

*Note: This document was written and designed by the staff at Terminal Studios with the approval of Kenzer and Company.*

## Introduction

The original HackMaster game was a D&D inspired orgy of old-school roleplay and next generation hack-and-slash. It took the high adventure feel we loved from 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Dungeons & Dragons, turned it sideways, dialed the amp up to 11, and blasted it at us with a high-energy abandon.

In 2009, that game finished in the epic adventure known as Hacknarok. It was then that the Garweeze Wurld saga ended, leaving HackMaster players without a home and original edition HackMaster without company support (although Garweeze enthusiasts remain). Luckily, the pieces were already in place for an even *greater* setting, known as Kalamar.

## Welcome to Kalamar

If you think you've heard of the Kingdoms of Kalamar, then it's probably because you have. The World of Tellene was designed by, among others, Dave Kenzer, Brian Jelke, and Steve Johansson to be compatible with D&D and AD&D as far back as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. It is a world designed to make sense – politically, geographically, environmentally, and religiously. There are no icebergs in the middle of warm waters on Tellene, nor are there rain forests in temperate climates, or unexplainable dungeons brimming with unrealistic scenarios. There is instead a world of possibilities – where heroes are made, not born, and where the world's events happen whether you are there to experience them or not.

This document is meant to provide you with just a taste of only *some* of this fantastic setting and some of the scenarios available to you in Kalamar, while also filling you in on the exciting new edition of HackMaster.

## What is HackMaster?

If you've heard of HackMaster, but haven't played it, then you've probably been told that it's a "joke game based on a comic strip." Gentle reader, if you've heard and believed this, then you have done yourself – and the game – a great disservice.

HackMaster was, is, and always will be a deadly game of serious consequences with an attitude generating near-rabid fan appreciation and numerous fan and industry awards, including the "Origins Game of the Year" in 2001. It is a serious game that just happened to promote fun and humor even while a single roll of the die could generate any one of *10,000 different critical hit results*. (Make *that* into something funny, joke man!)

While, in the past, the game took classic D&D concepts and put a light twist on them, the new edition of HackMaster eliminates many of the puns and tones down the silliness a notch

while maintaining the kick-ass attitude that always set it apart (and some would dare say head and shoulders above) many of the other games on the market today.

But for those who loved the tone of Original HackMaster, do *not* despair. The new HackMaster maintains *much* of that sentimental Old School feel. Don't believe us? Crack open a copy of *Frondor's Keep* and thumb through the pages. You'll find yourself looking at a classic concept that's been expanded, impeccably re-designed, and brims with enough campaign options to leave your players busy and happy for months, if not *years*. And yet, while the *feel* is Old School, the *look* of the system is new, innovative, and – rare to *any* game – actually makes *sense*.

Rather than having characters and monsters take *turns*, HackMaster players measure their actions by *seconds*. Also, the game occurs in **real time** and combat is resolved by **opposed rolls**. If your 6 to hit is better than your enemy's roll to defend, you succeed in striking.

## But shouldn't I wait until "Advanced"

### HackMaster comes out?

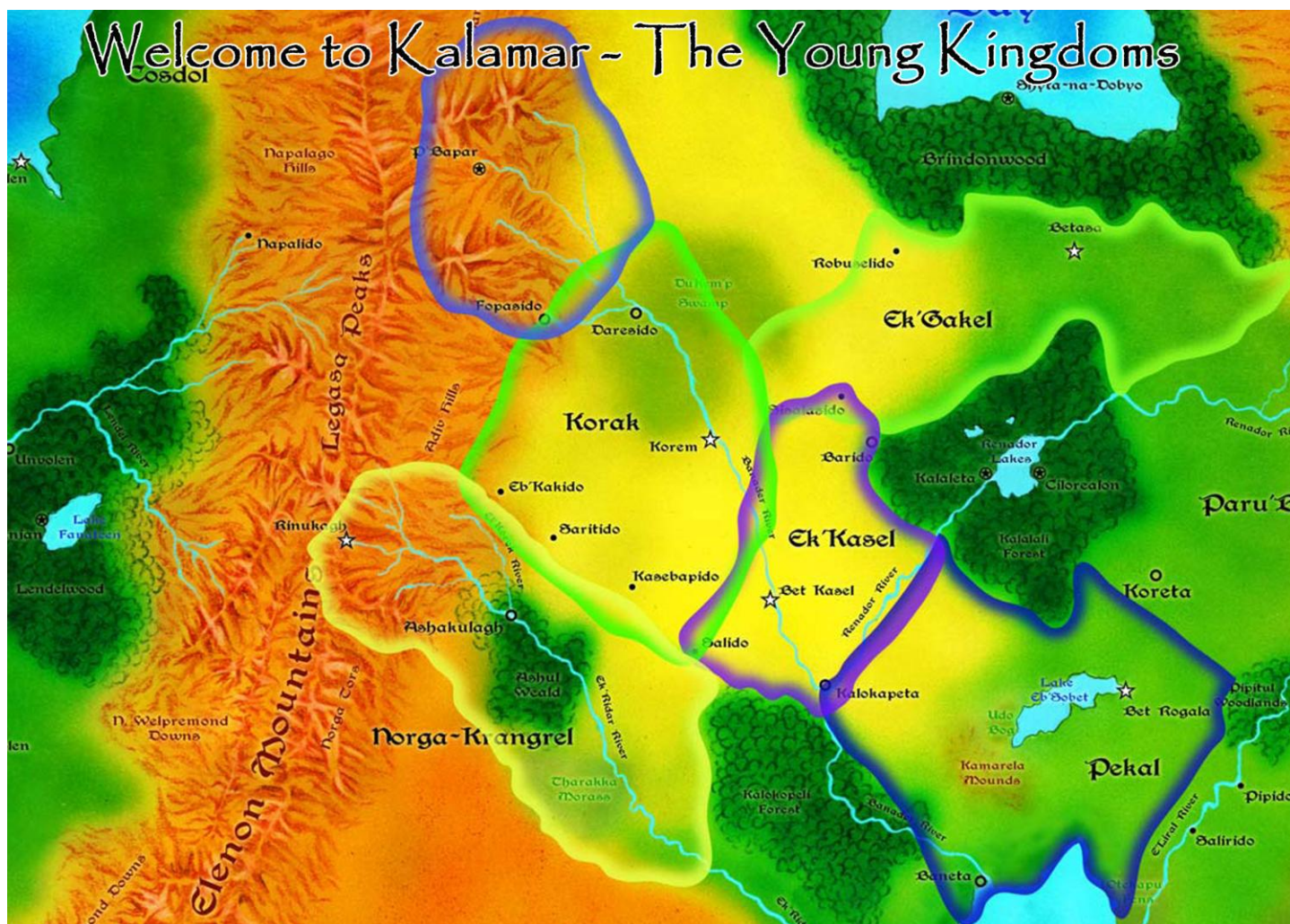
There has been a general misconception about HackMaster Basic, and what it means to the "advanced" version of the game. Rest assured, good sir or madam, **HackMaster Basic is a complete game**. If you roll up a character using the HackMaster Basic skills, talents, quirks and flaws, should he manage to survive to when the Player's Guide is released in 2011, he will be completely compatible with all the new material.

However, let's be realistic here – HackMaster is not a game in which players just wander through life and combat in some namby-pamby whimsical manner without facing dire consequences. While the humorous, antagonistic relationship between GM and Player has been eliminated (unless *you* want it to be there), any HackMaster GM keeps score and tallies deaths – and if you play a character without thinking through his actions, your GM's tally will be a big one. In other words, chances are good that the character you roll up today will not be alive to see the new options, skills, and classes of the HackMaster Player's Handbook.

## Okay, I'll give it a shot. What's available?

In a world where most sourcebooks cost you the equivalent of a week's worth of dinners, if not more, all of the basic options of the game are available to you in the HackMaster Basic sourcebook – available for \$19.99 in stores, or \$14.99 as an indexed PDF at [www.kenzerco.com](http://www.kenzerco.com).

For a complete list of the other items available to you, check out the section of this document titled "Supplements, Adventures, and Sourcebooks."



## The Young Kingdoms

Presently, the vast majority of released HackMaster material centers around the Young Kingdoms. In this section, you will learn about the history of this region, as well as the political divisions and tensions that can inspire the activities of your game.

### A Brief History of the Region

While most human tribes were still etching stick figures in the dirt, Brandobia was expanding out and growing powerful – and yet, the lands eastward of the Legasa Peaks were of no interest to them. Deemed “worthless,” Brandobian expansion occurred only after King Andovel granted the lands to his ambitious, power-thirsty nephew, Voleln.

Voleln quickly conquered these uncharted wastelands, but after facing stiff resistance from the elves and dwarves of the north-east, his progress was halted. Soon after that, Voleln’s “Eastern Brandobian Empire” was ground into the dust by organized and powerful hobgoblin armies, led by the infamous hobgoblin king Kruk-Ma-Kali.

Yet, Kruk-Ma-Kali’s great hobgoblin Kingdom of Krangi proved short-lived. After their king was assassinated, previously united tribes gave way to infighting, and were scattered back to

their holes due to a united effort from roving bands of Deji (the Tellene-wide tribes of mostly nomadic humans), scattered Brandobians, and even groups of elves, dwarves, and halflings.

In time, Brandobians re-established the Eastern Brandobian Empire, but their dominance there was again short-lived. Soon, emissaries from an even greater empire established contact. The Kingdom of Kalamar made one simple demand: submit or be destroyed. Voleln III refused to submit, and, three months later, his decapitated head adorned the western gate of P’Bapar.

### The Birth of the Young Kingdoms

One generation later, the Kalamarian Emperor Kolokar ordered the lands divided. Although they were now separate kingdoms and duchies, they still paid tribute to Kalamar – and this is how it remained for centuries.

However, like all great empires, Kalamar began to weaken, and slowly the Young Kingdoms gained their independence. No longer a part of their previous empires, Brandobia or Kalamar, they instead became individual realms united by a singular cause and similar interests: continued life and freedom, even in the face of the hobgoblin hoards. It is there, within these kingdoms, that the new HackMaster has been set – in a place of awesome danger and kick-ass excitement!





**Background:** Once controlled by a hereditary kingship, the Free State of Ek'Gakel overthrew the bonds of aristocracy in 390 Imperial Reckoning (I.R. for short)., when wealthy merchants hired mercenary bands to seize power from the nobles. Today, a chancellor elected for life in a general election rules the country. Brond Epseln, the current holder of this office, feels his greatest concerns revolve around the aggressive bands of Deji tribes, and Grel, as well as orcs who raid his lands from the south Brindonwood Forest. In truth, these troubles stem from his own incompetence and nepotism. The near-anarchy of the Free State – outside of Betasa – has resulted in Ek'Gakel's descent into poor economic shape, and also marks this region as a trouble spot for travelers.

**Population:** 602,000, comprised of humans of all races, humanoids including elves, gnomes, and halflings, as well as a handful of dwarven clans.

**Largest City:** Betasa, population 13,970 – 11,400 humans of all races; 2,570 elves, gnomes, halflings, and dwarves

**Government:** Representative Despotism

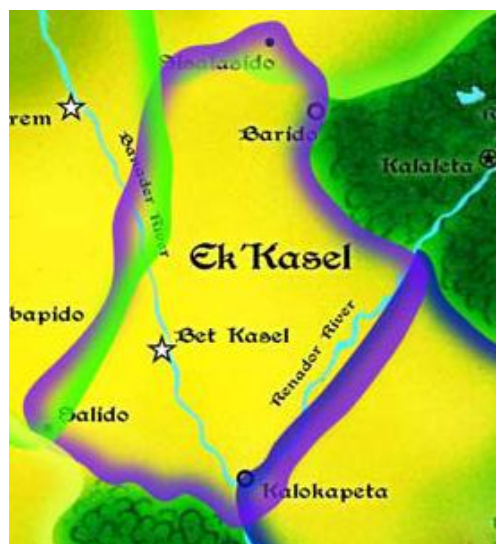
**Economy:** Trading and bartering, primarily of textiles, wine and wool

**Military:** 3,200 total; 500 Heavy Calvary, 1,000 Light Calvary, 1,000 Heavy Infantry, 500 Light Infantry (Crossbow), plus 200 volunteer halfling slingers

**Crime:** The 'Thieves' Guild of Betasa has grown in power in Ek'Gakel since the Deji Wars have begun. Guildmaster Meno strives for even more power, but is hampered by a charter requiring approval from six Senior Guildmembers. He would like to begin a new guild, if he is able to find two dozen bold and loyal thieves, regardless of experience.

**Transnational Issues:** Due to their inability to police within their own borders – resulting in severe economic issues – Ek'Gakel has ceased sending its tithe to Korak. Consequently, General Garnak, the leader of Korak, has repeatedly threatened to take it by force.

Economically, Ek'Gakel suffers from the anarchy outside of the capital city. Trade routes tend to be fragile, if not broken, and some people have been overheard whispering words like “freedom” and “unification.”



**Background:** Ek'Kasel was the last Young Kingdom to declare its independence from Kalamar, although in truth said declaration was a token gesture. The present King of Ek'Kasel, Erasar II, is a distant cousin of the Kalamaran Emperor, and has secretly been receiving arms and horses from Kalamar to aid in its battles with Norga-Krangrel.

The government is efficiently run, despite being in a perpetual state of war. Additionally, due to the inevitable loss of men to the attrition of war, women play an integral role in the society, through such essential activities as farming, herding, politicking, and serving as medics and alchemists.

**Population:** 412,500, comprised of most human and humanoid races.

**Largest City:** Bet Kasel, population 10,300 – mixed (humans of Brandobian, Kalamaran, and Deji heritage, with a handful of elves and halflings).

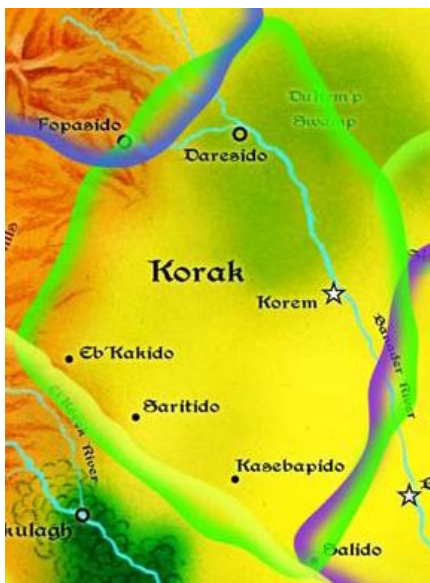
**Government:** Monarchy

**Economy:** Trade and barter, primarily of herbs and mosses, as well as high quality siege devices.

**Military:** 2,200 total; 1,000 Heavy Calvary, 1,200 Heavy Infantry

**Crime:** Ever since Queen Jada decimated thieves, robbers and even the beggars of Bet Kasel in response to criminals daring to steal her crown in 545 I.R., crime in Ek'Kasel has been nearly non-existent. However, there are a handful of freelance thieves operating within the capitol city – thieves who take great pains to not be too successful.

**Transnational Issues:** King Erasar II has a singular agenda – to reunite the Young Kingdoms with The Kalamaran Empire. His son – who loves his father far too deeply to ever endanger him – hopes for Ek'Kasel to remain independent. Erasar II's goal may become a reality should he find the means to persuade his nation's closest ally – Korak – to help in this reunion.



**Background:** Located to the south of P'Bapar, Korak is all that stands between the Young Kingdoms and annihilation at the hands of the hobgoblin hoards. Historically, Korak was the second of the Young Kingdoms to defect from Kalamar, having closely followed P'Bapar in order of declaration.

Korak is, and always has been, the greatest military force in the region. This is out of necessity, and current leader General Alere Garnek has been building up forces for the past five years in anticipation of a greater assault. His fears had better be right – his army building comes at a great cost, both financially and diplomatically.

**Population:** 607,000, comprised mostly of humans, with several thousand gnomes and halflings. Additionally, dwarven and elven mercenaries are generally available when necessary.

**Largest City:** Korem, the City of Swords, population 10,400 – human, a mixture of Brandobians, Kalamarans, and Dejj

**Government:** Militocracy

**Economy:** Trading and bartering, primarily of iron products – i.e., swords, armor and shields.

**Military:** 6,200 total; 1,200 Heavy Calvary, 200 Light Calvary, 4,500 Heavy Infantry, 300 Light Infantry (Crossbow)

**Crime:** Crime in Korak is light, although there are random and troubling incidents of criminal activity in Korem, seemingly centering on the actions of a mischievous shape shifter.

**Transnational Issues:** Korak is presently on poor terms with Ek Gakel due to Chancellor Epseln's withdrawal of support from the military alliance.

Korak's strongest ally remains P'Bapar, who continues to send aid on a regular basis.

Korak is at the forefront of an extremely dangerous region. Apart from war with Norga-Krangrel, Korak is constantly vigilant for other insurgencies, including lizardmen and Grel.



**Background:** Located to the north of Korak, P'Bapar is considered the leader of the Young Kingdoms. It was the first to defect from the Kalamaran Empire, and proudly holds status as the largest independent city-state on Tellene.

P'Bapar is loosely ruled by Archduke E'Dos Kalanasi II, who maintains his status – and the security of his country – through outworking and outwitting those in lower positions of authority.

P'Bapar maintains a special relationship with Korak. These two countries regularly exchange soldiers for the sake of training and fortification along the front.

**Population:** 228,000, comprised of humans (Kalamaran, Brandobian, and Dejj), as well as many non-humans of all races.

**Largest City:** P'Bapar, population 73,100 – with a similar composition to the nation as a whole.

**Government:** Independent City-State, ruled via monarchy

**Economy:** Trading and bartering, involving jewels, gold, silver, wool, vellum, and paka birds.

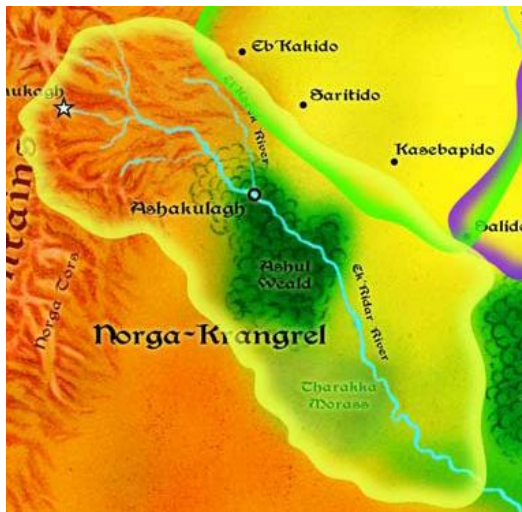
**Military:** 1,200 total; 500 Heavy Calvary, 200 Light Calvary, 500 Heavy Infantry

**Crime:** At least two large thieves' guilds operate within P'Bapar, along with assorted independent smugglers and burglars. Further, some of the rival merchant houses engage in as much illicit activity as they do legitimate business.

**Transnational Issues:** The single most serious issue which P'Bapar faces remains the threat of monsters in the mountains. Otherwise, the City-State occasionally has to deal with rare humanoid incursions on the eastern and northern fronts, as well as increasingly frequent bandit raids. Additionally, mercenary bands remain a fixture of the country. These soldiers regularly work in service of merchants and caravans, but when work is light they have been known to accept work as thugs and brigands.



## At a Glance – The Kingdom of Norga-Krangrel



**Background:** Norga-Krangrel borders Korak to the north and Ek'Kasel to the east. The kingdom – believed to be sacred by the hobgoblins living there – is ruled by Krokai-Marg, believed to be one of the greatest tacticians to ever assume the throne, perhaps second only to the legendary Kruk-Ma-Kali himself.

Krokai-Marg has little concern for his subjects, save his desire to keep them in a state of fervor against Norga-Krangrel's human neighbors. He has recently begun amassing troops in expectation of a large assault by Korak.

**Population:** Unknown

**Largest City:** Rinukagh, Birthplace of the Krangi, population 12,200 (11,200 hobgoblins plus a total population of 1,000 humanoids of other types – mostly goblins)

**Government:** Divinely-ordained Despotism

**Economy:** Barter and trade, primarily of slaves and wheat for various raw materials. Rinukagh's income primarily stems from massive tithes and donations, as the Krangi believe it to be the birthplace of all hobgoblins.

**Military:** Thought to be immense, but not directly known.

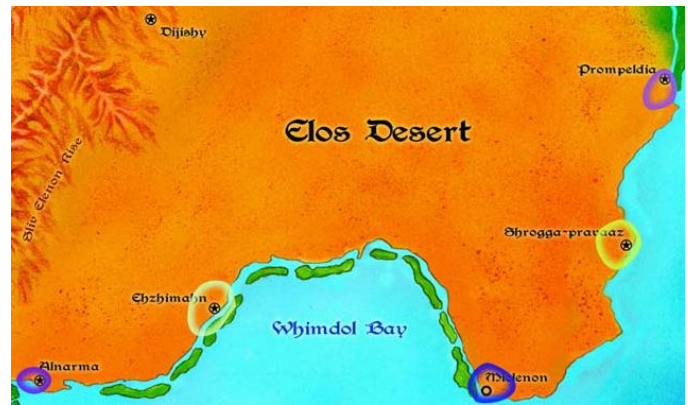
**Crime:** Thievery is rampant, even in Rinukagh. Most commonly, clever thieves disguise themselves as clerics and con pilgrims into buying fake relics, or they simply slit purses or bash them with clubs.

Additionally, soldiers confidently take what they want, when they want it, knowing full well the protection they receive from the clerics who employ them.

**Transnational Issues:** Humans and other non-hobgoblin humanoids are rare in Norga-Krangrel. In some regions, most humans exist only as slaves.

Norga-Krangrel stands in a state of perpetual war with its neighbors, and the warriors in Ashakulagh are amassing for a major attack. Once Krokai-Marg's reaches his target of 15,000 soldiers, the assault will begin.

## At a Glance – The Independent Cities of the Elos Desert



**Background:** The Elos Desert is a low-lying coastal plain covered with crusty salts – the remains of a past era in which a sea covered the region. Although extremely dry and seemingly inhospitable, several bands of Deji nomads dwell there.

Near the western limits of the Elos Desert lies a great crack in the earth's crust, known as **The Great Fissure**, which holds evidence of an ancient culture that once dominated the area.

In the southeastern area of the desert sits a five-league-wide basin known as **Nickel Basin**. Within it are ores which, when alloyed with iron, form a type of steel whose hardness rivals mithral. However, rumors claim that a curse lies upon this crater – those who spend time within it fall victim to a wasting disease. Additionally, deformed earth giants are said to dwell within.

**Cities:** *Alnarma* – Population 3,800, this city is often overlooked for the more popular port of Dowand-Brandel. Most commonly, travelers who seek slaves – but which to avoid dealing with their home country's slavers – come to Alnarma.

*Dijishy, City of History* – Population 6,000, most inhabitants are Deji shepherds who graze their flock in the nearby hills. Despite looking unimpressive on popular maps, Dijishy is a monster hunter's paradise. The area is filthy with gnoles, giant eagles, bugbears, ogres, manticores, kobolds, trolls, and wyverns.

*Ebzhimahn, Spire City* – Population 8,500, this city is – as its name implies – most recognizable by its numerous spires. This city enjoys the benefits of a unique trading agreement with a tribe of mermen living off of the coast among the coral reefs.

*Colony of Miclenon* – Population 15,700, this city was originally founded by Brandobian explorers. Later, as the Brandobian Empire splintered, Miclenon pledged allegiance to Eldor, for whom it remains a colony of to this day.

*Shrogga-Pravaaz, City of Giants* – Population, 5,500 humans, kobolds, hobgoblins, gnoles, bugbears, and a handful of ogres. This city contains buildings clearly meant to shelter a variety of beings, ranging from kobolds to ogres. This city's primary source of income is derived from mining, as they produce one of the world's largest concentrations of gemstones.

# Supplements, Adventures, Resources & Sourcebooks

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While we wait for the new HackMaster supplements and sourcebooks to come out, it's still possible to have a rich, detailed, and kick-ass campaign. Here are just some of the resources available to you:

## HackMaster

*HackMaster Basic* – All the rules you need to know to play HackMaster! Available at your friendly local gaming store, or at [www.kenzerco.com](http://www.kenzerco.com) – \$19.99 for softcover, \$14.99 for pdf

*Frاندor's Keep* – This 144 page setting will carry your PCs from Level 1-5 with numerous roleplay and combat scenarios. Available at your friendly local gaming store, or at [www.kenzerco.com](http://www.kenzerco.com) – \$24.99 for softcover. Also available is *The Mysterious Shrine*, a **free** bonus adventure for Frاندor's Keep!

*In the Realm of the Elm King* – An action-packed introductory adventure that will prepare your PCs for Frاندor's. Available as a pdf at [www.kenzerco.com](http://www.kenzerco.com) for \$4.99.

*White Palette, Ivory Horns* – Another awesome introductory adventure set in the northern borderlands of the city-state of P'Bapar. This adventure is *free* to download at [www.kenzerco.com](http://www.kenzerco.com).

*HackJournal* – A quarterly pdf product that publishes new rules, character classes, and much, much more. Each individual issue costs \$2.99 for an instant download, *or* you can become a member of the HackMaster Association for \$24.99 a year and download **every single issue ever** (32 in total thus far) **for free!** In the last issue alone, HMA'ers were privy to information on the Knight Class, Paladin Class, Fighter/Thief and Mage/Thief dual classes, seven new cleric classes, and more!

**Coming Soon** – *the Hacklopedia of Beasts* – A single volume, 400-plus page, full color Monster Book Supreme! You have never seen a book as stunningly designed, nor have you ever used a monster resource so complete!

Additionally, you also have the option of paying a visit to <http://www.kenzerco.com/hackmaster/> for a ridiculous number of free downloads, including a Quick Start Guide a PC Record Sheet, the HackMaster Basic Index, and much, much more.

## Kingdoms of Kalamar

The world of Tellene is big, and ripe with opportunities for gamers. If you are interested in learning more about Kalamar, and do not wish to wait for the various HackMaster conversions (and new material) to be released, then we recommend the following resources to you (Note: These items are available at [www.kenzerco.com](http://www.kenzerco.com) as searchable PDFs, and can be bought Print on Demand from [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)):

*Kingdoms of Kalamar Campaign Setting* – Designed to be compatible with 4<sup>th</sup> Edition D&D, this document is more than 500 glorious pages of invaluable information. Resources include information on the races of Tellene, the regions of the planet, the prominent organizations there, the languages, gods of Tellene, a *star chart* outlining the celestial bodies and calendar, cities and laws, military forces, a pronunciation guide, and the most amazing atlas ever made for a roleplaying game. That's right – **ever**. Available for \$24.99, and easily worth twice that amount.

*Divine Masters* – For D&D 3.0/3.5. In Tellene, there is only one pantheon of gods, who are given many different names by the various races and species throughout the planet. Divine Masters is a 250+ page book detailing everything you need to know about those faiths.

## City & Region Settings, for D&D 3.0/3.5

A brief list of the city settings available via the KenzerCo website:

*Dijishy: the City of History*

*Geanarvue: the Stones of Peace*

*Loona, Port of Intrigue*

*Secrets of the Alubelok Coast* (great for pirate games)

*Svimohzja: the Ancient Isle*

*Zoa: Citadel of the Bay*

**Note:** These books may be for D&D, but they are *very* rules light and are easily convertible to *any* fantasy campaign setting

## Species, Character, and Monster Books, for D&D 3.0/3.5

*Friend & Foe: the Elves and Bugbears of Tellene*

*Friend & Foe: the Gnomes and Goblins of Tellene*

*Fury in the Wastelands: the Orcs of Tellene*

*Blood & Shadows: the Dark Elves of Tellene*

*Salt & Sea Dogs: the Pirates of Tellene*

**Note:** These books were designed, in particular, to give depth and a wealth of story to monsters that are normally very one-dimensional.

## The Kenzer & Company Forums

If you have ever browsed the world wide web, then you know that trolls do not only exist in the realm of fantasy. Navigating the internet is filled with its own brand of peril – but not on the KenzerCo forums.

The community there is dedicated, helpful, and passionate about HackMaster. If you have a rules question, a comment or critique, then the people there will receive you with open arms and treat you like a friend.

## So what are you waiting for?

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There's a whole world waiting for you to sling some dice. Will you travel to Frاندor's Keep? Or perhaps you'll answer the call of a desperate man instead? The world of HackMaster is yours. Reach out and take it!

# Into the Unknown - A HackMaster Adventure

For 1 or more Level 1 Characters

## Introduction

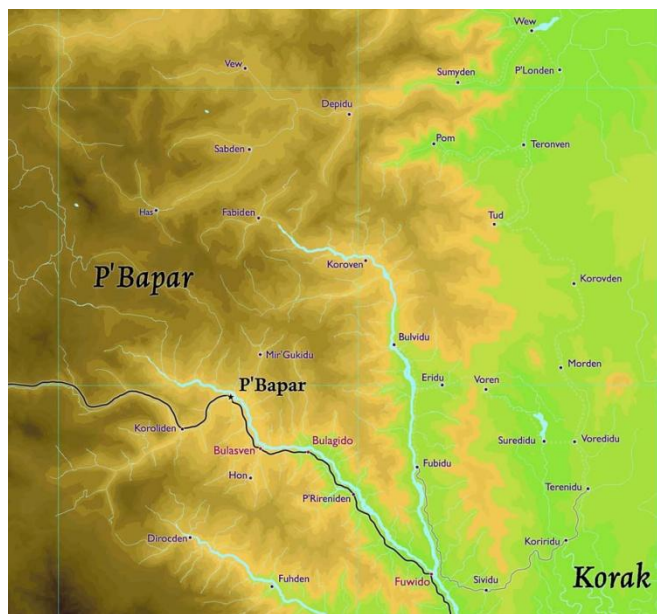
This introductory adventure is designed for *any number* of 1<sup>st</sup> level PCs. It should take only about 1 to 2 hours of play to complete, making it ideal for introducing new players to the game.

While this story takes place in P'Bapar, it can easily be adapted for any setting of the GM's choice. However, as this adventure is specifically designed to accommodate Quick-Start characters, it is assumed that all PCs are humans.

## GM's Background

Travel between villages in P'Bapar's Earldom of Telivan can be dangerous. Between ambitious highwaymen, unpredictable Dejy Tribesmen and aggressive humanoids, the dangers of the journey often outweigh the destination's reward. Typically, merchants, traders and soldiers travel together, often in large groups, and even *then* they are not guaranteed a safe passage.

Only fools and heroes would dare travel in smaller groupings – or alone...



**GM's Note:** To get a better sense of P'Bapar, please refer to “**At a Glance – P'Bapar**” on page 4.

Creature statistics are presented in an abbreviated format designed for easy combat resolution. GameMasters familiar with the rule system should easily understand the entries. The ToP listing (x/y) merges the opponent's Threshold of Pain (x) and Trauma check (y).

## 1. The Journey Begins

**Encounter:** The Mad Merchant

**Potential Yield:** A promised cut of his profits (max. 10 sp per character)

**Story Award:** Learning the reason for Mokira's urgency (67 EPs)

To get your party in the right mindset for an adventure, read or paraphrase the following text.

Though born the children of peasants, you've always known that your destiny lies beyond the borders of P'Londen. Unfortunately, the call of family responsibility – coupled with the empty coin purses at your sides – always seems to stifle your dreams.

Fortunately, though, your luck may be changing – A haggard-looking man rode into town yesterday atop a damaged cart pulled by a dying donkey. The man, who speaks with a sickly wheeze, calls himself Morisato “The Mad Merchant” Mokira, and appears very wealthy. Even before his poor donkey rattled off its final breath, Mokira produced hard silver and purchased another; even before his rickety cart stopped rolling, he hired two able men to repair it. Clearly, this man has somewhere to be – and now, you hear he needs armed escorts.

Mokira claims to have valuable goods in his cart, although nosey PCs only see frayed bundles of blankets in the back. Eager to carry on, despite the dangers of travel, Mokira refuses to wait for a larger group of travelers to journey with.

Instead, he offers the PCs an extraordinary sum to escort him – 10 pieces of silver per PC, ½ paid up front and in full upon his arrival in the City-State of P'Bapar, once he exchanges his goods.

Once the players agree to escort him, their families insist on arming them with their starting gear and they depart.

**Morisato Mokira, the Mad Merchant:** NE Kalamaran human; HP 20, Init +4, Def +0, DR 0, ToP 6/5, Appraisal (rings & jewellery) 32, language (Kalamaran 67) Salesmanship 45; *Quirk & Flaw:* Paranoid, Prematurely Gray. *Items on Hand:* 1 dagger, merchant/traveler's outfitting bundle (see pg. 81 of the HMB), Ring of Chance, 23sp, 32cp. EVP 35.

- Any PC may make a Current Affairs check (difficulty Easy, -80%) in order to recall Mokira's reputation for his unusual style as a merchant.

Morisato Mokira is perhaps less mad than he appears. It's true – he is a local legend for his sometimes insane pricing schemes – he's been known to attempt selling a simple steel



dagger for gold, and ornate jewels for copper – but, to him, that is merely the cost of celebrity.

What is more impressive is his knack for survival. He's travelled with traders who were killed to the man by hobgoblins. He's travelled *alone* into monster-riddled canyons and escaped without so much as a scratch. Yet, his luck now appears to have run out – while visiting the village of Wew, in northern P'Bapar, Mokira made the mistake of cheating the wrong man – Darnyr, a Deji Tribesman who came into “civilization” looking for fun and trade – out of an extremely precious ring. His con having been exposed, Mokira is now on the run from that very man.

### The Mad Merchant's Gem-Studded Silver Ring



The Mad Merchant's silver ring is *not* magical – but it is incredibly beautiful, and of an extraordinary quality. Even to the undiscerning eye, it appears to twinkle in the light. Any PC who passes an Appraisal check (difficulty Average, -40%) identifies the value of the ring to be 100sp.

### A note for the First Time GM - Roleplaying the Mad Merchant

How deep you play any game is entirely up to you. However, it is recommended that you do more than simply read the flavor text provided in this document. If you want your players to truly savor the glories of HackMaster, give them some juicy bones to chew on!

While it is extremely unlikely that the Mad Merchant provides his back-story to the PCs, he is almost *certainly* inclined to ramble about his troubles, muttering nonsense about how he “shouldn'ta taken it,” and how, “aw, me luck's run out at last!” As they attempt to pry information from Mokira, this give-and-take roleplay will make the game more enjoyable for you *and* your PCs.

## 2. Trouble Along the Road

**Encounter:** 10' pit trap (35 EPs for identification), Deji tribesmen, Darnyr, black bear

**Potential Yield:** The various items held and equipped by the Deji Tribesmen

Once the players have agreed to begin their journey, read or paraphrase the following.

At first the journey proves quiet and uneventful. Other than some harmless animals, you see nothing to suggest any dangers upon the road.

Then, roughly half a day's journey from P'Londen, you suddenly notice an ominous silence has filled the air. Even the Mad Merchant, whose ceaseless mutterings had filled your ears for too long, has grown quiet.

As you pass through a grove, a man step out from behind a large, one hand held up, calling you to halt. Clearly addressing your employer, in a thick Deji accent, he says, “These stones you traded me are *worthless*, Mokira! Did you really think you'd fool us for long? You stated your intended destination often enough. Now, where is it? The ring or your life!”

Mokira yelps, “It's the Deji tribesman Darnyr! Protect me!”

As the PCs step off of the cart, they may choose to talk with Darnyr, or engage him. Should they attempt conversation, he merely tries to goad them into battle through taunting and name-calling, eventually throwing small, sharp rocks (d4p-2 damage) at them if they refuse to engage him in combat.

- If Darnyr succeeds and the PCs move to engage the tribesmen, have them roll **twice** for Observation (Average difficulty modifier for both, -40%). If *any* PC observes the 10' pit trap then the party as a whole stops in time and is prevented from tumbling in. If they fail, the leading PC falls into it, receiving d6p-1 (min. 1 point) of damage. In either case, read or paraphrase some of the following text.

**If the first Observation check fails:** As the man stands before you, his hands confidently placed upon his hips, you charge forward with the full intention of hacking your way through him and into the clearing beyond the grove. However, you fail to take into account the *reason* behind his confident smirk – between you and he is a leaves-covered patch of ground that was clearly orchestrated to hide something.

Unfortunately, you notice too late, and as the leaves give way, you tumble helplessly into a pit, roughly ten feet deep.

**If the first Observation check succeeds:** As the man stands before you, his hands confidently placed upon his hips, you charge forward with the full intention of hacking your way through him and into the clearing beyond the grove. Luckily, you are also able to uncover the secret behind his confident smirk – laid haphazardly in front of you is an obvious pit trap, roughly 10' deep, clearly constructed by a man in a hurry.



If they succeed at notching it, the PCs may hurdle the pit trap by making an opposed Jumping Check (D20+PC's STR vs. d20+5). Alternatively, they have the option of moving around it, rather than over it.

- If a PC tumbles into the pit, he may make a Climbing check (Average difficulty, -40%) in order escape and re-enter combat.

Once the pit trap has been resolved, the second Observation roll comes into play. Read or paraphrase the following.

#### If the second Observation check fails

Moments before you come within striking distance of the man, the reasons behind his continued bravado become frighteningly clear. Standing on the left side of the path behind several clustered trees are men, armed with crossbows, tracking your every step.

#### If the second Observation check succeeds

As you move beyond the pit trap, you notice from the corner of your eye a sharp movement. Sure enough, from behind a nearby cluster of trees you are able to spot the shadow of at least one man, perhaps more, waiting to ambush you once they establish line-of-sight.

**GM's Note:** The number of men in this encounter is directly proportional to the number of players participating in this adventure. There should be a **minimum** of 2 total tribesmen, including Darnyr, even if you are playing the adventure with only one PC (your PC may need NPC help in winning the battle, however). For every PC over the number 4, there should be half as many Deji Tribesmen, rounded down. *For example – if you are running this adventure for 7 PCs, then they should square off against 3 NPCs. If you are running the adventure for 1-5 PCs, then they should square off against 2 NPCs.*

If the PCs failed to identify the threats on the side of the road, then they must roll d10 for initiative against the NPCs' d8. If the PCs succeeded in identifying the ambush, then they may roll a d6 for initiative against their opponents' d8.

**Standard Tribesman:** N Deji human fighter 1; HP 23; Init -1; Spd 10, Rch 2.5', Atk +0; Dmg d6p+d4p; Def +1; DR 2; ToP 7/5; Hon 9; EVP 67

**Equipment:** club, leather armor

**Hit Point Tracker:**

#1)       
 #2)       
 #3)     

**Darnyr:** N Deji human fighter 1; HP 26; Init -1; Spd 8(7), Rch 2', Atk +2; Dmg 2d6p-1; Def +1; DR 2; ToP 7/5; Hon 9; EVP 67

**Notable Skills:** animal husbandry 10, animal mimicry 16, fire building 10, language (Kalamaran 38, Deji 60, listening 15, intimidation 31, listening 25, observation 21; **Profs:** Short sword and dagger

**Equipment:** short sword, dagger +1, leather armor, 18sp, 14cp

**Hit Point Tracker:**


**A note on combat for the new GM:** Remember – if roleplaying makes the game more enjoyable, than vividly describing the action makes it even *better*. As you count off the seconds of combat, don't do your players the disservice of prattling off a dialog like, "1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4, okay, my guy rolls, it's a 19 against your 11, so you take... 5 damage ... 5 ... 6 ..." Wake us up when it's over!

Instead, consider spicing up your game a bit. An example of *spicy* dialog might include something like, "1, he's drawing near you ... 2, he viciously unsheathes his short sword while grinning sadistically ... 3, he feigns a jab but pulls back before he strikes ... 4, he lashes out brutally at your throat, make a defense roll!"

### 3. As Combat Draws to a Close

If the PCs are successful in their first-ever HackMaster combat, congratulate them for a job well done! However, there are still lessons to be learned, such as when it might be time to run away. As they near killing their last living enemy, read or paraphrase the following text.

As the final Tribesman realizes his fate and turns to run, your eyes widen. Behind him looms a black bear, standing tall on its hind legs, growling deeply at the man who is encroaching upon its territory. A crossbow bolt sticks out of the beast's flank, and with one great swipe the highwayman's head rolls off his shoulders and into the brush. Then, the bear turns toward you.

**Black Bear:** HP 45, Init -1; Spd 4; Rch Short; Att +8; Dmg 2d6p+4; Special Attack: None; Def -1; DR 9; ToP 18/12; Size Large; EVP 417

**Hit Point Tracker:**


**GM's Note:** HackMaster is a game where heroes are made, not born. One key ingredient to hero-making, then, is knowing when to tuck tail and run away. If your PCs are in no shape to defeat a black bear, but lack the common sense to flee, then have the guts to make them pay in blood. You won't be doing them *any* favors by coddling them and dropping hints about what they should do in this situation, so let them figure it out on their own!

Whether the PCs are able to overcome the Black Bear, or even if they turn to flee, they see that the Mad Merchant has hopped onto his cart and is riding away at the rate of 15 feet/second. He never intended to pay them for the escort, nor does he have the money to begin with. If the PCs choose to run, the bear will not give chase for more than 1d20 seconds.

Once the final combat scenario has been resolved, read or paraphrase the following.

Now without a ride or payment, you are bruised and battered, but still alive. You are also as close to the village of Teronven as you are to your home. Thus, the choice is now yours. If the perils of the road have already broken your spirit, you can return home to a simple life of mundane farming.

But if you seek adventure, fortune, and fame; if you crave to become a hero about whom tales will be told and songs will be sung throughout the land – if not the *world* – then you can continue ... *Into the Unknown*.

### Where to go from here

As the GM, you control the destiny of your players from this point on. Perhaps you'll want to take them to Frandor's Keep, the amazing mini-setting designed specifically for HackMaster Basic. Or, maybe you'll want to start them off somewhere small before taking them to the Keep, for which White Palette, Ivory Horn or The Realm of the Elm King would be perfect. Or, you may even choose to run from a homemade adventure.

Whichever you choose, there are a myriad of options available to you. You can't possibly go wrong with *any* of them. After all, from the rules to the settings and beyond, HackMaster has been designed to be modular. Use what you love. Skip what you don't. The options are numerous, and they are at your finger tips.

After all, as is the case with all good games, HackMaster is only as great as you make it.

Therefore, go forth and make it a great game!

