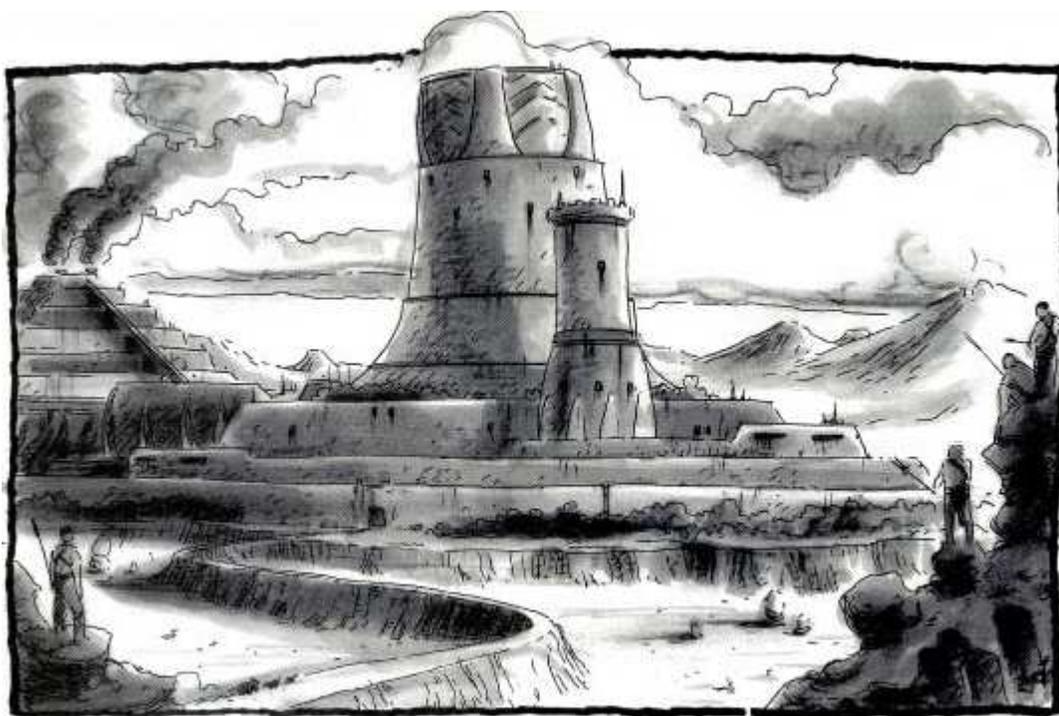


# Tyrian Conspiracy

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In order to play *Tyrian Conspiracy*, you will need the *Dark Sun 3 Core Rules*, *Dark Sun Prestige Class Appendix I*, *Terrors of Athas*, and *Terrors of the Deadlands*, all available as free downloads from the official Dark Sun site, [www.athas.org](http://www.athas.org), as well as the revised (3.5) versions of the *Dungeon Master Guide*, *Player's Handbook and Monster Manual* and the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*. The adventure is suitable for four 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> level characters. The following Dark Sun products are not necessary to play *Tyrian Conspiracy*, but contain additional information the DM can use to enhance the adventure: *Dune Trader* contains information on House Vordon and its prominent characters. *The City-State of Tyr* contains information on locations, characters and the political climate in Tyr, and the map included in *The City-State of Tyr* could be useful. *Elves of Athas* has information on the Wind Dancers tribe, while *Veiled Alliance* has information on Urikite culture.

Although written for Free Year 11, taking into account the events of the Prism Pentad – most notably King Tithian of Tyr's demise, *Tyrian Conspiracy* can easily be tailored to fit into campaigns preceding these events. However, the adventure must take place after Kalak's death and the events in DS1 *Freedom*.

### **T**easer:

Eleven years ago, a band of heroes rose up and overthrew Kalak, the Tyrant of Tyr. High Templar Tithian took up the fallen crown of Kalak, and as his first act, granted freedom to the slaves of Tyr. For the first time in over a thousand years, the people of Tyr were allowed to govern themselves.

The Free City of Tyr became a beacon of hope, a promise that one could live free from the tyranny of the Sorcerer Kings. The hope was given fangs when the Crimson Legion, an army made up of Tyr's ex-slaves and gladiators, repelled an invading Urikite army seeking to seize control of Tyr's precious iron mines.

During the turbulence of the last decade, King Tithian disappeared, searching, some say, for an artifact of great power. In his stead, the Council of Advisors has risen to take on the mantle of leadership in the Free City. Tithian has been missing for three years, and some say that the lost king will not return. Without his leadership, many see Tyr's future as uncertain. A new threat is maneuvering to strike, not from outside, but from within the very walls of Tyr itself...

### **A**dventure overview:

The PCs are approached by a charismatic woman who wants to hire their services and she is prepared to pay well. The mission is simple – hire on as guards on the House Vordon caravan bound for Urik, which is leaving Tyr at sunrise 2 days time from now. The PCs are to keep an eye out for anything suspicious, keep a close eye on the caravan master, and report back to her at the Wayward Trader tavern in the Artisan's District once the caravan returns to Tyr. The woman is in fact Talara Vordon, the cousin of aging House Vordon patriarch Thaxos Vordon.

Thaxos has spies following his cousin's every move, and based on their report he correctly assumes the PCs are Talara's new spies. He orders one of his henchmen, the half-elven bard Daimon, to take care of the PCs. Daimon first hires a band of thugs to take care of the PCs. The following day the PCs are attacked by a group of ex-slaves. The same evening or night, Daimon takes matters into his own hands and throws a flask of alchemical fire through a window into the PCs' quarters at whatever inn or residence they are staying at. When both of these attempts on the PCs' lives fail, Daimon reports back to Thaxos, who now realizes they are competent mercenaries. He orders Daimon to follow the PCs, and to warn Nadar, the caravan master on the House Vordon caravan that Talara's spies might try to sign up as guards – and that he should have them eliminated if they become too nosy. He does this by firing them upon their arrival in Urik.

Nadar, the caravan master, has his own agenda. While Thaxos has plans to conquer Tyr with his secret mercenary army, and claim the throne of Tyr, Nadar plans to betray him at that time and bring esteem back to his own family, House Mericles. Thaxos orders Nadar to transport a shipment of spice to Urik and use the profits generated from the sale to purchase the loyalty of a wizard. Nadar will purchase the wizard's loyalty, but for his own gains. He has also made sure the caravan never returns to Tyr. It will be attacked by elven raiders from the Wind Dancers tribe who will take advantage of a deliberately poor defensive strategy, and take Nadar and his bodyguard, the mul Cratek Skullsplitter, "captive". The elves appropriate the salt shipment bought for the remainder of the money from the spice sale, and Nadar is in return granted the elf tribe's favor.

The PCs find the caravan raided by the elves. They should be able to deduce from a survivor's testimony of a poor defensive strategy, and the fact that Nadar and Cratek were taken "captive", that something is wrong. The half-elf Daimon was conveniently killed in the elf raid and is no longer a cause for worry.

The PCs will most probably choose one out of two courses of action. A) Pursue the elves. B) Return to Tyr and inform Talara of what has happened. Should the PCs follow the elves, they embark on a side trek until they get back on track and decide to return to Tyr.

Nadar and Cratek ride crodlus back to Tyr and immediately venture to the Vordon manor. Thaxos is displeased to learn that his caravan was sacked by elves, but since the primary mission of enlisting the wizard's services was a success (or at least he thinks so), Thaxos is content to let the matter go. He has another, more important task for Nadar – to travel to the secret training grounds Thaxos had created in the mountains southwest of Altaruk and return with an elite crew of assassins. The mountain training grounds house Thaxos' most promising hirelings gathered from the ranks of his dummy houses.

Upon the PCs' return to Tyr, Thaxos' spies at the gates recognize them as Talara's spies and report to Thaxos. Nadar happens to be present when the spies arrive, and suggests to Thaxos that the PCs somehow were involved with the elf raid. Thaxos orders them killed, and sends his finest assassin, the halfling Derlan Watari, to do the job.

At the Wayward Trader the PCs meet their mysterious employer (Talara Vordon) who wants to know what happened in Urik. Upon learning of the caravan raid and the fact that Nadar and Cratek were lead away by the elves, she reacts with suspicion – after all, her agents reported that the two were back in Tyr. However, Derlan Watari strikes now, interrupting the conversation. A knife covered with scorpion poison flies through an open window, aimed at a PC. The halfling then flees. Talara will leave at once, telling the PCs to meet her at the restaurant called The Golden Inix midway along Caravan Way, where security is better, at high sun (noon) the following day. In the meantime, the assassin will harass the PCs with deadly games including scorpions.

At The Golden Inix Talara reveals her identity to the PCs and explains she still needs their help to uncover what her cousin Thaxos is up to. If they are willing to help, they must follow Nadar as he leaves for Altaruk and see what he is up to. Derlan Watari will strike when the PCs leave the establishment.

Nadar leaves Tyr later the same day. The templars at the gate have been paid to make life difficult for the PCs, but an appropriate bribe or bluff will let them off the hook. Nadar is accompanied by his mul bodyguard and a band of guards from House Vordon, all mounted on crodlus. The party will stick to the road that goes from Tyr to Fort Skonz, which they will ride past, but rest at Fort Amber before continuing southeast on the road to Altaruk.

During the desert trek, the PCs will encounter a severely dehydrated elf scout from the Wind Dancer tribe, who fled from a thri-kreen pack that has chased him for many days.

As the PCs are nearing Altaruk, Thaxos and his band leave the road and head west then south towards the mountains surrounding the merchant village. However, the PCs have a problem to contend with. A pair of giants coming from the east have spotted them. The giants are raiders in search of valuables and new skulls to add to their collection of trophies.

After dealing with the giants, the PCs can continue tracking Nadar. His tracks lead up into the mountains. The PCs eventually discover a hidden training camp for Thaxos' agents in a mountain canyon, but are attacked by sligs. The noise reveals their presence to the camp, and the mercenaries try to prevent the PCs from escaping.

Nadar and his team of six chosen mercenaries head straight for Tyr using magical aid to speed their travel. Thus, Nadar's party reaches Tyr before the PCs do. Upon their return to Tyr the PCs learn that a lot has happened during the last 24 hours.

The city is in turbulence. Several prominent senators and representatives of the Tyrian government have been murdered or attempted murdered in the night that passed. A public emergency meeting in the Council Chambers is being arranged. If the PCs attend the meeting, they will witness accusations, threats and arguments between prominent Tyrian characters.

The meeting takes a turn as Thaxos Vordon stands forth and offers his aid to the city, appealing to the mentality of the scared citizens, whom he masterfully bends to his will. Through the will of the people he declares to resolve the situation and rid the Warrens of crime as well using House Vordon troops. He has just legitimized moving his troops into the city – or at least in the eyes of the average citizen. This brings his plans of a coup closer to reality.

The PCs and Talara meet in the Council chambers or at the Sandstone Inn. Talara is convinced that Thaxos is planning a coup. When the PCs report of Nadar's visit to the secret training camp in the mountains southwest of Altaruk and the band he returned to Tyr with, she is utterly convinced of her fears. The problem is that Talara cannot simply accuse Thaxos of planning a coup – she needs evidence. Her main informant, a servant in the Vordon manor has disappeared; most probably she lies buried somewhere after Thaxos realized the servant was her informant. Her last report mentioned several visits to Thaxos' office made by the head of House Troika, possibly one of Thaxos' latest dummy houses. If the PCs can sneak into House Troika's headquarters, and find evidence of Thaxos' activities, she can present the evidence to the Council and have her cousin exposed once and for all. As the situation is now, no one will react to an increased amount of Vordon guards and agents gathering within Tyr's walls, and a coup could be imminent. It is crucial that the PCs act quickly.

Inside House Troika's headquarters, the PCs can find journals on recruited agents of House Vordon's dummy houses, and maps showing several marked buildings. If the PCs are clever, they can deduce that the locations on the maps house the next assassination victims. The PCs can save Captain Zalcor and Talara Vordon in the nick of time. The assassins along with the maps and the agent lists make up the evidence needed to have Thaxos judged and convicted in the courts of Tyr. If the PCs took with them the employment logbook and maps they will have the evidence they need to arrest Thaxos. Captain Zalcor / Talara will have Timor, Sadira and Rikus awoken and summoned to the Council chambers immediately to get approval for the tradelord's arrest.

However, the PCs and the city guard are too late. The guards of House Troika discovered the break-in shortly after the PCs left the headquarters. Asher Troika was summoned immediately, and rode out to the Vordon estate when he found out that the logbook and maps were missing. Thaxos is furious that his plans have been discovered, and realizes that his chances for a successful coup are dwindling. The majority of his troops have not yet arrived. He will be unable to defeat the city guard and claim the throne – his long-term plan has been foiled. If any of his assassins survived the encounter with the city guard and

the PCs, they will arrive shortly after Asher and report. Once Thaxos realizes the PCs are to blame, he orders Derlan Watari to finish the job given to him earlier and have the PCs suffer a slow and painful death.

Thaxos, Asher, Nadar, Cratek, and any mercenaries who survived will leave Tyr immediately and head for Fort Amber, the Vordon merchant fort on the road south. There they will stock up on supplies and change to rested animals, before heading on south towards Altaruk. The troops of the fort are ordered to kill *any* pursuers arriving the next 48 hours.

Nadar's plans of deception take a turn when Thaxos' plans are foiled. The trader deduces that he can still bring glory to himself and his family name if he can return to Tyr with Thaxos' dead or alive. However two obstacles remain: Asher Troika and any of the mercenaries who survived their encounter(s) with the PCs.

In Tyr, the city guard (and possibly the PCs) discover that Thaxos has escaped. It will take time to organize the city guard to follow him. Talara asks the PCs for one last favor – to bring back Thaxos alive, so she can have him condemned to death in the courts of Tyr. If they succeed, they will be richly rewarded. Captain Zalcor promises them that they will be greeted as heroes upon their return, and that he will make sure the city rewards them properly.

Derlan Watari strikes as the PCs are heading towards the stables by the city gate. He strikes from the shadows of an alley with his poisoned knives and scorpions. The PCs have a chance to finish off the assassin.

The PCs can get mounts at the stables and follow Thaxos' party. If the PCs plan to stop by Fort Amber they will be ambushed once inside the fort. Stopping at Fort Skonz is possible, as it is not owned by House Vordon. However, even if they avoid Fort Amber, the PCs have a number of encounters before they catch up with the Vordon party. Depending on their previous actions, these encounters may be avoided or the outcome changed.

If the PCs did not finish off Derlan Watari in Tyr, he will follow them on a crodlu and make their journey difficult. The PCs could run into a dune runner, if they did not help the dehydrated Wind Dancer elf earlier. Finally, they come across a dune reaper carcass, before catching up with the Vordon party and a pack of thri-kreen raiders. The kreen's loyalties have been bought, and the kreen attack the PCs. During the battle, the Wind Dancers arrive and attack the kreen. In the chaos that follows, the PCs and the House Vordon agents battle. The outcome is uncertain, and could depend on whether the PCs aided the dehydrated Wind Dancer elf or not. If they are lucky, the elves will finish off Nadar for them, and the PCs can leave with Thaxos Vordon alive.

The PCs will encounter the Tyrian city guard led by Captain Zalcor half a day north of the final battle. However, Thaxos will try to escape before this time. The cold Athasian night and the time of the twin moons stand between success and failure. The aging House Vordon patriarch has nothing to lose, and his resourcefulness is formidable.

The adventure ends when the PCs meet up with the city guard around noon (or earlier if they march through the night). The city guard will escort the PCs and Thaxos back to Tyr. A trial is held in the courts of Tyr, where Thaxos is found guilty of conspiracy against the City of Tyr, as well as conspiracy to murder and a number of other crimes. The aging trader is convicted and executed. As the treachery of Tyr's apparent savior becomes known to the public, the PCs are hailed as heroes and rewarded.

## 1: A tempting offer

Note: The adventure assumes the PCs are presently in Tyr. If the PCs happen to be elsewhere, there is no reason why Talara Vordon cannot meet them in another city or village with a trading post. The caravan is still bound for Urik, and it will eventually return to Tyr. Talara reaches Tyr before the caravan does.

The PCs are approached by a charismatic woman who wants to hire their services and she is prepared to pay well. The mission is simple – hire on as guards on the House Vordon caravan bound for Urik that is leaving Tyr at sunrise 2 days time from now. The PCs are to keep an eye out for anything suspicious, keep a close eye on the caravan master, and report back to her at the Wayward Trader tavern in the Artisan's District once the caravan returns to Tyr. The woman is in fact Talara Vordon, the cousin of aging House Vordon patriarch Thaxos Vordon. This encounter can take place anywhere the DM wants - in a back alley, at an inn, in the elven market, or anywhere else appropriate.

*“Hello there.” A sweet female voice beckons you to turn your head in its direction. Standing only a few feet away and studying you from top to toe is a slender, attractive, red-haired woman dressed in a traveler's outfit. She smiles as her eyes meet yours and says softly “You look like a band of experienced mercenaries.” The woman takes a step towards you. “Are you? Because I am in need of hiring someone who can watch something for me. Interested?” It is clear she has no romantic interests in you, but knows how to get your attention. “I will pay you well,” she adds.*

The woman does not reveal her name. If asked about it, she asks if it matters. If the PCs press on, she replies Lara. It is not a lie, simply a childhood nickname. Assuming the PCs are interested and hear their potential employer out, she continues.

*“There is a House Vordon caravan bound for Urik, leaving the morning after tomorrow. I want you to hire on as guards and keep an extra sharp lookout for anything suspicious. Keep a watchful eye on the caravan master and anyone he talks to during the trip. Your duties are not over until the caravan has returned to Tyr.” The woman gazes past you, as if she noticed someone in the crowd behind you. Still gazing past you, she continues. “Don't turn around. Someone is watching. Listen. Upon your arrival back in Tyr, behave as normal guards do - go to celebrate a safe return at the Wayward Trader tavern in the Artisan's District. Who knows who might show up there?” She smiles and brushes your hand, leaving a small item in your palm. “Don't forget to tip the barmaid” she says and blinks with one eye, before turning to leave. By Ral, it's a gold coin! Surely she can't have been serious about that being a tip. It does make you wonder, though, how much she intends to pay you for your services. Perhaps you have struck iron today?*

If the PCs try to catch a glimpse of whoever their employer spotted watching them in the crowd, roll a **Spot check**, but regardless of the result the PC doesn't notice anyone in particular watching them (the watcher withdrew when Talara spotted him, so there is no chance of spotting him again).

Thaxos has spies following his cousin's every move, and based on their report he correctly assumes the PCs are Talara's new spies. He orders one of his henchmen, the half-elven bard Daimon, to take care of the PCs.

## 2. Street brawl (EL 8)

Daimon first hires a band of ex-slaves from the Warrens to pick a fight with the PCs. He doesn't give the thugs orders to kill the PCs, but they are hotheaded and could get carried away if the PCs prove to be more capable than the thugs assume they are. The thugs will follow the PCs and wait for an opportunity to surround them. Unless the PCs state they are on the lookout for anyone following them, they have no way of knowing what is coming. If the PCs are in fact on the lookout, roll **Spot checks (DC 15)** to let them discover a band of six thugs following them. The

attack takes place before high sun (noon), whether the PCs are aware of the thugs following them or not.

*“This passage between the two streets bustling with activity is surprisingly quiet. Apparently not many people traverse this passage; not even a single beggar is within sight. A small lizard scurries away from a pile of trash as you approach. You suddenly become aware that you are not alone in the passage any longer. Ahead of you, three rough-looking men with clubs block the far end of the passage. Glancing back from whence you came, you see that three more men armed with clubs are approaching from the rear. You suspect these guys aren’t here to give you a friendly welcome to the neighborhood.”*

The passage is equal to a 60-foot long and 15 foot wide rectangle. The PCs are in the middle of the passage. Three thugs are at either end as the encounter begins. The thugs close in on the PCs and engage them in melee combat. The ex-slaves have orders to beat up the PCs to discourage them from affiliating with their female employer. Should the PCs prove to be tougher than expected, the thugs will use any means at their disposal to take them out, ganging up on a single target at a time.

**Ex-slave thugs (6);** Male human barbarian 3; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d12+3; hp 28, 30, 26, 24, 33, 28; Init +0; Spd 40ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +3; Grp +4; Atk +4 melee (1d6+1, club) or +3 ranged (1d6+1, club); Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+1, club) or +3 ranged (1d6+1, club); SA rage 1/day; SQ fast movement, uncanny dodge, trap sense +1; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0; AL CN; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +7, Craft (varies) +6, Intimidate +6, Jump +7, Listen +5; Endurance, Improved Unarmed Strike, Toughness.

*Possessions:* Club, 1d4 cp each.

Should the PCs defeat the thugs, and any of the thugs are alive, they can question them and learn that they were hired by a half-elf to “take care of” a band matching the PCs’ descriptions. The thugs don’t know the half-elf’s name, and can only describe him as average-looking with dark hair. The thugs were paid in advance, and didn’t

bother to study their employer’s appearance in detail.

### 3. Fire in the night (EL 4)

The same evening or night, Daimon takes matters into his own hands and throws a flask of alchemical fire through a window into the PCs’ quarters at whatever inn or residence they are staying at. He then immediately withdraws from sight, around a corner. The only witness to the incident, a one-armed drunken dwarf beggar has been bribed with a couple of ceramics to look another way and pretend to be sleeping.

Have sleeping PCs roll a Listen check (DC 15) to awaken from the noise of the clay bottle containing the volatile liquid break as it hits the floor of their room. If the PCs awoke from the noise, they can stop the fire that breaks out. Otherwise, they will awaken from the heat and flames licking at their skin. Every round that passes they suffer a cumulative 1d4 points of fire damage as described below. Allow the sleeping PCs a Wisdom check (DC 15) minus the total damage sustained, to awake. It will probably be too late to put the fire out, but at least they can try to escape the fire.

*What was that? You are suddenly awake. You have to blink your eyes a couple of times to see clearly, and you’re alarmed at the sight that meets you – a fire has broken out on the floor of your room, and it is quickly spreading. You don’t have much time!*

The PCs have 3 rounds to start putting out the fire before it gets out of control. The easiest solution is to use water. 3 gallons + 2 gallons per round that passes will do. Psionic powers and magical spells that control and extinguish fire can reduce the amount of water needed to quench the fire to a minimum. Until the work to put the fire out begins, all characters inside the room suffer a cumulative 1d4 points of fire damage per round that passes (1d4 on the 1st round, 2d4 on the 2nd round, 3d4 on the 3rd round etc.) from the increasing heat. While putting out the fire, they suffer 1d6 points of fire damage per round. All characters moving about the flames in the room must also make a Reflex save (DC 10) each round or catch fire per the

rules in the PHB and DMG.

Should the PCs fail to put out the fire because they lack water and other means to put out the fire, or they awoke too late to put it out, the fire spreads, but fortunately a water cleric is nearby. He arrives on the scene and puts out the fire with his elemental magic before the entire building burns down.

If the PCs question the one-armed dwarf beggar, he denies seeing anything. He claims to have been passed out drunk. Roll secret **Sense Motive** checks (DC 10) for the PCs to realize the dwarf is lying. If the PCs offer him more than 4 cp (or a drink), he will have a change of heart and say he saw a pointy-eared fellow skulking about right before the fire started. That is all he will reveal. The dwarf doesn't mention that the fellow paid him for his silence, unless the PCs behave threateningly and try to intimidate him.

#### 4. Signing on

The Vordon main office and a large secure warehouse can be found by following Caravan Way to Iron Square, where all the major trading houses have quarters.

*The Vordon compound is busy during the day hours. Messengers hurry back and forth between the Emporium and the main office, while workers are loading up crates on an enclosed wagon. A lightly built and well dressed man of medium height with short cut black hair oversees the work, while a clerk standing next to him etches an inventory list of what is being loaded on the wagon, on various colored soft clay bricks. A pair of mul guards at the entrance eyes you as you approach. "Halt." One of them steps forward, his hand on the hilt of his sheathed sword. "State your business."*

If the PCs explain they are at the compound to seek employment on a caravan, the guards let them pass and point out the overseer over by the wagon as the person they should talk to.

*The caravan master nods his head as a response to something the clerk whispers to him as you approach. A smile broadens around his lips. Then he dismisses*

*the clerk, before turning to address you. "I am Nadar, the caravan master. What can I do for you?" His voice is stern and he gazes straight into your eyes when he talks to you.*

If the PCs say they want to hire on as guards, the caravan master gives them a quick glance from top to toe.

*Nadar studies you briefly and smiles. "You look like you've seen some action. Tell me a bit about your previous work history and of any talents in particular I should know about. I might have some openings for the people with the right skills, if you know what I mean.*

Nadar is no fool. A part of his last guard crew recently quit on him for no apparent reason (Talara paid them to quit), and an experienced band of adventurers looking for work just happens to be a bit too coincidental to his favor. That doesn't mean he won't hire the PCs, but he'll have his mul cohort, Cratek, watch them during the journey. He'll offer 4 cp a day per head, but is willing to stretch his offer to 8 cp.

Should the PCs ask what the caravan is transporting, they will get an honest answer. It is transporting various sorts of spice. There is nothing illegal in the cargo hold.

#### 5. A last minute crewmember

After his plan to kill the PCs with alchemical fire failed, Daimon reported back to Thaxos, who realized that the PCs are competent mercenaries. He orders Daimon to follow them and eliminate them if they discover anything related to his coup plans, and to warn any other loyal House Vordon agents whose paths the PCs cross, that they are spies and not to be trusted.

Daimon arrives just in time before the Vordon caravan bound for Urik leaves Tyr. He discusses matters briefly with Nadar, who has his suspicions confirmed. They agree to a plan where the half-elf will play the role of a fellow guard, and try to get close to the PC to discover their true motives.

*The wind blows fiercely today, even in the city. The caravan is just about to leave, when a male half-elf clad in inix leather armor and a brown cape, with a crossbow flung over his shoulder enters the compound. He walks straight up to Nadar, who is busy instructing his animal handlers on which route to take. Nadar eventually turns to the half-elf and they exchange brief words. Nadar gives an affirmative nod, and then speaks to Cratek, his mul bodyguard. The half-elf steps away from the pair, and spotting you, heads in your direction – the wind sending ripples through his cape and throwing his shoulder-length black hair across his face. “So, you’re the experienced mercenaries the caravan master speaks so highly of. The name’s Daimon – it appears we’ll be working together.” The mercenary extends a hand wrapped in black leather straps and throws back his hair.*

If the PCs want to converse with Daimon, he can reveal that he’s worked for the house before, and

None of the passengers are of importance to the adventure. They are roleplaying subjects the PCs will have to relate to, or at least keep an eye on, since their mission is to watch out for *anything* suspicious.

that it pays competent hands well. Before he came to work for House Vordon, he worked for a number of merchant houses as a caravan guard. He mentions Shom, M’ke and Wavir among his former employers. He has survived gith raids, rampant mekillots and even a giant raid, he claims. Roll secret **Sense Motive checks (DC 20)** for each PC. A successful **check** reveals that he is lying about the giant raid.

During the journey to Urik, Daimon will inquire about the PCs’ deeds, and their goals. He’ll ask about friends and family, and pretend to be their friend. In fact he is trying to extract useful information from them that he can use against them, and to find out why they were hired by Talara, and for what purpose. He will be persistent and on the PCs’ backs like a mosquito for the entire journey to Urik, even if they tell him to back off.

## 6. From Tyr to Urik

The caravan is an armored wagon pulled by a pair of mekillots. The crew is made up of 30 guards in addition to the PCs and Daimon, a chef and three chef’s assistants, two **psion** animal handlers, the caravan master Nadar, and his mul cohort with the charming name Cratek Skullsplitter.

In addition to the crew, a small number of passengers are on the caravan. They are an aging human urikite couple, a rather eccentric male human air cleric, a young male human trader, and a female half-elf juggler.

The caravan uses the following route:  
Tyr-> Fort Skonz-> Silver Spring-> Urik

This route is approximately 130 miles of travel. The caravan travels 24 miles per day and reaches Urik in the afternoon on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of travel.

### Guard duty

Guard patrols work 12-hour shifts. There are 16 archers, 10 footmen and 4 kank outriders. Half are on patrol at given time, and the remaining half are in position and ready to fight within **3d6 rounds** after an alarm is sounded at night, **2d6 rounds** in the day.

Daimon is usually assigned to archer duty. The PCs will be assigned to any of the three posts which they are deemed best at, unless they have spellcaster abilities they have told Nadar about, in which case the caravan master orders them to be on the upper deck with him and Cratek. This is not just out of tactical reasons, but for practical purposes as well. It is much easier to keep an eye on a spellcaster who is close, than one who is out of sight and at a distance.

### Crewmembers and passengers

#### Cleaz, dwarf cook with three assistants:

Cleaz is a silent character who mostly feels sorry for himself. He was once a warrior and his focus was to protect his village by the Silt Sea. During a giant raid, he was knocked unconscious and

dragged to safety by his friends, who unknowingly made him break his focus of protecting the village to his death. His assistants do not know this, but they're more talkative than their boss.

**Marat and Berut, psion animal handlers:**

These fellows aren't very talkative. One of them is always on duty, while the other is resting in his quarters. They are shy, but hardworking. Both are telepaths.

**Roshan, guard captain:**

The guard captain is of powerful build and has a commanding voice. He is a fair man and open

The trip from Tyr to Urik is rather uneventful. DMs are encouraged to use random encounters to add as much action as they please, and not to act out every day of travel, unless the PCs are engaged in conversations with the various NPCs and find the trip to be interesting and entertaining.

for conversation as long as everyone does what they're told. Roshan is one of the four kank outriders.

**Aba and Barak, aging urikite couple:**

The elderly urikites are seemingly friendly and open-minded. They founded the family pottery shop in Urik and they have 7 children (3 sons and 4 daughters). The couple likes dice games, and the pair is in fact quite the hustlers. They will lift the PCs of any valuables they can.

**Daran Aedoclus, young balican trader:**

Daran has discovered a smart way of making money. He books passage on a caravan bound for another city, and buys a small amount of valuable items to sell for profits in the city the caravan journeys to. Then he signs up for another caravan and repeats the procedure. He is young and ambitious, quite talkative and knows many mekillot-jokes. He is a bit naive though, and it is only luck that has prevented him from being robbed by shrewd traders and rogues.

**Pinara, half-elf juggler**

Pinara is a dark-haired woman with a coy smile. Her interests in a man depend on the size of his moneybags, or more importantly, how much he

will spend on her, and how much money she can steal from him before she leaves him behind drunk in a bed or alley. She has currently taken an interest in the young trader Daran Aedoclus, whom she deems an easy source of money.

**Wexchakan, eccentric air cleric**

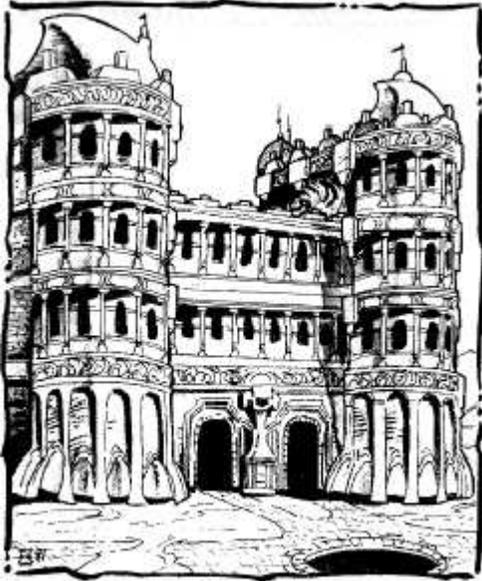
A man in his fifties with white hair and a spark of lightning in his eyes, Wexchakan wears a worn bloodstained cotton shirt from Draj, his home city, with weird decorations such as sitak feathers, scorpion claws and an amulet with a petrified bird eye of some kind. He is utterly silent, except if someone addresses him. He will fly into a heated discussion with himself speaking of the sight, flight capabilities and noises of various birds. This goes on for exactly one minute and eight seconds before he again becomes utterly silent.

**Nadar, Cratek Skullsplitter and Daimon are described in the Appendix.**

## 7. Arrival in Urik

The caravan arrives as scheduled in Urik after 6 days of travel, in the mid-afternoon on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. About half of the guards are dismissed, including the PCs and Daimon. Except for the PCs and Daimon, the dismissed guards (11 archers and 3 footmen) are told they are not needed on the journey back, and that they are released from their contracts with House Vordon. Nadar then instructs Roshan, the guard captain, to transport the goods to the House Vordon warehouse in Urik. He has some business to attend to.

*"After another exhausting day of desert travel and walking for hours with the sun stinging in your eyes, you finally see the blurred outlines of the City-State of Urik on the horizon. Nadar orders you all to keep up the pace, and a couple of hours later you find yourselves standing within Urik's walls, in a large plaza bustling with activity, just on the other side of the city gates. No beasts of burden are allowed to enter the city, so the mekillots and kanks have to wait outside.*



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*The templars' routine inspections and tax calculations took longer than expected. About half of the caravan guards are now paid and dismissed, including you. The dismissed guards immediately head for the nearest tavern. There is some discontent when Nadar calls out after them and announces that they are released from their contracts with House Vordon and need not report for duty when the caravan begins the return trip to Tyr at sunrise the following morning.*

*Nadar then leaves Roshan, the guard captain, in charge of transporting the caravan's goods to the compounds of House Stel and the purchase of slave carriers. Nadar assures him he will be with them shortly. He then disembarks and heads down Caravan Way, along with his mul bodyguard, Cratek. Daimon turns to you and whispers. "I figured this was coming after such a quiet journey. Don't worry. This has happened before. I'll have a word with the caravan master about keeping us on. We might have to accept a cut in our pay, but it's better than being stranded here in Urik, the city with a law for every man that lives in it."*

The PCs are free to do what they wish. They will most probably try to get rid of Daimon and follow Nadar. Daimon will apparently leave the PCs alone (He will stalk them at a distance however. Attentive PCs may roll **Spot checks** (DC 20) to notice Daimon following them).

### Nadar's business

Nadar follows Caravan Way for several blocks before taking a turn and heading down Obsidian Way. He then turns left and walks down a smaller street, and takes several more turns through still smaller streets, following a small map drawn on papyrus. He will eventually encounter a half-elf standing on a street corner and pay him a silver for further directions to a two-story clay building with a wooden door. The neighborhood is equivalent to the Warrens (slums) of Tyr. Nadar knocks on the door, and apparently talks to someone on the other side of the door through a small round hole in the door, but does not enter the building, and he and Cratek eventually leave.

Nadar proposed a deal: the wizard on the other side of the door's loyalty for 100 silvers, but was told to come back with the money before he would be admitted. Nadar heads straight to the House Stel compound, to meet with its senior traders, negotiate the final price and receive payment for the spice shipment. He also negotiates a price for a salt shipment the caravan will take back to Tyr and pays with a smaller amount of the money made from the spice shipment. As he leaves, House Stel slave workers start to haul barrels with salt from the compound to the Vordon wagon stationed only a few blocks away, by the Obsidian Gate.

Nadar and Cratek return to the wizard's den with a bag filled with silver from the spice transactions. After showing the contents of the bag to the hole in the door, they are admitted. The pair is inside for almost twenty minutes, before they come out and head for an inn in the merchant district, where they will rent a room and stay for the night. They want to get a good night's sleep before the caravan leaves for Tyr in the morning.

Encounters 8 and 9 are optional encounters the DM can use while the characters are traversing the streets of Urik. They are not keyed to the ongoing plot.

## 8. Elf on the corner (EL 3)

This encounter is most likely to take place near a marketplace or in the elven market. An elf standing on the corner of an alley calls out to the PCs and motions for them to come closer.

*As you are walking down the street, someone calls out to you from behind you somewhere. As you turn to look, you spot an elf clad in gray robes on a street corner next to an alley. His skin is dark, and his hair square-cut with tight ringlets in the fashion of most male urikites. The elf makes a strange hand gesture in your direction and says in a low voice with a thick accent "I've got something I can guarantee will be of interest to you. Come closer, so I don't have to shout." The elf throws a glance up and down the street and into the alley. "We don't want anyone else to hear this."*

If the PCs refuse to come closer to the elf and the alley, the elf comes to them.

*"I've got something the likes of you will be simply thrilled about." The elf throws another glance up and down the street before reaching into his robes and takes out something wrapped in red cloth. He carefully unwraps the cloth, and reveals a shiny metal mirror. He holds it up for you to see, but is reluctant to let you touch it. You spot mysterious sigils and runes tracing the mirror's frame, and a large rune on the back of the mirror. "I found this while exploring the ruined city of Kalidnay. I don't know what the runes mean, but they're undoubtedly magical in nature... So, are you interested?"*

The elf initially proposes 100 silvers for the mirror, but he is willing to accept a much lower price. After all, he just stole the mirror from a merchant. The runes were etched by the elf himself and have no magical properties. A *Sense Motive* check (DC 25) will let a PC realize that the elf's story of how he found the mirror in the ruins of Kalidnay is a lie. A *detect magic* spell will reveal that the mirror does not have a magical aura.

Note: If the PCs did come closer to the elf (not vice versa), at least one PC will become the victim of a half-elf pickpocket hiding in the alley (who is working with the elf). Allow the PC(s) in

question make a *Spot* check opposed to the half-elf's *Sleight of Hand* skill roll. If caught red-handed, the half-elf seeks to flee. The elf claims he didn't know anything about this (let him roll a *Diplomacy* check and opposed *Sense Motive* checks for the PCs). He wants to conclude the deal on the mirror, but if the PCs see through him, he will seek to flee as well.

**Elf hustler:** Male elf rogue 2; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d6-2; hp 7; Init +3; Spd 40ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk +1 melee (1d8/18-20, elven longblade); Full Atk +1 melee (1d8/18-20, elven longblade); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ elf traits, evasion, trapfinding; SV Fort -1, Ref +6, Will +1; AL CN; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 13.

*Skills and Feats:* Appraise +7, Bluff +6, Craft (calligraphy) +7, Diplomacy +10, Hide +8, Move Silently +8, Open Locks +7, Search +9, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +10; Hidden talent (*far hand*).

*Possessions:* 1d8 cp, steel mirror, elven longblade.

**Half-elf pickpocket:** Male half-elf rogue 2; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d6; hp 9; Init +3; Spd 30ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk +2 melee (1d4+1/19-20, obsidian dagger); Full Atk +2 melee (1d4+1/19-20, obsidian dagger); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ half-elf traits, evasion, trapfinding; SV Fort +0, Ref +6, Will +2; AL CN; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 11.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +5, Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Search +6, Sleight of Hand +13, Spot +8, Tumble +8; Skill Focus (Sleight of Hand). *Possessions:* 1d6 cp, obsidian dagger.

## 9. Hamanu's code (EL 7)

The PCs are approached by a templar street patrol. The templars will harass the PCs for violating one or more aspects of Hamanu's Code and threaten the PCs with sentence to slavery if they do not pay appropriate fines. Sample violations could include wearing cloaks (only templars and Hamanu himself are allowed to wear cloaks within Urik's city walls), giving a

beggar something in a beggar-free zone, or walking on the wrong side of a memorial street dedicated to a fallen general or other great warrior. Regardless of the violation of Hamanu's Code, the fine is minimum 10 cp per character. The exact amount is up to the DM.

*You were minding your own business and had done nothing to incur anyone's anger. Still, the four urikite men wearing bleached white robes walked straight up to you and ordered you to halt. All four men have an imposing posture, dark square-cut hair with ringlets, and square-cut curled beards. Their white cloaks are decorated with one of the city's many official emblems, the Sorcerer-King Hamanu in battle dress. Underneath their cloaks the men wear suits of leather armor, and each carries a decorated wood shield on their left arm. The templars all have one hand on their sheathed scimitars hanging from their belts. Their leader speaks in the characteristic thick urikite accent. "You have violated Hamanu's Code. Ignorance of the Code is no excuse. You will pay the necessary fine of compensation or be sentenced to life in the slavepens."*

If the PCs object, the fine increases by 50% per objection. If they ask how they have violated the Code, they will be informed of what they have done wrong. The PCs are going to have a hard time convincing the templars to let them off the hook, but they can succeed in reducing the size of the fine through a successful opposed **Diplomacy check**. Should the PCs be unable to pay the fine, the templars will accept their gear as payment. If the PCs refuse to surrender their gear, the templars will have them sold into slavery and take their gear anyway. Should the PCs start a fight with the templars, 2d6 more templar guards will arrive on the scene in 1d6 rounds after the templars call for assistance.

**Templars (4):** Male human templar 3; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d8+3; hp 21, 20, 24, 22 Init +0; Spd 30ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk +4 melee (1d6+1/18-20, bone scimitar); Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+1/18-20, bone scimitar); SA sigil, rebuke undead; SQ secular authority, SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +5; AL LN; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 11.

*Skills and Feats:* Appraise +6, Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +6, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +6; Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

**Templar Spells Known** (6/5; save DC 10 + spell level): 0 – *cure minor wounds, defiler scent, detect magic, detect poison, inflict minor wounds, resistance*; 1st – *bless, cause fear, cure light wounds, hand of the sorcerer-king*. **Possessions** (each): bone scimitar, wood large shield, leather armor, 1d6+1 sp and 3d4 cp.

## 10. Departure

The caravan leaves without the PCs at sunrise the day after it arrived. Nadar and Daimon have agreed that they don't want the PCs nosing around, and decide to leave them behind. When they show up at the Obsidian Gate, the guards refuse to let them outside. Daimon calls out to the PCs from the other side:

*"I'm sorry. I did what I could, but the caravan master only had room for one of us. I'm sure you'll find other work. I hear there's a House Wavir caravan leaving for Balic in a couple of days. Maybe they'll take on a couple of extra hands. Well, it was nice working with you!"*

*A horn is sounded. The caravan starts to move, the wagon wheels creaking at the sudden pull of the mighty mekillots who start to march forward as the animal handlers prod them with psionic jolting poles. You are left behind.*

## 11. Back to Tyr

The PCs will have to find a way to follow the caravan and get back to Tyr. The Urikite guards at the Obsidian Gate will not let them pass, so they will have to find another gate to exit through. The PCs can buy beasts of burden such as crodlus or kanks at a fortified stable just outside another gate, or they can walk. The caravan travels 20 miles per day. The Tracking DC for following the caravan is 8 + 1 per day that passes before the PCs head after the caravan.

## 12. The man beasts (EL 11)

The desert journey can be a perilous one or a relatively quiet one, depending on the DM. One random encounter is included below. If you want to increase the challenge of the desert journey, add more random encounters or let the PCs be caught in a sandstorm.

A group of predators in search of prey discovers the PCs as they are camped for the night. The creatures move with the grace of tigons, and strike with the fury of tembos. It is a band of mul savages (see the Appendix) who attempt to sneak up on the PCs. The savages are looking for food and water and will kill to get it.

The savages speak rudimentary common, but try to scare off their enemies with the roars and cries of imitated feral beasts. If one of the savages is reduced to less than half of his hit point total, that savage flees.

**Mul savages (4)**, Male and female mul barbarian 4/savage 3; CR 7; Medium humanoid; HD 7d12+14; hp 62, 57, 64, 52; Init +5; Spd 40ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +7; Grp +13; Atk +9 melee (1d4+2, unarmed strike [fist]) or +8 ranged (1d3+2, sling); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d4+2, unarmed strike [fist]) or +8/+3 ranged (1d3+2, sling); SA: rage 2/day, animal fighting; SQ mul traits, honed instincts, fast movement, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; SV Fort +10, Ref +3, Will +4; AL CN; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 14, Cha 8.

*Skills and Feats:* Move Silently +7, Hide +7, Spot +6, Survival +10; Improved Grapple (B), Improved Unarmed Strike, Stealthy, Wastelander.

*Possessions:* leather armor, sling and 6 slingstones.

Award the PCs only 50% xp for this encounter, since their enemies do not fight to the death, but flee when wounded substantially. Savages who manage to escape will not return to do further combat with the PCs.

## 13. Elf raid (EL -)

Nadar has arranged it so that the caravan never reaches Tyr. It will be attacked by elven raiders from the Wind Dancers tribe who will take advantage of a deliberately poor defensive strategy - the true reason why Nadar fired the majority of the archers. The elves strike between Silver Springs and Fort Skonz. After slaughtering the guards and plundering the caravan, the elves take Nadar and his bodyguard, the mul Cratek Skullsplitter, "captive". The agreement is that the elves take the salt shipment, and Nadar is in return granted the elf tribe's favor should he be in need of their aid in the future.

Depending on how far behind the caravan the PCs are, they can either witness the elf raid, where the elven archers defeat the infantry and outriders with ease, plunder the caravan and take Nadar and Cratek with them (and they could try to interfere, though this will most likely get them killed); or they can arrive on the scene later and find the remains of the wagon, the corpses of the guards and the mekillots swarming with insects and kes'trekels picking the corpses clean of flesh. Arrows litter the ground, and traces of a large group (50 elves) that came from the south and left in the same direction are easily found. Among the remains inside the wagon, the PCs find the body of the half-elf Daimon, who has been brutally mutilated and was left to bleed to death by the elves, and the dwarf cook Cleaz can be found barely alive - his face burnt beyond recognition. The former warrior whispers hoarsely that the elves struck out of nowhere, and slaughtered the infantry from safe distance. He curses Nadar's foolish defensive strategy, and says it serves him right to be kidnapped by the elves. Those are Cleaz's last words, as he dies from the wounds and internal damage inflicted upon him when the elves forced him to drink a bottle of alchemist's fire. Cleaz is beyond the PCs to save - not even *cure spells* will cure the internal damage inflicted upon him by the alchemist's fire.

The wagon has been thoroughly looted. Nothing of value remains for the PCs to scavenge.

**Wind Dancer Raider (50), Male elf rogue**  
1/fighter 2; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 1d6 plus 2d10; hp 14; Init +3; Spd 40ft.; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk +5 melee (1d8+1/18-20, elven longblade) or +5 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow); Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+1/18-20, elven longblade) or +3/+3 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow); SA: sneak attack +1d6; SQ elf traits, trapfinding; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +0; AL CN; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

*Skills and Feats:* Appraise +4, Bluff +4, Diplomacy +4, Hide +7, Knowledge (warcraft) +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Spot +6; Concentrated Fire, Pointblank Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Finesse.

*Possessions:* elven longblade, longbow, quiver with 18 arrows, buckler, 1d4 cp.

The PCs will most probably choose one of the following courses of action: A) Pursue the elves, or B) Return to Tyr and inform Talara of what has happened. Should the PCs follow the elves, they embark on a side trek adventure until they get back on track and decide to return to Tyr.

### Side trek: Elf tracks

The tracks lead south and are almost impossible to miss. After a quarter mile, two pairs of tracks made by some kind of clawed biped creatures deviate from the main tracks. These new tracks head west. These tracks are in fact made by crodlus ridden by Nadar and Cratek. The elves had crodlus waiting for them to use to get back to Tyr.

If the PCs follow the crodlu tracks, proceed with "The Plot Thickens" below.

If the PCs decide to follow the main tracks made by the Wind Dancer elves, they will have to travel fast to catch up with the elves. The elves are induced in an elf run from this point onwards. That means they cover 50 miles in one day, not taking into consideration terrain modifiers.

If the PCs insist on following the elf tracks, they should be discouraged or stopped from heading in that direction. One solution could be to let a sandstorm wipe out the tracks.

If the PCs somehow catch up with the Wind Dancer elves, the elves are very hostile and will shoot at first sight. Their ranks include a 9<sup>th</sup> level wizard (defiler), Duukodo, who specializes in metamagically empowered long range damage-spells such as *fireball* and *lightning bolt*. The elves will use hit and run tactics if they feel that will benefit them, running a couple of hundred feet before firing their bows, and repeating these tactics until their enemies are defeated or give up their chase.

### The plot thickens

Nadar and Cratek ride crodlus back to Tyr and immediately venture to the Vordon manor. Thaxos is displeased to learn that his caravan was raided by elves, but since the primary mission of enlisting the wizard's services was a success (or at least he believes it to be so, when in fact the wizard now serves Nadar and House Mericles), Thaxos is content to let the matter go. He has another, more important task for Nadar – to travel to the secret training grounds he had created in the mountains southwest of Altaruk and return with an elite crew of assassins. The mountain training grounds house Thaxos' most promising hirelings gathered from the ranks of his dummy merchant houses.

Upon the PCs' return to Tyr, Thaxos' spies at the gates recognize them as Talara's spies and report to Thaxos. Nadar happens to be present when the spies arrive, and suggests to Thaxos that the PCs somehow were involved with the elf raid. Thaxos orders them killed in a slow and painful way, and sends his finest assassin, the halfling Derlan Watari, to do the job.

### 14. The Wayward Trader (EL 4)

At the Wayward Trader the PCs meet their mysterious employer (Talara Vordon) who wants to know what happened on the road to - and in - Urik.

*<Located in the Artisan's District, this quiet tavern is a favorite of locals. Nothing fancy, the Wayward Trader offers assorted ales and broy along with kip sausage and biscuits. The Trader is a good place to enjoy a brew without being bothered.><sup>1</sup> Some of the patrons send you sidelong glances as you enter the locale. A character wearing a hooded robe seated at a nearby table gestures for you to come over. As she throws back her hood, you recognize the woman who hired your services in the first place.*

*"Ah, you're back. I heard the caravan had an accident. Please, be seated. Try the Tyrian ale, it is among the finer." She motions for the barkeep to bring a round of ales. Each of you receives a mug of the famed ale and your mysterious employer tips the man with a silver coin and passes him a blink with one eye. "Now, tell me everything that happened." She says as she takes a sip of her mug.*

Upon learning of the caravan raid and the fact that Nadar and Cratek were lead away by the elves, she reacts with suspicion – after all, her agents reported that the two were back in Tyr. However, before she can explain her suspicions, Derlan Watari strikes, interrupting the conversation.

A knife covered with scorpion poison flies through an open window, aimed at a PC. Odds are that the halfling hits his target (+19 ranged attack). He then flees. Talara will leave at once, telling the PCs to meet her at the restaurant called The Golden Inix midway along Caravan Way, where security is better, at high sun (noon) the following day.

► **If the attack succeeds, read the following:** *You glimpse but a shadow in the corner of your eye, something that obscured the light coming from outside for a brief second. A moment later you (point at a PC) are struck by something. A sharp pain spreads through your arm before it goes numb. An obsidian knife coated with a yellow substance – poison! – is stuck in your lower arm, near the elbow.*

The PC struck by the knife suffers 1d2 points of damage plus 5d6 sneak attack damage, and must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage. After 1 minute he must make another save or suffer an additional 1d4 points of temporary Strength damage, regardless if the first save was successful or not. The poison is gold scorpion venom.

► **If the attack misses, read the following:** *You glimpse but a shadow in the corner of your eye, something that obscured the light coming from outside for a brief second. A moment later (point at a PC), an obsidian knife coated with a yellow substance barely misses you.*

► Continue with the following paragraph, regardless of the outcome of Derlan's attack: *You turn your head to spot your assailant, but there is but an open window there. Your employer rises to her feet and whispers "Meet me at the Golden Inix, midway along Caravan Way at high sun tomorrow. It is safer there." She then heads towards a curtain-covered doorway in the back of the locale. What do you do? Around you everyone's eyes are glued on you.*

If the PCs rush outside or to the window and gaze outside, they see no traces of the assassin. He is long gone and vanished in the crowds of people traversing Caravan Way.

**Stats for Derlan Watari can be found in the NPC section in the Appendix.**

## 15. The assassin's toys (EL 4)

The PCs are not safe from Derlan Watari. He will sneak up on them if they are passing through a crowded area such as a market, and slip a tiny scorpion into one of their backpacks (Spot check (DC 30) to notice the halfling slipping the scorpion into the backpack). Should he be caught red-handed, Derlan Watari will attempt to bribe himself out of the situation, and try to bluff the PCs into believing he was hired by a brown elf who paid good money for him to harass them.

<sup>1</sup> Quote from *City-state of Tyr* p. 28

The halfling will follow the PCs at a safe distance to wherever they are going to spend the night. Unless the PCs take precautions, such as barricading doors and windows or leaving someone on guard, the halfling will attempt to get in position to use his death attack and strike to kill this time. If the PCs take precautions, he will simply leave a little something for them outside their door – a bag with three aggressive tiny gold scorpions that will sting a PC foolish enough to open the bag without caution. Note: the scorpions can sting through the bag, for example if someone trying to feel what is inside by squeezing the bag. For this purpose they are effectively blind and suffer a 50% miss chance.

**Scorpion, Gold;** CR 1; Tiny vermin; HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp -2; Atk +3 melee (1d2-3, claw); Full Atk +3 melee x2 (1d2-3, 2 claws) and -2 melee (1d2-3 plus poison, sting); SA improved grab, poison (DC12, 1d6 temp Str damage/1d4 temp Str damage); SQ tremorsense 60', vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 5, Dex 10, Con 13, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2. *Skills and Feats:* Climb +1, Hide +12, Spot +4; Weapon Finesse (B).

## 16. The Golden Inix

*<Midway along Caravan Way where the road bends, a narrow alley opens on the left. Next to it, a long brick building, nearly as narrow as the alley, beckons weary travelers with the aroma of frying inix and sweet broy. A cracked sign overhead bears a golden inix on its left side opposite a stylized bottle, declaring the building to be a tavern.*

*A half-giant doorman grasping a huge stone morning star stands just to the right of the door. Several tables with seating for 2-4 people each take up the left side of a walkway that runs the length of the building to a stairway going up. A small, L-shaped counter is to the right of the stairway with a middle-aged, dark-haired half-elven woman seated behind it. In the wall behind the counter, a curtained doorway parts at irregular intervals as serving girls bring food and drink to the customers seated at the tables.><sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> Quote from *City-state of Tyr* p. 26

The PCs are directed to a table and a female human waiter recites the menu to them. Talara has not arrived, but does so shortly after the PCs have ordered or declined to do so. She apologizes for the trouble they are in and understands if they want an explanation. She presents herself as Talara Vordon (if the PCs have not already demanded to know her name) and answers their questions to the best of her abilities.

*"I'm sorry for the trouble I've caused you by affiliating with you. I am sure you have many questions, and I will try to answer them to the best of my ability. And I believe we haven't been properly introduced to one another." She smiles coyly and extends her hand to each of you to greet you formally. "I am Talara Vordon."*

Talara will answer most of the PCs' questions, though she will be careful not to say things she does not know for a fact.

In short Talara will say that she suspects her cousin Thaxos is up to something. He is gathering his best agents from his dummy merchant houses and his spies are following her every move. Something is brewing, and it is bound to spell trouble. The PCs are already labeled as targets for his mercenaries. Should the PCs inquire about the assassin trailing them, she informs them that it is Derlan Watari, Thaxos' halfling assassin and bodyguard.

If the PCs are willing to help her figure out what Thaxos is up to, she will pay them well.

*"Your help will be highly appreciated. I am sure we can come to some kind of agreement, my friends." The beautiful woman blinks one eye at you. "How do 80 silvers split between you sound?"*

If the PCs want to bargain on this offer, Talara is willing to pay as much as 120 silvers for their services, and she implies she can arrange for other benefits as well. Thaxos has frozen most of her assets, so she is unable to pay them any more money.

If the PCs agree to the proposal, Talara will tell them what they need to know for their next mission.

*“My sources in the Vordon manor report that Nadar is leaving for Altaruk. Officially he is to renegotiate the terms of a kank nectar contract with the merchant houses of Balic, but I suspect there is more to this trip than that – especially since the contract was renegotiated just a couple of months back. Normally the contract is renegotiated on a yearly basis.”*

*Talara also stresses that Nadar must be oblivious to the fact that he is being followed. “Nadar is leaving later in the afternoon, but you shouldn’t leave Tyr until at least a couple of hours have passed. I’ll have kanks reserved for you at the stables. Also, you should seek to avoid confrontation if it possible.” As her last words before you part, Talara instructs you to visit The Sandstone Inn in the Noble District upon your return to Tyr – and to tell the innkeeper the Lady sent them. Talara nods, stands up, and heads for the door.*

## 17. The assassin strikes again (EL 8)

Unless the PCs ask specifically to leave through the backdoor of the establishment, they will be attacked by Derlan Watari as they leave The Golden Inix. This time he will throw knives envenomed with scorpion poison. The halfling assassin will strike from an alley as the PCs leave the Golden Inix tavern. To slow the PCs down, he has completely covered a 30’ section of the alley with caltrops, to give him time to round the corner of the alley and climb to the top of the roof of the Golden Inix using his *slippers of spiderclimbing*, where he will hide to escape the PCs. Again the halfling assassin will most likely elude them.

### GAME TERMS

The alley is 55’ long and 10’ wide.

As Derlan Watari spotted Talara Vordon leaving the Golden Inix, he cast his *pass without trace* spell and ate a *potion fruit of expeditious retreat* (5th-level). His land speed increases by 30 feet.

When he spots the PCs leaving the establishment, he moves 40’ feet into the alley, avoiding the caltrops he has placed by using his *slippers of spiderclimbing* to walk on the wall. He prepares to strike when a PC walks past the alley. The PCs are most likely to be surprised.

### ROUND 1:

Everyone rolls for *initiative*, including Derlan Watari. Once he can act again, the halfling assassin uses a *full-round action* to hurl three poison-covered knives at the PCs and prepares to retreat.

### ROUND 2:

The next round Derlan Watari will move at full speed and attempt to escape around the corner at the opposite end of the alley, tumbling if necessary. He climbs to the top of the roof of the Golden Inix (20 ft) and lies down to hide on the flat roof.

Should the PCs climb up on the roof, Derlan Watari will seek to escape, leaping off the roof and activating his *psionic tattoo of catfall* to avoid damage from the 20’ fall. He will then try to get lost in the crowds of people traversing Caravan Way (opposed *Hide check* vs the PCs’ *Spot checks*). His *potion fruit* will remain in effect for a total of 50 rounds.

## 18. Templars at the gate (EL 2)

Nadar leaves Tyr later the same day. The templars at the gates have been paid to make life difficult for the PCs, but an appropriate bribe or *Diplomacy check* will let them off the hook. This encounter assumes the PCs have obtained the mounts Talara had arranged for them to pick up at the stables, but if the PCs haven’t, the templars will find another reason to harass the PCs.

*“Halt. Animal inspection”. The templar deliberately places himself between you and the gate, preventing your departure. No one else has had his animal inspected. The templar proceeds to inspect your mounts thoroughly, carving notes onto a clay tablet for each beast he inspects. “Planning on taking these kanks outside the city, huh? I don’t think so. Do you*

*see these ring patterns on the base of this kank's antennae? That's a rare specimen with a particularly strong sense of direction. We have orders to retain all such beasts. Further, this one (another kank), is infected by contagious parasites that affect both men and beasts. According to regulations I have to order you to take it to a licensed slaughterhouse. There is one in the Warrens I think."*

Any character with the **Handle Animal skill** can roll a **skill check vs. DC 15**. A successful **check** reveals that the templar doesn't know anything about animal handling, and that his claims regarding the kanks are false. Though any such inclinations will make the templar furious, and he will apply them a 20 cp fine.

The templar has been bribed with five silvers. If the PCs can match that bribe, he will let them pass. A **Diplomacy check (DC 25)** will also convince the templar to let them pass.

*"I suppose we can make a temporary exception. As long as you guarantee your return, we can accept a deposit – nonrefundable of course."*

### **Nadar's Travel Route**

Nadar is accompanied by his mul bodyguard Cratek and a band of guards from House Vordon, all mounted on crodlus. In addition to the crodlus they are riding, the party has six more crodlus, reserved for characters they are to pick up later. Nadar's party will stick to the road that goes from Tyr to Fort Skonz, which it will ride past, but rest at Fort Amber before continuing southeast on the road to Altaruk.

## **19. Dehydrated elf**

During the desert trek, somewhere between Fort Amber and Altaruk, the PCs will encounter a severely dehydrated elf scout from the Wind Dancer tribe, who fled from a thri-kreen pack that has chased him for many days.

*You spot something, or someone to be more precise, lying on the side of the well-traversed desert road. A closer inspection reveals it is an elf. He is*

*unconscious, but still breathing – his chest moving up and down at regular intervals. From the looks of it, the elf has been lying in the sun for quite some time. He is severely dehydrated and will die if left unattended to.*

If the PCs share their water with the elf and give him some food, he will awaken and in return answer any questions the PCs might have. The elf encountered Nadar's party but they ignored his pleas for help and simply rode past him. Attentive PCs will recognize the elf's tribal signs as those of the raiders of the caravan. The elf, Dukkoti Breezechaser, recognized Nadar from the raid. All he knows is that the human trader arranged it so that the Wind Dancers could raid the caravan in return for the tribe's favor in the future. The elf asks humbly if he can spend the night by the PCs' campfire, as he is in no condition to run, he claims.

However, he recuperates quite quickly, and in the middle of the night he offers to stand guard, "the least he can do to thank them for saving his life".. However, an elf is an elf, and outsiders are outsiders, so Dukkoti takes with him what he deems valuable from the PCs' backpacks while they sleep, and takes off while it is still dark, heading west into the sandy wastes. Cautious PCs will remain on guard and prevent this from happening, in which case Dukkoti leaves them as the sun rises.



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## 20. Giant problems (EL 12)

As they near Altaruk, Thaxos and his band leave the road and head west then south towards the mountains surrounding the merchant village. When the PCs arrive on the location where the tracks head west, they have a problem to contend with. A pair of giants coming from the east has spotted them. The giants are raiders in search of valuables and new skulls to add to their collection of trophies. This encounter will most likely end in the deaths of one or more PCs. Clever PCs will flee. At the beginning of the encounter the giants are 600 feet away.

**Giant, Desert (2):** CR 10; Huge giant; HD 14d8+56; hp 161, 142; Init +2; Spd 40 ft; AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +10; Grp +26; Atk +17 melee (2d8+12/x3, spear) or +16 melee (1d8+8, slam) or +11 ranged (2d8+8, rock); Full Atk +17/+12 melee (2d8+12/x3, spear) or +16 melee x2 (1d8+8, 2 slams) or +11 ranged (2d8+8, rock); SA rock throwing; SQ lowlight vision, PR 15, rock catching; AL NE; SV Fort +13, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 27, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 11.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +18, Jump +20, Listen +12, Spot +12, Survival +12; Cleave, Combat Reflexes,

Great Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (spear).

*Possessions:* net made from giant hair containing 6 rocks, gargantuan short spear, 30 gallon keg of water (14 gallons remaining), skull collection.

## 21. Mountain training camp (EL 4)

After dealing with the giants, the PCs can continue tracking Nadar. His tracks lead to the mountains in the southwest. The PCs must leave their mounts at the foot of the mountains, for the kanks are not fit for such a rough climb. A pair of guards watches the Vordon party's crodlus.

**Vordon Guards (2):** Male human fighter 2; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d10+3; hp 18; Init +0; Spd 30ft.; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk +4 melee (1d8+1/x3, carrikal) or +2 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow); Full Atk +4 melee (1d8+1/x3, carrikal) or +2 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow); SA -; SQ -; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0; AL LN; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +6, Handle Animal +5, Knowledge(warcraft) +5; Assistance, Teamwork, Toughness, Weapon Focus (carrikal).

*Possessions:* Two one-gallon waterskins, backpack, trail rations for five days, torch, 1d10 cp, carrikal, leather armor, wood small shield, shortbow, quiver with 12 arrows.

Assuming the PCs do not raise too much noise and/or avoid the guards, they will be able to follow Nadar's trail to the edge of a canyon without being detected, where a small road winds down into the canyon which houses several tents and stone buildings – a camp of sorts.

*Following the trail of Nadar's party you reach the edge of a cliff overlooking a canyon housing several tents and stone buildings. A small road winds down into the canyon. You can see that the canyon is bustling with activity. Men and women of various races are engaged in various forms of training – equal in hardship to the classes at a gladiatorial school.*

Nadar is greeted by the agent responsible for the training camp, Suleiman, and the two will talk in his tent, while Cratek waits outside.

*You observe Nadar being greeted by a powerfully built bald man with dark skin, and the two vanish into one of the tents. Cratek stands guard outside.*

Allow the PCs a couple of minutes to act if they want to sneak closer or do something else. After a while, the pair will emerge, and everyone in the camp will be called together. Suleiman will speak loudly, and the PCs can overhear his words if they sneak closer. Suleiman then proceeds to pick out the ones that will return to Tyr with Nadar.

*After a while the pair emerges from the tent and everyone in the camp is called together. They form disciplined ranks and fall silent in instants. The man accompanying Nadar speaks for all to hear: "The time is nearing. Lord Thaxos is making the final preparations as we speak. Master Nadar has been sent to retrieve a band for a most important mission. I will personally select the men and women to go with him. The rest of us will remain here until further notice and keep training. When the time comes we will all be rewarded for our efforts." He then proceeds to pick out the ones that will go with Nadar, a total of five men and one woman.*

Nadar and Cratek are accompanied by six experienced and well trained mercenaries: Redblade, a male half-elf nomad/soulknife; Yaris, a female human rogue/assassin; Mutami, a male elf fighter/rogue; Crakos, a male human wizard (defiler); Borrass, a male dwarf kineticist; and Sa'mar, a male mul gladiator/rogue..

**Stats for the mercenaries can be found in the NPC section of the Appendix.**

## 22. Don't you just hate sligs? (EL 7+)

Just as Nadar and his mercenary party are preparing to leave the canyon through the same way they entered, the PCs are attacked by a band of sligs. The sound of battle alerts the camp to their presence. Nadar and Suleiman order that

the intruders are to be killed, and the camp's many well-trained mercenaries storm forth to take care of the threat. The PCs must defeat the sligs quickly and seek to escape before the mercenaries catch up with them. If the PCs manage to reach the foot of the mountains and their mounts, the mercenaries give up their chase on foot, and return to camp. Thaxos and his team head straight for Tyr using magical aid to speed their travel.

Use the stats for the 6 mercenaries accompanying Nadar and Cratek for ranged weapon attacks, and if any mercenaries catch up with the PCs. The PCs have a 120 feet head start, less if they moved closer to overhear Suleiman's speech. The PCs have one round to combat the sligs before the mercenaries in the camp react to their orders.

**Slig (6);** CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 4d8-4; hp 14; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk +5 melee (1d6+2, club); Full Atk +5 melee (1d6+2, club) and melee +0 (1d3+1, bite); SA formation attack; SQ telepathy (30 ft.); AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 11, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6.

*Skills and Feats:* Craft (weaponmaking) +4, Listen +3, Spot +4, Survival +6; Power Attack, Teamwork.

*Possessions:* club.

The mercenaries will accept the party's surrender, should the PCs offer it. They will have them stripped of their equipment and taken back to the camp for interrogation and death by the blistering rays of the crimson sun as they are bound on hands and feet and tied to wooden stakes and left to die in the outskirts of the camp. Hopefully the PCs manage to evade the mercenaries and avoid being captured (or at least find a way to escape from the camp if they are captured).

## 23. Turbulence in Tyr

Nadar and his team of chosen mercenaries head straight for Tyr using magical aid to speed their

travel. Thus, Nadar's party most likely reaches Tyr before the PCs do. Upon their return to Tyr the PCs learn that a lot has happened during the last 24 hours.

The city is in turbulence. Several prominent senators and representatives of the Tyrian government have been murdered or attempted murdered in the night that passed. A total of six assassination attempts took place, three succeeded. A [Gather Information](#) check allows a PC to pick up the rumors circulating.

DC 5: Several senators have been assassinated.

DC 10: The city guard is clueless.

DC 15: Six murder attempts, three dead men.

DC 20: Someone saw a mysterious woman flee from the dead Senior Templar Gennet's house.\*

\*DM note: the assassin Yaris in the Appendix

Normally, information does not spread this quickly across the city, but important rumors regarding several prominent politicians from different factions being murdered and attempted murdered *do* spread quickly, and especially with a little aid from Thaxos' men.

A public emergency meeting in the Council Chambers is being arranged. If the PCs attend the meeting, they will witness accusations, threats and arguments between prominent Tyrian characters. If the PCs do not attend the meeting, but venture to the Sandstone Inn, jump to encounter 24.

*Senior Templar Gennet in the Bureau of Finance was murdered last night. The templars accuse the merchants of being responsible as recent tax reforms were bound to cause anger in that faction. Master Sintha of House Valex retorts that the templars are well-known for their scheming and internal bickering. "It is just too bad an innocent merchant became a victim to their treacherous ways.", Sintha adds, referring to the fact that Rowen the Tailor, the Council representative from the Caravan Way was also found dead this morning. This results in a wail of commotion between the templars and merchants present. Then someone shouts that the Preservers, being the only faction the assassins didn't murder any prominent characters in, must be responsible. Sadira of Tyr rises to counter the claim, and the*

*Council chambers are reduced to a chaotic forum of accusations, threats and arguments.*

*Senator Vildeen Tyrthani manages to silence the parties, but the Senator Turax blurts out "Which one of you three wants to take responsibility for the attempted murder on the noble Senator Trevalis Minthur?", resulting in an outburst from the crowd. The crowd finally falls to silence as the aging patriarch of House Vordon rises from his position among seated spectators. Seated next to Thaxos you spot a halfling clad in identical robes as the tradelord. "If I may, senators, honored templars, respected nobles, and fellow tradesmen – citizens of Tyr." Thaxos begins.*

*The council chambers become utterly silent. "It is evident that someone is trying to sow discontent among Tyr's people and its political factions. This night's bloodshed and cowardly attacks, and the fact that the city guard has been unable to find the perpetrators means that no one is safe in our free city." Thaxos Vordon clears his throat.*

*"I for one will not let our city fall victim to assassins and those who employ them to take away our freedom. I will not yield. I do not doubt that you are present now, traitor, gloating at your deeds, so hear my words. I am not afraid to incur your wrath. Send your assassins, coward, or speak up now, if you are brave enough." The crowd's roars grow as the aging tradelord speaks, and end in wild applause to his finishing remarks. Thaxos bows slightly as he smiles and raises his palm, gesturing slowly for the crowd to fall silent again. His face suddenly turns gravely serious as he continues. "Sadly the city guard is unable to protect Tyr's citizens... "*

*Captain Zalcor rises to object, but Timor, the Senior Templar and Minister of Tyr, gestures for him to remain seated, passing a short nod to the captain of the city guard. Thaxos continues uninterrupted. "... and thus I see it as my sworn duty to Tyr and her citizens, to put an end to these outrageous murders, and at the same time put an end to the criminal threat in the Warrens." The people applaud the aging tradelord once again.*

*The senior templar signals for Zalcor to raise his objection. "All that sounds fine and well, Lord Thaxos, but how will you make truth out of your words, if you don't mind me asking?" Thaxos turns to face Zalcor and bows slightly before addressing the*

veteran guardsman. *"Of course, my dear Captain Zalcor. I mean no disrespect to the City guard, but it is evident matters are out of control. What if more murders were to take place? We would soon no longer have a Council to lead us. Where you have failed to succeed, my experienced guards and agents might have something to contribute. My resources are at the city's disposal, as they have always been. Was it not House Vordon that kept the citizens of Tyr fed during the chaotic times following our despotic sorcerer-king's death – and did we ask for anything in return? No. Nor do we ask anything in return this time, except permission to lend our aid."* The people once again applaud the trade patriarch of House Vordon.

*Timor, the Senior templar and Minister of Tyr rises after conferring quickly with Sadira, and Rikus who has been paying close attention to the discussion between the various parties. "The city thanks you for your generous offer, Lord Thaxos, but the Council has faith in the city guard. Investigations are being conducted as we speak, and I assure you that all resources are allocated in our search for the one responsible for the assassinations." Timor gives a slight bow, but receives a dissatisfied growl from the crowd. Someone calls out that the assassins could be halfway to Urik or some other rivaling city-state by now. Another voice shouts that it is foolish not to accept offers of aid from the ones who can afford to help. A third voice says that the city guard has nothing to lose except its pride if House Vordon's agents resolve the matter. Lord Thaxos stands, smiling with his hands folded on his back as the roars of the crowd demand his intervention.*

*Thaxos finally raises his hand and the people become quiet. "The people of Tyr have spoken. I will put an end to the threats within our fair city, so the Council can focus its efforts on the enemies outside Tyr's walls in the future." For that speech, Thaxos receives a standing ovation. Sadira, Timor and Rikus look to one another and shake their heads slowly, clearly dissatisfied with the people's reaction, while Thaxos enjoys the crowd's ovations.*

Thaxos has reasons for smiling. He has just legitimized moving his troops into the city – or at least in the eyes of the average citizen. This brings his visions of a coup closer to reality. Everything is being played out according to his plan.

Talara is in the crowd, wearing a hooded cloak, and has spotted the PCs. "Come" she says as she passes by them on the way out. Talara leads the PCs out of the Council Chambers, and to The Sandstone Inn in the Noble district.

## 24. The Sandstone Inn

If the PCs did not attend the meeting in the Council chambers, but showed up at The Sandstone Inn and told the innkeeper that "the Lady sent them", the innkeeper will send a messenger to alert Talara of the PCs' arrival. Talara then arrives after the meeting, and can fill the PCs in on what has happened (The DM must read encounter 23 and provide what details he or she deems necessary).

*"Thaxos has legitimized moving his troops into the city, at least in the eyes of the people. The Council is powerless when he has the people wrapped around his finger. Now, tell me what did you discover on your trip to Altaruk?"*

Talara is convinced that Thaxos is planning a coup. When the PCs report of Nadar's visit to the secret training camp in the mountains southwest of Altaruk and the band he returned to Tyr with, she is utterly convinced of her fears, for six assassination attempts took place (three succeeded). Talara has long suspected her cousin of planning something grand. His dummy houses have been very active when it comes to recruiting and maintaining relations with experienced agents.

*Talara looks increasingly worried as you relate your story. As you finish she bites her lip and cocks an eyebrow at you. "This all but confirms my suspicions. Those mercenaries Nadar brought back – they're the assassins. There were six assassination attempts, three of them succeeded... Of course. And that mountain camp is training grounds for Thaxos' elite agents recruited from the ranks of his dummy merchant houses. He must have vast numbers of troops and highly specialized individuals serving him. I've had my suspicions regarding those dummy merchant houses. I have a feeling that this is but the tip of the mountaintop. What say you, friends?"*

Talara is also convinced that Nadar is less loyal than he appears to be, but does not know the extent of his treacherous activities. She assumes he is simply trying to increase the size of his own purse. The problem is that Talara cannot simply accuse Thaxos of planning a coup – she needs evidence.

*Even though you are the only patrons present at the Sandstone Inn, Talara motions for you to lean forward and whispers. “The problem is we cannot simply accuse Thaxos of planning a coup – we need evidence. My informant in the Vordon manor has disappeared. Most likely she lies buried somewhere after Thaxos realized his servant was working for me. However, her last report revealed something that could prove to be a vital clue. She mentioned several visits to Thaxos’ office by the head of House Troika, possibly one of Thaxos’ latest dummy houses.” Talara pauses to breathe.*

*“If you could somehow sneak into House Troika’s headquarters, and find some kind of evidence of Thaxos’ activities, I could present the evidence to the Council and have him exposed once and for all. As the situation is now, no one will react to an increased amount of Vordon guards and agents gathering within Tyr’s walls. A coup could take place any time soon. It is crucial that you act quickly. I can offer you no more money at the moment, as Thaxos has frozen all of my assets. Though if he is found guilty in conspiracy against the Council of Tyr, I am sure you will be handsomely rewarded. While he is popular among the average citizens, there are those on the Council who would like to see him rot in a prison cell or his head placed on the chopping block.”*

## 25. House Troika (EL 11)

How the PCs proceed to investigate House Troika is up to them. During the day, the cramped office in the Merchant District is fairly busy, as various agents stop by to pick up orders from the House’s founder and caravan master, Asher Troika, who is also responsible for Thaxos Vordon’s network of agents and keeping tabs on the location of all Vordon and dummy house troops.

A large amount of guards, surprisingly many for such a small trading house, keep watch. Asher will see the PCs if they request an audience. As

they enter, Asher closes a book he is writing something in, mumbles something to himself, and places the book in a drawer in his desk. He does not know who the PCs are, and says he is not employing anyone new at the moment. Unless they are there on trade matters, he will have them escorted out by a clerk. If asked about his extensive amount of guards, Asher stresses that one cannot be too careful with the current turmoil and assassins running loose. If asked about Thaxos Vordon, Asher says he is glad that someone is going to set things right in Tyr, when the city guard has failed.

Careful observation of the Troika headquarters will reveal that a pair of the mercenaries brought back from the mountain camp near Altaruk pays the house a visit in the afternoon. It is the elf male Mutami and the human female Yaris. They stay for about ten minutes before they leave. Should the PCs follow the pair, they will eventually come to a seedy establishment in the Warrens, known as The Dying Crodlu. The entire band of six mercenaries from the mountain camp will be gathered here when the two arrive, but the mercenaries will most likely not recognize the PCs as the intruders from the camp, unless the PCs tried to sneak very close to the lair and were discovered before the slig attack. The mercenaries are waiting for nightfall, when they will split into two teams – each with a new assassination mission. Yaris, Borrás and Sa’mar will attempt to assassinate Talara Vordon, while Mutami, Crakos and Redblade will attempt to assassinate Captain Zalcor.

If the PCs decide to break into the House Troika office at night, they will find that almost as many guards stand posted outside the building at night. The PCs will have to come up with a plan to gain access to the building. A fake search warrant created with the [Forgery skill](#), creating a diversion, [charming](#) the officer in charge of command to let the party inside, or sneaking in [invisible](#) are all sound plans. The entrance door is not locked, but has a guard posted directly in front of it.

**House Troika Guard (12):** Male human fighter 4; CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 4d10+4; hp 30; Init +2; Spd 20ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +4; Grp +6; Atk +7 melee (1d8+5/x3,

datchi club) or +6 ranged (javelin, 1d6+2); SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +2; AL LN; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 10.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +7, Intimidate +6, Jump +7, Listen +6, Spot +6; Alertness, Cleave, Concentrated Fire, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (datchi club), Weapon Specialization (datchi club).

*Possessions:* scalemail, datchi club, javelin, 2d8 cp.

Once inside, the PCs must get through either locked door to Asher Troika's office (Open Lock skill (DC 25); hardness 5, hit points 15, break DC 18). Any loud noise will attract the guards outside.

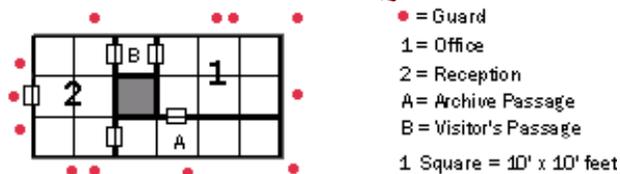
**1. Office:** A locked drawer (Open Lock skill (DC 30); hardness 5, hit points 1, break DC 17) in Asher Troika's office desk contains an employment logbook. Streetmaps showing two marked buildings also lie in the drawer.

**2. Reception:** A few art objects. A tidy desk with a report on cotton prices and a wax candle can be found on the desk.

**A. Visitor's Passage:** Some art objects of lesser value for waiting visitors to have something to look at. A leather couch and two wooden chairs.

**B. Archive Passage:** Files on old trade contracts, prices and caravan expenses, but nothing illegal or suspicious.

#### MAP OF HOUSE TROIKA HQ INTERIOR



#### Evidence

The logbook from the office (area 1) has information on guards and agents hired by House Troika, comments on the ones that have "potential for the cause", along with troop allocation information for a series of dummy houses. While Asher Troika has burned the maps of the murder victims and the attempted murder victims of the previous night, one map still lies in the drawer – a street map with two

marked buildings - the home of Captain Zalcor, and Talara Vordon's residence in the Noble District. These are this night's assassination targets. If the PCs realize this, they should rush to the homes of Zalcor and Talara to warn them, or at least alert the city guard. The PCs are welcome to go with the city guard, or they might try to prevent the assassinations on their own. In either case, the PCs will be in the nick of time to save Zalcor and/or Talara.

As noted above Yaris, Borrás and Sa'mar will attempt to assassinate Talara Vordon, while Mutami, Crakos and Redblade will attempt to assassinate Captain Zalcor.

**Stats for the six assassins (elite agents) can be found in the Appendix.**

#### If the PCs quit... or fail.

bail out, or fail in finding evidence of his activities, Thaxos will move his troops into the city within one week and plant false clues to the identities of the ones responsible for the killings. Once he reveals "a conspiracy" between Sadira, Rikus and Timor and their "schemes" to eliminate their political enemies, the people's favor of the Council dwindles to a minimum. Thaxos declares martial law with the support of the people, and his troops arrest the Council members immediately. A bloody civil war erupts and rages for weeks before Thaxos' elite agents infiltrate the opposition's ranks and assassinate its leaders. He soon crowns himself King of Tyr and holds the city in an iron grip. It is too late when the people realize it has a new tyrant ruler. Long live King Thaxos the first!

#### The plan has been foiled!

The bodies of the assassins along with the map and the agent lists make up the evidence needed to have Thaxos judged and convicted in the courts of Tyr. If the PCs took with them the employment logbook and maps they will have the evidence they need to arrest Thaxos. Captain Zalcor / Talara will have Timor, Sadira and

Rikus woken up and summoned to the Council chambers immediately to get approval for the tradelord's arrest.

However, the PCs and the city guard are too late. The guards of House Troika discovered the break-in shortly after the PCs left the headquarters. Asher Troika was summoned immediately, and rode out to the Vordon estate when he found out that the logbook and maps were missing. Thaxos is furious that his plans have been discovered, and realizes that his chances for a successful coup are dwindling. The majority of his troops have not yet arrived. He

Note to the DM: Captain Zalcor and Talara Vordon are both so important in Tyr and to the adventure, that even if the PCs do not react to the maps, the assassination attempts should fail.

will be unable to defeat the city guard and claim the throne – his long-term plan has been foiled. If any of his assassins survived the encounter with the city guard and the PCs, they will arrive shortly after Asher and report. Once Thaxos realizes the PCs are to blame, he orders Derlan Watari to finish the job given to him earlier and have the PCs suffer.

Thaxos, Asher, Nadar, Cratek, and any mercenaries who survived will leave Tyr immediately and head for Fort Amber, the Vordon merchant fort on the road south. There they will stock up on supplies and valuables, and change to rested animals before heading on south towards Altaruk. The troops of the fort are ordered to kill any pursuers arriving the next 48 hours.

### Nadar's deceit

Nadar's original plan was to serve Thaxos until the old trader aspired to be King of Tyr. Then when the people would realize they had traded their freedom for dictatorship, he would liberate Tyr with the various groups and individuals he has built good relations with over the years (the latest additions being the wizard in Urik and the elves of the Wind Dancers tribe). He would return the power to the Council in return for the

title of King, as Tithian had before him – and once again the House Mericles would be at the head of Tyrian politics.

However, it is not too late for Nadar to restore his family's honor – he can still regain glory by returning to Tyr with Thaxos dead or alive. However, he will have to get rid of the PCs first should they show up – and he has a feeling they will. They will undoubtedly try to take Thaxos back for themselves to further their own gains. So Nadar will bide his time until the moment is right. He also needs to get rid of Asher Troika and any remaining assassins still loyal to Thaxos. Fortunately he has Cratek to aid him when the time comes.

## 26. One last favor

In Tyr the city guard (and possibly the PCs) discover that Thaxos has escaped. It will take time to organize the city guard to follow him. Talara asks the PCs for one last favor – to bring back Thaxos alive, so she can have him convicted to death in the courts of Tyr. If they succeed, they will be richly rewarded. Captain Zalcor promises them that they will be greeted as heroes upon their return, and that he will make sure the city rewards them properly.

*"Bring Thaxos Vordon back alive. He will be convicted in the Courts and exposed for the people to see his true motives for offering his aid. The tyrant Thaxos will be revealed, and the people will hate him for it. He must not be allowed to escape. A man with his resources could retaliate in the future. Bring him back alive. He is less worth to us dead. Good luck, friends. The city will reward you on your return. Mounts will be prepared and waiting for you at the stables by the gates."*

## 27. Did you miss me? (EL 15)

Derlan Watari strikes as the PCs are heading towards the stables by the city gate. He strikes from the shadows of an alley with his poisoned knives. If the PCs move in to take care of him once and for all, he flees further into the dark

alley. PCs following him are in for a nasty surprise – the halfling has let loose eight aggressive gold scorpions he assumes will occupy them while he throws more poison-covered knives at them.

The alley is 10' wide and 60' long. Should a PC run through the field of scorpions, he will suffer numerous **readied attacks** before reaching the halfling (they are trained to do this). Note that the field of scorpions is only 15' long, so a character with the **Tumble skill** can avoid the scorpions by tumbling past them). If that happens, Derlan Watari is in trouble, for he is not capable of outrunning most PCs. He could try to escape by running up a wall, but this generates an **attack of opportunity** that could knock him down again if it hits. Also, this time there is no crowd to disappear in, as few wander the streets of Tyr at night. This time the PCs have a fair chance of actually killing the assassin.

The DM should keep in mind that Derlan is quite capable of killing one or more PCs in this encounter, if utilized to full effect.

**Scorpion, Gold (8)**; CR 1; Tiny vermin; HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp -2; Atk +3 melee (1d2-3, claw); Full Atk +3 melee x2 (1d2-3, 2 claws) and -2 melee (1d2-3 plus poison, sting); SA improved grab, poison (DC 12, 1d6 temp Str damage/1d4 temp Str damage); SQ tremorsense 60', vermin; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 5, Dex 10, Con 13, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2.  
*Skills and Feats*: Climb +1, Hide +12, Spot +4; Weapon Finesse (B).

## 28. After them!

The PCs can get mounts at the stables and follow Thaxos' party. If the PCs plan to stop by Fort Amber they will be ambushed once inside the fort (Use stats for Vordon Guards from encounter 21. There are 50 guards). Stopping at Fort Skonz is possible, as it is not owned by House Vordon.

However, even if they avoid Fort Amber, the PCs can have a number of encounters before they catch up with the Vordon party. Depending

on their previous actions, these encounters may be avoided or the outcome changed.



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## 29. The assassin's revenge (EL -)

If the PCs did not finish off Derlan Watari in Tyr, he will follow them on a crodlu, and attempt to sneak into their lair at night. If the PCs have a shared water supply, such as a barrel, he will attempt to make a hole in it to deplete them of their water. He could try to poison their mounts, or slip more scorpions into their backpacks, before he withdraws to plan further actions against them.

The DM is encouraged to be vicious, and to keep in mind that a slow and painful death is better than a quick and messy one.

## 30. Dune runner (EL 5)

If the PCs did not help the Wind Dancer elf earlier in the adventure, the elf died of dehydration and starvation. His corpse forever roams across the dunes in an endless run. He is a

dune runner, and his mere presence can curse others to join his run until they faint and even die through from exhaustion and the heat of the sun.

**Dune Runner**; CR 5; Male elf rogue 1/fighter 2; Medium undead; HD 3d12; hp 18; Init +10; Spd 50ft.; AC 18, touch 16, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk +3 melee (1d3 +1, unarmed strike [fist]); SA *compulsion* (Will DC 11), psionics, sneak attack +1d6; SQ elf traits, undead; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +0; AL CN; Str 12, Dex 22, Con -, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

*Skills and Feats*: Appraise +4, Bluff +4, Diplomacy +8, Hide +10, Knowledge (warcraft) +4, Listen +10, Move Silently +10, Search +10, Spot +6; Concentrated Fire, Improved Initiative (B), Pointblank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot.

*Possessions*: none (looted).

**Psi-like Abilities**: At will – *attraction* (DC 12, +5 interaction bonus), *mindlink* (3 willing targets), *psionic dominate* (DC 15, 2 targets). Manifest level 3rd. The save DCs are Charisma-based. All statistics include augmentation for the dune runner's manifest level.

### 31. Dune reaper carcass

The PCs come across a dune reaper carcass covered by desert bugs and a kes'trekel that flees upon the PCs' arrival. The dune reaper carries wounds that show that it was slain by men with bladed weapons. The dune reaper attacked Thaxos' company and suffered death at the hands of Cratek and Asher.

### 32. Confrontation (EL varies)

The PCs come walking over a dune to discover the Vordon party surrounded by a large thri-kreen pack. This pack is the same that was hunting the Wind Dancer scout the PCs encountered earlier. The kreen encountered Thaxos' party, and was preparing to attack, but the old trader managed to convince the kreen that mutual benefit could be gained from not

fighting. He has struck a deal with the kreen. In return for gems, the kreen will hunt anyone coming down the road from the north.

*You walk over a dune to discover the Vordon party surrounded by a large pack of thri-kreen. They are not fighting. You spot Thaxos Vordon conversing with one of the mantis warriors, who is inspecting a gem. "Nice shiny" you overhear the kreen leader say in broken common. It then clicks something to its fellow warriors who click their mandibles together in approval.*

The kreen leader agrees to the proposed deal. Then they become aware of the PCs.

*"It's them!" Nadar points and shouts. "Slay them!" Thaxos commands. The kreen leader turns to his warriors and gives an order in the kreen tongue. Suddenly, everyone's eyes turn to you and the kreen charge forward, waving gythkas and preparing to throw chatkchas. You brace yourselves, for few things are more terrible to encounter than a pack of thri-kreen raiders.*

The large thri-kreen pack attacks in waves, while Thaxos and Nadar watch with delight. The PCs will have to fend the kreen off for almost half a minute (5 rounds) before they notice the shadows appearing along the border horizon of the surrounding dunes. The PCs are surrounded and clearly outnumbered when the Wind Dancers arrive.

**Thri-Kreen (36)**; CR 1; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 2d8; hp 9; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk +1 melee (claw 1d4 or gythka 1d8) or +3 ranged (1d6, chatkcha); Full Atk 4 claws +1 melee (1d4) and bite -1 (1d4 plus poison) or gythka -1/-1 melee (1d8/1d8) and -1 melee (1d4 plus poison, bite) or +3 ranged (chatkcha); SA poison (DC 11, paralysis 2d6 minutes/paralysis 2d6 minutes); SQ darkvision 60', sleep immunity, leap; AL LN; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6.

*Skills and Feats*: Balance +4, Hide +4, Jump +30, Listen +3, Spot +3; Deflect Arrows(B), Multiweapon Fighting.

*Possessions*: gythka, 2x chatkcha.

**Wind Dancer Raider (50)**, Male elf rogue  
1/fighter 2; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 1d6 plus 2d10; hp 14; Init +3; Spd 40ft.; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk +5 melee (1d8+1/18-20, elven longblade,) or +5 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow); Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+1/18-20, elven longblade) or +3/+3 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow); SA: sneak attack +1d6; SQ elf traits; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +0; AL CN; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

*Skills and Feats:* Appraise +4, Bluff +4, Diplomacy +4, Hide +7, Knowledge (warcraft) +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Spot +6; Concentrated Fire, Pointblank Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Finesse.

*Possessions:* elven longblade, longbow, quiver with 18 arrows, buckler, 1d4 cp.

*You are outnumbered and surrounded. The kreen attack in wave after wave, and you don't know for how much longer you can bear to fight. In the heat of battle you suddenly notice several shadows appearing along the border horizon of the surrounding dunes.*

*By Ral, it is an elven warparty!*

*"Inferior bugs" shouts the elven leader. "You will perish and your carapaces rot in the sun-scorched sands." The kreen shift their attention from you to the new threat and tastier enemy. The kreen leader clicks his mandibles as he announces Gyth-tik! ("Blood hunt!") and the thri-kreen charge towards the elves on top of the dunes in great leaps. The elven leader replies in elven: E'Kontii Matota! Maakotii Matota!*

*("Death to our enemies! Death to the ones who have wronged us!"). The elves let loose a volley of arrows. For a moment you are forgotten, but not for long. The agents from House Vordon draw their weapons.*

Now is the PCs' chance to fight Thaxos, Nadar, Ashar, Cratek and any other Vordon agents still alive. The kreen and elves clash in a bloody battle. The outcome of the battle will be quickly decided, as the elven archers draw their tribal swords to deal with the kreen survivors of the initial volley of arrows. Note that Thaxos will not use his psionic powers. In case his party loses the battle, he does not want the PCs to know about his powers, in case he can plead for their mercy (or they wish to bring him back to Tyr and he could use his powers to escape). He will however defend himself as best as he can in melee combat should he become the target of the

PCs' attacks. Although old, Thaxos is quite capable of defending himself.



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*Arrows soar through the air. Chatkchas spin towards their intended targets. Those elves not engaged in melee combat with the feasting kreen fire volley upon volley of arrows at the mantis warriors. Everywhere surrounding you kreen fall victim to the elven arrows. Any elf unfortunate enough to come within reach of the kreen's melee range is ripped apart by the ferocious claws and gythkas of their insectoid enemies. The sand dunes have turned into a slaughter ground of elves and thri-kreen warriors. However, the elves have the upper hand through their sheer strength in numbers. Finally the last kreen falls as a dozen elven arrows pierce its chitin, and the mantis warrior sinks to its knees before collapsing in the red-tainted sands. The elves cry out in triumph.*

During the battle between the PCs and the Vordon party, Nadar throws down his weapons and offers to surrender. "Stop. I surrender. I've never done you harm, and our goals are the same." After the PCs finish any other enemies still standing, Thaxos and Nadar remain (if the PCs spare them). The elves encircle the survivors of the Vordon party and the PCs.

*The elves now turn their attention to you. They have you surrounded. Eager elven voices whisper on top of the dunes of what ways would be more interesting to kill you.*

► **If Nadar is dead, read the following:**

*The elven leader gazes down upon you with discontent to the visage of her fallen comrades and the slaughtered kreen you stand amidst. She raises her hand and the elves become silent. Then she speaks to you. "I can order your deaths by a single word or motion of the wrist." she says coldly. "However, you have freed me from my debt to the one called Nadar. For that I will spare your lives. Leave by the road you came. Take nothing with you from the fallen, for what they carry is compensation for my warriors who died today. Do not look back before the sun sets beyond the mountains to the west."*

The PCs are free to leave, but if they attempt to loot any bodies, the elves will show the PCs zero tolerance and open fire.

► **If Nadar is still alive, read the following:**

*Nadar steps forward, whispering "I'll get us out of this mess". He then addresses the elven leader. "Santhaal Wind Dancer. We meet again." Nadar calls out. "Congratulations on your victory and thank you for saving us from the barbaric thri-kreen." The elven chief shakes her head. "Nadar. I have lost many good warriors today and you congratulate me? You have a lot to learn. Tell me then, of your business out here." Nadar bows. "I apologize. I spoke without thinking. I am thankful you came to our aid." "Do not flatter yourself, even if we owe you a favor, we fought the kreen for our own reasons, not for you." "Charming as always, Santhaal" says Nadar and smiles. "Now about that favor." "Yes?" asks the elven chief. Nadar turns to you and looks at Thaxos before he smilingly says "Kill them all." "Very well." replies Santhaal. The elves reach for their arrows.*

The PCs will have to come up with a very good offer to convince the elven leader to spare them. However, if they aided Dukkoti Breezechaser, the dehydrated elf, who tried to steal their goods if they helped him, he will now return the favor. He calls out to his leader.

*A single elf steps forward. You recognize him as the dehydrated elf whom you aided earlier. He calls out to his leader: "Wait. This human left me to die in the*

*sandy wastes. These others showed me compassion and saved my life." Santhaal gazes at Dukkoti with no hint of thought, then turns her gaze to Nadar and then to you. "You" – she says and points at you, "step back with the old man." Santhaal pauses briefly before she continues. "You know, Nadar, we already repaid the favor by saving you from becoming a meal for the bugs. But I am feeling generous today, hence I will grant your request. "Nadar bows deeply. "Most gracious, my dear Santhaal." The female elf smiles and turns to address her warriors. "By all means. Let him witness that we elves are true to our words."*

*As the elves draw arrows and pull back their bowstrings, Nadar turns to you and makes a waving gesture. "Too bad you won't be around to see me crowned as hero when I bring Thaxos' body before the Council." The sound of a dozen arrows being fired at the same time pierces the air. Instants later Nadar's eyes widen as the arrows penetrate his body, and the trader falls to the sands dead. The sand is washed red with his blood and the faint desert wind blows stronger, whirling sand and dust into the air. For a moment the desert is quiet, then Santhaal repeats her words spoken in elven. "E'Kontii Matota. Maakotii Matota - Death to our enemies. Death to the ones who have wronged us."*

*Santhaal Wind Dancer gazes down upon you with discontent to the visage of her fallen comrades and the slaughtered kreen you stand amidst. "Do not outstay your welcome. Leave while you still can." she says coldly.*

Allow the PCs to loot the bodies of any dead agents or thri-kreen warriors. Should they dawdle or try to loot the elven bodies lying on the battlefield, Santhaal will scream out loud "Leave now!" – it is her final warning.

### 33. Thaxos Vordon (EL 12)

The PCs will encounter the Tyrian city guard lead by Captain Zalcor half a day north of the battleground. However, Thaxos will try to escape before that time. The cold Athasian night and the time of the twin moons stand between success and failure. Thaxos is fully aware that his time is running out. The aging House Vordon patriarch has nothing to lose, and his resourcefulness is formidable. The PCs do not

lead him far from the elves before he makes an offer to them.

*“So, what is in it for you?” The aging trader asks with an almost casual calmness. “How much are they offering, the Council and my treacherous cousin? He looks rather feeble as he shifts his weight to one leg. “I have not long to live. My dreams have been shattered. Let me go. I will pay you well. Or even better – come work for me. I will make you richer than beyond your wildest dreams. Steel, gold, gems, art, women, whatever you want at your disposal.” He has your attention. “You can be senators, pampered nobles, templars, whatever you want. You can be as active or passive as you like. We can change Tyr for the better. The people know this. The Council and its members are desperately clinging to their power. Tyr needs a king – a strong king. A just king. One that listens to his subjects. Don’t you agree? Let me go now. Give me one of your mounts.”*

The two last sentences are in fact part of a **psionic manifestation**. Thaxos uses *psionic suggestion* to make the PCs let him go. His speech increases the DC of the saving throw by 2. A **Psicraft check (DC 17)** reveals the manifestation of the power.

PCs who fail their saves will do what Thaxos said – let him go and give him a mount. However, they will not prevent other characters not affected from trying to stop him. To deal with any PCs who try to stop him, Thaxos uses *concussion blast*, being careful not to target any PCs who aren’t trying to stop him.

Once Thaxos is gone from sight (400 feet, past a dune) or 12 hours pass, the *psionic suggestion* ends.

Assuming the PCs prevent Thaxos from escaping and their allies from giving him their mounts, or they catch up with him and capture him again, Thaxos will try to escape again soon. Depending on what measures the PCs have taken to restrain the old man, his tactics will vary. Thaxos will take full advantage of the fact that he is very old, and attempts to look as feeble as he can, so the PCs will be less attentive and perhaps even feel sorry for him.

If the PCs have bound Thaxos’ hands and/or feet with a rope, he will use his **Escape Artist skill** to try to wriggle free. Failing that, if a single PC is responsible for watching him, and he is not blindfolded, he will use *psionic suggestion* to make the PC untie his bonds and let him make it off with one of the PCs’ mounts (if he is blindfolded, he will use *forced sense link* to see). If more than one PC is watching Thaxos, he will use *create sound* to create a small diversion – a sound out in the desert. If all PCs go to investigate, the trader will use the opportunity to get to a mount and try to get away (if he is tied up, he will use *far hand* to get hold of a sharp object and use it to cut his bonds). If some PCs are guarding him while the others go to investigate, Thaxos will try to use *psionic suggestion* to convince the remaining PCs into letting him go and cover his escape. Failing that he will use *concussion blast*. Another idea is to use *psionic dominate* to make the PCs fight each other.

Variations of this escape plan theme apply to other conditions and situations not covered by the text. If the PCs have devised a particularly clever watch plan, allow Thaxos a chance to escape when a random monster suddenly shows up and attacks. They are almost home clear and the reward will be worth the trouble. In any case, the **DM** should familiarize himself with Thaxos’ psionic powers so he can use them to his

Thaxos’ destination is the training grounds southwest of Altaruk, where a loyal powerful **psion (nomad)** agent can teleport him to a safe location far away from Tyr. If the PCs fail to stop Thaxos from reaching his destination, their mission to bring him back to Tyr has failed.

best ability.

### 34. A welcome sight

The adventure ends when the PCs meet up with the city guard around noon (or earlier if they march through the night). The city guard will escort the PCs and Thaxos back to Tyr.

*Now what? Troops on the horizon. Could it be that the Vordon patriarch has managed to summon his troops somehow? No, wait, they bear the flag of the city. It is the Tyrian guard led by Captain Zalcor. For once a welcome sight in the desert wastes. Zalcor rides in front of his troops and orders them to come to a halt. He then rides forward to greet you and inspect your quarry. "Ah. I knew you would succeed, my brave friends. Tyr owes you her freedom. Tell me, Lord Thaxos, how does it feel to know your plans have been foiled as your life nears its end?" The wrinkled old man does not reply - merely gazes back. Zalcor suddenly reaches for his sword and with lightning quick reflexes draws it and leaves a red trail across the old man's chest. "Don't even think about using your telepathic powers on me, old man. Guards - have Lord Thaxos experience the effect of the agony beetle's bite, one so many of his former enemies have come to know. I seriously doubt you will be in any condition to manifest your mindbending powers any time soon, Lord Thaxos. In fact I suspect you will be unable to do much at all."*

*Thaxos is restrained by Zalcor's men and one brings a cage filled with numerous specimens of the infamous agony beetle. The old tradelord's screams soon echo across the dunes and you turn away. Your work is finished. Thaxos Vordon will be brought back to Tyr and convicted in the courts of law.*

#### **What if Thaxos escaped?**

The aging tradelord's coup plans have been thwarted, but he will seek revenge. All the remaining mercenaries in the training camp west of Altaruk will be ordered to eliminate the PCs. He will hire bounty hunters, mercenary wizards and psychic warriors to hunt them down. The PCs have gained a powerful enemy. Some of Thaxos' troops and his elite agents remain loyal to him, and in time he might be able to raise an army large enough to invade Tyr. Though, this is a distant scenario, one that would take years to prepare, especially in secrecy.

#### **What if Thaxos was killed by the PCs?**

The Council has resources to have Thaxos raised from the dead and prepared for trial. However, the PCs' hero status and the rewards granted to them will be lower due to the public's perception of them killing a "helpless old man" on behalf of the Council, traitor or not.

## EPILOGUE

A trial is held in the courts of Tyr, where Thaxos is found guilty of conspiracy against the City of Tyr, as well as conspiracy to murder and a number of other crimes. The aging trader is convicted and executed. As the treachery of Tyr's apparent savior becomes known to the public, the PCs are hailed as heroes.

A token and proof of their heroism is given to each of the PCs in the form of a bronze scepter with an engraved obsidian ball mounted on the top. They are also rewarded with the real estate property that belonged to House Troika. That means their headquarters, as the house only leased its warehouses.

In addition to the above events, Talara Vordon becomes the next head of House Vordon. She becomes a powerful friend and ally of the PCs. As for their promised reward, the PCs may ask for gold, gems, positions as agents of House Vordon or possibly even magical and psionic items from Talara. The DM will have to determine how much treasure she wants to give the PCs.

## Appendix

### Key NPC statistics

Asher Troika  
Borras  
Crakos  
Cratek Skullsplitter  
Daimon  
Derlan Watari  
Mutami  
Nadar of Mericles  
Redblade  
Sa'Mar  
Talara Vordon  
Thaxos Vordon  
Yaris

### New prestige classes

Assassin

### New psionic item

Jolting pole

### Overland maps

The Tyr Region  
Close up on Altaruk

## KEY NPC STATISTICS

**Asher Troika, Male human psychic warrior 7;** CR 7; Medium humanoid; HD 7d8+14; hp 49\*; Init +7; Spd 30ft.; AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +5; Grp +7; Atk +8 melee (1d10+2/19-20, steel bastard sword) or +8 ranged (1d6+2, javelin); Full Atk +8 melee (1d10+2/19-20, steel bastard sword) or +8 ranged (1d6+2, javelin); SA/SQ psionics; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +4; AL LN; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 15.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +7, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +9, Literacy, Profession (trader) +10; Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Psionic Meditation, Psionic Weapon, Weapon Focus (bastard sword).

**Psychic Warrior Powers Known** (Power Points 22, save DC 12 + power level): 1st – *burst, metaphysical weapon* (+1 bonus\*), *offensive precognition* (+1 insight bonus\*), *vigor* (+5 hp\*); 2nd

– *animal affinity* (+4 bonus\*), *psionic darkvision*; 3rd – *psionic keen edge*.

\*Power can be augmented.

*Possessions:* steel bastard sword, wood large shield, 2 javelins, *potion fruit of firebreath*, 2d10 sp.

\* 39 hp remaining after the fight with the dune reaper

*Background/Description:* Asher Troika is an experienced mercenary who has served House Vordon for as long as he can remember. Asher started out as a caravan hand, then became a caravan guard, aspired to caravan captain, and finally to caravan master. His advancement in rank did not go unnoticed by the House's patriarch, who monitored his progression with interest. After personally interviewing Troika, Thaxos decided to sponsor him with his own merchant house – a dummy house. He eventually told Troika of his plans to conquer Tyr and promised him great power in return for his participation. Troika agreed immediately. Today he is responsible for keeping tabs on House Vordon's increasing network of troops and agents, running operations from House Troika's headquarters in Tyr.

**Borras, Male dwarf psion (kineticist) 6;** CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 6d4+12; hp 27; Init +0; Spd 20ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk +5 melee (1d3+2, unarmed strike [fist]); Full Atk +5 melee (1d3+2, unarmed strike [fist]); SA psionics; SQ dwarf traits, psionics; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +6; AL LN; Str 14 Dex 10, Con 14 Int 13, Wis 12 Cha 9.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +11, Disable Device +8, Search +8, Psicraft +7; Combat Manifestation (B), Improved Psicrystal, Psicrystal Affinity, Psicrystal Containment (B), Rapid Metabolism.

**Psion Powers Known** (Power Points 38, save DC 13 + power level): 1st – *bolt*\*, *call to mind*, *control light*, *control object*, *create sound*, *far hand*\*, *force screen* (+4 shield bonus)\*, *inertial armor* (+4 armor bonus)\*, *matter agitation*; 2nd – *concealing amorphia* (20% miss chance), *control air*\*; 3rd – *energy cone* (5d6, DC 16\*), *energy retort* (4d6, DC 16\*).

\*Power can be augmented.

*Possessions:* psi crystal (singleminded + meticulous), *psionic tattoo of animal affinity*, thieves' tools, 1d4 sp.

*Description/Background:* Borrás has dark skin and multi-colored tattoos covering his body from top to toe. Borrás' loyalty is unquestionable and his talents for discovering and disabling traps make him a valuable addition to any assassination crew.

**Crakos, Male human wizard (defiler) 7;** CR 7; Medium humanoid; HD 7d4+14; hp 33; Init +7; Spd 30ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +3; Grp +3; Atk +3 melee (1d4/19-20, obsidian dagger) or +6 ranged (1d4/19-20, obsidian dagger); Full Atk +3 melee (1d4/19-20, obsidian dagger) or +6 ranged (1d4/19-20, obsidian dagger); SA spells; SQ spells; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +6; AL LN; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 11.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +10, Concentration +12, Hide +8, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Move Silently +8, Spellcraft +14, Tumble +8; Brew Potion, Dodge, Hidden Talent (*detect psionics*), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll (B).

**Wizard Spells Prepared** (4/5/4/3/2; DC 14 + spell level): 0 – *detect magic, mage hand, light, resistance*; 1st – *mage armor (+4 armor bonus), obscuring mist, shield (+4 shield bonus), sleep (4HD, DC 15), unseen servant*; 2nd – *cat's grace, darkness (20% miss chance), knock, sting of the gold scorpion (1d6/1d4 Str, DC 16)*; 3rd – *boneclaw's cut, invisibility sphere, gaseous form*; 4th – *dimension door, icestorm (3d6 bludgeoning + 2d6 cold)*.

*Possessions:* scroll of rope trick (level 3), scroll: *boneclaw's cut (level 12)*, spellbook (knot patterns), obsidian dagger, 1d4 sp, spell component pouch, 50 ft. silk rope.

*Description/Background:* Crakos used to serve House Tsalaxa of Draji, but was framed for theft. The Draji tortured him and scarred him for life – applying acid to his face. His eyes are pale blue, a sharp contrast to his tanned skin and curly brown hair. He was quite handsome before the Draji did their number on him. Crakos was found unconscious in the streets of Draji by an agent from one of Thaxos' dummy houses, who realized he was a wizard, and recruited him into

the House's ranks. His spells are a valuable addition on any mission.

**Cratek Skullsplitter, Male mul barbarian 4/fighter 4;** CR 8; Medium humanoid; HD 4d12+16 plus 4d10+16; hp 74\*; Init +6; Spd 30ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +8; Grp +13; Atk +13 melee (1d8+7/x3, carrikal); Full Atk +13/+8 melee (1d8+7/x3, carrikal); SA rage 2/day; SQ fast movement, mul traits, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; SV Fort +12, Ref +4, Will +3; AL LN; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 11.

*Skills and Feats:* Escape Artist +9, Handle Animal +7, Jump +13, Ride +11, Survival +8; Cleave, Great Cleave, Hidden Talent (*burst*), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Quickdraw.

*Possessions:* ankheg breastplate, carrikal.

\* 53 hp remaining after the fight with the Dune Reaper

*Description/Background:* Cratek is Nadar's cohort and bodyguard. He is fanatically loyal to Nadar and will do anything asked of him. The mul is impressively tall and strong with bulging muscles, and his hands are the size that could fit and crush a grown man's skull. His body bears no tattoos, but a series of small brandings burnt into his skin decorate his chest and wrists. The mul charges into battle with his carrikal held above his head with both arms.

**Daimon, Male half-elf bard 4;** CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 4d6; hp 16; Init +2; Spd 30ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3; Grp +4; Atk +5 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); Full Atk +5 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); SQ half-elf traits, bardic knowledge, bardic music, smuggler +2, poison use, streetwise, trade secret (coolheaded); SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +6; AL NE; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 13.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +10, Craft (alchemy) +8, Craft (poisonmaker) +8, Disguise +10\*, Hide +9, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +9; Pointblank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw(B).

\*+12 when impersonating elves or humans.

*Possessions:* carru leather armor, light crossbow, bone case with 16 bolts, 4d6 cp.

*Description/Background:* Daimon is of medium height and built. He has pitch black long hair and brown eyes. He was a roaming mercenary bard until he joined House Vordon, and has been an employee of the house for several years, but is not one of the agents Thaxos plans to use in his coup.

**Derlan Watari, Male halfling ranger 5/assassin 10;** CR 15; Small humanoid; HD 5d10+10 plus 10d6+20; hp 91; Init +9; Spd 20ft.; AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +12; Grp +8; Atk +18 melee (1d4/19-20, obsidian dagger) or +19 ranged (1d4/19-20, obsidian dagger); Full Atk +18/+13/+8 melee (1d4/19-20, obsidian dagger) or +19/+14/+9 ranged (1d4/19-20, obsidian dagger); SA combat style (two weapons), death attack (Fort. save DC 24), psionics, sneak attack +5d6, spells; SQ halfling traits, companion, favored enemy (human +2), favored terrain (mountains +2), **hide in plain sight**, improved uncanny dodge, poison use, psionics, spells, +5 save vs. poison, wild empathy; SV Fort +9, Ref +16, Will +6; AL NE; Str 10, Dex 21, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 11.

*Skills and Feats:* Balance +17, Bluff +12, Climb +10, Concentration +10, Craft (poisonmaker) +11, Disguise +7, Handle Animal +10, Hide +25, Listen +16, Move Silently +23, Search +15, Sleight of Hand +22, Spot +12, Survival +10, Tumble +15; Dodge, Endurance(B), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Quick Draw, Spring Attack, Track(B), Two Weapon Fighting(B), Weapon Finesse.

**Ranger Spells Prepared** (1; DC 12 + spell level): 1st – *pass without trace*.

**Assassin Powers Known\*** (Power Points 47, Save DC 14 + power level); 1st – *detect poison, ghost sound* (DC 14); 2nd – *darkness* (20% miss chance), *invisibility*; 3rd – *deep slumber* (10 HD, DC 17), *false life* (1d10+10 hp), *nondetection*; 4th – *dimension door, freedom of movement, poison* (1d10/1d10 Con, DC 18).

\*Treat these powers as psionic versions of the spells listed on page 181 of the DMG).

*Possessions:* eight obsidian daggers, live scorpions, bard's friend, eight doses of gold scorpion poison, *psionic tattoo: animal affinity, psionic tattoo: catfall, slippers of spiderclimbing*.

*Description/Background:* <Derlan is Thaxos' bodyguard, attending Thaxos on all public occasions. He is a renegade from his tribe, cast out because of his evil ways. A skilled sneak, backstabber and poisoner, Derlan also serves Thaxos in the covert capacity of disposing of his employer's enemies.><sup>3</sup>

**Mutami, Male elf fighter 2/rogue 4;** CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 2d10+2 plus 4d6+4; hp 33; Init +5; Spd 40ft.; AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +5; Grp +7; Atk +10 melee (1d8+2/18-20, elven longblade) or +11 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow); Full Atk +10 melee (1d8+2/18-20, elven longblade) or +11 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ elf traits, evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; SV Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +1; AL CN; Str 14, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 14.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +9, Diplomacy +15, Hide +12, Listen +10, Move silently +12, Sense Motive +7, Spot +7; Dodge, Deflect Arrows, Hidden Talent (*far hand*), Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Finesse.

*Possessions:* elven longblade, masterwork longbow, quiver with 20 arrows, carru leather armor, buckler, 1d4 sp.

*Description/Background:* Mutami is tall with facial tattoos depicting a drake. His dark leather armor is sleeveless, exposing his impressive muscles. Mutami's blonde hair is cut short, and he has deep blue eyes. Recently recruited from the Skysinger market in Nibenay, Mutami is in fact a Shadow elf spy. He monitors House Vordon's activities with great interest, but has not discovered much except that everyone in the training camp he is at is preparing for a "cause". He hopes to be sent on a mission soon where he can find out more.

**Nadar of Mericles, Male human rogue 4/aristocrat 5;** CR 8; Medium humanoid; HD 4d6+8 plus 5d8+10; hp 53; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +6; Grp +6; Atk +6 melee (1d4, tortoise blade) or +8 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow), Full Atk +6/+1 melee (1d4,

<sup>3</sup> Quote from *Dune Trader*, p. 33.

tortoise blade) or +8/+3 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ: evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +7; AL LN; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 15.

*Skills and Feats:* Appraise +12, Bluff +12, Diplomacy +18, Gather Information +12, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (local) +8, Search +13, Sense Motive +13, Spot +12, Use Rope +9; Dodge, Hidden Talent (*know direction and location*), Leadership, Mobility, Spring Attack.

*Possessions:* +2 *carru leather armor*, tortoise blade, *psionic tattoo: sustenance*, 5d4 sp.

*Description/Background:* A lightly built and usually well dressed man of medium height with short cut black hair, Nadar easily blends in with most kinds of people. His stern voice and gaze can be quite convincing in negotiations. Nadar is a family member of House Mericles, but not directly related to Tithian. House Mericles lost much power and status when Tithian disappeared at Ur Draxa. Nadar dreams of restoring House Mericles' glory and maybe even aspire to the throne one day. He had never thought of such grandeur had it not been for his employer, Thaxos Vordon's grand schemes. As luck would have it, Nadar became one of Thaxos' favored agents, one of the megalomaniac trade lord's candidates for an influential position in his new reign. Nadar knows a tyrant king will be despised and eventually overthrown, at least in the Free City of Tyr. While he remains in the shadows during Thaxos' planned coup, gathering loyalty to House Mericles from various parties, Nadar will step forward and rebel against Thaxos once he claims the throne. Nadar will kill the new king and return power to the Council, in return he wants the title of King, as Tithian had before him. Either that or the position as Minister of Tyr.

**Redblade, Male half-elf psion (nomad) 6/ soulknife 3;** CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 6d4+18 plus 3d10+9; hp 58; Init +8; Spd 30ft.; AC 14 (touch 14, flat-footed 10); Base Atk +5; Grp +5; Atk +10 melee (1d6/19-20, mindblade) or +10 ranged (1d6/19-20, mindblade); Full Atk +10 melee (1d6/19-20, mindblade) or +10 ranged (1d6/19-20, mindblade); SA mindblade, throw

mindblade, psychic strike +1d8; SQ half-elf traits, psionics; SV Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +9; AL NE; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 11.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +13, Hide +12, Knowledge (psionics) +9, Move Silently +12, Psicraft +9, Tumble +10; Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Overchannel(B), Power Penetration(B), Talented, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (mindblade)(B), Wild Talent(B).

**Psion Powers Known** (Power Points 40, Save DC 11 + power level): 1st – *catfall\**, *control light*, *detect psionics*, *far hand\**, *matter agitation*, *mind thrust* (1d10, DC 12\*), *my light\**; 2nd – *cloud mind*, *concealing amorphia* (20% miss chance), *concussion blast* (1d6\*), *dimension swap\**, *psionic levitate*; 3rd – *psionic blast\**.

*\*Power can be augmented.*

*Possessions:* *potion fruit of silent moves*, 50 ft silk rope, 2d4 sp.

*Description/Background:* Redblade earned his name from the color of his mindblade. No one knows his real name, and few care to ask. His dark red hair and black eyes are testimony to the anger and hatred burning within him. Redblade is cool and cunning, but he has a fierce temperament should anyone inquire about his past. His mindblade and psionic powers are perfect with regards for assassination missions.

**Sa'mar, Male mul gladiator 3/rogue 2;** CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 3d12+6 plus 2d6+4; hp 36; Init +2; Spd 30ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +7; Atk +8 melee (1d8+3/x4, **heartpick**) or +5 ranged (stone handaxe, 1d6+2); Full Atk +8 melee (1d8+3/x4, **heartpick**) or +5 ranged (stone handaxe, 1d6+2); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ mul traits, arena guile +1, evasion, improved feint, mercy, trapfinding; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +1; AL CN; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 9. *Skills and Feats:* Balance +12, Bluff +3, Climb +11, Intimidate +7, Move Silently +10, Hide +10, Tumble +10; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (**heartpick**)(B), Expertise, Improved Feint(B), Improved Unarmed Strike(B); Weapon Focus (**heartpick**).

*Possessions:* **heartpick**, two stone handaxes, leather armor, 1d4 sp.

*Description/Background:* Sa'mar is an ex-convict gladiator who was released when Tyr's slaves were set free. He made a living as a thug in the warrens until he was discovered by a House Vordon agent who saw potential in the mul and had him enlisted into the services of House Troika, where he proved his worth. Sa'mar was then given the offer of becoming an elite mercenary and sent to a training camp, and promised great riches for his loyalty. Sa'mar accepted the proposal immediately. Sa'mar has a feral look in his eyes, but is amazingly controlled and calm for one of his race. A bright red circle tattoo covers his head, evidence of his criminal past and fate as a convict gladiator. His arms are decorated with tattoos of defeated gladiatorial opponents from the past, but a few have been added recently as Sa'mar likes to have memories of defeated enemies who put up a good fight, gladiators or others.

**Talara Vordon, Female human aristocrat 5/rogue 10;** CR 14; Medium humanoid; HD 5d8+5 plus 10d6+10; hp 65; Init +2; Spd 30ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +10; Grp +11; Atk +11 melee (1d8/17-20, bone longsword); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8/17-20, bone longsword); SA sneak attack +5d6; SQ defensive roll, evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trapfinding, trap sense +3; SV Fort +5, Ref +10, Will +11; AL LG; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 17.

*Skills and Feats:* Appraise +21, Bluff +21, Decipher Script +19, Diplomacy +24, Disguise +20, Gather Information +20, Listen +19, Ride +12, Search +19, Sense Motive +18, Sleight of Hand +19, Spot +22, Tumble +17; Dodge, Expertise, Improved Critical (longsword), Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Whirlwind Attack.

*Possessions:* bone longsword, traveler's outfit, hooded cloak, 3d6 sp, 1d6 gp.

*Description/Background:* <Thaxos' cousin, Talara has only recently arrived in Tyr. She was withdrawn from a closed outpost and now awaits reassignment. A slender, red-haired woman with an innate sense of justice and fairness, she has begun to suspect that all is not what it seems with Thaxos. She has discovered his dummy houses and unusual military

preparations and is appalled by the implications. Thaxos has taken note of her investigations and realizes that if she discovers his coup plots she will be a dangerous enemy. He is determined she never gets the chance> <sup>4</sup>

**Thaxos Vordon, Male human aristocrat 8/ psion (telepath) 12;** CR 19; Medium humanoid; HD 8d8+16 plus 12d4+24 plus 18; hp 120; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +12; Grp +13; Atk +14 melee (1d6+2 plus 1d6 electricity damage/17-20, +1 *shock steel shortsword*); Full Atk +14/+9/+4 melee (1d6+2 plus 1d6 electricity damage/17-20, +1 *shock steel shortsword*); SA: psionics; SQ: psionics; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +19; AL LE; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 15, Int16, Wis 20, Cha 20  
*Skills and Feats:* Appraise +19, Bluff +28, Concentration +22, Diplomacy +32, Escape Artist +14, Forgery +19, Intimidate +21, Psicraft +15, Sense Motive +19; Burrowing Power, Combat Manifestation, Greater Psionic Endowment(B), Improved Critical (shortsword), Leadership, Maximize Power(B), Overchannel, Psionic Body, Psionic Endowment(B), Psionic Meditation, Psionic Talent.

**Psion Powers Known** (Power Points 146, Save DC 13 + power level): 1st –*attraction* (+4 *interaction bonus*, DC 14\*), *conceal thoughts*, *control light*, *control sound*, *disable* (4 HD, DC 14\*), *detect psionics*, *far hand\**, *missive\**, *psionic daze* (4 HD, DC 14\*), *telepathic projection*, *vigor* (+5 hp\*); 2nd – *aversion* (DC 15\*), *concussion blast* (1d6\*), *elfsight*, *forced sense link* (DC 15), *psionic suggestion* (1 target, DC 15\*); 3rd – *body adjustment*(1d12 hp\*), *energy wall*, *false sensory input* (1 target, DC 16\*); 4th – *mindwipe* (2 negative levels, DC 17\*), *psionic dominate* (1 target, DC 17\*), *schism*; 5th –*mind probe* (DC 18); 6th – *mass cloud mind* (DC 19).  
\*Power can be augmented.

*Possessions:* +1 *shock steel shortsword*, *skin of the defender*, *ring of protection* +2, *cloak of charisma* +2, *vest of escape*, *potion fruit of speed*, small key for steel box lock, cloth-wrapped steel box (containing 53 gp, 6 gems each worth 15 gp, 2x *potion fruit of cure serious wounds* (level 15), and an ornamental bronze dagger worth 10 gp). **Note:** The steel box has a good lock (Open Lock DC 30) and is protected with an exterior *maximized explosive runes* spell on the lid, which will be

<sup>4</sup> Quote from *Dune Trader*, p. 33-34

triggered if anyone other than Thaxos reads them. The steel box will be badly damaged by the explosions but its contents remain intact.

*Description/Background:* <Thaxos Vordon has ruled his house for 50 years with an iron hand. Now he feels that leadership of one of the most powerful trading houses on Athas is not enough. The current problems in Tyr have given him the perfect opportunity to advance his ambition: Thaxos aspires to nothing less than the position of king. Thaxos is a handsome man despite his apparent age of 100+ (many claim that he has access to numerous potions and magical devices to extend his life). He dresses habitually in black and yellow. His lean, bearded face is the very picture of malevolent wisdom.><sup>5</sup>

Thaxos controls a number of dummy merchant houses in other names than House Vordon. One example is House Troika. These houses employ large amounts of well-paid troops composed of warriors, *psions* and spellcasters. The most talented, ambitious and loyal agents from the ranks of these dummy houses have been informed of the coup plans and for their loyalty and roles in the coup they will receive great wealth and influential positions under Thaxos' rule. However, the majority of House Vordon's agents are ordinary merchants and guards who could well turn on their megalomaniac patriarch leader when ordered to march into Tyr. A civil war is perhaps unavoidable, but Thaxos is confident his elite agents will give him the upper hand and secure victory.

**Yaris, Female human rogue 5/assassin 3; CR 8; Medium humanoid; HD 8d6+24; hp 48; Init +7; Spd 30ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +5; Grp +5; Atk +10 melee (1d6/19-20, masterwork small macahuitl) or +8 ranged (1d4, dart); Full Atk +8/+8 melee (1d6/19-20, 2 masterwork small macahuitls) or +8 ranged (1d4, dart); SA death attack (Fort. save DC 16), psionics, sneak attack +5d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1, improved uncanny dodge, poison use, psionics; SV Fort +5, Ref +10, Will +3; AL NE; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 14.**

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +11, Climb +9, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +12, Gather Information +8, Hide +14, Jump +6, Listen +10, Move Silently +14, Open Locks +14, Search +11, Sleight of Hand +13, Spot +10, Tumble +12; Improved Initiative, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (small macahuitl).

**Assassin Powers Known** (Power Points 7, Save DC 13 + power level): 1st – *ghost sound* (DC 14), *true strike*; 2nd – *invisibility*.

*Possessions:* 2x masterwork small macahuitl, *psionic tattoo: darkvision*, 1d4 sp.

*Description/Background:* Yaris is a charming Gulg woman with quick wits and grace. Little of her slim, well-trained frame is concealed by her small leather outfit. Her ebony skin and yellow eyes give her an exotic appearance, and she takes full advantage of her appearance when seducing a target. She knows how to manipulate men and strikes with her *Death attack* when her victims least suspect it.

## NEW PRESTIGE CLASSES

### Assassin

The assassin class is identical to the one presented in the *Dungeon Master Guide* with the following exceptions:

**Class Skills:** Remove Swim. Replace Use Magic Device with Use Psionic Device.

**Class Features:** Replace Spells Per Day with Power Pts/day and Powers Known.

Level	Power Points per Day	Powers Known
1	0*	1
2	1	2
3	3	3
4	5	4
5	7	5
6	11	6
7	15	7
8	19	8
9	23	9
10	27	10

<sup>5</sup> Quote from *Dune Trader*, p. 32

\* The assassin gains no power points from his class at 1st level. However, he does add any bonus power points he gains from a high Intelligence score, his race, and feats or other sources to his reserve. He can use these points (if any) to manifest his power.

**Power Points/Day:** An assassin can manifest powers. His ability to manifest powers is limited by the power points he has available. His base daily allotment of power points is given on the table above. In addition, he receives bonus power points per day if he has a high Intelligence score. His race may also provide bonus power points per day, as may certain feats and items. If an assassin has power points from a different class, those points are pooled together and usable to manifest powers from either class. Bonus power points from having a high ability score can be gained only for the character's highest psionic class.

**Powers Known:** An assassin manifests psionic versions of the spells from the assassin spell list on page 181 of the 3.5 DMG. At 1st level, an assassin knows one assassin power of your choice. Each time he attains a new level, he learns one new power. An assassin can manifest any power that has a power point cost equal to or lower than his manifester level. The total number of powers an assassin can manifest per day is limited only by his daily power points. An assassin simply knows his powers; they are ingrained in his mind. He does not need to prepare them (in the way that some spellcasters prepare their spells), though he must get a good night's sleep each day to regain all his spent power points. The Difficulty Class for saving throws against assassin powers is 10 + the power's level + the assassin's intelligence modifier.

Upon reaching 6th level, and at every even-numbered level after that (8th and 10th), an assassin can choose to manifest a new power in place of one he already knows. The new power's level must be the same as that of the power being exchanged, and it must be at least two levels lower than the highest-level assassin power the assassin can manifest. An assassin may swap only a single power at any given level, and must choose whether or not to swap the power at the same time that he gains new powers known for that level.

**Maximum Power Level Known:** An assassin gains the ability to learn one 1st-level power

when he takes his first level in the prestige class. As he attains each new odd-numbered level, an assassin gains the ability to master more complex powers. To learn or manifest a power, an assassin must have an Intelligence score of at least 10 + the power's level. A 3rd level assassin can learn powers of 2nd level or lower, a 5th level assassin can learn powers of 3rd level or lower and a 7th level assassin can learn powers of 4th level or lower.

## NEW PSIONIC ITEM

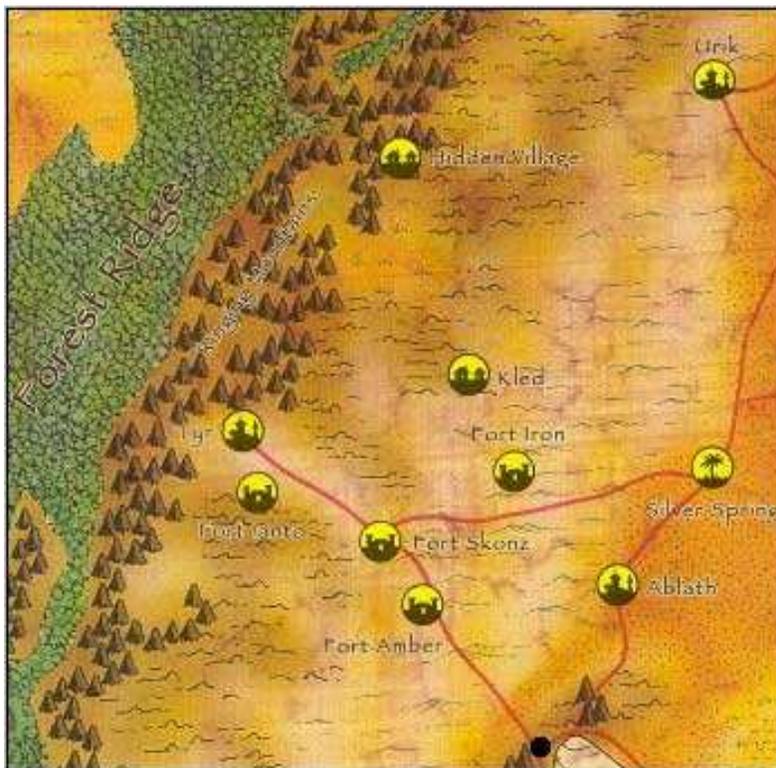
### Jolting Pole

This item is commonly used for prodding along stubborn mekillots and other beasts of burden. It is also frequently used by templars conducting interrogations. The length of the poles differ, but they all have an obsidian point in one end, which delivers a psychokinetic jolt to creatures touched with that end of the pole. The jolt is a force effect and inflicts 1 point of subdual damage.

*Manifester level:* 3<sup>rd</sup>; *Prerequisites:* Craft Universal Item, *far punch*; *Price:* 1,000 cp

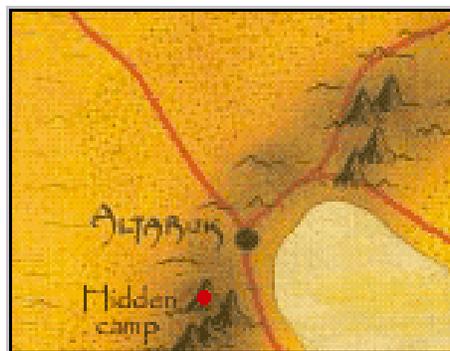
# OVERLAND MAPS

## Area map: The Tyr Region



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## Close up on Altaruk:



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