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Official Game
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Taladas: The Minotaurs

BY COLIN McCOMB



B R O M



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TALADAS: THE MINOTAURS

BY

COLIN McCOMB

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Cambridge CB1 3LB
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Printed in U.S.A.

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9344
ISBN 1-56076-150-4
9344XXX1501

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AT THE DAWN OF TIME . . .

INTRODUCTION

"When the gods first created Krynn, they brought into being three races: the elves, the ogres, and the humans. The elves would have you believe that they were created first, despite the evidence to the contrary. As members of the First People, it is our duty to educate them. Naturally, we will use any such educational tools as might be available. Take this axe, for example . . ."

Si-k'Misal, Lore Master at the Academy

The minotaurs are one of Krynn's most misunderstood races. They are a paradox, blunt and brutal, yet subtle and gentle. They are classified with the armies of Evil, yet some stand out as shining examples of goodness. There is almost nowhere on Krynn that you find creatures so enigmatic, yet so eminently understandable. The reason that there have been so few treatises written on the subject of minotaurs is that the minotaurs do not wish to be understood by *scholars*, from a vicarious point of view. They feel that if you desire to understand the minotaurs, then you should find out about them for yourself. Their view is, "If you are unwilling to face the danger, perhaps you ought not come at all. Once you get to know us (if you survive that long), you'll understand us, all right."

Herein the DM will find information on the history, customs, and capabilities of the minotaurs of Taladas, as well as some interesting and important NPCs, new spells and magic items, new monsters, and, finally, some adventure ideas for the DM to throw at his players. The DM should understand that Taladas is very nearly a mirror opposite of Ansalon, for Evil sweeps nearly unchecked over its face. Where Evil does not reign supreme, it is the forces of Neutrality that hold authority, not the power of Good. When the Cataclysm struck, it seems to have hit harder in Taladas than on Ansalon, for the cultures of ancient Taladas were almost completely destroyed in the dark times, and the citizens work hard to restore a memory that has long since faded. Taladas is a land that begs for heroes, for someone to impart the message of Goodness.

This is by no means a complete description of the minotaurs of Taladas, but is instead a guide for running campaigns involving them. Every DM must add his own touches to each adventure he runs, and expand the various details as he sees fit. After all, this is part of the fun of running a game.

HISTORY

The tales of the creation of Krynn and its races have been the subject of much controversy. Both the elves and the ogres claim to have been the first race created, and thus favored of the Gods. The consensus seemed overwhelmingly on the elves' side, for the elves were the only people who possessed records available to humans that date back to the Age of Dreams. Still, this position is being reexamined, for new evidence has surfaced that seems to suggest that the ogres were, in fact, the First People. This is something the minotaurs of Krynn seem especially intent on having known—it helps to provide justification for their ambition to rule the world. This, then, is the Minotaur Tale of Birth.

In the beginning, the Gods created the four principal races: Ogre, Elf, Man, and Animal. The elves, servants of Good, were for the most part placed on the Ansalonian mainland, while the ogres mainly resided on Taladas. Humanity existed on both continents, a balance to both the Good and Evil races. The "accidental" races—the gnome-spawn—originated on Taladas when Reorx first created the gnomes. At this point, the course of the world was proceeding relatively smoothly; that is, until Hiddukel convinced Reorx to forge the Graygem. When the gnomes released the Graygem, it careened over the entire planet, creating magical havoc.

One of the effects of the passage of the Graygem was the creation of the minotaur race. Originally an ogre clan of farmers and fisherfolk on the northwestern coast of the continent of Hosk, they became frightful combinations of man and bull when the Graygem shrieked over their villages one terrifying night. This was called the Night of Cruel Transformation. Understandably, this turn of events horrified them, and they attempted to enlist the aid of other Taladan ogre tribes in removing the curse.

The other tribes reacted in a hostile fashion to this new race, often raiding the minotaur villages, and the ogres finally devised a plan to enslave the "impure" breed. As a result, the ogres united to bring the minotaurs under their domination. The minotaurs recognized the superior numbers of the other ogre clans, and, while brave, were not foolhardy. They realized that resistance would be pointless, and the ogres enslaved them. This lasted for less than five years.

During this time, an enterprising minotaur discovered that individual ogres were no match for her in battle. This minotaur, Messeritha by name, was pleased to note that not all the effects of the Graygem were negative, and, for a short while, she embarked on an ogre-killing spree, killing

twenty ogres in her blood-lust. However, she was thoughtful enough to realize that since the number of ogres easily surpassed the number of minotaurs, she and her minotaurish comrades would be forced to devise a plan that did not call for outright war. Under her guidance, the minotaur slaves secretly built sailing vessels in the wooded areas near the coastline. Word of the plan to escape spread to almost all the minotaurs enslaved by the ogres.

The minotaurs prepared themselves for their exodus, and finally the last ship was complete. Although none of the ships was as seaworthy as the ones the minotaurs would later develop, none sank immediately. At this point the minotaurs were ready to leave—but not without exacting some form of payment. Late one night, they rose up and claimed the price of their slavery, ruthlessly slaughtering their sleeping-masters. Entire villages ran red with the blood of ogres.

Most of the minotaurs fled Taladas that night after the massacre. However, there were a few who had not been apprised of the escape (being seen as untrustworthy or just weak), and who therefore remained behind. The ogres took their revenge on the minotaurs of this group, dealing extraordinarily harsh punishments. A small group of the minotaurs who had been left behind did manage to escape to safety. Their descendants now inhabit isolated areas of Taladas, still afraid to emerge for fear of the ogre wrath.

The minotaurs on the ships sailed westward, where they had heard of an unclaimed land, on which they hoped they could live in isolation from the rest of the world.

When they finally reached the eastern shores of Ansalon, most of them settled there. Some, though, claimed that the land was unsuitable, and continued sailing. Nothing further was ever heard or seen of them.

The minotaurs set up a small society and began to create a new life for themselves by developing colonies. To their dismay, they ran afoul of the dwarven Kal-Thax Empire. The dwarves, recognizing the minotaurs as some variety of ogre, demanded unconditional surrender. The minotaurs, again overwhelmed by sheer numbers, were enslaved.

This state of affairs was intolerable to the minotaurs, who, reasonably enough, were unwilling to have escaped the ogres only have the dwarves capture them. They began to unite behind their hero Ambeoutin, who promised to lead them to freedom from the hated dwarves. He gathered together a band of minotaurs and began attacking small towns, murdering all inhabitants. Naturally, the minotaurs were careful to cover their traces.

In fact, Ambeoutin's band was so skillful at misdirection that the dwarves could not discern what or who might have been responsible for these atrocities. Thus, to deal with the situation, they sealed their borders, letting no creatures in or out.

A human Wizard of the Black Robes, attempting to magnify the trouble in the Empire, determined by occult means that the minotaurs were responsible, and he threw in his lot with the minotaurs, vastly increasing their power and maneuverability.

Although wildly successful after several attacks on larger villages, the mage, Skythus, determined that Ambeoutin and his band needed the aid of a powerful magical item, the *Axe of the Emperors* (see "New Magical Items") in order to succeed. Ambeoutin immediately set out to find this *Axe*, leaving Skythus in charge of the dwarven murder operation.

The minotaur chief is said to have journeyed alone through great peril to gain the *Axe*, finally defeating a green dragon in single combat. Despite the lack of true details of the search, it is known that Ambeoutin, much the worse for wear, returned in triumph with a glowing two-handed axe. The minotaurs who had not yet fled their dwarven masters immediately threw off their shackles, and rushed to join the Army of Ambeoutin.

The dwarves quickly mustered their army and marched on the minotaurs. The minotaurs, a vastly smaller army, were nonetheless as capable as any dwarven army five times their size. This was fitting because the dwarves had mustered an army almost exactly five times the size of the minotaur army. The deciding factor of the war was the minotaurish hatred of the dwarves. They fought as berserkers, each eliminating ten of the enemy before being felled.

The battlefield turned into a slaughterhouse. The minotaurs butchered nearly every able-bodied male dwarf then in the Empire. The minotaurs commandeered the empty cities, sacking and burning. Thus it was that the Kal-Thax empire fell. When they had destroyed the seat of the dwarven empire, the minotaurs began to move to the eastern portion of Ansalon, hoping to reestablish themselves as a free people.

When the minotaurs reached the coast, they realized that if they were to be a power in the world, they would have to establish a kingdom, and, following the example of their former masters, they decided to prey upon other races. They confirmed Ambeoutin as the first minotaur king, for he possessed more fighting skill and experience than any other minotaurs. He took a wife, and sired twin children, whom he called Mithas and Kothas. Their father trained these two children in the fighting arts, teaching them (almost) every trick he knew. Thus, their fighting skills made each of them a match for any other minotaur, even at a very young age.

Due to the nature of minotaur society, the twins knew that only one of them could survive to become King after their father passed away. On the day they passed the Rite of Initiation, Ambeoutin disappeared, taking his *Axe* and the mage Skythus with him. Legend holds that he sailed into the ris-





ing sun, from which he hoped to force the secret of light.

The twins were taken to the Arena to decide the kingship. They proved themselves to be exact equals in the Arena, and so they split the kingdom into two separate provinces. The two countries existed peacefully (for minotaurs) for about 1500 years, their inhabitants sailing the coasts and tilling the earth, with only occasional acts of piracy.

At that point, the Istar Empire came into being. Once again, the Minotaurs were overwhelmed, though at a severe cost to the Istarians, and the minotaurs were stripped from power in their kingdoms. This disastrous state of affairs continued for several hundred years, for not only were the minotaurs outnumbered, the Istarians had the powerful Solamnic Knights on their side.

Finally, the Cataclysm descended upon Krynn, which effectively ended Istar's stranglehold on the minotaurs. The minotaurs took this as a sign of favor from the Gods, and sailed across the Blood Sea to their old land, where they reestablished their empire. Certain individuals, whose families had worked the sea throughout the domination of Istar, knew that lands existed to the east, ready to be exploited. They parlayed this information to their brethren, who enthusiastically set sail for this "new" land.

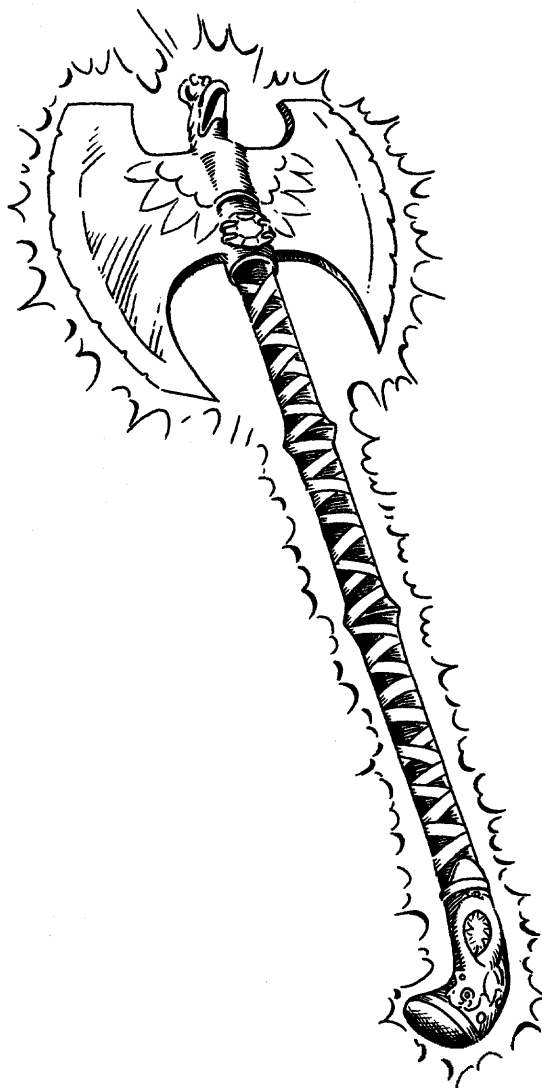
Mat oth-Kithka, a descendant of Ambeoutin, led an expedition of over thirty ships to Taladas. They came ashore in Thenol, and overwhelmed several villages. They filled their ships with booty and began the trek back to Ansalon. They never made it. The stories hold that the remains of this treasure fleet is sunk in the coastal waters near Armach. Several adventuring parties have gone searching for these ships, only to return emptyhanded, with heavy losses in life and investment.

Other adventuring minotaurs landed near Kristophan in Southern Hosk, where they found easy pickings. The humans obviously never expected an attack by sea, for all their fortifications had been built facing landward. The minotaurs, led by Eragas the Brutish, quickly subjugated all the people of Kristophan. Eragas proclaimed himself Emperor, and he established minotaur law throughout New Styrlia. All those who opposed Eragas met him in the Arena to contest his claim. All of them lost, and paid the price for their loss—death.

Eragas then moved to dominate the area surrounding New Styrlia. This ambitious maneuver, while not completed during his lifetime, earned him the respect of all his people, and to honor his memory (he fell in battle against a small battalion of humans), the minotaurs placed his young son on the throne without any of the formal arena battles usually surrounding such an event. His son, named in honor of the hero Ambeoutin, worked to complete his father's work, and swiftly and brutally crushed the resistance put forth by the last few human encampments in the areas, which in-

cluded Eragala (which formerly had been named Crinos), Okami, and Highvale. He went even further to push into the realm of the hulderfolk, but was never completely successful, due to the misdirections of the hulder, and Ambeoutin's army kept dwindling the longer he was there. However, he ensured that the minotaurs kept pushing for more land to their Empire. The Conquered Lands are a recent addition.

This, then, is the history of the minotaurs. The minotaurs have taken every opportunity to ensure that their power increases at every step. They are strong, intelligent, and devious. And above all else, one thing is certain about the minotaurs: they will never again allow themselves to be taken into slavery—even if it means death. They have come into their own, and will let no one deny them their place.



MINOTAUR WAYS

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIETY

"Honor. Family. Strength. Without these, we would be useless. Honor informs our lives and gives structure to our society. It enables us to resist chaos and enslavement. Family teaches us the virtues, the ideals that make us minotaurs. It sharpens the horns or it cracks them. Finally, strength is that by which we triumph. It is the raw power of life. Individually, each of these ideals is valuable—but not strong enough. We forge them together . . . and when this is done, we are well-nigh unbeatable."

Kuroth uth Simat, Tutor and Swordmaster
to the Imperial Family

The ideals most prized by the minotaurs, those that form the backbone of life for most minotaurs, are a reflection of their bloody history. These ideals are pervasive throughout minotaur culture, followed almost slavishly by the minotaurs. This is due to the fact that these ideals have kept the minotaur race growing ever stronger, having never once failed them. Accordingly, minotaurs hold these ideals in high regard, and will suffer to uphold them. Due to the influence of these ideals, the minotaurs instinctively bind themselves according to their family units, so that they as a whole might stand where an individual might fail. A minotaur will put his family above all else, even the good of the state. They learned that, to trust one another, they must first be trustworthy. Thus, the minotaur's word is his bond. Being descended from ogres, they naturally knew the benefit of strength from the very beginning of their existence, and despise creatures who lack it.

While minotaurs outwardly take after cattle, the animal they most resemble mentally is the wolf. They see it as an honorable, societal creature, one devoted only to its own kind, although it repays favors to those owed. The wolf is a fierce creature, relying more on the power of the muscle than on any pacifistic tendencies. Furthermore, it takes care of its own, yet can work with other creatures as well. Besides its raw power, it has guile and cunning. With qualities like these, how could a minotaur not like the wolf?

PHYSIOLOGY

Minotaurs stand roughly 7' tall, although they can be as much as 1½' taller. They weigh over 350 pounds on average. Their fur, which covers their entire body, is generally fairly short, although there have been some exceptions in the more brutish minotaurs. Taladan fur coloring ranges from whitish blond to black. It is, in short, exactly

the kind of fur one would encounter on a cow (although one would have to be either drunk or stupid or both to mention this to a minotaur). Their horns, 6-12 inches long for the females and one to two feet long for the males, are their pride and joy. The horns never stop growing throughout the life of a minotaur, although they grow very slowly. Minotaurs go to great lengths to keep their horns shiny and strong. As well, many minotaurs decorate their horns with beaten gold or brass, some counting their various victories on rings placed on the horn. These rings usually are engraved with some sort of pictograms that describe the win.

Occasionally, one will encounter a minotaur whose horns have been sawed off. This is an indicator that the minotaur is in some sort of disgrace, for sawing off the horns figuratively and literally removes the minotaur's pride. He is considered a virtual outcast, usually for the period of a year (although it can be much, much longer), and other minotaurs will try to minimize the time they spend in the company of such an individual. During this period, the minotaur in question undertakes a quest to redeem his honor. He will be fanatic in this cause, and will let nothing prevent his success. Further, no minotaur who has had any part of his horn removed may ever serve in any position of power in any minotaur community that respects itself. One of the worst things one can do to a minotaur is to saw his horn while he sleeps, for he will never be able to convince anyone that he did not lose it through dishonor. Would not someone without honor lie about how he came by the mark that identifies him as worth less than a common cow?

Minotaurs could normally live to be about 150 years old, although most minotaurs do not get the opportunity to die of old age; the warrior aspect of their society decreases one's expected life span phenomenally. It is an exceptional minotaur who can make it to his two hundredth year.

Despite their fairly long life-spans, minotaurs initially mature at the same rate as humans, although their metabolic system slows dramatically after adolescence. Thus, when a minotaur reaches the age of 60, he is thought to be at the peak of his powers. When he is 80, he is at the prime of life. At the age of 110 years, though, the minotaur's age begins to show, and his vitality slowly begins to ebb. His fur begins to mottle, making the minotaur somewhat piebald, first evidencing itself around the snout. From that point, the mottling manifests itself uniformly over his entire body.

PHILOSOPHY

The unique combination of honor, family, and strength has resulted in a philosophy of life that is

best formulated in the words of the humans: might makes right. While human cultures claim, for the most part, that this idea is unworkable, the minotaurs have successfully built their whole system of law and society around it. They recognize that all society anywhere is, in fact, based on the idea that might rules, and that strength does not necessarily emanate from the muscles. After all, there are several varieties of strength, such as intelligence, cunning, and the ability to twist minds to one's own purpose.

Minotaurs hold that a monarchy is the rule of a family which was strong enough to seize power, that a democracy is the rule of the mass of people, more willful than the single individual, that a theocracy is the rule of a priesthood intelligent enough to be able to twist the populace to its own end, and that a dictatorship is government held by the strength of the dictator's arm.

The minotaurs have come to realize this not through the usual linear thought processes that characterize most human thought, but rather through a system of thought that might best be described as labyrinthine. While minotaurs might have bull's heads, they do not have bull's brains. Their wits are those that the Gods originally intended all ogre-kin to have—intelligent, analytical, and devious.

Their building style emphasizes their thought process, as it does for so many races. Where humans and dwarves build along straight lines, suggesting logical, linear thought, where the elves build in a pre-planned order that suggests the randomness of nature, emphasizing their closeness to the land, and where the kender build haphazardly, the minotaurs build their cities and towns so as to suggest a gigantic maze, one in which only minotaurs might feel truly at home, where non-minotaurs are quickly overwhelmed by the twists and turns.

The minotaurish philosophy is not limited to "Might makes right." The minotaurs also pay homage to the idea "Anything which serves the state is right." They understand that, in order for their empire to succeed, they must serve the state first and foremost. If personal ambitions conflict with those of the state, personal ambitions are to be set aside for the sake of the state (although it is possible for one to serve the state and further his own ambitions simultaneously). This particular practice is not only accepted, but encouraged, for it insures that the individual members of the race will constantly be making it stronger.

The minotaurs intend for their race to rule, and they will go to any lengths to guarantee that it does. They mean, in the end, to exterminate or subjugate the other races of Krynn in order to rule unopposed. If this means serving Erestem for a time, so be it. Likewise, if it means allying with the forces of good, that too is fine, as long as it serves the purposes of the minotaurs.

One might infer that the minotaurs feel that oth-

er races exist only to be taken for all they are worth. This is correct. A minotaur reasons this way: If you are weak enough and foolish enough to be deceived, then you deserve to be deceived. The minotaurs have bred themselves to rule, and if other races stand in the way, why, they are just another obstacle to be conquered.

In any society where minotaurs and other races live together (such as the League of Minotaurs), the minotaurs will usually be the rulers, unless they are clearly outnumbered in terms of both strength and intelligence. The minotaurs will certainly never accept anything less than an equal position with any other race. If they are on a less-than-equal footing, they will use any means at their disposal to destroy the system from within or without, as long as they regain their freedom. After the fall of Istar, the minotaurs have found that they value their freedom enough to die for it.

ART AND AESTHETICS

The minotaurs generally care little for art. They love beauty, but they usually do not have the dexterity, the eye, or the patience to create masterpieces. Further, although they appreciate art when they see it, they prefer that it be functional, or else it is considered a waste of space. Let the elves have their uselessness, let them make what they will. After all, while they squander their time in worthless pursuits, the minotaurs are preparing themselves, making themselves the best that they can possibly be. Of course, minotaurs do not want to be seen as boorish, and so, every once in a while, retain an elvish traveler (or slave) to educate them in the recognition of great art. Quite a few minotaurs have, in this way, become great admirers of good art, and eagerly await the arrival of more.

Most minotaurs hold a basic attitude toward most of the humanities—if it is not useful, why bother with it? They want something functional, something they can use. One of the real drawbacks to this way of thinking is that they do not realize that they could use the humanities to broaden their intellectual horizons, to allow their minds to expand in new directions, and thus be able to imagine the possibilities that their enemies might design.

They do have some accomplished playwrights among their people, as well as some very good musicians and composers. They have several traveling bands which are quite talented and popular as well. Even the bandits have some culture, for brigands usually allow musical groups to travel through their territories, provided the band offers some free entertainment. Many people with musical ability use this cover as a way to travel from one end of the League to the other. Many others use their musical aptitude as a method of getting money, information, or, in some strange cases, revenge.



If any player characters wish to be employed by minotaurs for artistic purposes, they are in for a sad surprise. Unless the minotaur in question is in a mood to impress others with his understanding of other races, he will, at best, throw the players from his doorstep, and at worst, be extraordinarily offended by their suggestion that he is less than a total minotaur. This might even lead to a day in the Arena for the character, which, unless he has been practicing his weapons skills, could be disastrous.

FAMILY

In most of the minotaur societies not as advanced as the League of Minotaurs, the family is the all-important social grouping. A minotaur would be nothing without his kin, these groups hold, and so they devote everything to maintaining their families, even at the expense of others. Even within the League, the family plays a much stronger role than in other societies.

Although one might think otherwise, minotaurs make excellent parents, and once they mate, they mate for life. If their mate dies, they spend at least a year in mourning before seeking a new mate. Although they vociferously deny that they love anyone ("Love is for weaklings!"), their actions occasionally betray this statement as false. They are attentive and conscientious as parents, and will aid their children in any way they can. When giving birth, a mother usually delivers only one child, although, very rarely, twins appear. They are considered blessed and a blessing on the community in which they are born. They are often the biggest and the best of their generation, and, by example, can inspire the minotaur race in general.

Also rare in minotaur births, although not nearly as rare as twins, are females. Through the will of the Gods, or perhaps some side effect of the Graygem, minotaurs simply do not produce as many female children as male children. The ratio of males to females is roughly 3:1. This is perhaps a good thing, for otherwise the minotaurs would be much more prolific, and that much more a danger to the other races of Krynn. Furthermore, they can reproduce only once every two years.

One might speculate that the minotaurs would therefore be protective of their women, forbidding certain activities to them. This is not the case. Females are never discriminated against. They may follow any path they so choose, without any forced guidance from the males. No minotaurs argue against this system, for they know that talent arises where it will; they would be fools to suppress it. Thus, while it may come as a surprise to outlanders, it is easy to come across females in positions of high power.

Although minotaur children are raised in homes where their needs are carefully looked after, they are not spoiled, for while their parents provide them with the basic necessities, it is considered

shameful to rear a brat. The children are raised to be self-dependent and close-mouthed, intelligent and strong. They are carefully molded to enhance the qualities minotaurs find best and to suppress any sign of weakness. They receive an education, either from their parents or from the government, through which they learn the values that minotaurs hold so dear.

At the age of 15, minotaur children enter the Circus, where governmental elders give them many tests. Each child is measured by his or her ability, and the elders suggest schools for the child to attend, based on their evaluation. For example, a child who demonstrated unusual ability in navigation would be sent to the Sailing School or Navy Training, while an average child would be sent to a school that would, in general, enhance his ability in one or two areas, for the minotaurs do not tolerate mediocrity. Likewise, if a minotaur is not physically strong, but has an intellect worth mentioning, he is sent to the state-sponsored College of Magic. In this way, the minotaurs insure that they are not wasting valuable talent by judging their children solely on their appearance.

Overall, the minotaurs have discovered that if they pay attention to their children and the way their children are raised, their children become attuned to the destiny of the minotaur race as a whole much more quickly. Further, the runts of the litter are weeded out that much more quickly.

HONOR

To the minotaurs, there is nothing of more paramount importance than honor. They adhere rigidly and fanatically to their moral code, for if they do not, it could mean their destruction. They have carefully worked out this code over hundreds of years, although to the casual observer, it might appear that it had been conceived overnight. With deeper examination, however, one can see that it extends beyond just superficial levels.

The honor priority for a minotaur is first the land's honor, then his family's honor, and finally his own honor. A minotaur is considered the sum total of all three of these. The reasoning goes like this: if his nation is dishonored, then his family has not been playing its part in upholding the state. Therefore, he himself has not been exemplary in his behavior, for he has allowed the honor of his family to slacken. Thus, each minotaur carries a heavy burden, for not only does he have to worry about his own honor, he also must carry the responsibility for his family, and from his family, the responsibility for the honor of the nation.

Most minotaurs are very protective of their honor, and will harshly dissuade other races attempting to tarnish it. There is the occasional minotaur who only feigns honor, who will manipulate all who come across his path. Woe to the character who commits himself to a deal with one of these,

for the dishonest minotaur will hold the character to the word of the deal, while completely disregarding his obligations in the matter. It is fortunate that minotaurs such as these are usually spotted speedily and forcibly relieved of their lives.

THE MINOTAUR CODE

Might makes right. To be weak is to be wrong.
Anything that serves the state is right.
Honor is everything in life.
To be without honor is to be without life.
Family and nation before self. The individual means nothing next to these two.
It is dishonorable to kill another minotaur except in fair combat.
A minotaur's word is his bond. Once given, never broken. Any who do so are to be publicly dishonored.
Stamp out anyone other than minotaurs using minotaurs as slaves. Do not rest until they are destroyed.
Accept all responsibility for your actions.

This is only a small example of the Code that has evolved over the years. The list has been purposefully left short so that the DM may create some of the Code himself. It is necessary that none of the DM's additions contradict what has been laid down here, but, aside from this stricture, the DM should feel free to make any changes he desires.

If a player should lapse in his observation of these ideals, or unknowingly cause a minotaur to violate them, he may face the wrath of some very distraught minotaurs.

ATTITUDES TOWARD OTHER RACES

Minotaurs have no respect for any race other than their own, with the single exception of the dragons. Whether chromatic or metallic, good, evil, or neutral, dragons are one of the few sights on Krynn that can fill a minotaur with awe. All others must prove their worth to the minotaurs on an individual basis. After all, each race, in general, is simply a collection of scum to the minotaurs' eyes, and each patch of scum must distinguish itself from the others.

Part of the problem with other races, as the minotaurs see it, is that almost none of them have codified their honor for use in daily life, if they even have honor. They simply live as they feel they ought, relying on others to tell them whether or not they are, in fact, living a good life. The minotaurs, on the other hand, can count on their Code to guide them. They do not have an unspoken set of rules, but rather a firm, articulate reality upon which they can base their actions.

Another problem the minotaurs see in other races is their inability to combat a minotaur one-on-one. If a typical member of another race were a match for an ordinary minotaur, they could glean respect from the minotaurs. However, in almost the whole of Krynn, an average representative of another race has not yet been able to best an average minotaur. Until that point, the minotaurs will regard everybody as weakling slime.

Each individual, then, of every other race, must first prove himself to the minotaurs before they will grant him their respect. Once it is given to a particular individual, it is never rescinded unless that person should later prove himself unworthy of said regard.

What follows is a capsule summary of the views minotaurs have of each of the major races, and the DM should keep these in mind when player characters interact with minotaurs.

Elves are effete dandies with no honor (due to their guerilla tactics), and are usually not to be trusted. With their overemphasis on art and beauty, these snobs are to be respected only for their incredibly long life-spans and their woods-lore. Granted, they make good instructors for the unnecessary things in life, such as music, as well as being quite good with the use of swords. Their main weapons, however, seem to be bows. The fact that they mainly use a distance weapon suggests that the elves do not care that they slay their enemies dishonorably, and, therefore, the elves do not need to be treated honorably themselves.

Humans are as prolific as rabbits, most of them with no conception of honor, and all too willing to stab their friends in the back for a quick gain to themselves. A very few (such as the Knights of Solamnia) are to be respected for their honor and their fighting prowess. The rest should be regarded warily, and never trusted until they prove themselves. With their endless infighting, humans probably will end up exterminating themselves anyway, so all minotaurs need to do is to help them along.

Kender are vermin to be exterminated. They have no regard for the property and honor of another, and thus their own property and honor is to be ignored. Under almost every conceivable circumstance, kender are untrustworthy rodents to be avoided, or, if possible, incarcerated and executed. Minotaurs will use any excuse at their disposal to rid themselves of kender. Since thieves have no place in minotaur society, a race of thieves (despite the kender claim that they are simply "Handlers") has no place in the minotaurs' grand scheme of things. Because kender do not even make good slaves (they keep slipping their chains and escaping from the overseers), the only fate for them can be death.

Goblins are nasty, filthy creatures, to be disdained, used, and discarded. They can occasionally be trusted with minor tasks, but for the most part, they are useful only for the task of fertilizing





fields—preferably as the compost themselves. They have no honor, and, just as the humans do, they continually squabble among themselves, presenting a united front only when absolutely necessary, and sometimes not even then. With this sort of organization, they cannot even be used as ballista fodder, and, since they make terrible lackeys, they are useful only for the above-mentioned purpose—fertilizer.

Gnomes are useful for their gadgets, but little else. While minotaurs do have a sense of humor, they have little tolerance for the antics of the gnomish people. The hastiness of the little folk earns them nothing but disdain from the minotaurs, and their constant scurrying about irritates the minotaurs to no end. However, they inspire pity rather than hatred, and so the minotaurs plan to spare them. As slaves, if decently treated, they are extraordinarily useful laborers, as long as they are also carefully watched to make sure they make no unnecessary modifications to the project on which they work.

Of all the humanoid races on Krynn, the one that minotaurs most respect (which is not saying much) is that of the dwarves. They see the dwarves as hardy little individuals, who have a devotion to making sure their system works, placing it over themselves. However, the fact that the minotaurs were enslaved by dwarves so long ago still ranksles the minotaurish pride, and they still hate the dwarves for that indignity. Despite this hatred, though, the minotaurs respect the dwarves for the fact that dwarves are such able fighters, and perhaps one of these days some enterprising character will be able to mend the rift between the dwarves and the minotaurs. Then again, perhaps the minotaurs' hatred is too strong. One never knows until it is tried.

As for the evil humanoids, the minotaurs despise most of them for the dual fact that they are both without any honor and unable to defeat the minotaurs. With these races, the minotaurs feel that only brute force is necessary to put them in their places. The minotaurs still hate the ogres for their refusal to help the minotaurs in the beginning days, and even after these thousands of years, the flame of resentment still burns strong in the minotaur breast. It is especially strong because the minotaurs are ogre-kin, and they see the ogres' unwillingness to aid them as a betrayal of family and race. Minotaurs therefore have to restrain themselves from attacking ogres on sight, and every ogre would be well-advised to avoid minotaurs at all costs.

The minotaurs recognize that each race has something valuable to contribute to the world of Krynn. This is why, instead of exterminating them all outright, they try to enslave these others (not including the kender and the goblins). After all, they don't want to lose those unique gifts offered by the other races. Naturally, if the race in question absolutely will not submit to slavery, they

must be exterminated. The minotaurs see no value in peaceful co-existence, unless they can be convinced that it is detrimental to them to do otherwise. They will do all in their power to see that honorable members of these other races are given favored treatment and good lives.

DEATH

Minotaurs hold death in no special regard. They neither fear it nor sanctify it. When it comes for them, as, indeed, it must come for everyone, they desire only to greet it in a way that will honor them. They have no respect for those who whine and bleat when they sense the approach of their demise. On the other hand, someone who goes to certain death calmly and with fortitude deserves a great measure of respect, even though he might be an enemy, and he will be honored after death.

Since they know that death is inevitable, the minotaurs often try to make their deaths affairs of high drama. Even unto the end, minotaurs want themselves and their families to be venerated, and so wish to be remembered for a particularly good death. Thus, they laugh in the face of death when badly outnumbered, and try to die standing on their feet.

This is not to say that minotaurs actively seek out death. To the contrary, they love life very much, and try to live each day to its fullest. Their view of death is that it is a capstone to a life. When they face unavoidable death, they want to make sure that their lives end on a good note, one of honor and glory. Ideally, their deaths should prove to others the correctness of the minotaur way of life, and how inevitable the minotaur destiny is.

Among some fanatical groups, the method of dying has been developed in to an art form, and some of these involve the dying one taking uninvolved others with them. This is regarded as good sense in battle, but when there is no enemy present, it is seen as foolish and wasteful. Some of the more despicable cultists even commit suicide merely to prove a point. The majority of minotaurs regards these cultists as deviants and decadents to be eradicated, as there is no honor in the taking of innocent life.

THE LEAGUE OF MINOTAURS

The League of Minotaurs is the only minotaur enclave of any note on Taladas. Thus, unless noted otherwise, the writing hereafter deals solely with the minotaurs of the League.

On all of Krynn, there exist few better organized and more potentially powerful groups than the League, both militarily and politically. Their fighting forces are nearly unequalled on Taladas, and their statesmen are masters at diplomacy. Indeed, how else would elves and minotaurs agree on anything, as they did for the truce now in effect between the League and Armach? The minotaurs are truly a force to be reckoned with, and they should certainly never be underestimated.

Minotaur society not of the League of Minotaurs is, for the most part, based on one's strength and the strength of one's family. These societies have a loosely-strung together hierarchy of government, wherein each family struggles for its own glorification at the expense of everything else and all others. They give lip service to the idea that the state must be preserved, but use this only as a slogan to be discarded when the chance for glory for the family arises.

Within the League, however, the individual minotaur is considered to be as nothing—the League as a whole knows that there must some sort of social organization so that the minotaurs might survive as a society. Thus, they have derived the following caste system. First of anyone and anything short of the League as a whole comes the Emperor. His family comes only shortly behind. Next come the Horned Houses, the families of minotaurs. The minotaurs comprise roughly 15 percent of the population of the League. Not all the Houses have great wealth or power, though, and quite a few minotaurs work in jobs most commonly held by their lessers in caste. This causes them no shame; they do not wish to effect the airs of their more "noble" cousins, instead trying to live an uncomplicated life.

After the Houses come the "-iskis," the non-minotaurs who have rendered such significant service to the League that they are rewarded with the honor of being able to add the suffix "-iskis" to their name, which accords them the status of minotaurs. This, however, is not a hereditary title. It must be earned by each succeeding generation. The descendants of those honored in such a way are still accorded the status of Loyalist.

Lower than the "-iskis" are the Loyal Families, those of the old Kristophan who supported the minotaurs when they came back to Taladas. The Loyal Families and the "-iskis" themselves are no more than another 20 percent of the population. Next come the common citizens, the makers of goods and the property holders. Last in the order of free citizens come the unfranchised ones, those who do not work for themselves, and yet are un-

owned. Finally, there come the slaves. Although technically they are the lowest in rank, in the wealthy houses they often live in finer style than many free citizens. Note that minotaurs may never be slaves in League society, although some perform work for others, and may even enter into indentured servitude, thereby paying a benefactor for his favors.

RIGHTS

One is considered to have inherited the birthright of one's social class when he reaches the age of 16. Upon reaching this age, the parents are no longer responsible for their child, and he becomes, in the eyes of the law, a full adult. From this day forward, he is expected to fend for himself, although he may continue to live with his parents, should they so desire. However, they have no obligation to continue supporting him. His social status is, until he does something to change it for better or for worse, that of his parents.

The legal rights of each class are sharply different. The Emperor is exempt from nearly every law, save those that would endanger the League if he were not exempted. Even then, there must be clear and present danger for anyone to take action against him. However, he may do almost anything else with impunity, including the arbitrary slaughter of various citizens. He would be a fool to risk rousing the populace like this, but he does have the legal right to do so. His family, too, can escape the law on nearly every issue. This includes his extended family, such as grandparents and grandchildren, aunts and uncles. This does not mean that they are immune to the law as the Emperor is, but rather that, due to their vast amount of wealth and ability to draw on the Imperial Treasury to hire the best lawyers and champions, any attempt to pursue them for any matter less than treason or flagrant violation of the law in public is usually reconsidered.

The Horned Houses are, naturally, not nearly as immune to the law as the Emperor and his family, although they do have more rights than any other citizen in the League. The "-iskis" fall into this category as well. They are permitted to enter the Imperial City, hold important offices, and have their way in general. They are given precedence over others of lower rank at social functions, and the unfranchised and slaves must make way for them on the streets. One may not address them in a familiar fashion unless one has been given permission. Theoretically, they have the best lives in the Empire, for they do not have the Emperor's responsibilities, nor do they constantly have to worry about being challenged for their positions.

The Loyal Families are well protected by the





law. Although minotaurs usually do not hold much stock in bloodlines (despite the fact that their Imperial Family has remained in power for hundreds of years), they still give the full protection of the law to the descendants of the families which helped the minotaurs reestablish themselves of Taladas. Although there are no real outward privileges accorded to a Loyalist, aside from the right to have a Senator chosen from their family, the *saiones* (the City Watch) respond much more quickly to a Loyalist than any other lesser race, and treat them in a more dignified fashion. As well, the Loyal Families are the only others allowed to hold governmental posts of any importance, for theirs are the only families who have demonstrated that they are trustworthy. Finally, they are the only non-minotaurs who can hold any sort of title (remember that the “-iskis” are considered minotaurs in the eyes of the law!).

The law accords the common citizens the rights of life and property. Their taxes are heavier, percentage-wise, than those higher in the social order. They cannot practice magic without a permit from the government, nor can they hold any sort of office (except village posts). However, they are not entirely powerless. After all, they compose the bulk of the empire, and the Emperor must be careful not to irritate them, as more than one Emperor has found at the cost of his throne. When the Emperor prepares his edicts, he always keeps the populace in mind, and tries to do the best thing for them, provided that it does not cost him the support of the nobles.

The unfranchised have nearly no rights. Since they often have no permanent home, they pay no taxes, and thus have no say in how the government is run. Since they do not contribute toward the working of government, the government contributes nothing for their betterment. It is often hard to move ahead in the world as an unfranchised citizen, and they often hover about minotaurs or wealthy men, trying to be of help and therefore of notice. The thing that is most degrading about being one of the unfranchised is not having to work for someone, but the fact that slaves often receive better legal representation than honest citizens, due to the fact that slaves' masters are obligated to provide defense for the slaves.

Of course, not all of the unfranchised are unhomed as well. There are serving wenches, apprentices, and others who work for a master but are not owned by him. Unluckily, the minotaurs see all those with legal masters as unfranchised, and do not take any sort of special care of them, for they reason that their master, if he wants them to continue to work for them, will provide benefits. This has not always been proven to be the case, though, for unemployment is high in the Five Cities and the masters realize that their jobs are commodities, and thus can work their servants mercilessly. They are free to leave at any time, but, unless they want to take up the adventuring life

(for which one needs a license, costing 10 stl) or try their hands in the farmlands, they would be fools to leave their jobs to try their luck elsewhere in the city.

The slaves, strangely, have more rights under the law than the unfranchised citizens, for their masters must take care of them, rather than just be presumed to take care of them. However, they cannot engage in any sort of activity without their master's consent, nor can they bear arms, unless allowed to do so by the governor of the province. Their masters are required to find them shelter, feed them, and provide for their other basic needs, as well as provide legal representation for them.

The slave is not expected to, and indeed cannot, defend himself in the Arena unless it is for a capital crime (such as murder, treason, etc.). The master also will suffer a punishment, should his slave commit a crime. This typically involves a flogging, 10 lashes being the minimum. Naturally, the owners attempt to discourage crime in their slaves, often insuring this to a brutal extent.

The master may not sell his slave except on an approved Auction Day (once per month). Further, when a master purchases a slave, he must clearly delineate the conditions by which that slave might be freed to the slave, so that the slave might have something to strive toward. Once a slave is freed, he is considered to be a member of the unfranchised class, unless he somehow manages to find himself a job where he no longer works for a master.

On the other hand, the master may beat his slaves at will, and can even cause their deaths, as long as he has a mildly plausible story to cover his actions. If any slave should be so foolish as to murder his master and be discovered, the entire house's contingent of slaves will be butchered, to serve as an example to any other slaves contemplating murder. A slave may be killed by any citizen, the only cost being the anger of his owner and a realistic replacement value for the slave (which, for a skilled slave, can exceed 200 stl). The food and clothing a master provides need not be of any quality at all, simply enough to nourish and cover the slave.

A slave is less than human, and farm animals are usually treated better than the average slave. Of course, there are the slaves of the nobles, who tutor the aristocrats and their children, who live more comfortable lives than many poorer minotaurs. Although these slaves serve in prestigious houses, and occasionally have the ears of their masters, they have no more rights than their less-fortunate brethren, and can be killed indiscriminately as well. It is considered to be in extremely poor taste to kill a host's slave while guesting at his house, but it can be done. As one can see, it is much preferable to live as the lowest form of citizen, for then, at least, one has the right to live.

As well, the government also owns a sizable stable of slaves, which it keeps available for manual

labor of the nastiest variety, such as cleaning the sewers, building new roads, and taking care of the garbage strewn about the streets. Since the work is too demeaning for a minotaur to even supervise, they assign trusted slaves to oversee the rest of the slaves. Of course, every once in a while, the minotaurs make a mistake in assigning the overseer, and a band of slaves flees into the extensive sewer systems of the cities to hatch plots against their former masters . . .

This is a very rare occurrence, for the minotaurs know firsthand the trouble slaves can cause, and therefore try to be more responsible with their slaves than their former masters were.

FAMILY VS. NATION

In this age, the nation has taken the social place of the family. After all, the original function of the minotaur family was to enable some sort of social structure to take hold, to set up some basis for a social hierarchy. Now that the families have formed a societal base, the minotaurs are attempting to form an even greater society. In this grand new vision, the Horned Houses will be replaced by the Horned Nation. The authors of this vision hope to cause all minotaurs to see that the nation is simply a larger version of their family.

Unfortunately, too many minotaurs are not looking forward, anticipating the change that must come, and are instead clinging tenaciously to the old familial system, trying to boost their families' interests ahead of those of the state. Some far-sighted individuals among the minotaurs are taking steps to deal with these families. After all, if the minotaurs are without society, then logically, they cannot achieve their dreams of empire. Therefore, no sacrifice the individual can make in the service of the state is too great, and no sacrifice a family can make will be too great—including dying.

This contributes to some of the confusion surrounding the minotaurs. Technically, they are an evil people. Evil people care only for themselves as individuals. Thus, the minotaur society should not hold together, for each minotaur should be seeking his own gratification. Paradoxically, however, most minotaurs genuinely care for their society, and will seek its preservation at the cost of almost all else.

MAGIC IN THE EMPIRE

While the minotaurs are not especially adept at wielding the forces of magical energy surrounding Krynn, they do respect its power, and have devoted extensive resources toward understanding it. The League has created a special College of Magic for just that purpose, and all magic-using beings within its borders are expected to be, if not outright members, at least registered with the Col-

lege. Any caught practicing magic without a license are summarily tried. Of course, catching someone without a license out on the frontier becomes problematic at best, and impossible at worst.

The annual fee for membership in the College is 100 stl. While this fee seems rather steep to the members of the lower classes, the government concludes that magic itself is an expensive operation, and therefore it must receive tariffs accordingly.

Not only do the mages have to pay a yearly tax, they also must swear an oath that they will never use their magic to the detriment of the League. Of course, many mages disregard this, considering their magic to be much more important than any petty social institution. The vast majority of magic-users, though, abide by this oath, both for fear of the consequences should they break it, and because their honor is at stake. Finally, those mages who are recognized as legitimate by the Imperial League wear the Gray Robes of the state, rather than any White, Red, or Black Robes, denoting their allegiance to the League and to the Emperor.

With these restrictions come certain benefits. A mage may use any of the facilities of the College of Magic or its subsidiaries scattered throughout the Empire, excepting those set aside for another magic-user. He may find shelter within the College and reside there as long as he likes, although he still must pay a nominal fee for his food. He receives free training when he wishes to advance to the next level. Finally, if he is engaging in spell research that will benefit the League, he receives his spell components free, as long as he is working within the College grounds. There is a limit to how many 1,000 stl gems the College will finance, but they will provide a certain number.

LAWS, JUSTICE, AND ARRESTS

The laws of the League of Minotaurs are not extraordinarily difficult to understand. Although there are quite a few of them, they are fairly common-sensical, most of them dealing with the protection of the lives and property of others. Each of these is sacrosanct, and can only be altered, harmed, or abused with permission of the owner. Most of the laws can be traced to this idea. Theft is illegal because it involves taking the property of others; assault is illegal because it involves abusing the life of another. If ever there is a question regarding the legality of a probable course, one can almost always ask, "Does it involve harm to another's life or property?" If the answer is yes, then the action is probably illegal.

These laws, naturally, extend only to the citizens of the League. Even foreign minotaurs are not protected by the law (although it is certainly easier for



them to gain citizenship than any other race). Unfortunately for the criminals of the League, there is no easy way to tell who is and who is not a citizen. The lawbreakers have to figure it out on their own, usually with limited success. There is a rumor floating about that Kalros the Paunchy, an influential Senator, is attempting to pass a law that requires citizens to carry some sort of visible identification. Allegedly, this is so the *saiones* can more easily identify citizens in time of need. On the other hand, it is reported by several unreliable sources that he has been keeping company with some of the Upright Men (heads of organized crime) of the Old City in Kristophan.

At any rate, the laws in the League simply require respect for the other citizens. Anyone caught breaking these laws will be dealt with harshly. When making a public arrest, the *saiones* are incorruptible, and the offender is often dragged, beaten if necessary, to the nearest magistrate, the Praetor. Of course, if the arrest is private, there is a 50/50 chance that the offender might buy his way to freedom by paying each watchman 1-5 steel pieces. There are typically 10 *saiones* in a detail, making paying off an entire detail a rather expensive proposition. However, if the crime is flagrant enough, there is nothing a criminal can do to free himself.

When they have taken a case to the Praetor, the *saiones* present their case, detailing the nature of the crime. The Praetor determines whether a law has been broken, and will attempt to reach a settlement. This prevents every single case from going to the Arena, where the minotaurs turn "Might makes right" from a theory into a reality. The Praetor makes no judgment on whether a given person is guilty or not; he merely decides whether the case is worth sending to the Arena. Although it is possible to plead guilt to a Praetor, this is not often done, for the sentences are swift and harsh.

Many poorer people are anxious to reach a settlement, for they cannot afford to hire champions to represent them in the Arena. Rich people, of course, engage in more serious (to be read: expensive) crimes, and thus usually find it less expensive to hire a champion than to reach a settlement. Of course, if the crime is blatant and so obviously illegal (murder, treason, etc.), the Praetor may rule that the defendant must appear himself. Thus, many wealthy people are constantly looking for people to teach them new self-defense (and -offense) tricks, and will pay a good fee for services rendered. Quite a few adventurers have made a pretty penny in this fashion.

A settlement usually involves reparations being paid to the injured party, whether it be replacing goods, a monetary fee, or a public apology; sometimes, the Praetor finds both parties equally injured, and requires that they give up their current grievance.

One must always remember that although the



minotaurs respect power, they also respect their laws, and take a dim view of people constantly using their strength to take things from those weaker. Although the wealthy can get away with this (by hiring skilled champions to defend them in times of need), a less-wealthy person might find himself dangling by his neck from a tall tree if he continues in his repressive behavior. Many times, a group of watchmen has come across just such a fellow, a large, well-known, brutal, and very dead person. While the citizens of the League respect their laws, they often are not above taking them into their own hands (if they feel they can get away with it).

As mentioned earlier, foreigners have no legal right to represent themselves within the League. This may present a problem for those traveling within its borders. The loophole, however, is an easy one to find. All one needs to do is find a citizen who is willing to sponsor the claim in the Arena, and that is that. The problem lies in the fact that the sponsor's social level reflects on the foreigner, and, for the duration of the challenge, is the outlander's social level. The outlander then receives all the rights due to some one of that social class (which, for the lower classes, do not number many). Slaves cannot sponsor a foreigner.

The trick is in finding a patron of a high enough social level who is willing to do it cheaply. Ideally, one would have picked up a few minotaur friends along the way who would be willing to sponsor a claim. Realistically, the best one could hope for is

to find a sponsor among the common citizens, and to expect to pay that sponsor a fee of probably no less than 200 stl per social level (1 = unfranchised, 2 = common citizen, 3 = Loyal Family, 5 = Minotaur/Noble). The fee, as one can see, is quite steep, but even the unfranchised must make a living somehow, and the law is the law, love it or leave it.

Very occasionally, one just might get lucky and find a noble who sponsors cases for foreigners free of charge. Of course, the noble has his motives, whether they be humanitarian, decadent, or whimsical. It is often better just to pay somebody off instead of accepting the help of these nobles, for one never knows what to expect when the case is over. It is not at all unusual to be forced to do some noble's dirty work in exchange for such a favor.

When before the Praetor, one can expect treatment in relation to one's social standing. That is, the higher the social rank, the more leniently the Praetor will treat the subject regarding the Conditions of Combat, and further, will be more agreeable to forcing a settlement (especially if his palms have been shined by the passing of coins!), if this is what is desired. Not all Praetors can be bribed, though, and if one attempts to give a "gift" to one of these incorruptible judges, he might find himself fighting in the Arena weaponless!

Some further laws and rules of the League include: No magic in the streets. That is to say, no one may cast spells openly, for the people of the League are frightened of displays of raw magical power. This includes any display of magic, whether it be a simple *detect magic* spell or a *fireball*. Likewise, priestly spells are discouraged, because the Empire does not want to lose its citizens to rampant superstition. Magic is a proven science for most of the minotaurs, but powers granted from beyond? It sounds like a bad nightmare. Priests are therefore simply seen as magic-users who have figured out a way to work magic differently. Naturally, not all minotaurs take this view. See Chapter IV for further details.

As well, the government wishes to discourage the telling of old legends and fairy tales to the impressionable children. After all, they encourage fantasy and daydreaming, when the government wants them rooted in the here-and-now. Of course, edifying stories of the early days of the minotaurs are acceptable, but the "trash" tales currently in vogue have been banned. The punishment is flogging.

IN THE ARENA

One important thing to note before launching into a discussion of the legal ramifications of the Arena: the Arena is not used solely as a court of law. It also exists for entertainment purposes, for the diversion of the crowds. The mayor of any town in

which there is an Arena may declare a Day of Games, in which paid gladiators or trained slaves compete for the enjoyment of the populace. It also may be sponsored by Senators or other nobles who wish to pacify the people, or simply influence their goodwill.

The DM may wish to give his players a few combats in the Arena for some minor infractions, or perhaps induce them into becoming champions themselves. This will give them a taste of the danger in breaking the law, and they may therefore choose to adhere to it more strictly or break it more often.

The Arena is more often used as a trial ground than as a diversion. When the Praetor judges that a case is fit to go to the Arena, both sides of the case must reach an agreement on the Conditions of Combat that are acceptable to the Praetor. These Conditions are Victory, Arms, Armor, and Champions. This is the part of the settlement for which most people hire lawyers, because it is through this section of the litigation that battles are most often won or lost. After all, if the other side can successfully convince the Praetor that the battle ought to be weighted for his side due to extenuating circumstances, one has little chance of triumphing once within the Arena, unless one can afford a champion who is extraordinarily good, especially when underequipped. Of course, if one can afford a champion such as that, one might as well hire a decent lawyer, one who can prevent such an unfair opposing advantage.

This is where it comes in handy to have connections among the well-placed, for they can influence the judge or simply let it be known that the magistrate can be bribed. These sessions are closed to the general public, and the client, if he is being represented, is not even allowed to be present for this meeting. He will simply have to trust in his counselor, although there have been some unscrupulous advocates who take money from the opposing side in chambers, and leave their client to rot.

Prior to the meeting, each counsel (should it be employed) checks with his client to determine what his wishes are regarding each Condition, and during the session, will attempt to meet those as well as possible. Through careful wheedling and dickering, each side attempts to gain for itself the most favorable Conditions. The defensive side will always push for a Victory Condition that minimizes physical risk to the client, should he lose. Both sides push for as much armor and as powerful a weapon as they can. Finally, both sides have the option of employing a champion. Should one side take advantage of this possibility and the other decline, appropriate adjustments are usually made in the Arms/Armor categories.

Should the Praetor decide that there has been Contempt of the Conditions during the trial, he will wave a red flag, which prompts a watchman to blow his signal horn, bringing the trial to a tem-





porary end. A rehearing will be scheduled. Should one of the parties involved in the trial continue to fight after the horn has been blown, he is subject to bodily harm by soldiers stationed within the Arena, who will pull the combatants apart.

Contempt involves such infractions as lying to the Praetor regarding one's skill, attempting to bribe an incorruptible Praetor, bringing unauthorized items into the Arena for the purpose of an illegal win, and others. The list is long, and the Praetor can choose to exercise any or none of them.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The Victory Condition is often the most difficult decision to reach. Although there is well-established precedent set down in the law for each sort of offense, the magistrate must first determine the magnitude of the crime, and whether it deserves the full punishment that the law prescribes. Additionally, he must decide this while being pressured by both sides, both of whom usually are equally verbose and who have a profound knowledge of cases exactly like this one, and who will go on expounding and pontificating and never shutting up . . .

Many judges have petitioned the Senate and every and every other law-making body to require that the lawyers remain absent during this phase, but to no avail. Now and then, if especially irritated by two infinitely "knowledgeable" lawyers, a judge will arbitrarily rule a Victory Condition that goes to one extreme or another, which neither side usually wants. This helps to keep the attorneys in line, for they do not want to incur a Praetor's wrath in this fashion, because it reflects upon their skills as counselors. Many lawyers have worked at developing pleasant persona for the time they spend alone with the Praetor.

The Victory Condition can involve anything from the first blow landed to a painful death at the hands of the League's finest torturers. The victor of the match reserves the right to place any sort of mark on the loser (unless he is prevented from doing so by the Praetor), as long as it is not permanently disabling or crippling.

In the event that the defendant wins, he may, at his own discretion, levy upon his accuser the same punishment he could have expected had he lost. Thus, he could cause his accuser to be put to death if he were on trial for murder. If it is a state-tried case, the defendant receives monetary compensation for the inconvenience and attendant dishonor of being summoned to the Arena, as well as a public apology from the appropriate governmental functionary. Finally, he may inflict upon the champion trying the case the punishment that he would have received.

ARMS

Although magical weapons are usually reserved for only the most important cases, they may also be used to balance the skill levels between two obviously mismatched opponents. These days, the Praetor will require a test of weapon skills before he will allow magical items in a case, carefully observing everything about the two combatants and their handling of the weapons.

In the olden days, when the original system was still being worked out, before the Tests were created, many simply lied about their weapons ability, and won their cases unfairly. Now, it takes a very skilled actor to slip any sort of trick past the Praetor, and if he feels that someone has in fact pulled something illegal, he will rule Contempt of Conditions. This means that the entire case must be reheard, and the Praetor will be more than a little biased against the one who incurred the Contempt. Of course, if the other party involved in the case was killed during the original trial, a government champion is called in to finish the case. For obvious reasons, few violate the Conditions.

Spell-casting is not considered a suitable replacement for lack of weapon ability, and the Praetor consigns those caught flinging magic in the Arena to the dubious mercies of the champions.

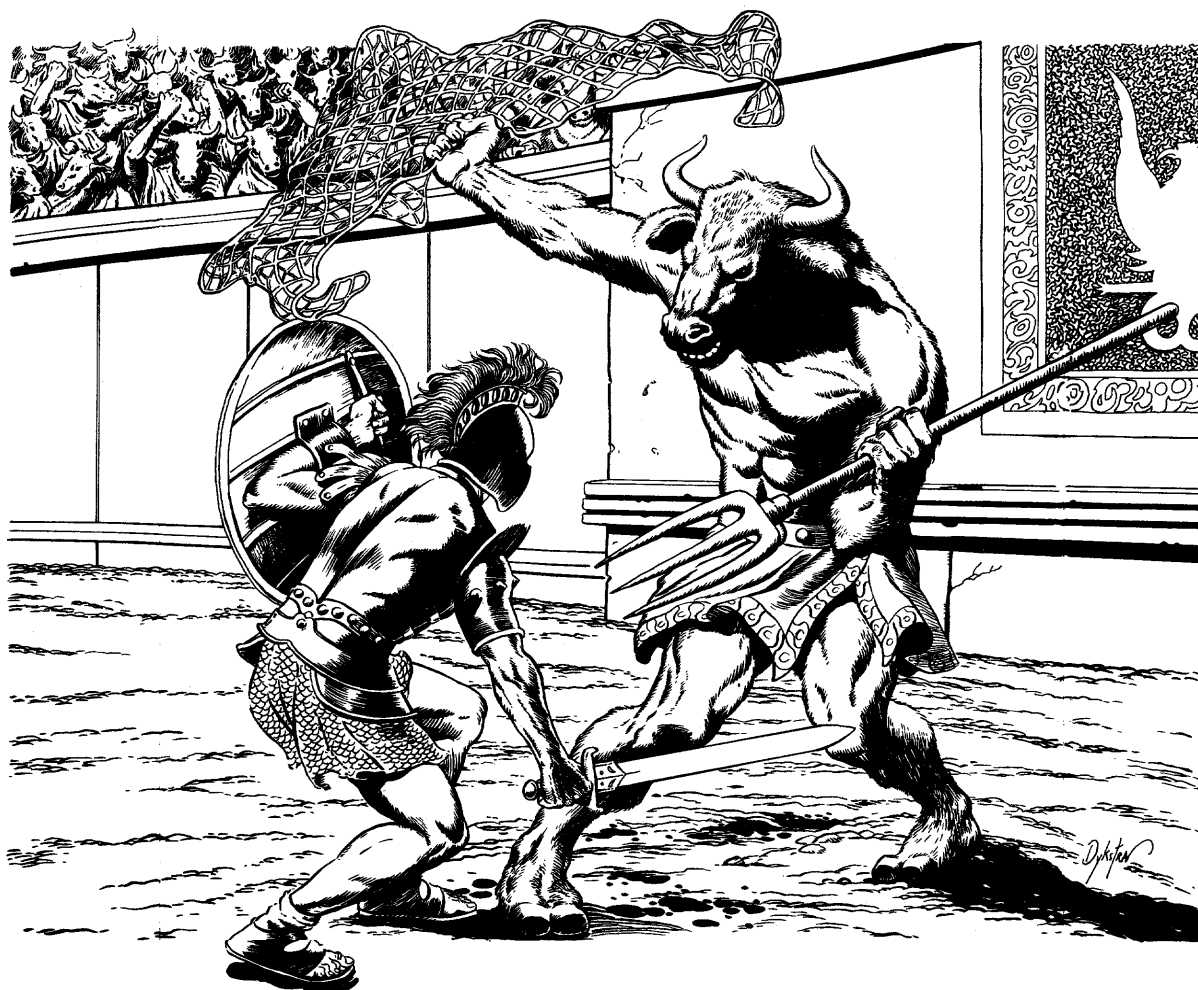
ARMOR

Armor, too, is used as a way to even the odds between mismatched opponents. An ordinary human, clad in banded armor, is usually considered a match for an unarmored minotaur, although, of course, one needs to take fighting ability into consideration as well in these cases. As in the Arms Conditions, magical armor is considered fair only when the mismatch is grotesque. Such items as magical rings, cloaks, and others are strictly prohibited, for they have, in the past, allowed various abuses by those more familiar with the uses of such items than their opponents.

If this means that a magic-user is at a disadvantage, so be it. The judge will try to compensate in another way, but the magistrates are loath to have such random factors as magic enter the trials, and will attempt to keep it away from the Arena as much as possible.

CHAMPIONS

Originally, the minotaurs did not allow champions in the Arena. They felt that it promoted weakness and sloth in the more politically powerful minotaurs. However, when the number of cases in which the government was involved increased dramatically, the old guard of the minotaurs grudgingly conceded that sometimes it was necessary to



employ champions in the service of the government, but they refused adamantly to allow this compromise to extend to the nobles, though it meant sacrificing their own privilege.

Along the line, however, an Emperor found that several of his nobles were too valuable to him to allow them to be wasted whenever they committed a "minor" infraction. Thus, he allowed them the privilege of hiring champions for all but the most serious cases, playing right into the hands of those who had been pushing for the license to use champions. When the humans saw what the nobles had achieved, they demanded fairness and equality for themselves. When the Emperor saw what he had done to the justice system, he abdicated his Imperial power to his son.

Under the championing system, anyone with enough money can buy himself power in the Arena. The detractors of the current practice claim that the champion system simply favors the wealthy, and that the modern practice therefore makes a mockery of the Rule of Might. Its proponents, on the other hand, firmly maintain that wealth is another sign of might, and perhaps a stronger sign of might than simple muscle power. After all, does not the money control the muscle? Due to their persuasiveness, their opponents number fewer and fewer. This might have something to do with the rumor that, whenever the opponents in question grow too vociferous and vocal, they have a funny way of turning up dead.

When presented with the fact that wealth has a way of ensuring that it does not change hands, the wealthy respond that only the truly mighty can hold onto something that everybody else wants. Clearly, unless something drastic happens, there is nothing that can change the situation as it now stands.

The champions themselves can be a rough lot, although, as in everything else, there are notable exceptions. A variety of people employ champions, from the government to lawyers (who usually maintain at least one champion for their clients' needs) to a Warriors' Guild. Some perform freelance work, while others work solely for one employer for the duration of their career. Whatever their methods of obtaining work, they are an enormously popular group of people, drawing tremendous acclaim. Women seek them out, while men envy them their size and speed. Nobles publicly disdain them, yet secretly court their company. The commoners aspire to be champions, and commoners and nobles alike slavishly ape the fashions affected by the currently popular champions.

One fashion that shows signs of enduring is that of adorning one's horns or, if one is not fortunate enough to be a minotaur, a scabbard or another commonly worn item, with golden rings, which symbolize victories won in the Arena. The rings are quite thin, so that a victor might fit as many as possible on his horns. This practice formerly





helped the officials keep count of a champion's victories, but, as it came into vogue, more and more trial combatants (who had previously never set foot in the Arena) appeared with their horns covered with gold, intending to frighten their opponents into making mistakes.

Naturally, the champions discarded this method for counting victories, and they began a new tabulation system. Real champions still keep track of their victories by this method, for they know that they can trust themselves, but mistrust any non-champions who have ringed horns.

Champions supplement their income with the gifts given them by admiring fans, delighted employers, and love-stricken females. A popular champion can double his income for a fight through the offerings alone! Even champions who have had little time to establish followings can earn enough to feed themselves well for at least a week based on only a single combat. Aside from the gifts, there are other benefits to being a champion. One attracts all manner of folk, from the worshipful young street urchins to the jaded thrill seekers of the upper classes, as well as the decadents who want to be associated with the death aura that they claim surrounds each champion.

While all this attention may not always be welcome, the gifts provided by them are, whether it be monetary or information. An intelligent champion can make a fortune heeding the tips of his sycophants. Of course, some of these hints are utterly destructive, so the champion must figure out which is which.

Based on this magnificent lifestyle, many young men and women of the lower classes, as well as some minotaurs down on their luck or just seeking a thrill, enter the ranks of gladiatorial school. This effectively seals them off from the rest of the world for a year, while instructors teach them several weapon techniques, armored and unarmored fighting techniques, and the value of theatrics. This is taught in a harsh, demanding environment, where the lash of a whip is more common than a compliment. The gladiators' instructors suffer surprisingly few casualties, however, for they are significantly better, with nearly any weapon, than most of their charges, and those students who are better with a weapon usually know when they deserve a lashing, and accept it without complaint.

When the students emerge, they are subtly different, radiating an aura of professionalism and courage. They are unmistakable in a crowd, for they love a high profile, and will always work for the crowd's entertainment. In the Arena, they move with a cool grace they did not previously exhibit, and display uncanny showmanship. Whether or not the fight is to the death, these gladiators always seek to defeat their opponent in the most impressive way possible, for that makes the food, drink, and money roll in that much faster. Living in this showy, flashy lifestyle, they often forget that the future holds some nasty surprises.

There are those champions on the other side of Fate's scale, who have, due to age, excessive losses, or other circumstances, fallen from the public's grace, who now reside dissolutely in whatever slums their city has to offer. They eke out an existence as hired swords, trying to earn money based on their former popularity as champions of the Arena. Most are good for no more than simple assassinations, as a bodyguard to some vaguely important person, or hired muscle for gang wars.

For the most part, they are a depressed, moody lot, leading a miserable existence, reliving the memories of their glory days with any who will listen, and they never give a thought to the future, being too wrapped in their present misery. They gladly take any job offered to them, hoping that this will be the one that leads them down the path back to glory. More often than not, it only mires them deeper in the quagmire of filth that has become their lives.

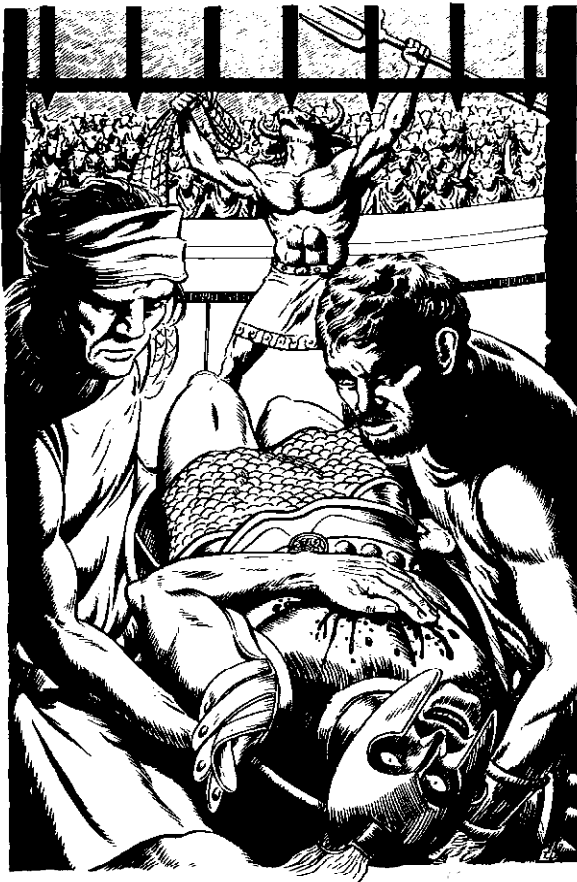
Champions do not usually fight to the end. If they are in a position where they are about to be killed, they surrender, and their client is brought into the Arena to face his punishment. Of course, there is the occasional Arena fighter who, in his blood fury, does not recognize the gesture, and kills his opponent anyway.

Senators often send messages to their Senatorial opponents by means of the Arena if they are on opposite sides of the issue being decided in the Arena. Many champions in cases such as this suddenly become bloodthirsty monsters, and it is most unfortunate when the other Senator's champion dies. The victorious Senator is all apology, of course, but the other champion is dead. Each Senator is sure to get the point—cross me any more, and you might end up like your champion.

All characters should take pains to remove themselves from such a situation, unless they enjoy being moved about like pawns on a chessboard. Of course, if they do somehow manage to become caught up in the internal power struggle of the Senate, they can win great notoriety for themselves working for one side or another.

The standard champion is a Fighter level 3, although, for the more trying cases, the level of ability rises dramatically. The Emperor's Champion is a fighter of the 16th level, while the other Imperial Champions are of the 14th. Each officially sanctioned Warriors' Guild in one of the big cities maintains at least one champion of 13th level, although most have more. In smaller towns, the Warriors' Guilds are obviously much smaller, and therefore attract less talent. Most of them have fighters no higher than 10th level, and the highest is typically 7th level.

The player characters might wish to hire themselves out as small-town champions for a time to improve their financial situation, to have a base of operations near a favored adventuring spot, or to improve their record as champions. If they do so, their pay will be determined by both the amount



of crime in the area and their own ability level. For high crimes, either the criminal is sent to Kristophan to have his case heard by the Senate or one of the Imperial Champions will come to the town.

LOSS IN THE ARENA

If found guilty in the Arena (that is, if he or his champion loses), the defendant faces a rough time of it. That is, he faces a rough time unless he has already been killed in the Arena. Losing a case there is no laughing matter. It means automatic public dishonor. The loser is subject to general derision (unless the odds were drastically against him), he might suffer a stiff jail sentence, be tortured, or publicly humiliated beyond his Arena loss. If someone is suspected of committing a particularly heinous crime, the fight in the Arena will be to the death. One of the state's champions (who usually fights cases such as these) will withhold the killing blow, and will attempt to subdue the culprit. Once this is accomplished, the family of the victim, or the headsman if there is no family, enters the Arena to deliver the execution.

It has been observed that the Arena has a strange effect upon the victims' families: it either makes the victim's family particularly nervous, or they are simply taking revenge, for in cases such as this, the mortal blow often goes astray into non-

fatal, yet very painful, parts of the body. Of course, should this nervousness/eagerness on the part of the family go too far, the champion will step in and make an end to it. The family does get at least three minutes to try to get it right, and many criminals have found, to their chagrin, that quite a bit of pain can be squeezed into those three minutes.

Even if they do not fight the case to the end, the losers are usually in for some pain. While the state does not torture those suspected of a crime, they have developed certain instruments for those proven guilty. They have developed lesser instruments, as well. For example, the mages of the League created an interesting item called the *ring of branding*, which allows the victor of a battle to place his personal mark on all those he has defeated in the Arena. These items are always in demand, and often command prices of at least 1000 stl.


In whatever form the loss takes, the Victory Conditions established at the outset are always upheld. The punishments for losing are limited only by the imaginations of those who determine the penalty. They can be as little as a fine paid to cover damages (in the case of mild misdemeanors) or death (for felonies such as rape, patricide, treason, and others). Many times, if a minotaur is the defendant, one or two horns are removed for crimes of less than capital importance.

In the ideal case, the punishment fits the crime, and no-one is damaged by the sanction any more than is justified by the nature of the transgression. In reality, the League is often much more harsh in punishing wrong-doers than is necessary, in the hopes that it will deter any further crime. This is not always the case, but the government nonetheless pursues this course with vigor. They conclude that they may as well castigate the criminals they manage to catch to the full extent. In the main, this only seems to ensure that the remaining criminals simply act more carefully when they work on their latest jobs. For many of the lower class, they see crime as one of the few lucrative means of survival. If not lucrative, at least it's a life.

THE MILITARY

Another means of employment may be found in the military, as the League is constantly on the lookout for new people to swell the ranks of the Legions of Eragas and the Minotaur Fleet. Although everybody in the League serves in the military at some point or another (for the Emperor has decreed a mandatory year's service for every citizen under the age of 30, whether male or female, in one of the two branches), some find the military life more attractive than others, and enlist in the military full-time. The military is certainly a more attractive option than starving to death, and, in the eyes of many, more attractive than farming some rich man's field. The common man is further enticed by the vigorous advertising campaign





mounted by the Ministry of War and Defense, which depicts life in the military as an adventure, excitement that cannot be gleaned from life anywhere else.

Even hardened adventurers, such as PCs, might find the military a viable option. After all, following orders is much easier than living in constant fear in the wilderness, with which so many adventurers are familiar. People new to the adventuring game may find the military life a useful springboard to launch their ambition, for not only does it provide training and equipment, it grants the additional benefit of discipline, which something most adventurers sorely lack.

When one joins the military, he can expect the basic necessities of life and even a luxury or two. While the food is not excellent, it is at least nutritious and, for many, better than they could have expected outside the military. His life is reasonably safe (unless they are called off to battle, which, in the League of Minotaurs, occurs fairly frequently), and when he leaves, he ostensibly has the respect of the other citizens of the League, and is guaranteed a pension according to his rank and service for the rest of his life. And it's certainly better than slaving life and limb away for some cruel master.

THE ARMY

Joining the Legions of Eragas is simple. All one has to do is go to the Ministry of War and Defense in the Imperial City in Kristophan (during the day, of course), find the Department of the Legions, and ask to speak to a recruiter. After a simple interview and an examination to determine physical fitness for the Legion, there is the swearing-in ceremony. The new recruits are required to swear, "I pledge my life in the service of my Emperor, and will hereby dutifully obey any commands given me by my betters. I agree to abide by any and all decisions regarding my life made by those higher in rank than I until such time as I am discharged from the military of my beloved homeland. I further swear to follow my leader to whatever wars we may be called, and to never desert my companions in times of war or of peace. I will never shrink from death in the service of the League of Minotaurs."

Although all past crimes are forgiven by the Legion, criminals are advised not to seek shelter from the law by enlisting, for there are enlisted men, employed on the side by the Ministry of Law, who work to make sure that people suspected of being on the run from the law do not have a long tenure in the Legions, nor, indeed, in life.

Almost all classes of character are welcome to join the Legions, with magic-users being the prime exception. They are under the jurisdiction of the College of Magic, and, as such, must receive permission from the College before they are allowed to enlist. It is quite rare for this to be allowed, although it does happen. Even when the mage is in

the army, he is segregated from the regular legions, for his duties are entirely different from theirs.

At any rate, the new inductee is escorted from the oath-swearing by two burly sergeants (fighters, level 5) to the encampment of the Bearkiller Legion, where he is housed in the "New Calves" section of camp.

If a person is desirous of joining the Legion but is not fortunate enough to be in Kristophan, there are always local recruiting offices in any village with a population larger than 200 people. Covered wagons make a circuit from town to town, gathering the new recruits from each hamlet to take them to their new home. Although the distance through the League is prohibitive, the huge number of such wagons allows a town to see a wagon roughly once every two weeks. The wagons are largely immune to bandit molestation, for all bandits know that the Legions will stop at nothing to destroy those who do so much as harm a flea on these wagons without the express consent of the commander of the Legions.

Once in training camp, the new recruits are run through a brutal daily regimen that is designed to weed out the weak, and to bolster those who hover on the line between weak and passable. The exercise goes on for two months, getting harder and harder every day. The weaklings are consigned mostly to the bureaucracy, while those who pass are given special training in weapons use and various other fighting techniques. It is at this point that the division of the trainees into the various units takes place.

Possible assignments include the *legiones ballistorium* (the siege engineers), the archers, light, medium, or heavy infantry, or, if one has connections with the nobility, any of the three divisions of cavalry (also known as *equestrianes*), although the light and medium cavalry is mostly composed of outlanders from Northern Hosk. If the tests during training were failed, the hapless soul will probably serve in the Quartermaster's Corps. When assignment is made to one legion or another, the new legionary is brought to the tattooist of that legion, who imprints the legion's symbol somewhere on the novice's body, leaving the choice of location to the inductee. This serves two purposes: it identifies that person as a member of a certain legion, due all the honors normally accorded to that legion, and it identifies those who desert the army.

While in the Army, there are quite a few, although not unlimited, opportunities for advancement. Most people start at the rank of private. They may then be promoted to the rank of sergeant, from there to colonel, to sergeant and so on.

Although most start at the enlisted rank of private, there are those who, due to promise and potential as trainees, are sent off to Officers School in Vinlans, where they receive training and literacy in the ways of command and tactics. When they

finish the four-year-long training session, they re-enter the Legions of Eragas at a rank no lower than Lieutenant, extraordinarily well-prepared in the ways of command and strategy.

The trainees are required to memorize the ranks of all those above them, in order that they know who to obey in times of crisis. The rankings progress as follows:

1. Private
2. Corporal
3. Sergeant
4. Master Sergeant
5. Sergeant Major
6. Lieutenant
7. Captain
8. Major
9. Colonel
10. General

There are, of course, various ranks of general (also known as *duces*), established to ascertain the command structure when several generals are present at a time. The commander of the entire structure of the Legions is, naturally, the Emperor. Immediately below him is the General of the Army, who influences and is influenced by the Minister of War and the General Quarter-Master. Below them are the various military governors, who command the Legions in the event of a provincial revolt.

The generals each command a legion, which consists of roughly 1,500 men, although they can fill to as many as 5,000. Each legion is divided into *ordines*, each comprising 500 men, further divided into *centuria* of 100 men each, each of which is finally divided into four units of 25 men, called *manipulae*.

The *manipula* is the heart of the army, for it is easily maneuverable, the men quick to respond to commanding officers. Most of these units consist of 24 privates and corporals, commanded by someone of sergeant rank or greater. Each maniple forms a block with five men on a side, with the commanding officer in the center issuing orders. When a soldier on any side tires or falls, there is a fresh replacement waiting for him on the inside of the maniple. He then gains a chance to catch his breath, so that he can replace one of his tired comrades later.

Further, unless they are storming a keep of some sort, they keep themselves spread fairly far apart, so that if one of them should appear to be in danger of being overwhelmed, another can step forward to even the odds. If they are assailing a stronghold, they draw closer together, and perform an action known as "turtling," which consists of each of the warriors on the sides locking his shield with those of his compatriots, presenting a wall of shields on that side. Each of the infantrymen on the inside raise their shields over their heads, locking the shields together on top. In this way, the maniple may advance to the walls of the enemy fortress under a protective shell, fairly safe from enemy arrows and sling bullets. Of course, it

does little good against boiling oil or catapult stones, but against most hand-launched missiles (unless they are particularly well-placed), it is impervious. It gives a bonus of +6 AC for all in the turtle.

The soldiers of the League are kept fairly busy with the wars against the Thenolites these days, but are well-taken care of for their efforts. On average, a private receives only 3 stl a month. This amount increases with each rank achieved, by 5 additional steel pieces per rank. Thus, a corporal would get 8 stl per month, a sergeant would get 13 stl, and so on until the rank of sergeant major. After this rank, the pay scale increases dramatically. Each lieutenant receives 60 stl a month. A captain earns 120 stl per month. A colonel earns 160 stl. A major gains 200 stl, while the general gets 260 stl, with 30 more per level of generalship. More can be earned through exemplary service that might not justify a promotion, yet still deserves a bonus. As well, the soldiers may keep any plunder from the fallen bodies and cities. Naturally, the higher-ranking soldiers get first pick, but the division of booty is, for the most part, very fair.

Despite the fact that the legionary could probably make better money as an adventurer, the risks are fewer and the actual benefits usually greater as a soldier. After all, the Legions provide home, decent provisions, dedicated and loyal companions, and a pension and health program that are usually unavailable to the average adventurer.

The tacticians in the League are, without question, the best in all of Taladas. It is through their strategies, and the implementation of said strategies by the crack soldiers of the Legions, that the League of Minotaurs has become a force to fear. Even though many of their strategists never see action, they have a keen understanding of the possibilities on the field, of the ebb and tide of battle.

They employ an enhanced version of the *wizard eye* spell, which has five times the duration, is capable of infravision, and is insubstantial. This improved version may be cast by anyone capable of casting sixth-level wizard spells—provided they can get it. It is a spell which is jealously guarded by the General Staff of the Legions, and one for which any of the League's enemies would pay handsomely. The spell enables them to view the terrain and the enemy firsthand, without having to rely on the questionable reports of spies and scouts. They continue to utilize scouts and spies, because they know that others can pick up something another might have missed.

Based on their knowledge of the situation, these men and minotaurs can effectively plan an approach which will dismember their enemy with minimal loss to themselves. Occasionally, of course, as happens in any evil society, the General Staff sets up one of its officers to take a fall, in order to divert attention from their own misdeeds, or to quash the ambition of a potentially powerful subordinate. This is, for the most part, a rare occur-





rence, as the citizens of the Minotaur League usually prefer personal confrontations rather than the sneaky knife-in-the-back approach. On the other hand, sometimes the only way to deal with a problem is in the “elven” fashion, as the minotaurs call it.

This disdain for the sneak attack does not extend to their tactics, however, for they recognize that the way to win a war is through the most direct means and efficient means possible. If this means slaughtering a village of old men and children, they will utilize that option. On the other hand, if it means a large, pitched, formal battle, that choice, too, is spent. Whatever the battle is, one can be sure that the General Staff of the legions of Eragas is completely aware of all terrain, fairly sure of the enemies’ numbers, and ready to implement any strategic maneuver they see as desirable.

For serving their time in the Legions, the DM may wish to consider giving the players an extra weapon proficiency of their choice, as well as the Endurance proficiency for free.

THE FLEET

It is not nearly so easy to join the Fleet as it is to join the Legions. Even the lowliest deck-swabbing ship rat is envied his position in the Fleet, for it is nearly impossible for the average citizen to enlist in the Fleet. As one of the oldest sea-faring races of

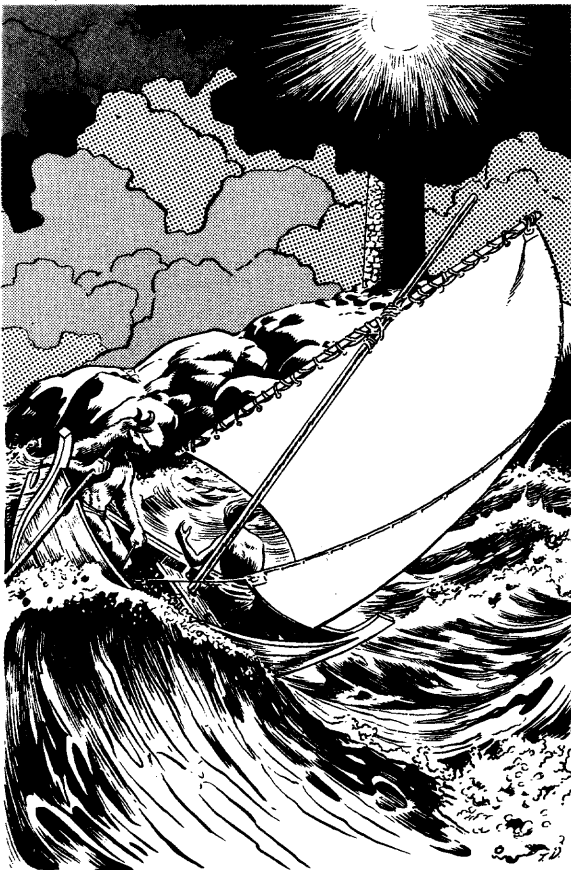
Krynn, the minotaurs are probably the best sailors on the entire planet. Thus, they dominate the ranks of the Fleet, and any positions left unfilled by minotaurs are fiercely contested by those eager to prove their worth to the minotaurs.

While all character classes (including mages, for each ship carries a mage in the event of an emergency) are welcome to try their luck at procuring such a position, those most likely to succeed will be fighters. This is not to say that all other classes are urged to try and then rejected out of hand, but rather that it seems to be that fighters generally possess the hardiness necessary for entrance into the Fleet. The Navy has ability requirements, each of which must be met by the hopefuls. In game terms, to even be considered for the Navy one must have a 13 Strength, 13 Dexterity, and a 14 Constitution.

To begin the process of joining the Fleet, one must be in Kristophan or Morgad (in the northernmost portion of the Minotaur League), as these are the only two cities in all of the Empire that house recruiting offices for the Fleet. As with the Legions, one applies at the Ministry of War and Defense in Kristophan, or in the Secondary Department of the Navy in Morgad. The candidate is given a number and is lodged in a decent hotel in one of the two cities until the next testing session begins (which is once every three weeks). The would-be sailors are transported to Luminari, the lighthouse at the mouth of the Tiderun.

It is here that the Fleet of the League maintains its Proving Ground, where the recruits must brave the dangerous reefs, shoals, and hidden currents in small, two-man, sailing craft. Not only does this weed out the sailors who, for the purposes of the Fleet, are considered incompetent, it also teaches loners the value of teamwork. The harrowing experience usually gains the survivors a friend for life in the person of their partner. Should an eager novice fail the tests, he and his mate are probably dead, for the slightest mistake in the treacherous waters spells doom for even an experienced sailor. For this reason, every prospective seaman attempts to choose his companion carefully; after all, no-one wants to end up as fish food because of a poor choice in sailing comrade. Of course, not all have chosen wisely, and many an excellent seafarer's bones lie in the muck of the Tiderun because of poor character judgement.

All survivors of the three-day battery of tests are then taken from Luminari to Kristophan, where they are given grueling oral and written examinations, eight hours a day, for a week. Those who pass this are given a two-day physical test, wherein they must run twenty miles, swim for two, and then must fight a fully-armed minotaur. Those who make it in good time (under five hours) are considered as candidates for the available positions. Those who do not are encouraged to come back and try again, for if they made it that far, they must have at least some talent.



The remainder, those talented, strong, and skilled enough, are sent to the Training Camp based in Morgad, where they swear their Oath of Service and undergo a year-long training period. They begin with several weeks of runs, swims, games, calisthenics, and weapons training, as well as schooling in the methods employed by the Fleet for its various operations. They are tested on these rigorously at the end of each week, and if they fail to be up to par, they are required to undergo serious tutoring until they have mastered the concepts. They are exempt from the physical exercises at this point, but are expected to make them up at the earliest possible time.


After the eleventh month of training, the students are split into small teams, numbering no more than ten each. They crew boats under simulated combat conditions, and are expected to be able to perform their duties (raids, establishing security, and so forth) with almost no sleep. Furthermore, they are expected to perform these duties well enough that they might ensure their unit's survival. This training extends to all manner of marine environment, above and below the water, deep and shallow, calm and storm. As well, they are expected to be able to complete land-bound exercises, and so are required to deal with sand, mud, or rocky terrain. This prepares them for any contingency should they be used as an amphibian assault force.

At this point, they have finished training, and begin their actual work in the Fleet. The DM may, at his own discretion, give a bonus of +1 to Strength or Constitution, as well as one of the Navigation, Seamanship, or Swimming proficiencies to any PC who successfully completes Fleet training.

Although the work is usually not as physically hard as the days of training, it is often more spiritually taxing, for each sailor feels that he carries the weight of the Empire upon his shoulders. Not only must he constantly guard and expand the boundaries of the League, but he must also struggle for each promotion; no promotion within the Fleet is unearned. Each person enters the fleet ranked as Sailor. No one not of minotaur blood may enter as any rank higher than that, although they may earn their way to a promotion. All are considered equal in the Navy's eyes until they prove themselves to be otherwise, either better or worse. The ranks are as follows:

1. Sailor
There are various grades of Sailor, First through Fourth Class. First Class is ranked more highly than Fourth.
2. Ensign
Like Sailor rank, there are four classes of Ensign.
3. Lieutenant Junior Grade
4. Lieutenant
5. Lieutenant Commander
6. Commander
7. Captain



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8. Commodore
 9. Admiral

As with the Generals of the Legions, there are various ranks of Admiral, from Vice Admiral to Rear Admiral to Full Admiral.

Although some of the Navy's rankings are similar to the Legions' in name, the rank associated with the name is very different. The Ministry of War and Defense pays the Fleetsmen significantly better than the Legionaries, for the Fleetsmen are, overall, more skilled fighters and are thus more valuable to the League. Not only does the Fleet provide food, shelter (with finer lodgings as the rank progresses), clothing, weapons, equipment, a fine pension and health plan, and better pay, the High Command urges its men to continually better themselves, and provides either the training or the money to pursue that training. Furthermore, many Fleetsmen go on to earn high places in government, and thus ensure that the Fleet will keep its funding. All of this combines to make the Legionaries extremely jealous of the sailors.

Each Sailor receives 15 stl per month, plus an additional 3 stl per Class above Fourth. Each Ensign receives 30 stl per month, with the additional 3 stl per class above Fourth. Each Lieutenant Junior Grade gets 60 stl per month. A Full Lieutenant acquires 80 stl; a Lieutenant Commander acquires 110 stl, a Commander earns 160 stl, while the Captain earns 200 per month. A Commodore earns 240, while a Vice Admiral earns 275 stl. There is an additional 40 stl per month per rank beyond. Of course, as in the Legions, bonuses can be earned through meritorious service.

In return for this treatment, the League expects nothing less than the best from its men. They are expected to keep the seas clear of all ships unless those ships which have been cleared by the Minister of War himself, in the form of a *signature sigil* (see p. 56) inscribed on their main-mast. Any ships not carrying this *sigil* may be boarded, searched, and sunk, although this does not happen too often. Ships sailing from Ansalon will be escorted to Kristophan, where they may pay 150 stl for the *sigil* to be placed onto their boat. Not only does this sign identify the boat as cleared by the Minister, it also allows the Ministry to keep tabs on the ship, and to find it by tracing the location of the *sigil*.

The Navy does more than stop errant merchant ships, however. They police the waterways of Southern Hosk from the Western Ocean to the Indanalis Sea, as well as make raids into Thenol, seeking to destroy areas vital to the Thenolites. The Fleet is the terror of the Taladan seas, and there are none who dare cross the paths of the armada with any but the most friendly of intent, for there are few ships near Taladas that can compete with the energy, speed, and power of the Fleet, not to mention the fighting ability of the sailors.

On Ansalon, the minotaurs were forced to board other vessels in order to have swift ships, for

their own were ponderous and sluggish, although sturdy. On Taladas, the minotaurs and other races collaborate on each ship, combining the speed and precision of an elven craft with the power of a minotaur vessel, making a ship that is awesome to behold. The ship produced in largest numbers is a dromond-style ship, as found in the *Player's Handbook*, although the League's version of it is infinitely more seaworthy. As well, it holds more cargo and storage space, allowing the ship to remain at sea for long periods of time. It is an incredible warship, and quite imposing, especially when seen from a smaller craft.

On board, the crew is organized under a supreme commander (at least aboard his own ship, although he must give precedence to any Admiral or face a court-martial), who is the captain of the vessel. His rank may be any higher than Lieutenant. On board ship, his word is absolute law, for if his crew does not obey him, it could spell disaster for the ship. The crew, usually numbering about 200 sailors, carries out his orders with machine-like efficiency.

The minotaurs do not use slaves to man the oars, for they consume too much food and take too much space that could be used for cargo or plunder, and so the sailors are required to oversee the propulsion of the ship. Each seaman must take a turn at the oars, at least five hours from his sixteen-hour day. While rowing is not the favorite chore of most of the ship's men, neither do they object strenuously to it. They are professionals, and are trained to accept what is necessary for the ship's good, and, furthermore, it is good exercise, which every Sailor wants. It is not always necessary to row, for the ship is equipped with sails that can provide steady, if not always swift, propulsion.

The captain of the ship appoints two men as his Mates. They are responsible for making sure the captain's orders are carried out in a timely fashion, as well as the keeping of the ship when the captain is ashore, asleep, or otherwise occupied. They wield near-absolute power, second only to that of the commanding officer. The three officers are obeyed in nearly everything, although if they grow sadistic with their power, they are likely to face a mutiny. If the sailors mutiny, they are most likely to set sail to a distant place, where they can hide from the Empire's anger. They know the fate of mutineers, and it is not pleasant.

EXPLORATION

One important duty of both branches of the military is exploration, although this is often left to the Fleet, with its greater mobility and speed. However, the Legions do often chart mountainous, rugged, or simply inland terrain unreachable by boat. It is the goal of the League to penetrate every nook and cranny of Taladas, and to leave a garrison of men there. Although they have traveled around

Taladas, the military has not, as yet, done much in-depth exploration of the lands outside of the League.

The military does not hold a monopoly on exploration, however; the Merchant's Guild, in addition to its commercial activities, sends its representatives into the deep forests and craggy mountains of the areas of Taladas, attempting to find every potential customer. If these "customers" are unwilling to deal with the Guild, word is leaked to the Legions or to the Fleet of the location of these intractable folk, and they are usually dealt with summarily.

The Imperial League is not entirely rapacious in its ventures, though. They are genuinely interested in their surroundings, and are always excited about the prospect of searching the unknown. It was precisely this instinct that allowed the survival of their race, and they have heeded its call ever since.

The opportunities for employment and adventure while exploring with the military or the Merchant League are nearly endless. After all, there is most of the rest of the continent of Taladas to explore; mountains to scale, swamps to seek, other races to repress, and new acquisitions to make for the Leagues, both Imperial and Merchant.

GOVERNMENT

The seat of government for the League is located in Kristophan, in the Imperial City. It is a majestic place, with spires rising high above the squat houses of the New City. Upon entrance through one of the four Gates, one is presented with the sight of the Emperor's Palace rising above the heights obtained by the villas of the nobles. It is a magnificent construction, built by humans, under dwarven supervision, who worked with elvish blueprints. Instead of looking like a hodge-podge of diverse elements, it is a marvel of craftsmanship. It reflects the styles of each of the races without detracting from the beauty of the others.

All of the Ministries are ringed around the Palace, with windows prominently displaying its grandeur, as a reminder of where the loyalties of the League lie. The message seems to be, the Ministries are secondary to the Emperor. They certainly seem to be so in function as well, for no word against the Emperor is ever whispered within the halls of these buildings. This is at least partially due to the fact that the Emperor claims to have spies within every Ministry, who will report the slightest indiscretion to the Emperor himself, and, of course, the Emperor pays each Minister so handsomely that they would be fools to turn on him.

The government of the League could best be described as a bureaucratic representational monarchy. There is a Ministry for just about every need a citizen might have, or at least a sub-Department. If there is no sub-Department, one will be created.

After all, if one person complains, there must be at least five more that are not complaining, and therefore there is a need for a sub-Department to deal with that need. The Ministers themselves generally try to be as helpful as they can, for they know that an angry public can be far worse to a Ministry than any budget cut. Thus, the League should be much more efficient than any other known bureaucracy, often having important chores done within the week, rather than six to eight weeks. Unfortunately, the civil service seems to attract a brand of people that slows the gears of government immeasurably.

The employees are hardly ever happy. For some reason, they seem to resent the people they are hired to serve. They are given some justification by the fact that they deal with angry people all day long. Their bitterness only serves to feed the fire, turning it into a gigantic vicious circle. When the employees are unfriendly to the citizens, the citizens respond with justifiable ire, which only serves to irritate the civil servants that much more.

It was not uncommon, in the early days of government, to hear shouting matches between a taxpayer and a governmental functionary on any given day. This practice has lessened, fortunately, with the addition of some Black Cloaks from the Legion Imperius to the decor of each ministry. As well, with more and more minotaurs beginning to serve in the bureaucratic chain of command, the customers have grown noticeably more friendly and meek. There has been a remarkable attitude improvement on the part of the employees.

After all, when a musclebound minotaur glowers at someone causing him trouble, the problem seems to vanish miraculously, no matter which side of the government fence he is on. Although everybody knows that the minotaurs are civilized and cultured people, it is hard to believe that one is safe from their wrath when their nostrils flare ever so slightly, with their muscles rippling underneath their togas. It is at this point that the farmer suddenly becomes much more friendly about his lack of governmental subsidy, or the bureaucrat remembers that no special form is required to allow a minotaur to see the Minister. Although the civil servants can usually hide behind their objection that the government requires that they fill out so many orders in duplicate, they drop this facade when dealing with minotaurs. After all, minotaurs carry quite a bit of clout, both political and physical.

The League always is looking to hire talented administrators, or even people to fill posts vacated hastily by those too intimidated by the clientele. One simply travels to the Town Hall in the local village, or, if in one of the Five Cities, to the governmental section of town and asks the nearest employee about a job with the civil service. The employee will direct the applicant to the proper Ministry or Ministry Office (the Ministry of the Civil Service), where he may pick up an application to





take home.

When the document is complete, it is returned to the Ministry, where the candidate is reviewed for his suitability in any governmental position. If they find his application fits, they transport him from anywhere in the League that he might be (with his consent, of course), and interview him. Using several detection spells, they quiz him on his application. If they like him, and his answers are truthful (often in that order), they hire him. The Ministry of Civil Service is currently trying to suppress a vicious rumor that is spreading around the League with alarming rapidity, which claims that the applicants are interviewed and hired based on their irascibility, and that hot tempers are a real plus when applying for a job with the Civil Service.

The bureaucracy is not the only part of the government, though. There are also the Senators and the Emperor to deal with, for they cannot be dismissed as mere figureheads. Even more so than the bureaucracy, the Senate and the Emperor determine the fate of the League, for although they do not implement the law, they create it.

The Senate building is located directly across from the Treasury in the Imperial City of Kristophan. The columned exterior looks peaceful enough, not betraying the constant power struggle that takes place within its doors. There are uncounted factions within the Senate, each Senator a member of numerous of these, each attempting to pull as many strings as possible for his family. As often as not, the complicated plots, sub-plots, and sub-sub-plots can end up destroying a totally innocent person, and occasionally backfire on those who started them.

While this is terrifying to non-minotaurs, it is meat and drink to the minotaurs. They love the complicated schemes and counter-scheme, the twisting, turning methods of interweaving each separate strand of guile into a tangled web which leads everyone astray, even its creator. The puzzles presented by the intrigues fascinate the minotaurs, who have not found any other sort of labyrinth which can misdirect them as the Senate can. Naturally, tempers often flare when the true target of one of these plots is revealed, and many Senators nurse a bright spark of hatred for other Senators, and they spend weeks and months and years searching for a way to get even.

Revenge is a way of life in the Senate. While the harm plotted is not always physical, it never fails to be harmful to the target (assuming it hits its mark). The few humans who actually serve in the Senate have, at one point or another, managed to offend a minotaur family, and the minotaurs, with just a trace of condescension, devise only simple plots to humiliate them, rather than the elaborate strategies that even minotaurs cannot see through. It is rumored that only the most devious, sly, and twisted individuals can serve in the Senate without going mad. This is at least partially true, for those unable to fathom the workings of the intrigues of-

ten are dealt with in an insidiously brutal fashion, driven slowly insane by the careful machinations of the other Senators.

Although each of the Loyal Families is allowed a Senator, just like the Horned Houses, most sell their proxies to powerful minotaur families. In return, the Loyal Family gains an ally in the Horned Houses, and can rely on that House to give them protection and aid them in times of need. It is an expensive proposition to maintain a Senator, but most of the Loyal Families can support one. They merely choose not to do so, for they stand to gain more by selling their proxy than by attempting to maneuver through the intrigues that would, possibly, destroy their Senator and his family.

Thus, most humans leave the Senate to the minotaurs. As well, many of the Loyal Families have simply given their proxies to the minotaurs because they wish to prove that they are still loyal servants of the minotaurs. Many of the Horned Houses regard these Loyalists as nothing more than fawning boot-lickers, to be tolerated only because it appeases the lesser humans.

For all their intrigues, though, the Senators are quite loyal to the Emperor, and most would never dream of causing him harm. They certainly become irritated with him on occasion, and wish to make some of his life miserable, which they do admirably by censuring his Edicts and sending him incredible numbers of court cases. However, they do not support revolutionaries, and most will do their best to crush such uprisings. Then again, there might just be a few nobles who wish to overturn the status quo . . .

Interestingly, the Senate hears the High Court cases, rather than the Praetors, cases involving betrayal of the Emperor's trust, cases of treason and murder among the nobles, and all other cases too important for the regular court system to handle. Fortunately for the Empire, the Senators do not allow others of their number to escape justice (this is probably at least partially due to the constant vendettas being waged within the Senate), and judge their own number harshly. While it has no more power than the Praetors to decide guilt or innocence, the Senate can agree on unusually harsh Conditions of Combat.

Sometimes, though, the various Senators keep their loyalty to their factions, and will attempt to keep the Conditions to a minimum. When conflict over the severity of the Conditions erupts, it is time to pass the case along to the Emperor, who does not impose easy Conditions. Therefore, the Senators usually try to reach some agreement before dooming one of their number to the Imperial Champions.

The popular mythology holds that the Emperor is above and immune to the machinations of the Senate. The unfortunate truth is that he himself is all too involved in them, for he must protect his own interests, and therefore he has planted spies within the Senate.

The Emperor must be wily, brave, and, above all, stable, for the demands of Emperorship are not something to be envied. He must deal with the problems of his subjects, the invasions of the Thenolites and Armach, taxation, and the frequent assassins sent his way. The Black Cloaks, his personal bodyguard, usually defend against these but every once in a while one slips through their cordon and makes his way to the Emperor, who must then fight for his life. He lives in constant fear of poisoned food, and goes through an average of three food-tasters a month. Even so, people envy him for his palaces in Kristophan and Thera, his nearly unlimited wealth, and his awesome power over the lives and deaths of so many.

Although his word is law, the Senate may choose to censure any of his edicts, and occasionally does so simply to remind him that its members hold the reins of power as well. The Emperor leads a life of frustration and apprehension, although he may choose to adopt an attitude tougher than the Senate cares to challenge, in which case he has removed a good portion of his problems.

THE SUCCESSION

Within any system, there are always malcontents who think they can do a better job of governing than the current ruler. Most systems do not make allowances for this, instead selecting their ruler from the richest, bravest, or most terrifying man among them. Not so the League.

When a citizen grows confident in his abilities, or if a player takes a fancy to the idea of ruling the League, he may issue an Imperial Challenge to the Emperor. This may only be done in the Capital City, for the Emperor has better things to do with his time than to travel around combatting every upstart who thinks he can rule a country. The challenger's name is put into a file kept by the Imperial Chamberlain, along with the names of all the others who think they are good enough to be Emperor.

Every winter and summer solstice, the pretenders to the throne gather at the Arena along with thousands of spectators. Since the Emperor cannot be bothered to fight every single one of the challengers himself (there are usually upward of two hundred challengers per solstice), the duelists must fight one another to the death in order to prove the three worthiest to meet the Emperor. Although one might think that the Emperor would wish to save the better fighters of these for his military, and thus have the challengers fight only to unconsciousness, the truth is that he is just as glad to be rid of the men who might later be a threat to his throne.

The typical challengers are 10th level fighters, who are armed with the weapon and armor of their own choice, supplied by the League. Some choose heavy weapons and heavy armor, thinking

that by this measure their lives will be longer. This, however, is not always the case. There are many records of lightly armored opponents, with weapons such as tridents, swiftly eliminating their bulky, heavily-encumbered, and slow-moving enemies. (The DM must take special care to remember that armored people move much more slowly than unarmored folk.) Any sort of underhanded fighting is strictly discouraged, and any who try it are disqualified; they are taken out and executed by a firing squad of archers.

Each of the challengers fight only one opponent at a time; they are not divided by skill, for the weak will be weeded out anyway. Since the Arena holds room for many, and since there are so many wishing to take the throne, the arrangers of the Challenges often have multiple fights in the Arena at the same time. The fighters are not expected to fight all of their opponents one after the other; they are allowed rest and healing magic between bouts, so that they might all be made as prepared for their battles with one another as when they entered.

When there remain only three survivors of the first day's battle, the three are given two days of free time, which they may do whatever they like as long as they do not interfere with one another. Most spend the time recuperating, massaging sore muscles, training, and resting. When their respite ends, they return to the Arena, where they are greeted by the sight of (or so it seems) half the population of the Empire, cheering or booing one or the other of the hopefuls. Each passes the inspection of a wizard, who makes certain that no magic is brought to the Arena on this day.

At this point, the Emperor enters the Arena to the acclaim of his loyal subjects. He ritually greets his three opponents, and, before the eyes of all, passes the same inspection by the wizards. He and his opponents then select their weapons and armor from the rack erected in the Arena. The Emperor, to prove that he has not meddled with the process and substituted magic weapons and armor for the mundane version, chooses his last. The order of the other three is chosen by lot. This is also the order in which they fight the Emperor.

At the sound of the gong, the Emperor and his opponent leap together with a blinding flurry of blows. If neither has fallen, they engage again and again until one lies bleeding his life away on the sand. At his prerogative, the victor may declare that the loser is to be saved. He may not do so simply in order to have his opponent tortured later, only if he intends to let the fallen continue to live his own life. At any rate, the victor is given his medical and magical healing, and a chance to rest, if he so desires, until he is ready to continue the Challenge. The winner of the bout must still defeat the other two challengers, even if the Emperor was the casualty in the first round.

The second and third rounds proceed much like the first, with the winner of each being given the





option to let the vanquished live. When one stands alone in the Arena, surrounded only by the blood and bodies of the others, the gong is struck once more. The Arena bursts into wild cheering, either for the ascension of the new Emperor, or for the survival of the old. Followed by the carousing crowd, the Emperor is carried back to the Imperial Palace atop the shoulders of the Black Cloaks of the Legion Imperius, where he is installed upon his throne.

Theoretically, this means that the Emperor could be of a race other than minotaur. In reality, this practice is much different. Although the minotaurs stress that might does make right, that all powerful enough are equal, they cannot bear the thought of serving under another race again. Since the night of the final victory is a traditional time for assassins to take their best shots at the Emperor, it is often not surprising that every once in a while, they succeed. The odd thing is, they usually only succeed when a non-minotaur is about to take the throne. Although nothing has ever been proven, it is a well-documented fact that a non-minotaur has never been Emperor for longer than a few hours.

Players can choose to take one side or another during this time. They may guard the new Emperor, or they may discover that he is slime, and decide that the best course of action for the League involves the Emperor-to-be meeting with a fatal accident along the way to the throne.

EDUCATION

Education for all children, both minotaur and human (excepting slaves), to the age of 12 is mandatory and cost-free, as it is one of the things for which all citizens pay taxes. Parents have the option of schooling their children at home, but the children must pass an examination sponsored by the Department of Education. Each parent who wishes to teach at home is supplied with a copy of the concepts the child is to master. If the child displays little or no knowledge of these, the parents are summoned before the Board of Educational Correction and given a hearing. If they are judged guilty of failing to properly educate their child, they will be publicly flogged, for it is considered a serious crime to allow a child to grow up unaware of the glorious minotaur heritage, whether or not the child can actually inherit it.

Most parents do not pursue this option, having seen too many of their friends return home, evidencing signs of having been flogged. Although the League school takes their children away from home most of the day, the children are usually kept out of trouble, as the penalty for truancy is corporal punishment. This explains the remarkable lack of very young street urchins. During the day, they are in school, and they are kept home at night. Those who rely on such children for their information are due for a disappointment.

Any player who was born as a free citizen of the League of Minotaurs should be given both Local History and Reading/Writing as bonus proficiencies.

CRIME

Despite the harsh sentences available for any sort of crime, it continues to be seen as a lucrative lifestyle for those with no honest talent. Most of the criminals in the Five Cities are under the employ of an Upright Man (or, in some cases, Woman), although some are freelancers. The freelancers do not tend to last long, though, because the Upright Men guard their territories jealously against intruders, and deal with them harshly. The ones who do last are those with incredible thieving skills, as well as proficiency in such essentials as evasion and disguise. Even then, they live lives of constant fear, not knowing when they might have been discovered. When they are caught by the thieves of an Upright Man, they are given the choice: Work for us or die. Most faced with this choice quit their freelancing careers.

While the thieves do not yet wield actual political power, they are quickly becoming a force to be reckoned with. The wealthy, and even the middle class, pay the thieves *not* to rob them, for they have found that, no matter the defenses of the house, there will always be a morning when all of their most valued possessions are gone.

The various Uprights of each city usually reflect the attitudes and income of the city itself. For example, the master thieves of Kristophan are usually engaged in a struggle for political power, while those of Thera are much more relaxed, preferring to influence events from behind the scenes. Those in Morgad are blunt, straightforward, and, at the same time can be treacherous like the sea from which they make (indirectly) their living. Those in Vinlans are earthy, farmer-like fellows who deal in stolen livestock and the money to be had from the deals of country folk, while those of Trilloman tend to be like the merchants from whom they steal, haggling over the smallest details of anything. The important thing to recognize about each of these men is the fact that they have used any means at their disposal to get where they are today, and should not be trusted.

The Upright Men of each city often struggle with one another for complete control over a city's underworld, although some claim that there is enough profit for everyone to take a share. Bloody wars between companies of thieves occasionally break out over some finer points of territorial rights, and when these escalate to a fever pitch, the *saiones* are quick to quell the riots. The Uprights almost never agree to cooperate, except when some wealthy person has deliberately flaunted the rules imposed by the Uprights. Then they agree that a lesson must be taught. It would

not do to let one person get away with it, because then everyone would try.

Although the Uprights of the same city rarely get along with one another, they generally offer assistance to traveling thieves from other cities. All that is required is that the thief check with the various Uprights of the city to obtain their permission to operate within the city. This welcome only lasts for so long, after which the Uprights begin to get a bit antsy. The Upright Men allow the travel because they never can tell when they need help from or in another city, when another Upright's assistance might come in handy.

The catacombs and sewers of every city provide a useful means of travel, as well as excellent places to hide from rival gangs when a secret war goes poorly. Players adventuring in the cities might wish to remember that they can usually escape the Watch by slipping into the sewers. It is a disgusting option, but oftentimes means the difference between life and death. The catacombs have become a bit dangerous of late, however, for the dead no longer rest in peace as they should. The Upright Men are angry and fearful of this violation of what they consider "their space," and will pay good money to any adventurers who want to try to clean them out.

SERVICES

When traveling in the League, players might wonder exactly what is available for them to purchase or hire. Nearly every service imaginable is available in one of the Five Great Cities, legal or otherwise. To find the particular aid one requires is no great feat.

Taverns and inns abound, with nearly one on every street corner in any minotaur settlement, for minotaurs are strong drinkers, and belligerent as well. Anyone wanting a barroom brawl need not look far. If hurt badly in one of these brawls, healing shops are not uncommon either. However, they mostly deal with herbal remedies, alchemy, and common sense, rather than magical healing, for clerics are few in the League.

General stores and markets sell most of the common items adventurers and civilians alike find necessary for survival, both in and out of the cities. Bazaars, more common to the larger municipalities, deal in the exotic goods, either those rare in the League or those imported from other realms, which usually demand much higher prices in the outlying areas than in the cities.

If a player is searching for training of some sort, he may go to the appropriate guild hall. This is much harder for rogues and clerics, as they must necessarily be discreet in the League, but it can be done. Magicians of all sorts need only go to the College of Magic, while fighter-types may apply for admission to the Warriors' Guild, which is dealt with in Section VI. Both the College and the Guild

have halls in the majority of the villages of the Imperial League.

Rogues need to find an Upright Man who will be willing to help them, while priests of any sort must find the (well-hidden) temples of their faith.

These are not difficult tasks, provided the character knows what she is doing and who to ask. Unlike both the fighter and the mage, though, the two training areas for priests and rogues are subject to change at no notice whatsoever, so these classes ought not expect to return to the same place more than twice.

If a player wants to buy or sell truly different items, or perhaps something magical, the only place that would carry these items with any frequency would be either the College of Magic (which sells at dramatically inflated prices to non-mages), or one of the rare licensed magic shops, found almost exclusively in the cities. These places are guarded with the ultimate in protection, magical and physical. Any character trying to break in would certainly find it a challenge. The challenge would pay off amazingly, though, just as soon as the character could find someplace to sell all of his ill-found loot.



THE CITIES

One of the most fascinating features of the League of Minotaurs is the circle of the Five Great Cities, which comprise the majority of the trade and population of the League. Each of the Five Cities contributes valuable goods and money to the nation and the economy. They are renowned throughout Taladas, and visitors flock from all over the continent to see the five brightest jewels in Ambeoutin's crown.

KRISTOPHAN

Kristophan, the capital of the Empire, is by far the largest of any of the cities. Located on the west coast of New Styrrlia, it is always a popular place. Even when the Senate is out of session, the population of the city is well over 500,000. As the political center, Kristophan is constantly full of those trying to peddle or buy political influence, those trying to sell their goods to those trying to buy influence, and thieves who make their living from both of these.

The hoi polloi of Kristophan dictate fashion and culture throughout the Empire. Their whim is the command of all the other cities. Those who would be culturally advanced in other areas of the Empire look to Kristophan for their cue. The parties thrown by these people are the social events that are not to be missed, and people die to get in . . . sometimes literally.

Politics is really the emphasis of life in Kristophan. Everyone seems to want to be in politics one way or another, and enough people are involved in the graft about town that it appears that everyone is involved. Kristophan's citizens, above all others, look forward to Publican's Day with great anticipation. It does not matter so much to them that their Publican is little more than a bootlicking toady to the Emperor and Senators and anyone higher in rank. What they really care about is the fact that Publican's Day is often their only chance to actively participate in the political process. Their town still bears scars from Publican's Days of over 50 years ago.

MORGAD

Morgad, located in Eragala, is the greatest seaport in the League, and perhaps on all of Taladas. While Trilloman is larger, Morgad receives visitors and goods that even Trilloman does not see. Its exotic imports, and the races that bring those imports, are always attractions for the people of and around Morgad. During trading season (summer and fall, when the storms at sea are less powerful than during the winter and spring), the population of Morgad swells from 100,000 people to nearly

200,000. Nearly every race on Krynn that is capable of sailing is represented during the peak season, and Morgad does its best to welcome them all in a fashion that makes them feel at home. It even receives visitors from the Ansalonian mainland, although these are rather rare.

Any good that is manufactured by any of these races can be found in Morgad, often at drastically cheaper prices than anywhere else in the League. For imported goods, legal or otherwise, there is no better place to go to buy than Morgad. Its people, accustomed to dealing with outsiders and strange races nearly every day, are unconcerned with odd events, and show no surprise when highly improbable events occur in their vicinity. Its society is not so much concerned with the fashions of Kristophan, for the people have seen far stranger things, and nothing really impresses them any more. The people consider themselves experts in all things nautical.

THERA

Thera, also located in Eragala, is the leisure capital of the Empire. 75,000 people live here year-round, but that number varies madly during the year. In the summer, the wealthy and powerful flock from the surrounding countryside to relax in the cool forests and shaded paths of the pleasure city. In the fall, they go home to their homes and businesses, only to return when the snows melt from the roads.

Only the wealthy, and those who serve them during the year, can afford to maintain residences in Thera. Others wishing to visit Thera must stay at an overpriced inn. The craftsmen and farmers who live in and near the town cater to the needs of the powerful who visit Thera. The Publican of Thera recently passed a bill which prohibits further building of houses or villas in the Thera area, for the area was being overrun with the houses of those vying for residences near the Emperor's villa. This bill has raised the cost of the rest of the houses in the area to ridiculous amounts, and many of Thera's former residents have retired on the money earned from the sale of their houses.

Overall, Thera is a relaxed, slow-paced city. Few natives of Thera start or enter fights, avoiding them whenever possible. The summer visitors tend to be a hot-tempered lot, though, and fights often erupt over the smallest incidents.

TRILLOMAN

Trilloman, trade capital of New Styrrlia and the League, is a city of 175,000. Like most of the other cities, its transient population is never constant. Caravans and wagons never cease entering its gates, for the city long ago decreed that its gates should always stand open except in times of war.

Although Trilloman does not get quite the exotic mix that is typical of Morgad, it more than makes up for this by the vast amounts of trade that pour through the city daily. Although its location is far from central, it is the hub of trade, and people come from over the entire League to trade in Trilloman.

The majority of people living in Trilloman are concerned only with the fastest ways to make money, and will stoop at very little to turn a profit. The thieves of this city therefore regard it as their duty to relieve these profit-mad merchants of the easy money made from the weary travelers. The guards, although thickly scattered throughout the city, are as susceptible to the lure of money as anyone else, and will turn a blind eye to the crime if offered enough to make it worth their while.

VINLANS

The only of the Five Great Cities situated in Highvale, Vinlans is a booming agricultural town of 50,000. As the smallest of the cities, it is often regarded as little more than an overgrown village by the natives of the larger cities. However, it is the place to go when purchasing anything having to do with crops. The selection of agricultural goods is not as great even in Trilloman. Vinlans is especially noted for its fine wines and the grapes which constitute that wine.

Its people are mostly farmers, or those who have made their wealth from agricultural endeavors. Although Vinlans is far from rustic, its citizens are regarded as hicks. This does not bother them, for the most part, because they know that they are indispensable to the League.

While there is not much to do that is out of the ordinary in Vinlans, there are always the numerous bars, taverns, and inns which are constantly open to serve the thirsty farmer. High society is not envied in Vinlans; those who pretend to it are seen as trying (poorly) to imitate the night life of Kristophan, and are pitied by the more realistic among the crowd. Despite its status as one of the Five Great Cities, Vinlans really does have a small-town atmosphere, and is perfectly content to keep it that way. Let the excitement flow in the big towns, they say; Vinlans is our home.

LIFE ON THE FRONTIER

Of course, life in the League of Minotaurs does not all take place in the cities. There are vast areas of land outside the cities that have not been completely engulfed by the encroaching tide of progress. While most of the provinces of New Styrlia and Eragala have been cultivated and civilized, the remaining three provinces have hardly been touched. The land is rife with the possibilities for adventure and glory.

Everything not in one of the Five Great Cities is referred to as "the sticks," or, more exotically, "the frontier" by the residents of those cities. In reality, these areas are not as barbaric as the city dwellers would like to believe. While the frontier is certainly not as civilized as the cities, it is far from the savage morass as commonly thought. Yes, there are creatures which live in the forests and fields, and yes, death seems to be easy to come by. On the other hand, there is none of the stench of thousands of people crammed together in squalid living conditions, nor is there the instant mistrust so prevalent in the city.

Where the city dwellers are closed and wary, the villagers tend to be open and trusting, although they are not stupid. They will not just blithely accept anyone who comes to their villages. Rather, each person must prove himself on his or her own merits, and demonstrate that they are worthy of the village's trust. Once this is established, there is almost nothing the villagers would not do for their friends. They especially enjoy the company of adventurers, for the adventurers brighten otherwise average days. Having a base in the villages of the League's countryside is highly recommended, for the players will have a base fairly close to the dangers they wish to confront, yet far enough away that they may recuperate without interruption.

The villagers tell tales of the hulderfolk, of the Thenolite ghosts that haunt the battlefields along the border, and of the ancient tombs of the once-glorious Aurim Empire. Whether any of these tales hold truth is something the players will have to determine for themselves.



NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Notes about minotaur NPCs: All minotaurs automatically gain the Tracking proficiency, and, unlike most others, do not have the -6 penalty that is normally applied to non-rangers. Indeed, due to the minotaurish senses, any non-city minotaur gains a +1 to follow any trail less than a day old. If the player wishes to take a minotaur as a PC, the DM should allow this as a free proficiency, but should not give the character the +1 bonus. He can justify this by saying the players have spent too much time near the cities—and if the players want their characters to be backwoods types, he can charge the players the additional proficiency slot the +1 bonus would ordinarily cost them.

S: 20
D: 16
C: 19
I: 11
W: 19
Ch: 14

Weapon Proficiencies: Bastard sword (specialized), battle axe (specialized), spear (specialized), trident, broad sword, bardiche

Non-weapon Proficiencies: Artistic Ability, Etiquette, Heraldry, Airborne Riding (Griffon), Land-Based Riding (Horse), Rope Use, Seamanship, Swimming, Endurance, Tracking

Magical Items: *Plate mail +5, shield +4, +3 vorpal bastard sword . . .* He has access to the entire Imperial Treasury. If he needs a magical item, he can probably get it within an hour.

AMBEOUTIN XI, EMPEROR

Minotaur
Fighter 17
Lawful Evil

AC: -10
MV: 12
hp: 105
THAC0: 4
#AT: 2
Dmg: 2-8/2-16



Even as a child, Chaerias knew that he was destined to rule the League of Minotaurs, for he was a direct descendant of Eragas the Brutish, and a nephew to the current Emperor, Ambeoutin X. A firm believer in the Rule of Might, it did not matter to him that one of his cousins, Krasus, had more direct access to the succession, being the Emperor's child, for Chaerias felt he was in all ways superior to anyone who might challenge the throne. His tutors, both in the ways of war and of intellect, were the best in the League. Krasus, too, received an equal education, but was markedly slower and weaker than Chaerias. He sought to compensate for this disadvantage by engaging various methods, such as poison, assassins, and other treachery.

Chaerias, finally becoming sick of evading the various pitfalls set by his cousin, demanded that his cousin be tried in the Arena like a real minotaur. Even though Krasus was the son of the Emperor, his special status availed him nothing, and he was exterminated in the Arena, cringing and pleading for his miserable life. From this experience, Chaerias gained his abiding hatred of the underhanded dealings of cowardly folk.

Finally, his chance came to take control of the League. He challenged his uncle to a test in the Arena. Ambeoutin, still smarting from the dishonor brought on his family by the young upstart Chaerias, would accept only a bare-handed duel to the death. After a long, grueling battle in the hot summer sun, a loud snap resounded across the Arena. The victor arose, blood-stained, and assumed his mantle. He proclaimed himself the new Emperor, and declared that henceforth he would be called Ambeoutin XI.

He sentenced his late uncle's family to immediate execution, for he knew that they were a nest of vipers, breeding creatures that more closely resembled goblins than minotaurs. After this, he issued new edicts, declaring that the continent of

Taladas would, in one way or another, be brought under the control of the Minotaur League. Always given to loud pronouncements that could not necessarily be upheld, Ambeoutin found that his Legions suffered some morale problems when faced with superior armies.

Cursing his own lack of foresight, Ambeoutin sent a diplomatic envoy to Armach, hoping that they would accept a truce for the time being. Meanwhile, he sought a general who could rectify the situation with the Legions. In answer to his prayers, Nelis Ringhorn arose from the ranks of the Officer's School, and led the Legions to several conclusive victories.

Ambeoutin and Nelis grew to be close friends when Nelis was promoted to the rank of General. Ambeoutin's advisors, however, began to whisper that Nelis was abusing the Emperor's trust and betraying the state. Always paranoid about the League's safety, Ambeoutin ordered that Nelis be tried for his crime in the Arena. General Ringhorn emerged alive and well, but the Emperor would not allow him to resume his former position on the General Staff, and he now considers Nelis to be a bitter enemy.

Ambeoutin is a paranoid minotaur, for he perceives so many of his great expectations to have backfired directly into his face, while those he trusted scrambled to safety. He will not tolerate weakness in those near him, nor will he accept non-minotaurish thought from a minotaur. He is a determined racist, seeing all other races as slime to be used, enslaved, or thrown away. Of all the races on Krynn, the only other one he respects is that of the dragons. He is completely non-religious, and he despises those who are, for he perceives them as weak, needing a crutch to support and justify their actions.

Although he does not know it, he has long been under the influence of a *suggestion* spell cast upon him by one of his advisors. This clouds his judgement and his good sense. Although he is, by nature, fanatic about the minotaur race, he is also usually a good judge of minotaur nature, and would not often make mistakes in governing. As it stands, however, he is now simply a puppet of the mysterious shadow beside the throne.

NELIS RINGHORN

Minotaur
Fighter 11
Lawful Neutral

AC: 0
MV: 12
hp: 80
THAC0: 10
AT 3/2
Dmg: 1-8/1-12 +13

S: 20
D: 12
C: 14
I: 16
W: 16
Ch: 17

Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword (specialized, gives +1 to hit, +2 damage), blades (Broad Group), battle axe, heavy lance, dagger

Non-weapon Proficiencies: Animal Handling, Direction Sense, Etiquette, Fire-Building, Heraldry, Thenolian, Elvish, Weather Sense, Blind-Fighting, Tracking

Magical Items: *Banded Armor +4*, *long sword +3*, *Ring of regeneration and warmth*

Nelis Ringhorn was one of the League's finest generals. His father, a captain in the Legions, ensured that the only way of life for young Nelis was the military life. From the moment Nelis was able to walk, his father began training him in the ways of swordplay and strategy. He quickly became a champion to the children his age, teaching them some of the tricks his father had shown him. When the bullying older children began returning home covered with dirt and blood, their parents investigated. It was found that Nelis had created a unit of his peers to combat the older boys. When this was discovered, Nelis was immediately whisked off to Officer School, due to his promise in the military field. At this point, he was only 10 years old.

During military school, Nelis was constantly a step ahead of his classmates, most of whom were 4 years his senior. However, despite his precociousness, his classmates respected his ability and his charm. It was no surprise to any of them, nor, indeed, to anyone, when Nelis graduated as valedictorian of his class. He went on to prove his practical worth in the Legions. He was first commissioned in the Dragonclaw Legion as a lieutenant. Nearly every commanding position he was given he made a success, even when he was badly outnumbered. He swiftly rose through the ranks, finally earning the rank of *duces*. He further proved his ability in a battle against the Thenolites, when he was given the title of Emperor by Ambeoutin XI himself. The Emperor's trust in Nelis was not unjustified, for Nelis won the battle with a minimum loss of life for the League.

This meteoric rise to success attracted the attention of many. Most of it was friendly. Unfortunately, there were those who felt they had been unfairly disregarded in favor of the young prodigy, and they set out to plot his downfall. Although Nelis had been growing close to the Emperor, these conspirators had friends even better placed, and they began to whisper of treachery.

Because the Emperor was inclined to be lenient towards someone he had once trusted, Nelis was not killed outright. He was duly tried in the Arena, where he fought unarmed against an opponent



who was armed to the teeth. Nelis emerged bloody but alive. Although his innocence had been established, the Emperor could not allow a possible traitor to serve in such a delicate position as Imperator. Nelis was mustered from the army with due honors.

Lost without the discipline and rigors of the army he had called home his entire life, Nelis entered the Arena as a sell-sword for a short period. He rarely lost, even when he fought against the redoubtable Hargh Tallarch. However, he found that this was not for him, and he took up the adventuring life. After accumulating a not insignificant amount of treasure, he returned to Kristophan to settle down. Sick of fighting, he opened an inn in the New City called The Dragon's Claw. He still resides there, dispensing food and drink. He is loathe to strap on his arms and armor again, but if offered enough inducement (such as something that will prove his honesty to the Emperor), will travel with an adventuring party for a short while. He will do almost anything to show his devotion to the state. He will not betray his comrades unless they pose a clear danger to the League. He has kept some clandestine contacts within the army.

Appearance: Nelis Ringhorn is a minotaur of about average size. While not overly handsome, he is absolutely charming, and has earned the devotion of many. His horns are completely sheathed in rings. The horns are remarkable not only for the sheer number of rings, but also in that they are rings accumulated from battles he commanded in the field, rather than from Arena victories.

Personality: Although magic has never been important to him, he does not disdain its use. He views other races somewhat patronizingly, but holds no enmity toward them. He despises disorder and chaos, as well as the shedding of blood for entertainment purposes. He is deathly afraid of deep water, and will not willingly board a boat. He is driven, a harsh taskmaster, yet none can say he is unfair. He expects no more from anyone else than he demands from himself. He scoffs at those who will not at least attempt to fulfill those expectations, and will not aid anyone unwilling to stand for themselves. Meanwhile, he seeks to avenge himself on those who discredited him. He will pay good money for information on this topic.

LEYLAS THE STAFF

Minotaur
Fighter 9 / Mage 10
Neutral

AC: -2
MV: 12"
hp 55
THAC0:12
AT: 3/2
Dmg: 1-6/1-6 +10



S: 19
D: 17
C: 13
I: 19
W: 14
Ch: 13

Weapon Proficiencies: Quarterstaff, long bow, dagger, swords, whip, battle ae

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Animal Training, Artistic Ability, Cooking, Rope Use, Blind-Fighting, Endurance, Hunting, Tracking, Set Snares, Navigation, Ancient History, Herbalism, Reading/Writing, Ancient Auric

Magical Items: *Quarterstaff +3*, *Gem of Seeing*, *wand of paralyzation*, *bracers of defense AC 4*, *ring of protection +3*

Leylas the Staff is the League's most notorious bounty hunter. It is said that there is nothing that he cannot retrieve given the time (and the money!). Little is known of his past. Ostensibly he was raised by wild animals, and learned his tracking skills from them. When he finally arrived in Trilloman, he was clothed in the entire bodies of several wolves. He was roundly reviled by some of Trilloman's citizens, and had to make a quick escape when the guards came to arrest him for the murder of several of the former.

He was later seen in Vinlans, clothed more decently and actually speaking a language. The peo-

ple treated him more decently at this point, and, eventually, someone offered him a reward for the finding and killing of a certain tribe of ogres. Leylas returned a week later, bearing their ears on his belt.

Nonetheless, none of this history can be trusted, for it comes directly from the mouth of Leylas himself. It might be exaggeration designed to strike fear into the hearts of his quarry, or it might be an out and out lie. It might even be the truth, although Leylas is known to lie to achieve his own ends.

One thing that is definitely known about his past is this: he was once commissioned by the Emperor himself to find the lost Crown Prince. The hunting of the boy took six months. The rescuing was another matter. The prince was held by a force of men, strategically located atop a rocky pass. The kidnapers held off a centuria from the Black Cloak Legion from this position. The Black Cloaks finally quit their attack, knowing that they could not succeed at this juncture. While the kidnapers were distracted with the Legion, Leylas sneaked into their heavily guarded stronghold, freed the boy from his chains in the dungeon, and spirited him away from under their noses. The exploit has been immortalized in song. Since the song is not very good, however, one can assume that Leylas wrote it himself.

As one can see, Leylas is his own best promoter. He is boastful and arrogant, not to mention greedy. When approached for a favor, he invariably responds, "Money, money, money." He is proud of his every little accomplishment, and will broadcast his feats to any who care to listen. He is in the game of life for himself, and, if he feels that he can get away with something, will try to do so. Despite all these faults, however, there is a good person underlying his outward appearance. He recognizes these faults in himself, but, for some reason, cannot rid himself of them. He tries his best to be like other people, but he also realizes this dream to be impossible. After all, he is far superior to most people in many ways, and, if he became more like other people, his prey would know that he has a good side to which they could appeal. More than anything else, Leylas hates being manipulated.

He does, contrary to popular belief, have a close circle of friends. Although he treats them worse than he treats people he does not know, his friends understand that he does not mean it (most of the time). Among this circle is Nelis Ringhorn, who feels that Leylas can help to restore him to the Emperor's good side. Leylas and Nelis constantly hurl verbal barbs at each other, and both love it.

VARELIA

Minotaur
Thief 10
Chaotic Evil

AC: 0
MV: 12"
hp: 60
THACO: 16
#AT: 2
Dmg: 1-6/1-6 +5

S: 18
D: 19
C: 18
I: 14
W: 8
Ch: 13

Thieving Abilities:

PP: 70%	OL: 50%	F/RT: 73%
MS: 81%	HS: 43%	DN: 80%
CW: 95%	RL: 0%	Backstab x4

Weapon Proficiencies: Short sword, two-weapon stype, dagger, blowgun

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Disguise, Forgery, Ventriloquism, Appraising, Tumbling, Tightrope Walking, Tumbling, Juggling

Magical Items: *Medallion of ESP, Hat of Disguise, 2 short swords +3, ring of jumping, gauntlets of swimming and climbing, leather armor +4*

Varelia was born as the first of two daughters of a minor nobleman in Kristophan. Her sister died at a fairly early age of a wasting disease. Her father accused Varelia of poisoning her sister to gain more attention, although he could prove nothing. He died only shortly thereafter, the victim of a nasty accident that saw him fall from the fifth floor balcony of his villa in Thera to the street below. Varelia, 19 years old at the time, claimed that she was tragically traumatized by this accident, which she had personally witnessed, and squandered her entire inheritance drinking away her sorrow. When the glaze cleared from her eyes a year after his death, she found that she was entirely broke. When none of her father's friends would take her in, her sanity, tenuous as it was, snapped entirely, and she turned to a life of crime.

Varelia is a rarity among the minotaurs of the League, for she does not serve the good of anything but herself. She is in this life only for herself and her advancement. She does not care whether the League falls or stands, for either way she will become richer. Should the League fail, she will be there to sift through the rubble for gold and jewelry. If it should stand, then she will make her living by stealing from the ever-prosperous nobles. She is quite attractive, but, should she not be playing at one of her games, her personality is very grating.

She is a skilled thief and con artist, adept at getting what she wants. As well, she sometimes takes contracts on the side for murder, which she enjoys immensely. Her favorite game is to find herself a job as a servant at a fine inn in one of the major





cities. She then pretends to take an interest in one of its patrons, usually a foolish young noble, who, should he be a normal male, will return the interest. She will toy with him, leading him further and further into her snare, and when he begins to trust and love her, she cuts out his heart and takes his money. Sometimes, if she has actually grown fond of one of her marks (an occasion which is very rare), she simply vanishes with his money and gifts. While this may seem cruel, she sees it as a kindness; after all, she has him live.

She has almost no close friends, for she drives away almost everybody who comes remotely close to getting to know her. She does have several acquaintances, all of whom find her slightly distasteful. She prefers to be a loner, for she does not like other people, nor does she respect their opinions. Varelia sees other people merely as a nuisance to be rid of, unless she can find some way to gain from them. She is prone to violent mood swings, friendly one moment and abusive the next. As well, she is a grudge-holder, long remembering past slights, whether real or imaginary. Furthermore, she frequently indulges in wild flights of paranoid fantasy (usually while she has been drinking, but this is not always the case), during which she treats everyone with whom she comes in contact as a potential enemy, and she will see any word, gesture, or facial expression which could be interpreted as even mildly unfavorable as a threat. She remembers these "threats," and plans elaborate schemes of revenge on those who have treated her poorly, often staying awake most of the night. Thus, she rarely gets more than an hour or two of sleep a night. As might be expected, she is an ardent devotee of Sargonnas.

When not attempting a con game, she usually associates with burly, exceptionally stupid minotaurs. These poor fellows do not have an incredibly long life expectancy, since one can count on them to offend her in one way or another. She enjoys frequenting bars and drinking massive quantities, and then complaining about how ill she is going to be due to the large amount of alcohol in her system.

Appearance: Although she can change her aspect at the drop of a hat, she is quite attractive to other minotaurs in her natural form. She has no distinguishing marks.

BURTONAS MORGAN

Minotaur
Ranger 8
Neutral Good

AC: -2
MV: 12"
hp: 70
THACO: 13
AT: 3/2

Dmg: 1-6/1-6

S: 18/78
D: 20
C: 12
I: 16
W: 16
Ch: 16

Weapon Proficiencies: Hand-to-hand, staff, net, lasso, club, knife

Total Bonus To Hit and Damage:

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Artistic Ability, Tracking, Hunting, Blind-Fighting, Animal Handling, Animal Training, Direction Sense, Cooking, Endurance, Woodlands Survival

Magical Items: *Bracers of defense AC 2*

Burtonas Morgan is a child from one of the Horned Houses that fell into debt to a human. His mother, disgraced that such a thing would happen in her family, took Burtonas and left the household. Always a rebel, she decided that the outdoors life was vastly preferable to city life, and took him there to be raised. As a child in the countryside, Burtonas grew to love the open air and trees. Away from the corrupting influence of civilization, he came to love all life, even that which he found personally distasteful. He took a vow that he would only kill for food (although he ordinarily is a vegetarian, he does occasionally eat meat), or, if absolutely necessary, to save his own life or the lives of those he loves. It takes quite a bit of convincing to assure him that those lives are at stake.

While growing up in the forest, Burtonas observed the actions of the animals when at play, hiding, and stalking. Taking these as his guidelines, he developed a new form of combat which combined the strength of the panther with the speed of the rabbit, fusing these together into a coherent whole.

Being a pacifist, he was well surprised when he finally made his first journey into the city. Not only did he see rampant poverty, illiteracy, and the generally miserable living conditions, he was accosted by two cutpurses who mistook his lack of weapons to mean easy prey. After he left them bleeding in the gutter (but not dead), he was arrested for not following proper procedures for punishing cutpurses. For this offense, he was sent to the Arena in a duel to unconsciousness. Using his knowledge of physiology, Burtonas incapacitated his opponent before the poor soul had a chance to land a good swing.

Naturally, the crowd loved it, and more than one person approached him, offering large sums of money for teaching that style of fighting to them, joining a champion's guild, or (more discreetly) for killing various people. Burtonas declined all of these offers, and left the city. Several of its denizens followed him out to his home, where he still lived with his mother. They skulked

about in the wood for a time, and when Burtonas left to gather dinner, they burst in and kidnapped his mother. They left a note explaining their terms—surrender himself, or she would die.

When he returned an hour later, he found the note. Furious, he gathered together his equipment, and tracked down the kidnappers. They had not yet returned to the city, and were totally surprised to see the avenging apparition of Burtonas rise before them. Two of the six were unconscious before they knew it, and the other four were hard pressed to defend themselves. One of them raised his sword to run Burtonas's mother through—and never drew another breath. The other culprits, sickened to be wearing their partner's blood, attempted to surrender. Burtonas was, unfortunately for them, in a blood rage, and he slew them all ruthlessly.

When he faced his mother, she turned from him, distraught that his minotaur heritage had come true to form at last. She commanded him to serve penance by seeking out and destroying three magical items, each highly evil, and not kill along the way unless extraordinary circumstances ordered it.

Burtonas has still not returned home, for he must still destroy the Blood of Sargonnas, an unholy *sword of poison +5* of the priests of Sargonnas, which is hidden somewhere in Okami. He welcomes all adventurers to join his quest, as long as they will attempt not to slay anybody.

Burtonas Morgan is a simple minotaur who seeks only to live a life of peace and quiet, where he can create his art in peace. He is not inherently warlike, and will always look for a peaceable solution to any problems he might have before he resorts to force. He deeply loves and respects his mother, and would do anything for her. Unlike most minotaurs, he does not command a strong presence or authority, but is instead a subdued, reserved individual. He rarely speaks, and he never speaks more than is necessary. He abhors cities, although he is secretly fascinated by the thought of so many people living in such a small space.

He admires any sort of craftwork, especially if it is artistically rendered. He has an extremely fine sense of aesthetics, yet many of his creations serve some sort of purpose other than earning the admiration of the observer. For example, a woodcarving might well be decorating a quarterstaff or concealing a secret door. As well, when his works are sold in the cities (by his mother, who still occasionally enjoys brief periods of city life), they fetch an astounding price, often in excess of 500 stl.

DOUGLAS KOLYNIAN

Minotaur
Thief 11
Neutral Evil

AC: -2
MV: 12"
hp: 57
THACO: 15
#AT: 2
Dmg: 1-8/1-12 +9

S: 19
D: 17
C: 14
I: 19
W: 12
Ch: 14

Thieving Abilities:

PP: 80%	OL: 40%	F/RT: 57%
MS: 95%	HS: 95%	DN: 75%
CW: 95%	RL: 20%	Backstab x4

Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword, battle axe, two-weapon style

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Animal Training, Cooking, Etiquette, Heraldry, Thengolian, Elvish, Rope Use, Singing, Disguise, Juggling, Tumbling, Tightrope Walking, Gaming

Magical Items: *long sword +2*, *dagger of poison*, *battle axe +3*, *gauntlets of dexterity*, *winged boots*

Lord Douglas Kolynian is a spoiled young minotaur diplomat and spy who is used to getting things his own way. His parents did not spoil him; he used his native strength and intelligence to manipulate others to his bidding. When he does not get his way, he mopes about, whines, becomes obsessed, and is generally irritating. When in a mood like this, he likes to feel as though he is suffering mightily, and will be entirely unsympathetic to the problems of others. He is very self-absorbed, yet at the same time, he is pretending to himself that he actually cares about other people's problems. When he can pull himself from his narcissistic reverie, he sometimes even tries to help.

He knows that he has some sort of mental problem, that he should pull his attention from himself, and he often tries to do this. When his concentration lapses, though, he almost immediately reverts to his old self. Despite his problems, he has some excellent friends who see his potential for good, and who will sacrifice much to help him realize this potential.

Raised in a large family, the second of six children, Douglas and his siblings were well-cared for by his parents. He is a younger brother to Lady-Maker Jon Mic-Aelus (q.v.), and a cousin to Burtonas Morgan. They would all be relatively close, if it were not for the fact that they so rarely see one another.

Douglas's was and is a loving family. Anytime he needs support, he can count on them. Although they may not give him any sort of physical support (such as money), they bolster his confidence and strengthen his resolve for a task. They firmly be-





lieve that once Douglas has set himself to a task, he will complete it in style, no matter the difficulty. They have never seen him fail at anything, once he determines to succeed.

Despite the fact that he was well-indoctrinated by the League, Douglas felt that there was more to life than traditionally taught at the state schools, and went traveling to seek a private education. He lived among the tribes of the Tamire for a time, and has been all over Taladas. This enables him to readily understand the psychology of other peoples (he particularly admires the elves), and he has frequently served as a diplomat for the Imperial Court. It was he who negotiated the truce between Armach and the League.

Douglas's self-education, however, helped remove any vestige of the training so carefully worked into him while he was young. Although he is smart enough to realize that his life and career would be in jeopardy if he ever revealed these treasonous sentiments, he finds it hard to live by them. While he dearly values his honor, and will attempt to live by the Code, he finds the rest of minotaur society a complete sham. Due to the influence of elven thought, he cannot accept the Rule of Might.

Although Douglas understands others quite well, he cannot seem to fathom himself. His deepest fear is that there is nothing there to fathom. He is worried that the masks he wears are all he is, that he is simply the sum total of other people's perceptions. To ease these fears, he goes out of his way to impress people. Afterward, he always realizes that he has merely switched his surface personality in order to make a favorable impression, and this feeds his fear tremendously.

When not being employed by the League in either of his capacities, he constantly searches for some clue as to his identity. He is confident that some wizard has stolen his life force, and Douglas will stop at nothing to find this wizard. Most of his friends laugh at him for this silly belief, but, deep inside, Douglas Kolynian knows it is true.

Another thing complicating his life is Varelia. She recently appeared in his life, manipulated him, and disappeared again. Not realizing that he is lucky that he still lives, Douglas seeks her out to demand some explanation. Using his connections in the underworld, he is getting closer all the time. It is doubtful that he'll like it when he finds out the truth. He has dealt with problems such as this before, though, and, should he survive his encounter with Varelia, he will take steps. He never forgets an enemy.

His father recently passed away, and his family needed a new Senator to represent them. They pressured Douglas into the position, as he was the eldest available one in the family. Douglas represents his family only in a halfhearted manner, for he feels he has more important obligations (such as to himself) than serving his family in this regard. However, when he does show at the Senate, the

bills he introduces are brilliant, and his debating style is flawless. This has brought him to the attention of the Emperor, who cannot decide whether Douglas would be better off alive or dead. Douglas's moodiness makes him unpredictable, which most minotaurs hate. On the other hand, when he is in a rational frame of mind, little can escape Douglas's notice, and he makes a perfect statesman.

LADY-MAKER JON MIC-AELUS

Minotaur
Fighter 12
Lawful Evil

AC: 1
MV: 12"
hp: 103
THAC0:9
AT: 5/2
Dmg: 1-8/1-12

S: 20
D: 16
C: 16
I: 18
W: 14
Ch: 17

Weapon Proficiencies: Blades (Broad Group), battle axe, two-handed style, two weapon style

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Direction Sense, Rope Use, Seamanship, Swimming, Weather Sense, Blind-Fighting, Endurance, Navigation, Ocean Survival, Gaming, Fishing

Magical Items: *Studded leather +4*. Other than this, the Lady-Maker disdains armor.

Jon Mic-Aelus is the oldest child in his family, and he has often felt it his duty to protect his younger siblings. This, to his mind, meant making sure they made the correct decisions so vital to life. He was determined that none of them would make the same mistakes he had made, and so he tried to make their decisions for them. While his intentions were good, his brothers resented him for it, and are only recently becoming good friends with him.

Jon spent a good portion of his younger life associating with the criminal side of Trilloman, dealing in the seamy activities so common in the slums of the Great Cities. As he matured, he realized that this life was doing him significantly more harm than good, and quit. He found that it was easier said than done, for the Upright Man for whom he had been working did not want any secrets exposed. The Upright Man sent his best assassin after Jon. When the moment came to strike, the assas-

sin took it. Jon's senses, which had been dulled by the slum life, very nearly did not warn him in time. Fortunately for him, some instinct caused him to duck the assassin's knife, and he made short work of the killer.

Eventually, after drifting dissolutely for a year, during which time a certain man in the seedy section of Trilloman fell from a great height, Jon Mic-Aelus enlisted in the Navy of the League. He wasted no time in rising to prominence, for not only was he an excellent hand aboard ship, he was a natural sea-borne tactician. He became a familiar fixture in the Navy's strategic center, and the admirals soon became reliant upon him for advice.

His crowning victory, the one that would have boosted him to the rank of admiral, was destroyed by his own brother. The Navy had been planning to raze Armach's capital city of Bok, and Jon Mic-Aelus had been placed in charge of all operations for the duration of the siege. He had even managed to find a map describing the correct path to wend through the treacherous Bay of Hoor at great cost to himself. As the Navy prepared to set sail for the greatest naval victory on the face of all Krynn, word came to the flagship that the League had declared a truce with Armach, and therefore that no action would be taken against the Confederation. When Jon heard the news of who had engineered the truce, he was flabbergasted. Disgraced that his own brother would so treacherously remove any path he had to power, Jon resigned his commission in the Navy, and entered the Arena in order that he might vent his anger in a legal way.

He accepted only commissions to fight to the death, or at least until unconscious. He only fights with bladed weapons. After several terrifyingly brutal victories, he was dubbed the Lady-Maker due to his tendency to aim at a point well below the stomach. The government, impressed with his prowess, swiftly hired him into its stable of champions, knowing that the crime rate would decrease drastically once word was leaked that the dreaded Lady-Maker was prosecuting.

He has since reconciled himself with Douglas, but, while they have become better friends, they still have some serious disagreements which occasionally lead to blows. One particularly bitter dispute that has brewed over the years is the difference between the yearly tax allotment to the Departments of Education and the Navy. The Lady-Maker knows that a strong navy is the only key to fulfilling the minotaurs' destiny to conquer Krynn, while Douglas (who secretly believes that any declaration of destiny is simply a means of manipulating soft-headed fools) holds that only through a strong education can the minotaurs understand those they would destroy.

Lady-Maker Jon Mic-Aelus represents all that is best and worst about the League. He is fiercely honorable and competitive, yet also caring and understanding for those who mean something to

him. He will sacrifice all that he can to ensure that the League carries out its destined task, and will denounce any who stand in the way of that destiny. A firm upholder of the laws, he vigorously prosecutes all who come under his jurisdiction. Lately, he has come to soften a bit in his views, and occasionally accepts fights that only require severe public disgrace.

AUSTAN GAVYNUS

Minotaur
Paladin 10
Lawful Good

AC: -1
MV: 12"
hp: 93
THAC0: 11
AT 3/2
Dmg: 2-8/2-16 +10

S: 19
D: 15
C: 19
I: 15
W: 16
Ch: 18

Weapon Proficiencies: Blades (Broad group), heavy lance, battle axe, quarterstaff

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Disguise, Healing, Herbalism, Blind-Fighting, Endurance, Tracking, Hunting, Horse Riding

Magical Items: *plate mail +3*, *bastard sword +3*, *battle axe +4*

Austan Gavynus is of a kind that is truly rare among the minotaurs of Taladas, for not only is he a paladin, he is a follower of Paladine, whose worship is otherwise unknown in Taladas.

Raised in a large (for minotaurs) family, Austan was the youngest of four children. He had always been a kind child of great strength, the favorite of his older brothers, who had received enough League-sponsored indoctrination that they themselves could no longer afford to be as gentle as they might have liked. Thus, although they knew it could be considered treasonous, they coached him in the ways of the minotaurs, yet cautioned him not to believe all of it. They did not want to see the spark of delight in life leave his eyes, as it had for all of them.

Sadly, before he could be tested on his knowledge, his family was killed in a mysterious fire, and Austan was sent to the League School to finish his education. While there, his instructors taught him the Rule of Might, and gave its attendant proofs. The brutality and lack of soul smothered him, and he came close to losing his formerly-held beliefs.

Fortunately, his brothers had taught him enough





about the value of other people, and due to his acting ability, he was able to fool the proctors of his test of his "sincerity" in the minotaur way. He passed with flying colors, and was sent to the Legions to complete his training. He spent several years in the Legions, fighting off the attacks of the Thenolites. However, he was discharged from the army when he refused to kill the elves, for he knew in his heart that they were not evil, as were the Thenolites.

He drifted dissolutely for a time, unsure of his life's vocation. After a time, he took to adventuring, for he knew that this would, at least in part, offer him some purpose in life. While wandering alone on the seashore of the Tamire, he came across a pitiful, dying wreck of a man who had just dragged himself from the ocean. Flotsam from the ship that was slipping beneath the waves washed up onto shore. Thinking to save the man's life, Austan took the man to a cave in the nearby hills, where he administered emergency aid.

When the man finally recovered consciousness, he clasped the strange medallion that hung around his neck, and murmured some words which Austan could not hear. A healing glow spread over the man's body while Austan stared, amazed at the power this man wielded. They spoke at length of many things, not the least of which was the continent of Ansalon and the worship of the gods there, one god in particular.

When the morning arrived, Paladine had found

his first convert on Taladas. Vowing to use his sword and his heart forever in the service of the god, Austan and his priestly friend, Belusais, roamed some of the deepest corners of Taladas. Austan had finally found something to fill the void in his heart left by the deaths of his family.

Belusais and Austan spent many joyful hours together as they adventured, speaking often of the mysteries of Paladine and striking down the forces of Evil wherever they encountered them. One night, they were both so exhausted from their day's work that they failed to post a guard. Cowardly followers of Bishop Trandamere crept in and slit the throat of the sleeping priest, and were about to do the same for the minotaur when he awoke. Bellowing with rage, he crushed the craven Thenolites. He vowed to Paladine that, despite the loss of Belusais, the word of Paladine would continue to spread.

Austan returned to the League, intent on making good his vow. The corruption and the stench of the city air smothered him, and he grew more determined to free the citizens of their plight. This was much easier said than done, however, for the majority of the citizenry did not want his brand of "saving." However, Austan was determined to try, and he has since lived in the cities, traveling from one to the other.

These days, both in order to supplement his income and in hopes of gaining more converts, Austan registers with the local Warriors' Guild as soon as he enters a city. He takes any case involving poor people or foreigners, using his Paladine-granted *detect evil* ability to see if he might be serving the purposes of evil by taking a case. If not, he will take the case for a minimal fee, enough to guarantee that he may eat and sleep, but no more. His fight record is impressive, for he has lost fewer than 10% of his battles. If he loses, he always reimburses the money he would have made from a bout.

There is one other thing that means as much as life to Austan, and that is his goal of changing the League so that it benefits all, not just the minotaurs. This attitude is treason to the other minotaurs, and if Austan were to express it openly, he would probably be dragged to the Arena on the spot. As it is, Austan works behind the scenes to promote the good for others. He hates breaking the laws of the land, but feels that it is necessary in order to achieve the best life for everyone. In order to obtain these objectives, he has become a sometime partner of Yu the Rock (see below).

If he ever hears rumors about any members of his family who may have survived, he will drop whatever he is doing and rush off to investigate. So far, he has had no luck, but this might change in time.

YU, THE ROCK

Elf
Thief 10 / Mage 9
Chaotic Good

AC:
MV: 12"
hp:
THACO:
AT:
Dmg:

S: 14
D: 19
C: 15
I: 19
W: 17
Ch: 20

Thieving Abilities:

PP: 90%	OL: 80%	F/RT: 77%
MS: 73%	HS: 90%	DN: 55%
cw: 85%	RL: 10%	Backstab x4

Weapon Proficiencies: Short bow, short sword, long sword, dagger

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Disguise, Reading/Writing (Common and Elvish), Juggling, Rope Use, Tumbling, Jumping, Tightrope Walking, Ventriloquism, Singing, Herbalism, Appraising, Spellcraft, Ancient History

Magical Items: *short sword +4, 3 daggers +1, cloak of elvenkind, cube of force, wings of flying, rope of climbing, boots of speed*

Yu the Rock was abandoned as a child in the outskirts of Morgad, and was found and raised by a family of humans in the slums of the city. Since they had no experience with elven names, they decided on a simple one: Yu. Although he was not well-loved, he was admired for his exotic looks and charm. His family found that raising him was more of a bother than they had expected, however, for he matured so much more slowly than his human siblings. His adopted father worked as a locksmith's assistant during the day, and at night was a part-time employee of the Upright Man in his section of the city. When Yu grew to be old enough (about 25 years old), his father began taking him to work at night. He was delighted when the young elf showed a real aptitude for the work. When they returned with what they supposed might be a magical treasure one night, his father was further surprised to find that Yu was fascinated by the workings of the Upright Man's mage.

He therefore left Yu under the care of the Upright Man, who continued the process of raising Yu, and ensured his education in the finer points in life: thievery and magic. Practicing diligently, Yu soon rose to be one of the better thieves in




Morgad, as well as a decent magician in his own right. He felt the stirring of ambition, and knowing it to be unjust to displace the man who had been his mentor for those years, he left Morgad and traveled to Kristophan.

Along the way, he was assaulted by a large party of brigands, who left him lying nearly naked by the side of the road, bereft of spellbooks and all his equipment. When he staggered into Kristophan, bloody and battered, he tried to lodge a complaint with the *saiones*, but they just laughed at him, and told him to be more careful when playing with the big boys. Enraged, Yu stalked off into the streets of Kristophan to find someone to help him with his revenge.

He finally managed to find some people who were happy enough to take him to Theodrus, the Upright Man of the South Quarter. Theodrus informed Yu that although he would be happy to provide Yu with a job in Kristophan, he would have to demand that no revenge be taken against the guards. Yu, badly in need of a healer, a place to sleep, and clothing, agreed to the terms. Inwardly, however, he still seethed at the injustice of a system that allowed this to happen. Instead of acting out his fantasies of revenge on the guards, Yu began to plot the downfall of the League of Minotaurs.

After Theodrus consistently asked Yu to perform some actions that ran contrary to Yu's nature, Yu decided that it was time to have a new Upright





Man in Kristophan, one more interested in the politics of the city, and one not so concerned with only wealth. He began to save his money from each job, pooling his resources and gradually earning the respect of his fellow thieves. He began a small revolutionary organization with his companions, working secretly to undermine the government. When he needs muscle for a job, Yu tries to enlist the aid of Austan Gavynus. Sometimes he can, and sometimes he can't, for Austan has very high moral standards, and will not sacrifice said morals to overthrow the government.

Yu is a very friendly elf, charming all with whom he comes in contact. His appearance is that of a harmless young elf, but Yu has wisdom beyond his years, and the guile that accompanies it. His close friends all trust him implicitly, for they know that he would sacrifice his life for theirs, and therefore they would do the same for him.

His one major flaw is that he is constantly yearning for female companionship, and will do most anything to obtain it. He wants a long-term relationship, but knows that with humans, this dream is nearly unattainable due to the huge difference in life spans. He is often lonely, despite the nearly constant presence of his friends.

His plans to take over from Theodrus are nearly complete, but he could still use a little more assistance, preferably in the form of a party of adventurers.

In his spare time, Yu is a playwright who often cleverly disguises his more radical political satire in the guise of old legends. His plays are admired by the gentry, who often do not look any deeper than the surface level. As well, Yu encodes secret messages to his band through the scripts of his plays.

BAHN RAKYNE

Minotaur

Cleric 5

Neutral

AC: -3

MV: 12"

hp: 35

THAC0: 18

#AT 1

Dmg: 2-7/2-8

S: 13

D: 15

C: 10

I: 15

W: 18

Ch: 15

Weapon Proficiencies: Footman's flail, warhammer, mace

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Healing, Herbalism,

Religion, Etiquette, Ancient History, Thenolian, Disguise

Magical Items: *Banded armor +3, shield +3, flail +4* . . . He has access to all of the Merchant League's not-inconsiderable store of items, which means that he can have virtually any item he desires in almost no time.

While Bahn Rakyne does not appear to wield much physical power, he is, in actuality, probably the second-most important being in the League, just behind the Emperor in status. He is the head of the Merchant League, the guild that is in charge of *all* trading in the League. The Merchant League makes no major moves without his approval, and, under his wise guidance, has made some great mercantile conquests.

The position of Head Merchant seems to be a hereditary one, for it has been in the Rakyne family for hundreds of years. None of the Rakyne have been imposing figures physically, but an aura of command and power seems to radiate from them. They have always been devout followers of Shinare, the Goddess of Wealth. Perhaps the continued guardianship of the Merchant League is her method of rewarding them.

Little is known of Bahn Rakyne personally. It is well known that he encourages the worship of Shinare among his merchants, and that those who follow her advance much more quickly than those who do not.

He is a man who inspires instant loyalty, if not because of his commanding personality, then because of his incredible power and wealth.

He very rarely shows his face in public, because he knows that the followers of Sargonnas would like nothing more than to sink a dagger into his back. As well, he has made some incredibly powerful enemies in the Senate, and would just as soon avoid any confrontations which would undermine his business career; i.e., those that involve his death. To this end, he usually hires adventuring types as bodyguards, simply because they know where their loyalties lie. When their term of employment with him ends, they find that they have a powerful ally in a very high place.

MINOTAURS OF OTHER PLACES

Although the minotaurs of the Imperial League of the Minotaurs are by far the majority of minotaurs on Taladas, there are many more scattered about Taladas for one reason or another.

NORTHERN HOSK

The minotaurs here are, for the most part, former members of the Fleet who mutinied. Knowing themselves to be beyond the safety of the law due to the nature of their crime, they fled from the land controlled by the League to relative safety in Northern Hosk. Since they know that the Fleet patrols the waters of Taladas, they have taken pains not to live near any water that is navigable by craft larger than a rowboat. They miss the joy of the open water very much, though, and some of the members of the tribe consider traveling to the ocean, commandeering the next ship they see, and setting sail for Ansalon. This is a dream that is discouraged by the tribal leaders, for they do not want to call the attention of the League to themselves.

Although they contend daily with the suspicious native population and the fierce elements, they assure themselves that life is good, compared to facing the court-martial that is, no doubt, awaiting them should they ever return to the League. They have set up a loose family system, based on the style historically held by the minotaurs. However, they do not wish to begin the Arena to establish the leader of the group as yet, since they are such small groups and continually on the move. They still use the idea of the Arena to settle disputes, although almost no combats are fought to the death, as this would weaken the tribe.

There are approximately five such groups on Northern Hosk, each numbering roughly 150 minotaurs. Each of the five is aware of the existence of the other four, but tries to avoid them as much as possible. When they do come into contact, it is often in the form of raids or other unfriendly activity, for they do not get along, as yet. An enterprising character might find it interesting to try to form alliances between the various tribes in order to undermine the League, to become a power in Northern Hosk, or simply for the joy of diplomacy.

The only thing that will cause the minotaurs to unite (at present) is raiding the villages of the ogre tribes near the Ring Mountains. These ogres, who call themselves "The First People" are prime targets for minotaurish hatred. Even after all these years, the minotaurs remember the shoddy treatment they received in the areas now inhabited by the ogres, and it enrages them beyond all belief. They forget their own petty differences when they find there is an ogre tribe encamped nearby.

They are a proud, lonely people, and will neither ask nor give charity. They would sooner die than take something they had not earned. They mistrust any gestures of kindness, and are very hostile to any other minotaurs, fearing that they are there as spies for the League.

Each tribe ranges over the whole of Northern Hosk, not caring for the seasons. The only time they pay any attention to the seasons is when the game and the nomads move. At this point, they follow the trail of the nomads. As former sailors in the Fleet, they have been trained to withstand all manner of physical hardship, and can endure days without food or sleep. This comes in handy when they are carefully tracking a human camp, because they do not have to stop for refreshment, as do the humans. Thus, they have an element of almost total surprise when they sweep down out of the darkness on their foes. Many a human camp has been found smoking in the morning, the only inhabitants the carrion eaters that have slunk in during the night.

The five minotaur tribes include the Gleaming Horns, the Blackened Blades, the Mountain Cattle, the Dirge, and the Smoking Vengeance.


The Gleaming Horns are led by Aurik Thentius, an 11th level fighter. This is, perhaps, the strongest tribe, for most of the minotaurs in it are nearly Aurik's equal in combat. The Blackened Blades are under the command of Krinlas the Dark (fighter 11), who worked for the Merchant League as an "opener of the way" (which means that he killed any "barbarians" who would not trade with the Merchant League) before he joined the Fleet, and his band is probably the most dishonorable company of minotaurs to be found. They specialize in sneak attacks, poison, and daggers in the back.

Morind Goodheart (fighter 9) steers the Mountain Cattle. Although they are probably the weakest minotaur tribe on Northern Hosk, they lead the best lives, for they have opened diplomatic and trade relations with the humans and elves. The Mountain Cattle are a happy-go-lucky group, usually open to outsiders, and they have no trouble laughing at themselves and their misfortunes. They are seen as the ideal minotaurish society—not so driven as most, friendly, and able to see the bright as well as the dark side of life.

The Dirge are a grim, desperate lot. Their leader, Cargin Ovesrik (fighter 9/mage 10), knows that none of his people can survive much longer in the wilds. They fell victim to an ogrim trap a few years back and lost some of their best trackers. Their luck has not improved since then, and even the renowned minotaur loyalty is beginning to fray. Every raid they make is out of desperation, and they cannot seem to break themselves out of this slump.

The Smoking Vengeance is under the command





of Wendemius Haril (cleric of Sargonnas 11). Wendemius is slightly mad, and his band appears to take after him. Among all of the tribes, they are the most feared, for they are the most unpredictable. Wendemius changes with the wind. One might think that this would lead to destruction for his company, but it seems that they prosper under his chaotic leadership.

Both the League and the human and elven nomads want these minotaurs stopped, and will reward adventurers who can destroy these roving bands. The nomads are sick of the depredations, and are fearful of their lives. The League wants the traitors gone, for they do not wish to encourage mutinies, or to present the picture that mutiny is even an available option.

PANAK

In the icy reaches of the Panak desert, erected close to the Great Escarpment, there still stands an old Legion post. Although it has been beaten by the snows and rains, whipped harshly by the stinging wind, and partially destroyed by a dragon's attack, the walls still stand strong against all comers. Inside lives the last vestige of one of the Legions' finest companies. Firmly defying the elements and creatures of the tundra, the Icebreaker Company awaits its orders to return home.

Over a century ago, the General Staff determined that it would be a good idea to establish as many bases over as wide an area as possible. To achieve this end, they sent several Legions to the most remote areas possible, and made plans to deploy them to take land in the name of the League. When a fire later swept through the Ministry of War, they lost several files containing information regarding the whereabouts of several of their Legions, and no-one could remember all of the locations to which they had been sent. Thus, Icebreaker Company waits for its orders in vain, for the General Staff does not even recall that they exist.

The minotaurs here are tougher than the average minotaur, for they must face a demanding environment every day, a climate that tests their survival skills to the utmost every moment they are there. This locale has changed the minotaurs in some ways, made them more bitter, shaggier, and more cunning. As well, being cut off from civilization has had its effects, too. They are less intelligent in the ways of society than their southern brethren, but their knowledge of the area has increased proportionately.

The company is organized along military lines, their commander the highest ranking officer. Since most of the original officers are too old to be of use anymore, the group has had to field-promote several of its number. As well, there have been several births from the few females stationed there, and the children have been raised in a solely military

environment. For the most part, though, the company consists of older minotaurs, who constantly bemoan the fact that there are so few females.

The female officers have shown themselves to be much more suited to command in this environment for some reason. They are practical, more concerned with their survival than any fancy shows of posturing. The minotaurs still practice their drills, in order to impress the generals when they come to the encampment. The females, although they too practice, suspect the truth of the matter, and are privately convinced that they will be stuck in the Gods-forsaken waste until the end of their days.

The commander of the garrison, Major Zinaf Chelonian (Fighter 13), knows that her company is tottering in its loyalty to the League. To relieve their spirits, she orders a fest night once every month. On this night, the minotaurs swath themselves in their warmest furs and move out over the tundra to hunt whatever creatures are so foolish as to be out. This is also the night they conduct raids on the camps of the Ice People, taking whatever they need to survive for the next month or two. Another method the minotaurs use to survive is to hire themselves out as guides to the adventurers who periodically pass through this way for food, weapons, or other goods. Next to the Ice People, no-one knows Panak the way the minotaurs do.

Chelonian rules with an iron fist, but can feel her command slipping away from her. She is anxious to send a messenger to the League to inform the General Staff of their situation, but cannot afford to send anyone on her staff. Thus, she looks for adventuring parties headed back that way. She realizes the way back is dangerous, and will pay with what few valuables the company possesses.

NERON AND THE FISHERIES

Deep in the tropical forests of Neron, there are small enclaves of minotaurs hidden away from all view. Skilled in the lore of the rainforests, these minotaurs hide themselves from all who seek them, never revealing themselves unless the one looking for them proves to be weak enough to kill.

These minotaurs are the last remnants of the "cowardly minotaurs" left behind when the first minotaurs abandoned Taladas. Afraid of the ogres, these minotaurs learned well the art of making themselves unseen as they crept away from the ogre's wrath. They still fear the ogres, the tales having been handed down from mother to daughter for generation after generation. Although few ogres make their way through the rainforest, these few are enough to keep the tribes hidden away for days following the ogre's passage.

These minotaurs have evolved much differently than their more civilized cousins. They are short, never more than 6' tall, and their bodily fur has thinned so much that they are hardly more hairy

than a rather hairy human. Their brains have atrophied from living in constant fear, and thus they are far less intelligent than they could be. Their horns have only been an encumbrance to them, and so they ritually cut them each year. They have never developed a belief in honor, nor in the Gods. They do not practice magic, and are enormously frightened of anyone who can command it. Their society is familial and matriarchal, although there is no love between any members of the family. They are all out for their own survival, and trust no-one other than themselves.

The women are in charge because there are more of them, strangely enough, and they cannot trust the males to do anything. The males, most of the time, plod out on hunting missions and return emptyhanded. The females, therefore, are the dominant force of the tribes, and they try to restore the minotaurs to what might be their former glory. The males, however docile they are usually, always rebel against the notion of exposing themselves to the scrutiny of the world in general, and ogres in particular. This argument quickly quells any ideas the females might have.

They bear an abiding hatred for all other minotaurs for the abandonment of their ancestors, and will attack them as soon as is possible. Since they do not like to be seen, the savage minotaurs rely on ambush and snares to capture their opponents, rather than direct combat. If a foe proves to be stronger than they are (5+5 Hit Dice), they will ei-

ther surrender or run away, whichever option is handier. If they are the stronger, then they come to gloat over their captive before beginning to torture him to death.

Players might encounter these creatures when searching the forests of Neron for some of the older civilizations, or perhaps on a zoological expedition. They could capture one of these minotaurs and expose her to the civilization of the other minotaurs. This might cause a drastic change in the lives of these minotaurs, although that is not likely, as they have been living this way since time immemorial.

RAINWARD ISLES

Just as so many other races have been blown ashore onto the Rainward Isles, so too have the minotaurs been forced there by the hand of the Gods. A passing Fleet ship was caught in one of the fierce storms that sweep the sea in that area, and, despite the skill of the helmsman and crew, ran aground.

They quickly made themselves unpopular with the inhabitants there, raiding the villages and farms for their supplies. The minotaurs were just congratulating themselves on their good fortune, on shipwrecking on such a bountiful place, when they were beset by the undead horrors that had been raised by the vengeful Gods. After a fierce





fight, the minotaurs emerged triumphant. Their victory was not without cost, however, for they had lost over half of their crew, and their ill-gotten supplies had been trampled during the battle.

After much discussion on a more easily defensible piece of ground, they decided that they would have to build themselves a settlement. They lost no time in beginning this process, and by the time the next undead attack came, they were ready. They repelled the undead, but again, at a cost to themselves.

They realized that they would have to ally with the People of the Isles, as distasteful as this was to them. They did not consider that they might have irritated the other races by the raid on their farms, and were considerably surprised when the People rebuffed them. In anger, the minotaurs prepared themselves for an attack on the People who dared to defy them. The undead chose this moment to attack, and fell upon minotaur, dwarf, kender, and human with equal fury. The embattled living, ignoring their own petty squabble for the nonce, returned the attack, and utterly obliterated the last remaining undead of that group. The living races warily agreed to a truce of mutual defense, and began working together.

With the two cooperating, they repelled the undead much more easily than they had before, and actually began to respect one another. The minotaurs taught the courageous People more fighting skills, in return for which the dwarves revealed

some of the secrets of the earth, the humans taught the minotaurs how to cultivate the earth and reap its harvest, and the kender agreed to leave the minotaurs alone. Over a year has passed since the first day the minotaurs arrived in the Rainward Isles, and their admiration for their counterparts continues to grow. The People have demonstrated that they are worthy of minotaurish loyalty, and the minotaurs will stand with the People in all things, excepting League commands for them to do otherwise. However, since the Imperial League of Minotaurs has apparently forgotten about them, they do not worry about this happening.

The minotaurs have not yet integrated their own society into that of the People (or, rather, integrated the People's society into their own), and still operate on the Fleet standard of rank. Their leader is Akesthra Evenkeel (Fighter 11), who expects immediate obedience from all of her charges. Some of her sailors are more fanatically loyal to their homeland than she is, however, and are desperately trying to find a way back home, despite her orders to stay put. She does not understand their eagerness to return home to a land of stifling laws and teeming masses, because she much prefers the quiet of the wilds offered by the Isles.

Currently, the inhabitants of the Isles are accepting all comers who want to help them defeat the undead menace. As well, most of the minotaurs

agree with Akesthra about the peace of the wilderness, and will enlist the aid of any passing adventurers to search out their homesick brothers. Aside from the menace of the undead, there are also tales of fearsome creatures hidden within the forests here, and any hardy band could seek them out (although this might not always be to their benefit!).

OLD AURIM

While Eragas was busy conquering the League, some of his less imperially-minded friends were busy exploring the rest of Taladas. While very few places looked as inviting to them as Southern Hosk, some of these places looked like pure challenges as places to survive, tests of one's minotaur blood. Old Aurim is such a locale.

The minotaurs here are descendants of those who thought only of the sport to be had from this "new" continent, not of the Empires one might build on it. When they reached Old Aurim, they thought immediately that this would be a testing ground beyond all others the world had ever seen. Upon further exploration, they knew that this was truly the forge upon which the Gods hammered souls. They returned to their ships, brought their survival necessities to shore, and burned the vessels.

With this accomplished, almost 400 males, females, and children bravely set forth upon the unsuspecting area of Old Aurim. Within the ruins of the old palaces, some made their homes, while others ventured out into the barren wastelands surrounding the once-lush cities. The minotaurs vowed to one another, before they parted ways, that they would always come to the aid of the others if either needed help. This done, each established a home in either the cities or in the countryside. Both city and country offered a challenge to survival, as the minotaurs knew it would.

The minotaurs in the country were witnesses to the birth of the traag draconians, and the other horrible experiments of the Dark Queen that were left to die in the sun-blasted land. They saw the coming of the hobgoblins, and they quickly made sure that no hobgoblins would approach the territories established by the minotaurs.

The city minotaurs explored the ruins, hoping to find some of the secrets that had supposedly made Aurim such a great Empire. Within the tumbled wreckage, they found many powerful items, as well as creatures that devastated entire blocks when they were unleashed.

Each of these groups eventually met with disaster. Those in the open land saw the hobgoblins rise up to become powerful; the sheer numbers of the hobgoblins began to daunt even the fiercest minotaur, and, once the hobgoblins knew that such a powerful foe was available, the minotaurs did not know a moment's peace. The hobgoblins kept

swarming to the areas where the minotaurs were. Finally, the country minotaurs sent a plea for help to the minotaurs of the city. Their messenger met the courier from the city, who was venturing into the countryside with a similar plea.

In the city, the minotaurs had finally opened a vault containing a beast more powerful than even they could defeat, and it was leeching the life from them and their children. When the heralds returned, the minotaurs knew that they must flee, or be crushed.

Gathering together their effects, the minotaurs fled deeper into the parched land, avoiding the draconians and the hobgoblins. Here they encamped, and set themselves to the task of redeeming themselves.

The minotaurs of Old Aurim are probably the most minotaurish of all minotaurs on Krynn. Their honor is their pride and joy, and, since they all regard themselves as part of the same family, they do not squabble among themselves. They are among the toughest creatures living on Krynn, and banded together they are nearly invincible. The minotaurs of Old Aurim should be treated as 8+8 Hit Dice.

Their population is about 1000 minotaurs these days. Their number constantly dwindles because each minotaur must pass a Rite of Initiation, which involves journeying into the dead land alone and surviving there for a month. Most of the children run afoul of hobgoblins, who have decided that minotaur is a tasty treat, indeed. Others encounter large bands of traag draconians, who also enjoy a nice piece of minotaur shank. Although the Rite keeps the population growth to nearly zero, it also ensures that only the strongest and the smartest of the minotaurs may breed.

These minotaurs are anxious to hear word about how the rest of the race is surviving. They want to show the rest of the race how well the deserts of Old Aurim have bettered them, and how this could work for the rest of the minotaur race as well.

Although their life is a constant battle to survive, these minotaurs love it. It has caused them to relish each moment as it comes, and it has honed their fighting skills so that they are, with few exceptions, the finest desert fighters in the world. They are more prepared than ever before to take over the world.



THE SPIRITUAL MINOTAUR

BELIEF SYSTEMS

In attempting to fathom minotaur belief systems, one must always consider their creed: Might makes right. This is the one belief that has never failed them to date, and many minotaurs hold this belief more sacred than the gods, whom many minotaurs consider spurious anyway. This ideal is an integral part of their life, and they fiercely resent any attempts to interfere with it.

For the most part, the minotaurs have no organized belief system. They have been consistently disappointed by the gods they called upon in the past, especially during their centuries of enslavement and debasement. Further, ever since the Flight of the Gods, there has been no hard evidence (to the minotaurs' eyes) that the gods ever existed.

The god the minotaurs theoretically most respect is Sargonnas, for he is cloaked in mystery, his ways devious and circuitous, full of twists and turns. This is not to say that Sargonnas is devoutly worshipped by all of the minotaurs. To tell the truth, the minotaurs are a willful, independent race, unwilling to bow before anyone not of their own kind, including the gods. Ever since Hiteh's Night, the minotaurs have grown increasingly leery of belief systems; if the gods are constantly with us, they say, where is their power?

On the other hand, one may not honestly say that the priests of Sargonnas hold no influence among the minotaurs. The cult leaders who have begun to resurface are old hands at political intrigue, and more than one Sargonnas cultist holds a high position in the League of the Minotaurs. However, Sargonnas has not, as yet, openly shown his power and his favor in the League, and therefore he is neither widely worshipped nor respected. This infuriates his priests, and they will go to any length to restore to Sargonnas that which is "rightfully" his. This includes limiting worship options; i.e., his priests will attempt to suppress the teachings of another god—violently, if necessary. Priests from outside the League might wish to consider disguise while traveling within its borders. Forewarned is forearmed.

This is not to say that all other belief systems in the League have been eradicated. Rather, they, like the cult of Sargonnas, have been quietly working behind the scenes to ease their return to the public eye. They too have the ears of certain politicians. Thus, these other belief systems are not as inaccessible as the Sargonnas cultists might like. One could probably find the temple of almost any god, if one was looking hard enough in the right places. This means that magical healing is done, for the most part, by magic-users who have made *healing potions* rather than by priests of any gods.

If one could actually find their temples, one could probably receive healing there. Unfortunately, the temples are well-hidden to all but the most devout searchers, and therefore the magic-users hold a virtual monopoly on aiding the wounded and sick.

One of the gods especially venerated in the League is Shinare, for the Merchants' Guild ensures that their patron goddess is not ignored. In all the League, there is no other deity more fervently worshipped than Shinare, for all the merchants respect her and her wealth. This does not mean that she receives much adulation and worship, but rather that she gets quite a bit of lip service, and her name is used to seal bargains between the merchants. Given the lack of piety in the rest of the League, Shinare is happy to be receiving at least some respect from the populace.

While most Ansalonian gods, Good, Evil, and Neutral, can be found on Taladas, the hierarchy of gods developed on Ansalon is non-existent. Each area has its own gods in entirely new positions of power. For example, the worship of the god *Paladine* is unknown (with the single exception of *Austan Gavynus*, his minotaur paladin). This is a situation which Ansalonian missionaries are devoutly attempting to remedy as soon as possible. Of course, given the incredible distance between Ansalon and Taladas (roughly 1000 miles), simply reaching Taladas is a demanding task. Once there, a foreign priest can run into all sorts of trouble.

Erestem herself is only barely known, and very slightly worshipped in the League. This truly enrages her and her priests; no self-respecting god wants Sargonnas placed foremost in any pantheon, especially not the Queen of Evil! Being subordinate to the God of Revenge is a matter of no small contention between Erestem's priests and Sargonnas's. However, unless she does something drastic, proving that she is a more worthy god for the minotaurs to follow, she is destined to a very minor role in the workings of the minotaurs' belief system. One can count on her to try something, but one can also rely on Sargonnas trying some new tactic to thwart her in this regard, for he is not anxious to lose his power to her in the vastly populated area of the League of Minotaurs.

Clerics are not held in any special regard in the League. Most of its populace sees them as charlatan magic-users, not intermediaries of powers from the heavens. A few of its citizens are devout worshippers of one god or another, but they are, for the most part, members of the human aristocracy, with enough time in each day to devote some to their gods. The average commoner is too concerned with making a living, and, so he thinks, too practical, to worry about some metaphysical apparitions. The commoners envy those with the time to do so, but do not necessarily wish to emulate them. After all, what the peasants envy is not



the worship, but rather the free time.

All the gods plan something to regain their followings in Taladas, but only Sargonnas has had any success so far, and this is due to of his previous involvement with the minotaurs.

SARGONNAS

Second in power among the Dark Gods only to Erestem, Sargonnas is Krynn's God of Vengeance and Deception. Although the minotaurs have always venerated him, in some form or another, little is known of him outside their societies. Most of what is known about Sargonnas filters to the common people through the minotaurs, leading one to doubt the veracity of any of the information currently known about the god. For all anyone knows, the minotaurs secretly worship Sargonnas fervently, and are merely putting up a front of atheism to discourage reverence for the other gods. The minotaurs know the non-minotaurs of the League wish to be more like them, and so will follow their lead on just about anything. This situation is, of course, mere speculation and does not necessarily contain any truth. As previously mentioned, he is the master of deception, and when Sargonnas is involved, everything is suspect.

He is the consort of Erestem, and he is the god to whom many offer propitiation when planning their vengeance. He and Erestem fathered the dark moon, Angomais, whom the dark magic-users petition for power. Sargonnas is difficult to fathom, for his mind, paralleling those of his most favored mortals, resembles nothing so much as a labyrinth, his motives and methods obscured. He jealously guards against any attempts to reveal the workings of his plots, and will (5% chance) destroy any mortal who interferes in the working of them.

In his true form, Sargonnas appears as a huge black crow with radiant green eyes. Of course, to complete one of his plots, he may assume any form he wishes.

Role-playing Notes: Sargonnas is a complex and convoluted god, one who takes his plots and vengeance very seriously. Any wrong done to him or his followers will result in an intricate and fatal plot against the offender. Occasionally, he is so blinded by vengeance that he does not always stop to consider the full ramifications of his plots, and therefore plunges into disaster.

Although he has been the consort of Erestem for uncounted eons, he will not hesitate to manipulate her into a position where he can clamber over her into a station of even greater power.

Sargonnas is not always reliable when granting spells; his followers cannot predict whether or not they will get the spells they pray for. It is a 75% chance that Sargonnas will give the spells asked, 20% chance he will give spells of his choosing, not the choosing of his priests, and a 5% chance he will grant no spells at all. This propensity has led

some of his priests to abandon his worship, leaving the "Whim King" alone with his plots. His more devout followers only hope that he has a reason for allowing this.

Statistics: AL le; WAL any evil and anyone desiring vengeance; AoC Plots, Treachery, and Revenge; SY black wings surrounding orb of blackness

SARGONNAS' AVATAR

(CLERIC 25, THIEF 25)

The earthly avatar Sargonnas usually takes is that of a 10' tall, incredibly well-muscled minotaur, although he has been known to take that of a slightly-built, black-clad being who slips into being behind a particular foe to impale it from the rear. Sargonnas can change shape at will, and inspires fear, awe, or anger depending on his will.

The avatar usually appears only to someone who has performed special service against the god, or someone powerful enough for the entire priesthood to call out for vengeance on him.

Str 24	Dex 24	Con 20
Int 23	Wis 18	Chr 23
MV 12	SZ 10'	MR 35%
AC -7	HD 20	HP 180
#AT 2	THAC0 6	Dmg 2d20 +14

Special Att/Def: His normal avatar attacks with a huge, double-bitted axe +5 which only the avatar can wield, and which disappears when he is killed.

DUTIES OF THE PRIESTHOOD

The priests of Sargonnas are in charge of carrying out important political intrigues which will bring more and more people to the worship of Sargonnas. They are expected to worm their way into favor in the courts of their land (keeping their identities hidden of course), and to influence the rulers and important nobles of the land in a way that will favorably affect Sargonnas and his church. Even if Sargonnas were to achieve his goals of conquest (at least, one assumes that those are his goals), he would keep his temples hidden, for that is the way of the God of Deception. Priests may never use Divination spells or tools (such as a *gem of true seeing*) except in reverse.

Requirements: AB Standard plus Int of 15 or greater; AL le; WP two-handed battle-axe (2d4/2d6), any edged hand-to-hand; AR Studded leather or leather only; SP All, Astral, Charm, Combat, Healing, Protection, Summoning*; PW 1) *know/obscure alignment* 1/day 5) *command* 1/hour 10) *false seeing* 1/day



THE WARRIORS' GUILD

This is a mini-adventure detailing the structure and architecture of a typical Warriors' Guild.

The minotaurs strive for orderliness in all things, although the order of these things may not be apparent to any but other minotaurs. Certain things, though, are similar throughout the Imperial League of Minotaurs. The Warriors' Guilds throughout the League are some of those things that remain fairly constant from place to place. While they differ in minor things, most resemble the others to a large degree. The typical Guild Hall is 260' by 340'.

1. REGISTRATION

The first thing you see once past the 15' high cast-iron gate are stairs leading to a marble-columned porch. Sitting directly in the middle of the porch is a small brick outbuilding, where a bored-looking minotaur peers at you through the small, barred window. A few flies buzz lazily about.

This minotaur is in charge of the registration for entry into the Guild Hall. He presents a few forms that need to be completed (biographical information, including such questions as, "What was the last creature you killed?," "What is your experience in adventuring?," and other such questions), and waits until the characters have completed them. If attacked, he will sound the alarm bell hanging to his left, whereupon 5 guards come charging to his defense. Each is a typical minotaur. Minotaur (6): Int Varies; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 6 + 3; hp 37, 31, 31, 28, 26, 19; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2-8/1-4 (horns and bite) or 1-8/1-8 (battle axe); SA none; SD none; MR none; SZ L; ML 13; XP 500

If the characters have already registered with the Guild, they need only give the password, and the registration minotaur will usher them into the secret tunnel underneath his desk, from which they emerge at 4a.

When they have completed the forms, the minotaur sends them to one of the Initial Testing Rooms on either end of the porch. Only warriors may register, although other classes might try to sneak in. Since the fighting styles of each class are different, however, this may prove to be a most difficult task.

2A, B. TESTING ROOMS

In these musty, windowless rooms, a lean human fighter (Level 8, AC 4, AL LN, hp 53) and an observer await the character. Here the Guild determines the skill level of the character by a duel. The

fighter is competent in whatever weapon the PC uses, unless it is something very outlandish. During the fight, the observer takes notes and nods his head disapprovingly, muttering to himself throughout the whole bout. When the duel is over, he will present his evaluation of the character, alerts the mages inside to the character's skill level, and lets them know to ready the maze.

Levels 1-3 are classified as Skill D, 4-7 are Skill C, 8-11 Skill B, and 12+ is Skill A.

3. LABYRINTH

The walls of this place are stone, with ivy creeping up them. The open sky above exposes the maze to the ever-changing weather, and the gentle breeze that flows through the walls brings with it a slight stench of the city. This looks like a great place to get lost.

While the character was being evaluated in 2, the mages indoors were preparing themselves for the casting of several illusion spells, which will confront the applicant at various points during the maze. The illusions do not move from their original spots; the players will, most likely, run into them anyway. Each skill level receives a different set of monsters; the higher the skill, the harder the illusionary monster. The letters at the tops of the columns denote the illusions' locations within the maze. (See chart on page 52).

Statistics:

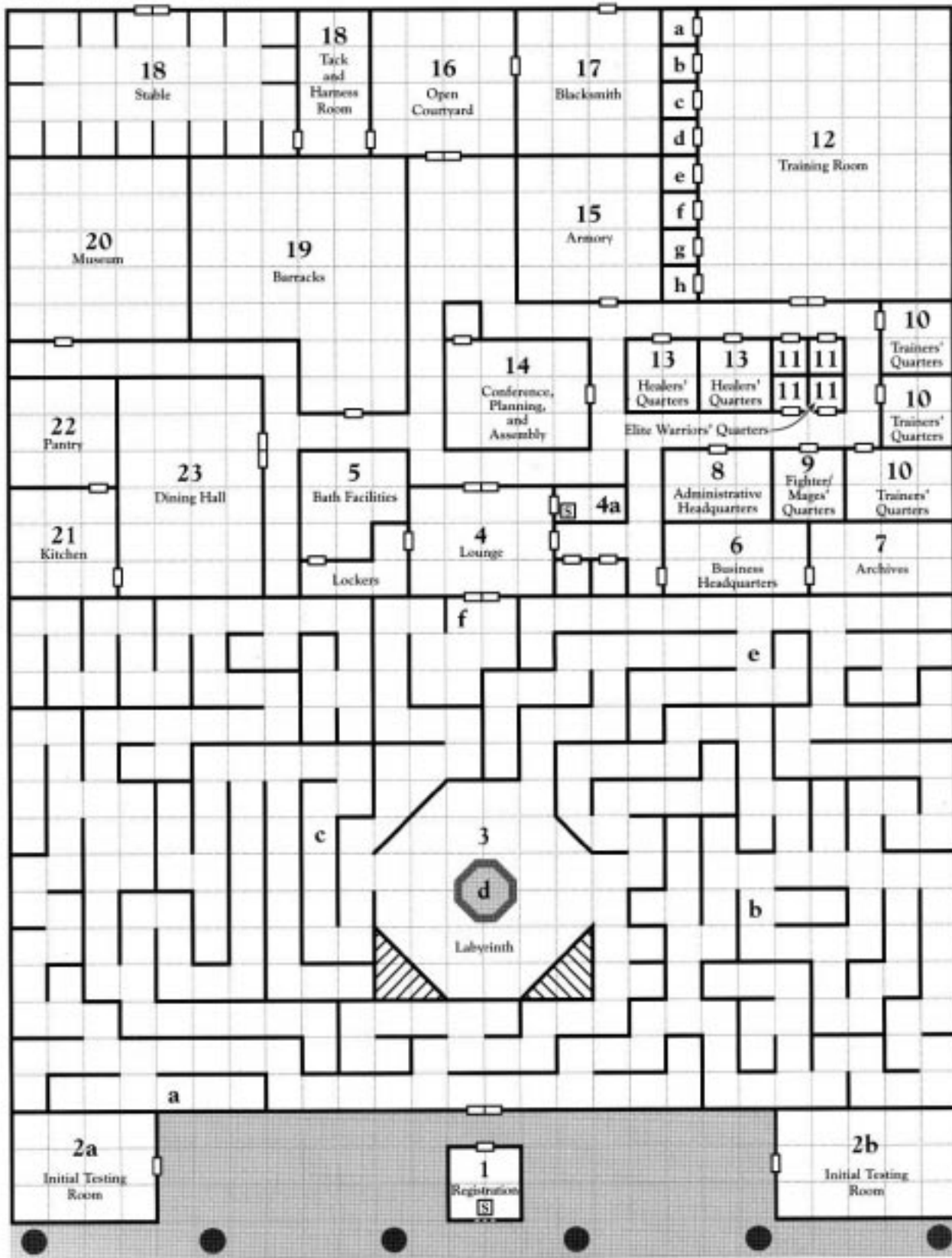
Each of these illusionary creatures is a perfect specimen of its type, and has full hit points. The damage inflicted by these creatures lasts only so long as the illusions are active. If a character disbelieves the illusions, he must re-try the simulation at a later date; the Guild does not want warriors who constantly look for loopholes while in training. If the character goes down, through simple bad luck or lack of sufficient skill, the Guild will still admit him. If he tried to surrender, on the other hand, they will not.

3D. CENTRAL FOUNTAIN

You have emerged from the maze into a large, sweet-smelling fountain area. The trickle of flowing water would bring you peace, and you are almost tempted to relax here. The only problem is that monster facing you.

When not in use for simulation purposes, the fountain is a favorite place to relax and socialize.

The Warriors' Guild



● Column
 — Door

□ Secret Trap Door
 - - - Barred Window

One square = 10'





	a	b	c	d	e	f
Skill D (lowest)	Goblin	Hobgoblin	Human fighter level 1	Lizard man	Gnoll	Bugbear
Skill C	Bugbear	Human fighter level 6	Elven warrior level 6	Ogre	Displacer beast	Minotaurs
Skill B	Minotaur	Human fighter level 9	Troll	2 Owlbears	Umber hulk	2 Ogre magi
Skill A (highest)	Yaggol	Human wizard level 12	Hill giant	2 Aurak draconians	Skeleton warrior	Death knight

4. LOUNGE/GAMBLING ROOM

Entering through the oaken doors, you feel your wounds vanish. Looking down, you see the grime and blood of battle fade from your body, although the sweat which you worked up is still very much with you. In this room are several comfortable looking couches, a card table in the corner, and chairs scattered about the room. A pall of tobacco smoke hangs throughout the room, the smell clinging to your clothing.

There are several people sitting in this room, ignoring your presence. One, a minotaur, absent-mindedly strokes his gleaming battle-axe as he eyes his cards. His human opponent is fingering his own cards, obviously trying to decide which to play. On one of the couches, an elf is attempting to engage an attractive human woman in witty conversation. She looks bored.

These are all trainers from the Guild who have nothing better to do on this day; most of the members are out on some quest or another. The trainers will not attack unless attacked, and will continue to ignore the characters unless the characters are very insistent on being seen.

Minotaur (Krantok): F10, AC 3, hp 87, #AT 5/2, Dmg 1-8+6 (battle axe, specialized), AL LE

Human male (Bilton): F8, AC 4, hp 65, #AT 3/2, Dmg 1-8 (long sword), AL LN

Elven male (Thereastril): F9, AC 1, hp 73, #AT 3/2, Dmg 1-6 (short sword), AL NG

Human female (Veliana): F11, AC 1, hp 96, #AT 5/2, Dmg 2-8+5 (bastard sword)

4A. READING ROOM

This room, much more quiet than the lounge, is as well-appointed. In addition, there are bookshelves for the more introspective (containing works mostly on weapons and warfare, although the occasional romance novel may be found as well), and the musty smell of old books fills the air. The plants seem to be well-loved, for there is a definite trail to the fern in the southwest corner.

The fern hides the entrance to the secret tunnel from area 1. It may be accessed by sliding the fern aside and pulling the trap door open.

5. BATH FACILITIES

Passing through the stench of the locker room, you emerge into the slippery-tiled floor of the bath area. The steam in the air carries a faint hint of incense, which seems to be masking the odor of the bodies of those who have been here before.

The central bath is roughly 15' x 15', the water looking remarkably clean and inviting. Over in the corner is the steam bath, where a slave boy ladles water over searing rocks.

If any character should move faster than a walk in this area, he must make a Dexterity check or slip and fall, taking 1 point of damage.

6. BUSINESS OFFICE

There are two minotaurs tending toward fat and old age sitting at separate desks here.

The minotaurs (F5, AC 6, hp 47, 40 #AT 1, Dmg 1-8, AL LE) can help the character with whatever problem he may have regarding the Guild. In addition, they have contacts with the government, and thus will be able to receive help for a major problem in the area. They take care of membership fees (50 stl per year), special training requests, and the various other matters regarding the guild.

As well, in a hidden safe in the wall are the accumulated valuables of the Guild. There is 15,000 in stl, 10,000 stl worth of gems, and 3,000 silver.

7. ARCHIVES AREA

This is where the Guild stores all of its records. The air is dry and dusty, broken only by the hacking cough of the elven archivist.

All of the files of Guild membership, reports of treasures seen and battles fought, evaluations of

fighters' prowess—it's all here. Any file that could contain any items of interest to fighters is probably contained within this room. The elf is defenseless and old, and is only good for revealing locations of files within the room. If attacked, he dies.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE QUARTERS

This room is shared by the minotaurs and the elven archivist. The trunks contain a total of 1,000 stl, and the elf's trunk contains 7 *potions of longevity*. This may cause a character to speculate as to the elf's true age. The elf will not tell, even under pain of torture, as he does not remember. Occasionally he will speak of events of over 2,000 years ago in the first person, but this is the only clue.

The footlockers reveal a *dagger +2*, *bracers of defense AC 4*, and a *rope of climbing*. There is nothing else of value in here, as the minotaurs do not believe that they are entitled to a richer life simply because they are too weak to train anyone.

9. FIGHTER/MAGES' QUARTERS

These are the quarters of the three elven fighter/mages. They are richly appointed, with valuable artworks decorating the walls. The three beds in here look very comfortable. Those who live here seem to want for nothing.

The fighter/mages (F9/W10, AC -1, hp 50, 47, 45, #AT 3/2, Dmg 1-8, offensive and illusion spells) are rather haughty individuals, and, unlike the administrative minotaurs, feel that their status requires a comfortable lifestyle. They look down on all the mere trainers (who hate the elves, but recognize that the elves run a valuable simulation). The elves are often found in here if they are not casting their spells on someone in the maze, for the rest of the Guild offends their artistic sensibilities. They carry their spellbooks and magical items with them at all times. These include chain +4(3), +3 long swords(3), and a ring of invisibility (1).

10. TRAINERS' QUARTER

This room is rather spartan, holding two beds and two footlocker. There is nothing of value on the walls, but there is a definite sense of personality to this room.

There is only 1,000 stl total in the footlockers. Otherwise, they contain only clothes, as the valuable weapons and items have been placed into room 15.

11. ELITE WARRIORS' QUARTERS

There is nothing of value in these rooms.

12. TRAINING HALL

This room is large, with a high ceiling, from which dust motes drift lazily to the floor. The room still smells of sweat and exertion, and there are frequent bloodstains on the semi-padded mats covering the floor. On the westward wall, there are several doors, labeled from a to g. The key to these letters lies on a sign reading:

- a-c. Masseurs
- d-f. Healers' Offices
- g. Practice Weapons
- h. Practice Armor

The sub-rooms contain everything the signs say they do. The healers can use their skill (and the occasional potion) to right any harm done on the practice floor (or in the wilds, for that matter).

The practice weapons are all blunted, heavier-than-average weapons which still inflict some damage. Treat them as clubs, doing 1-6 hp. The armor is old, mistreated junk, but it is functional, and is enough protection against the blunted weapons.

13. HEALERS' QUARTERS

The antiseptic smell of this room tells you that something vile is here. Upon closer inspection, you see that it is actually the healers' quarters. There are many vials and glass jars along the walls, and there are forms lurking within the murk of some of them.

There are three potions of extra-healing on the shelf, hidden among the various experiments being conducted by the healers. If the players sample any of the contents, they must make a save vs. poison or suffer 1-10 points of damage. If (5% chance) they taste the healing potion, they will recover their lost hit points, as per a usual healing potion. There is nothing else of value in the room.

14. CONFERENCE ROOM

A long oaken table dominates the room. There are 12 comfortable chairs along the length of the table. This room appears not to have been used for some time, as evidenced by the coat of dust on the table.

This room is used for conferences of the Elite Warriors and other Guild heads. The small room



to the north contains cleaning supplies, long unused.

15. WEAPONS AND ARMOR STORAGE

Rack upon rack of gleaming weapons greet your eyes as you enter this room. Armor is carefully hung over on the eastern wall, and the entire place, smelling of oiled leather and weapon oil, gives the impression of care and love.

This room is the depository of all the weapons that have any value in the Guild. The stout door to this room is kept locked at all times, except when both of the administrators (who are the only ones who have keys) are present. Everyone entering this room is watched like a hawk to prevent theft.

The room contains weapons and armor of all description, most of them at least slightly magical. There are 4 very powerful weapons and armor (+5), about twelve of lesser dweomer (+4), and many more of the less-enchanted items.

16. OPEN COURTYARD

17. BLACKSMITH

The heat of the forge nearly forces you from the door when you enter. Within is a glowing hearth, and the din seems to split your skull. There is a dwarf at the forge, swinging a mighty hammer with incredible force. Finished weapons line the walls, as well as other, non-violent items. He does not initially pause as you enter, but acknowledges your presence with a curt nod of his head. After a few more head-straining bashes of the hammer, he sets down his hammer and shouts, "What can I do for you?"

The dwarf, Aracknick Thunderbrow (F8, AC 7, hp 60, #AT 3/2, Dmg 1-4 +6, AL NG), is nearly deaf from the constant pounding on the anvil, and the players will have to shout to be understood. He can fix any metal item the players have within a day or two, and can even repair magical items, although this takes him quite a while longer.

The weapons on the wall are quite good, displaying excellent workmanship. They can fetch a price of up to twice the value for an ordinary item of that type on the open market.

18. STABLES/TACK AND HARNESS ROOM

The stable is a typical stable, and is able to hold 15-20 horses. Only eight are here right now.

The tack and harness room is also typical, although its contents can provide trappings for those who wish to make a grand impression.

19. BARRACKS/SLEEPING QUARTERS

Since the occupants are currently missing, there is nothing of value in here.

20. MUSEUM

The museum is an old standby of every Guild in the League. It contains the weapons and items of famous adventurers from the Guild, as well as memorial plaques commemorating their deeds. This particular museum is quite barren, but it is well-kept.

Although no-one here knows it, the sword that ostensibly belonged to the not-so famous adventurer Gilbert the Thorn is, in fact, the legendary sword of Kristophus. It is a +5 *vorpal bastard sword*, and bears the royal insignia of the house of Kristophus, evident should anyone examine it closely.

The displays are rigged with a variety of alarms, all of which will sound should anyone touch one of the pieces.

21. KITCHEN

This sweltering area is the focus of much activity. The cook, who looks very tired indeed, shouts orders to his apprentices, who scurry in and out of the room with mad abandon.

The cook (F3, AC 7, hp 17, #AT 1, Dmg 1-4 (cleaver), AL LN) is a harried, beefy man. He does not like to be interrupted in his work, and will harangue any who enter the kitchen without his permission. His urchins will flock to attack any who attack him, flooding the attackers and hampering their blows.

22. FOOD STORES

23. DINING AREA

There is nothing special here.

NEW MAGICAL ITEMS

THE AXE OF THE EMPERORS

This weapon was first carried by the ogres in the Age of Dreams when the Irda began to split from the main ogre race. Irix, the leader of the evil ogres, knew that he would have to rely on powerful magic in order to subdue the Irda. With great supplications to the Gods of Evil and the castings of mighty spells, the Axe was formed. Irix used the Axe to subdue his rivals and set himself up as the unchallenged emperor of the ogres. He then set out to destroy the Irda.

After several titanic battles in which the Axe played a decisive role, it was captured by the Irda. They attempted to destroy the evil thing through their mystical workings. Upon completion, the Axe vanished. Unbeknownst to the Irda, the Axe was not destroyed, but rather had hurtled itself to the continent of Ansalon, where it was discovered by the green dragon Ymrald, who collected it for her hoard.

She spent much time trying to discern its powers, but at last gave up in frustration. She passed it on to her eldest child, who, in time, let her child inherit the artifact. After several thousand years, the Axe became more a curiosity to be admired by the dragons for its fine workmanship than for any ostensible powers it might have.

Thus, it came as an almost complete surprise to Ymrald's descendant when a blood-thirsty minotaur ransacked her cavern while she was gone. She returned in time to see the Axe-wielding minotaur try to make an escape. They fought for a time, but, although the dragon scored some excellent hits, she was no match for Ambeoutin.

Much bedraggled, the victor returned to his camp. He and the mage Skythus spent a long night chanting certain rituals over the Axe which would reportedly increase its power. It is unknown whether or not they succeeded in this enchantment, but, when they emerged in the morning, Ambeoutin had full command of the powers of the Axe. He led his people to victory and the eastern lands when the dwarves were destroyed. The last time the Axe was seen was when Ambeoutin sailed off to the East with the (unwilling) Skythus.

Appearance: The Axe of the Emperors is a two-handed, double-bladed axe (2d4/2d6 damage) with a handle of some indeterminate black material and a blade of gleaming adamantite. It is obviously magic, even to the eye untrained in such things. Its haft is wrapped in metal strips, with the base of the Axe carved to resemble a dragon at rest. In its teeth, the dragon holds a sapphire worth 10,000 stl. The other end of the Axe appears like

nothing so much as a phoenix taking flight, its wings the blades and its feathers the serrated edges of the Axe. In its talons, it grasps a ruby of incredible value. Finally, there is a large pearl set at the very tip of the Axe, grasped by a tiny hand.

Powers: The full capabilities of the Axe are unknown, but there have been some indications that the Axe is in fact a living being, which will attempt to dominate any who try to use it (it has a Ego of 17). Only those with ogrish blood have been able to use it, for the Axe causes leprosy in non-ogres who attempt to do so, curable only by a *cure disease*, followed by a *remove curse* spell.

The owner of the Axe can *find traps* at will and *teleport* without error once/month. As well, its major powers are to cause awe in anyone watching (save vs. rods at -4 to overcome this), cause fear to all within a 120' radius at will (save vs. spells at -4 to negate fear), and to *cause serious wounds* by touch (in addition to any damage the Axe might ordinarily do). Finally, it acts as a +3 vorpal weapon, +5 against ogre-kin.

However, to counterbalance these benefits, it causes the wielder to slowly change alignment to lawful evil, which becomes evident to the owner as he gradually attempts to stomp out people he sees as weak. He will realize that the Axe is driving him to evil, and can attempt to be rid of it. This is accomplished by a *remove curse* spell cast on him. However, he must also undertake a quest to cleanse his soul of this evil. The owner will very rarely want to part with the Axe, however, for it grants great power. To get rid of the Axe, the wielder must make a Wisdom check at -4. If he fails, then he cannot attempt to be free of its influence for another month.

Further, it drives its possessor to insanity, causing him to become paranoid. He will trust no one (excepting a few *very* close friends), fearing that they are all seeking to steal the Axe. It also makes him a megalomaniac, and he will demand that anyone who comes within his presence (120' radius) pay tribute to him. This can involve as little as a bow in his direction, as long as it seems sincere.

As well, the Axe requires its possessor to drink the blood of an ogrish child once a month, or else lose 2 points of Constitution.

Finally, the Irda resumed their quest to destroy the Axe once they found that it had not been destroyed by their earlier attempt. Once a month, a band of Irda, one to four in number, will find the holder of the Axe and attempt to take it from him. If successful, they will take it to the center of Hitehkel and try to destroy it by sinking it, along with themselves, in the Burning Sea.



RING OF BRANDING

This magical device was created by the renowned mage Arashtiri of the Imperial League at the request of the Ministry of Law. They wished to have a device that would mark non-minotaur criminals for a long time, an equivalent to the sawing of the minotaur's horns.

Working long, late hours, Arashtiri finally managed to create the *ring*. He knew that the brand had to be in a recognizable shape, and so worked it into the form of the symbol of the League, a stylized version of a minotaur's head. After he had finished the first, Arashtiri began mass-producing *rings of branding*, for the Imperial Champions each needed one in order to impress (so to speak) on the criminal the sign that identified him. The *ring* quickly became an overnight sensation, every champion wanting one with his own personal symbol on it. Although the cost was prohibitive, these men and minotaurs gladly paid the price so that everyone might know who defeated each person by the symbol burned into his flesh.



NEW SPELLS

MAGE SPELLS

Level 2

Signature sigil (Alteration)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 2 rounds

Area of Effect: 1' x 1'

Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the caster to magically inscribe a sign, signature, or picture onto any inanimate material. It was first created by one of the League's mages purely by accident. He was attempting to create an improved version of the wizard mark spell, and came fairly close. However, his version always glows, and the mage does not have the ability to turn it invisible.

Those who know the command word (one devised by the caster of the spell), if within 100' yards, may cause the *sigil* to flare brightly, making

it visible up to a distance of 100 yards during the day, or if necessary, to explode, causing all who are within a 5' radius to suffer 2-12 points of fire damage (save for half damage). This may be used only once, and it leaves a smoking, charred area where the *sigil* formerly lay.

Furthermore, the caster may, on a whim, change the command word. He must first have the *sigil* before him, where he can lay his hands upon it. He then speaks the new command word, and from that point on it is the new one. This process can be repeated as often as necessary. It is, however, somewhat dangerous for the spellcaster, for if someone speaks the command word just before the mage re-words the command, the *sigil* will cause him the damage as described above.

The spell can be destroyed by *dispel magic*.



RUMORS, STORIES, AND ADVENTURE IDEAS

1. Miranda, the Upright Woman of the East Quarter, has a problem. Certain anonymous employees want her body enough to kill for it. This in itself is no problem—it has happened before. This time, however, her employees don't want her alive when they get their hands on her. They are followers of Hith and they think she would make a fine addition to their collection of undead. To that end, they are slowly poisoning her.

She is well aware that she's dying, and she wants to make sure they don't get her body. Since she can't trust anyone in her employ, she enlists the aid of the PCs. For 1,000 stl each, the PCs are to make sure that, when she dies (within a few days), her body makes it to the crematorium and her ashes make it to the urn safe and sound. Sounds easy? It won't be. Because the followers of Hith are planning on mounting a raid to recover her body when she's dead. The PCs had better be well prepared, because Hith will spare little expense to have her.

2. Although the governments of Armach and the League are technically under truce, the elves and the minotaurs do not usually see eye to eye on most matters. As a matter of fact, the exact border of Armach and the League is currently under dispute by the people who live and work in the area. The PCs, traveling in the area, are approached by both factions with employment offers. The humans and minotaurs want to push the border further south, and will pay the PCs to **persuade** the elves to leave. The elves are content with the borders the way they are. They are aware of the minotaurs' plans, and will try to hire the PCs to eliminate this troublesome village. If the PCs refuse either commission, both groups will be more than a little irritated, and will probably take steps to remedy their irritation.

3. There is a mountain in the Sikoni Range (in the Conquered Lands) which is rumored to have mystical powers; namely, if one should stand at its utmost pinnacle and raise his arms to the heavens, he will be blessed with youthful life for the next hundred years. One of the well-placed noble minotaurs, a Count Keslak, is feeling his years, and offers to exchange some political favors to the PCs for their company to the Mountain. The difficulty lies in the fact that the Conquered Lands are not yet completely safe for a minotaur to ravel in just yet, and Keslak is not exactly what one might call a popular noble in the area. As a matter of fact, there will probably be some people who would like to take a shot at Keslak. Although Keslak has his own private little army, he does not want to give them the danger pay bonus that he would be obligated to give if they were accompany him. It would be obvious that he was somebody of importance if he

were to travel with an army, and in the Conquered Lands, being important is inviting trouble. Moreover, he is not anxious to have many people know that he attempting this trip, for he does not want to take the risk that the story might spread that he attempted the trip and the mountain refused him.

What the Count does not know is that one of his slave advisors is, in reality, a spy for the Thenolites, who would like nothing better than to see the League thrown into the chaos Keslak's death would bring. Thus, he has passed the details of the Count's trip to his masters, and they have arranged to send a team of assassins to meet Keslak along the way. If the party accepts Keslak's invitation and succeeds in protecting him from the dangers of the assassins, the Conquered Lands, and the interesting effects the mountain uses to test supplicants, they will have a powerful ally for life. Further, he will be young, and thus able to protect their interests that much longer. If they refuse, they will have an equally powerful enemy. Of course, if they succeed in escorting Keslak to the mountain and back, there is always the possibility that nobody will accept the young Keslak as the real thing, and will instead drive him away from Senate and home . . .

4. Leylas the Staff has been hired by some anonymous person to bring back one of the PCs, dead or alive. While recuperating after one of their adventures, they catch wind of their imminent demise, and must do something to forestall it. This story might be a rumor, or might be the truth. What the PCs do is up to them, but if it is real, they had better do some quick thinking. The DM must make sure they know of his reputation.

5. It is rumored that Ambeoutin himself lies in a tomb somewhere in the Conquered Lands, the Axe of the Emperors by his side, with the lich Skythus standing over his body. Of course, there are those who claim that Ambeoutin never died, but instead lies in a stupor, waiting until the minotaurs have achieved a level of glory sufficient to warrant a true leader. When that moment comes, they claim, Ambeoutin will once again return, wielding his mighty *Axe*, and lead the minotaurs to their destiny.

The PCs, either out of greed or altruism, must search for the "tomb" of Ambeoutin, destroy his remains, and cause the *Axe* to shatter. Whether or not the legend holds any truth is, of course, entirely up to the DM!

6. The humans have a legend somewhat similar to this. Ever since Kristophus vanished, the humans of Southern Hosk have been sinking lower and lower into degradation. When they have become truly pitiful, then a descendant of Kristophus will





come forth, bearing Kristophus's sword, to lead his people from the muck and mire, as Kristophus himself did so many years before. Needless to say, the government of the League is not pleased with this, and has devoted hundreds of minotaurs to finding and destroying the descendants of Kristophus, his sword, and anything else associated with him. A member of the party might be descended from Kristophus, or have important knowledge on where that descendant is.

7. The party stumbles on a plot to assassinate an important human Senator, and must act to save him from the assassins, or they will be set up to take the blame for it. The main problem is that Senator Gerlais is an implacable foe of adventuring parties in general, for they cannot be taxed for their treasure. Furthermore, he is jealous of the fascination that adventurers hold for young children, and is a leading proponent of a law that would completely outlaw anything that glorifies the adventuring life.

When the adventurers approach Gerlais with their story, he is immediately suspicious, suspecting them of trying to dupe him so that they themselves might kill them. He calls his guards on them, and the party is forcibly removed from his presence. So how exactly do they go about protecting him? They had better figure out fast, because Gerlais is due to be killed within the next two days.

8. The characters, relaxing in Thera, happen to arrive just in time to catch one of the seasonal attractions—an earthquake. Hearing rumors about the fanatics who constantly harp on the dangers of living in Thera, the party may decide to investigate the truth of the rumors by interviewing some of the fanatics directly.

The characters might be in for a bit of a surprise when they hear the story that dwarves are responsible for the earthquakes. After all, dwarves have no love for the minotaurs' society, especially that part of it which they despise as decadent and weak, and the dwarves might decide to rid an otherwise passable society of its detritus by sparking the earthquake. If the PCs choose to investigate further, they may find the truth of the matter—either the dwarves are responsible for the tremors, or it is a natural occurrence. The choice is left to the DM.

9. Alternatively, the PCs could investigate stories that a mad (either insane or angry or both) wizard is causing the trouble by the subtle use of spells, using the geologic instability inherent in the ground to destroy the hoi polloi of the League, leaving the people to determine their destinies for themselves. The PCs must decide whether or not to side with him in the destruction of the League and the deaths of countless people in Thera. If the DM does not wish the destruction of the League, he can simply say that most of the important peo-

ple had left town, were visiting the Emperor's villa, or that they simply were not there. The PCs can live with the knowledge that they doomed thousands of people to agonizing deaths, or, if they did not aid the wizard, they might have to face up to the fact that they could have crippled the League, and thus rescued its people from the oppressive yoke of minotaur domination.

10. The characters might encounter one or two of the revolutionary groups hiding in the sewers and catacombs of Kristophan, and be contracted to kidnap the Empress, or some other important (and, more to the point), well-guarded personage. Once they take her (if they should manage to do so), they find that the revolutionaries are actually Hith cultists, plotting to "ransom" the Empress, taking the Emperor's money, while, at the same time, sacrificing her to their dark God. This would throw the Empire in to turmoil, making it easy prey to the Thenolites. The PCs must decide which is the lesser of two evils, Thenol or the League, and choose to save the Empress or not.

11. Although the minotaurs normally disdain crime (at least, they disdain crime in the League, for it harms the League), one particularly ambitious horn-head wishes to gain power in both the overland underworld. Audarius already has taken his family's Senatorial position, and, with his legitimate power, he has established himself as the kingpin of a crime cartel in Morgad. Not content with the proceeds from one city, he is now seeking to dominate the underworld of Kristophan as well. The party, either on its own or from an underworld contact in Kristophan, has become aware of the situation, and must take steps to deal with it, for the survival of the League is at stake, and, for some reason, they are the only ones currently qualified to deal with the situation. In attempting to halt the Senator's drive for conquest, the PCs open themselves to severe molestation by the criminals controlled by Audarius, up to and including assassination.

Furthermore, the PCs can expect no help from the uncontrolled underworld, for the Upright Men of Kristophan are currently engaged in a little war of their own, and disregard any rumors that Audarius is plotting to take over their tiny empires until it is too late. At that point, they are so busy fighting to maintain control of their holdings that they cannot spare any time or help for the PCs.

If the party succeeds in preventing Audarius from taking over Kristophan's underworld, they have earned powerful allies. Likewise, if they fail but survive, Audarius will make sure the remainder of their lives are miserable, and will also consolidate his hold in Kristophan before moving to take over the underworlds in the other Great Cities, where the PCs can attempt to thwart him again. If they fail there, Audarius will, no doubt, become a force in the Empire that will rival that of

the Emperor. And all know that a man of ambition will not be content with merely equal power.

12. The summer solstice has come, and with it, the time for the Imperial Challenge. Lucretian, a minor minotaur Senator, is planning to make a challenge against the Emperor, but he does not want to risk the penalty for losing. Therefore, he takes the PCs into his hire in order for them to figure some way in which he might smuggle decisive magic into the Arena. If caught, they face a possible fight to the death in the Arena. If they win, they will have been instrumental in installing an Emperor on his throne. Will he honor the promise he made to the PCs to give them great treasure? Or will he decide that they are too dangerous to be let loose in his new realm?

13. The wizard Kerayos has decided that the Burning Sea is interfering with his studies, what with it spewing soot and unneeded heat into the air, interrupting his research into climate control spells. Therefore, with the aid of his continental map (drawn by League sailors), he has devised a plan to rid himself of the Great Lava Sea. This involves traveling to the Storm Sea, past Old Aurim, and into the bay near the easternmost Ring Mountains. At the south end of the bay, he proposes to dig a channel that will funnel the Sea's waters into Hitehkel. Although this is a twenty-mile dig, he feels that it is well worth the effort. After all, his magic is at stake! With the aid of a few magical items, and maybe a spell or two, he can complete his trench within six months.

He has not hidden his intentions from anyone, and another mage, one with better credentials in climate, knows that this will disrupt the entire weather pattern for the planet of Krynn, which could lead to something nearly as devastating as the Cataclysm, with even more disastrous effects. He enlists the aid of the PCs and attempts to impress upon them the dire need for them to stop Kerayos. He himself cannot help them, as he has his own magical studies to continue. If they refuse, the doom of Krynn is upon their heads.





DyASTRAV

Children of the Sea



	Standard	Accantus
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Ocean, Temperate	Ocean, Coastal
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any
DIET:	Omnivorous	Omnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11-12)	Average (8-10)
TREASURE:	See below	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Chaotic Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-2	1
ARMOR CLASS:	7	5
MOVEMENT:	12, Sw 12	6, Sw 15
HIT DICE:	2	4
THACO:	19	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	By weapon	1-8/1-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	M (5'-7')	M (5'-7')
MORALE:	Average (8-10)	Steady (11-12)
XP VALUE:	120	650

In the secluded villages, there are people who are not quite people. Their faces betray a hint of the deep attraction the sea holds for them. Legends tell of handsome and beautiful strangers who visit rare humans of Eragala, and the strange offspring of such unions.

Children of the Sea are a separate race, although they must breed with humans to produce offspring. They leave their children with their human parents to be raised. Though humans often look down on them, they also hold these strange individuals in awe. When a Child of the Sea reaches maturity, he or she finally answers the call of the ocean waves, going down deep to live out their lives—except for the occasional tryst with a human.

Children of the Sea look human, but always have at least one feature that gives them away, such as brilliantly green eyes, hair with a green tint, or exceptionally advanced webbing of the fingers and toes. All have an affinity for fish and for the sea.

Combat: Children of the Sea are generally peaceful, but will defend themselves if attacked. They can learn to use any weapon which a human can use, though they prefer harpoons and nets. They will wear armor at the request of their parents (real and adoptive), but never by choice.

Children of the Sea have certain powers over water and the denizens therein. At the age of five, they gain the ability to predict weather in the area around them, and can predict it up to 48 hours in the future with 90% accuracy. At age seven, they gain the ability to summon fish. Once per day, they can cause any fish within 60 yards to come to their location. At age nine, they gain the power to *raise or lower water*, as per the 4th-level priest spell. They use this ability as if they were 7th-level priests. A Child of the Sea uses these innate abilities almost unconsciously, and will use them to aid his adoptive family unless he has not been treated well.

Habitat/Society: After growing up in a human home, Children of the Sea enter the ocean depths and lead a life which is largely solitary and nomadic. They sometimes recall their human childhoods, and crave the companionship they once had, and will venture onto land for a night or two. Children of the Sea are often the result of these visits. Male Children take no part in raising their offspring, although they may occasionally visit to leave a



gift for mother or child. Female Children will return to the ocean to bear their children, and, once the child is born, attempt to leave it with its father or another human family.

Ecology: Children of the Sea are members of human society for part of their lives. When they go off on their own, they live in relative harmony with nature, surviving on fish and plants. While they never kill for sport, they regard sharks as their deadly enemies.

To reproduce, Children of the Sea must mate with humans. They are sterile with one another.

Accantus: If a Child of the Sea is mistreated by his or her adoptive human family, there is a 5% chance that, upon reaching maturity, he or she will become an accantus. Accantus look like other Children of the Sea, and have the same abilities. As they approach maturity, however, they become more strange and wild, almost feral. They will leave their adoptive parents as early as possible, going off to live alone in seaside caves or ocean depths.

In becoming an accantus, a Child of the Sea gains two additional abilities. He can transform his body into water at will, and summon water weards to his side. In watery form, he may strike with his liquid fists for 1-8 points of damage each. Accantus are immune to blunt weapons and take only half damage from edged weapons in this form. In addition, they can alter their shape to any form desired, and may use this ability to slide under doors, through cracks, or any other obstruction that is not waterproof. They can also hide in pools of water undetected.

An accantus may summon one water weird per day (as described in Volume II of the *Monstrous Compendium*) with maximum hit points. Water weards will never attack accantus.

Accantus are seldom seen by humans who live to tell the tale. Evidence of their presence may be found, however—their former family members are often found drowned in their own beds in otherwise dry homes.

Accantus do not mate or reproduce.

Grain Nymph



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Farmland
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional (16)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1-2
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	3
THACO:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	0
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Nil
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	50%
SIZE:	M (5'-6')
MORALE:	Unsteady (7)
XP VALUE:	1,400



Grain nymphs are the cultivated version of their woodland sisters. These too are extraordinarily beautiful, possessing great appeal for most males. They are native to the League of Minotaurs, originally hailing from the farmland areas. They speak the nymph tongue, minotaur, and common (Auric). All grain nymphs can *speak to animals* at will, as well as summon insects (or repel them, depending on the needs of the field). They are also, in every sense of the word, intoxicatingly beautiful.

Combat: Grain nymphs do not fight when confronted by an antagonist. Rather, they attempt to lead the would-be attacker into their domain, the rows of grain. When a grain nymph leads an enemy on such a chase, the pursuer must save vs. spells at -2 or fall under the influence of the nymph. While under the influence, the pursuer behaves exactly as though intoxicated. He weaves, rather than walks. His speech is slurred and incoherent, and his reflexes are exceedingly poor (-4 to hit, -4 to AC). After 2d16 rounds, he must make a check vs. his Constitution. If he fails, he falls into a drunken stupor from which he will not awaken for 1d6 hours. When he does finally wake, he will have a splitting headache and an extreme aversion to loud noises. He will be at -2 to hit and -2 to AC for 1d6 more hours, at which point the influence of the grain nymph wears off.

This, however, assumes that he survives his sleep, for while he sleeps, the grain nymph will call any large farm beasts within a 1 mile radius to attack the sleeper. They will arrive within 10 minutes, and begin biting, kicking, or trampling the offender. The unfortunate soul will wake only after he has sustained 8 points of damage or half his hit points, whichever is less. At this point, he must flee to safety, with the herd animals running close behind. Thereafter, no farm animal (excluding horses) will ever be friendly to that person again, for he has been marked by the nymph. Nothing short of a *wish* can cure this.

A grain nymph can be killed by razing her field, setting it to the torch, or other methods of crop destruction, along with the more conventional method of killing her physically (if one can get close enough to manage that). Since the nymph cannot migrate to another field until the spring, she perishes along with her field.

Habitat/Society: Grain nymphs live only in the fields of farmers who treat their fields with love and care. In return for this care,

the nymph will lavish her bounty upon the grain, causing it to spring full and strong. With a grain nymph in the field, a farmer can double his usual harvest. A field will never suffer the effects of drought or flooding under her care.

All herd animals, especially farm animals, are friendly to a grain nymph, and will do anything for one, including the offering of their own lives. If a nymph is threatened in their presence, they will rush to her defense, until they are either dead or the attacker is driven away.

After the harvest, the grain nymphs sink into the soil of the field to protect it from the chill of the winter. After three years of protecting a field, the nymph will travel to another deserving field. If she does not find such a field within a 50 mile radius, the nymph dies. She cannot return to a field where she has already lain until 10 years have passed.

Occasionally, the nymphs are sought by people desiring to use their powers of drunkenness. If the nymph feels that this would do more harm than good to a seeker, she *charms* him, leads him from the field, and leaves him, slightly befuddled, well away from her area of influence. Otherwise, she grants him his wish, but does not use her full power. This means that the seeker suffers only -2 to hit and AC, and will not fall into the stupor, nor will he suffer the effects when he wakes. This ability makes the grain nymphs actively sought after during times of festival, when the farmers offer sacrifice and make promises to keep the earth in exchange for her presence at a gathering.

Ecology: The grain nymphs arose when the woods in the League's provinces were destroyed in order to make room for farmland. The nymphs were forced to adapt to the new situation or suffer extermination. Thus, they melded with the fields, offering life and bountiful harvest in the fields.

Grain nymphs do not get along well with their woodland counterparts, who consider the grain nymphs stuck-up. The grain nymphs merely see themselves as sophisticated and cultivated. They despise the birds that come and steal the grain, and will drive them away by any means possible.

	Aphelka	Thanic	Ushama
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate Salt Water	Subtropical Fresh Water	Any Salt Water
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare	Very Rare	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Solitary	Pod
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any	Any
DIET:	Carnivore	Omnivore	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11-12)	Very to High (11-14)	High (13-14)
TREASURE:	Nil	Q	Q (U)
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Any Evil	Any Good
NO. APPEARING:	1-2	1	2-12
ARMOR CLASS:	8	7	5
MOVEMENT:	12, Sw 3, jet 12	12, Sw 12	Sw 18
HIT DICE:	4	3	5
THACO:	17	18	16
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1 or 11	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	By weapon or 1 (x8), 1-4	1-6	3-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below	See below	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below	See below	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	Humanoid form: M (5')	Humanoid form: M (5')	Humanoid form: M (6')
MORALE:	Steady (11)	Average (10)	Elite (14)
XP VALUE:	270	270	650

Around the time of the Cataclysm, certain irda underwent a transformation, becoming closely linked with the sea. These irda became the first of the yrasda, an irda-like race, whose members could transform themselves into one of three different sea creatures. Why these irda voluntarily underwent such changes is unknown, although some sages speculate that they were sea-faring irda who broke from their people to live permanently on and in the sea.

Like irda, yrasda are shapeshifters, though each sub-race specializes in a single animal form, and can assume no other. Aphelka may take the form of squid, thanic may become a vicious and disgusting carp-like fish, and ushama can transform into killer whales (orca).

In their humanoid forms, yrasda look much like standard irda, with a slender build, silver eyes, and drooping eyelids. Thanic tend to have skin coloration of a deep sea green, while ushama have midnight blue skin, and aphelka can have any tone in between.

They are graceful and possess beautiful voices, but are not as peaceful as their irda antecedents. Aphelka are generally harmless, though they will fight to defend themselves. Thanic are vicious and aggressive predators, while ushama kill only what they need to eat.

Combat: On land, yrasda will fight with weapons, if possible, for they have lost their spell casting abilities. Ushama prefer swords, thanic prefer a dagger (hopefully in the back of their opponent), and aphelka maces. If they enter combat in the water, they will assume their animal forms.

In squid form, aphelka attack with their sharp beaks for 1-4 hit points of damage. In addition, they can attack with as many as eight tentacles for 1 point of damage each. Each tentacle which hits grasps the aphelka's opponent, constricting for 1-2 points of



damage in subsequent rounds. A victim can free himself from a tentacle with a successful open doors roll. Otherwise, he will be somewhat disabled, being unable to cast spells and at -1 to attack rolls.

A thanic attacks with its bite, inflicting 1-6 points of damage with its sharp teeth.

Ushama also attack with their bite, although they fight only for food or if attacked first.

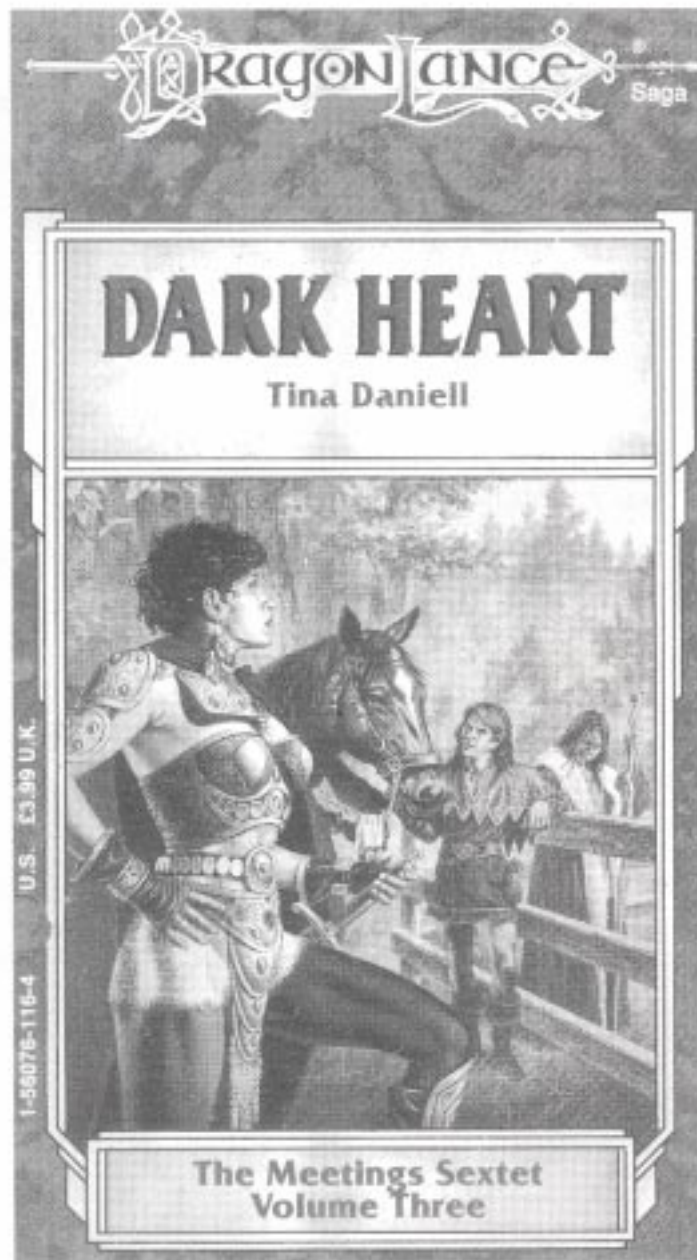
Habitat/Society: Yrasda are found throughout the oceans between Ansalon and Taladas. They seldom have lairs, preferring a nomadic existence, though aphelka and ushama will sometimes settle near a seacoast for a short while. Thanic are hostile to other humanoid life, but aphelka will sometimes enter into trade agreements with human, minotaur, or irda communities.

Ushama tend to be quite friendly toward other intelligent beings. They travel about in their tribe-like pods, and will usually aid any troubled traveler they find. Occasionally a pod or a single ushama will form a bond with an individual or even an entire town. Once such a bond is formed, only death will break it. Though the ushama will continue to wander the seas, it will always return to the town or person with whom it is bonded.

Ecology: Like irda, yrasda try to live in harmony with nature. However, they recognize themselves as part of nature, and will kill unintelligent animals (particularly fish) for food. Thanic are less concerned with their impact on nature than are other yrasda, and will frequently cause problems for fishermen by eating or driving away fish from a certain area. Yrasda are capable of making trade items from coral, shells, and pearls. Their most valuable trade item, though, is information regarding the fish population, sea currents, and weather patterns. Such information will often be traded for news of the world outside the waves or for part of a fisher's catch.



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BY COLIN McCOMB

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ISBN 1-56076-150-4



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Cambridge CB1 3LB
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\$9.95 U.S.

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