

Stay Behind

Adventure Module



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Acknowledgment

Go to the various playtesters

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Stay Behind

1

Foreword

This adventure is the final installment of the Light Rethem campaign. It expands on a few possible conclusions from the previous two modules, in which the party discovered the remnants of a lost culture from Hepekeria deep in the Rayesha mountains. How the players react to this discovery, and the choices they make, force this chapter to be more open-ended. Only one of the possible outcomes is fully fleshed out, the others are only bare-bones and subject to additional GM development.

While it is not necessary that you have played any of the previous adventures, it is recommended that you have played through at least one. If you haven't you should at least read them to understand the motivations of the major NPCs and why they act in the way they do.

Current Background

This adventure assumes that the players did not kill the Hepekerian king in the crypt discovered in *The Lucky Few*. But what happens after is still very open.

The Hepekerian king is a new type of Morvin, an Hemorvus, the product of an ancient and alien culture. Now freed after millenia of slumber, the Hemorvus is a powerful and intelligent adversary, or ally. He considers himself the last remnant of an important and practically extinct culture and survival is his primary goal. His secondary motivations are to preserve and propagate his lost culture, which is detailed in later sections.

Whether the PCs consider him a threat, an asset, or simply not worthy of their focus the king's fate will be molded by their actions and this adventure outlines some possible paths the Hemorvus and the players could take.

Option: Kill it quickly

Assuming the Hemorvus escapes the crypt, the party may desire to kill it as quickly as possible. Their motivation may be religious (after all, a Morvin is an abomination for all but Morgathians), altruistic (the king is a dangerous threat), jingoistic (the king is a foreign interloper bent on destabilizing the local power structure) or personal (perhaps the Hemorvus tricked the party, or they

resent his escape)..

Whatever the reasoning, this option is easy to handle for the GM. Treat this as hunting down a specific, dangerous, highly intelligent animal. The Hemorvus will (correctly) deduce that staying in the wilderness is his best chance at avoiding the party. His foreign features and accent make him stand out in any civilized realm, and a lack of acquaintances means he has few friends he can rely on.

The Hemorvus will not be easy quarry to hunt, however. In the early stages of the pursuit, the king is a powerful foe, with a host of esoteric powers. With near mastery of stone magic at his command, orchestrating landsides or similar tactics are quite easy for him at first. But over time, the king's powers will fade. The GM should read the later section on the Hemorvin, paying particular attention to the slow degradation of skills after awakening. The king is aware of this, and will not hesitate to take advantage of his temporary strength to ambush or weaken the party in their pursuit.

Over time the king will be nothing more than a smart, experienced hermit with a few spells, memories and strange useless languages at his disposal. He also has no real knowledge of Ivashu or Gargun, and an encounter with these creatures could prove fatal, especially after he loses his powers. He is also unfamiliar with the local barbarian tribes or fauna. He's still a stranger in a strange land, though a quick study.

For the GM, the question is how long is the party willing to pursue the king? Will they spend



weeks or months tracking him through the wilderness, dealing with random encounters, bad weather and other Hârníc hazards? Will the Hemorvus fall victim to the same perils as the party, presenting an anticlimatic finish for the PCs? The GM has a host of resources in Hârníc publications to manage wilderness hunts such as this. (Maybe even the gods are relieved of the conondrum the Hemrovus poses and offer some token gratitude. See the section on religion below.)

Option: Send it Away

The PCs may decide that the Hemorvus should leave for his home whence it originally came. This is not the worst of options. It provides a route to escape for the Hemorvus to a place even he himself may consider home, although he has been away for at least a millenium. The PCs do not have to dirty their hands, make a potentially difficult decision between slaying of the creature or letting him loose on the island, or endanger themselves in a pursuit.

For anyone not in the party, including any acquaintances of Moc'alm in the previous adventures, this looks just like the NPC is on his way home and nobody will try and dissuade him or prevent the voyage. The journey would be a trip down the Thard to Golotha, where the Hemorvus/Moc'alm will find a ship off the island. The future life's journey of the Hemorvus king will thus diverge from that of the players and they will likely never meet again.

Details on the Thard river can be found in the fanon or canon articles *Thard* or *Thard River* (see the References). The GM should feel free to have the combined group experience any number of adventures he considers likely. A particularly intriguing option would be to incorporate later plots of the Dark Rethem adventures. In any encounter, the Hemorvus will act solely to ensure his own survival and keep the party moving. He can slowly feel his power waning and is keen to return to Hepekeria as quickly as he can.

The Hemorvus should have sufficient resources to sceure a berth on a seagoing vessel, even after paying the party for their escorting services. Moc'alm's purse had a generous amount of coin, and he would also have left sufficient funds with a

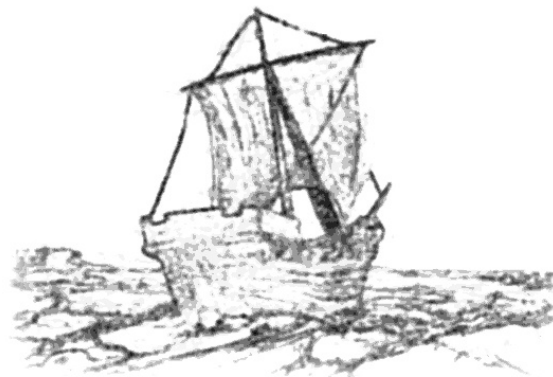
trustworthy agent (such as the Guild of Arcane Lore) in Golotha.

Come with me. One sub-plot is to have the Hemorvus propose the PCs accompany him home. He will promise them large amounts of treasure, gold or land in far-off Hepekeria. Through Moc'alm's knowledge he knows that his current people are no longer the rulers, but he also knows of the network of rebels that sponsored Moc'alm's expedition. He will need helping hands and he can trust the PCs since they have safely brought him to Golotha.

This will take the PCs to a land far, far away and into a new, albeit contemporary, society and the adventures that await them are far beyond the scope of this publication. If you play a campaign, this will definitely be a significant change of plans, so you may not want the Hemorvus to give the PCs that choice.

Morvin civil war. A more complex sub-plot would be to create a conflict in Golotha with the Amorvin that exist there. Perhaps the different Morvins «sense» each other, or Morgath delivers portents to his followers of the Hemorvus' existence. It is unlikely that the different morvin will tolerate each other and a great power struggle may ensue.

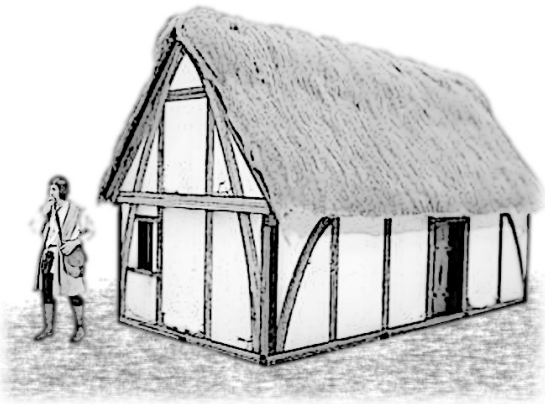
This would become an entire campaign unto itself, involving many aspects of Golothian society and the PCs as well. The entrenched Order of Chaos would clearly have the advantage unless the PCs intervene, and the ensuing upheaval would ripple throughout Golotha and perhaps into Rethem.



Option: A Colony

The Hemorvus is most interested in preserving his existence, but is very conscious of his previous life as a king who ruled over a large, advanced civilization. Once he is secure knowing that the PCs aren't pursuing him, he will reflect on his options. Becoming a leader or savior to barbarians has little interest to him, as he wishes to create a new society, not change one whose culture is already established. In his mind, the best choice is to found a «colony» in the wild fringes of civilization, despite the challenges that presents. By catering to people that have fallen out with current authorities, such as bandits, runaway serfs/slaves, and even expelled tribesmen, he believes he can use his political skill to unify such a motley crew. While the odds of success are small, in the short term his experiment will cause a few headaches to the current rulers in the immediate vicinity. Within one year, the king will have established a small hamlet, gathered some resources and become known in the region. Naturally, the PCs will be asked to deal with problem.

This is the option that will be explored in more detail in the following sections.



Introducing the players

Bring them back. Some serfs have recently escaped, presumably with outside help. One escapee was caught and revealed under torture that a camp supposedly exists a day or two in the wilderness where anybody brave enough to pick up the challenge of getting there is welcomed. The

PCs are tasked with locating and reconnoitering this camp. Since this is just a band of run-away serfs, the party may feel they are of sufficient strength to «abort» the experiment.

Help them help themselves. The PCs are known for their antipathy towards the current rulers and sympathy for the plight of the populace. A cottar may ask a trusted trader to ask for directions to the hidden colony and that trusted trader asks the PCs. As seasoned wilderness travelers they should be able to get the escapees to their destination, even though they don't know where it is yet.

A mage on the loose. An agent of the White Hand asks the players to find out what truth there is to the rumour that a mage is creating a new «civilization» in the foothills of the Rayeshas. Memories of Lothrim come to mind and this threat must be dealt with swiftly before it escalates. The underlying assumption for the mages is that a rag-tag group of escaped serfs cannot survive in the wilderness without magical aid. Alternatively the dwarfs make this query, as Kiraz is quite near. Since Gargun are close by, many groups have an interest in the colony. (Also see below.)

Getting there is half the fun

The colony has been founded north of Menekai in some secluded valley south-west to west of Yzug. If the PCs have been introduced to a guide, extracted the information from a captured informant, or maybe even are the guides themselves, is irrelevant. They will start from a civilized outpost for the next «run». Let them provision themselves.

Apart from any random encounter you might throw at the PCs, at about half distance to the colony, a safe-house has been built. It is commonly known to exist by any that venture to or from the human colony and its safety has been honored by barbarians and other travelers alike. It is surrounded by a token perimeter fence of brushes that is cut once a year to make it distinguishable from the surrounding wild growth. Several totems were placed here by the Kubora that mark this place as a safe haven, a symbol of the *Married Couple* is also here. Neither Gargun nor Ivashi have found the place yet. Nor have any Rethemi scouts

or hunters. It was established not long ago by the founders of the colony.

The location is not easy to find for someone who travels into or out of the mountains, streams are not close by and the small valley is easily overlooked by someone traveling along the ridge to the lowland. This is the east-west direction of travel. Someone going north or south in more or less a straight line between the colony and Menekai on the other hand will easily spot the place, it is along a natural path this way. A few steep steps up and then down, the foothills are not hard to traverse at this height.

The place is used as a retreat for the travelers that are en-route to or from the colony. The Kubora have struck a deal with the «man from the mountains» not to attack anybody in and around the building. A transgression hasn't happened since the agreement was reached. Usually, the weary travelers that go here would be no match for a Kuboran warrior and honor may prevent killing any such weakling for sport. The Kuboran symbols on the other hand also prevent any random traveler from transgressing, lest they feel the wrath of the Kuborans.

The house is stocked with supplies with approximately 10 man-days of food and some firewood in the cold season from the colony. A check is made every month or when a traveler arrives who removed any provisions. The hut itself is a log-cabin of approximately 6' x 9' and 6' high. There are no windows, but only a solid wooden door and a hole in the roof that is covered and can be opened to let smoke out. The door can be barred from the inside. The provisions are hung from the ceiling, when not in use. Benches along the walls surround a table in the center of the room. Both benches and table double as beds. Three human-sized blankets are stored with the food provisions and the roof is water-tight.

If the PCs make a deliberate effort to avoid the normal route they may miss this spot, which is not important. Remind them of the dangers of taking a detour through Kuboran mainland or the slow progress through the Rayesha mountains. (They may run into Yzug that way too, but don't tell them that.)

Fugitives

When here, the PCs encounter a small family of three that has fled the land from the Menekai region. They are obviously serfs and they make no claim otherwise. The family is comprised of a man of 35 years, his wife (32 years), a four year old child, and a goat. They are exhausted and pose no threat. They understand that they are at the complete mercy of the players.

The PCs may believe it or not, the story the family tells is true and outlined below. If the players are able to check names or other facts for some reason and they do, the story makes sense and there are no inconsistencies, it is the truth. Small pieces of the story are set in italics. They show parts that the fugitives know nothing about but round out the story for the GM and give him the opportunity to consistently answer questions for the family.

The couple had a son who was supposed to start working for the lord on his 12th birthday, so he went to the manor to present himself. The lord is known to serve swift and brutal justice for any transgression, so the boy was eager to be quick on his journey. The family lived in an outlying hamlet of a few families so he had to travel about a half a mile up the road.

Still within the confines of the fief and within sight of the parents, he was picked up by a mounted knight and two henchman patrolling with him. They were not the lord's men but from a neighboring manor, possibly the lord's liege. The parents lost sight of their son then but knew that he was being abducted. Apparently the knight dropped the boy off after forcing him to travel for several hours, half on foot, half being carried by the mounted knight. He now was far out of his territory and made haste to come back as fast as he could. *The knight enjoyed the troubled youth on his struggle home for a while, but eventually the patrol lost interest and went elsewhere.*

When the boy finally came to the lord's manor, he was obviously several hours late and knocked on the closed door in darkness and totally worn out. *The lord had already decided to go to bed and was in a bad mood for various reasons.* When the child was let into the house, the lord listened to the story but suggested that instead the boy was attempting



to flee and was caught by the patrol that sent him back. *This suggestion was half in jest, but the boy was frightened to death and did not dare speak against his lord. The lord could not take it back either.* His parents were consulted the next day, but they couldn't add anything to the claims made or were not believed. The boy was sentenced to flogging, which was carried out as if for a grown man and the child died two days after that due to the wounds inflicted. *The manor lord was now infuriated, because the knight in question was in the employ of his liege lord judging from the heraldry described by the boy and they would surely deny everything. Somebody had to pay for his loss!* The family was now fined for the ransom of a full labourer the lord has lost, which they were unable to pay. They heard of a safe haven in the north, much like a free city, where they could escape the wrath of their lord. *Obviously, the colony is not a free city.* Since their hamlet was a bit off the road and the lord had different troubles, the couple decided to flee during the next night, took their goat and never looked back since.

The other villagers managed to forestall the announcement a bit and told the lord's manor, while he himself was away, so he was only informed until very late that day. He pursued the fugitives into the wilderness, which they had already reached. His horse almost broke an ankle and his dogs were irritated by wolves' tracks so he broke off the chase. Hunting down people that were to be hanged anyway did not seem worth the effort right now. Maybe hire some cut throats to do it.

The PCs have several ways of dealing with the situation. Kill them on the spot as they are fugitives and try to collect any bounty

immediately. (Maybe the PCs were indeed the cut throats hired to do the job?) They could aid the traumatized and exhausted family that has made it this far apparently on sheer will. Any solution inbetween is possible.

The family just reaches the place, if the party has spent the night and is preparing to leave in the morning or they are already there, when the party comes in at dusk. They need rest and plan to stay until the next morning. Putting the weakened man (or the fatigued woman) to any meaningful work is impossible. He has carried the child most of the way and sometimes he even had to haul the goat.

For the GM: This family can be used to test the resolve or the true motives of the party before they reach the camp. Will they send these refugees to their death or will they help them survive? This preliminary encounter separates the refuge and religion storylines for a short while. If this is unnecessary or overly complicates the situation in your case, this encounter can be dropped. Although the backstory is rather detailed, it has no bearing on the main story arc.

Allies?

Shortly before arriving at the colony, the PCs will encounter a small group consisting of three mercenaries and a guide (who could be of Kuboran stock at GM discretion). They have been scouting the area to assess their options before making a move. The men-at-arms will suggest an alliance with the party, obscuring their real intentions and agreeing to help the PCs reach their goal whatever it may be. As the encounters with the colony play out, this group will spread rumors

and otherwise seek to undermine the PCs with the locals. They may betray the party as a GM option, probably at an inopportune time.

This group is intended to either improve the odds for the PCs or instead provide a suitable obstacle. The real intentions of this group and their chances of achieving it are solely for the GM to decide upon. If they GM feels the situation is already difficult enough as it is, the group can simply be used to add confusion.

Whatever the case may be, the GM should decide before-hand what his intents for these NPCs are, because already their initial reaction depends on that.

Assessing the situation

The party will eventually locate the colony, which was founded in a river valley just north and east of the Gominsen headwaters. The Hemorvus specifically picked this location, as it offers a plethora of advantages to help the colony survive.

It is far enough from any Hârníc realm, minimizing a chance of massed attack. Particular attention is paid in the direction of Rethem, as most of the refugees who come to the colony are escaping from there.

It's location lies in proximity to the Gargun colony of Yzug and the Mahnlin Kubora. The new colony is considered less a threat to the Kubora, and more an ally against the foulspawn. The Hemorvus has actually studied the Gargun recently, and knows the issues facing the colony at Yzug (see *Nasty, Brutish & Short*). He keeps this knowledge secret. (It's up to the GM if the disease ravaging the colony was actually introduced by the Hemorvus himself.)

The Kubora treat him with respect as the «man from the mountains» who has proven his mettle and otherwise ignore his presence just outside their mainland. He houses several Kuboran outcasts, and he made it clear to the tribes that they should not «acknowledge them as worthy opponents» by attacking the village. Remember that the Hemorvus king is a shrewd politician.

The water source is good and sufficient for the small colony. The stream can not be traveled by boat but is probably sufficient to power a small mill. The Hemorvus is seeking to attract a

proficient miller, guilded or not. The foothills provide sufficient precipitation to grow plentiful crops despite the harsh winters.

He has called his village *Neofites*, although the meaning is lost to all the villagers. Whether anybody can understand his intention with that name does not matter to him, he chose it to humor himself. Indeed, many fugitives call the Hemorvus himself *Nee of Ites* because of this, Ites apparently being his lost clan or the village he originally fled from. Oh, the horrors of being surrounded by fools!

Now get to work

When the PCs enter the village peacefully, they are greeted as fugitives (unless they are already known as supporters or refugee aids) and unless they appear too exhausted, are immediately asked to get to work. The community is described in the following section, there are a myriad things to do.

It should be obvious that everyone here is trying to keep the community alive and puts hard work into it. Any newcomer is expected to do the same

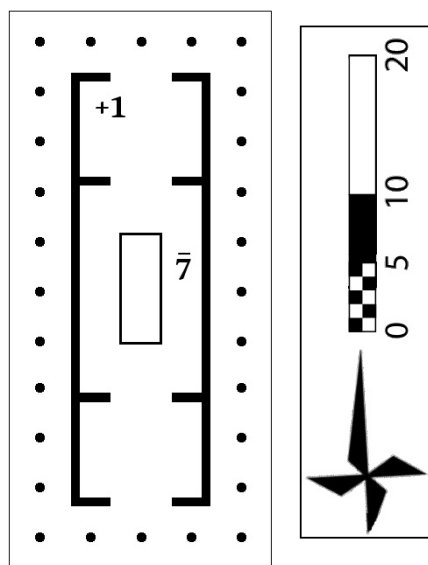
Depending on the reasons that the PCs came here, they may start doing something else entirely than what they were ordered to. Read through the community section to understand what individual NPCs will do, depending on circumstances. This list summarizes the main conflicts, which the PCs may use to their advantage or try to diffuse, depending on their intentions here.

These are not the gods you are looking for. Neither the renegade Kubora nor the more civilized Rethemi fugitives are particularly keen on worshiping the married couple. The Hemorvus had the temple built and showed some «divine» powers during that phase, so there is no denying that his faith has to be reckoned with. But the ancient customs of the classic pantheon and the Kuboran ancestors cannot be wrong either. Adhering to the faith of your elders becomes hard as you pay service to the Married Couple. Increasingly so, as rituals and theology seem to grossly violate all that was taught before. What shall you teach our children?

Lost Technology. The Hemorvus remembers a few minor technological improvements that are

unknown in Hârn and tend to make people feel awkward. While the king has not openly professed to being a Morvus, he has taught the village folk quite some tricks. The right mixture of sand and other minerals has lead to the creation of pretty flat surfaces and easy sculpting. This material may even turn out to be *concrete*. This is not of immediate importance but even this mundane technology creates an aura of a warlock about him. Maybe he should be burnt?

Free Spirits. The Hemorvus with his «unlife» has gained the interest of the spiriual world around the settlement. Minor tree spirits and fluttery «elves» sometimes haunt the village. This may be good or bad, as the spirits do not think in those categories, but it keeps the populace edgy. A mischievous pot dropping on your foot for no apparent reason can be just as disconcerting as a thornbush down the path that wasn't there yesterday. Maybe the settlement is cursed? Or the curse will be lifted, if the king leaves?



Old wine in new skins. The Hemorvus was a king and still considers himself to be one. He does not have the powers to force his claims, but he still has the haughtiness and the arrogance that comes when dealing with people several stations below you. The fugitives are not here for their own pleasure but only for his ends. When he considers it necessary, he will use fear and become ruthless. He is a politician aware of the conflicts in his camp

and he is able to use that. But his attitude leads to some inhabitants getting the impression that their lot in life has not improved at all. Maybe make a run for Jara to the north?

Local Map Key

1 The Temple. This structure will immediately strike the party as strange, as it resembles nothing else built on Hârn. (An interior map is given on this page.) Constructed from smoothed concrete, the interior building is surrounded by a colonade atop a slightly raised foundation. The north entry represents Peoni/Life, while the south symbolizes Morgath/Death; in the middle they are joined as the Married Couple. The walls are completely unadorned at this stage. Any priest with the ability to detect consecration can determine that the temple is consecrated to both Peoni and Morgath at the same time!

2 This small concrete house is where the Hemorvus king lives. He has no servants and often works alongside his tenants. The structure is essentially one big room with a small chamber set off to the side where he keeps his bed. The main room is intended to be a council chamber, but so far no official council or moot has been established.

3 The wall around the village has not been completed. Completed sections are composed of natural boundaries, packed stone, some concrete and wood. The Hemorvus initially set out to encircle the entire village but swiftly discovered that he lacked the raw stone materials for such a major project. His plan to augment it with wood is constrained by the limited manpower as his disposal. The populace considers an organized threat from Gargun or Kubora real and wants to be prepared, but they are busy just surviving and cannot spare time to build walls.

4 *Jerad of Leikas.* A Rethemi guilded woodcrafter who joined the colony because he could not advance beyond journeyman and was forced to work for one abusive master after another. Although he earns no coin here, at least he is respected. Unfortunately, his lack of advancement

8 Stay Behind



Stay Behind 9



in Rethem was not without cause: his skills are poor. He has just enough knowledge to complete the most basic tasks, but his constructions have yet to stand the test of time. He spends most of his days cutting down trees; in effect he is more of a timberwright than carpenter. His shed contains freshly cut wood that needs to cure. The son of Dorn (6) has found an interest in carpentry.

5 *Ergan of Fram*. This experienced farmer was the first peasant to join the colony. Viewed by the others as «founding father», he has advised the village on all aspects of tending crops and in all respects acts like the reeve of the community. He has neither wife nor child, but is interested in settling down if this colony becomes more stable. Despite his satisfaction with how things are progressing, he is uneasy about the Married Couple faith. While the King hasn't forced any villagers to convert, the temple is intimidating and Ergan is faithful to his Peonian belief. In his mind, the Married Couple pantheon is blasphemy and he would like to rededicate the temple to Peoni, expunging the Morgathian element. He is currently testing how far he can go with his religious «mutiny» without causing the king to anger.

Ergan is somewhat of an adventurer and a nightmare for feudal lords. He has chosen to run away out of his free will and not out of ill fortune. He simply met some visionary rogue on the streets one day and decided to gamble his literal life on the promises of the stranger. This stranger was the Hemorvus and he struck gold when he met Ergan that day.

6 *Dorn of Tessel* came here when he and his family were deported to another fief. It was a shady trade between two Agrikan lords, was all he was told, when they packed him in his cart and forced him to leave his land. It was against the law, but where to appeal to? The henchmen (11) of the king slaughtered the Rethemi men and fled with the farmer. With Dorn they took his family of three and some goats. They made sure that some local peasants saw everything and that's how the word started to spread. The man was not really thrilled

either way, and is content to work here. He is not sure whether his lot really improved, but he is not the revolting kind and can work the land with efficiency. His eight year old son is interested in carpentry and is often seen with Jerad (4).

7 *Inald of Uckin*. A former tenant farmer who lost his land in some gambit of the owners and turned rogue long ago. He spent over 5 years living on the fringes of Rethemi civilization, stealing and robbing to survive. Now in his 40s, he's looking to find a steadier place for himself. Having heard rumors about the colony, he found the location himself. He lives with Mara, a 17 year old mute Kuboran woman with latent psychic powers, a tribal outcast. He is not convinced that this colony will survive another winter, and believes the king's ambitions are too dangerous - merely using the villagers in an aristocratic powergame. If someone proposes a deal which improves his and Mara's position, he will take it.

8 *Hongan of Orpal*. This former half-villein, age 32, has brought his wife, who is now pregnant. They have fled from the Menekai area. Hongans uncle is the reeve of his former village and clan head. He shows a lot of remorse for fleeing. But he believes he had no other choice, when his father was killed by the lords ruffians and he, his son, was fined for depriving the lord of an able-bodied worker in the fields. After taking away some land as penalty, the lord had then hinted at taking away and remarrying his wife to a man «who could actually support a wife». When his uncle told him, he could not do anything for him, Hongan made the fateful decision to run away. He was supported on his flight by the guards (11) and now supports the king in everything. Hongan considers him a savior.

9 *Turkil of the Kubora*. A recent arrival and Kuboran outcast from the Kubora Vikoeri tribe. Accused of raping a woman from another clan, he eluded his pursuers for over a year while traversing the breadth of Peran. Having heard of

this community and the truce it has with the Mahnlin, he came here hoping to gain some protection; he still feels hunted and suffers from paranoia. Unfortunately, he is opposed to all the technology he sees and is especially wary of the temple, which he says has an aura of death (not incorrectly, in this case). He constantly mutters to himself and frequently lectures the others about how stone is not fit to live in. The villagers all view him with suspicion, which would probably turn violent if they were to learn of his past crimes.

10 *Kellan of the Kubora.* He was born with a deformed left hand, making him unable to wield shield or axe. He sought to become a shaman and spent years studying under an elder until one of his rituals went horribly wrong. Seen as a sign that he was abandoned by Krador and the spirit world, he was cast out from his tribe. He was one of the earliest arrivals to the colony, and taught the king much about Kuboran ways. He also supports the colony as a trapper and small game hunter. His shamanic attunement is still active, and he is aware that the natural spirits are restless around the village. He believes the «unnatural» temple is the source of the trouble, and he hopes the king will come to his senses regarding his religion. He recalls stories from his

teacher speaking of the spiritual unrest that accompanied Morgathian priests, but clearly this king is no Morgathian, right?

11 The original Gulmorvin guards are content to live together in this hut. Their former lives as nobles no longer matter to them and they are wholly dedicated to the survival and prosperity of the king. They will still go out on «hunting» expeditions, both for food and potential community members, but their main purpose is protecting their king. They are by far the most martially capable of the village and also retain their attitude, experience, and intelligence from their respective previous lives.

It may very well be possible that the Gulmorvin were killed in the previous adventure. In that case, the GM should staff this building with three loyal soldier types that do the king's bidding. It should not be difficult finding disenfranchised yeomen in any fief on the Rethem/Thardan border. You can surely see the connection to the first adventure and the side-story that is begging to be told.

This concludes the adventure proper. The next sections are explanatory paragraphs, attribute and skill values for the Morvin and references.



Theology

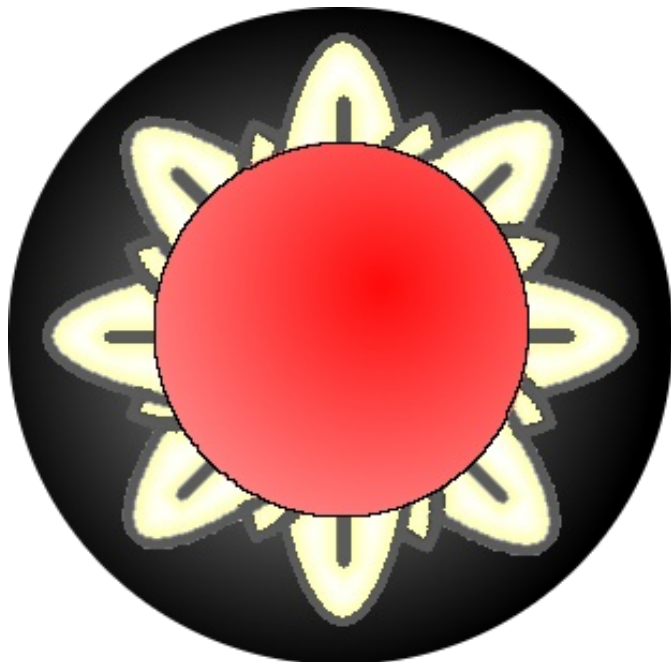
At around 1100 BT an ancient civilization adopted a religious doctrine that was unheard of before and died with that civilization at about 800 BT around three centuries later. The adoption was obviously not a sudden thing, but once the ruling class chose to follow the new way, the rest went along.

In a time when most other religions had not founded churches yet and established their own theology, religious leaders in the west of Heperkeria thought of the classic pantheon being headed by a *Married Couple*, a man and his wife. The man was known as Morgath and the wife as Peoni. (We choose the names a contemporary can most easily relate to; undoubtedly the ancient names were different.) Just as life was governed by

the forces of birth and death, so the couple reigned humanity as symbols of that duality. Morgath was the expression of death, loss, and grief; Peoni was the expression of fertility, birth and joy. Most other deities, indigenous or foreign, were considered children or younger siblings of these two. This includes all other gods that are both still worshipped today and have been in contact with this civilization. But neither current nor forgotten gods are of importance for the basic theology of the Married Couple.

The compound symbol of the religion was the flower of the Holishe. The ubiquitous nature of the plant, although it was rare, was seen as the ever presence of the two parental gods. It is used in many rituals of this religion.

The priesthood of this religion was open to



both men and women, but over time it became customary for women to be more concerned with the Peoni aspect, while men were likely to deal with the aspects of Morgath. Peoni healed wounds, tutored mid-wives and bonded marriages. Morgath accompanied the sick, performed burials and headed embalmings.

Just as birth and dying mark beginning and end of a life, so can dying and birth be seen as the beginning and end of death. Whether this includes rebirth or the transfer of souls (transmigration) was a matter of debate among the priests and such questions would be answered differently at different times. The religion was not free of accusations of heresy.

Some of the most unique rituals that evolved in this religion were those surrounding the Undead. Undead were not seen as bizarre beings, beings were either alive or dead. With the ritual, a transfer of life-essence from a living being to a dead being was initiated. Thus was tied the death of one to the birth of another. Since Morgath was involved, the beings that «benefit» from this are termed Morvin here. It is plausible that deprivations of these rituals turned into rituals that are used today to «create» Amorvin. For the ritual to work, the dead being must have retained a minimal life-essence as to prevent the passage of the soul. The crucial difference to the modern day

ritual was that at 1000 BT, the Morgathian priests in Hepekeria made sure that any sacrifice was always voluntary.

Usually that sacrifice was made to regain or retain the wisdom of a former king or advisor in dire need. Warriors were not resurrected as often in that manner, because the physical attributes of the dead were lost faster. Whatever the case, the limit to such resurrection rituals was five. There were other conditions at the time of transfer besides voluntary sacrifice that made ritual attempts rare. This did not stop influential people from preparing themselves for reawakening regularly. Almost all kings prepared for this as did many men and women considered wise in their original life time.

Gulmorvin also figure in this religion. They were mostly buried together with a high ranking figure as honor guard. Since any Morvin life was seen as an extension of another life that was forfeit in its place, the Gulmorvin were mostly guards that agreed to die now and awake later to play their role when needed. Effectively this put their life in stasis. Their abilities suffered in the process, but usually not as great as with modern Gulmorvin. Hemorvus on the other hand, often improved their abilities as they added another life to their own.

Needless to say that if any of this were discussed with a contemporary priest of whatever convocation it would constitute the gravest of heresies and blasphemies and would not be tolerated. An inquisition into a church crime is highly likely in that case. Books with content of that nature will be burnt immediately by any priest – likely including Save K'norrians.

Some players with a deeper knowledge of Hârnc may consider this religion incompatible with the way the gods are portrayed in canon publications. Remember that the knowledge of the gods as described in the rules is meta-knowledge of the players, not available to characters. It is entirely within the bounds of Hârnc rules to have different aspects of gods and different rituals, particularly, if they have been lost in time. I also refer to the controversy around the canon *Dead of Winter*, which made clear that meta-knowledge is not available to characters in the world and can be bent, proving the point.

Nonetheless, it may still be interesting to consider the repercussions of the current invocation of the life transfer on Peoni and Morgath and potentially the other gods. What is their position on this? Is it an unwelcome memory of their past when they were not a divorced couple that have separated in raging anger? Is it a reminder that they once ruled the world jointly? They may just consider themselves to be bound by the *concordat* and grudgingly honor the rituals. I personally find it interesting to view the *concordat of the gods* as an elaborate divorce settlement in Siem's court.

The genesis of the gods is left for the GM to explain, of course, if necessary for his campaign. It would be a natural way for this religion to have formed from nature spirits as they morph more into more human form, possible with influence from ancestral worship. The malign and benign aspects had not been separated in the spirit world yet and only with the married couple are they being decomposed. This may be a different route than mainstream religion has taken or even mainstream religion may have formed after the couple had been forgotten or considered «wrong» by individual religious leaders. Both are possible.

A GM interested in the genealogy of deities and religions is referred to the *Summa Venariva* publication, which provides ways to incorporate this theology to the fringes of official Venarive doctrines. As a last thought, I'd like to point out that this religion may consider Agrik and Larani spoiled children that are constantly at each others throat. Warring and fighting is considered beneath the station of the adherents of the «true» couple. While this seems like a sympathetic touch to the religion, it may well have been the downfall of the civilization that professed this religion. The more warlike neighbors did not consider purposely killing non-willing sacrifices as against the will of their gods. This «spoiled, misbehaving brats» view may still be present in the last Hemorvus known to be alive.

Culture

Not much needs to be said about the culture, most is left to the GM's imagination. But there are some key points to keep in mind.

First, despite this module's focus, the society was not especially obsessed with death and elaborate burial customs. Life and death cycles were certainly important, and central to the state religion, but not in excess than other cultures from that same era.

Second, the culture held reverence for all things stone and earth. They produced extremely proficient masons, architects and sculptors. A very small elite practiced stone magic (the principles of Pvarism had yet to be codified) and fanciful legends see these wizards crumbling the walls of cities or raising towering spires with arcane commands.

Third, rulership and power were concentrated in tangible manifestation. For this culture, that meant constructing buildings, temples or tombs atop high ground, in effect claiming dominion over all beneath it.

Fourth, the city state was the political norm, and the rulers were noble priests who led the state religion. Though skill in stonemasonry could elevate a practitioner above their birth class, in other respects society was strictly stratified. Remember this when roleplaying the Hemorvus; he must be somewhat uncomfortable directly interacting with common folk as he would have been shielded from that in his previous life.

Lastly, crime and punishment would be roughly equivalent to the Harnic norm, minus any of the feudal trappings. Exile or compensation was the preferred punishment for social/economic crimes; corporal punishments were warranted for physical crimes.

Hemorvin - Stay Behind

The important information for this adventure is repeated here. Read the *Lost Generation* and *The Lucky Few* for more details on the Hemorvin.

The Hemorvin and the Hepekerian Gulmorvin do not age slower than regular humans. Any additional age or lifespan is received from the sacrifice. The Gulmorvin of Hepekeria are intelligent and free-willed. They are bound to the Hemorvin by a sacred oath, however, and will obey any order from him. Whether they can be controlled by Morgathian rituals is unknown, but it seems possible, since their original creation

process was Morgathian in nature. An order from the Hemorvus would always take precedence.

The Hemorvin and Hepekerian Gulmorvin cannot enter any area consecrated to any god but Morgath or Peoni. Both creatures suffer wounds regularly but are not affected by fatigue and shock rolls. They die when Injury levels exceed END. Slain Hemorvin and Hepekerian Gulmorvin die as regular humans do.

The rules regarding AUR and SHA apply to Hemorvin as they do to Amorvin. The extent of the Bukrai from an Hemorvus is six feet during his

dormant and semi-dormant phase and zero after the ritual of awakening.

Hemorvin use Shadow Conflict as Mental Conflict, a separate Shadow Strength does not exist. Neither do they use Bukrai Points (BPs). They also do not sacrifice to *Klyss*, they accrue piety to the holy pair Morgath/Peoni as any human would. A resting place is not needed currently and they receive no benefit from it. The Hepekerian Morvin live «normally». Hemorvin do not use Bukrai blades nor are they reincarnated should they be killed in any phase.



Hemorvus

Str	12	Eye	16	Int	15
Sta	12	Hrg	12	Sha	16
Dex	12	Sml	12	Wil	15
Agl	12	Voi	13	Mor	12
Cml	13	End	13	Mov	12

Skills

Acting/80, Agriculture/30, Awareness/66, Climbing/57, Condition/71, Dancing/43, Drawing/49, Folklore (Old Hepekeria)/92, Intrigue/87, Jumping/60, Mathematics/44, Oratory/56, Physician/33, Rhetoric/63, Riding/76, Shadow Conflict/75, Singing/38, Stealth/45, Survival/55, Throwing/65

Languages/Scripts

Azeri/19, Hârníc/37, Korlic/54, Numec/35, Old Numec/89, Trierzi/39, Khuzdul/15; Ayaran/42, Lakise/45, Tianti/25, Runic/15, Hekori (Script)/86

Religion

Ritual (Holy Pair)/32, Piety/36

Combat

Initiative/87, Unarmed/57, Dodge/70, Dagger/56, Shield (round)/60, Sword (falchion)/65

Armor/Weapons

High quality cloth robe, leggings, and cloak, Leather knee boots and gauntlets, Great helm, Kurbul cowl, gambeson, and hauberk, dagger, round shield and falchion

Gulmorvus

Str	12	Eye	10	Int	10
Sta	13	Hrg	10	Sha	10
Dex	12	Sml	10	Wil	12
Agl	12	Voi	06	Mor	10
Cml	06	End	13	Mov	10

Skills

Animalcraft (Horse)/34, Climbing/69, Drawing/36, Embalming/33, Folklore (Old Hepekeria)/51, Herblore/30, Intrigue/78, Oratory/37, Physician/37, Rhetoric/48, Riding/40, Shadow Conflict/71, Survival/42, Weaponcraft/25, Weatherlore/43

Languages/Scripts

Old Numec (Language)/76, Khuzdul/10, Runic/10, Hekori (Script)/83

Religion

Ritual (Holy Pair)/39, Piety/25

Combat

Dodge/45, Initiative/51, Unarmed/40, Spear/85, Dagger/65, Sword (Falchion)/65, Shield (round)/70

Armor/Weapons

Kurbul Halfhelm, Leather Coif, Cloth Tunic, Kurbul Hauberk, Linen Surcoat, Linen Breaches, Leather Calf Boots



The Hepekerian Gulmorvin still have INT and WIL and do not serve Klyss directly but the Hemorvus they have sworn to defend. Should they survive their Hemorvus, they will turn into regular Gulmorvin immediately. Otherwise they have regular human senses.

These Gulmorvin do not engage in Shadow Conflict unless explicitly ordered. Any results thereof are as for the Hemorvin itself, except that they cannot extend their own life or the life of their master or brethren this way. They engage in conflict as they did in their original life. As Hemorvin and Amorvin, they are hard to distinguish from regular humans. Due to their servient nature, they appear to lack personality and they overall appear sullen and unlively.

References

The following background material, available from *Columbia Games*, *Kelestia Productions*, and *Lythia.com*, can provide more insight into the setting. The adventure is written such that you do not need to read any of it but the colorful atmosphere can greatly add to the enjoyment of adventures such as this. It goes without saying that Hârn maps are invaluable assets.

Columbia Games: *Harn Religion - Kingdom of Rethem - Nasty, Brutish & Short - Peran - Rayeshas - Thard River*

Kelestia Productions: *Summa Veneriva*

Fanon: *All Dark Rethem Adventures - The Thard*

How do Hârnians react to a reborn king?
Cleanse an undead abomination from the island
or let a self-proclaimed religion of harmony
rekindle a thriving community.