

## Chapter 3: आरभते-यम (ārabhate-yama) (The Journey Begins)

### Travel

The PCs must begin their journey. They have a few options, based on what they can find. There is a small town west of them that is under the control of Great Aryah Paramjit called Khanapur. In Khanapur, they have a few options for travel west.

#### Option One: By Caravan

There is a caravan heading west through the mountains, making the risky late autumn journey. They are carrying some very valuable woods aromatic, raw, worked, et cetera. Hidden in some of those piles of wood is gunpowder, however, as the Dar-Purámi mountain guide (an Osprey named Latdho) is a rebel in Hanuman's army. The Caravan is set to depart in three or four days.

The Caravan consists of:

**Miss Dinyá**, a Housecat member of the Trade Caste, and a native of Kütta. She is a slight vajrah with sort fur patterned in tabby stripes of a light brown color, edging into red. She is the leader of the expedition, and is edgy about attempting the journey, but they must go for financial reasons. She is incapable of defending herself, and relies on the mercenaries.

**“Lord” Bhekan**, a monitor lizard who is dressed in a manner that would be uncomfortably warm even for fall. His claims to being Sunborn are dubious, but he appears to be an incredibly dangerous jenah. He is armed with a wickedly curved scimitar and two visible pistols. He is captain of the guard for the caravan. His mercenary warriors are loyal to him and consist of a motley band of Sarpah Paksin and Vajrah.

**Latdho**, the guide, is an Osprey of Low Caste. He is marked typically for his race with a white face and chest and dark wings and back. He has a dark stripe running from between his eyes and all the way around his head. His fingers and toes are a grayish-blue. He only carries a small knife. Only he and a few of the porters know about the huge quantities of gunpowder being smuggled.

**Úrho** is a fat Emperor Penguin who is anxious to get home to his wife and children. He is the broker for a trading house in Dar-Purám, and is a constantly whining pessimist.

**Others:** The Caravan has about a dozen drovers, porters and workers. They tend to the three Büthán and help the mercenaries with their Chinti. There are mostly dogs, cats, and a couple of shrews who are brothers and speak a language no one else understands.

**The Mercenaries** are another dozen in number, divided into three squads of four. The first squad is led by Srsasan, a Cottonmouth, and consists of a leopard, a snapping turtle, and a one eyed sparrow. The second squad is led by Lavsaya, a Paint Horse, and consists of a rhino, a crocodile, and a small bat who dresses very strangely and has a strange accent. The third squad is led by Teennim the Mouse and consists of a wolverine, a macaw, and an obviously insane

hyena. The fourth and most important squad is led by “lord” Bhekan himself, and consists of a lion, a painted turtle, and a falcon.

### **Option Two: By Skyship**

There is a Skyship leaving at dawn, and it will not wait for anything. It is bound for Nivant, its home port. It is hauling mostly cloth and raw ores.

The Skyship consists of:

**Captain Róshah**, a crow of the High Caste. He carries a heavy looking short sword and a pistol. He is a friendly janah, but a tad taciturn and gruff. He is at his ease with other Highborn janah, since he deals mostly with Trade and Low Caste folks.

**Nala**, the first mate, is a sandy colored flying squirrel. She is the cousin of a minor noble, and covets the ship. She is obedient only to the Itter, and rarely the spirit. She and the Captain do not get along very well, but he can’t discharge her for political reasons: and they both know this.

**Akyétabu**, an older Monkey rigger, is the father-in-law of Hanuman. He is the leader of the mutinous half of the crew, and plans on hijacking the ship before it reaches Nivant, so he can land it as a prize for the rebellion.

**Mihkár**, the ship’s carpenter, is likewise involved in the mutiny. He is a dark brown hog, with very clean tusks. He has smuggled a carton of crystals which will slow the decent of any non-flier who must abandon ship. He works closely with Chankunia squirrel crewmember and seamstress, to construct small belts for the crystals.

**Sínadim**, the blue heron, is the merchant broker for the House of Olámuk (the owners of the ship). He knows nothing of the rebellion, but suspects some of the crew of being less than loyal. He is a jerk who hates any sort of disorder, and is fussily precise in the way he talks and comports himself.

**The Loyal Crew** consists of eight janah: a sea otter, a kestrel, a turtle, a squirrel, a fox, and two seagulls.

**The Mutineers** consist of ten janah: three monkeys, a gibbon, a rat, two cats, a tiger, and two cardinals. The cardinals are husband and wife.

### **The Night before they leave...**

The PCs are either in a town or camping. If they are camping, they are attacked in the night by the demon thing. If they are in an inn or hotel or a friend’s house or whatever, the demon thing also attacks them, but has to force its way in...

**Stuff to Remember:** If the PCs do not go by skyship, they find the wreckage of it later in their journey somewhere on the road to the Isle of the Asuras.