

# Day Of The Saru - Part 1

By Stephen H. Jay

An Official Living Jungle Campaign Adventure  
For Heroes Of All Levels

**Blurb:** “Visions. Dreams. Vague yearnings. Distant drums. A call to adventure has come at last. Think you know all there is to know of Malatra? Foolish children. The dark jungle holds many secrets. Some beautiful. Some terrible. All wondrous. If you would know more, now is the time to answer the call.”

## Module Vitals

**Status:** Official Living Jungle Campaign Adventure. (This means it is a part of the official Living Jungle storyline.)

**Format:** Storyteller. (This means that numbers and statistics are kept to the barest possible minimum, and that background knowledge of the living jungle on the part of the Storyteller (Dungeon Master) is assumed. Also, this format encourages the Storyteller be flexible and modify the encounters to fit the needs and personalities of the Heroes adventuring in it.)

**Players:** 4 to 7 (6). (Playable with 4 to 7 heroes, best played with 6.)

**Game Time:** 4 to 8 hours.

**Experience:** 5,000

## The Living Jungle Campaign

Players bring their own characters to Living Jungle events, and are responsible for keeping records of the characters experience, wealth, and possessions. Look over the characters that are brought to your table, both to familiarize yourself with them and to check for unusual magic items or discrepancies. Magic in the Living Jungle is very rare, with permanent magic items being very, very rare. Most Living Jungle possessions will be ornamental, symbolic, or items carried for barter. If a player has an unusual item or items, question them where they got it. If you are not satisfied with their answer, you may disallow the item for the round.

Heroes are awarded experience for surviving and completing the adventure, regardless if all goals and objectives of the adventure

have been reached.

This module is designed for characters of all levels. As such, the opponents and encounters in the module may need to be modified by the Storyteller to better suit the mix of heroes and their capabilities. Non-player characters may be utilized at the Storytellers discretion.

## At Death's Door

Living adventures use a version of the Death's Door rule for the duration of the tournament. If a Hero is reduced to zero or less hit points, he/she does not die immediately. Instead, the Hero continues to lose one hit point at the end of each round until aided by another Hero or NPC. Heroes who go unaided die when they reach -11 hit points.

A Hero who is saved "At Death's Door" will have one hit point and will be unable to perform any physical action greater than walking unless magical healed. Spellcasters who fall into the negative hit points lose their spells in memory.

## Storytellers Introduction

The adventure begins with the heroes being drawn to the Jungle Giants village of Hafoka. This village is located in the south west, north of Kumbo Swamp and west of the Dreaming River. It is largely an unexplored territory, though Pathfinders and Scouts have reported animals, plants and insects of gigantic proportion. It is whispered that the Allmuseri, the evil society of necromantic shamans live here, as well as the last of the cannibalistic tribes. The Jungle Giants, however, are known to Malatrans as friends if not actually allies. They are a friendly but private people who

seem to enjoy their life with family and friends. Only two giants fought against Tiger ten years ago as the Hafokans generally do not travel outside their lands.

The heroes can arrive at Hafoka for a variety of reasons. Some possibilities are:

1) Low-level heroes may just be wandering the area for adventure. Hafoka is considered the gateway to the wilds of unexplored Malatra, and thus attracts many young adventures who pay their respects to the giants - and then frequently are not heard from again.

2) High-level heroes may be dream questing, felt drawn to Hafoka in a more standard dream, or have just heard rumors and whispers that something is happening in Hafoka that deserves their attention.

3) Pathfinders and high-level scouts who have been in the area before know first-hand of its peculiar way of “swallowing-up” paths and trails. New routes through the jungle are constantly disappearing as the jungle voraciously closes them off. The farther one travels west from Hafoka, the more pronounced this characteristic becomes. As a result, no one has penetrated more than a few days west without skirting to the north toward the Yaku Plains, turning back, or disappearing altogether.

4) Saru, and to a lesser extent Monkey Katanga and their relatives, will have felt drawn to this area for over a month. The urge has gotten stronger as time as gone on, and is similar to the migration instinct that some animals feel. Being intelligent, however, heroes can resist if they want. This urge to travel here happens every 8 to 12 years and usually only affects Saru. This time, however, other creatures have been

affected and the urge among Saru is particularly powerful.

5) Saru female shaman, of which there are very few, will feel an undeniable urge to travel here. The DM may make it a *Geas* if necessary.

6) Butu will also feel a strong urge to come. The instinct, however, is not one of migration, but one of longing and nostalgia, as if they had been away from home for a long time. This is true even if the Butu hero has never been there before.

The heroes may travel over land, down the river and then over land, or may magically be transported near the village (with all their pertinent items) at the end of a dream.

### **Before You Begin**

Ask each player to write down the following:

1) What fears does your hero have? These could be fears of death, dishonor, failure or loss. Be as specific as possible.

2) What dreams does your hero have? In other words, what would your hero like to accomplish in life? What would his ideal afterlife reward be?

3) List some things that have special emotional or spiritual significance. They may be family, totem animals, possessions, tribal colors or markings, or a childhood memory.

4) What is their preferred action in combat? In other words, do they charge into battle, flee to the trees to taunt and take attacks of opportunity, cast offensive spells, cast supportive spell or what?

When each player is done, have them turn their answers over to you. They will be used later.

## Players Introduction

The adventure starts 30 minutes walk from Hafoka, the village of the Jungle Giants. The sounds of jungle drums can be heard, as well as the raucous calls and gibbering of birds, monkeys, insects, leopards and dozens of other creatures. Anyone who has the *Signaling-Drums* skill can easily interpret the message. The drums say “Come. It is the Good Walk. It is the Good Smash. We will show you the way”

The jungle here is normal, heavy growth jungle. The grandfather trees rise some 200 feet in the air, the ground is covered with vines, ferns, small trees and insects. Investigation of the area reveals a bountiful paradise of fruits, nuts, tuber plants, birds, insects and small animals. It also will reveal a great number of saru or gorilla tracks and monkey spoor, seemingly headed casually but purposefully toward the sounds of the drums. There is evidence of predators here as well, but nothing out of the ordinary. The most dangerous seem to be a pack of 6 raptors. Dangerous to small, low-level parties perhaps, but really no danger to almost anyone else (i.e. heroes).

If the heroes make a prolonged effort to investigate the area, they will find a tuft of white hair - evidence that one of the rare Great White Saru is in the area. An even more prolonged effort (one that few heroes will take the time to make) will reveal a tuft of green hair from a Kretch!

## Encounter One: Hafoka

The heroes introduction to Hafoka may well start with misunderstanding. The giants will

be using large sledge hammers made of boulders and logs to smash down a section of the jungle (the Hafoka travel all the way to the Miranuma mountains to get boulders of the right shape and size for this). Nearby there will be a group of saru standing together. Saru generally don't like loud noises, so they will be flinching and looking a little worried at all the noise the giants are making. This may all combine to make a hero jump to the conclusion that the Jungle Giants are attacking the saru.

This is not the case. So many **saru**, **katanga**, **butu** and **nubari** have arrived that the giants cannot accommodate them all in their village. So, being thoughtful guests who really like to smash things, they are clearing away a section of the jungle in order to make a comfortable camp for everyone. When they are done, there will be a nice open space below the grandfather trees for the visitors to camp in. The giants will also provide pre-assembled stands made of bamboo, strung with cloth hammocks (this gets the sleepers off the jungle floor at night and away from the insects). The hammocks are very large, made for jungle giants.

The other travelers, or ‘Walkers’ as the giants call them (a title of respect, similar to that of a religious pilgrim), know no more than the heroes. They were drawn here, came of their own free will, and feel the need to journey onward.

Jungle Giant stats are the same as Hill Giants or, if you have the proper reference material, neutral good tendency jungle giants (see Fiend Folio). They can hurl tree trunks as well as the boulders from their sledges.

Once all misunderstandings are taken care of, the heroes may introduce themselves to the giants. Keep the following in mind:

1) The Jungle Giants do not speak Malatran Common well. The only one of them that ever did died a few years ago fighting Thri-Kesh (more on this later). They also know no formal sign language. Indeed, the Jungle Giants speak very little even amongst themselves. Their language seems to be made mostly of grunts, growls, and throat-clearing noises. Jungle Giants have a weak empathic link that, combined with simple gestures, communicates most everyday tasks between them. Hafoka is isolated and receives few visitors.

2) Innovative heroes may actually communicate effectively using the drums. DC for communication should climb dramatically for complex concepts, and the DM should task some information as “undecipherable” to maintain the mystery of what’s going on.

3) Spells, of course, are possible in higher level heroes, but some mystery should still be maintained with archaic or cultural references by the giants that don’t mean much to the heroes.

4) Persistence by highly skilled and creative heroes should be rewarded, even if most or all of what the giants know is revealed.

## THE GIANTS STORY

The giants have been there “forever”, or for as long as anyone can remember. They have a pretty basic village set-up. The buildings are made of materials found in the forest, bound together with vine and a mud-plaster the giants make by combining the nearby clay mud with burnt limestone and campfire

ash. The limestone is brought back from the mountains. This plaster is new to most Malatrans and very primitive. Trips to the mountains only occur once per year, and are meant to pay respects to their ancestors who, according to their oral tradition, “came from the mountains.”

The giants are reserved, but hospitable. They respect hunting above all else, and see warfare as “an evil thing to do, even when forced upon you.” That is why only two of the jungle giants actually fought in the Battle Of Blood Bridge. The two giants are both dead now, one killed during the war and one afterward on a hunt for garuda. Although the tribe thinks they made the wrong decision to fight in the war, they are both respected for standing up for their beliefs.

The social order in the village is typical of Malatra as well. There are 105 individuals; 28 male, 38 female, and 39 children. Most of the inhabitants are fighter-class, but there are many who are at least a few levels in the Hunter prestige class. There are 4 elders, all called Leaders. **Leader-Chief’s** name translates to “Smash Much, Sleep Much” . **Leader-Shaman** is “He Who Frightens Chickens” (his favorite communal ceremony is to gather chickens into a pen, then scare the holy crap out of them to see which way they fly. From this he divines the spirits Will). **Leader-Witch-Doctor** is “Stares At Water.” The last Leader is the only female. She is a **healer and herbalist** called “Flowers In Nose-Hair” (you figure it out). She speaks a broken sort of Common, but will quickly learn more as the adventure continues because of her Linguist feat, and may become the heroes main translator.

The Story-Teller may add other NPC’s as needed, but there really is only one other of

note. It is a rather deranged-looking giant called **“Dropped On Head”**. He is a 5<sup>th</sup> level Hunter (Ranger), 3<sup>rd</sup> level **Garuda Rider** who will make an appearance later unless there is another Garuda Rider in the party. Dropped On Head maintains a modest lodge, and is known to approach only large, meat eating garuda. The rest of the village think he is crazy, since “one HUNTS a big gnasher, not pet or ride it!”

The Hafoka are rich by jungle standards, in that they have an abundance of shiny rocks, tools, food, and equipment. Most are giant-sized. Their pride and joy is the Leader-Chiefs Great Hall, where feasting is held almost every night. The hall is a true giants hall, built of large timbers and topped by plaster-covered thatch over more timbers. It is as tall as two giants (About 20') and dominates the center of the village as a large circular building 100' across. It has a genuine (and somewhat) semi-circular wooden table that encircles a great fire pit. Above the pit is a hole in the roof to let out the smoke. High above the hole is a canopy to shield the fire pit from rain.

The feasting hall is not only a social gathering place, but a nightly sacred ritual where every member of the feast offers some of his meal to the fire in thanks. Each night the rich, pungent smell of burning food fills the air for miles which sometimes actually draws the predators whose carcasses and skulls adorn the hall walls and ceiling. Such trophies include a Gnasher (T-Rex) skull 8 feet across, as well as the horns and heads of dozens of large or dangerous animals. On the floor are dozens of animal pelts, a couple of kretch pelts, and two snakemen skins (taken from a time before the treaty). The most striking trophy is a huge head made not of bone but of some kind of hard, black, chitinous substance. It

has a broad, flat head 4' across, multi-faceted eyes, long horn-like antennae and huge mandibles. It is the head of the mantis-like Thri-kesh, one of the most vicious predators in all of Malatra and found in abundance in the mysterious jungles west of the village - exactly where the Walkers will be going.

**If the Heroes spend the evening at the feasting hall**, which is likely, the giants will ask them to choose a favorite food. The storyteller should write this down for future reference. The Hafoka will try to provide these foods at the halls, but anything at all exotic to them is out of the questions. Also, the giants are very fond of habnero peppers, and put it in almost everything, even their beer.

The Hafokan's are, literally, fat and happy. They will explain that long ago the founders of their tribe made peace with the spirits of the land and with a great spirit the Hafoka call “She who forever walks.” The deal, they will explain, is that the Hafoka must stay close to home, tend the fires and offer sanctuary to any good people, and perform the “The Good Walk” once every 8 to 12 years (more on this later). In return, the spirits provide them with bounty, long life and good health.

#### THE GOOD WALK AND THE GOOD SMASH

Sooner or later the heroes will ask questions pertinent to why they and so many others were drawn here. This has to do with what the giants call “The Good Walk” and “The Good Smash”.

**The Good Smash** is a ritual done once per week or as needed, such as this day when more room was needed to accommodate all

their guests. Using their sledges, the giants methodically smash and clear away the jungle at the edges of their village. All plant life, except for the large, old trees of the canopy commonly called Grandfather Trees, are cleared away. Usually this is just a matter of practicality, as the jungle grows so much faster here than elsewhere in Malatra. In fact, the giants will explain, the farther one goes west of the village, the faster the jungle grows back. Go far enough west, the giants say, and you will need to do this every morning and evening.

**The jungle grows fast here for two reasons**, both of which may become apparent to the heroes either through investigation or by talking with the giants. First, the soil is particularly fertile and rich, filled with the nutrients, insects and worms that indicate vigorous health. Second, the nature spirits are more numerous and more robust. Go far enough west, and the spirits almost become more numerous than the animals and plants themselves. This, of course, means more predators as well, as well as a greater variety of plants, animals and monsters.

**The Good Walk** is done every 8 to 12 years. The Jungle Giants know when to do it in just the same way the heroes knew to come here; they felt it. This is part of the pact as well, the giants will say, but they can't really remember why they do it. They just know that when the time comes, many visitors will come and then the giants must lead them west thru the jungle to a place called Baneratha-shi-gurtha or "Big Rock Place Where She Who Walks Lives".

Most years the visitors number only a dozen, and are almost always all saru. Of the dozen, two or three usually die along the journey from the creatures that inhabit the

jungle or illness. The rest go into the "Big Rock Place", but ordinarily only 3 or 4 come back out. The giants never go in, so they don't know what happens there. They never see "She Who Walks" or even know what she is. The 3 or 4 are then escorted back to Hafoka - if they'll come. They are always changed in some way, says the giants. Some are blessed, while some run off into the jungle, insane. Some, say the giants, are both blessed and insane. These always go north. Where they end up, no one can say for sure.

**What do the giants mean by "blessed"?**  
The giants explain that heroes going on The Good Walk can expect 4 possible outcomes:

1) The non-saru are either ignored or blessed in some small way, but always say they do not remember what happened to them. The spirits have smiled upon them, but have not granted them any great boon. What these small boons are, the giants are not very clear on, except to say that "their lives were luckier from that day forward." These individuals feel happy and uplifted, but can't say why.

2) Some saru are ignored or blessed in a small way, and have a vague recollection of traveling a great distance and of being away for a long time, though only a day has passed. They say they "went home and visited family, and were smiled upon by their mother." More than that, they cannot remember. These saru are sometimes female, but most are male. In fact, all male saru who enter end up either ignored or blessed this way.

3) Some saru are granted a great boon, such as the ability to talk to spirits. The spirits come cautiously, as if meeting them for the first time. Such saru, the giants say, return

to their homes as one of the very rare shaman of the saru. They are always female.

4) A few of the female saru are granted this great boon, but the spirits clamor for attention, driving the saru mad. After days of struggle, the saru flees into the jungle to be rid of the spirits, and are never heard from again.

5) The rarest of all are those female saru who are surrounded by demanding, clamoring spirits, yet are able to organize and manage the demands made upon them. Those special saru are unable to do anything but talk to their spirits for days. They are not even able to travel. The giants stay to protect the saru from the creatures of the jungle until she is able to travel. Then, she thanks the giants for their service, blesses them in the name of “The Precious Mother Chee’ah”, and disappears north into the jungle.

Few heroes have heard of Chee’ah. Those more learned or worldly wise will know of the saru legend of a female saru demigod that walks the plateau and watches over all saru. Chee’ah is occasionally sought out by female saru who feel the calling to be shaman. Some heroes will say they have never even heard of a saru shaman. They exist, but true to their demigod, they become very private and reclusive individuals.

Even rarer is the saru witch-doctor (there is only one known in the campaign). This special individual gained great favor from the spirits and was granted a special favor.

## **Encounter Two - Spine Gnasher (Spinosaurus Egyptianus)**

At dawn the next morning, a Spinosaurus will attack the encampment and the about 40 walkers sleeping there. Spinosaurids are the largest meat-eating dinosaurs ever discovered, and are significantly larger than T-Rex. They are bipedal, 50' long, with large sailback spines 6' in length. Stats are provided below, but the Story-Teller is free to adjust this encounter as he sees fit.

Spine Gnashers are extremely rare, and rarely are seen this large. They are most common in this part of the jungle. Since few malatrans have explored here, this is why they are rarely seen.

The Spine Gnashers will specifically attack the pilgrims, but will refocus their attack when the heroes and giants intervene. It is assumed that most hero parties will role-play their way into the village for the evening, probably in the great feasting hall. This means that by the time the heroes come to the rescue, there will be a number of casualties already.

The gnashers will flee once they lose half their hit points. Dropped On Head will arrive to taunt one of the gnashers, count coup with his coup club, then run off into the jungle with a Spine Gnasher in hot pursuit.

After the battle, 2 of the walkers are dead, while 18 more are injured or deciding to give up on their ‘Walk’. This leaves 20 NPC’s to accompany the heroes and giants westward.

**The giants knew the attack, or something like it, was coming**, because the walks are always started by an attack at the village. “The Good Walk begins!” they will shout joyfully as they enter into battle. Usually the attacks are from much “less-worthy”

garuda, so the giants will interpret the attacks by the Spine Gnasher as a great sign or blessing. The giants fight hard to protect the Walkers, and will genuinely mourn those who are killed (as well as the Spine Gnasher, if it is killed). They will also bid those who abandon the Walk a fond farewell. The giants will fight hard to protect the Walkers now and during the walk west, even if it costs them their own life. This is part of the pact with She-Who-Walks. “The Walkers come. Some will overcome their challenges. Some will abandon their walk. Some will be lost. A few will be blessed. Such is the walk of life. Such is the journey to enlightenment.”

**Spine Nashers (Gargantuan Animal).** NA 1 to 3; HD 28D10+112 (266 hp); Init +1 (dex); Speed 50 ft; AC 14 (-4 size, +1 Dex, +7 natural); Attack Bite +28 melee; Damage Bite 10d8+14; Face/Reach 10 ft by 50 ft/ 15 ft; Special Attacks Improved Grab, Swallow Whole; Special Qualities: Scent; Saves Fort +17, Ref +14, Will + 8; Abilities Str 30, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 10; Skills Listen +12, Spot +12.

**Special Reward For Garuda Riders:** Any Garuda Rider that counts coup on one of the Spine Gnashers gains a special reward for this extraordinary feat as follows: 1) +1 to their Knowledge (Garuda) skill; 2) Add +5' to their movement; 3) Bragging rights! +2 to Boast when Boasting specifically about the time they rode the Spine Gnasher.

## Encounter Three - The Good Walk

The next three days consists of smashing and walking all day. Arboreal and air born heroes can make better time, but they don't know exactly where the giants are going, as the giants take a meandering path that they

all seem to know. They will travel more or less straight for a while, then silently seem to agree that a course correction is needed and make it.

*The giants sing as the travel in loud, boisterous, joyful voices.* The songs are a celebration of The Good Walk, which they see as a sacred ritual. They sing loudly the entire journey.

**THE FIRST DAY** the party make about 5 miles through the thick vegetation. They travel basically west-south-west.

**THE SECOND DAY** the party ambles mostly west and makes almost 5 miles.

**THE THIRD DAY** the party turns west-south-west again and runs into some serious plant growth, making only 3 miles. Heroes back-tracking will find the trail behind them rapidly recovering from being smashed down. Animal and insect species thrive, with sleep on the floor of the jungle becoming impossible because of the millions of ants that come out (sleeping in the trees or on a hammock is acceptable). The grandfather trees here soar to 450', but fliers will see that, in the distance, the trees get even taller.

**Every evening have the heroes make a FORT save (DC 35).** Make note of those who fail their saves. Their systems are being assaulted by new toxins, bacteria and parasites in the environment. None of these will be fatal, but they will remain undetected for the moment and may affect things later on.

The Story-Teller may take this time to try and make the heroes lives a little uncomfortable, yet rewarding. New species of plants (many medicinal), animals and insects (many stinging and biting) live here.

Nature spirits are everywhere, both visible and invisible. Katanga of new varieties, though still wild and uncivilized by Malatran standards, abound. Take some time if the heroes seem so inclined and let them discover new things.

## **Encounter Four - Great White Saru**

On the fourth day the group travels about 1 ½ miles before stopping late in the afternoon. Though they spot the giants choose will look no different that any other, the giants will be very particular. They will smash down the area, then Flowers-In-Nose-Hair will take a large water skin full of dark powder and mix it with water. She will chant and spray it liberally over the entire area, then mix two more skins and do it again. To any one with spellcraft her chants are a Protection-type spell. “Here we will spend the night on the ground. I have asked the little ones (insects) to leave us in peace tonight, so we will not be stung or bitten. We will sing and meditate, and prepare you for the morning visions you will have.”

Nearby is a holy place, a shrine to the nature spirits, that the heroes must travel to in the pre-dawn hours (see next encounter). For tonight, Flowers-In-Nose-Hair will take the heroes through a ritual cleansing and focusing to open them to the visions that will come. The heroes are not required to do this, but will be told that this is proper. For the time being, however, the heroes are to make camp in the prepared spot, start a fire, and eat well.

After dark, the party will be approached by 6 Great White Saru. They will come silently from the trees (DC 45 to spot or hear), and will call down. They will call first in Hafokan, then in Maltran Common. “Hello

the camp. May friends of all good peoples approach?”

Once accepted, the Great White Saru will drop down from the trees. There is a witch-doctor (unheard of for normal saru, but rare enough for great whites), 3 Path-Finders, and 2 Hunters. All are 10<sup>th</sup> level characters. The leader is a Pathfinder named Straight Spear.

The saru have not come for the Good Walk. They have felt the call, but know what it is all about and know that it is a journey for other saru, not for them. They approached the camp because two of them are hurt, having sustained injuries in a fight, and they have no healer. The injuries are not serious, but in such a dangerous part of the jungle, small injuries can become important when fighting a dangerous foe. After the injured are seen to, the saru will sit and tell their story. It should follow the basic format below, but the Story-Teller is encouraged not to just read the text.

### **THE GREAT WHITES STORY**

“We are hunting Kretch and those who have befriended them. Beware, heroes. They are in the area.”

“When the Tamara were defeated, many of the kretch were hunted down and killed. So were the bat-like Akathasa and the spirit Yakshas. Many, however, escaped. There was no way to know how many had survived, so we remained vigilant and hunt them to this day.”

“We also hid our homes again. The kretch are a doomed people without us, for only by using our bodies can they reproduce. They massacred one of our villages during the war, but the others remained hidden. They

will stay hidden so long as one servant of Tiger remains in Malatra.”

“The kretch fled throughout Malatra, hunted by everyone, even their former allies. Some, we believe, have taken up residence in this part of the jungle, for it is the most inaccessible. And, they have allies here. The Allumuseri.”

All heroes will have heard of the Allumuseri. They are a secret society of evil witch-doctors, necromancers, dark hunters and cannibals. They were never very powerful until Tiger came. They aided some of Tiger's servants, but never allied themselves directly with them. Kural, the villainous korobokuru, was a shaman of the katimaya and brother to the hero Bengoukee before he betrayed all good peoples of Malatra and allied himself with the servants of Tiger. It is widely believed that the allumuseri were the ones that recruited Kural and aided him in his treachery.

During the war, Kural became armed with a Staff Of Withering, something most malatrans had never even heard of. It was his favored weapon, and was given to him by the Allumuseri.

Straight Spear will bring forth a large skin sack etched with runes of protection and non-location. “We have been hunting Kretch in these jungles for 2 years, and have never gotten closer than last night. A few miles from here we fell upon 6 kretch. One of them was carrying this.”

Straight Spear will up end the sack and out will tumble the lower jawbone of some animal. “When you defeated the Tamara, no one ever thought of what to do with their bodies. Many of the places of their falling have become places of restless spirits. This,

good heroes, is a monstrosly evil thing. It is the lower jawbone of a Tamara.”

After letting the words import sink in, the Saru will continue. “The allumuseri have done something to it, for we cannot destroy it. I am taking it back to my village for the elders to see, and to take their council. Would you dare to see a small part of what it can do?”

Straight Spear will take a part of a butchered animal and say, “One must be careful, for there is hideous half-life here. And it feeds on blood.” Straight Spear then allows one single drop of blood to fall upon the jawbone.

The Story-Teller may read the following aloud:

**“The blood falls upon the bone and is drawn into it, like a drop of rain is pulled into dry earth. For a moment, nothing happens. Then, the bone begins to vibrate and rattle upon the earth. A whooshing of air can be heard, like an approaching storm. Then a thin, piercing wail, very quite as if from far away. The wail gets louder and louder, turning into a painful shriek. The air around the bone grows suddenly cooler, and shadows seem to gather in a swirl of air, dust and debris. The shriek crescendos, louder and louder, the cloud of swirling debris lifts higher as the tempest of wind becomes stronger. Then, the shriek is cut off abruptly and the air is stilled. For a moment the dirt and debris hang motionless in the air and seem to form the outline of a darkly humanoid shape. The debris falls to the ground, and all is silent and still once more.”**

Straight Spear continues with his tale. “Of

the 6 kretch we attacked, 2 sacrificed themselves to allow the other 4 to escape. We believe they were carrying more items of power, but have no idea what they were. We still don't know where the kretch are hiding or who they are allied with. This dark jungle hides much, and the spirits here, while powerful, don't always understand the questions we ask them, nor do we always understand the answers."

"I know you are on the Good Walk, and are honor bound to try and see it thru to the end as a sign of respect for what the Hafokans hospitality and help, if nothing else. Also, the saru among you are compelled to make the journey. We will take this cursed item to our elders and hold council. But be warned. The kretch are here, and they are not alone."

After hearing this, six of the NPC pilgrims (make them any race you wish) will approach the Jungle Giants and say they no longer wish to continue on The Good Walk. The Giants will amiably offer to escort them back to Hafoka in the morning. This leaves six NPC's on The Good Walk with the heroes.

The rest of the evening will pass by uneventfully, except for the cleansing ceremony.

**The Cleansing Ceremony.** Flowers-In-Nose-Hair will take all willing participants to a spring that is about 30 minutes walk away. Two jungle giants will come as escorts. All the NPC pilgrims will come. The spring is large, almost half an acre in area. The waters are cool, clear and refreshing. A feeling of safety and serenity permeate here - though the giants will still maintain their vigilant guardianship. Flowers-In-Nose-Hair will intone "Spirits of the jungle, we ask your blessing on these

Walkers. Refresh them and rejuvenate them for the trials ahead. Clear their minds for the lessons to come. Open their heart for understanding." She then offers the Walkers a sip of a fragrant and heady juice. The juice immediately warms them and gives them a feeling of cheer and happiness. (If there are no minors playing the adventure, the Storyteller may modify this description to one of "a light buzz", where everyone is happy and uninhibited). Flowers-In-Nose-Hair then instructs everyone to undress completely, enter the pool, wash away their troubles, and celebrate life. During all this, dozens of spirits of all kinds will begin to show up to watch. This includes animal and plant spirits, non-descript nature spirits, and elemental spirits.

When the heroes are done, they will climb out of the water and fall into a peaceful sleep (even those who normally don't sleep). They will wake up a few hours later, completely refreshed.

## **Encounter Five - The White**

Three hours before dawn Flowers-In-Nose-Hair will paint the heroes with runes and tell them, "You are going to see the White. In it, you will try to build two bridges. One into your true self. One to the spirits around you. Your understanding of your place in the world, of your role in this life, may change by the time your journey on The Good Walk is finished. Here, in the White, the spirits will try to help you survive the journey."

"The White may or may not speak to you of three things. First, to see where your path may be taking you. If you are successful, you may see your fate. Since the fate of all that is living is to join all that has lived, you may see your own death. Understanding what you see, however, may be even more

difficult, and more frightening, than you can now imagine.”

Second, to overcome the barriers that are your own fears and desires. These will distract you from your true course.

Third, to convince the spirits that you are worthy to continue. This jungle has mighty spirits in it, and some of the mightiest of Taboo Spirits. Even an accomplished Blue Hand may have difficulty passing thru. You must make peace with the spirits of this place.”

Leaving the pool behind, the heroes follow Flowers-In-Nose-Hair farther west to the top of a hill. Mention to the heroes that the impenetrable jungle and moonless night sky give no light by which to see, so Flowers-In-Nose-Hair will bring a great torch and suggest the heroes do likewise. Though only 300 yards away, it takes them almost an hour to get their destination.

At the top of the hill the jungle, surprisingly, gives way to a grove. The canopy of jungle has broken here as well, letting in shockingly bright shafts of moonlight that reflect off a dazzlingly white obelisk. It illuminates the entire grove, and gives the heroes a feeling of peace and well-being. If the heroes mention the fact that there is moonlight here, even though it is supposed to be a moonless night, Flowers-In-Nose-Hair replies, “We are of Malatra, but no longer *in* Malatra. Approach the obelisk. It already knows you are here.” Flowers-In-Nose-Hair will stand nearby if she is needed.

The obelisk is, as stated, completely white and seems to shine with the reflected moonlight. The surface is semi-rough, like that of sandstone. It stands 2' x 2' at its base and rises to 10' tall.

At this point the Storyteller needs to refer to the answers given him by the players prior to game play. The experience at the Obelisk Of The White will be personalized and witnessed by all, though some things will be seen slightly different to different heroes. Though a general description of the events to follow can be found below, the Storyteller must personalize the experience according to the answers given, his experience with the heroes so far, and the stated goals of this encounter.

### **Step One: The spirits will gather.**

As the heroes watch the obelisk, they will see spirits emerge from the jungle and join with the substance of the obelisk. The spirits will be nature spirits, ancestor spirits, elemental spirits and taboo spirits. There will be dozens, perhaps hundreds of them, that enter and merge with the obelisk. The Storyteller should include any spirits that may be of significance to the heroes, as well as taboo spirits of each tribe or race. The heroes will be judged by these spirits, and any actions or pledges will have the force of a *geas* here, if applicable. It's up to the Storyteller to tell this as he sees fit, but one possible way to describe this is as follows:

“As you stare at the Obelisk, you are suddenly aware of the approach of spirits. From out of the jungle, coming alone and in pairs, spirits of every kind and shape come. Here, you see the simple, androgynous shape of a nature spirit, one of those non-descript spirits that indicate a healthy jungle. It steps to the obelisks and enters it, merging with it. The obelisk shines a little brighter with its presence. There, you see a hedgehog spirit. It looks just like the animal, but merges easily into the stone. Before disappearing within, however, it

seems to give you a reproachful look. Now comes the ancestor spirit of a nubari tribe, the Kovo by its clothing. Next comes a mighty taboo spirits. It looks like an angry tantor (elephant), and would surely crush you with its mass if it were real. Instead, it passes thru you and into the obelisk. The spirits keep coming; a dozen, two dozen, three dozen. Each one passes into the obelisk, brightening it until your almost think you might go blind. Then, the light becomes strangely... clearer. It is as if you are standing in broad daylight, with an unearthly clear and pristine light all around you. There are colors all around you as well, flashes of blues, reds and greens. Finally, the colors of your tribes/totems seem to settle upon you, like holy garments.”

*Goal #1: The Heroes must understand that they have the attention of every spirit that is important to them.*

### **Step Two: Prophecy will be made.**

Here the Storyteller must combine the fears of the heroes with their favored combat action to tell prophecy. Below is a list of things that must be prophesied, with an example of how the Storyteller might describe it. There are only 4 vital ones, so some heroes may share in the visions or the Storyteller may invent new ones.

1) The Heroes Will Battle The Thri-Kesh. These are the mantis-like monstrosities mentioned earlier in the giants village. In combat, thri-kesh are wired to go after anything that is moving. The faster it moves, the more the thri-kesh will be attracted to it. Thus, a monkey katanga jumping around in the trees will garner more attention than the stationary spear thrower, even though the spear thrower may be dealing out lots of

damage. *“(Heroes Name) takes to the trees, shrieking and throwing stones. Ignoring the lion katanga charging it, the thri-kesh leaps to the trees in hot pursuit. Up, up into the grandfather trees they go, the monkey katanga being pursued by the thri-kesh. Finally the monkey katanga reaches the small uppermost branches some 500' above ground and pauses. The thri-kesh also pauses, some 30' feet below, the small branches under it bending dangerously under its weight. Success! Thinks the monkey katanga, for the thri-kesh can climb no higher. Then the monster flexes its carapace and unfolds gigantic, translucent wings. Screech watches in surprise and horror as the creature launches itself upward, snagging him with one huge, hooked claw. He is pinned, unable to move, as they monster flies on, Screech held motionless in its grip. The creatures maw dips down once, then twice, and is dripping with blood. Screech struggles no more.”*

2) The Heroes Will Be Changed. In section two of this adventure, the heroes will be transformed into a gorilla, though they will retain the abilities of their heroes in almost every way. *“(Heroes Name) looks into the pool and is startled to see a large female gorilla staring back at him. He jumps, startled, and looks down at himself. He still sees his own body with all his clothing and tattoos, but his weapons and fetishes are gone. Also, he discerns the hazy outline of a female gorilla around him, surrounding him. He looks at the water again. Yes, no doubt about it. Despite how he sees himself, he has the appearance of a young adult female gorilla to everyone else.*

*Suddenly, bursting through the jungle, a large male silverback gorilla appears. He sniffs the air in huge whoofs, panting. He looks around, sees (Heroes Name), then*

screams, hoots and pounds his chest. The male charges, plants a hot, amorous kiss on (Heroes Name's) mouth, picks him up, and runs with him back into the jungle. Minutes later there is much shaking of the branches. There is also much screaming, most of which is coming from (Heroes Name).

3) The Heroes will fight bravely, but will see their people wither away and die. "(Heroes Name) has grown old, with many, many children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. He is a respected elder of his tribe, and even as he approaches his 100<sup>th</sup> summer, he will still pick up the spear to protect his village. None can doubt his courage or wisdom.

Yet as his 100<sup>th</sup> summer comes to a close, (Heroes Name) wonders if he has been so wise after all. For years he has heard troubling news from the northwest. The Plains Of Ash is growing. It is only a little each year, hardly even noticeable at first. And there have always been more pressing matters to contend with. First, Tiger had to be defeated. Then came the snake-men, the lizard people, the Dark Hunter, that - thing - that come out of the Valley of Spirits. All seemed pressingly important.

Then comes the news that the jungle has begun to fail even more quickly as the ash has taken over. Things have started to emerge from that hideous place, killing and ... draining of life .... all that they encounter. The problem has suddenly become bigger in (Heroes Name) eyes and mind. As he looks back over the long years, he wonders if he had really fought the right enemy. For the ash comes now even to his village. When the dry season winds blow strong enough, the ash comes and brings sickness. With his final days, he tries to warn his people of the danger that he sees. They nod respectfully

and thank him for his council, but he doubts they truly understand. For they are young and have never known a time before the ash-fall. The jungle is large, the ash moves slowly, and there are great and glorious battles to be fought. What's a little ash every year?"

4) The Heroes will travel far from home. A golden-skinned nubari with six fingers comes again to your cage. You shout at them, "I am not an animal!", but they don't seem to understand. Indeed, you know they see you as a gorilla, nothing more. They see you prying at the lock once again. One of the nubari walks over to a shelf of containers with a sort of lever on it. He picks up the blue container, walks to your cage, points the container at you, and pulls the lever. From the nose of the container emerges a fine mist of liquid. A moment later, you lay stunned on the floor of the cage, unable to move or speak.

You can hear just fine, however. "That one is causing trouble again, Zalil. Maybe we should terminate the experiments and find one more docile."

The other golden-skinned nubari seems to consider this. "Alright. Move him into the disposal chamber and select another from the new captures."

Your cage rolls on its wheels into a small room. "Make sure you close the booth securely this time," the one called Zalil says. "It leaves one nasty stench behind."

You watch with dread as your cage is secured to the floor with leather straps. Overhead a strange, funnel-shaped object hangs from the ceiling. The nubari that has brought you here says, "Too bad you didn't cooperate better, little fella'. We only

wanted to make you better.” He leaves small room, shutting the door behind him. Laying on your back you look straight up into the moth of the funnel thing hanging from the ceiling. From deep inside it come a small blue light, followed by some crackling like little lightening.. Then there is a flash .. and you know no more.”

5) The Heroes will be challenged by their spirits (This vision can be directed at anyone, but would be most appropriate for Blue-Hands, Garuda-Riders, Spell-Weavers, Spirit-Speakers, Shaman and Witch-Doctors. Adjust the spirit in the vision accordingly). *You summon a spirit for divination and counsel, asking it advice and requesting assistance. Much to your shock, the spirit shakes its head slowly and sadly. “How often have I heeded you, my friend? How often have I called you ‘Wise-One’? Yet for all I have done, you have acted selfishly and foolishly. Your offerings have been infrequent, though I ask for little in sacrifice. Your actions you would call heroic, but I know them to be short-sighted. So you defeated Tiger - so what? Is Malatra precious in your heart? Do you think of the lands success, or your own? What is more important to you, the open path or the land in which it lies? Have you ever seen the Spirit of Malatra as you see me here and now? No, you have not. Worse, you don’t even consider the question. A sickness grows in Malatra, and all you think of is yourself. How can you and your people flourish if Malatra dies?”*

*The spirit starts to fade away. “I can no longer grant the boons you ask. I am weakened and sickened unto death, and your arrogance never saw it coming.” The spirit disappears, fleeing with all your companion spirits. Your powers and abilities are gone!”*

Here ends the visions of The White.

*Goal #2: The Heroes must take their prophecies seriously. They are heroes and have beaten prophecy before. That does not mean they will do so again.*

### **Step Three: Pledges must be made.**

At this point the spirits end the visions and will speak in a softly shifting chorus of voices. “Now is the time for commitment. You may leave without dishonor, for you never really understood why you were summoned here. Go on with your lives with our blessing if you wish. But know this: If you choose to go on, then you will be bound to see the end of your journey, no matter its outcome. Know that you will be changed by the end. Changed for better or for ill, no one can say. But you must choose.”

*Goal # 3: Heroes agreeing to continue will be placed under a ‘Geas’ to finish it.*

## **Encounter Six - Valley Of The Thri-Kesh**

The walkers and giants leave the Obelisk of the White and travel for another day going west-south-west. The grandfather trees reach 500’ by days end, though the upper branches are dry and stunted, almost as if drought-stricken in the dry heat. This is the realm of birds, insects and the things that hunt them.

**Failed FORT Saves.** Earlier in the module the Storyteller was to make a record of those who had failed Fortitude saves. Those who failed will now start to feel the effects of infection. Describe to them that they sleep poorly tonight, dreaming frantic images of

prophecy and pain. They will awake in the morning tired. *All FORT saves will be at a - 2 until cured or until the noted in the story.* The Storyteller should try to make the sickness appear, at least at first, as the aftereffects of a night of prophecy and disturbing visions.

The giants will announce “Here is the Valley Of The Thri-kesh.” With a grin, they will say, “It is a good valley. The Thri-kesh are dangerous creatures, worthy of battle. Many giants have fallen here. So have many walkers. It is the most dangerous part of The Good Walk this side of Banerathashi-gurtha (Big Rock Place Where She Who Walks Lives).”

**It will take two days to travel through the Valley Of The Thri-Kesh.** The party will now likely consist of the heroes and 6 NPC’s of various races per the Storytellers discretion. It is recommended that at least 3 be saru NPC’s.

Also note that at this point that all the plants the giants smash down at night is almost completely grown back by morning. Thus, the walkers continue to utilize the cots or hammocks, or (if they are saru or monkey katanga) will probably be making nests in the trees.

**DAY ONE, MID-MORNING.** The giants will continue zealously smashing their way thru the jungle, singing their way along. The tune they are singing has changed, however. If the Walkers complain that this might attract the Thri-kesh, the Giants will respond, “Yes, we know. The song is for the Thri-kesh. We are hoping for their blessing.”

By mid-morning, the giants smash their way to a group of 20 totems set in the jungle. They are long spears, set in the ground so

they cross at the top and bound with hemp cord. Hanging from each one is a weapon of some kind. The spears are decorated with bright colors in lines and dots, adorned with feathers. The weapons vary from axes and daggers to strange-looking circular discs of rock with deep notches cut into them. The notches are set at the four compass points; left, right, up and down. The notches are large enough that a nubari could easily slip the four fingers of his hand and grasp the disc firmly. The giants will say, “These are the totems of the mantis-men. They originally came from a very dry and sandy place that writhes beneath an evil dark sun, though those that made the journey have died. These were put here by their children. The mantis-men live very short lives. The totems mean, “Those who violate our land will be killed with these weapons”, or something like that. From now until we leave this valley, they will watch us.”

**DAY TWO, MID-AFTERNOON.**

**Sometime this afternoon, the Thri-kesh will attack.** There should be at least two of them, but probably no more than four. While the heroes will no doubt defeat the thri-kesh, they are still extremely dangerous to individuals.

The Thri-kesh are gigantic preying mantis. They are masters of camouflage and lightening attacks. They are extremely hard to see when they aren’t moving and can strike so rapidly as to startle on-lookers and stun those they hit if surprised. Worse still, their first attacks, while causing some damage, are mainly grapple attacks. The thri-kesh seize their prey, grapple them, then begin to eat, dealing out devastating bite damage to immobilized prey. They also secrete a mild paralytic with every bite (Fort DC 20, paralyzed for 1d4 rounds). *They will concentrate on eating any grappled prey,*

*even if attacked by someone else.* Their response if attacked is to move away with their prey or flying away if they must (they aren't very good flyers). They are excellent climbers, so often climb up into the trees to have a peaceful meal. They will almost never drop a meal they've started to eat, as the hooks and barbs on their forward claws make "dropping" prey difficult. Typically the prey must be torn of their claws shredded by bloody shred.

The thri-kesh also have a peculiar habit of chasing whatever is moving the fastest. They seem to be biologically wired to go after fast-moving targets. Thus one possible strategy to defeating them is to simply attract their attention to a hero that can move faster than they can. *This will only work on one Thri-kesh, however.* Two thri-kesh never go after the same prey.

**Thri-Kesh, Monstrous Huge Vermin.** NA 1-3; HD 16D8+32 (104hp); Init+0; Speed 40ft, Climb 30 ft, Fly 30 ft (clumsy); AC 22 (-2 size, +14 natural); Attack 2 claws +19 melee, bite +13 melee; Damage Claw 1d8+5, Bite 3d6+5; Face/Reach 10 ft by 20 ft/10 ft; Special Attacks Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Lightning Strike, Sneak Attack, Squeeze, Venom (Fort DC 20, 1d4 rounds); Special Qualities Hide +10, Listen +5, Spot +12; Saves Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +5; Abilities Str 21, Dex 10, Con 14, Int -, Wis 16, Cha 2.

*Improved Grab* as per the Monster Manual ability.

*Improved Grapple* gives the creature +5 to all grapple checks due to the hinged and barbed nature of its claws. Attempts to break the grapple by pinned prey deals automatic claw damage.

*Lightning Strike.* Gives the creature a +4

on its claw attacks, due to the incredible speed of the attack. Does not improve initiative.

*Sneak Attack.* If the thri-kesh remains undetected and then surprises its prey (either catches it flat-footed or otherwise deprives the prey of its DEX bonus, the thri-kesh may be able to stun its prey. If the initial attack is successful, the prey gets a FORT save of DC 28 (don't forget anyone who is sick gets a -2 to FORT saves). If the save fails, the prey is stunned for 2 rounds and cannot attempt to oppose the grapple.

## Encounter Seven - Temple Of The Saru

The Walkers, possibly down to the heroes and 3 or 4 npc's, will now make their way up and out of the Valley Of The Thri-Kesh. At the top of the ridge is an actual path through the jungle. "The path is to Baneratha-shi-gurtha (Big Rock Place Where She Who Walks Lives). There will be no more smashing until we return home. For this we are sad. But for you, there is still much walking."

The jungle remains vigorous and healthy, with many nature spirits nearby. The grandfather trees soar to an impossible 500'. Yet the path remains open and garden-like. "There are no predators here, but we will walk with you until you reach the rocks," the giants will say.

An easy 4 hour walk later, the walkers see two impressive stone figures ahead. They are saru, one male figure carved of black marble. The other is a female saru carved of white marble. The figures are 12' tall and perfectly detailed, down to the age-lines around their eyes. The female statue appears to be smiling and gesturing down

the trail that leads past them. The male statue also smiles, but he grips a great spear and has a cautious, wary look about him.

*The statues have a curious quality about them, one the giants are familiar with.* They will ask the Walkers, “What do you see?” This question is part of a ritual, for only Walkers who have been truly called will actually see the statues. Everyone else, including the giants, only see two large boulders. Those who have not been called are not allowed past this point. “In the past, some have come who were not true Walkers. They came for other reasons, so we had to stop them. Once we were dishonored because we failed to catch a non-Walker. He was a nubari kwaku who came to steal secrets, we think. We never saw him again, but the one Walker that came back said the kwaku had been eaten by the Guardian. She ran off into the jungle then, crazed and raving. We never saw the Walker again, either.”

**One last comment by Flowers-In-Nose-Hair.** “We do not understand all that happens in the temple, but know this: What you do there affects all of Malatra. 12 years ago the Walkers failed in some important trial in the temple. A spirit serving the temple told me that this failure allowed three more Tamara to cross over the Blood Bridge than would otherwise would have come. I often wonder how many good peoples died from those three.”

The walkers travel on, past the stone statues and along the path. Another hour walk brings them to a great cobblestone courtyard before a gigantic temple. The temple is columned and arched, and though its archways are high enough to allow a jungle giant passage, the architecture will be familiar to any veteran of the Tamara war,

as well as Blue Hands and anyone experienced with ruins. It is clearly a work of the Ancients - and in perfect condition. Someone or something is maintaining this structure. The only difference between this and other ancient buildings is that the carvings on all the walls and columns depict saru. Further carving and wall pictograms and paintings will be found inside. All depict saru in everyday life. Caring for baby saru. Swinging through trees. Playing. Eating. But half the carvings show saru caring and tending to other creatures, talking to all sorts of plants and animals. They even depict stories of saru trying to talk to such animals as garuda and rhinos, then running for their life as the animals attack.

The interior of the temple is like many other ancient ruins. Large and high-ceilinged, with actual glass panes set in the upper arches to let in the dim sunlight that makes it past the grandfather trees outside. All of these glass panes are unbroken. The interior, as the exterior, is clean and well-maintain.

Light does come from another source. Set in the ceiling every six feet or so are stones that glow with their own light. This is a form of ‘Continual Torch’ (Continual Light), and such a display of interior lightening without a fire may be frightening to some walkers.

There are six rooms to the temple. Going from the archway where the walkers came in:

First Room - a 20' x 20' room with tables and chairs, all stone. The tables are laid out with a great banquet of meats (raw and cooked), fruits, nuts, vegetables, waters, mead, and beer. Their will also be the favorite foods the heroes mentioned before

the feasting hall in Hafoka. The tables are actually covered in a cotton tablecloth dyed purple and red (an extravagance by some tribes standards, as weaving something this large is arduous and the purple color is difficult to produce.

There are three doorways leading out off the room, all large enough to admit a giant. One is straight ahead to the **main temple**. Next to this door is a pedestal with a large copper bowl on it. This bowl is for offerings from the walkers. **The main temple will remain locked and absolutely impenetrable until morning and offerings have been made (see below).**

The archway to the left leads to **room # 3**. The door is covered with a tapestry for privacy. The tapestry is a mural of a great city of the ancients in the jungle. Someone with Knowledge-Ancients or a Blue-Hand may be able to recognize this as the ancients city in the Jungle Of Lost Tribes before it was destroyed. The city is only known by its ruins, and most of those ruins were torn down by the Tamara 10 years ago during the war.

The archway to the right leads to **rooms 4, 5 and 6**. It is uncovered.

**Room # 3** is a simple but large living quarters, with bed, table and closet. While meticulously clean as everything else, it doesn't actually look lived in, though it could accommodate a saru or nubari.

**Rooms 4, 5 and 6** are storage rooms and a kitchen with hearth. All are clean and cold, apparently unused. There are empty barrels, storage bins that might once of held potatoes, grains or onions, hooks for meats, bananas and such, and urns for liquids. All are empty. **A Spot of DC 25**, however, will

reveal several grain beetles and weevils, which would indicate that grain products of some kind have been here in the recent past. A Hero with the **scent feat** can easily pick out the lingering odor of onions, garlic and meat.

There are also wooden drawers here with kitchen implements in them. These include the standard array of knives, spoons, stirring sticks, and two pronged forks. It also includes the more exotic 4 pronged forks and "sporks" (spoon and fork combo). There are honey dollops (large wands with a grooved bulb at the end for portioning out honey) and churning sticks (large sticks with wide blades at the end for whipping cream into butter). All these implements are made of ancient ceramic, are in perfect condition, and are clean.

The most amazing thing to behold is a single, large wire whisk. It is 3' long and made of metal.

The secret to this place is this: Any food or beverage the walkers wish will appear as soon as the walker isn't looking. It will appear fully cooked (if desired) and ready to eat. The dishes are in the cupboard, and dirty dishes are cleaned as soon as they are placed back in the cupboard. Further, if the walkers want to cook for themselves, ingredients will appear and the hearth will fire up!

### **Bobo**

Soon after the heroes arrive, they will be greeted by Bobo, an odd-looking but friendly saru. Bobo tends to the living quarters, kitchen, storage area and the courtyard, but rarely enters the sanctuary of the temple. He has been setting up the banquet table in expectations of the guests.

Bobo is a somewhat known hero of Malatra. He is a fifth-level hero, and those who have heard of him have heard him called “The stupidest saru in the jungle”. He is a great friend of Abu the hedgehog katanga trader, who is known by almost everyone. What is odd-looking about him is two-fold. First, he appears to have a “five o’clock shadow” all over his body. Bobo was known to be a hairless saru (a repulsive sight!) that he believed was some sort of family curse. It was, in fact, genetic, and the healing qualities of the temple have been correcting this genetic error over the years. As a result, he now is covered with fuzz.

The second odd thing is that Bobo has a ten foot anaconda draped around his neck and shoulders. It’s a large and muscular-looking thing, and spends its time both watching the heroes and then sticking its nose in Bobo’s ear, apparently whispering things to him. The snake is, in fact, a greater nature spirit granted by Chee’ah to protect and guide Bobo. The spirit does not run Bobo’s life, but does try to keep him out of trouble. Bobo usually listens to what he simply calls “my best friend after Abu”. There are times, however, that Bobo doesn’t listen to the spirit as he rushes around trying to please people. When this happens, the spirit then protects Bobo from his mistakes.

Bobo is probably the friendliest person a hero will ever meet. He is also among the dumbest. He will do anything he can to make anyone happy, and is most commonly heard to say “Bobo sorry” in nearly every conversation. This is because he doesn’t understand most of what’s told to him, and so is constantly making mistakes. Bobo disappeared about 12 years ago, right around the time of the Battle Of Blood Bridge. It was feared that an agent of the

Tamara had killed the poor confused soul. Somehow, he made it to the temple and has found a home.

Bobo is here for comedy relief. He will get the heroes any food or drink that they ask for, as well as any spice or serving utensil, napkins etc. The kitchen and storeroom magically provide anything asked for (though Bobo may misunderstand what the heroes want and ask for the wrong thing). The heroes may also go to the kitchen and storage rooms and ask for or prepare any dish they wish. That is what the utensils and cooking hearth in the kitchen are for.

Bobo is not helpless, however. Though he never willingly fights (he will run from battle if possible and fight only long enough to get someone else out of danger), he is capable of it. Also, he is slowly undergoing a transformation that is turning him into a kind of sorcerer. He knows a couple of 1<sup>st</sup> level sorcerer spells, but doesn’t know what he is really doing. He just does certain magical things in an attempt to please.

Bobo cares for the temple and the grounds, and the temple cares for him. He cleans and cares for the animals and plants around the temple, usually sleeping in the forest at night except during “scary thunder rains”. The animals and lesser nature spirits around the temple adore Bobo, and during the Walkers meal several will come into the temple asking for food or looking to be groomed. These won’t be any sort of dramatic entrance. A spider monkey here, a parrot spirit there, even a plant spirit may suddenly appear near Bobo. When this happens, Bobo will act like it is a long-lost friend, make a fuss, water or feed the animal or spirit, then it will go its way or disappear.

Besides comedy relief, Bobo is also here to

make a point, if the Heroes are open to it. He is attentive to nature in a way few Heroes are. He instinctively knows what many have forgotten: The jungle is more important than any concept of personal glory. This is why Bobo serves with out regard for himself.

**Bobo, male saru.** Str 20, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 5, Cha 16. 6<sup>th</sup> level (F4/S2).  
Spells: Mending (to fix the things he breaks in the temple), and Summon Monster I (to meet new friends in the jungle).

The **Main Temple** is locked and is blocked by two immense wooden doors bound with a shiney gold metal (bronze). It cannot be open by any one for any reason until the next mornig and an offering (of any kind) has been placed in the copper bowl. Then, it swings open easily.

## MAIN TEMPLE

The temple is a large, open auditorium, 30' wide by 40' long. The ceiling curves up into a dome 40' above the floor in the center. 'Continual Torch' stones are set along its perimeter. The floor is cut stone with a beautiful picture painted upon it. It is a picture of the Amaranthus, the flower of immortality. Careful investigation will reveal that the image is not painted on. Rather, the image seems to be pressed into the very stones themselves.

At the far end of the temple is a large statue of a female saru sitting upon a dias. She wears a garland of flowers, has her left hand over her heart and her right hand out, palm downward. The palm has a curious symbol carved on it (spell-casters will know it is the symbol for Transformation). She is 20' tall and made of a strange green stone (The stone is Moss Agate - See Below). This puts the upraised hand about 15' above the floor.

On the floor at the base of the dias are eight ceramic urns, about 3' tall. *All saru will recognize the statue as that of Chee'ah, She-Who-Walks and goddess of the saru.*

The aura of the temple is of peace, good will, and joy. *All injuries will begin to heal at the rate of 1 hit point per hour. Anyone still suffering from the sickness of the jungle gets a new FORT save at +5, and may make a new save every hour until cured.*

Sitting next to the statue is a saru in a green robe. The hair of his head is braided with ribbons of many different colors. He wears a clear white stone on a gold chain necklace. He sits upon the dias, next to the statue and says, "Welcome, Walkers. We have been expecting you."

## What Saru Know

All saru will hold some core beliefs about Chee'ah, at least as a legend if not in actual fact. There is, however, a difference between what different saru will know.

*Most saru* will know Chee'ah to be the matron protector and teacher of the saru. She is an immortal, instructing her shamans, caring for the saru, and concerned with the well-being of the jungle.

*Saru shaman and witch-doctors will know* that while any wise saru can become a shaman, only those most blessed will ever actually see Chee'ah. Very few shaman have ever met actually met her. Meeting Chee'ah or being visited by one of her mightiest spirits can be both wonderful and terrible. Such a shaman can become 'Touched'. She becomes so blessed that spirits will clamor to her, demanding attention and offering to grant all sorts of boons. If the saru doesn't know how to handle the clamor, she will go

mad. Also, being visited by Chee'ah is sometimes an omen that great sacrifice will be needed.

All shaman of any race will have experienced this to a lesser degree. The calling to become shaman is, in fact, a clamoring of attention by the spirits. The difference, however, is a matter of degree. Becoming a shaman is a passage of the uninitiated into the realm of the spirits. Becoming 'Touched' is the major leagues, with hundreds of spirits of all kinds demanding attention.

(Though this will not come up now, in game terms the saru shaman will be mobbed by spirits for 2d4 days. During this time, she must make a concentration check every 12 hours. The first check is DC 25, but each subsequent check goes up by 3 (25, 28, 31, 34 etc). At the end of the 2d4 days, the hero must add the results of all those checks. Each failed check is a -1, each success is a +1. Then the hero must make a Willpower check which is Willpower + Char Level + Concentration adjustment ( which could be -8 to +8) vs DC 35. Failure means the hero goes mad, runs into the jungle trying to escape the spirits, and forever disappears. Success means the shaman is "Touched", gaining special abilities and acquiring new responsibilities.)

Spirit Sense and Spirit Turning are required feats before any character is "Touched" this way. Only shaman with an understanding of sprits have even a chance of dealing with them.

### **Gee'asha (Bemph!)**

The male saru sitting next to the statue is Gee'asha, care-taker of the Temple Of The

Saru and Custodian Of The Walkers. If the walkers wish, they may call him Bemph! This was his nickname as a child, because he kept running and swinging into trees with an audible "Bemph!"

Gee'asha is a friendly, wise saru of great power. He looks young and vigorous, but is actually very old. Someone with the linguist feat will notice that he uses older pronunciations of common words. This doesn't happen a lot, but on occasion the Storyteller should try an add a "ye" or "verily" to his speech. Try not to do it too often or be too obvious. Gee'asha is 300 years old. Those who become a Maltran Hero (New Prestige Class) will cease to age. Gee'asha will refer to himself as "Hero Of All Good Peoples", which is a mid-level Malatran Hero.

While the specifics of this new Prestige Class are still being worked out, the Story-Teller should assume the following about Gee'asha.

- 1) He is a 15<sup>th</sup> level NPC. At least 8 levels are warrior.
- 2) He is extremely focused and dedicated to saru, all good peoples and Malatra in general. He serves Chee'ah and has been Touched. He seems laid-back and friendly, and won't act all portentous or pretentious, but he won't be swayed from his work either.
- 3) The Walkers must proceed with the journey. Once they passed the Obelisk of White, they were honor-bound to continue and will become cursed with an insanity if they balk now. This is to protect the location of the temple.
- 4) Gee'asha has the ability to change the

substance of any spirit-possessed item. It is part of his class. If a hero has a feather fetish, for example, but would prefer it be a stone that would fit upon a staff, then Gee'asha can ask the spirit to change its substance. This is considered a serious request on the part of the spirit, particularly an elemental spirit, and will not be taken lightly. Gee'asha, however, has done this many times. All the ribbons in his hair are, in fact, fetishes and magic items changed from some other form.

### The Urns Of Stones

The eight urns at the foot of the dias are filled with "pure" stones. These are stones that have spirits within them, and can offer benefits to the possessor. Gee'asha's purpose is to talk to each Walker, determine which stone would best benefit the Walker based on their personality, and give it to them. The Story-Teller should refer to the information already obtained about the attitudes, dreams and fears of the heros, and act as if Gee'asha knows them as well.

### THE STONES

Each stone has several possible uses. After talking to the Walker, Gee'asha will pick a stone for the Walker, describing what it does in character terms, not game mechanics terms. The Walker must pick which use they want. THEN, tell the player what it does in game terms.

**1) Aventurine.** A green quartz with dark green flecks. "This stone provides clarity of vision and emotional balance. You must decide what it will do for you."

+2 Spot, or

+2 to Sense Motive, or

+1 to WILL.

**2) Moss Agate.** "Mossy" coloration pattern of green to blue-green. "Connects you to the spirits of nature and fertility, expands your consciousness and removes fear."

+1 to CHOSEN spirit feat, or

+1 to a CHOSEN divination spell check, or

'Remove Fear', magical or natural, once per day for 8 hours (permanently removes if magical), or

+1 to all Animal Empathy and Animal Friendship spells and affects.

**3) Apophyllite.** A green, glassy stone. "Strength, endurance and stamina."

+1 FORT, or

+1 Strength checks, or

add +5 to hit points.

**4) Azurite.** A blue stone with green spots. "This stone may increasing understanding, improve divination or improve concentration."

+2 to any CHOSEN intelligence-base skill, or

+1 to all divination spell checks, or  
+ 2 to concentration.

**5) Bloodstone.** Black stone with red flecks. "A warriors stone, it prevents fear, bolsters courage around you, stops blood flow, and increased stamina."

Immune to fear and gives +2 to fear to any ally with 20', or

prevents hit points from going below 0, or

add +2 to all endurance checks.

**6) Jet.** A pure black stone. “This dark stone actually protects against the darkness, whether it be from evil, disease or evil spirits.”

Acts as a personal “Prot From Evil”, or

+2 to any save involving disease, or

+1 to Turning evil spirits.

**7) Kyanite.** A deep blue stone with darker blue flecks. “Enhances creativity, truth and communication.”

+1 to any craft skill, or

+2 to Sense Motive, or

+4 skill points may be added to “Speak Language”

**8) Malachite.** Deep green stone with green swirls. “Warns of danger and focus attention.”

Initiative +1, or

Concentration +2.

### **Gee’asha’s Conversation**

What follows is a narrative of how Gee’asha’s conversation might go. The Story-Teller should not read this verbatim, but should work it into the role-playing. *“I hope you have enjoyed your meal. Please take your time to eat all you wish, drink all you wish, and rest as long as you like. When you are ready, you will begin the*

*next part of your journey.”*

*“We have talked about you and I have given you boons. No doubt you have many questions about this place, myself and The Good Walk. I will answer some and will put off others until you return. I am sorry, but you just won’t be able to understand all the answers, even if I gave them to you. You will need time to learn new things.”*

*“This is the Temple Of The Saru. Though Chee’ah often comes here, it is nota temple to her. She doesn’t believe in such things. Symbols of personal power or influence are not what she is about.”*

*“You must continue on your journey. You will stand below the great hand of the statue and be.... changed. The change is temporary, but how long you are changed is a difficult question to answer. You will also be transported... someplace else. Again, it would be difficult for you to understand.”*

*“What will happen to you may seem so strange that you might think it a dream. It is not. If you are harmed while you are changed, you will return with the same harm. If you die while on your journey, well, you will not be coming back at all. Also, it is important for you to understand that all your actions have consequences. What you do while you are away may change things once you get back. Things can be changed for good or for evil. That will be up to you.”*

*“This is done every 8 to 12 years. The path can not be opened more frequently than that. When it is ready to open, the call for The Good Walk goes out, and the Walkers come.”*

*“Chee’ah discovered this path long ago and*

*uses it to try and save Malatra from the terrible evil that is threatening it. When the spirits came back to Malatra, the greatest of the spirits were the elementals. But have you wondered about the Great Spirit Of Malatra itself? Malatra has a great wound upon it, and is slowly bleeding to death. The healing of this wound is more important than any battles of your peoples, any personal struggle, any personal desire or ambition. If the wound is not healed, then the Great Spirit of Malatra will not appear, cannot appear. Eventually, all of Malatra will die, and the land itself will come crashing down.”*

*“Today the journey you take will not be to heal this wound. The good peoples of Malatra have much to learn before they are capable of even attempting to heal Malatra. Today, is a journey of discovery and courage. Today, you must learn why the saru are so important to Malatra, and why all the peoples of Malatra must learn a new way of protecting the land.”*

When the conversation is over, the Walkers will stand below the statues hand. A moment later, there will be a flash, a feeling of dislocation and of changes done to their bodies. Then, blackness.

END OF PART ONE

Day Of The Saru, Part I  
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