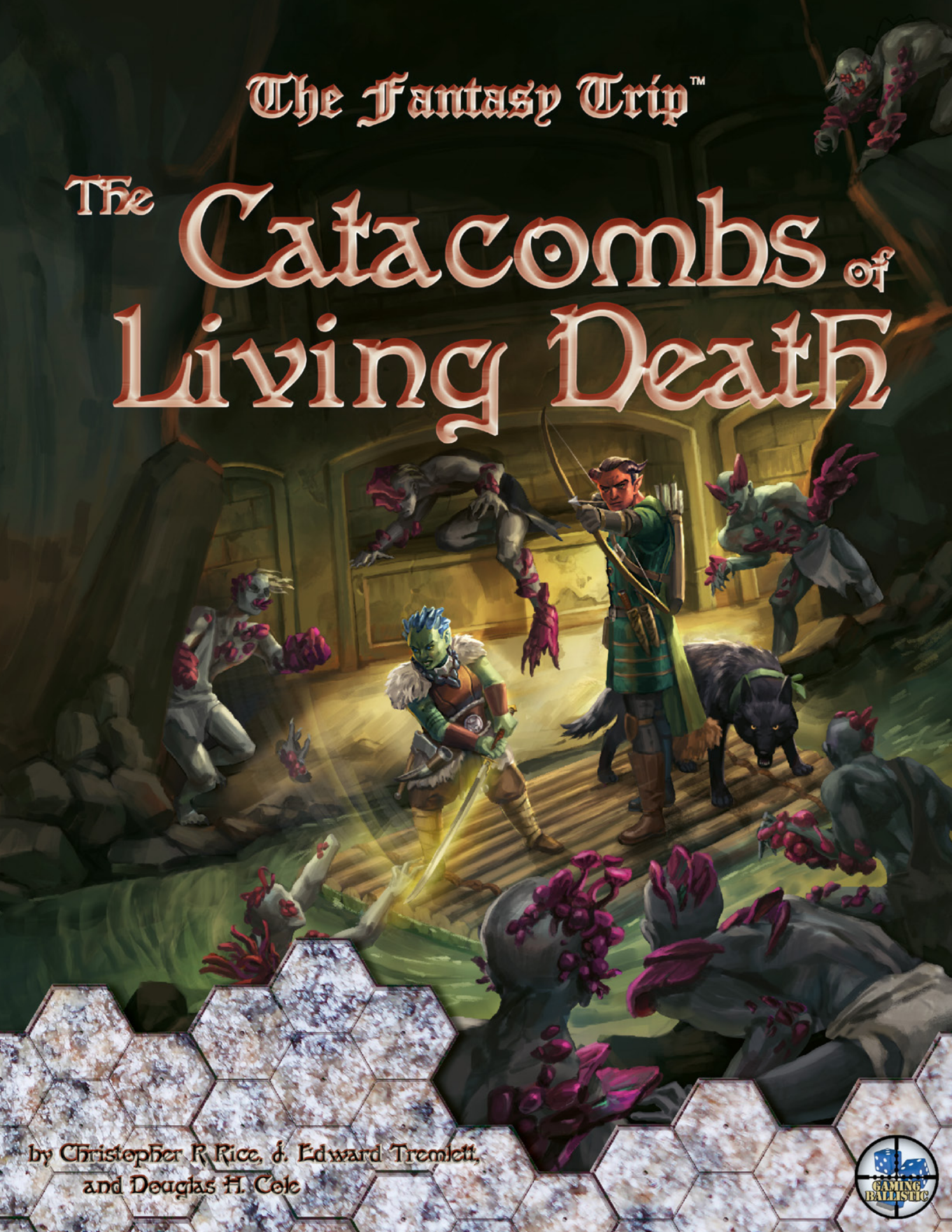


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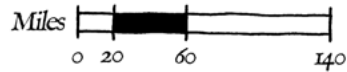
The Catacombs of Living Death



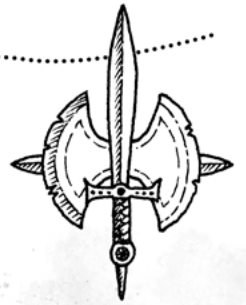
by Christopher R. Rice, d. Edward Tremlett,
and Douglas H. Cole



REGIONAL MAP



NORTH

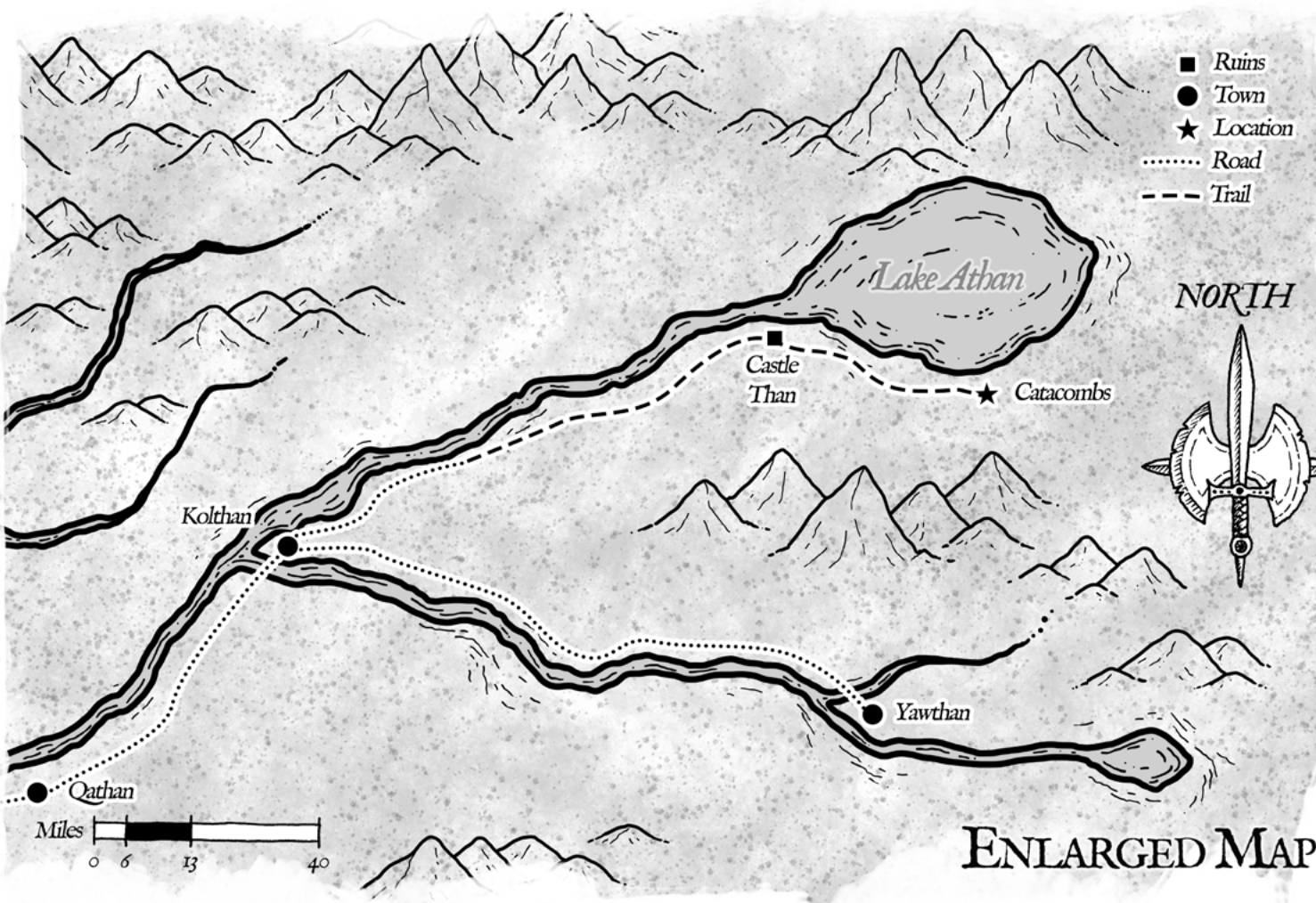
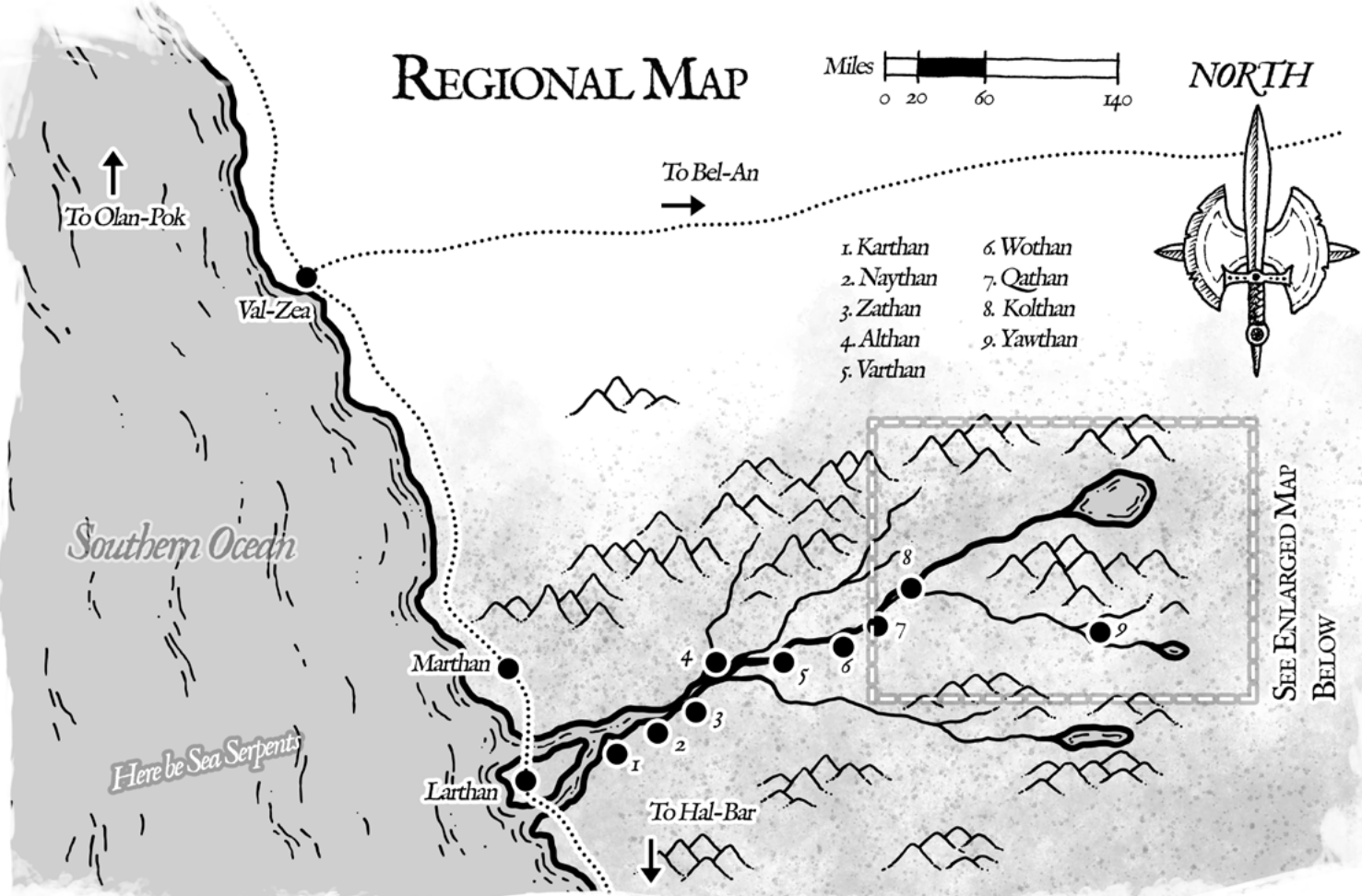


To Bel-An



- | | |
|------------|------------|
| 1. Karthan | 6. Wothan |
| 2. Naythan | 7. Qathan |
| 3. Zathan | 8. Kolthan |
| 4. Althan | 9. Yawthan |
| 5. Varthan | |

SEE ENLARGED MAP
BELOW

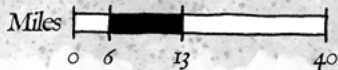


NORTH



- Ruins
- Town
- ★ Location
- Road
- - - Trail

ENLARGED MAP



The Fantasy Trip™

Catacombs of Living Death



WRITTEN BY J. EDWARD TREMLETT, CHRISTOPHER R. RICE, AND DOUGLAS H. COLE

PRODUCED BY DOUGLAS H. COLE

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Background

Catacombs of Living Death follows Crown of Eternity, Curse of the Pirate King, and **ROC OF SAGES**. These adventures introduced the party's seemingly scatterbrained patron Jok C. Sevantes. They also featured the somewhat omnipresent and always threatening Indhyna League which collects powerful magical artifacts, and the port and trading city of Olan-Pok.

In Catacombs, Sevantes summons the party to pursue yet another legendary treasure, the **Helm of Baat**. Unfortunately, his current quarry lies within the Catacombs of Eulogia in Athan, a kingdom recently stricken by a virulent plague. Jok needs the party's help immediately, as he's been dragooned into service trying to cure a disease he had a clandestine hand in creating.

The party must journey to the kingdom of **Athan** and go upriver into the face of danger. This is no ordinary malady: The plague spreads by animated fungal zombies that target intelligent beings. The Helm promises relief to the diseased realm of Athan...and brings Jok's own plans closer to fruition. (Mua ha ha!)

Key Players

Jok seeks the *Helm of Baat* for his own needs, using the PCs as his hands; other factions work in the background; both are described below. Jok's plans, in motion for years, start to congeal.

THE ARCANE ARCHAEOLOGIST

Formerly a member of the **Indhyna League**, recently the League is looking kill Sevantes...for good reasons.

Jok Sevantes

The arcane archaeologist is more than a former Collector for the League. A deeply informed researcher, powerful wizard, and capable field agent, Sevantes has a long history of locating and acquiring both valuable magical artifacts and lost and hidden lore. He came to the belief that two bickering factions of the League are *both* misguided.

Jok's talents include **Scholar**, **Alchemy**, and **Naturalist**; he's a potent spellcaster and knows the secret of making **Paired Parchments** which he uses to maintain a substantial and far-flung intelligence network. He name-drops the League and works through proxies wherever he can to lay false trails.

Sevantes set two important minions in motion before his departure to Klee-Artha prior to the events in **CROWN OF ETERNITY**. One was Eiter, who perished in flames during the events of **ROC OF SAGES**.

Jok sought out the other, Alvich Dalmhand—always through proxies and cut-outs, claiming to be “on League business”—seeking a way to clear the **Catacombs of Eulogia** of trouble, both human and duerch. Instead of sending in stealthy expeditions like the League, Sevantes would walk in and take the Helm, relying on an alchemical antidote combined with an **Amulet Against Disease** to protect him from the plague.

He arrived in Larthan secretly and remarkably quickly under the pseudonym “Doctor Lazar,” assuming it would grant him some level of credibility and access to the nobility.

The title proved ill-chosen: It got him pressed into service at the castle instead. He now must carefully advise the royal physicker, Simon Luke, *without* revealing his own role in the plague, using what little antidote he has to reverse-engineer a cure.

Jok summons help *immediately* upon learning Dalmhand's **Red Wind Plague** is spreading unchecked through Athan.

JOK C. SEVANTES

ST 13, DX 12 (adjDX 14), IQ 19, MA 10.

Talents: Alchemy, Charisma, Literacy, Naturalist, Scholar, Scribe, Writing.

Spells: Delete Writing, Duplicate Writing, Lesser Magic Item Creation, Lock/Knock, Long-Distance Teleport, Mage Sight, Remove Cursed Object, Reveal/Conceal, Reverse Missile, Scrying, Spell Shield, Spellsniffer, Staff II/Manastaff, Summon Myrmidon, Teleport, Wizard's Wrath, Write Scroll.

Languages: Common, Dwarvish, Sorcerers' Tongue.

Equipment: Amulet Against Disease (worn as a cloak pin), Iron Flesh ring, Charm (+1) bracelet, Ring of Increased DX (+2) ring. He carries an ornate hickory walking stick as a **Staff**, charged with 19 mana. His magic items are *each* protected by four **Conceal** spells. He knows how to make **Paired Parchments** (**HEXAGRAM #1, P. 36**).

Back at the Villa: Jok has been seeking out powerful magic items for years. He didn't bring them with him to Athan... but picks up choice items—including his true wizard's staff—prior to the final journey to **THE SUNKEN LIBRARY**.

Alvich Dalmhand

Alchemist, dabbler, scholar, and troublemaker for hire. He directs his knowledge of healing, physiology, and disease into mad experiments he judges perfectly reasonable.

At what he believed was the League's request (and generous funding), Dalmhand modified a “zombie fungus” that afflicts ants and cicadas south of **Yawthan** into a plague

Places of Import

This section serves as a detailed legend for Athan and its settlements. The settlements are only given a dash of flavor, acknowledging each is simply a waypoint on the journey to the Catacombs. The towns of Athan are listed as they appear traveling upstream from Larthan to the Catacombs.

OLAN-POK

Olan-Pok—the infamous City of Jewels—acts as the northern gateway to the southern continent. It is said nearly anything that exists can be purchased there. It perches on the edge of the Desert of Vrel, filled with bandits, slavers, and worse. Jok “suggested” the heroes who helped him during the events of *ROC OF SAGES* unload their feathers, eggs, and any other loot in Olan-Pok’s world-renowned open-air markets. Jok headed directly to Larthan.

VAL-ZEA

The city-state of Val-Zea was a significant power before its famed gemstone mines closed 150 years ago. Now it serves as a waystation between Olan-Pok and Larthan, and a gateway to the cities across the Southern Ocean. It is still a significant city, with strong walls and bustling trade...but it is a shabby memory of what it once was. The Emir has closed Val-Zea against the plague spreading out of Larthan.

ATHAN

The Christian realm of Athan is several hundred years old, a forested realm located between Val-Zea and Hal-Bar. A nigh-impassible mountain range covers the north approach, with well-known passes only near the coast. The Southern Ocean marks the west border, and the fast-flowing Right River blends with the mighty but slower Royal River to form the southern border of the realm. All in all, the Royal House of Athan holds sway over 40,000 square miles and perhaps 600,000 souls, mostly scattered through the countryside.

Athan’s terrain is lush and ranges from “forest” in the north to “jungle” in the south. The realm is both insular and self-sufficient. Athan is a vigorous exporter of forest products (from bow staves to planks for shipbuilding to fine furniture) as well as foodstuffs, including high quality liquors. It’s a popular stop for coastal traders.

The main settlements along the Royal and Right Rivers—the obvious pathway to reach the Catacombs of Eulogia—list their current and usual populations, followed by the overall reaction rolls of both Royal Knights and the population when encountering strangers or using the **Shopping** table.

The duerch burrowed into the eastern part of the kingdom a century ago, seeking the *Helm of Baat*.

Marthan (Pop: 14,000+/7,000; Reactions: -2)

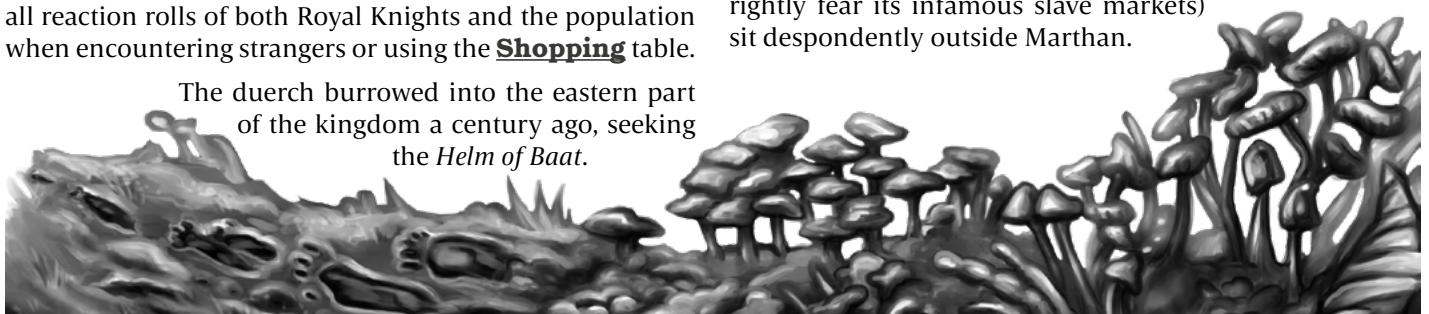
Two hundred miles south of Val-Zea, a range of jagged peaks stretches inland from the Southern Ocean, and a lush, verdant landscape stretches to the south. Tucked between the ocean and the mountains is Marthan, lying 60 miles north of Larthan. Athan uses Marthan as a customs station, examining and taxing goods under the watchful eyes of well-connected **Royal Knights**.

Sea of Humanity: At least double the usual population squats in ramshackle tents or open-air campsites around the walled town. An air of siege and desperation cloaks the town. Refugees lie exhausted, destitute, or injured from wild flight from the interior of Athan. Many pray fervently for relief that will not come. Periodically, unhinged ascetics whip themselves bloody and set themselves on fire before a crucifix, attempting to purge with fire sins their scourges will not touch.

It’s Customary: At the north end of the town, six Royal Knights and 20 retainers search for signs of disease in the few travelers coming south with goods or offering services. They levy a tax of 10% on durable goods, and take one-sixth of all consumable items (including personal rations) as involuntary charity for the thousands of refugees surrounding the town. Those who will not pay the tax may not proceed south. They warn non-Christians against proselytizing, and when that is finished, hand over a low-value metal coin with an image of a bridge stamped on it. “Don’t lose it; present it to the bridge guards at Larthan to cross.”

Here to Help: The Knights and their retainers are harried and their eyes are haunted; they see the end of their realm in the seething mass of humanity before them. A party heading south to fight the plague receives the gratitude and vocal blessing of the senior knight and an escort through the throng of humanity to the road south...which is mostly filled with refugees headed *north*.

Bare Larder: Marthan is starving as refugees flood north. Rumors that Val-Zea has closed its gates to travelers (true) have reached the settlement, and any who do not have the financial or intestinal fortitude to venture to Olan-Pok (or rightly fear its infamous slave markets) sit despondently outside Marthan.



Provisions: Under the name of “Dr. Lazar,” Sevantes produces a note saying the bearers of the document should be allowed passage upriver by barge. The document is worth +2 to reaction rolls for the unaligned or the king’s faction, but –2 from the queen’s.

A Skeptical Physicker

At an opportune moment soon after the characters’ arrival, Luke diverts the characters into an audience chamber. He demands to know who they are and what “Dr. Lazar” wants from them. He questions their origins, ties to “Lazar,” and their knowledge of Athan and its troubles. The heroes’ responses determine if he is sympathetic, hostile, or vengeful.

Sympathetic: If they’re sympathetic, indulge Luke’s need to vent, and agree that yes, “Dr. Lazar” is an unctuous ass, it earns the party an offer. If they find materials to fabricate the antidote and deliver them to Luke rather than Lazar, Luke will provide royal passes to ease their way. These gold discs imprinted with the King’s seal allow resupply at Royal Waystations, though durable goods must be returned. In the current chaos, the ability to lay claim to well-trained horses and wagons, commandeered barges, and obtain travel supplies is in ferocious demand. Requests for provisions made with the gold discs in hand are at +2 to reaction rolls.

Hostile: Luke is predisposed to be antagonistic to anyone allied with the Queen or Lazar. He reacts negatively to courses of action originating with Sevantes. He begrudgingly acknowledges that samples of the plague fungus would help; the more he steers the effort, the less hostile he is.

Vengeful: If the party blows him off or is rude, they make a vengeful enemy (See **Action and Consequence**). If he discovers the party members already have a cure, Luke rages and sets the **Royal Knights** to meet with Lazar and any companions. The agenda includes summary execution.

A Royal Audience

It is possible, if unlikely, that the party’s actions become important to the king or queen. If so, the characters called before the royal will be “asked” to pledge loyalty to that faction. It takes a very skillful demurral to avoid wrath if they say no. Avoiding the summons by bravely running away might be wise.

- **The King:** The king wants the plague ended and the ascetic faction quelled. Both of these are in the heroes’ best interests. A desperate monarch might look to capable expendables to arrange an (ahem) permanent separation with his ever-estranged wife.
- **The Queen:** A religious fanatic and charismatic power broker, the queen also wants the plague quelled, but believes it can only happen through proper religious devotion. She is ruthless, and it’s not the first time she’s swum dangerous waters. An interview that goes poorly makes a very formidable enemy who commands throngs of fanatics.





The Red Plague

Following the events of *Roc of Sages*, the always acquisitive Jök Sevantes again calls stalwart adventurers to aid him in his efforts to find and recover valuable arcane artifacts.

This time, they must venture forth and travel through a plague-stricken land. Surviving the journey, the heroes must enter the Catacombs of Eulogia and recover the powerful Helm of Baat.

Simple enough...but things are not always as they appear. Nothing that powerful sits unguarded and unwatched: The present owners are certain to object strenuously.

Catacombs of Living Death is for 4-6 characters of 36-38 points. While designed to follow *Crown of Eternity*, *Curse of the Pirate King*, and *Roc of Sages*, it can be played by itself with some adjustment.

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