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Keeping the Peace

A campaign featuring members of the Pala Jakállá police

Given a free choice of character background, most players opt to be members of the nobility. This is the approach advocated by Professor Barker himself in Adventures on Tékumel, and it is undeniably the easiest course if the group want to play adventurers of the traditional sort. Wealth gives noble characters more individuality and freedom of action, and they are more likely than other social classes to fraternize with others not of their own clan.

But that is not the only option. For the middle and lower classes, individual aspiration is less important than the needs of the clan as a whole. Player groups who are willing to try something a little bit more challenging will get a lot out of playing characters who are authentic Tsolyáni. This means characters who live and work beside their clan-cousins. Kinship forms a bond which will hold the group together and generate plot-threads throughout the course of the campaign.

This article sets out a basis for a campaign in which the players are united by being both clan-cousins and members of the Pala Jakállá city militia.

The boys in blue

The city militia of Pala Jakállá comprises a single cohort of 400 troops. While not having the status of a regular army unit, the militia is constituted along army lines, its official designation being the 18th Cohort of the First Jakasha Provincial Militia.

The militia captain is Daranai hiSarashkü of the Clan of the Moon of Evening. Daranai reports to an 8th Circle bureaucrat in the Palace of the Realm (the effective "major" of the militia) who in turn reports through the Palace Head to the Governor. A small cadre within the police is detached for the gathering of intelligence. This group (which the player-characters are destined to join) reports directly to Slegu hiVorusel, a lieutenant of the Omnipotent Azure Legion.

The campaign begins with a "pilot episode" in which the characters are still serving as ordinary members of the militia. This introduces them to the background and lets them get a feel for what their job has so far entailed. In the course of this adventure, they are co-opted to Lt Slegu's unit—the equivalent of being re-assigned from the traffic division to Special Branch!

The cast list

Eight player-characters are provided, with preset skill-levels. Players should roll their own attributes, rerolling any score that is not appropriate. (They are of course free to change the characters' names if the ones provided do not appeal.) These characters are about 20 years old at the start of the campaign. All except Gurrekai Mreshsha are members of the Clan of the Red Flower. The first three characters listed are only peripherally attached to the militia and, with fewer opportunities for derring-do, would suit more thoughtful and experienced players.

Korenoi hiLaumek (status 6) is a junior magistrate of the 5th Circle attached to Lt Slegu's office. This role would suit a thoughtful player who might enjoy some extra intriguing between regular game sessions. He must have Reasoning of at least 15. Having been educated at a temple school he gets the skills listed for that (*TRIKELU* page 6) as well as the following: Administrator 4, Calligraphy 3, Etiquette 9, High Society 5, Historian 1, Intrigue 5, Lawyer 6, Orator 2, Poet 2, Scribe Accountant 3, Theologian 1, Tsolyáni 9, and 6 levels in any foreign language(s) of the player's choice. His regular salary is 30 Kaitars a month, but he has a wealthy patron (Lord Nichevar hiSsanmiren of the Sea Blue Clan) who gives him an additional 30-40 Kaitars a month.

Telüre hiDorusan (status 3) is an Aridani militia member. Her drop-dead gorgeous looks (Comeliness 20) are of the vulnerable "good clan-girl" sort, so her toughness is likely to come as a surprise to anyone foolish enough to give her trouble. She has the police skills listed in the accompanying box, plus childhood skills as given in *TRIKELU* Section 141.

Vrishemu hiDorusan (status 3) is a former infantryman in the Legion of Mighty Jakállá, which he left after a six-year enlistment because of a lung infection. He must have minimum Strength of 15 and Height of 11, but Stamina now no more than 10. His skills are: Armourer 2, City Lore 5, Etiquette 8, Historian 1, Longsword/axe 6, Merchant 2, Mu'ugalavýáni 2, Physician 2, Polearm 7, Sailor 3, Salarvyani 2, Shipbuilder 4, Soldier 8, Strategist 2, Swimmer 8, Theologian 1, Tsolyáni 8 and Warrior 1. Joining the militia would be beneath him after the distinction of serving in a heavy infantry legion, but Lt Slegu has the perspicacity to see that an ex-legionary could be useful to his team, so Vrishemu will be paid a "consultant's" salary of 15 Kaitars a month. He also continues to receive a pension from his legion of 8 Kaitars/ month.

Chaizel hiOrutesh (status 4) is from the Red Flower clanhouse in Penom and hence something of an outsider here in Pala Jakállá, where his lineage is not represented. He is a 3rd Circle lay priest employed by the Omnipotent Azure Legion as a scribe, physician and spell-caster. He must have at least Reasoning 13 and Psychic Ability 17. His skills are: Astrologer 1, Bednaljan 2, Demonologist 1, Engsvanyali 2, Calligraphy 4, Etiquette 8, Historian 1, Salarvyani 5, Psychic Sorcerer 5, Theologian 5 and Tsolyáni 8. To these levels, add the skills appropriate for education at a temple school.

Shoretl hiDorusan (status 3) comes from a long and proud line of militiamen. One of his fathers (now retired) was a police sergeant involved in the arrest twenty-five years ago of the traitor Futharek hiVriddi, who was trying to flee the Imperium by sea. Shoretl has a lot to live up to. He has the standard police skills listed, plus childhood skills.

Bashan hiDorusan (status 3) was rejected by the Squadrons of Tlaneno the Steersman, and only reluctantly joined the militia. He is alert and watchful, often reaching a swift conclusion on the basis of intuition while others are still puzzling over the facts. (Minimum Cleverness and Psychic Ability both 16, but Height no more than 9—the reason the marines turned him down.) His skills are as listed in the box, plus the player's choice of childhood skills.

Ssomu hiRanagga (status 2) is the "poor country cousin" of the group, a great hulking young man who has been sent to the city from his home village upriver to make a career in the militia. His lack of status is compensated by his physical attributes (minimum Strength, Stamina and Size all 16). He has the police skills listed, plus childhood skills which should include levels of swimming and hunting.

Gerrekai Mreshsha (status 1 originally) is a Salarvyani employed as a minder by Korenoi hiLaumek. His clan is not represented in Tsolyánu, making him zero status here in Pala Jakállá, but Korenoi knows that he can be useful to have around. He must have Strength, Stamina and Dexterity all at least 11. His skills are: Arruche 4, City Lore 2, Etiquette 7, Foreigners' Quarter Lore 5, Hijajai (the language of Haida Pakala) 4, Historian 1, Theologian 1, Salarvyani 7, Survival 2, Swimming 4, Thief 5, Tsolyáni 6 and Warrior 3. This role would suit a player with little previous experience of Tékumel.

Life at home

The "core group" of militia characters (Telüre, Bashan, Shoretland Ssomu) naturally know one another very well, having worked together for the last five years. They are also well acquainted with Vrishemu (he is Telüre's brother and Bashan's and Ssomu's cousin) but won't have seen much of him over the last few years because he was posted with his legion. Prior to the campaign they will have had less to do with Korenoi and Chaizel, but will have seen them now and again around the clanhouse. They may have seen Gerrekai once or twice tagging along with his employer, and on an unmodified Police check they might know a few snippets about him.

All the player-characters except Gerrekai have quarters in the wing of the Red Flower clanhouse that is given over to young unmarried adults.

Drunk & disorderly

The first scenario begins on a sweltering hot summer's afternoon. The four militia members are walking their beat while chatting to Vrishemu, who has recently left the army. (The other player characters will have to sit this one out, or "guest-star" as NPC patrons of the winemakers' clan.)

Suddenly a man in a grey and green kilt comes rushing up. On a +5 City Lore check, the characters can identify him as belonging to the Clan of the Shaded Garden, purveyors of wine and beer. He blurts out that there is trouble at his clanhouse and asks them to come at once.

The public rooms of the winemakers' clan are reached by a doorway directly onto the street. Entering, the characters find a group of about a dozen clanless day-labourers sprawled on mats around a low table directly inside the door. They are obviously very drunk and are laughing and joking loudly. The rear part of the ground floor is a raised section partitioned into several open-fronted booths. Various people of low to lower-middle class occupy these, most notably a group of four cadets of the Squadrons of Tlaneno the Steersman who appear to take umbrage at the day-labourers' rowdy behaviour. They are glowering at the labourers and fingering their swords.

A stairway leads up to a balcony where the better-quality private drinking rooms are located. An observant character (probably Bashan) will notice that a tall warrior with the badge of the Sea Blue Clan is standing at the top of the stairs surveying the scene below with stony-faced indifference.

The problem stems from the fact that the day labourers have been working on an annex of the Temple of Vimuhla down the street and today is pay-day. After a long hot day's work, the beer and wine have hit them pretty hard. Even so they are only being loud, not abusive. Normally there would not be anything to worry about, but the experienced Shaded Garden servants spotted that look in the marines cadets' eyes that means trouble's brewing...

What's eating the cadets (four cousins of the Green Opal Clan) is that instead of the swashbuckling encounters with Hliss and Salarvyani pirates that their recruiting officer promised, they've spent the last four months' basic training sailing up and down the MiSsuma River. ("No better than bleedin' coppers!" as one of them tactlessly might put it.) The cadets have come straight off duty and have not yet been back to barracks. They are not armoured (it's too hot!) but are wearing swords.

In one booth over in the corner sits a heavy-set man with a scarred face. This is Chikor of Meku, a renowned local gladiator. He is of low social status but high prestige because of his public profile. No trouble-maker, he is the sort of dependable fellow who might step in and help the young militiamen if he sees them making a hash of things.

Three private rooms are occupied upstairs. In the first, Lord Goreng hiViridu of the Sea Blue Clan is having a discreet briefing session with six foreign adventurers whom he's hired to go on a little "antique collecting" expedition into the underworld. Lord Goreng is keeping this quiet because he doesn't want anyone in Pala Jakállá to suspect how badly his finances have been depleted by his lavish lifestyle. He is seeking a prestigious bureaucratic appointment and cannot afford even a whiff of scandal.

Another private room is being used by an odd couple: Gapraloi hiTetolan, an elderly scribe from the Palace of Foreign Lands, and a young temple prostitute of Hrihayal whom he has engaged for the afternoon. Gapraloi cannot conduct this liason in his clanhouse because he is afraid of his three wives.

The third suite is occupied by half a dozen priests of Gruganu. The party is being paid for by one of the priests, Hrchak hiYa'anelu, who is visiting Pala Jakállá to conduct some research at the temple library. Since his clan is not represented here, he has been staying at another clan which has friendly links with his own. However, he felt that it would be an imposition to expect his hosts to entertain his friends from the temple, so he has brought them here instead.

The man on the stairs is Lord Goreng's bodyguard, a tough ex-soldier of the Clan of the Sweet Singers of Nakome. He has no intention of letting anyone into his employer's room, police or not. The characters actually have no need to go upstairs anyway, so they won't get any trouble from the bodyguard unless they go looking for it.

The point of this scenario is not for the player characters to have a bar-room brawl. Quite the reverse! They have to demonstrate that they can defuse a tense situation without getting ruffled. Remind them that violence is not the only way to solve problems—a bit of fast talking followed by a Police skill-check often does the job just as well.

The new job

After getting back from the incident at the winemakers' clan, the characters are making their report to the sergeant at the precinct house when a messenger enters. He exchanges a few words with the sergeant, who tells the characters they are to go with the messenger to the Palace of the Realm. Vrishemu will doubtless Assume this doesn't apply to him, but then the sergeant peers at him and says: "You're Vrishemu hiDorusan, aren't you? You're to go along as well."

They arrive at the Palace of the Realm and are led through the bustling outer hallways, up an imposing marble staircase, along cool hushed corridors to a dark-panelled chamber high up at the back of the building. Here they are kept waiting for hours while scribes bustle in and out of the inner office, along with some very furtive and disreputable-looking types who come and go at intervals. Chaizel might look in at some point, but he can't enlighten them other than to tell them they're in the office of Lieutenant Slegu hiVorusel of the Omnipotent Azure Legion.

At last, as the rays of sunset trickle out of the room and a servant comes to light the lamps, Slegu has them called in. Korenoi is here. Slegu doesn't mince words: they're being transferred to intelligence work, and that's it. Korenoi recommended them, so Slegu hopes they measure up. "Report here tomorrow morning," he concludes, gesturing towards the door. As they're about to leave he adds: "Which of you is Vrishemu hiDorusel? Stay for just a moment, will you."

Slegu goes on to explain the job in a little more detail to Vrishemu. Korenoi has a letter from Vrishemu's old legion captain which he hands to Slegu to read. Slegu gives a judicious nod. "Police work's a bit beneath a man with your military record," he says to Vrishemu. "But this isn't ordinary police work. We deal with Imperial security here." He goes on to explain the deal: Vrishemu will be informally attached to the group on a monthly salary of 15 Kaitars.

First day at work

The characters show up at the Palace of the Realm the next morning to find another sixteen militiamen waiting too, making a full Semetl of twenty in all. They soon ought to realize that Slegu is not going to be a hands-on-kind of boss. He emerges from his office long enough to appoint one of the group as sergeant to a canny-middle-aged chap named Qurugar hiTolketh. Then he goes off on other business, leaving Korenoi to explain the first day's duties.

In case the pitfalls ahead haven't occurred to the characters, Sergeant Qurugar loses no time cueing them in: "You lads think you've landed yourselves a plum job? Not a bit of it! We've got important matters to look into, all right—matters of state security and that—but we're still no more than humble militia. We can't barge in wherever we like as if we were the Omnipotent Azure Legion. So you're all going to have to learn a bit of diplomacy, and you'd better learn fast. Fall afoul of some of the people we'll be investigating and they'll just stonewall you. Others will have highly-placed friends who'll be more than happy to bust you back to street-sweeping if you're not careful."

The lieutenant's view

Slegu has very little regard for militiamen, who are generally of fairly low status. The characters will have to earn his respect. He likes Vrishemu, thinks he got a real deal being inluded into the army, and is happy not to seem patronizing in assigning him to what (in Slegu's own view, in any case) is a rather demeaning job. He resolves to try to find Vrishemu a more suitable post, but in fact never gets around to it. Slegu's opinion of the Korenoi is that he is reliable and capable, but after all just a pen-pusher.

Along with about a dozen other OAL intelligence operatives, Slegu's job is to deal with serious matters of Imperial security in and around Pala Jakállá. The idea of assigning a Semetl of the regular militia to special intelligence work came from higher up, and is a pretty half-baked scheme as far as Slegu is concerned. But since it has been left to him to make it work, he's decided that these militia can at least be of value looking into minor matters and doing preliminary spade-work that would otherwise eat into OAL time.

Slegu will call Korenoi in from time to time to review the group's progress and assign new tasks. Other than that he leaves them to their own devices, and is often absent for extended periods on missions of his own. While Slegu is away, the day-to-day running of investigations is the responsibility of Korenoi and Sergeant Qurugar.

Perks

People are very far from equal in the eyes of the law. Foreigners who get into trouble might be sold into slavery or taken for use in Imperial work gangs. Low-class citizens can expect a spell in a very unpleasant gaol —often with a drubbing into the bargain. The middle classes are likely to bribe their way out of trouble, so a militiaman might get an extra 2-6 Kaitars a month or more on top of his regular salary. The upper classes, on the other hand, will not stoop to deal directly with the militia, offering their inducements to presiding bureaucrats like Korenoi (who therefore ought to make an extra 3-18 Kaitars a month).

Adventure seeds

The Holy Hawk: Someone has stolen a küni that the priests of Karakan use to keep sea-birds out of the temple. The High Priest suspects the culprits may be members of the Society of the Emerald and Silver Crown, a secret group in the temple of Dlamelish. If so, the theft would be a breach of the Concordat—an Imperial crime.

The truth is that this is just a matter of internal temple politics, and has nothing to do with the Dlamelish people. Two senior priests were conspiring to withdraw their support for the High Priest's protégé at the next temple council. The küni overheard the conversation. Recognizing that it might repeat their plans at an inopportune moment, they arranged to have it abducted until after the council meeting.

If the characters start getting close to the truth, the two priests get very jumpy and will do anything necessary to cover themselves. If they're found out, the High Priest could have them tried by an ecclesiastical court—not for intriguing against him, but for stealing the küni, which is technically the property of the god.

The Coining Caper: A collector of rare coins complains that he bought some that have been filed down. Tampering with the coin of the realm is an Imperial offence, so Sergeant Qurugar sends his men to investigate. ("We might get a few impleaments out of this one, lads," he says, rubbing his hands.)

They trace the coining operation to some Nighted Tower clan-members in the village of Pendara. A successful result? Not quite. The miscreants have been filing coins, true—but only antique coins such as Engsvanyali Suor, not Imperial coinage. This is just a civil offence, requiring them to pay Shamtla to those of their victims who can be traced. Which just goes to show that you can't win them all.

The Goodfellas from Gunurum Isle: A group of low-class Salarvyani have been preying off new arrivals in the Foreigners' Quarter, demanding money with menaces. This would not normally be a matter of interest even to the regular militia, but one of the gang's victims was a Livyáni nobleman who is now the friend and guest of a high-ranking official. The intelligence department is therefore being leaned on to do something about it. This is an adventure where Gerrekai gets a chance to shine.

The Honeyed Trap Gambit: Lieutenant Slegu is convinced that a noblewoman and her friends are implicated in the use of the illegal drug zu'ur but he can't prove it. His own face is too well-known in such circles, so he tells the characters to go undercover. They are to approach the nobles purporting to be suppliers of the drug and entrap them into making a deal. Doing well in this scenario will put them in Slegu's good books.

The Light-tipped Troopers: A pretty girl of the wealthy Ssanmiren lineage has been raped and badly beaten, leaving her permanently brain-damaged. The culprit is not known and the girl cannot give any account of the attack. But when her fingers are prised open, a medallion of the Legion of Mighty Jakállá is found. Some troopers of this legion having been seen around the city, the characters investigate—only to find that their suspects have returned to barracks.

They follow the suspects to Jakállá. (The referee here gets the opportunity for the old fish-out-of-water routine, Jakállá being a huge metropolis in comparison with Pala Jakállá.) At the barracks they find that they are barred entry. The legion officers insist they'll conduct their own internal enquiry. If justice (and the Ssanmiren family) are to be served, Vrishemu will have to do some delving of his own. As a former legionary, he can get into the barracks and snoop around—but will he find out something that leads to a conflict of loyalties?

Other episodes

The campaign will get tedious if every session hinges on matters of state security. Think of the campaign as a long-running TV series. Not every episode of Star Trek involves contact with aliens. A police series like Between the Lines focusses on the detectives' private lives as often as on the business of catching crooks.

The Slippery Pole: This should take place once the players have settled into a routine. Sergeant Qurugar dies unexpectedly following a bout of pneumonia. (Play him with a cough for a couple of weeks before this.) To make matters worse, his death comes in the middle of a very tricky investigation. Slegu is not around, so Korenoi has to appoint a brevet sergeant. (Presumably he will choose one of the player- characters.) This character is in for the hardest week of his career, but if he holds things together then Slegu confirms the promotion on his return.

Putting Their Feet Up: At the end of a hard week, the characters are relaxing in the Red Flower clanhouse when a longshoreman rushes in with dreadful news. A strange stone idol has been found in the cargo unloaded from one of the clan's ships.The captain and crew are being held by a Squadron of Tlaneno the Steersman, whose officer suspects the idol of being a Pariah Cult object. If found guilty of diabolism (worship of the Pariah gods) the entire ship's company could be imprisoned or even executed!

Under PreSûre: The elders of the Red Flower Clan decide it would be a good idea to marry off Talüre and Korenoi. Either can refuse the match, but this might cause resentment back at home —those elderly aunts only think they're doing their best for the young things, after all. Other player-characters may be asked to "have a word with them." And what if one of the other characters was already carrying the torch for his lovely cousin? There could even be a duel! Here is a potentially touchy situation which could give some amusement if played with a light touch.

Dead Shark syndrome

A campaign must remain fresh or it stagnates. After a year of game-time, the player-characters will reach the end of their first term in the militia and must decide whether to re-enlist or seek adventure elsewhere. This is a good point to switch direction.

If the players would prefer the chance to really cut loose, they can go into the clan shipping business and get involved in adventures on the high seas. Alternatively, they might stay in counter-espionage but make the move to being fully-fledged OAL operatives. (They'd have to have performed pretty damned well to merit it, though!) A third option is to have Korenoi elevated to administrator of a rural fief upon reaching 7th or 8th Circle. Since the fief is in a remote region of Do Chaka with a history of rebel activity, he'll need subordinates he can trust.

Police characters must have Strength, Stamina and Height all at least 10. After five years' enlistment, the skills gained are:

Armourer	1
Charge	4
City Lore	5
Lawyer	2
Longsword	4
Livyáni	1
Mu'ugalavýáni	1
Physician	1
Police	7
Salarvyani	1
Warrior	2

These levels include both the professional and "off-duty" skills acquired in early adult life (*TRIKELU* Section 142). Note that although police are usually equipped with maces, not swords, the Longsword skill covers both weapons.The Police skill is equivalent to Soldier, but with less emphasis placed on tactics, drilling and legion history. Police skill-checks (often averaged with Cleverness) may be used to spot something wrong, control a riot, placate an angry drunk, identify the drug zu'ur, recall details of old crimes, and so on.

In special circumstances, militia can be equipped with medium plate armour. Most of the time (particularly in the hot southern climate) they wear only medium leather or ordinary clothes with an azure skullcap for identification. Salary is 15 Kaitars a month for an ordinary militiaman, 30 Kaitars/month for a sergeant, and 70 Kaitars/month for a lieutenant.

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