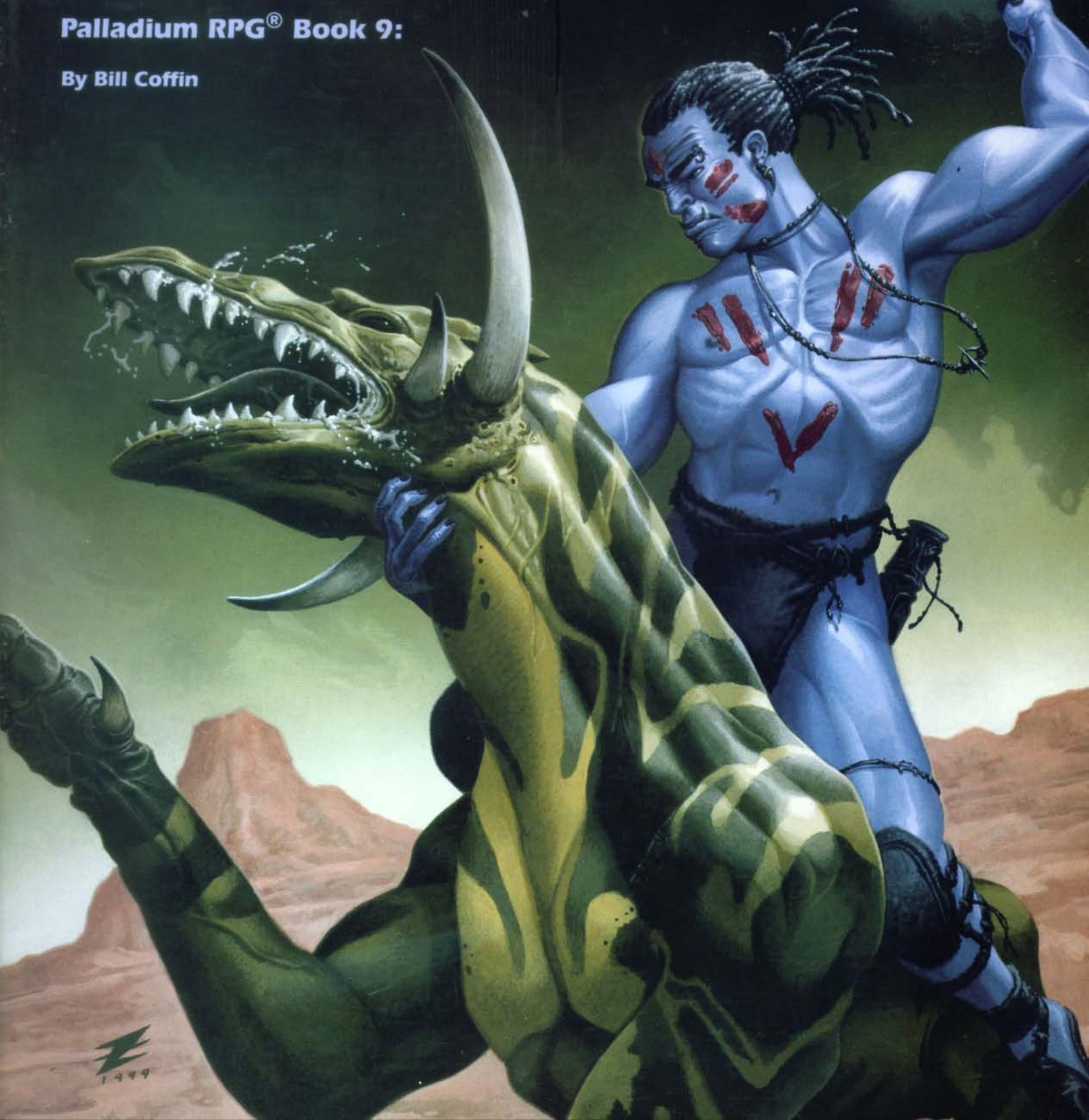


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The Baalgor Wastelands™

Palladium RPG® Book 9:

By Bill Coffin



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Acknowledgements

This book couldn't have been written without the generous help of a bunch of people.

First and foremost, I must thank Kevin Siembieda for giving me this chance to write about a world he has so painstakingly created. The Palladium Fantasy world is, in my mind, his finest creation, and I am honored that he would let me play with it in the way that I have. This place has occupied a lot of my creative energies for the last 12 years, so it's especially gratifying that I can now give something back to it.

Next, I must thank Jason Pascale, Steve Edwards, Mike Hawthorne and Richard Thomassen for volunteering to read my first draft of this book. (Steve, Jay and Mike also reviewed my manuscript for the Western Empire, for which I am also grateful.) Their insightful comments and attention to detail had been fantastic. Thanks, guys. You're the best.

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And finally, I must thank my incredible wife Allison. Without her constant support and encouragement, this would never have gotten finished.

— *Bill Coffin, 1999*

The cover depicts a Quorian Warrior battling a Tusker. The action takes place in the Rocky Desert. Painted by John Zeleznik.

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The Baalgor Wastelands™

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Special Thanks to Bill Coffin for another welcomed addition to the Palladium World. To Ramon Perez Jr. and Kent Burles for their pulse pounding artwork; Maryann and her tremendous effort on every level imaginable, and to Al, Jim, Jules, Wayne and all the Palladium Wastelanders who help keep us going in the right direction.

— *Kevin Siembieda, 1998*

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Now You're Playing with Power

Long-time players of the **Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®** are going to notice that the “power level” of the Baalgor Wastelands — the average level of the NPCs, the abilities of the monsters and races here, the availability of unique and powerful magic items — is higher than in most other sourcebooks. Considering that some players out there get justifiably worried when their favorite games begin upping the ante in terms of game power, a little explanation is in order.

A lot of the Palladium players I've talked with are concerned with how the role-playing industry seems to be caught up in an epidemic of “power gaming.” That is, rolling up the most insanely powerful characters you can just so they can blast everything in sight. While that might be fun for some folks (hey, I've done my share of it), it often doesn't leave much room for character development, genuine storytelling and imaginative problem-solving — the *real* hallmarks of good role-playing.

Rest assured, this sourcebook, and indeed, Palladium Fantasy in general is NOT becoming a “munchkin” game or a “power gamer” paradise. The reason why this sourcebook is of a higher “power level” than other sourcebooks is because the Baalgor Wastelands are one of the most dangerous and challenging environments in the entire Palladium world. You could argue that the only places as inherently dangerous as the Wastelands are *The Land of the Damned*, the heart of the *Yin-Sloth Jungles*, and perhaps the heart of the Northern Wilderness in deepest winter. To accurately reflect the severe peril characters must face when adventuring here, I thought that making this place's environments, monsters, races and NPCs a little more powerful than other parts of the world was not only appropriate and logical, but necessary.

In short, this is a tough place. It chews people up and spits out the bones faster than it takes them to draw their steel. The Baalgor Wastelands are designed with medium-level (4th to 7th level) characters in mind. G.M.s, unless your player characters are from here, you might consider finding some other part of the world to adventure in first before tackling this region. If you really would like to bring lower-level players into the Wastelands, then you might wish to downplay the bad guys here.

There, that's enough disclaimer stuff. I hope you have as much fun playing in this part of the world as I did writing about it. Good luck!

— Bill Coffin, 1999

A few words from Siembieda

For some years now, the Palladium Staff and I have lamented, “if only there were a way to clone Kevin Siembieda.” Or, failing that (and we have), to find a writer who has the same insight, enthusiasm and vision . . . the same love and passion not only for role-playing in general, but the Palladium Megaverse® in particular.

Well folks, the jury is still out, but I think we have found our man, Bill Coffin. Bill seems to understand and love the Palladium Fantasy setting better than any writer I have ever worked with. As I read, edit and make minor changes and additions to Bill's manuscripts, I find myself smiling and muttering to myself, “that's exactly right,” and “wow, I couldn't have presented that any better myself!” Sometimes it seems as if he has read my mind. It is a unique experience and pleasure for me to work with a fellow writer who has such a similar appreciation and view of “my” world, even as he takes it and defines it in ways that leave his own mark of quality upon it. It's just cool to have somebody take my baby and treat it with the same nurturing care. I've worked with other writers over the years, and I've enjoyed many of the projects we worked on together, but I see a bit more in Bill's work and dreams. I see a synchronicity and passion that holds the promise of tremendous potential, and, with any luck, is the harbinger of great things to come. Based on the reception of Bill's first book, **The Western Empire™**, it seems most Palladium Fantasy gamers share my enthusiasm.

Please do not interpret any of the above as my plan to turn over the Palladium World to Mr. Coffin, or anybody else. You can rest assured that I have plenty of ideas and plans for my first and favorite RPG creation. Furthermore, Bill and I consult about ideas and directions for future projects, and I read (and rework as I see necessary) every word submitted by all my freelance authors.

If I seem to be gushing, it's just that I see a new era of unprecedented fun and excitement for the Fantasy RPG series. You will be seeing a lot more from *Bill Coffin*, as well as other imaginative writers like *Steve Edwards* and *Randi Cartier*. Not to mention a host of great artists, new and old alike. For the first time ever, I feel that I have assembled a team of dynamic writers and talented artists to help me breathe life and adventure into the **Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®** and the entire Palladium Megaverse®!

The Palladium World is a fantastic place of men, monsters, and heroes. A world that has been shaped by magic, perhaps more than any other. A world born from darkness and chaos. A world crackling with magic energy and given birth to abominations and heroes alike. A raw power that has been harnessed by dark and deadly forces to destroy and enslave. Yet, time and time again, courageous individuals have dared to challenge the darkness and call upon the same magical forces to bring hope and light. Titanic forces that continue to battle into the current timeline. Forces of good and evil inexorably tied to magic and a place of wonder we know as the Palladium World.

I, Bill, and all the rest, plan on putting our prolific and fertile imaginations together to define this mystical and turbulent world. And while doing so, present adventures and settings that will challenge, intrigue, surprise and tantalize. So strap yourselves in and enjoy the ride. We will. Oh, and bring a few friends along to enjoy the show.

— Kevin Siembieda, 1999

Part One: The Baalgor Wastelands



A land steeped in history and legend

From the Journals of Rystrom Khejas

"I arrived on the shores of the Baalgor Wastelands cursing the day I ever was born. No more than ten days after I had completed my tour of the Western Empire, the Order of the Scroll, a society of adventurer-scholars to which I belong, sent me a Magic Pigeon bearing ill news. It seemed that Hogun Allsbrath, famed scholar of the North, had run afoul of a thieves' guild in Caer Itom and woke up one morning with several knives between his ribs. Allsbrath had been organizing an exploration of the Baalgor Wastelands and with him gone, the Order needed a replacement. That was where I, Rystrom Khejas, wandering scholar, came in. A dubious honor, to be sure.

"Being the only Order member in good standing on this half of the world, I was ordered to take Allsbrath's place. One moment I was entertaining the Imperial Court with my tales of the Old Kingdom. The next, I was on a leaking ship bound for the most blighted piece of dirt in the whole world.

"Aside from several pirate attacks and sea serpent sightings, the voyage to the Wastelands was a rather quiet one. Less than two weeks out of the Channel Islands in Lower Barraduk, we finally sighted a line of bleak, rocky coastline that jutted forth from the surf as if it were some kind of fortress wall designed to hold back the sea. If this was an omen to turn back, none of the crew were heeding it, much to my dismay.

*"We landed in **The Free City of Troker**, a stark metropolis of thieves, pirates, murderers and rogues of every sort. Troker is heralded to be the jewel of civilization in the Wasteland, which made me wonder, if this horrid place represented the best in the region, then what nightmares and atrocities awaited me deep in the wilderness? I shuddered to think of it.*

"As I prepared for my overland journey, I noticed how this region still bore the scars of its ancient wounds. The Elf-Dwarf War had ended here in a great magical apocalypse nearly 6,000 years ago, but to many of the inhabitants, it might as well have been yesterday. Indeed, there are precious few elves and dwarves here, but those who do make the Baalgor Wastelands their home treat each other with a degree of loathing and hatred I've never seen before.

"And then there are the exotic peoples of the Wastelands — the dour Eandroths, whose disposition is matched only by the dryness of the desert. The bloodthirsty Gromek, whose physical strength is matched only by their savagery, the sullen Minotaurs, doing their best not to gain notice, as if they still bear the guilt of some terrible, ancient crime. Perhaps, someday, they will find the forgiveness they so desperately crave, though I doubt they'll find it here.

"Being a man of travel, of course I had seen such beings before. What truly astonished me were the bizarre people one does not hear about in scholarly manuals and bestiary catalogs. Just within Troker were Baalizad, hulking aliens whose black carapace and crushing pincers make them most dangerous foes. The mysterious Vrill, whose psionic powers still cannot help them break free of their collective amnesia. And there are the curious Quillbacks, sprightly little scamps who stay alive by their speed,

their wits, and their coats of dagger-like quills. I met with the mighty Quorians, a warrior race brought here from another world by the Dwarves in the Great War. And the Gosai, another warrior race who are as stealthy as the Quorians are strong. Brought here by the Elves during that great conflict, these people were marooned on our world when the Big Thunder (as locals like to call that great cataclysm of the Circle of Absolute Elemental Power) wiped the Baalgor rain forests and great elven cities from the face of the planet, leaving only a parched, cracking badlands.

"And then, just two days off the ship, I met with Sir Batheled Skye, the great chronicler of monsters and animals. Sir Skye had just returned from the Sandy Desert with tales of enormous dragon-worms lurking beneath the sand, ready to devour whoever walked above them! And of lethal, tusker-like predators who sprint at great speeds, leap and glide onto their fleeing prey. But there was something else, something Sir Skye had seen which he could not tell me of. As he catalogued all of the odd beasts he had seen, there was something he witnessed out there which defeated his ability to describe. He shook at his recollection of this mysterious thing, and tears fell from his eyes as his voice squeaked silent. What could have rendered this great explorer so daft? And if it could reduce the great Batheled Skye to emotional ruin, what would become of me, a mere swordsman-scholar? Rumors persist of creatures so large that their very passage shakes the earth, but even I am skeptical of such things. Then again, stories of this sort persist only when they contain some kernel of truth.

"Shortly after my unsettling meeting with the famed Sir Skye, Troker fell under attack by a ravenous horde of orcs, ogres and trolls, all led by a crew of vicious, insane Gigantes who wished to tear the city to its very foundation. The guardsmen of Troker repelled the attack (with some help from myself and other adventurers, I don't mind admitting), but I soon learned that such bloodshed was a common occurrence. In fact, many Troker natives commented that the giant brutes who attacked the city were not the most dangerous of adversaries they had ever faced. Far from it. It would have been far worse to have been attacked by an organized force of Gromeks or the more civilized and organized of the giant races.

The mere mention of these two folk brought to light yet another danger of this threatening land — that far beyond the sandy wastes lie the great Baalgor Mountains, where towns and camps of giants spy on the workings of us smaller folk. In the shadow of the Mountains, it is said that these oversized enigmas gather their strength, but for what purposes, and by whose command? Do they really answer to some giant-king ruling from Mount Nimro, or have they simply gathered in this remote and inhospitable place to get away from a world of humans who would otherwise slaughter or enslave all members of the giant races? Perhaps, then, these giants were not to be feared, but pitied.

"Whether giants are to be pitied or reviled, I do not know. I can tell you that giants are as fierce and frightening a foe as any I have ever faced. And from reports I overheard, there exist large settlements of the winged Gromek, who themselves seem to be preparing for some great and terrible conflict. Long have storytellers spun yarns of these creatures' ferocity, strength, and skill at arms. To think that they may be mobilizing for a single,

massed attack on any one place or people is almost too terrible a thought to bear.

"By the end of my third day, I had undergone a curious transformation. No longer did I hate and loathe this place. I had grown used to its customs and quirks far faster than I would have given myself credit. Now, having spent several days on the edge of the Wastelands, learning all I could of it, I was intrigued. I was tempted. I was aching to explore the vast Baalgor wilderness. I knew that for every secret I had heard since my arrival, there had to be ten more waiting to be discovered! That under the sand and stone lay the ruins of what used to be the greatest civilization in the world. And that here and there, if one is of the mind to look and listen, one could sense the ghosts of ancient days, wandering the ruins of this place, lamenting the destruction their folly had brought them.

"No, this was no mere wasteland. This was a paradise for those stout of heart and strong of limb. A place of endless adventure and countless danger. And I was one of the fortunate few who would explore this place and learn its secrets. Perhaps, as the years spin by, so shall others follow in my footsteps to learn what I will not, and to defeat the unknown menaces whose evil presence still stain these war-torn sands."

— Rystrom Khejas,

Wandering Scholar and High Initiate of the Order of the Scroll

The Palladium world is one of wonders. There are marvelous and imposing civilizations like the Western Empire, the Timiro Kingdom, the Eastern Territory and the Wolfen Empire. There are also places of great mystery, like the Dragon's Gate, the Devil's Mark, Mount Nimro, and the Land of the Damned, among others. And there are places of great wilderness, like the Yin-Sloth Jungles, Ophid's Grasslands and the Great Northern Wilderness. Most places on the Palladium World fall into one of these categories but the Baalgor Wastelands fall into all three.

Here are a vast terrain of rocky lowlands, parched earth, savanna, deserts, and high mountains. During the cool rainy season, temperatures range from 70 to 80 degrees during the day and down to freezing at night. During the spring and summer, daytime temperatures soar from 80 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and down to 50 to 60 degrees at night. It's hard to believe that this was once a lush rainforest paradise similar to the Yin-Sloth jungles.

The Wastelands are also the site of one of the greatest mortal civilizations in Palladium history — the Elven Empire — and the Age of a Thousand Magicks which came before the rise of their Empire. But, as the Elf-Dwarf War laid waste to the entire region, it became barren, unforgiving badlands. Now, only the hardiest souls can expect to survive the scorching temperatures, the lack of food and water, the many monsters prowling about, and the legions of warlords and marauders who constantly patrol for new victims and prey. And as time slowly moves on from that terrible holocaust, the mystery of the Wastelands deepens. Who exactly destroyed this jungle paradise? What great secrets were lost in the firestorm? And what remains to be found?

Most importantly, the Baalgor Wastelands still dwell under the shadow of the Elf-Dwarf War. The cataclysmic end of the fabled War is the defining moment for this region, and the aftershocks of that conflict will never truly go away. Numerous historians argue that the defining moment of U.S. history wasn't

the Revolutionary War, but the Civil War. In just four years, everything the country had achieved to that point was forever changed, just as everything the country would ever do after that conflict would be done, in some small way, as a result of the bloodshed between the States. The Baalgor Wastelands are no different. Here, the pain of the ancient war is as fresh as it was yesterday, and for many elves and dwarves, this land still evokes such shame, anger and sadness that they will not set foot upon it. For it was here that two great civilizations fell prey to their own vanity and nearly drowned the world with their blood.

In its own weird ways, the Elf-Dwarf war is still being fought here by the alien races summoned by the Elves and Dwarves, and who now struggle to survive in a hostile alien environment. Indeed, many of these races have developed antagonisms of their own, making this blasted land just as much of a battleground now as it was in the past.

Those who travel through this blistered and parched land may be looking for treasure, adventure or glory, but the one thing they will find that won't be on any treasure map is the sense of the mind-numbing insanity that drove the Elven and Dwarven peoples to destroy each other. Considering how great those ancient empires were, and seeing now what they have been reduced to, one realizes that the Elf-Dwarf War must never repeat itself, regardless of the cost or sacrifice. Unfortunately, very few have learned that lesson. And events brewing north of the Baalgor Wastelands suggest that history is threatening to repeat itself.

The Wastelands remain a place of tyranny and bloodshed where life is cheap and death comes easily. It is where the strength of will is often (but not always) a greater thing than that of steel. But for those champions willing to make the world a better place, the Baalgor Wastelands are a perfect place to start. For here is where the future of the rest of the world truly lies. This place is a living reminder of the dark and twisted fate of empires gone by, and that unless the forces of goodness and justice prevail, such a fate may befall the empires of the modern day.

History of the Baalgor Wastelands

From the Journals of Rystrom Khejas:

"From the day I first learned to read, I have always been fascinated by the Elf-Dwarf War. Surely, the Palladium world has a rich history, and the epochs of the Age of Chaos, the Age of Purification, the Time of a Thousand Magicks, and all the times since then are both fascinating and profound. But for some reason, none of them ever grasped me with the same sense of urgency and tragedy as the Elf-Dwarf War. Perhaps it is the sad, desperate way in which it all ended that keeps up my interest (if morbidly so). Or maybe it is the mystery behind why this conflict really started, or why it ended in the way that it did. Or perhaps it is because I see so many parallels between this war and the world today. Even now, Eastern and Wolfen armies threaten to soak the earth in each other's blood. And far to the west waits the so-called Empire of Sin, coiled like a serpent, ready to

strike. These are dangerous times, and if we are not careful, if we do not heed the lessons taught by the folly of the past, then we are doomed to repeat it.

"For a scholar such as myself, studying the Elf-Dwarf War poses two serious problems. The first is a lack of historical material, particularly involving the legendary Circle of Absolute Elemental Power used to destroy the Golden City of Baalgor and the surrounding lands. In that Big Thunder, many of the Elven records kept during the war were destroyed in a single instant. Likewise, during the Millennium of Purification that followed the great war, the surviving elves and dwarves voluntarily destroyed whatever remaining evidence of the war they could find. Their official reason was to prevent future generations from making the same mistakes they did. But also, many believe that the surviving elves and dwarves, so ashamed by their conduct during the war, also wanted to conceal their wrongdoings by destroying all evidence of them. Thus, any comprehensive study of this war is impossible. What little information that may have survived, has been shattered like a china bowl, its pieces scattered by the wind, and covered by the earth. Piecing it all back together is impossible. Still, scholars like myself stare at the fragments of our past and try to piece together enough of the puzzle to get a reasonable picture of events. The more of those lost tiny fragments we can uncover the more we can glean.

"Piecing together the past, I fear, is a daunting task under the best of circumstances, and probing into the Great War is the most difficult of undertakings. The problem is that nobody particularly wants you to know any more about the Elf-Dwarf War than you already do. I would like to think that most scholars and mages who study this time period do so to better our understanding of past mistakes to prevent them from being made again. But there are those who lust after power and riches, and believe that by searching out the secrets of this bygone era, they will gain arcane knowledge that will, indeed, empower them. As a result, those sages, scholars, libraries, monasteries and wizards' guilds that do possess knowledge about the Great War are very reluctant to share their secret with anybody else. After all, how can one be sure that the person you are sharing your information with can be trusted with it? Even if those you tell genuinely intend to use the information responsibly, it may still fall into the hands of those with black hearts and foul intentions. And, you can never be sure that some power-mad villain might not take one's secrets by force. Or, having done so, decide that it would be best if all others who share this knowledge perish. Dangerous work my friends, dangerous work.

"But that is not all. There are secret societies (and some not so secret) who have sworn to obscure the history of the Great Elf-Dwarf War as much as possible. Groups such as these believe that no good can come from knowing too much of that terrible conflict, and so they destroy historical evidence wherever they find it, harass and murder those who seek such information, and spread misinformation and lies about what is known, to taint people from discovering what is not known. I myself have run afoul of one such group, and I was lucky to escape their clutches alive. But they succeeded in their mission, having destroyed the priceless history book I had fought so long and hard to obtain.

"As my quill runs dry on this particular topic, I can only say that there is far, far, far more to be known about the Elf-Dwarf War than anybody shall ever discover. Indeed, I am one of the world's leading experts on the topic, and even I admit to knowing only a few scattered fragments of the whole story. To those who would seek the truth, be warned that this is a subject whose secrets are hidden for a reason, and that the more you know, the less you may want to know — and the less likely you are to live to share it. The secrets of the Elf-Dwarf War are, no doubt, great and horrible. I think if the mortal mind were to know all that transpired over the course of this conflict, it would certainly induce madness and life-long melancholy.

"Still, there will always be those who wish to seek out clues and accounts for themselves. I surely did, spending a great deal of my younger days in the wild-lands of the world on various research expeditions. If you want to know more about the Elf-Dwarf War, then indeed the Baalgor Wastelands are the premier place to search. True, the harsh environment and swarms of marauders make it difficult to conduct a proper archaeological expedition, but there are vast treasures buried here. Entire cities and outposts lie sleeping under the shifting sands, along with the ruins of wizard towers, dwarven rune forges, elven citadels, rune weapons themselves, and other marvels forgotten by man and time. To the scholar or treasure-seeker, these are the things that dreams (and nightmares!) are made of. Those who have the courage, ability and knowledge to seek these things out and brave the dangers that go along with the search, may find riches beyond all compare. While I do not crave gold and glory, I do crave the truth, and hope that somebody will, in my lifetime, find a few more tantalizing pieces to our troubled past. To those hardy souls, I wish them the very best of luck. They are going to need it."

The History of the Elf-Dwarf War

The region known as the Baalgor Wastelands has a long, rich, and tragic history. For millennia, it was a lush rainforest where the Elves basked in their victory over the Old Ones, until a great conflict arose and destroyed it all. Today, the Baalgor Wastelands are a blasted basin of sand, rock and stone, populated by those who either do not know the land's history, or who choose not to spread it. Through the various scraps of the Tristine Chronicles and a handful of surviving relics, legends and stories, scholars and sages have managed to assemble only a few glimpses into the Baalgor Wastelands' past. The history offered on the following pages is an incomplete history, at best, but it offers an inkling of what happened.

For those who would learn more about the tragic history of this place, the only option is either to travel to the Baalgor Wastelands and/or Old Kingdom themselves and comb through the crumbling ruins, blowing sand and shattered rock for clues, or to travel back in time to witness the apocalypse of this place first-hand. Such means have never been open to adventurers, unless you believe the rumors that once a century, a door to the past opens up so that the wrongs of foregone days may be made right.

Ultimately, the history of the Baalgor Wastelands is a history of the Elf-Dwarf War, for that terrible conflict is what made this

place what it is today. And every person, place and thing present, all exists in context of that event. Despite all of the time that has passed since the final days of the war, the Wastelands are an ongoing testament to the destructive forces unleashed by the elves and dwarves. Perhaps by coming to know the horrors of the Wastelands, one could better see how to prevent such things from occurring again elsewhere in the Palladium world. Indeed, when one sees national powers like the Western Empire, the Wolfen Empire and the Eastern Territory agitating for war, or sinister cults seeking to unlock uncontrollable powers from other worlds, it would seem that the Palladium world will experience holocaust after holocaust until one destroys the world itself.

Or not. There will always be those for whom history is a guide, a warning, a prophecy. And those who would heed the wisdom of the past can certainly affect their future. For the power of history is not to reshape the past, but to educate the present for the betterment of the future. As long as there are those who will learn, there will be hope for generations to come.

Prelude to War

Of the many accounts of what life was like before the Elf-Dwarf War, this particular excerpt from the Tristine Chronicles bears an informative overview. Many dispute the authenticity of this passage, since it lacks the cryptic prose found elsewhere in the Chronicles. In fact, the Tristine Chronicles themselves pose an interesting mystery to scholars of this topic. The Chronicles offer a sketchy, unclear history of the Palladium world at best, with many gaps and spots where large portions of text are missing. The section describing the Elf-Dwarf War is one of those. This leads some to believe that for whatever reason, the history of this terrible conflict was either purposefully not chronicled, or more likely, all chronicles pertaining to it were destroyed by someone who wanted this war not merely forgotten, but erased from memory.

As a result, many of the text fragments used as sources on the Elf-Dwarf War are of questionable identity and origin, and many of the most authoritative passages on the Elf-Dwarf War are not from the Tristine Chronicles, but from private notebooks, journals, battlefield chronicles, hearsay, legends, and other documents somehow preserved over the passage of time.

Regardless if the following writing is a genuine Tristine fragment, it is held by many to be the "official" description of life before the Elf-Dwarf War.

After the Old Ones were put to sleep, the world entered a Golden Age where both the Elven and Dwarven Empires reached fabulous levels of wealth, power and majesty. The Elves built towering, shimmering cities throughout the New Kingdom that were as much a testament to their mastery of magic as their appreciation of beauty.

Likewise, the Dwarves constructed incredible underground realms that were the greatest feats of engineering the Palladium world has ever seen. The Dwarves, too, were masters of their own forms of magic, and they used them to bring their empire greater glory.

For millennia, the Elven and Dwarven realms peacefully co-existed, exchanging gifts of magic and wealth. Where the Elves ruled the surface of the New Kingdom, the Dwarves ruled underground, and there did the two realms live almost as one.

But, as they say, familiarity breeds contempt, and slowly, gradually, the closeness of the Elves and Dwarves went rotten. The Elves became haughty and superior, while the Dwarves grew bitter and vengeful. The two realms drifted apart culturally even as they grew closer and closer physically. And although many great magic-wielders, clergy, scholars, sages and statesmen tried to heal the growing rifts between these two great peoples, the seeds of schism had been sown, and a tree bearing bitter fruit had begun to grow.

The Iron Age

Here, the history of the region grows incredibly sketchy, since most records and documents were destroyed in the Great War. All that is known for sure is that the Dwarves hatched a plot to utterly destroy the Golden City of Baalgor to avenge some equally horrible atrocity the Elves had committed just a few months before.

And lo, did the Elf and Dwarf draw unto arms against the other, causing the Golden Age of Peace to disappear before the Iron Age of War.

Who began the war one cannot say, for it was the work of both the Elves and Dwarves, yet not rightly the fault of either. No, it was the many-headed beast of Pride that pushed these great peoples into distrusting each other and wishing destruction unto their neighbor.

And it was Greed that gave the Elven and Dwarven generals the dreams of riches and spoils of war to be taken from their defeated enemy.



And it was Fear that a neighbor so great and strong and powerful might one day rule the other, and in doing so, gain the world.

Together, these formed a hydra of discontent that perhaps no mortal kingdoms could have withstood. For this beast was so slow in the growing, so subtly worked into the underbellies of both Elf and Dwarf, that even had they recognized this monster in their midst, they would have been powerless to defeat it.

Another fragment offers a more concrete description of the War's beginning, in what is now the Old Kingdom.

In the New Kingdom did these great powers meet for one final reckoning of peace before both were flung headlong into the abyss. As the great armies glowered at each other, far across the field as their generals met and traded words edged with steel, a great disturbance between the two hosts drew them into arms. The Elves thought they detected a Dwarven ambush heading for the conference tent, while the Dwarves thought to have seen the Elves doing the same. Both rushed to their generals' aid, and met with a terrible clash of arms.

Thick into the press did both armies fly, and a day of hideous bloodshed soaked the earth and split the air with the cries of the dying. By the sun's retreat, the field was piled high with the fallen, and the fates of these two Empires were sealed.

Actually, the Elf-Dwarf War was a series of wars lasting many thousands of years. It seems that both sides would take turns beating the other into retreating, only to have them return a generation later to renew the fight. This is how the two civilizations were able to battle so long and so hard, yet not manage to utterly ruin each other.

During most of this conflict, the main battleground was the New Kingdom, now known as the Old Kingdom. When the fighting first began, the Elves held the western half of the region, extending all the way to the Baalgor Rainforest and the Sea of Crystal Waters. The Dwarves held the Eastern half of the area, extending all the way to the New Kingdom Mountains. For millennia, the warring powers pushed back and forth across this area, both above and below ground, reducing it all to utter ruin. Where once stood a field of magnificent Elven cities, now only rubble littered the ground. The stunning underground chambers and catacombs of the Dwarves were caved in and shattered.

This is how the war went until its final phase, the last war, in which both the Elven and Dwarven armies vowed either to destroy the other or destroy themselves in the trying. Whoever emerged victorious from this final conflict would rule the world. With such high stakes, the ferocity of the war increased a thousand-fold, with both sides committing unthinkable atrocities. Genocide, allegiances with infernal powers, and dark treacheries were all standard weapons to employ against each other, as this next passage of the Tristine Chronicles explains:

After the last Quiet Time grew old, the War began anew, with untold savagery and foul intent. The Elves and Dwarves met again in the shattered wastes of their ancient heartland, now strewn with the wrack and ruin of countless clashes. Again did the two meet, and the slaughter grew so thick and dolorous that rivers of wasted life soaked the earth and ran to the west, where it stained the Sea of Crystal Waters forever Scarlet.

From this carnage did the Dwarves fall back, their ranks pierced by the Elves, who marshaled their mightiest sorcerers to



consume Dwarven champions as mere insects before a raging bonfire. The Elven press chased the Dwarves to the entrance of their final stronghold, the great Undercity of Korin Gealead. There did the Dwarves make their final stand, resolved to perish for naught but the fury of the Fair Folk.

But the Stout Ones did not fall, as expected. Indeed, they rallied their forces and beat back their invaders, routing them so utterly that they chased the defeated Elven army across the wastes of the New Kingdom, and deep into that jungle paradise that all Elves called home.

The Dwarves summoned all the strength they had, including forces best left to other worlds, and grim powers uncontrollable. Thus assembled with this desperate and grim host, the Dwarves set upon the Golden City of Baalgor, an earthly paradise that had never known the stain of war or the blot of misery. There did the Dwarves besiege the place, laying waste to its towers, filling the streets with the blood of the innocent, just as the Elves had done in Korin Gealead.

But again, the Elves rallied, and the Dwarven line fell free, back into a ransacked host of locusts to be driven by the storm wind of Elven vengeance. It was this that set the stage for the Final Apocalypse, the Last Reckoning, the Big Thunder. For so frantic and desperate had the Dwarves become in their failed efforts to rid the world of all folk Fair, that they resolved to destroy the Elven land once and for all. Thus did they invoke the Circle of Unmaking, that Ring of Elemental Fury which turns air to poison and earth to sand and life to the void.

The Dwarves wrought this magic upon the city, first destroying all that remained of the inner walls. None were spared, Elf and Dwarf, innocent and damned. Not one soul did survive that most terrible onslaught, and once they had been wrested from this earth, so too did the city fall to sunder, its former glory stripped away before the winds of ruin, its beauty forever defiled.

But the Blight only began as thus, for once evoked, it could not be controlled, and indeed the jungle paradise became the stage of reckoning for an entire war that had scarred the world, and made even the gods themselves turn away from the affairs of mortal folk. The Circle expanded its borders again and again, so far beyond the control of those who has unleashed it. Wood and field and stream did fall away to the Fury, leaving nothing behind but a shattered Desolation that never again would know the beauty of all things green, of the song of birds, or the babbling of brooks. For this place was now and forever Wasteland, and a testament to the folly of the wicked would it be.

It is said that the Big Thunder wiped out the Golden City of Baalgor and gutted the Baalgor Rainforest in just a few, short, terrible hours. The massive damage done from that, according to ancient texts, seemed to strike a mortal blow to both sides, and had long-reaching ramifications that ravaged both Dwarf and Elf hundreds of miles away. Over the next century, what forest and people survived perished, as if some dread disease had infected the land. The Rainforest was no more and the great Elven city atomized, the Wastelands serve as a grim reminder of the folly of war pushed past the line of reason.

The Day After

After the great destruction, the world was said to have lived in quiet shame for what had been done. Although it was the Dwarves who invoked the Circle of Absolute Elemental Power that destroyed the Baalgor Rainforest, the Elves knew in their hearts that they shared the blame for what they had done. They knew that they had committed their share of atrocities, had driven the Dwarves to the edge of madness, and, worse, had they been in the Dwarves' place, they would have done the same thing.

Afterwards, the survivors from both of the shattered empires vowed that never again would this kind of madness consume the world, and so began the *Millennium of Purification*, where Elves and Dwarves worked together to destroy all the weapons of the Elf-Dwarf War, put this unforgettable atrocity behind them the best they could, and begin the long, slow process of healing and rebuilding. Sadly, for both races, this would mark the beginning of a long decline. Decimated, neither would be able to hold onto what little they had, and both empires faded. While Elf and Dwarf strongholds remain in the Old Kingdom, most of these people have joined the world of man and live as equals — workers, warriors, teachers and advisors — among the human nations.

Where there is little history covering the Elf-Dwarf War itself, there is an abundance of material describing its aftermath and the beginning of the *Millennium of Purification*. Scholars believe that this is the result of an entire generation of horrified and repentant people who felt that if they did not describe the horrors of their final war for the benefit of future generations, then surely, someone would believe it never happened, or

worse, they would let another war like this reoccur. This is ironic, when one recognizes that many of these same scholars were probably responsible for destroying the precise records that detailed the Great War and the various, lost magicks used during it.

Of even greater irony is that many of these post-war documents are *not* considered reliable, and are dismissed by many scholars and military leaders. The reason for this is that many of the recountings written during the period of Purification are clearly biased — obviously exaggerated and/or slanted one way or another to get across the many authors' points of view. Many are written as cautionary tales and warnings to future generations reflecting the horror, shame and madness, rather than actual (or reliable) historical details of fact. Equally disturbing, confusing and misleading are the thousands upon thousands of legends, folk tales and lies that have arisen over the last 6000 years concerning everything in the Elf-Dwarf War, from who started it, alleged events and atrocities, villains and heroes, to tales of legendary and forgotten magic, lost cities, haunted ruins, alien monsters, dark secrets and the locations of lost treasures, ancient tomes, ancient (and presumably accurate) editions of the *Tristine Chronicles* and other writings, and ancient artifacts of historical, religious and magical significance. This makes determining an accurate history about the Great War nearly impossible. However, there are a few choice passages attributed to various editions of the *Tristine Chronicles* that are both informative and trustworthy. One in particular captures the essence of the horror felt by both sides of this conflict, once they saw the utter destruction it had wrought:

One must remember that both sides escalated the fighting, just as both ignored the other's repeated pleas for peace once the war had gone too far.

The blame falls on both for the devastation their pride hath wrought; a crime that shall be a long time in the paying. That is why the gods do not allow the Elf and Dwarf to reign over their own kind, and has made them second to Men. Thus, they wander homeless and in shame over a world that shall never again entreat their visions of greatness. They are the Fallen Ones, the Broken Ones, and their folly must become the wisdom that the Age of Man has yet to learn.

But this is not the concern of the Elf and Dwarf, for they must contend with the dark handiwork of their forefathers until the end of time. Forevermore, theirs is the legacy of a thousand shattered cities, an infinitude of shattered lives, the decimation of two great civilizations and the collapse of two races once called noble. For in hate, anger and petty jealousy, they did bring a blight upon this world the likes of which had not been seen or heard of since the time of the Dreaded Old Ones. And so the specters of chaos from the days of old did turn their hearts to cold stone and cloud their minds with dreams of fevered vengeance. Born from the womb of hatred, together Elf and Dwarf spawned only war and destruction.

Only when Baalgor became the Wastelands did the remaining Elves and Dwarves finally understand the horrors they had inflicted upon themselves, and in so doing, on all they touched. Only then could they see how deeply the sharp and terrible the weapons they had forged through hate had cut. Only when the red soaked earth choked with the blood of untold millions lost in but a heartbeat, did the Elf and Dwarf stop to survey their hand-

ework. Only then did they recognize the spectral vultures of War, Famine and Pestilence circling overhead, waiting to claim them. Only then did they weep over the millions of young and sweet innocents who perished alongside the multitude of warriors. Only when everything the blood of the innocent touched shrivelled and died, and seas turned red, did the progenitors of their own destruction weep and plead to the heavens for forgiveness. But their only reply was a hot wind that stung their swollen eyes. So great was their grief that every man, woman and child of Elf and Dwarf trembled and wept as one. The War was finally over and in its wake, the loss of innocence and peace. Elf and Dwarf would forever bear the stain of their crime, just as the Baalgor Wastelands would stand the test of time as a scar upon the very earth. A grim reminder of the horrors a people can bring upon their enemies, and in so doing, upon themselves. A scarred and barren land that is said will never heal nor ever bear fruit until the Elf and Dwarf can find it possible to forgive themselves.

Cast down from nobility, the folk, both Fair and Strong, thought to make amends by erasing the horrors they had so wantonly unleashed. So it was that Elf and Dwarf would spend a millennium in a futile attempt to cover their sins. And in so doing, wiping from the face of existence the weapons of destruction, hell-spawn minions and the magicks most foul that had undone them. And while the Fair and Strong scrambled to preserve the future for those who might come to walk in their footsteps, their peoples and civilizations slipped farther into ruin, allowing the barbarians and monstrous to invade their old kingdoms and tear the last vestiges of civilization asunder.

And so the era of the Fair and Strong came to a sad end, and the eyes of fate would look upon others to carry the future. Still, Elf and Dwarf survive and tread across the land, no longer the chosen ones, but part of the masses. And though no longer the exalted, they walk among men and monsters with wisdom and fiery conviction to make this new era shine brighter than any before it. A future that will not make the mistakes of the past.

Future History: The passage above is little more than a vague summary of the last days of the Great War and what transpired in the thousands years that followed. Still, for many scholars and sages everywhere, its spirit and message is clear: Man must learn from the mistakes of the past and avoid repeating them. A lesson many fear falls upon deaf ears. It also gives vivid insight into the hearts and minds of the survivors of the War, and the tremendous guilt the people of both races endure to this day.

However, it sheds little factual light upon this legendary and epic period of history. Since so much of factual history is lost and can not be found, accurately portraying and quantifying the Elf-Dwarf War poses a challenge of mind-boggling proportions. Understanding how this War got so out of hand, the reasoning behind it and uncovering the underlying truths and details haunt most historians. Some are absolutely obsessed by it, and some are willing to risk everything in search of the truth. If the old saying, "the truth shall set you free" is a truism, there are those who believe the truth about the Elf-Dwarf War could set the Palladium World free from future war and self-destruction. It is a romantic dream, to be sure, but it is one many consider worth pursuing.

The Geography of the Baalgor Wastelands



Notes for Desert Adventuring

From the Journals of Rystrom Khejas:

"Hot, rocky and desolate! Everywhere I travel in these cursed lands, it is always the same. It has been only a month, and my travels here have only started, but already I have been assailed by more bandits, marauders, monsters and animals than I care to recall. Yet that being said, by all held holy, it is the damned heat that shall kill me!

"Nowhere else on this world have I seen such a place where the weather alone is your worst enemy. Just a week ago did I witness a tragedy that could have been averted, had some simple precautions been taken. In *The Free City of Troker* I met a band of hardy adventurers whose exploits included the slaying of the foul dragon Gordiag and the destruction of the Corrupted Church of Isis, deep within the Western Empire. Yet, these fool-hardy heroes laughed off the dangers of the desert, so confident in their battle seasoned skill and experience that they brought with them only a meager supply of food and water. None of them purchased native travelling robes to reflect the sun's heat. Nor did any of them trade their fine Western war horses for desert animals better suited for travelling over rocky and sandy ground.

"I left in the same direction as these heroes only three days after they departed Troker. After only a day and a half, I found the first of them, the haughty palladin named Sir Fuiran. His skin was cooked and blistered, and where it lie exposed, was fused to the edges of his plate and mail, as if the entirety of it had been heated red-hot, and he melted inside. It seemed Sir Fuiran had fallen to one of the dreaded Blister Winds that scour the Wastelands. If only he had left his heavy armor behind. But in refusing to take it off, it became his coffin.

"The second body turned up a day afterwards, along the same trail. This was Sister Makell, who had assured me days before that once their band discovered the ruins of the Golden City of Baalgor, she would return to the Timiro Kingdom and be promoted to High Priestess of her Church of Light. Alas, it appeared Sister Makell had skipped the High Priestesshood, and was promoted directly to celestial service, as they say. Her body laid twisted and broken along one of the many riverbed channels crisscrossing the wastelands. Apparently, the party had been walking in one of these to take advantage of the shade they offer, when a sudden thunderstorm dumped several inches of water on the baked earth. Unable to absorb the water, it all funneled into the nearest erosion channel, catching the party unaware in a flash flood. Perhaps the other members made it out. Sister Makell certainly did not. It looked like she was caught by the torrent of rushing water. I suspect she was dashed against the side of the channel or a boulder, knocked unconscious and drowned. Very sad. Rest in peace, holy one. I'm sure your deity has a special place set aside for you.

"I never found the bodies of the others, but as I entered the stony desert region, I passed an Eandroth caravan that offered to sell me what I believe were some of their belongings. It seems the Eandroth found a party of adventurers dead at their campsite. It was unclear if they died of thirst or perished in a sudden night freeze. It would be hard to say, since they probably were not prepared for either.

"I thanked the Eandroth traders for the opportunity to sample their wares, but I decided against buying any of the items offered me. It seemed a shame for such valiant heroes to meet such an inauspicious end, and wrong of me to profit from their demise. Furthermore, being somewhat superstitious myself, I feared that if I carried the fallen heroes' possessions with me, I might meet a similar end. Or worse, be haunted by their spirits. Ghosts are said to be commonplace in the Wastelands, and I saw no reason to bring their attention to me or to tempt fate.

"It now being many years after the fact, and having survived my sojourn through the Wastelands, I wish I took the Eandroth up on their offer. Some of the things they were selling were rather nice. And after all, it wasn't like their previous owners needed them any longer."

Desert Climates

The most dangerous thing about the Baalgor Wastelands is the environment itself. Composed mainly of deserts and parched, dusty grasslands, this is perhaps the hottest and driest environment in the Palladium world.

When people think of deserts, they often think of the huge sand dunes of the Sahara, but this is only one kind of desert. Death Valley in the U.S. is covered with scrub-brush in many places. Likewise, much of the Middle East is covered with plains of broken rock and stone, and nearly the entire surface of Mars, a desert planet, is covered with a mix of sand, soil and rock. Such terrains are generally referred to as "stony deserts." Parched and cracked earth covered in stones of varying size, from boulders to pebbles. Such desert may give way to buttes and even rocky deserts where the topsoil has blown away and the wind has eroded the bedrock into columns of stones, canyons and strange configurations. These stony and rocky deserts



are sprinkled with scraggly patches of drought resistant grass, thorny bushes and desert plants.

All deserts share one characteristic: a serious lack of water. Water is the root of all life, and without it, it is very hard for a place to support a wide range of plant or animal life. Deserts usually have some kind of water supply, they just have very little of it. Desert animals and peoples find ways to adapt to this, but for visitors, this causes serious hardships, and a lack of understanding about the desert can be deadly.

What follows are some considerations regarding desert travel.

Water Consumption

If one is going to survive in the desert, he is going to need water, and lots of it. Most humans can go for weeks without food if they have to, but can only last three or four days, tops, without water. And that's just sitting still. Somebody who is particularly active (i.e., running, walking, fighting, or performing heavy manual labor) can dehydrate him- or herself beyond the point of no return within a day. Heat, wind and lack of shade also contribute to the problem of dehydration in a desert environment.

In the Baalgor Wastelands, having adequate water supplies is critical to all adventurers. For game purposes, normal-sized humanoids must consume a minimum of two quarts of water a day or become dehydrated, double if involved in strenuous activity like combat, running or hard labor.

Dehydrated characters have all combat bonuses and number of attacks per melee reduced by half. Sustained dehydration (for more than 24 hours in desert conditions) results in the character losing 25% of his total hit points. Reduce Hit Points by an additional 20% for each subsequent 24 hour period without at least one quart of water. After 72 hours, characters will have lost 65% of their total hit points, plus speed will be reduced by 90%, attacks/actions per melee round are reduced to one per round, and the suffering characters have no initiative and *no* combat bonuses of any kind! After 96 hours, Hit Points are down by 85% and if the dehydrated characters do not each get at least two quarts of water within the next 1D6 hours, they each fall into a coma. After that, unless they get at least two quarts of water in the next 24 hours, hit points drop to 3D6 points below zero and they die.

These requirements are just for characters doing normal activity, such as walking, talking, exploring, etc. If the characters spend more than four hours of the day performing rigorous activity such as fighting, running, heavy manual labor, etc., then their water requirements for that day will be *doubled*.

To fully recover from dehydration, players must drink two extra quarts of water for each day they have gone without drinking any. They cannot drink all that extra water at once, though. They need to drink it over the course of the next 48 hours. With rest and proper hydration, a full recovery is made at roughly the same rate as the dehydration; meaning if a character suffered dehydration for three days, complete Hit Points, speed, bonuses and abilities are restored in three days (basically reverse the dehydration process).

Water requirements for giant-sized humanoids, such as ogres, trolls and Wolfen, are double those of normal-sized humanoids. So, your average giant-sized humanoid needs to drink four

quarts (one gallon) of water in desert conditions. And those over 15 feet (4.6 m) tall will require quadruple the human amount (i.e. two gallons).

Small humanoids, like gnomes and goblins, require only half the amount of water per day that normal-sized humanoids require. That means they only need to drink one quart of water a day while in the Baalgor Wastelands.

In addition, races and animals "native" or accustomed to the Baalgor Wastelands, such as Eandroths, Gromeks and Minotaurs, also require only half the normal amount of water that "outsiders" not accustomed to desert conditions require. This is because these races have, over time, acclimatized to the extreme heat and dryness of the region, and their bodies naturally conserve water much more efficiently than humans, elves and most other people.

Finding water where there appears to be none

Compounding the need for water is the fact that it is scarce in this region. Travelers can go for days over the sand, parched, dusty earth and rock without seeing so much as a puddle or spring. Tiny amounts of water might condense on one's gear overnight, but it is an insufficient amount to live on; scarcely more than a sip. Furthermore, even if one is laden with full water skins, he or she probably won't get much farther than a week to 10 days in the open desert on that alone. So, how does one survive in the middle of the Baalgor Wastelands? Many don't. Those who do either rely on magic, the drinking of blood (often humanoid blood) or the life-giving *chsuba root*.

The **chsuba plant** is a hardy, scraggly-looking weed indigenous to the Baalgor Wastelands. Although there are places where a small variety of cactus plants can be found, and water extracted from them, the *chsuba* is the only plant found throughout the Wastelands. In the most desolate and arid areas (easily representing 60% of the entire region), one can usually find 1D4+1 *chsuba* roots growing per square mile of territory (10-30 times that in some places). Thus, if player characters are skilled at outdoor foraging, they can find enough water to live on indefinitely. The trick is finding it. *Chsuba* roots have virtually no aboveground growth, other than a scraggly weave of what appears to be a small clump of dried out vine that blends in with their dusty surroundings; making them easy to miss. Furthermore, those without any knowledge of the plant would most certainly assume it is nothing more than a bit of dead, dried out scrub and walk right past it without a second thought.

Those who know about the root, and make a successful Wilderness Survival skill roll at -20%, will be able to successfully locate a *chsuba* root. Once found, all one needs to do is dig up the root and feast. The bulbous meat of the root contains roughly two quarts of water (enough for a normal-sized humanoid to live on for a day), which is easily squeezed from it. Or, the succulent root can be eaten raw. It has the consistency of a juicy, but fibrous grapefruit and a good taste, providing both water and nourishment. The knuckle joints of the dry vine portions contain the actual seeds, so discarding this inedible portion allows the plant to regrow in the dry earth. As one might expect, this plant is a dietary staple of many Wastelanders.

Other sources of water in the Wastelands. The cactus is surprisingly rare in the Baalgor Wastelands. Only a small variety of large and small cactus plants can be found from time to time. These dense, thick plants can be cut open and a drinkable liquid drained or squeezed from its meaty body. However, this "water" has a bitter and unpleasant taste, and the meat of the plant is not usually edible (eating it causes nausea and stomach cramps; reduce attacks per melee round by one, and combat bonuses by one point).

Other plant life such as scrub (short bushes, vines and weeds) and drought resistant desert grass found in the stony desert regions offer no means of extracting water or nourishment to humans. Even horses and animals that can eat such plants will get only a minimal and insufficient amount of water from them.

The occasional and rare oasis of grass, flowering plants, bushes and/or small cluster of short (often scraggly) trees offers (comparatively) cool shade and soft grass, but rarely any apparent source of water (i.e. rarely an obvious pond or spring; only one in ten will have a small pond on the surface or well made by nomads). What it does offer is a variety of game (mainly birds, lizards, rodents, snakes and insects) that is likely to live or hunt in this patch of green. If the time of year is right, and one's luck holds out, there may be a small amount of fruit (namely raspberry and strawberry types). However, what such an oasis of life represents is some source of water, typically an underground stream. Characters with the ability of dowsing and those with the Wilderness Survival skill (at -30%) may be able to dig into the ground and get water to puddle up. While this water will be brown and gritty with dirt, it will taste like nectar to those dying of thirst.

Magic is one's only other hope for acquiring water in the parched Baalgor Wastelands. The ability to Summon Rain, Create a Circle of Rain, Create Water or Ice, turn other Liquids to Water (for example, wine and other alcohol causes dehydration, so drinking them hurts rather than helps. But if one could turn a bottle or skin of wine into precious water ...), or the ability to summon air or water elementals who can find or create such things can mean the difference between life and death. Consequently, the services of *Water Warlocks* are highly valued, and to a much lesser degree, *Air Warlocks* and *Summoners*.

Note: As long as there is a spark of life, the Restoration spell will instantly heal and restore victims of dehydration. However, Healing Touch, magic potions of healing, and similar healing magic and psionics have only the most minimal effect on people suffering from dehydration — one Hit Point per spell, potion or touch. Enough, perhaps, to survive an extra day provided one has the benefit of eight or ten such supernatural healings. Of course, resistance to heat, thirst and exhaustion are also helpful in delaying the inevitable, but even these characters ultimately still suffer from the accumulative effects of dehydration and heat exhaustion.

Heat Exhaustion

More than one "civilized" adventurer has perished from overexertion and strength sapping heat. Fools who attempt a forced march in full armor under the noon sun quickly boil in their own sweat. Included here are some guidelines for what precautions player characters will have to take to keep from accidentally cooking themselves to death.

Players and G.M.s alike must remember the incredible heat and dryness of the Baalgor deserts. Although not as far to the south as the Yin-Sloth jungles, the Wastelands are hot and dry, and, except for the occasional boulder or rock pillar jutting from the land, there is no shade. The heat and dryness is as much due to the area's latitude as it is to the mountains that surround it, keeping away clouds and rainfall. While open to the sea, most of the storms that come from the Sea of Scarlet Waters dissipate over the coastline, leaving the interior of the region high and dry. And when storms do make it to the interior, the blasted land is so baked that the water just runs off and drains away, leaving the area nearly as dry after a rain, as it was before. And finally, the magical holocaust that created this region, the activation of an out-of-control Circle of Absolute Elemental Power, initially depleted the region of all plant life and evaporated all surface water. Since then, the Baalgor Wastelands have remained an expanse of dry, dusty, wind-swept flatlands and deserts, and they will likely stay that way forever.

In the spring and summer, the Wastelands range from 85 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit (29-38 C) during the day, and down to 50 or 60 degrees Fahrenheit (10-16 C) at night. These "hot times," as locals call the hours of daylight, tend to increase one's need for water, since just sitting still can cause one to sweat to the point of dehydration. Things aren't as bad in the fall and winter when temperatures range from 70 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit (21-27 C) during the day and down to freezing at night. This is the time the locals jokingly refer to as the "rainy season," because maybe five or ten inches of rain will fall on the region during a six-month period. Cunning desert survivors often craft ways to catch this rain and store it for later, while inexperienced travelers may pass such opportunities by.

The heat of the Baalgor Wastelands makes it seem like one is traveling and adventuring in a blast furnace. Just wearing clothing and a light load can become a difficult task or at least an annoyance. Normal, non-strenuous activity, such as walking or light manual labor can only be continued for half an hour per point of Physical Endurance (P.E.) above 8. Thus, an adventurer with a P.E. of 14 can walk or work lightly for three hours straight at a time before suffering from heat exhaustion or needing to rest and rehydrate.

Adventurers performing strenuous activity, such as a forced march, combat or heavy lifting or work (this includes wearing any suit of armor or equipment weighing more than 50 pounds/22.6 kg), can only go on for 15 minutes per point of P.E. above 8. So, the same adventurer with a P.E. of 14 can only run, fight or perform otherwise strenuous activity for about an hour and a half at a time.

Extremely strenuous activities, such as heavy or prolonged fighting or running at an all-tilt sprint, can only be done for one minute per P.E. point.

Once the character has gone for such a period he will need to rest. The only way to avoid tiring out quickly is to take frequent rest stops and drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids. Water and fruit juices are ideal. If a person rests for ten minutes every hour, they can remain active for 8-10 hours before needing to stop and rest for at least 2-4 hours. Pushing oneself will eventually cause the character to drop to the ground, physically exhausted (half speed, attacks per melee round, skill performance and combat bonuses). **Note:** Only desert folk who have lived in

the Wastelands all their lives are better acclimated to the environment and can remain active for twice as long with half-the rest time.

Wearing Heavy Armor

Besides forcing characters to drink lots of water and seek the shade, the hot, dry climate of the Baalgor Wastelands also makes it rather uncomfortable for anybody to wear heavy armor there. Anyone wearing non-magical armor weighing 50 pounds (22.6 kg; add 20 pounds/9 kg for giant-sized armor) or more suffers the penalties listed on page 270 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG** under "armor restrictions." Men of Arms will have their movement halved, and penalties of -2 to parry and dodge. Non-Men of Arms will have their penalties doubled! This means that movement is only 25% regular and the character is -4 to parry and dodge. In addition, the character will have to take frequent, short rests due to fatigue. (See the previous section for notes on this.) **Note:** Heavy armor in the desert also doubles the rate at which one sinks into deep, soft sand.



Travelling Over Desert Terrain

The Speed attribute of humanoid characters and animals typically measures how fast they can run in a full-out sprint. Running full-tilt like this is very tiring and can only be performed for a few minutes (generally, one minute for every point of P.E. unless otherwise noted). When walking or riding an animal for long distances, characters will move at much slower speeds.

Moreover, the type of terrain they are moving over also has a serious impact on how far and how fast one can move. Walking or riding on a flat, smooth surface like a paved road or grassy plain is one thing. Walking or riding on uneven, unstable, or vegetation-covered terrain is something else entirely.

In general, the Baalgor Wastelands doesn't have any terrain that is good to walk or ride on, so going anywhere in this region probably will take longer than the characters are used to. Given the extra amounts of water one must carry to drink while traveling the Wastelands, as well as the greater likelihood of hostile random encounters, and bad weather, any extra time spent out in the wild puts the adventurers at added risk. G.M.s, try to keep this in mind when your players are travelling great distances across the Baalgor Wastelands. This isn't like a long stroll in the park. This is traveling through a hostile environment, and you should consider making it so that any sensible player will think twice before attempting a long overland journey within this region. 'Nuff said!

The following are some guidelines for travel rates and restrictions for each of the main areas of the Baalgor Wastelands: The Rocky Coastline, the Stony Desert, the Sandy Desert, the Rocky Desert and the Baalgor Mountains.

Rocky Coastline

Traveling on foot: The expanses of cracked, uneven, and slippery rock hinder most overland travel along the coast. The fastest rate of travel here is about four miles (6.4 km) an hour. Traveling at a leisurely pace will cover one and a half miles (2.4 km) per hour.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 15% to 25% for most humanoids, 40% for humanoids under four feet (1.2 m) tall, and 5% for giants over 15 feet (4.6 m) tall.

Traveling on horseback: The top speed here is about 20 miles (32 km) an hour at full gallop, but there is a 30% chance of stumbling, throwing a shoe or other injury. 15 miles (24 km) an hour is a brisk but safe pace. A leisurely pace would be only 10 miles (16 km) an hour, or slower.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 25% for most horses and riding animals.

Traveling on Silonar, camel, or other desert animal: These creatures are more suited for the dry desert regions, not the wetter, grassy coastal area. The rates and restrictions of travel for desert animals in this area are the same as for hoofed animals. The Speed Modifiers are also the same.

Stony Desert

Traveling on foot: This terrain is made difficult by the blanket of small to medium-sized stones covering the surface everywhere. This gravel covering makes it difficult to get good traction or to maintain one's balance. Characters can maintain a maximum walking speed of 6 miles (9.6 km) per hour, but this is fairly dangerous. For each hour of travel at this speed, characters have a 01-30% chance of slipping and falling (1D4 damage) and/or twisting or spraining their ankle (2D4 damage and reduce speed by 20%). Approximately three, possibly four miles (4.8 to 6.4 km) per hour at a brisk pace, or one or two miles (1.6 to 3.2 km) at a leisurely pace and no risk of stumbling and hurting oneself.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 20%-30% for most humanoids, 40%-50% for humanoids under four feet (1.2 m) tall, and 10%-20% for giants over 15 feet (4.6 m) tall.

Traveling on horseback: The stony ground cover of this land makes it especially hazardous for hooved or long-legged animals of any kind. Riding at a full gallop on such terrain is impossible, since the animal will certainly fall and break a leg or get seriously injured/killed after only 1D6 minutes of moving at full speed. Maximum rate of sustained travel is 12 miles (19.3 km) per hour, but this is almost certain (75%) to result in the animal stumbling, falling and coming up lame, and/or throwing the rider after an hour of riding at such a pace. The fastest safe pace is 6 miles (9.6 km) an hour.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 50%-70% for most horses and riding animals.

Traveling on Silonar, camel, or other desert animal: Most desert animals do not have the trouble navigating this land that horses tend to have. Desert animals can run at 12 miles (19.3 km) per hour, and only have a 01-10% chance of falling or hurting themselves for each hour of travel. The fastest speed without fear of stumbling is 9 miles (14.5 km) per hour. A leisurely pace would be 5 miles (8 km) per hour.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 20% for most desert animals.

Sandy Desert

Traveling on foot: The deep, relatively soft sand of this area makes it difficult for travelers to get any sort of traction; this is especially true of hooved animals. The maximum walking speed for humanoids is 3-5 miles (4.8 km) an hour at a brisk pace, with a 5-10 minute rest necessary every hour. Travelers can cover two miles (3.2 km) an hour at a more leisurely pace, and only have to stop for a 5-10 minute rest break every four hours.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum running speed is reduced by 30% for most humanoids, 50% for humanoids under four feet (1.2 m) tall, and 10% for giants over 15 feet (4.6 m) tall.

Traveling on horseback: Approximately 24 miles (38.4 km) an hour at full gallop but there's a 01-15% chance of the horse stumbling or falling without injuring itself (loses initiative, 1D4 meleé actions getting up, and must start running again, plus the animal is likely to throw its rider when falling). 18 miles (28.8 km) an hour at a brisk but reasonable pace; 10 miles (16 km) an hour at a leisurely pace.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 20% for most horses, mules and other hooved riding animals.

Traveling on Silonar, camel, or other desert animal: 36 miles (57.6 km) an hour at full run, but this pace is extremely punishing for the animals, and it will kill them after an hour. A brisk but reasonable pace is 24 miles (38.6 km) an hour. A leisurely pace is 16 miles (25.7 km) and hour.

Speed Modifiers: None. These creatures are truly in their element, here in the Sandy Desert.

Rocky Desert & the Baalgor Mountains

Traveling on foot: The rate of travel for this area is very slow in the Rocky Desert, because of the thick fields of sharp, jagged, uneven rocks covering the ground, and broken by giant boulders, buttes and rocky outcroppings. Shallow canyons, buttes and narrow, winding passageways, hills, cliffs and ledges to are commonplace as one nears the Baalgor Mountains. Navigating the barren mountains is even more treacherous. Occasionally, there is a spot where moving about is both easy and safe, but for

the most part, travelers are forced to balance on the edges of sharp stones or wedge their feet in uncomfortably narrow crevices just to get a foothold, much less move around quickly and comfortably. Furthermore, there are places where pillars of granite rise up from the ground to create hiding places for predatory animals and bandits waiting in ambush. Maximum rate of travel here is just one or two miles (1.6 to 3.2 km) an hour, with rests required every two hours or so. At a more leisurely pace, characters might cover less than a mile per hour.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 50%-60% for most humanoids, 60%-80% for humanoids under four feet (1.2 m) tall, and 30%-50% for giants over 15 feet (4.6 m) tall.

Traveling on horseback: Horses and other such riding animals will prefer to avoid the Rocky Desert and Baalgor Mountains due to the extremely unstable, rocky, and/or treacherous terrain. Riding through this area is slow and exhausting for long-legged animals. 5-7 miles (8-11.2 km) per hour is astounding, but 1-3 miles (1.6-4.8 km) an hour is much more realistic. Unless travelling a worn, relatively clear path (roughly equal to traveling a stony desert), these are dangerous places for an animal so large and heavy, with a chance of the horse getting stuck in a narrow rocky passageway, slipping and falling off a precipice, or slipping on the steep, rocky ground and breaking a leg. The chance for such a calamity is 01-20%; roll for every half-hour of travel; 01-50% chance every 10 minutes if a fast pace is forced. Sometimes the rider must get off his mount and lead it by the reins, walking.

Speed Modifiers: Maximum speed is reduced by 75% for most horses and riding animals. Note: Some areas of the Rocky Desert and Baalgor Mountains are too steep, narrow or treacherous for riding animals.

Traveling on Silonar, camel, or other desert animal: The travel rates and regulations for desert animals are the same as for horses and other long-legged riding animals. These creatures are not used to this kind of environment, and they will be rather reluctant to enter it.

Speed Modifiers: The Silonar is -50%, while gryphons, the sphinx and other feline animals are -20%.

Some Notes Concerning Riding Animals

Horses. The kind of food fed to a horse also makes a difference in the rate of travel. Contrary to what many gamers may think, a horse is *not* a lawn mower with legs. A horse can eat grass, weeds and other vegetation, but it takes a much longer time for it to digest such foods and therefore, the horse can not function at full capacity. A horse on a varied diet of oats, grass and hay will move 10% slower. A horse on a steady diet of grass and/or hay will run a full 25% slower because such food just is not as nutritional or filling. It would be like you or I living just on bread and water; it would keep us alive, but with very little energy. On the other hand, a diet of oats, barley and other grains, though more expensive, will help keep the animal healthy and operating at top efficiency. Grooming and proper watering are also important for the horse or pony's well-being. (Note: The term "pony" refers to an Appaloosa-type pony, not a child's miniature riding animal).

Draybacks are the ultimate desert pack animal. Although slow and dim-witted, a Drayback's ability to work tirelessly for long hours with little to no food or water makes them ideal for the rigorous demands of the Baalgor Wastelands. Draybacks will eat almost anything, from scrubby grasses to small animals. Native wastelanders often feed them a mixture of chsuba roots and dried game animals. Draybacks also require little to no grooming, and they only need to rest for 4-5 hours a day. However, if a Drayback's rider subjects his steed to extended (several weeks) periods of thirst, the animal will eventually seek out water on it's own. Since Draybacks can smell water (including chsuba roots) from a mile (1.6 km) away, this can lead to the creature deviating from the path desired by its riders, regardless of prodding to the contrary, or to the animal wandering off on its own to find water (most will return after getting their fill). Given the slow speed at which a Drayback moves, this can cause a considerable delay.

Silonars are the only commonly used carnivorous steeds in the Baalgor Wastelands, but their all-meat diet makes them problematic. Whereas other animals might be able to graze (slim pickings in this part of the world), Silonars must eat at least one quarter their body weight in meat every 3-5 days. In the wild, Silonars often prey on Draybacks, camels, lizards, snakes, rabbits, rodents and even horses, livestock, and lone humanoids. As a riding animal, a Silonar's keeper must keep his animal well-fed. Failure to do so will decrease the animal's performance (it will run 25% slower and be at -3 to strike, parry and dodge until it is fully fed). Worse, it makes them more irritable, aggressive, and uncontrollable than usual.

After going three days without food, a Silonar's rider will receive a -10% modifier, and will lose all bonuses to his Horsemanship: Exotic abilities as they pertain to the Silonar at hand. For each subsequent day the Silonar goes hungry, an additional -10% modifier applies to the rider's Horsemanship: Exotic skill. After seven days of fasting, Silonars become extremely unpredictable and uncontrollable, with a 01-75% chance of breaking free to seek out any kind of food, sometimes starting with its rider! For each subsequent day beyond this point, the Silonar is likely to go into a "hunger frenzy." The likelihood increases 10% with each passing day. After 14-17 days of hunger, the animal is likely to attack just about anything, including an armed camp, grabbing either the closest or most vulnerable looking victim. A pack of hunger crazed wild animals (thankfully a rare occurrence) will dare to invade a caravan or even a town in an attempt to find food, and will fight till slain or until they can flee with prey clutched between their teeth. Under such conditions, the rest of the pack may resort to cannibalism, tearing apart slain or seriously injured members of their own party. A horrific sight to be sure.

Some Eandroth and members of the monster races feed their dumb and vicious Silonar mounts enemies slain in combat; sometimes even killing captives and slaves to feed their animals. While this can be an effective (and arguably inexpensive) food source, Silonars fed humanoids on a regular basis will develop a taste for them and can become "man-eaters" when let loose or escape their master. **Note:** A Silonar can survive without food, at a diminished capacity, for up to 45 days (Hit Points, speed, attacks per melee, damage and combat bonuses are all reduced by half; S.D.C. is completely gone as the creature is dying from starvation).



Rock Buzzers are like Silonars in that they eat mostly meat and that they become uncontrollable if they aren't fed regularly. Unlike a Silonar, which will continue to run and fight at reduced efficiency for a while before it freaks out or dies of hunger, Rock Buzzers will simply find their own food the moment they become hungry. This is not a good thing if one is on their back at the time, especially if trying to flee an area. Rock buzzers only require 15% of their body weight in meat every three days, and considering their low overall weight, it's not hard to keep these guys well fed. However, since they will literally fly off in search of food the moment they feel hungry, many riders overfeed their mounts to play it safe. There is a risk to this, too, because Rock Buzzers are too stupid not to overeat, so they will devour whatever is fed to them. If a Rock Buzzer eats more than 33% its body weight within a 24-hour period, it becomes sluggish and uncooperative and may fall ill. Sick Rock Buzzers fly at 50% their normal speed, lose all bonuses, and can only fly for an hour or two before tiring and needing three to four hour's rest — they like to sleep and lay around for $36+2D6$ hours after gorging. Extend this period by $8+2D6$ hours for every 10% above 33% of their body weight. These gluttonous animals can devour as much as their body weight at a single sitting if allowed to.



Travel by Wagon or Coach

Wagons and coaches are generally limited to smooth, flat terrain, such as grasslands, lowlands, trails and roads. Speed is limited by the weight and number of horses drawing the vehicle. As a rule of thumb, it is safe to assume that a single animal pulling a wagon will travel 50%-80% slower than when carrying a single rider on its back. A team of animals pulling the same wagon share the weight and can move faster, but will still be 10%-30% slower than travelling by horseback. Furthermore, the other members of the team can only go as fast as the slowest horse on the team, as well as being restrained by the weight of their load. Pulling a wagon at full speed may also cause the wagon to tip over and break (01-42% chance).

Certain environments in the Baalgor Wastelands, such as the Baalgor Mountains, and the Sandy Desert (under certain conditions) are impassable to wagons and coaches. The wagon simply can not function in such an environment and will seriously break or get stuck within 1D4 minutes of trying. The dried-out river beds that crisscross the Baalgor Wastelands actually provide the perfect terrain for wagons and coaches, very similar in effect to paved roads. However, taking a wagon or coach into a river channel is to flirt with death, since a flash flood could wash away any vehicles before their user could possibly hoist them up and out of danger from the surging waters (unless, of course, the wagon driver was a mage or psionic who could levitate objects). Likewise, riding along cracked and dry earth or stony desert is doable, but consists of constantly bouncing and wobbling, making the ride incredibly uncomfortable. In addition, the odds of breaking a wheel, getting stuck or having an animal come up lame are greatly increased. The usual limits apply when traversing such inhospitable terrain.

Note: In all cases, riding across the dry blistered earth of the Baalgor Wastelands will always create a cloud of dust, even when traveling at relatively slow speeds. Anything more than a walking pace will raise dust clouds, and running even at half speed will send them billowing in the air and visible for at least two miles (3.2 km).

Methods of Magic Travel

Of course, in a world of magic there are always alternatives to conventional means of travel. Magic spells such as Fly as the

Eagle, Magic Portal, Teleport and others, enable practitioners of magic to travel from one place to the other via magic spells, circles, scrolls or other magic items. These modes of transportation are comparatively uncommon and not typically available to the average person. Likewise, there are psionic powers that can help one survive and overcome the Wastelands.

Flying: Riding on top of a flying animal, like a Pegasus, Gryphon, or Rock Buzzer, or flying by means of a spell or magical enchantment (flying carpet, etc.), can be one of the best ways to travel across the harsh environment that is the Baalgor Wastelands. It is fast, easy, and low-maintenance, but comes with its own set of problems and concerns. One is expense. Unless a character is a practitioner of magic himself, getting even limited magical flight can be expensive. Even spell casters must be careful not to expend so much P.P.E. on flying as to be ineffective or helpless in case of trouble later. Another is the fact that a large flying humanoid can be seen coming from a great distance (at least a mile or two) unless concealed by cloud cover (rare in the desert) or flying low to the ground. Reckless flying can also claim many lives, especially those who are enjoying the power of flight for the first time and either can not control their movement or can not control their urges to "hot rod." Mid-air collisions and crash-landings can be fatal. So can attacks by airborne predators, such as Perytons and dragons, among others (not to mention bandits and hostile natives wielding spears, bows and arrows or magic).

Atmospheric conditions, like fog, smoke, dust storms, and cloudy or stormy weather, can impede flying and make it dangerous (try staying aloft when you're getting hit by lightning bolts from every direction, or to see where one is going while blinded by clouds of pelting sand). Likewise, flying low to the ground may require the flier to slow down in order to weave in and around canyons, rock formations, buttes and such, especially in the rocky desert and mountain regions. Coastal storms, sandstorms, tornados, strong winds and blistering heat can all ground fliers. Plus, the air over the Wastelands gets really hot, so one can not escape the oppressive heat even when flying with a breeze in his face. The wind may feel comforting, but the heat and burning rays of the sun are still pounding down from on high, causing dehydration, fatigue, and so on. In fact, flying higher than 400 or 500 feet (122 to 152 m) becomes unbearable, with temperatures as high as 130 degrees Fahrenheit (54.4 C)!

Furthermore, flying over the Baalgor Wastelands does not mean one avoids the perils of the inhabitants of this hostile land. Flying at any altitude makes the flyer vulnerable to sharp-eyed aerial predators like hungry Rock Buzzers, Perytons, Yema, and even dragons. Flying low to the ground makes the flyer a target of monsters, humanoid bandits and hostile tribes of monster races (goblins, orcs, ogres, trolls, etc.). Volleys of slung rocks, arrows, javelins and spears fired from marauders on the ground can easily injure or bring down fliers. Anybody who looks like they're flying by magical means is always a juicy target for bandits and marauders.

Navigating from the air is more difficult than most people imagine, too. Ground dwelling creatures like humans are not accustomed to an aerial perspective or finding their bearings from up high. As a result, they are easily disoriented when flying in the air. One tends to lose their sense of time, speed of travel, direction and distance, especially when flying high, up in the

clouds. This is even worse for underground beings like Dwarves, Kobolds and Goblins who often get "air sick" (i.e. feel a bit frightened, nauseous and dizzy, and may need to stop periodically to vomit) when flying. As a result, Land Navigation and any other navigation skills, while flying, are -20% during the day and -30% at night (-25% and 30% for subterranean folk). Reduce the penalty to only -10% if flying low to the ground (50 feet/15 m or lower).

One of the most common problems among flyers is that they often assume because they are "flying over" the Wastelands they don't need to bring as many provisions with them. Hey, why load yourself with all that water when you can fly back to town and get some more tomorrow, right? Most do not realize they suffer the effects of the heat (and wind) to the same degree as those on the land and need water to keep cool and hydrated — there is no shade in the sky. Furthermore, more than one adventurer following such shallow wisdom has perished when conditions did not permit him to fly back to where extra provisions could be had. Or when heat exhaustion made it impossible to fly or, in some cases, even cast spells!

The wisdom behind all this is, just because flying is faster and seemingly more efficient, it doesn't make traveling in the Baalgor Wastelands any less hazardous.

Bad Weather

Outdoor adventuring just isn't complete without bad weather. And in the Baalgor Wastelands, the weather is as harsh as the coldest Northern winters or the wettest Yin-Sloth summers. Here, the murderous heat, dryness, lack of surface water and shade, strong winds and storm activity kill more adventurers than the blade of a marauder's sword. Skills such as Wilderness Survival and Land Navigation are absolutely essential for players to survive travelling in the open. Without the latter, travelers will easily become lost, travel in circles and/or head in the wrong direction.

Dust Storms occur in the stony and rocky deserts, and throughout the region wherever parched earth is found. They are typically the result of strong winds (20 mph/32 km or higher). While they occur more frequently than Sand Storms (once every 1D4 days), they are much less harmful; more of a nuisance than deadly.

Penalties: Travelers caught in a dust storm will have their visibility reduced to about a quarter of a mile (1200 feet/610 m), their movement/speed is reduced by 30%, the Land Navigation skill is reduced by half, Tracking is impossible, sense of direction may be affected, sound is obscured by the wind and blowing dust (shouting range is about 100 feet/30.5 m), and the eyes, nose and mouth must be shielded/covered, otherwise the blowing dust and grit will get in them and blind the eyes (takes one minute to rinse or rub them clear) and cause those who gulp a handful of dust when trying to speak with an uncovered mouth, to cough and gag (lose one melee action). The mouth can be covered with a cloth or the hands, the eyes protected with the hands or brimmed hat.

Sand Storms. These are the classic desert maelstroms with high, sustained winds that can move an incredible amount of sand, or dust, pebbles and debris in a short period of time. Sand storms happen everywhere in the Baalgor Wastelands; any

given area here can expect a serious sand storm (lasting 3D6x10 minutes, sometimes twice as long) at least once every 10 days. Under most circumstances, sand storms blind whoever walks through them, obscure paths, trails and landmarks and even harm exposed flesh with the pelting sand. **Penalties:** Travelers caught in a sand storm will have their visibility cut down to a minuscule 1D4 yards/meters, their movement is reduced by 70%, the Land Navigation and Tracking skills are rendered absolutely useless, sense of direction is lost, sound is obscured by the wind and clatter of the sand (shouting range is about 10 feet/3 m), and the eyes, nose and mouth must be covered, otherwise the blowing sand and grit will get in them and blind the eyes (takes 1D4 minutes to rinse them clear with water and recover one's vision) and choke those breathing the stuff (causes coughing and gagging).

Furthermore, the pelting sand and debris stings, especially against unprotected flesh, inflicting one point of S.D.C. damage per 10 minutes until they reach shelter — shelter can be a tent, wagon, crate, boulder, or village hut to covering oneself with extra clothing or a blanket, protecting one's head and face and hiding behind his riding animal or curling up like a ball (moving from time to time to avoid getting buried if the sand begins to blow and drift too deep).

In the sandy desert region, sand storms are especially lethal. Here, the average storm lasts for 5D6x10 minutes. Anyone caught in one of these has their visibility reduced to zero (can barely see their hand in front of their face), their movement is slowed by 95%, and they will take 1D4 damage from the flying sand particles and scathing winds per ten minutes until shelter is



found or made. However, a "soft" shelter, like a tent, will suffer double damage throughout the storm, which means that most tents and other light shelters will be ripped apart and destroyed in long storms. Under such conditions, the only real refuge is among a rocky enclosure/outcropping, cave, wood or stone structure or underground. Penalties: Same as above.

And if that weren't enough, sand storms in the sandy desert also move tremendous volumes of sand. Any given spot affected by a sand storm will gain or lose (50%/50% chance) 1D6 feet (0.3 to 1.8 m) of sand every 10 minutes! This means that in the course of a storm, an area can be entirely buried or completely uncovered. Characters caught in such storms must take this into account, or risk being buried alive by the storm's end! This also means paths, trails, roads and prominent landmarks *may* be obliterated, covered by drifting sand, at least until the next storm. One more reason traveling through these parts of the Wastelands is so difficult. It is hard to locate a place or even retrace one's path when the landscape keeps changing every few weeks.

Blister Winds. This phenomenon is exclusive to the Baalgor Wastelands. Coastal winds blow hot air across the region, where the constant sun and aridity keeps the air from cooling down. The air currents hit the incredibly tall Baalgor Mountains and cycle back to the interior of the region where the same forces that heated them up before continue to heat them up further. This process continues recycling and recycling this air until it forms an ultra-mild tornado of superheated air. These tornadoes, or "Blister Winds," do not have the swirling wind velocity to really move things around like a genuine tornado, and don't even qualify as a violent sand storm; fundamentally the same as a dust storm. However, they do contain blast furnace hot air that will seriously burn whoever comes into contact with it.

A dust storm characterized by hot wind blows around the swirling core of the Blister Wind funnel and extends around in a half to one mile (0.8 to 1.6 km) radius around it. The superheated core of the average Blister Wind is 10 feet (3 m) in diameter, travels across the ground at a Speed of 44 (30 mph/48 km), and lasts for 3D4 minutes. Characters can often outrun or outmaneuver them if they are fast enough, but Blister Winds are notorious for traveling in erratic paths, and sudden changes of direction, and can easily head off fleeing travelers and cook them anyway. Any character caught directly in the path of a Blister Wind can try to dodge the oncoming tornado, but they must roll a natural 16 or higher. A successful dodge means the character takes only one quarter the normal damage from the heated air, as described below.

Anyone caught in the path of a blister wind will immediately suffer 2D8 points of damage directly to Hit Points! Moreover, any paper items on the character have a 01-65% chance of igniting, and metal items on the character will become too hot to touch for 1D6 minutes afterward. Touching a superheated metal item will result in a burn for 1D4 points of damage. Characters in superheated metal armor will take 1D6 points of damage per melee round (every 15 seconds) until their armor is removed or is somehow cooled off. Dowsing superheated armor with water will cool the armor off, but the initial cloud of steam will still cause 1D6 points of damage to the character wearing it. Likewise, the metal components of riding gear (bridles, bits, etc.) will cause animals to buck and run wildly in response to the metal burning into their hides.

But perhaps the most insidious effect of a Blister Wind is the incredible dehydration it causes. Anyone hit by one immediately suffers from serious dehydration, equal to having been without water for 36 hours. Unless he or she consumes at least one or two quarts of water, any movement or fighting will be severely curtailed. (See notes concerning heat exhaustion).

Blister Winds and Demon Storms are the two most feared weather aberrations in the Baalgor Wastelands, and even hardy natives such as Eandroth and Gromek know that these things are killers. Any given spot in the rocky, stony and sandy desert regions will experience a Blister Wind on average of once a month. The rocky coastline and Baalgor Mountain areas do not experience such storms.

Demon Storms. This is another strange phenomenon believed to occur only in the Baalgor Wastelands and perhaps the Land of the Damned. This is an unnatural storm signalled by dark skies, often of a strange, ominous color (dark green, purple, red, etc.). While there may be wind and the occasional flash of heat lightning in the sky, they are not overtly threatening. However, when it "rains" it is always something strange that falls from the skies — typically pebbles, tiny mud balls, tiny fish, frogs or toads (such animals die in a matter of minutes) or hail the size of marbles. The latter can be a godsend to those suffering from thirst because the hail can be scooped up in pails, buckets, hats, water skins and hands and drunken as soon as it melts, which in the Baalgor heat is usually about five minutes. Unfortunately, the hail will damage tents (2D6 S.D.C.) and cause 1D4 damage to everything and everybody caught in the storm. While the menacing dark skies may last as long as four hours (roll 1D4), the actual "shower" only lasts 3D6 minutes.

Demons: The storm gets its name from the fact that demons also appear in the storm. Roll percentile: 01-60% means 1D6+1 lesser demons or sub-demons appear, 61-95 means 1D4 lesser Deevils, and 96-00 means one or two greater demons or Deevils appear! These can be impish, mischievous beings or murderous cretins bent on inflicting pain and suffering to mortals. Whether the fiends will attack, pester or threaten Wasteland travelers depends on their mood (i.e. the G.M.).

According to legend, the Demon Storms are an after-effect of the Elf-Dwarf War and one of the ways these foul monsters gain entry into the Palladium World. Thankfully, a Demon Storm happens only 1D4 times a year; typically only once or twice.

Night Freezes. With no cloud cover to contain the region's warmth from the day, the Baalgor Wastelands get very chilly after dark. The average temperature drops to 40 or 50 degrees Fahrenheit (4-10 C), which is uncomfortable, but not especially dangerous. Sporadic, unpredictable "night freezes" occur, however, when the after-dark temperature plummets to as low as 10 or 20 degrees Fahrenheit (-12 to -7 C) for the night. Water will freeze and exposed people and animals will suffer from this kind of cold. Unless covered with appropriate clothing or blankets, characters will take 1D6 points of damage per hour until they find a source of warmth or until the sun comes up.

Thunder Storms. The last weather hazard most people think about in the Baalgor Wastelands is torrents of rain. However, intense rain storms can and do happen here, and because of this region's hot and dry weather, these rainfalls are very dangerous and damaging. Baalgor thunder storms fall into two basic categories: coastal storms and interior storms.

Coastal Storms brew over the Sea of Scarlet Waters, like the intense maelstroms that affect the European North Atlantic, or form the Nor'easters that pound the northeastern U.S. coastline. These storms gather strength over the water, then head straight inland, where the rocky coastline comes right up to the sea. Usually, these storms crash head-on into the coastal areas, then roll either north or south until they blow themselves out, or until they return back to the sea. The hurricane-force winds of these storms wreak havoc on most of the coastal settlements, none of which are really built to withstand that kind of punishment. Moreover, the storm surge (a 20 foot/6 m tidal wave) caused by these storms often dashes ships against the stone cliffs, which accounts for the unusually high number of shipwrecks in the area. Baalgor Coastal storms happen about once a year, but every 10 or 15 years, an unusually strong storm season pops up, and 1D6+1 coastal storms will lash the coastline over a period of three months. During such times, one of those storms often will hit the coast and roll away to the sea but not really lose any power. These storms will double in size and strength and hit the coast again as a super-storm. These fearsome maelstroms will destroy all but the hardest communities and ships. Local legend has it that every 100 years, a super-super storm brews, and actually will destroy part of the rocky cliffs as it breaks upon the coastline. So far, no scholar or historian has verified the occurrence of such an incredible storm. But with such severe weather here, many believe such storms could happen.

Interior Storms are like "normal" thunderstorms throughout the rest of the Palladium world, except they tend to rain a little harder, last a little longer, and have about double the amount of lightning. Anybody hit by lightning in one of these storms takes 8D6 damage, but there is only a 10% chance of this happening, unless the character is wearing a full suit of metal armor, in which case the chance of a lightning strike while out in the open increases to 25%.

The real problem with interior storms is that they dump 2D6 inches of water upon the desert. While this might seem like a good thing, the earth here is too rocky, hard and baked dry to absorb any of this water, so flash floods usually occur as it rushes toward the rocky coastline and pitches over into the sea.

Thankfully, this flooding happens often enough that "river channels" 3D6 feet deep have been eroded into the earth in many places, so the flooding is somewhat contained. However, during a flash flood, these dry channels instantly fill with 3D6 feet of fast-moving water (Speed of 25) that will likely drown or wash away anybody caught in the wave. Characters with the Swimming skill can try to stay and navigate the rush of water, but their skill rolls will be reduced by 25%. Those who fail three consecutive Swimming rolls when caught in a flash flood will drown. And those who do make their rolls, can only stay in the rushing water for a number of minutes equal to their P.E. before they tire and drown, too. Those who manage to survive in a flash flood long enough to make it to the waterfalls of the rocky coastline will have a very long and painful fall to the ocean. The average plummet is 40 feet (12 m), inflicting a total of 6D6 damage (1D6 for every 10 feet, and an additional 2D6 damage from the sharp rocks the characters will fall on). One would think that as dangerous as these channels are, nobody would travel in them. However, they often are the only places in the desert where one can find a smooth path to travel, shade from the walls of the channel, and sometimes puddles of water. Indeed, the Baalgor flood channels even serve as a kind of network of natural roadways for Wastelanders, but one should take caution when traveling in these; a flash flood will occur with only one melee round of warning (a roaring sound and rumbling of the ground), so unless travelers have some other means of advance notice or instant means of exiting the trench, they will get caught. That having been said, thunderstorms are so comparatively rare (1-4 annually) that these channels are in constant use, which also makes them the most trafficked places in the Wastelands and attractive to bandits, raiders and brigands of all kind.

Tornadoes: Baalgor Tornadoes are rarely accompanied by rain, other than a sprinkle or mist, and rarely darken the sky, so these twisters can appear suddenly, without warning. A tornado kicks up a dust cloud and causes a dust storm 1D4 minutes before the devastating funnel cloud actually strikes. To make playing easy, consider the tornado to be the equivalent of a 6+1D4 level Tornado elemental spell.



Part Two: the People

Races & Monsters of the Baalgor Wastelands

From the Journals of Rystrom Khejas:

"If I had to name one thing that truly separates the Baalgor Wastelands from the rest of the world, I would have to say it was its people. Nowhere else will you find so many odd and amazing folk as you will in this scorched land of rubble and ruin. the only other places in the world with such a wide variety of exotic and bizarre creatures, I think, are the Yin-Sloth Jungles and the Land of the Damned.

"Scholars such as myself have spent their careers speculating how and why the Baalgor Wastelands have become such a menagerie of unique people, monsters and animals. Some blame inter-dimensional portals. Some blame the Elf-Dwarf War. Some blame the exotic environment. I say it is all three.

"Remember, the Baalgor region was once a lush rainforest, filled with endless varieties of flora and fauna. Although those magnificent forests are gone forever, I believe that at least a few of the forest animals adapted to desert life and survived. the Drayback is a fine example. Clearly descended from some kind of massive jungle lizard, its tough hide and ability to smell water make it a natural survivor in the deepest deserts.

"During the Elf-Dwarf War, both sides resorted to recruiting allies from other worlds and dimensions. While it is believed that the Dwarves began this practice, the Elves readily followed suit. Most of the alien races brought to this world perished during the war, but a few, such as the Gromek, the Quorians and the Gosai live on. Indeed, the Gromek rule a considerable portion of the Baalgor Mountains, challenging the giants there for supremacy. the Gosai and Quorians both make the Wastelands their home. Indeed, they would thrive there if only they could stop fighting each other.

"the Baalgor Wastelands also experience randomly appearing tears in reality. Dimension-spanning doorways to other worlds thought to be an after-effect of the Elf-Dwarf War. Whether these are summoning devices gone awry, genuine rips in the fabric of reality caused by the Big Thunder (and other foul magicks used during the Great War), or naturally occurring phenomena is unknown. What is known is that they appear sporadically throughout the Wastelands. Some times they are just quiet portals to another time or place, but other times they admit demons or strange and incomprehensible beings into our world. the sinister thin Ones are one such race, as are the enigmatic Vrill, whose lack of memory stymies even their own efforts to determine where they came from.

"Regardless of the reasons, the Baalgor Wastelands are both a biologist's paradise, and a cataloger's nightmare. Just when you think you have seen all the creatures this land has to offer, you find a new one. Granted, there is comparatively little life still in the Wastelands — the Elf-Dwarf War's devastation and the hostile climate have seen to that — but the desert is alive, one just needs to know where to look. And the things that do live there, rivals even the richest of environments in uniqueness.

"Now, if you will excuse me, I must book passage with a wagon train that I understand is heading for Quorian territory. I am simply dying to meet one of them."

Races, Monsters & Animals of the Baalgor Wastelands

Baalizad (New!)
Cyclops Spider (New!)
Dragonmen
Drayback (New!)
Eandroth
Earthshaker (New!)
Giants
Cyclops
Gigantes
Jotan
Nimro
Titan
Gosai (New!)
Gromek
Lazretheg (New!)
Minotaur
Mologoth (New!)
Quillback (New!)
Quorian (New!)
Rockbuzzer (New!)
Sandwurm (New!)
Sloderi (New!)
the thin Ones (New!)
Vrill (New!)



Baalizad

Baalizad are one of the more recent additions to the Baalgor Wastelands. A purely subterranean people until a few hundred years ago, these creatures built enormous, ant-like warrens deep underground. Baalizad elders claim that their people have, for the last 10,000 years, been fleeing the advance of some menace known only as the "Demons of the Deep." Long after the dust from the Elf-Dwarf War settled, the first Baalizad broke through to the surface. Since then, they have come to realize that they have nowhere else to run from the "Demons of the Deep," and that if they are to survive, they must form alliances with the many surface-dwellers. Given the Baalizad's monstrous appearance and alien demeanor, making friends hasn't been easy. Most humans (especially the pirates, slavers and ignorant colonists living along the Baalgor coastline) will attack these creatures on sight out of fear alone. Evildoers, slavers, marauders and other bad folk often target them for slaughter in order to get their carapace segments to make super-efficient suits of armor; similar to



what Western slavers have begun to do with Fyr-Kree insectoids in the Yin-Sloth jungles. In actuality, though, Baalizard carapace plates cannot be removed without cracking apart, making them useless as armor. This has caused many Baalizard to perish for nothing. Others are hunted for sport or "monster killing" or enslaved and put to hard labor. Perhaps needless to say, the Baalizard are becoming increasingly fearful, resentful and suspicious of most surface folk.

Baalizard live in warrens, or large, extended family groups. The typical warren is 20-50 strong, with large warrens reaching 250 or 300 individuals. As Baalizard warrens travel through the earth, they collapse the tunnels and chambers they leave behind, forever fearful that whoever (or whatever) might be chasing them might use the tunnels to follow them. It should be noted that nobody, not even modern Baalizard, have ever encountered the mysterious "Demons of the Deep," and many now believe them to be nothing more than a superstition or bizarre creation myth. Young Baalizard, having grown used to the surface world, scoff at their elders who insist that an impending conflict with their ancient demonic enemies is at hand. Whether or not these old stories are true, Elders continue trying to make alliances with surface folk when they can. The Baalgor Wastelands are a dangerous enough place, they reckon. Trying to survive it without any friends is suicide.

One thing in the Baalizard's favor is that they require very little water (only one gallon/4 quarts every 10 days or so) and they can eat any mineral substance for nourishment. They especially love precious stones and consider them a delicacy. But in a pinch, ordinary rock or even soil or sand will do. Baalizard do

not eat tempered metals or alloys, since they consider them spoiled and indigestible. Thus, Baalizard do not go after swords, armor, and many other metal goods adventurers commonly own. It has been said, however, that certain Earth Warlocks have curried Baalizard favor by converting dirt and clay into rock, thereby providing the under-dwellers with a magically created banquet.

Little else is known about these creatures, except that a single Baalizard will occasionally leave its warren to take up with groups of non-Baalizard adventurers. Why these individuals do this is unknown, least of all to the departing Baalizard! Maybe they wish to see the world, or maybe they feel that by travelling, they can find the allies or magic their home warrens need for defense themselves. Whatever their reason, adventuring Baalizard tend to have very difficult times outside of the Baalgor Wastelands, where they are regarded as monsters and treated with fear and suspicion. Uneducated folk often think Baalizard are demons, Deevils, or some other kind of bizarre monster and, thus, an enemy of fair humanoids to be destroyed. These stories are completely unfounded, but that's something the Baalizard must deal with on their own terms.

Intelligent Life Form

Alignment: Any, but tend to be good or selfish.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 5D6, P.P. 2D6, P.E. 5D6, P.B. 2D4, Spd. 2D4 (1D6 digging).

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level.

S.D.C.: 60 plus those acquired from O.C.C. and physical skills.

Natural A.R.: 14

Horror Factor: 12

Average P.P.E.: 3D6

O.C.C.s Available: None, per se. Baalizard have no concept of a division of labor, so all of them work as laborers and soldiers. With the G.M.'s approval, players could play a Baalizard as an R.C.C. Such characters would be the equivalent of a *Vagabond/Peasant Farmer ONLY*. Baalizard player characters can never change O.C.C.s or be something other than a Vagabond/Peasant Farmer. Players, this is just how these creatures are, so do not give your G.M. a hard time about this! Just think of it as a new role-playing opportunity.

Natural Abilities: In addition to being able to see in total darkness up to 200 feet (61 m), Baalizard are excellent underground engineers, on par with Kobolds or Dwarves. The style of Baalizard constructions, however, is alien and bizarre, distinctly different from other kinds of subterranean works.

Underground Tunneling: Baalizard can dig and build solid, strong tunnels with no fear of a cave-in, with incredible speed and dexterity. They can also excavate ruins and the sites of cave-ins with the same prowess. In addition, the character can usually tell if an existing tunnel or chamber is a natural formation or whether it was dug by Dwarves, Kobolds, Gnomes, Troglodytes, humans, or other subterranean peoples. The Baalizard can even tell if it is a new, old or ancient structure. **Base Skill:** 40% +5% per level of experience.

Underground Architecture: Baalizard are excellent underground architects able to build small and large rooms, archways and staircases, as well as labyrinths of many tunnels, passageways, mazes and underground traps (often pits and cave-in traps). Likewise, the Baalizard can recognize the styles of other types of underground construction. Those who travel slowly and cautiously, looking for underground traps, can locate, avoid and deactivate them. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience; detection and deactivation of traps has a success ratio of 15% +5% per level.

Underground Sense of Direction: the character has an innate ability to tell direction when underground, even in total darkness (not applicable on the surface). Thus, a Baalizard can tell if it is travelling up, down or level, the approximate angle of decline or ascent, depth beneath the surface, and the approximate direction (north, south, east or west). **Base Skill:** 40% +5% per level of experience.

This skill also enables the creature to judge the approximate location to surface structures (natural and artificial), but *only* if the Baalizard is familiar with the area. The character will also recognize traits and aspects of the underground tunnel or construct that serve as landmarks for him. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience; -25% if in an unfamiliar area.

Attacks Per Melee Round: 2 or by O.C.C. and corresponding skills.

Damage: Baalizard have two different kinds of arm configurations. One type is roughly proportionate with the rest of the body, ending with a clawed, four-fingered hand. Claw attacks with this hand will do 1D8 (or 2D4) S.D.C. plus any P.S. bonuses. The other Baalizard arm configuration is disproportionately large and ends in a big, heavy, crab-like pincer. A swipe with this pincer does 2D6. Anything caught in the crushing grip of the pincer takes 3D6 damage until they break free or are let go.

In addition to claw attacks, Baalizard can breathe forth a stream of superheated plasma from their mouths once per melee round that works like a primitive flame-thrower. This does 3D6 S.D.C. and has a range of 30 feet (9 m). Anything hit by this plasma will continue to burn, doing 3D6 S.D.C. per round for 1D4 melees or until extinguished, whichever comes first. Baalizard can only do this three times a day, but when they do, it counts as an extra melee attack that round.

Bonuses: +1 to pull punch and +2 to save vs magic.

Magic: None. Baalizard generally have had very little exposure to magic, so many of them don't even truly grasp the concept. As a result, these beings generally don't covet magic items or powers.

Psionics: Baalizard can only become minor psychics; roll as normal.

Average Life Span: Baalizard live for about 100 years, although one in every 1,000 lives to over 800 years old. These special Baalizard are considered quasi-immortal by their peers, and often hold positions of great respect and prestige within the community.

Size: 7 feet (2.1 m), 400-500 pounds (180-230 kg).

Habitat: Exclusive to the Baalgor Wastelands. Some believe these creatures live in the Yin-Sloth jungles as well, but such folk are confusing them with the Fyr-Kree insectoids of the Great Fire Bog.

Languages: A clicking, rumbling language unique to the Baalizard. Unless aided by magic, non-Baalizard can *not* speak this language, since they lack the necessary vocal apparatus. If so inclined, however, Baalizard can learn to speak just about any language after being exposed to it for just a few days (languages learned by a Baalizard have a beginning success ratio equal to the base percentage of the Speak Languages skill and improve at a rate of 5% per day up to a maximum of 90%). No matter what they speak, however, they will always have a distinct Baalizard sound to their voice. Psychics can also use telepathy to communicate with these alien beings.

Enemies: None, per se. Baalizard refer to mysterious entities known only as the "Demons of the Deep," as their ancestral enemy. However, no living Baalizard has ever encountered these "demons," leading many to think that perhaps they do not really exist.

Allies: None, per se. Some humans, Eandroth, Gosai and Quorians have reportedly established friendly contact with Baalizard surface rovers, although overcoming the language barrier with these aliens is difficult at first. Baalizard are generally open and accepting of others, provided they are not savage and aggressive. As a result, Baalizard find most of the monster races too war-like and lawless for their taste, leaving humans, Gnomes, Elves, Dwarves, Troglodytes and other races as potential allies.

Physical Appearance: Baalizard are lumbering, hulking humanoids covered in a thick, armor-like, black carapace that makes them look like bizarre knights from another world. They usually have asymmetrical arms — one will be a humanoid arm ending with a clawed, four-fingered hand that can be used for fine manipulation, the other arm is oversized, ending with a big pincer, used for heavy lifting, crushing, and combat. **Note:** Fine manipulation, such as picking locks or operating hand tools, is impossible with this pincer hand. It

can only be used for basic lifting and moving of objects, and for combat. Most Baalizad have one claw-hand arm and one pincer arm (reminiscent of Kappa, although the two species are not related). However, 25% of all Baalizad have two symmetrical arms. Of these, 50% have two claw-hand arms, and 50% have two pincer arms. Although Baalizad society does not have a division of labor in general, those with pincer arms tend to specialize as soldiers while those with two claw-hand arms often are subterranean engineers who oversee construction efforts.



Cyclops Spider

These large, spider-like creatures change color to match their surroundings, but most often appear as a mottled gray. Cyclops spiders are so named because they have a single, glassy eye in the center of their head. Their smallish bodies are supported by eight long, segmented legs. Each leg ends in a pointed, hook-like appendage that is excellent for grasping footholds. They also make excellent weapons, which the creatures often use to kill their prey.

These frightening creatures are descended from Giant Cave Spiders that were mutated by the ancient magicks used to destroy this region at the end of the Elf-Dwarf War. When fighting, they rear back on their four hind legs and attack with their four front legs, snaring prey and rending it to pieces. Cyclops Spiders are stealthy hunters that usually stalk prey during the

night, when their color-changing shells make them especially hard to see. It is rumored that these creatures can see the invisible, but that is unconfirmed. Cyclops spiders are popular guard animals among giants, trolls, ogres and orcs, because of their inherent viciousness. However, these spiders are just as uncontrollable as they are deadly, making them problematic pets or guard animals.

Animal

Alignment: Generally considered an anarchist or miscreant predatory monster.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6 (high animal), M.E. 2D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 2D6+12, P.P. 2D6+12, P.E. 2D6+12, P.B. 1D6, Spd. 2D6+12

Hit Points: P.E. +20

S.D.C.: 20

Natural A.R.: 10

Horror Factor: 13

Average P.P.E.: 1D6

O.C.C.s Available: None, considered an animal.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 60 feet (18.3 m), see the invisible, prowl 75%, leap 10 feet (3 m) high or across, and scale walls 88% and can walk on walls, climb on ceilings and hang upside down. Also, these creatures possess a natural camouflage ability equal to the first level Earth Warlock spell, Chameleon.

Attacks Per Melee Round: 4

Damage: Bite does 2D6 damage, while a leg-hook strike does 2D8+2.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +3 to strike and parry, +4 to dodge and to damage (in addition to any P.S. bonuses).

Magic: None.

Psionics: All Cyclops Spiders have the psychic ability of Sixth Sense, at no I.S.P. cost.

Average Life Span: 10 years.

Size: 5-6 feet long (1.5-1.8 m) and 100-150 pounds (45-70 kg).

Habitat: Found in any rocky place, but mostly in the Baalgor Wastelands, the Old Kingdom Mountains, and the Bruu-ga-Belimar Mountains of the Great Northern Wilderness. It is reported that these creatures also infest certain parts of the mountains bordering the Land of the Damned.

Languages: Cyclops Spiders communicate amongst themselves by emitting specially scented pheromones. Humanoids with acute senses of smell (such as Wolfen) may detect the smell of these pheromones, providing them with advanced warning that Cyclops Spiders are in the vicinity. Projected empathy and telepathy will also work on these creatures, but only crude communication will be possible, such as "Go," "Stay" or "Stop," and so on. However, Cyclops Spiders can not talk back, answer questions or communicate anything other than emotions via empathy.

Enemies: Anything that moves! Cyclops Spiders are absolutely fearless regarding creatures roughly their own size. They do not like attacking creatures larger than themselves, but will do so if incredibly hungry. Cyclops Spiders generally hunt alone, and attack using surprise. They do not like to attack multiple opponents, but will do so in order to kill one quickly and drag it away for consumption. The giant spider's victims often are stashed in a rocky crevice nearby where they can be fed upon over a period of 3-4 days after the kill.

Allies: None; animal.

Physical Appearance: Giant, single-eyed spider.



Dragonmen

Dragonmen are a race of fierce-looking humanoids native to the Baalgor Wastelands. they are demonic in appearance, with numerous horns protruding from their spines, and have long talons. the horns and talons are natural defenses that have evolved for the Dragonmen to survive in their hostile homeland. Humanoid races widely believe these creatures to be brutal fiends because of their hideous countenance. According to popular beliefs, the Dragonmen are the mutant children spawned by a human or an ogre and a Great Horned dragon. Of course, this is impossible, but the legend still persists, especially among the unintelligent or uneducated Dogres, goblins, orcs, peasant farmers and nomads.

Dragonmen have been labeled deadly menaces and systematically enslaved or destroyed for centuries. they are extremely rare and have become valuable commodities at slave markets. More often than not, a captured Dragonman is destined for gladiatorial combat. Based upon their fierce appearance these creatures have become favorites in the arena. the lucky ones, who have proven their loyalty, are sometimes kept as bodyguards. If cared for and well fed, the creatures grudgingly become loyal to their slave masters.

Despite their monstrous appearance, Dragonmen are peaceful and will try to avoid conflict. they have a high regard for life and only want to be left alone. If necessary they will defend themselves, and when provoked, they can be incredibly ruthless and savage.

Dragonmen are omnivorous like humans, but are primarily vegetarians who forage and eat fruits, nuts, roots and bark. they lead a primitive lifestyle with no use for technology or magic. they are a nomadic people who tend to use simple clubs and rocks as weapons and tools. However, they will keep any metal items they find, especially tools and weapons. Despite their natural measures of protection, i.e., horns, fangs, talons and flaming breath, the Dragonmen are not aggressive creatures and are extremely affectionate and loving among their own kind.

Sadly, very few Dragonmen still live in the Baalgor Wastelands; exact numbers unknown. they wander in small, close-knit and loving family clans feeding on the sparse vegetation and wildlife.

In the Baalgor Wastelands, Dragonmen have been decimated by nearly constant attacks by Gromek, Giants, Trolls and Western slavers. Many have left for the Yin-Sloth Jungles, but those that still live in the Wastelands persevere as best they can. Many have retreated to the deepest sandy deserts, where very few of their enemies will follow. In addition, many Dragonmen tribes, too small to fend off attackers by themselves, have begun abandoning their "go-it-alone" ways and have forged loose treaties with large Eandroth clans and caravans. In return for trade and protection, Dragonmen provide manual labor and extra security to the Eandroth. they also trade their services as expert scouts and trackers. Such alliances are easy enough to forge, since the Eandroth have endured many of the same persecution and hardships that have almost destroyed the Dragonmen. In fact, some clans accept the Dragonmen as "blood-brothers" and full members of their tribe or clan.

Most orcs, goblins, and hob-goblins, as well as uneducated humans, either fear these monstrous beings or revere them as regional overlords and sometimes even worship them as gods. Most Dragonmen tend to ignore such bumpkins, exploiting their exalted stature only to avoid conflict and/or to get food and water when in desperate need. Still, some Dragonmen have taken advantage of this perception and have joined (often lead) small bands or tribes of Baalgor goblins, orcs and humans.

In time, perhaps the Baalgor Dragonman population will grow enough to form small villages or towns, but for now, a scattering of tiny tribes, clans and individuals roam the Wastelands, ever alert for danger.

Intelligent Humanoid

Alignment: Any, but tend to be selfish.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+2, M.E. 2D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 4D6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 5D6, P.B. 2D4, Spd. 4D6

Hit Points: P.E. +60, plus 1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 4D6, plus any garnered from skills.

Natural A.R.: 12

Horror Factor: 11

Average P.P.E.: 4D6

O.C.C.s Available: Mercenary, gladiator, soldier, thief, healer and shaman. Also, Dragonmen can opt for the Nomadic Tribesman O.C.C. from the **Yin-Sloth Jungles** sourcebook.

Natural Abilities: Perfect nightvision (500 feet/152 m), poor day vision (100 feet./30.5 m), see the invisible, resistant to fire and heat (half damage), impervious to disease, and breathe flame!

Attacks Per Melee: three or by O.C.C. and combat skills.

Damage: Talons inflict 3D6 damage, head butt with horns 2D6, power head butt with horns 3D6, running charge/ram with horns 5D6 (counts as two melee attacks), bite 1D6 or once per melee fire breath (4D6 damage, 15 ft/4.6 m range).

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +6 to damage, +2 to save vs spell magic, and +3 to save vs Horror Factor. All are in addition to attribute and skill bonuses.

Magic: By O.C.C. only.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 150 years.

Size: 4 to 5 and a half feet (1.2 to 1.7 m) tall, 200-300 lbs.

Habitat: Although Dragonmen originated in the Baalgor Wastelands, comparatively few still live there, since most of them have been killed or driven away. Today, most Dragonmen live in the Yin-Sloth jungles.

Languages: Most speak goblin, ogre, elf, western human and southern human dialects at 80% proficiency. None read or write.

Enemies: None, per se.

Allies: None, per se.

Physical Appearance: Dragonmen are short, bulky humanoids who are slightly simian in appearance. they are covered by thick, scaly gray to gray-green colored skin that feels like cured leather. A ridge of dark gray horns starts above their eyes and ends halfway down their backs. their arms are overly long, extending below their knees, and end in sharp, long talons. the teeth are pointed but not as fang-like as Dogres or Trolls.

Drayback

Draybacks resemble big, slow komodo dragons or monitor lizards, with a purplish tinge to their thick, scaly hides. They have broad, flat heads, and large, glassy eyes with multiple sets of transparent eyelids to blink away sand and grit.

They are very popular in the Baalgor Wastelands as work animals because they can pull heavy loads, have incredible endurance, have no problem surviving in the desert, and are extremely easy to domesticate. Some even use them as riding animals, easily accommodating one lead driver and as many as four passengers or up to a ton of equipment, water or trade goods strapped to its back! Moreover, they can smell water up to a mile (1.6 km) away. They are suspected to be jungle lizards that were forced to adapt to desert life after the smoke cleared from the Elf-Dwarf War.

Although slow and dim-witted, Draybacks are not aggressive and follow orders reasonably well — not unlike an old, slow moving work horse. Their high strength and level of endurance enables them to walk or work tirelessly for long hours and go with little to no food or water for up to three days. This makes them ideal for the rigors of the desert. Draybacks will eat almost anything, from scrubby grasses and small animals to grain, hay, dinner scraps and garbage. Native wastelanders typically feed them a mixture of chsuba roots and dried game animal. Draybacks also require little to no grooming, and they only need to rest for 4-5 hours a day.

The only drawbacks, besides their ponderous speed, are that these animals are not very good at defending themselves, and



they will ignore commands and wander off to find water when they become truly thirsty. This can lead to the creature deviating from the path desired by its rider in its search for water. Actually, the lizard's ability to sense and locate water can be as much a godsend as an occasional nuisance.

Animal

Alignment: Generally considered an anarchist animal.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D4, M.E. 1D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 2D6+30, P.P. 1D6+6, P.E. 2D6+24, P.B. 1D6+4, Spd. 1D6+6; P.S. may be considered supernatural.

Hit Points: P.E. +1D4x10

S.D.C.: 1D6x10

Natural A.R.: 13

Horror Factor: 10

Average P.P.E.: 1D6

O.C.C.s Available: Not applicable.

Natural Abilities: Has the equivalent of Land Navigation 82% (i.e. can find its master or home base), good hearing and vision, is tremendously strong, and needs minimal water (half that of man, even though it is 2-3 times bigger). the animal can easily go three days without water, and if absolutely necessary, up to three weeks, although speed will be reduced to half after the first week. Draybacks can also go without food and water for three weeks, but will instinctively go to search out water after only three or four. Impervious to normal fire and heat; resistant to magical fire and heat (half damage).

Dowsing (special): Draybacks can smell water (such as chsuba roots or underground deposits) up to a mile (1.6 m) away.

Carrying and pulling (special): Draybacks can carry 50 times their P.S. attribute in pounds. thus, a drayback with a P.S. of 32 can carry 1600 pounds (720 kg) on its back! the animal can pull 200 times its P.S. attribute in pounds, 3-4 tons!

Attacks Per Melee: Two (too slow for any more).

Damage: Bite does 4D6. Once a Drayback bites, it will not let go, shaking its victim in its mouth. Each additional shaking attack is an automatic hit and inflicts 2D6+6 damage! Draybacks will let go only if their opponent dies or goes limp (pretending to have died) or if the animal loses half or more of its S.D.C. and/or Hit Points in damage. **Note:** If a Drayback is killed while somebody is in its mouth, the jaws will lock, holding its victim tight. Only a combined strength of 32 will can force the jaws open and the action causes 1D6 damage to the individual held in the mouth.

Bonuses: +1 to save vs poison and disease, and +6 to save vs Horror Factor; they are generally too stupid to be afraid or in awe of anything. Bonuses are in addition to attribute bonuses.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 40 years.

Size: the body is 10-12 feet (3 to 3.6 m) long and 300 to 500 pounds (135 to 225 kg), but the tail adds another 6-12 feet (1.8 to 3.6 m).

Value: Draybacks are very dependable work animals that require little supervision and minimal care. Wild Draybacks are worth 250 gold each. Domesticated ones can sell for 500 to 1000 gold each. Drayback eggs go for 50 to 100 gold, depending on the market. the eggs are beginning to catch on as an exotic commodity in the Western Empire; however, they

are mostly used to make gigantic omelets rather than cultivated as work animals.

Habitat: Mostly in the Baalgor Wastelands, but they thrive in almost any hot or temperate region. they cannot tolerate cold weather and would not be able to survive a Northern or even Eastern Territory winter.

Languages: None.

Enemies: None.

Allies: None.

Physical Appearance: Big, slow reptiles that resemble the komodo dragon or monitor lizards.

Eandroth

The reptilian Eandroth race may have been the result of some strange magical experiment, or they may be beings from another dimension brought here by a Summoner's circle or a dimensional portal.

Young Eandroth mature quickly, and for the first 24 years of their lives, they appear as short, thin, hairless, youthful, smooth-skinned humanoids that resemble human-like theropod dinosaurs. After this age they begin to bulk up and show more muscular definition.

All Eandroth under the age of 25 are rather child-like and solitary characters. They are good-natured, honest, caring and jovial, except during their violent mating period. Tribes typically have fewer than 50 members.

During each mating season (twice yearly), Eandroth males go through ritual combat to gain the right to mate with a female (Eandroth males outnumber females by about eight to one). These fierce, savage contests thin out the general population by some 20% over a period of roughly two weeks. Young are born live after a three-month gestation period. Females reach sexual maturity at age 10. Males reach sexual maturity at six.

From childhood, the Eandroth are taught to ride Silonar (Horsemanship: exotic), two-legged dinosaur-like animals native to the Baalgor Wastelands. One seldom sees an Eandroth without his trusty steed, and many tribes will have two or three Silonars for every one male. Eandroths are one of the few races who can semi-domesticate and ride these wild monsters. This makes the Eandroth all the more dangerous, for they often use their Silonars as weapons during battle (slain enemies are typically fed to these animals).

All Eandroth possess a unique psionic talent called the *heat point*. While this ability primarily is used to start fires, it can also render opponents unconscious used primarily to start fires, making any large group of Eandroths all the more dangerous.

Eandroth society is nomadic in nature. Their caravans can be seen wandering all over the Baalgor Wastelands, never staying in one spot for too long. Eandroth caravans vary considerably in size. The smallest consist of perhaps a dozen Eandroth, each carrying their belongings on the backs of their Silonars. The largest caravans may have several hundred Eandroth (occasionally over a thousand), a huge herd of Silonar and Drayback lizards, and a convoy of large carts to carry extra supplies, belongings, and the caravan matriarch. Large Eandroth caravans are usually powerful enough to hold their own against most attackers, and as a result, most desert marauders (including giants and Gromek) give such groups a wide berth. Non-Eandroth trav-



elers often find these large caravans to be excellent sources from which vital food, supplies and weapons can be bought or bartered for.

Eandroth males who survive 50 or so mating seasons (25 years) undergo a dramatic biological change into a "rogue" state. Their bodies become much more muscular, their height increases a few inches, their skin becomes loose and wrinkled, and certain attributes increase. Their previously gentle temper is replaced by a far more aggressive and intolerant disposition due to a change in body chemistry. These rogues are much tougher, meaner and smarter than the young Eandroth, and are feared even by their own kind.

Intelligent Humanoid

Originally conceived by Erick Wujcik.

Alignment: Any, but usually anarchist or unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6, M.E. 2D6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 3D6, P.P. 4D6, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 2D6, Spd. 3D6

Hit Points: P.E. +2D4 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 1D4x10 plus those gained from physical skills.

Natural A.R.: 10

Horror Factor: 10

Average P.P.E.: 2D6

O.C.C.s Available: Until they become *rogue*, the Eandroth live as simple hunters and wilderness people with basic combat skills (see attacks per melee) and with the basic skills described next. Other than their basic desert and hunting skills, below, they can not select an O.C.C. before reaching the age of 25. See the Rogues for O.C.C.s and enhanced abilities.

Skills Before Becoming Rogue: All Eandroth are trained in riding Silonars, which gives them the skill Horsemanship: Exotic at +30%! All male Eandroth also automatically know the skills Wilderness Survival (+20%), Land Navigation (+15%), Dowsing (+15%), and Track and Trap Animals (+15%). All females know First Aid (+20%), Cook (+20%), Sewing (+10%), Sing (+10%), and Skin and Prepare Animal Hides (+15%).

Natural Abilities: Able to survive for 1D4+2 weeks without water and food, and can function at peak levels of efficiency on a tiny amount of food and water (half gallon of water a week and two pounds/one kilogram of food) for as long as two months. They can also tolerate great heat with no ill effects, but hate the cold. Also see the psionic *heat point* power.

Attacks Per Melee: Two or three as a simple hunter or by O.C.C. At rogue stage, three melee attacks *plus* those gained by hand to hand combat skills and experience.

Damage: By weapon or heat point power.

Bonuses: None.

Magic: None.

Psionics: Females possess great psionic power after they become rogues. Prior to this, they possess 2D6x10 P.P.E., 4D6 I.S.P. and the psionic power to Sense Evil.

Psionic Heat Point: This is a natural psionic power common to all Eandroth, male and female. By concentrating for 1D6 minutes, an Eandroth can raise the temperature of a single point to a flame point. The character must stay motionless and the heat point must be one target or tiny location. This limited pyrokinetic power enables nomadic warriors and huntsmen to create campfires and cause what appears to be spontaneous combustion. The ability can be used to cause a

piece of paper, book or article of clothing to suddenly ignite into a small fire (roughly a diameter of two inches.)

This tightly focused pyrokinetic energy can also be directed at an antagonist's head. The heat point attack can only be used on one stationary (not moving around) opponent whose head is clearly visible and within a 90 foot (27.4 m) range. The subtle attack will cause the victim to suddenly feel feverish and groggy (-2 on initiative). If he moves away, the heat point is broken and the Eandroth must refocus his attack, starting from the beginning. However, if an individual stays in one spot, he can be rendered unconscious at the end of 1D6 minutes of heat point concentration. The attack inflicts no permanent damage, and unconsciousness lasts 1D4 minutes, or as long as the Eandroth maintains his concentration and focus on that heat point. Moving beyond the range of the psionic attack or moving out of sight or behind closed doors will prevent a heat point attack. **G.M. Note:** This attack can be inflicted on characters inside body armor as long as the head area is accurately located. Remember, the victim of the attack will begin to feel feverish shortly before he falls unconscious. This will tip off anybody who knows anything about Eandroth that they are under heat point attack and should move. There is no I.S.P. cost to using the heat point ability.

Average Life Span: 25-30 years; those who live past 30 years become "rogues" and set off for decades of wandering. A rogue can live for hundreds of years.

Size: 4 ½ to 5 feet (1.4 to 1.5 m), 75-135 lbs (34-61 kg)

Habitat: Extreme desert and hot grasslands. They are most common to the Baalgor Wastelands and areas of the Old Kingdom. In recent years, one tribe has migrated to the Land of the South-Winds (with Silonars in tow), where they seem to be prospering.

Languages: Dragonese/Elven.

Enemies: None, per se, but they are a careful and cautious people.

Allies: None, per se.

Physical Appearance: Reptilian or saurian type humanoids with fine, scaly skin and tail.

Eandroth Rogues

Although Eandroth rogues have a reputation for being ill-tempered, the Eandroth, in general, have a great respect for life and other races. Travelers who encounter Eandroth caravans in the wild can expect a friendly reception, provided they treat them in a kind and generous manner. Indeed, especially large caravans are often the only lawful force in a region, and if not for the protective influence of such groups, Gromek, giants, ogres, orcs, goblins, and other barbaric people would have conquered the Baalgor Wastelands long ago.

Average Life Span: Males who reach rogue stage can live to 350 years of age, while many females live to reach 500. Approximately 30-40% of the males survive to become rogues, compared to 40-55% of the females.

Habitat: During their early rogue years, a lone female rogue might be found almost anywhere, but rarely in cold regions.

Note: Female Rogues often become too large to use any body armor other than loose-fitting chain mail, leather, padded and similar types. Rogue females frequently associate with other

Eandroth, especially those who have not gone rogue, but tend to be grumpy and hot-tempered towards males and may lash out violently if any sexual advances are made upon them. Rogue females cannot bear children.

Male Eandroth Rogues

Male rogues typically strike out on their own for many years, wandering the world and learning about combat, science, magic, technology, other people and places, and other things. Rogues learn very quickly (start at first experience). After a hundred or more years of exploration, the male usually returns to his desert tribe where he will become the principal war leader and/or teacher of the other Eandroth. Those who think of the Eandroth as being mild-mannered and minimally skilled in combat will find themselves in deep trouble with a powerful rogue. Aside from their mental and physical prowess, only the finest warriors survive to the rogue phase.

Alignment: Any, but mostly good.

Attributes: The original attributes of the young Eandroth increase as follows. The number of additional six-sided dice to be rolled and added to the existing attributes are as designated. I.Q. 2D6, M.E. 2D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 2D6, P.P. 1D6, P.E. 2D6, P.B. 0, Spd. 1D6

Hit Points: Add 10.

S.D.C.: Add 2D4x10. **Weight:** Add 2D4x10 lbs.

Natural A.R.: Increases to 12, tougher skin.

Horror Factor: Increases to 14.

Average P.P.E.: Add 2D6.

O.C.C.s Available: At age 25 the rogue selects an O.C.C. Any are available except Psychics. Most lean toward Men of Arms, clergy and scholar. **Note:** The O.C.C. and experience starts at first level as the rogue is now considered a first level character with his new O.C.C. and new life. Use the appropriate experience table for that O.C.C. selection. The youngling skills and bonuses are kept and only now increase with true experience.

Average Life Span: 350 years if the Eandroth survives to become a rogue.

Habitat: During their wanderlust years, a lone rogue might be found almost anywhere, but rarely in cold regions.

Note: Rogues almost never use armor unless they know they are going into battle, at which time, they prefer scale and splint armor. Knives and swords are their favorite weapons. Rogues rarely associate with other Eandroth during their wanderlust years and tend to be grumpy and hot-tempered toward any of their kind until they decide to settle down. The traditional Eandroth double-bladed knife is their ultimate favorite weapon (2D4 damage).

Female Eandroth Rogues

Female Eandroth also enter a rogue phase if they manage to survive childbirth 25 to 40 times. Female rogues are extremely rare and are the true leaders of their community. While the females may wander the world for a few years, they are not overwhelmed with wanderlust like the males. Consequently, a female will join one particular group or return to her tribe and settle down at one place. Also, unlike the males, they are less cantankerous and aggressive, and incredibly protective of their tribe members and friends. If a tribe member or loved one is slain, injured, or threatened, the female will launch a devastating

attack of her own. The vengeance of a female rogue is horrible. When a female becomes a rogue, she becomes obese to the point of losing her mobility. While most of her physical attributes do not change, the female's mental and psionic abilities grow enormously. All female rogues are Mind Mages!

Alignment: Any, but mostly good.

Attributes: The original attributes of the young female Eandroth increase at rogue stage. The number of additional six-sided dice to be rolled and added to the existing attributes are as designated. I.Q. 2D6, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 0, P.P. 0, P.E. 1D6, P.B. 0, Spd. 0

Hit Points: Add 10.

S.D.C.: Add 1D6x10. **Weight:** Add 6D6x10 lbs.

Natural A.R.: Increases to 12, tougher skin.

Horror Factor: Increases to 15.

Average P.P.E.: Add 1D6x10.

Eandroth Mind Mage O.C.C. Only! At roughly the age of 30 (and having given birth at least 25 times), the female Eandroth becomes a rogue and erupts with psychic powers to become a Mind Mage. Use the Mind Mage experience table.

Psionics: Mind mage, with all psionic categories available to her.

I.S.P.: Initial Inner strength points are an incredible 2D6x10+140 and she gains an additional 10 I.S.P. per each level of experience.

Earthshaker

These lords of the desert are the only creatures not threatened by Sandwyrms, dragons, or other great menaces. Highly intelligent and gifted with incredible psionic and magical abilities, Earthshakers are some of the most fearsome creatures in the known world. A single monstrosity could probably destroy an entire kingdom or empire, if it so desired, simply by walking through it. Very few mortals could even hope to gain the attention of these beasts, much less persuade them to change their course.

Thankfully, the only thing that matches an Earthshaker's destructive capability is its capacity for sleep. Being creatures of magic, Earthshakers do not require food per se, and they will often slumber for up to 1,000 years at a time. They usually bury themselves somewhat before going to sleep, and in the years that pass, layers of soil, rock and vegetation cover the backs of their shells so that their resting place often looks like a hill with weird, spiky projections jutting forth from the ground (the tips of the creature's shell or hide). In fact, there have been many instances of people building villages or towns on these sites, only to receive a rude alarm decades or centuries later when the leviathan awakens and goes on the move.

When an Earthshaker awakens, it proceeds to the nearest ley line nexus, where it will tap into the magical energies and feed off them. Earthshakers will feed in this manner for 2-3 days before they are full. During this time, the ley lines feeding into that nexus will fluctuate wildly in power for a 50 mile (80 km) radius from the nexus. Spell casters will note that fluctuating ley lines will dip in power from 20% to 70% normal. When the ley lines are at 50% or less, floating along them will be impossible, as will tapping their energies to assist spell casting. Oddly enough, Earthshakers cannot simply sit on these nexuses forever, or they will suffer the equivalent of death from overeating. Once sated, the leviathan must move at least 100 miles (160 km) from any nexus, where they will dig in and sleep for the 1,000 years or so it will take them to digest their meal of pure magical energy. It is rare for an Earthshaker to stay awake and on the move for more than a few days to a month. Although Earthshakers do not have to dig in a certain distance from other Earthshakers, they do not like close company, so they typically find a place to sleep that is at least 100 miles (160 km) from the nearest Earthshaker. This has led scholars to estimate that there can be no more than 20 to 30 of these bizarre creatures in all of the Palladium World, if that many (a half dozen to a dozen are believed to inhabit the Baalgor Wastelands). While some scholars believe that there are over two dozen, some suspect that there may be as few as 4-8 Earthshakers left, just barely keeping their race alive. Others speculate that there are more, but they are slowly dwindling as the older ones die off. The truth of the matter may never be known.

Once or twice in an Earthshaker's life, it will mate, although the details of this ritual are not fully documented. The few existing reports on this topic note that the behemoths mate during their feeding periods, when males may seek out a female. If she accepts, the two feed off a single nexus together, exchanging their own magical energies with each other. Afterwards, the female will begin growing an egg inside of her that will take at least 2,000 years to fully gestate. Once gestated, the female buries the egg deep underground, where it will lie dormant until the



mother dies. Regardless of how far the mother is from her egg at her time of death, her passing will somehow trigger the egg to hatch. The unborn Earthshaker begins growing at an extremely fast rate doubling in size every hour until it finally breaches the egg. During this growing phase, the young Earthshaker will un-earth itself and head for the nearest ley line nexus, where it will feed, as an adult would. Afterwards, it will dig in and slumber, assuming the normal Earthshaker life cycle, reaching full size and maturity within 100 years.

What is interesting about this theory is that if it is true, then the Earthshakers are slowly but surely dying out. If they only lay one egg (or even two) in a lifetime, and if those eggs hatch only upon their mother's death, then the birth of each male effectively reduces the number of eggs the next generation can

lay! If this is in deed the case, then the Earthshakers are seemingly doomed to extinction. Of course, since so little else is known about these enormously long-lived creatures, they might have a way of getting around this circumstance.

Elven and Dwarven scholars can both attest that Earthshakers did not play a part in the Elf-Dwarf war. Apparently, these great creatures were so disgusted by the insanity of that conflict that many of them refused to awaken during the length of the conflict, hoping to wake up to more sane conditions. Several Earthshakers were in fact slain during the Big Thunder at the end of the war, but the majority survived almost unhurt (they were underground, after all), leading many to believe that any day now, a large number of unknown Earthshakers will rise from the ground and enter into a group feeding and mating



frenzy that would destroy what little life remains in the Baalgor Wastelands.

Earthshakers do not amass magic items or wealth, as they consider themselves above such petty distractions. Pieces of Earthshaker hide and shell are as valuable as dragon hide or dragon bone, but cutting pieces off a moving Earthshaker is extremely difficult — like chipping away at solid granite.

In recent millennia, many of the Quorians who have arrived on the Palladium world have entered into a strange symbiotic relationship with the Earthshakers who are slumbering under the Baalgor Wastelands. For more information on the nature of this relationship, refer to the *Quorian* entry in this section.

Creature of Magic — exact race and purpose unknown.

Alignment: Generally considered to be Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+3, M.E. 5D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 4D6+50, P.P. 1 (that's it — only one P.P. point), P.E. 2D6+50, P.B. 3D6, Spd. 30+1D6; supernatural P.S. and endurance

Hit Points: P.E.x10

S.D.C.: 1D4x100

Natural A.R.: 19

Horror Factor/Awe: Special. Earthshakers have a Horror Factor of 17. Anybody failing to save versus their H.F. roll will be stunned with awe/horror for 1D4 minutes — such folk frequently get stepped on if they're in an Earthshaker's path. Even those who do make their roll will be stunned with awe/horror for a full melee round as their minds are bogged by the incredible size and powerful presence of these juggernauts.

Average P.P.E.: 10D6+100

Average I.S.P.: 10D6+100

O.C.C.s Available: Earthshakers are too lethargic to pursue any particular O.C.C.

Natural Abilities: Bio-Regeneration (1D4x10 per melee round), also see Magic and Psionics.

Attacks Per Melee: One via magic, psionics or physical attack.

Damage: Any thing caught under the foot of a passing Earthshaker will take 1D6x100 S.D.C. damage! Basically, under an Earthshaker's foot is the last place one wants to be, unless you fancy becoming a pancake. Also, even a giant humanoid cannot parry and Earthshaker's foot — it's simply too heavy to stop. The best one can do if caught underfoot is to successfully dodge out of the way, or roll with impact.

If an Earthshaker so desires, it can stomp one of its legs against the ground with such force that a shockwave will ripple out for 100 feet in all directions, inflicting 3D6 damage and knocking everyone affected off their feet unless they successfully roll their P.P. or less on a D20. This shockwave damage does not harm the Earthshaker itself, nor will it harm anybody riding on top of the beast.

Bonuses: +6 to save versus spell magic, +7 to save versus psionics. Completely immune to Horror Factor, all poisons, disease, mind control (magic, psionic or otherwise) or any spell magic from levels 1-3!.

Other Combat Info: Due to their extreme size and lack of physical prowess, Earthshakers can not dodge or parry any incoming attack. They depend entirely on their high A.R., S.D.C. and H.P. to soak up damage until the attackers are driven off or lose interest.

Magic: Earthshakers can perform the following spells at 10th level proficiency: Tongues, Ley Line Transmission, Energy Bolt, Energy Field, Energy Disruption, Extinguish Fire, Call Lightning, Memory Bank, Oracle, Second Sight, Negate Magic, Dispel Magic Barrier, Mystic Portal, Globe of Daylight, Blind, Calling, Summon Fog, Wink-Out and a total of 1D6+6 spells of choice selected from levels 1-5.

Psionics: Earthshakers can perform the following psionic abilities at 10th level proficiency: Telepathy, Clairvoyance, Commune with Spirits, Dispel Spirits, Object Read, See the Invisible, Sense Dimensional Anomaly, Sense Evil, Sense Magic, Sixth Sense, Total Recall, Detect Psionics, Hypnotic Suggestion, Induce Nightmare, Insert Memory, Mind Bond, Mind Wipe, Invisible Haze, P.P.E. Shield, Mind Block Auto-Defense and two Super-Psionic powers of choice.

Average Life Span: Effectively immortal. Nobody has ever fully chronicled the life span of one of these creatures, since they go dormant for so long. They are believed to live as long as 5,000 years. Like dragons, they are creatures of magic, so it is possible that Earthshakers could live for much longer than anyone expects.

Size: Mammoth! 300 feet (92 m) tall, with a shell that's nearly 1,500 feet (457 m) in diameter. Earthshakers weigh approximately 1,000 tons (455 kt). They are so massive that they often make the ground tremble wherever they walk, hence their name.

Habitat: So far, they have only been spotted in the Baalgor Wastelands, but they could survive in any climate. Earthshakers also can breathe underwater, so they may dwell at the bottom of an ocean or an especially large lake or river. It is suspected that there are no such creatures in the Timiro Kingdom, the Western Empire, The Eastern Territory, the Island Kingdom of Byzantium or the Floenry Islands. However, it is possible that one or more of these creatures could be slumbering beneath the Old Kingdom, the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Land of the South-Winds, the Northern Wilderness, Ophid's Grasslands, or the Land of the Damned.

Languages: Earthshakers aren't known for communicating verbally, but if they were struck by that fancy, they would speak in an ancient dialect of Elven. Earthshakers also can communicate telepathically, as per the psionic ability, at 10th level proficiency and without I.S.P. cost. However, just because these creatures can communicate doesn't mean that they like to communicate. These behemoths consider most other living creatures too short-lived and trivial to bother themselves with (much like how humans regard ants). The only beings who have had any success contacting Earthshakers have been the Quorians, whose Dream Shamans often contact sleeping Earthshakers telepathically in search of advice and wisdom. In this regard, Earthshakers often act as oracles, dispensing their vast insight and wisdom in vague and confusing terms. However, Earthshakers will usually talk to a person this way no more than once or twice a month. It is unknown if Earthshakers simply find the same people too boring to speak with more frequently than that, or if they are intentionally trying to reinforce their image as distant, impenetrable mystics. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle.

Enemies: Because so few things can seriously hurt them, Earthshakers consider very few creatures their enemies. Adult dragons, demon/devil lords, major elementals and gods

are the only things that seem to elicit any sort of respect from these otherwise supremely arrogant creatures.

Aside from that, the only serious enemies Earthshakers have are other Earthshakers. Solitary by nature, they do not enjoy each other's company, and if forced to dwell within several miles of each other for more than a few days, violence will ensue until one of them leaves the vicinity.

In addition, every few millennia, Earthshakers awake and unearth themselves to feed and to mate. During this time, males become extremely territorial, and will attack any Earthshaker detected within a 50 mile (80 km) radius.

Since Earthshakers treat most other beings as insignificant insects, they don't care about whatever collateral damage they cause. This has made enemies out of many humanoid folk who have had their village destroyed by an Earthshaker passing through, or from a pair fighting.

Allies: None, per se. Although the sheer size and power of these creatures earns them respect from dragons, demons, Titans and other creatures of incredible power. Supremely arrogant, Earthshakers have no such respect for these creatures in return. They do not need anybody, not even other Earthshakers, and tend to lead mysterious and solitary lives. However, since the arrival of Quorians on the Palladium world, Earthshakers have learned to appreciate the quasi-worship these people hold for them as they sleep.

Physical Appearance: Something like a cross between a massive snapping turtle and a great horned dragon. Earthshakers have a very thick, scaly hide punctuated with many horn-like points jutting forth. Their shells have a serrated edge, and also have the peaked surface of a snapping turtle's shell. Earthshakers have hot orange eyes. Their enormous feet each have three clawed toes, which tend to leave footprints 5-6 feet (2 m) deep and three times as wide.

Giants

Giants are massive humanoids who typically stand 16 to 20 feet tall (4.9 to 6 m), although lesser (smaller) "giants" such as Trolls, Ogres, Gromek and Wolfen are sometimes included in the general category. These hulks are a dying breed because their immense size places huge demands on them and their environment. For example, they cannot easily hide from enemies and, even though they are physically powerful, they have fallen victim to the assaults of a dozen different races who fear and attack them. In addition, they require three to six times more food than a human and a much larger supply of resources to sustain their existence. However, it is the genetic make-up of the "true" giants that has hurt them the most. True giants can live as long as an elf, but they do not reach child-bearing age until they are 30 to 50 years old, and then, they can only bear one child every three or four years. By comparison, human females can bear offspring at a young age every 10 or 11 months. Giants just can not successfully compete with the smaller, more productive, efficient and resourceful races.

Most humanoids fear giants because of their immense size, raw power, fearsome appearance and history of committing many atrocities and crimes. As a result, numerous crusades and campaigns have been launched by various races to exterminate giantkind. The Western Empire is particularly guilty of this. In fact, giant-hunting has been a popular sport among Western no-

bles and knights for thousands of years, especially among arrogant milksops who found that ambushing these huge humanoids was a relatively easy way to have some cruel fun and boost their reputation as warriors.

While giants have endured a great deal of unjust persecution, they also have brought a good deal of their current misfortune upon themselves. Jotan, Nimro and Gigantes are notorious for terrorizing countrysides, towns and cities; leading hordes of trolls, ogres and orcs against innocent folk; enslaving people of all races; and forging alliances with evil dragons, demons and other nefarious forces of darkness.

This has come back to haunt all giants. As their reputation as monstrous evildoers has spread, so have the borders of the human kingdoms of this world. And where humans settle, giants are eventually pushed out, lest they be destroyed. As a result, giantkind has been exiled to the most remote and inhospitable parts of the world, which makes them hate mankind all the more.

One such bastion of giantkind is the Baalgor Wastelands where several thousand Nimro, Algor and Gigantes live, as well as a number of Cyclops and Jotan. The Baalgor Wastelands have always been home to many giants, but just to the east, in the Mount Nimro region, an entire giant kingdom is taking shape. Here, all giants and inhuman misanthropes are welcome to gather together for safety, and to forge a common destiny. Much of the world does not know about this nascent giant kingdom. The Western Empire has heard some rumors about it, and has dispatched numerous scouts to investigate. Depending on what they find, the Westerners may send an army to the region to destroy the kingdom, both to be safe and to test its own newly rediscovered military strength.

The giants of the Baalgor Wastelands have flocked to the banner of the Nimro Kingdom, which itself sees the Baalgor Wastelands as a vast land of opportunity. After all, there are few bothersome humans there, plenty of large animals to hunt, and there is even a route to the sea. Thus, most of the giants living in the Wastelands are part of a larger colonization under the auspices of the fledgling Nimro Kingdom of Giants. Of course there are giants who are dissidents, independent settlers and loners who are not affiliated with any kingdom, but these are in the minority (approximately 20-25%).

As with all great plans, there are obstacles to overcome. The Gromek represent the most immediate and threatening. These tough, aggressive humanoids traditionally considered the Mount Nimro Region and the Baalgor Mountains their adopted homeland. That is, until the Nimro Kingdom of Giants formed, and a brief and bloody war forced them out. Pushed back to the Baalgor Wastelands, Gromek have become the mortal enemies of all giantkind, and they have vowed to resist the giant incursion into the Baalgor Wastelands with all their might. As a result, a stalemated war of attrition is going on in the Baalgor Mountains, where giant and Gromek outposts constantly launch raids against each other. For giants, this is a major stumbling block, for until the Gromek are dealt with, there is no way the giants can even think of conquering the rest of the Baalgor Wastelands.

For more information on the Nimro Kingdom of Giants, keep your eyes peeled for the **Mount Nimro** sourcebook, scheduled for release in 1999.



RAMON
PARCER '99

Special Combat Considerations and Bonuses: True giants inflict more damage in physical combat, thanks to their extreme size and strength. Unless stated otherwise, a restrained, open-handed slap does 1D6 damage, a restrained punch does 2D4 damage, a full-strength punch does 2D6 damage +P.S. bonus, a power punch does 4D6 +P.S. damage bonus (counts as two attacks), or by weapons or magic (if versed in the mystic arts). In addition to attribute and skill bonuses, most giants are also +1 on initiative, +2 to pull punch, +1 to roll with impact or fall, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, and +1 to save vs poison, drugs and disease.



Cyclops

Cyclops are an ancient and mysterious race of giants said to have walked the world since the Age of Chaos, when the Old Ones reigned. The Cyclops are the sole possessors of the much-coveted *lightning magic* used to make a variety of powerful weapons, including lightning javelins and arrows. Such lightning weaponry is fashioned by means of a secret magical art known only by the Cyclops. Scholars believe that the magic invoked to produce these lightning shafts actually calls upon the power of the Old Ones and only the Cyclops can cast it without retribution. Indeed, should any creature other than the Cyclops learn and use the ancient magic, 2D6 greater demons will appear, seize the weapons, torture the creator to death, and disappear. Transgressors sometimes are allowed to live, so that they may serve as reminders to all others who would dare steal the secrets of lightning magic. These poor souls typically have their hand and tongues removed, their faces terribly disfigured (P.B. Down to 3) and suffer other particularly cruel mutilations.

Brokering their unique magicks, the Cyclops have amassed incredible wealth, and with it, they have built a powerful, isolated kingdom on the *Isle of the Cyclops*, to the west of the Western Empire. Here, the Cyclops make deals with the Empire of Sin to supply them with lightning weapons and other magical arms. Unknown to the Western Empire, the Cyclops are also making secret deals with the Nimro Kingdom to supply them with lightning weaponry as well. How the Western Empire will react if this is ever discovered, is a topic of much speculation among the Cyclops themselves. The Isle of the Cyclops and the Western Empire have always been on friendly terms, but then, the Cyclops have never betrayed their human allies before, either. Currently, the cover story is that any such weapons in the hands of Baalgor giants have been manufactured by unaffiliated Cyclops "rogues and dissidents."

Cyclops tend to be surprisingly civilized though aggressive toward smaller and weaker beings. They prefer their own lightning weapons but love rune weapons, magic armor, and magic items of all kinds. Most tend to be self-serving, greedy and covet vast wealth, prestige and power.

Cyclops are the least numerous kind of Giant in the Wastelands. Most Baalgor Cyclops were kicked off the Isle of the Cyclops for some reason, or they had delusions of grandeur and felt they could gain greater power for themselves in the Wastelands. Cyclops generally act as military advisors and magical weapons-makers to the Nimro who lead the organized Giant tribes trying to build their kingdom of giants. A few Cyclops adventurers and opportunists also operate as pirates, bandits, raiders and/or lead their own crews of cutthroats and brigands. Most of these mixed bands of warriors (typically including other giants, ogres, orcs, goblins and the occasional Troll, Kobold, Gosai and human) wander the Wastelands and Old Kingdom looking for glory, wealth and power through acts of banditry and/or as mercenaries, adventurers and ruthless explorers (the latter searching the land in the hope of discovering an ancient ruin where more magic weapons or magic-making secrets can be found).

Giant Humanoid

Alignment: Any, but lean toward anarchist and evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 2D6, M.A. 4D6, P.S. 5D6+2, P.P. 4D6, P.E. 4D6, P.B. 2D6, Spd. 2D6

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 50 plus those gained from O.C.C. and physical skills.

Natural A.R.: 5

Horror Factor: 12

Average P.P.E.: 1D6x10 plus P.E. attribute number or by magic O.C.C.

O.C.C.s Available: Any, without restriction, although most lean toward Men of Arms.

Skill Notes and Bonuses: All Cyclops speak Troll/ and Western Human. About 40% are literate in Elven and/or Western Human or another language (+10%).

Natural Abilities: Superior physical strength and endurance. Nightvision 60 feet (18.3 m; can see in total darkness), good overall vision and hearing, impervious to lightning/electricity (including magic electricity) and resistant to all other forms of energy (taking only half damage) except for kinetic energy.

the Cyclops' Lightning Shafts (Magic): Many Cyclops (33%) can create four types of lightning javelins and two types of arrows. the damage and average cost for each type is included.

Javelins: Light: 4D6 damage (cost 650-1,000 gold), medium: 7D6 (cost 1,000 to 1,500 gold), heavy: 1D6x10 (cost 1,600 to 2,400 gold; rare), or super: 2D4x10 (cost 2,000 to 5,000; super-rare). The magic javelins appear to be jagged rods pointed at both ends and range from six to ten feet (1.8 to 3 m) long. Effective range thrown (magically enhanced): 1,000 feet (305 m); only a cyclops can hurl the lightning javelins 2,000 feet (610 m). Limitation: the javelin or arrow can only be used once because it turns into a real lightning bolt in mid-air and disappears after it strikes. Roll to strike as usual, but add a +1 bonus to strike.

Arrows: Light: 3D6 damage (cost 300 to 500 gold). Heavy: 6D6 damage (cost 800 to 1,200 gold).

Both light and heavy arrows can be designed to fit short bows, long bows or crossbows. Like the javelins, they appear crooked. Effective range: 200 feet (61 m) farther than the normal bow weapon, 600 feet (183 m) farther for a Cyclops.

Attacks Per Melee: Two minimum or by O.C.C. and combat skills.

Damage: Typical giant damage, or by weapon or magic.

Bonuses: +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +4 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, plus those gained from attributes, O.C.C. and skill bonuses.

Magic: By O.C.C.

Psionics: Standard; the same as humans.

Average Life Span: 600 years, but some have lived to 1,000!

Size: 14 feet plus 1D4 additional feet (4.6 to 5.5 m). 600 to 1,000 pounds (270 to 450 kg).

Habitat: Cyclops can be found anywhere, but are most common in the Wastelands, Old Kingdom, Great Northern Wilderness, and occasionally in the Western Empire as free citizens. thousands inhabit the Isle of the Cyclops, a small nation of giants that has existed for centuries. (See the **Adventures on the High Seas** sourcebook for complete details and maps).

Enemies: Traditionally, Changelings, Titans and Trolls. Generally indifferent to others, but most humans still fear them. For reasons that are unclear, Cyclops and Gigantes hate each other and frequently engage in duels, feuds and skirmishes. Cyclops try to avoid them and consider them to be savage, mindless barbarians incapable of appreciating art or culture (a reasonably correct assessment).

Allies: Kobolds, Nimro, Ogres and dragons. Indifferent toward most others. May associate with the supernatural and creatures of magic, as well as humans and other races. they are frequently worshipped by Kobolds.

Physical Appearance: Olive-skinned giants with one large eye in the center of the head and usually long dark hair. Cyclops prefer to wear Roman-style togas and clothing made of fine silk. they also love to wear gold and gem bracelets, necklaces and jewelry.

Favorite Weapons: Cyclops prefer to use their own lightning weapons and all types of magic weapons, armor and items. they also like ordinary javelins, spears, bows and large swords.



Jotan

Also known as *Earth Giants*, the Jotan are the most powerful giants of the Palladium world, as well as masterful metal workers and swordsmen. Jotan are not particularly smart, and they actually prefer a life of labor, usually as men of arms, bandits, miners, excavators of mountains, builders, and manufacturers of weapons and armor. They are frequently employed to create weapons and armor for the other giant races, particularly for Cyclops and Nimro. The craftsmanship of the Jotan's work is second only to that of the Dwarves, and easily equal to the Kobold.

The Jotan tend to keep to themselves, largely because their numbers are small, but they are extremely aggressive and war-

like, lashing out at any non-giant race they happen upon, especially smaller or weaker folk. Jotan often become bandits or marauders, commanding small armies of goblins, orcs, ogres and trolls. In fact, Jotan evildoers are largely responsible for the bad reputation giants have in general.

Jotan are the enforcers and blacksmiths for Baalgor giants in general. There is plenty of metal and stone to make great weapons and armor here, so the Jotan are plenty busy, with all of the work orders to fill (lots of giants mean lots of weapons and armor is needed). The violent Jotan also relish the frequent opportunities to do combat with Gromek, rogue Gigantes, and even the occasional foray into human settlements. This latter activity is deeply frowned upon by other giants who fear that provoking the humans will only lead to the kind of trouble giants all over the world must deal with.

Giant Humanoid

Alignment: Any, but lean toward anarchist and evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 5D6+10 (supernatural), P.P. 4D6+6, P.E. 4D6+6, P.B. 2D6, Spd. 3D6

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 1D4x10+40

Natural A.R.: 5

Horror Factor: 12

Average P.P.E.: 1D4x10

O.C.C.s Available: Any men of arms, clergy, witch or warlock.

Skill Notes: Speaks Troll/Giantese and Gobblely, and gets the additional skills of Recognize Weapon Quality and Field Armorer, both at +15% regardless of the O.C.C. selected.

Natural Abilities: Supernatural physical strength and endurance. 40 feet (12.2 m), good overall vision and hearing, and resistant to heat and fire (inflicts half-damage). Jotan have a natural aptitude for mechanics and metal working.

Attacks Per Melee: three, or by O.C.C. and combat training +1.

Damage: Typical giant damage or by weapon or magic.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, plus those gained from attributes, O.C.C. and skill bonuses.

Magic: By Witch, Warlock or Clergy O.C.C. only.

Psionics: Standard, the same as humans.

Average Life Span: 300 years, but some live to 500.

Size: 18 to 20 feet tall (5.4 to 6.1 m).

Habitat: Can be found anywhere, but are most common in the Baalgor Wastelands, the Old Kingdom and the Land of the South Winds.

Enemies: Traditionally, Rahu-Men, Titans, Elves, Dwarves and humans. Generally indifferent toward others.

Allies: Nimro, Cyclops and Gigantes, as well as trolls, ogres, orcs and goblins. Indifferent toward most others. May associate with supernatural beings, creatures of magic and evil sorcerers. Jotan can be extremely hostile and frequently command troops of orcs, goblins and other monster races.

Physical Appearance: Bronze-skinned giants with powerful builds, dark eyes and brown hair.

Favorite Weapons: Giant-sized large swords, battle axes, ball and chain, and blunt weapons. They wear chain, scale and plate armor.



Gigantes

Gigantes are the most feared and bizarre of all Palladium giants. They are mutants plagued by an unstable, ever-mutating genetic structure that gives them a host of deformities, insanities and weird powers. Gigantes are ignorant, aggressive misanthropes with a lust for bloodletting. Although humans and elves are their primary victims, the other non-human races, and occasionally the other giants, also fall prey to their aggression and madness.

Gigantes are wild, daring and merciless fighters. They are extremely hostile, aggressive, cruel, and given to berserker rage and wholesale slaughter. They are especially murderous toward non-human races and eat the flesh of their enemies. Titans and Rahu-Men are their arch-enemies, and the most villainous Gigantes will attack them on sight. Gigantes often associate with other giants, trolls, ogres, powerful sorcerers, dragons, creatures of magic and supernatural beings.

Gigantes are the wildest bunch among all the Baalgor giants. While their mutant structure makes them excellent fighters, their insane natures also makes them uncontrollable and unpredictable; both bad characteristics to have in an organized society. So, most Gigantes are either kicked out of giant villages or they leave willingly to roam the land in search of smaller folk to victimize. These foul monsters love to pick fights with anybody. Absolutely anybody. And in as hostile environment as the Baalgor Wastelands, that gives them all sorts of opportunities to fight to their hearts' content.

Giant, Monstrous Humanoids

(mutants even by giant standards)

Alignment: Any, but lean toward anarchist, miscreant and diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6, M.E. 1D6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 4D6+8 (supernatural), P.P. 3D6+6, P.E. 4D6+6, P.B. 2D6, Spd. 4D6

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 1D6x10 plus possible mutation variations that provide bonus S.D.C. as well as those acquired from physical skills.

Horror Factor: 13 and higher depending on their appearance.

Average P.P.E.: 2D4x10

O.C.C.s Available: Any men of arms, clergy, or witch; they generally are not smart enough or patient enough to practice magic. Gigantes are best suited as villainous non-player characters (NPCs).

Natural Abilities: Superior physical strength and endurance, considered the equivalent of supernatural P.S. and P.E.; 40 feet (12 m), good overall vision and hearing, instinctive swimmers (60%).

Attacks Per Melee: 2 or by O.C.C. and corresponding combat skills.

Damage: By punch, kick or weapon; also, by mutation (see below).

Bonuses: +4 to save vs Horror Factor, plus other bonuses from attributes, O.C.C. skill bonuses and mutations.

Magic: Generally unavailable.

Psionics: Standard, about the same as humans.

Average Life Span: 150 years; few live beyond 200.

Size: 15 to 20 feet tall (4.6 to 6 m), 14 feet +1D6 additional feet. 1,000 to 2,000 pounds (450 to 900 kg).

Habitat: Can be found anywhere, but are most common in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Wastelands, the Old Kingdom Mountains, and the Great Northern Wilderness (and perhaps the Land of the Damned).

Languages: All speak Giantese. Some also speak troll and/or Gobblely.

Enemies: Traditionally, Titans, Rahu-men, Elves, Dwarves, Humans, Wolfen/canines, and most other non-giants. According to humans, "Gigantes hate everyone!" In the Baalgor Wastelands, Gigantes are on particularly bad terms with Gromek.

Allies: Fellow, Nimro, trolls, ogres, orcs and goblins. Generally indifferent to others. Frequently join other forces of evil, sorcerers, dragons, creatures of magic and the supernatural.

Physical Appearance: Varies dramatically. Most Gigantes have a monstrous, horrifying appearance.

Gigantes Mutations & Special Abilities Table:

Roll four times to determine random abilities and features.

01-05%: Nightvision of 90 to 540 (3D6x30) feet (27.7 to 166.3 m).

06-10%: See the Invisible.

11-15%: Turn invisible at will.

16-20%: Impervious to fire, including magical fire. Add 20 points to S.D.C.

21-22%: Poisonous bite that does 3D6 S.D.C. damage.

23-24%: A second mouth or one on the end of a tentacle. Bite does 1D6 S.D.C. and adds one additional attack per melee round when an opponent is within range.

25-26%: Single large horn. Add 1D6 S.D.C. to ram attack and head butt.

27-32%: Additional pair of arms, add one melee attack per round.

33-40%: Scaly skin, add 1D6x10 S.D.C.

41-45%: thick lumpy skin, add 6D6 additional S.D.C.

46-50%: Leather wings; 50% chance the Gigante can fly at a speed of 2D6x10.

51-54%: Additional eye (+2 initiative, 30 ft/9 m nightvision)

55-59%: Large heavy tail; a tail slap does 2D6 S.D.C. damage.

60-64%: Large fangs; bite does 3D6 S.D.C.

65-69%: Ape-like body covered in fur; add 15 points to S.D.C.

70-75%: Feather wings; 50% can fly at a speed of 3D6x10.

76-80%: Claws; do an additional 1D6 punch damage.

81-84%: Large, flat teeth; bite does 2D4 S.D.C.

85-90%: Breathe fire; 20 foot range (6 m), 3D6 S.D.C. damage.

91-95%: Spits acid; 20 foot range (6 m), does 4D6 S.D.C. damage.

96-00%: Additional leg; adds 20% to balance, +1D4x10 speed.

Gigante Insanity Table:

Roll once initially. Roll additional insanities as a result of trauma, and for every 50 years the Gigante has been alive. NPC Gigantes generally will have two insanities.

01-10%: Psychosis.

11-34%: No insanity.

35-44%: Obsession.

45-77%: Phobia.

78-91%: Neurosis.

92-00%: Affective disorder.



Nimro

Nimro are greedy, arrogant, aggressive and cunning giants made all the more dangerous because they know how get others to follow them, and they are good strategists and planners capable of conceiving large, sweeping plans. Such is the case of the Baalgor Nimro, most of whom are stationed here as part of the Nimro Kingdom's ongoing effort to claim the Baalgor Wastelands for its own.

So far, their campaign has gone well for the Nimro, who have managed to establish numerous camps and villages throughout the region, but especially in the Baalgor Mountains and the rocky desert. Nimro lead foraging parties that travel all over the region in search of food, prisoners and valuables, but they tend to stay away from the Rocky Coastline where the human settlements and sea traffick are. No need to pick a fight with an enemy that has caused giantkind so much trouble already, right? But still, those Western humans are so puny and defenseless, and those pirate communities are disorganized and flush with booty. Perhaps a little raiding here and there could be in order.

There are also many Nimro renegades and independent operatives in this region who left Mount Nimro because of the ongoing power struggles there. Many are powermongers themselves, who wanted to be in charge but did not have the ability to take power for themselves. As a result, they decided to come to the Baalgor Wastelands where they could be larger fish in a smaller pond, so to speak. Such Nimro tend to become murderous cutthroats, chieftains and warlords, commanding small armies of evildoers.

Nimro are clever schemers, good strategists, surprisingly organized and socially active with other giants, including trolls and ogres. The Nimro of the Baalgor Wastelands have their hands full maintaining the war with the Gromek as well as trying to push forward their colonization of the Baalgor Wastelands and the formal establishment of a Kingdom for Giants. Even if the Gromek are defeated, the Nimro realize that they have a massive task ahead of them if they truly wish to rule the

entire Wastelands region. This is a wild and savage land with many fearsome and strong people living in it. The Nimro realize that to conquer this land, they may have to strike deals and alliances with other Wastelanders such as the Eandroth, Gosai and Quorians. To any other giant, this course of action would be unacceptable, but to the Nimro, it is all part of the complex task of building a nation.

To that end, the Baalgor Nimro have forged an alliance with the Isle of the Cyclops, and have even gotten some delegates from that kingdom to help advise them and supply them with lightning weapons and military support.

Giant Humanoid

Alignment: Any, but lean towards anarchist and evil, particularly miscreant and aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 4D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 3D6+6, P.P. 3D6+6, P.E. 4D6+6, P.B. 3D6, Spd. 2D6

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 50 points, plus those gained from O.C.C.s and physical skills.

Horror Factor: 11

Average P.P.E.: 1D4x10 or by magic O.C.C.

O.C.C.s Available: Any, except knight, palladin and long bowman.

Natural Abilities: Superior physical strength and endurance, considered supernatural. 40 foot (12 m) nightvision, good overall vision and hearing. Impervious to fire; all other forms of energy do half damage!

Breathe fire: Range is 40 feet (12 m), inflicts 4D6 damage and counts as an extra melee attack when used. Fire breath can be used only once per melee round.

Attacks Per Melee: 2 plus breath attack or by O.C.C. and chosen combat skills.

Bonuses: +2 to save vs Horror Factor, +1 to save vs illusions, and +3 to save vs possession. All are in addition to bonuses gained from attributes, O.C.C.s and skills.

Magic: By O.C.C. only.

Psionics: Standard, about the same as humans.

Average Life Span: 300 years, with some living as long as 500 years.

Size: 15 to 18 feet tall (4.6 to 5.8 m), 14 feet +1D4 additional feet. 800 to 1,400 pounds (360 to 630 kg).

Habitat: Can be found anywhere, but are most common in the Wastelands, Old Kingdom, and the Yin-Sloth Jungles. The Nimro have built a kingdom of giants in the Baalgor Wastelands, to which all Giantkind are welcomed.

Languages: Giantese, Troll, and Gobblely. Many Nimro also speak Elven and other languages. About 50% of all Nimro are literate in Elven or Western Human.

Enemies: Traditionally, Titans, elves, dwarves, humans, and non-giants. Generally indifferent to others.

Allies: Jotan, Gigantes, ogres, trolls, orcs, goblins and fire dragons. Nimro occasionally ally themselves with Cyclops and Algor, and they may associate with the supernatural, creatures of magic, and anybody who can best serve them. Indifferent to most others.

Physical Appearance: Copper- or red-skinned giants with black or red-brown hair and bright yellow eyes. Nimro often wear light armor, half-plate and chain and plate.

Gosai

These quiet and lethal humanoids from another world were brought to the Palladium World as assassins and spies during the Elf-Dwarf War. The Gosai were originally a tree-dwelling people, well-suited for the region's original jungle and forest environment. Since the Big Thunder, they have developed tough, scaly skin to protect themselves from the scathing environment of the Baalgor Wastelands.

A few generations after the Elf-Dwarf War came to an end, the Gosai set aside their lingering resentment for Elves and Dwarves, realizing that the people of today are greatly different than they were eons ago (They are considerably more humble, for one thing). The few other races that were in the Baalgor region during the Elf-Dwarf War still consider the Gosai as dangerous and spooky as ever. For the most part, humans and other races see these desert wanderers as just another exotic race in an exotic land.

Gosai are a nomadic people who travel in large groups consisting of one or more extended families. The average tribe has no fewer than 20 members, and the largest can reach over 200. Such big groups tend to draw notice, however, so most clans are kept under 100 and clan gatherings are often short-lived reunions before all the families go their separate ways.

The Gosai have an extended family structure in which brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles and all their siblings and offspring will stick together as a single unit. Periodically, they will leave these family units to hone their combat abilities, seek adventure or revenge, or to see more of the world, but 98% of the time, they return home within a year or two, and return to their familial duties. Once Gosai mate, they do so for life, which also prevents many adults from wandering off on their own. The female gives birth to 2-4 children at a time, but only after a 36 month pregnancy. Gosai females do not swell during pregnancy until their final year.

The alien beings are level-headed and methodical, but once moved to violence, they become ruthless and vicious fighters who rarely show mercy (even if it is begged of them), and can hold a grudge or vendetta that spans decades. Even in the heat of combat, however, Gosai remain relatively calm, cool and collected. The average warrior does not rattle easily, nor do they show their emotions; professional assassins can seem absolutely cold and hard as ice. While most view them as cold and unfeeling, the truth is that they are a passionate people, but they internalize most of their feelings except when around their closest friends or trusted family members.

The Gosai's greatest weakness is a contact allergy to metal of any kind, inflicting 1D4 points of damage each time any part of their flesh touches any kind of metal. As a result, Gosai avoid metal entirely, opting *not* to use metal weapons even if their grips are covered in cloth or another non-metallic substance. Likewise, Gosai do not use much technology for the same reason. Numerous scholars liken this to the iron intolerance shown by some Faerie Folk, making them think that perhaps the Gosai were originally of that ilk but mutated during the Elf-Dwarf War. Such conclusions are wrong, but prevail anyway, especially among the more "learned" circles of the major nations. Gosai can and do use stone and wood weapons, particularly wooden staves and slings, but most prefer to rely on their retractable claws and remarkable kicking ability in combat.



One final note: Gosai refuse to use riding beasts or beasts of burden, preferring to carry their meager possessions on their backs wherever they go. According to the Gosai themselves, one should never own so many possessions that he or she requires a beast of burden to carry them all. To do otherwise is to display gluttonous materialism, something which all Gosai strive to avoid. This aversion to using pack animals has expanded over the years into a disdain for any kind of riding animal. This also means they have little use for gold, gems, and other valuables, preferring to live "life to its fullest" and enjoy the wealth one earns through reputation, glory and infamy — they love building notorious reputations for themselves and enjoying the celebrity (and/or fear and intimidation) it brings.



Intelligent Humanoid

Alignment: Any, but usually selfish or aberrant evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 3D6, P.P. 3D6+6, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 3D6, Spd. 3D6+6

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level.

S.D.C.: 3D6 plus O.C.C./R.C.C. and physical skills.

Natural A.R.: 10

Horror Factor: 10

Average P.P.E.: 4D6

O.C.C.s Available: Any, except knight, palladin and long bowman. Favorite O.C.C.s are thief, assassin and gladiator. Or the character may opt for the *Gosai Assassin Racial Character Class*. **Gosai Assassin R.C.C.:** In this case, the character has become a professional killer but refuses to employ hand to hand weapons of any sort. The Gosai Assassin is identical to the Assassin O.C.C. except in place of Hand to Hand: Assassin, the character learns a unique unarmed combat style called *Skudasa* that emphasizes a Gosai's natural fighting abilities. Note that ONLY the Gosai Assassin R.C.C. is eligible to take Hand to Hand: Skudasa. Also, in place of the four weapon proficiencies available to the Assassin O.C.C., the Gosai assassin gets one additional skill selection from each of the following categories: Espionage, Military, Rogue and Scholar (for a total of four skill selections). The Gosai Assassin CAN NOT take a W.P., Horsemanship skill or the Disguise skill.

Hand to Hand: Skudasa: This is a cross between Martial Arts and Assassin combat training, with a special emphasis on clawing and kicking attacks.

Level

1 Starts with two attacks per melee round, +2 to strike.

2 +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to pull punch and +2 to roll with punch/fall.

3 All kick attacks.

4 +1 attack per melee round and +1 on initiative.

5 Claw attacks increase to 3D6 damage, "pop kick" increases to 5D6 damage.

6 Critical strike on an unmodified roll of 17, 18, 19 or 20.

7 Character may use his hand and foot claws as paired weapons, as per the W.P. Paired Weapons skill. They can also be used to parry swords and other hand held weapons.

8 Leap Attack, +1 on initiative, +2 to pull punch.

9 +1 attack per melee round.

10 +2 to parry and dodge.

11 Body throw/flip, +1 to initiative.

12 Death blow on an unmodified roll of 20 (if desired).

13 +2 to damage.

14 +1 attack per melee.

15 +2 to strike and disarm.

Natural Abilities:

Prehensile feet (special): A Gosai is just as dexterous with his feet as with his hands. Those with the Scale Walls skill get a +10% bonus. Plus, Gosai can perform feats of fine manual dexterity (such as picking locks) with their feet, with no penalty.

Retractable claws (special): Gosai have retractable claws on their feet as well as their hands. For this reason, they almost never wear shoes or gauntlets.

Pop hinges (special): Gosai have a unique elastic material in their knee joints, allowing their legs to "pop" straight with incredible force. This allows them to leap 30 feet (9 m) in any direction. Also, Gosai can use this ability to deliver extra-powerful kicking attacks known as "pop kicks."

Attacks Per Melee: 2 or by O.C.C. or R.C.C. and combat skills.

Damage: A swipe of hand or foot claws does 2D6, a "pop kick" does 4D6 but counts as two melee actions.

Bonuses: +1 melee attack (due to agility and prehensile feet), +1 to strike, parry and dodge. +2 to save vs Horror Factor, and -2 to save vs poison.

Magic: By O.C.C. only.

Psionics: Standard.

Average Life Span: 60 years.

Size: 5-6 feet tall (1.7-2 m), 150-175 pounds (68-80 kg).

Habitat: Gosai cannot stand cold or wet climates, so the Baalgor Wastelands is the only place where they truly feel comfortable (they would also find The Land of the South Winds comfortable if they ever travelled to it). Some Gosai Assassins have traveled abroad to sell their skills, mostly in the Western Empire, the Timiro Kingdom, Old Kingdom and certain parts of the Eastern Territory.

Languages: Besides their own native tongue, Gosai also speak Elven fluently. They were taught it by the Elves who originally summoned them to this world during the Elf-Dwarf War. Since then, Gosai elders have taught the language to their young.

Enemies: Giants, trolls, ogres and orcs. Gosai especially dislike Quorians, whom they fought extensively during the Elf-Dwarf War. In many ways, the war is not yet over between these two races. Oddly enough, Gosai are indifferent to Dwarves, the race they were specifically recruited by the Elves to fight during the Elf-Dwarf Wars. It is thought that when the Dwarves recruited the Quorians to "level the playing field," the Gosai and Quorians targeted each other exclusively, almost forgetting about their Elf and Dwarf patrons. In the years that followed, the Gosai gradually forgave both

the Elves and the Dwarves for getting them involved in their insane war in the first place, but the Quorians are still hated.

Allies: Humans, Elves, and Eandroth. Gosai are indifferent to all other races.

Physical Appearance: Slender, graceful humanoids who many people think have a slightly reptilian appearance. Completely hairless, they are covered with fine, metallic red scales. Their teeth are small and pointed, like a puppy dog's milk teeth. Gosai have light yellow eyes with an elongated, golden "goat's eye" pupil. Most prefer to dress in loose clothing, usually a tunic, billowing leggings, and a flowing set of desert Bedouin robes.

Gromek

Gromek are a race of giant aliens who appear to be more demonic than man or beast. Their head is animal-like with widely spaced eyes, huge maw, fangs, horns, and a series of bony plates that run from the nose to the top of the head. Their giant bat wings and size give them a further demonic appearance. However, the Gromek are not demons, they are a warrior race from another dimension with towering mountains. How or why they came to the Palladium world is unknown, but considering that they came to the Baalgor region, a place where many other aliens have also appeared, it is possible the Gromek were summoned during the Elf-Dwarf War.

On their homeworld, the Gromek are the masters of their planet, having conquered or obliterated any who dared to op-

pose them. Their society is extremely strong and communal. Their native level of technology is comparatively primitive, roughly equivalent to the Earth's Middle Ages, or that of the Palladium World, except magic is something new to them.

The Gromek's homeworld, like the Palladium World, has a history of dimensional disturbances which have enabled small groups of explorers and warriors to investigate other worlds. Unfortunately, few Gromek are adept in magic or dimensional travel and they often become trapped in the alien dimension they've gone to explore. If trapped, the warriors find an isolated location to build a base of operations and to establish a new tribe (males and females share equal status in the Gromek society and all scouting parties have equal numbers of both genders). As the tribe grows, the Gromek become increasingly aggressive and begin a campaign to conquer and control the land around them. Eventually, they can grow to become a dangerous force; this is certainly the case on the Palladium World.

Quite intelligent, they are masterful weaponsmiths and craftsmen. The Gromek's entire society is oriented to war and training for war, not unlike the Spartans of ancient Greece. Males are trained as warriors from early childhood. Females bear the responsibility of raising children and serve as craftsmen and weaponsmiths. All are deadly and merciless combatants, exhibiting compassion only for the benefit of their own kind. The females are also taught the arts of being a warrior, but serve as healers and military strategists.

Although most Gromek will unite against a common foe or to engage in a major military campaign, they usually live in small clans of about 80 members in a particular village. In lands



dominated by Gromek, there may be scores of these villages clustered together, representing thousands. The smallest clan or scouting group will contain 2D6 warriors, half are female.

The Gromek's aggressive, predatory nature shows itself through their disdain for all weaker forms of intelligent life. The Gromek's immediate inclination is to destroy or subjugate the weak. They view most humanoids as either inferiors or a threat to their domination. This has brought all Gromek into a savage, ongoing war with giantkind in and around the Baalgor Wastelands and the Mount Nimro region. The winged-warriors had considered the Mount Nimro region as their home territory for many, many years, until the numerous giants settled their differences, united, and drove the Gromek out. Stunned by their defeat, the Gromek have united to resist the incursion of the giants, who they have since sworn to destroy utterly. The Gromek's war against the giants has moved to the Baalgor Mountains, where the two races have fought each other to a bloody stalemate.

Thankfully for the Gromek, they still virtually rule the Baalgor Mountains, using their ability of flight to soar from mountaintop to mountaintop, giving them far more mobility than their giant, grounded foes. The Gromek clans here use blitzkrieg and surprise tactics to harass their enemies. A few Gromek clans have grown especially powerful and collect tribute from all creatures living in their vicinity. The most powerful of these warlords have established small "kingdoms" along the inner edge of the Baalgor Mountains, stretching into the rocky deserts. Eventually, one Gromek warlord will beat all of the others into submission, creating a united Gromek nation of sorts; spelling trouble for everybody else living in the Wastelands.



Intelligent Winged-Humanoid

Alignment: Any, but predominantly selfish or evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+1, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 4D6+2, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 4D6, P.B. 2D6, Spd. 2D6 running, 6D6+6 for flight.

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 4D6 plus those acquired from physical skills.

Natural A.R.: 12; tough, fine-scaled skin.

Horror Factor: 14

Average P.P.E.: 2D6

O.C.C.s Available: All optional and Men of Arms O.C.C.s, especially mercenary, soldier, ranger, knight and palladin. They can also select clergy, but find few gods worthy of their worship. Men of Magic O.C.C.s are available, but Gromek rarely pursue them. However, most clans have one or more Wizards or Warlocks.

Natural Abilities: Winged flight, keen hawk-like vision, resistant to fire (does half damage). Extremely aggressive.

Attacks Per Melee: Two, plus those gained by combat skills.

Damage: Bite inflicts 1D6+4 damage, clawed hands 1D6+2 damage plus P.S. bonus, clawed feet 2D6+2 damage plus P.S. bonus, or by weapon.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +4 to dodge while in flight, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact. All are in addition to attribute and skill bonuses.

Magic: By O.C.C. only, and a rare happenstance because most Gromek find the pursuit of magic to be alien and unnatural. They are born warriors, so some even regard magic as cowardly.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 180 years.

Size: 8 to 10 feet (2.4 to 3m) tall. 600 to 800 pounds (270 to 360 kg).

Habitat: Gromek prefer mountains and tall hills in moderate to hot climates. While they consider the Mount Nimro region to be their adopted homeland, over the last generation, many have been forced out of that area by agents of the Nimro Kingdom. As a result, the largest concentrations of Gromek settlements in the world are among the Baalgor Mountains. They are also occasionally found in the Yin-Sloth jungles and the untamed parts of the Land of the South Winds.

Languages: Their own language, both spoken and written. Most also speak Giantese.

Enemies: Humans and most indigenous intelligent life forms.

Allies: Occasionally ally themselves with ogres, trolls or giants. However, with relations souring between giants and Gromek in general, such alliances are less and less likely. Most have never seen a Wolfen or other northerners.

Physical Appearance: Tall, muscular and fearsome. Gromek have a demonic appearance, with horned heads, scaly skin, sharp, dragon-like teeth and great leather wings. Both male and female look almost identical. The only distinguishing features are that females rarely exceed eight feet (2.4 m) in height and possess female reproductive organs.

Notes: Gromek generally mate for life and are extremely protective of and loyal to family, friends and race. Females give birth to one or two offspring after a gestation period of twelve months. Males begin physical and combat training by age five, while females begin to learn holistic medicine, literacy and strategy. Physical training for females begins at age seven. Males reach full maturity by age sixteen, females by thirteen.

Treasure may consist of gold, gems, magic, grains, alcohol, and any other items deemed to be the spoils of conquest. However, to the Gromek, real treasure is quality weapons and armor. Suspicious of magic, warriors rarely use magic of any kind unless it's a weapon. Magic items are normally given to wizards and priests.

Tribe treasure is divided into half to three quarters, and usually kept in a special place known only to the leader and his second in command. The remaining amount is kept with the priest (or wizard, if there is no priest). A typical treasure of gold and valuables for a small- or medium-sized clan will be worth 500 to 2,000 gold with 2D4 common magic items and dozens of fine weapons and armor.



Lazretheg

These predatory fiends are almost certainly alien abominations from another world. A favorite tactic is for these creatures to use their hook-like legs to latch onto a rock, grab prey with its tentacles and reel it in. Once the prey is close enough, the Lazretheg leaps onto the target, sinking its spear-like proboscis into the victim. The creature then drinks the victim's blood until it either dies or the Lazretheg gluts itself. Since it takes nearly all of the blood of a normal-sized humanoid to fill the terrible beast, even giant-sized humanoids who initially survive such an attack will probably die later from blood loss.

Once glutted, a Lazretheg sleeps for a few days, then begins hunting for a new target. Lazrethegs love to feed on huge animals, like Sandwyms or Earthshakers, because then they can hang on for weeks, drinking at their leisure.

Animal Predator

Alignment: Anarchist or Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D6+1 (high animal intelligence), M.E. 2D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 2D6+8, P.P. 2D6+6, P.E. 2D6+6, P.B. 1D6, Spd. 2D6+6

Hit Points: P.E. +20

S.D.C.: 20

Natural A.R.: 6

Horror Factor: 10

Average P.P.E.: 1D6



O.C.C.s Available: None, considered an animal.

Natural Abilities: None.

Attacks Per Melee: 3, by whip or bite.

Damage: Lazretheg whip lashes inflict 2D6+4 S.D.C. damage, plus strength bonus. Whip constrictions inflict 1D6+4 per attack until the Lazretheg is killed, the whip is cut off, or the victim is released. Its proboscis bite inflicts 3D6 S.D.C.

Bonuses: +3 to initiative, +1 to strike.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 3 years.

Size: 3-4 feet long (0.9-1.2 m), 50-75 pounds (23-34 kg)

Habitat: Exclusive to the Baalgor Wastelands.

Languages: None.

Enemies: None.

Allies: None.

Physical Appearance: These animal predators look like 3-4 foot long chiggers with long, whip-like tentacles with which to grab their prey.

Minotaur

Minotaurs are an ancient race of beastmen known for being warriors with incredible strength, endurance, agility and fighting prowess. They are estimated to number fewer than 8,000, just teetering on the edge of extinction. Some scholars, however, argue that such population counts are unrealistic since nobody has any real inkling of how many of these beings are truly left. Indeed, accounts from the last few hundred years suggest that the total Minotaur population could be as much as 20 times higher than the more conservative estimates.

Minotaurs are usually encountered alone, in pairs, or in small bands of 2D4+1. Tribes tend to be small, with about 2D6x10 members. The largest Minotaur tribes are believed to top 300 individuals, but these are rare. They are subterranean creatures and the majority live underground, inhabiting the most remote and hostile regions in the world. Minotaurs are known to exist in the *Old Kingdom Mountains*, the *Great Northern Mountains* and the *Baalgor Wastelands*, but no one knows how extensive these communities may be. It is also believed that a large number of tribes and perhaps even a Minotaur city exists in the forbidden *Land of the Damned*, but nobody knows whether this is true or simply another legend about this mysterious region.

A secretive and aggressive people, Minotaurs shun contact with other races and will mercilessly attack anyone who enters their underground realm (in some cases the surface territory as well). It doesn't matter that the interloper may be friendly or



merely lost; the poor soul is attacked, enslaved or slain (and sometimes eaten). Minotaurs seem specially hostile toward humans, elves, and dwarves, occasionally rising from their lairs beneath the earth to cause trouble for these races. This extremely aggressive demeanor is one of many reasons why so few people of the Palladium world have even seen a Minotaur — and survived to tell the tale — much less heard of them. Those who do know of Minotaurs generally consider them a myth or a race of monstrous giants on the verge of extinction.

Despite their anti-social behavior, there are Minotaurs who will work with others. Those who worship the dark gods (especially true of Death cults and those who worship the Old Ones) may associate or co-habitate with members of other races who worship the same god. Some Minotaurs, good and evil, take to a life of adventure, forsaking their underground brethren, and live on the surface. These fellows are comparatively rare and encountered most often in the Eastern Territory, Old Kingdom, Baalgor Wastelands and Yin-Sloth jungles.

Oddly enough, even the friendliest and most outspoken Minotaur knows little about his own people or their history. Few know about any other Minotaur communities in the world except for their closest neighbors (typically 1D4 other small tribes). Generally, all they know about their history is that some great disaster befell their people thousands of years ago, causing them to shun the world around them. What this disaster may have been or who may have been responsible is unknown, but many believe it had something to do with either the Minotaurs' willing servitude to the Old Ones, or an attempt of theirs to awaken those slumbering monstrosities.

This last theory is circumstantially substantiated by Minotaurs who have established death cults that worship the Old Ones and other dark gods. Over the millennia, at least half a dozen such cults have been discovered and destroyed by one race or another. Ancient Minotaurs were also known to practice Necromancy and, according to legend, Minotaur Witches are said to draw their powers from the Old Ones. Some legends about the Time of a Thousand Magicks also suggest that the Minotaur sorcerers engaged in dark magic. Several tribes and cults of Minotaurs were destroyed by elves and dwarves during the Millennium of Purification because they would not forsake forbidden and dangerous magic.

Before then, the elves who inhabited what once was the Baalgor Rainforest discovered the ruins of an ancient Minotaur city. Elven documents tell of excavating statues of Minotaurs that appeared to be deliberately beheaded or smashed, with bas-reliefs and carvings marred to erase the features of king and peasant alike. The bits of uncovered architecture showed a city with great archways, towers and citadels. Other evidence suggests the city fell in a devastating war, and grisly mass graves containing tens of thousands of Minotaurs have been reported in these ancient documents. Indeed, even today Minotaur graveyards can be found throughout the Baalgor Wastelands as a silent testimony to an age-old effort to eradicate these giants from the face of the world. At the largest of these sites, the ancient elves erected a huge statue of a Minotaur warrior, in homage to the spirits who might linger at such a place of death. The whereabouts of this statue, and the graveyard it marks, have since been covered by the elements, but doubtlessly the psychic impression of the place remains strong to those sensitive to such things.

Although the Minotaurs of the Baalgor Wastelands are fairly adept at digging tunnels and underground construction, they prefer taking over abandoned Dwarven complexes, Baalizard burrows, natural caves and other types of subterranean habitats, including man-made dungeons and catacombs. Many are quite skilled at constructing traps and pits in the tunnels of their subterranean homes, so adventurers must be wary.

Most Minotaurs are somewhat nomadic, and seldom stay in one place for very long. Fifty percent are vegetarians, but even those who resort to eating meat still prefer grass, grain, vegetables or fruit. They can sometimes be spotted foraging on the surface for food, but they are always quick to return to their subterranean homes.

Minotaurs love to use heavy armor and weapons. Typically, they must take these items from slain enemies, since they are only fair to poor craftsmen.



Intelligent Humanoid

Alignment: Any, but most are evil or selfish.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+1, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 5D6, P.P. 4D6, P.E. 5D6, P.B. 3D6, Spd. 3D6

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 2D4X10 plus those gained from physical skills.

Natural A.R.: 12 (A tough, leathery hide).

Horror Factor: 14

Average P.P.E.: 2D6

O.C.C.s Available: Almost always (94% of the time) a Minotaur will select a man at arms O.C.C. Of these Minotaur warriors, 40% will be mercenaries, and another 20% will be assassins. The remaining 40% become any of the remaining man at arms O.C.C.s, but Minotaur knights and palladins are extremely rare. Such individuals (especially those who become champions of light) are branded as traitors to their race and cast out. For such pariahs, a life of fear and rejection faces them, for though they may be noble and courageous, they still are likely to be feared and mistrusted by other races, as well as their own.

The remaining 6% of all Minotaurs who select a clergy or man of magic O.C.C. frequently hold positions as leaders and advisors within the community. Of these, 2% become Chaos Priests (priests of darkness who worship the Old Ones), 1.5% become Disciples of the Old Ones (witches who gain their power from pacts with the Old Ones themselves!) and another 1.5% become Necromancers, the favorite mystic art among Minotaurs. The Remaining 1% is made up of Wizards (0.3%), Earth Warlocks (0.4%) and other types of spell casters (0.3%).

For more information on specific Minotaur R.C.C.s (such as the Chaos Priest and Disciple of the Old Ones), refer to the **Old Ones, 2nd Edition** sourcebook.

Natural Abilities: Superior physical strength and endurance, nightvision 60 feet (18.3 m; can see in total darkness), good overall vision and hearing, superior sense of smell, recognize scent 22%, track by blood scent 54%, and fire and cold resistant (does half damage).

Attacks Per Melee: 2 or by O.C.C.

Damage: Claws/punch do 2D6 damage plus P.S. bonus, kick does 3D6 S.D.C. damage plus P.S. bonus, head butt does 3D6 damage, charge with horns inflicts 5D6 S.D.C. damage plus P.S. bonus and has a 60% chance of knocking the victim of the charge down (victim loses one melee attack and initiative).

Bonuses: +1 to strike, parry and dodge, +3 to save vs Horror Factor; all are in addition to attribute and skill bonuses.

Magic: Only by O.C.C., very limited; 94% of all Minotaurs are fighters of one kind or another.

Psionics: Standard, same as humans.

Average Life Span: 400 years; few live past 500.

Size: 8 to 11 feet tall (2.4 to 3.3 m); 7 feet +1D4 additional feet. 500 to 800 pounds (225 to 360 kg).

Habitat: Minotaurs are known to live in the southern half of the known world, most notably in and around the Old Kingdom Mountains, the Baalgor Wastelands, and parts of the Yin-Sloth jungles. According to legend, several tribes also inhabit the Land of the Damned.

Languages: All Minotaurs speak Troll/Giantese, Gobblely and Elven. Most (94%) are illiterate.

Enemies: Minotaurs are wary of all humanoids. Some are known to strike up long-term friendships with members of other races, but this is uncommon. To gain a Minotaur's friendship, one must have shown the creature a great deal of trustworthiness and acceptance.

Allies: None.

Physical Appearance: Muscular, humanoid giants with light to dark bluish-gray to black skin. Black hair, yellow eyes and the head of a bull.

Value: Some Alchemists will pay up to 1,500 gold for a Minotaur horn. However, since these closely resemble a normal bull's horn, Alchemists are very wary of fakes.

Mologoth

A big, dumb, T. Rex-style predator that stomps across the Baalgor Wastelands, constantly searching for food. These animals are extremely dangerous and hostile, but Baalgor natives (including Eandroth, Gosai, Quorian, Gromek, giants and tribes of Ogres) have found a number of ingenious ways to use the Mologoths' low intelligence and large size against them. Mologoths are easily lured into ambushes, pits, traps, and dead ends, as well as tricked, confused and duped by experienced hunters and quick thinking travellers. Some tribes even hunt these creatures as an initiation rite, but Mologoths shouldn't be taken lightly. Their brute strength and savagery are awesome to behold, and they can swallow a Troll whole, and bite a wagon in half with their powerful jaws, or smash it with their foot or swipe of their tail.

The Mologoth is one of the most feared and legendary creatures of the Baalgor Wastelands, especially by outsiders and "civilized" folk. They are sometimes captured and brought to

gladiatorial arenas in the Western Empire, Lopan and Old Kingdom. Rare and valuable to these arenas, the monstrous animal draws large crowds of curiosity seekers, and is frequently unleashed against 10-40 unarmed (sometimes poorly armed) opponents who are either slaves or criminals marked for execution. These poor souls are literally chased down and eaten alive. A horrible, but popular spectacle. They also eat carrion (dead and rotting carcasses).

Giant Predatory Animal

Alignment: Generally considered to be Miscreant or Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D6 (instinctive predator), M.E. 2D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 3D6+30 (considered supernatural), P.P. 1D6+12, P.E. 2D4+20, P.B. 1D6+5, Spd. 2D6+20

Hit Points: P.E. +55

S.D.C.: 1D4x10+40

Natural A.R.: 13

Horror Factor: 14

Average P.P.E.: 15 (4D6)

O.C.C.s Available: None, considered an animal.

Natural Abilities: Incredible strength, endurance, and destructive capability; good speed. Resistant to fire, cold and electricity (takes half damage). Recovers from damage quickly, at a rate of 1D6+3 per 24 hours.

Attacks Per Melee: Four by bite, stomp or claw.

Damage: Bite for 2D20 (or 1D4x10), claw strike for 2D6+P.S. damage bonus, clawing foot strike 4D6+P.S. damage bonus, stomp for 6D6, and tail swipe for 4D6. A tail swipe is usually by accident, as the tail is not prehensile and the creature cannot use it deliberately to strike a foe or prey.

If a Mologoth rolls a natural 20 when biting, it will swallow the victim whole (as long as he is troll-sized or smaller). Swallowed victims take 4D6 damage per melee round while inside until the prey dies, or the Mologoth dies or the victim cuts his way out.

Cutting out of the great beast is more difficult than it may sound, the digestive juices sting and inflict damage. The prey inside cannot open his eyes so must fight blind, and will suffocate within 1D4+2 minutes, if he doesn't succumb to the vapors and juice of the monster's digestive system. Thus, intelligent beings must chop away blindly, first through the wall of the stomach and then through the skin. A total of 50 points of damage must be inflicted before he can escape, and will require at least one melee round; usually much longer, if at all. If there is any good news for the swallowed victim, it is that his hacking at the insides of the beast will help those still outside, causing it to writhe in pain, reducing its number of attacks, speed and bonuses by half. While cutting oneself out from the belly of the beast (especially when 'combined with attacks on the outside) will often slay the Mologoth, some will run away and survive! Must have at least 20% of its Hit Points and roll percentile dice. A roll of 01-50% means it survives, heals and continues to plague the land.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, parry and dodge. If a Mologoth scores a claw strike with its upper claws or feet, it will attempt to bite the same victim on the next attack, at an additional +3 to strike! Also, Mologoths have +8 to save vs Horror Factor (will attack large groups and animals), and a +4 bonus to save versus magic, poison, disease and psionic attacks affecting the mind.





Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 30 years, but often less than that.

Size: Roughly 50 feet (21 m) tall.

Value: None, per se. The meat is edible but tough and gamy tasting, definitely an acquired taste. Wasteland tribes (mostly nonhumans) also use the teeth and claws to make jewelry and weapons (arrowheads, spikes for clubs, etc.), and to decorate clothing. The hide is sometimes used to make leather armor, gloves, and other leather works.

Habitat: So far, they remain exclusive to the Baalgor Wastelands. The Gromek and giants of the Baalgor Mountains keep these monstrosities contained and their numbers low, but if the hunting and slaying of Mologoths ever stopped, they would soon spread to the Old Kingdom, the Yin-Sloth jungles and beyond.

Languages: None; animal grunts, groans and roars.

Enemies: None, except for Sandwyrms.

Allies: None, an aggressive animal.

Physical Appearance: Similar to a Tyrannosaurus Rex, with a beige, striped coloration, and larger forearms. Mologoth have three sets of teeth, like a great white shark.

Quillback

These small, feral humanoids scramble among the rocks of the Baalgor Wastelands looking for scrubby plants, insects and small animals to eat. All the while, they are often hunted by vicious monsters and other, larger predators. What keeps these creatures alive is their high intelligence, raw speed and their porcupine-like set of quills, which they use very effectively in combat.

Quillback society would be considered "primitive" by most humans, elves, dwarves and Wolfen. They are constantly on the move, looking for food and trying not to be eaten, and do not establish large families, tribes or permanent homes. Thus, Quillback adults will usually come together, court each other for perhaps a month, mate, and stay together during the course of the female's five-month pregnancy. Quillback mothers give birth to 2D4 "kits" at a time, but only 1-4 of them are ever expected to survive to adulthood. Quillback fathers will stay with their mate for two or three months after their kits are born, helping find food for them, and defending them from predators. At the three-month mark, when the young learn to walk and forage on their own (and most importantly, when they develop their set of quills), the couple separates, never to reunite. Once the Quillback young are 6-8 months old, they all go their own ways. Despite this solitary nature, small groups of 2 to 10 Quillbacks, or "hutches," will travel and live together, figuring that there is safety in numbers. Yet even the average Quillback hutch rarely

stays together for more than a year or two before it splinters and breaks apart. Members will often leave the hutch after mating and seldom reunite with their old comrades.

Thanks to their sharp sense of smell, Quillbacks can identify each other simply by scent. Thus, long-separated friends or relatives will recognize each other instantly upon meeting. Large Quillback reunions are fairly uncommon, but when they do happen, they call for much celebrating, eating, drinking, dancing and storytelling. If a Quillback attending such a reunion has non-Quillback friends with him or her, they too are invited to join in the festivities. Such guests are expected to bring food with them, or at least a bunch of really good stories. To a Quillback, a good story is funny, exciting, and contains a tinge (just a tinge, mind you) of sadness. These folk are used to losing their friends and loved ones on a frequent basis, and are fond of eulogizing them in stories and song. Like most else in their lives, these reunions seldom last more than a few days before people begin to go their separate ways.

Quillbacks are relentless pack rats, collecting every little thing that strikes their fancy. Shiny things like gems, gold coins, earrings, polished metal trinkets and the like are favored items, as are fine pieces of glass or cut rock and tiny statues. To a Quillback, something's worth does not depend on what it's made of, but how it looks (and if the little creature finds it attractive). If a Quillback must choose between a tarnished rune weapon that looks like hell, and a finely polished, glittering piece of quartz, the quartz will probably win out. At the same time, Quillbacks are not stupid, and those who grow accustomed to the ways of the "tall folk" learn that looks can be deceiving. They also learn about items "tall folk" value and may become discerning enough to gather items humans and such will trade in order to get shiny trinkets and good junk that the Quillback prefer.

Quillbacks are not, by nature, thieves, but they do covet things very, very badly, and even the most honorable, honest Quillback will find himself "borrowing" things and forgetting to return them. While this may be only a mild irritation to one's fellow adventurers, it has gotten many Quillbacks into serious trouble in larger settlements and cities. Approximately 10% are either habitual thieves or kleptomaniacs.

Intelligent Humanoid

Alignment: Mostly unprincipled or anarchist. A few may be scrupulous, miscreant or aberrant, but these are quite rare.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+8, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 2D6, P.P. 4D6, P.E. 2D6, P.B. 2D6, Spd. 5D6

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 15 plus whatever is gained from O.C.C. and physical skills.

Horror Factor: None.

Average P.P.E.: 3D6.

O.C.C.s Available: Any man at arms (except for long-bowman, knight or palladin), clergy (typically shaman), psychics (most are Psi-Mystics or Psi-Healers), vagabonds, or entertainers (such as bards or minstrels). Quillbacks lack the discipline to become men of magic. If the character so desires, he or she may opt for the Quillback Scavenger R.C.C.

Quillback Scavenger R.C.C.: In this case, the character lives by his or her wits, wandering the wastelands and collecting loose odds and ends and somehow surviving endless scrapes



and dangerous situations. Quillback Scavengers often fall in with bands of travelling adventurers and Wasteland nomads including goblins and orcs. Their exploits commonly make them folk heroes to their own people. Such characters also possess insatiable curiosities, often “leap before they look” and are prone to taking anything that catches their eye without asking. (Note: This means that Quillback Scavengers will almost never be of a good alignment. Selfish alignments are most common.)

In skills, the Quillback Scavenger is identical to the *Vagabond Optional O.C.C.*, except that the Scavenger will have detect ambush and detect concealment and traps as O.C.C. skills, and will not have animal husbandry as an O.C.C. skill. Also, Quillback Scavengers may select eight O.C.C. related skills (Vagabond restrictions still apply) to start with. Quillback Scavengers have the same experience point requirements as a Thief or a Merchant O.C.C.

Natural Abilities:

Advanced Smell: Quillbacks can detect very faint smell traces and can use this ability as the Track Humanoids skill at 30% +5% per level. In addition, Quillbacks can detect when persons are experiencing extreme emotions (64% chance) and they can recognize an individual by his or her scent.

Advanced Hearing: Quillbacks can hear very faint sounds, like light footsteps or a small animal breathing. This gives them +1 to initiative and makes them almost impossible to surprise (96% of the time, they will detect a surprise attack before it hits, much like the Sixth Sense psionic ability).

Quill Defense: This is a kind of natural body armor with an A.R. of 10. Any physical attack with a fist, foot, mouth or other body part must roll over a 10 when striking or suffer 3D6 damage from hitting a bed of sharp quills. In addition, Quillbacks can attack with their quills, inflicting 2D6 damage with an arm swipe, or 4D6 with a body block. Quillbacks cannot “shoot” their quills, but they can pull them out and stab or throw them at opponents like daggers or ice picks; does 1D4 damage per quill. The quills can also be used to pick locks or for knitting. Note that Quillbacks are covered with tens of thousands of quills, so they are not likely to run out of them if they pull them out frequently to use as weapons. Furthermore, lost quills regrow within 1D4+2 months.

The drawback to these protective quills is that wearing armor or clothing of any kind is virtually impossible. Quillbacks generally do not care about clothing, but wearing armor would come in handy. They do like to wear arm bands, bracelets, anklelets, rings, earrings and other types of jewelry.

Attacks Per Melee: Three, or one plus O.C.C./R.C.C. and combat skills.

Damage: 1D6 claws; Quill Defense; or by weapon.

Bonuses: +2 to parry and strike, +3 to dodge, +1 to pull punch.

Magic: Only Quillback shamans ever learn the ways of magic.

By and large, these critters are very curious about the mystic arts but they lack the attention span to pursue them. Overly fascinated by the arcane, they use magic recklessly, with no thought to dangerous side effects or long-term consequences — much like an uneducated child might treat a firearm. This makes Quillbacks very dangerous around magic, prompting

many adventurers to keep magic items of all sorts out of Quillback hands.

Psionics: Standard.



Average Life Span: Fifteen to 20 years in the wild. Quillbacks over 10 are considered old and likely to get killed by predators. Quillbacks in cities, towns or other "civilized" places can live as long as 50 or 60 years.

Size: Four to five feet tall (1.7-2.1 m), 75 to 100 pounds (35-45 kg).

Habitat: Found mostly among the rocks and crevices of the Rocky Desert and forests of the Baalgor Mountains, in the Baalgor Wastelands. Recently, merchants and slavers have begun exporting them to the Western Empire, The Land of the South Winds, and the Yin-Sloth Jungles. Resourceful in the extreme, Quillbacks could probably survive anywhere.

Languages: All speak a chattering dialect of Gobblely. Many also learn Elven, Giantese and Western Human.

Enemies: Anything larger than it is feared, especially Baalizard, Gromeks, giants, orcs, ogres, trolls, and certain humans, elves and dwarves.

Allies: Anyone who has proven themselves to be trustworthy. In general, this means Eandroth, Dragonmen, Vrill, and certain Quorians, Gosai, humans, Elves and Dwarves. Gnomes and faeries, because of their small stature, are instantly trusted, even if they are evil. This character flaw has gotten more than one Quillback into trouble, especially when dealing with faeries.

Physical Appearance: Quillbacks are small, lean humanoids covered by a thick "fur" of porcupine-like quills. They also have rodent-like, snout faces, and sinewy arms and legs. They range from a light gray to a drab brown.

Quorian

Another warrior race "recruited" during the Elf-Dwarf Wars is the Quorians. These humanoids were summoned from an alien world by the Dwarves. From the onset, the Quorians were used specifically to counter and fight the Elven Gosai minions. As the war dragged on, the Quorians soon grew disenchanting with this insane conflict. They broke their ties with their Dwarven allies, preferring to have nothing to do with their war. However, their fight with the Gosai escalated to the level of a vendetta and a matter of honor to the Quorians, and that conflict has continued throughout the ages. To this day, many thousands of years after the Elf-Dwarf War ended, the few Quorians and Gosai in the Palladium World hunt and battle each other relentlessly. For modern Quorians, there is no immediate or tangible reason why this adversarial relationship continues, other than the fact that the two races teach their young to hate the other and

to continue their age old campaign of revenge. To them, it is enough to know that the Gosai are their ancestral enemy, and that they must be destroyed, and vice versa. The fires of discontent and vengeance are fanned by treachery and murder perpetrated against the other by both sides.

Historically, Quorians have been one of the few alien peoples of the Baalgor Wastelands actively concerned with finding a way back to their homeworld. Quorian Shamans, Psi-Mystics and Oneiromancers in particular, are consumed with this goal. As the Elf-Dwarf War ended, the Quorian Riftlords who knew how to navigate the dimensional breach between the world they knew as Quoria and the Palladium World had been slain in combat. No matter how desperately they searched for whatever scraps of knowledge that might help piece together the secrets of dimensional travel, the surviving Quorians had no way back home. They were trapped on an alien world.

Aggressive and warlike, the Quorians are surprisingly disciplined and orderly fighters who rarely engage in senseless bloodshed. They have a surprisingly high regard for life, unless it is a Gosai's. Consequently, they are renowned men at arms who often wander the world where they earn a living by the edge of their sword and sell or trade their services to others. In the meanwhile, they actively pursue any news or rumors pertaining to their homeworld and the secrets of dimensional travel. In fact, many Quorians have adopted it as something of a life-long quest. On the bad side, Quorians are filled with such a homicidal single-mindedness that they will destroy anybody and anything they think is blocking their way home. Exactly why Quorians are so eager to leave the Palladium World is unknown, since they thrive in the harsh, hot climate of the desert, but then again, it is an alien place.

In recent years, more and more Quorians have been giving up their wandering ways. This is due to the growing (and quasi-symbiotic) relationships many Quorian Oneiromancers have entered into with sleeping Earthshakers. When the Elf-Dwarf War ended, groups of Quorians wandered the wastelands in search of missing Riftlords or some other way of getting back to Quoria. Some of these groups happened upon the resting sites of sleeping Earthshakers buried under the ground. Although buried, these humongous creatures displace so much soil that their sleeping burrows look like large hills and to the discerning eye of the Quorians, easy to locate. Furthermore, erosion sometimes washes away the top layer of soil covering the behemoths to reveal the spiky protrusions on top of their shells. These spikes tend to poke out of the ground, resembling Stonehenge-like groves of alien standing stones or some equally mysterious monument. Initially, Quorian Oneiromancers merely thought these hills were holy places akin to ley line nexuses — places of strong ambient magical energy. Before long, they realized that there were incredibly powerful living beings sleeping under them. Moreover, Quorian Oneiromancers were able to contact these sleeping giants telepathically during *Chants of Dreaming*. Many of these mystics have since convinced themselves that their best chance of finding a way home is to learn it from the sleeping Earthshakers. Indeed, these enigmatic creatures are extremely knowledgeable in many things, and willing to dispense tiny bits of their wisdom in cryptic suggestions and riddles to the Dream Shamans who seek telepathic audiences with them.



Thus, on the resting site of each of the Baalgor Wastelands' few sleeping Earthshakers is a Quorian village, led by the Oneiromancers who treat the Earthshakers as sleeping gods with the keys to universal understanding. The other Quorians of these villages assume the role of defending the area from outside invaders — not so much to keep the Earthshakers from harm (they really don't need anybody's protection), but to maintain a base camp where they can keep in contact with their sleeping benefactors.

For a slowly increasing number of Quorians, this has become an acceptable way of life. After searching fruitlessly for a way home, the Oneiromancers' contact with the Earthshakers seems like their last hope. Over the centuries, these Quorians' devotion to their Earthshakers became a kind of worship. Hints dropped by the dreams of the Earthshakers indicate that someday they will all awaken and gather together for an event of unprecedented importance. Spurred by this news, some Quorians have become more interested in preparing for this day than in finding a way back to Quoria.

A highly superstitious people, Quorians are prone to having precognitive dream-visions that they take very, very seriously. While Oneiromancers perform *Chants of Dreaming* rather often, most Quorians have a "dream-vision" only two or three times in their lives. These dream-visions are the equivalent to a successful Chant of Dreaming, only it happens at random. Most Quorians have their first dream-vision in early adolescence; a sign of having achieved spiritual adulthood. After that, the average Quorian has 1D4-1 additional dream-visions over the course of his or her life. Each subsequent vision is treated as a major personal event, and a portent to one's next phase of personal development, or what the future might hold. It isn't unusual for a Quorian to radically change a course of action or his entire life, all because of a quirky dream he regards as an omen or portent of things to come. As a result, Quorian Shamans, Psi-Mystics and especially Oneiromancers are revered members of their society because of their ability to interpret dreams and divine the future. While skilled interpreters of dreams, some of their creative interpretations are not always accurate, and sometimes self-serving (or more to the point, serving the greater good or beliefs of the tribe). In fact, the Quorian obsession with the future is almost as strong as their desire to return to their homeland. Within a year of having their first dream-vision, Quorians leave their family to find their own place in the world. Tradition dictates that once a Quorian leaves his family's wandercamp or village, he or she is never welcome there again. Scholars think this is a custom designed to maintain genetic diversity, and to maintain strong but small groups. Quorians themselves explain that they simply do not get along with their kin. For most, living among strangers or other Quorians is far preferable to living with one's family.

Nomadic Quorians live in small to medium-sized (10-60 individuals) "wandercamps" that never stay in any one place for long. Quorians who have chosen a settled life, on top of sleeping Earthshakers, create villages of up to 400-500 individuals. Regardless of their social structure, all Quorians are fiercely independent, proud and honorable. Their independent and combative spirit combined with their go-it-alone nature tends to encourage keeping gatherings to small, loosely-knit families, clans and groups.

The reason for this might be rooted in the Quorian sense of honor, which is very easily insulted. Quorians do not take kindly to any insinuation that one is less than courageous, forthright, and dependable. Calling these matters into question is to invite a duel or an all-out brawl to determine who owes who an apology. Among their own, their healing factor keeps them from killing each other over insults and offenses. However, this also makes it hard for Quorians to fit in with non-Quorians, who are not as violent or easily provoked, and who do not recover as quickly from injury.

The Quorian healing factor contributes to making these people rather foolhardy and a bit too convinced of their own immortality. While Quorians do not go into the blood frenzy of a Dogre, they do tend to charge into battle without thinking and take risks, thereby getting themselves into situations they really can not always handle. What's worse, Quorian pride is such that retreating from battle for many valid reasons may be considered a sign of cowardice. Consequently, many Quorians would rather die fighting a losing battle than to run and fight another day. The Quorian healing factor has another effect on how these people fight — they steadfastly refuse to wear armor of any sort (Shields, gauntlets and armlets are okay, though). For a Quorian to "cover" himself with protective armor (especially when they can bounce back from physical harm) is a pathetic display of weakness and cowardice that merits chastisement, abuse and exile. On the other hand, they do not hold other races by the same standard and accept that humans, elves, and others routinely wear armor. While they do not hold them in any less esteem, most Quorians are impressed by those who wear little or no armor, especially when facing a Quorian (an act regarded as the highest show of respect and courage).

Note: Quorians never really had priests until they came to this world. While this brings up the question of whether or not there are any deities in Quoria, it also explains why Quorians do not look up to their priests as dream-readers the way they look to Shamans, Psi-Mystics and Oneiromancers.



Intelligent Humanoid

Alignment: Any, but lean very heavily in favor of the "honorable" alignments; namely principled good, scrupulous and aberrant evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 2D6+2, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 3D6+6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 3D6+6, P.B. 2D6+2, Spd. 2D6

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 25, plus those from O.C.C./R.C.C and physical skills.

Horror Factor: None

Average P.P.E.: 3D6

O.C.C.s Available: Any. Most Quorians are some kind of men at arms, but in recent years, Quorians have increasingly turned to the mystic arts of wizardry and "elementalism"/Warlock magic. Quorians do not trust Diabolism or Summoning, and simply will not pursue such disciplines unless one is truly evil, obsessed with power or insane. Despite this, Circle Magic does tempt some Quorians, who feel that such arts could be used to create a dimensional portal that would return them to their homeworld. Indeed, the ancient Quorians who first came to the Palladium World had mastered the magical art of "Rifting" — the ability to travel to different worlds, dimensions and time periods via magical portals created along ley lines and at nexus points. The Quorians somehow lost their knowledge of Rifting during the Elf-Dwarf War (all of the practicing "Riftlords" were slain or fled the planet), and those few who practice Diabolism or Summoning today, no doubt do so in the hopes of rediscovering the lost art. (Indeed, Quorian legend insists that some Riftlords have survived, and dwell in secret, awaiting the time to bring their brethren home.)

Quorians tend to shy away from the clergy and psychic O.C.C.s. Those with strong spiritual or psychic potential often opt for the Quorian Oneiromancer Racial Character Class (R.C.C.).

Natural Abilities: Excellent sense of hearing and vision (roughly equal to humans with perfect senses), and high P.S. and endurance.

Healing Factor (special): Quorians have incredible recuperative powers, enabling them to withstand a great deal of physical punishment before dying. All Quorians automatically regenerate three S.D.C. every 10 minutes (18 per hour) and one H.P. every 15 minutes (4 per hour). In addition, Quorians are resistant to fire and cold (half damage) as well as to drugs, toxins, disease and poisons (1/3 damage). The Quorian healing factor also mends wounds without scarring, and broken bones will heal 10 times faster than usual, without any sign that they were ever broken. **Note:** The Quorian healing factor will not regenerate lost limbs, nor will it bring back a Quorian from the dead.

Attacks Per Melee: 2 or by O.C.C./R.C.C.

Damage: By punch, kick, weapon or magic/psychic attack.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +3 to pull punch, +1 to roll with impact, +3 to save vs poison and disease, +20% to save vs coma/death and +2 to save vs Horror Factor — all are in addition to attribute bonuses.

Magic: By O.C.C.

Psionics: Standard.

Average Life Span: 50-60 years.

Size: 6-7 feet tall (2 to 2.3 m), 200-300 lbs. (91 to 136 kg); Quorians are big, but they are not considered giant-sized humanoids, and they do not have the benefits and drawbacks that ogres, trolls, giants and other oversized humanoids have.

Habitat: Largely confined to the Baalgor Wastelands, although Quorians have been spotted in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, near Mount Nimro and in the Old Kingdom.

Languages: All Quorians are fluent in their own unique language as well as Dwarven. Many Quorians are literate and study other languages such as Elven, Gobblely and various dialects of Human.

Enemies: Gosai, giants, trolls, ogres, orcs and anybody who interferes with their quest to return to their native world or their devotion to the Earthshakers.

Allies: Generally speaking, Eandroth, Dragonmen, and humans. Stand-offish to Dwarves and Elves. Indifferent to most others.

Physical Appearance: Tall, broad and muscular, the Quorians clearly look like a warrior race, similar to Orcs or Trolls. They have pupil-less, reddish eyes and dusty blue-purple skin. Their rope-like, tendril-like hair resembles thick dreadlocks, which some Quorians like to tie back in a bundled ponytail.



Quorian Oneiromancer R.C.C.

Quorian Oneiromancers, also known as "Dream Shamans" are the spiritual, religious, and psychic centers of Quorian society. Possessing strange powers of the mind and spirit, these mysterious individuals often lead Quorian villages and wandercamps (groups of nomadic hunters and warriors). They use magic, psychic powers, and the ability to interpret dreams to see the future — precognitive dreams. In game terms, Quorian Oneiromancers are similar to the Psi-Mystic O.C.C., with slightly different powers.

Initial psychic powers include Mind Block, Clairvoyance, Sixth Sense, Meditation and four from the Sensitive category ONLY. Afterwards, for each new level of experience, the Oneiromancer may select one additional psionic power from the healing, sensitive, or physical categories.

Initial magic powers include four spells from levels one or two. At each subsequent level, the Oneiromancer may pick a total of two additional spells from any level up to his own level of experience (i.e., a 3rd level Oneiromancer could pick spells from levels one, two or three).

Finally, these Mystics can also perform the shamanistic *Chant of Dreaming*, as described in **Adventures on the High Seas**. The only differences for the Quorian Oneiromancer are this ability only costs 20 P.P.E. (instead of the usual 40), and there is an additional +10% chance of success.

Otherwise, the Quorian Oneiromancer is identical to the Psi-Mystic O.C.C. in all respects, including skill selection and experience point requirements. Quorian attributes, natural abilities, and other aspects common to this race are unchanged, see above.

Rock Buzzers

Rock Buzzers are giant, flying insects that appear to be a cross between a large housefly and a flying beetle, only with no hair and a shiny, metallic sheen to their carapace. They vary individually in their coloration and include the entire spectrum of color. Eandroth swear that "red" Rock Buzzers fly faster than any other color, while certain human traders insist that black ones fly more quietly than others, but such assertions are believed to be nothing more than false perceptions rather than fact. Whether these giant bugs are indigenous to the Wastelands or from another world, or mutants, is unknown and the topic of endless debate.

Rock Buzzers are one of the few domesticated beasts of the Baalgor Wastelands. Their non-aggressive nature makes them easy to handle, but they are so incredibly dumb that they are difficult to train. When not being ridden, a Rock Buzzer must be tied down and hobbled with wing restraints, or it will fly off for good; these creatures have no sense of loyalty whatsoever. Rock buzzers do not understand verbal commands and must be managed entirely with control reins. Characters with the *Horsemanship: Exotic* skill will be able to ride these giant insects, but at -15% unless they have the psionic power of empathy or telepathy, which can be used to establish some kind of rudimentary rapport with these animals. Rock buzzers are a little small for riding animals, so they can only carry one human-sized rider (or smaller) and a few bundles for cargo.

Animal

Alignment: Animal/insect, considered selfish.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D4 (low animal intelligence), M.E. 1D4+2, M.A. 1D4+1, P.S. 2D6+12 (considered supernatural for lifting and carrying purposes), P.P. 1D6+12, P.E. 2D6+12, P.B. 1D4+1, Spd. 2D6 running, but 72 flying (approx. 50 mph/80 km). Also see special abilities and bonuses.

Hit Points: P.E. +20

S.D.C.: 2D6+50

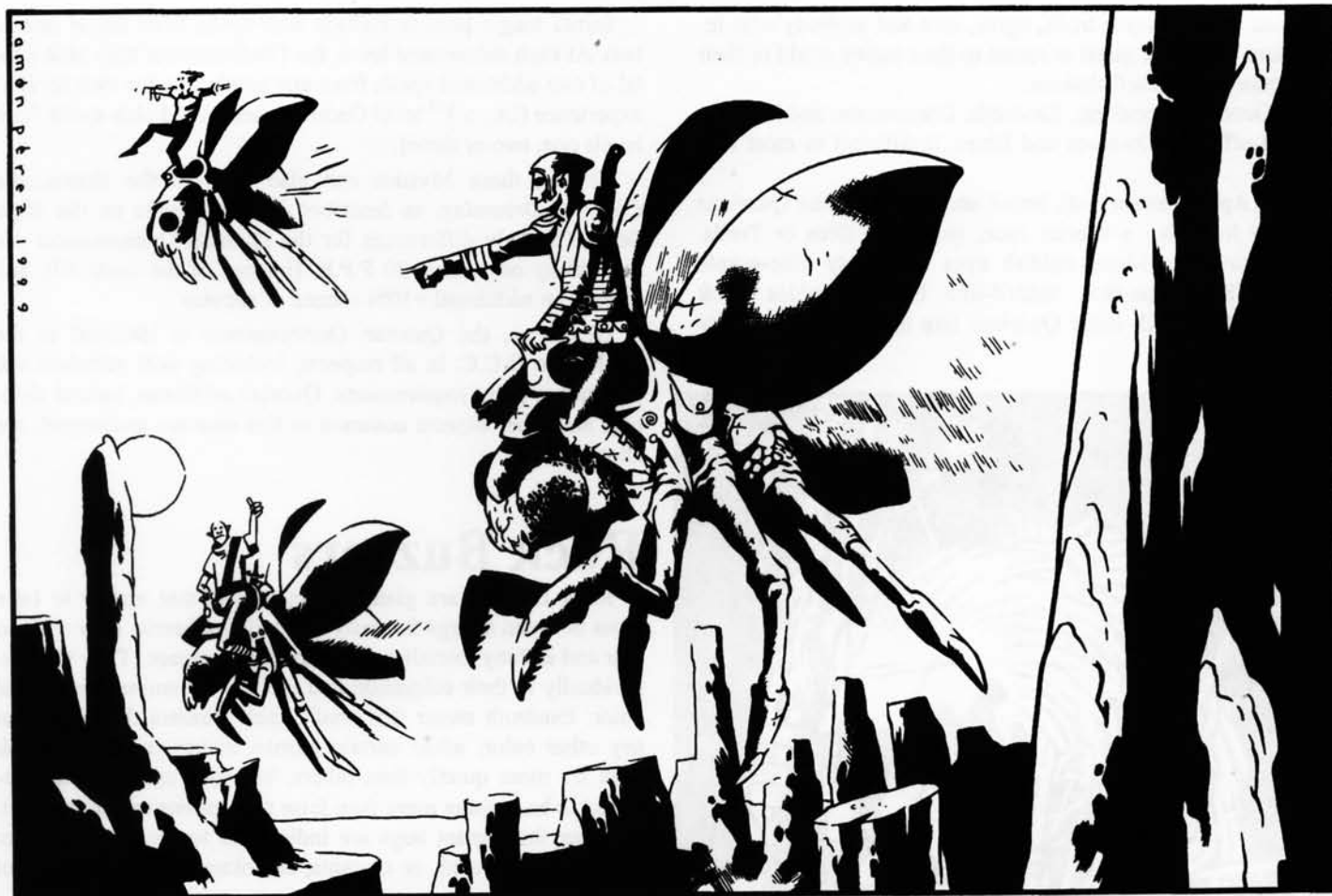
Natural A.R.: 8; soft-bodied insect.

Horror Factor: 8

Average P.P.E.: 1D4

O.C.C.s Available: None, considered an animal.

Natural Abilities: Rock Buzzers are excellent fliers and have adapted well to the vertical cliffs of the Baalgor Mountains



and the Rocky Desert area of this region. All can fly, leap 5 feet (1.5 m) high and across, climb on walls and hang from ceilings like most small insects, prowl at 33%, swim 33%, have crude but polarized vision (can not be blinded by sunlight, glare or bright light), have an excellent sense of smell (50% to track by smell), and can go without water for days.

The insect prefers to eat mostly meat (fresh, spoiled or rotten) and carrion, but can eat garbage and other foods as well. They become finicky and less manageable when hungry and will simply go off to find their own food when they can no longer ignore their hunger pangs. This is not a good thing if one is on their back at the time, because the giant insect will carry its rider off with it, ignoring all commands and prodding until it has fed. Rock Buzzers only require 15% of their body weight in meat every three days, and considering their low overall weight, it's not hard to keep these guys well fed. These insect steeds are dumb animals that will over-eat if allowed to do so. If a Rock Buzzer eats more than 33% its body weight within a 24-hour period, it becomes sluggish and uncooperative and may fall ill. Bloating or sick Rock Buzzers fly at 50% their normal speed, lose all bonuses, and can only fly for an hour or two before tiring and needing three to four hours rest — they like to sleep and lay in the sun for 36+2D6 hours after gorging. Extend this period by 8+2D6 hours for every 10% above 33% of their body weight. These gluttonous creatures can devour as much as their body weight at a single sitting if allowed to.

Flight (special): Rock Buzzers can fly up to 50 mph (80 kph) for as long as one hour per every two P.E. points they

have. Or, they can fly as fast as 75 mph (120 kph) for one minute (4 melees) for every point of P.E. they have. Extremely agile flyers, these giant insects can turn on a dime, fly sideways and land anywhere (effectively VTOL capable). However, the noise made by the Rock Buzzer's wings is extremely loud — imagine a buzzing, flying insect being broadcast over a loudspeaker. Consequently, riders will be unable to sneak up on anybody. Riders will also not be able to communicate verbally with anybody while in flight; hand signals, psionics, bugles and horns are used between riders.

Sticky pads. A Rock Buzzer's feet allow it to land and walk on vertical surfaces, and even while upside-down! These insects can also land on smooth surfaces, such as polished glass, but walking on them is a bit more difficult and speed is reduced by half.

Attacks Per Melee: One, but Rock Buzzers are very non-combative, so in the face of danger, they often will try to flee unless directed otherwise by a rider.

Damage: Generally, rock buzzers only attack very small creatures for food. If they had to attack something, they could bite for 1D6 S.D.C. damage

Bonuses: -1 to strike, +2 to dodge, +4 to dodge while in flight, +2 to save vs poison and disease, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor. All are in addition to attribute bonuses.

Special Bonuses for certain colors: For some reason, Rock Buzzers of different colors do seem to have special and unique characteristics. Only the Eandroth, Gosai, Quorians, Dragonmen and some groups of humans born and raised in the Wastelands seem to have taken note of these differences.

Outsiders and most scholars (because they are outsiders) discard such claims as exaggerations and/or unfounded folklore.

Red: +2D6 to spd attribute. A reasonably common color.

Orange or Rusty Brown: Leap 8 feet (1.8 m) high and 10 feet across; +1 to dodge. A common color.

Brown: +1D6+8 to S.D.C. and +1 to save vs poison and disease. A very common color.

Black: +20% to prowl and wing noise while flying is roughly half as loud. Riders can communicate by shouting and can be heard up to 100 feet (30.5 m) away. Comparatively rare.

Dark Blue: Alert and smarter, +2 to I.Q., +2 on initiative. A comparatively rare color.

Dark Green: Can go without food or water for an extra day or two. A less common color.

Yellow or Yellow-Green: Has keen sense of smell, +1 on initiative, +25% to track by smell and 50% to recognize scent. Rare.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None, although the creature responds very well to empathic and telepathic communication.

Average Life Span: 5 years. Rock Buzzers grow to full size within 3 months of birth.

Size: 6-7 feet (1.8 to 2.1 m) long, approx. 260 pounds (572 kg).

Habitat: Exclusive to the Baalgor Wastelands, however, they function well and can survive in any warm climate. That having been said, none have migrated to the Yin-Sloth Jungles or Land of the South Winds, suggesting that some instinct of the insect or an unknown aspect of the Wastelands keeps them in that one particular region.



Languages: None.

Enemies: None, per se. Most predators find them bad-tasting.

Allies: None, per se. They offer little to no resistance to being domesticated as riding beasts, although their extremely low intelligence makes training them a long exercise in patience and repetition.

Physical Appearance: A giant insect that some have compared to a cicada and others to a cross between a large housefly and a flying beetle.

Value: 1,000 to 1,500 for a "trained" adult. Trained means that the Rock Buzzer can be easily saddled and reined. Untrained insects go for 400-500 gold, but they take 1D6 hours to saddle and rein, and riders are minus another 15% to their exotic riding skill, so the extra time is hardly worth the price break. Rock Buzzer eggs go for 70-100 gold each, and are often sold in clutches of 10.

Sandwurm

By Bill Coffin & Kevin Siembieda

Perhaps no other creature drives home the point that the Baalgor Wastelands is a place of horrific wonders better than the Sandwurm. These massive beasts are the uncontested lords of the sandy desert. Technically, they are a primitive form of dragon, similar to the Giant Woolly Dragon, having little intelligence and minimal magic ability. Physically, they resemble 300-400 foot-long serpents with hundreds of tiny legs. These creatures have huge heads with gaping maws filled with several rows of razor-sharp teeth. Like Lazrethegs, Sandwurms have mouth-tentacles that are used to lash out, grab, and reel in prey for consumption. Given a Sandwurm's size, they can do this to just about any humanoid smaller than a True Giant. The mouth tentacles reach about 50 feet (15.2 m). Aside from their biting and mouth tentacle attacks, these creatures also breathe fire and can cast a limited number of Fire and Earth Warlock Spells.

Sandwurms slumber deep beneath the sand or under large rock outcroppings for years at a time. When they awaken, they tend to lie in wait under the sand, sensing the vibrations of those walking on the surface. When prey comes within reach, the monster rises to the surface and gobbles up the hapless surface-goer. Prey includes animals and livestock to humanoids of all variety. Sandwurms sometimes decide to stay on the surface, basking in the sun and, as the mood strikes them, terrorizing lesser beings and reaping carnage and destruction in villages and tribes. These wicked monsters have no regard for life other than their own, and often do whatever they please — most really do consider themselves to be the Lords of Baalgor.

Although dumb compared to most of their dragon kin, Sandwurms are instinctive predators and can exhibit a surprising level of cunning when necessary. However, they are lazy creatures that hate to exert themselves and prefer, instead, to sun themselves and sleep for days at a time. They become active only when bothered, annoyed, feeling mischievous, and hungry. Some (about 30%) establish lairs where they keep the bones and trinkets of their most memorable or fun victims, but most are too lazy and primitive to do even that.

Sub-Species of Dragon.

Alignment: Anarchist or evil (any, but usually miscreant or diabolic).

Attributes: I.Q. 1D6+4, M.E. 1D6+6, M.A. 1D6+6, P.S. 6D6+30 (considered supernatural), P.P. 1D6+8, P.E. 1D6+22, P.B. 1D6, Spd. 2D6+30 (half that speed when digging or traveling underground).

Hit Points: P.E.x2 +100 for young and adolescents, multiply by ten for adults.

S.D.C.: 1D6x10+100 for young and adolescents, multiply by ten for adults.

Natural A.R.: Hatchling/Young: 12; Adult: 15

Horror Factor: 15

P.P.E.: 6D6 +3D6 per level of experience.

O.C.C.s Available: None.

Average Life Span: Scholars believe 1000 years to be the maximum.

Size: 300-400 feet (92.4-123.2 m) long, 40-50 feet (12.3-15.4 m) tall.



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Average Level of Experience: 5-7; same E.P. table as dragons.

R.C.C. Skills: Underground skills roughly equivalent to the three possessed by the Baalizard (+5%), climb 80%/75%, land navigation 80%, track animals 70%, track humanoids 65%, wilderness survival 90%, and understands and speaks a guttural form of Gobblely and Dragonese/Elven 75%. Also see natural abilities.

Natural Abilities: Supernatural strength and endurance, dig and burrow underground, excellent sense of smell and can track by smell alone 70% (+15% if following a blood trail; penalties for being blinded are half), Nightvision 600 feet (183 m), see the invisible, impervious to heat and fire (magical fires do one quarter their normal damage), and bio-regeneration 6D6 S.D.C./H.P. per melee round.

Vulnerabilities: Rune weapons do double damage, plus the beast tends to underestimate its opponents and often acts in haste or anger.

Attacks Per Melee: Hatchling/Young: Three by physical or one by magic; double for adults.

Damage: Varies with supernatural P.S. A favorite attack, other than biting (5D6 damage) or the tentacle attack (entangles and pulls prey into the mouth). A tentacle can also be used to strike out like a whip but does half damage. Fire breath has a range of 50 feet (15.2 m) and does 4D6 damage. The Sandwurm will also use its tail and/or looping lengths of its incredibly long body as a whip or bludgeon to inflict 6D6 damage per hammering blow.

Bonuses: Hatchling/Young: +1 on initiative, +2 to strike, +2 to parry, automatic dodge (can dodge without using a melee action), +1 to pull punch, +2 on all saving throws, +4 to save vs possession, and +6 to save vs Horror Factor — double for adults. All are in addition to attribute bonuses.

Magic: Two spells per level of experience selected from level 1-4 Fire or Earth Warlock spells. These can be mixed and matched from both categories, but the two can only be picked from one at a time.

Psionics: Empathy, Presence Sense, Mind Block and 1D4 Sensitive powers of choice. I.S.P.: M.E. number +1D6 I.S.P. per level of experience.

Habitat: Sandwyrms are found only in the Baalgor Wastelands. It is thought that they have no way of going over, under or around the Baalgor mountains, and therefore, are contained in that region. However, this is not true. Sandwyrms are capable of travelling over and surviving in many different terrains. Although they prefer the warmth, openness and desolation of the sandy desert, they can be encountered anywhere in the Baalgor Wastelands, including the rocky and

mountainous regions. Their apparent exclusivity to the Wastelands is yet another mystery. Less than 200 are believed to inhabit the Wastelands, but the Eandroth insist the numbers are at least double that, probably more. Nobody knows.

Languages: Dragonese/Elven and Gobblely.

Enemies: Virtually everything!

Allies: A rarity. Sandwyrms consider most living things as potential food, rivals or enemies. Occasionally known to join forces with other dragons and incredibly powerful sorcerers, demon lords, demigods, gods and similarly powerful beings. According to some rumors, two or three Sandwyrms have allied themselves with the fledgling Kingdom of Giants, but these are completely unsubstantiated.

Physical Appearance: A long, snaking creature with hundreds of tiny arms, large head, and massive, tentacle-filled maw. Typically a red and gold or tan color; deep blue eyes.

Sloderi

By Bill Coffin & Kevin Siembieda

Imagine a cross between a cheetah, a velociraptor and a flying squirrel, and you get a pretty decent picture of what these nightmarish terrors are like. Sloderi are long, sleek, scaly quadrupeds with T-Rex dinosaur-like heads and long, thin, whip-like tails that are used for balance, climbing and lashing out at prey and opponents like a whip. These creatures also have large folds of skin on each side of their bodies, from their forelegs to their hind legs, like the membrane of a flying squirrel. These soft, leathery membranes are used to help the beast to glide when leaping from mountain cliffs, buttes, rocky pillars and towering fingers of stone. Finally, Sloderi have long, curved, retractable talons that slice like a knife, on their fore and hind legs.

Like Tuskers, Sloderi run down their prey with bursts of lightning speed or by pouncing on them from up high and silently gliding down upon their unsuspecting prey. When the shadow of this hunter falls upon its victim, it is often too late. Sloderi do not have a Tusker's brute strength, so they stalk their prey like a mountain lion and use animal cunning and the element of surprise to bring it down. When hiding up in the rocks, on mountain cliffs or other high places (they sometimes invade towns and hide on the rooftops), they silently leap down upon unsuspecting prey. Depending on their height and wind currents, they can glide for hundreds of yards/meters and survive leaping from peaks, bluffs and buttes over a thousand feet (305 m) high, always landing on their feet. When "running down" prey the animal runs up to full speed, takes a long flying leap, and then used the membranes under its forelegs to glide for several hundred feet. This attack ends with a lethal approach from above on the fleeing prey, as the creature lands on top of it, sinks its long claws and/or teeth in, and begins to tear it apart. Lucky victims are killed instantly. The unfortunate ones are eaten alive.

Sloderi are roughly man-sized. They typically hunt in packs of 1D4+1, but lone hunters also frequently prowl the Wastelands and, occasionally, packs grow as large as 12-16, although a rarity. These hunters, whether solitary killers or small packs, often seek out humanoid prey because they find them to be slower, if not easier to hunt. Possessed with the cunning of a fe-



line and surprising patience, Sloderi that are not hungry are known to stalk and/or toy with their prey for days before making the kill. More frightening is the fact that certain individuals have been known to follow and stalk a caravan, group of travelers or a village for weeks, picking off victims whenever it gets hungry or bold enough to do so. This is not unlike following a herd of animals to prey upon and can result in the monster or pack killing dozens of people before finally getting caught, slain or driven off. Being targeted and followed by a travelling Sloderi or pack can be haunting and terrifying. It's important to note that the Sloderi will not usually fight to the death unless starving, cornered or driven to madness. Most will flee if their prey proves to be too difficult, however, these wily hunters may continue to follow that prey from a distance, waiting for a new opportunity to try again, especially if a target becomes sick, injured, lame or divided from the herd (i.e. teammates, travelling companions, village, etc.).

Monstrous Animal Predator

Alignment: Anarchist or Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D6+1 (high animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 1D6+16, P.P. 1D6+18, P.E. 1D6+16, P.B. 1D6+4, Spd. 3D6+24

Hit Points: P.E. +20

S.D.C.: 6D6+6; the pack leader will be the largest and strongest with a bonus 2D6 S.D.C. and +4 to P.S.

Natural A.R.: 6

Horror Factor: 10 for an individual, 13 when facing a group of two or more.

Average P.P.E.: 3D6

O.C.C.s Available: None, considered an animal.

Natural Abilities: Keen hawk-like eyesight enabling the beasts to see a rabbit two miles (3.2 km) away. They also have excellent hearing and sense of smell — track by smell alone 55% (+30% when following a blood scent). The creature has a prehensile tail that it can use like a whip, for balance and even for holding on to jutting rocks and branches, plus the following instinctive abilities: Land navigation 90%, climb 95%/80%, swim 40% and prowl 70%.

The Sloderi can leap 6 feet (1.8 m) high and 30 feet (9 m) long from a standing start. Can leap 25 feet (7.7 m) high and 150 (46.2 m) across with a running start and a glide-assisted leap. For such a leap, Sloderi must spend a full melee round to get up to gliding speed. When leaping down from on high, the monster can safely and silently glide for 1000-1200 feet (305 to 366 m) down and an equal distance across. Sloderi love to use this gliding ability to make flying sneak attacks on their prey. Gliding attacks are considered the equivalent of a leap attack.

Attacks Per Melee: Four.

Damage: Talons/claw strike inflicts 3D6 +P.S. damage bonus, tail whip 1D6+3 and a bite does 1D6+3.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +1 to strike, +3 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +2 to save vs poison and disease, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor. All are in addition to attribute bonuses.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Value: Some Eandroth and Gromek have had limited success in domesticating these creatures for use as attack animals.



Trained Sloderi cost a fortune, because they must be trained from birth, and it's not easy to get newborn Sloderi pups. The average trained animal will cost 1,000-2,000 gold in Troker, and easily double that in any other large city. Some Western generals have considered buying these domesticated animals to start their own Sloderi farms, since the thought of unleashing several dozen hungry Sloderi on an oncoming line of enemy troops has certain appeal. Thus, Western slavers have recently begun to actively recruit hunters and trappers to catch Sloderi couples and pups. Bounties for a mated pair go as high as 10,000 gold, and a healthy, pregnant female will fetch 15,000 gold.

Average Life Span: 10-15 years.

Size: 6-7 feet (1.85-2.15 m) long, but with a sleek, thin build.

Habitat: The Baalgor Wastelands, especially the rocky desert region, and mountainous parts of the Old Kingdom; occasionally Timiro. The Baalgor Mountains are a poor hunting environment for Sloderi, which discourages many of them from migrating there. As a result, these animals are most common to the Wastelands and have not widely spread to other parts of the world. Slavers have begun to sell captured specimens to the Western Empire for use in arenas. A Sloderi's tendency to take a flying leap into the crowd, however, makes them less than attractive to some arenas.

Languages: None, per se. Sloderi communicate among themselves with a system of complicated barks, grunts, and roars.

Enemies: Tuskers and Mologoths are the Sloderi's primary competition for food, and will even hunt Sloderi, if hungry enough. Plus, Sloderi, Mologoth and Tuskers often will fight each other to the death to assert territoriality over each other. Sloderi will only fight a Mologoth and other large animals when in packs of three or more. They will, however, take on a Tusker in a one-to-one fight, but will probably come out the loser in that battle. Lone Tuskers attacked by two or more Sloderi, however, are in serious trouble. Humanoids, particularly Eandroth and giants, are also considered enemies, as well as potential prey.

Allies: Only others of their kind. They consider most living things as potential food.

Physical Appearance: Strange dinosaur-like creature; roughly man-sized.

The Thin Ones

By Bill Coffin & Kevin Siembieda

The Thin Ones are a race of parasitic humanoids that, in order to live, must inhabit a host body that they control from the inside like a puppet. Nobody knows where these creatures come from, whether they are native to the Palladium World or were brought here like so many of the other aliens living in the Baalgor Wastelands. All that is known for certain about these strange humanoids is their feeding patterns.

Thin Ones live off the ambient magical energy (P.P.E.) found within all living things. They tap into this energy by inhabiting a host body, usually by paralyzing it, prying the mouth open and fitting itself down the host's throat. Once inside, the Thin One extends itself along the host's limbs and into its brain stem. At this point, the Thin One has total control over the host body. The host is still alive, but its brain is put in a kind of stasis while the Thin One is in control. Those lucky enough to survive a Thin One possession never recall being possessed, nor do they suffer any negative side effects aside from a few days of disorientation and fairly intense headaches (-10% to all skills and -2 to strike, parry and dodge while these headaches persist).

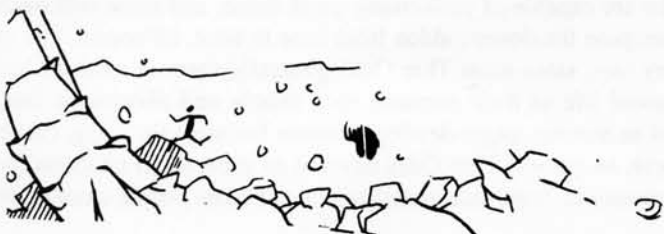
While possessing a host body, Thin Ones siphon off a single point of P.P.E. per day. This is a temporary loss of P.P.E. for the host, which is recovered normally, as if the P.P.E. were expended in casting a spell. The host's remaining P.P.E. is at the Thin One's disposal.

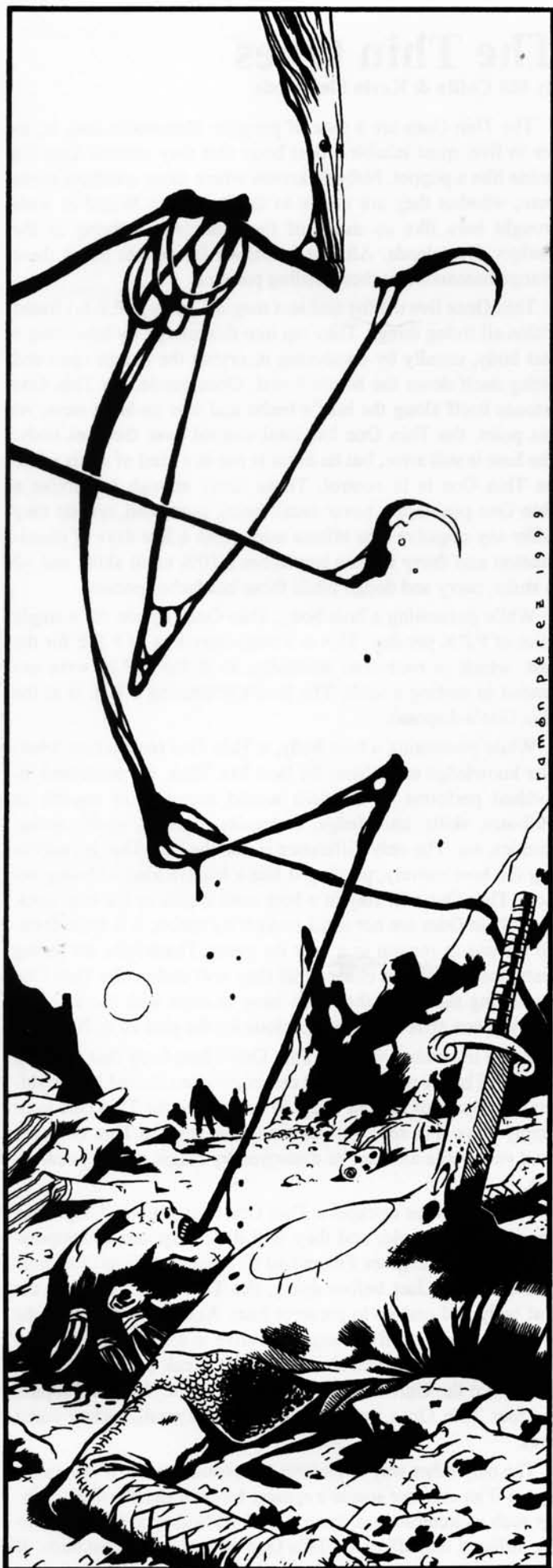
While possessing a host body, a Thin One may access whatever knowledge or abilities the host has. Thus, the possessed individual performs as he/she/it would normally in regards to attributes, skills, knowledge, memories, fighting, spell casting, psionics, etc. The only difference is that the Thin One is controlling the host entirely, piloting it like a bizarre kind of living vehicle. Thin One will stay in a host until it dies or the host does. Since Thin Ones are not thrill-seekers by nature, it is quite feasible for one to remain in a host for years. Thankfully for young hosts, there is a good chance that they will outlive the Thin One controlling them, but they then have to cope with the fact that they've been effectively unconscious for the past 10 to 20 years.

When in combat, it is the Thin One's host body that takes all damage. The creature inside is completely unaffected by the suffering or death of its host body. When it dies, the Thin One must simply leave it in search of another. This is when Thin Ones are most vulnerable and can be destroyed by magic and physical attack.

There are ways to expel a Thin One from its host body. Thin Ones detest the cold, and they will die if exposed to temperatures below 32 degrees Fahrenheit (0 degrees Celsius) for more than one hour. Just before dying, the Thin One will leave the host body and curl up to preserve heat. At this point, left to die or it may be captured by keeping it alive in a metal box or some other form of constraint that it can not break out of. (It is rumored that the University of Caer Itom, in the Western Empire, has four Thin Ones, each imprisoned in a small, locked metal box).

The only other way to remove the creature while it is inside a host is if an attacker scores a critical hit on it (a natural 20). Under such a circumstance, there is a 01-25% chance that the damage inflicted will affect the Thin One as well as the host body. If





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a Thin One is injured in this manner, it will panic and leave the host body at once, and try to flee. Exorcisms will confirm the presence of the possessing creature but will not force its expulsion.

Discovering the presence of a Thin One is not as difficult as one might think. They are hardly masters of subterfuge or subtlety, and they often give themselves away by doing as they please and using the host's body in such a way that it does not fit with the character's true alignment, morals or personality. Most of the time, a Thin One-possessed individual will be very emotionless and distant, reluctant to communicate verbally, and will avoid cold temperatures (even to the extent of not drinking cold beverages). Furthermore, psionic and magical abilities to sense evil and/or see aura will indicate the presence of this foul being.

Despite the various methods of discovering a Thin One, they still have a great weapon at their disposal: hardly anybody in the Palladium World even knows about them. Very few people have even heard of the Thin Ones, much less seen one or studied them long enough to have any idea of their range of abilities. Those few who have heard of the Thin Ones often disregard them as the subject of some crazy folk tale to scare misbehaving children, or as a rare sort of Possessing Entity. When people do discover a Thin One in their midst, they try to find a more "conventional" way to explain what is going on, rather than think it could be some demonic or alien puppeteer capable of taking control of an individual. Indeed, most of the time when it is discovered that the Thin One's host has been taken over by something, people first assume that a ghost or other infernal entity is doing the possession. And while the host's friends and loved ones waste time with religious ceremonies and exorcisms, the Thin One itself remains unaffected.

More importantly, much of the possessing and wrongdoing committed by Thin ones is wrongly attributed to the work of Changelings. After all, the world hates Changelings already, and people in general are primed to think that if there is somebody who looks like a friend but isn't acting like himself, then it must be a Changeling in disguise, right? Sadly, many Changeling persecutions have been started by the deeds of a Thin One either being mistakenly identified as a Changeling, or by a Thin One committing acts of villainy while actually possessing a Changeling. Indeed, were it not for The Thin Ones, Changelings might not be quite as feared, hated, and despised as they are today.

In the end, however, nobody knows what motivates Thin Ones. Once they possess a host, they often will just carry on a seemingly normal life, punctuated by acts of cruelty and evil, but otherwise doing what it can to keep its host body alive and healthy. Some Thin Ones display a penchant for extreme violence and wickedness, using their host like a disposable weapon, causing as much damage and disarray as possible before leaving their host behind (often as a corpse) and continuing their foul work in another hapless victim.

Despite this, there do seem to be at least a few Thin Ones who are capable of performing good deeds, and some will even champion the downtrodden from time to time. Of course, this is very rare, since most Thin Ones generally seem to view all humanoid life as their personal food supply and playthings. But, just as humans might develop extreme fondness for a dog, cat or horse, so too will Thin Ones develop an uncommon affection for a humanoid host, and sometimes one or more people close to its

host body (remember, the monster does share its host's memories). In fact, some speculate that it is the memories of the host that can affect a Thin One who is not diabolic or miscreant evil, to take a kind look toward humanoids and compel them to help others.

Thin Ones usually live and act alone, but small groups of them do occasionally get together to perform some unknown mission. To the precious few in the Palladium World who know of the Thin Ones, this behavior is particularly disturbing. One Thin One is terrifying enough. A band of them is almost too much to contemplate. With several friends to help it, a Thin One could practically take over whoever it pleased, whenever it pleased. Working in concert, they could take over alchemists, powerful wizards, nobles, and rulers of nations! Indeed, the possible havoc the Thin Ones could wreak shakes even the sturdiest of souls. Yet, they have not done it. Why? Are they simply content to feed and avoid detection? Or by staying hidden, are they biding time for some greater, more sinister purpose? Indeed, the world may never know.

One thing is for certain, though. Sightings of Thin Ones and the bodies they steal have increased dramatically over the last hundred years. To knowledgeable native scholars versed in this subject, it would seem that either the Thin Ones are having a population explosion, or, many more Thin Ones have become bent on evil-doing than previously thought. Another possibility is the growing population of "hosts" and their interaction with people outside the Wastelands (mainly explorers, mercenaries and adventurers from the Western Empire and Old Kingdom). Such villains are committing acts that draw attention. Either way, civilization has something quite serious to worry about.

Unknown, intelligent alien being & NPC Villain.

Alignment: The vast majority are diabolic (30%), miscreant (30%), aberrant (10%) or anarchist (25%). Due to their parasitic, predatory nature, they have a very hard time following a good alignment. Best suited as NPC villains.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6+4, M.E. 4D6, M.A. 4D6, P.S. 2D6, P.P. 2D6, P.E. 2D6, P.B. 1D6, Spd. 2D6

Hit Points: P.E. +3D6

S.D.C.: 3D6+6

Natural A.R.: 8

Horror Factor: When viewed in their natural state, Thin Ones have an H.F. of 9. However, this is more like intense curiosity or amazement. The Thin Ones are not particularly menacing-looking, despite their sinister means of survival.

Average P.P.E.: 6D6 +25. In addition, Thin Ones can tap into the P.P.E. of their hosts.

O.C.C.s Available: None, since they simply adapt to the O.C.C. of their host and draw upon his or her skills and experience. Thus if a 5th level Mercenary Troll is taken over by a Thin One, it acts with the abilities, experience and bonuses of the host Troll — experience and skills are frozen at the level of the host when the monster first took possession of him. Once the Thin One leaves that host, however, it loses all the abilities and skills it once enjoyed, and has only dim memories of that period.

Natural Abilities: In addition to possession by literally entering and merging with a host body, all Thin Ones possess the spell-like ability to paralyze others with their touch. This ability is equivalent to the spell *Paralysis Bolt*, only the Thin

Ones cannot use it over a distance, only by touch. This is the primary means for a Thin One to subdue and enter a host.

Also, all Thin Ones have the psionic-like ability to see auras, as per the psionic sensitive ability. This operates constantly for the Thin Ones, and it has no I.S.P. or P.P.E. cost. This is how the Thin Ones determine which hosts to target and identify psychics who are their natural enemies.

Finally, Thin Ones can scale walls 80% and prowl 50% (+35% when in darkness, shadows or hiding and not moving).

Vulnerabilities: As noted previously, various types of psionics can detect the presence of a Thin One. Likewise, psionic powers that can precisely target a specific mind can be used against the Thin Ones. This includes Mind Bolt, Hypnotic Suggestion, Mind Bond, Mind Wipe and others that directly affect the mind. The creature is also vulnerable to psionic and magical illusions. Remember, the mind of the host body is effectively asleep and in stasis, so it is the mind of the Thin One that is in control and vulnerable to psionic mind attacks and illusions. The only way to hurt the monster while inside the host body, without hurting the host, is through careful use of psionics. However, this means psychics are regarded as natural enemies and the first foes to be eliminated.

Cold based magic attacks may draw the monster from its host body and inflict double damage when outside the warm, protective host. Physical weapons and punches can be used against the creature when outside a host body, but make attackers vulnerable to its paralyzing touch (need a 16 or higher to save) and being possessed themselves.

Attacks Per Melee: Two in their natural state or per those available from a host body.

Damage: Claws inflict 2D4. The Thin Ones really are not built for combat on their own.

Bonuses: None in their natural state, or those possessed by the host body.

Magic: None in their natural state other than those noted under natural abilities, above. Their ability to physically enter and seize complete control of a host body without hurting that body or mind in any way is obviously some innate, magical ability unlike any seen on the Palladium World.

Psionics: None, aside from their natural ability to see aura and detect psionics (range: 60 feet/18.3 m; line of vision).

Average Life Span: Unknown; believed to be 30-40 years.

Size: At full height, a Thin One stands almost 8 feet (2.4 m) tall. However, Thin Ones fold themselves to fit inside and merge with a host body. Furthermore, they can fold and roll up into a ball the size of a grapefruit when without a host body and hiding, afraid or cold.

Habitat: Originally found only in the Baalgor Wastelands, but over the last several centuries they are feared to have spread to nearly every other corner of the Palladium world except for the Great Northern Wilderness, Bizantium, Phi, Lopan, and the northern half of the Eastern Territory, all of which are too cold for them.

Languages: The Thin Ones speak a unique language among themselves that is based on transmitted, sub-harmonic vibrations. Without advanced technology, you basically can not tell when Thin Ones are communicating with each other, nor can one hear what they are saying. All Thin Ones also appear to speak Elven, as well.



Enemies: All humanoids and many larger animals are considered potential host bodies and enemies. Some have speculated that the Thin Ones are some kind of alien demon or creature of magic because they have a minimal understanding of or regard for humanoid life. Also, like demons and many creatures of magic, they tend to be self-serving and often wicked and cruel, hurting others for their own enjoyment.

Allies: It is thought they may associate with certain demons or other powerful, supernatural beings but, this is pure theory.

Physical Appearance: On its own, a Thin One appears like an eight foot (2.5 m) tall stick figure or armature made out of some kind of black or gray wire. These creatures are extremely spindly, and look as if they could be snapped in two with the slightest effort. Their height and spindly build makes them somewhat awkward and clumsy, but they can easily move through very tight spaces (like a chimney, crack in a wall, between the bars of a prison cell or grate, a partly open window, arrow slit, and so on) as well as densely obstructed pathways like a jungle or forest. Furthermore, they are difficult to see among rocks, trees, and shadows, especially when standing still, blending into the shapes, lines, and shadow patterns of the background. Their long arms and legs end in small, sharp hooks that can only perform the most basic manipulations. Thin Ones have a small, narrow head which have a pair of pinpoint-small, jet black eyes and no other facial features aside from a tiny, thin, horizontal mouth.

The extremely wiry build of Thin Ones allows them to fold up into tiny packages as large as a large grapefruit or small bundle of sticks.

Vrill

Along with the Dragonmen and Thin Ones, Vrill are one of the least numerous people in the Baalgor Wastelands. Little is known about them, for they were all but exterminated during the Elf-Dwarf War, along with most records that mentioned them. What is known is that the Vrill came to the Palladium world during the War, and following the end of that holocaust, the few surviving Vrill, unable to go back from whence they came, vanished into the Wastelands.

All attempts to reconstruct the history of these people have failed, mostly because the Vrill themselves do not even know where they came from, why they were brought to the Palladium World, and how exactly they were nearly wiped out on this world. It would seem that whoever was responsible for the Vrill genocide also stole a good portion of their collective memory. Thus, the Vrill all have a case of serious amnesia when it comes

to their cultural identity, history and heritage. A people without a past, they forever long to fill that nagging blank spot in the back of their minds.

Vrill are a good-natured race, obviously out of place in this world and especially the desert environment of the Wastelands. They have a regard for life, promote peace and try to understand and tolerate all peoples. They usually become healers, explorers and mystics who roam the world to learn its secrets and, in so doing, learn something about themselves and their past. Vrill often travel alone, in pairs or with a group of adventurers. They are generally very open-minded, and love to meet people and see other parts of the world. Consequently, they will gladly band with travelling adventurers who would have their company.

One of the reasons why Vrill can pick up and go wherever they please is because they generally never settle down except to have children. Vrill couples will mate after a half-year courtship. During this time the couple will travel together, sharing knowledge and experiences. Once they mate, Vrill females undergo a fifteen-month pregnancy, after which she will give birth to 2D4 young. Of these, nearly half will die within their first month of life. A common Vrill custom is to assign a "ghost brother" or "ghost sister" to a young Vrill, in which case he or she bears the name of one of their dead siblings as a means of honoring them. Vrill young are cared for by both parents for another three years, during which time they grow to about 80% of their adult size. By then they can function as adults, and the parents part ways and the young Vrill journey together for another 1D4 years. After that time, the siblings will separate and explore the world on their own, usually alone, unless they find a prospective mate or a band of adventurers to join.

In general, Vrill are not very materialistic, and do not amass great fortunes. Most will own only one or two weapons, perhaps a suit of light armor, and a few possessions in a large satchel or backpack. Vrill, like Gosai, believe it is a virtue to travel light, so they never load themselves down with what they consider unnecessary weight. This same philosophy applies to their views of magic items. Vrill like and appreciate magic, but will only keep those magic items that strike their fancy or are important in survival or adventuring. Generally, items of exceptional beauty or historical significance are Vrill favorites. They avoid rune weapons, because they see them as an abuse of power and a misuse of life force. If a Vrill ever came into possession of a rune item, he or she is likely to take pains to either destroy it or put it someplace where nobody else would ever find it.

The Vrill's aversion to rune weapons may have been what brought them to the Palladium World during the Elf-Dwarf War, as some scholars have suggested. Those who uphold such notions believe the Vrill may have arrived to destroy all rune weapons and/or those who manufacture them. Either way, they would have incurred the wrath of the Dwarves, who slew nearly every last Vrill in retribution. Others believe these good natured beings may have been summoned by one side or the other (or a third party like the Titans) as mediators in a futile attempt to end the war and bring about a lasting peace. Indeed, one of the last cease-fires may have been the result of Vrillian efforts at a peace treaty. Of course, they may have been recruited as healers or drawn to the Palladium World by accident and got caught in the crossfire.



Intelligent Humanoid

Alignment: Any, but tend toward good or selfish.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 4D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 2D6+2, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 2D6+2, P.B. 3D6, Spd. 3D6

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level.

S.D.C.: 10 plus any from physical skills and O.C.C.

Natural A.R.: 5

Horror Factor: 6

Average P.P.E.: 6D6+10

O.C.C.s Available: 95% of all Vrill become one of the following: Monk (scholarly monks, NOT warrior monks), Scholars, Rangers, Sailors, Druids, Psi-Healers or Psi-Mystics. Of that other 5%, most become Warlocks or Clergy. Aside from the Ranger and Sailor O.C.C.s, Vrill usually avoid men at arms O.C.C.s.

Natural Abilities: Good vision and other senses on par with humans, instinctive swimmers 90% and can survive depths up to 600 feet (183 m).

Radar/Sonar (special): This ability sends out high-frequency waves which bounce off objects, returning and indicating the direction and distance of the reflecting objects. This enables the character to automatically know the location and range of objects and movements within range. Radar is especially useful in the dark, over long distances, and during combat (provided the character has a relatively full view of the combat area). Sonar is excellent underwater.

Range: 400 feet (122 m) +100 feet (30.5 m) per level of experience.

Abilities Include:

Interpreting Shapes: 50% +5% per level of experience.

Estimating Distance: 60% +5% per level of experience.

Estimating Direction: 50% +5% per level of experience.

Estimating Speed: 40% +4% per level of experience.

Estimating Exact Location: 40% +4% per level of experience.

Bonuses when using Radar/Sonar:

+4 on initiative.

+2 to parry and dodge.

+3 to strike.

+1 additional attack per melee; this is in addition to the two attacks per melee all Vrill start off with or those gained from hand to hand combat skills.

No minuses apply when blinded or in darkness.

Note: Radar does not go through cloth, wood, walls or people. Consequently, the character can not see or sense through walls or doors. Likewise, while he may sense a covered wagon, estimate its speed, direction and distance, he cannot tell how many people are inside it.

Disadvantages: Radar is totally fouled in the rain, snow, dust, sandstorms, and by other similar, multiple, obscuring images. No bonuses apply under these conditions, including the additional attack per melee. If these conditions exist under darkness or while the character is blinded, the radar is ineffective and the character is blind and suffers from the usual penalties of -10 to strike, parry and dodge.

Smoke also fouls radar, but not as severely as the aforementioned conditions. All the abilities to estimate speed, direction, distance, shape and location are at -30%. All bonuses are reduced by half. The character retains the additional attack per melee.

Attacks Per Melee: Three (including the extra attack from radar) or by O.C.C. Regardless of the O.C.C. or type of Hand to Hand skill a Vrill character selects, he or she will get an additional attack per melee courtesy of their radar ability.

Damage: Fist inflicts 1D4+P.S. bonus. Or by weapon, psionics or spell.

Bonuses: None, aside from those from the radar ability.

Magic: By O.C.C.

Psionics: Any Vrill who has psionics becomes either a psi-mystic or a psi-healer. If a Vrill is any other O.C.C., then the character can NOT have psionics.

Average Life Span: 100 years.

Size: 5 and a half to 6 feet tall (1.6 to 1.8 m); 160 to 170 lbs (72 to 76.5 kg).



Habitat: The Vrill are most common to the Baalgor Wastelands because it is the place they originated on the Palladium World and is one of the few places where they are not persecuted by humans. "Civilized" humans generally regard them as monsters because of their appearance and tend to assume the worst and kill them on sight. They do not enjoy overly moist climates such as the Yin-Sloth jungles or parts of the Land of the South Winds, although they could survive there. Nor do they handle cold well. They have been reported in the Old Kingdom, especially near Mount Nimro, as well as the less civilized and populated areas of Timiro and southern portion of the Eastern Territory. They also are rumored to exist in the Land of the Damned, but this is a completely unfounded and wild rumor. Due to their slowly growing reputation as healers and sages, they are slowly being accepted for something other than dangerous monsters or alien invaders.

Languages: All Vrill speak, read and write Elven and Dwarven, as well as Gobblely at 98%. Curiously enough, Vrill are unable to learn any other languages besides those three. Regardless of how intensively a Vrill may study other languages, he or she will never attain greater than a 10% proficiency in it. Nobody, not even the Vrill, know what the reason for this is. Nor do they have a "native" tongue.

Enemies: They do not consider any people to be their enemy, not even the humans and Ogres who have persecuted them out of fear for centuries.

Allies: Although the Vrill have no official allies, they are welcomed and embraced as friends and equals by Dragonmen, Eandroth, Gosai, Quorians, Quillbacks, and many Orc and Goblin tribes. In fact, the latter two welcome them as healers and allow them to become official and highly respected members of their clans.

Physical Appearance: Vrill are bipedal humanoids who look like a cross between a lizard and a frog. They are covered in horny, spiky scales that range from a light khaki to a dark beige. They possess large, amphibian eyes that are covered by nictitating membranes to keep out sand and grit. Vrill have graceful and lithe bodies, but are not very muscular, strong or bulky. They have long arms and legs, with only two large fingers and a thumb on each hand, and two large toes on each foot. A ridge of small, scaly fins runs from the top of the head to the tail bone. Vrill have large mouths, like a frog, but with a row of small, sharp teeth inside, and a human-like tongue. They are omnivorous with a gentle disposition.

Notes on Other Monsters & Races

Orcs, Ogres, Trolls, Kobolds & Goblins

Like ants crawling from the woodwork, trouble making and violent people flock to the Baalgor Wastelands in droves. Many come here because there are no confining laws to abide by, or any "civilized" powers, like humans, Elves or Dwarves, to deal with. Or maybe it is because they hear there are helpless settlements to plunder or dominate. Others seek glory and fortune by fighting under the war banner of one of the giant warlords who are staking out impressive stretches of territory along the Baalgor Mountains, or to engage in banditry, sell their swords as mercenaries or to search for treasure or secrets lying under the earth among the ruins of a bygone age. Still others are outcasts or refugees, and some are explorers and adventurers. Whatever their reason for coming, non-human blackguards such as Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, Kobolds and Goblins make up a good chunk of the region's population.

In the case of most of these so-called "monster races," there are numerous tribes and factions who engage in cannibalism (30-40%), and most will eat their enemies, as well as take humans, Goblins, Orcs and other races captive as prisoners or "cattle stock" to be eaten at a later time. Most consider Gnomes a delicacy.

Orcs are the most common of this segment, coming to the Baalgor Wastelands from the Yin-Sloth Jungles and the Old Kingdom. In the Wastelands, your average Orc can make a pretty good life for himself. He's probably used to living a nasty, brutish and short life regardless of where he lives, so the poverty and hardships of the region come as no surprise. The violence and lawlessness is also appealing to these barbaric people, freeing them from the constraints of civilization and allowing bloodthirsty Orcs to engage in combat, raids, brutality and savagery to their hearts' content. Overall, this is a prime environment for Orcs, who are growing in population very quickly, and in a few centuries could practically dominate the Baalgor Wastelands just by population creep alone.

Ogres are also numerous. They tend to act as willing intermediaries between the Orcs and the Giant Warlords — a large number of Ogre warriors and tribes willingly serve these Warlords and share their dreams of building a Kingdom of Giants.

Ogres like it in the Wastelands because they are not pestered by fair folk (humans, Elves, Dwarves and Gnomes), and are not constantly reminded of their monstrous nature. Also, Baalgor Ogres do not have to abide by the sissy laws of the human kingdoms. Here, you kill somebody or steal his animals and there is no soldier patrol to chase after you; perhaps, only the victim's friends or family. Here, the only justice is what you make for yourself. The way they like it. Furthermore, since so many Orcs, Goblins and Hob-Goblins (even some humans) look to Ogres as leaders and advisors, the oversized humanoids frequently find themselves toward the top of the food chain, rather than the bottom. Here, in the Wastelands, they are lord and master, leader and sage, not reviled monsters. To an Ogre, this is a really good deal. That is why so many willingly come and battle for positions of power.

Trolls are comparatively uncommon even in the Baalgor Wastelands, although they are more plentiful here than perhaps any other place in the world. Like Ogres, they are feared and revered by the smaller members of the monster races, particularly Kobolds, Orcs and Goblins. Their large size ranks them as giants and enables them to pal around with True Giants, enjoying leadership positions, and getting first crack at booty from raids and skirmishes (after the giants take their share, of course). Even warriors like the Eandroth, Gromek, Gosai, Quorians and Ogres respect Trolls for their raw power and menacing dispositions. Of all the places in the known world, the Wastelands are one of the few where one may encounter a half dozen or more Trolls holding (high) positions among a mixed group, to small clans of 8-24 made entirely of Trolls.

Kobolds in the Baalgor Wastelands generally descend from natives who have lived in the region since the end of the Elf-Dwarf War (in some cases, since before the Great War). Over time, the Baalgor Kobolds have watched their favored underground locations and ancient subterranean lands be destroyed, invaded or conquered by Minotaurs and Baalizards, as well as the occasional Sandwyrn and group of Goblins, Dwarves, humans and others. While Kobolds are great weaponsmiths and trap-makers, they can not fight all these interlopers, particularly the former two. So, rather than defend their territories to the death, Kobolds tend to keep moving. Unfortunately, this means they are slowly being pushed toward the surface and other locations (most notably the Baalgor and Old Kingdom Mountains), where, in some cases, they would really rather not be.

The subterranean lifestyle of the Kobolds also makes them one of the less noticeable races of Baalgor. One scholar referred to them as the "invisible" people of the Wastelands, while others sometimes call them the forgotten people. However, beleaguered or not, they represent a force to be reckoned with, and are best not forgotten. These Kobolds constantly trade with surface dwellers, from Goblins and Orcs to Ogres and Giants. Their main trade merchandise, is made up of the notorious Kobold weapons and armor. In fact, the Kobolds quietly supply at least half (probably more) of all the monster races (including warring and rival factions) in the Baalgor Wastelands.

Goblins fill in the societal nooks and crannies among the larger and more powerful races here. They have no industry of their own and can best be likened to the PFRPG version of a remora — those sucker fish seen hanging on to sharks, eating

bits of scrap the sharks leave behind. These foul tempered, diminutive people tend to join forces with somebody bigger and stronger than they, and live off the scraps of that person or group. If anything, Baalgor Goblins are even more shiftless, lazy and cutthroat than those in the Old Kingdom and elsewhere. Since it's harder to work in such a challenging environment, most Goblins find more creative ways to benefit from the efforts of others. With rare exceptions, most Goblins, even those who are members of large tribes (1000-4000 strong), are submissive to larger folk, particularly True Giants and Trolls. Many serve as mercenaries, spies and thieves willing to work for whatever side can currently afford to hire them or offer the best opportunities. They have little or no loyalty to any one group, faction, people or kingdom, but will usually back down to any who threaten or blackmail them. They are also prone to switching sides, i.e. fighting for or with one side until they appear to be losing, then abandoning that force to either join their enemy or to find greener pastures elsewhere.

Hob-Goblins, curiously enough, are largely absent from the Baalgor Wastelands. This is just one more thing about this enigmatic region that continues to baffle scholars everywhere. While large numbers of Hob-Goblins did populate this region at one time, very few reside here now — for every 5,000 Goblins, there is one Hob-Goblin. No historical information can explain this phenomenon. Elven and Dwarven records show that Hob-Goblin slaves were kept in the Baalgor area during and after the war, and they also suggest that the survivors of the Big Thunder wandered the Wastelands for centuries thereafter. The mystery, then, is what has happened in the last few hundred years that would explain the Hob-Goblins' mass disappearance. None of the current groups of goblinoids has any information to offer. Hob-Goblins who enter the Baalgor Wastelands do tend to feel very uneasy about the place, and many do not stay for longer than a month — certainly they are outmatched in physical size and numbers.

Other Monsters & Beings

There are also many monsters and other creatures found throughout the Palladium World that have made the Baalgor Wastelands their home. Such creatures are every bit as dangerous as native Wastelanders, and should be treated with caution. Some will be lone hunters or individuals, others will be found in groups or herds. **Note:** The page number following each monster below is where you can find additional information in the **Monsters and Animals, 2nd Edition** sourcebook. M&A also offers a variety of ordinary animals for use in role-playing games.

Black Jelly (p. 26)	Mummy Immortalus (p.121)
Dogre/Jungle Ogre (p. 103)	Owl-Thing (p. 122)
Dragondactyl (p. 39)	Peryton (p. 124)
Entities (p. 48)	Sallan (very rare) (p. 129)
Green Mold (p. 93)	Serpent Rat (p. 132)
Ki-Lin (very rare) (p. 106)	Silonar (p. 136)
Loogaroo (p. 113)	Spectre (138)
Manticore (p. 114)	Sphinx (very rare) (p.139)
Maxpary (very rare) (p. 115)	Sun Devil (p. 141)
Melech (p. 118)	Syvan (p. 144)

Thorny Sun Devil (p. 142)
Tusker (p. 149)
Worms of Taut (p. 156)
Za (p. 164)
Zavor (p. 165)

Part Three: The Places

From the Journals of Rystrom Khejas

"Before I ever came here, I had mistakenly assumed that the Wastelands were a uniform swath of sand and rock, every mile of territory indistinguishable from the next. How very wrong I was. Well, at least I have had the wisdom to admit my mistakes. How did my old teachers put it? Ah, yes, 'The rash man believes he knows everything. The wise man knows enough to know when he knows nothing.' Well, you could wander the Baalgor Wastelands for a thousand years, and you still could never learn all of its secrets. That much, I do know for certain.

*"Of the five areas within the Wastelands, the **Rocky Coastline** is the most familiar to me. Here I found the region's only human settlements. The climate is not as intense, there are some trees and grasslands, and the land not so desolate. Even the dangers are more familiar to me — Orc raiding bands, bandits and pirates, rather than the strange and unknown creatures of the interior.*

*"The **Stony Desert** is the bulk of the Wastelands, home to the Eandroth and innumerable gangs of bandits and marauders. This desolate stretch of plains is covered in small stones of every kind, only furthering the sense of infertility of this dry and barren place.*

*"To me, the **Sandy Desert** would appear to be the exact spot where the ancient Circle of Absolute Elemental Power was evoked, so long ago. Indeed, the lack of ruins of the Golden City of Baalgor would indicate that this spot is where that fine place was wiped from the face of the world. Here, the utter desolation bespeaks the intensity of the destructive forces set loose upon the region. Even the folk living here rarely settle long in one place, pausing only for a night's rest before moving on from this blighted earth.*

*"The **Rocky Desert** bears no likeness to any natural region I have ever seen. It would seem as if some incredible whirlwind lashed the mountains to the west and south, shattering their face and piling the debris like a carpet of shattered rock, broken by buttes, pillars of stone and strange formations that can tower hundreds of feet into the air. Here, the very ground is an assault upon those who would walk on it. It is home to the various scavengers and hunters who use this terrain to prey upon the unsuspecting.*

*"The **Baalgor Mountains** are a stark, vertical expanse of stone that leads the imagination to see it as a stone wall keeping the Baalgor Wastelands from the rest of the world. Indeed, perhaps this stout mountain chain is the only thing that contained the fury of the circle of Absolute Elemental Power from eradicating the rest of the world. Of course, given the unstoppable nature of that magical maelstrom, perhaps it was only chance that the storm did not consume those mountains, too."*

Overview of the Baalgor Wastelands

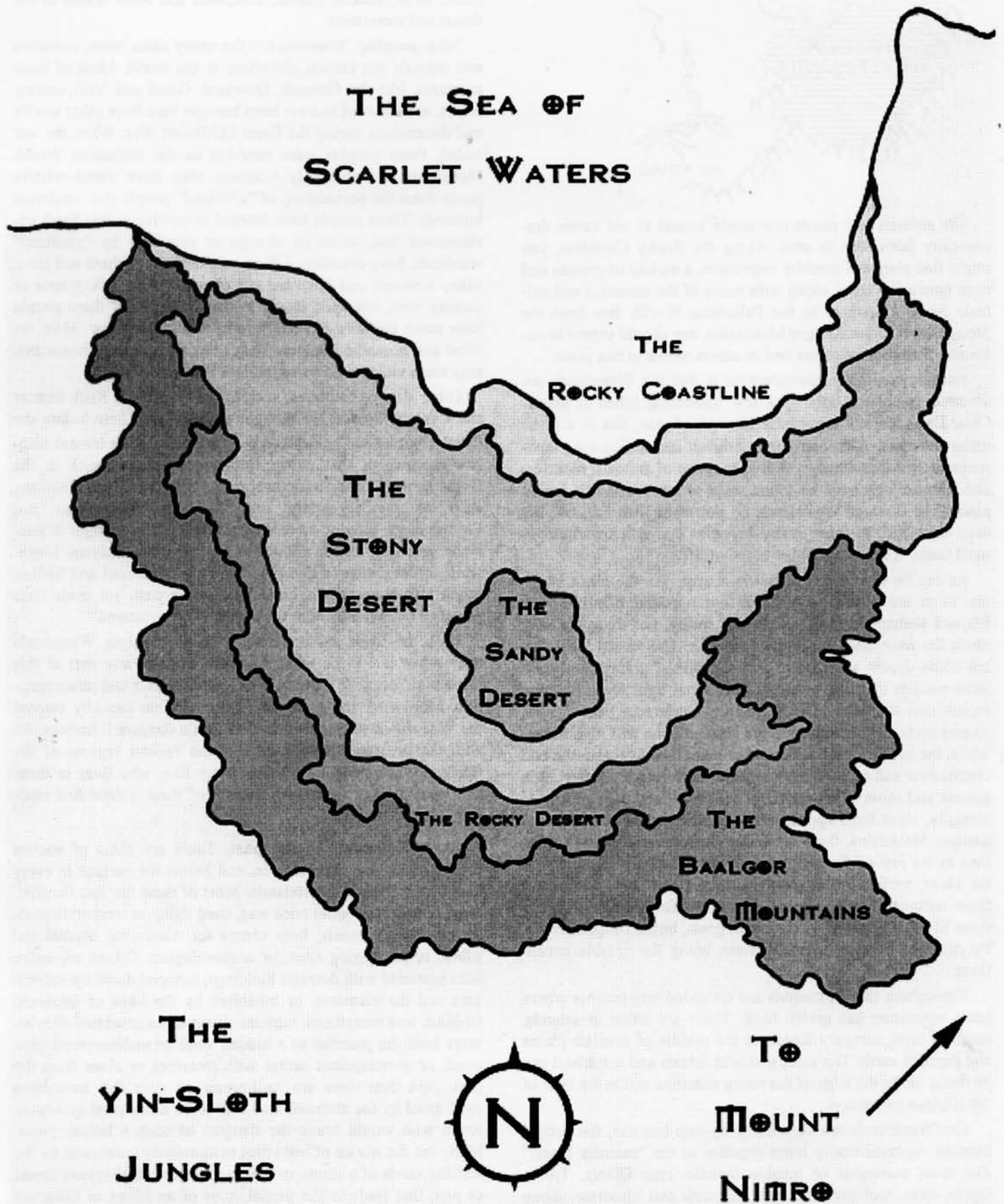
The Baalgor Wastelands are a vast terrain of rocky lowlands, parched earth, savanna and deserts all hemmed in by the imposing Baalgor Mountains on one side and the forbidding Sea of Scarlet Waters on the other.

The Wastelands used to be a lush rain forest before it was laid to waste during the Elf-Dwarf War, when the entire region was turned irreversibly to desert. Since then, the Wastelands have slowly and subtly evolved into different desert-type environments, each with its own distinctive topographies, climatic conditions, and wildlife. Each region is a small world unto itself, complete with benefits and drawbacks. To understand and know the Baalgor Wastelands, one must get to know each of these regions. There are five: The Rocky Coastline, the Stony Desert, the Sandy Desert, the Rocky Desert, and the Baalgor Mountains.

The Rocky Coastline comprises only 10% of the total region, and is made up of the long, thin coastal area where the Wastelands meet the Sea of Scarlet Waters. South and west of that is the Stony Desert, the Wastelands' largest area, comprising about 40% of the region. Further south and west of that, near the center of the region, is the Sandy Desert, a sea of rolling dunes and cloudless skies. This accounts for 15% of the total area, and is reminiscent of the modern-day Sahara Desert. Further to the southwest is the Rocky Desert, which comprises nearly 20% of the total region. The Rocky Desert amounts to the foothills of the Baalgor Mountains, comprised of large boulders, shelves of slab rock, pillars, buttes and canyons. And finally, the last 15% of the Wastelands is made up by the Baalgor Mountains, a jagged, stark wall of mountains lining the southwestern border of the Wastelands like a serrated knife blade. Here the Baalgor Gromek and giants battle for supremacy. This fighting and other dangers make the mountains such a hazardous place to travel that it helps keep the Wastelands one of the most isolated parts of the world.

A common misconception is that the Wastelands are entirely lifeless, but that is most definitely not the case. It is believed that 80% to 90% of all life in the Baalgor region was eradicated at the explosive end of the Elf-Dwarf War thousands of years ago. However, that remaining 10-20%, including species of plants, animals and humanoids, have somehow managed to survive, adapt and thrive in this blasted battleground. Over the centuries, they have been joined by indigenous and alien life forms who also make the Wastelands their home. Still, much of the region remains an inhospitable, burnt and sunbaked place of rock, sand and ruins.

THE SEA OF SCARLET WATERS





The animals and plants one might expect to see varies dramatically from area to area. Along the Rocky Coastline, you might find plenty of scrubby vegetation, a variety of grasses and even patches of trees, along with many of the monsters and animals found elsewhere in the Palladium World. But from the Stony Desert to the Baalgor Mountains, one should expect to encounter the unique peoples and creatures native to this place.

Another common misconception is that the Wastelands are deserted, populated only by a few wandering tribes of giants, Orcs, Eandroth and monstrous Gromek. Again, this is a gross understatement. Although this is a harsh and unforgiving environment, it is populated by a diverse range of animals, monsters and peoples who have all found ways to survive in this barren place. The Baalgor Wastelands do not teem with life, but life does exist, and, in some cases, thrive, as it would anywhere. In most cases, it is just a tougher breed of life.

As can be expected, vegetation is sparse in the burnt interiors. There are occasional oases of fertile ground, plentiful plant life and perhaps even a fresh water spring, but these are very much the exception rather than the rule. The Rocky Coastline has some decent amounts of scrubby plants, grasses and scattered patches of trees, even the occasional light forest. As one moves into the Stony Desert, cactus, clusters of desert grass, chsuba roots and small bushes are about all one will find. Meanwhile, the Sandy Desert is devoid of plant life except for the odd chsuba root and cactus here and there. In the Rocky Desert, thin grasses and moss begins to cover the rocks, and even groves of scraggly, short trees appear every hundred miles or so. In the Baalgor Mountains, there are more grasses, mosses and shrubs than in the rest of the region combined. The only catch is with the sheer, vertical cliff facings, canyons and deep crevices of these mountains, it is almost impossible for animals to reach these life-giving plants — mountain goats, birds, Dragondactyls, Peryton and other winged creatures being the notable exceptions.

Throughout the Wastelands are sprinkled tiny patches where some vegetation has grown back. These are either grasslands, scrub or light, scraggly forests in the middle of desolate plains and parched earth. The most plentiful forests and scrubland can be found along the edge of the rocky coastline and at the base of the Baalgor mountains.

The Wastelands are dominated by non-humans, the people humans euphemistically lump together as the "monster races." The most numerous or notable include True Giants, Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, Goblins, Eandroth, Gromek and Minotaur, along with a number of exotic alien races. In addition, Tuskers, Sun Devils, Silonars, Loogaroo, Melech and other monsters prowl

here in constant search of prey. There is also an abundant amount of "normal" or ordinary animal life, such as camels, rodents, birds, snakes, lizards, scorpions and other beasts of the desert and mountains.

Most peculiar, however, are the many alien races, monsters and animals not known elsewhere in the world. Most of these creatures, like the Gromek, Quorians, Gosai and Vrill, among others, are believed to have been brought here from other worlds and dimensions during the Great Elf-Dwarf War. When the war ended, these peoples were stranded on the Palladium World. Monstrous and obviously inhuman, they have found relative peace from the persecution of "civilized" people (i.e. intolerant humans). These people have learned to survive in this harsh environment and, although strange or primitive by "civilized" standards, have established their own customs, beliefs and laws. Many customs and laws are not obvious at a quick glance or cursory visit, but upon closer inspection, most of these people have some measure of social order, position and law. Most are tribal and nomadic in nature with rules and codes of honor that may seem violent and harsh, but are laws nonetheless.

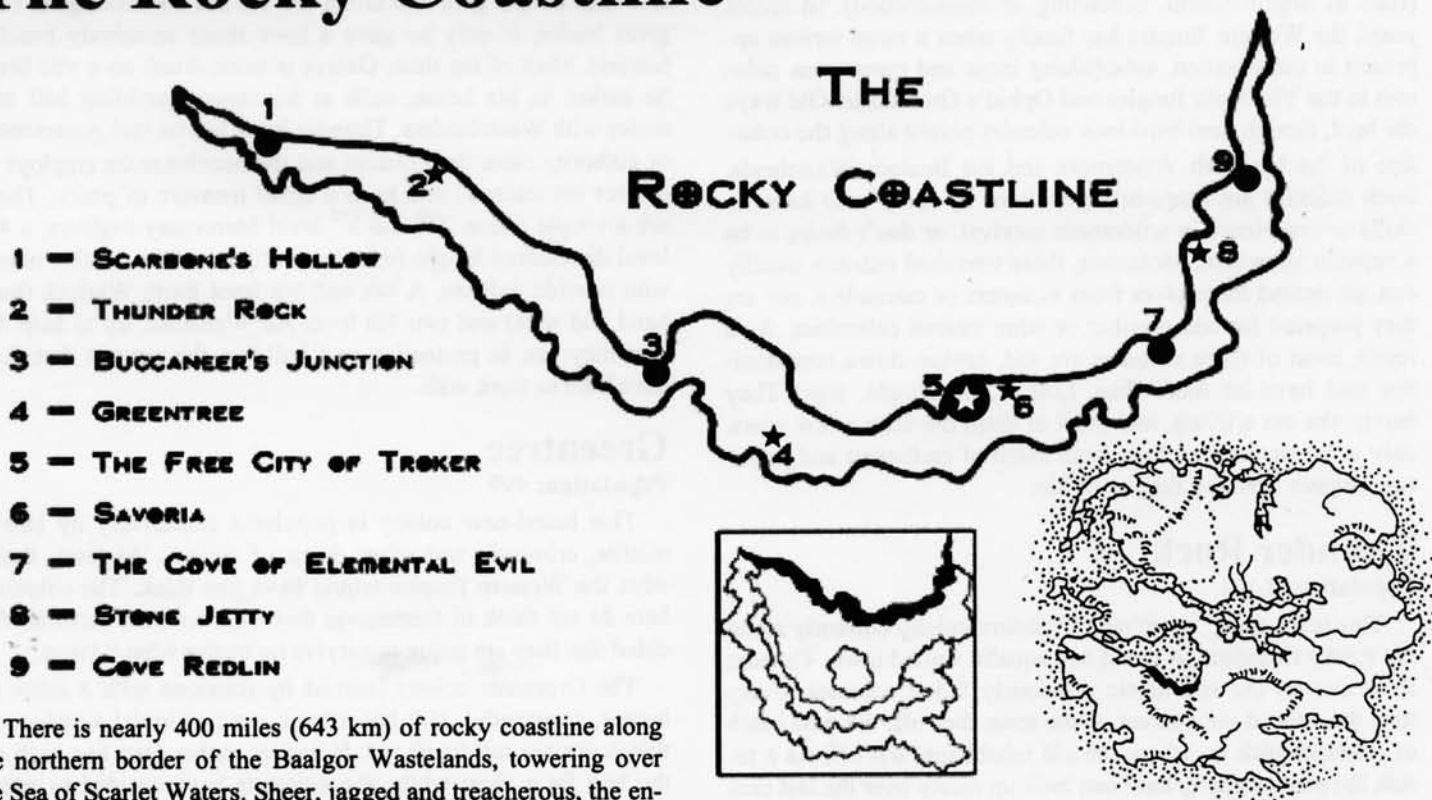
Other strange creatures, such as the Quillback, Rock Buzzer and Cyclops Spider, are thought to have lived here before the Great Thunder and have since been mutated by the intense magical energies of that event. Deformed creatures such as the Gigantes would seem to corroborate this theory. Some creatures, such as the legendary and fearsome Sandwyms and Earthshakers, seem to have always lived in the Baalgor Wastelands, and were strong enough to survive the cataclysm. Meanwhile, other creatures like the Thin Ones, Baalizard and Sloderi might also have always lived here in the past, yet made their presence known only after the region was devastated.

Both the lands and inhabitants of the Baalgor Wastelands truly make this place what it is, and to paint any part of this place with too wide a brush is to invite disaster and misconception. More than one group of adventurers has casually entered the Wastelands unprepared for the exotic dangers it harbors. So with that in mind, have a look at the various regions of the Baalgor Wastelands — what they are like, who lives in them and what it takes to survive in each of these unique and challenging environments.

Note: Remnants of the past. There are ruins of ancient towns, cities, and fortresses on and below the surface in every area of the Baalgor Wastelands. Most of these are just the shattered remnants of what once was, used today as temporary shelter by desert nomads, base camps for wandering bandits and tribes, or as digging sites for archaeologists. Others are entire sites scattered with decrepit buildings, stripped down by scavengers and the elements, or inhabited by the likes of Orcs and Goblins, and sometimes, humans. Even those inhabited sites always hold the promise of a hidden vault or undiscovered catacomb or unrecognized secret with treasures or clues from the past. And then there are well-preserved sites that have been swallowed by the elements and wait to be discovered by adventurers who would brave the dangers of such a hellish place. Many are the stories of lost cities momentarily uncovered by the shifting sands of a storm, or the discovery of an obscured tunnel or path that leads to the partial ruins of an Elven or Dwarven city or catacomb and fabulous riches or arcane knowledge. Many are the tales of those smart enough or strong enough to

defeat the guardians of ancient and forgotten places of power or ruins claimed by evil forces waiting to be liberated by the strong and righteous. Tales that bring fortune seekers, heroes, villains and adventurers to the Baalgor Wastelands in never-ending droves. Of course, there's the additional danger that whatever may be uncovered, may be just as quickly lost through storm or misfortune, or may pose a threat in and of itself, releasing some forgotten terror from the past on an unsuspecting present. Furthermore, while it is unglamorous and not sung about in songs, many of the tales, rumors and legends about the Wastelands are false, erroneous or dead ends. Thus, the majority of these danger-fraught sojourns lead no where and end in tragedy. It is estimated that of all those fortune seekers who come to the Baalgor Wastelands, less than 30% survive to tell their tales.

The Rocky Coastline



There is nearly 400 miles (643 km) of rocky coastline along the northern border of the Baalgor Wastelands, towering over the Sea of Scarlet Waters. Sheer, jagged and treacherous, the entire coastline is made up of a wall of solid stone, sea cliffs. In real-world terms, the rocky coastline resembles the cliff-beaches of the Pacific Northwest or Maine in North America, the cliffs of Dover in England, or the coastal cliffs of Australia.

On average, these cliffs range from 40 to 100 feet (12.2 to 30.5 m) high, with a narrow and rocky beach at their base, making it very difficult for ships to land. Here and there, the sea has hollowed out small coves and lagoons deep and still enough for ships to weigh anchor, and these spots have since become coveted places to build meager towns, outposts, and colonies.

The Rocky Coastline is the most "developed" and "civilized" part of the Baalgor Wastelands, at least, by outsiders' standards. This is the only place where one will find conventional towns, cities or roadways. Like the rest of the Wastelands, this region has very little fresh water (there are a few springs within the cliffs) and most of the sparse vegetation that survives is inedible. The soil is generally too rocky to make for good farmland, although there are areas where some crops can be produced if

the growing season is mild. Most coastal inhabitants live almost entirely off of fish, mollusks, crustaceans (crabs, etc.) and sea animals and sea plants from the ocean. Goats, sheep and other livestock, grains, fruits and other foods and spices must be imported from afar or domesticated locally.

There are three basic types of settlements along the coast: Western Empire colonies, pirate coves, and the infamous *Free City of Troker*. Pirate Coves are fortified strongholds in one of the region's coastline lagoons and tidal pools. There currently are three major pirate coves, but these too change, grow and die frequently. There also may be many other coves that nobody knows about. And finally, there is the Free City of Troker, which truly is in a class by itself. Once a mighty elven citadel designed and built by dwarven engineers, this accursed place was the site of a terrible bloodbath in the Elf-Dwarf War, and has been occupied by many different peoples since then. Currently it is a haven for pirates, smugglers, assassins, thieves and other villains.

Western Empire Colonies

The Rocky Coastline is home to the majority of the Baalgor Wasteland's human inhabitants (what few of them there are). Most of these "colonists" come from the Western Empire. These Western colonies are typically pathetic little settlements made up of castaways who have no clue how to survive in the harsh wilderness. Such communities often die out within a few years. Throughout its history, the Western Empire's colonization policy has been to round up whoever was causing trouble (usually criminals, scapegoats, religious outcasts, political agitators or poor sods caught in the wrong place at the wrong time), give them barely enough supplies to live on, and send them to some remote part of the world where they could try to establish a "colony." In truth, being sent to these colonies was a death sentence delivered upon those the Empire found too politically touchy to deal with by more conventional or obvious means (such as imprisonment, beheading or assassination). In recent years, the Western Empire has finally taken a more serious approach to colonization, establishing large and prosperous colonies in the Yin-Sloth Jungles and Ophid's Grasslands. Old ways die hard, though, and hard-luck colonies persist along the coastline of the Northern Wilderness and the Baalgor Wastelands. Such colonies are frequently populated by those who have no skills or experience in wilderness survival, or don't desire to be a colonist anywhere. Moreover, these wretched outcasts usually can not defend themselves from monsters or marauders, nor are they prepared for bad weather or other unseen calamities. As a result, most of these colonies are sad, broken-down communities that have no more than 1,000-2,000 people, tops. They barely eke out a living, and most of them die after a few years, only to be recolonized by a fresh batch of castaways and political refugees from the Empire of Sin.

Thunder Rock

Population: 1,121

This is the most "prominent" Western colony currently along the Rocky Coastline. A small and squalid walled town, Thunder Rock sits on the site of six previously failed colonies. Every time the current incarnation of the town dies off, the next batch of colonists pick up where the old inhabitants left off. As a result, the place actually has been built up nicely over the last century and is finally reasonably self-sufficient. The outer walls are solid and there are even cobblestone streets within the town itself. Most of the buildings here are made of rock and are quite sturdy.

Despite all of this progress, the Thunder Rock colony has a hard way to go. There is little arable land anywhere close by, and what few farms and pastures exist have been through the efforts of Earth and Air Warlocks. Wild game animals in the area have been hunted out. The majority of its food and resources come from the sea and includes hunting whales, sea lions and seals. The colonists have built an ingenious system of elevator baskets with which they can lower scavenging parties to the beach below, where they can dredge for crabs, spear fish, and collect whatever flotsam the sea washes in. Their other means of support is limited trade with Baalgor natives from the interior, largely Orcs, Goblins, Eandroth and Quorians. Unfortunately, other than sea food, alcohol, and entertainment in the way of gambling, dance halls, drinking places and competitions, plus

very limited trade goods from the Western Empire, they don't have all that much to attract traders. Still, their meager trappings of civilization and puny offerings of trade goods attract enough Baalgor inhabitants from the interior to help keep them going.

Even if the colonists find some new resource(s), they still have major problems on their hands. One is the constant lack of clean, fresh water. The other is that these colonists really do not have the energy, leadership or discipline to work well together and build a sound community. By and large, they are a shiftless and selfish lot interested only in their own personal survival and welfare. They have little sense of community and tend to operate on the "dog eat dog" principle of survival. This sentiment makes Thunder Rock a sad, violent and lawless place with a questionable future.

The colony's current leader is **Oskrut Gamash**, a 7th level Vagrant who is a lot more intelligent, strong-willed and persuasive than people give him credit for. He has the makings to be a great leader, if only he gave a hoot about somebody besides himself. Most of the time, Oskrut is stone drunk on a vile brew he makes in his house, sells at his tavern-gambling hall and trades with Wastelanders. Thunder Rock has no real government or authority other than Oskrut and the henchmen he employs to protect his interests and keep a small measure of peace. There are a couple dozen 2nd and 3rd level Mercenary Fighters, a 4th level dishonored knight (miscreant alignment) and a few others who provide defense. A 4th and 5th level Earth Warlock (husband and wife) and two 4th level Air Warlocks, try to help the best they can in protecting and building the outpost, but they have little to work with.

Greentree

Population: 499

This brand-new colony is populated exclusively by losers, misfits, criminals and other dregs of society. At least, that's what the Western Empire would have you think. The colonists here do not think of themselves that way, and they have all decided that they are going to survive no matter what it takes.

The Greentree colony (named by someone with a sense of humor, apparently), still has a large store of initial supplies, so things are not too tough yet. However, rather than live high on the hog for a short while, the colonists have decided to ration out their food and water sparingly until they can become truly self-sufficient. The colony is already halfway there. Help from the low-level priests and wizards among the group has helped the colonists to get a small farm working, and it looks like it might even produce enough of a harvest to last through their first winter season.

Greentree's Warlocks, warriors, and psychics (mostly 2nd-4th level) have also made great contributions to this small but growing community. Already it has a ring of wood and stone long-houses in the center of town, encircling a central courtyard where everybody meets to discuss their plans. The colony also has several windmills, a small school, two temples (one to the Church of Light, and the other to Aco and the Juggernaut), and an elemental temple that welcomes all disciplines.

The colonists are currently working on building a wall and moat which they need to finish to keep out and dissuade bandits and hostile forces from land and sea. Every colonist accepts that this is wild country, and that eventually some group of brigands

or monsters will try to raid and/or destroy them. When they do, the people of Greentree will be ready. These folks have put a lot of their blood and sweat into making this place their new home, and they will stop at nothing to defend it.

Greentree's leader is **Jameric Iyes**, a young 6th level human bard who was exiled for severely criticizing many Western nobles throughout his songwriting career. Incredibly popular, Jameric could not simply be jailed or killed, so the Empire sent him to this colony where they hope he will perish. Using his intellect and charm (I.Q. 18, M.E. 19, M.A. 20, P.B. 17, all other stats average), he has rallied the other colonists, giving them hope, dream and encouragement to make this colony work. His endless optimism and enthusiasm has gotten everyone to work together as such a united force of comrades that nobody would have it any other way. Besides being a skilled leader, an inspiring songster and storyteller, Jameric is also an able swordsman (Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, W.P. Sword, +3 to strike, parry and dodge). He was voted into power a year ago, and he will continue leading the colony for as long as his fellows will have him hold office.

Below Jameric is the **Council of Six**, a group of the colony's most influential people. The council is currently made up of two 3rd level priests of light, a 4th level wizard, a 2nd level earth warlock, a 3rd level water warlock, and a 2nd level mind mage. These folks were also voted into power, and they have yearly re-elections.

Below them is the **Council of Arms**, a group of the colony's finest warriors. The Council is led by Sir Trimian, a 4th level dwarven knight. He is accompanied by Lethlellin, a 3rd level Elven longbowman; Brondo, a 1st level orc mercenary; Corporal Chase, a 2nd level human soldier; Ryker Strongarm, a 2nd level dwarven mercenary, Crodd the Merciless, a 5th level human assassin (who's trying to put aside his violent ways); and Kuys Arestar, a 4th level female human mercenary who specializes in throwing weapons. Together these fighters organize Greentree's defenses. They all expect the town to be attacked sooner or later, and are working feverishly to make sure they have sufficient defenses in place to survive whatever onslaught they might face. Right now, the Council of Arms' biggest challenge is a lack of arms and armor. Besides their personal weapons, they have no steel or forge to make new weapons, tools, or armor. Some stone axes have been carved already, but for the most part, the people of Greentree have simple weapons like spears, staves, slings and cudgels.

A Final Note: Every colonist in Greentree hates the Western Empire, for obvious reasons. Any Western travelers arriving here will be immediately suspect, and any Western knight, palladin or noble will not be allowed within the colony's borders. Failure to comply will result in a very hostile reminder from the Council of Six and the Council of Arms. Located in the heart of the town square is a spindly looking sapling that has become the symbol and namesake of the town.

Savoria — Plague Town

Population: 223

This colony might have made it except for a strange and deadly plague that decimated the population and destroyed all of the nearby crops and livestock.

The Dread Plague, as the colonists call it, befell Savoria last spring. First, all of the colony's livestock died, then the disease rapidly spread among the nearly 2,000 people living here. Within six months, over half of the colony had died, and the piles of corpses introduced a whole new wave of disease and vermin to ravage the survivors. Now, this place reeks of death and no sane traveler will stay for more than a couple hours. Entering the colony's confines at all puts one at a 01-33% chance of contracting the Plague.

Infected characters will break out in a cold sweat three days after initial infection, followed by an inability to keep down any food or drink. Delirium sets in by the fifth day, and the afflicted see their Spd reduced by 75% and all skills are performed at half their usual level. Those afflicted also get only one attack per round, and they fight at -5 to strike, parry and dodge. Victims of the Plague will stay this way for as many days as they have P.E. points, after which they will slip into a coma of equal length before dying. Currently, normal medicine cannot cure this ailment — only magical healing can. The exact cause of this disease is unknown.



At this point, only an army of priests and/or Psi-Healers can save the last people of Savoria. Otherwise, the population will be all dead inside of three weeks.

Savoria has no government, nor anybody with noteworthy statistics. Food and water stores have been used up and they never had many valuable to begin with. Currently, every single colonist here has the plague at some stage of progress. A good 1D4x10% of Savoria's colonists are already comatose.

Stone Jetty

Population: 964

Basically, your typical Western colony of criminals, lunatics, outcasts and other ne'er-do-wells. Nobody here really has the skills to survive, and the colony probably will not last another five years. By that time, some drought or food shortage or other calamity will have destroyed it. But until then, the miserable wretches of Stone Jetty continue scraping a life out of the barren soil and unyielding rock of the seaside cliffs.

Stone Jetty has a small collection of meager farms, a tiny beach-side wharf for fishing, a livestock yard housing a miserable herd of sheep, and a low earthen wall for defense. This outer wall is lined with sharpened stakes pointing outward, and a shallow ditch before it. All of this is to keep out the band of inhuman marauders who constantly attack the town for food or the sheer pleasure of killing.

The town's leader is **Agoska Graag**, a human, 7th level ranger (M.A. 16, P.S. 21, P.P. 18, P.E. 18) who has appointed

himself king. This bullying miscreant rules Stone Jetty with an iron fist, using his gang of thugs (fourteen 1st and 2nd level mercenaries of varying races) to enforce his will. Everybody in town hates Graag with a passion, but they fear him too much to oppose him. That, and they all know that for the last three years, he is the only thing that has kept this town alive at all. His military genius and personal fighting skill has repelled smaller bands of raiders, and when larger bands show up, Graag organizes a colony-wide lottery to see who gets offered to the marauders as tribute. This loathsome lottery has become such a way of life that everybody has become numb to it. Naturally, Graag and his cronies are not subject to the lottery; that's a perk of being king.

Lately, a particular band of miscreants has taken interest in Stone Jetty, and hits it monthly just to get a free slave out of the colonists. This crew of villains is made up of 31 orcs, 22 goblins, 16 ogres, and 4 trolls. The group is led by one of the Trolls, *Big Hand Kasker*, who is a terrifying beast of a warrior (P.S. 30, P.P. 22, P.E. 30; 7th level thief). If Kasker is killed, one of the other trolls will take his spot. If all four trolls are killed, then the crew will probably fight among themselves to determine who will be boss, thereby destroying the group. Big Hand Kasker wears a suit of scale mail, and he fights with a magical, giant-sized goupillon flail (4D6+15!) that can turn the wielder fire-resistant three times daily.

Pirate Coves

Over the last several years, all hell has broken loose along the Western Empire's southern coast. The Provincial Noble Houses are all at war with each other or have allowed criminal elements to grow out of control. To make matters worse, the Imperial troops stationed in that region are just keeping their heads down, trying not to get involved. As a result, the entire area is falling into pure anarchy. While this means trouble for the Western Empire, it is a blessing for the local pirates, who can now slip through the *Strait of Scarlet Waters* unchallenged. Pirates from the outer ocean can easily travel the Sea of Scarlet Waters, raiding the coastal towns of the Western Empire, sacking her ships, and raiding along the Old Kingdom coastline.

This opportunity and activity means pirates need someplace to rest and regroup without going back through the Strait of Scarlet Waters and back into the open seas. That's why a string of pirate coves has sprung up along the coastline of the Baalgor Wastelands. The Baalgor coast offers a number of advantages. One, is the frightening reputation of the Wastelands, which makes pursuers hesitate about going there.

Two, the Baalgor coastline has no true civilization or law enforcement. In fact, most colonies can barely keep themselves fed, so the pirates (and other outlaws) have little to worry about from local authorities. Furthermore, the majority of coastal inhabitants have no love for the Empire and are not likely to cooperate with them.

Three, the rocky coastline has numerous hollows and bays that are perfect for pirate fleets to hide out in, sheltered from the harsh sea weather and hidden from the eyes of Western Empire's pirate-hunting patrols. In their secret coastal fortresses and hide aways, pirate crews can divide their plunder, repair their ships, and gather strength for another campaign.

As these pirate coves flourish, they become "outlaw towns" — safe havens for all manner of criminals, spies, runaway slaves, refugees and shady characters. Like the Western Empire Colonies, pirate coves along the Baalgor Wastelands, Rocky Coastline are frequently temporary facilities. Within a few years, pirate coves are destroyed by the weather, raids, Western pirate-hunters or rival pirate fleets, or disband, or the pirates using it are sunk or decide to move on (after all, pirates are not known for settling down).

Scarbone's Hollow

This is the westernmost of the pirate coves, not far from where the western end of the Baalgor Mountains runs into the Sea of Scarlet Waters. This cove is located in a large hollow that the waves have eroded over the eons. Within the hollow, the water is deep and calm, a perfect place for heavy warships to weigh anchor. Moreover, the entrance matches the color and pattern of the surrounding rock, so it is very difficult to notice.

The Hollow, as it's also called, has a narrow, rocky beach at its innermost end, where rock has tumbled down from the eroding cliff-side. The pirate cove is a series of buildings made from this fallen sheet rock. The buildings surround the foundation of an ancient elven fortress that has long since fallen to pieces (The dungeon is still intact, and is used to house pirates and prisoners, and to store supplies). The cove area is very uneven (being built on a pile of broken rock), and all of the buildings are connected by what amount to long, winding stairways of terraced, broken rock. There are only a dozen buildings (most of them house pirate crews), but there is also a central depot (for distributing food, weapons, and other vital supplies), a covehouse (where large meetings and celebrations take place), and a crude shipyard (where vessels are run aground and serviced). The Hollow can support a permanent population of about 250. Currently, there are only 100 pirates living here full-time, along with 65 slaves. In addition to this, the population of the Hollow swells whenever any of the sea-going pirate ships are docked in. There is always at least one ship here to guard the cove while the others are out.

Scarbone's Hollow is ruled by Captain Jaheris Scarbone, a 7th level human pirate who leads the nefarious Scarbone Crew, a powerful fleet of coastal raiders. These pirates have terrorized coastal settlements along the Baalgor Wastelands and the Old Kingdom for years. Recently, the Scarbone pirates have laid waste to several large flotillas of Western merchants, prompting the Western Empire to place a 100,000 gold reward on Jaheris head, alive or dead. There are rewards of 50,000 gold for the capture or killing of any of his lieutenants. Jaheris and his cronies laugh off these rewards, since they have already destroyed three pirate-hunting fleets looking to collect those bounties.

Jaheris and his lieutenants all command their own ships. Typically, each of these ships carries the maximum number of sailors, plus half the maximum number of soldiers. All crew are 2nd or 5th level pirates who fight with cutlasses and grappling hooks, and who do not wear armor.

Jaheris Scarbone Quick Stats

Scarbone is one of the worst villains ever to sail the high seas. He is a craven, heartless criminal who delights in the torment of others. He rules his crew by intimidating them and play-



ing his lieutenants off each other. With all of them competing against one another, none can ever try to take over Jaheris' position as leader of the entire fleet.

Title: Captain of the Scarbone Crew, and Lord of Scarbone's Hollow

O.C.C.: 7th level pirate.

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 14, M.A. 19 (55% charm/intimidate), P.S. 17 (+2 damage), P.P. 18 (+2 to strike, parry and dodge), P.E. 15, P.B. 8 (used to be 13, but he has received some nasty scars over the course of his career), Spd. 11.

Hit Points: 45, S.D.C.: 31

Attacks per melee: 6

Bonuses: +2 to roll with punch/fall, +3 to pull punch, +4 to strike, +7 to parry and dodge, +2 to damage; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert & Boxing — Karate kick: 2D4, Snap kick: 1D6, Leg Hook. Critical strike on a natural roll of 18-20. W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Knife (+3 to strike, parry and throw), W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Grappling Hook (+2 to strike or entangle), and W.P. Paired Weapons.

Weapons: Jaheris fights with Glarigel, a magical long sword that is indestructible, shoots lightning (3D6+6) three times daily and spits fireballs (3D6+2) three times daily. He also has a pair of silver daggers and three Chaser Crystals. He will

use the Chasers only in dire emergencies, since they will probably spook his own crewmen when he uses them.

Armor: Magical Leather of Iron; A.R. 15, S.D.C. 214.

Magic Items: The Ring of Loholla. Jaheris picked up this interesting item off a Western merchant last year. The ring has a permanent (but non-replenishable) P.P.E. base of 333, and can cast any combination of the following spells up to six times daily: Seal, Magic Pigeon, Words of Truth, Eyes of Thoth, Create Bread and Milk, and Heal Self (i.e. the wearer of the ring).

Money and other equipment: Jaheris has a personal hoard of 123,442 gold in assorted coinage. He also has a ruby worth 43,000 gold and a velvet bag of 100 diamonds each worth 10,000 each! Jaheris also has a small arsenal of normal weaponry, hidden away in his personal quarters in the Hollow. Jaheris commands the *Sea Rat*, a Timiro Viscount.

Tsirkan, Quick Stats

Tsirkan has been a pirate all his life. His father was a coastal raider, and his mother a villager in a wretched coastal colony. When she died, Tsirkan wandered up and down the coast, living by his wits and learning to fight. He served as a cabin boy for several pirate vessels until becoming a full-fledged pirate himself. Years later, he has joined with Captain Jaheris and has made a real name for himself as an outlaw. When not out to sea, Tsirkan supervises "law enforcement" (shaking down unpopular members of the fleet) at the Hollow.

Title: Lieutenant of the Scarbone Crew and Lead Enforcer.

O.C.C.: 6th level pirate.

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 8, M.A. 13, P.S. 15, P.P. 19 (+2 to strike, parry and dodge), P.E. 18 (+6% to save vs coma/death, +2 to save vs magic), P.B. 19 (45% chance to charm/impress), Spd. 15.

Hit Points: 45, S.D.C.: 19

Attacks per melee: 6

Bonuses: +3 to roll with punch or fall, +2 to pull punch, +5 to parry/dodge, +4 to strike, +2 to roll; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert — Karate kick (2D4), Snap kick (1D6), Roundhouse kick (3D6); critical strike on a natural 18-20. W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Targeting (+3 to strike with thrown weapons), W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), and W.P. Grappling Hook (+2 to strike or entangle).

Weapons: A Dwarven cutlass (2D4+4 damage, +2 to parry) coated with a single dose of Dragon's Breath poison (save vs poison or suffer an additional 6D6 damage). He also has 5 darts strapped to each of his wrists. Each of these darts is coated with Scorpion's Blood poison (save vs poison or suffer an additional 4D6 damage).

Armor: Studded leather with an A.R. 13 and S.D.C. 44.

Magic Items: A set of Magic Bandages and a Cherubot Rope.

Money and other equipment: Tsirkan is a compulsive gambler and is constantly out of money. Right now, he only has 200 gold to his name.

Ship: Tsirkan commands the *Black Shark*, a Byzantium Corsair.



Agrami, Quick Stats

Agrami is a headhunter from the Yin-Sloth Jungles who joined Jaheris' fleet several years ago. Now, he is the fleet's second-in-command and Jaheris' chief rival. He also plots to assassinate Captain Tsirkan in order to gain enough strength to usurp Jaheris' power base.

Title: Lieutenant of the Scarbone Crew.

O.C.C.: 6th level Yin-Sloth Headhunter.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 9, M.E. 11, M.A. 14, P.S. 18 (+3 to damage), P.P. 23 (+4 to strike, parry and dodge), P.E. 17 (+5% to save vs coma and death/+1 to save vs magic), P.B. 10, Spd. 10.

Hit Points: 35, S.D.C.: 26

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to roll with punch/fall, +2 to pull punch, +6 to strike, +7 to parry and dodge, +3 to damage; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert — Karate kick (2D4), Snap kick (1D6), Wheel Kick (2D6); critical strike on a natural roll of 18-20. W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Knife (+3 to strike, parry and throw), W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Grappling Hook (+2 to strike or entangle), W.P. Paired Weapons.

Weapons: Agrami fights with a pair of enchanted Mongwanga (heavy, multi-bladed throwing knives) that are eternally

sharp and return when thrown. These wicked weapons inflict 1D10+3 damage per hit, not including Agrami's personal bonuses.

Armor: None. He fights bare-chested as a sign of his courage.

Magic Items: None, other than his throwing knives.

Money and other equipment: Jaheris has successfully swindled this naive headhunter into storing all of his money (44,500 gold) in a strongbox back at the Hollow. Little does Agrami know that Jaheris has stolen this money and has no intention of returning it.

Ship: Agrami commands the *Razorhead*, an old-style Western Carrack. Although he could have his pick of a number of better ships, he has grown to like this one, which has been modified to move 25% faster and swifter than a normal vessel of its type. The *Razorhead* also has 50% more S.D.C. than a normal Carrack due to special armor modifications Jaheris has made.

Manaash, Quick Stats

This ogre is a terrifying killing machine who inspires his pirates more than any other captain in the fleet. Manaash is not interested in plunder as much as he is in killing people and sinking their ships. Thus, Manaash's crewmates have learned to strip a ship of its valuables *really* fast before Manaash puts the torch to it. Manaash is not a pirate by trade, but since stumbling into this occupation, he hasn't looked back.

Title: Lieutenant of the Scarbone Crew.

O.C.C.: 5th level Mercenary.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 15, M.A. 15, P.S. 18 (+3 to damage), P.P. 20 (+3 to strike, parry and dodge), P.E. 18 (+6% to save vs coma/death, +2 to save vs. magic), P.B. 15, Spd. 15.

Hit Points: 42, S.D.C.: 40

Attacks per melee: 6

Bonuses: +4 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +3 to pull punch, +4 to damage/disarm; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic — W.P. Sword (+2 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Blunt (+2 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Chain (+2 to strike, +1 to parry), W.P. Shield (+2 to parry, +1 to strike).

Weapons: Giant-sized cutlass (2D4+1D6), Giant-sized ball and chain (4D6).

Armor: Chain mail with A.R. 14, S.D.C. 44. Manaash has been warned about the dangers of wearing heavy armor at sea, but he just does not care.

Magic Items: A pair of Dragon Claws (6D6 damage!). These are Manaash's most prized possessions, and he prefers to fight with these above all other weapons.

Money and other equipment: 10,000 in gold, 20,000 in emeralds.

Ship: Manaash commands the *You and What Army?*, a Byzantium Corsair.

Argullud Zugon, Quick Stats

This wily pirate captain is one of the bright up-and-comers of the fleet. He has only fought under Captain Jaheris' command for a year, but has already plundered more than a dozen ships. Argullud's large collection of magic items and wealth makes

him the envy of the fleet. As his success grows, so does Argullud's greed, which shall be his undoing.

Title: Lieutenant of the Scarbone Crew.

O.C.C.: 3rd level pirate.

Alignment: Anarchist

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 10, M.A. 13, P.S. 21 (+6 to damage), P.P. 21 (+3 to strike, parry and dodge), P.E. 21 (+12% to save vs coma/death, +3 to save vs magic), P.B. 10, Spd. 18.

Hit Points: 27, S.D.C.: 20

Attacks per melee: 4

Bonuses: +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to pull punch, +6 to parry and dodge, +5 to strike; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert — W.P. Sword (+2 to strike, +1 to parry), W.P. Knife (+1 to strike, +2 to parry and throw), W.P. Blunt (+2 to strike and parry), W.P. Grappling Hook (+1 to strike or entangle).

Weapons: A flaming sword that inflicts 6D6 damage per hit. The sword also has had its color changed so that the flame is a bright blue.

Armor: Argullud wears a suit of specially designed plate armor crafted from the exoskeleton of a Fyr-Kree insectoid, from the Yin-Sloth jungles. The armor is very lightweight (incurring none of the usual negative modifiers for wearing heavy armor in extreme heat) and has an A.R. of 18 and 200 S.D.C.!

Magic Items: A ring with the power of Fleet Feet (10 minutes, three times daily) and a ring with the power of Multiple Image (20 minutes, twice daily).

Money and other equipment: Argullud has stashed 25,000 gold in a safebox back at the Hollow, 35,000 in gold and gems in his personal cabin, and 100,000 gold in a secret hiding place in the Free City of Troker.

Ship: Argullud commands the *Good As Gold*, a Byzantium Brigantine.

Gakrung the Widemaker, Quick Stats

This female orc is perhaps the most vicious killer of the entire Scarbone fleet. Clever and diabolic, Gakrung will kill any crew member who so much as looks at her the wrong way. Those who survive more than a few months under her command are considered "lifers," and tend to be very loyal to their Captain.

Title: Lieutenant of the Scarbone Crew.

O.C.C.: 4th level pirate.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 10, M.A. 22 (70% to intimidate only — Gakrung does not inspire any trust whatsoever!), P.S. 20 (+5 to damage), P.P. 14, P.E. 15, P.B. 3, Spd. 7.

Hit Points: 33, S.D.C.: 30

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses: +2 to roll with punch or fall, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +3 to parry or dodge, +2 to strike, +5 to damage; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: W. P. Sword (+2 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Battle Axe (+2 to strike and parry, +1D6 damage), W.P. Blunt (+2 to strike and parry), W.P. Grappling Hook (+1 to strike or entangle).

Weapons: A giant-sized battle axe that inflicts 3D6 damage and will glow red when within 100 feet (30 m) of an elf. When

the axe is glowing, it inflicts an additional 1D6 damage from heat damage (for a total of 4D6).

Armor: Studded leather with an A.R. 13, S.D.C. 38.

Magic Items: None.

Money and other equipment: Gakrung has 4,397 gold in her personal cabin. She also has a case of rare Western brandy worth 12,000 gold. She can't decide whether to sell the stuff or just drink it.



Buccaneer's Junction

This cove is an old Western Empire colony that never made it. Before it died out, the colonists established some really nice central infrastructure, which a group of enterprising pirates have since built upon. Buccaneer's Junction, as it is known, is a small naval base built into a hollow in the sea-cliffs. The base rests on a low, flat, wide shelf of rock leading into the water. The shelf is large enough to accommodate a small town, including several shops, warehouses, long-houses, a central square and market area, as well as other buildings and facilities. The Junction is visited by many pirate gangs operating in the region.

Some of the more frequently visited places are the Junction Shipwright, where pirate vessels are repaired and upgraded, the Lazy Loogaroo, a popular tavern run and funded by retired pirates, and a series of "booty shops" where plunder is bought and sold in a somewhat regulated fashion. The largest building in this place is a central council hall where the pirate leaders meet to hash out policies and entertain important visitors.

Nearly 400 people live at Buccaneer's Junction at any given time. Nearly 25% of them are active pirates. Another 25% are slaves of varying races. Another 25% are crafts people, traders, Western colonists, and other civilians who have decided to live here for safety's sake. The final 25% are retired pirates who no longer go out to sea. Many of these "old-timers" are still in the prime of their fighting careers, but have earned enough money to take it easy. After a few years, most of these retirees run through their savings and must muster out on another pirate cruise.

The Buccaneer's Junction is governed by four self-styled "pirate lords" who have established a parliamentary system of government. These lords are not formally affiliated, but have all decided to act together for the good of the pirate cove. Otherwise, none of them would be strong enough to run this place on their own. The four meet twice a year to set new rules and such, and at any one time, there is always at least one of the lords (and his crew) in town to keep an eye on things. None of the pirate lords really trusts the others, but none are about to attack their rivals and declare war, either.

The four pirate lords of Buccaneer's Junction are Graven Killjoy, Jammer, Shade and Mojo. Needless to say, these names are probably aliases, either to confound bounty hunters, or to prevent Summoners from using their real names to gain power over them.

Graven Killjoy, Quick Stats

Graven is a young, strong human who is both a skilled warrior and a ruthless leader. He lost his right eye several years ago in a duel, and now wears an eye patch to cover his wound. Over the years, Graven has gotten used to fighting half-blind, so he does not suffer from the usual negative modifiers. Graven has taken control of the Junction only recently, after murdering its former leader, Captain Oslof Grunnfeld, a tough old ogre who was very popular with the other pirates. Whether Graven successfully fills Oslof's shoes remains to be seen. Currently, some of the low-ranking pirates have been emboldened by how Graven seized power, and they all plot to usurp Graven's throne.

Title: Pirate Lord of Buccaneer's Junction

O.C.C.: 8th level pirate

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 9, M.A. 11, P.S. 17 (+2 to damage), P.P. 20 (+3 to strike, parry and dodge), P.E. 16 (+4% to save vs coma/death, +1 to save vs magic), P.B. 8, Spd. 17.

Hit Points: 41, S.D.C.: 30

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to disarm, +6 to strike, +7 parry and dodge, and roll with punch/fall/impact, +3 to save vs Horror Factor; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts — W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Knife (+3 to strike and parry, +4 to throw), W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Grappling Hook (+2 to strike and entangle, no parry possible), W.P. Paired Weapons.

Critical Strike on 18-20, Leap attack (Critical), All Jump Kicks, Kick Attack, (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6), Crescent Kick (2D4+2), Backward Sweep, Tripping/Leg Hook.

Weapons: Graven fights with a long sword ("Bonecutter") and dagger ("Bloodthorn") at all times.



Bonecutter: Total bonuses: +9 to strike and parry, +8 to throw. Enchanted to inflict an extra die of damage, is indestructible, and eternally sharp (total damage: 1D8+1D6+5).

Bloodthorn: Total bonuses: +9 to strike and parry, +10 to throw. Returns when thrown, does an extra die of damage (total: 2D6+1), and will bypass the A.R. of its targets! If used against targets wearing armor, the armor will not be harmed by this weapon, as it will automatically seek out gaps and chinks in the armor through which to strike. When used against creatures with a high natural A.R., this weapon simply goes through their natural defenses, so any roll of 5 or higher strikes unless parried.

Armor: A tattered coat of magically weightless and noiseless chain mail. Despite its ratty appearance, it has an A.R. of 13, and 219 S.D.C.!

Magic Items: Graven possesses a Gem of Direction and five Screech Bottles (One of Graven's favorite tactics when attacking ships is to lob one or two of these onto the enemy ship right before boarding, to rattle his soon-to-be victims).

Money and other equipment: Graven has 71,409 in gold of various denominations and currencies. He also possesses an opal worth 2,000, 3 pearls each worth 1,000 gold and 10 pearls each worth 500 gold.

Familiar: About a year ago, Graven paid a wizard in the Free City of Troker to cast a Familiar Link on Graven's behalf. His familiar, a booted eagle, stays by his side at all times and will harry anybody who attacks its master. The eagle has 25 hit points, three attacks per melee, talons inflict 2D6+2 dam-

age, 2D4 bite/peck, and is +2 to initiative, +4 to strike and +4 to dodge. Graven also uses the eagle as a scout, sending it in search of ships to plunder.

Ship: Graven commands the *Fist of Utu*, a Western war galley.

Jammer, Quick Stats

This Dogre is a living nightmare to both his friends and his enemies. To those who would oppose him, Jammer is a savage opponent whose blood frenzies make him immune to fear or pain. To his "friends," he is an uncontrollable and unpredictable ally, prone to rash decisions and easily lured into traps. However, Jammer's pirate crew absolutely loves him for his complete fearlessness and his successful track record. Pirates who crew on Jammer's ship often get twice as much booty as those on other ships of the Buccaneer's Junction fleet. It is generally accepted, however, that one day Jammer will pick a fight with somebody he can't possibly beat. And, being unable to run from a losing fight, he will meet a premature end out on the high seas somewhere. In fact, since the other three pirate lords are so convinced that Jammer will probably be killed by freelance pirate hunters or Western Empire patrols, they have talked about capturing Jammer themselves and turning him in for the 25,000 gold reward on his head. Hey, if he's gonna die anyway, might as well make some money off him, right? Jammer, of course, has no idea that his fellow pirate lords are casually plotting against him. As far as he's concerned, he is both immortal and invincible, so nothing in life is worth worrying about, least of all betrayal from one's business partners.

Title: Pirate Lord of Buccaneer's Junction

O.C.C.: 7th level pirate.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 6, M.E. 4, M.A. 8, P.S. 27, P.P. 20, P.E. 23, P.B. 3, Spd. 10.

Hit Point: 49, S.D.C.: 40

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses: +6 to strike, +7 to parry, +6 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +6 to roll with impact, +12 to damage, +10% to save vs coma/death, +3 to save vs magic and poison, +2 to save vs Horror Factor; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert — Critical Strike on 18-20, paired weapons, Karate kick attack (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6), Crescent Kick (2D4+2), Horror Factor 12, claws do 2D6+damage bonus, bite 2D4+2 damage.

W.P. Chain (+2 to strike, +1 to parry), W.P. Siege Weapons (+2 to strike), W.P. Blunt (+2 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Grappling Hook (+2 to strike and entangle, no parry possible).

Blood Lust: Like all Dogres, Jammer is susceptible to anger and frustration, which drives him into an unthinking rage. This is rather common in combat, where he will kill anybody around him (including any of his own crewmen not smart enough to stay out of his way). While in a berserk frenzy, Jammer gains an additional +4 to strike, +10 to damage, +8 to save versus Horror Factor, ignores the effects of fatigue and pain, and gets an additional two attacks per melee. At the same time, he is -3 on initiative, -4 to parry, and he generally will not dodge for any reason.

Weapons: Jammer fights with a giant-sized, magic Hercules club called Wyrmbane. Total bonuses: +8 to strike, +9 to parry, +7 to throw. In his hands, Wyrmbane does a total of

6D6 +12 damage. Wyrmbane also inflicts double damage against dragons, and has the Thunder hammer ability (+2D6 damage plus a booming thunderclap each time it hits its target).

Armor: Are you kidding? To quote Jammer: "You wear armor, you a girly-man!" Guess that says it all.

Magic Items: None other than Wyrmbane. He has lost, sold or been swindled out of nearly all his other magic items, mostly because he does not care for them. As long as he has his magic club, he's happy.



Money and other equipment: Jammer's second-in-command, Pareaux Veddish, handles all of the ship's accounting, and according to his logs, Jammer has 84,000 in gold, gems and jewelry, all socked away in a safe at the Buccaneer's Junction. What nobody knows is that Veddish is skimming from his boss quite badly; Jammer should be worth triple that. It is only a matter of time before the mad Dogre finds out and Veddish will suffer the dire consequences.

Ship: Jammer commands the *Big Ship*, a Byzantium behemoth. To a Dogre, naming a large vessel *Big Ship* is considered witty. None of Jammer's crew have the courage to make fun of this though.

Shade, Quick Stats

This elven assassin never intended to get involved with piracy, and although he is a powerful and respected pirate lord, he

considers his profession dirty and distasteful. He dislikes cavorting with all the rough sea-dog types, and would love to move someplace where, to him, there is a little "culture." Perhaps the Western Empire or the Timiro Kingdom. All he's waiting for is to save up enough money so he can move back to civilization and live in style.

Title: Pirate Lord of Buccaneer's Junction

O.C.C.: 7th level assassin

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 18, M.E. 15, M.A. 8, P.S. 18, P.P. 18, P.E. 15, P.B. 24, Spd. 13.

Hit Points: 49, S.D.C.: 31

Attacks per melee: 7

Bonuses: +4% to all skills, +1 to initiative, +7 to damage, +4 to strike, +10 to parry, +8 to dodge, +4 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +3 to pull punch, +4 to disarm, +6% to save vs coma/death, +2 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs poison, 70% chance to charm/impress; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Assassin & Boxing — Automatic knockout/stun on a natural 17-20, and W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Knife (+3 to strike, parry and throw), W.P. Spear (+3 to strike and parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Archery (Range: +80 feet, Rate of Fire: 6, +3 to strike, +1 to parry).

Weapons: Shade fights with a magic short spear (+6 to strike, +4 to parry, 2D6+10 damage) that has a pair of long, thin parallel blades on the tip. The weapon is enchanted to inflict an extra die of damage, and is eternally sharp (+3 damage). He also has two Cyclops Lightning arrows and a small arsenal of other, non-magical weapons, including a long sword, four daggers, a crossbow and 20 bolts, and a bullwhip.

Armor: Shade does not wear armor, but he possesses a magical ring that confers a natural A.R. of 12.

Magic Items: Shade always keeps with him his "bag of tricks," which contains four smoke bombs (each a different color), two stink bombs, two roman candles, and two flash bombs (one-shot devices like a stink bomb or a smoke bomb, but act identically to a first-level Blinding Flash spell).

Money and other equipment: Shade has amassed a whopping 225,000 in gold; all but 5,000 of which has been converted to Old Kingdom Dragon Coins for easy transportation. Shade keeps his money on him at all times in a big black leather belt purse. The clasp to the purse has been warded with an Inflict: Death to anybody who touches the purse but Shade. When activated, the ward inflicts 2D4x10 damage.

Ship: Shade commands the *In Darkest Night*, a brand-new Byzantium schooner he recently captured. He still owns his old ship, *Styphon's Blood*, a rather war-torn Western Merchantman. Shade would much rather sell this old boat than scuttle it or give it away, but finding the people to take care of it while he is out to sea is becoming increasingly difficult.

Mojo, Quick Stats

Like Shade, Mojo also never saw himself as a pirate until he stumbled into the career a few years ago. While traveling on the Sea of Scarlet Waters, his vessel was captured. Rather than walk the plank, he offered to join the pirate crew that took him prisoner. Very quickly, Mojo proved his worth in combat, and soon

led a mutiny that ended with the old captain getting marooned on a desolate island near the Sea of Dread, and Mojo in the captain's chair. Ever since, he has become flushed with his sense of power and destiny. He sees himself as becoming a fearsome sorcerer-pirate. His reputation does not extend too far outside the Sea of Scarlet Waters, but he is a dangerous opponent who should not be trifled with.

Title: Pirate Lord of Buccaneer's Junction

O.C.C.: 4th level wizard.

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 19, M.A. 15, P.S. 10, P.P. 9, P.E. 9, P.B. 11, Spd. 13.

Hit Points: 24, S.D.C.: 20

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses: +3% to all skills, +2 to save vs psionic attack and insanity, +2 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to pull punch; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. Staff (+2 to strike, +1 to parry).

Weapons: Iron staff (2D6) and pair of silver plated daggers (1D6).

Armor: Soft Leather with an A.R. 10, and S.D.C. 20.

Magic Spells: Decipher magic, sense magic, cloud of slumber, globe of daylight, tongues, enchanted cauldron, death trance, see the invisible, thunderclap, mystic alarm, turn dead, armor of Ithan, energy field, telekinesis, swim as a fish, and energy bolt.

Magic Items: None, aside from a large "Book of Spells" Mojo often keeps on his person. This large tome has a stitched spine that can be unlaced and re-laced to put more pages into it. All of the spell book's pages have silver runes written on them, making the book indestructible. Essentially, though, this book is just a bound collection of scrolls that Mojo keeps as an arsenal of ready-for use spells. Within the spell book are one scroll page for each of the spells Mojo knows (listed above), plus an additional scroll page for the following spells (which Mojo has not yet converted into spell knowledge): plasma bolt, teleport: minor, create zombie, magic pigeon and invulnerability: limited.

Money and other equipment: Mojo aspires to become a Diabolist, and has converted most of his wealth into various ward components worth a total of 55,000 gold. Aside from that, he only has another 2,500 gold in cash.

Ship: Mojo commands the *Sorcerous Ways*, a Western merchantman. Mojo is not too happy having the worst ship of the fleet, and he will commandeer the first vessel he captures that appears to be nicer than his own.

The Cove of Elemental Evil

Led by a cabal of evil Warlocks who have decided to turn their talents to seaborne mayhem, the "Sea-Dogs of the Elements," as these pirates like to call themselves, are a relatively new arrival on the Baalgor piracy scene.

The four Warlocks who lead this crew do so by fear and intimidation, killing any pirate or sailor among them (mostly orcs, goblins, scurvy humans and the occasional ogre) who fails in his duty or who does not follow orders. These warlocks also do not let any of their henchmen advance beyond fifth level, for fear

their own lackeys might think they are powerful enough to take over the group. Thus, most "high-level" henchmen and lieutenants have a mysterious way of dying while boarding enemy ships or washing overboard while at sea.

This cove is located in a large grotto that has been hollowed out by magical means perhaps a hundred years ago. The Warlocks of this cove would like to claim that they crafted this grotto themselves, but the truth is, nobody knows who made this place. Regardless of its mysterious past, the cove is a perfect harbor and hideaway for pirates. The grotto itself has a winding, narrow entrance that is easily defended. On the far wall of the main grotto is a huge cavern dug into the surrounding cliff wall. The pirates have made their base in that cave, Pueblo Indian-style.

Inside the base camp are a variety of stone buildings (all crafted by magic), as well as a large, central temple to the elemental powers. There are also numerous springs and fountains providing plenty of fresh water, also provided by elemental magic, as are the many eternal flames used for lighting, warmth, cooking and lighting other fires.

The elemental "lords" as they like to call themselves, jointly command a single warship, a Byzantium behemoth styled to look like a giant fish riding on top of the water. The ship, named the *Power of Four*, is a true monstrosity, carrying a full complement of sailors, pirates and craftsmen. The entire pirate crew goes out on the high seas all at once. Before the crew goes out, the Warlock Lords typically each conjure a single major elemental to guard the grotto until their return. So far, this ploy has worked well; all ships who have stumbled onto this place have been destroyed by the elemental sentinels. However, a group of enterprising adventurers might be able to defeat these guardians, ambush the Elementalist Pirates, and claim the grotto for themselves.

The four Elemental Lords of this cove are Konilock of the Flame, Byzantium Freck, Leslo Squibbs and Seremm the Gray.

Konilock of the Flame, Quick Stats

This guy is the most devious of the lot. He is the take-charge leader of the group even though all four are supposedly equal in rank and authority. Efficient, cruel and cunning, he will become one of the most powerful and legendary pirate captains in this part of the world, unless he is stopped. As his crew has become more successful, he has actually considered declaring them a mercenary company and getting in on some of the civil war action that has made the southern coast of the Western Empire such a hotbed recently. Failing that, Konilock would be content to simply plunder each and every ship that has the misfortune to cross his path. He never knowingly leaves any survivors after an attack, a habit which his cohorts swear will be his undoing someday.

Title: Elemental Lord of the Baalgor Coast.

O.C.C.: 8th level human Fire Warlock.

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q. 24, M.E. 21, M.A. 21, P.S. 14, P.P. 12, P.E. 12, P.B. 6 (His face is covered in terrible burns), Spd. 11.

Hit Points: 34, S.D.C.: 25

Attacks per melee: 5 physical or two by magic.

Bonuses: +10% to all skills, +2 to damage, +1 to strike, +2 to parry, +2 to dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to



pull punch, +3 to save vs psionic attack, +4 to save vs. insanity, 65% to trust/intimidate; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic — Karate kick (2D4), snap kick (1D6), critical strike 19-20, and body flip/throw.

W.P. Staff (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry, +2 to throw).

Spells: Cloud of Smoke, Globe of Daylight, Impervious to Fire, Cloud of Ash, Cloud of Steam, Fuel Flame, Flame Lick, Tongue of Flame, Darkness, Circle of Cold, Circle of Flame, Screaming Wall of Fire, Extinguish Fire, Fire Ball, Flame Friend, Heal Burns, Blue Flame, Wall of Ice, Dancing Fires, Eternal Flame, Fire Whip, 10 foot Wheel of Fire, Burst into Flame, and Plasma Bolt.

Other Elemental Abilities: The usual, see pages 108-112 of the *PFRPG, 2nd Edition*.

Weapons: Dwarven falchion that is +4 to damage and +2 to strike and parry (total bonuses: +6 to strike, +7 to parry, +2 to throw; does 2D6+6 damage).

Armor: Studded leather with an A.R. 13, and S.D.C. 38.

Magic Items: None.

Money and other equipment: 15,000 gold in cash. No other major valuables. This pirate crew has divided its total booty recently, with many crew members leaving, and a whole fresh group of new recruits coming in. Most of the money that Konilock (and the other warlocks) have made so far has been spent refurbishing their secret grotto hideout and paying the crewmen.

Byzantium Freck, Quick Stats

This villain is an egomaniac of the first order, and is also slightly detached from reality. While not fully delusional, he insists that the Island Kingdom of Byzantium was named after him, and that if he ever goes there, all he has to do is assert his legal claim to all of those islands in order to receive them. Aside from that behavioral quirk, Byzantium is also a fierce warrior, an accomplished warlock, and a bloodthirsty pirate. He will follow Konilock's every order, and is simply thrilled with his new life as a pirate. (It would seem that as long as there will be ships to pillage and sailors to slaughter, this blackguard will be happy forever.)

Title: Elemental Lord of the Baalgor Coast

O.C.C.: 8th level human Air Warlock.

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 10, M.A. 7, P.S. 18, P.P. 17, P.E. 17, P.B. 13, Spd. 13.

Hit Points: 42, S.D.C.: 30.

Attacks per melee: 5 physical attacks or two spell attacks.

Bonuses: +5 to damage, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and +2 to pull punch; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic — Karate kick (2D4), snap kick (1D6), critical strike 19-20, body flip/throw.

W.P. Staff (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Chain (+3 to strike, +2 to parry).

Spells: Breathe Without Air, Cloud of Slumber, Create Light, Create Mild Wind, Stop Wind, Change Wind Direction, Miasma, Silence, Call Lightning, Float in Air, Wind Rush, Ball Lightning, Calm Storm, Phantom Footman, Protection From Lightning, Breath of Life, Detect the Invisible, Phantom, Whirlwind, Electrical Field, Mist of Death, Atmospheric Manipulation, Wind Blast, and Snow Storm (the latter is an effective and startling attack in this hot region).

Other Elemental Abilities: The usual, see pages 108-112 of *The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game*®, 2nd Edition.

Weapons: Ball and chain (+5 to strike and parry, 3D6+5), nunchaku (+5 to strike and parry, 2D4+5) and a bullwhip (2D6+5).

Armor: Studded leather with A.R. 13 and S.D.C. 38.

Magic Items: None.

Money and other equipment: 15,000 gold; same situation as Konilock, above.

Leslo Squibbs, Quick Stats

Angry and uncontrollable, Leslo is the true wild card of this group. He feels his elemental magicks are not truly appreciated, next to the destructive firepower of his two comrades. Despite the truth that he is just as powerful as they (some could argue that he is the most powerful when at sea), he still feels overshadowed and cast aside. Thus, he is prone to lashing out and taking wild chances to prove his worth. He also does not plan well and tends to sow dissent among the other pirates of this group. Rumor has it that Konilock and Byzantium are considering casting this guy out and replacing him with a more level-headed candidate.

Title: Elemental lord of the Baalgor Coast

O.C.C.: 8th level human Water Warlock.

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 10, M.A. 10, P.S. 10, P.P. 10, P.E. 10, P.B. 10, Spd. 10,

Hit Points: 45, S.D.C.: 20

Attacks per melee: 5 physical attacks or two spell attacks.

Bonuses: +2 to damage, +1 to strike, +2 to parry, +2 to dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall or impact, +2 to pull punch.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic — Karate kick (2D4), snap kick (1D6), critical strike on 19-20, body flip/throw.

W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Shield (+2 to strike, +3 to parry); includes attribute bonuses.

Spells: Create Fog, Dowsing, Purple Mist, Walk the Waves, Water to Wine, Breathe Underwater, Impervious to Ocean Depths, Change Current, Ride the Waves, Command Fish, Sheet of Ice, Create Water, Hail, Water Wisps, Protection from Lightning, Snow Storm, Whirlpool, Little Ice Monster, Ten Foot Ball of Ice, Part Waters, Summon & Control Storm, Creatures of the Waves, Calm Waters (superior 8th level spell), and Summon Sharks or Whales. Note ice and cold magic are especially effective and startling in this hot region.

Other Elemental Abilities: The usual, see pages 108-112 of *The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game*®, 2nd Edition.

Weapons: Dwarven long sword, +3 to damage, +3 to parry (total: +4 to strike, +8 to parry, +2 to throw, 2D6+7 damage).

Small iron shield (S.D.C.: 50; total: +3 to strike, +5 to parry).

Armor: Studded leather (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 38)

Magic Items: None. See description for Konilock, above.

Money and other equipment: 15,000 gold (+6,000 hidden away at a secret place); basically the same situation as Konilock.

Seremm the Gray, Quick Stats

Reserved and sedate, this Earth Warlock is the most cunning and stable individual of the entire group. While he enjoys pirating the open seas with fellow Warlocks, the pettiness and excessive behavior of his cohorts have begun to wear on Seremm, who would not mind picking up and moving on. Seremm isn't too fond of the big ship he and his fellows use, either. He would much rather have captured a Byzantium Stone Ship, which he could have repaired and modified with his own magicks. But, the other three feared that having those responsibilities would make Seremm grow self-important (which would certainly have happened), so they nixed the idea. While vital at base camp, he feels like a fish out of water (pun intended) at sea where his powers have limited effectiveness.

Title: Elemental lord of the Baalgor Coast

O.C.C.: 7th level Earth Warlock.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 11, M.A. 17, P.S. 20, P.P. 13, P.E. 12, P.B. 13, Spd. 15.

Hit Points: 53, S.D.C.: 24

Attacks per melee: 5 physical attacks or two spell attacks.

Bonuses: +7 to damage, +1 to strike, +2 to parry, +2 to dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall or impact, +2 to pull punch.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic — Karate kick (2D4), snap kick (1D6), critical strike on 19-20, body flip/throw.

W.P. Staff (+3 to strike, +2 to parry and throw), W.P. Shield (+2 to strike, +3 to parry); includes attribute bonuses.

Spells: Chameleon, Dowsing, Fool's Gold, Rot Wood, Create Dirt or Clay, Hopping Stones, Crumble Stone, Dig, Encase Object in Stone, Locate Minerals, Wall of Stone, Animate



Object, Mend Stone, Rust, Sand Storm, Little Mud Mound, Travel Through Stone, Clay or Stone to Iron, Mend Metal, Metal to Clay, and Petrification.

Other Elemental Abilities: The usual, see pages 108-112 of *The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game*®, 2nd Edition.

Weapons: Magical Wooden Staff that is indestructible and spits lightning bolts (3D6+6, 40 ft/12 m range) three times a day. Plus a silver dagger, silver cross, cutlass and a small iron shield (S.D.C.: 50; total: +3 to strike, +5 to parry).

Armor: Studded leather (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 38)

Magic Items: Staff, above, and Crystal of True Seeing.

Money and other equipment: 15,000 gold; basically the same situation as Konilock, described previously.

Cove Redlin

This is the last of the great pirate coves of the Baalgor coastline. Its captain is the nefarious Azamon Redlin, a Western noble wanted for numerous acts of murder, treason, theft of Imperial property, and other offenses back home. Redlin is the last of an ancient noble family that was all but destroyed during the Western Empire's re-conquest by the great Emperor Leopold I. House Redlin fell relatively early in the fighting, and only a few of those nobles escaped and went underground. Now, many years later, the last of the Redlin bloodline, Azamon, sits atop a false throne he has built for himself here in the Baalgor Wastelands.

Along with a few adventuring buddies and a group of hired underlings, Redlin has built his own pirate cove, complete with a tiny beachside plantation and a stately adventurers' stronghold. The plantation is run by orcish slaves, kept in line by a few well-paid taskmasters who oversee the farming and organize the cove's defenses when Redlin is out to sea. His personal stronghold is essentially a mansion within a walled keep. Redlin's crew members man the keep itself, while the manor house is reserved for Redlin and his adventuring friends only. When not manning the keep walls or out to sea, his henchmen live in the wooden long-houses positioned on the shore, near the cove's dock.

By and large, Redlin usually targets ships that he considers personal enemies, such as any vessel flying the colors of any noble family that could be implicated in the downfall of House Redlin. Recently, Redlin has plundered and sunk a dozen Imperial Merchantman vessels, as well as ships belonging to a few different Western noble houses — Western ships are his primary target. As a result, Emperor Itomas has authorized a 250,000 gold bounty on Redlin, alive or dead (preferably alive). Numerous pirate-hunters have taken up the Empire's offer and are scouring the Sea of Scarlet Waters and the Baalgor coastline for signs of him and his scurvy cohorts. Among these pirate-hunters are Idimir Vass (a 10th level soldier and 4th level sailor), Neshueh Ghenna (a 5th level assassin, 5th level sailor, 3rd level wizard), and Sir Runneer Shaw (9th level noble, 6th level soldier, 2nd level sailor). Each of these pirate-hunters operates his own vessel, complete with a crew of sailors and soldiers.

These hunters are experts at what they do, and it is only a matter of time before they close in on Redlin. The question is, will just one of these hunters corner the hunted pirate (either on the open sea or at his hide-out), or will they all run across each other and duke it out over who has the right to bring Redlin to justice? Any characters familiar with the pirate-hunting business will know that fighting off competing pirate-hunters can be just as dangerous as fighting the pirates themselves.

Azamon Redlin, Quick Stats

House Redlin was all but destroyed during the Western Empire's last major civil war, and ever since, the last members of this noble line have wandered the Empire looking for the means of regaining power. Azamon Redlin has chosen the life of a criminal and pirate as the means to snatch power, fame and revenge for himself and his family name. This has earned him not only the wrath of the "Empire of Sin," but the respect of other villains and the pirates in the region, many of whom are willing to trade and/or fence goods for pirate, and help in small ways like providing warnings and information, and keeping their own mouths closed. Over the last few years, Redlin has found himself in charge of several warships and a small army of pirates willing to carry out his bidding. The Sea of Scarlet Waters is his current stomping grounds, and he has set up a cove of his own to the north of the Elementarists' Cove, described previously. He rules his self-styled pirate kingdom with the goal of lining his pockets, satisfying his every desire, reaping revenge against the Noble Houses who destroyed his family's good name, and spreading murder and chaos across the high seas.

Title: The Duke of Redlin

O.C.C.: 10th level Noble and self-styled pirate.

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 12, M.A. 19, P.S. 17, P.P. 18, P.E. 17, P.B. 20, Spd. 9.

Hit Points: 53, S.D.C.: 40.

Attacks per melee: 6

Bonuses: +5 to damage, +4 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +4 to pull punch, +5% to save vs coma/death, +1 to save vs magic/poison, 50% charm/impress; includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts — Critical strike 18-20, Body Flip/Throw, Snap Kick 1D6, Roundhouse Kick (3D6), and Axe Kick (2D6).

W.P. Sword (+4 to strike and parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Knife (+4 to strike and parry, +5 to throw) and W.P. Paired Weapons.

Weapons: Redlin fights sword and dagger style with a flaming sword (6D6 damage) and flaming dagger (4D6). The dagger is also enchanted to return when thrown. Redlin also carries an ornamental dagger with him at all times, a badge of House Redlin, but he will not use this weapon unless in dire emergencies.

Armor: Redlin wears a suit of magically weightless and noiseless plate and chain with an A.R. 15 and S.D.C. 100.

Magic Items: The pirate owns an ancient signet ring found in the Wastelands. It is carved out of dragon bone that contains wards of Inflict: Cold, Mystic Energy Drain, Permanence, and a few other unrecognizable wards. The net effect is this ring keeps an aura of comfortably cool temperature about Redlin at all times, so he may wear his heavy armor in the hot Baalgor sun with no ill effect. This ring works at all times, and will not cease to function if removed from Redlin and donned by somebody else.

Money and other equipment: Redlin has 45,000 gold in a locked and warded strongbox, hidden away in his manor. But much more importantly, the lavish furnishings of Redlin's manor (silver, tapestries, hardwood furniture, etc.) are worth millions. The most valuable pieces he owns are a tapestry worth 35,000 gold, a silver urn (containing the ashes of his long-dead grandfather) worth 12,000, and a set of emeralds worth a total of 25,000. Looting Redlin's manor would require a week-long effort of 10 people or more, and the total haul would fill the cargo hold of a Western merchantman.

Redlin's Friends

Lord Redlin has a number of fellow adventurers who have followed him to this cove. Many of these rogues stay here full-time, while others come and go as they please, often returning with them other villains. All of the NPCs staying in Cove Redlin are 6th to 10th level and of evil or selfish alignments. At current, there are six notable NPCs staying in Cove Redlin. They include:

Vorgoth Dur, a diabolic, human anti-paladin from the Western Empire wanted for the murder of nineteen members of several different lower Noble Houses. The last of these victims was slain right in the Embassy District of Caer Itom, prompting the Emperor himself to place a 150,000 gold bounty on Dur's head. He reportedly fights with a magical sword named Blacktalon.

Glimmig Bogras, High Initiate to the Cult of Set. This aberrant Priest of Darkness has known Redlin for many years, and has carried out many foul deeds for the nobleman. Glimmig is

willing to commit any crime that furthers the cause of Set and helps Redlin (who contributes to the church regularly). Glimmig is a borderline paranoid schizophrenic, which makes dealing with him particularly interesting after he has undergone a Prayer of Communion (double all bonuses and +3 on initiative).

Skorde Bi'giriith is a miscreant Diabolist who only cares about a life of comfort and power. He has amassed a large treasure which is scattered at hidden places throughout the world. He came to the Wastelands to learn some interesting new bits of ward magic he heard is being taught in Troker. Unfortunately, he quickly became a wanted man in Troker for several counts of theft and extortion. For the time being, he is laying low in Cove Redlin while he searches for the courage to enter Troker under disguise.



The Free City of Troker

This “wretched hive of scum and villainy” counts as the third and final class of settlement along the Rocky Coastline area. Here, pirates, bandits, brigands and adventurers from all over gather to buy, sell and trade slaves, mercantile cargo, stolen goods (typically at 10-20% below list price, 30-50% when bought wholesale by the gross), magic items, fresh drinking water, alcohol (mainly wine and rum), tobacco and all sorts of booty. It is also a haven for smugglers, spies and outlaws of every kind, and it has become known as the kind of place where travelers may acquire the things normally unavailable to them under more “civilized” conditions. Basically, it is a place where everything is for sale, and justice is enforced at sword-point.

The current version of Troker has only existed for 50 years or so, but the city itself predates the Elf-Dwarf War. In fact, rumors and folk tales telling about forgotten ruins and catacombs under the city abound, but few, if any, appear to be true.

The Dwarven Empire built Troker over 12,000 years ago as a gift to the Elven Empire, back when the two great civilizations were still at peace. Antagonism between the Elves and Dwarves had been mounting for quite some time, but the Dwarven king Jokurath XIV was determined to bring his nation closer to that of the Elves, and so he offered to build a magnificent stronghold-city for them. One that would be as unequalled in its aesthetic beauty as it would be in its invincibility. The Elves graciously accepted, and the great “Island-City” was constructed.

The Elves’ “gift” soon became a prominent naval outpost and trading center (although merchant ships had to learn how to dock, unload, reload and get out in just a few hours). For over one thousand years, this extreme act of generosity seemed to smooth over many of the rough spots that had made the Elves and Dwarves distrust each other for so very long. Indeed, many Dwarves lived in Troker, and the city became a model for how Elf and Dwarf could live peacefully side by side. It appeared as if a new age of peace might blossom between these two proud and powerful peoples. Unfortunately, this peace could not last. Ironically, when the Elf-Dwarf Wars broke out, Troker became an important strategic point for the Elves, and the site of many battles. The Elves needed to hold on to the city to support their other settlements along the Baalgor Coastline. The Dwarves needed to capture or destroy the city in order to break the naval stranglehold their enemy had on the Sea of Scarlet Waters.

The Dwarves besieged Troker repeatedly throughout the Great War, and as the conflict drew to a close, the Dwarven High Command had finally decided that Troker would fall, regardless of the cost. For this invasion, the Dwarves deployed a vast fleet of warships, complemented with Dwarven armies acting as an amphibious invasion force, and powerful sorcerers to provide magical assault and support. Some stories suggest flying demons were also deployed in this all-out siege. The defenders at Troker were kept under constant attack. During high tide, the marine ships would close in and attempt to unload soldiers into the city, while during low tide, the heavier warships bombarded Troker from outside the defensive moat.

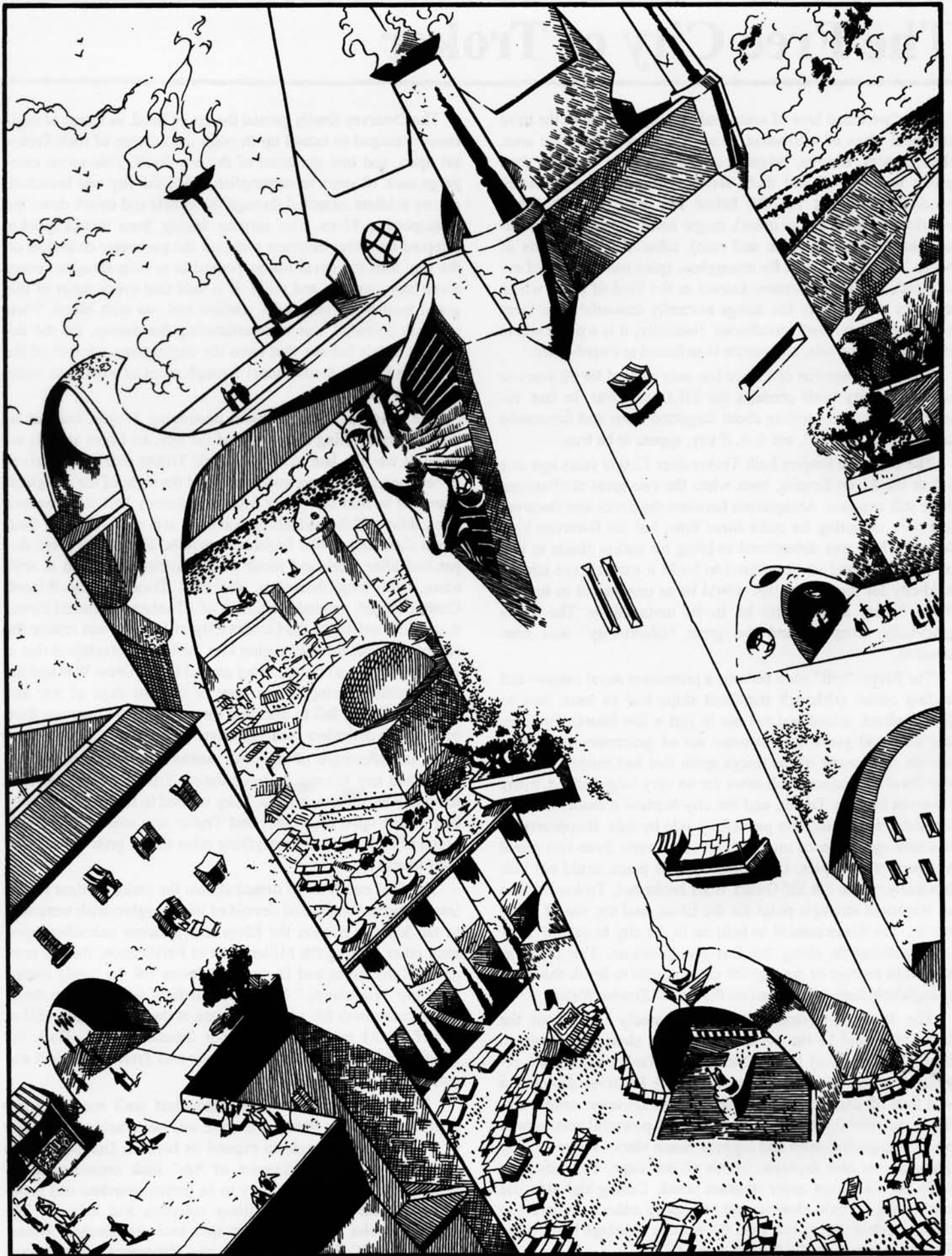
The Dwarves finally gained the upper hand, as teams of engineers managed to tunnel up through the column of rock Troker sat upon, and into the heart of the city itself. This secret campaign took 10 years to accomplish. Once the city was breached, enemy soldiers swarmed through the streets and struck down the unsuspecting Elves. The surging enemy from within quickly crippled the outer defenses and sent the perimeter defenders on the run, thus the naval troops poured in to help slaughter every elven man, woman and child. It is said that every street of this grand metropolis rang with warfare and ran with blood. Their ultimate downfall was underestimating the enemy, for the defenders didn’t believe that even the engineering wizards of the Dwarven Empire could tunnel through miles of solid rock under the sea to get to them.

The Dwarves then set about destroying Troker, but just as they finished killing the people of the city, an Elven armada arrived. It was too late to save a single Troker citizen, but driven to new heights of anger and courage at the sight of the slaughter, managed to rout the weary invaders, destroy half the Dwarven fleet, drive off the remaining warships and send the army back down their tunnel like frightened rabbits. Elementals were dispatched after them and much of the tunnel was filled in with stone. Not long thereafter, the mad Dwarven Bio-Wizard, Gazhur Drodd, created the Circle of Absolute Elemental Power that would obliterate the Golden City of Baalgor and reduce the rest of this lush forested region into the blasted wasteland that is it today, and, in so doing, bring an end to the Great War and the two empires. During the carnage of the last days of war and madness, Troker fell to demonic forces, with less than one third of its Elven defenders escaping alive.

In the aftermath of the war, neither the Dwarves nor the Elves had any interest in repopulating Troker — the city held too many horrible memories. They wanted to forget the evil they had visited upon each other and Troker was soaked in too much blood of both races to be anything other than a grim reminder of their insanity.

The final conflict had turned almost the entire Baalgor region into a desolate wasteland devoid of life, a nightmarish testament to the hideous powers the Elves and dwarves unleashed upon each other. During the Millennium of Purification, the sad remnants of the Elven and Dwarven Empires left the newly named “Baalgor Wastelands.” There was nothing left for them there, and because both felt so much shame at their acts, neither Elf or Dwarf would return for over four thousand years. Thus, the Wastelands were left for other beings and Troker lay silent and empty for a millennium.

The Island City remained untouched until roughly 3,500 years ago when the Western Empire was just reaching the height of its power, and sought to expand its borders. Discovering the ruins of Troker, the “Empire of Sin” sank considerable resources into rebuilding the city to its former grandeur and populating it with ready and willing colonists and soldiers. The Western nobles financing this project knew the Baalgor Wastelands were filled with monsters and dangerous warlords and



bandits, but if those forces could be tamed, then the Western Empire could take over the entire region. Their plan was to engage in massive excavation projects in an effort to uncover the lost secrets and magick of the Great War.

Many Western nobles criticized this project as a foolish waste of time and money. Why bother taking over a parched and worthless wasteland in an outrageous and costly attempt to find buried treasure and ancient magic that probably did not really exist? But such queries were disregarded as the Emperor and his cronies sank more money and men into the city. Eventually, a group of noble families, angry at the severe taxes they paid to finance the Troker project, sent a flotilla of warships to the island and blockaded it. With no influx of food and supplies, the colonists soon surrendered, the Emperor was "persuaded" to reconsider his position, and the project was halted. Over the next 2,000 years, at least 11 other Western Emperors tried to re-colonize the city and turn it into a seaport or naval base. For various reasons, all such attempts have failed. Ever since, Western nobles have been reluctant to do anything at all with Troker, fearful of becoming the next victim to the city's curse (or extreme bad luck, depending on how one looks at it).

For another thousand years or so, the city lay silent, until pirates claimed it nearly four hundred years ago. Since then, Troker has changed hands numerous times. Pirates have used it to declare their own kingdoms, just as orcs, trolls and other races have used it as a stronghold to attack human ships along the borders of the Old Kingdom and Western Empire. Even large groups of adventurers have, from time to time, established Troker as their own home away from home — a large semi-permanent base from where they could embark on various journeys and adventures. And more than once, Troker has been claimed by powerful wizards, priests, warlocks, psychics, and once, even a dragon, who would use this place as a fortified sanctuary, safe from whoever would oppose them.

In recent times, Troker has once again become a pirate haven. Roughly 50 years ago, the city fell under attack by a large and powerful pirate fleet that sacked the place and then decided to stay a while. They turned the central bazaar into a market where they could buy and sell their plunder, and invited other pirates in the region to do the same (claiming a small percentage of all transactions as a "bazaar tax," naturally). For pirates, smugglers and other outlaws, Troker offered the best of both worlds — a place where one could dump stolen goods and illegal gains without worrying about the law, as well as a nice place to rest and relax, not to mention, buy goods at reasonable (often discounted) prices. Pretty soon, Troker became the pirate "capital" of the western world, and its population swelled to its highest numbers since before the Elf-Dwarf War.

With all this prosperity, something bad was bound to happen. The pirate-king who ran Troker grew greedy and started upping the "bazaar tax" almost every month. He also imposed entry taxes and other tariffs, targeting pirate crews he didn't like. Before long, the pirate-king and his crew mates made plenty of enemies, and the city was torn apart by nonstop assassinations, street fights and skullduggery as nearly every major pirate crew in the region took a stab at ruling Troker. Reduced to pure anarchy, the city threatened to implode, and it probably would have, too, if Kai the Wanderer had not entered the picture.

Kai was an Ogre from the Timiro Kingdom who possessed both unusual intelligence and minor psychic powers. Branded as a freak by his fellow Ogres, Kai sought sanctuary in the Timiro Kingdom, where a kind knight named Sir Belevrian took him in and raised him as a free man. Kai became a knight, upholding truth and honor, and valiantly fought back the hordes of Orcs and Ogres who threatened Timiro's borders. Despite these heroics, many other Timiro knights feared and distrusted Sir Kai, and they exiled him after his mentor, Sir Belevrian, died of old age. Bitter and alone, Sir Kai wandered across the Old Kingdom, honing his fighting abilities, and searching for a home. Finally, he came to Troker, a place where it did not matter what race you were — just if you were good with a sword.

Kai sensed his opportunity and rallied a group of freelance swordsmen into a crew of his own. He began attacking smaller pirate crews, killing the captains and recruiting their underlings. Within a year, Kai had wiped out half of the warring pirate factions in the city, and made his bid for the throne himself. In a bloody street war, Kai brilliantly defeated the top three pirate factions, imprisoning their leaders and most of their crews. Once he declared himself warrior-king for life, no one dared oppose him, and after a while, order returned to the legendary city.

Until this point, Kai's rise to power had not been that different from so many other despots who had taken over Troker. But upon crowning himself, King Kai vowed never to let Troker fall back into the anarchy he had rescued it from. He re-established the original "bazaar tax" at 10% and established a flat port tax for all ships: 10 gold per day for small ships, 25 gold per day for medium ships and 50 gold per day for large ships. He extended invitations to all "merchants of circumstance," as he likes to call pirates and smugglers, to come to Troker and exchange their goods. As a sign of good faith, he freed all of the rival pirates he had captured and gave each one 50 gold with which to start a new life. He offered most of them positions in his city guard, which the majority accepted.

With his small army of pirates and mercenaries to enforce a fair (if brutal) set of laws, King Kai has established himself as an honorable but fearful leader. He expects his every word to be taken as law, and he severely punishes those who oppose him. Those who abide by his laws are treated fairly with kindness and generosity. For a pirate kingdom, one really can not ask for more.

Since King Kai took over 25 years ago, Troker has become a well established free trade zone and a thieves' paradise. The Western Empire has spoken of crushing it several times, but every Western commander knows that the city is extremely well-defended, and that nobody could ever marshal the military coalition that would be needed to crush King Kai's domain. Besides, the Empire has far more pressing concerns than picking on some pirate outpost in the middle of nowhere.

Likewise, none of the other major nations are all that concerned about Troker, since most of the city's pirates make their living raiding Western ships. And for the Timiro Kingdom, Island Kingdom of Byzantium, and the Eastern Territory, any enemy of the Western Empire is a friend of theirs.

Troker is a clearing house for stolen property, illegal goods, illicit pleasures and all kinds of contraband. Most of the pirates and smugglers here operate within the Sea of Scarlet Waters, but a fair number also operate in the southern waters, where the



world's heaviest merchant traffic is found. From there, most pirates either go to the Land of the South Winds or the Timiro Kingdom to unload their booty. If they are really ambitious, then they head up the Yin-Sloth coastline (perhaps picking up some slaves along the way), through the dangerous Strait of Scarlet Waters (which is heavily patrolled by Western warships) and into the Sea of Scarlet Waters. Once inside, pirates often hit merchant ships and coastal outposts and towns along the Western Empire's southern coast or the Old Kingdom's western coast before finally arriving at Troker. Ships who do this can make an extraordinary amount of money. The dangers are high, but for most sea-dogs, the risk is worth the juicy pay off.

Troker is also a great place for spies, criminals, political refugees and other fugitives to stay, since it is very easy to become just another anonymous face here. In fact, many of Troker's businessmen specialize in helping smuggle people to and from the Western Empire, the Eastern Territory, the Land of the South Winds and the Timiro Kingdom. These "fugitive brokers," as they like to call themselves, can often provide their clients with discreet passage on any variety of vessels, complete with expertly forged royal pardons and other such paperwork and legal documents, and well-crafted disguises. If ever there was a place to shake free of your legal entanglements, it is Troker.

With all the people on the run here, spies from nearly every kingdom find the city a marvelous place to learn rumors, secrets and snippets of information. Most of the fugitives and criminals here have an axe to grind against somebody (no pun intended),

and many are willing to share their dirty secrets for a small price or chance for revenge. Spies looking for interesting news and information, the many disaffected people of this pirate town can provide valuable tips, clues, leads, innuendo, histories and data that would be otherwise difficult to acquire.

For the most part, the international intelligence community in Troker gets along well enough, but once in a while, some big international crisis comes up that provokes all of the spies in town to begin fighting each other. For several weeks at a stretch, dozens of mysterious poisonings, knife-fights, robberies and assassinations will plague the city until the King's guardsmen crack down on everybody and restore the peace.

Troker is also the home of many thieves, assassins, and bounty hunters, all of whom are required to join the appropriate "Shadow Union" if they expect to work in town. There are three Shadow Unions in Troker, one for thieving, one for assassinations, and one for bounty hunting. Each of these Unions must report back to King Kai directly, to pay special networking taxes. As long as the Shadow Unions abide by King Kai's rules, then they can conduct business as they like. **Kai's rules are simple:**

1. No acts against the crown and his court.
2. No thieving from, killing or apprehending innocent bystanders. Essentially, "innocent bystanders" are anybody who King Kai has deemed "untouchable" for whatever reason. Kai routinely sends updated "untouchables" lists to each of the Shadow Unions to avoid confusion. Of course, they always include the King and his court, among others.



3. Each month, all Shadow Unions give 15% of their previous month's profits to King Kai.

4. All Shadow Unions will, upon request, conduct free work for the King.

None of the Shadow Unions break these rules because they know that if they do, the King will declare war on them; besides, they are very fair and reasonable. The last time a Union broke the rules, the Thieves' Guild had conducted a heist against a merchant King Kai considered untouchable. When word of this reached the King, he rounded up 150 of his finest guardsmen, who went to the guild headquarters and killed every thief on the premises. Most of the thieves put to the sword that day were not involved in the heist, but that wasn't the point. As far as King Kai was concerned, he just wanted to send the rest of the guild a loud and clear message. That was nine years ago. There have not been any problems like that since.

As for freelancers, mercenaries, and adventurers, all swords for hire who enter town are informed by union representatives that if they intend to perform any contract work in town, they had better do it through the Unions, or else. There are no second warnings. Adventurers who perform a contract theft, killing or abduction without first joining the appropriate Shadow Union are usually hunted down and killed. The Shadow Unions are ultra-strict about this for two reasons. The first is they do not appreciate freelancers moving in on their business. The second is that they must take the heat for any freelancer who breaks one of King Kai's rules, as outlined previously. Considering how King Kai enforces his rules, none of the Shadow Unions are

about to suffer the King's wrath for some drifter or freelance killer. **Note:** This applies to any adventurers who make work for themselves, too. Folks who decide to rip somebody off without the thieves' guild's say-so are targeted and killed. Otherwise, independents run the risk of hitting one of Kai's "untouchables," which would draw undeserved heat on one of the Shadow Unions. The Unions hate it when that happens, so they quickly take care of anybody who dares to make independent shadow work for themselves.

Aside from Kai's networking regulations, the law in Troker is subject to the King's whim. In general, very little is considered a crime in Troker, and everybody is expected to enforce his or her own right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. As a result, thievery, intimidation, brawls, extortion, double-crosses and fighting are rather common throughout the city. However, King Kai has made it very plain that if anybody fails to "tow the line" or makes a spectacle of himself, the King will step in with his guardsmen. When Kai feels the need to get involved in some altercation, he usually rounds up whoever was involved, plus anybody implicated in the matter, gives them a "fair trial," and executes or banishes them. The King does not mind if the people of Troker work and play hard, but he will not let things turn into a riot or get so out of hand that massive amounts of property is damaged or his city is placed in jeopardy. So, brawls and duels are legal, but defying or drawing weapons against the King's Guardsmen is not, and is punishable by death. Theft is not leaned on too heavily so long as what's stolen does not exceed 100-200 gold. Of course, anybody who steals from Kai,

his guardsmen, his friends or any of his listed "untouchables" is brutally punished, often imprisoned, sold into slavery or put to death, no questions asked. Offenses of honor, such as lying, rape and cheating, are encouraged to be resolved by formal duels held in the city arena so that everybody can watch. These spectacles are a favorite form of entertainment in town, and everybody goes to these expecting a good fight. Dueling out in the open is strictly forbidden, since those tend to blow up into gang wars or full-scale riots. More sophisticated and subtle crimes, like extortion, loan sharking or fraud usually do not gain the notice of Kai's guardsmen. The overall mentality is, if somebody's smart enough to commit such a complicated crime, then good for them. The murder of drifters, outsiders and suspected spies go largely uninvestigated and quickly forgotten. The murder of citizens may warrant an investigation and the culprit responsible may even be brought to justice (typically sold into slavery or executed in the arena). However, it is only the murder of merchants, figures of repute (priests, celebrities, well regarded entertainers, etc.), government officials, the King's Guardsmen and his "untouchables" that garners publicity and quick justice.

Troker is a rough and savage place, where just as many people live by the sword as die by it. Sure, there is danger around every corner, but for most of the people who make their home here, there is no better or more exciting place in the world. And for some odd reason, many travelling adventurers come to the same conclusion.

As for the city itself, there are a few specific things that differentiate Troker from most other settlements and towns.

First, there are no real poor or rich sections. In one building, you might have a bunch of destitute smugglers barely surviving, and in the next you might have a crew of incredibly rich pirates living off the fat of their latest campaign. Money is sprinkled in uneven amounts all throughout the city. The only exceptions are in the residences surrounding the Grand Bazaar, and those surrounding Kai's Keep.

Second, there are no formal churches or temples here. King Kai fears (and rightly so) that the presence of any organized religion in Troker would challenge his power. People are free to worship as they please, but no big religious gatherings are allowed, nor is the establishment of any church or temple, regardless of its religion. This goes for Warlocks, too — no public elemental temples of any kind are allowed in the city.

Third, there is no real industry in this city, meaning little manufacturing, building or farming. Piracy, smuggling and trading of (stolen) goods is the largest moneymaker. This means all manner of trading, selling and reselling — pure commerce. For most of these pirates and killers, manufacturing is a waste of time and effort. After all, why spend all that energy building something when it's so much easier to steal it?

Fourth, and perhaps most noticeably, Troker has a number of magical features about it that are not generally found anywhere else. On every street corner is a shuttered streetlight containing a permanent Globe of Daylight. Each night, King Kai's guardsmen draw back the shutters to these, bathing the entire city in a soft, comforting luminescence (A welcome side effect is that it keeps away vampires and other night monsters vulnerable to sunlight). Likewise, Eternal Flames are present throughout the city, as are magical, permanent springs of fresh water. Some of these springs are the centerpieces of grand, showpiece fountains,

but the majority are simple public drinking fountains found all over the city.

Fifth, Troker has an unusually high number of ghosts, entities, specters, ghouls and banshees roaming its streets, alleys and halls. Keep in mind that many, many people have died terrible deaths here over the years. Elves and Dwarves slaughtered each other by the hundreds of thousands at Troker during the Elf-Dwarf War. Western colonists starved and killed one another during the Empire's many botched colonization attempts. And the various pirate factions ruling Troker have used this place to put thousands of innocent (and not so innocent) people to the sword. When that many people have met a violent and premature end, one can bet that the psychic impressions left on the place are going to attract all sorts of entities and supernatural beings. To psychics, Troker is extremely "hot" with the psychic imprint of innumerable atrocities left behind. To ghost hunters, priests or others interested in the supernatural, the city is a virtual hotbed of spectral phenomena. To newcomers, this is a highly unsettling aspect of living here, but to those who can stomach it, frequent contacts with the spirits of past inhabitants is just another part of life in this most unusual city.

Sixth, Troker has a curious phenomenon whereby each month, at a random location in the city, the effects of a 10th level Create Bread and Milk spell suddenly appears. This bounty of food and drink never appears in any building, but always out in public. This has been going on for at least the last 50 years, and most residents think it is just another ancient spell cast on the city. However a few folks insist this is only the work of a kind-hearted wizard who likes to feed the destitute and homeless.

And finally, there are the forgotten catacombs, lost treasure troves, and secret rooms, chambers and passages believed to exist throughout the city. Indeed, the occasional secret passage, room or tunnel is discovered by the inhabitants. Ironically, nothing amazing, frightening or valuable has ever been found, but that doesn't stop the rumors about ancient secrets and treasures lying beneath the city waiting to be discovered.

Special Defenses

The Dwarves, using a variety of elemental magicks and arcanas no longer known by modern men of magic, created a giant upthrust of rock to rise out of the ocean floor, just a half-mile from the Baalgor coastline. Troker was built on top of this artificial island and served as a mighty naval base from which the Elves would patrol the entire Baalgor coastline for thousands of years.

Defensively, Troker is a marvel of strategic planning. The artificial island is in the middle of a large bay area which has incredibly strong tidal surges (much like Canada's Bay of Fundi). At high tide, the ocean fills the entire bay, so that Troker sits only 100 feet (30.5 m) above sea level. At low tide, the water recedes dramatically, leaving the city an additional 100 feet (30.5 m) above the waterline. More importantly, there is a 30 foot (9 m) wide ring of stone that surrounds the city that is exposed at low tide. During low tide, the stone wall extends nearly 50 feet above the water line, effectively forming a moat 1000 feet (305 m) wide for roughly an eight hour period. This is an ingenious defensive measure against enemy warships who have, at best, about eight hours to besiege the city before the bay dries up,



leaving the attacking warships stranded. Vessels caught in the moat during low tide have little room to maneuver and no way to get out, making them easy pickings for the city's defenders, who can bombard the trapped vessels at their leisure. Others may actually get caught on the circle of stones, where they teeter like crab out of water. Granted, this feature makes life a little difficult for Troker citizens who must time their shore excursions with the swell of the tide, but it has also saved the city from invasion numerous times.

Population Notes

Total population: 21,297

Humans: 3,394

Elves and Dwarves: 750 (Troker still gives these races bad vibes. Plus, there are too many "monster races" here for their tastes).

Ogres: 2,619

Trolls: 1,602

Orcs: 4,261

Goblins: 3,308

Gromek: 577

Eandroth: 1,704

Giants: 513

Other (Minotaur, Gosai, Quorian, Vrill, Quillback, Wolfen, etc.): 2,569

Note: At any given time, only about 25% of Troker's population (5,000 people) is made up of permanent residents. Of that 5,000, about 750 work for King Kai as soldiers, guards, and enforcers. The rest of the folks here are transients, staying for less than six months. Many are sailors and pirates who stay for less

than a month while they sell their cargo and have a little fun. Some are merchants who spend a little while longer making extra cash. And a certain percentage are travellers, explorers, fortune seekers, and adventurers who stay here for as long as their luck or opportunity holds out. In fact, adventurers, mercenaries, pirates, assassins, thieves and bounty hunters make up a greater portion of this city's total population than of many other cities in the world.

Additional Note: When a team of undead hunters surveyed the city 10 years ago, they detected over 1,000 ghosts and other supernatural beings living in Troker. For obvious reasons, these beings are not considered part of the citizenry, but they do comprise a noteworthy, if disembodied, segment of Troker's population. Nor does the official population include the 2000 and some odd slaves kept in the city.

King Kai the Wanderer

Kai the Wanderer is a tall, muscular ogre with long, black hair, greenish skin, and a red tint to his eyes. His lower teeth jut out just slightly from his lower lip, adding a subtly savage aspect to his looks. His arms and back are covered with intricately patterned tribal tattoos he received as part of his initiation rites when he turned 15, back in the Timiro Mountains. Kai has a long, vertical scar running over his right eye socket (his eye is unhurt) from an old battle wound.

Kai is harsh, brutal and scheming, but he also has a strong sense of justice and fair play. While he uses and abuses power to

his liking, he does it in a consistent enough fashion to suit the the people of Troker.

Title: Warrior King of the Free City of Troker

O.C.C.: 9th level knight

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 12, M.A. 17, P.S. 25, P.P. 21, P.E. 25, P.B. 9, Spd. 20 (40, see below).

Hit Points: 65, S.D.C.: 40

Attacks per melee: 7

Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +2 to disarm, +4 to roll, +5 to strike, pull punch, +8 to parry and dodge, +10 to damage, +2 vs Horror Factor.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts & Boxing — KO on a natural 20 (from Boxing skill), karate kick (2D4), roundhouse kick (3D6), crescent kick (2D6+2), tripping/leg hook. Leap attack (critical strike).

W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword (+4 to strike, +3 to parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Shield (+4 to parry, +2 to strike), W.P. Battle Axe (+4 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to throw, +1D6 damage), W.P. Lance (See Knight O.C.C. for details).

Weapons: Kai's primary weapon is an enchanted claymore that can, three times a day, paralyze whoever it hits. The user of this sword must announce their intention to make a paralyzing attack before rolling (any misses do not use the paralyzation ability). Victims hit by this sword must save vs magic or suffer the effects of a 6th level Paralysis Bolt spell (Kai likes to use this ability for taking prisoners). The sword also inflicts double damage to demons, and has been enchanted to inflict an extra die of damage (4D6 total). Kai also owns a magical battle axe that inflicts 4D6 damage and will inflict 1D6 damage to any non-Ogre that touches it.

Armor: Kai owns a suit of magical plate and chain armor (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 200) that regenerates S.D.C. at a rate of 10 per hour.

Magic Items: The Mask of Mer-Folk. This unusual piece of faceware is a metal mask with a humanoid face, stylized with exaggerated gills and fins coming off it. Wearing this mask confers the Swim as a Fish (Superior) spell ability (see page 199 of the Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Edition for details). Kai keeps this item in case he ever needs to make a quick getaway from Troker, and he has no ship is available.

He also wears a pair of Dwarven combat boots that confer the following abilities:

- The user inflicts an extra 2D6 on any kicking attack.
- The user may use the Telekinetic Leap ability at will, up to 300 feet (100 m), with no ill effect.
- The user's Speed attribute is doubled, but normal fatigue limitations still apply.

Money and other equipment: While Kai has not used his authority to plunder the city treasury (as so many of Troker's rulers have done in the past), he has amassed a considerable fortune. Ironically, his lack of greed has made him richer than if he simply sacked the city payrolls. By slowly collecting tax money through legitimate means, he has been able to amass cash for years. If he had simply sacked the city, it would have been a once-and-done affair. Kai personally has over a million gold hidden away in various safes, strongboxes, locked chests and other secure locations deep beneath his home in Troker. A good chunk of this money is

gold he seized from pirate crews that tried (and failed) to take over the city. This is in addition to his old pirate ship, land holdings, mansion and personal property. Meanwhile, there is another two million in the city coffers, and while earmarked for civic uses, it is completely at the King's disposal.

Troker City Key

Troker is divided into nine districts — four major and five minor. The four major districts are the **Bazaar District**, the **Arena District**, the **Good Times District** and the **Hard Times District**. The five minor ones are the **Temple District**, the **Magic District**, the **Money District**, the **Mariner's District** and the **Palace District**.

There are also two unofficial districts: the **Dockside District**, where the city's wharves and shipwrights are located, and the **Wall**, the large, hollow defensive structure that both encircles the city and houses the bulk of King Kai's guardsmen.

The Bazaar District

This is the first part of town one enters upon arriving in Troker. Consisting of many shops, stores and warehouses ring-ing a large, open-air commercial plaza (the **Troker Bazaar**), this district is, expectedly enough, where most of Troker's citizens, merchants, pirates and visitors do business.

The Troker Bazaar is a large and somewhat chaotic commodities exchange where shiploads of cargo are auctioned and sold. The Bazaar actually consists of several different auction yards, each of which specializes in a particular commodity, such as slaves, liquor, dry goods, livestock, etc.

The way these auction yards work is like this: a ship captain brings a load of cargo to an auction yard for sale. The captain pays the auctioneers a flat fee just to get his merchandise on the bidding block. Then, whatever goods are sold, the auction house takes a cut of the final profit (usually between 20-25 percent commission, so they can pay King Kai's Bazaar Tax and still make some profit).

Of course, the problem with selling items off at an auction is that sometimes the market may already be flooded with what you're offering, and you get a lousy price for your stuff. A safer, but generally less lucrative way of selling off cargo is taking it to one of the many *brokerage houses* in the Bazaar District. These businesses are no haggling, cash for cargo exchanges. The brokers generally buy cargo at a 40 to 60 percent discount off the list value, and then mark it up for resale. Most brokerage houses have the going rates for cargo written on big chalkboards which are updated daily, depending on supply and demand. For merchants without the money, time or patience to go through an auction, this is a favorite way of selling off extra cargo and bulk quantities.

Smaller quantities, special items, and one of a kind items can be sold or traded directly with smaller businesses, shops, merchants and fellow pirates and adventurers. In fact, pirates and adventurers frequently trade small quantities of goods and personal items among themselves. They can also win or lose select valuables to an entire ship's cargo through gambling.



The reason why the Troker Bazaar is so popular with pirates and thieves is because there is no such thing as “stolen property.” Here, possession is nine-tenths of the law. If it is in your hands, than you can sell it, usually with no questions asked. As soon as a hot item enters the Bazaar, it is generally considered up for grabs. Once an item or cargo gets to an auction floor, it is open to the public for bidding. This goes for anything from normal equipment, textiles, livestock, and slaves to exotic animals, magic items, ships, and whatever else comes their way. **A note on slavery:** While slaves are legal in Troker, very few citizens own them because its more profitable to sell them off. Most slaves belong to businesses, merchants and pirates, and are commonly used as forced labor.

Anybody petitioning King Kai about stolen property being either for sale at a shop or auctioned away will get no help from the Ogre lord. Moreover, any fighting in the Bazaar District is severely punished, discouraging former owners from trying to take back their possessions by force. The best bet for people who see their former belongings in the Bazaar is to buy them back before somebody else does. If they seek revenge, then they can try making threats or demands upon the scoundrel(s) responsible or the seller, but such tactics are usually not effective, leaving a public duel (or murder, vandalism, blackmail or other criminal act) their only other recourse.

Aside from the Troker Bazaar, this district also houses a wide variety of **retail shops** that sell all kinds of merchandise. Most of these places peddle things that sailors or pirates could not unload at auction or to a brokerage house. Some are little more than exotic pawnbrokers, but others have a few rather interesting items in their inventories, such as treasure maps, low-powered magic items, books, and items of certain historical value.

These storefronts also cater to visitors and passers-by. The average Troker storefront is 3-4 stories high, so the store itself takes up the ground floor, the shop owners live on the second floor, and the upper floor(s) are rented out on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Common rates are 10 gold a night, 50 for a week, and 150 for a month. The landlords also collect “breakage deposits” from their tenants up front, ranging from 100 to 1,000 gold to cover the cost of any damaged or destroyed furnishings. Prejudice toward renters often results in a demand of exorbitant deposits to keep those they don’t like away.

Also in this district are several **warehouse yards**, a feature added by Western engineers when they rebuilt large sections of

the city. These warehouses are owned by private investors, although King Kai has invested at least a partial interest in many of these operations. These warehouses rent out to pirates, sailors and merchant crews who need to stash a large amount of cargo or booty someplace. Since warehouse renters offer no security for their buildings, unwise customers who fail to guard their belongings will probably find them missing by daybreak.

And last, but not least, there is **Drinkery Row**, a strip of alehouses, taverns and eateries adjacent to the Troker Bazaar. These places are extremely popular among the many merchants and hucksters who work the Bazaar, who frequent “The Row,” as they call it, to grab some food and drink, and to catch up on the latest rumors and gossip. In many respects, Drinkery Row is like a distorted reflection of the Troker Bazaar. In the backrooms of these places, gambling and many shady and underhanded deals go down. It is well known that The Row is the market for the types of things that not even the Bazaar will sell openly. Things like national secrets, the true names of powerful individuals, dark magic, and body parts of exotic creatures (it is said that no wizard’s or Wolfen’s tongue is safe in Troker). If one greases the right palms in these establishments, almost any information or commodity (and person) can be bought or sold.

The Arena District

Perhaps the most lucrative district, after the Bazaar, is the Troker arena (another Western addition) and the many weapons shops, betting parlors, pawnshops, and ale houses that crowd the street sides. A good portion of the city’s organized crime conducts its loan sharking, extortion and blackmailing here too, preying on the dupes who fall for rigged betting schemes and the compulsive gamblers who bet themselves into debts they can not possibly get out of.

The Troker Arena towers over the district, and aside from the lookout towers of the King’s Stronghold, this is the tallest structure in town. It is a classic Western-style arena, with a big playing field, spacious grandstands and a ring of special pavilion boxes for big spenders, the wealthy and important folks, to view the games with a little privacy.

Food and drink vendors make a killing here (no pun intended) selling snacks and booze to fans as they watch the bloodsports. The Arena Games are typically held once a week, but that depends on the availability of fighters. If there are no criminals in the Troker Gaol, no duels (there usually are), and if



there are no mercenaries willing to “play for pay,” as the saying goes, then sometimes the Arena will go quiet for as long as a month. By this time, the people of Troker often become very restless and ready to see some bloodletting! However, duels to settle squabbles often see the arena open for small events and vendettas an extra day or two a week. However these “special events” usually last only 1-3 hours as opposed to the Big Day where combat, races, wrestling, contests, and spectacles go on for at least 8-12 hours. Circus acts and other forms of entertainment like concerts, live plays, sporting events, etc., are also performed at the arena.

There are several favored gladiators who work at the Troker Arena full-time, including:

- **Brueh Tukda**, a 7th level Eandroth Rogue mercenary who, for some reason, feels more at home in Troker than he does in the desert or out wandering the world. Some say he is being forced into his life of endless combat, while others suggest he merely loves to spill blood. He fights with paired Eandroth double-knives, and he is by far the Arena’s most popular fighter.
- **Raxus Ijirihad**, a 4th level Quorian who is a professional Gladiator and major psychic with the powers of Clairvoyance, Commune with Animals, Empathy, See Aura, See the invisible, Sixth Sense, Meditation and Mind Block.

Raxus likes to fight with pole arms, and his wide, sweeping fighting style makes him another popular fighter among the crowds, who can see what he’s doing even from the nosebleed seats. Like all Quorians, Raxus is obsessed with the future, and he claims to foresee the exact outcome of every one of his fights. His dream predictions are right only about half of the time, but he remains firmly convinced that he shall die at the hands of an Elven fighter with green eyes and “a spirit of fire,” whatever that means.

- **Quumaz the Magnificent**, a 5th level Gigante assassin who has thick, lumpy skin (A.R. 10), is impervious to fire, and has a second mouth on a tentacle sprouting out of his left shoulder (the mouth bites for 1D6 damage and it gives Quumaz an extra attack when an opponent is in range of it). Quumaz is deathly afraid of the color purple, and will cower in fear when confronted by it — much to the amusement of the other gladiators! This color is never allowed in the arena.





The Good Times District

Ah, yes, the Good Times District. As the home to most of Troker's brothels, dance halls, massage parlors, drug dens and tattoo studios, almost every sailor who comes to Troker swings by this end of town at least once. The prostitution rackets here are so incredibly wealthy and popular that they can actually obtain political audiences with King Kai himself to wrangle certain favors from him. Usually, this means having his guardsmen crack down on a rival bawdy house or the thieves' guild, or to eject certain rowdies from town who are roughing up the working girls.

Among the more noteworthy businesses in this district are:

The Brass Monkey. This brothel is the most popular in town, thanks to a wide selection of women (and men) from many different cultures and races. The house is known for making it possible to satisfy any client's desires. To keep things running smoothly, the madam keeps a full complement of bodyguards (4th and 5th level mercenaries and a 5th level Air Warlock) in the place at all times. They keep the peace and are ready to eject a dangerous patron at a moment's notice. Rumor has it that the Brass Monkey is also a place where one can arrange assassinations. This rumor got started when several pirate captains who were unfriendly towards the King came in one night and were never heard from again. Considering that Kai and the madam of this place are on fairly close terms (she often supplies him with free "entertainment" and information), it seems clear that the Brass Monkey is just one more place where King Kai can dispose of troublemakers, spies and conspirators.

Life Imitates Art, a tattoo studio that employs some of the best body artists in this part of the world. Many sailors consider it a badge of honor to obtain some kind of tattoo or ornamental scarring here. The head artist, Jigre Toal, is an ex-Imperial Janissary (8th level) from the Western Empire who came to Troker after his unit got wiped out in a botched raid upon an Orcish settlement in the Yin-Sloth Jungles. Jigre was captured and tortured extensively, losing his right eye in the process. He eventually killed his captors and escaped to Troker. Technically, he is AWOL from the Imperial Janissaries' Corps, but none of the soldiers who have learned of Jigre's whereabouts are particularly eager to retrieve him — he is a very good fighter and has many friends who will come to his defense.

Sweet Dreams. This drug den specializes in hallucinogenic drugs and liquors of every kind. Of course, most of the drugs are of terrible quality and cut with toxic substances, so fatal overdoses are more common than the proprietors would have one believe (about once every 50 visits).

The Hard Times District

This grim section of town houses the **Troker Gaol**, an old foundry that was still operational but has been converted into a kind of workshop for imprisoned criminals, foreign spies and troublemakers. The city's execution yards and slave pens are also located here, although most executions take place at the arena where everybody can profit or enjoy the event. To keep up the fearsome reputation of this part of town, the King's guardsmen are encouraged to abuse their power upon the prisoners as they desire. Remember, it takes quite a lot to be perceived as a lawbreaker in the City of Troker, so those imprisoned in the Gaol are presumed to be truly vile criminals, Western assassins, spies or other dangerous enemies of the City. However, they also include do-gooders and adventures who have tried to free slaves, gotten embroiled in dangerous plots, or who have crossed paths with the King or influential people in Troker. The King does not tolerate even loudmouth visitors to openly oppose him or sully his "good name," and such fools are captured and imprisoned at the Gaol as spies and conspirators.

To make matters worse, word has it that the most sadistic and power-hungry of the King's guardsmen request "Hard Times duty." Unfortunately, this also means the most cruel, vindictive, savage and brutal of the Guardsmen patrol the mean streets of this district and take no crap from anybody. A confrontation on the streets with these city lawmen is a surefire way to suffer some serious verbal and physical harassment; they rough up people all the time.

The Troker Gaol is an ancient ironworks which was used to construct all of the city's weapons, armor, and other metal products during the Elf-Dwarf Wars. The Foundry was restored by Western engineers who also reconfigured large sections of it into spartan jail cells. Here, prisoners forced into hard labor were housed during the night after working all day in the ironworks. The King has since rekindled that old tradition, and he uses his political enemies and criminals to keep the forge fires lit and producing plenty of metal goods. The Gaol usually holds between 50 and 100 prisoners, most of whom are sentenced here for life. The conditions here are so harsh, however, that most "lifers" only last a couple of years before dying of overexertion. The unusually cruel and vicious guards running it don't make

this place any healthier. **Note:** A 6th level, miscreant Diabolist is the warden and three 3rd-4th level Diabolists and a 5th level Summoner serve as his main officers, interrogators and supervisors.

Another dark and nasty place is the ring of **Execution Yards** near the Troker Gaol. Once the site of public fountains, these featureless courtyards are where criminals are publicly beaten, punished and executed. Most death sentences are carried out in the Arena, but when a quick execution is wanted, then they are executed in these public squares, either by beheading or hanging. The area draws fairly large crowds, who all get a kick out of accosting and insulting the prisoners being punished. A lovely tradition.

There are also seven **Slave Pens** in this part of town, each capable of housing up to 250 average-sized humanoids (if packed in like sardines). Granted, slavery is a common enough aspect of the Palladium world that most characters will not be shocked by seeing slaves mistreated and auctioned off. However, the slave yards of Troker are so inhumane, so barbaric in their treatment of their "inventories," that even certain evildoers might blanch at what they see here. Almost all of the slaves sold here are stolen from slaving frigates travelling off the Yin-Sloth coastline and Western waters. The pirates who hijack these vessels usually never feed their plunder, and by the time these miserable souls reach the City of Troker, they are half-starved to death. Indeed, many arrive in town suffering from some kind of disease or infected wound. Of course, most pirates do not care, because they just want to make a quick profit and get out of town. The merchants who buy these slaves don't care that they are in life-threatening conditions, because they are buying them at bargain-basement prices (typically 30-90 gold each, 2-4 times higher for prime specimens or exotic beings) and even if only one in three survives long enough to be resold (on average 150-400 gold per individual, and still a bargain price), the entire shipment can still turn a profit. In recent years, stories of the hideous treatment of slaves here have gotten out, and more than one band of crusading do-gooders have raided these pens to free as many slaves as possible. The biggest such action was the Slave Riot of Rurga, three years ago. Back then, a band of Rurga-worshipping palladins liberated nearly 300 slaves and cleared a path through town so they could escape to a waiting ship at Dockside. Ever since, Kai has kept security extra-tight at each and every slave pen, but such a raid could happen again, depending on the heroes.

The Temple District

This is the first of Troker's "minor" districts. Eight large, beautiful temple buildings dominate this section of town. They are available to visitors who care to make a quiet prayer to their god, but since the King has outlawed the presence of any formal religious institutions in the city, the buildings have fallen into disrepair. Worse, they are frequented by smugglers, pirates, killers and thieves who make backroom deals, meet with clients, gamble, sell drugs, or girls and sleep off a night of carousing. Their presence defiles these once sacred places of worship. Five years ago, a massive lightning bolt split into eight branches, each striking one of the temple buildings. Since this occurred during a torrential rainstorm and the interiors of these buildings were soaking wet (the roofs were in terrible disrepair to begin

with), the resulting hit to each building killed or injured all of the people inside them (mostly thugs). Many have taken this bizarre event as a sign from the gods, and fear the mistreatment of their temples has invoked their wrath. Although most brigands laugh and scoff at this notion, they tend to avoid these places and crime and seedy deeds have dropped 50%. Still, the boldest of Troker's "merchants of easy virtue" laugh off the possibility of divine retribution and continue their business in these places without fear. Someday, however, they might be proven wrong.

Of the temple buildings, only three still have any regular religious activity. The **Temple of Elementalism** is frequented by Warlocks who gather in secret and discuss secret plots and agendas, most of which have to deal with overthrowing the King. The **Church of Light and Dark** has been defiled and desecrated enough for a small Cult of Chantico to take up residence there. These guys are mostly drug addicts who commit petty thefts to maintain their habits. During their few lucid hours, they rabidly worship Chantico, convinced that he is coming to Troker any day now. The third temple was destroyed during the Elf-Dwarf War and never fully restored, and the ghosts of the priests of light who used to worship **Aco and the Juggernaut** still haunt this place. These souls should have left this world long ago, but ironically enough, their desire to continue worshipping in an earthly manner keeps them anchored to this realm. The ghost-priests have begun to draw a mix of curious onlookers and genuine converts.

The Magic District

When the City of Troker was first built, this district housed several Alchemist's shops, a college of Wizardry, and several guild houses for men of magic. All of that is gone now, and the only genuinely magical place left is an old tower where it was said that an extremely gifted Diabolist once deciphered the meaning of rune magic. The **tower** is thought to contain a vast storehouse of priceless books, scrolls and notes containing all kinds of unique magical knowledge. The catch is, the tower itself has been made invulnerable and seemingly impenetrable. It appears to have been crafted from a single piece of stone and warded with invulnerability magicks from the inside. Moreover, the place is said to be covered with wards of every kind on the inside, spelling certain death for whoever enters. All who have tried either perish, never to be seen again, or reappear, swearing never to try again, as they limp off to recover from being "fried" by the powerful defensive enchantments. Less than 15% survive to lick their wounds. It is believed that treasure seekers have, over the decades, tripped off all of the wards protecting the first floor and the stairwell to the second. But, there are nine more stories to go, and literally thousands more wards to defeat, before reaching the Diabolist's workshop. The thought of this, and the remote possibility that there might not be anything up there to justify the risk, continues to deter all but the bravest (or suicidal) adventurers and treasure hunters.

Meanwhile, several "Alchemist Shops" have opened up throughout the district, but many are run by charlatans who know nothing about magic. The worst of these sell only trinkets, a meager selection of herbs and common magical components, smoke bombs, Goblin dust and a tiny selection of magic potions and odds and ends acquired by pirates and thieves which they did not want to keep themselves. The **Heart of Magic** is the



The Money District

Nobody knows what this district was originally designed for. Nowadays, it is occupied by most of Troker's moneychangers, lenders and banks. Security at these businesses is extremely tight, because if it was not, they would all be picked clean by thieves and con-artists. The business folk running these places prefer to hire their own guards and "security specialists" (i.e. Wizards, Warlocks, assassins, and whoever else might help keep hooligans and ne'er-do-wells away) rather than rely on the City Guardsmen. Everybody knows that if you go to the King for security, he will end up robbing you worse than the thieves would.

The largest bank in town is the **First Bank of Troker**, which caters to permanent residents and traveling folk who wish to store at least 10,000 gold worth of currency on the premises. At any given time, there is approximately 500,000 to one million gold in the bank, in various denominations (Eastern, Western, Old Kingdom). The Bank also stores roughly 4-6 million worth of gems, jewelry, silver and other valuables.

In addition to storing money, the First Bank of Troker also mints it. Accounts that go untouched for longer than five years are confiscated by the bank, and the gold is melted down into *trading bars* about the size of a small brick, and worth 12,500 gold a piece (weighs 5 lbs/2.25 kg each). Such trading bars are modeled after similar currencies put out by the Island Kingdom of Byzantium, the Timiro Kingdom and the Land of the South Winds.

All valuables held at the Bank of Troker are in a massive vault that is kept under close watch at all times by *Koguur Lureg*, an 8th level Elven Mind Mage who has a talent for picking off thieves. Lureg has singlehandedly thwarted four armed robberies at the bank, and secretly hopes somebody will try to knock off the place again so he can go through the exhilaration of battle once more. Lureg is backed up by a complement of 30 soldiers hired from some of the finest armies and mercenary companies of the Western Empire and the Eastern Territory. The captain of the Guard is *Palen-Krod Xeed*, a battle-scarred and loyal 7th level Troll. Xeed fights with a giant-sized maul and has earned himself the nickname "Sir Smash-a-Lot" for his tendency to kill first and ask questions later. Then there is the "Ghost Squad," so named because they are seldom seen. These include a 9th level Minotaur Air Warlock, 6th level human Earth Warlock, 6th level Ogre Diabolist, a 7th level Ogre Wizard, and a 5th level Orc Witch (with the Gift of Magic), all of whom use their powers and wiles to defend and protect the bank.

There are several smaller banks in this section of town, each of which have similar security measures to those of the First Bank of Troker. The truth is, all of the banks share security tips and secrets with each other, because they all know that if they band together, they can all be a bit safer. As a result, each bank tends to emulate the successes of others. So, if one has a tough troll guard watching the vault, within a year, the other banks will be the same way.

The Mariner's District

This is the home of a wide variety of taverns, inns, dance halls and show houses all aimed at entertaining visiting sailors and pirates. Almost all of these places are exactly the kind of

only full service, genuine magic shop, but the Alchemist who runs it can not even come close to keeping up with demand and has a poor selection of potions and talismans (only a 01-33% chance of having a particular item in stock and never anything rare or powerful), but does have a fairly good selection of poisons and herbs (01-60% chance of having an item in stock).

This section of town also has a dozen private residences of Wizards (3rd-7th level) who will sometimes meet with visitors to discuss magic, offer advice, and even sell the occasional scroll or their services to perform magic (healing, etc.). Prices vary with the individual and the desperation of the client, but are typically book price to 10-60% higher.

The magic district is also where scores of Warlocks (average 2nd-5th level) live and work, hiring themselves out to pirates, sailors and the city. It is also where one can find all kinds of nonmagical and nonpsychic fortune tellers, palm readers, interpreters of dreams (the most legit being those run by Quorians), spiritual advisors and mediums, drug dens (to reach higher awareness, of course), and snake-oil salesmen (goop and tonics to cure whatever ails you, or at least get you drunk enough not care for a while). There are only a handful of legitimate psychic prognosticators, Psychic Healers, Psychic Sensitives (real fortune tellers and sages), and even one or two Psi-Mystics and Mind Mages.

rough, dangerous establishments where brawls and other rowdiness breaks out nightly. Besides being very popular with sea-dogs, the establishments of the Mariner's District are also fairly popular with visiting adventurers, who can be sure to find plenty of entertainment, booze, jobs and opportunities. If one can not find somebody who is selling a treasure map, looking for adventurers to hire for all types of work, or is talking about some great adventuring opportunity that would intrigue any hero, then at least you can start a good brawl or enjoy a game of cards, darts, etc.



An especially popular place is the **Scaly Whale Tavern**, a large stone building topped with a fine slate roof. Out front, a carved wooden sign depicting a dragon-like whale hangs above the door, inviting passers-by to come inside. The establishment is the very picture of a welcoming, comfortable tavern. The bar sports a large variety of alcohol from the Western Empire as well as Dwarven mead and no less than a dozen different brews of ale. The chef is an orc, so the food is a little on the raw side, and of questionable origin (could be rat, cat, human ...), but if one doesn't think about it and orders his dishes well-done, the food should come out edible to most races. Running security is a Dwarven tumbler named *Rozlof*, whose acrobatic form of brawling makes him a formidable opponent capable of taking out bruisers two or three times his size. In fact, *Rozlof's* fighting antics have earned him such a reputation that the Troker Arena offered him a lucrative one-year gladiator's contract. *Rozlof* turned them down, though, favoring the more congenial atmo-

sphere of the Scaly Whale (The Tumbler O.C.C. can be found in *Adventures on the High Seas*).

The entertainment is provided by a human bard named *Grayson Dragonbone Vorik*, a 9th level bard who has traveled all over the world and has been in countless adventures. Most evenings, *Grayson* takes a position by the fireplace and spins yarns (both truthful and imaginary) all night long. A master storyteller, *Grayson* can hold an audience captive with his voice alone, although sometimes when he feels festive, he breaks out his mandolin and adds a little music. A few of the regulars are minstrels who accompany *Grayson*, and if the mood is right, even *Rozlof* will join in with his Dwarven Pipes.

What nobody knows is that the ever-popular *Grayson* really is a Changeling who has managed to hide his identity from everybody but *Rozlof*, who figured it out over the years. Perhaps in his younger days *Rozlof* would have been troubled by knowing a Changeling, but over time the Dwarf and the bard have become great friends, and now, Changeling or not, *Rozlof* will stand by *Grayson* through thick and thin, and vice versa.

Elsewhere in this district are a number of other bars, inns and taverns that adventurers might find enjoyable. The **Big House** caters to giant-sized patrons, especially those on the run from the law. **Mom's Kitchen** is a tavern that offers meals so big that even the hardest sailor can not finish his plate. The kindly old woman who runs the place is loved by many of the sailors who dine here, and they would all exact terrible vengeance on anyone who harms a hair on her head. And finally, there's **Captain Quahog's Little Inn**, a popular restaurant, tavern and inn. Most folks staying here overnight do so only because they are too drunk to walk, or because they have arranged for some company of the opposite sex to keep them from getting too lonely.

The Palace District

This is the smallest district in Troker, consisting of only two things: the Stronghold of King Kai the Wanderer, and the large, open-air plaza surrounding it.

Kai's Stronghold resembles a miniature castle, complete with concentric defensive walls, a barbican (armored gate) and four high guard towers from which lookouts can view up to 25 miles (40 km) away, on a clear day. Inside is a throne room, personal bedrooms, a banquet hall, a kitchen, bath chambers, an armory, a treasury (where Kai stores collected taxes and other "official" monies), a chapel (Kai's inner sanctum), and several rooms for housing guests and bodyguards. On the second level are the King's personal chambers, complete with a secret chamber hidden behind a sliding stone wall panel where Kai hides his personal treasure hoard. The entire personal chambers are heavily warded with alarm and death wards. Also on this level are guest chambers and various studies and conservatories.

The stronghold is both King Kai's home and the governmental seat for Troker. In the audience chamber, the King meets with his advisors and entertains official visitors. Outsiders are allowed inside the stronghold only by invitation, although the King does hold frequent banquets and feasts for friends and business partners. The stronghold always has a complement of 50 loyal and capable guardsmen (5-8th level) who patrol the premises at all times.

This stronghold is structured so that even if Troker itself were breached by invaders, the stronghold would have to be be-

sieged separately for it to fall as well. Kai, who is ever wary of rebellion, keeps large stockpiles of food, water, armor, weapons and other supplies in the underground storerooms beneath his estate. Only the King's most trusted guardsmen patrol the stronghold, so if the rest of the city rebelled, he and his cadre of bodyguards could probably hold out for at least six months.

Openly assaulting this building would be suicide for all but a small army. Likewise, the stronghold is so well-patrolled that sneaking in by scaling one of the walls would be impossible for all but the most skilled adventurers. Once inside, encountering any of the King's guards would result in them raising an alarm to call for reinforcements. Those brave enough to break in will find many valuables and treasures an enticing reward.

Surrounding King Kai's Stronghold is the **Central Plaza**, a spacious cobblestone courtyard where vendors and street performers work during the day, and streetwalkers, pickpockets and hustlers of every kind work at night. While loitering and most forms of petty crime are allowed here, any serious crime (a term open to widely varying interpretations by the King's Guardsmen, but usually any act involving violence or magic) committed in the central plaza is usually dealt with more harshly than if the same crime were committed elsewhere. Apparently, Kai does not take kindly to folks stirring up trouble and noise so close to his home.

The Wall

The City's outer wall makes up a tenth district, for it houses most of the King's Guardsmen. The Wall, as it is called, consists of two concentric stone walls 10 feet (3 m) thick and 50 feet (15 m) high. The walls are covered over by equally thick stonework at the top, so that guardsmen can walk, work and fight on top of the wall, while the hollow chamber beneath them houses their barracks and weapons depots. The Wall is typical pre-Elf-Dwarf War dwarven architecture, and it has held up remarkably well over the years. Part of the reason for this is because during all of the fighting the city has been involved in, the Wall itself has never been breached.

There are entrances into the Wall from within Troker, but nobody except Kai's guardsmen are allowed inside. Any trespasser found within or on top of the wall is killed on sight. Guardsmen with unusually refined senses of restraint might apprehend trespassers so that the King may pass judgement on them.

The Wall also includes eight large gunnery towers which provide the artillery defense for the city. On top of each tower is such a platform, another ancient Dwarven innovation which gives the siege weapons on each of these towers extreme versatility.

Each tower is equipped with a heavy catapult and two heavy ballistas. Ordinarily, siege weapons such as these have a fixed angle of fire (especially trebuchets, which are too large to move). However, the unique design of the gunnery platforms that these weapons are mounted on allows them to be rotated as needed. The ceiling of each tower is, essentially, a large gear connected to a system of smaller gears. By working a hand-driven crank, a single soldier can rotate the gunnery platform 90° in a single melee round. This makes it extremely difficult for hostile ships to approach the city, since all of the city's siege weapons can fire in every direction — something most siege weapons can not do.

The City's primary defensive weapons are its eight heavy catapults which are each operated by eight-man crews. A fully crewed heavy catapult can fire once every 8 melee rounds (two minutes). Damage (40-80 lbs./18-36 kg): 2D4x10+10; Minimum range: 100 feet (30.5 m); Maximum range: 1,240 feet (375 m); and has 350 S.D.C. **Note:** Troker's gunners are fond of using flaming bundles against incoming ships, which inflict 5D6 damage +4D6 damage per melee round until extinguished. Flaming bundles have a 01-75% chance of starting a fire if they hit something combustible, such as sails, rigging or cargo. The resulting fire will cause 1D4x10 the first melee round after the initial hit, then will double in damage each subsequent round as the fire spreads.

Troker's secondary defensive weapons are its 16 ballistas. Essentially wagon-sized crossbows, these weapons fire javelin-sized projectiles that can do a fair amount of damage to smaller ships and crewmen. Typically, they are crewed by two or three gunners (each having W.P. Siege Weapons). The maximum rate of fire for a fully crewed ballista is once every 8 melees rounds (two minutes).

Damage: 1D6x10; Range 1,320 feet (402 m); and the ballista itself has 125 S.D.C. **Note:** The aforementioned damage is for ballista arrows. Flaming arrows will do an extra 3D6 per melee round until extinguished, and will have a 01-15% chance of igniting what they hit (if it is combustible). Ballistas can also fire small rocks (10 lbs/4.5 kg each). The range is the same, but the damage for these is only 5D6.

A note on scaling the Wall: Climbing up over the Wall into the city is nearly impossible. First, even from the high tide's water level, one would have to climb 50 feet (15.2 m) up a vertical cliff just to get to the base of the wall, then climb another 50 feet (15.2 m) to get over that. Along the entire way, the outer wall and rock cliff is covered by wet, slippery mosses that reduce any climber's Scale Walls ability by -25%. Failing any one of these rolls (which must be made every 10 feet/3 m) results in a very long (and usually fatal) fall. Those who want to get in and out of the city are better off going through the main entry tower in the Dockside District.

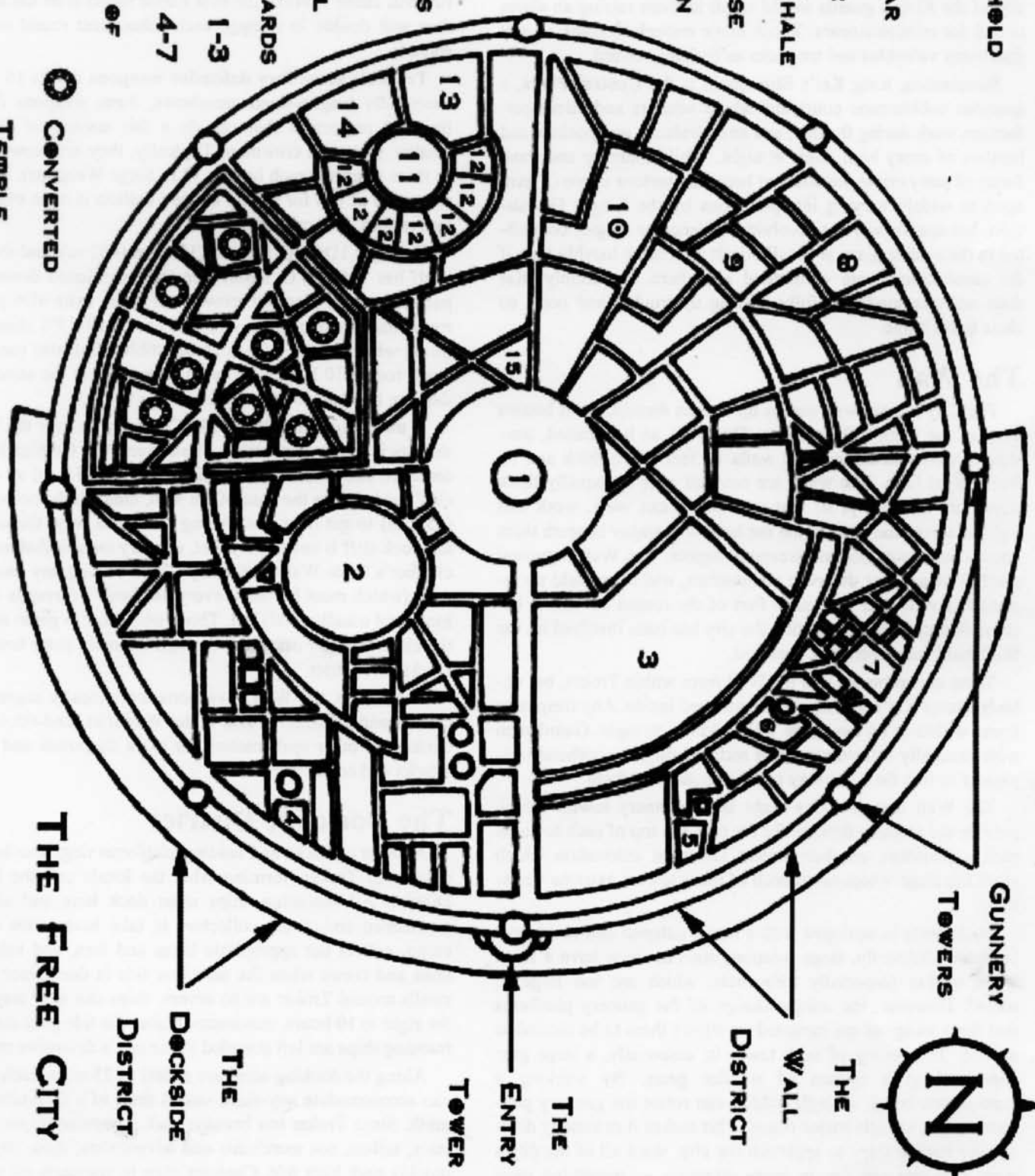
In addition, the Wall's weapons are typically augmented by archers and a dozen Air and Water Warlocks (2nd-6th level) and occasional other spell casters for extra firepower and strategic attacks and countermeasures.

The Dockside District

A series of docks and landing platforms rings one-half of the outside of Troker, forming what the locals call the Dockside District. All incoming ships must dock here and allow city guardsmen and/or tax collectors to take inventories of ships' cargo, collect the appropriate taxes and fees, and inform captains and crews when the next low tide is due. Since the tidal swells around Troker are so severe, ships can only stay in dock for eight to 10 hours, maximum, before the tide goes out, and remaining ships are left stranded in the city's defensive moat.

Along the docking areas are a total of 25 slips, each of which can accommodate any-sized vessel short of a Byzantium Behemoth. Since Troker has become such a popular stopover for pirates, sailors, sea merchants and adventurers, these slips fill up quickly each high tide. Captains slow to approach the city often find themselves waiting a day for another shot at docking. In ad-

- 1: Kai's Stronghold
- 2: Arena
- 3: Troker Bazaar
- 4: Mage's Tower
- 5: The Scaly Whale
- 6: The Big House
- 7: Mom's Kitchen
- 8: The Brass
- 9: Sweet Dreams
- 10: Life Imitates Art
- 11: Troker Gaol
- 12: Execution Yards
- 13: Slave Pens 1-3
- 14: Slave Pens 4-7
- 15: First Bank of Troker



 CONVERTED
 TEMPLE

THE FREE CITY
 OF TROKER

dition, Troker law strictly forbids ship captains from lashing their boats to the outside of the docks, or to "double deck" the slips, since it usually results in traffic jams as the tide goes out, leaving many ships stranded in the defensive moat. When the tide comes back in, 10-40% of these ships take on water and capsize, forever resting at the bottom where enterprising thieves dive into the wreckage later and pick the ships clean of anything valuable. Ships stranded down below tend to be buffeted and smashed to pieces by the tidal waves, and the wreckage is eventually taken out to sea.

Docking fees are 10 gold per day for small vessels, 25 gold per day for medium vessels and 50 gold per day for large vessels. All docking fees must be paid before one's crew disembarks. Ships laden with cargo but without the gold to pay the docking fees can forfeit 100 gold pieces' worth of cargo instead. The higher fee for these ships is because Kai likes to penalize ship captains foolish enough to visit Troker without having any cash on hand.

The other big structure of the Dockside District is the **City's Entry Tower**, an odd bit of defensive engineering that makes a ground invasion of Troker nearly impossible. In the center of the Dockside area, a large tower runs up along the outer wall, flanked at the top by two guard towers. This entry tower contains a winding spiral staircase inside that hugs the outer walls of the tower. Since the staircase design makes it partially enclosed, it is easy for defenders to pour flaming oil or other such substances down these stairs to deter attackers. The staircase itself takes between 5-10 minutes to ascend. The closed off nature of the staircase makes it uncomfortable (but not impassable) to in-comers.

Those leaving Troker, and those bringing large amounts of goods in and out of town, use one of the Entry Tower's *freight elevators*! The elevators are essentially huge circular platforms with raised edges and chains attaching them to the top and bottom of an ingenious Dwarven pulley and gear system. With minimal effort, a crank driver can quickly and safely raise or lower the elevator platforms (there are three). A ride from the bottom of the tower to the top takes only two minutes (eight melee rounds) whereas a ride down is faster, taking only one minute (four melee rounds).

Notable Residents of Troker

As mentioned before, this city has an unusually high number of adventurers, pirates, mercenaries, refugees and other folks who live by their wits and weapons. Such an adventurer's haven naturally sports lots of unusual and remarkable individuals, and the enterprising G.M. is encouraged to populate Troker with as many weird, off-beat and interesting NPCs as he or she can muster.

On top of those, here are just a few of the heroes and hardcases who call this place home.

- **The Clemens Crew** is a band of pirates led by a vicious human 6th level pirate, Claddeh Clemens, who openly covets the King's position of power. These pirates plot to kill King Kai and take over the town when the opportunity presents itself. This plan to overthrow the King is a pipe-dream that gets a lot of talk but little action. There are roughly 65 members to this pirate crew — nowhere near the numbers needed

to overthrow Kai, but more than enough to start a serious ruckus if they do decide to launch their little rebellion.

- **Another crew of pirates and killers** who have the same idea is **Jarvin's Brigade**, a mercenary company that used to work in the Western Empire but was almost destroyed at the Battle of Island City in the Empire's Lower Barraduk region. The survivors of that fiasco escaped to Troker, where they have built on their reputation to slowly gather about 200 warriors. Led by *Jarvin Mushassa*, a 5th level elven mercenary (and apparently an ace with any kind of missile weapon), this bunch of soldiers feels it can easily defeat the King's Guardsmen in an open fight. However, they will probably wait for The Clemens Crew to make their move, and then, when the King's forces are distracted, they will assault Kai's stronghold, hoping to take out the leader himself. They'll be waiting a long time if they are counting on the Clemens gang, and although they are optimistic about their chances for success, they are underestimating the Guardsmen, magical intercessions and the support King Kai will have from both citizens and visitors.
- **The Army of Night** is a small group of non-union assassins that the King keeps on his personal retainer for extra-special missions. These killers are extremely good at what they do, and nobody even knows of their existence except for Kai. The Army of Night can carry out any kind of "intregue", from subtly poisoning a mark while he eats his dinner, to openly assaulting a numerically superior group of pirates. Whatever King Kai asks these killers to do, they can do. The identity of these assassins, however, is a total mystery — not even Kai knows who they all are (The representative who conducts business with Kai does so invisibly or by magic pigeon). A few notable members include a 6th level Mind Mage, a pair of 7th level Gosai Assassins (twin brothers), and a 7th level Mystic among others.
- **Harker Dwarfkiller** is a 5th level Elven Fire/Air Warlock who sells his magical abilities to the highest bidder. Pathologically hateful of all Dwarves, Harker still acts as if the Elf-Dwarf War never ended. This twisted individual will mock, cheat, insult, belittle, rob and antagonize any Dwarf he sees. The moment the Dwarf draws his weapon, the Elf will strike with murderous intent and without mercy; fighting until either the Dwarf is dead or he is defeated (Harker has never been in this position and will never beg for mercy from a Dwarf, accepting death first). If defeated and left alive, Harker will plot his revenge. He is also willing to take jobs involving the torment, framing and murder of Dwarves.
- The person who might break Harker's chain of murders is **Sir Gridlin Thunderforge**, a 6th level Dwarven knight who has come to Troker to hunt down several villains who eluded him back in the Old Kingdom. Gridlin is very sharp, and will soon detect if Harker is hunting him. Who would win a fight between these two is a hard call to make. Perhaps if either of them had some help, they would be most grateful, and would reward their helpers generously...
- **Brega Dubai** is a 9th level human thief and one of the most notorious smugglers in this part of the world. He has made a living running blockades in the Western Empire, and for several years, he practically ran the drug traffic going in and out of the Timiro Kingdom single-handedly. Now "retired," this

scoundrel spends his time running a smuggler's haven in town, where other smugglers can come to get advice and tips on where to score illegal cargo and other illicit goods (giving Brega 10% of the take). Brega is especially fond of the slave trade, and knows many slavers, slave traders, and auctioneers.



- **Janolo Rathskeller III** is a 6th level Goblin Cobbler thief who works for the Eastern Territory as a spy and courier. "Cursed" with an incurable streak of goodness (he's Unprincipled), Rathskeller often finds himself doing the right thing despite his better judgement. He came to Troker to deliver a secret message, but has since decided to stay and join the city's Thieves' Guild. In just a few years, Rathskeller has risen through the ranks quickly, using his shapechanging and magical abilities to pull off heists that nobody else can manage. Unless one of his many rivals within the guild kills him, Rathskeller will probably end up as guildmaster inside of five years.

This master thief's prized possession is a magical "thieves' kit" he has managed to assemble over the years. Basically, the kit is an old leather satchel enchanted to behave as if it were Leather of Iron, making it extremely durable (A.R. 14, 250 S.D.C.) Contained in the satchel are several items of considerable value to a thief, assassin or spy:

A set of magical lock picks that add +15% to one's Pick Locks skill.

A pair of fingerless gloves that add +20% to one's Pick Pockets skill.

A quill that adds +25% to one's Forgery skill.

A set of thimble-like fingertips that add +20% to one's Find Traps skill.

A set of 10 Old Kingdom 100 gold coins that supposedly add greatly (+25%) to one's chances of success at bribery. Chances are, these coins are not magical and that their worth alone is what makes these bribes happen.

- **Orquin Janelack** is a charlatan Alchemist who really can not manufacture magic items, despite his claims to the contrary. Instead, he buys and sells magic items from adventurers and a few local mages whom he cuts in for a substantial share of the profits. Publicly, he pretends to make the items himself and is such a convincing con-artist that he has a reputation for being a genuine Alchemist to be feared and respected. One would think it is just a matter of time before somebody figures this guy out, but he has been running this scam for nearly seven years. In fact, most practitioners of magic who would spend any time with him could probably tell that this guy is a phony, however, Wizard Janelack refuses to discuss magic with his clients, nor will he trade secrets or teach spells to "those beneath his notice." He conducts himself with such an air of self-importance, arrogance and confidence that most folk assume he's just too important and powerful to be bothered and accept him at face value. Orquin does have a relatively large selection of items (01-45% chance of having any "standard" magic item found in the **Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Edition**), but they are not worth the 100 to 200 percent markup he tacks on above their list price. Of course he, himself is covered in magic rings and things to both protect himself and to (seem to) cast spells.
- **The Circle of Three** is a small band of bounty hunters on the lookout for the crooks who come through the city. They work for various employers, keeping in touch with them via magic pigeon, and have teleportation circles to transport their quarry to various foreign lands. These guys are real hardcases, and they are not to be trifled with. They operate in secret so as not to alert the bad guys living in Troker. King Kai lets them work here and gets 25% of every bounty they collect on. If they fail to pay, he will simply reveal their presence and ruin their business. The bounty hunters are clearing lots of coin anyway, so they are all to happy with this arrangement. The Circle of Three consists of Yryan Kulver, a 6th level human bounty hunter (and a major psychic, or so it is rumored), Grayscale Ghoss, a 5th level Eandroth rogue mercenary (an expert in paired Eandroth knives, and pound for pound, the toughest of the three), and B'kiss, a 5th level Gosai Assassin (who delights in capturing Quorians, whatever their crime). Their silent, fourth partner is Quaan Circleman, a 7th level Titan Summoner (aberrant alignment) who serves as the organizer, planner and back-up man. Not even King Kai knows that Quaan is part of the "Circle."
- **The Carnival of Souls** is a freaky circus/performing troupe consisting of disturbing-looking genetic oddities and many different exotic races. It includes a human with six eyes, a Wolfen with scaly skin, a Gnomish siamese twin an Ogre with gills and fin webbing on his hands, feet, arms and legs,

as well as a freakish Gigante, a pair of Quillback jugglers, and an obese female Eandroth fortune teller (6th level Mind Mage), among others. These guys were successful performers in the Western Empire until a crowd of thoroughly spooked audience members organized a mob and drove these poor folks out. Most of the troupe members are the equivalent of 3rd to 5th level vagabond NPCs. By and large, they are of good and selfish alignments, and will pitch in to help a worthy cause.



- **Madame Shadow** is an ancient, 14th level Elf noble who appears to be (by Elven standards) nearly 1,000 years old. Legends about this temptress abound throughout the City of Troker. Madame Shadow (she refuses to reveal her true name) runs one of the oldest drug dens in the Good Times District. Some say she descends from the High Court of Baalgor and that her family was ruined when the city was destroyed so long ago. Others say she is an undead monstrosity who preys on her stupefied clients. And still others insist that she is under an eternal curse that will not let her die, no matter how old she becomes. Perhaps none of these stories are true, or perhaps all of them are!
- **Captain Dukelwe Flinder** is a Byzantium naval officer (4th level soldier and 4th level sailor) who has gone AWOL and has convinced his crew to do the same. Captain Flinder commands a Byzantium Stone Ship which he has somehow sailed all the way to Troker. Once he recruits some more sailors and mercenaries, he hopes to sail to the southern coast of the

Western Empire and sell his services as a naval mercenary commander. However, King Kai very badly wants to take Flinder's magnificent ship for himself. He is considering having the Army of Night dispose of the Byzantium captain so he can commandeer it

- **Eshkoven Juijod** is a Dragon Wolf who has lived in Troker for over 25 years. He is a 6th level thief, 3rd level wizard, master prankster and overall troublemaker. Eshkoven loves a good fight, and he is a sucker for any group of adventurers looking for extra help. The King absolutely hates Eshkoven for a practical joke played on him shortly after he came to power. For whatever reason King Kai has been unable to apprehend Eshkoven, despite the 50,000 gold bounty on his pelt.

Wilderness Encounters

Tables for the Rocky Coastline

Once outside any of the Western colonies, pirate coves or the Free City of Troker, travelers are exposed to the tender mercies of the surrounding area. The Rocky Coastline, like elsewhere in the Baalgor Wastelands, is crawling with all sorts of monsters, animals and evildoers, so adventurers must be wary.

In a typical day's travel, the G.M. should check for random encounters twice — once for daylight hours and once for nighttime hours. Since at least part of the player characters' party will probably be asleep for any night encounters, G.M.s may wish to determine on which player character's watch the encounter occurs.

To see if an encounter occurs, roll a D20. A 15 or higher means an encounter will take place.

To determine just what that encounter might be, roll percentile dice and consult the table below, or select one.

01-03%: Extremely uneven, rocky terrain. Movement is reduced to 10% normal speed for the next 20 miles (32 km).

04-07%: The player characters find an unusual-looking plant ahead of them. If the players examine this plant, it's top portion will pop open, releasing a large cloud of spores that will cover anybody within a 10 foot (3 m) radius. Whoever breathes in these spores must save versus poison or suffer a random insanity for the next 1D6 hours — the result of the mind affecting spores. Also, unless the characters wash themselves off, they will keep breathing in the spores over the next 24 hours. This plant radiates magic, and is probably some oddity introduced to the region during the Elf-Dwarf War.

08-10%: The heroes come across a pair of Orcish-style spears staked into the ground so that they cross over each other, forming an "X." Strapped to this is the body of a comatose Gnome. He has been badly beaten and left for dead. If revived, he will thank the characters profusely and insist that his life is in their debt. He is Edlo Vasiff, a scrupulous 4th level Wizard. Vasiff explains that somebody in Troker wants him dead and sent an assassin known only as "Razorface" after him. After a harrowing chase into the desert, Vasiff says, this villain caught up with him and made mincemeat out of him. Razorface is a powerful Dwarven assassin, and will certainly return to finish the job when he finds out that Vasiff is still alive. What's worse,

Razorface works for Kai the Wanderer — to attack Razorface is to declare war with the City of Troker.

11-13%: Off on the horizon, the players spot a large dust cloud growing in size. After a few minutes, sharp-eyed heroes will note that it is a covered wagon filled with heavily armed Orcs, Goblins, and/or Ogres. Driving the wagon is a particularly nasty-looking Orc (or Ogre) who wears a ceremonial headdress made from the skull of a Sloderi. Clearly, these villains are headed for the player group, who will have five minutes (20 melee rounds) to prepare themselves before being attacked. There will be three marauders for each player character!

Goblins will be 2nd or 3rd level thieves and mercenaries. Orcs will be 3rd or 4th level mercenaries and soldiers. Ogres will be 4th or 5th level mercenaries and assassins. These killers will not have any magic items on them, but in their wagon, they do have a considerable amount of tools, weapons, spare armor, survival supplies, and booty raided from elsewhere. The exact value of this last bit of treasure is up to the G.M., but it should not exceed 7,000 gold.

14-16%: For several miles now, the heroes have had the strange feeling that they're being followed. When they fan out to investigate, a garishly dressed Elven noble dispels the invisibility spell he had been hiding under and introduces himself as *Lajak the Red*, an adventurer of high esteem and even higher aspirations! Lajak will continue to bombard the player group with overblown praise of himself until somebody interrupts him. Lajak will explain that he is an adventurer looking for thrills and treasure and that *he* has decided to join the player character's party! Of course, the adventurers have no say in this. If they don't want him, he will politely insist. If the group makes it painfully clear to Lajak that he is unwanted, he will seem to deflate. Moping, he will leave the heroes alone so he can sulk elsewhere. Once the group gets moving again Lajak will turn invisible and once more follow them (he stays visible if they allow him to come along, but tends to disappear for hours at a time and wander off on his own). He will stay with them, interfering in their affairs (for good or for ill) for at least the next week. What the party will eventually discover is that Lajak is a 3rd level, anarchist Thunder Lizard hatchling! He has no treasure or belongings aside from his clothing and a few travelling supplies in a knapsack. Depending on how the party treats him, Lajak could become a sinister enemy, a spiteful rival, a helpful ally, or a high-powered nuisance. **G.M.'s Note:** Play Lajak as an overly insistent, slightly spastic goofball who clearly pretends to know more than he really does. He is effectively a kid (not even an adolescent), and has not gotten a handle on what is appropriate behavior yet, so sometimes he's polite and proper, sometimes whiny and innocent, other times silly or boastful, and so on. Have some fun with him. He might be just the thing to introduce a little comic relief, as well as other subplots to your campaign.

17-19%: A cave-in nearby leads to a forgotten Dwarven stronghold, deep underground and built out of an ancient cave. The stronghold was occupied temporarily during the Elf-Dwarf War, but was deserted for some reason. A small stockpile of quality weapons and armor can be found here (nothing more than 20,000 gold), as well as a journal kept by the stronghold's commanding officer. What it says, and why the stronghold was abandoned, is up to the G.M., as well as the possibility that this

place might be connected to many other underground spots of interest, including other Dwarven tunnels and chambers, Baalizard burrows, passages leading into the infinite depths of the earth, or to the underground chambers used to infiltrate the Free City of Troker eons ago! There is a good chance (G.M.'s choice) of 1D4 entities (any, except possessing ones) or a Specter, a Zombie, or some other ancient menace or guardian.

20-22%: The adventurers spot a group of 2D6+1 Minotaurs on a rare surface journey. These guys are part of an Old Ones Death Cult, and they are armed with battle axes, flamberges and goupillon flails. Led by a 6th level Minotaur witch (a thrall of the Old Ones), the group, consisting of 3rd to 5th level mercenaries, is headed to a nearby Western colony to destroy it. If the heroes have any shred of goodness in them, they will want to either stop these villains somehow or join in the colony's defense.

23-25%: As the player characters walk along the edge of the sea-cliffs, an ominous cracking sound fills the air. As they peer over the edge of the cliff, they watch a big wave pound into the cliff face. Only instead of the water spraying into mist, a big chunk of the face (including the ground they are standing on) cracks off and crumbles to the beach area below! All characters caught in this collapse will take 2D6 damage, but should not be seriously injured. As they dust themselves off, they notice that a small cave has been exposed from the collapse. And what is this? It looks like there is a locked chest of some kind in the cave! Wonder what's inside? Or more importantly, what kinds of traps, wards or guardians might be watching over it? Regardless of what the group may or may not have to fight, the contents of the chest can be anything from gold and gems, to ancient books, scrolls, food, tapestry, etc., that have rotted or crumbled into dust or worthless scrap.

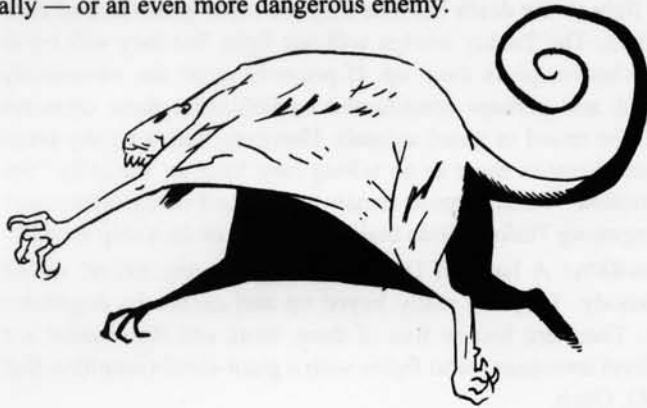
26-28%: An especially cranky Eandroth Rogue named Grom passes the group going the other way. Grom is a 3rd level Mercenary and will not speak unless they actually threaten him; at which point it will be too late to keep things civil.

29-31%: Six Eandroth (non-rogues) riding Silonars approach the party, holding their hands up to show they mean no ill will. The leader of the group, Kasal, informs the group that he and his mates are scouting for their caravan, located just 30 miles (48 km) away. Their leader, a female named Shikessa, has fallen gravely ill and needs medical attention. Can the adventurers help? If they do, they will gain a powerful ally.

32-34%: The Shikessa Eandroth caravan. Governed by the wise and powerful Mind Mage, Shikessa, this is a small but growing caravan and will someday become one of the more prominent ones in the Wastelands. The caravan is currently on their way to Troker to trade a shipment of fine silks (worth between 50,000 and 60,000 gold, depending on the current market value) they received from Old Kingdom merchants. It has 31 Eandroth riding a mix of seven covered wagons and 10 Silonars.

35-37%: The Nu're'ss Eandroth caravan. They have settled down in this nice spot near the sea in the hopes of making money by trading with folks traveling to and from Troker. The caravan has 45 members. Its 10 covered wagons have been converted into small houses. The caravan has a herd of 32 Silonar, and they will sell them for 1,000 gold each. All are saddle-broken. Others in the group may consider gambling a few gold or talking and exchanging information and current events.

38-40%: Clyplln, a 6th level Cyclops knight. Noble and true (unlike many of his one-eyed brethren), this warrior has dedicated his life to wiping out the Gigante menace in the Wastelands. Currently, he is hunting down a Gigante-led band of marauders in the area. He has also crossed swords with numerous Gromek warlords, as well as the giant chieftains of the mountains. Accompanied only by his gryphon, Ironwing, Clyplln wanders the Wastelands, fighting tyranny and righting wrongs wherever he finds them. Hated by many of his own kind, exiled from his homeland, yet distrusted by the humans and other small folk he protects, this champion lives a lonely and thankless life. Yet, such is the way of true heroes, and such is the price of nobility. Clyplln would gladly befriend any adventurers who would have him, and he would gladly join them for a while if their travels brought the promise of taking on bad guys somewhere. This guy knows a great deal of lore about the Wastelands, as well as inside knowledge about the mountain folk and the ongoing wars there. He could be a most valuable ally — or an even more dangerous enemy.



41-43%: Sloderi attack! Out of nowhere, the wandering heroes are beset by a pack of ravenous Sloderi. There will be one of these monsters for each player character. The creatures haven't eaten in weeks and will not retreat until slain. They will double-team the strongest fighters, hoping to take them out first and then prey on the survivors.

44-46%: A sudden, intense storm catches the player group unaware and out in the open! Roll D100 for the type of storm. 01-33%: Windstorm (each player takes 6D6 damage from flying debris and from being buffeted about), 34-66%: Lightning Storm (each player has a 50% chance of getting hit by an 8D6 lightning bolt), 67-00%: Rain Storm (75% chance that the extreme downpour will create a flash flood, washing the entire party downfield. Players without the Swim skill have a 50% chance of drowning in 2D4 melees if they do not get help immediately. Where the characters are finally deposited is up to G.M., as is how many of their possessions are still with them.)

47-49%: A group of 2D4+2 weary looking Goblins or Orcs beg the player characters for water. This is all a ploy, and the moment the player characters let down their guard, these bandits will attack. Fortunately, they are easily discouraged and will flee (or surrender if pursued) should the group prove to be too much for them. Most are level 1-3 thieves and mercenaries.

50-52%: The remains of an old Western exile colony. By the looks of it, there were only about a dozen homes here, none of which are standing anymore. The only thing that is left is a little foundation work from some of the buildings, and a charred rock slab where the colony used to build its fires. The sun-bleached

bones of the exiles litter the place, as do some fairly fresh piles of Loogaroo or Manticore droppings. Is the place haunted? Is it inhabited at night by monsters? Are more exiles about to be dropped off here? Is a band of Goblins, Orcs or Bogie-Men living in the ruins? G.M.s, you be the judge.

53-55%: Traveling in the opposite direction is a party of four evil adventurers, consisting of a Gosai assassin (R.C.C.), an Orc Ranger, an Ogre Wizard and a human Diabolist. The group is looking for signs of an ancient Dwarven complex that they are convinced is both nearby and chock full of undiscovered rune weapons. Their search has not gone well, and they are now looking for anybody they can victimize. All four NPCs are of roughly equal level to the player characters, and should have enough magic items to be a fair match for them. These guys are pure evil and will try to trick, rob, use or destroy the party.

56-58%: Just before the group members all awaken to break camp for the morning (or are settling down for the night), they discover four Quillbacks sneaking around the edge of the camp, surveying it. The group are all 1st level vagabonds led by a 2nd level Quillback scavenger R.C.C. When confronted, the creatures will be extremely surprised — they thought the big-folk were dead, and were working up the courage to pick their bodies! The Quillbacks will issue a quick apology and then try to run away. If caught or somehow prevented from running, they will apologize profusely. To pay for their transgression they will gladly share whatever information they have on the surrounding area. These guys have been scavenging off the deserted colonies and pirate coves along the coastline. They know all sorts of secrets about the local area, as well as the location of one particular cave where a great pirate treasure is said to be hidden. They lack the courage to investigate it themselves, since the place is rumored to be guarded by some ancient or terrible, evil menace. They'll be glad to take 'em there for a small cut of the booty.

59-62%: The player group has strayed too close to a monster's den, and it is now defending its territory. Roll D8 on the table below to see what kind of creature they have disturbed.

1. Cyclops Spider
2. Loogaroo or 1D4+1 fugitive Ratlings.
3. Manticore or Peryton.
4. A nest of 1D4+3 Serpent Rats.
5. Sun Devil
6. Thorny Sun Devil
7. Owl-Thing
8. Melech or Sloderi

63-64%: The party spots a lone individual traveling in the distance. This character's race, O.C.C., and level of experience are left to the G.M. Selfish and gregarious, this freebooter is in a good mood and will happily bargain with the group for information, supplies or merchandise. Of course, the freebooter probably will not help the group unless very well compensated. Worse, he may later betray them in some way.

65-67%: The party crosses paths with a band of four wretched-looking convicts — one human, one Orc, one Quorian and a Gromek with clipped wings. They are fugitives on the run for something they've done in Troker. A group of five human bounty hunters and an Eandroth Rogue male (all are 5th level; wearing crusader-style chain mail with A.R. 11 and S.D.C. 40 because it covers less of their bodies than usual, as a means of heat reduction, and carrying crossbows, swords and spears), all

riding Silonars, are in hot pursuit. The fugitives proclaim their innocence and that they have been framed for their crimes. A Words of Truth spell or other such magic reveals that they are telling the truth! However, a Detect Alignment will also reveal that these guys are diabolical to the core. The question here is — do the heroes let these guys swing for something they did not do, or will they knowingly defend evildoers who will probably commit some crime later down the road — maybe against them? Ah, decisions, decisions.

68-70%: Nearby is a massive Earthshaker footprint that is pressed right into the rocky ground. The footprint is very old and eroded somewhat, blurring the edge of it. Typically, the savage coastal rainstorms here dump a lot of water that never collects anywhere, it just all runs into the sea. This footprint, however, is an excellent catch basin for fresh water and is about half full, at five feet (1.5 m) deep. This is more fresh water than most Wastelanders see in their lifetimes! Who or what is nearby, possibly laying claim to this watering hole, is left to the G.M. to decide.

71-73%: Ley line. If the party follows this, it'll lead to a nexus in 1D4x50 miles. Along the way, the party might find other ley line travelers, or something unexpected waiting for them at the nexus, like a battle-hungry Wizard or Summoner (and minions) looking for opponents, a dimensional portal, an alien entity or some freak supernatural phenomenon that nobody's ever encountered before.

74-76%: Old, ramshackle ruins. Roll 1D4 to determine what kind of ruins they are.

1. An old, dilapidated Western colony.
2. The base of what used to be a Dwarven outpost. A secret passage in the foundation leads to an underground chamber and passageways.
3. The foundation of an Elven (mage's?) tower. It still radiates magic (is there a magic circle, wards, magic item, or something buried under the rubble and dirt?).
4. A truly ancient ring of knee-high standing stones, like a miniature Stonehenge. This is marking the site for something, but what? If anybody cleans off the center of the ring, they will discover ancient Elven script etched into the bedrock. The script says this is a Minotaur burial vault, where the bones of thousands have been stored in honor of the dead (lots of bones, few valuables).

77-78%: A pack of 20-30 Serpent Rats feasting on the carcass of what looks like a Gigante. It is hard to tell, since what has not been devoured already is badly decomposed. Yuck. The Serpent Rats don't realize that the player characters are not going to steal their meal, so they will attack for 1D4+2 full melee rounds until killed, driven back, or the adventurers escape the immediate area. That means getting at least 1000 feet (305 m) from where the carcass lays.

79-80%: 1D4 Peryton or Dragondactyls swoop down out of the sky and attack whoever is straggling behind or is injured. These monsters will try to carry him or her away to avoid a conflict with the rest of the group, but once they land they will rip their prey apart and devour him.

81-82%: The heroes encounter a group of nearly 30, 2nd and 3rd level pirates (mostly human but some Orcs, Ogres and Goblins, too). They have recently lost their ship after a botched raid

on a nearby pirate cove. The rest of the crew was captured (and are being tortured to death, no doubt) and they are now scavenging for supplies. These sea-dogs are not equipped to survive out in the wild like this, so their top priority is getting some food, water and extra weapons. Led by an aberrant human, these pirates will politely demand that the group give them all of their belongings. If the heroes comply, they will be left alone, with enough food and water to last a day or two. If the player characters resist, a vicious fight will break out. The pirates will break off if more than half of them die, or if their leader and more than four others are taken out of action.

83-85%: The party stumbles upon a Tusker den where three Tusker mothers and their twelve newly born whelps (25% normal attributes) are awaiting the return of the alpha male, which has the attributes of a herd leader. The male is out hunting and will return in 1D4 minutes with the carcass of a Drayback in tow. Upon seeing or smelling the heroes, it will attack, alerting the Tusker mothers, who will do the same. All of these animals will fight to the death because they are super-protective of their children. The Tusker whelps will not fight, but they will try to bite whoever picks them up. If properly cared for, extensively trained, and perhaps conditioned empathically, these creatures might be raised as guard animals. However, that is a risky proposition, because there is no telling how long an allegedly "domesticated" Tusker would remain loyal. And really, who wants a rampaging Tusker inside their own house or on a ship at sea?

86-88%: A band of Dogres looking for any excuse to kill somebody. They are really keyed up and cannot be negotiated with. There are four or five of them, total, and their leader is a 3rd level mercenary who fights with a giant-sized Goupillon flail (4D6). Ouch.

89-91%: The heroes notice a trail leading to the rocky cliffs along the ocean's edge. Following the trail to the cliffs leads the group to a narrow, windy series of ledges one could climb down to reach a large cave hollowed out of the cliff face. Living inside is an old human hermit who was exiled here long ago and has since spent his life learning almost every secret there is to know for the surrounding 50 miles (80 km) or so. The only problem is he speaks in a bizarre language he made up himself, a mish-mash of Western Human, Elven, Dwarven, and Gobbly. Anybody speaking with him will have to make their language rolls at -25%. Player characters who know all four languages will still be at a disadvantage, -10%.

92-94%: A band of 20 wretched-looking humans stumbles across the group's path. Emaciated and dying, these poor souls haven't eaten or had fresh water in days. They beg the heroes for help, explaining that they are Western exiles whose colony was destroyed by marauders. There were over 100 colonists, but only these 20 survived. If they do not get food and water within 48 hours, they will all die. What do the players do?

95-96%: The player characters follow a trail that brings them very close to the edge of the sea-cliffs along the Baalgor Coastline. Which is unfortunate for them, because as they look over to the ocean, they see a gargantuan tidal wave forming and heading straight for the shore! It just keeps getting bigger and bigger, and it is hard to say if one could get far enough away in time, without being able to fly or teleport. Needless to say, any character caught by the full force of this thing will, shall we say, not be in the best of health.

97-98%: A natural tunnel that could lead to adventure and treasure. Unfortunately, it leads to a Baalizard's den where 1D6+2 of these creatures are not happy to see invaders. They fight to the death to repel the invaders, but will stop at the entrance of their cave. There is no loot inside the den.

99-00%: One or two Lazretheg hiding in a hole, crevice, behind a rock, or drop down from a tree, boulder or cliff, and attack the nearest person as prey. In the alternative, one or two Perytons, Dragonductyls or gryphons could swoop down in an attempt to snare an adventurer for food.



The Stony Desert

The Stony Desert comprises nearly 37% of the Baalgor Wastelands. Most of this region resembles the landscape of Mars or certain sections of Arizona and Utah or the Middle East — mostly flat or slightly hilly, some sand, and entirely strewn with large and small stones and broken-up rocks. The climate becomes considerably hotter and drier here than along the Rocky Coastline, as none of the storms that lash that area ever make it this far inland. Thus, the land parches and bakes under the relentless sun. Water becomes a precious commodity here, as the hot climate evaporates it quickly and rain waters run off the hardened earth and rock. Thus, one can only find moisture from dew to collect under rocks and on the occasional plant in the early morning.

Vegetation here is sparse, but sharp-eyed travelers will spot the infamous *chsuba plant* (also known as the “water plant”) growing here and there. If extracted from the ground, their swollen roots can yield enough water for a person to drink for an entire day, maybe more. Otherwise, plant life consists only of patches of hardy desert grass and weeds, and some scrub brush, none of which is edible. One also finds the occasional cactus (another source of water) and even the rare oasis with 1D6+1 short, scraggly trees.

This region is where many Wastelanders feel that their homeland truly begins. The desert is unforgiving, they say, and does not suffer fools lightly. Those who enter this forbidding realm should do so knowing that just by travelling here, they will undertake a challenge that many are not ready for. And in the Baalgor deserts, the price of weakness, ignorance or failure is death.

Note: See the section on *Notes for Desert Adventuring*, in the beginning of the book, for survival tips, the chsuba plant, desert storms, heat exhaustion and travel.

Notes On the Major

Population Centers In the Area

Unlike the Rocky Coastline, there really are no permanent settlements in the Stony Desert. The very nature of this area forbids it. With no ready supplies of water, no arable land, and virtually no shelter from the elements, any town or city would very quickly perish here unless heavily sustained by magic. There are a few tiny oases throughout this area (and other parts of the Wastelands), but these very rare spots are rather tiny, and cannot support more than a few dozen people, maximum.

In the absence of any major settlements, the most prominent groups of people here are large and powerful bands of nomads, marauders, and other wanderers who never stop moving for more than a few days at a time. These groups generally fall into one of two categories. The first are those who move along, harvesting what little food and water they can and trading with other peaceful folk. The second are predatory marauders who roam the area in search of others to plunder, pillage and/or feed on. Merchant caravans and obvious outsiders are the favored targets for these bands, but anybody, including other Baalgor nomads and rivals, can fall prey to these brigands. Thus, the inhabitants of the Stony Desert form a kind of life cycle — the more peaceful wanderers manage to feed off the land so they can stay one step ahead of the predatory groups who would eat them alive.

The most notorious and exotic humanoids inhabiting the Stony Desert include *Dragonmen tribes*, *Eandroth caravans*, *Quorian wander camps*, and *Gromek war camps*. Most of these creatures have adopted the Baalgor Wastelands as their own and regard humans, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes and many other “civilized” folk as outsiders and invaders. As noted early in this book, clans, tribes and gangs of *Orcs*, *Ogres*, *Goblins*, *Kobolds*, *Baalizard*, *Trolls*, *Minotaurs*, *Giants* and even *humans* are found scattered throughout the Wastelands. *Orcs*, *Goblins*, and *Ogres* are the most common of the so-called “monster races.” *Kobolds* are more plentiful than most people realize but keep a low profile presence and are largely hidden underground and found mostly in the Rocky Desert and mountain regions that partially encircle the Wastelands. *Giants*, a general term referring to all giants collectively, are most common in the mountain regions and lands that border the Old Kingdom. The others are scattered and found in small groups, pairs and individuals.

It is important to remember that while “deserts” are commonly thought of as barren, lifeless places, they are actually reasonably “alive.” In the case of the Baalgor Wastelands, not only is the region teeming with desert animals and hardy, if sparse, vegetation, but it is also inhabited by many different, often exotic, people. Remember too, that the Baalgor Wastelands are an

expansive region covering over 140,000 square miles, and that does not include the thousand plus miles of mountains that curl around it from the shores of the northwest to northeast. Compared to other parts of the known world, the Baalgor Wastelands comprise a desolate and forbidding realm that is thinly populated by nonhumans. While there are many different people, most tribes, clans and bands are small, ranging from as few as 6-60 (the most common range) to as big as a few hundred. Those over 300 are considered large and uncommon. Those whose numbers surpass one thousand are a rarity, and most desert people, even the largest tribes, are nomads constantly on the move. The largest tribes and permanent settlements or towns are found along the Baalgor Coast (as previously described) and in and around the mountains. So those who laugh and tease saying that, "for a Wasteland, it sure is full of people," are either making a joke or talking out of ignorance.

Dragonmen Tribes

Compared to the Eandroth caravans in this area, the Dragonmen tribes of the Stony Desert are tiny, usually consisting of only 20 or 40 members for two reasons. First, there simply are not that many Dragonmen in the world to make up huge groups. Second, Dragonmen are afraid that if they gather in large tribes they will attract notice, and be hunted and destroyed. Thus, they like to keep their numbers small and mobile. This also means most tribes tend to avoid contact with other people, particularly humans, Ogres, Orcs, Goblins and Giants, and they are not likely to accept any outsider or Dragonmen newcomers into their fold.

That does not mean, however, that Dragonmen tribes are rivals or don't like working together. On the contrary, when groups of Dragonmen cross paths, they are almost always on friendly terms, and both groups will exchange news and information, water and food, and offer to help with a particular task or problem at hand. Most will also rush to help, rescue and defend their "cousins" (a Dragonman considers all other Dragonmen as such). This friendliness stems from the fact that these people suffered greatly during the Elf-Dwarf War and are near extinct. While the Elves and Dwarves annihilated each other (and the Baalgor rainforest), the Dragonmen were caught in the middle. Their pleas for help, peace and surrender fell on deaf ears, as they were callously used as fodder by one side and slaughtered by the other. Ever since, the surviving Dragonmen have decided that if they are to survive, they must be able to trust their own kind at all times, under any circumstances. Thus, as the number of Dragonmen slowly rebounds in the Wastelands, tribes are forging more and more alliances with other Dragonmen tribes. Indeed, one day some of the Dragonmen tribes might even band together on a permanent basis (not any time soon), but until then, they wander in seclusion and are suspicious and cautious of all other people.

Although Dragonmen tribes have good relations with each other, these tribes are distrustful of other people, particularly outsiders (i.e. anybody who is not born as a Wastelander, and humans, Elves and Dwarves in particular). This is not unfounded paranoia. For the many long, hard years since the devastation of this land, Dragonmen have suffered at the hands of nearly every race living here, even from relatively peaceful folk

like the Eandroth. In recent years, Western humans have begun enslaving Dragonmen by the dozen, reinforcing the belief that humans are as bad as Elves and Dwarves and not to be trusted. This goes double for Dragonmen tribes of the Stony Desert, where resources such as food, water and metal are scarce, and marauders are plenty. Tired of being chased and hounded, the local Dragonmen tribes have grown strong and bold enough that if they can, they will fight back against anyone who threatens them. This also goes for bands of adventurers and travelers who approach a Dragonman without caution. Unless one makes it extremely clear that he means no ill will, Dragonmen are likely to attack first and ask questions later. Travelers who make a special effort to prove that they mean the tribe no harm and are honorable and trustworthy, however, may befriend certain Dragonmen, and even entire tribes, thereby forging a valuable (and perhaps life-saving) friendship. Dragonmen are extremely honorable and once a genuine friendship is struck, they can be loyal to a fault. That having been said, an act of treachery by a "friend" or fellow Dragonman will earn that individual(s) the Dragonman's (to the entire tribe's), eternal hatred and enmity, and is likely to be hunted down and killed like a mad dog.

There are four noteworthy Dragonmen tribes of the Stony Desert: The **Broken Horn Tribe**, the **Desert Paradise Tribe**, the **Scattered Stones Tribe**, and the **Seven Sons Tribe**.

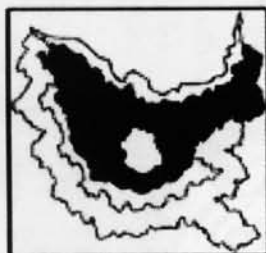
The Broken Horn Tribe

This tribe currently has 22 members: 7 males, 8 females and 7 children (was double this only a few years earlier). The Broken Horn tribe was named in remembrance of *Turgekh Eskomiel*, the tribe's champion for nearly 20 years. Turgekh was a strong, brave and loyal Dragonman who led his people through many difficulties and hardships, including several battles with desert marauders and Gromek patrols. Turgekh's greatest moment of glory came when he single-handedly fought back a dozen Orc bandits who had attacked the tribe at night. During the battle, Turgekh gored the marauder's leader to death with his central horn, a feat which demoralized and scattered the remaining attackers, and saved the tribe from certain destruction. Soon thereafter, a group of those same marauders ambushed Turgekh as he was scouting for the tribe. When the hero's tribesmen found his body, the noble warrior lay cut into many pieces, and the horn which he had used to kill the marauders' leader had been broken off his head and left laying next to him. In honor of their fallen chieftain, Turgekh's tribesmen changed the name of their tribe and kept his horn with them so that his spirit would always be able to find his tribesmen.

Since then, the tribe has gone through some really bad times. In the three years since Turgekh died, they have lost over half their original number (it was once one of the large Dragonmen tribes) this was due to constant attacks from the same group of marauders that murdered Turgekh and who seem to have a vendetta against the tribe. The Dragonmen try to defend themselves as best they can, but the marauders pursuing them are hell-bent on wiping the tribe off the face of the earth. They have killed well over three dozen of their pursuers themselves, but the original band that started this tragedy were members of a large Orc tribe (150+ members) who won't rest in their vendetta against them. Unless these Dragonmen find a new champion or some means to end this vendetta, the Orcish marauders will eventually succeed in obliterating them.

THE STONY DESERT

- 1: CLAW LAW CREW
- 2: YOROGIN CARAVAN
- 3: BROKEN HORN TRIBE
- 4: ZORIGESH CARAVAN
- 5: DAMNATION ALLEY CREW
- 6: TSEKENSE VILLAGE
- 7: KIRONA WANDERCAMP
- 8: SCATTERED STONES TRIBE
- 9: RAAG AKETTIKIK



- 10: BLOODSTORM CREW
- 11: DESERT PARADISE TRIBE
- 12: RAAG HHISKEX
- 13: SAVERSEE CARAVAN
- 14: RAAG BORGUNI
- 15: RAAG DYVETRA
- 16: BAKANSHI WANDERCAMP
- 17: RAAG ZETRONENKI
- 18: SEVEN SONS TRIBE

The current leader of the Broken Horn tribe is a young Dragonman named Useke. He is brave, strong and true, but is completely inexperienced as a leader (the equivalent of a 2nd level Mercenary Warrior). Useke came into his position of authority just two months ago, when the last chieftain was killed in an Orc raid, a level of responsibility the young Dragonman does not feel quite prepared for. So far, he has managed to avoid the desert marauders chasing his people, but he knows it is only a matter of time until they catch up. For that reason, he is trying to rally his tribesmen to dig in and fight one last time — either to destroy their sworn enemies or to die gloriously trying. Unfortunately, one of the problems thus far, has been that the Orcs keep sending small bands of 12-30 against them, and their tribal leader is never among them. Useke suspects that if they could slay the Orcs' leader, the vendetta would end.

Of course, this "last stand" might sound great and noble, but it is also suicidal. The marauders chasing the Broken Horn tribe consist mainly of Orcs, plus a few Ogres and Trolls, and they outnumber the Broken Horn by eight to one. If Useke and his tribesmen are to survive, they will need some help, and soon.

The Desert Paradise Tribe

This tribe of 30 Dragonmen (12 males, 12 females and 6 children) has taken over a small oasis in a remote corner of the Stony Desert. They have lived here unmolested for over five years, and unless attacked, they have no intention of leaving.

It is hard to blame them, really. The oasis has a pond fed by an underground spring providing a constant supply of fresh water. A grove of trees bears a variety of fruit, and there is even a small cave providing welcome shade and shelter against fierce storms. The Desert Paradise tribe found this place by accident after they emerged from a sandstorm with no idea of where they were. After several days of wandering, they stumbled across this life-giving place and made it their permanent abode. Renaming themselves in reference to their new home, the Desert Paradise tribe has grown very used to the easy life this place offers, and they have no incentive to return to the harsh life of desert wandering.

Other Dragonmen tribes warn the Desert Paradise tribe that their mentality is very dangerous, and that any spot as enticing as their oasis is bound to be discovered and coveted by some other group, such as a band of brigands, human colonists or Gromek soldiers. And when they do, these enemies shall de-

scend upon the oasis with a vengeance. The Desert Paradise tribe realizes this, but they would rather wait until that happens than leave the comfort and safety of their home. So far, only a few lone (nonhuman) travelers have discovered their little paradise, and came and left without causing any trouble — grateful just to fill their water skins and leave unmolested. So who is to say that any gang will find them and try to take their land from them? Most of the members of the tribe cling to this line of logic, but an increasing number of tribe members feel their days may be numbered. And when that happens, the Desert Paradise tribe will be forced to leave and relearn how to survive in the desert as nomads.

So far, the tribe is opting to stay put, but now most of the members are nervous. What if somebody does find their home? Will they be able to defend it? And if not, do they still have what it takes to survive in the desert? Probably, but will they go mad with grief, taunted and teased by their memories of a lush oasis that once had been theirs? Questions, questions, questions.

The tribe's leader is an overconfident warrior named Chuzurik, who insists that any attack against the oasis could be easily repelled by "the bravery and fierce resolve of my fellow tribesmen!" Chuzurik's tribesmen are not so certain, and many feel that the oasis will turn into a mass grave if a band of Gigantes, Ogres, Mologoth or some other menace enters the picture.

The Scattered Stones Tribe

This is the smallest of the Stone Desert tribes, having only 11 members (6 males, 2 females and 3 children). It is little more than a very small extended family that, for various reasons, has never grown much larger than it is right now. Experts at desert survival and land navigation, these nomads have successfully avoided any contact with desert marauders or other hostiles in the area. The tribe's scouts always manage to spot trouble, and they travel so quickly and quietly, that they can disappear into the desert without a trace.

The Scattered Stones' tracking and scouting abilities are so well-known among Dragonmen that the tribe is considered something of a good luck charm. Thus, whenever another Dragonmen tribe is nearby, it asks the Scattered Stones to travel with them for a brief time. The Scattered Stones appreciate the honor, but are also growing tired of this treatment. One of the reasons why they have survived as long as they have is because they do not take foolish risks or gather in large numbers. As long as they choose to travel with larger and less stealthy groups, they are inviting danger to visit them, or so say the tribe's elders.

The leader of this clan is an elder Dragonman named Jekh'lahk, who would always rather run than fight, even from fights he knows he can win. "Better to run and live than to fight and die," is his personal motto.

The Seven Sons Tribe

The exact opposite of the Scattered Stones Tribe, the Seven Sons are the largest Dragonmen tribe in the Stony desert, consisting of 64 members (26 males, 29 females and 9 children). Initially, the tribe consisted of just one family which bore seven sons, each of whom became a noteworthy warrior who served his tribe with honor and distinction. As the fame of these Dragonmen grew, others sought to join them, and the family of nine (the sons and their parents) quickly grew.

Several years ago, the father of the Seven died, and now the sons rule the tribe as a council of chiefs, voting on all important matters. The tribe continues to grow, and the Seven must soon decide whether to continue travelling as a single group or to break apart into seven new tribes. Each path has its merit. If the tribe stays united, it shall be able to defend itself against attackers of all kinds, from dangerous desert beasts to the various warlords who patrol this forbidding region.

But, if the tribe stays united, perhaps it will attract the attention of a warlord powerful enough to destroy them (a distinct possibility, with all the Gromek, Orcs, giants and other hostile folk in the area). Thus, it would make sense for the tribe to break into seven parts, so each could continue travelling without bringing undo attention to themselves.

For now, the Council of Seven has decided to give this matter a month's time so that the tribe members may debate the issue. When the month elapses, the Council of Seven will hear arguments from their fellow tribesmen for and against splitting up the tribe. Then they will make their vote. Given the tribe's peaceful way of handling political matters in the past, whatever path they take will not involve any violence.



Or will it? The youngest of the Seven, **Firyin Kath**, is determined to split up the tribe, no matter what it takes. Over the years, Firyin, a 3rd level anarchist mercenary warrior (I.Q. 11, M.E. 7, M.A. 9, P.S. 18, P.P. 14, P.E. 22, P.B. 3, Spd 15; H.P. 40, S.D.C. 21), has grown power-hungry, and he longs to run his own tribe, even if it means killing one or more of his own broth-

ers to do it. The dangerous thing is, Firyin has recruited 4 other Dragonmen to his cause, and together they have been plotting the assassination of the two brothers most in favor of keeping the tribe united. Once they're out of the way, the tribe will split apart for sure. Of course, Firyin could just go off with his clan on their own, but somehow that is not appealing; he wants them all to splinter.

Eandroth Caravans

Eandroth caravans may always be on the move, but they have the resources, manpower, and fighting ability of a small village. Well-equipped, well-motivated and well-organized, the average Eandroth caravan is more than a match for most desert monsters or marauders. In fact, many Wastelanders have learned to give these powerful traders a wide berth. Everybody knows that the Eandroth don't go around looking to start fights, but they will stop at nothing to destroy those who attack them first.

As strong as they are, Eandroth caravans try very hard not to impose their will on other settlements and people living in this part of the Wastelands. Large caravans, especially, must deal with frequent requests to champion some cause, to take a stand against local brigands, or even to help staff large facilities, such as the Free City of Troker (It is well known that *Kai the Wanderer* has always wanted a corps of hardy Eandroths running security for him). The larger caravans could even become raiders or marauders themselves, preying upon bandits and travelers, and taking their booty! In the end, however, the sober Eandroth are simply uninterested in such vulgar displays of power and greed. To them, it is enough just to live long, prosper, and enjoy the reputation (and corresponding security) that they have built for themselves.

Eandroth Caravans are found in every part of the Wastelands except the Baalgor Mountains, where the steep and narrow passages make it impossible for caravan wagons and Silonar to maneuver. Only individual Eandroth, especially Rogues, may roam the mountains. Eandroth caravans are perhaps most common in the Stony Desert, which they consider the "heart and soul" of the Wastelands. As a result, the Stony Desert is the hub of activity for Eandroth caravans, which may trade with the coastal Western colonies (which is almost never a worthwhile trip), the merchants of the Free City of Troker, and the various tribes, as well as travelers they encounter along the way. Eandroth caravans are also known to simply ride through the Stony Desert with no particular destination in mind, hunting, scavenging and roaming through the Wastelands as they have done for ages. Most enjoy trading goods, and exchanging stories and information with other travelers.

There are three especially well-known caravans in the Stony Desert that pass through on a regular basis. These caravans constitute the bulk of Eandroth trade activity here, but there are numerous other smaller caravans (30-100 people), travelling groups (4-28 people), and lone Eandroth Rogues throughout the desert as well. Frequently, 2-10% of the members are non-Eandroth. The Eandroth are well-known to adopt worthy warriors and allies as full-blooded members of their group, giving these individuals the exact same and equal rights as the Eandroth majority. Such tribal members are more than "friends," they are considered "Eandroth."

The three major Eandroth caravans of the Stony Desert are the **Ydrogin Caravan**, **Zorigesh Caravan** and the **Saversee Caravan**.

The Ydrogin Caravan

This caravan consists of over 200 Eandroth (roughly 145 adult males and females and 60 children), who ride a total of 17 large covered wagons, a herd of 33 Silonar and 25 Draybacks. Ydrogin Eandroth have grown rather wealthy and powerful from trading with the Free City of Troker, which has caused them to have diplomatic difficulties with other Eandroth caravans and particularly the small clansmen and individuals in the area, who see them as having "sold-out" and/or being "corrupted" by the City-Folk.

While honorable and good-natured, the Ydrogin caravan's reputation has been tarnished lately by rumors that they buy slaves from Troker and sell them to desert marauders who use them as food. In return, the Eandroth get booty the marauders have stolen from other Eandroth caravans! Such rumors are the kinds of stories that often circulate among rival Eandroth caravans and clans who must compete against each other when trading. However, the stories about the Ydrogin caravan have taken on an unusually harsh tone, especially from the Zorigesh caravan, the Ydrogin's main competitor. These latest rumors are pure fabrications, but many of the smaller caravans, clans and nomads in the area don't know that.

Ordinarily, such harsh talk would dissipate over time, but a recent brawl in Troker between Ydrogin and Zorigesh Eandroth has led to a blood feud between the two groups. However, both caravans have worked too hard to achieve what power and wealth they have, so for now, neither is willing to launch an all-out attack and risk their own total destruction. Instead, the two send small raiding parties against each other. Raiders will typically steal valuables, scatter riding animals, and sabotage a wagon while the caravan has stopped to rest. Other times, they will sneak into the camp to steal supplies or merchandise, or even to kill a few of the wagon drivers (never the riding animals). As this blood feud intensifies, it could very well turn into an all-out war in which both Eandroth caravans cease their commercial activity and turn entirely to warring against each other.

The leader of the Ydrogin Caravan, a female rogue (and 8th level Mind Mage) named Deggh Courlik, would rather broker some kind of peace with the Zorigesh caravan than defeat them in battle. Deggh has two reasons for this. First, she knows that warring with the Zorigesh Eandroth is a lot less profitable than trading. Second, Deggh was once in love with a Zorigesh Eandroth named *Tuluuk T'onnn*, who has since become a rogue himself and a renowned Eandroth warrior. Word has it that Tuluuk has returned to the Zorigesh caravan to fight in the blood feud. Deggh fears that to defeat the Zorigesh Eandroth, she will have to destroy Tuluuk as well, and this would break her heart. So, Deggh pursues her caravan's side of the vendetta with less than total dedication, which has led other Ydrogin Eandroth to accuse her of cowardice and incompetence. Nobody in the caravan dares to try to depose her, so all this grumbling has led to low morale within the caravan.

Unbeknownst to the Ydrogin caravan, the Zorigesh Eandroth Tuluuk T'onnn died several years ago in the Old Kingdom, which means that Deggh has been holding back for nothing. If she

finds this out, and thinks that the Zorigesh deliberately tricked her on this, she will become enraged and demand the utter destruction of the entire Zorigesh tribe.



Deggh Courlik, Quick Stats

Kind and compassionate, although she can be ruthless when pushed. She used to be incredibly athletic, but since becoming a rogue, she is too fat to move much at all.

Title: Matriarch of the Ydrogin caravan.

O.C.C.: 8th level Mind Mage.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 18, M.E. 25, M.A. 21, P.S. 14, P.P. 10, P.E. 13, P.B. 8, Spd. 2.

Hit Points: 55, **S.D.C.:** 100; **I.S.P.:** 225

Psychic Powers: Mind block, see aura, alter aura, meditation, psychic diagnosis, psychic purification, psychic surgery, increased healing, astral projection, clairvoyance, commune with spirits, telepathy, ectoplasm, impervious to fire, resist thirst, teleport object, deaden pain, lust for life, detect psionics, object read, presence sense, sense magic, sense dimensional anomaly, sixth sense, see the invisible, summon inner strength, float, resist hunger, dispel spirits, empathy, sense evil, induce sleep, exorcism, bio-regeneration (self), and all Super-Psionic powers.

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to damage, +2 to roll with and pull punch, +4% to skill performance, +5 to

save vs psionic attack (+11 to save vs mind control), +6 to save vs magic potions and charms, +5 to save vs possession, and 65% likelihood to invoke trust or intimidation. Includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic — Kick (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6), Critical Strike on a 19-20, and Body Flip/Throw.

Weapons: None. Deggh is too immobile to consider using melee weapons, instead she prefers using her psychic powers to defend herself.

Armor: Natural A.R. of 12.

Magic Items: Deggh wears an enchanted leather helmet that gives her an additional +2 to save versus all psionic attacks and an additional +4 to save versus any form of mind control, including illusions. The helmet also masks her psionic ability, so anyone using Detect Psionics on her will think she is psychically inert.

Money and other equipment: None.

The Zorigesh Caravan

This caravan has only 148 individuals (90 adults, 58 children), but it is rather wealthy, with 20 covered wagons, 50 Silonar and 35 Draybacks. This caravan also has the largest inventory of tradable goods, ranging from high-quality weapons and armor to food, dry goods, dried herbs, old maps, bits of valuable information (such as the location of pirate coves and large ruins deeper in the desert), kegs of drinking water, and even a few minor magic items.

Despite its success as a trading power in the Stony Desert, the Zorigesh caravan has always dwelt in the shadow of the more influential Ydrogin caravan. As a result, many Zorigesh Eandroth bore a strong dislike for the Ydrogin caravan well before the blood feud ever started. It was Zorigesh traders who first began spreading the nasty (and false) rumors about Ydrogin Eandroth. It was also a bunch of brash young Zorigesh thugs who started the brawl in Troker that touched off the blood feud between them and their rivals. The most volatile of these younger Zorigesh is a miscreant 3rd level Mercenary Warrior and 2nd level Merchant named Trk'ia. He has been spoiling to earn glory in battle all of his life. When it became clear to him that his caravan would have no glorious campaigns to undertake (it was too busy making money, after all), Trk'ia decided to fabricate an enemy. First by defaming the Ydrogin caravan, and then by instigating a small war with them, Trk'ia has gotten his wish. Now, he leads raids against Ydrogin traders throughout the area. Personally, he has slain over 20 Ydrogin, and will not be satisfied until the entire caravan is destroyed or disbanded and scattered across the desert.

Trk'ia is backed by a crew of 10 other Eandroth who think the same way he does. These 11 thugs are what keep the entire caravan motivated towards war. The Zorigesh caravan's leader, a 6th level Mind Mage female rogue named *Bian Trigill*, is both a weakling and a coward who cannot (and will not) stand in Trk'ia's way. So, as long as things stay like this, the Zorigesh caravan will remain the Ydrogin caravan's sworn enemy. If Trk'ia were taken out of the picture, however, then perhaps the two caravans could one day settle their differences and the Stony Desert could become a considerably more peaceful place.

The Saversee Caravan

The third major Eandroth caravan of the Stony Desert wants no part of the brewing blood feud between the Ydrogin and Zorigesh caravans, although both parties routinely try to drag the Saversee Eandroth into the conflict. Realizing that such a war will only insure the mutual destruction of all involved, the Saversee Eandroth steadfastly refuse to fight for either side, prompting both the Ydrogin and Zorigesh to think that they may be spies or secretly allied to the other side.

Thus, while the Saversee caravan stays out of the blood feud, the effects of the feud are hurting them anyway. Until the conflict is resolved, neither the Ydrogin or Zorigesh caravans will trade or even communicate with the Saversee caravan. Cut off in this fashion, the Saversee Eandroth have grown bitter and angry at their kin, who they say are too stupid to learn the harsh lesson taught by the Elf-Dwarf War.

The Saversee caravan stays out in the wilderness with no real destination. The major trade routes in this area are traveled by the Ydrogin and Zorigesh caravans, so to avoid them the Saversee keep to the hinterlands, making a meager living trading with the wanderers, hermits and small clans of Orcs, Goblins, Ogres, humans and others living there. Being in a more distant and hostile land, the Saversee find themselves increasingly under attack by desert marauders of all races, as well as Gromek patrols who sense that this caravan is an easier target than the other two.

The Saversee caravan is the largest of the three major Eandroth caravans in the Stony Desert, which, ironically, makes them the poorest. With no serious trading centers with which to do business, the Saversee caravan are having a harder and harder time sustaining themselves as their fortunes dwindle. Some in the caravan feel that they should use their might to prey on desert marauders and smaller bands of Gromek, while others steadfastly oppose such action. The ultimate destiny of this caravan lies in the outcome of the Ydrogin-Zorigesh blood feud. The longer the feud goes on, the poorer the Saversee will become, and the more likely they will turn out of desperation to becoming marauders themselves.

The Saversee caravan consists of 260 individuals (175 adults, 85 children), 10 large covered wagons, 12 small wagons, 100 Silonar, and 100 Draybacks. The caravan itself is led by Grontha Mosh, a surly female rogue and 10th level Mind Mage. Grontha recently lost two of her brothers to Ydrogin raiders, who struck the caravan because they mistakenly believed it had supplied their Zorigesh enemies with weapons and information. This bloodshed is just the latest in a number of debilitating attacks on the caravan. Before the Ydrogin attack, Zorigesh raiders burned several of the caravan's wagons, killing a number of children. At the same time, the Saversee Eandroth have also endured withering attacks from persistent desert marauders and Gromek patrols.



Quorian Wandercamps

Pound for pound, Quorians are among the fiercest warriors of the Baalgor Wastelands, but they lack the numbers, magic abilities, or inclination to become a major power in the region. For the most part, the Stony Desert Quorians (like their kin throughout the Baalgor Wastelands) are content merely to survive and work on finding a way back to their native world. Those who have delusions of becoming warlords or nation-builders usually alienate themselves from the rest of their people and must concede to leading non-Quorians. Most would-be-warlords usually die an early death.

Being nomadic in nature, and dwelling in the inhospitable Stony Desert, there are no major permanent Quorian settlements in the area. By and large, the Quorians here are constantly on the move, settling down to camp somewhere for a few days at most, and then moving on. Such a transitory life is the key to survival for these people. Since they are so few, they must walk a thin line between insulting the powerful Eandroth caravans in the region, and inciting the wrath of the Gromek garrisons here, too. As a result, Quorian groups, like Dragonmen tribes, are small, travel light, and try not to gain the notice of other folk. Indeed, it is not uncommon for Quorians here to live most of their lives alone, in pairs or tiny groups. Many even become hermits or solitary wanderers, periodically joining up with groups of adventurers or hitching a ride with an Eandroth caravan, or spending a brief respite at an oasis.

The only major issue facing all of the Quorians of this area is a growing incursion by the Gosai. Historically, the Gosai and Quorians have been enemies, and even to this day, a blood war rages on between these two dwindling peoples. Dealing with Gosai is tricky, because the Quorians have already earned a reputation as being violently hot-headed and not to be entirely trusted, so other races fear and avoid them. This concerns the proud Quorians, who realize that if they are going to survive, they must befriend other people. With Gosai in the vicinity, it is going to be rather difficult for Quorians to carry out their war with their old enemies and still maintain good relations with other Wastelanders as they watch this age-old conflict unfold.

There are three noteworthy groups of Quorians in the Stony Desert: **Kimona Wandercamp** and **Bakanshi Wandercamp**, both of which are traditional, and the **Tsekense Village** (a wandercamp that has recently settled down permanently over the resting site of a slumbering Earthshaker).

Kimona Wandercamp

As per Quorian custom, this wandercamp is named after its greatest warrior, Kimona Lasaatki. This group has borne the brunt of most of the Gosai's recent incursions into the Stony Desert, mostly because they have historically roamed near the Sandy Desert, the traditional home of the Gosai. For much of this century, even though the Quorian and Gosai never declared peace between their peoples, there had been virtually no fighting. During this time, the few Quorians left on this world were able to perpetuate their kind and distance themselves a bit from the danger of extinction. But within the last decade, the Gosai have renewed the long-standing war with a peculiar vengeance. It has been left to the Quorians to wonder why, since all they

can do is defend themselves against ever more frequent raids and assassinations by Gosai killers bent on wiping out the Quorian people once and for all.

That will not happen as long as the Kimona wandercamp is around, or so they swear. These Quorians have had enough of running and dodging their Gosai adversaries, watching their comrades fall one by one to Gosai claws. The young Kimona warriors disagree with their elders' opinions that acting brashly and spilling excessive Gosai blood will only cause greater troubles for the Quorians. To this wandercamp's new generation of warriors, such words fall on deaf ears. These brash youths have felt their honor crumble under the weight of their elders' peace-making ways, and now they shall repair their honor by smiting the Gosai menace once and for all!

This kind of talk, needless to say, really worries other members of the wandercamp, who have been establishing good relations with several Eandroth caravans. They know that if a bloodbath flows between the Gosai and Kimona, the Eandroth will sever their ties with the wandercamp just to maintain neutrality (They do business with the Gosai, too). As the strength of Kimona and his fellow warriors increase within the wandercamp, it is more and more likely that such a bloodbath is inevitable.

To that end, Kimona has been plotting a major attack upon a Gosai stronghold in the Sandy Desert, a place where he is confident many of the raiders who have been attacking the Kimona wandercamp live. Kimona had contemplated a move like this for some time, but just recently, he had a dream-vision of a bold attack upon the enemy of his people, an act of daring glory that would immortalize his name and make the name of Kimona forever known among the Baalgor Wastelands. His followers naturally think that this is an omen that they will triumph over their Gosai adversaries and bring the wandercamp great fame and renown. The camp elders warn that Kimona's dream-vision could just as easily have been a "warning," that if they carry out their brash attack, they will become renowned but hated and hunted, and likely to bring shame and hardship down on their wandercamp.

As the time for Kimona to make his move draws near, the wandercamp nervously waits to see which interpretation of Kimona's prophecy is true — the young warrior's, the elders', neither, or both.

The Kimona wandercamp consists of 59 Quorians, 34 adults and 25 children. Many are adolescents who have just become able to fight as adults. These are the camp members who follow Kimona most fanatically. Kimona waits and hopes to recruit them for his campaign against the Gosai, but none of these youngsters have had their first dream-vision yet, which is the true rite of adulthood in Quorian society. Until that happens (and it will, soon), none of them are eligible to fight at his side. So, Kimona must balance his desire to hit the Gosai now, with waiting for more of the children to become adults so he can harness their strength and devotion.

Materially, the Kimona wandercamp has very little aside from personal weapons, a few Draybacks, and basic desert survival gear. They are a simple people, uninterested in accumulating power or wealth. Perhaps because they never had any. Many wonder what Kimona himself would do if he chanced upon some great treasure or magic weapons.

Kimona Lasaatki, Quick Stats

Fierce and passionate, a natural born leader and a brilliant tactician. His dedication to the wandercamp is beyond question, although his hot-headedness and hatred of the Gosai makes him somewhat unpredictable. Furthermore, how he addresses problems sometimes runs contrary to what is the best course of action for the majority. He is open-minded enough to deal with non-Quorian adventurers, if they approached him respectfully, and is seriously considering recruiting "outsiders" in his campaign against the Gosai. Clever and resourceful, he could easily trick dumb Orcs and Goblins into attacking his enemies, just as he could trick or entice capable adventurers and mercenaries into joining his cause and working against the Gosai.

Title: High Warrior of the Kimona Wandercamp

O.C.C.: 10th level soldier.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 12, M.A. 19, P.S. 22, P.P. 18, P.E. 17, P.B. 6, Spd. 19.

Hit Points: 69, S.D.C.: 50

Attacks per melee: 6

Bonuses: +2 to roll, +5 to strike. +6 to parry, dodge, and pull punch, +10 to damage, +3 to save vs poison, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, and +20% to save vs coma/death. Includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert — Karate kick (2D4), roundhouse kick (3D6), backward sweep; critical strike 18-20. KO/Stun 18-20.

W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword (+4 to strike/parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Spear (+4 to strike/parry, +3 to throw), W.P. Shield (+4 to parry, +2 to strike). Body throw/flip and disarm.

Weapons: Kimona's primary weapon is an enchanted spear that can cast any combination of the following spell-like powers three times daily, at 6th level proficiency: Call Lightning, Ball Lightning, Electrical Field, Plasma Bolt, Electromagnetism, and Spark of Life (an electrical equivalent to the fire elemental spell Flame of Life).

Armor: Are you kidding? This guy's a Quorian, and considers wearing armor to be the height of cowardice.

Magic Items: Kimona has picked up from slain enemies two magical rings. The first confers the sensitive psionic power *Commune with Animals* (see page 169 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Edition** for details). The other is an ancient artifact that goes back to the Time of a Thousand Magicks, called the *Ring of Shaping*. This ultra-rare item gives its bearer the power to change form just like a Changeling! While this might be of great use to thieves, spies and assassins, it also could get the user branded as a Changeling and put to the sword! Kimona is at odds over how to best use it. While he recognizes it as a powerful and valuable thing, he also feels he would be branded as a skulking coward if he ever used it to trick his enemies. He has secretly used it once to assume the disgusting form of a Gosai to get close to a pair of scouts. Then, to be fair, he transformed in front of their eyes to his true form, and fought and killed both. He feels like he cheated somehow, and doesn't know if he should ever put it to such use again. He might be inclined to trade this for a very powerful magic item, but would expect (and should get) a fortune for it.

Money and other equipment: Has little use for material things. He does, however, have 231 gold tucked away and will keep an eye out for more. This money is being saved in case he decides to hire some non-Quorians.

Bakanshi Wandercamp

Far from the Kimona-Gosai conflict, the Bakanshi wandercamp has its own crisis to take care of. Only three months ago, **Ekensha Ukessa**, the wandercamp's Oneiromancer (a.k.a. Dream Shaman) died after giving to the rest of the wandercamp a most perplexing account of a dream-vision he had.

Ekensha was ancient by Quorian standards (113 years old), and had long been a source of great wisdom, accurate prophecies, and spiritual inspiration. His dream-visions provided the group with its direction and focus. Many nights, as the wandercamp lay sleeping, Ekensha would astrally project, roaming the material world like a ghost and flitting throughout the Astral realm in search of clues that would lead his people back to their home world. Over the years, he pieced together many little bits of information that might suggest how the Quorians could find a way to travel from the Palladium World back to their homeworld, Quoria. By the time he was an old man, Ekensha had pieced together a theory that only needed corroboration in the form of a dream-vision. If he had a dream that would tell him the things he suspected, then he would know that all of his inner searching was correct, and that he had found a way home.

As he lay on his deathbed, he had the dream-vision he had been waiting so long for. As he woke from it, he could feel his life slipping away, and he struggled to tell the meaning of his dream to the rest of the wandercamp, which had been standing vigil over their stricken leader. All he managed to tell them was, "Far to the south there lies the *Gate of the Wyrms*, where the secrets to all of our people's questions lie. Go there, and learn the truth of our kind, for it shall set us free." And with that, the great shaman Ekensha Ukessa, passed from this realm into the next.

In his wake were few qualified to lead the wandercamp or to become its new Dream Shaman. Few adults had the kind of dream-visions that let you know if you were cut out for the job. The one who came closest was a young warrior named **Grovoss** — pure of heart and mind. He had a dream-vision similar to Ekensha's, and it seemed clear to all that young Grovoss was the one destined to lead the wandercamp.

That is, it was clear to everyone but Grovoss. Still unproven as a leader, Grovoss fears the responsibility thrust on him. He does not want to be responsible for botching his entire wandercamp's destiny if he fails in his duties. Casting his worries aside, the rest of the wandercamp put Grovoss in Ekensha's old position, and they looked to him for guidance. Not knowing what else to do, Grovoss declared that he and four of the wandercamp's finest warriors would journey to the south, to this "Gate of the Wyrms," and find out exactly what Ekensha was referring to.

Since then, the wandercamp has been preparing to send its finest off on a quest that will surely change all of their lives. Currently, the camp's warriors are going through contests of strength, skill and spirit to see who gets to go. All the while, Grovoss tries to consult the spirit world for an inspirational or

informative dream to guide him. So far, he hasn't received any such insights, and the time to depart draws near.

The Bakanshi wandercamp consists of 60 Quorians: 20 adult males, 20 adult females, and 20 youngsters. Aside from Grovoss, the 19 other adult males are all competing for the right to quest on behalf of the wandercamp. Only four will win that right. The remainder will probably have to deal with incredible disappointment, which will lead to extensive soul-searching among them. The upside is that of this bunch, at least one or two is likely to discover his potential to become a Dream Shaman (as will 3-4 of the women).

Grovoss is a 3rd level mercenary and a 1st level Quorian Oneiromancer of principled alignment.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 15, M.A. 17, P.S. 22, P.P. 17, P.E. 22, P.B. 8, Spd 20.

Hit Points: 32, S.D.C.: 40

Tsekense Village

Like other Quorian wandercamps, the Tsekense roamed the Wastelands in constant search of dimensional lore. Heading this effort were three elder Oneiromancers, each of whom had conflicting dream-visions as to where the wandercamp should travel, what the clues they'd already found meant, and what perils were waiting for the group. These divisions ceased one day about 2 years ago, when the wandercamp bedded down in the deepest reaches of the Stony Desert. That night, as the Quorians slept, all three of the Oneiromancers unconsciously established telepathic contact with the slumbering Earthshaker who lay buried beneath the dirt on which the Quorians had camped. Each of the shamans held long telepathic audiences with the Earthshaker, learning many fascinating insights and bits of universal knowledge.

The next morning, the Oneiromancers, each profoundly affected by the previous night's occurrence, all settled their differences and decided that the wandercamp should stay put as long as there was a sleeping Earthshaker to converse with. The other Quorians of the camp agreed, and they all set to building a semi-permanent village on the Earthshaker's burial/sleeping site.

Since then, the camp has become something of a small town. The Quorians have built stone huts to live in, they have begun cultivating chsuba roots for water, and there is plenty of game nearby for food. The village is not walled, but is ringed by the horn-like protrusions of the Earthshaker's shell. Lookouts perched atop these can spot visitors and intruders up to 10 miles (16 km) away, conditions permitting. Marauders have learned this by word of mouth, so they generally avoid this place because they know they really can not establish an ambush, and fear the Earthshaker's power.

The three Oneiromancers have spent nearly all of their time since the village's foundation asleep or in self-induced trances in a constant effort to communicate with the sleeping Earthshaker. They and the rest of the village have come to regard the great slumbering creature of magic as a kind of deity. A few villagers resent this notion, however, and feel that their true destiny lies in the Wastelands, not here. This faction is steadily

growing in numbers, and pretty soon, these disaffected Quorians will leave the village in search of their own destinies elsewhere. The other villagers will not try to stop their maverick comrades, but they certainly will bemoan their departure, especially with the village entering increasingly dangerous times.

The village has come under attack three times since its foundation. The first was a group of roving Ogre and Troll marauders who thought the village would be easy pickings. They thought wrong. The Quorian warriors, inspired by the notion that their shamans had established contact with a sleeping god of dreams, smashed the raiders with an almost religious frenzy.

The second attack came exactly a year ago, when a trio of ravenous Mologoth tore through the village. Warriors killed one of the beasts and wounded another, but by that time, over seven Quorians lay dead or dying and six others were injured. The conflict ended when the villagers' Dream Shamans broke contact with the Earthshaker (with which they had been holding a kind of telepathic conference) and performed shamanic chants of Call Lightning that burned the rampaging beasts to cinders.

The third attack was just three weeks ago, when a patrol of six Gromek touched down in the village to investigate. They were set upon immediately by Quorian warriors who killed four of the Gromek. The other two got away, and no doubt have informed their garrison commanders about the villagers' whereabouts and disposition. While the Quorians of this place feel that their village is on sacred ground, they also feel that the Gromek may return in much greater numbers to avenge their fallen comrades.

There are 75 Quorians (60 adults, 15 youngsters) living here, which by Quorian standards is practically a megalopolis. Ironically, those who leave this village tend to cause the village to grow. As these disaffected Quorians roam the Wastelands and meet other Quorians, they spread the word of this Earthshaker village. This often prompts many other Quorians to come here and check the place out. Many of those who visit stay permanently, so the village is experiencing a weird population boom.

The village's three Dream Shamans (each is an 8th level Quorian Oneiromancer) are the spiritual leaders and lawgivers of this village. What they say goes. Since they spend most of their time astrally projecting or in some kind of dream trance, they delegate much of their authority to a corps of six of the village's finest warriors (5th to 7th level Mercenary Warriors), who are personally responsible for the Oneiromancers' well-being. They have sworn to protect the Dream Shamans lives with their own, and each of them would gladly carry out that duty when and if that time comes.

Marauder Crews

With no laws to constrain them and few champions to oppose them, the Baalgor Wastelands are a natural haven for marauders and bandits of every stripe. These cutthroats travel aimlessly through the Stony Desert, searching for others to waylay. Most of these groups consist of castaways and misfits too violent, insubordinate or just plain ornery to fit in anywhere else. Unlike Gromek patrols, which operate with razor-sharp military precision, or an Eandroth caravan that relies on its strength of numbers and devotion to the caravan's collective welfare, desert marauders often are rag-tag misanthropes who range from rea-

sonably organized (a rarity) to bickering, vindictive, disorganized, self-serving scoundrels who fight among themselves, and care only for the here and now. These hooligans, thieves and cutthroats rarely have the ability to make far-ranging plans, much less carry them out. They tend to be loud, cruel, and savage predators who prey upon the weak, unsuspecting and innocent. They cause damage and chaos wherever they roam and have little to no regard for any life other than their own. The largest and most organized groups will be those under the command of a forceful leader, making them also the most dangerous. Fortunately, most wasteland brigands are loose gangs and clans of cowardly opportunists and scurvy losers who back down and flee when their victims show too much fight.

Many adventurers disregard the desert marauders of the Baalgor Wastelands as a serious threat, but such attitudes are pure folly. Indeed, desert marauders will never rule the Wastelands, nor will they displace larger, more organized powers such as Gromek, giants or Eandroth, but make no mistake: they are every bit as dangerous as any other malignant force. What they lack in raw discipline and training, they make up for in ferocity, treachery and either fearlessness or cruelty.

There are dozens of marauding groups, large and small, who call the Baalgor Wastelands home. Most favor targeting outsiders/foreigners, largely because they tend to be well equipped with provisions and valuables, and because they are not likely to be missed. By attacking outsiders, the marauders are in no jeopardy of breaking any local non-aggression pacts, starting a feud, provoking local heroes or lawmen, or causing anybody to stand up and take notice of their activities. Best of all, outsiders are not likely to have many (if any) friends or kin in the area who might seek revenge, and nobody is likely to miss them. In fact, most people never *expect* outsiders — be they explorers, adventurers, merchants, refugees, mercenaries, sorcerers, heroes or villains — to survive in the first place, so nobody is surprised when they disappear in the wilderness, making them the perfect victims! Humans and other handsome races (Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes, etc.) are in the minority in the Wastelands and stand out as obvious outsiders.

In the Stony Desert, there are three notorious outlaw groups to be wary of. They are the **Claw Law Crew**, the **Bloodstorm Crew** and the **Damnation Crew**.

The Claw Law Crew

This horde of godless savages are the killers who have been harrying the Broken Horn tribe of Dragonmen, who also live in the Stony Desert. Their numbers have been reduced somewhat by the stiff resistance offered by the Broken Horn Dragonmen, but they still are a force to be reckoned with. However, with their continued failure to destroy the Broken Horn Dragonmen, morale has begun to sag, and some of the marauders are even deserting the crew. To keep the crew together, and to smash the Broken Horn Dragonmen once and for all, the leader of this band is planning a final, all-out attack on the tribe.

The Claw Law crew consists of 72 Orcs (half of which are tired of this campaign and want to go back to raiding helpless travelers and smaller groups), 16 Ogres, 8 trolls and one Gigante named Kongo who leads them. The rest of this crew has either been slain by the Dragonmen or deserted.

The Orcs are 3rd to 4th level mercenary warriors, assassins and thieves who wear light armor (if any at all) and generally fight with two handed weapons, such as large swords, battle axes, or pole arms.

The 16 Ogres are also, mostly, 3rd to 4th level mercenaries and soldiers, some of whom have served in the city guard at the Free City of Troker. The mercenary Ogres are similarly equipped to the Orcs in the crew, except they fight with giant-sized weapons which inflict an additional 1D6 of damage. The soldier wear studded leather and fight with a large shield in one hand and a long sword, battle axe or mace and chain in the other. A pair of Ogres, Sneedle and Braux, are both 6th level, know Martial Arts and have W.P. Paired Weapons, making them tougher than the others. One female Ogre is a 5th level Wizard, and another is a 3rd level Earth Warlock.

The eight trolls are 4th to 5th level mercenaries and assassins. None of them wear armor, since finding troll-sized armor out here is rather difficult. They mostly fight with one-handed weapons, such as maces, swords and axes. At least one of them, however, fights with a giant-sized flamberge. One is a 2nd level priest of Darkness who worships Dyval, Lord of the Deevils.

The Claw Law Crew's leader, **Kongo the Kurayguss**, is a fearsome and deadly Gigante who is as insane as he is evil. He should not be trusted or underestimated. Ever. Kongo is a diabolic 6th level mercenary warrior and 4th level assassin (I.Q. 8, M.E. 4, M.A. 7, P.S. 30 (supernatural), P.P. 19, P.E. 30, P.B. 10, Spd 14; H.P.: 70, S.D.C.: 100). As a Gigante, Kongo has the following mutations: An additional pair of arms (+1 melee attack per round), scaly skin (+40 S.D.C.; this has already been factored into his attributes, above), an additional eye (+2 to initiative and 30 foot/9 m nightvision), and a large, heavy tail (a tail strike does 2D6 damage).

He fights with a giant-sized, magical flail that has been enchanted with the Thunder Hammer power, so it inflicts an extra 1D6 points of damage (for a total of 6D6). Kongo also possesses three potions of healing, a pair of Chaser Crystals, and another pair of purplish crystals that will explode when shattered, inflicting 4D6 to everything in a 30 foot (9 m) radius. All those caught in the blast must save versus magic or be knocked off their feet, losing one melee attack. Kongo obtained these curious crystals from a giant scout of the Nimro Kingdom. Before Kongo tortured the giant to death, he confessed that the Nimro Kingdom was mining this material from the heart of Mount Nimrod and are working on ways to develop this odd stuff into a weapon to arm their smaller minions, such as Orcs, Ogres and Trolls. As yet, Kongo has not had the motivation to check out this wild tale for himself, nor has he wished to use his "Blasto Rocks," as he calls them. He will hold onto these until he absolutely must use them. The giant also owns a ring that confers fire resistance, but he can not get it to fit on any of his large-knuckled and knobby fingers.

Kongo combines his Gigante abilities, learned fighting skills, and magic weapons into a deadly array of battlefield prowess. Kongo had been struggling with another Gigante, Bigoras, for the leadership of this crew, but when Bigoras died at the hands of the Broken Horn's old tribal leader, Kongo earned the position by default. Now, he has become obsessed with succeeding where his chief rival failed, and to that end, he will stop at nothing to destroy the Broken Horn tribe. The rest of the crew think

Kongo is wasting his (and everybody else's) time and energy pursuing a the Dragonmen, especially when their defeat will yield little to no treasure. However, given Kongo's penchant for murdering those who disagree with him, nobody is willing to argue the point, and they grudgingly follow orders.

The Bloodstorm Crew

This crew has been around for nearly 50 years, and they have become something of a legend in the Stony Desert. Although they are robbers and killers, they are also known for having a sense of honor, and never harm women or children. Moreover, they also will not rob their victims of so much that they have nothing left to survive on. Victims of this crew will always be left with at least one weapon and enough food and water to make it for another few days.

Such uncommon, chivalrous behavior from bandits encourages many of their would-be victims to bargain with them rather than fight. They know that if they give up their goods peacefully, the Bloodstorm marauders will leave them without bloodshed. In fact, some merchant caravans that have been hit several times by this crew are treated more like valued customers than victims, and the Bloodstorm bandits have been known to extend special courtesies to their "clients." Once, even coming to a caravan's defense, rescuing them from a band of giants, helping to heal the wounded, and then extracting a generous "reward." All things considered, a good deal.

The Bloodstorm Crew have prowled the Stony Desert for so long that some of their members have become the best guides and trackers in the area, and are frequently hired for that purpose by wealthy merchants, outsiders and individuals. However, those who would hire these bandits should do so knowing that they are businessmen first and comrades second. As soon as a better offer comes along, or if they think they can get away with robbing their employers once they are all out in the desert, then they will do so without a moment's hesitation.

These bandits are also famous for their incredible riding abilities. Every member of the Bloodstorm crew has Horsemanship: Exotic with a +10% bonus for all feats regarding riding a Silonar. The Bloodstorm crew are the foremost non-Eandroth experts on how to raise, train and handle Silonars. Being nomadic outlaws, they really do not have the option of breeding Silonars, so they tend to masquerade as merchants so they can buy their steeds from sellers in Troker, as well as from Eandroth caravans. Word has it that those who do business with the Bloodstorm Crew in this manner will be spared from any attacks from them for a full year — certainly the Eandroth have *never* been raided, and are rumored to "trade" with the brigands and exchange information on a regular basis.

The main reason these marauders behave in this fashion is because of its leader, **Gramazz the Gray**, an Orcish bandit whose father led the Bloodstorm crew before him, and like his father before him. Gramazz is of average Orcish intelligence, but is unusually charismatic and sharp-witted, knowing instinctively how to deal with people, how to enforce his authority, and when to take advantage of opportunities. Furthermore, he has a personal code of honor (aberrant evil) that has been adopted by half his crew.

Gramazz rules the Bloodstorm bandits with amazing skill, tolerance and fairness. Not only does he consider himself the top



dog of the pack, but his entire crew is extremely loyal to him, and none have even the slightest urge to rebel or depose him. The secret of Gramazz's success is three-fold. First, he has proved himself in battle and as a capable leader over the years, with no help from his father or grandfather. And being a capable leader means caring about and taking care of his men. As a result, the other members of his gang respect him on his own merit. Second, Gramazz has led the Bloodstorm Crew to its most prosperous era ever. They are rolling in money and valuables, and have never lost a battle. Third, Gramazz possesses a pair of Dragon Claws and a Sorcerer's Dragon Helm, passed down to him by his father as a mantle of leadership. Not only do these items make Gramazz powerful, personally, but they are also an "official" endorsement of his legitimacy as the leader of the group. That, and Gramazz has never abused the power of these items, helping to cement his henchmen's trust and loyalty.

This gang is the farthest-ranging of all the Stony Desert marauders. These guys are constantly on the move, and will frequently venture along the Coastline, into the Free City of Troker, and into the Sandy Desert. From time to time, some bounty hunter tries to find and capture these rogues, but such efforts are a fool's errand. These robber swordsmen are masters of the desert, and the only way they shall ever be caught is if they want to be.

This crew ranges from 30-40 members, each with his or her own Silonar. The number of the group fluctuates because all members are free to leave as they like and many have friends and family living in the Wastelands. This group is more racially

diverse than most, consisting of Orcs, Ogres, and Trolls, as well as some humans, Eandroth Rogues, and even a Quorian or two. For the most part, the Bloodstorm bandits are 4th to 7th level Thieves and Rangers who tend to fight with one-handed bladed weapons, such as long swords, scimitars, and cutlasses. They are also fond of throwing weapons, such as daggers, darts, short spears and hand axes. Among the most notable members are *Nee'arl* an 8th level, Eandroth Rogue and Ranger (a masterful Silonar and Rock Buzzer rider — he has both a Red Rock Buzzer and a Silonar), *Margolii the Wonderous*, who is a 6th level, Ogre Wizard, *Krifosto the Kind*, a 7th level, human Psi-Healer, and *Brutana the She-Devil*, a 5th level, Troll Warrior Monk. **Note:** In addition to the bandits themselves, the gang has many "friends" and "associates" who are willing to lend them a helping hand, hide members on the run, trade and fence goods, offer warnings, and do other things of benefit.

Gramazz the Gray

Title: Chief of the Bloodstorm Crew

O.C.C.: 7th level Thief and 3rd level Ranger.

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 13, M.A. 19, P.S. 27, P.P. 18, P.E. 18, P.B. 10, Spd. 21.

Hit Points: 65, **S.D.C.:** 35

Attacks per melee: 5 (Note: Gramazz uses his Dragon Claws as paired weapons, effectively doubling his number of attacks per melee).

Bonuses: +4 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +12 to damage, +5 to roll with impact, +5 to pull punch, +2 to save vs magic, +6% vs coma/death. Includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert — Karate kick (2D4), axe kick (2D6), roundhouse kick (3D6). Also see Dragon Helm magic.

W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword (+3 to strike/parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Knife (+3 to strike/parry/throw), W.P. Archery (ROF 4, +80 ft/24 m to range, +2 to strike/parry), W.P. Spear (+3 to strike/parry, +2 to throw).

Weapons: Gramazz's primary weapon is his pair of Dragon Claws, which are indestructible and inflict 6D6 per hit.

Armor: None. He finds armor too confining, especially on long rides in the desert. Besides, with his noteworthy fighting skills and powerful magic items, he considers armoring himself a sign of cowardice.

Magic Items: Gramazz's prize possession is his sorcerer's Dragon Helm. This item has 80 P.P.E, and regenerates 4D6 spent P.P.E every three hours. Whoever wears this helm can cast the following Wizard spells at their personal level of experience: Blinding Flash, See Aura, See the Invisible, Sense Evil, Sense Magic, Thunderclap, Climb, Turn Dead, Armor of Ithan, Energy Bolt, Sense Traps, Carpet of Adhesion, Energy Field, Magic Net, Multiple Image, Shadow Meld, and Tongues.

Money and other equipment: Other than his Dragon Claws, Dragon Helm, and about 600 gold, Gramazz has no other noteworthy items. He cedes most of his treasure to the members of his gang in the form of a monthly bonus to the raiders who perform best. Keeping a lot of money is not important for Gramazz, since the thrill of adventure is what motivates him and most of his men.

The Damnation Crew

Rumbling along the broken wastes of Baalgor, the Damnation Crew are the terror of the Stony Desert. Somehow, they have acquired an old Dwarven war machine from the Elf-Dwarf War, and now they're using it to pillage, destroy and terrorize.

The weapon the bandits have recovered is a *Dwarven Juggernaut*, a type of fearsome wheeled vehicle that once was the mainstay of the Dwarven Empire's cavalry. Reminiscent of the magnificent Land Ships sometimes seen in the Ophid's Grasslands, this vehicle resembles a large, wide sailing vessel, except that it has no masts, sails or rigging. And, instead of a keel, it has two axles, each supporting two giant wheels. Dwarven Juggernauts are slow and not very maneuverable, but they are very resilient and can inflict terrible damage on large, stationary objects. In fact, moving at full speed, a Juggernaut can punch a hole through most castle walls, or completely flatten smaller buildings. How the Damnation marauders got their hands on this thing is something of a mystery. The Damnation marauders are led by a crafty Ogre named **Rogayashi**, a miscreant 7th level thief and 1st level pirate (I.Q. 14, M.E. 12, M.A. 14, P.S. 25, P.P. 25, P.E. 25, P.B. 14, Spd 11; H.P.: 60, S.D.C.: 45). He appeared in Troker several months ago looking to recruit fighters and workers, gathered nearly 50 roughnecks, villains and mercenaries to his cause, and led them on a brief overland journey into the Stony Desert, where he first revealed to them his land-ship, a Dwarven Juggernaut he has named the *Orcish Delight*. However, Rogayashi has never told anyone where he found this vehicle, or how he laid claim to it.

Rogayashi has been a desert marauder all of his life. His parents were miserable slaves in the Old Kingdom, where he grew up. He quickly learned that if he did not find some other life for himself, he would live and die as a slave, just like the rest of his family. So, while still an adolescent, Rogayashi and some friends ventured to the Baalgor Wastelands to become fierce bandit leaders. Their heads were filled with visions of daring raids, piles of gold and plenty of minions ready to carry out their nefarious bidding, but, things didn't quite turn out as they thought.

Not one week into the Baalgor Mountains, the group was set upon by Gromek, who slew all but three of the youngsters. Those survivors, all of whom were badly wounded, managed to escape to a local garrison of giants, where they received enough medical attention to keep them alive. The boys were then put to work to pay for their care. Rogayashi's friends grew to like working for the giants, and have stayed with them. As for Rogayashi, he grew tired of taking orders, and after only a few months, deserted, heading out into the deep desert.

There, he fell in with a band of cutthroats and fought along-side them for several years. It was during this period that he learned how to handle himself in battle, and worked up the chain of command as his superiors slowly died off, one by one. The closer Rogayashi got to becoming the crew leader, the less he could wait for it, and pretty soon, he hatched plans to assassinate all of the leaders and take power for himself. His big chance came a year ago, when the crew came across a huge cave in the Stony Desert where they found an ancient Dwarven arsenal. Improbably enough, an intact Dwarven Juggernaut was hidden away underground there for millennia, just gathering dust. After a major excavation effort, the crew dug a ramp into the

ground so the Juggernaut could be rolled to the surface. Once this was done, however, those vying for leadership quickly fell upon each other, and a great, bloody battle engulfed the entire gang. By the time it was over, only Rogayashi was left standing. With few other options, he went to Troker and recruited a crew of his own. He brought them back to the Juggernaut hidden in the desert and began his campaign of terror. He has never looked back.

Once he had a crew to run his war machine, Rogayashi began a relentless campaign of terror, raiding and destroying every settlement and nomadic group he could find. After hitting several Eandroth caravans, Western colonies, and even hunting a few Mologoth (and selling their remains to butchers in Troker), Rogayashi has amassed a small fortune in cash which he keeps on the *Orcish Delight*. He has promised shares of this to his crew, all of whom are free to leave and take their share with them at any time. As long as the *Orcish Delight* keeps raking in booty, however, none of her crew are likely to retire from land piracy any time soon. Rogayashi and his land-ship make them powerful men. Men to be feared and recognized, and his men like that feeling of power.

As Rogayashi and his crew draw more notice to themselves, they seem to get all the more brazen. The survivors of one Eandroth caravan have offered a reward of 25,000 gold for Rogayashi's head. Since then, all kinds of rumors and stories have sprung up (especially in Troker) concerning Rogayashi and his "Doom's Day Machine," prompting numerous others to track him down. Most of these are bounty hunters eager to cash in on the Eandroth reward for Rogayashi. Others are interested in commandeering the *Orcish Delight* for themselves. Of these, some are curious human engineers who wish to learn how to build these great machines once more. Others are Western spies and agents who would love to add a machine like this to the Empire's arsenal (the Western Empire has offered select "specialists" 300,000 gold for the ancient war machine in working order, but would pay quadruple if they had to). Still others are interested in examining the strange magicks that power and protect this incredible vessel.

Ironically, 20% of the bounty hunters and mercs who have gone out to hunt Rogayashi down have, after seeing the vehicle in action, joined his crew! The rest have either been run off or slain. As Rogayashi revels in his infamy, he has become bolder and bolder, even attacking giants and Gromek throughout the Stony Desert. Rumor has it that he even destroyed a local Gromek garrison! Whatever one's motivation, there are plenty of folks after the *Orcish Delight* and her power-hungry captain. If Rogayashi realizes his days may be running out, he must figure it is better to burn out than to fade away, because he hasn't slowed down one bit. His marauders, now numbering over a hundred, with a few dozen hangers-on following the troop from a distance, waiting to be recognized and accepted, do not realize the degree of danger they are courting. Even if they did, most would probably not care, because like their fearless leader, they love the excitement, power and infamy they are reaping. They are having the time of their lives as they quickly become living legends. **Note:** According to one recent rumor, the Kingdom of Giants at Nimro have offered Rogayashi the title of general and a king's treasure if he would join their ranks and help them smite the enemies of giantkind. But then, wild rumors about these bandits abound.



The Orcish Delight Warship

Type: Ancient Dwarven Juggernaut — a magical land-ship and battering ram of immense power.

Crew: 4 to 8 drivers to work the wheelcranks, 2 to 4 drivers to handle the steer cranks, and a captain to oversee the entire vehicle. The *Orcish Delight* can accommodate up to 30 human to Orc-sized warriors or 15 giant-sized soldiers, or any combination thereof.

Size: 70 feet (21.2 m) long, 20 feet (6 m) wide and 25 feet (7.6 m) tall.

Excess Cargo Capacity: 15 tons with a minimum crew and no troops or weapons; 27 tons fully loaded.

P.P.E.: 1200 and radiates with magic.

Features of Note: Imagine a large warship mounted on the wheeled chassis of a huge catapult, stick a big ram-prow on the front, and remove all the masts and sails, and you begin to get an idea of what this thing looks like. The Juggernaut epitomizes ancient Dwarven military engineering and magic. Although relatively big, slow, and strong, it was designed as a “siege-buster,” to smash through a city or castle’s defensive walls and unload troops inside the breach.

The *Orcish Delight* is truly unique, because one has not been seen in over 6000 years. Until the Damnation Crew appeared on the scene, the only evidence that the Dwarven Juggernauts ever existed is a few rare drawings and descriptions in ancient books, tapestries and wall paintings. It is one of the magical devices of the Great War that ancient Dwarves vowed never to build again. When they were in production, Dwarven armies used dozens of these war machines to crush

their enemies and shatter their defenses. It is a magical creation along the lines of the forbidden Demon Black Ships and the product of some sort of Rune magic. Even if this vehicle were captured by the Western Empire or a group of mages, it would take years, probably decades, of study to figure out how it was made and attempt to duplicate it (and quite possibly, never manage to do so). Moreover, the cost would be in the millions of gold pieces, at least.

The most peculiar feature about this vehicle is its undercarriage and wheels. The undercarriage is like that of an ordinary wagon or cart — two main axles each supporting two wheels. The axles are made of an ancient (or magical) kind of ironwood that was once commonplace in the Baalgor rainforests, but no longer exists. The wood itself is at least as strong as steel, although many times more flexible. Unless intentionally damaged, the axles of a Dwarven Juggernaut will work for decades before they crack. (Note: The *Orcish Delight* was in pristine condition when Rogayashi found it, so it is just at the beginning of its operational life). Likewise, the axles and wheels are housed in an intricate suspension system of ironwood flexrods and specially made housings, so as to provide a comparatively smooth ride (Actually the bumpiness is smoothed out just enough so that it feels like one is on a seaborne vessel while the Juggernaut is in motion). Like the axles, the ironwood suspension system can perform for years under the most rugged of conditions before showing signs of fatigue or breakdown.

Each wheel is a single, thick slice of an ironwood tree trunk, carved and smoothed into a perfectly circular shape.

Enclosing each wheel is an outer "tread" and "spokes" of Dwarven steel, specially forged around it so as to form a single piece of seamless metalwork. These metal wheel coverings have been enchanted to be indestructible (as is most of the vehicle), thus enabling it to travel over virtually any terrain without fear of throwing a wheel. Each of these wheels weighs close to 1,000 pounds, which gives the Juggernaut the ability to roll over just about anything smaller than it, once it really gets moving. If run over, any Ogre-sized humanoid or smaller will take 1D6x10 damage, and will be stunned for 1D6+1 melee rounds. Giant-sized humanoids take 6D6 damage and will be stunned for 1D4 melee rounds.

Topside, the Juggernaut resembles a sailing ship with an upper deck, cabins and storage holds down below, plus attack platforms fore and aft.

Speed: Dwarven Juggernauts have terrible acceleration and even worse handling. Back in the Elf-Dwarf War, Juggernaut crews would get these vehicles going as fast as they could, heading straight for a castle or other large structure. Then, a mile (1.6 km) or so before impact, they would let the Juggernaut coast the rest of the way as the crew belted in and braced for impact. To this end (smashing through things), Juggernauts work like a charm. As general-purpose vehicles, though, they are terrible, with poor handling, steering and maneuverability.

Juggernauts are propelled by a series of wheelcranks, each driven by one or two people. Each wheel on a Juggernaut has an elaborate cranking mechanism that enables a single humanoid with a P.S. of 20 or higher to get the wheel turning (a considerable feat, considering the sheer weight of the wheel, coupled with the mass of the rest of the ship). To get a Juggernaut moving, the four wheelcranks need to be started more or less at the same time and at the same speed. How fast the vehicle moves depends on how fast its wheelcranks are turned. For gaming purposes, the top speed of a Juggernaut is equal to one quarter of the combined P.S. attributes of all the "drivers" working the vehicle's wheelcranks, in miles per hour. So, a Juggernaut with one driver per wheelcrank, each having a P.S. of 20 has a top speed of 20 mph (32 km). This is the *minimal top speed* of a Juggernaut, since it requires at least 4 wheelcrank drivers each with a P.S. of at least 20 just to get the vehicle moving. With additional, stronger drivers, though, a Juggernaut can move at much higher speeds. Juggernauts with eight drivers each with a P.S. of 25, for example, have a top speed of 50 mph (80 km)! Technically, there is no maximum speed for Juggernauts. They are limited only by the strength of the blokes working the wheelcranks.

Which brings us to the Juggernaut's one critical design flaw: a lack of brakes. Juggernauts were designed as high-speed battering rams, not as a means of transport, so brakes were never built into them. The reasoning for this was that the Juggernaut's target would stop the vehicle upon impact. Of course, this causes serious problems for Juggernaut riders who are not belted in at the time of impact, even though one of the magical features seems to be a variation of the Float in Air spell that automatically engages at that moment to dramatically cushion the blow. Without a big object to crash into, the only way to stop a Juggernaut is to let it coast, gradually lose momentum and come to a stop. How-

ever, given the mass of these monsters, they do not exactly stop on a dime. For every 10 mph (16 kph) the Juggernaut is moving, it requires a full quarter-mile (0.4 km) to come to a gentle, coasting stop. Thus, a Juggernaut cruising along at 50 mph (80 kph) will coast for 1.25 miles (2 km) before slowing to a halt. An alternative way to stop is to turn the front wheels, causing the vehicle to come to a skidding halt (typically about 1D6x100 yards/meters later).

Another problem with the vehicle is its slow acceleration. Regardless of the number or strength of a Juggernaut's wheelcrank operators, the vehicle will generally accelerate at the poky pace of 10 mph (16 km) per minute (4 melee rounds). Thankfully, propelling a Juggernaut is like riding a bicycle in high gear. The hard part is getting it going. Once it is on the move, keeping its speed steady is not a problem. The same principle applies here. Thanks to the ingenious designs (and magic elements) of the Dwarven wheelcranks, it requires far less strength to keep a wheelcrank turning at its constant speed than at a higher speed. As a result, once a team of wheelcrank operators have attained a certain speed, they will be able to keep cranking at that speed for a number of minutes equal to 10 times their individual P.S. attribute. Thus, even the weakest wheelcrank operators (P.S. of 20) could keep a crank going at cruising speed for over three hours. However, if wheelcrank drivers are only accelerating the vehicle, never letting the speed level off, then the longest they can work the cranks is equal to their P.S. in minutes.

Finally, Dwarven Juggernauts have one last disadvantage: they handle about as well as a house on wheels. Juggernauts have two steering cranks, one for the fore axle and one for the aft. Just to move either of these cranks takes a P.S. (individual or combined) of 30. Again, the design of the cranking mechanism does not allow for it to turn any faster if additional strength is applied to it. Thus, a steering crank can be turned just as fast by a single Troll with a P.S. of 30 as by four Ogres each with a P.S. of 22. Each steering crank can turn its wheelbase a maximum of 10 degrees per melee round. If both steering cranks are used in conjunction, then the vehicle can turn 20 degrees in a melee round. The tightest turn a Juggernaut can make is a 40 degree turn. These things are just not built for stunt driving.

S.D.C. by Location:

Main Body: Front Section — 800

Main Body: Mid-Ship — 600

Main Body: Rear Section — 700

Ram-Prow — 800

Fighting Towers (2) — 250 each

Hull per 10 foot (3 m) area — 150

Undercarriage, axles, wheel hubs — 100 each

Wheels (4) — completely indestructible (magic).

Magical S.D.C. Regeneration: The incredible war machine regenerates 10% of its S.D.C. per every 24 hours, so unless the main body is completely destroyed, the damnable thing will regenerate to full S.D.C. in a matter of days.

Armaments: Ram-Prow: The real show-stopper is the ram-prow. The *Orcish Delight* inflicts 1D6x25 for every 10 mph (16 km) it is traveling at the moment of impact. Thus, if it hits a castle wall going 40 mph (64 kph), it will inflict a whopping 4D6x25 (100-600) damage! Keep in mind, however, this is against large, stationary objects. Any living crea-

ture should be able to dodge an oncoming Juggernaut rather easily (+6), since one would see and hear it coming from a mile away (literally). Besides, the ram-prow actually would go over the head of anything shorter than 10 feet (3 m) tall. Of course, then you have to worry about getting run over.

2 Heavy Ballistas: Damage: 1D6x10; Range 1,320 feet (400 m); each has 125 S.D.C. and does *not* regenerate from damage. Each of these is mounted on a gunnery tower located at the aft of the vehicle and mounted on a crank-driven turret that gives each ballista a 360 degree firing radius. It takes a full melee round to rotate one of these ballistas 90 degrees. **Note:** The aforementioned damage is for ballista arrows. Flaming arrows will do an extra 4D6 per melee round until extinguished, and will have a 01-12% chance of igniting whatever they hit, provided it is combustible. Ballistas can also fire small rocks (10 lbs/4.5 kg). The range is the same, but the damage for these is only 5D6. In addition, Rogayashi likes to attach heavy ropes to his ballista arrows so he can harpoon hapless victims and reel them in. Harpoon arrows will only travel half their normal range.

Magic: Whatever ancient magicks were deployed to build and effectively power the Juggernaut are lost to history.

Gromek War Camps

Far and away, the toughest and most dangerous forces in the Stony Desert are camps of Gromek warriors. There are five such camps (or "raags" in the Gromek tongue) operating in the Stony Desert. Three of them are smaller units reconnoitering the region, cataloging the other races, settlements and groups, and surveying their strengths and weaknesses. The other two have established semi-permanent outposts as part of the Gromek's expansion strategy. All five groups receive their orders from command posts in the Rocky Desert and the Baalgor Mountains. The camps are part of a larger expansion strategy whereby the Gromek hope to take over the entire Baalgor Wastelands for themselves.

They have two reasons for this. The first is because it is there for the taking. Gromek being Gromek, they will attack and conquer anything just for the sport of it, and the Stony Desert is no different. There is also a second and more pressing reason: The Gromek need the land, thanks to their ongoing war with the giants of this region and of the Mount Nimro Kingdom of Giants. Although the Gromek of this world have long considered the Mount Nimro Region and the Baalgor Mountains their adopted homeland, the emergence of a nation of giants has caused them major trouble. Early on, the giants and Gromek were able to co-exist in relative peace, but inevitably, the two began fighting, and Gromek and True Giants have since become mortal enemies. Now that a strong giant kingdom is forming in the Mount Nimro region, the Gromek there have been driven out and seek refuge in the forbidding Baalgor Mountains. But as the giants have expanded there, too, the Gromek find themselves in a real bind.

They have deadlocked the giants in their fight for control of the mountains, but they too wish to expand. So, with an eastern push out of the question, they must turn their eyes to the west, and capture as much of the inner Baalgor Wastelands as they can before the giants lay claim to it as well. The first step in that

strategy is to scout out the area and identify the greatest threats in it. Only then will the Gromek Warlords in the Rocky Desert commit their warriors to conquering the region. Such a move is well in the future, especially since the war with the giants keeps most Gromek troops assigned to the Rocky Desert and the Baalgor Mountains.

For now, only a relative handful of Gromek have been deployed to the Stony Desert, but this handful is indeed a grave threat to others living there. Not only are the advance Gromek troops violent and cruel by nature, but they also feel the need to prove themselves in battle. After all, to these scouts, the battles far off to the east are where the real action is found. If they are to gain any sort of recognition for themselves, they are going to have to scare up battle trophies to show their superiors once they return home. So, many Gromek patrols will attack anything they think they can defeat. This means lone travelers, wandering parties of adventurers, desert marauders, and even smaller Eandroth caravans. A sixth Gromek camp, a major garrison, has indeed fallen to the Damnation Crew, and, much to their chagrin, a few independent Gromek and scouts have been run off by the gang. Currently, the advance Gromek troops have assessed the Eandroth Caravans, the Damnation marauders, and the Coastal Settlements beyond the Stony Desert to be the most dangerous of potential adversaries.

Raag Akettikik

This war camp is laid out in typical Gromek fashion — a square courtyard with few buildings, surrounded by a 30 foot (9 m) high defensive wall. There is no gate or other ground entrance to the camp, because Gromek soldiers have no problem flying over the walls, and any ground entrance into the camp would be considered just another way for intruders to breach security.

Akettikik Camp houses 29 Gromek soldiers, 28 of which are divided into four units of seven each. In each of these sevens, there are five 2nd level soldiers, a 3rd or 4th level soldier acting as sergeant, and a 6th or 7th level soldier acting as unit commander.

The 29th soldier is an 8th level Gromek knight named *Grillek Ibesstissen*, who has been commanding this camp since its construction, just six months ago. Grillek is an honored veteran of many battles against the giants to the east, and considers it a serious dishonor to be reassigned to his present duties. Contrary to Grillek's hard feelings, his superiors have given him this assignment because they have the utmost confidence that he will make great strides in capturing territory for the Gromek people. Grillek hates it out in the desert flat lands where there is no clearly defined enemy to fight. To compensate, he routinely sends his patrols out with strict instructions to come back bearing the head of some fallen enemy, or to not come back at all. This has led to the camp's sevens laying waste to several small Eandroth caravans, parties of wandering adventurers, and even a small group of Minotaurs. The occasional Mologoth has also offered some sport, but engaging sorcerers, giants and creatures of magic are considered the most worthy challenges. For Commander Grillek, this wanton carnage is just a way of killing time (no pun intended), and he longs for the day when he will be recalled home to fight hordes of giants once more. He has only recently heard about the "invincible Damnation Marauders" and is

investigating the matter. If the stories and reports he has heard are true, then he may have finally found an enemy worth battling.

Commander Grillek Ibesstissen

Alignment: Miscreant career soldier who loves combat.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 10, M.A. 11, P.S. 22, P.P. 17, P.E. 16, P.B. 7, Spd. 6 running, 33 for flight.

Hit Points: 57; 8th level knight.

S.D.C.: 45

Typical Gromek

Alignment: Any, but usually anarchist or evil by human standards.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+1, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 4D6+2, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 4D6, P.B. 2D6, Spd. 2D6 running, 6D6+6 for flight.

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 4D6 plus those gained from skills and training.

Most Common O.C.C.s: Soldier and Knight.

Raag Borguni

This war camp is identical in design and manpower as Raag Akettikik. However, the commander of this camp, **Agek'ta'k T'kussa**, is a level-headed thinker, a military genius, and an able leader. He is an aberrant 11th level soldier (I.Q. 13, M.E. 15, M.A. 11, P.S. 24, P.P. 15, P.E. 17, P.B. 8, Spd 8 (running), 31 (flying), Hit Points: 54, S.D.C. 53) who fights with a giant-sized claymore that can spit super-powerful lightning bolts (1D4x10, 200 ft/61 m) three times a day (Each time one of these lightning bolts is discharged, the weapon's handler takes 1D6 damage unless they are naturally or magically resistant to electricity). Otherwise, Agek'ta'k's only other possessions of note are a small sack containing 3,500 gold in Old Kingdom Coins and a collection of various humanoid skulls (some of which might be valuable to certain Alchemists, at the G.M.'s discretion).

Agek'ta'k shares in the dream of a great and glorious Gromek Empire. He also realizes that, at least for now, the Gromek must work with other, non-Gromek people to achieve that goal. Thus, he openly invites local wanderers and desert-dwellers to join the Gromek cause. Those who do are expected to work hard, but they are fairly rewarded. Those who do not accept his invitation are given a clear warning: "It is alright not to join the Gromek cause, but if you live within the Gromek domain, you will be subjected to slavery! So if you value your freedom, leave now! To stand against the Gromek is to invite death."

Other Gromek commanders feel T'kussa is a weak-minded idiot who has grown "as soft as the shifting sands," why else turn to non-Gromek for "assistance?" His attempts to forge alliances with non-Gromek are not only tactically sound, but a necessity if the Gromek hope to survive, let alone dominate the Baalgor Wastelands. However, Commander T'kussa is ostracized by his narrow-sighted peers, and he generally only gets misfits and outsiders assigned to his command. This has not stopped the determined Commander from whipping his troops into a crack fighting unit that is easily one of the best and most experienced in the Gromek legions, certainly the strongest in the Stony Desert. Over the last year, the Raag Borguni Camp has

endured numerous attacks from desert marauders, Eandroth war parties (no doubt retaliating for some atrocity Raag Akettikik is believed to have committed) and even desert wildlife such as Mologoth and Melech. Each time Raag Borguni has fallen under attack, its soldiers have fought bravely and efficiently, repelling their attackers with nary a casualty on their side.

Just as Commander T'kussa has taught these Gromek soldiers how to fight like champions, he has also swayed them to his general philosophies, too. As a result, Camp Raag Borguni is perhaps the only Gromek war band in the Stony Desert that would just as soon deal with potential enemies and dominate lesser beings than fight them. He and his men ascribe to the notion that the Gromek are destined to rule the entire Baalgor Wastelands one day, but for the troops of Raag Borguni, such a goal is to be pursued with sound strategy, honor, dignity and mercy, or not at all.

The Raag Borguni includes 63 Gromek (21 are 2nd-4th level soldiers, 30 are 5th to 7th level soldiers, eight are 7th to 9th level Knights and four are 8th and 9th level rangers). His non-Gromek troops include a squad of Ogres (4th to 6th level soldiers), two squads of Orcs (3rd to 4th level), a squad of Melech(!), plus the following special agents, a 5th level Change-ling assassin (disguised as a human), a 7th level Sphinx Wizard, Loogaroo scout, Manticore scout/interrogator, and a Thin One spy! All truly *seem* to be loyal to the Commander and war camp, professing that they want to be on the "winning side" and share in the Gromek's glorious destiny. **Note:** Unless somebody kills Commander T'kussa, he could ultimately grow into the General who could, indeed, lead the Gromek war machine to conquer the Baalgor Wastelands and hold the southern mountain range. He may also be the only one capable of defeating, or at least holding, the giants at bay in the east. However, until his fellow Gromek accept his views (which is unlikely until they have suffered many defeats and great losses), the Gromek supremacists may well have doomed their people. Meanwhile, T'kussa's talents are wasted in the Stony Desert . . . or are they? He is making many contacts, learning the lay of the land and building a formidable army.

Raag Hhisksx

This is the third of the outland war camps, which represent the outermost reaches of the Gromek sphere of influence. Raag Hhisksx is also built in typical raag style. This camp has been whittled down to only nine Gromek, all of them 2nd level soldiers. Most of these wretches have suffered injury in combat, and they are almost out of supplies. The only thing keeping them from abandoning their post is their fear that to do so is to accept their failure and bring disgrace and far greater punishment from their superiors in the mountains. Thus, they press onward, doing the best they can.

Gromek commanders in the Rocky Desert have received word that the camp has recently suffered great losses first from an attack by a large force of Minotaur warriors led by one of their Old Ones worshipping witches, in league with a mixed force of Jotan and Nimro (which suggests the Gromek war effort could be in for some serious trouble if the giants are sending out their own war parties). While losses were high (32%), the Gromek were able to finally repel the raiders (actually the giants had done the damage they wanted to inflict and retreated with minimal casualties).

The second siege came only a few weeks later when a band of marauders calling themselves the Damnation Crew decimated the Gromek forces (60% casualties) and actually breached their fortifications!

Unknown to the nine survivors, a force of 60 Gromek warriors (twice the standard complement for a minor outlands war camp) has been dispatched two Raag Hhisksx to reinforce it and learn more about these two unexpected menaces. Until those reinforcements arrive, however, nobody except the wretched soldiers of this camp will really know what hideous things have befallen this establishment.

Raag Dyvetra

This is a new base camp and the last of the four walls has barely been finished. The camp has a full complement of 30 Gromek soldiers (2nd to 5th level), but they were late in getting here, since the original detachment of troops were sent off to investigate the troubles at Raag Hhisksx. This left Raag Dyvetra short-handed and vulnerable before the last walls were erected, something that really rankled the camp commander, a miscreant, 8th level knight named **Sissn Yiuguth**. Sissn swears that when he finds the commander who gave the order to divert the soldiers who were supposed to come here to check out some "disturbance" near Raag Hhiskxs, he will kill him and all of his underlings.

The spooky thing is, Sissn really means it. He is aggressive and violent to the point of being psychopathic (suffers from semi-functional mindless aggression caused by a head wound he took while fighting a Cyclops years ago). Most of the time, one with this disability would not be the best candidate to run an advance reconnaissance camp, but sustaining mild brain damage has actually been the best thing for Sissn's career. Unable to control his homicidal urges in pressure situations, this warrior just snaps and destroys whatever is in front of him. This was most helpful during a bitter three-day battle against a band of giants in the Baalgor Mountains not too long ago. However, in that same fight, Sissn also killed three of his own soldiers, and it became clear to the Gromek High Command that Sissn was both too valuable to take off the battlefield and too much of a liability to keep him anywhere nearby. So, they sent him off to the Wastelands. Since then, Sissn has become increasingly unstable and paranoid, convinced that other Gromek commanders are jealous of his fighting skill and plotting against him. Unless Sissn is removed from command shortly, he will command his troops to attack one of the other Gromek war camps, claiming that those soldiers have been collaborating with giants and other enemies. The only thing that might dissuade this is if his attention is drawn to the Damnation marauders or some other challenge.

Raag Zetronenki

The last of the Gromek war camps in this area is the largest and oldest. Built nearly five years ago, this place has become a forward command post for all activity in the Stony Desert. It has grown to the size of a small village, with buildings surrounding the inner walls of the camp out to nearly a half-mile in all directions. Most of the residents are extra soldiers (there are 280 troops garrisoned here, split into 40 "sevens") and 160 non-Gromek slaves (Orcs, Goblins, Quorians, Dragonmen, and

some others). This camp is rather self-sufficient, with a small forge for making weapons, and other crafters to make and repair armor, repair the camp's stone walls, and provide the camp with other necessary services.

Still, the size worries its commander, an aberrant (with diabolic leanings) 8th level knight named **Egreiga Koge** (I.Q. 9, M.E. 12, M.A. 11, P.S. 24, P.P. 17, P.E. 24, P.B. 11, Spd 11 running and 20 flying — one of his wings was badly wounded a few years ago, and he still has some trouble flying. H.P. 69, S.D.C. 60).

Commander Koge possesses a few magic items, including a ring of sandstone (it has been enchanted to be indestructible) that enables the wearer to cast any combination of the following spells up to three times daily, at 6th level proficiency: Dust Storm, Dirt to Sand, Quicksand and Sandstorm. Koge also possesses a 100 foot long (30 m) Cherubot rope, a Gem of Direction, a vial of Miracle Cream, and over 40,000 gold in various denominations. All of this treasure was taken from defeated opponents over the years. All Koge needs now is a magical weapon and his collection will be complete. Currently, he fights with a giant-sized, non-magical flamberge (inflicts 4D6 damage).

The Commander feels that by making an establishment this large, you invite your enemies to attack. Yet, he also feels that he does not have the numbers needed to actually pacify this area. So, he sits in a quandary, wondering whether to build up the camp further, or to settle down and wait for the other camps to grow in size before launching his own campaign of conquest.

None too secretly, Commander Koge feels that the Gromek have a natural right to claim both the Baalgor Wastelands and the Mount Nimro region. More importantly, he feels the Gromek race is superior to all others, and he looks upon any non-Gromek with the utmost contempt. Even Gromek are likely to be ill-treated by this arrogant and forceful leader. He is an egomaniac of the first order, and expects all he meets to bow down before him. The only reason why his fellow Gromek tolerate his excessive behavior is his legendary reputation as a giant-killer. Like many other commanders in the Wastelands, he fiercely resents his assignment to the Stony Desert. Still, that does not mean he won't carry out his duty to the letter, and severely punish any of his own soldiers who will not do the same. The only thing that gives him comfort is that his superiors seem to be serious about conquering the Wastelands and he has been indicated as the one to lead that campaign. Indeed, the walls of Raag Zetronenki are adorned with the dried-out, severed wings of Gromek accused of insubordination or cowardice and the bones of non-Gromek who dared to defy him. A grisly reminder of the nature of Gromek justice and the iron claws of Commander Koge.



Wilderness Encounters

Tables for the Stony Desert

The stony desert, like all other parts of the Baalgor Wastelands, is a wild and dangerous place. Make a D20 random encounter roll for every eight hours the party spends in this region (once each for morning, afternoon and evening). A roll of 15 or higher means an encounter will take place. To determine the nature of the encounter, roll percentile dice and consult the table below. In the alternative, the G.M. may present his own encounters, be they animals, raiders or other dangers.

01-02%: A recently uncovered entrance to a Minotaur lair. There are 21 Minotaur adults living here, all working very hard to repair the damage done to their home by a moderately powerful earthquake that hit a few days ago. The Minotaur will not welcome anybody inside, regardless of the circumstances. If the player group lingers nearby too long, a party of Minotaur warriors will come out to drive them away. They will defend their home to the death.

03-04%: A trio of adolescent Vrill greet the party and ask if they need any healing or information on the Wastelands. Any player character with an I.Q. of 12 or higher will realize that these Vrill are fairly naïve and are bound to get into trouble. Any good or unprincipled characters will be inclined to act as a "guardian angel" for these youngsters until they grow up a little more. This means the trio will cheerfully join the player group as NPCs; all are first level.

05-06%: A pack of 3D4+4 Jackles looking for prey. They will be attracted by the scent of blood and will consider attacking a lone humanoid or even a group that is suffering from injuries, illness or heat exhaustion/exposure.

07-08%: 1D4 Peryton swoop down out of the sky and attack whoever is straggling behind or appears to be the easiest target (smallest, slowest, injured, etc.). These monsters will try to carry him or her away to avoid a conflict with the rest of the group, but once they land, they will try to kill and rip their prey apart to devour him.

09-10%: Walking in roughly the same direction as the player characters is a female Eandroth who is just starting to put on the incredible amounts of weight females gain when they enter their rogue phase. This female is a 4th level Mind Mage, and no stranger to combat and hardship. If asked, she will tell how she destroyed an entire band of desert marauders by herself one time, three days after giving birth! She is on her way to meet up with her caravan so that she may take her place as its leader. Apparently, there is another female there who has usurped her spot, so things are likely to get nasty when the two meet face to face.

11-12%: A group of four Dragonmen are on their way to the Rocky Coastline where they will meet with friends in the Broken Horn tribe. They are skittish and suspicious of strangers, but will not engage the player characters unless completely necessary.

12-14%: One to three Gromek Scouts flying in the skies overhead. They may consider attacking travelers to test the ground dwellers' strength or for a little sport. However, these scouts will not fight to the death, if the travelers prove to be too strong. They will also fight if attacked, but will eventually retreat to make their report.

15-16%: Flash flood! A torrential downpour has dropped several inches of water on the baked ground, which is too hardened to absorb the moisture. As a result, all the water is collecting in deep rivulets and running west towards the coast. For 10 miles (16 km) in any direction of the player characters' current position, the ground is crisscrossed with fast-moving streams. Movement is effectively halted for the next 1D4+1 hours, until the floods run themselves out, marooning the members of the group on dry and relatively safe patches of earth or on top of boulders. Trying to cross any flood stream will probably result in one losing his or her footing and getting swept along by the flood waters. Those swept away are likely to drown, be dashed against a large rock, or deposited far, far away, lost in the middle of nowhere. Horses and carts will probably meet a similar fate. Furthermore, if the members are divided as well as stranded, flying predators may see one or more as easy prey (Gryphon, Peryton, etc.).

17-19%: A recently settled Eandroth caravan lies directly before the player characters. Consisting of only 25 members, these Eandroth are fairly territorial, and consider anybody passing this way to be trespassers. As the heroes come into view of the village, seven Eandroth on Silonars will ride out to them and demand an explanation for their trespass. All of the Eandroth are carrying spears and double-bladed Eandroth knives (1D8). The leader is an older Eandroth on the verge of entering the rogue phase, so he is in no mood to take any guff from the heroes. If the player group knows what's best for them, they will simply apologize, offer some kind of gift to make amends, and move along their way. Quickly.

20-21%: A dying Western merchant who appears to have succumbed to the heat. He clutches a sealed scroll tube and presses it into the hand of the first player character who touches him. "The Eastern Territory must get this document!" he rasps. "Don't let it fall into Wolfen hands." This is the last thing he says before he dies. The scroll tube is sealed with wax. If opened, there is another sealed scroll tube, only this one is warded heavily to prevent tampering. Inside that tube is the document the merchant referred to. What does it say, and why is it so important? We leave that to imaginative G.M.s.

22-23%: 1D4+1 Nippers — Worms of Taut (page 158 of the **Monsters & Animals, 2nd Edition** sourcebook). One has a collar and "dog tags" with its name written in Western, suggesting that at least that particular one, if not all, were imported from the Empire of Sin. Probably escaped from one of the coastal colonies. All are hungry and looking for prey.

24-26%: Gromek patrol, flying. The adventurers have three melee rounds to conceal themselves before the Gromek patrol notice them and attack. There are eight flying Gromek here. Six of them are 4th level soldiers; one is 6th level. They are led by a 5th level Gromek Wizard who does not quite command the full respect of his troops, and will gladly ambush the party if it means that his troops will think better of him for it.

27-29%: Sloderi attack! The party is set upon by a pack of Sloderi — one animal per player character. They will fight until they are down to a third of their original hit points before fleeing. These creatures look like they are just trying to get some food, but maybe they are after the party for interfering with the pup they abandoned, as described in the encounter below...

30-31%: The party finds an injured and abandoned Sloderi pup. The animal is no more than a few days old, and without medical help, it will die within 24 hours. Healing (magical, psionic or normal first aid), food and water will all save this little creature. It is too small to be dangerous now, but like all Sloderi, it will grow to full size within three months. Once it does, this will become a very powerful and dangerous predator. However, if the group saves it, it will "imprint" on them and consider them its family, never leaving their side. While this means the party has gained a nice guard animal, it will pose several problems. How do you go into a tavern with a Sloderi following you? How do you feed this thing when you are in town? And what if your pet attacks somebody's horse or rider? Assuming the player characters do not kill the beast or transport it away, these will be only some of the many challenges that will come with being a Sloderi's caretaker. Good luck!

32-34%: The player characters meet another party of wandering adventurers. This crew consists of a 2nd level Wolfen thief (who really is not doing well in this heat), a 1st level Palladin clad in the briefest remains of his plate and chain mail (he's also not doing well in the heat), a 1st level Elven Fire Warlock, and a 3rd level Ogre vagabond. Basically, these guys are a bunch of wannabes who claim to be the legendary "Defilers," but clearly, they are only stealing the name. These losers are in sorry shape, with little food or water, and all of them bear some kind of wound. They ask the adventurers for help, but that will only delay their inevitable self-destruction. Adventurers this ignorant deciding to tour the Baalgor Wastelands is like a sailor deciding to go through the Sea of Despair in a dinghy. Does the player group help these guys, let them go on their way, or take advantage of them? Are they being followed by villains or predatory animals?

35-36%: Off in the distance, you can hear somebody playing an instrument that sounds like Dwarven pipes. The sound carries for miles, and echoes across the land, eerie and spooky. Those familiar with local lore will recall that there is a ghost story about a famed Dwarven knight who died here long ago, murdered by his fellows for the crime of showing mercy to an Elf. It is said that forever more, this sad spirit roams the hills, playing his pipes. Whether or not this story is true remains to be proven.

37-38%: The half-eaten carcass of an Eandroth and his Drayback. Both are too badly eaten and decomposed to determine the exact cause of death. Closer inspection shows some movement under the skin. Tomb worms! 2D4+3 of them! They will attack anybody who messes with the carcass.

39-40%: The party meets another group of travelers, five human sailors (2nd to 4th level) who appear to be a long way from home. The sailors will regard the adventurers only if they are talked to first. However, they try to ignore the group and answer with as few words as possible. They come off as cold and distant. The truth is that all five have been occupied by Thin Ones, and they are now travelling to meet with others of their kind for some unknown purpose. If the player group realizes who and what these guys are, the Thin Ones will try to flee. If cornered, they will fight. If any of these sailors are seriously wounded, the demonic thing controlling him will play dead until the player characters go away. Afterwards, if the host body dies, the displaced Thin One and his companions will track the party with the intent of possessing their bodies.

41-43%: Players find a buried cache of Gromek weapons that has been uncovered by a recent rock slide or dust storm. The cache contains 30 large shields, seven flamberges, 14 berdiches, 14 battle axes, and seven balls and chains. G.M.s, keep in mind that all of the weapons are giant-sized. In addition to this is a set of magical bandages, a major find regardless of one's size.

44-46%: A ghost of an ancient Dwarf appears and seems to be wearing the robes of a Wizard or Diabolist! Communicating with the ghost will not be easy. First, he speaks in an ancient form of Dwarven that modern Dwarven-speakers will be at -25% to understand. Second, the ghost will not speak to Elves under any circumstances and is cautious of humans. The ghost will try to warn the travelers that they are about to enter "cursed earth" and should progress no further. If the adventures press forward, they will come to a killing ground where 1D6x1,000 Dwarven soldiers were slain in an enormous ambush during the Elf-Dwarf War. The ghost will ask members of the group to give them all a proper burial on sanctified soil. If the group refuses this herculean task (it would take months of digging, scores of wagons and thousands of gold just to unearth and load them into wagons, let alone transport them to the Old Kingdom for a proper burial), the ghost will hound and haunt them for the next 1D4 days — causing noise, preventing them from sleeping, attracting danger and calling forth 1D6 poltergeist entities!

If the players do heed the ghost's wishes, it will be happy, appearing from time to time to see how the work progresses. **G.M. Note:** The longer it takes the group to unearth, transport and bury these skeletons, the more likely roving bandits and monsters will take notice of them. Furthermore, they will be looked upon with fear and suspicion for hauling thousands of bones through the desert. Phase two of this project is finding holy ground in the Old Kingdom or getting somebody to sanctify an area along the Baalgor coast, thereby making it holy ground, either is acceptable to the ghost. No place else will do.

47-49%: The party spots a lone individual traveling in the opposite direction. Roll D6 to determine who this person is.

1. A male Eandroth Rogue.
2. A Minotaur warrior or other type of giant.
3. A Gromek warrior.
4. A Quorian warrior.
5. A Gosai assassin or Dragonman.
6. A Quillback scavenger or Goblin.

50-52%: The party encounters a group of nearly 50 Quorians, who have set up their wandercamp for the day and are enjoying a few games of "Skullthumper." Upon seeing the player characters, the Quorians invite them over to play a game or two. If any members of the group play well and honorably, even if they lose, they will earn the Quorians' respect. If they play dishonorably (such as showing poor sportsmanship or outright cheating), even if they win, they will make enemies of the entire group. If the player group should win their game (and the Quorians' approval), they will have gained some very valuable allies who will gladly help them the next time they are in a jam.

53-55%: A lone Gosai on a mission of assassination. This killer intends to murder the shaman of a Quorian wandercamp nearby. The Quorian shaman has foreseen this, but is letting the assassin approach anyway. Do the player characters get involved, knowing that if they do nothing it may cause a war between local Gosai and Quorians?



56-58%: Dimensional Rift! It seems that the aftereffects of the terrible magicks used in the Elf-Dwarf War have not yet stopped affecting the Baalgor Wastelands. Random dimensional portals like this one are not that uncommon, since the fabric of reality has been so severely distorted, and will take many eons to fully heal itself. This portal will only last for another 1D6 hours. It is a two-way door, so whatever's on the other side can come through just as easily as the player group can. Whether anything comes through is up to the G.M. Going through the portal will transport the players across space and time to a random location. Roll D10 on the table below to determine the player group's destination.

1. Teleported 1D6x10 miles (or 1D10x10 km) in a random direction. Roll D8 for direction.

- 1: north
- 2: northeast
- 3: east
- 4: southeast
- 5: south
- 6: southwest
- 7: west
- 8: northwest

2. Same as #1, but players teleported 1D6x100 miles (or 1D10x100 km) in a random direction. Note: This could just as easily place the heroes off the known world. Will they land in water or on some undiscovered island or continent?

3. Same as #1, but players are teleported to one of the following major settlements of the Palladium World:

1. Shadowfall, capital of the Wolfen Empire.
2. Llorn, the mightiest Eastern Territory city on the Great River.
3. Byzantium, capital of the Island Kingdom of Byzantium.
4. Credia, capital of the Timiro Kingdom.
5. Caer Itom, capital of the Western Empire.
6. Clypss, capital of the Isle of the Cyclops.
7. Phi or Lopan (50%/50% chance of either).
8. Caer Doragon, the Orcish city of the Yin-Sloth Jungles.

4. Players randomly teleported to one of the major magical sites of the Palladium Fantasy world. Roll D6 to determine which one.

1. The ruins of the Golden City of Baalgor.
2. The mega-ley line nexus in the Bruu-ga-Belimar Mountains.
3. The Dragon's Gate in the Yin-Sloth Jungles.
4. The Devils' Mark in Ophid's Grasslands.
5. The Great Rift in the Land of the Damned or someplace in the Western Empire.
6. Mount Nimro.

5. Time travel to an era in Palladium history. Roll D6 to determine when.

1. The Age of Chaos.
2. The Age of Purification.
3. The Time of a Thousand Magicks.
4. The Elf-Dwarf War.
5. The Time of the Prestida Kings.
6. 1,000 years into the future! G.M.s, have fun with your alternate future. Since nothing is set yet, you can really go nuts, and when the player characters finally return to their own time, all will be as if nothing happened. Of course, the future might be a hellish holocaust, and if the players do not do something in the present to stop it, then the world will go to ruin.

6. Travel to a different world/dimension! Roll D4 to determine which:

1. Hades
2. Dyval
3. The realm of angels.
4. An Elemental plane. Roll an additional D4 to determine whether it is the plane of earth, air, fire or water.

7. Transported to an alien world from which one of the Baalgor races originated (or if the G.M. prefers, some other alien environment of his or her choice). Roll D4 to determine if the world is the:

1. Gromek homeland.
2. Quorian homeland.
3. Gosai homeland.
4. Vrill homeland.

8. Elsewhere in the Megaverse! Either roll D4 or choose an alternate reality the heroes have been sent to. They could pop up anywhere in the Palladium Megaverse® (G.M.'s choice) or even in some other environment entirely (other RPG setting, book, comic, or movie setting, etc.). Some likely destinations are:

1. Rifts® Earth (anywhere).
2. Heroes Unlimited™.
3. After the Bomb®; TMNT®.
4. Nightbane® (the Earth or the Nightlands).

59-61%: A group of 20 Dragonmen women and children lamenting the enslavement of their males. It seems that a few days ago, "some giant-folk" came through and enslaved nearly half the tribe, killing anybody who resisted. The slavers headed north, mentioning that they were headed for Troker (probably to sell off the Dragonmen to the highest bidder). If the players get involved, it will take them a full day just to track down the slavers. The slaver party itself consists of two Gigantes, two Trolls, three Ogres, and five Orcs. Their stats and weapons should match favorably with those of the player characters.

62-63%: A Minotaur graveyard. This medium-sized pit (350 feet in diameter) contains the skeletons of a hundred or more Minotaurs. Most of these bones are very ancient, and have been smashed to pieces by the elements and vandals. The whole bone pile has been stripped of any horns (probably sold to alchemists far and wide), weapons and valuables. Still, a group of six Quillbacks or Goblins are sifting through them, looking for anything of value. The grave-robbers are not looking for a fight and will try to flee if attacked. These characters are a long way from home and interested in somehow hiring the party to escort them back to their village. Once there, they would reward the group with "heaps of riches!" However, what Quillbacks consider riches is quite different from what other people would consider riches. The Quillbacks will give the players their entire hoard of "treasure," which is just a pile of broken bits of metal and other worthless, shiny objects. If Goblins, their "riches" consist of 1D6x10 gold, a silver plated dagger, a bottle of rum and some worthless odds and ends. The NPCs are genuine and, to them, these things are valuable. How the players handle this meager "reward" might be the source of a brief adventure.

64-66%: Ley line. If the party follows this, it will lead to a nexus in 1D4x50 miles. Along the way, the party might find other ley line travelers, or they might find something unexpected waiting for them at the nexus, like a battle-hungry Wizard looking for opponents, a dimensional portal, an alien monster or some freak supernatural phenomenon that nobody's ever encountered before.

67-68%: The group is being stalked by a Manticore! The monstrous villain is stealing supplies and water when nobody is looking. If caught or if a member of the group wanders off, the Manticore will attack him — the monster hasn't eaten in quite some time. If the group is weak and foolish, the monster will pick them off one by one.

69-70%: The heroes notice a lone giant (a Nimro) lying low against the ground at the base of a small hill. Clearly, he is trying not to be seen, but he's difficult to miss. If the group lets on that they have spotted him, he will draw his broadsword and attack! This guy is a scout (3rd level soldier) sent from Ghurthasi Tor. His mission: To survey this part of the Stony Desert for eventual colonization by the giants. This particular Nimro hates all "small folk" and is convinced that if he is spotted, he will be reported to the Western Empire or some other human kingdom, who will hunt down all of his kind and kill them. Paranoid? Yes. Dangerous? Most definitely. Proceed with caution.

71-72%: Ruins. It is impossible to know what this building once was, as even its foundation is crumbling into dust. Still, the site radiates magic very strongly, as well as an aura of intense evil. Psychics will feel rather uneasy here, as will clergy of light. What might lay beneath the dirt is left to the G.M.

73-74%: 1D4+4 wild and hungry Silonar who see the player characters as a delicious meal. They attack in tandem.

75-76%: Blister wind. The party gets caught in a vortex of superheated desert air. All suffer 2D6 damage. Characters in metal armor take 2D6 damage immediately, then another 1D6 per melee for 1D10 melees thereafter unless they cool down their armor or take it off. Note: Pouring the group's water supply on superheated armor will not work, since the blister wind will have raised its temperature to near boiling.

77-78%: Sticking out of the ground is the upper half of a dead (and badly decomposed) Earthshaker. How this creature died is unknown, but it is creating a terrific stench that has attracted vultures, rats, buzzards, Serpent Rats and other scavengers from all over. If the player group wishes to scavenge off the creature, its immense skull would be very, very valuable. There are only three problems. One, how do you cut off a head this big? Even in the Earthshaker's rotten state, this will take some time. Two, while the party is working on that, they will have to endure the attacks of hungry scavengers, including swarms of Serpent Rats and Rock Buzzards, a dozen or more Sloderi and or Silonar, and other creatures. Three, marauders may also want the head for themselves and be willing to fight anybody who stands in their way.

79-80%: 1D4 Owl-Things in a bad mood and looking for trouble.

81-82%: Baalizard trap! The player characters blunder into a large, ant-lion like depression set by a Baalizard hunting party. 2D4 Baalizard will be in the depression. The Baalizard cannot be bargained with, but if more than half of them are killed or subdued, the rest will begin burrowing underground to escape. If the adventurers follow them, they will land in a large burrow of 1D6x10 Baalizard! Better hope you are on good terms with your deity!

83-84%: Heat wave. Inexplicably, the temperature soars to nearly 130°F (54.4 C)! This makes moving, carrying anything and fighting extremely taxing. Water consumption requirements for the day are doubled, and players and their animals will only be able to be active for four hours, maximum, before having to sit out the rest of the day.

85-86%: A mated pair of Tuskers in a bad mood. Any sudden movement or act of aggression will cause them to attack.

87-88%: A pair of severed Gromek wings lie on the ground before the player characters. They are only a few hours old, so tracking their former owner — who is probably losing a fair amount of blood — should not be too hard (+20% to Track Humanoids). Anybody who makes their Racial Histories roll will know that "clipping" is the Gromek practice of slicing the wings off one who has shown cowardice or dishonor. This includes running from battle, failure to obey orders and showing mercy to unworthy opponents. Such individuals are either brought back to the campsite for ritual torture and execution, or are left out in the wild to fend for themselves.

89-90%: The player group meet Narayana, a Quorian Oneiromancer (Dream Shaman) who has discovered a secret path to

immortality. As long as Narayana sleeps, he does not age (much like the Immortals of Sleep from the *Ninjas and Superspies* sourcebook, *Mystic China*). As Narayana sleeps, he astrally projects himself all throughout the world, learning incredible secrets and stretching his understanding of how the universe works. He also is piecing together information on how to create a magical portal between this world and the Quorian homeworld. Narayana's body is guarded by a corps of eight 2nd and 3rd level Quorian warriors who are convinced he is discovering their way back home through extensive Astral travel.

91-92%: A Cyclops Spider appears from its hiding place and attacks. It is starving and will fight to the death.

93-94%: Chsuba grove! Much to the player group's luck, they have discovered a cluster of nearly 50 chsuba roots growing together. This is a treasure trove of water for those who can recognize these plants for what they are. However, for whatever reason (mating or migration season perhaps), there is a poisonous snake, or spider, or scorpion near the base of almost every plant! They see the characters as a threat and will attack anybody who comes near them, and are not easily chased away.

95-96%: Scorpion migration. A column of thousands of poisonous scorpions are cutting across the travelers' path for at

least a half-mile in each direction. Where did all these critters come from, where are they going, and why are they all grouped together like this? They do not attack unless threatened.

97-98%: A pack of 1D4+3 wild Sloderi or Tuskers, or a Mologoth, or a pair of Melech out hunting. They will consider humanoid prey, but will back off if their prospective meal prove to be too tough — i.e. killing half will send the others running in retreat.

99-00%: The travelers see many shooting stars arcing across the night or twilight sky in a dazzling display of blue, red, yellow, and green glowing streaks. A few hours later, they are startled by a bone-jarring impact and a deafening explosion! The sound was from whatever made that tremor. Upon investigation, the group finds a large crater about five miles (8 km) away. It is still smoking and sooty, but there is nothing inside of it, except for a few small, rocky fragments! Whatever it was that landed here has either been carried out (maybe it was a huge nugget of alien metal taken by scavengers) or has left under its own power (maybe it was the egg of another space dragon, like Ceratus Dominus from the *Adventures in the Great Northern Wilderness* sourcebook). Whatever landed here, it is not of this earth.

The Sandy Desert

When the Circle of Absolute Elemental Power was used to destroy the Golden City of Baalgor, it laid waste to the entire Baalgor Rainforest, creating the Baalgor Wastelands. The ground zero of that phenomenon is what is now the Sandy Desert, a stretch of rolling sand dunes that support the least life of any section of the Wastelands. The environmental damage done here is worse than elsewhere in the Baalgor region, so life has been especially slow to return. That which makes its home among the hot sand is constantly on the move. Almost no vegetation can be found in the Sandy Desert except for the occasional cactus and a few oases — groves of trees and a little standing water. How these little desert watering holes survive in this environment is unknown. Most Wastelanders think they were formed magically since the Big Thunder. Regardless of how or why they exist, an oasis is very rare and only accentuates the otherwise utter lack of water and plant life here.

Animals and humanoids are also fairly uncommon in the Sandy Desert. There is abundant insect life underground (most notably, the Wiggle beetle, a 3-4 inch long insect that burrows through the ground backwards, using its sensitive abdomen to locate other underground insects and animal eggs to eat). There is also a fair number of desert birds, who soar high and long on the thermal updrafts of the desert. Few ground animals stay long here, due to the lack of water and food. Among the most notable desert animals are a variety of snakes, including poisonous vipers, scorpions and such large predators as the Tusker, Silonar, Sloderi, Mologoth, and the dreaded Sandwyrn.

Most humanoids tend to avoid the sandy desert, and visit it only to pass through the region or to avoid enemies. The extreme temperatures, lack of food and water, and the

ever-shifting sands make it almost impossible to establish a permanent settlement.

A heavy amount of residual magic energy also permeates the area, and according to local folklore, many of the people and creatures of this region bear the mark of the Big Thunder's magical fallout. Normal animals have been mutated into terrible creatures, and some believe the "alien" humanoids who live amid the dunes are really Elves and Dwarves transformed by ancient magic or perhaps the Elemental Circle itself. Scholars hotly disagree with this, but local folklore prevails, at least with some Wastelanders. Like everything else about this odd place, the truth is rarely obvious.

Notes On the Major Population Centers In the Area

Like the Stony Desert region, the harshness of this area forces people to stay on the move. Sandstorms and shifting dunes make it impossible to build any permanent structures. Dry winds buffet everything and the blowing sands swallow those who pause for any length of time. The Sandy Desert offers only scorching heat, a near-total absence of water, and an abundance of savage predatory creatures that will attack and eat anything that moves. There are no roads, and the ever-changing topography of the region precludes establishing trails of any sort. No matter how long one lives in the desert, he is always a stranger, always venturing into a hostile environment that can swallow a man whole . . . and without a trace.

As a result of these harsh conditions, most everyone here is a nomad or just passing through with no intentions to settle down



1: AB'AL'S CARAVAN

2: HYGU TRIBE

3: GTHNENEN TRIBE

4: DURYOPS TRIBE

5: RAAG RAXUX

6: RAAG GESIQ

7: RAAG COJODA

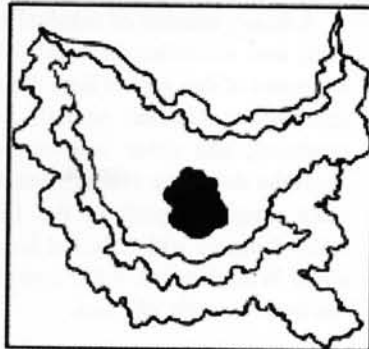
8: EIROKAN TRIBE

9: KKAIRJAN TRIBE

10: ADRAODAN TRIBE

11: THE SITE OF THE GOLDEN

CITY OF BAALGOR



(not here, anyway). Those few who do stay for any length of time almost always have some quirky agenda for doing so. Rumors of great treasures, ruins and ancient secrets buried beneath the sand abound. As do stories of ancient ghosts walking the dunes, willing to impart their knowledge (supposedly including hints about ancient forms of magic) to those who will listen or perform some service for them. Indeed, there are rewards and challenges that the power-hungry and adventurous may find alluring in the Sandy Desert. For others, it is a place where they can lose themselves. A place where a refugee is likely to be assumed dead and one's persecutors are not likely to follow.

The most prominent residents of the Sandy Desert fall into one of four categories: Eandroth caravans, Gosai tribes, Gromek garrisons and the Catacomb Minotaurs. As elsewhere in the Wastelands, these are just the groups that earned themselves some measure of notoriety. Small nomadic bands of humans, giants, Dragonmen, Orcs, Goblins, Kobolds and others can also be found in the Sandy Desert. Some make their homes here, others only pass through while running away from something or on a quest. Some are nameless people trying to eke out a life, some are heroes, others villains most foul, and still others, hideous monsters and beasts with their own reasons for calling the desert home. **Note:** Approximately 50-73% of the "monster races" operating in the Sandy Desert are cannibals, and even 15-20% of the humans have resorted to the grisly practice. Only the Eandroth completely refrain from cannibalism.

THE SANDY DESERT

Eandroth Caravans

Although Eandroth can handle the Sandy region comparatively well, but even they do not particularly like it. Bandits, marauders, and man-eaters can lurk beyond the next dune and many love to use sandstorms and other bad weather to hide their activities and help set up their attacks. There are only two Eandroth caravans of note currently inhabiting the region, although neither of them are of any great prominence. For the most part, Eandroth traveling through the Sandy Desert either go it alone, or go in very small groups to avoid attracting notice. Large caravans tend to garner attention from bandits and monsters, and are actually more difficult to maintain. Despite their excellent ability to handle rough terrain, even Eandroth wagons can not handle the shifting sands well, getting stuck in the sand or tumbling down the side of a dune.

The two noteworthy desert caravans in this area are **Ab'al's Caravan** and the **Phantom Caravan**.

Ab'al's Caravan

This caravan has only 31 members, all of whom are adult males, led by a single female rogue named **Ab'al**. The caravan has no wagons or carts, save for the one used to ferry Ab'al, an unprincipled, 9th level Mind Mage who is way too fat to move on her own (I.Q. 21, M.E. 26, M.A. 26, P.S. 14, P.P. 13, P.E. 13, P.B. 10, Spd 3; Hit Points: 68, S.D.C.: 75). Instead of hauling lots of goods around, these Eandroth are herdsman, commanding over 150 head of Silonar. Keeping this many Silonar under control is an incredible feat, considering the viciousness of these animals. Ordinarily, it would be impossible, but Ab'al uses widespread empathic transmissions to keep the animals calm and docile while the other Eandroth constantly patrol the herd and keep it in line.

This caravan takes an annual trading route that goes from the Baalgor Mountains, straight through the heart of the Wastelands, to the Free City of Troker, down along the Rocky Coastline, then cuts back through the Stony Desert and ends up at the same place in the Baalgor Mountains they were a year before. During this trip, the Ab'al tribe constantly hunts for wild Silonar, subduing them and adding them to their herd. The animals are broken and trained rather quickly; it takes these herders less than a month, thanks to Ab'al's psionic help. Once they are ready for sale, the caravan peddles the animals to any and all buyers. Most of their clients are other Eandroth, merchants in Troker, and individual wanderers who are tired of traveling on foot. It is rumored that this caravan has sold considerable numbers of Silonar to the Bloodstorm Crew of marauders in the Stony Desert, and for their sales, they receive added protection from those bandits while traveling that part of the Wastelands.

Exactly, what this caravan spends its money on is a mystery. The herders buy most of their supplies from Troker, but that only accounts for a small portion of their profits from a year's worth of Silonar trading. Rumor has it that the herders bank most of their money in one of Troker's financial houses, letting all that gold accumulate interest while the caravan heads back out into the wilderness. If this is true, then the Ab'al caravan, while small, is probably one of the richest groups in the Wastelands, for they have been in business for nearly 80 years, and would have been banking their loot for as long as Troker has had banks!

Of course, this still does not explain what these nomads plan to do with all their money. Perhaps they are misers at heart, or perhaps there is something they wish to purchase that will cost millions and millions of gold pieces. Or perhaps they simply don't like carrying all that cash around, and have no inclination to spend it, simple folk that they are. One thing is for certain, though, they do not take kindly to thieves. It is said that 10 years ago, a band of thieves stole a portion of the money they had banked. When these Eandroth found out, they traveled to Troker, hunted each thief down, and got their money back. The thieves responsible disappeared — some say they were fed to the Eandroths' Silonar. Others think they met with an even more gruesome fate. Whatever happened, the *stories* of this alleged event keep getting more and more exaggerated, which has discouraged others from trying to steal this caravan's hard-earned gold ever again.

Each of the caravan's members is a 3rd to 5th level Ranger with appropriate herding skills. By and large, this caravan does not like to fight, and will try to buy off aggressors by offering up a few choice Silonar as a gift. If that doesn't work, and the Ab'al Eandroth are forced into battle, they will fight with incredible skill and savagery. All of these herders are accomplished long-bowmen, and their ability to fight while mounted is legendary. A favorite tactic is to make lightning-fast hit and run strikes, racing past their foes while letting loose a volley of arrows, and then doubling back for another pass. Ab'al's Eandroth use special "whistler" arrowheads that emit high-pitched shrieks they fly. This gives the weapons a Horror Factor of 10 against



enemies who face them for the first time. These arrows can be heard for miles, making them excellent signaling devices, too. When fighting up close, these Eandroth make expert use of both their double-bladed knives, and the fighting abilities of their Silonar mounts.

The Phantom Caravan

These Eandroth are more like a band of guerilla warriors than a genuine caravan. Nobody has ever spoken with these mysterious warriors face to face and lived to tell the tale. Over the last six years, they have been credited with attacking many travelers in the Sandy Desert, seemingly at random. The most noteworthy damage done by this group was the destruction of a heavily armed and escorted wagon train that bore several prominent nobles and scholars from the Western Empire. These human outsiders had reportedly organized an expedition into the Sandy Desert to locate the ruins of the Golden City of Baalgor. Three weeks after the caravan left Troker, the heads of the nobles and scholars were sent back to the city in a bag with the note, "Those who would defile the dead would do well to meet them."

When a rescue party was dispatched to the Sandy Desert, all they found were the scattered remains of the wagon train, which by that time, had been almost entirely covered over by blowing sand. No bodies were recovered.

Since then, any mysterious death or occurrence in the Sandy Desert is chalked up to this mysterious band, regardless if they actually did the deed. The only thing that is known of them is that they are Eandroth. This was verified when a psychic spoke with the spirits of those slain nobles and scholars, which described a force of 20-25 heavily armed Eandroth warriors who attacked in the dead of night and took no prisoners. Most startling was that it appeared as if all of the attackers were Eandroth "Rogues," which is very strange, given their solitary nature and disdain for teamwork. All of the attacking Eandroth were master swordsmen, and several of them employed earth and fire Elemental Magic with devastating effect.

Other than that, nobody knows anything about these raiders. The families of the Westerners slain in that wagon attack have since posted a 100,000 gold reward in Troker and throughout the Western Empire for the heads of those responsible for the murders. So far, not even a lead has turned up. Some in Troker believe that the other wandering Eandroth caravans in the Wastelands must know something about this band of Rogues, but they claim to not. In truth, this group of Phantom Eandroth have so expertly concealed their identities and whereabouts that many believe them just to be a local folk-tale. However, these Eandroth do exist, and they are exceedingly dangerous.

Nobody knows how they pick their targets. Some think it has to do with anybody having ties to the Western Empire. Others think it has something to do with a deep-seated hatred for non-Eandroth. Others think the Phantom Eandroth are acting on behalf of a strange and menacing deity. Furthermore, all are convinced that these warriors are among the most powerful and experienced in the world (7-12th level) and that at least a half dozen Eandroth Warlocks lead them. However, these are all just groundless theories and wild speculation that have little to no credibility. The simple fact of the matter is that nobody can figure out who these people are or what makes them tick. All they know is that they are the lords of the night in the Sandy Desert,

and that anybody traveling there must be aware that their lives may be in peril as long as this band lurks about.

Gosai Tribes

Like the Gromek, Gosai have learned to thrive in the Palladium World after being marooned here at the end of the Elf-Dwarf War. When the Baalgor region was laid to waste, the Gosai quickly adapted to the scathing environment, and became adept desert-dwellers able to withstand the hottest and driest conditions. Once the entire region had turned to desert, the Gosai migrated to the center of the Wastelands, where both their fate on this world was long ago sealed. Gosai have a particular affinity for the Sandy Desert, for it reminds them of their common history on this planet. It also reminds them of all they have done to survive here, and that through their determination and adaptability, they can overcome any obstacle. These sentimental reasons are why the Gosai make this place their home (and they are the only group in the Wastelands to do so happily).

Although the Gosai like to stay in this, the smallest and most hostile area within the Baalgor Wastelands, they are constantly on the move — staying put too long on the sand will usually result in getting buried by a sandstorm or eaten by a Sandwurm. Typical movement protocol for a Gosai tribe is for the entire group (usually one or more large, extended families) to head out together, with four or five scouts traveling ahead of the group by a day's journey or so. These scouts warn the main group of any large, impending danger ahead. They will also meet and talk with other Gosai they come across, spreading news and trading information. This network of scouts lets most of the Gosai in the Sandy Desert keep tabs on the rough whereabouts of other tribes and potential threats. This is especially handy if one of the tribes falls under attack, since a distress call can be answered by large numbers of other Gosai within a day or less, sometimes in an hour. Since Gosai generally get along with each other, they have no problem pulling together in the name of mutual defense. Thus, if one small tribe were to be attacked and wiped out by desert marauders, chances are, the next day those marauders would have to face a Gosai force five to ten times stronger, and hot for revenge. Aside from this camaraderie and friendly relations, Gosai tribes are fairly self-reliant and do not meet with other tribes all that often. Periodically, two tribes will get together for a three day long meeting/reunion which, for Gosai, is a time of great festivity and fun. Intruders or attackers who stumble upon such a gathering are given one curt warning to keep their distance. Failure to comply will incite an all-out attack from the two tribes. Gosai warriors are notorious for over-reacting when outsiders disturb a big get-together.

Gosai tribes typically range from 50 to 100 individuals, although some very large tribes of 300 or more have been known to exist, usually after several tribes come together to fight off a common enemy. Afterwards, the united tribe holds together for a few years before the family clans begin to go their separate ways. During this time of unification, however, many Gosai will leave their original tribe to join another, a social custom which helps them maintain their genetic and cultural diversity among their fairly small population pool.

Although the Gosai are relatively few, they are beginning to increase in number at a more rapid pace. If this keeps up, the

3,000 individuals in the Baalgor Wastelands will double in the next 10 years.

There are four prominent Gosai tribes in the Sandy Desert, along with nearly ten smaller, unaffiliated groups. The three main tribes are the **Hygyu Tribe**, the **Gthnemen Tribe**, and the **Duryops Tribe**.

Hygyu Tribe

This tribe formed only a year ago, after an especially large tribe broke into four new ones. However, in that time, the three other tribes have met with untimely ends. The first tribe ran afoul of a Gromek war camp, and in the battle that followed, the entire tribe was slaughtered (taking as many Gromek with them). The second tribe simply disappeared one night, without a trace; not even leaving psychic impressions on the area where they were last sighted. The third group contracted a disease that had no cure and killed its victims within a matter of days. The disease is thought to have been some kind of insidious weapon developed for the Elf-Dwarf War but left dormant all this while, only to be accidentally unleashed by these unfortunate Gosai. Now, only the Hygyu Gosai are left. They see the loss of their brethren as clear indication that they are all under a bizarre curse that will shortly claim their lives, too.

The 76 Gosai of this tribe (51 adults, 25 children) so firmly believe that their lives are about to end that they are willing to try anything to stay alive (If you are going to die tomorrow, what have you got to lose, right?). Thus, several of the tribe's finest scouts have begun scouring the Sandy Desert in search of some kind of magical protection that might be able to keep the tribe safe. They do not know exactly what that might be, but they hope they will recognize it when they see it. Meanwhile, some members of the tribe are converting to a number of deities who they think could intervene on the tribe's behalf. Perhaps the most peculiar behavior has been that of the tribal elders, who have directly sought the help of a small Quorian Wandercamp travelling through the area. The elders have repeatedly begged their ancient Quorian enemies to see what the future holds for the Hygyu Gosai tribe — Quorians are renowned for their power to see the future in their dreams.

Needless to say, the Quorians are a little skeptical about this. After all, these two races have been sworn enemies for thousands of years, and Gosai in particular have a history of luring unsuspecting Quorians into cunning traps. The Quorians' knee-jerk reaction was to attack the Hygyu tribe, but they were outnumbered by about six to one, eliminating that option. Upon hearing their enemy's desperate request, the Quorians were intrigued and several of them entered into a dream state to see what they could of the tribe's future.

While a number of the Hygyu Gosai revile the notion of accepting help from Quorians, the tribal elders have quashed all such dissent, and have laid down the law: The tribe will accept whatever help the Dreaming Ones will offer, and for their service, the Hygyu Gosai will never harm, harass or hinder these particular Quorians again. Ever.

Just a fortnight ago, the Quorians attended a meeting with the Hygyu tribal elders, where they revealed to them what they glimpsed in a series of precognitive dreams. According to the Dream Shamans, the Hygyu have linked themselves to the dark path suffered by their brethren, but they have the power to free

themselves from the shadows of this dark cloud. Most of these Shamans have seen "a great storm coming." A storm that "shall bury the Hygyu forever, lest they take action." But, the Quorians add, the tribe could be saved if they accompany them to a safe haven in the Stony Desert. A secret sanctuary where they can all ride out "the storm" in a cave large enough to hold both the tribe and the wandercamp.

Now, it is the Gosai's turn to show some trust. Is their ancient enemy telling the truth? Is there a safe haven for them both? Who's to say that a Quorian ambush does not lie in wait, sealing the Hygyu's fate? Why can't these seers be more specific? What kind of storm? On the other hand, Quorians are not known for lying about matters concerning their dreams of prophecy, nor are they duplicitous in general. So the chances are good that they are telling the truth. Still, there are centuries of bad blood — spilt blood — between Gosai and Quorians, and this wandercamp might see this as too good an opportunity to avenge fallen comrades who have, no doubt, suffered under the claws of Hygyu assassins.

G.M. Note: Exactly how this situation plays out will determine the fate of the tribe. If the Quorians indeed lead the tribe to safety, then perhaps this could be the first step in forging peace between these two long-time enemies. If the Quorians are leading them into a trap, the Hygyu tribe may perish, fulfilling their own fears of a dark fate. How matters unfold and how player characters might factor into the equation are left in your capable hands and fertile imaginations.

Gthnemen Tribe

With only 25 adults and 12 children, this small tribe has had a rather difficult time surviving on its own. It had been part of a larger tribe that broke apart years ago, but since then, this tribe gradually atrophied. Now, the tribal elder, a wise wizard named **Mubulu**, has decided the time has come for the tribe to find its fortune elsewhere. Clearly, the Sandy Desert does not want them here, Mubulu reckons. But, where to go? The Sandy Desert has been the traditional Gosai territory for thousands of years. Where else could these people go to where their unique abilities and skills will ensure their survival?

To this end, Mubulu has reflected on his own considerable travels as an adventurous youth, and has decided that the tribe's destination should be the Free City of Troker. There, they can market their fighting skills as thieves, assassins, mercenaries or bodyguards, the kind of work Gosai were born for. If business takes off in Troker, Mubulu figures, the tribe can either stay there, or they can save their money and move to the Western Empire, where the Gosai could amass huge fortunes as "soldiers of circumstance," as they are called in that far-away Empire of sin and vice.

The other Gosai of this tribe think Mubulu's plan is solid, and they have all agreed to go. In fact, the tribe now nears the edge of the Sandy Desert, where they will cross into the Stony Desert, land of their Quorian enemies and countless other dangers. Mubulu is certain that his people can make a good living for themselves in Troker or the Western Empire. The question is, will they survive the journey there? Depending on how things unfold, he might be willing to accept the help of a few enterprising non-Gosai, if their terms, conditions and manners are acceptable.

Mubulu, Quick Stats

Title: Elder of the Gthnemen Tribe

O.C.C.: 4th level Wizard.

Alignment: Unprincipled

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 14, M.A. 13, P.S. 17, P.P. 17, P.E. 10, P.B. 10, Spd. 14.

Hit Points: 30, S.D.C.: 30

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to damage, +2 to roll with impact and +2 to pull punch.

Other combat info: No W.P.s. If pressed to fight hand to hand, Mbulu will rely on his claws.

Weapons: None, per se. He does own a magical staff which he will use if threatened. See details below.

Armor: None.

Magic Items: Mbulu owns a few enchanted items, but his favorite is a knobby, twisting staff. The staff itself is a 100 point P.P.E. battery which regenerates 1D6 P.P.E. per hour. The staff also boosts its user's spell strength by one level. While the staff is indestructible and strikes as an iron staff (2D6+2), it is not really meant for combat. However, it can cast a special version of the *Magic Net* spell three times daily at 6th level proficiency. In this version of the spell, the strands of the net are not magical fibers, but strong, thorny vines, similar to those conjured by the *Wall of Thorns* spell. Those trapped by this magical net can struggle to break free, but doing so will automatically inflict 2D4 damage per action or movement. Usually, this encourages captives to wait for somebody outside the net to cut them free, or to wait out the spell's effects.

Money and other equipment: Mbulu has 100 gold and a satchel containing some other personal effects, but that is all. He is a Gosai, and therefore prefers to travel very light.

Magic Spells: The following is the extent of Mbulu's spell arsenal, in addition to knowing all of the Common Knowledge Spells: Sense Magic, Decipher Magic, Chameleon, Befuddle, Telekinesis, Ley Line Transmission, See Aura, Fear, Paralysis: Lesser, and Repel Animals.

P.P.E.: 52 points.

Duryops Tribe

The Duryops Gosai are not known so much for the fights they have won or the size of their tribe, but for having the only remaining supply of seeds and nuts to a variety of plant life that had been common to the Baalgor rainforest 10,000 years ago, but no longer exist anywhere. These seeds and acorns, if planted, could reintroduce many species of strange and wonderful plant life to the Palladium world, including the legendary *Ironwood trees* (whose wood is as easy to cut as ordinary maple, but once it dries for 3 days, becomes as hard as steel yet remains incredibly flexible), *Ogeega bushes* (the berries of which are said to possess incredible healing powers, even to the point of regenerating lost limbs), and *Ravaran vines* (semi-sentient tangler vines that grow at the incredible rate of one foot an hour).

These are just a sampling of the plants that could be grown from the wide variety of seeds that are this tribe's most prized possessions. However, living in the middle of the desert, the Duryops Gosai have nowhere to plant, nor any way of raising

them. Thankfully, these seeds will remain potent forever, thanks to an ancient enchantment placed on them, but as long as they remain in the desert, they are useless.

Many Gosai of this tribe are very happy to live in the desert and have no real desire to leave. At the same time, though, they are lured by the notion of planting these seeds on the edge of the Old Kingdom, the Nimro plains or the Yin-Sloth Jungles, to see what would happen. More than a few Duryops Gosai hope that one of the plants that would grow from this would be the Evertall tree, one of the towering, majestic trees the Gosai dwelled in when they first came to the Palladium world.

The keeper of the bag of seeds is a cautious and sober Gosai Ranger named **Churluo**, who is also the elder of the entire tribe. He will not plant any of these seeds unless he is 100% sure they will grow, nor is he likely to sell or trade them. Together, they are worth millions upon millions of gold to any Alchemist, perhaps even more to a king or noble who could grow new crops and forests that would be worth a fortune. And that's what really concerns these Gosai. With such an incredible treasure in their possession, somebody is bound to hear of it someday. And when they do, the tribe will be hunted down and killed so that others may profit from their little bag of magically sustained seeds. Many times, Churluo has considered destroying these seeds so that they would not be put to foul use, but the plants have been passed down for so many generations that it would be a betrayal of his ancestors. It has been his family's responsibility to guard these seeds ever since the end of the Elf-Dwarf war, so Churluo feels the weight of a thousand ancestors on his shoulders, watching to see how he carries out his duty. Exactly how or why the seeds came into his family's possession has been lost over time, and this too haunts the Elder.

By this point, all poor Churluo wants to do is cast off his burden in such a way that it leaves his conscience clean. Perhaps if he encountered a group of honorable, good-hearted (principled or scrupulous) and trustworthy adventurers, he would give the seeds to them to take care of or use in ways they see fit. But, he would only do such a thing if they offered to make a blood pact over this, in which case, if they failed their mission, then the remainder of the Duryops tribe would descend upon them with all the fury of a hundred demons.

The Duryops tribe consists of 77 individuals (45 adults, 25 children, and 7 infants). Of the adults, 20 of them are Rangers, an unusually high number for a tribe, considering that Gosai prefer careers as thieves, soldiers and assassins over careers as explorers or scouts. Another legacy of the past (was this tribe once the keepers of the land, nature and crops?).

Churluo, Quick Stats

Title: Elder of the Duryops Tribe and "Keeper of the Forest."

O.C.C.: 9th level Ranger.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 9, M.E. 14, M.A. 10, P.S. 13, P.P. 19, P.E.: 15, P.B. 11, Spd. 21

Hit Points: 40, S.D.C.: 30

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +4 to strike, roll with impact, and pull punch, +5 to parry and dodge.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert — Karate Kick (2D4), snap kick (1D6) and wheel kick (2D6+2). W.P. Archery and Sword.

Weapons: Churluo owns a magical longbow named Arhalej, Slayer of Fiends. Arhalej has been enchanted to fire as if it is a Great Bow from the Yin-Sloth jungles, giving it incredible range (1,500 feet/462 m) and stopping power (5D6). Moreover, arrows from this weapon automatically inflict double damage to demons and devils.

Note: Those using Arhalej are often unable to see clearly as far as this weapon will shoot. This has led numerous archers using Arhalej to accidentally fire on their companions or for stray shots to hit fellow soldiers, leading some to change the weapon's nickname to "Slayer of Friends."

Armor: None.

Magic Items: The bag of seeds. There are hundreds of different seeds and nuts in this pouch, representing at least 25 different species of now-extinct plant life. All of the seeds radiate magic, and will begin growing immediately upon being planted in fertile soil. Once they take root, however, they will require water, nutrients and sunlight, like any plant, as well as good environmental conditions. Considering that most of these plants came from a steamy rainforest, the best place to plant them would be somewhere in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Land of the South Winds, or on one of the Floenry Islands.

Money and other equipment: Nothing noteworthy.

Gromek War Camps

Gromek have established advance camps on the outer edge of the Sandy Desert as part of their strategy to claim dominion over the entire Baalgor Wastelands. While the Gromek are not that interested in what is in the Sandy Desert, they just want the ability to launch strikes within that area. That way, Gromek soldiers can fly over large stretches of the territory in search of travelers, refugees and enemies to attack and harass. Eventually, the winged warriors hope, they will receive sufficient reinforcements to patrol the Sandy Desert heavily enough to drive out all other major races inhabiting it, particularly the Eandroth and Gosai.

Under the command of the famed warrior **Xevesstsn**, the Gromek have made their presence known to all living in the desert. They have destroyed several lesser Eandroth caravans and Gosai tribes already, and with more manpower and support, Xevesstsn figures the whole of the Sandy Desert will fall under Gromek control within a year or two (provided the war with the giants does not take a catastrophic turn).

Patrolling the Sandy Desert is one part of the overall Gromek strategy. The second part is actually getting Gromek to settle as much of the Wastelands as possible. Now, there are not nearly enough Gromek to overrun the Baalgor Wastelands in terms of sheer numbers, and these flying humanoids prefer mountains and jungle habitats, but the Gromek High Command hopes to change all that. Each of the bases on the edge of the Sandy Desert are also to act as colony villages, where the additional troops scheduled to arrive can raise families and further the dominion of the Gromek realm. So far, there are very few "colonists" at any of these bases aside from the soldiers themselves.

There are three "raags" or war camps on the edge of the Sandy Desert. They are **Raag Raxux**, **Raag Gesiiq**, and **Raag Cojoda**.

Raag Raxux

This is considered the "primary" war camp of the area, as it is commanded personally by Xevesstsn. Unlike the war camps of the Stony Desert, this facility has no walls or permanent structures, since the shifting, blowing sands make any building of that sort impossible here. Employing Earth Warlocks to build permanent stone buildings has been attempted in the past, with mixed results. Ultimately, any standing structure is vulnerable to the shifting sands and winds.

Since there are no permanent buildings, it more resembles a nomadic camp than a major military base. All soldiers live in large tents that can be disassembled and stuffed into carrying sacks for easy transport and relocation. The soldiers usually break down their tents and reassemble the camp every few days or else they will get covered over by the constantly blowing sands. Likewise, all of the camp's supplies, weapons and equipment are kept in portable racks and crates, so it all can be moved if need be. To this end, the camp relies heavily on its prize herd of Draybacks, each of which have large storage baskets strapped to their backs and essentially live their lives as walking storage depots.

Still, maintaining a nomad-style structure is not enough to protect Raag Raxux from the relentless desert winds and sandstorms that eventually swallow anything that stands still too long in this area. To that end, Xevesstsn has enlisted the aid of two mercenary Eandroth Earth Warlocks and an Air Warlock (two are 4th level, the third 5th level) to help keep the elements at bay. These specialists spend most of their time erecting temporary walls of stone to hold back shifting sand, or calm, reroute or dispel fierce sandstorms that threaten the entire camp. Hiring mercenaries is a most un-Gromek way of doing things, and Xevesstsn has taken a lot of criticism for it. Indeed, only his exemplary record as a soldier and leader keeps his soldiers from griping too badly about having to serve alongside what they consider to be an inferior species.

Raag Raxux is three times the size of the other two raags in the Sandy Desert, having a total of 154 personnel. There are three combat divisions, each consisting of seven, seven-soldier units, and a single commanding officer. On top of that are the three Eandroth Warlocks and Commander Xevesstsn. In addition, Raag Raxux has 80 Draybacks, which carry water, weapons, equipment and material the Gromek soldiers of this camp do not carry themselves. **Note:** Gromek military fashion requires soldiers to carry all of their belongings on them, so the things kept on giant lizards are replacement items and gear too large to carry, such as 12-man tents, and cisterns of water.

In addition to its herd of Draybacks, Raag Raxux also maintains several packs of Silonar, which are used as guard, attack, and tracking animals — most Gromek spend as much time as possible flying in the air rather than on the ground or riding land-crawling beasts. While Silonar are notoriously difficult to train, Xevesstsn, through his Eandroth contacts, has them under control and greatly enjoys putting these vicious animals to work. Right now, Raag Raxux's use of Silonar is an experiment. If it works well, other Gromek raags may adopt the practice.

So far, life has been fairly quiet at this camp, perhaps because it is far from any major caravan paths and tribes, and because for giants to attack it, they would have to go through or



around most of the Sandy Desert. There are hostile animals (most notably Sandwyrms) that pop up once in a while, but for the most part, this camp enjoys relative peace and quiet. Actually, that's its biggest problem. With nobody to fight, the warriors are increasingly bored, disgruntled and spoiling for a fight, and Xevesstssn knows it. So, to prevent his troops from falling out of combat-form, he is trying to figure out where and who his troops can attack to keep in shape. A major Eandroth caravan would be nice, but they rarely come into this area. Recently, Xevesstssn has considered linking up with the raags of the Stony Desert and exterminating all non-Gromek humanoids in the area just as a show of force. Meanwhile, he welcomes the appearance of adventurers, especially powerful groups, whom he can pit his men against for practice. As a result, more than ever, many explorers and travelers entering the Sandy Desert are never seen again.

Xevesstssn, Quick Stats

This guy is about as by-the-book as they come. He is strict and unyielding with his rules and regulations, and he will not hesitate to "clip" (cut the wings off of) any Gromek soldier who challenges or questions his command or tries to desert. This has earned him the nickname of "Wingcutter" from other soldiers, who naturally would never call him that name to his face.

Commander Xevesstssn is a brilliant leader, a fierce warrior and a cunning strategist. He firmly believes that if the Gromek can defeat the giants infesting the Wastelands, then they can

claim this entire area for their own, before moving on to retaking Mount Nimro from them.

Despite his harsh, cold and bloodthirsty manner, Commander Xevesstssn is extremely honorable, and would never do anything that would make him look dishonest or cowardly. Nor would he ever betray the Gromek people. By the same token, his sense of honor and loyalty applies only to Gromek and how he is seen by his subordinates and his sworn enemies, the giants. Xevesstssn considers himself far above "the soft folk," as he calls humans, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes, Eandroth and most other small and fragile humanoids, thus it matters not what they may think of him or his people and he is not honor-bound to treat them like "people." Likewise, he holds himself to no standards of honor when dealing with Gigantes, Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, Goblins or Wolfen, all of whom he considers to be barely sentient savages too uncouth to even understand honor, much less appreciate it. One reason for his arrogant attitude is that Xevesstssn has never been personally defeated by any individuals of these "soft folk." If he were, the shame he would feel at being humbled by such inferior and worthless beings would probably drive him to suicide or other rash actions. Perhaps even a fight to the death rather than accepting defeat at their hands.

Commander Xevesstssn, Quick Stats

Title: High Commander of the Sandy Desert

O.C.C.: 9th level knight.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 14, M.A. 16, P.S. 20, P.P. 20, P.E. 20, P.B. 5, Spd. 10 (running), 35 (flying).

Hit Points: 65, S.D.C.: 40.

Attacks per melee: 7

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +5 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +5 to disarm and roll with impact, +6 to pull punch, +7 to damage, +3 to save vs magic and poison, and +10% vs. coma/death. Includes attribute bonuses.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts — Karate kick (2D4), roundhouse kick (3D6), backward sweep, and tripping/leg hook. All jump kicks. Leap attack (critical strike). Critical strike 18-20.

W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Lance (see Knight O.C.C. for details), W.P. Sword (+4 to strike, +3 to parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Shield (+4 to parry, +2 to strike), W.P. Pole Arms (+4 to strike/parry/damage, +2 to throw), W.P. Battle Axe (+4 to strike/parry/dodge, +1D6 to damage).

Weapons: Xevesstssn always carries a lance with him for use in flying charging attacks (his favorite method of attack). Once his lance is gone, he will rely on his pair of magical battle axes (3D6 damage) each enchanted to return when thrown. These axes are not giant-sized, so to Xevesstssn, they feel more like hand or throwing axes.

Armor: Xevesstssn prefers not to wear armor, although he does own a suit of specially made plate and mail (A.R. 17, S.D.C. 160). He only wears this for show, however, since he feels it constrains him too much while flying.

Magic Items: Xevesstssn has collected a few magic items from slain enemies, including a Screech Bottle (he loves to drop these on enemies right before performing a flying charge), 6 Magic Bandages, 2 Magical Restraints and 2 potions of Might of the Palladium.

Money and other equipment: 1,500 gold in Old Kingdom currency, 1,000 in Western currency, and 4 diamonds worth 2,000, 1,200, 900 and 800 each.

Raag Gesiiq

This camp is fairly average, by Gromek standards. It is also constructed nomad-style, like Raag Raxux, and is staffed by 50 troops, total. There are seven, seven-soldier units, all of which answer to Commander Orgizeg, who runs the entire camp. Raag Gesiiq has a herd of 50 Draybacks (one for each soldier) and a pack of 10 Silonar, all of which were trained by the houndmasters of Raag Raxux.

Raag Gesiiq operates right along a major trade route, so the soldiers here often encounter travelers passing through the region. As a show of force, the Gromek patrols of Raag Gesiiq are under standing orders to harass any non-Gromek they find. Typically, this means shaking-down travelers for a "passing-through" tax, which is just a way of getting folks to acknowledge that these lands are under Gromek dominion. Those who refuse are killed or at least given a good thrashing and stripped of their possessions to remind them who is boss in these parts. That is where the trouble comes in for Raag Gesiiq.

Many of the travelers bullied by the Gromek sevens of Raag Gesiiq are lone explorers or small parties who are not strong enough to defend themselves, so they pay out whatever is asked of them without fuss or protest — instead they hear a lot of pleading, bowing, scraping, and thanks for not killing them. This has made the members of the war camp bold and cocky, and given them a false sense of power. Consequently, they have come to underestimate all small humanoids, and giants as well. They misinterpret prudent acts of submission to pass by them unmolested as having broken the "soft folks" spirit. This means they will not be prepared for the day they encounter a group that won't yield to their extortion or who possesses the magical might and courage to challenge their "dominion." And there are a fair number of Gigantes, desert marauders and other tough customers in the Sandy Desert who will be only too happy to hand the Gromek their own heads on a platter.

The Gromek pursue this unwise policy of arrogance and tyranny because their commander ordered it, but they have come to enjoy it, and like the feeling of power it brings. In fact, some are getting drunk with power and will be absolutely stunned when a "soft-folk" chops them down to size. This is bad news for **Commander Orgizeg**, a miscreant 7th level soldier (I.Q. 9, M.E. 15, M.A. 4, P.S. 21, P.P. 18, P.E. 21, P.B. 6, Spd. 6 running and 29 flying; H.P.: 49, S.D.C.: 30), because he has not realized what a sorry state of mind his troops are in, or how soft and lazy they have become. Orgizeg is an arrogant megalomaniac entirely convinced of his personal superiority as a warrior, intellectual and officer. In his mind, he is the perfect soldier, and any failures will be the fault of his underlings.

Thanks to Commander Orgizeg's arrogance and short-sightedness, his entire operation is in jeopardy — defeat is in only a matter of time.

Raag Cojoda

This camp used to be identical in size and structure to Raag Gesiiq. Just recently, a band of giant soldiers from Gurthasi Tor (consisting mainly of Algor, Nimro, and a few Gigantes) raided this place and killed every single Gromek in the camp. The giants cut the heads and wings off every one of the fallen Gromek and brought them back to Gurthasi Tor (the giants' command post) undetected. So far, none of the other Gromek camps know this camp has perished, and it will be 1D4 weeks before they suspect anything is wrong. When the other camps in this area learn what happened (the giants purposefully left lots of incriminating evidence at the attack site to add insult to injury), they will probably gather together for a single, massed assault on the nearest group of giants they can find.

Note: Actually, there is a single survivor here, a lowly 2nd level soldier named **Ferigut** (I.Q. 7, M.E. 7, M.A. 7, P.S. 19, P.P. 15, P.E. 17, P.B. 7, Spd: 7 running and 36 flying; H.P.: 45, S.D.C.: 45; anarchist alignment). He was spooked during the battle and flew away. While Ferigut survived the bloodbath, he has also thoroughly disgraced himself, and does not know what to do. If he stays here, eventually his fellow Gromek will find him, or other giants will. Either fate is equally unappealing, since the Gromek will clip him and the giants will kill him. Likewise, he does not want to head off into the desert alone because he is a weakling (by Gromek standards, anyway) and knows he probably would not make it very far on his own. So, for the moment, he sits just in eyeshot of the camp, nervously biding his time. What's a poor coward to do?

Ferigut is a coward's coward. He has no intention of returning to military duty among his own kind, so he figures that he will make a new life as an independent adventurer. However, he's not sure exactly how to do so. Consequently, he will try to strike up with any group of adventurers he encounters. Sadly, he will make a poor ally. Ferigut will avoid work, covet the possessions of others and will not undertake any work or brave any danger he does not have to. If forced into working too hard, or exposed to serious peril, he will whine and complain the entire time and will consider deserting again if the opportunity avails itself (he might also switch sides or do other things to betray his comrades, especially if it means saving his own neck). However, he is cowed by shows of force, so slapping him around or threatening him periodically, will keep him more or less in line. At least that's what his old commanding officers used to do.





The Minotaurs of the Sandy Desert

By Kevin Siembieda & Bill Coffin

Far below the surface of the Sandy Desert are innumerable caverns, catacombs and tunnels, both natural and artificial.

The natural caverns, tunnels and subterranean chambers were created by underground rivers, streams, sink holes, earthquakes and the very formation of the planet.

Most of the artificial ones were built by the Dwarves before and during the Elf-Dwarf War. Of those, very few remain intact, as many were destroyed during the Great War. Others were damaged or fell to ruin from the passage of time and the neglect of centuries that followed. Many had been blocked off by their Dwarven creators, who did not wish for their underground strongholds to be overrun by Elves, Kobolds, Goblins or other invaders, but who could not bring themselves to completely destroy their old cities and grand kingdoms. Thus, great doors were sealed, access tunnels collapsed and homes abandoned. Troglodytes, rare in these parts, Baalizard and Kobolds also account for a small number of catacombs, as does the use of magic and shafts left by miners and prospectors. Goblins also live in subterranean dwellings, but they are too lazy to dig their own, and usually make do with natural formations and ruins abandoned by their makers. However, after the Great Thunder and the decimation of the region, even underground dwellers felt the taint of blood from the millions who died. Somehow the land down to its very bedrock had been tarnished and tainted. The touch of ghosts, shadows of wickedness, the stain of madness and the presence of dark magic still lingered and threatened. Thus, even the craven Goblin and defiant Kobold abandoned

their tunnels and warrens to find homes in the neighboring mountains or Old Kingdom.

Unknown to most, the natural and artificial catacombs that honeycomb under much of the Wastelands have been adopted by many different tribes of Minotaurs. These misbegotten and enigmatic creatures have lived in and under the Baalgor Wastelands for thousands of years; in some cases, since the fall of their civilization. Nobody knows for sure exactly what tragedy decimated the Minotaurs, but many suspect that their ancestors were either the willing servants of the Old Ones during the Age of Chaos and that their forefathers participated in a concerted effort to reawaken the Old Ones (either before or during The Time of a Thousand Magicks) — and suffered the consequences. The exact cause of the Minotaurs' villainy and horrific downfall is lost to the passage of time. Even the Tristine Chronicles offer little in this regard. Suffice it to say that they suffered mass exterminations at the hands of Titans, Elves, Dwarves and other enemies of the Old Ones for it. The Minotaurs' own campaign of evil brought them to the brink of extinction. During this time, millions upon millions of Minotaurs were destroyed. According to legend, only 100,000 managed to escape (many scholars believe the real number was closer to 300,000).

Ashamed and frightened, the Minotaurs hid deep in the bowels of the earth, seeking refuge where few surface dwellers would look for them and few other subterranean people lived. And in so doing, one such sanctuary was found in the massive cavern and natural tunnel system below the heart of the Baalgor

Rainforest, a place men now know as the Sandy Desert of the Baalgor Wastelands.

The Minotaurs who came here vowed to forever sever their links to the Old Ones, all dark gods and other forces of evil, never again to pursue any form of black magic or other sinister forms of power. Here, they would live out a quiet penance, spending the rest of time repenting for the terrible things done by their forefathers.

So ashamed were they of their wrongdoing, and so afraid that any discovery of them by surface dwellers would lead to all of their deaths, these particular Minotaurs ventured deep underground, closing off every tunnel and cavern behind them, so that nobody would ever know where they had gone or how to find them. They did their job well, for nobody, not even other underground folk, discovered them during the many thousands of years between then and now.

This makes these Minotaurs truly unique, for they have been shut away from the world for an estimated 70,000 years! They have isolated themselves so well, that they know nothing about the rise and fall of the Elven and Dwarven Empires, the Great War, or the obliteration of the lush forest they think grows above them. Nor do they know anything about the emergence of humankind or their many kingdoms! They are truly throwbacks to a bygone age. There are other tribes of Minotaurs who inhabit the Baalgor Wastelands and other parts of the world, but these Minotaur tribes represent a living link to the past. Unfortunately, they did not preserve any books or artifacts from this ancient time and are little more than primitive hermits.

Since they sealed themselves off, they have dwindled from several thousand to only a few thousand. The biggest reason for their decline has been a chronic lack of food and other vital supplies to sustain a large population of giant-sized people. The other, less tangible malady is that these particular tribes of Minotaurs have never come to terms with their sins of the past, and have been living with an age-old death-wish. So sullen are they over the crimes of their ancestors that they saw no stake in the future. This sentiment is especially strong for those Minotaurs who feel that their ancestors were the willing thralls of the Old Ones — for any world in which the Old Ones have been defeated has no room for their minions, or so the reasoning goes. Thus, the Minotaurs under the Sandy Desert have merely been marking time, keeping their location a tightly held secret, as they wait for the last of their number to vanish or be sent a sign that their suffering is over.

There are three Minotaur tribes underneath the Sandy Desert, the **Eirokan**, the **Kkairojan**, and the **Adraodan**. Oddly enough, none of these tribes knew about each other. They all had sealed themselves off so completely that none of them have had any direct contact with any outsiders, Minotaur or otherwise, for over 70,000 years. Only a recent quirk of fate has drawn all three tribes back into the world. An unlike set of circumstances that threatens to radically change the destinies of all involved.



The Reawakening

An Earthshaker annoyed by the pestering Quorians decided to remove itself from their contact and burrowed deep under the desert. This happened to take place near a fault line on the border of the Sandy and Stony Desert in the southeast, not terribly far from the Baalgor Mountains. After digging into the earth, a band of Quorians followed and pleaded with their minds for the creature to give them the secrets of the universe. Feeling mischievous, the Earthshaker wondered to what lengths these “worshippers” would go, and set out on digging deep into the earth to see how far they would follow. Its burrowing broke through several natural tunnels and finally caused the collapse of the ceiling to a large natural cavern. The great creature fell into the cavern and, in anger, shook the earth with an earthquake. This tore the earth open even wider and revealed the three ancient Minotaur tribes.

The Earthshaker immediately sensed the Minotaurs’ presence and instantly knew what they were. The great beast laughed, and through psionic communication, mocked them as fools — literally hiding their heads in the ground to escape an angry world. The Earthshaker chided them and bid them to see what changes time had wrought — if they dared to once again step into the light of day. Then the behemoth left them exposed and in shock. The Quorians in tow, did not quite understand what had transpired. The monster’s words have haunted the Minotaurs’ dreams ever since, as each tribe struggles with what to do next.

Three Roads

Each of the Minotaur tribes have taken a different path in life, or perhaps more to the point, their lack of life. Now, with their world of seclusion and darkness torn asunder, each wonders about a future in a world they do not know.

The Eirokan Tribe

This is the smallest of the ancient Minotaur tribes, with 249 members. Although large by Minotaur standards, it is but a tiny fragment of the huge population that once lived in these caves, so long ago.

The Eirokan are morose and sullen, seeing life only as a hopeless chain of misery and self-loathing. Trying to somehow right the wrongs of their ancestors and do what was right, they decided to forsake their evil ways, live in self-imposed exile, and watch their people waste away. Mass suicide was considered, but deemed “wrong,” and it was decided that it was fitting that they suffer through life rather than end it prematurely and escape the punishment they deserved. And suffer they did. Without sufficient food or resources, and refusing to revert to cannibalism, their population declined rapidly. However, since at the same time they felt they could take their lives, the tribe leveled out at a few hundred and has been maintained for thousands upon thousands of years. As unbelievable as it may sound, each generation has managed to pass on their tremendous guilt and sorrow to the next. Ironically, it was this current generation that finally had enough and decided to let their people come to an end and find eternal peace (they believed themselves to be the sole survivors of their race). Seeing no reason to prolong

their pitiful existence and having borne the weight of guilt for countless generations, they decided to end their tribe by remaining celibate, and not bring any young into their dark world. There has not been a child born or even conceived by this tribe for nearly 30 years. Now that a substantial portion of the tribe has exceeded its child-bearing years, the Eirokan were coming dangerously close to losing their ability to perpetuate themselves. In another 10-15 years, the tribe would have been doomed, because they would all be too old to bear young.

The Eirokan viewed this with a mixture of horror and welcomed oblivion. Certainly, they did not relish the thought of their race dying out within the span of a single generation (remember, they believed themselves to be the last of all Minotaur people). However, they felt they could no longer perpetuate their loathsome existence. In fact, the general consensus was that they should have done this eons ago, and that this is the kind of ignoble end they deserved. **Note:** The ongoing sorrow of this tribe of Minotaurs was so great that it actually generated a faint psychic aura that certain individuals could detect when passing overhead.

All this has changed since the incident involving the Earthshaker and the literal shattering of their world. As Eirokan tribesmen stared in disbelief at the Earthshaker who plummeted through their central underground chambers, Minotaurs from the other two tribes came to see what had happened. Their living areas had been shaken and breached by the creature as well, but none were prepared for what they saw and experienced. The Eirokan, least of all.

Weeks later, they still hide in their broken tunnels, occasionally daring to peer up at the filtered light that seeps into the depths of their homes. More jarring than the light of day or being revealed (sort of) to the world, is the knowledge that other Minotaurs live in the world. Once debilitated by the guilt of their forefathers, they are now shaken by what they see as their own pointless multi-generational sacrifice. Many insist nothing has changed and they should continue with their plan. They insist it is all a trap or a test, and that the only way to remain true to their ancestors is to abandon the light, return to the catacombs and go forward with their extinction plans. However, there are those among them for whom the glimmer of hope still burns. They point to the other Minotaurs and the light of a new future and contend that fate has freed them, that they have suffered enough, and that the gods have forgiven them for the sins of the past by opening up the very earth and beckoning them to build a new, shining future. Others are so afraid of the "unknown" which lies above and before them, that all they can do is weep and wonder.

The Eirokan are not very industrious or organized. With little to live for, they saw no purpose in maintaining a productive society, so most of these Minotaurs are sheepish and frightened vagabonds or the equivalent of peasant farmers who once harvested mushrooms and other cave fungi for all their lives. There are no champions, heroes or outstanding figures to motivate or lead them.

It seems inevitable that some will strike out into the world, though most are ill prepared for what lies in wait for them. Probably half will perish in the desert sun. Those who stay below, lost to despair or fear, are likely to remain a secret society, hidden away deep within the earth, slowly dying with each passing day.

The Adraodan Tribe

The Adraodan Tribe has lived true to the wishes of their forefathers by abandoning the Old Ones forever and endlessly praying for insight, guidance and forgiveness. At the same time they have dedicated their lives to goodness, becoming incredibly aware of others' feelings and learning incredible compassion. Tens of thousands of years have brought about a startling evolution among this tribe, making all Psychic Sensitives, Psi-Healers, or psionically enhanced warriors. They call themselves Adraodan Crusaders of Light — self-made heroes longing for the day they may step back into the world and fight evil rather than court it. To these honest, loving and dedicated Minotaurs, the earth opening above their heads was nothing short of a miracle. The sign they knew would come. The sign that it is time to rejoin the world and make it a better place.

There are 2,724 Adraodan Minotaur, another 423 were killed when the earth above them shook and collapsed, and another 91 were slain in a clash with the Kkairojan (their first battle against evil). Unlike the Eirokan tribe, all are eager to rejoin the world, and are much better prepared to meet their destiny. Even the hot, baked wastelands should not claim more than 10-15% of them. They also believe themselves prepared for the alien sights, sounds and people of their new world. To some degree they are, but nothing could fully prepare them for the world in which they enter. Particularly the savage and barren Baalgor Wastelands, the violent Old Kingdom or the ruthless kingdoms of humans. In fact, none have even heard of humans, and most expect to see kingdoms of Elves, Dwarves and Titans, among others. Still, they will welcome the challenges they face, and are so driven to prove themselves and make the world a better, kinder, and safer place, that they will forge through every peril set before them.

The members of the Adraodan are idealistic and highly motivated. All will try to live their lives as nurturers, healers and noble knights whose glory and triumphs will set the standard for heroes and forever erase the folly of their ancient forefathers. They are champions who dream of a day when all people will look at a Minotaur and think only of heroes and goodness, not evil. That is the dream they live for. The dream they have strived to achieve for some 70,000 or more years. They only thank fate that they have been the ones chosen for the honor of redeeming their people. Such high ideals will carry many far, leading some to greatness, others to failure, and a few to doom. Who these brave, bold heroes first meet will help to shape their character and destiny. The player characters may be counted among such influences.

For now, the tribe plans on splitting into four groups and traveling to the four corners of the world. Once they reach civilization (or what passes for it in these parts), they will divide into hundreds of smaller groups and individuals to explore the world and battle evil. That's the plan.

The Adraodan have already had their first taste of evil, and have made their first eternal enemy, the Kkairojan tribe. These two are like the opposite sides of the same coin. Despite their better judgement, most Adraodan feel they must track down, and stop the evil Kkairojans, no matter what the cost.

Adraodan Minotaur R.C.C.

Alignments: Any, but most are good or unprincipled; rarely anarchist or evil.

Attributes (modified): The number of six-sided dice rolled is as designated: I.Q. 2D6+2, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 2D6+4, P.S. 5D6, P.P. 4D6, P.E. 5D6, P.B. 3D6, Spd 2D6+3

Hit Points: Standard (P.E. +1D6 per level).

S.D.C. Bonus: 2D4x10 plus those gained from O.C.C.s and physical skills (2D6x100 on Rifts® Earth, making the giant an equivalent mega-damage creature with limited M.D.; every 100 S.D.C. equals one M.D.C.).

Natural Armor Rating: 12; Minotaurs may also wear body armor for additional protection.

Horror Factor: 14

Average P.P.E.: 4D6

O.C.C.s available to Adraodan Minotaurs: Most are Psi-Healers (23%), Psychic Sensitives (25%), Psi-Mystics (10%), or Crusaders of Light (30%).

The Crusader of Light is effectively the Knight O.C.C., but delete the Horsemanship, Heraldry, W.P. Lance and two O.C.C. Related Skills, and give the knightly Minotaur seven psionic powers of choice in their place. Selections are made from the Sensitive and Physical psionic categories. The warrior is considered a major psychic, needs a 12 or higher to save vs psionics and starts with I.S.P. equal to M.E. attribute +1D6+2 points per level of experience.

Only 12% of the Adraodan select some other O.C.C. The O.C.C.s available to these characters are Scholastic Monk, Warrior Monk, Priest (of Light), Scholar, Bard, Minstrel, or any of the following Men of Arms: Ranger, Palladin, Mariner, Sailor, and Juggler. They avoid the pursuits of magic (all magic O.C.C.s except the Psi-Mystic) for fear that magic may corrupt them as it did their forefathers.

The vast majority of these tribesmen will live by their high ideals, and pass them down to their children for generations, regardless of the hardships they may suffer. Ultimately, they are likely to establish a long-lasting tradition of Hero Minotaurs and even a new legion of knights who embrace all races as equals, oppose the Old Ones and destroy evil where they find it.

Skills of Note: Speak Troll/Giantese, Gobblely and Elven. All Adraodan Minotaurs are literate in Elven (+20%).

Physical appearance: Muscular, humanoid giants, but tens of thousands of years living underground has given the Adraodan, Kkairojan and Eirokan tribes a somewhat smaller and slighter build, and pale skin — light grey to creamy white, with dark grey or black hair, greenish-yellow eyes and the head and horns of a bull.

Height: These ancient Minotaurs are a bit smaller than most of their kind, averaging around 7.6 to 9 feet (2.3 to 2.7 m) tall.

Weight: 400 to 650 pounds (180 to 292 kg).

Average Life Span: 400 years, few live past 500.

Average Level of Experience: The Adraodan have lived sheltered, uneventful, and peaceful lives. They are not prepared for the world of men and monsters. All start at 1st or 2nd level of experience. However, over the next year, those who survive should reach 2nd or 3rd level.

Natural Abilities: Like all Minotaurs, the Adraodan possess superior physical strength and endurance, a superior sense of smell, recognize scent 22%, track by blood scent 54%, and are fire and cold resistant (does half damage). Generations spent living underground and in darkness has improved their nightvision to 600 feet (183 m; can see in total darkness), but

their eyes are sensitive to light and see only about half as well and half as far as a human's in daylight.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, parry and dodge, +2 to pull punch, +3 to save vs Horror Factor; all are in addition to attribute and skill bonuses.

Damage Notes: Claws/punch do 2D6 damage plus P.S. bonus, kick does 3D6 S.D.C. damage plus P.S. bonus, head butt does 3D6 damage, charge with horns inflicts 5D6 S.D.C. damage plus P.S. bonus and has a 60% chance of knocking the victim of the charge down (victim loses one melee attack and initiative).

Magic: None for the Adraodan; see O.C.C.s above.

Psionics: All Adraodan Minotaurs possess at least major psionics (see O.C.C.s above), yet less than one half percent are Mind Mages.

Value: Some alchemists will pay up to 1500 gold for a Minotaur horn. However, since it closely resembles a normal bull's horn, they are wary of fakes.

Habitat: The Adraodan Minotaurs plan on making the entire world theirs to explore, however, most will be found in and around the Baalgor Wastelands, Old Kingdom and Eastern Territory for years to come.

Enemies: The forces of evil, particularly the Kkairojan Minotaurs.

Allies: The forces of good.

Favorite Weapons: None at this time.

Note: A warrior named Nekaradon was the tribe's leader. She is of principled alignment, a young 92 years old (young for a Minotaur), 3rd level Crusader of Light, with 41 Hit Points, 24 S.D.C., and I.Q. 10, M.E. 15, M.A. 21, P.S. 21, P.P. 24, P.E. 20, P.B. 11, and Spd. 20. Nekaradon is the finest and arguably the most noble warrior the tribe has ever known. To help her fellow tribesmen follow their hearts and find their own destiny, she will leave on her own, heading north, as soon as she helps her people get out of the Wastelands.

The Kkairojan Tribe

This tribe of black-hearted fiends fell back to their old evil ways after only a few millennia. The Kkairojan had grown tired of repenting for sins their forefathers had committed. "If we are to be shunned for what they did," the Kkairojan have written, "let all of the people of the world fear us for a reason." Such was the reasoning that led the Kkairojan down the slippery slope to evil, and now the entire tribe has become willing servants to the Old Ones. Afraid to return in force to the surface, they have quietly worshipped the dreaded Old Ones and continue to search for ways to wake them from their sleep.

The Kkairojan Minotaurs had made excursions to the surface, sending forth scouts and evil sorcerers once every few thousand years. Ironically, the group was in a fierce argument about whether or not they should all step out from the shadows to again walk in the light of day, when the earth opened up above them. These psychopaths believe that it was the slumbering Old Ones who reached out with their dreams to touch the mind of the Earthshaker and send him to liberate them. They also see it as a sign that not one member of their tribe perished in the cave-in and earthquake.

Within 72 hours, every one of the 1300 Kkairojan disappeared into the night, but not before battling the Adraodan.

Actually, the Adraodon started the fight when they recognized the ancient tattoos, symbols and robes of the Worshipers of Old Ones. Bred to hate and destroy evil, the impetuous and righteous Adraodan bellowed for the evil ones to "prepare to die." The battle lasted for hours before the Kkairojan put an end to it by using magic to repel the Adraodan heroes and slip into the night. However, their parting words rang ominous:

"Hear me and listen good, little brothers. The Chaos and the Darkness have freed us so that we may bring freedom to them. And so we shall. Till then, know that we will grow strong and smite all who stand against us. You dishonor your ancestors and forsake your birthright as lieutenants of the Darkness and heralds of the Chaos. We are now and forever, mortal enemies, and we shall see that every last one of you dies a horrible death. And we shall enjoy deeply, drinking your warm blood."

Not surprisingly, the Adraodan believe that it has been ordained that they are to destroy this brotherhood of sin and evil before it can take root, even if it means tracking them across the world. And so the age-old contest between good and evil, the redeemed and the damned, continues.

Kkairojan Minotaurs

Alignment: Evil, mainly diabolic (63%), miscreant (35%), and 2% aberrant and anarchist. The overwhelming number of these fanatical, bloodthirsty monsters are evil incarnate.

Attributes (unchanged): Same as all Minotaurs.

Hit Points (modified): P.E.+13, +1D6 per level of experience. Higher only if a Soldier of Darkness, Harbinger of Chaos.

S.D.C. Bonus: Standard: 2D4x10 plus those gained from O.C.C.s and physical skills.

Natural Armor Rating: 12; Minotaurs may also wear body armor for additional protection. Higher only if a Soldier of Darkness, Harbinger of Chaos.

Horror Factor: 14

Average P.P.E.: 4D6

Special O.C.C.s:

Disciple of the Old Ones (Minotaur Witch) O.C.C. See the **Old Ones, 2nd Edition** sourcebook for details about this Minotaur Witch who is linked to the slumbering Old Ones. Approximately 33% of the Kkairojan Minotaurs are Disciples of the Old Ones.

Soldier of Darkness, Harbinger of Chaos (new). This is a type of witchery and magic that has not been seen in 70,000 years. Like the Witch Disciple, this evil warrior pledges himself forever to the evil Old Ones. In return, he or she is granted the powers of darkness and serves as the protector of the Old Ones' priests, Disciples and worshippers. They are the enforcers, defenders and assassins of Old One cults and the slayers of enemies — i.e. all who oppose the awakening of the Old Ones and the return to chaos. This is an honor that has only been bestowed to members of the Kkairojan tribe, no others. Approximately 33% of the Kkairojan Minotaurs are these demonic soldiers.

- **Bonuses:** +1D6x10+30 to Hit Points (or 1D6x10+10 M.D.C. in a Mega-Damage setting). Increase natural A.R. to 15, and skin color is a cool, bluish grey, like the color of steel, and the eyes burn red-orange like hot coals. They also enjoy +1 extra attack per melee round, +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +1 to Horror Factor, and P.S. be-

comes supernatural! Note that all bonuses are in addition to the usual Minotaur R.C.C., attribute and skill bonuses.

- **Special Magical Powers:** Can cast the following spells, Sense Evil, Turn Dead, See Wards, Sense Traps, Energy Bolt, Fire Fist, Blind, Agony, Size of the Behemoth, and Armor of Ithan. Plus select one spell of choice per every other level of experience (i.e. levels 2, 4, 6, 8, and so on). Spell selections are made from level 1-4 Wizard Spells only.

- **P.P.E.:** Has P.E.x2 +2D6 per level of experience.

Other O.C.C.s: The remaining third of Kkairojan can select any of the following: Assassin, Thief, Priest of Darkness, Necromancer, Witch, Wizard, or Scholar.

Skills of Note: Speak Troll/Giantese, Gobblely and Elven. All Kkairojan Minotaurs are literate in Elven (+10%).

Physical appearance: Muscular, humanoid giants, but tens of thousands of years living underground has given the Adraodan, Kkairojan and Eirokan tribes a somewhat smaller and slighter build, and pale skin — light grey to creamy white, with dark grey or black hair, greenish-yellow eyes and the head and horns of a bull.

Height: These ancient Minotaurs are a bit smaller than most of their kind, averaging at around 8 to 9.6 feet (2.4 to 2.8 m) tall.

Weight: 400 to 700 pounds (180 to 315 kg).

Average Life Span: 400 years, few live past 500.

Average Level of Experience: 1st to 4th level experience.

Natural Abilities: Like all Minotaurs, the Kkairojan possess superior physical strength and endurance, a superior sense of smell, recognize scent 40%, track by blood scent 74%, and are fire and cold resistant (does half damage). Generations spent living underground and in darkness has improved their nightvision to 600 feet (183 m; can see in total darkness), but their eyes are sensitive to light and see only about half as well and half as far as a human's in daylight.

Note: All Kkairojan Minotaurs are man-eaters and cannibals (meaning not only do they eat other humanoids, but their fellow Minotaurs. In fact, they survived in the catacombs for eons by preying on a fourth Minotaur tribe that went underground, as well as hunting surface humanoids at night and keeping humanoid and Minotaur slaves as their food stock!)

Damage Notes: Same as all Minotaurs.

Magic: Via a Witch-like pact with the Old Ones or a rare magic O.C.C. selection.

Psionics: Standard, same as humans.

Value: Some alchemists will pay up to 1500 gold for a Minotaur horn. However, since it closely resembles a normal bull's horn, they are wary of fakes.

Habitat: The Kkairojan Minotaurs plan on infiltrating the civilized world, establishing more cults to the Old Ones, and gathering more worshippers. Meanwhile, they also search for a way to awaken their slumbering masters. From the sound of things, they may already have a few leads. Most will find the Baalgor Wastelands, Old Kingdom, Western Empire, Yin-Sloth Jungles and Land of the South Winds to be the most appealing.

Enemies: The forces of good, particularly the Adraodan Minotaurs.

Allies: The forces of evil, including demons.

Favorite Weapons: None at this time.

Note: Leading them is **Gruegas Wierdling**, a diabolic, 8th level witch/Disciple of the Old Ones (I.Q. 12, M.E. 14, M.A. 13, P.S. 25, P.P. 18, P.E. 25, P.B. 15, Spd 15; H.P. 57, S.D.C.: 100). She is backed up by five 4th level witches who are also devoted to the Old Ones. The tribe is itching to cause widespread havoc and mayhem on the surface. Their ruthlessness and magic will help them survive and escape the Wastelands. Then they will splinter into scores of small groups (13-30 members) and the occasional pair or individual to spread their campaign of evil across the world.

The Ruins of the Golden City of Baalgor

Somewhere under the shifting sands of the Sandy Desert are the remains of what was once the Golden City of Baalgor. Everybody knows that. What they do not know, however, is where exactly those ruins are. Very little reliable information exists as to the city's whereabouts, and the books, maps and other documents dedicated to the subject point to conflicting locations. Although all of them have been extensively searched over the millennia, no signs of the Golden City have ever turned up. There is a reason for this, but not one that any would-be treasure-seekers would suspect. When the city was destroyed in the Big Thunder so long ago, it truly was wiped from the face of the earth. Vaporized! No physical remains of the city are anywhere to be found, no matter how hard one searches.

However, the incredible release of magical energy that destroyed the city, coupled with the simultaneous release of the personal, psychic energies of all those who died in the cataclysm, has left a kind of afterimage on the world. As a result, every 100 years, a ghostly version of the Golden City of Baalgor appears as it was only a few short hours before the cataclysm occurred. During this frightful recreation, the horrible final moments before the city and its people were obliterated are replayed with startling clarity. It is said that those pure of heart may gain entrance into the ghost city and interact with the spirits dwelling there. Many say such is madness, for the ghosts will only lure you into staying with them until the city is destroyed, and by that time, the hapless visitors will become ghosts of Baalgor themselves. Whether such talk is superstition or true remains unknown. **G.M. Note:** To the people of the Palladium World, this is just an unsubstantiated folktale. It has been scoffed at for centuries because nobody credible has ever witnessed the city return. But the tale is indeed true, as the Wastelands will soon get a chance to discover. For more details on this, refer to *The Golden City of Baalgor* in the Adventures section of this book.

Wilderness Encounters

Tables for the Sandy Desert

Roll a D20 for every eight hours the characters spend in the sandy desert region. A roll of 15 or higher means a random encounter takes place. To determine the nature of the encounter, roll percentile dice and consult the table below.

01-02%: Sandwrym! Take cover!! Whether this monster engages the group in a prolonged battle (which it may cut short at any time), or simply ignores the group is a matter of luck.

03-05%: Oasis/watering hole. The party has found a beautiful little spot complete with fruit-bearing trees, a small freshwater pond and spring, and some nice, shady spots to rest at. The spot appears unoccupied, but that is just a trick.

Upon entering the oasis, a dozen undead skeletons will rise up from the earth and attack the adventurers! Half of these skeletons will be Dwarven, half will be Elven. The skeletons were set here as a trap by a Necromancer who has claimed this oasis as his own. Where the Necromancer is now is a mystery. The skeletal warriors all have 50 S.D.C., have no bonuses to strike, parry or dodge, and have two attacks per melee. The skeletons have no sense of self-preservation, so they will not parry or dodge at all. They fight with old swords and battle axes. If the group retreats from the oasis, they will resume their hiding place until the next traveler stumbles across them. If they are destroyed, the player characters may enjoy the oasis for as long as they like, or until the Necromancer returns (if ever). Really ambitious G.M.s could place an intricate Necromancer lair beneath the oasis, accessible through a secret passage beneath a large rock or some such.

06-08%: A crew of twelve 3rd and 4th level Dwarven knights who still think the Elf-Dwarf War is going on, sight the player characters and are closing in to investigate. Among them is a 5th level Dwarven wizard! Considering the ancient dialects of Dwarven and Elven they speak, it is possible that this party has been released recently from suspended animation. But that begs the questions: Who suspended these guys, and why?

09-10%: A pack of a dozen "domesticated" Silonars fleeing a Mologoth. The Silonars will run near enough to the player characters that the Mologoth will quickly lose interest in this fast-moving prey and focus instead on the heroes. The Silonar that were being chased are exhausted from their pursuit, and if the adventurers successfully dispatch the Mologoth, they should be able to take control of 1D6+1 of the animals with little trouble. However, all are branded as the property of a large and powerful Eandroth caravan, which might cause troubles down the road. How these Silonars got away from their keepers is up to the G.M.

11-13%: As the player group walks by, a foul-tempered Zavor pops out of the sand and attacks! Any magical attack on this bizarre beast will cause it to split into two perfect copies of itself! See page 165 of **Monsters & Animals, 2nd Edition** for details. The G.M. can substitute a different monster if he prefers.

14-16%: Melechs! These foul creatures have been lying in wait, hoping to waylay the first traveler they could find. These hideous creatures will fight until they have 25% of their original Hit Points left before they flee. There are four or five Melechs total, and between them, they carry the clan's treasure hoard: 250 gold, a dwarven dagger (+2 to strike, +3 to damage), a flail (+2 to damage) and a Dwarven long sword (+2 to strike, parry and damage). They also have a Gem of Direction and a Container of Much Water (a major find, this deep into the desert).

17-19%: Thorny Sun Devils. Six of these creatures are sunning themselves out in the open. If unmolested, they will let the player characters pass in peace. If bothered . . .

20-22%: After waiting out a particularly fierce sandstorm, the player characters encounter a group of seven Eandroth digging themselves out of the sand. These dazed and slightly shell-shocked individuals explain that since they have been in the desert, they have been hit by a furious sandstorm every night. So far, they have lost all of their pack animals, extra supplies, and half of their original group has been lost to the relentless killer storms. The group is convinced that someone or something is following them and blasting them with these storms. For what reason anybody might do this, the Eandroth claim ignorance. However, if pressed for details, one will note that they think an evil Eandroth Earth Warlock, who has long hated their tribe, might be finally exacting his revenge upon them.

23-25%: This slow-moving Eandroth caravan has exactly 60 members, split evenly between males, females and young. A crew of 12 Quorians are also riding alongside the caravan for a little while, trading and exchanging stories while on the move. The player characters will be more than welcome to do business with the caravan, but only if they can keep up with it. These guys stop for nothing.

26-27%: A band of giant slavers is roaming nearby, looking for smaller, weaker humanoids to capture and sell, probably in Troker's slave market. If they spot the player characters, expect a major confrontation. There is one giant for every character; a mix of Nimro Fire Giants and Jotan Earth Giants. All are well armed and 3rd-5th level in experience.

28-29%: A swarm of a thousand plus Fire Ants are swarming over a 200 foot (61 m) radius. They attack every living creature they encounter. Their sting does one point of damage and injects a poison. Being bitten 30 or more times will cause 2D4 damage for 1D4 melee rounds unless a save vs lethal poison is made (14 or higher). Fleeing the area is advised.

30-31%: A human caravan crests the top of a nearby dune, and the lead wagon driver uses a hand mirror to flash at the player group to get them to come over. The caravan consists of six covered wagons, each one escorted by four 2nd or 3rd level human mercenary warriors. Inside the carts are human scholars on an archaeological expedition. They will pay the player characters 1,000 gold each for any truthful information they can provide regarding the location of the ruins of the Golden City of Baalgor. Little do they know there are no (known) actual ruins of the city left, and that the city's original location is only a few miles away, buried by nearly 50 feet of sand.

32-33%: Poking out of the sand are the stone spires of what appears to be, upon excavation, an ancient temple to a long-forgotten deity. Actually, it is the burial spot of a great Quorian Riftlord who fought in the Elf-Dwarf War. Her bones still lie in a sealed sarcophagus beneath the stone base of the memorial. Perhaps they could be used to establish contact with her spirit, who could reveal the secrets of creating a dimensional portal to Quoria! Unlikely, but you never know. Meanwhile, 1D6 Haunting Entities linger in the area.

34-35%: A pack of 2D4+3 Striped Hyenas looking for prey. They are aggressive and work as a team. They are especially attracted by the scent of blood and will not hesitate to attack an individual or pair of humanoids, or a group suffering from injuries, illness or heat exhaustion/exposure. They may even consider attacking a group of healthy people.

36-37%: A tribe of 13 Gosai live nearby, enjoying the hot, dry weather. If the player characters approach, they will treat them with suspicion, but not with malice.

38-39%: Sun Devil. This critter is really cranky because it was wounded recently (down to 75% of its normal Hit Points) and the extreme heat isn't making things any easier. If somehow subdued and treated, it will regard the characters with kindness. Otherwise, it will snap at whoever gets within 30 feet (9 m).

40-41%: Viper pit! Crawling around in a large hole or depression in the sand are 2D4 highly poisonous Desert Vipers! Their bite does 1D4 damage but the poison 6D6! Needs a roll of 14 or higher to save vs lethal poison. Average H.P. of each snake is only 1D6, but they are lightning fast (+2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +1 to dodge; one attack per melee round). Avoiding the pit should avert danger, unless one or two are hidden in the sand outside the pit. Walk carefully.

42-43%: Sand Blow! The party has hit an underground pocket of gas and air which explodes through the surface. All of the party members and their pack animals will fall 40 feet (12 m) to the bottom of the blow chamber, a large, naturally hollowed sac underneath the earth. Most sand blows result in the unfortunate surface-dwellers being swallowed up by the sand and suffocated, but the party is lucky, here, and they have stumbled into a large underground cavern system. There is a small stream of clear, fresh running water, and naturally phosphorescent fungi glow on the walls, providing a soft light. Several winding passages lead away from here, and they appear to be wide enough to admit the pack animals, too (assuming they survived the fall). Where these passages lead is up to the G.M., as is how the players must find their way back to the surface.

44-46%: The heroes spy a massive (15 feet tall, and 350 pounds) marble statue of an Elf that has been seriously damaged by the elements and time, so any superficial details of the work have been erased. The statue stands half-buried in the sand, but if excavated, the characters will find a barely legible inscription at the base of the statue that reads, "...istine the Chron ..." What does this statue really mean, and who did it once really depict? The players could sell this for 1,200 gold back in Troker, or they could transport it to a university, where the academic worth of it would be better appreciated and get at least ten times the price. Any player with an appreciation of lore, history or archaeology will realize that this statue could have immense historical value if it really does depict the legendary *Tristine the Chronicler* — no known images of this famed person exists. Most likely, it will just spark furious debate among academics. Which, depending on who you ask, can be more dangerous than battling dragons!

47-48%: One of the player characters accidentally steps too close to a den of desert asps, and is attacked. Three vipers come out biting. All get one free attack on three different characters! Determine to see who they are attacking and let each try to dodge out of the way (need a 16 or higher). These asps have an unusually strong poison that does no real damage to start off with, but will kill the victim within 24 hours (suffers 1D6 points of damage, swelling of joints and nausea every hour). Magical healing will cure this poison. If the adventurers have no means of magical healing, then an Orc Shaman who lives in a stone hut nearby can whip up an herbal cure, but this comes at a price: One of the player characters must cut off one of his own hands

and give it to the shaman! Now, who in the group feels like giving up his lute-playing career? Of course, the group's next adventure might involve pursuing a way to restore the character's lost hand.

49-50%: A Gryphon or Peryton swoops out of the sky to attack any pack animals or injured characters. It will fight for 1D4 melee rounds and flies away if it can not win.

51-52%: The player group spots a wandering party traveling in the opposite direction. The party consists of eight Elves, led by a Quillback who they have hired as their guide. Among the party are two Knights, a Palladin, a Ranger, a Priest of Light (worships Cirga the Bowman), a Wizard, a Diabolist and a Earth Warlock. All of them are 3rd level, and the party, in general, is extremely well equipped. They will share/trade supplies and information, but that is all. They have their own mission to accomplish and will not spend more than an hour with the player group. Of course, when the player characters discover the remains of this party the next day, they will realize that there is a seriously powerful menace prowling the desert. Anybody familiar with the Wastelands will figure by the bite marks on the bodies that the attacker was either a Mologoth or more likely, a Sandwyrn. The heroes *may* be its next target.

53-55%: As the player group scales a sand dune, it partially collapses, causing a large sand-slide. All characters must roll a



15 or higher or lose their footing and tumble down the dune, taking 1D4 points of damage. While these unfortunates empty their boots and bags of sand, they notice that they have stumbled upon a hibernating Serpent Beast (a Worm of Taut) whose lair has been uncovered by the sand-slide! Disturbed by the commotion (and by the smell of food), the Beast will stir and come after those who disturbed it with a vengeance. It will take this monster a full minute (4 melees) to wake up, so the characters have a good head start if they choose to run.

56-57%: A nest of fire ants is nearby, just out of sight. It is a roughly three foot (0.9 m) high mound in which thousands of these stinging insects live. Camping nearby will attract the attention of these little critters, who will swarm all over the sleeping players, probably waking them up. Unless the player characters want to receive hundreds of burning stings, they must proceed very, very cautiously to get the hundred or so fire ants off of each of their bodies.

58-59%: At some time, a Fire Warlock placed an Eternal Flame here, which has since served as a campfire to many passing travelers. Judging by the amount of trash left in the area (much of it is buried by the sand), the fire gets lots of use.

60-64%: Animal encounter. Roll D8 on the table below to see what kind of creature the players have come across.

1. Jungle Kodiak bear ("Ernie"). Major trouble! This nightmare will attack without fear. It is curious that it has ventured this far out into the desert, though.
2. Cheetah. This speedy hunter is stalking the group and later in the day, will try to pick off the smallest member of the group or one of the pack animals.
3. Pride of lions. During the day, they are sleeping and resting, and will not mess with humanoids if they don't pass too close. At night, these felines go on the prowl. One or two might be man-eaters who prefer to prey upon humanoids and might very well attack in the dead of night.
4. A pack of 1D4x10 Striped Hyenas has spotted the group and will attack if any of them look especially weak or wounded. Will fight until five or more of them are killed, then retreat.
5. A tribe of 150 Old Kingdom baboons lives nearby, as anybody with Trap/Skin Large Animals can tell by the piles of droppings and footprints. If the adventurers stumble onto the troop, they are going to be in big trouble, so they should keep their eyes open and give the apes a wide berth. At night, these animals range all over in search of food, and they are not afraid of humanoids. Unless the group has put more than eight miles (12.8 km) between them and the baboons, they are likely to encounter 1D4+1 during the night, resulting in a fight to the death!
6. 1D4+2 hungry Rock Buzzers. They make such a racket passing overhead, it's impossible not to notice them before they dive-bomb the group. They fly away if their potential prey proves to be too tough (meaning after the bugs have lost 40% of their Hit Points).
7. Desert viper. It will attack if accidentally stepped on.
8. A pair of booted eagles soar overhead in search of food. They are not a danger to the player characters, but are truly majesty in motion.

65-67%: The party spots a lone individual traveling in the opposite direction. Roll D6 to determine who this person is.

1: Hermit. A scholar, druid or sage, this person enjoys solitude. He will not stop to chat with the adventurers unless they are nonthreatening and make some sort of kind gesture. He is a living fountain of knowledge about all things, not just the Baalgor Wastelands.

2: Nutcase. This guy is completely out of his head. Roll three times on the random insanity table in the PFRPG rule book to determine exactly what is wrong with him. The G.M. may assign an O.C.C. and attributes as he or she sees fit. As a default, make this person a 4th level vagabond with average attributes except for a very low M.E.

3: Lost Wanderer. This adventurer got separated from his party during a sandstorm, and has been lost ever since. He is starving and in bad need of water. If helped, he will be extremely thankful to his saviors and will return the favor. The wanderer is a 6th level principled human. Determine O.C.C. and attributes at your discretion.

4: Fugitive. This guy has done somebody wrong, and is now on the run for it. The fugitive is a miscreant 1st level thief (race of choice) who will beg the party for help, but will desert them at the first sign of trouble. After traveling with the party for a day, whoever was hunting this individual will catch up to the group and exact justice on everybody. The hunters are three 2nd level Orc soldiers, led by a 5th level Troll soldier. All four are working for a Nimro Warlord in the Baalgor Mountains. It appears this villain learned some military secrets he shouldn't have, and has been on the run ever since.

5: Survivor. This person has been through a terrible battle and will die within an hour if his wounds are not healed. If he lives, he will owe the party his life and ask them to help him seek revenge on his assailants. The survivor, a 3rd level Elven Palladin, was ambushed by a pair of vicious Loogaroo (full hit points) whose lair is just a half-day's travel away. In the lair is a treasure map leading to what appears to be an ancient crypt deep within the stony desert.

6: Hunter. This 11th level human Long Bowman hunts other humanoids for sport. He is diabolical and a cannibal, but will mask this at first, trying to befriend the party. That night, he will get the group to split up so he can attack them one by one. He is especially fond of coating his arrowheads with paralytic poison so he can come in close to finish off his victims.

68-70%: Sandwyrms! This thing will attack any rhythmic vibrations (such as those made from walking) on the ground. The only way to escape this creature's notice is to fly away, teleport out of the vicinity, or somehow walk arrhythmically so it can not home in. Walking arrhythmically is incredibly difficult, and only those with P.P.s of 14 or higher will be able to do it at all. Those who can will only be able to move at half their Speed rating, and for a number of minutes equal to half of their P.E. Player characters must travel for a quarter-mile in any direction to get out of the Sandwyrms' territory.

71-73%: Sandwyrms cult. The adventurers have wandered into the territory of a tribe of Orcs who all worship a great Sandwyrms that has taken up permanent residence nearby (perhaps it is the beast described in the previous encounter). The Sandwyrms has recently positioned itself so that its open mouth

is just flush with the surface — a conical pit surrounds the Sandwyrms' maw, so anything falling in the pit is very likely to slide into the open mouth and be devoured. The Orcs have made a practice of sacrificing humanoids to the monster, and often will nab passersby for their routine sacrifice. Otherwise, the sacrifice will come from within their tribe, and none of them want that! There are 34 orcs in the tribe, including a 7th level shaman (the tribe's leader and witch doctor), five 3rd level shamans, 12 warriors, 10 females and 6 children. The Orcs live in miserable, little leanto tents and have almost nothing of value. They fight with crude stone spears, axes and slings. It will be next to impossible to bargain with them, since the only thing they understand is sheer force. Flashy displays of magic will temporarily awe these Orcs and throw them into disarray. Furthermore, the high shaman of the tribe is very insecure, and if it appears that the outsiders' magick is greater than his, he will do anything to prove his superiority, including challenging them to a contest of strength and magic to determine who gets fed to the Sandwyrms.

74-75%: Dimensional Rift! It seems that the aftereffects of the terrible magicks used in the Elf-Dwarf War have not yet stopped affecting the Baalgor Wastelands. Random Rifts like this one are not that uncommon, since the fabric of reality has been so severely distorted, and will take many eons to fully heal itself. This dimensional portal will only last for another 1D4 hours. It is a two-way portal, so whatever's on the other side can come through just as easily as the players can. Whether anything comes through the portal is up to the G.M. Going through it will transport the players across space and time to a random location. Consult the tables given in the Random Encounters section of the Stony Desert description to determine the players' destination.

76-77%: The players come across a Western War Galleon lying on its side in the sand. The hull is still barnacle-encrusted and moist with seawater, and the sails and rigging are in decent shape, only there is no crew to be seen anywhere, nor valuables. What the heck happened here? Cue the "Twilight Zone" theme music.

78-79%: 1D4 Entities. Roll 1D4 to determine what kind, and consult **Monsters & Animals, 2nd Edition**, page 48, for complete information.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The Syphon Entity(s) | 3. Haunting Entity(s) |
| 2. Poltergeist(s) | 4. Tectonic Entity(s) |

80-82%: Ley line. If the party follows this, it will lead to a nexus in 1D4x30 miles (48 to 192 km). Along the way, the party might find other ley line travelers, or something unexpected waiting for them at the nexus, like a power-hungry Wizard or dragon looking for pawns or opponents, a dimensional portal, 1D6+1 entities of various types, 1D6 demons, or some freak supernatural phenomenon that nobody's ever encountered before.

83-85%: High overhead, a bald-faced vulture circles in the sky. Another one joins it. Then two more, and another few. Before long, there are close to 20 of these carrion-eaters circling over what they figure is a big creature about to die. Yet, the group does not see anything on the horizon. Perhaps something is about to meet its maker just a few dunes away. An investigation may turn up an adventurer(s), Wastelander(s), one or more giants (any type), a wild animal, an (presently) invisible creature ... or ... are the vultures waiting for the group to die?!

The Rocky Desert

86-87%: Blister Wind. The party gets caught in a vortex of superheated desert air. All characters will take 2D6 damage directly to their Hit Points. Characters in metal armor take an additional 2D6 damage immediately, then another 1D6 per melee for 1D10 melees thereafter unless they cool down their armor or take it off. **Note:** Pouring the group's water supply on superheated armor does not work, since the blister wind will have raised its temperature to near boiling.

88-89%: Demon Storm. The G.M. can either roll for a random effect or pick one. See the description in the beginning of the book in the section on storms.

90-91%: Sandstorm! Out of nowhere, a fierce sandstorm whips up and engulfs the party. If the players can't dispel the storm or somehow avoid its effects, then consult the Sandstorm Results table in the beginning of this sourcebook to determine what happens.

92-93%: A destroyed Eandroth caravan lies across the player characters' path. Dozens of dead bodies are scattered everywhere. If the group spends a day searching through the wreckage, they will find 2D6x100 gold worth of salvageable goods, but selling them to another Eandroth caravan will probably tip the Eandroth off as to where they got this "merchandise." Who hit this caravan and why are mysteries. Perhaps they were searching for some precious item the caravan was carrying. Or perhaps the caravan made enemies with the wrong bunch of people. Or maybe some mysterious and unknown menace is prowling the Wastelands. Something strong enough to take out an entire Eandroth caravan is dangerous in the extreme and could be demons, giants or bandits to Sloderi, Mologoth or a Sandwyrn.

94-95%: A Banshee's death wail breaks the silence and follows the player group! What does this Harbinger of Death know that they don't!? Or is she just hopeful? Will follow them for 1D4+1 days or until the group manages to chase her away.

96-97%: One of the travelers steps on a sand blow, revealing a hungry Lazretheg, which will have +4 on its first initiative roll. It will try to lash onto one of the humanoids, reel it in and bring him or her under the sand. For an added challenge, the G.M. may wish to make this a nest of the horrid creatures, with one Lazretheg for each or almost each player character.

98-00%: The player characters notice something gleaming on the ground before them. When they investigate, they find an Elven skull that appears to have been dipped in molten silver! The skull is quite old, and any player characters who psychically Object Reads it will learn two things. First, that this is the skull of Arhaleg Hescu, a renowned demon hunter from the Golden Age of the Elven Empire. Second, it is the possession of Rakazj Roayog, the Gargoyle Mage who slew Arhaleg so long ago. A successful Demon/Devil Lore roll will reveal that Rakazj apparently kept a collection of silvered skulls, each an enemy he personally defeated. This collection was Rakazj's pride and joy until a thief stole it and scattered them throughout the world. Ever since, Rakazj has been in search of his missing skulls, and has been especially interested in recovering this one. Is an encounter with an 9th level Gargoyle Mage (and minions?) in the group's future?

The Rocky Desert is a bleak landscape of huge boulders, pillars of stone, high cliffs, rock canyons, buttes and other stone formations. It was formed during the Big Thunder, when the Circle of Absolute Elemental Power pulverized the inner edge of the Baalgor Mountains. Entire mountains were shattered and reduced to shards of rock and gravel. Thankfully for the rest of the world, the Circle never made it past this point, so the Baalgor Mountains were spared the full brunt of this magical apocalypse, as was the rest of the world. In fact, many scholars and mages credit the tall, dense Baalgor Mountains which horseshoe around the Baalgor Wastelands for stopping the magic that devastated the forest paradise that was once Baalgor. The remaining peaks constitute the modern Baalgor Mountains. For miles along the chain's inner edge lies a vast plain of shattered mountainside that covers the land with crushed stone, huge slabs of rock and stony debris, forming odd rock canyons, buttes, tower-like pillars, rock bridges and arches, as well as hills of broken stone and plains of "ringing rocks" — jagged shards of rocks with high iron content, so when struck by a metal object, they ring out. The inner walls of the Baalgor Mountains have been blasted into sheer cliff walls and jagged peaks (the other side is gently sloping, rising up to the heavens). If one can navigate the sheer cliffs (there are a few natural passages and a few man-made trails) the Mountains are full of pastoral valleys and light scrub forests, a pleasant relief from the baked earth and rock of the Wastelands.

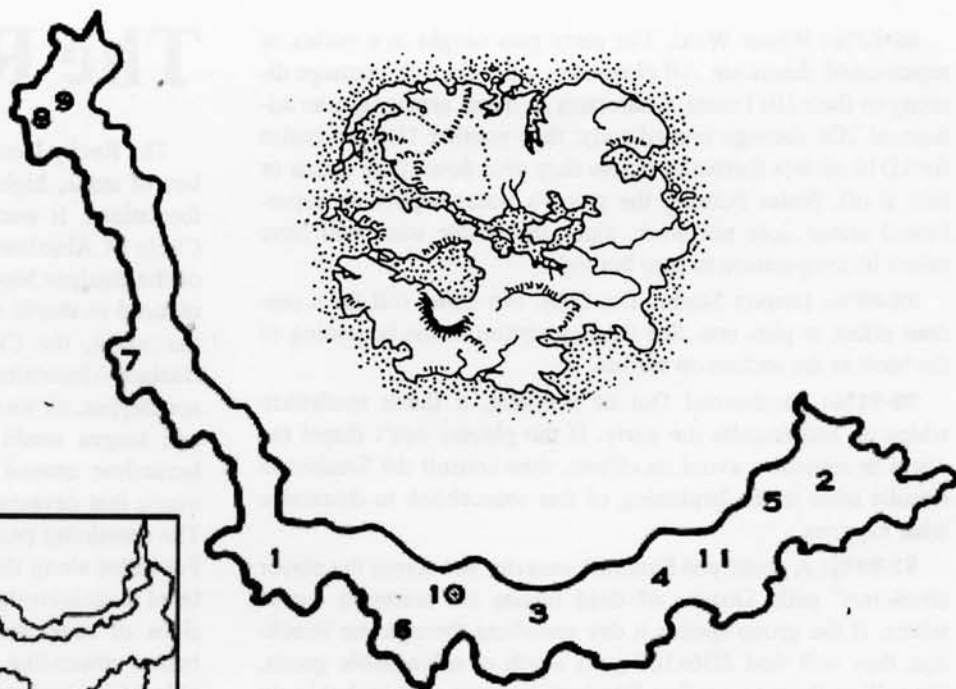
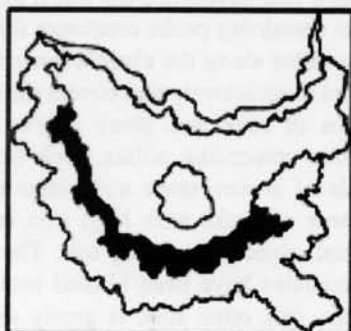
The Rocky Desert comprises about 20% of the entire Baalgor Wastelands. It somewhat resembles a massive rock quarry, for everywhere one looks are huge pieces of broken rock which have only begun to be worn down by natural erosion. As a result, the entire area still has an unnatural look and feel to it.

There are three basic zones to the Rocky Desert, each defined by the sizes of their rock debris. The zone closest to the Baalgor Mountains features enormous slabs of mountainside that cracked and fell off their parent formation during the Big Thunder. These slabs have piled on top of each other in a great jumble, stacking up at random, and sometimes by Spriggans. In fact, there are some bizarre and impressive formations, towers and bridges credited to the handiwork of these strange, rock building Faerie Folk. The elemental forces unleashed have also formed many high cliffs, narrow canyons, buttes and unnatural staircases of terraced stone for travelers to ascend on their way to the Baalgor Mountains. Parts of this are vaguely reminiscent of Earth's Utah and Arizona canyons.

Further out are massive chunks and pieces of stony debris, from the size of a melon to that of a small building, which have piled up in places to form small (200 to 400 feet/62-124 m high) hills. Especially large pieces of rock (themselves the size of one of these smaller rock hills) dot the ground. The ground between these hills and large rock formations is covered by smaller pieces of jagged stone and gravel that make the terrain uneven and difficult to traverse. There are countless crevices and loose stones where a traveler can get his foot lodged between or slip on. The vast and varied range of debris and rock formations also makes it very easy for bandits and predatory animals to hide almost anywhere. The rocky landscape is dotted by the occasional

ROCKY DESERT

- 1: MEKHED CARAVAN
- 2: TABLETOP
- 3: LEGHUR STRONGHOLD
- 4: KORGUSS STRONGHOLD
- 5: YRYMIN STRONGHOLD
- 6: BURROW OF GAZAD
- 7: BURROW OF @ZGEROD
- 8: LOIJURKAN TRIBE
- 9: ETRINAN TRIBE
- 10: SERELAN TRIBE
- 11: IDRIJIAN TRIBE



tuft of grass, chsuba roots, sprig of scrub, or cluster of weeds or vines.

Even further out and into the interior of the Baalgor Wastelands (away from the mountains) is the third and final zone of the Rocky Desert. Here are comparatively tiny pieces of rock ranging from large rocks or small boulders to gravel covered ground. The terrain is similar to the land between the rock hills and formations in the previous zone, except that it is much more even but just as difficult to travel on by foot. In the previous zone, even though the ground was very uneven, the size of the rocks were each large enough that walking "on" the largest was comparatively easy. Here, however, the rocks are so small that there really is no smooth surface free of gravel and loose stone. Worse, much of the landscape is covered with sharp, pointed stone that can jab and lacerate the feet of humanoids and animals by simply being stepped on. There are paths and strips clear of jagged stone and even comparatively free of gravel, just nice packed earth speckled with pebbles; some natural, others created by Warlocks or Spriggans. Unfortunately, these paths and trails do not go straight across this region, but weave and twist, and even go up and down, around and over the shattered rock fields, elongating the average trip by another 40% or so, distance-wise. Traveling here is dangerous and tiring. It is especially hard on hooved animals, which will always have a difficult time finding footing and avoiding cutting up their feet and lower legs. Draybacks and flying animals are best suited to this terrain. As a matter of fact, Rock Buzzers are native to this part of the desert and the mountain regions.

Notes On the Major

Population Centers In the Area

The many kinds of rock formations give the natives the perfect opportunity to build permanent homes and base camps made out of rock. Although plant life is just as scarce here as

elsewhere in the Wastelands, the Rocky Desert has plenty of places where one can find shade and protection from the wind, as well as good places to hide, and maybe even a few rocky clefts where small pools of water have collected.

For the most part, this is a region populated by individuals and very small groups. The land is simply too rough and unruly to support large villages or camps, even though there are more "permanent" homes and settlements here than any other place in the Wastelands with the exception of the Coastline and Mountains. However, the terrain is unpleasant enough that neither the giants nor the Gromek have shown much of an interest in this region, so they have not brought their bloody conflict being fought above, in the Baalgor Mountains, down to the rocky lowlands.

Major settlements in the Rocky Desert largely consist of Eandroth caravans, nonallied giant clans, small tribes of Goblins, Orcs, Ogres, Minotaurs, and Baalizads. One will find the occasional Quillback, Kobold and Troll here too, as well as the usual varied range of travelers, explorers, bandits, refugees and adventurers. In fact, raids, banditry, kidnapping and cannibalism are all common means of survival for those who call the Rocky Desert home. **Note:** Approximately 70% of the Orcs, Ogres, and Trolls inhabiting the region are cannibals and man-eaters (i.e. prey upon their own kind and most other humanoids). 50% of the Goblins are cannibals and 30% of the Kobolds, giants and Minotaurs. Only the Eandroth and Quillbacks refrain from preying on their own kind and other humanoids.

Eandroth Caravans

The Eandroth caravans of the Rocky Desert are like Eandroth caravans found elsewhere in the Baalgor Wastelands, with three notable exceptions.

First, they are smaller than in other areas. This is due mostly to the inability of the Rocky Desert to support large groups of people.

Second, the large caravans that travel through the rest of the Wastelands are unable to bring their wagons onto the rocky

plains of this area, so they leave them to the smaller, more lightly equipped caravans. Wagons just cannot traverse the-rugged terrain. Wheels crack, break and get stuck on and in the jagged rocks and crevices. This means the Eandroth of the Rocky Desert must rely on the ponderous Draybacks making travel slow and vulnerable to attack. One Eandroth tribe has settled down semi-permanently, and the other takes only quarterly trips through the area. To travel more often that, given the loads Eandroth caravans carry, is impractical.

Third, the caravans here are less mercantile in nature. In part, this is because they have fewer local people and trade partners in this hostile region, and simply do not travel as-much, so they meet fewer prospective customers. Of course, the main reason why the Eandroth do not try harder to find folks to do business with is because there just aren't that many in the area, period. And those who do live here are often craven man-eaters and primitive bands of hostile hunters. Remember too, that the Rocky desert is the farthest removed from what passes for "civilized" and inhabited areas. It is farther from the coast than even the Sandy Desert, nestled in the shadow of the mountains which cut them off from the Yin-Sloth Jungles and Old Kingdom. What reasonable people do live here are more like hunter-gatherers, sticking together for safety's sake, and doing a little business with those who happen to come their way. The rest are hermits, bandits, savages, monsters and the occasional refugee, adventurer or lost soul.

As mentioned previously, there are two main groups of Eandroth here: The **Me'khed Caravan** and the Eandroth village of **Tabletop**.

The Me'khed Caravan

This caravan consists only of Silonars and Draybacks; no wagons of any sort, since they can not navigate the rocks. Despite the tribe's expert ability to navigate this treacherous terrain, traveling here is still slow and difficult, so they only move about occasionally. Usually, they restrict any serious travel to bi-annual or quarterly trading runs to the border of the region, where they trade with other Eandroth groups and people they meet along the way, then all the way to the other side of the Rocky Desert to trade with the giants and/or Gromek. Once they have made their profit, the Me'khed find some relatively nice spot to settle down for a few months, and stay there until they pick up and move once again, often retracing their path.

The Me'khed are supremely devoted to not taking sides in anybody's struggle, even more so than most Eandroth. That is how they can justify doing business with all people and particularly both sides of the warring giant and Gromek factions who have been turning the Baalgor Mountains (and other parts of the Wastelands) into a blood-soaked slaughterhouse. However, just because the Me'khed have no problem with playing both sides of the fence, their clients sometimes express their disapproval. With each transaction the tribe makes with the giants and Gromek, both groups grow increasingly angry that the Me'khed also does business with their sworn enemy. Sooner or later, one or the other will show their displeasure by threatening and/or attacking these desert traders. How serious and deadly this confrontation may be will depend on the circumstances and on how well the capable Eandroth can defend themselves.

The Me'khed caravan consists of 66 Eandroth (50 adults, 16 children), along with a herd of 40 well-trained Silonar and 35 Draybacks, with a small, semi-permanent trading post at an oasis back in the Rocky Desert where another 20 tribesmen live. The oasis is a cluster of two dozen trees, an acre or two of tall grass and bushes, and a small bubbling pond where the Eandroth keep some livestock, a dozen Silonar, a pair of Draybacks, and raise strawberries, raspberries and a garden of chsuba roots (they sell and trade the plants to other desert folk). Water and chsuba roots are two of their biggest commodities.

For the most part, the Me'khed are 3rd to 5th level Merchants and/or Rangers, with four 2nd to 6th female Mind Mages and six 3rd to 5th Warlocks (two each, earth, fire and air). The caravan's leader is **Unom**, a 6th level Merchant and 3rd level Ranger. Unom is a Rogue male who took over the caravan a few months ago when the female rogue in charge died unexpectedly from a scorpion sting. Until another female rogue presents herself, Unom will lead the caravan. He is a major psionic who uses his powers only as a measure of last resort.

Unom, Quick Stats

Title: Leader of the Me'khed Caravan

O.C.C.: 6th level Merchant, 3rd level Ranger.

Alignment: Anarchist

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 18, M.A. 7, P.S. 15, P.P. 18, P.E. 18, P.B. 8, Spd. 14.

Hit Points: 72, **S.D.C.:** 60

Attacks per melee: 6

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, +4 to parry, dodge, roll, pull punch. +2 to save vs. magic, poison. +6% to save vs. coma/death.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand Expert & Boxing — Karate kick (2D4). Critical strike 19-20. W.P. Knife (+1 to strike, +2 to parry/throw), W.P. Archery (ROF 5, +120 feet/36 m to range, +4 to strike/parry), W.P. Sword (+2 to strike, +1 to parry), W.P. Spear (+2 to strike/parry, +1 to throw).

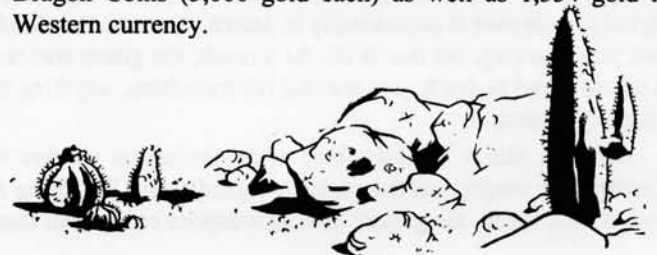
Psionics: Ectoplasm, Mind Block, Nightvision, Summon Inner Strength, Telekinetic Punch, Telekinetic Leap, Teleport Object. **I.S.P.:** 92

Weapons: Eandroth double-bladed knife (2D4) damage.

Armor: A suit of magical scale mail (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 100) enchanted to be sparkling green, weightless and fire resistant.

Magic Items: Unom owns an ancient magical crossbow named **Caalal**, a moderately famous weapon dating back to the Elf-Dwarf War. This Elven crossbow saw heavy use during the early days of the Dwarven invasion of the Baalgor Rainforest. Caalal acts as a normal crossbow except that any missile fired from it is considered a magical weapon. In addition, three times daily, Caalal can transform one of its missiles into a 7D6 fireball, lightning bolt or wind rush. The weapon is worth 500,000 gold or more in the civilized world.

Money and other equipment: Unom has four Old Kingdom Dragon Coins (5,000 gold each) as well as 1,334 gold in Western currency.



Tabletop Caravan

This Eandroth caravan has found what they consider to be a nice spot to settle down at for a while: a huge, freestanding rock that juts up from the surrounding stone like a small, flat-topped mesa. The Eandroth have named this rock "The Tabletop," and have made it their home. Normally, they live in stone huts around the base of the Tabletop, but if danger approaches (such as a giant patrol or a large monster), the villagers can scramble up a flight of stairs they have hewn into the side of the rock up-thrust leading up to the top. There, they can easily defend against any ground attacks or assailants coming up the stairs — most raiders or monsters lose interest halfway up. The gigantic hunk of mountain is so big and dense that any attack leveled against it will do nothing more than chip bits of granite off it. Even an Earthquake spell or rock to mud has little serious effect.

So far, the Tabletop Eandroth have stayed where they are for over a year (a record), and as long as nothing dislodges them, they will stay indefinitely. The village survives by hunting — birds, lizards, snakes, Sloderi, Drayback and Cyclops Spider comprise most of their diet. Ample water is harvested from the moisture that collects in the rocky crevices all around the local area, as well as from cshuba root. They also trade extensively with the Quillbacks who live in the area. These spiny scavengers have a way of finding and collecting valuables lost in the desert, and they always find some group of Eandroth (or other traders) to swap the stuff with. The Tabletop Eandroth, who already had a fair amount of coinage and various mercantile goods when they settled down, trade some of their things for items the Quillbacks are offering, like weapons, armor, and, from time to time, even a few minor magic items.

There are very few individuals of distinction within this village of 71 individuals (44 adults, 27 children). Aside from **Gronsha Boll**, the 6th level Female Rogue who runs the village, the only other noteworthy individuals are **Freelym Deryn**, a 4th level Air Warlock (I.Q. 10, M.E. 12, M.A. 8, P.S. 20, P.P. 13, P.E. 17, P.B. 9, Spd 12; H.P.: 29, S.D.C.: 35) and **Seethen Jhyheryn**, a studious and insightful 3rd level wizard (I.Q. 13, M.E. 13, M.A. 6, P.S. 15, P.P. 15, P.E. 14, P.B. 7, Spd 15; H.P.: 30, S.D.C.: 30). Seethen is not yet a rogue, but will soon be and will definitely leave the village when his wandering years come about.

Giant Strongholds

The giants of *Gurthasi Tor*, the giant city of the Baalgor Mountains, have established a number of advance camps and strongholds in the Rocky Desert. Mostly, these are to watch out for signs of Gromek advancement into this territory. So far, the Gromek have only shown casual interest in the Rocky Desert, flying patrols over it occasionally in search of victims to plunder and giants to slay, but that is all. As a result, the giants stationed here are bored to death, just waiting for something, anything exciting to happen.

Actually, this is a subtle form of psychological warfare the Gromek are waging on the giants assigned there. By flying far out of their reach, the giants' missile weapons can not hit them,

and by never showing a serious interest in the giant outposts, they are taunting and frustrating their enemy. With no Gromek to fight, the giants are becoming their own worst enemy, and have begun squabbling and brawling amongst themselves, plus morale and discipline have deteriorated badly. This is part of a larger Gromek strategy. One day, they hope to claim the Rocky Desert along with every other part of the Wastelands, but this desert has nothing of known value and minimal strategic importance, so they concern themselves with more pressing matters elsewhere in the Wastelands, the Baalgor Mountains and around Mount Nimro.

There are three main giant strongholds in this area: **Loghur Stronghold**, **Korguss Stronghold** and **Yrymin Stronghold**. They are a danger to travelers of all racial persuasions, including nonaffiliated giants. In fact, they look upon most True Giants who have not thrown in with the Kingdom of Giants forming around Mount Nimro as fools, cowards and traitors to their race. A good deal of their anger and hostilities come from frustration born out of boredom. Of course, they despise humans, Elves and Dwarves, especially citizens of the Western Empire.

Loghur Stronghold

This small (by giant standards) fortress houses 30 giant warriors (10 Nimro, 8 Jotan, 7 Algor, 4 Gigantes and 1 Cyclops advisor) and 100 assorted sub-human marauders (20 Trolls, 30 Ogres and 50 Orcs) who the giants use for cheap manual labor and cannon fodder. The stronghold itself is basically a big yard enclosed by huge slabs of rock the giants have piled up to form crude (but thick and high) stone walls. An opening in the north wall is the only entrance into the stronghold, but a huge iron gate has been built into the entrance way to keep out unwanted visitors.

Like the outer wall, the entire stronghold is built out of salvaged pieces of stone from the surrounding area, so the entire place looks rough-hewn and primitive. However, the sturdiness of the buildings cannot be questioned; most of the huts and long-houses of the strongholds have 150% the normal S.D.C. for an otherwise normal stone building, and they do appeal to the giants' overall sense of style. The Algors in particular love the look of this place, claiming nowhere else makes them feel so much at home.

Loghur Stronghold, like Gurthasi Tor, boasts a large population of what giants like to call "short ones" or "shorties" — Trolls, Ogres, and Orcs working for giant masters. Loghur was not intended to have this many hangers-on, but the giants soon discovered after they built this place that the Rocky Desert was crawling with small bands of sub-human marauders who more often than not were only fighting each other. Rather than let these "shorties" kill each other, the giants recruited a number of them to join their forces and fight the Gromek. It was not hard rallying these aggressive clans, since Trolls, Ogres and Orcs all respect brute strength, and by those terms, working for a giant is the best gig you can land. Before long, Loghur Stronghold had volunteers coming in from all over, not only in response to the worship of power, but because living under the giants offered them greater security, regular meals, supplies and purpose, as well as a perception of greater power and prestige.

Basically, these short ones are sent out on patrols to look for signs of Gromek activity (as well as others) and report back.



They are also encouraged to shake-down whomever they can and bring their valuables back to the camp, whereupon the giants divide the plunder among themselves. When back at the camp, these short ones perform all of the unpopular work required to make the camp run. This includes cooking food, latrine duty, and basic manual labor.

Aside from sending their smaller minions out to do grunt work, the giants of Loghur Stronghold have fallen idle, spending their days playing rough contact sports like Slam and Rompstomp (for more information on these games, refer to the section on Gurthasi Tor, the City of Giants), and occasionally hiking far from the stronghold itself on long patrols of the local area. Overall, morale and discipline for this group has crumbled severely, and these warriors have become little better than just a well-armed bunch of hooligans. If ever a major Gromek attack hits this place, it is unlikely that they could hold the winged invaders back.

Skddn Ros Kdda, the Cyclops advisor stationed here, is concerned by the unruliness and growing state of anarchy, but can sympathize with their feelings somewhat. He is a miscreant, 7th level soldier (I.Q. 17, M.E. 6, M.A. 12, P.S. 29, P.P. 19, P.E. 19, P.B. 6, Spd 8; H.P.: 54, S.D.C.: 70), however Kdda does find the state of this garrison deplorable. In fact, he has even considered relieving the Commander of duty, beating the hell out of the other Commanding Officers, and taking command of the garrison himself. However, Kdda is not a particularly dedicated giant patriot. Once he takes over Loghur Stronghold, he just might turn its manpower into an incredibly powerful band of

marauders. Or, he might even sell out to the Gromek. He craves power and will consider doing anything to make other people grovel before him.

Commander Stone Hammer is the leader of this band of misanthropes. He is a reasonably competent leader and well-liked and respected by his men. He is seasoned enough to know he needs to lighten up and let his men release steam under these boring and stressful conditions. While it may not be apparent to non-Military personnel, being stationed in enemy territory, miles away from reinforcements, friends, allies and loved ones, while expecting and waiting for enemy incursions, is extremely stressful. The waiting can drive men mad. And he suspects that's why the Gromek are taunting them with fly-bys. In addition to slacking off on discipline and letting his troops have some fun, he has dispatched some long-range reconnaissance teams hoping they can find some adversary he can send his men against. In addition, he has gathered together two volunteer teams; one to go out in the wilderness to hunt Mologoth, the other to kill and return with the head of a Sandwyrm. He has also dispatched a recruitment team to find and try to bring other True Giants to their cause (they've already recruited one Jotan).

Stone Hammer is an aberrant Jotan of unusual intelligence (for a Jotan) and even temperament. He is a 7th level Ranger (I.Q. 12, M.E. 17, M.A. 10, P.S. 40, P.P. 23, P.E. 24, P.B. 7, Spd 12 and 59 Hit Points and 90 S.D.C.) with W.P. Sword and W.P. Chain.

Korguss Stronghold

This fortress is constructed similarly to Loghur Stronghold, with high walls of piled stone, stone buildings, and a large main gate on the north wall. The chief difference between this outpost and the Loghur Stronghold is this one has a much larger population. It houses 40 giants (10 Jotan, 10 Algor, 20 Nimro) and 264 assorted Minotaurs, Trolls, Ogres and Orcs. And, the numbers of the "shorty" hangers-on just keep climbing. Every month, waves of fresh volunteers arrive to replenish those who have fallen in battle, and to keep the ranks swelling. At its current rate of growth, Korguss Stronghold will have over 1,000 shorties working for it within a year.

All of this manpower is good for fighting campaigns, but with no ready enemy to engage, many of these smaller troops grow restless and demand some kind of action. The Korguss leaders have taken their cue from the degradation that is affecting Loghur Stronghold, and they don't want that to happen here. So, many of these "shorties" are sent out to patrol the surrounding area, and up into the neighboring mountains charged with finding signs of Gromek activity, shaking down locals and travelers for tribute, and hunting down monsters. In fact the Commander is seriously declaring war on a band of 15-20 Gigantes up in the Mountains just to give his troops some sense of purpose. The Gigantes' only crime has been refusing to join the Giant Kingdom and remaining independent.

Meanwhile, the real big task given to the short ones is venturing into the Stony Desert and waylaying other bands of marauders and travelers. This is supposed to keep the overall population of the Korguss battle-group down, since many shorties are expected never to return. So far, however, just the opposite has occurred. Due to the expert training these troops have received from their giant overlords, these hordes have been overwhelming other marauder groups and taking many of them prisoner. The prisoners are then pressed into service on behalf of the giants, or kept as live stock to feed the troops! This, in turn, gives the troops more combat experience, increased confidence (which helps them in combat) and encourages other "independents" to join this successful group that is quickly becoming notorious in these parts. While this is a great way to increase manpower, it only worsens Korguss' seemingly unstoppable population explosion. So far they have managed, but vital supplies, including food, water and metal are constantly in short supply.

Oddly enough, the giants of Korguss do not want to turn away their "shorties." For one, they like the success and sense of power it gives them. For another, they fear if they start turning away some, others will stop coming and some of their current troops might desert or turn against them. Furthermore, these troops could be genuinely valuable combatants in the war against the Gromek (Note: 25%-45% are likely to desert when faced with real life and death combat).

The notoriety and growth of the Korguss Stronghold has not escaped the Gromek legions who are concerned by what they see, to the point of debating whether or not they should lay siege to it, and perhaps the Loghur Stronghold as well. If so, it will be at least a few months before they take action, by which time the number of small ones at Korguss should have doubled.

Korguss Stronghold is run by five giant officers who each control an 8-giant squad. Each of these giant commanders is a

5th level soldier. Three are Nimro, the other two are Algor. All have roughly average statistics for their race, except all have above average intelligence and mental affinity (they are natural leaders and good planners). The smartest one among them is **Erskin Dredlo**, a Nimro Mercenary who is as crafty as he is ruthless.

Yrymin Stronghold

This is the most unusual stronghold of the giant contingency in the Baalgor Wastelands, for it houses only three giants, each of whom has volunteered to serve the honor of the fledgling Nimro Kingdom.

This stronghold had been staffed by 20 giants at one point, but they were pulled out and reassigned to fight in the Baalgor Mountains. For a while, the fortress lay silent and empty until three giant adventurers showed up, rebuilt the place (it had been in a state of terrible disrepair) and announced that they were holding up part of the Nimro Kingdom of Giants' territorial claims in the Rocky Desert. These adventurers are **Goliko Edrex**, a Nimro Fire Warlock, **Lldirrn**, a Cyclops Long Bowman, and **Quake**, an Algor Mercenary Warrior.

The giant soldiers at the other Strongholds have no idea who these three are or exactly what to make of them. None of the giants stationed in the region knows where they came from or what they really want. Only that they are each incredibly tough, not to be trifled with, and are all devoted to one another. That they would come out of the blue, rebuild an old garrison and staff it themselves is really strange. Giants being giants, they tend to view any strange thing with a hearty dose of suspicion.

The Fortress of Three, as this group likes to call itself, does not mind the notoriety. In fact, they rather enjoy it. Despite whatever nasty rumors might be floating around about these adventurers, the truth is that they are all fiercely loyal to the Nimro Kingdom of Giants and will die in support of the cause. They had been adventuring together deep in the Yin-Sloth Jungles when they heard about the formation of a Kingdom of Giants. They returned to Mount Nimro and met with the leaders there, asking that they be put to some use for the betterment of the fledgling kingdom. When they were told that the forces in the Baalgor Wastelands could use some help, they headed off at once, bound straight for the Rocky Desert.

When they got there, they saw that the Yrymin Stronghold in the Rocky Desert was abandoned, so they took it upon themselves to man it (the giants back at Nimro assumed the three would join one of the other base camps). Moreover, they did not particularly care for soldiering, so they decided to strike out on their own as an elite unit, free to perform whatever missions they saw fit. They reconstructed this old fortress and have established themselves as a force to be reckoned with. They live and fight as a unit and have already taken down three Gromek scouts and attacked two Gromek patrols (the winged warriors were caught off guard, believing the Stronghold deserted and were taken by surprise by long-range magic and lightning bolt attacks). These giants use a combination of magic spells, Cyclopien lightning shafts and enchanted weapons to blast flying foes from the sky. Rumor has it that the top Gromek warlords of the Baalgor Wastelands have put a hefty bounty on the heads of all within the Fortress of Three. This amuses these giants to no end, and they openly encourage "any enemy of the

Nimro Kingdom to come forward and try to collect." So far, there have been no takers. None that lived, anyway.

Goliko Edrex, Quick Stats

Goliko is the leader of the Fortress of Three, but only because the other two are not really interested in the position. An aggressive, power-hungry Nimro, Goliko loves the freedom he and his friends have to terrorize Gromek, and anybody else! He is also a patriot of the first order, and will put the good of the Nimro Kingdom before himself and all other concerns. He respects the giants at the other Strongholds but sees himself and his teammates as a Special Operations Strike Force. Goliko has papers from the giant High Command at Nimro identifying the three as soldiers of the Kingdom of Giants, he just hasn't seen any need to make a trip to one of those strongholds and identify themselves. All three like the idea that the Gromek and others in the area are kept guessing about who they are and what their agenda might be. They believe it gives them a foot up on the enemy.

O.C.C.: 8th level Fire Warlock.

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 17, M.A. 14, P.S. 23, P.P. 20, P.E. 28, P.B. 15, Spd. 11.

Hit Points: 60, S.D.C.: 70

Attacks per melee: 5 by hand to hand or two via spell magic.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +5 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with impact and pull punch, +10 to damage, +7 to save vs magic and poison, and +26% to save vs coma/death.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic — Karate kick (2D4). W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike/parry/throw), W.P. Chain (+3 to strike, +2 to parry)

Magic Spells: Blinding Flash, Fiery Touch, Stench of Hades, Cloud of Ash, Darkness, Tongue of Flame, Circle of Flame, Fireball, Wall of Flame, Flame Friend, Fuel Flame, Mini-Fireballs, Eat Fire, Screaming Wall of Flame, Wall of Ice, Eternal Flame, Flame of Life, Fire Whip, Fire Sponge, River of Lava, Ten Foot Wheel of Fire, Burst Into Flame, Drought, and Plasma Bolt.

P.P.E.: 172

Weapons: Giant-sized ball and chain (4D6 damage). Goliko would do almost anything to get his hands on a magically flaming ball and chain, even if it were not giant-sized.

Armor: Goliko wears no armor, but does wear a magical Ironhide Ring that gives him a natural A.R. of 14 as long as he wears it. (Note: This ring will magically re-size itself to fit any wearer from gnome to giant).

Magic Items: Goliko wears another ornate magical ring that boosts his spell level by two. Legend has it that there are three other rings just like his, one for water, earth, and air. It is said that whoever possesses all of these rings at once will gain magic powers beyond mortal reckoning (i.e. all elemental spells and no True Elemental will harm him). It is Goliko's secret desire to one day seek out these other three rings and complete the set.

Money and other equipment: 25,000 gold in rubies, diamonds and emeralds.

Lldirrn, Quick Stats

Lldirrn is the archetypal sniper: calm, cool and collected, and entirely dispassionate about the lethal trade he has become so good at. Lldirrn is a terror with the abundant Cyclops Lightning weaponry and the magical longbow he carries with him at all times. He is a Cyclops, which tricks some into thinking he might not be very good at long-range marksmanship, but he is absolutely deadly to anybody within bow-shot range, as many careless Gromek have learned the hard way. In addition, he knows the secrets of making Lightning Shafts (passed down from his father) and has built a forge in the Stronghold where he constantly replenishes his supply. There are currently two dozen javelins, and 96 arrows; all are maximum damage.

O.C.C.: 8th level Cyclops Long Bowman.

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 9, M.A. 15, P.S. 29, P.P. 17, P.E. 21, P.B. 10, Spd. 8.

Hit Points: 53, S.D.C.: 80

Attacks per melee: 5 hand to hand, 8 with a long bow.

Bonuses: +4 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with impact and pull punch, +16 to damage, +3 to save vs magic and poison, +12% to save vs coma/death, and +4% to all skills.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Expert — Karate kick (2D4). W.P. Archery (+5 to strike/parry), W.P. Targeting (+6 to strike), W.P. Sword (+3 to strike/parry, +2 to throw), and W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike/parry/throw).

Weapons: Lldirrn's magical, giant-sized long bow was crafted especially for him on the Isle of the Cyclops. Intertwined with strands of indestructible metal, the wielder of this weapon must have a P.S. of at least 18 to even pull back the bowstring. Those who can fire this bow, however, can add their P.S. damage bonus to the damage of the shots they fire, up to +10. The bow also shoots an extra 100 feet (30.5 m) per P.S. point above 20. Lldirrn wears a V-shaped double quiver across his back that holds a total of 48 arrows (2D4x10 more are stored in a secret place at the Stronghold at all times).

Armor: Giant-sized Leather of Iron (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 212)

Magic Items: Lldirrn wears a large belt satchel with a permanent Dimensional Pocket spell cast on it. In it he keeps much of his personal effects, as well as several extra bundles of ordinary (48) and Lightning arrows (48), a spare long bow (ordinary), 2D4 darts, a skin of water, and some hard candy.

Money and other equipment: 20,000 gold, also kept in his magical satchel.

Quake, Quick Stats

The wild man of the group, Quake is armed with a powerful lust for combat. This fierce Algor tends to lose control of himself in the heat of battle, taking unnecessary risks, refusing to retreat from battle (only his two cohorts can usually talk sense into him), and routinely takes on the strongest foe within reach (even if he isn't being attacked by that individual). Quake probably would have died as a result of his rashness long ago, but Goliko and Lldirrn keep him in line and watch his back. Three work like a well-oiled machine of war.

O.C.C.: 8th level Mercenary Warrior.

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 7, M.E. 13, M.A. 6, P.S. 35 (supernatural), P.P. 25, P.E. 26, P.B. 6, Spd. 24.

Hit Points: 66, S.D.C.: 95

Insanities: Semi-functional mindless aggression. Plus Quake hates clergy of all kinds, for reasons he has not disclosed even to his partners.

Attacks per melee: 8!

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +7 strike, +12 to parry and dodge, +4 to disarm, +5 to pull punch, +6 to roll with impact, +24 to damage, +6 to save magic and poison, +3 to save vs Horror Factor.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand Expert, Boxing & Wrestling — Body block/tackle (3D6 damage +P.S. bonus), pin/incapacitate 18-20, crush/squeeze (3D6 +P.S. bonus), body flip/throw (2D6 +P.S. bonus), and KO/stun 17-20.

W.P. Sword (+3 to strike and parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Shield (+2 to strike, +3 to parry), W.P. Chain (+3 to strike, +2 to parry), W.P. Battle Axe (+3 to strike, +2 to parry and throw), W.P. Pole Arm (+4 to damage, +3 to strike and parry, +2 to throw).

Weapons: Quake fights with a non-magical, giant-sized battle axe (does 5D6 damage), a flamberge (4D6), a ball and chain (4D6) and a Berdiche (4D6+4).

Armor: Quake wears a giant-sized suite of magically weightless, noiseless double mail (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 55). He considers this armor disposable and will not try to repair it.

Magic Items: None.

Money and other equipment: None. Quake typically spends whatever he earns, so he has saved nothing. He also relies on the charity of his team mates to help him out of money troubles.

Baalizad Burrows

The tunnels and burrows of the Baalizad create an underground labyrinth hidden below the huge rocks, boulders and mesas that cover the landscape of the Rocky Desert. Like Dwarven and Kobold underground lairs, Baalizad burrows are rather intricate and complex, although comparatively crude. While Baalizad are not overtly aggressive and hostile toward surface people, they see any intrusion of their burrows as an invasion and respond with deadly force in the defense of their home. Their tunnels are all the more dangerous to surface dwellers because they tend to be maze-like and confusing, making it nearly impossible for outsiders, other than Dwarves, Kobolds and other subterranean people, to navigate them. There are many places throughout a Baalizad burrow where defenders can hide and set up ambushes, deadfall traps and other nasty surprises. Many an invader has perished in their confusing tunnel networks, while others wisely decide to make a hasty retreat, and any invader should think twice before charging into one.

All this being said, Baalizad are generally open and accepting of others, provided those others are not too aggressive. These poor, displaced aliens from another dimension are misunderstood and presumed to be monsters because of their frightening appearance. The truth is they are intelligent, curious and caring beings who find most of the so-called "monster races" too war-like and lawless for their taste. They find humans, Gnomes, Elves, Dwarves, Troglodytes and others more to their liking. However, the Baalizad have suffered injustice and slaughter at the hands of humans who frequently assume they are monsters or demons. Rather than ask questions or try to make contact,

they assume the worst and attack the Baalizad on sight, out of fear alone. Meanwhile Evildoers, slavers, marauders and other evil beings have targeted the aliens as potential slaves, fodder for the gladiatorial arena, victims to plunder, another food source, and monsters to be hunted for sport. Despite all this, most Baalizad press forward in their hopes of adapting to this hostile world, making allies of humans, Elves, Dwarves and other "civilized" surface dwellers, and forging a new and better life on this planet.

Ironically, as defensible and safe as Baalizad burrows can be, many tribes are slowly but surely migrating to the surface. The exact reason for this transition is unknown, but it is clear that many clans are choosing life above ground, rather than under it. One likely reason is their goal to establish friendly relations with surface dwellers. Another may be the belief that they can somehow escape the mysterious "Demons of the Deep" they so fear. This means the Baalizad will have to learn to deal with the myriad people and cultures of surface folk if they are to survive. Those who do not become food for the vultures, and learning to live on the surface may play a major role in the survival of their race.

There are two primary groups of Baalizad in the Rocky Desert: the **Burrow of Gazad** and the **Burrow of Ozoerod**. For generations these two groups have had nothing to do with each other, but as their tunnel networks expand and gradually come closer to each other, they are bound to accidentally meet or connect. Whether or not these groups pull together or move farther apart remains to be seen. Apart, both groups are more vulnerable and may eventually die at the hands of surface people, villains, monsters and animals. Together, they might successfully dominate a small, localized region of the Wastelands, securing their safety at least in the short-term. Unfortunately, it seems only a matter of time before some powerful Warlord will arrive to steal their land and enslave or destroy them in his own mad scheme for power or to bolster his reputation.

Hopefully these two tribes will not clash and begin fighting among themselves. Any such conflict will go largely unnoticed by surface folk, because most of it would take place underground and in the distant and desolate Baalgor Wastelands. However, the Baalizad are likely to recruit the help of some surface-goers in their struggle, which could spread the conflict, to some small degree, to the surface. **Note:** See the section on the people and monsters of the Baalgor Wasteland for more details and **character stats** for these beings.

Burrow of Gazad

There are 574 Baalizad living here, nearly all of them adults. The Gazad collective has been tunneling through the earth for centuries, hollowing out an expansive tunnel network like ants, living in one locale for a few decades, and then moving on by digging tunnels through the solid earth and rock. To prevent any hostile animals or invaders from following them, the Gazad routinely collapse their travelling tunnels behind them every half-mile or so, but they have left numerous large underground dwellings and winding, intersecting tunnel networks behind them. Many of these have been discovered and occupied by Minotaurs, lazy Goblins, giant spiders, and other non-Baalizad creatures.

The Gazad tribe have rarely had prolonged contact with hostile people or monsters, something not many other Baalizard can say. Either tremendous luck or precognition on the part of the Gazad responsible for determining the direction of the ever moving and expanding burrows is responsible for their quiet and peaceful existence. Since they have not had to defend themselves very often, they tend to be open and trusting when they do meet other subterranean people, such as Kobolds, Troglydtes, or some of the other unknown and uncataloged dwellers of the Palladium underworld.

The current Gazad burrow is a huge cave-like structure that breaks through to the surface right at the top. Those who would enter from the surface must go through a wide, winding passageway that corkscrews down into the earth for nearly 200 feet (61 m) before opening into the central chamber of the Gazad burrow. Since the Gazad are not particularly concerned about their security, surface-goers can enter the preliminary tunnel of the burrow and make it all the way to the central chamber without even meeting a single Baalizard guard. Granted, if one came into the burrow and started trouble, he would be set upon by several hundred angry Baalizard, but until one makes a clearly hostile move towards one of the collective, chances are the Baalizard of this burrow will treat outsiders with friendly curiosity. A few may ask what the outsiders' business is in the burrow, and may even suggest they not stay and/or should go, but that's about all. If the interlopers are kind and perform some service (healing, tell stories, entertainment, create rock-food, help defend them, etc.), the Baalizard are likely to befriend them and allow them to stay for at least a little while.

All that's about to change. Numerous hostile parties in the Rocky Desert have noticed this burrow, including giant soldiers (and their sub-human minions), certain Gromek scouts, and numerous Quillbacks. While the Quillbacks mean no trouble (they only want to explore this burrow and have some fun), the giants and Gromek will pose a serious threat. The Gromek are likely to send one or two "sevens" down into this burrow to see what is going on. Likewise, the local giants will probably send 20 or 30 of their "shorties" (Trolls, Ogres, Orcs and other, comparatively small, allies and minions) into the burrow to investigate. The Ogres and other aggressive minions will raise all kinds of trouble and enjoy raiding, capturing Baalizard slaves and killing. When the hostile scouts and raiding parties from either of these groups go into the Gazad burrow, they will certainly start a fight they cannot finish, and will get massacred — even the gentle and trusting Gazad tribe will recognize the danger these invaders represent and fight to protect their burrow and loved ones. This will only provoke the giants or Gromek to send a large force to excavate the hole and kill or enslave every last Baalizard in the collective. Or at least launch a major battle that they may lose, and send the Baalizard survivors fleeing.

Such a task will not be easy. The Baalizard themselves are extremely tough, and can very quickly dig out a series of defensive tunnels that no surface invader could penetrate without sustaining severe casualties. Most likely, any giant or Gromek incursion won't actually result in the destruction or enslavement of the Gazad tribe, but it will make these otherwise trusting souls suspicious of all surface-goers, regardless of who they are or how they treat them.



There are no clear-cut leaders, heroes, or otherwise distinguished individuals in the Gazad collective. Perhaps if the burrow was pushed into a war with surface-goers, then certain individuals would emerge to lead the group and coordinate its defense.

Burrow of Ozoerod

Only marginally smaller than the Gazad burrow, it currently has 499 individuals. Like all Baalizad, the tribe fled to the surface to escape its ancient persecutors, a mysterious group of monsters they call "the Demons of the Deep." In fear of their lives, the Ozoerod tribe (like so many others who apparently never made it) burrowed straight up, hell-bent to make a new life on the surface where the Demons of the Deep (hopefully) will not follow them. To ensure this, they collapsed every tunnel and burrow behind them, never looked back, and have not been troubled by demons since. Ironically, the Baalizad people have been escaping from these "Demons of the Deep" for generations, and all know the horrifying stories and legends, but no living Baalizad has ever even seen one (leading some surface scholars to wonder if the "demons" are real or imaginary).

The Ozoerod tribe reached the surface thirty years ago, but within a few short months, their dreams of freedom from persecution were shattered. The reception they got from surface dwellers was violent and murderous. Naive and trusting, this collective opened their arms to the people of the Wasteland and fell under immediate and constant attacks. No sooner had the tribe made it to the surface then they were set upon by giants, Gromek, Minotaurs, Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, humans and even jittery Eandroth (Quillbacks generally leave the Baalizad alone because they are not aggressive and the average Quillback could never take on a Baalizad). It would seem their decision to abandon life underground to evade the "Demons of the Deep" and find *sanctuary* on the surface was not the solution they had hoped for.

The Baalizad's fearsome "looking" appearance has marked the compassionate and tolerant beings as yet another monstrous invader — a new enemy or rival to be feared and destroyed. Tragically, humans and the monster races alike have had this knee jerk reaction, and most still attack with deadly force rather than ask questions or pause to see what these new "monsters" might be up to. If they did, they would see that the Baalizad are, generally, peace-loving creatures who are looking for friends and allies — not warring or maniacal monsters. Unfortunately, their terrible, demonic appearance (monstrous even by the standards of most of the so-called "monster races") works against them, instantly evoking fear, misunderstanding and prejudice. This prejudice and fear is so extreme and unreasonable, that many humans, Orcs and Goblins alike insist the creatures are really demons and slay them on sight. Those who have learned better often subjugate the Baalizad into slavery, force them to fight in the gladiatorial arena, hunt them for sport, or, as is the case with the Gromek and many Ogres, and giants, consider them to be a potential rival better eradicated now, while they are still weak and small in numbers than later.

Although the Ozoerod tribe defended themselves valiantly, they lost nearly half their number in just their first few months on the surface. To save themselves, they retreated back under the earth, building numerous defensive tunnels, false chambers



and deadfall rooms (underground living chambers designed to lure invaders in, but can be collapsed easily to trap or bury unfriendlies alive). These subterranean dwellings are comparatively close to the surface (only a hundred yards/meters or so underground) in hopes that the legendary "Demons of the Deep" will not find them. Since having gone back underground, and coming to the surface only at night or in small numbers to quietly explore the surface, most of the surface beings have assumed the Baalizard to be destroyed or so few in number as to no longer be a threat. As a result, few come looking for them and the tribe has had a chance to reorganize, recuperate and replenish their numbers.

The Baalizard of the Ozoerod tribe have never forgotten or forgiven the harsh treatment they received at the hands of Baalgor surface folk, and have become hardened and more predatory themselves. They view all non-Baalizard as potential enemies and attack at the slightest provocation or hint of danger. A few even strike out in spite. Giants and Gromek have earned the place of "mortal enemies" among the Ozoerod tribesmen who often waylay and kill scouts, individuals and small groups — their remains are often found hideously dismembered and lacerated by Baalizard claws.

Ironically, the hostility these Baalizard show the surface world will only make life considerably more difficult for them, giving credence to the false stories that they are monsters. At this point they don't care. If the world sees them as "monsters," so be it, they will be monsters! Surprisingly, Dwarves living in the Baalgor Wastelands made the first effort to try to understand these misbegotten refugees, and have recently been joined by Elves and a tiny handful of human scholars and adventurers. All have been amazed at what they have learned about the Baalizard, but the world at large still sees them as horrible monsters. The tribesmen of Ozoerod wisely regard all surface beings with suspicion and fear. **Note:** Most people in the rest of the Palladium World have never seen nor heard of these beings. Most will assume them to be demons and will respond with fear and violence, and attack to kill.

Ckurlka, Quick Stats

The leader of this burrow is a particularly huge warrior named **Ckurlka** who has killed many surface-goers in the last few years. Not only is he the fiercest warrior of the burrow, but also its smartest planner. If Ckurlka were eliminated, the other Ozoerod tribesmen would flounder for a few weeks until another leader presented him or herself.

O.C.C.: The equivalent of a 6th level Mercenary Fighter.

Alignment: Anarchist

Attributes: I.Q. 21, M.E. 15, M.A. 15, P.S. 24, P.P. 11, P.E. 30, P.B. 6, Spd. 5 running or digging.

Hit Points: 55, **S.D.C.:** 95

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses: +4 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +9 to damage, +3 to roll with impact, +2 to pull punch, +8 to save vs magic and poison, and +30% to save vs coma/death.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic and Wrestling — Snap kick (1D6), pin/incapacitate 18-20, critical strike 18-20 and breathe fire (but can only do this three times a day).

Weapons: None. Ckurlka's large, lobster-like claws inflict 2D6 on a swipe and 3D6 when crushing something in their grip. Also, Ckurlka, like all Baalizard, can breathe forth a stream of

superheated plasma from his mouths once per melee (up to three times daily) that works like a primitive flame-thrower. This does 3D6 S.D.C. and has a range of 30 feet (9 m). Anything hit by this plasma will continue to burn, doing 3D6 S.D.C. per melee for 1D4 melees until extinguished.

Armor: None, aside from natural A.R. of 14.

Magic Items: None.

Money and other equipment: None.

Some Notes on the Demons of the Deep

What little the Baalizard people now about the Demons of the Deep they know from their tradition of folk tales and oral history. According to Baalizard legend, these demons enslave, torture, kill and devour all subterranean creatures and have persecuted their people for thousands of years. Their reasons and motives for such cruelty are unknown. Baalizard tales refer to them as "legions of demons with souls as dark as the depths from whence they came." Finally, there came a day that the surviving Baalizard tribes gathered and proclaimed their only chance for survival was to make a new life on the surface. Their reasoning was based on the fact that, according to legends, the Demons of the Deep will not go up on the surface for any reason. It is said that 21 tribes made their way to the surface with the evil ones in hot pursuit. Their exodus would take many years and today, only *two* tribes are known to have made it to the surface. The others are presumed lost.

Dwarves, Kobolds and other known subterranean people have never heard of these demons, nor have they ever had any sort of encounter with them. Not even Dwarven legends or the *Tristine Chronicles*, both of which go back tens of thousands of years, make any mention of any subterranean demons other than the Old Ones. Then again, neither makes any mention of the Baalizard who apparently live much deeper in the bowels of the planet. The Baalizard point out that most of the subterranean people in the known world also venture into the light of day and live close to the surface, a place, for reasons unknown, the demons fear to tread. They also add that whomever encounters these terrible monsters are enslaved or destroyed, so of course the Dwarves and surface people would not know about them.

Scholars refute this assumption, pointing out no such demon is known to any people on the planet. Furthermore, a race of tunneling demons does not quite click with other races of demons. No demon hunter or priest of light (or darkness) has ever heard of an exclusively subterranean race of demons, much less one that has been hounding other subterranean folk.

Perhaps, then, these "demons" could be another unknown race of underground beings more powerful than the Baalizard, and exceedingly hostile. Certainly, this would explain how they may have been able to make a race as strong as the Baalizard run in fear. After all, the Palladium World is full of fantastic and terrible beings, and a weird underground race of invincible monsters certainly would not be out of the question. All that would remain to prove this theory would be for somebody to actually encounter these "demons" and verify their existence. However, no Baalizard is willing to lead such an expedition, and none of the known subterranean races have the capability of tunnelling that deep into the planet without spending years to do so. And

once down that deep, how, exactly, does one find these demons? Practitioners of magic, Warlocks in particular, scoff at the mere suggestion. They insist no such demons exist. The Baalizard are fleeing from phantoms — boogie-men that were never real to begin with. To prove their point, they explain that no elemental being (Earth Elementals being able to travel through the Earth) knows of any such beings, and if anyone would, it is they! The debate goes on. **Note:** Such discussions occur only with a select handful of humans, Elves, Dwarves and Baalizard in and around the Baalgor Wastelands. Remember, most people don't even know the Baalizard exist, although this may change a bit with the appearance of the Gazad tribe. Furthermore, it is possible that another Baalizard tribe or two *may* pop up in the Baalgor Wastelands or southwestern Old Kingdom. Assuming that is, that more of the 21 original tribes are still on the run and hope to find refuge on the surface. These others may have stopped running to live quiet, happy lives deep in the earth, or, if the Demons of the Deep are real, may have all been enslaved or slaughtered.

Minotaur Catacombs of the Rocky Desert

The network of caves, tunnels and catacombs of the Rocky Desert are a roughly a 50/50 mix of natural formations and artificial constructs. Half of them are old Dwarven strongholds and the occasional Kobold or Troglodyte dwelling, most of which (but not all) were abandoned long ago. The other half are natural caves and tunnels originally formed by underground rivers, springs and other geological forces. Remember, this region was once a lush tropical paradise that had many surface and underground lakes, rivers and tributaries, but all above the ground and most (90%) of those underground were dried up by the legendary Circle of Elemental Power that turned a paradise into the Wastelands.

A number of people, particularly the monster races, use the caves, tunnels and passages as domiciles, hideouts, and underground villages. Trolls, Goblins and Spriggans are especially prone to adopting such underground dwellings, but bandits, nomads, explorers, hunters and individuals of all races sometimes seek refuge underground. Such people typically use caves and tunnels that are comparatively close to the surface, and are often temporary shelters, gathering places or hideaways.

Minotaurs, on the other hand, have laid claim to many of the deeper and more elaborate underground networks (deliberately steering clear of those close to the surface to avoid contact with other races). Several different Minotaur tribes, large to tiny, have managed to claim and rebuild these underground habitats without surface dwellers having any idea of how many may actually live underground. Thanks to the remote location of the Rocky Desert, few invaders, slavers, treasure hunters, explorers or meddlers ever come to this inhospitable region, allowing the Minotaurs to live in peaceful seclusion. As a result, there are more Minotaurs in this region than any other part of the Baalgor Wastelands, and perhaps the world.

The majority of the Minotaurs living under the Rocky Desert are hermits and loners who live in isolation or wander the tunnels in small groups, family clans (4-16 members), or tiny tribes

(20-60 members). Although rumors persist about entire cities of Minotaurs that exist somewhere in the Land of the Damned, the Baalgor Minotaurs are reclusive by nature and prefer to live in small, independent and intimate communities. True, if one counted all these Rocky Desert Minotaurs together, they *would* qualify as a sizeable community, or even a city, but they do not operate as a unified force, but literally hundreds of small, independent groups, clans and individuals. These groups are generally friendly toward one another, engage in limited trade, exchange information and may even come to one another's aid (years of persecution and guilt have made all Minotaurs part of an unofficial fraternity), however, they respect each others' individuality and sovereignty. That having been said, there are four sizeable (for Minotaurs) settlements rumored to exist far below the surface of the Rocky Desert. These are the **Loijurkan Tribe**, the **Etrinan Tribe**, the **Serelan Tribe** and the **Idrijian Tribe**. Most surface-goers dismiss the notion of these powerful groups of Minotaurs as fanciful folklore or exaggeration from the mouths of storytellers, drunkards and paranoids. This is because there is not one documented encounter with any large Minotaur group in the Rocky Desert, above or below the ground. Nor is there any record of encounters with groups going by any of the names noted above. Despite being dismissed out of hand, these four Minotaur tribes do exist and are as powerful as the stories have suggested.

Note: Like most other people, some of these Minotaurs are good, some are evil, and some merely want to live their lives in quiet isolation, but none of them are to be trifled with. Pound for pound, these Minotaur tribes may be the most powerful groups of people living within the Baalgor Wastelands. Ironic, since they are virtually invisible to the outside world.

The Loijurkan Tribe

This tribe is perhaps the most ancient group of Minotaurs in the Baalgor Wastelands, with a lineage dating back 10,000 years, all the way to the beginning of the Elf-Dwarf War! The tribe's history probably extends even further back than that, but there is no record of it. Today, the Loijurkan number about 280.

All this time, the Loijurkan have been ruled by a secretive and sinister cabal of priests of darkness who rule with foul intent and iron fists. These priests worship *Utu, the Lord of the Dead*, and strive to provide their lord with as many "new arrivals" as they can. In other words, these priests find the act of murder to be a form of holy tribute to their god, so they actively encourage the rest of the tribe to locate and kill non-Minotaurs. The priests believe that if their tribe kills enough people, then Utu will reward them all. So far, though, all the Loijurkan's murderous ways has produced is a big pile of bodies and a legacy of evil.

The Loijurkan death cult has made this tribe feared by all subterranean folk in the vicinity, and even some of the Orc, Ogre and giant tribes have heard of them. After all, the Loijurkan have a well-deserved reputation as homicidal maniacs, so Baalizard and even other Minotaurs try to give these people a wide berth. In the meantime, the tribe relentlessly scours the catacombs of the underworld and makes short runs to the surface to look for additions to their body count. How and when their murderous spree will end is unknown. Perhaps, one day, a group of champions will oppose these villains. Or perhaps they will run out of victims and begin preying on themselves. What-

ever the cause, if this tribe dies out, the rest of the Rocky Desert's inhabitants will breathe a sigh of relief.

The Loijurkan tribe is led by the high priest of its death cult, a diabolic, 10th level Priest of Darkness named **Keisel the Undying** (I.Q. 13, M.E. 18, M.A. 18, P.S. 18, P.P. 10, P.E. 30, P.B. 5, Spd 7; Hit Points: 80, S.D.C.: 64). Over the years, Keisel's fascination with the dead has grown into an overriding obsession that includes a fascination with all forms of death. Conversely, signs of life, such as sunlight, running water and lush vegetation, make him sick to his stomach, and for every minute he spends exposed to any such influence, he must save vs nonlethal poison (14 or higher) or suffer from acute nausea. While afflicted like this, Keisel's number of attacks per melee go down to half, he loses all of his combat bonuses, and makes all skill rolls at -20%.

The Etrinan Tribe

Early in the Elf-Dwarf War, an army of Dwarves built a large underground stronghold where they launched many bloody campaigns against Elves. One day these Dwarves encountered the large and powerful Etrinan Minotaur tribe and the two became friends and allies. These Minotaurs fought alongside the Dwarves for generations, and to show their gratitude, the Dwarves gave the tribe eight extremely powerful rune weapons.

Eventually, however, the tide of the Great War turned against the Dwarves, and as their defense collapsed, Elven soldiers stormed the underground strongholds. This particular location was the site of an incredibly bloody battle that resulted in the

destruction of the entire Dwarven army and the Elves who attacked them. All told, nearly 50,000 perished in that battle, 79% of the Etrinan tribe along with them, but when the fury stopped, it was the Minotaurs who were the sole survivors.

The Minotaur survivors took their own rune weapons, gathered up a few dozen others, along with some tapestries, statuary and other mementos of their dear Dwarven allies, and sealed off what was left of the stronghold. The tribe had lost both friends and their spirit to live. They vowed never again to meddle in the affairs of others and remained closed off from the world from that day forward.

Disease, misfortune and solitude have seen the Etrinan tribe slowly dwindling in number. Today they are fewer than 100, many of whom are old and dying — there are only 32 young members left. The tribal elders have given each of the original greater rune weapons awarded the tribe to the eight most promising young warriors. The remaining 24 youths have been given the other rune weapons gathered the day the Dwarves perished (most of these are lesser rune weapons). They have been charged by the elders to forsake their solitude and make their own place in the world. What exactly these youthful warriors intend to do is undetermined. Most of the remaining young Minotaurs look to the "Chosen Eight" for some direction, as there are already existing friendships and acquaintances among them. All are shocked. Three simply wish to remain isolated, using these weapons only for defense, perhaps going out in the catacombs to join another tribe or establish their own.

Two, a female named **Luur'na** (2nd level Priestess of Light who worships Isis and is of scrupulous alignment; I.Q. 12, M.E.



11, M.A. 9, P.S. 22, P.P. 15, P.E. 18, P.B. 19, Spd 10; Hit Points: 26, S.D.C.: 50. Age 23) and her boy friend Zii'clymnt (2nd level Ranger, anarchist alignment; I.Q. 9, M.E. 10, M.A. 8, P.S. 28, P.P. 19, P.E. 25, P.B. 14, Spd 24; Hit Points: 22, S.D.C.: 72. Age 19), have already gathered seven other youths and plan to explore the world and let "the hand of fate guide them." While they are leaning toward goodness and talk of becoming great heroes, they are all young (the seven are all 1st and 2nd level Mercenary Warriors or Vagabonds/Peasants ranging in age from 15 to 23 years old; incredibly young for Minotaurs, who live to the ripe old age of 400 years) and can easily become embittered, hardened and see their alignments change to anarchist or evil. The only exception is Luur'na; Zii'clymnt is already leaning toward miscreant.

Luur'na's greater rune weapon is a nine foot (2.7 m) long, ornate silver staff with patterns and runes etched in gold. It is a fabled *Lightbringer or Holy Rune Weapon*, named Saraph. She is scrupulous, does 4D6 damage (double to supernatural evil, including demons and Deevils) and has all the basic rune weapon features plus healing/cleric abilities (see pages 250-252 of the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition* for details).

Zii'clymnt's greater rune weapon is a six foot (1.8 m), black long sword with silver runes. Its name is *Lightning Striker*, anarchist alignment, does 6D6 damage and has all the basic rune weapon features plus 90 P.P.E. and can cast the following Air Elemental spells provided sufficient P.P.E. is available: Call Lightning, Electrical Field, Wind Rush, Levitate, Invisibility (itself and its wielder), and Breath of Life. (See page 250 of the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition* for details about Greater Rune Weapons.)

The G.M. is at liberty to design the other greater and lesser rune weapons as he or she sees fit, but none will be more powerful than those described here. Likewise, the G.M. can define the other young Minotaurs going out into the world, both good and evil.

The following characters are the most noteworthy:

Groun'na, Quick Stats

Groun'na, one of the oldest, is an impulsive and thoughtless bully who plans to seek out other people who the Etrinan warriors can subjugate with their powerful weapons. He has only two companions, also bullies (with lesser rune weapons), who share his "vision." Having been chastised and rebuked by the others has earned them all his lasting hatred. Should they ever meet on the surface, Groun'na and his henchmen will regard them as their enemies. This fearsome 6th level Mercenary Warrior has the will and wile to achieve his goals and there is little doubt that he will gather a band of villains and conquer some small to medium tribe or village. He also has potential for becoming a ruthless and brutal officer among the Kingdom of Giants or leading a group of raiders in the Wastelands, Old Kingdom or Eastern Territory. His two buddies are a pair of dim-witted 3rd level thieves, both of miscreant alignment. Without Groun'na, they are second-rate crooks, but under his leadership, they should grow into capable and murderous thieves.

O.C.C.: 6th level Mercenary Warrior.

Alignment: Miscreant and hates Elves.

Age: 59 (very young for a Minotaur).

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 12, M.A. 13, P.S. 25, P.P. 16, P.E. 21, P.B. 12, Spd. 12.

Hit Points: 56, S.D.C.: 67

Attacks per melee: 6

Bonuses: +3 to strike, +3 to roll, pull punch. +4 to parry, dodge, disarm. +14 to damage.

Other combat info: Body flip/throw, KO/stun 17-20, W.P. Sword (+3 to strike/parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Shield (+3 to parry, +1 to strike), W.P. Targeting (+4 to strike), W.P. Battle Axe (+3 to strike/parry/dodge, +1D6 to damage).

Weapons: Groun'na fights with **Egebba**, a runic chakram (bladed flying ring) that inflicts 5D6 per hit. Egebba possesses all basic runic powers plus the following:

- Egebba loves combat and enjoys its job very much. While it will goad its user into fighting, it will never try to take over its user or overwhelm him. This weapon lives to serve.
- Returns when thrown.
- Throwing range is as far as its user can see, up to 2000 feet (610 m), and is +3 to strike.
- Four times a day, Egebba's user can enchant the weapon to do one of the following special strikes.

1. **The power strike:** Enables Egebba to hit as a 6th level Wind Rush spell.

2. **Fire strike:** Egebba strikes as a 1D6x10 fire ball!

3. **The mirrored triple-strike:** Enables Egebba to split into three versions of itself, all of which can be directed to the same target each inflicting 5D6 damage), or to hit two or three different targets (each at +1 to strike, rather than the normal +3).

4. **The guided strike:** Enables Egebba to hit its target almost unerringly. Using this power, Egebba's wielder can miss only by rolling a natural one! Likewise, Egebba's target can only dodge such a strike by dodging with a natural 20! As a magically "guided" weapon, if the target was visible when the weapon was thrown, it will follow him and hit even if he runs around a corner or tries to leap out of the way (remember, misses only if a 1 is rolled by the attacker or the victim rolls a natural 20). It can not stop in mid-air or open doors, so if the target does manage to elude it, Egebba returns to its thrower.

Mergerij, Quick Stats

Perhaps the most respected of the eight is a principled champion named Mergerij. He preaches that with great power comes great responsibility, and if the Etrinan tribe is to do anything with its incredible rune arsenal, it should be to make the world a better place, and to atone for the past crimes committed by the Minotaur people over the years.

Mergerij is an overly righteous Palladin type of hero who has a nasty habit of getting up on a soap box and telling others what they need to do to become better people. A lot of this is a matter of youthful exuberance, lack of worldly experience and a narrow outlook on life (he sees issues strictly as black or white/good or evil). This may change with time or become an entrenched part of his personality.

O.C.C.: Effectively a 4th level Palladin, minus the lance W.P.

Alignment: Principled. Groun'na and Mergerij hate each other, and may, one day, have a showdown.

Age: 20 (very young for a Minotaur).

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 21, M.A. 9, P.S. 23, P.P. 20, P.E. 20, P.B. 9, Spd. 18.

Hit Points: 42, S.D.C.: 69



Zeelik Stonemace, Quick Stats

Zeelik is *not* one of the "Chosen Eight," but a character of note nonetheless. Although a bit shy, uncertain of himself and vastly underrated by the others in the tribe, he will grow into a true hero. Zeelik is soft spoken, unassuming, gentle, compassionate, honorable and trustworthy, all traits he keeps expanding. As a warrior, he is also observant, quick on his feet (a fast thinker), never underestimates the enemy, is courageous in combat and can be ruthless against the enemy. He is not sure about what to do, but has decided to go to the surface world alone to find himself and try to be the best person he can be. As we said, he will grow into a great hero.

O.C.C.: A first level Palladin, minus the lance W.P.

Alignment: Principled. Zeelik was a student of Mergerij, but finds the warrior to be too self-absorbed and dispassionate, so the two have parted company. Mergerij will always think of the lad as his student and a lesser no matter what the young Minotaur may accomplish.

Age: 16 (barely out of diapers for a Minotaur).

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 19, M.A. 12, P.S. 21, P.P. 21, P.E. 20, P.B. 12, Spd. 17. **Note:** P.S., P.P. and P.B. will all increase by 1D4 points by the time the lad reaches 4th level.

Hit Points: 25, **S.D.C.:** 59 (will increase by 5D6 by 4th level).

Attacks per melee: 6

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +3 to pull punch and roll with impact, +3 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge, and +6 to damage, +3 to save vs magic and poison, +10% to save vs coma/death and +6 to save vs H.F.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts and Palladin Special Training — W.P. Shield (+1 to parry), W.P. Sword (+1 to strike), W.P. Blunt (+1 to strike and parry), and W.P. Spear (+1 to strike and parry). No W.P. Lance.

Weapons: Zeelik fights with **Anzuroq**, a rare stone rune mace passed on to him from his father. This ancient stone weapon has runes carved into its haft and head, but may not be of Dwarven make. It predates the Elf-Dwarf War, although it was used extensively during that conflict. The personality of the mace is that of an honorable patriot who fights for his homeland and master, not out of hatred for Elves. Indeed, this weapon has served numerous Elven masters over the centuries, although it prefers the company of Dwarves. Anzuroq inflicts 1D4x10 damage per hit. It also possesses all of the common rune powers plus the following additional powers:

- **Earth Elemental Magic:** Anzuroq has a P.P.E. battery of 80 P.P.E., which can be used to cast the following spells at 6th level proficiency: Hopping Stones, Animate Plants, Quicksand, Rust, Wall of Thorns and Travel Through Earth. Anzuroq replenishes its P.P.E. battery at a rate of 10 per hour.
- The rune mace also has a soul-drinking style of attack that it can use three times a day. Upon command, and a successful hit, Anzuroq can petrify its target permanently. The victim must save versus magic (roll a 14 or higher on a D20) when struck to resist the effects of this attack. Otherwise, the magic is equal to the 7th level Earth Warlock spell, Petrification. Anzuroq's user can also dispel the effects of petrification at any time by tapping the mace on the subject three times and commanding the enchantment be broken.

Attacks per melee: 6

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +2 to disarm, +4 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact, +7 to strike, +10 to parry and dodge, and +10 to damage. +3 to save vs magic and poison, +10% to save vs coma/death and +6 to save vs H.F.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts and Palladin Special Training — Karate kick (2D4), roundhouse kick (3D6), snap kick (1D6), axe kick (2D6), and all jump kicks. Critical strike 18-20. W.P. Sword (+3 to strike, +2 to parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Shield (+3 to parry, +1 to strike), W.P. Blunt (+3 to strike and parry), W.P. Spear (+3 to strike and parry, +2 to throw). No W.P. Lance.

Weapons: Mergerij fights with a pair of rune weapons, a short sword named **Cutter** and a dagger called **Sticker**. Both are a matched set with the same crimson blades and silver and pearl handles. Both have all the basic rune weapon properties plus the following:

Cutter is +1 to parry, inflicts 6D6 damage, possesses all of the common rune powers, plus can spit fire balls (6D6 damage) ten times per day, and makes its wielder impervious to heat and fire.

Sticker, the dagger, possesses all physical psionic powers and the Super Psionic powers of Electrokinetics and Catatonic Strike! The blade has 110 I.S.P.

- The curse: Dislike (see page 263 of the **Palladium RPG, 2nd Edition**).

- The curse: All but Principled Users have a 5% chance of being petrified by Anzuroq every time they use the weapon for anything but honorable and good intentions, and also once every 10 years. If the user of the rune mace is petrified by the weapon, then a Stone to Flesh spell will be needed to reverse that character's condition — or, Anzuroq's new owner can negate it.

The Serelan Tribe

The Serelan Tribe is the only group of truly good Minotaurs in the Baalgor Wastelands. Other tribes may have good individuals, but only this tribe is entirely noble and pure of heart. About half are of scrupulous alignment, a third principled and the rest unprincipled. This respect for life, liberty and lawfulness is an aberrant characteristic for Minotaurs, and has caused their own kind to condemn and ostracize this tribe. They do not really care that they are outcasts, but their beliefs often place them in peril.

Other Minotaur tribes of the Baalgor Wastelands have always treated them with disdain, and the Serelan are frequently the victims of raids, robbery and sabotage, often by masked assailants. Recently, things have gotten worse, and their fellow Minotaurs no longer hide behind hoods or feign innocence. They have become outwardly hostile and threatening, as have a number of their giant and Troll associates. One Minotaur tribe in particular, the Idrijian, has decided that the Serelan must die. To that end, they have begun hunting down the Serelan with a vengeance.

As valiant as they may be, their members are frequently attacked when in small groups and outnumbered three to one. In fact, over the last year the tribe has dwindled from 156 to 111. As a result, tribesmen try to stay together for safety in numbers. As disliked as they are, rival Minotaurs know that whoever tries to destroy the Serelan as a unified army will sustain heavy casualties. This keeps most other black-hearted groups of Minotaurs and giants at bay, but the Serelan know that a tough reputation can not save them forever.

To that end, the tribe has decided to take matters into their own hands. Rather than run from the Idrijian (and other evil forces), the Serelan warriors have begun hunting down the Idrijian and standing strong against all who threaten them! The Idrijian do not know what to make of this, since they are not used to being on the defensive. The Serelan know they can not beat the Idrijian in an all-out battle, so they engage in a campaign of guerilla warfare and pick off Idrijian warriors in small groups. Being honorable warriors, these attacks are always fair and one on one. As this feud gathers steam, giants and monster-race allies are going out of their way to avoid getting caught in the crossfire. The Serelan are superior warriors, so any vendetta waged against them will have a terrible toll, and there is no guaranteed winner (actually, most are putting their money on the Serelan).

The people of the Serelan tribe have truly forsaken the evil ways of their ancestor who embraced a lifestyle of hate, violence and evil. Instead they stand on the side of light and dream of making the world a better, safer place. For decades now, they have helped beleaguered travelers from certain death. They have also established excellent trade relations with both Rocky Desert Eandroth tribes and several individuals (two male Eandroth Rogues and one female are counted as "official" members of the



Serelan tribe). Judging from the incredible success of their campaign against the Idrijian, the Serelan are becoming a force to be reckoned with by all evildoers.

Minotaurs generally dislike outsiders, but not the Serelan. They welcome peaceful folk of all races, and will gladly help or accept aid from non-Minotaurs — they have many friends and associates in the Wastelands. Furthermore, these Minotaurs spend at least half their time on the surface and lone Serelan warriors regularly leave the Wastelands on quests to learn more about the world or to battle evil beyond their homeland. Such champions almost always return to their home tribe, eventually, armed with fresh new knowledge, magic, treasure and worldly experience.

One such champion is Xexin Vidaav, a 9th level Palladin. Xexin has recently returned to his tribe after his seventh sojourn on the surface in which he traveled the world, making many powerful friends and allies, and defeating all manner of monsters and villains (Xexin has also made a number of powerful enemies, who may one day track him down to his subterranean home).

Note: The average Serelan warrior is a 4th-6th level Mercenary or Ranger; 10% are Long Bowmen, 5% Knights and 2% Palladins.

Xexin Vidaav, Quick Stats

A hero's champion, Xexin will never break from his alignment, regardless of the temptation (he has an additional +4 to save versus any mind control that would force him to act contrary to his alignment). Xexin has defeated many forces of darkness in his career, and considers it the highest of honors to return to his tribe and carry on the fight against the evil Idrijian and others of their ilk. He is a fearless and inspiring leader, a cunning warrior, and a good friend to all who fight alongside him. Indeed, if ever he were to return to a roaming, adventuring life (as he might if the Idrijian are defeated once and for all), he would probably take up with a group of non-Minotaur adventurers, provided they were of comparable ability and alignment.

O.C.C.: 9th level Palladin.

Alignment: Scrupulous

Age: 232

Attributes: I.Q. 9, M.E. 13, M.A. 19, P.S. 26, P.P. 20, P.E. 26, P.B. 10, Spd. 18,

Hit Points: 67, **S.D.C.:** 80

Attacks per melee: 8

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +5 to strike, +8 to parry, dodge. +11 to damage, +2 to disarm, +3 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact and +6 to save vs Horror Factor.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Boxing and Special Palladin Training — Karate kick (2D4), roundhouse kick (3D6), crescent kick (2D6+2), tripping/leg hook, all jump attacks, and leap attack (critical strike). Critical strike on 18-20, KO on natural 20.

W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Lance (see Palladin O.C.C. for details), W.P. Sword (+4 to strike, +3 to parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Shield (+4 to parry, +2 to strike), W.P. Spear (+4 to strike/parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Chain (+3 to strike, +2 to parry), and W.P. Forked/Trident (+4 to strike/entangle, +3 to parry, 1 to throw).

Weapons: Xexin fights with a major magical weapon known as **the Millennium Spear**, carved from the branch of an ancient and holy tree in the Great Northern Wilderness. The Millennium Spear inflicts 5D6 per hit (plus Xexin's other damage modifiers), but it may only be wielded by good characters. Selfish characters wielding this weapon will be at -5 to strike, parry and dodge and will inflict half damage with any hit. Evil characters wielding this weapon will be at -10 to strike, parry and dodge, and will inflict only one-quarter damage per hit.

The Millennium Spear has several other powers, including:

- **Double Thunder Kata.** Any Warrior Monk or man at arms skilled in W.P. Paired Weapons may use this single item as a paired weapon, striking simultaneously with either of the Millennium Spear's bladed ends in a whirlwind of martial prowess. Typically, one strikes with one of the blades first, then quickly follows up with another attack or a parry with the other bladed end. This power works constantly.
- **Special Katas.** The Millennium Staff may be used to perform any combination of the following special katas up to three times daily.

Whirlwind Kata: Using this power, the wielder can attempt to parry most any incoming attacks, even missile weapons! Magical attacks, such as fireballs, lightning and other energy blasts, however, can not be parried.

Lightning Kata: Using this power, the wielder can put all the energy he would expend in all of his attacks for the melee round into his first action. The result is an attack that inflicts 1D6x10+88 damage (do not include other damage bonuses)! A potentially devastating attack, but it also leaves the fighter totally vulnerable for the rest of the round, unable to dodge and parries are done without benefit of bonuses (unmodified dice rolls only).

Purity Kata: When the wielder invokes this power, his or her next successful attack will hit as a critical strike, inflicting double damage. A roll to hit is still required. If the wielder rolls a natural critical strike while invoking this power, then the damage from the hit is tripled.

Armor: Xexin wears a suit of weightless, noiseless plate and mail (A.R. 17, S.D.C. 160). He also owns a Cloak of Iron (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 300), but he does not wear it often. If ever his plate armor is destroyed, he will use the cloak as a temporary form of protection until he can procure another suit of plate and mail.

Magic Items: Several years ago, Xexin discovered, buried deep under the rock, a part of an ancient and long-forgotten Dwarven treasure hoard, a magical lyre, mandolin and flute. Upon command, each of these instruments will levitate off the ground and begin playing beautiful music by themselves for up to an hour. Otherwise, they have no magical powers. Sold as a set, they could probably fetch close to 100,000 gold in one of the magic markets of the Western Empire.

Money and other equipment: Xexin has acquired millions of gold pieces over the years, but has given most of it away to those in need. He has kept a strongbox filled with 25,000 in Old Kingdom gold, plus 10 diamonds each worth 5,000 gold, and a necklace of 12 dragon's teeth (each is worth 40,000 gold, making the entire necklace worth 480,000 gold). The Palladin made the necklace himself from a diabolic Fire

Dragon he slew a few years ago, so he will be loath to part with it for any reason. He wears this necklace at all times for good luck.

In addition to his monetary treasure, Xexin also owns a small arsenal of giant-sized Dwarven-made weapons, including a ball and chain (4D6+4 damage, +1 to parry and strike), a battle axe (4D6+4, +2 to parry and strike) and a claymore (4D6+4, +1 to strike and parry).

The Idrijian Tribe

Cold-hearted to the core, this tribe of 250 Minotaurs are exactly the kind of fiends who have given Minotaurs in general a bad name. Idrijian warriors have committed countless atrocities over the years, both on the surface, and underground, without fear of retribution. For many years, these bullies figured nobody would ever dare oppose them, until Xexin Vidraav and the Serelan Minotaurs took their stand. The Idrijian were no strangers to victimizing and tormenting those weaker than they, but have no clue how to handle a strong opponent who does not seem to fear them. No matter what these villains do to defend themselves, they find their numbers being whittled down steadily by Xixin and the other warriors of the Serelan tribe. Even more devastating to the Idrijian, is the damage to their reputation as the most fearsome and dangerous Minotaurs of the region (people are asking themselves, "If they are so tough, how come the Serelan are kicking their behinds?"). So far the battles between these two tribes are waged as guerilla warfare — surgical strikes, ambushes, sabotage and small squad combat (4-16 members per squad), rather than all-out war. The Idrijian have always been "raiders" who use hit and run tactics, the element of surprise and always try to have superior numbers. Thus, they attack like furies, kill, loot and disappear before reinforcements can arrive or their opponents can regroup and counterattack. Recently, these attacks have grown more and more brazen and bloody. Those leveled against the Serelan tribe are more vicious than ever, and those made against others usually involve threats and rantings about how tough the Idrijian warriors are and how everybody should fear them. **Note:** Casualties among the Idrijian are three times higher than the Serelan who are slowly chopping down their enemy and winning the war.

Desperate, the Idrijian are turning to the Old Ones for help. The leader of the tribe, **Cowedo Gatsi**, a miscreant 7th level thief and 4th level witch of the Old Ones (Age: 340; I.Q. 10, M.E. 15, M.A. 14, P.S. 24, P.P. 21, P.E. 23, P.B. 3, Spd. 17; Hit Points: 75, S.D.C.: 90), has begun converting many of his warriors into witches of the Old Ones. As a result, 40 Idrijian warriors, normally 3rd to 5th level mercenaries, are now also 1st or 2nd level witches. All of these individuals have made life-long pacts to the Old Ones, but the majority of them do not yet fully realize the seriousness of their vow. Perhaps when they are defeated once and for all, and their souls are about to be claimed by their Old One masters will they realize the folly of their ways. Until that time comes, the Idrijian are gearing up for the next attack by Xixin and the Serelan Minotaurs. That so many Idrijian warriors have become Old Ones' witches complicates matters for the Serelan Minotaurs, but probably will not affect the ultimate outcome of this ongoing war.

Quillbacks of the Rocky Desert

By nature, Quillbacks do not form large groups, tribes or villages. So, although the Rocky Desert is one of the prime living spots for these elusive scavengers, one seldom encounters more than 4-8 of them together at once.

These beings thrive in this environment, since there are plenty of nooks and crannies for them to hide in and large predators have trouble moving across the rock-strewn ground. The Rocky Desert has been Quillback territory since the Big Thunder, so they also have an in-depth knowledge of the region. If there is a secret cave, berry patch or a particularly interesting person living (or hiding) in this region, one of the local Quillbacks will probably know about it.

Quillbacks are common enough here to be considered one of the prominent races in the area. There is no accurate count of how many live in the Rocky Desert, but some scholars put the estimate at 5,000. The true number, however, is impossible to figure, since they don't keep records on anything themselves, and they all move around so much. Not like it really matters, though for anyone living or travelling in the Rocky Desert. Simply knowing that the Quillbacks are there is the most important thing. Knowing how many of them there are is useless. **Note:** Adventurers should plan on encountering a few Quillbacks for every week of travel.

Most Quillbacks one encounters in the Rocky Desert are simple hunter-gatherers trying to scrape together a living, but a few of them will pursue an O.C.C. These skilled Quillbacks typically crave adventure, excitement, and the company of larger folk. So, any Quillback adventurer that runs across a party of heroes will likely try to join that group, either by offering his services as a scout, befriending one or more of the members, or simply tagging along until the group accepts him into their fold. The only exception to this rule is if there is already is another Quillback in the party, in which case, other Quillbacks will not want to join the group (they consider that being rude). Once a Quillback adventurer has joined a group, he will follow them for as long as they hold his interest. Many Quillbacks will stay with a group for under a month while others become permanent fixtures, traveling far and wide, seeing many strange lands and wondrous things.

There are numerous prominent Quillbacks in the Rocky Desert, but there are three who really stand apart from the crowd: **Bimmid the Bold**, **Janihill**, **Tchkiskisk**.

Bimmid the Bold is a Brer Rabbit-like character who routinely defeats bigger and tougher opponents simply by outwitting them. This unprincipled, 11th level Quillback Scavenger (I.Q. 20, M.E. 18, M.A. 13, P.S. 10, P.P. 22, P.E. 11, P.B. 14, Spd. 32; H.P: 55, S.D.C.: 30) has conned, swindled and outright robbed blind, countless Orcs, Ogres, Trolls, and even a few giants, all via a wild mix of brains, bravery and luck. He is perhaps the biggest hero to the Quillbacks in this area.

During the course of his adventures, Bimmid has accumulated an impressive treasure trove. It would seem that robbing tall folk of their most valued belongings has given Bimmid a taste of the good life, and now all he hunts for are items which



will make him more comfortable. Already, he owns an Environmental Tent, a Pillow of Sleep, a Fire Wick and a Container of Much Water. Bimmid lives in a small rock cave in which he has set up his environmental tent to make the entire cave a rather cozy stay. To hide his belongings, he stretches a magical Cloak of the Chameleon across the front while he is away. This cloak, which confers the 1st level Earth Elemental spell Chameleon at all times, provides the perfect camouflage for his home, and makes would-be intruders think that a large piece of stone covers the entrance. Finally, for added defense, he obtained a Magic Roman Candle which can fire 20 "sparkyballs," as Bimmid likes to call them, daily. The candle can fire volleys of up to 4 sparks at once, each requiring a separate roll to hit. Each spark travels 100 feet (30.5 m) and inflicts 2D6 damage per hit.

Janihill is a scrupulous, 5th level Quillback Shaman (I.Q. 14, M.E. 11, M.A. 23, P.S. 6, P.P. 21, P.E. 8, P.B. 13, Spd. 20; H.P.: 33, S.D.C.: 10) who has appointed herself as the protector of the region. Mostly, she wanders the Rock Desert looking for greenhorns and other needy folks so she can offer what help she can. Janihill is a very knowledgeable and friendly soul with a penchant for making friends easily. She lives without any possessions (whatever she finds she usually gives away shortly thereafter) and has little interest in accumulating treasure of any sort (no big surprise, there).

Tchkiskisk is the closest thing to a Quillback Shakespeare one will ever find. A while ago, this wily, unprincipled, 4th level Quillback Scavenger (I.Q. 20, M.E. 20, M.A. 13, P.S. 10,

P.P. 22, P.E. 10, P.B. 9, Spd. 23; H.P.: 30, S.D.C.: 20) found a magical quill of endless ink and a trio of large, used spell books (Each page of these books had been a scroll, but all of them have been used, leaving only blank pages). Curious, Tchkiskisk taught himself how to write in Elven, and ever since, has written an ongoing chronicle of his adventures and explorations. Actually, his works are very entertaining reads, and he has become a very popular person at Quillback get-togethers, where everyone is entertained by rousing tales of adventure, happiness, hardship, sorrow and joy. Now, Tchkiskisk's only problem is that he is running out of paper and must find some more! He has gotten used to writing a fair amount each day, and will go crazy if he can not write for lack of paper. This may lead him to engineer some risky schemes to get his claws on another book or sheaf of scrolls or other writable medium.

Wilderness Encounter

Tables for the Rocky Desert

Throughout the Rocky Desert, travelers can expect to run across all sorts of animals, monsters, evildoers and other unusual encounters. While the party is traveling through this region, the G.M. should check for random encounters every eight hours (once each for the morning, afternoon and evening). To determine if an encounter occurs, the G.M. rolls a D20. A 15 or higher means an encounter will take place. To determine the nature of the encounter, roll percentile dice and consult the table below, or pick one. Or whip up one of your own.

01-03%: The heroes have found a gaping hole in the ground that looks like it has been pushed out from down below! In the hole is a large natural cavern. Examining it reveals that it is the lair of perhaps 20 Minotaurs, only they are nowhere to be found. Relatively fresh skeletons of dozens of Quillbacks, Orcs, Ogres, and even a few giants, are among the bones of hundreds of animal skeletons piled indiscriminately throughout the cavern.

04-07%: The player characters meet a Vrill Psi-Healer and Sage who has made the Rocky Desert his home. He is loved by the local Quillbacks, who come to him for healing. This character has virtually no possessions, and is very kind-hearted (scrupulous alignment). He will heal just about anybody, free of charge. However, he is a hermit who wants nothing to do with civilization, adventure or combat and will not join a band of adventurers.

08-10%: The heroes have discovered the entrance to a Baalizad burrow. The 1D6x10 Baalizad living here are fairly friendly, and are willing to trade with the player characters, if the group has anything they might want. Some of the Baalizad will refer to the "Demon of the Deep" that has been chasing them, but will speak no more of it. Upon hearing of this, though, the player characters realize that over the last few evenings, they have heard ominous rumbling sounds coming from the earth!

11-12%: Sitting in a meditative state is a lone Eandroth Rogue swordsman. His sword-length double-bladed knife rests across his lap. This individual has dedicated his life to perfecting the art of sword fighting, and is a most formidable opponent. He is a 5th level mercenary, but his W.P. Sword is at 10th level. His weird, double-bladed sword requires two hands to use, inflicts 3D6 damage per hit, and has an additional +2 to strike,

parry and dodge. Otherwise, it is a normal, non-magical weapon. He will challenge any passerby to a friendly contest with swords; winner is the first to draw blood. Unless this is done, the Eandroth is aloof and has nothing to say. If someone in the group agrees to the contest, he will become friendly and chatty, but will not join them.

13-15%: The player characters have wandered into a long, narrow canyon where a Mologoth (or 1D4 Sloderi) has wandered into. The dumb beast can not figure out how to get out, so it is just rampaging up and down this canyon, eating whatever creatures have the misfortune to come by, which are few, so the beast is ravenous. The Mologoth will give chase to whatever it sees, so anybody who does not want to get eaten alive better outrun it or prepare for a fight to the death. The canyon walls are 50 feet (15.2 m) high and rather sheer, so they offer a -20% penalty modifier to any Scale Walls/Climb attempts. **Note:** If any player characters run at the Mologoth and dive underneath it, the creature will require a full melee round to turn around, because this canyon is a tight squeeze for it. That extra melee round could be all the time one needs to escape. Likewise, flying characters should be able to distract it while the others climb out. Turning invisible only works for a melee round or two, because the Mologoth has an excellent sense of smell and will sniff them out.

16-17%: The group finds a weaving path that is free of rock and must have once been a riverbed. This smooth pathway is used by many inhabitants and travelers in the region, so if the group should take it, they are likely to encounter any variety of people, friendly or hostile, including Orcs, Goblins, Ogres and giants.

18-19%: The party comes across a small boulder that, on closer examination, is really a huge, uncut diamond! It seems this stone has been blackened by the Circle of Absolute Elemental Power that ruined this stretch of land, but otherwise, it is flawless. Of course, it is also 500 pounds (225 kg), so transporting it will be difficult. Furthermore, its immense size means it must either be cut into smaller pieces or be used in an idol or other large statuary or architecture. Still, it is probably worth a cool million if taken to a major city in the Western Empire, Timiro Kingdom, Eastern Territory or other major nation. Now, all they have to do is lug it out of the Wastelands. No easy task.

20-22%: Gromek flying patrol. The player characters have three melee rounds to conceal themselves before the Gromek patrol notices them and attacks. There are six Gromek, five of them 4th level soldiers, and their leader, a 6th level soldier, who has a special dislike for Dwarves. He will order his group to attack any Dwarf (and those travelling with him or her). Groups who don't have any Dwarves among them will only be shaken down for 100 gold each. Those who can not pay must surrender something the Gromek value, such as a weapon, and may be worth much more than 100 gold. Resistance will result in a life and death battle.

23-25%: Sloderi attack! Roll percentile: 01-50% is a lone hunter, 51-00% is a pack of 1D4+3 animals.

26-27%: The party spots a wandering party traveling in the opposite direction. This other group is of equal size to the players' party, and will have an even distribution between men of arms, clergy, men of magic and psychics. All are of roughly equal level to the player characters, and should have enough

magic items to be a fair match. They are a mix of different races with only 1-2 being human.

Additional info for a group of good guys:

1. Good & gregarious. The party is very friendly and might even offer to join forces with the players for an adventure or two.

2. Good and indifferent: The party will share/trade supplies and information, but that is all. They have their own mission to accomplish and will not spend more than an hour with strangers.

28-29%: The group finds itself passing a number of man-made pillars and circles of stone (none have any magical significance). A short while later, they encounter 1D4+1 Spriggans busy arranging rocks and hefting boulders for their latest creation. The Spriggans ignore them unless somebody compliments them on their designs, at which point these Faerie Folk will be sociable. Crafty characters who weave questions into the discussion (like, "Aren't you afraid giants will come and knock them down? No? I thought there are all kinds of giants in the area? Really, only a half dozen to the east, ... and so on) can get information from the Spriggans, otherwise they are "too busy" to chat. People who pester, annoy or interfere with their work will get rocks thrown at them and be told to get out of here. Anybody threatening or who deliberately damages their handiwork will be ruthlessly attacked, beaten and possibly killed!

30-31%: The player group spots a party traveling in the opposite direction. This group is of equal size to the players party, and will have an even distribution between men of arms, clergy, men of magic or psychics. All are of roughly equal level to the player group, and should have enough magic items to be a fair match for them. Selfish and indifferent, these guys do not feel like being bothered by others and might consider robbing them if they think they can get away with it.

32-33%: The player group spots a party traveling in the opposite direction. The party is of equal size to the players' group, and will have an even distribution between men of arms, clergy, and men of magic or psychics. All are of roughly equal level to the player characters, and should have enough magic items to be a fair match for them. They are cutthroats who will pick a fight for no reason, and attack, rob and kill those they believe weaker than themselves. They may also be affiliated with a greater menace troubling the area and may come back with reinforcements if they deem the player group too equally matched, or lay in ambush for them up the way.

34-35%: One or two vipers! They will attack if anybody comes within six feet (1.8 m) of them. The bite does 1D4 damage but the poison 6D6! Needs a roll of 14 or higher to save vs lethal poison. Average H.P. of each snake is only 1D6, but they are lightning fast (+2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +1 to dodge; one attack per melee round).

36-37%: The adventurers encounter 1D4 young Quillbacks. They are wandering the Rocky Desert in search of *Bimmid the Bold*, so that they may join him on his wild and exciting adventures. But since they have not found their hero yet, they will gladly pal around with the player characters for 1D4 weeks, whether the party likes it or not. Each of the youngsters is an impetuous, inexperienced and foolish 1st level Quillback Scavenger R.C.C.

38-41%: Animal attack. The player group has strayed too closely to an animal's den, and now it is defending its territory. Roll D8 on the table below to see what kind of creature it is.

1. A really big, really mean Ernie (Jungle Kodiak Bear), and he's in a bad mood.

2. 1D4 Cyclops Spiders.

3. A mountain lion who is defending her 3 cubs back in the den.

4. A lone Tusker. This thing will kill whatever gets near its home.

5. An angry and aggressive baboon who has been driven from his tribe after challenging the dominant male and losing. The animal is in a foul mood and spoiling for a fight. The slightest act of provocation will send it into a murderous frenzy. It has 20 Hit Points and 12 S.D.C., three attacks per melee round and does 1D6+6 damage from claw attacks and 3D6 from its bite.

6. A giant Cave Spider which rushes from a nearby rocky cleft and attacks one of the player characters at random. These critters have been gradually declining in number ever since Cyclops Spiders became the dominant hunters of this area.

7. A big, bad bull moose that has wandered down from the Baalgor Mountains into the Rocky Desert and now can not find its way out. It's in a really bad mood and is liable to charge anything that gets near it, out of sheer frustration. Those who can communicate with animals should be able to calm it down, though.

8. A Lazretheg lashes out from underfoot and reels in one of the player characters. For each melee round that goes by without the character breaking away (or killing it or forcing it to flee), another Lazretheg will join the fray! No more than one Lazretheg per player character will be in this fight.

42-43%: The party spots a lone individual traveling in the opposite direction. Roll D6 to determine who this person is.

1. An Algor or Jotan giant warrior who has had enough of taking orders, and has decided to leave this part of the Wastelands. He is a 2nd level, anarchist mercenary.

2. A Minotaur warrior who, upon spotting the player characters, will try to hide from them as best he can. He is an anarchist, 3rd level thief who has no fondness for small folk, but no burning hatred for them either. He doesn't want trouble, but will take advantage of outsiders if they give him the chance.

3. A beautiful, but tough-looking 3rd level Elven wizard who has gotten separated from the rest of her group, an expedition looking for the ruins of various ancient, Elven citadels reported to be in the area.

4. A 6th level human vagabond who is 100%, absolutely, no-bones-about-it insane. He will lash out at anybody who even mentions the Elf-Dwarf War, Minotaurs, or the Western Empire. He also claims to have seen the "Demons of the Deep" slaughtering Baalizad (it's not true, what he witnessed was a battle between a small group of Baalizad and a clan of Old Ones-worshipping Minotaurs, but he's convinced otherwise). He possesses a stone spear, a stone knife, and some basic survival supplies and speaks only in the humans' Western language.

5. A 1st level Eandroth Rogue Ranger who is surveying this area on behalf of the Tabletop Eandroth village.

6. A Dragonman who has been severely wounded, apparently from a Tusker! This guy will die within three or four hours unless he receives immediate medical help. When and if he gets healed, he will suffer from near-total memory loss.

44-46%: 1D4+1 giants, with 2D6 "shorties" (Orcs and Ogres) on patrol from one of the local strongholds. They are looking for Gromek, but they will hassle whoever they find. These guys are from Gurthasi Tor.

47-48%: Dimensional Rift! It seems that the aftereffects of the terrible magicks used in the Elf-Dwarf War have not yet stopped affecting the Baalgor Wastelands. Random tears in space like this one are not that uncommon, since the fabric of reality has been so severely distorted, and will take many eons to fully heal itself. This two-way dimensional portal will only last for another 1D6 hours. This means whatever's on the other side can come through just as easily as the player characters can (Whether anything comes through is up to the G.M.). Going through the portal will transport the group across space and time to a random location. Consult the table from the Random Encounters section of the *Stony Desert* description to determine their destination.

49-50%: 1D4 Cyclops Spiders attack, dropping down from overhead.

51-52%: Ley line that is 1D4x10 miles (16 to 64 km) long, and there is no nexus junction. Along the way, they might find other ley line travelers, or an evil wizard, dragon, demons or entities.

53-54%: The group stumbles across a small cave that can hold at least four human-sized people. There are signs that it has been used as a camp, but not any time recently. It might make for a good campsite or hideout.

55-56%: The heroes come across the ruins of an ancient citadel. The type of stone in the walls still standing indicates that this place was not built out of the shattered mountain rock. This stone looks to have been imported. A successful Identify Gems/Minerals skill roll will confirm that this is "blood marble" from the Western Empire. It also appears to have been quarried within the last century or so. There are no inhabitants, nor are there any discernable psychic impressions. However, those making a successful Lore roll will recall an old story about some renegade Western Noble who claimed the Baalgor Wastelands for himself, with the aid of a small (but very powerful) army. The tale says he built his capital "in the shadow of the giant's mountains," but the story gives no indication as to what happened to this noble, his army or his empire. It appears to have been destroyed years ago, but perhaps survivors still live in the Wastelands.

57-58%: A sudden storm: Roll percentile, 01-33 is a Blister Wind, 34-66 is a Dust Storm, 67-00 is a Demon Storm.

59-61%: A 3rd level Gromek soldier (P.S. 25, P.P. 20, P.E. 23; H.P. 32, S.D.C. 30) stands before the party and challenges the strongest player to single combat. Meanwhile, seven more Gromek circle the scene overhead. Six of these have identical stats to the one challenging the party. The seventh is a 5th level soldier. This scenario is a rite of passage. If the Gromek on the ground wins in single combat, he will be given high honors by his clan mates. If he loses, he will lose face and be ashamed by all Gromek who know him. If this Gromek beats whichever

character he fights (i.e., kills him, knocks him unconscious or forces him to surrender), then he will taunt the rest of the group and fly off. If he is defeated, however, his mates overhead will swoop down and carry him off without bothering the party. If the fallen Gromek is still alive, he and his buddies *may* ambush the party later for revenge. If the player group cheats or gangs up on this lone Gromek, the rest will join in and it will become a battle royal to the death!

62-63%: A Gryphon or Peryton swoops out of the sky to attack any pack animals or injured characters. It will fight for 1D4 melee rounds and then fly away if it can not win.

64-65%: A huge, jutting piece of rock is home to a camp of 12 Gromek scouts who do not appreciate the intrusion.

66-67%: The group spots a trio of Mologoth thundering across the rocky plains, looking for food. The player group either needs to get out of their path (hiding in a cave or climbing up high where the dinosaur-like creatures can not reach are the best plans) or gear up for one heck of a battle. They have 1D4+2 melee rounds before the monsters catch their scent.

68-69%: The heroes chance upon the home of Gemma Gord, an 11th level Rahu-Man wizard. Gemma is as reclusive as he is powerful, and does not like to receive visitors. However, if the group can get past his hostile demeanor, he is a font of knowledge, information and power. He could easily destroy one of the giant strongholds in the area single-handedly with his impressive array of spell magic, but prefers to let others do for themselves. Still, he is likely to offer hints and advice.

70-71%: As the party travels over the rocks, they see a frantic Quillback scrambling towards them. It looks straight at them and begs for their help. Chasing after it is a band of three Orcs, two Ogres and a Troll from the Loghur stronghold (all are 2nd and 3rd level mercenaries and thieves, except the Troll who is a 5th level assassin). Clearly, if they catch this little guy, they are going to torture and kill him. Does the group help? If they try to talk their way out of it, they'll discover the Quillback is a thief (4th level) who has been stealing from the group and they want justice! Paying them off might work, but then these miscreants might get cocky (assuming the player group is afraid of them) and demand an exorbitant amount and/or attack them anyway. Battling and defeating these marauders will make enemies with all the giant strongholds in the area and may instigate one or more search parties coming after them to seek retribution. If the group doesn't help the little thief, he's as good as dead. Helping

the Quillback will earn his sincere appreciation and he may, someday, do something to repay their kindness. For one, he could serve as a guide to the region, leading them along the (relatively) safest parts of the desert. **Note:** At least one of the giants' minions should escape to spread word of their defeat and get others to hunt down and challenge our heroes.

72-73%: The characters find the petrified egg of a Great Horned Dragon. It seems to have turned to stone somehow, but still radiates magic, so perhaps if a Stone to Flesh spell were cast on this thing, and some healing magicks were applied to it, it might hatch. At worst, it could always be sold or traded as a curiosity item (garnering no more than 200 gold). Curiously enough, the stone egg is nearly indestructible. It is the size of a watermelon and weighs 60 pounds (27.2 kg).

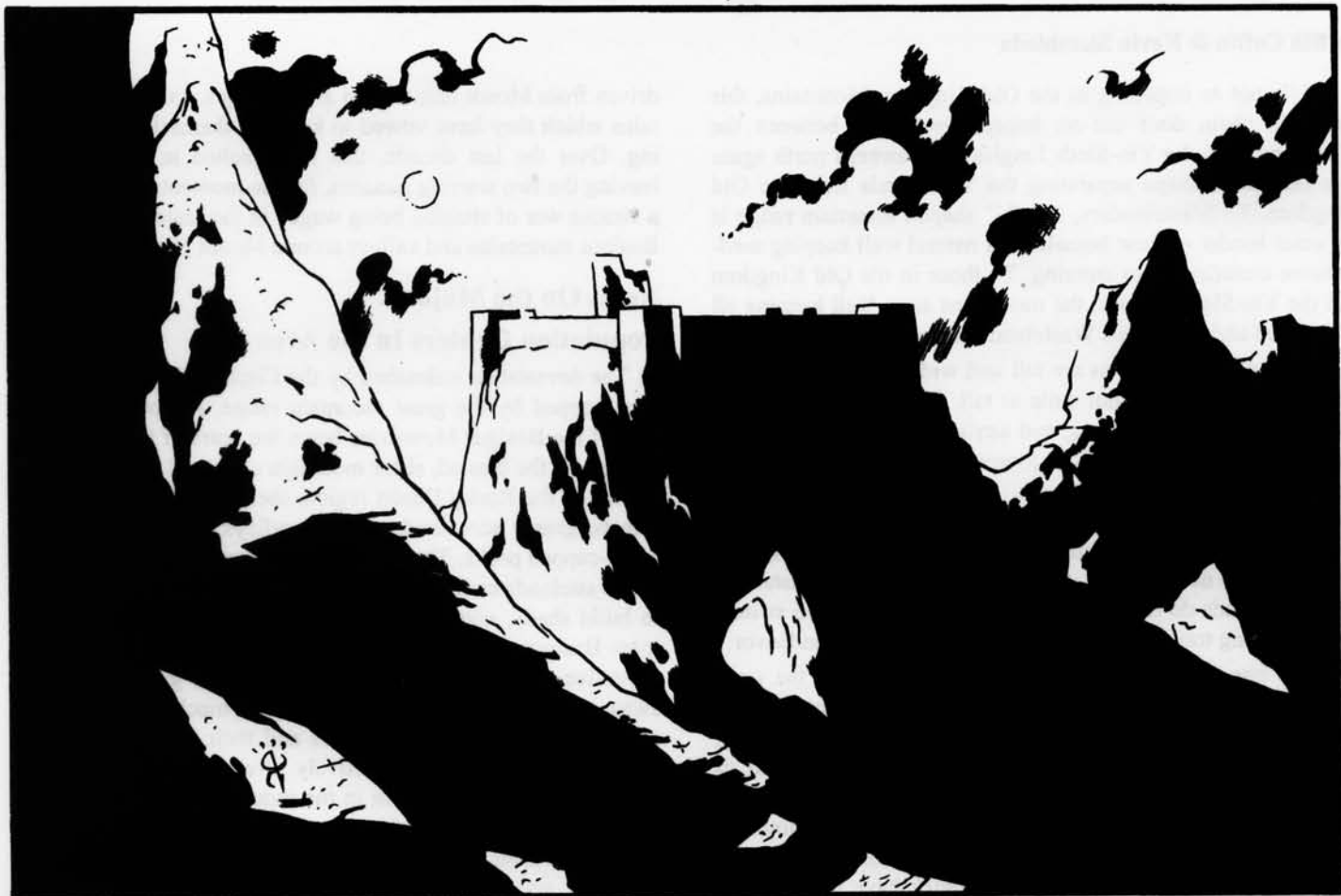
74-76%: Earthquake! The ground rumbles and ripples, causing a large cleft in the earth to rip open right in front of the player characters! The dimensions of this fissure are equal to the earth elemental spell Chasm at 10th level proficiency. Any character who can fly can easily get across, all others will have to find a lengthy and dangerous detour. The quake has also loosened the rocks within a one mile (1.6 km) radius, making rock slides a serious danger. Getting caught at the bottom of a rock slide or tumbling down with one causes 6D6+40 damage and has a 01-66% chance of burying each person caught, alive. The individual may still be alive, but must be unburied or he will perish from the weight, heat and untreated injuries within 2D6+8 hours.

77-79%: The severed head of a Nimro giant is staked on a pike. Who killed this giant, and why?

80-82%: A Cyclops Spider is hiding nearby and will pounce upon the last person in the party's formation. The creature is currently camouflaged (95% chance of remaining hidden, unless viewed by magical means, picked up on Vrill radar, or some other special form of perception), so it will be almost impossible to detect until it is too late.

83-85%: A bunch of Quillback scavengers (2D6) who have taken to outright banditry! These guys have spunk, if nothing else. They will attack first by causing a small rock slide (5D6+6 damage, but little chance of getting buried alive), then by bombarding the survivors with basketball-sized rocks, which cause 2D4 damage each. After one minute (4 melees) of this "stone rain," the bandits will come down into the pass to examine and loot their victims. If the Quillbacks are not met with further re-





sistance, they will steal whatever they can from the unconscious or dead bodies. However, these guys are cowards and will not stand up to a direct fight, nor will they kill anybody knocked out. So, anybody who comes-to while being rifled by the bandits will cause them to drop what they are carrying and flee. If any remain standing, the bandits will make a few threats and demand surrender. If those standing (even it's only one guy) do not surrender, the bandits will scurry off.

86-88%: A crazed Tusker looking for food. It will attack anything that moves, targeting horses and pack animals first! Unless this thing is slain quickly, it could seriously hobble the player characters' animals. Of course, if the group is on foot, the Tusker will go after them, instead.

89-91%: Quorians on the warpath! A crew of 2D4+2 Quorian warriors led by a 3rd level Oneiromancer are heading through the Rocky Desert on their way to Gurthasi Tor, where they believe the giants are holding some form of interdimensional transport. Of course, their hunch is 100% wrong, but they don't know that yet. For now, they have had several bloody run-ins with giant patrols from the various strongholds in the area, and they are willing to temporarily team-up with another group.

92-94%: Black Jelly just waiting to be stepped on. As the party passes by, have the first character in the group roll a D20. A 14 or higher means he notices the gooey mass and avoids it. Otherwise, the character will end up with his lower leg coated in this vile stuff. Getting it off without killing or seriously maiming the character can be an adventure by itself.

95-97%: The players must squeeze through a narrow rock passage or spend an extra 1D4 days going around another way. Halfway through, they notice that the rocks on both sides are covered with dangerous Green Mold! Have each player character roll a D20 against his or her P.P., requiring a roll of 14 or higher to slowly squeeze through without rubbing up against the mold.

98-00%: The player group finds some weird standing stones stuck in the ground, a miniature Stonehenge-type arrangement. They are covered in carvings of an alien language that nobody has ever seen before. While examining the structure, 1D4 Perytons or Dragondactyls swoop down to attack. Ironically, the stone megalith offers protection from aerial attacks provided the characters stand under one of the arches.

The Eastern Baalgor Mountains

By Bill Coffin & Kevin Siembieda

While not as imposing as the Old Kingdom Mountains, this mountain chain does cut an impressive border between the Wastelands and the Yin-Sloth Jungles, then sweeps north again in a horseshoe shape separating the Wastelands from the Old Kingdom. To Wastelanders, the "U" shaped mountain range is the outer border of their homeland, a natural wall keeping meddlesome outsiders from entering. To those in the Old Kingdom and the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the mountains are a wall keeping all of the wild and dangerous Wasteland creatures confined.

The Baalgor Mountains are tall and wide, comparable to the American Rockies, but not quite as tall. Still, this makes for an impressive obstacle to cross, and anybody trying to cut across them on foot is in for a serious journey. There are precious few natural paths in the mountains, and even fewer roads or man-made paths. Riding and pack animals have a particularly hard time. Most of the mountain range is fairly steep with jagged peaks and deep valleys -traversing them can be painstaking. What few roads do exist are winding, with innumerable switchbacks, making travel an extremely long and tiresome endeavor.

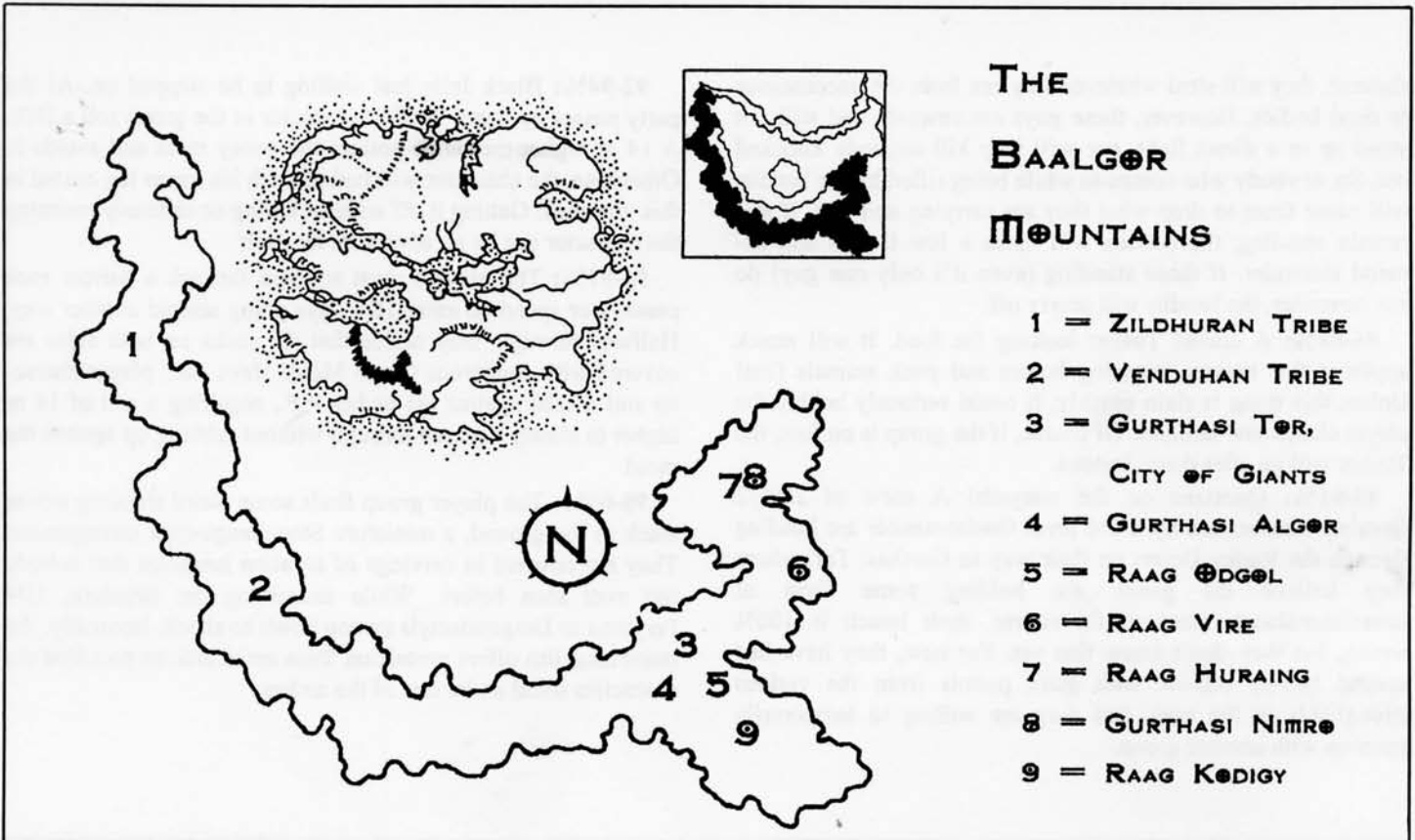
More importantly, this region is home to two of the more powerful groups of the Baalgor Wastelands, the giants and the Gromek. The giants mostly hail from the east, at Gurthasi Tor, where the fledgling Nimro Kingdom of Giants has spread its wings and looks to expand into the Baalgor Wastelands. The Gromek have lived in the Mount Nimro and Baalgor Mountain range for thousands of years, but are being driven out by the newly organized giants. In fact, all Gromek have already been

driven from Mount Nimro, and are making a stand in the mountains which they have vowed to keep for themselves or die trying. Over the last decade, this has resulted in titanic battles leaving the two warring factions, for the moment, deadlocked in a vicious war of attrition being waged in the eastern range of the Baalgor mountains and valleys around Mount Nimro.

Notes On the Major

Population Centers In the Area

The devastation unleashed by the Circle of Elemental Power was stopped by the great mountain range. Although the inner ring of the Baalgor Mountains bears the scars of this holocaust, marked by the blasted, sheer mountain cliffs and the debris field known as the Rocky Desert region, the mountains nestle alpine forests, grassy scrubland, pastoral valleys, rivers, streams and snow-capped peaks. Thus, it is actually more lush and alive than the Wastelands encircled in its arms. There are plenty of places to build shady, cool farms, settlements and strongholds. Many more Baalgor natives would inhabit the mountains if not for the pervasive presence of warring Gromek and giants who hold sway over the eastern half and dominate much of the southern and western half. These monsters and their Orc, Goblin, Ogre and Troll minions have effectively driven out most other settlers. There are no Eandroth in the mountains, nor Dragonmen, Baalizad, Gosai or Quorians, other than a handful of adventurers and mercenaries. Likewise, there are few humans, Elves, or Dwarves, and even most clans and tribes of Minotaur, Orcs,



Goblins, Ogres, Trolls and others are allied to one side or the other. Only Kobolds, concealed inside the very mountains themselves, have true autonomy and play both sides against each other. There is rumored to be a number of Minotaur settlements deep beneath the mountains, but their exact locations and numbers are not known. According to some stories, these are the most secretive and reclusive of the Minotaur tribes.



Minotaur Mountain Tribes

As in other parts of the Wastelands, there are some impressive ancient catacombs deep within the heart of the mountains. Nobody knows how old they are, just that numerous groups of Minotaurs live in them and they aren't fond of visitors. Like the Rocky Desert, the exact identity, strength and whereabouts of these tribes are unknown. The rocky passages leading to the underground chambers beneath the mountains are so incredibly difficult to reach that few even try, let alone succeed, in finding them. Those who do, seldom return to tell their tale, and the few that do, have never been able to fight their way into the Minotaurs' inner sanctum, so they can only confirm that some number of Minotaurs do exist under the mountain. That only reinforces the rumors that the Minotaurs of the Baalgor Mountains are so secretive and hostile towards outsiders that they will kill any non-Minotaur that gets near them. Still, adventurers and explorers who are convinced that they can out-fight, out-think, or out-run any hostile Minotaurs continue to brave those deep caverns and dark tunnels — where most meet their end.

There are two Minotaur tribes of note rumored to live somewhere under and within the Baalgor Mountains: The **Zildhuran Tribe** and the **Venduhan Tribe**.

The Zildhuran Tribe

This tribe supposedly inhabits an expansive labyrinth of catacombs built around a magnificent, underground, Dwarven city. The core of the cavern nowadays is protected by an incredibly dense and confusing network of tunnels that form a mind-boggling maze. The Zildhuran Minotaurs have memorized these tunnels and know of secret panels in the walls, so they never get lost in them, but outsiders will spend hours, if not days, trying to make their way through them. The lucky ones stumble back to where they started, give up and leave, the unlucky ones are either ambushed by Minotaur defenders or find their way through, only to be waylaid by guards waiting at the end of the maze. Some never find their way out at all and their remains are found where they finally collapsed and died from thirst or starvation.

It is said that the Zildhuran Minotaurs fought alongside the Elves during the Elf-Dwarf War, and that they eventually met

their end when armies of Dwarves attacked and decimated them. Truth be told, they were actually bought off by the Dwarves, and led their Elven allies into an ambush. The story spread by the Dwarves was that the tribe perished with the Elves, so that they could use the Minotaurs as a secret strike force and assassins. A few centuries later, the Dwarves and many of the Zildurhan met an untimely death at the hands of an invading Gosai army who ransacked and pillaged the City. When the Dwarves abandoned the City, toward the end of the Great War, the Minotaurs stayed. The Zildurhan have been a mere shadow of their former selves, skittish and reluctant to make contact with any group of people, friend or foe. Their act of treachery makes other Minotaurs fear them as untrustworthy and the tribe believes that should the Elves learn about what they did, they would destroy them in retribution. They are wrong about the Elves, who couldn't care less about them, but they don't know that.

Zildurhan Minotaurs are reported to have an unusually high incidence of psychic ability among their tribe, with a third having minor psionics, and another third possessing either major or master psionics. The leaders are said to be Mind Mages specially trained for warfare, specializing in disciplines such as Psi-Sword, Psi-Shield, Mind Bolt, Telekinesis, the various other types of kinesis powers, and similar. In large engagements, groups of Zildurhan warriors and Mind Mages keep in constant telepathic contact with each other, making them an extremely well-coordinated fighting force.

The Zildurhan tribe has 143 members, many of whom are young, just entering their careers as warriors. A dozen or so live "topside," where they serve as bandits and raiders to help supply their subterranean brothers with equipment, news and food (mainly captured or slain humanoids). They have no minions, per se, but maintain an ongoing trade relationship with a tribe of Kobolds 80 miles (128 km) to the south. They do have around 100 slaves (mostly Orcs, Goblins and a few other races) as well as humanoid livestock (mostly Goblins, Orcs and humans) as part of their food supply. **Note:** The tribe is considering joining forces with the Kingdom of Giants as they see the Gromek as dangerous alien invaders who, given time, will try to conquer the world.

The Venduhan Tribe

These Minotaurs are the keepers of another impressive cavern system, only this one connects with an older and deeper chain that stretches down into the depths of the underworld for dozens of miles. The Venduhan themselves have never seriously explored this subterranean catacomb, but would like to. If outsiders entered this cavern and somehow made peace with these comparatively peaceful and open-minded Minotaurs, they would help organize a joint expedition of the place below.

The Venduhan number 1,021 strong, and are one of the largest gatherings of Minotaurs anywhere. The tribe has increased in size by about 25% every 50 years for the last two centuries, a staggering rise in number, for Minotaurs. On one hand, this population rise indicates just how successful the tribe has been. On the other, restricted to an underground environment, it strains the available food and causes other problems. They have plenty of fresh water from an underground stream and miles of tunnels to expand into, but food is a major problem. One must remember that Minotaurs are 8-10 feet (2.4 to 3 m) tall and consume

about twice as much as an average human. To maintain a population of a 1000+ giants, they need reliable and expansive trade for food, or to move to the surface where they can more easily raise livestock, or divide the tribe into two or three smaller, independent units. They'd rather avoid doing the latter as it means breaking up large family clans and friendships centuries old, plus they are incredibly strong united as one group. They have already established a pair of (seemingly unallied) outposts in mountain valleys where 50-80 tribesmen live and raise sheep, goats and turkeys. This will help in the short term, but not in the long. Their large number presents another problem for them because they live in a war-torn environment: Keeping themselves secluded to avoid being dragged into the conflict. If the giants learn of their large community, they will try to recruit them, and failing that, attack and enslave them. The tribe will be targeted for no other reason than their size and the giants' fear that they may one day work against them. The warlords of the fledgling Giant Kingdom are aggressive and suspicious of anybody who is not on their side, and tend to have the attitude that one is either "for them or against them." With that attitude, it is impossible for the Minotaurs to maintain their independence or neutrality and stay out of the conflict. If the Gromek learn about them, they too will attack, destroying half and enslaving the rest. Likewise, humans who have a nasty habit of lumping all giants or non-humans into the same category, *might* also lay siege to them under the misconception that they are part of the giant or Gromek forces. Furthermore, the Minotaurs are haunted by the



treachery and evil of their ancient ancestors and present-day sub-groups, giving humans and other small folk a reason to fear them, even though the Venduhan tribe has forsaken the worship of the Old Ones and evil gods thousands of years ago, nor do they prey upon or eat other humanoids. It is a dilemma to which there are no easy or obvious answers.

There is one faction of this hard-pressed tribe who are all for establishing a large surface community and battling all who oppose them, however, more sober heads are prevailing, and the Venduhan are considering more peaceful ways to deal with their population crisis. This includes establishing trade, perhaps with a tribe of Kobolds (except that these beings can not be trusted and are already dealing with both the giants and Gromek) and/or the Eandroth in the Rocky Desert, as well as trying to establish additional surface farms and herds of cattle for food, and sending foraging expeditions out into the Wastelands and Old Kingdom. The trick is doing all this without attracting the attention of the giants or Gromek, or their henchmen and allies who might threaten to trade or sell the information about the tribe's existence unless the Minotaurs pay some sort of extortion or help them in some way.

Note: Although reasonably peaceful, the tribe will ruthlessly defend itself. Also note that the tribe has no practitioners of magic and tends to avoid magic because they see it as a corrupting force. However, if they could find some means to magically create food in order to supplement their tribe . . .

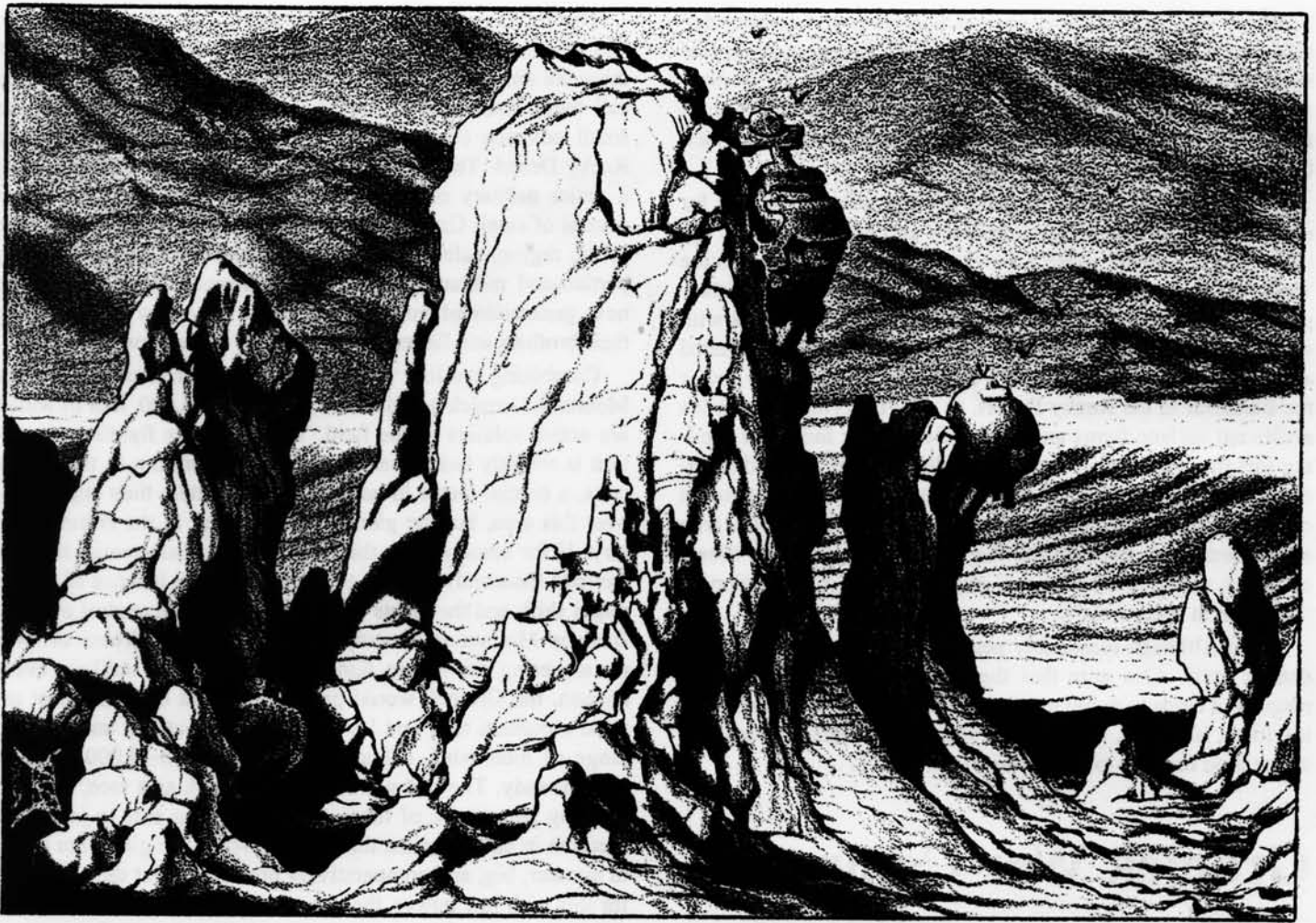
Gromek War Camps

When the Gromek were forced out of the Mount Nimro region by giants, they fell back to the one place where they would have the advantage of flight, and knew they could hold off any enemy indefinitely, the eastern Baalgor Mountains. Actually, there were several loosely affiliated tribes and clans already living in the mountains — Gromek love living high above the ground where they can literally stretch their wings and fly. The defeat of their cousins living at Mount Nimro has polarized most of these clans into a united army — a legion of angry warriors craving revenge. Although the giants frequently goad them into the Old Kingdom and Baalgor lowlands, the Gromek have forced the giants to bring the war to them up in the mountains. The Baalgor Mountains are the perfect place for the Gromek to wage a war. The tall, jagged peaks make it difficult for land crawling opponents to move and maneuver, as well as completely eliminate the use of siege weapons, cavalry, and most large-scale field tactics. Mountain invaders are restricted by the terrain and vulnerable in passes and along cliff facings where they can only travel in a straight line, single file or in narrow rows of two or three. Under such conditions, the ability to fly gives the Gromek a decided advantage and unchallenged mobility. Furthermore, since many have lived in the mountains for generations, they are already familiar with many of its features, dangers, hiding places and secrets, giving them home field advantage. Thus, a squad of 8-12 Gromek can usually successfully battle enemy forces 10-15 times greater in number (this advantage disappears in mountain valleys and lowlands), and enemies caught on a narrow mountain pass are picked off like fish in a barrel.

There are scores of small war bands with 6-36 warriors (male and female) scattered throughout the eastern mountains, but there are only four main Gromek war camps, or "raags" as they call them. Each of these raags is considerably larger than the small advance camps in the Sandy Desert or patrols in the Rocky Desert. These are full-scale armies capable of sustaining a major military offensive indefinitely. In addition, there are dozens of small Gromek villages on many of the mountain tops in the region, safely out of the reach of most enemy scouting parties and military patrols. There, Gromek females raise the next generation of young warriors so they may one day join their brothers and fathers in the glorious war against giantkind.

Combining the four main raags and the various villages, the Mountain Gromek's population is roughly 43,000, half of which are active soldiers in the field. The Gromek's fighting population is roughly twice that of the giants operating in the mountains, a crucial factor in helping them maintain their superiority over this area, but the giants remain strong in the Nimro territory. If for some reason the Gromek lost a substantial number (several thousand) of their adult warriors, the balance of power might shift, and the giants could eventually gain control over the Baalgor Mountains, destroying the Gromek's dream of ever reconquering the Nimro Kingdom. Should this unlikely event happen, the Gromek would probably inhabit only the most remote mountain tops and lay claim to the southern and western range of mountains. (There are easily 10,000-15,000 in these parts already. The bad news for the Gromek as a race, is that a growing percentage of these clans are going east to join their brethren in battle against the giants). **Note:** The giants are fewer in number, big, and comparatively ponderous, but they make up for this with raw power, the use of magic, and an army of Orcs, Goblins, Ogres, Minotaurs and Troll henchmen. Even some Elven, Dwarven and human mercenaries and cutthroats fight on the side of the giants. Furthermore, those in the Mount Nimro region are vast in number, made bold with each victory and flush with dreams of power.

As one can plainly see, now is an important time for the Gromek people. If they can drive out their hated giant enemies, they will have taken the first major step in reclaiming their adopted homeland, Mount Nimro. Yet, they dare not launch a massive, costly full-scale attack against the giants, for if it failed, tens of thousands of Gromek would perish and they could condemn their entire race to near extinction. Instead, they use small squad and guerilla tactics to launch surprise attacks, surgical strikes, and lightning-quick hit and runs upon the enemy. They also engage in psychological warfare, doing things to taunt, confuse and divide the enemy, and make them take rash and foolish actions. They patrol constantly, monitoring and logging enemy movements and plotting acts of retaliation. The Gromek are also fond of destroying the giants' supplies, cutting off their supply lines, chasing off their riding animals and livestock, and other acts of espionage and sabotage to wreak havoc among their forces. This is not as satisfying as killing the giants themselves, but all important in keeping the giant war machine grinding slow, especially in the mountains. Divide and conquer and war of attrition have always been two favorite tactics of the Gromek. Another is to frustrate the enemy, because it demoralizes the troops, encourages foolhardy action, and causes dissension in their ranks. And an enemy who can not focus on combat is vulnerable in many ways.



Gromek culture is military by nature, so all males are trained from childhood as soldiers, knights and select other men at arms. With no external enemy to fight, Gromek villages and war camps tend to fight themselves and/or try to dominate a particular area and all who live there. The current menace represented by the giants has unified the many independent tribes, clans, villages, war camps and individuals, and gotten them to work in unison under a single chain of command. As long as the enemy exists, the Gromek will continue to operate as a united, highly efficient war machine capable of producing incredible amounts of war material and legions of battle-hardened soldiers. They also have strong trade with Kobolds in the mountains to get quality weapons, armor and other supplies.

As for a fighting force, because Gromek are trained in the arts of combat at such an early age, the average, inexperienced soldier is 2nd or 3rd level, while veterans range from 4th-8th level, sometime higher (officers are usually 7th-12th level). Unlike the giants, the Gromek only recruit a small number of non-Gromek to fight at their side — all counted, perhaps as many as one thousand, and humans, Elves, Dwarves and True Giants are *never* among them. They do, however, keep slaves, but the number never surpasses more than 25% of the Gromek population.

For now (and probably for years to come), the Gromek remain unified and offer stiff resistance to the giants of the Nimro Kingdom. They dominate the upper reaches of the mountains, where the giants cannot tread, and constantly monitor the forests, scrubland and valleys of the lower mountains where giants

and other peoples can gather and/or find resources (water, food, trees for wood, shelter, etc.). While they have no delusion that they can control or dominate every location, especially caves and hiding places, they know about most of them and make regular patrols to monitor them. When it is deemed necessary, they take wing and attack enemy camps — sometimes decimating them, other times satisfied simply to send their enemies fleeing, or to prevent a resource or strategic position from falling into enemy hands. From mountain peaks and the sky, “one can see the world from its proper perspective,” or so an old Gromek proverb goes. While the giants build a kingdom around fiery Mount Nimro, and the Gromek are not likely to recapture it, the Gromek rule the peaks of the eastern mountains, and the giants are unlikely to wrest it from their taloned grasp. Worse, the giants have won the Gromek as an eternal enemy who never forgives or forgets. If the Kingdom of Giants ever falters, the Gromek will swoop down upon them like angry condors and rip them apart. In the meanwhile, they continue their battle in the mountains and kill giants and their allies wherever they are encountered.

Raag Vire

This is the largest and strongest of all Gromek war camps in the Baalgor Wastelands. To a large extent, the entire Gromek military effort is directed by this single raag, under the constant supervision of Jijjerijn the Magnificent, Raag Vire’s Supreme Commander, and the current leader of the unified Gromek tribes of Baalgor.

In some respects, Raag Vire is cut from the same cloth as its enemy city, Gurthasi Tor, home of the Baalgor giants. Both are fortified military settlements from which each side's army launches raid after countless raid to drive their enemy out of the area. But that is where the similarities end. Unlike Gurthasi Tor, which is to be converted into a civilian outpost one day, Raag Vire is a military camp, period. Gromek society makes little distinction between military and civilian life, and nowhere will that seem more prevalent than in this, the largest of the Gromek raags.

Raag Vire hosts a small city's worth of Gromek, but despite its size, it still retains the stark geometric layout of a prison camp, and the buildings are minimalist at best, designed to provide shelter and storage, and little else. This is not a place of comfort. It is a place of constant hardship. The Gromek yearn to destroy an enemy that outnumbers and overpowers them, so the only way they can win, they reckon, is by showing superior resolve. There are no creature comforts, no bars, no inns, no theaters. Everything is designed to hone Gromek into dedicated warriors and precision fighting machines.

Raag Vire sits atop one of the highest peaks in the Baalgor Mountains, *Mount Rigeza*. A city that could only be appreciated by anybody able to fly. There is virtually no horizontal space, so all of the buildings are either built on narrow terraces or directly into the face of the mountain. Moving around up here requires lots of agile flying which, of course, is second nature to Gromek, but not to many other folks. Thanks to its vertical design and remote location, it is impossible for the giants below to besiege this mountain top city without the use of magic. No siege weapons can reach them and only flying assailants pose any real threat. As a result, Raag Vire has no protective walls or guard towers. The sharp eyes of its inhabitants alone are enough of an early warning system against unwanted intruders.

Slowly but surely, the number of Gromek at Raag Vire is growing. When the Gromek tribes were scattered during their terrible defeat at Mount Nimro and years of rivalry before that, many of the Great Tribes fragmented and went their separate ways. Those Gromek who suffered defeat at the hands of the giants were terribly demoralized and ill equipped for defeat. A few even committed suicide rather than live in disgrace. With nowhere else to go, they retreated to the Baalgor Mountains. From their haze of defeat, the famed Gromek warrior, Jijjerijn the Magnificent, stepped forward and took command. Jijjerijn spoke of how defeat made the true warrior stronger. That it taught them about their enemy and themselves. That knowledge would work against their enemy and restore glory to the Gromek Empire . . . provided they had the courage to fight. And the courage to face possible defeat, yet again. The great warrior rallied the Gromek from the pits of despair and into a fighting force determined to prevent the giants from making any further gains. "Indeed, we can no longer fight the giants on the open battlefield," Jijjerijn said. "The flat lands are their domain. No. We must have them bring the fight to us. To the mountain. And when they feel safe, because they have seemingly forced us to the highest peaks, we shall swoop down upon them and throw each and every one to the hard earth below and listen to their bones snap like dry twigs."

And so began a war of cunning and attrition. The Gromek raiding giant supply trains, assassinating key personnel, striking

when least expected, conducting hard-core psychological warfare on the enemy and chalking up one small win after another. "We must not be impatient or greedy." Cautions the Great Jijjerijn, "The mountain begins as just a pebble, but a thousand pebbles make a hill, and millions make a mountain. We shall build our mountain of conquest with but a pebble, and stone by stone we shall build a mountain of victory."

Meanwhile, throughout the Baalgor Mountains, Yin-Sloth Jungles, Old Kingdom and Baalgor Wastelands, word spreads among the tribes of scattered Gromek that there is a new war going on in the Baalgor Mountains. A war where one rag-tag army of Gromek led by the Mighty Jijjerijn has prevented a legion of giants from claiming the mountains. This war calls to every Gromek warrior like a siren maiden, causing them to arrive in swarms to join their brethren. In the last year, the number of Gromek returning to Raag Vire has increased exponentially, and unless some catastrophe happens, this war camp alone can prevent the giants and their minions from conquering the eastern mountains. Whether they and the others can successfully tear down Gurthasi Tor, and perhaps win back a chunk of Mount Nimro is yet to be seen, but the mountains are Gromek domain.

For now, the Gromek of Raag Vire are content with each small victory. They continue to rally Gromek to their cause and patrol and harass the giants, avoiding any serious toe-to-toe confrontations. In the meantime, new recruits come in every day, and the united Gromek tribes dream of a time that will bring the giant Lords of Mount Nimro to their knees!

Jijjerijn the Magnificent

Jijjerijn epitomizes what Gromek strive for: strength and courage in battle, a hard heart, and cool head for making command decisions, a strong sense of honor and fair play, and an unflinching resolve to achieve the task at hand, no matter what the cost.

When Jijjerijn retreated into the Baalgor Mountains after the giants took over the Mount Nimro region, he swore that one day, the Gromek would return victorious. With the few platoons he had scraped together, he established a base camp where Raag Vire is today, and began launching harassment raids on the giants, thereby encouraging more Gromek to join.

As said previously, Jijjerijn is building the strength to hold the eastern mountains and, perhaps one day, destroy Gurthasi Tor, after which, he believes, the giants will lose their resolve to colonize the Baalgor Wastelands and will pull back from the Mount Nimro region. Should that ever happen (it is unlikely), Jijjerijn is ready to chase the fleeing giants and cut down every last one of them.

The Gromek leader has learned that there is another large Gromek army, reportedly some 25,000 troops strong, operating in the Mount Nimro region. Reports indicate that this roving army refuses to confront the giants directly. Rather, it is wandering through the giant kingdom, living off the land and destroying undefended towns and villages, forcing the giants to spread themselves thin in an effort to find and destroy them. This unfiliated band may unwittingly give him the opportunity he needs to pounce upon and destroy his enemy. However, Jijjerijn wonders why this tribe of Gromek have not come to join the battle directly. The obvious answer is that they must be led by a warrior who sees Jijjerijn as a rival, and the two tribes may eventually clash rather than fight as one.



Title: Supreme Commander of Raag Vire and Lord of the Baalgor Gromek.

O.C.C.: 12th level Knight.

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 16, M.A. 12, P.S. 24, P.P. 18, P.E. 24, P.B. 12, Spd. 12 running and 40 flying.

Hit Points: 84, S.D.C.: 50

Attacks per melee: 8

Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +4 to strike, +9 to parry and dodge, +4 to roll with impact, +2 to disarm, +3 to pull punch, +13 to damage, +5 to save vs magic and poison, and +18% vs coma/death.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand Martial Arts & Boxing — Karate kick (2D4), roundhouse kick (3D6), axe kick (2D6), crescent kick (2D6+2). All jump kicks, leap attack (critical strike), critical strike 18-20, KO on a natural 20, and body flip/throw.

W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Lance (See Knight O.C.C. for details), W.P. Sword (+5 to strike, +4 to parry, +3 to throw), W.P. Shield (+5 to parry, +3 to strike), W.P. Battle Axe (+5 to strike/parry/throw, +1D6 to damage), W.P. Spear (+5 to strike/parry, +3 to throw), W.P. Chain (+4 to strike, +3 to parry), W.P. Pole Arm (+5 to strike/parry, +4 to damage, +3 to throw)

Weapons: Jijjerijn fights with two magical weapons he has owned for years.

The Axe of Elmorik: This handsome, double-bladed battle axe was the chief weapon of famed Dwarven general Elmorik Downwater. After Elmorik died in the Siege of the Golden City of Baalgor, his axe was lost for many years until it was found nearly a century ago by treasure-hunters. Since then, it changed hands until it came into the possession of Jijjerijn.

The Axe is indestructible and inflicts 3D6 per hit but ordinary (non-magical) weapons and shields parrying the axe must save vs magic (base roll of 12 or higher) or shatter! Items that do save vs magic take normal S.D.C. damage. Oddly enough, this weapon does not have the same “shatter-

ing” effect against armor, other inanimate objects or living beings (does normal damage). It is not a two-handed weapon.

The Northern Fury: When unsheathed, the blade of this flat-gray long sword frosts over and steams, radiating intense cold. The sword inflicts 4D6 damage, and anyone struck by it must save vs magic or be paralyzed by the numbing cold for one melee round (15 seconds; no attacks or melee actions are possible). The sword makes its wielder immune to normal cold and magical cold inflicts only half damage.

Furthermore, the sword enables its user to cast any combination of the following spells, at 6th level proficiency, up to three times daily: Freeze Water, Sheet of Ice, Shards of Ice, Wall of Ice, 10 Foot (3 m) Ball of Ice, and Encase in Ice.

This sword is nearly indestructible, having 500 S.D.C., which it regenerates at a rate of 20 per hour.

Armor: Plate and chain armor with an A.R. of 15, and 100 S.D.C.

Other Magic Items: As noted under the Command Post description (#2, below), Jijjerijn has a variety of magical weapons and items, including select potions, fumes and 30 Lightning javelins.

Money and other equipment: The warrior has stowed an unspecified treasure trove beneath the floor of his command post. Rumors vary widely as to the exact contents, but there must be at least 1D6 million in gold, silver and gems.

Raag Vire

Population of Raag Vire: 9,604

The population of Raag Vire breaks down into Gromek military units, the smallest of which is a 7 man squad, known simply as “Seven.” Seven squads make up a 49 man Gromek platoon. Seven platoons make up a 343 man company. Seven companies make up one, 2,401 man brigade. In all, the Raag has a field army of 9,604.

Raag Vire special troops or “enhanced brigade” includes a company-sized command unit, a company-sized mages’ unit, and a company-sized clergy unit.

City Key

1. Barracks. This is where everybody stays when not on duty or otherwise out in public. All troops, regardless of their rank, sleep in simple, unadorned barracks. The uniformity of this suggests that regardless of rank, everyone in the army is still the same when they go to bed at night, and have all survived another day together. Security is fairly lax here, for only fellow Gromek are allowed. Since the Gromek of Raag Vire rarely steal from each other (they all fear the consequences far too much), the barracks are not usually locked down, so folks can enter and exit them as they please. There are no other races allowed at Raag Vire for any reason, not even slaves or prisoners. Thus, any non-Gromek is instantly recognized as an enemy and destroyed.

Typically, a barracks houses a single platoon of 49 troops. Platoon barracks are grouped together according to their company. Different company groupings tend to have some distance between them, since Gromek companies often develop intense rivalries. As a result, the commanders of the base try to keep the soldiers from mingling as much as possible.

1: BARRACKS (EACH UNIT SUBDIVIDES INTO 7 SMALLER UNITS HOUSING ONE GROMEK SQUAD EACH)

2: COMMAND POST

3: WAR COUNCIL BUILDING

4: FOUNDRY

5: TEMPLE

6: MAGE'S

CENTER

7: PROVING

GROUND

8: TRAINING

YARD

9: SOLITUDE

POINT

10: CANTEN

11: FOOD DEPOT

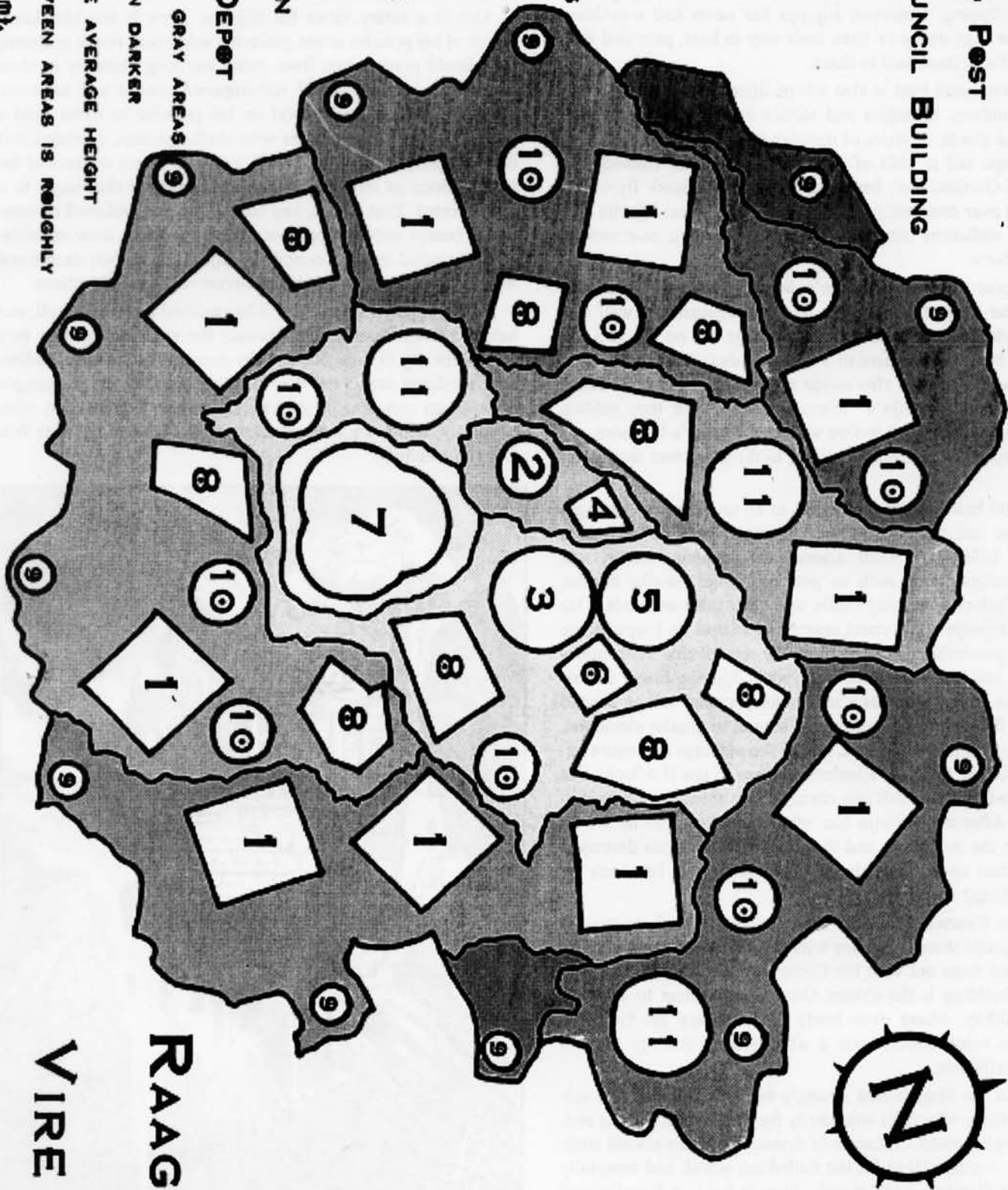
NOTE: LIGHTER GRAY AREAS

ARE HIGHER THAN DARKER

GRAY AREAS. THE AVERAGE HEIGHT

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AREAS IS ROUGHLY

100 FEET (30 m).



RAAG

VIRE

2. Command Post. Like all other buildings at the compound, the Command Post is a stark reminder of the severe, all-important military mind-set of the camp and Gromek culture. The building is essentially a huge dome with an open top for Commanders to enter and exit through. Access to this building is restricted to only the topmost Officers of the raag, which includes Jijjerijn the Magnificent and his staff, the heads of the special units and the commanding officers from each of the raag's companies. No one else is allowed in, under the penalty of wing clipping. However, Jijjerijn has never had a problem with underlings trying to force their way in here, provided they had something important to share.

The Command Post is also where Jijjerijn assesses information, formulates strategies and tactics and runs his campaign against the giants. A series of massive tables dominate the floor, where maps and models of the nearby mountains (including a model of Gurthasi Tor, based on numerous Gromek fly-overs) are pored over constantly by Jijjerijn and his aides. Jijjerijn also holds all audiences here, which tend to be short, no-nonsense conversations.

This place is also Jijjerijn's home. There are cots and bedrolls he uses to catch some rest, and against one wall is a kitchen where he receives his food. Jijjerijn has no servants living here, but a complement of 7 bodyguards (all 5th to 6th level Gromek soldiers) who also reside at the Command Post. These bodyguards are Jijjerijn's "Silent Shadows," for they seldom speak, and they never interfere with their leader's business, except to protect him. Each is willing to die to protect their great leader.

A secret hatch in the floor leads to an underground passageway hewn into the rock of the mountain itself. It leads to a chamber holding a small arsenal of weapons, armor, and one-use magic items such as potions, fumes, smoke bombs, scrolls, Cyclops Lightning shafts, and other odds and ends. This cache is Jijjerijn's last stand armory. It is said he keeps magic weapons powerful enough to blow the top off this very mountain, but nobody knows for sure what Jijjerijn keeps in this storehouse. Perhaps he has a means for personal escape located inside or the makings to summon a demon or greater elemental. Or perhaps, as it is whispered, he has the makings to conjure another Circle of Absolute Elemental Power to use if it looks like Raag Vire is about to fall into enemy hands somehow (pure conjecture). After all, Jijjerijn has often remarked that he would rather see the mountains and the Baalgor Wastelands destroyed entirely than under giant dominion. Perhaps that has been his plan all along?

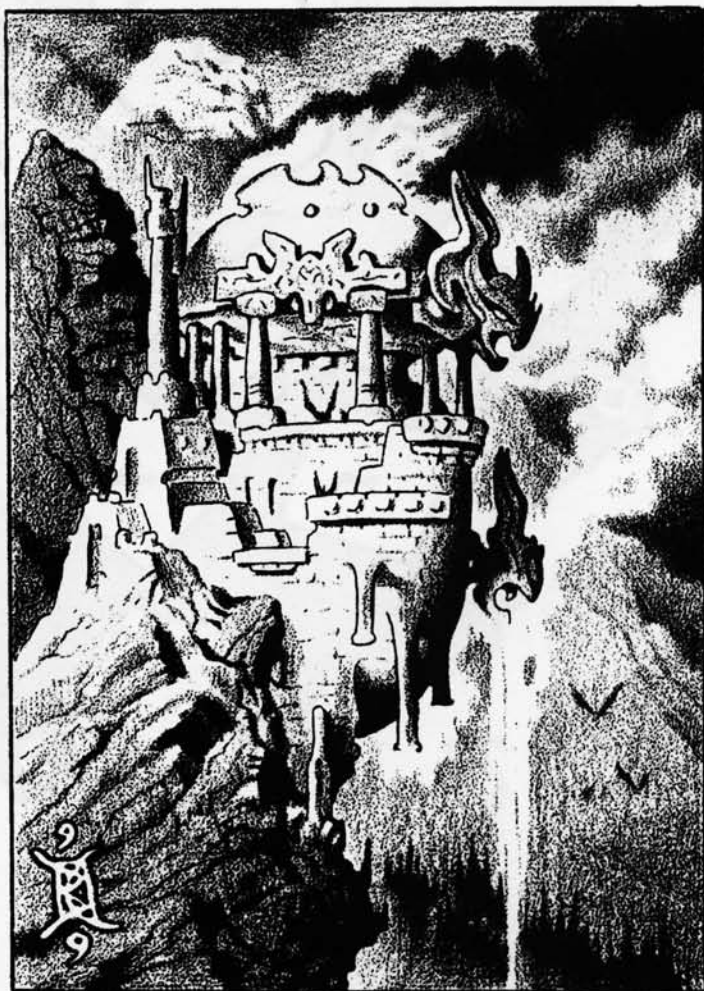
3. War Council Building. This massive, domed structure is where Jijjerijn shares his plans with the rest of the camp once he has hashed them out with his Commanding Officers. The War Council building is the closest Gromek equivalent to a parliament building, where even lowly Commanders get their one chance to voice dissent over a wide-ranging strategy without fear of retribution.

Jijjerijn the Magnificent strongly believes that the best soldiers are those who fight voluntarily for their cause. To that end, he has implemented a measure of democracy to his overall strategy plan — a rare thing for the Palladium world, and especially so for the Gromek. Each month, Jijjerijn holds a War Council meeting here with each raag company commander. Every

month, he receives reports from all of his company officers on their progress over the last 30 days (this is more for the benefit of other Company Commanders than for Jijjerijn, who receives constant status reports on all operations). Then, he reveals his plans for the upcoming month and opens the floor to discussion, giving each commander their say if they so desire it. Any Commander may move to challenge any *one* of Jijjerijn's initiatives. If that challenge is met by a second, then the war council votes to approve the initiative after debating it. Majority rules.

This is a safety valve for Jijjerijn, since it lets him know which of his policies might incite his soldiers to revolt or desert, and should prevent him from doing anything blatantly reckless or foolish — a matter of self-imposed checks and balances. Likewise, he has made good on his promise to never hold a grudge against Commanders who challenge him, provided it is done properly in a War Council session and not in front of the troops. Once an initiative is passed, no further challenges to it are tolerated. That means, any complainers are relieved of command, beaten and/or clipped or exiled. Likewise, once an initiative is rejected by the Council, Jijjerijn lives by their decree and will not try to argue the point or circumvent their objections.

So far, Jijjerijn's war council has worked incredibly well, and helps to keep morale high because the soldiers feel that they have some say in their fate and the direction of the war. Soldiers have no direct say in the War Council, but they are encouraged to bring up concerns or grievances to their Commander, who, hopefully, will bring their concerns to the table at the next War Council meeting.



4. Arsenal/Foundry. Another one of the raag's large, domed buildings. This one has side entrances and a chimney. This is where the Gromek blacksmiths work day and night in rotating shifts to crank out new weapons and armor and to repair damaged or worn items. Great fires and melting cauldrons keep the place oven-hot, lit up by the glow and sparks of the metalworks. Much of the metal used here is salvaged from slain enemies, or raids on the Gurthasi Tor iron mine. The last such raid was two years ago, and while the Gromek made off with a considerable amount of metal, they also lost enough troops to discourage Jijjerijn from ordering another such attack. In that time since, Gromek scouts have searched for a new source of iron to keep the war effort going. Their major suppliers are two different Kobold colonies who also supply the giants.

Recycling of metal is a common practice. Any spare or scrap metal is melted down and recast into something useful. Old and obsolete items are likewise melted and recast. Wasting metal is more dangerous than wasting food or water up here, so the blacksmiths keep a very close eye on their inventories.

Running the metalworks operations is **Lorig the Anvil**, a 7th level soldier who lost an eye fighting giants three years ago. His loss of depth perception has made him a liability in combat, so he was taken off the front-lines and put to good use managing the foundry. Lorig is immensely proud of his job and the important role it plays in the overall war effort. He is also extremely protective of his position, since it is the only thing that still makes him feel like a soldier.

This building also houses the main Arsenal, where most of the finished items are catalogued by the raag's quartermaster, who then distributes them on an as-needed basis and stores the rest. Currently, there are several hundred extra weapons and about 100 extra suits of armor stockpiled here.

5. Temple. The Temple of Raag Vire is a shrine to the Juggernaut, perhaps the only deity commonly worshipped by the Gromek people. An entire platoon of priests of darkness, their acolytes, and support soldiers maintain the temple, living there as if it were their barracks. However, their living quarters take up only a small portion of this massive, domed structure. The temple is large enough to accommodate half the raag. During the monthly holy services, somewhere between 70% and 80% of the camp attends. Curiously, Jijjerijn does not attend these services. It is unknown whether he worships in private or is an atheist. Several of Jijjerijn's subordinates note that this could cause a rift between him and his men someday.

Running the temple is an 8th level Priest of Darkness named **S'ghol**, who is supported by seven lesser priests (each a 4th to 5th level priest of darkness) and fourteen acolytes (all the equivalent of 1-3 level religious squires — devoted assistants to the priests). One of the priests is a *Troll* named **Jasok the Faithful**, who is the only non-Gromek living in Raag Vire. For reasons unknown to the rest of the Raag, Jasok climbed up to the mountain to serve at the temple. He already was a 3rd level Priest of Darkness serving the Juggernaut. When he was challenged by the Gromek watchmen, he demanded a duel of honor in the *Proving Ground* to earn the right to serve the Juggernaut at the temple (he claims the deity sent him here). Jijjerijn, piqued with curiosity, allowed the duel. Jasok squared off against the watchman who first stopped him, and in single, unarmed combat, slew him with his bare hands. Three more Gromek challenged the

Troll, one after the other, and all met similar fates. At that point, Jijjerijn stopped the duel and decreed that Jasok could stay at the temple. Although viewed with distrust by many Gromek, Jasok has proven to be a valuable and loyal member of the temple and of Raag Vire. Still, some think he has a secret agenda or is a spy for the giants. Jasok is aware of these opinions of him and, as a result, he is always alert for trouble, although nothing has occurred since his initial arrival. If indeed Jasok has a secret agenda, or if he is more (or less) than what he seems, he keeps the secret well.

6. Mage Center. The practitioners of magic who serve the camp are housed in one of the big domes like the War Council building. Warriors by nature, most Gromek are familiar with the ways of steel, but tend to view the mystic arts with some suspicion. Granted, they appreciate the destructive power many spell casters wield, but deep down, they still fear what they do not fully understand. As a result, Gromek wizards are fairly uncommon and viewed with distrust by their fellows. Jijjerijn, the Magnificent would like to change all that.

Since the founding of Raag Vire, Jijjerijn has realized that cultivating a force of combat wizards will give his army some much needed firepower and countermeasures against the giants and their magic wielding minions. To that end, Jijjerijn spent many of his first days after their defeat at Nimro seeking out Gromek wizards and recruiting them to his cause. The most powerful among them is **Qsin Lirieg**, a 7th level, aberrant wizard who has been a friend of the Gromek leader for years. Aside from Qsin, Jijjerijn has recruited another dozen Gromek wizards, ranging from 2nd to 5th level in experience. These mages are charged with teaching the mystic arts to a crop of new candidates in the hopes of creating a fresh generation of Gromek wizards. This is not easy, because many of the war-like Gromek see the use of magic as a weakness. Furthermore, the Gromek's lack of mystic knowledge severely limits the range of spells known to them. Consequently, several students have been sent abroad to expand their spell repertoire. Still, things look promising. Jijjerijn has 12 wizards working and teaching 37 novices (not yet 1st level wizards but close), who should be ready for action in just a few more months. Until then, he has scouts scouring the area for magical scrolls of any type so they can be converted to actual spell knowledge and taught among his battle mages.

As a unit, the mage company has not yet seen combat, so there is some doubt as to how well they will perform. However, each of these Gromek mages is at least a 2nd or 3rd level soldier, so they can handle themselves in combat. Indeed, many of the mages in this unit are very eager to complete their training so they can test their new destructive powers upon some unsuspecting giants.

7. Proving Grounds. This large, open yard looks like a cross between an arena and an amphitheater. This is where all legal matters are resolved, such as duels of honor, commendations and promotions, censures and demotions, criminal trials, and punishments (usually clipping or execution). Jijjerijn requires that all such legal matters be brought to him first, after which he decides if they merit public display. If they do, then he calls the camp to order, and they assemble to watch the proceedings. Since Gromek culture is based heavily on shame and honor, having this public display of the legal system makes it a very powerful deterrent. Getting caught for doing something bad is

one thing. Getting physically punished is even worse, but being publicly humiliated is the unkindest cut of all. While none of Jijerijn's soldiers fear his brand of discipline, they do fear the brand of shame. On the other hand, receiving praise or commendation is a high honor.

8. Training Yard. There are many of these scattered throughout the raag, almost one for every company. Essentially, these are small courtyards where troops can drill, practice, spar and exercise when they are not on duty. For many Gromek, working out in a training yard is the preferred method of recreation. Many yards have obstacle courses, target dummies, sparring weapons and so on.



9. Solitude Points. Initially, these were designed as lookout posts, but over the years, it became evident that the giants are not going to challenge Raag Vire. So, the soldiers stationed here tend to scan the horizon for signs of other flying adversaries, such as Perytons or dragons. Very seldom does any flying menace come near, and when they do, a few well-placed bow shots drive them away (very few monsters or animals are foolish enough to attack a Gromek city head on). Since lookout watch is rather boring, many Gromek take this time to reflect on their life as a warrior, and their accomplishments in life. For this reason, these watch posts have been nicknamed "solitude points," where Gromek can catch a few hours of meditation or contemplation before returning to the danger and routine of their duties.

Note: As added inspiration, the names of the greatest Gromek heroes have been inscribed on stone plaques at these

lookout points to give the troops some inspiration and food for thought. Each hero's name evokes memories and stories of honor, courage, nobility and sacrifice.

10. Canteen. While Gromek are not party animals, they do require a little release now and then, so once a month, platoons are allowed to hit the canteen for a night of drinking and carousing. Each company has its own canteen, which serves food during the day, and drinks at night. The canteens try to schedule the platoons' visits as best they can to prevent more than a couple of platoons from hitting them at once.

Raag Odgol

This war camp is standard for the Baalgor Mountains, consisting of a single Gromek brigade of 2,401 soldiers. The supreme commander of Raag Odgol is **Igrig Odgol**, an 8th level knight. He is a nearly legendary Commander, and the only living Gromek officer with the honor to have a war camp named after him. Odgol received this honor when he led a very successful raid into the heart of the Mount Nimro region several years ago. His campaign destroyed several giant villages and a small giant army before retreating back into the Baalgor Mountains. As his reward, Odgol was given the highest honor possible in the Gromek culture, to have a military outpost established in his name. Bursting with pride, Odgol was given Command of this outpost, where he now harries the giants of Gurthasi Tor and lowland troops.

Thanks to Odgol's enthusiasm, the soldiers of this war camp are on constant patrol, flying over Gurthasi Tor and taking inventories of enemy troop movements. Most of these scouts like to drop large rocks and bags of excrement into enemy camps, just to annoy the giants. In addition, the Odgol Sevens have made many raids upon giant supply trains moving through the treacherous mountain passes leading up to Gurthasi Tor. Thanks to their bravery and hard work, only two thirds of all the supplies sent to Gurthasi Tor from Mount Nimro ever reach their final destination. The rest are destroyed by Gromek attacks (usually aerial arrow bombardments, or causing rock slides to hit the wagon trains) or captured.

Ever the ambitious warrior, Odgol isn't happy with just harrying the giants. He wants to take Gurthasi Tor itself, but has too few soldiers to do that. So he asks himself, how could such a task be accomplished? The key, Odgol believes, is to strike at *Overlord Orgath Nukessin*, ruler of the city itself. Convinced that giants will not fight without a leader (not exactly true), Odgol has been plotting the assassination of Nukessin for months. To Odgol, it is simply a matter of sneaking into the city and murdering the giant in his sleep. With their leader gone, he believes the giants would become demoralized, confused, and splinter into rival factions, crippling them militarily. After much consideration, Odgol has decided the best way to hit Nukessin would be for him to personally lead a suicide squad of 343 Gromek straight into the city with the sole purpose of killing *Orgath Nukessin*. Sure, most (if not all) of the Gromek involved would die, but the blow dealt to the enemy would be devastating (if only it were that easy).

To a degree, he is right, but the truth is nobody knows what exactly would happen to the war if Nukessin was assassinated. Sure, it *might* demoralize the giants. Or it *might* galvanize them into such a fury that they would actually become more difficult

to defeat. At least that is the position the Gromek High Command at Raag Vire has taken, and why they have flatly refused to authorize Odgol's suicide plan. Furthermore, they believe keeping Commander Odgol alive is far better for the Gromek war effort than him wasting his life to get the giants' regional leader in the Baalgor Mountains. So far, Commander Odgol's respect for authority has prevented him from going against orders, but as the war drags on, his patience wears thin. One day, he will snap and order the attack, heading the charge himself. Given the Gromek Commander's extreme popularity among his fanatical troops, it is possible that his entire camp would follow him into the abyss. If this were to happen, it could set the war into high gear. Even if Odgol's plan succeeds, and he kills Overlord Nukessin, the Gromek Commander and his forces are not likely to survive, and while they may inflict terrible damage to Gurthasi Tor before they perish, the giants at this stronghold will ultimately win. The rest of the Gromek might have to capitalize on the opportunity to finish the city off, once and for all, regardless of how risky such a move might be. Odgol knows this, and it fuels his desire even more to make the suicide charge. To him, there could be no better way to die and to promote the glory of the Gromek people, than to die while thrusting his spear into the heart of Nukessin. The problem is, retribution from the Mount Nimro Kingdom of Giants will be quick and terrible. Weakened by the siege against Gurthasi Tor, the Gromek may lose their control of the eastern Baalgor Mountains. Hopefully, this scenario will never unfold.

Raag Kodigy

Raag Kodigy is perhaps the most nondescript war camp in the this area. It houses a brigade of soldiers and a company of Commanders, support staff (weaponsmiths, armorers, etc.) and combat specialists, such as wizards and priests. Among these specialists is Ghrrh Tyriun, a 7th level wizard who places his own well-being somewhat before that of the Gromek cause.

When around other Gromek, Ghrrh puts on a good front, acting like a patriotic soldier willing to do anything to further the Gromek cause. However, Ghrrh has other plans. In the course of his arcane studies, he learned that during the Elf-Dwarf War, numerous Gromek mages discovered the forbidden arts of Life Force Wizardry, a brand of magic that tapped into the very life essence of other things. Its most accomplished mages became life force vampires who fed on the life energies of others to survive and to gain the energy needed to cast spells. Many of the Gromek Life Force Wizards used their magic to commit horrible atrocities during the course of the war. Many worked as mercenaries, selling their services to those who could most richly reward them. However, by the end of the Elf-Dwarf War, most of the Life Force Wizards had been slain. Those who survived vanished during the Millennium of Purification, the secrets of this dark magic disappearing with them.

Ghrrh has been fascinated by the tales and believes the secrets of this forbidden magic may still exist somewhere in the Baalgor Mountains. More than anything, Ghrrh wants to find and revive this ancient magic. So far, his search has been fruitless, but just recently, he learned that some strange caves were sighted in the vicinity of Raag Kodigy, which could very well hold what he desires (of course he thinks this with every discovery of ancient ruins and lost artifacts). To get closer, he has vol-

unteered for service with Raag Kodigy, and now is biding his time, fighting as a combat mage in the war (and leading a small corps of other Gromek combat wizards on daring, commando-style raids and missions). Patiently, he waits for the day when he has enough command authority to organize a formal search of the caves. If and when Ghrrh learns the secrets of Life Force Wizardry (an unlikely occurrence), he will use his powers to climb in the Gromek Military until he rules the unified tribes. Ghrrh is a power-mad tyrant in waiting. He will not be satisfied until the entire world squirms underneath his claws.

Ghrrh Tyriun, Quick Stats

O.C.C.: 7th level wizard

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 12, M.A. 9, P.S. 20, P.P. 15, P.E. 15, P.B. 10, Spd. 11 running and 30 flying.

Hit Points: 33, **S.D.C.:** 30

Attacks per melee: 5

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with impact, +2 to pull punch, +7 to damage, +3 to save vs magic and +2 to spell strength.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Basic — Karate kick (2D4). Critical strike 19-20.

Spells: All common knowledge spells plus the following: See the Invisible, Sense Magic, Fear, Mystic Alarm, Armor of Ithan, Energy Bolt, Carpet of Adhesion, Breathe Without Air, Fire Bolt, Fire Fist, Call Lighting, Life Drain, Sickness, Wink-Out and Eyes of Thoth.

P.P.E.: 205

Weapons: Ghrrh refuses to fight with weapons of any sort as a sign of his superior spell casting abilities. In truth, this is just his excessive pride getting the better of him, and there will come a day when he will run out of P.P.E. at an inopportune moment.

Armor: None. Relies on his natural A.R. of 12 and magic.

Magic Items: Ghrrh owns a Ring of Sustenance, which eliminates his need for food, drink or rest for as long as he wears it.

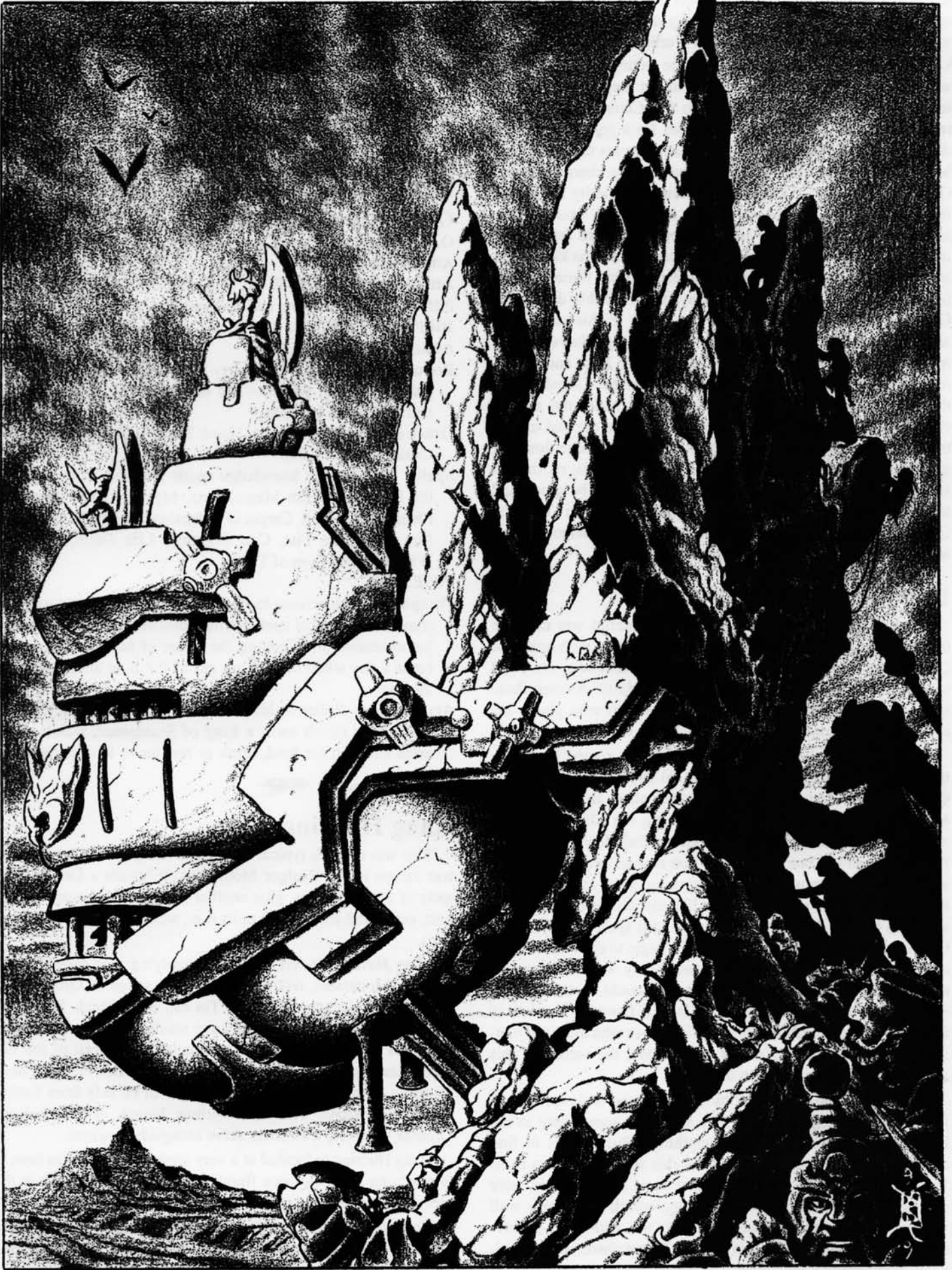
Raag Huraing

This war camp is typical in size and design to the other major war camps in the Baalgor Mountains. It houses a Gromek brigade of 2,401 soldiers, plus another 343 troops who act as support, command and special units (i.e., wizards, priests, psychics, etc.).

Raag Huraing is one of the lowest-lying war camps of the Baalgor Mountains, overseeing the only series of Gromek villages that the giants of Gurthasi Tor can easily reach. Recent attacks upon these communities have resulted in the massacre of hundreds of Gromek, and the evacuation of the rest of the villages. Seeking safety, the thousand or so Gromek villagers have all come to this war camp where they will be safe from further enemy incursions. This is a serious breach of protocol for Gromek warriors, who never serve alongside civilians.

Raag Huraing is located at a very strategic spot. From here, it is nearly an equal distance flight to the other major raags in the area, which makes it a perfect spot for supply distribution.

The local villages and mountain valley ranches had manufactured weapons, armor and stonework, as well as raised live-



stock, such as cattle, mountain goats and sheep, for distribution to the other raags. Now that the local craftsmen and herdsmen have moved into the camp, production and supply problems are already surfacing. The herders need lots of room to raise their animals, and craftspeople need their shops and raw materials to manufacture their goods. When the refugees evacuated to Raag Huraing, they took only what they could carry, leaving most of their equipment and bulk materials back at their villages, now occupied by the giants.

Surprisingly, the giants have not yet razed the empty villages, which suggests that they are daring the Gromek to try and take them back — a ploy that is either born from overconfidence or an invitation to fight. Indeed, the lead Commander, **Crylln Ryll**, sees this as an invitation to rush into an ambush and lose more troops to the invading giants. The villages being the cheese in a trap set by the enemy.

Crylln Ryll and his other officers agree there are really only two courses of action: One, to cut their losses and escort the villagers to higher ground and other villages (except this leaves a growing force of giants and their henchmen on their doorstep), or, two, drive the giants from the villages regardless of the cost. Most favor the latter, and even the villagers are ready and willing to join the fight in retaking their homes. If successful, the Gromek will set the invading army back six months to a year. If they fail, or suffer large losses, Raag Huraing will be crippled and left vulnerable to future attacks.

The only thing in their favor is that they know they are entering into a trap, so the giants lose the element of surprise. The trick is to take advantage of the enemies' overconfidence and, somehow, catch them by surprise, divide their forces and drive them back. One such tactic is to ravage their own villages. The giants expect them to try to preserve them, but villages can be rebuilt. An all-out blitzkrieg-style attack bombarding the villages should catch the giants by surprise and drive them out of their hiding places and circumvent most traps. To add to the confusion and element of surprise, the Gromek will destroy the main village in a landslide by collapsing a weak part of the mountain (this should kill 30+1D4x10% of the enemy and injure and scatter all others). These survivors will be left largely unmolested by Gromek forces, because it will take them a minimum of 20-40 minutes to recover and pull themselves and other survivors from the rubble (probably twice as long), and another 30 minutes to get to the nearest village on foot. Within one minute of the landslide, the Gromek legions will swarm the other occupied villages whose troops should be startled by the violent uproar of the landslide only a few miles away and drawn from their hiding places to see what is happening. During this time of confusion, the Gromek will strike. They will add to the turmoil by using the classic Gromek tactic of hitting the enemy "high and low." Flying warriors will fill the sky, first hurling rocks and spears at the enemy below, then swooping down like angry eagles to slice their foes with blades and taloned claws. As soon as the hand to hand combat begins, more Gromek will charge from the trees, running and flying close to the ground to engage enemy ground troops on their own level, and should easily punch through the unprepared enemy ranks and slaughter them before they know what has hit them. If the battle goes well (and it will), the Gromek will pursue the scattered enemy forces as they try to flee down the mountain in retreat, where the vengeful

villagers will wait in ambush. Caught between two fronts, the enemy should be cut to ribbons with only 1D4x10% escaping with their lives!

A few Gromek Commanders are not certain the plan will work, but agree it is the best plan of attack. If Raag Huraing were supported by another company or two of soldiers, the victory would be guaranteed, but they don't have this luxury. Thus, uncertain as to the exact number of enemy troops they face or what they may have in store for them, the Gromek ready themselves for the confrontation, coming within the next 36 hours.

G.M. Note: This is a great scenario for one or more adventures for the playing group. The situation is exactly as the Gromek Commander suspects it to be. The overconfident 640 giants and their 1200 short ones (mainly Orcs, Ogres, and Trolls; and about half the number the Gromek believe present) will be caught completely off-guard and decimated. Gromek losses will be minimal (2D6 percent). The raid will take place during the day and the main battle will last less than two hours. However, the Gromek will hunt down and slay fleeing troops for the next 72 hours.

Player characters might be part of the giant contingent, or captives (the outcome of a prior adventure) who manage to escape during the battle. Or they may simply be in the general vicinity, out adventuring and become victims in the manhunt that follows — being mistaken as minions of the giants or as scouts, spies or other invaders. If a giant, Ogre, Troll or Minotaur is in the group, there will be no convincing them otherwise. Besides, Gromek prey upon most smaller humanoid regardless of race and are always in a killing mood.

In the alternative, the player group may encounter bands of giants and/or their comparatively diminutive allies separated from their units, trying to regroup, or deserters trying to get the hell out of there. In either case, these villains are under-supplied and foul-tempered, so they will engage in banditry to get supplies and torture and kill to vent their anger and frustration.

Any or most of these occurrences could make for grand adventures.





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Giant Strongholds

The eastern range of the Baalgor Mountains has been the home to Trolls, Ogres and giants for centuries before the Gromek appeared. While many of these people have remained, at least one third have moved to the Old Kingdom lowlands. The towering peaks, low forest and mountain valleys have always made the Baalgor Mountains attractive to people of all kinds. The fact that the eastern third borders the southwestern edge of the Old Kingdom, a region that has been overwhelmed by the "monster races" for nearly four thousand years, has, naturally, attracted non-humans and giants. Outside the hills and lowlands around Mount Nimro, this stretch of mountains contains the largest number of giants in the known world (nobody knows what may be found in the Land of the Damned), outside of the Nimro Mountain region. Half of the giants gather in small tribes, villages, forts, and strongholds populated by their own kind, while the other half lord over other members of the monster races and serve as tyrant rulers, tribal leader(s), champion(s) or enforcer(s). Clusters of giants are scattered throughout the entire U-shaped Baalgor Mountains, but giants are the most numerous in the areas that border the Old Kingdom, and butt against the Nimro Mountain range, home of the new Nimro Kingdom of Giants, that runs southeast.

There is only one major city of giants in the eastern mountains, a place known as **Gurthasi Tor**. Scattered around the community are a number of allied forts, strongholds and small villages inhabited by giants and their minions. Many of these giant settlements have been very successful, but their growth is hindered by the ongoing war with the Gromek who also live in these parts. Even before the Nimro Gromek were pushed out of their homes by the Kingdom of Giants, they had an uneasy and antagonistic relationship with the Baalgor Giants. There was no open warfare, but the two races disliked each other and often raided each others' camps and villages. What veil of civility or tolerance may have existed between the two races was shredded when the rising Nimro Kingdom of Giants forced the Nimro Gromek into the Baalgor Mountains. This situation was exacerbated when the Baalgor Giants announced their support and allegiance to the fledgling Kingdom.

The Gromek are so enraged by this turns of events that they have come to regard all giant races everywhere as their eternal and mortal enemies. In response to the giants seizing control of the Nimro Mountains, they have declared the Eastern Baalgors to be theirs and theirs alone. They are so aggressive and dedicated to pushing the giants out of the Baalgor Mountains that many giants have left to live with their brethren in the Nimro Kingdom. Others consider the Baalgor Mountains their home and refuse to leave. In their support, the Nimro Kingdom of Giants has declared the Eastern Baalgors to also be part of the "Domain of Giants" and have launched a campaign, in unison with the city of *Gurthasi Tor*, to drive the Gromek from these mountains as well. This has invited open warfare and nonstop raids, ambushes, and sabotage by both parties. It also had the unexpected result of unifying many of the independent Gromek tribes, clans and individuals into an army bent on the destruction of all giants.

The giants take a dim view of the Gromek army and believe it is only a matter of time before they wipe them off the face of the map. They are confident (overly so) that they will be victorious over the Gromek and, when the war is over, develop the region and establish large towns and trading centers not unlike their Cyclops cousins to the west. Even now, the Gromek "war" is only a minor inconvenience, as the giants work hard laying the foundation of the Nimro Kingdom, the heart and soul of the fledgling nation of giants. What they do not seem to realize is that the Gromek will never surrender, and taking the fight to them in the Baalgor Mountains will require a campaign of guerilla warfare that will span generations and tap into their resources in ways they do not yet imagine.

A multitude of Trolls, Ogres, Orcs and Goblins have all sworn allegiance to the Nimro and Eastern Baalgor Giants, and serve as cheap manual labor, pawns and cannon fodder against their mutual enemies (i.e. the tyrannical Gromek, humans and other handsome humanoids). The giants get willing, if not trustworthy henchmen, while the "short ones" as they are called, get a feeling of power and a sense of protection and safety under the banner of the giants' nation. Furthermore, an increasing number of nonhuman people like the idea of a true nation of so-called "monster races." While many Orcs, Ogres, Goblins and Trolls — barbarians all — have dreamed of forming such a nation for centuries, and a few have tried, none have even come close to succeeding. The very fact that the giants of Mount Nimro have actually established and sustained such a place against a powerful enemy like the Gromek has sent ripples throughout the land, giving giants in particular and other monster races hope for a better future and a secure place in the world of "man." Most of these minions are undisciplined marauders and nomadic barbarians who do not actually live with the giants they serve. Rather, they live in communities of their own, outside the giants' own settlements. Of these peoples, only Trolls, and to a lesser extent, Ogres, enjoy any real respect from True Giants. Minotaurs are seen as betrayers to be watched closely and never trusted, but recruited for their strength and warrior prowess.

Kobolds have earned genuine neutrality, largely because they are unseen, living underground, and their presence is not strongly felt. Furthermore, the Kobolds have always been a friend to giantkind and provide them with weapons, armor and equipment at reasonable prices and trade. The fact that most Kobolds will trade goods with almost anybody, including Gromek, rival factions of giants, bandits and, sometimes, even humans, is somehow beside the point. Perhaps it is because the Kobolds' trade with the Gromek and other races is so low-profile that the giants can easily ignore it. Or perhaps it is that the giants know they could never invade and destroy these tiny subterranean people, so they elect to keep them as allies and disregard their annoying indiscretions.

Humans are seen as the ultimate enemy, because giants and most other "monster races" have suffered greatly at their hands; enslaved, abused and slaughtered for centuries. Elves, Dwarves, and Gnomes are seen as the old elite who enslaved and abused them before the humans rose to power, and now guide the humans. Wolfen are not an issue due to geographic distance, and most other races are viewed as expendable second-class citizens who deserve little respect or concern. Still, when the Kingdom of Giants is completely in place, the giants will cater to

nonhumans, but will tolerate humans, Elves, Dwarves and Gnomes who accept their sovereignty and bow before them. Even now, there are members of these races who serve the giants as henchmen (i.e. evil sorcerers, assassins, mercenaries, the vengeful, power-hungry and insane).

Of the numerous giant outposts and fortresses in the area, and with the exception of the city, *Gurthasi Tor*, two are particularly noteworthy. They are **Gurthasi Algor** and **Gurthasi Nimro**.

Gurthasi Algor

This outpost is situated high atop a mountain overlooking Gurthasi Tor, the Baalgor City of Giants, far below it. The icy, windblown conditions up here give the outpost its name, and the soldiers staffing it complain bitterly that the post is only fit for Algor Giants. There are only 25 True Giants up here, with another 20 or so Trolls and 30 Ogres. Orcs and Goblins are not generally assigned to this outpost.

As if the weather wasn't troubling enough, the outpost is the only one right smack dab in the middle of Gromek territory. As a result, the camp is under constant attack and surveillance by heavily armed Gromek patrols. Presently, the stronghold is cut off by Gromek warriors, who have decided to starve the giants out, rather than risk a bloody clash. The Algor stronghold has only enough food and supplies to last another few weeks. Secret forays into the surround area have proved less than helpful, with most bands never returning and presumed captured or slain by the enemy. Unless reinforcements arrive soon, the stronghold will fall. Before they die of starvation, though, they willingly make one last charge at their Gromek adversaries, and try to get down the mountain to the city below.

The biggest hero of this stronghold is a Nimro named **Gojor**, an anarchist, 9th level Long Bowman and expert with siege weapons (I.Q. 8, M.E. 17, M.A. 6, P.S. 20, P.P. 23, P.E. 23, P.B. 8, Spd 9; H.P. 63, S.D.C.: 70). He is a master ballista gunner of remarkable skill, known for knocking out flying Gromek from incredible distances. Quiet and grim, he is a sniper's sniper. He will wait by his ballista for hours just to get a good, clean shot at a Gromek scout or careless courier. Outside of his duties, he does not have much of a life. He transferred to Gurthasi Algor because he thought it would be interesting to live in the cold for a while. So far, he has not been disappointed.

The other giants include seven Algor (all 3rd-5th level warriors), ten Jotan (all 5th to 6th level warriors), three Gigantes, a pair of Cyclops (3rd level) and an evil Rahu-Man (4th level assassin).

Gurthasi Nimro

This lonely outpost has also been cut off by Gromek warriors, and has been the site of a prolonged siege. The 160 or so giant warriors stationed here are supported by nearly 600 Trolls, Ogres and Orcs, all of whom take part in the daily defense.

Gurthasi Nimro is positioned just ten miles (16 km) away from *Raag Huraing*, from which Gromek can launch raid after raid upon this battered and bruised giant fortress. Especially frustrating to the giants here is that the Gromek constantly attacking them have a place where they can fall back and rest. The giants of Gurthasi Nimro do not, and the Gromek know it. This inequity has become a potent Gromek weapon in the psycholog-

ical aspects of this particular battle (the Gromek could overrun this outpost at any time).

About once a season, this stretch of the Baalgor Mountains gets extremely foggy and wind-swept, making it impossible for Gromek to raid or fly over. During these times, reinforcements from Gurthasi Tor come up the winding passes to resupply the beleaguered outpost, and to replenish its forces. But, the Gromek war camps nearby are growing quickly, and by keeping Gurthasi Nimro at the same size, the giants here are doomed to be overwhelmed. They all know this, which has given many of the warriors assigned to the outpost a reckless attitude that encourages them to take unnecessary risks in combat.

This stronghold maintains a contingent of 60 Algor Berserkers whose battlefield ferocity is so great that this particular group of giants is one of the few things giving the Gromek pause from laying siege to the stronghold — thanks to the battlefield exploits of this crew, the Gromek have a grudging respect for these defenders. But their respect only goes so far — to the Gromek, these giants are barbarians, as evidenced by the numerous Gromek heads used to decorate the city walls.

The other thing that gives the Gromek pause is the number of spell casters assigned to the post. There are three Troll Wizards (levels 2, 4 and 7), seven Nimro Air Warlocks (levels 3-6), four Ogre Earth Warlocks (levels 3-5), four Ogre Priests of Darkness (levels 2-5), an Orc Witch (4th level), a Jotan Mind Mage (6th level), and a Fire Dragon (5th level Wizard).

Gurthasi Tor, City of Giants

Gurthasi Tor is set deep within the Eastern Baalgor Mountains, right at the mountain chain's most narrow point. It has easily traveled mountain passes on either side of it, from where one can easily go west to the Rocky Desert and the rest of the Baalgor Wastelands, or east to the Nimro Plains, the realm of the giants or to the Old Kingdom.

More importantly, Gurthasi Tor occupies one of the few expansive plateaus in all of the Baalgor Mountains. The area where the city now lies had once been a mountain top. According to legend, engineers from the Dwarven Empire sheared it away thousands of years ago to build an experimental city where Dwarves and Elves would live together in peace and harmony. Unfortunately, historical records do not reveal what fate befell its inhabitants. Many scholars think that this project was a last-ditch attempt to patch things up between the Elven and Dwarven Empires, but it was too late. The city was never finished; less than 20% of it was built, and it was never inhabited by Elves or Dwarves.

For thousands of years, this lonely plateau went forgotten and undeveloped, used only occasionally as a temporary camp by traveling giants, Gromek, Ogres, Trolls, and other mountain folk.

About 85 years ago, a large, mixed band of Jotan, Nimro and Gigantes built themselves a stronghold on the mountain plateau. They used the crumbling foundations and ruins as a base and added on to them. Over the years, it has grown in size to become a fortified city, home to thousands of True Giants and the short ones willing to call them master.



Strictly speaking, Gurthasi Tor really is not so much a city, as it is a heavily built-up and fortified military camp that occupies the entire Dwarven plateau. Nor is it particularly self-sufficient, as it has minimal resources and manufacturing and relies heavily on outside trade. Thousands of giants and nonhumans have visited the city throughout the years. With them is a constant cavalcade of adventurers, trappers, and traders bringing furs, animal skins, food, livestock, slaves, stolen loot and goods of all kinds to trade at the city — the only major trade town in the Baalgor Wastelands after Troker! Since it gets most of its necessary provisions (food, fuel, medicine, etc.) from outside, the supply line leading to the city is its lifeline. If the eastern pass from Gurthasi Tor to the Nimro Plains were cut off (a constant threat from the warring Gromek) the city would be hard-pressed to provide for itself with enough food, water, and other vital supplies to survive more than a few weeks without feeling the strain. Keeping this pass open is the top priority of Gurthasi Tor. It is patrolled constantly and major supply caravans are escorted by heavily armed troops and spell casters (small groups and unsolicited merchant traders are on their own).

Joining the Kingdom of Giants

As most of the world knows, a kingdom of giants is forming in the Mount Nimro region, but nobody in the civilized world knows how big it is who is organizing it, or what its intentions are. The truth is, six tribes of Nimro Fire Giants have banded together under the powerful and mysterious leader known as *Sunder Blackrock*, a Nimro warrior-mage. Initially, Blackrock united his fellow Nimro tribes for mutual defense against any further attacks at the hands of the Western Empire and some of the larger and bolder barbarian tribes. As the unification of the tribe made them an instant power, they prospered. Within a few years, other giants came to join them, realizing that for their kind, safety is available only in numbers. This, in turn, attracted more giants, and several bands of Orcs, Ogres and Trolls. Before long, Blackrock realized he had a golden opportunity and declared a “giant kingdom” claiming dominion for a 150 mile (240 km) radius around Mounts Nimro and Nimrod. All giants would be welcome there, as would be those races who traditionally served and befriended giants, such as Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, and any who would bow before them.

For close to 10 years now, the Nimro Kingdom has rapidly grown in size and power, becoming something of the last great population center for True Giants in the world. Blackrock realized that their growing success would concern humans, particularly the Western Empire, and cause them to investigate and probably wage war against them. Meanwhile, the rowdy Jotan and barbaric Gigantes were agitating for war with anybody to relieve their boredom — they have little use for what most people would consider civilization. Blackrock solved both problems with one antagonist, the Gromek. By waging war with them, he gave the less civilized and warlike members of the new kingdom both an enemy and a purpose. At the same time, he surmised that humans would be much less inclined to invade a war zone between such powerful and “monstrous” forces, and would wait until the “monsters” killed each other off. This is exactly how the Western Empire has responded, buying Blackrock and

his fledgling kingdom at least a decade to firmly establish themselves and build defenses.

Unfortunately, the Gromek conflict escalated much more quickly than Blackrock had anticipated, turning into a full-scale war that will drag on for years. In both a bid for power and an effort to rally more forces to his side, the wily mage warned the giants of *Gurthasi Tor* about the Gromek’s growing hostility and that the “great city” may be in grave danger. He went a step further, and offered them the full support of the Nimro Kingdom of Giants — “allies for life,” he said, adding that he respected the people of Tor too much to assume they might want to join his newborn kingdom, but would celebrate the day such a bond could be forged. As Blackrock hoped, the Tor Giants welcomed his subtle invitation, pledged themselves as members of the new Kingdom of Giants (while maintaining their autonomy) and declared the Eastern Baalgor Mountains to be the “Domain of Giants!” This instantly gave Blackrock’s kingdom military forces and strongholds in the mountains, doubled the territory claimed by the new kingdom without lifting a sword, and rallied an exodus of giants and monstrous supporters from across the known world to join the Kingdom of Giants. In addition to the monster races, the explosive growth of this kingdom has also attracted powerful beings, including a handful of dragons, sphinx, and other creatures of magic, as well as warriors, adventurers and practitioners of magic who see tremendous opportunities for themselves either as part of this new nation or in their ability to exploit current events to their advantage (money, power, revenge, etc.).

Colonization into the Wastelands

It is only a matter of time before the giants look to claim the Baalgor Wastelands. There are already rumors to this effect, as advanced scouting and assessment parties have made their way into the region. So has the Gromek-Giants War. Clashes between Gromek and giants take place in the wastelands with increasing frequency. Furthermore, the hostility and aggressiveness of independent giants and Gromek toward everybody in the Wastelands is at an all-time high. The giants, heady with thoughts of their own nation and becoming powers in their own right, are more haughty and brazen than ever, and willing to take risks and accept challenges they would not have considered in the past. The Gromek seem to hate everybody, and lash out at any they regard as a threat or challenge to their power in the region.

The Baalgor Wastelands has many points of interest to the giants. First, it is another part of the world that none of the human kingdoms seem to care about, and where humans, Elves and most people are scarce. Second, with its abundant numbers of large creatures like Mologoths, Drayback and other monsters and animals, the giants could actually live off the land there. Colonizing the Wastelands would also give the Kingdom of Giants access to the Sea of Scarlet Waters, from which it could conduct sea trade with other nations or launch raids against them. Lastly, the most important prize would be the Wastelands themselves, which are the burial grounds for countless magical treasures that were lost in the aftermath of the Elf-Dwarf War, and are home to some amazing people whom the giants believe they can recruit. Certainly, entire arsenals of rune weapons may have survived the carnage of the Elf-Dwarf War and escaped

destruction during the Millennium of Purification. If they could find these weapons, then they could build an invincible army, as well as possessing very potent bargaining chips when striking deals with other nations. Or so the giants reason.

Such a colonization effort will not be easy and is out of the question at this time. The implementation of such an effort is decades in the future, if ever. The giants of *Gurthasi Tor* would be instrumental in these efforts as well, for they have some knowledge of the Rocky and Stony Deserts, and already have some connections with traders and clans of nonhumans living in the flat lands. For now, the fledgling kingdom must contend with and secure the Baalgor Mountains. They need to establish many more mountain strongholds to keep their supremacy there, not only to push the Gromek out, but to secure their mountain borders from humans and other potential invaders. Furthermore, the Baalgor and Nimro Mountains provide a safe haven and natural sanctuary in which to retreat, regroup and hold their ground, should the need ever arise.

Gurthasi Tor

More commonly known as "The Tor."

Population: 15,360

Algor: 645

Cyclops: 100

Gigantes: 2,211

Jotan: 2,939

Nimro: 3,733

Minotaurs: 231

Trolls: 983

Ogres: 1,376

Orcs: 2,155

Other citizens & allies (Goblins, Kobolds, Gosai, etc.): 987

Note: This does not include the 3,000-5,000 slaves and humanoid food stock (a 50/50 split).

A note on racial hostilities:

Gurthasi Tor is first and foremost a military town, so anybody within 25 miles (40 km) of the place who is not a giant or one of their minions will be treated as an enemy. That means "kill first and ask questions later." Gosai can talk their way into the city, since there is already a small Gosai presence there (several of these desert killers are working for the city as spies and assassins). However, humans and the other handsomer races are regarded with extreme prejudice.

Furthermore, this city is made by giants, for giants. Anybody less than 14 feet (4.3 m) tall is derisively called a "short one" or "shorty," which means one is less than equal to any of the city's True Giants. Being a "shorty" means one is a second-class citizen and expendable. Most are also seen as unworthy of respect or courtesy, and can be mistreated with impunity. Most of the shorties in town actually like being treated this way, for bizarre cultural reasons, but the hazing short ones receive makes life here rather nasty and brutish. However, compared to life in the wilderness, it's not bad, besides, many tell themselves, this is just the giants' way, and deep down they really do care about their loyal subjects. Indeed, short ones are appreciated as a reliable and hard-working labor force and as front-line (expendable) soldiers. The lucky ones actually earn a place of genuine respect and camaraderie.

Trolls, Ogres and Orcs are the most common types of "short ones" in town. The mistreatment they receive depends on their size; the smaller you are, the worse you get treated. Thus, Trolls are treated only as second-class citizens or third cousins, Ogres are kicked around pretty badly, but are sometimes given grudging respect. Orcs are considered too stupid to be worthy of much of anything, but are respected for their strength, endurance, and willingness to put up with deplorable living conditions. To the giants of *Gurthasi Tor*, this makes Orcs the ideal employees. What's more, there are always lots of new Orcs coming to town, so those who inevitably die are easily replaced.

Kobolds are welcomed friends and visitors, despite their diminutive size. They are respected for their metalworking and engineering skills, as well as having built their own civilization spanning countless millennia. As the city grows, more Kobolds are arriving, to find a place where they can find some excitement, trade goods, and to ply their skills as metalworkers.

Wolfen are also welcomed here on account of their size, fighting prowess, budding knowledge of magic, and, most importantly, for their well-documented hostilities with humans of the East and West. Of course, Wolfen are a rarity in these parts.

Goblins and Hob-Goblins are considered pesky vermin, but most giants will not waste the time or energy trying to eradicate them. Thus, they are used as cannon fodder and allowed to make a living off the scraps of the giants, as long as they can stay out of the way and obey the law.

"Fair folk," such as humans, Elves, Dwarves and Gnomes, are, generally, killed on the spot, no questions asked. For any of these races, *Gurthasi Tor* is a very dangerous place that should be approached with extreme caution. Even those few villains allowed to stay will suffer indignities, accusations, and abuse at the hands of nonhumans.

Other Notes

Gurthasi Tor does have some industry. From the plateau itself, the giants and their minions mine both high-quality granite and iron. The granite has been crucial for erecting new buildings and supplying the city with an endless supply of boulders to fire and hurl at invaders above and below the city. Likewise, the iron mine has helped the giants produce and repair their own weapons, armor and tools. Supplies of both granite and iron do not look like they are going to run out any time soon, so if the giants defeat the Gromek soon, these mineral riches will be of great value to them.

Of course, the giants of *Gurthasi Tor* play as hard as they work, and with two mines and a nonstop war effort to maintain, one can believe that they play awfully hard. Sunder Blackrock understood early on that without some kind of recreation, the giants here would tear themselves apart, so he also sends large amounts of beer and liquor, lovely courtesans (by giant standards, anyway), and entertainers up to "The Tor," as giants like to nickname this place. These "party trains" arrive once every few weeks, as an ongoing reward to the giants of *The Tor* for their hard work and devotion. When the train arrives, the entire town stops for a day and goes hog wild with drinking, dancing and debauchery. While not exactly the smartest practice as far as maintaining city defenses, these parties help keep morale high.

For now, *Gurthasi Tor* is a city still in its adolescence, with its greatest challenges still ahead of it. Chief among them is the

war against the Baalgor Gromek. The Gromek are no measly enemy, and if they ever banded together for a single assault on The Tor, the city could very well fall. For now, however, the fighting between the giants and the Gromek has deadlocked. The giants are too smart to venture deep into the upper reaches of the mountains and the Gromek dare not wage an all-out attack. Thus, both sides are locked into a no-win situation where each does what it can to frustrate and pick away at the other, with casualties steadily mounting and no end in sight. Despite these conditions, the giants of Gurthasi Tor believe that they will triumph over the Gromek, but that it shall be very long, hard and bloody work.

They also believe that the Nimro Kingdom has a glorious destiny to fulfill, one that shall ensure the survival of giantkind, and make the world tremble with fear and bow in respect. To that end, Gurthasi Tor is more than just a city of giants in a forbidding mountain realm. It is the vanguard of a new era for all giantkind. The linchpin in the Nimro kingdom's colonization of the Baalgor Wastelands, and a sign of things to come.



Overlord Orgath Nukessin

Nukessin is the founder, Chief Administrator and Overlord of Gurthasi Tor. He has been personally named to his post as High Commander of the Baalgor Army, a division of the Nimro Kingdom of Giants, by Sunder Blackrock himself. The Kingdom of Giants considers Lord Nukessin its greatest ally and Gurthasi Tor one of its greatest assets. Orgath Nukessin, based at The

Tor, is the Commander of the Kingdom's frontline defense and base of operations for its mountain war with the Gromek.

A cunning warrior and respected leader, Overlord Nukessin has been given the task of eradicating the Gromek presence in the Baalgor Mountains and launching scouts into the Baalgor Wastelands, while continuing to rule Gurthasi Tor. For any other giant leader, this combination of tasks would be too much to handle at one time, but not for Nukessin. He thrives on challenge and stress, performing best when his abilities and resources are strained to the utmost. Now that he has been given command of the war in the mountains, his every wish as a warrior and ruler has come true.

Overlord Nukessin's administration has been in place for years, so he has the luxury of spending most of his time planning military operations. He correctly believes that constantly harrying nearby Gromek strongholds, and engaging in hit and run strikes to pick off the Gromek a few at a time, will eventually take its toll and force them to leave the vicinity. However, the Gromek are engaged in the same operation against the giants and both are currently equally matched and constantly countering each other.

Overlord Nukessin has delegated City Administration duties to a hand-picked council of 12, known as "The Dozen." This group of Nimro and Jotan enforce the laws and work schedules of the city ruthlessly, demanding nothing less than 100% effort from everybody, down to the last Orc. Slackers and sandbaggers are beaten and given a warning. Second-time offenders who are not True Giants are killed without warning, and their heads are staked on the city walls as a reminder that the price of slothfulness is death. "Just as one missing rock can cause a landslide," the Dozen say, "so can one slothful worker jeopardize the entire city, and bring about its destruction."

At heart, Overlord Nukessin is a patriot to the giant cause, and a ruthless but fair leader. Like his twelve-man council, Nukessin demands complete devotion and competence from all of his underlings. To him, Gurthasi Tor is way too important to allow for any mistakes to be made. This city ... "his" city ... is the linchpin to giantkind's destiny, and it is on his shoulders to help usher in a bright new era for his entire race. If he appears as a slave driver or zealot, it is the price of bearing such a heavy mantle of leadership. All that matters to Overlord Nukessin is furthering the glory of the new Kingdom of Giants, thereby making the world a better place for True Giants everywhere — and establishing his mountain domain as the second greatest city of giants in this part of the world.

O.C.C.: 10th level Nimro Soldier.

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 14, M.A. 22, P.S. 30, P.P. 21, P.E. 30, P.B. 13, Spd. 26.

Hit Points: 75, **S.D.C.:** 90

Attacks per melee: 8

Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +6 to strike, +8 to parry and dodge, +17 to damage, +2 to disarm. +4 to pull punch, +5 roll with impact, +8 to save vs magic and poison, 70% chance to evoke trust or intimidation, +2 to save vs H.F., +3 to save vs possession.

Other combat info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts & Boxing — Karate kick (2D4), roundhouse kick (3D6), backward sweep, tripping/leg hook, all jump kicks, and leap attack (critical

strike). Critical strike 18-20, KO on natural 20, and can breathe fire.

W.P. Paired Weapons. W.P. Sword (+4 to strike/parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Shield (+4 to parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Chain (+4 to strike, +2 to parry), W.P. Siege Weapons (+3 to strike), W.P. Pole Arms (+4 to strike/parry/dodge, +2 to throw)

Weapons: Orgath's long sword (3D6+2) is enchanted to be indestructible and to alert him whenever Changelings are within 100 feet (30.5 m), and it also adds one attack per melee round.

Armor: Orgath's plate mail is normal, but of excellent quality (A.R. 17, S.D.C. 200). In addition, Orgath wears a bizarre gauntlet/vambrace on his left arm that appears to be made of some purplish, rubbery substance. Upon command, four tentacles sprout out from it and can extend up to 20 feet (6 m) away. These tentacles can grab, move, throw, and manipulate items such as a weapon, just as a normal hand would. Whipping someone with these tentacles inflicts 3D6 damage. Anyone entangled by these tentacles can be constricted for 2D6 damage per melee round until the victim breaks the hold (either by destroying the gauntlet or by superseding its 25 P.S.). Or it can parry at +7.

For those attacking the gauntlet tentacles, each has an A.R. of 15 and an S.D.C. of 50. When reduced to zero the magical tentacle withers and disappears — an attack that inflicts 50 points of damage or more to a single tentacle will chop it off, causing it to fall to the ground, wither and disappear. The destruction of each tentacle counts as damage inflicted to the magic gauntlet, itself. The gauntlet has an A.R.

of 15 and 270 S.D.C., which regenerates at 10 per hour. If the gauntlet is destroyed, it will fall away from the user's hand like a mass of wriggling snakes before turning to dust. The gauntlet will resize itself to fit any user from gnome to giant.

Other Magic Items: Nukessin wears a necklace that confers the Tongues spell ability at will. He also owns a number of lesser magic items, including various potions, scrolls, and talismans.

The most important item in the Overlord's possession, however is the **Dread Pendant**, an infamous treasure that has brought both power and destruction to whoever has owned it. While wearing this pendant, one knows the true names of the eight most powerful Baal-rog demons of Hades, known collectively as the Council of Doom; they are effectively lesser, demon lords. With this knowledge, the wielder can draw upon the magic of the pendant to summon any one of these fiends (who is never happy to be made to serve a mere mortal, but must obey the pendant wearer's every command).

Once one of the eight Baal-rog is summoned via the pendant, the other seven will stop at nothing to find out who owns it, and use all of their power to destroy that individual and anyone else who may know of the item's existence. The pendant can only control one of the Baal-rog at a time, unless they are vanquished in combat. However, the Dread Pendant does make him impervious to the magic and psionic powers of all eight, as well as all lesser Baal-rog (of course, they can use their powers against those around him, and can fight him in hand to hand combat). Each of the remaining seven to be vanquished by the wielder of the Dread Pendant (i.e. loses in combat, surrenders,



begs for mercy, makes a deal, etc.) also falls under his control and must serve him loyally and without deception. They are also forbidden to call forth any supernatural minions to fight the pendant werer for them, although they can try to manipulate other mortals to do their dirty work.

If the Council of Doom kills the mortal using the pendant, they have 1D4 minutes to take it and hide it or throw it someplace and hope nobody else finds it. After that very short period of time, they cannot touch it. The eight would love to destroy it or take it to a different dimension, but they can not. They are forever *cursed* to serve whomever owns its.

Overlord Nukessin obtained the Dread Pendant from a worker who discovered an ancient cache of Dwarven Treasure while the giants built Gurthasi Tor. He kept the item for himself and researched it to discover its history and significance. Now, he is in a quandary. He would like to send it back to Mount Nimro, where the kingdom could put this item to good use. His hope is that the demons would not dare to thwart an army of giants, but, he also knows that death and mayhem follow this item wherever it goes. He fears that any giant who uses it, even if it is he or the great Blackrock, will not be able to control the forces unleashed and it could spell the doom of the Kingdom of Giants. Consequently, he has told nobody about the Dread Pendant and never takes it off, but also never uses it. He'll consider using it as a last resort, only when he is at death's door or The Tor is about to fall into enemy hands. He has considered getting the cursed item to the Gromek's ultimate leader, but Gromek warriors rarely use magic, so the Warlord is not likely to draw upon its powers and doom himself.

Money and other equipment: Orgath has a personal fortune worth millions in gold (gems, jewelry and other valuables). He keeps one million at the Hall of Nukessin, another at Troker, another at the Isle of the Cyclops, and the rest at a secret place in or near Mount Nimro.

Gurthasi Tor — City Key

1. Outer Strongholds (2 at the East & West Mountain Passes). Once a traveler gets within 10 miles (16 km) east or west of Gurthasi Tor, the mountain passes leading to the city become walled in by the mountains on either side. This forms a narrow cleft through the rock that extends all the way up to the mountain top. At this point, the pass becomes the perfect place to stage ambushes, since there is nowhere to go but up or back down the way one came. It is here where the first line of Gurthasi Tor's defenses are laid.

Before each pass opens up to the plateau, there are two strongholds, 2000 feet (610 m) before the city gates and 200 feet before the city gates (there is another on the other side of the city gate before coming to the city proper). Each of these strongholds consists of a stone watchtower large enough to accommodate up to 8 giants and a dozen short ones. The usual guard complement consists of 4-5 Nimro, 2-4 Jotan or Gigantes and a dozen Ogres. In addition, each stronghold is stocked with scores of arrows, spears, rocks for hurling and gallons and gallons of oil to ignite and throw or spill down the mountain pass (Just imagine a giant-sized Molotov cocktail). These mini-forts are

wedged into the two rocky passes 30 feet (9 m) above the actual roadway/passageway, so they tower over travelers, rather than stand before them on the ground. The giants manning the strongholds climb into them by way of large metal ladder rungs hammered into the side of the mountain. Once up top, they can see the road for a thousand feet (305 m) in either direction. **Note:** One of the defenders is always an Earth Warlock who can erect stone barriers or command stone, and another is an Air Warlock who can send powerful winds or storm waters rushing down the pass.

Strangers are stopped and questioned at both of the outer strongholds. A large, iron gate (300 S.D.C.; 20 feet/6 m tall) can also be dropped from the elevated strongholds to trap people (i.e. enemies and criminals) between them and the entrance gate up ahead. If the giant sentries at the outer strongholds are convinced that the travelers will be welcome in Gurthasi Tor, they are allowed to proceed. Many sentries take this opportunity to fleece travelers for bribes or extortion money, something travelers hate, especially when both outer strongholds are likely shake them down.

Unwelcome travelers are driven back by a swift kick from the sentry, a few warning shots from arrows, or maybe a flask of burning oil or a magical Wind Rush. Those who continue to try to press forward will have to endure a murderous bombardment of rocks, spears, arrows and flaming oil just to get to the stronghold gate. Surviving the onslaught to get past the sentry strongholds will tax even the hardest warriors. They do little to deter flying intruders, but the giants have planned for that contingency as well. Each stronghold has a loud metal bell on top of its tower, which is rung whenever intruders fly over. The high, narrow walls of the mountain pass help carry the noise of these warning bells for miles. If one is rung, then either the next stronghold down the road, or the Gurthasi Tor defenders, will hear it and take the appropriate measures (namely arrows and magic).

2. Outer Barbicans. Both the east and west entrances to Gurthasi Tor are protected by a massive gatehouse consisting of a pair of very stout stone watchtowers (800 S.D.C. per sq. 10 ft/3 m) flanking a set of three iron gates. Each gate has 300 S.D.C., and visitors must pass through each one, like going through airlocks, to enter the city. This makes storming the gates extremely difficult unless one destroys them, but even then, the invader would have to contend with being attacked from above and below by the giant guards manning the gatehouse. Each gatehouse holds 4-6 sentries, usually 2-3 Nimro and 1-2 Jotan plus one Mind Mage or Psychic Sensitive to "scan" suspicious looking newcomers (the psychic can be a giant or short one). In addition, each barbican has a loud warning bell on top of the towers to be rung whenever the gates falls under attack. Ringing this bell will bring heavy reinforcements within 4 melee rounds (one minute), who will do all they can to hold the gate.

3. Public Yards. These are open areas where no buildings have been put up yet, so for now, they are like the giant equivalent of parks — wide open spaces with some boulders to lean on and the occasional tree or tuft of grass, nothing else. Giants often come here to relax on their time off, usually to play games of Slam, Hammerhead and Rompstomp. The rules for these games are almost impossible to figure out unless one is a giant.

They focus on beating the hell out of each other and for the most part, the players do not get seriously injured, although they do take some serious bruising (In an RPG context, giants that have just played a game of Slam, Hammerhead or Rompstomp are down to one quarter their original S.D.C.).

In *Slam*, teams of four giants attack one another by hurling their own team-mates at opposing players.

Hammerhead is like *Slam*, except one player has a big hammer, and only he is allowed to hit anybody else. Oddly enough, there is a rule that encourages the hammer wielders to attack their own teammates.

Rompstomp is a free-for-all involving 8-12 giants who grab an Orc, or sometimes some other small humanoid (may be a criminal or somebody they don't like, but is also a random selection), and chase him around, trying to "stomp" and "kick" him to death. As the little guy runs and dodges for his life, the giant players knock, trip and pound each other out of their way in order to get the little guy. The winner is the one who finally "stomps" (or kicks) him to death. If the targeted Orc manages to survive for more than 15 minutes, the game ends and the little fella is celebrated as a "Squirmers First Class" and given all the food and drink he can devour and carry away with him. These "Squirmers" are never forced to play a game of Rompstomp again, although they can volunteer or accept payment (usually on behalf of their family/heirs). This is a barbaric and grisly game, but, oddly enough, a lot of Orcs find it honorable to die in a Rompstomp game, and those who survive become local celebrities. Go figure.

4. Barracks. These large, stark buildings house up to 200 True Giants at a time. Since everybody here works on a strict eight-hour schedule, 600 giants make use of a single barracks building. This leaves no privacy for anybody, but the giants don't seem to care much. Inside, the barracks are a simple hall with stacked beds lining the walls. Commodes in the corners drain into a system of sewer tunnels chiseled into the plateau, so all waste runs out through there. (Strangely, nobody ever wonders if these sewage tunnels might someday be used to breach the city. Where they exit the side of the plateau, they are barred by an iron grille (100 S.D.C.), but these could be breached easily enough.) Each bed station has a rack for weapons, armor and gear to be stowed when not in use; giants are never far from their hardware. Visitors are strictly prohibited unless given explicit permission by a commanding officer.

The giant warriors living here are mostly mercenaries and soldiers (75%) with a sprinkling of thieves, assassins, long bowmen, rangers/scouts, and even a few knights (rare). The warriors at Gurthasi Tor range on average from 3rd to 6th level. Commanders tend to be from 5th to 8th level. In general, *Nimro Giants* and the rare *Cyclops* and *Rahu-Man* tend to be Commanders and Specialists (siege engine operators, interrogators, spies, mages, etc.), *Jotan* tend to be the front-line heavy-hitters and grunts, *Gigantes* are used as shock troopers (typically, *Gigantes* are sent out first, so they can go nuts and maybe instill some fear into the enemy), and *Algor* range from grunts to Commanders. **Note:** Although the occasional Troll, Ogre and Minotaur can achieve the position of Military Advisor (to giants) or Specialist (mage, spy, etc.) and earn the rank of Commander over other "small ones," they never command True Giants. Most others are considered beneath True Giants regard-

less of their abilities, special powers and experience. They follow orders or are exiled or slain.

5. The Ironworks. This is a complex of three separate operations, a foundry, an armory and a blacksmith. The services provided here are especially valued by everyone in Gurthasi Tor, and the Jotan, Nimro and Kobold metalsmiths who work here are highly respected.

5a. Foundry. Raw iron from the mine is refined and smelted into steel and steel alloys. Rods and sheets of finished product are stockpiled in underground chambers after a certain amount is given to the Armory and the Blacksmith. The Foundry is run by **Gonsol Rorgatha**, an 8th level Nimro mercenary (I.Q. 12, M.E. 18, M.A. 12, P.S. 18, P.P. 24, P.E. 24, P.B. 12, Spd 6; H.P: 69, S.D.C.: 69) who used to work in the forging fires of Mount Nimro before coming here. Rorgatha is a quiet and grim individual who takes absolute pride in his work. His life-long exposure to extreme heat makes him even more resilient to flames and energy than most Nimro, taking only quarter damage from magical fire and other forms of energy (rather than half damage as is typical of all Nimro). Rorgatha supervises 24 other Nimro and six Jotan (3rd to 5th level), as well as a work crew of nearly 100 assorted Trolls, Ogres and Orcs.

5b. Armory. Here, finely crafted weapons of every sort are churned out day and night for use at The Tor as well as for trade with their giant brethren in the Nimro Valley (at near cost) and non-allied traders and adventurers who have been coming to the city for decades. The Gurthasi Tor Armory provides each soldier with his personal weaponry, as well as stocking the city's reserve weapons stores. Fine swords, axes, spears, arrows, flails and chained maces are the armory's primary products. The head weaponsmith is a Jotan 7th level Mercenary and Smith named **Quillon Cashcraw** (I.Q. 9, M.E. 10, M.A. 7, P.S. 35, P.P. 25, P.E. 26, P.B. 10, Spd 23; H.P: 50, S.D.C.: 90). He dislikes making small, concealable weapons such as daggers or most other one-handed weapons, because he thinks they are the mark of a coward. Cashcraw also dislikes making missile weapons because he believes all combat should be conducted up close and personal, but periodically, will create large batches of arrows and bolts at Lord Orgath Nukessin's behest. The only reason Cashcraw gets away with his surly attitude is because his work is absolutely top-notch (equivalent to Kobold quality) and he is fanatically loyal and devoted to the giant cause. Ironically, Cashcraw would rather be out fighting the Gromek, but his skills are too valuable to be wasted, so he is required to stay back and crank out weapons. Still, if he ever was given a chance to fight for the city, he would leap at it in a heartbeat.

Cashcraw oversees six Jotan apprentices (3rd to 4th level), a dozen Kobolds (4th to 7th level) and approximately 12 Trolls, 10 Ogres and 8 Orc helpers. Cashcraw also dislikes the Cyclops residing in town, whom he views as competition. He distrusts their famed lightning weaponry, and would love to discredit them somehow, even though their magical weapons help the war effort.

5c. Blacksmith. Another 7th level Jotan smith, **Hargus Ferthik**, manages this facility (I.Q. 17, M.E. 17, M.A. 11, P.S. 30, P.P. 29, P.E. 28, P.B. 4, Spd 16; H.P: 55, S.D.C.: 83). He oversees nearly 15 Trolls, 20 Ogres and 20 Orcs, as well as a crew of 12 Nimro and Jotan junior metalsmiths (2nd to 3rd level). This smith and metal workshop is constantly busy, day

and night. Here, Hargus manufactures the majority of armor and other metal goods (ranging from iron bars for the gates to nails and hinges) for the city. He also performs most of the repair work and any special metallurgy. Hargus is fairly good-natured for a Jotan (he has killed only three of his Orc assistants this year) and absolutely loves his job. He does not trust his underlings to competently complete a job, so he personally inspects and puts the finishing touches on almost every piece of work that leaves the shop. That makes Hargus very overworked, and production backlogs are common. It will not be long before Lord Orgath Nukessin either forces Hargus to stop micro-managing everything, and/or accept some help from a Kobold or Cyclops assistant manager, or he will replace him outright. If relieved of his metalworking duties, Hargus would surely go mad with grief.

6. Rec Halls. These sprawling buildings provide the services of a saloon, gaming hall, gambling den and inn, all under one roof. Stocked and financed through a "recreation fund" set up by the city Overlord, Orgath Nukessin, all giants are allowed to come here and have fun once a week. There is plenty of good food, beer and booze, dancers, singers and storytellers, as well as friendly games of chance, cards, dice, arm wrestling, full body wrestling, and knife throwing. Various ladies of the evening can also be hired out for a tumble upstairs in one of the many comfortable rooms. Patrons sometimes rent out rooms just to sleep in a nice bed for one night, even if they don't have anybody with them. Rooms rent out for 50 gold an evening. Most other services are free, courtesy of the city Overlord.

Leaving a tip for the working folks is encouraged, though, and most of the giants become considerably free and easy with their money once they have had a few drinks. While a certain level of rowdiness is anticipated, fighting is strictly prohibited and everybody is expected to have good, clean fun. This means any belligerent brawlers, disorderly drunks, drugged-out troublemakers, cheaters and other ne'er-do-wells are taken into custody and flogged publicly the following morning. Security is typically run by a high-level (7th or greater) giant soldier, usually a Jotan or a Gigante. Gigantes especially love bouncing for the rec halls, and many of them specifically request this duty.

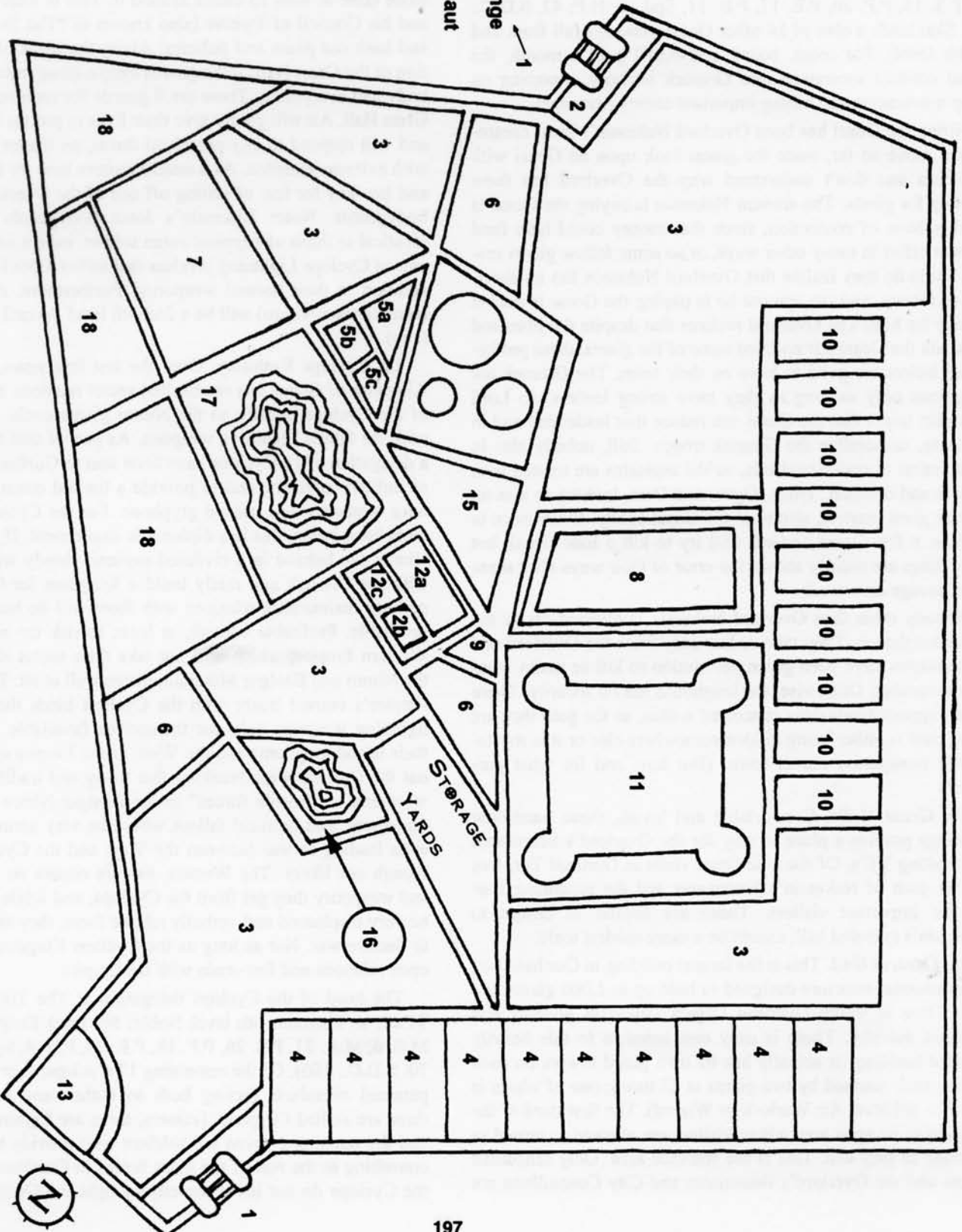
7. Slaughteryards. Huge flocks of sheep, goats, and herds of cattle and pigs are driven up the mountain passes from the Nimro Plains and kept at the stockyard the slaughterhouse. At any given time, there are 1D4x100 sheep, 1D4x50 cattle, and 1D6x100 pigs awaiting slaughter and butchering. Most of the meat is salted and stored in underground lockers. A small portion of the meat is sold fresh, usually for the top officers of The Tor and special occasions. Running the slaughterhouse is **Reginald Cuthbert Swenley**, an absolutely, positively insane Gigante who is under the delusion that he is some kind of gentleman-noble. He personally dispatches every animal slain here, leaving the actual butchery to his staff of 30 Orcs and 40 Ogres. Reginald likes his work a little too much, though, and tends to fall into a manic depressive state on days when he is not killing animals. Clearly, if he was not employed as a butcher, he'd be off causing mayhem in the Wastelands. His trademark killing tool is a giant-sized maul that he named "Reggie's Little Helper." Rumor has it that Reginald sometimes abducts Orcs and eats them, but nobody can prove it. Given the low standing of Orcs in this town, nobody is really eager to, either.



The insane butcher is a 5th level, miscreant, Vagabond (I.Q. 6, M.E. 1 (!), M.A. 4, P.S. 32, P.P. 24, P.E. 30, P.B. 2, Spd 32; H.P.: 60, S.D.C.: 130) who has scaly skin (+40 S.D.C., already factored into the stats above), vestigial feathered wings (he can not fly, but often flaps his wings when he gets excited), large fangs (3D6 damage from bite attacks) and an additional leg (+20% balance, +20 speed, already factored into the stats above). Reginald suffers from semi-functional mindless aggression — "Reggie SMASH!" were the last words heard by at least one unfortunate Orc who used to work here before his "accident." He also suffers from mild manic depression, as mentioned earlier. Once in a while, Reginald's depression sets off a violent episode, which usually results in something ugly happening to one of the workers.

8. Nukessin Hall. Located in the middle of town is a grandiose (by giant standards) hall where Overlord Orgath Nukessin, the High Commander of Gurthasi Tor, lives and entertains guests. Although Lord Nukessin runs the town from the Great Hall, he returns home every night to relax and schmooze with friends and prestigious visitors. Lord Nukessin's personal hall is attended to by a staff of 18 Orc slaves, and managed by an Ogre butler named **Yev the Merciless**. Yev is a 3rd level soldier who is well-versed in combat. He takes great pride in his job, and personally thwarted a Gromek assassination attempt against the Overlord just two years ago. This act of bravery has earned Yev lifelong gratitude from Nukessin, who will keep him on the payroll and treat him with generosity and kindness for the rest of his days. Also living in the Hall are **Firessa, Gleena and Meerth**,

1. Outer Strongholds
2. City Gate
3. Public Yards
4. Barracks
5. The Ironworks
- 5a. Foundry
- 5b. Armory
- 5c. Blacksmithy
6. Rec Hall
7. Slaughteryards
8. Nukessin Hall
9. Gosai Longhouse
10. Great Hall
11. Central Hall
12. Cyclops Embassy
- 12a. Gryphon Yard
- 12b. Lightning Forge
- 12c. Barracks
13. Archery & Boulder Range
14. Brewery & Distillery
15. Temple of the Jugernaut
16. Iron Mine
17. Quarry/Stoneyard
18. Tynytown



GURTHASI TOR, CITY OF GIANTS

Nukessin's three Nimro mistresses. Although each of these giant women compete for the Overlord's attention, they are like sisters to each other. None of them are permitted to leave the Nukessin Hall without being accompanied by Yev the Merciless.

9. Gosai Longhouse. This is the most recent addition to Gurthasi Tor. Within the last year, Orgath Nukessin has brokered a deal with a clan of Gosai, hiring them as spies and assassins. The leader of this tribe is **Shesseseth Skai**, an anarchist, 6th level Gosai Assassin R.C.C. (I.Q. 13, M.E. 12, M.A. 13, P.S. 15, P.P. 20, P.E. 17, P.B. 11, Spd 15; H.P. 42, S.D.C.: 40). Skai leads a clan of 14 other Gosai assassins (all from 2nd to 4th level). For room, board, and 5,000 gold a month, the Gosai conduct incursions into Gromek territory, reporting on troop movements and killing important enemy personnel.

Hiring the Gosai has been Overlord Nukessin's most controversial move so far, since the giants look upon the Gosai with suspicion and don't understand why the Overlord has them fighting for giants. The amount Nukessin is paying the Gosai is another bone of contention, since that money could help fund the war effort in many other ways, or so some fellow giants reason. Little do they realize that Overlord Nukessin has no shortage of money, and the amount he is paying the Gosai is pocket change for him. The Overlord realizes that despite the jibes and back talk the Gosai stir up from some of the giants, these professional killers are good to have on their team. The Gromek are dangerous only as long as they have strong leaders, so Lord Nukessin hopes that the Gosai can reduce that leadership and in so doing, demoralize the Gromek troops. Still, nobody else in town seems to understand this, so the assassins are treated with disdain and derision. Trolls, Ogres and Orcs, looking to kiss up to their giant masters, also treat the Gosai coldly. Every once in a while, a few Ogres or Orcs will try to kill a lone Gosai, but these thugs are usually shown the error of their ways after some brief, savage claw work.

Nobody other than Overlord Nukessin is allowed inside the Gosai longhouse. They take orders only from the Overlord and the assassins have been given permission to kill or maim whoever trespasses. Otherwise, the longhouse has no security. There are no apparent valuables concealed within, so the gold they are being paid is either being hidden somewhere else or it is mysteriously transported out of town. (But how and for what purpose?)

10. Great Halls. Comfortable and lavish, these handsome buildings provide a place to stay for the Overlord's lieutenants and visiting VIPs. Of the nine Great Halls in Gurthasi Tor, five are for each of Nukessin's lieutenants and the remaining four are for important visitors. These are similar in design to Nukessin's personal hall, except on a more modest scale.

11. Central Hall. This is the largest building in Gurthasi Tor, a monumental structure designed to hold up to 1,000 giants at a time. Here is where Overlord Orgath Nukessin governs and manages the city. There is only one entrance to this heavily guarded building (it actually has its own guard towers on each corner, each manned by two giants at all times; one of whom is a 2nd or 3rd level Air Warlock or Wizard). The first third of the building is an open area where visitors are allowed to crowd in as much as they can. This is the entrance area. Only scheduled guests and the Overlord's lieutenants and City Councilmen are

allowed past the entrance chamber, to another open area stocked with rows of stools and benches. This is the waiting area, where guests are expected to wait quietly until their turn to speak with Lord Nukessin comes up. When that time comes, they are led to the final third of the building, the audience chamber, where Overlord Nukessin holds court, meets with advisors, gives military commands, entertains guests, and other such duties. The audience chamber is decorated plainly, with a single, massive, granite throne (uncushioned, of course) where Overlord Nukessin sits while speaking with visitors. There is also a huge stone table in with 13 chairs around it. This is where, Nukessin and his Council of Twelve (also known as "The Dozen") meet and hash out plans and policies. Along the walls of every section of the Great Hall, Jotan guards keep a close watch on everybody and everything. There are 8 guards for each section of the Great Hall. All will gladly give their lives to protect their leader, and will respond to any perceived threat, no matter how small, with extreme violence. As a result, visitors here try to stay calm and low-key for fear of setting off one of the Overlord's jumpy bodyguards. **Note:** Nukessin's Jotan bodyguards have stats identical to those of a typical Jotan soldier, except each carries a pair of Cyclops Lightning javelins that inflict 1D6x10 per hit, in addition to their normal weaponry. Furthermore, one in eight (sometimes a Nimro) will be a 2nd-4th level Wizard or Warlock (any).

12. Cyclops Embassy. Over the last few years, the Nimro Kingdom of Giants has established secret relations with the Isle of the Cyclops, mostly so the Nimro giants could be supplied with the fabled Lightning weapons. As part of that relationship, a delegation of 18 Cyclops have been sent to Gurthasi Tor to act as military advisors, and to provide a limited quantity of lightning weaponry and trained gryphons. For the Cyclops government back home, this is a diplomatic experiment. If the Baalgor Giants can behave in a civilized manner, slowly win their war with the Gromek and really build a Kingdom for Giants, then perhaps maintaining relations with them will be both wise and profitable. Profitable enough, at least, to risk the wrath of the Western Empire, which will not take their secret alliance with the Nimro and Baalgor Mountain giants well at all. The Western Empire's current treaty with the Cyclops binds them to make lightning weapons only for themselves (available for sale on their island kingdom) and the West. If the Empire of Sin found out the Cyclops were breaking this treaty and trading lightning weaponry to "hostile forces" in the Baalgor-Nimro region, the diplomatic and political fallout would be very serious, perhaps even leading to war between the West and the Cyclops — although not likely. The Western Empire counts on the support and weaponry they get from the Cyclops, and while they would be very displeased and verbally rebuke them, they are not likely to declare war. Not as long as the Cyclops Kingdom maintains open relations and free-trade with the Empire.

The head of the Cyclops delegation at The Tor is **Vss'clp Tl'all**, an aberrant, 6th level Noble, 5th level Knight (I.Q. 14, M.E. 6, M.A. 21, P.S. 26, P.P. 18, P.E. 20, P.B. 9, Spd. 15; H.P. 70, S.D.C.: 100). Of the remaining 17 Cyclops, four are Tl'all's personal attendants (acting both as butlers and bodyguards), three are skilled Gryphon Trainers, three are Lightning-Smiths, and the remaining seven are soldiers who provide training and consulting to the rest of the giant forces in Gurthasi Tor. **Note:** the Cyclops do not leave the city to fight the Gromek for any

reason. As far as they are concerned, they are here to represent their government and to help (indirectly) the Nimro Kingdom of Giants. While many of the giants in Gurthasi Tor rankle at how the Cyclops refuse to fight, all respect the one-eyed giants for their strength and magical powers. Truly, they are a force to be reckoned with. **Note:** There are roughly another 80 "freelance" Cyclops warriors present in the city. These gentlemen do fight and associate with the other giants, but they do not represent their island kingdom or government in any way.

The Cyclops embassy compound consists of three buildings: the Gryphon Yard, the Lightning Forge, and the Barracks.



12a. Gryphon Yard. Three Cyclops oversee the Gryphon Training Facility, raising and training their animals from hatching through adulthood. The gryphons raised here are not for sale. Rather, they are trained specifically as hunting and attack animals for use by the troops of Gurthasi Tor. Usually, a particular giant is chosen as each gryphon's new master, so before the trained gryphons are turned over, a three-month "bonding" period must be completed; the gryphon and its new master must get to know one another. Once that period is done, the two work as a team, much like a falconer and his bird might act in tandem. Only the most loyal and responsible giants are selected to become gryphon masters, a most coveted position within the city.

The head of the Gryphon Yard is **Ipssp Zod**, a 5th level soldier who has spent his entire career handling gryphons. Zod is helped by two 3rd level soldiers/trainers who have also had ex-

tensive experience with handling these majestic, if dangerous, animals. Currently, the Gryphon yard has 12 unhatched eggs (they are due to hatch any day now), 12 young gryphons and 8 adult gryphons. Of the adults, five have been fully trained and await assignment to a giant soldier. The final three have proven difficult to train and will be ready in another couple months.

12b. Lightning Forge. Only **Frthpp Odross**, a miscreant 5th level Long Bowman/Lightning-Smith and his assistants, **Qdda Qin**, a miscreant 4th level soldier and smith, and **Podga Indro**, a 3rd level soldier and smith, are allowed inside this dark and forbidding mixture of an alchemist's workshop, weaponsmith and foundry. Here, Odross, Qin, and Indro manufacture the famed Cyclops Lightning Weapons, but they only make what their commander, **Vss'clsp Tl'all** tells them to make. Compared to their past work as lightning-smiths, working in Gurthasi Tor is a fairly light duty, since Tl'all has been given strict orders not to provide the city with an abundance of weapons, lest the Mountain (and Nimro) giants abuse that power and alert the Western Empire to the Cyclops' involvement.

Consequently, these lightning workers often spend days at a time with little to do while awaiting work orders. To kill time, they spend most of their days in the Public Yards playing games of Hammerhead, Slam, or Rompstomp. They also like to carouse in the Rec Halls, and spend lots of time at the archery and boulder ranges. Being out and about so much has made them rather popular among the other giants in town, something Commander Tl'all thinks is good for Nimro Kingdom/Cyclops relations. Security at the Forge is very tight, with two Cyclops guards patrolling the small facility at all times. So far, there has only been one break-in attempt, and the Orcs who were caught intruding were beaten, executed and skinned publicly. Since then, everyone in town has given the Lightning Forge a wide berth. Still, it makes an attractive target for thieves and enemy agents, regardless of the risk.

A fortune in alchemical components are locked away inside, as well as a stockpile of scores of lightning weapons (mainly arrows and a few dozen javelins). Remember, the secret of making the magical weapons is known only to the Cyclops and any who dares to speak of it is torn to shreds by a swarm of demons! Indeed, to try to steal the secrets of lightning weaponry is to sign one's own death warrant.

12c. Barracks. All 18 of the Cyclops delegation bunk in this building, which is rather spacious and comfortable by giant standards. Like the other buildings in the compound, only the Cyclops themselves are allowed in here. Periodically, the Cyclops hold secret meetings to discuss the state of affairs at Gurthasi Tor, the Nimro Kingdom of Giants, and the Gromek War. The end conclusions of these meetings are then sent back to the Isle of the Cyclops by means of a Magic Pigeon scroll. The delegation has 23 such scrolls, which they use only for this purpose, or for sending emergency messages back home. They will not use these scrolls on behalf of the Nimro Kingdom for any reason. In fact, Overlord Nukessin does not even know the Cyclops have this treasure trove of magical scrolls.

In general, all the Cyclops warriors in Gurthasi Tor not already mentioned are 3rd to 5th level soldiers with average statistics. They possess ordinary weapons, armor and equipment, as well as a large stash of lightning javelins and arrows of every power level (**Note:** They will NOT trade, give or sell these weapons to anybody for any reason. Period.)

13. Archery and Boulder Range. Soldiers can practice their aim with short bows, long bows, crossbows, or their throwing arm (knives, axes, spears and rocks). The target areas are the best for improving one's accuracy, but most of the giants who come here (especially the Jotan) love going to the firing area at the edge of the plateau where they can hurl rocks or shoot missiles over the edge, into the mountain air. The giants do not really know, or care, where these projectiles and rocks land. They hope they are hitting a Gromek camp or something equally gratifying. What they don't realize is these missiles are crashing down near the lair of a sleeping *Thunder Lizard* named *Wydras the Dreamer*. Ancient and incredibly powerful, Wydras hates it when somebody disturbs his sleep, and one of these days, a boulder is going to crash down on him and wake him up. And when that happens, whoever threw the errant rock or spear will be in a world of trouble — as might the entire city of Gurthasi Tor.

Wydras the Dreamer

This ancient Thunder Lizard's lair is at the base of the plateau on which Gurthasi Tor rests. The Gromek know of him and steer clear, but the giants' do not. The constant barrage of rocks, spears and arrows from The Tor's shooting ranges are bound to awake this elder dragon someday. The question is, on who will he vent his rage once he awakens? Wydras is not particularly vicious by nature, but he does not like to be disturbed by mortals for any reason unless he invites it. He also is an individual who really appreciates a decade or two of really good sleep. So whoever wakes him up is going to have to do some quick explaining and genuine contrition — bowing and scraping is mandatory.

O.C.C.: Adult Thunder Lizard.

Alignment: Unprincipled (More like Anarchist or even Miscreant for the first 1D4 hours after he wakes up).

Attributes: I.Q. 26, M.E. 26, M.A. 26, P.S. 34 (supernatural), P.P. 22, P.E. 26, P.B. 32, Spd. 56

Hit Points: 3,026, **S.D.C.:** 2,000

Natural A.R.: 15

P.P.E.: 950

Horror Factor: 15

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 100 feet (30.5 m), excellent color vision, see the invisible, turn invisible at will, prehensile tail, bio-regeneration 1D4x10 H.P./S.D.C. per minute (every four melee rounds), resistant (half-damage) to all fire and cold, metamorphosis at will (for up to 6 hours), teleport self

(88%), dimensional teleport (78%), and all other dimensional powers, dimensional spells and knowledge common to most "true" dragons.

Green Fire Breath (special!): Range: 100 feet (30.5 m), six feet wide (1.8 m). A blast of poisonous vapors that look like green flame and inflicts 1D6 damage and paralysis (1D6 melees unless save vs magic at 14 or higher) to humans/mortals. The fire breath does 3D6 to supernatural beings and dragons, and does 6D6 against Elementals. The breath attack can be used up to four times per melee. The width of the blast enables Wydras to strike 2-6 opponents simultaneously if they are standing closely together.

Attacks per melee: 7 physical, or 4 fire breath, or 2 by magic. Wydras' favorite weapon is his formidable spell arsenal. However, he will try to incapacitate good and selfish adversaries rather than blast them into oblivion. Evil adversaries, however, receive no such courtesy.

Bonuses: +4 on initiative and roll with impact, +5 to pull punch, +7 to strike, dodge, +8 to roll, +19 to damage, +4 on all saving throws, and +6 vs Horror Factor.

Other combat info: Wydras knows all wizard spells from levels one through fourteen. He is NOT to be trifled with!

Weapons, Armor, Magic Items, Money and other equipment: Wydras is a powerful, ancient dragon who has had several millennia to amass an incredible treasure beyond the wildest imaginings of most adventurers. If a group of player characters is bold (or suicidal) enough to sneak into Wydras' lair (perhaps when the dragon is venting his frustrations on Gurthasi Tor), they will find a treasure of mind-boggling magnitude.

G.M. Note: We leave it up to the individual G.M. to decide the specifics of this incredible treasure hoard, but do make it appropriate with Wydras' considerable age and power. Likewise, take into account how angry Wydras will be either to find thieves in his home, or to discover later that he had been robbed. If this is the case, the adventurers will have angered a very powerful foe who will stop at nothing to capture them and extract a long and excruciating revenge. This monster could easily become a lifelong enemy. Note that hauling even a small part of the treasure trove will earn the attention of both the giants and the Gromek who will come to investigate. This means each of the player characters is not likely to be able to get away with more than a couple of magic items or unique weapons (not necessarily magical) and 1D6x10,000 in gold and gems. Once the



giants or Gromek get to it, the treasure is lost to the player group — although a large-scale battle could break out over it between the two enemy forces.

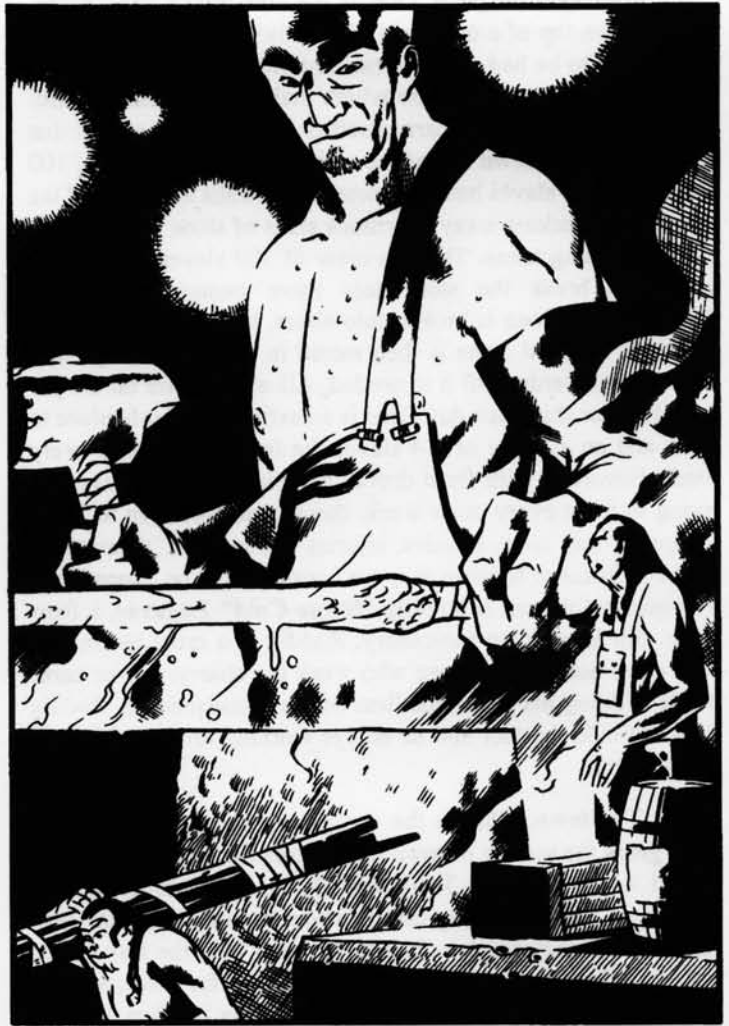
Also note that there is a slim possibility that the charismatic Overlord Nukessin *might* be able to make a limited alliance with the great serpent. Such an agreement would be that if The Tor (so close to the dragon's lair) should fall under attack, that the dragon would come to help defend it. Likewise, if the dragon ever needs their help, it need but call and 240 giants will come running (and flying), more if necessary. Wydras has never liked Gromek and will appreciate the Overlord's show of respect and sincerity, so such a deal is likely to be struck.

14. Brewery and Distillery. For many giants living here, this place is the true soul of the city. This massive operation can turn out huge quantities of very harsh and very foul-tasting beer and hard liquor, using grains brought up from the Nimro Plains and some local plant life picked from the mountains. Most giants actually prefer the much better-quality brew brought up from the Nimro Plains, but the Gurthasi Tor Brewery and Distillery is a point of pride for locals (and an acquired taste), who believe that a city isn't a city until it can produce its own drink. This is more of a Jotan custom, but it has taken root firmly in Gurthasi Tor. So, while the Gurthasi giants may drink the night away on imported libations, it is considered good luck to have a round (or three) of the local stuff first and last. **Note:** The large amount of flammable material in the brewery/distillery makes it a fire and explosion hazard. A few well-placed fireballs or a 10-Foot Wheel of Fire could turn this place into a huge bomb capable of leveling a quarter of the city.

15. Temple of the Juggernaut. This is the only holy building in town, since almost all of the townspeople worship the Juggernaut, if they worship at all. (It is said that some Gigantes, Trolls and Orcs worship demons, but that is unconfirmed and Overlord Nukessin has no inclination to investigate such rumors.)

The temple itself is, like most buildings in Gurthasi Tor, stark and spartan, consisting only of a small rectory where the high priest can prepare before services, and valuable holy relics can be locked away when not in use. Otherwise, the entire temple is built as an outdoor amphitheater, which makes it far more easy for numerous giants to crowd into the stadium-style seating area. The temple's high priest is a somber Nimro named **Highwatcher**, a 7th level Priest of Darkness (I.Q. 10, M.E. 12, M.A. 5, P.S. 19, P.P. 18, P.E. 21, P.B. 8, Spd 15; H.P.: 60, S.D.C.: 55). Highwatcher very seldom speaks to anybody except his other priests and acolytes, and even then, is not particularly verbose. The three Priests of Darkness (two 2nd level, one 3rd) and the five acolytes note that it seems the high priest bears some terrible burden, as if there is something heavy weighing upon his soul. Rumors as to what this might be abound, but nobody has any real answers. Perhaps it has something to do with the Troll priest working at Raag Vire, with the Gromek.

16. Iron Mine. In terms of sheer area, the iron mine is the largest structure in Gurthasi Tor, but 99% of it is underground. Beneath the surface of the plateau, tunnels plumb deep into the plateau's core, tapping into the rich iron deposits in the mountain. The deepest shaft descends nearly 2,500 feet, but most miners do not go down that far because there are deposits much closer to the top (only the two Kobold mining advisors venture into the depths of the mountain).



In terms of production, the mine turns out hundreds of tons of raw ore each year. Most of the ore is kept in outdoor storage yards, to be transferred to the city's ironworks when needed. A small portion (20-33%) of the mine's output is exported back to the Nimro Plains as a sign of gratitude and support from The Tor. The iron mined here is particularly good, and would command a high price if sold on the open, human market.

The iron mine is one of Gurthasi Tor's most critical operations, for it allows the city to remain self-sufficient in the one thing it cannot fight a war without: weapons and armor. If the city had to depend on importing its military hardware entirely from the outside, they would be very vulnerable to the Gromek. At least, that is what one will hear from **Pokolja Dregoyid**, a 6th level soldier and the foreman of the mine. Pokolja is a loud-mouthed, self-important Nimro who never stops telling everybody just how important "his" mine is to the survival and prosperity of the city. Indeed, it is important, but the giants and shorties working it have grown tired of hearing Dregoyid crow about it all day long. In fact, several of Dregoyid's Jotan sub-foreman are thinking about arranging a little "accident" that will get rid of him and catapult one of them to the top slot. Of course, none of these conspirators has discussed who exactly should get the top position when it opens up, so most likely, they will fight bitterly amongst themselves if and when the opportunity arises. The two Kobold advisors (6th and 7th level miners) think the entire situation is hilarious.

17. Quarry/Stoneyard. One of the nice things about building a city on top of a mountain plateau is that there is no shortage of rock to be had. The plateau that Gurthasi Tor occupies is rich with high-quality granite which makes for excellent buildings and missiles. The Quarry itself is just an enormous pit that has been slowly hewn out of the rock. Nowadays, crews of 100 giants and 200 slaves hammer away at the walls and floor of the quarry pit, breaking away enormous slabs of stone to be hauled out to finishing areas. There, a crew of 300 slaves and Goblin volunteers break the stone into more manageable pieces. Typically, the stone is broken into slates, boulders, and "rods." Finished, quarried stone is then stored in one of the large outdoor storage yards until it is needed. All workers are on the job for a 12 hour shift each day. This is an extremely unsafe place to work and an average of 3-4 slaves die in the workplace every week. However, with fresh droves of volunteers and slaves arriving in town every other week, there is no incentive to make the quarry any safer. Besides, injuries to slaves or "short ones" are of no concern because they are considered to be expendable. The quarry foreman is **Roddig "Stone Cold" Zagaxas**, a fearsome, 5th level Jotan mercenary. Roddig is a cruel taskmaster who cares nothing for those who work the quarry. All he cares about is doing his job, regardless of the consequences. Roddig does not hide the fact that he enjoys working droves of "shorties" to death.

18. TINYTOWN. This is the derogatory nickname the giants have given the section of town that houses the "short ones." The "small folk," including Trolls and Ogres, live here apart from their giant masters so they can get away from the constant, brutal treatment they receive. Of course, other than the slave pens, nobody is here who does not want to be, and for creatures who respect brute strength, one can not find a better job than working for giants. The downside is that one suffers frequent abuse and mistreatment almost every day. Around here, that can range from constant rudeness to routine beatings to the occasional murder.

To get away from this, Gurthasi Tor's "shorties" have established their own pecking order inside TINYTOWN. Here, Trolls reign supreme, and they routinely pick on anybody smaller than them. In turn, Ogres are the next in line, with some mages, witches and psychics rivalling the power of the average Troll. Of course, they belittle and abuse the Orcs, Goblins, and occasional other races (humans and Elves have it the worst). Orcs are near the bottom of the pecking order but are still a legitimate group of The Tor's citizens, even though they receive absolutely horrible treatment almost everywhere they go. Still, to the Orcish mind, this is a good thing because it gives one constant opportunities to prove his toughness by taking beatings and working in unbearable conditions. Goblins and humans are the lowest of the low. Orcs vent their frustrations on whatever Goblins they can find. Goblins have it rough in The Tor, but especially so in TINYTOWN, where all "shorties" are encouraged to carry out whatever hazing they want to do.

TINYTOWN is like a town unto itself, complete with taverns, bawdy houses, weapons shops, food markets, temples, and other such establishments. The giants' part of the city has little crime, assaults and murders, but TINYTOWN is a chaotic place where almost every man is out for himself, and complete anarchy reigns after nightfall. Again, the giants never bother themselves with

keeping order here because what do they care if a few short ones kill each other? In two weeks, a few dozen more will show up and replace whoever died. As a result, this part of town is extremely dangerous, day or night, regardless of what race one might be. Here, the only law is whatever one can make for himself, usually at sword point. Despite all this, non-giant visitors still find TINYTOWN rather comforting, if only because the buildings and fixtures are much closer to human scale than the rest of the city, which tends to make smaller folk feel like they are a tiny child in a grownup's world. **Note:** Giants only interfere with the affairs of TINYTOWN when their lawlessness spills into the giants' city.

Wilderness Encounter

Tables for the Baalgor Mountains

Roll a D20 for every eight hours the characters spend in the Baalgor Mountains. A roll of 15 or higher means a random encounter takes place. To determine the nature of the encounter, roll D100 and consult the table below (or pick one, or come up with your own). **Note:** All monsters and animals are described in detail in, you guessed it, **Monsters & Animals, 2nd Edition**, a truly great source book!

01-03%: Somewhere nearby is reported to be a recently uncovered entrance to an ancient Minotaur or Dwarven lair where an incredible fortune in gold, gems, and magic items is waiting to be plundered. It is said to be guarded by only an immortal Minotaur Witch (or Dwarven Zombies) who receives direct telepathic communications from an Old One! Adventurers investigating this tale should do so with a healthy dose of skepticism. These kinds of wild rumors and alleged treasure maps are a dime a dozen. It seems like everybody has one (or a dozen).

04-07%: The adventurers meet a party of 6 haggard-looking Vrill who have been serving as field medics for wounded Gromek and giants throughout the many embattled areas of the Baalgor Mountains. These brave healers feel it is their duty to ease the suffering of these peoples, even if they do not have the sense to stop their mindless, pointless bloodshed. Making life even more difficult for them is that they are hunted by both the Gromek and giants who think these Vrill are working for the other side. If the truth could be brought out, chances are, both sides of the giant/Gromek war would leave them alone.

08-10%: Gromek flying patrol. The player characters have three melees to conceal themselves before the Gromek patrol notices them and attacks. There are eight Gromek: Six are 4th level soldiers, one is a 6th level soldier and they are led by a 5th level Wizard who does not quite command full respect from his troops yet.

11-12%: The heroes encounter Uthren Gaelle, a 7th level Titan knight. This lone warrior has made it his mission to prevent the giants of Gurthasi Tor from taking over the Baalgor Wastelands. To that end, he secretly sabotages the city patrols whenever he can, taking on small giant patrols and other acts of guerilla warfare. He would be more overt, but he would be quickly outnumbered, so he opts for "discretionary warfare." He may try to enlist the player group's aid in his personal war, or he may (accidentally?) get them involved or implicated in one of his schemes.

13-14%: The group stumbles upon a Dragonactyl nest with two foals (very unusual) who can not be more than a few weeks old. 1D4 melee rounds later, Mommy comes screeching out of the sky to attack the characters closest to her babies. Daddy Dragonactyl appears 1D4 melee rounds after that. Both will fight to the death to defend their young, or until the humanoids are driven at least 1200 feet (610 m) away and continue to retreat.

15-16%: Four Maxpary Shamblers see the player characters and attack immediately. After the attack, the group might notice an entrance to a cavern which is the home of a tribe of 60 Maxpary living not too far from the surface. Anyone who enters here should do so with extreme caution: few enter a Maxpary lair and return to tell the tale.

17-18%: A pair of Melech pounce on the player group from a rocky outcropping ten feet (3 m) above. These foul creatures will not retreat until slain.

19-20%: The party encounters a wandering group of giants who are very interested in what the player characters are up to. The party should be an appropriate mix of men of arms, magic, clergy and psychic O.C.C.s, and they outnumber the player group two to one. Unless the heroes are in the direct employ of the local Gromek, then the giants will only want to take the player characters back to Gurthasi Tor for some questioning. Whether or not the player group obliges them, stands and fights or makes a run for it, is up to them. **Note:** These giants are not trying to trick them into becoming slaves, but want to recruit them into being field agents (this is especially true if they are known as powerhouses or the group is predominantly nonhuman). This could open up adventures in The Tor and in the field against Gromek.

21-22%: A recent rock or mud slide has revealed an old (not ancient) grave (any race of the G.M.'s choice). Among the bones and rags is an opal medallion (worth 600 gold, and it may have an Elven or Dwarven inscription) which radiates slightly of magic. Unfortunately, it does not confer any mystical powers but contains a *Syphon Entity* who will subtly manipulate and corrupt the individual who possesses or wears the medallion.

23-25%: Coming up the road toward the player group is another party of mixed adventurers. There should be one adventurer in this party for every member of the player group. Levels of experience, number of magic items, and overall power levels between the two groups should be roughly equal. This party is fairly cautious and will not make any outwardly hostile moves unless the player characters do so first. They are spies from the Western Empire up to no good. They are not beyond waylaying the group if they think they can, and they will certainly try to get information out of them.

26-28%: A trio of Quillback thrill-seekers are shadowing the player characters, waiting to see some kind of action occur. Depending on how things turn out during the group's next hostile encounter, they might pitch in to help the player characters, but only if they think the heroes are going to win anyway.

29-31%: The player group are flown-over by a swarm of EXTREMELY loud Rock Buzzers. The sound of these huge flying insects is so great that it will mask the sound of any surprise attacks launched against the group during the 1D4+1 minutes it will take for the swarm to completely pass over. If any of the group is injured, 1D4 of the insects might try to make off with him to eat later.

32-35%: Animal attack. The player group has strayed too closely to an animal's den or the creature is hurt or hungry and attacks with a vengeance. Roll 1D8 on the table below to see what kind of creature it is (or add your own).

1. 1D4+1 Melech out for blood and booty.
2. 1D4 Cyclops Spiders.
3. A big, mean Ernie (Jungle Kodiak Bear) and his mate. They don't appreciate the intrusion.
4. A pack of 2D4+2 wolves who have developed a taste for humanoid blood. Fight until half their number are killed, then flee.
5. 1D4+2 Peryton attacking as a pack!
6. 1D4 giant Cave Spiders which rush from a nearby rocky cleft or cave and attack two of the player characters at random.
7. A Loogaroo looking to extort booze and salted meats or a Za looking demanding money from travelers for safe passage.
8. 2D4 Serpent Rats looking for prey, or a rare and beautiful mated pair of Pegasus frolicking in the mountains — they flee the moment they notice humanoids in the vicinity.

36-37%: The party spots a lone individual traveling in the opposite direction. She is an Elven Palladin in full plate mail with a minor holy weapon (G.M.'s choice as to its powers). She is on a quest to find the grave of an ancient Elven Palladin who died here in the Elf-Dwarf War. She must retrieve an item of extreme importance from the body, but she will not say what it is. She also is in dire need of extra hands for this job, and she will entreat the player characters to join her (or, more likely, she will join the group for a while, and then ask them to help her find this burial spot).

38-39%: Rock slide! It seems a crew of murderous Gromek on a nearby mountaintop have engineered a big rock slide to close off a pass that giants have been using. Unfortunately, the player group is walking on that very pass right now! They will hear the rumbling of the approaching avalanche of stone several minutes before it reaches them, and they will spot the rushing stones two minutes (8 melees) before they are crushed and buried under the thunderous pile of rocks. How they escape is up to the G.M. and players, as will be any retribution the group may wish to take against the Gromek. Going after them will entail a harsh climb up the mountain, but if they reach the summit, they will be treated to splendid views of both the Baalgor Wastelands and the Nimro Plains. From here, they can also spy a major Gromek war camp on an adjacent mountaintop. If the group would map this out, they could sell or trade this information to the giants.

40-41%: 1D4+1 Harpies — rare for these parts, but they caught wind of the war and thought there would be plenty of carrion and easy victims to prey upon. They flee after two or more have lost all their S.D.C. and at least 25% of their Hit Points. Mean and vindictive, they may alert their new friends, the Gromek, to the group's presence.

42-44%: Ley line that runs for 1D6 miles (1.6 to 9.6 km). If the party follows this it will lead to a secluded valley and a meadow with fresh water and plenty of game animals. The meadow is home 4D6 Faeries, 1D4 Frost Pixies, 1D6 Bogies, a Spriggan and a Nymph (she inhabits a towering pine tree).

45-46%: Random ruins. It appears that a Gromek stronghold once occupied this spot, but it was destroyed long ago. Anyone



who can object read the rubble or those who can commune with the dead will learn that this place is the spot of a great betrayal and slaughter of a Gromek general by his best friend, over 100 years ago. It is said that once this general died, the giants were finally able to push their way into the Baalgor Mountains. 1D4 Poltergeists or a Haunting Entity may be present if the G.M. wishes it.

47-48%: A Gryphon or Peryton swoops out of the sky to attack any pack animals or injured characters. It will fight for 1D4 melee rounds and then fly away if it can not win.

49-51%: A fight between several giants and several Gromeks is going on before the group's very eyes. Do they slip away or join the battle. If they fight, whose side are they on?

52-53%: Ernie attack! The players are surprised by a Jungle Kodiak bear out for blood! The odd thing is, it is wearing a studded leather collar, so it was probably owned by somebody. Now, who was it and what will he do to the group if the owner learns they killed his bear?

54-55%: The adventurers stumble upon a Peryton nest with a full clutch (1D4+1) of eggs! The mother is out hunting; who knows when it will return? If the characters make off with the eggs, they can sell or trade them for a good amount of coin. Of course, player characters with the Cook skill can make a wicked omelet out of them too.

56-57%: The player characters find a shoed and saddled Pegasus that appears to have been abandoned. This magnificent creature looks a bit haggard and drawn, as if it has not eaten,

drank, or really even slept in several days. The animal has a chain attached to its bridle; the chain is connected to a large iron stake topped with a ring and is driven so deeply into the ground it will take a combined P.S. of 31 to pull it free. On the underside of the pegasus' saddle is the name "Sir Glawyn Vewandy," but this name will be unfamiliar to the entire party. Just who this person is and what has become of him is up to the G.M.'s discretion. He is probably dead. The Pegasus will not fight any attempts to be freed, and it will stay with the party if unchained. Also, it will show particular allegiance to the person who specifically took the chain off its bridle. Once fed and watered, this animal will quickly return to full health.

58-60%: A Magic Pigeon greets the player characters and delivers the following message: "Hail, wanderers! The Gromek Overlords of the Baalgor Mountains bid you welcome and request your presence at Raag Vire at once to discuss the terms of your prospective employment against the giant menace. Signed, Jijjerijn the Magnificent." For more information, see the write-up on Raag Vire and Jijjerijn earlier in this section.

61-62%: A lone sphinx lies in front of the player group, blocking the way. Before the characters can turn around, the sphinx demands that each of them lay down before him their most valuable belonging. Failure to do so means instant death! The sphinx means business, too. It is a 6th to 8th level Wizard (depending on the strength and level of the player characters) as well as a major psionic. It has been robbing travelers this way for years.

63-64%: The carcass of a dead Gromek being eaten by 2D6 Serpent Rats or 1D4 Condors. If they chase away the carrion eaters and search the body, they will find a short sword and a dagger, nothing more. They'll also find 1D4+2 Gromek hovering overhead. The Gromek will hold the character(s) in equal disdain whether they believe them responsible for the warrior's death or them as grave robbers defiling the corpse of a hero.

65-68%: The player characters find the hiding spot of a Syvan named Ellsbren, a devious villain who very nearly wrested control of the Nimro Kingdom for himself, but his scheme was discovered, and he has been on the run ever since. Turning over Ellsbren to any giant stronghold will make the characters' standing among the giants of this area go up considerably. Of course, the Syvan is a very tough customer (at least 6th level).

69-70%: Before the party is a fissure in the rock nearly 10 feet (3 m) in diameter. Any item dropped into the fissure falls away into the blackness, but no impact sounds are ever heard. If any gems or other precious metals are dropped down the hole, a few minutes later, a deep, rumbling voice will echo up the chamber, "Mmm. Very much tasty. More please." Things of no value are shot back up and out of the hole a few minutes later, accompanied by, "Ptui! Me no like! Send down tasties, please." What the hell is this thing?

71-73%: A cranky old Minotaur lives nearby and is likely (65%) to attack the humanoids outright as they pass by. If defeated, this creature does have a treasure trove in its lair consisting of 1,100 gold, a cherubot rope, and an ancient map that points out the precise location of where the Golden City of Baalgor used to be.

74-76%: The player characters have discovered the nest of an Owl-Thing. The mother has gone off hunting for the evening,

but there are four young, helpless babies left in the nest. Any attempts to touch the babies or to enter the nest will panic these little creatures, who will cry out telepathically. This, in turn, will alert the large nest of 20 Serpent Rats living nearby, who will descend upon the group with a vengeance. If the characters slay half the Serpent Rats, the rest will flee. If the babies are hurt or killed, their mother will hunt the party down, regardless of how long that might take.

77-79%: The sounds of combat and a lion roaring echo throughout the nearby mountains. If the group investigates, they will find a clearing where a Chimera has been chained up in front of a stone doorway carved directly into a vertical rock face. Another Chimera is chained up here, but it is dead, along with nine assorted Orcs, Ogres and Trolls. The remaining Chimera will breathe fire at all who approach until they retreat. If the animal is incapacitated or killed, the group will notice that etched into the top of the arched doorway, written in ancient Elven, are the words; "Behold the Sanctum of the Great Wizard Alkamion, Rival of Lictalon and Scourge of False Mages." The doorway leads to a winding staircase that leads down into the bowels of the mountain. What lies in wait down there, in this forgotten wizard's study? It can be nothing, little or much, as can the dangers the group must face.

80-82%: Several vultures are picking at the body of a dying Gromek, who is trying feebly to ward off these carrion-eaters. If the vultures are driven away, the Gromek will thank the heroes and ask them to grant a dying warrior one final request. If the player group accepts, he will ask them to cut off his head and bring it to the nearest Gromek war camp, telling them his kinsmen will richly reward them. A moment later he dies. Do they simply leave, or do they return the head and risk being called in for murdering this soldier? Even if the player characters are not accused of murder, what possible good could come of presenting the head of this fallen warrior?

83-85%: Built into a nearby rock face is an iron cage with a permanent Mystic Energy Drain ward affixed to it. The ward is active, preventing the 7th level Diabolist/6th level Summoner Loogaroo trapped inside from escaping. It is insane with anger and frustration, having been imprisoned here by the Summoner who captured it for the last 100 years. This Loogaroo is hardly a smooth-talker (M.A. of 4), but will insist that it has been wrongfully imprisoned all this time and demands to be set free. It promises that it will teach the Circle of Teleportation to whoever lets it out of the cage. Of course, once let go, it will flee without fulfilling its promise (hey, this thing is miscreant evil), but if the creature is recaptured, it can be made to give up what magical knowledge it knows.

86-88%: Without realizing it, the player group accidentally enters an area booby-trapped by Dwarven mages during the Elf-Dwarf War. By some freak circumstance, the trap has remained undisturbed for all this time. Essentially, when the player characters enter this small clearing, they trip off a silent alarm ward which, in turn, activates the wards on 6 small stone jars nestled within the nearby rocks. The activation wards cause the jars to break open, each releasing a Tectonic Entity. These entities have all been instructed to destroy any non-Dwarves in the area. However, they also have been instructed to obey the commands of any Dwarf. So, if the characters are lucky and have a Dwarf with them, then they can command these six Tec-

tonic Entities for the next 24 hours, after which they will go their separate ways, probably to feed off all the fear, anger and misery being generated by both sides of the Giant-Gromek war. Otherwise, if there are no Dwarves, the entities will assemble bodies of stone and relentlessly pursue the characters until they or the characters are destroyed, or until a Dwarf countermands their orders. Note: Anybody resembling a Dwarf will be able to command these entities, including Changelings, metamorphed individuals, and so on. Dwarvelings have only a 50% chance of pulling it off, though.

89-90%: Etched into a nearby rock face is the following message, in ancient Dwarven script: "Here did pass the army of Gruthig Knon, Liberator of the New Kingdom and Bane of Elves everywhere. All hail the glorious Dwarven Empire! Death to the Elves!"

Historians in the group will probably know that Gruthig Knon walked his army into a huge ambush somewhere in the Baalgor Mountains where his entire army of nearly 10,000 Dwarves were wiped out. During the incredible battle, the Dwarves took some 8,000 Elves and their minions with them, and the magic spells used during the conflict caused a great portion of a nearby mountain to break away and slide down into the pass where the fighting took place. The rock slide buried the dead combatants. The area has never been relocated or excavated, but those who do are likely to unearth a vast fortune in buried weapons, armor and magic items of every kind. Unfortunately, they would have to dig through over a million tons of rock to get to them, which could take centuries (perhaps only decades with the help of an army of Elementals).

91-92%: 1D6+2 "shorties" — Orcs and Ogres led by a Troll. They feel bold and empowered due to their association with the giants of The Tor, and are spoiling for a fight. However, they will not fight to the death and will either run away or surrender against tough opposition.

93-94%: A mated pair of Dragonductyls or Perytons live nearby, and they will challenge any passers-by. Consequently, if they are subdued, they could, after considerable effort, be trained as rather powerful steeds.

95-96%: A trio of Trolls block the path and demand a sizable "toll" fee of 100 gold per person. If the group pays too quickly, the Trolls will demand an extra 100 each. If the group refuses, a fight will break out. Two of the Trolls are 6th level mercenaries, but one is a 4th level Air Warlock. Additionally, three of their Ogre and 1D6 of their Orc friends are hiding in the rocks and will join the fight within one melee round.

97-98%: A dozen Gromek soldiers, each 3rd to 5th level, are hiding in the nearby area, looking for giants to ambush. As the party travels into the Gromek's strike zone, their leader steps forward and announces his presence. He explains that the party has trespassed onto Gromek territory, and for that, their lives are now forfeit. Their only chance to redeem themselves is to help them battle the next patrol of giants who happen through this area (this should occur in the next 24 hours). If the player characters agree, then the next group of giants to come through will be a platoon of 31 giant warriors, consisting of 5 Algor, 10 Jotan and 15 Nimro. Any giants who escape this attack will report back to Gurthasi Tor, and the player characters will become enemies of the Nimro Kingdom of Giants. Likewise, after helping the Gromek, the group will not get much better treatment from

them. True to their word, they will release characters who fought at their side, to leave the Baalgor Mountains and never return. Those who challenge or defy the Gromek will be attacked and killed.

99-00%: A sleeping Serpent Beast lies only 300 feet (91 m) away. Player characters should proceed with caution. Oddly enough, this monster is allergic to Dwarf flesh, and one melee round after biting a Dwarf, it will begin vomiting uncontrollably.

Part Four: Adventures

From the Journals of Rystrom Khejas

"From the moment I set foot in the Baalgor Wastelands, I was preoccupied by a variety of quests, errands and adventures. Foremost among these were my self-imposed scholarly investigations. Who destroyed the Golden City of Baalgor, and why? Why were the Minotaurs exterminated in such huge numbers? And what could account for the large, various, bizarre and alien creatures living here? Indeed, even if I spent the rest of my life here (Thoth protect me!), there would be no shortage of great and wondrous adventures to partake of.

"But, as one of my mentors once said, every large adventure is merely the continuation of smaller ones. And indeed, those words ring true, especially here! Wandering the wastelands has its share of encounters with random monsters and animals, but many of these chance meetings turn into adventures unto themselves — quick jaunts of daring and danger that were always educational, if not rewarding.

*"Even now my mind fills with such events. Along the Rocky Coastline, I rescued a comrade who fell into a narrow gorge and had to be lifted out before a flash flood washed him away. In the Stony Desert, I played the bizarre and brutal game of **Skullthumper** with a Quorian wandercamp (and scarcely lived to tell of it). In the Sandy Desert, a Mologoth chased me for over 10 miles (16 km) until I found refuge on a stone outcropping occupied by some rather territorial Gosai. In the Rocky Desert, I discovered the half-buried shell of a long-dead Earthshaker, whose carcass provided a home to the hundred or so Orc marauders who had been terrorizing the area. And in the Baalgor Mountains I encountered a noble and true Cyclops warrior fighting a lifelong struggle against the evildoers of his own kind. I even glimpsed, from afar, the giants' mountain city of Ghurthasi Tor.*

"So, as I prepare for my next major journey into the wastelands, I know that the trip shall not be by the most direct or fastest route. Indeed, there are many episodes of chance awaiting me out there. May I have the strength of arm and speed of wit to survive them all! And to those venturing forth into these wild lands, be aware that indeed the most challenging adventures may occur when least expected, rather than most desired."

Hook, Line & Sinkers™

These bare-bones adventures can be used as simple, one-shot story lines, or they can be expanded upon and made into a larger adventure, or they can be incorporated as one of the many episodes of an ongoing campaign.

The "hook" is the current situation or location of the adventuring party.

The "line" is an opportunity for adventure that presents itself to the party.

The "sinker" is the clincher to the line, a dilemma that makes the situation a true adventure.

Earthshaker!

Hook: Somewhere in the Stony Desert, the party comes across an enormous hole in the ground where it appears something massive has unearthed itself and walked away. Those familiar with the area will realize that this must have been where an Earthshaker was sleeping. It would seem the creature has awakened and moved on. Anything in the path of this incredible behemoth is in mortal danger, for Earthshakers stop for nothing, and pay heed to very few living things.

Line: The Earthshaker is leaving a trail of footprints that are nearly ten feet (3 m) deep and easy to follow. They lead to the northwest, on a beeline for the Free City of Troker! Clearly, if the Earthshaker does not stop, the city is in for some trouble. Ordinarily, many player characters might not have a problem with that city of evildoers getting flattened. However, the group encounters a band of 20 Quorians, who had been coming to the Earthshaker's sleeping place because they had a collective vision that something terrible was going to happen there. The Quorians insist that this moving Earthshaker will cause an incredible amount of death and damage to the people of the Baalgor Wastelands if it is not stopped. The leader of the Quorians is a 6th level Quorian Oneiromancer who thinks he can communicate with the creature telepathically, and convince it to go someplace else besides Troker.

Sinker: The Quorians are right about their vision of death and destruction. Unbeknownst to them, there was a Gromek war



camp positioned on the back of this Earthshaker, and now that the Earthshaker is on the move, so are the Gromek. The Gromek commander figures that this is a prime opportunity for his soldiers to give the rest of the region a taste of Gromek power, so he is using this unique opportunity to launch raids on nearly every settlement the Earthshaker comes across. Most of the time, the Earthshaker will accidentally destroy some small village or caravan by walking straight through it, the Gromek will swoop down to kill off the survivors and loot the wreckage, and then they return to the back of the monster. The Gromek realize that they are on a crash course with Troker, so they will most likely abandon the Earthshaker before it reaches the city. However, by that time, word of a Gromek-controlled "dragon-beast" will be all over Troker, sending the merchants and sailors there into a panic. This alone will cause rioting and property damage. Ironically, the great beast will turn before getting to the City and find a place to settle down at near the base of the Western Baalgor Mountains. Depending on how much damage and disorder occurs at Troker, this might be an interesting opportunity for the player characters to play an integral role in rebuilding the city into a more respectable trading center. Or get caught up in plots and intrigue as local villains or outside raiders try to take advantage of the city's state of confusion and disarray.

The Ninth Notebook

Hook: While traveling along the border that separates the Stony Desert from the Rocky wastelands, the player group comes across the remains of two Eandroth caravans. It appears that both had met for some kind of trade, only to be destroyed. Whoever attacked these traders were as vicious as they were methodical. Every wagon has been burned, every member of the caravans has been killed, along with all of the pack animals. Interestingly enough, about one third of the casualties here are in a big pile off to the side of the attack site, as if they were rounded up and executed! Likewise, all of the caravans' beasts of burden were lined up and killed. Even the merchandise was all thrown into a big, jumbled pile and torched.

Line: While investigating the wreckage, a young, shell-shocked Eandroth stumbles out from under a pile of bodies, covered in blood not her own. Apparently, this young one was missed during the killing, and she was nearly buried alive as all the bodies piled up. If asked what happened, all she can say is that a "small army of Minotaurs" descended on the caravans, killing everybody and destroying everything. If given time to calm down or treated to some kind of psychic healing, she will elaborate that the Minotaur were looking for something called the "*Tome of Tanasmrian*," a notebook written by a great Elven Wizard long ago. The Eandroth didn't know why the Minotaurs wanted this book, or why they thought they might have it. When the caravans would not give it to them (they didn't have it), they killed everybody and ransacked the trade goods looking for it. Near the end of the slaughter, one of the Eandroth in the other caravan revealed that another group of Eandroth possessed the book (true), and that they are, by foot, perhaps three days' travel to the northeast. After learning this, the Minotaurs finished their carnage and headed in that direction at a double-quick pace.

Sinker: Anybody versed in the ways of magical lore will know immediately that the legendary *Lictalon* kept a number of notebooks detailing all sorts of obscure arcane knowledge. One of these detailed the sleeping magicks inflicted upon the Old Ones. It was said that *Lictalon* knew of a weakness to the magicks used to defeat the Old Ones, and that the magic slumber could be dispelled under certain circumstances. Whatever weaknesses existed were noted in *Tanasmrian's Ninth Notebook*. For centuries, evildoers have searched for this notebook so they could use it to release the Old Ones. Whether or not this book even exists anymore remains to be proven, but if indeed another Eandroth caravan has a notebook of this title, then the entire world would be in mortal danger if it is the genuine article (or an accurate copy) and this band of Minotaurs get their hands on it.

Of course, even if this Ninth Notebook does not exist, or simply if the Eandroth caravan does not really have it, these Minotaurs should be stopped before they commit any further massacres. How the heroes go about this is up to them. A frontal assault probably will not work, however, since the Minotaurs number nearly 30, and have among their ranks three witches and three Priests of Darkness. The player group might try to lure the

Minotaurs into an area where their numbers will not matter much (like a narrow, Thermopylae-like pass) or they might try to recruit some help before tackling the Minotaurs — like getting to the Eandroth first and standing with them to repel the monsters' onslaught. **Note:** If a *copy* of Tanasmrian's Ninth Notebook is found, three quarters of its pages are torn out, including the section on how to awaken the Old Ones. This expurgated version has limited historical and collectable value; it is worth about 500 gold.

Strangers in a Strange Land

Hook: The party has been captured and convicted of crimes against the Western Empire. Since the local lord was feeling generous on the day our heroes got nabbed, he sentenced them to banishment rather than to death. Thus, they find themselves branded as criminals, without any possessions aside from the clothes on their back, and chained to a prison ship headed for the Baalgor Coastline, to one of the wretched prison colonies.

Line: The player characters are dropped off with no supplies whatsoever with about 100 other castaways. Aside from our heroes, none of these people are adventurers, and none of them have the skills to survive in the wilderness! Right away, they will recognize the player characters as brave, strong and resourceful individuals, and they will consider them their leaders, whether they want this responsibility or not. It is up to the characters to decide how to deal with it. Good players will probably try to help these people obtain food and water, and help them build shelters. Selfish players might follow the same course of action, but only to provide themselves with food, water and shelter, too. Evil characters will probably just try to survive on their own and let their fellow castaways fend for themselves. Or they might try to enslave these castaways, using them for labor, food (yuk!) or both.

Sinker: The surrounding area offers minimal food and water. Some small animals can be caught, and a tiny spring a quarter-mile to the west can be tapped for fresh water, but there is not nearly enough here to support everybody. The heroes must find food and water, and plenty of it, if they are to live. After a preliminary exploration of the surrounding area, the player group will run into a small band of marauders riding horses. These bandits are all 1st and 2nd level with no magic or psionics available to them and there should be only one or two marauders for each player character. This should give the player group a good chance of being victorious and getting at least some, if not all, of the bandits' weapons, armor and supplies to equip themselves; perhaps even a few horses. The heroes will also learn, from any prisoners taken, that the bandits were on their way to a small pirate's cove just 30 miles (48 km) north, along the coastline.

If the group plays their cards right, they could pretend to be the brigands or a band of adventurers looking for some pirate action. If they raid or quietly rob the place, they could get many of the critical supplies they and the 100 or so other castaways need. In fact, once the pirates leave, the cove itself might make for a good base of operations (although they'll have to battle the

pirates sooner or later). This could also be an opportunity to get out of the Wastelands by either booking passage on the ship (need something of value for that) or joining the pirates as members of their crew!



The Agony of Defeat

A lesson in playing Skullthumper

Hook: The adventurers have been traveling through the open desert for days, and they are running perilously low on food and water. They need to resupply soon, but they have seen no game animals, and even chsuba roots have been scarce.

Line: Thankfully, they spot a Quorian wandercamp nearby, and decide to go there for help. The Quorians are not hostile, but they are also somewhat low on supplies and really aren't inclined to share what little they have. However, the Quorians sympathize with the heroes' plight, so the camp's leader, a 5th level Oneiromancer proposes that they play a game with the Quorians to determine if they get food and water, or not. The game is an old Quorian favorite — Skullthumper!

The basic concept of Skullthumper is similar to American football or English rugby. There are two teams battling over control of a "ball," which in this case is a Gosai skull (an ancient Quorian tradition). The two teams square off on a playing field 300 feet (91.5 m) wide and 900 feet (277.2 m) long. At either end of the playing field is each team's endzone. If you get the skull over the other team's goal line, your team wins the game. Simple, right? Well, not quite.

First, each team has a "dodger," who is the only person that is allowed to carry the skull. While the dodger has the skull, the other team's dodger is at liberty to do whatever he or she can to stop the other dodger and get the skull. Usually, this means punching, kicking, clawing, biting, and any other kind of physical attack. Dodgers are not allowed to use weapons, spells, psionics, or clerical powers when attacking each other. Special natural abilities, like a Dragonman's ability to breathe fire, or a Goblin Cobbler's ability to use spell-like powers, are allowed, however.

Second, each team has a "blaster," who is usually a man of magic, psychic, warlock, or other kind of spell caster. The blaster is outside the playing field, and never comes into physical contact with any of the players. The blaster's job is to stop the other team's dodger using any means at his or her disposal, but without actually stepping on to the playing field. Also, the blaster may only bother the dodger once he has crossed over the field's halfway line and is on the way to the endzone. Typically, blasters use spells and other powers either to stop the dodger or make him lose the skull. The easiest way is simply to blast the dodger until he's a smoking heap of bones, at which point your dodger picks up the skull and runs with it. But Skullthumper is a

game about style, not brute power, so blasters are strongly encouraged to use their powers creatively and with some sense of artistic flair when attacking the dodger. Therefore, shooting the skull out of the dodger's hands, hitting the dodger with a Carpet of Adhesion, or blocking the endzone with a Wall of Thorns are all perfectly acceptable defensive strategies. Hitting the dodger with barrage after barrage of Mini-Fireballs is considered extremely poor sportsmanship.

One final rule regarding the blaster, he is not allowed to directly attack any other person on the team, including the other team's blaster! However, if the other team's members are indirectly affected by a spell intended for the dodger (say, if a Miasma cloud were cast on the dodger and the dodger's teammates also ran into that cloud), that is allowed. In fact, it is even encouraged, since that usually promotes clever spell casting.

Third, the other team members on the field are all "jammers." Each jammer pairs up against a jammer from the other team. Once the game begins, the paired off rivals may use any means at their disposal to incapacitate the other. Jammers are under the same restrictions as dodgers with regards to using weapons, magic, psionics or clergy powers. Once a jammer has taken care of the his opponent, he is at liberty to attack the other team's dodger. This is usually when the game gets really interesting — and where the dodger truly lives up to his name. The number of jammers on each team varies according to the number of players available. What really matters is that each team has an equal number of players.

Most Skullthumper games involve three to six jammers, although a few games have been played with up to 20 jammers per side. Such huge games often have multiple skulls and multiple dodgers, too, and the game's victory is determined by who scores the most goals by the game's end.

To win. As mentioned before, the game ends when a dodger crosses the other team's endzone line while in possession of the skull. As a rule, flying, teleportation and other "movement" magicks are not allowed, and any dodger who uses them to cross the endzone forfeits the game for his entire team. A most dishonorable way to lose a game. Likewise, the blasters on each side are only allowed to harm or impede the other team's dodger. They may not cast magicks of any kind on any other player of the theirs or the other team. That means no casting Fleet Feet on your own dodger!

A game of Skullthumper begins with each team on either side of the playing field's halfway line. The two dodgers meet in the middle, nose to nose, waiting for the start of the game, signalled by an impartial observer. Once the game begins, the dodgers immediately begin fighting and wrestling over possession of the skull which is located on the ground in the middle of them when they face off. Likewise, the jammers pair up and begin brawling to get the best of their opponent. There is no time limit to a game and no timeouts. Even if there is cheating on the field, the game continues until the end, and any transgressions are dealt with afterward.

Skullthumper is a quintessential Quorian game, so all rules of Quorian culture apply. That means anybody who wears armor is

considered a wimp and even if they win the game, they get no respect and are booed. Anybody who cheats is lower than low, and will probably be attacked by the Quorians, after the game. And, while this game is supposed to be played rough, intentionally trying to kill other players is considered really bad form, and those who do should expect the other team to do the same to them! Most of all, what is considered "honorable" and "dishonorable" playing depends on the mood and alignment of the other team. If the other team are sore losers, they are likely to cry foul once the other team has won. But, if they are of a good or aberrant alignment, they will accept defeat graciously, having enjoyed the challenge, and are likely to commend those who won, even if their team took a terrible shellacking during the game. Not surprisingly, arguments over the outcome of Skullthumper games are the leading cause of fights between Quorian wandercamps (**Note:** In recent years, giants and other groups have adopted the game).

Most Quorian wandercamps play two-out-of-three matches, allowing for an hour between each game for the players to heal from their wounds — Non-Quorians usually find this to be not nearly enough time. However, if a game goes on for a particularly long period of time, or if it results in fatalities, the match is called after the first game. If players die during a second game, then either the match stops there (the only possibility for a draw is if both teams have won a game at that point), or it will go to a third game. Most participants are usually exhausted but eager to get it on.

Sinker: How the match plays out determines how much food and water the Quorians give their opponents. If the player characters' team gets creamed and offers no resistance whatsoever, the Quorians will view them as weaklings undeserving of any help. If the adventurers lose, but give a good game, they lose with honor and the Quorians will give everybody a day's worth of supplies and a hearty "good luck!"

If the player group wins, but does so dishonorably (i.e., they cheated or showed really poor sportsmanship), the Quorians will give them a day's worth of supplies and tell them to leave their sight. If they win honorably, and in a way that does not humiliate or kill any of the Quorians, then they will receive all the food and water they can carry (up to a week's worth). Furthermore, the Quorians will ask these "heroes" to stay with them for the evening to rest and heal from their wounds while they all trade stories about that day's game and other adventures. If all goes well during this night of rest, then perhaps the player characters will make true friends out of this band of Quorians, who might be inclined to help them out or fight by their side in the future

Author's Note from Bill Coffin: Skullthumper is the original concept of *James Nugent*, a dear friend of mine and a long-time player of *Palladium Fantasy*. James suggests that to really get the flavor of Skullthumper, watch a Rutger Hauer movie called *The Blood of Heroes*, which not only gives you a good idea of what Skullthumper is supposed to be like, but also a good feel of what the Baalgor Wastelands themselves are supposed to look like. Also take a look at the cover to *Monsters*

& *Animals, 2nd Edition*, as it depicts an Eandroth riding a Silonar in one of the savanna areas of the Wastelands; the low mountains and hills of the northern coast behind him.

Gorum's Bridge

Hook: While traveling along the Rocky Coastline, the player group begins crossing over shallow canyons that were once rivers before the Circle of Elemental Power evaporated the water and turned the land to dust. In this part of the Wastelands, storm fronts come in from the sea, pass overhead, and pour down rain near the edge of the Stony Desert. Since the ground there is too sun-baked to absorb all its moisture, the rain runs off, back to the sea, and over the years via the old riverbed or "flood canyons" as they are known, along the Rocky Coastline. Many of these flood canyons have bridges spanning them, and some have sturdy pillars of stone in the middle which a person could climb upon to save himself from rushing flood waters. Exactly who built these bridges and towers of stone is unknown, but most presume them to be the work of one or more Earth Warlocks and/or Spriggans. This adventure takes place as the group is crossing a quarter-mile (.04 km) long bridge spanning a flood canyon 200 feet (61 m) deep.

Line: Just as the party gets to the halfway point, a massive Troll steps out of nowhere, appearing right in front of them! (in reality, the Troll had been hiding under a cloak of invisibility, and he has now revealed himself.) The Troll identifies himself as Gorum the Grim, a 3rd level Wizard who lays claim to the bridge. Gorum tells the travelers that they may pass only if they answer one of his riddles correctly. Each hero may offer an answer. If the entire group fails to answer correctly, then they must turn back or lay down all of their possessions to proceed. Those who do not comply, will face a hideous death, or so Gorum warns.

Now, for the riddle, Gorum clears his throat and sings with a booming, smooth voice that sounds surprisingly melodious, coming from a Troll:

Come guess me this riddle, what baits pipes and fiddles?

What's hotter than mustard and milder than cream?

What best whets your whistle, what's clearer than tea?

What's sweeter than honey and stronger than steam?

What will make the dumb talk, what'll make the lame walk?

What's the elixir of life, the philosopher's stone?

Forsooth, it's no wonder that this liquid thunder

Is ten times more precious than Kym-Nark-Mar's bones!

Sinker: The answer is "whiskey." But, even if the heroes guess correctly, it shall do them no good. All of this was just a ruse by Gorum to stall the group while the rest of his band of cutthroats (a group equal to the size of the players' party, plus one more, and Gorum) charge across the bridge from behind, effectively surrounding them!

In the ensuing fight, the heroes shall find themselves fighting not just to defeat the bad guys, but also to keep from getting knocked off the bridge! It is a long way down, and whoever falls

will take 2D4x10 damage. Those who survive this fall will certainly have a broken limb or back and will be immobilized until they receive serious medical attention. Of course, rescuing the fallen comrade from the canyon will be tricky, since there is no easy way down the sheer, smooth canyon walls. And, as the sky fills with rumbling storm clouds, it is only a matter of time before a torrential flash flood charges down the canyon, washing away whoever gets caught by it. For selfish or evil characters, this could be a serious test of one's loyalty to the group. Do you leave your fallen companion behind, or do you risk drowning to save him and get him help? Ah, decisions, decisions.

Note: This adventure idea is based off an original concept by *Samuel Van Der Wall*, who graciously gave me permission to modify it. The lyrics to Gorum's riddle are from "The Humours of Whiskey," a traditional Irish folk tune.

Politics By Other Means

Hook: While entertaining themselves in Troker, the player group gets into a brawl with a group of sailors. Despite how the fight turns out, it quickly escalates into a small riot on the street. By the time King Kai's city guards show up and settle things down, several merchants from the Western Empire lay dead.

Line: The surviving friends of these dead Western merchants are prominent figures in Western politics, with favors owed to them by many Western Noble Houses. They are sick and tired of the conditions at Troker, and have decided to do something about it. They have all left the town (with their dead friends in tow) and are headed back to the Western Empire, where they will petition their Noble contacts to assemble a naval force to lay siege to Troker and depose Kai the Wanderer.

For King Kai and Troker, it gets worse. Some of these merchants are so hell-bent on encouraging the Empire to lay siege to the city, that they have secretly hired a large pirate crew to sack other Western merchants in the name of the Free City of Troker. In no time, this will encourage nearly every other Western merchant operating in the Sea of Scarlet Waters to petition their Noble Houses for action. Ultimately, the Empire will be forced to act, and to send a large war fleet to the city. Troker is tough, and it could withstand a big attack, but if enough Imperial warships fell upon it, the West could probably depose Kai and take the place over. Indeed, the Noble Houses most eager to attack the city can already see this place becoming a new (and extremely profitable) slaving center.

Sinker: Within a week of the initial brawl, news of an oncoming Western war fleet will be all over Troker, causing a small panic. Many adventurers and sailors are already fleeing until they are sure the Western Empire will not put the torch to the city. Just as our heroes are thinking that perhaps it would be wise to get out of town for a little while, they are visited by a very large contingent of the King's Guardsmen, who insist they accompany them for an audience with the King!

King Kai tells them that they have 48 hours to discover who really killed those Western Merchants, capture them and get a confession or evidence to the dirty deed. If the heroes fail at this, Kai will place a death mark on them, and every assassin

and bounty hunter in the Wastelands, Old Kingdom and Western Empire will come looking to collect. King Kai has somehow learned that the player group was in the initial brawl, and now holds them responsible for Troker's current mess. The only lead is that Kai has heard that some Goblin named *Skobb Keggins* has been bragging about "shanking some dandy" during the fight. Keggins is a known drug addict and often hangs out in the Dead Quarter of town, where hundreds of ghosts and other horrors also live. Keggins is also rumored to have lots of friends who are known killers and thieves.

Whether or not Keggins actually did the killing is up to the G.M. Maybe he is one of the culprits, or maybe he knows somebody who knows somebody who has since returned to the sea — the man who arranged the trouble and did much of the killing. The player group could try to track down the culprit and turn him over to the angry Western merchants in hopes of getting them to call off the Western war fleet. If that doesn't work, then maybe the heroes, having fulfilled King Kai's debt, could go about exposing the angry merchants' conspiracy to hire pirates to attack fellow Western shipping. Or maybe the player characters could go to the Western Empire and find some other way of getting the Noble Houses to recall their warships. Ambitious G.M.s can also play out the Western siege of the city, which should provide for some interesting, if destructive action. Those who enjoy political intrigue can make the instigator of this trouble a Western Noble (and 6th level knight, miscreant alignment) who has designs on the city, and whose brother (or father or uncle, etc.) is leading the warships on the siege against Troker.

If Bones Could Talk

Hook: Scholars have spoken of a mass Minotaur grave for centuries. At last, one scholar has found it, and wants to bring along some reliable adventurers (the player characters) to accompany him and his "team" of scholars and archeologists to this mysterious site. The only problem: A rival has stolen the scholar's notes and maps, so before the trip begins, these items must be retrieved by the player characters.

Line: Once that is done, the party makes the arduous journey into the heart of the Stony Desert, where they finally come to

the *Pit of Bones*, an enormous mass grave where the skeletons of thousands and thousands of Minotaurs lie. To the scholar, just getting here is the payoff, since he can now verify the existence of this place, make some drawings, take a few skulls as evidence, and enjoy a prestigious academic career back home in the Timiro Kingdom. However, the Minotaur Necromancers who watches over this sacred place (as members of his family have done for generations) does not like "grave-robbers." Before the party has a chance to explain themselves, they fall under attack. During the fighting, the player group is forced to retreat or is pushed into an underground chamber buried by some of the bones (the ground may even collapse beneath their feet, plunging them into the depths below — no injury other than some bumps and bruises). The initial tunnel is part of a secret network of catacombs and chambers below the earth. There they will encounter 2D6 hostile Minotaurs (the Necromancer's family clan, all dedicated to protecting this sacred site), and/or Minotaur Zombies or Mummies, and other subterranean creatures.

Sinker: If the group could get the fighting to stop long enough to explain that they mean no harm, the Necromancer (and his helpers) will allow them to leave, provided they take nothing with them and promise not to tell anybody else of the graveyard's location. Otherwise, battle and escape is their only recourse.

The ultimate payoff is the discovery of a long-lost underground temple to the Old Ones, erected by a Minotaur tribe eons ago. In fact, this is the site of one of the greatest Old Ones cult ever established by Minotaur priests. If the player characters can defeat the Minotaur Necromancer and the numerous supernatural guardians left behind (zombies, mummies, Guardian Stones, etc.), they will have found an historical landmark with ancient artifacts worth a fortune (at least 1D6x100,000 gold). Of course, the trick will be getting the items from inside the temple back to civilization where they can be placed on display. An adventure in itself.

There are also gems, coins and jewelry worth 3D4x1000 gold, plus the various (non-magical) weapons of the defenders, but no magic items. **Note:** Some items, especially religious ones, may be cursed! An Object Read of the bones reveals they



were all worshippers of the Old Ones who had been trying to awaken their dreaded masters. They were slain by Elves at least 30,000 years ago. There are no other details other than impressions of evil and the suffering of the dying. Object Reading the various objects inside the temple will confirm they are tens of thousands of years old and used for evil intentions — any curses will also be revealed.

Foolkiller

Hook: Somehow, the party comes into the possession of the rune sword Foolkiller. It could have been part of a treasure trove from another adventure (such as the ruins of an ancient Dwarven weapons cache, or an Elven citadel, or from the site of a long-lost battle during the Elf-Dwarf War). It could have been a weapon from the hands of a powerful enemy defeated in battle, or the group could have been led to it by a treasure map. However the player group acquires this weapon, it should be a natural consequence of your ongoing campaign.

Line: Whoever claims Foolkiller will realize that they possess a powerful, greatest rune weapon. It has an extremely long, bloody and detailed history, and tales of its power have reached far and wide. While it is not quite as prestigious as such legendary weapons as *Castlerake* or *Frostfoil*, Foolkiller is still a major prize that will make the party considerably more powerful and famous.

Sinker: Of course, Foolkiller comes with a host of curses, not the least of which will be the horde of villains, crusaders and power-mongers who all want the weapon for their own purposes. Whoever owns this weapon will be harassed to the ends of the earth by those who covet Foolkiller, and life for our heroes will be one adventure after another as would-be treasure-seekers decide to make off with the rune sword. As a foil to those characters who thrive on constant adversity, the attacks from Foolkiller's thralls should come at extremely inopportune times, like when the hero or group is recovering from a particularly nasty battle, or when they are undergoing a quest where time is of the essence, and so on.

Secondly, the party must also contend with getting rid of this thing. After a while, other party members will decide the weapon is no longer worth keeping, but whoever actually owns Foolkiller will disagree. Convincing the fellow player character to part with this weapon could prove to be a very tricky situation for even the most experienced heroes (especially if they don't want the situation to devolve into intra-party combat). Part of the problem is that the magical weapon has the character under its subtle influence and does not want to be discarded.

Thirdly, if the party does come to a consensus to be rid of the weapon, where are they going to put it? If it falls into the hands of somebody evil, the world will certainly suffer for it. Casting Foolkiller to the bottom of the sea or dropping it in the fires of Mount Nimro are two good options. However the heroes decide to pursue this course of action, keep in mind that those who covet Foolkiller for themselves will harass them every step of the way. And, Foolkiller itself won't like being discarded, so, at some point, it will try to "slip away," out of the group's control,

to find somebody who will appreciate it. The heroes must keep a very sharp eye on this thing as they transport it, or they will find themselves on all sorts of side adventures trying to get this damnable thing back.

Below are the stats for this monstrous rune sword. G.M.s, realize that this is an extremely powerful weapon, and if you wish to make it a part of your campaign, make sure to play up its many curses and drawbacks. Including this weapon in a campaign without any curses or drawbacks will seriously unbalance most campaigns, making the other players miserable, and generally "munchkinizing" your game environment. Proceed with caution! This is *not* a keeper. And now ... Foolkiller.

The Rune Sword, Foolkiller

And when the Fair Folk who survived the Cataclysm of Baalgor retaliated against the Great Strongholds of Underforge, they did find many runesmiths who had taken their own lives rather than face defeat at the hands of their ancient enemy. But deep within that place of misguided arcana sat a lone figure, a single runesmith who sobbed uncontrollably, tearing at his flesh and pulling his beard from his chin. So maddened and shattered was this individual that the Fair Folk could not bring him to justice. They knew that whatever crime was his, that he did mete unto himself a punishment worse than any hangman's noose or headsman's axe. Thus, did the Fair Folk leave him there, alone in his shattered forge. And there did he wail, begging the gods' forgiveness for unleashing the Killer of Fools upon this earth.

— *The Tristine Chronicles*

Name: Foolkiller, a Greatest Rune Weapon.

Type: Bastard Sword: 1D6x10 damage!

Appearance: Foolkiller has a wavy, kris-style blade that shines in two different shades of metallic blue. The handgrip is covered in a leathery substance that gives its user a firm hold on the weapon (strange, then, that so many of Foolkiller's users have accidentally dropped this sword into crevices or moving bodies of water). The pommel of the weapon is a sculpted bust of a laughing jester with a demonic look (blazing eyes, small horns, and sharp teeth) to his face. Foolkiller has a slightly curved hilt.

Rune Powers: All common rune powers plus the following:

Can be used by any Alignment (special): Although itself miscreant and an evil corruptor, the weapon can be used by a character of any alignment. It is rumored that a forgotten Deevil Lord is trapped inside.

Psionic Powers: Foolkiller can perform all Physical psionic powers, plus the Super Psionic powers of Bio-Manipulation and Catatonic Strike. The sword has 130 I.S.P., which it recovers at a rate of 10 per hour.

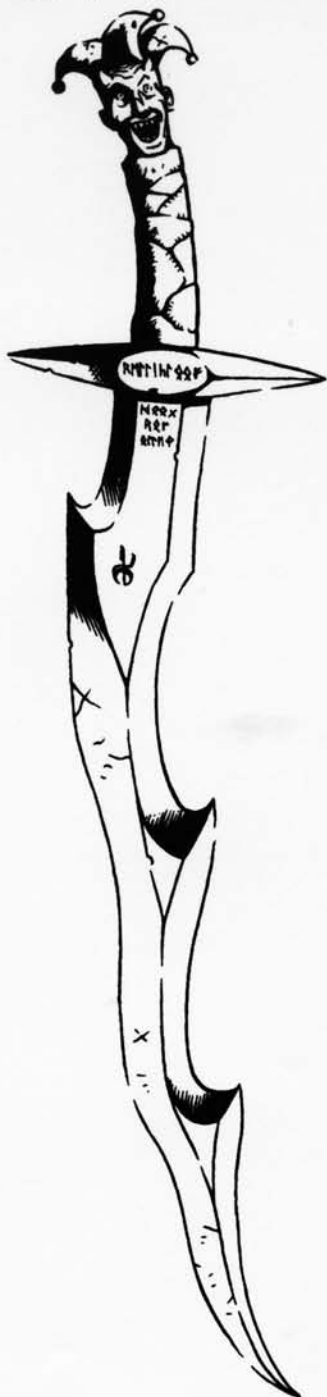
Wizard Powers: Foolkiller can cast the following Wizard spells at 6th level proficiency: Armor of Ithan, Magic Net, Fleet Feet, Superhuman Strength, Size of the Behemoth, and Energy Bolt. The sword has 130 P.P.E., which it recovers at a rate of 10 per hour.

Thunder Strike: Once a day, Foolkiller can inflict 1D6x100 on a

strike! However, there are two nasty side effects. The first is that by using this power, the wielder automatically loses half of his or her own remaining Hit Points! All remaining S.D.C. is sapped, too! Second, after using this power, the user is at -4 to strike, parry and dodge and -1 attack per melee for the next 1D4+2 minutes.

Soul Drinking: And finally, Foolkiller can drink up to six souls a day. Against a Soul Drinking attack, the struck victim must roll 14 or higher or have his life force forever consumed by this dark and evil weapon.

The Curses: But, all this power comes at a horrific cost. First of all, Foolkiller revels in disharmony and chaos. It loves the fact that so many people fight over it, and it will try very hard



not to stay with any one owner for very long. It also encourages displays of power to evoke fear or desire (to own it) and inspire evildoers to take desperate measures to either escape it, or to get their hands on it. The foul intelligence inside the blade will also try to direct, corrupt and manipulate its owner, although it can not actually use its psionic or magic powers to possess or control him. Foolkiller's ultimate goal is to somehow engineer two worldly kingdoms to go to war over it.

After owning Foolkiller for six months, the sword has a 50% chance of somehow slipping away from its owner. Foolkiller's "owners" often find their sword mysteriously slipping out of its scabbard, falling from their hands, or simply vanishing overnight. The chances of Foolkiller getting "lost" go up 10% per week, cumulative, after that. The rune blade also revels in the fact that those who lose the sword are usually still bonded to it to some degree, so they often have an inkling of where it is and/or who possesses it next. This prompts them to chase after their sword and to attack whoever has come to possess it. **Note:** Foolkiller has an extremely forceful personality, and it will resist unleashing its full power when being used by Principled, Scrupulous or Aberrant users — unless doing so will emotionally damage or corrupt that individual. Users of these alignments must successfully dominate the sword just as a summoner would dominate one of its thralls. Afterwards, the standard summoning rules apply; if Foolkiller breaks free, it will endeavor to "get lost," as described above.

Foolkiller also harbors a pathological hatred for Elves and Faerie Folk of any kind. Upon detecting any such folk nearby, it will try as hard as it can to get its user to slay them (whisper lies, taunts and foul thoughts to motivate him). Weak-minded users of this foul weapon have often found themselves suddenly attacking in anger or a jealous rage over the slightest perception of an offense, egged on by the demon blade. This characteristic, more than any other, has resulted in most of its owners' deaths. Worse, the owner of the blade finds himself quickly learning to enjoy killing! Something good characters should find horrifying.

Finally, Foolkiller will curse its user with Glowing Eyes. This effect is permanent, and will remain even after the sword is lost, unless a Remove Curse spell is cast on the user (-30% to save). The hue of this particular manifestation is a watery blue-purple, which those who know about the weapon have nicknamed, "The Mark of the Fool."

Personality: Arrogance, cruelty and selfishness are the hallmarks of this evil creation, one of the last and greatest (and most evil) rune weapons to be forged during the Elf-Dwarf War. Foolkiller was originally designed to be given as a gift to an Elven general, in the hopes that the weapon would sow dissent and chaos within the Elven ranks. For a short while, it did, but not before doing the same to equally covetous Dwarven military leaders as well. Foolkiller takes pleasure only in destroying things and causing disruption. It has respect for nothing, save its own power and achievements. It despises all other rune weapons and will urge its user to at-

tack (or at least not trust) any person it detects who is in possession of such weapons. In general, it will not communicate with its user, except to urge him or her to do vile deeds of treachery, destruction and disruption or to wallow in hatred, envy, jealousy and other dangerous emotions.

Other notes: Foolkiller is the prize sought by a variety of groups devoted to gaining the demon blade for their own ends. Among these groups are the *Order of the Serpent*, an obscure Western cult, which has the world's largest collection of information on this weapon, a secret history of its users stretching back for several millennia. To what end the Order is putting this knowledge is unknown. Also, the *Ogre Warlord Vulgish Skong*, of the Old Kingdom, has been searching for this weapon ever since he lost it ten years ago. He is obsessed with Foolkiller's retrieval, and employs a 2,500 man army in his search. He thinks it is still in or around the Old Kingdom somewhere, and he will even venture into the Western Empire, Baalgor Wastelands, Timiro Kingdom, or Eastern Territory to find it. And finally, it is rumored that several *Holy Palladins of Rurga* (an order based in the Eastern Territory) have dedicated their careers to finding Foolkiller and casting it into Mount Nimro or into the deepest part of the ocean, so that it may never again trouble the world. These Palladins are quite skilled warriors, and they claim to be very close to finding this elusive renegade weapon. The rest of the warriors and power-mongers who covet the weapon are fools who believe they can master the weapon and use it without ill befalling them . . . hence the blade's name, Foolkiller.



Experience Tables

Giants, Gromek, Minotaur, Eandroth, Dragonmen, and Vrill use the experience table that is reflective of their chosen Occupational Character Class (O.C.C.) — often a Man at Arms.

Vrill are limited to the following: Monk (scholarly monks, NOT warrior monks), Scholars, Rangers, Sailors, Druids, Psi-Healers or Psi-Mystics. Of that other 5%, most become Warlocks or Clergy. Aside from the Ranger and Sailor O.C.C., Vrill usually avoid men at arms O.C.C.s.

Earthshakers are creatures of magic and Non-Player Characters (NPCs) not meant for use as a player character, so they do not need a listing for experience. One may consider them similar to ancient dragons with an average spell casting level of 1D4+8. Most cast spells at 10th level proficiency.

Sandwyrms are another NPC monster not meant for use as a player character. They are effectively a primitive sub-species of dragon, so the dragon experience table is appropriate. Average level of experience is 1D4+3.

The Thin Ones are NPC monsters so they don't require an experience table.

Baalizad R.C.C. are effectively Vagabonds or Peasant Farmer with natural tunneling abilities similar to Dwarves.

Baalizad R.C.C.

- 1 0,000-1,860
- 2 1,861-3,600
- 3 3,601-7,000
- 4 7,001-14,000
- 5 14,001-23,000
- 6 23,001-34,000
- 7 34,001-44,000
- 8 44,001-60,200
- 9 60,201-80,400
- 10 80,401-110,600
- 11 110,601-145,800
- 12 145,801-195,200
- 13 195,201-245,400
- 14 245,401-290,600
- 15 290,601-340,800

The Gosai can select any O.C.C. except Knight, Palladin and Long Bowman. Their favorite O.C.C.s are Thief, Assassin and Gladiator, or the special *Gosia Assassin R.C.C.* (about 25-30% are the special *Gosai Assassin*).

Gosai Assassin R.C.C.

- 1 0,000-2,150
- 2 2,151-4,300
- 3 4,301-9,600
- 4 9,601-18,200
- 5 18,201-28,400
- 6 28,401-38,600
- 7 38,601-54,800
- 8 54,801-75,200
- 9 75,201-100,400
- 10 100,401-132,600
- 11 132,601-185,800
- 12 185,801-240,200
- 13 240,201-295,400
- 14 295,401-365,600
- 15 365,601-425,800

The Quillback have a wide variety of O.C.C.s they can select from, but 20-25% are *Quillback Scavengers*.

Quillback Scavenger R.C.C.

- 1 0,000-1,900
- 2 1,901-3,600
- 3 3,601-7,200
- 4 7,201-14,400
- 5 14,401-24,500
- 6 24,501-35,000
- 7 35,001-45,000
- 8 45,001-65,000
- 9 65,001-85,000
- 10 85,001-115,000
- 11 115,001-145,000
- 12 145,001-185,000
- 13 185,001-250,000
- 14 250,001-310,000
- 15 310,001-375,000

Quorians can select an occupation from a wide variety of O.C.C.s, but among their people are the priest-like oracles known as the *Oneiromancer* or *Dream Shaman* (only 5-10%).

Quorian Oneiromancer

- 1 0,000-2,130
- 2 2,131-4,260
- 3 4,261-8,580
- 4 8,581-17,160
- 5 17,161-24,910
- 6 24,911-34,190
- 7 34,191-49,290
- 8 49,291-67,390
- 9 67,391-93,490
- 10 93,491-131,590
- 11 131,591-182,690
- 12 182,691-225,790
- 13 225,791-272,890
- 14 272,891-333,190
- 15 333,191-399,690

Adraodan Minotaur's

Crusaders of Light O.C.C.

- 1 0,000-2,110
- 2 2,111-4,120
- 3 4,121-8,140
- 4 8,141-17,180
- 5 17,181-25,220
- 6 25,221-35,420
- 7 35,421-51,840
- 8 51,841-71,200
- 9 71,201-96,400
- 10 96,401-131,600
- 11 131,601-181,800
- 12 181,801-232,000
- 13 232,001-282,200
- 14 282,201-342,400
- 15 342,401-402,600

Kkairojan Minotaur's

Soldier of Darkness

(aka Harbinger of Chaos)

- 1 0,000-2,030
- 2 2,301-4,060
- 3 4,061-8,120
- 4 8,121-18,240
- 5 18,241-26,480
- 6 26,480-36,600
- 7 36,601-52,700
- 8 52,701-75,800
- 9 75,801-100,900
- 10 100,901-140,000
- 11 140,001-195,100
- 12 194,101-240,200
- 13 240,201-300,400
- 14 300,401-360,600
- 15 360,601-430,800



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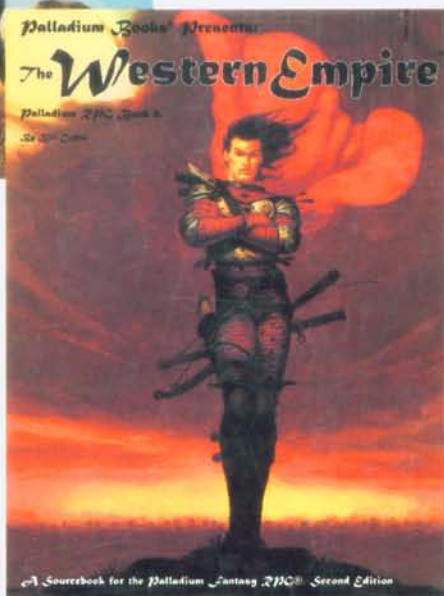
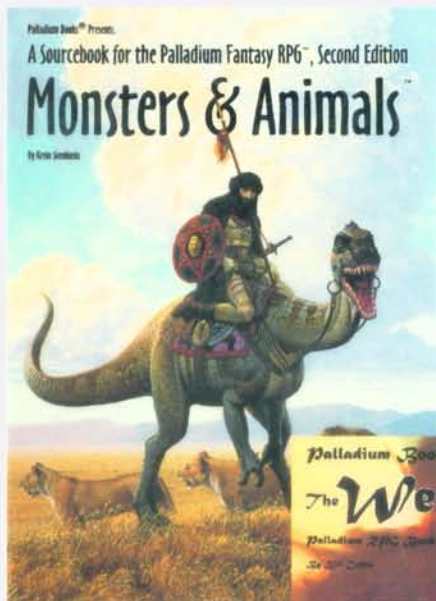
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