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Issue 6

# Visitations of Glory



Text Edition



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# Introduction

Welcome to Issue 6 of "The Book of Visitations of Glory". This is by far the most extensive issue so far and I think has a little something for everyone. Due to the size of the files it has become impractical to put out an issue as a single piece, so this web format has saved the 'zine (thanks Belinda).

Where to begin? Krista Donnelly has written another fine scenario for those who want to spend their time actually playing the game instead creating characters and stats. This is a fine endeavor and someday Krista will have to explain why there have been so many dissimilar results with similar groups playing in the same setting.

Joe Pizzirusso has submitted a story that began as a thread on the Tékumel group's site and has blossomed into a rousing Tale of the Gods. A fine example of what can be done with a touch of ethereal inspiration. The script below the Wheel of Flame is Irzákh, which is being used with permission from Professor Barker. And I did the art work, so all in all, a nice collaborative piece.

The spell list from Robert Dushay continues the OTE theme from Issue 5. It's interesting to see the various systems using the Tékumel world as the point of reference. The next issue will complete the trilogy. You will notice three dimensions beginning to appear in the Empire of the Petal Throne. Mike Watts has created a scene at the Temple of Dlamélish that creates a very nice mood. I'm sure that I am not alone in saying, more please!

The rest of the art and odd bits are from my collection of Tékumel material that I have worked on sporadically and then put aside until the right time comes to put it all together. I guess that would be now. And again, many thanks to Belinda Kelly for getting this compilation into a useful web format.

# Acknowledgements

Visitations of Glory, Volume 6

*A magazine dedicated to the world of 'The Empire of Petal Throne' by M.A.R Barker*

More than a few cycles of the moons have passed since 'The Guild of Ethereal Ink' last delivered a compendium such as this to those who seek knowledge. Still, I have other items that must wait for the next opportunity. Even this issue would never be finished if I included all the embellishments that could be added here and there. I greatly appreciate all of the contributions and hopefully, the glimpses into their private Tekumel will inspire a spark for the coming revival of the greatest fantasy world that I have ever had the priveledge of contributing a minor part. Enjoy.

*All Tekumel items and the Irzakh font (c) 2002. All rights reserved. As as in the case in all issues of the 'Book of Visitations of Glory', all such writings from the contributors' pens are unofficial, non-canonical and have no relationship to or bearing on the real world of Tekumel.*

# Generic Spells

## Generic Spells for Tekumel Over the Edge

*Roberd Dushay*

Notes: These are the Generic spells converted from Gardásiyal and Swords and Glory into TOTE. They are numbered as in S&G, with new Gardásiyal spells noted with a "G". Generally, every for every die the spell is known at (that is, the number of spell learning dice or experience dice applied to learn the spell), two S&G/Gardásiyal levels are known. More simply, knowing a spell at one die means knowing the equivalent of U1 and U2, and so on. When "dice" are referred to for an effect, this means the number of dice the spell is known at, not the number of dice in the caster's sorcery characteristic. "Success" refers to the amount by which the successful casting roll beat the defense or difficulty. A "skill contest" means the caster and an opponent roll their sorcery characteristic dice or magical resistance dice. Higher roll wins; in a tie, the situation stays as it was before. Notice that magical resistance here is just innate resistance plus will and/or steel armor and shields and enchantments. There is no bonus for cover, dodging, etc.

These are spells known to some temples, but not to others. If a particular temple has a spell, the temple of that deity's cohort knows the spell also. Characters are unlikely to be taught these spells unless they are in good standing with their temple.

Notice that there is a -1 penalty for targets to attempt to resist these spells.

### 26. Acceleration (Psychic)

Belkhánu, Hnálla, Karakán, Vimúhla

Type:            Range: Touch    Area:    Duration: x dice x rounds/2  
Aimed

- ☞ Concentration required to maintain
- ☞ 4 dice: Preparation time: 1 round. Enhances coordination and neural transmission. Permits the recipient to go first every round.
- ☞ 5 dice: Preparation time: 1 minute. Caster plus everybody within three feet may act twice each round. (Spell casting is not speeded up.) A badly failed action (by more than 6 points) means the recipient must stop moving at double speed or risk injury; a botched action means the recipient falls unconscious for 1-3 minutes and suffers 5 dice of damage.

### 27. Adornment (Ritual)

Avánthe, Dlamélish

Type:            Range: (dice) x 10    Area: (dice) x 3    Duration: x dice x minutes  
Aimed            ft                            ft





**31. Ascertainment (Psychic)**

Belkhánu, Hnálla, Ksáru, Sárku, Thúmis

Type: Radius Range: Caster only Area: Duration: x dice minutes

- ☞ Prerequisite: Ascertainment (no. 2) of at least 4 dice
- ☞ Concentration required to maintain
- ☞ 4 dice: Permits a multi-way conversation between all persons within 200' of the caster. The spell lasts for 5 minutes, and is not species-specific.
- ☞ 5 dice: The caster can become part of the telepathic network used to send important messages across the Five Empires (and the Pe Chói and Miháli enclaves). The spell has a range of 10 miles (8.3 tsán) and lasts for 10 minutes. To use this spell, the caster must spend 2 years training and "psychic meshing" with colleagues, and is expected to work in the network afterwards.

**32. Benefaction (Ritual)**

Avanthe, Belkhánu, Dlamélish, Hnálla, Hrü'ü, Ksáru, Thúmis

Type: Aimed Range: Touch Area: 3 ft circle Duration: 12 hours

- ☞ 5 dice: Restores all shots to the Pedhetl of the target. The target must have used at least 1 shot for this spell to work. All shots gained by this spell dissipate after twelve hours if not used.

**33. The Blade of Inexorable Disjection (Ritual)**

Karakán, Vimúhla

Type: Aimed Range: 3 feet Area: Duration: x dice x rounds

- ☞ Concentration required to maintain
- ☞ 2 dice: Creates a sword of brilliant ruby energy. The target (who may not be the caster) can use this as a one-handed sword with a bonus die. The sword does x4 damage. The blade will disappear if it leaves the target's hand. The target may not use a shield, or perform a non-combat action while holding it. (Movement out of battle is not permitted).
- ☞ 3 dice: The sword is a two-handed version, 6 feet long, with two bonus dice, and x5 damage. The caster may be the target of this spell.

**34. The Blessing of the Planes (Ritual)**

Belkhánu, Hnálla, Ksáru, Sárku, Thúmis

Type: Radius Range: Caster only Area: (dice) x 3 foot circle Duration: x dice x rounds

- ☞ Concentration required to maintain
- ☞ 1 die: Preparation time: 1 round. Range: Touch. Gives the caster or another target a bonus die to her magical resistance roll. The target gets no benefit for casting spells, however. The spell is species-specific.

- ☞ 2 dice: Preparation time: 1 round. Gives the target(s) an additional die to his magical resistance roll.
- ☞ 3 dice: Preparation time: 1 round. Range: 60'. The target loses two dice to their magical resistance roll. This spell is immune to Disenchantment.
- ☞ 4 dice: As per the 2 dice variant, but all targets within 9' of the caster gain 2 additional dice to their magical resistance as long as they remain within the circle. Undead, androids, automatons, etc., are not affected.

### 35. Comprehension (Psychic)

Hnálla, Hrü'ü, Ksárul, Thúmis

Type:            Range: Caster only    Area: --    Duration: x dice x minutes  
Aimed

- ☞ Concentration required to maintain
- ☞ 1 die: The caster can understand one spoken human language audible within 10'. The caster is magically able to speak that language, too, for the duration of the spell. A speaker may resist the spell to avoid having their language understood. If there are multiple speakers, the one with the least dice defends.
- ☞ 2 dice: The caster now understands nonhuman languages, and can also read a document in one modern human tongue. The Mihállí language cannot be understood this way. [N.B. Hostile nonhumans cannot be comprehended, either: no tricks to learn the language of the Ssú!]
- ☞ 3 dice: As above, but the caster now reads ancient languages, too. (Nothing older than Llyáni, however.) The caster learns if the scroll has an Execration curse or other magical hazard on it before reading it. Modern Mihállí is incomprehensible, but ancient Mihállí can be read, for some reason.
- ☞ 5 dice: The caster may now read modern Mihállí, and can read execrated documents without setting off the curse.

### 36. Derangement (Psychic)

Belkhánu, Hnálla, Hrü'ü, Sárku

Type:            Range: (dice) x 30    Area:    Duration: Varies  
Aimed            ft

- ☞ 1 die: Range: Touch. The target becomes temporarily insane for x2 minutes. [That is, the difference between the caster's sorcery roll and the defender's magical defense roll x2.] The spell only affects intelligent beings. It can be Disenchanted, and is useless if the target has Control of Self currently active. The target's behavior is randomly determined by the referee.
- ☞ 2 dice: Range: 60 feet, and the duration is x3 minutes.
- ☞ 3 dice: Range: 90 feet, and the duration is x2 days.
- ☞ 4 dice: Range: 120 feet. The victim is permanently insane unless Disenchanted. If the first Disenchantment fails, the target is can never be cured except by Divine Intervention (prayed for by a friend, since the target is beyond such things).

### 37. Dessication (Ritual)

Avanthe, Hrü'ü, Ksárul, Sárku

Type: Range: (dice) x 30 Area: -- Duration: Varies  
Aimed ft

- ☞ See rules on hitting specific body parts.
- ☞ 1 die: Range: touch. Duration: x3 minutes. Whatever body part is touched is dried up. An appendage (arm, leg, tail, etc.) is withered and numbed. If the body is the target, blood flow temporarily ceases, and the victim suffers a disabling (but not fatal) heart attack. A touch to the head causes the victim to be stunned. The effect can be immediately relieved by Healing (no. 10; 2 dice level) or a Disenchantment.
- ☞ 2 dice: Range: 60 feet. The effects are more severe. An appendage is permanently withered; a body hit causes paralysis for x4 days; a head hit causes a coma for x3 days. Disenchantment is no longer an effective countermeasure, and while Healing (no. 10) at 4 dice will restore a limb, it cannot remedy a head or body effect.
- ☞ 3 dice: Range: 90 feet. A head or body hit causes an instant coma, with death following in x1 days. An appendage is permanently withered unless Healing (no. 10, 4 dice) is applied within an hour.

### 38. Domination (Psychic)

Belkhánu, Hnálla, Hrü'ü, Ksárul, Sárku, Thúmis

Type: Range: 30 ft Area: One target Duration: Varies  
Aimed

- ☞ Prerequisite: Domination (no. 6) at 4 dice.
- ☞ Concentration required to maintain
- ☞ 3 dice: Also known as the Mind Bar. Gives the caster full control over the target's mind: actions, beliefs, knowledge, etc., for a full 24 hours. The target must be intelligent. The proper Disenchantment will counter this spell, and it can be detected by the Perception of the Energies spell (no. 15).
- ☞ 5 dice: The Mind Bar is permanent without a Disenchantment. It is harder to detect with Perception of the Energies: the caster takes a penalty die to detect it.

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NOTE: Higher level Domination spells are known to exist: these are undetectable and resistant to disenchantment.

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### 39. Doomkill (Ritual)

Hnálla, Karakán, Vimúhla

Type: Radius Range: (dice) x 90 Area: (dice) x 4 ft diameter Duration: Instant  
ft circle

- ☞ Preparation time: (dice - 2) x rounds

- ☞ Creates a bright, noisy explosion. Treat it as an ordinary radius spell. Every being within the area of effect takes damage. Magical resistance serves as armor, even if the primary target already tried (and failed) to resist the explosion. (In effect, the primary target gets to use his magical resistance to both attempt to counter the spell and to reduce the damage it does.) If the defender takes more damage than 10x the number of dice in his armor (not counting magical resistance as part of his armor, and considering armor of less than 1 die to be 1 die), then the armor has been destroyed in the blast. If armor is destroyed, so are other possessions, save those likely to be blast-proof. Flammable goods, like paper, will be burned if the victim takes more than 6 points of damage.
- ☞ If there is intervening cover between the center of the spell and a victim, the cover serves as additional armor, probably 1 – 2 dice worth.
- ☞ A botch (all 1's) by the caster means the Doomkill has exploded in her hand. She gets her magical resistance and whatever armor is protecting her, but there can be no cover. If the defense roll for distance and cover was all 6's and beat the caster's roll, the Doomkill also explodes in her hand.
- ☞ 3 dice: x8 damage.
- ☞ 4 dice: x10 damage.
- ☞ 5 dice: x15 damage. The spell does structural damage, too.

#### 40. Elicitation (Psychic)

Ksárul, Thúmis

Type: Radius    Range: touch    Area: (dice) x 5 ft diameter circle    Duration: x dice x 2 rounds

- ☞ Prerequisite: Elicitation (no. 7) (at least 3 dice)
- ☞ Concentration required to maintain
- ☞ 2 dice: The caster can concentrate on a magical or technological device (such as an "Eye," book, amulet, etc.) and be guided to it. The targeted device gets a magical resistance roll to avoid the spell, with its number of dice based on how powerful it is. While being guided, the caster can perform other actions, but cannot gain surprise or initiative.

#### 41. Empowering and Enervation (Ritual)

Avanthe, Dlamélish, Karakán, Vimúhla

Type: Radius    Range: Touch    Area: (dice) x 3 ft diameter circle    Duration: x dice x rounds

- ☞ 1 die: Adds 2 dice to all of the target's physical abilities. A person may be the recipient of this spell only once per day. It doesn't work on animals, androids, undead, demons, or beings animated by other-planar power.
- ☞ 3 dice: As above, but the spell now has a 10' circle of effect: 1-6 beings in the area get the increase.

- ☞ 4 dice: Range: 30 feet. All targets within the circle of effect have -2 dice to all of their physical abilities for the duration of the spell. If the target is affected by the spell, roll their hit dice base (the trait upon which their hit points are based; if none, just use two dice) two dice. If the target rolls less than the two dice, he falls unconscious for x1 minutes.

#### 42. Enhancement and Debilitation (Ritual)

Karakán, Sárku, Vimúhla

Type:            Range: Touch    Area: --    Duration: Varies  
Aimed

- ☞ Concentration required to maintain
- ☞ 1 die: Preparation time: 1 round. Converts "excellent" steel into "enchanted steel" for one item (helmet, sword, etc.) The Sárku/Durritlámish version only works on copper. The spell lasts for x1 rounds.
- ☞ 2 dice: Preparation time: 2 rounds. Converts "ordinary" and "excellent" steel into "enchanted" steel for x1 minutes.
- ☞ 3 dice: Preparation time: 2 rounds. This variant has a 30' range. The target is the victim's armor: enchanted metal is temporarily turned into a softer material, making it the equivalent of Chlen-hide, for x1 rounds. The entire suit, plus weapon, if appropriate, are affected. The defense roll is the armor's number of bonus dice against the caster's casting roll. If the casting roll had any 6's, or if the defense roll was a botch (all 1's) the armor is permanently softened unless the spell is Disenchanted before it normally would have worn off. Permanently softened armor can be restored by the 5 dice version of the Enhancement and Debilitation spell. (Permanently affected armor does not require concentration to maintain, once the spell expires.)
- ☞ 5 dice: Enchants one full suit of heavy armor, plus a weapon and/or shield, permanently. Concentration is no longer required to maintain this spell. The base metal must be "excellent" steel (or specially hardened copper for the Sárku/Durritlámish worshippers). This spell is tiring and dangerous: the caster may use no other magic for a full month. A botched casting roll will kill the caster!

#### 43. Excellence (Psychic)

Karakán, Vimúhla

Type:            Range: (dice) x 3            Area: (dice) x 3 ft            Duration: x dice x  
Aimed            feet                            diameter circle            rounds

- ☞ Concentration required to maintain
- ☞ 1 die: The target becomes a more skilled fighter, with +1 for attack and defense rolls. The spell is species-specific.
- ☞ 2 dice: The targets (1 or 2) get +2 for attack and defense rolls.
- ☞ 3 dice: All intelligent beings within the circle of effect get a bonus die for attack and defense. The caster may include herself. The caster can cast another spell while maintaining this one.

- ☞ 4 dice: As above, but every being in the target area rolls a d6 to see how many points they add to their combat rolls. This spell can be used against a single unintelligent or semi-intelligent target instead. As usual, undead, androids, automatons, demons, etc., are immune.
- ☞ 5 dice: All targets within the area who fail to resist roll d6 to see how many points they subtract from their combat rolls. All intelligent, semi-intelligent, and non-intelligent beings are affected, including the undead. Automatons, demons, androids, or sorcerously created beings are still unaffected.

#### 44. Far Seeing (Ritual)

Karakán, Vimúhla

Type:               Range: Caster only   Area: --   Duration: x dice x rounds  
Aimed

- ☞ Concentration required to maintain
- ☞ 1 die: Preparation time: 1 round. The caster becomes far-sighted: objects 300 meters away are seen as though 1 meter away. However, objects within 10 meters are blurry. The caster takes a penalty die to combat and dexterity actions.
- ☞ 2 dice: If a hostile opponent uses the 1 die version of Far Seeing on the caster or within 10' of the caster, there is a sorcery skill contest. If the caster of the 1 die version loses the contest, he is blinded for x1 rounds.

#### 45. Favouring (Ritual)

Belkhánu, Karakán, Vimúhla

Type: Radius   Range: 6 feet   Area: dice x 3 ft diameter circle   Duration: Varies

- ☞ Concentration required to maintain
- ☞ Preparation time: (dice) x minutes
- ☞ Prerequisite: Favouring (no. 9)
- ☞ 2 dice: Duration: 1 hour. Gives the recipient a pool of 7 x (spell dice) hit points. When the pool is used up (or when the spell expires), damage is accrued normally. The spell is species-specific, and a target may only receive it once a day.
- ☞ 4 dice: As above, but for 24 hours. This spell is not species-specific, but can only work on intelligent beings. The target may receive this spell twice a day, but it cannot be cast the second time until the first casting has expired or has been removed. Remember, the spell isn't healing; it creates an extra-planar skin around the recipient that absorbs damage.

#### 46. Guarding (Ritual)

Belkhánu, Hnálla, Hrü'ü, Ksárul, Sárku, Thúmis

Type:               Range: Touch   Area: (dice) x 30 ft diameter circle   Duration: Varies  
Areal

- ☞ Prerequisite: The Seal Upon the Powers (#18) and The Sphere of Impermeable Quiescence (#20).
- ☞ Concentration required to maintain

- ☞ 3 dice: Preparation time: 5 minutes. Duration: 6 hours. Creates a magic-proof circle around the caster. Although magic can be cast normally inside and outside of the circle, magic cannot cross its border. It prevents androids, automatons, creations produced by sorcery, demons, and undead from crossing, but they function normally inside the circle. The circle is immobile; it remains if the caster steps outside of it.
- ☞ 5 dice: Preparation time: 30 minutes. Duration: 24 hours. This version costs 3 shots to cast, and is used to protect temple sanctuaries, council chambers, etc. from magical espionage and attack. It is highly resistant to Disenchantment: two successful castings are needed to dispel it.

#### 47. The Hands of Kra the Mighty (Psychic)

Avanthe, Belkhánu, Dlamélish, Sárku

Type:            Range: dice x 60 feet    Area: 1 target    Duration: --  
Aimed

- ☞ A slow spell, meaning although the caster does not have to maintain it, it takes effect one die per round. If the spell does at least as much damage to the victim as the victim's armor absorbed, then the armor is crushed and useless afterwards.
- ☞ 1 die: A successful hit means the target takes x4 damage as they are seized by an invisible pincer of psychic force.
- ☞ 2 dice: A stronger variant that does x7 damage. It can smash down strong doors, break down a wall nearly two feet thick, etc. Inanimate objects also get some resistance dice.
- ☞ 3 dice: This variant can target two adjacent human-sized beings, or one large being, such as a Shén or Ahoggyá. The spell does x10 damage, and can batter down gates, break through stone walls six feet thick, topple tall trees, etc. The Warding spell (no. 71) at 5 dice will block this spell completely.

#### 48. Healing (Ritual)

Avanthe, Belkhánu, Dlamélish, Karakán, Thúmis, Vimúhla

Type:            Range: 6 feet    Area: dice x 3 feet diameter circle    Duration: --  
Aimed

- ☞ Prerequisite: Healing (no. 10) for at least 3 dice
- ☞ 1 die: The casting success x3 roll is how many hit points are recovered for as many as three adjacent human-sized targets (or two Shén/Ahoggyá sized targets, or six smaller creatures). The caster cannot be one of the targets.
- ☞ 2 dice: The caster may include herself in the area of effect.
- ☞ 3 dice: This variant heals all damage, including withered limbs, blindness and deafness, paralysis, hypnosis, and Derangement (no. 36, through 3 dice), for as many as three human-sized targets, etc.

- ✍ 5 dice: Touch range. A rare variant. It creates an artificial body for the personality (Intellect, Shadow-Self, Psychic Reservoir, and Spirit-Soul) of an intelligent being dead less than an hour. The body is completely average (2 dice for all physical capabilities) but the mental skills of the soul transfer. The new occupant must train for a month before they can use the body for combat or ritual magic. (Psychic magic may be used immediately.) This body can never be revived or have parts regenerated, although lesser healing works on it. (The DNA-matrix is too weak to sustain such effort.) The spell is species-specific (a human sorcerer creates a human body). A spirit-soul may choose to resist entering such a body, of course.

#### 49. Inscription (Ritual)

All

Type: Range: Touch Area: 1 target Duration: x 10 minutes  
Aimed

- ✍ Preparation time: 1 hour
- ✍ Prerequisite: Inscription (no. 11)
- ✍ 5 dice: As for (no. 11), except Generic spells can be transcribed. The spell can only be used by a devotee of a sect that can use the spell, even if the spell is not coded. (A worshipper of Sárku cannot read an inscribed Intrepidity (no. 50) spell, although a worshipper of Karakán or Vimúhla could.) Notice that the temples frown on distribution of Generic spells of 4 and 5 dice, and such scrolls should only be written with the approval of higher authorities of the temple.

#### 50. Intrepidity (Psychic)

Karakán, Vimúhla

Type: Range: dice x 60 feet Area: dice x 3 foot Diameter: x dice x  
Areal diameter circle rounds – 10 rounds

- ✍ Concentration required to maintain
- ✍ 2 dice: All intelligent beings (save androids, automatons, demons, the undead, and creatures created by magic) get a bonus die to their morale.
- ✍ 3 dice: As before, but they gain an extra die.
- ✍ 4 dice: Those in the area who fail to resist the spell lose three dice to their morale.

#### 51. Light and Darkness (Ritual)

Hnálla, Hrü'ü

Type: Radius Range: 90 feet Area: 10 foot diameter circle Duration: Instant

- ✍ Prerequisite: At least 3 dice known of Light and Darkness (No. 13)
- ✍ 1 die: A soundless flash of blinding light (Hnálla) or impenetrable darkness (Hrü'ü) that permanently blinds any targets within the area of effect. Targets each get to roll magical resistance dice against the caster's success roll to avoid the effect. This blindness can be cured by a 4 die Universal Healing spell (no. 10), 3 die generic Healing spell (no. 48), or 5 die Temple Healing spell (no. 146). This spell only affects living targets: undead, androids, and demons are immune.



**52. The Missile of Metállja (Psychic)**

Ksáru, Thúmis

Type: Range: dice x 40 feet Area: Varies Duration: Varies  
 Aimed

- ☞ Prerequisite: At least 4 dice in Translocation (no. 22).
- ☞ 2 dice: A silent bolt of psychic force against a single target. The caster may choose to stun or kill. If stunning, the victim is stunned for x1 minutes. If killing, the bolt does x2 damage, but the defender gets no armor or other means to reduce the damage.
- ☞ 3 dice: As above, but with a 10' diameter circle of effect.

**53. Necromantic Domination (Ritual)**

Ksáru, Sáru, Thúmis

Type: Range: dice x 40 feet Area: dice x 5 feet Duration: x5 minutes  
 Aimed diameter circle

- ☞ 1 die: Gives crude control over unintelligent undead, such as Mrúr and Shédra. The target can be ordered to flee, fight allies, or remain immobile. Notice that this spell does not require concentration to maintain. The undead may attempt to resist, based on their intelligence and size: start with 1 die for most (semi-intelligent) undead to resist, and add a die for every die of combat ability above 3. Jági resistance dice can be computed as for intelligent beings.
- ☞ 2 dice: Gives better control, and also affects more intelligent undead. Targets can be ordered to lead the caster, fight for the caster, and perform simple tasks. Notice that very simple undead, such as Mrúr, are not capable of more than this. The undead will not follow some orders, including self destruction, fighting other undead controlled by the caster, or entering brightly lit rooms or areas inhabited by the living.
- ☞ 5 dice: A high powered version of the spell that grants nearly full control over as many as two undead for twenty-four hours. However, the spell can only be used against a particular target once. At the end of twelve hours, the target(s) must be ordered to leave, or they will do their best to kill the caster. The caster may attempt to kill the target(s) before the spell expires.

**54. Nimbleness (Psychic)**

Avanthe, Dlamélish, Karakán, Vimúhla

Type: Range: dice x 30 feet Area: 1 target Duration: x1 minutes  
 Aimed

- ☞ 1 die: Grants the target an extra die to roll on all agility skills.
- ☞ 2 dice: An offensive spell; the target has one less die for all agility skills.
- ☞ 3 dice: As for the two dice variant, but affects all within a 10' diameter circle for a full 24 hours. This spell can be removed by a proper Disenchantment, of course.

**55. Nutrification (Ritual)**

Avanthe, Dlamélish

Type: Aimed      Range: dice x 40 feet      Area: dice x 5 feet diameter circle      Duration: x5 minutes

- ☞ Prerequisite: At least 3 dice in Nutrification (No. 14).
- ☞ 4 dice: Preparation time: 2 minutes. Creates a sumptuous feast (of food and drinks known to the caster) suitable for (x1) individuals. The meal appears ten feet in front of the caster, and lasts until consumed or for 20 minutes, whichever comes first.
- ☞ 5 dice: Preparation time: 5 minutes. As above, but for (x5) individuals, and the caster may make the food suitable for animals or other species. As noted in spell no. 14, people are suspicious of magical food, so this spell can't be used easily.

### 56. Perception of the Energies (Ritual)

Belkhánu, Hnálla, Ksáru, Sárku, Thúmis

Type: Radius      Range: Caster Only      Area: Varies      Duration: Varies

- ☞ Prerequisite: At least 2 dice in Perception of the Energies (No. 15).
- ☞ Requires concentration to maintain.
- ☞ 1 die: Preparation time: 1 minute. As for the 2 die version of Perception of the Energies (No. 15), but with an area of a 40 foot diameter circle, and lasting for five minutes.
- ☞ 2 dice: Preparation time: 2 minutes. The caster can detect if a spell has been cast on a being, including undead, androids, demons, etc., within the area of effect (a 10 foot diameter circle). The caster sees a faint, glittering halo of light around ensorcelled creatures. The caster can recognize if the spell is friendly, hostile, or neutral [cast by Stability or Change] to her, but not the exact nature of the spell. It lasts for five minutes.
- ☞ 4 dice: Preparation time: 5 minutes. The spell blocks the effects of lower level versions of Perception of the Energies. This spell can sometimes be penetrated: for example, Pí'ur casts Perception of the Energies (no. 56) on himself to hide a Control of Self spell, and Aís wishes to see if Pí'ur has any enchantments on him. She casts Perception of the Energies (also no. 56) at 2 dice on him. Both Pí'ur and Aís have four dice of sorcerous ability. Pí'ur and Aís roll a sorcery contest, rolling their sorcerous ability dice. Pí'ur rolls 15; Aís rolls 13. Aís fails to penetrate Pí'ur's defense, and detects no magic on him. If Aís rolls better than Pí'ur, she knows that he has this defensive spell on him, and the Perception of the Energies must be dispelled to see if there are any other spells hiding underneath. This spell can be cast on others up to five feet away, and lasts for an hour.

### 57. Pestilence (Ritual)

Avanthe, Dlamélish, Sárku

Type: Aimed      Range: dice x 4 feet      Area: dice x 3 foot diameter circle      Duration: —

- ☞ 1 die: The victim is immediately incapacitated with a deadly, contagious disease. Death is inevitable within two minutes unless an Alleviation spell (nos. 1 or 29) or Disenchantment (no. 5) is cast. Anybody touching the victim or his possessions has a 50% chance of becoming infected. (Notice that a successful Alleviation or Disenchantment will not infect the curer.) The plague is species specific, but other species can transmit the infection if they touch the body, then touch someone else without washing first. The plague is easily recognized by huge bluish welts, and the rapid decay of the victim's corpse. Notice that Disenchantment will eradicate the disease (no further contagion), while Alleviation cures the symptoms (a cured target has infected gear). Infected equipment has a 30% chance of transmitting infection unless burned or washed thoroughly with water and Vé paste (a soapy substance that works as a disinfectant).
- ☞ 2 dice: As above but more powerful: multiple victims may be infected, the chance of contagion rises to 70% (50% for infected equipment).

### 58. Phantasms (Ritual)

Avanthe, Belkhánu, Dlamélish, Hrü'ü, Ksárul, Thúmis

Type: Radius    Range: dice x 4 feet    Area: [(dice) + 3] x 10 ft    Duration: x [dice + 3] rounds

- ☞ Prerequisite: At least three dice in Phantasms (no. 16)
- ☞ Requires concentration to maintain.
- ☞ 1 die: As for the 3 die version of Phantasms (no. 16), but the 1-5 apparitions wear heavy chlen-hide armor (stops 2 dice). They have 3 dice of combat ability, do x3 damage.
- ☞ 2 dice: Creates 1 - 2 large simulacra, the size of a Shén or large animal, of any form that the caster has seen or knows about. No matter what they look like, they have 4 dice of combat ability, armor that stops 2 dice of damage, 35 hit points, and do x3 damage.
- ☞ 4 dice: Creates 1 or 2 (roll a die) still larger and more frightening monsters, of any appearance the caster desires. These huge creatures have 5 dice of combat ability, do x4 damage, have 50 hit points, and armor that stops 3 dice of damage.
- ☞ 5 dice: Creates one truly stupendous creation, as large as a Sró. It has 7 dice of combat ability, does x5 damage, 60 hit points, armor that stops 4 dice of damage.

### 59. Prorogation (Psychic)

Avanthe, Dlamélish, Hrü'ü, Ksárul, Sárku, Thúmis

Type: Aimed    Range: dice x 40 feet    Area: dice x 5 feet diameter circle    Duration: Varies

- ☞ 1 die: Slows down target's perceptions. The target moves at half speed, getting one action every other round, for x1 rounds. The spell works on intelligent beings, including undead, but not on animals, semi-intelligent beings, demons, androids, or beings created by sorcery.
- ☞ 2 dice: As above, but the duration is x2 rounds.

### 60. The Radiant Gaze (Ritual)

Karakán, Vimúhla

Type: Range: dice x 60 feet Area: dice x 3 feet diameter circle Duration: —  
Aimed

- ☞ 1 die: A hissing blast of flame (scarlet for Karakán, orange-red for Vimúhla) does x1 damage to the target. Armor will reduce damage. Flammable substances can ignite 50% of the time.
- ☞ 2 dice: As above, doing x2 damage, and armor is only half effective (round down), and flammable substances have a 75% chance of igniting.
- ☞ 3 dice: As above, but doing x3 damage.
- ☞ 4 dice: As above, but doing x4 damage, with an 85% chance of igniting flammables.
- ☞ 5 dice: A large blast of flame. As above, doing x5 damage. Even if the target successfully resists the spell, the flames have a 90% chance of igniting flammables (and the target may take damage from the resulting fire).

### 61. Reanimation (Ritual)

Hrü'ü, Sárku

Type: Range: Touch Area: dice x 3 feet diameter circle Duration: —  
Aimed

- ☞ 5 dice: Preparation time: ten minutes. The primary purpose of this spell is to keep a deceased comrade mobile until a revivification is possible. Summons the Intelligence, Shadow-Self, and Psychic Reservoir (but not the Spirit-Soul) of a dead person is returned to their body, provided they have not been dead for more than a week. The reanimated body is definitely dead: wounds have not healed, the skin has a greyish cast, and it smells faintly of decay. All mental faculties are intact, but physical abilities are halved (round down). After a week of reanimation, the body begins to rot again, losing about -1 to hit points and physical skills each day. After a total of two weeks, the body dies again, and cannot be reanimated again (although it can be made undead). As long as the reanimated body is still functional, a revivification spell can be successful. The sorcerer who casts this spell cannot cast any more ritual spells as long as this body "lives," although psychic spells are permitted. Notice that the deceased need not be reanimated into their original body; the corpse does not get any magical resistance. Reanimated sorcerers may not use ritual magic. This spell is species-specific.

### 62. Sagacity (Ritual)

Ksáru, Sárku, Thúmis

Type: Range: (dice) x 20 Area: Duration: x dice minutes  
Aimed ft

- ☞ 1 die: Boosts memory and intelligence. Gives the target a bonus die on any intelligence or memory skill. The spell is species specific.
- ☞ 2 dice: A hostile version; gives the target a penalty die on any intelligence or memory skill. The spell is species specific.

- ☞ 3 dice: An improved version of the 1-die version of the spell: it affects a 10 foot diameter circle; all targets within the circle receive an additional die on any intelligence or memory skill. This version is *not* species specific.
- ☞ 4 dice: The victim has their intelligence reduced to a bare minimum for an hour. He or she must be guided, instructed, and cared for. Healing and Alleviation are useless; on Disenchantment (no. 5) can remove this spell before it expires.

**63. Semblences (Psychic)**

Belkhánu, Dlamélish, Hnálla, Hrü'ü, Sárku

Type: Radius      Range: (dice) x 30 ft      Area: (dice) x 10 foot diameter circle      Duration: x dice rounds

- ☞ Requires concentration to maintain
- ☞ 1 die: Creates an illusion in the target area. If the spell is successful, the target believes it, and suffers the effects of the illusion (including any damage), although no real body damage is done. Targets may see a raging fire and die, believing they have burned to death, although their bodies remain unharmed. The spell only works on intelligent beings, but Tinalíya and Hlutrgú are immune for unknown reasons, as are undead, androids, automatons, creatures created by magic, demons, etc. Animals and semi-intelligent beings are also unaffected. If victims have reason to suspect an illusion, they can roll their magical resistance, plus a bonus die for each die in an intelligence trait, against the caster's successful score can be attempted to free them from the illusion. The illusion itself can only be dispelled by Disenchantment (no. 5). If the referee considers the illusion to be difficult to believe, she may make the spell harder to cast (increase the difficulty of casting).
- ☞ 2 dice: As above, with longer range, larger area of effect, and longer duration. In addition, targets either believe the spell or not; no "disbelief" roll is permitted, even if victims know it is a Semblance; Disenchantment must be used.

**64. The Silver Halo of Soul Stealing (Ritual)**

Belkhánu, Hrü'ü

Type: Aimed      Range: (dice) x 50 ft      Area: (dice) x 2 foot diameter circle      Duration: —

- ☞ 3 dice: Preparation time: 2 rounds. A glittering circlet of energy spins through the air to strike its target. The target does not get to include cover, dodging or any other physical defense in his magical resistance roll (although steel armor may be added). If the magical resistance roll fails, the spell has hit, and the target gets a second magical resistance roll (taking steel and will into account, but not dodging or cover) to avoid the effect. If he fails, the target's Spirit-Soul is whisked away forever into the Unending Grey, leaving behind a mindless automaton of a body whose every action must be commanded. Only Revivification (no. 76) or Re-embodiment (no. 88) will restore the Spirit-Soul. The spell can be blocked by Warding (nos. 24 and 71), The Seal Upon the Powers (no. 18) The Muniments of Excellence (no. 75) and other spells that block ritual magic. Undead, automatons, androids, demons, etc. are unaffected by this spell.
- ☞ 5 dice: Preparation time: 3 rounds. As above, but the target does not get a second magical resistance roll.

### 65. The Speculum of Retribution (Ritual)

Avanthe, Dlamélish, Hnálla, Hrü'ü, Karakán, Ksáru, Sárku, Thúmis

Type: Range: Touch Area: Caster only Duration: (dice) x minutes  
Aimed

- ☞ Requires concentration to maintain
- ☞ 1 die: Preparation time: 2 rounds. Creates an invisible shield around the caster. Before casting, the sorcerer must decide if the spell will block ritual or psychic magic for its duration. When cast, if the caster succeeds in defending against hostile spells (Aimed only) of the chosen type only, then the spell is flung back at the original caster, who will take the full effect if she doesn't resist her own spell. The Speculum can block spells from books or scrolls, but effects from "Eyes," amulets, or other magical devices. The caster may move and fight normally while this spell is in effect.
- ☞ 2 dice: Preparation time: 3 rounds. As above, but the spell blocks both psychic and ritual magics.

### 66. Stealth (Psychic)

Belkhánu, Hrü'ü, Ksáru, Sárku

Type: Range: Caster Area: dice x 3 feet Duration: (dice) x minutes  
Aimed diameter circle

- ☞ Requires concentration to maintain
- ☞ 1 die: Preparation time: 1 round. The caster moves in complete silence, giving a penalty die to those trying to track the caster.
- ☞ 2 dice: Preparation time: 2 rounds. The spell can include more individuals than the caster, and those trying to track the spell recipients lose a die to their tracking skill.
- ☞ 3 dice: Preparation time: 1 minute. The spell can include more individuals, and those trying to track the caster lose two dice to their tracking skill.

### 67. Tranquilisation (Ritual)

Avanthe, Belkhánu, Hnálla

Type: Range: Caster Area: Varies Duration: Varies  
Aimed

- ☞ Requires concentration to maintain
- ☞ 3 dice: Preparation time: 1 minute. The caster creates a thirty foot circle of calm. Rain, wind, snow do not enter the zone; ocean waves and earthquakes are stilled within the area of effect. The spell lasts for twenty minutes.
- ☞ 5 dice: Preparation time: five minutes. The circle of effect is one hundred feet, and the spell lasts for an hour. There is a 25% chance that a storm or disturbance will cease completely during the spell, but it may resume afterwards. This spell is often used by sorcerers hired to accompany ships.

### 68. Vallation (Ritual)

All

Type:           Range: Caster   Area: 10' x 10' wall   Duration: 3 minutes  
Areal

4 dice: A wall of other-planar substance appears 3 feet in front of the caster and begins moving directly away from her 2' per second (6' each round) until the spell expires, or the wall reaches a major obstruction (a wall, a pit, stairs, another Vallation, a large stationary object.) (Notice that the full range of the wall's movement, if not blocked, is 360 feet.) The wall is 10' x 10' by 3' thick, although it will be smaller if there is not enough room for it. A being in the wall's path will be struck by the wall. The damage procedure is slightly complex: first the character rolls their magical resistance against the caster's success roll (counting steel armor and will, but not movement or dodging). The difference between the caster's success score and the defender's magical resistance is noted. Then, the caster rolls a d6 for the multiplier for this difference; the result is the damage the defender takes. The wall will smash the victim down, and then pass over, only doing damage on the round that it strikes. Undead, androids, and other material beings take damage; creatures summoned by sorcery are dispelled when struck by the wall. The spell blocks all physical damage, including missiles (and including missiles hurled by the Translocation spell (no. 22). Vallation also blocks the following spells: Doomkill (no. 39), The Hands of Krá the Mighty (no. 47), The Missile of Metállja (no. 52), The Radiant Gaze (no. 60), The Silver Halo of Soul Stealing (no. 64), the Speculum of Retribution (no. 65), and the Vapour of Death (no. 69). If two opposing Vallations meet, their caster's spell success scores are compared. The lower-scored Vallation is dissipated, while the higher-scored Vallation continues unimpeded. If there is a tie, both spells are halted in place, and each round, their casters roll their sorcerous ability dice until one side wins. The appearance and substance of a Vallation varies by the caster's religious affiliation. Notice that each variant has advantages or disadvantages combating opposing Vallations.

- ☞ *Avánthe*: Water. Gains +2 when opposing a Vallation of Fire.
- ☞ *Belkhánu*: Wind. Gains +2 against a Vallation of Indigo Fog. In addition, when it encounters a Vapour of Death spell (no. 69), it sends it back to its caster.
- ☞ *Dlamélish*: Poisonous, writhing serpents. Gains +2 when opposing a Vallation of Grey Mist. Any victim struck by the wall, in addition to the regular damage, will die in the next round unless cured by an Alleviation spell (nos. 1 or 29).
- ☞ *Hnálla*: Calm. Gains +2 when opposing a Vallation of Wind.
- ☞ *Hrü'ü*: Ice. Gains +2 when opposing a Vallation of Water.
- ☞ *Karakán*: Clashing Swords. Gains +2 when opposing a Vallation of Serpents.
- ☞ *Ksáru*: Indigo Fog. Gains +2 when opposing a Vallation of Calm.
- ☞ *Sárku*: Grave Earth, a rolling avalanche of dirt, cerement, bits of bone, and wriggling worms. Gains +2 when opposing a Vallation of Swords.
- ☞ *Thúmis*: Grey Mist. Gains +2 when opposing a Vallation of Grave Earth.
- ☞ *Vimúhla*: Fire. Gains +2 when opposing a Vallation of Ice, with a 75% chance of setting all inflammables ablaze when touching them.

### 69. The Vapour of Death (Ritual)

Hrü'ü, Ksáru, Sárku, Vimúhla





- ☞ 2 dice: Preparation time: 2 rounds. As above, with longer duration and larger area.
- ☞ 3 dice: Preparation time: 4 rounds. As above, but including wisps of yellowish gas. This yellow gas will dissolve Chlen-hide into sticky goo at once, unless the chlen hide is soaked in water before the gas arrives. Steel and copper are degraded one level: enchanted metals lose their enchantment, and unenchanted metals become corroded. All four temples use this variant.

### 70. Vistations of Other Planes (Ritual)

Belkhánu, Hnálla, Hrü'ü, Ksárul, Sárku, Thúmis

Type:	Range: Caster	Area: (dice) x 5 feet	Duration: (dice) x 30
Areal		diameter circle	seconds

- ☞ Requires concentration to maintain
- ☞ 2 dice: The caster detects Nexus Points within the area of effect, if there are any. (Note that there may be wandering Nexus Points, usually about 5% of the time.) The caster may move and fight, but cannot cast any more ritual spells while this spell is in effect.
- ☞ 4 dice: As above, but in addition to detecting Nexus Points, the caster can now open them, although she will not know what's on the other side. The Nexus Point is big enough to accept an Ahoggyá, Black Ssú, or Shén, but not larger or bulkier objects. The party must enter in single file, no more than one person per round. The caster must be the last to enter, because the Nexus closes after she does.
- ☞ 5 dice: As above, but the caster has a rough idea of what lies on the other side: is there breathable air, or immediate harm on the other side. The Nexus is larger, able to accept two humans at a time.

### 71. Warding (Ritual)

Hnálla, Hrü'ü, Karakán, Vimúhla

Type:	Range: Varies	Area: Varies	Duration: Varies
Areal			

- ☞ Prerequisite: At least 3 dice of Warding (no. 24)
- ☞ 3 dice: As for the 3 dice Universal version (no. 24), creates a cylindrical defensive shield ten feet in diameter. Blows and missiles cannot penetrate, but slow moving objects and gases do. It takes (dice + 2) rounds to penetrate, but once inside, long, one-handed weapons may be used. The shield moves with the caster, who may cast spells through it. Unlike the Universal version, the occupants can attack out with hand weapons (but not missile weapons, even those wielded by Translocation (no. 22)). The warding normally moves with the caster, but the caster may choose to leave the area, leaving the shield behind. If the caster leaves the Warding, it will no longer move, even if the caster re-enters it (taking (dice + 2) rounds to do so.) Concentration is required to maintain this spell.

- ✍ 5 dice: Preparation time: 10 minutes. This version covers a circle 1000 feet in diameter, and has a range of up to 60 feet. It is cast upon buildings or other constructions (or natural formations) of stone, brick, earth, etc. The target is protected against magic and ancient devices, but non-permanent items, such as furniture or beings inside, are not. For example, if a house protected by this spell is targeted by a Doomkill (no. 39), the occupants may all be slain and the house's contents destroyed, but the house itself will stand intact. This spell is for protecting fortifications, cities, and so forth against magic. The priesthoods who possess this spell make the rounds of their cities, casting this spell on important buildings. Buildings protected by this spell are affected normally by physical attacks, such as artillery. This spell lasts for a week. It is said that the priesthood of Hnálla have even more powerful versions of this spell, but these are not taught to anybody but the most advanced sorcerers.

## 72. Zoic Domination (Ritual)

Avanthe, Dlamélish

Type: Aimed	Range: (dice) x 50 ft plus 50 ft.	Area: (dice) x 10 foot diameter circle	Duration: x dice rounds x 2
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- ✍ Prerequisite: At least 2 dice in Zoic Domination (no. 25)
- ✍ 1 die: Allows for crude control over one large creature, such as a Sérudla or Sró, or several smaller animals who fit into the area of effect. The largest sea creatures, such as the Akhó, are unaffected. Control means an animal can be forced to flee, freeze, or fight others.
- ✍ 2 dice: As for the 1 die variant, but can even control the large sea creatures, if their main body fits within the area of effect.
- ✍ 3 dice: Allows finer control of animals up to human size. Targets can be commanded to accompany the caster, assist in tasks (such as digging a hole, knocking down a tree, etc.), warn of intruders, scout for food, and so on, up to the capabilities of the creature. Alternately, the spell can be used to control all the small animals and insects within the area of effect and direct them to a single task. They all get a single, combined, magical resistance.

# Usenánu: The Great and Powerful City of Two Rivers

Located near the convergence of the Arjáshttra and Missúma rivers, this ancient city sits in the center of the breadbasket of the Empire. The production and distribution of foodstuffs begins here and extends out to all parts of Tsolyánu and beyond.

It is one week before the Intercalary Days and the view from my guest quarters at the Temple of Avánthe is beautiful. The sky blue roof combs, with gilded edges of gold, tower over the many adjacent buildings. Usenánu's picturesque ancient gray walls undulate up and down around its perimeter serving as a ring band. The strongholds of the other gods are set around like colorful sidestones to the central gem of this temple.

Outside the northern wall are the low White Feather hills. The nearer rises are burrowed everywhere for the dead. A thin blue veil of haze covers them in the glory of the early morning light. All memories of disappointment vanish before this wealth of light.

The central part of the city is filled with streets of staid, aristocratic dullness inhabited by wealthy merchants. I spent some morning hours in the nearby central haudárukh; thronged with humans and other species from morning till night with only a short break around noon to escape the oppressive heat. Here representatives from the various clans show samples of their wares. The actual production of these goods is performed at the respective clanhouses located on the specialty streets scattered throughout the city. Most orders taken here are for large quantities to be delivered later, or are for sale to the neighboring population who do not wish to travel across the city.

Two dháibakh is the standard width of the street, and between the passersby, the loungers, the people standing at stalls bargaining, and the marching troops, traveling through the city can be difficult. Passage through the crowd was one long gentle push as the participants automatically scanned each other for status and decided who gave way to whom. Once, as my hired bearers were elbowing a path through the surrounding horde, I was surprised by a loud yell, and being gracelessly hustled out of the way, I became aware that the crowd has yielded to a procession, consisting of several ceremonially armed men in white, followed by a handsome closed palanquin, borne by eight bearers in white livery, in which reclined a stout, magnificently dressed Patriarch of Hnálla, utterly oblivious of his inferiors. The representative of high position, he was reading and never took any notice of the crowds and glitter which I find so fascinating. More men in white followed, and then the crowd closed up. After chastising the bearers for their clumsy attempt to get out of the way, the crowd was again divided by my middle clan chair. Other groups vying for openings included Belkhánu temple workers running with a coffin three dháibakh long, shaped like the trunk of a tree, and slaves carrying burdens slung on poles, uttering deafening cries, a marriage procession with songs and music, and a funeral procession with weeping and wailing, succeeding each other incessantly. All the people in the streets were shouting at the top of their voices, the chair and baggage slaves were yelling, and to complete the bewildering din the Avánthe priests at every corner were demanding piety by striking two blocks of wood together.

Color erupts in these constricted streets, with their high houses projecting upper stories over the throng. Their eaves are heavily carved and gilded in between the river shell tiles that let through a soft light to the streets below, while a sky of deep bright blue fills up the narrow slit between. In the near-shadow below, fitfully lighted by the sunbeams, hanging from all the second stories are the richly painted boards two to three dháibakh long. Some are black, some heavily gilded, a few orange, but the majority blue and perfectly plain, except for the glyphs several hóikh long identifying the clan down the middle of each, gold on the blue and black, and black on the gold and blue.

Now, the entire crowd is in holiday dress. The prevailing color is bright blue. Even the slaves put on such dress when not working, and all above the low clans wear them in rich, ribbed güdru, lined with thésun of a darker shade. And these prosperous-looking men, who are so richly dressed, are only the shopkeepers and the middle clans of merchants. The high clansfolk seldom put their feet to the ground and thus avoid soiling their fine gold-and-silver arzhúm.

The shops newly filled with all sorts of brilliant and enticing things in anticipation of the great festivals. During the Intercalary Days they are all closed, and the rich merchant clans vie with each other in keeping them so. Those, whose shops are closed the longest, sometimes even for two months, gain a great reputation for their wealth.

Near the temples the streets are given up to shops of one kind or another. Thus there is the "Jade-Stone Street," entirely dedicated to the making and sale of jade-stone jewelry, which is very costly and much desired by the Green-Eyed Goddess at the Lady's nearby place of worship. There is another whole street devoted to the sale of coffins; several in which nothing is sold but furniture, from common folding tables up to the costliest tables, bedsteads, and chairs of massive serésh carving; pottery streets, book and engraving streets, streets of thésun shops, streets of workers in bronze, silver, and gold, who perform their delicate manipulations before your eyes; streets of tailors, where gorgeous mantles of khéshchal plumes can be bought; and so on, every street blazing with colors, splendid with costume, and abounding with wealth and variety.

There are hundreds of butcher and fishmonger clans' shops in Usenánu. At the former there are always hundreds of split and salted fowl hanging on lines, and hmá of various sizes roasted whole, or sold in joints raw. The fish shops and stalls are legion, but the fish looks sickening, as it is always cut into slices and covered with blood. The boiled skin of a species of large worm is exposed for sale as a great delicacy, and so are certain kinds of hairless, fleshy insects.

In my wanderings I came upon a shop of the Green Opal Clan, with its vestibule hung with scarlet, the chosen marriage color of the wedding party. Within the door the "wedding garments" were hanging for the wedding guests, scarlet güdru cloth, richly embroidered. Some time later the bridal procession swept through the streets, adding a new glory to the color and movement. First marched a troop of men in scarlet who carried scarlet banners, each one emblazoned with the great deeds of the bride's clan. Then came ten heavily gilded, carved and decorated pavilions, each containing marriage presents and borne on poles on the shoulders of slaves. After this display of glory and wealth, came the bride, carried in a locked palanquin to the bridegroom's clanhouse, completely shrouded, the palanquin was one mass of decoration in gold and blue enamel, the carving fully ten hóikh deep. The procession was closed by a crowd of men in scarlet, carrying the groom's clan's stern-faced dlántukoi, with banners, and instruments of music.

I have also visited the strange and ever-shifting waterfront, which is one of the most marvelous features of this city. Floating and stationary, with about one hundred thousand residents, its population is subtly distinct in race from the land population of Usenánu, which looks down upon it from its dome shaped heights. The hruchánmekh I have enclosed give a very good idea of the forms and colors of the boats.

A short distance below Usenánu's city center the piers of the maritime clans maintain their large, two-storied clanhouse boats, with entrance doors two dháibakh high, always open, and doorways of rich wood carving, through which the interiors of the first deck can be seen with their richly decorated altars, innumerable colored lamps, sitting mats and tables of carved serésh wood with white marble set into the top. Embroidered thésun hangings, gilded mirrors and cornices, and all the extravagances of Tsolyáni luxury complete this display of wealth and power. Many of them have gardens on their roofs. These are called flower boats, and are fragrant and colorful. Then there are the outlying tiers of three-roomed, comfortable house boats used to avoid the summer heat and crowding near the docks. Marriage boats, with banners announcing the most recent union; long distance river transports, with their carved and castellated sterns; bird boats, with their noisy inmates; florist clan's boats, with platforms of growing plants for sale; two-storied barges, with open sides, floating brothels, in which evening entertainments are given with much light and noise; food preparation boats, with soot covered gilt, from which proceeds an incessant stream of noise and cooking smoke; washing boats, market boats, floating shops, which supply the river clans with all marketable commodities and services; boats from Béy Sü, Haumá and Jakálla of fantastic form coming in on every wind and current.

There are fishing craft with big, stylized eyes on either side of the bow, without which they could not see their way. These unwieldy-looking vessels are sailed with an amount of noise and apparent confusion which is absolutely shocking to anyone unused to nautical travel. The rudder projects astern one and one-half dháibakh or more, the masts are single poles, the large sails of fine cloth; and what with their triangular shape, rich coloring, lattice work and carving are the most pleasing craft afloat. Then there are "passage boats" that service the sákbe road crossing and the entire network of rivers and canals, each clan having its special rig and build, recognizable at once by the initiated. These sail when they can, and when they can't are propelled by large sweeps, each of which is worked by six men who stand on a platform outside. These boats are always heavily laden, crowded with passengers and they carry crews of from thirty-five to fifty men.

Unlike the dilapidated dwellings of the nearby poor clans on shore, the clanboats are models of cleanliness, and space is efficiently utilized. These boats, which contain neat rooms with matted seats by day, turn into beds at night. The children have separate quarters. The men go on shore during the day and tend to the clan's work, but the women seldom land and are devoted to their own duties. However, in the transport clans the women have a more visible role. They are seen at all hours of day and night flying over the water, plying for hire at the landings, and ferrying goods and passengers. As strong as men, they are clean, and pleasant-looking. With one at the stern and one at the bow, they send the hull along with skilled and sturdy strokes. Their dress is made from a simple dark brown or blue cloth. The feet are big and bare; the hair is neat and drawn back from the face into a stiff roll that accentuates the display of their large turquoise ear plugs. These women often ply the heavy oars with a wise-looking baby on their backs, supported by square pieces of blue cloth embroidered in gold and red thésun.

I went to several temples which have priestly dormitories attached to them, with great tidy gardens and ponds for sacred fish. The temple of Avánthe even has houses for sacred hmélu, whose sacredness is shown by their monstrous obesity. Each temple has an accretion of smaller temples or shrines round it, but most, just before the Intercalary Days, are deserted. Where I saw worshipers they were always women, some of whom looked very earnest, as they were worshiping for sick children, or to obtain boys, or for the fortune of their clan. Priests and priestesses were always available to the worshippers for guidance in the rituals. Other clergy were concerned with obscure ceremonies to their gods such as the priest in front of the Temple of Thúmis who has a growth like a horn on his forehead, with which he struck the pavestones and produced an audible thump.

In the district of the Temples of Change is the outer court of the "Sanctuary of Pleasures," which is surrounded by a number of grated cells containing life-sized figures of painted wood, undergoing at the hands of other figures such torture as are decreed for certain ceremonies to Hriháyal. In the evening there is a perpetual crowd of fortune-tellers and numbers of various gaming tables always thronged with players.

Such sights remind me of my own duties back at the temple of "The Maiden of Beauty" where I must now prepare for the twilight ceremonies.

# Market

## Red Star Clan

The bezóar stone is found in the dgúr bladder or stomach of the hmá. They also occur in other animals, especially ruminants, but those are not as prized. Sometimes they are brittle and light, sometimes heavy and hard. As a medicine they are highly regarded and are very expensive. The bezóar is regarded as an infallible universal remedy against poisoning and against all kinds of ailments. It is sufficient to wear a stone or dip it into a drink one was about imbibe.



The Red Star clan has a special arrangement with the Silver Collar clan to custom make ornamental pieces of jewelry for your use. For a significant amount more, a piece can be commissioned at The Red Eye of Dawn clan.

## Iron Fist Clan

Not every sword hit to the head will penetrate the skull; instead they often leave a sizeable dent. Under the dent there might be hemorrhaging, caused by the rupturing of local blood vessels as a result of the impact. In order to treat that bleeding and the associated pressure on the brain the Iron Fist clan offers this "Reliever of Indentations" for battlefield surgery, with which you can place over the injured area, turn the key to screw in the sharpened point thus raising the dented cranium. This model comes in sword quality steel and a much less expensive hardened copper.



## Emerald Circlet Clan



The poorer followers of the Green Eyed Lady often wear this "Pendant of Qodhúr" as a symbol of their faith and to identify themselves to others of their belief. If prominently displayed it is a signal that a liaison would be welcomed. The device is crudely cast in bronze and is thus affordable to the masses. Finely carved examples made of gold can be purchased upon request.



#### Staff of Beneficence Clan

These enucleation and evisceration spoons are useful in the scooping out of eyes from their sockets. Designed purely for medical use, there are rumours that they have been used for darker purposes during even darker rituals. Neither the clan nor the Temple of Keténgku are pleased with this possibility and buyers of these items are closely scrutinized.



#### Round Rock Clan

A beautifully crafted kilt frontpiece made from dyed hmá wool and metallic thread. The iconography is a complex representation of thunder and lightning and is fashionable with the local worshippers of Karakán. This is a favorite gift from female followers of Avánthe to their War God worshipping lovers.



#### Open Sepulchre Clan

An aílur of the Temple of Sárku. These votive statues are made from copper and are used as sacrifices during a particular high holy day at the temple. Once per year the great verdigris clad doors of the Shrine of the Aspect Véshkuru are opened for the "Casting of the Copper". Worshippers stand at the entry and toss in their offerings. They are rewarded with a release of heat from deep below the surface of the temple accompanied by the smell of the great living fires that melt and form the contributions into instruments useful to the Worm Lord. They are very popular amongst the mining and smithing clans and are considered a valuable part of a young clan girl's dowry.



### Purple Gem Clan

This high quality scribed representation of Tuléng can be cut from the paper, folded and the tabs glued under to form a ten sided representation of the original piece of High Cartography that resides in the Governor's Palace.



# Treatise of the Everflowing Water of Life

**From the Halls of the God of Engineers and Architects**

**Under Seal of the High Prefect of the Temple of Keténgku in Usenánu**

**'Treatise of the Everflowing Water of Life'**

The pure and fresh water, the heat and light shall circulate like the various fluids whose movement and maintenance are necessary to ensure life. The secretions will not mysteriously be placed there, and maintenance of public health shall be accomplished without disturbing the order of the city and spoiling its outer beauty.

Edict 1294

Governor of Usenánu

Since the settlement's inception, its lifeline of water depended on the flow of the Arjáhstra and Missúma rivers. Over time, canals and great reservoirs were built to the north of the city to gather and hold the water and to provide a location for the "Great Headworks of Keténgku" that marks the beginning of the extensive plumbing system of city.

Human excretions of the order of 600,000 tsértse of urine and 200,000 tnáng of fecal matter per day require an adequate system of collection and disposal. The society, thus, has a constant threat of health hazards and epidemics. Potable water is available to everyone inside of the city walls and to most environs immediately outside the walls and the harbor area. Sewerage facilities are available to more than 70 per cent of the urban population in urban areas but only 10 per cent of rural population has access to flush latrines.

From the earliest times, water tunnels from the city tapped into the connection located just outside the northern city walls. As in other cities, access to the water supply had to be ensured against enemy invaders who conceivably could cut off the supply above ground. The early inhabitants initially tried to sink secure well shafts within the city walls, straight down to the water's source, but couldn't. Their tools were no match for the hardness of the rock. Instead, they had to dig vertically and horizontally, first eking out a dark, angular tunnel. The tunnel descended by a treacherous flight of stone steps hewn from the rock; in essence a spiral staircase around a 10 dháiba shaft, down and around to a huge natural cave outside the original walls of the city. At the far end of the 17 dháiba long x 6 dháiba high x 3.5 dháiba wide cave, the diggers finally tapped the spring whose water still bubbles to this day far below the Great Temple of Avánthe.

The first major modification to the early city's water supply was the excavation of a new tunnel even further away, to access water to the city, store the supply in an underground pool, and hide the entrance of the river. This was an attempt to thwart a possible siege of the city. Aqueducts are generally laid underground, sometimes to a depth of 14 dháiba. Some are broad enough to accommodate two men walking abreast. While the great cities of the plains are relatively flat compared to other Tsolyani cities, they still have the characteristic domed shape resulting from the process of ditlána performed over the millennia. The top level of the city has slowly raised itself up from the original pipes requiring new connections to be made to the sewers. The Wicker Image Clan is kept employed flushing the pipes and raising the potable water from the now very deep sources connected with the surface through large wells.

The low cartography maps below were prepared to help guide the sweeper clan through the tunnels in order to perform their duties.

The actual construction of the water lines was epic in its proportion. During one excavation it took two teams of workers of the Black Hand Clan seven months to cut their way through 2 tsán of solid rock. Each team chipped the way to the center from opposite sides of White Feather Hill, extending an aqueduct from the new reservoir north of the hill to the city. Guided only by water fissures, they laboriously dug out a tunnel about one dháiba in width, and one to three dháiba in height. One man would methodically hack and chip away at the rock face and the others behind him picking up and passing the broken stones out in baskets. Chiseled in the rock at the point where the two teams met is an inscription recounting "The Opening Unto the Flowing Waters" in which the stone cutters made their way towards one another ax-blow by ax-blow. This day is still celebrated by the local clan.

Drains were built for removing sewage from clanhouses, palaces, administrative buildings and streets. They consist of a trunk line and auxiliary drains underneath the buildings. Waste and refuse from the buildings not hooked up to the sewer lines is carted out through the appropriately-named "Night Soil Gate" south of the city.

A typical large, high clan compound has a main sewer of masonry, which is linked to four large stone shafts emanating from the upper stories of the main building. The shafts act as ventilators and chutes for household refuse. The shafts and conduit are formed by cement-lined limestone flags, but earthenware or burnt clay pipes are used in the remainder of the system. These are laid out under passages, not under the living rooms.

The drainage system consisted of semi-fired clay pipes, from 7.5 - 12 chóptse in diameter. The rain water overflow from the roof gardens and the courts are collected in cisterns below the bottom floors with the excess carried down further into buried drains. The pipes had perfect socket joints, tapered so that the narrow end of one pipe fixed tightly into the broad end of the next one. The tapering sections allowed a jetting action to prevent accumulation of sediment.

A medium clan bathroom often features decorated walls covered with monochrome frescoes and decorated friezes, and plaster stands which hold ewers and washing basins. Often, at the center is a pool with typical dimensions of 20 dháiba by 2 dháiba by ½ dháiba deep. There are surrounding slabs which form seats for the foot-bathers jutting over the bath. They are classically painted terra cotta, and decorated in a bas relief of a watery motif of reeds. The used water is discarded into a cavity in the floor and connected directly with the main drain.

Usually, not too far away is the flushing water closet, screened off by gypsum partitions on either side. Many are fitted with ventilating shafts. It is flushed by rain water or by water held in cisterns. There are holes in the floor, and beneath for flowing water. The stools are notched in such a way so that these can be used for defecation as well as urination. There are often several other closets found throughout the clanhouse too. The rich clans use hmá wool for ablution while the poor used grass, stone or sand or water depending upon the weather conditions. Amongst the lower clans it is very common to use water for ablution. People use the right hand for eating food, and it is considered disgusting to use the same hand for ablution with water. So the left hand is used for sanitary purposes.

Much attention has been given to constructing toilets on a pay and use basis in common areas where men pay per use, the females and children avail these facilities for free. The Temple of Keténgku has also set up primary health care center at these places.

Because the temples required their own "pure water" arrangements, there are two separate drain and waste water systems in the city. This was certainly an extra expense, but the temples developed a conservation system for its reuse. Basin water is channeled into temple ponds or large underground cesspools or directed into a settling basin. Here the waste materials are held in suspension and subsequently used as manure for the temple's sacred fields and croplands.

### **Bathing Customs**

As using hot water in Usenánu is considered effeminate, a man's bath typically is a quick douse of cool water over the head. On average, his bathing basin is a waist high, polished marble bowl. Women's bathrooms, on the other hand, usually contained portable earthenware tubs filled with warm water for a more relaxing soak.

The high clan Usenanuyani prefer cloths, oils, scrapers and rinses over the local type of soap which is manufactured from a combination of hmá fat and ashes.

It is considered good manners for a host to offer his guest the services of his bathroom after a dusty and arduous journey. Ah, the joys of being treated by a winsome slave girl as she scrapes his skin of perspiration and dirt with a bronze utensil. Ah, the shock when she completes her works with a good dousing of cool water from an urn setting on a stand nearby.

### **Other Customs**

It is also popular these days to emphasize the medicinal values of human waste. Urine is supposed to have many therapeutic values. Some lay priests even claim that by study of urine they can confidently say whether a young girl is a virgin or not.

It is also widely believed that the dung of a hmá mixed with night soil removes black pustules on the skin.

For oral care it is advised to relieve oneself on one's feet because the divine liquid gives the required cure.

If a warrior defecates too much, he will become weak because he has not digested all of what he eats. A member of the Flame-worshipping clans will deliberately block his anus during the ceremony of attaining of manhood and pretend as if he did not defecate at all.

Midwives predicted the future of the child from examining the first excrement.

Grandmothers often eat the first excrement of the male child if he was born after a long period of marriage or after number of female births in the family.

Periodic "roaring" far underground is attributed to the bellowing of huge mythical worms, as they thrash about in the labyrinthine sewers below.

# Local Usenánu Festivals During the Intercalary Days

## Local Usenánu Festivals During the Intercalary Days

*Brad Johnson*

Although Usenánu has the reputation of being a rather staid city, seemingly concerned only with the agricultural bounty of the plains and the making of money, it does offer some unique opportunities for revelry. The following ceremonies celebrate the transition between one point of existence and the next. It is a time of renewal for some, a time of inimitable demise for others.

### Temple of Hnálla

Dawn of Ikáner. In the year 1843, during the reign of Nrainué, “the Iridescent Goddess”, and after the city’s *ditlána*, the powerful Emerald Girdle clan commissioned the famous artist *Ayéla* to construct a door for the renewed Temple of Hnálla. It was to glorify the god and to celebrate the retaking of *Pán Cháka* from the *Mu’ugalavyá* the previous year. She was to do whatsoever she desired and it was to be designed so that it would be the most perfect and most beautiful imaginable. She took 23 years and did not disappoint. Her doors are worthy of being called the “Gates of Opening Unto the Ultimate Light”. During this celebration the Emerald Girdle clan provides clothes and food to the worshippers as a sign of the clan’s great wealth, status and piety.

### Temple of Vimúhla

Sunset of Vraháma. The ceremony of “The Wakening of the All-Cleansing Blaze”. Ancient beliefs teach that the gods must be reminded and shamed into performing their expected and required duties as the great powers that they are. Only voluntary sacrifices are accepted for this ritual. Usually they are Usenánuyani who are allowed to abrogate all debts to the temple by participating. After gathering together outside of the temple in the still darkness of early morning, they are led through the foreboding fortress gates, across the expansive red marble tiled plaza to the foot of the steep stairs that lead up the side of great pyramid. Above, the raging furnace known as “The Great Flame” awaits them with its eager caresses. The first ritual washing by their own clan members cleanses them of their indebted status. The second washing, conducted by temple acolytes, prepares the sacrifices for the transition and includes a sedative from drinking the water that the consecrated tetkúmne knife has been dipped into. Calmly they walk up the intricately carved steps and as they ascend the accompanying priest explains to them the meanings of the various levels as they reach them. The higher they go the more the drug takes effect. They actually experience the passage from this life to the next. When they reach the top they are impatient to complete the journey and join their “Great Lord of the Final Conflagration”. After one final blessing, they gladly jump into the waiting flames with looks of bliss upon their faces. After the ceremony the family members return to their respective clan houses to recount the bravery that they have witnessed. They celebrate their cousin’s journey to the Isles secure in the knowledge that their honor is intact. The Flame Lord has been reminded of his duties.



# Strange and Dreadful Things



by Krista Donnelly

## GM Introduction

The scenario opens with the player characters, Hrü'ü priests, waking up deep in the tsuru'úm. Half of them think they know why they're down there, and the rest will be bewildered. Ostensibly, the sorcerer Chúrisan brought them all there to identify the best candidates to induct into the Triple-Y Society. The High Ritual Priestess Umá controls Chúrisan's mind bar. She know they're there not only to identify Triple-Y candidates, but also to conduct a ritual vital to the well-being of the temple: The Peripatetic Submersion into the Sublime. Visán, the temple guard, was simply ordered to accompany Chúrisan to provide protection. The others are the candidates.

But further complications ensue. Chúrisan wants to carry out a personal vendetta against the Iron Helm clan members (Visán and Nírun). Nírun is a secret agent of the Temple of Grugánu, though he doesn't know it. And the entire group has been discovered by a crusading Qón priest, Mízhotl, who's lost due to a subtle twisting of space in the area.

The ritual is being performed for Shiggéth Chá, an Inner Aspect of Hrü'ü, who is nicknamed "the Swimmer" and who travels through Time and Space. The ritual is supposed to be performed every 1,000 years and is now overdue. Strange and dreadful things are prophesied to occur when the ritual is neglected. The prophesies are correct. The temple being leveled by the Disposer of Méku (see Player Introduction) was only the beginning. The latest summoning of Ka'íng, a demon of Hrü'ü, ended badly, killing over a dozen priests. A progression of events such as this will continue until the ritual is performed. (See Shiggéth Chá section for more details.)

This group is not alone in the tsuru'úm. A group of slaves has escaped from the Qón outpost in the area. The slaves from the Hrü'ü group will not be able to re-trace their path home due to Shiggéth's twisting of space in the area. And two more priests from Qón outpost are out there searching for the lost Mízhotl.

This scenario is heavy on intrigue with the possibility of moderate amounts of combat. If the characters are played well, there will be tensions between the party members. There are 9 player characters as written. If more are desired, some more temple guards can be added. If fewer are desired, Treshélmú can be dropped the easiest. Mízhotl will be hard to play since he will be viewed with great suspicion by the other characters.

## Player Introduction

The worship of Hrü'ü in Méku extends back into antiquity, beyond even the time of Stability-loving Éngsvan hlá Gánga. Along with the temple of Ksárul, Hrü'ü has long held sway over the region. The stability of the region is enhanced by the fact that the ruler of the city, called the Disposer, is traditionally from the Iron Helm clan and worships a Change deity.

However, the city was stunned at the start of the recent civil war by the actions of the Disposer. A Chiténg worshipper, he hated the Sárku temple and its new emperor. Whipping the crowds into a frenzy against the usurper, he incited the destruction of the Worm-Lord's temple. But the crowds could not be contained and before calm returned to the city both the temples of Hrü'ü and Ksárul lay in smoking ruins. Lives were lost, and valuable property destroyed.

Naturally, the Disposer paid for his rash actions. Another member of Iron Helm now rules the city. But taxes are heavy, and it's rumored that a large percentage of the money is making its way into Iron Helm's coffers. The clan has paid heavy shámtla for the actions of its member, but it does not seem impoverished. Perhaps it's a testimony to the wisdom of the clan elders, for such shámtla has ruined clans in the past.

After five years of labor, the temples have been re-built. The city bears few traces of its great trauma. With stability returned to the empire under the new emperor Mirusíya, life is reverting to normal. And yet, you all detect an undercurrent of tension running through the temple. It is whispered that something went wrong with the latest summoning of Ka'íng. And did the temple of Avánthe deliberately snub you at the last New Year's festival?

You went to bed last night not long after the midnight ceremony. With the mighty Túnkul gong ringing in your ears, you dropped off to sleep. As you slowly awaken, you gradually become aware that you are no longer in your personal room. This place is much darker, with a peculiar light green glow. And you are not alone. Around you are other comrades in various stages of awakening. Your heart begins to pound as you realize you are lying in a tunnel in the underworld.

## Traveling Underground

It will always be difficult to travel away from the river and the shrine, and easy to travel towards it. If the characters travel away from the river, start with small events:

A rock will fall from the ceiling and strike someone on the chest/near miss [allow rolls vs Dexterity with a "difficult" modifier of +2]

The glowing fungus will become fainter. If inspected, it will look like it is dying.

The floors and sides of the corridors/tunnels will become slick. Have rolls vs. Dexterity again and who fails will fall. No damage but an inspection will show it's blood and not water on the floors and sides.

They will occasionally hear screams and howling in the distance (the Hrü'ü slaves being hunted by the Hurú'u – see their section below.)

If they are very persistent in trying to leave the area and not perform the ritual, they will see a vision of The Weaver of Skeins.

After time spent traveling away from the river and after one of the other events has occurred, they will invariably find themselves back at the river. If Nirún attempts to figure it out, he will guess that it's a trap and speculate about either very precise nexus points (Unheard of! The magics needed would be tremendous.) or a clouding of their minds while they travel. The nexus point guess is close, but not exact. Shiggéth Chá, the one who swims through time and space, has altered reality in this area, in effect creating a kind of looping other-planar path.

## Weaver of Skeins Encounter

Up ahead there is a pool of dim light in the midst of darkness. There is just enough light to see an old man sitting on a stool in front of a great loom. At his feet is a wicker basket filled with yarn. He shoots the shuttle-cock through the loom with great speed. Before your eyes a pattern is emerging on the cloth in the loom. He looks up and eyes you fixedly while continuing to work. "I am the Weaver of Skeins," he announces. The pattern in the cloth is resolving itself into an image of a fish. The fish is pale, dead-looking, with large, white eyes. "What I choose to weave, I weave. The skein I cut short is cut short." He lifts up a large pair of scissors and cuts off the cloth from the loom. It falls to the floor, crumpled, with the fish seeming to stare at you with one large, pale eye. He begins another skein. This one is pure darkness. He looks up at you again and frowns. Gradually, he fades from view.

The characters cannot get any nearer to the Weaver or interact with him. If they approach, he will always seem the same distance away. If they throw something at him, it will disappear when it reaches him. Once the vision is completely gone, anything thrown will re-appear on its previous trajectory. He is not a pure vision but somewhat out-of-phase with this plane. This is a warning from Shiggéth Chá.

## Qón Outpost

This rugged little outpost is a testament to the daring spirit of the Guild of Those Who Repel the Dark. Mízhotl proposed the idea after finding the cavern as way of saving time between forays in the tsuru'úm. The outpost is now staffed by Mízhotl and his partner Hóru and another two man team. The outpost's main entrance is a crevice exposed by a crack in the building stone used by the Bednálljans in this corridor. Barely wide enough for a grown man to squeeze through, it gradually widens into a chamber with a soaring ceiling from which hand stalactites. Ascending stalagmites provide cover and concealment within the room itself. If you're willing to crawl and then slither on your belly, an alternate entrance/exit exists. Only access to water was lacking. When Hóru figured out that only about a dozen feet of rock separated the floor of the chamber from a river below, five slaves were brought down to create the "well."

Enough food stores to feed ten men for half a year have been laid up. There are also medicinal herbs, clothes, sleeping mats, scrolls and the various sundry items needed for daily life. The scrolls record the locales explored and creatures exterminated. The cavern is guarded by the spell The Ritual of the Purified Sphere. No undead, demons, creatures created by sorcery who serve Change, or priests who serve a Change god can enter.

The slaves were able to escape because the other two priests decided to go search for the missing Mízhotl and Hóru. The best time for these two priests to show up is when the Peripatetic Submersion into the Sublime is being performed. If the ritual isn't being performed, then when entry is attempted into the outpost. If that doesn't happen, then when the party thinks it has made good progress towards the surface (and is facing the Hurú'u).

The other two priests are women, Shánü and Halé. Use Mízhotl's statistics and spells for them.

## The Qón Slaves

The four slaves were laboring for the temple of Qón on its outpost. Their last task was to carve down through the floor to create a "well." This was difficult, dangerous work since the shaft was vertical. Hand and foot-holds were also notched into the side of the shaft to allow for another escape route.

The confidence of the slaves in the benevolence of their masters was shaken when Mízhotl and his partner did not return from their latest expedition. The slaves have overheard conversations among the Qón priests about the wisdom of keeping them alive once the work is completed. Dead men tell no tales, as long as their corpses can't be found. Mízhotl spoke the most strongly against this plan. Once he failed to return, they decided to take matters into their own hands and escape. Climbing down the well shaft, they jumped into the river and hoped for the best. One man drowned, but the rest made it to shore. They feel something may have pulled their friend under.

Now they are wet, worried and lost. They can't seem to find their way out and keep ending up back at the river. Two of them managed to retain their pick-axes. The other two are carrying loaves of dná-grain bread in rough nets that they previously used to haul away rocks and debris from their work site. If they find the Hrü'ü party, they will attempt to tail it, hoping to be led to the surface. If there's a confrontation between the two groups, they will recognize Mízhotl. They will run if threatened, fight if cornered, and agree to cooperate if asked.

If Mízhotl wants to utilize them, he can do so. Any kind of gesture at the initial meeting will clue them in enough so they won't openly recognize him. They will follow orders he gives them unless they're obviously suicidal.

The nets they're carrying the bread in can be used to capture the Nenyélu.

## The Hrü'ü Slaves

There were five slaves who carried the unconscious priests down on their backs plus a driver. They were dismissed by Chúrísan to return to the temple once their work was done. They were not happy about this since it meant going back unguarded and without a guide. But they tried their best to obey. However, they are also caught in Shiggéth Chá's looping other-planar path and keep returning to the party's original location. They are also being hunted by a Hurú'u, a vaguely humanoid greyish-white undead creature. The Hurú'u howls as it travels, and the howl is deafening in close proximity. The characters will hear the howls in the distance throughout the scenario, sometimes increasing, sometimes decreasing. Occasionally they will hear the slaves' screams when the Hurú'u is getting nearer.

## Shiggéth Chá, His Shrine and The Peripatetic Submersion into the Sublime

Shiggéth Chá is an Inner Aspect of Hrü'ü said to swim the seas of Time and Space without boundaries. He is portrayed as a dead-looking fish with pale, pupilless eyes. He is said to be to take persons to certain places only He can reach, planes beyond even Lord Belkhánu's powers. If He so wished, he could even swim "around" the dread Pylons. (Mitlányal, p. 134)

As befitting his nature, there is no one location for his shrine. Instead, the "shrine" is a river which runs deep under the tsuru'úm. The correct stretch of river changes over time and is identified by an abundance of cave-adapted fauna in the area. Past priests have carved intricate portraits of his likeness into cavern walls near where they performed the ceremony.

Currently, the shrine is between the narrow, deep portion of the river and a shallow stretch which can be forded. There is no portrait in this area. The shallow stretch comes up to the knees, the narrow section is 8 feet deep, and the shrine is chest-deep.

The ceremony itself revolves around the Nenyélu. The ritual priest stand with arms outstretched in a Y position, chanting an invocation to Shiggéth Chá in Bednálljan Salarvyáni. While the invocation is being made, a living Nenyélu is held above flowing water. Upon completion of the invocation (which lasts five minutes), the priest draws the symbol of Hrü'ü on the Nenyélu's head seven times. Then the eel is thrown back into the water and must be slain immediately. To fail to slay the Nenyélu is an insult to Shiggéth Chá which will be re-paid in kind.

When they look for Nenyélu, there will be an absolutely pale one which is half-grown (8 feet in length, four inches in diameter). If this one is captured, Shiggéth Chá will be especially pleased by the ritual.

If anyone is bitten by the Nenyélu while the ritual is being performed, they will not suffer the usual neurological damage. Instead, they will be gifted by Hrü'ü with a preternatural ability to navigate through other-planar space.

### Capturing the Nenyélu

The players will have to be creative here. They can confiscate the nets the Qón slaves were carrying and construct a crude fishing net (particularly if they let Zhurák be in charge). They'll need to tie rocks to the bottom of the net to weight it down. If they look for it, they can find a narrow section of the river (which will be about 8 feet deep). If someone makes it to the other side, they can block the river with the river and drive the Nenyélu into it.

Chúrisan can also attempt to cast Soporiferousness on the eels and then send someone it to retrieve it. Or, he could cast Terrorisation and drive the Nenyélu into the net or into the shallows where someone standing there can catch it.

## Timeline of Events

### Awakening

In a corridor of rough-cut stones which is overgrown by a palely luminescent green fungus. Can hear a faint, steady sound in the distance. After some interaction among the characters, mention howling in the distance (this is the Hurú'u).

Characters may choose to go toward the faint, steady sound (which is the river), or in another direction (either towards the surface or to seek out the howling). If they choose to move away, use one or two small events mentioned in *Traveling Underground*. If they go toward the river, describe increasing damp walls, slippery floor underfoot and have an Étla crab scuttle by.

### Encountering the Qón Slaves

No matter which direction the party moves in (or if they don't move at all), have them encounter the Qón slaves next. Have them hear footfalls, see figures in the distance before actually encountering the slaves. The slaves will be trying to follow them undetected.

During the encounter with the Qón slaves, mention the howling in the distance again. It sounds a bit louder this time.

### Encountering the Hrü'ü Slaves

If another encounter is needed (for instance, if the characters are not interested in trying to perform the ritual), they will stumble across the mutilated body of one of their slaves. They will be able to hear the remaining slaves in the distance – running and unintelligible shouts.

If they go in search of the shouts, they'll round a corner at some point and be attacked by the crazed slaves who'll throw stones at them. A round or two of confusion will follow, but if the characters make the attempt, they will be able to calm the slaves and get the slaves to recognize them. After this, the slaves will never be willing to leave their presence, even if threatened with death. Several of the slaves will be deaf due to close calls with Hurú'u.

The driver will explain about their failed attempts to return to the temple.



## River

If they're searching for the river, it won't take them long to find it. They'll come out right beside on the magnificent portraits of Shiggéth Chá. Since this won't be the shrine location, they will find little river life here. If anyone goes into the water or tries to fish somehow, they'll have an encounter with "the mouth with eyes", a Tletlákha. Achán will know what it is and be able to offer advice on how to get it off.

If anyone's interested in desecrating the portrait, it is studded with valuable pearls and outlined in black opals.

## Finding the shrine

The characters will need to travel along the river to find the shrine. The way will vary between three to four feet from cave wall to water to only wet rocks to walk upon. Require Dexterity checks whenever you feel like it to see if they slip and fall. If the failure is bad enough, then they've fallen into the river. And if it's a truly magnificent failure, the river is deep and the current is swift and they're in danger of drowning.

They'll pass the shallow ford before reaching the shrine location. They won't find the narrow, deep section of the river unless they keep travelling after finding the shrine. When they reach the shrine, several Nenyélu will swim by on the far side of the river and throw stones at them. Just after that, a group of blind, pale Étla crabs will rush up out of the river and come straight at them. They'll attack but will break out after a couple rounds if resistance is offered. If they don't figure it out after that, have the Nenyélu swim by again and throw small, pale (translucent) fish with big, bulging eyes at them. Since the shrine is characterized by an abundance of pale, cave-adapted life, keep mentioning one after another type of sighting until they get the point.

## Finding the Qón Outpost

The Qón outpost is between the shrine and the narrow, deep portion of the river. The roughly circular opening in the cave ceiling above the river is not immediately obvious. Unless someone specifically states they are looking for it, they will not notice it.

The Qón slaves and Mízhotl will immediately know when they are in the area. Someone keeping an eye on the slaves will notice that they have become rather agitated. If pressed, they will point out the location of the "well." They'll also mention the death of their comrade. (He was bitten by a Nenyélu and became paralyzed and drowned. His half-eaten corpse is lodged under a rock underwater in this general location.)

Interestingly enough, the spell guarding the outpost will prevent all the player characters from entering, but not any of the slaves. They will encounter an invisible resistance that gradually strengthens until it feels like they're moving through molasses. Eventually, they'll get stuck completely. Make them roll against Strength to be able to move backwards if they reach that point. Of course, it will be a challenge to even get to that point, since the well opening is about 10 feet above the surface of the water.

If the characters have shown no interest in trying to perform the ritual, have the two remaining Qón priests, Shálü and Halé, be in the outpost and stage a confrontation.

## Performing the Ritual

Have the appropriate rolls versus Strength, Dexterity, etc. as the ritual is being performed. If the Nenyélu is not well-secured, it will attempt to bite Sídlá or whoever is near its head. Though the characters do not know it, the bite will not cause neurological damage if it occurs during the ritual itself. Instead, it will confer a preternatural sense of how to navigate other-planar space. If the Nenyélu escapes being killed after the ritual is ended, the only way out of the region is to be guided by a character with this enhanced ability.

If the characters haven't had enough trouble by this point, have Shánü and Halé, the other two Qón priests, show up to rescue Mízhotl and attempt to disrupt the ritual.

## The Big Finale

Depending on what the characters chose to do, the big finale will either be performing the ritual, a showdown with the Qón priests, a combination of the two or a fight with the Hurú'u.

If the characters do not perform the ritual, they have failed. The prophecies about "strange and dreadful things" is completely accurate. When they try to leave one last time, they will all simultaneously step through a nexus point and find themselves on the white stone steps in the middle of nowhere, lost in the between-spaces of other-planar space. Their temple will continue to suffer a string of bad luck for years to come.

If the ritual succeeds, not only will the temple prosper, but the characters will find their personal paths smoothed for several years to come. This will be a failure for Mízhotl, of course.

## The Creatures

### Étla Crab

These heavily armoured, normally mottled brown-green but here very pale, crab-like crustaceans have six legs, two sharp pincer-claws, and -- unlike their Terran ancestors -- frontally placed eyes and a mouth set with chisel-shaped teeth! The Étla runs straight forward, unlike the crab, and it usually holds and bites, rather than pinches. Nonetheless a 40 cm specimen can crush a finger, and the really big ones can take a leg off.

It's hard to trap Étla, they chew their way out of just about anything. Instead they're caught on lines, for once an Étla has a morsel in its claws it is very reluctant to let go. Every region has its own recipes for cooking Étla.

Number Occurring: 75/25; 1-10/2-20

Strength: 3    Dexterity: 4

Intelligence: 1    Willpower: 4

Psyche: 1    Charisma: 1

Pedhetl: 0

Melee Attack: 4    Missile Attack: 4

Melee Defense: 2    Missile Defense: 2

Attack Type: Pinch -1    Damage \*1

Bite +0    Damage \*1

Armor Rating: 5    Health Points: 35    Shock: 7

## Nenyélu, the Eel Fish

The Nenyelu has poison-bearing fangs, and its bite can be lethal. Nenyelu poison is quick acting: numbness and shooting pains spread from the vicinity of the bite, followed by paralysis, blindness, and eventual suffocation. Even if the victim is healed, they are very likely to have some residual paralysis and vision problems, which may improve over a period of years.

Number Occurring: 1-6

Strength: 3 Dexterity: 6

Intelligence: 1 Willpower: 4

Psyche: 2 Charisma: 1

Pedhetl:

Melee Attack: 5 Missile Attack: 6

Melee Defense: 3 Missile Defense: 3

Attack Type: Bite +0Damage=\*3

Armor Rating: 4 Health Points: 45 Shock: 9

## Tletlákha, the "Mouth with Eyes"

The Tletlákha is little more than a fanged mouth surrounded by six eyes, with an expandable, reddish brown stomach sac and a tiny tail behind. The ridge protecting the eyes is covered with barbed spines which penetrate the victim's flesh. Once attached, the creature gnaws upon its prey, unless forcibly pried loose. Its jaws are very powerful.

Number Appearing: 65/35: 1-10/4-40

Strength: 3 Dexterity: 4

Intelligence: 1 Willpower: 4

Psyche: 1 Charisma: 1

Pedhétl: 0

Melee Attack: 4 Missile Attack: 0

Melee Defense: 2 Missile Defense: 2

Attack Type: Bite +0 Damage x2

Spine -1 Damage x1

Armor Rating: 0 Health Points: 10 Shock Value: 2

## Hurú'u, the Undead

A greyish-white, spectral undead creature which wanders howling in the underworld. It can be driven off by magic or fire. The howling deafens all within 10 feet of it.

Strength: 4    Dexterity: 4

Intelligence: 2    Willpower: 4

Psyche: 4    Charisma: 1

Pedhétl: 4

Melee Attack: 4    Missile Attack: 4

Melee Defense: 4    Missile Defense: 4

Attack Type: Howl    +2    Damage x3

Armor: 3    Health Points: 40    Shock Value: 8

## Characters

### Achán hiSóruna

Male, Dark Moon, 9<sup>th</sup> Circle Scholar Priest, Hrü'ü, 33 years old

Strength 5    Melee Attack 5    Magic Resistance 5

Dexterity 4    Melee Defense 3

Intelligence 9    Missile Attack 4

Psych 3    Missile Defense 2

Willpower 7    Initiative 5

Charisma 4    Health Points 60

Pedhétl 4    Shock Value 12

Older, Highly-Skilled, Low Lineage, Good with Animals

-2 bonus on Animal Training skill checks and Wilderness Survival checks involving animals.

You get an Intelligence check to predict the behavior of an animal you see.

Analysis 1    Language (Tsolyáni, read) 3

Animal Handling (Küni-bird, Kúrgha, Rényu, Sagún) 4    Ritual (Hrü'ü) 3

Calligraphy 2    Scholar (Zoology) 5

Debate (Scholarly) 2    Subculture (High Clan) 1

Etiquette (High Clan) 1    Subculture (Priesthood) 3

Etiquette (Temple) 3    Theology (Hrü'ü) 3

Language (Tsolyáni, speak) 2    Wilderness Survival (Underworld) 3

You are that rare breed – a practical scholar. You specialize in the health and behavior of unusual creatures. You have twice turned down offers to become a lay-priest and work in the zoos of personages from very high status clans. Not only are you loyal to your temple, but you know that there's no greater scope for your particular talents than within Hrü'ü's fold. The temple in Méku has a particularly complex labyrinth underground which gradually evolves into the more normal tsuru'úm. So not only do you have the guardian creatures of your temple within the labyrinth but there's also natural wildlife which finds its way in. And when scouting expeditions into the surrounding underworld are authorized, you often make surprising and significant discoveries.

It's been a while since your last expedition. You've spent a lot of time lately checking up on the signs of a healthy habitation underground: traces of a Dlaqó's passage, the tell-tale lingering stench of the carrion-eating Kúrgha, the germinating spores of a newly growing fungus Sagún, the acid-damage on the walls from the secretions of a greyish, gelatinous Mu'ágh. You also have fielded recent questions from your fellow priests: Nirún hiGurúma inquiring after the deafening howl of the Hurú'u; Umá hiSérekel, the High Ritual priestess, asking after how to obtain a living Nenyélu. When you laughed and suggested purchasing one from a breeder she did not share your sense of humor. But Nenyélu are water-dwelling creatures, long, sinuous and eel-like with many tiny sharp fins along their sides which they use for propulsion. They also possess a rudimentary pair of hands just behind their blunt, snake-like heads which they'll use to hurl stones and other small objects at creatures. They have a kind of cunning, low-level animal intelligence and can range up to 15' in length and 6" in diameter. Their bite is poisonous and can cause neural damage. You suspect strong arms, a strong net and a lot of courage is the best hope of catching one.

While you wait for something to come of that request, you have other, more important, matters on your mind. Some new predator seems to have taken up residence in the uttermost depths of the underworld. When you last went down a month ago, hoping to find a Ngóro, you stumbled over the corpse of a Hurú'u, dead with the only signs of injury being two circular bruises on either side of its body. Further searching revealed more corpses of different species. All shared the same type of bruises. You suspect sorcery or some creature of an other-planar nature. You want to figure this out before this predator moves up into the temple's labyrinth proper.

**Additional Information**

Smoked Nenyélu is a rare delicacy.

**Goals:** Discover the 'predator'. Increase your knowledge of the underworld fauna.

## Chúrisan hiNezár

Male, Purple Gem, 12<sup>th</sup> Circle Sorcerer, Hrü'ü, 41 years old

Strength 1    Melee Attack 4    Magic Resistance 7

Dexterity 7    Melee Defense 2    Psychic Pool 80

Intelligence 6    Missile Attack 5    Ritual Magic Value 8

Psyche 8    Missile Defense 3    Psychic Magic Value 7

Willpower 4    Initiative 7

Charisma 3    Health Points 25

Pedhétl 6    Shock Value 5

Older, Highly-Skilled, High Pedhétl, Nemesis (Iron Helm), Responsibilities

Calligraphy 1    Spells:

Etiquette (High Clan) 1    Decorporealisation [Ritual] – T4, T7

Etiquette (Temple) 3

Language (Tsolyáni, speak) 2    Light & Darkness [Ritual] – U1, U2

Language (Tsolyáni, read) 1

Magic 5    Soporiferousness [Ritual] – U2, U3, U4, U5

Ritual (Hrü'ü) 1

Subculture (High Clan) 1    Terrorisation [Psychic] – U2, U4

Subculture (Priesthood) 3

Theology (Hrü'ü) 1

In addition to being a successful sorcerer priest, you are a member of the Triple-Y Society, an extremely secretive organization. This society is so secret that you are not aware of any other members, or indeed, how you became a member yourself. And lately, you've remembered that you are only occasionally able to remember the fact of your membership yourself. But it has been much on your mind lately. For some reason, you are certain it's time to size up a new crop of priest-candidates for initiation. So you commandeered a group of slaves and in the dark hours of the morning went to likely candidates as they slept and collected them. The slaves carried the drugged priests on their backs. You lost track of how long you walked as you descended into the underworld. Looking back, you're amazed that you made it unscathed through the labyrinths that your Temple always constructs underneath their buildings. When you finally reached a place that seemed right (just where the ancient Bednálljan stonework gives way to a natural cave setting), you had the priests deposited on the floor and sent the slaves away. You're not certain exactly what it is that you're looking for, but you know only the best and brightest make it into the Triple-Y Society. (And conversely, those who've risen highest in the Temple are most likely Triple-Y members.)



But service to your secret society does not preclude a little activity to benefit your own interests. To that end, you arranged to have the services of the Temple guard Visán hiPagárta for your "expedition." Visán belongs to the Iron Helm clan, as does Nirún hiGurúma, the Temple trapmaster. Iron Helm is a high status clan (but beneath your clan of Purple Gem) and the ruler of Méku ("the Disposer") does traditionally come from that clan. For these reasons, the Temple has taken the politically expedient path of accepting that the Disposer of Méku who incited the mobs that leveled your temple along with the temples of Sárku and Ksárul, was acting on his own. Public apologies and a hefty shámtna helped ease the Temple into taking this position. However, you are convinced that these so-called mobs could not have accomplished so much destruction without help from within. And who better to help the Disposer than his clan members? In addition, Visán has shown a distressing tendency to question orders in the past while something just doesn't seem right about Nirún. Perhaps these are rationalizations, but you feel you would be doing the Temple a favor if you got rid of this disloyal element.

Unfortunately, this is easier said than done. You can't go about it too directly as Iron Helm has the power to exact revenge beyond the simple paying of shámtna. Several weeks ago you attempted to take out Nirún. He was in the mirrored hallway which serves as an entrance into the labyrinth beneath the temple. You waited until he was at the far end and then you entered, stepped on the pressure plate which triggered the trap (walls close in to crush the occupants) and quickly fled. With his lame leg, you were sure Nirún wouldn't make it in time. But, somehow, he did. Maybe he isn't as lame as he pretends to be? But with both Nirún and Visán down in the underworld with you, there should be more opportunities to discretely rid the temple of them.

#### **Additional Information**

1. The Triple-Y Society is an extremely secretive society with the Temple of Hrü'ü. It concerns itself with political power, high-level inter-Temple relations, international intrigue and ambassadorships, and both the breaching and maintenance of Imperial Security. Individuals are often unaware of their own involvement until they have risen quite high within the Triple-Y Society. Mind-bars and mind-control are used to block the memories and control the actions of their agents.
2. You have a small quantity of the drug left in a small vial in your belt pouch. It is gaseous and needs to be inhaled for several seconds to be effective.

**Goals:** Identify likely candidates for the Triple-Y Society. Discretely kill/lose Nirún and Visán.

## Nirún hiGurúma

Male, Iron Helm, 11<sup>th</sup> Circle Administrative Priest, Hrü'ü, 36 years old

Strength 4    Melee Attack 6    Magic Resistance 4

Dexterity 7    Melee Defense 4

Intelligence 10 Missile Attack 6

Psyche 1    Missile Defense 4

Willpower 6    Initiative 9

Charisma 4    Health Points 65

Pedhétl 1    Shock Value 13

Older, Highly-Skilled, Tough, Low Pedhétl, Physical Disability: Lame, Bad Reputation (Disposer's actions)

-3 bonus to resist poisons and similar effects

Burglary (Buildings, Tombs) 5    Poisons 5

Calligraphy 1    Ritual (Hrü'ü) 1

Engineering (Construction) 4    Subculture (High Clan) 1

Etiquette (High Clan) 1    Subculture (Priesthood) 4

Etiquette (Temple) 1    Theology (Hrü'ü) 1

Language (Tsolyáni, speak) 2    Wilderness Survival (Underworld) 1

Language (Tsolyáni, read) 1

When outsiders ask what you do for the temple of Hrü'ü, you smile mildly and say that you work for the administrative branch. This has the virtue of being true, technically speaking. But you do not oversee agricultural lands or pore over financial reports. You maintain and develop strategic defenses and the physical embodiment of theological ideals. That is, you are in charge of all the traps the temple uses in its underground labyrinth and inner shrines. You suspect that you don't know all of them, but you do know the commonly used varieties as well as more obscure ones and several that are unique to the temple in Méku. In those rare rituals when lay worshippers who have contributed great sums are allowed into an inner shrine, you are there, limping humbly through the halls with them, keeping a sharp eye out that they don't go somewhere or do something that might get them killed. Though most Tsolyáni are disdainful of your lame leg, you consider it a mark of pride, given that you were injured in your younger days in the process of creating a great trap for the temple.

Two things disturb your equanimity. Though the Disposer had since been killed and his actions were nearly a decade ago, in the eyes of certain priests, you seem to bear some of his shame simply because you are from his clan, Iron Helm. Iron Helm is powerful in Méku, so no one has acted on their beliefs, but you have heard whispering behind your back. And, you suspect someone has finally acted. For the second thing which has kept you up at night lately is the attempt on your life. You can categorize it in no other way. You were in the mirrored hallway which begins the labyrinth when you heard movement behind you. It must have been someone deliberately stepping on the pressure plate which triggers the mechanism that causes the walls to close snugly together for the walls immediately started closing in on you. But you knew the trap better than they, for even with your lame leg you were able to reach the re-set plate and depress it in time. It was a close call though. You want revenge.

### **Additional Information**

- 1** You sometimes feel as if you are forgetting something. It's like there's something at the back of your mind that you can't remember. You've never mentioned this feeling to anyone.
- 2** You think other Iron Helm members are also under a cloud, but you haven't asked anyone yet to see if they've noticed anything or had any attempts on their life.

**Goals:** Discover your enemy. Uphold the honor of Iron Helm.

### **Nirún hiGurúma's Identity**

You are actually a priest of Grugánu undertaking some of the most dangerous work of your temple, infiltrating another temple. Like all the other spies, you are normally under a mind-bar which prevents you or anyone else from learning about your true identity. Mainstream Tsolyáni society for some reason believes that spying in this manner is highly ignoble. They are merely demonstrating a profound lack of appreciation for the theological imperatives engendered by the Grugánu faith.

The mind-bar was crafted to lift itself whenever you discovered something of importance to your Grugánu superiors. It has lifted now so this event apparently qualifies. Gather as much information as you can pertaining to it, and get out of the situation alive. Then, it's off for a visit to your "clan-auntie."

You now have two additional skills:

Ritual (Grugánu) 3

Theology (Grugánu) 3

## Mízhotl hiTlakán

Male, Amber Cloak, 9<sup>th</sup> Circle Administrative Priest, Qón, 35 years old

Strength 3    Melee Attack 3    Magic Resistance 7

Dexterity 2    Melee Defense 1    Psychic Pool 84

Intelligence 7    Missile Attack 2    Ritual Magic Value 4

Psyche 7    Missile Defense 0    Psychic Magic Value 7

Willpower 5    Initiative 3

Charisma 6    Health Points 40

Pedhétl 7    Shock Value

Older, Highly-Skilled, High Pedhétl, Responsibilities (Secret Society), Ugly

Calligraphy 1    Spells:

Etiquette (High Clan) 1    Aeriality [Psychic] G2

Etiquette (Temple) 3    Ascertainment [Psychic] U1,U2,U3,U4,U5,U6

Language (Tsolyáni, speak) 2    Light & Darkness [Ritual] U1, U2, U3

Language (Tsolyáni, read) 1    Stealth [Psychic] G1, G3

Magic 3    The Hands of Kra the Mighty [Psychic] G2,G4,G6

Ritual (Qón) 1

Subculture (High Clan) 1

Subculture (Priesthood) 3

Theology (Qón) 1

Wilderness Survival (Underworld) 3

You belong to the Guild of Those Who Repel the Dark, a secret society with the Qón temple devoted to exorcisms, combating demons and exterminating underworld creatures which serve either the Lords of Change or the Pariah Deities. Your specialty is cleansing the underworld of creatures whose sympathies lie in the wrong direction. In practice, you extend this to any creature you dislike. You've had years to get quite skilled at this. When the temples of the Dark Trinity suffered their great setback at the start of the recent civil war, the Guild took full advantage of the situation. You and your comrades operated with a greater scope and freedom than you would have otherwise. As a result, you are among the most well-informed about the great depths beneath Méku. The Guild was also able to talk the rest of the temple hierarchy into establishing a permanent outpost deep in the tsuru'úm. You personally choose the spot as it had much to offer: numerous escape routes, proximity to water (an underground river) and proximity to an area you believe to be of importance to a Change temple. You've seen odd portraits carved in the walls at infrequent intervals along the riverbank. Judging the artistic style, they seem to be of greatly differing ages, from several hundred years ago to many thousands of years ago. The water was not immediately accessible but you assessed the situation and realized all that was required was a bit of excavation and a well could be carved through the floor which would open over the river. It would be easy to then drop a bucket down on a line and scoop up water when it was needed. The excavation is nearly completed. The outpost is already protected from agents of Change with the spell The Ritual of the Purified Sphere.

All of this only makes your latest setback even more frustrating. You and your partner Hóru had set out days earlier to hunt and kill a Hurú'u that you have heard howling in the distance on previous occasions. (A Hurú'u is a vaguely humanoid, greyish white, spectral undead creature whose near constant howling can be heard from some ways away. In close proximity, it's been know to deafen people.) But to your frustration, you got lost. Three times you set out in what you were certain was the correct direction only to hours later find yourselves arriving at the river. Perhaps frustration made the two of you careless for as Hóru sat and pondered by the river, he didn't notice the Sagún nearby. Sagún will often leave you alone if you leave them alone, but when Hóru stood up, he must have moved too fast. The eight foot tall, pale bluish-grey fungus shook its woody-appearing claws and emitted a cloud of spores. You cast The Hands of Kra the Mighty from a distance and killed it, but it was too late for Hóru. He'd already breathed in the spores. Within hours they germinated in his lungs and he died. You've been trying since then to find your way back to the outpost without success. You'll recognize where you're at but once you start off in the right direction, you eventually find yourself back at the river. Paths that you're sure you'd memorized seem to lead you in a different direction each time.

It's been several days now. Your food has run out and you're worried that predators may have found Hóru's body. As you set off once again from the river, you hear small noises up ahead. You creep quietly forward until around a bend in the tunnel you find what looks like a group of Hrü'ü priests. A few, including a warrior, are standing. The rest are lying down and appear to be waking up.

#### **Additional Information**

1. There is another team of two priests, Shánü and Halé, in the outpost, as well as five slaves. The priests may already be looking for you.

2. You're hoping the slaves' work isn't completed yet. There's been a dispute between you and the other team about whether or not to kill them once the outpost's finished. You're against it and want to be there to prevent any rash actions.

**Goals:** Find your way back to the outpost. Figure out what's causing you to get lost. Discover why the Hrü'ü priests are down here. Stay alive.

## Sídla hiSérekel

Female, Cloak of Azure Gems, 9<sup>th</sup> Circle Ritual priestess, Hrü'ü, 31 years old

Strength 4    Melee Attack 6    Magic Resistance 4

Dexterity 8    Melee Defense 4

Intelligence 6    Missile Attack 7

Psyche 3    Missile Defense 5

Willpower 6    Initiative 8

Charisma 5    Health Points 50

Pedhétl 4    Shock Value 10

Older, Highly-Skilled, Attractive, Greedy

Acrobatics 4    Leadership 1

Calligraphy 1    Oratory 2

Dagger 1 (damage x2) Ritual (Hrü'ü) 4

Etiquette (Very High Clan) 2    Subculture (Very High Clan) 2

Etiquette (Temple) 4    Subculture (Priesthood) 4

Language (Tsolyani, speak) 2    Theology (Hrü'ü) 3

Language (Tsolyani, read) 1

You are a rising star in the Hrü'ü priesthood. From the beginning, you found yourself strangely drawn to the often inexplicable rituals of your temple. Your intensity and focus seem to have been noticed early on as you steadily were given more demanding and prestigious roles to play. Very soon you graduated from positions such as Precluser of the Goddess (where you merely stood for an entire ritual in a particular, but very ordinary, place in the temple) to roles such as the One Who Unfolds the Night (where you burned incense which produced roiling clouds of purple smoke) to being an active participant in the summoning of the demon Ka'íng, the Striker of the Spheres and Master of Artful Demise.

Now you've been handed what could be one of your greatest opportunities or a chance to ruin your career. Several days ago, you were called before Umá hiSérekel, the High Ritual Priestess of the temple. She's from your clan (Cloak of Azure Gems) and even your same lineage, though she's not a relative. You suspect she's been a secret patron of yours. She informed you that the temple is in grave peril. A ritual must be performed every 1,000 years for an Inner Aspect of Hrü'ü called Shiggéth Chá, "the Swimmer," or strange and dreadful things will happen. She did not elaborate on this point, but stressed that the ritual has been performed without fail since the time of the Bednálljans.

The ritual is entitled The Peripatetic Submersion into the Sublime. Shiggéth Chá is usually portrayed as a dead-looking fish with pale, pupilless eyes. He is said to swim the seas of Time and Space without boundaries. The ritual must take place in his shrine. Unfortunately, his "shrine" is a stretch of an underground river deep in the tsuru'úm. The correct portion of the river will be identified by the abundance of blind, pale cave-adapted fauna in the area. The ritual itself will require the assistance of others. You will need to stand with your arms outstretched in a Y position, chanting an invocation to Shiggéth Chá in Bednálljan Salarvyáni (which you've now spent the last few days memorizing). Meanwhile, a living Nenyélu needs to be held above flowing water. Upon completing the invocation (which lasts several minutes), you will draw the symbol of Hrü'ü on the Nenyélu's head seven times. Then the Nenyélu is thrown into the water and must be slain immediately. To fail to slay the Nenyélu is an insult to Shiggéth Chá.

The description of this ritual alarms you somewhat. For one, it will be no simple task to find and hold a Nenyélu. These sinuous, eel-like creatures are up to six inches in diameter and can be 15 feet long. Moreover, they have small, sharp fins along their sides which will make holding onto one painful, and their bite can cause neurological damage. Plus, you've always found their description to be creepy since they also have vestigial arms behind their blunt heads with which they can throw small stones. Fortunately, you won't be the one holding onto to the Nenyélu, and it doesn't sound like it's a problem if you use a juvenile in the ritual. But how will you capture one? And how will you find the river? And once you find the river, how will you find the correct stretch? And how will you kill it afterwards? You've spent the last few days pondering these questions. You have little doubt that this particular ritual was given to you due to all of these difficulties. But if you succeed, the rewards you will reap . . .

You do wonder about the "strange and dreadful" threat – can it really be true? Could the ritual be late already? Could that be why the Disposer of Méku was able to raze the temple in the civil war?

**Goal:** Perform the ritual.



## Treshélmú hiSóruna

Male, Dark Moon, 5<sup>th</sup> Circle Sorcerer, Hrü'ü, 28 years old

Strength 4    Melee Attack 5    Magic Resistance 7

Dexterity 5    Melee Defense 3    Psychic Pool 84

Intelligence 7    Missile Attack 5    Psychic Magic Value 7

Psyche 8    Missile Defense 3    Ritual Magic Value 6

Willpower 5    Initiative 8

Charisma 4    Health Points 45

Pedhétl 6    Shock Value 9

Older, Highly-Skilled, Decisive, High Pedhétl, Bad Reputation (Unknown Cause)

Calligraphy 1    Spells:

Etiquette (High Clan) 1    Clairvoyance/Clairaudience [Psychic]

Etiquette (Temple) 1    U1, U5, U7

Language (Tsolyáni, speak) 2

Language (Tsolyáni, read) 1    Elicitation [Psychic]    U1, U2, U3

Magic 3

Ritual (Hrü'ü) 1

Subculture (High Clan) 1

Subculture (Priesthood) 3

Theology (Hrü'ü) 1

You're beginning to wonder if you've fallen out of favor for some reason. For the last few months, you've been concentrating on trying to learn the next level of the Elicitation spell. Previously, you could easily spend several hours a day with Ádlar, the 10<sup>th</sup> Circle sorcerer priest who is your mentor. But now when you send a request for a meeting, you are always rebuffed. Sometimes he's busy, other times he suggests that you need to do more preliminary work first and assigns you the oddest topics to research. It's never taken you this long before to master another nuance of a spell. This has led you to ponder about the strange episode of six months ago. Perhaps it was a test that you failed.

Six months ago, you woke up one morning to find yourself deep underground along with seven other 5<sup>th</sup> Circle priests. After an initial period of confusion and suspicion where you questioned and suspected each other, you took charge and led the party up out of the tsuru'úm. It's true that two of the priests did die. One was out on point and fell into a crevasse. Another was drinking from a stream when he brushed against a tall, fungus-like creature. It emitted a cloud of spores which he breathed in. Coughing and choking, he was carried along for quite some time but eventually breathing became too difficult and he suffocated to death. It took days for your party to find its way to the surface. Now you wonder. Did you take too long? Are you being punished for the deaths of the two priests? Who was responsible for your situation? No one has ever made reference to it.

You're thinking of going to your clan elders and complaining. You know they have contributed a great sum of money toward the rebuilding of the temple. You know you are a talented sorcerer. It's only fair for your career to continue to be nurtured within the temple. You don't want to be forced to become a lay-priest, but you will if your prospects don't improve.

**Goals:** Show them all what you're worth. Gain some respect.

## Umá hiSérekel

Female, Cloak of Azure Gems, 15<sup>th</sup> Circle High Ritual Priestess, Hrü'ü, 43 years old

Strength 2    Melee Attack 3    Magic Resistance 3

Dexterity 4    Melee Defense 1

Intelligence 4    Missile Attack 3

Psyche 1    Missile Defense 1

Willpower 6    Initiative 4

Charisma 9    Health Points 40

Pedhétl 4    Shock Value 8

Older, Highly-Skilled, Attractive

Analysis (Political) 2    Oratory 5

Arts (Singing) 4    Planning 4

Calligraphy 3    Ritual (Hrü'ü) 5

Debate (Political) 3    Strategy (Political) 2

Etiquette (Temple) 5    Subculture (Priesthood) 5

Etiquette (Very High Clan) 1    Subculture (Very High Clan) 1

Language (Tsolyáni, speak) 2    Theology (Hrü'ü) 3

Language (Tsolyáni, read) 1

It's always tricky to recruit new members into the Triple-Y Society. The zrné must be separated from the hmá, yet the temple frowns on one society arrogating to itself the right to conduct potentially fatal 'entrance exams.' Thus you look for just the right opportunities to exploit. The need to perform the rite of The Peripatetic Submersion into the Sublime at the shrine of Shiggéth Chá "the Swimmer" (an Inner Aspect of Hrü'ü) presents the perfect opportunity. A dangerous ritual, a shrine with an uncertain location, and some promising candidates make for a fortuitous convergence. And it's not as if the ritual isn't in dire need of being performed. The Bednálljan-era scrolls clearly show that the window for the ritual is nearly past. Historically, strange and dreadful things have occurred whenever more than a 1,000 years passes without this service to Shiggéth Chá.

The ritual makes for an excellent test of talent. For one, it is dangerous. A living Nenyélu must be captured, held above flowing water while a priest chants the invocation and makes the sign of Hrü'ü upon its head seven times, and then released. It must be promptly killed upon its release or a grave insult will done to Shiggéth Chá. Nenyélu are sinuous, eel-like creatures which can reach 15 feet in length and 6 inches in diameter, have sharp little fins to help propel themselves through the water, vestigial arms behind their blunt heads and a bite that causes neurological damage. Several days ago, you formally assigned the performance of the ritual to the brightest star in the Méku temple, Sídla hiSérekel, a 9<sup>th</sup> Circle priestess who "coincidentally" is from your same clan and lineage. You want her to succeed for the temple and the clan's sake, but you will not endanger yourself to accomplish this task.

The other difficulty in performing the ritual is that the location of Shiggéth Chá's shrine is not exactly known. You know it is a stretch of an underground river deep in the tsuru'úm, but which stretch? Past accounts mention a great abundance of cave-adapted fauna (blind, pale), and earlier Temple accounts seem to indicate that after past successful performances of the ritual, the temple crafted a careful portrait of Shiggéth Chá into the cave wall in commemoration. (Shiggéth Chá is usually portrayed as a dead-looking fish with pale, pupilless eyes.) Finding a portrait is not a guarantee, however, as the location Shiggéth Chá favors seems to shift over time.

You were successful in persuading the High Administrative Priest to allow you to assemble a group for a last-ditch search to find the shrine. In true temple tradition, no one but Sídlá has been told anything about the ritual. In the middle of the night, long after the midnight rituals, the candidates were collected as they slept. With Chúrisan hiNezár, the sorcerer, at your side to cast Sophoriferousness if any should chance to awaken, they were carried on the backs of slaves for many hours until they were deposited near a border of a worked section of the underground and natural caves which are believed to be near the river. After sending the slaves back to the surface, with their driver to guide them back through the labyrinths, you have waited for the candidates to awaken. This area is dangerous, far beyond the influence of the Temple of Hrü'ü. Truth be told, you would prefer not to be here. But you are the High Ritual Priestess. It is your duty to perform The Peripatetic Submersion into the Sublime if Sídlá should fail.

- 1** The Triple-Y Society is an extremely secretive society with the Temple of Hrü'ü. It concerns itself with political power, high-level inter-Temple relations, international intrigue and ambassadorships, and both the breaching and maintenance of Imperial Security. Individuals are often unaware of their own involvement until they have risen quite high within the Triple-Y Society. Mind-bars and mind-control are used to block the memories and control the actions of their agents.
- 2** Chúrisan hiNezár, the sorcerer, is also a member of the Triple-Y Society, though he is usually under a complete mind-bar and not aware of the fact. He is not aware of your own involvement. For this excursion, he is aware that there's an initiation rite occurring but he knows no details. In his memory, you also came down here asleep on the back of a slave, just like the others. Since you are not a sorcerer, you cannot control his mind-bar. But should you need to lift it completely, you need only grasp his wrist, look him directly in the eye and state, "The time for change has ended. Long live the Emperor!"
- 3** You have a Terrible Eye of Raging Power and an Eye of Frigid Breath.

**Goals:** Identify the best and the brightest from the priest-candidates for the Triple-Y Society. Ensure the performance of The Peripatetic Submersion into the Sublime.

## Visán hiPagárta

Male, Iron Helm, 3<sup>rd</sup> Circle Temple Guard, Hrü'ü, 25 years old

Strength 9    Melee Attack 8    Magic Resistance 4

Dexterity 7    Melee Defense 6

Intelligence 4    Missile Attack 8

Psyche 4    Missile Defense 6

Willpower 7    Initiative 7

Charisma 4    Health Points 90

Pedhétl 4    Shock Value 18

Older, Highly-Skilled, High Stamina, Tough, Low-Lineage, Bad Reputation  
(Disposer's actions)

-2 bonus to Stat or Skill checks related to endurance

-2 bonus to resisting poisons and similar effects

Calligraphy 1    Ritual (Hrü'ü) 1    Polearm (Halberd) 3

Etiquette (High Clan) 1    Subculture (High Clan) 1    damage x4

Etiquette (Temple) 1    Subculture (Priesthood) 2    Sword (Short) 2

Language (Tsolyáni, speak) 2    Teamwork (Military) 2    damage x3

Language (Tsolyáni, read) 1    Theology (Hrü'ü) 1

Observation (Military) 3

Yours not to reason why, yours but to do and die. Well, you hope the dying part will be greatly delayed, but you've long since given up trying to reason out some of your assignments. Often your duties are quite normal – standing guard at the temple, escorting high circle priests and the like. But occasionally, your assignment is bewildering. Once you were ordered to go and stand watch over a tree half a day's march from Méku. You stood out there for three days and nights without relief, worried all the while that some zrné or other forest creature would attack you. When you came back to the temple, you quietly asked around for an explanation. No one could give you any, but a week later you were called before the temple guard commandant and demoted from 3<sup>rd</sup> Circle to 2<sup>nd</sup> Circle. It took you two years of unquestioning obedience before you re-gained 3<sup>rd</sup> Circle.

Last night, you were told by your superior to wait for orders from Chúrisan hiNezár, a 12<sup>th</sup> Circle sorcerer. A few kiréns after midnight, he came to you and commanded you to accompany him. What followed was a bizarre scene as he traveled from room to room, trailed by a chain of bearer slaves. He would stand and gaze at each priest as he or she slept, put his hand over their mouth for a few moments and then would motion for the bearer slaves to lift the priest up and carry him or her on their backs. When five priests were taken in this fashion, the entire procession began to descend through the temple. Just before you left the temple proper and entered the underworld, Umá hiSérekel, the High Ritual Priestess, joined the procession. She neither looked at you nor acknowledged your presence. In silence, the descent continued. After hours of walking, you seemed to arrive at your destination, though it appeared to be only a slight widening in the tunnel to you. Chúrisan motioned for the slaves to lower the priests to the floor, and then the slaves were dismissed. They seemed rather alarmed at the command to return alone and unguarded, but you had no sympathy to spare for them. Eight priests, including yourself, are here and you appear to be the only soldier of the lot. (You put little trust in the efficacy of sorcerers in a tight situation.) And nearly everyone is of higher status than you. You can only assume that some ritual will be performed, and you're expected to safeguard the participants. Meanwhile, you, Chúrisan and Umá seem to be waiting for the others to awaken.

Goals: Stay alive. Figure out what's going on.

## Zhurák hiMrékka

Male, High Pinnacle, 6<sup>th</sup> Circle Administrative Priest, Hrü'ü, 33 years old

Strength 8    Melee Attack 6    Magic Resistance 4

Dexterity 4    Melee Defense 4

Intelligence 8    Missile Attack 5

Psyche 0    Missile Defense 3

Willpower 8    Initiative 5

Charisma 7    Health Points 80

Pedhétl 4    Shock Value 16

Older, Highly-Skilled, Psychic Dampener, Physical Disability: One Eye

Administration 3    Language (Tsolyáni, read) 1    Club - Familiarity

Calligraphy 1    Negotiation 1    damage x2

Engineering (Construction) 1    Planning 3    Dagger - Familiarity

Etiquette (High Clan) 2    Ritual (Hrü'ü) 1    damage x2

Etiquette (Temple) 3    Subculture (High Clan) 2

Intimidation (Street) 3    Subculture (Priesthood) 3

Language (Tsolyáni, speak) 2    Wilderness Survival (Underworld) 2

You get things done for the temple. Others have the wild ideas of what they want accomplished, but you actually get them accomplished. You were heavily involved in carrying out the architects' ideas in the re-building of the temple. When Nirún thinks up of a new trap to install in the temple's labyrinth, you take the crew of slaves to the tsuru'úm and make his idea a reality. You know exactly how to organize projects, give orders to inferiors, and gather the needed resources. Talents such as yours are often overlooked. The sorcerer capable of casting powerful spells, the highly visible ritual priest or the respected scholar get all the glory but you know you are indispensable. You are treated fairly enough by the administrative side of the temple hierarchy, but you are not well known among the branches.

Once reason behind the recent slowness in gaining Circles is your physical deformity. Your left eye was put out four years ago in an accident on a construction site. You were taken to the temple infirmary quickly but the healing magic failed. It was then that you learned you were a psychic dampener. You know this knowledge hasn't spread widely since the temple may wish to use it to their advantage at some point in the future. As a dampener, sorcerers have great difficulty casting any spells within a 6 foot radius of you. This unfortunately precludes the healing magic that operates by touch, but leaves you vulnerable to any offensive spells that can be cast at a distance. You have made the best of a bad situation by choosing to view this "ability" as a secret weapon.

Recently, the High Ritual Priestess Umá hiSérekel, posed you a small problem. If you were to catch a Nenyélu, how would you do it? Very carefully, you replied. She smiled and inquired no further. You're wondering if this will be an actual assignment in the future. One would need to proceed carefully to catch a Nenyélu. The eel-like fish grows to up to 15 feet in length and six inches in diameter. Due to the many tiny sharp fins along their sides that they use for propulsion, they're hard to hold onto. And they have a pair of rudimentary hands just behind their snake-like heads which they use to hurl stones or strike at things. But most importantly for you, their bite is poisonous, and even if healed, a victim usually sustains some neural damage. You have no intention of letting yourself get bit by one. Of course, since they live in rivers and lakes, you're unlikely to accidentally run into one. But if you had to catch one, you're sure you could. Look for a juvenile specimen, use nets, find a location where the river narrows and drive them into it. Shouldn't be too hard.

**Goals:** Stay alive and uninjured. Boost your reputation for competence.

## Characters in Order of Status

Umá hiSérekel	15 <sup>th</sup> Circle High Ritual Priestess, Cloak of Azure Gems
Chúrisan hiNezár	12 <sup>th</sup> Circle Sorcerer Priest, Purple Gem
Sídla hiSérekel	9 <sup>th</sup> Circle Ritual Priestess, Cloak of Azure Gems
Nirún hiPagárta	11 <sup>th</sup> Circle Administrative Priest, Iron Helm, specializing in traps
Achán hiSóruna	9 <sup>th</sup> Circle Scholar Priest, Dark Moon, specializing in zoology
Zhurák hiMrékka	6 <sup>th</sup> Circle Administrative Priest, High Pinnacle, project leader
Treshélmú hiSóruna	5 <sup>th</sup> Sorcerer Priest, Dark Moon
Visán hiPagárta	3 <sup>rd</sup> Circle Temple Guard, Iron Helm



# The Tale of Pthuanath

*Joseph Pizzirurso*

## Prolog

Tirvor Antashma, Priest of the 'Lord of Sacrifice', Traveler and Councilor, guest of the Red Mountain Clan, had found himself walking in on the tail end of a conversation between several worthy individuals, including Epengar hiVu'uvanu, Clan of the Sweet Singers of Nakomé, Verússa hiTlekolmu, Cloak of Azure Gems, Arumel hiChankolel, and Hrithik hiAnadán, of the Red Star Clan. Although he had missed much of the early foundation of the discourse, and thus was unsure of the greater context, it seemed that the conversation had spiraled out to where possible interpretation included the insulting of one Iyena, priestess of Vimúhla, wife of Arumel hiChankolel, or possibly offense against the Ito clan or even one of the assassin clans. In the free-wheeling discussion that followed Epengar diplomatically tried to absolve anyone from ill intent, but Hrithik hiAnadan suggested that Epengar might have a hidden agenda or perhaps some construct of mind as to what conditions would have to be met to justify the final incandescence of the possible offender. It seemed as if claims of shámtnla were soon to be filling the air like chrí-flies gracing a summer battlefield.

Tirvor, who would usually keep his own counsel when sailing in unknown and troubled waters, chose this moment for an ill-timed quip. Perhaps wisdom and caution were temporarily lost in the lingering intoxication of finding oneself still alive and unscathed, so recently rescued from what seemed to be the unavoidable severing of the threads of his skein.

## The Tale of Pthuanath

"And just what would you want him to get roasted for?" Hrithik hiAnadan, the corner of the left side of his mouth rose in a half smile, clearly showing the verbal pitfall laid out for all to see. It almost seemed to say that skirting the trap would be cowardly, leaping into it and seeing if one would survive would make a tale more worthy of retelling.

Before Epengar was able to respond, a voice from the shadows spoke. "Lá, does one really need a 'reason' for a good roasting?" The tall, foreign priest shot a smile to the warrior, as a slave filled his wine-bowl.

"On occasion one just needs to attend a good immolation, just because...it clears the mind, it balances the five selves that make the man, the alignment of the planets calls for it, the fine olfactory feast is pleasing to the 'Lord of Red Devastation', it serves as edification and entertainment for the clan children...the list goes on and on."

"Olfactory feast?!" cried Hrithik scornfully, "Are you proposing that 'The Catharsis and Cleanser Through Flame' has a nose?"

The gazes of the two men locked as each man sized up his partner in this qadárni, this 'little war'. Tirvor had known many a man like this young, brash warrior. "Chá! By the 'Eternal Blaze'," Tirvor smiled inwardly, "I seem to recall being much like this in my youth, so many years ago." This young noble projected pride and strength for all to see, like a newly forged blade. He would have great spirit, flexibility, and energy. He had not, however, been tested and retested in the flame; he had not yet been beaten and purified, hammered again and again. He was not yet like the ugly, battle-worn, blade that he would one day become, not like this old war-priest. As such he would likely to speak and act precipitously, to be the ravening flame, following the path provided by opportunity and fate. It was good that the faith had such weapons to be used by the elders and the planners. Such it was in the old country, and, it was good to see, such it was in this land as well. The 'Flame' would remain strong.

"Well, speaking non-theologically, it seems to stand to reason that not having a nose would be an awful waste of the sentient barbecue, so painstakingly provided to the god. Not to mention the temple's lavish use of rare and expensive incense and obscure and sacred woods, often specified as being especially pleasing and even reserved solely for the veneration of specific aspects. It would be something like assigning Perfect of Drá to the best cushions, right between the wine vat and the warm oil-pool, at the high festival of the green ladies. Wasteful. And waste seems ignoble somehow."

"Speaking more theologically," Tirvor paused and lowered himself onto an ornately carved bench, arranging his bulky, travel-stained, frayed and faded robes, all crimson and black, about him. He reached up to remove the strange, heavy conical headpiece by the ornately carved earflaps, and placed it beside him, the metal chains and dangling ornaments clinking faintly on the stone. "I was able to lavish enough másh-brandý and silver upon the 'Hierophant of the Dusty Shelves at the 'Pavilion of Twilight's' library, and he was able to locate a, very possibly spurious fragment of an Irzakh recension of the 'Lament of the Wheel of Black' (then known locally as either 'The Eternal Glory of the Inferno All-Consuming' or 'The Ode to the Great Wheel of Fire') and, as possible evidence in the "yes-Nose of Flame, no-Nose of Flame" dogma debate, I must point out the verses where the Pthuanath, the sandal-bearer of our Lord of Red Ruin, begged for permission to strike a blow in the battle. With your kind indulgence..."

Tirvor placed a hand over the silver egg-shaped medallion he still wore, closed his eyes, and began to sing in a deep rumbling voice. The cadence was different, unusual, foreign, but not altogether displeasing. He continued for several minutes, slowly swaying with the rhythm, and then stopped to view his audience. "That was the opening to the ode from which I plan to quote. I do little justice to it...a singer of epics I am not. I beg your pardon, but I thought it useful to give you the feel of how this tale would have been presented by and to a people who swept across the civilized world, conquering and cleansing in fire, for the glory of the 'Lord of Red Devastation', and, who are now nothing but ash and dust.

"I must also point out that in translation the poetic structure and most of the imagery is lost, and for the sake of time, the honorifics and formal forms of address have been withheld. We are not, after all, a band of warriors and brothers gathered around the cooking fires waiting for the night to pass and for the dawn, and glorious battle, to come."

Tirvor took up and unrolled an age-stained scroll upon his lap. Following the text with a calloused finger he read:

"Pthuanath, humble and small, kneeled and places the Mighty Flame's right foot upon her head. "Dread Lord," she pleaded, "Grant me leave to depart from your radiance for just the span of a few heartbeats. Permit me to stand for just a moment in the midst of the vanguard of your host and raise a hand in righteous anger against the rabble of the 'Vain and Impotent Lord of Secrets!'"

"A hint of a smile crossed the Flame's face and He raised his shield and pointed the boss at the foe's left flank.

"Pthuanath, humble and dutiful, struck her forehead to the ground nine times, and then leapt to her feet. She strode to the leading edge of the battle-line, pushing aside many a great demon-lord of the Flame, who dared not notice an affront given in the directed service of the Flame.

"Pthuanath, brave and wise, drew a small bronze blade and cut a lock from her long braided tresses. From her virginal left breast she coaxed three drops of life-giving milk, which glistened copper in the half-light. These she touched to the lock, whispering nineteen words of power unto it, as she wove it into the mystic glyph.

"Pthuanath, flushed with pride in her Lord, raised the lock over her head where it began to glow, then shine with a crimson light. Here, to the far left, advanced the uncountable demonic legions of the Blue Lord's brhé'tha -- great undulating land worms whose skin and adamantine claws glistened and hissed with the corrosive venom whose slightest touch spelled a quick and agonizing death. The hootings and wailings that emanated from multiple orifices grated and creaked in ways that turned to water the bowels of many Hero's of the Flame.

"Here also, on the near left, advanced a thousand thousand of those demons who served the 'Black Sword of Doom'. The v'hákth, shadowy and billowing puff-bladders, floated two man-heights above the broken and scorched ground, trailing their masses of silver and blue tendrils. Where the tips of these tendrils touched the earth they laid open gaping furrows, much as the butcher lays open the breast of a hmélu. These drifted quickly forward, as if blown by a strong and directed wind, but in utter and disturbing silence.

"Pthuanath, radiant with joy, cried out the three secret names and flung the lock towards the advancing lines on the left flank. It sped, like the stooping küni-bird, towards the murderous rabble, until it froze suddenly in the air, a mere spear's cast before the advancing line. The glowing glyph hung there slowly rotating growing ever brighter. The cowardly demons of the dark quailed before this wonder, until they were beaten forward and rallied by their masters, who laughed and mocked this feeble effort.

"Heartened, the foe advanced to reap dire slaughter in the ranks of the faithful, when a sound ripped the air, like that of a cliff-face sundering, and a tsán of living granite hurling itself into the sea. Coruscating flame ripped the glyph in two, to the right and to the left. First a great wave of crimson light, outflying the flame crashed over the lines like a tidal wave, buffeting and hurling bodies like leaves in a great inundation. Unnatural screams tore from brhé'tha as dark and clay-like flesh was ripped from carbon-blackened bones and eyes blanched and melted in sockets. To the other side vhákth slammed into each other, casings excoriated as if by thousands of razor-sharp claws, tendrils blown from bodies as the antennae and legs are pulled free of the still living étla-crab.

"Then, as is the compassionate and noble nature of the flame, the suffering ended. The expanding wall of flame whelmed the demon hordes, silencing the anguished cries of the brhé'tha, consuming their flesh, purifying their unnatural venoms, and reducing the imperishable bone to a fine white powder, to settle and blend harmoniously with the sands of the field. The vhákth shriveled silently, the blackened membranes desiccated and thrown to the skies in a great heated upwelling, like a basket of autumn leaves tossed in a raging fire pit, to float gently on the breeze, ash-white and fragile.

"Back on the hill, as the two legions of sharetlyal collapsed and vanished from the field in ash and smoke, the fan bearers, servants to the Flame, took up their task and in great gales wafted the sweet scents of the burning towards their Lord, who stretched out his mighty arms wide, planted the butt of his spear in the earth and breathed deep the pleasing offering, the gift of his sandal-bearer."

Tirvor fell silent and slowly rolled up the fragile parchment. "Here ends the fragment. The tale goes on to tell that Pthuanath returned immediately to her duties as the Dread Lord's sandal-bearer, content with her lot and her place and eternally honored that she was permitted to have a deed recorded in the 'Eternal Book of Burnings'. 'The Mighty Flame' later rewarded her dual strike with a pair of offspring, twins of His loins, puissant demon-lords of the flame.

"Throughout the tale the refrain of the chorus repeatedly moves to the view of the Flame's coterie and particularly the fan-bearers. These great towering men, with skin of sizzling black iron, have the duty to fan the life-giving heat from the 'Mighty Flame' out to the myriad worlds under his protection. The nomads of the great deserts of the south, and those who inhabit the cities bordering the blazing sands know well the nature of 'Breath of the God', which sears the lung and desiccates all before it.

"This image of the Flame "breathing deeply" of the results and gifts of battle are oft-repeated thru the epic. Perhaps its poetic license...perhaps it is a facet of the nature of the god and something in this offering, real or metaphorical is sustaining to the god.

"This traditional tale may thus and fuel to the fire of the debate. Or it may not. What matters what one old man has to say, né? Such are some of the debates of the temple-dorm theologians."

(Translator's note: One can clearly see the hand of a later commentator or writer wishing to turn the tale to his own ends. The description of the nature of the dark demons is self-contradictory and imbues them with incongruous human failings.)

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