

The Bloody Sands Of SICARIS

A Fantasy adventure for four to six players Level 6-8.
Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons®
Player's Handbook, Third Edition, published
by Wizards of the Coast®



By SCOTT CHARLTON





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The Bloody Sands Of SICARIS

By Scott Charlton

Cover: Andrew Baker

Artists: Thomas Manning, Chris Meeseey, Jim Pavelec, Tyler Walpole

Editor: Sara Rivera

Graphic Design: Victor Choy Designs, Inc.

Development: Tiny Poisonous Fish Design Team

Tiny Poisonous

Fish Design Team: Andrew C. Overton, Karl Pineiro, Eddo, Guy Pittman,
Scott Charlton

Team Paradigm: Henry Lopez, Nelson Rodriguez, Eric Wiener,
William Rivera, Pedro Barrenechea

Cartography: Anthony Marker, using Campaign Cartographer 2
from ProFantasy Software.

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The Bloody Sands Of SICARIS

First of the Coryani Chronicles Trilogy
Set in Arcanis:
The World of Shattered Empires™

INTRODUCTION

The petty and traitorous schemes of a distant Hinterland commander strike at the very heart of the Coryani. Rumors of collaboration with the dismal, gloomy powers of Cancri send the Imperial Council into a panic as the threat of war looms again over the citizens of the Imperium. Thrust into the intrigues of mighty nations and the sinister plans of the far-flung cities of foreign lands, the players go in secret with an Imperial legate on a task of direst importance to the ancient outpost of Sicaris. The mission is twofold: To bring back a wayward noble daughter of the Imperial family val'Assante', and to find the source of the turmoil that seeks to tip the teetering balance of power. These objectives will lead the heroes into a shadow war of sinister alliances, secretive cabals, assassins, spies, and unfolding machinations, a twisting path that may lead to both their and the Empire's salvation, or its downfall.

SCENARIO FORMAT AND CONVENTIONS

This scenario is for four to six characters of experience levels 6-8. The adventure makes use of the D20 system and is fully compatible with all games that use the D20 rules. The Open Gaming License makes this adventure possible and it requires the use of the 3rd Edition Players Handbook, Dungeon Master's Guide and the Monster Manual published by Wizards of the Coast. (Having a copy of *Sword and Fist* is helpful, but not necessary). With minimal work, the scenario can be adapted to any game world the Dungeon Master chooses.

The Bloody Sands of Sicaris is set in Arcanis: The World of Shattered Empires, on the continent of Onara in a country known as the Hinterlands. GMs can easily transfer the scenario to an existing campaign however, provided the city of Sicaris is in a remote, hot and arid environment.

The module has a main plot and a mystery for the adventurers to solve, but Sicaris is also a thriving, interactive city. A large appendix (NPCs of Sicaris) is given, along with a few detailed areas of the city for encounters and interaction. The GM can base any additional material they wish to develop on these to flesh out Sicaris, the surrounding territory or any other element they may wish to add.

SCENARIO OUTLINE Prelude-

Word of the traitorous acts of the Commander Magistrate in Sicaris reaches the Imperial Council through a spy stationed there by the noble Senator Phineas Assante'-Voucis. The senator also finds that his wayward daughter Hemmenia is staying in the Hinterland City, and is trying to devise a way to get her out and safely back to the capitol (Coryan) before a catastrophe should happen. A solution presents itself when an

old friend of Senator Phineas, the Consul Exeter Barr, asks for Hemmenia's hand in marriage. This gives the senator an idea to enact a plan to snatch up the Commander Magistrate and get his daughter back. He lays out the plan for Exeter, and both he and the Imperial Council formalize the plan by arranging a secret envoy that will arrive in the city of Sicaris.

He will go as a Legate to the city, dupe it's Commander, Nymic Altimera, into believing he is being promoted, and propose to Hemmenia, bringing them both back into the Empire without incident.

Hard Points

A. Exeter's Gambit. The player characters enter the plot when the senator and Exeter approach them with the plan in the Hall of the Justicars, given their good and noble reputations. The adventurers are to shadow the legate and his entourage as bodyguards so as not to arouse suspicions. Senator Phineas tells the group that he has a spy in his employ, an officer of the military garrison in Sicaris. This person is their ally, but Senator Phineas does not reveal this person's name for security purposes. The entourage makes its way in haste through the outer provinces and the nation of Milandir, traveling deep into the Hinterlands, to the old quarry garrison city of Sicaris.

B. Shadow Messengers. The Legate and his entourage reveal themselves to the very nervous Commander Magistrate the morning after they arrive and convince him he has been promoted to the rank of Provincial Governor while touring the city. The adventurers trail the entourage and view the sites of the strange Hinterland City. The adventurers leave to await further instructions, and receive a message to again shadow the Legate in the evening at the Yellow Fountain market.

C. Assassin! In the evening, the adventurers are in the Yellow Fountain Market mingling with the crowd and keeping an eye out, when the adventurers see Legate Exeter arguing on a balcony with Hemmenia Assante'-Voucis. At the same time, Hemmenia's disgruntled bodyguard Bernarr goes to her room to steal a jeweled dirk she carries, for the purposes of framing her. After the argument, the Legate retires for the evening and Talent tells the adventurers to meet with him in the morning.

Bernarr ambushes and kills Exeter in a dark hallway, and stashes the body. A Khitani merchant, Ni kuel Ar witnesses the murder, but says nothing. Water porters discover Exeter's body the next morning and report it to the guards. The many enemies Hemmenia has made in Sicaris place the blame on her, according to plan.

D. Enemies of the people (part 1). Brother Talent awakens the adventurers in the morning and tells them about the murder. The people of Sicaris gather in the arena and call for Hemmenia to be arrested and tried, but the Commander Magistrate is nervous about detaining an in-law of the Emperor. He addresses the people in the amphitheater and states his case, so the angry mob calls for the Vanomir tribal custom of trial by combat in the arena, and asks that Hemmenia choose a champion. The Commander Magistrate reluctantly agrees in order to keep the peace in Sicaris. Bernarr feigns a leg injury, disqualifying him as Hemmenia's champion.

E. Enemies of the people (part 2). Shortly after, the Garrison Captain, Vander Proust, arrests the adventurers for unspecified acts of treason as spies. A squad of soldiers takes the adventurers to the fort prison under guard and seals them off from any communication in an underground cell.

F. Of Rituals, Khitanimen, and Tigers. The Captain who arrested the adventurers visits them in the cell and reveals that he is the Imperial spy. He lays out a plan to help

Hemmenia by selling them off as slaves to the arena to fight as her champions, to protect their identities and fulfill the two-part mission.

The adventurers are taken through the streets in a bizarre ritual to the auction block and gladiator pens. The group meets Upo, a Khitani tiger fighter who tells them about a secret meeting he overheard between the merchant Ni kuel Ar, and the Altharian Circus Master, Sylab.

The adventurers learn about Hemmenia and her intolerable personality, and find out she is not the real killer, yet they still do not know who is.

G. Bargains of the flesh. The adventurers meet the Head Slave Keeper Uzinda, who offers for them to fight willingly in the games, promising a glorious and lucrative future. Sylab places the adventurers on the block from behind the scene and manipulates things to insure Hemmenia's bodyguard Bernarr purchases them to fulfill a deal he made to help her.

H. We who are about to die... Bernarr takes the adventurers to the arena, where they meet Hemmenia and Sylab. The trial by combat then commences for three bouts.

The adventurers learn of and see various things that give them clues to the mysterious murder and the conspiracies that surround it, during and in between the fights. If the adventurers win the bouts, they will receive the customary prize, and Hemmenia will grant them their freedom provided they help her catch the real killer. If they lose, she will make them a deal for the same.

I. The Murderer Revealed. The adventurers will go to the Clasp for a victory celebration; the group will glean information that points to Bernarr as the legate's assassin. The rogue Lilyblack will devise a scheme to try out this theory and reveal that the bodyguard is indeed the murderer with the group's help. This will expose Bernarr's plot, along with Sylab the Circus Master and Ni kuel Ar's. Either Bernarr will attempt to flee and be apprehended to stand trial in Coryan, or he will be killed while trying to escape.

J. The heir of Sicaris and the wrath of the Emperor. The next day the Commander Magistrate will proclaim his promotion and name Captain Proust as Regent-Commander publicly. He will then leave with the entourage and the adventurers the following day on the caravan. Before the caravan leaves, the centurions will take Bernarr into custody to stand trial in the capitol.

Brother Talent will ask Hemmenia to leave with the caravan for her safety. The centurions will arrest Nymic and strip him of his title when the group returns to the city of Ashvan in Milandir.

They will arrive a week later, whereupon the group will receive their rewards and a very powerful new patron, Senator Phineas Assante'-Voucis.

GM's Background (Prelude)

The main thrust of the adventure plot hinges on two men, one of whom has grown tired of the decaying dream of the Coryani Empire, in both its lethargic bureaucracy and its splintering religious institutions. His name is Nymic Altamera, Commander-Magistrate of Sicaris, a rough-and-tumble city situated in the far reaches of the Hinterlands. He has allied himself traitorously with the dark nation of Canceri and its agents both church and state. He gives aid in the form of border passes, money, information, and worst of all, illegally purchased slaves, most of whom end up on the bloody altars of The Dark Triumvirate, the state religion of The Theocrat in Canceri.

The other man, Phineas Assante'-Voucis, is a noble senator who sits on the Imperial Council in the capitol of Coryan, whose responsibilities include certain security measures in the political interests of the Empire. He has had trouble with two things for some time now. The first is his wayward and

headstrong daughter, Hemmenia. She gallivants around the outlandish and exotic lands of the outer Imperial Provinces, stepping on toes, abusing the power her father's position affords, and slandering the good name of Assante'-Voucis. She scoffs at the idea of marriage and settling down, preferring an adventurous life to that of a civilized, sedentary one.

The second problem is with the Commander-Magistrate of Sicaris. Senator Phineas was directly responsible for Nymic's transfer to the backwater outpost of the Hinterlands, as the Senate saw the Commander as seditious and unruly. The senator had it arranged for a garrison officer there to act as a spy and report anything suspicious. The spy has made regular reports for some time now, but nothing of consequence was apparent. Recently however, the actions of the Commander-Magistrate have been known to connect with the many churches and factions of Canceri. The spy has reported this to Senator Phineas, and thus the Imperial Council, and it has set them in a frothing panic. A Canceri base in the Hinterlands would change the political and strategic theater drastically, and for the worse.

However, the council members and the army are indecisive as to what they can do to avert such an occurrence. They cannot simply recall the Commander-Magistrate, as he might grow suspicious and make a move with the Canceri or the Vanomir. If they use direct force or assassination on the traitor, it could lead to discovery and provoke war. The Canceri, Milandir, and even the barbarian Hinterland chieftains would use any excuse to play their hand in the political arena if knowledge of the traitor or imperial intervention got out. This was the subject of disagreement and much-heated debate on the council for days.

Shortly after this, the spy also reported that the senator's daughter Hemmenia, whose exact whereabouts were unknown to him, recently arrived in Sicaris. This fact has clouded the senator's judgement from fear of placing her in danger should they have to invade the Hinterland city.

One evening after the council adjourned, Senator Phineas made his way home while rubbing his aching head. Exeter Barr, and old friend, suddenly hailed him in the street. Exeter, a capable and seasoned public official, had just returned to Coryan from a successful assignment as political consul to a far off provincial governor. Phineas returned his greetings, glad to see his old friend, and made the offer to catch up over dinner at his home. Upon arriving, they talked of the doings of the Imperium and more personal matters; Exeter asked how things went in the Council and how his lovely daughter Hemmenia fared. Later in the evening after dinner, Exeter became more blunt and sincere, asking about Hemmenia again, stating his true feelings for her, and proposing marriage.

The shock this gave to Phineas nearly caused him to faint, but a strange epiphany came to him suddenly. As an anxious Exeter waited in silence for an answer, the senator concocted a scheme to solve both of his problems at once. He knew that Hemmenia had a strong affection for Exeter. Therefore, he would send Exeter as a legate to Sicaris to "promote" the traitor as a ruse, and get his daughter back, well rooted to the confines of the Empire in wedlock. He then agreed to Exeter's wishes, but on the condition that the consul should take the title of Legate to Sicaris, and bring his daughter "out of that mongrel den of thieves." He slowly and carefully related the situation to Exeter, and explained his plan. Exeter sat wild-eyed but patient, and finally agreed to the deal. The next day, Senator Phineas requested a personal audience with the High Chancellor of the council, and the Imperial Cabinet. The vote on the plan was almost unanimous, and became formalized within hours. By the next morning, Exeter was wearing the signet ring of an Imperial Legate.



However, there will be an unaccounted for element to the Imperial plan. Exeter will indeed meet with the Commander-Magistrate and dupe him, the ruse going well in Sicaris. He will also propose to Hemmenia as planned. However, another petty scheme will attach itself to the already complicated affair.

Hemmenia has a famous centurion bodyguard, Bernarr, who accompanies her on her travels. He is as well traveled, accomplished, and decorated as a soldier can be. He has even received the Laurel of Vigilance from the Emperor himself. He accepted the task of guarding Hemmenia as an easy way to serve out the rest of his term in the Imperial legions.

However, the years of constant nagging, pointless duels and conflicts she has caused or subjected Bernarr to, and the abuse of his famous reputation, have made him hateful and murderous, particularly to Hemmenia. Getting back to the interior of the Empire is the obsession that consumes him daily. Due to Hemmenia's powerful connections and selfish nature, she has not allowed him to transfer to another post, given the fact that she enjoys having the famous soldier as her personal thug and showpiece.

Bernarr cannot not harm his charge, or see harm brought to her. He would be the one to answer for it. Therefore, he waits patiently for an opportunity to present itself.

When the Legate arrives and greets Hemmenia, the bodyguard will see that opportunity materialize. While they are arguing, Bernarr will excuse himself, go to their room, and steal an exotic jeweled dirk she carries. Bernarr will trail Exeter when he leaves from arguing with Hemmenia, envenom the dirk, ambush him in a dark hallway (witnessed by a Khitani merchant in secret), and stash the body. Water bearers will find the body the next morning with the dirk protruding from its neck.

Hemmenia's many enemies will accuse her of the murder, but the Commander-Magistrate will be afraid to arrest an in-law of the Emperor. An old custom of the Vanomir will be called for instead, and the Commander-Magistrate will reluctantly agree to suppress the revolt he will have if he does not, to buy some time.

This will indirectly lead into the adventurers fighting in the arena for Hemmenia's honor, and later revealing the true assassin's identity. You can use the glossary below to familiarize yourself with the terms for the lands and people of Onara, particularly to make a comparable transfer for an ongoing or starting campaign.

The adventure scenario is written with enough rich detail to stand-alone or for use as a continuation to the Canceri Chronicles. Every scenario is either a Hard Point or a Soft Point. The Hard Points are essential to the plot. Each Hard Point introduces, furthers, or resolves a subplot involving a major character or conflict. For the scenario to make sense, it is suggested that the GM include every Hard Point, though certain details may be altered to fit into a larger or existing campaign.

The Soft Points, on the other hand, give the players background information or add tension to the drama of a scene as it unfolds. They GM may alter Soft Points more easily than the Hard Points. The GM can modify these to suit a whim, expand them to extend a scene subplot or the adventure as a whole, or exclude them all together.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Altharians: The people of the southeastern peninsula of Onara, once a colony of the Coryani that broke off and became independent. They take their name from Althares, God of Knowledge and Artificers whom they worship. The Altharians are tall and black skinned.

Assante: The additive surname of an extended family branch of the Imperial family of Coryan, without the Val prefix. This is an adoptive name as the family is related by marriage and

not by blood, and therefore not of Valinor lineage. An example would be the noble Senator Phineas Assante'-Voucis.

Canceri: A nation that is the sworn enemy of Milandir. Canceri broke from the Coryani two hundred years ago due to a religious schism. Its government is a theocracy that venerates the "Dark Triumvirate" that is made up of the gods Neroth, Sarish, and Nier.

Censure: An independent city-state of the Hinterlands that started out as a penal colony for dangerous or politically useful criminals of the Coryani Empire. The city is a resounding center of culture now, known for its opulent buildings, crafts, performers, and rumors of a secret, underground city that lies beneath it.

Coryani: The most powerful and civilized empire on Onara, with a history that stretches back over eight hundred years. Both Milandir and Cancen split from the Coryani.

Ehtzara: Hinterland tribal sorcerers, known popularly for their gifts of prophecy, mysterious or reclusive nature, and malign acts such as raising the undead or uttering powerful curses. They dress in black desert robes with tasseled hoods or cowls, and are often unscrupulous and evil.

Hinterlands: A largely unexplored territory of arid tree dotted scrub, desert, salt flats, mesas, and rocky coastline, situated on the northeastern corner of Onara. This largely inhospitable land is home to the Yhing-heer, nomadic barbarian tribes of fierce horse clans.

Many legends of dog men, ancient treasures and monoliths, strange stellar lights, caves of glass and hideous monsters come out of this ancient land.

Hurrian: God of Storms and Strength, The Thunderer, The Reluctant Warrior. This Deity is paid homage to all over Onara, but there is only one temple to him in the Hinterlands, the Temple of the Fountain in Sicaris.

Khitani: a vast nation to the west of the Coryani, and its historic enemy. Those outside the Khitani nation know little of the elusive people save that their ruler is a being called the Sleeping Emperor.

Milandir: A province that split from the Coryani when the Emperor failed to protect it from the aggression of neighboring Canceri. The Milandir revere knightly ideals.

Nawal: The title of a Hinterland horse clan chieftain, comparable with the medieval noble rank of Baron or a provincial governor. The Nawal is the head of state for a given tribal territory, responsible for its defense and all the affairs of his domain. He may rule over a single tribe, or many depending on his power and popularity.

Pax Coryanis: Literally translated from the ancient common tongue, "The Coryani Peace."

Takomir: The nomadic tribal horse clans of the eastern coastal regions in the Hinterlands. They are tall and swarthy of complexion, though less so than their cousins the Vanomir, probably due to ancient infusions of Coryani blood.

Valinor: The chief servants of the gods. Long ago, an equal number of Valinor served each god. Legends say that Sarish tempted the Valinor with the promise of gifts and many of them fell from grace, becoming demons.

Vanomir: The tribal peoples of the south, west and interior of the Hinterlands, cousins to the Takomir. They are virtually identical in appearance and culture to the Takomir, with the exception that they are darker of skin and eye color, are often clean-shaven, are shorter and stockier, and have more permanently settled villages.

Ymandragore: a mysterious island realm ruled by the Sorcerer-King. The Sorcerer-King uses spells unknown to the rest of Onara. One order of mages in his service is the Ordainers; wizards capable of "eating" magic and who employ strange magical artifacts.

Yhing-heer: the indigenous peoples of the Hinterlands, and the language spoken by the tribes of the Vanomir and

Takomir. The language is a mixture of Low Khitani, Ancient common, and one other unidentifiable language group. It forms the base of Yhing-heer with the other two as additives. The tribes measure a person's wealth in horses and warriors, the exceptions being fertile or productive lands.

HISTORY OF SICARIS

The origins of the city stretch back to the time when the great empires of Coryani and Khitani were at war. This was before Milandir was autonomous and the province held the camps of three different legions; the Legion of Deliverance, the Legion of the Shining Pillar and the Legion of the Creeping Asp. One of the legions the Legion of the Shining Pillar was given the task of exploring the interior of the Hinterlands using native scouts to find a suitable site to quarry stone blocks needed for the forts being raised along the borders.

A site was located, but hostile indigenous tribes of horsemen, the Vanomir, fought the legion, regarding the chosen site as their tribal land. After many pitched battles against the tribesmen, the legion was at one point kept under siege on a mesa top for two weeks. The Vanomir could not gain ground and the Coryani were dangerously short on water. Reinforcements were days if not weeks away, so in their desperation during a lull in the siege, the legionnaires tried to make a truce.

They "volunteered" an Altherian servant and sent him into the midst of the Hinterlander camp with gifts of clothing and weapons, threatening to shoot him full of arrows if he ran back. The Altherian wandered slowly into the center of the enemy camp situated in a nearby gulch, his legs shaking, nearly petrified with fear. The legionnaires watched in hiding on the ridge top, arrows knocked in taut bows.

When the horsemen finally noticed the servant, they were frightened and visibly coiled back from him, much to the amazement of the legionnaires, and the Altherian. The Hinterlanders had never seen a black man, and kept crying out "Ehtzara! Ehtzara!" They mistakenly thought he was painted black, and thus a sorcerer or shaman about to cast spells and sow curses among them. They assumed he must be powerful indeed, or crazy and guarded by lethal spirits, for walking right into the midst of them. They implored him not to destroy them or wither their horses, suing for peace and ending the siege.

Negotiations began through the Altherian "shaman." Before long, the Coryani established a permanent rock quarry and basic roads through the main body of the tribal territory, and to the Hinterland penal colony of Censure. As time passed and the quarry grew, trade began to flourish between the Coryani and the local populace, and fraternization was commonplace. The Altherian learned the language of the horsemen, (Yhing-heer) and acted as ambassador, making clever decisions, formalizing deals, bartering finely woven Coryani cloth and dyes, iron tools, and spun glass for Hinterlander spices, salt, horn bows and exotic baubles. The soldiers even took to calling him the name given by the Vanomir, Ni'rotogi (Dark Wisdom) and he is recalled with much regard in campfire tales to this day.

With the construction of roads and the advent of peace, merchants began to trickle in, trading crafted imperial goods for Hinterland gold or lustrous, uncut garnets. Strange tribal objects of carved black glass or ancient saurian treasures increased interests and piqued imaginations, becoming all the rage in the interior of the empire. A permanent trade post and garrison, called Edgefort, was established, and several building projects began, including irrigation using natural stone water traps and a bucket/pulley system, as well as the domestication of a variety of large flightless birds called "Axebeaks".

Relatively far from any war front, and because of the defensible location, hostile forces rarely raided the small city, other than an occasional bandit attack on caravans. Client kings were established amongst the Vanomir, and the

Takomir peoples to the east, giving up a large portion of their wealth, horses and land in return for Imperial citizenship and protection. Hinterlander cavalry units were established and based in Milandir, to fight against the Khitani and Canceri.

Turmoil finally came to the Hinterlands and Edgefort indirectly, when a great effort was made by the mighty Khitani armies to push their chariot columns south across the badland plain of the First City into the upper Coryani provinces. The Coryani sent almost every legion out of Milandir and the Hinterlands on an intercept course, and over the course of months, troops were drawn out from as far back as Edgefort to buffer and support the new northern frontline. This led to the infamous Canceri raids on the unprotected Milandir, a tactical blunder that would eventually cost the empire the province through revolt and secession.

As troops left Edgefort, however, many angry Vanomir and Takomir Client-kings argued rightly that it would lead back to an intertribal war in the Hinterlands. Eventually it did, and after the independence of Milandir, almost every road to the quarry town was cut off, leaving the Client kings to fend for themselves in a bloody conflict. Humanoids, bandits, and highwaymen raided the territory. Any settlers from the empire outside Edgefort's direct protection fled southwest, a massive diaspora of refugees across the border of the new country of Milandir. The Client kings talked seditiously of revolt, citing the Milandiri example, and when they had quelled their tribal enemies at last, they staged a military coup and seized the fort town by force, restoring order to the land. The Coryani could do nothing to quell the revolt. The Coryani had no troops left to punish the Canceri, let alone a distant Hinterland outpost.

Soon after, the Coryani sent an Imperial ambassador to Edgefort and achieved nominal agreements. There would be a Coryani Commander, a Magistrate and a council made up of Hinterlander chieftains as a basic governing body, but the old tribal cults were the only churches. The Coryani were still free to do business in the territory, but the chieftains would set all trade rates. The council would govern over territorial alliances, leaving direct militia actions in the fort and the city to the nominal legionnaire forces still there (shrunk now to only forty soldiers from two legions). The Empire would receive an annual tributary tax, but no longer could the Empire draw any troops from the Hinterland tribes. The empire, happy to have any foothold in the area at all, agreed to the terms.

The city claimed independence, nominal alliance with the Coryani, and was renamed Sicaris. Eventually the respective roles of Commander and Magistrate became one and the same, hence the current ruler's title of Commander-Magistrate. Years have gone by, and as the once great Coryani and Khitani Empires break apart, fading slowly into history, the hills and shifting dunes of the Hinterlands show the mere echoes of foreign efforts to tame the rugged interior. They cover up the past like secrets, mocking and aloof, testament to the timeless nature of this harsh and distant land. The far off rock quarry outpost is all that remains of the Legion of the Shining Pillar and their efforts in the land of the savage horse clans.

About five years ago, an Altherian half-breed named Sylab came to the Hinterlands, looking for the mysterious ancient city of rock he had heard tales of as a boy. He had always wanted to visit the floor of the old quarry basin. The traveling minstrels who told him then of Sicaris, had said that the quarry was used as an arena for mighty heroes locked in titanic and valorous duels to the throng of exotic crowds. Minstrels, actors, and acrobatic trick riders gave grandiose performances, bringing refined culture to the hoary wastes of the Hinterlands. When he was older, Sylab set out to pursue his lifelong dream of travelling far into the Hinterlands to Sicaris. Upon reaching the city, Sylab rushed to see the amphitheater, not even stopping for water, or to wash off the dust of the road. Therefore, it was with great disappointment



that he viewed the ramshackle, dirty remnants of the arena. Ragged merchants and traders were dealing on its floor, selling cheap, tawdry wares on its steps. Animals were housed in crude pens. It was nothing like Sylab pictured it would be. He sat depressed and slumped in an archway for hours.

After sitting and brooding on his situation, he was approached by a native horseman and invited to his clan tent, to meet the man's tribe and have a meal. The Vanomir, who recalled the old tales of Nirotogi, embraced him fondly. Nymic Altimera had only recently been transferred there, and was not liked at all by the Sicarites. During conversation, the horsemen complained about the new Commander-Magistrate and the troubles he brought to the city.

When Sylab heard the Vanomir talk of the current state of affairs in Sicaris, combined with the vision of the arena still in his head, he envisioned a way to capitalize on the situation. His plan would make him loved by the Commander Magistrate and the army, the Vanomir, the thieves and slavers, everyone in Sicaris. He asked the Nawal clan head, Kharkofen, for his help as an investor, plying his charismatic charm and penchant for storytelling. Kharkofen agreed and they became partners.

They assembled patrons, investors, warriors, performers, beasts and bookies, all for a grand re-opening of the gladiatorial circus in the newly revamped quarry pit, with "Sylab the Circus Master" at its center. If the arena were not as he envisioned it, then Sylab would make it so. The grand reemergence of the games was a hit and even Nymic gained popularity. As the coffers filled, Sylab reinvested, tying into every nook and cranny of the territory. He made deals with the Commander-Magistrate, taking the affairs of the city off Nymic's shoulders. He propelled himself up through the ranks of the populace, landing the role of shadow ruler of Sicaris. Now, the arena is the center of all business in the land of the Vanomir.

In fact, it is Sylab that is helping Hemmenia Voucis by designing the Olympic style matches to favor her champions. This is both to gain a powerful new ally in the empire, and to provide a more seemly and valorous cover to the arena games, now more appealing to the tastes of the inner provinces of the Coryani, and beyond. Besides, the new heroes Hemmenia purchased, coupled with the scandalous backdrop of the trial, will bring a huge draw to the arena today. Sylab cannot lose.

The City of Sicaris

Type:	Large
Population:	4,904
GP Limit:	3,000
Assets:	735,000
Power Centers:	Conventional (Commander-Magistrate, Chaotic Neutral) Nonstandard (Guild Master of Thieves, True Neutral)
Military: Soldiers:	54
Militia:	594 (due to Yhing-heer levies)
Captain of the Guard:	Captain Vander Proust Fighter 6
Industries:	Horses, livestock, fine leather goods, spices, slaves, cloth, silver, minerals, copper, arena
Features of Note:	Arena, Cave Gate, Exotic market places
Quarters and Districts:	Cavern Quarter (cave gate, Equestrian gate, fort, barracks and southern portion). Cliff Quarter (western portion, cliff homes and bridge-streets, Serpents Square, Street of the Blessed Fishes). Low Quarter (lower eastern portion, Night Foxes, Beggars market, and merchant shops) Guildler Quarter (upper eastern portion, crafter guildhalls, and streets). Arena district (arena and Arena Street, gladiator and slave blocks, Yellow Fountain market, and auction yard). Orchard District (Orchard hill, Temple of the Fountain, wells and water traps, farms and horse peddlers)

EXETER'S GAMBIT (Hard Point)

This is the point where the player characters enter the plot. Exeter was instructed to choose an entourage of specialists, and a secret bodyguard to trail him on the way to the Hinterlands. The adventurers are selected to fill the role of the secret bodyguard. The adventurers are assumed to have great and valorous reputations at this point, having been known to serve and champion the cause of good and righteousness many times in the past. If the players have already been run through the Canceri Chronicles, they are known to have assisted Duke Victor val'Holryn, the town of Ashvan, and Milandir on the whole. If not, they are assumed to have amassed famous deeds of valor and daring by seventh or eighth level, and the GM can supplement the knowledge of the player character's reputations with these.

The adventurers find themselves traveling the Imperial road, looking over the city of Coryan, capitol of the Imperium. It is known as Mighty Coryan or the City of Columns, grandest and most civilized center on the continent. It is home to every race and type of people, large thronging crowds from every corner of the land. It is a place of great royal manors, mighty guilds, majestic temples, stalwart towers and spires, ancient schools, grand libraries and amphitheaters. Coryan is known throughout the provinces as a place of justice, civility, and learned men.

Everywhere one cares to look the efforts of centuries of refinement and architectural construction. There are broad, paved streets and plazas, tiered, beautiful fountains, giant pedestals with exquisite statuary, stoic bronze and marble busts, expansive parks, eldritch, tree lined thoroughfares, and always the multitude of balconies and columns so loved by the Coryani.

The main quarters of the city form a central hub, built along the hills that line the sides of the broad Corvis River. The opulent Royal palace, the Senatorium, and the Dome of The Valinor, whose mammoth antique minarets, tiled roofs, and shining marble walls can be seen for a league or more outside the Imperial Quarter are merely some of the dozens of government and religious structures that adorn the quarter.

The royal quarter ends in the impressive Tower of Vigilance and the Triumphal Bridge. The bridge spans the river to connect with a vast, articulate, spider web stretching out or in-between to encompass the newer parts and additions of the city made over centuries of growth. Read the boxed text below to the players.

The lot of you has just passed through the Governor's gate, pushing past the guards, carts, vendors, and beggars, all trying to make their way into the gate or to practice their respective trades. You settle after your travels on a bench in the famous Park of the Centurions, under a statue of the Soldier-Saint Alrameus Vernico of Plexus. You have come to the capitol to answer a written message, delivered to you a week ago. It is stamped with a wax seal bearing the herald of the noble house of Assante'-Voucis, a noble line of Coryan and in laws to the Imperial family.

To (place character's names here), from His Noble Honor, Senator Phineas Assante'-Voucis of The Imperial Council.

Greetings and Salutations. It has come to my attention that your efforts and deeds in the past have been not only valorous and just, but also of service to the good peoples of the Imperium at large. These deeds have not gone unnoticed, and I have been counseled by my best advisors to seek you out, as I am in need of valiant persons of your caliber. I request an audience with you in the Hall of the Justicars by no later than midday (on the seventh day of this month, Spring Tide).

The matter at hand is of dire importance, and I regret not

being able to elaborate on the details. This can be done in person only, and if you have not responded by the aforementioned date, I will assume you are not interested or are precluded from doing so by other events unknown to me.

There is great reward for your service, which will also be discussed upon your arrival in Coryan. I bid you good journey and safe travel. Until we meet, speak of this to no one, a remark I am sure you will adhere to, as you are known for your discretion and professional service.

Respectfully,

Honorable Senator Phineas Assante'-Voucis

When the adventurers finally leave the park, they can be directed very easily to The Hall of the Justicars, which resides in the Imperial Quarter. They will approach the huge, pretentious building and be shown to a private office by a young, male scribe down a bust-filled, marble hallway. Read the boxed text to the player characters.

The scribe asks you to follow him down the deep, imposing hall, and makes his way around many corners and down several flights of stairs. The building is labyrinthine, a dizzying nexus of corridors, stairwells, stately rooms, chambers, and offices, and you wonder if even seasoned delvers such as yourselves can find your way out without a guide or some sort of divination. The whole building is alive with the muffled, sober sounds of bureaucratic activity and shuffling papers.

The scribe stops at a thick, padded door and opens it, gesturing for the adventurers to go inside. Upon entering, the smell of rich leather fills their nostrils, and they view a compact room with a rectangular oak table, and eight expensive leather chairs with arching backs. There are no windows, and several book and scroll cases with varied volumes and texts on law or political affairs are placed snugly against the far walls. Four silver batons in baroque sconces light the room, emanating light from their tips, presumably magical. An exquisite map of the Empire and its surrounding territories covers most of the wall next to the door the group has just gone through. The scribe requests that the adventurers wait here until the legate Exeter and Senator Phineas arrive, and shuts the door behind him.

Everything in the room is as it appears. This room is used for secret or high security meetings. There are several wards placed on the room to protect it from spying and a -20 penalty is added to any for a Listen checks on noise from the room due to the padded door and special construction. There is really nothing else to search for or preoccupy the adventurers except the lengthy and boring books.

They will wait for about forty minutes until the Senator and Exeter Barr arrive. If they try to leave or be seen any sooner, they will only get lost in the maze of rooms and halls, or run into clerks or scribes who cannot help them. If they should cause trouble in any way, ten sixth level fighters accompanied by a tenth level centurion from the Legion of Vigilance will arrive in 3D6 rounds after a cry for the guards is sounded.

After the group has finished exploring the room or waiting, read the text below aloud.

You are starting to become restless, when the door opens and two men in white robes enter. The first man is about five and a half feet tall, middle aged with short cropped black hair and a handsome, well-tanned angular face. He is holding a large scroll under one arm, and he wears a gold Imperial legate's signet ring on his right hand. The other man is older, and has a look of dignified and imposing wisdom, standing a full six feet in height,

with longer silvery curls on his head. A red senator's sash lies across his large chest, and he looks you over appraisingly, not betraying any reaction.

The black haired man begins to speak. "Good day to you all. I am the Legate Exeter Barr. This is his Honor Senator Phineas Assante'-Voucis." The senator nods at the group, but remains silent. "Please, take a seat."

Exeter gestures with a hand to the leather chairs, smiling. They both take a seat at the head of the table as the legate unfurls the scroll under his arm, revealing a detailed map of the Hinterlands with several annotations added to it.

The legate begins speaking again. "And now to the business at hand. We have heard of your famous exploits and it has come to our attention from reliable sources that you have some experience in the undertaking that we are about to present. However, we can only give you cursory details, given the delicate nature of this affair. More information will be furnished should you accept this task.

It has come to the Imperial Council's attention that a distant provincial army commander is offering aid to an enemy of the Imperium. This traitor cannot be dealt with by the usual means, due to the location of his command and the persons involved."

At this point, the senator becomes visibly uncomfortable. Exeter notices this, and continues. "I have been given the task of bringing this traitorous commander to justice in a slightly unorthodox way, a way which requires careful planning and execution. Upon our arrival, we will enact upon a course that will foil the commander into leaving with us. This will separate him from his soldiers and make him think he is being promoted to a higher rank."

The legate leans toward you, speaking in hushed tones. "The part of this operation which you have been brought here for is to simply shadow myself and my entourage in disguise on the way to the traitor's garrison. That and to see that nothing untoward should happen outside the scope of my influences, shall we say, given the nature of the environment in which this will all take place." He glances down to the map of the Hinterlands, and looks suggestively at the group. "I trust you take my meaning."

The GM may inform the players that their characters are well aware of the legends and tales of the barbarous Hinterlands, and the Yhing-heer, the heathen tribes of savage horsemen that dwell there.

They will know that there is only one Coryani garrison still there, in the mysterious, old fort-city of Sicaris. They will also have heard adventurer's tales of the fabled city. Sicaris is famous for its bloody gladiatorial arena, exotic women, and the adventurous stories of thieves and slavers, sorcerers, hideous monsters, as well as the vast hoards of ancient treasure said to be hidden amongst the hills of the region. Some of these tales include the lost Temple of the Hidden Star, elder animals that speak, a subterranean human city, strange and powerful artifacts, and invisible men that reside in glittering caverns of glass.

Continue reading the boxed text to the players

After you ponder over the map and its obvious implications, Exeter continues speaking. "From the look on your faces, I see you are familiar with the legends of that place. You will be handsomely rewarded should you accept, and any help or information in future endeavors within the region will be given freely.

I will give you a while to consider, but you must realize that time is pressing and we have to act with haste. This problem might lead yet again to war if it is not dealt with promptly. I ask you to consider that, and the powerful allies you will have if you successfully complete your task.

I must add that it is of larger scope than it seems, and I do not even think the commander realizes what he has done, nor the powerful forces aligned against him. We will return shortly to receive your answer."

Allow the players to discuss the offer for a while and answer any simple questions they may ask about the Hinterlands or Sicaris (see the glossary above and the section: History of Sicaris). If they attempt to use the Sense motive skill, they receive a +10 circumstance bonus to see that the legate is being rather blunt and telling the truth. However, he is hiding something additional (the concern he and the senator have for Hemmenia). Any attempts to use mind reading spells, charms or divination will end in the spell fizzling out due to the magical wards placed on the room.

If the adventurers agree or ask about the specifics of the mission, Exeter will hint at the "enemy of the Empire," the nation of Canceri to underline both his point and the gravity of the situation. If they still do not accept, he is prepared to offer an initial large sum of money, and even hereditary titles if the group is not persuaded.

It is left up to the GM to come up with the total value in gold pieces offered by the legate, but it should be relatively substantial (10,000 GP or more). Exeter is not above bartering for the payment, in gems, lands, favors and patronage, access to libraries or magic, etc. as long as it is not too outlandish a request. His main goal is to get them to accept the offer. Once they do, the GM can play the part of the legate and fill the adventurers in on the specifics of the mission.

Senator Phineas and Exeter will thank the group profusely when they accept. They will give them an address to wait the outfitting and departure of a large seasonal caravan. The adventurers, the Legate, and his entourage will use the caravan as cover to make their way to Sicaris unnoticed. The location they will stay in is a small but stately manor on the river, with all the accoutrements a modern noble's home can offer. Kitchen with servants, an exotic pathway garden, bathhouse, stables with three excellent horses and room for five more, as well as a library. The group will be waiting for two days until the caravan is ready to depart. Until then, they are free to roam about the capitol and go as they please.

The adventure continues after the players have been outfitted, and have traveled for weeks in the shadow of the Imperial Legate on a seasonal trade caravan through Milandir and into the Hinterlands. The group they follow consists of the Legate Exeter Barr, Brother Talent of Annonica, (a monk who served in the military as a diplomat), and two adept centurions, Eras and Marcello. The Legate and his group pose as a boring Imperial bureaucrat, his protegee' consul and scribe, with two standard legionnaires as his escort respectively, on a routine journey to Sicaris.

Exeter has instructed the adventurers to don the guise of prospectors, or gladiators, especially if they should be recognized as who they really are, given their somewhat famous reputations. They have been given the appropriate gear for their cover story, along with false border passes and excellent horses if they did not already have them. The GM can tell the group to come up with aliases or at least false names, and/or disguises.

Read the boxed text below aloud to the group.

You have traveled for weeks on the long train of wagons, occasionally driving off fierce animals at night or troops of bandits easily discouraged by your prowess. You have seen every northern province of the Coryani Empire, passed through the rolling green hills, forests and swamps of Milandir, and the recently sacked northern town of Ashvan, only recently re-garrisoned and barely recovered from a mighty Canceri siege. Your caravan was embraced fondly there, giving vital supplies and information from the south.

The town of Ashvan is a typical northern Milandiran town, with a strong garrison, a few inns and taverns, farmsteads and a church of Illir. (Ashvan is detailed in the module *The Spear of the Loghin*, but a basic description is given here if it is unavailable to the GM). Ashvan is ruled over by a Knight-Protector, a vassal to Duke Victor val'Holryn. It is also home to the Order of the Spear, a group of knights dedicated to guard the Cold Road, the main route into the sinister nation of Canceri.

After two days of selling and revelry in Ashvan, the caravan pressed on past the last Milandiri border fort, up into the high, arid frontier of the Hinterlands. It is a land of canyons, huge outcroppings of rock, a volcanic mountain range, baked mud flats, shifting sand dunes and gnarled scrub plains. Tales of weird monsters, powerful witches, and strange stellar lights abound here as well.

It is also home to the tribes of the Yhing-heer, savage clans of nomadic horsemen. They are said to be so numerous that they sound like an earthquake when storming out of the sandy hills and mesas, an awesome, indefatigable hoard of wild haired, bloody eyed heathens that stretches past the horizon.

You continue traveling down an ancient road, almost indistinguishable from the sandy, boulder-strewn terrain. Twisted sun scorched bushes, trees and tall, thorny cacti dot the roadside. Flowers bloom here and there signaling the coming of the spring rains. Lizards, hares, and creatures that are unidentifiable scurry under branches or low shelves of pale, striated stone.

A wind picks up, throwing up clouds of sand and dust into your face, blasting wagon sides and causing them to rock violently. You travel with the caravan under the hot sun, riding from morning until noon, stopping at a cave, where the drovers tell you an old well is hidden. Everyone gets off their horses or climbs down from the wagons. Five of the drovers head down to the cave to draw water in buckets with ropes.



BANDITS, OR MERE HOODLUMS? (Soft Point)

The caravan is being tailed by a large group of young Vanomir horsemen, who are merely curious and a little mischievous. They have been scouting for sight of the spring caravan.

They will wait until the caravan begins traveling, and then ride daringly close to the wagons. They will begin hooting, attempting dexterous riding tricks, giving war cries to frighten the meek, and will try to snatch a piece of gear or article of clothing from one of the player characters. Snatching an item is a melee touch attack. The horsemen get a +4 circumstance bonus to this attack.

Read the boxed text below.

The caravan continues its way down the old road, through a line of low, rugged hills. About an hour later, one of you spots a dust cloud coming from the many Yhing-heer horsemen galloping hard behind the caravan, not two spears casts in back of it. People scramble into wagons and take cover, as ten or twelve of the savage riders race past the wagons, veering close, shouting out war cries in a loud, un-synchronous staccato, "AVEEEHAARI!" A warrior dressed in blue desert garb and black sash gallops up to a wagon, throwing a squirming lizard through the canvas flap. A woman's piercing scream and cries of "Get it off! Get it off me!" tells true that the critter found its mark. The young warrior seems to take much pleasure in the woman's cries; laughing so hard he almost falls off his horse.

The other warriors perform daring acts of horsemanship, vaulting from the ground over saddles, standing on their feet and even hands, or stretching down to grab stones from the speeding ground beneath them.

As one of you is watching this take place, you feel a tug and realize too late that another of the barbarian riders has pulled (a piece of gear or article of clothing) from you. He rides back into the midst of the other horsemen at the rear, blending in, and they disperse in many directions, leaving as fast as they came back into the hills, in a cloud of rising dust.

If the adventurers attack the horsemen, or pursue the thief, the Vanomir will still disperse. It is a -15 penalty to wilderness lore and Riding checks to keep up with and follow the expert horsemen in their native territory. If they are harmed however, they will return in the night with a sack of poisonous creatures to distribute among the adventurer's bedrolls, to avenge their honor.

If the group takes the encounter in jest as it was meant, then the bravest and stealthiest of the Vanomir warriors will sneak into camp later that night. He will place a bone fetish on the chest of the sleeping adventurer whose property he stole. This is a sort of fair exchange to the young Vanomir, and a way to count coup on his "adversary."

Read the boxed text to the group in the morning when they wake up.

The camp stirs to life as people awaken early to the first rays of the morning sun. (Player Character's name) feel something hard lying in the bedroll underneath your body, and you jump up to see what it is.

You pull out some sort of fetish, a long, carved leg bone with what looks like an adder's skull, tied to the top of the shaft with rawhide, its mouth agape with sharp, wicked, fangs. Glass beads are tied on to the tassels hanging down from the rawhide knots that secure the snake skull, and a rattling sound comes from within it.

If the adventurers cannot figure out what it means, one of the old drovers will tell them it is a bravery rattle for counting coup and a gift in exchange for the theft the day before. The rattle fetish is actually useful, and if any Vanomir sees the player character with it, they will receive a +2 reaction bonus and a chuckle from them. The drovers will laugh and poke fun at the adventurer that received it, and say that they have gotten a traditional welcome to the Hinterlands. They will also set everyone's minds at ease, relating that the "young bucks" are just out to have fun and are not a group of brigands.

Sighting Sicaris

The caravan will travel for three more days without incident, and the hilly countryside will give way to a dune filled desert landscape. The wagons will then press on for one more day, when the player characters spot a huge mesa while out in front of the caravan. A drover will cry out that Sicaris is very near.

THE GREAT CAVE-GATE (Hard Point)

You ride over a ridge of sand dunes, and just over the rise, catch sight of a pathway or road ahead. As the caravan catches up, you goad your horses into a canter, and approach the front of a tall mesa sticking out of the sands. As the caravan comes around a rock face, the sandy ground gives way to a packed, gravel-covered road, sloping down the base of the cliff wall. As you ride down the roadway, the air becomes cooler, a welcome relief from the sweltering heat. The wagons pass alongside you, swallowed up by the cool shade under the tall cliff. The caravan kicks dust up off the roadway, traveling toward what looks like the main gate to Sicaris, a giant arch. The arch is carved into the striated, many colored stone of a high, sloping cave gate, two and a half stories high, festooned with mammoth caryatid columns and the guardian creatures of myth.

The head cart driver stops, speaking with gate sentries, armed with bronze, curvy-bladed pole arms in a rolling, tribal dialect. He pulls out a leather pouch and pays an entrance toll. The adventures can see a deep cave bustling with activity in front of them. Continue with the boxed text.

The cave itself is oblong and immense; a spear's cast in height and thrice that in depth. A haze of bluish smoke hangs in the air, from torches that gutter in blackened iron brackets and polished brass oil lamps.

There is a railed cliff edge half way along the cavern floor, which plummets half a spear toss down, revealing a subterranean market place below you. The market is filled with merchants standing on a paved square that surrounds a stained marble fountain. The cliff face, fitted with broad steps and worm eaten wooden rails tumbles downward to the square. Desert birds flap loudly and roost in the nooks and crannies of the walls, or fly around the cave.

The hum of the crowd's voices, haggling over prices and the chinking of coins, couple with the bird noises and echo through the cavern. The wagons hug a passage wall along a narrow path atop the cliff, and as the path turns sharply to the right, streaming daylight blinds you from skylight holes cut into the cavern roof. Balconies fitted to the rock from carved shops and homes, jut out from the far wall to your left, and the people clustered on them smile, wave and jeer at you now, speaking in their tribal tongue.

A smaller marble arch, covered with gargoyles of animal headed humans passes over the carts, revealing the open sky, the bright sunlight, and a large, natural amphitheater at the bottom of a great stone delve, ringed by uneven tiers. Many buildings surround the amphitheater, resting on the tier ledges.



Cave mouth doorways peek out over cliff-lined streets that amble through the city, now clearly in view. The vast array of buildings stretched out before you are a maze of covered alleyways, bridges and second story streets, dead end paths and linking, jumbled masses.

As the group passes along the paved main road, glimpses are caught of the alien city's canyon streets and buildings. The buildings are amalgamations of ancient Coryani, Yhing-heer, and other unidentifiable architecture.

As the adventurers traverse the city, read the boxed text below.

You catch snippets of strange languages and vulgar and exotic scents. The sites around you and the native populace give you the all-pervasive feeling of immersion in a foreign land. Surely, this is the heart of the Hinterlands. The caravan slowly weaves its way through the traffic of carts, wagons, camels, horses, and pedestrians.

As you view the bizarre performers and pagan fakirs, beggars and proselytizers, the shrines, turrets and colorful tents, there is no doubt that you are in the fabled streets of the heathen city of Sicaris.

SHADOW MESSENGERS (Hard Point)

The Legate and his entourage will disengage from the caravan, which settles in a level box canyon in the Cavern Quarter, on the southern side of the city. The adventurers are free to refresh themselves, stretch their legs and tour the quarter.

Exeter asks them quietly not to stray too far, however, as the entourage will be going to see Nymic Altimera in about an hour. Exeter wants the adventurers to tail the entourage as they speak with the Commander Magistrate while touring the city, to listen in, and watch out for trouble.

If the adventurers want to tour the city, any of the listed NPCs listed below can be used for interaction, or new ones can be added. Beggars, small children offering their services as guides, and fire-breathing priests of obscure cults on street corners and rooftops will also assault them.

They will also note the strange uniforms the guards are wearing, looking like the archaic dress of the ancient legions. If they look more carefully, they will see the Northlander Ninth legion insignia still proudly displayed (a numeral nine over the blue letter "N" in the ancient Coryani alphabet) on the left sleeve of the guard's tunics. Players, who have the skills of Heraldry, Ancient History, or the Bardic Knowledge skill, can make a DC 12 check to determine the nature of this insignia (see History of Sicaris). Brother Talent will suggest an inn called The Clasp in the Cavern Quarter, which is known to have mercenaries, drovers and pit fighters as patrons. He tells the group they will blend in there and not arouse suspicions. (See the Soft Point: The Clasp)

OUTFOXED (Soft Point)

A crew of five thieves (part of the Night Foxes thieves guild) is waiting for the caravan to arrive and look for new marks to ply their trade. They will work as a team to distract and pick loose pockets or valuable equipment.

They will trail the adventurers and wait for them to stray into the crowded streets. One of their favorite ruses is to tip over a merchant stall with a piece of rope that is tied to a leg on its base. One of them will pose as a guide and translator for the unfortunate mark when the vendor starts to yell and call for the town guard. His partners will move behind and pick pockets, or mug persons standing next to an alleyway with saps and wet sacks to put over their heads. If the fight becomes more serious, they will draw their rapiers and no

longer attack to subdue, or will flee if the fight is going badly.

After the hour has passed, the adventurers will see Brother Talent signal them from across a crowd to follow him. He will lead them to a covered walk, across from a balcony where they will see the Legate and his entourage meeting with the Commander-Magistrate. Read the boxed text aloud.

At the appointed time, you make your way back to the canyon where the wagons are parked. Through the canvas tops of the carts and wagons, you see Exeter's consul, Talent waving you over.

You walk over to him and he says, "I have been told to instruct you to trail myself and the Legate, as we are about to meet with Commander-Magistrate Altimera. You should be able to hear what is going on, as you can position yourselves under the balcony there," and he points to a marble terrace overlooking a covered walk, and a colorful market plaza called the Serpent's Square. "Keep an eye out for anything out of place, especially if anything goes wrong or the traitor becomes suspicious. If we should become separated, we will meet back at the Clasp and decide from there what to do. Let us go."

Brother Talent splits off from the adventurers, and climbs a stairway to the balcony. A blonde haired, young Coryani man is joining the Legate and his centurions, dressed in an officer's uniform and holding a silver baton, whom the adventurers may presume is the Commander-Magistrate, Nymic Altimera. He stammers as he speaks with Exeter, looking very nervous, inquiring as to why an Imperial envoy has been sent here.

There are several places where the adventurers can place themselves. They can roam in the market, feigning to shop or stroll under the covered walk. Any Listen checks for the purposes of eavesdropping on the Legate's conversation receive a +3 circumstance bonus, due to the acoustics of the balcony walk, and rear wall. Continue reading the boxed text.

Exeter begins enacting the ruse, soothing the Commander-Magistrate, and assuring him that they are here for a very auspicious reason. He relates how the Empire has heard of the exemplary job Nymic has done with the governing of Sicaris and the surrounding territory. Nymic seems more relaxed now, his face breaking out into a smile. They begin walking along the balcony, and you can see nothing suspicious in the market crowd, from the windows and rooftops, or from the guards stationed at either end of the balcony and the stairs.

The legate tells the Commander-Magistrate that a promotion for Nymic to Provincial Governor has already been approved by the Senate, although they are waiting for his arrival in Coryan to make his newly appointed commission formal.

You all wait in virtual silence to hear the Commander-Magistrate's reaction. Nymic pauses for a long time, visibly stunned. He suddenly gives a great laugh at the news, thanking the Legate for bringing it personally, mentioning how he must be held in high regard indeed, to have been brought this news in person as opposed to a written message. You let out a sigh of relief, and continue your eavesdropping. It appears the traitor has taken the bait, as he arranges immediately for the Legate and his entourage to be taken to the finest quarters available at once by a beautiful Yhing-heer servant girl. He puts forth an invitation to Exeter for dinner later at his home in the Cliff Quarter, saying they will celebrate and speak of preparations to leave soon, at the Legate's leisure. As they are led off, Exeter risks a glance at you, playing nervously with the large signet ring on his finger, and his gaze then looks toward the Cavern Quarter. You can only assume you are to wait there for further instructions.

The adventurers are notified by a written message delivered by a Vanomir boy who tracks them down. The GM can read it aloud to the players, or actually write it on a piece of paper and hand it to them.

I feel I am safe enough for now, and will meet you again in the Yellow Fountain market on the Arena Road at seven o' clock, though not directly, of course. Place yourselves in the same manner, but keep some distance, as I have some very personal business to attend to this evening.

If you have anything unusual to report, use one of the local messenger boys or a spell to contact Talent at the front desk of the Clasp.

Exeter

Listed below are a few buildings, sites and NPCs for the GM to use if the adventurers should choose to explore the Cavern Quarter and nearby districts, or if some detail and interaction is desired by the GM. The statistics for any recurring NPCs or other persons dwelling in the city (such as standard guards) are in the NPC appendix.

THE EVENING STAR EMPORIUM (Soft Point)

This is an oblong one-story building of yellow-brown stone, decorated with blue and green tiles and a dark stained wooden door with a polished brass star on the front. Inside the shop are a variety of specialized equipment, magic items, scrolls, and curios. They rest in decorative glass cases, on velvet-lined shelves and marble mantles, and hang in wire baskets suspended from brass hooks in the ceiling.

The proprietor, Valentinus, is an Altharian Adept with a strange, mellow foreign accent. He is charismatic and will let his strange wares sell themselves, confident in their value and the customers' interest. He will chat idly with patrons and answer any questions they have truthfully. He came to Sicaris four years ago and inherited the shop from the previous owner, but he is tired of the Night Foxes and their exorbitant "protection" racket. He is considering moving the shop to the nearby city of Censure on the Bleak Coast, since many of his wares came from there in the first place.

Later, Valentinus will have no knowledge of the murder and can only relate the common rumors and conjecture, or suggest a magic item or two to help the adventurers in their search.

The shop is also known for its large book and scroll collection (both normal and magical), something Valentinus takes a fancy to. There is even a small, cramped reading room in the back. Below is a list of the various unique wares the shop has displayed for sale. The GM may feel free to invent more or choose from the normal equipment list in the Player's Handbook (page 108) in addition to the items listed here. Most of the magic items and gear here are intended for adventurers.

Tube mirrors: Two small mirrors fitted at angles just inside a thin, painted tube with flip top caps, for seeing around corners or under furniture, fighting creatures with gaze attacks or trick shots. They come in three sizes: small (one foot,) medium (three to five feet) and large (ten feet). They are also watertight and can double as a breathing tube if used underwater. Cost: 20, 25 and 30 GP respectively.

A row of trained messenger lizards in wire cages. These are often used in the Hinterlands instead of pigeons due to the many hawks of the area and the foul taste the lizards have to most predators. Cost: 65 GP

*Two mirrored helmets: The first has masterfully placed holes and small mirrored panels inside it so that the wearer can see above and to the right and left flanks by viewing the panels. Halves the penalties to a Spot skill check for anything above or behind the wearer. The second helmet has a highly polished mirrored face visor that reflects sunlight as a glaring flash in a thirty-foot radius. (DC 20 Reflex save or be blinded for 1D3 rounds). Opponents must avert their eyes and suffer the penalties for fighting blind if they save. Cost: 200 and 250 GP respectively.

*A quiver of specialty arrows and quarrels: Their range is equal to a normal arrow or quarrel, and the heads can be fitted to any arrow. Stonecutter (+3 to hit versus rock or stone with loop and twine at back for climbing rope) signal arrows (whistler, mirrored flash, smoke, and flare. The flare is equal to lantern light, burns for ten rounds, and is +1D6/round as a weapon), crescent head (for cutting ropes and banners. +2 attack bonus), and claw head (for the small glass bulbs below.)

*A small shelf of flask atlatls. They consist of a shaft of wood the size of a torch, with a shaped, wire cage head mounted on the top. An oil flask or a large glass globe (listed below) is loaded into the head and hurled with the stick handle for better accuracy and range. (Smooth rocks can also be placed in them).

*An assortment of glass globes with labels bearing a description and various fluids or powders inside them. There are two sizes of globes, a one-inch and a three-inch size. The smaller globes are made for the claw head arrows, and the larger ones are for the flask atlatls. Both sizes can be hand hurled effectively. Roll 2D6 for the amount of each type of globe available.

Combustible: filled with Alchemist's Fire and flint chips laced with Altharian Alchemist's Powder. Cost: 30GP (small), 150GP (large)

Flash: filled with a gray powder that bursts in a flash of searing light. Cost: 15GP Radius: 10' (small), 45GP Radius: 30' (large)

Acid: highly caustic fluid, much stronger than usual. Cost: 15GP (small), 25GP (large)

Liquid Fear: releases a cloud of drug inhalant that affects morale as a **Fear spell**. Cost: 300GP Radius 10' (small), 500GP, Radius 30' (large)

Tiny Poisonous Fish (The Dragosi Special): Releases a strobing, prismatic mist that is a hallucinogenic drug which affects Wisdom, followed by a **Confusion spell** in the radius, and a **Major Image spell**. The Major Image creates an underwater scene, complete with eerie aquatic sounds, bubbles, shoals of colorful fish and rays swimming around the target(s), and varied sea life, (starfish, eels, seaweed, anemones and barnacles) clinging to buildings and floors. Due to the hallucinations and loss of Wisdom, it will be very hard to determine what is the actual illusion. (Note that those not drugged will still see the illusionary scene!) Both the Confusion and Major Image spells are at eighth level. Cost: 600GP (Large only. Despite the spell cost, for some reason, the Dragosi sell this item unusually cheap to Valentinius. And man is it ever worth it!)

ASSASSIN! (Hard Point)

At seven o' clock, the adventurers should make their way to the Yellow Fountain marketplace.

The lot of you walks down to the Yellow Fountain Market in the evening, looking for a sign of the Legate. You make your way down Arena Street, and see the amphitheater to your right, its pennants and hanging decorations swaying slightly to a cool desert breeze.

The street curves sharply around the north end of the arena, and below you can see large torches fitted to a makeshift wooden stage where a woman is performing with seven trained cats, for a crowd of children. Her voice and their peals of laughter echo sharply from the walls of the arena and the surrounding terraces and buildings.

As you look about, drinking in the carnival sights of Sicaris, you can see street corner performers, priests, beggars, and merchants retiring from a hard day's work, as ones and twos of shadier night folk replace them. This city seems never to sleep.

You make your way up a carved stone staircase, fifty paces high, to another of the tiers that supports the Yellow Fountain Market. It is a large, roughly rectangular open-air market paved with pale smooth fieldstones and rimmed by covered walks and squat, two story buildings.

The night crowd blooms here also. Vanomir tribesmen, exotic women, foreign lords, and local rakes. They move about the square and sample the delights it has to offer. Tile topped tables and raised gazebos dot the edges of the streets here. The balconies and verandas that cover the walkways are festooned with hanging plants and vines, beaded curtains, and colorfully patterned banners. Rows of shops and painted carts hold bulging baskets, filled with wares and luscious fruits.

Colored light streams out from stained glass windows on the upper wall, forming dappled patterns on the paving stones. The scent of perfume, food, wines, and spices are everywhere, providing an overwhelming distraction to your senses. A burbling, yellow alabaster fountain froths out water at the center of the square. Sitting on the marble benches that ring the base of the fountain are lovers whispering and travelers resting from the day's heat in the cool evening air.

The GM can allow the adventurers to move about the marketplace to shop or browse, and should put the accent on exotic baubles and pursuits of simple or lurid pleasure. Examples include buying an intricately carved alabaster figurine or a rare pet (such as a golden marmoset or a Khitani seven-song beetle), sampling a cup of opiate wine, trying on expensive hats and clothes, etc. Before long, the adventurers will be startled by a ruckus that breaks out. Read the boxed text below to the players.

Suddenly you hear shouting from a high terrace balcony above, and everyone around you looks up to see the Legate Exeter quarreling with a shockingly beautiful young Coryani woman with elegant blonde curly tresses. A merchant near you says, "Not another one of Hemmenia's tantrums!" in an exasperated tone, which can only mean that she is the daughter of Senator Phineas.

Hemmenia is shouting at Exeter loudly, cursing him for conspiring with her father, throwing potted plants that barely miss his ducking head. The pots crash onto the walks, the plaza, and steps below, as unfortunate pedestrians scatter for cover.

The Legate leaves abruptly, hands held out in front of him, angrily saying they will discuss things later. He makes a veritable dash for the doorway from the balcony. A minstrel resting at a table wipes pottery shards from her embroidered sleeve, murmuring sarcastically "It doth truly look like love, ...or, um, something".

Whatever the adventurers do, a couple of rounds after Exeter leaves they will once again see Talent waving them over to a shadowy covered walk across the market. He looks frazzled and embarrassed.

He will explain that the Legate has left Hemmenia's presence so as not to jeopardize the mission, and has retired

for the evening, not wishing to be disturbed. Talent informs them that they are again free to roam, and that he will summon them in the morning by messenger in the Cavern Quarter. The GM can fast forward to the next morning, or draw the evening out by placing encounters with the available NPCs in the module.

At this point, Bernarr will secretly trail behind Exeter, and wait until the Legate's meeting with Talent is over. When Talent leaves, Bernarr will overcome Exeter from behind in a dark hallway. He wrestles with the Legate, who punches Bernarr in the neck with his large signet ring. Bernarr then stabs Exeter in the neck after a noisy struggle, killing him instantly.

A passing Khitani merchant, Ni kuel Ar, will hear the noise of conflict and turn a corner just in time to witness the murder, but remains unseen by Bernarr. The Khitaniman will flee and say nothing; until later. Bernarr will drag the body down the dark hall, to a stack of large water jars and place it behind them, where water porters find it in the morning and report it to the guards.

ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE, PART 1 (Hard Point)

The adventurers will awaken in the morning to a very agitated Talent. Read the text below.

You come out of your fitful sleep, having dreamed of shouting masses and nightmares of pursuit. You are shaken violently by unknown hands, and jump upright with bleary eyes to see the Consul Brother Talent, and the two centurions, fully armed and standing over you. Talent barks, "You must get up! Something dire has occurred to our charge!" He is fretting and pacing frantically. When you begin to speak, he stops you with an outstretched hand, apologizing for rousing the lot of you in this way. He regains his composure asking you to get dressed and look out the window toward the arena.

When the adventurers look out the window, they see a large angry crowd in the amphitheater stands, as well as on every tier, plaza, balcony, and set of steps that will hold them. It looks like all of Sicaris is gathered there at once. The Commander-Magistrate is on the central arena stage in full uniform addressing the people, but the group cannot quite hear what he is saying due to the shouts and jeers of the noisy crowd. They do not seem to approve of what he is saying. Continue reading the boxed text below.

Talent speaks coldly and methodically, his eyes looking forward as his youthful features go blank, "The Legate Exeter has been murdered. A group of water bearers found his body this morning in an alley, Hemmenia's dirk stuck into his neck."

It would appear Hemmenia Assante'-Voucis has lived up to the rumors of her atrocious personality, and has made many enemies here. Many powerful people in Sicaris are accusing her of killing the Legate, which is preposterous, of course. As it stands the Commander-Magistrate fears that if he should arrest Hemmenia, he will suffer the Emperor's wrath later. Her enemies are using the murder for an excuse to have her prosecuted, and are angry that the Commander-Magistrate will not comply.

As I am now in command, this is what I will do. I am going to see the traitor Nymic and see if we can salvage the mission, or at least plan an escape. I ask you if you still wish to continue your employment despite the current circumstances, because if the senator's daughter should die at the hands of these savages and thieves, there will surely be war in the Hinterlands. I suggest that you take some time to think on this and give your answers. Do

what your conscience demands of you. I am going to the arena now to do my duty, and if you join me in two hours at the Equestrian gate, I will assume you have thrown your lot in with us.

Before I go, I should add that Senator Phineas has great pull within the legions, and the Emperor lends a careful ear to his advising. It could very well lead to many long and bloody conflicts all over Onara." He pauses briefly, and with a sardonic smile, he continues.

"Ha, it is truly ironic. An unimportant outpost in this desolate wilderness, and an arrogant Coryani girl bringing the most powerful and civilized nation on the continent to its knees.

Whatever your choice, I will send a letter to the Imperial Council commending your efforts." He salutes you with a fist to his chest. "Pax Coryanis. Long live the Empire," and leaves with the centurions through the door.

THE CLASP (Soft Point)

The Clasp is a small two-story inn with whitewashed, stucco walls, located in the Cavern Quarter. The patronage here includes adventurers, pit fighters and mercenaries, Night Foxes, drovers and the occasional daring merchant or slumming noble. The proprietors are two centurions-turned-adventurers, Artemis Terna, and Spencer of Corsk. It gets its name from a beautiful elven gold and amethyst studded cloak clasp they found in a treasure hoard near the Great Forest. (It is in a small glass case over the bar, non-magical and worth 5,000 GP. Spencer used it as collateral on a loan to start the inn.)

Fiery drink, spicy food, gambling, chess or backgammon, harlots, and tall tales of adventure by Spencer and patrons are its stock and trade. There are large stables on a back street near a horse and camel peddler's lot, and decent, secure lodging in the rooms above at reasonable rates.

The two proprietors and a bouncer keep the peace here, and the Night Fox Guild have been paid off to deter crime and freelance thievery. Uzinda the head slave keeper, Famke' Skellicarus, and a slim, pretty elf adventurer rogue named Lilyblack Ghennoke', also frequent the Clasp. She serves as a freelance informant to Famke', Sylab and Captain Proust, and can be found here at all hours in the common room.

Lilyblack will approach the adventurers after the Legate is killed whereupon she will inform them that she has been watching them, knows that they are spies of some kind, and has information to sell them concerning the murder. She will stress its importance and tell them it's exactly what they have been looking for, (asking for 1,500 GP and settling on 600.) Lilyblack suspects they are spies working for the Imperial council, which is true. But she thinks they might be working specifically for the Legion of Vigilance, due to Hemmenia's and Bernarr's reputations, added to the fact that they were with an Imperial Legate, and that she knows of Nymic Altamera's dealings with the Canceri.

The night that the assassin killed the legate, she was on her way home through an alley and saw Hemmenia's bodyguard coming out of a dark hallway onto Arena Street, holding his neck. He looked over, seemed to be surprised and startled to see her on the corner (not something she would expect of such an adept and famous soldier.) Bernarr then started to advance on her with his hand on his sword, but stopped when a crowd of drovers and merchants came walking by.

He then gave her a murderous glance and she ran back to the Clasp. Lilyblack has been hiding out here ever since, scared to go outside or roam around alone. Since the murder, she has been holding out to sell this vital information to the right buyer.



FAMKE' SKELICARIS AND THE STREET OF THE BLESSED FISHES (Soft Point)

After Brother Talent and the centurions have left the room, read the boxed text below to the players.

You are still dressing and strapping on your gear when there is a light knock on the door. When you open it you can see a pale, raven-haired Milandiri boy dressed in an amethyst purple velvet cape with a cream collar, somber dark doublet and pants, and many jeweled rings, standing with a silver tray. The tray has a dainty, stylized oval ceramic dish, and a fluted blue glass bottle shaped like a fish. The boy says, "Good morning to you, kind Gentles. My name is Donaki." He bows low in courtly fashion, balancing the tray perfectly. "I am sent here to you to deliver this gift, which I hope you will receive presently. I have instructions that the giver of this gift is to remain confidential. Will you receive me?"

The gift is the dish and the fluted bottle. Donaki will place them on the nightstand and ask to be excused, bidding the adventurers a good day, whereupon he will leave. He is given protection by the Night Fox guild, and is a herald of the Guild Mistress of Assassins, Lady Famke' Skellicaris, (who is the sender of the gift). Donaki will not say whom the gift is from, even if he is bribed or coerced by the adventurers (He has been promised that he will be sealed in a tiny tower with no door for doing so.)

A successful Sense Motive check will reveal that he is not lying and is impatient to leave but not frightened, since he has received these threats before. He will act impeccably, even if they are rude or brash and will try to leave at the earliest opportunity. If a spell caster detects for magic, the bottle will irradiate an aura of alteration, but the dish is perfectly normal (and worth 100GP).

The bottle smells of perfumed ink and when poured by Donaki into the dish, blobs of lavender ink can be seen floating in normal water. However, the ink blobs will quickly coalesce into fancy longhand script on the surface of the water.

To the Illustrious new Gentles of Sicaris,

Your attendance would be appreciated at a breakfast assemblage on the Street of the Blessed Fishes this morning. Please arrive within the current hour at the Plaza of the Emerald Eel, (in front of the Harlequin actor's guildhall) for excellent cuisine and stimulating conversation.

P.S. You may keep the message bottle and Quirikaar dish as a token of my affection.

Expectantly,

The Lady 'Famke' Skellicaris, Bard Gallant

The bottle can hold a written message of up to 100 words, or a page sized map or drawing. The user must write on the surface of a pan of normal water with a quill pen and then pour it into the fluted mouth of the fish shaped bottle.

The adventurers can easily be directed to the Street of the Blessed Fishes, which lies in a canyon that shoots off Arena Street in the Cliff Quarter. Read the text below to the players.

You walk down Arena Street and the crowd is still yelling, gossiping, or debating in different sections of the

amphitheater. You see a gilded sign ahead of you painted with the image of a large, graceful fish and an arrow pointing to a canyon street to the west.

On the left wall of the entrance to the street is a waterfall fountain made of pink marble. The fountain is twelve feet high with a polished bronze sculpture of the sea god Yarris, surrounded by voluptuous mermaids holding conchs spouting water, large clamshells, and other aquatic themes. Colorful fish with fanning fins and tails fill the pool at the base. A faded inscription at the bottom reads, "The face we have is really four, the One shown, the One seen, the One Believed, and the One Real."

The street itself is full of decorative arches and tasteful, elegant buildings and lanes. The ground is paved with cobblestone or decorative tile mosaics. The canyon blocks off the noise coming from the arena stands, and is replaced by the sloshing and bubbling of fountains, seemingly everywhere, and of every type ever seen. Art galleries, placid hanging gardens, and expensive craft shops line the main thoroughfare, and long branches of clinging ivy hug the canyon walls. Continue with the boxed text.

You walk to the end of the street and see a tall building with a sign labeled "Harlequin Actor's hall" in baroque gold letters and across from it the Plaza of the Emerald Eel. It is a curving oval of dark green tiles lined with a ring of low coquina blocks. Some of the blocks are larger, carved into benches or high arched chairs and tables. A pair of long water filled basins split the plaza in half, filled with stands of thick green bamboo and tall, drooping willow trees, with a pathway between them.

There are dozens of large koi fish swimming through the bamboo stands. The scent of food is present, and as you walk between the basins, you can see a young elegant, white-skinned woman with a tiny purple orchid laurel on her head. She is dressed in a long cinched gown made of dark cloth in a spider web weave, a pearl choker and teardrop earrings. She is perched on the end of the basin, feeding the Koi fish from a yellow packet of food. There is an expensive looking sitar next to her.

One of the stone tables is set with lavish fruits, pastries, quail eggs and Khitani green tea in a silver serving set. A large decorative rice paper parasol with black and purple tips is set into a hole in the table, unfurled to shade it from the morning sun. The woman looks up at you now, and with a warm and perfect smile says, "Good Morrow to you, gentles. I am the Lady Skellicaris." Her face is as white as polished enamel. "Shall we dine?"

Famke' has invited the adventurers here because she has heard the rumor of foreign assassins in Sicaris, and suspects they may be just that, given the murder of the legate. She will let them introduce themselves and serve them breakfast on expensive china, asking them their business in Sicaris politely. She knows through Lilyblack that they have been tailing Exeter, and this fact has aroused her suspicions greatly. Famke' will say that she is part of a somewhat political enclave in Sicaris, and that the adventurers sudden appearance just before the murder has risen some concern with this group. She will use Sense Motive and will probably determine the group is lying about their mission and identities, which will not assure Famke' one bit, and will keep this dangerous situation going.

If Famke' is pressed about her role in Sicaris or her interest in the adventurers, she will simply say that her tasks are varied and sacrosanct. She will however allude to things such as the removal of disagreeable persons in power, guarding well-kept secrets, and especially emphasizes the discreet

riddance of unsanctioned competitors within the scope of her influence. If they still do not take her meaning, or are either coy or elusive, Famke' will state that they need not tell her of any professional business they are on in the city. She will state that she merely needs assurances that the adventurers had nothing at all to do with the murder of the legate.

At this point, if Famke' cannot divulge the truth or the fact that the adventurers did not kill Exeter, she will assure them of the mortal danger they place themselves in by doing this. She may use a **Detect Thoughts** spell (while fingering a copper piece in her robe) and see what the group is thinking when she mentions the murder.

If however, the adventurers have convinced her that they are not assassins, she will tell them that the legate's killer is very strong and not a professional in the "discreet" sense. Famke' will say she has already gone to the Temple of the Fountain and examined the body as well as the murder scene.

ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE, PART 2 (Hard Point)

When the adventurers are walking up to the Equestrian gate, a troop of ten Color Guard led by the garrison Captain, Vander Proust, and the high priest of the Temple of the Fountain, Aristus, will intercept them.

The Captain will approach and inform the adventurers that they will be taken to the garrison prison for questioning. If they ask why, he will say that they are suspected as spies, and that they may even be tied in with the murder of the legate. He tells them he has had them followed for some time now, and he is certain they are in collusion with some unknown power conspiring against the city.

Vander assures the group that he will treat them justly, and that they are surrounded. He says that they will not get far at all if they are troublesome, and that if indeed they are innocent, a priest at the garrison will determine it with a detection spell.

If the adventurers are unwilling to go with Captain Proust, the GM can have Brother Talent approach and assure them that this is the right thing to do and to trust him. Adventurers who use Sense Motive will receive a +10 circumstance bonus, and success will reveal that Brother Talent does not seem to be bothered by this event, and that he trusts the Captain greatly. Talent will even use his centurions to aid the troops, though they will seem puzzled by it. More priests from the temple, or loyal Vanomir worshippers can also aid the soldiers. The unruly mob now assembled in the streets can simply overbear the adventurers with a word from Aristus using subdual tactics (listed in the Player's Handbook on page 134.)

The group is stripped of all weapons, equipment and armor, and placed in a nearby specialized paddy wagon for dangerous or powerful criminals. (Very good lock: DC35, bars are hardness 10 with 60HP and a Break DC of 28). They are taken to the garrison-fort where the troop places them in a dank, underground cell at the end of a long hall. It has a reinforced barred door, high window, and thick bars (same statistics for bars and lock as the paddy wagon.). It is watched constantly by five of the Sicarite Color Guard, who will play dice and not speak or respond at all to the adventurers.

OF RITUALS, KHITANIMEN, AND TIGERS (Hard Point)

The player characters will have sat in the cell all day until well after nightfall, listening to strange sounds coming from the arena through the high window. Captain Proust will enter and dismiss the soldiers on guard here. Read the boxed text to the players.



The adventurers will have languished in the cell all day long until nightfall, hearing nothing but the strange notes from a lyre or harp in the arena, and stranger noises following it from outside somewhere. (The sounds are from Famke' Skellicaris and her magical lyre, which she is using to build the arena platforms.) Suddenly the Captain who arrested them enters the hall. He dismisses the guards and they file out a nearby door. He watches them leave and he turns to speak with you. Read the text below aloud.

"I'm sure you are wondering why you've been brought here. I know about the Legate and the plan of the High Council, since I am in fact the Imperial spy you were informed of in Coryan. I had you arrested to keep the whole affair secret, because there are other spies here, and you were being followed, possibly even about to be killed yourselves.

You must listen for we haven't much time left before the guards become suspicious. My plan is to ask you to pose as captured spies and sell you to Sylab the Circus Master in the arena, who is the real power in Sicaris. He's been running the city for two years now, and made a figurehead of the traitor, Nymic.

I have also been informed that Sylab has made a deal with Hemmenia, agreeing to rig the games somewhat in her favor, in return for some boon in the future, and her leaving Sicaris. I have contacted Sylab and told him I have just the champions he needs for the games in my dungeons. If you agree to my offer, you can get close to Hemmenia, and with luck, you can get her out of Sicaris while remaining unsuspected by anyone.

If you win, you can get Hemmenia out of this mess. I will work behind the scenes and try to find out who killed the Legate. The warriors of the arena are often visited by patrons and used in power plays here. I will keep you informed and we can coordinate to attain our mutual objectives. Is it a deal?



If the player characters agree, they are taken the next morning out of the cell to a cart that goes to the auction block for the arena.

If they do not agree, Vander will assure them that this is the only way the adventurers, Hemmenia, the entourage, and himself can possibly survive. He will guarantee that the forces aligned against them have powerful and deadly connections here and the rule over the mob besides. (The player characters should obviously realize they have some control of the situation, and can manipulate Vander somewhat if they are clever, since they now know he is the Imperial spy). He can even bribe them with potential lore for lucrative adventures in the Hinterlands, as his elite troops patrol the caves, ruins, and sites of the territory on a regular basis. He also has relations with the various tribes and guilds of the territory, as well as the six mighty guild houses of Censure. He will use this knowledge to bait the adventurers into entering a deal with him.

Vander will tell the group that he will send the guards at mid day tomorrow to subdue them with nets and clubs, and that they should make a good show of it to keep up the ruse. Vander will then leave the hall. The guards will come in the next day to retrieve the adventurers with nets and clubs, attempting to bind the adventurers and take them to an open cart in the courtyard of the fort. Read the boxed text to the players.

The cart makes its way out of the garrison gate, where a mob has gathered. They yell and jeer at you, throwing small rocks, and rotten fruit. The soldiers push the crowd back, and the cart continues down a sloping road through the uneven lanes and terraces of stone. The mob becomes quieter, and follows along with the cart to the north end of the city. As you pass the arena, you can see three huge canvas tents on the arena floor that takes up most of its length. Children, who see you tied up in nets, crowd at the back of the cart, running to keep up.

Grown ups join the children and follow you into a large, rickety wooden gate in a stucco wall with catwalks that seems built to cordon off an enclosed market square from the main street. It has a huge, pale block of stone at its center, with crude steps and chains through iron rings drilled into the top. Several men of dubious character come out of a far green door to meet with the head sergeant of the soldiers. They have the look of bandits or slavers about them.

Men of all social castes try to get close despite the guards pushing them away, lifting the children up to touch you like saints or luck charms in some bizarre ritual. This seems to please the children greatly, especially the boys. The people crowded around you look with eyes that speak of wonder, reverence and respect, no longer jeering at you like bound captives, giving the whole affair an eerie, surreal atmosphere.

Guards usher the crowd out, close the wooden gate and lift you up from the cart, carrying you towards a rectangular pen with fresh straw on the floor. There is a large, tattooed Khitaniman stretched out on a makeshift bedroll of rags at the back of the cell, snoring loudly. They unbind one arm from the nets on one of you, and place you on the floor of the pen, closing the metal gate door with an audible lock click. One guard brings two wooden bowls, one deep with cool water in it, the other shallow with what looks like compacted chunks of salt, and slides them through a hinged slat at the door's bottom into the cell.

They begin to look you over, chatting and laughing with the slavers and each other in their strange, rolling tongue. Two burly sentries stand watch over you, sitting on the great central block a stone's throw away, armed with spears, whips and cudgels. The remaining guards and slavers leave through the green door in the far corner of the market. Just what in the hell is going on, and how this man can sleep in this gods-awful heat, is beyond you.

Whichever character has an arm free can work out of the net and free the others. The pen has thick, metal bars on one side with a sturdy new gate (Replaced from Upo's escape. It is a very good lock with a DC35, and the bars are hardness 10 and a break DC of 28) and stucco covered walls with graffiti on the other three. It is reasonably cool and clean, and there is a hole at the back to use as a privy. The adventurers will be waiting here for an hour before anything significant happens. At that point, the sleeping Khitaniman will wake up, and if they rouse him before then, it had better be for a good reason, as he will be very grouchy. Players will receive a -3 penalty to reaction rolls unless they make amends somehow. If he wakes normally however, he will be friendly, speaking with the group in the common tongue. He has been in Sicaris for a while, and looks reasonably healthy and well cared for. Read the boxed text below aloud to the group.

You have made yourselves at home and have been here about an hour when the large sleeping man awakens and stretches with a yawn. He looks about six and a half feet tall, of amazing size and girth. His head is bald, and many scars and colorful tattoos zigzag across his bare, sun-bronzed chest and well-muscled limbs. He sits up against a wall and surveys his surroundings, looking you over cautiously, murmuring something in Khitani.

The Khitaniman's name is Upo, a gladiator by trade in the arena. He is only in the pen to keep him from trying to escape, something he has tried on three separate occasions. In reality, he is done with the idea, and hopes to regain the trust of the guards so he can live out the luxuriant lifestyle afforded to popular fighters in Sicaris. His attempts to flee have only helped his reputation in the arena, and helped to raise the bounty placed to capture him the last time he fled.

The guards keep his pet tiger, Agar far away in the beast pens of the amphitheater, as Upo has masterfully trained her to follow complex commands, and since she helped him escape before by busting open the heavy pen door. Upo has a great love for Agar, telling the adventurers about her, and sees her like the Khitani see the Elder Sage Tiger, an atavism of his luck, prowess, and passion. If anything were to happen to Agar, Upo would go berserk and stop at nothing to avenge her.

Upo feels escape is futile now, and will tell the adventurers as much if they ask. He will tell them they are soon to be auctioned off to patrons of the gladiatorial games, and will fight in the ring this very day. However, he will mention that gladiators are sometimes granted freedom by the Commander Magistrate for fighting valorously in the arena, and that even if he is freed, he will likely stay in Sicaris. If the adventurers still insist on escaping, Upo will laugh and say the best chance they have is to win the crowd and make their patron money. He tells them it is very hard to cross the arid lands of the Vanomir and monsters will devour them in the desert. Upo adds that overall his owner Sylab the circus master treats him better than most noble lords would.

Upo will act friendly and very courteously toward the adventurers, especially if they offer him some of their salt, an expensive delicacy much like candy in this region. He knows about the murder of the legate and the common gossip surrounding the whole affair, and will bring it up in conversation. However, Upo had seen Sylab speaking with Ni kuel Ar, a Khitani merchant and investor to the arena only last night outside the pen. Upo feigned sleep and overheard them whispering about the "real assassin," about how it could be used to their mutual advantages to keep up the ruse of Hemmenia as the killer. He does not really care who did it, but sees it as bad tidings for Sicaris and the games in general, and so will show some concern.

As long as Upo is not treated badly or with disrespect, he will tell the adventurers anything he knows and can be a very useful ally, since he knows all that there is to know of the arena. Astute and clever players will concoct schemes and

plans with Upo to make alliances, especially if they should fight him and his tiger in the arena. He likes to dupe people and play jokes, and adventurers will find him most willing to do so. (The GM should award additional XP for this).

BARGAINS OF THE FLESH (Hard Point)

Shortly after the adventurers finish talking with Upo, a group of guards in chain mail enters and then steps over to the pen door. There are eight burly guards total, armed with stout cudgels, shields, and spears. A tall, sinewy half-orc woman in black, stylized leather armor and tight black braids with silver beads follows them. Her left hand rests on the handle of a barbed scimitar, a polished bronze buckler strapped to her wrist, and she pulls a ring of keys off a thick hide girdle at her waist. Read the boxed text below aloud to the group.

The half-orc woman grins at you and says, "Welcome to Sicaris. My name is Uzinda. I trust you have made friends with Upo. Listen carefully, and please do not interrupt, for I am only going to say this once. You have been captured and sold to our master, Sylab to be auctioned on the block today." She gestures with a hand toward the large, pale stone stage. "Let me say straight off that I do not decide your fates overall, and that I merely serve our master in the role of Head slave keeper. So do not plead about your freedom or complain to me about fairness and justice. Accept that you are now our mutual master's property.

Let me add that slavery is legal in the Hinterlands and you will not find mercy from the Commander Magistrate nor his appointed officials or the soldiery. Many of us were in the same fix when we came here, and since then, we have made better arrangements upon our arrival. Some of us are better off now than before we arrived.

So behave and act properly and you may catch the eye of a kind and wealthy patron. We will tell you what is going on and you will not be degraded, and often not even disrespected. We Hinterlanders have a great love for the arena that is somewhat superstitious, and you will be seen as bearers of good fortune and tidings in the ring if you perform well.

These combats are not always lethal, as the people here hold the custom of counting coup in high regard, and admire clever, creative fighters. Use this to your best advantage. You may even be granted special privileges, gifts of food, liaisons, money, and lands in time, provided you succeed in gaining reputations and popularity. Many gladiators could buy all of you at once with but two bouts wages. If you fight willingly and successfully in the ring, you may even be released.

If you do not, or should cause trouble of any kind, you may find yourselves sold into the hands of the Canceri or worse, (looks at a spell user) the Sorcerer King. I am not threatening you; I merely state the facts. Consider how far out in the territory you are, and realize this is your best chance. I suggest you put thoughts of escape out of your heads. That and vendettas, at least directly, will not be tolerated." She pauses, smiling. "Some surly behavior is expected given your condition. Just don't overdo it. If you keep your heads and use your wits, you will do nicely and survive."

She stops speaking, looking the group over, and examines you more closely. "You look like a capable and comely lot, and relatively bright, so I will put forth a proposition. If you make an oath to me that you will cooperate and embrace your newfound vocation, at least for the time being, I will put in a good word to our benefactor and see you well placed for the auction.

This will guarantee not only a noble patron, but your survival and proper treatment, as well as increase your chance at freedom. You have also come to us with most

fortunate timing as we have an urgent legal dispute to be settled in the arena, as is our custom. I suggest you capitalize on this and take your oaths. I tell you now that this is as good as it is going to get. Do you accept?"

Sylab, who is spying on the adventurers through various peepholes and listening cones in the walls, has sent Uzinda here with the proposition she has offered them. He is eager to have Hemmenia purchase them through Bernarr, as he has already approached her with the plan to help in secret, in exchange for leaving Sicaris and a favor in the future. Sylab has convinced Hemmenia that she is in way over her head, and she has embarrassingly agreed to let him help her.

If they refuse or are unwilling, he will see to it that Bernarr buys them anyway to fulfil his bargain with her. He knows that Bernarr is the real killer, and has not come to him, Hemmenia, or the Commander Magistrate with this knowledge. He is merely using this valuable information to his and his allies' best advantages. It's all business to him. He has nothing personal against the adventurers, or against Hemmenia, but getting rid of her one way or the other is a benefit Sylab will enjoy, as she has made trouble for him and his customers ever since she arrived in Sicaris.

If the adventurers accept, Uzinda will clap twice loudly. A Vanomir servant dressed in white cotton clothes will appear from the far door with a platter of sumptuous food and drink in shallow, decorative earthenware, giving it to them through the door slat. They may then ask Uzinda questions or make simple requests. If they do not accept, or take too much time debating, she will warn them again of "prospective foreign buyers," asking them to reconsider. If they still refuse or delay, Uzinda will say she is sorry to hear that, leave them in the cell, and reports their answer to Sylab.

If they have already accepted however, Uzinda will let them finish eating, and use the key ring to let them out of the pen to stretch.



The Auction

Soon the adventurers will be prepared for the auction. If they have accepted the offer Uzinda has made, they will have an easier time all around, as they will be treated with more dignity. Provided they do not do anything unruly or insulting, they will perceive that they are being treated as relative equals by the guards, and considered trustworthy overall, given the change of demeanor they see in their captors.

If they refuse Uzinda's offer, try to escape or act uncaring to the rules already specified by their new masters, seven of the Color Guard and Aristus, the high priest of Hurrian will be called for, and will arrive in three rounds. The priest is armed with a Decanter of Endless Water, and will take up a position on the higher auction block, showering and knocking down charging or fleeing prisoners. The priest and the guards will separate and hose down the adventurers, holding them down, putting thick masterwork manacles (Hardness 10, 15HP and break DC of 28) on their hands and feet under Uzinda's supervision.

The guards are quite experienced in dealing with unruly slaves and mobs from arena, street, and bar brawls.

Regardless of whether the group accepts the deal or not, the guards will prepare the auction block and clean up the surrounding area. If the decanter's water jet has not hit the adventurers for acting up, they are given the chance to wash up and be prepared for the auction. If they have to be subdued, the rough treatment will continue and minimum preparations are made for them. However, if they have opted to take up the offer without incident, they will be in for a treat.

After the guards let the group out of the pen to stretch their muscles, they see the far door opening again. Three Vanomir servants dressed in white cotton garb roll a large pine tub through the doorframe and place it on the ground near a stone lined gutter. One of the servants hands Uzinda a rolled up message and she reads it, saying "excellent." (It is a written message stating that the arena is ready.)

The servants pour water into the tub from a stack of glazed clay urns along the wall, and file through the door. As they leave, the scent of henna fills the air, followed by the sound of pattering footsteps and the soft jingling of bells coming down the hallway toward the auction yard. The guardsmen smile and jibe each other quietly, their eyes fixed on the small door. Read the text below aloud.

As you turn to look the beautiful forms of seven graceful caramel skinned, slave-maidens clothed and veiled in gauzy, printed fabrics of green, blue and yellow enter and surround you. Silver cuffs with electrum bangles hang from their ears, and dancer's belts with bells drape over their curving, voluptuous hips. Their arms and fingers are bedecked with slim silver hoops and fancy, gem set rings. Six of them hold sandalwood trays with green stone jars, decorative combs, and fragrant soaps in lucid alabaster bowls.

The last maiden is carrying a dark, lacquered footstool, placing it by the edge of the pine tub. She gestures for you to enter the large tub with a sweeping gesture of her arm, shiny bracelets jingling. You enter the tub, and the maidens proceed to wash and massage your aching bodies. Your hair is combed and oiled, and one of the maidens hums a foreign, lilting tune.

The slave girls dry you off with large, white towels and give you clean, revealing clothes to don. The head maiden bows to Uzinda, and leads the pretty girls in single file back down the hallway in jingling step, the last one closing the door behind her. The head slave keeper says, "I trust you can see the allure of my master's employ. Now that you have been prepared, we will begin the auction. Take your places there."

When the adventurers stand on the block, Uzinda will wave a hand at a guard on the wall, who will blow a brass horn. In a few moments the rickety gate will open and reveal a host of slavers and patrons of the games, from many nations, some even humanoid. The following is a list of all the NPCs of note. They are merely for the GM to add color, as Hemmenia is sure to purchase the adventurers through Bernarr.

Kharkofen, Nawal of the Vanomir

Ni kuel Ar, Khitani merchant

Famke' Skellicaris, Guild Mistress of Assassins

An Ordainer (on his way back from Cancri)

Hoorag Horse killer, a bugbear chieftain

Bernarr, representing Hemmenia (with a sword-cane and his ankle wrapped in bandages)

Juke the Yellow, a gnoll chieftain

At this point, the GM can play the part of the auctioneer, a squat, and fast speaking Night fox versed in five languages. During the auction, another Night fox working for Sylab will be going through the crowd, using signals to direct the auctioneer.

He sways bidders' opinions or makes noise at the right moment to assure that it is Bernarr who buys the adventurers (at an exorbitant price, of course!) Most of the people are here merely to escalate the price and give Hemmenia a hard time, something Sylab will profit from greatly. However, no one will be able to outbid Bernarr in the end. The GM can feel free to set the price for the adventurers and play against their pride (about 100 GP per level plus bonuses for any obvious skills is a good guide to go by.)

We Who Are About to Die... (Hard Point)

Bernarr will take the adventurers to the arena. Any players who use Sense Motive successfully will see that Bernarr is very hateful to Hemmenia, and that he seems to be nervous or hiding something. Any suspicious PCs, who watch him walk down the steps, can make a Spot check (at DC15) and see something fishy about his leg wound. If they should try to speak with Bernarr, he will tell them to be quiet if they know what's good for them, and rap them hard with his cane if they disobey.

After Bernarr pays for the adventurers, he directs them off the auction block and down the street to the arena. They will feel like they are being followed again, and can look behind them to see the Lady Hemmenia concealed in a veiled litter carried by four slaves trailing behind, looking gloomy and impatient.

Read the boxed text below to the players.

You walk down the street to the stone amphitheater, where the three canvas tents are stretched across the arena floor, hiding gods only know what. Long poles and ropes keep up the tents, varying from fifteen feet to a full forty feet in height. The crowd that filled the auction market trickles into the stands, awaiting the spectacle that will come shortly. Bernarr leads you down the northern steps to one of the sunken fighter pens along the wall. When you duck inside, you see the Consul Brother Talent with his two centurions seated on a wooden bench. He quickly says, "Remember she is arrogant and not used to being dependent on anyone, but most of all, remember the objective here!" Bernarr gives Talent a curious look when he hears this, and the litter arrives. Talent says nothing to Bernarr and looks forward, hailing Hemmenia with a smile. The bodyguard narrows his eyes, suspiciously turning his gaze on you, as if summing you up.

The litter bearers place it outside the pen, and Hemmenia draws back the gauzy veil, ignoring Talent and addresses you. "I wish to speak with you now." She shifts to get a more comfortable position, an elegant white hand brushing a lock of golden hair from her beautiful,

porcelain face. "Come forward." Her voice is warm and musical, a horrible match to her frigid personality. As you step up to the front of the pen, she continues. "They say you are spies, so I can only assume you are crafty. No doubt by now you are aware of the circumstances in which I find myself. I have made a bargain with that thieving wretch Sylab, to increase your odds today.

I shall make you an offer. I ask you to fight on my behalf and if you win, I will give you your freedom. And what do the clever spies say to that?"

Hemmenia will impatiently await the adventurer's answers, since she feels they are now her property, and do not really have a choice. If they are unwilling or prove difficult, she will fly into a rage, threatening to have Bernarr cut their legs off, etc., until Talent convinces her to calm down and act more cordially. Then she will ask them what they want, offering gold, jewels and even carnal favors to a handsome male character if they do not suggest anything else.

If the PCs ask about the night of the murder or any thing else relevant to it, she will impassively tell them what they already know, with the added detail of Bernarr's absence during the argument. Anyone using Sense Motive (DC 22) will see that Bernarr becomes nervous at the mention of this, and that Hemmenia is telling the truth and feeling sad about Exeter being killed.

If the adventurers win in the arena, Hemmenia will indeed grant them their freedom, and ask that they now help her find the true culprit of the murder. If they should lose, she will instead make them a deal to find the killer in exchange for their freedom, as she did intend to marry Exeter and feels a vendetta is required, to honor and avenge his memory.

She is still a little worried about the lynch mob that will assemble if she loses in the arena, but does not fear the Commander-Magistrate, as she has bought him off with promises of liaisons and Coryani gold.

In a short while, the arena stands will begin to fill. Sylab will pay a personal visit to the various pens, briefing the gladiators about the rules of the tournament, waiting to visit the adventurers last. Read the boxed text to the group.

As you finish your deal with Hemmenia, you can see the slim, tall form of a colorfully dressed mulatto Altharian man through the canopy of the litter. He comes out from under the canvas wall in the center of the arena floor, and you catch a glimpse of what looks like a stage or platform of some kind. Hemmenia turns to see what captivates your interest, scowling when she looks upon the man coming toward you. "Here's that half-breed scoundrel Sylab now, no doubt come to gloat and drop innuendoes at my expense!" Sylab is dressed in a black desert robe with a multicolored thick cloth yoke across his shoulders, with hanging embroidered silk tassels capped with little silver bells. His hair is done up in the Yhing-heer fashion, long black braided locks framing his handsome face, decorated with silver beads and cusps that hang down past his chest. They swing in stride with the fancy tassels as he walks. He has a long, burnished dogwood staff with the head of a silver jackal in his right hand, and a slim, effete scimitar at his waist tucked into a broad green sash. Sylab smiles as he sees Hemmenia, and speaks to her in a deep booming voice "Oh, come now my lady, such a poisonous look to your patron! Can you not see the crowd gathering around us and feel the excitement that the games bring? Have I not kept my end of the bargain, and delivered strong and fine champions to avenge your slighted honor and see justice done this very day?" Hemmenia replies by rolling her eyes in disgust, and barks for the litter bearers to take her away from here. They pick her up in the litter and head toward the

north stairway, out of sight.

Sylab chuckles and turns his gaze on the consul, and you. "Good day to you Brother Talent!" Talent waves a halfhearted response. "Well met, warriors. Uzinda has good things to say about you, and she has an unusual instinct about such things. I have faith that you will do well today. I have also gone to pay homage at the Temple of the Fountain, and Neerel the Seer has divined a very auspicious future for all of you. It's the least I could do for the service you have done for me!" He gazes up and looks pleased at the stands of the arena, growing more crowded every moment.

"Can you feel it?" He closes his eyes and a toothy white smile plays across his face. His hands reach out into the air, as if feeling something tangible, his motions and speech are full of drama. "There is nothing else like it. The sound of the crowd, and the expectation in the air! It is not the matches or the performances, no matter how grand or moving, though those are indeed enjoyable, but this very moment that thrills me the most. My most cherished concubine, Anticipation! You can feel her stalking through the stands, in every hall and pen, on the city streets, and on the sandy arena floor like a great wall of water about to rush in and drown you! You should get to know her face and feel her curves, warriors. Study her movements and flirtations well, for she can show you the future!"

Talent looks at Sylab as if he is crazy. Sylab opens his eyes and laughs at the dubious expression on your faces. "Ah, but I do drone on and worry the logical Talent about my sanity!" He grows more serious, turning to face you and continues, "Now to the rules of the tourney.

"There will be three bouts, each of which will have one or more objectives to accomplish in order for your team to win. They will take place on the platforms there," and he points to the canvas wall behind him. "You may hamper, attack and even kill your opponents, but reaching the objective is worth more points overall. Only one of your team need accomplish the objective of any given bout to win it. There is a scoring system, which will be announced before each bout. The team with the most points wins the tourney, and the trial. There is also equipment, magic, and weapons stored or hidden within each platform. I am sure you would like to know more noble warriors, but that would spoil the surprise, now wouldn't it! You see! I can see my mistress in your eyes even now! I bid you good luck, and tell you to make a pact with your gods. From the looks of your competition, you're going to need it, so make yourselves ready! The tourney will begin in an hour." Sylab smiles and turns in a flurry, racing across the arena to a far hall.

Talent watches him speeding to the door, and then stares at you all with a confused look, speechless.

The tournaments will begin in an hour and a half when the stands are packed beyond capacity. Literally everyone in Sicaris is watching the games today, from the lowliest beggar to the highest noble and of course, the Commander-Magistrate. The crowd stands on rooftops or perches on balconies, stairways, and catwalks all around the amphitheater. Two of the Color Guard leading the Ordainer from the auction will visit the adventurers, telling them he is here to drain any spells from them. He tells them that scrolls and magic items concealed within the far platforms will replace any lost magic. (Because of the large amount of spell levels the Ordainer is draining, the GM can allow arcane spell casters to make an Intelligence check (or a Wisdom check for priests) at DC13 and "hide" 1D6 spells of their choice from him mentally.)

Sylab made a deal a few weeks ago with the Ordainer that he would be provided with spell casters for his trip back

to Ymandragore. However, since Sylab needed to make a deal with Hemmenia recently, he instead promised the Ordainer all the spells he could siphon off in addition to the spell casters from the losing team the day after the match. If the spell casters should be the PCs, then Brother Talent and the centurions will protect them, and the Ordainer will go away, very unhappy with them, and Sylab.

As the Ordainer is completing his task, Uzinda will show up at the pen carrying a chest, visibly scowling at him, telling the adventurers that trumpets will blare to announce the start of the tourney. She says that Sylab will address the Commander-Magistrate and the crowd, stating the rules of the current match. He will then announce Hemmenia's champions, naming them as the "Coryani Troop of Honor," after which they will make their entrance and salute the Commander-Magistrate in the Imperial fashion. They must then make their way to the platform with the Coryani flag. Uzinda gives them legionnaire's uniforms from the chest to wear, and she tells them to get ready. (If one of them was particularly helpful to her or made a good impression before the auction, she will offhandedly drop a masterwork-throwing dagger at their feet.) Brother Talent and the centurions will wish them good luck and leave to the stands to join the Commander-Magistrate. Both the adventurers and the opposing gladiators will start with no weapons or armor unless specifically stated, and if they smuggle in a small item, or it was given to them.

As the adventurers put on their uniforms, a fanfare of trumpets will sound, announcing the beginning of the first bout. Read the boxed text below aloud to the players

First Bout (Capture the Flag)

You look up at the sound of the trumpets, viewing the arena and the Magistrate's box where Nymic Altamera, Hemmenia, Talent, and the centurions are seated. The Sicarite Color Guard, armed with strange curving pole arms, surrounds them. As the crowd stirs, you see Sylab the Circus Master enter the ring from the south entrance of the arena. He bows low, addressing the Commander-Magistrate and the crowd in a deep resounding tone. "Greetings your honor! You have summoned us here today to resolve a matter that may seem simple at first to an outsider. Nevertheless, it is a matter, which will bring trouble to the people of Sicaris. It may even bring war to the whole of the Hinterlands! The people have spoken on the matter of the unfortunate murder of the Imperial Legate, Exeter of Coryan, and you have heard their cries, coming to an astute decision. The order has been given to judge the accused in the ancient Hinterland tradition of trial by combat."

His voice rises to a deafening shout suddenly. "However, since we will all share the wrath of the Coryani for this death, there is not just one person wronged here!" He spreads his arms dramatically and turns, his gaze sweeping the stands, and the crowd yells aloud in unison, rising to their feet. The stands are a massive shifting morass, making the guardsmen around the amphitheater visibly nervous. Sylab holds out his arms to quiet the crowd and as they settle, he continues. "I ask you, should we ignore the fact that there must be a trial?" A resounding cry of "No!" comes from the stands.

Sylab walks over and points to Hemmenia in the Magistrate's box. "Should we instead give the accused over to the Empire and scoff at the esteemed tribal law?" Again the crowd stands up and shouts "No!" Sylab resumes his drama, "Then we are all in agreement that we share the same fate, and that there must be a trial today! By the tribal law, the accused is committed to defend herself by appointed champions, and it is our gods who will pronounce the verdict in the arena this very day!" The

stands and rooftops come alive with shouts, jumping bodies, and fists in the air.

Sylab waits for the crowd to quiet down and turns back to the Commander-Magistrate, who looks nothing less than fearful, saying, "Your honor has heard the wish of the people, and has sanctioned the tribal custom wisely. I therefore humbly ask you to give the command for the tourney to commence."

The bouts will have a scoring system, and the GM should keep track of points for both teams. There are also weapons and gear stashed in each bout within the platforms. (See: **Weapons and Gear**). The GM may place them as appropriate before the bouts in the platforms, or devise new items that are fitting to the adventurers. The GM can also supplement the gladiators given with other combatants or modify the ones given (see below).

Continue reading the boxed text to the players.

The entirety of Sicaris turns their gaze to the sweating Commander-Magistrate. Somewhere a cricket sounds a chirp. Nymic gulps and stammers quietly at first, but clears his throat, loudly proclaiming, "Then let the games commence!" The people of Sicaris go wild again, and as the trumpets sound, Sylab begins the match. "As is the tribal custom, I shall present the offended parties first."

At this point, the GM may choose from the list of gladiators in the appendix: The Opposition. Sylab will announce them by their patron, their names and reputations, followed by drums beating and much aplomb from the crowd, as the gladiators walk over to face the Commander-Magistrate and salute him. After the opposing team has entered and assembled, continue reading the box text.

Sylab turns to your pen, and starts his introduction. "And now, in the defense of the accused, Lady Hemmenia Assante-Voucis, a group of Imperial spies captured only yesterday armed to the teeth with sorcerous magic and razor sharp blades bent on destruction. I give you the Honor Troop of Coryan!" Foul cries, shouts, boos and hissing erupt from the stands, signaling your entrance to this mockery of justice. Sylab asks each team to take their places on a wooden platform to either end of the tent shaped canvas wall. When you climb up, you can barely see the opposing team on the far platform over the canvas top. There is a wooden crate at your feet. Sylab goes on to explain the match. "The tourney shall have three bouts. Each of these will have a final objective to reach before a victor is decided. A tally will be kept for each team by a panel of three separate judges to insure fairness. To kill an opponent is worth one point; disabling an opponent two; and capturing a flag or winning the bout are each worth four points. There are weapons and equipment hidden or stowed in each platform."

A group of bare chested, muscular workmen comes out of the far hallway and runs over to the canvas wall. The head worker looks at Sylab, who is smiling wickedly at you, and as he nods his approval, the workers simultaneously pull down the large canvas curtain. The entire crowd gasps in amazement at the sight of a sailing ship, complete with a mast, square sail, crow's nest and rigging, floating on what looks like a huge, round tub of water, but no tub can be seen! The entire circumference of water is suspended in mid air, no doubt by magic, and schools of silvery, vicious looking, sharp-toothed fish glimmer and flash in the sunlight. The small quick fish swim in agitated shoals under or around the bobbing ship's hull. Large clamshells, waving seaweed, an old anchor, and even a treasure chest spilling over with gold line the bottom of the water, completing the illusion.

There is a Coryani flag to the rear of the ship on a pole, and on the opposing side of the vessel, a black flag on a pole bearing the various Yhing-heer clan symbols in colored thread.

Sylab seizes the moment of quiet, gesturing or pointing with his hands and says, "The object of this match is simple. Capture your flag from the enemy, take it to the crow's nest, and place it in the bronze bracket on the rim. The first team to do so wins." He pauses for a moment, wild eyed and grinning, looking completely insane. He suddenly bellows, "Patrons, I give you the first naval battle of Sicaris!"

The crowd is so loud that you cannot even hear each other from three paces. They begin to throw fruit, hats, purses, cups, or any other object not nailed down in frenzied hysteria.

After ten minutes of the cacophonous crowd, the harsh blare of a trumpet will sound, signaling the start of the bout. The adventurers will see the other team furiously breaking open the crate and pulling things out. It requires a successful Strength check (DC10) to open a crate. In the player characters' crate are two coils of rope with grappling hooks (which can be used as flails or gaffs), six large belaying pins (1D6 damage, Crit-x2, Range-10') and two scrolls. The GM may use whichever types of scrolls are appropriate for the spell casters in the party. The GM may place items from the appendix: Weapons and Gear and have them hidden throughout the boat. If a team wins, they may keep one weapon or piece of gear each for the next bout. Clever PCs may also attempt to conceal small gear and take it back to the pen.

The GM can use the rules for climbing, swimming and jumping for all DC checks and distance on the boat. Listed times are based on a speed of 30 feet per round. A **Wall of Force** spell contains the water. Anyone falling into the water will receive only quarter damage from a fall, but will be attacked by the vicious shoals of fish the round after they fell in. The GM should roll 3D8 for the amount of fish that attack each round, which causes one point per fish each round. It will take either someone throwing the swimmer a rope and two rounds as well as a Climb check (at DC18) or the swimmer can paddle to the **Wall of Force** (Swim check at DC10) and climb over (DC16) to the docks in four rounds.

Second Bout (Siege)

After the first bout, the adventurers are allowed to retire to their pen. They find several finely crafted antique Coryani breastplates and a set of green metal **Bracers of Armor+2** on the bench in the pen. (The opposing team has been armed likewise) Hemmenia will ask Bernarr to go down and see how they are doing. One of the adventurers will see several bruises and a red, rounded blemish on the left side of Bernarr's neck, barely covered by his shirt. If they ask the GM about the blemish, they can be told it looks like someone wearing a signet ring punched him there. They may also have spoken with the rogue-spy Lilyblack about this (see the soft point, The Clasp.) Closer examination or a Spot check at DC15 will further reveal that the mark resembles an Imperial crest. (Exactly like the one on the ring Exeter was wearing and always fumbled nervously with. This is still on his body, which is being kept in the temple.) If they ask Bernarr about it, he will be caught by surprise. He will then say quickly that he got into a scuff with the Commander-Magistrate and his men when they tried to arrest Hemmenia after the murder. If they press him, he will say that he must return to his mistress, and that they have other things to worry about. Bernarr will then leave the pen to the Magistrate's box.

If the adventurers suffered too many wounds, the GM can allow a priest of Hurrian from the temple to visit the pen

and cast a few healing spells to ensure that they survive the next two matches.

The second bout will begin shortly after this encounter, when Sylab makes his entrance. Read the boxed text below aloud.

The trumpets sound again and Sylab walks out on the arena floor. The crowd waits in hushed anticipation, but the Circus Master does not speak. He is smiling pleasantly to himself, closing his eyes, basking in the glow of the moment, as the doubtful crowd whisper and murmur to one another.

Suddenly Sylab laughs aloud and begins to float into the air. He arcs up and over the stands in a flurry of flapping robes, circumventing the arena and goading the now cheering crowd, a flying lunatic. They stand in waves to reach out to him as he flies overhead. He speaks and his booming voice echoes off the tiers and buildings. It seems to have been augmented by a spell, sounding as unnatural as it does.

"Dear patrons, it is time for our second bout!" The crowd yells their approval and he pauses, allowing them to settle. "The match will have the same conditions and scoring system, hidden equipment; one point for a kill; two for a disable; three points to gain the glowing key; and four for a win. The defenders will be placed in a fort, and they must hold it with their lives. The objective for the attackers is to breach the fort defenses, get to the glowing key, and open the door to the ballista tower. They must then fire the ballista at a target, which will hoist their flag, signaling victory! There is a time limit, and if the defenders hold or the flag is not flying by the end of the match, they are victorious." As the flying Circus Master speaks, the workers from the first match enter and position themselves around the new canvas wall, waiting for the signal to pull it down. Sylab speaks with dramatic inflection and pause. "Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you... The Siege!"

Sylab waves at the workers, and they yank down the canvas, exposing a small wooden fort, roughly T-shaped, which has a tower on the southern end of the T with a loaded ballista. The ballista is aimed at a red target shield directly across from it, about a spear cast in distance. Between the target and the tower is a lily field; asymmetrical rows of small pits with tree stumps turned upside down inside them. The stumps have their branches and thick roots sharpened like stakes to pierce and snare anyone falling into the pits.

Around the base of the tower is a wooden siege fence consisting of crossed oak beams, sharpened to a deadly point. The fence sits on an earthen rampart, goes to about the middle of the fort, and ends in two large pits filled with stakes.

There is a stout metal-banded door at the midsection of the fort interior that leads to the ballista tower. A glowing key on a chain rests on a peg above the door.

The northern half of the fort seems to have no ground defenses, but has a slightly higher wall with minarets on the corners. On the arena floor about a spears cast away from the high wall is a shielded cart with some projectile weapon mounted on it. Three tower shields stand on the eastern side of the cart, and two tall ladders are on the ground next to them. Continue reading the boxed text aloud to the group.

Everyone in the arena gapes in awe and roars their approval. How all of this was built in a single night is beyond you, and the people of Sicaris can be heard yelling that Sylab the Circus Master is truly a magician of the highest caliber.



Whichever team won the last bout gains the advantageous position of defending against the attackers on the fort walls. There is a weapons rack along the west wall of the fort, with spears, swords and daggers of various types. (The GM may also place weapons appropriate to the defenders.) There are also two scroll tubes hanging from the top. The minarets and the shielded cart provide one half cover (+4 AC cover and a +2 to Reflex saves).

In each minaret corner is a loaded heavy crossbow with ten quarrels, and a pile of ten fist sized rocks (1d6 damage, Crit-x2, range 10). There is also a chest with two torches, a tinderbox, and six flasks of oil with rags stuffed into them. Mounted on the wagon below is a loaded porcupine, a device similar in function, range and damage to a large crossbow, but it can fire a volley of ten arrows simultaneously.

There are three extra loads for the porcupine, and it takes 1d4 rounds to reload it fully. (The GM can allow it to be fired half loaded in half the time.) When it is fired, roll a to hit versus the average AC in the porcupine's range and arc (120 degree arc from five feet at the base and twelve feet at the cap.) Halve all dexterity bonuses (rounding down) due to the large amount of quarrels in the volley, and then roll 1d6 (or 1d3 if half loaded) to see how many arrows hit. (The cart is also a good place for any items the GM may choose from the appendix: Weapons and Gear.)

There is also a tube with two scrolls hidden inside the handle of the cart under a false cap. The GM can ask for a Spot roll from the players to find this (DC12.) Anyone running with a ladder has no A/C bonus from dexterity, due to the length and weight of the ladders. Smart PCs will balance the ladders on the cart and use it for cover.

The glowing key is ten feet above the door on a peg. Anyone using the key on the door while a fight is going on must make a Will save (DC 15) to concentrate and open it. Whoever is opening the door is flatfooted unless actually involved in the combat directly. The spikes on the rampart, the lilies and the pits cause 2D6 damage when hit, or 3D6 if a person falls on them from above (Reflex save at DC15 for half). The time limit for the bout is twenty-five rounds.

Third Bout (King of the Mountain)

When the adventurers go back to the pen again, a priest of Hurrian is waiting for them. He introduces himself as Heric, and says that Hurrian is truly with them. He congratulates them and says that they will have a couple of hours to rest and recuperate until the final match begins. Heric also offers to pray with any of them if they wish. There are tin pitchers of cool water and broad bowls of fruit on the wooden benches. A sandalwood tray with bottles of ointment rests on a small wooden table. Heric says the ointment is good for sore muscles, cuts and burns. The group hears him whispering a prayer for Exeter's soul to be welcomed into the afterlife. He steps up to the door to leave, and asks if he can do anything else before he leaves.

The two bottles are filled with five doses each of **Kheoghtom's Ointment**. (The GM can also assume that the opposing gladiators have gotten similar treatment.) The PCs can ask Heric for any simple task, such as delivering a message and even smuggling in a small piece of equipment, or a small weapon. They can even ask him about the night of the murder or the condition of Exeter's body. (In fact, Heric received the body at the temple on the night of the murder and prepared it.) If they do not ask Heric about Exeter, the GM can have him mention an additional comment about it to drop into the subject.

If the PCs are crafty, they will realize that they can use the spy, Captain Vander Proust to get to their own equipment and have Heric smuggle it in, or use their own money to buy it. If they should use something they obviously did not have before the tournament, nothing will be done about it unless it skews

the odds drastically in their favor or can cause great destruction, such as a wand of fireballs. After all, the Sicarites admire tricksters and see it as part of the games.

The third bout will begin with the customary trumpets and an introduction by Sylab. (The GM can feel free to improvise anything substantial that may have happened during the two previous bouts.) Read the boxed text below to the players.

Darkness begins to fall over Sicaris, casting long shadows throughout the amphitheater and along the canyon walls and thoroughfares. Torchbearers make their way through the stands and light pitch dipped brands stuck in brackets on the amphitheater walls, guttering alight, driving away the pooling shadows. A score of pretty Yhing-heer girls follow the torchbearers with large baskets filled with tallow candles. They hand a candle to each person in the stands. The trumpets sound again as patrons scramble to retake their seats after the pause in the tourney. Minutes pass and a restless murmuring comes from the crowd, growing denser every moment. You can see the Coryani flag resting in the corner of the pen. Suddenly, Sylab emerges onto the arena floor, his robes lined with glowing crystals set in tiny rows across his body. The workers trail behind him as he once again takes to the air. He touches the top of his staff to the apex of the last canvas tent, and a fiery globe of light bursts around the silver jackal head, giving Sylab an eerie countenance. The crowd, rejuvenated from their repose, cries its approval anew. Sylab begins to speak, and again his voice is tainted with magic, sounding like a spirit from the grave. "Good patrons, we come to the final bout of the tourney, and near the end of our trial." The echo from his voice is weird and uncanny, resounding off the walls and buildings. He flies slowly around the circumference of the arena's rim, addressing the crowd as if speaking to a jury. "Has Sicaris not seen the rise and fall of the mighty? Has she not survived much plight and suffering? Then we can only assume that the gods favor our ways. This and that they will bless us with not only a just ruling through the tourney, but that others outside the Hinterlands will hear of this and deem us a strong and just people in the days to come!" He throws out his arms as if to embrace all of Sicaris and the patrons stamp their feet and cheer in prideful approval.

Sylab makes his way through the air to the Magistrate's box, gesturing toward Hemmenia who sits mute at this pagan spectacle. He turns back to the crowd, and says, "Remember the very moment you have raised your voices to a shout, for if this woman is indeed innocent, the gods will know it and set her free of bondage.

I ask all that are present here to light their candles and thereby make a solemn oath to the gods that they will act in keeping with the divine rule. Whoever is victorious tonight is truly blessed by the gods and will be proclaimed as such in accordance with the tribal law. If this woman is guilty, she shall be tried by his Honor on the morrow. Sylab pulls a tallow candle from a pocket and lights it on one of the torches.

The crowd turns to look at each other and follows suit, stepping down to the torches below them in shuffling rows. Sylab bows his head as if in prayer, and many of the patrons do likewise. Whispered oaths and prayers come down from the high stands, accentuating the religious air of the arena. When the crowd is finished, Sylab raises his head and continues his speech, sounding sober and serious.

"And now patrons, I give you the stage on which our champions shall give themselves and their case up to judgement, and the final bout of our tourney." The workmen surround the canvas tent and look to Sylab for a signal. He looks

down at them and nods, bellowing out, "They shall be put through the purifying flame of the divine judge, mighty Nier! The workers yank down the canvas with a great tug, and a blast of flames from within reveals a tall mound of earth and rock, stylized to look like a blackened, jagged volcanic mountain.

At the base of the mound, on the north and south sides, are what looks like four low wooden frames with taut black cloth stretched across the tops. On the east and western sides of the mound are two packed earth ramps that slope up sixty feet. There are four more of the wooden frames; one positioned half way up each of the ramps and one each over the edge of two large pits at the top. Huge gouts of flame shoot out of the pits into the air, and long, jagged iron spikes protrude out of the pit, glowing dull red from the heat of the flames. Just above the pits is a level tier, ringed with more of the deadly spikes at an outward angle.

At the center of the tier platform is a conical pillar of rock, with a smaller five-foot wide tier about ten feet up the pillar, crowned with a ten-foot metal framework pedestal. Both the small tier and the pedestal are spiked like the tier below. On top of the pedestal is a blackened iron statue of the god Nier, one hand stretched out and holding a fiery metal torch, the other holding a set of polished copper scales. His eyes are aglow with hellish flame, and at the feet of the god is a bronze bracket for a flag. Continue with the boxed text.

The crowd emits sounds of fright and awe, and Sylab continues addressing the crowd. "The last bout will have the same scoring system and shall also be timed, but the scores shall be slightly different. One point for a kill, three points for a disable and seventeen points for the team flag at the foot of Nier when the gong sounds. If no flag is there at this time, then the first team to place a flag there wins." Sylab flies over to a large gong of hammered bronze, and pulls out a striker from behind it. He cries out, "And now patrons, let the match begin!" He strikes the gong loudly, and you see the other team running with their flag for the mound.

The quick way up the mound is by using the wooden and canvas frames, which are trampolines. A character may attempt a running jump onto a trampoline by successfully rolling a to hit roll against AC 15. A character may use their tumbling skill or jump skill if it is better than their base attack bonus. This is a move equivalent action and does not provoke attacks of opportunity. Otherwise, it requires two rounds to get enough bounce to reach the next level. This is a full round action that provokes attacks of opportunity. The trampolines add +10 to Jump checks and double the maximum distance of the jump. The trampolines at the base of the mound are on three-foot tall platforms. If the character successfully jumps to a trampoline on the first tier from a trampoline on the ramp, they may attempt to continue the jump as a running jump listed above. This will allow them to reach the foot of Nier in one round. If the character fails to reach the first tier from the ramp trampoline, they will fall into one of the flaming pits and take 4d6 damage from the spikes and burning coals (DC18 Reflex save for half damage). The trampolines at the base of the mound land the characters near the sand traps on the mound's edge in two rounds, just under the first tier. There is a half-buried canvas bundle of weapons and gear in the sand trap. It is a 15-foot climb (DC15) up to the first tier from the sand traps. The time limit for this bout is twenty rounds.

When the tourney is over, the points will be tallied in the magistrate's box and a victor will be named. The winners will be escorted to the Commander-Magistrate and he will present them with a huge bronze chalice that has been inscribed with their names and an inscription reading "To the Victor, the spoils of war." The chalice is overflowing with varied gems, silver jewelry and coins (worth 10,000 GP total) and 1D3 minor magic items (the GM can roll randomly or choose

items appropriate to the adventurers). Anyone wounded is healed by the high priest of Hurrian (Aristus of the Fountain).

THE MURDERER REVEALED (Hard Point)

After the tourney is over, whether the adventurers won or lost, they will be taken to the Clasp to celebrate with the Hinterland team and seated at the customary Victory table. All the important people of Sicaris (with the exception of Sylab, Ni kuel Ar, Hemmenia, and Bernarr) will come and pay their respects to both teams (Hemmenia is in safekeeping at the garrison fort with Bernarr).

Brother Talent will sit at a nearby table, congratulating the adventurers. He leans over and whispers that he cannot think of a way to flush out the murderer, and that they will just have to settle on getting Hemmenia out of Sicaris. He looks slightly distraught and disappointed, and the adventurers can see him straining to come up with a plan to catch the killer.

At this point, if the players do not act on this, or cannot come up with a plan to prove that Bernarr is the murderer, the GM can set the scene for a confrontation with Bernarr. Even if the players have a plan, this scene can still be played out. Read the boxed text below to the group.

You are caught in a maelstrom of celebration and toasts to your health and prosperity, when a very distraught Lilyblack comes to the Victory table. She walks over and whispers in your ears. "I have some information you may want to hear. Follow me up to your room where we can speak in private. She acts as though she is happy and luring you up to your room for more personal congratulations, as the patrons laugh and goad you to follow her. Brother Talent looks worried at first, but catches on and joins the crowd, standing up and yelling out "Hmm, a sweet elven maiden. That's something even a monk would be tempted by!" The crowd roars with much laughter.

Whichever of the adventurers goes with Lilyblack will be led to their room and told that she was visited by Bernarr in the stands during the tourney. He told her that he would buy her off with a large sum of gems in return for her silence (see the soft point: The Clasp). The bodyguard said that they should meet on the outskirts of town on Orchard hill by the tall water tower.

However, she says that she has been given two pieces of information from a reliable source (Famke' Skellicaris). The first is that Bernarr has hired a large group of Night Foxes to meet him on Orchard hill tonight for a secret mission. The second is that Sylab and Ni kuel Ar knew all along of the murderer's identity, which means once they find out that Lilyblack knows anything, they will likely want her dead too.

Lilyblack will plead for help, bribing or coercing the adventurers any way she can, as she is terrified of Bernarr, and she is particularly wary of Sylab's wrath. She says the meeting is set in the small hours of the night, when the green moon reaches its zenith. The adventurers should have about one hour to come up with a plan.

Orchard Hill

Orchard Hill is situated on the northwest corner of Sicaris. Large stone water traps cap the top of the hill, and a wooden tower hanging with rope-strung pulleys, buckets, and gutters loom over the water traps to irrigate the orchards and fields that ring the hill. A windmill next to the water tower powers the pulley system. Bernarr will walk up the hill at the appointed time, and eight Night Foxes will be concealed in the trees of the orchard. Read the boxed text below to the players.

You are waiting in hiding for Bernarr to arrive, watching for a sign in the darkness. The hilltop is

illuminated by the eerie silver-green light of the moon, accompanied by the creaking of the windmill and sloshing, water filled buckets that make their way slowly to the top of an old wooden tower. Sounds of domestic animals or the yip of a distant jackal pierce the night with startling suddenness.

Suddenly you hear a twig snap, and look to see Bernarr in full armor walking up the eastern hillside. He cries out to Lilyblack, who walks out from behind the water traps, greeting the bodyguard. He looks around suspiciously, but seems confident. Lilyblack gets to the point, saying, "Where is my payment?" Bernarr responds by placing a bulging pouch on one of the water traps. Lilyblack opens it and looks disappointed, pouring out gravel onto the ground.

Bernarr draws his sword saying, "Oh come now, you didn't think I was going to make a deal with a sneaky little spy, did you? No, I think you've seen a little too much and would just betray me later." He takes out a vial as he speaks and smears the blade of his sword with a dark fluid.

Lilyblack stares at the poison and looks genuinely afraid. Bernarr continues his tirade. "If you had just minded your own business and kept off the street, you wouldn't have to die, little songbird." Bernarr glances around again, a look of casual overconfidence on his face.

He throws the poison vial away, and advances on Lilyblack. She quickly barks out a response, sounding desperate. "But I didn't see you kill the legate!" He retorts, "Ah, but you have already deduced what I was doing! And I would have gotten away with placing the blame on Hemmenia if it was not for the meddling of spies and adventurers!" Bernarr's face twists into a mask of hate and he lunges at Lilyblack with the poisoned blade.

If the adventurers make an appearance, then half of the Night Foxes will run up the hill to engage them while the other half attempt sneak attacks from behind. (If the adventurers have brought along anyone to assist them, the number of Night Foxes can be increased). The poison on Bernarr's blade is Terinav root. (Contact, DC 16, 1D6 Dex/2D6 Dex)

Whatever the result of the combat, Bernarr will try to escape after a few rounds into the city where he has a horse waiting. He will attempt to flee out of Sicaris to Milandir and then to one of the northern Coryani provinces. If he is captured, he will go back to Coryan with Brother Talent and the adventurers. If Bernarr is knocked down to zero hit points or less, and the adventurers move to kill him, Brother Talent will intercede. He asks that the adventurers spare Bernarr as a personal favor so he might be taken back to Coryan to face justice at the hands of the Emperor and avenge the death of his master, Exeter.

THE HEIR OF SICARIS AND THE WRATH OF THE EMPEROR

The next morning the Commander-Magistrate will call for a public meeting in the amphitheater, and announce both his promotions to Imperial Governor and Captain Proust as the Regent-Commander of Sicaris. The spring caravan will be ready to leave after the announcement, and Brother Talent will have prepared Exeter's body and a wagon for the entourage's departure.

If the adventurers should try to implicate Sylab or Ni kuel Ar in any way, they will be told not to make waves by Commander Proust. They will get the idea that he is protecting Sylab and the Khitani merchant for his own nefarious purposes. If the adventurers should ask the new Commander about this, he will flat out tell them that it is



true. He says that he cannot start his career as leader of Sicaris by angering the powerful patrons of the arena, or the people. (The GM can even have a dramatic face off with Sylab, the Night Foxes, and themselves for flavor as a soft point).

The caravan will arrive in Milandir in a few days, in the city of Ashvan. The traitor Nymic Altimera will be arrested and stripped of his title by the Centurions and the town guard, who are not at all happy with his giving aid to their sworn enemy, the nation of Canceri.

The caravan will eventually leave Milandir and arrive in Coryan a week later. The adventurers will be contacted secretly and paid. They will also gain a powerful new patron, Senator Phineas Assante-Voucis.

Dark Rumors

Later, one of the adventurers will hear rumors of the Emperor himself proclaiming a gruesome judgement on Nymic Altimera and if he is still alive, Bernarr. According to the horrid tale, Nymic was splayed out on the flagstones of the palace courtyards and surrounded by the Legion of Vigilance. The legion then marched over the screaming Nymic in full armor, trampling him to death. The soldiers then cut up his body and fed it to the royal war hounds.

As for the famous centurion Bernarr, the Emperor decided that he could not be killed publicly or disappear, since he was a famous hero. The Emperor then had Bernarr don a suit of armor with the inscription, "Pax Coryanis" across the breastplate. The Emperor told the centurion that since he dared to scheme against a Royal Daughter of the Imperial family, and since he so loved the outer provinces, that he was to patrol the outer reaches of the Empire for the rest of his life. He then summoned an ancient sorcerer who placed a powerful curse on Bernarr. In accord with the curse, he can never again set foot on Coryani soil or he would be

carried away by devils to the pits of hell. He is to patrol the borders to seek out and destroy all enemies of the Empire.

After the adventurers hear the black tale of the Emperor's justice, read the boxed text below to the players.

One evening while strolling past the entrance to the Imperial Quarter, you see a somber black flag posted high on the Tower of Vigilance. An old soldier is standing on the Triumphal Bridge, staring at the flag flapping in the cool night air. He sees you looking at it and proceeds to tell you that the flag is an ancient tradition in the Legion of Vigilance, placed there when they lose a great hero, or as a mark of shame. "I wonder who died?" he says, and walks off past the tower into the busy column lined streets.

Conclusion

The adventurers may ask Senator Phineas about any special terms they may have settled on previously as payment. The GM can lead into several adventure hooks after the adventurers have rested up in Coryan.

The adventurers might ask Senator Phineas for information on the Hinterlands, including documented lore, maps and local scouts and return to plunder its wealth and secrets.

They could be caught up in the political intrigues of the Imperial court, or stalked by assassins hired by a vengeful Bernarr, or one of Nymic Altimera's Canceri contacts.

Hemmenia might also summon the adventurers to her country estate, asking them to investigate the theft of one of her rare maps. This map details the location of a series of ancient magical portals all over Onara. The map also includes the tale of the hoary, invisible Jungle Island of Aerie, which travels through the air. There is also an incantation on how to find the island on the back, written in an ancient language.

Whatever the case, the adventurers have made many new allies (and a few enemies) and heaped honor and glory (which are most Coryani virtues) upon their names.

This time, Larrisa, Goddess of Fortune has smiled upon them, and they have made it out alive.

"They say that curiosity killed the cat, and then compare fortune seekers and questing men to fools. Yet I ask you who is the greater fool, one who leads by example and even folly, or the one who sits idly by and waits for signs of corruptible stagnation."

Taken from the Illirite Book of Honorable Accord, by the Soldier-Saint Alrameus Vernico of Plexus.

NPCs of SICARIS

Legionnaire, Male Human Warrior2: CR 1; Medium-Size Humanoid; HD 2d10+4; hp 20; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft., AC 17 (Armor +4, Shield +2, Dex +1); Atk +5 Melee (Masterwork short sword, 1d6+2/19-20), +4 Ranged (Masterwork shortspear, 1d8+2/x3, Range 20ft.); AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10. Skills: Climb +4, Jump +5, Ride +3, Search +2, Spot +3. Feats: Endurance, Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Chain Shirt Armor, Large metal shield, masterwork short sword, masterwork shortspear.

Description: Legionnaires are the typical soldiers of the Imperial legions. They are well trained, well equipped, and disciplined.

Centurion, Male Human Fighter6: CR 6; Medium-Size Humanoid; HD 6d10+12; hp 44; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft. (20ft in Banded mail); AC 20 (Banded mail (+7), Shield (+2), Dex (+1)); Atk +12/+7 melee (Masterwork Short Sword, 1d6+6/19-20), +9/+4 ranged (masterwork Shortspear, 1d8+3/x3); AL LN; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +5, Jump +5, Ride +5, Swim +4, Listen +4, Search +2, Spot +4. **Feats:** Endurance, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Focus (short spear), Weapon Specialization (short sword), Close-Quarters Fighting, Mounted Combat

Possessions: Banded mail armor +1, masterwork large metal shield, Short sword +1, masterwork short spear, 2 potions of Cure Light Wounds

Description: A Centurion is the commander of an Imperial legion, usually consisting of eighty to one hundred men. They have risen through the ranks by exceptional prowess and skill.

Militiaman, Sicarite, Male Human Warrior3: CR 2; Medium-Size Humanoid; HD 3d10+6; hp 28; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft (20 ft in breastplate); AC 19 (Breastplate +5), Shield +2; Atk +7 melee (masterwork scimitar, 1d6+2/18-20), +6 Ranged (masterwork shortspear, 1d8+2/x3, Range 20ft.); AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +6, Jump +6, Ride +6, Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +2. **Feats:** Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Possessions: Breastplate (5), large metal shield (2), masterwork scimitar, and masterwork short spear.

Description: The militia of Sicaris is a mix of transferred Coryani soldiers, and Vanomir warriors trained as legionnaires. They answer directly to the garrison Captain and the Commander-Magistrate.

Color Guard, Sicarite, Male Human Fighter3/Rogue3: CR 6; Medium-Size Humanoid; HD 3d10+6 (Fighter) plus 3d6+6 (Rogue); hp 44; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 19 (12 touch, 17 flatfooted); Atk +10 Melee (masterwork Scimitar, 1d6+3, Crit 18-20/x2), +9 Melee (masterwork Yhark, 1d10+3/x3) or +9 melee (masterwork Yhark, 1d6+3), +9 Ranged (masterwork mighty composite longbow, 1d8+3/x3, range 110 ft.); SA Sneak attack +2d6; SQ Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Decipher Script +7, Escape Artist +8, Forgery +7, Gather Information +7, Hide +8, Intuit Direction +6, Jump +12, Listen +7, Move Silently +8, Use Rope +8, Ride +11, Search +7, Sense Motive +6, Spot +6, Tumble +10. **Feats:** Endurance, Improved Unarmed Strike, Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat, Ride-by Attack, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Possessions: Sicarite Studded Leather (5), masterwork small metal shield (1), masterwork scimitar, masterwork Yhark, mighty masterwork composite longbow.

Description: The color guard serves simultaneously as the sergeants and scouts, spies and specialists of the garrison in Sicaris. Their rogue skills stem from a tradition that originated when the Coryani retracted troops from the Hinterlands and a skeleton crew was left behind to fight bandits, enemy tribes, and monsters. Since then, the color guard has become crack troops and elite guerilla fighters. They use disguises often to spy, and will wear normal guard uniforms to blend in with regular troops, keeping the rumors alive that "they are everywhere". They do not answer in any way to the Guild Master of Thieves (Sylab).

Nymic Altimera, Commander-Magistrate of Sicaris, Male Human Fighter7: CR 7; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 7d10+14; hp 60; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft (20 ft in half plate); AC 21 (Half Plate +1 (+8) Shield (+2), RoP (+1); Atk +14/+9 melee (masterwork short sword, 1d6+7/19-20), +10/+5 Ranged (masterwork shortspear, 1d8+3/x3, Range 20 ft.); AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +6, Jump +4, Ride +6, Listen +6, Spot +6. **Feats:** Alertness, Dodge, Endurance, Leadership, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Focus (short spear), Weapon Specialization (short sword).

Possessions: Half plate armor +1, masterwork large metal shield, short sword +2, masterwork short spear, two potions of Cure Light Wounds, and a Ring of Protection +1

Description: Nymic Altimera was stationed in Sicaris six years ago due to his seditious behavior in the Imperial Army. He is finished with believing in Coryani ways and has sold his services to

Canceri. He is nominally respected in Sicaris, largely due to Sylab and the reemergence of the arena and the color guard, and is merely a figurehead due to the Circus masters' machinations. Nymic realizes this fact, enjoys it, and thinks he is being promoted and taking credit from Sylab running things from behind the scene. Nymic does not care about the trial as long as it does not affect his future governorship or the opinion of the Emperor.

Yhing-heer Tribesman, Male Human Fighter1/ Expert3: CR2; Medium-Size Humanoid; HD 1d10+2, 3d6+6; hp 27; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 17 (Sicarite Studded Leather (+5), Dex (+2); Atk +6 melee (masterwork scimitar, 1d6+2/18-20) or +6 (masterwork heavy lance, 1d8+2/x3), +6 ranged (masterwork composite longbow, 1d8+2/x3, range 110ft.); AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Animal Empathy +10, Handle Animal +8, Hide +8, Intuit Direction +10, Knowledge (Nature) +8, Move Silently +8, Ride +12, Search +8, Wilderness Lore +10. **Feats:** Mounted Combat, Improved Initiative, Mounted Archery, Track.

Possessions: Sicarite Studded Leather, masterwork scimitar, masterwork heavy lance, mighty masterwork composite longbow (+2).

Description: These are the native tribal horsemen of the Hinterlands. Their tribal weapons are the scimitar, heavy lance, and the composite longbow. Native tribesmen receive training in these weapons, as well as the track feat. They tame the best war-horses on Onara, and begin training on them at a very early age. The horse is seen as a man's most valuable possession, even over weapons, gold or magic.



Kharkofen, Nawal of the Vanomir, Slave of Hurrian, Scourge of the Canceri, Male Human Warrior12: CR 11; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 12d8+12; hp 72; Init +5 (Dex); Spd 30 ft (30 ft in Chain Shirt); AC 21, 24 vs. Missiles (Chain Shirt +7), Shield (+2/+5), Dex (+2); Atk +17/+12/+7 melee (+2 Holy Battle axe, 1d8+5 +2d6 holy vs. evil/x3) or +16/+11/+6

melee (masterwork heavy lance, 1d8+3 (x3 charge)/x3), +16/+11/+6 ranged (mighty masterwork composite longbow (+3) and masterwork arrows, 1d8+3/x3, range 110 ft.); AL CN; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 14. **Skills:** Intimidate +17, Handle Animal +17, Ride +19, and Wilderness Lore +9. **Feats:** Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Ride-by Attack, Spirited Charge.

Possessions: +3 chain shirt, small metal shield +1/+4 vs. missiles, +2 holy battleaxe, +3 mighty masterwork composite longbow, masterwork scimitar, masterwork heavy lance, 20 masterwork arrows.

Description: Kharkofen started his rise to power as a young scout to an adventuring troop, and gained popularity for his exploits, cunning and strength, and his devout worship of Hurrian. He is known for several great deeds (killing a shovel horned rhino single-handedly, looting the fabled Ghost Jackal cairns, raids against the Canceri, and helping to build the Temple of the Fountain.) He is the main investor of the arena, and a very popular leader in the Hinterlands. He can often be found in the arena or at the Clasp, swapping tales with newly arrived adventurers in Sicaris. Kharkofen does not like Hemmenia, but has trusted his ally and business partner Sylab to handle her departure from the Hinterlands. He knows nothing about the murder and sees it as the act of a coward.



Brother Talent of Annonica, Male Human Monk5: CR 5; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 5d8+5; hp 28; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 40 ft; AC 16 (Wis +3), Dex (+2), Monk (+1); Atk +7 melee (+1 Kama, 1d6+3) or +5 (Unarmed, 1d8+2), +6 ranged (masterwork sling, 1d4, range 50 ft.); SA Unarmed Strike, Stunning attack, flurry of blows; SQ Evasion, Still Mind, Deflect Arrows, Slow Fall (20 ft.), Purity of Body; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +6, Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (Arcana) +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +5. **Feats:** Dodge, Skill Focus

(Diplomacy), Weapon Focus (Kama).

Possessions: +1 Kama, masterwork sling.

Description: Brother Talent is a monk from Annonica, a southwestern province of the Coryani Empire. He joined the legions to study various modes of personal combat, and was recognized early on as an astute political officer. He serves in the army as a diplomat of foreign affairs, and is loyal to the Imperium, functioning well in the lawful and ordered structure it provides. He will go to great lengths to accomplish a mission despite atrocious odds, and wants to complete the task that his respected commander Exeter tried to finish before he was murdered.

Bernarr of Coryan (the Vigilant), Male Human Fighter10: CR 10; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 10d10+20; hp 84; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft (20 ft in full plate); AC 24 (Full plate (+10), Shield (+3), Dex (+1)); Atk +16/+11 melee (short sword +2, 1d6+7/17-20), +13/+8 ranged (shortspear +1, 1d8+4/x3) or +13/+8 (mighty composite longbow +1 and arrow +1, 1d8+5/x3); AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +9, Jump +9, Ride +3, Listen +7, Spot +7. **Feats:** Alertness, Blind Fighting, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Critical (short sword), Improved Initiative, Leadership, Run, Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Focus (short spear), Weapon Specialization (short sword).

Possessions: +2 Full plate armor (10), +1 large metal shield (3), +2 short sword, +1 short spear, +1 mighty composite longbow (+3), 25 +1 arrows.

Description: Bernarr is a famous soldier and the personal bodyguard of Hemmenia Assante-Voucis. He murdered the legate to frame Hemmenia and he has become twisted and evil from her abuse and the horrors of war. Bernarr is very capable and deadly, but has become sloppy, selfish, and unwieldy, and is barely able to contain his loathing and disrespect for Hemmenia or any land other than the inner provinces of the Coryani.

Sicarite Rogue (Night Fox Guild), Male Human Rogue3: CR 3; Medium-Size Humanoid; HD 3d6+3; hp 17; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 17 (Sicarite studded leather (+5), Dex (+2)); Atk +4 melee (masterwork rapier, 1d6+1/18-20), +5 ranged (mighty masterwork composite short bow and masterwork arrows, 1d6+1/x3, range 70 ft.); SA Sneak attack +2d6; SQ Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +6, Climb +7, Decipher Script +8, Disable Device +8, Hide +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Open Locks +8, Pick Pocket +10, Search +8, Spot +6. **Feats:** Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (rapier).

Possessions: Sicarite studded leather, masterwork rapier, mighty +1 masterwork composite short bow, and 20 masterwork arrows.

Description: The Night Foxes are not merely just the thieves of Sicaris. Though stealing is against the law, trickery and cunning are traits that are seen as romantic and stylish by the people, so the rogues of Sicaris ride the thin line between folk heroes and outlaws. They are quite skilled in the rapier (their trademark along with colorful sashes), and are known for swashbuckling duels and chases with the guardsmen. Their leader is Sylab the Circus Master.

Sylab the Circus Master, Shadow Ruler of Sicaris, Male Human Rogue10: CR 10; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 10d6+10; hp 52; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 23 (Bracers (+6) RoP (+4) Dex (+3); Atk +10/+5 melee (rapier +2, 1d6+3/18-20), +12/+7 ranged (Mighty (+1) Composite shortbow +1 and +1 arrows, 1d6+3/x3, range 70 ft.); SA Sneak attack +5d6; SQ Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC), Uncanny Dodge (can't be flanked), Slippery Mind; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +12, Will +7, Str 12, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 17.

Skills: Bluff +16, Diplomacy +18, Innuendo +17, Listen +15, Move Silently +16, Perform +16, Pick Pockets +18, Search +16, Sense Motive +15, Spot +15, Tumble +16, Use Magical Device +16. **Feats:** Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, and Leadership.

Possessions: Bracers of Armor +6, Ring of Protection +4, Cloak of Resistance +2, +2 rapier, +1 mighty composite short bow (+3), 10 +1 arrows, 10 masterwork arrows.

Description: Sylab is the shadow ruler and the true power in Sicaris. Sylab came to the city five years ago and rebuilt the gladiatorial games with the help of Kharkofen and a few other investors. He has made the arena games the center of virtually all activity in Sicaris. He acts as Guild Master of the Night Foxes, is the head of all bureaucratic affairs in the city, and Circus Master of the amphitheater. He has made a deal with the traitorous Commander-Magistrate to act as an intermediary to the Yhing-heer and handle the day-to-day affairs of the city. Sylab has gone native, embracing the Yhing-heer customs and dress. He is a schemer and a dreamer, and is obsessed with taking the games to the Coryani and surrounding lands eventually. He knows that Bernarr is the killer from Ni kuel Ar and they are using Hemmenia and her horrible reputation to make money and increase the fame of the arena games. If Sylab makes a deal he will adhere to it, but he will play on exact wording and use anything unspoken or unknown to his greatest advantage.

Lilyblack Ghennoke', Female Elf Rogue5: CR 5; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 5d6+10; hp 32; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 18 (Studded Leather (+4) RoP (+1) Dex (+3); Atk +6 melee (rapier +1, 1d6+3/18-20) or +6 (dagger +1, 1d4+3/19-20) or +2/+2 (rapier +1 and dagger +1, 1d6+3/18-20 and 1d4+2/19-20), +7 ranged (mighty (+1) masterwork composite short bow, 1d6+1/x3, range 70 ft.); SA Sneak attack +3d6; SQ Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC), immunity to magic sleep, +2 save vs. enchantment, low light vision, special search; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +10, Decipher Script +11, Disable Device +11, Hide +11, Listen +11, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +11, Pick Pocket +11, Search +12, Spot +11, Use Magical Device +9. **Feats:** Improved Initiative, Two Weapon Fighting.

Possessions: +1 studded leather, Ring of Protection, +1 rapier, +1 dagger, mighty masterwork composite short bow (+3).

Description: Lilyblack came to Sicaris with a group of adventurers looking for a lost temple in the wilderness, which they never found. Shortly after, the troop was killed by gnomes with the exception of Lilyblack who fled back to Sicaris. Since then she has acted as a paid spy for Famke' Skellicaris, Captain Proust, and Sylab, mainly at the Clasp. She is waiting for the right group of adventurers to arrive and ally with them to strike it rich. She will freelance and spy, sell information, or steal items for the right price, but is not evil or totally unscrupulous. She will not do anything to anger Famke' or Sylab, and realizes that she can be "removed" for not acting carefully and with discretion. She strongly suspects that Bernarr is the murderer and will try to sell this information, especially to fellow adventurers.

Uzinda, Head Slave Keeper, Female Half Orc Fighter8: CR 8; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 8d10+24; hp 76; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 18 (Sicarite studded leather (+5) Buckler (+1) Dex (+2); Atk +13/+8 melee (masterwork scimitar, 1d6+5/15-20), +10/+5 ranged (mighty (+3) masterwork composite longbow, 1d8+3/x3, range 110 ft.); SQ Darkvision, Orc Blood; AL CN; SV Fort +9, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +14, Jump +14, Profession (slave keeper) +6, Ride +12. **Feats:** Cleave, Improved Critical (scimitar), Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar). **Possessions:** Spiked Sicarite studded leather (5), buckler +1 (2), masterwork scimitar.

Description: Uzinda was captured in an orc lair by a Takomir raiding party and sold to Sylab as an exotic fighter. She became a formidable gladiator and Sylab recognized that she was both intimidating and clever. She has since become the Head Slave Keeper and is casual but quite serious about her position, getting much more respect and power in Sicaris than in her male dominated tribe. She will give respect and a sly, appreciative smile to people that can get away with bending the rules, or help those who show cunning and courage in adversity.



Aristus G'Adir (of the Fountain), High Priest of the Temple of the Fountain, Male Human Fighter6/Cleric6: CR 12; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 6d10+12 plus 6d8+12; hp 94; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft (20 ft in Full plate); AC 24 (Full plate +10), Shield (+3) Dex (+1); Atk +15/+10 melee (Bastard sword +1, 1d10+6/19-20) or +16/+11 (Longsword +2, 1d8+5/19-20), +12/+7 (mighty +3) masterwork composite longbow, 1d8+3/x3, range 110 ft.); SA Spells, turn/rebuke undead, turn fire/rebuke water creatures AL CG; SV Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +10; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +9, Concentration +14, Jump +9, Knowledge (religion) +13, Ride +13. **Feats:** Alertness, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Expertise, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Leadership, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon specialization (bastard sword), Weapon Focus (Longsword).

Possessions: full plate +2 (10), large metal shield +1 (3), Longsword +2, bastard sword +1, mighty (+3) masterwork composite longbow, Decanter of Endless Water, Ring of Spell Storing (6 levels)

Spells Prepared (5/5/5/4): 0- Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Guidance, Light, Read Magic; 1- Detect Chaos, Detect Evil, Detect Good, Detect Law, Obscuring Mist (d); 2- Augury, Calm Emotions, Enthral, Fog Cloud (d), Zone of Truth; 3- Cure Serious Wounds, Invisibility Purge, Magical Vestment (d), Meld into Stone. Deity: Hurrian; Domains: War, Water.

Description: Aristus was a suicidal and self-loathing Milandiri adventurer who was left behind by his companions in the desert due to his horse dying of thirst. While he wandered in search of water, he had a vision of Hurrian, God of Storms who said that Aristus was to serve as a priest and build a temple. Aristus scoffed at the vision and said sarcastically if he could be led to a fountain of boundless water, then he would become a true believer.

Just as he wandered over a dune, he stumbled over a large shell shaped Decanter of Endless Water half buried in the sand. He has been a devout priest of Hurrian ever since, and carries the magic decanter everywhere he goes on a sling over his shoulder. He has converted many of the Yhing-heer, and constructed the Temple of the Fountain in Sicaris. Many of his parishioners are in the garrison militia, and he often lends a hand on patrols. Aristus wants to find the killer and he is helping Captain Proust investigate the murder. So far, he has found nothing more than rumors, and a Speak with Dead spell used on Exeter's body has given him nothing more than garbled cryptic clues.



Famke' Skellicaris, Guild Mistress of Assassins, Female Human Bard6/Assassin7: CR 14; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 6d6+6 plus 7d6+7; hp 67; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 21 (Bracers +6) RoP (+3) Dex (+2); Atk +13/+8 melee (Rapier of Puncturing, 1d6+2/15-20 +special) or +10/+5 (War Fan of Venom, 1d6+1/x3 +special), +12/+7 ranged (composite shortbow +1, 1d6+1/x3, range 70 ft.) or +12/+7 (dart +1, 1d4+1, range 20 ft.); SA Bardic Music, Sneak

Attack +4d6, Death Attack, Poison Use, Spells; SQ +3 Save vs. Poison, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC), Uncanny Dodge (Can't be Flanked), Bardic Knowledge; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +12, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +10, Diplomacy +19, Disguise +18, Gather Information +19, Hide +18, Move Silently +18, Perform +18, Spellcraft +11. **Feats:** Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (rapier), Exotic Weapon (War Fan).

Possessions: Bracers of Armor +6, War Fan of Venom, Periapt of Proof against Poison, Ring of Protection +3, Lyre of Building, Scarab of Protection, Slippers of Spider Climbing, Rapier of Puncturing, Composite Short bow +1, Dart +1 (12). **Spells:** Bard (cast 3/4/3): 0- Daze, Detect Magic, Ghost Sound, Light, Mage Hand, Read Magic; 1- Charm Person, Cure Light Wounds, Mage Armor, Sleep; 2- Cat's Grace, Cure Moderate Wounds, Hold Person. **Spells:** Assassin: (3/2/1): 1- Change Self, Obscuring Mist, Obscuring Mist; 2- Alter Self, Darkness; 3- Non-detection.

Description: Famke' comes from the Guild House of Dragosi (in the nearby coastal city of Censure) whose structure mimics a theatrical troupe. She came to Sicaris four years ago to see the popular arena and found the Harlequin Actor's Guild. Though she is the only resident assassin, she strangely claims the title of Guild Mistress of Assassins, and spreads rumors of "the Shadow Guild" and will use her acting, disguises, and illusions to solidify the rumors. She will invite new killers for hire to a fine meal and suggest politely that they leave Sicaris at first, but will harass or even kill them if they stay. She has helped Sylab spruce up the games and performances in the arena, and uses her Lyre of Building to construct the platforms for the trial. Famke' will ally herself with the group if she thinks they are trying to catch the legates' murderer. She hates Ni kuel Ar but cannot make a move against him for fear of his powerful political connections in many countries.

Ni kuel Ar, Khitani merchant, Male Human Expert4: CR 3; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 4d6; hp 16; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AC 11 (Dex +1); Atk melee +3 (1d4 mastercraft dagger); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills: Appraisal +8, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +11, Gather Information +11, Knowledge (politics) +8, Listen +8, Sense Motive +10, Spot +8, Use Magical Device +9. **Feats:** Alertness, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Gather Information), Skill Focus (Sense Motive).

Possessions: Potion of ESP, Mastercraft dagger

Description: Ni kuel Ar is the epitome of scheming dichotomy. This sinister rotund Khitani bureaucrat-turned-merchant uses his political connections in various governments to further the ends of his mercantile exploits and cross the dangerous borders between Cenceri, the Khitani Empire, Milandiri and the Hinterlands. He is as unscrupulous as they come. Ni kuel Ar has been embarrassed by Hemmenia once too often and what started as a competitive rivalry has turned into utter hatred. He would like to see Hemmenia thrown to a large pack of rabid jackals in the arena, but cannot touch her for fear of her bodyguard, Bernnar. He saw the murder happen, and realizes how dangerous the centurion is, but has gone to Sylab to turn a profit at Hemmenia's expense rather than report it to the Commander-Magistrate.

Valentinius Burnell, Male Human Adept6: CR 5; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 6d6; hp 24; Init +5 (Dex); Spd 20 ft (breast plate); AC 17 (Breast Plate +7); Atk melee +4 (1d6 Mastercraft short sword); AL NG; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Alchemy +11, Concentration +9, Profession (apothecary) +9, and Spellcraft +9, Spot +4. **Feats:** Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, and Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Alchemy).

Possessions: breastplate +2, shield, masterwork short sword, masterwork short spear, and various wands, scrolls, and potions. **Spells:** Adept (3/3/2) 0- Detect Magic, Guidance, Mending; 1- Comprehend Languages, Cure Light Wounds, Endure Elements; 2- Delay Poison, See Invisible

Description: Valentinius is a tall, thin Altharian Adept with a mild foreign accent. He came to Sicaris in search of ancient scrolls, alchemical components, and occult lore to add to his already large collection. He is well traveled and comes from the tropical island city of Jarko near the Altharian peninsula. He offhandedly worships Althares, god of Artificers, and he is constantly inventing adventuring equipment for his shop, the Evening Star Emporium. Valentinius does not know anything about the assassination of the legate except the common rumors about Hemmenia and "shadow assassins." His most powerful ally is the Lone Khitaniman.

Donaki the Herald, Male Human Expert3: CR 2; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 3d6; hp 17; Init #; Spd 30 ft., AC 11 (Dex +1), Atk +5 melee (Dagger +1, 1d4+1/19-20), +5 ranged (Dagger +1, 1d4+1/19-20, range 10 ft.); AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +8, Diplomacy +12, Gather Information +8, Innuendo +9, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +7, Read Lips +7, Ride +8, Sense Motive +7. **Feats:** Alertness, Ambidexterity, Weapon Finesse (Dagger).

Possessions: +1 dagger, two potions of Invisibility

Description: Three years ago, Bandits abducted this young son of

a Milandir tax collector and killed his father along the border. Famke' Skellicaris happened to be travelling back to Sicaris from a visit to an employer in Jhen Lou, and stumbled upon the aftermath of the crime. She became curious and stalked the bandits until nightfall. When she caught up with them, she spied the lovely Donaki in chains and murdered the bandits in their sleep to keep him as a prize. Since then, she has sent Donaki to the finest teachers in Censure to train him as a noble herald and courtier. To speak to Donaki is to speak to Famke', and he is not to be taken lightly. Donaki is loyal to Famke', but he occasionally tests the boundaries of her patience and good graces to be stubborn. He is protected by the Night Foxes, and is very adept at reading peoples motivations from both his training and the political intrigues of a herald. He will use his boyish appearance to foil the unwary. Donaki dresses in tasteful high fashion, looking every bit the part of a well-mannered and sophisticated young noble of the realm.

Drover, Human Commoner3: CR 2; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 3d4; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., AC 10, Atk +1 melee (club, 1d6), +1 missile (1d8 Lt. Crossbow); AL LN; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8. **Skills:** Handle Animal +6, Profession (driver) +6, Ride +6. **Feats:** Alertness, Endurance, Simple Weapon Proficiency (Light Crossbow)

Possessions: club, light crossbow, 20 crossbow bolts

Description: These men are the typical cart drivers and laborers of the caravans coming from the Coryani Empire. Most of the drovers going into the Hinterlands are well-seasoned veterans of such rugged and dangerous travels.



Lady Hemmenia Assante'-Voucis, Noblewoman of Coryan, Female Human Aristocrat4: CR 3; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 4d8; hp 19; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., AC 10, Atk +3 melee (Jeweled masterwork dagger, 1d4-1/19-20), +4 ranged (+1 Oathbow, 1d8+1/x3) or +6 ranged (+3 Oathbow, (2d8+3)/X4, range 100 ft.); AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +6; Str 8, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +11, Innuendo +7, Knowledge (Geography) +11, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +9, Ride +7, Sense Motive +7. **Feats:** Alertness, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Knowledge (Geography)).

Possessions: Jeweled masterwork dagger, Ring of Animal friendship, Ring of Shooting Stars, Cloak of Displacement, Oathbow.

Description: The headstrong, spoiled daughter of a high noble senator of Coryan, the beautiful Hemmenia truly acts as if the world is her oyster. She has a voracious interest in traveling and tales of exotic places, and will speak with adventurers frequently to hear of their exploits. Hemmenia has been travelling now for almost four years. She has convinced her father that Bernarr should keep her safe while she travels through the savage, heathen lands outside the empire. It is this fact, coupled with her arrogant, demanding impatience that has caused many feuds and rivalries (including the trial in Sicaris). Hemmenia is not truly evil, however. She believes that to act this way is to show strength and not be overcome by the sinister ways of the world, and it has been "proven" to her in the rough and uncivilized environs she has grown up in. She can be moved to great acts of generosity and even kindness to those she truly believes are good, and will be seen to act quite differently if she is in a safe and civilized surrounding. Hemmenia is also an avid and capable student of geography, and has made many friends and contacts with cartographers, ship captains, mercantile interests, and foreign courts during her travels. She has a modest collection of rare, ancient and unusual maps back in Coryan, and will spend a hefty coin to acquire more.

Hemmenia pays nominal tribute to the goddess Anshar for her travel aspect, and to the goddess Larissa in her pursuits of pleasure.

"The Lone Khitaniman", Bounty Hunter, Male Human Rogue9/Ghostwalker6: CR 15; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 9d6+16 (Rogue) plus 6d10+12 (Ghostwalker); hp 119; Init +8 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 60 ft. (Boots); AC: 27 (Mithral Shirt +9), RoP (+4), Dex (+4), Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (chain, spiked 2d4+4/17-20), +18/+13/+8 ranged (mighty +2) masterwork composite shortbow, 1d6+2/x3, range 70 ft.); SA Sneak attack +5d6; SQ Evasion, Uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), Uncanny Dodge (Can't be flanked), Painful reckoning (+6), Resolute Aura (+6), Feign Death, Superior Iron Will, Etherealness (1/day), Shadow Walk (one mile in 5 minutes, 6 hours per day); AL ?; SV Fort +12, Ref +14, Will +15; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +17, Disable Device +18, Hide +19, Jump +19, Listen +16, Open Lock +19, Search +18, Sense Motive +16, Tumble +21, Intimidate +22, Move Silently +19. **Feats:** Endurance, Iron Will, Toughness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (chain, spiked), Improved Critical (chain, spiked), Weapon finesse (chain, spiked), Exotic Proficiency (chain, spiked)

Possessions: Chain, spiked, keen, mighty(+2) +2. masterwork composite short bow, 20 masterwork arrows, masterwork thief's tools 6 sets of iron manacles, set of Dimensional shackles, spring gauntlet (loaded with various drugs and poisons in glass globes), Ring of Protection +4, Mithral Shirt +4, Cloak of Resistance +2, Boots of Springing and Striding.

Description: This intimidating and dreadfully mysterious Khitaniman appears as if by magic whenever a criminal escapes and his services are needed. He has a strong reputation in the Hinterlands, and when he appears, hoodlums either run for their lives or quickly step aside. Nothing is known about him, except that he has an all-consuming devotion to capture his quarry. The Lone Khitaniman dresses in a weird mix of Yhing-heer, Khitani and adventuring clothes and gear; a low, rasping voice and a puff of smoke comes from under his shadowy, large brimmed hat. He frequently does business at the Evening Star Emporium, but otherwise no trace of him is seen short of faint glimpses or his trademark, the butt of a smoldering cheroot left on the ground. Sometimes the Lone Khitaniman will use a large flightless bird (an Axebeak) as a mount.

APPENDIX: THE OPPOSITION



Hannani Ben Omar, Magician Gladiator, Male Human Wizard8: CR 8; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 8d4+8; hp 41; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., AC 19, 20 vs. 1 opponent (Natural Armor (+1), RoP (+2), Bracers (+4), Dex (+2); Atk +5 melee (Masterwork quarterstaff, 1d6+1) or +2/-2 (Masterwork quarterstaff, 1d6+1/1d6), +7 ranged (Masterwork Light crossbow, 1d8/19-20, range 80 ft.); SA Spells; AL N;

SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Alchemy +7, Climb +5 (+7 with rope), Concentration +7 (+11 when on the defensive), Jump +5, Scry +7, Spellcraft +14, Tumble +9, Use Rope +7. **Feats:** Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Dodge, Mobility, Scribe Scroll.

Possessions: Masterwork quarterstaff, masterwork light crossbow, Amulet of Natural Armor (+1), Bracers of Armor (+4), Ring of Protection (+2)

Spells: (4/5/4/4/2): 0-

Description: The stocky and clever Hannani used to be in the employ of the arena as its High wizard and treasurer. He was caught embezzling funds from Sylab and thrown into the arena both as punishment and to earn back the money he stole. Luckily, he was an avid adventurer as a youth and has much experience as a combat caster. Hannani hopes to win the tournament and gain the prize money so he can pay off Sylab and leave Sicaris a free man.



Marius and Mariel Leo "The Desert Lions", Sicarite Gladiators, Human Fighter5/Gladiator3: CR 8; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 8d10+16; hp 64 (avg); Init +6 (Dex, Improved initiative); Spd 30 ft., AC 18 (Sicarite Studded Leather +5), Buckler (+1); Atk +12/+7 melee (Chain, Spiked;

2d4+5/19-20 Note: 10' reach), +7/+5 ranged (shortspear, 1d8+3/x3); SQ Improved feint, Study opponent +1, Exhaust opponent; AL CN; SV Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +8, Climb +11, Jump +13, Perform +13, Ride +10, Tumble +9. **Feats:** Exotic Weapon (Chain, Spiked), Weapon Focus (Chain, Spiked), Improved Initiative, Weapon Specialization (Chain, Spiked), Improved Critical (Chain, Spiked), Power Attack, And Close-Quarters Fighting.

Possessions: Sicarite Studded Leather (5), bladed gauntlet, Buckler. **Description:** Marius and Mariel are fraternal twins, half Coryani, and half Yhing-heer. They gained infamy in the northern deserts of the Hinterlands as bandit chiefs, and were captured by bounty hunters to defend themselves in the arena. Since then, their reputations have only grown in the bloody games. They are as lethal as they are comely, a sinister pair of handsome, tawny haired animals worthy of their titles.



Bruclar "The Giant", Ogre Beast Gladiator, Male Ogre Barbarian2: CR 4; Large Giant; HD 4d8+12 (Ogre) plus 2d12+6 (Barbarian); hp 53; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., AC 18 (studded leather +3) Natural +3) Dex +1); Atk +8 melee (Huge greatclub, 2d6+9), SQ +5 natural armor, Large size, Rage (1/day), Uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 25, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Skills: Climb +12, Listen +5, Spot +5. **Feats:** Weapon Focus (greatclub), Improved Unarmed strike.

Possessions: Masterwork studded leather, huge greatclub.

Description: This hulking beast is a huge example of his kin. He was actually captured not by bounty hunters, but by Valentinus the Adept. Bruclar tried to ambush him in the wilderness, and the Adept used one of his glass globes to knock the beast out, and sent for the guard and a cart to drag the ogre back to the city. Since then, Bruclar has fought in the arena games, and he has to be kept in a deep pit instead of a cell due to his monstrous strength. Sometimes drugs are used to calm him or give him delusions if he acts up (something he fears greatly). He wants to win to join Ruhar's army and come back for revenge on Valentinus.



Dretta il'Rahir, Vanomir Gladiator, Female Human Rogue7: CR 7; Medium-sized Humanoid (5 ft 3 in. tall); HD 7d6+14; hp 44; Init 7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft. (Run x5), AC 18 (Sicarite Studded Leather +5) Dex +3); Atk +8 melee (masterwork Duom, 1d8+1/x3, special), +9 ranged (mighty masterwork composite shortbow, 1d6+1/x3, range 70 ft.); SA Sneak Attack +4d6; SQ Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC), Uncanny Dodge (Can't be flanked); AL N; SV Fort

+4, Ref +8, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 14. **Skills:** Balance +15, Bluff +12, Climb +11, Disable Device +12, Hide +13, Jump +13, Move Silently +13, Search +12, Sense Motive +10, Spot +10, Tumble +15. **Feats:** Exotic Weapon (Duom), Weapon Focus (Duom), Run, and Improved Initiative. **Possessions:** Sicarite Studded Leather, masterwork Duom, mighty (+1) masterwork composite short bow.

Description: The tomboyish Dretta began her career in the arena as a trick rider in the city of Mil Takara, but much like Uzinda the Slave Keeper, she saw the appeal of getting much more respect as a gladiator. She came to Sicaris for the larger crowds (and larger

pay). It is normally forbidden by the Yhing-heer for women to fight, so Dretta is treated in all respects by her people as a man.



Ruhar Mankiller, Gnoll Gladiator, Male Gnoll Barbarian5/Gladiator2: CR 8; Medium-Sized Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 (Gnoll) plus 5d12+10 (Barbarian) plus 2d10+4 (Gladiator); hp 82; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 40 ft. (20 ft in Bandedmail), AC 18 (Bandedmail +6), Natural Armor (+1), Dex (+2); Atk +14/+9 melee (Bladed gauntlet, 1d6+4/13-20), +12/+7 ranged (masterwork shortspear, 1d8+4/x3); SQ

Darkvision 60 ft., +1 natural AC, Uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), Uncanny dodge (Can't be flanked), Rage (2/day), Fast Movement, Improved feint, Study opponent +1; AL CE; SV Fort +13, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 19, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +11, Intimidate +11, Jump +9, Listen +9, Perform +6, Spot +9, and Tumble +10. **Feats:** Power Attack, Exotic Weapon (Bladed Gauntlet), Weapon Focus (Bladed Gauntlet), Improved Critical (Bladed Gauntlet), Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Bandedmail, Bladed Gauntlet, masterwork shortspear.

Description: Ruhar is one of the prominent warriors of a nearby collective of gnolls, ogres and other mixed humanoids scattered by the Vanomir over the years in conquests. He hopes to win the tourney, the prize money and his freedom so he can buy weapons in the Pirate Isles or in Canceri, raise an army of humanoids and mercenaries, and burn Sicaris to the ground.

He is dangerous and full of blood lust, and not to be trusted one bit, even by his own gladiatorial team. His only ally is Bruclar, who wants to escape and join Ruhar's army as a mercenary.



Upo the Tiger Master, Male Human Fighter9: CR 9; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 9d10+18; hp 76; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (studded leather +10), RoP (+2); Atk +15/+8 melee (masterwork spiked chain, 2d4+7/19-20) or +13/+6 (unarmed, 1d3+4), +11/+6 ranged (mighty (+4) masterwork whip-dagger, 1d6+4 19-20 x2, range 15 ft.); AL CG; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +8, Handle Animal +14, Sense Motive +8, Jump +8, Tumble +6. **Feats:** Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (chain, spiked), Expertise, Improved Critical (chain, spiked), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Focus (chain, spiked), Weapon Specialization (chain, spiked), Ambidexterity.

Possessions: Sicarite studded leather +3, Ring of Protection +2, masterwork Spiked Chain, Mighty masterwork whip-dagger.

Description: Upo fled a plague in his native land seven years ago, and was caught stealing food in Milandir. He was then sold to slavers and taken to the arena in Sicaris. Upo has been tattooed to make him look more exotic and has used his animal training skills to train his tiger companion, Agar. He has tried to escape three times, but was always brought back by bounty hunters. He is a very popular gladiator, and accepts his lot in life now, which has given him inner peace. He intends to stay in Sicaris even if Syllab frees him. Upo knows his master and Ni kuel Ar are involved in the murder plot somehow, and will tell anyone who gains his trust what he knows if they ask him.

Agar, companion to Upo, Trained Tigress: CR 4; Large Animal (3 ft. tall, 9 ft. long); HD 6d8+18; HP 50; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 14 (touch 14, flat-footed 12); Atk +9 melee x2 (claws, 1d8+6) and +4 (bite, 2d6+3); SA Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d8+3; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 23, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 4, Wis 12, Cha 6. **Skills:** Balance +6, Hide +5, Listen +3, Move Silently +9, Spot +3, Swim +11.

Special Attacks: Pounce (EX): If a tiger leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action.

Improved Grab (EX): To use this ability, the tiger must hit with a claw or bite attack. If it gets a hold, it can rake.

Rake (EX): A tiger that gets a hold can make two rake attacks (+9 melee) with its hind legs for 1d8+3 damage each. If the tiger pounces on an opponent, it can also rake.

Description: Agar was trapped as a young tiger by hunters and sold to Sylab. She was very stubborn and irate, mauling three workers and killing an animal trainer. Sylab became frustrated and was about to order that Uzinda put her down, when a solution materialized. Upo had only recently been brought back after his second escape attempt, and in an act of suicidal stubbornness, ventured out onto the arena floor. He had watched the tiger from the fighter pens, and he knew she had not eaten for three days. He grabbed a bowl and asked Uzinda to fill it with raw

meat. Upo then walked out and sat down in front of the tiger, the bowl of meat in his lap, and a standoff ensued. Mainly out of curiosity, Uzinda allowed the contest of wills to continue and left them there through the night. Bets were placed on who would win, or even if the Khitanman would survive. The next morning, the slave keepers and gladiators were amazed to see Upo and the tiger playing a game of tag and wrestling playfully. He told them a few days later he named her Agar, (roughly translated from Low Khitan, it means "Destiny") and they have been an inseparable and popular arena pair ever since. No one may approach Agar unless Upo commands her to allow it. He puts her on a thick leather collar and leash in the arena. If anything happens to Agar, Upo will stop at nothing to avenge her.

NEW ITEMS:

Weapon	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
Exotic Weapons—Ranged						
Medium Sized						
Disc Crossbow, repeating *	65gp	1d6+1	18-20/x2	100 ft	10 lb	Slashing
Crossbow Disc (6)	3gp	-	-	-	1 lb	-
Flask Atlatl	10gp	-	-	X2	1 lb	-
Large						
Yhark *	8gp	1d10/1d6	X3	-	15 lb.	Slashing and Bludgeoning

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Armor Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure	—Speed— (30 ft) (20 ft)		Weight
Light Armor								
Sicarite Leather	40gp	+4	+6	0	5%	30 ft	20 ft	20 lb
Sicarite Studded Leather	100gp	+5	+5	-1	10%	30 ft	20 ft	25 lb

Globe (Grenadelike weapons)		Cost	—Damage—		Range Increment	Weight
			Direct Hit	Splash		
Acid	Small	15gp	1d6	1**	15 ft.	1/2 lb.
	Large	25gp	2d6	1d6***	10 ft.	1 lb.
Combustible	Small	30gp	1d6	1**	15 ft.	1/2 lb.
	Large	150gp	3d6	1d3***	10 ft.	1 lb.
Flash	Small	15gp	Blinding ^	-	20 ft.	1/4 lb.
	Large	45gp	Blinding ^	-	15 ft.	1/2 lb.
Liquid Fear	Small	300gp	Inhalant Poison %	-	20 ft.	1/4 lb.
	Large	500gp	Inhalant Poison %	-	15 ft.	1/2 lb.
Tiny Poisonous Fish		600gp	Hallucinogen #	-	20 ft.	1/2 lb.

* Double weapon

** Deals splash damage to all creatures within 5 feet of where it lands.

*** Deals splash damage to all creatures within 10 feet of where it lands.

^ Reflex save (DC15) or be blinded for 1d4 rounds.

% Fortitude save (DC15). Contains an non-magical inhalant poison that affects morale as a Fear spell

Causes a temporary loss of 1D4 Wisdom the first round and 2D4 wisdom the second round. See the item description in the Soft Point: The Evening Star Emporium.

Weapons

Yhark: a 10' pole arm with a bronze head shaped like a slightly straightened "s", with a prong extending at a 45-degree angle on the rear of the blade, and a ball on the butt of the pole. The butt can be used to attack opponents on the flanks. Furthermore, an attack can be made on a mounted rider, with a +4 (as a trip attack). But it is designed to hit the rider only, (as horses are seen as more valuable than gold, and a blessed creature of Hurrian.). Also with an Exotic Weapon Proficiency in the yhark will allow the user to use the yhark as a double weapon. The yhark is a rather archaic weapon that was used by footmen to fight mounted attackers in the narrow canyons of Sicaris, and is mainly a ceremonial weapon nowadays, carried traditionally by the Color Guard.

Disc Crossbow (6 round clip): this weapon is similar to a normal repeating crossbow, except that it fires a slim, sharpened disc of metal. These are hard to come by in southern lands, and it is unclear whether they were developed in the Hinterlands, or were imported from the Khitani.

Flask Atlatl: The Altharian Adept Valentinius Burnell invented this device. It is a shaft of wood about the size of a torch, fitted with a shaped wire cage head. A flask, vial, or smooth rock is loaded into the cage and the wielder then hurls the missile with the handle. The flask atlatl gives a +1 to hit.

Glass globes:

Armor

Sicarite Leather and Studded Leather: due to necessity from the lack of iron in the Hinterlands combined with the excellent leather artisans of the Yhing-heer, this superior armor was developed from a cunning design. The armors allow more freedom of movement, and consist of interlocked and water shrunk leather plates over a tailored stiff bamboo framework. Either studs or strips of metal, and sometimes spikes are added when affordable. The technique to make this armor is tied to only a few families in the Hinterlands, and is a closely guarded secret.

Tourney Items

Below is a list of additional suggested items that are hidden in or around the platforms in the arena tourney beyond those listed in the description of the bouts. The GM can feel free to place them according to his or her discretion, and modify or add more items. No normal weapons are listed unless they are new, and it can be assumed that weapons that the adventurers are proficient with will be provided. All items are listed with a numeral one, two, or three signifying the suggested bout they should appear in.

Normal items

Tanglefoot Bag

Caltrops, 1 pouch

Telescoping pole: a short, 4' wooden baton that extends out to a 10' long pole in sections with interlocking rings (in one round). Gives a +2 to DC checks versus Dex when walking on ropes or slim surfaces. Usable as a club when folded.

Pouch of lye: use as a thrown weapon (range-10') opponent must make a Reflex save at DC15 or be blinded for 1D6 rounds and take 1D3 damage/round for three rounds due to the lye burning any exposed skin.

Sling shot (1D3+1 Critical: 19, 20 Damagex2 Range10') and a pouch of 100 marbles: the marbles can be shot, or spilled onto a surface. Opponents crossing the surface must make a Reflex save at DC13 when moving normally or a DC 16 if fighting or running, or else they will slip and fall (1D4 damage). The marbles cover a ten-foot area.

Bandoleer of 3D4 masterwork throwing daggers

Magic

*Items marked with an asterisk are new, and a description is given below.

Potions

Cats Grace

Fire Breath

Heroism

Cure Serious Wounds

Invisibility

Scrolls

Spiritual Weapon (CL 8)

Sound Burst (CL 6)

Animate Rope (CL 7)

Aid (CL 5)

Animate Objects (CL 12)

Flame Arrow (CL 8)

Grease (CL 4)

Ice Storm (CL 9)

Iron Body (CL 15)

Reduce (CL 3)

Jump (CL 6)

Displacement (CL 5)

Evard's Black Tentacles (CL7)

Glitterdust (CL 4)

Mage Armor (CL 2)

Melf's Acid Arrow (CL 4)

Mirror Image (CL 4)

Prayer (CL 5)

Shield (CL 3)

Cure Serious Wounds (CL 7)

Cure moderate wounds (CL 5)

Tasha's Hideous Laughter (CL 4)

True Strike (CL 1)

Vampiric Touch (CL 5)

Water Breathing (CL 5)

Rings

Ring of Evasion

Ring of Water Walking

Wands

***"Pepper-box" Wand of Magic Missile (20 charges):** These are wands that were damaged slightly in their creation. Wands with this modifier placed on them discharge 1d6 charges whenever they are used. If there are insufficient charges in the wand to fulfill the needs, the wand explodes for 1d6 points per charge over the amount left within it. The character can make a Reflex save for half damage (DC 20)

***Bee Stick:** this unusual honey comb-capped wand magically summons one normal, irate bee, which can be directed to attack by simply pointing the wand at a target. (The wielder must make a ranged touch attack). It does a point of damage, and if the target is engaged in combat, they must make a Will save at DC 16 or receive a -2 penalty to hit and saves for that round. Spell casters must make a Concentration check or fail to cast successfully. The bee dies after it has stung a target. A bee costs one charge, and the wand has 20 charges left.

Wand of Lightning: this is a glass and iron wand with a rubber insulated grip, and a symbol of Hurrian on the handle (3charges)

Wondrous Items

Monks Belt

Gloves of Arrow Snaring

Gauntlets of Rust

***Mena'har's Shield of Dancing:** this battered shield was crafted by the ancient sorcerer Mena'har when he became tired of being attacked while in the middle of casting spells. Either it will protect the wielder or a designated ally, animating for four rounds, whereupon it must be wielded by hand for another four before its dancing power is reactivated, or it falls to the ground. The shield automatically grants the wielder the Shield proficiency Feat if they do not already possess it.

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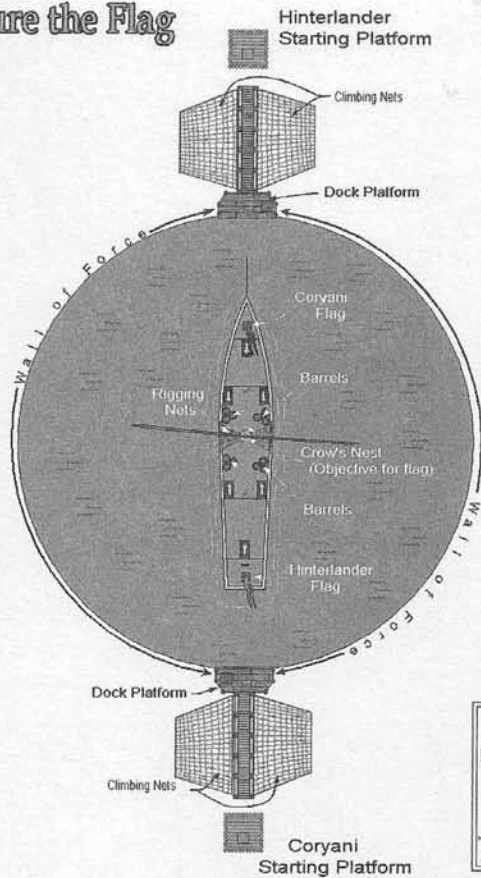
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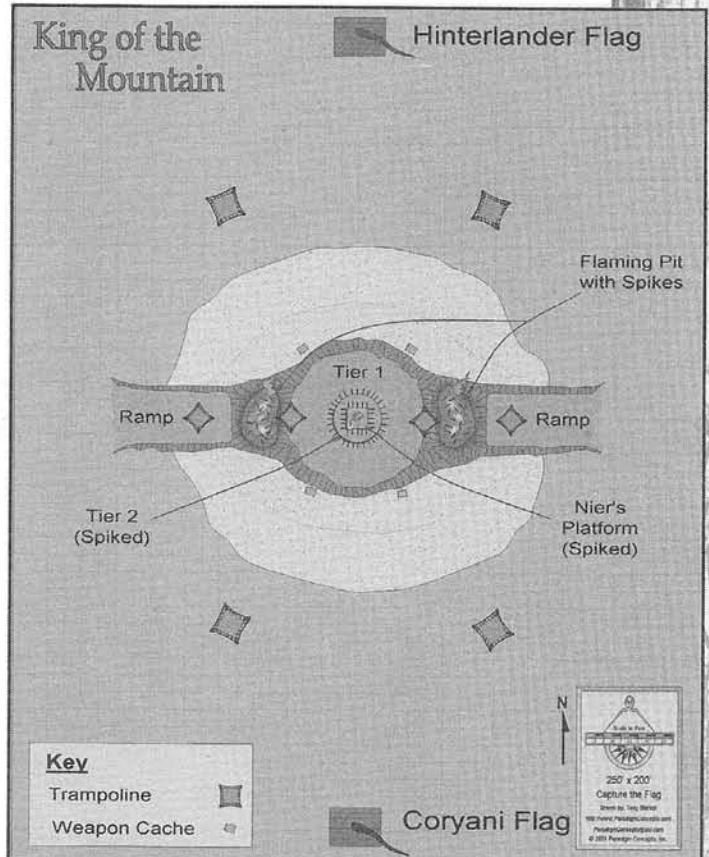
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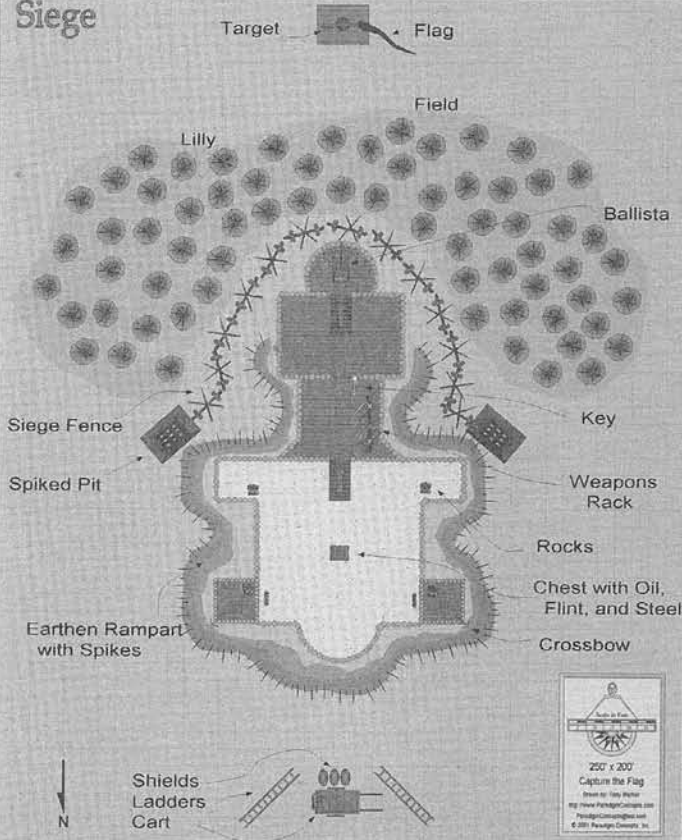


King of the Mountain



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Siege



The Bloody Sands Of SICARIS

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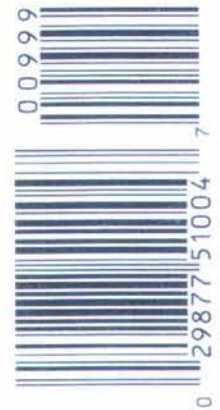
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