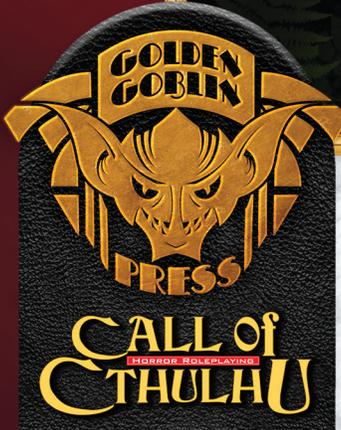




Albino *Albino*
2018



FRONTI NULLA FIDES

— NO FAITH IN APPEARANCES —

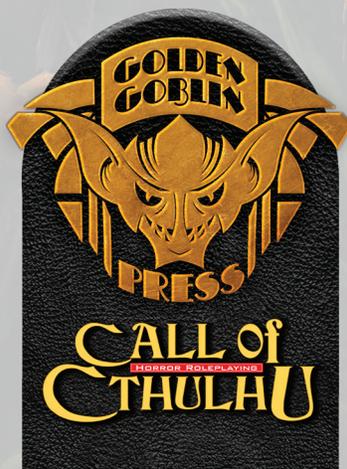
Featuring scenarios by Oscar Rios, Jeffrey Moeller,
Charles Gerard, and William Adcock



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Fronti Nulla Fides

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THANK YOU

We'd like to thank the many generous backers of the *7th Edition Guide to Cthulhu Invictus* for making this collection possible. Our thanks go to the many playtesters at conventions, over the Internet, and across dining room tables for helping us improve these adventures, while reminding us how much fun a few hours of gaming can be. I'd personally like to thank our authors, Charles Gerard, William Adcock, and Jeffrey Moeller, for making the world of Cthulhu Invictus a bigger and more terrifying place. I'd also like to thank our artists: Alberto Guerra, for the beautiful cover; Reuben Dodd, for the wonderful interior illustrations; and Gregory Shipp, for the impressive maps. I'd like to thank the talented Mark Shireman for another incredible layout and design, and last but not least our amazing editor Jeffrey Moeller, for keeping this project on track.

OSCAR RIOS

Princeps Officii, Golden Goblin Press

GRATITUDE IS NOT ONLY THE GREATEST OF VIRTUES,
BUT THE PARENT OF ALL THE OTHERS.

– Marcus Tullius Cicero



DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my friend and colleague, Jeffery Moeller.

IN POVERTY AND OTHER MISFORTUNES OF
LIFE, TRUE FRIENDS ARE A SURE REFUGE. THE
YOUNG THEY KEEP OUT OF MISCHIEF; TO THE
OLD THEY ARE A COMFORT AND AID IN THEIR
WEAKNESS, AND THOSE IN THE PRIME OF LIFE
THEY INCITE TO NOBLE DEEDS.

– Aristotle





THE CLOCKWORK ORACLE

BY OSCAR RIOS

THE CAST

Quintus Dexsius Latinius

Paterfamilias of House Dexsius, father of Telesinus, Latina and Commius

Galerius Dexsius Telesinus

Oldest son of Dexsius Latinius, wants Nectarios Callis killed

Latina Dexsilia

Daughter of Dexsius Latinius, wants the Clockwork Oracle destroyed

Kaeso Dexsius Commius

Youngest son of Dexsius Latinius, lover of the slave Adara Panagou

Dexsius Lydosa

Freedman of House Dexsius, offering shelter to the three children

Prokopios of Corinth

Lawyer of Quintus Dexsius Latinius

Akakios

Adult grandson of Prokopios, twin to Aspasia

Aspasia

Adult granddaughter of Prokopios, twin to Akakios

Aniketos

Local tinker, specializes in clockwork diversions

Plutonius Vera

Local tinker, specializes in water clocks and steam novelties

Nectarios Callis

Engineer and High Priest of the Tick Tock Man

Endre Mires

Engineer and cultist of the Tick Tock Man

Xerxes Peris

Engineer and cultist of the Tick Tock Man

Adara Panagou

Pregnant slave, beloved of Kaeso Dexsius Commius

Tellis

Aged former guard dog, turned pet, turned cybernetic horror

Varanius Strabi

Vigilis watch captain

INTRODUCTION

This scenario takes place in Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis, also known as Corinth (Greece). This major city in southern Achaean had been destroyed during the Roman war against the Achaean League, but was rebuilt in 44 B.C. on the orders of Julius Caesar, shortly before his assassination. Today, the city is large and prosperous, serving as the capital for the Roman Province of Achaean. It is a center of regional trade and a major base for the Roman Navy, as the city boasts not one, but two harbors. It has a mixed population of Romans, Greeks, and Jews, and hosts many rituals connected to the Imperial Cult.

A wealthy merchant, Quintus Dexsius Latinius, has fallen under the influence of his newest client, Nectarios Callis. This mysterious man, a brilliant engineer, has been supplying Latinius with wondrous clockwork machines over the last year. Latinius has dismissed all other clients, including Aniketos and Plutonius Vera, two local tinkers who also supplied him with clockworks. He now solely supports Nectarios Callis and his apprentices.

Quintus Dexsius Latinius has recently been given a singular new clockwork, the most complex yet (and possibly ever constructed). This item, a clockwork bird (a jay), is supposedly able to tell the future.

Since Nectarios Callis and his clockworks entered the family's lives, their father has become more and more distant, and increasingly obsessed with his collection of mechanical wonders. Nectarios was even given a room to work out of in their household, command over the servants, and an unlimited budget to draw from for his work. When Dexsius Latinius was confronted by his children about all of this recently, he flew into a rage. He ordered his servants to remove his children from the property and banished them from his sight.

FOR THE KEEPER

Quintus Dexsius Latinius has indeed fallen under the sway of Nectarios Callis, who is both a talented engineer and dangerous cultist. He worships the Outer God Nyarlathotep in his avatar of the Tick Tock Man, a living machine god. Latinius is fascinated by the clockwork toys that Nectarios makes for him, although ensorcelled is perhaps a better term for it. The cultist, along with two apprentice craftsmen and junior cultists, now operates out of the Dexsius family home, and have subsumed Latinius' will.

As his plans progressed, Nectarios realized that the adult children of the Dexsius household needed to get out of his way. He overheard each of the children complaining about the influence he had over their father, and how they needed to put a stop to the patronage before their family's fortunes were completely depleted. So Nectarios struck first by creating the Clockwork Oracle and giving it to his patron. This life-size, clockwork Eurasian Jay opens its mouth once per day and sings out a set of clicks, chirps, and

whistles. Nectarios told Latinus that these messages presage future events, and convinced Latinus that only he could interpret them. Latinus became firmly convinced of the Clockwork Jay's power, and began basing all of his decisions on the machine's messages. In truth, the Clockwork Oracle does not tell the future; the messages come from Nectarios himself. Instead, its hypnotic effect deadens the will of its owner. Through this ruse, the cult quickly took nearly complete control of the household and its fortunes, turning the impressionable Dexsius Latinus into their puppet.

Nectarios convinced his patron, through the Clockwork Oracle, that his children would soon betray him and try to drive off the only people loyal to him, so that they could poison him and inherit his fortune. When his children did try to speak to him about the unhealthy obsession with his clockworks and his relationship with Nectarios, their father reacted violently, feeling the predictions of the Oracle had been proven out. The children were banished from the home and the cultists now move forward with their final, wonderful plan.

The cultists have lately turned most of the villa into a massive workshop, and used a considerable amount of Latinus' fortune to finance the building of a massive and complex machine. It is a 12-foot-tall, fully articulated automaton in the form of divine Apollo. When completed, they will offer this machine as an avatar-body to host The Divine Machine, allowing their god to manifest in the physical world. If completed, this avatar will grant Nectarios incredible power, allowing him to wreak havoc throughout Corinth.

INVESTIGATOR GOALS:

- The investigators must destroy or disable the Clockwork Oracle in order to free Quintus Dexsius Latinus from its influence.
- They must kill, capture, or drive off Nectarios Callis and his fellow cultists.
- They must kill or surgically rescue the now corrupted and controlled slaves of House Dexsius.
- (Minor goal) They must specifically save one slave, Adara Panagou, who is involved with one of the sons of House Dexsius.
- (Minor goal) They must recover a hidden jewelry box, secreted within the villa.

Interview: Galerius Dexsius Telesinus

It is mid-afternoon when the investigators meet the children of Quintus Dexsius Latinus. The meeting is held at the home of Dexsius Lydosa, a trusted family friend and their father's freedman. They have known him since they were children, and view him almost as they would an uncle.

Lydosa, a bald, sturdy man of about fifty, welcomes the investigators to his modest home. He explains that he is quite fond of the children, and terribly worried about his former master. But due to his loyalty to their father, he feels that it is best that he not get directly involved. Offering the displaced children of the



THE CLOCKWORK ORACLE

Dexsius clan food and shelter is the best that he can do. Lydosa then escorts the investigators to his garden, where they are given a glass of rather pedestrian wine and a bowl of figs before the trio of Quintus Dexsius Latinius' children arrive.

The three adult children are led by Galerius Dexsius Telesinus, the eldest son, who is well dressed, sharp-eyed, and intense. His younger sister is Latina Dexsilia, who appears calm and level-headed, picking her words carefully and displaying a keen intelligence. The youngest is Kaeso Dexsius Commius, who appears careworn and nervous, and is obviously the naivest and most pampered of the three. Telesinus dismisses every servant and slave, and urges that all being said must be held in the strictest confidence before they begin.

Once the investigators agree to confidentiality, the conversation begins in earnest. Telesinus tries to maintain control of the conversation, his message being that their father has gone mad and must be stopped before the Dexsius' reputation (by which he means fortune) is forever ruined (by which he means spent). His siblings, however, frequently interject, bickering and interrupting him multiple times. Latina usually does this to clarify things or soften something that sounds overly harsh. Commius instead interrupts to voice his personal concerns (usually about the household slaves) and stress the urgency in resolving the issue quickly. Investigators making an Insight roll quickly realize that the three are far from united, with very different personalities, goals, and opinions. While this rivalry and resentment is a problem, they are united in the need to resolve this quickly and quietly.

- Their father has fallen under the sway of a dangerous client, an engineer named Nectarios Callis.
- Nectarios makes clockwork devices, water clocks, windup toys, and other such machines.
- Nectarios has moved into the villa, along with two of his assistants.
- Nectarios presented their father with a mechanical jay, called The Clockwork Oracle.
- Each day, the machine issues a birdsong message, which their father claims to interpret.
- Their father claims that the jay's message details all important events which are to happen to him in the coming day, basically foretelling his future.
- Since getting the Clockwork Oracle, their father is a changed man.
- He has dismissed all other clients, turned away his friends, and banished his freedmen servants from the household.
- They have discovered that a considerable amount of their father's property holdings in Corinth have been sold recently, and the money used to finance Nectarios' "work."
- Four days ago, they tried to question their father on these matters, and he became enraged, saying that the Oracle had predicted that they would not only turn against him, but plot to murder him.
- He then banished them from the house, turning them out with only the clothing on their backs.
- They went to the home of Lydosa, their most loyal freedman, and asked for shelter, which he generously provided.
- Since then, they've had neighbors watching the house for them, and have learned that there are constant deliveries of strange items which must cost a small fortune. The neighbors have seen gears, tools, carved marble, spools of copper wire, plates of brass and bronze, and other things that they cannot clearly identify.
- They believe their father has been bewitched by Nectarios, but have no proof.
- Prokopios of Corinth, their father's lawyer, was summoned to the house today.
- The lawyer said that he was too busy to come, but would visit tomorrow. They believe that this was Prokopios doing what he could to buy them some time.
- They fear that Quintus Dexsius Latinius plans to change his will and exclude them from any inheritance, or worse, to formally adopt Nectarios as his sole heir.
- They require swift and decisive action, which must take place this evening, before tomorrow's appointment with Prokopios.
- They can make no payment now, as they are all cut off from their family's fortunes. They promise to reward the investigators generously and make them clients of House Dexsius (+3% Status) once things are set right, however.
- If the investigators agree to help them, the trio then explains what specifically they want done:
 - » Remove Nectarios Callis and his cronies from their father's home.
 - » If possible, find records of any of their family's monies spent by Nectarios, as further evidence against him, as they are convinced that their father is not in his right mind.
 - » Separate their father from the Clockwork Oracle.
 - » Make sure that their father is safe, even if he must be restrained. If necessary, they will try to have him declared legally unfit, so that they can make decisions on his behalf.
 - » If possible, try not to hurt any of the household slaves, whom they are all fond of.
 - » If possible, try not to hurt the family dog, Tellis, who is more of an old, beloved pet than an actual guard dog anymore.
 - » All of this must happen tonight, before their father meets with his lawyer, Prokopios.

HIDDEN AGENDAS

Before leaving, each of the three siblings tries to speak privately with one or more of the investigators. Each has his or her own agenda and priorities. None of the siblings does this with the others seeing; as these are private matters, they do not expect the others to agree. They select investigators whom they feel could be sympathetic to their goals. Latina gravitates towards intelligent investigators, especially female ones; Commius towards slaves, lowborn, or youthful investigators; and Telesinus picks those he judges to be the least squeamish about "getting their hands dirty."

Personal Goals of Dexsius Telesinus: He wants Nectarios dead, not captured. He wants the Clockwork Oracle brought to him after it is taken from his father. If their father cannot be freed from Nectarios' influence, then he must not be allowed to meet with the lawyer. If he were to die before that meeting, then the old will would be honored. This would "restore their family's good name." In truth, Telesinus sees this as a good opportunity to remove his father from power and take control of the house. He promises to be a very generous patron to them once he is in control of the family, should they ensure that these things happen (+5% Status instead of +3%).

Personal Goals of Latina Dexsilia: She wants the Clockwork Oracle completely destroyed, and not brought to anyone else (she suspects that her brother Dexsius Telesinus wants it). She also wants her late mother's jewelry secured and brought to her, so that Nectarios cannot sell it. Her father is selling off much of the family's assets to pay for these strange shipments. She says that the jewelry is hidden in a secret alcove behind the mosaic of Poseidon in her bedroom (the center-most bedroom on the north side of the house). To open the compartment, one must press both of Poseidon's eyes at the same time. She says that if these things happen, she will allow them to select any item from the box they wish (2D4 x200 sesterces in value) and funnel them additional monies beyond what was agreed to, once they are taken on as clients (+1% additional Status).

Personal Goals of Dexsius Commius: He confides that he is in love with one of his father's slaves, Adara Panagou. He was putting aside money to purchase her freedom, so that he could marry her. If the investigators can ensure her safety and bring her to him, he will give them half of the money that he had saved (+500 sesterces, which he managed to take with him when banished). Investigators making an Insight roll realize that he is hiding something, something that his siblings would not approve of. If pressed, the young man confesses the whole truth: the slave girl is pregnant with his child (or so he firmly believes). She is only a few months into the pregnancy, but it has begun to show through her clothing. Everyone in his family will strongly object to him marrying her. If they agree to help him, he provides them with a detailed description of her, and reveals a way to enter the household undetected (see The Back Way In, below).

Possible Meetings in Corinth

The investigators may wish to attempt to gather more information in Corinth before moving on the Dexsius' villa. A few bits of additional information can be gleaned. The three knowledgeable sources are the two tinkers (Aniketos and Plutonium Vera) who were dismissed as clients, and the aged family lawyer, Prokopios.

Aniketos, Local Tinker: This native Greek engineer is thickly bearded, and oversees a number of younger men (a collection of sons, nephews, and grandsons) who do all of the actual building, as his hands no longer work as well as he would like. His thriving shop is located on a good block, in a prime spot next to an upscale wine shop and across from a public fountain. The shop deals mostly in water clocks, hourglasses, and finely polished lenses of crystal which magnify objects. They also do a small business in wind up clockwork novelties, mostly walking cows, ducks that flap their wings, and a rooster that makes a

horrible buzzing noise five minutes after you wind it up.

Aniketos is friendly enough, and warmly invites the investigators in for a cup of juice (wine hurts his guts too much these days) and a chat. He has little to say about his former patron, Quintus Dexsius Latinus, other than that he was a generous man and he shall miss both his company and his patronage. He asks after his health, commenting, "I hear the family may be going through difficult days." Of Nectarios, he has few flattering things to say, but is initially hesitant to speak. He starts by saying, "That man is no brother in the arts to me, or even my rival across the way, Plutonium. I beg you do not lump us together; what we do is honest work: precise, natural, and created from our own keen minds with our—well someone's—steady hands."

If pressed, and the investigators make a successful Charm, Persuade, Fast Talk or Status check, he will give the investigators a bit more information. He will explain that his art does have corrupted forms, passed down from far distant times, and empires older than Rome, Alexander, or Egypt (investigators making a successful Cthulhu Mythos realize he means The Fallen Kingdoms). "In those days, magic and science were sometimes combined to create machines that were more than the sum of their parts. Things with their own will and possessing dark souls, created by weak-minded men inspired by dreams sent to them by dark spirits and malevolent gods. I do not speak out of jealousy of Nectarios' creations, and I do not accuse him of anything. I only say that if I were one of Latinus' children, I would be very concerned for his safety." He adds, with a wink, "But what do I know, I am just an old man who makes toys with his grandchildren."

Unbeknownst to almost anyone, Aniketos is a retired investigator, an aged veteran of the Shadow War. After this meeting, he asks the local watch captain, Varianus Strabi, to meet with him. Strabi is the grandson of a former teammate of his, and current soldier in the Shadow War, defending Corinth against Mythos threats. Once briefed by Aniketos, Varianus will put a group of ten men on alert as a rapid response team, just in case something "unexpected" happens at the Dexsius villa. Strabi won't aid or hinder the investigators' efforts, but will be ready to clean up after them and take advantage of any trouble that they might stir up.

Plutonium Vera, Local Tinker: This Roman man, from the province of Africa, came to Corinth to study engineering and never left. He is thirty-two, fit and in his prime. He shaves himself of all body hair, painting on his eyebrows so as not to (further) unnerve customers. He employs a number of young, freeborn apprentices, whose families pay for the opportunity to have them work for him as part of their education.

He runs a thriving business dealing mostly in kitchenware that whistles and moves when water is boiling, his best seller being a wolf-headed pot that opens its mouth to howl steam. The main source of his income though is solving problems and designing larger machines, such as pulley systems, water mills, and the occasional war machine, and selling the plans to customers. He likes the comfort of Corinth and is happy to stay in the city rather than oversee such large-scale projects. He is best known from his "Eros Collection," over a dozen clockwork figures of nude men and women engaged in various lewd and repetitive motions when wound up. He has a sample of each figure available, and creates a new one every year, but they are not for general sale. They are made specifically for customers for about 1,000 sesterces, and



there is a two-month waiting list for these figures.

Plutonium needs no prodding to speak ill of Nectarios. He agrees that the man is not like him, "or the old greybeard across the way, Hygieia preserve him." He says that he does not trust the man, simply because "he is so good, yet no one knows anything about him. Who did he apprentice under? Who are his earlier patrons? What are his previous creations? No one knows. I should know. There are only a handful of people across the empire who have the expertise to do what I do, and I either know or know of anyone of note. We're a community of friends, sometimes rivals, but siblings in this art. He is not part of our family. Suddenly, someone with that level of mastery steps out of the shadows and displaces two of the finest engineers from our most generous patron? Someone no one has heard of, making strange and wondrous new machines, which some say are almost magical? I don't trust it, and I'll have nothing to do with the man. No good will come from the likes of him, or his apprentices, mark my words."

Prokopios of Corinth, Family Lawyer: This very well-respected advocate has been the personal lawyer for the Dexsius family for two generations. In his twilight years now, he only practices contract law. He is still fit for his advanced age, and travels with his adult grandson and granddaughter, the twins Akakios and Aspasia. They help him get about, as well as serve as his scribes and bodyguards if necessary.

Prokopios is not easy to get hold of. Investigators must make a successful Luck check to find him at home. Getting in to see him, even for a few moments, requires a Hard Charm, Fast Talk, Persuade, or Status check to get past his household's steward. Once inside the lawyer's home, Akakios explains that his grandfather can only give them a few minutes, before letting them into his office. Once inside, Prokopios begins the meeting by asking the investigators a lot of questions; Who are they? What do they want? Whom are they working for? He is not someone to speak loosely. Once they inquire about Quintus Dexsius Latinius, though, he slowly smiles, blinks a few times, and gathers his thoughts:

"I can't say anything about his affairs that aren't a matter of public record, because I am his advocate and what we discuss is private."

- "He has signed a number of contracts recently, liquidating certain business interests and selling a number of properties."
- "The monies raised are being turned over to him, at the house. I estimate that he has reduced family's fortunes by about one fifth in the last week. Again, this is a matter of public record."
- "I will be meeting him tomorrow to amend some documents, and draw up a new one. These are not connected to his business interests but are of a more personal, family related, nature."
- "I will send one of my assistants to file those papers late tomorrow, likely near closing time at the city clerk's office. Once filed, they will become part of the public record, and legally binding."
- "I'm afraid that is all the information that I can give you. Anything else would be either rumor, opinion, or confidential."

While sticking to the letter of his legal oaths, Prokopios has nonetheless hinted at quite a few things. The information gives the investigators a timetable of when the papers are being drawn

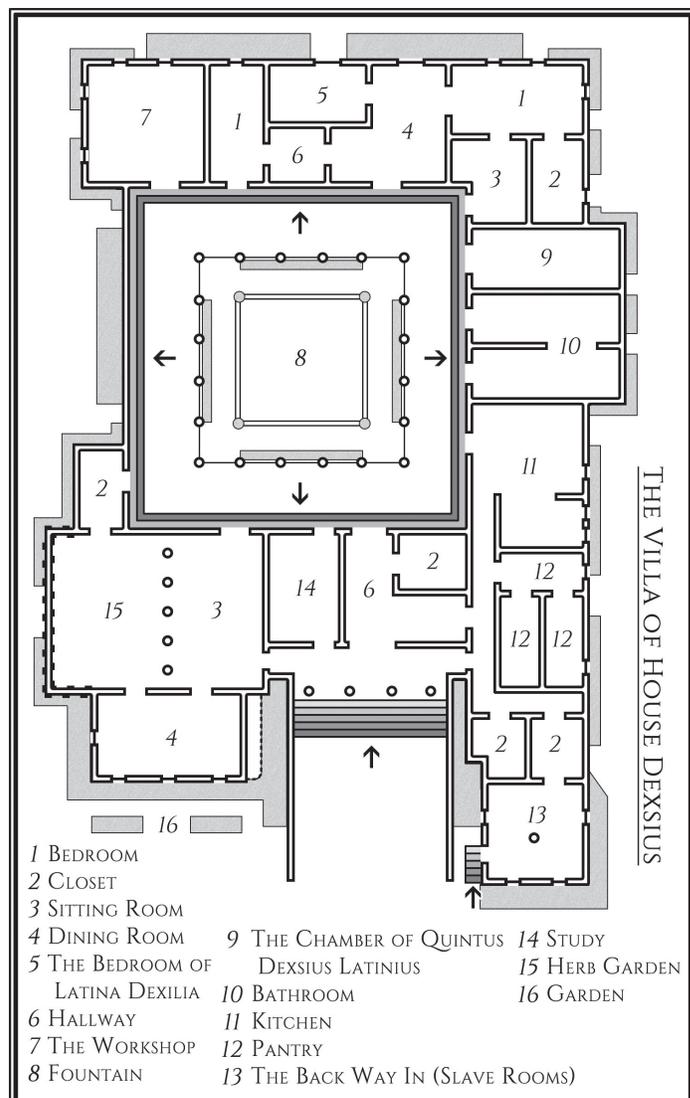
up, what they are about (family matters, meaning an altered will and a new adoption), and when they will become legally binding. It also confirms the rumors of Dexsius Latinius selling off a lot of his property.

THE HOUSE OF DEXSIUS

The Villa, Location and Weather: Situated on the outskirts of Corinth, the villa of House Dexsius is remote enough that screams won't likely be heard by neighbors (unless someone critically fails a Luck check). However, the home is urban enough that signs of a fire would be noticed, and someone running for help should be able to summon assistance from the local vigilis within 20 minutes. Either way, breaking in undetected by neighbors or occupants is certainly possible during nighttime hours.

Investigators making a successful Luck check are blessed with having bad weather move in, filling the night sky with thick clouds that blot out both the moon and stars. Those making a Hard Luck roll are further granted with stormy weather, with sheets of rain and claps of thunder. This aids their efforts at Stealth (Keepers can add a bonus die to any Stealth rolls they so desire).

The Back Way In (Room 10): Adara would sneak out to meet with Commius after they were forbidden to be together in private by Latinius. Latinius learned of his son's love for the slave girl,



and threatened to sell her if he did not “come to his senses.” To facilitate their clandestine meetings, they have broken the locks on the window leading into the house’s slave quarters, allowing her to exit the house to meet up with Commius. The lock is broken in such a way that it cannot easily be detected, and is still undiscovered. Investigators who know about it can gain access to the villa through this unlocked window with a simple Climb check, or just the assistance of someone else to boost them up.

The Front Door: The main door is thick and locked, and any knocking upon it is ignored by everyone but the family dog, Tellis. After several rounds of knocking, the animal will begin savagely barking at the door if anyone persists. The barking is unearthly, unnatural somehow, and quite unnerving, requiring those who hear it to make a O/1 SAN check. Forcing the door open requires 200 STR and makes enough noise to awaken everyone in the house.

Alternate Entry Methods: Investigators can also enter the villa undetected through a latched window, by making a Climb check, then a Stealth check, and then beating a STR of 60 to force the window open. At night, the household is mostly asleep, although the cultists will be hard at work in the sitting area of the house. Once inside the house, investigators must make Hard Stealth checks every 10 minutes, or they attract the attention of Tellis. Investigators failing a simple Stealth check at these intervals also awaken the household slaves. One or both of the two junior cultists, Xerxes Peris and Endre Mires, will investigate on further failed Stealth rolls.

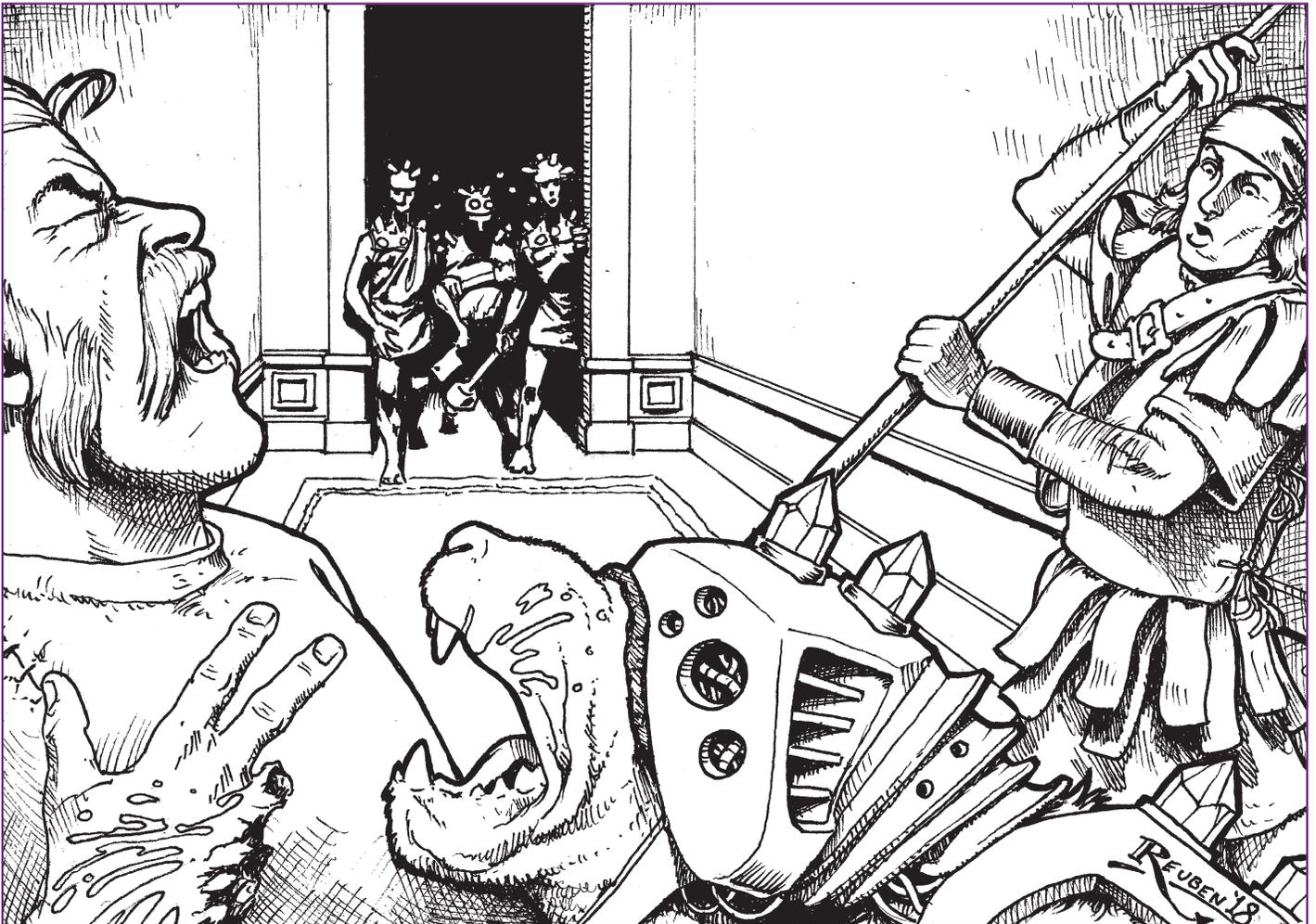
The Sound of the Altered

Tellis (the dog) and the twelve slaves of the Dexsius household have been “upgraded” by strange magic and technology. Their voices have a strange quality to them, quite unnatural to the ears of ancient Romans. They would best describe it as unnatural or an imitation of natural sound; modern ears would call it “autotuned.” Investigators find Tellis’ barking and the voices of the household slaves to be alien, sickening, and frightening to hear.

Quintus Dexsius Latinus will not leave his room, even if awoken, as he has been commanded by the Clockwork Oracle to remain there. Nectarios Callis will not leave the workshop.

Beware of Dog

Tellis was described as too old to be an effective guard dog, and more of a family pet. However, the animal has been upgraded by Nectarios, making him a truly dangerous guardian. The dog has a strange collection of apparati over its eyes, head, down its back, and over its shoulder blades. These devices are made of bronze, brass, copper wires, and glowing crystals. The whole thing gives off a humming sound when Tellis is agitated, and the crystals begin to glow in purple, green, and yellow tones.



THE CLOCKWORK ORACLE

These mechanical alterations have made the animal quite energetic and vicious, granting it improved strength and constitution, but have (for now) erased all of its memories and previous personality traits. Mentally, it is now as much machine as it is dog, and obedient only to Nectarios. Any encounter with Tellis, which is almost unavoidable, is loud and violent, and awakens everyone in the house. While it would take an extreme effort to capture Tellis alive, daring and resourceful investigators may manage to do so at the Keeper's discretion.

The Slaves

Once the household is awoken, the slaves respond to the disturbance. They raise the alarm if possible, calling on Tellis if he has not already discovered the intruders. Much like Tellis, Nectarios has also "upgraded" the slaves to better serve his purposes.

Each of these slaves, a total of four men, six women (including the visibly pregnant Adara Panagou), and two children, have been augmented by the dark technologies of the cultists. They now all wear bronze helmets, topped with glowing crystals, which are screwed into their skulls. Bronze, copper, and brass plates, coated with wires and adorned with crystals also cover their chests, shoulders, and spines. They retain their personalities and reasoning, but cannot control their actions. They viciously attack any intruders, all the while begging for help and mercy. Some ask that they be spared and explain that they cannot control themselves. Some plead for the investigators to save their master, Quintus Dexsius Latinus, above all else.

The slaves are clumsy, slow moving, and rather ineffective at combat. Most can be easily captured and bound, simply by knocking them down and acting quickly. Nets, hurled furniture, and rope work well against these unfortunate victims.

The Junior Cultists, Endre Mires and Xerxes Peris

These middle-aged engineers wear tool belts, thick oil-stained tunics, and leather work aprons, at all hours of the day and night. They are obsessive/compulsive and rarely sleep, and are often hyper-absorbed in tasks. They may investigate strange noises, but likely do so only after Tellis and the slaves are silenced. Their main concern is giving their master, Nectarios, enough time to finish his great work. If that means buying him time with their lives, then they willingly pay that price.

Both are ignorant of any magic, nor are they skilled combatants. However, they are equipped with a powerful weapon, implanted into their left hand and forearms. These are called the Palm of The Machine God. Most of the device is hidden under their flesh, but a few wires and metal plates can be seen on their skin and palms. A white, glowing crystal is visible under the palm of their left hands.

In combat, this device is triggered on a successful Brawl attack, delivering an additional electrical attack (1D10 damage, ½ with successful Extreme CON check). This is basically a lethal taser imbedded into the cultist's flesh, and it cannot be removed without destroying it. Each attack drains 15 POW from the cultists, allowing them to only discharge the weapon three times per day. Using it a fourth time is possible, but that renders them unconscious for twelve hours.

The Chamber of Quintus Dexsius Latinus

Located in the southern-most of the two bedrooms on the east side of the home, this is where Dexsius Latinus currently spends

all of his time. When not waiting for the next prediction of the Clockwork Oracle, he sleeps. The effects of the machine make him pliable and lethargic, allowing him to be more easily managed by the cultists. If anyone enters this room, he tries to defend himself and raise an alarm, but he is an older man who has never been in a real fight in his life. He can be easily disarmed and subdued. However, the Clockwork Oracle is also in this room, and it can be dangerous in combat (see The Clockwork Oracle, below).

The Clockwork Oracle

This large, clockwork bird is shaped like a jay, but is actually the size of an eagle. It is a beautiful thing of brass and bronze, with gemstone eyes and silver wings. In materials alone it is worth 2,000 sesterces. It is in fact alive in a sense, although it seldom moves other than to deliver its daily "prediction" or when it must defend itself. When defending itself, it can fly about to make swooping attacks with its sharp claws, while chirping, warbling, and tweeting a cacophony of sounds. These sounds cause confusion, dizziness, and nausea in anyone hearing them, forcing everyone within 20 feet to suffer 1D3 damage per round (a successful Extreme CON check reduces the damage by half). If the Clockwork Oracle is destroyed, then Quintus Dexsius Latinus slips into a coma for the next 24 hours, but is otherwise unharmed (see Conclusion, below).

The Workshop and the Cultists

This area now takes up the northern sitting room. It is now a crowded workshop, filled with work tables, tools, a small forge, and boxes of expensive raw materials. The center of the room is occupied by eight dining couches, which have pushed together into a single massive bed. Upon this bed rests a massive, partially completed Clockwork Man, 12 feet tall from heel to crown. It has marble plates shaped like muscle bolted over an inner frame filled with brass cogs, bronze pistons, copper wires, and glowing crystals. It currently only has one arm, is missing its lower left leg, and the head and lower abdomen are not yet covered with marble plating.

This is where the investigators find Nectarios Callis (who stops his work for nothing until directly threatened) with the junior cultists Xerxes Peris and Endre Mires (unless they heard the Investigators earlier). As soon as the investigators enter this room, the massive clockwork man begins humming rhythmically, alerting the cultists. If the upgraded Tellis is still active, they summon the dog to help them defend their workshop.

If all three cultists are present, they fight until one of them is slain. If only two of them are here, they fight until things begin turning against them. At this point, one or both cultists kill themselves by holding their left palm, the one armed with the Palm of The Machine God, over their foreheads and discharge its full power into their brains. As they do this, they scream "a mortal life for a divine awakening." If the investigators can subdue them before they can accomplish this, then they can prevent The Arrival. If not...

THE ARRIVAL & FIGHTING THE MACHINE GOD

The partially completed avatar for The Machine God slowly comes to life after the self-sacrifice of its cultists. It pulls itself upright, tries to stand and falls to its knees, then begins moving towards the investigators. Sparks fly from the creature and it emits a pinkish smoke that smells of a lightning strike. In the crystals forming



its piercing eyes, and the gaps between its gears, are reflected the yawning void, endless dimensions and the crushing secrets of the universe. The investigators lose 1D10/1D100 SAN for seeing the powered-up Machine God of Corinth, Avatar of Nyarlathotep.

This incomplete construct is nowhere near as powerful as it was meant to be. It lacks spells, mobility, and the ability to verbally communicate. It can, however, deliver quite powerful blows with its marble plated fists. Unless destroyed, the creature literally begins falling apart after three rounds of combat, losing 15% of combat effectiveness for the following two rounds (60%, and then 45%). At the start of the sixth round of combat, regardless of damage inflicted thus far, the avatar shakes itself apart in a shower of unnatural black and gold sparks. These sparks ignite everything they touch (see *The Fire and The Vigilis*), inflicting 1D6 points of damage to everyone within a 15-foot radius.

The Fire and The Vigilis

The collapse of The Machine God of Corinth causes a small fire, which completely engulfs the villa of House Dexsius in a matter of minutes. The fire is unnaturally hot closest to the source, and cannot be extinguished by normal means. If the investigators flee the villa as soon as the fire begins, then they can escape unharmed. However, moving about inside the house, to recover items or evacuate prisoners, may require CON checks (due to smoke and heat), DEX checks (to move swiftly around the quickly burning structure), or Luck checks (to just be in the right place at the right time as the villa burns around them), depending on the whim and will of the Keeper.

Fortunately for Corinth, the fire spreads no further than this residence, due to the heroic efforts of the local corps of vigilis, the police/firefighters of the Roman Empire. They move to combat and contain the fire, but also to control the scene. They keep people away from fire so that no one else gets hurt, treat anyone injured, and detain anyone looking suspicious trying to leave the scene. They are armed and allowed to use force if their orders are not adhered to, and they do so if necessary.

Leading these men is a sturdy, no-nonsense sort, with old burn scars down his right arm. This is Varanius Strabi, one of the local watch captains and a soldier in the Shadow War. If he finds any sign of the Mythos, such as humans with implanted machine parts or sentient clockworks, he orders his men to destroy them unless convinced otherwise (see *Pleading For Mercy*, below). If he takes any of the cultists prisoner, then he orders their implanted arms to be severed on the spot, and the men taken in for questioning. If he manages to question the investigators, and they explain themselves believably, he is inclined to let them leave the scene to be questioned by him, unofficially, at a later date. Otherwise, investigators must roll a successful Fast Talk, Charm, or Persuade to avoid being detained after questioning.

However, Strabi is not a man to hinder others who are fighting the same war he is. Also, there is a good chance that he has been forewarned of their activities, should they have spoken to the local tinker Aniketos. Investigators dealing with him truthfully have a chance of making a very good ally in this city in their battles against the Mythos.

Pleading For Mercy

If the investigators wish to have the mechanically implanted slaves and servants of the Dexsius villa spared by the vigilis, they will need to be very persuasive with Varanius Strabi. He is not the sort to take

unnecessary risks or half measures, and these "people" have clearly been deeply infected with the taint of the Mythos. Investigators who promise to "put them down" if they cannot be saved will be allowed to leave the scene with them on a successful Persuade or Status check. The vigilis even help conceal their appearance and transport them somewhere secure. Without these assurances, the investigators must make a Hard success on a Persuade or Status to secure safe passage out of the area for these innocent victims of the cult.

CONCLUSION

Failure: If the investigators fail to stop the cultists, then they complete the body of The Machine God of Corinth in about a week. It is a nearly unstoppable killing machine, able to cast spells and speak. Its horrific appearance on the streets of Corinth sparks panic, riots, and mayhem. The carnage lasts for three days, leaving parts of the city a smoking ruin and causing the deaths of over three thousand residents. In the end, The Machine God and its followers, who quadruple in number due to new insane devotees, manage to leave the city by ship and vanish into Mares Nostrum. Should all this occur, the investigators lose 1D10 SAN points, and the scenario ends in failure.

Success: Once they defeat the cult and stop The Machine God of Corinth, the investigators have won, but there is still much to do. They may have implanted victims to deal with. They may have saved the paterfamilias of house Dexsius, Quintus Dexsius Latinus. What is the fate of the Clockwork Oracle? What of the slave girl Adara and her relationship with Commius? Where is the jewelry of Latina Dexsilia? All these details must be addressed.

The "Upgraded" Slaves and Tellis: Once the cult is defeated, the implanted slaves and Tellis regain control of their bodies. All of the slaves wish to have these terrible objects removed from their bodies. Doing so is possible, but requires someone, likely the investigators, to make a Hard success on a Medicine roll. Those with the Surgeon profession gain a bonus die to such rolls. If the check is failed, then the victim dies. If the surgery is not attempted within 24 hours after the defeat of the cult, these victims also die, as the implants begin breaking down within them. Unfortunately, Tellis has been much more deeply implanted, and his surgery requires a Hard success on a Medicine roll, with surgeons needing a normal success but losing the benefit of a bonus die. For every victim who dies after being rescued, the investigators lose 1 SAN.

The Jewelry of Latina Dexsilia: The family jewelry hidden by Latina Dexsilia is exactly where she said it would be, safe in the house before the fire. If it is not recovered, or the investigators take it for themselves, Latina suspects them of stealing it. Investigators falling under suspicion of this lose 1D4 Status points, as Latina Dexsilia spreads rumors of their dishonest actions. If it is recovered and returned to her, Dexsilia gladly honors her agreement, granting them their pick of the items, which are worth between 400 and 1600 sesterces. They also gain +1% Status, due to her personal friendship.

The Clockwork Oracle: Unless this is destroyed, Quintus Dexsius Latinus never recovers. Even if it is separated from him, Latinus is never free of the item's hold, and slowly goes insane. If the item is destroyed, then Latinus slips into a coma for 24 hours, but when he awakens, he

THE CLOCKWORK ORACLE

has regained full control of his faculties. Latinius knows that this machine somehow stole his will, and makes sure that the investigators are not punished by the authorities for their actions. He also rewards them, honoring whatever deals his children made, with a bonus of 5,000 sesterces.

If the Clockwork Oracle is given to Dexsius Telesinus, it quickly charms him. He quietly leaves Corinth, links up with a different cabal of similar cultists in Athens, and the whole ugly process starts all over again.

Adara: If Adara dies, then Commius is heartbroken, but accepts it. If she lives, then he convinces his father to free her and the two run away together, settling in Baetica (one of the three provinces making up Roman Hispania), where they marry. Latinius buys him a successful vineyard to live on, with the understanding that he never return to Greece. It is a form of exile, but a happy one. The couple's child is born a Roman citizen, as she was a freedwoman before giving birth. The child is named after one of the investigators who was kind to Commius, likely the one who removed her implants. Commius becomes a close friend of the investigators, giving them a friendly contact in that province. Whether the child was tainted in utero by the experiments conducted on his mother is, of course, up to the Keeper.

A New Paterfamilias?: If Quintus Dexsius Latinius dies,

then his son Galerius Dexsius Telesinus takes over the house. If Quintus Dexsius Latinius lives, then he remains in power and resumes his normal life. He goes out of his way to make amends to his friends, clients, and especially his children. He is very grateful to the brave Mythos investigators who saved him as well.

REWARD AND REPERCUSSIONS

- **For defeating the upgraded Tellis:** +1D3 SAN
- **For defeating an upgraded slave:** +1 SAN per slave
- **For defeating Endre Mires and/or Xerxes Peris:** +1D3 SAN
- **For each slave saved from their implants:** +1 SAN per slave
- **For saving Adara Panagou:** +1D3 SAN
- **For each slave that dies in surgery/ from inaction:** -1 SAN
- **If Adara Panagou dies in surgery/ from inaction:** -1D3 SAN
- **For destroying the Clockwork Oracle:** +1D4 SAN
- **For destroying The Machine God of Corinth:** +1D10 SAN
- **If The Machine God is completed:** -1D10 SAN

NPCs

UPGRADED TELLIS

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	85	INT	15	Hit Points	28
CON	100	EDU	—	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	45	POW	55	Build	1
DEX	75	SAN	—	Move	14
APP	—	Luck	55	Age	—

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Bite) 60% (30/12), damage 1d6+DB
Dodge 42% (21/8)

Armor: 3-point brass, copper, and bronze plating

Skills: Listen 75%, Scent Something Interesting 90%

Sanity Loss: 1/1D6 SAN to see Upgraded Tellis;
bizarre barking costs 0/1 SAN.

UPGRADED SLAVES OF HOUSE DEXSIUS (X12)

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	50	INT	55	Hit Points	10
CON	50	EDU	Varies	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	50	POW	55	Build	0
DEX	30	SAN	40	Move	6
APP	Varies	Luck	55	Age	Varies

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 30% (15/6), damage 1D3+DB
Dodge 15%

Armor: 3-point brass and copper plating and helmet

Sanity Loss: 1/1D6 SAN to see an Upgraded Slave

ENDRE MIRES AND XERXES PERIS, Cultists of The Machine God

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	60	INT	70	Hit Points	9
CON	50	EDU	90	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	40	POW	60	Build	0
DEX	75	SAN	0	Move	9
APP	40	Luck	60	Age	—

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 25% (12/5), damage 1D3+DB+electrical shock (x4 per day), 1D10 damage, only half damage with a successful Extreme CON check.
Dodge 45%

Skills: Listen 45%, Science (Engineering) 65%, Spot Hidden 40%

QUINTUS DEXSIUS LATINIUS, Ensorcelled Paterfamilias of House Dexsius

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	40	INT	60	Hit Points	9
CON	40	EDU	65	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	50	POW	50	Build	0
DEX	40	SAN	35	Move	7
APP	50	Luck	50	Age	60

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 25% (12/5), damage 1D3+DB
Dodge 30% (15/6)

Armor: None

Skills: Status 85%



THE CLOCKWORK ORACLE, Servitor of The Machine God

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	50	INT	50	Hit Points	6
CON	50	EDU	—	Damage Bonus	-2
SIZ	10	POW	65	Build	-2
DEX	70	SAN	—	Move	4/14 Flying
APP	—	Luck	—	Age	—

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 50% (25/10), damage 1D4

Warbling (1D3, half damage with a successful Extreme CON check)

Dodge 35%

Armor: 4-point brass, bronze, and silver plating.

Spells: Powerful Variant of Dominate (lasts 24 hours, cast once per day, only on its owner)

Sanity Loss: 0/1D4 SAN to see the Clockwork Oracle animated and attacking.

NECTARIOS CALLIS, Cultist of The Machine God

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	65	INT	75	Hit Points	11
CON	60	EDU	90	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	55	POW	80	Build	1
DEX	75	SAN	0	Move	9
APP	55	Luck	80	Age	60

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 45% (22/9), damage 1D3+DB+electrical shock (x5 per day), 1D10 damage, half damage with a successful Extreme CON check.

Dodge 55%

Armor: None

Skills: Fast Talk 60%, Insight 55%, Listen 45%, Persuade 50%, Science (Engineering) 75%, Spot Hidden 40%

Spells: Contact The Machine God, Summon The Machine God.

THE MACHINE GOD OF CORINTH, Avatar of Nyarlathotep

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	100	INT	430	Hit Points	20*
CON	50*	EDU	—	Damage Bonus	+2D6
SIZ	150	POW	500	Build	3
DEX	45*	SAN	—	Move	4
APP	—	Luck	—	Age	—

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 75% (37/15), damage 1D6+DB (reduced to 60% on round 4, 45% on round 5)

Dodge 22%

Armor: 5-point brass, bronze, and silver plating.

Spells: None*

Sanity Loss: 1D10/1D100 SAN to see The Machine God of Corinth active.

*Lower than normal due to being incomplete.

VIGILES OF CORINTH (x16)

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	65	INT	50	Hit Points	12
CON	60	EDU	40	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	65	POW	45	Build	1
DEX	45	SAN	45	Move	8
APP	50	Luck	45	Age	Varies

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 55% (27/11), damage 1D3+DB

Fighting (Club or Axe) 50% (27/11), 1D6+1+DB

Dodge 45%

Armor: Hardened Leather Armor (1D4), Light Helmet (+1)

Skills: Climb 50%, Listen 40%, Spot Hidden 45%

VARANIUS STRABI, Vigilis Watch Captain

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	75	INT	60	Hit Points	13
CON	65	EDU	80	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	65	POW	65	Build	1
DEX	55	SAN	50	Move	8
APP	40	Luck	65	Age	42

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 70% (35/14), damage 1D3+DB

Fighting (Club or Axe) 70% (35/14), 1D6+1+DB

Dodge 50%

Armor: Hardened Leather Armor (1D4), Light Helmet (+1)

Skills: Climb 60%, Listen 50%, Spot Hidden 65%

GODDESS OF THE WHITE APES

BY JEFF MOELLER

INTRODUCTION

This is a sequel to "The Vetting of Marius Asina," published in Golden Goblin Press' *De Horrore Cosmico*. It is not strictly necessary to have played "The Vetting of Marius Asina" to play this scenario, but if your investigators have not, then it will be necessary to include a branch of the research tree that covers what happened ten years earlier in Massilia. This scenario is intended for experienced investigators who have a reputation for dealing with strange happenings.

The primary antagonist (if antagonist she is) is Decima Asina, the youngest daughter of Marius Asina and the inhuman Sorceress-Queen of Opar. Now, Decima Asina has become the new Sorceress-Queen, and kidnapped a nephew of the Roman Emperor to be her husband and reinvigorate the royal bloodline of the White Apes of Opar.

Decades earlier, Marius Asina, a particularly daring Roman sailor and trader, stumbled onto the Lost City of Opar. Opar, home to the White Apes of Lovecraftian stories such as "The Facts Concerning The Late Arthur Jermyn And His Family," is a decaying, once-great outpost of fabled Atlantis, whose inbreeding, shrinking population, and isolation have caused it to collapse, putting its people on the brink of extinction.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

The White Apes and Marius Asina

The male White Apes are savage, bestial, man-eating, and not particularly bright, whereas the females (while savage and bestial) are more intelligent and far more human appearing: Frazetta-esque, but oddly alluring, ape-women. The White Apes are an offshoot of human evolution which has not quite hit speciation just yet: hybrids are fitfully possible, with unpredictable results. They have a matriarchal society which, led by a Sorceress-Queen, worships Tsathoggua, conducts human sacrifices to this dark god, and dominates the humans unlucky enough to live within raiding range of its city.

When Marius Asina and his crew stumbled upon Opar, roughly 30 years before this scenario begins, they initially suffered the same fate as other humans unlucky enough to do so: enslavement, or sacrifice, and/or spit roasting for the dinner table for any who resisted. However, Asina himself bore up well and bravely under his initial torture and abuse, and the Sorceress-Queen took notice. So did Tsathoggua, who gave her a "suggestion": Opar could stand to learn something from the Romans. A stronger Opar would serve him better.

As a result, instead of killing and/or eating Marius Asina, the Sorceress-Queen married him and ultimately produced four viable children, in addition to several failed pregnancies. She and Marius returned to Marius' home port of Massilia, and set about trying (as best they could) to integrate their children into the higher levels of Roman society.

This met with varying degrees of success. Two of the surviving children were worse than useless in Roman society, one daughter was beautiful and very human-seeming, while the youngest daughter (Decima) proved bright and an apt student of sorcery, but looked too much like her mother to ever pass for human. Ultimately, though, the most human-seeming daughter was poised to marry into human society, and Marius decided to clean up his balance sheets in preparation for the wedding, by having a controlled exposure of his family's dirty laundry through third-party investigators. He hoped that by eliminating his wastrel son, and finding out which of his ruthless machinations throughout the years had become known, he could advance to Senatorial rank and defend his family's position long-term.

The Real Plan Was Focused On Decima

From Tsathoggua's standpoint, however, Marius Asina's goal of integrating his children into Roman society was secondary and comparatively unimportant. What Tsathoggua (and Decima's mother, and the priestesses back in Opar) really wanted was to reinvigorate the royal bloodline. They wanted the next Sorceress-Queen to be Roman educated, less inbred and impulsive, and schooled in the latest (Roman) methods of building and running an empire. For them, it was mainly about producing a daughter like Decima and installing her as an enlightened ruler in Opar, reinvigorating it and setting it on a course to become a renewed empire.

Marius not only underestimated the amount of scandal that his wastrel son had left in his wake, but overlooked a love triangle between his two older daughters and the younger one's fiancé. When that scandal eventually broke, it brought down his entire house. In the aftermath, only the youngest daughter, Decima, survived. Unless the investigators went out of their way to make sure that Decima was cared for, she was abducted, sold into slavery as a circus curiosity, and eventually spirited away back to Opar. Ten years later she is now its Sorceress-Queen. (If she was killed, Decima would have been resurrected, as she is too vital to Tsathoggua's plans. If she was adopted, in effect, by the investigators, she would have been kidnapped via Gate about a year later, when their attention was elsewhere).

Decima Today & What She Wants

Since being whisked away back to Opar, Decima has, somewhat reluctantly, assumed the role of Sorceress-Queen of Opar, guided and mentored by her nursemaid and now major domo, Showenge. (If Showenge was killed, then she likewise has been resurrected.) Decima is a hybrid human-Oparian with human sensibilities, and is not (yet) at O.S.A.N. She is thus capable of empathy and compassion for humans, and of interacting with them—which is what Tsathoggua wants. She is someone with a breadth of perspective who can think outside of the Oparians' brutalist box. Unfortunately for the investigators, her comfort zone only expands to the contemporary Romans' brutalist box: death penalties, loyalty tests, the acceptability of slavery,



— ♦ THE CAST ♦ —

Lucius Thallus

Lawyer

Julius

Kidnapped 14-year-old nephew of the Emperor

Ursula

Palace slave, witness to Julius' abduction

Silvius Aegyptus

Centurion in the Praetorian Guard

Lothar

*Crucified Praetorian Guard,
blamed for Julius' kidnapping*

Decima Asina

Half-human Sorceress—Queen of Opar

Showenge

Major Domo of Decima

Gallus Anicetus Varro

Roman Sorcerer and intermediary for Razeela

Razeela of Opar

Priestess of the Black Toad, aunt of Decima

Jeshua

Missing architect from Massilia

Felix

*Menagerie keeper, husband to Lucia,
father to Felix the Younger*

Lucia

Wife of Felix, mother to Felix the Younger

Artus

Roman sailor, guide on voyage to Rhapta

Azantu

Harbormaster of Rhapta

Mosha

Egyptian seaman

N'geri

Human slave of Opar

Marius Asina

Deceased father of Decima Asina

Flavia Asina

Deceased sister of Decima Asina

Buteo Asina

Deceased brother of Decima Asina

Juliana Asina

Deceased sister of Decima Asina

the "wisdom" of military dictatorship, the value of life varying with familial social rank, and thinking nothing of the rights or dignity of conquered peoples. And she hates Rome and hates any investigators who were (directly or indirectly) responsible for killing her father, casting her into slavery or a menagerie, or otherwise abusing her.

Decima Is Rebuilding Opar As A Reflection of Rome And Needed A Suitable Mate

In the past several years, Decima has begun to apply the lessons of Rome toward reestablishing Opar as the advanced civilization that it once was. Slave executions have become less arbitrary and more principled. Selection of human sacrifices has become more ordered and focused on rebellious slaves. The city has been cleaned up, an aqueduct built, sewage pipes laid, and the temple of Tsathoggua has been spruced up beautifully. The architects, engineers, lawyers, artists, and educators necessary for this gentrification project have been acquired through a variety of methods: voluntary hiring for vast sums, semi-voluntary arm-twisting, and outright sorcerous abduction via Gate and enslavement (some more comfortably than others—a potential alternative hook).

A Sorceress-Queen needs a good husband, however; ideally, one with not only good genes but a sense of empire as well. And to quell internal dissent from the barely-governable White Apes and to shore up her own position in Opar, this needed to be someone special, someone with panache. And so, once again, the House of Asina has taken a gamble. Decima has used sorcery to Gate into the Imperial Palace in Rome and kidnap a nephew of the Emperor, named Julius, as her new husband. A bright 14-year-old, being groomed for a future in the military, Julius is shaken by his abduction, shaken by his new surroundings in Opar, and shaken by his new bride on several levels.

Julius' abduction was witnessed by a palace slave, Ursula, and the Imperial Court has reached out for specialists to figure out what happened, and ideally, retrieve Julius.

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS

Lucius Thallus, Lawyer: The investigators are urgently summoned by Lucius Thallus, a lawyer in Rome. Investigators should include experienced seekers with a reputation for successfully having handled strange threats. (If they played through "The Vetting of Marius Asina," Lucius is the lawyer who previously hired them to vet Marius Asina's reputation.) Lucius knows very little about what is going on, but pledges to assist them in any way possible. He seems very agitated, but refuses to discuss things in detail; the investigators are to wait quietly in his office and go with his client when he arrives.

The client arrives promptly after Lucius sends word that the investigators have assembled. He is a centurion in the Praetorian Guard, Silvius Aegyptus, and he is accompanied by six other Praetorian Guards in full uniform. The investigators are asked to please accompany them to the Imperial Palace, for a mission of utmost importance.

A TRIP TO THE IMPERIAL PALACE & A SORCEROUS ABDUCTION

As the investigators near the palace, they cannot help but notice that a man is being crucified just outside the gates: a large, redheaded man who has the look of a seasoned Teutonic warrior. An Idea roll

accurately suggests that he might be a now-dismissed member of the Imperial Family's household guard. (This is Lothar, the Praetorian Guard being blamed for allowing Julius to be kidnapped.)

Inside the palace, the investigators are brought into the presence of the current Emperor himself, along with his wife. One of their nephews, Julius, 14 years of age, has been abducted right out of his bedchamber in the dead of night. There was a witness, Ursula, a slave girl who had been instructed to educate him in sexual matters. The girl is broken and babbling, but one of the things that she said seemed familiar to certain "friends of the Palace," including Lucius Thallus. According to the girl, a hole burned itself through the wall, and a horde of barbarians burst in, seized him, and disappeared the way that they came. The whole room stinks of sorcery to anyone with any magical capability, and the

"barbarians" were supposedly eight-foot tall apes with white hair, led by a much smaller female of their kind. One of the ape-men shattered Ursula's collarbone and shoulder with a backhanded slap, but she heard the female say, in perfect Latin, "do not struggle, Julius...this is the Roman way."

Skilled interrogators and torturers have plied their trade with Ursula, but are convinced that she speaks the truth, and they have no idea what the odd, scorched markings in Julius' bedchamber could be.

The investigators have been summoned because the Emperor has it on good authority that assuming this Ursula's tales are true, Lucius Thallus knows something about these ape-men, and if the investigators have played through "The Vetting of Marius Asina," he adds that they do too. If not, then they have a reputation for resolving strange and mysterious happenings.

For Investigators Who Have Played "The Vetting Of Marius Asina": Filling In The Gaps

Nihilistically, regardless of what the investigators did, things have played out rather predictably for the House of Asina. If they succeeded in catalyzing some sort of scandal that would actually affect Marius Asina, his house fell shortly thereafter. Marius himself would have done the noble thing and committed suicide, if he were not killed during some sort of struggle. Without him to keep a lid on things, the two older sisters would have come to blows and fought to the death; the survivor would have been executed (if it was Juliana) or killed by a mob if (it was the less human-looking, elder sister, Flavia). Buteo probably died during the scenario, but if not, he is killed shortly afterwards as well by any number of revenge seekers.

If the investigators failed to catalyze a sufficient scandal to deal with anyone but Buteo, the House of Asina fell anyway not long after. Buteo was killed by a mob not long after Asina ascended to being one of the firsts of the city of Massilia (in the unlikely event he survived the scenario). Asina fell ill and died not long after (poisoned by Quintus Certa). The love triangle between Juliana, her fiancé Quintus Certa, and Flavia would have exploded in violence, with both sisters ending up dead and Quintus Certa exiled to parts unknown. In the aftermath, Showenge would have spirited Decima away (if she still survived), or Decima would have fled a mob looking to "kill the monster."

Ultimately, only Decima's prior fate is really important to this scenario. If she was not affirmatively and clearly killed or captured, and if Showenge also survived, then Showenge spirited her away back to Opar. If Showenge was killed or separated from her, she still ended up back at Opar, after a harrowing journey overland and sea where she was serially enslaved, put on display, brutalized, and ultimately rescued by some Oparian agents. In any such case, she has now fulfilled her intended destiny and risen to the throne of Opar, and bears a serious grudge against Rome in general and the investigators in particular. If captured and not specifically taken under the investigators' protection, much the same occurred—whoever she was left with (with the exception of Lucius Thallus or the Temple of Artemis) abused her terribly, treating her as subhuman and ultimately selling her into slavery, from whence she ultimately makes her way to Opar.

Only if the investigators treated her with exceptional

kindness—like a young lady, taking her under their wings—is the story different. Then, she will have simply disappeared, without explanation, after a year—abducted via sorcerous means by the Oparians to take her place as their Sorceress-Queen. In this case, her rage and hatred against Rome will still be the same, but she will have fond memories of the kindness of any investigators she may encounter, and be inclined to show them mercy.

For Investigators Who Have Not Previously Played "The Vetting Of Marius Asina": What Has Gone Before

Lucius Thallus can fill them in on what will be the "canonical" version of prior events:

He hired a group of investigators to water test the reputation of one Marius Asina, a provincial senator in Massilia, ten years earlier. He was not sure at the time who was bankrolling the investigation, but he now believes that it was Marius Asina himself, seeking to find and plug any weaknesses in his reputation in preparation for a try at higher office.

The investigators did an excellent job, and found both some things that Marius Asina probably wanted to wash his hands of, with the investigators' assistance, but also some things he did not expect them to find. Only one investigator returned from that mission, a broken and now deceased man.

Marius Asina's only son, Buteo, was found to be some sort of deformed brute, who had raped and brawled across society and fathered a deformed child with a favored prostitute. He was killed by the investigators in a bar brawl, started by Buteo when they started poking into his relationship with the prostitute. She seemed to think that he was not entirely human, and when they saw the remains of the baby, those appeared quite simian. Buteo's deformations, uncovered after his death, included odd body proportions more like those of a large ape than a man, and copious white body hair more akin to an ape's fur than a man's hair.

The investigators uncovered what they believed to be a second son of Buteo, born to a female chimpanzee at the menagerie of the Certa family, (the family into which one of Marius Asina's daughters, the beautiful Juliana, was scheduled to marry). The "baby chimp" was oddly white-haired and human-like, and startled the investigators by

being able to scratch out some Roman words. It identified Buteo as its father, much to chagrin of one Felix, the kind and elderly North African menagerie keeper at the Certa's villa.

These revelations led the investigators to suspect that the deceased matriarch of the Asina family, "Julia Aquiliana," was not human. Although the one daughter that went out in public, Juliana (age 16), was both human appearing and beautiful, there was an older daughter, Flavia (age 22) and a younger daughter, Decima (age 12) who were not seen in public. Even Juliana savagely attacked and horribly disfigured the face of a Certa house slave, Lucia, who had touched her without permission.

The investigators infiltrated the Asina family villa near Massilia. They found evidence that the eldest daughter, Flavia, was inhumanly deformed: powerfully built, ape-like, and white-furred, by glimpsing her in her bath. They also learned that she was involved in a love triangle with her sister Juliana for the affections of Quintus Certa, Juliana's fiancé.

The investigators were caught snooping in a hidden underground level beneath the Asina's villa, and had to fight their way out, sustaining near total casualties.

On his way out of town, the lone surviving investigator denounced the Asina family, telling all that he knew and encouraging the city to cast out the monstrosities at the villa. The mob, upon seeing the baby "chimp" and the body of Buteo, marched on the villa and burned it to the ground, killing any who were caught fleeing. This included Asina himself and his two oldest daughters.

The returning investigator managed to come back with two trophies: a signet ring of the house of Asina, and a map of the eastern coast of Africa. The signet ring is of a white spiral, or perhaps a labyrinth. The map is distressingly large in scale, but goes far further south than any contemporaneous Roman map. It depicts the trading town of Rhapta (likely near modern Zanzibar), which is as far as Roman maps go, then continues another 3,000 kilometers down the coast, ending about 2/3 of the way down what is today the coast of Mozambique. The map then turns inland and depicts a white spiral labeled "Opar" about 10 kilometers inland.

The youngest daughter, Decima, was never seen by nor captured by the investigators. Her body was not recovered after the fire. Rumors were that she was the least human appearing of all the Asina children, possibly mentally deficient and kept out of the public eye.



WHAT THE INVESTIGATORS NEED TO DO, & ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

The investigators are tasked with retrieving Julius and bringing him back to Rome, alive (preferably) or dead. While Julius is only a nephew, an abduction out of the palace itself (whether conducted by spirits, beasts, or enemies) makes Rome and the Emperor look weak. Success will be well rewarded, not just monetarily but with rank. Failure is unacceptable.

The investigators are given an Imperial writ of aid (giving them a bonus die on Persuade or Intimidate checks against anyone favorably disposed to Rome, but also marking them as Imperial agents should it be found on their persons), and any reasonable budget to pursue their goal (including the use of a ship and crew if necessary). However, they are cautioned that they must not reveal the precise nature of their task as they pursue it, at least until Julius' fate is determined. His abduction is being kept secret to avoid embarrassment to the throne. As a result, while they may requisition aid in an amount and form that does not call undue attention to themselves, they are advised to keep their mission as small and inconspicuous as possible.

Progress reports are to be coded and sent to Lucius Thallus by trusted messenger, who will relay them to court and take charge of requisitioning anything that they may need.

INTERVIEWS AT THE PALACE

The Bodyguards, & Introducing the "Roman Way" Theme

The investigators are accompanied by household guards at all times when in the palace. These are tough, hulking Teutons who speak Latin with heavy accents. They are unhappy that their fellow guard and cousin, Lothar, was scapegoated for the abduction, but that is how things are done here in Rome, they suppose. (While the guards know this, the reason for Lothar's crucifixion is *not* common knowledge, and they are not about to discuss it with the public.)

The Witness, Ursula, & Re-Emphasizing the "Roman Way" Theme

Ursula is a 17-year old slave from near Augusta Treverorum (Trier), the daughter of a noble who unwisely rebelled against Rome. As a result, she and her whole extended family (those who were not killed) were enslaved. Welcome to Rome.

Ursula, a beautiful redhead, was assigned to be the concubine of Julius. She does not appreciate her lot in life, but has developed a bit of a callousness about it. After all, that's the way things are in Rome. So is the torture that she has been exposed to: the fingers on her left hand have been systematically broken and the soles of her feet burned, in an effort to ensure she reports fully. Her story has not changed, and she is now a weepy, broken, traumatized mess. She can robotically repeat what she has already said; unusual kindness and sympathy (Hard Persuade roll) might extract one additional piece of information:

- She has been "assigned" to be the "mistress" of Julius (whom she sometimes slips up and refers to as "the boy") for the past three months. Parts of her duties are to sleep with him, have sex with him, and teach him how to behave around women.

- Her impression of him is that he is "just a kid" and young for his age by Roman standards. He's not mean to her, and she has seen nothing that indicates Julius was involved with any sort of sorcery.
- The abduction happened in the middle of the night. She smelled something awful and burning and woke up as Julius did. She was grabbed by a huge, white-furred ape wearing "imitation" Roman legionary's armor—made big enough to fit the thing. It had a gladius upsized for its size, was half again as big as a man and much stronger, as were the eight or so others with it. They came in through a "burning hole" in the wall of the bedchamber.
- The apes clubbed Julius over the head and tied him up, and then stripped her naked and seemed to be prepared to ravish her. A female of their kind then came in and shouted something at them in some strange, guttural language. She was an adult, but much smaller than them in size (about 5' 6"), and looked "more human" than the others. She was dressed in Roman noblewoman's clothes and had a gilded laurel crown on her head. She was very muscular and well-developed (she can describe her curviness with her hands). She and the eight ape-soldiers grabbed Julius and went back the way they came, through the "burning hole" in the wall. Julius struggled and swore a bit at the female, but she said (in perfect Latin) "do not struggle, Julius...this is the Roman way."
- If specifically asked, she can confirm that the ape-woman was wearing a pendant with a white spiral on it. If shown a signet of House Asina, she can identify it as matching.
- If specifically asked, she can advise that Julius had been acting strangely in the nights leading up to the abduction. He had been telling her about disturbing dreams, being called to by a girl. He kept asking Ursula why she was waking him up for sex. She did not know what he was talking about.
- The one additional thing that she can add, if treated with actual kindness (Hard Persuade check, with a bonus die for positive incentives such as a promise to take her along and set her free), is that the ape-woman whispered something to her after her soldiers put her down. She said "I was like you once—abused by Romans because they didn't see me as their equal. I am better than they are."

Inspecting The Scene Of The Abduction & The Gate

The bedroom is as lavish as one might expect for a nephew of the emperor, and there are only a few clues to be had. The major one is the perfectly circular char mark on the wall opposite from the bed, 8 feet in diameter and circled by a variety of strange runes and symbols. A Cthulhu Mythos roll, or familiarity with the spell, identifies this as a Gate. If anyone is familiar with the spell (or learns it later), they will know that the caster can only safely use such a Gate to transport themselves to somewhere they are familiar with, either through personal knowledge or through magic. The investigators would be well advised to copy down the runes, particularly if

they are unfamiliar with the spell. A second Cthulhu Mythos roll, or familiarity with the spell, discloses that the target location was about 5,000 kilometers to the south, somewhere far to the south of contemporary geographical knowledge.

Investigators pausing to look around the room in general may also notice that there are a lot of scrolls and books on diverse topics, including philosophy. Julius is a studious and philosophically oriented young man.

Reporting To Lucius Thallus

Remind the investigators that they are supposed to provide frequent and comprehensive reports to Lucius Thallus. If they are mostly complete and mostly honest with him (mentioning, at a minimum, the involvement of a young, white-furred ape-woman who spoke flawless Latin, and providing him with a sketch of the Gate), his reaction depends on whether any of the investigators played through "The Vetting of Marius Asina." If so, he openly surmises that it sounds like Decima, the youngest daughter. If she was killed (which should be unlikely if that scenario was properly staged), investigation reveals that her grave is empty, or someone was bribed to turn over her ashes not long after her death. Even if her body was reduced to ashes, and the ashes scattered in the ocean, Decima is restored to life by the will of the Great Old One Tsathoggua itself, in response to a massive ritual conducted by the combined priestesses of Opar. If they have not, he can summarize the prior investigators' efforts and what they learned about Opar.

Keeper's Note: *For those already familiar with Lucius Thallus, he is setting aside his usual reticence in discussing the Mythos and the Shadow War because this matter affects the emperor's family.*

Soon after they make their initial report to Lucius Thallus, the investigators are approached in a safe, public place by a very ancient-looking, well-dressed Roman man. A suitable place would be at the doorway of Lucius Thallus' office, where he has been loitering and reading. He calls them each by name to capture their attention, and introduces himself as Gallus Anicetus Varro. An Occult check recognizes the name as that of a notorious sorcerer, a slippery one who has had several brushes with arrest and execution but always managed to wriggle out of trouble. He also has a reputation for being untrustworthy.

Varro is not looking for trouble, but introduces himself as an intermediary who might be able to assist them with their "current project." He holds out a pendant with the White Spiral of Opar on it as proof of his bona fides. If they would be so kind as to accompany him to a back room in a nearby inn that he has prepared in advance, he will be happy to explain. "No tricks," he vows.

A Meeting With Varro And A Conference Call With Razeela Of Opar

In the back room, Varro says, "You are right not to trust me, but this is a business proposition. A contact of mine in certain circles I traffic in wishes to have a word with you. I think you might want to hear her out." Assuming no investigator efforts at stopping him, he produces a small brazier and burns some sweet, intoxicating incense in the closed room. A Cthulhu Mythos check recognizes the scent of the fabled Black Lotus. He then mutters a few words in ancient Stygian, and the investigators see, within the smoke, an image of an older, mature, full-blooded White Ape woman, dressed in imitation of a Vestal Virgin. SAN loss for the experience is O/1D3.

She introduces herself as Razeela, a Priestess of the Black Toad and the aunt of its current Sorceress-Queen, Decima Asina. She speaks decent Latin and comes across as calm, although like all Oparians, her temper is short, and she is quick to take offense. She is looking to make a deal with the investigators, and explains herself as follows:

- She is the younger sister of the former Sorceress-Queen of Opar and the aunt of Decima Asina, the current Sorceress-Queen. She only has a little time, as there are eyes everywhere, so the investigators must listen closely.
- Decima is the Sorceress-Queen at the command of the Black Toad, who believes that the bloodline of the White Apes needs strengthening by mingling with that of humans. That is why Julius was abducted—to mate with Decima and become her (subordinate) king in Opar.
- Decima has done some good things for Opar in terms of rebuilding their city and bringing order to the unruly, more bestial males.
- However, in one regard, Decima has gone too far. She has begun to engage in coercive population planning: forcing the White Ape priestesses to mate with human males, and vice versa, to create a whole generation of hybrids. Those who refused—like her husband—have been purged. This has resulted in a great deal of resentment among the populace, including in many of the fiercely competitive White Ape males. The situation is tense.
- She does not want Julius there, and wants to reverse this planned breeding program. To that end, she is willing to help the investigators. They need to get to Opar quickly, before Julius becomes too enraptured by his new bride.
- Decima is expecting them in about 90 days, and will be ready for them then. She assumes that they will be travelling conventionally. However, if they swear sacred oaths that they will remove Julius from Opar, do their best to topple Decima from power, and not betray Razeela, then Varro here will teach them to use the same magic that Decima did in the abduction. The ritual will get them as far as any participant has ever been. They should be able to find someone in Rome who has been as far as Rhapta, which will reduce their journey to 30 days by sail. If they will not keep faith with her, then they have a long journey ahead.
- They of course have no reason to trust her. But the enemy of my enemy is sometimes my friend.
- When they arrive in Opar, have a slave ask for her at the Temple of the Black Toad, and she will aid them further as she is able.

If at any point the investigators interfere with him, Varro ceases cooperation and they have lost their opportunity, barring coercion or torture. Varro does not know where Opar is located, and has never been there, so he cannot assist the investigators with getting there more directly.

Assuming that the investigators give their word to Razeela, Varro ends the vision quest. He then taps the most studious or

magically-capable investigator, and asks him or her to meet him at the door at the Temple of Vesta at midnight that night. The investigator must come alone; he tells the others that they should look into other avenues of investigation and rendezvous with one another in two weeks, when their friend will be safely returned.

Learning The Gate Spell

At midnight, Varro shows up, good to his word. The investigator is blindfolded and taken by wagon for several hours; in point of fact, they never leave Rome and go only a short distance. When the blindfold is removed, the investigator finds himself in a scriptorium, with a supply of food, water and wine, and a scroll.

The scroll proves to be an excerpt from a much longer work, The First Scroll of Arax. This part excerpts the Book of Eibon, as translated into Latin by Arax, court sorcerer to Caligula who disappeared without a trace on the day of Caligula's assassination. The excerpt requires 2 weeks and a successful Read Latin roll to study. SAN loss is 1D4, and the reader gains +5% to Cthulhu Mythos. One spell is automatically gained: Make Way To Distant Land; no other spells are available. The excerpt also imparts rudimentary information on Opar, summarized in *Goddess of the White Apes Handout #1*, nearby.

At the end of the second week, Varro returns, blindfolds the investigator, and returns him to the door of the Temple of Vesta along with a warning to speak to no one of his involvement. Make Way To Distant Land is a variant Gate spell that costs 100 permanent POW on the parts of the caster and/or persons contributing to the casting (up to seven in number) and 5 permanent POW

from each person who passes through it. It requires that either the caster or a contributor know the target location, either from having been there before or through magical means (scrying or Dreaming). Once cast, it can be used by the caster and the contributors to pass through to the target destination; only the caster and contributors may use it. It remains accessible (including for purposes of coming back) for 90 days. Transiting through such a portal costs 1D4 SAN, and repeated abuse of the space-time continuum is warned against, lest the attention of Things Best Left Sleeping be drawn to the travelers.

A wise course would be for the investigators to round up someone who has been as far south as possible, to catch up to the abductors as best they can. This means the port city of Rhapta; a grizzled sailor named Artus has been there and can be hired on as a "guide" in Rome. He has not been south of there, however, and no one in Rome has, either. Artus speaks some Nabataean (25%) as well as Latin, and so is a useful guide to and in Rhapta.

RESEARCH:

Prior Confirmed Similar Abductions: Felix & City Builders

The investigators might think to go rumormongering for stories about prior, similar abductions. This requires them to interact with well-connected persons or persons whose business it is to collect stories of strange occurrences. With a successful Luck roll while talking to enough well-traveled people and/or occult information peddlers, they might stumble on to some interesting information.

Over the course of the past three years, a number of highly-skilled professionals from Rome have gone off on hush-hush building projects, reportedly in the port of Rhapta, and not returned after the year or so that they were scheduled to be gone. All were paid an enormous fee, half in advance. Many are six months to a year overdue. These have included engineers specializing in sewer systems and aqueducts. There is no news of them; few people have been as far as Rhapta, and of the ships that strayed that far in the past few years, no one was looking for signs of these missing professionals or ongoing building projects. None remember seeing any unusual signs of construction in Rhapta, though.

Following Up On Persons From Massilia

If they happen to think to ask about strange occurrences that may have happened in Massilia, they should eventually learn two things. First, Jeshua, a public-works architect living in Massilia (and the son of the architect who built the Asina family's villa), mysteriously disappeared two years ago; a round, scorched circle was found on the wall of his bedchamber. His family had a reputation for skill with building cryptoportica (underground tunnels and passageways).

Second, many in the occult underground have heard that a woman and child are in Rome right now, seeking help with the abduction of their husband and father, a menagerie keeper named Felix. This is the same Felix who was involved in "The Vetting of Marius Asina"; he has since married his disfigured love, Lucia, and had a child with her, also named Felix.

Interviews: Felix's Family (Lucia)

It is possible that surviving investigators from "The Vetting of Marius Asina" will remember Lucia, formerly a house slave of House Certa. She was savagely attacked by Marius Asina's

Rear Guard Actions

Decima expects that Rome will send seekers, perhaps even any survivors of those who destroyed her family before, after her to try and recover her husband-to-be. She will be watching logical lines of inquiry of which she is aware, through hirelings, and try to violently dissuade pursuers that appear to be a threat. This means that her thugs and hirelings will be watching, at a minimum, Lucius Thallus (who she knows was hired to look into her family's reputation), and in particular, watching Felix's family. Anyone who seems to be taking an interest in Felix's family's crazy-sounding story (see "Interviews: Felix's Family (Lucia)") is certainly targeted.

The response comes in the form of a vicious attack, at night in an alley or other out of sight place, by a skilled gang of cutthroats. They do not necessarily fight to the death, but they will kill the investigators if possible. They should be close to a match for whichever investigators they attack, no pushovers. Any survivors who are interrogated turn out to be professional seekers themselves, who were told to forcibly interrogate the investigators about their "ongoing harassment" of the Asina family. They were hired through a lawyer, and told to give the investigators a message if they were captured: "Decima of House Asina sends her regards; she apologizes that she could not be here in person, but hiring other people to clean nobles' dirty laundry is the Roman way. Her message said that you would know what she meant by that."

daughter Juliana after touching Juliana without permission. Lucia's silence was bought, and she was set up on a plot of land outside of Massilia.

In the wake of the fall of House Asina, Felix sought her out, and her mental condition has improved. She and Felix have married and had a child; Felix left the service of House Certa and began to work as a paradise garden builder for wealthy families in Massilia and elsewhere, making use of his broad familiarity with exotic animals.

Lucia and Felix the Younger (age 5) have been in Rome for a month, staying with Felix's brother, Josephus, who works at the Circus tending to its wild animals. They have been beseeching magistrates for aid and trying to hire occult investigators, but have not been taken seriously by anyone yet. They are glad for the attention, particularly if any of the investigators met either Felix or Lucia during "The Vetting of Marius Asina." (If the Keeper wants another hook for this scenario, perhaps they contact the investigators to ask for help.)

Lucia's Story of Felix's Abduction by Decima

According to Lucia, three months ago, a middleman approached Felix openly, seeking to hire him to build a "menagerie" in Rhapta. He offered Felix handsome pay, half down and half on completion: 100,000 sesterces in total. Felix was tempted but suspicious, and ultimately turned down the offer, preferring to stay with Lucia (whose disfigurements are somewhat disabling) and their son.

A month later, there was a knock on their door. Outside was a moderately tall, thin, voluptuous, powerfully built young woman, clothed from head to toe in silk and gold jewelry and wearing a heavy veil. She seemed to be alone and spoke perfect, patrician Latin. She identified herself as Decima of House Asina, whom both Lucia and Felix recognized as being the youngest daughter of the fallen House. She needed help with her "menagerie" in her kingdom, and Felix's experience with "successfully raising her nephew, despite his nature...you know who I mean" made him the only logical choice. She repeated her offer of 100,000 sesterces, and "swore on her mother's soul" that he would be returned to his family after one year. Felix was quite afraid, and then vomited and again refused, stammering "that...chimp...was Buteo's son?" With that, the woman threw back her veil, and she had the face of an ape with long, white hair atop the body of a beautiful dancer. She still looked a bit like Juliana, the older sister who had maimed her, though.

The ape-woman threw down a bag of gold—50,000 sesterces—and said "you forget yourself. I am a Senator's daughter, and a queen in my own land, and your refusal is a grievous insult. You have no right to refuse one of my station. I suppose we will have to do this the Roman way—take what you want, but pay for it in a fashion, by way of mending fences." With that, a horrible "serpent made of darkness" slithered in through the door, grabbed Felix, and hauled him kicking and screaming into the night. Lucia could find no trace of Decima or Felix after that.

Keeper's Note: If Felix learned the truth about Buteo's son during "Vetting," his mind suppressed it until Decima's visit.

RESEARCH:

The White Spiral & Opar

Appropriate Mythos research, apart from the First Scroll of Arax and in a tome of appropriate antiquity or very broad coverage, might also lead the investigators to the information in Goddess of the White Apes Handout #1.

Goddess of the White Apes Handout #1: The Lost City of Opar

Opar is rumored to be an ancient city far in the south of the African continent, a colony of the fallen, pre-human empire of Atlantis. It is said to be roughly 30 days' sail in mild weather down the coast of Africa from the Mountains of the Moon (Rhapta, or, in the 21st century, Zanzibar). Legend has it that Opar is a fabulous city of marble, resplendent with jewels and rich in rare spices and woods. It is said to be populated by semi-human, intelligent, savage, sorcery-wielding, white-furred ape-men. Oparians are said to display a great deal of sexual dimorphism, with the females being more gracile and human appearing (although no one would mistake them for human). The males, by contrast, are huge, brutish, and gorilla-like, with savage and uncontrollable tempers. They are ruled by a sorceress-queen, and sacrifice humans to dark Atlantean gods, chief among them a deity called the Black Toad, Ssathioqua. The city's symbol is one of legendary Atlantis, a labyrinthine spiral imposed on a white sun.

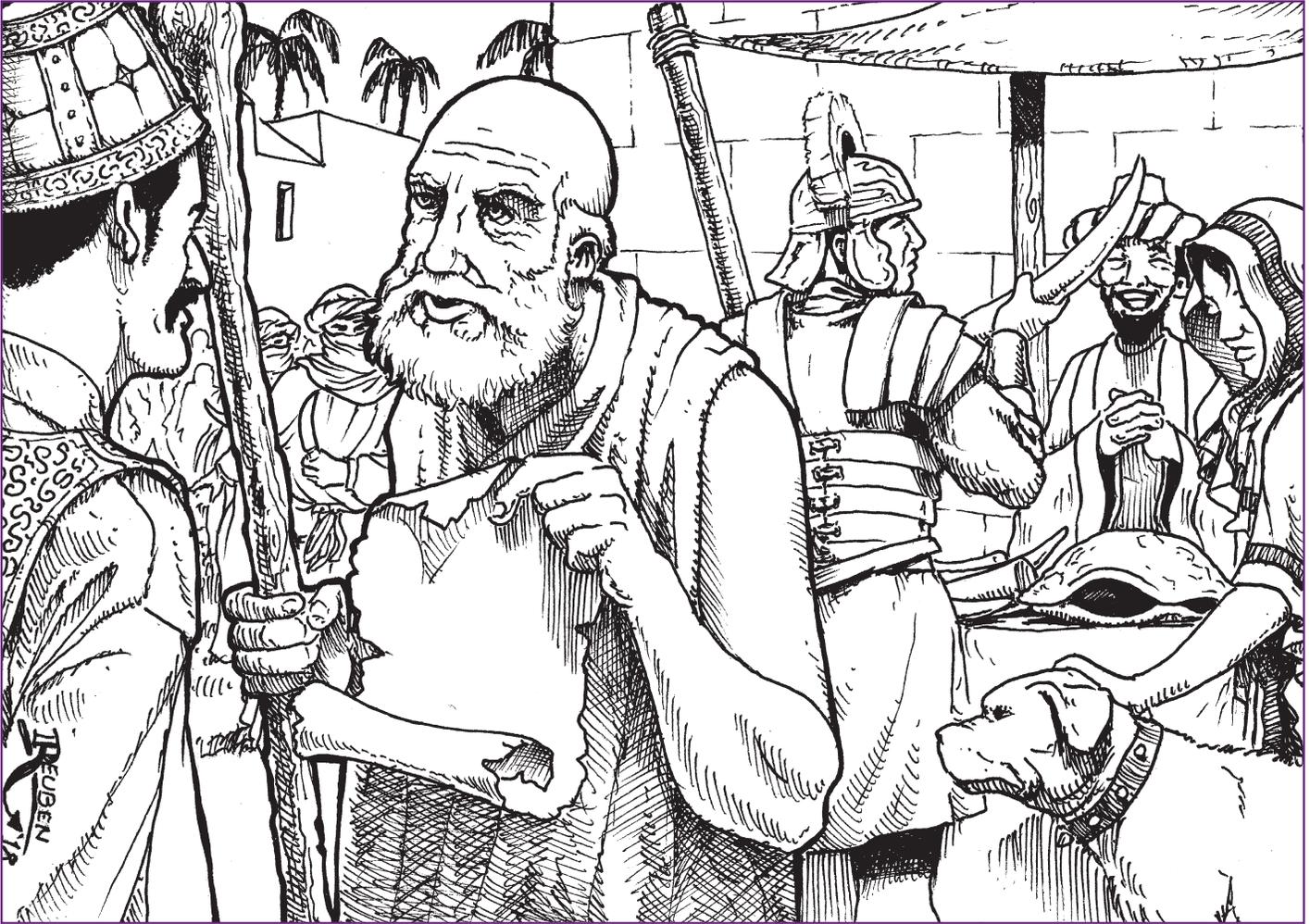
THE ROAD TO OPAR/RHAPTA

Rhapta is the most southerly, historically attested trading venue reached by the Romans along the eastern African coast. Today it is a lost civilization, known only from limited historical sources, chiefly the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. Since that is as far south as anyone available to them in Rome can attest having been, that is as far as any Gate replication efforts can take them.

The exact location of Rhapta is not clear from historical sources. However, it was said to lie near the mouth of a river that fed down from the Mountains of the Moon, and supposedly an island lies opposite from the mouth of the river. This would seem to put it in modern-day Tanzania, and the description could well be the long-used, regional trading center of Zanzibar/Dar Es Salaam. Another candidate is the area around Kilwa harbor, 330 kilometers to the south of Zanzibar. For our purposes, we will assume that it is the former. Historians are still arguing about it.

Rhapta is a marketplace for ivory and tortoise shell, cinnamon and cassia bark, and other spices, bound up the coast from inland Africa, India, and Indonesia. According to Roman historians, it is a "metropolis," but what that means, exactly, is unclear. It was under the firm control of the Arabian king of Musa, who was an ally of Rome, and he appointed a governor and collected taxes there.

We will assume that it is a small city, with (as is often the case in ancient times) mariners kept confined to the areas near the dock and bazaar. There is a dock, a bazaar, and the usual port-side accommodations (inns, chandleries, and prostitutes); an average of 1,000 people are in the maritime district at any one time. The maritime district, however, is a rough and tumble place, partly dependent on collective self-defense to deal with thieves and pirates, both of which are happy to take advantage of poorly armed traders. Romans are not unknown, but far more common are traders from Egypt, India, and the horn of Africa, who then go further north and east to trade more. People are more likely to speak Coptic Egyptian than Latin as a lingua franca, although on a Luck roll, someone nearby speaks intelligible Latin. If not, and



if the investigators failed to bring a guide with them, they'll have to hire a translator who has at least one language in common with at least one of them.

INQUIRIES IN RHAPTA

The Harbormaster, Azantu, who is charged with maintaining order at the port, speaks Coptic, Nabataean, and broken Latin (20%). Any requests for official assistance (portraying themselves as Roman emissaries) get the investigators directed to Azantu. He is the younger brother of the local Musan governor, Azan-Imo, and has been on the job for 20 years, making him a good person to ask questions of.

At this time, the indigenous people of the area are an Afro-Asiatic people related to the peoples along the Red Sea; sub-Saharan Bantu did not colonize the area until the 10th Century A.D., and are currently based further south, in Mozambique. Many of the elites in Rhapta are Musan Arabs who have intermarried with the locals. The port is civilized by Roman standards, if a bit rowdy. It is an opportunity to meet people from as far away as India and China (including daring explorers, people with rare objects, and all sorts of others) and trade for many sorts of unusual valuables.

Azantu can truthfully provide the following information (he has no reason to lie), and offer the following assistance:

- There are no significant engineering projects for which Romans have been hired going on in Rhapta, nor have there been any in the past few years.

- There have been a few Romans through here, however, in the past few years, headed further south, which is odd. Each time, they were expected and caught passage with Uzunti. Uzunti is a Bantu trader, hailing from somewhere about six weeks' sail to the south. Few traders come to Rhapta from the south, and Uzunti is the only one who comes from more than a week or so's sail to the south. He is not presently in port and is not expected soon. However, at least one person who has sailed with him, an able-bodied Egyptian seaman named Mosha, is in port. Azantu is happy to have him brought in, and Mosha is happy for work (at least at first).
- Mosha is not afraid to sail south unless and until he figures out that they are looking for the City of the White Apes, or Opar. He does not know exactly where that is, but knows that there is a region of coast, about 30 days' sail to the south in mild weather, where people do not go and do not live. The locals call it the "Coast of Ghosts," and there are stories stretching back many generations about entire hunting parties, villages, and ships taking on water that disappeared without a trace. Some whisper that there is a city a half a day's journey inland, populated by giant, carnivorous ape-men with white fur; but no one in their right mind does anything but sail by the "Coast of Ghosts," giving it a wide berth. Once Mosha figures out where the

investigators mean to go, it will take a Hard Intimidate or Persuade check to keep him from jumping overboard and fleeing for shore at his first opportunity (backed by a hefty bribe). He speaks mainly Coptic (40%) plus a few words of Latin and Bantu (10%), just enough to stumble through a very simple conversation, mostly oriented to shipboard tasks and navigation.

Decima certainly has cutthroats watching for pursuit in Rhapta, and another significant attack should be staged (perhaps at sea, as the investigators sail south).

It is certainly possible that the investigators force someone (such as one of Uzunti's former crew) into helping them create a Gate to a point further south on the coast, shaving another 30 days off of their pursuit.

Beyond Rhapta/Sailing to the Coast of Ghosts

The investigators have little trouble chartering a small, coast-wise sailing vessel large enough to hold ten, and can even hire on a crew of three to sail it for them with little trouble. (Most available crewmen will speak only Coptic Egyptian and/or Nabataean, barring a Luck roll).

Most mariners in and around Rhapta know nothing of the White Apes or any "Coast of Ghosts," and will simply want to be paid appropriate wages for the entire journey—half now, half on return to Rhapta. Mosha (once he figures out where they are going) will do his best to worry them and rile them up, though, as they get close. Eventually, about a day's sail from Opar, he will insist on getting off the ship, barring a Hard Intimidate or Persuade check and a sizeable bribe; the rest of the crew is less paranoid but expect the same bonus that Mosha demands. Whether the crew remains behind at the shore, as they promise, to facilitate an escape, or return pursuant to pre-arrangement, or flee like cowards, or are butchered by the White Apes, is up to you and how wise any plans to avoid butchery are.

The Journey By Sea

Any directions that the investigators have to Opar put it about 3,000 kilometers, or roughly a month's sail, along the coast. The investigators will need to pay attention to provisions, fresh water, avoiding rough weather, and taking on supplies as they go. They encounter few if any other vessels during their entire journey, and Rhapta is the last sizeable settlement that they find on their way. South of Rhapta, the coast becomes oppressively hot. The Bronze Age fishing villages along the way are not unaccustomed to the rare trading ship putting in for supplies and will trade with them, but this involves either communicating in Bantu or pantomime.

Optional Additional Peril: Disease is a particular concern over the course of this journey. A Medicine check helps the investigators to realize that they would be well-advised to boil their drinking water (which requires time on shore) and to sleep under bug-proof cloth (granting them a bonus dice on any CON check). Barring that, typhoid fever and/or malaria are serious risks (require one CON check for the month, with failure resulting in one of these diseases; the CON check should be Hard if they are not careful with their drinking water).

About 100 kilometers from where they would strike inland for Opar at the mouth of a small river, they pass the last human fishing village. These people speak only Bantu, but if the investigators have a translator or pantomime their way through a conversation,

it is clear that the villagers are afraid of what lies to the south: a great city of White Apes, with even worse monsters "made of shadows" among them, who kidnap and enslave anyone they catch. No one goes there willingly, and no one ever returns.

The investigators would be wise not to try and go into enemy controlled territory with an open show of force. If they do, they are picked out as unusual and the scenario turns into a shore-side massacre orchestrated by about 1,000 White Ape warriors. Stealth and infiltration, or at least avoiding an obviously hostile, alarm-inducing approach, are the only viable options.

THE CITY OF THE WHITE APES

Approaching The Shore

Opar is an ancient land, an outpost of fallen Atlantean civilization that, until five years ago, had largely fallen into ruin and squalor; its ornate marble temples and civilization collapsing as its apish citizens devolved into brutes. Decima has, over the past five years, set Opar on a better course, providing relatively sane leadership and rebuilding the core of the city. Opar is still a mess, a field of ruins under reconstruction, but parts of it are now impressive even by Roman standards.

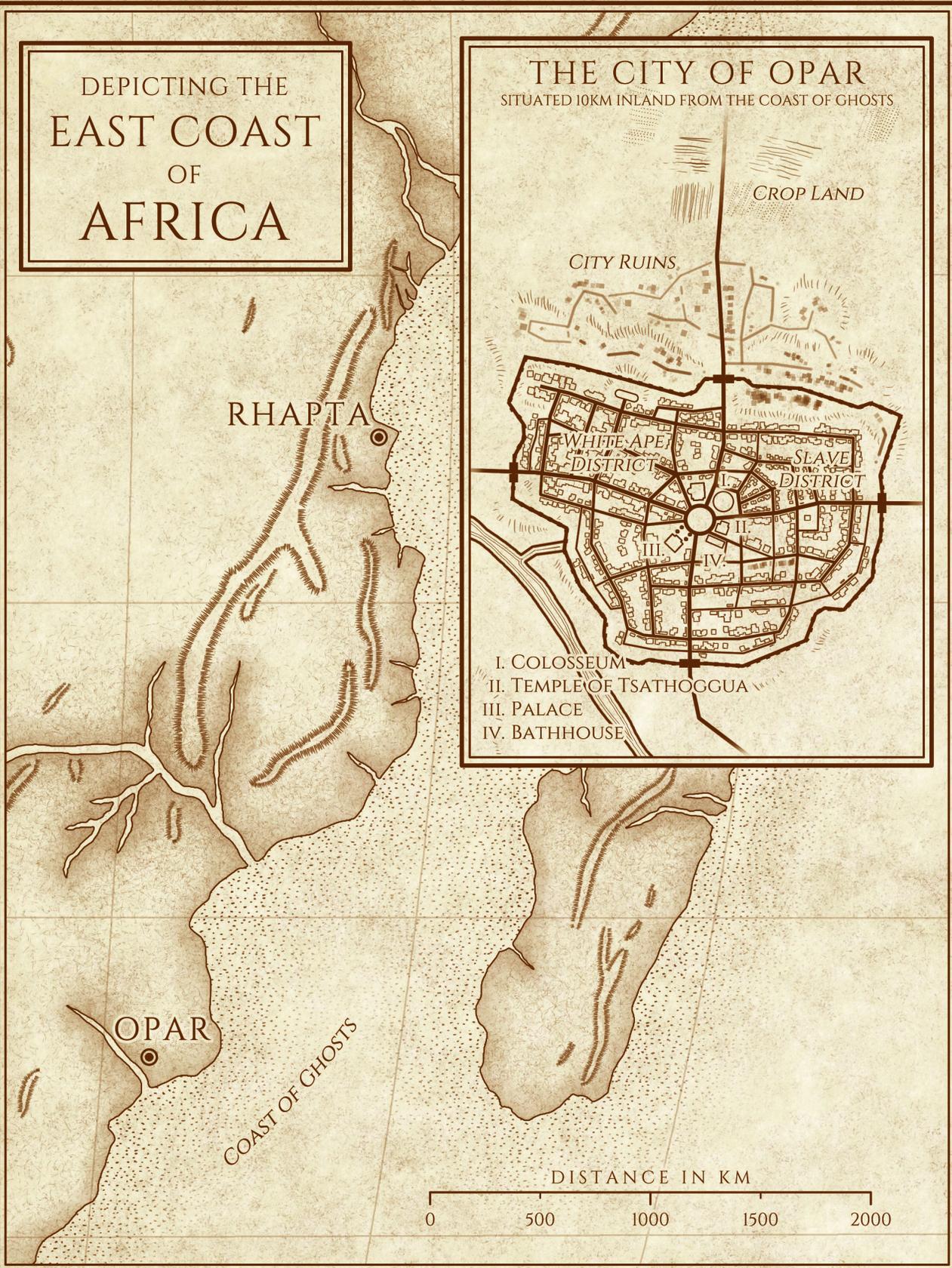
Ancient (and potentially dangerous) marble ruins, thoroughly overgrown by centuries of jungle, occupy a roughly 10 kilometers by 10 kilometers area along the shore and up a small river at the western edge of the former city site. Inland, an area in the north-eastern corner of the ruin field, farthest away from the shore and the river, well-concealed by thick jungle, and roughly two kilometers by one kilometer, has been cleared and rebuilt with both new and old marble. An aqueduct has been used to span a hill between the new city site and the river (the river is partially dammed and diverted to the aqueduct about 5 kilometers from the mouth of the river, which now only trickles). A sewage outlet empties into the ocean 5 kilometers away of the river mouth. Efforts have been made to camouflage this opening.

A patrol of three White Ape warriors supposedly patrols each of these areas, but to call them indifferent to their duties would be kind. They chafe at being told what to do, think that guard duty is excessively hard work that is beneath them, and are easily provoked and tricked by enterprising intruders who seek to ambush them. Although each carries a signal horn, they are more interested in catching and rending any humans daring to enter their territory than doing their duty and sounding an alarm. In short, they are not very smart. In any event, finding and following back either water work leads to the occupied part of the city site.

The Fate Of Razeela

Overlooking the river mouth is a high bluff. Vultures circle overhead, while a gaggle of others feast on something at the foot of the cliff. Shooing away the vultures, the investigators can easily find the picked over remains of a female skeleton, humanoid but not human, dressed in the remains of what looks to be a Vestal Virgin's robes. Judging from the broken and shattered bones, she was tossed from the top of the bluff. Lying among the remains are several leaden tablets, written in both Latin and in less familiar symbols (Oparian). Each tablet curses Razeela and all of her descendants as traitors for "refusing honorable marriage." Any investigators remotely familiar with Roman practices realizes that the Oparians are mimicking the Roman way of executing traitors: hurling them atop from the Tarpeian Rock. Razeela has

DEPICTING THE
EAST COAST
OF
AFRICA



been executed in this way, and the investigators can expect no help from her. The good news for the investigators is that she did not betray them, but they have no way of knowing this. This should put them on their guards.

Arriving at Opar & Sneaking Into the City Proper

The occupied city site is walled with watch towers and 20-foot-high stone walls, but there are four gates which are open during the day to allow human slaves to go in and out. Decima is expecting guests to arrive in roughly 90 days from Julius' abduction, so if the investigators have used magic to get here sooner, they may not (yet) be expected. Decima's orders are to bring any Roman emissaries (or captured Roman spies) under heavy guard to the steps of the Temple of Tsathoggua.

The reconstructed city site is home to approximately 10,000 sentient entities: 9,000 human slaves (equally divided between male and female); 1,000 male Oparian warriors, organized into a legion, centuries and subunits in strict Roman order; and a mere 50 female Oparians, all of whom serve as priestesses and administrators. And, of course, one Formless Spawn of Tsathoggua, Decima's enforcer of last resort, known as "the Taker of Sacrifices." Even grown up, she still calls it "Inky." Fortunately, it stays in the Temple of Tsathoggua unless she gives it contrary orders, although she makes sure that every new arrival in Opar has a chance to see it, as it takes sacrifices on holy days. Its presence squelches anything but the occasional whisper of a slave revolt, no matter how awful the abuse becomes.

Some of the human slaves are valuable (artisans, lawyers, doctors, engineers, and the like) and are treated well; they live in the "nice part of town" and are kept comfortable. The vast bulk do labor (including construction, prostitution, craftwork, and crop raising) for bread rations and hovels. Just like in Rome.

On a 10,000-person scale, Decima and the priestesshood have created a nicely functional Roman-style city, with slaves doing the work, a conquest-hungry military caste ruling with an iron fist and doing as they will with the less-valuable slaves, and a royal family and religious caste regulating things from the top. Slaves without professional-level credentials are regularly beaten, sexually abused, murdered (subject only to compensation paid to their owners), and any who complain or rebel become fodder for games in the Colosseum (see Vignettes, below).

Infiltrating the City/Sneaking in With the Slaves

Most of the slaves are dressed for tropical conditions (shoes, simple shirts, loincloths, and hats), and most are sub-Saharan African (comparatively local Bantu-speakers). There are a few Egyptians, Arabs, and Semites as well; the very few Caucasians are all hirelings from the Roman Empire (or a couple of exotic prostitutes brought here to deliberately diversify the White Apes' breeding pool).

Those who appear European or Mediterranean are slightly out of place, but if appropriately dressed, are assumed to be important slaves not to be lightly messed with. Extended observation notes that some of the non-local slaves are better dressed, Roman-style, and move freely throughout the city, but there are not many of them. They also tend to live in the nicer areas of the city. The other slaves live in tenements and slave hovels in a northern slum district.

The point is that if the investigators take the most logical tack of sneaking in to the city and reconnoitering it disguised as human

slaves, a Disguise check is likely not needed immediately, but will be required if they act oddly. "Oddly" would include acting out of place, making aggressive eye contact with any of the White Apes (most of the human slaves bow and scrape in front of them), standing up to the White Apes in any way, or being caught in places where unknown slaves do not go (e.g., the Palace, the Temple of Tsathoggua). The male White Apes are not smart or diligent, and it is easy to join a work gang coming in from the fields, and from there, circulate through the city.

All the slaves and White Apes (except for very new slave arrivals) speak passable Latin, which is used as a kind of lingua franca in Opar, so Latin-speaking infiltrators face no linguistic challenges. Decima insists that everyone speak Latin in public, so lessons are given as needed.

Note that none of the slaves are armed or armored, although it might be possible to conceal a smaller weapon underneath one's hat or shirt. The White Apes, by contrast, are all wearing adapted legionary kits: helmet, armor, shield, resized gladius, and pilum.

Stealth be Damned; We're Emissaries Of Rome!

It is possible that the investigators may decide to tromp right up to the gates and start issuing demands on behalf of the Roman Empire. The first White Ape that they decide to try this with tries to kill whoever seems to be in charge. If this White Ape is killed, the next responders to a reissued demand include Showenge.

If the investigators respectfully request a meeting, as foreign emissaries, the White Ape demands that they wait, and summons Showenge to deal with them properly. Once Showenge shows up she takes command of the situation. If any of the investigators met her ten years ago in Massilia she remembers them. In any case, the investigators are then disarmed, bound, and marched unceremoniously to the steps of the Temple of Tsathoggua for a meeting with Decima. If they protest this type of treatment of official emissaries of Rome, Showenge reminds them of how Rome treats foreign emissaries who appear at its gates uninvited: the same way, because Rome does not tolerate those who approach it as equals.

Distractions?

It is possible that the investigators will try to create some kind of distraction to aid an infiltration effort. This is neither necessary nor a promising idea, as it calls attention to a problem. The investigators might, by way of examples, try to start a fire before sneaking in, kill a White Ape patrol and leave the bodies displayed where they will easily be found, or create some other kind of chaos. Such efforts have their desired effect of weakening the already lax watchfulness of the guard, but Decima, at least, is not stupid. She assumes that it is a distraction; fortifies the guard around critical targets, such as herself, Felix, and Julius; and waits for the investigators to make a move. Such reinforced guard positions are calculated to be sufficient to easily defeat any investigator groups, and this likely leads to the investigators being severely beaten and captured if they make a move against such a target. Decima is certainly not above making the guard look deliberately weak while having far more guards, with nets and clubs, in concealed ambush positions (see the cover of this book).



Vignettes In Opar To Illustrate The Theme

Staging thematic vignettes in Opar is a central part of this story and should not be skipped over. The point is to draw parallels between Oparian behavior and Roman culture, and get the players thinking about whether there are any differences (or realizing that the differences often boil down to the perpetrators being White Apes instead of “good” Romans).

- Any guard who is defeated but not killed is promptly crucified in the forum; draw a deliberate parallel to the fate of the scapegoated household guard in Rome.
- The White Apes swagger around town in patrols, shoving ahead in lines, casually abusing the slave population, and have all adopted noms de guerre, aping the Praetorian Guard.
- No one enters the Temple of Tsathoggua itself except for the White Ape priestesses, who go around veiled and escorted like Vestals (even though they are all pregnant). Wills and legal documents (another of Decima’s recent innovations) are kept there as well. Business with the priestesses is conducted on the steps, on that side of the forum.
- When the investigators arrive, games are being held in honor of the wedding of the Sorceress-Queen Decima and her new husband, Julius. This includes recklessly violent chariot races in the Colosseum, using elephants instead of horses.

The White Apes are eating up the spectacle.

- A molested human slave stumbles out of a household, naked, and runs to one of the White Ape legionaries, complaining that the White Ape she was sent to sew for has attacked her. The accused White Ape follows her out, naked. The two White Apes stare at each other for a while, and then they negotiate a (low) cash settlement on the theory that the woman was not injured. She is finally drug off by her hair by her owner, unless the investigators intercede, kill both White Apes, and slip away. The slave, a Bantu woman named Ngeri, is grateful if rescued, and can help hide the investigators or answer their questions.
- It might be noticed that most of the female slaves are pregnant.
- Both gladiator contests (humans vs. humans) and executions (White Apes or wild beasts vs. humans) are ongoing at the Colosseum as well. The White Apes have formed into sporting constituencies of “shirts vs. skins” as well as competing colors.
- A human slave who reacts with indignation at a White Ape indignity (other than from his owner) is sold on the spot to the offender, then ripped limb from limb by his new owner in plain view of the public. SAN loss is 1/1D3. As this is entirely lawful for slave owners, no one does anything to stop it.

Showenge, Decima's Major Domo

This redoubtable, elderly, sub-Saharan African woman has gone from Decima's nursemaid to Decima's right-hand (although her authority over the White Apes is entirely derivative). She circulates throughout the town, day and night, overseeing the ongoing Romanization and correcting the White Ape males on the finer points of acting like Praetorian Guards. It is evident that the White Apes resent her.

She is shrewd, cunning, and utterly ruthless. She is not above executing humans publicly, according to an announced schedule, to draw out any investigators that she concludes have infiltrated the city but who cannot be found.

Looking For Felix, the Menagerie Keeper: Sneaking Into the Palace?

The investigators may seek out Felix, the abducted menagerie keeper from Massilia, realizing that he too was abducted and probably does not want to be here. He is perceived by Decima as incredibly valuable, and so he is kept housed in comfort in the palace.

Investigators should quickly realize that sneaking into the palace is essentially impossible: the place is basically the headquarters for the White Ape army and obviously the subject of constant, well-planned, and effective heavy watch and guard. Moreover, the human palace slaves are well-known to the guards. Still, let the investigators try, and roleplay out any plausible sounding plans. Likely the investigators are captured, bound, beaten, and hauled before Decima on the steps of the Temple of Tsathoggua.

Felix is allowed out of the palace under the watch of three White Ape warriors, who (like the others) carry sounding horns which they are too slow to use. Arranging an ambush while Felix is out on some errand is a matter of waiting and planning. Alternatively, one of the investigators who is known to Felix might subtly approach him and manage a subtle conversation with him in public, out of momentary earshot of his escort, perhaps thanks to a distraction. Either way, Felix is glad to see them, remembers any investigators that he has previously encountered, and wants to get out of Opar in the worst way. He knows just about everything that there is to know about Opar, its layout, its guard changes, and ways into the Palace. The only things that he does not know are the two surprises under Revelations, below. See Goddess of the White Apes Handout #2, nearby, for a summary of what Felix can tell the investigators.

Infiltrating The Temple of Tsathoggua?

Only death awaits the investigators here, but they will not know this absent information from locals such as Ngeri or Felix. Wise investigators will gather local intelligence before charging into an important building. Fifty smart and capable White Ape priestesses, Showenge, a constantly active Taker of Sacrifices ("Inky"), and frankly, no one they seek to recover, are all in residence. It is also made of marble, and so comparatively difficult to set fire to. If they get close to it during the day, it is being scrubbed down by some female slaves "in anticipation of the big announcement tomorrow at noon."

REVELATIONS AND ENCOUNTERING DECIMA

The investigators have several ways to reach an encounter with Decima, while still being alive:

- They get hauled in front of her after being captured. If this happens, she meets them on the steps of the Temple of Tsathoggua. The doors are opened so that the idol of Tsathoggua can be clearly seen. Depending on how respectfully they conduct themselves, this either ends with Inky, oozing out from behind the idol and devouring them, or (if they are respectful) being given a fighting chance in the Colosseum. Either way, Decima tells them off royally for their past transgressions against her family. If the investigators were exceptionally kind to her before, she is willing to let them go, provided that they swear an oath never to return to Opar. If they refuse, then to the Colosseum with them. If they are sent to the Colosseum, they are offered their choice of armor and weapons (even

Goddess of the White Apes Handout #2: Felix's Information

- The Palace itself is extremely well-guarded and watched—Decima has the smartest, not the toughest, White Apes as her personal guard, and these few are diligent. It is better to wait for her and Julius to come out to try something against her. They come out frequently, especially given that there are games underway.
- Tomorrow, Decima and Julius are both planning to make an announcement in the forum at noon. If you mean to retake Julius or help me escape, that would be a good opportunity. Everyone is expected to attend this announcement, slave and White Ape alike.
- All the professionals who have been brought here and who have spoken up about leaving have been publicly killed after their tasks were complete. Jeshua, the architect from Massilia, met such a fate after his usefulness had waned, as an example.
- Although they lean on me to instruct others on how to care for newborns, they do not really need me for that. Instead, she seeks my advice regularly about how to pacify the male White Apes; she was aware that I have a knack for calming animals, and I am good at it.
- Decima is frustrated and knows that the White Apes are nearly ungovernable, which is why she is encouraging hybridization. Most of the female White Apes are pregnant by human slaves, and most of the female human slaves are pregnant by male White Apes.
- The male White Apes are furious and feel disrespected by not being allowed to mate with their own females, as are the male humans with pre-existing attachments to some of the human females. It is everything that Decima can do to maintain order, and she is thinking about sending some of the White Apes off on military missions from which they are not expected to return.

Inciting The Mob, Roman Style (Or, The Oratory Check)

Inciting the crowd of White Apes against Decima, so as to create chaos in which the investigators might slip away with Julius and/or Felix, involves a Hard Oratory check, modified depending on the circumstances. Make the investigators deliver their best, rabble-rousing speech in game. (Inciting the humans is a good way to get the humans killed.)

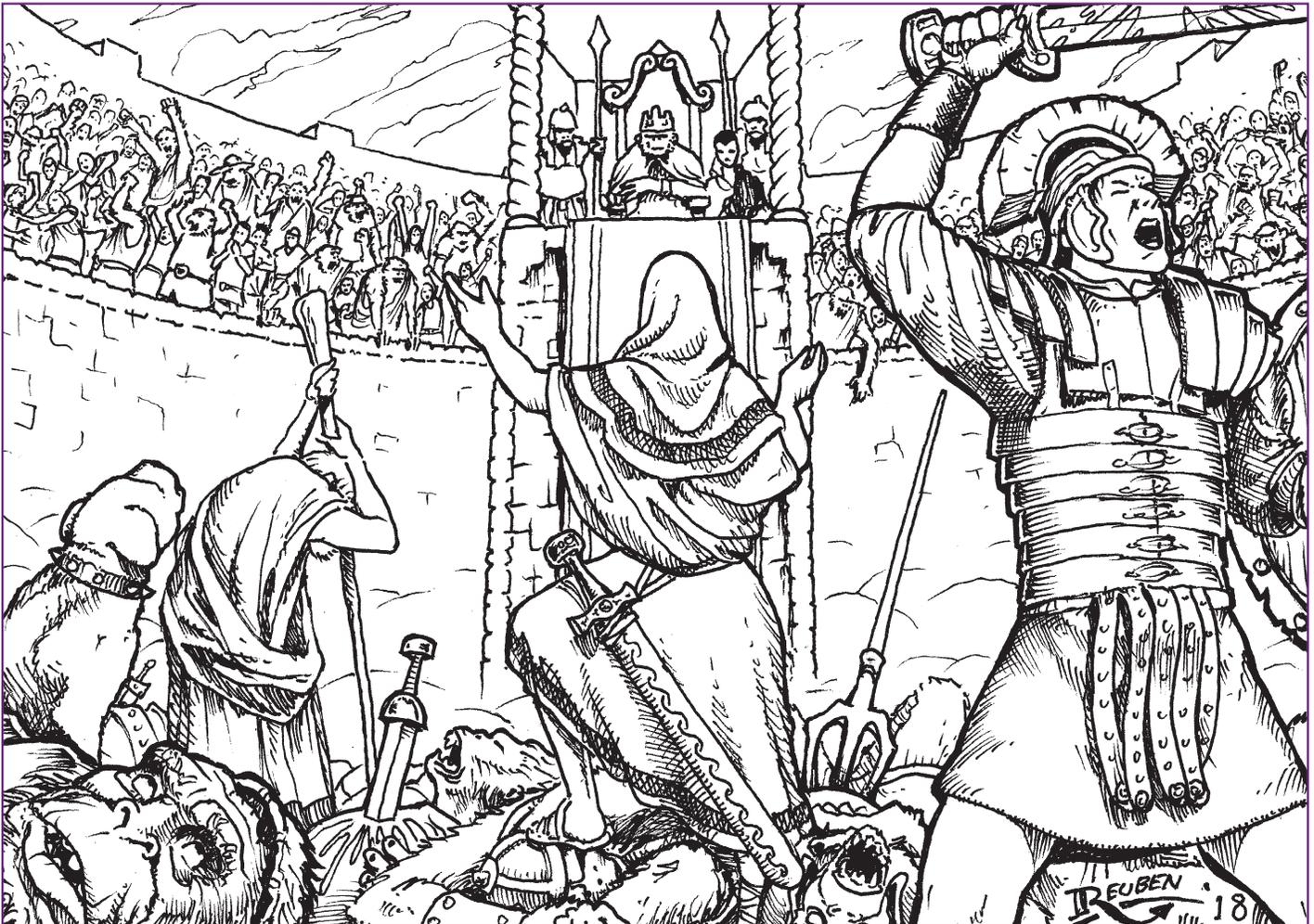
- If attempted at a time when the investigators are captives, the check is instead Extreme (if you allow one at all).
- If attempted at a time when the investigators have just survived a fight at the Colosseum, the check is Regular.
- If the investigators specifically appeal to the sensibilities of the White Ape warriors being denied their women, in favor of weakling humans, allow a bonus die.
- If the investigators come across as trying to portray themselves as superior beings to Oparians, withdraw the bonus die or impose a penalty die, as this is more likely to incite the cowed humans than the White Apes.
- If they have defeated Inky, removing it as a source of terror, allow a bonus die.

their own), told that they will fight for their lives, and that they will be permitted to leave Opar and never return if they are successful. Their opponents are one White Ape warrior each, which, if they somehow defeat them, gives them an opportunity to incite the crowd into a revolt. (This, in turn, might enable them to assassinate Decima, free Julius, and/or free Felix in the ensuing chaos.) If the investigators are exceptionally tough and have access to magic, their opponent is, instead, Inky. See the nearby box for how

such mob incitement efforts can be adjudicated.

- They manage to stage an ambush when she is out of the palace. This might be before her public address in the forum, or after it.
- They confront her boldly in the middle of her public address, Robin Hood style, and try to incite the crowd against her in that fashion.

If Decima is allowed to deliver her address without investigator interference, she announces (with Julius holding her hand at her



side), that she is pregnant with the child of Julius, and the gods have told her that the next princess will lead Opar into a golden age. Careful scrutiny of the crowd for a reaction reveals that few, if any, of the jealous White Ape males are able to conceal their hatred and envy.

Challenging Decima Other Than In View of the Population

Challenging Decima other than in open view of her people is ineffective, and at best gets them a chance at losing their lives in the Colosseum. She is happy to debate them, though, on whether she is a villain, or they are villains. They destroyed her family (and she never did anything to deserve it), and why? Because they were only half-Roman and therefore not as good? Well, look around, she's fixed that: see what good Romans the Oparians are! They've got marble edifices, plumbing, and laws that protect citizens. And she's open about it: they've also got forced prostitution, social castes, inherited conditions of servitude, and a legal system that protects the elite and the military while making everyone else disposable, regardless of their merit. A society of a few smart and capable leaders maintained by strong right arms, with brutal examples made of any dissenters, like her aunt. Just like the Roman Empire.

If they are able to really get her angry, which the argument "but we're human and you're half-ape" or the like effectively accomplishes, then Decima loses her composure. "You presumptuous morons," she fumes. "Rome used to be the pinnacle of civilizations, but now? The Senate is a puppet, you've had one incompetent emperor after another, your empire is being rolled back, and brother kills brother. Why do you think most of your recent emperors have been madmen and violent lunatics, depraved fiends or mental midgets? Why do you think I wanted one of the emperor's relatives to father my children? For the status alone? Ask your friend Felix how hybridization works!" She concludes this speech with a smirk, as she orders the Taker of Sacrifices forth to devour them, causing a stampede and a free-for-all. Although she offers no proof of her insinuation that the Imperial bloodline has already mingled with the Oparian blood, this should give the investigators some serious pause.

RESOLUTIONS

Creating Chaos at the Right Time

Either Decima's announcement, or a victory by the investigators in the Colosseum, sets the stage for chaos. An impassioned speech to rise up and "make Opar great again" at such points might push the furious male Oparians over the edge (see the "Inciting The Mob, Roman Style" boxed text), and the butchery begins. Alternatively, the celebration in the aftermath of a Colosseum victory might result in a slave riot at the Colosseum.

A fire set in the slave hovel district, while everyone is at the games, also succeeds in causing a panic, giving the investigators an

opportunity to confront Decima and Julius in the streets. Decima's six bodyguards (five White Ape warriors plus Showenge) present a fightable challenge, and if things appear to be going badly, they try to hustle Decima away while shoving Julius toward the investigators to further her safe escape.

Smuggling Julius and/or Felix Out

No matter how fast that the investigators arrive in Opar, Julius has already been made use of. Decima weds him, seduces him, and breeds with him surprisingly quickly, and no one is as surprised as Julius. Strangely, although he will not readily admit it, he was not frightened by or repulsed by her at all.

If the investigators came as quickly as possible, using a Gate to get to Rhapta, Julius has not yet succumbed to Stockholm Syndrome and is still willing to leave. If they did not cut their travel time with a Gate, then he does not wish to leave his wife and unborn child, and will have to be intimidated or forcibly subdued. A struggling Julius is far, far more difficult to extract from Opar, either while the city burns and drowns in blood, or pursuant to any sort of quiet extraction attempt. Strangely, the Oparians only put up token efforts to stop Julius from being extracted—they don't like him, don't like the sexual competition for Decima, and the Sorceress-Queen got what she needed from him, anyway.

Felix is happy to take a chance to try and escape Opar and get back to his family, and is fully cooperative with any reasonable investigator plans. Despite his age, he is still able to move at a rate of 7. This is fortunate, because if Decima is still alive and aware that Felix has fled, he is hotly pursued by anyone and anything that she can get to listen to her. She can restore order (with the assistance of Tsathoggua, Showenge, and summoned monsters, if necessary), but losing Felix is a blow to her ability to control the Oparians.

Getting back to Rome may be an adventure all on its own, or the investigators may take the first safe opportunity, and burn the permanent POW, to Gate themselves back to a familiar location.

REWARDS AND REPERCUSSIONS

- **Eliminating the Taker of Sacrifices:** +1D10 SAN
- **Rescuing Felix:** +1D6 SAN
- **Rescuing Julius:** +1D6 SAN as well as garnering the investigators a very healthy reward, both financially and in terms of rank (+20% to Status, up to 75%)
- **Failing to rescue Julius:** -1D6 SAN and -20% Status, and they would be wise not to return to Rome unless they have a believable tale of his valiant death (with his body as proof). If so, they are spared and given a small reward for their honest effort and lose no Status.
- **Knowing the possible secret of the Imperial bloodline, and a potential explanation for the madness and violence of some recent emperors:** -1D3 SAN, and should make them ponder what they ought to do about it.

NPCS

**DECIMA, NEW SORCERESS,
Queen of Opar**

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	75	INT	90	Hit Points	13
CON	75	EDU	75	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	60	POW	125	Build	1
DEX	70	SAN	20	Move	9
APP	5	Magic Points	25	Age	22

Nationality: Oparian/Roman dual citizen

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Enchanted Knife), 80% (40/16), 1D4+2+DB

Fighting (Savage Clawing, Rending, and Biting), 80% (40/16), 1D6+DB

Dodge 50% (25/10)

Armor: 1-point hide and fur

Education: Sorceress with access to the vast and ancient library of Opar, plus study of Roman ways and culture.

Skills: Climb 99%, Cthulhu Mythos 25%, Empire: 60%, Listen 50%, History 50%, Occult 90%, Other Kingdoms (Opar) 90%, Other Language (Greek) 30%, Own Language (Latin) 75%, Own Language (Opar) 99%, Read/Write Languages 60%, Rebuild Oparian Civilization 65%, Science (Astrology) 40%, Science (Augury) 70%, Science (Philosophy/Religion) 40%, Seduce Horny Teenager 99%, Spot Hidden 50%, Status (in Opar) 100%, Stealth 50%

Spells: Many, at the Keeper's discretion, but none would involve disguise or changing form. That just isn't done in Oparian society. Alter Weather, Augur, Bless Blade, Contact The Black Toad Ssathogua (Tsathoggua), Contact Taker of Sacrifices (Formless Spawn of Tsathoggua), Create Gate, Dream Vision, Enthrall Victim, Evil Eye, Flesh Ward, Heal, Mindblast, Steal Life, and Summon/Bind Wings in the Night (Byakhee) are certainly in her arsenal.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D3 Sanity points for seeing Decima

**SHOWENGE, Midwife and Servant of the Sorceress-
Queens of Opar**

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	65	INT	90	Hit Points	11
CON	65	EDU	70	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	50	POW	90	Build	0
DEX	65	SAN	0	Move	8
APP	40	Magic Points	18	Age	74

Nationality: Oparian Servant

Education: Oparian Sorcery and Ancient Wisdom.

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 70% (35/14), damage 1D3+DB

Fighting (Large enchanted curved and hooked Oparian Knife) 70% (35/14), damage 1D4+2+DB; impales; short length; 20 HP.

Dodge 32% (16/6)

Armor: None

Skills: Bargain 50%, Civics 50%, Cthulhu Mythos 35%, Fast Talk 35%, First Aid 70%, Insight 50%, Library Use 20%, Listen 50%, Medicine 50%, Natural World 50%, Navigate 25%, Occult 50%, Other Kingdom (Roman Empire) 50%, Own Kingdom (Opar) 60%, Own Language (Opar) 70%, Other Language (Latin) 50%, Other Language (Greek) 50%, Pilot Boat 25%, Science (Augury) 50%, Science (Astrology) 50%, Science (Philosophy/Religion) 50%, Spot Hidden 50%, Status (in Opar) 50%, Swim 25%, Tact 0%, Write Languages 50%

Spells: Augur, Bless Blade, Contact the Black Toad Ssathogua (Tsathoggua), Contact Taker of Sacrifices (Formless Spawn of Tsathoggua), Create Gate, Enthrall Victim, Evil Eye, Flesh Ward, Heal, Mindblast, Summon/Bind Wings in the Night (Byakhee)

**CUTTHROATS AND HIRELINGS,
Avulus, Brutus, Caius, & Drusus**

CHAR.	AVULUS	BRUTUS	CAIUS	DRUSUS
STR	70	75	85	65
CON	60	70	85	70
SIZ	60	70	85	65
DEX	80	60	40	60
APP	60	65	60	60
INT	60	55	55	60
EDU	40	40	40	40
POW	55	50	45	55
SAN	45	40	35	50
Luck	55	50	45	55
Hit Points	12	14	17	13
Damage Bonus	+1D4	+1D4	+1D6	+1D4
Build	1	1	2	1
Move	9	8	7	8

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 55% (28/11), damage 1D4+DB

Fighting (big knife) (Avulus, Brutus, Drusus), 55% (28/11), damage 1D4+2+DB

Fighting (big club) (Caius) 55% (28/11), damage 1D8+DB

Dodge 50%

Armor: None

Skills: Spot Hidden 50%

**TYPICAL MALE WHITE APE WARRIOR
of the Lost City of Opar**

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	85	INT	45	Hit Points	8
CON	55	EDU	Varies	Damage Bonus	+1D6
SIZ	85	POW	55	Build	2
DEX	55	SAN	0	Move	8
APP	5	Luck	—	Age	Varies

Nationality: Opar

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 80% (40/16) 1D6+DB



GODDESS OF THE WHITE APES

Fighting (Savage Clawing, Rending and Biting) 80% (40/16), 1D6+DB

Fighting (Sized-up Gladius) 50% (25/10), 1D6+1+DB, HP 20, medium length, impales and parries

Fighting (Pilum), 50% (25/10), 1D6 thrust+DB or 1D8 thrown (25 yards range)

Dodge 50% (25/10)

Shield (medium) 50% (25/10) 1D4+DB

Armor: *Leather and rings plus light helmet and medium shield (modified legionary kit for tropical weather), plus a further 2 points of hide and fur, for a total of 1D4+4 armor plus 1D4 shield.*

Skills: *Climb 99%, Listen 50%, Sneak 50%, Spot Hidden 50%, Stealth 50%, Track 50%, Use Shield 50%*

Sanity Loss: *0/1D3 points to see a male White Ape*

Notes: *Rend first, ask questions later*

THE TAKER OF SACRIFICES, Formless Spawn of Tsathoggua, occasionally known as "Inky"

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	90	INT	65	Hit Points	17
CON	55	EDU	—	Damage Bonus	+2D6
SIZ	115	POW	50	Build	3
DEX	95	SAN	—	Move	12
APP	—	Magic Points	—	Luck	—

Attacks per round: *2 (limited to 1 Bite per round)*

Fighting attacks: *Due to its extreme fluidity it is able to attack in a wide variety of ways, forming whips, tentacles, and other appendages with which to bludgeon and strike its opponents.*

Fighting 60% (30/12), damage 2D6+DB

Grab (maneuver), damage 1D6+DB

Bite 30% (15/6), damage swallowed

Dodge 47% (23/9)

Bite: *The victim is instantly swallowed. Each round thereafter the victim takes 1 point of damage from constriction, the damage done per round progressively increasing by 1 point (e.g., on the second round 2 points of damage are taken, and so forth). While swallowed, the victim may take no action whatsoever, though friends may attempt to slay the monster to free him or her. A formless spawn can make one Bite attack per round and can continue to swallow prey until having swallowed its own SIZ in prey. While digesting a victim, a Spawn may continue to fight but may not shift location without disgorging that which it has swallowed.*

Grab (maneuver): *Grabs an opponent using one of its whip-like appendages; range is always one-fifth of the monster's SIZ in yards.*

Armor: *Immune to all physical weapons, even enchanted ones—wounds simply snap shut after being opened. Spells may affect them, as may fire, chemicals, or other forces.*

Skills: *Lurk Motionless And Unnoticed In Dark Corner 90%, Succumb to Pleas for Mercy 0%, Tolerate Childish Nickname 100%*

Sanity Loss: *1/1D10 Sanity points to see the Taker of Sacrifices*



FOLLOWING SEAS

BY CHARLES GERARD

THE CAST

Galerius Lucius Sospes

Reputable merchant and negotiatio in Antioch.

Decius Salvius Protus

Magister/Captain; Grieving sea captain marked for death by a denizen of Tindalos.

Sabellius

Proreus/First Mate; An inexperienced Roman sailor, fiercely loyal to Protus, who sees the captain as a father figure.

Falerius Ruso

Gubernator/Helmsman; Retired sailor from the Roman Navy. He's concerned about the captain, but prefers to resolve conflict without bloodshed.

Tullius Quarto

Proreta/Forward Watchman; A superstitious Syrian freedman, who harbors suspicions about the captain and is quick to join a mutiny.

Herius Melus

Faber/Ship's Carpenter; Competent in his trade, but intolerant of decisions that put the crew at risk. He is the ringleader of the mutiny.

Pomponius Sorex

Sailor; A freedman with the lowest status among the crew, and easily swayed by his more experienced peers.

Dacien

Drowned son of Decius Salvius Protus

open water crossings for no legitimate reason. Besides Protus acting strangely, the ship's carpenter is agitating for mutiny, and there is talk that the ship or indeed the captain himself might be cursed. The talk is correct.

Hired by Galerius Lucius Sospes: The Keeper could also draw investigators into the plot directly, as a group hired by Galerius Lucius Sospes, a reputable merchant and negotiatio (trader and lender to foreign agents) in Antioch. He needs a group with sharp wits and skills to escort a shipment of goods to Rome, and investigate his suspicions about the magister.

GOALS

There is only one Mythos threat in play—a voracious inter-dimensional horror, a Leech of Tindalos, that is shadowing the magister. Investigators will have to cope with flaring tensions among crewmates, deal with a panicking captain bent on sabotage, and defeat or escape the creature.

The captain possesses a magic Leaden Ward, an amulet that “blinds” and repels the creature. But once the beast appears, he will fall into a well of fatalism, and use the ward only to protect himself long enough to sabotage the ship and make sure that the thing does not follow them to civilization.

An ideal outcome for the investigators would be to gain possession of the Leaden Ward before the captain or his suspicious crewmates throw it into the sea, while stopping his attempts to sabotage the boat. Investigators have a better chance of routing the monster if they manage to use social skills to galvanize the crew and join forces against it. Reducing its Hit Points to zero will also send the thing wriggling back to its home dimension.

- Put down—or join—a possible mutiny aboard the Minerva.
- Prevent the magister and his protege, the first mate, from sinking the ship.
- Find the magister's protective charm and use it to ward off the Leech of Tindalos.
- Or, survive the creature's attacks and escape to safety.

FOR THE KEEPER

The magister, Decius Salvius Protus, is a marked man. He has fallen in with a Pythagorean cult based in Ostia, known as the Greater Hellenic Temple of Apollo, and who call themselves “The Listeners.” A central rite of this cult involves the use a mind-altering and time-traveling elixir, a modified version of the Far Eastern Liao Drug, to “cleans” emotional blemishes and commune with the “pure mathematical forms” from the realm of Tindalos. The cult uses Protus to smuggle the formula's key ingredient, Black Lotus, from the terminus of the Silk Road in Syria back to Rome.

INTRODUCTION

This scenario takes place aboard the Minerva, a 65-foot, sail-powered cargo ship plying the trade route between Antioch in Syria Palestina and Ostia, the port that serves Rome. Much of the action takes place between the islands of Cyprus and Crete, after a few days of travel, though the location and timing could easily be changed to fit into a custom campaign.

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS

Passengers on the Minerva: The group may simply be on board the Minerva as paid passengers, when they get caught up both in simmering tensions among the crew and a much darker threat stalking the ship. The magister navis (captain), Decius Salvius Protus, is pushing the crew hard, sailing at night and risking

Ten years ago, Protus lost his son, Dacien, at sea, in an accident he feels that he could have prevented. This grief was nearly unbearable, until the cult's members approached him and offered treatment for these painful memories. The Listeners claim that they can free people from emotional scars, and bring them closer to a pure mathematical truth in the kingdom of Apollo. In fact, they use the Liao formula to send people back in time to try and grapple with troubling memories.

Protus has frequently partaken of the drug, dissolved in wine, as a salve for his crippling grief. The wine sends him back in time to re-experience his last precious moments with his child. Protus became obsessed with this exercise, frequently visiting the day of his son's death, dwelling on moments that he yearns to recapture, but also reliving his own devastating mistakes. With unrestricted access to the smuggled Liao Wine during long ship voyages, he has imbibed frequently.

After one-too-many visits into the past, Protus finally caught the attention of an empathic, leech-like abomination from the realm of Tindalos. Like the so-called Hounds of the same realm, once a Leech of Tindalos marks its quarry, it will follow them across time and space, until the target is devoured. The Leech has been following Protus for weeks, and he has already glimpsed its toothy snout sniffing at him through acute angles.

The Listeners have groomed Protus to willingly surrender to the strange creatures of Tindalos when the time comes, teaching him that these beings must devour everyone who sees them, and that trying to run from them when they appear will only bring disaster upon the world. They provided him with a leaden charm of protection that is supposed to make him invisible to denizens of that dimension. The ward may confuse monsters from Tindalos at short range, but Leeches can still catch his "scent" using empathic senses.

The Leech creature locks on to human prey by sensing regret—or a strained relationship with memory and time. This presents opportunities for Keepers to draw out details about back-story elements, and prompt players to explore their investigators' darkest memories, including any previous Mythos-related brushes with insanity or moral quandaries that resulted in a loss of Status.

THE JOB

Use this section if you want to send the investigators on a mission, rather than simply entangle them, as passengers, in a turn of bad fate.

Sospes suspects that Protus is skimming profits and double dealing with a shady new trade guild in Ostia. Is he offloading merchandise at a stop along the way? Is he fencing a portion of the goods to higher paying clients? Who is he working with? Are other crew members involved? The investigators must find out what the captain is up to and what the crew knows.

Sospes offers 5,200 sesterces for the assignment, in addition to compensation for any reasonable provisions that the group needs for this considerable journey of about two weeks. An empty accusation against the magister could backlash, so he must have some proof. He is willing to negotiate up to 6,200 sesterces on a Hard Bargain or Charm check. Chances of better pay may improve if the investigators appeal to his sense of pride and reputation; how dare someone leech his hard-earned profits!

What Lucius Sospes Knows

If the Keeper chooses to use Lucius Sospes as an entry point for the adventure, he will disclose the following details.

- Profits for shipments under Protus' command are just not adding up. Clients have complained. He estimates that about 5 percent of the shipped goods are not reaching his buyers in Rome.
- The captain has been seen keeping company with members of an upstart trade corporation called the "Greater Hellenic Temple of Apollo," one of many guild cults with a presence in Ostia. It's possible that they have something to do with the cargo discrepancies. Maybe he is selling some of these goods to the cult for extra pay?

Protus, the Magister

As the ship prepares to embark from Antioch, Protus is outwardly affable to passengers, but perceptive investigators will notice that he seems preoccupied and restless, his eyes sunken into dark sockets. With new crew members, he is curt and commanding, but not disrespectful. On an Insight check, investigators can see that he is worried about the voyage. A Hard Insight roll also reveals he has buried, unresolved grief or loss. An Extreme Insight roll allows investigators to glimpse into the abyss of fear in his eyes. He has not slept in many days, and is possibly even suicidal.

Ten years ago, Protus suffered a terrible loss. Against the wishes of his wife, he brought his 10-year-old son, Dacien, aboard the *Minerva* to learn the ways of the sea. He was stern with the boy, treating him with the same expectations he would have for any other crew member. Dacien, desperate to please his father, was overly zealous while handling lines, became tangled in them, and fell overboard. He drowned while being dragged beside the ship for several stadi before the crew could cut his body loose.

A TOUR OF THE MINERVA

The *Minerva* is a 65-foot cargo corbita, a common, workhorse trade vessel of the Roman era. The ship can carry up to 70 tons of cargo, and measures 19 feet wide amidships. She features a square mainsail measuring 360 square feet, and a foresail, or artemon, of 50 square feet that is rigged off of a raked mast that hangs over the bow.

On this voyage, the vessel is loaded with about 1,500 amphorae of Syrian wine and garum, as well as about 500 larger pots of dry grain, and a small selection of dyed textiles.

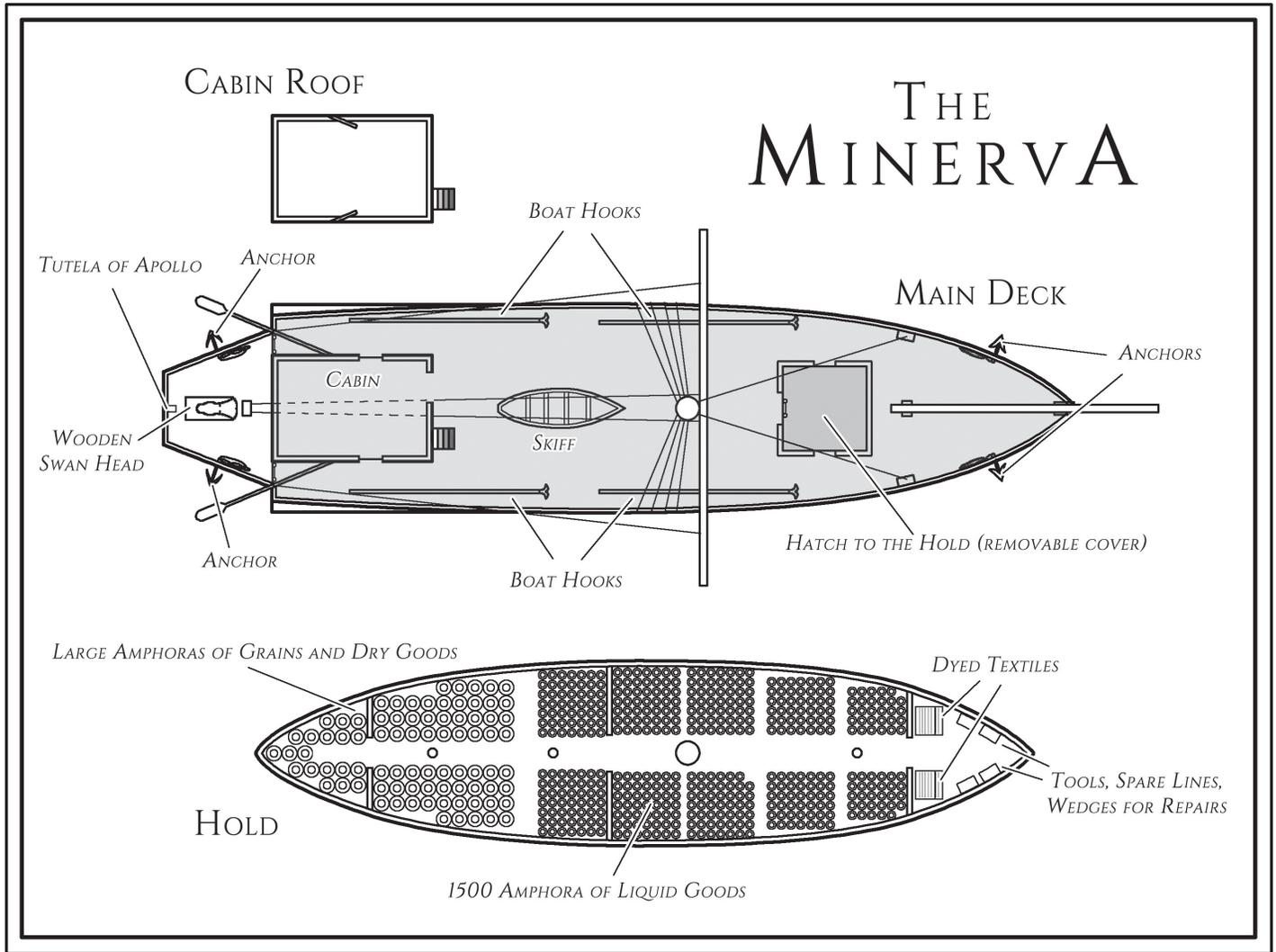
Her deck has a small cabin, where the crew can take shelter from weather or sleep in shifts. It also has a small galley, with a charcoal stove and an assortment of tools for repairs, including mallets, hammers, wedges, crosscut saws, hand drills, an adze, and an axe. The cabin has one arched doorway and a window on each side. Two 15-foot boat hooks are kept along each side of the ship, used for pushing off docks or staving off invaders when needed.

The helmsman stands on the roof of the cabin to steer, using long handles connected to two oars on either side. The cabin is attached to a slightly raked, railed aft deck that features a large, iconic wooden swan's head facing over the stern. Against the back rail of the aft deck there is small pedestal with a statue on top, depicting the ship's divine patron, or tutelae.

Investigators making an Occult or Empire check will recognize that this statue is an outdated and crude gilded figure of Apollo, holding a lyre. This would more typically be a place for a statue of Neptune, Bacchus, Venus, or Luna. Close inspection reveals that this statue replaced a previous one—and anyone with seamanship experience would know that replacing the statue would be seen as



THE MINERVA



an affront to the gods and an invitation for disaster. When inspecting the area around the statue, a successful Spot Hidden roll reveals that the pedestal has a concealed compartment. Inside is a skin of the Liao Wine and an inscribed Leadern Ward (see below).

A skiff is tied to the deck between the front of the cabin and the mainsail mast. This small boat serves as a tender when the ship is anchored near a port, to replenish supplies or shuttle crew and passengers. It accommodates a maximum of 4 people when empty, or two when loaded with cargo. Overloading the skiff is dangerous, as it greatly compromises its limited stability. The skiff is powered by four oars which fit into gunwale notches for oarlocks. It takes three rounds to free the skiff and launch it over the side using ropes.

A corbita under sail is capable of traveling at an average speed of 4 or 5 knots, with a top speed of 6 knots. At 6 knots, the journey from Antioch to Crete takes about 5 days.

The Hold

The hold contains 1,500, very carefully stacked amphorae of liquid goods and 500 large jars of grain. Stacking and weight distribution is critical to the vessel's stability at sea. Ship's provisions, tools, replacement boards, extra lines, and other repair supplies are also kept down below. The cargo hatch lies in front of the mainsail mast, with a square opening of about 15 feet. A ladder on the forward starboard side of the hatch leads down into the hold. Some ships have a simple pump in the hold to help remove water from the bilge. Protus "helpfully"

removed the ship's pump before embarking, fearing that he might need to scuttle her at sea if he was found by the Leech.

Watching the Captain

Any of the following could be observed during the voyage, particularly if investigators are watching the captain closely.

Protus is sketching out strange geometries on the floor of the aft deck, in charcoal. If asked, he says he is working out a "formula for lost time."

- Before heavy rain begins on Day 3 (see Timeline below), small remnants of these formulas might be found anywhere aft of the cabin.
- The magister rarely sets foot anywhere forward of the cabin, which is the outer range of his Leadern Ward. He will leave this ward in the pedestal compartment until he senses fomenting dissent among the crew, or the monster's appearance seems imminent. His reluctance to leave the aft deck and helmsman's platform above the cabin is another source of resentment—merchant crews prefer to see a captain get his hands dirty once in a while.
- A few times each day, the magister prays and makes offerings before the ship's tutela (carved figurehead of a god on a pedestal, meant to bless

and protect the ship), takes a drink of something from a wineskin, and spends a few moments in reverie as he relives the day of his son's death. On a successful Spot Hidden roll, investigators will notice a concealed pedestal compartment in the tutela (that Protus puts the wineskin into).

- Talking to Protus

If investigators manage to gain the magister's trust, he will share the story of his lost son, Dacien. He craves a sympathetic ear, and will be more open if an investigator is willing to share their own personal story of loss or regret. Protus might even offer a bit of the special elixir he keeps in the pedestal of the tutela (see Liao Wine below for effects). He is in a vulnerable, near-fatalistic state of mind, and would welcome a little compassion.

Investigators who partake of the wine will win his complete trust (see The Liao Wine, below, for the consequences of this). They may then hear more than they can bear about the Listeners, about the philosophy of Pythagoras, how time is but an illusion, and how only mathematical harmony can heal wounds like regret and anger. He may try to convince them to join him in this "treatment." He will speak about being haunted by memories to the brink of madness. "Mankind can learn mathematics and use it to seek harmonies. But the numbers, the angles, the proofs—these things are the real beings of this universe. It belongs to them. Only they are alive. We are their language. Not the other way around."

There are also a couple of proverbs that he likes to recite in Greek, learned from the Listeners: "Always the great god applies geometry to the universe," and "an eagle's old age is worth a sparrow's youth."

The Listeners

A successful Occult (or Cthulhu Mythos) check can provide background information about the Listeners. The Greater Hellenic Temple of Apollo is one of many contemporary groups that claim lineage back to Pythagoras. The Akousmatikoi, or Listeners, believe themselves to carry the master's true teachings. They use a combination of music, drug-induced trances, and rigorous study of mathematics to purify the soul and purge the body. The investigator will also recall that "Listeners" was the name of followers of an old Greek cult in southern Apennine peninsula a few centuries ago. They studied mathematics, philosophy, and music, and followed the mystical teachings of a man named Pythagoras. There is currently a revival of those teachings in Rome, with various cults and schools forming around conflicting interpretations.

Keeper's Information: Their quest for more mind-expanding substances led some of the Listeners to embark on Silk Road expeditions, when they found shady sources of the Black Lotus and Liao Drug. When they discovered the drug's time-bending properties, they began to use it therapeutically, mixing it with other substances to refine its effects. Only priests of the temple are supposed to experiment with larger doses to glimpse the mathematical forms of Tindalos. The group meets in an underground basilica in Ostia, and has started to establish chapters in Antioch and Palmyra to protect the flow of this elixir.

The Haunting Past

When the captain imbibes Liao Wine, the membrane of time becomes thin, the Leech takes notice of his bedeviled mind, and his memories (actually a window in time) can project to others who are in range. This temporal leakage allows the Leech to draw

closer to finding the angular doorway that it seeks. Any or all of the following strange events could occur during the journey. They are listed in order of intensity, to help Keepers build tension.

The Dancing Aura

Each time that the captain takes a drink of his Liao Wine, a plasmic glow will crackle from the yard arms and tops of the two masts, and dance up and down the angles of the rigging like an aurora. This gives off a strong odor of ozone mixed with a personalized déjà vu, a memory-inducing scent. Keepers can use this as an opportunity to hint at a painful memory from an investigator's background.

This aura is similar to a common phenomenon known at sea as a Helene (one) or a Castor and Pollux (two), later in history to be known as St. Elmo's Fire. These incidents are associated in folklore with creatures known as the acthnic, fire elementals also called salamanders. Quarto, the superstitious forward watchman, is happy to explain these associations. Its appearance is generally considered to be a good omen, but no one has ever seen this glow jump into the rigging before like this one does.

The aura will stop at a set distance from the Leaden Ward (see below), seeming to hit at an unseen boundary (halfway up the brail lines of the main mast, if the ward is still in the pedestal).

- **The Knocking.** A slow, rhythmic knocking sound is heard against the starboard hull. It is soft at first, and then grows in intensity. Like a hunter searching the burrow of quarry, the Leech is testing for weak spots in the film of time through which it can pass. The captain perceives this as the sound of his boy tangled in lines, thumping against the hull, and projects these fears into the minds of others nearby. Those who investigate will see a child's corpse slamming against the ship at the water line. This causes a loss of O/1D3 SAN.
- **Clear Skies.** An investigator sees the miserable weather suddenly become a hot, midsummer day with full sails under fair winds. Gulls cry out as though heralding landfall. The scent of something pleasant and personally familiar wafts through the air. Just as abruptly, the scene flips back again. This can happen anytime, day or night. O/1 SAN loss to see this.
- **Echoes.** Panicked, phantom voices cry out for "Dacien!" and "He is drowning!"
- **The Dacien Apparition.** If any investigators find themselves alone, either above or below deck, a young boy, covered in seaweed, is spotted standing with lines in his hands. Gulls perch on his head and shoulders, pecking at empty eye sockets. If approached, the figure will open its mouth and pour an endless torrent of fetid seawater onto the deck boards. The water and figure disappear as soon as other crew members arrive. This causes a loss of O/1D3 SAN.
- **A Bout of Reverie.** Ozone from the plasma aura envelops an investigator, carrying a scent that triggers one of their darkest memories, which plays out in a vivid waking dream which carries a strong temptation to try and change the outcome. Investigators in range must make a POW roll to resist becoming captivated by the memory for 1D10 rounds, at a SAN cost of 1/1D6. One of the crew members could get caught up in these bouts of memory, and begin to act out





moments of their own tortured pasts, possibly resulting in emotional breakdowns or accidental confessions.

- **Shadow Play.** The whole scene of Dacien's death may play out in shadowy detail, ghostly figures fading in and out of phase as the boy becomes tangled in lines and dragged overboard, while the crew scramble and try to cut him loose. After rescue attempts fail, Protus fends them off, not allowing anyone to release the phantom of his son's lifeless body into the sea.

During these spells of temporal flux, on a successful Spot Hidden roll, Keepers may allow the investigators to witness the captain putting his wineskin back in the secret compartment in the tutela's pedestal, or observing his strange behavior as he pantomimes remembered actions on the day of his son's death.

TIMELINE:

The Voyage of the Minerva

Day 1: Embarking. The *Minerva* is loaded with cargo, and sails from Antioch toward the island of Cyprus. The captain orders that they pass along its southern shore. The common (and safer) route (Navigation check or familiarity from past experience) would instead hug the shore of Cilicia and cross the sheltered Aegean Sea. Under a starry sky, the captain commands the crew to press on through the night. Knocking sounds against the hull, eerie plasmic glowing and fleeting phantom images may appear on the first night.

Day 2: Southern coast of Cyprus. Both crew and investigators with experience at sea or a successful Navigation check note that the captain's navigation is keeping the *Minerva* oddly far from shore. He appears increasingly wary and studies the waters, as if pursued by pirates. Melus, the carpenter, may begin to complain and plant seeds of doubt about the captain's leadership. Investigators with any reasonably positive Status, and who are not part of the crew, may be drawn into an awkward conversation with Protus. The glowing aura, phantom images of Protus' son and crew scrambling on deck appear in greater detail. Moments of vivid and painful memories intensify among both crew and investigators.

Day 3: Open water. The *Minerva* sails west all day and night over open water, with no land in sight. Light rain builds throughout the afternoon. Winds become fickle. By nightfall, the deck is slick, and rain has soaked everything to the core. Despite an overcast sky, the captain demands again that the crew sail through the night.

Night of Day 3: Sorex disappears (see "The Forward Watch Goes Missing" section, below). Quarto, the superstitious forward watchman, becomes agitated and talks of terrible omens. He is likely to voice suspicions about the captain being cursed. Knocking sounds against the hull intensify, as the Leech continues searching for an angular opening between worlds.

Day 4: Open sea. All day is spent sailing west. Winds become stronger and gusty, mostly from the north, and progress



FOLLOWING SEAS

slows as a result. Sheets of rain soak everyone to the bone. Arguments about the ship's course boil to the surface.

Sunset on Day 4: Possible mutiny erupts (See the "Mutinous Talk" section, below).

After sunset of Day 4, during the possible mutiny: A violent collision rocks the ship, as the Leech tries to pry through the hull to our world. See "The Knocking" section, below.

Day 5: Expected arrival date in Crete.

THE LIAO WINE

The Listeners' specially infused wine includes Black Lotus from the unknown East, as well as wormwood and other psychoactive substances that were known to the Pythagoreans. It is not as strong as the pure Liao Drug, but has other properties meant to promote emotional healing, an obsession of original Pythagorean teachings.

When someone takes a drink of the Liao Wine, they must make a SAN roll, with a cost of O/1D6 points. If they succeed, there is no effect, but the liquid tastes unbearably bitter and sparks an eerie moment of *déjà vu*. If they fail, the substance takes immediate effect, causing them to collapse into a dream-like reverie (lasting 1D10 rounds) and re-experience some of their most painful and horrific memories.

Imbibing a large quantity of the wine could send the drinker back beyond his own lifetime, even thousands of years in time, to glimpse unfathomable images of the creation of the universe or maddening visions of corkscrew spires and monstrous denizens of Tindalos (SAN loss of 1D3/1D20).

The Leaden Ward

Members of the Greater Hellenic Temple of Apollo saw that Protus had started to abuse the Liao Wine, and feared that he would soon attract beings from the realm of Tindalos, which they call Noumenon. To protect him for a time, the cult's elders made a Leaden Ward that could throw creatures off his scent while traveling across time. He kept it with him during most of his trips, but eventually Protus forgot to wear it, and was marked by a Leech of Tindalos. On Earth, the Ward still confuses denizens of Tindalos, but does not completely throw them off the target's scent. When within the charm's protective sphere, the Leech of Tindalos is rendered blind, no longer able to use empathic senses to zero in on prey. Instead, it flails around, only slightly less dangerously.

The Ward, made from a thin sheet of lead and about the size of a silver dollar, is inscribed with mathematical diagrams and formulas in an old Greek script. A Cthulhu Mythos check suggests that it is meant as some kind of ward against spirits or creatures from other realms, but offers little else.

Protus keeps the ward in a special compartment in the pedestal of the tutela of Apollo. From there, its range covers about a third of the deck, with the sphere's diameter reaching just to the forward edge of the cabin.

The Leech will not willingly enter the sphere. Notably, the Ward's field suppresses the plasma "Helene" effect that the creature causes in the rigging. This could clue investigators about the protective nature of this item. On a successful Idea roll, Keepers may point out that the plasma glow seems to stop at an unseen boundary (halfway up the brail lines of the main mast, if the ward is still kept in the pedestal).

When thrust inside the Ward's protective field, the Leech suffers the following effects:

- The creature is rendered blind and all of its senses are dampened.
- It will flail about like a salted (Earth) leech and spray ichor randomly to protect itself. Investigators in close range can avoid getting sprayed with a successful Luck roll. They may also "dive for cover" on a successful Dodge roll, which forfeits any other actions that round.
- Biting attacks by the Leech are made with two penalty dice.
- The Leech can, however, Fight Back against any melee attacks without penalty, as attacking at close range reveals the attacker's position.

INTERVIEWS

The Crew (Any Member)

Talking with most members of the crew about the magister will reveal the following basic information.

- The captain lost a young son at sea, and blames himself for the accident.
- The first mate, Sabellius, is young and incompetent. He was promoted to his position without any merit. The captain favors him, and has become like an adopted son to him.
- The captain talks to a secretive new group in Ostia. They call themselves the "Listeners." They are rumored to be scholars and mathematicians.
- The captain sometimes drinks a foul wine that sends him into fits of blathering nonsense. At least one of the amphorae in the hold stinks of it. He smuggles this wine to the Listeners.
- Some sailors at port say the magister is cursed, because he replaced the ship's tutela. It had once been Neptune. Perhaps the god seeks revenge on him and the Minerva.

Failed Push rolls on social skills when talking to the crew (e.g., getting a crew member drunk, paying for information, or escalating to threats) could result in suspicion forming against the investigators, making it much harder to get footing once tensions boil over. They could be accused of spying, or of bringing more bad luck to the Minerva. Such results could escalate calls for mutiny.

FURTHER INTERVIEWS

with Particular Crew Members

Falerius Ruso, Gubernator/Helmsman

The helmsman learned his skills as an armed sailor (*nautae*) with the Syrian fleet of the Roman Navy. Now retired, he has seen his share of combat fighting pirates on the Mediterranean, though he has no taste for bloodshed. Ruso has been working with Protus for more than a year, the longest of any other crew member.

He does not put stock in superstitious rumors of a curse, but he knows that the magister has been behaving strangely for several months, and that he has been talking to "Listeners" of the Greater Hellenic Temple of Apollo in Ostia. He knows that the Listeners study mathematics and partake of medicinal compounds to



expand their knowledge.

- He knows that Protus often wears a special leaden charm, that he hides sometimes to avoid it being stolen, and has heard him claim that it “keeps the demons away.”
- Protus has confided in Ruso the story of his lost son, and he knows that it had a profound effect on the captain. He is deeply concerned about the captain—he does not remember seeing him sleep over the last few weeks.

Sabellius, Proreus/First Mate

Sabellius considers Protus to be a father figure. The two became close about a year ago, and though the Listeners have not welcomed the proreus into their ranks, he considers himself a follower of their philosophy and Protus to be his spiritual mentor.

Protus has enthralled Sabellius with tales about the virtues of mathematics and the importance of emotional “cleansing.”

- He will defend Protus fiercely, and will follow his orders even when they seem self-destructive.
- Sabellius is worried about Protus, however, and he could be convinced to help the investigators if it seems to be in the magister’s best interest.
- Protus has disclosed to him that he is being stalked by a curse, and that only devotion to Pythagorean philosophy and healing will set him free. A Hard success on social skills (other than Intimidate) could get Sabellius to talk about the captain’s strange practices and the elixir he frequently imbibes.

Tullius Quarto, Proreta/Forward Watch

Quarto is deeply suspicious of the magister, and will readily turn against him when the opportunity arises. He is the most superstitious member of the crew. Quarto is outraged by any invitations to bad luck, such as changing the original tutela of the ship. Quarto would likely identify the Leech as an “actlunici” fire elemental.

Quarto left a childhood love whom he promised to marry, Aulia, for a life at sea. He often dreams of the life that could have been.

Herius Melus, Faber/Carpenter

Melus is brash and abrupt, but keeps an even keel in a crisis. People find him to be trustworthy. Unfortunately, he is in dire need of cash to pay off serious debts with money lenders in Antioch. He fears that these debts have put his whole family at risk. He sees the missteps of the magister as a direct assault on his income and personal honor, so he is quick to lead the charge for mutiny.

Pomponius Sorex, freedman, Sailor

Sorex has the lowest status of any crew member and tends to follow the majority when it comes to conflict. He has observed the magister closely, and has seen the hidden wineskin and leaden ward in the ship’s tutela. Unknown to any of the crew, Sorex was involved in the brutal murder of a man in Palmyra. He was part of a group of drunken freedmen who stabbed and beat a plebeian to death for a few coins. He has been running from this crime for many years, and often sees the victim’s eyes in his dreams.

THE FORWARD WATCH (SOREX) GOES MISSING

On the Night of Day 3

During a change of watch on the bow on the night of Day 3, Quarto, or an investigator taking a shift at the forward watch, discovers that Sorex is mysteriously missing from his post. Close inspection shows some splintering on the starboard rail and scorch marks on the forward rigging (from the aura). On a successful Spot Hidden roll, investigators may find a translucent bluish film on the rails and spattered on the deck—the substance is partially hardened, like a gelatinous slug trail that does not wash off in the rain. This is residue from the Leech’s spray attack. However, they will not find Sorex, as he has been eaten by the Leech.

MUTINOUS TALK

By the time that the Minerva reaches Crete, the magister has been driving the crew and the ship hard, sailing through the night when stars are visible and pushing the ship’s limits even in unfavorable conditions. He is agitated and restless, often staring over the stern deck as though searching the horizon for pursuers.

As the sun sets on the fourth day at sea, he demands that the crew continue to sail through the night. With a strong wind against them, progress would be slow, as they would have to tack and zigzag, making little progress. The crew is now fed up. They have lost trust in the magister, and chatter about his supposed curse has floated to the surface. Plus, Sorex has gone missing, seemingly having gone overboard, and there is that inexplicable residue on the rails...

Here are but a few of the crew’s many grievances:

- Sabellius does not deserve his station, and the crew resents the favoritism.
- The magister drives the crew too hard and takes needless risks, like sailing at night and through bad weather. Doubtlessly Sorex was asked to do something risky at night, and it cost him his life.
- He is also a drunkard. He has been seen imbibing wine that he keeps on the aft deck. Sometimes he spouts disturbing nonsense during his bouts of inebriation.
- He is also cursed on top of it all. Chased by demons. Maybe the death of his son brought it on. Maybe removing the Minerva’s original tutela caused it. Crew members will cite examples of bad luck and omens to support this theory (unfavorable winds, an amphora smashed while loading, a woman spotted in the market holding a spindle before embarking, and so on). In truth, the rumors about a curse stem from Protus’ own drunken confessions.

Melus, the carpenter, is first to broach the topic of mutiny.

Finally, when the captain orders yet another night of sailing, Melus confronts the magister. Tensions boil over as Sabellius rushes to the captain’s defense, and Ruso tries to maintain order on the deck. If the conflict escalates, Melus could try to hold Sabellius as hostage. The investigators could find themselves on one side or the other, depending on previous interactions. Investigators who gained the trust of the magister could be seen as his allies and foes to the mutineers.



However the mutiny scene plays out, it will be interrupted by a violent collision with an unknown obstacle below the surface.

THE KNOCKING

Suddenly, there is a loud crash. The ship lurches, and the hull planks groan against some unseen force in the water. All investigators must make a regular DEX check to keep their footing, and if they fail, an additional Luck roll not to go overboard. The force is so great that experienced sailors may assume that the ship has run aground.

This collision is a final, whopping blow from the Leech of Tindalos, crashing its way into this dimension.

The forward watchman, Quarto, pitches forward and hangs off the foremast. Ruso, the helmsman topples off the steering deck as he tries to maintain a grip on the starboard oar, which snaps but remains stuck in the oar housing, leaving him hanging overboard. With one oar jammed, the ship turns directly into the wind, pushing the mainsail against the mast, and sending it "running" in a backwards direction. This position is extremely dangerous, and could break off the main mast. Recovery from this mess will require a number of tasks and skill checks.

- Sabellius, the first mate, and Melus, the carpenter, rush down into the hold as soon as they get their footing to check the load and look for leaks. Anyone who goes down into the hold will discover a small breach in the starboard bow, a gout of water pouring into the hold. Using oiled cloth and a hammer and chisel, this leak can be fixed with a successful Repair/Devise roll.
- During the commotion, the magister commands the crew to man the lines, furl the sails, and take care of damages, but he does not leave the area behind the cabin. As the crisis begins to calm, a look of panic spreads across his face. He knows that the creature is finally coming for him. The electric aura around the bow rigging brightens and flashes. Something large beats against the hull below the water line.
- To rescue the forward watchman Quarto or the helmsman Ruso, investigators must make a successful STR check. Each will fall into the water after hanging for two rounds without help.

Anyone toward the bow of the ship will notice little plumes of glowing, electric light coming from the mast stays and angled sections of the forward rigging.

- Man Overboard! To rescue someone who falls in the water, allow two attempts—a Throw check if tossing a line to the swimmer, or a DEX check if fishing them out with an oar or other rigid tool. The ship continues to sail forward (or rather, backwards), so the swimmer will drift the other way until they are behind the ship. It is extremely difficult and unlikely to navigate the ship back around to recover someone who goes overboard after this point.

Those who land in the water notice strange glowing shapes moving under the surface, as the Leech probes the rounded hull for an angular entry point to this dimension. Seeing this results in a SAN loss of 1/1D3.

- The mainsail must be taken in before the mast snaps. This requires two crewmen or skilled investigators two rounds to complete. The mast will

snap after three rounds if the sail is not furled.

- Someone with the Pilot Ship skill must take over the remaining steering oar. Ruso will take his position again if he is rescued. The broken starboard oar makes navigation much more difficult, causing all Pilot checks to be made with two penalty dice.
- The jammed starboard oar can be partially fixed on a successful Repair/Devise skill, but it will continue to pull to one side and make steering more difficult (reduce to only one penalty die if fixed).

THE UNLOCKING

Tensions flare again once things settle down a bit. Melus confronts Protus, accusing him of witchcraft and colluding with dark forces. Another crewman chimes in, revealing that he has seen the captain drinking foul wine from a skin hidden in the tutela pedestal. The two demand that the ship be repaired and turned toward Crete. Protus commands the carpenter to stand down, and tells Ruso (or whoever is manning the oars) to steer westward. Ruso refuses, trying to reason with the captain. Violence will soon erupt if the investigators do not intervene.

During this phase, glowing "Helene" plasma brightens in the angles of the shrouds or brailing lines outside of the Leaden Ward's protective sphere. Wind howls in the lines. Knocking sounds beat against the curved hull, and amphorae clink in the hold as the Leech searches for an entryway to this world. If anyone is isolated in the bow section or far from the Leaden Ward, they could get hit with a sudden spray of bluish mist issuing from the lines, and suffer 1D6 hit points of damage per round as it eats into their skin (until removed with a cloth or water for 1 round).

If this hits a crew member, they will scream in pain and claim they saw the mouth of a serpent or eel lash out from the rigging. If this hits one of the investigators, this sight is witnessed on a failed Luck roll, triggering a SAN loss of 1/1D6. An encounter might also trigger a dark memory, as the creature begins to probe minds.

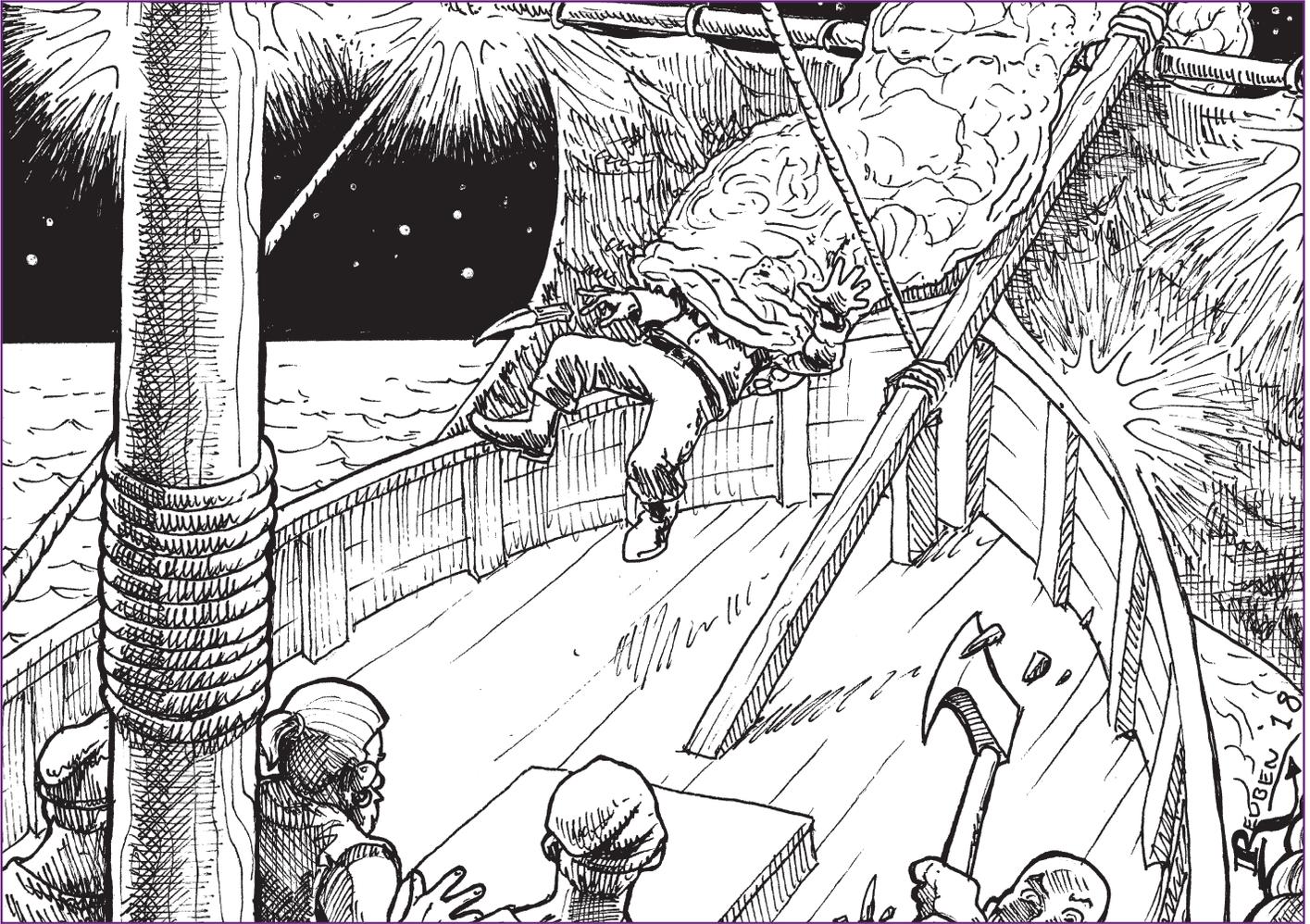
Crew members begin to form opposing groups, with some threatening the magister. Anyone with the Oratory skill can prevent violence at this stage with a Hard success. Other social skills must be used on an individual basis.

If a crew member is injured by an attack of blue mist, this could trigger the magister to implement his fatalistic plan for sabotage. He will retrieve the Leaden Ward when given a chance and quietly order Sabellius to destroy the skiff with an ax, or to smash amphorae in the hold if he decides to destroy the skiff himself. Sabellius is devoted to Protus and will follow his commands at first, but if the investigators have managed to befriend the first mate, he could be convinced to turn against the magister using a social skill of choice—but only on a Hard success.

THE BREAKING

The foresail lines begin to howl and glow with arcs of plasma when the Leech's translucent head finally emerges from acute angles within the rigging. Its maw searches the air blindly, trying to catch the scent of human minds. Everyone is allowed one round to move or react, as the bear-sized, translucent Leech slips through cracks in time and flops grotesquely onto the deck. Its organs, visible through its skin, pulsate and gyrate with strangely angular precision. This bizarre sight triggers a SAN loss of 1D3/1D20.





Protus' Sabotage Plot

If he has not acted before, this will convince Protus that the creature is finally coming for him, and his tenuous sanity will snap. He knows that even if he uses the Leaden Ward to hold the creature at bay, it will only delay an inevitable massacre, as it follows them to shore to devour innocents in its path. The Listeners have groomed him to submit and sacrifice himself to the creatures of Tindalos, should they come for him. When its arrival is clear, he is convinced he must sink the ship. If all hands are lost at sea, perhaps the creature will return to its own realm.

Sabotage plans, in order of priority, follow:

- Break open enough liquid amphora and cause enough leaks in the hull to destabilize the ship (takes 3 rounds, see the "Shipwreck" section, below).
- Destroy the skiff so that no one can escape.
- Disable the steering so the ship will list and capsize.
- As a last resort, set the deck on fire using lamp oil. Fires can be put out by using wine or garum from the hold, or using textiles to beat out the flames. If the flames spread unattended for five rounds, the fire will grow out of control.

Protus will try to keep possession of the Leaden Ward until he is able to damage the ship, and then he will throw it into the sea. Or, if he senses that the crew or the investigators are coming for the Ward, he will dispose of it right away, to prevent anyone from using it to survive.

Even if the investigators manage to gain control of the Leaden Ward and keep survivors within its protective sphere, the Leech will continue to follow them to civilization, where it will find and prey on other people. Protus does not believe that such a thing can be fought or killed, because the Listeners have taught him not to resist.

Possible reactions from crew members in response to the magister's suicidal actions include:

- Attack the captain and take his Leaden Ward, throwing it into the sea. It must be the cause of this curse. Or possibly, throw them both overboard.
- Protect the skiff and focus on launching it to get away from the ship and the monster.
- Attack the creature.
- Jump overboard themselves.
- A temporarily insane crew member, succumbing to the influence of dark memories, could go along with the plan to sabotage the ship, following the orders of the magister.

THE LEECH OF TINDALOS

The realm of Tindalos has many denizens. Just as some creatures in that dimension behave like earthbound predators, others act more like parasites. The Leech of Tindalos hunts for hosts using empathic senses. The Leeches serve as an essential part of the

FOLLOWING SEAS

Tindalosian defense system, with an empathic ability to detect intelligent, temporal intruders. It is drawn to the fraught human relationship with time and memory, picking up on submerged desires to change the past.

When humans use means such as the Liao Drug to visit the past, they risk catching the attention of such a creature. As with Hounds of Tindalos, once a Leech finds and fixates on a temporal explorer, it will hunt its prey through time and space to devour its target.

To enter our realm, it must emerge through acute angles. After the Leech fully emerges from its angular spawning point, it appears as a flying, fattened worm with extended "wings" like a cobra's hood, which narrow to an undulating maw bristling with rows of crystalline teeth. It is translucent, so its organs can be seen heaving inside, as can anything it has ingested.

Anyone on the ship who does not remain within the protective aura of the Charm could be targeted by the Leech. A target must succeed on an opposed POW roll, or forever remain the creature's mark.

SHIPWRECK?

If Sabellius or the magister manage to spend three rounds, uninterrupted, in the hold of the ship, they will be able to cause enough damage to the hull, and spill enough liquids from the amphorae, to cause so-called "free surface" sloshing. This puts the boat in severe danger of capsizing. After this point, any Pilot rolls must be made with an additional penalty die, and a failure means the Minerva will begin to list past the point of no return. The ship will start to capsize three rounds after these actions are completed, for a total of six rounds. At that point, crew and investigators have only two rounds to get aboard the skiff (if seaworthy), or hope to find a raft of flotsam to cling to once they hit water.

After the boat sinks, each investigator in the water may make one Luck roll to be within reach of buoyant debris, such as a steering oar, part of a mast, or other scraps of wood that break free. Multiple pieces can be lashed together for a makeshift raft.

Investigators in the water without any flotation support must make a Swim roll with a penalty die or drown, as the displacement of the sinking ship drags people under. Any crew in the water will drown unless pulled to safety.

- **Rounds 1-3:** Sabotage in the hold is wrought.
- **Rounds 3-6:** The ship is severely unstable. Pilot checks are made with an additional penalty die. Failure means the boat lists for two rounds, and then capsizes.
- **Rounds 7-8:** Ship is actively capsizing if it is not already. No actions will reverse this. Every physical action on board requires a successful DEX check. All (human) attack rolls are made with a penalty die.

SURVIVAL AT SEA

Even if investigators manage to escape the Leech's attacks and safely get aboard a raft of wreckage or the skiff, they will still have to last many days at sea with whatever provisions they managed to load with them.

This scenario assumes that prevailing northerly winds would push a boat or raft southward away from Crete for about 160 miles, to the coast of Cyrenaica. This journey, drifting at a speed of 1.5

knots, would take about four days. A makeshift sail (requiring a successful Repair/Devise check) cuts this time in half.

There are so many factors in play, including currents, wind direction, and intersection with other vessels, that Keepers have plenty of license to simply decide whether or not survivors will make it to shore. If the Keeper prefers to play out the remaining group's survival chances, some guidelines follow:

- Roll 1D8+2 to determine the number of days adrift (adjust according to taste).
- The maximum number of days that a party can survive without fresh water is six.
- Each player must make a CON check after two days, or be forced to roll SAN check as panic takes over (see below).

If at least one person aboard the vessel or raft has "Survival: Sea" skill at 30% or more (which includes all of the crew except Melus and Sorex), all occupants get one bonus die on their CON check (for example, they can craft an effective evaporation still to get a minimal amount of fresh water).

If the survivors did not manage to bring any water or liquids with them, everyone gets one penalty die to their CON check.

- Those who fail the SAN check panic and stoop to lifeboat ethics, fail to resist the temptation to drink seawater, or attack another person on the boat in a misguided attempt to drink their blood.

REWARDS AND REPERCUSSIONS

There is no hope for the magister, but each crew member who survives should garner the investigators 1D3 SAN.

THE LEECH OF TINDALOS

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	90	INT	50	Hit Points	26
CON	110	EDU	—	Damage Bonus	+1D6
SIZ	120	POW	120	Build	2
DEX	50	SAN	—	Move	8*
APP	—	Luck	—		*4 after feeding

Attacks per round: 1

Leech Bite 90% (45/18): With a successful bite, the creature can attach itself to its prey. The initial bite does 1D6 hit points of damage (plus damage bonus of 1D6), and drains 3D10 Power per round until the mouth is disconnected. The bite is painless and leaves behind a deep, bloodless wound. When attached, the creature also regenerates 6 hit points per round. A likely Major Wound from its bite would be the loss of a limb or a gaping hole that never heals.

Spit Blue Mist 90% (45/18): The leech can spray a small cloud of living blue ichor at a target in melee range. This does 1D6 hit points of damage per round, until the substance is removed with a cloth or water, which takes one round.

Dodge 26% (13/5)

Armor: Due to its extra-dimensional nature, mundane weapons only do half damage.

Sanity loss: 1D3/1D20 Sanity points to see a Leech of Tindalos.

NPCS

**PROTUS,
Magister of the Minerva**

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	70	INT	75	Hit Points	10
CON	40	EDU	45	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	60	POW	50	Build	1
DEX	60	SAN	20	Move	8
APP	45	Luck	50	Age	47

Attacks per round: 1**Attacks:** Fighting (Brawl) 60% (30/12), damage 1D3+DB

Fighting (Ax) 40% (20/8), damage 1D6+DB

Dodge 30%

Armor: None**Skills:** Listen 45%, Intimidate 70%, Mathematics 30%,

Navigation 80%, Pilot Ship 75%, Repair/Devise 60%,

Spot Hidden 40%, Status 30%, Survival (Sea) 75%

**FALERIUS RUSO,
Gubernator/Helmsman**

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	80	INT	55	Hit Points	11
CON	55	EDU	40	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	55	POW	65	Build	1
DEX	65	SAN	45	Move	9
APP	50	Luck	65	Age	57

Attacks per round: 1**Attacks:** Fighting (Pancratiun) 70% (35/14), damage 1D4+DB

Fighting (Pugio) 65% (20/8), damage 1D4+2+DB

Fighting (Boat Hook) 70% (35/14), damage 1D6+DB

Dodge 32%

Armor: None**Skills:** Intimidate 50%, Listen 60%, Navigation 80%,

Persuade 65%, Pilot Ship 80%, Repair/Devise 40%,

Spot Hidden 60%, Survival (Sea) 75%

**SABELLIUS,
Proreus/First Mate**

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	55	INT	45	Hit Points	10
CON	55	EDU	40	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	40	POW	45	Build	0
DEX	75	SAN	45	Move	9
APP	70	Luck	45	Age	18

Attacks per round: 1**Attacks:** Fighting (Brawl) 30% (15/6), damage 1D3+DB

Fighting (Ax) 30% (15/6), damage 1D6+DB

Fighting (Boat Hook) 30% (15/6), damage 1D6+DB

Dodge 37%

Armor: None**Skills:** Listen 30%, Occult 30%, Pilot Ship 35%, Spot Hidden 40%,

Survival (Sea) 35%, Swim 40%

**TULLIUS QUARTO,
Proreta/Forward Watch**

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	65	INT	70	Hit Points	13
CON	50	EDU	35	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	80	POW	80	Build	1
DEX	55	SAN	80	Move	7
APP	60	Luck	80	Age	32

Attacks per round: 1**Attacks:** Fighting (Brawl) 40% (20/8), damage 1D3+DB

Fighting (Khopesh) 60% (30/15), damage 1D8+DB

Fighting (Boat Hook) 50%, damage 1D6+DB

Dodge 27%

Armor: None**Skills:** Listen 65%, Navigation 20%, Occult 40%, Pilot Ship 40%,

Spot Hidden 80%, Survival (Sea) 30%

**HERIUS MELUS,
Faber/Carpenter**

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	50	INT	85	Hit Points	12
CON	55	EDU	40	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	65	POW	60	Build	0
DEX	65	SAN	60	Move	8
APP	20	Luck	60	Age	41

Attacks per round: 1**Attacks:** Fighting (Brawl) 50% (25/10), damage 1D3+DB

Fighting (Short Blade) 60% (30/12), damage 1D6+DB

Dodge 32%

Armor: None**Skills:** Charm 40%, Craft (Carpentry) 40%, Listen 65%,

Pilot Ship 30%, Repair/Devise 60%, Spot Hidden 50%,

Survival (Sea) 25%

**POMPONIUS SOREX,
Doomed Sailor**

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	55	INT	65	Hit Points	9
CON	40	EDU	40	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	50	POW	55	Build	0
DEX	40	SAN	55	Move	8
APP	40	Luck	55	Age	25

Attacks per round: 1**Attacks:** Fighting (Boxing) 30% (15/6), damage 1D3+DB

Fighting (Knife) 45% (22/9), damage 1D4+DB

Dodge 20%

Armor: None**Skills:** Listen 80%, Pilot Ship 40%,

Repair/Devise 20%, Spot Hidden 65%

MANUMISSION

BY OSCAR RIOS

FINDING NELLIUS

In this scenario, the investigators are hired by a respected centurion to recover his nephew, whose father sold him into slavery to pay for his gambling debts. The boy is due to be killed by his new owner shortly, a mysterious augur who can tell the future by watching the pattern in which ghouls eat corpses.

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS

The Vigilis: The investigators are just leaving work on a hot summer day, maybe heading for a bath house or to grab a bite to eat, when they are approached by a local vigilis named Granius Lucilianus. He has helped the investigators several times in the past, and they owe him several favors. He seems to have been rushing about; there are several blood stains on his uniform, but he doesn't appear injured.

When he sees the investigators, he is very relieved. After greeting them, he says, "remember that time...you know...that time..." meaning one of the times he turned a blind eye to something illegal you were all up to... "Well, I am calling in my marker. I need a favor on an urgent matter, and I need you to come with me right now." He sighs, catching his breath, "I know it's sudden, but this will square us up. You know I wouldn't pull this unless it was very important. So, do we have a pact?" This is a lot of favors to call in; Granius is a very good friend to have in Rome, and one that the investigators will definitely need in the future.

INTRODUCTION

Nellius, an 8-year-old boy, was sold into slavery two weeks ago by his father, Braccius Metunus. Metunus was a drunkard, a luckless gambler, and physically abusive towards his wife and son. After racking up some serious gambling debts he sold his son to the slavers of the slave market of Aratus. He used the money to pay off his debts, get drunk, and visit more upscale brothels. His wife, Pubella Destilia, objected strongly and physically tried to prevent this, but was beaten savagely by her husband.

In desperation, Pubella used what little money she had to send a message to her older brother, Centurion Opiter Desticius Majus of the 6th Ferrata Legion, in Syria. Her brother immediately requested and was granted leave, and traveled as quickly as he could to come to his sister's and nephew's aid. By this point, Metunus was once again in debt and tried to sell some of his wife's dowry items (mostly cookware, table settings, and candlesticks). When she tried to stop him, she was once again savagely beaten.

Her brother arrived to find her beaten bloody and unconscious, so he tended to her wounds and asked neighbors to look after her, while he waited for his brother-in-law to return home. When Metunus returned, Desticius Majus was waiting for him; Metunus was drunk and belligerent while Desticius was furious and a trained killer. Their exchange was brief, brutal, and fatal as

the centurion beat his brother-in-law to death with his bare hands. The vigilis arrived and detained Desticius, who admitted to the murder and explained the reason for it.

The vigilis are in a bit of a jam. None of them want to arrest the centurion, but Metunus was a member of the dockworkers' trade guild. This is a front for various organized crime groups, and they'll soon be demanding an answer for the murder of one of their members, and want someone held accountable. They offered to let Desticius leave Rome immediately without arrest, but he refused to go. His sister cannot travel for several days due to her injuries, and his nephew is missing. His plan is to return to the East with his sister and nephew, after finding and freeing Nellius.

They reached a compromise. Centurion Opiter Desticius Majus would leave Rome and return to his base in Syria at once, if the vigilis helped him hire someone to find and free Nellius, and then transport the boy and his mother to Antioch (Syria) to join him there. The centurion is a wealthy man, and can pay the investigators handsomely for this—up to 5,000 sesterces for freeing the boy, and another 5,000 for getting them to Antioch. He will also become a "friend and patron" if they are successful, raising everyone's Status by 1%.

KEEPER'S INFORMATION

Young Nellius was taken to the slave market of Aratus, who is known for selling children. He was purchased almost immediately by Septimus Tettius Calvus on behalf of his father, the Augur Mamerus Tettius Verecundus. Nellius, along with several other children, was then taken to the port of Rubra on the island of Corsica, where he is currently being well-fed along with the other children.

Mamerus Tettius Verecundus is a secretive and well-paid augur with a very exclusive clientele. His method of augury is called Palliomancy, and it involves watching the frantic feeding of a half-starved ghoul pack. Beneath his villa are lead-lined tunnels, which hold a small pack of ghouls captive. He feeds them regularly, but only enough to keep them always hungry for more. When he has an augury to perform, he feeds them young plump children, which he fattens up for a few months before butchering and hanging them on hooks, leaving them to dangle for a week or so before dropping their body into the ghoul pit. He then watches the ghouls tear the corpse apart, and divines the will of the gods by the pattern in which the creatures feed.

Tettius lives in a compound in the hills above the city of Rubra. He has little to do with the locals, aside from purchasing supplies from them, and they do not think highly of him. The Palliomancer lives there with his son, two body guards, three general guards, and a loyal personal slave/overseer in charge of a number of cowed household slaves. Nellius, along with six other enslaved children, are kept in the compound away from the eyes of visitors. They are cared for and exercised every day by a slave who is like a mother to them (and a possible ally to investigators).

— ♦ THE CAST ♦ —

Granius Lucilianus

Vigilis ally of the investigators

Opiter Desticius Majus

Roman Centurion from the 6th Ferrata in Syria, Nellius' uncle.

Pubella Destilia

Nellius' mother, widow of Braccius

Braccius Metunus

The dead husband, father to Nellius

Braccius Nellius

The missing child

Caesulenus Arminus

Overseer at the slave market of Aratus

Publicius Pompolussa

Slaver with Aratus, and grandson to Aratus

Laberius Faustus

Ship's captain working for Tettius Verecundus

Marina

Old woman with a score to settle

Sertorius Falconius

Innkeeper at Rubra

Mamercus Tettius Verecundus

The augur of Palliomancy, transitioning to a ghoul

Septimius Tettius Calvus

The augur's son and assistant

Laberius Crito

The loyal slave of Tettius Verecundus

Pinaria Ambrosia

Sympathetic slave house mother, possible ally

Dossenius Pilus

Bodyguard of Tettius Verecundus

Tadius Iustinus

Bodyguard of Tettius Verecundus

Viridius Piso

Estate guard of Tettius Verecundus

Acilius Luctacus

Estate guard of Tettius Verecundus

Nigidius Senopianus

Estate guard of Tettius Verecundus

Ummidia Vispania

Wealthy woman waiting for her fate to be read

Currently a wealthy Roman woman, Ummidia Vispania is visiting the compound alone to have her future foretold. A child has already been killed and is ripening above the ghoul pits. The smell makes the ghouls even more hungry, knowing the body will soon drop into their waiting claws.

BEGINNING THE INVESTIGATION

The investigators begin by following Granius Lucilianus to the home of the newly widowed Pubella Destilia. He tells them the details of the crime and what he wants them to do on the way. When they arrive, some vigilis are carrying out the badly beaten corpse of Braccius Metunus. In the apartment are two other vigilis and Opiter Desticius Majus, who is cleaning himself up after the brief but savage fight. He asks Lucilianus if these are the people he recommended, and the vigilis tells him "Yes, they are dependable. I'd trust them with this if it was my nephew." The centurion nods and the vigilis all clear the now empty apartment, saying "We'll be right outside to escort you to the gates, once your business is done."

INTERVIEW:

Centurion Desticius Majus (Nellius' Uncle)

Desticius Majus is a decent man who lost his temper. He stresses that he never meant to kill his brother-in-law, especially not before he told him who he sold Nellius to. He curses himself for ever letting his sister talk him into allowing her to marry Metunus, and how he always knew he was a worthless sack of shit. He tries calmly to answer questions, but actually knows very little. He explains his sister may be able to answer more detailed questions. He tells what little he does know, stresses the importance of getting his nephew freed, and both Nellius and his mother safely delivered to his home in Antioch.

He offers the investigators a bank note for 10,000 sesterces, explaining this should be more than enough money to purchase the boy's freedom and get them both escorted to Syria safely. He says that they may keep any money left over from this note, and when they deliver his nephew and sister to him in Antioch, he'll pay them another 5,000 sesterces. He explains that he has made many friends, and investments, in the east and is a man of means there. If the investigators agree, and gain his trust, he gives them the bank note (redeemable here in Rome) and departs with the vigilis.

INTERVIEW:

Pubella Destilia (Nellius' Mother)

In an upstairs apartment, in the care of a kindly neighbor, is Pubella Destilia, the mother of Nellius and younger sister of Desticius Majus. She is very badly hurt: a broken nose (which has been set by doctors but badly swollen), two black eyes, a dislocated shoulder, a split lip, a torn scalp (head bandaged), and a few cracked ribs (from kicks). She is heartbroken about her son and about her brother risking his career, but not really upset that her husband is dead. She says that she wishes she had been brave enough to kill him herself, then maybe Nellius would still be with her.

She doesn't know where her husband sold Nellius, nor to whom, only that he came home two days later drunk and filthy, beat her, and slept for a full day. She took some money from his pouch and paid a messenger to take a letter to her brother, and he beat her again when he realized some of the money was missing. She said that after selling Nellius, he made her sleep in the boy's room, banishing her from their bedroom. She thinks that he might have



hidden whatever money was left from the sale here, and hopes maybe that it may hold some clue as to where her son is. This all happened over two weeks ago, and she prays that the trail hasn't gone cold. She even offers to trade her freedom for that of her sons, so long as Nelliis is taken to Antioch to live with his uncle.

SEARCHING THE INSULA

Investigators searching the apartment, and making a successful Spot Hidden check, locate a stash of what at first seems to be coins. Unfortunately they are brass brothel tokens, redeemable at a place called "The She-Wolf's Den." Investigators who are residents of Rome know the location of this place on a Know check, while others require a Hard success on a Know check.

While investigators can go here to ask questions, they likely don't need to. Across the street and up the block, the investigators see the slave market of Aratus, a sprawling, warehouse-like building, with a slave auction block and lots of human merchandise on display. Resident investigators making a Hard Know check, or non-residents making an Extreme Know check, realize that this slave market specializes in selling children.

THE SLAVE MARKET OF ARATUS

Aratus is a powerful slaver, and does not visit the market much. Everything is run by his employees. The market is much like a modern livestock auction house, with viewing stands, an area to display the people for sale, offices, and rear pens. If it is after dark,

then the place is closing down, but an overseer is there to ask them if he may be of service. If it is morning, then the auction house is quickly filling up for a day of business.

Making an Arrangement: The helpful overseer is Caesulenus Arminus, a broad-shouldered brute with a shaved head and a baton. He is not one to give out information about previous purchases, saying to the investigators, "all sales are legal, and final." He deflects, "I really don't think I can help you..." but then pauses and smiles. If the investigators give him 100 sesterces, make a Hard success on a Persuade or Bargain check, or an Extreme success on an Intimidate check, then he says, "Let me take you to my manager. They keep records of everything; maybe he can help you broker a deal with the boy's new owner. It's only been a few weeks."

The investigators are then taken to the rear offices, where beautiful female and male slaves wait hand and foot on the guests of the auction house and the wealthier customers. Here they meet Publicius Pompolussa, a young, ambitious slaver and one of the grandsons of the market's owner, Aratus. He is flanked by powerful guards, so intimidation is not an option. Attacking him or anyone in the market would be foolish and suicidal, as many ex-gladiators and former war prisoners now work here as freedmen or slaves. However, Publicius is willing to deal with the investigators and hears them out, offering them excellent wine served by beautiful attentive slaves ("they are for sale if you are interested"). He remembers Nelliis, and who purchased him, and that makes all the difference. Publicius hates Septimus Tettius Calvus, the son of Tettius Verecundus, who visits the markets about once a week.

He tells the investigators that the man who purchased Nellius is not going to part with him, of that much he is sure. He says that he is a good customer, but, he suspects, he is not the best master in the empire. If pressed, he explains that the man buys only children, a few at a time, about once or twice a month. If they were well cared for, then he wouldn't need to buy so many. He says, "Most things are for sale here, even occasionally information. Give me 5,000 sesterces and I'll put you in the same room with the pig, after that, it's up to you." Investigators can bargain this down to 2,500 with a successful Charm or Bargain check.

If it is night time, Publicius suggests that the investigators be his guests until morning when Septimus Tettius Calvus should arrive at the market, assigning them a beautiful personal slave, a soft bed, and feeding them an excellent meal. He explains that it is too late to handle this now, and they'll do so in the morning. If it is the daytime, he leads the investigators back out into the market to find Septimus Tettius Calvus. He then points out a tall lanky man dressed in a long toga, with part of his toga draped over his head as a hood. He has two bodyguards with him, and is waiting for the auction to start. He says, "That's your man, called Septimus Tettius Calvus, son of Tettius Verecundus. He works for his father. I don't know much about him, other than no one else does either. They are very rich and have a lot of powerful friends, so take a piece of advice. Avoid the direct approach. I doubt that they will sell you back Nellius, or even admit to purchasing him. But I promised to put you in the same room with the man, and I have."

Following Tettius Calvus From The Slave Market

If approached, then Tettius Calvus won't discuss any matters with the investigators. He will also refuse to talk business, saying "All of our dealings are by referral only." If the investigators persist, then he calls on his bodyguards Dossenius Pilus and Tadius Iustinus to end the conversation. If a confrontation occurs, then he calls on the guards at the slave market, or even the vigillis to help him. He has done nothing unlawful, and the authorities would take his side in any conflict. No social skill checks (Fast Talk, Persuade, Intimidate, Charm) work as he and his father need these slaves and have zero interest in selling them. And anyway, he is completely insane.

The investigators' best bet is to follow Tettius Calvus and see where he goes. This can be risky, as Tettius values his privacy above all else. Investigators must make a Stealth check to follow Tettius and his entourage without being detected. If failed, the investigator(s) who failed the check must make a Luck check. If they fail this, then they have been detected, and Tettius' guards move in to scare the apparent tail off. Investigators must either flee, or make a Fast Talk, Persuade, or Charm roll to diffuse the situation, otherwise a physical confrontation is likely. The guards will only seek to deliver a blow or two, as a warning, and refrain from causing serious damage unless the investigators escalate things.

After buying two young slaves, Tettius Calvus visits a bath house, does some light shopping, and then takes a barge down to Ostia. Once in Ostia, he transfers to a ship, *The Fate of Ages*, and sets sail for Rubra on the island of Corsica. Once there, he heads to his father's estate to deliver the two new slaves and resume his duties.

GETTING TO OSTIA, ITALIA, & THEN RUBRA, CORSICA

The investigators will have to follow Tettius around all morning, with two major moments of challenge. When he boards a barge to Ostia, the investigators must follow him down river. They need to

either get on the same barge, or the next one, as quickly as they can without being detected. Likewise, once they get off the barge, they must quickly hire a boat to follow *The Fate of Ages*, not knowing where it is heading. Keepers should roleplay out both of these moments, allowing the investigators to make social interaction checks or offer bribes to barge and ship captains, so as not to lose their only lead to finding Nellius. However, this is just for tension. Barges traveling between Ostia and Rome are plentiful, and ships for hire at the port of Ostia are common. With a few coins, 1-6 (1D6) sesterces for the barge, and 30-60 (1D4 + 2 x10) sesterces per day for the ship, investigators should have little difficulty in reaching Rubra 2D4 hours behind *The Fate of Ages*.

Strangely, *The Fate of Ages* sets out in late afternoon and sails through the night, arriving a few hours before dawn the next day. When the captain of whatever ship the investigators have hired realizes that the ship they are following is heading for open water as the sun sets, he tried to make for shore and call off the deal due to the added danger. Investigators need to make a Fast Talk, Persuade, Charm, or Status roll, or double his fee, to get the captain to continue to follow. Failing this, the investigators lose a day, and then spend two more days searching for *The Fate of Ages*. Their captain surmises that the ship was heading for Corsica, and they eventually find it docked at Rubra.

Exploring Rubra

Rubra is a small port town in Corsica, an agricultural backwater of the empire. Rubra is a sleepy place where little happens, with a market, docks, shops, a single tavern/rooming house, a bathhouse, and a number of two-story buildings (mostly with shops on the ground floor and apartments above them). Most residents of Rubra know about the strange, reclusive augur Mamercus Tettius Verecundus, but won't gossip about him unless the investigators make a successful Charm, Persuade, Intimidate, or Status roll. If successful, then the investigators can learn the facts in the nearby box.

INTERVIEW:

Marina

Marina is an old woman, who still has terribly scarred legs from the fire which claimed her husband. She makes her living making cheese, overseeing a staff of a dozen freedmen, slaves, and free-born. Most people know not to mention the augur on the hill in her presence, as it upsets her and gets her telling wild stories.

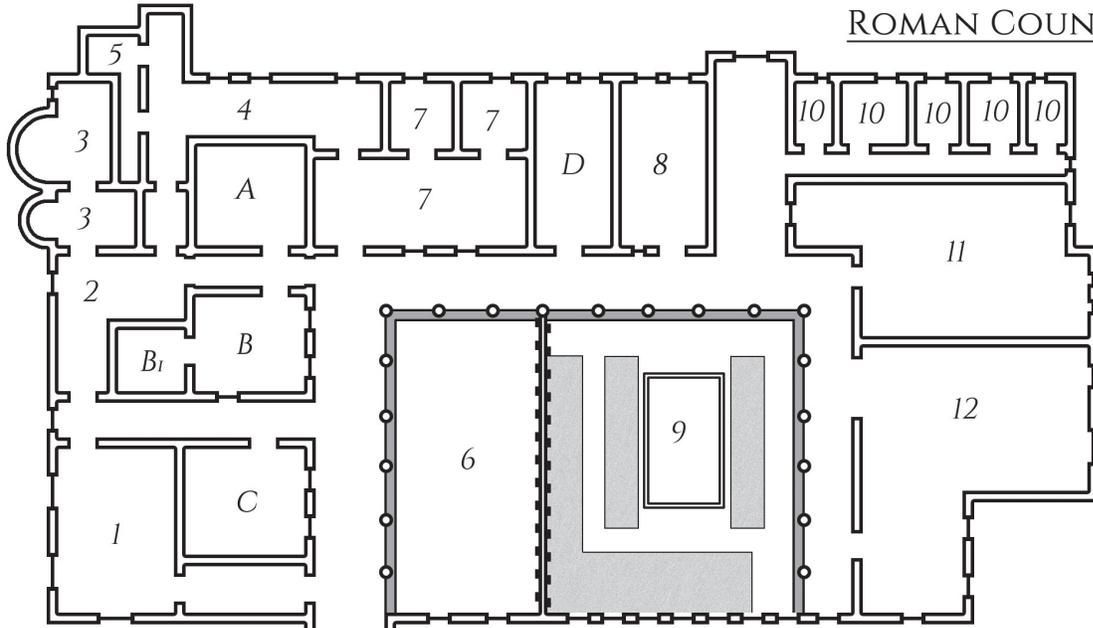
Investigators asking her about Tettius Verecundus get dirty looks from her staff, but an earful from the bitter woman. She says that everyone at the villa is a sexual deviant, who throw parties for wealthy people wishing to victimize children. When the children get too old, they are killed, and thrown into a pit below the villa, after they are drained of blood to make some sort of evil tonic. She then says that her husband discovered a system of tunnels leading up into the hill below the villa, and that these tunnels were lined with lead. Before he could show her, or anyone else, where these tunnels were, he was murdered by arson. "I can still hear him screaming, but I couldn't control my body, I was running in a panic, my legs were on fire, and then someone tackled me."

GETTING INTO THE VILLA:

Talking Their Way Past the Guards

Daring adventurers can attempt to talk their way into the villa by pretending that they are a referral. Mix-ups and miscommunications

ROMAN COUNTRY VILLA



- | | | | |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 TRINCLINIUM | 6 YARD | 11 SLAVE PENS | R A LABERIUS CRITO |
| 2 BAKERY | 7 GUARD BARRACKS | 12 TEMPLE OF PLUTO | O B MAMERCUS TETTIUS VERECUNDUS |
| 3 BATHS | 8 LUXURY GUEST ROOM | | O B ₁ STUDY |
| 4 KITCHEN | 9 GARDEN/ORCHARD | | M C SEPTIMUS TETTIUS CALVUS |
| 5 PANTRY | 10 SERVANTS' ROOMS | | S D EXTRA GUEST ROOM |

do happen, so it is not outside the realm of believability. Laberius Crito is the personal slave of Tettius Verecundus, and a very loyal, cruel, and suspicious man. Investigators arriving at the gates should be well dressed to attempt such a deception. An investigator must make an Extreme success on a Fast Talk check; however, those with more than 50% in Status need only make a Hard success. Such investigators must convince Laberius Crito that they are here to have their fates read, and that they were referred by someone who's already had dealings with Tettius Verecundus. Investigators who fail are turned away, possibly watched, and the house guards are put on high alert to watch for trouble over the next few days.

If the deception is successful, Laberius Crito brings the investigators in, shows them to guest rooms, and asks them to relax until dinner, when his master will meet with them to discuss making an appointment. He says that another patron is visiting and should have her fates read this evening, but they should be able to accommodate them later this week. "My master will discuss particulars with you this evening," he offers. He adds: "You can move about the estate as you wish, but the main house is off limits unless escorted by a guard." While guests here, the investigators are shadowed by two slaves and one of the house guards at all times, "for their protection and to serve them while guests at the Villa of their master."

INTERVIEW:

Mamercus Tettius Verecundus

At dinner, the investigators meet the augur, Mamercus Tettius Verecundus. He is a tall, broad shouldered figure, physically dissimilar to his son. He wears heavily perfumed dark blue, almost black, robes that conceal his feet and hands, and a hood that

Rumors about Mamercus Tettius Verecundus

- He is a reclusive and very wealthy augur, who lives in the hills north of Rubra.
- His estate is very private, with its own security force, and visitors are not welcome.
- Wealthy visitors arrive about twice per month, but never spend long there.
- One is there now, a woman named Ummidia Vispania, who visits every few months.
- Tettius Verecundus never appears in town, sending his son Tettius Calvus.
- Tettius Calvus leaves Rubra 2-3 times per month, and buys slave children (only) in markets in Italia, Alexandria (Egypt), Nova Cathro (Africa), and Massilia (Gaul).
- No one likes to talk about, or think about, why he needs so many children.
- Fifteen years ago, a man named Blandus asked too many questions, and tried to get the authorities to look into the estate, but he died in a fire before anything came of it.
- Blandus' widow, Marina, still lives in town and tells strange, crazy stories about what her husband had discovered, but no one listens to her (for their own sake).

conceals his face. What glimpses the investigators do get suggest a strange, possibly malformed face. He walks with a slow shuffling gait, which becomes a skipping hop when moving quickly. Beneath the perfume, the man excuses a stench of rot, and his face and body have a horrific appearance, as the man is well on his way to transforming into a ghoul, but he does not discuss this with anyone. A Cthulhu Mythos check, or prior experience with ghouls, might offer some the investigators some insight into his condition.

At first, Tettius Verecundus will be a bit confused as to who referred the investigators, but a successful Fast Talk roll will gain his confidence. He then settles in and dines with the investigators. He picks at his food, which is just average considering the wealth of the estate, and doesn't make much small talk. His other guest, Ummidia Vispania, dominates the conversation, speaking endlessly about her home in Alexandria, her worthless children, her fool of a husband, and the insolence of her slaves. She is here to have the fates read about which teacher she should send her second son to study with. She is pleased to learn that this is the investigators' first time visiting Tettius Verecundus.

She then invites them to watch her fates being read, saying she loves to see the reaction of first-time viewers. Tettius Verecundus agrees, saying that they should at least see what they are paying 50,000 sesterces for. "Is that acceptable? It is my standard fee." Both he and Ummidia Vispania watch and wait expectantly for an answer. Once they do, all is well, they have the pair's confidence, and late that night, about the 11th hour, they are led to the Chamber of Dark Fates.

GETTING INTO THE VILLA:

By Stealth

The most direct way for investigators to gain access to the estate is to wait until after dark, and then break in. The main gate is always guarded by a single guard, so scaling the wall is the best option. This requires a successful Climb check, with a bonus die if one is able to use a rope (some form of grappling hook is needed for the first investigator over the wall if they hope to use a rope).

The estate is large, and the number of guards is far too small to make it secure. Investigators must roll Stealth checks four times per hour to avoid alerting the guards, and only a critical failure alerts one of the guards, slaves, staff members, owners, or guests. However, if investigators have raised the alert level at the compound (by confronting Tettius Calvus or failing to talk their way past Laberius Crito), then a failed roll requires a successful Luck check to avoid detection, and Stealth checks must be made six times per hour. Investigators exploring the compound do have a chance to find Nellius and escape with him successfully (see The Slave Pens section, below).

GETTING INTO THE VILLA:

Via The Tunnels

Investigators hearing the rumors of the tunnels below the compound can attempt to find them. This requires a Hard success on a Spot Hidden to find the entrance while searching around the base of the hill. Investigators should realize that doing so places them within sight of those moving about the villa above, so some measure of stealth is called for (e.g., waiting for dusk, or dark, posting a lookout, pretending to be shepherds).

Once the entrance, a tiny crawl space hidden by some bushes (planted to conceal it), is found, the investigators may enter to find

it only goes about 12 feet before being blocked by a brick wall and a metal ventilation grate. The construction is old and poorly maintained, so the barrier can be overcome by inflicting 100 HP damage to it, or exerting 250 STR of force against it (e.g., pulleys, a team of donkeys, an ox). The tunnels are pitch dark, foul smelling, and mostly narrow affairs where investigators must travel stooped and single file.

The tunnels are, as the rumors suggested, lined by lead. They honeycomb the area under the villa, but if the investigators always choose passages with an upward grade, they reach the villa, entering into the Chamber of Dark Fates. However, before reaching it, they will be attacked by the pack of five ravenous ghouls who live in these tunnels. The ghouls launch attacks from multiple directions at the same time, communicating with chitters, hoots, and snarls.

Slain investigators are dragged off into the darkness, and the ghouls withdraw to eat them, giving the remaining investigators enough time to either escape outside or continue on to the Chamber of Dark Fates. A ghoul retreats once reduced to less than 50% HP. If three of their pack are killed or driven off, then the ghouls retreat, considering making a meal of investigators not worth the risk. If the investigators survive their encounter with the ghouls, they reach the Chamber of Dark Fates and enter the villa from below.

THE SLAVE PENS

Here is where investigators will find six children, four girls and two boys, all being fattened up with good food and daily exercise. They all wear white tunics, and have had their heads shaved bald. During the day, they are taken to play in the garden for several hours, and to help out at the farm, but the rest of the time they are kept here, in a row of locked cages. The cages are quite comfortable (at least as far as animal pens go), with blankets, beds, toys, and snacks.

With the children at all times is a slave woman, Pinaría Ambrosia. She is a 40-year-old slave who has been here about 9 years, and has grown to love the children she cares for. She hides these feelings from her master, but tries to make the children happy in the few months that they are here. She knows their fate, and hates it, but feels helpless to stop it. She wears the key to their cages on a chain around her neck, along with a signal whistle, to alert the guards in case of trouble.

If she sees the investigators breaking in, she will try to find out what they are about before she alerts the guards. If she learns that they are here to free Nellius, she then asks them to free all six of the children, saying if they swear to do so she'll help them. If they agree, she will unlock the cages for the investigators. She asks if they can get her forged manumission papers, and if they can, asks that they do so for her, and get her and the other five children somewhere safe, then she'll take them to raise as her own.

She whispers to the investigators, "My master is an evil man, who feeds these children to monsters from the underworld, one or two a month! I lie and say they go raise ponies in the country, so they do not live in fear. Please, you must get us out of here." If the players seem well armed, then she adds: "My master only has three guards, two bodyguards, and his son. Can you put an end to them? If we escape, they may still come for us, and will surely just buy more children and continue their horrible ways. Please, by all the gods of goodness and light in the Empire, I beg you to stop him!" Depending on the investigators' choice of action, Keepers should go to either the "Stealthy Escape" or "Brutal Elimination" sections (see below).

GUIDED TO THE CHAMBER OF THE DARK FATES?

If the investigators are guided to the Chamber of Dark Fates, then they join a procession of Tettius Verecundus, one or both of his bodyguards, and Ummidia Vispania (his son stays in the main house). They enter the Temple of Pluto, passing by the slave pens, where Verecundus has a word with the slave woman Pinaria. He asks her: "How are the new ones settling in?" and then tells her: "Make one ready for tomorrow, we have unexpected guests." The woman smiles and nods, but those making a successful Insight roll can tell that her heart breaks a little hearing the news.

The Temple Of Pluto And Chamber of Dark Fates

This hall holds a statue of Pluto, some braziers, and an offering table. There is a trigger at the foot of the offering table that unlocks a secret door leading to a spiral stairway descending into the earth. Tettius Verecundus falsely claims (for showmanship purposes) that only blood opens the doorway, and he sacrifices a black goat on the altar while pressing the trigger with his foot. The trigger can be found with a successful Spot Hidden roll, but there is an obvious latch on the opposite side of the door.

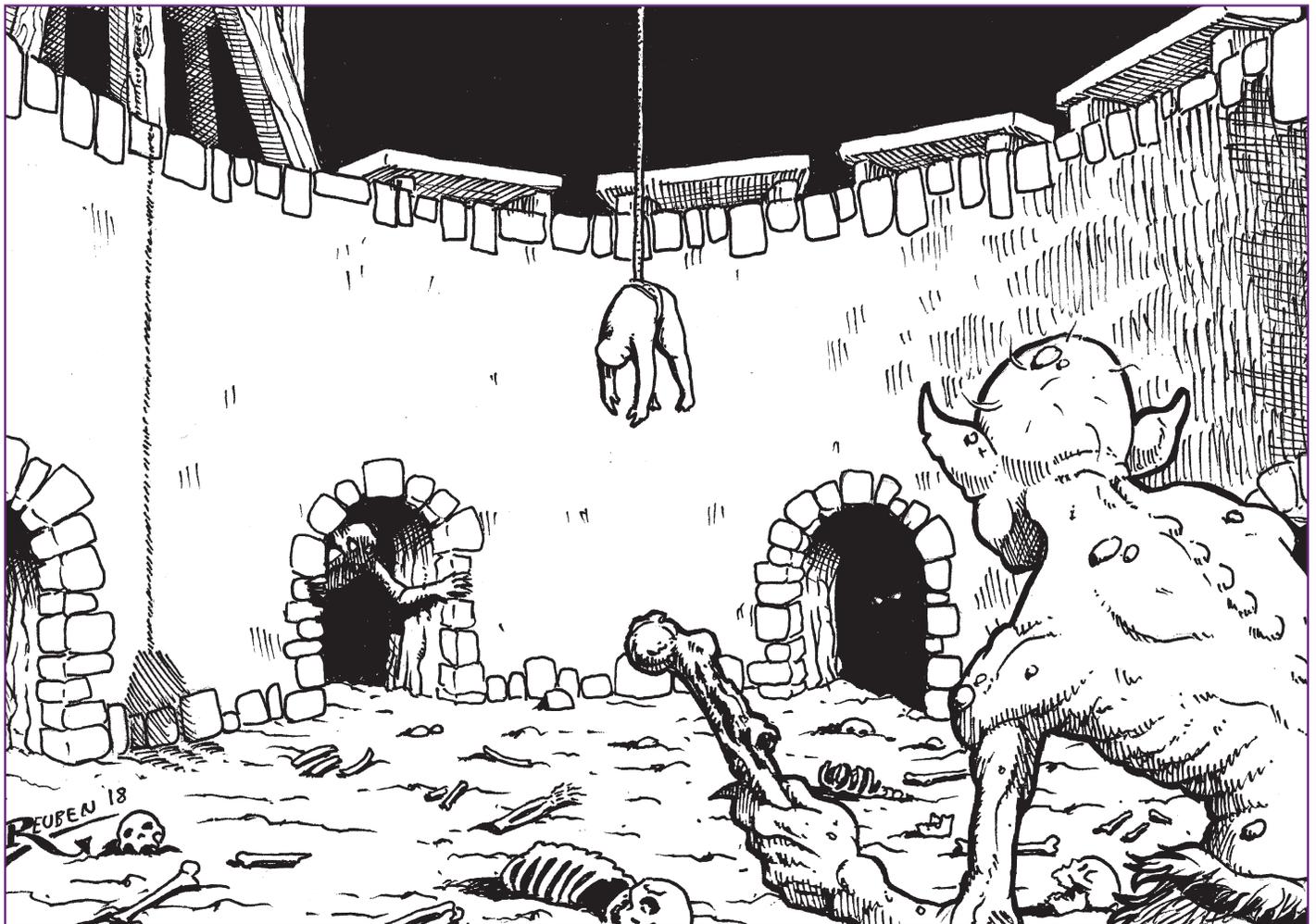
If the investigators are guided here: Tettius Verecundus takes his guests to the Temple of Pluto, where he offers prayers to the god of the underworld, asking that he "send his children to show the future to this woman, Ummidia Vispania." He then slits the throat of a goat, and as its blood fills the furrows of the ground

below the altar (outlining the word "fates"), the floor opens, revealing a stairway leading down.

The stairway is dark, but torches line the walls and can be lit. It leads down to a large, round chamber, with an open pit in its center. About 12 feet of space surrounds the pit, which is 12-foot-deep and rimmed by a three-foot-tall, wrought iron railing. Here sits a padded chair on a dais with an ornate, spiral black ram's horn sitting on it. A winch is fastened at the edge of the pit. Hanging from the end of the winch, swung out over the center of the pit, is the dead body of a plump child. It is a day or so old already, bloating and bruised looking, a nude boy shaved bald, about eight years old. Viewing this costs the investigators 1D4 Sanity points. Distressingly, the other participants are all nonplussed by the sight.

The floor of the pit is bloodstained, with bits of bone scattered here and there. Along the edges of the bottom of the pit are three openings, each leading to tunnels where ghouls lair, and a possible exit at the base of the hill (see the "Getting into the Villa" section, above). Getting up to the railing from the bottom of the pit requires a Climb roll, or a Jump roll with a boost, if the investigators are coming from that direction.

If the investigators were guided here: Tettius Verecundus blows the ornate horn, and Ummidia Vispania cuts the rope holding the child's corpse and it falls into the pit. She says "Pluto, send your children, accept my offering, show me the truth of the future." Hungry ghouls spill out of the tunnels, ripping the body to shreds and eating it as they return to their dark warren below.



Verecundus then reads the pattern of their feeding and divines the future, the ability granted to him by Pluto. (If the investigators are watching from nearby, hesitating to attack, the omen is one of Ummidia's death).

STEALTHY ESCAPE

Investigators trying to escape with Nellius, or all six children and the slave Pinaria, are at great risk of being detected. The safest way would be the underground tunnels below the Chamber of Dark Fates, but only if the ghouls have been defeated or eliminated. If the ghouls are still a threat, the non-combatants can be kept between investigators, as the ghouls can only attack the people at the front or back of a group. While the group is passing a T-shaped intersection, it is possible for ghouls to attack someone in the middle, unless it is blocked off. If investigators don't realize this, one of the children is snatched, dragged off into the darkness, amid screams of horror, howls of glee, and the sound of hungry jaws snapping bones and the hot coppery smell of blood. Investigators surviving these challenges do manage to get to the surface with the children.

Investigators attempting to scale the walls with Nellius must make a Stealth check to avoid detection, but those attempting this with all of the children and Pinaria must make a Hard success on their Stealth check. Investigators detected will have to first face a single guard, then the other two guards, then the two bodyguards, and finally the master of the house and his son, as they rouse from slumber and join the fray. The investigators might do well to simply silence the one guard on patrol, or possibly the patrolling guard and the one on gate duty before attempting to escape. Investigators eliminating the gate guard can also simply leave through the main gate.

BRUTAL ELIMINATION

If the investigators kill all five of the ghouls below the villa, then Tettius is ruined. His operation is destroyed, and angry patrons who have already paid handsomely in advance to have their fate read seize his property through the courts over the next three months. Once he is destitute and nearly homeless, these same people have both him and his son murdered, as these are dangerous people who do not take disappointment well.

Otherwise, the investigators must eliminate Tettius Verecundus and his son Tettius Calvus. They are both minor sorcerers who are slowly becoming ghouls themselves. While the household guards and bodyguards will try to defend them, once they are dead these men will stop fighting and offer their surrender. With their employer dead, there is no reason to continue on. They claim ignorance of the evil child sacrifices to ghouls (which is a lie) and ask to be allowed to depart without further trouble.

THE LOOSE END: *Ummidia Vispania*

If Ummidia Vispania is alerted to this attack, she hurls threats at the investigators. "Do you know who I am? Who my friends are? This man was our man, his powers our powers! We will track

you down, wherever you go, and we will destroy you!" How this plays out is up to the Keeper and the investigators. Do they kill her? Imprison her? Did they do this quietly enough to avoid waking her at all? Do they talk their way out of this (with an Extreme success on Fast Talk, Persuade, or Intimidate)? Or do they alert the vigilis in town and convince him to see matters for himself? Human sacrifice (which this amounts to) is a grave offense under Roman law, even of slaves, and this would result in her eventual execution. She will quickly find that, in fact, she has no friends willing to get involved over what is now spilled milk (or, if she starts implicating others or calling attention to them, she is silenced by assassins). The investigators' biggest worry should be that they themselves might be silenced, by those worried about what they know and their ability to "name names." Optionally, the Keeper might place accounting records in the villa that the investigators might use either as blackmail, evidence for the prosecutor, and/or insurance against reprisals.

GETTING OFF OF CORSICA

Once off of the estate, the investigators must escape Corsica as quickly as possible. Mamercus Tettius Verecundus is a wealthy and powerful man, and the investigators are basically stealing his lawful property. The investigators must hire a ship to take them off Corsica as soon as possible. The escape won't go unnoticed long, and if investigators are not on the open sea by an hour after sunrise, they may be arrested before they can leave Rubra. Investigators would do well to plan and arrange their escape off Corsica before they rescue Nellius, not after.

If Verecundus and Calvus are killed, however, there will be no pursuit. They have no other family, so legally ownership of the slaves is not a clear matter, and with no claims being made, they can simply be re-absorbed into the empire as freedmen with a few forged papers.

CONCLUSION

Once the investigators escape with Nellius, they must take him and his mother to Antioch, Syria, and deliver them to the household of the Centurion Opiter Desticius Majus. He pays the investigators whatever they need, and makes them clients of his house (+1% to Status). If Pinaria is still with the investigators, with any of the other surviving children, the centurion agrees to take them on as freedmen attached to his house. They all—his sister, nephew, and the other escaped slaves—become part of his household and live lives of comfort and security in the East.

REWARD AND REPERCUSSIONS

For saving Nellius: +1D3 SAN

For eliminating Mamercus Tettius Verecundus: +1D3 SAN

For destroying the ghouls: +1D3 SAN

For saving Pinaria and the other children: +1D3 SAN

For abandoning Pinaria and the other children: -1D3 SAN

For allowing Mamercus Tettius Verecundus to remain operating: -1D3 SAN

NPCs

MAMERCUS TETTIUS VERECUNDUS,
the Augur of Palliomancy, early stage ghoul

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	65	INT	80	Hit Points	11
CON	60	EDU	95	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	65	POW	70	Build	1
DEX	50	SAN	0	Move	9*
APP	20	Luck	—	*due to transitioning to a ghoul	

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 35% (17/7), damage 1D4 + DB (due to developing talons)

Fighting (Large Knife) 60% (30/12) 1D4 + 2 + DB

Dodge 45%

Armor: Piercing and stabbing attacks do half damage

Skills: Insight 45%, Listen 45%, Spot Hidden 40%, Science (Augury) 65%, Status 65%

Spells: Bat Form, Dominate, Grasp of Cthulhu, Incinerate, Maggots

Sanity Loss: 0/1D3 Sanity Points to see Mamercus Tettius Verecundus

SEPTIMUS TETTIUS CALVUS, the son and assistant of Mamercus Tettius Verecundus

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	50	INT	75	Hit Points	11
CON	55	EDU	70	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	55	POW	65	Build	0
DEX	50	SAN	0	Move	7
APP	45	Luck	65	Age	22

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 25% (12/5), damage 1D3 + DB

Fighting (Large Knife) 50% (25/10) 1D4 + 2 + DB

Dodge 45%

Armor: None

Skills: Insight 40%, Listen 45%, Spot Hidden 40%, Science (Augury) 65%, Status 55%

Spells: Grasp of Cthulhu, Incinerate, Maggots.

LABERIUS CRITO, the wise & loyal slave of Mamercus Tettius Verecundus

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	45	INT	70	Hit Points	9
CON	50	EDU	90	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	45	POW	60	Build	0
DEX	45	SAN	0	Move	8
APP	40	Luck	60	Age	52

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 25% (12/5), damage 1D3 + DB

Dodge 22%

Armor: None

Skills: Insight 50%, Listen 40%, Spot Hidden 35%

DOSENIUS PILUS & TADIUS IUSTINUS,
Bodyguards of Mamercus Tettius Verecundus

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	65	INT	50	Hit Points	12
CON	60	EDU	70	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	65	POW	45	Build	1
DEX	45	SAN	0	Move	8
APP	50	Luck	45	Age	42

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 45% (22/9), damage 1D3 + DB

Fighting (Gladius) 50% (25/10), 1D6 + 1 + DB

Dodge 45%

Armor: Hardened Leather Armor (1D4), Light Helmet (+1)

Skills: Listen 40%, Spot Hidden 45%

VIRIDIUS PISO, ACILIUS LUCTACUS, & NIGIDIUS SENOPIANUS, Estate Guards

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	55	INT	50	Hit Points	11
CON	50	EDU	60	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	55	POW	50	Build	0
DEX	50	SAN	0	Move	8
APP	50	Luck	50	Age	Varies

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 35% (17/7), damage 1D3 + DB

Fighting (Pugio) 35% (17/7), damage 1D4 + 2 + DB

Fighting (Spear) 40% (20/8), 1D6 + DB

Dodge 30%

Armor: Leather Armor (1D3), Light Helmet (+1)

Skills: Listen 35%, Spot Hidden 40%

THE GHOUL PACK (x5)

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	80	INT	65	Hit Points	13
CON	65	EDU	—	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	65	POW	65	Build	1
DEX	65	SAN	—	Move	9
APP	—	Luck	—	Age	—

Attacks per round: 3

Attacks: Fighting (2 claws and 1 bite) 40% (20/8), damage 1D6 + DB

Bite and hold (maneuver): with a successful bite attack, worries for 1D4 points of damage per round in each successive round

Dodge 40% (20/8)

Armor: Piercing and stabbing attacks only do half damage, round down any fraction

Skills: Climb 85%, Stealth 70%, Jump 75%, Listen 70%, Spot Hidden 50%

Spells: None

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 points to see a ghoul



THE DRAGON OF CAMBRIA

— ♦ BY WILLIAM ADCOCK ♦ —

— ♦ THE CAST ♦ —

Marcus Caelus

Secretary to the Governor, sets the investigators on their mission

Bleddyn

Silures tribesman and traveling companion for the investigators

Maedoc

Anti-Roman druid, trying to use the dragon for political ends

Caradoc

Silures nobleman, speaks for the tribe

Dafydd

Priest of Ocelus, speaks for the Silures

Essylt

Suspicious Silures soothsayer

Caius Rupilius Pullus

Roman innkeeper in Venta Silurum, friendly

Elisedd

Distraught Silures father of dragon dinners, more of a hindrance

Marina

Old woman with a score to settle

Sertorius Falconius

Innkeeper at Rubra

Numerius Laelius Murena

An overconfident big game hunter, doomed

Aulus Laelius Marcellus

An overconfident big game hunter, also doomed

Adherbal

The Laelius' brothers reasonably competent slave

Gallio Pius

Acting supervisor at the lead mine, has actually seen the dragon

The Hooded Stranger

Serpent Man agent sent in to sweep up the mess at the end

INTRODUCTION

This scenario is set in the late spring near Venta Silurum (modern-day southeastern Wales). Venta Silurum is a small Roman town in Britannia, established as an administrative center to oversee the defeated Silures tribes. In the sixty-three years since its founding, Venta Silurum has prospered, thanks in no small part to the mineral wealth of this region—lead, silver, and even gold have been found in the nearby hills.

News has recently come from Venta Silurum that a new and capacious lead mine, some three miles from the town on the banks of the River Wye, has suddenly ceased production. Reports claim that the veins of lead remain rich, but that a “dragon” emerged from the mine and killed two slaves, dragging one down into the river to consume at the beast’s leisure. The local tribesmen have also begun to suffer from the creature’s predations. Arrows and javelins are said to bounce off the creature’s scaled hide without injuring it. A formal petition for assistance has been lodged with the governor’s office about the beast’s continued presence in the region.

KEEPER'S INFORMATION

There is in fact a large, anomalous creature now running amok near the River Wye. However, it is not a dragon in the sense in which we might use the word. Instead, it is a large, carnivorous theropod dinosaur, an earlier and more basal relative of the *Tyrannosaurus rex*, that in later centuries will become known as *Megalosaurus*. The enormous predator (this particular individual is a young adult, twenty-five feet in length and standing ten feet tall) has appeared due to an unfortunate confluence of human engineering and Earth’s alien prehistory—the engineers expanding operations at the lead mine accidentally exposed and breached a hibernation chamber, built millions of years ago by the Serpent People. The *Megalosaurus* awoke and emerged into the sunlight for the first time in 166 million years.

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS

Working for the Governor:

The investigators could be employees or receivers of patronage from the governor of Britannia. In C.E. 139 this is Quintus Lollicus Urbicus, formerly governor of Germania Inferior under Emperor Hadrian. A career soldier before entering politics, the Numidian-born Urbicus is not a passionately intellectual man. He has been assigned to Britannia to pacify the Caledonian border, in a reversal from Hadrian’s largely hands-off policy. The investigators have seen little of their patron since arriving in Britannia, receiving their assignments from Urbicus via a secretary, Marcus Caelus, a lean, scholarly man.

Arriving, they find Caelus in a state of intense mental activity, pacing, checking and rechecking open volumes on his desk and muttering excitedly. Slaves see to the investigators’ refreshments,

THE DRAGON OF CAMBRIA

and when the final investigator arrives, Caelus sweeps his gaze, eyes burning with enthusiasm, across the assembled group. "Ah!" he exclaims, "Everyone is here, we can begin. An intriguing piece of news came to the governor's attention today, perhaps you have heard it yourself. A lead mine north of here, near a town called Venta Silurum, has suddenly stopped producing—allegedly, because a dragon emerged from the mine. Can you believe it, a dragon!"

He pauses to look expectantly at the group. "Well," he says finally, "have none of you read Pliny?" Seeing the answer to be a negative, he sighs and continues. "Pliny, in his exhaustive treatise on natural history, cites reports of dragons native to both Æthiopia and India, as well as vast serpents that can swallow a man whole. None of these, however, are to be found in Britannia. Corroborating the account coming from the mine operators, a representative of the Silures tribes has asked Governor Urbicus' aid in destroying this dragon, claiming that it has been preying on their livestock since its emergence.

"While the governor remains doubtful as to the existence of a dragon, he considers a good-faith effort to aid the Silures as politically useful in his campaign to re-pacify the Caledonian frontier to the north. You have been selected to investigate these reports of a 'dragon' and to put the Silures' fears to rest, as well as to see what needs to be done to restart work at the mine. My understanding is that this was a particularly rich vein of lead that was being worked. I have here for you letters of safe passage, identifying you as agents of the Empire. For my own part, I am intrigued by reports of a dragon so far from their known territories; if this is a native species of reptile, documentation of such a beast would add to our understanding of natural history. If there is such a creature, and you kill it, I will reimburse you your troubles in bringing its hide back to Londinium."

Interview: Bleddyn (A Messenger From The Silures)

If the investigators wish to speak with the messenger from Venta Silurum before embarking, he is staying as a guest of the governor until the next day. Bleddyn is a young man, 17 years of age, tall and well-built, with a thin beard. Polite and well-spoken, speaking in accented Latin, he can answer questions about Venta Silurum, and repeat accounts of the dragon:

The overseer of a prosperous lead mine ordered the digging of a new shaft to determine the extent of a rich vein of ore.

On the third day of excavation, screams were heard coming from the depths of the new shaft.

A giant, green-skinned dragon emerged from the shaft, severed one man's leg with a single snap of its jaws, and carried another man off. It was said to be the length of six men and the height of two, and walked on two legs.

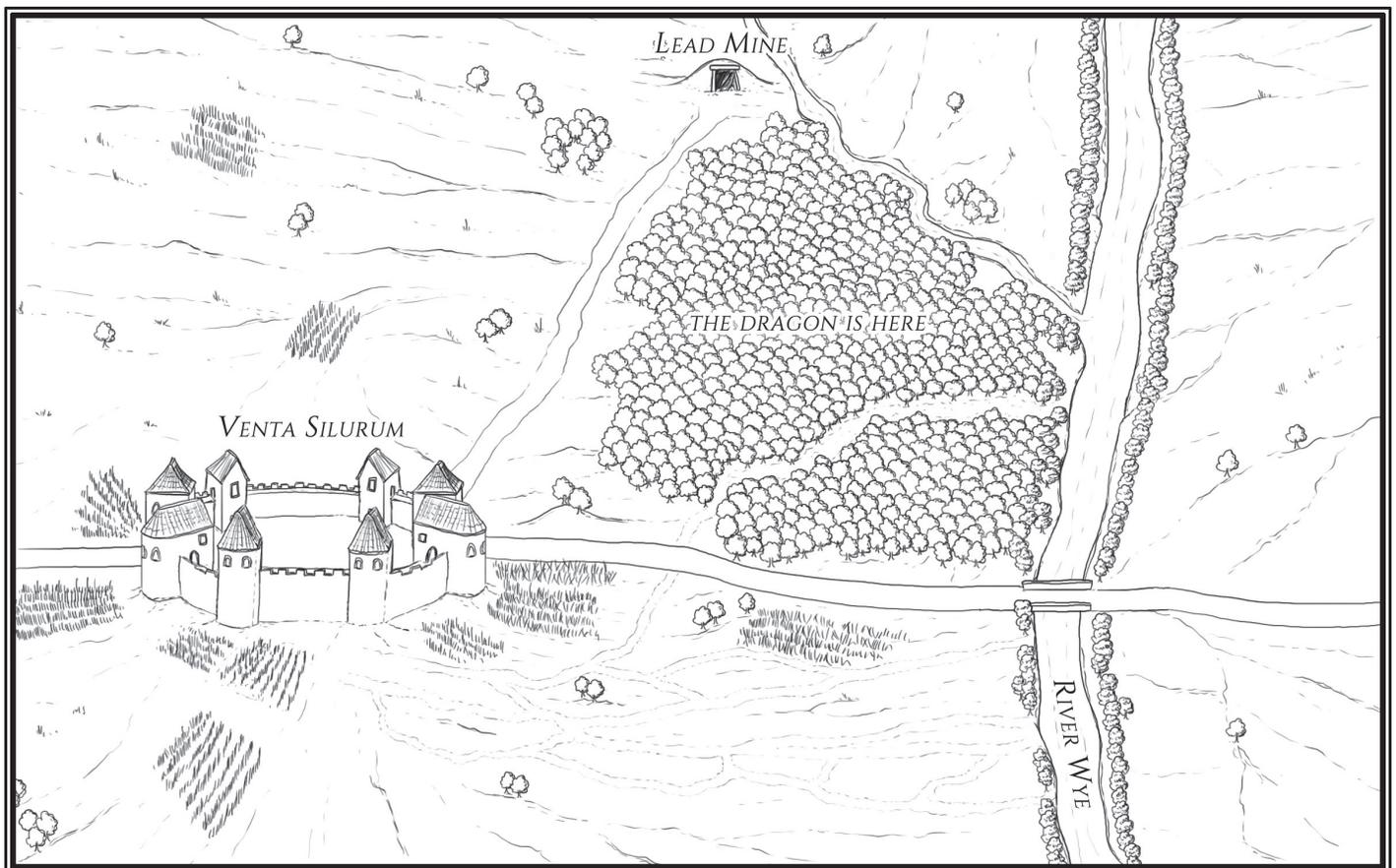
It has taken up residence near the banks of the River Wye, judging from its predations on livestock.

Bleddyn has not seen the dragon himself. Much of the information about it that is circulating is secondhand or worse.

Bleddyn will be returning to Venta Silurum tomorrow, and is happy to travel with the investigators and provide introductions.

VENTA SILURUM

The trip to Venta Silurum is uneventful, taking only three days. Venta Silurum is not a large settlement, and from the outside is a typical, Celtic Iron Age hill fort: forty acres surrounded by a



massive earthen rampart topped with a wooden palisade, with a broad ditch encircling the rampart. The rampart is broken by a pair of gatehouses; the road from Glevum (modern day Gloucester) to the legionary fortress at Isca Silurum (modern day Caerleon) passes right through Venta Silurum. Within the rampart, the town is now neatly divided into city blocks, following the Roman model. A large and impressive temple of Mars is under construction, surrounded by scaffolding, in the center of the town, across the forum from the modest basilica that serves as the administrative heart of Venta Silurum.

Surrounding the town are farms and tilled fields, gardens and livestock, primarily pigs and chickens neatly penned. The town gives every indication of growth and prosperity. While Romans make up a significant minority, the vast majority of people here are locals of the Silurian tribespeople—Celts of average height and build, with olive complexions and dark, curly hair; resembling modern-day Spaniards.

Many people will pause and watch the investigators pass; rumor has spread through Venta Silurum already of a call for “dragon slayers” to come from Londinium. Though life seems to proceed as normal here, successful Insight rolls will recognize an atmosphere of uncertainty; the babble of commerce and conversation seems somehow muted, while children are held closer to their mothers than would perhaps otherwise be normal.

The Druid

Shortly after arriving, the investigators take notice of a belabored oratory delivered in the native tongue. An old man, bald and gnarled with arthritis, dressed in a robe of undyed wool and leaning heavily on a shepherd’s crook, lectures a small crowd. Investigators who speak Brythonic can understand at least the gist of the man’s speech, but require a successful language roll if their skill is below 25%. Alternatively, Bleddyn can translate.

The old man (whom any of the assembled listeners, or Bleddyn, can identify to the investigators as Maedoc, a druid who lives in the forest nearby, and who is widely believed to be over 150 years old) expounds on the following points, which Keepers are encouraged to expand upon with as much flowery language as possible:

- The dragon has been sent as a gift from Ocelus, the Celtic god of war.
- The dragon will drive the legions of Rome from Britannia’s shores.
- The dragon is still young—it must be nurtured, protected, and fed by the Silures until it is fully grown.

None of this is true, and Maedoc is well aware of that fact. However, he sees political expedience in claiming the dragon as a Silurian protector. His main goal is to stir up anti-Roman sentiment among the Silures, a fact readily discernible with a successful Insight roll. If one of the investigators should decide to confront Maedoc in the public square and make a pro-Roman speech, success on a contested Oratory roll against Maedoc’s skill of 45% can sway the crowd against his raging diatribe. Investigators appealing to the security Rome has brought its subjects, or to advances in technology, medicine, or similar, will receive a bonus die on their Oratory roll. Additionally, investigators should recall that none present (save possibly Maedoc) remember a time before the region was under Roman rule, and if the Romans were to be driven out, it would represent a drastic change in the way of life for these people. Failure should result in hostility from the townspeople and reluctance on their part to assist the investigators.

The Council

Bleddyn assures the investigators that the local council will wish to meet with them to discuss their plans for slaying the dragon. This council is the governing body of Venta Silurum and surrounding environs, answerable to the governor in Londinium. It is they who sent Bleddyn to request aid in dealing with the creature.

As it is late afternoon by the time the investigators arrive, only two members of the council, both older men, dressed plainly, are available to speak with immediately. The taller and more broadly built of the two, sporting a full head of dark hair and a short beard tinged with gray, is introduced as Caradoc; the shorter, balding man leaning on a staff is Dafydd, a priest of Ocelus, “or as you have us calling him, Mars,” he says humorlessly.

Neither man is particularly pleased to see the investigators. Caradoc is immediately hostile, angry that the complaint about the dragon “was not taken more seriously.” He makes it clear that he had expected a detachment of soldiers to be sent to eliminate the dragon, not a handful of the governor’s cronies. “Arrows and javelins bounce off the creature’s hide, and it’s strong enough to break the back of a full-grown cow! What do you intend to do against that?” he complains bitterly. If asked how he knows these things, he has heard stories, but again, they are all secondhand or worse.

Demonstrating that they take the threat of the dragon seriously will help the investigators put Caradoc and Dafydd at ease and convince them to give the investigators a chance. Humility, understanding, and sympathy towards the Silures’ situation will be the investigator’s best tools in interacting with these men.

Once convinced of the investigators’ sincerity, Caradoc can offer the following information:

- The dragon emerged from the mine, killing one man on the spot and dragging another to the river to feed on.
- From nose to tail it is as long as six men laying head to foot with each other; its head is as long as a five-year-old child, with teeth as long as a man’s fingers.
- Arrows and javelins bounce off the creature’s thick scales without effect.
- The dragon stays close to the river.
- It has killed two children and the ox they were driving down to the river to drink. Their father, Elisedd, is inconsolable.
- Dafydd will add that he believes the dragon a curse brought upon the town by Roman greed and arrogance.

As the hour is growing late, Caradoc will suggest the investigators sup and seek lodgings at the House of Lycus, a Roman-style caupona, or inn.

The Foretelling

As the investigators are leaving their meeting with Caradoc and Dafydd, they are hailed with a call of “Brave, brave dragon slayers!” Approaching is a tall woman, in her mid-30s, wrapped in a hooded cloak of green-dyed wool. Her hair is dark and coarse, while her skin appears sallow, almost jaundiced compared to the complexions of the other Silures. Her flat nose and close set, narrow eyes contribute to an overall appearance of suspiciousness and unattractiveness.

“Would you know what the gods hold in store for you, dragon slayers?” she asks, her voice honeyed. “I will tell you, for a few silver coins...”

If asked, she will give her name as Essylt, and if her price—5 sesterces—is paid, she will produce a slim dagger from beneath her cloak, and a recently-strangled dove. Squatting on the packed earth, she plunges the blade into the bird, slitting it open, allowing its entrails to spill on to the ground. She probes them with her fingertips before looking up at the investigators.

“The signs say weal for your hunt for the beast, and that its blood will coat your blades. But woe, woe to any who set foot within the mine, for the curse of Pluto hangs heavy upon those stones.”

If the investigators ask how the “curse” might be lifted, Essylt has this to say:

“Pluto is lord of all within the earth, and does not give up his wealth with ease. Rome is greedy; will the Empire not take heed that the Lord of the Underworld sent a dragon to end operations at the mine? Shall the legions instead be food for the worms that crawl beneath the earth?”

Though it may not arise in this scenario, Essylt is not fully human; she bears the taint of the Serpent People, and has some inkling of her inhuman lineage. Occasionally whispered of as a witch-woman, she has some contact with the “Little People,” a breed of Serpent People that have degenerated into stunted dwarves, armed with stone tools and with only a low cunning in place of the race’s once-formidable intellect. She is included here for Keepers wishing to expand upon this scenario. Those Keepers making use of the optional Hooded Stranger (detailed in a later section) can decide whether Essylt is aware of the Stranger’s identity and whether she is aiding him or not.

Investigators asking Bleddyn or other local residents about Essylt can learn only that she’s a witch-woman, living alone outside the town walls. Local legends state that her mother was found mad after spending a night asleep on a hillside somewhere to the north, and gave birth to Essylt nine months later. The identity of her father is unknown.

The House of Lycus (Caupona or Inn)

Small compared to the inns of Londinium or Rome, the House of Lycus is nonetheless welcoming. The exterior of the building is painted a vivid blue and sports a courtyard enclosed by a waist-high wall of undressed stone, lined with stout benches of oak. A doorway leads into a common room with a bar and kitchen, and from there another doorway leads into a hallway lined with rooms to rent. The common room sports a beautiful mosaic floor depicting the She-Wolf nursing Romulus and Remus—likely the source of the inn’s name, “the House of the Wolf.”

Caius Rupilius Pullus, the Roman owner, keeps the bar; he apologizes that he only has three rooms available currently, so the investigators may be forced to share rooms with one another. For a meal, he can offer the investigators wine, roasted squab and flat bread. Meals and room together will come to five sesterces per investigator.

Talkative and friendly, Pullus will inquire about the investigators, their backgrounds, and what brings them to Venta Silurum. If they mention coming from Londinium, he will mention that they are the second group of travelers from Londinium he’s seen today—a group of three arrived earlier in the day, two brothers and a slave. If asked about them, Pullus can say little, explaining only that they were not forthcoming with information. He speculates that they, like the investigators, are in Venta Silurum on account of the dragon.

A Desperate Father

As they are dining, the investigators are approached by a middle-aged Silures man, his thick beard beginning to gray and his eyes red and swollen. He introduces himself as Elisedd, “the father of two fine boys taken by that damned beast.” He explains that he’d sent his two sons, Teutorigos and Nuallan, to drive an ox to the river to drink. They never returned. He found the half-eaten carcass of the ox, its back broken and its abdomen torn open, viscera scattered around amidst deep, three-toed tracks. Of his two sons, all he could find was the left hand of Nuallan, severed just above the wrist, “as white as new-fallen snow.” He, as is rapidly becoming a familiar story, has not personally seen the dragon either, but he did personally see the aftermath of one of its attacks.

Elisedd begs the investigators to allow him to join them and help avenge his children’s deaths. He will describe himself as a good shot with a bow and fair with a spear. If the investigators think to ask, Elisedd will admit to having a wife and young daughter at home.

The Hunters

As the sun is setting, the three other guests of the House of Lycus will return, seeking their room. The first is a tall, wiry man, in his mid-40s, with a thin-lipped mouth that seems locked in a permanent grimace, dressed in leather and wearing a coil of rope around his torso. The second, in his thirties, bears a strong familial resemblance to the first, but is shorter in height, with his hair cropped so short that his head is almost shaved, and has a lazy left eye. The third man is a Numidian, dark-skinned, wearing a short mantle of leopard skin over an undyed linen tunic. Over his shoulder he is carrying a short, heavy, pronged thrusting spear, of the sort used when hunting wild boar.

Successful Empire rolls will identify the first two men as the Laelius brothers; five years ago they were a famous pair of Venatores, gladiators who specialized in fighting against animals in the arenas of the Empire. The older is Numerius Laelius Murena, who earned the epithet “Tiger-Slayer,” while the younger is Aulus Laelius Marcellus, sometimes called “Boar-Sticker.” After Marcellus was kicked in the head by a zebra, the pair retired from active fighting to work as trainers and procurers of beasts.

The group will rebuff any attempt on the investigators’ part to strike up a conversation; the Laelius brothers’ fame has left them arrogant, and Adherbal, their slave, speaks little Latin. They have spent the day exploring along the banks of the Wye, taking note of the dragon’s spoor, extrapolating the beast’s habits and planning their approach to capturing the beast. They are eager to sell it to an arena in Londinium or even Rome for as much money as they can get. Having not yet seen the dragon, they don’t realize just how far in over their heads they actually are.

If cornered by the investigators, the Laelius brothers will be sarcastic, abrasive, and rude—but can be brought to tell of their plans through appropriate use of flattery (Charm) or Intimidation.

They are here to serve two plot purposes: first, to interfere with the investigators’ plans. They do not want the dragon dead; they want it captured and in their possession. They will attempt to sabotage traps laid by the investigators, set free tethered “bait” animals, etc., in their efforts to undermine the investigators. Their second purpose is to die horribly in the jaws of the dragon. They are here to provide mangled remains for the investigators to stumble over (with an attendant SAN loss of 1/1D4+1) and to drag themselves on bloody stumps into the investigators’ presence,



begging to be put out of their agony after actually having laid eyes on the thing.

VISITING THE MINE

Should the investigators decide to visit the mine that the dragon emerged from, their way is clear. A packed earth road leads from Venta Silurum to the lead quarry, a distance of three miles to the northeast, near the banks of the River Wye. The mine has been excavated from the hills on the western side of the river, where lead-bearing ore was recognized. The quarry itself is roughly a hundred yards square and has been excavated to a depth of ten feet; a pair of drainage sluices run from the quarry down to the river, and water wheels turn night and day to pump groundwater out of the quarry and through the sluices to the river below. Miners' barracks line the northern edge of the mine, and a number of wooden ladders around the edge of the quarry allow access to the pit.

Currently, the turning of the water wheels is the only activity in the quarry, with bare-chested and brawny men working in tandem to turn the wheels and move water up and out of the excavation. The mine is not flooded or seemingly in danger of flooding; however, it does appear to sit above an aquifer, and the floor of the quarry is slightly muddy.

As the investigators approach, they will be hailed by a lean, sunburned man with a badly crooked nose and a permanent squint. Immediately suspicious of the investigators' intentions, he questions them closely about their business at the mine before

bothering to introduce himself. Once satisfied (such as being shown the governor's writ of aid), he will identify himself as Gallio Pius, acting supervisor of the mine—the last supervisor having been carried off by the dragon and eaten.

If questioned, Gallio Pius will confirm that he personally saw the dragon, and is the source of its various descriptions. He doesn't blame the workers for not wanting to go back down into the mine. He can offer the following additional information:

- The shaft was dug to follow a rich vein of galena—a mixed ore of lead and silver.
- He does not think that there are any more dragons down there. If there were, they would have gotten hungry and emerged by now.
- The shaft itself poses a hazard. Because of the aquifer under the mine, the floor is softer than the ceiling, and so the ceiling is slowly sinking and may actually collapse.
- If the investigators insist on exploring the shaft, Pius will warn against it, but will provide oil lamps anyways.

Descent into the Depths

The shaft is chill and damp, utterly lightless other than the investigators' oil lamps. The shaft descends at a slight angle and runs for 35 feet, with paired wooden posts on either side of the shaft at five-foot intervals. Because of the narrowness of the shaft

(compounded by the presence of these posts), the investigators will need to descend single file.

Twenty feet down, the investigators encounter what Gallio Pius warned them of. Spot Hidden rolls or Science (Engineering) skill of 25% or more will allow the investigators to notice that the ceiling of the shaft is getting lower, and water is beginning to pool on the floor. It is icy cold as it spills over the investigators' sandals.

The shaft terminates in an opening into what at first appears to be a cavern. Scattered rubble across the floor of the shaft reveals where the dragon forced its way through in making its way towards the surface.

The Cave of Time

Passing through the cavern entrance, the investigators drop five feet to the floor of the chamber, which is immediately recognizable as artificial; the chamber is fifty feet long by thirty feet wide, with a vaulted ceiling fifteen feet high. Everything is of polished white marble, cut into identical blocks and fitted together without gaps. The walls are covered in carved symbols superficially resembling Egyptian hieroglyphs, and imagery of people with flattened, snake-like heads and monstrous, lizard-like creatures.

There are six panels of thick, clear glass set into the floor, each one ten feet long by five feet wide, covering a depression in the floor. When an investigator walks up to one of these glass panels, a brilliant red light turns on in the depression underneath, illuminating a metallic casket similar to an Egyptian sarcophagus, bearing a reptilian visage in place of a human face.

Should the investigators break the glass (necessitating an Extreme Strength roll or 25 points of damage dealt to the glass), the sarcophagus inside can be opened with relative ease (a regular Strength roll), revealing a snake-headed, scaly-skinned humanoid figure, six feet tall, dressed in silk robes and wearing a variety of amulets and charms about their neck and wrists. The creature appears to be dead, but perfectly preserved. All six chambers contain identical creatures. SAN loss for seeing these things in their bizarre cryochambers is 1/1D6 for any or all of them.

A Cthulhu Mythos roll recognizes these beings as the legendary Serpent People of ancient, time-lost Valusia. A second Cthulhu Mythos roll can decipher enough of the hieroglyphs and astronomical references to get a sense of the place: a sleeping chamber designed to last for many aeons, and established millions of years earlier.

Finally, while these are intact, there is a gargantuan depression in the floor, similar to the others but fifty feet square. The glass-like door has swung outward on hinges and no sarcophagus is apparent. Rather, there is an enormous pile of scat inside, and the marble around this depression is gouged and crumbled in two places, as though something titanic had hauled itself out. An Idea roll suggests that perhaps the sleeping Serpent People had set a beast to guard their slumber.

Finding the Dragon

Almost anyone in Venta Silurum can give the investigators a rough idea of the territory that the dragon has claimed, although few are willing to lead the investigators there. Elisedd will lead them as long as they allow him to join in the hunt for the beast, and Bleddyn can be convinced to lead them for 25 sesterces—but he will not stay to fight the monster.

The creature has made its home in the forest south of the mine, at a shallow bend in the River Wye, near where the Silures used

to bring their cattle to drink. The banks are lined with willows, leaving the river cool and shady along this stretch, with only a well-worn dirt pathway, the result of decades of driven cattle, penetrating this otherwise pristine woodland scene. Three-toed tracks can be seen impressed into the earth, and a musky, reptilian smell hangs heavy in the air. Piles of the creature's greasy dung can also be found readily enough—and if sifted through, human teeth can be found in one of the piles, the enamel too hard for the dragon's stomach acid to break down. A Natural History roll will suggest that the droppings are being used by the dragon to mark the edges of its territory.

A successful Track roll while following the creature's footprints will allow the investigators to realize that the dragon seems to follow the same route on a regular basis, likely patrolling the territory it has claimed. It also seems to be bipedal.

Following the footpath through the trees to the water's edge, a Spot Hidden roll will allow the investigators to spot the creature. The Megalosaurus generally resembles a Tyrannosaurus rex, but its forelimbs (while not walked on) are stouter and more substantial. It is bipedal, but walks with its spine horizontal to ground, using its tail to balance its sizeable head. Its skin is a mottled yellow-green, fading to buff on its face and underside, with tiger-like stripes of darker green on its flanks, offering it a degree of camouflage against the foliage.

It is very likely that the creature will pick up the investigators' scent before they become aware of it, unless they specify efforts made to mask their scent, and it is an ambush predator. Casualties are likely if they simply ride up to where they think it might be.

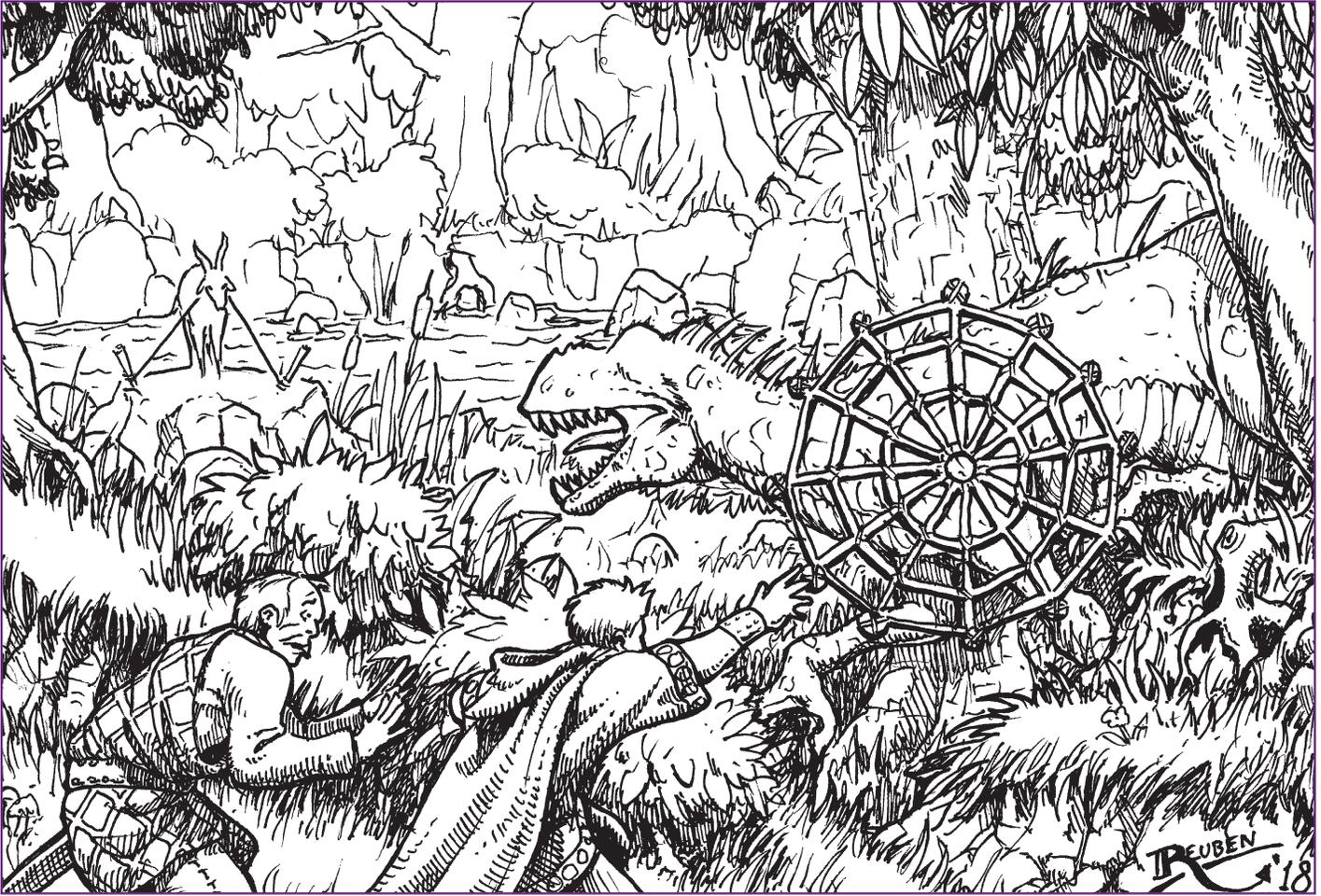
If the investigators are on horseback, or have brought an animal with them as bait, the dragon will target the animal first; while it recognizes that humans can be eaten, it identifies four-legged creatures as "prey" more readily. The dragon prefers to strike from concealment if possible, holding still and waiting for prey to come as close as possible before exploding into motion, attacking first with its serrated teeth and then raking with its rear claws if prey continues to struggle. It is surprisingly fast for its size.

If no animals are present, the dragon will attack the first investigator in traveling order; this reptile has never encountered humans wearing metal armor before, and will not hesitate to attack an armored investigator.

Slaying the Dragon

Killing the dragon will not be an easy task for the investigators, but can be done, especially if they take the time to scout out its territory and plan their attack with care. The dragon is not a particularly smart animal and can be lured into snares, tripped, etc., to place the odds of success in the investigators' favor. Investigators who charge headlong into the beast's territory are likely to regret having done so.

The Laelius brothers and their slave will be in the same area much of the time the investigators are there, devising their own snares. Murena is largely working off the experience of having trapped Nile crocodiles for the pet trade, and believes that the key to capturing the dragon will be to get a noose around its snout to prevent it from bringing its teeth to bear. Investigators who are stymied in planning their attack may overhear him explaining this to his brother with a failed Luck roll, as this plan is suicide. The beast is bipedal, and its neck is much too strong to be noosed. Likewise, incautious investigators can tip off their own plans to



the lurking Venatores or worse, draw the attention of the dragon.

Keepers wanting to add another wrinkle to the investigators' hunt can bring the druid Maedoc wandering into the forest in search of the dragon, having convinced himself of the truth of his statements regarding the beast. This option is especially fitting if one of the investigators has humiliated Maedoc in front of the community via a contest of oratory, leaving the old man desperate for a means to restore his standing with the people of Venta Silurum. The old man may be a nuisance to the investigators, or, if they are cornered and wounded by the beast, an opportunity to flee as the dragon bites down on him instead of them.

For investigators who hit upon the idea of poisoning the dragon, death cap mushrooms (which an Empire roll will recall being used to poison the Emperor Claudius) grow wild throughout Britannia, and a Natural History roll will allow them to find and harvest enough (about a half-pound) to kill the beast. The trick will be getting the dragon to consume the mushrooms. Tainted bait is a sound plan. Once poisoned, the dragon will experience vomiting and diarrhea for the first three days, with symptoms progressing to seizures in 2-3 days, followed by collapsing into a coma before dying of renal failure (or, more likely, a sword to the throat once comatose). Death from mushroom poisoning will take a week to kill the dragon, but with a sufficiently high dose the creature's death is assured with minimal risk to the investigators.

AFTER THE HUNT

Once the dragon is slain, the investigators are likely to want to take its hide and collect on the bounty offered by Marcus Caelus.

The beast is twenty-five feet long, stands ten feet tall at the hip, and weighs 2700 pounds. As such, transporting the carcass back to Venta Silurum will not be an easy task; building a sledge and hitching a team of oxen to it is likely the easiest means of doing so.

In Venta Silurum, there will be no shortage of individuals happy to assist in skinning the creature; once removed, the creature's hide will weigh 450 pounds and require two salting sessions to properly dehydrate and preserve. Finding a sufficient quantity of salt may prove a challenge as well.

The meat of the dragon will be roasted and served at a celebration in honor of its vanquishing; anyone consuming the dragon's flesh will find it has the consistency of pork, with a flavor resembling a mix of chicken and mild fish. The flesh is not harmful to consume, though it lacks any magical properties some might ascribe to dragon's flesh—an Occult roll would suggest that eating the meat of a dragon may grant one the ability to understand the language of birds, for example.

In the wake of the dragon's destruction, the normally fiercely-independent Silures are happy to toast to the Empire, possibly a sign of strengthening relationships between the two cultures.

Optional: The Hooded Stranger

As an optional encounter, if the Keeper desires, a black-cloaked stranger arrives in Venta Silurum, asking questions about the dragon, where it has been seen, and where it emerged from. He may come to the investigators' attention when he attempts to rent a room at the House of Lycus, and upon failing, simply questions

THE DRAGON OF CAMBRIA

Pullus about the dragon and where it has been seen. Or, he may follow the investigators into the woods (at a distance, trying not to be seen) to observe their work.

This individual is a member of the Serpent People, living in disguise as a human being. He has followed reports of a dragon to Venta Silurum, recognizing what has happened—a hibernation chamber built by his people during the Jurassic period has been breached, and the “guard” placed in the chamber has escaped. He is searching for the hibernation chamber to ensure that his kin within are unmolested, and to reseal the chamber.

He can explain this if the investigators corner and question him. Bearing them no particular malice, he will neither help nor hinder them in their fight against the dragon—sealing off the hibernation chamber (for example, by collapsing the mine shaft) is his sole priority. If the investigators are aggressive towards him, he will attempt to dose them with Black Lotus powder and escape while they are hallucinating; failing that, he knows a number of spells.

If the investigators have done anything to the hibernating serpent-men in the chamber, the mysterious stranger will seek vengeance on them. If slain, the mysterious stranger’s human visage fades away, revealing his true reptilian nature.

CONCLUDING THE SCENARIO

Governor Urbicus will be very pleased to hear of the investigators’ success in dealing with the dragon, and returning with the monster’s scaly hide in tow will win them much acclaim, as well as the promised reimbursement from Marcus Caelus. He can offer them 250 denarii for the hide. If Urbicus hears of this, he will offer the investigators twice what Caelus had offered for the reptilian trophy.

REWARDS AND REPERCUSSIONS

Slaying the dragon gains the investigators +1D4 SAN and +1D10 Status.

NPCs

ADHERBAL, Slave to the Arrogant Ex-Gladiators

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	65	INT	55	Hit Points	14
CON	55	EDU	30	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	90	POW	40	Build	1
DEX	45	SAN	45	Move	7
APP	40	Luck	40	Age	31

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Spear) 60% (30/12), damage 1D10+DB
Dodge 22% (11/4)

Armor: None.

Skills: Art/Craft (Carpentry) 65%, Climb 60%, Empire 30%,
Natural World 50%, Other Language (Latin) 21%,
Own Language (Numidian) 40%, Stealth 45%,
Status 15% (Infamis), Track 65%

AULUS LAELIUS MARCELLUS, Overconfident Monster Hunter

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	60	INT	40	Hit Points	14
CON	75	EDU	30	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	70	POW	60	Build	1
DEX	45	SAN	45	Move	7
APP	55	Luck	60	Age	36

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Sword) 80% (40/16), damage 1D6+DB
Dodge 42% (21/8)

Skills: First Aid 40%, Insight 15%, Intimidate 65%,
Own Language (Latin) 40%, Sleight of Hand 35%,
Status 25% (Infamis), Stealth 25%, Throw 30%

Armor: Soft leather armor (1D3) and a medium helmet (1D2)

ELISEDD, Grieving Father

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	50	INT	55	Hit Points	14
CON	70	EDU	30	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	70	POW	60	Build	0
DEX	35	SAN	50	Move	7
APP	50	Luck	60	Age	45

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Spear) 25% (12/5), damage 1D6+DB
Fighting (Bow) 30% (15/6), damage 1D8
Dodge 17% (8/5)

Skills: Animal Handling 60%, Art/Craft (Carpentry) 25%, First
Aid 50%, Natural World 60%, Other Language (Latin) 21%,
Own Language (Brythonic) 40%, Own Kingdom (Silures
Lands) 40%, Repair/Devise 30%, Status 40%, Track 40%

Armor: Soft leather armor (1D3) and a medium helmet (1D2)

ESSYL, Soothsayer with the Blood of Serpents

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	55	INT	85	Hit Points	10
CON	65	EDU	40	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	40	POW	70	Build	0
DEX	75	SAN	25	Move	9
APP	30	Magic Points	14	Age	35

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Large Knife), 70% (35/14) 1D4+2+DB
Dodge 57% (28/11)

Armor: None

Skills: Art/Craft (Potions) 60%, Cthulhu Mythos 12%,
First Aid 50%, Insight 55%, Natural World 80%,
Occult 55%, Other Language (Latin) 41%, Other Language
(Serpent People) 31%, Own Language (Brythonic)
50%, Ride 10%, Status 15% (Infamis), Track 50%

Spells: Augury, Contact Worms of the Earth



NUMERIUS LAELIUS MURENA, Overconfident Monster Hunter

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	60	INT	70	Hit Points	11
CON	50	EDU	50	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	60	POW	70	Build	0
DEX	40	SAN	62	Move	7
APP	45	Luck	70	Age	42

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Sword) 85% (42/17) damage 1D6+DB
 Fighting (Net) 55%, damage entanglement, range 5 yards
 Dodge 60% (30/12)

Armor: Soft leather armor (1D3) and a medium helmet (1D2)

Skills: Animal Handling 40%, First Aid 35%,
 Insight 35%, Intimidate 45%, Natural World 30%,
 Own Language (Latin) 50%, Sleight of Hand 30%,
 Status 50% (Infamis), Stealth 20%, Throw 55%, Track 40%

THE DRAGON, A Misplaced Megalosaurus

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	220	INT	10	Hit Points	32
CON	100	EDU	—	Damage Bonus	+4D6
SIZ	220	POW	65	Build	5
DEX	65	SAN	—	Move	10
APP	—	Luck	—	Age	—

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting attacks: The dragon can attack with one bite or one clawed foot per round.

Bite 80% (40/16) 1D10+DB

Claw 60%, damage 1D6+DB, plus STR roll to resist being knocked prone.

Dodge 32% (16/6)

Armor: 6 points of thick, scaly hide.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D8 SAN for the investigators' first encounter with the dragon; subsequent encounters warrant no SAN loss, as this is a natural creature, albeit outside its natural era.

THE HOODED STRANGER, Serpent Man with a Mission

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	45	INT	90	Hit Points	13
CON	70	EDU	—	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	55	POW	60	Build	0
DEX	65	SAN	—	Move	8
APP	—	Magic Points	12	Age	—

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting attacks: The Hooded Stranger carries a Roman pugio dagger, but has little knowledge of unarmed combat. As a last resort, he may bite, delivering potent venom through his fangs. His preference, however, is to throw or blow Black Lotus powder (See Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition Keeper's Rule Book, page 268) in opponents' faces and leave them to suffer. He is carrying two doses of the rare and deadly powder in leather pouches on his belt.

Fighting (Brawl) 50% (25/10), damage 1D3 (unarmed) or 1D4 (with dagger)

Fighting (Bite) 35% (17/7), damage 1D8+venom (see above)

Throw 50%

Dodge 32% (16/6)

Bite: The bite of a Serpent Person is highly venomous. The victim must succeed in an Extreme CON roll; failure results in taking 1D8 points of damage.

Armor: 1-point scales.

Spells: Consume Likeness, Dominate, Enthrall Victim, Evil Eye, Implant Fear, Voorish Sign, Wither Limb

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 to see the Mysterious Stranger's true form.

THE BLOOD SWORD OF EMERIC

BY OSCAR RIOS

OVERVIEW

This scenario takes place in the province of Germania Superior, starting in one of the many border forts of the Limes Germanicus. It begins at the fort of Zugmantel, just north of the Rhine river (and near modern day Wiesbaden).

The Germanic lands north and east of here are in crisis. Germanic refugees are flooding the area, begging for aid and protection. Caravans of amber, furs, and slaves are being attacked by a Germanic, barbarian bandit chieftain/rebel, named Emeric of the Helvetii.

Emeric has been a thorn in the side of Rome for several years, but has never been so bold. The garrison commander at Zugmantel, Centurion Numerius Vergilius Dama, took one third of the troops stationed here (35 in all) on an extended hunt for Emeric and his raiders. They are now overdue to report or return, and the acting commander is starting to worry. The situation is quite tense; the garrison, merchants, and refugees are all on edge. It would only take a small incident to send things spiraling into chaos.

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS

The investigators might be in Zugmantel for any of several reasons.

Hired by Merchants: The investigators are hired by Rufus Caseo, a merchant, to escort him and some valuable goods from Zugmantel back to Italia. The goods never arrive at the fort, being one of the many caravans sacked by Emeric of the Helvetii. The investigators are then sent out to find the lost caravan, and save anyone who was traveling with it.

Hired by the commander of the fort, Solanius Maricius:

The commander is overwhelmed, dealing with angry merchants, desperate refugees, and his fatigued, undermanned garrison. He needs Emeric of the Helvetii dragged in, dead or alive; Centurion Vergilius Dama found so he can resume command of Zugmantel; and he needs the refugees able to return to their homes.

Sent by their investigator organization: Emeric of the Helvetii is now being called Emeric Bloodsword, or Emeric the Undying, in certain occult circles. Rumors are being passed about among the refugees that Emeric has a blood red sword, that kills with the slightest cut and slices chain mail as if it was wool. Other rumors claim that Emeric cannot die, and that wounds which would kill a mortal man are quickly healed. The investigators are sent to verify if these rumors are true, and if they are, then to find out how the barbarian is doing it and put a stop to it.

FOR THE KEEPER

Emeric Bloodsword, a.k.a. Emeric the Undying, is already dead. He and his men were defeated in battle by the usual commander of Zugmantel, Centurion Numerius Vergilius Dama, as the barbarians attacked the village of Murganaz. Emeric did have an

enchanted sword, a "Blood Sword" which granted him incredible powers, but it was not enough to save him or his men. The blade was knocked from Emeric's grasp by a shot from a slinger. Once separated from the blade, Emeric lost its protection. He was then easily subdued, tortured for information, and then crucified.

Emeric's magical saex shattered the moment that Centurion Vergilius picked it up. Vergilius quickly became obsessed with having a Blood Sword of his own, to become an invincible defender of Rome. From the captured Emeric, he learned of a powerful sorcerer living deep in the woods who was also a master bladesmith, named Ottokar. Centurion Vergilius left a large portion of his men at Murganaz, where Emeric was captured, to restore order, and left with two of his most trusted men to find this magus, Ottokar. He told everyone that he was off to arrest or kill this sorcerer, but his true aim was much darker.

When Centurion Vergilius found Ottokar (because the sorcerer allowed him to do so), he was able to strike a bargain. If Centurion Vergilius sacrificed his two companions to Ottokar's god, Python (an aspect of Yig), then the sorcerer would make him his own Blood Sword. Driven mad by his battle with Emeric, Centurion Vergilius agreed and murdered his two companions, sealing a dark pact. Ottokar then told him that they would need the blood of 100 humans (beyond what was already on hand), to harvest the iron within the fluid in order to create another such blade (this time, a Blood Gladius).

Ottokar taught Centurion Vergilius a spell, Summon/Bind Nightgaunt, and Centurion Vergilius began summoning these creatures and sending them out to Murganaz to bring back living captives. Ottokar has also summoned a huge horde of wolves to keep the humans from escaping the village before enough blood could be collected.

Currently Murganaz is under siege, as winged nightgaunts swoop in every night to carry off a few people. The remaining soldiers are being picked off one by one, and no one can leave, as packs of wolves rip apart anyone attempting to do so. The villains are very close to having their hundredth victim, and the mad centurion will then have his Blood Gladius.

The investigators must question the refugees to learn the latest news on the hunt for Emeric, gaining some idea of what is going on. They will learn of the planned ambush of Emeric at Murganaz. Once they reach Murganaz, the investigators will discover the ongoing siege, and become pinned down by the wolf packs as well. There, they can talk to Legionary Renato (a Spaniard), the slinger, and learn of the general location of Ottokar the magus/smith, and that their commander was heading there. From that point, the investigators can either fight their way through the gauntlet of wolves, or allow themselves to be carried off by the nightgaunts, to reach the lair of Ottokar. Once there, the investigators must kill the now insane Centurion Vergilius, and possibly Ottokar.



— ♦ THE CAST ♦ —

Emeric the Red/Bloodsword/The Undying
Helvetii raider, now dead

Centurion Numerius Vergilius Dama
Insane, corrupted Centurion

Centurion Solanius Maricius
Acting commander of Limes Zugmantel

Ewald, Leutwin, Helmo, & Gislin
Murderous Germans, posing as guides

Ingeborg
Germanic girl and honest guide

Theudemar
Distraught Germanic man, posing as a guide

Legionary Renato
Legionary, struggling to hold Murganaz

Ottokar
Debased Serpent Man smith & magi

Rufus Caseo
Merchant who may hire the investigators

THE FORT OF ZUGMANTEL

One of the many forts lining the border of a Germania Superior, it consists of a military camp with some support buildings, such as taverns, warehouses, storehouses, stables, and offices (for accounting and tax purposes). However, as the investigators arrive, it is clear that something is very wrong. While the facility looks like it could easily handle a hundred or so visitors at any time, currently the camp is overflowing and surrounded by over six hundred, mostly Germanic, people. In addition to caravans, travelers, and merchants, more than 75% of these people are displaced refugees.

There are hordes of men, women, and children camped in and around the fort, many with livestock in tow. Some are sick, most are hungry, and all of them are scared. There are soldiers everywhere, overseeing the refugees, keeping them away from the merchants and one another, as many of them are from villages with long standing rivalries. Space is limited, resources are stretched to the limit, and tensions are obviously high.

The investigators should witness an altercation between two sets of refugees and a merchant caravan over access to one of the camp's three wells. It all degenerates very quickly and resolves before the investigators can become involved. The conflict ends in bloodshed, with soldiers charging in to break up the melee, with the air filled with curses, screaming women, and crying children.

A Meeting with Solanius Maricius

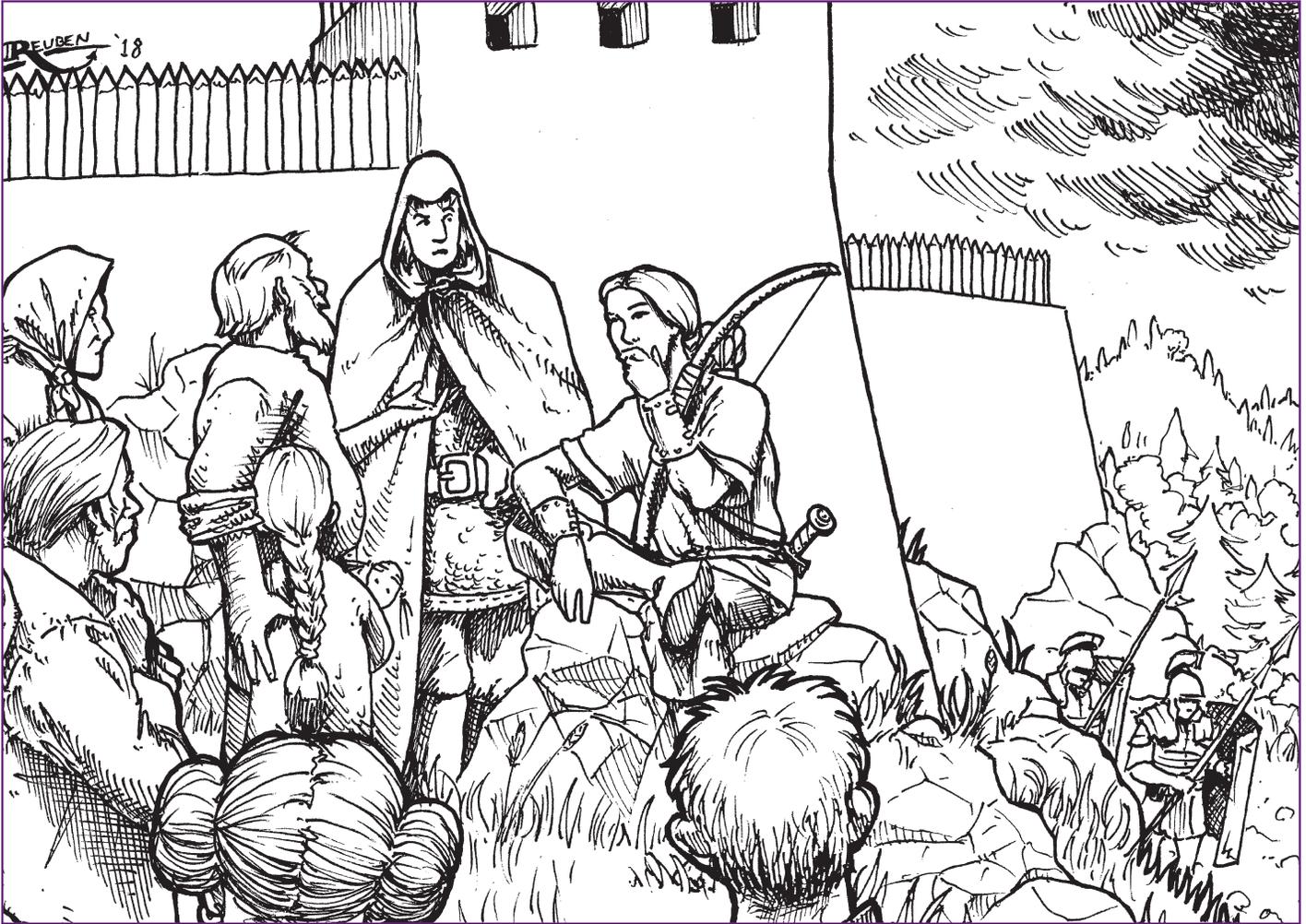
The investigators are not in Zugmantel long before they are granted, or are summoned to, a meeting with the acting camp commander, Centurion Solanius Maricius. He is a young centurion, clearly exhausted, and in need of help. He tries to enlist the

investigators' help in resolving this crisis. Following are the key points that he discusses in this meeting:

- A bandit captain, identified as Emeric the Red, has been attacking caravans in the area for about six months.
- Emeric leads a band of about twenty well-armed men.
- Emeric and his men escalated matters and started raiding the villages for supplies, dragging off captives, burning homes, and murdering anyone who opposes them, starting about four months ago.
- Several villages were attacked multiple times, causing them to be abandoned.
- Refugees from those abandoned villages have been showing up at Zugmantel for weeks.
- The refugees are afraid, saying that Emeric is protected by some sort of magic, making him invulnerable, and wields a mighty, blood red sword.
- The base commander, Centurion Numerius Vergilius Dama, set out with one third of the base's garrison (about 35 men) to hunt down this Emeric about two weeks ago.
- Centurion Vergilius Dama was going to be patrolling the trade route and visiting the area villages, but his specific route was unknown. Maricius has no exact details as to where he might be now, other than "north and east of here."
- The patrol led by Centurion Vergilius Dama is overdue. They were supposed to return four or five days ago, to report in and resupply.
- He has been trying to maintain order ever since, but the number of refugees has grown considerably since then.
- He has requested reinforcements, but even if the request is granted (and he does not think that it will be), then they will not arrive for another week or two.
- His men are exhausted, food is running out, and fights are starting to break out. He cannot maintain control much longer.
- Emeric must be killed or captured, so that the refugees return to their homes and farms.
- He can supply a rough map of the lands north of here, but it is not as accurate as he would like it to be.
- The investigators are asked to: kill or capture Emeric the Red (and anyone assisting him); recover any stolen property/slaves taken by Emeric, if possible; locate the missing patrol of Centurion Vergilius Dama; and report back to Zugmantel as soon as possible with news on any of these objectives. The investigators can gain rewards of between 500 – 2,000 sesterces for achieving any of these objectives, from either Commander Solanius Maricius, the merchant who has hired them, and/or their investigator organization.

Talking to the Refugees

The only way to get a better idea where Emeric the Red is (or rather, was) operating, and where Centurion Vergilius Dama may have led his patrol, is by talking to the refugees. While most of them do not speak Latin, a few of them do. Investigators speaking



Germanic and/or treating the refugees with kindness are looked upon favorably, and gain a bonus die to any social interaction checks. The investigators can learn many things from the refugees, divided into: Rumors about Emeric the Red; Rumors about Otto-kar; and Clues to Locating the Missing Patrol, in the nearby box.

Processing the Intelligence

Investigators getting these clues can determine that the patrol of Centurion Vergilius Dama is moving along a north-easterly arc. The next village along that arc past Jikilaz is Murganaz, a four-day march from Jikilaz. With this information in hand, the investigators should be able to surmise that village of Murganaz is where Emeric the Red will likely attack next, and that the patrol of Centurion Vergilius Dama would likely have beaten them there. Unfortunately, Murganaz is deep in Germanic territory, also a four-day march from the fort of Zugmantel. Keepers can allow investigators to figure this out with a successful Idea check (with a bonus die for mapping the patrol's track out).

Hiring a Guide

When speaking with the refugees, many will ask if the investigators are going to try to stop Emeric the Red. All of the refugees want to return home, but not until the bloodthirsty maniac is stopped. No matter what they answer, soon rumors are flying about that the investigators are, in fact, going to do just that. Once that happens, three possible guides step forward:

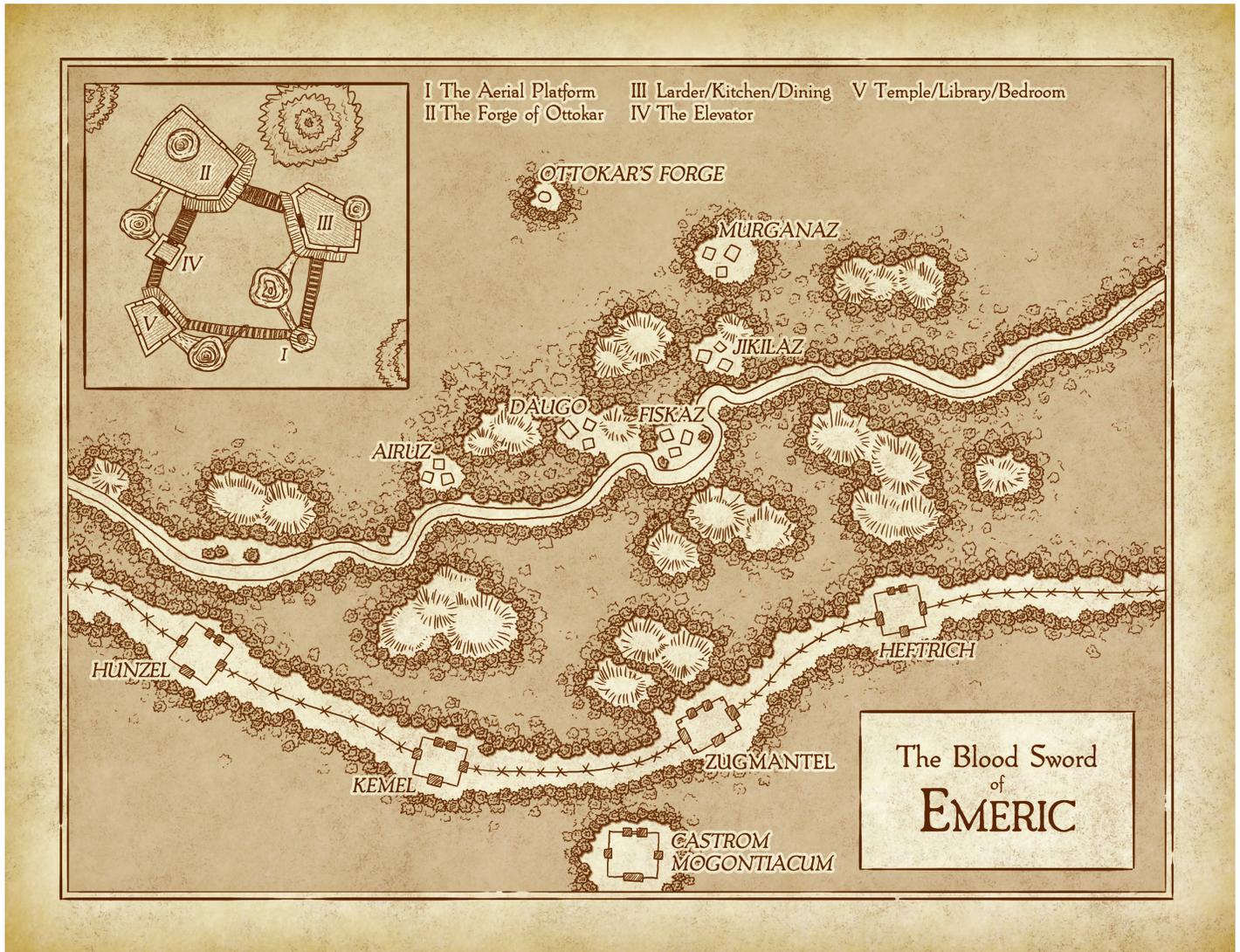
The Bad (Ewald, Leutwin, Helmo, and Gislin): This group of four men from Daugo, named Ewald, Leutwin, Helmo, and Gislin, offer to lead the investigators wherever they want to go. They also offer to join in the fight against Emeric, and even to hunt, fish, and set up camps for the investigators. They claim to be hunters, and in a way, they are. One of them (Ewald) speaks passable Latin (30%).

These men are part of the area's Germanic resistance. They would love to kill and rob a few Roman citizens. They are not allied with Emeric the Red, whom they see as someone killing his own people, but are happy to exploit the situation for their own goals. The weapons, armor, and supplies that the investigators carry would be valuable in their fight against Rome. They intend to lead the investigators into the wilderness and kill them, either in their sleep or when the terrain favors them (while climbing a hill or fording a stream).

Investigators making a successful Insight roll easily realize these men are lying and have false intentions. Investigators who were kind and generous to refugees might also be warned that "those boys from Daugo are bad news..."

The Good (Ingeborg): This young girl is from Fiskaz. Her parents are dead, and her older siblings dragged off by Emeric the Red. She is fourteen, and her only remaining prospects are traveling to far distant family (which she cannot afford) or marrying into a local family (which without a dowry or family, limits her choices to the





Rumors about Emeric the Red

- Emeric the Red was always an extremist and a bully, leading a group of like-minded thugs, but never had any popular support among the local tribes.
- Emeric has been leading his bandit band for a few years, but only recently started gaining success.
- In the past six months, Emeric and his men have been aided by dark magic (the sudden appearance of storms or fog) to aid in his attacks.
- Over the past season, Emeric has begun abducting people during his raids, dragging them off never to be seen again.
- Emeric has come into the possession of a magical, blood red sword,

which heals his wounds and kills victims with just the slightest cut.

- Some believe that he has made a pact with the fabled wizard Ottokar, renowned for being both a bladesmith and a sorcerer.

Rumors about Ottokar (Some of These Are Not Factual)

- He is a boogeyman, a story told to children to make them do their chores.
- He is an immortal sorcerer and a master smith, who makes dark pacts in return for powerful weapons.
- He is a demon, masquerading as a man.
- His lair is deep in the woods, protected by magic that keeps

it from being found unless Ottokar wants you to reach it.

- Ottokar values youths and maidens, drinking their blood to maintain his immortality and offering their souls to a dark power known as the Serpent of Shadows.

Clues to Locating the Missing Patrol

- There was a sighting of the patrol at the village of Airuz, 12 days ago
- There was a sighting of the patrol at the village of Daugo, 10 days ago
- There was a sighting of the patrol at the village of Fiskaz, 8 days ago
- Refugees fleeing from the village of Jikilaz reported seeing the patrol, after their village was attacked, 7 days ago.

most undesirable matches). She is sturdy and brave, but is unladylike in manner and appearance. She is thus reliable, as an Insight check might confirm, as it is in her own self-interest to make friends with the investigators, as they might take her in. They need each other, a point she is not shy to make.

Ingeborg's family made its living gathering mushrooms and medicinal herbs from the forest, as well as running small game snares. Ingeborg is a good tracker, and knows the region well. She is the only truly trustworthy guide; her immediate goal is to lead the investigators to Emeric the Red and help them defeat him, in order to avenge her family. She will ask, eventually, that she be allowed to travel with the investigators, even back to Rome, and will acquit herself bravely, whatever may come.

Note that her Latin is extremely limited (10%), broken and halting, and she often gets frustrated trying to communicate, resorting to hand gestures, pointing in directions and drawing crude sketches.

The Ugly (Theudemar): Theudemar, a dairy farmer from Jikilaz, volunteers to lead the investigators to Murganaz. He speaks passable Latin (30%). While he does know the way to Murganaz, he instead leads them to his home village of Jikilaz instead, in order to further search for his missing children, Porketill and Tofa. This adds four days to the investigators' journey, and ensures that they arrive too late to prevent Centurion Vergilius Dama from obtaining a Blood Sword of his own. An Insight check might lead the investigators to conclude that he is grief-stricken to the point where his stability might be questioned. Investigators who have obtained a map of the area can attempt to check on Theudemar's route, and with a successful Navigation roll, they realize that he is not leading them to Murganaz. If confronted, then he initially denies it, but a successful Persuade or Intimidate roll gets him to admit the truth. If allowed to reach Jikilaz, then Theudemar begins rushing about the abandoned village, calling out for his missing children ("Porketill! Tofa!"). He never finds them nor learns their fate; they are simply gone. The village is abandoned, with rotting bodies lying here and there, as ravens pick out their eyes and wolves feast on what livestock was left behind.

Unless Theudemar is successfully Persuaded or Intimidated into actually leading the investigators to Murganaz, he chooses to remain in the burned-out remnants of his hut. He babbles about getting dinner ready for when his children return, but it is by then clear that he has lost his mind. He is a broken man who has cost the investigators much time; how he is dealt with is up to them. If the investigators abandon him here, then Theudemar is killed and eaten by wolves.

THE TRIP TO MURGANAZ

The trip to this village from Zugmantel takes four days with Ingeborg (five without a guide, and seven if they get sidetracked with Theudemar. The four men from Daugo have no intention of taking them there, so when they attack, it takes another six days from where they are led off to).

In any case, the trip takes the investigators through dark forests, across rolling hills, and past abandoned farms. Few people have

remained in the region due to the crisis. When the investigators get a half of a day from Murganaz, they notice something following them. At first one or two, but soon a few dozen wolves are shadowing them through the trees. The wolves stay out of bowshot, but begin closing in the nearer that the investigators get to Murganaz.

When the investigators reach Murganaz, they see that it has been fortified in a typical Roman fashion. There is an earthen berm and ditch, a pair of gates, and spiked stakes surrounding the village. Within the stockade are some legionaries standing guard. They begin yelling at the investigators once they are spotted, but they are too far away to make out what is said. One legionary fires an arrow in their direction which lands nearby. It has a written message affixed to it. "Go get help, we are under siege!" Just then, the wolves begin howling, and the trap is sprung.

The Wolves Close the Trap

Bizarrely, a full one hundred wolves come rushing at the investigators en masse, with the only clear path to escape being towards the fortified walls of Murganaz. Even more bizarrely, they leave a clear path of escape toward Murganaz. Investigators choosing to run for the village get there, before the wolves attack, if they have a movement rate of 8 or more. Those with a movement rate of 7 or less are attacked for three rounds, before thrown torches and missile fire (arrows, spears, rocks, javelins) from the stockade of Murganaz drive them back.

Investigators trying to run away in another direction, or who stand and fight, must kill all one hundred wolves or get up in a tree before they are caught. (In other words, it's hopeless.) A Natural History check confirms that there are far too many wolves acting in coordination for this to be some kind of natural occurrence, and a natural wolf pack would not have left a way out. Investigators falling unconscious from their wounds are dragged into the woods by the wolves, left alive, and are later picked up by a nightgaunt and transported to Ottokar's lair.

Once the investigators enter Murganaz, then barring an impressive plan, they are trapped, for the next three days anyway.

THE SIEGE OF MURGANAZ

Interview: Legionary Renato

Inside of Murganaz remain only eight exhausted legionaries, and about thirty grateful and equally exhausted German villagers. In the village square are a dozen crucified men—Emeric the Red and his former raiders.

One rank-and-file legionary, named Renato, has assumed provisional command, and briefs the investigators on the situation. The wolves are keeping them from leaving, and every night a few nightgaunts swoop in to try and carry off people alive. They are relentless, and most nights they can get away with one or two. The legionaries have killed a few, but more keep coming. They are being picked off a few at a time. He asks if more soldiers are behind them (in hopes they are the advanced element of a relief column). He is frustrated when he learns that they are not.

Renato can offer the following additional information:

- They are trapped by the wolves, who seem to be keeping them here for the "night demons." As an experiment, they sent someone out of the gates to try and draw them in, and the wolves just stayed put.
- The night demons are blank-faced, winged creatures.



They swoop in and carry people off into the night, without otherwise harming them. They even break into homes, and set fires to lure people into the open in order to do so.

- The night demons ignore the dead, and carry off only living people.
- The creatures drop anyone who attacks them while they are flying off.
- They have been under siege for the last eight days.
- They have food for maybe another six days, five with the investigators now here.

If asked about Emeric the Red or Centurion Vergilius Dama, Renato can also offer:

- Their patrol ambushed Emeric and his band, defeating him after a difficult battle.
- Emeric wielded a blood red sword, which seemed to make him invulnerable.
- He was stabbed and shot with arrows, but seemed to hardly notice, as the wounds quickly healed before everyone's eyes.
- He (Renato) is a slinger, and was ordered by the Centurion to aim for Emeric's sword hand, which he did, breaking it and causing the man to lose his grasp on the sword.
- Legionaries kicked the blade away and quickly subdued Emeric, and would have beaten him to death, had they not been ordered by the Centurion to take him alive.
- Emeric was tortured, and told them that some solitary magus in the forest named Ottokar forged him the sword.
- It was to this sorcerer's lair that all of the stolen treasure and captured people had been taken. It lies deep in the woods to the northeast, about one day's journey from here.
- As soon as they learned everything that the Centurion wanted to hear from Emeric, they crucified him.
- The Centurion then took two men and went off in search of this magus, intent on killing him, recovering the stolen property, and liberating any prisoners that they might find. They were ordered to wait here until he returned, which was supposed to be two or three days at the most.
- Two days later, the wolves surrounded the town.
- A day after that, the night demons began attacking, carrying off people alive.

ATTACK OF THE NIGHT DEMONS

The "night demons" (nightgaunts) attack for two more nights, attempting to carry off anyone that they can. On the third night, the attacks stop. At dawn of the fourth day after the investigators arrive, the wolves are suddenly gone, and everyone is free to leave. If this comes to pass, then the scenario ends in failure, and the cycle repeats itself, only this time with Centurion Numerius Vergilius Dama wielding a blood red gladius. He rampages about, an even more deadly scourge than Emeric was, raising tensions along the border that persist for decades.

A Cunning Plan

The only likely way for the investigators to reach the magically

protected Lair of Ottokar, without him wanting them to find it, is to be carried there by the nightgaunts. Failing that, they are going to need to make a serious dent in the wolves, likely involving a sally out of the town or drawing them off with a feint (and some very good tree climbers). However, the investigators do not know where they should be going, other than a general direction and an estimated distance, so that is unlikely to ultimately be successful. Unless, that is, that Ottokar decides that he wants to be found (such as by the investigators getting close to his lair and Fast Talking their way into an audience with him). His lair is, in fact, located about a day's march to the northeast of Murganaz. Investigators searching for Ottokar are likely targets of opportunity for the nightgaunts as well.

The nightgaunts carry off anyone that they can, dropping them only if they are attacked mid-flight. Investigators allowing themselves to be captured are flown to the Lair of Ottokar unharmed. The nightgaunts do not disarm anyone, nor do they strip off any of their captive's armor. Once at the lair, captives are dumped in a massive wooden cage on an aerial platform, and secured within it. The nightgaunts then ring a gong and fly off.

Investigators can escape the cage by inflicting 25 hit points of damage to it, or by cutting the ropes holding the door shut, which requires just 10 hit points of damage. Sheer brute force (more than 250 STR points) works as well. If they do not escape within 15 minutes, then Ottokar and Centurion Vergilius Dama arrive to collect them.

The Forge of Ottokar/Temple of Python

This strange temple is high above the forest floor and made from the gnarled, intertwined trunks and branches of a half dozen large trees. It has five main areas:

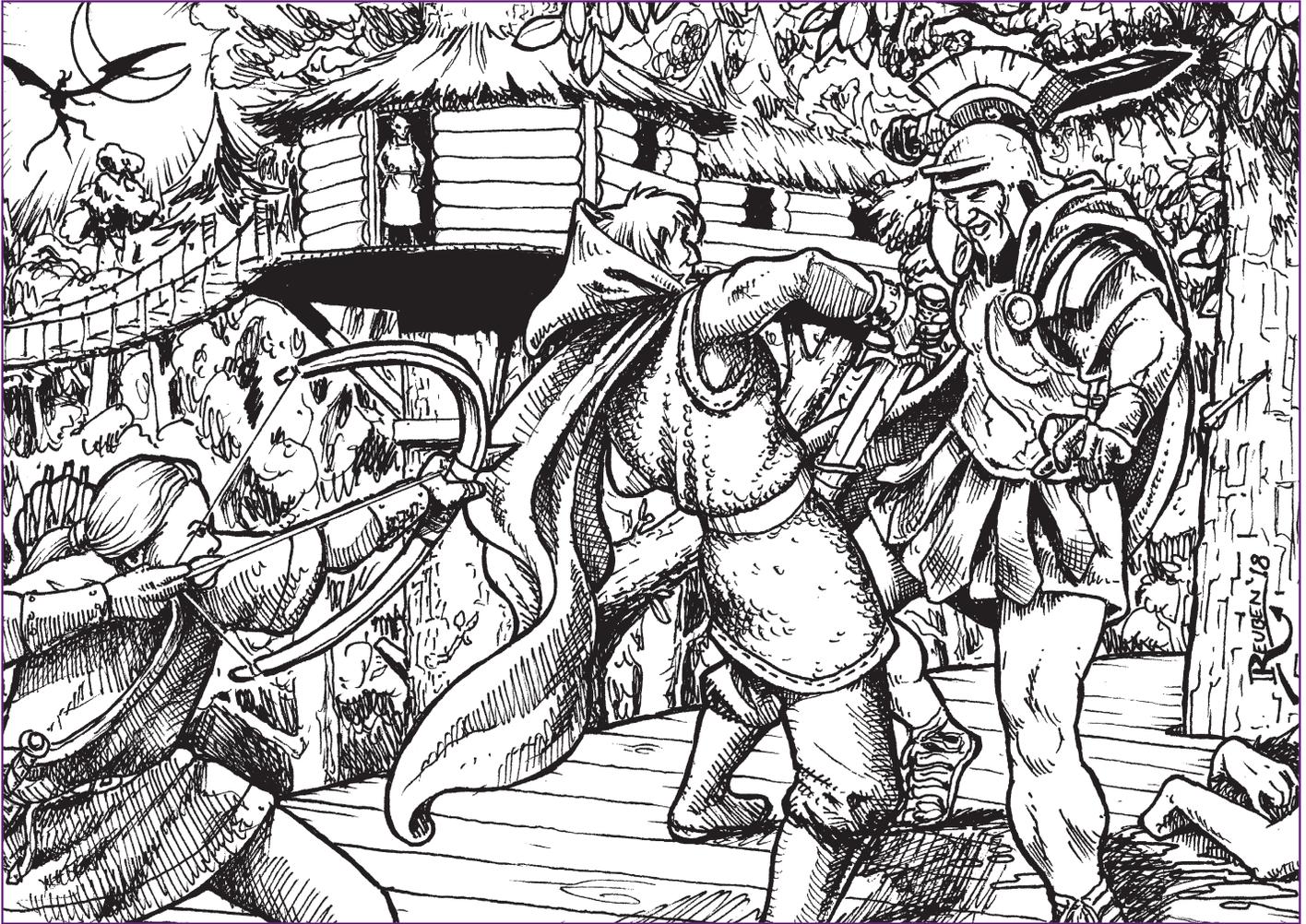
The Aerial Platform: This area has a large wooden cage, and is used to drop off and store prisoners. The ground below is barely visible in the dark night, but it is more than 70 feet down.

The Forge of Ottokar: Here is a large, strange smithy, filled with tools of metalworking and instruments of torture. A half dozen bodies are hanging here, hands above their heads, with both feet severed. The blood is collected in a system of troughs, all draining into a cauldron. There are tubes, beakers, and strange glowing apparatuses, where the blood is processed to extract its iron. There is also a pile of rotting corpses. There are dozens of bodies here, covered with maggots, flies, and gnawing carrion beetles. The air is rancid, thick with the stench of smelted metal, boiled blood, and decaying human flesh. Investigators viewing this must make a SAN check for a 1/1D6 loss.

Larder/Kitchen/Dining: This room has stores of grain, wine, and dried meats. The fresh meat stored here is of the human variety.

The Elevator: A wooden elevator on counterweighted pulleys can safely raise and lower the investigators to the ground from the aerial platform.

Temple/Library/Bedroom: This is the largest chamber of the complex. It has single bed, a couple of cots, and many shelves filled with scrolls (all in non-human languages). The far section of the chamber features a massive wooden statue of a huge serpent constricting a maiden, her face a mix of anguish and ecstasy. Grasped in the coiled tail of the snake is an exotic-looking sword, poised to strike



down into the maiden's collar. The statue's eyes, both the serpent and the maiden, are inset with amber gemstones. If these stones are pried out, the statue explodes in a spray of acid, causing 2D6 damage to everyone within 90 feet.

Strewn all about the base of the statue, as if in offering, is the bulk of the valuables stolen by Emeric's raiders, mostly pieces of amber, worth 20,000 sesterces.

DEFEATING CENTURION VERGIlius

This once noble centurion is now mad, corrupted by his encounter with Emeric the Red. He cannot be reasoned with, and feels that it is his destiny to defeat all Germanic barbarians, expand the empire, and become Caesar, wielding the power of the Blood Gladius.

He may or may not already have this weapon, depending on how long it took the investigators to reach the lair of Ottokar. If the investigators hired the correct guide, and either allowed the nightgaunts to carry them off by the second night or otherwise escaped from the village by the first night, then his Blood Gladius is not yet complete, and he is comparatively easy to deal with.

DEFEATING OTTOKAR (Degenerate Serpent Man and Bladesmith)

Ottokar is only half Serpent Man, the rest of his genealogy being a mix of human and Hyperborean, giving him a twisted mix

of frightening features; somewhat reptilian, somewhat elfin, and vaguely human. His mind is as twisted as his heritage, and he is neither completely logical nor sane.

Ottokar enjoys creating sacred blood weapons. He considers himself a craftsmen and artist. He believes that every life taken with such weapons is a sacrifice to Python (a.k.a. the Great Old One Yig). He wields a Blood Dagger himself, but mostly relies on his spells for defense. He does not retreat from his lair, as it is also a temple to his god. Any intruders are considered infidels who must be destroyed.

Unless defeated, Ottokar continues to craft deadly magical blades for anyone who wants one, so long as they have the intention and means to spread death, warfare, and misery in the name of Python.

REWARDS & REPERCUSSIONS

For reaching the Forge of Ottokar: +1D3 SAN

For defeating the nightgaunts: +1D4 SAN

For defeating Centurion Vergilius Dama (without the blood sword): +1D4 SAN

For defeating Centurion Vergilius Dama (with blood sword): +1D6 SAN

For defeating Ottokar: +1D6 SAN and +2 Status

For destroying the Forge of Ottokar/Temple of Python: +1D4 SAN and +2 Status

For making sure that Ingeborg is secure after the scenario ends: +1 SAN

NPCs

CENTURION NUMERIUS VERGILIUS DAMA

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	65	INT	55	Hit Points	11
CON	60	EDU	40	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	55	POW	65	Build	0
DEX	55	SAN	20	Move	8
APP	60	Luck	65	Age	—

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 50% (25/10), damage 1D3+DB

Fighting (Dagger) 50% (25/10), damage 1D4+2+DB

Fighting (Gladius) 60% (30/12), damage 1D6+1+DB

Fighting (Pilum) 45% (22/9), damage 1D6

Small Shield 30%, damage 1D4+DB

Dodge 40%

Armor: Chainmail Armor, Medium Helmet,

Small Shield (1D8+1D2+1D4)

Small Shield absorbs 6 hit points, 24 hit points.

Skills: Intimidate 30%, Spot Hidden 40%, Track 45%

Indefinite Insanity: Megalomania.

The Blood Gladius of Vergilius: If armed with this weapon, Centurion Dama gains a number of powers. When holding it, he takes ½ damage from non-magical weapons, and regenerates 1 hit point per round. The blade itself does normal gladius damage, but has double the normal hit points (40). Each wound inflicted by a Blood weapon inflicts an additional 1D3 points of damage, as blood is painfully drawn out of the victim and into the blade. Victims of this attack lose 1/1D3 SAN the first time that they encounter the effect. The wielder is also immune to any negative effects of shock or pain, feeling it but not being impeded by it. These blades can only be wielded by a single person, designated at its forging, and should they be held by another, they instantly shatter into uselessness.

OTTOKAR, Degenerate Serpent Man Sorcerer

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	65	INT	50	Hit Points	9
CON	50	EDU	120	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	40	POW	100	Build	0
DEX	65	SAN	0	Move	8
APP	—	Luck	—	Age	1000s of yrs

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 50% (25/10), damage 1D3+DB

Fighting (Blood Dagger) 1D4+2+DB (see the Blood Gladius of Vergilius for details).

Fighting (Bite) 35% (17/7), damage 1D6+DB +1D6 for venom (unless victim succeeds in an Extreme CON check).

Dodge 35%

Armor: 1-point scales.

Skills: Intimidate 40%, Science (Metallurgy & Biochemistry) 70%, Spot Hidden 50%

Spells: Summon/Bind Nightgaunt, Summon/Bind Wolf Pack, Create Blood Blade, Cause Blindness

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 SAN to see Ottokar.

NIGHTGAUNTS, the "Night Demons" (1D4+1 total)

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	50	INT	20	Hit Points	12
CON	50	EDU	—	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	70	POW	50	Build	0
DEX	65	SAN	—	Move	6/12 Flying
APP	—	Luck	—	Age	—

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Paw, tail, horn, or limb) 45% (22/9), damage 1D4+DB

Tickling 35% (17/7), immobilized for 1D6+1 rounds (target must already be seized)

Dodge 35% (17/7)

Armor: 2-point skin.

Skills: Stealth 90%

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 SAN to see a nightgaunt

EWALD, LEUTWIN, HELMO, & GISLIN, Murderous and Deceitful Barbarians

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	65	INT	45	Hit Points	11
CON	55	EDU	30	Damage Bonus	+1D4
SIZ	60	POW	45	Build	0
DEX	55	SAN	50	Move	8
APP	40	Luck	45	Age	Varies

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 45% (12/5), damage 1D3+DB

Fighting (Dagger) 45% (12/5), damage 1D4+DB

Fighting (Axe) (Ewald & Leutwin) 40% (20/8), damage 1D6+DB

Fighting (Spear) (Helmo & Gislin) 40% (20/8), damage 1D6+DB

Fighting (Small Shield) 15% (7/3), damage 1D3+DB

Dodge 35%

Armor: Hardened Leather with Light Helmet & Small Shield (1D4+1+1D3)

Small Shield absorb 5 hit points, 20 hit points

Skills: Fast Talk 50%, Own Kingdom (Zugmantel Area) 40%, Stealth 45%, Ewald speaks decent Latin (30%); the others only speak Germanic.



THE BLOOD SWORD OF EMERIC

INGEBORG, the Vengeful Orphan

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	40	INT	60	Hit Points	11
CON	70	EDU	30	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	40	POW	60	Build	0
DEX	75	SAN	50	Move	8
APP	45	Luck	60	Age	13

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 25% (12/5), damage 1D3+DB
 Sling 40% (20/8), damage 1D4+DB
 Dodge 37%

Armor: None

Skills: Craft (Trapping) 45%, Listen 45%, Own Language (Germanic) 40%, Other Language (Latin) 10% (broken and halting); Own Kingdom (Zugmantel Area) 40%, Spot Hidden 80%, Stealth 60%, Track 65%

THEUEMAR, Mentally Unhinged Father

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	55	INT	40	Hit Points	11
CON	55	EDU	30	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	50	POW	40	Build	0
DEX	50	SAN	35	Move	8
APP	40	Luck	40	Age	52

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Brawl) 25% (12/5), damage 1D3
 Fighting (Spear) 35% (17/7), damage 1D6+DB
 Dodge 25%

Armor: Soft Leather Armor (1D3)

Skills: Craft (Cheese Making) 65%, Fast Talk 45%, Own Language (Germanic) 40%, Other Language (Latin) 30%; Own Kingdom (Zugmantel Area) 40%

WOLVES (x100)

CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE	CHAR.	VALUE
STR	65	INT	15	Hit Points	9
CON	50	EDU	—	Damage Bonus	None
SIZ	40	POW	50	Build	0
DEX	65	SAN	—	Move	12
APP	—	Luck	—	Age	—

Attacks per round: 1

Attacks: Fighting (Teeth, claws, and mauling) 50% (25/10), damage 1D8+DB
 Dodge 32% (16/6)

Armor: 1-point fur.

Skills: Track (by smell) 90%, Spot Hidden 60%



FRONTI NULLA FIDES

NO FAITH IN APPEARANCES

Featuring scenarios by Oscar Rios, Jeffrey Moeller,
Charles Gerard, and William Adcock



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— Publius Vergilius Maro, aka Virgil

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