

MEJETUS:
**ANCIENT
SHADES**

Dark Rethem Adventure 4

Alun Rees

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MEJETUS: ANCIENT SHADES

Credits

WRITER

Alun Rees

CONTRIBUTORS

Anders Bersten and his players,
Andy Gibson and Neil Thompson,
the players at IviniaCon and
the HarnWriters Team

MAPS

Alun Rees

(unless noted in the text)

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INTRODUCTION

Mejetus: Ancient Shades is the fourth adventure of the Dark Rethem campaign and only really makes sense if the player characters (PCs) that have already completed *Peran: Heart of Darkness*, *Afarezirs: Root of All Evil*, and *Golotha: Deeper Dark*. If they haven't then the GM will need to make some very significant changes to make it playable.

This adventure has been written for the author's Fate Core hack, *Fate of Harn* (available from Lythia.com). *Fate Core* (Evil Hat Games), is available for Pay What You Want, from Drivethru RPG. A brief guide to converting the adventure to HM can be found at the end.

Mejetus: Ancient Shades includes a much more detailed set of [Designer's Notes, and GM Briefing](#), than any of its predecessors. This is to help explain some of the backstory so that the GM can help the PCs interpret what they learn. It is important that by the time they approach the final scenes of the adventure the players understand what is at stake. However, reciting chunks of the backstory to the players is not recommended; the GM should use it to inform the way they answer player questions etc. so that they make the necessary connections between what they have learned in the previous adventures and this one.

I hope the GM can live with is my views on the Harnic gods, Yashain, and its relationship with Kethira. Hopefully they will be able to relate these to their own vision of Harn.

Adventure Outline

The PCs ended *Deeper Dark* owing the Gurim a service and *Ancient Shades* sees them summoned to pay their debt. The PCs have to recover clues that will: lead them to the ancient ruins of Mejetus; ensure they understand what Coln of Kutz has become; what he intends; and why they must thwart those plans.

Essential Resources

- *Peran: Heart of Darkness*; *Afarezirs: Root of All Evil*; *Golotha: the Deeper Dark*; *Zarainsen Warehouse*; *Scarlet Ribbon*; *Mejetus*; and *Bitter Fallen* (available from Lythia.com).
- *Kustan, Kubora* (from Harnmaster Barbarians) and its extension, *Tribes of the Kubora*, (available from Columbia Games). The author's Fate Core hack *Fate of Harn* (available from Lythia.com) &/or a version of the *Harnmaster Rules* (available from Columbia Games or Kelestia Productions)

Helpful Resources

- The *Rethem* and *Thardic Republic* modules as well as *Imrium* and *Bedenes* (all are available from Columbia Games).
- *Emesa* (from Lythia.com).

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TIMING

Deciding when this adventure takes place is, as with its predecessors, up to the GM. However, the timeline below describes the 'ideal' if a group is playing through all four adventures of the Dark Rethem campaign.

Events in any group's own campaign (and the long intervals separating the publication of the four instalments!) mean slippage is inevitable. However, the GM should try to keep to the seasons, even if the year slips. During those intervals the GM can take their players anywhere as long as they leave time for them to return for the next adventure; Rethem is a very interesting place and I encourage tourists to explore it.

- *Peran: Heart of Darkness* takes place in the height of the very hot summer of the first year of the campaign (nominally TR720);
- *Afarezirs: Root of all Evil* takes place during the early Spring of the following year (721TR), when the weather conditions allow for the sea voyage into the North;
- *Golotha: Deeper Dark* takes place during the early-mid summer of the same year as *Root of all Evil* (721TR).
- *Mejetus: Ancient Shades* begins in the spring nearly two years after the conclusion of *Deeper Dark* (723TR). The exact start time for Act I depends on where the PCs went after *Deeper Dark*, as the GM must allow time for them to get back to Golotha shortly before the 18th of Nulus. If they arrive later they will need to travel very swiftly to catch up with the caravan that will take the Scarlet Ribbon into Peran. They can leave later and travel faster if they travel alone but the GM should make them understand the risks of travelling into Peran in a small group.
- The non-negotiable part of the timeline is that the PCs MUST get to Kustan for the Kuboran Moot that begins on the night of the full moon of Larane. There is no other time in the year when the necessary NPC encounters can take place there. It is common knowledge that it is better to arrive in the first days of the Moot as the Kubora get more fractious as time passes. This also allows the PCs time to take advantage of all the Moot has to offer the traveller (and this adventure).

ACT I: A DEBT TO BE PAID

Overview

Irrespective of how long has passed since the PCs completed *Golotha: the Deeper Dark*, or how far they have travelled, or how much they have tried to hide their identity or location, they receive a message. It comes from Jarop of Zarainsen, and invites them to return to Golotha. Whatever their feelings it becomes increasingly difficult to refuse the invitation!

Scene Aspect(s)

Any Aspects that will be in play throughout the Act will be noted at the start of each Act. In Act I ***An obligation cannot be ignored*** is in play through each of Scenes 1 to 5.

SCENE 1: A MESSAGE

Overview

Wherever the PCs are they receive a visit from local members of the Lia-Kavair or one of its affiliates. They have come to deliver a message ...

Scene Aspect(s)

Additional aspects can be improvised by the GM on the basis of where the PCs are approached.

GM Aims

- To hook the PCs into the adventure through a message from Jarop of Zarainsen, the Lai-Kavair Grandmaster in Golotha. If the PCs are antagonistic to Jarop then the request might come through Jamys of Abrant, with whom the PCs are likely to have a less ambiguous, and more positive, relationship.
- To ensure that they realise that this message is connected to the debt they owe the Morgathian Gurim

PC Outcomes

Despite any misgivings the PCs realise that Jarop (and Jamys) let alone the Gurim, are not figures they can ignore.

Description of Events

Some 'friends of a friend' (Lia-Kavair or their affiliates) seek out the PCs with a message from an old acquaintance, Jarop of Zarainsen:

'Come to Golotha now. You have a debt to settle and it has been sold to me. The people who deliver this message will cover any costs of the journey. You need not fear returning, you will be under my protection. Jarop'.

The GM must hope that the offer of an all-expenses paid trip back to Golotha will be enticing enough but if the PCs are strangely reluctant the leader will use **Intimidate** vs. the **Will** of the PC who appears to be the leader - usually the toughest looking fighter.

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He is prepared to cause mental stress to the PC with the intention of forcing a concession (or even taking him out) in order to get him to accept the offer and return to Golotha.

The heavies won't initiate any physical conflict as they have been instructed not to cause the PCs any physical harm. They will, though, defend themselves if the PCs initiate combat. They will always concede once a PC is down to their last physical stress box having judged that they made their point.

If the heavies do concede then they will gain the same Fate Points as a PC would, and these will be available in the next scene to add to the GM's pool of Fate Points.

Local Boss

*The most feared in town;
Dangerous connections*

+3 Fight

+2 Strength (Damage+1)

+1 Contacts

Knife:0; 1-H Improvised:1

Cloth:0

0 1 1

Thug (1-2 per PC)

*Handy in a fight;
Well-known in certain circles*

+2 Fight

+1 Strength (Damage+1)

Knife:0; 1-H Improvised:1

Cloth:0

0 1

Link to the next scene

Scene 2 is initiated if the thugs are forced to concede. Scene 4 is initiated if the PCs accept the invitation.

SCENE 2: PRESSURE

Overview

The PCs discover that refusal is going to be costly.

Scene Aspect(s)

You used to have friends is in play during this Scene with additional aspects improvised by the GM on the basis of the PCs' situation.

GM Aims

- To make it clear to the PCs that life will be intolerable if they continue to refuse the invitation.

PC Outcomes

They accept the invitation when it is offered a second time, if only to get the locals off their back.

Description of Events

The local Lia-Kavair (or their local affiliate) will make life difficult for the PCs:

- Any local employment opportunities dry up and any current employer has to, sadly, let them go.
- Buying goods or services becomes increasingly difficult for the PCs as they suffer a +1 increase in difficulty when using Privy Purse.
- Any credit they may have accumulated melts away along with any good name they have established, so that local Rank is reduced by -1
- These changes in wealth and status can be increased after over the next few weeks if continue to refuse to return to Golotha.

Finally they are subjected to a social attack using the Lia-Kavair's +5 **Contacts** vs. the **Will** of the PC with the highest **Contacts**. The PCs may be able to create some advantages to defend themselves once the attack begins. Equally the Lia-Kavair will make liberal use of Fate Points to boost the effect of their attacks.

The intention is to do Mental Stress to the PC most important for the contacts they have established, and force him to concede and convince the others that they will have to comply.

This time the Lia-Kavair are prepared to inflict a Minor Mental Consequence on the PC, such as *Name is dirt in around here*, before conceding.

Link to the next scene

As before the PCs can trigger Scene 4 simply by agreeing to return to Golotha and meet Jarop. Alternatively their refusal can trigger Scene 3. However, the GM may wish to consider whether the PCs actually want to play the conclusion of the campaign: more fun is to be had with volunteers than with 'pressed men'.

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SCENE 3: NO ALTERNATIVE

Overview

The PCs ARE going to Golotha!

Scene Aspect(s)

Relaxed in a place of safety can be invoked to lower PC guards for a kidnap attempt or **Powerful enemies** to make it difficult to avoid arrest

GM Aims

- The GM ensures they return to Golotha!

PC Outcomes

They deal with the consequences of continued refusal.

Description of Events

If they continue to refuse the offer &/or run rather than accepting the paid passage back to Golotha, then the GM may have to work harder. If the PCs play hardball then the GM can do likewise. While not favouring GM fiat they may face ... other forces ... the local Morgathian network (or their allies) will use a series of cut-outs to focus significant local interest on the PCs. This could involve:

- Kidnap! Each PC will wake up securely confined in a hidden compartment in the bed of a wagon (or ship if they have fled overseas), under several hundred pounds of turnips, wool, brassware etc. Their destination is unknown but turns out to be ... Golotha.

Kidnapper (2 per PC)

Trained by Naveh

Loyal once paid

+4 Larceny or **Stealth**

+3 Athletics or **Deceive**

+2 any other skill the GM needs

+1 any other skill the GM needs

Club:1

Cloth:0

0 1 1 1

- Arrest when a guildmaster's goods are discovered in the PC's possession. The local Lord finds them innocent but has become aware of a summons from Re-them for their return to Golotha. They are stripped of their possessions for causing the court inconvenience and chained to the next cart going west. All of their possessions are in the cart, but they don't know that! Everything will later be returned by Jarop.

Link to the next scene

Go straight to Scene 4.

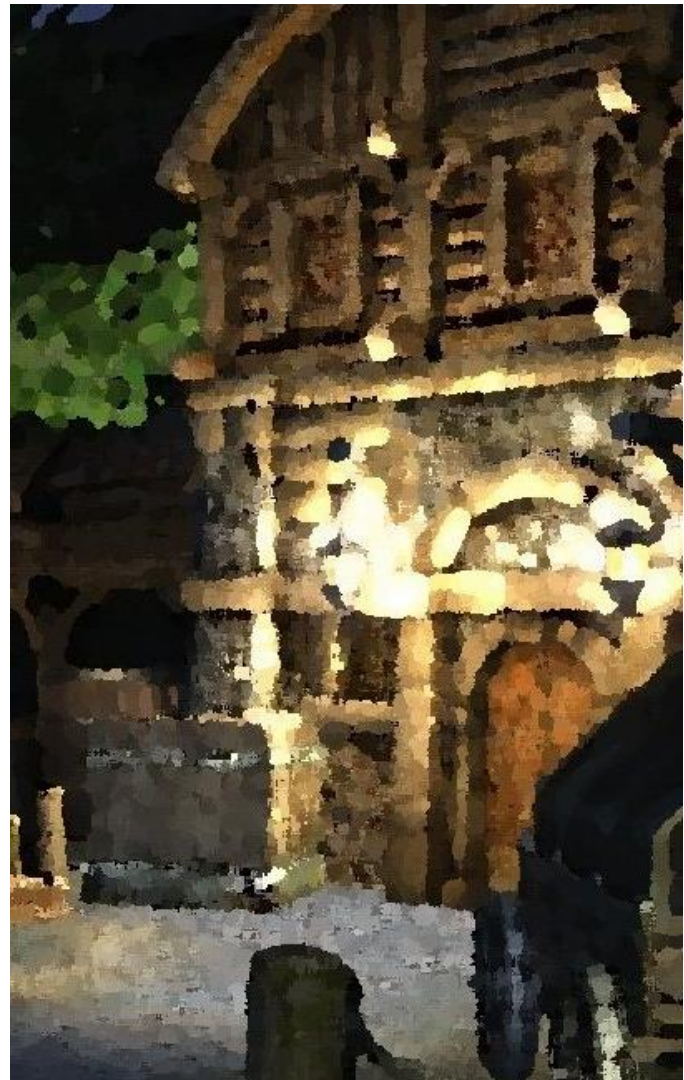
SCENE 4: INTERVIEW WITH AN AMORVRUS

Overview

The PCs meet Jarop and his 'sponsor'. The GM should use *Zarainsen Warehouse* to provide the necessary detail of the location

Scene Aspect(s)

The Guild's home ground is in play throughout the Scene and **Dark and dank vault** is in play once the PCs are taken to the dock below the Zarainsen Warehouse.



The Zarainsen Warehouse, Golotha Pool

GM Aims

- To reveal that Jarop's invitation was cover for an opportunity to repay their debt to the Gurim and that they have much more to lose if they react badly.
- To provide a thorough briefing for the mission the Gurim requires in payment of their debt while making

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every effort to convince them that the Morgathians are playing a straight game. There should be no hint of subterfuge.

PC Outcomes

They accept the mission as the (far) lesser of two evils, finding some way to justify their cooperation with the Morgathians.

Description of Events

Jarop's invitation brings the PCs back to the Zarainsen Warehouse in Golotha. Whatever Jarop thinks of the PCs and however relations with them were left after *Deeper Dark* one of the Gurim's senior priests is still a Zarainsen and the clan has prospered as a result. Therefore Jarop will put aside any personal feelings (for now at least) to fulfil the Gurim's bidding.

It may be necessary to remind the PCs how things were left with Jarop before proceeding and they may, or may not, therefore be surprised by Jarop's almost avuncular manner towards them

Empathy vs. 0 is all it takes to see that Jarop is at pains not to appear in any way threatening. The impression gained is that he actually needs something from the PCs and is genuinely trying to make them feel at ease. **Success with Style** will tell them that they have some power in this game. It is important to Jarop that they agree when he asks them to come with him for a meeting 'with a friend'.

Jarop escorts them down to the dank vaulted dock beneath the warehouse where a hooded figure emerges from the shadows accompanied by his bodyguards.

Under the hood and mask of a senior Morgathian priest this may or may not be the Gurim himself; it doesn't matter. There are other figures in the shadows that infest the basement dock; close enough to act but sufficiently hidden to be difficult to identify.

The masked Morgathian dismisses Jarop with a cursory 'thank you' and tells the PCs that the time has come to make good their debt. He wants them to find out what has happened to the one-armed man who disappeared on Temple Hill, and report back what they discover.

They will, of course, remember what the Gurim said to them that night but the Morgathian reminds them of events and consequences:

'You trespassed on holy ground and, while you were unable to stop the Unlamented Dead escaping, your actions did allow us to see what form it had taken. This placed your fate in the balance.'

'Coln of Kutz knows the Source, and the Gate, and shared his being with the Unlamented Dead beyond the gate. In doing so he became both Gate and Keeper and he may become the Key'

'You brought this Unlamented Dead from the wilderness and allowed it to run free. The thing that Coln of Kutz has become is dangerous for it has the power to end all days. This weighed very heavily against you and left you in debt.'

Potent Morgathian Priest Amorvrus

Wielder of the Shadow of Incarnate Evil

Feared by all

The mask of Morgath

+4 Ritual (Morgath) (Divine Intervention: +2

to any skill or action so long as a Fate Point is spent to invoke an aspect of Morgath) AND

(Shadow of Bukrai: see Fate of Harn)

+3 Scholar (Speaks Ivinian and High Azeryani as well as **Harnic**; and **Reads Lakise)**

+3 Will

+2 Contacts

+2 Intimidate (Invoke Morgath: +2 to create advantages with Intimidate because of the reputation of the Church)

+2 Fight (Touched by Bukrai: if any Physical Stress is inflicted on the target, add a point of Mental Stress)

+1 Empathy (Scent of Fear: +2 to discover a relevant aspect that could be compelled to force the target to cooperate)

+1 Deceive

+1 Stealth

+1 Ride

Dagger:1; Unarmed:0

Leather beneath cloth:1

0 1 2

Mild **1**:

Serious **2**:

Grievous **3**:

'You were offered you two ways to pay that debt and you preferred to owe a service rather than join the ranks of the Warriors of Klyss, the gulmorvrin',

He gestures and numerous shapes emerge from the dank shadows; gulmorvrin!

'This offer is now repeated: the gulmorvrin or a service? Decide.'

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Loyal Bodyguard (1 per PC)

Veteran man-at-arms
I fear my master

+3 Melee
+2 Strength (Damage +1)
+1 Endurance

Spear:2; Falchion:2; Dagger:1

Ring mail:2

0 1 1 1

Gulmorvrin (2 per PC)

Obedient but Slow
Susceptible to Fire
HORRIFIC(+2)

+3 Fight (**Touched by Bukrai**: if any Physical Stress is inflicted on the target, add a point of Mental Stress);
+2 Strength;
+1 Endurance

Bludgeoning Fists:1 (+1 Damage)

Leathery skin:1

0 1 1 1

This is a good time to remind the PCs of what they know, that:

- Den Hapra, the mad old scribe who accompanied Kutz up river, said that the Denal Kubora had asked if Kutz was *'the Key to the Lock that bound them'*, and if he was *'the Gatekeeper who would battle the outsiders and bring the god his rest'*?
- Den Hapra's notebook said: *'The Denal are the Guardians and the Cursed of the Hand but one day a Gate Keeper shall appear and He shall be Like but Unlike, Denal but not Denal, and he shall be the Key. He will seek out the Outsiders and defeat them and then Crador will rest.'*
- Some of what they learned from the diary given to them by Wenowina the Crone contains similar references in what the Morgathians who went to the Hand were overheard saying: *'We have caste wards around this place so that the Lord of Fires is denied this portal as the Gurim has ordained. We have warded it with the elements that are anathema to the Fiery One and his servants and intend that over time the portal that was opened here will be dispersed by the flow of his greatest enemy, water. We have taken care not to risk the Concordat by working*

the Gurim's will only through the Shek P'var'. 'Only the Unlamented Dead that we sense beyond the portal can open the door and they are caged beyond it. As they cannot journey to this side then they cannot be the Key for the Gate Keeper.' 'We will consecrate a shrine at Mejetus so that the Emperor and all his legions will guard The Lock. With no Lock, no Gatekeeper and no Key, the Lord of V'Hir will be contained.'

Should they wish to change their mind and take up his previous offer of service among the Gulmorvrin ... then that can be arranged ... he ostentatiously indicates the blank-eyed Gulmorvrin, again. Alternatively they can undertake the mission described and, if they do well, then there might be an opportunity to continue in the service of Morgath.

If they ask precisely what service is being sought ... he will straightforwardly describe events that have come to the church's notice since the events on Temple Hill:

- The 'unlamented dead' they know as Coln of Kutz escaped pursuit that night and seemed to disappear, perhaps drowned in the Thard. Reports of a bald man abound; those of a red-beard have been common; and those of a one-armed man less so, but nothing that could definitively identify Coln of Kutz.
- Then, in the spring of last year a strange report reached the church. The man that oversees the ferry crossing at Zerien was reported to have gone mad. He claimed to have been woken during the night by a man offering a king's ransom if he would take him across the Thard into Rethem. The sum was so great that, after taking the man's money, the ferryman returned to his bed to plan his retirement. When roused the following morning he was maniacally happy. Only the discovery that the bag of gold he'd been given was gone altered his mood. Worse, the small sum he had accumulated as savings was also missing. A hue and cry went out for the tall noble in a hooded cloak of rich red fabric, but he had disappeared. To this day the ferry is being operated by a cousin as the crossing keeper continues to grieve for his loss.
- A man who was night-fishing saw a man cross to the north bank that night. He enquired of the road to Phira and bade the fisherman a friendly good night before walking into the darkness. The witness was very clear that it was a red tunic not a hooded cloak that caught his eye, but like the ferryman his description of the man was otherwise vague.
- The hue and cry found a final witness some distance beyond Phira; a local huntsman. He reported having met a tall man with a red hat at dawn after the ferry keeper was woken. He offered a few pleasantries on the weather and the like but the man said very little in return. When a better description was sought he admitted that the hat was all he seemed to notice ... it

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was very red. He was absolutely certain that the man didn't have a red cloak or tunic, though. Given the fisherman's estimate of the time of his encounter and the huntsman's location, this was judged to be a different person; only if the man had run all the way could it have been him.

- Some days later a farmer and his household were burned to death in their barn west of Senun. Only the youngest child survived and she said a lady with red hair had paid for a meal and a bed for the night. The next thing the child remembers is the smoke and heat of the barn burning around her and squeezing under the wall through a scrape made by the farm cats. The bodies were burned beyond recognition and the remains of the barn door showed signs of having been wedged shut from outside. Further investigation by the local bailiff discovered all the family's portable wealth to be missing. Before he could investigate further a vagabond found sleeping under a hedge was lynched by villagers. The Constable of Senun sent a man to investigate and he took down the bailiff's report and attached a scrap of parchment on which the bailiff had traced a shape he found scratched into the horse trough beside the barn, it was newly made and copied in case it was of import:

3

He could not read but the Morgthian a can tell the PCs
it was the first letter in the name ... Kutz:

ՀԱՅԿԱ

- Reinvestigating the events at the Third crossing an agent of the church found the same letter scratched into the soft wood of a post where the fisherman had met the man in the red tunic.
- After that the trail went cold. Nothing was heard of a one-armed man, no initials were found, and nothing untoward was reported that involved a man or woman in anyway dressed in red.
- Then similar reports reached Golotha in the late summer from a number manors in the North: all concerned someone making enquiries about the region's ancient history. It proved impossible to see any pattern in the sightings, other than that the visits avoided Tormau and the manors near to it. What attracted the church's interest was that whenever enquiries were made 'red' featured in the description of the questioner.
- These reports ceased in Larane of last year. However, a one-armed, red-bearded man was seen leaving Dasen with the annual caravan heading to the Kuboran Moot at Kustan. When questioned witnesses could add little detail about what happened at Kustan other

than to say that this man spent a lot of time with a half-breed trapper called Halako before disappearing.

- Halako is reported to live among the savages so it has not been possible to question him about what happened to the one-armed man the church believes to have been Kutz.

Empathy against a potent *Amorvrus* is difficult (vs. +3) but success reveals that he seems to be telling the truth about these events. Additional shifts of success reveal additional insights:

- 1 shift - given the time that has passed **something** has sufficiently alarmed the Morgathians for them to have called in the debt now;
- 2 shifts - as above, plus a Morgathian might be less successful in this investigation (**Scholar** or **Contacts after the meeting** vs +2 reveals that though the followers of Morgath are loyal unto (un)death they do not have a reputation for initiative and the ability to think on their feet);
- 3 shifts (**Success with Style**) - as above, plus there may even be something that a Morgathian simply **can-not** achieve, that the PCs can (unless all the PCs are openly Morgathian PC, then replace this with: "the PCs have shown sufficient initiative in the past to be trusted with a mission beyond many servants of the church").

Link to the next scene

The timing of the Gurim's summons is now clearer. The last person reported to have spent time in the company of Kutz was the half-breed trapper, Halako. The PCs are to travel to the Moot, find Halako and find out where Kutz has gone. The PCs have time to get to Kustan for this year's Kuboran Moot if they leave within the next few days. When they report back their debt will then be reviewed.

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SCENE 5: SCARLET RIBBON

Overview

The PCs travel to the Kuboran Moot. The GM can use *Scarlet Ribbon* for details of the route.

Scene Aspect(s)

Together against the wilderness and **A caravan attracts all sorts** are in play as long as the PCs are with the caravan. If they are separated from it then **Dangerous forest wilderness** comes into play instead.

GM Aims

- The GM should ensure that, if the PCs are going to get to Kustan with the annual caravan of traders, that they reach Dasen by the 5th day of Larane. A day later and they will still be able to catch it on horseback, but after that they will be travelling through Kuboran territory without the collective strength of the caravan and its hired guards for several days before they catch up with the stragglers.

PC Outcomes

They join the caravan. It is possible for them to travel alone but this will add complication and danger to a journey that is otherwise usually very safe and which traders consider almost routine at this time of year.

Description of Events

The nucleus of the caravan will have left Golotha on about the 18th of Nolus, picking up wagons and mules as it makes its way first to Shostim, then Quiso and Winen, and finally crossing the River Denia to Dasen via Tormau.

Although that will take the wagons making up the core of the caravan 12 or 13 days, the journey from Golotha to Dasen takes 4 -5 days on a horse; 6-7 days on foot and 5-7 days by ship, depending on wind and weather. The church, through Jarop, can arrange for horses or passage on board the *Serenela's Fancy*, a ship the PCs will be familiar with from *Afarezirs: Root of all Evil*.

The GM can insert encounters into the journey from Golotha to Dasen so long as they do not distract the PCs and stop them reaching the start of the Scarlet Ribbon in time to join the caravan.

If they leave on foot, by ship, or on horseback on the 25th, 26th or 27th of Nolus, respectively, they should arrive in Dasen between the 1st and 3rd of Larane. The caravan will depart at dawn on the 5th.

If they have any specific requirements for the journey then they should either obtain what they need in Golotha or arrive in Dasen just in time (and pay significantly more for almost anything).

The route and timings are summarised below (though the GM could simply give the PCs access to the map of the trail found in the *Scarlet Ribbon* article):

Larane	Milestones
5th	Wagons leave Dasen and, after paying a toll of '2d per leg' to the Warriors of Mameka, reach the southern edge of the Uldan Hills.
6th	Wagons cross the hills and descend into the valley of the Perath to camp beside the river.
7th	After a long day marching the wagons reach the place where Garao Kubora can be paid as guides for the rest of the rip north.
8th	The wagons reach the headwaters of the Perath and cross, turning NW as they do so. Depending on how bad the winter and spring thaws have been it can take an extra day to complete this section of the route.
9th	Having crossed the headwaters the wagons cross continue NW into the Aranaki Hills
10th	Depending on how much rain has fallen on the Rayeshas and the Western Highlands of Peran, this section of the route, which will take them through the Aranaki Lakelands, can take two days, not one. Having Garao guides reduces the risk of losing time.
11th	The wagons cross at the shallow ford where the Warriors were ambushed in 717 and enter the range of the Rathiri Kubora.
12th	Depending on whether they have lost time they will either move on or camp above the valley of <i>Siolen Kustan</i> for up to 2 days, before completing the final stage through the valley and on to Kustan
13th	Rest day or catch-up day
14th	Rest day or catch-up day
15th	Wagons reach Kustan late in the day and camp is pitched. Trading starts the following morning

Link to the next scene

None is necessary. Simply staying with the caravan will bring the PCs to Act II.



The approach to Kustan Siolen

ACT II: THE KUBORAN MOOT

Overview

The PCs spend time at the Kuboran Moot in search of trapper called Halako and information about Kutz.

Scene Aspect(s)

Fierce Kuboran pride is in play as long as the PCs are at the Moot.

The simple carved wooden tokens given to the PCs by the Asawne during *Peran: Heart of Darkness* will be recognised by any Kuboran as being a traditional image of Crador the Blind significant to any Kuboran. A PC gains the aspect **Trusted by Kubora** (but without a free invoke) as long as the token is openly displayed at the Moot.

Any use of **Rapport** while invoking **Trusted by Kubora** that Succeeds with Style will lead to an enquiry of where the PC obtained the tokens and offer them a chance to tell the story. If the PCs are honest and tell the tale of their time with the Asawne, then they will gain the additional aspect **Honoured by the Asawne**.

The Moot

Visiting Kubora will have arrived at their traditional campgrounds around Kustan over the preceding few days. Large numbers of Zurnir Kubora arrive up to 5 days before as they provide guards for the Rathiri hosts and for the sacred sites.

The GM should look for opportunities to compel PC aspects to make their time at the moot 'interesting', and keep the Fate Point economy ticking over. Plot seeds could include:

The Dangerous ...

Anything from an ox driven mad by the provocation of a curious Kuboran child to a cougar in search of her cubs

or a beast destined for the arenas of the south, could put the PCs, or those nearby, at risk:

Curious Cougar (1)

Protective of young

Grace & Power; Small Sized(+2)

+4 Notice

+3 Athletics (Cat's Grace: Use Athletics instead of Stealth when avoiding detection)

+2 Fight

+1 Survival

Bite:1

Hide:1

0 1 1 1

Rampaging Ox (1)

Mad with rage

Great Size(+4)

+4 Endurance (Hard to kill: Use Endurance to defend against physical attacks though the beast takes +1 extra damage on a tie)

+3 Strength

+2 Athletics (Trample: Use athletics to attack a target and, if Succeed with Style then to +3 additional points of damage)

+1 Fight

Gore:2

Hide:1

0 1 1 1 1

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Confused Hirenu (1)

Territorial hunter and scavenger
Stupid and fragile boned; Great Size! (+4)

+4 Notice

+3 Athletics (Leap onto a target: Succeed with style to leap 20' into the air before swooping hooves first onto the target to do +2 additional damage) **AND (Fly:** Move 2 zones ignoring obstacles on the ground)

+2 Fight

+1 Intimidate

Talons:3 & Beak:2

Hide:2

0 1 1 1

Escaped Griffon (1)

Master of the high peaks
Wily hunter; Great Size(+4)

+4 Athletics

+3 Notice (Glide onto a target: Can use Athletics instead of tack to move up to 3 zones per 20' of starting height and attack target) **AND Agile climber:** +2 to climb)

+2 Intimidate

+1 Fight

Talons:2 & Beak:1

Hide:2

0 1 1 1 1

... and the Drunken ...

A group of caravan guards (or Kuboran hunters) are harassing a Kuboran (or southron) maiden. Though they are experienced the guards are the worse for drink:

Drunken Guard (1 per PC)

Don't mess with me, sunshine!
Come on, darlin'

+2 Fight

+1 Strength (Damage +1)

Unarmed:0; Dagger:1

Cloth:0

0 1 1

Drunken Hunter (1 per PC)

You southern cur!
Come, be my woman tonight

+2 Fight

+1 Strength (Damage +1)

Unarmed:0; Handaxe:1

Leather:1

0 1 1

Day 1 of the Moot (15th Larane)

Southron traders arrive but are confined to their campground until dawn of the following day.

On the evening of the first day - the full moon of Larane - there is a formal welcome and the summoning of all attending Hanuhn and Druhn to the village of Kus. By tradition the eldest among the Hanuhn sings the *Song of the Fallen God* which tells of the origins of Peran as a rugged wilderness in which the Tawedog, the Old Ones of the Forest, had lived for an eternity. It goes on to describe a great battle in the skies during which a god was cast down. His iron club fell to earth at the head of the River Denia where it created a huge marsh and raised up the Rayesha Mountains. Kemlar saw the turmoil in the heavens and chose Peran as the sacred place to which he led 'The People'; the Kubora.

After the formalities are over the Druhn withdraw and the Rathiri hosts are given gifts of food that constitute the meal that the Hanuhn share. Over that meal the Hanuhn discuss events of the last year which must be resolved. Lists of perceived transgressions, heroic and honourable acts, or information gained about potential threats to the tribes are voiced. The tribal shaman, who accompany their Hanuhn, listen carefully so that the details are added to the nation's collective oral history. Unsurprisingly interpretations of any decision can sometimes vary, but the majority recollection is usually ruled accurate.

Generations ago the Druhn would have retired to their tribal camps but since the time of Arlun it has become traditional for the Druhn to remain in Kus and share their own, less formal, meal. Though their duties are to lead the warband and advise the Hanuhn on matters of hunting, territory and war Arlun taught them how important their role was in the fate of their tribes and of the Kuboran nation as a whole. When he first drew them together Arlun voiced his plan to invade the southron lands, and over recent years it has been over this meal that the loyalties of the Druhn to Ryler the Southron and those that would contest with him for influence, have been explored. The final business of the meal is for the Druhn to agree the arrangements

for the Feast Hunt that takes place on the 8th day of the Moot.

While the men meat in Kus the Crone of each tribe takes food to honour the oldest Crone of Heneryne attending, at whichever campground she occupies. Some women discretely claim that while the Hanuhn talk, and the Druhn boast, the important decisions are made by the Crones who return to their tribal camps to ensure the men are influenced by their women folk to do the 'right' thing. No woman would claim such a disgraceful thing in front of her menfolk, but that doesn't mean it isn't true.

Day 2 of the Moot (16th Larane)

At dawn the elders of the Rathiri Kubora with a body-guard of Zurnir warriors, visit the southron campground and formally invite the assembled traders to display their wares. At the same time they are warned that they must respect the Kubora, their possessions and their women and remember that though they travelled through Siolen Kustan and meet among the barrows of Kuboran heroes, they must not trespass on either.

By tradition the most senior trader makes a speech in response pledging those attending to follow the guidance offered. They also warn that no visitor can expect any protection if they break this vow made on their behalf. Finally the Rathiri receive gifts as proof of southron good will.

There is much visiting between the Kuboran clans and tribes in search of wives, trade, friendship, or recompense for some perceived slight that has occurred over the last year. By noon they are also visiting the southron camp in search of trade, and sometimes entertainment. A particular attraction is a wagon of red haired whores from Golotha; red hair is rare, and much valued, among the Kubora.

Day 3 of the Moot (17th Larane)

Visiting and trading continues. The annual **Gargun-Head competition** begins and in the morning the **Short Foot Race** takes place around Kus, while the afternoon sees the **Wrestling** competition take place.

Day 4 of the Moot (18th Larane)

Visiting and trading continues, as does the next round of the **Gargun-Head** competition. The **Long Foot Race**, from Kus to Siolen Kustan and back, takes place and at the end of it the **Weight Lifting** competition is decided - usually this acts as an elimination event for the **'Stone Carry'** later in the Moot.

Day 5 of the Moot (19th Larane)

Visiting and trading continues and the **Single Combat** and **Javelin** competitions are judged by a group of Druhn. There are also competitions among the boys and youths that see them race and wrestle and compete with the bow.

Day 6 of the Moot (20th Larane)

Visiting and trading continues and the final elimination matches take place and from which the best two teams emerge to compete in the final of the **Gargun-Head** competition.

Day 7 of the Moot (21st Larane)

Most traders leave during the morning. There are always tales circulating through the caravan that if you stay longer you might become the subject of **the Feast Hunt** and the victim of the riotous behaviour with which the Moot often ends!

Visiting and trading among the Kubora continues and every tribe, and some of the larger clans, compete in the **Rope Pulling** until only one team remains standing.

Day 8 of the Moot (22nd Larane)

The warriors embark on the **Feast Hunt** while the women and children gather the fruits of the forest. At the end of the hunt claims for the most heroic act are made and adjudicated and the name of the most successful hunter promulgated among the tribes. The wisent are butchered and their slow roasting begins.

Day 9 of the Moot (23rd Larane)

Each tribal shaman takes any youth preparing for their manhood ceremony into the forest to ensure they understand what is expected of them. Then they are sent off to hunt for the food that their clan will eat that night.

During the day the **Stone Carry** takes place among the stones of Siolen Kustan, but outsiders are not invited.

Storytelling competition will have informally begun around the campfires on the 2nd day but word soon spreads of who the serious contenders are and they will find themselves invited to the camps of other clans and tribes as the Moot proceeds. By the 9th Day it is clear which handful of storytellers will be invited to entertain the gathered Kubora at the Hunt Feats at the end of the 10th day.

Day 10 of the Moot (24th Larane)

At dawn the youths seeking manhood gather and bathe in the stream running down to Kus before having their heads shaved. They are then given a potent blend of fermented berries and herbs by the presiding shaman, blindfolded, and led into the forest towards Siolen Kustan.

The roasting of the wisent continues into the afternoon when each tribe carries chunks of meat and other food from their campground to Kus for the **Hunt Feast**, the final event of the Moot.

The victors in the various competitions are recognised by all the Kubora present and songs sung of their achievements. The final contenders in the Storytelling



Wisent in the valley of the Shawls

competition is given the opportunity to tell their tales to all the Kubora who have attended with the victor being acclaimed by the cheering of the tribes.

Speeches are made by the Rathiri and decisions on any remaining contentious matters are announced. Usually these have been agreed by the Hanuhn and Druhn in advance, but there are sometimes surprises! There is much anticipation that, this year, Ryler will make a rousing call for unity and war. If he does then the safety of any remaining southron visitors may be called into question, even if they are already on the trail!

The Moot ends with everyone eating and drinking too much, gambling more than they have and fighting more than is good for them! It is no wonder that on the following day some hotheads will pursue and harass the southron caravan and any traders who chose to overstay their welcome. Usually it's only necessary to give them gifts to get them to leave the caravan alone but sometimes the encounters can turn dangerous and bloody, particularly if they come upon a small group of traders separated from the caravan and its guards.

Formerly the Moot ends at the following dawn and the tribal camps break up and the Kubora begin their journeys back to their home ranges.

The truce that provides safe passage to Kubora traveling through the ranges of other tribes holds for about 5 more days, but the further from Kustan they get the more likely it is that there will be trouble.

A similar truce is, in theory, granted to southrons traveling home, but as described above it is far from a guarantee of safety.

SCENE 1: ENQUIRIES

Overview

This should take place on Day 1 of the Moot with the PCs trying to find Halako and what he knows.

Scene Aspect(s)

So many people! is in play until they find Halako. This can be invoked to provide lots of people to ask or compelled to increase the challenge.

GM Aims

- To share the layout of Kustan with the PCs;
- To help the PCs understand that the tokens given to them by the Asawne during Heart of Darkness can be useful;

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- To make it relatively easy for the PCs to find Halako and discover what he knows.

PC Outcomes

They find their way around Kustan and learn and discover more about why Kutz visited Kustan, and his power to cloud people's memories.

Finding Halako

It should take the PCs no more than 2 days to find the half-Kuboran Halako. He is at the Chetulli campground in the company of his relatives.

He is sensitive about his parentage but will discuss the man he met last year; tall with one arm. He intervened when Halako found himself at a disadvantage when faced by a couple of drunken Ivinian caravan guards. He didn't think to ask the man's name, in fact he struggles to come up with a convincing description; he called him 'Red'.

His abiding memory is of the man's curiosity; he didn't say much but when he did speak it was a question about

Halako the Half-breed Trapper

Sensitive about his parentage

Open hearted veteran of the forest

+3 Survival

+2 Missile

+1 Fight

Bow:1/1; Dagger:1

Leather:1

0 1 1 1

history! Halako took him up to the ruins of Caer Kustan and told him about a woman in Bedenes who he might be interested in meeting. Halako had come across her the last time he attended the Beast Fair at Emesa. Her name is Morn/Lorn/Dorn, something like that, and she paid him well to tell her what he knew about Kustan and stories he picked up from his Kuboran family.



The Ruins of Caer Kustan

Before the end of the Moot, and before most of the caravan headed south, Red disappeared. Halako asked around but no one remembered much about the man he'd spent time with or noticed when he left.

Further Enquiries

Investigation: Overcome +2 to reveal that a number of people visiting the Moot last year were asked about the ruins in general and its temple, in particular. Descriptions of the person making the enquiries are varied, but the red

theme is clear. **Success with Style** helps understand the apparent power of Kutz to disguise himself: several people he had no particular contact with describe him as the tall, one-armed red bearded man the PCs would recognise, but whenever they find someone who spent time with him, his appearance is blurred, with only the theme of red being consistent. His power seems limited in scope to individuals he interacts relatively closely with.

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The Bitter Fallen within Kutz habitually castes a fragment of its consciousness into the mind of anyone it interacts with, sometimes to deceive them, and often to discern what else they might know of value. In doing so their perception of the encounter blurs; it is only the fragment of Kutz's will that ensures something red is remembered.

Link to the next scene

The GM should introduce Scene 2 immediately, before the PCs have time to set off to the ruins themselves.

SCENE 2: GOMAS STRAIGHT ARROW



Scene Aspect(s)

Influential friend while in the company of Gomas.

GM Aims

- To remind the PCs what a helpful friend Gomas can be, but to ensure they are not allowed to use him in place of their own hard work!

PC Outcomes

- They will have an opportunity to visit the ruins with a well-informed guide.
- If the PCs ask for Gomas's help he will be happy to accompany them to Caer Kustan at dawn on Day 2.
- The ruins of Kustan are an eerie reminder of imperial strength and final weakness. Once a potent fortress it is now a collection of ruined walls and towers with the remnants of garrison buildings within (see *Kustan*).

Gomas 'Straight Arrow'

Aged 57, height 5'7", light frame, weight 144 lbs, plain appearance, dark complexion, grey hair, brown eyes

Widely respected Hanuhn of the Asawne Kubora
Listens to the trees, the river, the air, and the night; Loyal guardians

+4 Will (Calm dignity: Use Will instead of Rap-
port to create advantages during negotiations)

+3 Notice

+3 Melee

+2 Endurance

+2 Scholar (Kuboran folklore: +2 to Scholar on
this subject) AND (**Weatherlore:** +2 to Overcome
when predicting future weather) AND **Speaks**
Harnic as well as **Old Jarinese**

+2 Empathy

+1 Athletics

+1 Ritual (Kuboran Pantheon)

+1 Survival

+1 Stealth

Handaxe:1/1; Dagger:1

Leather:1

0 1 2

Mild **1**:

Serious **2**:

Grievous **3**:

Sytari 'the Man'

Aged 24, height 5'6", light frame, weight 115 lbs, very attractive appearance, medium complexion, red hair, piercing green eyes

Meinrhyfel of the Asawne

Dedicated to Gomas

Bride to the man that bests her

+4 Melee (Mistress of the Handaxe: +2 to cre-
ate advantages using this weapon)

+3 Fight (Dirty-fighter: Spend a Fate Point to in-
crease the harm done by a successful Fight attack
so that any Stress is converted to a Mild Conse-
quence, Mild becomes serious or serious becomes
Grievous related to a very painful blow to kidneys
or gonads, or an eye gouge etc.)

+3 Missiles (Mistress of the Javelin: +2 to cre-
ate advantages using the 1-h spear as a javelin)

+2 Notice

+2 Athletics

+2 Endurance

+1 Survival

+1 Crafts (Curach: +2 to Overcome challenges
using the Kuboran skin boats)

+1 Intimidate

1-h Spear/Javelin:2/1; Handaxe:1/1; Dagger:1

Leather and Round Shield:1+2

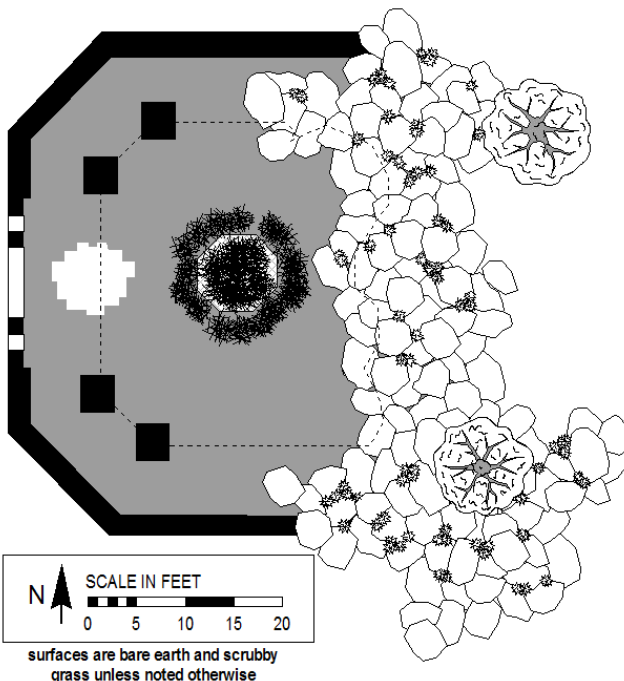
0 1 2 3

Mild **1**:

Serious **2**:

Grievous **3**:

The Order of Khamar's Temple



The central pit that once contained the sacred fire of Agrik is a cold and clogged with debris and fragments of the roof. Beyond it three arched windows illuminat more debris and the edge of a mosaic.

Clearning the debris reveals a very fine mosaic border with the words *'The betrayal of Emperor Mejenes on his quest to the gateway to Balgashang'*, in Lakise; the Khamari only used the Agrikan temple tongue, Surikal, ceremonially.

Unfortunately, within that ornate border sits only bare earth. The rest of the flagstones on which the mosaic was laid are not here; they have been removed. The growth of grasses and moss where the flagstones once sat suggests that they have been gone a long time - they cannot have been here when Kutz visited Kustan a year ago

Gomas can tell the PCs that some masonry from the fort was taken to *Siolen Kustan* after it fell. This act symbolised the complete triumph of the Kubora; the invader's impregnable fortress was subsumed into the Shaws.

MEJETUS: ANCIENT SHADES 16

Not even Gomas can get the PCs legitimate access to Siolen Kustan, the Shawls of Kustan, and will actively oppose any plan to go there without permission. To do so would compromise his relationship with them and he would have no choice but to have them killed

Acurdin ‘the Guide’ or Garach

Aged 36, height 5’9”, medium frame , weight 121 lbs, average appearance, dark complexion, prematurely grey hair, green eyes

Veteran hunter

Dedicated to Gomas

Proud Kuboran

+4 Notice (Eyes in the back of his head: +2 to avoid surprise at the start of an encounter)

+3 Athletics

+3 Melee

+2 Intimidate

+2 Stealth (One with the forest: +2 to create an advantage with Stealth in the Peran forest)

+2 Missiles

+1 Survival (The forest feeds us: +2 to Overcome tasks related to finding food in the Peran forest)

+1 Endurance

+1 Crafts (Curach: +2 to Overcome challenges using the Kuboran skin boats)

+1 Strength (+1 Damage)

1-h Spear/Javelin:2/1; Handaxe:1/1; Dagger:1

Leather and Round Shield:1+2

0 1 2 3

Mild **1**:

Serious **2**:

Grievous **3**:

Link to the next scene

If the PCs are rash enough to ignore Gomas and try to get access to the Shawls then have them warned off by Zurnir guards &/or get them lost among the mounds and ditches of Siolen Kustan. There are several square miles of monuments for them to search! Gomas has a suggestion, though. There might be a way to obtain the information they desire. The Rathiri are the keepers of the Shawls and know more about them than any other tribe. If, during the Moot, the PCs could find a way to impress their hosts then they might beg a favour and be able to ask questions of a Rathiri shaman about the mosaics. Rathiri oral history might contain a reference to them and what they showed before they were taken up and carried to the Shawls.

If they are going to ask such questions they will need to



Zurnir Guardians (2 per PC)

Veteran hunter

Dedicated to a holy task

+3 Melee

+2 Endurance

+1 Strength (+1 Damage)

1h-Spear:2/1; Handaxe:1/1

Leather & Round Shield:1+2

0 1 1 1



The Khamari Temple at Kustan

have sufficient prestige not to be ignored. Having him as their supporter will not be enough; the Rathiri are sometimes suspicious of Kubora who befriend southrons.

Gomas thinks there might be a way for them to increase their standing during the Moot: The Kubora love competitions and many are staged during the moot. Clans compete in all sorts of ways.

Gomas can tell the PCs about the competitions and when they occur (see overview to Act II). Little specific knowledge of the rules are necessary, they are at best, 'loose'; almost anything goes short of outright murder!

While the PCs can't take part in any of the events, it is no unknown for a Kuboran champion, or a warrior who hopes to be one, to takes on outsiders in 'private' competitions. Ostensibly these are just warm-ups which provide some entertainment but they also provide guides to a warrior's form and sometimes attract bets.

Southrons seen to be worthy practice competition are honoured by the tribes for their performance, so long as they do not perform too well! However far below Kuboran standards they fall, visitors can gain a name for themselves if they are lucky and careful.

It isn't acceptable for them to challenge a Kuboran -that will be insulting and might get a PC killed. However, if they can create the impression that they are worthy competition by displaying their skill, strength or endurance, then a would-be champion may come to them. Gomas warns the PCs that each of them should accept no more than one challenge; the Kubora dislike southron arrogance.

If the PCs agree go straight to the Scene 3.

SCENE 3: THE GLADIATORS ENTER

Overview

Gomas makes his suggestion first thing on Day 2 of the Moot and competition start on Day 3. The PCs therefore have relatively little time to start impressing the Kubora if they are to attract any competitors for the early events.

Gomas will strongly advise the PCs to avoid the **Single Combat** competitors. To get their attention a PC would have to display skill with a melee weapon and southrons doping that are more likely to attract summary execution than status. He is also arrogantly confident in any Kuboran's ability to best them in a 'fair' fight. Therefore, as an act of friendship, Gomas will ensure they do not get any challenge in **Single Combat**,

He has a last piece of advice before leaving the PCs to try their luck while he returns to the business of the Moot:

After any contest both winners and losers make speeches to anyone watching. Remember that you are visitors here. Be graceful in defeat, as such grace is almost as important with my people as victory.

Scene Aspect(s)

Anything goes! Is in play from the point a contest is agreed. Treat each Contest as a separate Scene in terms of the GMs fate Point store.

MEJETUS: ANCIENT SHADES 18

GM Aims

- To involve the PCs in the life of the Moot and give them a real flavour for the Kubora at play; their gambling, their pride, and their complete belief in their racial superiority;
- To encourage as many of the PCs as possible to involve themselves with the strategy rather than relying on the 'big and strong' PCs to do the work. More socially able PCs could set up bets and seek advantages with the crowd through oratory or subterfuge (though the latter should be used carefully. While the rules are loose the Kubora dislike outright cheating, particularly by a southron!)
- To discourage any PC from showing an interest in the **Single Combat** event. If they insist then the GM may not be able to save them!

PC Outcomes

At least some of the PCs try to impress and gain sufficient attention to raise their status and reputation. The Asawne tokens mean they start with more credit than the anonymous southrons making up most of the visitors, so they should feel able to use Fate points to take advantage of their existing reputation.

Description of Events

The GM can role-play these encounters in as much detail as they please but shouldn't forget that Fate Core is well-provided with mechanics to manage competitions.

First each PC should choose the event they feel they are most likely to do well in (the GM should use the mechanics below will help them decide). The process is in two parts, attracting the attention of a Kuboran competitor; and competing with them.

Kuboran Contender

Experienced competitor

Convinced of Kuboran superiority

+4 the Contest skill

+3 the principal Supporting skill

+2 the secondary Supporting skill if present

+1 Rapport (for the acceptance speech)

Contest Weapon (if required); Knife/Club:0

Cloth:0

0 1 1 1 1 or **0 1 1** for storyteller

Getting a contender's attention: Overcome +2 with Contacts modified by any advantages (suggested below) that the PC can create to draw attention to themselves.

Having a PC with strong social skills spend the days praising their ability publicly, and creating relevant advantages, would also help.

The Contest itself: The GM should allow the PC to use any reasonable opportunity to create some advantages that can improve their chances or ruin those of their opponent once the competition starts. The Kuboran opponent will almost always use **Intimidate** to create and exploit the advantage **Kubora Always Win!** before the contest starts. The warrior may also use **Intimidate** or **Rapport** during the contest to distract the PC with threats or banter, or **Empathy** to seek out his weaknesses.

There are other, event specific, advantages the Kubora will seek to create detailed below:

Short Foot Race (Day 3)

The PC can get a competitors attention by being seen running 'just for fun', but displaying pace using **Athletics** to create an advantage such as **Fleet of foot**.

The competition is an **Athletics Contest** (see Fate Core) but the Kuboran will use **Strength** (to barge the PC during the sprint) to create advantages.

Wrestling (Day 3)

The PC can get a competitors attention by goading the various wild beasts collected for trade and, even, wrestling a bear, to create **Will Fight Anything Alive**.

The competition is a **Fight Contest** (see Fate Core) but the Kuboran will use **Strength** (to overbear them during the bout) to create advantages.

Long Foot Race (Day 4)

The PC can get a competitors attention by running everywhere, but this time displaying endurance rather than pace create an advantage such as **Can Run All Day**.

The competition is an **Endurance Contest** (see Fate Core) but the Kuboran will use **Survival** (to reflect his knowledge of the course to the Shaws and back to pick the best route and avoid any pit-falls)

Weightlifting (Day 4)

The PC can get a competitors attention by goading the various wild beasts collected for trade and, even, wrestling a bear, to create **Will Fight Anything Alive**.

The competition is a **Strength Contest** but the warrior will use **Endurance** (to set an extreme distance to carry the weight 'to make it more interesting'; the weightlifting is only really important as an eliminator for the later Stone Carry).

Javelin (Day 5)

The relationship that the PCs have with the Asawne and Nolgind Kubora should present them with opportunities to be

seen competing with them 'for fun' and gaining the advantage *Wondrous Eye for a Target*.

The competition is a **Missile Contest** but the warrior will use **Strength** (to set an extreme distance for the target 'to make it more interesting'.

Storytelling (Evenings of Day 5 - 9)

Again, time around the Asawne &/or Nolgind fires will offer a chance to use **Rapport** to create an advantage such as **Powerful Storyteller**.

The competition is a **Rapport Contest** but a Kuboran contender will use **Athletics (Dance)**, **Craft (Music)** and **Scholar (Skill in Old Jarinese)** to create advantages around the story itself.

The Contests

All the would-be champions will have a skill pyramid peaking with the key skill of the relevant contest. Each contest will be managed as described in Fate Core and proceed in a series of exchanges:

1. At the start of every exchange each competitor can, if they wish, try to create an advantage before making their contest roll (below). If they succeed then they can use the aspect and its free invoke to support their contest roll. However, if they fail to create the advantage, then they forfeit the contest roll and the opponent automatically wins that exchange and gains a victory point (below). If they tie when creating the advantage then they fail to create it but don't forfeit the contest roll.
2. Each competitor makes one skill roll (unless it is forfeit, above) to determine how well they do in that stage of the contest. The winner is the competitor with the highest final score and gains 1 victory point (2 if they exceed the opposition by 3+), and describe how they take the lead.
3. In the case of a tie an unexpected twist occurs: the terrain or environment shifts somehow, the parameters of the contest change, or an unanticipated variable shows up and affects all the participants. Whatever the detail, the GM describes the new situation aspect that applies it to the contest until it's finished or removed by the actions of a competitor.
4. The first competitor to achieve three victory points wins the contest. The GM should keep a note of the margin of victories (3-0, 3-1 or 3-2).
5. Importantly, if a PC concedes the contest at any point they keep any margin of success they have already achieved. Hence if they got to 2-0 but conceded before the final exchange they are the loser but keep a +2 margin which could be important later. Conceding also gains them a Fate Point as with any concession.

After any Contest

Gomas will have told them that in Kuboran society winning and losing as sometimes less important than the grace with which it is accepted.

At the end of each competition there is therefore the PC uses their **Rapport** to overcome their opponent's **Rapport** to determine the good grace with which they each accept victory or defeat.

The shifts of PC success or failure are added to (or subtracted from) the margin of victory noted above, to determine if they leave the contest with an enhanced reputation in the form of *Honourable Loser*, which can be invoked for free later

Link to the next scene

Scene 3 can take place on any day after the 3rd, interrupting any Contests, which can continue after it.

SCENE 4: WENOWINA THE CRONE

Overview

Perhaps it is their performance in a contest against a Kuboran, or their enquiries about Halako or Kutz, that bring them to the attention of the small party of Nolgind that have travelled from the Afarezirs to Kustan. By tradition the small number of Nolgind travelling to the Moot share the campgrounds of the Vikoeiri.

The PCs are approached by Coric Far-seer who they met during *Root of all Evil*. He explains that Wenowina the Crone asks them to share food with her. If Gomas finds out then he asks if he can accompany them - a sign of great honour to a woman, given Gomas' high standing.



GM Aims

- To re-introduce Wenowina to the PCs and use the opportunity to remind them of what they discovered among the Afarezirs;
- To encourage them to trust her, as they trusted her in the past;

- To present the PCs with a difficult decision that invites them to look at the world from a Kuboran point of view.

PC Outcomes

They have an opportunity to gains significant recognition among the tribes.

Coric Far-seer

Appearance: Aged 20, height 6'1", medium frame, weight 175 lbs, handsome appearance, medium complexion, brown hair, green eyes

Hanuhn in waiting
Unbidden visions

- +4 Survival
- +3 Notice
- +3 Rapport
- +2 Melee
- +2 Missile
- +2 Empathy
- +1 Ritual (Kemlar)
- +1 Scholar (Kuboran folklore: +2 to Overcome using Scholar in this field) AND **Speaks Trade Ivinian** as well as **Old Jarinese**
- +1 Contacts (Nolgind: +2 to create and advantage when using Contacts among the Nolgind)
- +1 Athletics (Grace of the Cat: +2 to Athletics when climbing, or falling)

1-h Spear:2/1; Handaxe:1/2; Dagger1; Unarmed:0
Leather:1

0 1 2

Mild 1:

Serious 2:

Grievous 3:

Description of Events

When they reach the Nolgind tents, set apart from those of Vikoeiri, there are a number of women of various tribes paying court to the great old lady of the Afarezirs. Once Coric tells her that he has brought the PCs then she dismisses these supplicants and announces that she will see no one else today. She exchanges pleasantries with Gomas before asking him, the PCs, and Coric to share a sparse meal of dried fish with her. As befits her status as a woman she prepares everything for them but eats separately. Afterwards she asks them all to take a walk with her.

The PCs are now **Known by Wenowina the Crone** for the rest of the Moot. The GM should remember the subsidiary status of women in Kuboran society and might invoke this against the PCs if they encounter a group of

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headstrong young warriors to whom she is 'just another old woman'.

It has been nearly a generation since Wenowina journeyed to the Moot and the old woman looks even frailer than they last time the PCs saw her. The journey to Kustan would be a challenge for a much younger woman. She has, though, come for a very specific reason ...

Wenowina seeks a gift



When they are a little way off among the trees she pauses and sits on a tree stump. She has a favour to ask of the PCs; a final task to undertake a final gift to bestow on her. After a pause she says ... 'Kill me'.

She says it very simply but the PCs are likely to be at least confused, if not shocked! Then they may have questions.

She tells them that, when they took on the burden of the Heart of the Beast, she decided she could finally go to her rest, and spend eternity among the trees of the Great Forest as a handmaiden of Heneryne, wife of Kemlar the Guide. Unfortunately her body has refused to give up its hold on life!

Wenowina the Ancient Crone

Appearance: Very aged, height 5'2", light frame, weight 117 lbs, plain appearance, medium complexion, grey wispy hair, cloudy blue eyes

Protect the people

Insightful and cunning

Cursed with old age

+4 Scholar (Kuboran Folklore: +2 to Scholar on these subjects) **AND Speaks Harnic and Trade Ivinian** as well as **Old Jarinese** and (though few know it, she **Reads Lakise**)

+3 Will (Fears no spirit: +2 to create advantages in any kind of spirit combat)

+3 Rapport (Legendary storyteller: +2 when yelling stories around the camp fire)

+2 Intimidate

+2 Notice

+2 Empathy

+1 Ritual (Heneryne) (Herblore: Can use Ritual instead of Scholar to create an advantage using useful plants)

+1 Crafts (Nolgend cookery: +2 when preparing traditional dishes)

+1 Survival (Bounty of the islands: +2 to Overcome when seeking out food along the shore)

+1 Athletics (Tribal Dancing: +2 to Athletics when dancing)

Unarmed:0

Cloth:0

0 1 2

Mild **1**:

Serious **2**:

Grievous **3**:

She cannot, as a devout follower of Heneryne, in all her aspects, take her own life and, since every Crone is sacred to all Kubora, no tribesman can deliberately take it for her. She came to Kustan to find a southron to do this thing, but hearing that the PCs were at the Moot she is convinced that Kemlar has sent them to her again for this final purpose. Will one of them grant her this gift?

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Gomas and Coric can advise them that if undertaken by the right person (chosen by Wenowina) in the right conditions (publicly so there is no risk of accusations of murder), then this could be an honourable thing to do.

Combined with how they deal with any Contests this might strengthen their case when the time comes to seek a favour from their Rathiri hosts. I might provide final proof of their understanding of, and respect for, Kuboran traditions.

If they discuss what they want from the Rathiri with Wenowina then she nods sagely and agrees that killing her could help. It would need to be done at the right time and in the right place, but, yes, it could help them.

She will give some thought to place but believes the right time will be at the very end of the Moot so that as many Kubora as possible see the PCs do what she has asked, increasing the influence it will have with the Rathiri.

It is common knowledge that most of the traders will have left on the 7th or 8th day to ensure they are far from Kustan before the Moot ends. Even the most audacious merchants will depart early on the 9th day. By staying to the very end the PCs risk making their journey south more hazardous. However, being **Honoured by the Asawne** and **Known by Wenowina the Crone** will be helpful protection. If they also obtained a favour from the Rathiri then they might be even safer. If they stay then they could even travel some of the way south with Gomas and his people.

Link to the next scene

The PCs should be encouraged to continue their effort to gain status and reputation among the tribes be remaining at the moot until the final day. To reduce the risk that they find themselves in difficulties Gomas ensures they are able to remain at the Asawne campground until after dark and then sends a warrior or two to guide them back to the southron camp.

Scene 5 begins late in the afternoon of the 10th day of the Moot, when they are probably the last southrons left at Kustan.

SCENE 5: THE HUNT FEAST

Overview

This Scene assumes that one of the PCs has agreed to end Wenowina's life. They are offered the opportunity to seek a favour from the Rathiri, and Wenowina displays her wisdom (and cunning).

GM Aims

- To ensure the PCs don't ruin the chance to get the favour they need and that Gomas and Wenowina are trying to deliver for them.

PC Outcomes

They have an even better opportunity than they could have hoped for.

Description of Events

The PCs' appearance in the middle of the throng of Kubora gathering at the centre of Kus on the last day of the moot will cause an initial stir; they are the only southrons left at Kustan. However, their reputation as **Honoured by the Asawne** and **Known to Wenowina the Crone** will make them subjects of curiosity rather than a threat to be met with force.

Gomas makes sure they, and Coric Far-seer, stay close to him and his bodyguards and they take their places around the central firepit along with the other tribal leaders. Wenowina sits discretely behind Coric just as the other Crones sit behind their tribal representatives.

When the various tribal groupings are settled around the fire pits dug in preparation the Rathiri Hanuhn is announced by the sounding of Wisent horns. He leads a procession of the warriors who gained particular honour during the Hunt. They carry some of the artifacts accumulated by the Rathiri including a threadbare robe said to have belonged to Heneryne, the helmet of the last Corani copmmmander of Caer Kustan, and the distinctive blades captured from the Warriors of Mameka; their cherry red amber hilt stones seem to emit as much as reflect the lights of the fires.

After the cheering of these trophies, and of the bravest participant in the Feast Hunt has, died down the featsbegin. Once the Kubora have sated their hunger the storytellers take centre stage. As dusk deepens the competition come to a climax and the winner makes the speech he hopes will ensure he is remembered for generations to come.

It is after this, before the clans and tribes become too inebriated, that Gomas steps into the light of the central fire pit and shouts for quiet before addressing the Rathiri Hanuhn: *'an unworthy woman seeks permission to speak among hunters'*.



The tribes gather for the hunt feast

This is unusual but the Rathiri Hanuhn, after a brief consultation nods his permission and Wenowina hobbles forward. Gomas returns to his palce from where he can provide a translation for those that don't speak Old Jarinese.

Wenowina embarks on a brief summary of her life of service to the Sholen and their Nolgind brothers and sisters before telling the tales of Falar the Tall and the Beast of Blood (see *Afarezirs: Root of all Evil*). She links them to the Heart of the Beast and the bravery and tragedy of the Hafen.

Finally she tells a story no one has heard before: *'The Tale of the Strangers'*.

Her delivery is spellbinding and the winner of the story-telling competition bitterly realises that it is her story, not his, that will be remembered from this night.

She tells the story of the PCs' time among the Afarezirs from her point of view, ending with the handing over of the Heart of the Beast and a simple statement that her trust in the heroes that have visited the underworld to save her people is complete.

Speakers of Old Jarinese, or those listening to Gomas' whispered translation, will realise that the way she is telling the story she is allowing the crowd to think the heroes are Kubora of another tribe. There are calls from the crowd demanding to know *'who are these heroes of the People'*.

She ends saying that, with the departure of the strangers and the Heart of the Beast, her work is over and it is time the Sholen found another Crone. It is time for her

to lay down her burden and begin her walk into the Great Forest of the Kuboran afterlife where she will beg to serve their Guide, Kemlar.

Her dignity and the pathos of her delivery draws quiet weeping from some of the otherwise silent audience. In the dark the PCs will be right to sense that nearly every Kubora who has attended the Moot is crowding closer to hear her, and that her story is being whispered to those who are not close enough to hear it first-hand.

Allowing a moment for the impact of her decision to sink in she then goes on to crave a favour from the wise Rathiri, keepers of Kemlar's Barrow and the Shawls of kustan, and of the assembled Hanuhn and Druhn of the People.

'I beg you to grant me the favour of deciding when and where my life should end, and the manner of its ending.'

Her request is received with shouts of approval from the crowd. The Rathiri Hanuhn and Druhn consult briefly with the assembled leaders but it is clear that to refuse her would risk turning the crowd against them. The Rathiri Hanuhn stands and approaches Wenowina, who waits with her head bowed.

'Your service to Heneryne is well known and it is proper that you should lay down your burden. But you may not take your own life as it would offend Heneryne, and none here will despoil their blade with the murder of a Crone. How will you choose the time or place or manner of your death? Has your decision been guided by Heneryne?'

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'Yes,' she replies, *'I believe Heneryne has chosen every step I have taken to this decision. Will you allow me to choose the time, place and manner of my death?'*

'Yes', comes the reply, *'we are agreed that you may choose, but'* sarcastically, *'do not expect those assembled to wait until Kemlar sends a bear to do the deed.'*

There is some laughter but Wenowina silences it with a strong voice that belies her frailty.

'Then I choose the coming dawn as the time of my death and I choose Kustan Siolen as the place of, my death. It is where the tears of Heneryne brought forth the first of the Shawls and it is a fitting place for me to follow Kemlar's final guidance. Is it agreed that I may choose the manner of my death?' her strong voice demanding a clear answer.

It comes, dismissively, *'Yes, it is agreed'*. The Rathiri Hanuhn perhaps thinks that, like other old people who are a burden to their clan, she will just wander off among the stones until a wild beast or starvation kills her. He begins to turn away but she isn't finished ...

'Then I will tell those assembled what Kemlar has chosen for me', which is enough to get everyone's attention back.

'Kemlar brought the Strangers to the Sholen and they took on my burden. He has brought them here to Kustan to end my journey through life and begin my walk inot the Forest'.

There is confusion. *'How can such peerless heroes risk the anger of Heneryne but taking your life?'* comes a shout.

'Such is the bravery of those that that entered the underworld and shouldered the burden of the Heart of the Beast that they will face Heneryne's ire to send me on my way'.

'Are they present here', demands the Rathiri Hanuhn, clearly surprised that such feats have not been the subject of a story told that day, or common knowledge among the tribe from which the heroes come.

'Yes. And I call them into the light now ...' She gestures the PCs forward to general gasps of amazement and not a few cries of anger at this bad joke!

It is Gomas who steps forward and calms the crowd shouting over them that he knows these southrons and gave them tokens to show the honour the Asawne hold for them. He is not surprised that Wenowina also found them worthy of praise and trusted them with the burden of the Heart of the Beast, for it was *'they that sought to bring rest to the unsleeping god beneath the Hand of Crador. Was that not a story told around these fires a year ago?'*

He then asks one of the PCs to speak, *whispering 'Tell them why they should trust you to enter the sacred stones'*.

One of the PCs must take on the role of orator; it need not be the one who has agreed to kill Wenowina. Gomas will translate if necessary.

The PC must use **Rapport** to overcome the +4 passive resistance of the crowd, and like a Contest, the PC must achieve 3 victory points before the audience does!

1. At the start of every exchange the PC can, if they wish, use an existing advantage, or try to create a new one, before making their contest roll (below). They can spend Fate Points to invoke **Honoured by the Asawne** and **Known to Wenowina the Crone**, and any **Good Loser** aspects waiting to be invoked from their contests.
2. However, if they fail to create a new advantage, then they forfeit their overcome roll and the crowd automatically wins the exchange and gains a victory point (below). If they tie when creating the advantage then they fail to create it but don't forfeit the contest roll.
3. The PC then makes a **Rapport** roll to Overcome +4 (unless it is forfeit, above).
4. If the PC succeeds in the Overcome they gain 1 victory point (or 2 if they **Succeed with Style**) and describe how they take the lead. If they lose the crowd gains a victory point (or 2 if the PC failed by more than 3).
5. In the case of a tie no victory points are awarded but the crowd gains an advantage such as **Shouted Down**, which the GM can invoke for free during a subsequent exchange.
6. The first to achieve three victories wins the contest.

If the PC wins then permission is granted. If they lose then they are still given permission but it is grudging (see the next Scene for consequences of gaining grudging permission)

Link to the next scene

Wenowina announces that she will set out for the Shawls immediately and the PCs will be expected to accompany her. Gomas, his bodyguards, and Coric and the Nolgind will go too. The Rathiri insist on a Zurnir guard but soon word has spread and dozens, perhaps hundreds of Kubora follow to be joined by even more during the night.

The walk to the Shawls is slow and painful for Wenowina and the PCs have to support her. However a great bear of a man emerges from the dark and seeks the honour of carrying her. It is Ustar the half Ogre, winner of the Stone Carry, and he carries her with surprising gentleness the rest of the way.

Gomas leads them back along the trail that brought them to Kustan and to the centre of the valley where he, Coric, the Nolgind and some Asawne set up a simple camp. All around other impromptu camp fires are lit by crowds of Kubora determined not to miss this remarkable event.

SCENE 6: A LEGEND DIES

Overview

Before dawn on the 25th of Larane the valley of the Shawls is alive with Kubora breaking their fast with whatever they carried from Kustan overnight.

Scene Aspect(s)

A place of wonder is in play once the PCs reach the Shawls with Wenowina.

GM Aims

- To build the tension as the PC carry out an act they hope will not cost them dear;
- To demonstrate Wenowina's wisdom and cunning in bringing them to a place they need to see even as she contemplates her death;
- To make them pay for mistakes they may have made early while remembering to 'fail forwards' if things seem to be going wrong. Ryler's intervention can at least buy them half a day before any pursuit begins.

PC Outcomes

They have a chance to enter Kuboran folklore and to further their mission by gaining sight of the remains of the mosaic panels looted from the ruined temple of Khamar.

Description of Events

From among the crowd of tribal leaders the Rathiri Hanuhn emerges and approaches Wenowina, impatient to get this unfortunate event over with. He seems to think that Wenowina can be killed on the spot, but she reminds

him, politely, that she was granted the favour of deciding where her life would end.

She seems to look about her and contemplate this before turning and pointing up the southern slope to a complex of banks. *'The centre of the Maze is where I will enter the afterlife'*, she declares.

She is helped by Gomas, the Nolgind and the PCs to make her way up into the Maze and to the mound at its centre. From there she can be seen by the mass of Kubora below and she sits on the fallen stone facing north. The PCs who have accompanied her will immediately see that the space between the stones is a patchwork of flagstones, some of which are richly decorated by mosaics in the Corani style ... a style reminiscent of the remnants they have seen in the Khamari Temple!

While Wenowina's life is brought to an end by one of their number the others can discretely examine the mosaics and try to make sense of them.

The PC who is going to kill Wenowina ... should make an Overcome +2 roll using either Fight or Melee to dispatch her cleanly and with the style the Kubora expect.

Failure: succeed but replace **Known to Wenowina the Crone** with **Southron Murderer of the Crone** (with a free invoke to the GM)

Tie: as above but without the free invoke

Success: Wenowina passes quietly and with dignity into the afterlife

Success with Style: succeed and replace **Known to Wenowina the Crone** with **Honoured Killer of the Crone** (with a free invoke).



The stone circle at the centre of the Maze

The PC who is going to kill Wenowina ... should make an Overcome +2 roll using either Fight or Melee to kill her cleanly and with the style the Kubora expect.

Failure: succeed but replace **Known to Wenowina the Crone** with **Southron Murderer of the Crone** (with a free invoke to the GM)

Tie: as above but without the free invoke

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Success: Wenowina passes quietly and with dignity into the after-life

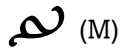
The PCs able to examine the mosaic ... will be able to put together a narrative based on the pieces of the mosaic despite the fact that it is far from complete and portions of it are out of place relative to the rest:

- The central motif shows Agrik and Larani in combat above a forest, where a cairn of stones stands in the centre of four viciously clawed fingers.

Scholar: +2 Overcome to date the mosaic as from the high Corani period of Sylud the Scholar

There are 4 panels that may once have surrounded the central motif:

1. A mighty warrior wearing a crown leads an army towards the cairn. He is identified only by an initial on his shield:



Scholar: +2 Overcome: this is probably the Emperor Mejenes the Great.

2. The warrior crosses a great river on a raft and barbarians kneel to him, he is sheathed in flame.

Scholar: +2 Overcome: the river is probably the Chetul and the kneeling figure the Urdu, while the flame is not unexpected given the mosaic's Agrikan origins.

3. The warrior leads the army through a forest to enter a fortress on a rocky outcrop overlooking the first of two branches of another river.

Scholar: +2 Overcome: the river is probably the Pemetta or one of its major tributaries, such as the Suthen or Uthel, and the fortress is probably Mejetus.

4. The warrior crosses a bridge across the river and is ambushed by a band of savages who wound his left arm.

Scholar: +2 Overcome: the barbarians are not Urdu, who are depicted differently, but probably Equani who live beyond the Pemetta.

Given what the PCs know of the size of the mosaic from the temple they can infer that there are probably another 4 panels that are either missing or destroyed beyond interpretation. They have part of the picture that Kutz sought but not all of it.

Notice: +3 Overcome: scratched in the moss covered surface of a worn flagstone, is a 'K'.

If the PCs only gained grudging agreement (or if the GM thinks they need a work out) then ... at the point Wenowina dies a group of Kubora charge out of the scrub and trees beside the Maze and attack the PCs and their companions. The PCs are *Higher* and Gomas, Coric and the other Nolgind will take their side.

Link to the next scene

When either half the attackers are out of the fight, or half the PCs have been forced to concede, a tall Kuboran and a bodyguard will intervene to enforce an end to the fight. Ryler the Southron may have planned to announce an attack on Rethem last night, but events have overshadowed whatever he might have said. He wants to stop any possibility of blood feuds further fragmenting the Kuboran tribes so that, perhaps next year, he can call them to arms.

Gomas, or Ryler if Gomas has been incapacitated, will pull Wenowina's killer to one side and tell them in no uncertain terms to get away now before things take any more unexpected turns. He will try to buy them a half-day, perhaps a day, before any pursuit starts, if that is what these hotheads demand.

Whether or not there is a chase is up to the GM. Some PC groups will relish the opportunity to come to grips with a small group of Kuboran hunters seeking to make a name for themselves (use the descriptions above for the warriors). Others may just need the threat of pursuit to speed them on their way, and others still will prefer simply to skip quickly to the next Act in pursuit of their mission. The GM will now their group best and how to link to that Act.

Traders travelling from Kustan to the Beast Fair usually take 13-15 days to reach Emesa. The return journey is invariably slower without Kuboran guides. Additionally, carts are more heavily laden with wild beasts and bulky pelts in place of the often light and portable trade goods that they carried north. It is also not unknown for traders leaving early to lay misleading trails to confuse those departing later and so gain an advantage in the market place at the Fair.

Angry Kuboran Warrior (1-2 per PC)

Expert hunter

Driven by spiritual fervour

+3 Melee

+2 Endurance

+1 Strength (+1 Damage)

1h-Spear:2/1; Handaxe:1/1

Leather & Round Shield:1+2

0 1 1 1

ACT III: RETURNING SOUTH

Overview

The PCs make as swift a journey south as possible so they can report what they have found to the Gurim in Golotha. However, events will interrupt them and a gift from their patron will send them further in their pursuit of Kutz.

The *Scarlet Ribbon* article provides information for the return journey.

Scene Aspect(s)

There is no single Scene Aspect that applies throughout this Act.

SCENE 1: EMESA'S BEAST FAIR

Overview

The Beast Fair provides an opportunity to fall in with traders heading south to Golotha and travel in greater safety, if a little slower. It also offers an opportunity to meet the woman Halako the trapper mentioned: Lorn/Morn/Dorn.

Scene Aspect(s)

People everywhere is in play once the PCs arrive at the Beast Fair.

GM Aims

- To communicate the bustle and hustle of the Beast Fair;
- To introduce Lorn of Aeale and portray her as an earnest young woman with knowledge she will offer in return for a gift of something she doesn't know.

PC Outcomes

They have a chance to enter Kub0ran folklore and to further their mission by gaining sight of the remains of the mosaic panels looted from the ruined temple of Khamar in Kustan.

Days 1-4 of the Fair (10–13 Agrazhar): The Craft Bazaar.

Craftsmen who failed to find a new master at Bedenes during the Festival of the Pillars, or who lost their place to some new arrival, come to the Fair in hope of finding new employment. Beast hunters of sufficient skill to capture animals with minimal injury can command good wages. Common labourers are always in demand for a trip to Golotha that is often one-way.

Days 5-6 of the Fair (12–13 Agrazhar): The Beast Auction.

The Akarata of the Warriors of Mameka claims the right of first refusal on every beast offered for sale at the Fair. He, or more often his steward, Granek, selects a handful of creature that he expects to fetch the best prices and pays a "fair price" for them. At noon on the 13th, the Akarata's beasts are auctioned to the highest bidder, often selling for five or six times what Granek paid for them. Those who failed in the beast auction can spend their silver on slaves; by tradition the slave auction follows that of the beasts.

Day 7 of the Fair (14 Agrazhar): Judgment Day

While trading continues on Emesa Common, the Akarata's Court is held in the hall of the Mamekan Chapter House. Meketa Bron Zarnist has deputised for the Akarata for a number of years and gives judgement on capital crimes and those deemed too important for consideration by other officers of the Order at local Moots. Any of the accused is entitled to seek Agrik's judgement through a trial by combat. However, no one can remember the last time anyone won their freedom against one of the champions nominated by the Akarata from among his Guard. Those accused who simply throw themselves on the mercy of the court rarely find it. Those sentenced to death are taken in chains to Bedenes, where they grace the fire-iron at the Akarata's pleasure.

Meanwhile traders prepare for the journey south to Dasen, Tormau, Shostim, and finally Golotha.

Day 8 of the fair (15 Agrazhar): Blessing and Procession

At dawn the Apterterahn pronounces a blessing over the assembled travellers. The Akarata sends his annual tribute to the Senesharil in Golotha in the custody of his Master of Silence, accompanied by the newly ordained priests and a company of seasoned men-at-arms. Additional security is guaranteed by the traders who usually retain any guards who escorted them north.

Discretionary Encounters

There are plenty of opportunities for the GM to add encounters while the PCs are at the Beast Fair:

- a wild beast escapes and must be captured safely;
- a brawl breaks out and the PCs are drawn into it;
- an encounter with the Warriors of Mameka can always be ... tricky to navigate (see *Bedenes*)
 - The key encounter, though, is with the scribe Lorn of Aeale, visiting Emesa from Bedenes during the Beast Fair.

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Lorn of Aeale

If the PCs make enquiries about the woman Halako described to them then they will be directed to Emesa's market place where an itinerant scribe is making most of her annual income by copying trade documents for largely illiterate traders, and the entirely illiterate half-Kuboran wild men who sometimes emerge from the forest to sell their bear, beaver and sable pelts. In the latter case she seems as eager to ask them questions as to complete their paperwork.

As the light fails each evening the demand for her services slackens she can be found among the traders seeking out stories about the Kubora and the Peran wilderness.

If the PCs approach her with questions she will freely admit that she met someone who was full of questions about Kustan and Peran: a fat scholar with a red brooch. She will only tell them anything else if they have new information to trade for her answers.

The GM should resolve this as a Scholar Contest in which the PCs try to convince Lorn that they know something she doesn't and in return for which she will answer their questions.

The best scholar among the PCs is the obvious candidate for this Contest and gains +1 for any other PC with Scholar who pitches in to support them in convincing Lorn that she can learn from them.

They could also pay a Fate Points to invoke their **Honoured Killer (or Murderer) of Wenowina** to display their knowledge of Kuboran ritual death ceremonies and **Honoured by the Asawne** if they refer to the tokens they carry.

PC social skills can also generate advantages before or during the competition to support their case. The first to three victories wins.

Lorn of Aeale, the Scribe

Agent of Rowanti Adel of Mertin
Insatiable curiosity about Peran
Betrayed by her accent

+3 Scholar (Peran folklore: +2 when using scholar in this field of study) **AND (Languages:** **Speaks Old Jarinese** as well as **Harnic**, and **Reads Lakise**)

+2 Crafts (Lexigraphy: +2 when using Crafts in this field)

+1 Deceive

Unarmed:0

Cloth:0

0 1 1

The PCs will not know that they have a unique piece of information. No southron has ever convincingly claimed to have seen the remnants of the Kustan mosaic in its current location among the monuments of Kustan Siolen.

If, during the competition the PCs mention this ...

Lorn will automatically concede allowing the PCs to describe the form of her concession. Presumably they will ensure that the terms of the concession cost her everything she said to Kutz and he said to her.

If Lorn wins the Contest ... she will only tell them that the scholar was full of questions about the ruins at Kustan and the mosaic within. She will add that he had some fascinating ideas on the fate of spirits that pass from Kethira and fall out of favour with the gods they worshipped during life. She will add that Corani-era legends mention "the fingers that fell" and this, combined with what she has learned of the Warriors of Mameka, suggests that the Agrikans believe there is something important in the forests of Peran that relates to Agrik's claws.

If Lorn loses (or they fully describe the mosaic they have seen) ... she will share everything she told him.

The Corani records Lorn has researched say there was a mosaic at Caer Kustan's temple showing something of importance to the Order of Khamar. The various accounts are tantalising but do not describe the mosaic in any detail.

The visitors to the Moot she has interviewed have described the temple ruins and mentioned fragments of mosaic without giving her any of the detail she craves. She doesn't know that the descriptions she has been given are of the decorative surround to the mosaic, rather than the panels themselves. No one has thought to mention that the Kubora took the panels to Siolen Kustan after Caer Kustan fell.

To her knowledge the PCs are the only southrons ever to have seen it in its current location. She will, therefore, listen avidly to the PCs description of what they have seen. She will provide them with the additional scholarly interpretations of the panels described in in the previous scene if they have not already worked them out.

This is information she could not share with Kutz as he did not share whether or not he had seen the mosaic among the Shawls.

Finally, she will add that she told the scholar that a 'fellow scribe' in the Thardic Republic is seeking permission to visit the Agrikan temple at Imrium, which is being argued over by the Order of Herpan and the Order of Eight Demons. It is claimed that the temple was founded by the Order of the Khamar; the only example other than the one sacked at Kustan. It is said to have a mosaic floor and there is a possibility that it duplicates the mosaic at Caer Kustan.

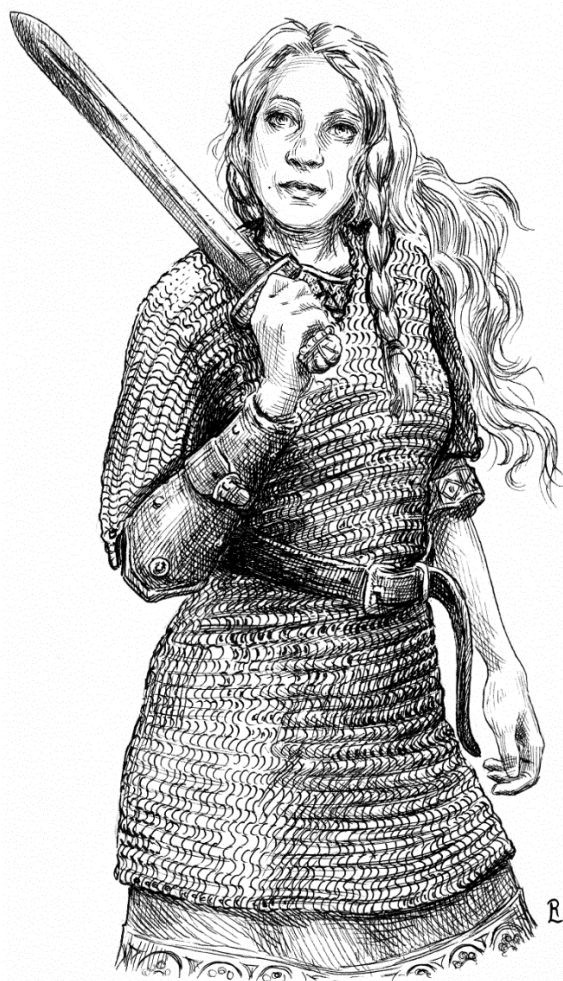
If questioned what knowledge the fat scholar shared with her in return for what she told him she will look momentarily confused. Now that she thinks about it she can remember nothing of particular import he said other than his observations on the fate of souls in the afterlife.

Link to the next scene

They now have additional information to share with the Gurim so should depart for Golotha. They can travel with the heavily armed caravan and it Mamekan escorts or seek to make swifter progress alone. If the latter then the GM should feel free to offer them an encounter with some brigands keen to harvest what looks like easy pickings compared to the caravan.

If they are inclined to simply head to Imrium then the safest and quickest route is probably via Golotha and a barge heading east along the River Thard to Techen, and from there to Geshte in the Thardic Republic. It is a relatively short distance from there to Imrium.

Either way, before they leave the route to Golotha go to Scene 2.



SCENE 2: THE GURIM'S GIFT

Overview

The PCs encounter Vigdis Grimkall. Depending on how *Root of all Evil* played out she could be anything from an 'Ivinian they sailed with', to a 'dangerous Amorvrin agent of the Gurim', via a 'trusted companion' they saw killed or thought to be dead. Whatever their last memory of her, she meets them on behalf of the Gurim from whom she brings a gift.

Scene Aspect(s)

Strange horror is in place once the PCs meet Vigdis Grimkall.

GM Aims

- To re-introduce Vigdis Grimkall and to manage that encounter in a way that fits with their last meeting;
- To ensure that they quickly realise (or are quickly appraised of the fact) that she is also on a mission for the Gurim
-

Vigdis Grimkall, Amorvrus

Aged 27, height 5'7", medium frame, weight 149 lbs, the epitome of northern beauty: fair complexion, blonde hair, blue eyes

Vessel of the Shadow

Beautiful agent of the Gurim

+3 Athletics

+2 Fight (Touched by Bukrai: if any Physical Stress is inflicted on the target, add a point of Mental Stress)

+2 Contacts

+1 Crafts (Seamanship: +2 when using Crafts in this context)

+1 Scholar (Speaks Harnic and Jarinese as well as Ivinian/Trade Ivinian)

+1 Ritual (Morgath)

Short Sword:1; Dagger:1; Unarmed:0

Chain & Round Shield:3+1

0 1 2

Mild **1**:

Serious **2**:

Grievous **3**:

PC Outcomes

They understand the Gurim has not finished with them but has sent them a grisly gift to aid them.

Vigdis Grimkal

Whether the PCs are travelling with the caravan or alone, the Scene is most atmospheric if Vigdis simply appears at their camp fire. The GM will, though, want to make sure that the handover, and demonstration, of the gift takes place away from prying eyes (and ears).

Depending on how the GM used her in *Afarezirs: Root of all Evil* the PCs may be surprised, shocked or amazed to see her again. If she was killed but the body lost then they may still not know she is Amorvrin and be amazed at her apparent resurrection.

If relations between her and the PCs were poor by the end of that adventure, then she will warn them that she is now under the Gurim's protection and has a gift from him. In retrain for the gift they are to tell her everything they have learned so far, so she can report back on their behalf. If the PCs are inclined to disbelieve that she is sent by the Gurim his gift should convince them.

The PCs can tell her the truth about their investigation or use Deceive to overcome her +2 Empathy to convince her that they have told her the truth.

Whatever they tell her she will truthfully recount his orders to them:

My Master says that unless you have the creature that was Kutz in custody, or its body, you are to continue your search. Find it and kill it, and your debt will be paid. Know that my Master will know if you lie and the creature lives.

Vigdis knows nothing more. The Gurim has issued instructions and she is following them. His word is law and the PCs would be well advised to treat it as such if they do not want to be pursued themselves.

She will then take them somewhere where they will not be overheard or observed (a copse of trees on the settlement where the caravan has camped, or a private tavern room in Golotha) and hand over the gift the Gurim has sent them.

The Gurim's Gift

Vigdis unwraps a simple but well-made wooden box a couple of hand spans across in each of height, width and depth. It is bound with brass and its top has stout steel hinges and is secured by an expensive lock. Before handing over the heavy, ornate key she has been instructed to demonstrate the use of the gift.

She unlocks the box and opens it. The inside is padded to protect the obviously valuable contents of a velvet bag Vigdis lifts out. From the look of the bag it contains a roughly oval object weighing several pounds.

Reaching into the bag Vigdis takes a firm grip on the contents and lets the bag drop to reveal ... the severed head of the apprentice scholar, Eilith of Zarainsen. She playfully dangles the grisly gift by its long brunette locks and it spins grotesquely.

The head is in excellent condition; the Gurim must have had it preserved, though it does not smell of preservative any more than of decay. A thick band of linen is wound around the head to stop the lower jaw lolling open.

Vigdis holds out the head for the PCs to inspect: *Recognise her? My master thought this an apt punishment.*

As soon as one of them does so, or if they examines it closely while she holds it, the eyelids spring open and the eyes begin to swivel manically from side to side as if looking for something, while the nostrils flare as if seeking some scent.

Each PC should take a **+3 Horror test** (see *Fate of Harn*).

Vigdis laughs out loud at any discomposure the PCs experience and, still laughing, pulls the linen band free. The mouth does not loll open; instead the jaw muscles can clearly be seen working and the teeth may even be heard grinding.

Vigdis slowly rotates on the spot taking in the West, then the South, then the East, at which point the severed head screams! The GM may feel the need to apply a second Horror Test!

Vigdis silences it by turning to the West again, and binding up the jaw.

She explains what she has been told: *The head can 'smell' the creature you're seeking and screams when it catches his 'scent'. It will lead you to the creature so you can kill it.*

Her mission complete Vigdis bids them farewell and warns them to *keep the head secret, and keep it safe. If you are caught with it then expect only impalement, the Morgathian Church is 'misunderstood' in many places.*

She then departs to report back to the Gurim.

The Head of Eilith Zarainsen

The PCs are very unlikely to be able to work out how the Gurim has created his grisly gift, but the GM should know the following to help them interpret enquiries. It is important that they actively restrict what the PCs can find out at this stage if a future Scene is not to lose impact.

- The Gurim has imbued the head of the apprentice scholar with enough of the Shadow of Bukrai to preserve it as a gulmorvrin is preserved. This it will not rot.
- The Shadow compels the head to continue with the task it has been given by the Gurim: find the creature hiding within Coln of Kutz.
- Though its flaring nostrils and swivelling eyes give the impression that Eilith's head is looking for physical traces of Kutz, these are merely physical manifestations of the desperate need the Gurim has implanted to pick up the spiritual trail the creature has left. The Gurim recognised the connection between the Bitter

Fallen within Coln of Kutz and the young woman who had conducted the ritual that set it free.

- When the creature withdrew its influence from Eilith, and the other apprentices, so deep had the connection become that it inadvertently took a fragment of her soul with it. It is that lost fragment that the head senses apparently irrespective of distance.

Link to the next scene

The GM should be careful not to treat the head like a precise direction finder or tracking device. It gives a general direction but it cannot be used to draw a straight line from their current location to Kutz. It can't though, narrow down a direction of travel. It is clear from the head's reaction that Kutz is currently somewhere to their East.

That should be enough to reinforce any decision to go to Imrium and the temple mosaic that might be able to fill in some gaps in their understanding, and the knowledge the Fallen is seeking.

As long as the GM does not allow the PCs to be side-tracked or seriously hurt the head and its screaming can provide several possible encounters on the road or river:

- A hunter charges onto the trail in search of the woman he heard screaming in distress: what have you done with her, sirs?
- A dockside tavern becomes the centre for a drunken search for unquiet spirits when the head's wailing is overheard.
- The box presents an attractive target for thieves. Can the PCs retrieve it before the thieves pick the complex lock?

Whether the PCs travel overland or along the Thard, Scene 3 is best triggered when they have crossed into the Thardic Republic, perhaps on the road between Gesthei and Imrium.

SCENE 3: PEONIAN HOLY GROUND

Overview

The PCs discover there is more to the head of Eilith of Zarainsen than they initially believed and come to understand the true tragedy of what has befallen Eilith.

Aspect(s)

A place of peace is in play while the PCs are near the ruined shrine.

GM Aims

- To establish a routine for the use of the head, and how secretive they keep it;
- To lead the PCs to see the head as a mindless thing; the girl's intelligence and personality having been lost to the Shadow.
- To use that information to trigger this Scene when the PCs are alone and in the wilderness or at a secluded campsite.

PC Outcomes

Having begun to take the head for granted, using it every few days to ensure that they are headed in approximately the right direction, they discover that they may have something to gain by treating the Head differently.

Description of Events

Roadside Peonian shrines are so common in the Thardic Republic that the PCs shouldn't be told about the one they stop or camp beside. It is the nearby source of clean water that attracts them.

If the Scene has to be triggered while they are still in Rethem then the shrine is overgrown and crumbling almost beyond recognition; just a few rough stones or a cairn. All that distinguishes this shrine from the hundreds that were destroyed is that it was not also desecrated. It remains Peonian holy ground.

Either way it is just the sort of place Vigdis would have avoided by instinct when the head was in her possession so she, and presumably the Gurim, will not know about the effect the PCs now notice.

When they take out the head to check their general direction of travel it does not scream. The eyes do not swivel they only stare. The manic flaring of the nostrils has also stopped. The head appears to have 'stopped working'.

By experimentation the PCs can discover that if they take a few paces in any direction then the head shows signs of agitation: the brow furrows, the jaws work, but its 'normal' manic behaviour still doesn't occur and it does not scream when facing East (or any other compass point).

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Investigate, +2 Overcome: the head looks calmest when close to the stones of the shrine, which is Peonian.

Notice, +2 Overcome: there is a crude “K” scratched into one of the stones of the shrine; Kutz passed this way.

When a PC asks a rhetorical question such as ‘why isn’t it working’ the PC holding the head should make a +2 Horror Test or drop it as the head wearily announcing: *I don’t know why it’s not f****ing working!*

This is the first time that the head has shown any sign of intelligence; when it does the PCs should be shocked and horrified. By now they will have begun to treat the head as a thing, nothing more than a tool. The girl’s voice should shock them into remembering that she was once as vibrant and alive as they are. No matter what they think she may have done, or her connection to the Butcher murders, this sudden announcement of her humanity should give them pause.

If she was dropped in the mud she will demand that they pick her out of the mud and ... *clean this shit from my eyes you miserable son of bitch; my cousin will have you skinned alive!*

If the PCs leave the head in the mud and run for it ... they will lose a potentially helpful guide. From then on they will have to use their own tracking skills and the periodic scratched ‘K’ to stay on Kutz’ trail. They should also be reminded that the Gurim may not be happy if he finds out that they have thrown away his gift. Worst still someone else may find it and come looking for ‘the evil scum’ who dropped it!

If they do as she asks and treat her with even a modicum of respect ... they will get polite thanks; and the chance to question her. The GM can draw her answers from the following account of her past.

Eilith’s Head

Find the Bitter fallen

Angry at her loss; MONSTROUS(+3)!

+3 Will (Scent of her betrayer: +2 to find signs of the Bitter Fallen’s spiritual finger print)

+2 Scholar

+1 Intimidate

No attack

Skin:0

0

Eilith's Story

She knows she is (was?) Eilith of Zarainsen, cousin to Jarop of Zarainsen and apprentice to Mistress Amalya of the Guild of Arcane Lore in Golotha.

That is why, when Kutz was delivered to Jarop, she got to see him. Cousin Jarop had paid for her apprenticeship as an investment for the future of the clan and asked her to examine the one armed man.

He wanted to know if he should approach the Guild of Arcane Law for advice having already sounded out the priests of Save K’nor and decided their price for a consultation was so high that alternatives should be considered first. Eilith was free, and so was the first opinion he sought.

She first saw the one-armed man at a Zarainsen safe house in Sewertown and remembers thinking he was no more than a mindless idiot who could do nothing for himself but drool.

She asked the old woman set to watch the man to get some food and drink so she could see if he could feed himself. While she waited she examined him trying to see if his eyes reacted to light and dark. Within those vacant eyes she thought she saw a flicker of intelligence. It was as if they reflected a candle flame. That’s when she remembered hearing the voice for the first time; her voice, speaking inside her head.

At first it was faint, but as she gazed into his eyes it became clearer. It was her voice but more confident that she usually felt. She began to feel she’d never succeed as a scholar but suddenly a great plan leapt into her mind as if unbidden.

She’d tell Cousin Jarop that the Guild might be able to help but it would take a few days of research to be certain and to find out how much her Mistress would charge. However, instead she would

Return to the safe house, steal away the man and study him herself. She was certain he was an interesting case and her study would impress her mistress and lead to early mastery within the Guild of Arcane Lore. It was all so obvious and simple!

She carried out the plan with ease. Her cousin agreed to give her a few day and that night she went back to the safe house and broke in. She heard the plan in her head and it worked like a charm. It was as if she knew the layout of the building and how to get in with least fuss. She also managed it without disturbing the old woman and she wondered if she had the family’s talent for housebreaking.

She roused the one-armed man and silently led him past the sleeping old woman and out of the front door. From there she took him to the dormitory she shared with the other apprentices. They offered surprisingly little resistance to her plan once they’d had a look into the man’s eyes themselves. They agreed that they should hide him

and tell no one about him. The apprentices were responsible for cleaning and cooking for themselves and so no one else ever came near the dormitory. Other local youths were afraid of them and their knowledge so they were undisturbed.

From then on it was as if the boys would do anything she wanted. It was almost as if they knew what her plans were before she told them.

They kept him for nearly a week before she thought of the next step in the plan. She had been copying a manuscript for her mistress; a tedious history describing ancient rituals used when Morgathians were important at the Corani Imperial Court.

Suddenly the passages made complete sense. There were enough descriptive sections to allow the ritual to be carried out. If she could do that she's summon a 'Shade' some sort of weak Morgathian incarnation of the Shadow of Bukrai according to the text, and offer it the one-armed man's body. With the Shade active in the body Jarop would be able to ask it questions and get the answers he wanted.

The listening PCs should see some logical inconsistencies in Jarop being able to talk to a Shade, or the Shade knowing what Kutz was thinking, but Eilith says it made perfect sense at the time.

Once she'd succeeded at the task her uncle would ensure the Guild had to reward her as well as gaining status in the Guild. The masters might even recommend her for study with one of the Shek P'var she was certain Master Adelrin know.

Making the ritual work would be the perfect masterwork even if she wasn't even a Journeyman yet. They'd have to take notice and her future would be assuredly successful.

It didn't seem to matter to her, or the boys when she explained it to them, that the ritual required a number of body parts and most importantly a number of human heads. That was a small price to pay for the future she described to them.

There followed a month during which she and the other apprentices killed 13 people, carefully removed their heads and a variety of organs. Recounting this will give Eilith quite some pause. It is as if she is remembering it for the first time, or realising that it was her carrying out the barbaric acts rather than watching someone else do it. The realisation hits her hard and tears will be coming to fall from her eyes as she continues her story.

She knew from the manuscript that the ritual would have to be carried out on ground consecrated to Morgath. That was when she had the idea of ensuring they carried out the ritual at the time of the monthly mass on Temple Hill.

If they chanted the ritual close to the Morgathians then that would probably be the same as doing it in a temple.

To get finished in time for the Morgathian mass on the hill they had to speed up the harvesting of heads and they got a little careless. The pretty girl and her lover were too convenient to ignore. The man in the fog was a real last resort to ensure a 13th head (and a kidney) was collected before midnight.

It was all going perfectly until the PCs arrived and disrupted the ritual!

Then, at the point she was supposed to draw blood from the one-armed man so that the Shade could enter him everything went wrong. Instead of the shade entering him she suddenly felt confused. The confidence with which she had planned and acted since meeting Kutz seemed to evaporate.

It was as if everything that she had done over the previous month flashed before her eyes for the first time: The boy begging for his life; the fat merchant she'd made eyes at to get him into the shadows where they could cut his throat; the sightless eyes of the heads she gathered up and piled into a cairn in the middle of the dormitory; the symbols she didn't understand that she copied from the manuscript in blood.

The last thing she remembers before being dragged before the Morgathians was the one-armed man turning to her in the lantern light. Amid the sudden horror of what she'd done and the terror of the consequences she remembers him smiling and whispering "thank you", before disappearing into the shadows.

All she remembers of the days since is a fearful compulsion to find him, or the part of him she can still 'feel' he stole from her, and the terror of discovering that her body was gone. The only voice in her head has been her own screams bottled up by *that damned linen band*.

Today, for the first time in a year she has experienced some kind of peace. Presumably the Peonian shrine has granted her some degree of peace. She no longer feels the consuming panic; for the first time since Temple Hill, since before temple Hill she is able to think!

She still longs to find Kutz; to be reunited with what he stole from her, but it is no longer consuming her. Rather there is a rationale reason to find him. Until she can get all her soul back she cannot hope for any peace.

There is something else she wants to do, or see done. She wants to see him suffer for what he made her do, and for what has happened to her since. After that she will be as happy as she can conceive of ever being again. She will help the PCs find him if they will kill him for her.

Though some of the terror and madness that she has experienced returns when they leave the shrine, every day brings her a small degree of greater control over her urge to cream.

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The GM should treat this as a Critical Consequence such as ***On the Verge of Madness*** and could have a PC treat it using **Empathy**.

Even without treatment she will master the urge to scream (except when it is advantageous to the adventure for her to do so!) and feel more in control of her fate.

With the increased control will come a realisation that she can do more than simply point the PCs in Kutz's direction. She begins to sense traces of him when they cross his trail and can even begin to sense how old the trail is.

Link to the next scene

The PCs continue to Imrium with Eilith as a much more useful guide than she was. She will scent Kutz several times on the way to Imrium, as long as they are ashore.

SCENE 4: THE TEMPLE AT IMRIUM

Overview

The PCs have to negotiate access to the temple but find a more complete mosaic that may help them find Kutz.

Aspect(s)

Shadows and cobwebs is in play while the PCs are inside the temple.

GM Aims

- To show how invaluable Eilith can be in actually tracking Kutz;
- To use the dispute over access to the temple between the Order of Herpa the Mace and the schismatic Order of the Eight Demons, as necessary to make access a challenge.

PC Outcomes

They gain a complete view of what the Khamari mosaics show and leave the temple with a clearer picture of what the priests recorded about Mejetus and events there several hundred years ago.

They also gain a clue as to how to get there ... a clue Kutz may already have acted on.

Description of Events

When they arrive at Imrium, Eilith is able to detect relatively fresh the relatively fresh scent of Kutz at the gate to the upper town.

Finding the temple should be easy but gaining access should be a challenge. It is guarded day and night to stop either the Herpans or the Eight Demons gaining access, or fighting over it. As an additional safeguard the legion commander has had a couple of planks nailed across the entrance.

Dutiful Legionary (1 per PC)

Well trained

Bored by this duty

+3 Melee

+2 Athletics

+1 Missile

1-Spear:2/1; Short Sword:1/1

Ring & Kite Shield:2+1

0 1 1



Legionary of the Imrium garrison

The three companies of the Cohort that garrison the town should discourage a direct assault as shouts from the guards or the sounds of a fracas will bring many more legionaries running: the temple is less than 100 paces from the nearest tower and not twice that from the main gate.

Any reasonable plan to gain access should be played out by the GM using the following only as a guide:

Rapport, to set up any possible advantages followed by the use of **Privy Purse** (+1 per guard Overcome) to bribe their way into the temple. This can be complicated by an officer making an unannounced inspection.

Intimidate vs +2 Will though the GM could use a Fate Point to invoke *More frightened of my officer*, to stiffen the guards' resolve.

Investigation vs. +2 to spend a successful 24 hours before spotting a pattern in the guards' routines. During the night half the guards conduct a 15 minute 'perimeter check' that takes about 15 minutes. During this time only half the guards are at the temple.

Contacts vs +2 to find a member of the local criminal fraternity who might be prepared to break into the temple. However finding one with the Craft skill to render what he finds within in charcoal on parchment, at night, might be a challenge and require extra expense (**Privy Purse** vs +2 at least, +3 for a real artist).

Larceny could set up an advantage based on coming up with *a good plan* and bear in mind that a *dark cloudy night* or *full moon* could be significant aspects on the scene. The break-in itself could comprise a multi-step Challenge (see Fate Core) which can be made more difficult by adding a time constraint:

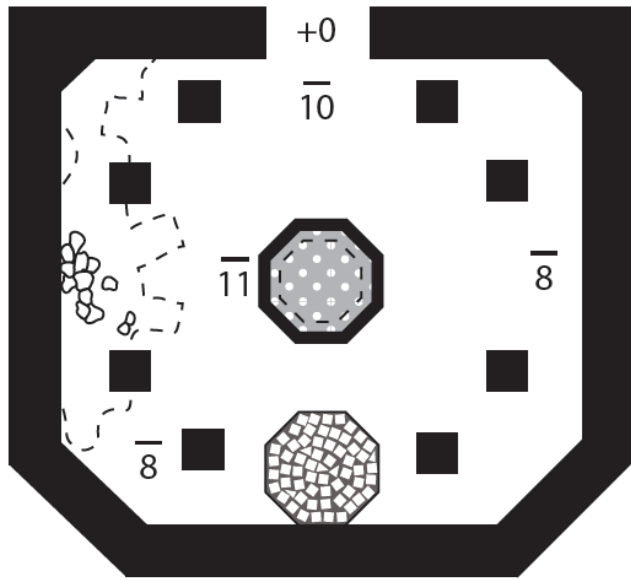
- **Stealth** to reach the temple unobserved;
- **Athletics** to reach the hole in the roof caused by a fire during the schism of the Eight Demons, and through it to the floor of the temple;
- **Notice** to find the mosaic in the minimal light they dare use for fear of alerting the guards outside;
- **Scholar** to interpret what they see &/or **Craft** to swiftly record it for later interpretation.

The GM can also play out any use of **Investigate** or **Contacts** to determine if anyone like Kutz has been near the temple. They will discover that a junior legion officer was approached only a few weeks ago by a noble lady. She paid enough for him to sponsor an evening at the brothel in the outer town for some of his men. That ensured they were late on duty at the temple. He met her there and she paid him a bonus, though strangely the details of exactly how much now escape him, to prise away the boards at the door and allow her to enter. She had a very distinctive red silk shawl and spent nearly half an hour inside the temple

When the PCs gain access they are immediately aware that the mosaic is very similar to the fragments they examined at Siolen Kustan. It is equally obvious that this mosaic is complete and shows not just scenes similar to those looted from Caer Kustan and left at the Shawls, but additional panels that have not survived at Kustan.

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The Imrium Temple and Mosaic



INTERIOR SCALE
Feet (1 mm = 1 foot)



By Oddgeir Drevdal

Integrating what they learned at Kustan with what they find at Imrium ... the PCs gain the following information:

- The central motif shows Agrik and Larani in combat above a forest, where a cairn of stones stands in the centre of four viciously clawed fingers.
- Additionally the Imrium central panel extends that central motif to show the cairn over-turned and the armies of Agrik issuing forth from a portal do battle with Larani and the resulting desolation of the forest

Scholar, +2 Overcome: the Imrium mosaic dates from slightly later than the Kustan original. It could be that the overturned cairn shows the future and the predicted final; battle between Agrik and Larani. It is impossible to say whether the overturning of the cairn causes the battle or the arrival of Agrik's hordes overturns the cairn.

There are 4 similar panels to those they saw at Kustan only here they are still in place and take up half the space around the central motif. They show:

1. A mighty warrior wearing a crown leading an army towards the cairn. He is identified only by the initial "M" on his shield

Scholar: +2 Overcome: this is probably the Emperor Mejenes the Great.

2. The warrior crosses a great river on a raft and barbarians kneel to him, he is sheathed in flame.

Scholar: +2 Overcome: the river is probably the Chetul and the kneeling figure the Urdu, while the flame is not unexpected given the mosaic's Agrikan origins.

3. The warrior leads the army through a forest to enter a fortress on a rocky outcrop overlooking the first of two branches of another river.

Scholar: +2 Overcome: the river is probably the Pemetta or one of its major tributaries, such as the Suthen or Uthel, and the fortress is probably Mejetus.

4. The warrior crosses a bridge across the river and is ambushed by a band of savages who wound his left arm.

Scholar: +2 Overcome: the barbarians are not Urdu, who are depicted differently, but probably Equani who live beyond the Pemetta.

The Imrium mosaic, though, is complete it shows 4 further panels making up one complete half of the whole. These were presumably lost or destroyed at Kustan; perhaps they sit somewhere else among the Shawls. Who knows? Happily the PCs don't really have to care they can instead examine the complete mosaic for the first time:

5. The wounded warrior's arm is infected, weeping white pus, so it is amputated by physicians gathered around him. In the background a smith crafts a false arm from precious metals.

Scholar, +2 Overcome: the physicians would probably have been killed for their failure.

6. A group of cowed and masked figures are shown in threatening poses around the bedridden warrior. They are extinguishing the flames in which he has been wreathed in the previous panels.

Scholar, +2 Overcome: Agrikans often portray Morgathians in this way and the extinguishing of the flame suggests they are separating the Emperor from Agrik in some way.

7. The warrior is shown on his funeral pyre being welcomed into the afterlife by Agrik.

Scholar, +2 Overcome: The clear implication is that the Morgathian intervention killed him but that in the end he returned to the one true path to Agrik.

8. The emperor's bones are collected from the ashes of the pyre and carried back to Kustan, the legion fighting off the barbarians that block their way. The cloaked and masked figures are cut off from the legion among a horde of natives.

Scholar, +2 Overcome: This would be what Agrikans would have considered a just end for the Morgathians. It also shows a more positive outcome for the legion than history records; something less than a company straggled into Kustan after their ordeal. They did, though have the casket of the Emperor's bones.

A unique feature of the Imrium Mosaic

The mosaic has a much less abstract border than the one at Kustan. It depicts carts and legionaries on a road that begin outside the 4th panel number and runs clockwise around the other panels to end *in* the 3rd panel.

It shows supplies starting from a large city and following a well maintained highway on the east bank of a very wide river. Soon the river branches but the supplies continue north along the east bank of one of the rivers. The highway becomes a trail running to a quarry from where stone is used to improve the roadway.

From there it continues north along the east bank until it passes a small outpost on the western bank. From there it rises among hills to a mountain pass before descending into the broad forested valley beyond. The mountains are shown infested with creatures that could be Gargun.

The route shown on the border then follows this river through forests until it terminates at the 3rd panel where Mejenes is shown making a triumphant entry into Mejetus, but from a different direction.

Scholar, +2 Overcome: The Corani Empire planned to build a road along the eastern bank of the River Gomisen linking Coranan to Mejetus but it was abandoned when Mejenes died. This could show the route it took, or was intended to take. I clearly does not show the route the Emperor took across Peran from Kustan to Mejetus.

The GM can show the PCs any poetic maps of Rethem, Tharda and Peran and allow them to work it out OR ...

Scholar or **Investigate** or **Contacts**, +2 Overcome could provide additional clues:

- Large cities were rare in the Empire. The starting point could be Coranan or Golotha;
- Broad rivers running north into Peran from what was Imperial territory are not common. The river could be the Thard and then the Gomisen;
- There were few settlements on the west bank of the Gomisen in Imperial times. That could be Senun or Menekai. However, if it was Senun it would probably be nearer the point where the Gomisen branches from the Thard and would show the bridge that still spans the Gomisen. The settlement is probably Menekai.
- There is still a quarry on the east bank of the Gomisen north of Senun, from where it gets its supplies and to where it ships most of its stone.

Link to the next scene

The quickest way to the quarry is to retrace their route to Geshte and from there take a boat to Techen. Boats from the Republic and those from Senun and Menekai meet there to exchange cargo.

SCENE 5: TECHEN MARKET

Overview

The PCs have to negotiate the bustle of a busy market day in Techen, taking in the entertainments offered as they either make their way to the Senun Road or seek a boat north. While there they have the chance to do a good deed for someone they may already know.

Scene Aspect(s)

Hustle and bustle and **Stallholders shouting to get attention** are both in play until mid-afternoon when most of the market disperses.

GM Aims

- To confront the PCs with some cruelty and test their reaction to it while offering them a chance to do a good deed;
- To introduce them to a helpful tinker and re-introduce them to someone they may already have met.

PC Outcomes

They gain a new friend and find an old one.

Description of Events

Techen is a powerful economic hub benefitting from trade with the Republic and Golotha. The market is in full swing when the PCs arrive and every guildsman in the town, as well as framers, craftsmen and tradesmen from far and wide hawking their goods and produce or selling their services.

The PCs have no alternative but to make their way through the hustle and bustle. They are either on their way to the Senun Road or seeking a talbar captain who could take them to Senun.

There are almost as many entertainers as traders. Jugglers, musicians, a troupe of players, and a bear for the baiting, are competing for the crowds' coppers. There is also something more unusual.

Near the centre of the market a rough brute of a man is calling to the crowd: *Who wants to fight Ezar's War? Who wants to take the part of a mighty King Kabe? Who will step forward and take the place of the heroes who won Rethem's freedom from the evil hordes of the Blood Red Bitch?* 'The Red Bitch' is common Rethemi slang for the goddess Larani.

He may have got his history wrong but the size of the crowd suggests the locals don't care. In the centre of the circle of gawping onlookers is a man in a parody of a red and white surcoat. His shield is of thin wicker and his 'Great Sword' is a length of willow topped with inflated pig's bladders.

Around his neck is a leather leash held by a second man who also has a spear. Before the bizarrely equipped 'Laranian' is a local youth wearing a crude pewter circlet

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representing a crown of 'King Kabe'. He has a wooden club and a buckler. Though he is no expert he is battering the leashed man bloody.

The surcoat provides no protection against the crude but heavy blows the apprentice is raining down on him and whenever he moves to defend himself he is yanked back off balance by the leash. At one point he turns and roars angrily at the big man behind him only to find himself facing a lowered spear point. The man holding the leash smiles an ugly smile as the youth fetches the man a stout blow to the back of his head and sends him reeling to the ground.

The crowd roars its approval and the caller steps between the youth and the fallen man. *That's your lot mate, you've had your money's worth. Now, who's next?*

Money is exchanged and another man enters the ring and takes up the club and buckler. The warrior in red and white is yanked to his feet and the tawdry scene is re-played.

If a PC decides to take the part of King Kabe ...they should be ashamed!

If the PCs look carefully through the blood and bruises ... they may recognise Sir Hovan Mindar (see *Root of all Evil*).



If relations with Sir Hovan were very poor by the end of that adventure, or he was killed, then replace him with a similar Laranian with a similar cover story and a similar secret mission.

Sir Hovan has continued to wander through Rethem collecting information that might be helpful to his order. He had intended to travel back to Kanday by a circular route up the Thard to Senun and from there down to Menekod. He was to rendezvous with a Laranian escort south of Themeson. Unfortunately he took a little too much wine when his talbar stopped at Thiri and he woke to find himself stripped and bound to a cart. His accent had become a little more noticeable after a drink or two and the two brigands turned showmen saw an opportunity to take a Kandayan into slavery for profit.

Sir Hovan Mindar

Aged 35, height 5'11", medium frame, weight 164 lbs, plain appearance, medium complexion, brown hair, grey eyes

Secret agent of the Red Lady

Good in a tight corner

Hides a Kandayan accent

+4 Melee (Hidden weapon: Whenever **Disarmed**, spend a Fate Point to declare the presence of a hidden dagger. The **Disarmed** aspect is ignored but the opponent gets a boost instead, representing the momentary distraction of drawing the dagger)

+3 Notice

+3 Deceive

+2 Athletics

+2 Investigate

+2 Fight (Bar-fighter: +2 to create advantages involving improvised weapons, bottles, chairs etc.)

+1 Contacts (The faithful are everywhere:

Overcome 6 minus local market size (plus 4 where Larani/Peoni are proscribed) to find a Laranian/Peonian sympathiser who owes the character a favour. Success with style and they'll take risks to help him.)

+1 Investigate (Attention to detail: Use Investigate instead of Empathy to defend against Deceive in contests; what others discover through gut reactions and intuition can be learned through careful observation of the attacker)

+1 Scholar (Speaks Harnic and Reads Lakise)

+1 Ritual (Larani)

Unarmed:0; Dagger:1

Cloth:0

0 1 2

Mild **1:** **Disarmed and beaten bloody**

Serious **2:**

Grievous **3:**

If a PC decides to intervene to protect Sir Mindar ...
a small blocky man lays a hand on their sword arm and

quietly points out that, 'Anyone brave enough to step between this crowd and their sport will be lynched. Now is not the time but if I might have a word in private we might help the poor man.'

If the PCs accept the man's invitation for a word in private ... he will introduce himself as Mosak, a local tinker, who trades in brassware from Techen up the Gornisen valley to Senun and Menekai. He finds the display they have just seen as offensive as the PCs clearly do: *There has to be a way to get that poor man away from those brutes.*



If the PCs decide to intervene anyway ... the GM should be prepared for a running fight through the market and out of the town. There will be plenty of chances for stand up fist fights and narrow escapes with the showmen and members of the crowd. Perhaps the group is split up and only comes back together by luck in a copse of trees beyond the eastern edge of the town.

Whatever happens the GM should try not to incapacitate a PC unless he has a clear idea of how they can escape from the Earl's dungeon to conclude their quest! If the worst comes to the worst the wiry little man may be able to help them out with some healing.

Equally, whatever happens they will find that Sir Hovan will turn up shortly after they get back together or successfully evade escape; having used the confusion to make his own escape.

Master Mosak the Tinker

Aged 35, height 5'5", heavy frame, weight 164 lbs, plain appearance, pale complexion, black hair, brown eyes

Covert Maermalite missionary 'Bullman'
The Bringer of the Life Renewed
Cart with a false bottom

+4 Will

+3 Notice

+3 Deceive

+2 Empathy

+2 Ritual (Peoni) (Divine Intervention: +2 to any skill and any action so long as a Fate Point is spent to invoke and aspect of Peoni) **AND (Son of Tirrala:** +2 to the treatment roll of a minor or serious Consequence (OR spend a Fate Point to instantly reduce the level of the Consequence by one step) so long as the roll is within a scene of it being inflicted)

+2 Rapport

+1 Contacts (The faithful are everywhere:

Overcome 6 minus local market size (plus 4 where Larani/Peoni are proscribed) to find a Laranian/Peonian sympathiser who owes the character a favour. Success with style and they'll take risks to help him)

+1 Investigate

+1 Scholar (Speaks Harnic and Reads Lakise)

+1 Ride (Carts and wagons: +2 to Overcome an obstacle while driving a cart or wagon)

Unarmed:0; 1-h Improvised:1

Cloth:0

0 1 2

Mild **1**:

Serious **2**:

Grievous **3**:

If a local is seriously hurt during any affray ... the PCs can expect their steps to be dogged by a party of mounted men-at-arms in the Earl's livery. That can lead to another kind of confrontation outside the town on the way to Senun. They will not pursue more than half a day away from Techen before reporting back that the miscreants were accosted, killed and their bodies thrown into the Thard ... the Earl would not want them to report failure and they will not want to pursue their quarry too far from their warm beds in Caer Techen.

If the PCs come up with a credible plan ... the GM can adjudicate is as normal.

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If they are struggling to come up with a plan that can both free Sir Hovan and maintain their anonymity ... then Mosak suggests waiting for a few hours until the crowd grows tired of the entertainment or until the two brutes consider it prudent to protect their investment from further damage. He knows their type. They have stumbled onto a gold mine and their victim is no use to them permanently injured. They will probably spend much of what they've made on ale and strong drink if they have the chance. All the PCs have to do is keep an eye on where they go and then, when they've drunk themselves to oblivion, the PCs can sneak in and free the fellow.

Mosak has an ox cart he uses for his trade and they can secrete Sir Mindar among his goods and leave town entirely innocently.

Mosak normally looks around for some likely fellows with whom he can travel north along the Gomisen. No one will be surprised to find him in their company when they leave.

If the PCs agree ... the GM can run this escape plan.

The two showmen are indeed keen to spend their money; and not just on drink. They have a rickety hand cart that they bought with their first profits at Thiri. That is stacked up with their possessions and hauled from market to market by the captured Sir Hovan. Today has been their most successful day and they intend to enjoy it. They will stake out the knight with the leash at his throat tied to the cart and his right leg tied to the horse trough outside the cottage of the bawd they intend to take turns enjoying. At any one time there will be only one of them on guard and his attention will decline as inebriation turns to sleep. The PCs will have an easier time the longer they wait but they may also feel the pressure of time as dawn approaches.

If the PCs don't decide to free Sir Mindar ... they will encounter Mosak on the road, having freed the man himself.

If the PCs aid Sir Hovan ... they will find Mosak excellent company on the road and Hovan very grateful.

In the unlikely event that the PCs show Mosak, or Sir Hovan, Eilith's head then they both make a +4 Horror Test to avoid making some Peonian/Laranian signs against evil.

Notice, +2 Overcome: the PC notices the flinch.

If the PCs point out the flinch Mosak admits that in matters so horrible his first reaction is to remember what his granny taught him and make a sign against evil. His **Deceit** will drive home this tale if necessary. In Sir Hovan's case no deceit is required: he freely admits to being Kandian so a Laranian sign is second nature to him!

Link to the next scene

Their paths lie in the same direction, as Eilith confirms Kutz also passed along the Senun road. She cannot estimate how far ahead he is, only that he is not getting further

ahead. The prodigious feats of speed he has exhibited seem to have disappeared. In fact the creature within Kutz has learned the hard way that it can only push Kutz' body so far before it breaks. For now it is ensuring Kutz gets some regular rest and food; after all it doesn't know it's being followed.

SCENE 6: THE MADMAN AND THE QUARRY

Overview

Leaving Mosak and Sir Hovan the PCs hear a rumour that hastens them across the Gomisen from Senun to a quarry on the eastern bank of the river. There they discover that Kutz is only a matter of a day or two ahead of them!

Scene Aspect(s)

Confused and surprised miners is in play at the quarry.

GM Aims

- To begin to increase the pace with hints that the PCs are as close now to Kutz as they have been since temple Hill
- To get them across the river quickly and give them a last push into the wilderness of Peran.

PC Outcomes

They should feel exhilarated to be so close behind Kutz and eager to finish what they have started.

Description of Events

Once the PCs reach Senun Mosak will take his leave and continue on his normal route to Menekai. While Sir Mindar may feel he owes the PCs a debt for their aid, he tells them that Mosak needs his protection more than they do, and so will also bid them farewell. The last they see of him is a figure walking beside the tinker's cart as he heads north.

If the PCs can find a way for Eilith to get his scent she will confirm that Kutz was at Senun's small dock very recently. The sickly scent of her soul is all over the place.

An enquiry to the dock master will confirm that a couple of days ago an Agrikan knight with a red plume in his helmet paid for the crossing to a quarry upstream on the far bank. Interestingly the skipper of the talbar concerned reports that the man may have been a knight but he certainly had no red plume. Rather he had a red cloak.

Talbars regularly make the trip from Senun to Menekai and when they arrive the captain warns them that they need to know the guildmaster miner has a habit of demanding labour from those using his dock.

However, when they disembark there is no sign of the guildmaster miner, or anyone else, demanding anything from them.

They are free to wander up from the dock to the camp in the middle of the quarry. Most of the miners are working but some are working to repair the treadmill that drags trucks up from the dock. They are being supervised by a man with a splinted leg.

The miners need no threats to get them to talk – they are still shaken by what happened and happy to share their experience: they were the victims of a madman.

The day before yesterday a one armed man came ashore and marched up from the dock towards the trail into the forest and hills beyond.

As was his habit, the guildmaster insisted on labour in return for use of the dock and ordered the man bound to the treadmill for a full day of work.

While they were binding him in place he tore part of the wooden framework away and set about the miners with it. He ended up with a broken leg -thank the gods it was a clean break, but the guildmaster took a clout to the side of the head and has been out cold ever since.

The red haired fellow seemed to have the strength of 10 men and shrugged off the miners who tried to contain him.

Once he'd driven them off he calmly walked into the forest, heading north ... and good riddance.

Enquiries reveal that some men thought he had a red beard, not red hair and others though he had a red hooded cloak.

It is the red item they remember; other descriptions are vague.

Link to the next scene

Investigation or **Survival**, Overcome +2: there is an area of old, moss covered, cobbles near the north end of the camp, on which the Guildmaster's shack is built. There are also scattered cobbles among the bushes at the northern edge of the clearing just beyond the shack. Most of them have been dug up and sold across the river over the generations.

If they explore further into the bushes they will find a block of stone near the mines latrine. It's considered good luck to touch it as the miners say it's been here as long as htere3's been a quarry. The hands of generations of quarrymen have worn it almost smooth but ...

Notice, Overcome +2: there's a worn horizontal groove that could be an arrow pointing north. Beneath it are the faint reminders of 7 letters. The GM should award the PC one letter per shift of success in whatever order they choose: M E J E T U S.

The further they head north from the quarry the more cobbles they find; the quarrymen have preferred not to wander too far into the trees in search of easy pickings. There are enough left to indicate that this was once a significant trackway, maybe even a road.

This is the start of the supply road that would have connected Mejetus to the heart of the Empire, if it had ever been completed. Now it is barely a sketchy trail into the wilderness with cobbles that run perhaps 5 leagues north before they peter out where the road building ended with the abandonment of Mejetus.

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Eilith can confirm that Kutz came this way very recently, and if they are lucky they may even find a ‘K’ worn into the moss of a final imperial way marker. This should

be enough to get them moving north in pursuit of Kutz, and into Act IV.



The quarry trail

ACT IV: INTO PERAN

Overview

The PCs chase Kutz north across the foothills of the Western Rayeshas into the valley of the River Suthen. They risk encounters with Gargun and Kubora before seeing evidence of the bitter struggle taking place between the Urdu and the Equani.

With or without the Urdu they pursue Kutz to a place that haunts Urdu dreams and there they discover a secret unknown to any but a single young man. They learn of Kutz’s plan and how it will put Peran, Harn and perhaps all Kethira at risk, unless they can face a terror they have already run from.

The PCs can travel for 2 watches a day and spend a 3rd watch hunting and gathering with no ill effects. The journey will take them 10 - 11 days with no interruptions or distractions. **Endurance**, +3, or +4, Overcome in flat mixed forest and the rough, hilly or mountainous stages, respectively, to travel for 3 watches per day. This can reduce the journey time to 7 – 8 days but the GM should apply cumulative **Weary**, **Exhausted** and **Dead on their feet** Boosts to those PCs who tie/fail successive overcomes.

Stage	Terrain	Distance (leagues)	Travel time (watches)
The quarry to the foothills	Flat mixed forest	10	3-4
The foothills to the mountain pass	Rough/Hilly mixed forest	15	7-8
Across the mountain pass into Peran	Mountainous needle leaf forest	5	5
From the pass to the ruins of Mejetus	Flat mixed forest	15	5



The lost Corani road

SCENE 1: THE GARGUN OF YZUG

Overview

If the GM wants to throw additional obstacles in the way of the PCs then this optional encounter with a hunting party of Gargu-Kyani can provide some exercise for martially inclined PCs, or an unexpected confirmation that they are on the right path.

Scene Aspect(s)

Trackless forest wilderness is in play as long as the PCs are travelling through the Peran forests.

GM Aims

- To establish some routines for the PC's trek north such as order of march, rising and setting camp times, watch routines, and how often they hunt and gather (if they did not come prepared with supplies for such a long journey as this), so that this and Scene 2 can be timed for maximum enjoyment.
- To portray the Gargu-Kyani as the least prone to violence of the Gargun breeds so that conflict is not inevitable;

- To ensure that however the encounter plays out the PCs are not seriously hurt before reaching Kutz;
- To decide whether or not to invoke the disease that first struck the Gargu-Kyani of Yzug in 719 (see *Nasty, Brutish and Short*, for details), and if they do whether to use it ...
 - as an excuse to have the Gargun parlay or beat a hasty retreat so that much reduced tribe loses no more fighters; OR
 - to explain why these white orcs have the strength and frame of their larger Khanu cousins as only the tribe's strongest survived the disease to breed.
- To decide whether to merge this and the other optional scene (Scene 2, below) to further complicate matters.

PC Outcomes

Though delayed they survive to continue their pursuit of Kutz.

Description of Events

Once the PCs leave the last imperial way marker behind and enter the virgin forest they have little alternative but to

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follow the Gomisen north. This requires them to sometimes turn inland to find a ford on its tributaries but Eilith can confirm that Kutz is doing the same. Soon they learn that by using Eilith to track Kutz they are often led straight to a ford he may have taken longer to find.

In theory, therefore, they should be gaining on him but Eilith confirms that, if anything, he is getting further ahead. He must be travelling almost inhumanly quickly. He is displaying the characteristics inferred from his initial escape from Temple Hill which, more recently he has chosen not to use.

The Bitter Fallen driving Kutz is sensing that it is nearing its goal and has chosen not to, or perhaps forgotten to, manage the resources of the Kutz body in its haste to reach its objective.

Gargu-Kyani (1-2 per PC)

Thoughtful Nocturnal Predator
Loyal to Tribe; Honours Courage

+4 Melee

+3 Athletics

+2 Notice (Danger Sense: a free Notice roll to create an advantage due to the fact that they're not surprised by enemy at the start of any ambush)

+1 Stealth

Mankar:1 1-h Spear:2/1

Leather & Round Shield:1+1

0 1 1

Link to the next scene

If they parlay then the PCs will discover that the Gargun have seen a wild man jogging through the forest a little further north. They followed for a while and they never saw him stop for food or rest, only to scoop up water as he splashed across a stream. The fact that all people look alike to the Gargun makes a description difficult but the PC should assume this is Kutz.

SCENE 2: THE MAHNLIN KUBORA

Overview

The GM can complicate the encounter by having a party of Mahnlin Kubora appear. Their range is close by and they hunt the Kyani for heads with which to play Gargun-head (see *Peran* and Act II).

Scene Aspect(s)

Suffer not a Foulspawn to live! is in play if the GM merges this Scene with the previous one.

GM Aims

The way in which this encounter plays out depends on whether the GM merges it with the previous Scene and how that is played.

If they merge the two scenes:

- To have the Kubora react aggressively to the PCs if they are seen parlaying with the Gargun. The PCs may even find themselves fighting alongside the Gargun against the Mahnlin who may not be choosing their targets!
- To have the Kubora attack in support of PCs that are fighting the Gargun;

If this scene is kept distinct:

- To decide if the Mahnlin saw the PCs at the Moot; if they encounter is calm and peaceful then they may spot the Asawne token which can be invoked as at the Moot;
- To decide if the Mahnlin know about the killing of Wenowina and how they feel about it;
- To decide whether the reputation a PC gained at the moot encourages one of the Kubora to challenge them to a race, stone carry, javelin competition etc.

PC Outcomes

Though delayed they survive to continue their pursuit of Kutz.

Description of Events

The GM can place the Scene in the hands of the players by asking 'what aspect do you think he has?', or inviting them to 'Declare a detail' to shape the direction the story goes at this point.

So long as they survive and can continue it doesn't matter, so the GM should make sure the challenges are relatively non-lethal unless he's looking to insert a couple of consequences over the scenes leading up to the climax of the adventure.

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Mahnlin Kubora Warrior (1-2 per PC)

Expert hunter

Fierce; Cunning

+3 Melee

+2 Endurance

+1 Strength (Damage +1)

1h-Spear:2/1; Handaxe:1/1

Leather & Round Shield:1+2

0 1 1 1

Link to the next scene

If they parlay then they too will report a madman running through the forest. This time the description is clearly that of Kutz.



Peran Forest

SCENE 3: THE URDU

Overview

So long as they survived the encounters with the Gar-gun &/or Kubora the PCs will find themselves picking their way down from the pass overlooking the headwaters of the Gomisen into Peran with Mount Echephon towering above and behind them.

Here they come upon a scene of barbarism beyond their experience and have the opportunity to gain allies as they pursue Kutz further into the wilderness.

GM Aims

- To portray the Urdu as noble savages, with a view of outsiders less coloured by a history of southron aggression than their more fickle Kuboran neighbours;
- To encourage them to take up arms with the Urdu in pursuit of the Equani butchers;
- To use the time with the Urdu to give them information about the Haunt of Night, *Kyrk am Nos*.

PC Outcomes

They continue with or without the Urdu towards the Haunt of Night; and Kutz.

Description of Events

Eilith can tell the PCs that, as they descend into Peran, Kutz's trail is getting fresher; he is travelling more slowly. There do appear to be some limits to his inhuman capabilities.

In the direction Eilith is leading them, the PCs can see a column of smoke rising from the forest a league or so away.

The valley of the Suthen has been fought over by the Urdu and Equani for a number of years; both claiming the western and eastern banks as their range. The Urdu claim ancient rights to the river's headwaters while the Equani seek to extend the foothold they have held on the western bank for many generations.

As the PCs get close to the smoke of what was a burning Urdu camp a young warrior, barely more than a boy, emerges into their path and levels his spear; clearly prepared to die in pursuit of his duty.

Empathy, vs +0 Will to discover the aspect **forced into manhood too quickly by what he has seen**. This can be invoked to support **Rapport**, knowing how to approach him without triggering an attack, or compelled to have him break down in the face of **Intimidation**, for instance.

Either way the PCs should prefer to talk their way into the camp rather than draw his male relatives to his defence. They will gain more trust if they let him/encourage him to escort them into the clearing.

There they come upon the aftermath of an Equani attack on an Urdu camp carried out while the hunting party was away. Unless the PCs play their initial introductions very badly the Urdu will not think to associate them with the attack; they are all too used to the way of Equani war.

Vengeful Urdu Hunter (2 per PC)

Expert hunter

Fierce; Cunning

+3 Melee

+2 Endurance

+1 Strength (Damage +1)

1h-Spear:2/1; Handaxe:1/1

Leather & Round Shield:1+2

0 1 1 1

It is impossible not to be horrified by the frenzy and savagery of the attack or the cruelty inflicted after it (Horror test at +3). The bodies of the older men, women, children, and even babies have been dismembered with limbs, heads and torsos displayed around the camp on tent poles and hoisted into the trees. Some have been skinned; perhaps while still alive.

The Urdu have no honourable alternative but to pursue the Equani warparty declaring *Gwaedumdiath*, Blood Revenge: no prisoners; no fear of death; all honour for the slain.

Rapport (limited by language skill in Old Jarinese) can be used to express regret and sympathy with any advantages stored up for use later in this or the next Scene.

Will the PCs join the Urdu in righting this wrong? Will they swear Blood Revenge?

If the PCs accept the challenge ... they will be welcomed as fellow warriors and expected to keep up as the Urdu race north east after the Equani, whose tracks they seem able to follow even if the PCs can't. If they are able to allow Eilith to scent the trail she will confirm that the path they are following is also the path Kutz followed.

During the short halts for water or food the Urdu will confide that the hated Equani are heading for *Kyrk am Nos*, The Haunt of Night. This is a place on a rocky outcrop above a ford on the River Suthen that the Equani tribes revere.

The Urdu abhor the place in equal measure. Their grandmothers tell of a great warrior who crossed the Urdu hunting range with an army more numerous than the trees of the forest. He appeared noble and honourable, trading fairly with their forbears who offered to guide him in return.

Then he crossed the Suthen into Equani territory, was ambushed by the wild savages and wounded. He became infected with the evil of the Equani and changed, killing the Urdu in his camp. For this he suffered a dishonourable death, infecting his grand palace with his evil so that it would forever be known as the Haunt of Night.

If the PCs politely refuse ... the Urdu will bid them farewell and race north east after the Equani. Eilith will be able to tell the PCs that Kutz went the same way, so the PCs will find themselves following the Urdu who make no effort to conceal their route.

Link to the next scene

Having crossed a series of low rises the PCs will see dusk begin to fall across the valley of the River Suthen. As it does so the Equani campfires will become obvious among the trees of a rocky outcrop overlooking the river. The number of fires suggest there are dozens of Equani. They are greatly outnumbered but the Urdu seem comfortable in their fate. Their women and children are gone and their honour requires the death of their killers, or their own death trying. Such is the fate of any hunter swearing *Gwae-dumdiath*.

Notice, +2 Overcome: Anyone who has read Meredath's diary (*Afarezirs: Root of all Evil*) will recognise some of the landmarks from his description of Mejetus: it sits on a hill top above the Suthen; the river below the fort is broad and shallow; ideal for building a bridge; the peaks of the Rayeshas to the south-east resemble a face looking up at the stars.

SCENE 4: THE HAUNT OF NIGHT

Overview

The PCs find Mejetus and explore the last home of an Emperor.

GM Aims

- To play up the eeriness of the Haunt of Night with the shadows cast by the Equani fires; the grim Urdu moving among them killing any they encounter; the shouts and screams going on around them as the PCs continue to seek Kutz among the mayhem;
- To increase the tension as the PCs descend into darkness to be confronted by a monster.

PC Outcomes

They find the secret beneath *Kyrk am Nos*. And discover just how dangerous Kutz and the creature that rides him could be if they fulfil their ambition.

Description of Events

If the PCs decline to accompany the Urdu ... they will come upon the 'Haunt of Night' but without the Urdu to explain anything of what they see. The Urdu attack described below will still take place but the GM should time it to aid the PCs in their efforts to follow Kutz into what seems to be the heart of the Equani encampment.

If they have accompanied, the Urdu ... they will be told that ahead lies 'Kyrk am Nos', the Haunt of Night; a place revered by the Equani war cult, the *Shevrach*.

Scholar, +4 Overcome (+2 with Old Jarinese): *Shevrach* could be a corruption of the Old Jarinese phrase *sedory rach* which translates as 'deadly shades'. Peran myth says the *Sedory Rach* are ghostly creatures of the night that fall upon isolated hunters and rip out their spirits leaving the corpse to wander the forests for eternity.

The GM should allow the PCs to draw comparisons with the way in which Morgathians create gulmorvrin and with the title of this adventure: Ancient Shades.

If they can find a way for her to scent Kutz, Eilith will tell them that his trail follows the path they can just make out in the trees into the heart of the Equani camp.

The Equani are getting drunk on victory and fermented fruit mash and the longer the PCs leave their attempt to enter the camp the better. However, the sun is setting and they will soon need artificial light to even move through the forest and ruins of Mejetus, let alone make rapid progress in pursuit of Kutz. If they leave it even longer, the clear night and the moon make it relatively easy to pick their way through the camp, but the Urdu are eager for blood and will delay only until the sun is very low in the west

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Shevrachi celebrations

Just before they attack the Urdu will confide that one in three of the Equani will probably be drunk and that then odds have shifted in their favour, to only 3 or 4 to 1. This is unlikely to reassure the PCs!

The PCs, whether with the Urdu or not, would be well advised to wait for the attack to provide a distraction that will allow them to look for Kutz.

If the PCs decide to skirt the camp in search of Kutz ... they will waste some time and discover that the trail does not emerge from the camp. He's still in there! They may have him cornered, at last

As the PCs make their way into the camp the GM should use *The Haunt of Night* to provide the detail of then ruins. For instance, they will quickly become aware of the heavy smell of death and decay hanging over the surrounding forest. If it is dark enough they may be lucky enough not to find the source of the foul smell!

They will almost certainly step on a snake or disturb some of the large bats that have colonised the ruins as they use Athletics to clamber as quickly as possible over the

many fallen logs that were once the palisade of Caer Mejetus.

Cribog (1 group per PC)

Swarm of nocturnal predators

Silent; Small(+2)

+3 Stealth (Silent Killer: Overcome target's Notice to create the Boost **Surprised** which must be immediately invoked in an attack.)

+2 Athletics (Fly: Can move 2 zones per turn through unobstructed air) AND **(Elusive:** +2 to defend against all but area attacks)

+1 Fight

Bite:1

Skin:0

0 1 1

Harnic Adder (1d3 per PC)

Dangerous when surprised!

Silent in the undergrowth; Small (+2)

+2 Notice

+1 Fight (Poison: Any successful attack requires the victim to overcome +2 with Endurance or suffer 1 physical stress per exchange until treated)

Bite:1

Skin:0

0

The GM is encouraged to use these atmospheric details as the PCs (and the Urdu) move up to the edge of the Equani firelight. Then the Urdu shout their defiance and charge the capering Shevrachi.

Shevrachi Warrior (1-2 per PC)

Never fear death

Berserk Violence; Strength of their god

+4 Melee

+3 Endurance

+2 Notice

+1 Strength (Damage +1)

1h-Spear:2/1; Handaxe:1/1

Leather & Round Shield:1+2

0 1 1 1 1

In the chaos of the surprise attack the PCs should be able to use Eilith to pick up Kutz's trail; it is the freshest she has ever sensed. He is close, very close. As they follow Kutz's trail through the chaos of the fighting the PCs find themselves moving away from the campfires to the only significant structure that has survived the centuries. It sits at the highest point of the ruins, in the middle of a naturally occurring outcrop of stone. Behind it the outcrop becomes a cliff with stone tumbled down into the valley below.

As they follow Kutz's trail through the chaos of the fighting the PCs find themselves moving away from the campfires to the only significant structure that has survived the centuries. It sits at the highest point of the ruins, in the middle of a naturally occurring outcrop of stone. Behind it the outcrop becomes a cliff with stone tumbled down into the valley below.

The Imperial Pavilion

Notice or Investigation, +2 Overcome (+4 if fully dark): This was once a well-crafted building but its regular lines

have been blurred by an Equani lean-to across the front of the structure and the repairs the tribesmen have made over the generations. All manner of trophies hang from it and poles around it: heads, weapons, skins, feathers etc.

Resting on well laid stone foundations are wooden columns supporting the pitched roof, now patched with skins. Between the columns the well-made wooden walls are also patched with animal skins.

Scholar or Investigate, +2 Overcome: It is old, perhaps centuries old, and fallen into disrepair from which crude Equani repairs are only just saving it. Though they have propped-up and replaced much of the richly carved wood of the original building there is enough remaining to identify it as in the Imperial Corani style. It can only be the Imperial Pavilion which once housed the Emperor and his immediate entourage.

Within the lean-to the PCs find a crude bedroll, a cooking fire, and a range of tribal utensils, food and fermented fruit mash.

The far wall of is dominated by the carved doorway into the pavilion. The original doors were badly damaged when the Equani originally forced entry so the entry is now hung with skins. The skins are crudely coloured with vegetable dyes and marked with abstract scratches, mud, and human excrement.

Scholar or Investigate, +2 Overcome: The carvings around the doorway have been better protected from the elements and regularly cleaned by the Equani so their detail remains clearer. They appear to depict scenes from Morgathian theology: Klyss welcoming the dead etc. Additional shifts of success reveal:

- that the carvings were added over the top of the original more secular, carvings of imperial might, and,
- some of the carvings originally depicted generals and legionaries rather than priests and gulmorvrin.
- the modifications were completed in a hurry, though by skilled craftsmen.

Though the PCs can't conclude this yet, the original secular carvings were modified in a hurry after the Emperor accepted the Morgathian offer to save his 'life'.

The faint light of a flickering candle can be seen through a crack in the skins covering the doorway.

The Inner Sanctum

This large room has been turned into a ritual space with a large boulder serving as an altar placed in the middle room before an ornate chair. The stone is crusted by the blood of captives sacrificed in failed attempts to create the gulmorvrin that the Equani have been told about. Now an old Equani, Durnik, the Shevrach's principal shaman, lies across it with his neck snapped; his dead eyes peer up at the PCs from a disturbing angle. There is no sign of Kutz

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but the flickering candles of human fat illuminate much of interest.

Scholar or **Investigate**, +2 Overcome: the shaman has been dead for only an hour or two.

For the first time since the Peonian ruin Eilith's sense of Kutz becomes blurred. He passed into the shrine but the generations of foul Equani worship provide a fog or torment that clouds her sense of him. She does scent him strongly over the body of the shaman, though.

The walls of the chamber, where Mejenes met with his generals, were once of richly painted wooden panels displaying the might of the Empire. Now those painted scenes are almost completely hidden by tightly stretched skins, some of which are human. In the light of the candles the PCs will see the skins are covered with charcoal drawings in a simple work-man like style.

Investigate or **Scholar**, +2 Overcome: These drawings are much more refined than the crude daubs outside. They are in charcoal and shows signs of being refreshed a number of times. If the drawings are considered one left, one right, from those closest to the doorway through which the PCs entered, then they appear to tell a story of sorts.

The PCs may recognise parts of the story from the mosaic, but these drawings have more detail and seem to show a different perspective.

- **Drawings 1 & 2:** tell of the preparation for the invasion of Peran. They show the exploration of the north coast of Peran by a Corani fleet and the subduing of the tribes encountered on various islands. Then the drawings show the building of rafts that carry engineers up river to begin the building of Caer Mejetus. A group of cowled figures are shown among the builders

Scholar, +2 Overcome: This should prompt recollections of the history of the Nolgind Kubora in *Afarezirs: Root of all Evil*.

- **Drawings 3 & 4:** The Emperor Mejenes is shown travelling from Coranan, to Merethos (Golotha) and north to Kustan. From there he and his legion set out, along a roadway cleared through the Peran wilderness, to the Pemetta and, via a raft bridge into Urdu territory. They also show his negotiations with the Urdu who are then shown serving as scouts and auxiliaries for the march from the Pemetta to the Suthen. Finally he reaches Mejetus where a well-constructed wooden fort awaits him.

Scholar, +2 Overcome: This should prompt recollections of what the Urdu told the PCs about the initial relationship between the Urdu and the invading army.

- **Drawings 5 & 6:** The focus of the drawings shifts from the Emperor to a group of scholars, some cowled and masked, some not, leaving Mejetus for an unusual group of rocky pillars to the south west. The initial part

of the journey shows them trekking west, but then a large section of the skin has been cut away

Scholar or **Investigate**: +2 Overcome: the section was cut away VERY recently. The wooden wall behind the lost section of skin is hinged and gives access to an unused room full of the debris of ages. The skin on the opposite wall (No. 5) also conceals a hinged wall giving access to similar rooms. These were the living quarters of the Emperor's bodyguards and servants.

- **Drawings 7 & 8:** These shows events among the rocky pillars depicted earlier. The depiction of the Hand of Crador should be clear to anyone who has visited it. The details show the uncowed scholars undertaking some activity at the peak of the highest pillar involving 'Air'; in tunnels under the pillars involving 'Earth'; and in an obviously excavated chamber 'within' a pillar, involving 'Water'. This last chamber is above a more natural chamber beneath the ground where the masked and cowled figures are seen surrounding a cairn of stones and summoning a black orb while they hold objects that resemble the parts of a key. One of the cowled and masked figures embraces the black orb and undergoing some sort of transformation into a more perfect man who returns with the other scholars to Mejetus carrying the miraculously whole key.

Scholar, +2 Overcome: This should prompt recollection of the description of activity at the Hand in Meredath's diary.

- **Drawings 9 & 10:** These drawings return to events at Mejetus and show Mejenes planning the crossing of the Suthen into Equani territory. It takes place across a wooden bridge built to improve the shallow ford below the fort but the advance guard, led by Mejenes, is caught in the open before it can form a perimeter. It is little more than a skirmish but the Equani reach the Emperor and wound him, bringing the tentative advance to a swift conclusion as he is escorted back to the safety of Mejetus.

Scholar, +2 Overcome: This should prompt recollection of the events depicted in the temple mosaics.

- **Drawings 11 (on the left side of the wall facing the entry):** It shows physicians swiftly amputating the Emperor's left arm at the elbow against the Emperor's instructions. Then, in gruesome detail it shows their reward: torture and impalement before the army for their incompetence.

Scholar, +2 Overcome: This is a subtly different interpretation of events that the one shown in the temple mosaics.

- **Drawings 12, (on the left side of the wall facing the entry):** The uncowed scholars are seen departing down river by barge while the cowed scholars are depicted as being horrified at the incompetence of the

physicians. They take on the Emperor's care while they read many scrolls in search of a cure for the infection that grips him. Finally, and with obvious reluctance, they are shown inviting the Emperor to embrace a black orb reminiscent of the one depicted earlier. Meanwhile one of them oversees the shaping of the key they brought back from the Hand of Crador into an artificial arm for Mejenes. The final drawings show Mejenes embracing the orb and joyfully transcending his mortal form, while wearing the reshaped key in place of his lost forearm.

Scholar, +2 Overcome: They allowed the Emperor to embrace the Shadow of Bukrail!

Immediately behind the altar stone and the throne, between these last two drawings, a single, unadorned, patchwork quilt of human skin, hangs like a curtain, waiting to be drawn. Drawing it aside reveals

- **Drawing 13:** unlike the rest of the drawings, which are on skins nailed to the wooden walls behind them, this drawing is applied direct to the wooden wall.

It shows a life-sized man dressed in grand armour and wearing a crown. He holds a sword in his right hand while the artificial left hand protectively cradles a representation of the Hand of Crador. The centre of the man's torso is dominated by a drawing of a dense black orb

- This section of wall is, like those behind drawings 5 and 6, hinged ...
- **Scholar**, this shouldn't need interpretation!

Beyond the PCs may be expecting to find the undead emperor, but they find only an empty room. It is about half the size of the room they have been examining.

Scholar, +2 Overcome: it could be the Emperor's private audience chamber.

Link to the next scene

The space beyond the curtain has two doors. Both are ajar though the one to the right has a stout iron bar dating from the Corani occupation.

Investigation or **Craft**, +2 Overcome: the door was unbarred very recently, perhaps today. Before that the door had been securely barred for a very long time.

The room to the left boasts a simple bed of crude construction, a brazier containing dying embers, and supplies.

Investigate, +2 Overcome: the chamber has been recently occupied. The brazier suggests it was last fed less than half a day ago. Beside the bed is a wooden board with a skin stretched across it. It has been used for a charcoal sketch of a tribesman (the shaman lying dead outside). The style matches that of the drawings outside in the hall, though probably more accomplished (the artist has had a century of practice since he completed the drawings outside). This drawing is one of dozens, perhaps hundreds, scattered

around the room. **Success with Style:** some of the drawings are on skins cracked and discoloured with extreme age but all are of Equani men and boys (the various shaman and their apprentices who have served here over the centuries and those warriors granted access to the sacred place).

The PCs cannot know, at this point, that this is the bed chamber of Nidmarw, the 'man' revered by the Equani war cult, the Shevrach, as a god (See *Mejetus*). They also cannot yet know that this 'god' is actually a Morgathian priest, Alai. He is an amorvrin who has been marooned here since the fort fell (see *Mejetus* and below).

The room to the right, behind the previously barred door contains only an open trapdoor with a set of stone steps winding down into the darkness.

Investigate, +2 Overcome: the layer of dust over the floor suggests the room has been undisturbed for a long time, until today. There are clear signs that someone or something has passed from the door to the stairway. **Success with Style:** Two people passed this way, one taller than the other.

Scholar or **Investigate** or **Craft**, +2 Overcome: the spiral stairs are constructed so that the joins between stones are almost invisible; well beyond the skill of even the best Corani masons. **Success with Style:** perhaps they are Khuzan.

The PCs will probably conclude, as they contemplate the spiral stone stair into darkness that they will face an undead Emperor and Kutz below. The GM should do everything to encourage them in this view, including waiting patiently while they prepare for every possible eventuality as they descend, in single file.

Finally the GM should apply time pressure as the tide of the battle outside begins to turn against the outnumbered Urdu. Soon they may discover something has happened to their shaman and investigate ...

SCENE 5: THE EMPEROR'S TOMB

Overview

The PCs discover the secret Mejetus has hidden since it fell.

GM Aims

- To continue to stress the fearfulness the drawings from the previous scenes should have developed;
- To play the Emperor as more than a gulmorvrin, but less than an amorvrin;
- To play the Morgathian's death with sufficient pathos to make the PCs feel sorry for the poor creature condemned to live a life among these savages.

PC Outcomes

They discover why Kutz came here and conclude where he has gone.

GM Briefing - The Fate of an Emperor

As the PCs have probably worked out by now the desperate Emperor Mejenes accepted the Morgathian offer to make him Amorvrus as the only way to stay 'alive'. In his hubris he perhaps thought he could command a god as he commanded his legions, and all would proceed as he had planned.

However, the rite failed and it was immediately clear to the priests that their plan had gone horribly wrong. Rather than an ever living Emperor bound to the Morgathian church they had created a creature with the free-will of an amorvrin but little more intellect than a gulmorvrin.

Though confused the creature mortally wounded the burly acolyte sent to try to kill it. The young man's body was, though, a convenient asset. Having admitted to his generals that their 'cure' had failed 'due to the previous incompetence of the Emperor's physicians' (who were promptly impaled), the priests needed a body for the Emperor's pyre. The bones carried back to Coranan and interred with great pomp were those of a low born Morgathian called Goas!

The legion commanders had already turned their attention to an orderly retreat with the Emperor's bones. The priests had no alternative but to retrieve the 'Key' they had created beneath the Hand of Crador and crafted into a golden arm for the Emperor, seal the vault as best they could, and pretend they had never sought to offer Mejenes to Klyss.

Meanwhile the undead creature confined in the chambers below had recovered from its initial confusion. It displayed only rage and an implacable attachment to the ornate metal arm crafted to replace the one it had lost.

Despite two attempts, and unable to call on anyone outside their small group, the Morgathians failed to retrieve the arm. As the betrayed and angry Urdu threatened the fort's perimeter the priests determined that they would not be able to take the Key from him. Instead the creature that had been Mejenes along with his golden arm would have to remain at Mejetus.

While the Key would no longer be guarded by the legions, it would be guarded by a fearsome undead monster capable of only violence to anyone approaching it. Perhaps this was what Morgath intended. Someone, though, would have to watch over Mejenes until the church could decide his fate and rescue the Key. The task fell to Alai, the most junior priest, who had only been made amorvrin a month or so before, beneath the Hand of Crador. He would maintain the watch with the three surviving acolytes.

When the legion fought its way out and disappeared into the forest the Urdu followed, harrying the Corani as far as the Pemetta, where the Kubora took up the task. When they returned to Mejetus they found it occupied by the Equani. They had watched events unfold from across the river and entered and pillaged the deserted fort. Though they had burned most of the barracks the palisade was largely intact and it, combined with the weariness of the returning Urdu, meant the Equani could not be dislodged. They have held it ever since.

Only one building survived the initial sack; the Imperial Pavilion. The Equani entered it and killed three milksop boys who remonstrated with them. A fourth youth they took outside and burned to ashes in one of the barrack huts.

Returning to the Pavilion they stripped it of anything of value before finding the trapdoor leading down into the hill. Three descended in search of treasure; only one escaped with tales of a monster that tore his brothers to pieces. After nearly a month of contemplating the trap door six warriors decided they were more than a match for any Corani monster and disappeared into the darkness.

Among them was a respected war chief and when he returned to the surface to die in the arms of his friends, they believed his last words: leave it be! They were planning to use the pavilion as a great pyre of their war chief, when a naked and exhausted young man entered the camp and tried to enter the pavilion.

He was cut down before a warrior recognised him as the youth burned to death after the sack. As they watched his body crumbled to dust and blew away on a sudden breeze. The breeze carried the dust in the direction of the pavilion; a strong enough omen for the Equani to decide their war chief deserved a better pyre than this cursed place.

After that the youth returned again, so they killed him again, and again. Over and over again, but every time he

returned. Finally they allowed him to make his way to the pavilion.

Alai has forgotten how many times he has died since. First it was starvation as the Equani, who periodically settled at Mejetus were too afraid of him to allow him to learn their language, let alone feed him. There were also at least two very harsh winters during which he froze to death.

After that final freezing he returned to the camp to find it occupied by a group of Equani hunters and their wily old shaman. The old man provided Alai with food and fuel in return for agreeing to become a god who favoured the shaman. The cult quickly spread and Alai even taught them the rudiments of Morgathianism. Gradually his life settled into a more ordered pattern.

Over the centuries the Shevrach cult, centred on Mejetus, has grown to be part of Equani society and Alai is worshipped as their 'god', Nidmarw. Apprentices kill the shaman when he gets too old and then fight to the death to decide which of them Nidmarw favours, becoming the new shaman. They ensure the Shevrach maintain the pavilion and provide food and fuel to keep themselves and their god dry, warm and fed.

In the early decades Alai would listen at the door at the bottom of the stairs and hear the sounds of the undead Emperor's rage as he stumbled from room to room destroying everything and anything he came across.

During brief periods when the emperor became quiet Alai would try to recover the Key. Each time he failed. Over the last century he has heard fewer and fewer noises. Once it was so quiet for so long that he became concerned that the Emperor might have escaped and taken the Key with him. He unbarred the door and tentatively explored the room beyond. His last death was when the quiescent monster erupted from among some debris and crushed Alai's skull against the stone wall.

His dying thought was that this was his thirteenth and final death, but when he woke beneath the Hand he concluded that he must have misremembered. He recounted his deaths all the way back to the Pavilion and concluded that his next death would be the one from which Klyss would claim him forever. Determined not to waste that last death he has not visited his charge since, after all, rescue may yet arrive ...

The Tomb

All is darkness in the vaults below the pavilion. There are plenty of candles of human fat in the hall above but each **Casts a dim little light**. The PCs can also improvise torches from Alai's bedding but without pitch they will burn **Bright but unreliable**.

The GM can spend their Fate Points to invoke these aspects to create shadows or plunge the PCs into sudden darkness unless they, in turn, are prepared to use their own Fate Points to buy off the compels.

The GM should describe the tight turns of a stair that force the PCs to descend in single file and the **Tight turns restricting space and line of sight** to influence weapon use and open the opportunity for surprise at the bottom.

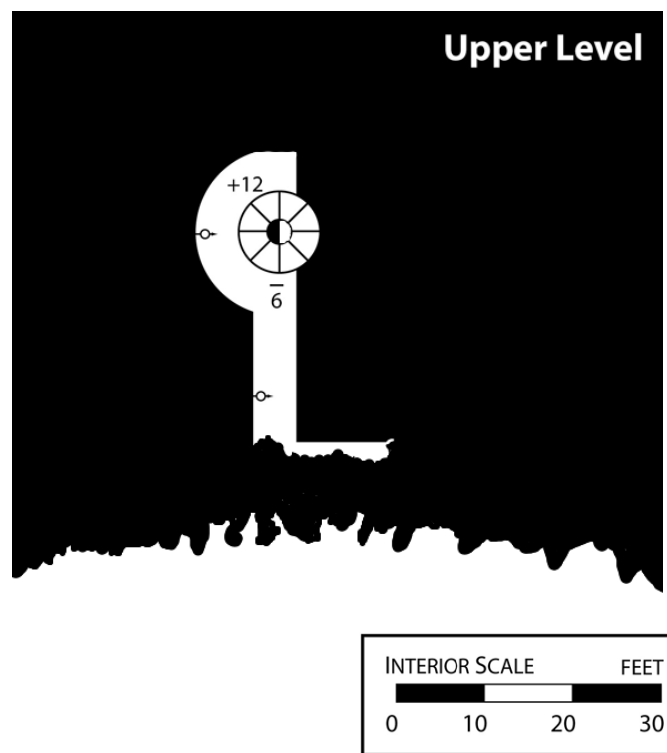
The maps of the chambers beneath the Imperial Pavilion are based on the *Khuzdul Outpost* (by Kerry Mould, with maps by Thomas Shook), the original of which can be found at Lythia.com.

This adventure changes the original article in that the upper level is entered from the Imperial Pavilion via the spiral stair described above. The original location 14 simply does not exist in this interpretation.

This adventure also assumes that Kerry's description, and Thomas' maps, show the outpost as it was a millennium before the Corani engineers found it. Over the intervening centuries the cliff overlooking the river Suthen had suffered several significant rock falls, carrying locations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 15 & 16 (from the original article) away with them.

The Upper Level

The Equani have not ventured down here since the fort was sacked, but Alai once used the corridor beside the spiral stair to store the more valuable items brought to him as 'sacrifices'. Once he imagined handing them over to his Morgathian rescuers when they came to save him; but that dream has slowly died, until today.



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Once the PCs reach the bottom they will find the corridor stacked with all manner of slightly valuable items.

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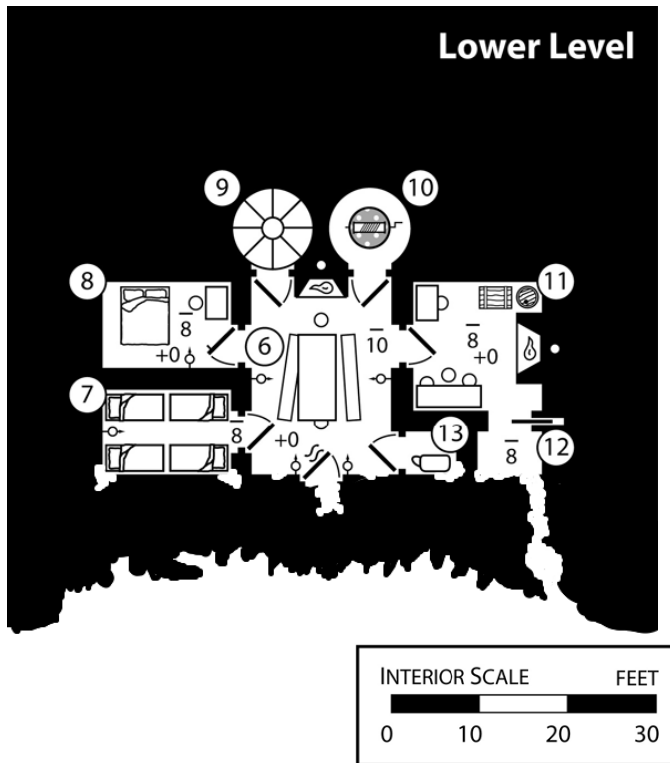
Investigate, +2 Overcome: the items have not been disturbed in a very long time, though there is some evidence that some of the better pieces were lifted out before being dropped again. **Success with Style**: it is almost as if they were selected, offered, but then discarded as worthless. (Alai offered the better pieces to Kutz but he had no interest in anything but the Key).

The Lower Level

Alai has avoided the lower level since his last 'death', until today. As the PCs begin their descent they will hear the splintering of wood and other sounds of destruction echoing up the stairwell.

[6] This was Mejenes' private dining room and where he discussed strategy with his officers. Most of the furniture was dashed to pieces in his rage during the early months of his confinement, but today even those pieces of debris have been dashed to splinters.

[7] The Emperor's body slaves lived here where they could serve his every need. His most trusted bodyguards stood watch at the surface. Today the door is beaten off its hinges and the beds rendered almost to matchwood.



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[8] This was Mejenes' bedchamber and is the only room that still resembles its original state. It is as if, buried in the rage and frustration of his undying, the Emperor has continued to keep it as a memory of his former life. The finer items are broken and crushed by the creature's clumsy efforts to use them, but the stool and camp table along with the bed remain much as they were. The bedding though is shredded and crumbling.

It is here that the Emperor lies for months at a time, quiescent and unmoving, perhaps seeking succour in disjointed dreams of distant greatness.

[9] This stairwell was how the Corani accessed this level when they found the complex in the 460s and decided to adapt it as living quarters for the Emperor. The stout door at the bottom of the stairs was originally intended to be barred from within but before they left the Morgathians installed a wooden bar to keep the creature from emerging. The PCs will find the bar has been removed and the door is slightly ajar.

Fortunately, in his rage, the Emperor has not yet noticed that the door is open (unless the GM wants to give it the advantage presented by the narrow stairway ...).

[10] This well would still work if the mechanism, rope and bucket the Corani installed had not rotted away. Today it is wedged shut by the debris the Emperor created 250 years ago when he woke to discover he was less than the superman the Morgathians had promised.

[11] This was the Khuzan kitchen, a purpose the Corani recognised and reused. They never managed to fully unblock the flue which emerged to the north of the fort so Mejenes preferred to have food prepared in the legionary mess rather than have to put up with the smoke that accumulated here. The same was true of the other fireplaces, so Mejenes' quarters were warmed with braziers.

[12] The Corani wedged the sliding door to this room closed as the servants complained of a biting draught issuing from a crack in the fallen rocks that comprised the wall. Since the fort fell the rocks have settled and the crack has widened significantly. Today it provides a tight but accessible route to the cliff face outside.

From the outside this crevice looks just like the many others that riddle the cliff-face. Only if someone took a light into the narrow passage would anyone outside get a clue that it existed.

[13] This Khuzan privy served as the Emperor's larder where the many delicacies that made the mess cooking bearable to his sophisticated tastes were stored.

Description of Events

Only when they emerge from the stairwell into [6] will an imposing figure with only one arm loom out of the shadows to kill them (unless the GM wants to give it the advantage presented by the narrow stairway, see [9] ...).

They may believe this is Kutz but should soon realise the figure is clad in heavy ornate armour. They are in the presence of what was once Mejenes the Great!

Only when they have subdued, destroyed or confined Mejenes, will they be able to explore the other chambers in search of Kutz. He is not here.

Instead they find a deathly pale man in his late middle years (amorrvin age slowly and Alai has aged by only 1 year for every 10 that have passed). He is huddled behind the door to [11] and weakly trying to hold it closed for fear the Emperor finds him.

The Undead Mejenes

Mad with rage and loss

Aggressive

Slow

+4 Fight (Touched by Bukrai: If any Physical Stress is inflicted on a target they also take +1 Mental Stress)

+3 Strength (+2 Damage)

+2 Endurance

+1 Intimidate

Bludgeoning Fists:1

Leather Ceremonial Armour:1

0 1 2 3 4

The Abandoned Guardian

The PCs should have no difficulty forcing the door open and discover that Alai is desperate to avoid his final death. Not only will Klyss claim him but he will have to answer for his failure to keep the Key safe.

Misguidedly believing he may still survive he will do anything to stop the PCs killing him, including telling them his story (above) and what happened a few hours ago. A cursory examination will show that he is beyond help. The damage the Emperor and Kutz have done to his ribcage makes death inevitable; he just doesn't know it yet.

He was sketching in his room when he heard a commotion in the hall outside. Peeking through the spyhole he uses to know when to make a ceremonial entry he saw Kutz break the shaman's neck on the 'altar'. That was nothing compared to something he had not sensed since the other priests left; the Shadow of Bukrai accompanied the visitor.

The PCs will probably conclude that the ceremony on Temple Hill may have left Kutz tinged with the Shadow, but to Alai this was what he had dreamed of for 2 centuries: rescue. The church had sent someone to find him at last.

He ran to the bearded one-armed man and embraced him but then his memory becomes blurred. He had the impression of telling the man about his drawings and about the Key and the Emperor. Then he remembers the man cutting away the portion of his drawing showing the route to the Hand of Crador and telling him to lead the way to the Key. Alai tried to offer his rescuer some of the prized

items he had accumulated on the upper level of the vaults but he showed no interest in them.

They entered [6] and when Kutz asked where he would find the Emperor and the Key Alai indicated [8]. He then insisted on Alai showing him the rest of the rooms before returning to [6].

To Alai's horror Kutz started to shout and the creature burst from its resting place. Alai was stunned by this turn of events and unable to resist when Kutz flung him into the creature's arms. By reflex the Emperor brought his arms together behind the winded priest and Kutz swiftly stepped up and tore the golden arm free.

Alai the Morgathian Priest

Apparently aged 40, height 5'6", light frame, weight 124 lbs, plain appearance, pale complexion, brown hair, blue eyes

Amorrvin guardian of the Key

Klyss will punish me

Shevrachi god

+2 Ritual (Morgath) (Shadow of Bukrai: spend a Fate Point to instantly summon the Shadow of Bukrai with the same characteristics as a Spirit Elemental conjured using the Savoryan skill but able to possess a target. **Possessed by the Shadow** is the first consequence applied if the cleric or a fellow believer spends a second Fate Point.

Possessed by the Shadow means the target is treated as a gulmorrvin ('mental' skills become 0; 'physical' skills reduced by 1) and they are under the complete control of the Morgathian cleric until the end of the scene if the consequence is Mild, the session if Serious, or the entire scenario if Grievous. Alternatively the cleric can release the target at will.

When the Shadow departs the target's skills return to normal but the relevant consequence becomes **Memory of the Shadow** until cured as a normal mental consequence.

+1 Craft (Drawing: +2 to create an advantage with Craft using his skill in drawing)

Unarmed:0; 1-h Improvised:1

Cloth:0

0 ● ●

The creature went mad, dropping Alai and blundering about the vaults looking for its lost arm. Alai painfully crawled to the nearest door and sought refuge where the PCs found him.

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Link to the next scene

Investigate, +2 Overcome: the sliding door between [11] and [12] has been forced open very recently.

If the PCs ask Eilith she will report that there is a clear scent of Kutz in these rooms and that he left through the fissure in the wall of [12]. While difficult it would not be impossible to clamber down the crags and disappear into the forest with both the Key and a map to the location of the Lock!

There may be time for a few short questions before Alai's eyes go vacant and his body crumbles to dust. The breeze from the sliding door - if they haven't already noticed it - blows the fine powder into the corners of the room. His life is over ... his duty failed.

Assuming the PCs pursue Kutz through the gap in the wall then Eilith can pick up Kutz' trail.

Athletics might be necessary to make the descent, at night, safely! Alternately they may return to the surface and take their chances against the Equani celebrating their victory.

While he has a map, the PCs have Eilith so they should have no trouble following. Whether they can keep up with him is another question. They can only try!

The pursuit through the forests towards the Broken Lands and the Hand of Crador can be played by the GM using the relevant sections and encounters from *Peran* and *Peran: Heart of Darkness*. The GM should be careful not to distract them too much but ensure they don't make up too much of the head start Kutz has.

The PCs can travel for 2 watches a day and spend a 3rd watch hunting and gathering with no ill effects. The journey will take them 10 - 11 days with no interruptions or

distractions. **Endurance**, +3, or +4, Overcome in flat mixed forest and the rough, hilly or mountainous stages, respectively, to travel for 3 watches per day. This can reduce the journey time to 7 - 8 days but the GM should apply cumulative **Weary**, **Exhausted** and **Dead on their feet** Boosts to those PCs who tie/fail successive overcomes.

Stage	Terrain	Distance (leagues)	Travel time (watches)
The ruins of Mejetus to the Broken Lands	Flat mixed forest	25	8-9
Through the Broken Lands to the Place of the Hand	Rough mixed forest	10	5

They begin several hours behind Kutz but Eilith can tell them over the following few days that they are closing that gap, very gradually. If they begin to become despondent that they will not get there in time, then the GM can remind them that as there are no signs of the start of the Final Battle between Agrik and Larani, they may yet succeed.

No matter how much they exert themselves they should not be able to catch him before he reaches the Hand of Crador, instead he should arrive at an hour or so before they do. If they are delayed for some reason, it shouldn't matter. What is waiting at the Hand means that a longer lead can be explained away by his captivity.



The Broken Lands

SCENE 6: THE HAND OF CRADOR

Overview

The PCs return to the Place of the Hand (see *Heart of Darkness*) to find they are not the first to arrive. They find Kutz is a prisoner but that a theological dispute offers them the distraction they need to follow him into the Hand.

GM Aims

- To play this scene as a shock: the Hand is already held ... by Agrikans!
- To provide the necessary distraction to enable the PCs to pursue Kutz into the Hand.

PC Outcomes

Initially faced by what appear to be insurmountable odds the PCs take an opportunity to get past the Agrikans into the Hand.

The Place of the Hand

When the PCs arrive (see *Denal Kubora* for a full scale map of the Place of the Hand), from the East this time, they will have a fine view of the Hand from the cliffs that overlook it. The rough terrain at the top of the cliffs make it easy for them to remain hidden while they survey the scene below.

[1] The banner of the Red Shadows of Herpa has been set up on the south side of the Hand. Half a company of Laumak, several officers, and a Herpan priest have set up camp near about 40 paces from what appears to them to be the most obvious entry into the Hand (see *Heart of Darkness: Hand of Crador Ground Level Map B [V]*). A cursory investigation discovered some very old Gargun droppings just within the passage so they have posted 3 men at the opening in case something emerges from the Hand.

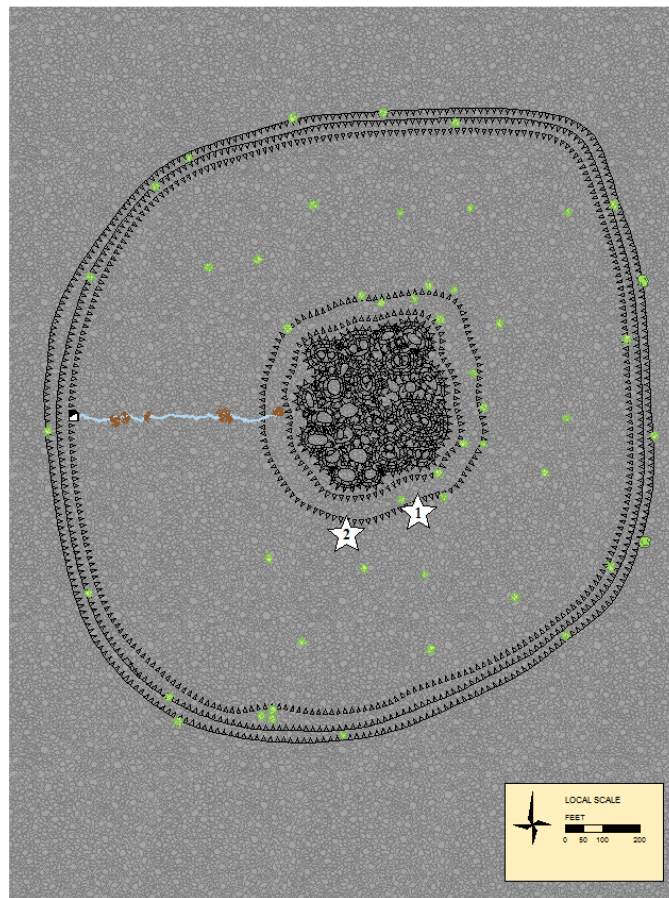
A full company set out from Menekai as a result of a very compelling divination that showed the Hand, the route to it, and the passages beneath it. Agrik may be anticipating what the Bitter Fallen is planning and wants to ensure he holds both sides of the portal. The rest of the men and all the horses were lost to a Kuboran ambush a few days south of here.

[2] Agrik appears to have been profligate with his portents as a similar group of Mamekans arrived from the west a few hours after the Red Shadows. Their banner flies 40 paces to the west of the Herpans who would not allow them to approach any closer.

The two orders have avoided coming to blows only because they are deep in hostile territory and subject to occasional harassment by the Yelgri that occupy the heights of the Hand.

THE HAND of CRADOR

GM MAP



Though there is no sign of Kutz, Eilith can follow his trail to the north side of the Place of the Hand where he appears to have descended to the jumbled limestone below; well out of sight of the Agrikans

Athletics, +2 Overcome: to follow Kutz's route down into the floor of the natural amphitheatre surrounding the Hand.

From the base of the cliff Eilith can track him to the north side of the hand from where he appears to have picked his way around the eastern side of the Hand edging closer to the camp.

The Bitter Fallen doesn't know the layout of the Hand and assumes the Agrikans have found the most promising way in. In its thirst to reach the Heart it is not thinking particularly logically, or it might have explored a different way in.

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Agrikan Laumak (approx.. 20)

*Veteran of many skirmishes
For Agrik and the Order!*

+3 Melee

+2 Endurance

+1 Strength (+1 Damage)

1h-Spear:2/1; Sword or Mace:2

Padded & Shield:1+2

0 1 1 1

Agrikan Knight (approx.. 4)

*The flower of Agrikan chivalry
For Agrik and the Order!*

+3 Melee

+2 Endurance

+1 Strength (+1 Damage)

Sword or Mace:2

Ring & Shield:2+2

0 1 1 1

Agrikan Priest (2)

*Fervent
Ordained into the Fires*

+3 Ritual

+2 Scholar

+1 Intimidate

Sword or Mace:2

Leather & Shield:1+2

0 1 1 1

If the PCs decide to use one of the gaps between the pillars on the north side of the Hand ... the GM should use *Heart of Darkness* to let them navigate a way to the Heart and discover Kutz is not there. The desire to 'embrace the Heart' (see below) should mean they quickly depart from the Chamber of the Heart but they may decide to establish a base in the passage leading to the Chamber and stop him ever getting close to it. Depending on their previous experience beneath the Hand the GM may warn them that staying put tends to attract the denizens that infest the passages beneath the Hand. The GM should then attack them with all the forces the Hand can muster to drive them

away from the Heart and give Kutz the chance to get to the Chamber of the Heart.

If the PCs decide to follow his trail ... they will make their way around the eastern edge of the Hand into sight of the Herpan camp, about 100 paces away. The orders have agreed that single combat between champions will determine which of them has Agrik's permission to enter the Hand.

All the Agrikans, including the guards set to watch the passage have formed a circle around a large flat rock mid-way between the two banners where the ritual combat will take place. The nearest Agrikan is now almost 50 paces from the passage into the Hand.

Together the two priests call on Agrik to get his attention: *'Lord of the Fires of Balgashang we will let you decide which of our noble orders will lead the way into the tunnels your visions have shown us. Choose the most righteous champion!'*

In the respectful pause after they complete their oration Kutz erupts from among the rocks about 20 paces from the passage and lumbers across the crumbling limestone blocks and into the Hand. He is wearing the arm he took from the Emperor.

Notice, +2 Overcome: Kutz is gaunt and heavy footed. It might be that the exertion that has brought him to the Hand has sapped some of his inhuman strength and endurance.

Link to the next scene

Chaos and recrimination erupts among the Agrikans; each order believing the other to have betrayed the agreement, and that the figure racing to the Hand belongs to their rivals! The ring quickly disintegrates and the orders face off with weapons drawn.

The GM should encourage the PCs to make use of the distraction to follow Kutz into the Hand. They should certainly feel there is an imperative to act.

Athletics, +2 Overcome: will get them to the passage before the Agrikans realise there are third parties interested in the Hand as well as themselves. The GM should encourage PCs to 'fail forward' and accept the cost of a Mild consequence in the form of a *sprained ankle* etc. to ensure they get into the Hand before the Agrikans can stop them.

If they prevaricate ... then the immediate opportunity will be lost as they plan a more elaborate solution to their problem. This is not a disaster as the GM can decide that while the Bitter Fallen can scent the portal and should be able to take Kutz straight to it, a lack of the precise detail of the passages causes as long a delay as is desired as Kutz wanders beneath the Hand on search of the Heart.

That, and the attempts of the creatures beneath the Hand to delay them should account for the fact that whatever the PCs do Kutz always gets to the Heart 10-15 minutes ahead of them.

Delay will see the Agrikans restart negotiations. These won't last forever and the fact that some non-Agrikan has entered the Hand will tend to increase their cooperation and lead to signs that they are preparing to enter the Hand together. This should be enough to prompt the PCs to look for a swift plan to get into the Hand, possibly by using a passage out of sight of the Agrikans. These negotiations should also buy the time for the PC to try to stop Kutz before they have to face a coordinated assault from troops of the two most effective fighting forces in western Harn!



The passages beneath the Hand

SCENE 7: THE HEART OF DARKNESS

Overview

The chance to save Kethira from the apocalypse!

GM Aims

- To ensure the PCs understand what is at stake: the end of the world;
- To accelerate the pace to ensure that even if the PCs took a lot of time to get into the Hand they realise they have little time to stop Kutz before he opens the portal that could signal the end of days;
- To use tremors and slight cracks in the walls of the limestone spires of the Hand to imply that something significant is happening
- To remind the PCs that they are not alone beneath the Hand, but use the denizens to subtly drive them towards the Heart rather than as obstructions;
- To describe events on the other side of the portal as dramatically and ominously as possible.

PC Outcomes

They save the world and survive to brag about it!

Description of Events

Once the PCs enter the Hand the GM will need *Heart of Darkness* to describe their route and any encounters. Any surviving Gargun left the Hand to perish in the wilderness and anything the PCs killed last time is likely to have re-generated or bred so numbers will be as before.

The creatures beneath the Hand have all been tasked or warped to deny access to the Heart but they recognise the Gatekeeper and will not attack the Key-bearer. They can, though, be used by the GM to make the PCs work hard, and take time, to reach their goal. The denizens of the Hand can also weaken the PCs in advance of the climactic scene of the adventure.

Corrupted Harnic Adder (1)

Aggressive defender of the Hand!

Silent in the dark; Small (+2)

+2 Notice

+1 Fight (Poison: Any successful attack requires the victim to overcome +2 with Endurance or suffer 1 physical stress per exchange until treated)

Bite:1

Skin:0

0

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Swarm of Corrupted Lizards (1/PC)

Aggressive defender of the Hand!
They're in the walls! Small (+2)

+2 Athletics (Elusive: +2 to defend against all but area attacks)
+1 Fight (Poison: Any successful attack requires the victim to overcome +2 with Endurance or suffer 1 physical stress per exchange until treated)

Bite:0
Skin:0

0 1 1

Multi-headed Roper Snake (1)

Aggressive defender of the Hand!
Never leave the pool; Great Size(+4); TERRIBLE(+1)!

+4 Fight: (Multiple attacks: Can attack ≤3 targets per exchange, or spend a Fate Point to double that number) **AND (Serpentine Crush:** Spend a Fate Point to add *Incapacitated* (with a free invoke) to any any attacks that caused damage)
+3 Notice
+2 Stealth
+1 Athletics: (Swimmer: Move two zones through water so long as there are no obstructing aspects)

Tail: 1 & Squeeze: 3 (if target is *Incapacitated*)
Scales:2

0 1 1 1 1 1

Opening the portal

Kutz is the 'Gatekeeper' referred to in previous adventures, but he is sharing his body with the Bitter Fallen, one of the 'Unlamented Dead' capable of opening the portal from the Kethiran side, but supposedly trapped on the Yashain.

Kutz now has the 'Key'; the golden arm crafted from the precious metals the Morgathians blessed beneath the Hand. With this he can open the 'Lock' that the Shek P'var created to seal the portal; the 'Heart'.

The Bitter Fallen does not have any precise idea how to use the Key to unlock the Heart. Though it is not subject to the strange attraction that a mortal would feel when exposed to the Heart, it fears interference from the Agrikans.

Spirit of the Earth (1)

Aggressive defender of the Hand!
Never leave the passages; Never enter the Chamber of the Heart

The first time the Spirit is encountered it manifests as a Small (+2) Earth Elemental capable of only Attack actions. If it is driven off ('taken out'), then 1d6 minutes later it reappears having summoned more of its strength against the PCs. Driving it off again leads to successive intervals of 1d6 minutes and a growth in its strength until it is a Superb (+5) Earth Elemental. Driving this incarnation off means it will not reform until the next Session.
– see Fate of Harn: Shek P'var Extra).

Elemental +2 to +5: this single skill increases in time with the change in the scale of the elemental the Spirit creates:

Overcome: used to stop a PC getting past the elemental by brute strength or agility.

Create an Advantage: used to physically obstruct the activity of the PCs.

Attack: used to cause physical stress to the target by battering them with chunks of limestone. The laerger the elemental them the more damage it deasl as described in Fate of Harn: Fight.

Defend: The Spirit has no interest in defending its temporary elemental form, so PCs attacks are against +0.

'Strength'	+2	+3	+4	+5
Batter:1	Dam +1	Dam +2	Dam +2	Dam +3
Stone:4	0 1	0 1 1 1	0 1 1 1 1	0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
Conseq.	Mild 2	Mild 2	Mild 2 Serious 4 Serious 4	Mild 2 Serious 4 Serious 4 Serious 4

Therefore it will begin to experiment as soon as it finds the Heart so that it can gain control of the portal quickly. Then it can negotiate fealty from those of the Bitter Fallen who

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seek passage into Kethira, and use them against the warriors outside that might threaten it.

It quickly discovers that the Key cuts through the limestone encasing the cairn like a hot knife through butter. The limestone, while apparently corporeal is only there because of the water being drawn through the chamber above by the magically bound water spirit. It is, therefore, linked to the enchantment and susceptible to the Key.

Having discovered this power of the Key the Bitter Fallen will use Kutz to slice through the stalagmite rising from the cairn towards the roof of the chamber and topple it away from the cairn using Kutz's considerable strength.

It doesn't know if it needs to clear the entire cairn, but the Agrikan mosaics implied that the entire cairn should be toppled. It will therefore work at 'wiping away' the limestone, and the calcified human remains entombed within it, from the entire cairn. Then it will seek to topple the stones.

By the time the PCs arrive in the Chamber of the Heart Kutz should have cleared most of the limestone away from the cairn.

The GM should remind the PCs of the mosaic showing the entire cairn being toppled in order to allow Agrik's hordes to pass through. This should encourage them to believe that if they can only kill or restrain Kutz then they can stop the apocalypse.

However, the Bitter Fallen in Yashain exert the same attraction though the Heart as the PCs previously experienced. At the start of each exchange each PCs overcome the urge to embrace the Heart. They can only take an action against Kutz if they succeed.

Will, +4 Overcome: **Tie** and the GM gains the Boost **Eerily attractive** (with a free invoke) to apply to the next overcome attempt. **Fail** and the PC embraces the cairn, loses their action and taking 1 point of Mental Stress. They then need to make the +4 Overcome to break free at the start of the next exchange and be able to take an action, or take another point of Mental Stress. This continues until either they begin to take Consequences such as **Fascinated** (Mild), **Dangerously Attractive** (Serious), and **Fatally Attractive** (Grievous). The Critical Consequence is **Consumed by the Heart**, which triggers the taking of Physical Stress until the PC is dead. The GM can increase the challenge by spending a Fate Point to invoke **Heart of Darkness** and increase the Overcome by +2. However they should be careful not to incapacitate all the PCs too quickly; they must have a chance to grapple with Kutz and save the world!

Conceding

This unique situation requires the GM to be very clear with the PCs about how Fate's Concession rule applies. If a PC concedes during their struggle to free themselves from the Heart, or while fighting with Kutz, then they must

run from the chamber and not re-enter. They take no further part in the Scene and give up any chance to influence events: either they fight to the death to stop Kutz, or accept that they cannot stop the end of the world.

Coln of Kutz ridden by a Bitter Fallen

Looks much older than his 40+ years: a stooped 6' with a gaunt frame, haggard appearance, dark complexion, bald, straggly beard where grey has largely replaced the red, pale blue eyes with an evil glint. He wears the Golden Arm of Mejenes the Great in place of his lost left arm

Gatekeeper and Key

Indomitable will

Physically exhausted

+6 Will (Influence: The Bitter Faslendoes not need to use its Influence to 'ride' Kutz; the ceremony on Temple Hill gave it full rights within this body), **AND (Confuse:** Spend a Fate Point to leave misleading memories within a mortal who suffers a point of mental stress as a result of a mental attack using Will)

+5 Empathy (Identify weakness: +2 to discover and use a mortal's aspect or knowledge)

+4 Rapport (Master of bargains: +2 when using Rapport to strike a bargain or negotiate a desired outcome spending a Fate Point to ignore a language barrier)

+3 Strength* (Ignore the pain: Use Strength to defend against Melee/Fight attacks though the Kutz body takes +1 damage on a tie)

+3 Fight*

+2 Endurance* (Ignore the strain: Once per session spend a Fate Point to reduce the severity of a serious physical consequence to mild, or remove a mild consequence altogether)

+2 Survival*

+2 Notice*

+1 Scholar (Speaks Old Jarinese)*

+1 Athletics*

+1 Intimidate

*Skills inherent in the Kutz's body

The Golden Arm (or chunk of limestone): 1 (Dam+2)
Cloth: 0

Physical: ① ① ② ③

Mental: ① ① ② ③ ④

Mild ①: Weary

Serious ②: Exhausted

Grievous ③:

Embracing the Heart

As well as the impact described above any PC that touches the Heart will be able to see through the portal to the other side. The GM should remind them of their previous experience of this (see *Heart of Darkness*) so that some brave soul may be curious enough to take the risk even if not forced to embrace the Heart! The GM should consider compelling scholarly aspects to 'encourage' this.

Heart of Darkness includes a description of what they saw last time. It is obvious to any PC embracing the Heart this time that things have changed.

Anyone looking through the Heart will see that, though the Bitter Fallen still swirl about the Yashain side of the portal gnawing at their soul, there is now primeval forest surrounding the barren clearing. The PCs may not realise it but their intervention during *Heart of Darkness* and *Root of all Evil* has shifted the balance of power on this small portion of Yashain.

What was a wilderness between the realms of Agrik and Larani has responded to the tales told of the PCs among the Kuboran tribes. They appeared to fulfil myths about bringing sleep to Crador the Blind, and took on the heavy load born by the Crones of the Nolgind. Most recently they have earned a place in the history of the tribes at the Moot. Whether individual Kubora believe they are heroes or villains they have offered the tribes the opportunity to see their legends and myths as something connected to the present. This has strengthened belief in Kemlar the Guide, his wife Heneryne, and their son Crador.

What was previously the boundary between fiery Balgashang and the tributary realms of Larani is, for now, greatly influenced by the Kuboran pantheon. As a result the Great Forest of the Kuboran after-life has expanded to surround the portal's exit on Yashain.

The GM should feed the following visions to the PCs embracing the Heart as the Scene proceeds.

- All is not well in the Great Forest. On one side of the clearing trees are beginning to smoulder and flames can be seen flickering in the forest canopy. Could it be that the Agrikan violence around the Hand, the actions of the Bitter Fallen, and the nearness of the Key are encouraging an advance by the forces of Agrik? Certainly some of the flames flickering among the trees look animate, and might be bearing polearms.
- On the opposite side of the clearing a lion bearing a red and white standard emerges to watch events. The Lion Mendiz, Larani's banner bearer has come to oppose the forces of Agrik; the battle lines for the final conflict between the two gods are forming!
- An old man led by a blind youth, and supported by a beautiful mature woman, enter the clearing between the assembling forces of Agrik and Larani. As the PC watches the woman hands the boy a bow. He takes

very deliberate aim at one of the Bitter Fallen feeding on the PC and fires, piercing it and causing it to shy away. This creates the advantage **Protected by Crador** on the scene. It can be invoked once for free by a PC embracing the Heart. After that invoking it costs a Fate Point. Crador's quiver never seems to empty and his blind aim is uncanny.

Meanwhile, Kutz' efforts to clear the limestone around the cairn are encouraging more V'hir to appear among the trees until a veritable firestorm is heading towards the clearing. If the PCs can drive Kutz away from his task then the advance of the V'hir slows.

If the PCs try to cut the Key from the stump of Kutz's left arm ... it makes little different. The Key has been turned in the Lock and the golden arm will remain held in contact with the Heart and be impossible to remove, even if Kutz is removed from contact with the arm.

Confrontation

However things proceed in the Chamber, at one point, perhaps through a last effort by the Bitter Fallen as Kutz is cut down by the PCs; perhaps by a PC pushing away from the Heart, the topmost stone of the cairn is dislodged. Any PC can now see through the walls of the Chamber to the clearing on Yashain; the gate is opening.

Bitter Fallen squeeze through the opening door out of Yashain and into the Chamber; it is important that some of them escape as future adventure hooks! They now ignore the PCs as they are much more interested in using the gateway than attacking any mortal. The PCs no free to act as they please in the presence of the Heart for the first time.

- The V'hir are edging closer to the portal, one side of the clearing is now a firestorm. Opposite them the Lion Mendiz has been joined by groups of knights and men-at-arms, in the same red and white livery, ready to confront their ancient enemies over the fate of the world. The PCs can only suppose that similar battle lines are forming across Yashain around other portals between the two realms.

At that point the PCs must either prepare for the end of the world or replace the stone in an effort to close the gate again. It is to be hoped they achieve the latter.

If Kutz has already been cut down ... then the Bitter Fallen that rode him will manifest above the cairn accepting the fealty of the others passing out of the gate and into Kethira. They streak away from the Heart into the walls of the Chamber, cracking the limestone where they pass through.

If he is still able to act then Kutz will ... try to obstruct any PC trying to replace the capstone. If the worst comes to the worst then the Amorvrin Alai will break all records for resurrection and crawl out from a shadowed corner of the Chamber where it was first created and distract Kutz

long enough for the PCs to finish him off. The effort comes too early in his regeneration and will cost Alai this last life. Perhaps Klyss will be kind given the manner of his departure.

If the PCs can wrestle the stone back onto the top of the cairn they can seal the portal before the Final Battle starts.

Strength, +5 Overcome to succeed. The stone has become preternaturally heavy; as the portal swings open it becomes more and more difficult to close. Several PCs may be needed to lift it into place.

As they struggle to replace it the mature woman with Kemlar and Crador walks gracefully towards the Heart. As she approaches her gait becomes more laboured and her posture becomes hunched. She ages visibly until she is hobbling forward battling the Bitter Fallen that remain on the other side of the portal aside with a stick that has appeared in her hand.

Wenowina the Crone leans heavily on that stick and gently pulls the golden arm through the portal into Yashain. If Kutz is still attached to it he is effortlessly dragged through too, leaving the Bitter Fallen behind. She tucks the Key under her arm and leans down to help Kutz to his feet: he has reached the afterlife he would have chosen, at last.

Then she turns her now miraculously pert bottom to the PCs and the wanton young woman she has become walks back to join her the Kuboran gods. Together they take the Key into the forest, but not before 'Wenowina' casts a last look back over her shapely shoulder and gives the PCs a suggestive wink.

Kutz is joined by a group of 11 Kuboran hunters who form a defensive circle around the Yashain side of the Heart. The PCs may be reminded of 11 stones on the cliffs along the coast from the Sholen Nolgind camp ...

As the portal closes the firestorm is gone; Agrik's V'hir have returned to Balgashang and new shoots are already bursting from the ground to replace the blackened stumps of the trees it had consumed.

The Laranian forces are also gone. The Lion Mendiz dips Larani's standard a fraction in the direction of the Heart (and the PCs) before the vision of Yashain is gone. The Heart still pulses with light, but now it is a green and healthy shade.

Link to the next scene

With the Key in the Lock the enchantments that have protected the Heart for so long lose their integrity. Combined with the impacts of the Bitter Fallen who escaped through its walls the PCs are thrust back into Kethiran reality as chunks of limestone begin to fall out of the ceiling.

The PCs will race out of the Heart pursued by clouds of limestone dust as the ways into the Hand are changed forever. The portal may still be there, but it will be behind tons of limestone.

SCENE 8: AFTERMATH

Overview

The PCs probably emerge expecting to confront the Agrikans but find an altogether different battle in progress.

GM Aims

- To fight the battle with as much detail as the PCs need to feel satisfied before finishing the adventure.

PC Outcomes

They should realise they have saved the world, or at least helped Wenowina do so, paid a debt to the Gurim, and bested the Agrikans too.

Description of Events

Outside the Hand a battle is in progress; the Agrikan camp beside the Hand is under attack from two sides.

A group of Kuborans have entered the Place of the Hand from the west and are attacking the joint Agrikan perimeter.

Asawne Warriors (2 per Agrikan)

Veteran hunter

Fear the Hand of Crador

+3 Melee

+2 Endurance

+1 Strength (+1 Damage)

1h-Spear:2/1; Handaxe:1/1

Leather & Round Shield:1+2

0 1 1 1

The Agrikans are also being attacked, from the south, by a motley handful of men-at-arms led by Sir Hovan Mindar, with the cry of 'For Larani!'

Laranian Men-at-Arms (5)

Veteran of many skirmishes

For Larani!

+3 Melee

+2 Endurance

+1 Strength (+1 Damage)

1h-Spear:2; Falchion:2

Padded & Shield:1+2

0 1 1 1

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Notice, +2 Overcome: Gomas Straight Arrow is directing the attack. He foresaw danger awaiting the PCs at the Hand and raised support among both the Aswane and Denal Kubora to break with tradition and travel to the Hand!

Notice, +2 Overcome: Mosak the Bull Man has been compiling rumours about the Hand for decades and received a vision from Peoni to help him get here with Sir Mindar and his escort.

In the face of the attack the Herpans and Mamekans have put aside their quarrel and are beginning to organise a stout defence. Their training and the quality of their arms will sway the battle in their favour given time.

However, were the Agrikans to be attacked from the unexpected direction of the Hand by a small group of motivated individuals ...

The Battle of Crador's Hand

The GM should mediate the battle in as much detail as necessary. 'Lust for Battle' can be found in Fate of Harn, and provides a way to resolve a large skirmish, such as this, using Fate mechanics.

If things are going badly for the PCs then the GM can introduce a couple of Denal Anghenfil ('Marsh Ogres') to support the Kuboran effort!

Denal 'Marsh Ogre' (2-3)

Veteran hunter

Fear the Hand of Crador

+5 Strength

+4 Endurance

+3 Stealth

+2 Fight (+3 Damage)

+1 Athletics (Swimmer: can move through water as if on land as long as there is no obstruction)

Huge Flint Maul:3; Unarmed:1

Naked:0

0 1 1 1 1

In Conclusion ...

It is to be hoped that the PCs have been successful in sealing the Heart of Darkness, and that the Final Battle does not start, so the end of the world is forestalled.

EPILOGUE

The PCs

They must report their success to the Gurim. If they don't he will assume they have betrayed him and ensure they regret it.

Gomas will offer the PCs the chance to return with him to the Asawne camp, from where they should have little trouble returning to Tormau. From there Jamys of Abrant can be able to arrange passage to Golotha.

While the PCs cannot provide a body they will be able to provide a convincing account of events; what they learned from Alai can be corroborated from the fragments remaining in the temple archives.

Jamys of Abrant will be happy to welcome the PCs back to the White Stroat and can offer 'decent work for decent grub'. If they turn him down then so be it, but they may still find there's a reason to travel that way again in the not too distant future ...

The Agrikans

It is unlikely that the Kubora or the Laranians will take any prisoners. However, the GM could ensure a Mamekan &/or a Herpan lived to tell their tale to their respective Akarata. Confirmation of the location of the 'Claws of Agrik' may only fuel the fervour of the Mamekan faction that favours further attempts to dominate Peran. It is also likely to strengthen Herpan desire to do the same and demonstrate they are the natural leaders of the Agrikan Church on Harn.

Either order might mount a further expedition in strength to discover what exactly lies beneath the 'Claws', or seek out the PCs for any number of interesting fates ...

The Laranians and Master Mosak

They aren't exactly sure what they've achieved, but Mosak assures them they are safer than they were an hour or so before. He will also helpfully intervene to distract them if the Laranians begin to suspect that the PCs are acting for the Gurim.

He has taken note of the PCs and recognised that though they were set to work by an evil hand, the outcome was not evil. This is a talent that the more enlightened members of the Peonian Church value.

He and the Laranians might be convinced that they would be safer accompanying the PCs to Tormau than making their own way back through the forest. The Earl is known to be more honourable than any other Rethemi so they can probably rely on him to grant them mercy and put them on a boat to Selvos.

The Kubora and Gomas

Gomas will listen eagerly to anything the PCs are prepared to tell him of the about events beneath the Hand. They may not realise it but they have written another chapter into the 'Tale of the Strangers' which will win Gomas the story-telling contest at the next Moot. That, in turn, will strengthen the grip of the Great Forest on a particular region of Yashain.

The PCs may also have strengthened the will of the Kubora to be great again. Ryler the Southron may never have a better chance of rallying the tribes to his cause than immediately after Gomas finishes telling his story next year. Reverence for, and belief in, the Kuboran pantheon will run hot and strong as the tribes learn that their gods intervened and thwarted both Agrik and Larani. Could it be that the PCs are the unknowing puppets of a Kuboran pantheon on the rise?

Eilith

She is satisfied that the creature that did her so much harm is gone. Whatever fragment of her personality remained within Kutz has gone with the death of his body. The Laranians will want to destroy her, but Mosak will intervene with the promise that he will ensure she finds a peaceful rest if she will go with him. She will still die but Mosak will ensure what remains of her soul finds some kind of peace in the afterlife.

The PCs may, though, keep her secret or even return her to the Morgathians. It is difficult to see what value she has now that she has fulfilled her purpose. The decision is theirs.

The Gurim

The Gurim became aware of the risks the emergence of a 'Gatekeeper' might present when the Khala-Bukrin (Master of Archives) of the Golothan temple found an obscure reference to some scholars that accompanied a Corani naval expedition. Unfortunately many of the temple records, and priests, were destroyed following the revision of Morgathian theology and practice in the make 590's.

The oldest of the Golothan Khala, the Khala-Morvrin, claims to know nothing of those times, but the Gurim suspects that he is old enough to know more of that distant mission into the wilderness than he has ever told. Perhaps the Khala-Morvrin recollects his own resurrection, or that of another, in the vaults beneath the Golothan temple when the city was called Merethos. Perhaps the last memory of that waking amorvrin before their rebirth was of a screaming tribesman charging into a clearing in a dense forest.

It is possible that it was the Khala-Morvrin who pointed the Master of archives at the relevant text, though he might claim it was simply a practical joke that happened to turn up something useful!

It might be that it was the Khala-Morvrin or Khala-Bukrin who met with the PCs below the Zarainsen warehouse, and not the Gurim himself. It is possible they are pawns in a Morgathian plot to credit, or discredit, a Khala or the Gurim himself.

While the Gurim, or any Khala, is unlikely to trust outsiders with any further investigation the PCs were previously offered the opportunity of further service and even undeath as an amorvrin. This could take a campaign in a very different direction if the GM and players wanted to explore the dark side ...

The Bitter Fallen

It is up to the GM whether the Bitter Fallen that drove Kutz escaped with its 'subjects'. It might provide a recurring nemesis for the PCs as 'Lord of the Fallen', or the subject of further adventures once it begins to cause mischief. Whether or not it escaped a significant number of the more potent Bitter Fallen are now free in the world where they can provide a range of interesting encounters in the future.

DESIGNERS NOTES & GM BRIEFING

This section includes some of the material that didn't make it into *Peran*, *Afarezirs*, *Tribes of the Kubora*, &/or the Agrikan Order articles. Either there wasn't room for it &/or it was judged a little too far 'out there' for canon. I include it to illustrate some of the thinking behind the Dark Rethem campaign and to provide additional plot hooks a GM might exploit.

The Hand of Crador

Many sages believe there is a congruence between Kethira and that of the 'divine' world of Yashain. They speculate that events on Yashain are reflected on Kethira, and perhaps those on Kethira are reflected on Yashain, in the way that an action can cast a shadow on a screen.

The Agrikan Hierarchy of Eternal Flame is particularly interested in identifying the Kethiran equivalent of the Plain of Khamar, where the fateful battle between Larani and Agrik was fought. They believe that in finding the point of congruence of Khamar on Kethira they will be a step closer to finding tangible evidence of Agrik's lost claws. At least one pontiff claimed that Khamar was the Lysara drylands but most agree it is simply not hot enough to be a parallel for somewhere close to fiery Balgashang. They have also failed to find anything that could convincingly be described as evidence of Agrik's claws.

Some Azeryani historian even suggest that it was the search for Khamar and the Claws that drove the Empire to some of the most desolate, and otherwise valueless, deserts around the Venarian Sea. In the 3rd century, for instance, much was made of legends of a particular iron ore found in the rocky outcrops of Hepekeria and called 'khamar' in some texts. Within a century an imperial army had landed on the shores of the sub-continent.

The Hierarchy's interest dates back to the very roots of Agrikan belief. The volcano that consumed Ilypen has always been thought of as a gateway to the core of Balgashang and so, when the Prophet's followers dispersed to carry this word across Lythia, and build the 888 cairns, they travelled in the certain knowledge that parts of Yashain intruded into Kethira.

Deep in the Pontifical archives is a much re-written tale of one such party of wandering cairn-builders who may have been the first Agrikans to set foot on Harn. They arrived in advance of the organised waves of Pharic invaders and travelled north and west away from the coast. On their journey they encountered a large band of Jarin that had just completed its journey out of Nuthela into the western wilderness. From those tribes they heard of the 'Falling God':

Long ago, when the People knew nothing of The Land of Trees and Plenty and the Old Ones of the Forest made their

home there, as they had for eternity. Then there was a great battle in the skies and a god was cast down. His weapon fell to earth at the head of the Great River and the land drew itself up to the East as it feared the club. The River rose to drown the god for it knew him as not Good - but he did not die.

He slept the sleep of ages and dreamed many dreams. Only his hand tells of his resting place as he reaches for the Light. From it dark dreams stalk the Land and bad luck flows into the Waters.

To make his slumber long and make better dreams and luck sacrifice must be made. This is what the People learned when they came to The Land of Trees and Plenty and this is the lore they have followed.

Whether this is something the tribes learned from the Khuzdul of Kiraz; or describes real events from the time of their arrival in Peran; or is simply a means to explain the strange limestone formations of the Broken Lands is not known. The story does not say which god fell but when the Agrikan wanderers saw the place that it described they believed they had found Agrik's claws

Their leader claimed to have been granted a vision of a gateway to Balgashang beneath the 'Claws' and set his companions to excavating a chamber in which to build their cairn. When the work was completed the wanderers prepared to separate and go their different ways. However, their leader announced he would journey no further but settle with the tribes. One of his companions challenged his leadership but was defeated. Believing that their leader had betrayed their faith the remaining wanderers left him to his fate. It was the words of one of those surviving companions which were set down later and now lie, forgotten, in the great library of Lysara, lost among the multitude of tales told of the 888 cairns.

Agrikan belief & Azeryani destiny

The cairns were initially viewed allegorically by the church, but with the growing domination of the Azeryani peninsula by the Empire the cairns became a convenient focus for an imperial religion. A Pontiff once announced:

'The 888 cairns are real and it is our divine and imperial purpose to find them. Ilypylen decreed their placement so that we that have come after him have a reason to spread the word of Agrik and the demesne of his most mighty terahni - the Emperor.'

Throughout the expansion of the Azeryani Empire during the 1st - 3rd centuries the 'Cairn Doctrine' provided endless arguments in favour of a 'just and holy war'.

However, despite the expansion of the Empire over all south-central Lythia no cairn had been found which exhibited any divine characteristics. By 300TR politically sensitive pontiffs began to worry that, as a result, the teachings of the church might begin to appear hollow. For another hundred years, though, the church encouraged Emperors to look beyond the seas for the cairns. Then, when the

century war with the Dalkeshi ended with stalemate, the High Corcuno published a decree that formalised what select Agrikan scholars had had been quietly preparing for a generation. In 399TR the cairns were declared to be ‘allegorical devices rather than physical objects’. They should no longer be sought in the material plane but believers should look within themselves and others for evidence of the cairns that underpinned their faith.

Lists of those priests that had spoken powerfully in favour of the ‘Cairn Doctrine’ were drawn up and they were mercilessly purged. Soon what had begun as a change of doctrine had become a decade long witch-hunt which saw hundreds of Agrikan priests fed to the Holy Flame on the flimsiest evidence of heresy. In the face of the pogrom many dies but some priests gave up position and name and disappeared, taking to the road to seek the cairns in secret.

Marasalir the Ulanekh

One such heretic Marasalir claimed to be a travelling Ulanekh. He had already explored parts of Hepekeria in the footsteps of the legions. With him he carried an obscure manuscript describing an early Agrikan hero called Mamaka. In those ‘Trials of Mamaka’ he found reference to a cairn the Holy Smith had encountered during his journey in search of an ore called ‘al Khamar’. Despite great hardships Marasalir found no cairn but discovered that the Taugari cultists told similar stories of their ancient heroes. He succeeded in converting one such cultist to Agrikanism by drawing parallels with the Hepekerian god Azay. The man was a talented smith schooled in all the lore of the Taugari. The Hepekerian is not named in any manuscript but Marasalir named him ‘the Mamekan’ in honour of the hero that had brought them together.

Together the two returned to Lysara where the convert sought to codify all he knew of the ways of Taugari metalcraft while Marasalir buried himself in the bowels of the great library. There the fruits of his search were great for he found in a lost archive the tale of the Harnic cairn builders. Here was a distinctive geographical feature within which the cairn would be found. If he could find it then the Hierarchy of Eternal Flame would have to alternative but to admit its error and continue the search for other cairns. Marasalir and the Mamekan departed for Harn and arrived at the court of the Corani Emperor Kobar.

Prior to Marasalir’s arrival the Agrikan orders of the Octagonal Pit and of Demon Pameshlu were the only Agrikan orders found in the Corani Empire. They were encouraged to service the mob’s thirst for grand and bloody entertainment. Marasalir, claiming the official sanction of the Pontiff, introduced the Emperor’s generals to the more martial aspects of Agrik and was granted permission to accompany the Corani legions as they pressed westwards. Among them he founded the Order of Khamar, the first Agrikan war-cult recognised by the Corani throne.

The archives of the K’norran temple in Golotha says that: *‘At the start of the 5th century, the Corani legions absorbed the tribes of the Jenath and took the river valleys of the Perath and Denia. Citizens followed them and settled from Emesa northwards and Tormau eastwards. The settlers explored many of the limestone caves they discovered in the forest and established mines in the river valleys in pursuit of the tales of gold and silver that circulated at that time’.*

The Order of Khamar was firmly established at Kustan by 425TR and accompanied all the expeditions deeper into Peran. They maintained smaller enclaves at the other legionary outposts in Peran, such as Emesa and across Peran to the Pemetta. ‘The Mamekan’ continued to be mentioned in the stories of legionaries returning from the frontier as a *‘strangely attired priest’*, but the fate of Marasalir is not recorded. Certainly by the mid-400s he would have been an old man, but then so too the Mamekan.

Morgathian concerns

Throughout the period of the Corani occupation of Peran the influence of the Morgathian Church within the Empire was subtle but insidious. During the reign of Emperor Laketta the Morgathian’s provided a theological underpinning for his hedonistic pursuits in return for which he allowed Morgathian priests to travel widely through the Empire. Such an early expedition of Morgathian scholars to Peran first noted interest to what the Khamari were seeking. Ever watchful for religious competitors the Morgathians sent more scholars into the wilderness and in particular encouraged Emperor Mejenes to push across Peran and into Equeth in pursuit of an ever greater empire.

There is no evidence that the Order of Khamar ever precisely identified the location of the cairn beneath what the Kubora had long called the Hand of Crador; the order’s records were lost in the sack of Caer Kustan in 477. What is certain is that the Morgathians did find both the Hand and the cairn. They recognised it as a gate to Yashain that had been sanctified to Agrik. The Concordat forbade their direct interference with it but they could not ignore a prize the Khamari were so diligently seeking. So it was that the Morgathian leadership hatched a plan which would both keep the Khamari away from the cairn and perhaps, over time, destroy it in a way that did not break the Concordat.

They engaged a Grey Mage to summon and bind elemental forces to the Hand of Crador: Air and Earth to guard the cairn from any that sought to find it; and Water to erode the cairn over centuries. Having seen the wards set the Morgathians left the Hand and returned to Caer Mejetus. What happened to them after that is not clear, but most believe they were lost with Mejenes and his legion. Similarly nothing else is known of the Grey Mage. The rising of the tribes of 477 cost both churches whatever they had learned of the Hand and the cairn.

Khamari decline; Mamekan ascension

The remnants of the Order of Khamar sought sanctuary at Imrium where they diligently reconstructed the 'Trials of Mamaka' from memory. A small temple was built and the priests clung to the fundamentals of their theology:

- *there is a cairn in Peran and it is important that it is found;*
- *the Khamari were the chosen instruments in finding it; and*
- *they were being tested as Mamaka was tested.*

So things remained until the ascension of Saurach in 485. An Agrikan zealot, Saurach opened official relations with Lysara and received the pontiff's first plenipotentiary in 489. He discovered that the Order was a hotbed of the 'Cairn Heresy'. A year later an imperial edict declared the Order of Khamar heretical and individual priests were hunted down and executed. The edict proved the Emperor's good faith to the Hierarchy of Eternal Flame (though it did not save him from assassination a year later).

The Trials of Mamaka were thought lost but somehow, over the next 150 years, 'Mamekans' kept alive the embers of their theology. During that time the Balshan Jihad bred subtlety, secrecy, and discipline into the survivors and the Trials were annotated and expanded through the time of the Morgathian Theocracy. When the Trials of Mamaka did surface again they were in the hands of Agrikans calling themselves the Order of Mamaka, Master of Steel. They and their terahni, the Warriors of Mamaka, pledged allegiance to Arlun the Barbarian in 635. Mamekan influence grew until it took over the Harnic church near the end of Ezar's War.

The Order of Mamaka has spent more than a generation at the head of the Agrikan Church in Harn and, under a succession of politically astute primates, has focused on bringing the Order into the Agrikan mainstream ahead of the other Harnic orders. This has been at the cost of its ancient Khamari mission to locate the Peran cairn. However, as the priesthood has concerned itself less with the quest bequeathed by its Khamari forbears, the terahni of the order, the Warriors of Mameka, have become increasingly obsessed with Kustan. They know much less of the cairn story than their priests but are deeply saturated with the Mamekan belief that they should be supreme. For them Kustan is the key to that supremacy even if they lack the knowledge to define why.

Akarata Horab of Gerund led the Warriors north in 718 without the permission of his Senesharil, and Apalankh, Klyrdes Bisidril. Bolstered with crusaders recruited in secret from the Azeri mainland Horab believed he was destined to be the Mamekan who brought Kustan back within the Agrikan fold. He failed and the cost in Azeryani blood has drawn the Pontiff's ambassador to Golotha in search of the reason for the expedition and its disaster. Klyrdes is now in a position he has always feared. He knows his or-

der has its roots in heresy but also understands how powerful he could be if the tale of the cairn proved to be true and he were to gain it. As the holder of one of the 888 Cairns he could face the High Corcuno from a position of strength.

Herpan envy; Morgathian suspicion

The other Agrikan order to whom Peran is of interest is the Order of Herpa the Mace and their sponsored terahni the Red Shadow. The most mystical of the Harnic orders has long collected tales and visions related to Peran which it seeks to bring to Agrik through the power of sword and flame. Somewhere in that library of vision and prophesy is mention of 'the claws and the cairn within the forest and the waters'.

Lacking the Trials of Mamaka and copies of the scriptures that Marasalir brought to Harn the order has none of the details available to the Mamekans. Instead they have portents and instinct. They have watched the actions of the Warriors of Mamaka and Senesharil Andraz knows there's something of value in the Peran forests – he simply can't be certain what. So he waits and watches for the clue that will unlock the puzzle.

To the Gurim-Khidar-Ugik-Hârn in his dark temple in Golotha the Hand of Crador is less of an enigma. He knows the church sent priests into the forest to ward some source of potential Agrikan power. He knows that the temple archives describe 'a Gate, a Keeper, and a Key' to some artefact deep in the wilderness and he fears that this gateway is how Agrik will enter Kethira when the Final Battle with Larani ignites across the Kethiran family of worlds. While the Final Battle might precipitate the chaos Morgath desires the Gurim does not believe the Church and its army of gulmorvrin is yet strong enough to ensure the defeat the tattered remnants of Agrik's hordes and Larani's legions, and engulf all of Kelestia in the Shadow of Bukrai.

He also suspects that his Khala Morvrin knows more of that distant mission into the wilderness than he has ever told; he has been amorvrin long enough to have been a contemporary of those long dead explorers.

Secular interference?

The Earl of Tormau is the only Rethemi noble with any interest in Peran and its tribes. All the nobles of Rethem fear the potential havoc a second Kuboran invasion could cause but even those with Kuboran blood have spent a century distancing themselves from their barbarian cousins. Only clan Lynnaeus has cultivated its long associations with the tribes. Through those associations Earl Denyl and his forebears have learned much of the ancient traditions of the Kubora. Though not a particularly spiritual man, Denyl Lynnaeus knows better than to ignore the warnings spoken by the wise among the Asawne about the Denia Marshes and the Denal Kubora who live there. Following the advice of his chamberlain, Nykkal of Claswith,

Earl Denyl is now seeking to recruit entire tribes to his banner in advance of the war he knows is coming. This is why he regularly sends trusted envoys into the forest. One such party, led by a mercenary captain called Coln of Kutz, failed to return having travelled far up the Denia. Rumour had it that Kutz may have gone native and be stirring up the tribes in ways the Earl does not appreciate.

The Kuboran Tribes have as many legends relating to the Hand of Crador as they have of Crador the Blind himself, but Gomas Straight Arrow, Hanuhn of the Asawne Kubora is fond of reminding the children of his tribe:

'Up river from here is a boundary, a boundary that we cross only at need. When illness strikes a clan or the hunting is poor then someone takes on the necklace of bone and is sent to the headwaters of the Denia as a 'gift of sacrifice'.

In return the 'Trickster' will bring better dreams and make them real. The Denal Kubora have served him since Kemlar gifted us these lands and they guard Crador's Hand jealously.

When the southrons tried to take the forest from us long before the time of my grandfather's grandfather's sire, they sought the 'Hand' saying that it belonged to their god. That and other sacrileges brought the tribes together and we smote them like the falling tree strikes the ground when the storms blow their worst.'

Crador the Blind - origins

In the days of the Kuboran trek from Nuthela a man called Lensha came to them, described as 'swarthy featured and travelling from the south; a young traveller in the company of 7 companions – each a champion of power and each bearing a sacred stone'. Despite his youth Lensha was a scholar and Kemlar welcomed his discourse and company, and granted him and his companions permission to walk the forest looking for a special place they claimed would be important to the future.

Lensha wandered far and wide but he and his companions were much taken with the marshes at the head of the River Denia and it was thought they sought solitude there. Even then the marshes were a dank and mysterious place avoided by the Kubora who settled and hunted better ranges. When Lensha returned from the marsh only 6 companions accompanied him and a rift had opened between them. When they departed Lensha remained and settled among the Kubora and, over years proved himself a warrior without compare. He loved Kemlar like a father and that regard was returned such that the old man named him his adopted son. Long were the conversations they shared on matters beyond the Kubora who said he was both mighty Druhn and wise Hanuhn. Some talked of him as the Guide's anointed one, the one who would lead the People after Kemlar left them, but all was not well in the household of the Guide.

Kemlar had taken a wife, Heneryne. She was young and beautiful and came to Kus where her hearth was never cold and her bed always warm. Though she loved Kemlar

she also loved the forest but he would never let her far from his lodge without escort and for this he trusted only Lensha. A friendship, and more, grew between the vibrant young woman and her husband's favourite and there were whispers of disloyalty. Kemlar heard none of this and when Heneryne fell pregnant the old man celebrated the birth of his only son whom he called Crador.

Then it was that Lensha left Kemlar and the Kubora, unable to look upon the babe without weeping. At his leaving he left a carved stone which promised Kemlar that if the tribes ever needed him he would return. Kemlar prized the stone beyond all things and told the tribes that, in times of greatest need, Lensha would return. Still the Kubora speak of this pledge and when the tribes faced first Gargun hordes and then Corani legions warriors told of a tall dark man fighting beside them. His face seemed always in shadow but his skill at arms was beyond compare and when he was present no Kuboran warband was ever defeated. When chieftains looked to reward him he had already melted into the forest.

Kemlar doted on Heneryne's child but sadly Crador showed no interest in learning but revelled in practical jokes and mischief. With age his games became more malicious and sinister. He stole and drank and whored his way from tribe to tribe but still Kemlar did not discipline him.

Finally young Crador went too far and ravished a chieftain's daughter. A council of all the tribes demanded Kemlar take the boy in hand and so their Guide called Crador before him.

The young man came and paid Kemlar due respect but when his accusers voiced their claims he laughed in their faces. Kemlar tried to keep order but the warriors would not hear him and seized the youth. Some cried for his death but others feared to take the life of their Guide's son. Instead, they said, 'Let him no longer see temptation. Let his eyes be taken in payment for the wrongs he has done'.

So it was that Crador became 'Crador the Blind', set free into the forest so it could finish what the chieftains had lacked the courage to do themselves.

Kemlar, when told, cried out in grief and pain and set the tribes the four great tests that have shaped their culture. He also spoke a gift and a curse with his dying that sent the Kubora away chastened: he granted Crador rights eternal to the forest wilderness and so saved his life; but also cursed him to wander outside human company.

As punishment to the tribes he warned them that though Crador was denied their company for eternity he would come to them in their sleep and if they failed to live lives as Kemlar decreed Crador would make their nightmares real.

Crador the Blind - myths

So it was that Crador became the shadow lurking on the edge of every village: thanked for all things good in the hope of keeping him at bay; blamed for the bad and venerated to gain future favour. Rendered mad by the pain of his torments Crador was everything that the tribes thought best and worst of him: he hid enemies from sight so they might slaughter a camp without warning; but lost children were often led to safety by a blind wanderer. He would trick the boastful and haughty so their pride was their downfall; but fools and idiots often found favour when he left them gifts.

One clan, though, refused to bow to Crador or court his whim. They tired of the veneration and determined to destroy 'The Trickster' once and for all. The hunt they began lasted generations but their pursuit harried Crador away from the ranges of the tribes and confined him in land no Kuboran coveted: the Denia Marshes. The other tribes, circumspect in their fear of the Dream Maker, left the Denal to their quest but appreciated the absence of poor luck, illness and disaster during this time.

However, though clan Denal could seek to confine Crador they could not contain the dreams over which Kemlar had given Crador power. For decades Crador spared every tribe his attention but concentrated on those that had sought to confine him. Slowly the spirit of the Denal was broken until they wished nothing more but to live in their forsaken marsh meeting other Kubora only rarely.

His pursuers dealt with, Crador returned to tormenting all Kubora until the sacrifices began again, but now food or animal sacrifices were not always enough. Kemlar had denied the Kubora the right to take a human life in worship so they took to choosing someone, usually a youth or maiden, to be sent to the Hand as a 'gift of sacrifice'. In this way the Kubora make no blood sacrifice; the 'gift' is merely sent to the Denal to be conveyed to the Broken Lands where they are 'left for Crador to take them, or not ...'. This practice has continued to today though a tribe or clan must be under great duress to take the step of choosing a 'gift for the Hand'.

Over the centuries the truth of Crador's origins drifted into myth until every tribe had a different tale to tell of why they feared and venerated him. He became a myth and a myth he remained until the Corani came to the forests. Then a Rathiri Hanuhn reported a blind man offering a Corani General advice. So it was that Crador was blamed for new wrongs in bringing the southrons to the forest and a further wave of ignominy was laid upon the Trickster god.

Crador the Blind – tribal views

As with all Kuboran religious observance every individual takes his or her particular view of the gods. There is no priesthood to enforce a uniform theology or to interpret the Kuboran pantheon or its members in a particular way.

Hence within every clan and tribe a wide range of religious belief and observance can be found.

The Asawne, under the careful guidance of several generations of practical Hanuhn, view Crador as largely benevolent. Gomas 'Straight Arrow' is known to advise his people to regularly make simple offerings of food and game to Crador and, if things go well, to celebrate his name. *'If things go badly'*, says Gomas, *'it is simply Crador testing you and you should redouble your efforts to solve your own problems'*. The Asawne are well known for helping a clan brother if he cannot solve a problems alone. This means that, despite their proximity to the Denia Marsh, no Asawne has been 'sent to the Hand' since before the time of Arlun. The same is true of the other tribes that have had most contact, for good or ill, with southrons. However some tribes are whispering that the Suyari, Utcin and Delerni are now reaping the reward of not propitiating Crador regularly. Certainly these tribes are under the greatest pressure from the Rethemi and there is talk around their camp fires of sending a 'gift' to Crador in the hope he will help turn the tide against the southrons. The Uld have already made that decision and every Summer since 715 an Uld boy or girl has been sent to the Denal Marshes with the Denal attending the Tribal Moot at Kustan.

The Rathiri think Crador insane and unpredictable. While they are careful not to tempt his displeasure they believe him too mad to be influenced by mortal effort. Their neighbours have been heard to say that this is an approach the Rathiri can afford to take. As the custodians of Kustan they can, after all, rely on the aid and support of any Kuboran if they are in need as well as the intervention of Kemlar himself. More traditional Kubora imply that the Rathiri spend too much time with southrons and that they will soon forget all the Kuboran gods. They also joke that *'just because the Rathiri are all southron bastards doesn't mean they should claim the same of one of our gods'*. In return the Rathiri discretely make fun of some of the old fashioned views of their neighbours.

The Obodu share their view of Crador with almost all the remaining tribes. This is, perhaps, the only thing on which Ryler of the Iorzu and Arbrega of the Obodu agree! They both see Crador as malicious and bitter; taking every opportunity to puncture the pride of the boastful and exact revenge on the tribes that caused him to be exiled. The Obodu view may be linked to the traditional tale that it was an assault on an Obodu princess that led to Crador being blinded. Every year or two most of these tribes have sent a 'gift' to the Hand of Crador. Rumour has it that Ryler is considering asking all the tribes so far taking his side in the struggle for power among to contribute a 'gift' to the enterprise. Such a mass sending has not been heard of outside of legend. His enemies say this is exactly why Ryler is considering making such a gesture; to mark himself as fitted to sit beside those other Kuboran legends Nebran and Arlun. The Iorzu Druhn is not a fool, but such a demand of faith

from his supporters is a great deal to ask and may risk fracturing the complex network of alliances he had so far built.

Meanwhile the Denal Kubora have a prophesy that one day a saviour will come among them who will free them from the burdens they carry: *'The Denal are the Guardians and the Cursed of the Hand but one day a Gate Keeper shall appear and He shall be Like but Unlike, Denal but not Denal, and he shall be the Key.'*

Some among the tribes say that the Gate Keeper has recently come to the Denal and that soon 'Crador will Rest' and bring no more nightmares to the People. Other, perhaps wiser, folk say that Crador is also the bringer of good luck and how will they fare without that. What all Kubora believe is that were Crador ever to rest then a time of uncertainty will come to the People and the Land of Plenty. In advance of that time every Kuboran will seek to make his and her peace with his brothers and sisters within and beyond the clan and tribe. Debts must be settled and honour satisfied. Were Crador to Rest before the challenges Kemlar laid on the Kubora were complete then chaos will come and darkness rule. Ryler the Southron hears that prophesy and says now is the time to take back the lands of the south as Kemlar told him in a vision.

Never has the fate of Peran and the realms around it been so much in the balance. But it is a balance that no one person fully understands. Were some brave soul able to put together the pieces of the jigsaw left scattered across the west then they would have power and influence indeed.

The Heart of Darkness

No mortal can be certain if Agrik's Flaming Mace fell from the heavens and excavated the depression containing the Denia Marches while shattering the Broken Lands of Peran (see *Peran*).

No mortal can know if the claws clutching the mace also fell to earth, or if the cataclysm caused the Hand of Crador to be thrust up out of the bowels of Kethira.

No mortal can know if the Hand was ever the home of Crador the Blind.

What Kuboran myth suggests, though, is that a cairn was built beneath the Hand by travellers 'from the East'.

What Agrikan theology says is that 888 cairns were built by disciples of the prophet Ilypen and that they marked out, on Kethira, places of congruence with Balgashang, on Yashain.

What some Agrikan scholars propose is that the cairns mark portals through which, when the final battle between Agrik and Larani begins, their master's hordes will emerge to dominate Kethira.

Only one certainty exists: there is a portal beneath the Hand connecting Peran to a region of Yashain on the borders of Balgashang.

However, over the last Kethiran millennium the blasted plain where the portal opens on Yashain has been subject to great change. The arrival of the Kubora in Peran and their intense devotion to Kemlar's final commands has turned some of that oven-hot wilderness into the 'Great Forest' of the Kuboran after-life. Only the area immediately surrounding the portal provides a reminder of the previous suzerainty of Balgashang; a stream of the foul ichor from the soul pits beneath Agrik's fortress infecting the portal. The Kubora do not know that it is the influence of this ichor that has shaped the perverse and corrupted creatures beneath the hand, and the Denal themselves.

Equally, they do not know, and probably could not understand, what drives them to revere the Hand and send sacrifices to it. They know in their bones that the Hand is the closest any Kuboran can come to touching the godhead of Kemlar so their mythology has invoked Crador to guard this portal to their underworld.

Larani has commanded her generals to do no more than keep watch on the portal while sending ambassadors to Kemlar. So far he has refused to meet with them.

Of Gods and Spirits

Excerpts from a treatise on theories of godhead by Rowanti Adel of Mertin

As I write I know that my most able student is putting herself in great danger to further my work. It is to her that I dedicate this work. I know too that what I write verges upon heresy even among my own brothers and sisters of the Hyn-Aelori. These ideas are far from conservative but they are important, and so I write them down despite the risks.

What maketh a 'god'

While the ten great gods of our time appear similar across all the cultures of Western Lythia they are not identical. The 'pontiffs' and 'councils' of the western world claim supremacy over all branches of 'their' church despite local variations of doctrine, practice, and even name, but they know that many of the aspects of their one god are very different from those they would have us believe are universal. They know, as I know, that Nala-Uroh was wrong.

My study of the 'lesser' gods worshipped on the fringes of civilisation show some of them to have some of the aspects of the ten gods most of us worship. However they also have stark differences. The most interesting ones are those which appear to be unique to a local region or tribal grouping.

Among these I have invested half a lifetime of study in the Kubora of Peran. It is that study that has earned me exile from Rethem and the enmity of the Mamekans. It is this work that makes me fear that those they call 'The Silent Ones' are hunting me.

All the more reason to write these thoughts down, so that they might live beyond my death.

I have supposed that ‘the gods’ are not as we are taught. They are not solid and corporeal and driven by the same emotions as are we. Agrik is not the source of all the vile aggression and mindless violence in the world. Save K’nor is not the font and guardian of all knowledge (may he forgive that blasphemy), any more than Morgath is the origin of all the wielder of chaos.

Suppose instead that it is we, the mortal inhabitants of this place we have christened Kethira, who are the source of all those characteristics, emotions, drives and actions? What if, through our actions, we make the gods in our image and that image in turn shapes our world?

Kuboran myth

There is good evidence from the tales told even by the more civilised Kubora who followed Arlun into Rethem and settled there that Kemlar was once a mortal man.

He has no detailed miracles ascribed to him during his life. Yes, he is said to have ‘called forth game and fish ...’ when the clans asked but it is not suggested he created that game and fish in a barren wilderness. In their tales there is much more time spent describing the very mortal skills he used to bind the Kubora together and lead them into Peran. So too his wife, Heneryne. While the tales told of her during her life paint a picture of the perfect wife and mother there are no miracles at all ascribed to her in life.

Even though there is evidence in both Agrikan archives and Kuboran folk tales to confirm the arrival of Agrikan missionaries in Peran during the lifetime of Kemlar they all agree that Kemlar did not adopt Agrikan practices or worship. There is nothing in the life of Kubora today other than a love of battle that connects them to Agrik. Such love of battle is, sadly, equally common among the Larani-ans and those who follow Sarajin! The tales imply that such was Kemlar’s virtue and strength of character that one of the missionaries remained with him when the others left. That missionary, called Leshalt, is said to have adopted the Kuboran way of life rather than imposing any Agrikan teachings.

Only over the centuries after Crador is exiled, Kemlar dies and, finally, Heneryne passes beyond the veil to the afterlife, do the Kubora begin to describe interventions by their gods. My insistent belief is that it was the very honour and praise that the Kubora heaped upon their dead guide that turned Kemlar into a god. So to with Heneryne. Finally the terror the tribes of the Kubora hold for Crador was what shaped him into a god. The reasons the tribes worship Kemlar and Heneryne, and propitiate Crador, are the causes of the now divine character of those gods.

This is the heart of my supposition. It is the kinds of people who worship and the reasons they worship that ‘creates’ the god from whatever power lies in that place we describe as Yashain. Taken to a further stage of thinking it could be that the very place that a ‘god’ is worshipped

shapes the nature of those regions of Yashain that fall under the sway of that god. Might not the many prayers to Agrik spoken in Lysara impart the heat of that place to Balgashang? Might not the library-temples of my own order shape the home of Save K’nor?

The Agrikan search for Khamar

My researches have revealed that it was well known to the Corani Emperor Kobar and his circle of advisors that the exile priest Marasalir was searching for a gateway to Khamar. They hope, in the words of one member of the Emperor’s inner circle that:

‘The man and his outlandish servant may be mad enough to believe that they can find a path to that most revered plain beyond the walls of Balgashang that they describe, but for my lord Kobar it is the divine reason to send the Legions into the West and North that matters ... In this my Lord follows the example of his Imperial cousin across the seas while strengthening us for a time when that same cousin might cast covetous glances upon this Misty Isle which, as all agree, will be united under the Imperial Corani’

There can be no doubt that ‘the man’ is Marasalir as he was known for his strange travelling companion. It is also known that it was after Marasalir’s arrival that the Corani Empire began its most ambitious phase of expansion.

The reputation of Western Harn

Why is it that Rethem is known as ‘The Dark Kingdom’, not only across the Isle of Harn, but far beyond? Some would claim that it was the fall of the Corani Empire into the worship of Morgath and Agrik that caused this. Those that claim this are naïve and not worth the argument. Such explanations forget that it was not that part of the island which is now Rethem which is most stained by evil. That unholy honour falls to the swathe of central Harn subdued to his will by the Foulspawner, encompassing much of what is now the kingdom of Kaldor!

Why is it that the evil roots Lothrim put down across that realm have not grown into a base of power for the churches of Agrik or Morgath?

My thesis is that during the time of Lothrim it may have been that the regions of Yashain to which Kaldor is connected did indeed fall under the sway of Agrik and Morgath. However, the rebounding of the better human qualities across that swathe of civilisation after the fall of the Foulspawner drove back their influence. Into that new made ‘better’ place the essence of Peonian and Laranian godhead flowed.

Take instead the lesson of the far West. Suppose instead that those adherents of Lothrim that survived his fall scattered into the wilderness of the West. Suppose instead that there they either carried on the abominations of their dark master and that in doing so began to push back the boundaries of the tribal peoples who had lived there. Suppose instead that those that followed them in their dark practices were the counsellors who whispered into the ear

of Corthir, the first to establish hegemony over all the tribes of the Corani. Suppose it was they who tempted him with the promise of more land and power if he would but allow them to worship as they wished. Suppose it was they who prepared fertile ground for the arrival of Marasalir through their practice of abominations that in this day would be called 'Morgathian' or 'Agrikan'.

Might it be that it was their actions which allowed those realms of Yashain we now call Durakhar and Balgashang to expand to mirror the lands of the Corani Empire. Might it be that the bloody rampages of the Corani legions raised up the power of Agrik in the west even before any of them knew to worship him? Could it be that when the followers of Demon Pameshlu arrived in Coranan and offered the Emperor entertainments of bloody majesty that the 'presence' of Agrik in the west was strengthened? Perhaps the dark researches of the scholars the Emperors encouraged were enough for the principles of Morgath to sink their claws into the Empire.

If, over centuries, the dominating 'spirit' of the west was bloody conquest and suppression, then how can we be surprised that the oceans of blood and pain that soaked into those lands encouraged the spiritual roots of what we choose to call 'Morgath' and 'Agrik', and perhaps 'Naveh', to grow and blossom.

In Conclusion ...

Gods do not exist as our churches claim. Rather the formless spirits that surround Kelestia have been formed by our emotions and actions. Where those emotions and actions become ritual we call them 'worship'. It is we and our 'worship' that shape the gods after aspects of ourselves, be they good or ill.

Every vain act by an ugly matron strengthens Halea as does the greed of a usurer. Every enlightened thought about the world around us adds to the shape of my own god, blessed Save K'nor. Whenever a maiden is ravaged or an innocent killed then that 'thing' we call 'Agrik' becomes a little more powerful. Equally when one man is paid to kill another in secret or be stealth then 'Naveh' takes firmer form in the mind and action of his worshippers. Wherever this circle of god-creation takes root and worship becomes regular then the formless void around us takes on the characteristics of that place we have decided to call 'Yashain'. All else is legend and myth.

The Bitter Fallen

The combined reverence and loathing the Kubora feel for the Hand of Crador soaks through the Peran wilderness to drain into the Heart of Darkness. Combined with the rare but rich feasts provided by sacrifices sent to the Hand, a community of the *Bitter Fallen* has coalesced around the Yashain side of the portal within the Heart of Darkness (see the *Bitter Fallen* bestiary article).

There, on a blasted plain between the realms of Larani and Agrik these scavenger spirits fight like dogs over the thin gruel of sustenance leaking from Kethira. Few have even the vaguest memory of their previous existence. Some, though, remember what they have lost and dream of a return to power and prestige.

When the PCs rescued Coln of Kutz at the end of *Heart of Darkness* one of the Bitter Fallen surviving on the Yashain side of the portal took the opportunity and leapt across the bridge Kutz had formed. Some of the other, mindless, Fallen also escaped Yashain but most lacked the intelligence or initiative to do anything but loiter around the Hand waiting for their next meal. While they continue to infest the locality they are more or less harmless sipping at the Kuboran fear and reverence as it flows past them to the Heart.

Coln of Kutz

The Bitter Fallen was unable to exert any control over Kutz's body. During the journey from the Hand of Crador back to Tormau in the company of the PCs it was in a state of shock at its change of circumstances; overwhelmed by the sensations bombarding it after centuries, perhaps millennia, in the isolating and cruel world beyond the Heart. For months afterwards it was occupied only in the struggle to understand the world around it and the body it occupied.

During this period it did discover some of the shattered fragments of Kutz's memories from before his descent into the passages beneath the Hand of Crador. Most were incomprehensible but some related to what Kutz learned among the Denal Kubora, and which led to him to the Heart. Much of the detail was missing, but there was enough to understand that the body it inhabited might be capable of reopening the gateway through which it had escaped. Perhaps, it mused, it might be able to free others of its kind, making itself their ruler. It could not know that opening the portal would have far greater consequences for Kethira and her sister worlds.

Nothing, though, was possible until it could find some means to act! That came when it discovered that it could, with great effort, send a portion of its consciousness and will into another body that looked into Kutz's eyes. The first was a brave mouse that clambered up his arm to the bowl of gruel he was mechanically spooning into his mouth. Perched on the edge of the bowl, helping itself, it looked into Kutz's eyes and the Bitter Fallen suddenly perceived the world from the mouse's point of view. Soon it began to influence the animals behaviour by hinting at the possibility of food behind this door or that. In this way it explored the tower in which Kutz was housed. It also discovered that it could leap-frog into multiple bodies when the mouse shared a gaze with first its mate and then another mouse encountered behind some wainscoting.

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Its next experiment was with the serving maid that brought Kutz his food and set him to spooning it into his mouth. The kindly look she caste at the poor man was enough for the Fallen to enter her, but the challenge of a human mind was much greater that it expected. When it suggest she take Kutz out of the tower the maid experienced an incomprehensible babbling voice in her head that caused nothing but panic. She ran screaming from the room and the Fallen quickly withdrew its consciousness. The maid's story was the direct cause of Kutz being sent to Golotha for examination.

The apparent failure with a human mind was, though, a helpful lesson for the creature. The maid refused to return but the stable boy sent in her stead provided a subject tor more subtle investigation. It learned much more sitting in the boy's head, looking and listening: the rudiments of the local language were swiftly absorbed. With that language it was able slightly nudge the boy's natural kindness and curiosity to encourage him to lead Kutz out into the castle courtyard after dark 'just for some exercise'. Working with the natural grain of the boy's mind left him feeling he'd come up with the idea all on his own. It also found it was able to both interrogate and influence the boy's memories. It found images of the hayloft where he slept and influenced the boy to take Kutz there with the idea of using it as a place to hide until escape was possible. The loft proved difficult to access for the shambling Kutz but it left the boy with only a blurred recollection of this escapade, just in case.

A few days later any further planning was interrupted by Kutz's voyage south to Golotha. During the voyage it was frustrated to confirm that despite its every effort the core of its consciousness remained locked within Kutz; it was to Kutz that its fragments of consciousness returned when it ceased concentrating on maintaining its dispersed influence. It also discovered that while a dozen rats were no challenge to its influence it could maintain itself in more than three or four simple minded sailors only with the greatest effort.

Uncertain what the change in its location meant and at the mercy of events it resolved to take any opportunity to engineer Kutz's escape. An opportunity presented itself when it encountered the amoral and ambitious Eilith of Zarainsen. As she examined Kutz the creature swiftly assessed her frustration with the hard work required to achieve mastery and 'helped her understand' that Kutz was the obvious means of achieving early recognition in a variety of fields of study. It was a simple matter to plant the idea of spiring Kutz away to the dormitory she shared with the other apprentices for further study. There the younger and weaker minds of the boys, who already looked up the Eilith, were easy to dominate.

Once established it had time to consider its next move as the apprentices went about their duties oblivious to its

influence. Only when Eilith was copying a scroll describing an ancient Morgathian rite did the germ of a plan begins to form. The ceremony was used to capture spirits for Klyss and embody the Shadow of Bukrai into bodies to create gulmorvrin servants.

As that idea blossomed it triggered the events of *Deeper Dark* which led the apprentices to horrid murder and the subsequent events on Temple Hill. Instead of harvesting souls for Klyss and replacing them with the Bukrai embodied in gulmorvrin and amorvrin, the body of Kutz was prepared to properly accept the creature's consciousness as its lawful possessor. Its plan worked perfectly, despite the intervention of the PCs and the Gurim. At the end of the ceremony the creature was left in full, if initially imperfect, control of Kutz's body, and made its escape]

After Temple Hill



As well as control of Kutz's body and access to his physical skills it found it was able to supress or over-ride much of the body's sensation of pain and fatigue. This allows the 'man' to perform many physical feats beyond a normal human. Kutz appears able to travel far and fast without significant rest and to overpower anyone he has wishes.

In the immediate aftermath of the escape the Fallen was driven by an instinct to escape Golotha. It out-distanced

any pursuit by running east across Orman island and swimming to the south bank of the Thard, near Kibly. It followed the south bank of the Thard for league after league and spent the autumn and winter following *Deeper Dark* begging, borrowing and stealing what he needed to stay alive across Anerath and Hesby hundreds before making its way into Kanday. This period can be extended for as long as the GM desires, for their own campaign continuity. The Bitter Fallen can have spent months or years gradually coming into a full understanding of Kutz's body and refining the plan that will take him to Mejetus.

The following spring his wanderings in the no-mans-land between Rethem and Kanday came to an end. He encountered an entertainer telling stories in a market square. One story of his stories he'd picked up from a trader who hailed from Tormau; a bastardised version of the *Song of the Falling God* (see *Heart of Darkness*). This gave form to Kutz's plan and he began a more systematic search for clues to his goal.

His enquiries gradually led him to cross back into Rethem at Zerien and then across the Hohnam Blight to Dasen where he joined the caravan to Kustan for last year's Moot. . It is from this period that the reports of a one-armed man, or 'someone in red', recounted in Act I, date.

From the Moot he returned south to Emesa and the discussion with Lorn of Aelee recounted at the start of Act II. The hint that Imrium held a complete picture of the route it needed to follow triggered an inhuman urge to travel east. From Emesa it drove Kutz to Quiso and then back across the Hohnam Blight towards Senun. The Fallen had not driven the body so hard since the escape from Temple Hill but now it drove it further and faster. Somewhere on the fringe of the wilderness, Kutz simply collapsed, and would have died if not for an ancient, almost blind, hermit who lived in the forest range of the Delerni Kubora.

The old man had once been a Peonian missionary but was captured and tortured to the edge of madness before being forced to publicly recant his faith. Released as a lesson to those that might follow, he wandered into the forest expecting to die. It turned out that Peoni had other plans and provided fruit and berries on which he subsisted. A chance encounter with an injured Kuboran hunter has created a reputation for the old man as an incarnation of Crador the Blind who, none-the-less, has useful knowledge of herbal cures.

The old man dragged Kutz's unconscious body deep into the forest and cared for him for nearly a year in the cave that served as his hermitage. It took months for the one-armed man to be able to stand, let alone walk; the soles of his feet had been run to bloody shreds by the Bitter Fallen. Frustrated by the delay the creature tipped the old man further into dementia by roughly rummaging through his memories for entertainment.

As the PCs are embarking on Act II the Bitter Fallen's frustrations boil over and it kills the hermit. The old body was stringy eating but provided much needed sustenance for the challenges ahead. Striking south until it found the road again the Fallen picked up its quest where it had left it over a year before. It has no idea that the PCs are now pursuing similar clues and on its trail.

The indomitable will of Coln of Kutz

The Bitter Fallen remains unaware of a side-effect of the ritual on Temple Hill. As well as giving it the control of Kutz's body it desired it re-ignited a tiny spark of Kutz's remaining consciousness. That spark was buried deep by his experience beneath the Hand and would never have emerged without the ritual. It is far to meagre to make a bid for control of the body. It is, though, the remains of the potent will that kept Kutz battering at the Heart when his conscious mind had been consumed by it.



All Kutz has been able to do is to trigger a repetitive, unconscious, physical tick. This is the re-tracing of the letter "K" onto any material under the creature's hands when it is otherwise occupied. These are part of the information recounted in Act I and they crop up at intervals through the adventure. The GM is free to place others as necessary to refresh the trail and help guide the PCs if necessary.

The other thing that the Fallen is unaware of is that much of Kutz's sense of self was bound up in his luxuriant red beard. Whenever the creature influences a human the red of his beard is somehow integrated into whatever influence it weaves or memory it leaves.

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The Fate of an Emperor

By the time the PCs near the climax of this adventure they should have pieced together much of what happened to the Emperor Mejenes 'The Great' during his attempt to invade Equeth. This summary is intended to help the GM ensure that the PCs grasp what happened so they can stress the significance of some of the clues discovered either in previously adventures, or during this one:

- The events described in the diary discovered at the end of *Afarezirs: Root of all Evil* took place before the Emperor Mejenes arrived at Mejetus. They describe the ways in which a Grey Mage, 'employed' by the Morgathian Church, places enchantments on the Hand of Crador to seal the portal.
- It also describes the consecration, by the Morgathians, of materials for a 'Key' capable of unlocking those protective enchantments and opening the portal again.
- Though the Shek P'var (including the diarist) departed to be shipwrecked among the Afarezirs, the Morgathians waited at Mejetus with the materials they intended for the 'Key'.
- When the Emperor Mejenes was wounded by the Equani his left arm became infected and he became gravely ill.
- Legionary hotheads took revenge on any 'savage' they encountered, including the Urdu with whom Mejenes had established good relations and who had been the legion's eyes and ears in the valley of the river Suthen.
- Mejenes did not improve and reluctantly agreed to the amputation of his left arm. It made no difference and his physicians' advice was to prepare for his death journey to a glorious afterlife.
- The Morgathian priests saw an opportunity and, without consulting any higher authority, made the Emperor an offer it was difficult for the desperate man to refuse. They could save him if he accepted the gift of Klyss and became Amorvrin! At the same time they could make good the loss of his arm - replacing it with a richly decorated metal one.
- The legion's finest smiths were set to work under Morgathian direction to create an arm from the consecrated precious metals they provided. How better to protect the 'Key' than by making it part of an almost immortal amorvrin Emperor protected by all the might of an Empire? Also, what prestige to the priests that could deliver the Empire to the Church!
- The increasingly delirious Emperor grasped at the straw they threw him and agreed. The necessary ritual was undertaken in the Khuzdul vault beneath Caer Mejetus.
- Whether the spirits of long dead Khuzdul interfered with the dark rite or one of the priests made an error is impossible to know. Perhaps Klyss felt that their strategy

put the Concordat at risk. Whatever the cause the ritual was only partially successful: the Emperor did not die, but neither did he live on as an amorvrus.

- He became a dark parody of himself, more gulmorvrin than man but with sufficient intelligence to recognise what he had lost and to resent his undeath. He went mad with grief and rage.
- None of this could be admitted so the priests emerged to declare that the Emperor had died through the mismanagement of his doctors; who were promptly impaled.
- Meanwhile increasing Urdu anger turned to pressure on the legion perimeter and forced the Corani to contemplate retreat. The carefully wrapped body of a Morgathian acolyte was consumed by the flames of an imperial funeral pyre and the bones entrusted to the Emperor's bodyguards. The undead Mejenes, though, remained beneath the camp. The only palliative for its violent rage was its new golden arm.
- The priests selected the most junior among them, who had been made amorvrin during the same rite beneath the Hand, to stay and watch over Mejenes. He would have the surviving acolytes to serve him.
- The camp was abandoned and the Urdu pursuit cost the legion dear. It was a tattered remnant of the force that had headed east that reached the River Chetul where the Kubora took on the task of decimating what was left.
- History records that only a few brave souls made it to Kustan, guarding the box containing the bones of their Emperor. The fate of the Morgathian priests is not reported; they were not among the survivors.

The damaged mosaic at Kustan, and the complete copy at Imrium, tell most of this story from the legionary (and Agrikan) point of view.

A Long Vigil

What no one but the Morgathian priest who remained at Mejetus knows is what happened next ...

- As the Urdu departed in pursuit of the legion the fort was left for an Equani warband to enter and sack. They killed the dark robed youths who tried to keep them out of the Imperial Pavilion but were themselves driven out of the vaults below by an un-killable monster; the undead Emperor.
- When, less than a month later, the one of those young men, naked and shivering, entered the fort the Equani killed him again, and saw his body crumble to dust. He returned a month later; they killed him again and again, but every time he returned. Each time the Morgathian woke beside the Heart of Darkness beneath the Hand of Crador and made his way back to fulfil his sworn duty to watch over the Emperor.

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- Finally, Equani anger turned to fear and the last time he returned they allowed him to walk through the camp and into the Imperial Pavilion.
- Over the years their fear turned to awe and then reverence. Over the generations the Morgathian has become the centre of the savage Equani war cult, the Shevrach. It is a twisted and merciless melding of fierce Equani dedication to Kemlar with a Morgathian world view.
- The Shevrach use the ruined fort as a base for their attacks into Urdu territory, bring sacrifices to the pavilion, and commune with their god through their shaman.
- In the early years the Morgathian tried many ways to get the undead Emperor to give up the golden arm so that he could carry it back to the temple in Merethos (now Golotha). However the monster prized the arm above any trinkets provided by the Equani.
- Today the priest has accepted that Morgath does not want him to take the arm and return it to safe keeping. Instead he will remain here, watching over what remains of the Emperor Mejenes for the rest of the undeath Morgath grants him. He is, undoubtedly, more than half mad. His only solace comes from the dark acts of the Shevrach that are reported to him through their shaman and his efforts to teach them to create gulmorvrin.
- He knows that the metals enchanted below the Hand were intended to create the 'Key' without which the portal to Yashain would remain sealed for eternity.
- Meanwhile, the undead Mejenes lies, mostly quiescent, on its rotting death bed beneath Mejetus.

This story has been drawn, by the Morgathian, in charcoal on the walls of the Imperial Pavilion.

USING HARNMASTER

Character and Creature statistics

Many of the personalities from the previous adventures make an appearance in *Ancient Shades*, so GMs preferring Harnmaster should refer to the other adventures for their statistics. Harnmaster statistics for most of the more generic characters can also be found in the earlier adventures, and where a direct match doesn't exist it shouldn't be difficult for a GM to modify those that are there to fit the *Ancient Shades* context.

In the case of beasts and creatures then either they appear in the earlier adventures or in published Harn canon/fanon.

The Heart of Darkness

The GM should refer to the relevant section of *Peran: Heart of Darkness* when adjudicating the journey through the passages beneath the Hand and how the Heart itself attracts PCs; though what they see on the 'other side' is different.

Weapons and Armour

The weapons described should be easily identifiable in Harnmaster and will have all their usual characteristics, unless the text makes it clear there is something special about them.

Skill Rolls

Fate is 'skill-lite', compared to Harnmaster so a Fate skill can encompass more than one Harnmaster skill. In such cases the context will usually make it obvious which Harnmaster one the GM should look to.

The table opposite suggests which Harnmaster (3rd Edition) skills the GM should use as alternatives to the *Fate of Harn* skills described in the text of this adventure.

Fate of Harn Skills	Harnmaster Skills
Athletics	Acrobatics, Climbing, Dancing, Jumping, Skiing, Swimming, depending on the context
Contacts	Intrigue
Crafts	The relevant craft skill, depending on the context. E.g. Agriculture, Animalcraft, Milling, Metalcraft, Musician, Singing etc.
Deceive	Acting or Rhetoric (Diplomacy) depending on the context.
Empathy	Rhetoric (Diplomacy)
Endurance	Condition or END
Fight	Unarmed combat
Intimidate	Rhetoric (Intimidation) or Command, depending on context
Investigate	Awareness, or sometimes a relevant Lore skill where the investigation is specific to that area of study
Larceny	Legerdemain or Lockcraft depending on context
Melee	The relevant Melee Weapon skill
Missiles	Throwing or the relevant Missile Weapon skill
Notice	Usually Awareness, but possibly Initiative, depending on context
Rapport	Lovecraft, Oratory, Rhetoric (Diplomacy) depending on context.
Ride	Riding
Ritual	Ritual
Scholar	The relevant Lore skill depending on context. E.g. Astrology, Engineering, Folklore, Heraldry, etc.
Stealth	Stealth
Strength	STR
Survival	Fishing, Foraging, Survival, Tracking, or Weatherlore, depending on context.
Will	Mental Conflict or WIL

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GM NOTES

