



A 3.5/OGL ADVENTURE FOR LEVEL 4

W2

River Into Darkness™



BY GREG A. VAUGHAN

GAMEMASTERY™
MODULE

Bloodcove



Locations

1. Dockmaster's Office
2. The Witchlight (inn)
3. The Pirate's Hook (tavern)
4. Free Trade Square
5. Shaduk's Ninepins (gambling den)
6. Admiralty Militiahouse and Jail
7. The Tickling Keelhaul (tavern)
8. The Bloodroot (tavern)
9. Umbertine Arms & Armor
10. Benbow's Wheelhouse (tavern)
11. Paulus' Herpetorium
12. Pathfinder Society Chapter House
13. Mupkin Lighthouse
14. Kahveh Exports (Barzoni trading house)

15. Aspis Consortium
16. Ten Shrouds (inn)
17. Salt Reaver (inn)
18. House Barzoni
19. House Cartahegn
20. Cartahegn Sugarpress
21. The Castellany of the Fever Sea
22. House Umbertine
23. House Luxlor
24. Chellish Embassy
25. Land Gate

Street Names

- A. Wodewalk
- B. Shyster Street
- C. Widow's Walk
- D. Corsairs' Way
- E. Light Tower Point
- F. The Drop Off
- G. Rotten Plank Row
- H. The Rigging
- I. Warehouse Row

0 feet 80



RIVER INTO DARKNESS

GAMEMASTERY MODULE W2 WILDERNESS ADVENTURE

CREDITS

Design: Greg A. Vaughan

Development and Editing: Jason Bulmahn, Mike McArtor, Jeremy Walker

Additional Editing: Chris Self

Art Director: Drew Pocza

Cover Artist: Ben Wootten

Interior Artists: Imaginary Freinds, Wayne Reynolds

Cartographer: Rob Lazzaretti

Managing Art Director: James Davis

Vice President of Operations: Jeff Alvarez

Brand Manager: Jason Bulmahn

Director of Sales & Marketing: Joshua J. Frost

Sales & Marketing Assistant: Carolyn Mull

Paizo CEO: Lisa Stevens

Corporate Accountant: Dave Erickson

Staff Accountant: Chris Self

Technical Director: Vic Wertz

Publisher: Erik Mona

W2: *River Into Darkness* is a GameMastery Module designed for four 4th-level characters. By the end of this module, characters should reach 6th level. This module is designed for play in the *Pathfinder Chronicles*™ campaign setting, but can easily be adapted for use with any world. This module is compliant with the Open Game License (OGL) and is suitable for use with the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game. The OGL can be found on page 31 of this product.


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The Vanji River meets the Fever Sea like an open wound, the iron-rich clay dyeing the waters a rusty red. Legends hold that the blood-tinted waters issue from the wounds of the Gorilla King who lives in the heart of the dark jungle. The ramshackle town of Bloodcove clings precariously to the enormous roots and scaffold-wrapped trunks of one of the gigantic mangrove trees that grow at the edge of the river mouth. This port ekes out its existence between the laden trade ships with their cargoes of kahveh, ivory, precious metals, and exotic woods from the interior and the custom paid by the visiting pirates from the Shackles offloading stolen goods and booty.

Expeditions up the river for the rare commodities the jungle holds end in disaster as often as success, but the lure of a quick fortune ensures a steady flow of traders and speculators despite the danger. Whatever their goals, all who head upriver leave port with one final admonition from the locals ringing in their ears.

"Anything can happen on the Blood."



THE PATHFINDER CHRONICLES

Adventure Background

Long have the mysterious depths of the Mwangi Expanse held riches greedily sought after by the northern realms of Golarion. Unfortunately for prospective plunderers, these riches are hidden beneath a veneer of disease, deprivation, and death. Despite these dangers, the profiteers are not to be thwarted, and in recent decades many successful expeditions have made fortunes for their financiers. Numerous nations and companies have established trading posts precariously clinging to existence in the deadly depths of this cornucopia of riches. Despite the constant attrition of these posts and those who operate them, there is no shortage of intrepid individuals willing to test their mettle against the dire jungle.

One such group of entrepreneurs is the massive Aspis Consortium. The ruthless profiteers in Aspis operate one of the few organizations that is not a nation-state but that has the capital and manpower to invest in regular trade from the Mwangi. Lacking the resources of a realm such as Chelax, however, the consortium relies on its profit margin, requiring it to maximize the returns on its investment in these ventures. To this end, the consortium turned to less-palatable practices, such as brutal intimidation, extortion of the jungle's native inhabitants, and the enslavement of some tribes to serve as forced labor. While the freebooting pirates and merchants of the region don't really care how the Aspis Consortium operates, the inhabitants of the jungle tribes Aspis preys upon do not

appreciate the company's tactics. The Aspis Consortium works to hide its practices from its customers, as they might be unhappy to learn of the company's unscrupulous methods. It is the victims themselves, though, who create the strife the Aspis Consortium faces and that ultimately draws the player characters into this adventure.

One of the consortium's most profitable posts in the Mwangi Expanse is Nightfall Station, standing in the dark depths of the jungle just off the Vanji River. Presented as a particularly profitable trading outpost far from what little civilization ekes out an existence on the coast, its distance from easy scrutiny serves to mask its true source of wealth. Nightfall Station is actually the site of a gold mine operated by the Aspis Consortium. To preserve the secret of this rich vein and prevent the arrival of others who would seek to exploit it, the Aspis Consortium does not go through the trouble and expense of transporting miners to the site. It instead imports only the necessary supplies and weaponry needed to enslave part of a local elven tribe called the Ekujae. These elves are forced to dig under cruel overseers and are housed in the depths of the mine to minimize any chance of escape.

Conditions are brutal and mortality is high among the miners. As a result, Aspis agents have raided isolated Ekujae villages to increase the labor pool. News of these depredations gradually spread among the scattered Ekujae settlements, and the tribal elders decided it was time to put a stop to

it. A powerful warband composed of Ekujae from across the jungle gathered and began attacking the Nightfall Station mine. The initial assaults caught the defenders off guard and killed many. Now, however, the consortium mercenaries are well entrenched and have successfully fended off several further attacks. Nevertheless, the assaults have taken their toll, and the Aspis Consortium is in desperate need of more mercenaries to help defend its mining operation from the Ekujae depredations. This need drives it to seek help outside its normal channels—help in the form of freelance adventurers.

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins with the PCs marooned in the free port of Bloodcove. After defeating a rampaging dragonnel, they are approached by Kelim Esteban, captain of a riverboat and an agent of the Aspis Consortium. Captain Esteban offers them an opportunity to make some fast gold by filling in as temporary guards at distant Nightfall Station. Upon accepting the job, the party finds itself aboard the sternwheeler *River Queen* as it crosses the estuary of the Vanji in the teeth of an approaching storm and in the path of some hunting aquatic gargoyles.

It doesn't take the PCs long to become well acquainted with both the drudgery and the dangers of a trip up the perilous Vanji as they push through the dense tropical heat. Midway to Whitebridge Station, the first stop and a refueling point for the riverboat's *protean engine*, pygmy keches of the Kaava tribe attack the expedition. Fighting through this attack, the *River Queen* soon discovers signs of trouble at Whitebridge Station. Arriving at Whitebridge Station, the PCs discover the inhabitants were slaughtered by elves of the Ekujae tribe—some of whom remained behind with a trained girallon.

With the destruction of the station, it becomes impossible for the PCs to obtain a fresh power source for the *protean engine*. In order to avoid becoming stranded in the depths of the jungle without fuel, Captain Esteban takes a detour through the nearby Kurka Swamp to reach Brimstone Falls. There, the PCs must locate a new arcophage, the rare creature native to the Mwangi Expanse that serves as the power source for the *protean engine*. This side trek is fraught with perils from both the swamp and a lizardfolk tribe that holds the Brimstone Falls sacred.

Leaving the Kurka Swamp behind, the *River Queen* is beset by another hazard as a yellow musk creeper secreted onto the boat by the Ekujae at Whitebridge Station transforms a crewmember. After dealing with the ill-fated crewman, the PCs must fend off one final assault before reaching Nightfall Station, which they find to be an armed camp on the defense against elven incursions.

The PCs are immediately tasked with the defense of the station by its manager, Mynafee Gorse, an influential agent of the Aspis Consortium. During their time at the station, the PCs discover it is more than just a trading post—it also has a working gold mine manned by enslaved Ekujae elves working in deplorable conditions. The PCs find themselves caught between loyalty to their employer and compassion for the unfortunate but “barbaric” elves being brutally oppressed by the consortium.

Introduction

Bloodcove: the last port of call on the Fever Sea. This strange town is part pirate haven and part merchant bazaar. Its ramshackle buildings rest on the twisting, interwoven roots of a colossal mangrove tree, a fitting metaphor for the complex web of promise, deceit, treachery, and broken alliances that defines the remote trading colony. The hard-won bounty of the Mwangi Expanse flows through Bloodcove to ports around the world, and obtaining these exotic riches from the deadly wilderness is the easy part—the real difficulty is hanging on to the treasure long enough to see it safely delivered to a distant port.

The adventure begins when the PCs find themselves in Bloodcove without a job, lacking prospects and with no immediate way home. There are several possible ways for them to arrive in such a predicament. They could have been hired to guard a shipment from Bloodcove back to the northern kingdoms, only to watch their ship burn to the waterline as it sat in the harbor. Alternatively, they might have been sent to meet with someone in the pirate town, only to find out when they arrived that their contact is missing, and no one seems to know anything about him. Finally, they can be agents of the Aspis Consortium ordered to report to Kelim Esteban. In that case, you should have them encounter the dragonnel as they explore Bloodcove searching for their contact.

PART ONE : ADRIFT IN BLOODCOVE

The following encounters occur shortly after the PCs become stranded in Bloodcove.

Rampaging Dragonnel (EL 6)

This encounter occurs in Bloodcove while the PCs are on the boardwalk near the inn where they are staying, possibly the Salt Reaver.

The bustle of the oppressively hot afternoon is broken by a piercing shriek. There is a pause in the sounds of commerce as all eyes turn upward to see a massive beast soaring below the lower limbs of the giant mangrove upon which Bloodcove is constructed. The huge reptilian creature looks like a vestige from some long-forgotten era as it swoops down toward the wooden shanties and catwalks of the city. Its wickedly hooked beak snatches a passerby off of one catwalk and flings him into the scaffolds and rooftops far below before it alights on the end of the very boardwalk upon which you stand. It again utters its piercing shriek, and this time the sound of its scream is echoed by those of several frightened people trapped on the other end of the boardwalk.

When the dragonnel lands on the walkway, it interrupts an informal gathering of Aspis Consortium agents taking place outside. While none of these agents is of any significant consequence within the organization, they can nevertheless provide the PCs with an opportunity to improve their situation. One of these agents is now trapped on the other end of the boardwalk, with the dragonnel blocking his escape. Meanwhile, the other two agents look on at a loss from a safe distance. They can't tackle the dragonnel themselves, but they don't want to just leave their friend to its clutches. If these agents spot the PCs, they rush over and beg the PCs to help them save their friend. If the PCs seem reluctant, the agents hint that they have powerful friends who will no doubt be very grateful for any assistance the PCs render.

Creature: The creature attacking the citizens of Bloodcove is a dragonnel. This creature is thought to either be a type of dragon or a foul cross between a dragon and a pteranodon. It is 25 feet long with leathery, claw-tipped wings, serpentine neck, long beak, and head like a pteranodon. They are exceedingly rare on Golarion, typically existing only in the wild-est fringes where things still walk the planet

THE RED AGUE

Scarlet vetch is a plant found in the lowlands and rocky crags of the Mwangi Expanse. It is an extremely virulent strain related to locoweed, and when consumed has a psychotropic effect on the individual. The imbibor must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or fall victim to the red ague for 1d4 hours—a fever that makes the individual extremely irritable and combative. Even normally docile creatures are susceptible to this effect. If the Fortitude save is failed by more than 5 (or on a roll of a natural 1), the scarlet vetch causes the red ague to enter a rage, as a barbarian. The victim is completely mindless while affected by red ague and attacks anyone it sees until incapacitated or the effect wears off.

that have long since disappeared from more civilized regions. This dragonnel nests in the Terrua Crags but often hunts in the lowlands below. On this particular morning, while devouring a monkey, it consumed a patch of scarlet vetch, a plant that causes a maddening disease called the red ague. As the disease attacked its mind, the dragonnel flew toward the inhabited lands it normally avoids and is now attacking anything it sees in a blind rage.

ENRAGED DRAGONNEL

CR 6

Tome of Horrors 114

N Huge dragon

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Listen** +11, **Spot** +11

DEFENSE

AC 15, **touch** 6, **flat-footed** 15
(+9 natural, −2 rage, −2 size)

hp 100 (8d12+48)

Fort +12, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8

Immune paralysis, sleep

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., fly 100 ft. (poor)

Melee 2 claws +14 (2d4+8) and bite +12 (2d6+4)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

TACTICS

During Combat The dragonnel fights from the boardwalk initially, but if reduced below 40 hp it takes off and makes Flyby Attacks in order to Snatch foes and drop them to the city below (6d6, fall).

Morale The dragonnel fights to the death in its maddened state.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 11, **Con** 22, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +24

Feats Flyby Attack, Multiattack, Snatch

Skills Hide +3, Listen +11, Spot +11

TRAPPED CITIZENS (7) **CR 4**

hp 4 each; **MM** 102 (half-elf warrior)

TACTICS

During Combat The trapped citizens draw their swords (everyone goes armed in Bloodcove) and back away from the monster, hoping it chooses someone else for its meal.

Morale The citizens flee as soon as they can get past the beast attacking them.

Development: If the PCs confront the dragonnel, regardless of how the fight goes, the distraction allows the trapped citizens (including the Aspis Consortium agent) to escape. The other agents are extremely grateful

for the PCs' assistance and promise that a member of their organization will contact the PCs soon about suitable compensation.

If the PCs walk away from this encounter, the consortium still takes notice of them, although in a somewhat less friendly light. You can still run the encounter with Estaban below, but in this case, rather than offer the PCs a job as a sign of gratitude, he attempts to coerce them into accepting his mission by threatening to use his pull with the town's authorities (such as they are) to have them tossed out into the jungle.

A Timely Offer

This encounter occurs following the battle with the dragonnel. One way or the other, Aspis Consortium agents in Bloodcove learn about the PCs. At some point the following day, the PCs receive a message asking them to meet with a consortium agent outside the Ten Shrouds Inn at sunset. When the PCs arrive, read or paraphrase the following.

What passes for the cool of evening in Bloodcove, with a welcome sea breeze off of the Fever Sea, has descended upon the port. Lamps are lit and passed-out drunks are beginning to accumulate on the boardwalk outside the town's seedy grog shops.

As you make your way along the crowded walk, a massive man who looks to have orc blood in his veins blocks your path with arms crossed over his barrel chest. He glares at you over a mouthful of tusklake teeth. Next to him stands a man in black cloak and leathers. The image of a snake upon a shield is embossed on a brooch attached to his cloak. He wears a rapier at his hip and bears a fine, oiled mustache. In a soft voice laden with the faint accent of the Shackle Isles, he says, "Greetings. I am Kelim Esteban, captain of the River Queen, and I have a business proposition to make you... if you care to let me buy you a drink." He gestures to the entrance of a busy tavern nearby.



If the PCs take up Captain Esteban on his offer, he ushers them inside and buys them a round of the house's watery ale. He introduces himself as an agent of the Aspis Consortium, a northern mercantile group with interests in this area. He explains that his employers need able bodies to help guard a valuable trading depot against incursions by cannibal savages who recently moved into the area. The depot is well-defended and has successfully fended off many attacks, but the defenders are on the verge of exhaustion and need some temporary relief from competent sword-arms until company reinforcements arrive from Absalom. The incident with the dragonnel demonstrated that the PCs are a cut above the average Bloodcove resident, and the consortium is willing to offer them 20 gp per day for the duration of the assignment.

If the PCs are interested, Esteban explains that the depot is called Nightfall Station and lies some 400 miles upriver—a two-week trip aboard his wheelboat. He expects the job to last about a month before the nomadic jungle tribe gives up and moves on, with the option for the PCs to stay on long-term if they so choose. At the end, he will provide free passage back downriver to Bloodcove after they receive their salary from the paymaster at the station.

Captain Esteban can provide the following information to the PCs:

- The Aspis Consortium is a trade group primarily based out of Cheliah but with a strong presence in Absalom, where much of its trade is conducted. It is loyal to no single government but carries a trade charter with—and is recognized by—most of the northern nations. It is involved in all sorts of legal trade and its business in the Mwangi Expanse is just one branch of its operations.

- The Aspis Consortium, like many nations and trading companies, has a strong presence in Bloodcove in order to tap the resources of the nearby jungles for great profit. It is one of the most important players in the river trade and controls two important trading stations that serve as hubs and supply depots not only for its own boats and caravans but for those of other trade groups as well. These two depots are Whitebridge Station, where the Vanji River is bridged about 200 miles upriver, and Nightfall Station, which lies much deeper in the jungle and is closer to the consortium's trading interests with the more reclusive jungle tribes.

- The Aspis Consortium can afford to pay such exorbitant rates for mercenaries because the gold, ivory, spices, and kahveh it brings out of the jungle turn huge profits in the northern markets. In fact, the Aspis Consortium is one of the leading trading concerns operating out of Bloodcove.

If the PCs accept the job offer, Esteban gives them 280 gp each as an advance. He asks them to meet him at his wheelboat at the Bloodcove piers at noon in 2 days, when the *River Queen* casts off.

Statistics are given for Captain Esteban and the rest of his crew in the *River Queen* section.

PART TWO: THE RIVER QUEEN

This section describes the vessel upon which most of this adventure takes place and the NPC crew accompanying the party to Nightfall Station.

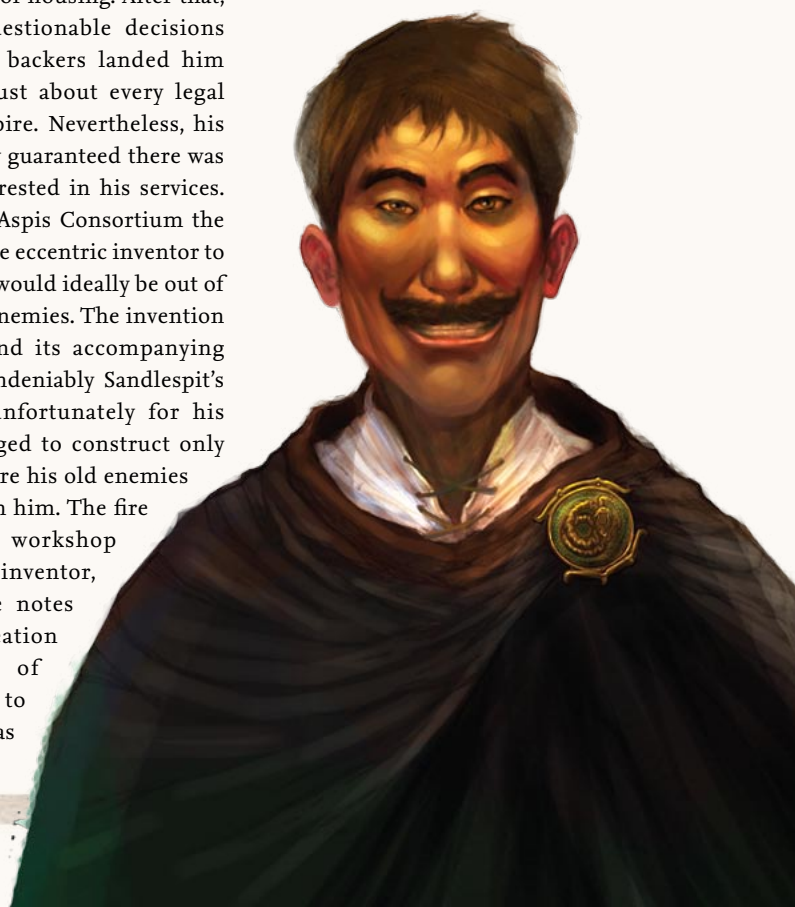
The *River Queen* is a sternwheeler paddleboat known as a wheelboat. A magical device known as a *protean engine* powers the craft. The *protean engine* is the brainchild of a Chelish inventor named Arthox Sandlespit, and it remains a closely guarded secret of the Aspis Consortium. Sandlespit was something of a pariah in old Cheliah, having been kicked out of the prestigious Egorian Academy in his first year when one of his inventions was responsible for burning down an entire wing of housing. After that, a long series of questionable decisions and shady financial backers landed him in hot water with just about every legal authority in the empire. Nevertheless, his undeniable ingenuity guaranteed there was always someone interested in his services. When he joined the Aspis Consortium the company relocated the eccentric inventor to Bloodcove, where he would ideally be out of sight of his Chelish enemies. The invention of the wheelboat (and its accompanying *protean engine*) was undeniably Sandlespit's biggest coup, but unfortunately for his employers, he managed to construct only a few prototypes before his old enemies finally caught up with him. The fire that destroyed his workshop not only killed the inventor, it destroyed all the notes concerning the creation and maintenance of the wheelboats, and to this point, no one has

been able to recreate the unique blend of magic, metallurgy, and ingenuity necessary to duplicate his discovery. Meanwhile, the Aspis Consortium has kept the discovery a closely guarded secret, fearful of what its competitors could do if they got their hands on one of the prototypes.

Arthox discovered a way to use the transmutation energy of an indigenous fungal parasite known as an arcophage to power his *protean engine*. The engine leeches magical energy directly from the arcophage. A mature arcophage has enough magical energy to power each craft for about a month before it must be replaced. For this reason the Aspis Consortium has taken to breeding arcophages at its resupply depot of Whitebridge station, so that it can keep the wheelboats that travel up and down the river moving.

The *River Queen* has a draft of only 3 feet, a 77-foot keel, and a 20-foot beam. The *River Queen* can make 6 mph in slack water. Since it is a river craft, it can only be operated for about 10 hours a day due to visibility restrictions, so in no current it can make 60 miles in a day. The hull of the craft is sturdy but light, and the upper structures on the deck are composed of wood to keep the craft as light as possible for maneuverability and

Kelim Esteban



GATHER INFORMATION

While the PCs equip themselves for their trek, they can ask around on their own about their new employers. A Knowledge (local) or Gather Information check reveals the following information at the listed DCs.

DC Result

- 15 The Aspis Consortium is one of the most profitable traders in Bloodcove. It is also one of the most ruthless against its rivals. Even the various pirate factions in this area are loath to attack an Aspis Consortium shipment on account of the skilled mercenaries the company employs as guards.
- 20 Whitebridge Station is a boon to everyone who trades in Bloodcove. It protects the only crossing over the lower Vanji River and serves as a jumping-off point for caravans into the interior. The Aspis Consortium runs it but lets anyone use it, charging only a small toll.
- 25 Nightfall Station is the most profitable trading depot in the entire Lower Vanji basin. The station manager, Mynafee Gorse, a Chelish nobleman, is said to have contacts with dozens of tribes in the interior that procure the gold and ivory he trades in prodigious amounts.
- 30 Many consider it strange how successful the Aspis Consortium is with its trade goods. Gold, ivory, and spices by the boatload come down the river, but the only things that ever go up are swords and armor. (If Esteban is asked in regards to this he merely shrugs and restates that the station is under attack.)

buoyancy on the sometimes tricky and shallow channels of the Vanji.

A. Cabin

This teakwood cabin is lightly built with stanchions supporting its roof. A single door provides entry and nine shuttered windows look out over the sides of the ship (treat as simple doors without locks). The teak walls have several wide cracks, and a gap of 2 feet exists between the tops of the walls and the topdeck to allow maximum air circulation in this sweltering enclosure. Cargo crates are often brought in to serve as table and chairs. Crew members place their belongings in bundles of netting that hang overhead, and hammocks can be strung between the stanchions to accommodate 12 in reasonable comfort or 28 if everyone is crammed on top of each other.

B. Gangways

These narrow walks run along the side of the cabin from bow to stern. They are 2 feet wide and require a DC 10 Balance check for a Medium creature to traverse them in rough water or while moving faster than half speed. The mosquito netting that protects area I does not extend to the gangways.

C. Cargo Deck

This open decking is where the crew stacks and ties down the bales, crates, and barrels of both cargo and supplies for transport. The gangplank and aft anchor are stored here.

D. Wheelbox

This closed wooden housing covers the upper access to the machinery of the sternwheeler. It is waterproof and bears a padlock (DC 20 Open Lock) to prevent tampering.

E. Paddlewheel

This wood and iron wheel propels the boat. Anyone that falls into it while it is running takes 3d6 points of bludgeoning damage per round and must make a DC 15 Reflex save each round to avoid becoming stuck. Creatures that become stuck are subject to drowning.

F. Covered Cargo

This shaded area's sides are open but it lies below the pilothouse, so it has some protection from the elements. It also lies within the boat's mosquito netting. A weighted coil of rope with bits of leather tied to it at regular

intervals rests here so a crewmember can take soundings.

G. Magazine

A short stair descends to the strong wooden door that bars entry to this area. The door has a good lock (DC 30 Open Lock). This small cabin is used to store the boat's weaponry and any especially valuable cargo it might carry. A short ladder accesses a shelf at the bow end. Faruq typically sleeps in the space below this shelf. At the time of this adventure, the magazine holds only a supply of cheap rum and an arsenal of six light crossbows, 200 crossbow bolts, four light wooden shields, and three spears.

H. Foredeck

The boat's forward anchor is suspended from the railing here. The forward end of the bow is covered by a mass of moldering netting to serve as a cushion against any front impacts. There is a rail that provides cover to those on this deck.

I. Topdeck

This deck is accessed by a rickety ladder and sits atop the main cabin. The funnels from the furnace rise through here and bracket the doorway into the pilothouse. There is no rail on this deck, but several stanchions support a mosquito net draped over this deck, as well as areas A, F, and J. The net is quite old and has been mended several times. It does not provide cover, as it is easily torn, but does prevent Diminutive or larger creatures (including swarms) from passing through and greatly reduces the number of insects that plague those within its confines.

J. Pilothouse

This enclosure sits atop area F and has walls, floor, and ceiling of well-fitted teak, rendering it largely weatherproof when the shutters are closed. A heavy twill curtain guards the only access to area I. Large windows provide good visibility to the front and side and can be closed from within. The wheel dominates the cabin, which is also occupied by a hanging ship's bell, a table of charts, a wooden couch upon which Captain Esteban takes his rest, and a chest of personal belongings below the couch. Piloting the ship requires a DC 10 Profession (boater) check or a DC 15 Profession (sailor) check in addition to any conditional modifiers.



K. Protean Engine

This magical device provides the ship's propulsion. The engine is contained within a large iron box, with two vats forward, and several large gears connected to the spinning drive shaft aft. The arcophage is contained in a small metal box toward the stern. This box is kept locked (Open Lock DC 30) and Hurg (see below) has the only key. If the arcophage is removed, the engine loses power immediately. Once the engine loses power, it takes a full hour for the engine to build up enough magical charge to drive the boat. While the engine is operating, bolts of magical energy continually arc across its metal surface, dealing 4d6 points of electricity damage to any creature that touches the metal directly.

L. Flywheel

This is the main shaft that transfers power from the *protean engine* to the paddlewheel in the stern. General maintenance on this device requires a DC 10 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check each day or

there is a cumulative 20% chance per day of a breakdown (see page 12).

M. Locker

This represents all of the furnace deck that is not occupied by the *protean engine*, the magazine, or machinery. The deck has a low overhead with only 4 feet of clearance, so Medium creatures must squeeze. Hurg the dwarven fireman resides in the heat and noise down here (he is mostly deaf so it doesn't bother him much) and any perishable or semi-valuable goods best not left on deck but not important enough to warrant storage in the magazine are kept here (tools and spare parts for example).

The Crew

Provided the *protean engine* is functioning properly (a big proviso), the *River Queen* can be operated by a skeleton crew as small as two: a pilot and someone to take soundings of the river bottom. Currently, the wheelboat has a crew of six, consisting of Captain Esteban, Faruq, Hurg, and three crewmembers. The PCs are hired as guards for Nightfall Station

but are also expected to do their share of the work while aboard the *River Queen*.

Captain Kelim Esteban (Pilot)

Captain Esteban is a human hailing from the Shackles who joined the Aspis Consortium as a sellsword 12 years ago. He was eventually promoted to agent and finally riverboat captain. He is an utter profiteer, loyal to the consortium only while it is to his economic advantage. The sheer amount of profit he has made while piloting the *River Queen* has set him up to be a wealthy man whenever he retires to the northern lands. In the meantime, the promise of greater wealth does inspire a considerable amount of loyalty in him, especially in regards to his wheelboat. That loyalty, however, does not extend beyond the company's profit margin and his boat, rendering everyone else expendable in his eyes. He does not generally give suicidal orders to his crew (at least not overtly), but on more than one occasion only a few survivors have returned from his voyages, and somehow he always manages to be one of them.



ARCOPHAGE

The energy that powers the *protean engine* comes from a rare magical creature indigenous to the Mwangi Expanse and only recently discovered. This creature, known as an arcophage, is a form of fungal parasite that attaches itself to mobile plant creatures, such as treants and shambling mounds. Once embedded in the host creature, the arcophage begins to magically transmute the plant's body into copies of itself, slowly consuming the host. In the meantime, the newly created arcophages are deposited into the environment, where they lie dormant until they come in contact with another plant creature. When a plant creature touches an arcophage spore, it must make a DC 18 Fortitude save. A successful save destroys the spore. Otherwise, the spore becomes implanted in the host. Once a creature has a spore implanted, it must make another DC 18 Fortitude save each day or take 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The arcophage creates one new spore for each point of Constitution damage it deals. A *remove disease* spell destroys an implanted arcophage.

Arcophage spores are somewhat fragile outside their native environment. They are killed by direct exposure to sunlight, as well as freezing temperatures and extremely dry climates. This sensitivity has largely prevented their spread beyond the borders of the Mwangi.

CAPTAIN KELIM ESTEBAN

CR 6

Male human rogue 3/fighter 2

LE Medium humanoid

Init +7; Senses Listen +6, Spot +7

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15

(+5 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 29 (6 HD; 3d6+3d10)

Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +3

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 rapier +10 (1d6+2/18–20) or

Melee mwk dagger +9 (1d4+1/19–20 plus poison)

Ranged mwk dagger +9 (1d4+1/19–20 plus poison)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

TACTICS

Before Combat Esteban coats one of his daggers with poison if he anticipates combat.

During Combat If coming under ranged attacks, Esteban takes cover and drinks his *potion of protection from arrows*. He remains on board the boat, preferably in the pilothouse, to coordinate the defense. If the pilothouse is overrun, he uses his Tumble skill to move quickly through opponents to try and clear the decks.

Morale Esteban leaves the *River Queen* only as a last resort, figuring his chances of survival in the jungle on foot are slim. His preference is always to keep the boat moving away from danger. He leaves crewmembers behind if necessary to save the boat.

STATISTICS

Str 13, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14

Base Atk +5; Grp +6

Feats Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Profession [boater]), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Skills Balance +6, Bluff +7, Escape Artist +7, Hide +7, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +6, Profession (river pilot) +10, Search +5, Spot +7, Swim +7, Tumble +7

Languages Common

SQ trap sense +1, trapfinding

Combat Gear 2 doses of giant wasp poison (Injury DC 18; initial 1d6 Dex, secondary 1d6 Dex), *potion of endure elements*, *potion of protection from arrows*; **Other Gear** +1 chain shirt, +1 rapier, 4 masterwork daggers, porcelain asp and shield brooch worth 25 gp, belt pouch with 14 gp, 17 sp, 4 cp, a moss agate worth 10 gp, and a key to the magazine

Faruq (Mate)

Faruq is Esteban's mate and enforcer. He keeps the crew in line and is instrumental in dealing with threats to the boat, though like Esteban, he relegates the most dangerous combat roles to expendable underlings. Faruq's human side is of Vudran descent, and he shares the ethnicity's swarthy skin tone, sallow somewhat by his orcish complexion. He dresses in the traditional Vudrani garb, consisting of a brightly colored turban, vest, pantaloons, and sash. Faruq plays the role of the sophisticated swashbuckler as well as he can, at least until a combat situation arises and brings his barbarian traits to the fore. Faruq has only recently been admitted as an agent of the Aspis Consortium and is anxious to prove himself. Strive to keep Faruq alive

until **Encounter G**, where a nasty end has been prepared for him.

FARUQ

CR 4

Male half-orc barbarian 4

CN Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14

(+2 armor, +2 natural)

hp 47 (4d12+16)

Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +1

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee mwk falchion +7 (2d4+13/18–20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +4 (1d8+4/x3)

Special Attacks rage 2/day

TACTICS

During Combat Faruq puts 3 points into Power Attack and tries to position himself to take advantage of his Cleave feat. He stays on the boat to defend it and if reduced below 25 hp or the boat is overrun, he rages and attacks the nearest foe.

Morale Faruq fights to the death to prove himself to his employer, ironically even if Esteban falls.

STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8

Base Atk +4; Grp +9

Feats Cleave, Power Attack

Skills Climb +6, Listen +4, Spot +4, Survival +7, Swim +8

Languages Common, Polyglot

SQ fast movement, illiteracy, trap sense +1

Combat Gear *potion of neutralize poison*; **Other**

Gear +1 leather armor, masterwork falchion, masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str bonus), 40 arrows, belt pouch with 8 sp, 6 pieces of coral worth 15 gp each, and a key to the magazine

Hurg (Engineer)

This decrepit, old, near-sighted dwarf is the engineer of the *River Queen*. Aged beyond his years from a long, hard life on the Fever Sea, Hurg suffers from severe rheumatoid arthritis in his back that bends him over nearly double. Hurg alone keeps the complex and antiquated machinery of the *River Queen* functioning. He is normally found on the lower deck monitoring the *protean engine* or tinkering with the mechanisms and wears only a loincloth and leather apron. His bald head is scarred from many electrical discharges, and he keeps



his coarse gray beard shaved to a rough stubble to prevent its entanglement in the machinery. Hurg's stooped posture allows him to move and fight without penalty in the confined spaces of the furnace deck. Not a member of the Aspis Consortium, Hurg's true loyalty lies to the *River Queen* herself, which he sees as his personal charge and responsibility. Hurg is unaware of the Aspis Consortium's true activities mainly because he hasn't bothered to pay any attention.

HURG

Male dwarf expert 4

N Medium humanoid

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12
(+2 armor)

hp 22 (4d6+8)

Fort +3 (+5 vs. poison), **Ref** +0, **Will** +5; +2 vs. spells

OFFENSE

Spd 15 ft.

Melee heavy wrench +3 (1d8)

CR 3

TACTICS

During Combat Hurg tries to avoid combat as much as possible, retreating to the lower deck of the *River Queen* to hide in the cramped spaces and prevent anyone from damaging the machinery.

Morale Hurg fights to the death to protect the *protean engine* and machinery of the *River Queen*.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 8, **Con** 14, **Int** 16, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3

Feats Nimble Fingers, Skill Focus (Knowledge [architecture and engineering])

Skills Appraise +10, Craft (blacksmithing) +12, Disable Device +12, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +13, Listen +8, Open Lock +9, Search +10, Survival +8, Swim +7

Languages Common, Dwarven, Giant, Polyglot, Undercommon

SQ dwarf traits, rheumatoid arthritis, stonecunning

Combat Gear 3 flasks of acid, 2 vials of antitoxin, 5 sunrods, 3 tindertwigs; **Other**

Gear leather apron, heavy wrench (as heavy mace), *ring of endure elements* (see sidebar), masterwork tools, magnifying glass, belt pouch with 12 gp, a piece of lapis lazuli worth 50 gp, and the key to the wheelbox padlock

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Rheumatoid Arthritis (Ex) This painful condition makes Hurg bend over double. While it limits his speed, it also allows him to move through the lower deck of the *River Queen* without squeezing.

Crewmen

In addition to Esteban, Faruq, and Hurg, there are three other crewmen aboard the *River Queen*—Danner, Houghman, and Speraggo. These are typical Aspis Consortium mercenaries hired from various northern lands to serve as laborers and muscle. They have big dreams of becoming prosperous agents in the Mwangi Expanse, but they have little real knowledge of the organization beyond their immediate duties.

They remain tight-lipped and surly around the PCs, seeing the newcomers as potential threats to their positions.

ASPIS CONSORTIUM MERCENARIES (3) CR 1

Male human warrior 2

NE Medium humanoid

Init +0; Senses Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15

(+4 armor, +1 shield)

hp 13 (2d8)

Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk short sword +3 (1d6/19–20) or

Melee spear +2 (1d8/x3)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +2 (1d8/19–20)

TACTICS

During Combat Aspis mercenaries prefer to engage foes at a distance and with greater force whenever possible, whittling down enemies with volleys of crossbow fire concentrated on a single target at a time. They prefer to use sword and shield for melee but use spears to set against a charge when necessary.

Morale Aspis mercenaries are essentially bullies who panic and flee if their leader falls or they are clearly beaten. Their harsh masters and the promise of gold, however, means that they do not retreat as long as there is still hope of victory.

STATISTICS

Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10

Base Atk +2; Grp +2

Feats Endurance, Great Fortitude

Skills Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +5, Swim +4

Combat Gear 2 potions of cure light wounds, potion of hide from animals, flask of alchemist's fire; **Other Gear** +1 studded leather, light wooden shield, spear, masterwork short sword, masterwork light crossbow, 10 crossbow bolts, belt pouch with 3 gp

PART THREE: INTO DARKNESS

This section of the adventure details the party's journey up the Vanji River aboard the *River Queen*.

Departure (EL 7)

The party is scheduled to meet Captain Esteban at the *River Queen* on the docks at noon on the appointed day. They find him and the



crew there preparing for departure. At this time, the party can meet their fellow crewmembers as they prepare their berths on board and learn the layout of the ship.

Due to delays in the arrival of provisioning orders and getting them loaded aboard, the River Queen is several hours behind schedule as she chugs away from the docks of Bloodcove. The sun is near setting as Captain Esteban guides her across the great estuary that marks the mouth of the Vanji, where the red-tinted water of the river mixes with the sea. The vast expanse of the Mwangi interior rolls into the distance in the final fire-tinged light of day, overcast by the dark clouds of a thunderstorm that approaches from the east.

The massive mate, Faruq, makes his way

about the boat lighting hurricane lamps, and the captain shouts down from the pilothouse to secure the loads and make ready for rough weather. The plan is to reach a sheltered bend in the river by nightfall and make anchor there for the night, but it looks like with the approaching storm, darkness is going to come much sooner than expected.

The *River Queen* is loaded with large amounts of food and mundane items to resupply Nightfall Station. Fortunately, it is well secured, occupying the central spaces of areas C and F with some in area N. The water barrels for the journey are stored at area F. The PCs can choose where they wish to weather the coming storm. Hurg retreats to the furnace deck, the crewmembers to the

River Encounters

| d% | River Encounters | Source | Average EL |
|--------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| 01–04 | 1d4+1 water spider swarms | MM 239 (see below) | 3 |
| 05–07 | Hippopotamus* | <i>Tome of Horrors</i> 287 | 4 or 3 |
| | or 2 leopards in the trees | MM 274 | |
| 08–12 | 1d4 mosquito swarms | See page 29 | 5 |
| 13–15 | Anaconda (giant constrictor) | MM 280 | 5 |
| 16–18 | 1d3 giant crocodiles* | MM 271 | 5 |
| 19–20 | 1d6+5 piranha swarms* | <i>Tome of Horrors II</i> 154 | 8 or 7 |
| | or 1d4+4 crocodiles* | MM 271 | |
| 21–24 | Breakdown | Page 12 | — |
| 25–26 | Fog | Page 12 | — |
| 27–28 | Portage/Sandbank | Page 12 | — |
| 29 | Sleeping sickness | Page 12 | — |
| 30–31 | Snag | Page 12 | — |
| 32–34 | Sound | Page 12 | — |
| 35–100 | No encounter | | |

* These encounters do not leave the water.

cabin, and Faruq joins Esteban in the pilot-house. If the PCs choose to head inside, they have no risk of going overboard when the storm hits but are automatically surprised by the attack described below. If they remain on deck they must either tie themselves off or make a DC 7 Balance check each round to avoid being washed 5 feet toward the nearest edge by the heaving swells, lashing rainfall, and surging waves, but they gain Spot checks prior to the attack.

Creatures: A pair of hungry kapoacincths (aquatic gargoyles) dwelling on the bottom of the estuary are stirred up by the storm and spot the lone boat passing above. The kapoacincths are able to ride a cresting wave to the deck of the boat and use their Hide skill to attack with surprise. If no one is on deck, they have no chance to be spotted before boarding the ship.

KAPOACINCTH ROGUES (2)

CR 5

Male and female kapoacincth rogue 2

MM 113

CE Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic, earth)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +8

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14

(+4 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 58 (6HD; 4d8+2d6+30)

Fort +6, **Ref** +11, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities evasion; **DR** 10/magic

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., swim 60 ft.

Melee 2 claws +10 (1d4+4) and bite +7 (1d6+2) and

gore +7 (1d6+2)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

TACTICS

During Combat The two kapoacincths attack

anyone on deck before trying to force their way into the cabin. They attempt to flank the first opponent they find, hoping to sneak attack him into unconsciousness, and then drag him down to the bottom of the ocean for their next meal.

Morale If one of the creatures falls, the other grabs the body and disappears back into the depths.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 19, **Con** 21, **Int** 6, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 4

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +8

Feats Multiattack, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Hide +12 (+18 underwater), Listen +8,

Move Silently +11, Spot +8, Swim +12

Language Common

SQ freeze, trapfinding

Development: Although the *River Queen* takes a pounding from the storm, as long as the gargoles are killed or driven off before they do too much damage, the boat holds up very well and sustains no significant damage from the wind and waves.

On the River

The Vanji River is a wild and dangerous waterway. It averages about half a mile wide with steeply sloping, muddy banks that quickly descend to a depth of 20 feet or so. The river bed is far from uniform, being often broken by mudbanks and sandbars, making

the waters treacherous in daylight and impossible to traverse in the dark. The first 200 miles of the river flow through the rolling terrain below the Terrva Uplands—a broken land of ravines and scrub grasses inhabited by fleet herbivores and the predators that hunt them. A few nomadic tribes graze their herds through these lands in a constant migration to better water. The wall of the jungle to the south is sometimes a few miles distant and sometimes grows right up to the bank. After 200 miles, the river enters the jungle proper just past Whitebridge Station. Here, close on the banks of the river, are walls of thickly matted vegetation rising higher than a building, broken only occasionally by small clearings and side streams. This thick growth of trees and vegetation often reaches across the river approximately 50 feet above the water, creating a dim tunnel of green shadow. The overall impression is that of an endless primeval forest with the ever-present odor of rotting vegetation.

While traveling against the 3 mph current on the Vanji, the *River Queen* only goes 3 mph, making 30 miles per day, but when traveling downstream it cruises at a respectable 9 mph, making 90 miles per day. Aboard the *River Queen*, the trip to Nightfall Station is typically 13 days (with the pilot pushing on past nightfall on the final day, thus giving the depot its name) and only about 5 days on the return trip.

The climate on the river is universally hot and muggy. Rain falls for at least a short time every day, though usually in showers that quickly clear up, leaving behind only greater humidity. Daytime temperatures average between 90 and 95 degrees with high humidity, and night brings an only slightly more comfortable average of 80 to 85 degrees. The very hot conditions during the daytime are described under Heat Dangers on page 303 of the DMG. Characters must make Fortitude saves each hour (DC 15 +1 for each previous check) between 10 AM and 8 PM (10 hours total) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. During the second half of the journey, the almost-constant shade on the river provides a +8 bonus on the saves. Those wearing armor or heavy clothing take a –4 penalty on their saves. A character who takes nonlethal damage is fatigued until the nonlethal damage is removed.

A character with the Survival skill can make a DC 15 check to gain a +4 bonus on the Fortitude

SLEEPING SICKNESS

From malarial swamps to the effects of malnutrition to insect-borne parasites, disease has always played a prominent role in the explorations of the past. It should also play a role in a module for low-level characters, where failed Fortitude saves and a dearth of curative magic can become a real challenge. One of the random encounters presented in this adventure is sleeping sickness, more accurately known as *African trypanosomiasis*. This scourge is a parasitic disease spread in tropical regions by the bite of the tsetse fly, and the Mwangi Expanse is no stranger to its taint. The prevalence of biting flies and insects on the Vanji River is such that recognizing the tsetse's particular needlelike jab is virtually impossible prior to the appearance of the disease's symptoms.

Sleeping sickness causes fatigue in addition to the ability damage and is often fatal if left untreated. *Remove disease* is effective in treating the affliction, but in the wilds of the Mwangi where healing magic is hard to come by, other mundane treatments have been developed. The most effective of these is dosing the patient with arsenic (ingest DC 13; initial 1 Con, secondary 1d8 Con). If the patient survives this "treatment" there is a cumulative 30% chance that the disease is cured with each dose given.

For more in-depth information on diseases of Golarion, see also *Plague and Pestilence*, by Ed Healy and Rick Miller, in *Pathfinder* #8.

saves. For every point by which the Survival check exceeds 15, the character can grant the same bonus to one other person. Faruq attempts this daily, granting any additional bonuses to Captain Esteban, the crewmen, and then the PCs (in that order). Hurg requires no Fortitude save due to the ring he wears, enchanted long ago to protect smiths from the intense heat of dwarven forges.

The Mwangi Expanse and Vanji River are teeming with life. Travelers often catch sight of splashing schools of fish, screaming monkeys in the interlaced branches overhead, or the occasional hippopotamus or crocodile sunning itself on the bank.

In addition, swarms of black, biting flies constantly hover around the boat, especially at night, when some even manage to infiltrate the mosquito netting, bouncing off of lamps, clothes, and faces in their flight. Most of the local denizens ignore the boat, but there are dangers represented by both the fauna and the other hazards of the river. Roll for an encounter on the River Encounters table twice each day and once each night. Those marked with an asterisk don't leave the water, and individuals remaining aboard the boat and beyond the creature's reach are safe from attack.

Breakdown: When this is rolled, the *River Queen's* engine suffers a mechanical breakdown. A DC 25 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check can be made each hour (cannot take 20) to repair the damage and restart the *protean engine*, which then requires 1 more hour to charge up before travel can resume.

Fog: A thick soupy fog rolls in and remains for 2d8 hours, reducing visibility to 5 feet with total concealment beyond that. Esteban brings the boat to a halt, refusing to continue forward in the fog. Roll for an additional encounter once during this time.

Portage/Sandbank (50% chance of each): At a portage, the river has become shallow enough that the sternwheeler must be stopped and the *River Queen* hauled over it by crewmen wading in the water pulling on ropes. This requires a DC 24 Strength check, though as many individuals can aid another as they wish. This operation requires 1 hour to complete. If the obstacle is a sandbank, the pilot and any forward spotters can make a DC 20 Spot check to notice and avoid it. Otherwise, the boat runs aground and should be treated as a portage.

Sleeping Sickness: A random crew member or PC is exposed to sleeping sickness from an insect bite (Injury DC 15; incubation 1d2 days; 1d4 Con, 1d4 Wis, fatigue; see sidebar).

Snag: Like a sandbank, a DC 20 Spot check by the pilot or a forward spotter allows this submerged log to be avoided. Otherwise the boat strikes it and is stopped. Anyone within 5 feet of an edge must make a DC 15 Balance check or fall overboard. It requires 1d2 hours to repair the damage and bail out any water. Roll for an additional encounter, ignoring any that are not water based.

Sound: A strange sound carries out of the impenetrable jungle or across the rolling

plain, such as a terrifying roar, mournful humanlike wail, the rushing of mighty waters, the crashing of trees as something gargantuan passes nearby, or distant drumming. It continues for as little as a few seconds to as long as several hours. Exploration discovers no source for the sound but does call for another encounter roll.

Water Spider Swarms: These are identical to spider swarms as found in the MM except they are able to move at their full speed over the surface of water as well as land.

A. Wreck of the *Lady Fortune*

Chugging along the red-tinted river, Captain Esteban points to the overgrown south bank at a reminder of the constant dangers that you face on these waters. Resting half-submerged on that shore is another wheelboat, possibly the twin of your own. The center of the wrecked boat's hull gapes with a huge hole and the entire superstructure is missing, where some massive explosion ripped through the vessel. Faintly visible on its moss-slick bow are the words Lady Fortune.

This is indeed the sister ship of the *River Queen*, another Aspis Consortium wheelboat due back in Bloodcove a week ago. It is readily apparent that it suffered an explosion of its *protean engine* due to some malfunction. There is no sign of survivors and the jungle's inhabitants have long since claimed any remains or valuables. Esteban stops only if the PCs insist, but there is nothing of note to be found in the wreckage.

B. From the Darkness Above (EL 8)

The river narrows and curves near the fringe of the jungle that paces you to the south, until it has actually grown out and over the river for a short distance. Temporarily, you push through a twilight-green tunnel as the trees enclose both banks and meet overhead with intertwined branches. Captain Esteban tells you that this is how the entire second half of your journey will be after you reach the heart of the Mwangi Expanse.

For a few miles' distance, the jungle engulfs the course of the Vanji. Normally, this is a fairly quiet stretch of the river, but recently, a hostile tribe of pygmy creatures called the

Kaava migrated into the area south of the river here and claimed this stretch as part of its territory.

Creatures: As the *River Queen* travels through this jungle tunnel, it comes under attack by the Kaava tribe. In the tree branches above the river hide seven pygmy keches. These keches are apelike creatures standing 3 feet tall, with grayish-green fur and long clawed arms made for climbing. The Kaava tribe trains black mamba vipers to accompany its warriors into battle. Each kech has a small black mamba coiled about its body. While in the trees, the keches have a +12 bonus on their Hide checks. When the wheelboat passes beneath them, the keches leap from the limbs down onto the mosquito net covering the topdeck. The net cushions their fall but shunts them off the sides and back to the main deck below. Two of the keches fall over the sides, are lost in the swirling waters, and drown. The other five can make DC 15 Jump checks as they land on the main deck to avoid taking 1d6 points of damage from

the fall. Upon landing, the snakes separate from the keches to join in the attack. As the keches attack, Esteban and Faruq defend the pilothouse and topdeck while the PCs and crewmen battle the keches below.

PYGMY KECHEs (5)

CR 3

Tome of Horrors 175

NE Small monstrous humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Listen** +3, **Spot** +3

DEFENSE

AC 16, **touch** 14, **flat-footed** 13

(+3 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)

hp 27 each (5d8+5)

Fort +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities Dodge, Mobility

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., **climb** 40 ft.

Melee 2 claws +9 (1d3) and bite +4 (1d4)

Special Attacks rend 1d6

TACTICS

During Combat The keches attempt to gang

up on lone individuals with the assistance of their mambas. If other opponents try to assist their target, their mambas attack those individuals to fend them off.

Morale The keches defend their territory fanatically and only retreat if four of their number are killed. The snakes do not retreat.

STATISTICS

Str 11, **Dex** 17, **Con** 12, **Int** 9, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +2

Feats Dodge, Weapon Finesse

Skills **Climb** +11, **Hide** +8 (+20 in forest), **Jump** +6, **Listen** +3, **Move Silently** +4, **Spot** +3

Languages Common, Polygot

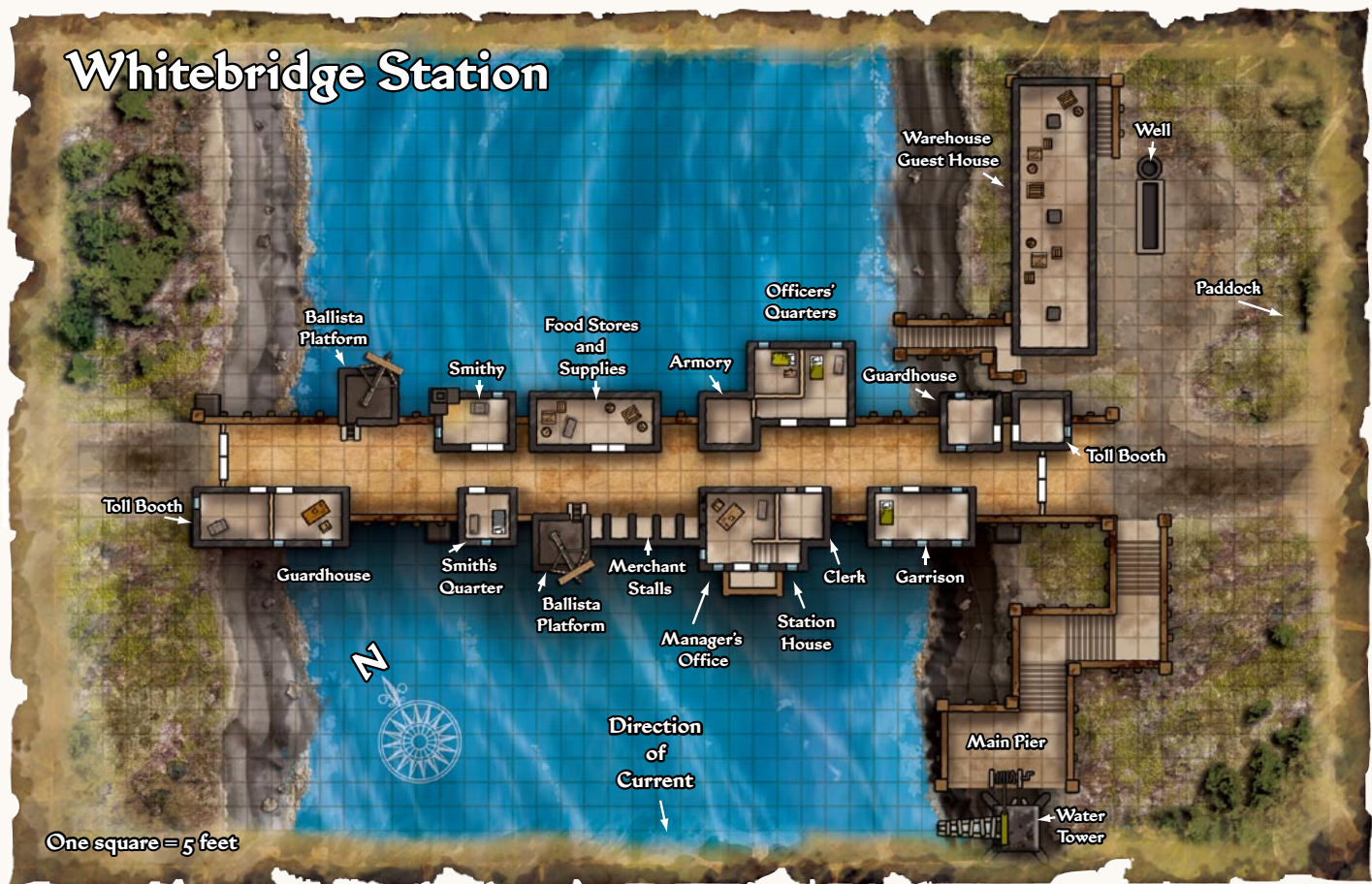
SQ pass without trace

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Pass Without Trace (Ex) A kech can move across any ground, including mud, ice, or snow, without leaving any signs of passage. Tracking by nonmagical means is impossible.

Rend (Ex) If a kech hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This automatically deals 1d6+1 points of damage.





BLACK MAMBAS (5)
hp 4 each; MM 280 (Small Viper)

CR 1/2

C. Ill Omens for Whitebridge

The placement of this encounter is not precise. It occurs at the end of the last day before the *River Queen* reaches Whitebridge Station.

Daylight is waning on the Vanji, and you should reach Whitebridge Station on the morrow. The shout of the forward lookout brings your attention to the front of the boat. Coming toward you out of the gloom, a large white form floats upon the water down the center of the river. Captain Esteban slows the sternwheeler to await the strange apparition. As it draws closer it is identifiable as a flat-bottomed boat, apparently unoccupied.

Captain Esteban orders grappling hooks to be thrown and the boat secured, which the crewmen immediately jump to do. Once drawn alongside the *River Queen*, Esteban identifies the boat as one of the punts from Whitebridge Station. It is unoccupied but holds a single fly-covered backpack soaked in

tacky blood (at least several hours old). The backpack holds a few hastily gathered rations and supplies. Two thistle-tipped arrows that pierced it are still embedded in its folds. A DC 15 Knowledge (local) check identifies the arrows as those used by the Ekujae tribe.

The punt provides no additional clues and Esteban cuts it loose. He refuses to proceed any further due to the growing darkness, and anchors the *River Queen* in the center of the river for the night and orders double watch shifts.

D. Calamity at Whitebridge Station (EL 9)

Whitebridge Station suddenly rises out of the haze that has stood on the river all day. As if in anticipation of your arrival, the wind rises and clears the air, giving you a perfect view of the famous station that sits upon the trade route cutting through the heart of the Mwangi Expanse. The river flows through a narrow gorge, where two massive columns formed from dozens of tree trunks, bound into clusters around stone pilings, and sunk into the riverbed support this giant span. The

bridge rises forty feet over the Vanji, from the top of one tall bank to the other. A large pier and tower of some sort rise from the near bank, and a multi-level caravanserai can be seen up the bank beyond. It is the bridge itself that commands immediate attention, arching above the river and bearing buildings and fortifications all along its length. The shield and snake standard of the Aspis Consortium flaps gently from a stanchion atop the bridge's central supports, but that is the only movement to be seen at what should be a bustling trade station. The only sound is the gurgling of the muddy river.

Whitebridge Station is a giant fortified wooden bridge spanning the Vanji River, almost 200 feet in length. The station is built upon the bridge itself, with its buildings crowding both sides of the road and hanging out over the lip of the bridge, supported by a web-work of wooden supports. Each end of the bridge is blocked by a gate constructed of wooden poles lashed together, leaving gaps through which guards can fire at attackers but providing security for the inhabitants of

the bridge station. Furnishings are sparse and functional with little of any true value.

Captain Esteban or any of the crew can provide the following general information about Whitebridge Station.

- Whitebridge Station is an Aspis Consortium outpost that provides access across the dangerous Vanji River to travelers—and even rival merchant companies—for a small toll.

- The station manager, named Alec Blough, is an experienced agent of the Aspis Consortium well versed in the Mwangi interior. The station's contingent includes a garrison of two-dozen Aspis mercenaries, a few officers, and a handful of Aspis-affiliated merchants and vendors including a competent blacksmith. A few dozen locals are kept on as laborers as well.

- Caravans or riverboats come through Whitebridge Station every few days, so there is always a good chance of travelers staying at the guest house at any given time. There is never a time when the station should be this quiet and abandoned.

Upon approach to the station, Esteban proceeds slowly with all hands on alert and docks at the main pier. If the PCs suggest another approach, such as dropping them off downriver to perform reconnaissance, he does so. Esteban remains on the *River Queen* but allows Faruq and two of the crewmen to accompany the PCs ashore if they suggest it.

Wide cargo stairs lead up from the pier to the caravanserai, where a guest house built atop a warehouse and a paddock stand outside the boundaries of the fortified bridge, provided for travelers who do not enjoy the protection of membership in the Aspis Consortium. Across the paddock are several small shanties for the laborers. All of these buildings are empty, and no animals are present, though a DC 15 Search check at any location turns up signs of battle and bloodstains, where fat black flies congregate. The gates to the bridge stand unsecured and open, and a search of the station's buildings turn up similar evidence and signs of looting, though no actual bodies. Even the ballistae are damaged and useless. All of these signs are fairly fresh—made within the last 24 hours.

This slaughter came when a large war party from the Ekujae attacked the station the previous evening and caught the defenders completely off guard. Every single person was slain, the station looted (including all records

THISTLE ARROWS

These arrows are a specialty of the Ekujae shamans, who craft the arrowheads out of the thistles of a toxic plant that most creatures find highly caustic. They deal normal damage but have a 25% chance of becoming embedded in the wound and causing an additional 1 point of damage each round from their irritating sap. Creatures immune to critical hits or sneak attacks are immune to this extra damage. A creature can remove an embedded thistle arrow as a move action without provoking attacks of opportunity, but doing so deals an additional 1d3 points of damage as the thorny barbs are pulled free. A DC 12 Heal check (made as a standard action) can pull free a thistle arrow's head without dealing any additional damage.

and account books), the animals stolen, and all of the bodies carried away, leaving very little evidence. One Aspis officer attempted to escape in the station's punt but was shot down as he cast off and fell into the river, leaving the unmanned punt to drift with the current. A DC 10 Survival check can locate the tracks of dozens of barefoot humanoids heading east back into the shelter of the nearby jungle. Once the tracks enter the jungle, they split up into several different parties and become much harder to track (DC 25 or more) as the elves then covered their trails.

Creatures: Although the attackers moved on, the Ekujae left behind a small scouting party of five rangers to watch over the station and ambush anyone else who comes along. With them is a trained girallon raised by the tribe. Unless the PCs are particularly stealthy the elves notice their approach and prepare an ambush. When the PCs finish exploring the caravanserai or approach the east end of the bridge, three elves begin firing at them through the open gate from positions of cover behind the east guardhouse and garrison building. At the party's approach, the elves retreat to take up positions behind the smithy and smith's quarters. If the PCs follow, the girallon bursts out to attack them from its hiding place in the storehouse, and the remaining two elves fire down upon the PCs from windows located on the northwestern wall of the station house's second floor. They

FETISH OF NATURAL ARMOR

Aura faint transmutation; CL 5th

Slot amulet; **Price** 1,500 gp (+1), 7,000 gp (+2), 16,500 gp (+3)

DESCRIPTION

This fetish is a small charm made of bound sticks and ornamental stones worn around the neck on a thong. Wearing it toughens your body and flesh, giving you an enhancement bonus to your natural armor bonus from +1 to +3, depending on the kind of fetish, similar to an *amulet of natural armor*. In the creation of one of these amulets, a portion of your spirit is bound up in it so that once worn, if removed, you gain a negative level until this fetish or another Ekujae fetish is worn again. This negative level can be permanently removed and your connection with the fetish broken with a *restoration* spell or a *remove curse* spell immediately followed by a successful DC 15 Fortitude save. If you fail the save, you must receive another *remove curse* before you can attempt another save.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *barkskin*, creator's caster level must be at least 3 times the fetish's bonus; **Cost** 750 gp, 60 XP (+1), 3,500 gp, 280 XP (+2), 8,250 gp, 660 XP (+3)



adjust their strategy if the PCs approach from a different direction.

EKUJAE RANGERS (5) CR 3

Male or Female wild elf ranger 3

N Medium humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11

(+3 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 20 (3d8+3)

Fort +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +0 (+2 vs. enchantment)

Immune sleep

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk shortspear +6 (1d6+2)

Ranged mwk longbow +8 (1d8/x3 plus thistle arrows) or

Ranged mwk longbow +6/+6 (1d8/x3 plus thistle arrows)

Special Attacks favored enemy +2 (humanoid [human])

TACTICS

During Combat The elves try to attack with bows as far as possible. They move into melee when it seems opportunistic to do so, always trying to flank opponents.

Morale The Ekujae fight to the death until three of their number are killed. The others then retreat and head for the jungles if reduced below 7 hp. They attempt to kill themselves rather than be captured, leaping from the bridge into the dangerous waters below (a 40-foot fall) if necessary.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Feats Endurance, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (longbow)

Skills Climb +4, Hide +9 (+11 in natural surroundings), Jump +4, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +9, Search +2, Spot +4, Survival +5, Swim +4

Languages Elven, Polygot

SQ camouflage, elf traits, wild empathy +1

Gear Ekujae longbow, 20 thistle arrows, masterwork shortspear, *fetish of natural armor* +1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Camouflage (Ex) The Ekujae are able to use the plantlife of their surroundings with such skill as to be able to bind branches and leaves to their clothing and limbs to create camouflaging coverings of greenery. They must renew these constantly throughout the day, but this covering provides them a +2

circumstance bonus on Hide checks while in natural surroundings.

GIRALLON CR 6

hp 58; MM 127

TACTICS

During Combat The girallon focuses on the first foe it sees and tries to tear him to bits before moving on to another.

Morale The girallon is intensely loyal to the Ekujae and dies fighting for them.

Treasure: Although the Ekujae thoroughly looted the station, they were unable to break through the reinforced door of the armory (the manager threw the key into the river before dying). The door can be bashed open (hardness 5, hp 21 remaining) or the lock picked (DC 25 Open Locks). Within is a store of mundane weaponry (include any you see fit) as well as a masterwork halberd, three chain shirts, and a chest holding 200 crossbow bolts. In addition, there are three smokesticks, a crowbar, and a healer's kit. Strangely, included in the healer's kit are five carefully labeled bottles that each hold a dose of arsenic—used as a rather drastic treatment for sleeping sickness (see the Sleeping Sickness sidebar).

Development: During the fighting, another elven ranger slips out from under the bridge and attempts to sabotage the *River Queen*. He is stealthy enough to remain unnoticed by the captain and crew, but if any of the PCs remain behind on the boat you should give them Spot checks opposed by the ranger's Hide check (with a +8 circumstance bonus for remaining beneath the surface of the river). If the saboteur succeeds, see area G.

After the PCs secure the bridge, Captain Estaban sends Hurg ashore to look for a fresh arcophage to replace the one currently in the

protean engine, as its reserve of magical power is almost gone. Prior to the raid, the Aspis Consortium harvested arcophages from an infected shambling mound housed in the storehouse that they kept alive with repeated applications of *lesser restoration*. When the elves attacked, they killed the shambling mound and dumped its body in the river. Although there are several arcophage spores still remaining in the storehouse, none of them have the magical power necessary to run the *protean engine*. When he learns this, Captain Estaban elects to forge on upriver rather than making futile attempts to dive into the murky waters to try and recover any of the arcophages. Even with the energy supply aboard the *River Queen* dwindling, he knows of a place where they can likely find a replacement arcophage with a short detour. Once the PCs have satisfied their curiosity at the station, the *River Queen* pushes upriver once again.

E. Midnight in Kurka Swamp (EL 8)

Shortly after leaving Whitebridge Station, the *River Queen* enters the jungle proper, rising a like the wall of a green fortress, the Vanji River issuing from its dark gatehouse.

A little more than 10 miles into the jungle, Captain Estaban steers the wheelboat into a tributary he calls the Kurka River rather than following the main artery of the Vanji. He explains that this stagnant rill flows from Kurka Swamp, in turn fed by the Brimstone Falls on the opposite side. The Kurka Swamp is rife with plantlife of all kinds, including the mobile plant creatures that serve as hosts for the badly needed arcophages. He states it should only take the boat a few days off of its schedule, and the only alternatives are to swim or walk once the current arcophage gives out. At these words, he gets a strange look in his eyes but won't speak further of it until the swamp is reached 3 miles later. Read or paraphrase the following upon reaching the swamp.

The swamp stretches out as far as the eye can see. Hummocks of tangled trees and plant life grow among hundreds of water channels overgrown with reeds and showing only the slightest trace of a current in their stagnant surfaces. The ever-present rumbling of the River Queen's engine suddenly ceases, leaving an unnatural silence over the scene,





with only the sounds of the creaking vessel, the faint whisper of a breeze through the tree tops, and the occasional cry of some strange marsh animal. The boat slowly drifts to a halt at the very edge of this marshy labyrinth.

Captain Esteban explains that, due to the tangled plants and drifting debris of the swamp, it is not safe to use the sternwheeler, lest it becomes snarled and damaged. Therefore, the only way for the *River Queen* to traverse the swamp is to be pulled with ropes by crewmen walking ahead of the boat. Fortunately, the water is only about 4 feet deep in the swamp—deep enough to accommodate the wheelboat’s shallow draft but not too deep

for a Medium creature to walk and keep his head above water. Two heavy ropes, each 20 feet long, are attached to the boat’s bow and then two pullers walk ahead in the swamp to pull the craft. Everyone aboard of sufficient health and at least size Medium, other than Captain Esteban and Hurg, take turns pulling the vessel. The shifts are 2 hours long and move the boat at 1 mile per hour. It requires 2 days to reach Brimstone Falls.

While the boat is pulled, roll for random encounters normally but replace any result of Breakdown or Hippopotamus with 1d2 Leech Swarms (use the stats for bat swarm but change its speed to swim 10 feet—MM 237). All random encounters are directed

against individuals in the water. Most of the rest of the crew remains on lookout with whatever ranged weapons are available for this very reason.

At dusk, Esteban calls a halt to the day’s pulling and has the *River Queen* pulled up onto a fairly dry nearby beach. One of the crew gets off a lucky shot and brings down a boar shortly afterward. There is a minor celebration, and a cooking pit is dug on the beach and the boar roasted on a spit while Esteban breaks out a cask of grog from the hold.

Creatures: As the celebration continues, a will-o’-wisp notices the crew’s fire and moves in to attack. Its attack attracts the attention of one of the swamp’s fouler denizens, a fell flotsam that arrives 2 rounds after the will-o’-wisp, gliding silently along the surface of the dark water.

WILL-O’-WISP

CR 6

hp 40; MM 255

TACTICS

Before Combat The will-o’-wisp appears as a dim light bobbing in the distance out over the swamp like a lantern being carried. It uses its vibrations to make a sound that resembles a hacking, choking cough, and it occasionally dips suddenly as if stumbling. It hopes to lure someone out into the water.

During Combat If no one comes, the will-o’-wisp moves in closer and attacks, suddenly retreating out over the water each time to try and lure someone into the water. It knows that the fell flotsam usually hunts by following its light.

Morale If the fell flotsam is defeated or the will-o’-wisp is reduced to 20 hp, it becomes invisible and retreats back into the swamp to seek easier prey.

FELL FLOTSAM

CR 6

hp 39; see Appendix 1

TACTICS

During Combat The fell flotsam does not work with the will-o’-wisp but knows that prey is near wherever the will-o’-wisp goes. The fell flotsam silently glides up to try to hypnotize anyone in or near the water in order to engulf him. It only reluctantly pursues prey onto dry land.

Morale The fell flotsam fights until destroyed unless confronted by fire it cannot circumvent, in which case it retreats. Once it ascertains that it can no longer get at its prey, it retreats back into the darkness.

Development: Much to the disappointment of the entire crew, the search for an arcophage in the Kurka Swamp proves to be in vain. Estaban has one more spot to search. He has heard tell of a ferocious shambling mound that lives in a cave near the spectacular Brimstone Falls. With the current arcophage nearly dead, it might be the expedition's last hope.

F. Brimstone Falls (EL 7)

Ahead lies the goal of your side jaunt: Brimstone Falls, a cataract that falls over a 60-foot cliff into a wide lagoon at the edge of Kurka Swamp. The falls are magnificent, composed of dozens of tiny streams and rivulets painting a mosaic of water over the jungle-grown slope. The spray from these myriad cascades keeps a constant rainbow hanging above the waters within the bowl of the cliff basin. The slope of the cliff is not overly steep, and you can see that a few trails run in switchbacks up its face among the falls.

Where the Kurka River meets the Kurka Swamp is a 60-foot drop off that creates these falls. The river here is broad and shallow, broken in many places by upthrust rocks, creating this array of waterfalls. The western portion is steeper and more violent, but the eastern portion has a milder slope and spreads the water into a number of smaller rivulets, allowing a series of trails to exist in and among them. The falls are sacred among the denizens of the swamp because they serve as a focus of the loa spirits of the jungle. Though largely abandoned in recent times, some humanoid tribes still remember this older purpose and occasionally visit the falls. At several places along the trail are ancient loa idols, which are little more than rock lumps about 5 feet tall, with most of their features worn away. At one time, they depicted loa spirits—humanoids with animalistic heads.

The slope of the rock is generally less than 45 degrees, but is damp with spray and growths of moss and lichen and requires a DC 15 Climb check. A failed check that results

in a fall only causes the individual to slide down 1d6+10 feet, dealing 1d6 points of damage. Attempting to climb in a waterfall, however, requires a DC 25 Climb check, due to the force of the water. The trails are narrow and steep but require no Climb checks to traverse, except where they cross a waterfall. Here the individual must make a DC 5 Climb check or DC 10 Balance check each round he remains within the flow of the falls. Failure results in a fall of 1d3x10 feet.

Captain Esteban pulls the *River Queen* up short of the falls and sends the PCs and any surviving crewmen (except Faruq and Hurg) to confront the shambling mound and (ideally) secure an arcophage.

1. Landing

A low shelf of rock just above water level provides easy access to the trails. It is here the *River Queen* moors while the PCs head up to find the shambling mound. A loa statue that is still in relatively good shape stands here. Its head is clearly that of a hippopotamus.



2. First Switchback

A loa idol with barely discernable features resembling a monkey or ape stands here. It blocks a second trail to area 4 that is only noticed with a DC 17 Spot check or a DC 7 Search check.

3. Second Switchback

Another loa idol stands here. Its head has broken off, hiding its former animalistic identity.

4. Lower Shelf

The trail ends here below the mouth of the cave at area 5. Crudely chiseled handholds have been cut into the rock face up to the opening. These reduce the ordinary Climb check DC to 5.

5. Tunnel Mouth

This tunnel opens onto the shambling mound's lair. At its entrance is another loa statue—this one's features clearly depict a crocodilian head.

6. Plant Lair

The tunnel is damp with water constantly dripping through the crumbling ceiling, and numerous root tendrils and vines have grown down into it from above. A shambling mound lurks within this tunnel, as described below.

Creatures: The *River Queen* arrives at the falls at the same time as a party of lizardfolk from a local tribe, come to pay homage to the loa spirits. There are a total of three lizardfolk warriors led by a shaman. These creatures have just reached the entrance to area 5 when the wheelboat arrives and immediately move back down the path to investigate the new arrivals. The lizardfolk are none too pleased to find strangers (especially "softskins") at this sacred place, and don't hesitate to attack. This tribe is slightly different than the standard lizardfolk, in that its members have crestless, crocodilian heads with large, toothy jaws. The sounds of battle awaken the shambling mound after 1d4 rounds, at which time it emerges and makes its way toward the closest combatants in order to drive them all away from its home.

LIZARDFOLK (3) CR 1

hp 11 each; MM 169

TACTICS

During Combat The lizardfolk move to areas 2 and 3 to hurl javelins at the intruders. They retreat to the areas of waterfalls if

approached for melee, using their superior Balance checks to fight while forcing their opponents to risk slipping from the trails.

Morale These lizardfolk flee if the shaman is killed.

LIZARDFOLK SHAMAN CR 3

Male lizardfolk adept 3

MM 169

N Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17

(+1 Dex, +5 natural, +2 shield)

hp 23 (5 HD; 2d8+3d6+5)

Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 *morningstar* +5 (1d6+3) and bite +2 (1d4+1) or

Melee 2 claws +4 (1d4+2) and bite +2 (1d4+1)

Ranged javelin +3 (1d6+2)

Spells Prepared (CL 3rd):

1st—*bless*, *burning hands* (DC 12), *sleep* (DC 13)

o—*guidance*, *light*, *touch of fatigue* (+4 melee touch)

TACTICS

Before Combat Before battle, the shaman casts *bless* on the lizardfolk, giving them a +1 morale bonus on attacks and saves against fear effects, and casts *guidance* on himself.

During Combat The shaman tries to capture foes at a distance with his *sleep* spell and uses *burning hands* on those who get closer. He takes up a position behind his followers on the trail above them and fights using his morningstar and bite.

Morale The shaman fights until slain.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** 13, **Int** 9, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4

Feats Multiattack, Spell Focus (enchantment)

Skills Balance +5, Climb +5, Jump +6, Survival +4, Swim +3

Languages Draconic

SQ hold breath, summon familiar (lizard named Eyelick)

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*;
Other Gear +1 *morningstar*, 3 javelins, heavy wooden shield

SHAMBLING MOUND CR 6

hp 60 (currently 52); MM 222

TACTICS

During Combat The shambler moves down the trail, attacking whomever is closest. It is able

to move easily on the narrow trails and gains a +4 bonus on Balance and Climb checks due to the plethora of fauna growing among the falls that it can grasp.

Morale The shambling mound fights to the death.

Notes This shambling mound is infected with an arcophage that already dealt 3 points of Constitution damage)

Treasure: Each lizardfolk carries 1d10 gp worth of small fetishes and ornaments. In addition to the arcophage, the shambling mound hid a small amount of treasure in the back of its cave it gathered from the few passersby it happened upon. This consists of a masterwork longbow, three small gold nuggets worth 20 gp each, and a jade lip disk worth 50 gp.

Development: Once the shambling mound is dead, the arcophage is easy to remove, as it resembles a massive, pale, semi-translucent tumor growing on the back of the plant creature. If the PCs return it to Hurg, he has no problem installing it in the *protean engine*. It takes an hour for the engine to recharge, but the PCs have plenty of time, as they have to pull the riverboat back through the swamp to the river proper.

G. Deadly Stowaway (EL 4)

After leaving the swamp and passing the now-abandoned village of Nantambu, the *River Queen* appears to be finally having a smooth run. The locals deserted the area, taking anything of value due to the hostile Ekujae nearby. Esteban does not stop, for fear of an ambush. This event occurs about 2 days after passing Nantambu.

During the fight at Whitebridge Station, another Ekujae, unknown to the PCs or crew, swam the river to the bow of the wheelboat. There, under the netting of the bow, he placed a botanical weapon—a small cutting from a yellow musk creeper. Before joining in the battle, though, the Ekujae ran afoul of a poisonous water snake and floated dead down the river. Since that time, the tiny cutting sprouted and grew, eventually finding a narrow seam in the planks of the bow and growing its way through using the debris caught in the rotten netting as fertile soil. Unless the PCs thoroughly inspect the boat or enter area G and search it (DC 20 Search), the creeper grows to maturity in the small area below Faruq's berth in area G and

is only discovered when Faruq shifts around a few items in search of a cask of rum.

Ideally, Faruq remains alive and relatively healthy until this point, because he is the intended victim of the the creeper. If he is dead, substitute another crewman for him, changing his type to Plant, giving him +2 natural armor, a speed of 20 feet, a slam attack that deals 1d6 points of damage, removing all feats and skills, and making the following ability score adjustments: Dex -4, Wis changes to 10, and Charisma decreases to 1. Whoever the victim is, he enters the cabin at area **G** and is not seen for a couple hours before emerging as described below. The description assumes the creeper's victim is Faruq.

The door to the magazine bangs open as if someone had forgotten his own strength. Faruq lumbers up out of the cabin, and something is obviously not right. His normally sheathed falchion is gripped firmly in his hand. His sallow skin has taken on a pale yellow cast, and stark white eyes stare out from his bestial face.

Creatures: Faruq has been transformed into a yellow musk zombie and is now bent on destroying every living thing on the boat. A DC 20 Spot check detects a tiny bit of green vine growing out of his ear. Be sure to adjust Faruq's equipment to reflect any items he has gained or lost. The yellow musk creeper is in area **G** below the berth. It has not yet reached full size but is deadly nonetheless. It is a green clinging vine with ivylike leaves. Small dark green bulbs adorn the vine, as do yellow flowers mottled with purple. Its large bulbous root is in the space below the berth as well. The plant has cover due to its secluded position.



FARUQ CR 3

Male half-orc yellow musk zombie barbarian 4
Tome of Horrors 316
NE Medium plant

Init -2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 8, flat-footed 12
(-2 Dex, +3 armor, +2 natural)

hp 55 (4d12+16)

Fort +8, **Ref** -1, **Will** +1

Immune plant traits

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee mwk falchion +9 (2d4+7/18-20) or

Melee slam +8 (1d6+5)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +2 (1d8+4/x3)

TACTICS

During Combat Faruq viciously attacks the first individual he sees.

Morale He keeps fighting until slain.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 6, **Con** 18, **Int** 1, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +8

SQ link to creator, plant traits

Combat Gear *potion of neutralize poison*; **Other**

Gear +1 leather armor, masterwork falchion, masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str bonus), 40 arrows, belt pouch with 8 sp and 6 pieces of coral worth 15 gp each

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Link to Creator (Ex) Faruq is linked to the yellow musk creeper and can never move more than 200 feet from it.

YELLOW MUSK CREEPER CR 2

Tome of Horrors 282

N Medium plant

Init +0; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft., low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14
(+4 natural)

hp 19 (3d8+6)

Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

Immune plant traits

OFFENSE

Spd 0 ft.

Melee slam +7 (no damage)

Ranged pollen spray +2 ranged touch (see below)

Special Attacks improved grab, Intelligence drain, pollen spray (DC 13)

TACTICS

During Combat The creeper sprays its pollen at the first person to enter the magazine and attempts to grapple him.

Morale The creeper fights until destroyed. If

its root is not found (DC 12 Search check) and destroyed, it regrows at a rate of 3 hp per day.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 10, **Con** 15, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +5

SQ create yellow musk zombie, main root

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Create Yellow Musk Zombie (Su) A victim reduced to Intelligence 0 by a yellow musk creeper's intelligence drain ability instantly dies from the root in its brain. A victim reduced to Intelligence 1 or 2 goes comatose and becomes a yellow musk zombie under the creeper's control in 1d2 hours, as the root in its brain settles without causing further damage. If the yellow musk creeper is destroyed before the yellow musk zombie rises, the transformation can be prevented by a *neutralize poison* followed by a *heal* or *restoration* spell.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, the yellow musk creeper must hit with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and attaches a root to its opponent's head and drains Intelligence.

Intelligence Drain (Ex) On a successful grapple check, a yellow musk creeper attaches a root to its opponent's head and deals 1d4 points of Intelligence drain each round it maintains the hold.

Main Root (Ex) The actual roots of a yellow musk creeper resemble a large, bulbous brown sac that typically lies below the surface of the soil and dirt where it grows. On the *River Queen*, the main root can be found in the netting hanging over the bow. Even if its vines and flowers are destroyed, the creeper completely heals itself over a period of days, as long as the main root exists. Destroying the vines and flowers (represented by the creature's hit points), then the root, kills the plant.

Pollen Spray (Ex) The flowers of the yellow musk creeper can puff a musky, fine powder at a target up to 10 feet away. If this ranged touch attack is successful, the victim must make a DC 13 Fortitude save or act as if affected by a *charm monster* spell. Charmed creatures move at their normal speed into the waiting vines of the yellow musk creeper, allowing it to make an automatic grapple check. The save DC is Constitution-based.



H. Ekujae Ambush (EL varies)

This event occurs as the *River Queen* continues north up the Vanji or after it has turned aside onto the Buunta Flow for the final stretch to Nightfall Station. During this time, DC 16 Spot checks catch signs that Ekujae are in the area—a glimpsed scout in a tree top, a distinctive thistle arrow floating in the river, the occasional call of a bird or animal that somehow isn't quite right—yet no overt actions are made against the wheelboat. Stage this encounter to occur when the party is prepared and capable of handling it (i.e., when rested) and when you can maximize the anxiety and mounting fear of attack.

The river is somewhat boggy here, with sandbars rising above the surface at various places. One such sandbar has forced the River Queen into a narrow channel hugging the starboard bank, which is little more than a nearly impenetrable wall of greenery. Suddenly, a grinding rasp vibrates through the hull, and the boat lurches to a halt. The captain cuts the engines to prevent further damage while

the crew runs forward for a look at the struck obstacle. It is during this turn of events that a susurrus of hissing rises from the surrounding jungle, like the exclamations of dozens of snakes. Flights of arrows slice out through the nearby foliage and clatter onto the boat and in and among her crew.

An Ekujae war party placed an obstacle in the river below the water line, which caught the *River Queen*. Invisible while the craft was moving, now that she is still anyone peering over the bow can see large sharpened logs rising below the water and snagged into the boat's hull, preventing her from moving forward. In addition, the channel is too narrow for the wheelboat to attempt to travel back downstream. Fortunately, the logs have not damaged the hull, but they must be removed before the boat can proceed.

The Ekujae buried these logs in the river bottom. The logs are 8 feet long, and the river is only 10 feet deep here. It is impossible to fish the logs out of the river, but if someone were to dive in, he could dig out the base of the logs from the sandy bottom in 4 rounds.

The river is clear enough here that this can be correctly gauged from the boat. The channel is only 30 feet wide.

Creatures: The attacking war party consists of more than 30 Ekujae warriors, but most of them remain in the concealing foliage and never reveal themselves to the party or expose themselves to attack, preventing any mass attacks from hitting more than a few of them at a time. Every member of the crew visible on the boat is fired at by 1d4 arrows per round (ranged attack +4) as long as the *River Queen* remains stalled and for 2 rounds thereafter. During the time the wheelboat is halted, 1d6 Ekujae warriors attempt to leap onto the deck from the foliage-covered bank in the first round, with 1d3 more trying it every round thereafter until the boat starts moving. The leap from bank to boat or vice versa requires a DC 10 Jump check to avoid a tumble into the water. Two Ekujae warriors from the bank follow anyone who goes into the water to dislodge the logs (use the rules for underwater combat, DMG page 92). Finally, anyone who goes over to the bank is

attacked by two Ekujae warriors each round, but is not subject to ranged attacks by the other warriors.

EKUJAE WARRIOR

CR 1

Male and female wild elf warrior 2

N Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen -1, Spot -1

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10

(+1 Dex)

hp 12 (2d8)

Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** -1 (+1 vs. enchantment)

Immune sleep

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee shortspear +4 (1d6+2)

Ranged longbow +4 (1d8/x3)

TACTICS

During Combat The elves work in concert as described above.

Morale The Ekujae do not retreat from this battle, relying on their superior numbers.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 13, **Con** 10, **Int** 8, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4

Feats Weapon Focus (longbow)

Skills Climb +3, Jump +5, Swim +3

Languages Elven

SQ camouflage, elf traits

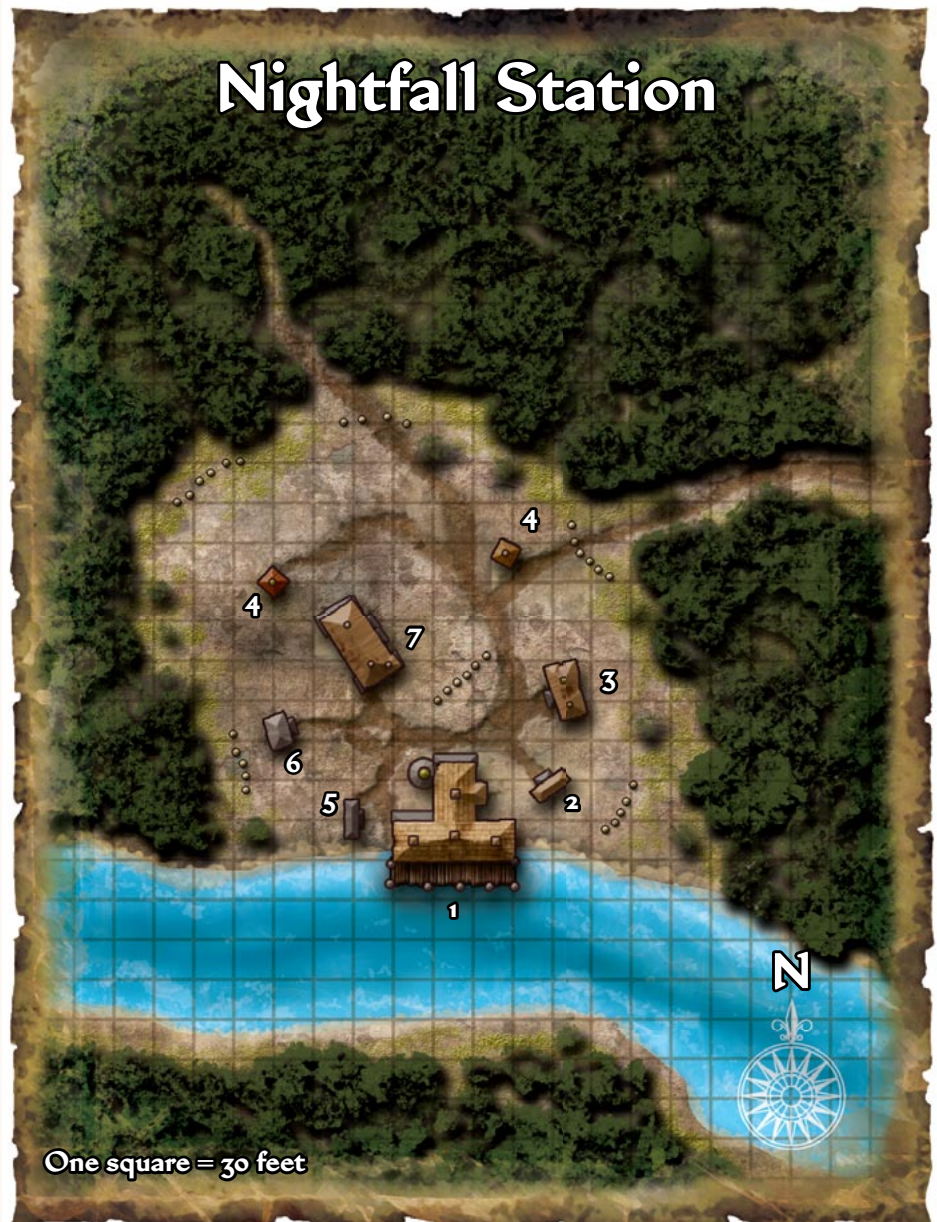
Gear longbow, 20 arrows, shortspear

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Camouflage (Ex) The Ekujae are able to use the plantlife of their surroundings with such skill as to be able to bind branches and leaves to their clothing and limbs to create camouflaging coverings of greenery. They must renew these constantly throughout the day, but this covering provides them with +2 circumstance bonus on Hide checks while in natural surroundings.

PART FOUR : DARKNESS OVER NIGHTFALL STATION

Nightfall Station is an Aspis Consortium trade station that lies deep in the heart of the Mwangi jungles, off the Buunta Flow. Ostensibly a trade station that handles large amounts of ivory and raw gold, the station actually hides a secret that would draw unwanted attention from both the consortium's competitors and its trading network in the civilized lands in the north. For not only is the station a center of trade, it also harbors a hidden gold mine. Furthermore, the Aspis Consortium has



exploited this gold mine through the brutal enslavement of several indigenous tribes over the years, a fact likely to sour relations with some of the consortium's wealthy trade partners if news of it came to light. For this reason, the backwater station serves as a front for the consortium's true activities here.

Work in the gold mine is brutal, with a high mortality rate, causing a need for frequent slave-gathering raids throughout the surrounding area. When the supply of slaves available from the nearby, isolated villages was exhausted, the consortium began raiding Ekujae settlements to gain fresh laborers. Unfamiliar with the scope of the elven nation, the consortium did not realize what it bit off when it made raids against a

part of a large and warlike elven tribal nation with an ancient history of unity and purpose. Now that news has traveled to the Ekujae high chiefs deeper in the jungle, the wild elves have converged on the station in ever-increasing numbers in a war of attrition. While the well-defended and garrisoned station has held out so far, the constant attacks take their toll on the guards, requiring the short-term influx of unknown sword-arms until Aspis Consortium reinforcements arrive from northern lands.

Unlike the first half of the adventure, which was tightly scripted, the second half is more freeform. The station and its denizens are described in detail, and it is up to the PCs to determine how to proceed. They might want to simply keep their heads

down, fight the elves, and take their pay, or they might be stricken by the plight of the mine's slaves and betray the station to its elven enemies. They might even attempt to negotiate some sort of agreement between the two sides, although this is unlikely, as the Aspis Consortium needs workers, and the elves detest the human invaders. Regardless of how the conflict plays out, the treacherous Petrune is sure to make life interesting for the station's inhabitants.

I. Nightfall Station

True to its name, Nightfall station lies just beyond the daylight reach of the party's last day of travel on the river, and Captain Esteban pushes on well after dusk in order to reach the station.

Rounding a bend in the night-shrouded river, you suddenly see a welcoming sight: On the left bank is a break in the monotonous jungle wall, revealing a clearing and low hill. Built up at the edge of the river is a large structure—part dock, part fortress. Its many windows are ablaze with lights, and you can see crossbow-armed guards walking along the covered pier. A shrill whistle sounds from the top of one of the watchtowers, and soon there is all sorts of activity as people gather at the dock. At last, you have arrived at Nightfall Station.

Nightfall Station is located within a large clearing at the jungle's edge and consists of the station house and several surrounding outbuildings. A couple trails that were once used for what trade actually went through the station lead off into the jungle, but they are now abandoned due to the Ekujae attacks. Spaced at intervals around the clearing are sharpened stakes, upon which are mounted the heads of slain wild elves in various stages of decomposition—some little more than jawless skulls—posted as warnings to the other elves. A DC 19 Spot check made within 30 feet of the impaled heads behind area 6 notices that they seem to twitch and move, occasionally flinching, scowling, blinking, or working their jaws as if trying to speak. This is nothing more than random necromantic emanations seeping out from area 6 occasionally providing them with slight animation (as can be determined with a DC 25 Knowledge [religion] check). They are harmless, and a successful turn check against 1 HD undead makes them grow quiescent for

1d4 hours but does not destroy them, unless the PCs have uncovered the secret of area 6 and put a stop to Petrune.

A two-man patrol of Aspis Consortium mercenaries constantly walks the grounds. There is a cumulative 15% chance of encountering it every 10 minutes spent outside.

1. Station House

This is a large fortified structure of wood and rough stone. It is where all of the inhabitants of the station are quartered except the slaves and a small contingent of guards at area 7. Furnishings are simple and sparse but comfortable, with the only ones of truly fine quality being in the station manager's office and quarters. The station is also noticeably undermanned due to attrition from fighting the Ekujae these past few months. It is run by station manager Mynafee Gorse and largely administered by his secretary Petrune. The garrison consists of the 24 surviving Aspis Consortium mercenaries, led by three of the original eight officers. There are eight servants/unskilled laborers (all human commoner 1) and six skilled staff members: a boatwright, two carpenters, an engineer, a blacksmith, and an accountant (all human expert 1). All are members of the Aspis Consortium. The station is well-outfitted and provisioned to survive on its own for several more months, as long as it can be defended. At each position marked G, an Aspis Consortium mercenary is stationed on guard duty 24 hours a day.

The station's occupants spend most of the day at their work stations (offices, workshops, and so on) and most of the night in their own quarters. Off-duty guards either sleep in their quarters or drill on the grounds.

Treasure: Locked in the secure storage area is gold ore and ivory worth 8,500 gp awaiting transport down the river. A locked chest in the accounting office holds the payroll of 2,500 gp. In addition, hidden beneath a floor tile (Search DC 22) in the small washroom off the manager's office is a cache containing four large gold nuggets worth 250 gp each, a diamond necklace worth 2,000 gp, a ruby-studded dagger worth 500 gp, a *potion of invisibility*, and a *potion of fly*.

Clues: The accounting books in the clerk's office show normal trade involving ivory, spices, wood, and raw gold. If examined, though, a DC 18 Intelligence check or DC 12 Forgery check determines the books hide something in the transactions.

Among the mundane weapons and armor in the station's armory is a chest holding seven sets of masterwork manacles bearing blood stains, found with a DC 16 Search check.

Hidden in Mynafee's desk in his office (DC 30 Search) are the station's true books showing quite clearly how unpaid laborers have produced material from what he only describes as "the mine." According to these books, this has continued for the past 4 years.

A search of Petrune's quarters (DC 28 Search) reveals a piece of parchment hidden beneath his mattress. It is written in the Ekujae dialect, requiring someone who reads Elven to make a DC 10 Decipher Script check. It is from his elven accomplices and simply states, "Three more for your use. Bring payment to the usual place." It refers to additional captives the Ekujae took to sell to him (see Event 4).

Development: If Carlus the engineer's attitude can be changed from indifferent to friendly, he cryptically warns the PCs that, "All is not as it seems at the old barracks." Rum can be purchased for 1 gp a draught in the parlor during daylight hours, and each drink purchased for him provides a +1 bonus on a Diplomacy check (although he passes out after five drinks). Questioning him in the presence of others, however, raises the station inhabitants' suspicions and the PCs are given their first and only warning—just as if they had been caught in an unauthorized area. If the PCs can ensure his safety and change his attitude to helpful Carlus admits that the barracks hides a secret mine where elven slaves are used to dig for gold. He even volunteers that he thinks this is what caused the recent attacks. The next morning, unless he is kept under constant surveillance by the PCs, he is found drowned on the riverbank.

2. Laundry

This is a simple wooden roof held up by slender poles. Lines strung between the poles hold the linens and laundered garb of the station's inhabitants. A large cauldron boils over a fire throughout the day, where two servants scrub the laundry before hanging it to dry.

3. Barn

This large wooden building holds the station's small supply of livestock, consisting primarily of three goats, a dairy cow, a dozen chickens, and two draft horses. Much of

the building is filled with fodder for the animals.

4. Guardhouses

These simple wooden structures have a single door and an arrow slit in each wall. Torches are mounted on their exterior to illuminate the area at night. There are always two mercenaries on guard at each of these.

5. Workshop

This building holds the tools and working space for the smith, carpenters, engineer, and

boatwright. They effect any repairs the *River Queen* might need.

6. Cold Storage (EL 6)

Something of a misnomer, this building's name implies its contents, not its purpose. The corpses of those Aspis Consortium members who fall during this war with the Ekujae are kept here, as can be attested to by the horrible reek of decay noticeable within 60 feet of the building (or farther, if downwind). When the wind blows from the northwest, the station's inhabitants are particularly unhappy. Unable to safely bury their dead in their usual cemetery—a small clearing a quarter mile away through the jungle—the station's inhabitants have thrown the fallen in here until the siege ends. Any Ekujae slain are decapitated to make new warning stakes, and their corpses are thrown in the river. A padlock secures the door to this building (DC 20 Open Lock), and Petrune holds the only key.

Opening the door reveals two dozen corpses stacked haphazardly about the floor. Anyone entering is exposed to filth fever (DMG 292).

A DC 20 Search check is able to locate a hidden door in the floor concealed beneath a pile of corpses. Below the door is a rough tunnel leading to the mine (area 7).

Creatures: Guarding this chamber are a dozen zombies. They lie among the corpses and only attack if examined too closely or the secret door is discovered. The zombies are the corpses of both Aspis guards and Ekujae elves—with their heads still attached. Petrune creates these undead and is slowly building his forces from the corpses available. They obey only him.

ZOMBIES (12) **CR 1/2**
hp 16 each; MM 266 (human commoner zombie)

TACTICS

Morale The zombies fight until destroyed or turned. They do not leave the building unless ordered by Petrune.

7. Barracks

This rough building of hewn timber has one door and no windows.

It abuts and is partially built into the base of a small knoll. Upon their arrival, the PCs are forbidden to enter this building.

Within are a few rude cots and hammocks, as well as large chests and lockers holding digging equipment, chains and manacles, and several whips and scourges. One locker hides a secret door that opens on a mine shaft under the hill. Finding this door requires only a DC 12 Search check since faint, dirty barrow tracks on the floor lead to and from it. Just inside the door is the guardroom, where two of the mercenaries are always on duty, keeping watch over carts and hand barrows filled with raw gold ore. Tailings were formerly carried out and dumped in the jungle but are now stored in a side room until such excursions can again be made safely. A secret door in this side room (DC 20 Search check) opens on a rough tunnel unknown to the guards that leads to area 6. Down the main tunnel are a series of cells holding 11 Ekujae men and women in very poor health (2–5 hp each) who work as slave labor in the mine. The other three mercenaries maintain a vigil over them and escort them to the workfaces of the mine each day to continue the painstaking gold production. The mine shaft itself descends 200 feet at a moderate angle with only three different workfaces.

Treasure: The raw gold ore stored in the room behind the secret door is worth a total of 650 gp but is very bulky. It weighs 500 pounds.

Inhabitants of Nightfall Station

The station manager, his secretary, six experts (noncombatant), eight servants (noncombatant), three Aspis Consortium officers, and a total of 29 mercenaries make up the current complement of Nightfall Station. Relevant statistics are provided here.

ASPIS CONSORTIUM MERCENARIES (29) CR 1

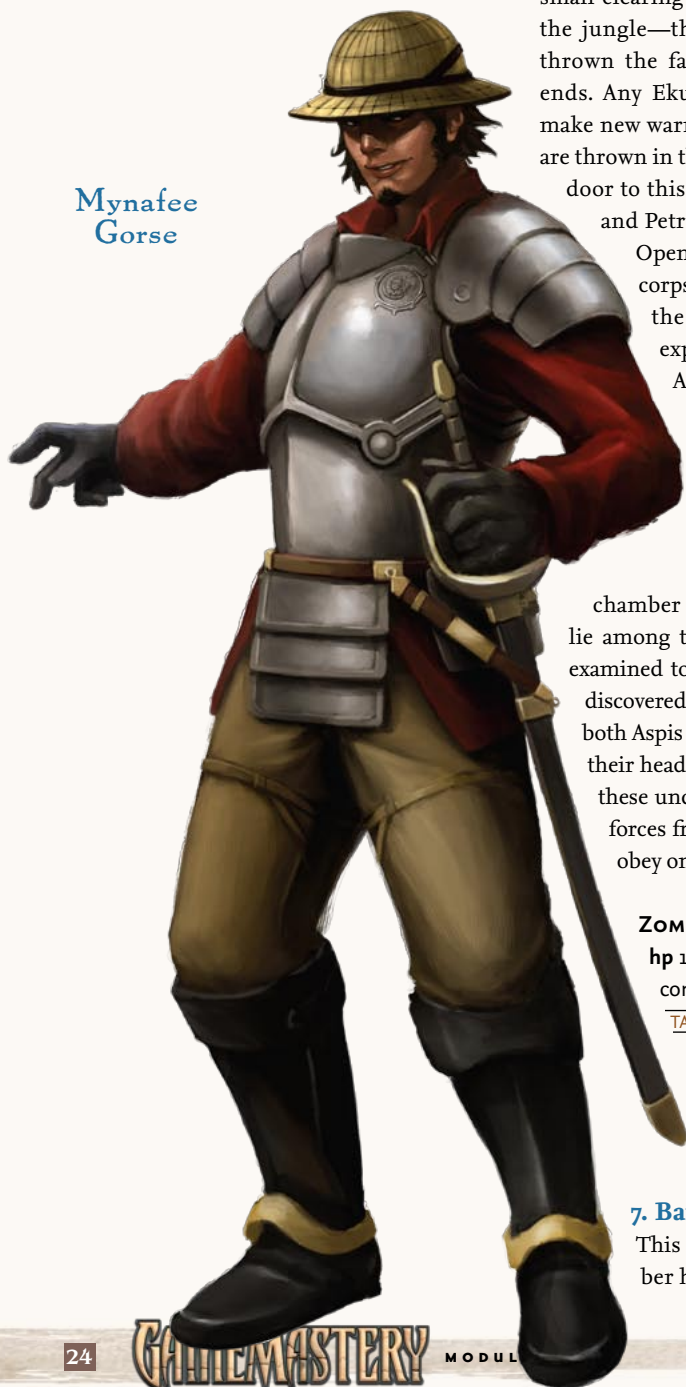
Male human warrior 2
hp 13 each; see page 10

TACTICS

During Combat The mercenaries work well together, always trying to fight in pairs in order to flank and aid another if necessary. They prefer to make ranged attacks and seek defensive positions to do so if possible.

Morale These mercenaries are brave and extremely loyal to the consortium but retreat if the odds seem stacked against them and none of their leaders are nearby to spur them onward.

Mynafee
Gorse



ASPIS CONSORTIUM OFFICERS (3) CR 4

Male human fighter 4
NE Medium humanoid
Init +5; **Senses** Listen -1, Spot -1

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17
(+1 Dex, +5 armor, +2 shield)

hp 34 each (4d10+8)
Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk rapier +9 (1d6+5/18-20)
Ranged mwk light crossbow +5 (1d8/19-20)

TACTICS

During Combat The officers rely on their soldiers to do most of the fighting, preferring to make ranged attacks from the back, unless an enemy looks on the verge of defeat. In that case, they step in to claim the victory and first share of spoils.

Morale Well paid by the Aspis Consortium, the officers remain loyal, retreating only if certain defeat appears imminent.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7

Feats Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier)

Skills Climb +7, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +5, Survival +2, Swim +4

Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of darkvision*, 3 *potions of endure elements*, 2 flasks of alchemist's fire, vial of antitoxin; **Other Gear** +1 chain shirt, heavy steel shield, masterwork rapier, masterwork light crossbow, 10 crossbow bolts, everburning torch, belt pouch with 20 gp and assorted gems worth 180 gp

Mynafee Gorse (Station Manager)

Mynafee Gorse is the youngest son of a Chelish noble family. Excluded from inheritance by his oldest brother, he joined the Aspis Consortium and rose quickly through its ranks. It was he who almost single-handedly crafted the success of Aspis in the Mwangi Expanse and was rewarded with control of Nightfall Station. It is his combination of conscienceless business acumen and daring that vaulted the fortunes of the station to its present level. Through a combination of threats and bribery among the local tribes, Gorse plays them off against each other for his gain. His success is legendary on the Vanji, and many an entrepreneur on

its waters speaks of the "luck of a Gorse." It is Mynafee who enacted the practice of enslaving local tribesmen to work his gold mine and he is determined to ensure its success without compromise.

MYNAFEE GORSE**CR 4**

Male human fighter 4 (Aspis Consortium Officer)
hp 41

Petrune (Secretary)

Petrune joined the Aspis Consortium 5 years ago and was recently assigned to Nightfall Station both to learn from Mynafee Gorse and to test his mettle in its harsh conditions. Unbeknownst to Gorse and the rest of the consortium, Petrune is actually a spy planted in the consortium by a trading competitor. His assignment was to find out all he could about Nightfall Station and the secret of Gorse's success, but in the depths of the wilds he has hit upon a new plan to double-cross both Gorse and his true employer. Allying with certain unscrupulous individuals in the Ekujae tribe, he has turned to the necromantic arts to build his own power base and ultimately take over the Nightfall operation himself. These co-conspirators, a pair of Ekujae rangers, have led awry elven raids against the station and, in exchange for gold and gems, even captured and brought him additional members of their tribe to serve as zombie fodder.

PETRUNE**CR 7**

Male human wizard 7
CE Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +6, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12
(+1 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex)

hp 26 (38 with *false life*; 7d4+7)

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee masterwork sickle +6 (1d6)

Ranged dart +5 (1d4)

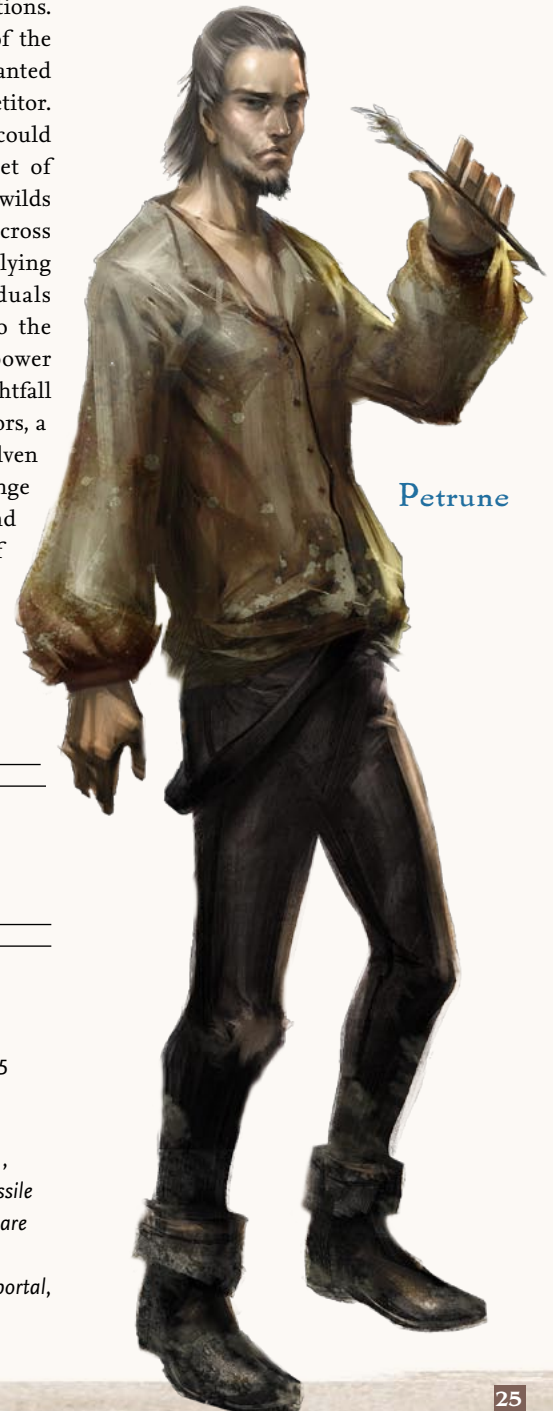
Spells Prepared (CL 7th, +3 melee touch, +5 ranged touch):
4th—*animate dead*
3rd—*empowered burning hands* (DC 14), *fireball* (DC 16), *empowered magic missile*
2nd—*false life*, *protection from arrows*, *scare* (DC 16), *summon swarm*
1st—*chill touch*, *expeditious retreat*, *hold portal*, *protection from good*, *shield*

o—*acid splash*, *detect poison*, *flare* (DC 13), *light*

TACTICS

Before Combat Petrune casts *false life* and *protection from arrows* before combat.

During Combat Petrune casts *shield* as soon as he realizes combat is imminent, and then uses his empowered spells and wand against foes. He uses *scare*, *summon swarm*, and *fireball* on groups of attackers. If cornered near area 6, he unlocks the door and calls forth his zombies.



Petrune

Morale If he thinks he is losing, Petrune casts *expeditious retreat* to flee back to the station house. He is aware of the cache of potions hidden in Gorse's washroom and attempts to recover it in order to fly away invisibly.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 16, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3

Feats Alertness (when familiar within arm's reach), Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Concentration), Spell Focus (necromancy), Weapon Finesse

Skills Concentration +14, Diplomacy +3, Forgery +6, Heal +8, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +6, Spellcraft +15, Spot +4

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Polygot

SQ summon familiar (bat named Cetacarp)

Combat Gear *potion of remove disease*, *wand of color spray* (12 charges), *wand of detect magic* (37 charges), 3 vials of arsenic; **Other Gear** *bracers of armor* +1, *cloak of resistance* +1, 4 darts, healer's kit (7 uses remaining), masterwork sickle, *ring of endure elements*, *ring of protection* +1, key to area 6, and a pouch with three tiger eye agates worth 100 gp each, 12 black onyx gems worth 25 gp each, and 22 gp.

Spellbook All spells above plus 0—all; 1st—*cause fear*, *comprehend languages*, *endure elements*, *identify*, *magic weapon*, *shocking grasp*; 2nd—*command undead*, *fog cloud*, *fox's cunning*, *resist energy*, *rope trick*; 3rd—*daylight*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*; 4th—*contagion*

The Ekujae

The Ekujae is a large tribe of wild elves who live primarily in the northern reaches of the Mwangi Expanse, though they do settle farther south sporadically. The tribe is comprised of dozens of inter-related clans that number several thousand members altogether, though these clans typically live in small isolated villages with only infrequent contact. Only a crisis of some sort can rally the clans together for a time. The Ekujae hold to their own personal codes of honor, but it is foreign to many other peoples. They are often labeled as savages by the unknowing, who interpret necessities of survival in the jungle as "barbaric" practices.

The Ekujae have a strong oral tradition that they are the remnants of a great civilization left behind to face some great Darkness that threatened the world. They do not know any

specifics of this ancient legend, but remain a very warlike people in preparation for the day they are once again called forth to fight. Some of the intricacies of their traditions create strong taboos within their tribe, which they do not violate. Their dead must be prepared for burial in a special ritual or become unclean tools of the Darkness. As a result, any Ekujae corpse that does not receive its consecrated burial within 1 day becomes anathema, and no member of the tribe approaches within 30 feet of it. In addition, the Ekujae never enter a cave, as they believe that is where the Darkness currently dwells.

The Ekujae are wild elves identical in all respects to the wood elves described in the MM, but they have the ability to camouflage themselves to take advantage of their jungle home. The Ekujae are able to use the plantlife of their surroundings with such skill as to be able to bind branches and leaves to their clothing and limbs to create camouflaging coverings of greenery. They must renew these constantly throughout the day, but this covering provides them a +2 circumstance bonus on Hide checks while in natural surroundings.

There are hundreds of Ekujae camped in the jungles around the station. Anyone entering the tree line is attacked by 1d8+4 Ekujae warriors within 1 minute, with 1d10+5 more arriving every 1d3 rounds thereafter. Each time reinforcements arrive, there is a 20% chance 1d2 rangers are with them. They do not pursue back into the clearing. The leader of the Ekujae is a powerful warlord known as Chief Arinal. He is not cruel by nature, but he is incensed at the actions of the Aspis Consortium and is absolutely determined to rescue his captured brethren and drive the consortium from the

Expanse. He is a cunning and formidable adversary, content to wait for the right moment to strike, doing everything he possibly can in the meantime to hamper his foes. So far, he has taken no prisoners (the mercenaries of the consortium believe the elves are cannibals who butcher anyone taken alive) but if he does, he treats them relatively well in hopes that he can trade them to Gorse in exchange for elven slaves. He considers his eventual victory inevitable and can only be persuaded to negotiate if the PCs (or the consortium) can first convince him that his position is not as secure as it appears. See Concluding the Adventure for one possibility.

Events at Nightfall Station

Upon arriving at Nightfall Station, the PCs are cordially welcomed by Mynafee Gorse and shown around. He has the station's accountant make payment on any wages they are owed. They are put up in the guest quarters while Esteban is given one of the empty officers' quarters. Any surviving crewmembers remain on the wheelboat. The PCs are given the run of the station's first floor other than the locked storage areas and the accounting office. The PCs spend 12 hours of every day on assignment at the various guard posts within the station house, at one of the guardhouses, or on patrol around the grounds. They are never assigned to guard duty at area 7 and any questions about that posting go unanswered, with a terse order to mind their own business. They are not expected upstairs in the station house or near area 7 and, if caught in an unauthorized area, they are reprimanded the first time and thrown into area 7 as spies the second time.

The time frame of this portion of the adventure is up to you. What follows are a number of events that can occur while the PCs are stationed here. For the most part, these events can happen in any order, although Event 4 should happen before Event 6, and Event 7 should not be run until the climax of the adventure. The *River Queen* remains at Nightfall Station while undergoing minor repairs. It is still riverworthy, but Esteban does not wish to push his luck on the dangerous river.

Event 1. Snipers (EL varies)

This event can occur as many times as you see fit, day or night. In it, 1d3 Ekujae rangers position themselves in trees 60 feet outside



the station's perimeter and take shots at any targets who present themselves. They continue until they run out of arrows, all targets get under cover, or they come under attack in return, at which point they melt back into the trees.

Event 2. Probing Assault (EL 8)

This event can occur multiple times, but only at night, when the elves' low-light vision gives them the advantage. A group of eight warriors led by a ranger rushes into the perimeter to wreak as much havoc as possible. They retreat when half are killed. Their tribal taboos prevent them from coming within 30 feet of the impaled severed heads.

Event 3. Night Swimmers (EL 9)

This event occurs at night and only once. A group of eight rangers swims the river and boards the *River Queen*. Hurg hides himself below decks and is safe, but anyone else the rangers can reach and quietly kill is fair game, including guards on the boat and dock and anyone in the halls of the station house. They fight fanatically to the death.

Event 4. Phantom Brawl

One of the mercenaries assigned to area 7 is brought into the station house dead, part of his skull caved in by some heavy blow. The officers claim it was a brawl between the mercenaries, but PCs outside heard no sounds of fighting and no further investigation or punishment is made. In truth, one of the slaves killed him in the mine. Remove one mercenary from the station's total and one slave from area 7. Add a zombie to area 6.

Event 5. Fire Attack (EL 5)

This event occurs only once. The Ekujae fire a volley of burning arrows into the barn (area 3) and ignite the fodder. The station must form a bucket brigade from the river to extinguish it and save the livestock. To complicate matters, the elves release two lions they have captured into the compound to cause chaos while the fire burns. It takes the bucket brigade 10 rounds without being attacked by the lions to extinguish the fire. Each round after the 5th, there is a 20% chance of losing 1d2 animals trapped in the barn by the fire.

LIONS (2)

hp 32 each; MM 274

CR 3

Event 6. Petrune Unmasked (EL 8)

This occurs only once, at night, when the PCs are on guard duty outside. A DC 15 Spot check notices a dark shape moving from the station house to the jungle west of the clearing. This is Petrune meeting with his Ekujae contacts 100 feet out into the jungle. At the meeting are Petrune, the two rangers, and three more elves hobbled, bound, and gagged. Petrune gives the rangers one of his agates and cautiously leads the prisoners back to area 6. Once inside, he cuts their throats and animates them as zombies. If caught in the act, he fights his way back to area 6 to make a stand with his zombies.

Event 7. Mass Assault (EL varies)

This event only occurs once and should be timed to coincide with the conclusion of the PCs' investigations and the climax of the adventure. The elves send 75 warriors and 12 rangers into the clearing (avoiding the staked heads) and attack en masse. Any NPCs who do not retreat back to the station house are cut down in short order, and the guardhouses are besieged and burned down. The station house itself does not burn easily, due to the stone used in its construction. The Ekujae assault the station house, trying to break in the strong wooden doors and window shutters (equal to good wooden doors) to get inside. The assault continues until 60 of them are killed or captured. You should not roll every attack by every individual and only focus on the areas where the PCs are involved. Alternatively, if your players wish to, let them take charge of small groups of defenders and play out more of the battle in that way.

CHIEF ARINAL

Male wild elf ranger 3/barbarian 2

N Medium humanoid

Init +1; Senses low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11

(+1 Dex, +2 natural, -2 rage)

hp 32 (3d8+2d12+10)

Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +3 (+5 vs. enchantment)

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge Immune sleep

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee +1 frost spear +9 (1d8+12 plus 1d6 cold)

Ranged mwk longbow +7 (1d8/x3 plus thistle arrows) or

Ranged mwk longbow +5/+5 (1d8/x3 plus thistle arrows)

Special Attacks favored enemy +2 (humanoid [human])

TACTICS

During Combat Chief Arinal rages on the first round of combat and charges into the thick of the fighting. He uses Power Attack for 2 points. For the Ekujae, leading men into battle means exactly that, and a chief not at the forefront of a charge is not chief for long.

Morale Chief Arinal retreats if more than 60 of his men fall or if he is reduced to fewer than 5 hp.

STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 13

Base Atk +5; Grp +10

Feats Endurance, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Rapid Shot, Track

Skills Climb +10, Hide +9, Jump +10, Knowledge (nature) +3, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Spot +7, Survival +6, Swim +7

Languages Elven, Polygot

SQ camouflage, elf traits, wild empathy +4

Gear +1 frost spear, Ekujae longbow, 20 thistle arrows, fetish of natural armor +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Camouflage (Ex) The Ekujae are able to use the plantlife of their surroundings with such skill as to be able to bind branches and leaves to their clothing and limbs to create camouflaging coverings of greenery. They must renew these constantly throughout the day, but this covering provides them a +2 circumstance bonus on Hide checks while in natural surroundings.

EKUJAE WARRIORS

CR 1

Male and Female wild elf warrior 2
hp 12 each; see page 21.

EKUJAE RANGERS

CR 3

Male and Female wild elf ranger 3
hp 20 each; see page 15.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

There are many possible outcomes to the adventure, but the most likely ones are included here.

If the PCs defeat the final Ekujae assault, the elves give up and move on, completely vacating the region—the siege is finally broken. The PCs can remain at the station for the rest of their contract and receive their payments plus the goodwill of the Aspis Consortium.

The PCs could give up on the whole situation and decide to abandon the station, bribing Hurg to help them steal the *River Queen* and make down river. Since Hurg's loyalty lies to the boat rather than the consortium, he can be persuaded to do this if convinced of danger to the vessel.

The PCs could discover the secret of the slave mines and switch sides, allying with the Ekujae in an effort to bring down the corrupt traders. The Ekujae do not cooperate with the PCs, but if they get involved in a large melee at the station, the elves launch their mass assault (Event 7) to take advantage of the confusion. The PCs can stay and help them or take the opportunity to escape aboard the *River Queen* as described above.

Finally, if the plot between Petrune and the rangers is unmasked, both sides are so shocked by the betrayal that a parlay could be organized. In this case, if the PCs make a DC 17 Diplomacy check, Gorse agrees to release the slaves and give the Ekujae 10% of the mine's output in return for them helping him to obtain slaves from other tribes of humanoids throughout the jungle. While possibly not an ideal solution, it does resolve the immediate crisis at the station and garners the goodwill of both the consortium and the elves.

Once the PCs finish with Nightfall Station, they still face a 5-day journey back down the Vanji ahead of them. And when the adventure is resolved, the PCs might have to deal with the ramifications of an angry Aspish Consortium upon

returning to Bloodcove if the station and its mine were not saved. As they have seen, the consortium's methods are brutal and its reach is long indeed.

APPENDIX 1: NEW MONSTERS

Fell Flotsam

Bobbing along the surface of the water is a patch of oily blackness, like a piece of the night sky afloat on the waves. Vaguely discernable are lumps and protrusions, as if it were a tangle of bracken and flotsam. It has a slight sheen and, most disturbingly of all, seems to be floating along against the current.

FELL FLOTSAM

NE Large undead

Init -1; **Senses** blind, blindsight 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot -5

DEFENSE

AC 4, touch 4, flat-footed 4
(-5 Dex, -1 size)

hp 91 (14d12)

Fort +4, **Ref** -1, **Will** +6

DR 10/bludgeoning and magic; **Immune** acid, cold, ooze traits, undead traits; **Resist** electricity 10, sonic 10; **Weakness** fire vulnerability

CR 6

OFFENSE

Spd 10 ft., climb 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

Melee 2 slams +13 (2d4+6 plus 1d6 acid)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks acid, constrict (dd4+6 plus 1d6 acid), hypnotic pattern, improved grab

TACTICS

During Combat A fell flotsam attempts to approach its prey undetected until close enough to affect the prey with its hypnotic pattern and lure its victim into its clutches.

Morale A fell flotsam does not retreat unless prevented from reaching potential prey by an intervening barrier of fire.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 1, **Con** —, **Int** 2, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +17

Feats Ability Focus (hypnotic pattern), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Climb +14, Hide +7 (+15 in water), Listen +0, Move Silently +9, Swim +14

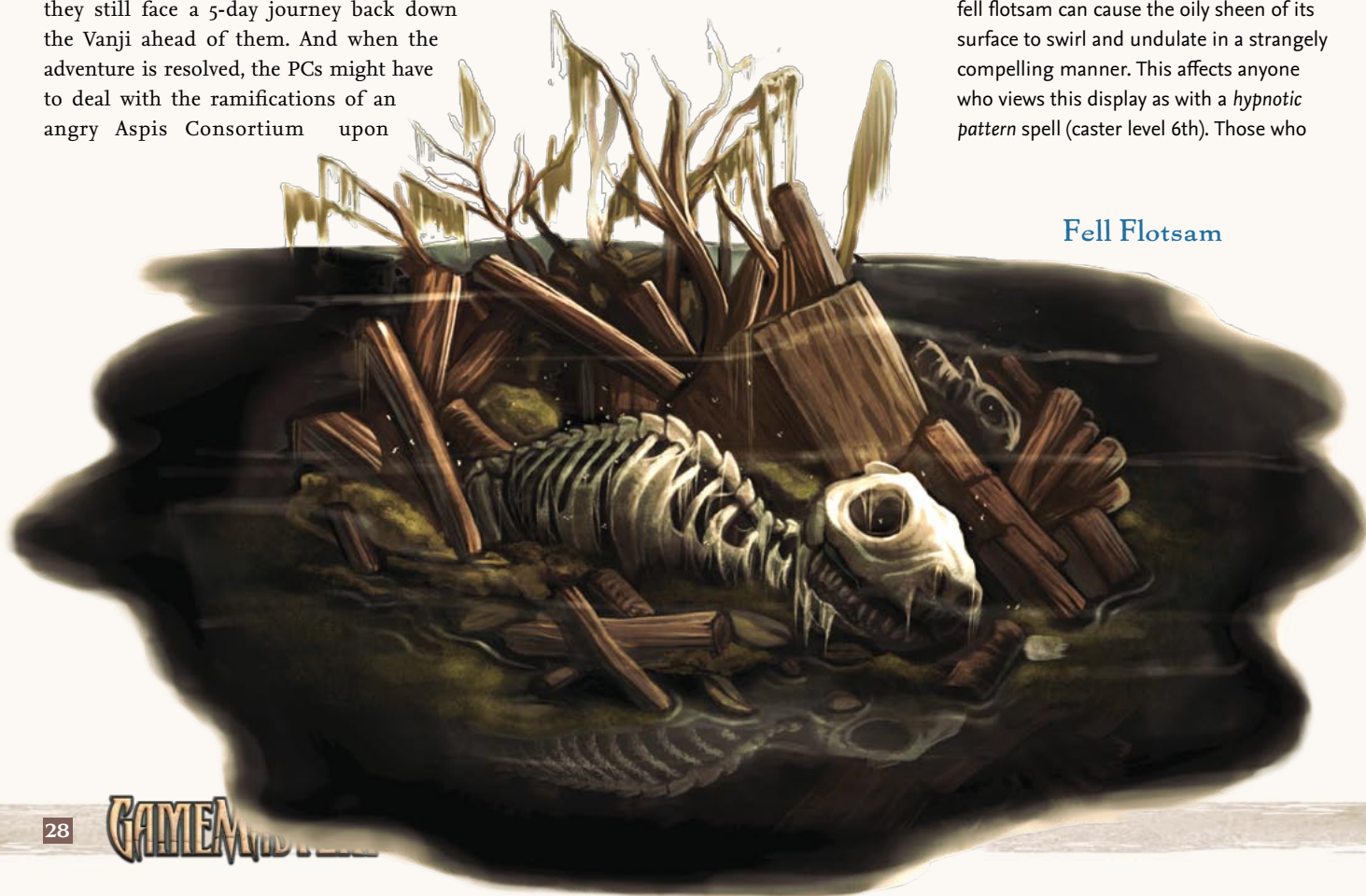
SPECIAL ABILITIES

Acid (Ex) A fell flotsam secretes a powerful acid that dissolves only flesh. Any melee hit or successful grapple check deals acid damage.

Constrict (Ex) A fell flotsam deals automatic slam and acid damage with a successful grapple check.

Hypnotic Pattern (Su) As a standard action, a fell flotsam can cause the oily sheen of its surface to swirl and undulate in a strangely compelling manner. This affects anyone who views this display as with a *hypnotic pattern* spell (caster level 6th). Those who

Fell Flotsam



fail a DC 18 Will save have an overwhelming urge to approach and touch the swirling lights unless prevented by others. Those who approach enter the fell flotsam's area and allow it to make automatic constrict attacks until the victim is freed or dies. This constrict attack does not allow a new saving throw, as the fascinated individual willingly enters its embrace. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a fell flotsam must hit with its slam attack. It can then start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Skills A fell flotsam has a +8 racial bonus on Hide checks. This bonus increases to +16 while in water. It has a +8 racial bonus on Move Silently checks. A fell flotsam has a +8 racial bonus on Climb and Swim checks and can always take 10 on these checks, even if rushed or threatened.

ECOLOGY

Environment tropical marshes

Organization solitary

Treasure none

Alignment always neutral evil

Advancement 15–8 HD (Large), 19–24 HD (Huge), 25–34 HD (Gargantuan)

Level Adjustment —

A fell flotsam is a hideous undead creature that takes the form of a floating ooze. As such, it shares many ooze characteristics and traits. A fell flotsam is formed from the combined psyches of the deaths of many sentient creatures in some swampy area. These souls merge with the primordial muck and fecund undergrowth of the marsh to create an undead predator of limited intelligence, capable of little more than hunting living creatures in order to consume them and deposit their bleached bones on the floor of swamp pools. The creatures gain no true sustenance from such predations, but each such creature slain allows a little bit of growth in the flotsam, so after many years a fell flotsam might advance to truly prodigious size. Fell flotsam's prefer sentient prey and often ignore the natural fauna of their swamps unless they have not fed in some time.

Environment: Fell flotsams are typically only found in jungle swamps, where both the ever-present danger that creates the requisite number of deaths and the truly prodigious

amounts of plant growth can combine in the deep, fermenting muck to spawn such an abomination of undeath.

Typical physical Characteristics: A fell flotsam resembles nothing so much as a 10-foot-diameter oil slick floating on the surface of the water. It is only a few inches thick but weighs around 3,000 pounds due to its compact mass. Though typically smooth in appearance, occasional protuberances resembling broken flotsam and debris press outward through its outer membrane, as if some primordial memory of the jungle wrack from which it is composed occasionally tries to emerge, only to be quickly reabsorbed.

Mosquito Swarm

A high-pitched drone precedes the cloud of tiny insects that approaches like a malevolent thunderhead.

MOSQUITO SWARM

CR 3

N Fine vermin (swarm)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Listen** +4, **Spot** +8

DEFENSE

AC 22, **touch** 22, **flat-footed** 18 (+4 Dex, +8 size)

hp 14 (4d8–4)

Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

Immune swarm traits, vermin traits, weapon damage

OFFENSE

Spd 5 ft., **fly** 20 ft. (average)

Melee swarm (1d6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks attach, blood drain, distraction

TACTICS

During Combat A mosquito swarm surrounds and attacks, attaching itself to any living prey it encounters. It can unerringly find and follow living prey.

Morale A mosquito swarm does not retreat.

STATISTICS

Str 1, **Dex** 19, **Con** 8, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +3; **Grp** —

Skills **Listen** +4, **Spot** +8

SQ swarm traits, vermin traits

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Attach (Ex) If a living creature takes damage by being in a space occupied by the swarm at the end of the creature's turn, hundreds of the mosquitoes from the swarm attach themselves and continue to deal blood drain damage. To remove the attached mosquitoes, the creature must deal at least 2 points of damage through an area effect

(that affects the attacked creature normally as well) or submerge himself in water.

Damage dealt to mosquitoes attached to a creature does not count against the swarm's hit points, unless the swarm is in the area of effect as well. Attached mosquitoes drain blood for 3 rounds before they become sated and fall off.

Blood Drain (Ex) A mosquito swarm deals 1 point of Constitution damage per round from blood drain on any living creature that ends its turn in a space occupied by the swarm or any creature subjected to the swarm's attach special attack, whether still within the swarm or not.

Distraction (Ex) Any living creature that begins its turn with a mosquito swarm in its space or while having mosquitoes from the swarm attached to it must succeed on a DC 11 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills: A mosquito swarm has a +4 racial bonus on Listen checks and a +8 racial bonus on Spot checks.

ECOLOGY

Environment any temperate or tropical

Organization solitary, cloud (2–7 swarms), or plague (11–20 swarms)

Treasure none

Alignment always neutral

Advancement none

Level Adjustment —

A mosquito swarm is a cloud of thousands of blood-sucking vermin that seek living prey to feast upon. A variant of the traditional mosquito, this particular species is significantly larger. Each specimen is roughly an inch long, which dramatically increases both the amount of blood each insect can drain from a potential victim, as well as the number of offspring each pair can produce. The males of this particular species die soon after mating, leaving the females to search for succulent blood to nourish the next generation. An attacking swarm is thus composed entirely of females. They prefer to feed on warm-blooded creatures.

Environment: Unlike traditional mosquitoes, this particular breed is extremely sensitive to cold temperatures and low humidity, meaning that they are largely confined to the jungles of the Mwangi Expanse. However, recently they have begun turning up in some of the more tropical ports along the Inner Sea, causing some to

speculate that perhaps the increased trade to and from the Mwangi has lead to some unwelcome stowaways,

Typical physical Characteristics: Spindly insects with long proboscises for draining blood from their prey, perhaps the most terrifying thing about these swarms is that they rely on numbers rather than stealth to steal blood, and thus they are large enough that it's easy to tell exactly what they are doing.

APPENDIX 2: BLOODCOVE

Bloodcove is a unique settlement perched on the very boundary of civilization and a great

vastness of unknown wilderness. Most maps that depict Bloodcove typically show only a blank area to the east marked simply with the words Mwangi Expanse. The town itself is unusual in that it is constructed in ever-rising scaffolds and boardwalks in and among the intricate root complex of one of the gargantuan mangroves unique to the coast of the Mwangi. This defensible position protects it not only from raids by the savages of the interior but also from raids by the "civilized" savages of the Shackles to the north. The name of the settlement derived from the blood-red color of the water at the mouth of Vanji River.

Bloodcove is a combination of pirate haven and free trade port. Founded by some of the great captains of the Shackles who grew too old to pirate and saw legitimate trade as their best route to wealth and easy living in their twilight years, Bloodcove has since become a neutral ground. The elevated boardwalk streets are crowded with both pirate crews and the rough-and-tumble sailors of merchant vessels. Brawls and knifings are a nightly event, but no full-scale warfare exists on the streets, and ships and their cargoes are generally safe from the pirates as long as they are in port. Once out in the trading



Mosquito Swarm

lanes, though, merchants lose the protection they had at Bloodcove.

The town is loosely ruled by the Grand Admiralty of the Fever Sea—as he styles himself—an official elected for life among the scions of the original pirate founders. The wealthy trading consortiums that utilize Bloodcove, however, have considerable say in who is chosen and how he conducts his reign. In truth, the grand admiral does little more than maintain a small standing force of poorly trained militia to protect the town from any jungle denizens that come too close, keep violence in the streets to an acceptable level, and keep Free Trade Square open for business at all costs. In return, a modest monthly fee is paid to the admiralty by all businesses and permanent residents of the cove.

About half of the population of Bloodcove is comprised of the dusky Mwangi peoples—corsairs and traders who have made the western coast of the jungle their home for centuries. The rest of the population is a mix of races and human ethnicities from northern realms that have come in as traders and speculators to grab a share of the riches that the jungles have to offer. Tensions run high between the various races and ethnic groups, but for the

most part the people of Bloodcove don't allow blood to come between them and profit.

BLOODCOVE

Small City nonstandard (trading houses); **AL NE GP Limit** 15,000 gp; **Assets** 3,960,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 5,281

Type mixed (human [Mwangi] 46%, human [other] 33%, dwarf 9%, elf 5%, halfling 3%, gnome 2%, half-elf 1%, half-orc 1%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Harthwik Barzoni, CN male human aristocrat 4/rogue 11 (Grand Admiralty of the Fever Sea), **Tyalt Crow**, N male human fighter 15 (Militiamaster of Bloodcove), **Tesha Umbertine**, LN female dwarf fighter 5 (Dockmaster), **Dibwurd Mupkin** LE male human ghost expert 3/sorcerer 6 (Lighthouse Keeper)

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Seelah

FEMALE HUMAN PALADIN 4

ALIGN LG INIT +0 SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES

| | |
|----|-----|
| 16 | STR |
| 10 | DEX |
| 14 | CON |
| 8 | INT |
| 13 | WIS |
| 12 | CHA |

DEFENSE

| |
|--------------------------|
| HP 34 |
| AC 20 |
| touch 10, flat-footed 20 |
| Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +3 |

SQ aura of courage, divine health

OFFENSE

Melee +1 longsword +9 (1d8+4/19–20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +5 (1d8+3/x3)
Special Attacks lay on hands, smite evil 1/day, turn undead 4/day (+3, 2d6+2, 1st)
Spell-like abilities (CL 4th):
 At Will—*detect evil*
Spells Prepared (CL 2nd):
 1st—*lesser restoration*

SKILLS

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Knowledge (religion) | +4 |
| Ride | +4 |
| Sense Motive | +6 |

FEATS

Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)



Combat Gear holy water (2), wand of cure light wounds (50 charges); **Other Gear** backpack, dagger, full plate, heavy steel shield, +1 longsword, mwk composite longbow (+3 Str) with 20 arrows, rations (4), silver holy symbol, 33 gp



Harsk

MALE DWARF RANGER 4

ALIGN LN INIT +3 SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES

| | |
|----|-----|
| 14 | STR |
| 16 | DEX |
| 15 | CON |
| 10 | INT |
| 12 | WIS |
| 6 | CHA |

DEFENSE

| |
|--|
| HP 29 |
| AC 16 |
| touch 13, flat-footed 13 |
| Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +3 (+2 vs. poison, spells) |

SQ animal companion (badger), wild empathy

OFFENSE

Melee mwk greataxe +7 (1d12+3/x3)
Ranged +1 heavy crossbow +8 (1d10+1/19–20)
Special Attacks favored enemy +2 (giants)
Spells Prepared (CL 2nd)
 1st—*entangle* (DC 12)

SKILLS

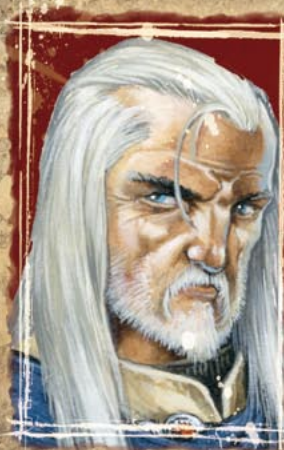
| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Heal | +8 |
| Hide | +10 |
| Listen | +8 |
| Move Silently | +10 |
| Spot | +8 |
| Survival | +8 |

FEATS

Endurance, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Rapid Reload, Track



Combat Gear antitoxin, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of pass without trace (2), smokestick, tanglefoot bag; **Other Gear** backpack, bedroll, cloak of resistance +1, +1 heavy crossbow with 30 bolts, +1 leather armor, mwk greataxe, ration (5), signal whistle, tea pot, 41 gp.



Ezren

MALE HUMAN WIZARD 4

ALIGN NG INIT +3 SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES

| | |
|----|-----|
| 11 | STR |
| 9 | DEX |
| 12 | CON |
| 17 | INT |
| 15 | WIS |
| 9 | CHA |

DEFENSE

| |
|--------------------------|
| HP 15 |
| AC 11 |
| touch 10, flat-footed 11 |
| Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +6 |

OFFENSE

Melee club +2 (1d6)
Ranged light crossbow +1 (1d8/19–20)
Spells Prepared (CL 4th, +1 ranged touch):
 2nd—*bull's strength*, *scorching ray*, *web* (DC 15)
 1st—*alarm*, *magic missile* (2), *shield*
 0—*daze* (DC 13), *detect magic* (2), *light*

SKILLS

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Appraise | +6 |
| Concentration | +8 |
| Knowledge (arcana) | +10 |
| Knowledge (geography) | +10 |
| Knowledge (history) | +10 |
| Knowledge (the planes) | +4 |
| Spellcraft | +10 |

FEATS

Combat Casting, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll



Combat Gear alchemist's fire (2), potion of cure moderate wounds, wand of magic missile (CL 1st, 50 chrgs); **Other Gear** backpack, bracers of armor +1, cane, dagger, l. crossbow with 20 bolts, pearl of power 1st level, rations (6), ring of protection +1, spellbook, 100 gp pearls (2), 61 gp



Lem

MALE HALFLING BARD 4

ALIGN CG INIT +3 SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES

| | |
|----|-----|
| 8 | STR |
| 16 | DEX |
| 13 | CON |
| 12 | INT |
| 8 | WIS |
| 16 | CHA |

DEFENSE

| |
|---------------------------------------|
| HP 20 |
| AC 18 |
| touch 15, flat-footed 15 |
| Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +5 (+2 vs fear) |

OFFENSE

Melee short sword +3 (1d4–1/19–20)
Ranged mwk sling +8 (1d3–1)
Special Attacks bardic music 4/day (countersong, fascinate, inspire competence, inspire courage +1)
Spells Known (CL 4th)
 2nd (1/day)—*cure moderate wounds*, *mirror image*
 1st (3/day)—*cure light wounds*, *hideous laughter*, *silent image* (DC 15)
 0 (3/day)—*d. magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *light*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *s. instrument*

SKILLS

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Bardic Knowledge | +5 |
| Bluff | +10 |
| Concentration | +8 |
| Diplomacy | +12 |
| Hide | +10 |
| Move Silently | +9 |
| Perform (wind instruments) | +12 |
| Tumble | +10 |
| Use Magic Device | +10 |

FEATS

Dodge, Spell Focus (illusion)



Combat Gear wand of cure light wounds (CL 1st, 50 chrgs); **Other Gear** backpack, cloak of resistance +1, dagger, +1 leather armor, mwk flute, mwk sling w/20 bullets, rations (6), ring of protection +1, short sword, spell component pouch, sunrods (3), 60 gp

Station House

Third Floor



Second Floor

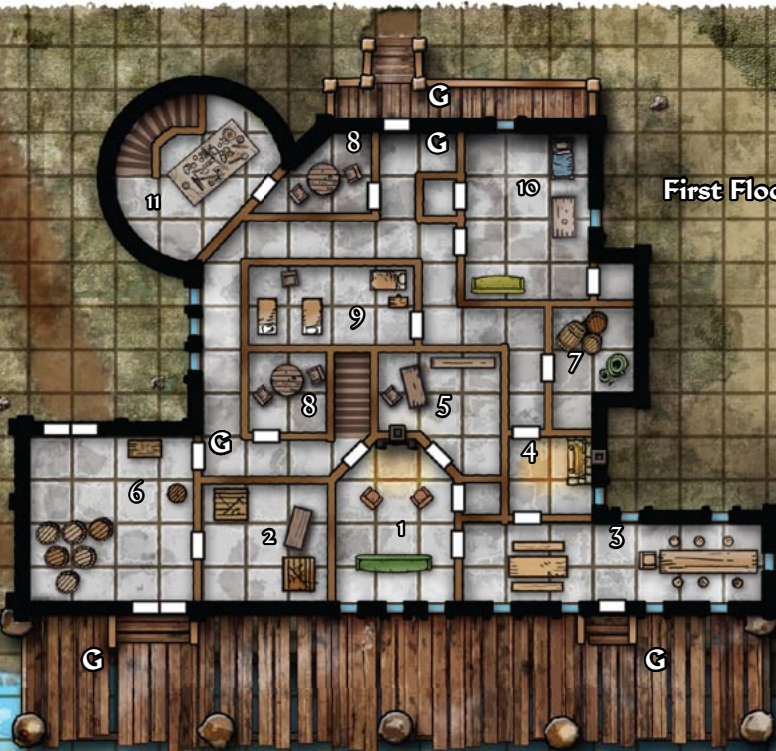


- 11.Ore Stores
- 12.Officers' Quarters
- 13.Secretary's Quarters
- 14.Station Managers Office
- 15.Manager's Quarters
- 16.Secretary's Office
- 17.Storage
- 18.Washroom
- 19.Engineer's Quarters
- 20.Smith's Quarters
- 21.Boatwright's Quarters
- 22.Carpenter's Quarters
- 23.Mess Hall
- 24.Practice Room
- 25.Accountant Quarters
- 26.Guardroom

N



First Floor



- 1.Parlor
- 2.Secure Storage
- 3.Dining Hall
- 4.Kitchen
- 5.Accounting Office
- 6.Cargo Storage
- 7.Larder
- 8.Guardroom
- 9.Servants' Quarters
- 10.Guest Quarters
- 11.Armory

G = Position of Guard

One square = 5 feet

THE JUNGLE HIDES MANY SECRETS

GameMastery Module

W2: River Into Darkness

A vast merchant consortium has a simple job for you—one that pays extremely well. All it asks is that you stand guard over one of its outposts for a few weeks until reinforcements arrive. The problem, of course, is that the outpost is in the middle of a vast and dangerous jungle and the natives seem intent upon putting an arrow in you at every turn. If the journey there doesn't kill you, though, you might just learn what is worth risking your lives over.

River Into Darkness is a wilderness-based adventure for 4th-level characters compatible with the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game. This adventure includes all the information you need to send your heroes on a fantastic journey through the heart of the deep and mysterious jungle, including encounters with terrible monsters and hostile natives.

This adventure is set in the Mwangi Expanse, the largest jungle in the *Pathfinder Chronicles* Campaign Setting, but it can be easily adapted for use in any setting. For more information on this environ, check out the *Pathfinder Chronicles Gazetteer*.



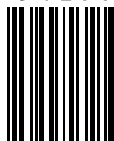
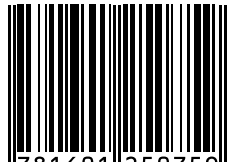
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