

- Empire of the Petal Throne -

MYSTERIES OF THE CRIMSON CHAMBER

An adventure set in the world of Tékumel by **Erick N. Bouchard** © January 2001(en_bouchard@hotmail.com).

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Based on the **Empire of the Petal Throne** role-playing game © M.A.R. Barker 1984.

- Note: Some of this material might be considered offensive to minors. Reader discretion is advised. -

Adventure Synopsis

This is an introduction adventure intended for players and characters new to Tékumel and the role-playing games set in this fantastic world, *Empire of the Petal Throne* and the later *Swords & Glory* and *Gardásiyal*. It is meant for three to half a dozen new heroes using whatever game mechanics suits you most, though the *Empire of the Petal Throne* role-playing game and the *Sourcebooks* #1 and #2 has been used as a reference for this adventure. Game characteristics have been provided only for the EPT original game but adaptation to more recent systems (Gardásiyal, GURPS, etc.) should be fairly easy.

Awakening in a crimson vault of the ancient, pre-cataclysmic Terran civilisation, the characters shall be manipulated by a godling into opposing a Hlüss colony excavating atomic weapons from the Ancient Times. The Hlüss a preparing for a full scale offensive upon the human civilisations of Tékumel. As involuntary "hosts" of the memories of soldiers from eastern Tsolyánu sent to uncover a secret Underworld cache, the characters will be introduced to the glamorous Legion of a Yán Kórani refugee, face the plans of depraved amazons, an assassin and a mad Mihállí, then invade an archaic vault of the Times of Darkness and (hopefully) prevent the Hlüss from wrecking havoc upon the Five Empires of Tékumel with a nuclear device, discover some of the Inner Mysteries of Ksárul and survive throughout this perilous adventure.

Introduction

In the mists of utmost confusion, eyelids heavy with slumber, the characters awaken in a strange, scarlet metallic room straight out of a retro science-fiction décor to find themselves dazzled by deeply confused memories. Flickering lights abound, surrounding a set of metal "coffins" from which the characters just woke up. Before them, on cold tables lighted by an eerie crimson light, lie the vivisected bodies of humans whose brains have been surgically extracted from their skulls, floating in a transparent container of bubbling water through which fluctuating cables have been attached. An immense, dark screen hangs like a monstrous insect eye on one of the four convex walls. No visible issues, though.

What is this place? Who are we? Half-forgotten memories evoke scenes from a surrealistic, overactive hive of a city where mechanical automatons, flying vehicles and brightly-clad pedestrians move in rapid motion. Their panicked faces betray their profound dread. Strangely, these memories are superseded by others from a more primitive epoch, where colourful armies bearing blue banners walk on the surface of a strange, alien world. It seems like the characters have awakened from a deep slumber which lasted a very, very long time...

Strangers in a strange land

The characters have awakened from a sleep much longer they might believe: they have laid in their "sleep coffins" for about 60 000 years, just after the fall of the Terran civilisation during which Tékumel fell into a parallel space. As members of the technical elite, their lives were spared from destruction in this entirely automated high-tech Crimson Chamber, sole survivors (or so it seems) of the fall of the ancient world.

They have slept ever since, unaware of the rebirth of the Tsolyáni empire, until Grugánu, the Cohort of the divine Ksárul, accidentally stumbled upon their pseudo-graves and found a way to manipulate them for its own, mysterious plans.

These visitors from the past remember little of their previous lives in their drugged state, let alone anything clear about Téकुmel. They do remember vague everyday landscapes and moments of what seems to be a high-tech, bourgeois life in a retro futuristic space civilisation, but nothing precise, not even their names or identities. They do, however, have vague remembrance of one another though not for any precise reason. More troubling are their parallel memories of a military life in a baroque, militarist empire where thousands of faithful obeyed the commands of an almighty sovereign set on a marvellous, emerald petal throne.

Unbeknown to them, the divine shard of Grugánu possessing the Miháli's psyche has psychically activated the automated computer supervising the survival bunker to run its "emergency adaptation program" upon the sleeping survivors. Robots set out on the outside world to capture "indigenous life", dissect their brains and transfer their life memories into the unconscious of their protégés to allow their survival in an unknown, presumably hostile world. Hence, the characters share both fragments of their previous lives and from their "hosts" as well, suffering for a time from an artificial *split personality disorder* deeply confusing to their new, awakened selves. As time goes on, the Miháli (though it might plan to eliminate the characters if it believes they could become too much "embarrassing witnesses") has programmed the computer to make them forget their technological selves and memories and to fully endorse their new, Tsolyáni identities whose memories shall become clearer by each passing day. Neither the gods of Stability nor those of Change want Téकुmel's inhabitants to possess knowledge that could menace their own supremacy...

The vault of sleep

After some time scrolling through their confused minds, the characters should logically explore their new surroundings. They'll find the "giant's eye" (i.e. the computer screen) to be most responsive to request addressed in the ancient Engsvanyáli language, which the characters still speak. The computer could provide them general, though not extensive, on their immediate exterior and surroundings, though it would not know the Tsolyáni names for the environment. Its memory banks have been largely erased by the Cohort's intervention, not wishing the characters to know too much about the Times of Darkness and before. As such, most answers would be limited to hearing the machine's mechanic, strident voice repeat "THIS-INFORMATION-IS-NOT-AVAILABLE".

The characters seem to be in a simple underground vault set in the Pán Cháka forests (hexagon 3603), near the Páchi Léi reserves, some 100 *Tsan* (133 kilometres) from the Temple of Vimúla and 250 *Tsan* (330 kilometres) from the city of Thúmissa. The outer atmosphere is both breathable and safe (of course), though no traces of advanced civilisation are visible anywhere, except for a strange crater burrowed hundreds of meter in solid rock, some distance from the seashore. Though the bunker originally maintained a satellite connection and three mobile, exploration robotic units, these seem to be unreachable since a few hours before the characters' awakening (due to the Miháli's interference). The Crimson Chamber's interior contains but the sleeping coffins, fresh corpses (one for every character) and some basic supplies such as torch-lights, electronic cooking materials and green and brown, latex camouflage exterior suits fit for most sizes. No weapons, food nor Eyes seem available, as the computer has been ordered to destroy them 37 hours before the characters' wake. Activating the door is possible only from the inside (though it can be left open), as no character knows the required security passwords.

Far south from the Crimson Chamber stands a majestic, marine Hlüss hive hosting about 300 of these dangerous predators. Through the vault's screen, it would appear on micro-tectonic maps as a deep, artificial depression in the underground bordering the seashore, where lies the enigmatic crater that the characters might have discovered by interrogating the Crimson Chamber's computer. Unfortunately, a raiding Hlüss party might uncover the open vault's location through psychic investigation, resulting in the destruction of the computer and (hopefully not) a full-fledged assault on the characters.

Memories of Yesterday

Any of our heroes' memory of the times before the long sleep are blurred and confused... To quote Professor M.A.R. Barker from the Blue Room message board:

"(...) The few myths and stories that survive tell of a single powerful interstellar state in this region of Humanspace: humans dominated it. The aggressive, curious, avaricious, and generally "up and at 'em" nature of our species made it possible for humankind to rule (or at least strongly influence) many species who were older and perhaps wiser than we. Humanspace included other citizens as well: the Pe Choi (whose scientific abilities had made interstellar travel feasible), the Ahoggya, who built great, boxy, bumbling merchant ships that bought stuff that other races treated as vile waste; the Shen, whose own fleets ranged far from their home system; the Pachi Lei, Swamp Folk, and Hlaka, whose cultures were smaller and less technological, but who had the capability to take Pe Choi technology and construct their own merchant fleets' the Tinaliya, who were intensely curious but who were so logical that they never developed an aesthetic or spiritual understanding at all. etc. Still other races may also have existed within this sphere. including some that were hostile to Humankind."

" (...) The pre-Tékumel form of government is hinted at in one myth-cycle as a sort of vast bureaucracy operating under a council of Archons (this is not the name in their language(s), of course). Each planet had its governing structure, but all joined together in this single great council (held at different locales from time to time), whenever need demanded. There were (and probably still are) spheres of power other than Humanspace scattered across the galaxy, with still more existing on other Planes that can be reached by nexus point gateways from our own space. Some of these species were extremely hostile to humans and their allies; a few hated the Pé Choi and considered humanity as little more than Pé Choi puppets. Several races preferred total isolation and blocked off access to their worlds with deadly technological devices. A few also sent small, secret groups to investigate and report on humanity's progress: e.g. the Shunned Ones. It is not known how many of these spy missions still survived on Tékumel after the planet and its solar system were abducted into the pocket dimension in which it still exists. "

The corpses and the remembrance

The corpses (one for each player) all seem vaguely, freakishly familiar, as the characters seem to identify them to long forgotten acquaintances or distant relatives... Of average size and built, most could be classified as ethnic "American Indians" or perhaps caramel-skinned "Indo-Aryans", with straight black hair and chiselled features. Their elaborate and colourful costumes seem to identify them as soldiers in a rich and civilised army (minor infantrymen the Legion of Serquí). Ignoring their open skullcaps and missing brains (surgically removed), they bear no injuries. Armour and weapons seem somewhat battered, made of tarnished bronze, but certainly usable.

After a few days or so, the characters' memories should unfold some knowledge of the powerful empire of Tsolyánu: a totalitarian military despotism ruled by the "divine" Emperor of the Petal Throne from the Golden Tower of Avanthár, served by thousands of fanatical soldiers. This highly hierarchic, xenophobic society is decomposed into a hierarchy of feuding clans. They vaguely remember a recent succession crisis as well as a war with a more archaic monarchy named Yán Kór. With time, the heroes should remember their past existences as a detachment of soldiers from the Legion of Serquí sent on mission to investigate the whereabouts of an Underworld secret weapon depository discovered in some secret texts by the priestesses of Dilinála from the city of Thráya. Their knowledge of Tsolyáni language and customs would become more precise, allowing them to take on the identities of those slaughtered by the Hlüss... likewise loosing most of their memories of their past lives. Presumably the players will choose to go on according to their "past lives" memories, their only link to their actual state. It seems not clear *why* they have woken up but an exploration of the outside world seems mandatory, if only for food.

The ancient scrolls of Suté Fán hiDalérü

Four months ago, nine adventurers sent on mission by the temple of Dilinála discovered strange scrolls in the ruins of Ngála, beloved city of the goddess Dlámelish. These scrolls, guarded in the sealed tomb of Suté Fán hiDalérü, a long dead scholar from Púrdinal who dedicated his life to Ksárul as a member of the Ndálu Clan faction, which has just been recently translated to Tsolyáni from the ancient Engsvanyáli language, described the localisation of another secret vault from the Times of Darkness where some fabulous engine of destruction laid hidden from mortal sight, protected by immense metal gates and powerful, inhuman guardians constructed from shining metal. Such weapon, featured high-ranking officers of the Legion of Kaikáma of Béy Sü, could easily fall in the wrong hands, providing a most powerful too for Baron Áld of Yán Kór to menace the hegemony of Tsolyánu. As such, all information regarding this discovery was to remain secret, save for a small detachment of warriors whose dedication to the Empire of the Petal Throne could not be doubted. It did not, as many secret societies (among which the Inner Circle of Ksárul, the clergy of Hriháyal and the traitorous Lord hiDeqobé acting as an agent for the Outer One from inside the official Ksárul hierarchy) soon discovered the ploy and sent their own agents after the artefact.

As the only "officially mandated" representative of the Toslyánu empire, Lord hiKübushá, an officer (paradoxically Yán Kórani) whose hatred for Baron Áld is boundless, led this force of some 50 soldiers from the Legion of Serqú into the Pán Cháka protectorate, where the vault should lie according to the scrolls. Their adventure led to the demise of a few sentinels whose memories have been transfused into the sleeping minds of mysterious survivors from the mythical Times of Darkness.

As said before, this information seems to have leaked (despite all precautions) to two powerful enemies of the state: the xenophobic Hlüss and some highly perverted Hriháyal rebels from the Legion of Kaikáma of Béy Sü (4th cohort of the 36th Imperial Medium Infantry). This leak is not a coincidence: as the vault's location is known by the Gods of Stability to hoard some deep secrets regarding the original dimension shift of Tékumel, they have no wish for this information (nor the power of the nuclear bomb) to fall into mere mortals' hands. As such, Ksárul seems to have sent is Cohort, Grugánu, to impregnate the mind of a Miháli shape-changer and manage for both the Hlüss, the rebels and visitors from the ancient past to compete for the priceless relic. As such, conflict would be inevitable, leading to the destruction of both the artefact and the forbidden mysteries. How could the Gods of both Stability and Change let the loss of some human lives get in the way of maintaining their hold over Tékumel?

The Hláka Eyrie

Soon after leaving the crimson vault, the characters will stumble upon a sterile land of grey hills and dense forests north, south and west. Piercing shrieks lead them to a small hill under which lies small cave where strange creatures are ongoing a curious mortuary ritual...

Whining and weeping, about ten Hláka are devouring the corpses of half a dozen of their fallen against a Feshénga ("The Many Legged Serpent")'s claws, whose corpse lays down beside the Sákbe road. Armed with spears, the winged, furry creatures seem afflicted by despair by the deaths of their companions. Speaking calmly in Tsolyáni should suffice to keep the Hláka from attacking. Their leader (named Jé'h Ssidu R'óh'lé, aka "He Circles in the Sky with Determination") knows enough of the Tsolyáni language to communicate: Just yesterday evening, their eyrie (whose name is unpronounceable but would translate as "Most Hot and Good-Smelling Sleeping Place") was under attack by some strange metallic, wingless animal with jewel eyes whose burning gaze would drive the Hláka into panic. The eyrie's warrior reacted by a tactical diversion, leading the wicked thing right into the Feshénga's lair. Unfortunately, the ensuing fight cost the lives of seven young Hláka hunters as the beast turned on them after slaying the crimson metal animal.

Witty characters might think of uncovering the mysterious animal's corpse, to find it is really the crimson vault's missing explorer module, a small robot with minimal defensive capabilities but great exploration skills. This erratic behaviour is quite surprising for a machine built for information gathering...

Of course, this is but another of the Miháll's ploy to prevent the characters from learning too much about Tékumel: the robot's circuits have been psychically tampered with, causing a fatal malfunction. "Dissecting" the module could provide the characters with some of its defensive and offensive devices (i.e. perhaps some Eyes and Amulets).

If asked politely, the Hláka could provide the characters with information to the closest human settlement (the Sákbe road to Thumíssa, about 150 kilometres west) or trade some (foul smelling) food against... something. Very convincing characters could manage to enlist one or more Hláka to accompany them in their travels, as these youths have seen little of the world and could be seduced by the promise of adventure, glory and fame.

HLÁKA: " *Hláka are slender, light-boned flyers with leathery wings and greyish or brownish short fur, ranging in height from 1.4 to 1.59m. The head is humanoid, somewhat flattened, with three close-set eyes (often bright blue) beneath a heavy brow ridge; a furry ruff at the sides and back of the head conceals their hearing organs. They possess a powerful prehensile tail which ends in a rapier-like bony blade. Their arms and legs are relatively weak and they hate walking for prolonged distances (...).* "

- M.A.R. Barker, *Tékumel Sourcebook: Swords and Glory*, volume 1.

Hláka scouts (10)

Alignment: Neutral (independent)

AC 5, HD 2 (6 hp), Hit roll: 17 -AC, Special: panic, flight, tail attack (D4 + poison).

The Army and the Giant

Lead by the Hláka or by their own direction sense, the adventures should stumble upon some encounters with the wild fauna of Tékumel while looking for some sign of human civilisation to the west, that is, Sákbe roads to the far west. The Game master should plunge into the depths of creativity to devise some interesting events as well as a few encounters with wildlife, the following table suggesting some creatures a small and ill-equipped party could apprehend.

D8	Creature
1	Chnéh
2	Küni
3	Kurukú
4	Kshéshchal
5	Mnór
6	Khúrga
7	Tsi'il
8	Dnélu

The true leap into action should come after a few days of travel, while the characters' memories of their former lives are slowly dissipating while their departed hosts' become clearer. As they vaguely remember "their" scouting mission ordered by Lord hiKübushá, their encounter with the red and gold warriors of the Legion of Serqú should have come as little surprise, were it not for the brutish beaked, three-eyed giant madly slashing at them in an otherwise tranquil grassland. The giant (a Dzór) is infuriated by this invasion of its territory, attacking any humanoid in sight. The characters should fight for their lives!

Dzór-giant

Alignment: Hostile (independent)

AC 4, HD 6+3 (25 hp), Hit roll: 15 -AC, Special: Night sight (hit +2/-2 according to luminance), Damage +2.

If they survive the skirmish (which is likely, considering the number of opponents against the Dzór), the adventurers might think of using this encounter to their advantage and get Lord hiKübushá on their side. After all, either they wear their crimson latex suits (portraying them as strangers), wear the fallen soldiers' apparel (portraying them as members of the Legion or most likely spies) or are in full nudity (portraying them as lunatics). As they should already know, five days ago, Lord Héri hiKübushá sent a small number of his men as sentinels and has been worrying ever since of their fate. The characters should have a good explanation if they wear their clothes and badges. If not, they'd better be convincing or risk being put to the stake as punishment for impersonating members of the Legion.

Surprisingly, they'll find an ally in Dídh hiErásie (the disguised Mihállí) who will try to convince Lord hiKübushá of their usefulness in infiltrating the secret vault, much to the bewilderment of his follow assassin. Did not auguries from Karakán foretell their meeting with strange travellers speaking in eerie terms? These might know how to penetrate the mysteries of the vault! Young Yísabe Péliith hiAhé, despite her low rank, should encourage the Lord in this way for sheer curiosity about their origins.

- **Lord Héri hiKübushá**

Captain (*Kás*) in the 3rd Cohort of the Legion of Serquí (14th Imperial Heavy Infantry), Lord Héri hiKübushá stands as a dark-skinned Yán Kóriani recently adopted by the Red Sun clan as gratitude for saving the life of many clan members during a skirmish involving Black Ssú. His hatred for Baron Áld (their respective lineage having been at war for centuries) let him to lead a minor in the battle of Srigash Field under the banner of Lord Charikasa hiChuyon, General of The Legion of the Clan of the Standing Stone (2nd Imperial Slingers), after which he was recommended for bravery and acquired citizenship in Tsolyánu. He soon joined the Legion of Serquí, Sword of the Empire, despite his relative "second class citizen" status as an outsider. Tall, square-jawed and stoic, he harbours the uncommon luxury of a full, dark beard. By Tsolyánu standards, this warrior would be labelled a puritan: he has but one wife (for political reasons), fathered eight children, and remains ever faithful and disdains hedonism. He fights with a strangely curved polearm and an oblong shield acknowledging his devotion to Karakán, Lord of Righteous War.

Warrior of VIth Level
Alignment: Stability (Karakán)
APP: 65, CON: 70, DEX: 70, INT: 80, PSI: 30, STR: 55,
AC 4, HD 6+2 (27 hp), Hit roll: 15 -AC.

- **Yísabe Péliith hiAhé**

This beautiful, long-haired lass is both the niece (by wedding) of Lord hiKübushá and the daughter of the traitorous priest, Lord hiDeqobé of the temple Ksárul. A courageous warrior, she has been leading as lieutenant a detachment of the Legion of Serquí's soldiers. She dreams of becoming Lord hiKübushá's second wife, despite her father's clear disapproval for this foreigner: this union seems unlikely, though, considering Héri hiKübushá's moral strictness. Worst of all, the perverted leader of the renegade 4th Cohort of the Legion of Kaikáma of Béy Sü, Lady Guládh hiSsáimen, is most likely to fall under the charm of Yísabe and try to have her (twisted) ways with her at the first occasion...

Warrior of IInd Level
Alignment: Stability (Karakán)
APP: 85, CON: 80, DEX: 60, INT: 70, PSI: 50, STR: 45,
AC 4, HD 2 (9 hp), Hit roll: 19 -AC.

- **Warriors of the Legion of Serquí**

A grim yet hardy lot, the gold and crimson warriors of Lord Héri hiKübushá would follow him right into Hell as he is a brave and generous leader, treating his subalterns as he would his own children. They fight with Chlén hide weapons.

Warriors of Ist Level (50)
Alignment: Stability (Karakán)
AC 5, HD 1 (4 hp), Hit roll: 20 -AC.

Treachery among brethren

To complicate matters further, some radical priest of clan Red Sun, belonging to the Priestly faction of Tsolyánu, found Lord hiKübushá an unacceptable candidate for a perilous mission in the name of the empire, especially since the warlord's plans could counter his own. Márüku hiDeqobé, priest of the 15th Circle and devotee of

Ksárul, arranged for some two of his spies to infiltrate hiKübushá's war party and manage for him to be... freed from his duties. The assassins (Jéfhú hiDukulé and his sibling Dídh hiErásie) were to arrange his death soon after the artefact's excavation, and to exterminate any embarrassing witnesses: unfortunately, Angóyo hiMratkine, a rival patriarch of clan Red Sun distantly related to the great general Kettukal hiMratkine and a spy for the Red-Hats of Mu'ugalavya, decided for Márüku hiDeqobé's own elder daughter and niece of Lord hiKübushá through a political wedding, Yisabe Péliith hiAhé, to take part in this venture as a common foot soldier. The traitors' secret mission was to arrange for pretty Yisabe to be kidnapped while the rest of the party was to be eliminated without a trace, preferably accusing the Hlüss or the Ssú.

The murderers bides their time while Márüku hiDeqobé has been destroying every trace of the scrolls of Suté Fán hiDalérü, leaving no living witnesses through what seems to be a mysterious "plague" among the priesthood. The priest has known of the artefact's location long before its recent fame, through oral tradition in the Inner Mysteries of the Other One, from which he truly derives his powers. As political assassination led to a radical change in the sect's leadership, Lord hiDeqobé became a high ranking member of the cult set to infiltrate the priesthood of Ksárul. His relations to the Red Sun clan led him to discover both the amazons' betrayal and the plans of Lord hiKübushá...

High priest hiDeqobé's plans are to protect Yisabe at any cost, get his hands on the Almighty Cloud of Supreme Light for his own devices and leave no witness of his treachery. He longs after power, though not at the price of his beloved daughter. He is far from a madman, just a greedy man with ambitions and little comprehension of the consequences of his actions. He lives for today and thinks little of tomorrow, hence serving gods that wish the destruction of Tékel. While he *could* be reasoned, it would take a lot for his ego to let go of his dreams of avarice. With the artefact, he intends to blackmail Prince Mridóbu in Avanthár into staging a new cult war of Stability against Change, through which the Pariah Gods could prosper. These designs are known but to himself and the underground cult of the Other One, his agents only believing hiDeqobé to be but an ambitious and unscrupulous priest of Ksárul.

- **Jéfhú hiDukulé**

This sombre character has been in the pay of Lord hiDeqobé for years, killing many for his price in golden Kitár. He believes his partner in crime, Dídh hiErásie, to be faithful to his cause but might be in for a big surprise. His deeply set dark blue eyes inspire mistrust upon those who dare cross his gaze.

Warrior of IVth Level
Alignment: Change (Chiténg)
APP: 50, CON: 50, DEX: 80, INT: 60, PSI: 35, STR: 55,
AC 4, HD 4+1 (16 hp), Hit roll: 15 -AC.

- **Dídh hiErásie (the Miháli sorcerer, true name unknown)**

What neither Lord hiDeqobé nor the assassin hiDukulé know is that his comrade Dídh hiErásie has been murdered and replaced by the Miháli shape-changer, whose objective is to obtain the artefact through any means possible. If that means murdering hiDukulé, hiKübushá and even hiDeqobé, than so be it. The demigod Grugánu, the Knower of Spells and Cohort of Lord Ksárul of the Blue Room, whose indomitable will dominates (most of) the Miháli's crazed mind, seems to have other plans for the awakened characters, perhaps even as Heroes of the Age...

Unfortunately for the warriors, they are not alone on the trail of the Almighty Cloud of Supreme Light as they have been followed by the creature posing as Dídh hiErásie, the Miháli warlock acting as an agent for the Ndálu Clan faction of the temple of mighty Lord Ksárul, planing the assault of the complex infested by a colony of inquisitive Hlüss that are excavating at this time the millenarian vault. As fate would have it, the scouts of this detachment disappeared after an attack by some strange, reddish metallic entity (a defence module from the crimson vault, piloted by the Miháli warlock) and were later found dead in a crimson crypt... They are, of course, the characters' alter egos.

Sorcerer of VIIIth Level

Alignment: Change (possessed by the will of the god Grugánu)

APP: [20]*, CON: 45, DEX: 80, INT: 99, PSI: 200*, STR: 55,

AC 4, HD 7+1 (25 hp), Hit roll: 16 -AC, Spells: by the game master's choice, Special: *Eye of Triumphant Passage Through Infernos*, *Magical Scimitar* (+2 to hit), *Skullcap of Girigámish*.

* *Natural appearance*

** *Reflecting partial possession by Grugánu. Aside for his Miháli talents and capacities as a sorcerer, Dídh hiErásie possesses no special power bestowed by Grugánu. He is, as such, simply a mortal and can be slain through normal means.*

The whores of Hriháyal

In a peaceful meadow, just the day after meeting the Legion of Serquí's battalion, he travellers shall cross a small river beyond which a small camp of about 30 brutish amazons from the Legion of Kaikáma of Béy Sü (36th Imperial Medium Infantry) has been laid. Though brutish, they seem amiable and willing to talk rather than fight their brethren. Strange, though, that these forces be defending this isolated territory so far from the menaced northern borders. But let us speak a little of these female warriors...

The viragos, led by a captain (*Kási*) named Guládh hiSsáimon, secretly deserted from the 4th cohort of the 36th Imperial Medium Infantry to uncover the powerful artefact before the rest of the Legions finds out. Though the authorities of the Legion of Kaikáma of Béy Sü would officially deny their implication in the amazons' plans, in truth their escape and venture was supported by General Dijaya hiQurruluma of the Blue Girdle Clan, reversed priestess of Dilinala, and seemingly even General Kaikáma hiMrachiyaku, the inverted officer of the Legion of Kaikáma of Béy Sü. As such, the adepts of the hedonist gods seem to be fomenting some treason... What is going on exactly?

The truth is more sinister than it appears. Despite the glory and munificence of its superb armies and mandarins, rot lies deep into the heart of the petal empire of Tsolyáni, crawling like a worm in a shiny apple. The dark cults of the gods of Change, of course, are despised by the law-abiding clans and citizens, though corruption lies beneath a gleaming surface. Under the guise of a benign cult to Avánthé and Dilinala, 4th cohort of the 36th Imperial Medium Infantry hosts a most debauched cult of debased trollops behind its facade of "virgins", in truth boyish amazons and lubricious priestesses whose depraved, strumpet sexuality betray the true (and perhaps unconscious) worship of the Mistress of Demons, the divine and demonic whore Hriháyal. The legendary Tsolyáni tolerance (if not inclination) to wanton debauchery, hedonism and depravity favoured the gradual degradation of the Legion of Kaikáma of Béy Sü into a subtle but pervading cult of orgies where young girls are sacrificed to the bestial urges of the fanatical harlots, later to be converted, enslaved or devoured by the cannibalistic villains. The legionnaires believe the soul of the dark Empress Dashiluna "the Green-Eyed", fanatical devotee of Dlámelish, has been reincarnated in a demon's body and that a new reign of power and luxurious, unrestrained pleasure is to come after the overthrow of the "Usurpator" of Avanthár. Despite appearances of discipline, most (if not all) of the Legion's warriors have been so debased for the greater glory of reborn Dashiluna...

This heresy would be of little consequence to our story, were it not for a brigade of viragos whose conspiracies led to the discovery of a secret cache dating from the Time of Darkness, apparently discovered by scholars worshipping Ksárul during the brutal reign of Emperor Báshdis Mssá VII (2 071 - 2 096) but never explored because of its highly "magical" (i.e. high-technology) defences and unfathomable metallic guardians, the insect-eyed golems known as Ru'un to the Tsolyáni. The Hriháyal fanatics' lust for power and dominance quickly unwrapped the multiple possibilities of this opportunity, as a strange artefact ("the Almighty Cloud of Supreme Light") was mentioned to lie within the vault's walls, a mighty engine capable of levelling a city to dust. With such powers in their hands, the power-hungry amazons could easily expand their influence through menace, maybe even forcing the Seal Emperor to break the religious Concordat in favour of their totalitarian church of Hriháyal...

- **Lady Guládh hiSsáimen**

This chubby, hideous matron of the Green Kirtle clan of Thumissa leads the 4th cohort of the 36th Imperial Medium Infantry, Legion of Kaikáma of Béy Sü. She is not only inverted but prone to acts of sadism and dominating, scatological fantasies implicating dismembered men, screaming young girls and various farm animals (especially young Chén). Her mores seem excessive even to some of her depraved cult members. She was reputed among her troops for her hedonistic debauchery with undead, tentacled animals of vicious dispositions. Almost two meters tall, she fights with an immense scimitar of polished iron, grinning maniacally as she dismembers these hateful men. Half mad, her wildest dream is to overthrow the Seal Emperor to establish her own dynasty, or maybe to flee Tsolyánu with as many riches as possible for a place in the military of Mu'ugalavya: her only loyalty is to herself, preceding both her legion and her goddess. Guládh hiSsáimen reveres the debauched Hriháyal as well as Dlámelish but solely her Greater Aspect of the Bestial One, a monstrosity obese, pale and wiggling woman with enormous hips whose bestial head reminds of a perverted reptile.

Priestess of Hriháyal of Vth Level

Alignment: Change (Hriháyal)

APP: 10, CON: 75, DEX: 40, INT: 45, PSI: 70, STR: 70,

AC 4, HD 4+1 (20 hp), Hit roll: 19 -AC, Spells: by the game master's choice, though she is more of a warrior than a sorcerer.

- **Amazons of the Legion of Kaikáma of Béy Sü**

These skull-shaven, massive, bow-legged, hairy and manly Aridáni women, clad in the green and purple garments of the Hriháyal cult, would remind a Terran of an tanned Eastern European athletic team, if not for their elaborate plastrons of bronze and polished tin. As the most fierce of the Legion of Kaikáma, they were sent by their mistresses with orders to obey every order of hiSsáimen to death: they hate men and delight in torture, leaning towards the most militant faction of their cult yet lawful to Lady Timuna, High Priestess of Dlámelish. They brandish lances and round shields. Many wear large tattoos representing the symbol of Hriháyal, Cohort and servant of Hriháyal: a vertical, silver oval pierced by a curved green line.

Warriors of Ist Level (30)

Alignment: Change (Hriháyal)

AC 5, HD 1 (4 hp), Hit roll: 20 -AC.

The Complex of Yesterday

Of course, the Underworld depot is nowhere else than the Hlüss infested complex, for these creatures have also discovered the location of the marvellous artefact through interrogation of a party of whorish amazons from the subversive Legion of Kaikáma of Béy Sü met by chance. As such they know about their imminent attack by Tsolyánu forces, though they would favour posing a facade of *naïveté* to get the Legions into falling in their clutches. This encounter could be deadly if not carefully planned by a thoughtful tactical approach.

The archaic base uncovered by the Hlüss is composed of an outer and an inner complex, the latter protected by some security password which has not been trespassed for eons. The Hlüss' explorations have led to nowhere until now. The outer complex has been thoroughly explored by the Hlüss, emptied of its content and analysed by their sorcerer-priests. The Hlüss presence accounts for about 15 warriors and 60 (usually non-combatant) drones, led by a Warrior-Sorcerer of Vst Level whose clicking name roughly sounds like K'kkysl'nkk. As their hive-ship lurks in the waters about 600 *Tsan* (800 kilometres) south of the complex, the Hlüss must travel by foot a lot and as such have no more than about five days of supplies inside the complex (though the Hlüss seem to know of some Underworld passageway that allows them to travel this distance in only six days). If no news have been sent by the Hlüss to the hive-ship for about two days, scouts from the latter will come to investigate - and probably will come back with reinforcements in twelve days to clean the place out.

Depending upon circumstances, the Game Master can fill the Outer and Inner Complexes with any guardians, traps and items he or she sees fit: for example, Tsú'uru and Marashyálu shape-changers could be appropriate, as well as some undead (Mrúr or stronger varieties perhaps) left over from the times when the Brethren of the Scarlet Nail of Sárku inhabited the vault. Appropriate spoils could be various history books, religious paraphernalia and decorum from the temples of Ksáru and Grugánu, perhaps even the rare and magical *Powerful Maps of Glory* or even a hidden version of the *Mysteries of Mysteries*.

The Complex, likewise, could be defended by mechanical traps if you feel inclined so – for relevant examples, see for example *Ice Cube Lube Tube* (p.7), *After the Flood* (p.16), *For a Case of Fire* (p.33), *Heart of Glass* (p.38) and *Gas Pit* (p.40) in **Grimtooth's Traps Ate** (Task Force Games, 1989).

HLÜSS: *"The insectoid Hlüss are indigenous to Tekumel. They are friendly to the Ssú and sometimes to the Shunned Ones, and neutral to the Hláka when the latter are not accompanied by humans. They love to set gems all over their bodies in intricate and beautiful patterns in a cement-like substance which they secrete. A mighty Hlüss warrior makes for a fearsome and magnificent spectacle indeed. (...) The Hlüss possess a long, segmented, scorpion-like body, four high-arched legs, a prehensile tail fitted with a paralysing sting, two smaller forearms ending in three digits and a thumb, and a broad, flattish head with three eyes and a sharp proboscis above a set of razor-sharp mandibles. They are covered with a light, chitinous exoskeleton and are greenish blue to shiny black in colour. They normally remain on all fours, but may rear up and use their central pair of 'hands' as tearing weapons in battle, though they do not employ swords or other weapons with these limbs. They range from 1.22 to 1.62m high on four legs, gaining perhaps another metre when they rear up.*

- M.A.R. Barker, *Tekumel Sourcebook: Swords and Glory*, volume 1.

K'kkysl'nkk

Hlüss Warrior-Sorcerer of Vst Level

Alignment: Hostile (Hlüssayal)

AC 4, HD 5 (22 hp), Hit roll: 16 -AC, Spells: as the game master chooses, Special: 2 attacks, paralysing sting, fear causes characters of level I to IV are -1 to hit, *Eye of Non-Seeing*, magical spear (+1 to hit).

Hlüss Warriors (15)

Alignment: Hostile (Hlüssayal)

AC 4, HD 2 (8 hp), Hit roll: 19 -AC, Special: 2 attacks, paralysing sting, fear causes characters of level I to IV are -1 to hit.

Hlüss Drones (60)

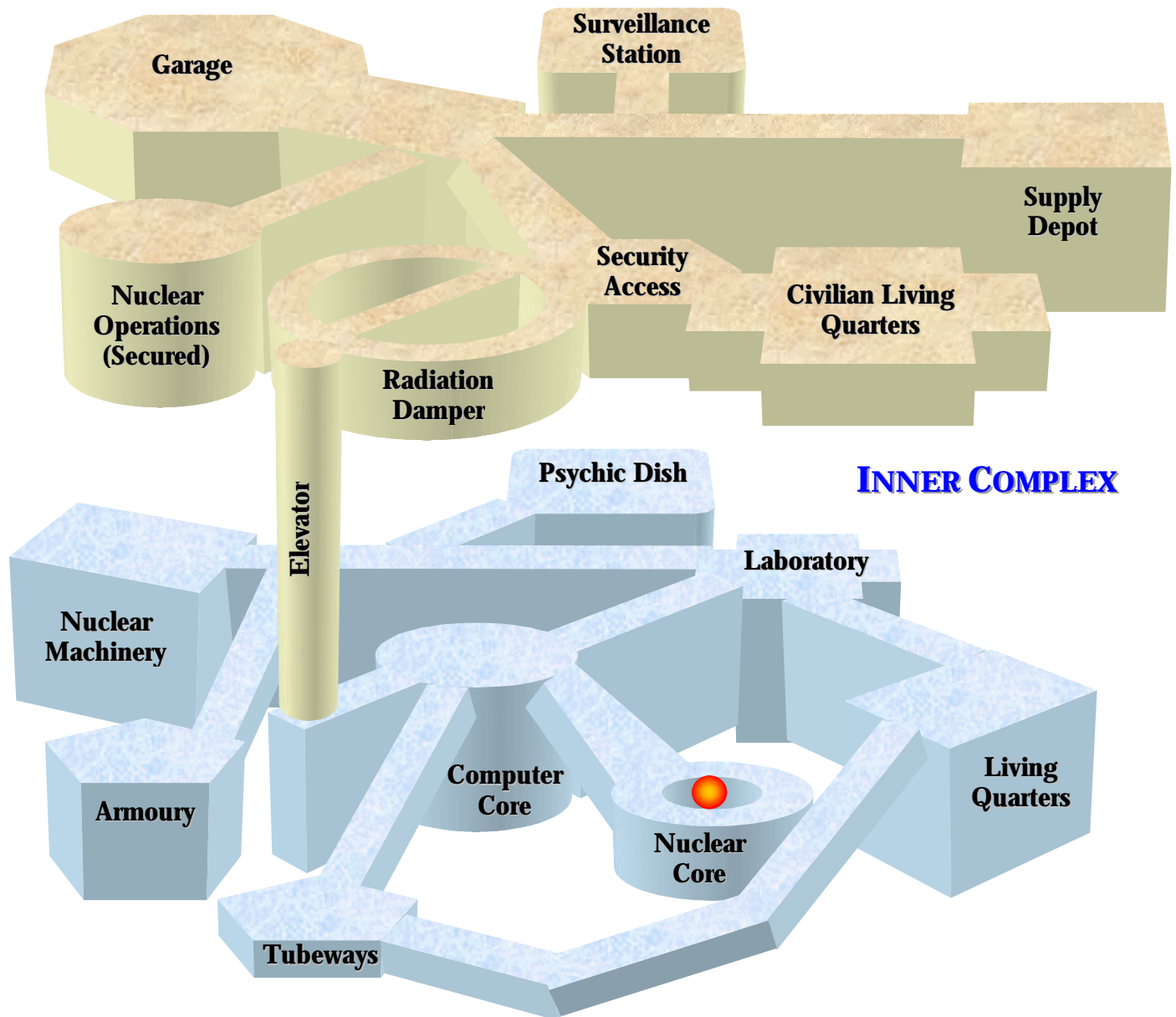
Alignment: Hostile (Hlüssayal)

AC 4, HD 1 (3 hp), Hit roll: 20 -AC, Special: 2 attacks, paralysing sting, fear causes characters of level I to IV are -1 to hit.

ANCIENT VAULT FROM THE TIMES OF DARKNESS

Erick N. Bouchard © 2001

OUTER COMPLEX



The Outer Complex

During the reign of Dharumésh Mssá II (1 712 - 1 723), in the First Epoch, the complex was once inhabited by a sect of the god Sárku (the Brethren of the Scarlet Nail) whom benefited from the powerful energy outputs to conduct abominable experiments in the deepest of secrets. Some 300 years after (around 2 080), after the gradual radiation poisoning (and subsequent death) of the priesthood, adepts of Ksárul from the Ndálu Clan secret society inhabited the complex for their own unfathomable reasons, and though they could not open the door to the Inner Complex (nor pierce the Inner Complex's powerful magical defences) they learned a lot about the technological architecture and science of the complex and notably managed to halt the deadly radiation leak. Some internal crisis among the cultists seems to be responsible for their abandoning of this shrine of knowledge around 2 200, during the reign of Emperor Báshdis Mssá VIII, "the Builder of Tombs" (2 190 - 2 232). Reasons why only today some member of the Ndálu Clan faction (the Mihállí) "remembered" the complex's location are not crystal clear, though it seems the excessive secrecy of the followers of the Blue God and their kin somewhat caused the loss of this precious information.

Sculptures in the characteristic Engsvanyáli style witness of the outer complex' age and occupation by two different cults at two different eras, something a literate aristocrat might notice. Anything of value has already been transported to the Hlüss hive-ship, aside for some magical devices self-appropriated by K'kkysl'nkk, an ambitious, vain and ravenous member of his profoundly xenophobic kin.

- **Civilian Living Quarters:** Devastated by the Hlüss, these were once inhabited by about twenty priests of Ksárul. Any object of interest is already aboard the hive-ship: Hlüss drones abound in these rooms.
- **Corridors:** The constant presence of the Hlüss drones and warriors makes these extremely perilous.
- **Elevator:** The elevator leading to the Inner Core is protected by some strange puzzle-lock looking like a strange board with on/off dominoes set in a strange pattern. This puzzle was built-in to insure access to about anyone from the highly scientific civilisation of the Terrans before the Times of Darkness while remaining esoteric to "primitives". Ten dotted buttons (whose domino-style numbers from 0 to 9 are easily understandable) await the correct code under the following series: **2-8-18-32-50-72-98-128-162**. The correct follow-up is **200**, twice the mathematical square of 10, following those of 1 to 9: each wrong answer causes a brief electrical shock to be emitted (1D6 damage).
- **Garage:** Large stockpiles of pillaged materials are being assembled by the Hlüss drones under the supervision of a small contingent of warriors. The drones' task is to gather any possible valuables (and furniture, etc.) here for inspection by their superiors and eventual transportation to the hive-ship. Every dusk, a shipment of some sorted materials (mostly trash: plastic cans, pierced clothing, fake jewels...) is sent with five drones and two warriors to the hive-ship, while every dawn sees the arrival of their empty-handed replacements. A thorough search (after dealing with the Hlüss menace) would uncover a used-up (discharged) *Lightning Bringer*, an *Eye of Illuminating Glory* and a *Skullcap of Girigámish*, as well as some interesting but worthless oddities. No worthwhile quantities of metal are available here, as the walls seem to resist both violence and magic. Many Hlüss abound.
- **Nuclear Operations:** Every piece of clockwork, machinery and keyboards has been smashed by infuriated Hlüss incapable of understanding their functioning. Nuclear Operations are beyond repair. Attentive investigation would uncover some obscure documents of the Ksárul priesthood in their secret language, many embalmed yet dismembered corpses ("deactivated" Mrúr) and the skeletons of a dozen long-dead Qól (Serpent-headed Ones). Usually ignored by the Hlüss.
- **Radiation Damper:** This unsettling, high-roofed room hosts many strange ventilators, tubes and flickering lights. The Radiation Dampener (which was recently repaired by the Ksárul priests) strongly reduces any form of energy radiation in the Inner Complex: magic functions as "dampened" while inside the Inner Complex, especially "outerplanar" magic related to dimension travel, demon conjuring

and displacement. As long as the Damper works, no part of the Inner Complex's structures or architecture can be modified or passed through: destroying or turning off the device will restore the radiation emissions (mild radiation poisoning, death occurring only after many months of exposure but lesser symptoms appearing after a day or so). Modifying the Inner Complex structure after turning off the Radiation Damper strongly risks major radiation leaks or (in the case of the Nuclear Machinery or the Nuclear Core) an outright nuclear explosion, destroying absolutely everything in a 5 kilometres radius. Hlüss generally ignore this uninteresting room.

- **Security Access:** This used to be a control room for genetic screening of the vault-dwellers (for both disease control and security reasons). Machinery is no longer functioning and is beyond repair. Dismantling the inactive force-screen mechanism (with much time and some decent tools) could reveal a good-quality *Eye of Being Unimpeachable Shield Against Foes*.
- **Surveillance Station:** The large screens once linked to the orbital satellites of Tékumel are totally destroyed and out of order. Thorough examination of the machinery could uncover an energy light bulb akin to an *Eye of Illuminating Glory*.
- **Supply Depot:** This is the main activity site for the Hlüss drones, as much trash still lies waiting to be examined. It still holds some functional technical tools, basic first-aid kits, iron mask, latex shoes and hermetic suits and maybe an *Abominable Eye of Detestation*.

The Inner Complex

The Inner Complex comprises the blue sections of the map. Access is only possible from the Outer Complex by passing through the Elevator Aside from the Elevator, the only exit is through the Underworld Tubeways at the lower levels of the Inner Complex, though access is one way (out) only for security reasons.

- **Armoury:** This dark room holds many metallic coffins (empty weapons depots), some technological gizmos and armour replacement for airborne vehicles. It is most likely the vault's former inhabitants left little working armament in their armoury, though the Game Master could include some *Eyes* if he or she so wishes. One of the crates is occupied by an inactive Yéleth android (see *Empire of the Petal Throne*) whose primary concern, if activated, would be the protection of the Computer Core and the Nuclear Core from intruders.
- **Computer Core:** This unassuming room is centred around a huge dome-like device covered with colourful, flickering lights and strange slots. Despite its appearance, this machine is a very powerful (though non-sentient) computer holding much data regarding the times before Tékumel's dimensional shift. These data hold the secrets the Mihállí and the god Grugánu do not want to fall in human hands. These secrets could be whatever the Game Master chooses, though some suggestions are offered below (see *Some Secrets of Tékumel*). It could even be possible that these data holds the location of one of the Keys to Ksárul's captivity, if the Game Master so wills.
- **Corridors:** These metallic pale blue corridors are lighted by an eerie light not unlike those of the dark god Ksárul's prison, the Blue Room. Coincidence or not?
- **Laboratory:** Much of what was studied in this advanced physics laboratory would be wholly unfathomable as it deals with the complex nature of the time-space continuum.
- **Living Quarters:** These dormitories, kitchens and gathering places were once used by a dozen scientists. Careful examination could uncover a secret panel behind which lies a curled *Glorious Cloak of Many Eyes*.

- **Nuclear Core:** The Saint of Saints... Inside the Nuclear Core lies the Almighty Cloud of Supreme Light. Unfortunately, the entrance is guarded by a fearsome Ru'un robot (see *Empire of the Petal Throne*) which nevertheless will not exit the room under any circumstance. This very powerful opponent can be halted by a special amulet found in the Psychic Dish or by ruse. See below for details regarding the nuclear artefact.
- **Nuclear Machinery:** These incomprehensible machines allow the Nuclear Core to be contained safely and provide energy for the whole complex. Messing them up is a very bad idea, which could even lead to the detonation of the Nuclear Core in case of massive destruction (killing anyone within a 5 kilometre radius).
- **Psychic Dish:** This complex device surrounds twelve high chairs that once allowed the scientists to communicate psychically with their orbital brethren. Careful examination of the computer could uncover some technological circlet working as an *Amulet of Control of the Ru'un* with but three charges left, though great care must be taken to prevent the fragile device from breaking.
- **Tubeways:** These high speed subway systems are similar to those found in the Underworld, though they are "one way" and "one wagon" and would leave its passengers (one to eight) some great distance further, somewhere far east in the ruins of the city of Sokátis about two days later. If the need be, they can provide a convenient (and very, very fast) escape from the Inner Complex.

Some Secrets of Téकुmel

(By Pr. M.A.R. Barker, from the Blue Room FTP files)

Lord Ksarul and the Blue Room

"There are two kinds of bond holding Ksarul in his room: Wards and Keys. Each Key has two or three Wards which prevent it from being used or, once used, from being un-used. Wards are easier to find than Keys, and are not necessarily located physically "near" the Keys they serve. The task of finding and using a Key to further Ksarul's release would be a Very Long Adventure – an entire campaign could be directed towards it, occupying the entire lifetime of a player's character, and taking several years of our time."

"A few keys have already been found and used, and rest upon a table in a place of waiting beside Ksarul's tomb. However, not all keys are what you would call "hidden". One key which is very well known is the Key in the possession of the Mad King of Salarvya. Deep beneath the palace in Tsatsayagga, the figure of a gently smiling young man reposes upon an altar. Those who meet high favour with the Mad King are permitted to make sacrifices to this figure, which is one of the Keys. If one sacrifices objects of blue, such as blue gems, blue fabric, even blue flowers, the figure grants boons and riches."

"Ksarul is fated to be freed, and the time of his freedom is not clear. But there is not necessarily a connection between the freeing of Ksarul and the end of Tekumel. The Egg of Time exerts a more direct influence upon the Tekumel multiverse."

Events in the Complex: Treachery!

Once the danger of the Hlüss and the temple's guardians have been neutralised, the amazons, the assassin and the Mihállí might just wait for the right time to take on Lord hiKübushá's soldiers:

- **The amazons:** The amazons care nothing about co-operation with Lord hiKübushá - this hateful, dominating and phallocentric anti-feminist minion of the Tsolyánu establishment. They would do anything to acquire the artefact and flee - leaving Lord hiKübushá and his troops alone against the Hlüss or even turning against them. Any truce would be temporary. If circumstances allow, it is very likely that Lady hiSsáimen will try to rapture Yísabe Péliith hiAhé: her liberation would bring great gratitude from Lord hiKübushá, as he cares deeply for his niece (though not in the way she would prefer). A lot of bloodshed is

the likely outcome of this battle, and perhaps the death of Yísabe (who would rather kill herself than surrender the artefact to traitors of the Petal Imperium).

- **The assassin:** Jéfhu hiDukulé is not as interested in the artefact as much as in killing Lord hiKübushá, make a mess of his mission and bring back Yísabe alive. He doesn't suspect in the least his partner's secret identity. Should he attack at an improper moment, or seem on the verge of failure, he will be betrayed by Dídh hiErásie (the Mihállí) to give more credence to his cover as a loyal devotee of the Imperium.
- **The shape-changer:** Dídh hiErásie has plans about the complex - though not what they would appear to be. What she cares most about is not the Almighty Cloud of Supreme Light by itself, but the computer memory banks from the Times of Darkness. These databanks, which only he, as well as some characters with dispersed recollections of the functioning of high technology, can decrypt, hold many of the gods' secrets regarding Téकुमेल, among which allusions to the purpose of the Egg of the World and the true nature of so-called gods of Stability and Change. Information no mortal... If everything fails, the Mihállí will have to decide whether he lets the characters escape with this knowledge, he slays them or tries to enlist them as agents in the war against the Pariah Gods. Much of this depends upon the decisions made by the characters in the complex as well as their value as potential heroes.
- **Hlüss reinforcements:** At the least convenient moment, a new detachment of Hlüss from the hidden mothership should flow into the complex to take it back from the human armies, in the midst of chaos. They are ready to sacrifice themselves and unleash the artefact's deadly power in order to prevent humans from acquiring this weapon: the survival of the Hlüss hive (and their eventual overtaking of Téकुमेल) is their sole purpose. Hopefully the characters will have managed by then the triple threat of the amazons, the assassin and the shape-changer...

The Almighty Cloud of Supreme Light

Ultimate goal of the quest for so many among the intruders, The Almighty Cloud of Supreme Light is protected in the inner complex of the vault by complex high-technology security mechanisms and some robotic guardians. Being but a "small" nuclear device of plutonium, the artefact was designed primarily as an energy source for the complex, not as a nuclear warhead (though small energy backup reserves should provide minimal energy in the complex for about 48 hours). The military potential of this weapon, though, in knowledgeable hands (such as the high priesthood of Ksárul or Thúmis), could pulverise to rubble a zone about 5 kilometres wide and irradiate (to deadly levels) about twenty times that zone for about ten years.

Once inside the inner complex, accessing the artefact is feasible if the guardians and safeguards can be circumvented. The central security container holding The Almighty Cloud of Supreme Light can sustain quite a lot of damage, but with proper instructions (such as priest of Ksárul would know, or a powerful Mihállí, or maybe someone with some memories of a high tech civilisation...) the container could be opened. Using brute force would eventually break the protective container's shields, freeing the artefact but irradiating everyone in a 200 metres diameter with deadly radiation (certain death in less than two days) and causing constant radiation poisoning in a 5 kilometre radius.

Just about everyone wants to get their hands (or pincers) on this device, save perhaps for the Mihállí whose primary interest is (surprisingly!) not the arcane engine of destruction but mysterious manuscripts from the Inner Circle of the temple of Ksárul hidden somewhere in the inner complex, unfathomable secrets in the secret tongue of the cult regarding the true nature of Téकुमेल, its gods and maybe even the location of one of the keys to the Blue Room where the sleeping god of Change, Ksárul, is waiting for liberation... This secret goal of the Mihállí sorcerer should be kept hidden at all costs, as he would rather destroy both the scrolls and itself (by blowing up the nuclear device) than let the initiated contemplate the inner mysteries of the cult of Ksárul. Wise characters might find something suspicious about Dídh hiErásie relative indifference for the nuclear device, follow it and discover its true goal. This might lead them into an interesting situation or a deadly confrontation with a stalwart and demented warlock...

Trust no man, not even your brother...

Hopefully the characters will have escaped the complex, with or without the artefact, by wrestling through the fighting armies or by using the tubeways. As one treachery leads to another, Lord hiDeqobé plans to have Jéfhú hiDukulé and Dídh hiErásie (whose true nature he knows not) assassinated on their return. He set forth a small troop of Ahoggyá to follow discreetly Lord hiKübushá: their mission is to eliminate all witnesses, including the amazons of the Legion of Kaikáma of Béy Sü, the warriors of the Legion of Serqú, Lord hiDeqobé's own agents and (unfortunately) the characters. They have been waiting for some days just a few kilometres before the entrance to the western Sákbe road to Thúmissa. This small detachment is led by a humourless Ahoggyá whose name can be translated as "The One Who Groans At Night". Seven years ago, they have migrated from southern Salarvyá, supposedly for unfathomable political reasons: their leader has been said to come from the mythical Onmu Tle Hlektis state, somehow related to opponents of the Ahoggyá "Powers That Be".

AHOGGYÁ: " *The Ahoggyá are four-armed and four-legged, barrel-bodied, bristly and knobbly. Their four arms extend out at equidistant intervals from under a domed, thickly armoured carapace on top of the body. Between and below these arms, protected by a horny ring are the eyes and other organs: two eyes and a fanged mouth on one side, and two eyes and other organs on each of the remaining three sides. Excretory organs are tucked up under the body. Their thickly muscled legs extend out from the base of the body in a permanent crouch, and their hands and feet both possess three digits and a thumb. They range from 1.41 to 1.60m in height, but their torso is perhaps 80cm in diameter. They have eight sexes, but their reproductive processes are largely unknown.* "

- M.A.R. Barker, *Tékumel Sourcebook: Swords and Glory*, volume 1.

Ahoggyá Warriors (25)

Alignment: Neutral (Tsolyánu)

AC 7, HD 3 (12 hp), Hit roll: 17 -AC.

Despite appearances, and despite their lack of consideration for life (human or otherwise), these Ahoggyá are not traitors to the Tsolyánu empire but dupes led by Lord hiDeqobé to perform an execution. They have been told a Yán Kóryani troop has invaded imperial lands to conduct a secret mission of sabotage with the banners and garments of the Legion of Serqú. They know nothing about the ancient artefact. Unless they have a good reason to doubt this treachery, they'll openly attack the "rebels" with scimitars and halberds. What might surprise the legionnaires most about this attack is the Tsolyáni flags and emblems as well as their grumbling voices and croaking battle cries of "die, traitorous scum, spawn of the putrid north, rebels of Yán Kór!" The Ahoggyá's orders were very specific about not taking prisoners, but parley would be acceptable. If the characters behave intelligently, a mass massacre could be prevented and Lord hiDeqobé's betrayal uncovered (which would lead to his immediate impaling wouldn't he be wise enough to hide). If not, they'd better run fast...

Epilogue

This story can end in many possibilities, some better than others. Most certainly, the characters can have made themselves deadly enemies in Lord hiDeqobé, the Hlüss, Lady hiSsáimen (if she survived) and her superiors. Depending on their actions, they might have become allies or enemies of Lord hiKübushá, the Mihállí warlock and maybe even the clergy of Ksárul and Grugánu. Collaboration with the loyalist Legion of Serqú might favour their acceptance as lawful citizens of Tsolyánu and maybe their implication in some secret society, or even in the secret war of the Pavár pantheon against the Pariah Gods... Who knows what the future holds, save perhaps for the gods?

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