

PERAN:

HEART OF DARKNESS

Dark Rethem Adventure 1

Alun Rees

(revised)

PERAN: HEART OF DARKNESS

Credits

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INTRODUCTION

It is hot, even with the river water sluicing along the side of the Kuboran hide boats, it's hot. Even the air is hot, and still; as if it's locked between the endless walls of greenery on either bank. It sucks the sweat from the skin; though the Kuboran guides are doing all the work, propelling the craft against the Denia's sluggish current. Ten leagues up river, it feels like every furnace breathe is a labour.

Kutz remembered what the guide said when he gestured to the south bank: *'Never get off the boat'*. Perhaps this was the same as all the other trips into the forest but it was certainly not going to be a comfortable one. Damned insects.

His old friend turned to face him, rivulets of sweat coursing down his face, and whispered, *'I've got a bad feeling about this ...'*

Adventure Outline

Heart of Darkness takes place in the Summer of 720TR and sees a group of player characters (PCs) travel up the River Denia into the Peran wilderness on a mission which may come from the Earl of Tormau. As they travel complications are added and a growing sense of foreboding envelops them. Finally they are confronted by a source of ancient evil.

Peran is known as the great wilderness of Harn. Dense first growth forest, much of it still in its primeval glory, cloaks the hills and valleys that run from the Rayesha Mountains to the coast. Home to the fierce Kubora the forest is not only mysterious but very dangerous. The tribes are known to have a capricious nature that can turn from welcome to threat in an eye-blink.

Essential Resources

- *The White Stoa Inn*; *Asawne Kubora*; and *Denal Kubora* should all be available wherever you found this adventure.
- A version of the *HarnMaster Rules*.

Helpful Resources

- *HarnMaster: Barbarians*; *Tribes of the Kubora*; *Peran*; *Bedenes*, *Warriors of Mameka*; and *Mamaka, Master of Stee* (available from Columbia Games).
- Copies of the original *Rethem* and *Tormau* articles would also be helpful to set the political scene. Though they are currently out of print Columbia Games may be able to assist. Alternatively the new edition of *Rethem* will provide all a GM could desire need when it arrives.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The overall flow of the adventure is shown below:



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ACT I: INTO THE FOREST

Overview

The PCs are made an offer in Tormau that it should be difficult for them to refuse but which leaves them little time to make enquiries or preparations before they are off on the first part of their journey. That journey continues deeper into the forest where they will learn more of the Kuboran tribes and their often mutual antipathy.

The Scenes in Act I are best played sequentially as written, though if the PCs fail to find out much about Kutz before leaving Tormau then Scene 2 can be broken up and used as encounters with mercenaries in the pay of the Earl on the road to Quyn.

Scene 1: The White Stoat Inn

Overview

Jamys of Abrant has called the PCs to a meeting at the close of business on a day in early Summer 720TR. Tormau is enjoying an unpleasantly warm spell and a drink will be welcome.

PCs connected to the underbelly of society will know Jamys is a big man in the Lia-Kavair while others can use *Intrigue* to know this. Even the unconnected know the White Stoat is the best inn in Tormau; frequented by better off locals. Depending on PC backgrounds this will either be an entirely appropriate location for a meeting or a very great privilege.

Jamys maintains a snug bar next to the Inn's common room where he can be assured of quiet when conducting Lia-Kavair, or other confidential, business. By tradition no one enters the snug without his express invitation, and it is that invitation he has extended to the PCs.

The White Stoat Inn includes maps of the inn and details of its inhabitants and their business.

GM Aims

- To paint Jamys as an 'honest rogue' who has nothing to gain by lying to the PCs, but none-the-less a bad enemy to make.
- To prompt the PCs to consider some of the possible sources of information around Tormau.
- To provide the PCs with sufficient information to help them prepare as best they can in the available time.

PC Outcomes

They accept a well remunerated job and gain a few clues worthy of investigation.

Description of Events

Jamys is a heavy set man with an imposing presence and darkly charismatic looks. He wears his hair well shorn to disguise his thinning pate. He has a marked Golothan accent. Two minders sit in the corner of the snug playing a game of dice and apparently ignoring Jamys and the PCs.

Awareness shows these two are actually keenly observing the PCs and that the bulges under their jenkins are hefty clubs.

The Innkeeper explains that he has been asked to gather a small group willing to go up river into Kuboran territory on an errand '*for a powerful patron*'. He is not prepared to be more explicit about the commission until he has the PC's commitment. The remuneration Jamys is offering is good (precise details of the level of reward are left to the GM so that it can be set at a level the party cannot easily turn-down but that equally does not put campaign balance at risk).

His most enticing suggestion is that '*if you take their penny and fulfil your part, then you will have gained important friends*'.

Intrigue reveals that Jamys is said to enjoy cordial relations with the constable of Caer Tormau but he will neither confirm nor deny that the commission comes from the castle. Everyone knows that Denyl Lynnaeus, Earl of Tormau, is the most important noble in the north-west of Rethem and his favour is not to be turned aside without good cause.

If the PCs decline to accept the mission then Jamys will tell them politely but firmly that his business with them is concluded. He warns them that he hears any whisper of this conversation repeated he will have them killed. His tone is so matter of fact that it is impossible not to take him seriously; the two minders can be seen smiling over their dice.

If the PCs say they will take on the mission but back out later then they can expect to be run out of Tormau by the garrison of the Caer with few if any of their possessions; Jamys does not like having people break their word to him and clearly has influence in important places.

It is possible that the PCs may prefer to try to work out what the mission is and undertake it freelance. With so little to go on this is unlikely and doomed to failure.

After they get more detail from Jamys they may try to find Kutz without Jamys' help in the hope that they can gain more than Jamys is offering. Apart from the practicalities of making their way up-river without Kuboran escort the GM should remind them that they have no guarantee the Constable of Caer Tormau would deal with them. If any of the PCs are themselves Kuboran then that would give them a greater chance of success, but surviving the encounters on the river and reaching their goal without the tacit support of the Asawne Kubora will be a challenge.

An offer they can't refuse

The mission as described by Jamys is extremely simple. All that is required is that the PCs travel up the River Denia in search of a lost employee of the constable of Caer Tormau, a mercenary captain called Coln of Kutz.

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Jamys of Abrant

They will travel 5 leagues from Tormau to Quyn manor on the north bank of the River Denia on ponies Jamys will provide. There they will be met by Kuboran guides who will take them by boat a further 10 leagues upstream to a Kuboran village where the Earl maintains a trading post.

Jamys will give them a note for Ardo of Guil, the Earl's man there, which should ensure his cooperation. It simply states *'These are to be treated well as friends of our mutual acquaintance'* and signed *'Jamys'*.

Where they go after that depends on what they can find out about Kutz and where he might be.

They are to find Kutz and bring him back. If he is already dead and the body cannot be recovered then they must bring proof, preferably in the form of a convincing witness, of the circumstances of his death. If for any reason Kutz is unwilling, or unable, to return then he is not to be allowed to remain alive and they must return his head to Jamys as proof that they have completed their mission.

Name: Jamys of Abrant

Race/Sex: Human/Male

Occupation: Innkeeper

Born: 8 Ilvin 678, Skorus

Appearance: Aged 42, height 5'10", heavy frame, weight 176 lbs/size 7, attractive appearance, medium complexion, brown hair, blue eyes

Str 14	Agl 09	Sml 14	Aur 09	Cml 14
Sta 10	Eye 11	Voi 13	Wil 14	End 10
Dex 09	Hrg 14	Int 18	Mor 07	Mov 10

Medical/Psyche: Greedy

Religion: *Ritual* (Halea) 29, *Piety* 12

Skills: Acting 62, AWARENESS 72, Brewing 52, CLIMBING 52, Cookery 36, INTRIGUE 99, Jewelcraft 34, JUMPING 44, Legerdemain 41, Lovecraft 63, ORATORY 56, Physician 28, RHETORIC 92, SINGING 39, STEALTH 53, Survival 30, Swimming 14, THROWING 54

Languages: Harnic 74, Old Jarinese 31

Scripts: Lakise 79

Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 55, DODGE 52, UNARMED 79, Dagger 70, Club 85

Money/Valuables: see the White Stoa Inn fanon article

Armour/Weapons: good quality cloth tunic and leggings, good quality leather calf boots; dagger in his belt and club within easy reach.

Other Equipment: everything the White Stoa Inn has to offer!

Load: 12.4 lbs

Encumbrance: 0

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	79	94	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	84	84	•	1	v	•
Head butt	•	•	79	79	•	1	•	•
Dagger	1	11	75	75	•	1	2	5
Club	3	9	100	90	•	4	•	•

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
Club	54	2/4	4/4	8/2	16/2

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	•	•	•	•	•	•
Face	•	•	•	•	•	•
Neck	•	•	•	•	•	•
Shoulder	C	+1	1	2	1	2
Upper Arm	C	+1	1	2	1	2
Elbow	C	+1	1	2	1	2
Forearm	C	+1	1	2	1	2
Hand	•	•	•	•	•	•
Thorax	C	+1	1	2	1	2
Abdomen	C	+1	1	2	1	2
Hip	C C	+1	2	3	2	3
Groin	C C	+1	2	3	2	3
Thigh	C C	+1	2	3	2	3
Knee	C	+1	1	2	1	2
Calf	C	+1	1	2	1	2
Foot	L	+1	2	4	3	4

Invocations: none

Convocations: none

Spells: none

Psionics: none

Notes: Jamys will always use Rhetoric or Oratory to win allies in a fight, or to whip up neutrals to obstruct a superior opponent while he escapes. If that fails he will offer a bribe and hope to get the money back later when he has the advantage. Jamys never forgets someone who lets him down or seeks to damage his reputation. There is nothing more important to Jamys than that reputation.

As well as being freemaster innkeeper of The White Stoa Inn in Tormau Jamys is the local Lia-Kavair guildmaster. He limits himself to a quiet local protection racket aimed at guildsmen with something to lose and extortion from the less fortunate members of Tormau's community. His business is tolerated by the constable of Caer Tormau so long as it helps control crime in the town (or directs it against any enemies of the Earl across the shire), and doesn't reduce the Earl's purse. In return Jamys is generous with his taxes and amenable to approaches from the Castle when things need to be done discretely and deniably.

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With this last point Jamys takes time to look each PC in the eye as if to assure himself that they have the will and grit for such a final act.

Jamys will tell them that the ponies will be ready by mid-morning tomorrow and he will send word now to ensure the guides are ready to depart from Quyn at midday. The ponies will be well provisioned for the short journey to Quyn and the guides will have everything they need for the river journey. He gives the PCs 20% of their final fee in earnest of goodwill and wishes them good night and good luck.

Jamys is a reasonably honest criminal as criminals go and values the licence the Earl grants him to do business in Tormau and the surrounding Hundreds. He is therefore conveying exactly what he has been told to convey to the PCs by the Earl's brother Vavryse Lynnaeus, constable of Caer Tormau. In his dealings with the PCs Jamys is acting in good faith and questions about the mission can be answered using the following information.

If no PC speaks any Kuboran (Old Jarinese) ...

Jamys can provide a Rethemi who does. Wyrden of Lomec has worked as a scout among the various logging camps that the Kubora allow the Earl to sustain along the Denia and its tributaries. He is a rough sort who will do anything for a decently filled purse. Wyrden is not particularly bright so is unlikely to provide the PCs with many original thoughts during the adventure. He will act as a translator and help the PCs make their way among the Kubora. He has a better understanding of the tribesmen than most as they often come to the logging camps to trade.

If Jamys is asked about Coln of Kutz ...

Jamys can tell them Kutz came to Tormau three summers ago with a small band of mercenaries. The Earl is always on the look-out for men hardened to battle and Kutz certainly looked the part. He is a head taller than the tallest PC and heavy built. Strong of arm and hale of health he was entirely bald and was thought eccentric for keeping a full red beard. He also had a long, angry, scar on his left forearm that rumour said he'd gained as a thief when a child in Tashal, the great city of the East. He claimed to have some learning and kept a scrawny scribe with him as an affectation.

He gained favour with the Earl and was often sent off on missions into the forest when he and his band would be away for days at a time. Then, one day last summer, he and his men weren't around anymore. Whether he'd been sent away, or run away, got lost or decided to get lost, Jamys doesn't know.

Jamys believes Kutz was expected back at Tormau before winter set in but there's been no word of him through the Spring.

Whatever happened, he's now wanted back.

Name: Wyrden of Lomec		Race/Sex: Human/Male	
Occupation: Scout		Born: 14 Kelen 698, Feniri.	
Appearance: Aged 22, height 5'5", heavy frame, weight 155 lbs/size 6, attractive appearance, medium complexion, pale blond hair, hazel eyes.			
Str 12	Agil 11	Sml 10	Aur 11
Sta 11	Eye 12	Voi 15	Wil 06
Dex 12	Hrg 08	Int 08	Mor 09
			Cml 13
			End 13
			Mov 12
Medical/Psyche: none			
Religion: <i>Ritual</i> (Sarajin) 12, <i>Piety</i> 14			
Skills: AWARENESS 48, CLIMBING 48, Folklore (Kuboran) 18, Fletching 24, Foraging 48, Hideworking 36, INTRIGUE 24, JUMPING 48, ORATORY 26, RHETORIC 45, SINGING 24, STEALTH 48, Survival 36, THROWING 48, Tracking 60, Weatherlore 40			
Languages: Harnic 65, Kuboran (Old Jarinese) 53			
Scripts: none			
Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 60, UNARMED 36, DODGE 50, Spear 48, Dagger 48, Bow 36			
Money/Valuables: negligible			
Armour/Weapons: coarse cloth shirt and leggings; leather shirt and shoes, heavy cloth cowl; dagger, spear and short bow.			
Other Equipment: bedroll			
Load: 38.4 lbs		Encumbrance: 1	

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	31	46	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	36	36	•	1	•	•
Head butt	•	•	31	31	•	1	•	•
Dagger	2	11	48	48	-10	1	2	4
Spear	1	11	63	53	-10	4	•	6
Shortbow	3	8	31	31	•	0	0	0

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
Shortbow	31	15/7	30/6	60/5	120/4

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Face	•	•	•	•	•	•
Neck	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Shoulder	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Upper Arm	C	+0	2	4	3	4
Elbow	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Forearm	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Hand	•	•	•	•	•	•
Thorax	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Abdomen	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Hip	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Groin	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Thigh	C C	+0	1	1	1	1
Knee	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Calf	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Foot	L	+0	2	4	3	4

Invocations: none
Convocations: none
Spells: none
Psionics: none
Notes: He is being paid by Jamys as a translator, not as a warrior!

Link to the next scene

As the meeting takes place the night before their planned departure there will be little opportunity to make any enquiries until the morning.

Scene 2: Making Enquires

Overview

The PCs have a few hours the following morning to make enquires before Jamys expects them to depart for Quyn. (*Tormau* includes a map of the entire settlement and details of the political background but if that article is unavailable it is enough to know that the small town straggling along the only trail arriving at the castle from the south. To the north of the promontory on which the castle sits, overlooking the sandy Otrend Cove, is the camp of the Earl's substantial mercenary army).

GM Aims

- To allow the PCs the chance to ask some questions around Tormau before departing.
- To keep up the pace by making the PCs very aware they have relatively little time before leaving and that if they delay then not only may Jamys get angry, but more importantly they may miss their guides.

PC Outcomes

They confirm some of that they have been told but also get a hint that not all is well with the Kubora.

Description of Events

There will be enough time for each PC to visit a single possible source of information from those listed below. If they work in pairs or a single group then the number of potential sources they can talk to will be reduced in proportion.

The Earl's Mercenaries

About 200 mercenaries, mostly Ivinians and Kuborans, are housed in tents on the Common at the North end of Tormau. While there are some raids into the south they have little to do but prepare to defend Tormau from the King when that weak willed son of a crone builds up the courage to come north.

The Ivinians are housed in tents provided by the Earl, while the Kubora prefer hide tents of their own making. A few lines of tents are occupied by Rethemi and other Harnic mercenaries. These Rethemi are the Earl's only mercenary cavalry and their horse lines and paddock sit between the Kubora and the Ivinians.

Hrafna - an Ivinian

He speaks poor Harnic so conversation is stilted and cannot extend beyond simple language; but in return for a drink he is happy to talk.

If asked about Coln Kutz ...

Kutz? Big man – rough bastard (both of these are compliments from an Ivinian). He was one of the 'Runners' - haven't seen him for maybe a season - maybe longer.

If asked about 'Runners' ...

The Earl often seeks out what he calls 'Forest Runners'. They go on missions into the forest; the castle trusts them

more than most of the natives (gesturing to the Kuboran camp). What they do he doesn't know, but they're gone for days and weeks sometimes.

He can provide no other information.

Suricar – a Kuboran

While the experience of most 'civilised' men is that Kubora from the deep woods are surly and aggressive Suricar has been in the pay of the Earl for 3 years and has mellowed in his approach to non-Kubora. No doubt he'd still happily cut their throats if he encountered them in the forest but he's got used to pay and the Earl's supplies and does not intend to have to run for the forest by behaving stupidly. His primary language is the Old Jarinese dialect spoken by the Kubora but he's picked up a lot of Harnic during his time in the Earl's service.

If asked about Coln Kutz ...

Kutz went out of his way to get to know the Kuboran mercenaries and to learn their language – not like most of the southrons or northmen. He was a favoured *coedrheg* to the tribes and Suricar accompanied him on a couple of trips to the Asawne and Uld Kubora.

If asked about 'coedrheg' ...

That is the word the Kubora gave to the non-Kubora who picked up some of their ways. They sometimes acted as go betweens or emissaries to the tribes. *Coed* means 'trees' and *rheg* means 'run' in their dialect. They are respectful of Kuboran ways and go out of their way to show they understand they are the inferiors when in the forest. Kutz knew he was an outsider and behaved honourably. In the end he began to realise he didn't need all the iron many of the mercenaries wear and dressed for the forest.

If asked what might have happened to Kutz ...

Maybe he didn't learn enough - the forest feeds on those who fear it. Rumour is he took a wrong turn and ended up in the marshes where the Ogres will have eaten him, or perhaps ...

At this point Suricar very pointedly shuts up as if realising he's about to say more than he should and takes a carved token strung around his neck firmly in hand.

If asked about the token ...

He has nothing more to say and further probing will result in him looking to his friends. They show themselves ready for a fight if the PCs don't take the hint and end their questioning.

Biris of Thaldan - a Rethemi Light Horseman

Biris is paid by the Earl to act as guards for favoured traders going north or south from Tormau.

If asked about Coln Kutz ...

He has never heard of Kutz though he knows the Earl regularly sends messengers into the forest. He will suggest the PCs talk to Tursar of Megelese, a trader in town makes his money trading with that half-breed Scarlet Dak. He might know something ...

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If asked about Coln Kutz ...

If asked about Scarlet Dak he can tell them that Dak is a half-breed trader from Golotha who makes a fortune trading with the Kubora.

Tursar of Meglese – trader/usurer

Intrigue: Tursar has trade agreements with Daquer of Iyesin, a Golothan mercantyleer who deals with the Kubora. That brings him into conflict with the Agrikan fighting order at Bedenes.

Tursar gives 'nowt for nowt' but for a generous bribe in cash he will share what he knows of the Kubora and their relationship with the Earl. His 'fee' will be 25-50% of the PC's down payment (exactly how much is left to the GM and may be influenced by PC *Rhetoric*).

If asked about Coln Kutz ...

He was probably one of those sent to make the treaties with the tribes and to ensure they were kept. Unfortunately those treaties currently seem a little bit fragile. Over the last season traders have been reporting more losses to the Kubora than has been usual for a year or two.

The Earl's family have always had a good relationship with the Kubora. The current Earl had reached an accommodation with the tribes that means those wearing his colours are usually left alone. That's no longer the guarantee of safety it was and the tribes are more restless than they've been for years.

If asked about Clan Lynnaeous and the Tribes ...

Clan Lynnaeous lived in the forests north of Tormau during the dark times of the Theocracy and made friends among the Kubora. Then, when the time was right, they raised a rebellion to take Tormau for their own. When Arlun the Barbarian came out of the forest and made Rethemi what it is today, the Lynnaeous called upon those ancient bonds of friendship to keep Tormau. Even when Arlun was gone and the Kubora went back to the forest the Earls of Tormau have tried to keep them as allies. Now, with things the way they are with the King the Earl needs friends and the Kubora serve cheap and fight hard.

If asked about recent events ...

He doesn't know if it means anything but the last time a Kuboran raider's body was brought in it was wearing a small disc of wood with one side crudely carved to show what Tursar took to be a full sun, and the other side a thin sickle moon.

When one of the Earl's Kubora saw it he went paler than Tursar had ever seen a Kuboran go. He doesn't know what the symbols meant but it frightened the Kuboran, and Kubora don't frighten easily.

He's not prepared to part with the token – he thinks it might be some sort of charm against the Kubora. Rumours he's picked up say that the symbols may tell of trouble coming. That's why some locals say Setarn has gone to make his peace with his barbarian gods after all these years

of civilisation. Tursar thinks the wily old Kuboran has gone to do whatever it is he does out there in the forest that pays him so well.

If asked who Setarn is ...

Setarn is a Kuboran who lives in Tormau in the style of a civilised man but no one knows quite how he affords it.

A final word ...

Tursar wishes them well. Perhaps if they find out what happened to Kutz then the tribes will settle down again. If the next season's trading is disrupted then he will suffer.

Setarn 'the Kuboran'

Setarn is well known in the town and asking almost anyone will reveal that Setarn is a Kuboran who spends a lot of time away from Tormau. Scurrilous rumour says he masterminds the brigandage between Tormau and Ithiko to the south. Others say he has a secret silver mine in the forest from which he regularly recovers a king's ransom. That's what keeps him in such style.

He has a sizable house built a little apart from the rest of the town but it has all the trappings of a successful guildsman, including Rethemi servants.

If they seek out Setarn at home ...

His servant, a well spoken Rethemi, apologises but his master is away from Tormau at the moment and not expected to return for a ten-day or more.

Rhetoric may lead the servant to declare that a number of Kubora known to his master have left word for Setarn to say they were leaving Tormau. He doesn't know why.

Link to the next scene

If necessary the GM can use Jamys' men to find the PCs if they are tardy in collecting the ponies from the Inn by mid-morning. It is important that the GM doesn't give them too much time to become distracted or to pursue options that will prove ultimately fruitless.

Scene 3: To Quyn Manor

Overview

The journey to Quyn takes 1 watch (4 hours) by pony and, after the ferry to Dasen, the PCs follow the well-worn trail to, and then through, the manors of Benost, Merne, Aravune, Doslar and Kusuma. *Harnmaster: Barbarians* and *Tribes of the Kubora* provide information about this fierce people. *Asawne Kubora* gives more detail about Acurdin's tribe.

GM Aims

- While the GM can check for random encounters on the road care should be taken to avoid distracting the PCs from their mission.
- If the PCs failed to pick up any hints in Tormau then those scenes can instead be placed on the road so they have another chance to learn something of their quarry.
- To add some confirmation to any thoughts the PCs have about their sponsor.
- Introduce their Kuboran guides as surly and uncommunicative, playing up the superiority that Kubora often display towards 'southrons'. Acurdin in particular should be portrayed as a man who behaves in a very rigid manner.

PC Outcomes

They make an uneventful journey to Quyn and set off up river with their guides.

The belligerent man-at-arms

As the PCs pass through one of the manors they are confronted by a bad tempered man-at-arms. He demands to know what they are doing travelling through these lands armed as they are.

However, he then seems to notice something about the PC's mounts which stops him dead in his tracks and leads him to apologise and wish them well on their journey.

Awareness reveals it was the saddle cloths he noticed. They are black and yellow – the Earl's colours.

Arriving at Quyn Manor

This small manor has been made prosperous by the Earl's trade with the Asawne Kubora. It sits on the north bank of the River Denia where it is joined by the Quyn stream. The tributary is clogged with tree trunks felled up-river by treaty with the Asawne Kubora.

It isn't difficult to spot their guides - a group of Kubora hunkered down beside the timber dock near where several hide boats are drawn up on the bank.

Kuboran PCs will be viewed as capable but not worthy of friendship as they have clearly given up the true life of a Kuboran in favour of service to southrons.

Non-Kuboran PCs will be partonised by the guides. They will assume the southrons are incapable of managing much for themselves and need help with the simplest tasks.

Non-Kuborans from another tribal background will be treated with suspicion, not just partonised. The Kubora are almost more xenophobic about their Urdu neighbours than about southrons and they will assume that other tribes beyond their experience are as untrustworthy as the Urdu.

Their leader waits for the PCs to approach before seeming to take any notice of them.

If the leader is questioned ...

He reveals he is Acurdin of the Asawne tribe of the Kubora, and that his clan brothers are also Asawne. He has been told to wait until the middle of the afternoon and then safely transport the group up-river to one of his tribe's villages. He has given an oath to fulfil this mission.

If asked whether he serves the Earl ...

Acurdin will spit copiously and deny serving 'southrons'

If the PCs seek a delay ...

Acurdin will say his instructions are clear: wait until mid-afternoon and then carry the southrons up stream. If no one arrives when leave.

If they do not wish to travel then they cannot be those he is expecting and he will leave.

If asked if he is expecting them ...

The leader nods and begins to efficiently arrange for the ponies to be left at the manor; the loading of the PCs gear aboard the boats and, within 30 minutes, of largely silent activity is ready to depart. He, and his fellows, are a surly bunch communicating with gesture and expression as much as with words, and he's not much more communicative with the PCs.

If a PC speaks Jarinese or Old Jarinese ...

Communication will be easier as the Kubora give every impression of barely understanding Harnic. Further questioning of their leader, however, will reveal that he speaks better Harnic than initially seemed the case.

Preparing for the journey

The boats are light but sturdy craft called *curach* by both the Rethemi and the Kubora. Built on a bent willow frame the hides are sealed with organic wax or oil which renders them entirely waterproof. They can carry two passengers and their gear along with a Kuboran with a paddle at either end to provide motive power and steering. The number of boats and guides should be varied to accommodate the number of PCs.

They have a broad beam and shallow draft which makes them quite stable on the water and ideal for river travel. The Kubora clearly travel light having little more than a bedroll, a javelin, hand axe and round shield.

The PCs should decide who is travelling in which boat and the order of the boats once on the river. Acurdin will take the rear place in the lead boat.

If a PCs tries to board wearing metal armour ...

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He will be told with brisk gestures that this puts them, and more importantly the balance of the boat, at risk and they should stow it with their gear.



Acurdin 'The Guide'

If the PCs fail to follow this advice ...

Any PC who refuses to follow this advice will be told to walk along the bank. Within a league that will become impossible as the heat is such that heavy armour will generate Fatigue at an increasing rate. Forest encounters can also be used to help the PC realise that wearing armour in these conditions makes no sense if it isolates him from the people who know the locale best – the guides.

If the PCs need to don armour while on the boats

With the exception of helmets, metal armour stowed on the boats cannot be safely donned until back on solid ground. Were a PC to be unwise enough to try to get into armour while on the boats then they should be required to make a successful **STUMBLE** and **FUMBLE** roll for each area of the body covered to avoid falling overboard &/or dropping their armour into the water and seeing it sink without a trace.

Name: Acurdin 'The Guide'

Race/Sex: Human/Male

Occupation: Hunter

Born: 6 Halane 694, Hirin-Tarael cusp

Appearance: Aged 26, height 5'9", medium frame, weight 121 lbs/size 5, average appearance (+5 to other Kubora who ignore the Arus), dark complexion, grey hair, green eyes

Str	15	Agl	12	Sml	11	Aur	13	Cml	05*
Sta	15	Eye	15	Voi	08	Wil	14	End	15
Dex	14	Hrg	14	Int	12	Mor	14	Mov	14

Medical/Psyche: Facial scarring (Kuboran Arus) - * Cml already -5

Religion: *Ritual* (Kuboran pantheon) 15, *Piety* 14

Skills: AWARENESS 86, CLIMBING 86, Folklore (Kuboran) 47, Foraging 99, INTRIGUE 32, JUMPING 86, ORATORY 45, Physician 37, RHETORIC 54, Seamanship (Curach) 80, SINGING 21, STEALTH 97, Survival 97, Swimming 45, THROWING 95, Tracking 84, Weatherlore 74

Languages: Kuboran (Old Jarinese) 76, Harnic 53

Scripts: none

Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 75, UNARMED 86, DODGE 60, Hand Axe 85, Dagger 75, Javelin 85, Round Shield 85

Money/Valuables: a few hand crafted ornaments

Armour/Weapons: homespun cloth tunic and leggings, leather shoes and vest, and kurbul vambraces; handaxe, dagger (obtained in trade with the earl and of poor quality), javelin and round shield

Other Equipment: fire starter, small cook pot and bedroll

Load: 27.0 lbs

Encumbrance: 0

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	86	101	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	91	91	•	1	•	•
Head butt	•	•	86	86	•	1	•	•
Dagger	1	10	80	80	•	1	2	5
Hand Axe	1	10	95	90	•	4	6	•
Javelin	3	10	100	90	-10	2	•	6
Round Shield	6	13	90	105	•	2	•	•

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
Javelin	100	8/7	16/6	32/5	64/4

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	•	•	•	•	•	•
Face	•	•	•	•	•	•
Neck	•	•	•	•	•	•
Shoulder	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Upper Arm	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Elbow	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Forearm	C K	+0	5	5	4	4
Hand	•	•	•	•	•	•
Thorax	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Abdomen	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Hip	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Groin	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Thigh	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Knee	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Calf	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Foot	L	+0	1	3	2	3

Invocations: none

Convocations: none

Spells: none

Psionics: none

Notes: Acurdin has worked hard to achieve a position of responsibility and honour among his people and it is duty to them that drives him. They speak of him as someone who might be Hanuhn one day for he is thought wise and level headed. He knows he could do well if he went to Tormau as a mercenary scout but he wants only to live life as Kemlar taught.

This outlook on life has made him well liked but seen as perhaps a little too serious. Certainly he takes any task allotted to him very seriously. His manner is rather distant, even with his friends, but with outsiders he is positively distant, almost to the point of being rude. He means nothing by it – he simply isn't very good with strangers.

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Just before they board the boats for the journey

Acurdin gives each PC a piece of cloth, dyed black and muddy yellow; the Earl's colours. They are told to display it prominently so it can be seen from the south bank of the river. Finally he gestures to that bank and warns the PCs to never get off the boat on that bank.

If asked why the south bank is dangerous ... he has a single word answer: *Suyari*. The Suyari are another tribe of Kuborans.

Link to the next scene

The next scene is a logical extension of their journey.

Name: Asawne Warriors		Race/Sex: Human/Male	
Occupation: Hunters		Born: various	
Appearance: various but their appearance is typically fierce and their complexion dark through exposure.			
Str 13	Agil 12	Sml 10	Aur 12
Sta 11	Eye 15	Voi 10	Wil 12
Dex 10	Hrg 11	Int 12	Mor 10
			Cml 06*
			End 12
			Mov 12
Medical/Psyche: none			
Religion: <i>Ritual</i> (Kuboran pantheon) 15, <i>Piety</i> 12			
Skills: AWARENESS 60, CLIMBING 60, Folklore (Kuboran) 33, Foraging 55, INTRIGUE 34, JUMPING 60, ORATORY 32, Physician 24, RHETORIC 34, Seamanship (Curach) 65, SINGING 24, STEALTH 72, Survival 72, Swimming 32, THROWING 76, Tracking 70, Weatherlore 60			
Languages: Harnic 27, Kuboran (Old Jarinese) 64			
Scripts: none			
Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 60, UNARMED 60, DODGE 60, Hatchet 72, Dagger 60, Javelin 72, Round Shield 66			
Money/Valuables: various tribal goods			
Armour/Weapons: homespun cloth tunic and leggings, leather shoes and vest; hatchet, dagger (obtained in trade with the Earl and of poor quality), javelin and round shield			
Other Equipment:			
Load: 25.8 lbs		Encumbrance: 0	

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	60	75	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	65	65	•	1	•	•
Head butt	•	•	60	60	•	1	•	•
Hatchet	2	8	77	77	•	3	4	•
Dagger	1	10	65	65	•	1	2	5
Javelin	3	10	87	77	-10	2	•	6
Round Shield	6	13	71	86	•	2	•	•

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
Javelin	87	8/7	16/6	32/5	64/4

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	•	•	•	•	•	•
Face	•	•	•	•	•	•
Neck	•	•	•	•	•	•
Shoulder	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Upper Arm	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Elbow	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Forearm	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Hand	•	•	•	•	•	•
Thorax	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Abdomen	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Hip	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Groin	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Thigh	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Knee	C	+0	1	2	1	2
Calf	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Foot	L	+0	1	3	2	3

Invocations: none
Convocations: none
Spells: none
Psionics: none
Notes: They would die for Acurdin and he for them



Denia tributary

Scene 4: The Suyari

Overview

The PCs are conveyed up river by their skilled guides but they encounter even surlier Kubora and have the opportunity for some action which may improve relations with Acurdin and his men.

GM Aims

- To impress the PCs with the solid capability of the Kubora but ensure they are not seen as their, or anyone else's, servants.
- To begin to create the picture of the Kubora as a complex people with a rich and complex culture rather than the stereotype of the 'fearsome warrior'.
- To help the PCs understand that the Kubora are not a single people but comprise a variety of tribes among whom there is often little love lost.
- To introduce the chance for the PCs to win some respect from the guides by accepting a challenge on behalf of Acurdin.
- To give the PCs a work-out without killing them.
- To allow them to see a symbol they may have seen before and will certainly see again.

PC Outcomes

They learn more about the Kubora and their rigid sense of honour and encounter an opportunity to impress their guides while helping Acurdin out of a difficult situation.

They get used to the routine of river travel at a time of year when there are about three watches of daylight (each 4 hours) and three watches of darkness:

- Dawn to mid-morning (half watch): check the trap lines set around the camp overnight; try for a fish; prepare breakfast; break camp.
- Mid-morning to late afternoon (2 watches): travel.
- Late afternoon to dusk: collect fire wood and set camp; lay out trap lines in the hope of game for the morrow; try fishing for tonight's meal; set watches;
- Dusk to full night: the Kubora keep themselves to themselves and arrange watches around the camp so that at any one time one of them is out of sight in the forest but relieved at regular intervals;
- Full night to dawn: sleep, but if the PCs wish to set watches they can do so.

The Kubora pride themselves on being able to travel for 3 watches and then fight a battle but they will lower their expectation to match the known weakness of southrons.

The journey upstream to the Aswane village takes 2 watches (one today then, after camping overnight, the first watch of the day tomorrow. They intend to arrive at mid-day.

Through the afternoon

The journey through the afternoon is uneventful save for a few shouted exchanges of news with the groups of timberwrights where the Denar river joins the Denia. It is

along the Denar that the Earl is allowed to take timber. The Kubora will not stop and the shouted exchanges will add nothing to what the PCs have already found out. The forest around the mouth of the Denar has a gap-toothed appearance where large trees have taken lesser trunks with them when felled. This is the scarring of the land that is making Sir Ardith Serathy of Quyn, as well as his lord the Earl, rich.

Quickly, though, the timberwrights are left behind and virgin forest grows right down to both the North (left) and South (right) banks. At intervals the guides pause in their paddling as if to listen, an ear cocked first the left, then even more attentively, to the right bank, which they scan continuously. These pauses lead to little interruption in the pace of travel but the PCs will get the sense that it is with the right bank that the Kubora are concerned.

As the journey continues **Awareness** will gain a sense that the guides are paying more and more attention to the South bank, but the PCs will not be able to spot what it is that is worrying them.

If the guides are questioned during the journey ...

They are taciturn and keep their answers to the minimum. This should be no surprise to the PCs given the apparent lack of competent Harnic among the Kubora. Even a character versed in Old Jarinese will get little more of a response to most questions.

If the guides are asked about the south bank ...

Without the Earl's colours the Suyari would already have shown themselves along the south bank. They will not hear of landing there. The Denia is more than 150 paces wide here and Acurdin will steer a course that keeps the boats closer to the Asawne, or northern, bank.

If the guides are asked about the Suyari ...

The Suyari are the Kuboran tribe that occupy a range on the other side of the river. They are traditional enemies of the Asawne and a treacherous and dangerous enemy.

Dusk falls

The sun sinks early behind the towering trees, and with dusk come swarms of biting insects relishing fresh meat. They are annoying but ultimately harmless, unless the GM wants an excuse to visit a bout of marsh fever on the PCs in a week or two's time.

Acurdin, in the lead boat, angles into the North bank at a point where the tree line is interrupted by a small stream. A dozen paces into the inlet and the boats are well hidden from the river. It is clear this is a camp often used by travellers as a fire pit waits among the tress a few paces into the trees where the ground is dry.

The Kubora set about preparing a camp with calm efficiency. Soon a fire is set and dried meat and grain is softening in boiling water. One of the Kubora slips away into the forest to keep watch as soon as they land but when the

meal is nearly ready he returns for a whispered conversation with Acurdin.

Name: Suyari Warriors		Race/Sex: Human/Male	
Occupation: Hunters		Born: various	
Appearance: various but their appearance is typically fierce and their complexion dark through exposure.			
Str 13	Ag 12	Sml 10	Aur 12
Sta 11	Eye 15	Voi 10	Wil 12
Dex 10	Hrg 11	Int 12	Mov 12
Medical/Psyche: none			
Religion: <i>Ritual</i> (Kuboran pantheon) 15, <i>Piety</i> 12			
Skills: AWARENESS 60, CLIMBING 60, Folklore (Kuboran) 33, Foraging 55, INTRIGUE 34, JUMPING 60, ORATORY 32, Physician 24, RHETORIC 34, Seamanship (Curach) 65, SINGING 24, STEALTH 72, Survival 72, Swimming 32, THROWING 76, Tracking 70, Weatherlore 60			
Languages: Harnic 27, Kuboran (Old Jarinese) 64			
Scripts: none			
Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 60, UNARMED 60, DODGE 60, Hatchet 72, Dagger 60, Javelin 72, Round Shield 66			
Money/Valuables: various tribal goods			
Armour/Weapons: homespun cloth tunic and leggings, leather shoes and vest; hatchet, dagger (obtained in trade with the Earl and of poor quality), javelin and round shield			
Other Equipment:			
Load: 25.8 lbs		Encumbrance: 0	

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	60	75	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	65	65	•	1	•	•
Head butt	•	•	60	60	•	1	•	•
Hatchet	2	8	77	77	•	3	4	•
Dagger	1	10	65	65	•	1	2	5
Javelin	3	10	87	77	-10	2	•	6
Round Shield	6	13	71	86	•	2	•	•

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
Javelin	87	8/7	16/6	32/5	64/4

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	•	•	•	•	•	•
Face	•	•	•	•	•	•
Neck	•	•	•	•	•	•
Shoulder	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Upper Arm	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Elbow	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Forearm	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Hand	•	•	•	•	•	•
Thorax	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Abdomen	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Hip	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Groin	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Thigh	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Knee	C	+0	1	2	1	2
Calf	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Foot	L	+0	1	3	2	3

Invocations: none
Convocations: none
Spells: none
Psionics: none
Notes: The Suyari value honour but they also value their lives as they are so valuable to their tribe. They will not waste their life needlessly unless the PCs escalate the fight into a battle.

Superficially the Suyari look like the Asawne guides and are all armed much as the guides: light javelin; hand-axe; round shield and knife. **Awareness** will spot subtle differences in clothing and more obvious differences in the deep

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facial scars all the Kubora sport. They are still wet from their swim across the Denia.

One of the visitors addresses Acurdin in the fluid vowels of the Kuboran dialect and the guide frowns, but nods. The other guides look shocked but make no move. Speakers of Old Jarinese will understand that a formal challenge has been issued relating to some slight Acurdin is responsible for.

Acurdin will turn to the PCs and explain in much better Harnic than he has previously revealed that there is a difficulty. These Suyari are clan brothers to a warrior he, Acurdin, bested in a game of chance at last year's gathering of the Kuboran tribes. It was a fair game but the Suyari took it badly and Acurdin had to defend himself and wounded the other man. These Suyari seek to right the wrong they feel marks their clan's honour.

If asked what it will take to 'right the wrong' ...

Acurdin explains that though the insult was trivial it has grown with the time these Suyari have carried it. He will add that 'if Crador is indeed to rest', then honour must be settled.

He explains that in other circumstances he would not hesitate to fight one of them, and offer them the chance to make things right by drawing first blood. However he is sworn by his clanhead to avoid placing those in his care – the characters – in jeopardy. Fighting the Suyari risks things going badly and the characters being hurt. He must, therefore, balance two matters of honour: fighting the Suyari and putting the PCs at risk which would dishonour him and his clanhead; or protecting the characters by refusing the challenge and so taking the dishonour on himself.

He can see no way to avoid dishonour but his personal honour is less important than that of his clan would lose if he put the characters at risk though his actions. So, he will refuse the Suyari challenge.

If asked what this will cost him ...

He explains that he had significant status among his people and that will be lost, but that is better than risking the oath his elders shared with the Earl of Tormau. He will not hazard his clan or tribe's honour on any account.

If asked if one of guides can be his champion ...

He can't nominate another of the guides as they are also bound by the oath to protect the PCs rather than put them at risk. Anyway he would not put his clan brothers in a situation he would not face himself.

If the characters offer to join a general melee with the Suyari ...

He will do everything in his power to stop them – including having the guides hold them at weapon point while he disarms them. He explains that any fight to the death will simply turn this matter of honour into a blood feud and that is not what his clan would want.

The GM should beware PCs that take this option despite Acurdin's efforts as this is very early in the adventure to have the PCs put themselves at such risk.

Name: Suyari Champion		Race/Sex: Human/Male	
Occupation: Hunters		Born: various	
Appearance: various but their appearance is typically fierce and their complexion dark through exposure.			
Str 15	Agl 11	Sml 10	Aur 11
Sta 13	Eye 13	Voi 10	Wil 13
Dex 10	Hrg 11	Int 11	Mor 10
		Cml 06'	End 14
		Mov 11	
Medical/Psyche: none			
Religion: <i>Ritual</i> (Kuboran pantheon) 15, <i>Piety</i> 12			
Skills: AWARENESS 55, CLIMBING 60, Folklore (Kuboran) 33, Foraging 55, INTRIGUE 34, JUMPING 60, ORATORY 32, Physician 24, RHETORIC 34, Seamanship (Curach) 65, SINGING 24, STEALTH 72, Survival 72, Swimming 32, THROWING 76, Tracking 70, Weatherlore 60			
Languages: Harnic 21, Kuboran (Old Jarinese) 61			
Scripts: none			
Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 60, UNARMED 80, DODGE 60, Hatchet 72, Dagger 60, Javelin 72, Round Shield 66			
Money/Valuables: various tribal goods			
Armour/Weapons: homespun cloth tunic and leggings, leather shoes and vest; hatchet, dagger (obtained in trade with the Earl and of poor quality), javelin and round shield			
Other Equipment:			
Load: 25.8 lbs		Encumbrance: 0	

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	60	75	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	65	65	•	1	•	•
Head butt	•	•	60	60	•	1	•	•
Hatchet	2	8	77	77	•	3	4	•
Dagger	1	10	65	65	•	1	2	5
Javelin	3	10	87	77	-10	2	•	6
Round Shield	6	13	71	86	•	2	•	•

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
Javelin	87	8/7	16/6	32/5	64/4

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	•	•	•	•	•	•
Face	•	•	•	•	•	•
Neck	•	•	•	•	•	•
Shoulder	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Upper Arm	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Elbow	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Forearm	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Hand	•	•	•	•	•	•
Thorax	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Abdomen	C L	+0	2	4	3	4
Hip	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Groin	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Thigh	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Knee	C	+0	1	2	1	2
Calf	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Foot	L	+0	1	3	2	3

Invocations: none
Convocations: none
Spells: none
Psionics: none
Notes: He's a big man and fit with it; and not used to losing. Perhaps his confidence, particularly against a southron, could be used against him?

If the PCs ask if they can help ...

This is an opportunity for a PC to offer to face the Suyari in Acurdin's place. It is permissible for Acurdin to be represented by a champion and if a character made that

decision Acurdin's oath would not be compromised. While *he* cannot take an action that would put the characters in potential harms way, if one of *them* offered to accept the challenge on his behalf then he would not be directly responsible for that decision or its consequences.

If the Suyari won then they would be satisfied; he does not seem to consider what would happen if the PC won – that seems so unlikely to him. Either way he, Acurdin, would still have his honour.

If the characters won't provide a champion ...

Acurdin will tell the Suyari he refuses the challenge and they will whoop and holler in derision at his cowardice, lack of honour and likeness to a woman. The Suyari will then demand gifts as proof that they have bested him. Acurdin is visibly hurt by the taunts and will be much more subdued from this point on. He defers all subsequent leadership to Garach, another of the guides.

Acurdin will think no worse of the characters if they take this path. They are, after all, southrons who are known to have no understanding of honour. The rest of the adventure will play out as written but where Acurdin or other Kubora have a chance to be more open, understanding or helpful, the GM should limit their actions and make it more challenging for the PCs to gain their assistance.

If the characters offer to provide a champion ...

Acurdin is obviously surprised and perhaps a little confused. He didn't expect this but is grateful and will look on the characters in a new light – not as equals, of course, but certainly as better than he expected.

He will explain that as the Suyari have issued the challenge it is the PC champion who can chose the nature of the fight. He is clear the warriors will not be satisfied by some riddling or other game – they seek combat. Though the choice of weapons is left to the character the Suyari will be insulted if the choice is a 'southron weapon', as they cannot fight with what they do not have.

Acurdin's advice is that they should fight bare-handed in the hope that neither is killed. Losing a PC leads to a loss of face for him, while killing a Suyari risks an escalating blood feud. The Suyari will imply a fight to the death if the PC nominates any weapon, including a knife. Bare-handed they will assume the fight is to submission.

Hopefully the PCs will follow his advice but if not let the combat proceed on their terms. See below for the consequences of not following Acurdin's advice.

Once the champion is identified ...

Having judged the Suyari as leaner and lighter than them the PCs should be confronted by the Suyari champion – who has been lurking out of sight in the trees. He's a much bigger, heavier man ...

The fight should be fought to its conclusion. If the Suyari wins then their honour is assuaged having defeated Acurdin's champion. If they lose then their reaction can be

straight-forward: they lost in a fair fight, or the GM can add a complication.

Potential Complications

If the GM wants to give more than just the PC champion a physical workout then the following options can be explored as follow-ups to the events described above.

If Acurdin refused the challenge ...

Once the Suyari have stopped insulting Acurdin and gloating over him they will demand evidence of their triumph over them.

If a PCs accepted the challenge on behalf of Acurdin and lost ...

Once the Suyari have stopped insulting the PC for being a weak and womanly southron they will demand evidence of their triumph over him.

If a PCs accepted the challenge on behalf of Acurdin and won ...

Once the Suyari have picked up their fallen warrior they will demand compensation for having had to face a dishonourable opponent – a southron.

The only evidence of victory or compensation the Suyari will accept is a piece of the PCs equipment for each Suyari warrior, including those out in the forest. Either a weapon or a piece of armour will suffice.

In any of the above circumstances ...

The Suyari may be convinced to accept alternatives to the weapons and armour they want; OR

The Suyari hold out for their initial demands and if the characters won't comply then they will rollup their sleeves and set out to teach the southrons and their Asawne 'nursemaids' a lesson.

If a general melee breaks out ...

The Suyari want a blood feud no more than the Asawne so the GM should stress that the Suyari move on the PCs bare-handed. They will still have their knives at their belts but will only use them if a PC resorts to their knife first. If the PCs make to use their other weapons then the Suyari will do likewise and someone is likely to end up dead.

The fight will continue until one side or the other has subdued their opponents or until the GM thinks the PCs either have the upper hand or are at risk of getting badly hurt. In either case the Suyari will look to retreat into the forest with their wounded.

It is left to the GM to determine the consequences of any blood feud the PCs have triggered, but in future they would be well advised to travel through the Hohnam Blight only in daylight and in a large group!

The attitude of Acurdin and the other guides ...

It is important to note that Acurdin and the guides are passive observers of any melee resulting from the PCs refusal to hand over any of their possessions. If they take part there is a good chance the feud will re-start and that may

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end with someone dead and someone else pursued through the forest.

At the end of the encounter

Searching any incapacitated Suyari will yield a small carved wooden token strung on a hide thong. The token has a smiling face on one side and a fanged maw on the reverse and looks to be relatively newly carved. If there is no body left to examine then the PC who acted as champion will later remember seeing a token like this strung around the neck of his Suyari opponent.

There is some similarity to the token Tursar of Meglese may have shown a character.

If the guides are asked about the token ...

The guides will dismiss the tokens with a shrug saying that they are just a superstition. Any PC choosing to keep a particular eye on the guides after these events will notice they all wear a similar token.

Finally, the camp settles to sleep and the PCs will see the Kubora take turns at keeping watch in the forest. It is up to the characters if they wish to stand a watch as well.

The Kubora will be up before the PCs and prepare a cold breakfast for them before the journey upriver continues, much as it did yesterday.

Link to the next scene

The next scene is a logical extension of their journey up river.

ACT II: THE ASAWNE

Overview

The PCs arrive at a large Asawne Kubora. They meet a number of people who add to their picture of Kutz and his fate. They also learn that their mission may have significance to the Kubora as well as to the Earl of Tormau.

Finally they are offered help in continuing their journey in pursuit of the lost mercenary, nearer to the Heart of Darkness. (*Asawne Kubora* includes maps of the village of Gomas 'Straight Arrow' and its immediate surroundings).

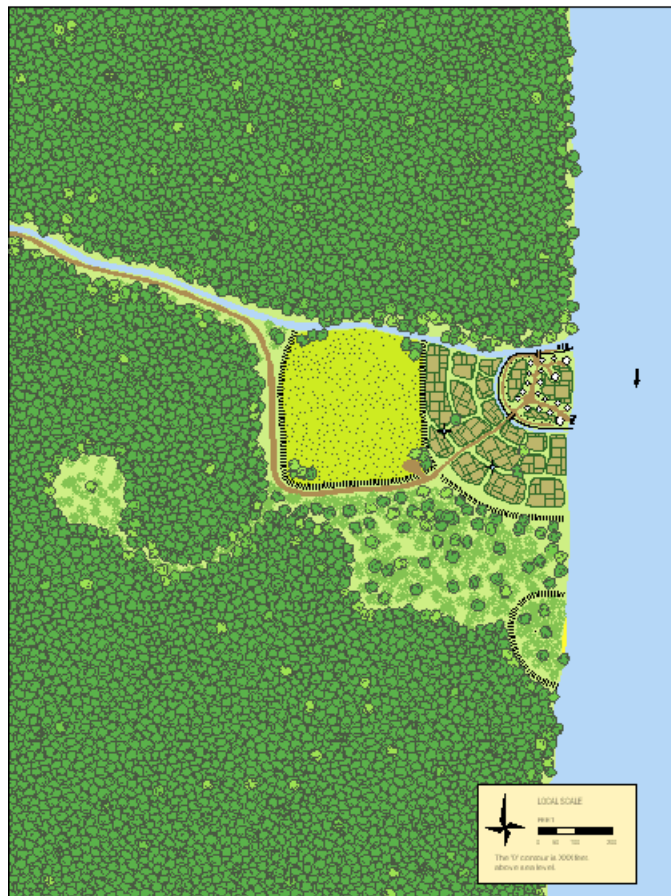
Scene's 1 & 2 can be played in any order, but Scene 3 is best kept until last.

Introduction

The guides continue to paddle up river through most of the morning. Towards midday the north bank begins to look less densely forested and it is soon clear that stretches of the bank have been subject to primitive cultivation. Finally the boats come in sight of a Kuboran settlement on the north bank of the river. This is the Asawne village to which Acurdin has been commissioned to deliver the characters.

ASAWNE RIVER CAMP

COMMON MAP



As the PCs approach the village groups of children appear on the bank looking blankly at the visitors. Clad in skins and rough cloth they already show some Arus – disfiguring

their otherwise innocent faces. The PCs see that the village is a substantial clearing with a palisade facing the forest. There are a number of substantial round-houses within the village bounds and beyond the stockade the forest has been cleared for several hundred paces and thinned further than that.

Acurdin and the other guides allow the boats to coast in towards shore, and the crude dock fashioned there. He advises the PCs to keep their hands visible.

Scene 1: Ardo of Guil

Overview

Ardo of Guil is the representative of the Earl to whom Jamys addressed the PC's introductory letter.

GM Aims

- To paint Ardo of Guil as a pompous, drunken sot who none-the-less may have important information.

PC Outcomes

They learn more than they might wish to know about how the Kubora treat unwelcome visitors and that Kutz did travel through the village heading upstream.

Description of Events

As the PCs climb up onto the dock it is impossible not to notice that the body of a man is tied to a post, partially immersed in the river water.

Awareness will suggest he died following an extended period of torture and mutilation. Another **Awareness** success will indicate that he is not a Kuboran as he has none of the distinctive facial scarring of Kuboran Arus.

A short, fat, Rethemi is waiting on the dock as they arrive. He clearly notices the Earl's colours and introduces himself grandly as *Ardo of Guil, mercantyle plenipotentiary of the Earl of Tormau to the clans of the Asawne Kubora*. He continues: *You are welcome, please accept my hospitality*.

It is clear that Ardo's invitation is aimed at the PCs not the Kuboran guides who are left to make their own arrangements. It will also be clear that he views any tribal PC as beneath his notice and will offer them neither hospitality nor conversation unless prompted. Then he will treat them like the PC's servant, not an equal.

The GM should vary this attitude if there are no non-tribal PCs present but otherwise it should be used to communicate Ardo's low opinion of 'barbarians' and his pretensions to leading a 'civilised' life in which everyone has a place in the recognised social order. It also reflects his view of how high he stands in that social order, despite appearances to the contrary!

If Ardo is asked about the body outside ...

He explains that every so often some freebooter chances his arm when he learns the black and yellow colours of the Earl can offer some protection from the tribes.

The one outside was only expecting to encounter some dim barbarians rather than an agent of the Earl himself. The man had no proof of his connection to the Earl so Ardo disowned him. The poor devil was handed over to the Kuboran women and treated as an oath-breaker. It took him a week to die and the Kubora will display his body there as a sign to their gods of their distaste for liars.

Ardo's hut and trading post

The Earl of Tormau retains Ardo as a representative to trade with the tribes. It is here that the Earl sends gifts of weapons and other trade goods in return for licence for his timberwrights to log downstream.

Ardo's trading post is a typical, if large, Kuboran round-house, perhaps 20 feet across with the centre pole rising almost 10 feet above the floor. Half the hut is crowded with bales of skins, other products of the forest, and trade goods of one kind or another; the other has a low pallet and a table on which an open ledger sits. Ardo ostentatiously closes the ledger when the PCs enter and the woman who was stirring a pot over the fire pit near the centre of the hut retreats into the shadows where she sits quietly on the pallet and begins repairing some of Ardo's clothes.

He is a scruffy individual though he would claim he seeks to keep up civilised standards in this barbarian backwater. He is clearly interested in the PCs as his only other 'civilised' company arrives every season or so when the Earl sends more trade goods up river.

Once the PCs are settled he asks if the PCs have anything for him, some sign that you are truly from the Earl. Handing over the letter they received from Jamys will satisfy Ardo and he files the letter safely in the ledger.

He is a deeply officious individual and, having verified the PCs credentials, he will then insist on recording their names. If they object he will explain that he is accountable for relations with these natives and if the PCs cause trouble while here he will be answerable for it. By taking their names he ensures he can point his finger at the true trouble makers. He is, of course, certain that this will be unnecessary in the case of his current visitors but precautions must be taken.

The PCs should see his practice of taking names as a way of confirming whether Kutz came this way and when.

Once he has recorded the PCs in his ledger he will happily answer any questions but the lucidity of his answers will decline as he works his way through a bottle of liquor he keeps for special occasions such as this. It is all too clear that Ardo defines special occasions loosely as there are several empty liquor flasks visible in the hut. It is a rough spirit he 'prepares locally' and PCs should moderate their intake if they are not to fall into the same stupor as him by the end of the meal.

If they ask about Kutz ...

Kutz came up river a number of times on the Earl's business and used the Asawne camp as a base for journeys

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to many of the neighbouring tribes. The local chief is an ally of the Earl and supports the Earl's efforts to make alliances with the Kubora.

Name: Ardo of Guil		Race/Sex: Human/Male	
Occupation: Trader in skins and furs		Born: 17 Azura 675, Hirin	
Appearance: Aged 45, height 5'4", heavy frame, weight 150 lbs/size 6, ugly appearance, fair complexion, dark hair going grey, grey, rheumy, eyes			
Str 13	Agl 07	Sml 05	Aur 10
Sta 07	Eye 18	Voi 08	Wil 11
Dex 13	Hrg 05	Int 13	Mov 07
Medical/Psyche: fleas and lice (Rhetoric -10); alcoholic			
Religion: <i>Ritual</i> (Agrik) 12, <i>Piety</i> 04			
Skills: AWARENESS 48, CLIMBING 44, Drawing 24, Fishing 28, Hideworking 63, INTRIGUE 46, JUMPING 52, ORATORY 24, RHETORIC 63, SINGING 22, STEALTH 36, Survival 22, Swimming 13, THROWING 34			
Languages: Harnic 91, Kuboran (Old Jarinese) 56			
Scripts: Lakise 80			
Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 50, UNARMED 43, DODGE 45, Knife 31			
Money/Valuables: see the details of Ardo's Trading Post			
Armour/Weapons: worn cloth robe and hood draped around his neck and shoulders with leather shoes and a fur hat			
Other Equipment: Knife			
Load: 9.0 lbs		Encumbrance: 0	

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	43	58	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	48	48	•	1	•	•
Head butt	•	•	43	43	•	1	•	•
Knife	1	10	36	31	•	0	1	4

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
•	•	•	•	•	•

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	Q (fur)	+0	5	2	1	4
Face	•	•	•	•	•	•
Neck	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Shoulder	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Upper Arm	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Elbow	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Forearm	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Hand	•	•	•	•	•	•
Thorax	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Abdomen	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Hip	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Groin	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Thigh	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Knee	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Calf	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Foot	L	+0	1	3	2	3

Invocations: none
Convocations: none
Spells: none
Psionics: none

Notes: Ardo serves the Earl of Tormau, running a trading post among the Asawne Kubora. He lives all year with the Asawne in their camp on the River Denia and has taken up with the widow tasked cook and clean for him. As a result she has lost all status within the tribe but is strangely devoted to him.

He is visited once during the Spring and Autumn months, twice during the Summer but not at all during the Winter. Apart from the woman he lives with he has made no friends among the Kubora who view him as a pathetic example of southron manhood good only for the trinkets, gifts and trade goods he dispenses in return for their pelts and permission for the Earl to log further down river. Behind his back the call him 'Ardo the Leech'.

He fills the empty months between visits with drink. He is now a confirmed alcoholic but knows enough not to get so drunk he cannot fulfil his duties to the Earl.



Ardo of Guil

Then, last Summer, Kutz came with a group of men, maybe a few more than a handful, and an unlikely companion in the form of a scribe who kept making notes in a book he carried with him everywhere. He said they were heading further up river rather than into the forest.

Ardo warned Kutz that the Kubora say there's nothing good up river but he wouldn't be swayed. He was going to raise an army, he said, to crush the usurper Chafin. He had weapons and lots of supplies in his boats but they weren't for the Asawne. He took them with him. The mercantylor hasn't heard anything of him since. He got a letter from Tormau last season asking if he had heard anything but wrote back explaining the man had disappeared.

He has no idea what happened to Kutz, but there have been some disturbing rumours that he hears through his Kuboran woman.

If they ask about recent events ...

Things have got more tense lately; the warriors have been restless but no one will tell him why. What he does know is that a number of debts are being settled – sometimes bloodily. He's more nervous than he has been in all his time at the village. He's taken to sleeping with his dagger under his pillow, just in case.

If asked about the tokens ...

He has noticed them a lot over the last season. Mothers carve them for their children and even the warriors wear them. Some are carved with a sun and moon; some with a

friendly face and a fearsome one; some with trees and lots of game and then trees but no game.

If asked who leads the village ...

The village clanhead is Gomas, called Straight Arrow, who is also Hanuhn of the Asawne. He is currently residing in the village.

Link to the next scene

The GM can encourage the PCs to wander around the village by having Ardo's woman hustle them out of the hut so she can put him to bed.

Scene 2: Making Friends?

Overview

If any PC chooses to wander around the village they will be treated suspiciously unless the character taking the walk helped Acurdin against the Suyari. In that case there is some civility from the villagers. News travels fast!

GM Aims

- To enable the PCs to gain a Kuboran view of Kutz;
- To learn that the tokens they have encountered are widespread and probably related to 'Crador'.
- To learn that 'Crador' has a number of names most of them sinister.
- To begin to build a sense of foreboding about the journey further up river and about the mysterious Denal Kubora and someone, or something, called Crador.

PC Outcomes

They see the Kubora in a more domestic setting and learn that Kutz went upriver.

They discover that other Kubora are suspicious of the Denal Kubora who are to be found at the river's headwaters.

They gain an increasingly complete view of Crador from the Asawne point of view.

Description of Events

Anyone choosing the walk around the village will see Kuboran women in their prime cultivating vegetable plots. Most of the men present either within or outside the palisade are of middle years and above but still have the bearing of warriors. They are the Hearth Guard and responsible for defending the village and villagers when hunters in their prime are away from home. Today the only such warriors present will be Acurdin and the other guides.

The village children are clearly curious about the visitors and will follow them around. The older women and grandmothers, too frail to work at cultivation, discretely watch them and the characters.

If the PCs try to enter into conversation with the women or older warriors ...

Rhetoric (Old Jarinese) will allow them to get single word responses that make it clear conversation is not welcomed. It may get the PC close enough to see some of the tokens they have heard about or encountered, but they will not be allowed to examine them.

If the PCs try to enter into conversation with the children, most of whom are to be found near the river bank ...

Simple gifts will bring some children close enough to see that almost every one of them wears a token.

Awareness will allow a PC to see a snake moving quietly through the long grass and reeds at the river edge and

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allow the character to intervene before the snake bites a small child who, fascinated by the PCs, steps back onto it.

Intervening either to kill the snake or treat the bitten child is the best way to make a connection to the villagers. Even if the child dies the PCs will get some benefit for trying to save her, particularly if they helped Acurdin earlier in the adventure.

Creature: Common Harnic Adder (7-23" long)

Str 06 **Agil** 08 **Sml** 08 **Aur** 01 **Cml** •
Sta 12 **Eye** 16 **Voi** • **Wil** 08 **End** 07
Dex • **Hrg** 01 **Int** • **Mor** • **Mov** 12

Skills: AWARENESS 60, CLIMBING 20, Intimidate (hiss) 30, STEALTH 60, Tracking 50

Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 60, Bite 45, DODGE 45,

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Bite	•	•	55	•	•	•	•	3

	Location	B	E	P	F
01 – 15	Head	1	1	0	1
16 – 35	Neck	1	1	0	1
36 – 65	Thorax	1	1	0	1
66 – 85	Abdomen	1	1	0	1
86 – 00	Tail	1	1	0	1

Notes: Hisses to Intimidate & will retreat given the chance. Only attacks if stood on. Venom – H4, 90 mins

If the PCs try to enter into conversation with the women after aiding the child ...

Having sought to save the child the PCs can quickly get into conversation with the Kubora. Playing games with the children will lead to conversation with their grandmothers if the PCs take care. These are a proud people who disdain the southrons for their weakness but trying to save a grandchild is a way to cross many cultural barriers.

Rhetoric (Old Jarinese) will get them to talk reasonably freely and the gift of some useful item like a knife or cooking pot will increase the level of success.

If asked about Coln of Kutz ...

They will all remember him as a strapping man with a shaved head and whiskers the colour of old blood who dressed properly (as a Kuboran) and who respected the tribe and its ways. He gained respect and last time he passed through; he even made a small sacrifice to Heneryne in the hope she would protect him among the Denal but he has not returned so perhaps 'The Twisted One' claimed him despite the boast the Denal have made. Perhaps because of the boast.

If asked about 'the boast' made by the Denal ...

They will say that there are rumours among the tribes that 'Crador will rest' and all Kubora must make things as Kemlar asked before it is too late.

If asked about Heneryne ...

The women will simply state that she is the goddess who watches over all Kubora in need.

I asked what 'Crador will rest' means ...

They will go silent: 'to speak of the 'Two faced god' too much brings bad luck'.

All they will say is that it is bad luck to name the god Crador, son of Heneryne, three times and so they use other names for him: 'The Twisted One'; 'The Deceiver'; 'The Bringer of Dreams and Nightmares'; and 'He Who Looks Both Ways', to name but a few!

The PCs should identify a sense of duality in Crador which they *may* connect to the tokens the women handle when talking of the god.

If they ask to handle a token ...

They will not allow the PCs to examine a token but **Awareness** will identify a range of two sided images. The two sides are carved to show two things a Kuboran might identify as opposites: sun and moon; happiness and sadness or fear; abundant food and hunger, etc.

If asked who leads the village ...

The Hanuhn of the Asawne is Gomas, called Straight Arrow, and he is present in the village.

The Druhn, Rytog 'the Blade' is away from the village with most of warband, hunting. Rytog is named for the weapon he took from from a Mamekan Knight in 718. This is provided as a potential future plot hook, not as a way to distract the PCs with the possibility of getting their hands on a Mamekan Blade. It is left to the GM whether there is a Blade to be found.

Link to the next scene

The next scene will be prompted by having Hanuhn Gomas approach the PCs and invite them to his hut.

Scene 3: Hanuhn Gomas

Overview

Gomas 'Straight Arrow' is an important man among the clan, the tribe and among the broader Kuboran people. He is known for his honour and wisdom; things about which many speak.

He also has a slight gift of foresight which has warned him of the PCs arrival and their mission. He has thought long and hard about whether he should say anything to them about his fears but his obligations as their host means he cannot stay his tongue lest they come to harm through his failure to act. He will not tell them what they should do – that is not his to say. He will, though, answer their questions so that they can make a decision for themselves.

GM Aims

- To present an opportunity for the PCs to find out more about Kutz and where he may have gone;
- To learn more about Crador and what might happen were he to 'rest';
- To find out something about the risks they may face;
- To have the opportunity to seek help in the next stage of their mission;

PC Outcomes

They find out that Kutz went up river to the Denai Marshes and that he appears to have disturbed a fragile equilibrium among the Kubora

They find out something about the risks they may face and in particular learn more about Crador and what might happen were he to 'rest';

They will have gained support for the next stage of their journey.

Description of Events

Gomas moves about the village with an obvious air of dignity. The other Kubora show him as much deference as any one Kuboran shows to another. He is accompanied by two warriors, one of whom is either Acurdin (if the PCs helped him earlier) or Garach (if Acurdin lost his honour). The other is a comely woman of 20 or so armed as any man. She is Sytari 'The Man', who has chosen *meinirhyfel*: 'the path of the man'. This allows her to act and be treated as a man in all things. PCs that condescend to her as if to a woman will risk abuse from her or the other Kubora, before Gomas calms things down. They walk slightly behind the Hanuhn.

He has good Harnic and invites the visitors bearing the colours of his friend and ally the Earl of Tormau to share a meal with him. He leads them to his hut which is guarded by two other hunters.

Acurdin and Sytari join them in a meal of tasty broth and flat bread. After the meal Gomas is straightforward in

declaring his interest in the characters, telling them that he has had a vision of their coming '*in the trees and in the river; in the air and in the night*'. He tells them that he knows something of their mission. He may not tell them what they should do but will answer their questions if he can.

If asked about Kutz ...

Gomas tells them he believes they are being sent after a man who is already as good as dead. Kutz was sent to make peace and keep the Kubora under control. Instead the Hanuhn believes he has roused something that was best left undisturbed. He believes the characters have been sent after Kutz to put an end to the chaos he is unknowingly going to unleash. He believes that they are sent to kill Kutz.

Coln Kutz thought himself protected from the forest but he went too far into its heart and there he appears to have discovered that the old ways of the Kubora are not to be discounted.

If asked about Crador ...

The Asawne shaman has recently learned that the Denai Kubora are sending messages across Peran. He even believes they may have sent word to the 'Left Behind', the Urdu. They are saying that 'Crador will rest'.

There is an ancient prophecy that says 'The Trickster' will one day fall asleep. If Crador were to rest then he would no longer send nightmares and evil luck; but equally he would no longer send good fortune.

Were the prophecy to come to pass then the tribes believe the life of the Kubora would change forever; some say the world would end. Before that happens every Kuboran will seek to gain Kemlar's favour so they are worthy to meet him in the after-life. They will gain that favour by taking every opportunity to fulfil the tasks he set them: *Battle the land, and thy brethren, and those of thy kindred that stayed behind, for in clean strife shall the heart be joyous, and the hand grow harder.* That may mean war and disaster.

This is why more southrons have been attacked this last season and why the Suyari came after Acurdin in response to a trivial slight at the Moot. All are looking for chances to build their honour in case they meet Kemlar sooner than they had expected.

All the tribes have revered Crador for the good luck he brings and fear him for the bad luck his nightmares presage. Worship takes different forms among the tribes: some love him; some hate him; some laugh at him, but few dare ignore him. They all remember the prophecy.

Were those among the tribes who believe in the prophecy to sway others then the tribes might unite and sweep south again, as they did in the time of Arlun. Every Kuboran who joined such a fight would have the opportunity to boid his name so that Kemlar would notice him at the World's End. This is why Gomas has sent word to the Earl warning that tribal alliances are more fragile than in several generations.

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Name: Gomas 'Straight Arrow' **Race/Sex:** Human/Male
Occupation: Hanuhn of the Asawne **Born:** 3 Savor 663 (Tarael-Tai cusp)
Appearance: Aged 57, height 5'7", light frame (size 7), weight 144 lbs, plain appearance (+5 to other Kubora who see through the Arus), dark complexion, grey hair, brown eyes

Str 11	Agl 11	Sml 12	Aur 15	Cml 10*
Sta 11	Eye 12	Voi 11	Wil 15	End 12
Dex 12	Hrg 12	Int 15	Mor 15	Mov 11

Medical/Psyche: Facial Scarring – Kuboran Arus (*+5 CML to Kubora)
Religion: *Ritual* (Kuboran pantheon) 105, *Piety* 53
Skills: AWARENESS 70, CLIMBING 55, Folklore (Kuboran) 88, Foraging 45, INTRIGUE 76, JUMPING 65, Mental Conflict 78, Musician (drum) 69, ORATORY 78, Physician 59, Prescience 72, Rhetoric 76, Seamanship (Curach) 53, SINGING 64, STEALTH 75, Survival 73, Swimming 66, THROWING 77, Tracking 67, Weatherlore 78
Languages: , Kuboran (Old Jarinese) 95, Harnic 43
Scripts: none
Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 73, UNARMED 63, DODGE 55, Dagger 67, Hand Axe 76, Javelin 62, Round Shield 77
Money/Valuables: a few coins used as decorative ornaments, the feather of a Northern Eagle passed through the generations to each Hanuhn
Armour/Weapons: Good quality, well cured and supple leather shoes and vest over homespun cloth leggings, long sleeved tunic, leggings and hooded cloak. He discards the hood and cloak in combat. Good quality dagger (a gift from the Earl of Tormau) and average quality hand axe and javelin
Other Equipment: hand drum and beater, fire maker
Load: 25.8 lbs **Encumbrance:** 0

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	63	78	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	68	68	•	1	•	•
Head butt	•	•	63	63	•	1	•	•
Dagger	1	12	72	72	•	1	2	5
Hand Axe	3	11	86	81	•	4	6	•
Javelin	3	10	77	67	-10	2	•	6
Round Sh.	6	12	82	97	•	2	•	•

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
Javelin	77	8/7	16/6	32/5	64/4

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	•	•	•	•	•	•
Face	•	•	•	•	•	•
Neck	•	•	•	•	•	•
Shoulder	C L	+1	3	5	4	5
Upper Arm	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Elbow	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Forearm	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Hand	•	•	•	•	•	•
Thorax	C L	+1	3	5	4	5
Abdomen	C L	+1	3	5	4	5
Hip	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Groin	C C	+0	2	2	2	2
Thigh	C C	+0	1	2	1	2
Knee	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Calf	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Foot	L	+1	2	4	3	4

Invocations: none
Convocations: none
Spells: none
Psionics: Prescience 72
Notes: Gomas would fight to the death in defence of his peple, but will seek peaceful ways of resolving conflict first. The Earl of Tormau considers Gomas a reliable ally who acts to benefit his people.

Gomas is not one of the tribal leaders who believes in these ancient prophesies. He has always taught that a man can shape his own fortune and should not blame Crador for any ill luck that befalls him. However he is disturbed by the rumors as other leaders will be reacting differently to him. He does not want his people to sacriofice themselves on a blade fashioned from an ancient prophesy.



Gomas 'Straight Arrow'

If asked where Kutz went ...

Up river from the village is a boundary, a boundary that no Asawne Kubora crosses unless in dire 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 those dreams come true. None have been selected as a 'gift' since Gomas became the tribe's Hanuhn, something he is very proud of.

Kutz crossed that boundary – whether he did it willingly or not he will have reaped his reward ...

If asked about the Denal Kubora ...

The Denal Kubora were once great warrior heroes but have served Crador since Kemlar left his People. They guard 'The Hand of Crador' jealously. When the southrons tried to take the forest from the Kubora long ago they came to find the 'Hand' saying that it belonged to their god. That and other sacrileges brought the tribes together and the

Kubora smote the invaders like the falling tree strikes the ground when the storms blow their worst.

Gomas never told Kutz that he had dreamed about him and of the 'Hand'. What would bring the two together he doesn't know but he does know the fates of the Hand and of the man are bound together.

The Denal say that Kutz is the saviour they have been waiting for and that 'Crador will rest'. With that rest will come an end to the Denal's servitude to the god but it also brings the risk of the end of the world.

Gomas feels guilty that he did not share what he forseen with Kutz – he feared to alter the will of the gods. Now he fears the characters also have a part to play – be it for good or ill he does not know. This is why he is talking to them. He will not be made guilty a second time. If Crador is truly to rest and the world is to come to an end he wishes to have this act weighed in the balance in his favour.

Gomas now feels his conscience is clear. He wishes them well and hopes their fate is to stop whatever chain of events Kutz has set in motion, before it is too late.

If the PCs ask for help traveling upstream ...

He will think carefully and tell them he will provide guides for them. If they aided Acurdin against the Suyari then Acurdin will lead the guides as before. If the PCs did not aid Acurdin then Garach leads the guides and any subsequent reference to Acurdin should be read as Garach.

Gomas makes it clear that he can ask his people to escort the PCs to the top of the Denia cataract but not beyond. That is a decision they must make for themselves.

When Gomas has said all he has to say ...

He bids the characters farewell and dismisses them. As they leave his hut they notice he is flipping a small round token, which might have a sun carved on one side and a waning moon on the other.

That night ...

If they did not aid Acurdin earlier, then they will have no alternative but to spend the night in Ardo's hut. It's more roomy but he snores.

If they aided Acurdin in his confrontation with the Suyari they will be invited to sleep in his bachelor hut, or the hut of one of the other guides if there are more than three PCs. If they saved, or attempted to save the child from the snake then the grandmother will bring them food that night whether they sleep in Acurdin, or Ardo's, hut.

Link to the next scene

Next morning Acurdin and the guides will ready the boats for an early departure and will be ready to leave when the PCs make their way to the dock.

. Clearly news of their mission has circulated among the Asawne as the majority of the village has turned out to watch them leave. The Asawne line the path to the boats in silence. Many of them bow to the PCs or sadly shake their

heads as they pass; fingering the small wooden tokens that have become so familiar to the PCs. The PCs get a clear sense that the villagers do not expect to see them return and are showing respect for their bravery in going any further.

If they saved, or tried to save the child, then a grandmother steps from the crowd just before they arrive at the dock and presses something into the hand of the PC who intervened with the child: tokens for each PC on leather thongs; newly carved the previous night.

She says something in the Kuboran dialect that a speaker of Old Jarinese, or a guide, will translate as *'You will need these when you challenge the Trickster for the fate of the world'*.

ACT III: FURTHER UPSTREAM

Overview

The PCs follow Kutz to the range of the mysterious Denal Kubora and encounter challenges both human and, it seems, inhuman.

Scene 1 is optional but can provide an apparently confident party of characters with a helpless dependent to look after. The 'lost boy' may also provide a convenient cover when they arrive at the head of the Denia cataract.

This scene is also a potential adventure hook linked to *Bedenes*.

Scene 1: The Watcher

Overview

In this optional scene the PCs become aware that they are being shadowed by someone or something on the North bank of the Denia. If they investigate they capture a mute boy with terror in his eyes and a terrible past. (*Warriors of Mameka*, *Mamaka Master of Steel* and *Bedenes* provide background for the investigation of the boy's history).



Peran forest

GM Aims

- To present them with a physical challenge in an atmosphere of foreboding
- To provide a helpless dependent to encumber them

PC Outcomes

They will feel satisfaction in capturing a 'threat' while saving a child in need. They will also learn how bad some bad guys get.

Description of Events

Awareness will suggest that, having travelled half a day from the Asawne village, there is something among the trees of the North bank, moving in parallel to their course.

Speculation as to whether it is the Suyari returned to hunt them will lead Acurdin and the guides to indicate that the watcher in the woods is not silent enough to be Suyari.

If the PCs come up with a plausible plan to capture whatever it is that is out there they should be allowed to carry it out and appropriate skill use should include: **Tracking, Survival, Stealth or other wilderness skills**.

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Their quarry is a boy – perhaps 10 years old – who will be frightened into frozen immobility when captured.

The red headed boy is dressed in rags, but the rags of a Rethemi freeman; not the skins and homespun of the Kubora. His shoes are little more than scraps of leather tied onto his feet by twine, but it is clear they are not of Kuboran manufacture; he has no Arus.

Initially he does not speak because he is too frightened but it soon becomes apparent that he *cannot* speak as his tongue has been cut out. The only way to gain his trust is with *some* food – too much will make him violently sick as he crams everything into his mouth.



Geddis: the lost boy

Rhetoric (diplomacy), and sufficient good treatment will leave him hunkered down in his rags watching the PCs warily. Gentle treatment will give him the confidence to tell his story by drawing crude pictures in the sand of the river bank or on parchment. He recognises Lakise characters and has some skill in reading and writing: enough to write his name, 'Geddis' and to enhance his drawings with some Harnic words. However he is more fluent writing in a language that only an Agrikan priest is likely to recognise – Surikal.

Drawing suggests that he has been taught to write very carefully and has a very good hand. However he seems to

know a very narrow range of words that he can write. It is as if he learned to right the *other* language (Surikal) in beautifully formed Lakise!

Name: Geddis **Race/Sex:** Human/Male
Occupation: lost boy **Born:** 28 Kelen 710, Feniri
Appearance: Aged 10, height 3'11", scant frame, weight 63 lbs/size 1, average appearance, fair complexion, dark red hair, blue eyes
Str 08 **Ag** 13 **Sml** 09 **Aur** 08 **Cml** 10
Sta 08 **Eye** 13 **Voi** - **Wil** 14 **End** 08
Dex 11 **Hrg** 13 **Int** 12 **Mor** 11 **Mov** 12
Medical/Psyche: dumb (his tongue has been cut out)
Religion: **Ritual** Agrik (Mamekan) 20, Peoni 11, **Piety** Agrik 12, Peoni 1
Skills: AWARENESS 62, CLIMBING 45, Drawing 30, Folklore (Emesan) 43, Folklore (Mamekan) 33, Foraging 65, INTRIGUE 36, JUMPING 61, Physician 17, STEALTH 67, Survival 73, Swimming 32, THROWING 67, Trapping 34, Weatherlore 58
Languages: Harnic 62 (but dumb), Ashekal (Mamekan sign language) 24, Surikal (Agrikan Temple Language) 26.
Scripts: Lakise 24
Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 55, UNARMED 46, DODGE 65, Knife 36
Money/Valuables: none
Armour/Weapons: knife
Other Equipment: ragged cloth shirt and slightly more substantial vest
Load: 6.5 lbs **Encumbrance:** 0

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	46	61	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	51	51	•	0	•	•
Head butt	•	•	46	46	•	0	•	•
Knife	1	10	41	36	•	0	1	4

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
•	•	•	•	•	•

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	•	•	•	•	•	•
Face	•	•	•	•	•	•
Neck	•	•	•	•	•	•
Shoulder	C C	-1	1	1	1	1
Upper Arm	C	-1	1	1	1	1
Elbow	•	•	•	•	•	•
Forearm	•	•	•	•	•	•
Hand	•	•	•	•	•	•
Thorax	C C	-1	1	1	1	1
Abdomen	C	-1	0	0	0	0
Hip	C	-1	0	0	0	0
Groin	C	-1	0	0	0	0
Thigh	C	-1	0	0	0	0
Knee	•	•	•	•	•	•
Calf	•	•	•	•	•	•
Foot	•	•	•	•	•	•

Invocations: none

Convocations: none

Spells: none

Psionics: none

Notes: Geddis was kidnapped from his family by Granek, the servant of Akarata Horab of the Warriors of Mameka. He was bled as part of Horab's perverse worship of Mameka (see Bedenes, CGI #5764). When he was past usefulness Granek cut out his tongue and sent him south for sale as a slave.

Geddis learned the rudiments of the Mamekan secret sign language, Ashekal, by taking part in the perversion of Mamekan rites practised by the Akarata, though he doesn't know its significance. He was also set to transcribe portions of Mamekan holy books and this is where he picked up some Lakise and Mamekan Ritual and lore. In sacrificing his own blood and pain during the Akarata's rituals he has also gained some piety in the eyes of Agrik. His memory of Peonian ritual, and remaining piety, is due to his nightly silent prayers to the 'Guardian of the Meek' during his incarceration.

Gedis will also try communicating with the PCs in sign language, but only a consecrated Mamekan will recognise his crude use of their temple sign language - Ashekal.

If Gedis is encouraged to tell his story ...

The pictures he draws (enhanced by acting out some parts of the story and the odd word written in Harnic) are shown in italics:

- He comes from *somewhere near the coast* where there is a *castle with knights* who have *shields bearing a sword*.
- He does *not recognise the Earl of Tormau's colours*.
- He used to live with his *family in a cottage* but was taken to live in the castle *without his parents' knowledge*.
- He was taught to *copy words from a big book* and *cut so he bled* while a *fat man* was *whipped by two woman*.
- The *fat man drank his blood*.
- Gedis had his *tongue cut out*, was *tied up* and *put into a cart*.
- He *found an old knife* under a sack in the cart and used it to *cut his bonds*.
- He *jumped free* and *hid in some bushes*.
- Next morning *riders came* and he *ran into the forest* and *got lost*.
- He *found the river* and has *been living as best he can* for *weeks and weeks*.
- He *tried to find his way home* but every time he leaves the river he gets lost again.
- He has only one question: *will they help him find his home?*

Physician confirms that his forearms show the signs of regular and repeated cuts. He has been professionally bled – as if to let out bad humours – quite regularly over a number of months, perhaps years.

If the PCs work out that Bedenes is where he came from ...

It is possible they will be tempted to set off in that direction. They should be reminded that Bedenes is some way away to the north west – the opposite direction to their goal. If they insist on being diverted then the GM is left to flesh out the subsequent adventure with the help presented in *Bedenes* and *Warriors of Mameka*. Gedis is intended to provide someone for the PCs to have to watch out for, but a trip to Bedenes could be interesting ... later!

Link to the next scene

The PCs are in the hands of Acurdin and the other guides, so leading the PCs further up river should not prove difficult.

Scene 2: The Cataract

Overview

Even if they are delayed by the 'The Watcher' it will be soon after noon that the boats reach the base of the Denia cataract. From here the boats must be carried to the top. The PCs have the opportunity to fall into the river and be rescued before they reach 'The Place of Farewells'.



The steep wooded slopes beside the Denia Cataract, and the slippery limestone, make for treacherous footing

GM Aims

- To help the PCs realise how slippery limestone can get when it's wet. The GM can remind them of this if they reach the Hand of Crador
- To present an opportunity to test their swimming skills without doing them serious harm. An injury leading to a temporary physical penalty is as bad as things should get unless a powerful PC needs to be curbed.
- Continue to build unease about the Denal Kubora.

PC Outcomes

Have an opportunity to get wet and get heroic ...

Description of Events

The cataract is formed by the erosion of the underlying rock into a series of stepped limestone pavements over which the Denia flows. This means the climb is never very

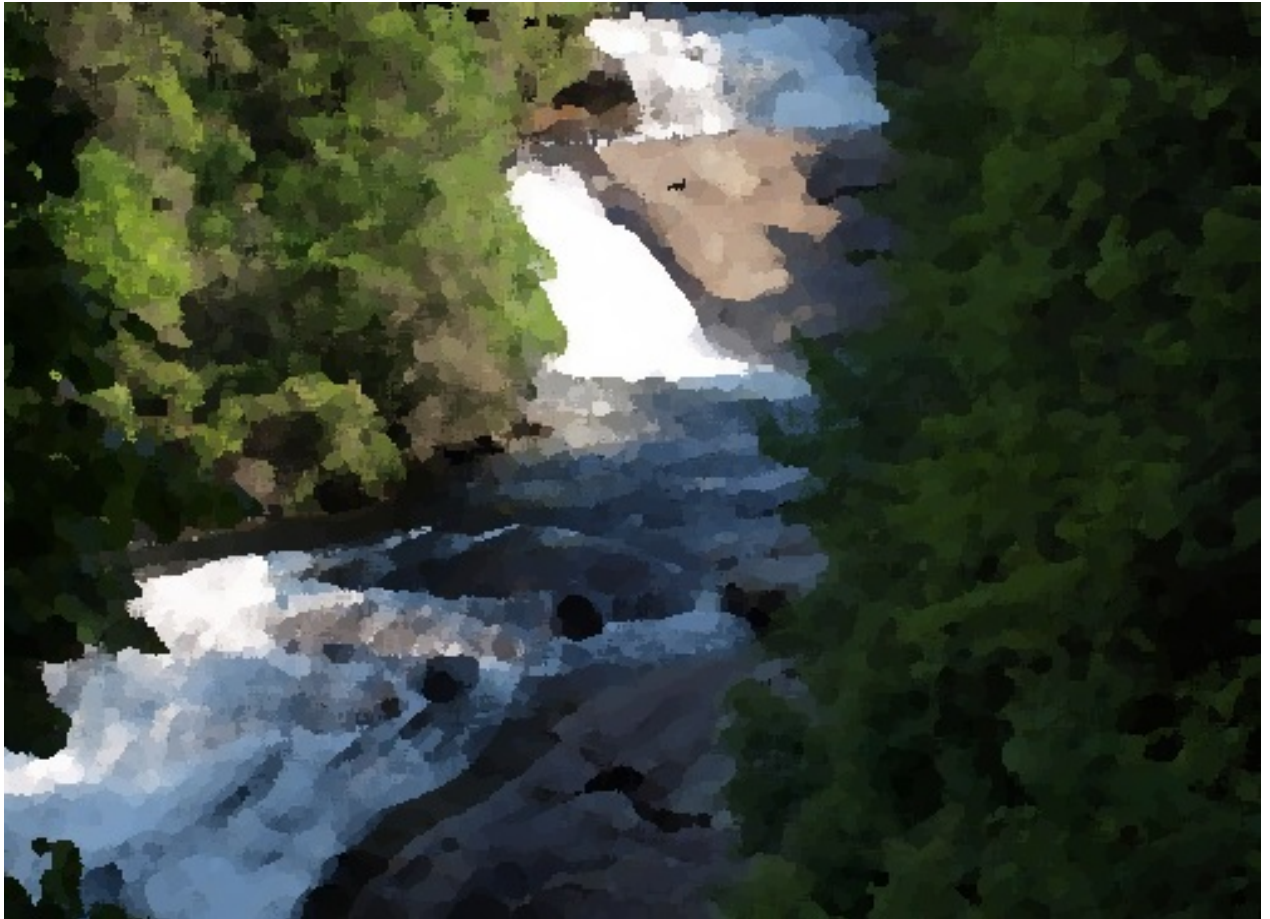
steep. In cross-section, however, erosion has carved the cataract into a steep sided bowl rising from the edge of the river to the forest above. This means that the group will have to walk in single file within a few feet of the river.

Though the *curach* are very light and ideal for the sort of portage now required they cannot be carried as quickly through the forest above. Acurdin will also make it clear that the path they are following is the traditional, and agreed, route to the top of the cataract and the marshes beyond. There are great risks from the Denal if they travel by any other route.

With the gear stowed in the boats two men can carry them but four can carry them more quickly. The Kubora are used to this and are also used to moving on the limestone in their soft leather shoes. The stretches of deep, fast flowing, water between the steps of the cataract present a risk to those less used to the slick limestone.

If asked about abandoning the boats ...

Acurdin tells them that he and the guides will return to the village on foot, leaving the boats with the PCs. They may need them to continue their journey into the marshes.



Denia Cataract

The journey beside the cataract

The journey to the head of the cataract takes 4 hours (one watch) if only the Kubora carry the boats (and requires **2 STUMBLE** rolls per PC to stay on their feet during the journey).

If the PCs help then the journey-time is halved (to 2 hours) but the risk of a fall increases (**Four STUMBLE** rolls per PC). If the PCs become worried after a couple of tumbles they can continue to help the Kubora but slow the pace a great deal. This removes the need for any subsequent **STUMBLE** rolls but stretches the journey to two full watches. It's actually quicker to allow the Kubra to do the work than to 'help' them while taking inordinate care to avoid a tumble!

Consequences of a failed STUMBLE roll:

Any PC who stumbles will slip into the water and must succeed with a **second STUMBLE roll** to stay in the shallows.

Failing the second roll means they must make use of **Swimming**.

Failing the swimming roll means they are swept down the cataract and requires a subsequent **Swimming CS** to regain the upper hand over the river. Repeated failure risks drowning (see HarnMaster Rules for swimming/drowning). Efforts by those on the bank to throw ropes, hold out spears to help, etc. can be judged with appropriate use of the rescuers' skills.

Link to the next scene

When they reach the top of the cataract the PCs and their guides are confronted by two 6 foot stakes driven into the river bank on either side of the trail. Each is topped by a human skull.

If the guides are asked about the skulls ...

Acurdin and the other guides say nothing but bow grimly to the skulls as a mark of respect. They do not say if the respect is to the skulls or to the Denal, who placed them there.

Beyond this grisly gateway the path moves away from the river bank through the edge of the forest. At regular intervals the trees are decorated with a variety of offerings such as bead necklaces; animal skins or skulls; and items of clothing.

If asked about the decorations ...

These are items left by generations of Kubora making this journey to 'The Place of Farewells'. By tradition any Kuboran making the journey should leave something of value along the path. **Awareness** or **Survival** will reveal that some of the items are very old indeed, though of little intrinsic value. The only Kubora not required to leave something are the 'gifts of sacrifice' being escorted to their doom.

Acurdin and each of the guides leave something along the way. The PCs are not required to do so, they are not Kubora and not bound by the tradition. That doesn't mean they can't leave something in the hope of attracting some good luck.

If asked about the 'gift of sacrifice' ...

Kemlar forbade blood sacrifice but in dire need a tribe might send someone to the 'Hand of Crador' from where none return. During Acurdin's lifetime the Asawne have sent only two such 'gifts'. A 'gift' is intended to serve Crador for eternity, and it is the Denal who carry the gift to the god.

Scene 3: Murder in the Dark Overview

The night brings visitors that the Kubora investigate. Sadly Acurdin and the other guides do not return and the PCs are left wondering when whatever took the Kubora – such acknowledged masters of the forest - will return for them ...

Denal Kubora includes GM and Poetic Maps of the Denia Marshes and shows the location of the Place of Farewells.

GM Aims

- To create a sense of foreboding among the PC.
- To help the PCs realise how relatively helpless they are in a dark forest.
- To ramp up the sense of foreboding with some gruesome deaths.
- To give the PCs a reason to take to the waters of the marsh rather than travel through the forest.

PC Outcomes

They realise they do not have the forest skills of the Kubora and that they are far away from their natural element. They should end the scene terrified of the forest and whatever lurks there.

Description of Events

The path they have been following brings the PCs and their guides to a small clearing bounded to the north, west and south by dense forest and to the east by an expanse of open water perhaps 400 paces across. From here looking east they get their first view of the Denia Marshes and the bowl of hills surrounding them.

With dusk coming quickly the guides gather firewood and set camp near the edge of the marsh as far from the forest as possible. This is the first time the PCs have seen their guides nervous of the forest and preferring to camp in the open. They are collecting much more firewood than usual and building a bonfire next to the normal camp fire.

The camp seems very exposed beside the open water after several nights with the forest within touching distance. As the sun sinks the distant sound of drums can be heard over the marsh, interspersed with some high pitched notes from an instrument the PCs do not recognise.

If questioned about the bonfire ...

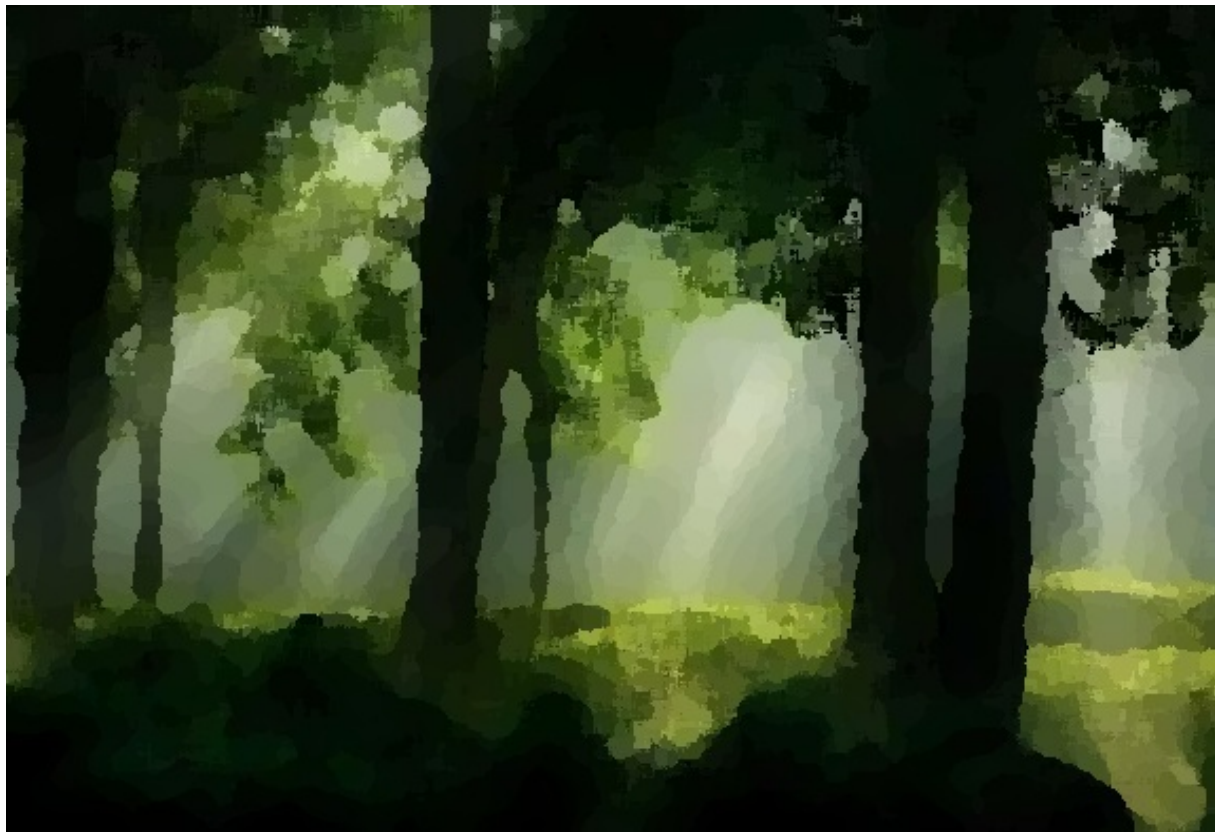
Acurdin says the bonfire will '*keep the forest at bay*', though he prays it will not be necessary. If pressed he will say that when lit the bonfire will give them some light to fight by. Though *he* would fight in the open only as a last resort he realises that the PCs will be happier fighting away from the confines of the forest.

If asked about the instrument ...

The Kubora are disturbed by the noise which they identify as a 'string-drum' unique to the Denal Kubora who

inhabit the marshes and use the instrument to summon 'marsh ogres' to aid them.

If asked about 'marsh ogres'... They are huge creatures, found only in the range of the Denal. They are equally at home in the forest, the marsh, or the water.



The forest at twilight

If questioned on the Denal Kubora ...

Acurdin is reticent but as the sun sinks and the drums go silent he tells tales of this mysterious Kuboran tribe with villages that 'float' on the marsh.

The Denal are fierce, independent, and hostile to almost anyone approaching their range unless they bring a 'gift of sacrifice for the Hand of Crador'. If other Kubora wish to trade then they travel to the head of the cataract and wait there for the Denal to approach them.

The Denal are not liked by their neighbours; having a fearsome reputation among the tribes. Only a small number of warriors travel to Kustan each year and they come to trade furs, bog iron and herbs, not women. It is said around the fires of the Asawne that they breed with the marsh ogres that stalk the reed beds.

Legend tells that 'Crador the Blind' haunts the marshes and it is from here that he sends bad dreams or good luck depending on his capricious nature. Some tribes believe he can be encouraged to send good luck in return for a 'gifts', but Gomas teaches that men make their own luck.

Acurdin will gesture to the tokens the PCs were given when they left the village. Like all the wooden discs the PCs have seen they display a 'positive' images on one side and a 'negative' image on the other: a smiling face and a

fanged maw; a sun and a moon; plentiful game and an empty forest scene. He explains that they show two possible futures: good luck or good hunting; and bad luck, hunger or fear. They represent the two sides of Crador: restful dreams and nightmares. Kubora believe that they protect them from the worst of Crador's excesses by showing respect for the god's power.

If asked about the 'Hand of Crador' ...

Somewhere, deep in the marsh, is Crador's home. In Kuboran lore it is called the 'Hand of Crador'. Acurdin knows no more than that, except that the southrons who came to the forest long ago sought to find it and defile it.

If Acurdin is asked if he will accompany them tomorrow...

If the PCs helped him with the Suyari he will agree but even if they didn't he will demonstrate Kuboran superiority and say '*We are better than southrons, I will aid you in your time of need*'.

Later that night

It is deepest night when Acurdin wakes the PCs to quietly tell them that two of the guides have not returned from their watch; he believes they are all in danger. He had hoped that the Denal would believe the boy, Gedis, was a 'gift' and leave them undisturbed until tomorrow. That the

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Denal have come in the night means they have not been taken in and are not willing to negotiate. He can only buy time by becoming the hunter rather than remaining the hunted.

As the PCs stir they hear again the high pitched plucked notes of the Denal string-drum, but much nearer and in the forest behind them. Acurdin calmly tells them to arm themselves; he must be worried.

He and the remaining guides will go into the trees; get behind the Denal; and drive them onto the PC's swords.

If cautioned on this course of action ...

Acurdin will say that the Denal only come at night if they intend to kill. He will not sit and wait for the blade to fall, like a prey animal.

Once he and his men have gone into the trees the PCs are to light the bonfire so that they have light if it comes to a fight. He and the others then disappear into the trees.

If the PCs offer to go into the forest ...

Acurdin will grin in the firelight and shake his head. He and the guides have the best chance of getting past and behind the Denal.

After the guides have gone into the forest...

The next 20 minutes crawl by; **HEARING x 2** will reveal a few soft groans or grunts off in the trees and then the creaking of, perhaps, tree boughs? Then silence.

The substantial bonfire means that ***within 10 feet there is no penalty for poor light; for another 10 feet beyond that there is a 20% physical penalty for tasks relying on sight; and beyond that the penalty doubles to 40%.***

Over the crackle and roar of the bonfire it is difficult to hear anything from the forest. Nearer the forest there is only an ominous, almost physical, silence seeming to flow out from among the trees. 10 minutes, then 20 more pass. Then an hour and the forest remains preternaturally quiet.

If the PCs decide to set off after Acurdin...

The PCs should ***suffer the 40% penalty*** due to poor light unless they have torches/lanterns which remove the penalty if they are only finding their way among the trees. Once they engage ***in combat the penalty returns to 30%*** as the light sources swing and sway back and forth.

Having the ***light bearer stand aloof from a fight reduces the penalty to 10%***. Anyone with combat experience will know they are better off near the fire where they at least have a chance. If the boy, Geddis, is with them they should consider his fate if he were abandoned at the camp.

If, despite these concerns, they brave the forest at night the GM should make copious use of ***Awareness*** rolls to imply that there is movement around them, just beyond the illumination of their lanterns/torches; perhaps trying to get between them and the camp.



The forest by moonlight

If they try it without light...

Stealth and AGL are needed to avoid making noises, tripping over roots, getting caught in a thicket of thorns etc. **CF** should involve some minor injury from these trips, falls, scratches etc. and add to the physical penalty. **Survival** should be used to avoid losing contact with other PCs.

If the PCs persevere in the forest ...

It is likely that the PCs will be lost in the dark and, hopefully, isolated from one another. At that point they should again start making **Awareness** rolls suggesting that there are 'things' all around them. **Awareness** will allow them to locate the glow from the bonfire and make their way back to it.

If instead they wait for dawn...

Regular **Awareness** rolls should lead to the camp being roused repeatedly through the night as one guard after another is certain they heard something moving through the trees towards the camp. This can be amplified if, as the night goes on, the available fire-wood begins to run out and the darkness edges closer and closer to the PCs. At dawn they will be exhausted (no Fatigue recovery).

There is no sign of the Kuboran guides

If they explore the forest at dawn...

As they work their way into the forest they will find the bodies of the guides. How far they get down the following list depends on the strength of their stomach, their nerve, and the number of guides that accompanied them:

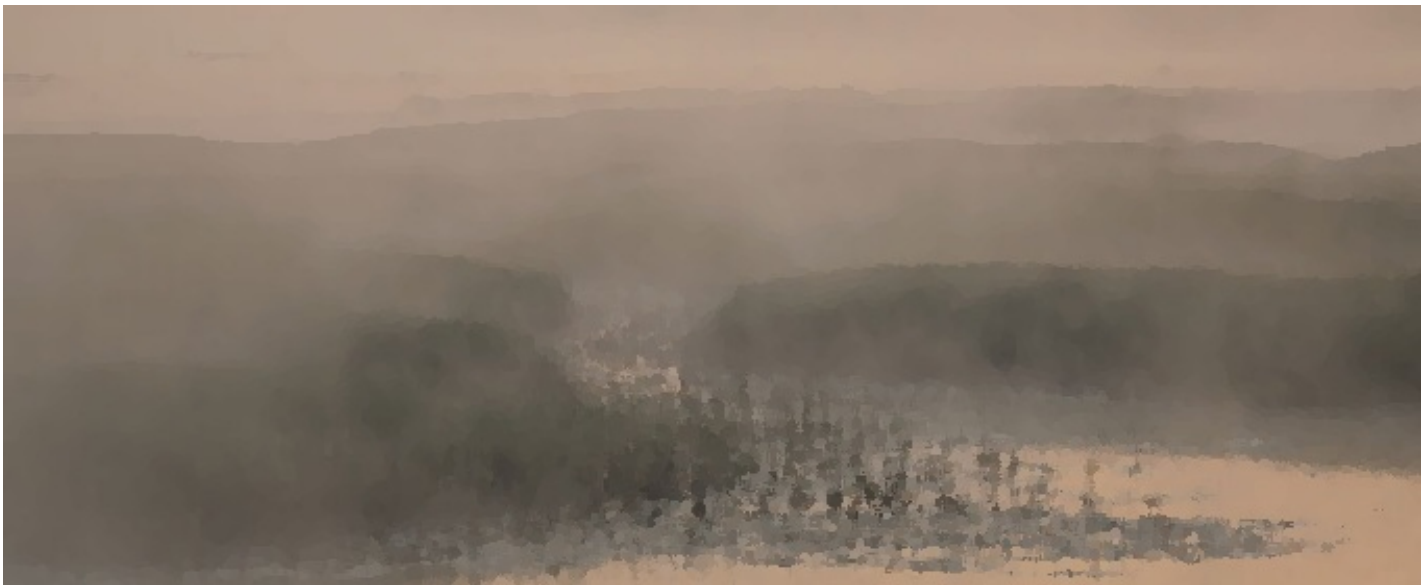
- A guide impaled on a set of sharpened stakes propelled out of the undergrowth by a thick bough that two PCs together would struggle to bend back.
- Another is pinned to the tree with a fire hardened spear that has gone right through his chest and wedged into a crack in the bark beyond; the spear is bigger than a tall man might comfortably wield.
- A guide is crushed against the bole of a tree as if by a chunk of lumber, of which there is no sign;
- A patch of undergrowth that is unnaturally wet ... with blood. The rest of the guides, including Acurdin, hang by their feet from the branches above; their throats cut. Blood drips sluggishly from the carved wooden token hanging around Acurdin's neck. All have also been gutted; their still steaming guts lie a few yards away.

Link to the next scene

The PCs may want to collect the bodies for burial, though they know little of Kuboran burial practice which favours exposure in the forest, or they may simply wish to run screaming back to the camp. Whatever they do their route should take them back to remains of the bonfire past the guide pinned to the tree by the large spear. The spear is gone.

Whatever killed him is still out there ... that is usually enough to drive the PCs out onto the marsh, if only to put distance between themselves and whatever lurks in the forest. In the dawn light a number of narrow channels can be seen leading from the lagoon beside the Place of Farewells into the marsh.

ACT IV: THE MARSHES



Dawn across the Denia Marsh from the Place of Farewells

Overview

At dawn following 'Murder in the dark' the PCs find themselves disorientated and threatened among the reed beds of the Denia Marsh before encountering what they

will be certain are 'marsh ogres'. Finally they stumble on to a Denal settlement where they find the final clues to the fate of Coln Kutz. (*Peran* and *Tribes of the Kubora*, provide an overview of the Denia Marshes and the Denal

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Kubora. *Denal Kubora* provides essential additional information and includes a map of the marshes on 1st Nuzyael 720TR.

The Scenes should be played in the order they are presented.

Scene 1: Lost?

Overview

The PCs discover how difficult it is to navigate the narrow channels with tall reeds and dense vegetation all around and no way to see any great distance.

GM Aims

- To use the claustrophobic channels between the reed beds to frighten the PCs but keep them moving.
- Once in the maze of channels it will be easy for the GM to take them 'forward' even if the PCs believe they are trying to get back to the 'Place of Farewells'.

PC Outcomes

At this point finding Coln Kutz may be lower on the PC's list of priorities than trying to find safety. Initially they should feel marginally safer out on the water than in the forest that surrounds it, though that view may change after a few encounters. Then they should accept that it may be as dangerous to go back as to go forward.

They may also feel some obligation to the Kubora who have given their lives for them, and those that have trusted them.

Typically they might:

- Continue to search for Kutz;
- Try to reach a Denal village;
- Try to cross the marsh to escape without going back the way they have come;
- A combination of these ...

Whatever their strategy they should have to spend several watches, including some at night, either out on the water or on the boggy morass of the reed beds themselves.



marsh

Deep in the

Description of Events

No GM or player map of the Denia Marshes is ever accurate for long as the channels that bisect the reed beds

are endlessly changing through the natural process of silting and freeing of channels and the gradual colonisation of even the shallowest mud back by reeds.

While the Denia Marshes are probably no more than 10 leagues across in any direction, travelling across them by boat requires at least d10 x that distance to be travelled along the narrow channels which divide up the reed beds.

Taking the direct route on foot across the reed beds can seem like the quickest way to get from A to B but the boats must then be carried and the progress is no quicker unless you know the routes – and the PCs don't. So, unless a character (who cannot be helping to carry a boat) makes a **Survival CS** twice every half-league, travel on foot also takes d10 x the normal travel distance too.

Whenever making their way across the reed beds **STUMBLE rolls** are used to determine if there is a mishap and a resulting minor injury (including a physical penalty) as above (see, *The Denia Cataract*).

Link to the next scene

As dusk approaches, and with the resulting drop in temperature, a thick mist begins to congeal above and between the reed beds. They are quickly surrounded by a blanket of mist restricting visibility to a few paces and back-lit by the angry orange glow of the setting sun.

Encounters

The GM can use this encounter table every 2 hours to keep the PCs on their toes and deny them a good nights' sleep. It is not intended build up a physical penalty that will make them think twice about taking dangerous offensive action later in subsequent Scenes:

01-50	no encounter except biting insects.
51-60	smoke from a Denal Kubora village rising above the marsh but too far away to see the village.
61-80	sink in a bog if on foot, or get lost among the reeds if in the boats, and have to lose a watch retracing their route to safer ground or open water.
81-90	poisonous water snake which is most likely to seek to get away but a STUMBLE roll will mean it has been disturbed and will attempt to bite.
91-95	something large is moving in the water just out of sight behind them they will not realise it is a Denal Anghenfil (marsh ogre) observing them; he will not come near them.
95-00	nothing during the day but an ethereal glow out over the marsh if it's dark and a visit from a 'spirit of sacrifice' (see Act V, Scene 2)

Link to the next scene

The next scene simply happens to the PCs, whatever they choose to do as night falls.

Scene 2: Ogres in the Mist

Overview

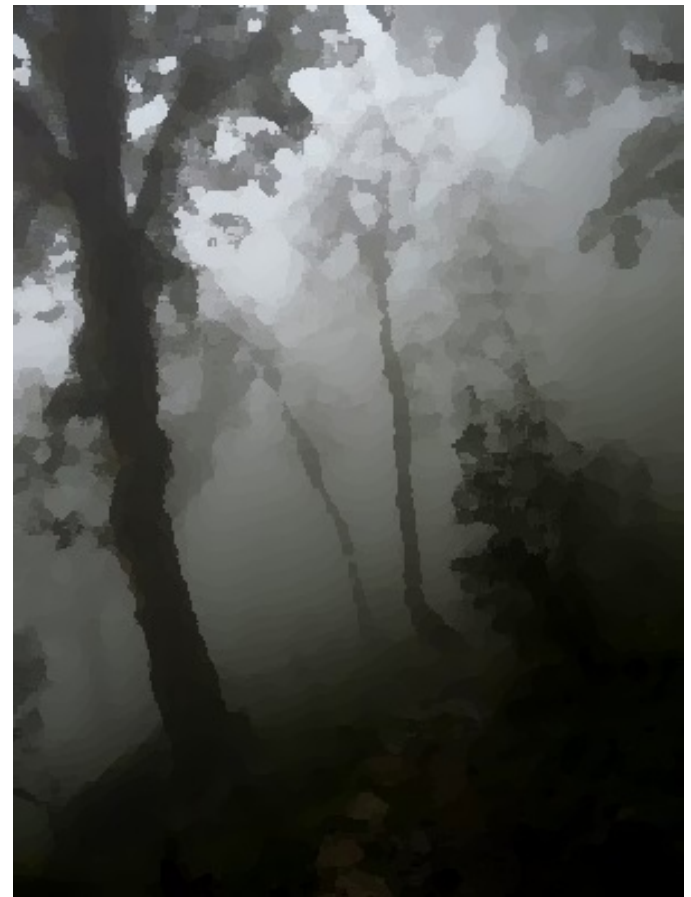
The PCs are stalked by something large in the mist ... (*Denal Kubora* provides details of the 'Ogres'; the Denal Anghenfil). This scene can be used to move a group of PCs who are uncertain about what to do towards an encounter with the Denal. It plays best if the PCs are on the reed beds rather than out on the water.

GM Aims

- To keep a party moving when there is a risk they will be paralysed by a range of unpalatable options.
- To ramp up the fear developed in the dark of the previous scene and have the PCs driven gently towards a Denal village which they will see the following morning.
- To remind them that Geddis (the lost boy) needs protection.

PC Outcomes

They may decide whether the tales of the 'Marsh Ogres' are true ...



Mist engulfs one of the rare islands to which straggling trees cling

Description of Events

Dusk means that the PCs must rest as best they can.

If they choose to sleep in the boats out on the water

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The *curuglau* are fine for up to 4 people to sit in but trying to get a good night sleep in them is much more of a challenge. The PCs should be warned there will be no re-setting of fatigue tomorrow morning and the possibility of an additional physical penalty if they try to sleep in the boats.

If, despite the GM's efforts, the PCs remain out on the water they will hear noises among the reed to either side of the channel a little way behind them and a loud splash some way behind them. **Awareness** will suggest that there is something in the water approaching from behind and maybe something in the reeds trying to get ahead of them.

If they push on they will find the channel they have been following narrows to a blind ending, and whatever it was in the water behind them seems to be getting closer ...

That is likely to encourage them to seek 'solid' ground.

If they choose to look for some 'solid' ground...

During the day they have noticed some areas of 'high' ground, sitting a foot or two above the water. If they pull the boats up onto the reed beds they can take turns to sleep in, or under, the boats. They might even get a fire started.

If they move onto the reed beds ...

HEARING x 3 to hear something large moving among the reeds out of sight in the mist. **CS** will suggest it is heavier than a man.

If they try to set a trap for it then they should be allowed to try and may even get into combat with 'it'.

NB: The GM should avoid clear descriptions but focus on 'it' being '*much larger than a man*', '*smelling of damp skins or fur*', and wielding a '*great club*'. 'It' also seems to suffer a lower penalty than the PCs in combat due to the poor visibility.

There should be one 'ogre' for every two PCs and the anghenfil should attack from two sides – one of them apparently rising up out or the reeds right next to a PC as if growing out of the bog itself – he certainly smells that bad.

When the PCs are either gaining the upper hand or feeling hard pressed the anghenfil should simply step away into the swirling mist followed by splashes as they launch themselves into the water leaving the PCs breathing deeply and wondering what they have actually encountered.

Just as they regain some composure they will hear the 'string-drums' of the Denal playing back and forth across the marsh – as if the two musicians are competing. They seems pretty close to where the PC's are – just out of sight through the mist.

Name: 'Marsh Ogres'		Race/Sex: ???	
Occupation: Hunter/Anghenfil		Born: various	
Appearance: various, height 5'7", light frame (size 7), weight 144 lbs, plain appearance (+5 to other Kubora who see through the Arus), dark complexion, grey hair, brown eyes			
Str 20	Agl 10	Sml 18	Aur 05
Sta 22	Eye 15	Voi 02	Wil 15
Dex 10	Hrg 15	Int 06	Mor 10
		Cml 04	End 19
		Mov 10	
Medical/Psyche: 'giantism' and low intelligence			
Religion: <i>Ritual</i> Kuboran Pantheon 15, <i>Piety</i> 10			
Skills: AWARENESS 80, CLIMBING 65, Foraging 55, Herblore 13, INTRIGUE 16, JUMPING 65, ORATORY 08, Physician 20, RHETORIC 16, SINGING 18, STEALTH 65, Survival 73, Swimming 70, THROWING 75, Tracking 60, Weatherlore 60			
Languages: Harnic 43			
Scripts: none			
Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 70, UNARMED 75, DODGE 50, Maul 65, Knife 70, Spear 62			
Money/Valuables: nothing of value to a 'civilised' man			
Armour/Weapons: they wear nothing but a loincloth but their thick blubbery skin provides some protection. They carry a huge club or heavy fire hardened spear and large flint knife. They also have a skill with thrown rocks but those are relatively rare out on the marsh			
Other Equipment: a waterproof firestarter.			
Load: 18 lbs		Encumbrance: 0	

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	75	90	•	2	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	80	85	•	3	•	•
Head butt	•	•	75	75	•	3	•	•
Maul	7	9	85	70	-20	10	•	•
Spear (10')	8	10	82	72	-10	6	•	8
Big Knife	2	10	75	70		2	4	4

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
Thrown Rock	75	4/4	8/3	16/2	32/1

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	•	•	2	4	3	3
Face	•	•	2	4	3	3
Neck	•	•	2	4	3	3
Shoulder	•	•	2	4	3	3
Upper Arm	•	•	2	4	3	3
Elbow	•	•	2	4	3	3
Forearm	•	•	2	4	3	3
Hand	•	•	2	4	3	3
Thorax	•	•	2	4	3	3
Abdomen	•	•	2	4	3	3
Hip	•	•	2	4	3	3
Groin	•	•	2	4	3	3
Thigh	•	•	2	4	3	3
Knee	•	•	2	4	3	3
Calf	•	•	2	4	3	3
Foot	•	•	2	4	3	3

Invocations: none
Convocations: none
Spells: none
Psionics: none
Notes: The Anghenfil are not very bright but they have an animal cunning and will not risk death. They will attack with surprise and, as soon as a PC gets close to damaging them, will melt into the marsh.
 The GM should remember that they are equally at home on land or under the water so it should not be difficult for them to disappear into the bog

Link to the next scene

Hopefully the PCs will be intrigued enough to head towards the sound of the string-drum, and will find, by luck, that they are on a reasonably solid area of reed bed

so they can make decent progress. However, the mist carries sounds in peculiar ways and, just as it seems they are mere yards away from the musician, the sounds stop and dusk moves to full dark leaving them wet and cold.

At least they are on some relatively dry ground where some straggly trees and bushes have gained a foothold. This means they can build a fire and get a decent nights rest – they should feel they need it.



Denal Tenau ('Shaman') and Denal Anghenfil ('Marsh Ogre')

Scene 3: The Denal

Overview

The PCs come upon the chief settlements of Denal clan Edak and have the chance to interact with these mysterious people. They will discover the truth about the 'Marsh Ogres' and pick up Coln Kutz's trail again from a wild eyed scribe who has gone native, mad, or both. *Denal Kubora* provides a map of the Denal settlement upon which the PCs stumble.

GM Aims

- To get the PCs back on track for the original mission to find Kutz while they discover some of the biological and cultural uniqueness of the Denal.
- The GM should try to ensure that there is enough time at the start of the interaction to allow for the possibility of a peaceful meeting, but if necessary provide sufficient threat in the form of marsh ogres to quieten the PCs and allow them to ask some questions before they do anything too rash.

PC Outcomes

Recognise that the Denal – though potentially very dangerous – may be their best hope of surviving the marshes.

Feel they are back in control of their fate and that the Denal are certainly 'odd' but perhaps not all 'bad'.

Description of Events

With dawn comes another blanket of mist which is soon burned off by the rising sun. The PCs find themselves on a raised 'hillock' more than 4 feet above the surrounding water and with decent cover provided by scrubby trees and brush. They are overlooking a lagoon among the reeds and no more than 30 paces away from their vantage point is a cluster of huts built on wooden platforms stilted up over the water. Tied up at each hut are smaller versions of the *curuglau* they have been using which are built for just 1 or 2 people. The huts form a rough circle with planked walk-ways connecting them.

Walkways also lead down to a raft like construction, some 20 paces across, in the middle of the settlement. There women and children can be seen skinning otter and beaver, cleaning clothes and preparing skins on stretchers.

As the PCs watch a number of adult males clamber down ladders to the coracles and begin to paddle off across the lagoon to the channels that lead off into the reed beds. When they reach the margins of the beds, several hundred paces across the lagoon, they begin casting nets both into the water for fish, but also into the reeds where they seem adept at snaring fowl rising from the nest.

Awareness should reveal that a number of the children look thin and sickly and that some of the women display signs of inbreeding: crook-backs or distorted features. Closer examination would reveal that though the majority of this clan are 'healthy' they almost all have some minor defect, such as extra digits.

Perched on one of the verandas that overlook the central work area is a stick-thin youth who seems barely able to sustain his own weight. He is naked save for a grubby loin cloth but is holding a drum perhaps a foot in diameter across his knees. As the PCs watch he doesn't strike it but begins to pluck at a string running to the stock supporting it. Meanwhile his other hand seems to be manipulating the back of the drum to alter the tone.

The high pitched notes that they have got used to over recent nights issue forth: '*ding-a-ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding ...*' (if the PCs have never seen the film *Deliverance* then this would be a good time to stop and watch it ...) as he turns slightly the PCs see the surface of the string-drum has a crude design painted on it – of a frowning face.

The PCs may:

- sit tight and slink away – in which case several 'marsh ogres' will rise out of the bog and drive them towards the village;
- sneak up on the village with either a peaceful or aggressive approach in mind. If it is with aggressive intent use a handful of ogres to help them realise that this village is not as helpless as it might look. They can emerge from the water's edge just as the PCs are about to launch their boats in an assault on the village and overturn them with a flick of their wrists. Alternatively they can be found sitting in the first hut the PCs invade – having breakfast.

The GM should take care to use the ogres as a threat rather than to make it too easy for the PCs to kill one of them. While the Ogres are big and strong Harnmaster combat is very dangerous and this encounter is not intended to either damage the PCs before they can reach their ultimate objective, or sour relations with the Denal through the death of one of their warriors.

Whatever approach the hope is that there will be a pause before any violence erupts at which point a wild-eyed, long-haired man should emerge from a nearby hut and cry – in Rethemi accented Harnic – '*VISITORS – I LOVE VISITORS – THEY SAID YOU WERE COMING*'. At which point he drags a ragged and torn book from beneath his robes and begins scribbling in it manically.

Once the old man starts talking everyone in the camp will know the PCs are there. The fishermen will swiftly paddle back to the village from the edge of the lagoon and if they haven't already made their presence felt then several 'marsh ogres' will emerge from the water or the reed beds nearby and watch the PCs warily.

If the PC do kill one of the Denal before the intervention of the old man ...

The Denal are a fatalistic tribe. Their history is one of repeated blows despite their nobility of purpose. They accept death as the will of Crador. The fact that the arrival of the PCs fits so closely with their mythology makes them doubly willing to accept the loss of a warrior, even an Anghenfil, as one of Crador's little jokes.

Link to the next scene

So long as the PCs avoid a bloodbath among the Denal the apparent greeting from 'Den' Hapra will give them status in the eyes of the Denal and lead to an invitation to join Den for food and drink.

Scene 4: Den Hapra

Overview

Meeting the only survivor of the party that accompanied Coln of Kutz into the forest, the PC's finally discover what happened to their quarry and where he may be now.

GM Aims

- To paint Den Hapra as mad and a little hysterical.
- To non-the-less allow Den to tell his story and give the PC's the outline of events since he left Den with Kutz.

PC Outcomes

They will know what happened to Kutz and his men and put together some of the final clues that will allow them to locate the lost mercenary. They will understand why the Denal appear willing to help them and how they may fit into the legend that has ruled the Denal's actions so far.

Description of Events

'Den', or Surden, of Hapra, is the scribe that accompanied Coln Kutz and his men. He has recorded everything he remembers of their journey into the forest and events since. Unfortunately he long ago used up all the pages in his journal as well as the ink he brought with him. For most of the last season he has been re-using pages by writing first in the margins and then between other lines of text. He is also using 'ink' squeezed from the base of a variety of purple stemmed reed. Together these factors make his journal largely unintelligible to anyone but him. Another reader will find the narrative appears to jump about and be interspersed with poems and other writings that are barely legible given that the reed ink is very poor and fades quickly. That doesn't bother 'Den' as it simply leaves more space for his to re-use.

His obsessive writing and re-writing means that he could recite the entire tale; but the book appears to be important to him as a key to his memories. At important points in his narrative he will refer to his notes though **Awareness** will show his finger often follows bare space where words may once have been written.

Once the PCs are settled around him within the Shuntul Hut where he has been living as a guest they will be served a bitter vegetable broth in which pieces of fish float. It appears wholesome and filling if not very tasty.

Survival, Alchemical skill or Herblore might allow a PC to confirm it is not, as far as they know, poisonous, though there is a taint within anything made with the marsh waters that may have an effect on them were they to spend their lives here.

Awareness will reveal that the walkway outside the hut is crowded with Denal listening, even though they probably don't understand the Harnic Den uses.

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Name: Surden 'Den' Hapra **Race/Sex:** Human/Male
Occupation: Scribe **Born:** 19 Nolos 670, Ahnu
Appearance: Aged 50, height 5'9", scant frame, weight 122 lbs/size 5, attractive appearance (though malnourished), medium complexion, greying brown hair, watery blue eyes

Str 06	Agl 07	Sml 12	Aur 11	Cml 13
Sta 11	Eye 10	Voi 07	Wil 07	End 08
Dex 08	Hrg 11	Int 13	Mor 11	Mov 07

Medical/Psyche: addicted to a herbal hallucinogen prepared by the Denal
Religion: *Ritual* Save K'nor 22, *Piety* 5
Skills: AWARENESS 44, CLIMBING 28, Folklore (Denal) 48, Folklore (Re-them) 65, INTRIGUE 76, JUMPING 28, Mental Conflict 39, ORATORY 70, Physician 19, RHETORIC 60, SINGING 34, STEALTH 55, Swimming 18, THROWING 32
Languages: Harnic 83
Scripts: Lakise 89
Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 54, UNARMED 35, DODGE 35, Flint knife 45, Staff 42
Money/Valuables: only what he stands up in, plus his diary
Armour/Weapons: ragged, patched homespun breeches and cap and the ragged remains of a linen robe. Flint eating knife given to him by the Denal.
Other Equipment: quills and 'ink' constructed from local materials and the paper he brought jto the wilderness with him.
Load: 17.2 lbs **Encumbrance:** 0

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	54	69	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	59	59	•	1	•	•
Head butt	•	•	54	54	•	1	•	•
Flint knife	1	9	50	45	•	0	1	3
Staff	4	11	62	57	-10	3	•	•

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
•	•	•	•	•	•

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	C	+0	1	1	1	1
Face	•	•	•	•	•	•
Neck	•	•	•	•	•	•
Shoulder	C	-1	0	0	0	0
Upper Arm	C	-1	0	0	0	0
Elbow	C	-1	0	0	0	0
Forearm	C	•	•	•	•	•
Hand	•	•	•	•	•	•
Thorax	C	-1	0	0	0	0
Abdomen	C	-1	0	0	0	0
Hip	C C	-1	0	2	1	2
Groin	C C	-1	0	2	1	2
Thigh	C C	-1	0	2	1	2
Knee	C C	-1	0	2	1	2
Calf	•	•	•	•	•	•
Foot	•	•	•	•	•	•

Invocations: none
Convocations: none
Spells: none
Psionics: none

Notes: Den Hapra is addicted to a Denal ritual brew which gives him vivid dreams and hallucinations that he is struggling to separate from reality. This, combined with the events of the last couple of seasons, has rendered him crazy.

The Fate of Coln Kutz

As they talk with Den it will be clear that he is quite mad. He has spent several weeks here, alone, since Kutz left with no one but the Denal to talk to and nothing to do but write and take the herbal preparation the Denal use for ceremonial purposes. It is rich in a plant related to *fanosel*, to which he is now hopelessly addicted, and which leaves him prone to flashbacks and hallucinations. This makes his story even more difficult to follow as he

speaks in a continuous stream of consciousness from which the PCs can pick some details ...



Surden 'Den' Hapra

'Ohhhhhh! we came a long way – Ohhhhhh! we came a very long way – up the river – we lost friends – found monsters – found friends.

The demons came – came to eat. It was only me – me and him – he's a great man – a great, great man – misunderstood – but a great man – he knows destiny – he knows he has a purpose – he dreamed it ... Ohhhh! The tragedy of it the tradegy and the horror; the horror of it all.

They saw his purpose and then he followed the dream'.

There is much more like this and though the PCs may try **Rhetoric (diplomacy, command or intimidation)** to speed up the telling they will fail. Den has had the tale he wants to tell running around inside his head for months and now the dam is broken and it flows out, unstoppable. The PCs may as well seek to ask a river to reach its destination more quickly as question Den in an effort to shorten his tale. Over the next few hours the PCs put together the following picture of events ...

- Kutz and his party made their way up river much as the PCs have. Their mission was to reinforce alliances with the Asawne on the north bank and the Suyari on the south bank of the Denia but to go deeper into Peran. They were to skirt the marshes to meet the Oncade and Garao Kubora to the North. They were to complete their circle of the marshes to bring the Earl's friendship to the Samasdin, Chetulli, Sangic and Delerni Kubora. Then they were to return to Tormau

with news of the alliances the Earl hoped for. They were expected to return before Winter.

- They were to meet an Oncade Kubora hunting party at the top of the Denia cataract but when they arrived the Oncade were not there. They pushed on towards the marsh hoping to find signs of the Oncade and that night they camped at the edge of the marsh. That was when the first attack came. Several men were killed and the following morning they found the Oncade much as the PCs found Acurdin and the other guides.
- They struck off, around the marsh, aiming for the high ground to the north; the edge of the Oncade and Garao ranges. Over the next few days they were picked off one by one. Each morning those killed the day before were laid out, mutilated, for them to find.

The PCs gather that from this point on Den's sanity began to crack and his tale gets less precise and more allegorical and dreamlike:

- When only he and Kutz remained the Denal came for them in daylight for the first time. Instead of finishing them quickly one of 'skinny ones'; the Denal Tenau made signs that invited them to surrender and promised their safety. They had no alternative so Kutz agreed and they were carried to this village by reed boat.
- They weren't fed much but whatever they were given seemed to have something in it that kept them half conscious.
- Gradually they were trusted not to be bound and they were drugged less often. Den began to try to speak to the Denal that watched them and began to pick up some of their obscure dialect of Old Jarinese.
- They began to exchange stories until Den realised that some of the stories he was being told seemed to relate to Kutz, to him and to some other group of 'outsiders'.
- One story told of a saviour who would free the Denal from their servitude to Crador described as 'like but unlike; Anghenfil and Tenau, with a storyteller to tell the story'. He thought that described Kutz: big like a Denal anghenfil, but a leader like the tenau.
- He told Kutz these stories and then the mercenary said he'd begun to dream about the future when under the influence of the Denal hallucinogen. He said someone came to him and whispered to him in the dark telling him there was something he had to do.
- When those dreams were told to the Denal the clan-head, Edak, came to see Kutz and Den translated between them.
- They asked if Kutz was 'the Key to the Lock that bound them' and 'the Gatekeeper who would battle the outsiders and bring the god his rest'.
- Kutz seemed to have some sort of revelation and announced he was 'The Gatekeeper' and he would go in

search of the 'Outsiders'. Once he had defeated them he would rid the marsh of its evil once and for all.

- The old Denal that had come to see him said this was proof that 'Crador will rest' and 'the good news must pass among the tribes of the People'.
- Kutz left for the 'Broken Lands to the East' nearly a month ago and hasn't come back.
- Before he left he told Den that he had dreamed a way to protect the old scribe. Den draws back the ragged sleeve to reveal a crudely applied tattoo of a frowning face. On his other forearm is its smiling twin.

If the PC's ask why the Denal have spared them ...

Suddenly Den appears entirely lucid and logical and he tells them that a few days ago a tenau came to him and said he would have visitors 'from his previous life, from the outside'. He was frightened but now that they have arrived he is glad to have been able to tell his story.

He tells them that tomorrow they will be asked an important question on which their fate will hinge. If they give the right answer they will be taken to find Kutz so they can fight him; if they give the wrong answer they will be killed.

If the PC's ask what the question will be ...

Den will smile and say: 'They think you are the 'Outsiders' and that Kutz has not succeeded and returned in triumph because he has not been able to find you. They will take you to him.

Having sipped his narcotic brew throughout the hours it has taken to tell his story Den is now barely conscious. As he finally slips into narcotic fuelled dreaming his journal slips from his hand. It falls open on the last page where there is a section of clear, lucid, prose ...

The Song of the Falling God

Long ago, when the Kubora 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 club 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.

When Crador was driven to the marshes by the Denal of old he became one with the Falling God who 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 Kubora learned when they came to The Land of Trees and Plenty and this is the lore they have followed.

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

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will seek out the Outsiders and defeat them and then Crador will rest.

The spell is broken by the loud snore and a Denal woman enters and lays the mad-man to rest on the reed pallet that is his bed. There is almost reverence in her actions. She leaves several woven reed blankets for the PCs and leaves them to sleep.

If they decide to try to escape their fate ...

A generous GM might allow them to escape to their boats and leave the marsh, but one who wishes to have them see the adventure through to its conclusion can use Denal anghenfil to discourage escape. The want them to have a chance to answer their important question on the morrow so every effort will be made to subdue, rather than kill, them.

If they decide to face their fate ...

Though they may be expecting a climatic confrontation at dawn they will be left to their own devices through the morning. Denal will keep a close eye on them and efforts to escape can be dealt with as above. None of the Denal will talk to them at all. Until their status is confirmed the villagers are caught between disdain and awe. Den will repeat any of his story given the chance but the patience of even the most understanding character will be tried by his ramblings.

Finally, near noon, several reed boats appear at the edge of the lagoon accompanied by several anghenfil swimming alongside.

The PCs are herded down onto the central raft and all the Denal of the village sit on the walkways around them expectantly.

The reed boats deliver two old Denal the PCs have not seen before. They are accompanied by a body guard of Denal of typical Kuboran build (1 per PC) and Anghenfil (1 per PC).

After paying their respects to the village elder and to the village 'glade of Heneryne' they introduce themselves using Den as an interpreter.

They are Edak the Stalker – Hanuhn of the Denal Kubora, and Guran Water Walker, the Denal Druhn. Den will add that these are 'the Great Men' among the Denal and the ones who came to talk to Kutz.

After a reverent silence the tenau, Edak, asks a deceptively simple question of the PCs through Den: 'Are you the Outsiders spoken of in our tales of the past and future?'

If the PCs answer 'No'...

Edak asks a second question: 'So you are trespassers in the lands of the Denal?'

This gives the PCs a chance to backtrack before they are attacked by the bodyguards and every able bodied Denal present. Any that survive will be hunted merciless-

ly to the edge of the Denal range and then left to make their way back to civilisation as best they can.

A frustrated GM might allow them to escape but find that they are herded by the Denal towards the Broken Lands to the East. The Denal see no reason why these new 'gifts' should not find their fate with Crador, even if they are not the 'Outsiders' spoken of in legend.

If the PCs answer 'Yes'...

Edak smiles broadly and says 'Truly Crador may yet rest! You will be taken to the Gatekeeper'.

The Denal break into fevered activity and within 30 minutes the PCs and their equipment are back aboard either their boats or those of the Denal and part of a convoy travelling swiftly east. Even Den Hapra is brought with them as an interpreter, not that there is much conversation during the journey.

Only Gedis remains behind. The Denal refuse outright to allow Gedis to accompany them implying that it is too dangerous for a child and he cannot be one of the 'outsiders' spoken of in legend. The PCs, though, are left in no doubt that he will be safe with them and when Kutz has killed them he will be sent down to river to 'his own people'.

Edak and Guran and their bodyguards as well as most adult males from the village go with them. A few hours later they visit another, larger settlement and are joined by a third old man: a tenau who is introduced as Garras Reed Weaver.

The Hanuhn and Druhn seem to defer to Garras from now on and the PCs get the impression that he has some special role or responsibility relating to the Broken Lands. Den Hapra confirms that this was the third 'great man' to visit Kutz and question him.

Link to the next scene

The trigger to the next scene is agreement to be transported there by the Denal. If the PCs begin to have second thoughts the GM can remind them that making their way back the way they have come will be much more difficult than going along with the Denal plan and then running east and south to escape the marsh!

ACT V: THE BROKEN LANDS

Overview

The PCs follow the route Kutz followed and enter the Broken Lands. There, deep in the heart of this treacherous limestone karst maze they will find the Hand of Crador. *Peran* provides an overview of the Broken Lands and an illustration of the Hand of Crador. *Denal Kubora* includes a further description of the Leave Taking.

Link to the next scene

By this point it is to be hoped that the PCs will be committed to their search for Kutz. However, those seeking to run south out of the marsh can be manipulated into finding the Hand of Crador by having them become lost in the Broken Lands and stumbling across it.

Scene 1: The Leavetaking



The Leavetaking

Overview

The PCs, or 'Outsiders', are taken to the place from which Kutz departed in search of the Hand of Crador, and find a clue to his route.

GM Aims

- To describe the terrain in such a way as to help the PCs visualise the chaos of this terrain while keeping them on track for their date with destiny.
- The GM can emphasise the exotic nature of the Broken Lands through the sight of semi-legendary creatures, or ghosts of previous sacrifices ...

PC Outcomes

Make their way with as little mishap as possible to the centre of the Broken Lands where they find the legendary Hand of Crador.

Description of Events

The journey to the eastern edge of the marsh is much quicker than the PCs expect given their previous experience among the reed beds. Garras Reed Weaver and his men know every channel so the PCs and their escorts will arrive at 'The Leavetaking' as dusk falls and the mist again rises

If the PCs ask where Kutz is...

'The Leave Taking' is the place where 'gifts' are left for Crador and it is there that Kutz was left to find the god. The place the boats land is a more or less flat limestone slab among a chaotic jumble to limestone columns clothed in greenery. Numerous streams emerge from among limestone karst and flow across the Leave Taking and into the marsh.

PERAN: HEART OF DARKNESS 40

If the PCs ask which way they should go...

Garras will only gesture at the several gullies leading from the Leave Taking adding that 'The Outsiders will know the Hand of Crador when they see it'.

If the PCs follow a stream...

They quickly find the ground rising sheer on either side; the stream has eroded a deep gully through the limestone. These gullies are often completely hidden beneath a canopy of trees that obscure the sky and create a twilight that taints the pale limestone walls with an eerie green glow. The high ground is equally treacherous as the sinkholes and thinly covered crevices that score the land can produce deadly falls. In other places the paths cut by the streams disappear underground through dark, slippery, tunnels with only the hint of daylight ahead.

The chaotic maze of gullies penetrates at least a league to the east and slows direct travel almost as much as the channels among the reed beds slow travel my boat (see Act IV, Scene 1).

The Denal will leave the PCs with their own equipment plus some sleeping mats, kindling and wood for a fire, food for a couple of days and two primitive tallow lamps. Then they disappear into the mist just as the last of the light fades in the west.

If the PCs decide to make a start at night...

Reminding them of how slippery the wet limestone of the cataract was should make them think twice but if they persevere then the same **STUMBLE rules** can be applied. Even with a lantern or torch they will quickly become disorientated and are likely to travel in a circle back to where they started.

If the PCs decide to wait until daybreak...

The PCs will notice in daylight that the broad limestone slab on which they have camped shows significant erosion but also the signs of human impact. Sacrificial victims have carved pictures in the limestone for a millennium and though erosion means they don't last long some clearly show illustrations of the life they have given up or perhaps the life they hope their sacrifice will bring.

One section of the Leave Taking is also unusual as it is clear in daylight that it is tarnished a rusty red colour.

Awareness will allow the PCs to trace the reddish deposit to a narrow stream which is tinged rusty red and flows from out of sight among the limestone gullies. Just where that stream passes into a gully there is a deeply scored carving on the gully wall. It shows a burly human figure with no hair but a bushy beard ...



The Broken Lands

Scene 2: A Spirit of Sacrifice

GM Aims

- To remind the PCs that this is a place of death, often of innocents given up to a selfish god by parents hoping for better times.

PC Outcomes

They feel regret at the forlorn hope that the gift *did* achieve something through her death. It should be clear she was lost to a mundane accident not the action of a demigod. The GM may wish to roll for other encounters while travelling through the Broken Lands using the standard Harnmaster rules and the table below.

Encounters in the Broken Lands

These challenges can also be used to ensure the PCs arrive at the Hand sometime near midday, leaving half-a-day to explore ...

01–10	: Tracks/Spore/Sounds (Reroll)
11–30	: Fungus/Slime - CAMPAIGN sub-table 14
31–45	: Water barrier/flooding*
46–55	: Gargun - CAMPAIGN sub-table 10
56–60	: Reptiles - CAMPAIGN sub-table 13
61–68	: Ivashu - CAMPAIGN sub-table 15
69–75	: Ethereal - CAMPAIGN sub-table 16
76–80	: Cave-in/Bad floor/risk of fall*
81–85	: Uneven Floor/Low Ceiling/risk of fall*
86–90	: Sinkhole/risk of fall*
91–95	: Open amphitheatre (d10x10paces across) formed from a cavern into which the roof has fallen
96–00	: Stalagmites/Stalagmites/Flowstone/Pillars

* : this blocks the route unless the PCs take a risk trying to cross it. They waste half a watch finding a route around the obstacle if they seek to avoid the risk

Any flying creatures encountered will be high above and it should be possible for the PCs to avoid an encounter unless they actively seek to attract the creature's attention.

These encounters may distract PCs from the task at hand and may be better used for atmosphere. Rolls of 76+ in particular will give the PCs a clear picture of what it is like to travel through this chaotic terrain.

Description of Events

At some point during their journey through the Broken Lands, as they make their way through an eerie, green lit, limestone gully they should see an ethereal shape begin to form.

Name: A Ghost of Sacrifice		Race/Sex: Human/Female							
Occupation: Innocent Dead		Born: died as a child of about 12							
Appearance: Aged 12, height 4' 2", ghostly outline framed in a the green light filtering down from the green canopy above.									
Str	-	Agil	-	Sml	-	Aur	14	Cml	14
Sta	-	Eye	-	Voi	-	Wil	12	End	-
Dex	-	Hrg	-	Int	11	Mor	13	Mov	-
Religion: <i>Ritual</i> still remembers the prayer to Crador she was taught when she was sent into the Broken Lands									
Skills: Manifestation 65, Mental Conflict 35, Sensitivity 75, Telepathy 75									
Languages: Kuboran (Old Jarinese) 63									
Scripts: none									
Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 65,									
Invocations: none									
Convocations: none									
Spells: none									
Psionics: none									
Notes: Not all the 'gifts' who, for untold generations, have been sent to the Hand of Crador made it to their intended fate beneath the Hand. Many have died after becoming lost in the Broken Lands, through accident, or as prey to local predators.									
These innocent but unhappy and unfulfilled dead now haunt the Broken Lands. They know they were sent by their clan or tribe to fulfil an important task which they are now doomed never to complete. The mark of sacrifice is the a necklace of bones all 'gifts' wear									

It seems to flow up out of the ruddy stream at the PC's feet. The spirit is that of a young girl, and there is sufficient detail of her face to distinguish Arus.

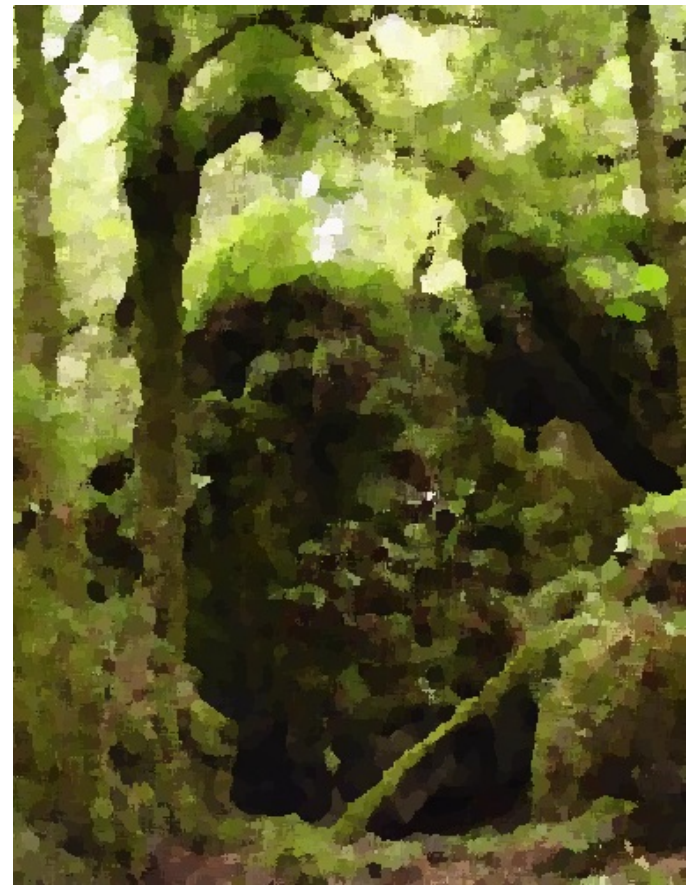
Though she speaks only the Kuboran dialect of Old Jarinese her Telepathy allows her to project her meaning into the PCs minds: *Have you come to help me, father. I tried to do*

as you said but the snake bite hurt so much – did the crops grow? Is all well? Father, can you hear me? Then her form disperses back into the stream, exhausted by the effort to manifest.

Awareness will spot an unusually shaped shard of limestone among a rich patch of moss and fern nearby. Uncovering it will reveal some of the larger bones of a small human. The Skull remains and just beside it a small pile of bones and a rotted leather strap – sure evidence that this was a 'gift of sacrifice'.

Link to the next scene

The journey through the Broken Lands should take at least a watch and longer if the PCs are forced to find other ways around the various barriers or deliberately decide to move at a slow pace. They are therefore likely to arrive at the next scene no earlier than midday and probably later in the day, even dusk, if they have been particularly unlucky. It would be best if there is enough light for the next stage of the adventure to proceed immediately.



'a twilight that paints the pale limestone walls with an eerie green glow'

At intervals they will find crude carvings similar to those they found at the Leave Taking in the wall of the gullies they follow, suggesting others have come this way.

Finally, the stream the PCs have been following disappears into a limestone tunnel but there is certainly daylight several hundred paces ahead, albeit hidden behind several

bends in the tunnel. Near the end of the tunnel is a carving of a big man with a beard.

Emerging from the tunnel and clambering over some large blocks of limestone the PCs see a remarkable natural wonder.

Scene 3: The Place of the Hand Overview

The PCs arrive at the Place of the Hand. *Peran* includes an excellent illustration by Richard Luschek, and *Denal Kubora* includes a map of the 'The Place of the Hand'.

GM Aims

- To describe the Hand of Crador with as much richness and majesty as possible.

PC Outcomes

They will be awed by the natural wonder they find but work out a way to reach it across the chaotic floor of the amphitheatre that is the Place of the Hand.

Description of Events

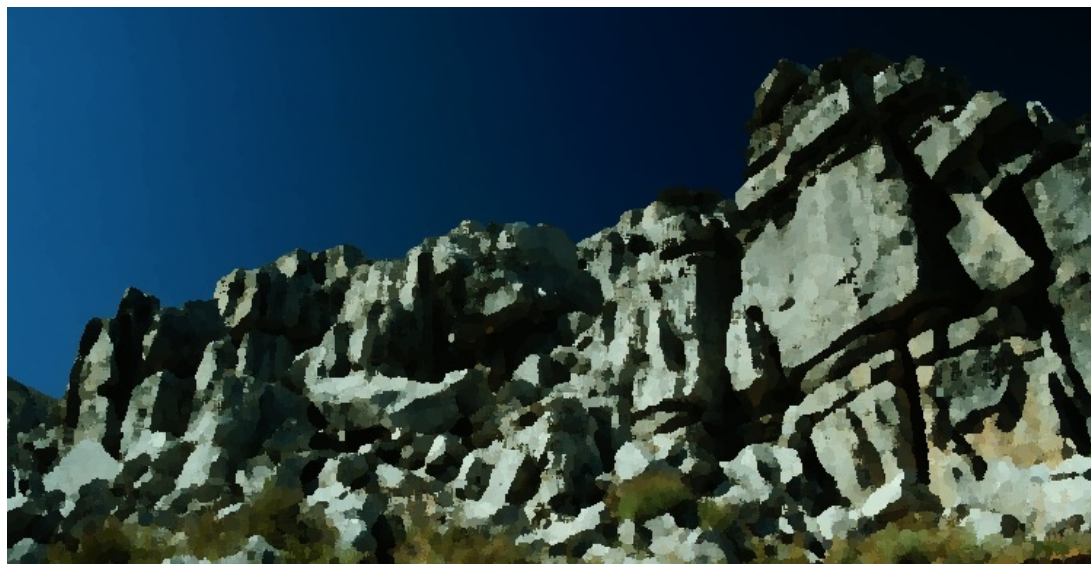
This may once have been a vast limestone cavern more than 400 paces across but a roof fall has created an enormous limestone amphitheatre with walls rising at least 60,

and often 90, feet above the point where the PCs emerge into it. The floor of the amphitheatre is a jumble of limestone blocks – many the size of a serf's hovel.

The stream they have been following flows towards them between, and sometimes under, the limestone blocks from a source to the west of the Hand of Crador itself. The Hand is a complex of more than 20 limestone pinnacles rising almost 200 feet high. The wind has carved them into strange shapes which leave the PCs to imagine they are twisted talons stretching up into the sky.

Vegetation within the amphitheatre is sparse with small clumps of scrub and brush clinging to crevices in the limestone jumble. Nearer the stream a handful of scrubby trees cling to life but appear gnarled and twisted with few if any greenery. **Herblore** will reveal they are sickly and **CS** will allow a PC to conclude that it is an unfamiliar disease with the characteristics of several wilts and rots.

The Hand itself appears to be resting on a mound of particularly large limestone blocks rising almost 30 feet above the floor of the amphitheatre, though the pillars of the hand go deep into the ground and the jumble simply surrounds them. During daylight there are always 1d6 Yelgri circling on thermals above the Hand.



The walls of the Place of the Hand

The Yelgri

There are three competing flights of Harnic Harpies nesting on or around the Hand of Crador. At any one time there are 2d6+4 members of each flight present. The Yelgri have low levels of intelligence and so it will be difficult for the PCs to interact with them other than through violence. The Kubora have a saying about the Yelgri: *they will eat anything that moves and if something doesn't move they will hit it until it does*. However, it might be possible for PCs to use the antagonism between the flights of Yelgri to set the harpies at one another's throat. Providing some food for them to fight over would do this.

The Yelgri never descend into the spaces within the Hand. Whether they fear the constriction or sense the danger there no one can know. They obtain water from nearby streams that do not flow out of the Hand, and rain collecting high in the Hand itself.

If the PCs hesitate and consider retreating into the tunnel then Yelgri will be found to have perched high (out of missile range) above the tunnel and be dislodging limestone blocks from above the tunnel entrance. Going back that way invites serious injury.

If the PCs are minded to sit still among the limestone blocks then a flight of Yelgri will begin to swoop and harry them, dropping stones on them.

Alternatively, if the only thing that is holding the PCs back is fear of the Yelgri then a commotion over some prey above the Hand can cause the Yelgri to be distracted. Such a commotion should reassure the PCs that they could make it to the base of the Hand during the distraction.

Name: Harnic Harpies			Race/Sex: Yelgri/various						
Occupation: Winged scavengers			Born: various						
Appearance: The average Yelgri male weighs seventy pounds and is four feet high, with a wingspan of twenty feet. Females are smaller. Yelgri are aggressive, although somewhat skittish. They are predatory carnivores and scavengers and use primitive tools and weapons.									
Str	08	Agl	10	Sml	15	Aur	10	Cml	•
Sta	07	Eye	17	Voi	•	Wil	10	End	08
Dex	08	Hrg	15	Int	06	Mor	•	Fly	30
Skills: AWARENESS 64, Flying 85, THROWING 55, Weaponcraft 45									
Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 50, DODGE 50, Claw 50, Talon 50, Sharpened branch (Spear) 40									

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Claw	•	•	50	50	•	•	2	•
Talon	•	•	50	50	•	•	•	5
Spear	4	9	60	50	-10	3	•	6

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
Thrown Rock	55	2/2	4/2	8/1	16/1
Dropped Rock	55	15'/2	20'/4	30'/6	40'/8

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
01 – 10	Head	•	3	3	1	4
11 – 15	Neck	•	3	3	1	4
16 – 35*	Wing	•	3	3	1	4
36 – 45*	Arm	•	3	3	1	4
46 – 50*	Hand	•	3	3	1	4
51 – 65	Thorax	•	3	3	1	4
66 – 75	Abdomen	•	3	3	1	4
76 – 85*	Leg	•	3	3	1	4
86 – 90*	Foot	•	3	3	1	4
91 – 00	Tail	•	3	3	1	4

* random roll for left or right 'limb'.

Notes: The average Yelgri male weighs seventy pounds and is four feet high, with a wingspan of twenty feet. Females are smaller. Yelgri are aggressive, although somewhat skittish. They are predatory carnivores and scavengers and use primitive tools and weapons.

A favoured tactic is to drop rocks from high above.

Reaching the Hand

The blocks of the amphitheatre floor provide good cover, while the 'escarpment' at the base of the Hand provides even better cover as the blocks are so big PCs can not only move between them but shelter under them.

If the PCs follow the stream to its source they will find a small red tinged pool among these large blocks and shaded by them. Seeking to follow the source into the Hand will lead to a fissure in a block of limestone no more and 2 feet across which can be seen to narrow sharply to a crack barely a handspan across. It is not possible to follow the stream into the Hand and alternate routes must be sought.

Link to the next scene

A harsh GM would make PCs roll **AGILITY x 3** to avoid slipping/falling/tripping and taking a leg injury during a run across the block field to the Hand, but if the PCs move at walking pace they should get here unscathed.

ACT VI: THE HAND OF CRADOR

Overview

The PCs have reached the base of the legendary Hand of Crador. Within they will find they are not the first to explore it as they are drawn closer and closer to an ancient enigma and a meeting with their quarry. Detailed maps of the passages within the Hand of Crador are attached to this adventure and the points of interest detailed below are marked on those maps.

Scene 1: Into the Hand

GM Aims

- The Hand is an eerie place with plenty of dripping water and the sound of wind movements high around the pillars cause strange wailings to move between the fingers of the hand. This should allow for plenty of atmospheric descriptions by the GM.
- If the PCs are very unlucky they may find themselves in a losing fight with the Gargun gang which knows the ground very well. If that begins to seem likely then a GM who wants the PCs to reach the goal of the adventure should allow the Gargun 'to escape' (and save the PCs from further harm save to their reputations).

PC Outcomes

Survive their entry into the Hand and the denizens within before they are drawn deeper into the maze and a confrontation with Kutz, or what he has become.

Description of Events

The GM can offer a number of routes into the Hand.

The PCs can skirt the base of the Hand until they find a large enough gap between two pillars to gain swifter access to the spaces within.

From the west there are only two such gaps that seem to offer a realistic chance of access. They are marked [I] and [II] on the Ground Level GM Maps. Other potential entries, marked [III] – [VII], can be found if the south and east aspects of the Hand are explored.

The limestone of the Hand makes climbing easy, and easier still if a rope and grapple are available. However, the smallest pillars rise at least 60 feet above their base with the tallest climbing 140 feet more above that.

Anyone climbing a pillar of the Hand will attract the attention of the Yelgri but could climb up the outside in an effort to find any ways down within the ring of pillars forming the outer rampart of the hand. 150 feet up the north-westerly face of the tallest pillar is a curiously symmetrical cave where a Spirit of Air resides.

The Spirit of Air

The remorseless competition between the Yelgri and the chaotic, vibrant life of the colony is one reason why the Spirit of Air has slowly crept back towards consciousness over the last century. The Spirit has no clear recollection of how long it has been here, but assumes it is a long time. Equally it has no recollection of who, or what, bound it here, but knows that it was for an important reason – to help keep something contained or protected.

The spirit's capacity to influence the environment around its eerie declines very quickly with increased distance from its 'binding rune'. Within the small cavern it is at almost the full physical strength of its prime. This is why its cave remains clean and undisturbed. It has kept out any bird that has sought to nest in the cave and a wall of pressure that keeps the Harpies out.

While its physical strength declines quickly away from the cave its senses have awoken to almost full strength and its perceptions stretch out from the cave as far as the boundary of the Hand and down into the air spaces between the limestone pillars. If the PCs scale one of the pillars seeking entry to the Hand it will sense their presence as the only genuinely intelligent creatures it remembers ever encountering. In an effort to attract their attention it will seek to buffet a passing Yelgri in a way that any PC with **Weatherlore** will instantly see as curiously unnatural. It will sense their attention and then move any Yelgri coming close enough in increasingly unnatural ways to confirm in the PCs mind that there may be something in or around the cave that is worth investigation.

Creature: Spirit of Air)

Str	•	Ag	•	Sml	•	Aur	01	Cml	•
Sta	•	Eye	•	Voi	•	Wil	08	End	16
Dex	•	Hrg	•	Int	02	Mor	•	Mov	40

Skills: Clairvoyance 95, Medium 95, Mental Combat 95 (only in defence)
These skills halve for every 10' from its cave entrance

Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 78, DODGE 80, BF&I as if STR/END = 24

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Bite	•	•	55	•	•	3	•	•

	Location	B	E	P	F
01 – 15	Head	1	1	0	1
16 – 35	Neck	1	1	0	1
36 – 65	Thorax	1	1	0	1
66 – 85	Abdomen	1	1	0	1
86 – 00	Tail	1	1	0	1

Notes:

It cannot be physically attacked, though magical weapons could destroy its binding rune and force it back into the Plane of Air from which it originated

The reason the Spirit wants to 'meet' the PCs is that with its slow emergence into consciousness it has sensed changes in the environment below. It has come to believe that it is not the only Spirit bound to the Hand but despite its efforts to call out to the others it is receiving only confused, animalistic responses. If it could 'speak' to the PCs it would ask them to seek out the other spirits and report back their state for it feels it should be concerned for their well-being.

The Spirit is unable to communicate with the PCs in any normal way but can draw very precise pictures in the limestone dust it can scour from the walls of its chamber.

Actions within the Hand of Crador

All the passages count as 'close' for combat, so that any Edge or Blunt aspect weapons suffer penalties in use. All passages require humans to move in single file, but two Gargun can fight side by side in most passages.

Some passages (marked [*] on each of the maps) are particularly narrow &/or low, requiring PCs to crawl or edge through them sideways. Particularly tall or heavy PCs may not be able to make their way through these passages without resorting to **AGILITY rolls**. Failure and they must strip off their clothes and equipment to make progress.

None of the creatures found within the Hand are large enough to suffer any of these difficulties and move through the passages with ease, though the Gargun can only fight on a frontage of one at these choke points. While sick, and increasingly deranged, the Gargun will choose when and where to fight if they can. This should allow them to pick points of attack when they have the advantage over the PCs &/or give them lines of retreat through which they can move much more quickly than human-sized intruders.

None of these constraints apply to the spaces that the passages connect. They are all at least 10 feet high and many are taller and open to the sky above. If an earlier encounter has attracted the ire of the Yelgri then the harpies may track the PCs through the passages from above and drop rocks on them when they emerge into the open spaces between the pillars of the Hand.

Some of the spaces, however, constitute a significant physical danger as they are not only open to the sky above but also open into the spaces below. All such holes in the floor lead to a drop indicated on the maps.

Those marked [**] have no easy ledge around them. PCs can use **Jumping** (a standing jump as there is never a sufficiently straight run up to make a running leap practical) or **Climbing** to make their way from entry to exit without falling into the lower level.

The spaces that are open to the sky above, and 5ft back into the passage leading into them, count as sufficiently well lit to have no combat or skill penalties. Further than that from a space open to the sky the lighting is 'poor' (5% penalty). A torch or lantern is of limited use in such confined circumstances so only the PC carrying the light source and the PC within 5ft of them gain any benefit. The benefit for any but the light bearer is to increase the quality of the light from 'dark' to 'very poor'; or from 'very poor' to 'poor'; or from 'poor' to 'normal'.

Spaces that connect to the lower level are coded [A1] – [C2] on both the Ground and Lower level maps so it is clear where a character will emerge in travelling between levels.

In the Lower Levels even the spaces count as poorly lit and the passages between as 'very poor/dark' (minimum penalty of 10% rising to 20% in the passages furthest from any light.

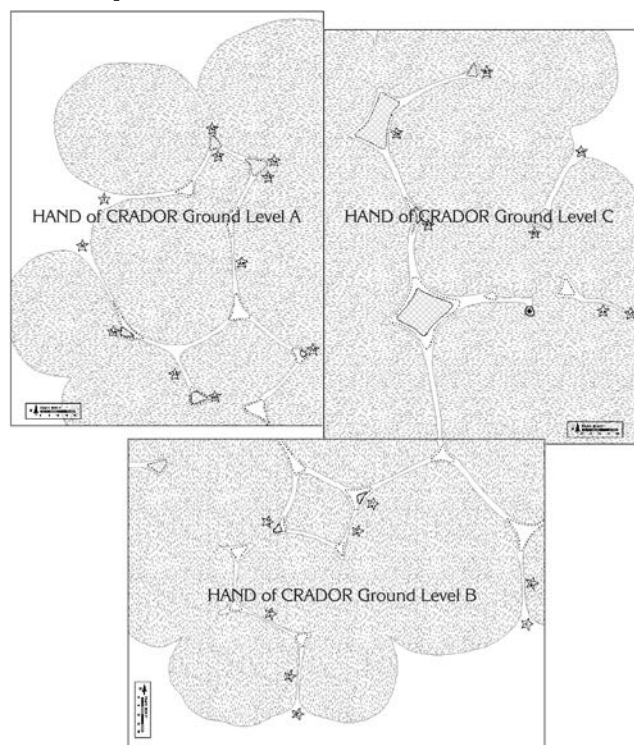
THE GROUND LEVEL

Travel through the Ground Level

Though there are places where the passages are wet and treacherous (see Encounters, below) most of the passages can be walked through with little incident.

- Creep 10ft/rnd or MOVE÷3 (Stealth +20)
- Walk 20ft/rnd or MOVE÷2 (Stealth ±0)
- Jog 40ft/rnd or MOVE (Stealth -20)
- Run/Sprint is impossible in the confined conditions (though not for a Gargun).

The composite map below shows how the three Ground Level maps relate to one another:



Entering the Hand through entries IV or VII will allow them to make their way directly to the Lower level, in which case they will avoid the gargun gang occupying other parts of the ground Level.

Encounters on the Ground Level

The journey through the passages can be made more difficult by rolling for an encounter every minute (6 rounds):

- 01-30: Tracks/Spore/Sounds (Reroll for the source).
- 31-45: Water trickling along the floor of the passage as well as down the walls requires a random PC to make a **STUMBLE roll** (Failure: 50% chance of stumble into the Lower Level if a hole is convenient, or take B1 to a lower

body location and go prone. Creeping through the passages means this encounter is ignored. *Jogging* through a passage section when this is encountered means *every* jogging PC must make a **STUMBLE roll**.

46-50: a solitary adder passing through during the day, but torpid during the night. In either case it will only attack when a failed STUMBLE roll means it is trodden on.

Creature: Common Harnic Adder (7-23" long)

Str 06 **Agil** 08 **Sml** 08 **Aur** 01 **Cml** •
Sta 12 **Eye** 16 **Voi** • **Wil** 08 **End** 07
Dex • **Hrg** 01 **Int** • **Mor** • **Mov** 12

Skills: AWARENESS 60, CLIMBING 20, Intimidate (hiss) 30, STEALTH 60, Tracking 50

Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 60, Bite 45, DODGE 45,

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Bite	•	•	55	•	•	•	•	3

	Location	B	E	P	F
01 - 15	Head	1	1	0	1
16 - 35	Neck	1	1	0	1
36 - 65	Thorax	1	1	0	1
66 - 85	Abdomen	1	1	0	1
86 - 00	Tail	1	1	0	1

Notes: Hisses to Intimidate & will retreat given the chance. Only attacks if stood on. Venom - H4, 90 mins

51-55 : d3 Lizards (as for snakes, above)

Creature: Common Rock Lizard (6-9" long)

Str 02 **Agil** 12 **Sml** 12 **Aur** 01 **Cml** •
Sta 06 **Eye** 16 **Voi** • **Wil** 06 **End** 08
Dex • **Hrg** 01 **Int** • **Mor** • **Mov** 14

Skills: AWARENESS 70, CLIMBING 60, STEALTH 70, Tracking 50

Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 75, Bite 20, DODGE 65,

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Bite	•	•	20	•	•	0	•	•

	Location	B	E	P	F
01 - 15	Head	1	1	0	1
16 - 25	Neck	1	1	0	1
26 - 55	Thorax	1	1	0	1
66 - 75	Abdomen	1	1	0	1
76 - 00	Tail	1	1	0	1

Notes: Will retreat given the chance. Only attacks if stood on or cornered.

56-60: a Ghost of Sacrifice (see Act V, Sc. 2). This poor creature made it as far as the Hand before the Lizards or snakes killed it. There will be no human remains here as the inhabitants of the Hand are far too frugal to leave anything behind. It might be that the odd bone remains nearby, half covered in limestone deposits, but that is all.

61-75 : d6 sickly looking Gargun - see below for stats. They will retreat shouting warnings 50% of the time, otherwise stand and fight until half their number are incapacitated, then retreat to warn the rest.

76-00 : Uneven Floor/Low Ceiling requires a random PC to make a STUMBLE roll or take a B1 blow to a random upper body location.

The Gargun Gang of 'King' Gerf

There are 18 Gargu-arak survivors of a band of 24 that came to the Hand just before winter arrived. They were fleeing Sangic Kuboran hunters in the foothills of the Raye-shas and stumbled upon the Hand. They congratulated themselves on outwitting their pursuers who, of course, knew better than the venture down into the Broken Lands.

The absence of significant competition has allowed them to settle in and determine that the Hand would make a fine base of operations and potential new nest if they could capture a princess. However, drinking the corrupted water flowing through the Hand has begun to warp them mentally and physically. They leave the Hand less and less and subsist on whatever they can trap or kill in its passages or immediately outside. Recently they have turned to cannibalism to supplement their meagre diet. Two of their 7 casualties have gone into the pot. Two others did not return when they went to explore the Lower Level, taken by the Spirit of Earth (see below); one fell into the pool from [6] while drawing water and was lost to the creatures there, and a last one was lost exploring outside the Hand just as after they arrived.

Response to intruders

Any lone gargun encountered will only run back to the gang's base of operations and raise the alarm 50% of the time. The rest of the time it will seek to retreat away from the intruders and either try to sneak up behind them or make a discrete exit from the Hand by the most direct route.

Any larger group of gargun will stand and fight if they have been warned and even if they haven't been warned they will still stand 50% of the time. The rest of the time they will retreat making random, individual, choices about which passages to follow whenever they arrive at a junction. This can mean that while they retire intending to fall back towards Gerf they may become dispersed through the passages.

If they do stand and fight then up to 3 gargun in one of the spaces can confront a single PC arriving through a passage. Only when the PC has forced them away from the entry, by knockbacks etc. can a second PC join the fray. Then up to 5 gargun can attack the pair of PCs in a space.

The presence of a hole descending to the lower level can reduce the number on either side able to fight by 1 PC and 2 gargun and still there is a risk that any **STUMBLE** will hurl the individual into the void!

Once half of any group of gargun have been incapacitated then they group will retreat as above.

Narrow passages [*] allow 2 gargun to take on a single PC edging forward, and only able to use whatever is in their leading hand for attack or defence.

A subdued gargun can be interrogated but they know nothing of the PCs quest except that a big man went into the lower passages and didn't come back.

Hand of Crador Ground Level Map A

The points of interest are numbered sequentially across all three ground level maps.

[1] The chance that a Gargu-arak guard is on duty is doubled during the night.

The lead PC approaching from [II] can use **Awareness** with **CS** spotting that something went down the narrow passage, if the gargun lies low down there.

If the PCs enter the Hand via [I] then he will certainly lie low and sneak after them.

[2] If there has been a commotion from the direction of [I] or [II] then they will stand and fight.

Name: Sickly Gargu-arak		Race/Sex: Gargun/Male							
Occupation: Hunter		Born: various							
Appearance: The Gargun are particularly scrawny, even for Gargu-arak, and show a variety of scabs, rashes, bald patches, weeping sores. They also appear to suffer from a range of 'birth defects' such as additional fingers or toes, badly aligned eyes or ears, crippled legs ... not unlike the Denal Kubora.									
Awareness reveals more marked abnormalities: the stump of an additional arm growing beneath the functional one, a thick pad of particularly hard hide over a vital region, even an additional eyeball developing in a forehead.									
Physician cannot explain these at all.									
Str	06	Agl	09	Sml	12	Aur	09	Cml	•
Sta	09	Eye	08	Voi	05	Wil	10	End	08
Dex	12	Hrg	15	Int	09	Mor	05	Mov	09

Medical/Psyche: **Physician** will identify as symptoms of a range of unidentifiable diseases

Skills: AWARENESS 47, CLIMBING 45, Herblore 60, INTRIGUE (Gargu-arak) 43, JUMPING 40, STEALTH 43, Survival 50, THROWING 40, Tracking 65

Languages: Gargu-arak 43

Scripts: none

Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 45, UNARMED 45, DODGE 45, Club 40, Buckler 50, Shortbow 50

Money/Valuables:

Armour/Weapons: scruffy cloth jerkins and leather caps over their hide

Other Equipment: club and buckler

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	45	60	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	50	50	•	1	•	•
Head butt	•	•	45	45	•	1	•	•
Club	3	9	55	45	•	3	•	•
Buckler	3	11	55	65	•	1	•	•

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
Shortbow	50	20/5	40/4	80/3	160/2

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	Hide L	•	6	7	4	6
Face	Hide	•	4	3	1	3
Neck	Hide	•	4	3	1	3
Shoulder	Hide C	•	5	4	2	4
Upper Arm	Hide C	•	5	4	2	4
Elbow	Hide C	•	5	4	2	4
Forearm	Hide	•	4	3	1	3
Hand	Hide	•	4	3	1	3
Thorax	Hide C	•	5	4	2	4
Abdomen	Hide C	•	5	4	2	4
Hip	Hide C	•	5	4	2	4
Groin	Hide C	•	5	4	2	4
Thigh	Hide C	•	5	4	2	4
Knee	Hide	•	4	3	1	3
Calf	Hide	•	4	3	1	3
Foot	Hide	•	4	3	1	3

Notes: These creatures have become corrupted by drinking the water flowing through the lower level of the Hand

Hand of Crador Ground Level Map B

[3] These 4 linked spaces and their connecting passages are the base of the gargun gang, the spaces and the passages between them are littered with the debris of gargun life and defecation. Gerf is usually at the most southerly of the 4 spaces.

Name: King Gerf		Race/Sex: Gargun/Male	
Occupation: 'King'		Born: various	

Appearance: The Gargun are particularly scrawny, even for Gargu-arak, and show a variety of scabs, rashes, bald patches, weeping sores.

Str	08	Ag	11	Sml	14	Aur	11	Cml	•
Sta	11	Eye	10	Voi	17	Wil	12	End	10
Dex	14	Hrg	17	Int	11	Mor	05	Mov	11

Medical/Psyche: As well as the range of scrofulous skin conditions enjoyed by all his 'tribe', and an additional left thumb Gerf shows the only functional corruptions in the band: thick bony growths over his head which grant additional armour protection and much heavier and more muscular fists which do additional damage (all features are included below).

Skills: AWARENESS 57, CLIMBING 55, INTRIGUE (Gargu-arak) 63, JUMPING 50, STEALTH 53, Survival 60, THROWING 50, Tracking 75

Languages: Gargu-arak 63

Scripts: none

Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 55, UNARMED 55, DODGE 55, Mankar 60, Buckler 60

Money/Valuables: Leather necklace strung with fragments of coin to the value of 4d and a silver ring set with a glass bead

Armour/Weapons: scruffy cloth jerkins (his leather 'helmet' no longer fits over his misshapen skull).

Other Equipment: mankar and shield

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm	•	•	55	70	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee	•	•	60	60	•	1	•	•
Head butt	•	•	55	55	•	1	•	•
Mankar	2	11	70	65	•	•	5	•
Buckler	3	11	65	75	•	1	•	•

Missile Wpns	AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)
•	•	•	•	•	•

Location	Armour Layers	AQ	B	E	P	F
Skull	Hide	•	8	8	5	6
Face	Hide	•	8	8	5	6
Neck	Hide	•	6	5	3	5
Shoulder	Hide L	•	6	7	4	6
Upper Arm	Hide L	•	6	7	4	6
Elbow	Hide L	•	6	7	4	6
Forearm	Hide	•	4	3	1	3
Hand	Hide	•	4	3	1	3
Thorax	Hide L	•	6	7	4	6
Abdomen	Hide L	•	5	4	2	4
Hip	Hide L	•	6	7	4	6
Groin	Hide L	•	6	7	4	6
Thigh	Hide L	•	6	7	4	6
Knee	Hide	•	4	3	1	3
Calf	Hide	•	4	3	1	3
Foot	Hide	•	4	3	1	3

Notes: He too has been corrupted by drinking the water flowing through the lower level of the Hand

Given the circular arrangement of the passageways the PCs may find themselves chasing the gargun in a circle, with some gargun leaking away from the defence if they reach a choice of passage without Gerf.

Gerf isn't 'King' for nothing. Apart from the physical changes in him he's by far the brightest gargun present. If the situation allows he will keep 4 gargun with him to de-

fend the front and then send the rest to circle around behind the PCs.

If half the group with Gerf are incapacitated then even *he* runs for it and the gargun defence will turn into a rout. A rout will also ensue if Gerf is incapacitated.

[4] This rock-fall was engineered by the gargun to reduce the number of entries into the Hand. They planned to make the Hand even more defensible by doing the same to some of the other entries, but that proved beyond them. It does not fully block the passage but makes it as difficult for a Human to pass, hence [*].

[5] The chance of a gargun being on duty here is doubled at night. If he lies low he will head towards [6] and link up with the two gargun that may be there then sneaking after the intruders to attack them from behind if they are engaged by the other gargun.

If he *does* run to warn the others, but the PCs ignore him and press on towards [6], then Gerf will organise the gang and follow the PCs, sneaking after them and waiting for their chance to attack from the rear. If the PCs descend to the Lower Level before the gargun attack then they will not pursue but post a guard at [6] for the next 2 watches. If the PCs emerge in that time then the gargun will seek to ambush them. If they are gone longer than that then Gerf will assume that they met the same fate as the gargun who explored the depths.

Hand of Crador Ground Level Map C

[6] This large space is open to the sky above and to the Lower Level below. There is a fairly wide ledge running around the gap in the floor so, other than during combat, it is likely that the PCs will be able to move around it without incident. The Yelgri use this shaft as a latrine and the walls are streaked and stained with their white guano.

There is a pool of ruddy red water at the bottom of the shaft with some scrubby plants growing at its southern end (see [9], below). Waiting quietly for 5 minutes followed by **Awareness** to see that there is something moving in the plants. Even from the ledge **Herblore** allows a PC to conclude that the plants are unhealthy looking and unlike any they are familiar with.

No gargun will be here during the night but during the day two may be found drawing water using a crude gargun-skin bucket and rope. While one of them deals with the bucket the other one watches for movement by the creatures found in and around the pool below. If they are not here then they will be at [3].

If a battle begins at [3] they will join the fight, attacking PCs from behind. If the PCs ignore the gargun [3], then these gargun will retreat towards [8] and beyond. If any gargun are pushed beyond [8] to the dead end in the passages then they will turn and face the PCs but finally, if they have lost half their number they will make a panic retreat to the Lower Level and move randomly about the passages there seeking a way back up.

PERAN: HEART OF DARKNESS 48

[7] This passage is 3ft wide and 8 ft high with a level floor and flat ceiling; it is not a natural passage. No light leaks far down this passage so a torch or lantern will be needed to explore it.

The chamber it leads to is not quite 6ft across and rises to a domed ceiling 8ft above a shallow bowl about a pace across and a 6" deep carved into the floor. Water is dripping into the bowl which is half full of water made milky white by the surrounding limestone.

If a PC reaches down into the milky water...

The bowl has a narrow shaft cut in its base that is only a few inches across and narrowed by an accumulation of limestone. Whether it is entirely sealed or not is unclear it may be that water is slowly leaking out through the bottom. Only long observation would confirm that this is the case.

If a PC catches all the water falling into the bowl...

After diverting the water for a full watch there is a decrease in the depth of water. This confirms that water is slowly flowing out through the bottom of the bowl. This experiment will also reveal that the water dripping from the ceiling is clear and pure with no limestone residue.

If they divert the water from the bowl for 5 watches then it would empty. If they then put their ear close to the hole in its base they will hear a dull but regular 'clang' as if stone were being struck by metal far below.

Excavating the limestone floor will quickly turn into the work of days and weeks.

If a PC examines the dome in the ceiling ...

The dome above is not wet; the water appears to drip vertically out of from a hole about the size of a clenched fist at its centre. The hole is surrounded by a carved spiral groove running from near the wall to meet the edge of the hole.

Any Mineralogy experience, or INT x 5, will notice that it is odd that, though there is a source of water in the rock above the walls and ceiling appear quite dry. It would be expected that the water would soak into the entire ceiling rather than dripping through the hole carved above. Close examination shows that the walls and ceiling are entirely dry...

If a PC examines the hole in the domed ceiling...

This is not difficult if a couple of strong PCs are willing to brace themselves across the bowl in the floor and lift a light character up until they can reach the hole.

Awareness (and a decent source of light), will reveal that the water is dripping steadily from the very centre of the hole without touching the top or sides or the rest of the ceiling. It is as if the water is actually appearing in the centre of the small space!

If the PC reaches into the hole then **DEX x 5** will reveal that the hole is about 6 inches deep and that all its surfaces are dry with powdery limestone!

If a PC seeks to detect any magical aura ...

They will get a sense of a magical aura focused on the hole in the dome but spiralling out with the carving in the dome. They may get a sense of an elemental spell of some kind, perhaps of an elemental presence, but no more.

It is very unlikely that the PCs will be able to work out exactly what is going on but the water is certainly coming from somewhere but not the limestone ceiling! In fact the spiral carving is enchanted to confine an ancient Spirit of Water within the hole in the ceiling.

The Spirit of Water

This spirit is in a quiescent, vegetative state, mechanically conjuring water into the hole from the watery dimension from which it was summoned. It is this water that permeates the lower levels of the Hand before trickling out into the surrounding jumble of blocks and the Broken Lands beyond. The Spirit was intended to erode the evil beneath the Hand but instead it has become the medium through which that corruption has spread through and beyond the Hand via the red sediment that is carried down to the Marsh and, perhaps, beyond.

It might be possible to establish a link with the Spirit if a PC had the mental skills or arcane talent of one of a handful of Savoryans across Kethira. However, even if they were successful it has no intelligence with which to say anything.

The flow of water has been going on for a very long time. **Mineralogy** will put that timescale at a century or more based on the extent to which the hole in the base of the bowl in the floor has begun to occlude.

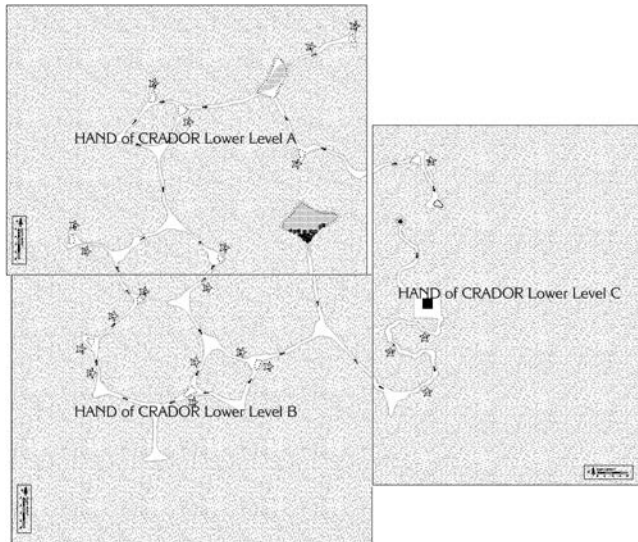
[8] This chamber is the largest that runs from the sky above down to the lower level. There is no easy passage from one side to the other.

THE LOWER LEVEL

Getting to the Lower Level requires a PC to climb (or be lowered) down. The limestone walls throughout the Hand are rough, pitted and cracked so there are plenty of handholds making the climb easy. It is even easier with a rope.

There are a number of places where the levels connect in a way that would allow PCs to descend. These are coded from [A1] – [C2]. All depths are below the Ground Level.

This composite map shows how the three Lower Level maps relate to one another and to the Ground Level passages:



The Flow of Corruption

The pure water conjured by the Spirit of Water at [7] flows over and around the Heart of Darkness, below, picking up the corruption that beats within that dark presence. It then makes its way through the gently sloping passages (see slope arrows) of the Lower Level. This takes the water in an approximately circular, clockwise direction, first south, then west, north and finally east. Over the years it has saturated much of the base of the Hand and accumulated in two pools at [8] and [9].

From [8] it flows out through the base of the Hand, specifically via [10], and from there to the stream the PCs followed to reach the Hand. The stream is supplemented by rain water collecting among the pillars of the Hand and across the limestone amphitheatre outside but the red residue, and the corruption it carries, originates from the Heart of Darkness.

The residue is at its highest concentration in the pools where it collects and it is from this source that the Gargun above became sick and began to change. The PCs should be safe unless they either drink large amounts of the tainted water or the GM wishes to visit a disease or some corruption upon them. Any **Survival** success when examining the water in the pools will show it is tainted and **CS** will suggest that the taint is related to the residue. It is not pos-

sible to determine if the problem is mineral or biological, disease bearing or poisonous. It's just BAD WATER!

Travel through the Lower Level

The wet conditions of the lower level make the limestone floor slippery. This restricts movement and increases the risk of a stumble compared to the drier Ground Level.

- Creep 10ft/rnd: MOVE÷3 (Stealth +20) no STUMBLES
- Walk 20ft/rnd: MOVE÷2 (Stealth ±0) 1 STUMBLE/min
- Jog 40ft/rnd: MOVE(Stealth -20) 1 STUMBLE/PC/min
- Sprint/Run is impossible in the confined conditions.
- Combat: treat as Jog (EML -20) 1 Stumble/PC/min (unless off-hand is used to brace against the wall)

Encounters on the Lower Level

The journey through the passages can be made more difficult by rolling for an encounter every minute (6 rounds):

01–30: Tracks/Spore/Sounds (Reroll for the source).

31–40: a Corrupted Snake emerges through a fissure in the wall or floor to attack (withdrawing to safety if it survives any blow).

The snakes that make their home in the Lower Levels are not simply passing through. They have changed to be able to survive the cooler temperatures. The supply of rapidly breeding lizards which they hunt through the fissures within the Hand sustains them.

While normal snakes seek to avoid a threat these have become aggressive predators and always attack.

Creature: Corrupted Harnic Adder (10-30" long)																																													
Str	08	Agl	10	Sml	10	Aur	01	Cml	•																																				
Sta	14	Eye	16	Voi	•	Wil	10	End	12																																				
Dex	•	Hrg	01	Int	•	Mor	•	Mov	14																																				
Skills: AWARENESS 70, CLIMBING 40, Intimidate (hiss) 50, STEALTH 50, Tracking 60																																													
Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 70, Bite 65, DODGE 55																																													
<table><tr><th>Melee Wpns</th><th>Wt</th><th>WQ</th><th>AML</th><th>DML</th><th>HM</th><th>B</th><th>E</th><th>P</th></tr><tr><td>Bite</td><td>•</td><td>•</td><td>55</td><td>•</td><td>•</td><td>•</td><td>•</td><td>4</td></tr></table>										Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P	Bite	•	•	55	•	•	•	•	4																		
Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P																																					
Bite	•	•	55	•	•	•	•	4																																					
<table><tr><th></th><th>Location</th><th>B</th><th>E</th><th>P</th><th>F</th></tr><tr><td>01 – 15</td><td>Head</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>16 – 35</td><td>Neck</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>36 – 65</td><td>Thorax</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>66 – 85</td><td>Abdomen</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>86 – 00</td><td>Tail</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>1</td></tr></table>											Location	B	E	P	F	01 – 15	Head	1	1	0	1	16 – 35	Neck	1	1	0	1	36 – 65	Thorax	1	1	0	1	66 – 85	Abdomen	1	1	0	1	86 – 00	Tail	1	1	0	1
	Location	B	E	P	F																																								
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36 – 65	Thorax	1	1	0	1																																								
66 – 85	Abdomen	1	1	0	1																																								
86 – 00	Tail	1	1	0	1																																								
Notes: Hisses to Intimidate. Perfect senses in the dark. Attacks aggressively until killed. Venom – H3, 60 mins																																													

41–50: a Ghost of Sacrifice (see above, but this poor creature almost made it to the Heart of Darkness before succumbing. There will be no bones but the ghost will give off an even more palpable sense of fear)

51–55: d3 Gargun (treat as 01-30 unless there were survivors of the PCs' incursion that may have fled down here).

56–70: Corrupted Lizards

PERAN: HEART OF DARKNESS 50

Though the lizards previously occupied both levels within the Hand the gargun learned to trap and net hordes of them for the pot. They now avoid the upper level and this is what has led the gargun to turn to cannibalism.

They have changed over many generations so they can survive in the cool passages beneath the Hand and now behave more like rats than reptiles. They have also developed a crude 'hive mind' which means that though they are no more dangerous than any normal reptile when encountered alone they are able to tackle large prey when encountered as a group.

Little bigger than a normal lizard they appear in groups of 5d10x10 (or between 50 and 500!). If the number appearing exceeds the weight in lbs of the PC then they will attack, otherwise they retreat. If they are pursued and cornered then their threshold for attack is halved but after one attack they will flow on past the PCs if possible.

There are numerous fissures and cracks in the floors and walls of the Lower Level which, though far too small for a human to traverse provide a means for the Lizards to move about without using the passages the PCs travel through. They may encounter very few lizards in the passages but there is an almost limitless population only feet away within the walls and floors. It is possible that the first time the PCs see a lizard is when hundreds of them boil out of a crack in the wall or floor and begin eating the PC where he stands!

Creature: Swarm of Corrupted Rock Lizard (6-9" long): 5d10x10 appearing

Str 06 **Agil** 12 **Sml** 12 **Aur** 01 **Cml** •
Sta 12 **Eye** 16 **Voi** • **Wil** 08 **End** 12
Dex • **Hrg** 01 **Int** • **Mor** • **Mov** 14

Skills: AWARENESS 80, CLIMBING 70, STEALTH 40, Tracking 70

Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 85, Bite 50, DODGE 15,

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Bite	•	•	50	•	•	0	•	•

Location	B	E	P	F
The swarm behaves as a single organism and has a single hit location	1	1	0	1

Notes: The swarm will rush an opponent and crawl over it seeking any exposed flesh to attack. The swarm has a single, collective, attack per round and hits will be to a random exposed location, probably hands or head. The opponent is allowed a single melee attack prior to being 'engulfed' in the swarm after which time melee attacks against the swarm are 90% likely to impact on the victim. The only defence is to use an Unarmed Combat Counterstrike to pick, brush and throw the lizards to the floor and stamp on them. A swarm which takes 5% of its number in injury levels will retreat whence it came

71-95: Uneven Floor/Low Ceiling requires a random PC to make a STUMBLE roll or take a B1 blow to a random upper body location.

95-00: the Spirit of Earth senses the PCs and the following sequence of events is triggered:

- the Spirit has sensed sentient intruders through a form of Clairvoyance;
- the first time it is encountered it takes 1d6+6 minutes to 'gather' itself. Each minute the best **Awareness** or **Min-**

ing the PCs is rolled to identify slight tremors in the limestone (+5% per minute);

- once it has gathered itself the Spirit the PCs will see chunks of the wall ahead of them flaking away into a pile of rubble that then begins to articulate and animate. For each minute it gathered itself a cubic foot of rubble animates (i.e. d6+6)
- Once 'embodied' it resembles a small Hru (**Folklore** might lead PCs to positively, but wrongly, identify it as a more compact example of that type of Ivashu).
- Then it attacks!

Trying to communication is pointless – it will happily seek to crush any PC that tries to engage it in conversation.

While the Spirit of Air is consciousness with little physicality, and the Spirit of Water no more than a mechanical shell, the Spirit of Earth is conscious bestial physicality with little intelligence. It is confined to the limestone walls and floors of the Lower Level passages.

Creature: Spirit of the Earth

Str 08 **Agil** 10 **Sml** 13 **Aur** 01 **Cml** •
Sta 14 **Eye** 13 **Voi** • **Wil** 10 **End** 14
Dex • **Hrg** 13 **Int** • **Mor** • **Mov** 10

Skills: AWARENESS 70, Clairvoyance (limited to sentient creatures in passages) 95, Mental Combat (in defence) 95

Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 70, Brute Strength 60

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Batter	•	•	60	•	•	1*	•	•

Location	B	E	P	F
Single hit location: It cannot be destroyed by physical attack only temporarily dispersed. Once it accumulates its volume (in cubic feet) in injury levels it will retreat into the native limestone returning in d6 minutes	9	9	18	24

Notes:

Volume on first encounter is d6+6 cubic feet.

It uses only Counterstrike in defence.

It suffers no disadvantage for the passages and can never Stumble or Fumble – both become a TA to opponent.

Once it has attacked the first time it never gives up and never surrenders and every d6 minutes after any defeat it will return with an additional d6 of volume, i.e. 2d6+6, then 3d6+6, then 4d6+6 etc. Ultimately its frustration will lead it to grow so big it will fill the passage ahead and simply steamroller into and over opponents

*Blunt Damage is per cubic foot of animated limestone

For as long as it can remember it has patrolled these passages. It does not know why it is here, how long it has been here or why, except that it must 'protect something' from 'something else'. In the absence of any more sophisticated thought or memory it manifests to attack and destroy any sentient creature it senses within the lower passages.

The animal inhabitants of the Lower Level are beneath its notice but the arrival of the gargun raised its awareness. It has lurked in the limestone beneath the chambers in which they live waiting for one to stray into its realm. That has not happened since shortly after their arrival, when it tracked and crushed two that were sent to explore the Lower Level.

Prior to that it was only the periodic arrival of a 'gift' that offered it the chance to hunt. Some of those it cor-

nered and crushed or buried but some avoided it by luck and entered the Chamber of the Heart. That is the only chamber of the Lower Level it is unable to enter.

PCs using **Tracking** can conclude that the large piles of limestone rubble located at various places through the tunnels are not natural but have been 'placed' there. At least one rubble pile should reveal a half-buried gargun in an advanced state of decomposition. It was battered to death and the rubble into which the Spirit embodied was left there when it departed for the walls of the passages again. Nearby is another gargun body, this time apparently buried up to its waist in rubble that has crushed it to death.

The Spirit can be a helpful aid in herding a group of PCs that seem set to wander aimlessly through the passages towards the Chamber of the Block by chasing them there!

Corrupted Vegetation

There are small clumps of fern-like and moss-like plants growing where there is sufficient light from above but **Herblore** will suggest they are unlike species living beyond the Hand. Treat them as the tainted water (above) as they are 'unnatural'. A PC would have to eat a lot before they suffered any effects, unless the GM is attracted by an unknown variety of food poisoning or the potential for a 'corrupted' character.

Hand of Crador Lower Level Map A

[8]: A depression in the floor has allowed the murky red water to gather here to a depth of about a foot, and though events in [9] may make PCs suspicious nothing lurks in the depths. It is possible to avoid entering the pool by moving around the edge of the chamber which is open to the sky above.

[9] The entire floor of this large chamber is covered in murky red water that trickles in from the south faster than it leaches out into the limestone floor. Hence it is up to 4 feet deep at the northern end. At the shallow, southern, end a variety of scrubby plants have taken root. If a PC tries **Herblore** while examining them closely then they can conclude that the plants are unhealthy looking and unlike any plant they know. Handling them without gloves, such as during any **Herblore** examination, will reveal that the underside of some of their leaves is coated with a sticky residue. This is a contact poison that slows metabolism, causes drowsiness and ultimately sleep. This particular corruption allows the plants to poison small animals which then drown and provide nutrients for their roots to absorb. Human sized PCs should roll **END x 5 or Condition**:

CS/MS: no effect noticed

MF: tingling and numbness in the fingers for d6 minutes (**FUMBLE** roll at the start of any combat during that time).

CF: immediate **STUMBLE** roll to avoid falling over and then **STUMBLE** and **FUMBLE** every minute and during the every round of any combat engagement during the next d6 minutes due to disorientation.

Disturbing the plants or entering the water will disturb the most dangerous inhabitant of the pool ...

Creature: Giant Roper Snake (20' long)

Str 23	Ag 05	Sml 17	Aur 06	Cml •
Sta 24	Eye 17	Voi •	Wil 10	End 24
Dex 05	Hrg 17	Int 05	Mor •	Mov 10

Skills: AWARENESS 70, CLIMBING 40, STEALTH 30, Tracking 60

Combat Skills: INITIATIVE 65, DODGE 25, Tail Grapple 85

Melee Wpns	Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Grapple	•	•	55	•	•	•	•	4

	Location	B	E	P	F
01 – 15	Head	7	10	10	3
16 – 35	Neck	7	10	10	3
36 – 65	Thorax	7	10	10	3
66 – 85	Abdomen	7	10	10	3
86 – 00	Tail of which there are 6	7	10	10	3

Notes: The snake will rear up in the water so that between 5 & 10 feet of it body is clear of the water.

Tails attack and are attacked separately. Tails have no 'locations' and any G or K result has an Injury x 10% chance of amputating a tail which is the only way to stop them attacking.

d6 Tails can grapple (each with different opponent) each round with the intention of rendering a foe prone and then pulling them beneath the water to drown.

When it has lost 3 tails it will halt attacks and retreat under the surface. Pursuing it will lead it to fight to the 'death'

The giant, corrupted, 'roper' snake is the most recent in many generations of snakes that have been warped so they now reproduce by being cut or bitten in half. At intervals the snake has the instinctive urge to gnaw its tail free of the rest of the body so that a new snake grows.

With each generation they have got bigger and more dangerous until the current occupant – which has eaten all its brothers has reached this remarkable size and lurks waiting for prey worthy of its attention.

Unfortunately the creature is almost un-killable as over the weeks and months ahead all the severed sections will regenerate into a separate snake with the same characteristics as this monster, but smaller. There will then be a vicious battle for supremacy during which one snake will emerge victorious and no longer hungry. For each snake the winner consumes it will grow an extra tail and grow in size.

Once in the passage running south from this chamber the sound of a repeated dull clang of metal on a harder stone than limestone can be heard echoing through the passages, like the bell that is used in time of plague to call for the dead ...

HRGx5 to identify that its source lies off the south edge of Map A on Map C.

Hand of Crador Lower Level Map B

[10] These pinnacles of limestone are particularly riven with cracks and fissures, making them an ideal breeding place for the corrupted lizards of the Lower Level. As a result Lizard encounters in the spaces surrounding these blocks, and the passages connecting them, will have an additional 100 lizards in the swarm: (5d10x10)+100.

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East of this block the sound of a dull clang of metal on stone can be heard echoing through the passages. It resembles nothing so much as the bell that is used in time of plague to call for the dead ...

HRGx5 to identify that its source lies off the east edge of Map B on Map C.

Scene 2: The Heart of Darkness

Overview

The PCs finally find Kutz, or what he has become, and experience at first hand the seductive attraction of the Heart of Darkness.

GM Aims

- To present a suitably exciting, and demanding, climax to the quest.
- To present the PCs with the moral question of whether they should mutilate Kutz in order to 'rescue' him, or just kill him.

PC Outcomes

Survive their encounter with the Heart of Darkness and escape the Hand of Crador, hopefully with Kutz still alive.

Hand of Crador Lower Level Map C

[11] This twisting passage is very wet with a continuous stream of water richer in the red residue than any of the water encountered so far (with the possible exception of the pool at [9]). The passage is particularly constricted through most of its length but is not like the other natural passages the PCs have passed through so far. To the untutored eye it appears as if tools were used to open up natural cracks and fissures in the rock. **Mineralogy** or **Engineering** skills will confirm that the passage has been enlarged from natural fissures that wound through the limestone. Additional successes will suggest that this is a very ancient tunnel – older than any the manmade excavations they may have found on the Ground Level of the Hand.

All the passages they have moved through so far (with the exception of the man made passage and chamber at [7]) have followed the weak interfaces where the vast blocks of limestone constituting the Hand meet. Here a natural fissure has been excavated *within* a limestone block itself. The PCs may not want to think about the fact that when they enter this passage they move under a block of limestone 100 ft across and nearly 200 feet high!

The Spirit of Earth will never pursue the PCs beyond the first constriction in the tunnel, though it may lurk here waiting for them ...

The second constriction before they reach [13] is where a fall of rock has partially blocked the passage and PCs must clamber over the top of the fall through the small gap near the ceiling. Less agile PCs may have to strip off their clothes and equipment to get through the gap.

The sound of metal striking stone is much louder when anyone listens at the top of the fall.

[12] At this point the original fissure went almost vertically up by 5 feet and the same is true of the passage formed from that original crack in the rock. Any PC putting their head above that rise will hear that the clanging sound is now very close. A PC clambering up this rise will see a dull reddish glow as if from the embers of a fire leaking from

around the corner. **Awareness** will give the clear impression that either a shadow is moving against the glow or that the glow is pulsing rhythmically, almost in time with the sound of metal on stone.

[13] This ancient, but manmade, chamber is the home of The Heart of Darkness. The chamber is rough hewn and between 15 and 20 feet across and about 10ft high.

At its centre sits what appears to be a stalagmite which is more than 5 feet across at its base and reaches 8 feet up

towards the ceiling. Milky water is dripping very slowly down from the ceiling so the column sits in a shallow pool of milky water deeply tinged with red, which trickles out past [12] and through [11] into the passages beyond.

On the far side of the stalagmite a tall, well built figure kneels next to the base of the column, striking it with a broken short sword.



Coln of Kutz

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If the PCs have kept a careful map...

If they found the chamber of the Spirit of Water on the Ground Level then they may be able to work out that they are almost directly beneath it.

The water dripping onto the stalagmite, and responsible for creating it comes from the Spirit of Water above.

If the PCs pay particular attention to the stalagmite..

Initially they may believe that the wet limestone of the stalagmite is reflecting back the orange light of their torch or lantern. However the base of the limestone column is emitting a sickly red glow that casts eerie shadows onto the white limestone walls. That glow is pulsing and outlines a roughly conical shape encased within the limestone.

Also encased, or partially encased, in the limestone are the outlines of a confused jumble of human forms, apparently embracing the flickering light source within. It is as if they have sought to warm themselves by embracing the pulsing flame that is the Heart of Darkness.

Awareness shows that around the base of the stalagmite are pieces of cloth and what look like the mineralised legs of a small kneeling human. They are gradually being encased in limestone as it precipitates out of the water dripping down from above. A little further around the base the mineralised hand of a child can be seen still clutching what appears to be a string of bones.

These mineralised limbs are partially immersed in the pool of water around the base of the stalagmite. However they are clearly rusty red in colour; as if the glow within has infused them with some red mineral.

There are no ghosts here.

The spirits of those 'gifts' that succeeded in reaching this chamber have been entirely consumed by the Heart of Darkness.

If the PCs pay particular attention to the floor...

The floor is slick with water flowing from the ceiling and down the sides of the stalagmite. The water pools at the base of the stalagmite and then flows across the floor of the chamber and out through the passage that brought the PCs here. It is rich in the red mineral they have been following to its source – the mineralised bodies of the gifts of sacrifice that have embraced the Heart over the centuries.

If the PCs pay particular attention to the figure...

The sound issuing from the chamber is made by a broken sword blade striking the column. The sword blade is wielded by a giant of a man. He has a bald head and a mass of red facial hair. He conforms to the descriptions the PCs have been given of Coln Kutz, though in the pulsing red glow of the Heart his features have a haggard, tortured, almost manic, caste.

He does not notice the PCs or react to their appearance as they enter the chamber but continues to strike at the Heart. He kneels beside the column of limestone with his

left arm braced as if to keep as much distance between himself and the Heart while he strikes at it with his right.

Name: Coln of Kutz				Race/Sex: Human/Male					
Occupation: Mercenary				Born: 19 Savor 684, Tai					
Appearance: Aged 36, Height 6' 2", medium frame, weight 180 lbs/size 7, attractive appearance, dark complexion, bald, but rich red beard, blue eyes									
Str	14	Agl	11	Sml	13	Aur	00	Cml	14
Sta	10	Eye	12	Voi	08	Wil	05	End	10
Dex	13	Hrg	15	Int	02	Mor	00	Mov	11
Medical/Psyche: he appears to be a mindless automaton									
Religion: <i>Ritual</i> 00, <i>Piety</i> 0									
Skills: none									
Languages: none									
Scripts: none									
Combat Skills: none									
Money/Valuables: nothing but what he stands up in									
Armour/Weapons: broken shortsword; cloth shirt, leather tunic, leggings and shoes of Kuboran make									
Other Equipment: none									
Load: 24.3 lbs				Encumbrance: 0					
Melee Wpns		Wt	WQ	AML	DML	HM	B	E	P
Hand/Arm		•	•	0	0	•	0	•	•
Foot/Knee		•	•	0	0	•	1	•	•
Head butt		•	•	0	0	•	1	•	•
Shortsword		2	12	0	0	•	0	5	4
Missile Wpns		AML	Short (0)	Med (-40)	Long (-60)	Ext (-80)			
•		•	•	•	•	•			
Location		Armour Layers		AQ	B	E	P	F	
Skull		•		•	•	•	•	•	
Face		•		•	•	•	•	•	
Neck		•		•	•	•	•	•	
Shoulder		C L		+0	2	4	3	4	
Upper Arm		C L		+0	2	4	3	4	
Elbow		C		+0	1	1	1	1	
Forearm		C		+0	1	1	1	1	
Hand		•		•	•	•	•	•	
Thorax		C L		+0	2	4	3	4	
Abdomen		C L		+0	2	4	3	4	
Hip		C L L		+0	2	5	3	5	
Groin		C L L		+0	2	5	3	5	
Thigh		L L		+0	2	5	3	5	
Knee		L		+0	1	3	2	3	
Calf		L		+0	1	3	2	3	
Foot		L		+0	1	3	2	3	
Invocations: none									
Convocations: none									
Spells: none									
Psionics: none									
Notes: Acurdin would									

If the PCs examine him or seek to communicate with him...

His left hand appears to have 'sunk' into the limestone and his forearm is mineralised like the bodies of those that have embraced the Heart. There is an angry glowing line, flickering with the same light as the Heart, coursing up and down what was a long scar running from wrist to elbow.

Kutz is unable to communicate; his conscious mind is gone. Only the instinct of an incredibly stubborn personality is keeping his sword arm moving. He is emaciated from the several weeks he has been here but not near death; the Heart sustains him while it consumes him. Only his iron will kept the Heart at bay when it first reached out to him.

If the PCs have encountered one or two other Spirits they might conclude that this is a Spirit of Fire. This is as reasonable a conclusion as it is possible to make, though wrong. Those that set the Spirits to guard the Block knew better than to seek to use fire to confine what appears to be an elemental fire of some kind.

The PCs have several possible courses of action...

- Walk away – the hope has to be that the PCs tribulations to date will make this inconceivable. As an incentive, if the PCs do leave without Kutz they should find the Spirit of Earth outside the chamber waiting for them. It will drive them back into the passage to the Chamber but will not advance [4].
- Kill Kutz where he stands – this would fit within their terms of reference but has consequences (see below) and they still have to get at least his head out as proof. There is at least a hope that if they could free him from the Heart he could walk out under his own power.
- Wrestle him free from the column – grappling the body of Kutz while he seeks to destroy the Heart with his broken sword is not difficult but no matter what strength the PCs bring to bare (and 3 of them can gain a hold on him at any one time) they will make no progress. His hand is not simply resting on the block but been merged with it, his flesh being consumed alongside his spirit by the Heart.
- Cut him free of the Block by severing his forearm - this is allowed within their terms of reference. The target is inert and his forearm does not yet have the resilience to damage of the limestone or the Heart within so it will not be difficult to achieve this with an edged weapon. A PC should be allowed to strike the arm below the point at which it has begun to atrophy to stone unless they **CF**. If they aim higher and take his arm off above the elbow then he will need rapid medical attention if he is not to bleed to death.
- Attack the Heart themselves – they can attempt this but looking at the progress Kutz has made they might judge this an unlikely route to success. They would be right in this judgement. The other half of his sword blade lies at his feet (*Weaponcraft* will show it to be of good quality). While he has successfully hacked a deep notch in the limestone it is making no impression on the beating Heart within. The Heart should be considered immune to physical attack, even if its coat of limestone and atrophied bodies could be prized away from it. However any attack on it will raise its awareness of the PCs.

It would be better for subsequent adventures in this series if Kutz can be brought from the Hand alive.

If the PCs either:

- **attack the limestone column;**
- **add their attacks to the notch Kutz has already cut;**
- **kill Kutz;**

- **severe his left arm to free him; or**
- **deliberately touch the stalagmite or seek to make mental contact of any kind with what beats within ...**

The Heart will become aware of them. Its attention is not something to encourage as once its attention is drawn to the PCs it will begin to exert its influence on them, pulsing more rapidly as it does so.

It is capable of **Mental Conflicts** (EML 90% - 5% per additional target) against anyone within the Chamber (but not outside it in the passage) every combat round. If any character loses the Mental Conflict then instead of their spirit being 'evicted' from their body the victim stops what they are doing and moves towards the Heart with their hands stretched out towards it. It is a tribute to Kutz that he remained strong enough to continue his attacks on the Heart with one hand while the other was consumed. Now his actions are purely mechanical and lacking in higher, rational, functions; those were first things the Heart consumed.

If a PC's flesh contacts the column...

It takes a single combat round for a character to stumble into contact with the column of limestone and the Heart within. If they have no other exposed flesh then they will lay their cheek against it. If they have no exposed skin then they will begin to tear at their clothes or discard their full helm to expose their flesh. This buys another combat round before contact is made.

As soon as their flesh makes contact with the column then the Heart will attempt a **second Mental Combat which the PC must resist or embrace the column and begin being consumed by it**. Embracing the Heart means there comes a vision of what they are embracing that offers them a last shocked opportunity to force themselves away from it.

If the victim asks about what they have seen...

They are so shocked by the 'vision' that they cannot bear to think of it again. Instead ... **Roll d%:**

- $\leq 1 \times \text{WIL}$ the shock has been such that they have managed to brace themselves so that only one hand is in contact with the Heart (like Kutz);
- $\leq 2 \times \text{WIL}$ they can use both arms to brace themselves dropping anything in their hands to do so;
- Any other roll and they ignore their 'vision' and embrace the Heart.

If the bracing hand(s) is/are gloved...

The character can continue to hold themselves away from the Heart (and delay its effects) until their strength gives out. Each combat round costs 1 Fatigue and the GM should use the 'Lifting' rules to determine if they can keep their own weight away from the Heart. It is almost as if gravity is drawing them towards it.

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Once flesh contacts the limestone and the Heart within the character begins to lose a characteristic point from INT, AUR, WIL and MORALITY, in sequence, every minute they remain in contact (e.g. after 1 minute they lose 1 INT; after the 2nd minute they lose 1 AUR, etc.). These points are lost permanently.

If they have successfully braced themselves with two hands this loss is every 2 minutes; if they have braced themselves so that only one hand is in contact then the loss is every 4 minutes.

Once a character's INT reaches zero they will remain braced against the column (frozen, like Kutz).

Once a character's AUR reaches zero then their body will begin to mineralise. Mineralization spreads from points of skin contact and takes a number of weeks equal to weight in pounds/10.

Hopefully other PCs will see what is happening long before this and intervene to save their comrade.

If other PCs try to restrain the victim...

The stumbling character can be wrestled to the ground by other PCs with *Grappling against Ignore* to stop them reaching the Heart, but as more PCs succumb to the Hearts Mental Conflict attacks there will be fewer and fewer left to save their friends! The PCs should quickly realise that they are in a game with sharply diminishing returns.

The GM should not allow the PCs time to discuss their options at this point but should demand that they act in real time, rolling repeatedly for Mental Combat. This should ramp up the pace and the panic but also help them realise that they cannot stay here and survive for long. They must ACT!

The GM can pause to lay out their options again (above) but then remorselessly press them to ACT, rather than 'plan'!

If they run for it...

Casting a last look at the Heart as they leave they will see the glow within resolve into flames that, for a moment, take on the shape of inhuman faces with maws, lined with teeth, open and thrusting towards the PCs in search of their life force.

If Kutz is dead when they leave...

As well as the inhuman faces above, any wound inflicted on him appears to take fire, channelling flames from the Heart into the chamber.

If Kutz is not dead when they leave...

As well as the inhuman faces above, the scar on his left forearm takes fire, channelling flames from the Heart into the chamber.

If they have severed his arm to save Kutz...

As well as the inhuman faces above, the scar the blood spray from the severed limb seems to take fire as it leaves his body, channelling flames from the Heart into the chamber.

If the PCs remain to investigate these events...

The Heart begins to exert its influence on them again and the flames they saw evaporate into the air. Whether they have left anything behind is another question ...

EPILOGUE

The GM can make the PCs fight their way out of the Hand of Crador and back to civilisation. If so it is important to note that the Spirit of Earth, and any corrupted creatures will instinctively shy away from a living Kutz. Alternatively the PCs can leave the Hand and recover in the tunnel that brought them to the Place of the Hand.

As night falls they will see the Hand cloaked in the palest flicker of red luminescence; making the Hand seem to writhe as if trying to free itself from the ground. Alas that freedom will not come this day ...

The Reaction of the Denal

The Denal have posted scouts near 'The Leave Taking':

If the PCs arrive there with Kutz, or are willing to show the Denal evidence of his death...

The Denal will assume that the 'Outsiders' have defeated their champion and stopped him in his mission. They will do all they can to earn the PC's favour. They will be cared for and over the next days and weeks they, and Kutz, will heal. Finally the Denal will take the PCs and Kutz back to the cataract and send them back down river.

News will slowly filter across Peran that 'Crador will not rest' and a degree of stability will return to the frontier. Den Hapra will refuse to accompany his old master down river if he survived, he is hopelessly addicted to the narcotics the Denal have fed him and cannot conceive of travelling away from their source.

If the PCs arrive without Kutz or are unwilling to share evidence of his death...

The Denal will assume that the 'Outsiders' have failed in their effort to defeat their champion and that he continues in his quest to bring Crador some rest. The PCs will be treated as defeated foes: stripped of everything of value they possess and then dumped at the head of the cataract to make their way on foot back to civilisation.

Meanwhile the Denal will wait for a sign that the Kutz has succeeded in his task and the frontier will remain tense.

If the PCs return to Gomas Straight Arrow...

He will listen silently to their tale and then wish them well saying that 'the gods make their own paths which we must follow'. Their efforts have earned his respect and he will offer them the opportunity to recover before sending them back to Quyn. This is when 'The Watcher' scene can be played if it was not used on the upstream journey and the GM wants a hook to take the PCs to Bedenes.

If they brought Kutz out or have proof that they killed him...

Gomas is relieved that the rumours that Crador will rest will now cease and offers the PCs his friendship, something he does not give lightly to southrons. Whenever they find themselves in need of his help he will seek to provide it.

The Fate of Kutz

If Kutz survives (and it will be better for subsequent adventures if he does) he remains as empty eyed as he was within the chamber. His mind appears to have been entirely consumed by the Heart of Darkness. Occasionally he seems animated during dreams but the rest of the time he stands or sits where he is left. If food is put in his hand and it is pushed to his mouth he mechanically stuffs it into his mouth, chewing and swallowing without expression.

Delivering Kutz to Jamys at the White Stoat will lead to the reward the PC were promised, though Jamys is clearly unnerved by the condition of Coln of Kutz. Jamys will discretely deliver the mercenary to the Caer and be glad to be rid of him.

The Effect of any 'Vision' of the Heart

Any PC that touched the Heart will wake nightly for a week and then weekly for a month from a disjointed nightmare. The nightmare will repeat more irregularly after that. Over time certain aspects of the dream begin to stick in the PC's mind:

The PC is looking outwards into a maelstrom of circling ragged and tattered spirits, each with the appearance of a gaping maw full of angry teeth. Beyond the whirlwind of spirits is a fiery wilderness in which the land, the sky and the very air seems to burn with an intense heat that threatens to melt the character's eyeballs.

One of the foul creatures of the maelstrom has locked its teeth onto whichever limb was in contact with the Heart and seems to be sucking out their very essence.

As they wake sweating, and possibly screaming, they have a single abiding emotional sensation: spiteful hate.

So ends the PCs journey into *Peran: Heart of Darkness* ... Will they brave *Golotha: The Deeper Dark*?

PC Benefits and Potential Plot Hooks

- PCs should open Old Jarinese &/or Folklore (Kubora) as a bonus to any other skill development.
- A sufficiently talented PCs could spend some time recording their memory of the journey onto a Poetic Map of the River Denia and the marshes beyond. The GM should secretly roll the **Drawing** skill check and note the level of success which can be used as a reflection of the map's accuracy and the effect on the journey of a buyer who uses it to avoid getting lost:

CS: only 30% chance of getting lost while following it;

MS: 60% chance of getting lost;

MF: 90% chance of getting lost;

CF: certain to get lost and have difficulty finding their way back to civilisation until they tear the damn thing up!

- The PCs will be offered a period employment by Jamys (at the urging of the Earl) so that he can keep an eye on them. The Caer is not keen to have what has happened to Kutz circulating freely.
- The White Stoat is an excellent base for further adventures in North West Rethem which could involve the political tensions between the Earl and the Crown; work raiding the Earl of Ithiko; or further missions into the Peran wilderness, including a journey to the Kuboran Moot at Kustan. Alternatively Jamys may want to use them as deniable Lia-Kavair muscle in his 'relations' with neighbouring guildmasters.
- The PCs may hear rumours that information about Peran and the Kubora can be sold to a scribe based somewhere in Emesa Hundred.
- They may help Gedis find his parents if they work out that the boy was confined in Bedenes. While the Earl will not move openly against the Warriors of Mameka on his northern flank he might not be too upset to see them distracted.
- The Earl might also pay for accurate information from Emesa and bedenes, while Jamys might want couriers for the agents he has recently sent north.
- The reputation the PCs will now have among the Asawne and Denal Kubora may mean other tribes come to them for help, or as allies.

DESIGNER NOTES

The name 'Coln of Kutz' often keys players into the Coppola and then the original Conrad. *Apocalypse Now* can help with the sense of isolation of 'civilised' characters in a wilderness environment. Equally the spirit of *Deliverance* is alive and well among the Denal Kubora where the discordant tones of a 'String Drum' can be achieved with a banjo.

The GM should not be afraid of using the atmosphere of these films to enhance the game.

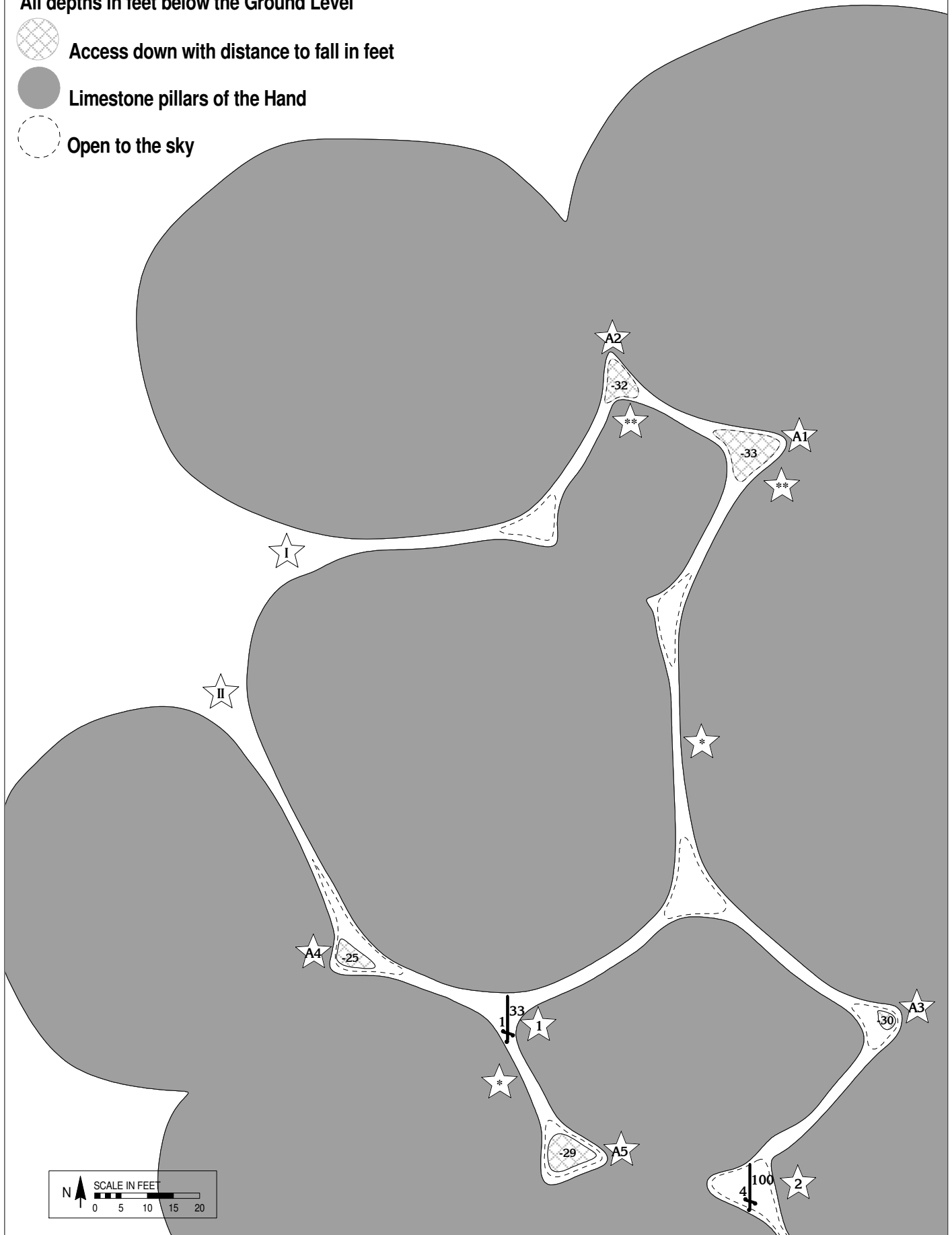
GM MAP



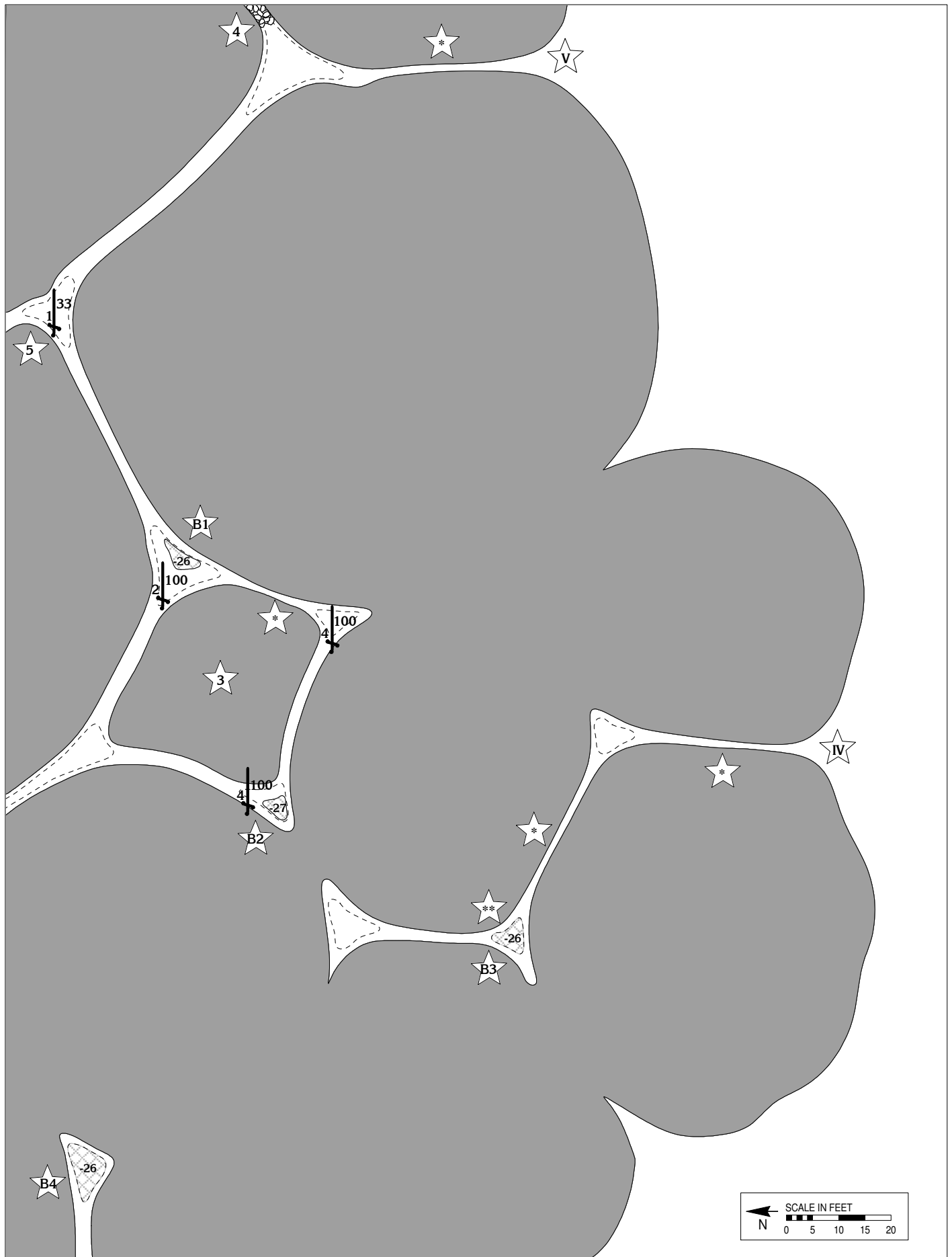
Access down with distance to fall in feet

 **Limestone pillars of the Hand**

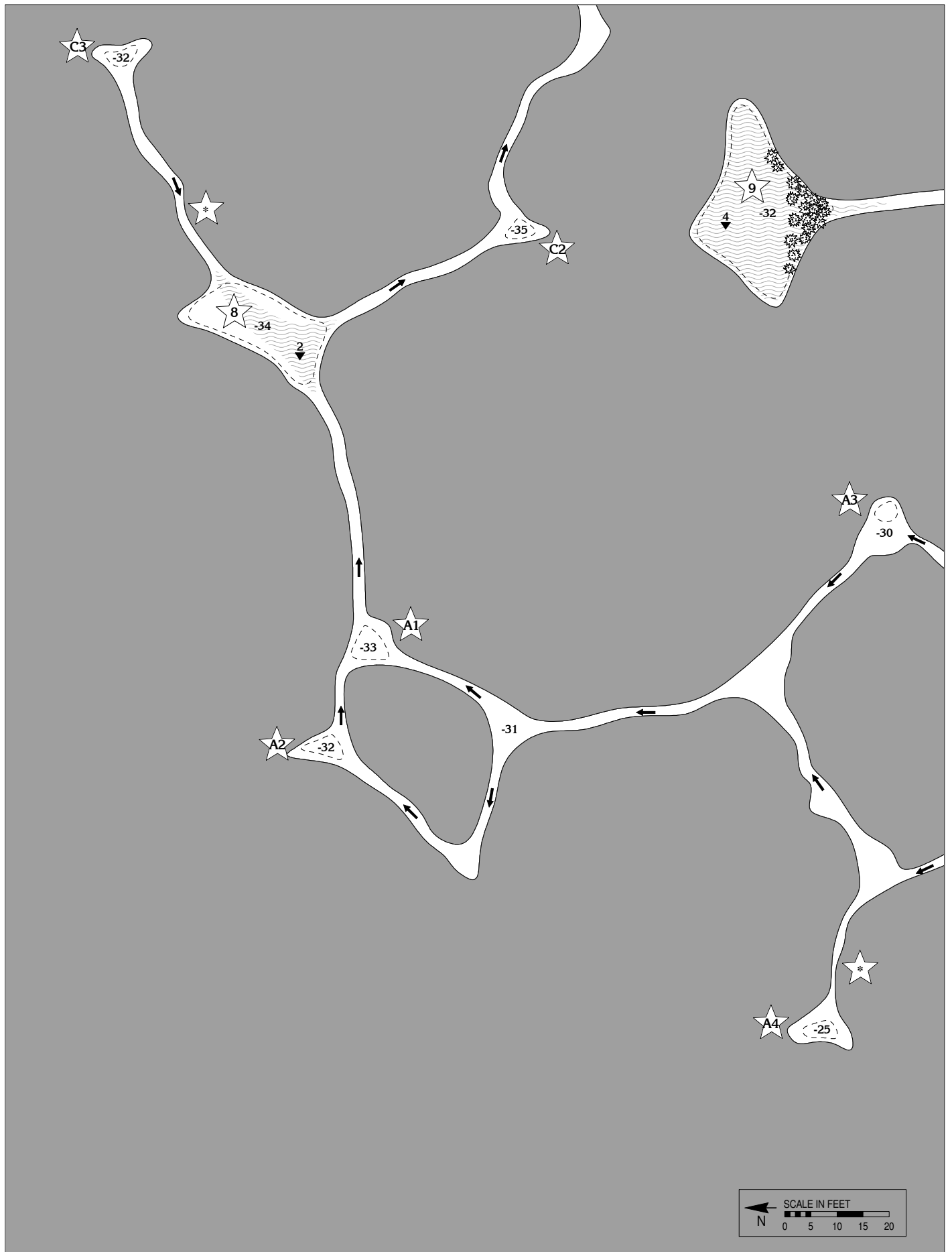
 **Open to the sky**

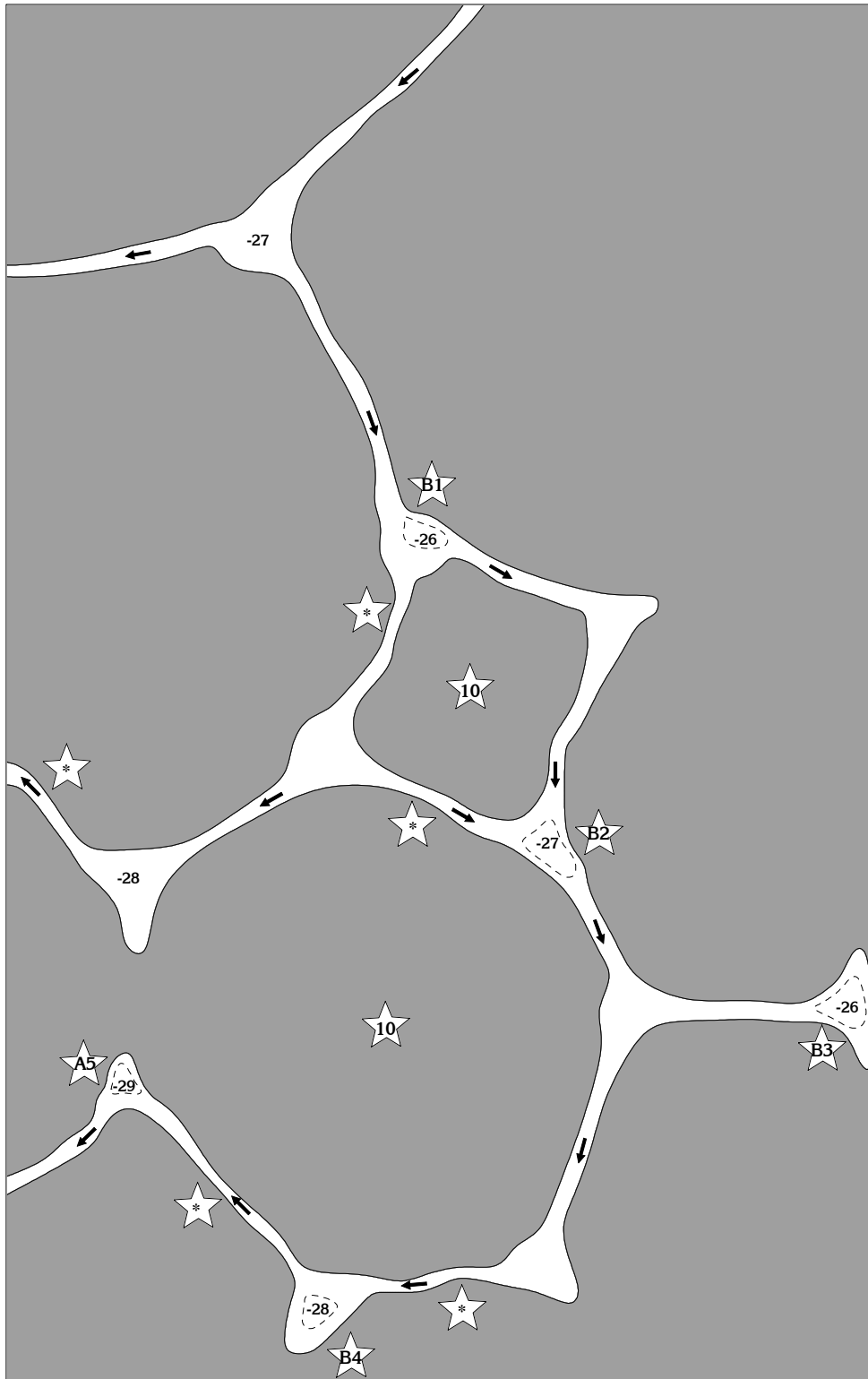


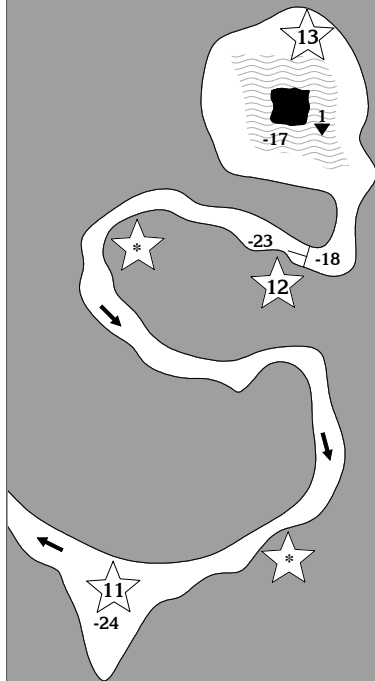
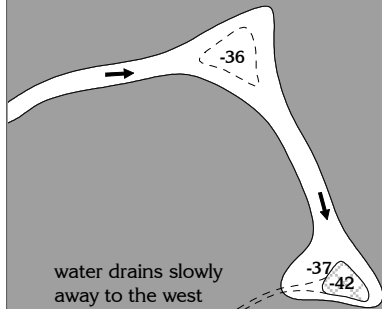
GM MAP











HAND of CRADOR Ground Level A

COMMON MAP

All depths in feet below the Ground Level



Access down with distance to fall in feet



Limestone pillars of the Hand



Open to the sky

