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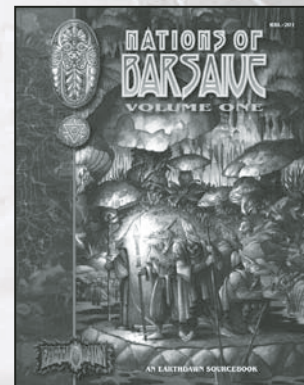
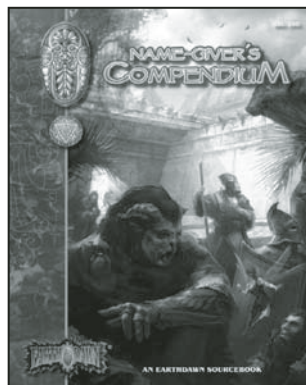
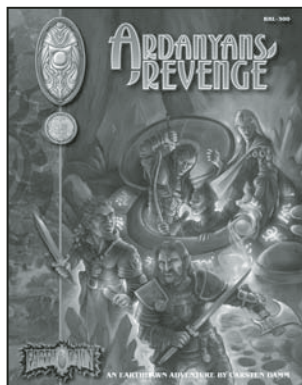


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WESTHRALL'S PASSAGE

Half of Westhrall's Map gives us only half a chance of success, but that is far better than what the alternatives provide.

• Ela Pono •



With the tip of his steel dagger, Baron Mardek of Valvria gestured toward the empty chair at the end of the table. "For the last time, Lady Pono, please sit down."

Ela Pono felt her *gahad* pushing up through her throat. How dare this pompous, overdressed windbag sit there and clean his fingernails, expecting her to sit at his order like a biddable child! "Braza take you, Mardek! Not even you can abduct a scholar from the Library of Throal and expect to go unpunished."

Mardek looked up a second time from his knife work, and as suddenly as it had arisen, Ela's *gahad* evaporated. At first she wondered if the baron had done something, but then she realized that her own scholarly curiosity had short-circuited her rage... specifically, her curiosity about Mardek's fingernails. Carefully manicured, with a pale, pearly sheen, they looked nothing like a typical ork's unruly claws. She suddenly wished that her own fingernails looked so elegant.

By the time she reached the end of this train of thought, Ela found herself sitting down precisely where Mardek had told her to sit.

"Lady Pono," Baron Mardek began, "you sold me a map. You certified that this map was the genuine work of Captain Westhrall of House V'strimon, and that it represented the safest river route from the Coil River, through the underground caverns, into Throal. Your research led you to believe that the terminus of this route lay directly underneath the dome of the present-day city of Valvria. All this may be true—but after investing much effort and a considerable sum of money, I have come to the unfortunate conclusion that you have not been entirely honest with me."

Ela shifted uneasily in her chair. The cushion was worn too thin for comfort, and the back of the chair pressed into her muscles in exactly the wrong way. Cursing her nerves, she schooled her face to a neutral expression. Thom Edrull had always told her to choose her customers wisely. Courting Baron Mardek may have been a mistake. "My lord," she said, with her best innocent-question look, "I don't follow your line of reasoning."

"Then let me make it clear," the baron continued. "First, you neglected to inform me that the terminus was more than one hundred and fifty yards under the floor of my city. Second, you understood the effort required to cut a shaft like that without drawing attention from the Royal Engineers? Third, you neglected to mention that the route runs along the fringe of Braza's Kingdom. As a scholar, you ought to be familiar with some of the denizens of that place—unless your pressing duties have not allowed you to read as widely as you should? I can assure you, the survivors of the first two missions I sent underground are quite, shall we say, intimately acquainted with them. Third—and I'm not certain how this detail escaped your attention—your map appears to end somewhat short of the Coil River or one of its tributaries. In fact, if my sources are correct, your map is little more than half complete."

Like a wicked spirit called by an unwary magician, Ela's memories of Braza's Kingdom flooded over her. Forcing them aside, she chose her words carefully. "If you feel I overcharged you for the information, perhaps we might arrange a reasonable refund."

Mardek smiled, showing teeth as clean as his nails. "We could, indeed... if I happened to be feeling reasonable."

Ela swallowed hard. "What can we do to put you in a reasonable mood, my lord?"

Mardek laid down his dagger and leaned toward Ela. "One way or another, Lady Pono, I want the other half of that map. If you can't find it in the library of Throal... well, you'll simply have to accompany my next expedition and draw out the rest of the route based on your own firsthand experience."

"My lord!" Ela protested, "I am no longer a *b'jados*, but a scholar. I cannot—"

Suddenly Mardek was out of his chair and standing right in front of her, the point of his dagger at her throat. "'Cannot' is no longer a part of your vocabulary, Ela Pono. You tried to cross me and you failed. Now your life is mine to spend as I will."

Westhrall's Passage is an adventure scenario designed for three to five Novice adepts of any Discipline. In this adventure, the characters are taken on a journey into the depths of the Kingdom of Throal, where the Pale Ones dwell and survival is always uncertain. **Westhrall's Passage** begins as a linear adventure but becomes more open-ended as it progresses, with the final outcome based on the actions of the player characters. Most of this adventure happens underground and includes a significant amount of rafting, so obsidimen characters will face more difficulties than Name-givers of other races.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

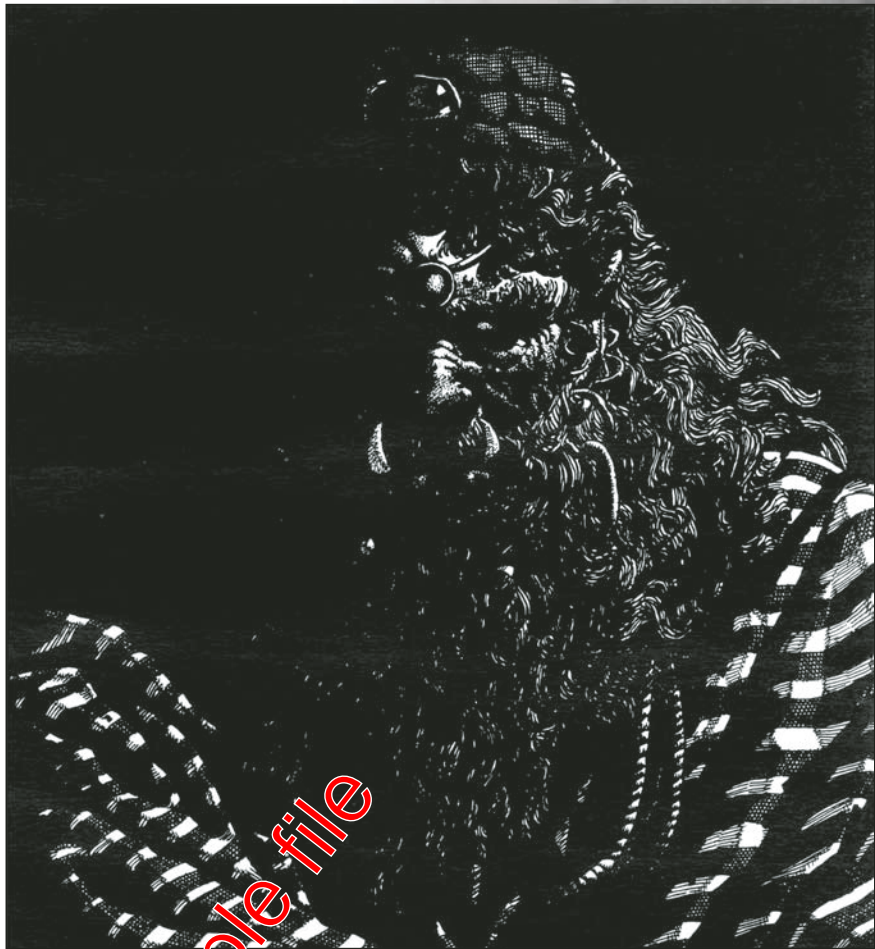
Westhrall's Passage is presented as a series of events. Each is described for the gamemaster, who should use the information given to run each section. There is little text to be read aloud to the players, meaning the gamemaster will have to describe many of the scenes to the characters as he sees fit. Where possible the text describes the terrain and areas the characters will encounter, but much of the detail is left to the gamemaster to devise.

Each encounter contains four sections: **Setting the Stage** contains a narrative description that the gamemaster reads aloud to the players, **Themes and Images** helps the gamemaster set the mood and pacing for a particular encounter, and **Behind the Scenes** explains what is really going on in each encounter. The final section of each encounter, **Troubleshooting**, offers suggestions to help the gamemaster get the adventure back on track should things go awry.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

During the Theran War, the Theran navy came close to destroying the delicate economy of the Kingdom of Throal by cutting off Throal's overland supply lines to the rest of Barsaive. To answer this threat, the famous riverboat Captain, Westhrall of House V'strimon, took his ship, *Astendar's Dart*, and blazed a trail from the Coil River to the caverns of Throal, using the underground rivers in the region. This underground supply line provided food and valuable raw materials to Throal's inhabitants, and brought back to the rest of Barsaive many of the weapons and spells that enabled its people to defeat the Theran enemy.

After the war, King Varulus III ordered the underground river routes closed, sensibly claiming that they represented



a threat to Throal's security that only the necessities of war-time could justify. The closing was easily accomplished because the network of subterranean caverns through which the rivers flowed was so labyrinthine that only regular manned stations along the routes prevented incoming riverboats from becoming hopelessly lost.

Recently, Baron Mardek Silkback of Valvria has begun secretly attempting to reopen the underground river routes to Throal. An ambitious ork and a consummate politician, Mardek would like nothing better than to take the crown of Throal for himself from the dwarf kingdom's weakening royal line. A secret road in and out of Throal would enable the baron to bring mercenaries into the kingdom under his banner, or make a quick exit should his schemes turn sour. Mardek is exceptionally loyal to Throal's ideals, but he feels that King Neden is likely to get himself killed on some foolish venture or another, especially after the fiasco that was the Battle of Prajor's Field. If this happens, the Kingdom of Throal will need someone to protect it from the eager scions of House Ueraven and House Garsun, all of whom are circling the throne like vultures. Mardek is confident that he is just the person to save Throal from such a disaster. See **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 122, for more information on Baron Mardek.

Ela Pono is an apprentice archivist in the Great Library of Throal. She has served Thom Edrull for several years, and on many occasions acted as the front woman for Edrull's less savory activities. Prior to becoming an archivist, Ela was part of an adventuring group called the Band of Blood

that mapped a section of Braza's Kingdom. When a wrong turn sent four of her best friends to a ghastly death, she retired and became a scholar at the library. Since then, she has undertaken to learn all she can about Throal's lowest depths. She recently discovered a fragment of one of Captain Westhrall's maps of the underground routes into the kingdom, which she sold to Mardek without Edrull's assistance or knowledge. See **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 41, for more information on Ela Pono.

Since acquiring the map, Mardek has equipped two expeditions to follow it. The first expedition, consisting of soldiers from his bodyguard, discovered the hard way that the route passed through the fringe of Braza's Kingdom—a nesting place of Horrors and their constructs. Of the three survivors, two were Horror-marked and the third has adamantly refused to return to the deep caverns.

Mardek put together a second expedition of adepts, soldiers, and guides recruited from the t'skrang natives known as the Pale Ones. None of these explorers returned. Though Mardek does not know it, the company survived the Horrors in Braza's Kingdom, but discovered that the map ended far short of the exit to the surface world. The mapped route brought them to an underground lake inside a huge cavern inhabited by Pale Ones; a t'skrang dwelling-place known as the Great Dome of Yatrivash. While camped on an island in that lake, the expedition was attacked by a ferocious tribe of Pale Ones and captured as slaves.

This second expedition also wandered into a political mire. A tribe of Pale Ones known as the Raghul is trying to take over the communities in the Great Dome of Yatrivash, with the help of dwarfs from the banned House of Indur (see **On the Banned Houses in Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 31) and t'skrang from the Abanos foundation of House K'tenshin, the House of the Little Diamonds (see **The Nials of House K'tenshin in Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 207). The Abanos possess the other half of Westhrall's map, and are searching for a way into the Kingdom of Throal as a gift for their Theran allies. In the meantime, they are enslaving the Pale Ones of Yatrivash, whom the dwarfs of House Endour are also using to mine a vein of silver ore.

Mardek has ordered Ela Pono to put together a third expedition to venture into subterranean Throal. He intends to use Ela's knowledge of Braza's Kingdom to get a small group of skilled adepts through the first part of the journey. He believes that the regiment of soldiers he sent with the second expedition attracted hostile attention from the locals, and that a small group might be seen as less of a threat.

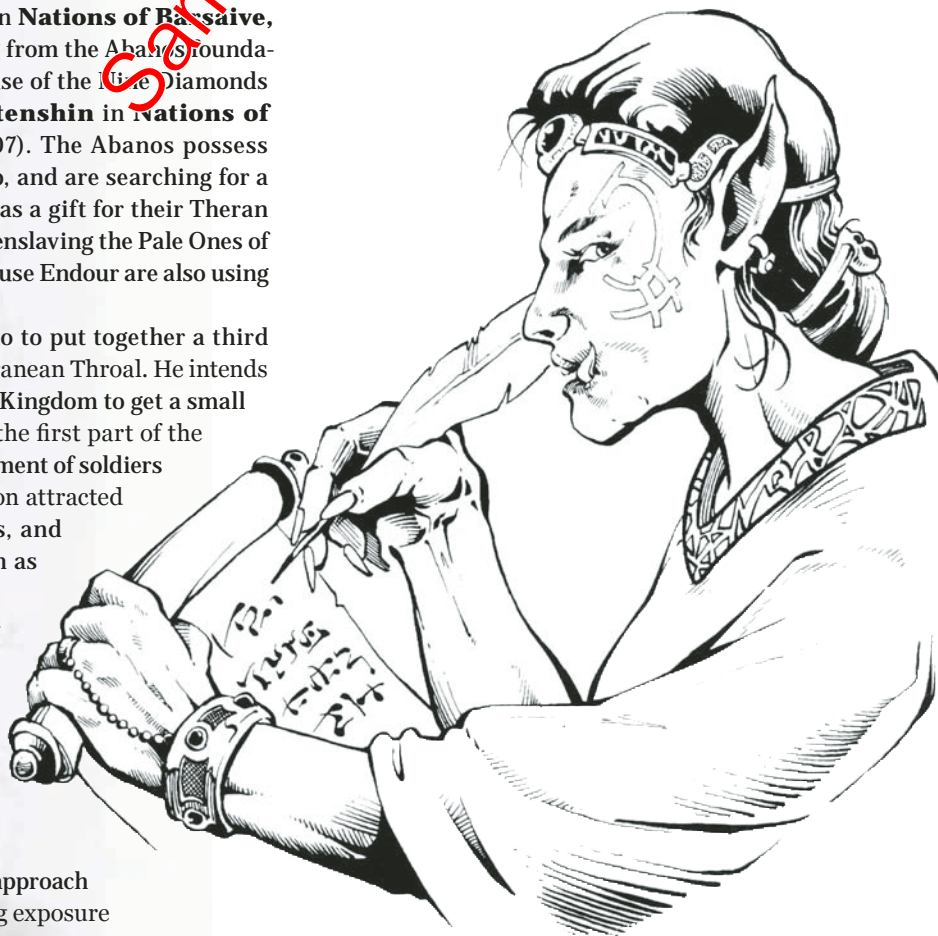
Ela would do just about anything to avoid returning to Braza's Kingdom, where she lost her friends six years ago. However, Mardek has her boxed into a corner. If she doesn't go on the expedition, she will have to face Mardek's wrath at being cheated. She can't approach the throne for help without risking exposure

of her illegal deals at the Great Library. She can't approach Thom Edrull for fear of losing her position once he finds out she has made deals behind his back. She won't flee Throal, because she badly wants to become the first ork to be appointed Scribe and Archivist at the Great Library. Thom Edrull has promised her this position, should he succeed Merrox as Master of the Hall of Records. She has no choice but to follow Mardek's orders and hope to survive.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Ela Pono hires the player characters to accompany her far beneath the Kingdom of Throal. She tells them she has found a fragment of a map that shows a route from the Serpent River into the Throal Mountains, and that she must verify its authenticity. By the time she approaches the characters, Ela has already acquired two native guides from the Pale Ones, a raft and 10 days' worth of provisions. She offers them a generous advance for equipment costs and pledges them to secrecy about the mission.

The adepts follow Ela's map from the terminus of the old supply route, skirting the edge of Braza's Kingdom and encountering dangerous subterranean creatures along the way. After leaving Braza's Kingdom behind, they reach the Great Dome of Yatrivash, and find evidence that the second expedition ended its journey on the island in the vast lake. As they travel farther through the Great Dome, they find several villages ransacked and abandoned. Eventually they reach one that remains intact; the inhabitants greet them warily, but peacefully.



During this encounter, the Raghul, aided by the Abanos of House K'tenshin, attack the village. The characters see firsthand the ravages of the Raghul tribe and its allies, and discover that a riverboat is moored somewhere in the caverns. Their t'skrang guides are killed in the battle, cutting the characters off from their only reliable means of getting safely back to the surface. In order to return to Throal and the world they know, the characters must forge ahead and find Westhrall's Passage on their own. Of course, this means they must first slip past, infiltrate, assault, or retreat from the Raghul and K'tenshin warriors. As they plan their escape, the characters also discover that the allies of the Raghul include dwarfs from the Banned House of Endour. Depending on the choices that the player characters make, the adventure may end in a number of different ways.

INVITATION TO AN EXPEDITION

In this encounter, Ela Pono, an apprentice archivist at the Great Library of Throal, approaches the characters. She says she has discovered a fragment of what could be a map made by the great Captain Westhrall of House V'strimon, drawn during the Theran War, which shows an underground route linking the Serpent River and the dwarf kingdom. She wants to hire the characters to accompany her on an expedition to authenticate the map.

SETTING THE STAGE

The Reading Room in the Great Library of Throal is the quietest place in the kingdom. Even the most garrulous dwarf feels the weight of contemplation among the reading tables and book-stacked shelves, as if the Library was a temple dedicated to the Passion Mynbruje. No voice in the Library rises above a quiet murmur—and rarely even that in the Reading Room, where debate is forbidden. Dwarfs being dwarfs, of course, many a whispered argument has started in the Reading Room and then moved outside the Library's massive brass doors. For those less inclined to constant discussion than the typical citizen of Throal, the Great Library is a blessed oasis of silence.

"Are you finding these writings helpful?" a soft voice inquires, accompanied by a rustle of silk. You glance up from the scrolls you've been reading, and see an ork woman in the yellow robes of a library apprentice standing by your table. Before you can answer her, she leans toward you with a smile, placing both hands on the tabletop. "If you need anything else, I can get it for you."

You shake your head, thanking her graciously. She bows her head and withdraws. As she steps away, you notice that she has left behind a small piece of brown parchment, pushed half-under your sheaf of papers. You pick it up and read...

At this point, the gamemaster should hand out the letter printed below.

THEMES AND IMAGES

A sense of mystery drives this first encounter. The characters should be forced to balance their desire for the silver with their natural suspicion that Ela's "exploratory mission" involves more than she is admitting.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The adventure begins with the characters in the Reading Room of the Great Library of Throal. The gamemaster may wish to create a brief scenario that leads the characters to the library, or may have Ela seek them out at their lodgings if none of the characters has reason or desire to be visiting the Library. If the player characters press Ela for more information immediately, she replies that she can say no more until the appointed place and hour, and she will stick to this position. If any of the characters are foolish enough to try strong-arming anything out of Ela, the gamemaster

should point out that physically threatening a staff member of the Library would undoubtedly draw the attention of the Royal Guards stationed at the doors. See **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 115, for more information on the Great Library.

Who is Ela Pono?

If the characters ask around in hopes of learning more about Ela Pono, they can use their Streetwise or Research skills to gather knowledge, or any other method the gamemaster deems appropriate; for example, knowledge

Dear Sir,

If you and your company are not otherwise engaged, I wish to employ your services on an expedition into the deep subterranean regions of Throal. My employer has authorized me to offer 400 silver pieces each for the successful completion of this exploratory mission. If you wish to know more, please come to the tavern called Ambica's Beard in the city of Valvria, tomorrow at the tenth hour. Please also come prepared to depart immediately on the expedition, should you decide to accept the offer.

With respect,

◦ Ela Pono
Apprentice Archivist of the
Great Library of Throal

skills about Throal or the Library. The Difficulty Number for all such Tests is 7 (see **Using Knowledge Skills** in the **Player's Compendium**, p. 232). How much the characters learn depends on the result level they achieve, as shown below.

Average: Ela Pono is an apprentice archivist at the Library of Throal, attached to the staff of Thom Edrull.

Good: Ela specializes in studies of Throal's subterranean regions.

Excellent: Ela was once a member of the Band of Blood, a *b'jados* group that explored Braza's Kingdom deep beneath Throal.

Extraordinary: Ela has been known to provide "special services" to library patrons in exchange for cash.

ELA PONO, THIRD CIRCLE ORK THIEF

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Toughness (16): 7/D12
Willpower (9): 4/D6

Strength (11): 5/D8
Perception (15): 6/D10
Charisma (10): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 6

Initiative: 5/D8
Physical Armor: 6
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 39 (59)
Wound Threshold: 11
Unconsciousness Rating: 31 (47)

Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 5/Tp

Combat Movement: 30

Full Movement: 60

Karma Points: 15

Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Avoid Blow^D (2): 8/2D6
Climbing (2): 8/2D6
Durability (4/3) (4): 4
Fence^D (4): 9/D8+D6
Karma Ritual (3): 3
Lock Picking^D (3): 9/D8+D6
Melee Weapons (3): 9/D8+D6
Silent Walk^D (3): 9/D8+D6
Surprise Strike^D (3): 8/2D6

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:

Mapmaking (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:

Horror Lore (1): 7/D12

Lost Kaers (1): 7/D12

Magical Lore (2): 8/2D6

Subterranean Throal (3): 9/D8+D6

General:

Bribery (2): 7/D12

Forgery (2): 8/2D6

Read and Write Language (5): 11/D10+D8

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Theran, T'skrang (Pale Ones)

Research (4): 10/D10+D6

Speak Language (3): 9/D8+D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*, T'skrang (Pale Ones)

Streetwise (3): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; Shatter 19)

Leather Armor (Phys 3)

Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)

Knife (Damage 6/D10; Range 6–10–12)

Short Sword (Damage 9/D8+D6)

Adventurer's Kit

Climbing Kit

Felt Hat

Mapmaking Tools

One half of Westhrall's Map (in Map/Scroll Case)

Trail Rations (1 week)

Traveler's Garb

Writing Kit

Loot

Gold bracelet (worth 60 silver pieces), gold ring (worth 30 silver pieces)

Legend Award

145 Legend Points

Notes

Ela possesses the ork Low-Light Vision and *Gahad* racial abilities.

Commentary

A Third Circle ork Thief, Ela Pono is an apprentice archivist at the Great Library of Throal, under the tutelage of the morally bankrupt Thom Edrull. For more information about Ela, see **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 41. Note that with a blood oath (below), Ela Pono's Death and Unconscious Ratings decrease by 4 points each due to blood magic. Treating Ela like a child is likely to trigger her *gahad*. On the other hand, her *gahad* will never be triggered when her own scholarly curiosity sets in. The gamemaster is free to describe the other triggers or nullifiers of her *gahad*.

At Ambica's Beard

Ambica's Beard is located in a working-class neighborhood of the Inner City of Valvria. The tavern's sign, painted in unusually detailed fashion for such an establishment, shows a drunken ork pulling hard on the beard of an otherwise female-looking dwarf. The tavern's clientele consists mostly of guards and *b'jados* who work for the dwarf trade houses based in Valvria, and most of them are much better behaved than the stereotypical ork. The Beard has only one house rule—no fights. If a fight looks likely to break out, every customer in the place will converge on the offenders and manhandle them out into the street.