

CONTENTS

Running the Adventure	2	The Village of Safeway	9
Adventure Background	2	Setting the Stage	9
Plot Synopsis	3	Themes and Images	10
It's Hardly Fitz	3	Behind the Scenes	10
Setting the Stage	3	Troubleshooting	12
Themes and Images	4	The Questor of Jaspree	12
Behind the Scenes	4	Setting the Stage	12
Troubleshooting	5	Themes and Images	12
The Swarm	5	Behind the Scenes	12
Setting the Stage	5	Troubleshooting	13
Themes and Images	5	Bergot's Brigands	13
Behind the Scenes	5	Setting the Stage	13
Troubleshooting	7	Themes and Images	14
The Shrine to Jaspree	7	Behind the Scenes	14
Setting the Stage	7	Troubleshooting	15
Themes and Images	7	The Brigands' Camp	15
Behind the Scenes	7	Setting the Stage	15
Troubleshooting	8	Themes and Images	15
A Thief in the Night	8	Behind the Scenes	15
Setting the Stage	8	Troubleshooting	17
Themes and Images	8	Aftermath	17
Behind the Scenes	8	Awarding Legend Points	17
Troubleshooting	9	New Magical Treasures	18
	9	Gou-tar	18

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A TEAR FOR JASPREE

Jaspree understands killing to survive. Sometimes you eat; sometimes you are eaten. But someone is torturing and killing Jaspree's children for sport and profit. Jaspree will not allow this to go unpunished. As his questor, I am charged with finding the sadistic murderer and bringing him to justice.

• Karthalus, Questor of Jaspree •



A Tear for Jaspree is a short adventure for three to five Novice (Second to Fourth Circle) adepts of any Discipline.

During this adventure, the characters discover a short-sighted greed, confront one of Barsaive's most dangerous predators, and become the instruments of a Passion's wrath. In the process they encounter some unlikely allies and meet a village with its own story to tell, one in which they might get in trouble if they ask too many questions, but could also serve as a safe haven in the future.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

A Tear for Jaspree is presented as a series of events, broken down into key scenes that are played in a particular sequence. Although the Shard is designed to lead from one scene to the next, gamemasters can alter key scenes to suit their campaign. Each scene 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 some of the scenes to the characters as he sees fit. Where possible, the text describes the terrain and areas the characters encounter, but much of the detail is left to the gamemaster to devise.

Each encounter contains four sections: **Setting the Stage** is a narrative description that the gamemaster may read 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. The final section of each encounter, **Troubleshooting**, offers suggestions to help the gamemaster get the adventure back on track should things go awry.

The encounters in this adventure are designed to be challenging for Novice characters. Some of the encounters may appear to be difficult, but many tricky situations can be avoided with a little planning. If the gamemaster feels that the adventure is too hard, it can be modified to suit the group's style of play. In some scenes, characters standing their ground and meeting their adversaries head-on may

well result in the death of the entire group. If this seems to be the case, reduce the number of opponents or their step numbers. However, keep in mind that Barsaive is a dangerous place and learning discretion will aid young adventurers well in the future.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Espagra are known across the land as voracious beasts that attack any creature they come across. There is nowhere that one can go to escape this plague on Barsaive. Every year, during the months of Charassa and Rua, espagra migrate to the high peaks of the mountains to mate and bear offspring. During this time, Barsaive gets a reprieve from espagra attacks until they redescend on the lowlands to find food for themselves and their hatchlings. Famished from their long mating cycle, espagra attack prey indiscriminately, and those Name-givers who live near the mountains know to watch the skies this time of year.

In the bustling city-states of Barsaive, the elite strive to outmatch one another by displaying impressive acquisitions and elaborate playthings. Fashion is always a high priority among the wealthy. Those of status, or who pretend they have status, constantly attempt to outdo their peers in the fashion game. Espagra have always been a desirable fashion in these privileged circles, and azure cloaks of espagra hide can be purchased in any major city. Recently, in the city of Iopos, the Denairastas dazzled their visitors by wearing dresses of espagra hide so beautiful they would make Queen Alachia green with envy.

Because tanning espagra hide is a difficult process, notwithstanding obtaining the hide from the espagra itself, the material is very rare and expensive. Soon people began requesting articles made from espagra hide, from the simplest of accessories to entire outfits. Word went out and the price of espagra increased even more.

Bergot, a dwarf Thief, aware of the increasing demand for espagra hide, concocted a scheme to become rich off their sale. Discovering that espagra would eat anything when coming down off the mountains, Bergot used his knowledge

of plants to poison small animals. While not lethal, the poison was extremely painful to animals and made them appear wounded. His men would then stake the beasts to the ground. Hungry espagra would find the wounded animals and devour them. This would soon make the espagra very ill and Bergot's men could easily kill them.

After a number of failed attempts at tanning, Bergot sought the service of a professional tanner. He met with several candidates, but none could guarantee success because of the difficulty of trapping the elemental air in the hides. He finally heard of Urzon, a tanner in the village of Safeway, renowned for his ability to tan exotic creatures. Bergot secretly arranged for Urzon to skin the espagra for him, while he sent others to contact various merchants to find buyers for the hides. Unfortunately for Bergot, the time that it had taken to kill, gather, and transport the espagra to the tanner had made some of the beasts unsuitable for tanning. Unwilling to lose more beasts in transport, Bergot kidnapped Urzon so that he could tan the hides as soon as the brigands killed the espagra.

Karthalus, a questor of Jaspree, has been having visions of an espagra being cruelly injured by Name-givers; he has taken this as a missive from the Passion Jaspree. The stories of espagra hunters have led him to the village of Safeway. When Karthalus heard that the tanner, Urzon, had a large quantity of espagra hides, he went to talk to him. Discovering the tanner missing and the village unwilling to discuss it, Karthalus began to think there was more afoot than there appeared. Karthalus has been camping near the edge of the village, but has seen no one suspicious during his watch. He has been waiting for a sign from Jaspree to give him direction.

The high demand for espagra hide left a lot of hungry young espagra stranded high in the mountains. Looking a parent to teach them how to hunt, they began to descend the mountain in search of food. Only a few at first, but as the more assertive espagra started heading down, other orphaned espagra followed and they have since descended the mountainside in droves, devouring everything they encounter.



PLOT SYNOPSIS

The player characters are resting at an inn in Bartertown when a friend contacts them. A tailor nicknamed 'Hardly' Fitz wishes to hire the characters to help with an endeavor. When they meet, Hardly explains to the characters that he is hoping to increase his selection of rare and exotic apparel; he has found a supplier and would like the characters to accompany his apprentice to purchase several espagra hides from a tanner in a distant village. They are shuffled off as soon as possible because he does not want his competitors to catch wind of the sale and make it to the village before his apprentice.

On the way they encounter a large exultation of espagra, unheard of in Barsaive. After the main body passes overhead, a number of espagra dive at the group, thinking the characters to be an easy meal. After a pitched battle, the surviving espagra are driven off, flying away to the southwest towards the Servos Jungle.

When the characters stop to make camp, they discover a shrine to the Passion of Nature, Jaspree. In the main area is a statue of Jaspree holding a wounded espagra. Later in the night, a group of dwarf brigands that were tracking the espagra attempt to sneak into camp in order to catch the beast. The group is forced to confront the thieves, eventually forcing the dwarfs to flee away into the night.

The next day, the group arrives at the village of Safeway and discovers that the tanner is missing. A visiting questor of Jaspree believes the group is the answer to the visions he has been having and asks the characters to aid him. After some investigation, the characters discover Bergot's operation. During a battle with the overpowered adversaries, the espagra break loose from their cages and attack their captors, causing them to flee into the woods. With Urzon freed and Bergot captured, the characters are able to finish their business and return to Bartertown.

IT'S HARDLY FITZ

This scene takes place after the characters have found a place to stay in Bartertown, near Throal (a suitable place would be the Juggling Shadowmant; see **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 135). A person, preferably someone they have interacted with before, approaches the characters, informing them that an artisan is seeking adepts for a job.

SETTING THE STAGE

Once the characters are in the tavern room or another suitable location, have someone approach the group—preferably an old friend. He informs them that he knows someone who would like to meet with them. After they agree, he directs them to a tailor shop in the market district of Bartertown where they meet a dwarf nicknamed 'Hardly' Fitz. Hardly has a flair for the dramatic and a witty repertoire. Some people say he was a Swordmaster in his younger days, but Hardly shows no interest in swords, preferring to fight his battles in the fashion arena.

Once the characters have been introduced to Hardly, read the following aloud.

"Well met, travelers. Many, many thanks for coming to see me. My name Darius A. Fitz, but everyone calls me Hardly; the pun is most intended. I am a tailor, as you might have guessed, and my clothes have been seen as far away as Iopos. You see, I am in need of some unique material in order to create my next stunning outfit.

"Unfortunately, my normal distributors have not the material I am looking for. I have, however, managed to locate a source, and if you can agree to be discreet in our dealings then I would like to retain your services."

After the group agrees to not disclose the nature of the business, read the following aloud:

"Rumor has it that the Denairastas of Iopos stunned the people of the royal house by wearing a shimmering blue gown made from the scales of espagra. As I am most informed on all things fashionable, I have noticed a lack of available espagra hides of late, and those that are for sale are exorbitant in cost.

"As I have said, I have located a source that is willing to sell me what I need for a fair and marketable price. Unfortunately, I have a need for some able-bodied adepts to protect my apprentice from theft and misfortune.

"If you are in an adventurous mood, I am willing to offer you one hundred seventy-five silvers each for your services. Alternatively, I can outfit your entire group with the most fashionable of attire available."

After the group members agree on a price:

"You will accompany my apprentice Savron to the village of Safeway. Once there, Savron will purchase the hides of espagra from a tanner named Urbon. You will then accompany him back here to receive your payment."

THEMES AND IMAGES

Hardly's shop is a chaotic montage of bright colors and rich fabrics. Hardly uses his etiquette on the characters and focuses on those who respond in kind. Some characters may feel out of place around Hardly as etiquette and knowledge of the upper class society are more the rule here than the exception. Hardly attempts to convince the characters that a colorful outfit will enhance their reputation. Even though he is located in the market district, an aristocrat may arrive to sample his garments, perhaps casting a disapproving look at common adventurers. Players can use this opportunity to learn some tricks from Hardly when dealing with aristocracy.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Every imaginable article of clothing is available here and in no particular order. Since Hardly caters to the wealthy, any number of expensive materials can be found. If the characters request some clothing, Hardly is more than happy to comply. He charges half the listed price for anything they request except for the very rarest of material like silk from Cathay (in which case he charges listed prices).

Savron is listening from the back room; characters notice him on a successful Perception (6) Test. If called out, he moves to knock something over on purpose and clambers out awkwardly. Savron is a competent assistant, but he has learned that it is easier for people to accept a person with less capable talents. He has been doing it for so long, it has become second nature. People who are around him for a while may notice that Savron is faking his clumsiness (Perception (9) Test). Hardly is well aware of this and assures the characters of his dependability.

If the characters inquire about espagra, Hardly tells them of their justly deserved reputation, sharing wild stories about how dangerous the creatures can be. He reassures the characters that they do not have to hunt any espagra. He also informs the player characters (in great detail) that the hides are very fashionable.

The characters may wish to ask Hardly about Safeway. He doesn't really know much about it other than the fact that it is a small village about eleven days walking from Throal. He points out the general location on a map—if the characters have one—and informs them that Savron has been instructed on how to find the village; Hardly doesn't pay much attention to such things.

SAVRON, HUMAN TAILOR APPRENTICE

Savron grew up on the streets of Bartertown. Unaware of who his parents were, he stole in order to survive. To make up for his lack of skill in thievery, Savron usually played the part of a bumbling child in order to hide his actions. On one occasion, he happened into Hardly's shop, knocking over bolts of fabric. Unperturbed, Hardly caught Savron attempting to steal a minor thread item. Rather than calling the guards, Hardly offered Savron the chance to learn a trade. Savron readily accepted and has been apprenticing with Hardly ever since.

While Savron is competent in his abilities, he has been playing the bumbling fool for so long it has become second nature. Though often chastised for "accidents," Savron has been trying to act more according to his station in life lately. Hardly worries that Savron may one day become an adept, but he does not voice his concerns about it.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10

Toughness (14): 6/D10

Willpower (11): 5/D8

Strength (12): 5/D8

Perception (11): 5/D8

Charisma (12): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8

Spell Defense: 7

Social Defense: 7

Death Rating: 36

Wound Threshold: 10

Unconsciousness Rating: 28

Initiative: 6/D10

Physical Armor: 2

Mystic Armor: 1

Recovery Tests: 3

Knockdown: 5/D8

Combat Movement: 28 **Full Movement:** 56

Skills

Artisan:

Acting (4): 9/D8+D6

Craftsman; Tailor (1): 7/D12