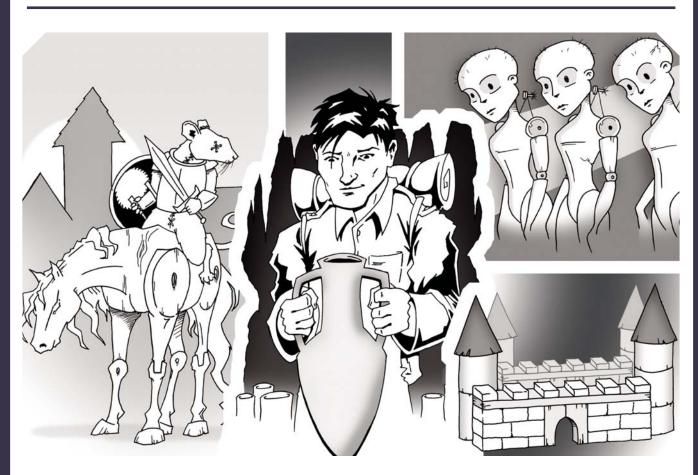
Fourth Edition

# PHABET RCAN



Written by STEFAN JONES **Edited by NIKOLA VRTIS** Illustrated by ALEX FERNANDEZ

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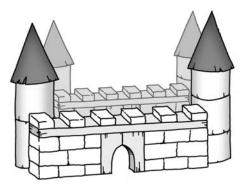
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## CONTENTS

Introduction	K is for Knock-Down
About the Author 3	BLOCKS
A IS FOR ANNALS OF	L IS FOR LUNAR BOOTS 18
Count Katydid 4	M is for Mice, Mounted 19
B is for Block	N IS FOR NARMUD
Print Charms 5	Market Circus 20
C is for Coyote Helm7	O IS FOR OAT CAKE KIT23
D is for Draw	P IS FOR PRIMORDIAL GROVE 23
Together Shards9	Q is for Quintessence 25
E is for Essum's Barge9	R IS FOR RANDOM BENCHES 25
F is for Fabulous Pavilion 11	S IS FOR SHORTCUT
G is for Gross of	SIGNPOSTS
PICKLED PRIVATES 13	T IS FOR TAVERN PUZZLE 27
H is for Helpful Doll15	U is for Unbelievably
I is for Immobilizing Kitty 16	OLD BEER
J is for Justice of	V is for Vanderlan's
THE KANOST 16	Fabulous Armory29

W is for Wolf Scroll 31
X is for Xao-Qui Necks 32
Y IS FOR YURT BUTTON
VEST33
Z is for Zokkee's
Papyrus Companies 34
INDEX



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GURPS System Design ■ STEVE JACKSON GURPS Line Editor ■ SEAN PUNCH e23 Manager ■ STEVEN MARSH Page Design ■ PHIL REED and JUSTIN DE WITT Managing Editor ■ PHILIP REED
Art Director ■ WILL SCHOONOVER
Production Artist ■ NIKOLA VRTIS
Indexer ■ NIKOLA VRTIS
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## INTRODUCTION

This resource for *GURPS Fantasy* campaigns provides adventure seeds, curious characters, and unusual artifacts. Some are trivial items, useful as red herrings and humorous diversions. Others are objects of staggering power.

Because they vary greatly in clout, cultural assumptions, and tone, not all of these items will be suitable for every campaign. You might employ them when the adventurers travel to lands (or worlds) beyond the usual campaign setting.

#### LANDS BEYOND

Many of the entries refer to unfamiliar nations, lands, and peoples. Most are the fantastic or mythologized equivalents of actual places and cultures on medieval or ancient Earth. The intent is to provide a bit of color, cultural background, and legend-quality "weight." The GM should substitute his campaign's equivalent.

A brief description of these lands follows; they are tagged with the letter of the entries in which they appear.

The default location for the entries is a region of European character. Lacron (V), Norfon (C) and the homeland of Count Vanderlan (V) are small kingdoms. The port of Erutappet (F, T) is located on the east end of the Mediterranean.

The kingdom of Moranx (U), the necropolis of Nehr (D), and the city-state of Salybos (N) are long-lost ancient places, located in the equivalent of Mesopotamia. Larshum (H) is a later Middle Eastern kingdom; it is a sometimes rival of Cheo (H), a stand-in for ancient Egypt.

The Leopard Emperor's lost realm (G) thrived long ago in central Africa.

In Central Asia, or its equivalent, can be found the plains of Doromi and Kyangi and the city of Kanost (J); the home village of Condor Boy (K, L, O, Y); and the mountains from which Guruka Hemay (B) stages his raids. The Silk Road (called here the "Spice Trail") passes not far from these places, as well as the remote Panner Wastes (L) and the monastery of the Xao-Qui Brotherhood (X).

Nian-Cho (F, H, I) and Arowundee (B) are Asian nations. Su-Dwar (A) is an isolated archipelago as far to the east as you can go without going off of the edge of the map, and possibly the edge of the world. It is a stand-in for Japan; not the actual place, but how it might have been imagined by a 15th-century European eager for tales of curious customs and fabulous treasure.

### Who Is This Kid?

Pick a child at random, and ask him if he has heard about Condor Boy. He'll look puzzled . . . not because he doesn't know *all about* Condor Boy, but because it's hard to imagine anyone who *wouldn't*.

This book assumes that every country in the campaign has its own Condor Boy stories. Many are variants of local legends and tall tales. But one adventure – Condor Boy's journey to the far edge of the world – is told everywhere, and it is not a story; it actually happened, ages ago. The celestial beings who sent him on this quest gave him many magical gifts. Several of these boons are described here (see pp. 18-19, 23, 33).

The wild land where the Coyote Helm (C) was discovered was home to warring empires with an ancient pre-Columbian flavor. This is also the location of "." Is for Full-Stop Drum, found in **Pyramid** #3/1.

### LANDS BEYOND BEYOND

A few entries (E, Q) refer to the Celestial Sphere. The stars, planets, comets, and other heavenly bodies float through this unearthly realm. It is also home to a civilization of beings who direct heavenly phenomena. While they are of a higher order than earth-bound humans, and receive directions from the gods, these "celestials" are not divine in nature.

The Celestial Sphere may be literally up in the sky. This is likely the case in cosmologies involving flat earths and enormous turtles. Reaching the place could require a magical ladder, a flying carpet, or a harness tethered to a flock of swans.

The Celestial Sphere could also be a parallel plane whose objects magically correspond to heavenly bodies. In this case, a Gate spell will be required to send Essum the star pilot (and the burned-out star Shemhault; see pp. 9-11) home.

Condor Boy (see box) visited many fantastic places during his adventures, including the Gates of Night (through which the sun passes at dusk) and a monastery floating beyond the edge of the world. Like the Celestial Sphere, these could be an integral part of the campaign world's cosmology . . . or may only exist in a parallel world of myth and legend.

## LANGUAGES AND CULTURAL FAMILIARITY

The Cultural Familiarities of NPCs list generic "real world" equivalents. When an NPC's native culture is long gone, there still may be some circumstances in which he benefits from his experience; some things never change. The person also knows enough about life in the old days to get a small bonus (+2) for the default History skill for that time and place.

Some characters are listed as knowing a *lingua franca* or a *trade language*. A *lingua franca* is a widely used language known by scholars, leaders, and educated merchants. In classic times, Greek was a *lingua franca* all around the Eastern Mediterranean. Latin had its time in the sun in medieval Europe.

A *trade language* is a tongue used by a region's merchants. It may be a pidgin, creole, or simplified dialect of a formal language. Sailors and port city street urchins may know a few words of it. Arabic was a trade language from North Africa to Malaysia for centuries; Persian was useful along the Silk Road. Spanish was a trade tongue in the age of sail; English is a trade language of sorts today.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

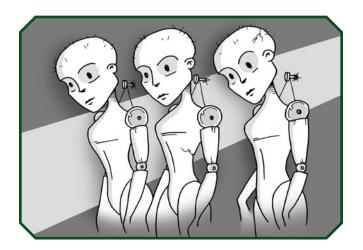
Stefan Jones has been writing adventure gaming material since 1981, including *GURPS MacGuffin Alphabet*. His life has been uneventful, except for the time a burn tried to set him on fire. He lives in a suburb of Portland, Oregon.

## H IS FOR HELPFUL DOLL

Not all kings take living servants to the grave with them. The ancient peoples of Cheo created realistic sculptures called *hippaya* (on Earth, the ancient Egyptians called them *ushabti*). They would come to life in the next world and serve the resurrected dead. The cheapest hippaya were made of unglazed, sun-hardened clay. Premium models were designed using wood, glazed ceramic, and metal.

When Princess Ushirpot of Larshum was betrothed to Prince Han-Lam of Cheo, her father commissioned a magnificent addition to her dowry-trove: 57 quite extraordinary hippaya. The cubit-tall figures had tailored clothing, real hair on their heads, and real teeth in their mouths. Most remarkably, a certain sound or action would transform the figure into an animated servant capable of real work. Each had its own specialty; while not remarkably competent, the servants required no food or drink and were wonderfully obedient. A second key sound or action turned the domestic back into an inanimate doll.

The hippaya were claimed by Urshipot's new mother-inlaw, Empress-Dowager Pohuoato. This sour, demanding woman was obsessed with mortality and her place in the next world. Pohuoato ordered the servants be animated for inspection. After a stern group lecture, Pohuoato interviewed each one in turn. They were then marched to her splendid tomb in the mountains, assembled in a dim ante-chamber, and deactivated.



The empress-dowager inspected her tomb and its treasures every year. After she became bedridden, she delegated the task to a trusted advisor . . . one who didn't deserve her trust. He lent the hippaya to courtiers, imperial magicians, and the priests who managed the royal tombs. The dolls learned many secrets during this service, including the locations of treasure caches and the details of magical rituals.

Three master records of the hippaya's activation codes were made. One was reserved in the workshop in Larshum where the statues were crafted and enchanted. Another was kept in Pohuoato's residence. The final scroll was encased in a leather tube and placed in the empress-dowager's sarcophagus, so she could command the dolls when she woke in the next world.

What became of the empress-dowager's soul is unknown, but when her tomb was looted a century after her death, its treasures were there for the taking. Some of the hippaya were removed by the first thieves, for inclusion in other prestigious burials. The rest were taken several hundred years later, when the tomb was rediscovered. By this time, the purpose and properties of the hippaya were forgotten; the new thieves thought that they'd discovered artwork of marginal value. But marginal is better than nothing; the statues were shipped to curio dealers across the sea.

About two dozen of the magic servants survive intact. Many reside in tombs and curio collections. Two, at least, are regularly brought to life. One is a sturdy gardener kept as a diversion by the residents of a royal harem. A temple in Nian-Cho has a seamstress hippaya. In addition to maintaining the monks' robes, she is used as a stage prop in an annual religious mystery play.

### **HIPPAYA**

The useful dolls are a kind of golem, a tireless animated servant. When activated, they are encased in an "illusion of life" that makes them look like living, slightly undersized humans.

Hippaya are meek, compliant, and attentive; they speak deferentially, with elaborate courtly manners. When lashed (an acceptable treatment for slaves in Cheo and Larshum), they are programmed to groan and grovel.

Hippaya obey whoever activates them. They only understand the ancient tongues of Larsham and Cheo, but very simple requests can be made by Gesture.

The spell to create Hippaya has been lost for thousands of years. It only worked on elaborate figures, not mere slabs of clay.

Hippaya damaged in their fragile doll form have the corresponding deformity when activated; it is common for them to have missing digits, limbs, or eyes. Cosmetic scratches and marks are concealed by the illusion of life. Damage to a hippaya must be repaired by a craftsman who has the Artist (Pottery) skill. The clay, paint, wood, and cloth must be enchanted with the Golem spell (or the ancient Hippaya spell, if it is discovered or reinvented). The enchantment requires 5 points of energy and costs \$100 per point for repair materials used.

**ST** 9; **DX** 8; **IQ** 8; **HT** 8.

Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9; Will 8; Per 8. Basic Speed 4.50; Basic Move 4; Dodge 7. 4"10' to 5"; 90-125 lbs.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Automaton; Cannot Learn; Doesn't Breathe, Doesn't Eat or Drink; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (Homogeneous, No Blood); Reprogrammable; Single-Minded; Social Stigma (Valuable Property); Unaging; Unhealing; Vacuum Support; Wealth (Dead Broke).

Skills: Savoir-Faire (Servant to Royal Court)-10. ● *One* of the following: Housekeeping-10; Animal Handling-10, Cooking-10, Gardening-11, *or* Sewing/TL1-11.

*Feature:* Does not have or need to expend Fatigue Points.

## K is for Knock-Down Blocks

The last gift presented to Condor Boy by the Court of Twilight was a chest full of what appeared to be building blocks. The lad was taken aback. Why was a hero like himself being given a toy? Was it an insult? Nonetheless, in light of the other boons he had received, Condor Boy accepted the chest graciously.

As it happened, Condor Boy did play with the blocks while resting in his magic yurt, as well as during his captivity in the dungeon of the Ocelot King. He spent many hours assembling the tiny stone blocks and wooden beams into elaborate models. At first, he recreated buildings from his home village. Later, he made miniatures of the palaces and temples he had seen during his quest.

One night, after completing an especially large project that used every block in the set, he found a tiny scroll stuck to the bottom of the chest. On it was written what seemed a childish rhyme about toy castles. But by this time, Condor Boy had learned that the gifts of the Court of Twilight were never trifles. Thus, when he reached the monstrous wall that blocked the exit of the Labyrinth of Last Isle, he already knew the building set's true purpose. He constructed an elaborate model of the curtain wall, sprinkled it with dust and splinters scraped from the structure, and read from the scroll of doggerel. As he completed the last verse, he swept the model aside . . . and watched in wonder as the walls fell in a heap. In his haste to escape the labyrinth, Condor Boy left the blocks and chest behind.

The chest is made of wood laminated with colorful cloth. It measures 18" wide, 8" high, and 12" deep. The set has lost holds about enough tiny blocks and beams to recreate a large peasant's house, a small church, or the gatehouse of a medium-sized walled town.

Using the set to demolish a building requires three steps.

1. Build a Model: Constructing a model to the standards required for the spell to work necessitates a DX-6 roll. (A

character with a Hobby Skill in miniature building may, of course, use that!)

In addition to the blocks and beams included in the building set, the model must contain bits of material from the structure to be demolished. A greater variety of materials results in a more effective spell; treating the model with sawdust from wooden beams *and* rock dust from each wall *and* rust scraped from iron hinges works better than a sprinkle of a bit of rock dust. Collecting a minimal amount of material requires a few minutes of contact with an outer wall; a thorough job requires several days and access to the inside of the structure.

Use the following skill modifiers:

Each hour observing the structure: +4
Successful Architecture skill roll: +2
Rush job (one hour or less): -2
Painstaking job (6 hours or more): +4
Minimal additional materials: -2
Average amount of additional materials: 0
Comprehensive amount of additional materials: +4

- 2. Recite the Poem: The doggerel on the scroll must be read out loud, with feeling. This requires a Performance +4 or Public Speaking roll.
- 3. Topple the Model: This must be done artfully and dramatically, requiring a DX+4 roll. If successful, the actual building is moderately damaged; the better the roll, the more breaches, toppled pillars, or crumpled roofs occur. On a critical success, the structure is leveled! In any case, 1d×5% of the blocks and beams used to build the model are lost or destroyed.

On a failure, another attempt may be made, but 50% of the pieces used are lost and the model must be built again. On a critical failure, 75% of the blocks and beams used are lost or destroyed!

## **Recreating the Blocks**

Creating replacement blocks and beams requires the invention (using Thaumatology) of a new, specialized enchantment spell. This is a task of Average overall complexity, assuming that the existing set is on hand and a few pieces are sacrificed for analysis. Prerequisites for the spell include Enchantment, Power, Link, Stone to Earth, Shape Earth, and Earthquake.

Replacement pieces must be expertly crafted by skilled miniaturists from fine wood and stone. Enough pieces to model a city wall, large church, or small castle cost \$10,000 and takes 100 man-days to complete; enchanting a set this size requires 5,000 energy. A set large enough to model a large fortress or cathedral costs \$40,000 and takes 500 man-days to complete; enchanting the set demands 10,000 energy.

Creating a second, separate set of blocks would also mean duplicating the chest and the scroll. Re-creating each of these enchantments would require a separate invention task.

## L is for Lunar Boots

The first of the boons Condor Boy received from the Court of Twilight were the lunar boots. He put them to good use on his journey across the Lands Beyond to the rim of the world. In the Labyrinth of Last Isle, he gave them to a young girl whose feet were wrapped in rags. This selfless act earned him the Mantle of Compassion, the last of the tokens required to pass the bridge over the edge of the world and reach the Floating Abbey, the object of his quest.

## Z is for Zokkee's Papyrus Companies

General Melluk received the Papyrus Companies as a retirement present. They let the crippled hero relive the glories of combat by leading a company of magical troops into battle against another force of enchanted warriors. Visitors who Melluk respected – or whom he thought could use a lesson in humility – were invited to challenge him to a game. The Papyrus Companies stayed in the family for many generations before being presented as a gift to Prince Aramand, who lost them in a dice game. The set's current location is unknown.

The Companies are packed in a beautifully made wooden chest. Its ebony sides have silver and brass inlays depicting soldiers in battle. The inside is divided into square bins about 5" on a side, plus cylindrical slots for two papyrus scrolls. The scrolls contain an activating spell, in the form of a ritualized battlefield roll-call.

Stacked in the bins are nearly 280 squares of papyrus, preserved and stiffened with a clear resin. Half of the squares are stained purple, the rest yellow. Each has a stylized picture of a warrior:

- Swordsman (25 of each color).
- Spearman (74 yellow, 72 purple).
- Archer (29 yellow, 30 purple).
- Standard-bearer, with a trumpet and a short sword (1 of each color).
- Officer, with a breastplate and ornate sword (3 yellow, 4 purple).
- A horse, with a robe draped over its saddle (1 of each color).

Before the game begins the pieces are laid out on a large field in the desired battle formation. The designated captain straddles the piece depicting the horse and robe, unrolls the scroll, and reads from it. On completion of the incantation, the papyrus tokens transform into living soldiers, ready to fight and die at the captain's orders. The horse token turns into a live horse, ready to be mounted; the robe it carries marks the wearer as the leader of the company.

While the officers will provide some direction, the broad strategy of the battle is up to the captain. The officers listen to his directions and see that the soldiers carry them out . . . even if it results in defeat and death. The game is generally fought until one side captures the other's standard. The soldiers carefully avoid harming the enemy captain, but strangers barging onto the battlefield can easily be injured or even killed.

The soldiers, living or dead, retain human form until the losing captain hands his sword to the victor. They then turn back into papyrus tokens, ready to be packed away for another game. Tokens that are damaged (beyond slight nicks, chips, or stains) lose their powers and will never transform again.

### THE TROOPS

The soldiers know their captain's native language (Native/None) and share his basic cultural knowledge. Their

costumes and style of arms vaguely resemble uniforms worn by soldiers of the leader's homeland.

While competent and disciplined warriors, the summoned troopers know nothing of campaigning or the basics of a soldier's life. They *can* be used on a real battlefield, but only if *one* of the companies – yellow or purple – is deployed. Soldiers of one color who catch sight of those of the other will feel an overwhelming urge to confront their ancient foe. In any case, the officers will complain about being matched against real troops, and the men will mutter doubts about their captain's wisdom.

#### Archer

ST 10; DX 12; IQ 8; HT 10.

Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 8; Will 13; Per 13; FP 13. Basic Speed 5.50; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8; Parry 9. 5'6"; 160 lbs.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Duty (Captain; Extremely hazardous; 15 or less); Obsession (Confront soldiers of other color; 6 or less); Fearlessness 3.

Skills: Bow-15; Brawling-12; Shortsword-13.

*Equipment:* Regular bow (1d-1 imp); shortsword (1d cut/1d-2 imp); light shield (DB 1); leather pants (DR 1); leather jacket (DR 1); pot-helm (DR 4); hip quiver with 20 arrows.

#### Spearman

ST 12; DX 11; IQ 8; HT 10.

Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 10; Will 13; Per 13; FP 13. Basic Speed 5.75; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8; Parry 9; Block 9. 5'10"; 180 lbs.

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Duty (Captain; Extremely hazardous; 15 or less); Obsession (Confront soldiers of other color; 6 or less); Fearlessness 3.

Skills: Brawling-12; Shield-13; Shortsword-12; Spear-13; Thrown Weapon (Spear)-14.

Equipment: Spear (1d+1 imp); shortsword (1d+2 cut/1d-1 imp); large shield (DB 3); leather pants (DR 1); leather jacket (DR 1); pot-helm (DR 4).

#### Swordsman

**ST** 12; **DX** 11; **IQ** 8; **HT** 10.

Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 10; Will 13; Per 13; FP 13. Basic Speed 5.75; Basic Move 5; Dodge 8; Parry 9; Block 9. 5'10"; 180 lbs.

*Advantages/Disadvantages:* Duty (Captain; Extremely hazardous; 15 or less); Obsession (Confront soldiers of other color; 6 or less); Fearlessness 3.

Skills: Broadsword-13; Brawling-12; Shield-13.

Equipment: Broadsword (1d+3 cut/1d imp); medium shield (DB 2); leather pants (DR 1); leather jacket (DR 1); pot-helm (DR 4)

## INDEX

Abbey of Scholar Olaf, 24. Administrator eunuch advisor, 14. Anchanipee throwing disc, 30. Annals of Count Katydid, 4-5. Anti-pilfering charms, 5, 6. Aramand, Prince, 34. Archer (Papyrus Company), 34. Armory of Vanderlan, 29-31. Army of a Thousand Brothers, 19. Arowundee, 3, 5, 6. Awit-Tiwa, 20-22. Aysah All-Matron, 23, 25. Balm of Celestial Quintessence, 25. Bastard of Phuwkut, 28. Beer, 28-29. Block print charms, 5-7. Budzub, 30. Building blocks, 18. Caretakers of the random benches, 26. Carinel, King, 7-8. Cat, 16. Celestial quintessence, 11, 25. Celestial Sphere, 3, 9, 10. Cheetutma Strait, 4. Cheo, 3, 15. Chomody, Lem, 32. Chorl, Baron Thol, 19-20; soul, 20. College of the Lidless Eve, 16-17. College of the Spiral Way, 32. Condor Boy, 3, 18, 19, 23, 33; boons of, 18-19, 23, 33. Court of Twilight, 18, 23; see also Condor Boy. Coyote Helm, 3, 7-9. Cultural Familiarities of NPCs, 3. Dagger, Kar Fon, 30; True Friend, 27. Despoil Seed spell, 17. Dhalinkost, Lord-Mayor, 16. Doromi, 3, 16. Draw Together Shards spell, 9. Dream relicts, 25. Drummer of the Abyss, 8, 9. Ear boxes, 26. Enorsson, King, 30. Erutappet, 3, 11, 27. Esoteric College of the Spiral Way, 32. Essum, 9-10. Eunuch advisors, 13-14. Fabulous Pavilion, 11-12. Floating Abbey, 18. Forest of Sorrows, 23. Foul Sea, 7. Gascule, Comte Hercht, 31. General (military) eunuch advisor, 14. Ghastblack Islands, 27. Ghiril Valley, 19. Giral, 11, 12.

Giromonte, 30, 31.

Gray Horde, 26, 27.

Great Eastern Mountains, 5.

Gross of pickled privates, 13-14. GURPS Fantasy, 3. Guruka, General Ko'Ramin, 5; Hemay, 3, 5-6; La'Ramin, 6-7. Guruka's bandits, 7. Han-Lam, Prince, 15. Helpful doll, 15. Hippaya, 15. Hwon-chutt suff, 5. Immobilizing kitty, 16. Imp Face spell, 17. Iraqueet, Madam Hiruta, 16. Iron Crags, 28. Justice of the Kanost, 16-17. Kanharry, 9, 31. Kanost, 3, 16-17. Kar Fon, 30, 31; dagger, 30. Keensight, Garrick, 33. Khetsarmon, 20-21. Knock-Down Blocks, 18. Korank's Drum, 10. Kyangi, 3, 16. Kyzyl Lake, 28. Labyrinth of Last Isle, 18. Lacron, 3, 29, 31. Languages of NPCs, 3. Larshum, 3, 15. Lasson, Captain, 11, 27. Last Ouestion, 8-9. Leopard Emperor, 3, 13. Lesser Coyote, 8. Lidless Eye college, 16-17. Lin-Barin, 16. Linso kukko, 32-33. Locations, equivalents in real world, 3. Lunar boots, 18-19. Lunderbag Amphoranug, 20-23. Lustrous Order, 28. Mantle of Compassion, 18. Mark of Thieves spell, 17. Melluk, General, 34. Menar, 30, 31. Mice, 19-20. Middle Sea, 11. Moranx, 3, 28-29. Mounted mice, 19-20. Mouth boxes, 26. Mouth-Goes-Away spell, 17. Mushroom Valley, 23. Namer, the, 24.

Narmud Market Circus, 20-23.

Necks, practice, 32-33.

Nian-Cho, 3, 11, 15, 16.

Oasis of Metter, 28.

Oat cake kit, 23.

Ocelot King, 18.

Noht, Lord of Spears, 28.

Nehr, 3.

Norfon, 3, 7.

Officer (Papyrus Company), 35. Olaf, Scholar, 24. Panner Wastes, 3, 19. Papyrus Companies, 34-35. Pohuoato, Empress-Dowager, 15. Practice necks, 32-33. Priest eunuch advisor, 13-14. Primordial grove, 23-25. Quintessence, see Celestial Quintessence. Random benches, 25-26. Salybos, 3. Scholar eunuch advisor, 14. Serpent of Cheetutma Strait, 4. Seshep IV, King, 28. Shame hurler, 30. Shemhault, 9, 11. Shortcut signposts, 26-27. Show swords, 30-31. Shrine of Avsah. 25-26. Sir Chadost, 16. Snake Legion, 28. Soat's-Son, Haraktar, 11. Spearman (Papyrus Company), 34. Spice Trail, 3, 5, 32. Spiral Way college, 32. Spontaneous generation, 24. Standard bearer (Papyrus Company), 35. Su-Dwar, 3-5. Swift End technique, 33. Swords, show, 30-31. Swordsman (Papyrus Company), 34. Sylvan Sisters, 26, 27. Szim, 19. Tall-tale plays, 4-5. Tannel, Baron, 7-8. Tavern puzzle, 27-28. Teek Ar-Ham, 28. Thief-Go-Away charms, 5, 6. Throwing disc, 30. Topto, 5. Tragedy of Lasson and Giral, 11. True Friend dagger, 27. Tylee, Lady of Gray Water, 23. Unbelievably old beer, 28-29. Upper Lacron, 29. Ushabit, 15. Ushirpot, Princess, 15. Vanderlan, Count Eril, 3, 29; armory of, 29-31. von Handersson, Captain Langer, 4-5, 31. Vush Horde, 5, 11. Walking City, 19. Wolf Scroll, 31. Wolves, semi-intelligent, 31. Xao-Qui Brotherhood, 3; necks, 32-33. Xar Xarn, 23.

INDEX 36

Yurt-button vest, 33.

Zokkee's Papyrus Companies, 34-35.

Yutrecht, King, 29.

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