

XAMOXIS' CLEANSING

A FANTASY SCENARIO FOR MYTHRAS BY DARVIN MARTIN



Mythras

THE DESIGN
MECHANISM

XAMOXIS' CLEANSING

A MYTHRAS ADVENTURE

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Mythras



Pulled into the conflict, the characters must decide how they can retrieve the artefact from inside the temple and who (if anyone) they offer it to once claimed.

BACKGROUND

Before the founding of Meeros the Skotadi lived in the land, a powerful cult of sorcerer priests worshipping the Invader Gods. Xamoxis of Skotados was a Skotadi sorcerer renowned for his creation of magical artefacts. After naiads on the Amaranth River drowned his wife, Xamoxis dedicated all his magical power to the mastery of water. To this end, Xamoxis seduced a willful naiad named Scylla, a local spirit worshiped by the Madakeen. After gaining her trust, the sorcerer bound and ravaged the water goddess, stealing a large portion of her power. When she fled, the sorcerer cursed Scylla so that she could never again walk on land, and then buried her deep under the pitiless earth.

Harnessing the stolen magic, Xamoxis of Skotados created a powerful artefact able to dominate water in all its forms, including those of water elementals. When the Madakeen attacked Xamoxis of Skotados to avenge their betrayed goddess, he obliterated the tribe, leaving only a handful of survivors to escape his wrath. The Madakeen fled deep into the wetlands where they built a large settlement. Later, the panthotours summoned a mighty river spirit to raise a huge crag of limestone out of the Amaranth upon which they constructed a temple to Scylla. There the Madakeen sacrificed any Skotadi they captured, intending that the spirits of their victims would feed the naiad wherever she lay in the earth's darkness. Though they spilled blood for many seasons within her temple, Scylla remained hidden from them in her torpor.

When dread Sariniya destroyed the Invader Gods and their faithful Skotadi worshipers, Xamoxis was among those eradicated from the world; the Madakeen, who found and seized Xamoxis' Cleansing, plundered his magical vaults and mansions. Unable to destroy the potent artefact, the Panthotours placed it within their temple to Scylla as an offering. With the passing of many years, the worship of Scylla faded until new, younger spirits replaced her in the prayer songs of the Madakeen; stories about Xamoxis' Cleansing became half-remembered legends.

When settlers from Meeros first arrived in the region, the overgrown shrine came to be known as the Flooded Temple because of its deadly past: a fabled ruin, many tried to uncover its secrets and failed to return. Even among the Scarlet Spears it became considered a death trap. Long avoided by local folk because of its fearsome reputation, recent events are once again bringing attention to the ruin and its secrets.

A year or so ago mercenaries killed a band of pirates disrupting trade around Tithys. Among the captured loot was an ancient map written in an unknown language; their captain copied the map then sold the original to the Matriarch of the Kalos family, their patroness. Dianthe, an accomplished scholar, recognised the magical Skotadi writing covering the stone tablet and spent much time translating it; although damaged by time, the tablet revealed information about a Skotadi artefact called *Xamoxis' Cleansing*, hidden inside the Flooded Temple. Knowing the wealth and power it could bring her family, she started planning for the artefact's immediate acquisition; however, Dianthe also believes that the vessel could help her prolong her own life, something the Kalos matriarch deeply covets.

THE PANTHER UNDERWATER

Scylla is revered by the panthotours of the region, and is known as the She-Cat Underwater. She manifests to both human and panthotour races, always adopting an appropriate form when she does so. To her panthotour worshippers, Scylla manifests as a female panthotour with a pair of bull-like horns, fish scales across her belly, and an exceptionally long, prehensile tail.

Scylla is related to the sun god, Ra-Arra, and the rain goddess As-ashi; in human myths her origin is somewhat different, but the mythologies of this region are complex and deeply interwoven.

MARKS AND THE KATHAROS

The Kalos family is handing out marks for mercantile activities on the Amaranth River between Tithys and Meeros. Restrictions imposed by Queen Herothos of Meeros mean they are at a very high premium and, to earn a letter of mark, the noble family requires specific services. For Dianthe this is an ideal way to hire the right people for her task: skilled adventurers who can work fast and discreetly under contract to procure the artefact and keep silent while doing it. While Dianthe has been scheming in Tithys, other powers are stirring in the area.

Zeph, one of the mercenaries contracted by Dianthe, is a secret member of the Katharos; after murdering his captain, he gave the copied map to Sa-Aba. After much study and expense, Sa-Aba learned the secrets of the map. Desperate to possess Xamoxis' Cleansing for his cult, the shaman rallied his followers and trekked upriver, seeking its hiding place. Sa-Aba stumbled upon the Madakeen village and, deciding to offer them as sacrifices Sariniya, attacked the Panthotours in a religious fervor. During the battle several Madakeen were slain before the Katharos were pushed back; among the dead Madakeen was the wife of the *effaga*, Fire Eyes. Seeking revenge, Fire Eyes took his son and a band of warriors to track and kill the Katharos; it wasn't long before they caught up to them at the Flooded Temple.

After another bloody battle, the Katharos retreated into the shrine and barricaded the doors; outside, the Madakeen settled in for a long wait, determined to avenge their dead with the destruction of the cult. Finally succumbing to a wound delivered by Sa-Aba's poisoned sword, Fire Eyes fell ill with delirium. Torn between revenge and curing his father, White Leg has been searching futilely for anything that can save him from madness. Consumed with fear over Fire Eye's rapidly deteriorating mind, the Madakeen are in a desperate race against time and prepared to do anything to save their *effaga*.

In the wetlands to the south of the temple, Scylla has awoken from her centuries long torpor and called to the spirits of the river valley. What they tell her is troublesome: Xamoxis of Skotados was destroyed long ago, but the object of her enslavement—Xamoxis' Cleansing—now lies within an ancient temple to the north. The Madakeen, who have trapped the Katharos inside the temple, also seek the artefact; Dianthe Kalos has discovered a map leading to it and is hiring adventurers to seek it out. Still cursed and unable to walk on land, Scylla bides her time, waiting for a moment when she can ally with the only people that may be able to get Xamoxis' Cleansing, restore her power, and end her curse—the characters.

TITHYS

Tithys (pronounced TIE-*theez*) is a small city clinging to the western bank of the Amaranth River about three days by barge northeast of Meeros. In an uprising a hundred years ago, its corrupt and brutal king, a distant relation of the Meerish royal family, was deposed and drowned in the river. The merchants who controlled much of the river trade, and hence Tithys' wealth, assumed governance and for a decade or so, life was good. Tithys prospered, relations improved with Meeros, and there was much rejoicing.

But inevitably corruption returned to the city. The Kalos family, a clan with high ambitions and low scruples, was forced out of Meeros almost at sword point and forced to travel upriver. Its considerable assets in Meeros were seized by the crown, but the Kalos family still had enough cash and cachet to establish themselves elsewhere. Tithys was the natural base; here, Kalos could be the biggest fish in a smaller pond and it quickly began to engineer alliances with the indigenous families cemented by marriages and sealed with monetary deals. Despite being disgraced in Meeros, Kalos quickly moved to show that it was a victim of an oppressive regime in the old city-state, and that Tithys needed to build its strength and reserves to fend-off unwanted Meerish attentions. The ploy worked. The Tithys merchants forged new markets to the north and west, even trading with the hated Badoshi. Kalos capitalized on these new liaisons, and as money began to flow into the river port, Kalos grew richer than it had ever been in Meeros.

These days, Tithys is firmly under Kalos's control. Smaller families are mere extensions of the Kalos name. Mercenaries are employed on a regular basis to protect Kalosian interests and to enforce family policy. Corruption is a way of life, a blind eye is turned to things deemed illegal downriver, and Tithys has become a distant, though troublesome thorn in Meeros' hoof.

ABOUT XAMOXIS' CLEANSING

The Cleansing is a large, finely-crafted silver bowl worked with superbly detailed sea serpents and crashing waves around its outer rim. Seven inverted triangles of inlaid pearl decorate the sides. The artefact shimmers with iridescent blue and green light and smells strongly of fish, mud, and summer-baked river plants.

CULTS AND BROTHERHOODS

While there are no Cults or Brotherhoods directly connected to the artefact, those dedicated to the pursuit of sorcery will do almost anything to possess it. Animist cults connected to water spirits are offended by the artefact and want to destroy it.

POWERS

Most of the artefact's secrets have been lost to time but it remains a potent relic. Xamoxis' Cleansing is sentient and has a Willpower of 60%; using each of its Powers requires an Opposed Willpower roll to dominate it. Failing this, the artefact lashes out, draining 1d6 Magic Points and 1d4 Hit Points from every Hit Location.

The possessor must be holding the artefact with both hands to use any of the listed powers. Casting spells drains Magic Points from

the artefact only; once the Magic Pool in Xamoxis' Cleansing is depleted, it must be refilled for characters to use any of its powers.

Whoever wields Xamoxis' Cleansing can draw upon the powers of the naiads imprisoned within (see page XX). Each call upon a power automatically succeeds and costs the user only 1 Magic Point. If this was not bad enough, any water spirit or elemental touched by the bowl must resist the user in an opposed test of Willpower. Failure results in the spirit being absorbed into the bowl, their previous existence erased from all knowledge.

The powers are:

- ⌘ Magically cure *any* poison or disease
- ⌘ Confer on the recipient the ability to breathe water for a year and a day
- ⌘ Confer on the recipient the service of an Intensity 2 Water Elemental once per month for a year and a day
- ⌘ Confer on the recipient an additional 1d10 years of life

Destroying the bowl requires a highly dangerous spirit quest to the spirit world to cut down the sardonic and seductive waterlogged cadaver of Xamoxis of Skotados in his flooded pleasure palace. Once the restless spirit is slain, the bowl can be shattered to free the naiads within. Such an event will have tremendous consequences, the predominant being to change every seasonal tributary to a flowing river year round. This in turn will raise the depth of the Amaranth River by at least half a dozen metres, permanently swamping many farms and settlements along its entire length. Whilst the return of water might aid the survival of the local settlement, it will have a significantly detrimental effect on many others, making fording the river almost impossible.

VALUE

At the very least 100,000 Silver Pieces; whomever holds the Cleansing potentially has an effective stranglehold over all river traffic and the inundations of the Amaranth River.

USING THE SCENARIO

Xamoxis' Cleansing is an adventure for experienced Mythras characters that have a good mixture of skills related to survival, exploration, and magic. Having at least one animist in the group will be an advantage, but magic of any kind will be useful.

Games Masters should spend time reviewing the rules on Animism (Mythras, pages 130—153), as there are a number of spirits and spirit combat encounters in this scenario.

The Madakeen are a pride of panthotours: combat against them is dangerous and characters can easily be killed by one of the panther folk. The Madakeen are largely isolationists who don't trust humanity—especially now that Sa-Aba has attacked their village and killed several of their number; winning them over is difficult, but the tribal warriors make tough allies in the fight against the cult.

For the purposes of this adventure, assume the characters have been adventuring together for some time (1d10 months) and all come from outside Tithys. They have come to town seeking their fame and fortune; although individual motivations may differ, everyone is responding to a recent declaration made by the Kalos noble family.

Always concerned with finding new ways to make more silver, the Kalos family is handing out trading rights and marks for

mercantile activities on the Amaranth between Tithys and Meeros. Restrictions imposed by Queen Herothos of Meeros, however, mean they are at a very high premium and, to earn a letter of mark the noble family requires specific services. Rumors say many of these “services” involve dangerous adventures ranging the length of the river valley and beyond.

There are a large number of reasons why the characters might be inspired to pursue the Kalos family’s offer; Games Masters and players should work together to create these motivations.

ALTERNATE LOCATIONS

While set in (or close to) Meeros, *Xamoxis’ Cleansing* can easily be placed in other areas. Below are suggestions for Thennla and The Realm.

THENNLA

If using Thennla (as detailed in *Shores of Korantia* and *The Taskan Empire*), we would recommend making Meeros into Mersin, and Tithys a Korantine Small City colony keen to escape Mersin’s influence. The Kalos family hail from Assabia, and the Katharos are themselves an ancient Thennalt cult of bandit-assassins, worshipping the demoness Sariniya.

The panthotaur Madakeen are sorcerous creations, originally created by ancestors of Sa-Aba as slaves, magically uplifted from the big cats of the remote hills. The Madakeen live a solitary existence away from humans on the Amaranth River that flows south west to the Mersin estuary. More information can be found in ‘Searching for Anathaym?’ on page 30 of *Shores of Korantia*.

THE REALM

If one prefers to use The Realm from *Book of Quests*, then Tithys is Torin, located on the Southvale River east of Senholm. The Katharos and Sa-Aba are a Chaos Mother cult affiliated with Jedakiah, and possibly serving him. The panthotaur migrated to the region a century ago after suffering persecution in territorial lands somewhere east of the Forest of Sorrows. Scylla is a bitter daughter of Feyr the weeping goddess, born from her mother’s tear where it touched the world and formed the Southvale River.

ENGAGEMENT IN TITHYS

The characters arrive in Tithys on the eve of the Festival of Tides. On this day, Tithyans celebrate the life-giving waters and bounty of the Amaranth River with games, feasts, and singing. While the spirits inhabiting the river and surrounding wetlands seldom respond to these celebrations visibly, the festival is very popular and always draws large crowds to town, bringing even larger purses filled with silver.

The warm, breezy day is overshadowed by gathering rain clouds and the sound of thunder is a distant echo over the river valley. Tithys is merry with preparations for the coming festival; vendors sell honeyed water from stalls, fishermen sing paeans to the river from the docks, and children wearing fish masks made from reeds play loudly in the streets.

Adventurers interested in working for the Kalos family should present themselves to Dianthe Kalos, the family Matriarch, by midday. The characters find the Kalos family manor with relative ease: a large, domed building made of marble lying north of the market.

GAMES MASTER NOTE

This is an opportunity for players to interact with a diverse range of Non-Player Characters while everyone waits for a chance at winning their fortune. Players could use their social skills (Influence, Customs, Courtesy, Deceit, etc.) to do a number of things: recruit some help to round out the party, gather information about the region, discourage the competition, etc.

Its blue-tiled walls rise above the single-storied homes and shops of Tithys, decorated with statues of Kalos patricians and patrolled by heavily armed mercenaries. As one of the only marble buildings in Tithys, the manor is well-known and easily recognised.

When they arrive, a group of 2d6+3 hard-edged men and women have already gathered around the main doors. The crowd is packed with a motley assortment of warriors, fishers, hunters, sailors, and scouts. Characters making a Hard Perception roll notice a man standing near the crowd who appears to be studying everyone very closely, as if seeking something; unremarkable and dressed in muddy traveller’s garb, the man is hard to pay attention to and unless characters make a Formidable Willpower roll they completely overlook and discount him almost immediately. This is Xitos the Hound, a sly merchant, and he is indeed gathering information while using Incognito to remain generally ignored by everyone. Xitos’ cover is that of a recently freed slave from Meeros seeking his fortune in the world.

The mercenaries guarding the main door are expecting a large number of visitors throughout the day so the characters’ arrival is not a surprise; still, they question them closely about their business with the Kalos family and it requires a Standard Influence or an Easy Courtesy roll to gain entry. Characters behaving rudely or arrogantly find their skill rolls are one grade harder, and any hostile acts are met with immediate violence.

MEETING DIANTHE KALOS

Once it is their turn, Noori—Dianthes’ personal slave—comes to escort the characters into the Trade House. Dressed in fine linens and wearing a gold slave collar, she guides them through the lavishly appointed villa and onto a balcony overlooking the Amaranth River. Dianthe is waiting for them, standing behind a table set with platters of roasted fish, dates, frybread, and bottles of Meerish wine. She is dressed in an expensive gown of purple silk, smiles coldly at the characters, her dark eyes flat and emotionless. She is a severe woman in her early fifties; her body wiry and taut like a coil of copper wire, with sharply arched cheekbones, thick silver curls, and a deep, olive complexion. Her every movement is calculated and rehearsed. During her interview, Dianthe continues to eat and drink, offering the characters nothing; after the characters have made their introductions, and while selecting from a bowl of olives, Dianthe asks: “Tell me why my family should consider employing you? What are your skills? Your strengths? More crucially, what won’t you do?”

The players may either roleplay out stories concerning their characters’ Background Events, Social Class, Passions, Family, Culture, Allies or Community which could lead to some very entertaining tales as players try to match or outdo each other’s narratives; or they may simply have their characters make a roll using Oratory or Influence to win Dianthe’s admiration and confidence. With every Failure, she yawns and grows increasingly bored but allows them to continue until they succeed or Fumble. A critical failure causes

Dianthe to have them shown out as obvious incompetents – whereupon Xitos the Hound will waylay them and beg for their help.

When the characters are done making their pitch, Dianthe crosses her slender arms and says, “I have an important matter that needs to be handled discreetly. I am confident you can manage it. There is an island upriver of here, just a big rock really, with a ruined temple on its eastern shore. The local riverfolk think it is haunted, and maybe it is at that, but there is ‘something’ inside that I want. I’m offering each of you 100 Silver Pieces for signing on with me, and another 200 when you bring that ‘something’ back, real quiet and quick. So, can we do business, or do you prefer keeping your purses empty?”

Assuming the characters agree to work with her, Dianthe lays out all the important details:

- ⚔ The Flooded Temple, a dangerous local ruin, hides an artefact that dates back to the time of the Skotadi called Xamoxis’ Cleansing. According to Dianthe, the artefact holds significant historical value to the Kalos family—that is all she shares. It takes a Formidable Insight versus Deceit (78%) roll to detect her dishonesty but she feigns insult if questioned, never revealing more.
- ⚔ Although she offers each of the characters a reward for their service, she can be bargained up to granting a letter of mark for trading on the Amaranth: this certifies them as approved merchants, comes with a small land title for business purposes and guarantees lowered taxes for the first year of operation. Normally such a charter costs a few thousand Silvers. The letter of mark can be sold for 1000 SP in any decent sized settlement on the river

With the negotiations complete, Dianthe requires each character to sign a standard Mercenary Contract with these provisions:

- ⚔ They will recover Xamoxis’ Cleansing and return it to her within a week. Failure to return with the artefact in the appointed time is considered a willful breach of the agreement and subject to further fines and penalties. This provision is null and void if the characters are killed during their service to the Kalos family. The Kalos family bears no legal responsibility to compensate surviving relatives, clan members, or any relation thereof if the signed party is slain during the length of the contract.
- ⚔ If the characters divulge any contract details with unsigned parties, no payment is to be rendered for their services and they are subject to legal fines of 2500 SP each. Refusal or inability to pay the levied fines results in involuntary servitude to the Kalos family for a period no less than 1 year but not exceeding 3 years.
- ⚔ If the characters attempt to steal the artefact, the Kalos family has the right to use any and all means in their apprehension and the reclamation of Xamoxis’ Cleansing, including but not limited to placing a bounty on their heads.

Dianthe’s main concern is getting the artefact while giving as little information out as possible: she is only as helpful as she needs to be, giving the characters a map of the area and a rough sketch of the artefact. She also provides them with a medium-sized bronze lockbox lined with padded silk (she keeps the key) and assures them a flatboat will be waiting on the docks at dawn.

The characters have the night to prepare and Dianthe expects them to leave at dawn.

FINDING MORE INFORMATION

The library in Tithys has a small collection of books, scrolls, and stone tablets that characters can gain access to for private study. Anyone making a standard Influence roll and donating 10 SP gets 1 hour of time to peruse the library, always under the watchful eyes of guards armed with tridents and daggers.

Discovering information about Xamoxis’ Cleansing through typical means requires an appropriate Lore roll of Herculean difficulty but using the library lowers this check to Formidable. The Games Master can decide what additional information, if any, is found but suggestions include an incomplete sketch of the temple interior or a few paragraphs regarding the sorcerer, Xamoxis of Skotados.

TRADE IN TITHYS

The Kalos family does a brisk business selling gear to mercenaries and the characters may want to purchase better armour, weapons, tools, etc. These goods are always available from various sellers, who have inflated their prices by 20% to take advantage of the coming festival.

- ⚔ Armour and Shields: ENC 3 or lower.
- ⚔ Public Accommodations, Food, and Clothing: any Quality.
- ⚔ Livestock: Goats, fowl, and pigs
- ⚔ Any personal weapon (One-Handed, Two-Handed, and Ranged)
- ⚔ Tools

Of particular interest to the characters is an old, Tithyan merchant named Triptolemus selling charms in the market. He sits on colourful handwoven blankets, and calls to the passing crowd with a toothless grin. His stall smells like urine and most people avoid him; still, the items spread out around him draw the eye. Most of Triptolemus’ wares are useless trinkets but there is a powerful spirit charm among his goods. The charm, a small piece of lapis lazuli wrapped with fragrant bay leaves, grants characters without the Binding skill the ability to fight Spirits without suffering a penalty to their Willpower; the charm also vibrates noticeably when a hostile spirit is within 5 metres of it. Triptolemus wants 300 SP for the charm but can be brought lower with successful haggling.

XITOS THE HOUND

Once a second-rate cutthroat, Xitos the Hound is now an enterprising merchant who has found it much more profitable to deal honestly with people than murder and rob them; in particular, he specializes in buying and selling magical artefacts wherever Meerish law won’t interfere with business.

Through a combination of bribery and magic, Xitos learned about Xamoxis’ Cleansing and Dianthes’ plans to get it. Blending with the crowd outside Kalos Manor, Xitos has been observing the petitioners as they leave, eavesdropping on their conversations. Even if the characters avoid openly discussing their contract, Xitos has bribed Noori for any information about Xamoxis’ Cleansing; thus informed about the characters assignment almost immediately, the man begins tailing them.

E'KN - CITY OF TORTURERS

E'kn (pronounced EH-chun), the City of Torturers, is not detailed in this scenario but Games Masters are encouraged to create it if the players decide to take Xitos' offer. It is a small, desert city located many days travel from Tithys, home to fierce nomads ruled by a fat, immoral sultan who is a puppet of the Badoshi Warlords. The journey from Tithys to E'kn is dangerous—djinn, efreet, sandstorms, and savage desert raiders are just some of the challenges faced by travelers.

The characters go about their business for some time before realizing Xitos is nearby. With an Easy Perception roll, they realize someone is shadowing them; when it becomes obvious he is spotted, Xitos approaches and formally introduces himself. He is a small, soft-voiced man wearing a threadbare tunic but if the characters study him closely (Hard Perception roll) they spot the jewel-crusted scimitar sheathed under his worn cloak.

Xitos praises the characters for getting the Kalos family contract and says, "I am willing to pay you 3,000 silvers for the artefact you seek. Nevermind how I came about this information: I mean you no harm and want nothing more than to do business. If you are interested, bring the artefact to the city of E'kn instead of returning here and seek me out. If you choose not to accept my proposition, I offer you my good will and wish you victory in your efforts."

Xitos gives the characters a small, wooden tile burned with the image of a hound: they can show it to any guard in the Merchant Ward in E'kn and he will find them shortly thereafter. Politely refusing to discuss his offer further, Xitos bows deeply before slipping away and around a nearby corner. The agent uses Stealth (61%) and Streetwise (83%) to avoid any pursuit by the characters until he finds a secluded spot to cast Incognito on himself, vanishing into the crowds. If attacked, Xitos does his best to escape and avoid any attention.

THE AMARANTH RIVER

The journey is slow and tedious with the seasonal winds blowing fitfully from the Southwest. The character with the highest Boating skill has to make a successful roll to travel upriver. On a Failure, the boat gets stuck on a sandbar and requires 30 minutes and a group Brawn roll to push free. A Fumble means the boat is holed and requires 1d3+3 hours work and a successful Craft (Carpentry) roll to repair.

If the boat is rendered useless, the characters must walk the rest of the way along the river bank, and then find a way to cross over to the temple. This will leave them with 1 level of Fatigue if they try to complete the trip by nightfall. Taking a more leisurely hike upstream will avoid tiring themselves, arriving at the island at noon the following day.

The weather is very warm and humid during the day, but becomes uncomfortably cool after sunset. Constant rain showers make travel miserable, wet, and tiring. The encounter with Scylla (see below) takes place during the otherwise uneventful day-long voyage between Tithys and the Flooded Temple.

SCYLLA

The day is warm with intermittent showers, and the insect infested wetlands to the east and west of the river seem to stretch to the horizon. River traffic around Tithys is heavy at the start of the journey as decorated merchant barges, riverfolk in reed boats and skiffs carrying sour-faced traders cluster towards the harbour, everyone heading to attend the celebrations of the river spirits. All too soon the characters are alone with just the hiss of falling rain to keep them company.

After several hours of sailing, and perhaps just as evening falls, their trip is suddenly disrupted when the river comes to life: hundreds of fish of all kinds swarm around their boat, leaping and splashing excitedly as the sound of sweet singing rises from deep below the water. From the river just a few metres beyond the stern rises a tall woman of supernatural beauty who says "*Stay your journey, travellers, I would have words with you on this Holy Day*". Gracefully built and green-skinned, her naked body is draped with riverweeds; a wild mane of mud-coloured hair is tangled about her head and shoulders. Her black, fish-like eyes regard the characters intensely. Characters with an appropriate Lore skill or Locale (if native to the river valley), can make a Hard roll to recognise Scylla as one of the mythic naiads of the Amaranth River.

Recently alerted to events, Scylla is fearful at what might be found within the Flooded Temple. Unable to tread dry land she cannot sense what goes on within, so she sent two of her undine handmaidens to investigate. Neither returned. Thus she has come seeking the characters for their help. Scylla wants to claim the artefact and destroy it, but realises it poses a great danger to her. She does not know much about the Flooded Temple, but dimly remembers that it was built by a magician by the name of Xamoxis of Skotados. If the characters promise to destroy the evil which lies within the temple, she grants them her supernatural aid. Each character will temporarily receive the ability to breathe in water, and understand the speech of river creatures, such as fish and water snakes – with the promise of further rewards if they are successful.

Pledging to help Scylla creates a Passion that acts as an oath; every character making the pledge receives Loyalty to Scylla, a score of the character's POW x3, plus Scylla's POW of 26, immediately. Scylla also reveals some very important information: a death cult and the Madakeen have come to the Flooded Temple recently and are locked in battle. Scylla does not know how the conflict began but it is obvious to her the Madakeen and cultists have turned the ruins into a battleground—the characters are going to have some difficult decisions to make when they reach the shrine. Realizing that she has been forgotten by the panthotaur, Scylla is disinterested in both the cultists and Madakeen: she wants Xamoxis' Cleansing and does not care how the characters get it, but expects they have to kill the cult leader and perhaps some of the Madakeen to succeed.

Scylla knows nothing useful about the cultists but gives the characters basic information about the Madakeen, decided by the Games Master.

SCYLLA'S WRATH

Scylla becomes enraged if the characters refuse to aid her, screaming a curse at them as she dives back into the river to swim away; any character that doesn't clearly pledge their loyalty has rejected the offer. Characters failing an Opposed Willpower roll against Scylla (79%) are struck with a curse: for the next 1d6 days

THE KATHAROS

The armband and skull motif are marks of the Katharos. They venerate several different gods of death and vengeance, including Sariniya and Helestenes, the Lord of the Underworld. Assassins and thugs for hire, the Katharos are outlawed in Meeros but have found a welcome of sorts among the Badoshi Warlords and those who have pledged to bring Meeros down. The cult attracts outlaws and the dispossessed; it has only a modicum of internal discipline, thrives on casual cruelty and the chance to perform sickening acts of violence, and revels in its notoriety. Individually, Katharos members may be brave or craven, but for them to want to save their own hides is not uncommon. In a group, they are callous and brazen. Indeed, the term 'Scum of the Earth' might have been invented for them.

their clothes, weapons, equipment, and bodies are permanently damp and sopping, as if they just climbed out of the river. While not exactly harmful, the curse is aggravating: characters cannot walk on dry surfaces without leaving wet tracks, any food held in their hands is quickly soaked, striking a fire becomes almost impossible with perpetually wet fingers and hands, and so on. Changing clothes is no good; within 1d3 minutes a fresh set is sodden once again. Any character wearing armour finds that the armour and its fixings soon begins to chafe the skin, making it uncomfortable to wear and move in, increasing it's overall ENC by 1 point. Stripping naked helps, but once clothes are donned, the curse begins again. Only begging for Scylla's forgiveness with a Hard Influence (or Standard Oratory) roll can lift the curse.

THE ISLAND

A 30 metre high crag of bare limestone rises out of the river, forming an ancient, unnatural island created by spirits before the founding of Tithys; at its base, the island is several hundred metres long and 50 metres wide, but narrows gradually as it grows higher. At the center of the island's flat, 30 metre wide summit, and surrounded by bright swamp flowers, stands the Flooded Temple.

A narrow beach of compacted silt and gravel surrounds the base of the island; stretching between the beach and summit is a winding, rugged path cut deep into the limestone and shadowed by overhanging rocks and bristling weeds—navigating the path requires a Hard Athletics roll to avoid taking a level of Fatigue from the strenuous hike. The path can be easily spotted from the river.

Five badly mangled human corpses are scattered over the beach 3 metres from the water's edge, with flies buzzing over the remains. Casualties of the skirmish with the Madakeen, the cultist's bodies were left to rot where they fell. All of the corpses are human men and women, lightly armed (shortsword, shortspear, target shield), and dressed in ripped black cloaks and linothorax armor; nothing of value or use can be found beyond their weapons, although each corpse wears a black leather armband embossed with a silver skull (worth 5 SP each). It's easy to spot the ragged claw marks and puncture wounds covering the bodies, and characters making an Healing or Hard First Aid roll realise the cultists were slain by large, feline claws and barbed spears.

Characters making a Perception roll spot a number of tracks made by hard-soled boots and large, cat-like paws; the tracks are scattered over the beach but also run along the path rising towards

the temple above. Closer inspection with a Hard Perception roll picks out a third set of tracks among the others, obviously made by a large, barefoot creature, walking upright. Panthotaur, while a rare sight in places like Meeros and Tithys, are known, and so a successful Locale roll correctly identifies the tracks as possibly panthotaur.

A pair of Madakeen scouts is posted above the path leading to the summit and has orders to report anyone they see to White Leg. Approaching characters spot the scouts by making an Opposed Perception versus Stealth roll as they climb the trail; if confronted, the hunters run back to alert the rest of their group that strangers are approaching. Undetected, the scouts follow the characters and flank them just as they arrive at the temple and encounter the other warriors. If the scouts are attacked, half the Madakeen rush down the path to engage the characters in combat.

MADAKEEN

Almost a week has passed since the Katharos, led by Sa-Aba, attacked the Madakeen village. The panthotaur warriors fought fiercely but the Katharos killed several of them using magic and poison before fleeing upriver. Led by Fire Eyes, whose wife was among the dead, and his son, White Leg, the Madakeen tracked the murderers to the Flooded Temple. After another bloody skirmish that left a third of the cultists dead and several of the Madakeen badly wounded, the cultists retreated into the shrine and barricaded the doors. Fire Eyes ordered his warriors to surround the entrance and wait for the Katharos to either starve or try to escape—he is determined to slay them all and leave with Xamoxis' Cleansing. The *effaga* knows the legends of its power and considers it his war prize.

Shortly after the Madakeen set up camp to wait out the Katharos, Fire Eyes fell ill: wounded in battle by Sa-Aba, the *effaga* was poisoned with Lyssa's Kiss—a slow-acting poison that cripples its victims with delirium before finally killing them. The poison is quickly destroying his mind but there are a number of options for curing it (see page xx); the most immediate, practical methods are finding a large dose of Amthara Root or casting Cure Malady. His adopted son, White Leg, has taken control of the Madakeen and bound his father to prevent the chief from hurting himself or wandering into danger while gripped by madness. Afraid the Katharos will attack any moment, White Leg can't spare more than a single warrior to undertake the search for Amthara Root and the effort has been wasted: Fire Eyes has just 2 hours before he succumbs to the Lyssa's Kiss and dies.

WHITE LEG

When the characters reach the Flooded Temple, they are confronted by a band of tall (2.5 metres), nimble, feline humanoids covered with dark, slick fur. Above their feral snarls shine bright, intelligent eyes of fiery emerald. The Madakeen are dressed in kilts of alligator skin and carry slings and barbed shortspears; their bodies are covered with ritual scars and some have their fur shaved into intricate patterns of swirls and ridges—the panthotaur equivalent of tribal tattoos. The leader of these fierce creatures, White Leg, is a tall, broad shouldered panthotaur warrior with piercing eyes. His right leg is covered with irregular patches of white fur, and he wears stripes of ochre war paint across his eyes and chest. Including White Leg, there are 8 Madakeen warriors; two of their slain brethren have been laid to rest on the ground nearby, side by side and holding shortspears across their unmoving chests.

The Madakeen surround the characters but keep their weapons lowered, growling low in their chests. Another Madakeen lies nearby, bound and thrashing in the mud. Even from the edge of the summit, characters making a Healing roll can see that the afflicted panthotaur is severely ill and dying.

When he approaches the characters, White Leg is brash, arrogant, challenging, and forceful; he takes offense very easily, is extremely suspicious of their motivations, disdainful, and generally ill-tempered. White Leg is at his breaking point: the Madakeen failed at finding Amthara Root, his father is dying, and his tribe is looking to him for leadership. He is angry and scared, but determined to appear strong, especially if his father dies and leaves him to lead the Madakeen. He does not ask the characters for their help—he demands it. If they refuse, only winning an Opposed Influence roll versus White Leg's Willpower can stop him from attacking out of sheer pride and frustration. If he attacks, the rest of the Madakeen follow his lead unquestioningly and join the battle.

CURING FIRE EYES

White Leg keeps his father close so that the Madakeen can watch over him. The *effaga* slips in and out of consciousness, burning with fever; sometimes he cries out in pain, or bellows nonsense while thrashing against the leather cords binding his wrists and ankles.

Any character that can make a Hard Healing roll recognises the symptoms of Lyssa's Kiss and knows that Amthara Root is the only plant that can counteract the poison. The plant isn't present on the island, but grows amongst the riverbank reeds on either side of the river. Foraging for enough root requires a successful Locale roll and 1d3 hours of wading through the waterlogged reeds on one of the river banks. The root then has to be crushed and scalded to release the oils that counteract the poison, the resulting liquid being sipped slowly.

White Leg stands near, his spear gripped tightly as he watches the characters attempting to cure his father. Fire Eyes is bound but resists violently, his poisoned mind filled with images of death and suffering. If using Amthara Root, it takes an Opposed Influence roll

versus the Potency of the poison (60%) to break through the hallucinations long enough to convince Fire Eyes to sip the potion; characters with the appropriate magic are able to cure it with a single casting of Cure Malady.

If the characters fail their rolls to heal Fire Eyes, he roars and threatens to kill them when he gets free. Games Masters should make any critical failures appropriately exasperating for this tense situation—shaky hands drop the herbs into the mud, Fire Eyes breaks free and tries to run away, the *effaga* has a violent spasm and dies, and so on. Characters can keep trying to cure the stricken panthotaur until they succeed, exhaust their resources (Magic Points or Amthara Root), or he dies.

If Fire Eyes is cured, it takes some time for him to regain his senses enough to sit up and thank the characters properly. Even weakened and confused, the *effaga* is still a powerful, commanding figure as he stands to behold his saviours and embrace his son. Joined by the voices of the Madakeen, Fire Eyes praises his ancestors with song, calling for a blessing of thankfulness.

Weakened by the poison and unable to lead his warriors into battle, Fire Eyes orders White Leg to join the characters when they enter the shrine, giving him Manspike, his spear, to use in battle. Despite having almost perished, the *effaga* is still determined to possess Xamoxis' Cleansing and sees the characters' arrival as a boon. White Leg is eager to kill Sa-Aba and avenge the many wrongs done to his tribe: he cannot be denied this honour—joining the characters whether they want him to or not, and only death can stop him from going. The Madakeen remain outside, forming a cordon around the main door in case any Katharos try to escape.

If the characters fail to cure Fire Eyes, White Leg orders them to join him in storming the shrine—he must honor his father by slaying the Katharos and claiming Xamoxis' Cleansing for the tribe. Any refusal at this point causes all of the Madakeen to attack the characters in a frenzy of grief and rage; they fight until the characters agree to help them or are all slain. White Leg goes alone, leaving the other Madakeen to protect his father's corpse and guard the area against escaping cultists.

LYSSA'S KISS

A cruel poison created from the rendered brains of madmen. It can be cured with Amthara Root or a Cure Malady spell; Fire Eyes has 2 hours before he dies from severe brain hemorrhaging. Finding the herbal cure requires a successful Locale roll of Formidable Difficulty and a full hour of carefully searching the nearby riverbanks. The Locale roll can be Augmented by Healing or an appropriate Lore skill.

Application: *Injected*

Potency: *60*

Resistance: *Endurance*

Onset time: *1d2 hours*

Duration: *1d2 days*

Conditions: *Poison manifests 1d2 hours as lesions form on the brain, causing Hallucinations. During this period the victim attacks friends, relives past events, and forgets who they are. After 1d2 days, the victim succumbs to Death from severe brain hemorrhaging.*

Antidote/Cure: *Can be cured with healing magic or a large dose of Amthara Root, a rare flowering herb found on the banks of the Amaranth River.*

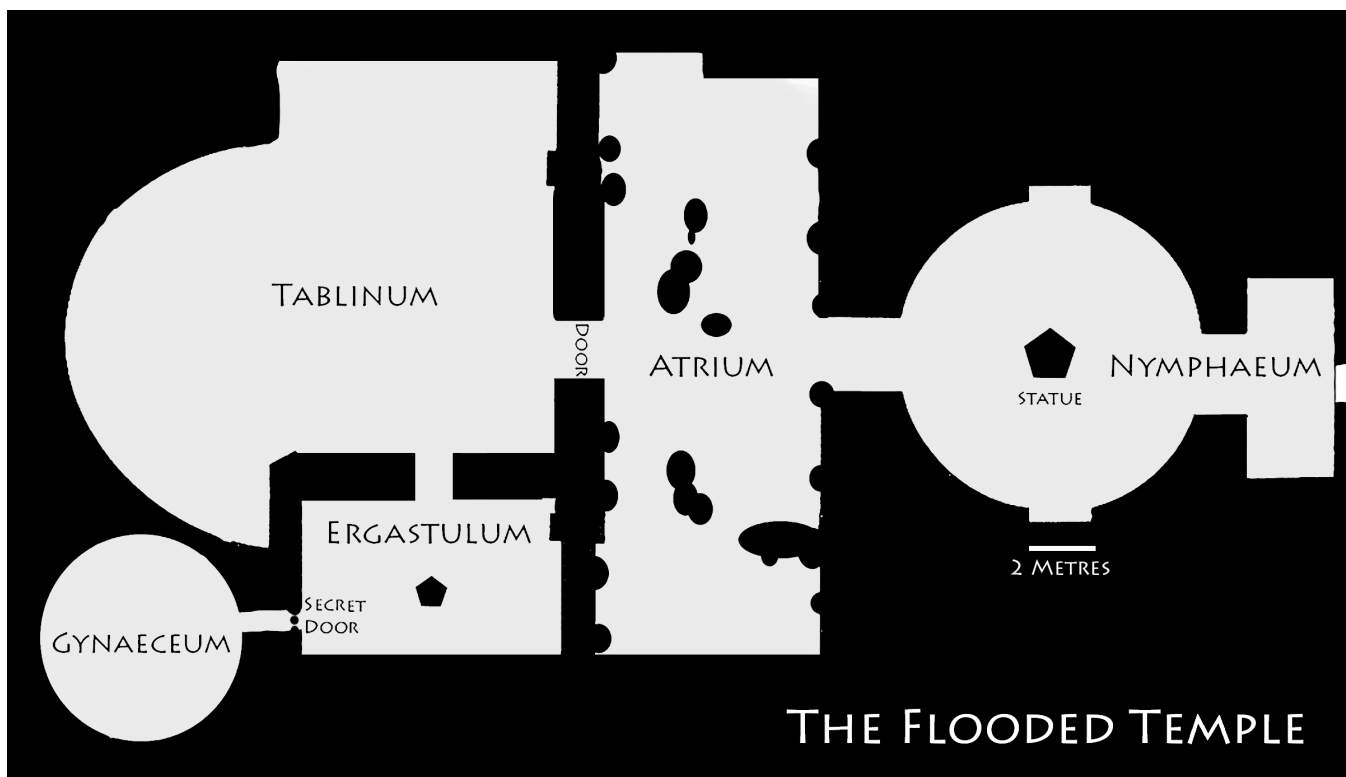
MANSPIKE

Manspike is a magical shortspear made from a single length of blackened, petrified wood and carved deeply with Madakeen runes. Against human males only, the wielder can expend 1 Magic Point to cause the spear to Maximize Damage as per the Special Effect (Mythras, page 147).

The weapon is worth 1200 SP.

THE FLOODED TEMPLE

The Flooded Temple is no temple at all, rather a place of summoning and sorcery where Xamoxis of Skotados bound the naiads of the Amaranth River, using their powers to control the waters. From the outside it is a windowless building of green marble built into the side of the island. Ancient columns, carved with glowering, hollow-eyed water creatures buttress its water-stained walls, whose



cyclopean blocks are cracked as if by some titanic force in the dim past.

The main doors are bronze, inlaid with mosaics of blue and green glass depicting the naiads of the river. These are sheltered by a crumbling portico, supported by three chipped pillars, the fourth of which has fallen into the river, the shattered blocks forming part of the natural causeway. The portico juts from the frontage, obviously once intended to receive river traffic but now its remaining columns are half submerged. Including the pediment, the front facade is just over 8 metres high and roughly 20 metres wide. Throughout the year, ancient Madakeen magic causes rain showers inside the temple, flooding the rooms to a depth of 20 centimetres. A combination of evaporation and submerged drains prevent the rain from completely filling the temple with water.

The rain makes it impossible to light or carry an open flame (i.e.: torches) inside the ruins: characters have to use magic or covered lanterns for illumination. Unless otherwise stated, all Perception rolls inside the temple are increased by one Difficulty Grade due to the constant splash of water and the fine mist filling the air.

Despite its fearsome reputation, most of the dangers inside the temple have waned over the centuries, or been removed by adventurers: traps were sprung or dispelled and monsters were slain. The Katharos have set up a number of ambushes in its rooms and represent a formidable threat hiding in the darkness. Sa-Aba has also spent time summoning 5 sickness spirits that lurk in the Tablinum, ready to fall upon intruders.

NYMPHAEUM

The main door is blocked from inside; the thugs pushed a heavy stone bench against it to prevent the panthotaur from entering. It requires a combined STR score of 100 to force the door open wide enough for a single character to slide through, before it jams against the bench. A Katharos thug is waiting just behind the door to attack

the first character sliding through and can only be detected by winning an opposed roll of Perception versus the thug's Stealth. Failing this, the thug gets a surprise attack on the first character squeezing through – automatically granting the thug the Choose Location special effect. After he attacks, the thug tries to flee, seeking to join his gang in the Atrium.

The walls in the Nymphaeum are carved with fish, riverhorses, and giant eels. A softly glowing mosaic of blue and green glass covers most of the far wall, beneath which an ornately carved archway leads west. Limestone caryatid columns stand in every corner, skilfully worked into the figures of beautiful women supporting the roof.

The centrepiece of the room is a 4-metre tall statue carved from bluish-gray soapstone. It portrays a half naked naiad rising from waves, with a fish in her arms. There is a superficial resemblance to Scylla, and indeed, all of her forgotten sisters. The sculpture is an artistic masterpiece, worth over 10,000 SP if a connoisseur could be found and the massive statue was transported from this place without breakage.

THE WATER TRAP

The statue is imposing and would be worth a few hundred silvers if it could be stolen; the Katharos were too afraid of its fierce appearance to get close, so they never activated the magical trap. If a non-worshiper of Scylla or any Water deity touches the statue with their body or an object (even if thrown, fired, etc.), the trap is activated: a blast of water shoots up from the floor wherever the victim is positioned in the room, striking with the force of a war hammer.

Purpose: Maiming

Trigger: Touching the statue

Difficulty: 75%

Resistance: Either Evade to dive aside or a Formidable parry roll if wielding a shield.

Effect: The water jet inflicts 1d10 damage to a random Hit Location, but can be (partially) parried by a shield if its size is sufficient to counteract the blast's size of Huge. If the trap gains one or more levels of success over the victim it can apply Special Effects, such as Bash or Trip Opponent.

ATRIUM

Large decorative pillars line the walls of this long room; although many of the pillars still stand, a number of them have fallen, along with a portion of the ceiling. Everything is half buried in metre or more depth of thick mud, which piles up towards the edges of the room, especially against the far wall. The collapse has created an obstacle course of broken columns and shattered stone slabs. Tarnished bronze doors, shut tight, lead further west.

Three thugs (four if the attacker from the Shrine made it here) are lurking near the middle of the room, each carrying 2 shortspears that they use for throwing, in addition to their swords and shields. The Katharos are sheltering behind the rubble and can easily be detected. Despite this the thugs get one free round in which they stand and each hurl a spear under the effects of a *Multimissile 2* spell at the characters, then duck down again to take cover. Both sides are at Short Range and the thugs enjoy the benefit of having their Abdomen and Legs completely obscured by the debris; roll for Hit Location on a 1d10+10 rather than 1d20.

If characters close for melee, the thugs ready their second spear and shields, then fight from behind the rubble. It takes some careful manoeuvring to fight amidst the treacherous debris, which is exactly why the thugs pick this place to defend. Fighting in the confined spaces between the fallen pillars makes combat rolls with weapons of VL Reach to become Hard. In addition the slick mud makes evading and outmanoeuvring all but impossible. Characters can make an Athletics roll to climb onto the slippery debris, negating the combat penalties but potentially exposing themselves to a single attack which they cannot parry as they scramble up.

TABLINUM

The walls of this large room are covered by faded murals showing a procession of robed men and women walking into the river, being transformed into fish, and then swimming into the sky on the other side. In each corner stands the ornamental pedestal for an erotic caryatid and the ceiling is badly damaged with large cracks. Everything is mud stained to chest height, but most of the detritus has been dug out allowing the bronze doors leading into this chamber to be closed. Since then the chamber has obviously been used as the thugs camp, piles of bones scattered across the floor along with worthless bric-a-brac despoiled from countless victims.

To the south the frescos have been torn away entirely, exposing another doorway to the Ergastulum from which emerges a stomach churning stench. Whilst hidden in the north wall is a secret door leading to the Gynaecium, where Sa-Aba has taken shelter, hoping to escape the butchery of his remaining Katharos thugs. Unfortunately for the shaman, there are obvious scrape marks in the muddy floor revealing the existence of the door, whose magical defences have long since failed. Passing a Mechanisms roll identifies a small latch hidden in the plaster moulding disguising the door.

Another pair of thugs armed with shortspears wait to attack anyone opening the doors, so it will be a terrible battle. The two thugs hold the doorway preventing themselves from being flanked, whilst the 5 sickness spirits Sa-Aba has summoned flow out into the

atrium to infect everyone they can; hopefully distracting those trying to come in through the doorway so that they burn up vital Action Points in Spirit Combat, and allowing the Katharos to stab them unopposed.

This is a devastating tactic, which could prove overwhelming. If so, permit White Leg to cast Spiritshield to help the characters, whilst other panthotaur warriors deal with their own spirit attackers. The players should be reminded that spirits are vulnerable to magical damage.

The main danger of this battle is not the diseases they will end up with, which Xamoxis's Cleansing will be able to cure, but the loss of Magic Points which may render them unconscious. Anyone left in the atrium when the battle concludes notices that the water level in the temple is perceptibly rising.

ERGASTULUM

The centre of this room is dominated by a one metre tall limestone dais with a shallow indentation as if to hold a spherical object. It is decorated with images of men and women with the lower bodies of giant fish; directly above the dais is a blue domed ceiling, in which a shining silver fish is engraved. Crumbling statues of water nymphs stand in the corners, their hands held out in supplication.

The ergastulum was where Xamoxis' Cleansing was kept safe and secure, brought out only when the Xamoxis wished to bind another naiad into it. It lay here, entombed behind a mud buried door for hundreds of years until Sa-Aba discovered its location.

Amongst the debris can be found some valuable treasures, consisting of a quartz crystal worth 2d10 SP, a bronze goblet, three large pieces of jade worth 1d100 SP each, a wooden ocarina, a pair of bone earrings carved in the shape of minotaurs and worth 1d20+20 SP, two small bars of pure silver (ENC 1) worth 100 SP each and a ceramic bull statuette consecrated to Myceras. If smashed on the ground, the statue releases a bovine bellow louder than a peal of thunder. Treat as an Intensity 6 Thunderclap miracle (Mythras page 191), forcing every creature within 60 metres to resist with an opposed roll of their Endurance against the breaker's Willpower. The statue can be sold to the Myceras temple in Meeros for 250 SP.

GYNAECIUM

Behind the secret door lies a short corridor leading to a medium-sized room where the walls are decorated with a recurring wave motif, in the centre of which is an amazingly lifelike painted fresco depicting what the temple must have looked like back when it was first built. The chamber is highly magical, being, in fact, a thinning of the separation between the mortal realm and the Spirit Plane. Before the mural are the crushed, silt-choked bones of Xamoxis who died here, caught by surprise when the river spirits swept the temple with a surging wall of liquid mud.

Sa-Aba is also here, ready to make his final stand. In his hands is Xamoxis's Cleansing, which he is currently using to flood the temple to the roof. If given the opportunity Sa-Aba seeks to negotiate his freedom in exchange for curing those who have thus far succumbed to disease.

Conflicted by a need to extract revenge for the deaths of his people or heal his father, White Leg must make an opposed roll of his two relevant passions to see which takes precedence. Sa-Aba has no intention of going through with the deal—he is just buying time. All the while any negotiations are hashed out, the water continues to rise at an ever more rapid rate. The shaman plans on drowning

CALLING SCYLLA

A side effect of flooding the Gynaecium is that the presence of water allows Scylla to manifest here. Any character that pledged loyalty to help Scylla can attempt to call her in a form of Divine Intervention. It is not easy; a character attempting to summon Scylla must succeed in a Formidable Loyalty to Scylla roll and expend 4 Magic Points. Only one character can make the attempt but, if successful, Scylla manifests within the waters of the temple at the end of the round in which she is summoned and can engage Sa-Aba and his Death Spirit in combat on behalf of the characters, or whisk the characters to safety (at least, those who have Loyalty to her) if so needed.

Sa-Aba can attempt to capture Scylla using the Cleansing: to do this, he need to engage her in Spirit Combat and win, which means concentrating on Scylla and not the characters.

everyone, assuming that he is the only one who can breathe under water, thanks to the Cleansing.

Prior to the characters arrival Sa-Aba used Xamoxis's Cleansing to make the rising waters swirl with a powerful current. This prevents attackers from wading towards him unless they can succeed in either an Brawn or Swim roll at Herculean difficulty. Though this seems impossible to overcome, characters may try every Turn and nothing prevents them from casting spells or using missile weapons, instead of trying to advance. He then calls upon the Cleansing to give himself water breathing and the ability to see clearly underwater.

When battle finally commences, Sa-Aba will be down to 7 Magic Points remaining in his Devotional Pool, and 13 personal Magic Points. He then uses the following tactics:

ROUND 1

Water provides cover for Hit Locations 1-6

Unleash Ukonoxe, his death Spirit, to attack the character with the highest POW. Ukonoxe manifests as dozens of scarab beetles that swarm through the air or through the water to descend on their target, engaging the victim in Spirit Combat here on the mortal plane. Miasma is used to instill blind terror before the spirit locks into spirit combat to drain the soul of the opponent.

ROUND 2

Water provides cover for Hit Locations 1-12

Cast Befuddle at whoever looks the strongest while Ukonoxe maintains its attack.

ROUND 3

Water provides cover for Hit Locations 1-18

Cast Disruption at a random character. At this point only combat remains as an option until the water level rises too high.

ROUND 4

If the fight has lasted this long, then the water level in the temple rises above neck deep, forcing everyone to start swimming. See *Unusual Combat Conditions – Swimming, Mythras page 106*. From this point onwards any surviving panthotours begin to drown. Sa-Aba himself will attempt to swim free.

If Sa-Aba is struck down, the waters recede rapidly.

CONCLUSION

The scenario has many possible outcomes but the most likely are described below. There is no definitive end to the adventure because the choices made by the characters determine how the story unfolds after they get Xamoxis' Cleansing.

1. The Madakeen keep the Cleansing, breaking their contract with Dianthe and becoming fugitives. The Madakeen offer them sanctuary for 1d6 days while they make plans for avoiding the Kalos family. Dianthe has agents, both mundane and magical, who find out very quickly if the characters break their contract agreement; with the wealth and power of the Kalos family behind her, the Matriarch can bring a considerable amount of force against them in her efforts to get Xamoxis' Cleansing.
2. The characters take the artefact to Scylla, who reclaims her stolen power and grants them their magical abilities. Having broken their contract with Dianthe, the characters are pursued by her agents; now, however, they have the power of a goddess on their side. If Queen Herothos discovers Dianthe was trying to possess Xamoxis' Cleansing, it has dire repercussions for her family's political and financial standing in the region.
3. Selling the artefact to Dianthe or Xitos are the most profitable options for the characters to take. Of course, the journey to E'kn and the adventures had once there can easily become the focus of several more scenarios using Xamoxis' Cleansing.
4. If the characters fail and Sa-Aba gets Xamoxis' Cleansing, it most likely means most or all of them are dead and the Madakeen slain. With his new power, Sa-Aba continues to strengthen the Katharos as more converts are added to its ranks; someone has to stop his madness and any surviving characters are probably the best candidates for the job.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

DIANTHE KALOS

The sun-stained, steely matriarch of the Kalos clan, Dianthe is fascinated with magic, has studied the ancient lore of the region, especially the Skotadi, and has even ventured into Badoshi lands to commune with sorcerers such as Kratos. She is still a novice in the sorcerous arts, but her intention is to find a way of prolonging her life so that she can witness the fall of Meeros with her own eyes, however long it might take. The spells she knows came from an ancient Skotadi grimoire. She has never cast them, and is waiting to enhance her own knowledge and find the right time, but she is always prepared to do so. Enhance CON she intends to use when illness strikes; Hide Life should she need to secret her soul from her enemies; and Revivify should she need to create an undead servant.

<i>Dianthe Kalos</i>		Attributes
STR: 9	Action Points: 3	
CON: 9	Damage Modifier: -1d2	
SIZ: 9	Magic Points: 17	
DEX: 13	Movement: 6 metres	
INT: 17	Initiative Bonus: 17	
POW: 17	Armour: None	
CHA: 14	Magic: Folk Magic & Sorcery. See Below	

Skills: Athletics 25%, Brawn 24%, Commerce 102%, Conceal 80%, Dance 30%, Deceit 99%, Endurance 31%, Evade 39%, First Aid 38%, Influence 95%, Insight 90%, Invocation 41%, Locale 90%, Lore (Skotadi Sorcery) 85%, Perception 88%, Ride 30%, Shaping 36%, Sing 41%, Stealth 70%, Streetwise 95%, Swim 36%

Passions: Hate Meeros 85%, Covet Immortality 90%, Get Xamoxis' Cleansing 85%

Magic

Folk Magic 78% (Appraise, Calm, Demoralise)

Sorcery: Invocation 41%, Shaping 36% (Skotadi Grimoire: Enhance CON, Hide Life, Revivify)

1d20	Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/4
4-6	Left Leg	0/4
7-9	Abdomen	0/5
10-12	Chest	0/6
13-15	Right Arm	0/3
16-18	Left Arm	0/3
19-20	Head	0/4

Combat Style: Matriarchial Murder (Dagger, Dart) 60%

Weapon	Size/Force	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Dagger	S	S	1d4+1-1d2	6/8
Dart	S	-	1d4-1d2	2/1

Darts are coated with venom causing an additional 1d8 damage that heals at half the normal rate

XITOS THE HOUND

Once a streetpad and cutthroat known for his dogged determination, Xitos realized he had a talent for negotiation and business that didn't involve blades or garottes. Turning his talents to trading, he has become successful enough to indulge his whims, which include collecting supposed magical treasures. Hailing from the Badoshi citadel of E'kn, he is a frequent traveler to Tithys where he has clashed with Kalos family interests on a few occasions. He has no love for Dianthe, and if he can snatch the Cleansing from her grasp (perhaps selling it back to her at a hugely inflated rate) then so much the better. Xitos is backed by powerful and ruthless investors in E'kn, which

is not known as the City of Torturers for nothing, so crossing Xitos can be every bit as bad as crossing Dianthe Kalos.

<i>Xitos</i>		Attributes
STR: 13	Action Points: 3	
CON: 9	Damage Modifier: 0	
SIZ: 10	Magic Points: 11	
DEX: 12	Movement: 6 metres	
INT: 16	Initiative Bonus: 14	
POW: 11	Armour: None	
CHA: 15	Magic: Folk Magic. See Below	

Skills: Athletics 61%, Brawn 39%, Commerce 90%, Conceal 90%, Dance 41%, Deceit 84%, Endurance 40%, Evade 63%, First Aid 55%, Influence 82%, Insight 75%, Locale 88%, Lore (Legends and Myths) 52%, Perception 63%, Ride 60%, Sing 44%, Stealth 61%, Streetwise 83%, Survival 70%, Swim 22%

Passions: Loyalty to E'kn 45%, Thwart Kalos 80%, Covet Influence 85%

Magic

Folk Magic 52% (Glamour, Incognito)

1d20	Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/4
4-6	Left Leg	0/4
7-9	Abdomen	0/5
10-12	Chest	0/6
13-15	Right Arm	0/3
16-18	Left Arm	0/3
19-20	Head	0/4

Combat Style: E'kn Cutthroat (Dagger, Garotte) 74%

Weapon	Size/Force	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Dagger	S	S	1d4+1	6/8
Garotte	S	T	1d2	-

The garotte is a sturdy leather thong finished with bone toggles that holds back Xitos' thinning grey hair.

SCYLLA (INTENSITY 4 ELEMENTAL SPIRIT)

Scylla is a minor goddess of the Amaranth River. She manifests in the form her worshippers imagine her to take; thus to humans, she assumes the form of a human woman with vaguely piscine features, weed and rushes for hair, and with a watery, flowing sound to her voice. To panthotaur, she assumes the form of the She-Cat Underwater described on page 3. Whatever her form, her personality is the same: haughty, demanding, mercurial, and liking of both compliments, gifts and loyalty. Her first concern is to regain the Cleansing and free the many naiads imprisoned within it; all other concerns are secondary. She is not without gratitude though, and those who help her will be helped and return, and those who give perpetual loyalty gain a patron for life.

If engaged in spirit combat, Scylla prefers to use the Psychic Stun and Compel Bargain effects to get what she wants.

<i>Scylla</i>	Attributes
INT: 18	Action Points: 3
POW: 26	Spirit Damage: 1d10
CHA: 18	Magic Points: 26
	Initiative Bonus: 18
	Abilities: Demesne (Amaranth River), Discorporate, Endowment, Manifestation

Skills: Discorporate 84%, Spectral Combat (Waters and Waves of Wrath) 86%, Willpower 102%

Passions: Loyalty to Naiads 145%, Hate Xamoxis 150%

1d20	Location	AP/HP
1-20	Elemental Spirit	0/26

WHITE LEG

Fire Eyes's eldest son, White Leg is proud, vengeful, contemptuous and fiercely loyal to his community and, particularly, his father. He grieves for his murdered kin and intends to visit a ghastly vengeance on Sa-Aba and the remaining Katharos—one that takes a lot of time and relies only on his claws and teeth.

He wears a kilt of crocodile hide and bones; ritual scars and crude tattoos adorn his body. Reduce a random Hit Location by half its Hit Points, representing the recent wounds taken during the battle with the Katharos.

White Leg knows Spiritshield and if he and other Madakeen accompany the characters into the Flooded Temple, he casts this spell at strategic points in the hunt for Sa-Aba. knowing that the shaman is likely to have summoned spirit allies.

<i>White Leg</i>	Attributes
STR: 21	Action Points: 3
CON: 17	Damage Modifier: +1d6
SIZ: 18	Magic Points: 10
DEX: 15	Movement: 8 metres
INT: 14	Initiative Bonus: 11
POW: 10	Armour: Crocodile Hides
CHA: 7	Abilities: Intimidate, Night Sight
	Magic: Folk Magic 59%, See Below

Skills: Athletics 60%, Boating 38%, Brawn 84%, Conceal 25%, Craft Shortspear 65%, Dance 34%, Deceit 29%, Endurance 62%, Evade 80%, First Aid 38%, Influence 61%, Insight 62%, Locale 70%, Perception 68%, Ride 20%, Sing 32%, Stealth 70%, Swim 60%, Tracking 64%, Unarmed 65%, Willpower 75%

Passions: Cure Fire Eyes 98%, Destroy Katharos 90%, Get Xamoxis' Cleansing 80%

Magic

Folk Magic 59% (Bladesharp, Mobility, Repair, Spiritshield)

1d20	Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/7
4-6	Left Leg	0/7
7-9	Abdomen	2/8
10-12	Chest	0/9
13-15	Right Arm	0/6
16-18	Left Arm	0/6
19-20	Head	0/7

Combat Style: Madakeen Warrior (Bite, Claw, Shortspear, Sling) 77%

Weapon	Size/Force	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
<i>Bite</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>1d4+1d6</i>	<i>As for Head</i>
<i>Claw</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>1d6+1d6</i>	<i>As for Arm</i>
<i>Shortspear</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>1d8+1+1d6</i>	<i>4/5</i>
<i>Sling</i>	<i>L</i>	-	<i>1d8+1d6</i>	<i>1/2</i>

FIRE EYES

A fierce, older Madakeen male with smouldering eyes that shine like embers. He proudly displays the ancestral tattoos and battle scars covering his body. In addition to the customary crocodile skin kilt he wears a necklace of crocodile teeth and carved wooden beads, the traditional symbol for an *effaga*. Fire Eyes wields Manspike, a magical shortspear with a thirst for human blood. Reduce a random Hit Location by half its Hit Points, representing the wounds taken during the battle with the Katharos.

Like White Leg, Fire Eyes knows Spiritshield and if he and other Madakeen accompany the characters into the Flooded Temple, he casts this spell at strategic points.

<i>Fire Eyes</i>	Attributes
STR: 18	Action Points: 3
CON: 14	Damage Modifier: +1d6
SIZ: 20	Magic Points: 12
DEX: 20	Movement: 8 metres
INT: 11	Initiative Bonus: 15
POW: 12	Armour: Fur and Crocodile Hides
CHA: 11	Abilities: Intimidate, Night Sight
	Magic: Folk Magic 73%, See Below

Skills: Athletics 87%, Brawn 74%, Craft Shortspear 70%, Endurance 80%, Evade 92%, Influence 88%, Insight 88%, Oratory 88%, Locale 86%, Perception 78%, Stealth 92%, Survival 89%, Swim 57%, Tracking 77%, Unarmed 88%, Willpower 80%

Passions: Get Xamoxis' Cleansing 95%, Destroy Katharos 90%

Magic

Folk Magic 73% (Bladesharp, Breath, Mobility, Repair, Spiritshield)

1d20	Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	1/7
4-6	Left Leg	1/7
7-9	Abdomen	2/8
10-12	Chest	1/9
13-15	Right Arm	1/6
16-18	Left Arm	1/6
19-20	Head	1/7

Combat Style: Madakeen Warrior (Bite, Claw, Shortspear, Sling) 84%

Weapon	Size/Force	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
<i>Bite</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>1d4+1d6</i>	<i>As for Head</i>
<i>Claw</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>1d6+1d6</i>	<i>As for Arm</i>
<i>Manspike</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>1d8+1+1d6</i>	<i>4/5</i>
<i>Sling</i>	<i>L</i>	-	<i>1d8+1d6</i>	<i>1/2</i>

MADAKEEN WARRIORS

These fierce panthotaur warriors stand over 2 metres tall and weigh over 90 kilos. The warriors carry shortspears decorated with bones, carvings, and precious stones. In combat they are fast, nimble, cunning, and deadly with both spear and claw; they prefer hit and run tactics over toe-to-toe combat. Reduce 1d2 random Hit Locations by half their Hit Points, signifying the wounds taken during the battle with the Katharos.

<i>Madakeen</i>	1d20	Location	AP/HP
Action Points: 3	1-3	Right Leg	1/6
Damage Modifier: +1d4	4-6	Left Leg	1/6
Magic Points: 11	7-9	Abdomen	2/7
Movement: 8 metres	10-12	Chest	1/8
Initiative Bonus: 14	13-15	Right Arm	1/5
Armour: Fur and Crocodile Hides	16-18	Left Arm	1/5
Abilities: Intimidate, Night Sight	19-20	Head	1/6
Magic: None			

Skills: Athletics 82%, Brawn 65%, Endurance 66%, Evade 80%, Insight 60%, Locale 86%, Perception 71%, Stealth 89%, Survival 79%, Swim 60%, Tracking 77%, Unarmed 85%, Willpower 70%

Passions: Loyalty to Tribe 90%, Destroy Katharos 95%

Combat Style: Madakeen Warrior (Bite, Claw, Shortspear, Sling) 68%

Weapon	Size/Force	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
<i>Bite</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>1d4+1d4</i>	<i>As for Head</i>
<i>Claw</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>1d6+1d4</i>	<i>As for Arm</i>
<i>Manspike</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>1d8+1+1d4</i>	<i>4/5</i>
<i>Sling</i>	<i>L</i>	-	<i>1d8+1d4</i>	<i>1/2</i>

KATHAROS THUGS

The fanatic followers of Sa-Aba, these cultists wear black, hooded cloaks, linthorax armour and carry shortswords, shortspears, and target shields. Each also wears a black leather armband embossed with a silver death's head, a symbol for their order. Reduce 1d4 random Hit Locations by half their Hit Points, indicating the wounds taken during the battle with the Madakeen. Adjust the number of Katharos thugs to match the party and any accompanying non-player characters.

The Katharos regularly use poisons. Their spears and swords are coated with a blade venom that inflicts Lyssa's Kiss (see page 8), and this is how Fire Eyes was laid-low. The venom is effective when a weapon coated with it delivers at least 2 points of damage to a Hit Location.

<i>Katharos</i>	1d20	Location	AP/HP
Action Points: 2	1-3	Right Leg	0/6
Damage Modifier: +1d2	4-6	Left Leg	0/6
Magic Points: 8	7-9	Abdomen	3/7
Movement: 6 metres	10-12	Chest	3/8
Initiative Bonus: 10	13-15	Right Arm	0/5
Armour: Linthorax	16-18	Left Arm	0/5
Abilities: None	19-20	Head	0/6

Folk Magic 48% (Curse, Darkness, Demoralise)

Skills: Athletics 39%, Boating 65%, Brawn 69%, Endurance 53%, Evade 56%, First Aid 44%, Insight 42%, Locale 59%, Perception 50%, Ride 42%, Swim 65%, Unarmed 42%, Willpower 45%

Passions: Obey Sa-Aba 94%, Escape the Flooded Temple 84%

Combat Style: Bloodthirsty Zealot (Shortspear, Shortsword, Shield) 60%

Weapon	Size/Force	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
<i>Shortsword</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>1d6+1d2</i>	<i>6/8</i>
<i>Shortspear</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>1d8+1+1d2</i>	<i>4/5</i>
<i>Target Shield</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>1d3+1+1d2</i>	<i>4/9</i>

SA-ABA, KATHAROS SHAMAN

Sa-Aba is a tall, muscular man with olive skin, dark, curly hair, and piercing blue eyes. His black goatee is always perfectly trimmed and oiled, and he often smells of exotic, spicy perfumes. He is handsome, charming, and cultured, all qualities that belie his raging insanity, cunning, and bloodthirstiness. He wears black laquered linthorax breastplate and matching greaves on his strong arms and legs. Tattooed on his upper arm is a large black skull encircled by a great serpent biting its own tail. He is a skilled shaman and has spent some of the time locked in the Flooded Temple summoning sickness spirits to attack anyone who launches an assault on his sanctum. He has five Sickness Spirits, each embodying a wasting disease, lying in wait for any assailants, and his fetch (bound into his tattoo), a Death spirit called Ukonoxe, which manifests as a swarm of black scarab beetles.

Sa-Aba	Attributes
STR: 13	Action Points: 3
CON: 13	Damage Modifier: +1d2
SIZ: 16	Magic Points: 16
DEX: 11	Movement: 6 metres
INT: 16	Initiative Bonus: 9
POW: 16	Armour: Linothorax, Arm & Leg Greaves
CHA: 17	Magic: Folk Magic & Animism. See Below

Skills: Acting 90%, Athletics 60%, Boating 18%, Brawn 64%, Conceal 67%, Courtesy 75%, Deceit 75%, Endurance 62%, Evade 60%, First Aid 18%, Gambling 53%, Influence 80%, Insight 42%, Literacy 88%, Locale 50%, Lore 85%, Oratory 90%, Perception 48%, Seduction 80%, Sleight 56%, Stealth 79%, Swim 68%, Tracking 64%, Unarmed 65%, Willpower 75%

*Passions: Dominate Xamoxis' Cleansing 100%, Destroy Enemies 90%
Escape the Flooded Temple 80%*

Magic

Folk Magic 78% (Befuddle, Disruption, Fanaticism, Slow)

Animism: Binding 80%, Trance 85% (Death Spirit Fetch, five Sickness Spirits compelled to defend the Flooded Temple)

1d20	Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	1/6
4-6	Left Leg	1/6
7-9	Abdomen	2/7
10-12	Chest	1/8
13-15	Right Arm	1/5
16-18	Left Arm	1/5
19-20	Head	1/6

Combat Style: Bloodthirsty Zealot (Shortspear, Shortsword, Shield) 70%

Weapon	Size/Force	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Shottsword	M	S	1d6+1d2	6/8
Shortspear	M	L	1d8+1+1d2	4/5
Target Shield	L	S	1d3+1+1d2	4/9

UKONOXE, INTENSITY 2 DEATH SPIRIT

This fetch Death Spirit takes the form of a vast swarm of black scarab beetles, each bearing a white skull emblazoned upon its carapace. It is a deadly foe, loyal to Sa-Aba and hungry for the life energy of his enemies. In combat, it uses its Miasma ability to project images and hallucinations of mutilation and carnage, causing its foes to cower, petrified, or flee.

Ukonoxe	Attributes
INT: 12	Action Points: 3
POW: 15	Spirit Damage: 1d8
CHA: 11	Magic Points: 15
	Initiative Bonus: 11
	Abilities: Autonomy, Miasma (Magnitude 4)
<i>Skills: Discorporate 77%, Spectral Combat 76%, Willpower 80%</i>	

1d20	Location	AP/HP
1-20	Elemental Spirit	0/15

SICKNESS SPIRITS (INTENSITY 1)

These malignant entities are Spirits of Wasting. Their attacks affect physical Hit Points and ignore non-magical parries and physical armour. A withered location erupts into a mass of festering boils, muscles atrophy and tendons ache. If the Head is affected by a successful attack, the spirit can use the Blind special effect as an offensive option, with the blindness lasting 1d3 rounds rather than turns.

Sa-Aba has summoned five of these ghastly wraiths to help guard him from harm while he attunes the Cleansing.

Sickness Spirit	Attributes
INS: 5	Action Points: 2
POW: 11	Spirit Damage: 1d8
CHA: 10	Magic Points: 11
	Initiative Bonus: 11
	Abilities: Wither

Skills: Stealth 71%, Spectral Combat 71%, Willpower 72%

1d20	Location	AP/HP
1-20	Elemental Spirit	0/11