

THE UNWANTEDS.

A setting supplement for Dark Sun – by Dotemalpayne.

Art.

All interior arts are in watercolor by Lucile.

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Forewords.

This supplement offers Game Masters a complete setting for the Dark Sun roleplaying game : a base of operations where players can meet, rest between adventures, and develop or train as needed.

The Game Master can choose to have players portray the main characters behind the Unwanted, staff members affiliated with House Red, or alternatively create or introduce characters from outside the original context.

The supplement covers the key aspects of the Undesirables—from their origins and development to their objectives, ethics, and secrets.

Finally, two interpretation approaches are offered for setting up future adventures, in consultation with the players and aligned with their roleplaying expectations.

May you take as much pleasure in playing it as I had in writing it.

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~Disillusionment~

Magra headed toward the great hall, a broad smile on his face. Without a doubt, today would be a wonderful day, a day when everything would go right, a day when everything would align with his ambitions. This unfamiliar frame of mind made him almost forget his habitual cruelty. Thus, when his path was blocked by the old slave scrubbing the floor on hands and knees, Magra merely shoved him aside with his foot, whereas on any other day he would have beaten him mercilessly.

"Move it, you old bastard, I'm in a hurry!"

Magra quickly forgot him, and as the old man writhed on the ground, moaning, he continued on his way, buoyant and cheerful, to plant himself before the ornate mirror in the great hall.

His sharp features, combined with a twisted smile, gave his face the look of a sadist reveling in his own delight. He experimented with different expressions, pursing his lips, then hollowing his cheeks, before opening his mouth wide to feign surprise, much like a leaden actor. His bony hands adjusted his headdress and brushed the sand from his loose-fitting robes.

Though he tried to control them, his gaze kept drifting, against his will, toward the heavy wooden door a few meters to his right. His efforts were in vain, yet he persisted in trying to drag his eyes back to his reflection in the mirror, over and over again.

Finally, he closed them.

He knew that, in just a few moments, his life would change forever behind that luxurious panel.

"House Red. What a ridiculous name! That's the very first thing I'll change."

Magra had been waiting for this moment for years; his patience and perseverance were finally about to pay off. His elderly father, may he finally return to Earth, had summoned him for a formal meeting. He only ever did that with his two agents, and only to discuss matters of great importance.

But never with Magra.

It could mean only one thing: he was handing over the reins. He was finally passing the management of the merchant house to his son. His legitimate son, at least. It was a pity the other bastard—yet another one!—wasn't there to witness it.

Magra smiled again at the thought of his “brother” and the look on his face when he saw him at the head of the house. He was so jubilant he felt a sudden urge to relieve his bladder.

He pushed the thought aside, took a deep breath, and knocked on the door.

Today, Magra would reign.

* * * * *

"Magra must never rule, do you hear me? Never!"

"Cruel, arrogant, sadistic, and incompetent—he has nothing but flaws. If he weren't my son, I would have dismissed him long ago." Alek's voice echoed through the vast room.

The shadowed figure he was addressing remained silent but nodded. His shoulders slumped as he listened to the old man's long speech and grasped its implications. He wasn't ready for any of this. Not at all.

Alek caught his breath after an outburst unlike any before. He leaned against the back of a chair, trying to pierce the darkness to find the eyes of the person he was addressing. In a voice that had grown quavering—almost hesitant—he whispered:

"Rest assured, he will understand..."

As if in response to his tirade, three sharp knocks rang out at the study door, like three warning shots.

* * * * *

"Right, now he had to think. And fast! "

As he vigorously washed his hands, Magra racked his brain for a solid solution—a "valid" excuse, as he used to call them when he was a child.

This time, he was angry with himself. Truly angry. His impulsive nature had landed him in a mess yet again, and now he had to convince the locals that...

"Master?"

Although the sun was already high in the sky, the room was dark—a nasty habit of his father's, keeping the windows covered to keep the place cool. But for once, that would work to his advantage. And for once, that old slave would come in handy, too.

* * * * *

Ozak slowly entered the office. His back stooped by the weight of ages, he moved forward with measured steps, knowing full well that something was amiss. His hearing had often betrayed him of late, but not his instinct, not his old reflexes, and certainly not the sixth sense that had pulled him out of countless dangers in his youth. The shouts had been brief, yet it was unmistakably the Master's voice he had heard—a man who never raised his voice.

"Master?"

The room was shrouded in semi-darkness, but his greatest burden at least had the advantage of granting him keen vision. He allowed his infravision to adjust to the faint ambient light and scanned the room for his master.

"Ah, there you are! Here, take this."

He instantly recognized that nasal tone, that grating rasp issuing from the throat of Magra, Alek's eldest son. As unpleasant as a taut rope on the verge of snapping, the guttural sound took him by surprise; then, emerging from the shadows of a side alcove, the sadist's face appeared, a terrifying smile playing on his lips.

Upon hearing the threat, Ozak instinctively raised an arm to shield his face against an impending blow, only to be surprised when Magra seized his wrist and slipped an object into his hand.

* * * * *

"Drop that thing, you're going to hurt yourself," Kalaar scolded, grabbing the crate's handles and lifting it unaided. Veloss smiled back, shaking his head with a crestfallen look; he was resigned to the fact that he would never match the Mul's strength. Still, unwilling to lose face too easily, he attempted a retort that was doomed from the start.

"I'll just keep an eye on you from the shade. To each their own job..."

An observer might have thought the two were friends working side by side. However, once Veloss walked away to retrieve his bone spear and resumed his post, there was no longer any doubt about their respective roles: guard and slave.

Now seated in the warehouse's shade, Veloss kept watch over the only slave assigned to him that day—a slave who, he knew full well, could escape at any moment without him being able to stop it, weapon and endless training notwithstanding. Fortunately for him, within House Red—under Alek's rule—no slave had ever escaped, and this had nothing

to do with the guards' numbers or skills. To some, being a slave here seemed irrational; to others, sheer madness.

A mass of muscle, Kalaar was a one-man war machine—a weapon capable of shattering the meager defenses of the entire household. As he moved, his body—scarred from a past life of servitude and combat—recalled the tagsters encountered in the desert along trade routes or near herds in the surrounding pastures; creatures whose agility and power made their every attack unpredictable. The guard often reflected that the natural order seemed wrong, that the roles ought to be reversed. He scowled slightly at the thought—though ultimately content with his own lot—and wondered who else could lift those crates with such ease, or how many men it would take to match the mul's endurance.

While the guard was lost in thought, Kalaar was just finishing his labor. Sweat beaded across his hairless body, yet he showed no signs of fatigue. A broad smile lit up his face at the sight of the completed work; the pleasure he took in carefully stacking each crate and arranging every sack in precise order gave Veloss the impression that the mul had made the task his own—as if he had chosen it himself, and his status as a slave were merely a trivial detail.

Suddenly, Kalaar straightened to his full height, ears pricked and brows furrowed. Veloss knew the signs; the mul's posture made him shudder instantly. Something was afoot.

"Did you hear that?" Kalaar approached quickly, muscles tense and face stern.

Relieved and casting aside his earlier thoughts, Veloss strained to listen as well. Life within the House was usually bustling, but at this midday hour—when the sun beat down most fiercely—the courtyard lay deserted; everyone sought the shade of the buildings, waiting for cooler times. He quickly scanned the key locations where his fellow guards ought to be. All were at their respective posts, and none appeared alarmed. So, no attack from the outside. Kalaar cut his observations short, grabbing his arm and pointing toward the main building.

"Shouting! Over there!"

Without waiting for a reply—let alone an order—he rushed toward the imposing red-brick edifice that gave the merchant house its name. Veloss had no choice but to follow, unsure of how to act in this bizarre situation where a slave was taking the initiative without waiting for commands.

Upon entering the Red House, Veloss finally heard the cries. He instantly recognized Magra's voice, unmistakable thanks to its unique timbre. The sound grew louder as he approached the office, its heavy door standing open.

He saw Kalaar, who was ahead of him, stop instinctively as he recalled the strict rules imposed on everyone joining the Red House. The prohibition was absolute, handed

down by Alek himself: no one was to enter the office without his consent. His hesitation, however, was short-lived, for the calls for help brooked no delay.

The interior was too dark for him to see clearly, yet the light spilling in from the great hall provided enough illumination for Veloss to make out a room in total disarray. A bench lay overturned before him; its cushions, scattered across the floor, mingled with the shards of vases that had shattered when the nearby table toppled over. He moved forward warily, searching for the combatants—for that was surely what they were. Veloss had witnessed enough wrestling matches to harbor no doubt about the nature of the struggle taking place nearby. He could hear the sounds of bodies rolling on the floor and crashing against the furniture. The opponents' ragged breathing and the gasps of their struggle grew louder as he advanced further into the room. When he finally located them, his eyes narrowed instinctively in a futile attempt to distinguish the two adversaries. As he did so, he tightened his grip on his spear—now held in both hands—pointing its tip toward the rivals.

"Help me! He's armed!" Magra shouted, breathless.

Just as Veloss hesitated over the best course of action, light suddenly flooded the study. Warm yet blinding, it washed over the room so intensely that, for a fleeting moment, everyone froze. The sun's power acted as a judgment to which all were compelled to submit. Silhouetted against the light like an executioner, Kalaar—who had pulled back the heavy curtains—was advancing rapidly to stop Magra's attacker. Yet, as he stepped in to intervene, he realized the fight had already ceased. At his feet, Magra—flat on his back, his face flushed from exertion—was pinning his opponent down from behind. With one hand, he pinned the man's right arm—which wielded a blood-stained dagger—while his other hand gripped the man's throat. Their legs were tangled in a clumsy grapple that a true fighter would have easily escaped, yet his opponent was no longer struggling. Kalaar recognized him instantly, and his heart raced, swept up in a mixture of surprise and emotion.

Ozak did not struggle. Tears streamed down his pain-ravaged face, and his open mouth could not give voice to the howl of sorrow consuming him. He reached out his free arm—not to break free from Magra's grip, but to grasp at something: an unattainable dream, a dream collapsing and lost forever. Kalaar turned his head toward whatever had so devastated his old companion and froze in turn. A few meters ahead lay Alek's lifeless body, sprawled face-down in a pool of blood. Beside him, slumped against the wall, was Dhalim—his second son—his throat slit.

"No! No!" Veloss shouted, his voice ragged with emotion. "Hold him back; I'm going to get Elya."

Kalaar snapped out of his stupor at the guard's orders and refocused on Ozak and Magra. The old man was still weeping bitterly, while Magra was catching his breath. The mul's keen eye—honed by countless life-or-death battles—quickly picked up details

that didn't fit the scene. Something was wrong. His gaze lingered on the hand holding the dagger, and he realized it remained in Ozak's grasp only because Magra was pressing Ozak's fingers around it—as if forcing him to hold the weapon, rather than trying to take it away. He also sensed the depth of Ozak's grief—the way he had crumbled at the death of his beloved master. A master so dear to his heart that he praised his virtues every day; so dear that he would tell anyone who cared to listen that, even if granted his freedom, he would never leave Alek's service. Finally, he caught a glimpse—however fleeting—of the faint smile on Magra's lips. It was a triumphant smile, one he had seen the man wear countless times during his petty, daily acts of spite.

Then Kalaar understood. He saw through the entire charade—the cunning, the treachery, and the horror brewing in the twisted mind of that vile bastard.

The two men studied each other for a long moment, and Magra clumsily tried to turn the situation to his advantage.

"Come on, slave! Disarm him so I can finally get up."

Magra's expression shifted drastically when he read the determination in the former gladiator's eyes. Fear contorted his face as the other man stepped closer.

* * * * *

"I was there when Kalaar killed Magra. I was there when the whip tore into his body, carving indelible furrows into his battered flesh. I was there when the citizens sought to make an example of him through a hasty trial and a hanging. And I was there, finally, when the House's own guards defended him against a furious mob. Some might deem this story utterly impossible—and anywhere else, I would have called you liars myself. But you were there too, and I can guarantee that what happens here cannot happen anywhere else."

Elya could not suppress the emotion making her voice tremble, yet she did not stop arguing her case. She had remained silent for too long; now, everyone needed to know the truth.

For nearly an hour, she had been striving to lift her companions' spirits, for they had all sunk into deep despondency following the events that had shaken House Red six months earlier. They all wondered whom they would serve now—and, above all, under what circumstances. Would they be resold like mere objects? How would they be treated elsewhere? What would their new masters, their new duties, and their new lives be like? They were all well aware that House Red was exceptional; and though none of

them could explain why Alek was so benevolent toward his slaves, they all bitterly mourned his loss.

Elya resumed her speech, growing more confident as her passion ignited, and gaining strength as she convinced herself. She wanted to believe it, too.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the purple hanging that concealed the small room's entrance stir. The timing was perfect—worthy of a bard's precise performance—and her final argument was destined to change the history of House Red forever.

She looked each of her friends in the eye, in turn: Ozak the Elder, whose face still bore the marks of the murder of Alek—a crime Magra had tried to pin on him; Déi, the youngest, whose habitual silence had deepened since the old master's death; and Kalaar, whose psychological wounds were far more apparent than the bruises on his body.

She played her trump card by pulling back the hanging. Veloss entered the room, supporting a man whose face was masked by a scarf and whose body appeared frail and unsteady. This entrance sparked both curiosity and suspicion among the group, as none of them was accustomed to welcoming newcomers into their tight-knit circle of slaves.

Sand, still warm from the desert, trickled onto the packed-earth floor as Dhalim removed his veil. His long black hair cascaded over his shoulders, but the deep gash across his throat was clearly visible to the stunned onlookers—a testament to Elya's healing prowess. All eyes turned to her, and she flashed them a wide smile.

"From this moment on, anything is possible, my friends."

For hours, the small group pieced the puzzle together, seeking to resolve inconsistencies and shed light on the dark omens that had befallen them. They finally understood why Kalaar and Ozak had been spared. House Red had an heir, and no citizen had the right to pass judgment on its slaves—or so Veloss had declared before the bloodthirsty crowd.

In a voice that was hoarse, slow, and pained, Alek's last son finally revealed his father's wishes—his mad plans for the future of House Red.

"Look at yourselves," he said. "What do you see?"

Stunned into silence, no one dared answer, fearing they might look foolish at such a solemn moment. Only Elya, confident in her knowledge, knew the answer but kept it to herself. Then Dhalim, with an unsteady hand, brushed his hair back behind his ears.

"Then look at us," he said.

Half-breeds. They were all the offspring of unions between different races. Kalaar, a mul, was born of a dwarf and a human, though he knew neither of them. All the others were the product of unions between humans and elves.

Dhalim recounted the brief romance his father had shared with an elf, years after his first wife's death. Deemed illegitimate, the child had been handed over to Alek by the elven tribe to be rid of the problem.

"We all share the same story, really," Elya added. "Rejected by one parent, disowned by the other—or by both. Sold into slavery just to get rid of us, or to make money and escape the burden."

"So what? What difference does that make?" Kalaar interjected cynically. "What do you want to become? Queen of the Bastards?" The word was out, piercing their hearts as sharply as an arrow.

"And why not?" she challenged him.

The task would be arduous, but Dhalim had sworn to see it through. He had promised his father, and he would not fail.

"You are all free," he called out. "It was His will, and I am putting it into effect right now. You may leave this instant—go wherever you please and do whatever you wish. But you can also take part in Alek's project—a dream he began building the day I was born, and one I am now carrying forward. House Red is merely a front for this project; we shall be its pillars."

~ Unwanted ~

Following Alek's death, Dhalim establishes a new way of operating for House Red, partnering with former half-breed slaves to manage both the House's commercial activities and its new goals. He spares no effort to scrupulously honor his father's final wishes. From now on, this group will form the foundation for all future decisions.

The last son of Alek.

Dhalim is the leader of House Red. He alone holds all the authority of this minor house. As the role demands a great deal of his time, he decided—in accordance with his father's wishes—to rely on a group to help him achieve his most secret goals: while officially managing House Red, he pulls the strings of an organization operating in the shadows—The Unwanted.

Passing the baton.

Alek (see Alek's story) was transformed when the elves brought him Dhalim—handed over like a common package one discards when it becomes a burden. He had never imagined that a child could suffer a lifetime of misery because of his own lapse in judgment, his dalliance, and his carelessness. Moved by his son's innocence and the horrific fate the boy might have suffered had he refused to take him in, Alek made it his mission to help as many children as possible facing the

same plight—particularly illegitimate half-breed children.

As Dhalim grew older, his perspective shifted, and his vision broadened to focus on half-breed slaves of all ages. Whenever funds allowed, Alek would go to great lengths to purchase individuals fitting that profile from the slavers. His ambition turned into an obsession, and he was intent on going much further when Magra put a stop to his momentum.

Today.

Today, Dhalim has taken over. He convenes the Unwanted whenever necessary—and solely to address matters concerning the group's goals, never issues related to the management of the trading house.

Some might view this attitude as a glaring lack of courage and a fear of embracing his new role as leader.

While it is not entirely incorrect—Dhalim has taken up the mantle without being truly prepared for it—the members he selected are deeply grateful to

him and fully committed to their new roles. Let us not forget that they have gone, overnight, from the status of slaves to that of free agents.

The members of the Unwanted.

Only the half-breed slaves of House Red belong to it (see their description below). Through this move, Alek sought to reverse roles by restoring power to those who had been enslaved—a fact that surprised Veloss as he watched over Kalaar in the courtyard.

Dhalim is also committed to keeping a close eye on everyone and tempering their impulses, ensuring that the oppressed do not themselves become oppressors. The group thus consists of: Dhalim, Ozak, Elya, Kalaar, and Déï.

Among the staff of the Red House, only a handful—selected based on Alek's judgment—were let in on the secret. They include : Veloss (guard), Geni (animal handler), Akmay (scout), Maluk (senior agent), and Tariq (quartermaster).

So, who's setting off on an adventure?

This is a crucial question that ties into the character tree system found in cer-

tain versions of Dark Sun, where a player must create a new character to replace one lost during an adventure.

The Unwanted are a small group concealed within a merchant house, making decisions based on jointly determined goals.

However, they realized they

needed to open up in order to expand their possibilities.

To this end, they selected a few reliable members from within the Red House; although these individuals do not attend meetings, they are fully part of the action group and thus—indirectly—part of the Unwanted as well.

Furthermore, the Unwanted can also hire mercenaries to carry out specific tasks, thereby avoiding the risk of blowing their cover.

Note: this is how the Unwanted group begins to take shape in Dhalim's young mind. Over time and through various adventures, things will inevitably change—and that is precisely what makes the game so compelling: Might other staff members catch on? How would the group react if new half-breeds joined the ranks? Would the group keep growing? If one of them died, would they be replaced? And by whom? Furthermore, what if a trustworthy individual wanted to join but wasn't a half-breed—what then? It is up to you, the Game Master, to shape the evolution of the Unwanted based on your specific group of players and your shared vision. Nothing is set in stone!

These same mercenaries could very well be hired on a regular or ad-hoc basis to meet specific needs. Another option would be to expand the circle of trusted individuals within House Red, though this must be handled with the utmost caution—for instance, by subjecting candidates to trust assessments before bringing them on board.



(Wouldn't that make for a great scenario?)

The merchant house can accommodate a wide variety of characters. Guards, scouts, beastmasters, psionics, merchants—certainly, any class can easily be represented, especially since new goals call for new skills, such as stealthy operatives or those versed in magical lore.

Depending on the ethical stance adopted by your group, it is up to you to create the appropriate characters...

However, be careful not to simply pull a rabbit out of a hat whenever the need arises. It is better to establish a coherent overall logic, rather than having a character miraculously appear just because a player wants to play one. That would create a sense of awkwardness and, above all, a real lack of consistency.

In this case, it is far preferable to have the players discover this new character and determine whether he can be integrated into House Red.

This could stem from a rumor about him that needs verifying, an encounter in a past or future adventure, or a newcomer to the village who asks a lot of questions about House Red...

It is important to bear in mind that it is up to the Unwanted to determine the most suitable characters for a mission. There is no point in sending three combatants to deal with a group of four if the goal is to remain discreet and, above all, avoid a fight.

Here are a few options based on the method chosen during the "interpreting the Unwanted meetings" stage (see the final chapter):

- ❖ In the first method, the Game Master can mandate the characters chosen for the mission and launch the adventure by distributing the appropriate profiles from their pool of characters.
- ❖ In the second method, the players decide who will step forward and, consequently, which characters they will portray. In this scenario, it is preferable—and tends to happen naturally—for players to adopt multiple characters whom they will play across various missions. This is arguably the most engaging approach for a campaign.



Note : It is worth noting—because it is truly important—that you should by no means simply pull a rabbit out of a hat every time. The trading house has limited resources, and constantly increasing the number of people encountered there would lack credibility. On the contrary, it is fascinating to see the real impact on daily life when players run into complications.

For instance, if the group's animal handler is injured during an adventure, do not hesitate to specify that the merchant house is losing money or that upcoming caravans cannot depart because he is the only one with the necessary skill to manage the animals and transport the goods.

This breathes life into the setting, creating a genuine community where everyone matters and has a role, and where the loss of a member carries real weight. It impacts both the life of the House and the characters' choices regarding adventures, at times limiting the pool of available characters.

A character cannot be in two places at once.

You should definitely make use of this mechanic. It is often very interesting to have one or more characters unavailable for an adventure—perhaps due to a trade mission, an injury, or illness.

It adds a bit of spice when the best fighter—the one you were counting on to lead the charge—is missing. The challenge becomes all the more rewarding and gives other characters a chance to shine, making them more interesting figures within the House.

Furthermore, in the context of a campaign, the Game Master is strongly encouraged to run several adventures simultaneously. If you are lucky enough to have multiple groups of players, that is ideal! Each group plays an adventure independently—limiting the characters available to the other group—and the resulting implications and consequences accumulate by the time they return.

If you play with the same group, track the time elapsed during the first adventure; then, at the next session, specify that the characters from the previous adventure are unavailable for a certain number of days. The players must then choose: either wait for them or set off without them...

The main characters aren't made of sugar.

It's hard to be credible when asking others to take risks while you yourself remain safely out of harm's way.

The half-bloods who founded the "Unwanted" all wish to play an active role in missions. They are, first and foremost, people of action; each wants to make a tangible contribution, and sitting around fretting while others do all the work goes against their very nature. However, they are well aware that

they cannot all take risks simultaneously, lest a single setback wipe out the entire group. It was therefore decided that at least two of them would always remain at the House Red, while the others would head out accompanied by trusted associates or specially hired mercenaries.



Goals.

The starting point of the Unwanted is the moment of realization Alek experienced when the elves dropped off his son, Dhalim, like mere merchandise. The circumstances of his romance with a young elf remain unclear, but because of Magra, Alek would take that secret to the grave. Nevertheless, everyone knew he was consumed by guilt for having "forgotten"—if only for a fleeting moment—his wife who had passed away shortly before.

Alek's initial goals.

His intentions at the time were simple and clear: nothing mattered to him but saving children in the same plight as his son. He considered all manner of solutions—buying them back, kidnapping them, attacking slave traders, and even setting up a front operation as a slave trader to retrieve them. This obsession consumed him, and he spent vast sums of money just to gather information.

Transformed by this new mindset, Alek all but neglected the management of his trading house; only the perseverance and dedication of his agents kept the business afloat.

He eventually took charge of his trade again, facing the hard truth: without money, he could achieve nothing.

As time passed, he contemplated increasingly unconventional methods, often putting his integrity to the test. It was during this period that he

considered surrounding himself with trusted individuals—a handful of reliable people with whom he could launch his operations.

As his son grew older, Alek's ideas evolved, drawing his attention to a new perspective: didn't adult half-blood slaves also deserve to be saved?

Dhalim's goals.

Father and son operated with this idea in mind—an idea, or rather an obsession, that had been passed down and which Dhalim was now striving to bring to fruition.

With the benefit of hindsight, Dhalim realized that while his father possessed plenty of ideas and ambition, he had never truly taken action—save for the recent acquisition of a handful of half-blood slaves.

Dhalim, however—driven by the fire of youth, or perhaps temerity, as some might call it—was prepared to take greater risks. In his view, simply buying slaves to set them free was not enough; it was too slow, too costly, and yielded too few results.

The goals are finally taking shape.

From now on, all actions undertaken by the Unwanted —as well as any new ideas—are subject to everyone's approval.

No avenue is overlooked in the pursuit of their goals; every option is explored, deliberated, discussed, and carefully weighed before any concrete action is taken.

The group is well aware that there is no room for error, as the entire enterprise would be at risk.

Main goal.

The primary goal is therefore the freedom of half-breed slaves, both adults and children.

This is an important point to discuss with your group, as your players will inevitably—and quickly—face dilemmas that clash with these childish initial notions. Swept up by their leader's youth and—doubtless—his ignorance of life outside his village, Dhalim drives his group toward a single-minded obsession, a childish idea, without considering other obvious factors: what about the other slaves? Don't the others—children and adults alike who aren't half-bloods—also deserve to regain their freedom?

It is important to remember that all members of the Unwanted are obsessed with their own fate and deeply self-absorbed, acting as if they were the only ones who had truly suffered. In their eyes, the world has made them suffer, and the world...

in question is represented by everything outside their small, very tight-knit circle.

The fear of the unknown—of a return to slavery or any other factor that might disrupt their new dreams—will be experienced as a catastrophe, an assault. Although they are aware that many dangers exist, they are somewhat like children who believe that everything will turn out fine as long as hope remains.

The adventures that follow will make them realize—whether gradually or suddenly—the true danger that Athas represents.

As the Game Master, it is up to you to create this atmosphere at every opportunity by sowing doubt about their convictions, pushing them to the brink of compromising their ethics—or even crossing that line—simply to survive.

Confront them with slaves who will follow them for their ideals, and others who will betray them at the slightest opportunity. Expose them to slaves who exploit fellow slaves. Finally, show them that it is not only slaves who suffer; free men struggle just as much! So, how will they act in these circumstances?

Their dreams need not be shattered, but their illusions must crumble in the face of the world around them.

Ethics.

This is a pivotal step that will truly define the group's direction and either propel or hinder its goals.

As the Game Master, you must absolutely take this into account and play on the characters' sensibilities, as this will fuel discussions among them and create unexpected situations.

The dilemma will often arise.

How can one avoid compromising oneself or violating one's principles and values while still achieving the goal?

Once again, nothing is set in stone. The ethical framework established at the start of the game will evolve over the course of the adventures, becoming more refined session by session, until everyone fully integrates it into their choices and actions.

How do you define it ?

In consultation with your players and while respecting the characters' perspectives (see their descriptions below), it is up to you to identify the key elements that will allow the heroes to distinguish themselves in the cruel world of Athas.

Here are the essential points to cover:

- ❖ **Define moral boundaries** by answering a few questions, such as:
 - How far are they willing to go to achieve their goals? (Lying, counterfeiting, fraud, corruption, extortion...)

- What is the line they absolutely refuse to cross? (theft, murder, dishonor...)
- Are they willing to let an opponent die? An enemy?
- ❖ To whom do these limits apply? Spellcasters? Templars? Slaves? Tribes? Merchant houses?
- ❖ What about the intelligent creatures they encounter—the undead, for example?
- ❖ Would they rather fail to achieve their goals than compromise their ethics, or will the situation be judged on a case-by-case basis?
- ❖ What is the penalty for breaking the rules? A second chance? Expulsion? Death to protect the group's secrets?

Finally.

Once these questions have been answered, it is important to record them so that everyone can consult them at their leisure. In the event of a transgression, let the characters sort it out among themselves to realign their shared values, but take care not to slow down the ongoing action; they can settle their differences later, at a more suitable time. If they fail to do so, Dhalim will make the final decision, after imposing a period of reflection on each of them.

Note: Ethics are essential to the Unwanted, as they form the basis of their relationship—the shared foundation that binds them together. Make use of this aspect, but do not abuse it, or you risk disrupting the group dynamic.

Keep the secret ?

Here is a fascinating topic to explore! Right from the start of their venture, the Unwantededs make decisions on numerous issues, each arguing based on their own experiences and their unique view of the world. Since opinions sometimes diverge, they had to lay the groundwork for a lasting relationship by agreeing on their goals and the means to achieve them. The ethical framework they established provided this foundation, yet one important question remains: should they keep the secret or not?

Here is a new topic for discussion with your players.

But? What secret are we talking about ?

For there are obviously several:

- ❖ Should the slaves retain their role?
- ❖ Should the Unwantededs group make its presence known within House Red?
- ❖ Should the Unwantededs display their identity proudly?
- ❖ Should slaves liberated later be informed without running the risk of betrayal?
- ❖ Should the colors of House Red be worn proudly? Should a specific symbol be displayed?

These are just a few ways to explore, but they will prove decisive for the adventures to come.

Slave you are, slave you will remain.

Regarding the role the Unwantededs are to play, note that their adventures begin with a deliberate choice: they decide to openly assume the role of slaves. Indeed, acting on Ozak's advice, they determined that playing this part would allow them to remain invisible to the rest of the world. After all, isn't it easier for a slave to snoop around unseen while the master draws everyone's attention? Isn't it easier to gather secrets from other slaves in a noble or merchant household? Isn't it easier to go unnoticed—or to linger where one shouldn't be—when one is a slave?

The Unwantededs will play the role of the invisible, the forgotten, and the scorned—for as long as it serves their interests.

It was no easy task to get the group to accept this idea, but Ozak is respected for his wisdom and his insights; he succeeded in making his point of view heard, and everyone rallied behind it.

Everyone knows ?

It is up to you to determine whether the entire House Red is aware of the group's status or if only a handful of people know. In the adventures that follow, only Veloss, Geni, Akmay, Maluk, and Tariq are privy to the situation. These individuals had already earned Alek's trust, and Dhalim decided to

defer to his father's judgment. Consequently, the group members go about their business as usual, fulfilling their respective roles within the House. Moreover, these duties suit them perfectly, and—dating back to Alek's time—each of them has always taken their work very seriously. Naturally, the close rapport they share with trusted staff members makes their lives significantly easier.

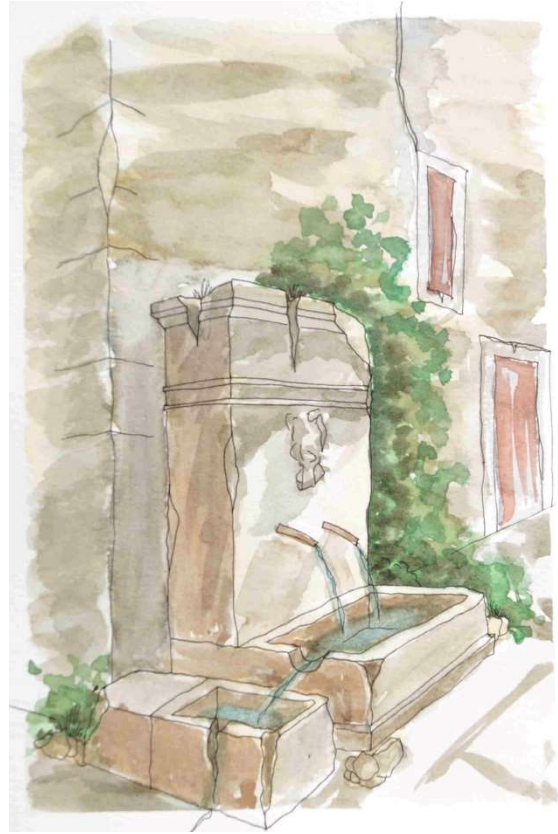
Unveil.

Like the wizards of the Veiled Alliance, the Unwanted are well aware that keeping their identities and locations secret is essential to their survival. For the time being, the decision has been made to wear no symbols, no marks—nothing that might identify them as an organization. You are, of course, free to deviate from this initial rule later on...

And what if the veil falls ?

And yes, what if the secret were to be discovered? What if one of them were to get arrested? What if the mask slipped?

Isn't that an adventure in itself?



Interpretation of the Unwanted meetings.

When the need arises, Dhalim summons all the Unwanted to outline new objectives, address specific issues, or simply seek their input on a matter weighing on his mind.

The aim of this step is to allow the Game Master to introduce the various adventures they have planned, in consultation with the players. Two options are offered for this purpose:

- ❖ The GM skips this interpretation step and presents the adventures to the players by outlining the final decisions made by the Unwanted.
- ❖ The players interpret the meeting so that they can decide on priorities—and thus future adventures—themselves.

1st option : Interpretation by the Game Master.

This interesting option allows you to embark on an adventure quickly, bypassing the standard "you meet an NPC who offers you a job" or "a friend asks for your help" scenario. It greatly assists the Game Master in launching the adventure without having to improvise the setup or the usual details associated with the start of a quest:

Who is contacting you? Why them? How can you trust them? What is the pay? ...

It follows the somewhat traditional approach where the Game Master develops the scenarios and steers the players—or imposes an adventure upon them. In either case, the players do not necessarily have a say and are essentially subject to the story as the Game Master has planned it. The difference here is that, by subscribing to the principles of House Red, the characters commit to honoring the will of the Unwanted.

In this method, they simply carry out decisions made by the House leadership, in line with established ethics and for the good of the community. Here, the characters act more as operatives than as fully invested members.

Once the adventure concludes, the return to House Red and the submission of their mission report provide an easy springboard for a follow-up, complications, or consequences. It is also ideal for launching standalone adventures—simple one-shots—without the need for a full campaign.

The stage is set, and the game master can launch the adventure by immediately laying out what has been planned: who is setting off, on what mission, with what resources, and what the goals will be.

2nd option : Interpretation by the players.

This is arguably the best option for those who enjoy roleplaying. Depending on your group, it is up to you to decide how much time to dedicate to setting it up—usually between half an hour and an hour, depending on digressions and roleplay.

This can be done right at the start of a scenario or, conversely, at the end of an adventure to allow the GM to plan the next session.

Here, the players take on the roles of the individual members—but only for the duration of the deliberation.

It is highly recommended that the game master also play one of the characters present in order to participate in the discussion and—why not—steer it according to their plans.

It is worth noting that, in this scenario, the players will be particularly attentive to the role played by the game master, as they know the character possesses superior (secret) knowledge and that their words will often carry significant weight.

Use the character sheets (below), which provide details on each individual's personality. Players can draw inspiration from them while roleplaying during meetings and even make the characters their own over the course of the sessions, effectively adopting a second persona they can grow attached to.

The real advantage of this approach is that players feel far more invested in the upcoming adventures, as they are the ones deciding to carry out the mission.

During this phase, there is no need to draw up a comprehensive agenda of topics if the main goal is to present a specific scenario. In this instance, discussing rising commodity prices or the logistics of daily life is unnecessary. Instead, assume the meeting is already underway and that the key topic—determined by the Game Master based on the chosen scenario—is addressed immediately.

Other groups of players will find the experience highly engaging and may even insist on increasing the impact of their decisions on House Red. It is up to you to decide what you wish to offer the players, based on your vision of the game.

In the context of a campaign, the management of resources and day-to-day challenges can easily spark thrilling debates during sessions.

Note, however, that this option—exciting as it may be—requires the Game Master to have a wide range of scenarios and plot twists ready to offer the players. There is no point in frustrating them by denying them a direction they spent time choosing...

To go further.

The next steps will take us toward horizons that are not yet mapped out but offer promising prospects. Indeed, if everything goes according to Plan A, we can already envision:

- ❖ How to approach the group's evolution?
- ❖ How the recruitment of newcomers will unfold?
- ❖ Whether a hierarchy—such as a steering committee—should be established?

and, looking even further ahead...

Could we imagine a group of Unwanted in each city-state or at strategic locations throughout Athas?

(Dhalim is already thinking about it...)

