

## CRIMSON SIN

**SETTING** City of Shiran,  
Pamesani Arena  
**REQUIREMENTS** A group of curious  
adventurers seeking a mystery to tax their skills  
with either combat capabilities or the funds to  
hire combat capabilities.

**AIDS** City of Shiran,  
Thardic Republican Module, Gods of Hårn /  
Hårnmaster Religion  
This adventure touches on political intrigue in  
Shiran and player characters are apt to ask  
questions not covered within the City of Shiran  
module.

### The Set-up

Every ten-day for the past month a woman has  
gone missing from the Crimson Palace ([#61]).  
All three were found in the Pamesani Arena, in  
the corridors between the slave pens and the  
practice area. Each was found by a member of  
the Order of the Octagonal Pit and reported to  
the proper authorities. So far only Merele of  
Kantar (proprietor of the Crimson Palace), the  
authorities and the Order know of these  
disappearances.

### The First Three Girls to Die

As the adventure begins, three girls have already  
died. They were beaten into unconsciousness and  
then had their throats slit.

This allows for multiple lead ins. Either the PCs  
could be Shiran legionnaires out to solve the  
case, freelance adventurers hired by Merel, or  
hired by any one of the house's patrons who fear  
the rash of crimes might close down their  
favourite establishment.

### Elias

Born a slave in Coranan, she was sold to Merel at  
the age of 6. She was 18 when she died. She had  
long blond hair, used little makeup and wore lilac  
perfume. She stood 5'0" and weighed 110 lbs.  
She had pale blue eyes. She liked the colour  
purple and loved to shop. She had 208d. Merele  
cleared her bedroom a ten-day ago. The silks,  
gausses and baubles with which Elias decorated  
her room as well as her 3' tall silver mirror, are in  
storage with Merele. She had only four regulars:  
Peld of Puthenya (Jeweller), Herth of Xyrin  
(Slave Trader) and Garut of Kulodru

(Slave Gladiator). She was found on the second  
day of the first ten-day.

### Cernyla

Born to a tribal family she was sold at the age of  
4 into slavery. She was 12 when she died.  
Cernyla worked as a messenger for the house and  
helped in the kitchens. Cernyla had raven hair  
and deep brown eyes. She stood 4'8 and weighed  
87lbs. She owned a small trunk containing 37d,  
two small brushes, some makeup and three  
tunics. Merel has the trunk in storage. It is not  
locked. She was found on the third day of the  
second ten-day.

### Grunela

Born somewhere in the north, Grunela was sold  
into slavery at the age of nine. She grew up in  
Merel's care. She was 23 when she died. She had  
curly brown hair, brown eyes and an exotic soft  
brown complexion. Grunela wore long tunics and  
leather sandals. Her bed has three strips of purple  
silk hung over it. Grunela was often hired to sing  
at private parties. Grunela had over 400d in  
account with the house. She usually carried 25-  
50d on her at all times. She was found on the  
ninth day of the third ten-day, dramless.  
Her guards are convalescing in the Peonian  
Temple. The Mercantylers' guild has refunded  
Merel's money. Kaote has a serious concussion,  
Tunkern a broken leg and nose and Trael has  
broken ribs and a broken right arm. They were  
jumped from behind by overpowering numbers.  
The last thing they remember is being hit hard  
and hearing Grunela scream. They were walking  
along Tharda way when it happened.

### The Task

The murderer must be found and brought to  
justice. Merele of Kantar will pay 5d for each  
day to anyone willing to guard her house and her  
employees. She will pay 100d to anyone who  
catches the murderer. This amount goes down by  
10 for each girl killed after Grunela.  
Merele is not allowing any of her employees out  
of the house except in large groups surrounded  
by larger groups of bodyguards. She also now  
forbids anyone she or her staff do not recognize  
into the Crimson Palace. The normal 10-15  
visitors a day are still welcome, as are all the  
tradesmen and merchants who make deliveries to  
the house. All of which, Merele is sure, are above  
reproach.

Merele can think of no one that she's slighted to cause such horrors to continue. The women were all relatively new to the profession and her house. There is no connection between their patrons, or any of their personal effects.

The Order of the Octagonal Pit will allow the PCs to spend the nights in the corridors beneath the Pamesani Arena conditionally that they stay out of certain rooms. The Order swears its innocence and refuses to become involved, as it is not a religious matter.

### **The Plot Thickens**

The house will see regular business, if a bit subdued. The PCs have six ten-days to solve the case. If they solve it any earlier, skip ahead to the conclusion.

### **The Fourth Ten-day**

In the fourth ten-day watchful PCs should see two men lurking around the Crimson Palace. If questioned they will say they were hoping to catch a glimpse of the girls in the windows. Rumour has it the Crimson Palace has the most beautiful girls in all of Shiran. Both of the men claim to be common labourers. If followed, they will go to the Moon and Flagon where they will meet with Kjoal and begin planning the fourth murder.

If she does not leave the Crimson Palace, she will be shot by a crossbow bolt through a window or doorway from across the street. If she does leave the Crimson Palace, six men will pummel her into unconsciousness, then drag her off to the Pamesani Arena where Kjoal will kill her quickly.

### **The Fifth Ten-day**

Revekka is killed either by crossbow bolt; or taken when she steps outside the Crimson Palace. Merele might let the employees out on market day to try to alleviate their boredom. Should the gang fail, they will try again to kill Revekka on the second, fourth and sixth day of the ten-day.

### **The Sixth and Seventh Ten-days**

Myla will be killed by crossbow bolt on the first opportunity that presents itself in the sixth ten-day. During the seventh ten-day Elias will be targeted. Merel will refuse to let her staff go out at all any time after the fifth murder.

There is always a chance another person may get in the way of an attack and be killed "accidentally". If this happens, the woman who

was supposed to be killed is spared and the next woman is targeted. This doesn't help Merele's business. By the sixth ten-day, there are less than five visitors a day.

### **If the Plot Continues**

For fear of losing her two best, Sho-lei and Kaidai, Merel will close the Crimson Palace. Tysele of Nurild will officially retire and Lerime Bernat will accept the other two into her house as free journeymen. That night, after meeting Sho-lei and Kaidai, Saula will learn that she will not inherit the House of the Seven Joys.

In a fit of pique Saula will tell Lerime that Kjoal has killed for her in the past and will do so again if she doesn't inherit the House of the Seven Joys. Lerime will send a body guard to the Watch (or the PCs) and have Saula locked in her room. Lerime will disclose all her suspicions (see Finding Information) as well as Saula's confession. Lerime believes Kjoal is the murderer. She will ask that Kjoal and Saula be arrested. If Kjoal is not present (63% chance at night, 85% in the day) Lerime will request additional security as she's sure Kjoal will try to kill her out of revenge for having Saula arrested.

### **Conclusion**

The trial that follows will accuse Kjoal (if he's still alive), any remaining members of his gang and Saula for the murder of seven free women. After the two week trial concludes, a member of the Order of the Octagonal Pit will demand the guilty be placed in the Pamesani games for the outrage they have committed against the temple of Agrik. The court will agree. The following ten-day the guilty will be torn apart by Ivashu for any who wish to watch.

## **Murder Most Foul**

There is a small gang of toughs that hang out at the House of the Seven Joys (#62) the second best house of courtesans in Shiran. The leader of this gang, Kjoal, is in the process of courting Saula.

Saula is a young, headstrong woman who many believe will inherit the house of courtesans from Lerime. One night about a month ago Saula told Kjoal wistfully that she did not want to own the second best house in the city of sin. Since then Kjoal has been working to put Merele out of business.

At first, they started by stealing from the Crimson Palace. Merele lost roughly 200d one night when a servant, on the way to a usurer, was mugged. The guards with him were overpowered just long enough for the thief to get away. Then Kjoal's gang began stealing veils, silks, pots and pans. All of the stolen goods turned up as little gifts to Saula. Lerime got suspicious, but Saula never admitted who gave her the gifts or where Kjoal got them.

Finally, after Merel hired better security, Kjoal began killing the staff. There are five members in his current gang. They've been taking the women to the Pamesani arena to try to throw any investigation off their track.

## **Finding Information**

Officially, Kjoal is part of the Lia-Kavair. However, the guild does not know about his current activities. Anyone with contacts in the Lia-Kavair could hear the rumours about Kjoal's recent rash of thefts; but there are no rumours about him killing courtesans.

Lerime has her suspicions that Kjoal is the murderer. She will admit them if questioned. Kjoal is Lerime's contact with the Lia-Kavair. She would rather see Kjoal killed and his gang disbanded. If the PCs approach her, she will offer them the job for 25d each. She will use her considerable bartering skill (Rhetoric 87) to try and get the PCs to accept at the price she offers. Merel will tell the PCs about the lesser thefts if they ask, but do not believe them to be associated with the murders.

## **Red Herrings**

The Crimson Palace sees many important visitors. Each one brings with him (or her) their own politics and squabbles. Perhaps the attacks are not against Merele directly, but against her house.

The Order of the Octagonal Pit may be responsible for the murders. Since they have numerous gladiators, it is not an unreasonable assumption. The murders are brutal and the bodies are found on their grounds.

Morgathians may be trying to discredit the Order of the Octagonal Pit for past slights. The attacks occur at night, and the bodies are not otherwise desecrated. No one likes the Morgathians, so it is possible.

Lerime of Tamel has a strong friendship with Merel, but her girls, so rumour has it, detest Merel and the successfulness of the Crimson Palace.

Merel no longer buys from Herth of Xyrin, saying his merchandise has not been to her liking of late. Out of anger for such public slander, he's hired the Lia-Kavair to kill off her staff so that she will have to buy again from him.

Tysele of Nurild, a free journeyman officially considering retirement, wants to own the business. By killing off the younger girls she's trying to pressure Merel to retire.

## **Characters**

The following is a brief description of the major players of the plot.

### **The House of the Seven Joys**

Built in a similar fashion to the Crimson Palace, each of the nine girls are free journeymen. The other four girls are slaves and will not casually talk to the PCs about the murder. Lerime will protect them by claiming they are busy, or do not wish to see the PCs after she's found out what the PCs are after.

### **Lerime of Tamel**

Lerime inherited the House of the Seven Joys from Sheryle of Tamel, her mother. Lerime followed her mother's profession by choice, having a knack for creating an atmosphere of tranquillity and beauty. Her employees are a mix of free journeymen and pleasure slaves. In her time under her mother's tutelage the only woman to surpass Lerime's skills at organization was Merel. Lerime still talks of the lessons she learned watching Merele with patrons. She offered Merele a partnership, but was declined. Lerime holds no grudge against Merele, nor her resulting better business. She sees Merele from time to time in the Hlean temple. The two women share secrets and tips to keep their businesses competitive.

### **Saula of Undarl**

Saula's beauty is well known in the house. She is young with long blond hair and blue eyes. She has an average, yet voluptuous appearance. She pouts prettily and often, accepting various gifts to help improve her mood. Lerime often laughs at her fits of pique and tells her not to grow up too fast. Saula has many clients and takes it as an affront that some men in the city find the girls at the Crimson Palace more beautiful and/or more exotic than her. Saula's skills are fair and she is willing to learn to improve, but is quick to anger and hard to pacify. She enjoys Kjoal's attentions, but is not in love with him. She has never thought about marriage and is more concerned with money and reputation than children and the life of a housewife.

### **The Other Free Girls**

Lenia of Jern, Ilycia of Khitas, Rilëa of Thureth, Arilëa of Mair, Kadanny of Korild, Lariela of Baranoal, Më of Fredath, and Danë of Thebelt are the other free girls that work in the House of

the Seven Joys. Each one will be happy to speculate (gossip) with the PCs over who killed whom and why.

They are an incredible source of gossip and should be the main source of red herrings. The women range from pretty to beautiful and their prices from high to unbelievable. They will talk to the PCs for free in the lobby of the House of Joy. The women will be eager to help, as well as hear all about the PCs previous exploits.

### **Kjoal's Gang**

The gang hangs out at the guildhall of the Lia-Kavair, the House of the Seven Joys, and the Moon and Flagon.

### Kjoal of Sherian

#### Attributes

STR	14	EYE	10
INT	15	END	12
STA	10	HRG	13
AUR	11	MOV	09
DEX	08	SML	13
WIL	13	DGE	45
AGL	09	VOI	13
MOR	08	CML	10

#### Skills

Physical: Climbing/52, Jumping/52, Stealth/63, Throwing/54, Legerdemain/34

Communication: Awareness/68, Intrigue/30, Oratory/22, Rhetoric/30, Ritual (Agrikan)/14, Singing/43, Hårnic/70

Craft/Lore: None

Combat: Initiative/72, Unarmed/59, Bow/66, Dagger/72, Club/62

#### Armour and Clothing

Cloth: Tunic    Leather: Leggings

Born to free parents in Kuseme, he left home and joined a gang when he was six. He has never returned home. Kjoal is 6'0" of lean muscle. His brown hair, cropped short, is usually greasy. He left Coranan after being accused of killing a legionnaire. He resettled in Shiran under a new name. Kjoal prefers to be the lookout, assassin or a thug as the situation demands. Kjoal enjoys Saula's attention. He plans to enter the Courtesan business as Saula's partner when she inherits the House of the Seven Joys.

### Orial of Frenna

#### Attributes

STR	13	EYE	10
INT	10	END	13
STA	15	HRG	11
AUR	09	MOV	12
DEX	10	SML	12
WIL	10	DGE	60
AGL	12	VOI	12
MOR	07	CML	08

#### Skills

Physical: Climbing/44, Jumping/48, Stealth/70, Throwing/44

Communication: Awareness/70, Intrigue/30, Oratory/26, Rhetoric/33, Ritual (Navehan)/11, Singing/36, Hårnic/71

Craft/Lore: Foraging/54, Heraldry/11,

Physician/38, Survival/47

Combat: Initiative/77 Unarmed/88, Bow/92, Dagger/66 Shield/72, Sword/71

#### Armour and Clothing

Cloth: Tunic    Leather: Leggings and

belt

Orial is a bowman from the legion. He is due to serve three months starting in the spring. His bow skill is regularly hired through the Lia-Kavair for 100-200d a job. He enjoys both Kjoals' company as well as his hangouts. He has black hair and brown eyes. In the legion, he has a reputation for silence and obedience. Outside, he is aloud drunk. Sober or not, he is a dead shot. His parents and grown-up siblings live in Hediro. He has, occasionally, send money home, but never visited. He pays lip service to Halea.

### **Ardandil of Gyrfen**

#### Attributes

STR	12	EYE	09
INT	11	END	10
STA	11	HRG	14
AUR	11	MOV	08
DEX	16	SML	08
WIL	06	DGE	40
AGL	08	VOI	10
MOR	09	CML	10

#### Skills

Physical: Acrobatics/64, Climbing/56, Jumping/48, Stealth/52, Throwing/50, Legerdemain/45

Communication: Awareness/45 Intrigue/39 Oratory/22, Rhetoric/36, Ritual (Agrikan)/11, Singing/33, Hårnic/72

Craft/Lore: Lockcraft/47, Metalcraft/23

Combat: Initiative/98, Unarmed/36, Bow/40, Dagger/36, Club/40

#### Armour and Clothing

Cloth: tunic Leather: leggings

Born in Shiran, Arandil is an unacknowledged bastard. His mother was a prostitute and the identity of his father changes regularly to best suit the situation. A tall, thin man, he stands 6'5" but weighs only 175lbs. He joined the Lia-Kavair when he was six. They taught him everything he needed to know to be a second story thief. Arandil is laid back and easy going to hide a lack of self-assurance and faith in his own skills. He and Kjoal have known each other for about 5 years and enjoy working together.

### **Burnel of Smatier**

#### Attributes

STR	17	EYE	13
INT	06	END	10
STA	06	HRG	09
AUR	10	MOV	11
DEX	12	SML	12
WIL	07	DGE	55
AGL	11	VOI	10
MOR	10	CML	11

#### Skills

Physical: Climbing/48, Jumping/48, Stealth/36, Throwing/52

Communication: Awareness/48, Intrigue/30, Oratory/24, Rhetoric/33, Ritual (Agrikan)/11, Singing/39, Hårnic/61

Craft/Lore: None

Combat: Initiative/66, Unarmed/40, Dagger/44, Club/64

#### Armour and Clothing

Cloth: tunic, leggings Leather: vest

A large man, his dexterity and agility are hampered by his weight. He has blond hair and pale blue eyes. He will eat whenever and almost whatever is presented. He doesn't remember his parents but calls Kjoal his family. He'll do anything for Kjoal. Burnel is slow but neither gullible nor dumb nor retarded. Insults along this line quickly enrage him. What he lacks in technique he more than makes up in strength. Kjoal treats Burnel like an equal member of his gang; and that alone has earned him Burnel's loyalty. Of the gang, Burnel is the only one who cannot fire a crossbow.

### **Pelin of Kovirimä**

#### Attributes

STR	08	EYE	16	INT
10	END	10		
STA	11	HRG	10	
AUR	09	MOV	11	
DEX	07	SML	08	
WIL	11	DGE	55	
AGL	11	VOI	11	
MOR	08	CML	10	

#### Skills

Physical: Climbing/54, Jumping/68, Stealth/59, Throwing/40, Riding/53

Communication: Awareness/36, Intrigue/27, Oratory/16, Rhetoric/24, Ritual (Agrikan)/10, Singing/30, Hårnic/68

Craft/Lore: Animalcraft/22, Foraging/39, Hideworking/24, Physician/22, Survival/33

Combat: Initiative/60, Unarmed/30, Bow/27, Dagger/44, Club/67

#### Armour and Clothing

Cloth: tunic and leggings

Born in Golotha, Pelin has changed locations more times, than he can count. Surprisingly Pelin fits right in with Kjoal and his gang. Pelin has been a thief, an assassin, and a burglar in two countries. He is a quiet, unassuming man with gray hair and green eyes. He has a deep, throaty laugh that cuts through barroom chatter. Pelin is a member of the Lia-Kavair. Currently he is not taking jobs as he's working off a debt with Kjoal.

### **The Other Victims**

The other girls from the Crimson Palace will be slightly less energetic in their conversations than the girls at the House of the Seven Joys.

#### **Andonesia of Undarl**

Born to the Kath tribesmen, she was sold into slavery at the age of four. She became a bonded journeyman at the age of 14. She has curly red hair and a high pitched giggle. She loves wearing blue dresses. Considered sly and playful, she is well liked. She was of average build with a smooth dark complexion. She stands 5'1" and weighs 110lbs. Andonesia loves animals and has two pet cats that roam the Crimson Palace freely. She owns twelve blue dresses and one red dress and a box with 214d. She was the favourite of Cobart Nordaka for a time and now tends to Anaflas Milaka when he's in town.

#### **Revekka of Thebelt**

Revekka was sold to Merle when she was 18, already trained as a courtesan. She worked in Coranan and became pregnant. The child was left with the father. She doesn't speak of her past. Revekka has pale white skin and light brown hair. Her eyes are blue. She wears dark pastels to try to highlight her natural fairness. A quiet woman by nature she can become totally engrossed in whatever her patron is saying. She owns four pairs of sandals as well as the regular paraphernalia for her career. In a box under her matters, she has 110d and a name (Torbir Wejjik) scribbled on a piece of paper.

#### **The Other Free Girls**

Myla of Fredath, Elias of Korild, Tysele of Nurild, Marsi of Cadal, Tysele of Nurild, Marsi of Cadal, Kaidai of Gamemnon all fear for their future. They will gladly tell the PCs a bit about themselves and their patrons.

There are two cooks and four servants, all of whom are slaves in the Crimson Palace. These slaves will stay well out of the PCs way for fear of being accused (or implicated) in a crime they know nothing about.

## THE PRIMACY OF HARN

The current Salara of Harn, Debryne Tilry, was born and raised in Shiran and entered the church there at the precocious age of 13. She resided in the temple for thirteen years, rising quickly to the rank of Shenase (priestess) and then being appointed to the position of Desilea. As temple curator she demonstrated a quick intelligence, a fine aesthetic sense, and strong organizational skills. Later, as an assistant to the Ensala (deputy primate) of Tharda, she showed a knack for negotiation and a grasp of legal detail, helping several foreign merchants who had run afoul of the Republic's unique customs. No one, including Debryne, was surprised when the Pontiff summoned her to Karejia and appointed her to the Council of Fragrant Gold.

After a fairly parochial existence, Debryne found the journey across Lythia and exposure to the Pontiff's cosmopolitan court exhilarating. She learned everything she could about the languages, artisanship and pleasures of the cultures that crossed her path. Over her ten years there, she formed strong opinions about the correct role of centralized administration in a church with highly improvisational ritual and notoriously free-spirited clergy. Specifically, she believes in a pragmatic, rather than dogmatic, approach to negotiating cooperation from her flock.

Debryne is also the Queen Mistress of the Shiran temple and the Harnic Grandmistress of the missionary Order of the Silken Voice.

### Relationship with the pontiff

The pontiff who named Debryne to the primacy believed that her pragmatic philosophy was ideally suited to an area that crossed political boundaries. However, that pontiff died three years ago, and the new pontiff, Hilenea Jila Vardur of Shonjiris, believes that church leaders are focusing too much on their regional interests, at the expense of Helas. Vardur's most recent missives to Debryne have been curt, calling her to task for the aggrandizement of the Shiran temple.

Vardur is also concerned about Debryne's tendency to forge close alliances with local political and mercantile interests. The pontiff fears that Harnic Haneanism will become corrupted by the workaday world and lose its ecstatic spirit. Debryne is trying to find out from her contacts in Helas whether Vardur plans to

send someone to spy on her, and who that might be.

### Administration

Four Ensala (deputies) help with administration, each assigned to a region: Tharda; Kaldor and Orbaal; Rethem and Kanday; and Chybisa and Melderyn. Debryne has recommended an additional Ensala to handle Orbaal alone, a priestess who is already well acquainted with their customs and fluent in the languages spoken there. However, Hilenea Vardur is "still considering" the matter.

Debryne's personal assistants handle most of the administration of eastern Tharda. The Ensala resides in Coranan and administers the church in the western part of the Republic.

The Ensala of Kaldor used to winter in Shiran, only visiting the kingdom during the travelling season. Not satisfied, however, that the Queen Mistress of the Tashal temple was tithing as she should, Dybryne urged the Ensala to take up residence there. The Queen Mistress is not pleased, but tithes have increased. The Ensala sees a great opportunity being wasted in Orbaal, where many freethinking women join the Agrikan Order of the Crimson Dancer. She fully acknowledges her inadequacy to mount an effective missionary campaign there, and she supports the appointment of a native Orbaalese as Ensala of that region.

One Ensala is appointed over both Rethem and Kanday because of the historic animosity between these two kingdoms. Debryne is determined that conflict along that border will not diminish the influence of her church. In order to be effective, the Ensala must have authority in both areas. She expects that intelligence gathering and trading will provide a key to increasing the church's influence if the situation becomes more volatile.

Cherafir is the residence of the Ensala of Melderyn. She is skilled at using the port city to export tales of the miracles of Halea far and wide. She also has authority over the church's activities in the Kingdom of Chybisa. However, she and her colleague in Kaldor work together to make sure that Kaldorans believe "their" Ensala has authority in Chybisa.

## **Ensala of Harn**

### **Sutrala, Ensala of Tharda**

Exquisitely beautiful -- sang one admirer, "like the finest porcelain cup, fit to hold only the headiest wines" -- Sutrala attends to her administrative duties with a nonchalant vacuity that bemuses even the more decadent priestesses. Perhaps fortunately, she allows most real responsibility to fall on the shoulders of the Queen Mistress of the Coranan Temple. Despite, or perhaps because of her apparent empty-headedness, she has engaged the confidence of many in the patrician clans, and she uses her information with surprising subtlety and good effect. Sutrala's parents were agricultural slaves in Le-Shel. She is often held up as an example of the social advancement that can come to adherents of the Enslaver of Hearts and Loins.

### **Lady Celi Aleta, Ensala of Kanday and Rethem**

Both Kandayan and Rethemi authorities believe, rightly, that Celi possesses information about alliances and plots that would be useful to them. To avoid giving the impression of having loyalty toward any one faction, she moves frequently, often with no notice even to her household but always under heavy guard. She usually winters at the temple in Aleath, to the considerable embarrassment of her noble family. A master of disguise, particularly of male disguise, she has been known to seduce women and engage in swordplay with men.

### **Ralinia Hybot, Ensala of Kaldor and Orbaal**

Since moving to Tashal, Ralinia has attempted to gain influence with the nobles who will play key roles in the coming succession crisis. She's been largely unsuccessful, except perhaps with Eriila of Kaphin, the king's lover and Lord Privy Seal. The two women enjoy a circumspect friendship, and Eriila is interested in the favourable arrangements that Ralinia says she can arrange for salt and for Eriila's favourite luxury, fine perfume. Ralinia is an abundantly built woman who makes those around her feel comfortable.

### **Dryla Guinas, Ensala of Melderyn and Chybisa**

The sister of a lexicographer, Dryla uses her position to make sure her brother continues to get speciality dyes from Shiran at a reasonable price. While adept at using her personal charm and wealth to enhance the church's reputation, she

has done little to help the struggling temple in Nurisel or to ease tensions between the temples in Harden and Thay. Merchants who have passed through Chybisa bring word that the handful of adherents there feel neglected of late. She has been implicated more than once in trying to smuggle exotic, proscribed substances into Cherafir. Fortunately for her, several town aldermen are her lovers. The Sheriff of Cherfinshire once characterized her personality as, "prickly, but not positively barbed," when dealing with local authorities.

### **Tafgel Rafjaal, Ensala of Orbaal (pending appointment)**

The daughter of a retired shieldmaiden and a handsome huscarl, Tafgel inherited her father's looks and her mother's "waywardness." Deemed too fragile to bear children, and likewise not fit for the life of a shieldmaiden, she was apprenticed to a skald. As a journeyman, she travelled extensively and encountered the Hlean church in Karejia, where she had an ecstatic experience and converted. When Salara Debryne heard of the female Orbaalese skald, she invited the woman to enjoy her hospitality in Shiran and then, recognizing her experience as a performer in lieu of being an acolyte, gave her the rank of Shenesene. Tafgel picked up Harnic quickly, and her voice is an asset to services.

## **Local Affairs**

The presence of the primate in Shiran affects the town, and local affairs affect the primacy. The primate pays special attention to the church's relationships with the following institutions.

**The Lia Kavair: While** in some parts of Harn, the Navehan and Morgathrian churches have adherents among the urban criminal element, in Shiran members of the Lia Kavair primarily worship Halea. Debryne wants to keep it that way, and so do the majority of the town aldermen, who see Hleanism as a mitigating influence against violent crime. The Lia Kavair strongly encourages its members to tithe to the temple, and the temple arranges for those monies to be transferred to important adherents who have been injured by the Lia Kavair's activities. In return for the church's soothing local authorities, the Lia Kavair makes sure Debryne is informed of significant events in the underworld. However, one alderman, Keliran of Horbin, believes that any criminal activity hurts business interests and often takes Debryne to task for not

turning over persons the primate knows to be Lia Kavair members. In turn, Debryne chides the alderman for not enjoying herself more since the death of her husband.

**The Mangai:** Debryne has taken an active role in soothing tensions between more and less prosperous tradesmen in Shiran. Her temple's message to the wealthier inhabitants is that they are successful because they stand in Halea's good graces. The message for the less successful is that the wheel of fortune turns, and those who follow Halea loyally will find themselves on top someday. Nonetheless, the church is not exempt from muttered accusations that it does more favours for those who can afford to tithe more generously, which of course is true.

**The Thardic Republic:** The authority of the republican government is wielded in Shiran by the magistrate and the marshal of Shiran Province and by the legar and the legion commander of Shiran District. Debryne is close friends with the magistrate, Serenima Dethale, and Serenima has a great deal of influence with the loyal, brave, but rather simple-minded marshal. Serenima's younger brother, Zulor Dethale, is the district legar. However, Zulor resents his older sister's achievements and status within their clan, and while he has not directly challenged her, he tends to bend to her wishes only grudgingly. Likewise Marshal Quarlid Jeredosta must contend with the ambitious Commander Nolarn Seris, who would like his superior's position. Debryne's challenge is to gain the benefit of her influence at the provincial level without overly alienating the district officials and their factions.

## Function of the Primacy

The Harnic primate performs the following political functions within the church:

- Appoints temple mistresses. The Queen Mistress chooses candidates for positions beneath her own, usually after informally gathering input from her priestesses, but their names must be submitted to the primate for approval.
- Recommends Ensala for appointment, subject to the Pontiff's approval. Also, the primate oversees their performance and can request permission to remove them from office. In a church dedicated to improvisational ritual and self-indulgence, an Ensala who neglects her duties may still be popular within the church. Enforcing discipline requires tact and, often, manipulation.
- Resolves disputes between temples. From time to time the primate will intervene in intra-temple conflicts as well, but only if the Queen Mistress asks for her assistance.

The primacy fills a judicial role as well, trying cases of alleged heresy among the clergy and dispenses justice. The location of the primate has resulted in an evolution of church trial procedures from those imported from Karejia toward those used by the Thardic Senate. Hanean theology is flexible, so charges of heresy are rare. Occupying the primate's valuable time with false charges carries as stiff a penalty as heresy itself.

The primate also represents the church in her person. When within view of anyone but her closest assistants, she should appear attractive and wear apparel and jewellery that signify high status. She should reflect the church's doctrine in her personal and public life, succumbing neither to asceticism nor sour moods nor stinginess. She should keep her word once she gives it and carry a reputation both for smart dealings and integrity.

To represent the church in the style that profits it, the primate collects tithes from all temples within her jurisdiction. Each temple should tithe one seventh of its income, usually in the month of Azura so that the primate's coffers are full at the start of The Banquet of Delight. Tithes are funnelled through the Ensala, who take a seventh part for themselves. Income often falls short of expectations, sometimes through deliberate fraud and sometimes through irresponsibility or incompetence on the part of the accountants.

Being Grandmistress of the missionary Order of the Silken Voice, as was her predecessor, Debryne has largely blurred any line that might have differentiated that role from the primacy.

## **Saint Zumaya and the pilgrimage of Silken Steps**

Debryne has been actively promoting the idea of a holy pilgrimage that ends in Shiran. If such a pilgrimage became established, it could bring considerable wealth to the temple. The pontiff, however, sees this initiative as yet another challenge to the centrality of her seat in Helas. The following tale, as recorded by the Desilea of the temple of Shiran, is the basis for the pilgrimage route.

In 718 Zumaya of Azeryan heard about a temple on Harn that rivalled the temple of Helas in beauty and richness. With wealth of her own and no family dependent on her, and still of good health, Zumaya decided to go see for herself.

That spring she began in Helas to refresh her memory of that place. She made a liberal donation to the temple and spread her coin liberally about the town, thus ensuring opportunities for pleasure and profit along her road.

## **The Trial of Sishyne**

Once there was a Solithar named Hengur Wohr who guarded the temple of Geshtei. Hengur was well shaped and had a pleasing disposition. A temple mistress, Sishyne, engaged him as her favourite consort and rewarded him amply for his efforts in the service of the Unchaste Lady. Of course she was not his only lover; he kept his palate sharp by sampling many pleasures. Instead of doing likewise, Sishyne became jealous. First she lost her appetite for food and

camaraderie and no longer participated enthusiastically in worship. Then she began to oversleep and neglect her temple duties. The Mistress of Discipline counselled her about ephemeral nature of the Stolen Moment, that one cannot hoard a thing if one truly wishes to enjoy it, but to no effect. Finally another Shenasene heard Sishyne threaten a wealthy adherent who had enjoyed a tryst with Hengur.

The Queen Mistress of the temple put Sishyne under heavy guard and requested the attendance of the primate. The primate conducted the trial in the temple courtyard. Only clergy and Solithar were admitted, with eight selected at random as jurors. The Mistress of Discipline stated the charges: personal failure to celebrate Halea's gifts, inciting a Solithar to ignore church teachings, and actively deterring a lay adherent from worship. The Mistress of Discipline also brought forth the witnesses to the heresies. After hearing the witnesses, the primate gave Sishyne a choice -- to be sentenced now, or to endure trial by orgy. With a wild smile on her face, Sishyne chose trial by orgy. The temple was prepared, and as the sun went down, food and drink were laid out and incense lit. As the party grew wilder, Sishyne could not summon the spirit to keep up. She drank more wine, ate more "blessed" food, and ingested more sacred herbs than anyone else, yet still her preoccupation with Hengur's flirtations and fondlings inhibited her spirit. Finally she grabbed one of the Solithar and demanded he perform the Sixth Forgotten Act with her. Well before reaching climax, she went rigid, spasmed painfully seven times, and died. Her body was wrapped in rough cloth and deposited in the ground outside of town with no marker.

In Meokolis, upon learning that Zumaya planned to travel west, a priestess introduced Zumaya to a high Imperial official. Recognizing her piety and knowing she would bargain truly, the official asked her to take a letter to his son, whom he'd heard was in Cherafir. To reward her and to protect her on the road, he gave her seven male slaves. Zumaya gave a seventh part of her new wealth, one slave, to the temple before departing.

Arriving in Omrium on the seventh day of Nulus, Zumaya attended Low Mass and brought her slaves to be used in the ritual, where she herself manifested such ecstasy as is rarely achieved past the prime of life. Such a sensation ensued, that the primate felt compelled to acquire the instruments of delight, lest this wandering

member of the laity upstage her. Zumaya left with seven pots of perfumed oils, twenty-one jars of rare spices, and seven-times-seven fine ceramic bowls.

Fortune followed her to Chedilo, where a ship was making ready to depart for Cherafir. However, the Ivinian captain followed Sarajin. He actually asked Zumaya if she was a virgin! Of course she was not. He then said, "An unchaste crone will bring bad luck to my ship. I won't take you aboard no matter what you offer."

When she sought to engage the man in a reasonable debate, he threatened to take her goods by force, rape her maidservants, and throw her into the sea. Undeterred, Zumaya invited him to dine privately with her. Not wanting to appear afraid of an old woman, he agreed. Zumaya donated a seventh of her oils, spices and ceramic bowls to the temple, and the priestesses, enjoying the occasion, helped her prepare a feast. The food, representative of that region's finest, was more spicy than usual, and perhaps the spices enhanced more than the taste of the food, or perhaps Halea's grace was upon it. Whatever the reason, the next morning the captain insisted on providing Zumaya free passage to Cherafir. The ship enjoyed excellent sailing weather, and his trade went well. Very pleased, the captain gave Zumaya many rich gifts, including a handsomely crafted lute.

When Zumaya left Cherafir, she was poorer by a lute but richer in knowledge. Discreet inquiries by the local priestesses discovered that the Azeryani official's son had been there but had vanished a few years ago, after the equally sudden disappearance of some jewellery. Rumour was that he had fled west. To thank them for their efforts, Zumaya sponsored a musical contest in the temple, offering her lute as the grand prize. So distinguished was the roster of artisans, that members of the royal court attended, allowing the temple to bask in unaccustomed respectability. In thanks, the Ensala gave her a personal letter of introduction and told her how safely to contact the Lia Kavair, who might have word of the son.

After some searching, Zumaya found him, now to all appearances a respectable city dweller, in Coranan. Upon reading his father's letter, he burst out weeping and then clasped Zumaya in his arms. "We were estranged, but he has forgiven my youthful folly. He would like to see me." Transported with joy and having no heirs, he gave Zumaya everything of his that he would not take with him on the road. He also gave her

a tip on which contests in the Pamesani Arena were rigged. Zumaya gambled with enthusiasm, gave a seventh part of her new wealth to the temple, and took the road to Shiran in the style befitting a queen.

Primate Debryne welcomed her with every possible show of hospitality, even seating the pilgrim at her left hand during the Banquet of Delights. Then one night a priestess of the Eight Demons, upon orders from that order's ever-jealous Senesharil, slipped in and killed Zumaya. The priestess escaped into the street, where she was trampled to death by a horse gone suddenly berserk. Praise be to Halea and her Handmaiden Sardura!

Debryne had Zumaya's body laid out in the temple while she personally made the arrangements for mummification and a mausoleum to be built. However, the morning that the embalmer arrived to begin her work, Zumaya's body had disappeared! In its place was a fragrant pile of fresh flowers, some of which do not bloom in nature at that time of year. Some have suggested that human hands performed this work and that Zumaya's body lies buried in plain earth somewhere. However, all who know the truth know that Halea's grace transported the worthy pilgrim directly to the ultimate reward in heaven, and that the flowers, now preserved between the clearest glass, were a sign of the goddess' blessing.

## **The Seven Silken Steps**

### **Helas, Karejia**

In the house of the most perfect bargainer among mortals, pray and make generous offerings to the Handmaiden Selina.

### **Meokolis, Azeryan**

At the seat of imperial greatness, where the East trades with the West, negotiate in good faith with the Handmaiden Elomia, promising her a fair portion of your future gains.

### **Omrium, Azeryan**

Within the temple of the Primate of Western Azeryan, celebrate with others in the Handmaiden Tania's name. Strike within yourself such a spark of pleasure that she will join with you to share it.

### **Chedilo, Trierzon**

In this wellspring of delectables, host a feast so bounteous that no guest will forget it, and toast the Handmaiden Galopea at every opportunity.

### **Cherafir, Melderyn**

This city profitably controls all trade with the Misty Isle, and the decorative crafts are rewarded here. Sponsor artisans of the musical crafts, and invite all who listen to make an offering to the Handmaiden Dulcia.

### **Coranan, Tharda**

Games of chance abound in this capital of bargaining. Call out your prayers loudly to the Handmaiden Thalia as you risk everything, so that all may see how she favours you. Donate a fair portion of your winnings to the church in her name.

### **Shiran, Tharda**

If you have completed every step of the pilgrimage, neither withholding your wealth or your body from the sacred pleasures along the way, then you need not fear the Handmaiden Sardura. However, if you have cheated Halea and still expect her blessing, then you may expect Sardura's visit. Make an offering to her with the assistance of the primate.

Having sanctified your body, mind and spirit sevenfold; having increased your wealth by like measure; having spread wealth and pleasure at each station along the sacred Path -- you have

achieved all that a mortal can, and you will live whatever time remains to you on Kethira in endless opulence with all your desires fulfilled, and when you die you will ascend directly to Halea's Crimson Chamber.

## Church Geography

The Hlean Church divides western Lythia into fourteen primacies. With a few very localised exceptions, the Church is legal throughout western Lythia. The largest concentration of temples is in Azeryan and Karejia.

### **Hárn** (seat: Shiran)

The church on Harn has been present since about 410 TR, and is regarded as the primary power base of the Order of the Silken Voice. Although Hlean temples are found in every human city on Harn, the church is most popular in the Thardic Republic. In Melderyn, Kaldor and Kanday the church is tolerated, if not encouraged, by the secular authorities. In Rethem the church is officially discouraged, but not illegal. Debryne Tilry is the current Hlean primate of Harn.

### **Ivinia** (seat: Fuhreling)

The worship of Halea was brought to Ivinia in 647 TR by the Order of the Silken Voice. Only four temples are present in the region: at Fuhreling, Beleka, Pelby and Jarehm. The church has been able to attract few Ivinian adherents and is dependent on financial aid from the central authority to survive. The primate is Jelissa Comicci, a Karejian appointee who has shown little understanding or appreciation of Ivinian culture.

### **Shorkyne** (seat: Karemus)

The Shorkyne primacy embraces Emelrene, Harbaal and Chelemby as well as the kingdom for which it is named. While the church has made no significant advances in Harbaal, it is reasonably widespread among the merchant classes elsewhere. The Ensala of Emelrene is virtually independent and is presently petitioning for the kingdom to be granted full primacy status. The primate of Shorkyne is Feshane Lorada, a formerly astute administrator who in recent years has become more interested in debauchery than governance.

### **Trierzon** (seat: Engaritane)

Including the nations of Palithane and Tarkain, this is one of the largest Hlean primacies. Berlana Untred has held the post of primate of Trierzon for nearly two decades and has no intention of retiring soon. She is a brilliant accountant and skilled diplomat, and only failed to be appointed pontiff at the last election by the narrowest of margins.

### **Western Azeryan** (seat: Omrium)

### **Eastern Azeryan** (seat: Hebos)

### **Southern Azeryan** (seat: Shonjiris)

### **Karejia** (seat: Helas)

### **Umrelia** (seat: Tazach)

### **Dalkesh** (seat: Natha)

### **Byria** (seat: Inri)

### **Northern Hepekeria** (seat: Vitho)

### **Falana** (seat: Bothisa)

### **The Hinterland** (seat: Horoka)

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