

The Fantasy Trip™

Ardonirane™

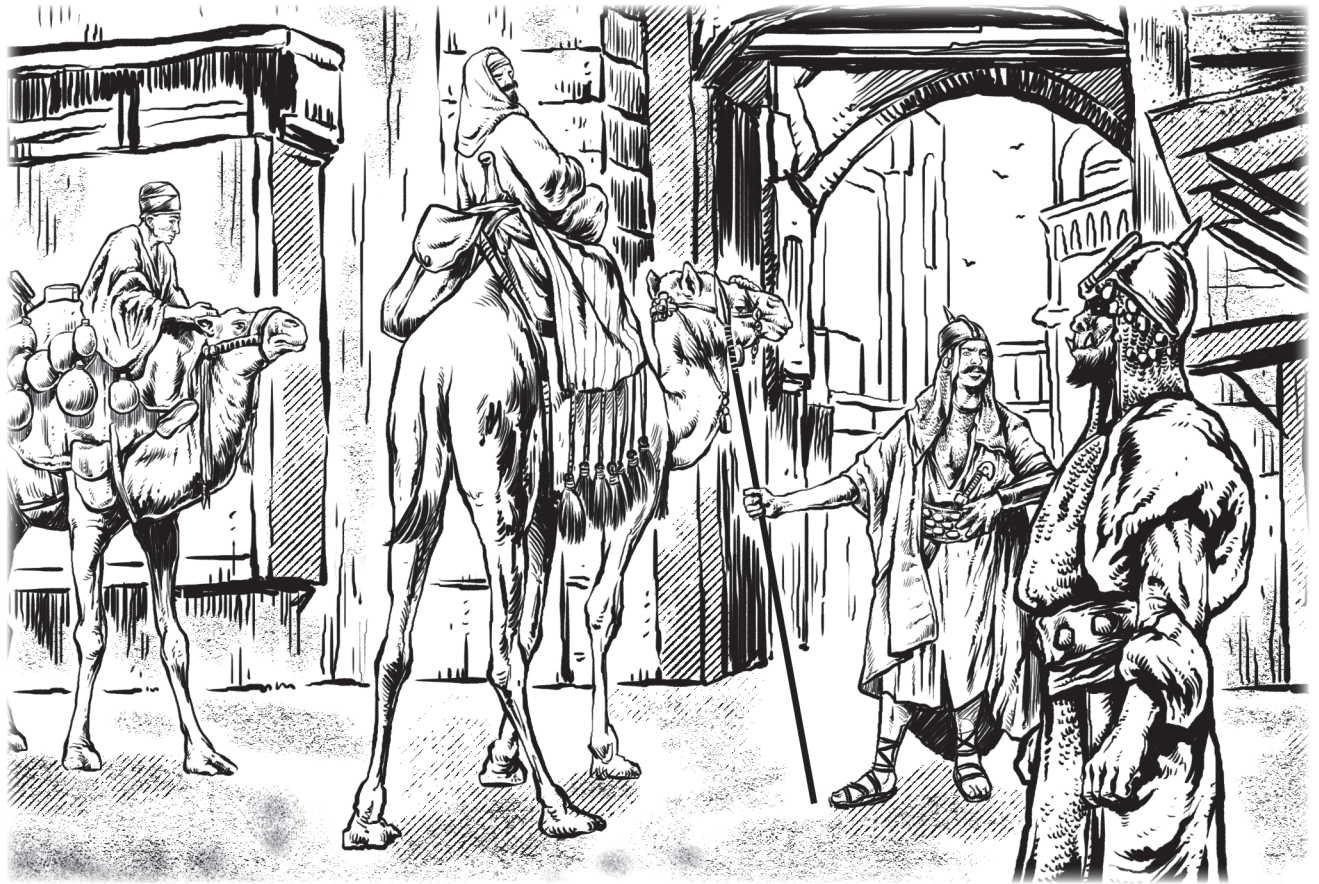
City of the Thorsz



By David Pulver

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

The Fantasy Trip™ Ardonirane™



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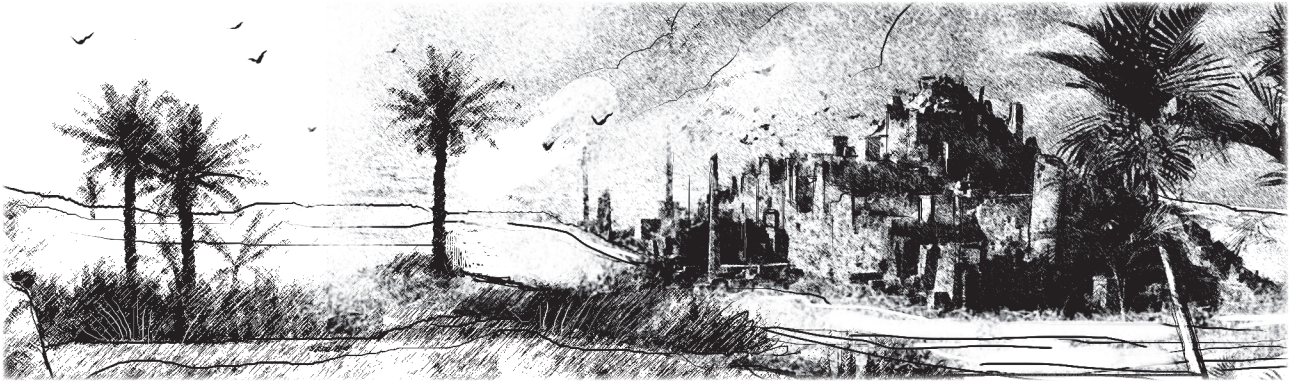
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1. Land of the Thorsz



The air shimmers with heat, but the green oasis ahead is no mirage, nor is the rose-walled city that rises from among the palm trees and dusty, green-speckled hills. Those three towers you see atop the highest hill? That is the Palace of the Thorsz. Above it flutters his proud manticore banner, crimson on black, proclaiming his presence in his city: Ardonirane, Jewel of the Red Plains.

The dusty roads leading to Ardonirane's open gates are packed. Now, in mid-morning, herdsmen lead goats and sheep to the markets, and farmers bring in cartloads of grain. But the farmers suddenly part, making way for strange men and women on prancing horses.

It is an entire clan of colorfully robed desert Ardoni, nomads from the Red Plains, their Arak's household in the lead. Their ears, belts, and saddles glitter with jewels and gold, bells braided into their hair. They're followed by leather-clad riders with long spears and bows, some bearing hooves or manes hanging from their saddles, grisly trophies of enemy centaurs slain in skirmishes on the Red Plains. Behind come painted wagons, children and elders peering out, then more riders guiding a great herd of goats and cattle. As they approach Ardonirane's walls, the younger nomads try not to gape at their first sight of the City of the Thorsz.

The desert Ardoni are distant kin to the city folk, but they have not always been friends, and have ravaged its lands before. But since being taught a harsh lesson by the mercenary army of Dhallak m'Thorsz Carn, they have come in peace. Tonight their Araks will sup with the Thorsz and his household, swapping old war stories and plotting a joint campaign against the fierce centaurs or Red Plains orcs, their blood foes. Later they'll invite the Thorsz to share their campfires, for they know the warlord enjoys the company of warriors. Some young nomads, overcome by the city's glories, will doubtless seek permission to dare the Thorsz' fabled Death Test, to enter his service or die in the attempt.

Still, trust only goes so far. The nomads are expected to take turns visiting the city in small groups, the rest camping in horsehide tents outside the walls, policed by the Thorsz' hard-eyed, mail-clad mercenaries. His red-robed officials will negotiate tolls for grazing and water rights over the next several weeks. Some of the nomad herds will be sold to the city, in exchange for salt, iron, jewelry, magic items, and other goods scarce on the open plains.

The nomads are not the only visitors from the Red Plains. A merchant caravan has come in, after days spent crossing desert and steppes from the southern land of Ryuvatar, whose wizard-hating priesthood refuse to permit Gates in their realm. The caravan is a meandering line of white-robed riders on tall camels, saddlebags bulging with spices, silk, and a strange artifact from a desert tomb. It's escorted by hawk-faced, wind-burned guards: men and orcs, some bandaged after clashes with bandits. Saddle-sore, but relieved to have reached the city at last, they are laughing and singing. The Thorsz' soldiers wave them through: tolls were collected when they passed the forts on the Ardonirane border.

The caravan master is greeted by an eager delegation of merchants from the city, factors from the wealthy House of Cascabel. They assure him of lodging in the city's best inns, stables for the beasts, and, most important of all, that his precious cargo, mnorenessa incense worth its weight in gold, will be escorted safely through the streets to the House of Cascabel's guarded storerooms.

But other eyes are also watching. High overhead, a shapeshifted wizard in the form of a desert eagle circles overhead, noting with a raptor's eye what enters the city today. Yasandra Cray, enemy of the Thorsz, shadow mistress of the rebel Underguild, makes her own plans . . .

This book describes the city of Ardonirane, ruled by Dhallak m'Thorsz Carn, the Thorsz, the ruthless warlord who built the Death Test labyrinth.

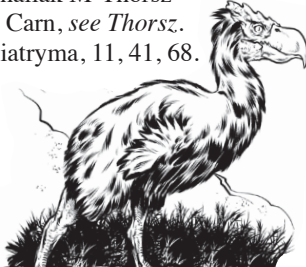
Ardonirane sits astride a wealthy caravan route across the Red Plains, a dangerous wasteland inhabited by fierce nomads and dotted with ancient ruins. Here the wealth of the incense and spice trade supports great merchant houses, powerful guilds, the designs of mighty wizards, and the schemes of cunning thieves. Bold adventurers gather there to prepare expeditions to surrounding ruins, or dare the Death Test to enter the Thorsz' service.

It is nine years since Dhallak Carn became Thorsz. He is a strong ruler, a force for order, yet one whose hatred for chaos can lead him to ruthless extremes. Under his rule, Ardonirane prospers – a city of traders, adventurers, and wizards: the Jewel of the Red Plains.



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JEWEL OF THE RED PLAINS

In *Death Test*, you met the Thorsz, the ruthless warlord of a busy merchant city. This book is a guide to that city: Ardonirane. Learn its history. How did the Thorsz reach power? What are his goals, and why does he rule with an iron hand? Why has he not married? And what may happen next month and next year?

- Dozens of character and location descriptions
- Sorcerous intrigues against the Thorsz
- Desert nomads: friends, foes, and For Hire
- What can happen when wizards cooperate with mechanics
- Adventure seeds inside and outside the city

Can the Thorsz found a new dynasty and rule Ardonirane in prosperity, or will his foes bring him down in fire and blood?

Ardonirane is a rich and detailed supplement for *The Fantasy Trip*.
The Fantasy Trip: In the Labyrinth is required to play.

By David Pulver

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