

The Moon of Thorns

by J.C. CONNORS

About the Adventure

The Moon of Thorns is an OSR fantasy adventure set in the cosmopolitan city of Caelkirk, although it can easily be adapted to other game systems and large, urban settings. A *GURPS Tredroy* version is available on www.1shotadventures.com

Fresh to the bustling city, the PCs join in on a city-wide search for Carac the Thorn, a no-good hoodlum wanted for multiple crimes against Caelkirk's noble families. The search for Carac, however, leads the PCs into the plans of a secretive death cult. The cult has hired Carac to help excavate a long-lost tunnel that leads under one of the city's greatest palaces. There, in the ancient catacombs of the palace, the cult hopes to find the body of a long-dead tyrant, who they hope to revive so that he can continue the bloody conquest he started six hundred years ago.

The Moon of Thorns is suitable for four-to-six 1st or 2nd level characters. The end of this adventure includes six pregenerated character backgrounds to give player some inspiration. If players are creating brand new characters, the adventure works best if they have never been to the great city of Caelkirk before, and are entering for the first time.

Characters introduced for the first time in the adventure are noted in ALL-CAPS. Ability rolls are in SMALL-CAPS. Sections marked with a map icon are side-quests and adventure hooks, and not important to the overall plot of the adventure. Sections marked with a person icon are opportunities for specific PCs, notably the pregenerated characters from the end of this adventure.

Adventure Backstory

Until recently, Carac the Thorn was like many other young men that lived in the poor Deadman's Row section of Caelkirk, the cosmopolitan city that lies within the borders of three great nations. Carac made his living doing odd jobs here and there (some legal, some not), and was a regular spectator at the city arena. His passion for the violent games helped him befriend some of city's gladiators.

One of Carac's gladiator friends, Rathar Trygg, recruited Carac to help him smuggle goods across the Blue River. For the most part, their jobs were small, nothing that would earn them more than ten lashes if caught. One day, however, Rathar brought Carac in on a better paying, riskier effort. The nighttime job was to deliver crates of unusual *lunagranate* magical artifacts to a secret portal located on the underside of one of the city's many bridges. There, an unusual servant woman takes the crate and disappears into the bridge.

When Rathar was killed in an arena mishap, Carac decided to continue the job on his own. Grief over the death of his friend made him careless, however, and soon Carac was accepting more dangerous, illicit jobs. One day, Carac took a job to assault a noble and his bride-to-be, which earned him a bounty across the city. While he has largely gone into hiding, Carac still performs his nighttime deliveries to the bridge, using other friends to help.

Unsuspecting Carac does not have any idea that he is embroiled in a darker scheme. His *lunagranate* deliveries are at the behest of a secretive death cult – the Order of Grief-

ers. The cult believes that they have found the location of the tomb of Prince Ivor, a fierce warlord and crusader who lived six centuries in the past.

Carac's deliveries are helping one of the cult's mages excavate underneath the Emir's palace in order to find it. They are using the imported lunagranate artifacts to demolish sections of the catacombs, hoping that it uncovers Prince Ivor's sarcophagus. For weeks, the mage's work has been slow, as he has dug in the wrong direction, but recently he realized his mistake. With one more crate of lunagranates, he believes he will find Prince Ivor's sarcophagus and retrieve it for his necromancer masters. From there, the Order of Grievors plans to revive the prince, and set him up again as a great conquering crusader.

Adventure Synopsis

The Moon of Thorns spans five parts. In part one, the PCs enter the great city of Caelkirk and are recruited into the local Mercenaries Guild.

In part two, the PCs are assigned to arena guard duty. As part of their assignment, the PCs are asked to keep careful watch out for the Carac the Thorn, a renegade who is wanted by two noble families for his crimes. After a deadly mishap in the arena, the PCs get clues to Carac's whereabouts. His gladiator friends know the identity of Carac's new smuggling associate – Arsalan al-Bir.

Finding Arsalan proves no easy feat. The young man is a street rat, and knows the roads and roofs of Caelkirk incredibly well. In part three, the PCs will have to use their brains and their agility to catch him. Arsalan, however, is the key to clueing in on Carac's busienss. Carac still runs regular deliveries to the Emir's Bridge, where the PCs can intercept him, in part four of the adventure.

Confronting Carac, however, exposes the tunnel that lies under the bridge, traverses half of Caelkirk, and ends under the great palace. In the final part of the adventure, the PCs must confront find two cultists of the Order of Grievors, who are close to finishing their work to retrieve the Prince Ivor's sarcophagus. With careful planning and action, the PCs will be able to foil their plot before the cult's necromancers arrive to recover the ancient relic.

About Caelkirk

The plains city of Caelkirk is located at the juncture of three different kingdoms. It is divided between the rule of Brittain, a Christian nation that has endured much change and upheaval over the years, ib-Wazi, an Islamic nation of new ideas, and al-Jabal, a Shiite Islamic nation of stern traditions. Somehow, the city has forged its own identity, though the wide rivers that divide the city have managed to retain the original culture and laws of each of Caelkirk's nations. Non-humans such as elves, dwarves, and halflings are a smaller presence in the city, but can be found in their own neighborhoods and quarters.



The city itself is home to some 200,000 people, making it roughly the same size and population of today's Venice. The comparison is also apt as Caelkirk is a hub of sophistication, trade, political innovation, and religious debate. As such, English, Arabic, and Latin are all spoke here.

Each section of the city is ruled by a governor who is subservient to his own kingdom. A council, partially elected, partially appointed, runs the city's day to day affairs. Law enforcement is reasonably staffed with mages, who deploy truth detection and information-seeking spells to track down criminals.

Guilds, or livery companies, are highly influential in Caelkirk, with the Mercenaries' Guild, Mages' Guild, and Company of Merchants wielding the most obvious power in the city. Thieves, smugglers, slaver's, and assassins' organizations mostly operate in the shadows.

Caelkirk is a religious city, with businesses pausing five times a day for Muslim prayers, and churches packed on Sundays. Although the city legally protects religious practice, it is not uncommon for residents to experience religious intolerance as they move about the city.

Part 1: Welcome to Caelkirk

The adventure begins with the PCs entering the bustling city of Caelkirk. Presumably, this is their first time to the great city. Unless the referee is inserting this adventure into another campaign, the PCs enter the city from the east, along Capital Street, in the Brittain section of the city.

There are no walls around the city – the old ones were demolished over a century ago. Still, city guard casually inspect those who enter the city, keeping a particular eye out for slaves being brought into the city (which is illegal in East and North Caelkirk) and anyone bringing a large amount of goods into the city without merchant credentials.

It is also illegal to bring bows, crossbows, and polearms into the city. Such weapons will be confiscated, as only men-at-arms are allowed them. Soldiers' equipment such as swords, plate armor, and war axes are allowed only to liveried men-at-arms and members of the Mercenaries Guild. Upon seeing any well-armed PCs, the city guards mandate that they go join the guild before being allowed to bring in their weapons.

Handily, an honest merchant house just off the street, Battista's Used Arms, is licensed to store weapons for only a few coins a day – though if they are not claimed in a fortnight, they will be sold off. Guards have a 50% chance of noticing

The Mercenaries' Guild

Joining the influential Mercenaries' Guild in Caelkirk is a straightforward affair. Either of its offices at Armshall or Southhold can sign up new *armsmen*. The only real requirement is to look respectable and competently duel one of the available sergeants. Fighters are automatically accepted! Others can gain membership by duelling, which can be handled with a STR or DEX ability check. GMs can give a +1 or +2 bonus for especially charismatic or clever PCs. The sergeants like moxie!

Once inducted into the guild, new armsmen will be assigned a master, to whom they must swear an oath of allegiance. In exchange for steady work, armsmen owe 20% of their income to their master.

Typical guild duties include police duty, especially in the bazaar and arena, guarding nobility, raiding death-cult lodges, and small defensive actions outside the city (mostly against pirates and brigands).

Three sample masters are described in the sections on Armshall and Southhold, though GMs are encouraged to invent their own!

any weapons smuggled through (25% for thieves), as long as they are not exceptionally bulky, like halberds! Or, a good CHA ability check may convince a guard to let a traveler into the city without checking their weapons, as long as the PC is *reasonably* equipped (i.e., not bristling with deadly military weapons and heavy armor).

The city guard advise any PCs who look skilled in martial ways to join the Mercenaries Guild. Not only does it give the PCs the right to carry arms, but there is plenty of work these days inside the city and the pay is good. Inquiring PCs are pointed to Armshall in East Caelkirk, or the massive Southhold in West Caelkirk, which is the official Mercenaries' Guild headquarters.

Armshall

Armshall is a spacious, sun-bleached brick building that surrounds a one acre, open training area. It is located just a block from Caelkirk's grand bazaar, a swarming market of wonderfully colorful shops of wineshops, fabrics, glass, and pottery.

Carac the Thorn

Bounty hunting is a seedy profession in Caelkirk. The authorities do not look fondly at their citizens being dragged from its sovereign territory for any reason. As such, the Mercenaries' Guild discourages bounty hunters from taking jobs that ask them to cross bridges.

Today, however, there is an exception. A few days ago, a man named CARAC THE THORN snuck into Abner's Hold, a viscount's keep on the outskirts of North Caelkirk. Carac held a betrothed couple at knife point, which ended up in scuffle. The young baron, MARTIN GUILDFORD and his betrothed, FELICIA NORTH were seriously embarrassed. Martin lost his sword, signet ring, and his pinky finger, sliced off Carac. Felicia was thrown into a duck pond, whereupon she lost her great-grandmother's necklace, though it's unclear whether she lost it in the pond, or to Carac.

Regardless, the Viscount Abner is furious and has demanded that the Mercenaries' Guild apprehend Carac. Known to be a connoisseur of the arena, both masters Brooker and Yvon ask the PCs to keep an eye out for Carac. If they see him, they are to apprehend him and immediately return the villain to Abner's Hold. Abner has set a reward of 1,000 gp for his capture!

Classes are frequently taught in the Armshall courtyard. A one-hour class ranges between 5 and 20 gp, though members of the guild are given a discount, depending on the class. Inquisitive students can sign up for swordsmanship and hand-to-hand classes from old veterans or learn bodyguard skills from experienced royal guards. Occasionally, a celebrity gladiator or well-known noble can be found teaching a class or two. Today, IBRAHIM ASFOUR, a devout general from the great western city of Alhallabad – known as much for his skill in combat as with his robust mahogany beard – is lecturing eager students on small unit tactics, drawn from his skirmishes with the dark elves of the Great Forest.

Those who join the guild from Armshall get assigned to one of the city's few hundred masters. Today, master MURIEL BROOKER has agreed to take on the day's recruits. One of the guild's few women officers, Muriel is a native of Caelkirk who worked her way up in the ranks over the last twenty years. An INT ability check recalls that Muriel and several of her senior mercenaries recently destroyed a bull-worshipping death cult that was headquartered in a subterranean temple in East Caelkirk. This feat has earned a positive reputation in all of Caelkirk's quarters.

Muriel accepts new recruits' oath of allegiance at sundown, buys them a hardy dinner at Royal Inn nearby, and then assigns them to policing duty at the city arena in the morning. She'll also quietly ask the PCs to look for the amoral scoundrel, Carac the Thorn (see text box). While the guild doesn't often participate in bounty hunting, she'd like to further advance her reputation by capturing the scoundrel and returning him to Martin Guildford's parents for punishment.

After dinner, as official members of the guild, PCs can rent a bed in the barracks here for 5 sp per night. Here, they'll be surrounded by a hundred or so young mercenaries eager for work, and can learn more about Muriel, Carac the Thorn, and the Caelkirk arena, which is where the worst convicts are often tried amidst great spectacle.

Southhold

Southhold is a massive fortress on the west bank, easily one of the largest structures in Caelkirk. Its great walls can hold up to three thousand men. At any given time, there are hundreds of mercenaries at the hall, meeting with their sergeants and officers, discussing city business, and – similar to Armshall – attending martial training classes in one of the courtyards.

PCs who join the Mercenaries' Guild from Southhold get assigned to MASTER MICHAEL YVON, the grandson of the old, high-ranking officer who acts as caretaker for the fortress itself. Anyone looking to find out more about Michael can succeed at a CHA ability check to discover that he has made no real name for himself as of yet. He seems to have earned his position from his grandfather's great influence in the guild. Middle-aged and overweight, Michael Yvon is hiring more mercenaries into his camp after several were killed in a recent desert skirmish with a sphinx and its bandit servants outside of Caelkirk. Fighters recall that the skirmish was a tactical disaster, with *much* to blame Michael for.

Michael Yvon will accept new recruits' oath of allegiance at sundown. He then assigns them to policing duty at the arena in the morning, but promises them a trip to the ruined city of *Umgazur* within a fortnight, where he hopes to uncover an unlooted treasure vault. Yvon also asks the PCs to look for the amoral scoundrel, Carac the Thorn (see text box), having promised Felicia North's family that he would see to it.

Like at Armshall, once members of the guild, PCs can rent a bed in the barracks here for 5 sp per night, where they can socialize with dozens of fellow recruits and mercenaries.

Part 2: Arena Duty

Regardless of which master the PCs serve, they end up at arena duty the next morning. The North Caelkirk arena is a huge stone-block structure, easily capable of holding 40,000 citizens, although it only hits that capacity once every few years. On a typical event day, less than 10,000 spectators gather to watch. Still, arena crowds can be raucous, competitive, and violent, so the Mercenaries' Guild is regularly hired to send armsmen to keep the peace. Armsmen are expected to breakup brawls, box pickpockets around the ears, and turn any serious criminals over to the West Caelkirk *sharia* courts, where they'll be fined or punished. A typical day's work at the arena pays about 10 gp, more for larger events.

Today, there is great disappointment among the crowds. An arena favorite, FELL BARRACUDA, was booked to make a comeback today against his nemesis, the half-ogre EYE UNUS, but had to cancel at the last minute due to a stomach sickness. Instead of exciting professional gladiator duels, the event has been replaced by convict executions. A Wis ability check identifies that the crowds are annoyed and restless as they stream into the arena. Soon, booing begins loudly across the arena, with shouts from the crowd that the Grand Referee had best make the lack of Fell Barracuda up to the spectators in some creative way.

The first event sours the mood even more. Three convicts are meant to fight a well-armored, but junior gladiator for their freedom. A minute into the match, the gladiator, BINNI THE LITTLE, twists his ankle, resulting in him limping around the arena after the convicts for an excruciating ten minutes.

 At this point, the referee should describe rowdy civilians breaking arena etiquette rules. One large, obviously drunken man throws rocks at the limping gladiator. Another, using a magically enhanced voice, starts shouting explicit, creative obscenities at the Grand Referee, who signals to nearby armsmen to kick the man out. The referee can flesh this interaction out to give the PCs some policing activities to keep them busy as they try to do their job and find Carac the Thorn.

Tracking Carac

Unfortunately, Carac the Thorn is not at the arena today. He abandoned the games when he heard Fell Barracuda was a no-show. Although Carac isn't around, PCs can find more information about his whereabouts during the event:

- Working the cheap seats and making a CHA ability check finds a few unsavory fellows who know that Carac de-

Binni the Little

TRAINEE GLADIATOR

AC 6 [13]

HD 2 (hp 8)

Move 120' (40')

Attacks

1 x axe (1d8)

THAC0 18 (+1)

Saves

D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (F2)

ML 9

Alignment: Neutral

XP 20

Traits: Jealous and unlucky. Always hangs out with the wrong crowd; sensitive about his short height. Speaks English and Arabic (broken).

Gear: Ornate crested helmet; mail shirt; leather gloves; heavy medium shield; small axe.



cided not to show up. A smith named DE HOLT – who clearly doesn't like Carac due to some unexplained “bad business” – advises the PCs to talk to Binni the Little, the gladiator who is performing. “If you call this a performance...” De Holt explains as he rolls his eyes. “Carac always hangs out with the gladiators after the show, but none of ‘em give any attention to him except for Binni”

- If the ability check was made by a thief, the rogue hears that Carac is lying low somewhere in West Caelkirk after his brazen assault on the Baron Guildford. “Good luck ever finding him there! Al-Jabal law isn't too keen on letting folk get dragged back east.”
- Talking to any gladiators discovers that Carac frequently hung out with them after the arena events, better to meet powerful friends. The gladiators never really liked him. “He'd flirt with the ladies that were trying to flirt with us!” they complain. They'll point the PCs to Binni the Little, “the only gladiator that likes Carac, aside from poor Rathar, God rest his soul.”
- Rathar was Carac's best friend, but he died a month ago in an arena accident. If the PCs take time to inquire more about Rathar's death, arena regulars will inform them that Rathar was killed when a convict named TORVALD smuggled a shiv into the arena. The convict surprised Rathar and got lucky with the blade, killing the talented gladiator.

The Sand Fury

SUMMONED ELEMENTAL

AC 6 [13]

HD 4 (hp 18)

Move 120' (40')

Attacks

1 x fist (1d6)

THAC0 16 (+3)

Saves

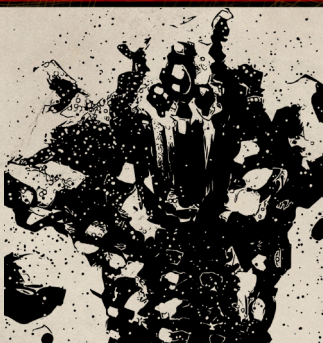
D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2)

ML 9

Alignment: Neutral

XP 75

Special Abilities: Magic resistance (+2 to all saving throws); Gaseous form; Also, a cloud of swirling debris surrounds the sand elemental. Anyone entering within melee range (5') of the creature must make a saving throw vs. breath attack or take 1 hp damage from the sand and sharp rock.



- Other arena staff who have been around for a while share similar information. "Carac was always disappointed that the women fans came escorted by their husbands or fathers!" tells one man. They also point the PCs to Binni the Little, "the only gladiator that puts up with Carac."

Earthquake!

After the first, disappointing event is over, the Grand Referee takes emergency action and hires an elderly conjurer from the Mage's Guild to summon an elemental – "The Sand Fury!" as it's loudly announced – to face off against the next batch of convicts.

The crowd's ill mood reverses as they see a giant earth elemental, made from sand and rocky debris, rise up from the arena floor. Cheers echo around the arena as the next batch of convicts flee in terror from the summoned brute!

The popular new match ends quickly, however, when a terrible earthquake shakes the arena. At first, the shaking seems timed with the sand elemental's performance, causing the arena to erupt into applause. But the shaking soon begins to rain debris into the stands, shake people from their seats, and even cause some fans even topple on to the arena sand. PCs must make a Dex check to stay on their feet, or take a tumble for 1 hp damage. The shaking continues for a minute, causing the

crowd to panic and scream. Suddenly, a large stone breaks loose from above the referee's seat box, nearly crushing the grand referee himself. The conjurer who was controlling the sand elemental is not so lucky; his skull crushed as he falls into the arena.

The death of the controlling mage causes the sand elemental's to be freed from his magical control. It roars and climbs into stands, ready to pulverize anyone in his way as he seeks to return to the desert outside the city. Several armsmen and junior gladiators – including Binni the Little – rush to engage the creature, shouting for the PCs' help to stop the menace.

Referee's Note: The earthquake was caused by a mishap. Two members of the Order of Grievors accidentally dropped a crate of lunagranates in the Emir's Tunnel, which runs underneath the arena. The result was a near-catastrophic earthquake felt in the arena above.

Arena Aftermath

After the battle (and assuming the PCs helped in some material way), they will be thanked profusely by the Grand Referee himself, ATABEG MANNAAN AL-GHAMDI. A young, charismatic, and well-spoken member of the Emir's court, Atabeg Mannaan heaps praise on those who helped calm the chaos, and vows to give their names to the Emir himself.

The earthquake is a mystery to Atabeg Mannaan. He does not recall a time Caelkirk was hit by an earthquake. He vaguely suspects there was a mishap when the Sand Fury was summoned, and that he needs to inquire among the senior members of the Mages' Guild.

Binni the Little is willing to speak to the PCs after the battle as well. Binni is temperamental; his ego must be stroked for him to give up any information about any of his friends. A Good or better reaction will get him to give up information about Carac, who is a drinking buddy of his after the matches. Binni, however, doesn't realize (or forgot) that Carac is hiding out from authorities, and freely gives up that he recently moved in with a friend, who is a cook at the famed Black Stallion Coffee House in West Caelkirk. While Carac doesn't know the location exactly, as he tries to avoid conservative West Caelkirk, he knows that Carac's friend is an ambitious, ebony-skinned, young miscreant named ARSALAN AL-BIR.

If, for some reason, Binni did not survive the battle with the sand elemental, referees should have another gladiator come forward and talk to the PCs. Carac the Thorn often tried to

befriend gladiators after their matches, so many of the fighters know his name, though few respect him, as they see him as a scrawny hangers-on to those who do actual work for a living.

Arena Underground

If the PCs investigate the corridors and tunnels underneath the arena, they'll find nothing unusual, as there is no entrance to the Emir's Tunnel from the arena's underground. Instead, they'll only find cages of exotic animals, gladiator waiting areas, prison cells, and large storage chambers that hold scenery and props. Quite a bit of those chambers have suffered structural damage due to the earthquake.

If referees wish to extend the adventure, the damaged arena tunnels can provide some additional opportunities for the PCs to prove themselves:

- A mantichore has escaped its cage during the earthquake. It devoured several prisoners and gladiators, and is now making a lair in the arena's underbelly. The Grand Referee of the arena will happily pay Mercenary's Guild members to kill or capture the creature (25 gp for killing it, 150 gp for capturing it alive).
- A 12-year old boy, AARON BEN ADAN, the grandson of the Guildmaster of Merchants, has gone missing. He was touring the lion cages underneath the arena when the earthquake hit. The poor boy is trapped in a collapsed tunnel with a broken leg. Returning him to safety will earn a 100 gp reward from his father, as well as perhaps a future patron.

Part 3: The Black Stallion Escape

Today, as the PCs cross the bridge into West Caelkirk, mul-lahs ask for alms to pay for food to be given out to the poor on *sham inniseem*, upcoming the spring festival. Donating a few coins earns the PCs thanks and praise, and also the white arm bands, which West Caelkirk politely requires non-Moslems to wear to distinguish them from the faithful.

The Black Stallion Coffee House is an extremely popular location in West Caelkirk. Everyone from poor laborers to great nobles can find tables of their own in the great coffee house. The house also features more than just its famous inky black coffee. Above the dining lodge are over two hundred rooms and suites available to rent, along with a large stable that boards, breeds, and sells fine horses. All of the servers at this place are trained to be *exceptionally* polite and helpful.

Carac's friend, Arsalan al-Bir works in the coffee house all days except Fridays and Saturdays, when the house is closed

Arsalan al-Bir

MISCREANT BARISTA

AC 8 [11]

HD 1 (hp 4)

Move 120' (40')

Attacks

1 x knife (1d4)

THAC0 19 (+0)

Saves

D13 W14 P13 B16 S15 (T1)

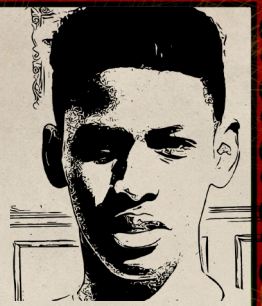
ML 8

Alignment: Neutral

XP 10

Traits: Loud, stubborn, and arrogant. But when outmatched, gives up easily.

Gear: Fine, balanced small knife. He also keeps a second, cheap dagger hidden in a wrap around his ankle.



for business for the weekend. He works in the spacious back room, boiling purified spring water and steaming fantastic cups of great coffee. Any of the servers in the Black Stallion know Arsalan, as he has a "big talent and bigger mouth."

Arsalan, however, has no desire to be questioned about Carac. He's nervous for two reasons. First, he knows that Carac's reckless assault on a baron and future baroness will likely bring retribution to Carac and any of his associates. Second, Arsalan's recently been recently transporting illegal goods around Caelkirk. The moment he suspects any strangers are looking for him, he'll make a quick run for it, hoping to escape into the crowded city and disappear.

If Arsalan can't easily flee through either the front door or the back door, he'll race upstairs to the second floor halls that hold the rooms and suite to rent. He'll dash through an open suite, head for a balcony, and then nimbly leap to the rooftops in an attempt to escape.

Arsalan's objective is to get to Zayed Square, the bustling center of traffic and commerce in West Caelkirk. His friend, a devout lizard man name KRLO RABBO owns a small art gallery in one of the buildings off the square. While Krlo does not approve of Arsalan's mischief, he has warmth in his heart for the young man and will hide him from those chasing him, *especially* if they are Christians.

For simple chase rules, the chase starts at Close Range (within 30'). Ansalan will run every round of the chase, using his area knowledge to benefit him his escape. Each round the PCs can make a DEX check to maintain distance, or a DEX-3 check to close distance within 15'. Magical speed may help as well. If the check is failed, distance grows to a city block, decreasing future rolls by another -3. If lost again, Ansalon effectively disappears.

In five chase rounds, Ansalon will hit Zayed Square. He'll then use his stealth skill to disappear into the masses. PCs must make a Wis check at -5 to spot him in the crowd!

If the PCs entirely lose Ansalon, they'll have to track him through other means:

- A scan of the square identifies a few harried people that look like they might have seen Ansalan. Good roleplaying or a CHA ability check, using techniques such as diplomacy or fast-talk, can convince an observer to give up information. Outside of Zayed Square, the informant will just say "I saw him run into the square." Inside Zayed Square, the information points to Krlo's art gallery.
- A CHA -2 ability check, inside Zayed Square will find someone who knows Ansalan by his description, and recalls that he has a friend who runs an art gallery in the square. This effort could take an hour or more, however, making it likely Ansalan slips back to his apartment to tell his mother he's going to disappear for a few days.
- A good or better reaction from one of Ansalan's co-workers at the coffee house reveals the location of Ansalan's his apartment, located a few blocks away. "He lives with his mother," I think, says one server.

Note that any roleplaying or influence attempts asking to give up personal information about a West Caelkirk citizen are difficult for obvious outsiders, or those who are wearing the white armbands that denote Christians and pagans.

Arsalan's Apartment

The PCs likely arrive at Ansalan's apartment if they lose him entirely during the chase and discover its location through his co-workers.

Ansalan lives in a small, two-room apartment above a fruit market located in a wide alley off of Al-Shaad Street. His widowed mother, TASLIMA, works half the day in the market, selling the bright red sugarmelons that are harvested south along the River Lorraine.

Like all mothers, Taslima is fiercely protective of her son, and will not easily give up any information on him. While she suspects that he has made some poor friends lately – as evidenced

by his constant late-night comings and goings – she does not know that he is smuggling goods as a side hustle.

The best way to get Taslima to give up her son's location is for the PCs to convince her that her son is in some kind of danger. Great roleplaying, and some good CHA checks, will get her to reluctantly explain that her son can often be found helping out – often very late at night – at Krlo Rabbo's art gallery in Zayed Square.

Sugarmelon War

With her son helping around the house and the market less than ever, Taslima has been bullied more and more from a competitor, a burly woman known as FEYROUZA and her dull, eldest son, KAB.

Thinking that the PCs are wealthy buyers, Feyrouza decides to intimidate Taslima. If Taslima is talking to the PCs in her apartment, Feyrouza and her son start loudly smashing Taslima's melon cart below, yelling that they are poisoned. If Taslima is talking to the PCs by her goods, they strut over and start yelling at the PCs that Taslima's melons are sour and will make people sick.

While Feyrouza will back down if threatened, her stupid son will not. Kab has no problem threatening, boasting, and inciting a fight to show his strength – especially with outsiders.

If the PCs help Feyrouza handle the bullies, she will think especially highly of them, and more easily give helpful information on her son. She laments that if he were around more, such ill things would not happen as much.

Krlo Rabbo's Gallery of Exquisite Paintings

Krlo Rabbo is an unlikely lizard man who has a great love for calligraphy and architectural paintings. After visiting the great mosque in the city, he was struck by a vision that he should devote his life to beauty. Ten years ago, he opened a small art gallery in Zayed Square. Because he is a devout Moslem, Krlo's art is non-figural, and often features calligraphic inscriptions and paintings of mosques and gardens, which have proven to be quite popular among the nobility of North and West Caelkirk.

Krlo's Gallery is a well-crated, two-room affair. The adorned cedar door opens into a spacious, incense-scented entry, where Krlo serves tea or coffee to his guests at an old, round table. This room is also where he often holds hours-long negotiations with clientele.

The entry opens up through a sash-laden door into the larger, a tiled room big enough to display a dozen or so large pieces.

A small closet is in the back of the gallery. Krlo himself lives above the gallery, but his apartment can be accessed only from a staircase outside the gallery.

Although Krlo was once a veteran of many skirmishes in the northwestern wastes, he gave up soldiering life many decades ago. Now, his enthusiasm comes from acquiring art from new artists across al-Jabal and displaying and selling pieces from his gallery. He also enjoys teaching the West Caelkirk youth about art, and holds calligraphy classes at his studio on Mondays. It was at one of these classes that he befriended Ansalon, who enjoyed the temperament and stories of the old lizard man. While Krlo suspects Ansalon has been involved with mischief lately, he does not know that the youth is participating in outright illegal activities, and would be disappointed if he found out.

If the PCs were hot on the heels of Ansalon, he'll be hiding in Krlo's closet, hoping that the lizard man shoos away his pursuers. If Ansalon arrived well-ahead of the PCs, he'll be hiding upstairs in Krlo's apartment. If Ansalon had enough time to talk with Krlo, he's told him that the PCs are wicked bounty hunters, paid to drag him back to East Caelkirk for crimes he did not commit.

Negotiating with Krlo

Krlo will not simply turn Ansalon over to the PCs for questioning. The lizard man is calm and questions the PCs on their motives. If threatened, he will try to chase them away, using a razor-sharp broadsword that he keeps behind his desk in his entry. But if the PCs explain their motives honestly, and succeed at staying logical and unemotional, Krlo will summon Ansalon, lock his gallery, and sit down at the table for a *candid* negotiation.

Krlo is practical and has a merchant's heart. If the PCs want something from Ansalon, he expects them to give something fair in return. Similarly, he scolds Ansalon not to protect friends who have broken a fair and just law, regardless where in Caelkirk it happened.

Krlo holds himself as the arbiter of fair. Krlo enjoys the negotiation though, especially on behalf of his friend, and tries to do the best to aid Ansalon. Certainly, if the PCs aided Ansalon's mother from her bullies, that will count as payment enough in his eyes. Otherwise, something in the range of 30 gp, or equivalent goods, will appease the devout lizard man, which represents a few weeks of honest work for the young man.

Interrogating Ansalon

If Ansalon does not have his friend Krlo to negotiate on his behalf, interrogating him will be more challenging.

Krlo Rabbo

LIZARD MAN GALLERY OWNER

AC 5 [14]

HD 3 (hp 13)

Move 120' (40')

Attacks

1 x longsword (1d8)

THAC0 17 (+2)

Saves

D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (F3)

ML 9

Alignment: Neutral

XP 35

Traits: Soft-spoken Krlo loves talking art and negotiating deals.

Gear: Usually none, but he keeps a fine, curved sword behind his desk to scare away would-be thieves. Behind his counter, in a locked chest that is nailed to the floor is 300 gp worth of coins and gems.



If Ansalon is captured while on the run, perhaps during his getaway from the coffee, he does his best to resist questioning. He call for help from other citizens nearby. Any ruckus summons a crowd who does not wish to see a teenage boy roughed up by strangers. The crowd demands the PCs release Ansalon, yelling that if the PCs truly have a problem with the young man, they should take it up at the courts or with a local mullah (something that will entwine the PCs in bureaucracy for weeks...)

If questioned some place more private, Ansalon first claims innocence and ignorance. There are several ways to get him to give up his secrets:

- Interrogating or intimidating Ansalon (perhaps aided by a STR check) causes him to spill the location of his friend. Roll at +2 if the PC uses believable threats – especially about his mother or his mentor Krlo.
- Because Ansalon feels guilty about his association with his friend Carac, after Carac's assault on the baron, he can be convinced that it is for his benefit to give up the location of his friend. A successful CHA check, using persuasive techniques, can reluctantly convince him to give up the information.
- Various magical spells, such as Charm, can also get him to divulge information on his friend.

If convinced to talk, Ansalon shares the following:

Ansalon has no idea where Carac the Thorn is hiding out, as he has not seen him at his apartment in several days. However, he suspects that Carac is still making midnight smuggling runs on the south side of the Emir's Bridge.

For the last few weeks, Carac has been delivering illegal goods at night. Carac takes a small boat and rows out under Emir's Bridge, a quiet bridge that connects North and West Caelkirk. The bridge is closed to commercial traffic after nightfall, and lightly patrolled. There, Carac meets a "strange lady servant who glows like the moon" and delivers a box of unusual, ceramic moons to her. The woman, he explains, "opens a secret portal under the bridge and brings the crate of moons inside."

Ansalon has this information because he helped Carac on two occasions, but the job made him too nervous to continue. The punishment for smuggling in North Caelkirk is harsh, and his share for such a trip was just a few copper coins.

Ansalon does not know where Carac gets the moons, nor what they are for. He does know that Carac learned about the job from Rathar, the gladiator who died in an arena accident a month ago.

If asked about Carac's assault on a baron in East Caelkirk, Ansalon explains that he was discouraged to hear that news, but that it does not surprise him Carac has acted increasingly erratic since the death of his friend Rathar. Ansalon has no idea why Carac would take such a job, other than the man has a well-known hatred for Brittain nobility, and was grumbling about his lack of money lately. "His ego is big and his purse his small... that's my only explanation."

Part 4: Midnight at Emir's Bridge

There are comparatively few boats on the rivers after dark. Only a couple dozen or so lantern-lit skiffs and some light brigs can be seen on the river once dusk falls. PCs familiar with fishing or anyone making an INT ability check identifies these boats as either fishing boats hoping to catch rare Lorraine lobsters, or cargo ships heading south to the city of Tirri, carrying the valuable wares of several nations.

The half-mile long Emir's Bridge itself is closed to commercial traffic after dark. Many guards question those traveling between the sections of Caelkirk; they generally only let residents past. Guards on the east bank are more numerous but easier to talk past. Guards on the western, al-Jabal side are disciplined and strict, and unlikely to let anyone on the bridge without a *very good* authentic story.

Carac the Thorn

SMUGGLER AND WANTED MAN

AC 6 [13]

HD 1 (hp 6)

Move 120' (40')



Attacks

1 x +1 shortsword (1d6+1)

THAC0 18 (+1)

Saves

D13 W14 P13 B16 S15 (T2)

ML 9

Alignment: Chaotic

XP 20

Traits: Impulsive Carac has made himself a wanted man across the entire city.

Gear: Martin Guildford's fine +1 shortsword; large knife; hooded cloak; fine leather hip boots; small wooden shortsword (enchanted); 30 gp.

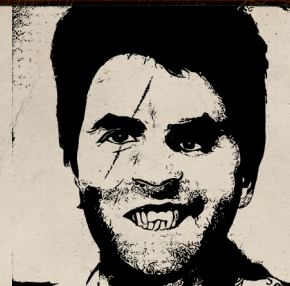
Mugluk

HALF-ORC SMUGGLER

AC 6 [13]

HD 1 (hp 5)

Move 120' (40')



Attacks

1 x hatchet (1d6)

THAC0 19 (+0)

Saves

D13 W14 P13 B16 S15 (T1)

ML 9

Alignment: Chaotic

XP 10

Traits: None-too-bright, Mugluk is known for his creepy smile and constant talk of the bloody arena games.

Gear: Hatchet; large knife; layered leather shirt; 20 gp.

To intercept Carac and his shipment, the PCs must either be on the bridge and on the lookout for him, or have a boat of their own. Guards routinely from both sides of Caelkirk wave off anyone loitering on the bridge, so PCs need to either be stealthy, use magic, or plan on talking their way into staying on the bridge for a while once it's dark.

Renting a rowboat is cheap, only about 5 sp, a few more if they want an experienced sailor to pilot it. A STR check is necessary to steer around the swift nighttime currents to the south side of the dock. Failure indicates losing time (~30 minutes per point failed) as the boat is swept southwards down the river. If the PCs botch the interception altogether, they'll have to try another night, which may result in the cult in the catacombs having additional reinforcements.

Once at the bridge, there are small grottoes that can reasonably obscure a rowboat. Thieves can also climb down from the bridge and hide in a grotto with a successful Climb Sheer Surfaces check; others must use ropes.

Carac's Skiff

Shortly after midnight, a small two-man boat leaves from the southern docks of East Caelkirk, not far from Cardonagh Palace, and steers southward. It goes under the Pasha's Bridge, sails along the docks of West Caelkirk, and then towards the middle of the southern section of the Emir's Bridge. This boat carries Carac the Thorn, his half-orc companion MUGLUK, and a locked cedar crate carrying four of the ceramic moons that Ansalon described – "moon shatters," or *lunagranates*, as dubbed the enchanters who manufacture them.

Carac's boat lights the way with a dim, hooded lantern. If he sees another boat near the bridge as he approaches (a Wis -3 roll due to the darkness and concealment of a grotto), he'll stop and observe for a while. If the intruder stays, he'll abort the mission and sail back to the East Caelkirk docks. Similarly, if he sees what looks like guards on top of the bridge where he is heading (which he is more likely to be looking for), he'll wait and then abort the mission if it looks like they are not leaving.

Otherwise, Carac steers his boat to the middle of Emir's Bridge, towards what looks like a rough patch of masonry in a foundation block under an arch. There, he'll moor his boat to the bridge, using the iron rings hammered into the brick, stand on his boat and tap on the bottom of the arch four times with a small cudgel.

Lunagranates

Carac is delivering a crate of four lunagranates, also known as "shatter moons." They are ceramic, moon-shaped magical items enchanted with a variant of the Earthquake spell. Their enchantment has unfortunately given them the quirk that they only work at full-strength on the same day as the full moon. When shattered, the items causes the ground to shake for a minute. On a full moon, this has the power to topple walls within a 15' radius, similar to a powerful Earthquake spell. Anyone caught in the radius must make a STR check or fall to the ground, suffering 1 hp damage.

During other lunar cycles, the shaking is minor, but those caught within its radius must still make a STR check to keep their feet.

A minute or so later, the bridge's masonry magically re-tools itself into an open doorway. Carac and Mugluk haul the heavy wood box from their boat and pass it to a hooded figure inside the bridge. A Wis ability check spots that the figure's face inside the cloak every so slightly *glows*. After a few quick words, the brick and mortar of the bridge seal the hidden passage shut.

Carac and Mugluk have zero desire to be caught smuggling. Depending on how they are confronted, they will either try to row away as fast as possible, heading towards the nearest docks, or even swim for it if they have no other option. If cornered, they'll shout for help from the bridge guards, hoping that the strict guards from western side of the bridge will come to their aid, or at least chase away both parties.

Failing to get help from the guards, the two men defend themselves up until their lives look in serious danger, in which case they will surrender.

Questioning the Hoodlums

If the two hoodlums are captured, the PCs are able to extract details of Carac's business from them. This feat requires some kind of interrogation:

- Carac is being paid to bring a box of four magical ceramic artifacts to the "Luminous Bride" – the cloaked woman who lives inside the bridge. He picks up the artifacts from behind a pub called The Bridge Rat in the low-income Dead Man's Row neighborhood, and then delivers them here. He has no idea what the items do, but he can sense that they are magical. He always brings someone with him to help. He originally used Arsalan, but Arsalan chickened out, so he recruited Mugluk.
- Carac's been doing this job for about six weeks. Before him, a gladiator named Rathar was doing the job, with

Carac helping him. Rathar was killed in an arena accident, and Carac took over the job. Carac visibly chokes up when discussing Rathar, his best friend.

- The half-orc Mugluk helps Carac because he desperately wants to become a gladiator, and Carac has friends in gladiator circles. He's not aware of any specifics of the job.
- Carac has no idea what lies deeper inside the bridge, or who the Luminous Bride is. He doesn't care either.
- Carac assaulted Martin Guildford and Felicia North because he was paid to embarrass the couple. He's hesitant to give out the name of the man who asked him to do the job, because revealing the name might make trouble for him later. Getting this information requires a *high* degree of persuasion. If successful, Carac says that one of SICLANDUS DE ABNER'S footmen paid him for the job. An INT ability check knows that Siclandus de Abner is a well-known member of the city mages' guild, and also one of the many sons of the 90-year old Viscount Guillaume de Laney de Abner, a powerful lord of Caelkirk. The viscount rules from his keep located a day's ride southeast of the city. *Referee's Note: The assault on the two nobles is unrelated to the events in this adventure, but can be used as a hook for another adventure. Siclandus was madly in love with Felicia North and angry that she was betrothed to marry Martin Guildford. Siclandus paid Carac to embarrass Guildford, hoping it would cause enough of a scandal to cancel the engagement. Carac does not know any of these particular romantic details, however.*

The Emir's Door

The brick portal in the underside of the bridge is magically sealed with a Hold Portal spell. There are four techniques to gain entrance from the river-side:

The Luminous Bride

MAGICALLY-CREATED SERVANT

AC 9 [10]

HD 1/2 (hp 2)

Move 120' (40')

Attacks

None

Saves

D13 W14 P13 B16 S15 (NH)

ML 6

Alignment: Neutral

XP 5

Gear: A fine silk cloak (enchanted to be soilproof); a centuries old gold and copper crown (worth 80 gp).

Background: The beautiful Bride was created by the mage Guiscard Severin when his love, Erica Solway, a Brittainne princess, rejected him for being below her station. Pouring all of his frustrated energy into his magical servant, he somehow succeeded in making her permanent creation. However, a miscast caused her to have an unusual glow in the dark. Has a slight "uncanny valley" appearance.



- Knocking on the door four times with an enchanted item opens the door. (Carac opens the door this way, using his enchanted wooden *rudis*, a shortsword that used to belong to his gladiator friend, Rathar.)
- A Knock spell can open the door (while the PCs are unlikely to have this spell, they can always hire someone...)
- A magic-user with the ability to move through stone, teleport, or similar can simply pass through the door.

History of the Pasha's Tunnel

The Emir's Tunnel was built by Pasha Abdul ib Hayyam around 1386, more than six centuries prior to this adventure. Fearing that the crusaders would conquer the city, the Pasha hired Rushdi Ramzi, a talented magic-user, to carve the escape tunnel using earth magic.

The miles long tunnel leads from underneath the Crescent Palace to a few blocks from the arena, where it forks. One fork leads under the Blue River and into the Emir's Bridge, which is where the PCs find entrance. The other fork continues north towards the plains, but mysteriously ends just a hundred yards out. Unfortunately, Ramzi died of fever before he was able to complete this second tunnel, intended to allow for a northern land escape under the city walls.

In 1854, the Emir of North Caelkirk ordered the interior of the palace remodeled. For over a year, mages and architects worked to transform the palace's original fortress-like design into one that could accommodate the Emir's magnificent banquets and receptions. Whether by accident or design, much of the old catacombs under the palace were sealed off during remodel, and the existence of the Pasha's escape tunnel was forgotten.

- The door can be smashed or blasted open! The door is made from old bricks and has about 60 hp. Of course, hammering on the portal likely attracts the attention of both curious pedestrians and ill-tempered guards...

The door can be opened from the inside without hinderance, as it was designed to help the pasha and his court escape to the river in the case of invasion.

Part 5: The Pasha's Tunnel

The miles-long Pasha's Tunnel runs under the Blue River into North Caelkirk, then forks and branches towards the Crescent Palace, where the Cult of the Grievors works to find the entombed body of Prince Ivor.

Anyone making an INT ability check knows history well enough to realize that they have found what is likely to be a secret escape tunnel.

The Antechamber

The antechamber to the tunnel is a small, brick room built on the inside of the bridge. The chamber was built traditionally, without magic, and even a casual investigation shows water damage and crumbling water due to the room's age. The dank smell of river algae permeates the room.

Collapsed, cedar shelves line one of the walls. The pasha's servants used to keep these shelves stocked with supplies in the event he needed to escape to the river, but they've long since rotted away. A small, silver bell (worth 25 gp) can be found in the corner of the room. It was once used to summon a boat that would take the pasha to safety.

In the rear of the chamber is a narrow, spiral staircase that leads deep into the bedrock underneath the Blue River. Any dwarf or magic-user will be able to identify that these stairs were carved by magic, and are well-crafted and sturdy compared to the antechamber.

The only resident of the antechamber is The Luminous Bride, a magical servant of the Order of Grievors. One of the Order's mages, GUISGARD SIVERIN, created the Bride as a companion, fashioned to look like his great, unrequited love. Unlike most magically created servants, the bride is both independent and permanent. The PCs immediately notice that her appearance is unusual, with her skin glowing slightly and her features having a mildly unsettling, uncanny valley appearance to them.

The Luminous Bride has been helping Guiscard by picking up the lunagranate shipments, and tirelessly carrying the artifacts to the cult's work site underneath the palace.

The Bride can talk and is quite pleasant, though she is simple-minded and catches no nuance. She cannot be incited to violence, and if threatened, scared, or attacked tries to flee down the tunnel, or else cower in fear. She only knows that it is her job to deliver the crate of four lunagranates to Guiscard, her master. She does not know why he needs them, who he is working for, or any real details of the cult. She does know that Guiscard is "helping the Order look for Prince Ivor," as she has overheard him talking about this quest many times.

A cleric, or anybody making an INT ability check, remembers that Prince Ivor was a crusader who lived over six hundred years ago (see inset on p.17).

The Escape Tunnel

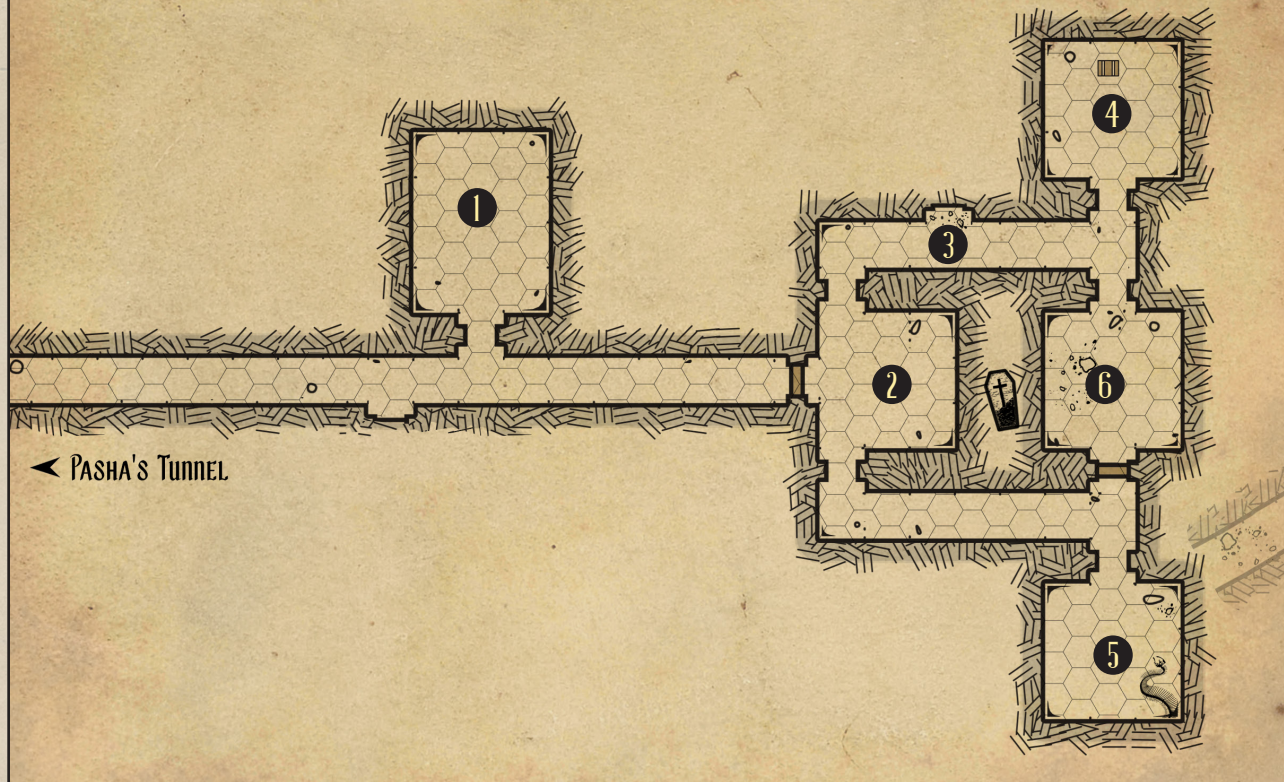
The tunnel is a straight and regular corridor, big enough for two people to comfortably walk side by side down its length. The tunnel walls are unadorned except for an intricately carved coat-of-arms positioned on the wall every hundred yards or so. The coat of arms displays a two-branched tree and a crescent moon. Magic-users making an INT check identifies it as the coat of arms of the Ramzi family. Several of the Ramzis were leaders in the Caelkirk Mages Guild several centuries ago, but the family has not been active in Caelkirk for generations.

About five miles down the tunnel, the tunnel ends in a large, octagonal room. This chamber is marked by massive structural damage. Heavy rubble is strewn everywhere and the ceiling is jagged and cracked. Two tunnel branches continue from the room, with one route continuing north and the other heading to the east. If the PCs investigate the room:

- A dwarf automatically identifies that the chamber's damage is due to a localized seismic event. Anyone else must make a Wis -3 check to understand the damage.
- Searching the room finds the shattered remains of at least two ceramic lunagranates on the floor. It also finds the bones of three crushed skeletons under the rubble. If the PCs examine a skeleton, one of its hands will suddenly, but feebly, reach outward, no doubt causing any retainers to make a morale check at -2!

Referee's Note: This is the source of the earthquake that hit the arena. Three undead skeletons were transporting lunagranates but accidentally dropped them, causing the quake. The falling debris crushed the skeletons.

CATACOMBS



If the PCs follow the passage to the north, they will find that it suddenly ends. This was once intended as another escape route, north to ib-Wazi, but the mage who was excavating the tunnel died before he could complete it.

The tunnel to the east heads underneath the Crescent Palace, where Caelkirk's great Emir and his council currently reside and hold court.

Under the Palace

The tunnel extends another three miles to the east before it ends in a forgotten section of the old catacombs that lie underneath the Emir's palace. It will be difficult for PCs to surmise their exact location in the city, though magic, dwarves, or someone with a fantastic sense of direction may get a hint as to their whereabouts.

Two members of the Cult of the Grievors work continuously in this section of the catacombs. The first is Guiscard Severin, a mage who has honed in on the area that he thinks Prince Ivor is entombed. He is aided by a strong half-ogre mercenary, CHOCK, who is happy to help with his massive pickaxe when Guiscard Severin is fatigued from his spellcasting.

Additionally, the two are accompanied by five skeletons, created from the remains of dead crusaders by the Order of Grievors' necromancers. Guiscard is happy to use the skeletons to do some of the more dangerous excavation work, especially when the magical lunagranates are used. *Referee's Note: For more experienced or powerful PCs, you can increase the number of skeletons, or give more of them sharp swords, shields, and armor.*

As the PCs approach the end of the tunnel, Guiscard and Chock are in their workroom (room 4). They are debating the merits of ale versus mead, with Chock obviously annoyed that Guiscard did not bring an extra bottle for him.

If the PCs were noisy on their approach, or if Guiscard's bride frantically fled from the PCs, the two will be alerted and will take defensive action in the catacomb entrance chamber (see room 2 below).

1 - Preparation Chamber

This chamber once held emergency supplies for those fleeing the palace. Shelves and chests were kept here, stocked with blankets, packs, and weapons. Most of these goods rotted away centuries ago, leaving dust and debris.

An old, medium shield is still hung on one wall, faintly emblazoned with Pasha Ali's sigil. A few old coins can be found

The Order of Grievors

Guiscard Severin

HALF-ELF MAGE

AC 9 [10]

HD 2 (hp 6)

Move 120' (40')

Attacks

1 x knife (1d4)

THAC0 19 (+0)

Saves

D12 W13 P13 B15 S15 (E2)

ML 8

Alignment: Neutral

XP 20

Gear: Fine cloak (enchanted to be soil proof); fine large knife; wooden rod (enchanted to move a yard of earth 3 times a day); scroll of Floating Disc.

Spells: Magic Missile; Shield.



Chock

HALF-OGRE BRUVO

AC 6 [13]

HD 1 (hp 6)

Move 120' (40')

Attacks

1 x hatchet (1d6)

THAC0 19 (+1)

Saves

D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1)

ML 9

Alignment: Chaotic

XP 10

Traits: Overconfident and under-educated. Chock does have a strict mercenaries' code - he takes his jobs seriously.

Gear: Leather armor; brass knuckles; two hatchets (one is a +1 hatchet; mining pickaxe; purse with 100 gp in centuries-old coins.



Severin's Man

MAGICALLY-CREATED WARRIOR

AC 8 [11]

HD 2 (hp 8)

Move 120' (40')

Attacks

1 x morningstar (1d6)

THAC0 18 (+1)

Saves

D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1)

ML 12

Alignment: Neutral

XP 10



Bone Grievors

SKELETAL SQUIRES

AC 7 [12]

HD 1 (hp 4)

Move 120' (40')

Attacks

1 x shortsword (1d6)

THAC0 19 (+0)

Saves

D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1)

ML 12

Alignment: Chaotic

XP 10

Gear: One of the skeletons wields a shield and has an ancient mail shirt. Treat him as AC 4 [16].



on the floor as well (worth 50 gp); the rest that were here were taken by Chock, who hid them from Guiscard.

Three bronze map tubes can also be found scattered among the debris as well. Inspection of the maps inside the tubes (which must be removed delicately, else they crumble away), reveals that they show the location of key fortresses in what is now southern ib-Wazi, circa 1400 (see [Handout A](#)). An INT ability check recalls the area and history well, revealing that only a few of those fortresses still stand.

 *These maps can make a good hook for future adventures. One map references a lost fort known as Shalfak Qala. A cleric or fighter recalls that the fort was destroyed in the Easter Crusade of 1519. As the story goes, the fort's last defender was an ib-Wazii archmage known as Al-Damashki, who wielded a legendary wand called the Rod of Black Destiny, which was said to be enchanted with over a dozen magical properties. When the crusaders burned Shalfak Qala, the wand was lost to history; even the location of the fort has been forgotten. With this map, however, the PCs have an opportunity to find the ruins of the fort and recover the rod...*

On the western wall of this chamber is a gold leaf inscription written in Arabic – *Allah Maak*, or “Go with God’s Might,” a blessing to those who would flee the palace under threat of siege or attack.

2 - Catacomb Entrance Chamber

Unlike the escape tunnel, this section is built without the help of earth-shaping magic. The rough and irregular walls are made from brick and mortar. Oil-less lanterns, each fueled by an enchanted stone that emits light, are regularly hung along the walls to provide light to Guiscard and Chock.

The entrance to the catacombs is guarded by a heavy metal door. The cult members usually keep the door open, but if they are alerted to invaders, they will close and lock it from the inside. This seals them in quite effectively.

Battering the door down requires a STR ability check at -5! Add +1 for using a crowbar or similar implement.

Of course, this tactic leaves Guiscard and Chock locked *inside* the catacombs, unable to escape. However, within 24 hours, their cult’s powerful necromancers will scry what has happened to their agents, and teleport them out.

3 - Blasted Wall

The wall here is significantly damaged. Guiscard and Chock spent a week trying to crumble this wall, thinking that Prince Ivor’s tomb was on the other side (the result of a divination

Skeletal Serpent

UNDEAD ASSASSIN

AC 6⁺[13]

HD 2 (hp 9)

Move 120' (40')

Attacks

1 x bite (1d4)

THAC0 18 (+1)

Saves

D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1)

ML 12

Alignment: Chaotic

XP 20

Traits: The serpent has infravision and can sense foes through its vibration sense. Constriction: When a bite attack is successful, the snake wraps around the victim and begins to squeeze, inflicting 1d4 automatic damage on each subsequent round.



spell failing badly). An INT check reveals that this entire hallways is now unstable. A lunagranate or some other explosive effect going off here again has a material chance of toppling ceiling stones on top of anyone here for 1d8 damage, and blockading the corridor.

4 - Workroom

Guiscard and Chock use this chamber as bed chamber and work room. There are a few interesting finds here:

- A yellowed parchment map lies on an uneven table, showing a confusing layout of the palace catacombs. A INT ability check figures out that the south-eastern chamber connects to another set of disused catacombs, which may allow for an alternate exit (see *Extending the Adventure*).
- A locked metal chest in the room holds lots of straw and one lunagranate. Oddly, this lunagranate seems to be leaking some sort of faintly-glowing, sticky sap. Any magic user or dwarf will know right away that it is quite defective. Additionally, if an INT check is made, the investigator discovers it will likely act as a primitive explosive (if it shatters, it explodes for 1d12 damage!)
- Two thick wool blankets lie at either end of the room. One smells foul, as it is the sleeping place of Chock. A bottle of strong Thorson’s Dwarven Mead sits over by the cleaner blanket. It is delicious, sweet stuff.

- A crumpled note in the corner is addressed to Guiscard. It is from a Brittainne princess from the town of Datonne named ERICA SOLWAY, who rejected Guiscard due to his station and association with the Order of Grievors (see [Handout B](#)). The Luminous Bride was created to look exactly like Erica Solway.

5 - The Skeletal Serpent Chamber

This room is empty except for the dry and lifeless skeleton of an enormous serpent. The necromancers of the Order of Grievors have enchanted this skeleton to come to life once Guiscard has removed the sarcophagus of Prince Ivor from the catacomb walls. The necromancers had no desire for Guiscard to be able to tell others of his accomplishment, so the undead serpent has been programmed to leave no survivors.

If Prince's sarcophagus is removed at any point, the skeletal serpent revives and hones in on Guiscard (assuming he is still alive, otherwise it targets other mages). The necromancers want Guiscard dead first, knowing they can more easily charm or enslave Chock, whenever they want.

The eastern wall in this room shows obvious signs of hurried brick and mortar work. If one were to bust through the thick wall here, it would connect into yet another abandoned part of the palace's old basement. (The wall is 9" thick brick, with 60 hp, though referees can weaken this appropriately if they have an adventure planned in another section of the catacombs).

6 - Crypt of the Seven Squires

This chamber was once sealed in by two heavy doors. Only one of them is intact, the other destroyed completely with strategic usage of the lunagranates.

This room once held the resting place of seven Christian squires who served Prince Ivor. The necromancers of the Order of Grievors, however, revived them as undead skeletons, who now serve Guiscard Severin (and occasionally Chock, though he swears they ignore his commands). Several of the skeletons were lost in an accident with the lunagranates, but at least five remain to serve the cult.

The floor of this room is uneven and strewn with rubble and debris, the result of the cult using the lunagranates to unseal the crypt. Guiscard now knows this crypt is closest to the sarcophagus that contains Prince Ivor.

Guiscard needs at least one lunagranate to gain access to the sarcophagus. The stone and hard clay surrounding the sarcophagus has been drained of magic, making it low-mana (giving all spells a 50% chance of failing), so he's loathe to use his earth-shaping magic to uncover it.

If Guiscard believes that he is in under threat, he retreats to this room and devises a few potential plans:

- If the Luminous Bride escaped the PCs and brings lunagranates to Guiscard, he will tell Chock and his guards to

Prince Ivor's Sarcophagus

The third son of the Emperor of Megalos, Prince Ivor was a fearsome and cruel warlord who led the Second Crusades of the 1420s. In 1446, Prince Ivor declared himself Ivor the First, "rightful ruler of all the world!" The world, however, does not accept Ivor's claim, and Ivor was eventually forced to retreat from the land. In 1449, he was mysteriously killed by a bolt of lightning during a blizzard. Prince Ivor's body was fought over for a year. Leading the attempt to claim his body was the Order of Grievors, a group that believed Ivor's claim. History, however, tells that a nun claimed Ivor's body and buried it in a hidden location, ending the story.

In reality, however, Prince Ivor's body was stolen away by a woman pretending to be a nun, and delivered to the Pasha of Caelkirk, who hated Ivor for his murderous crusades. The Pasha ordered a necromancer to revive Ivor, curse him into an immortal, barely-conscious state, seal him in a 750-lb. stone sarcophagus, and then bury it in the palace's catacombs – eternal punishment for the cruel tyrant. The heavy sarcophagus was reinforced and magically sealed with many appropriate spells to protect the prince's torment.

Centuries later, the Order of Grievors had become an obscure, hidden sect of necromancers and loyal cultists who seek to infiltrate the politics of ib-Wazi and Brittainne. However, when one necromancer discovered the true story behind Prince Ivor's burial, he hatched a plan to recover the prince, and use his revival to reclaim the world that was once his.

scare away the intruders. He just needs to set off a lunagranate, use a little bit of his Shape Earth spell, and then uncover the sarcophagus. He then expects the necromancers of the cult to teleport everyone away (which, sadly, will not happen as soon as he thinks).

- Without the lunagranates, he'll order Chock and his warriors to threaten the PCs, demanding they return the lunagranates or die.
- If the PCs outright attack, Guiscard will size up the situation. His ability to participate in the battle are limited, so he will likely seal himself up in this chamber (using an Illusion to disguise the opening), then painstakingly try to use his earth magic to uncover the sarcophagus, which drains him of most of his magical energy to achieve.
- If the PCs have captured the Luminous Bride, then all bets are off. Guiscard values her more than anything else, and will negotiate for her release. This quick surrender, however, angers Chock who will quickly turn on Guiscard and the PCs.

Remember, as soon as the sarcophagus is removed from the wall, this triggers the cult necromancer's plan of assassinating Guiscard and Chock. The skeletal serpent in the southeastern room silently comes to life, and slithers towards Guiscard and any other mages.

If the sarcophagus is removed *and* Guiscard is dead, a necromancer from the cult will eventually teleport into the chamber and then teleport himself and the sarcophagus into the cult's hidden headquarters. This event is unlikely to happen while the PCs are still around. (The cult uses occasional divination spells to observe the happenings in the catacombs, but they are not regularly watching. The soonest they'll arrive is an hour or so after their undead snake has been activated.)

If Guiscard is captured and interrogated, he will freely admit he is working for the necromancers of the Order of Grievors, who are paying him handsomely to recover the body of Prince Ivor. He does not know the purpose, exactly, but knows enough of the history of the cult that he assumes they are trying to either find an artifact lost inside the sarcophagus, or planning to resurrect the prince himself. He does not know that the prince is still – barely – alive inside the sarcophagus!

Finale

With careful planning and bold action, the PCs can defeat the two cultists and prevent Prince Ivor's sarcophagus from falling into the hands of the Order of Grievors.

If the PCs leave the sarcophagus in place, it will not be long before the secretive necromancers of the Cult of the Grievors steal it back again.

If the sarcophagus is returned to the palace, the Emir, will thank the PCs for their help in keeping his palace safe, and reward them each with 300 gp. He will then order his mages to seal the sarcophagus up once again. This action will likely delay the necromancers' plan to steal the Prince for quite some time.

If the PCs smuggle the heavy artifact out of the catacombs, they can find other interested parties in Caelkirk. Several curious antiquarians are willing to spend ten thousand coins or more for the sarcophagus. Also, the Brittain churches will also happily accept it as donation, as they see it as a sacred, lost relic (with some considering Ivor a martyr for the church).

Completing the Adventure

For completing the adventure, the PCs should receive typical XP awards for gold and defeating opponents. They should receive an additional 10% XP bonus for good roleplaying or excellent performance, such as capturing Carac the Thorn on behalf of their guild masters, or retrieving and returning Prince Ivor's sarcophagus.



Capturing Carac the Thorn earns the PCs the 100 ducat (1,000 gp) reward for his capture from Duke Abner and Martin Guildford's family. It also earns the PCs the thanks of their Mercenary Guild master, both of whom will gain significant status in East Caelkirk due to the capture. Of course, the Mercenaries' Guild will take its 20% cut from the reward...

If the PCs aided the Grand Referee of the Arena in a significant way, he will send them each a gift of fine, balanced large knives as a token of his appreciation. Such knives are usually reserved for gladiators who have pleased the crowd in good fashion.

Referees should freely confer various reputations, contacts, or patrons for befriending any of the influential folk in the adventure. Depending on how the dealt with Guiscard, Chock, and the sarcophagus of Prince Ivor, they may have also earned themselves an Enemy of the Order of Grievors.

Extending the Adventure

While this adventure ends with the PCs recovering (or abandoning) the sarcophagus of Prince Ivor, this retrieval can easily lead into other adventures.

An immediate extension of the adventure may find one or more powerful necromancers teleporting into the Pasha's Tunnel to investigate what is going on. This may force the PCs to find an alternate escape from the catacombs through the wall in the skeletal serpent's chamber. For dungeon-loving players, this next section of the catacombs may be filled with dangers thought sealed centuries ago – perhaps undead crusaders, dust demons, and crypt ghouls.

The catacombs may also lead directly into the cellar of the Emir's palace. Avoiding the Emir's servants and royal guards will be a challenge, as they will not treat intruders lightly.

In either scenario, the PCs will have earned the attention of the necromancers of the Order of Grievors. Unmasking the ancient cult, and tracking down its leaders, and avoiding assassination attempts can make the start of an exciting urban campaign!

Sir Svend's Quest

Sir Svend Holfdon, one of the pregenerated PCs, is on a quest to find out whether his king and friend, King Torvald, is alive or dead. This adventure does give conclusion to that question, leaving it as a hook for future adventures.

However, if the referee wants to settle that question, the answer lies at the arena. If the PCs inquire into the death of Rathar, they will discover that the lucky convict who killed him was named Torvald. This is the same King Torvald that Svend seeks!

In a one-shot game, Torvald continued to fight in the arena for several weeks, showing great skill in his matches. However, he was eventually killed in an arena event when the referee surprised the crowd by unleashing a mantichore into the arena. Torvald died bravely, but the mystery of how he went from king to convict is unknown.

In a continuing campaign, having impressed the Grand Referee, Torvald survived his battle with the mantichore and was freed after a close victory. One gladiator recalls seeing Torvald two weeks ago outside a church in East Caelkirk, passionately talking with a monk about the church's stained glass located in its rose window. "It seemed as if he found something special in that window," says the gladiator. Whether Torvald is still in Caelkirk, perhaps on a great pilgrimage or quest, or has moved on, is entirely up to the referee.

Special Thanks

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For more free one shot adventures, please visit 1shotadventures.com. If you enjoyed this adventure, or ran it for a group, all the author asks is that you give a shout out and let me know how it went. Post a note on 1shotadventures.com or tweet @SageThalcos on Twitter.

Change Log

v1.0 - Original OSR release.

Handouts



Handout A - Fragment of a map found in a tube in the catacombs. The map shows the location of Shalfak Qala, a fort destroyed 500 years ago.

Handouts

Dearest Guiscard

You are very brave for writing me. But I write to you tell you that your letters have afflicted me and you have abused my Goodness.

A year ago we ended our engagement, although my father would argue that an engagement cannot occur without his permission. Even still, you knew he had issue with your station. Although we blushed at its cruelty, we could not ignore it, and it disarmed us both the same.

I have become engaged to another, and I believe that the match will bring me happiness and you peace.

If you will grant me but one last wish, my dear Guiscard, please resolve to abandon the Order of Grievors. Although I know you learnt much by their books, I believe they mean you ill harm.

My still admires you and contemplates in you. Please stop writing, else my new lord angers.

Erica Solway

Handout B - Crumpled letter found in catacombs workroom. Here, Lady Erica Solway, a Brittain princess from the town of Datonne, scolds Guiscard not to write her anymore.

Handout - Player Safe Map



Two years ago, you signed up with the Brittain Navy to fight pirates that were raiding its southern coast. The work was easy for you, and you were personally responsible for seizing over a million dinars in contraband.

Unfortunately, a half-ogre's club to the head sent you back home to Calder. This would also end your navy career, as the wound causes seasickness like you have never had before. Missing the sea too much, you set off to Caalkirk to work in its great ports, where you hope you can once again put your keen eye for busting smugglers to use.

ANGUERRAND GREY

Scourge of Pirates



Thirty years ago you were assigned to work as a spy to the mysterious Djin Council. You never knew who your true masters were, but the position was considered a great honor among the elves of your homeland. For years, you traveled, listened, and brought back information for your masters.

However, one day you were assigned to steal into a small manor house in the town of Tirvi. To your horror, you discovered the lord of the manor had been murdered, and a witch was living in his stead. You were cursed by the witch and chained up in her closet. You were rescued by the noble's son, who had returned home. The witch, however, escaped, along with much your knowledge. The Council ordered you to Caalkirk, to recover your wits, and await new orders.

CIRADIL

Elven Spy



Now, you've followed his trail back to Caeltirk, unsure if you want to find your king and your friend alive or dead.

to her husband unless you can find proof of his death.

been missing. In that time, you fell in love with Rhisia. However, she has sworn to stay loyal a vision, and had to go south. He was never heard from again. For six years, the king has guards, and fought alongside him for years. One day, King Torvald told you he had received beautiful, fierce, and strong woman in the world. You became one of the king's body-

in the hobgoblin wars. There, you met King Torvald and his wife, General Rhisia, the most in the hobgoblin wars. There, you met King Torvald and his wife, General Rhisia, the most

SIR SVEND HOLFDAN

Obsessed Knight of the North



Per 11

You lived along the Blue river as a hermit the last ten years. You made your living wandering from village to village, helping the locals find lost animals, catch fish, and celebrate feasts. One day, however, a village asked you to recover a herd of cows that was swimming across the river. You used your magic to summon a gentle wave to bring them ashore, but Allah must have been displeased with you, for instead a great kraken of a wave formed and rolled down the river. You were arrested and tried for the destruction of three foot bridges. Fortunately, the local atabeg remembered you from the war you helped him win twenty years ago, and let you off with a stern warning.

OMAR

The Catastrophe of Three Bridges



Per 13 • Magery 3

Since you were a little girl, you heard the store of how your father built the legendary Morell's Ale Tavern and inn in Mindar with nothing by a penny he found in the street and years of hard work. Now it's your turn. You spent all your money buying a small three story tower in the Abner district of Caekirk, and fully intend to turn it an ale tavern that will make your old father proud. Unfortunately, while you own a great piece of property, you don't have any coin left to buy the fermenters, ale aging barrels, or even the pewter tankards. Your plan is to find some employ until you can fully equip the place, then open your tavern in time for the Christmas ale rush.

CATA MORELI

Business Mogul and Antiquarian



You washed up on the banks of the Blue River with little memory of how you got there. Nearby, a hermit told you that men were looking for you, but the men didn't see you lying in the reeds. The only thing on your person was a dwarf-pattern padded shirt, an unusual whip, and a pendant around your throat that you vaguely recall as being that of Eir, a Norse goddess. With the hermit's help, you also retrieved a rune-carved staff from the water that you assumed was yours, as it perfectly fit your hands. Unsure what to do or where to go, you headed south towards the city of Caekirk to see if you can uncover clues of your identity.

EIR

Mysterious Amnesiac

