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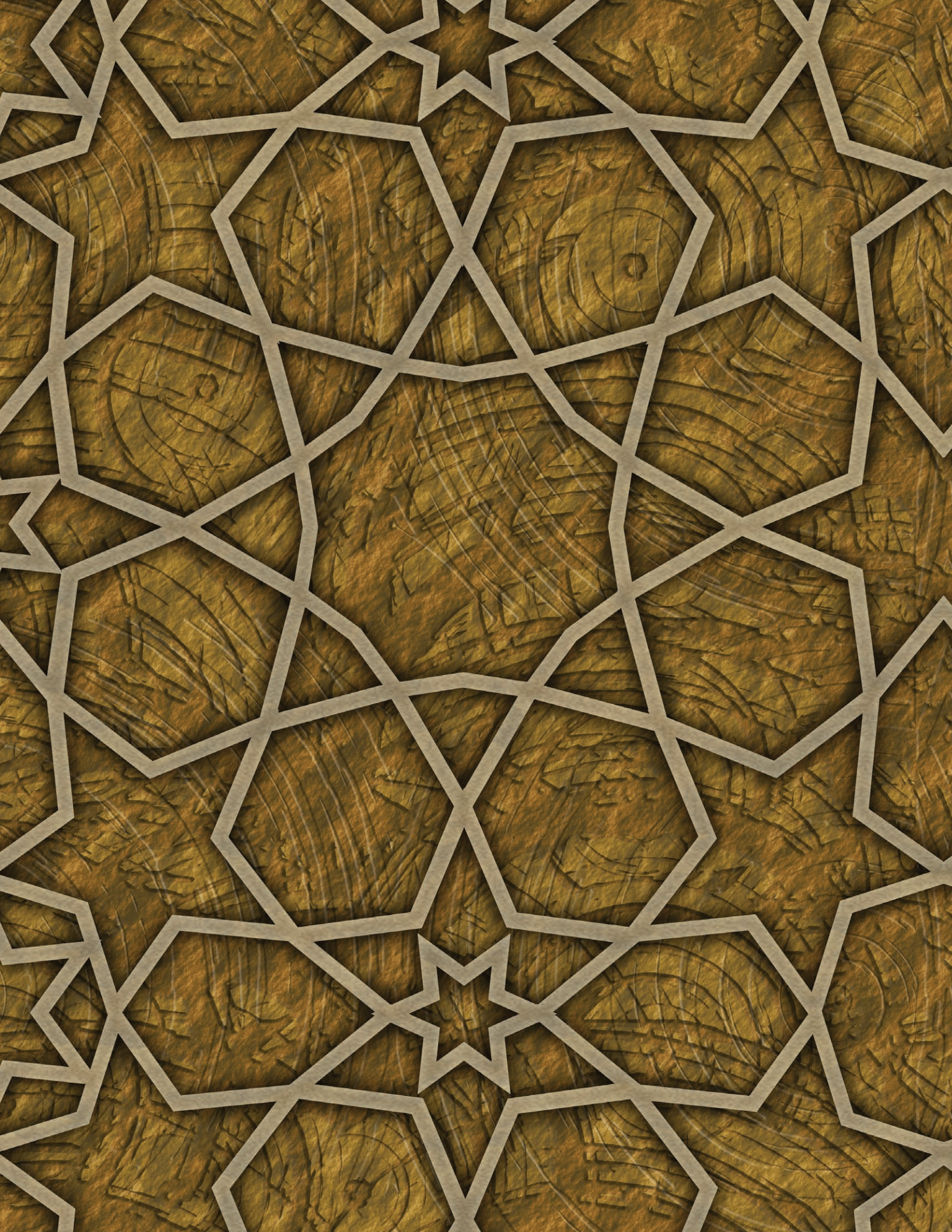
HELLFROST LAND OF FIRE

Tales from the Sands



Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams







Tales from the Sands

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www.tripleacegames.com

ISBN: 978-1-908237-26-2

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

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NF2

THE GOLDEN QUEEN



NF2: The Golden Queen is designed for a group of four Novice characters with 5 to 10 Experience Points. If you're looking to start play immediately, there are eight pregenerated characters in the *Land of Fire* free download section on the Triple Ace Games' website. All the players need do is purchase their gear.

The encounters are already designed to automatically scale up or down based on the party's size. For parties of higher Rank, the GM should increase the number of opponents accordingly. Add one Extra swarm or two Extras of other types to each encounter for each Rank the party is above Novice. For instance, if a party of four Seasoned adventurers encounters zombies numbering one per hero, a party of four characters must fight a total of six zombies—one for each hero, plus an additional two because the party is Seasoned.

Additionally, it is impossible to balance encounters in a published scenario to ensure every possible party configuration has a fair chance of success. Some parties will bristle with potent spellcasters and powerful warriors that can wade through scores of foes, others will comprise cunning rogues and thoughtful sages better suited to investigation and problem-solving. Most will likely fill a middle ground, and this is the option we have taken when writing the scenario. If after reading the adventure the GM decides his individual party will find the encounters too easy or too tough, he should adjust the opposition to provide a more suitable challenge.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES

For the purposes of writing, the adventure needed to be set somewhere. We have chosen the Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh. The characters begin in a town halfway between Hajjad, City of the Gods, and Marresh, City of a Thousand Gates. This is not a strict requirement, though, and the adventure can be moved to any of the great realms simply by changing the name of the nearest city and location of the temple the heroes seek.

The season has not been specified, allowing the GM to set it any time he wishes. Remember to pay attention to the ambient temperature whenever the heroes are outside a settlement. Inside one, it is assumed they are able to drink the required amount of water to stave off heat stroke and dehydration.

Background Notes

Before the jinn invasion, perhaps even before Hekata rose to dominate the northern desert, the cult of Melissah, minor goddess of bees, constructed a mighty temple. At its heart stood a golden statue of the bee deity. Every thousand years, or so the legends go, a single drop of royal jelly would drip from the statue's mouth. Many wondrous powers were attributed to this divine substance, yet the stories are now long forgotten save to a few scholars, and they take none of them seriously. The location of the temple was lost during the jinn conquest, and its existence is known only in obscure legends.

Queen Apithera, a priestess of Melissah (queen is the title wielded by her priests, and does not indicate royal birth), firmly believes the temple still exists. More importantly, she believes in the existence of the royal jelly.

Though loyal to her deity, Apithera would be considered insane by most people. She sees the civilizations that sprang up after the liberation from the jinn as fractured and chaotic. Her goal is to transform the world of mortals into a gigantic replica of a bee hive. Most of the denizens would become mindless drones, while those of martial prowess would serve as warriors. Naturally, she would be the queen, the absolute ruler of an ordered, cooperative, and absolutely loyal society.

Through the consumption of vast quantities of mundane royal jelly coupled with ancient and forbidden miracles long thought lost, she has begun to transform her body into something more (or perhaps less) than

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NOTE TO GMS

Most swarms in *Hellfrost* are Wild Cards, rather than Extras. Except where clearly noted in the text, whether the swarms encountered in this scenario are Wild Cards or Extras lies solely with the GM, who should base his decision on the abilities of the characters. Parties with area effect offensive spells (such as *burst*), high Toughness, and/or plentiful access to *healing* spells should face Wild Card swarms to make the encounter a suitable challenge, while those without should be set against Extra swarms.

human. She now rules a cult comprising humans, orcs, and mellified zombies obedient to her every whim.

Apithera has already discovered the location of the temple. Unfortunately, she has been unable to break through the warding placed on the inner sanctum when the temple was abandoned almost a millennia ago. In an effort to find the key to disable the ward, her agents have scoured Al-Shirkuh. After long years, they are close to their goal. All that stands between the deranged priestess and success is a small band of aspiring heroes who have unknowingly started to walk the same road.

Player's Introduction

Read or paraphrase the following text to the players.

For the last few weeks you have been gainfully employed by Karam ibn Ramzi, a respected sage. The work has been far from taxing. Much of it has involved carrying letters to other people, some rather unsavory, and returning letters or cryptic phrases to your patron. He has not revealed the purposes of his research to you.

At last it seems your legwork has paid off for Karam. After a three days march into the burning desert, you met with a lone Bedu. After you handed over a pouch containing small gems, he gave you a strange box to return to your patron. Your instructions from Karam were clear—return whatever the Bedu gave you unopened to the sage with all haste.

The walk back to town was uneventful, save for a small sandstorm that delayed you by a day. After enjoying a welcomed light meal and refreshing your waterskins at the town fountain, you are now ready to make your mid-morning appointment with Karam. All being well, he will also pay you the 100 dinars apiece he owes you for delivering the casket intact.

Each hero has an additional 50 dinars (25 dinars for any hero with the Poverty Hindrance). This represents wages they have managed to save while working for Karam. The heroes may spend the money before the adventure proper begins if they so desire—they have had many opportunities leading up to this point.

The box they carry is 8" wide, 4" deep, and the same high. It has a rounded top, giving it the general appearance of a small casket. The box is made of hard beeswax and has no obvious lid or other means of egress. The front is inscribed with a symbol—a bee. Followers of Ashtart may make a Common Knowledge roll at +2 to decipher its meaning. Devoted heroes and characters who honor other gods must use an unmodified Knowledge (Religion). Success reveals the symbol is that of Melissah, an aspect of Ashtart and minor deity of bees.

It is assumed the characters have not opened the box. Doing so without breaking it beyond repair requires a Lockpicking roll at –2. Should they undertake this action, the contents are described in **The Contents Revealed** (p. 4). Disobeying their patron's instructions costs the character 3 Glory points.

When you're ready, proceed to the next section.

The House of Karam

Karam does not answer the door, nor respond to any hails from the adventurers. The characters know he has no permanent servants—a cleaner comes once a week to dust his collection of knickknacks and small library, and he prefers to cook his own meals.

The front door is locked. Characters native to a city or town know this is unusual if the owner is at home—and Karam has always seen the heroes at this time of day or in the early evening without fail.

Checking the exterior reveals all the window shutters are closed and secured save for one on the upper floor. The heroes know from having visited the house several times that Karam's study takes up the entire top story. Again, this is rather odd—shutters are opened as early as convenient to allow the cool morning breeze to blow through the house. Faint yellow handprints can be seen up the wall, starting a few feet off the ground and ending just below the open window. Investigation reveals the prints were made by a sticky substance. A lick or smell, coupled with a successful Notice roll (the substance has dried out in the morning heat), reveals it is honey.

Entry to the house can be gained by forcing open the front door (Toughness 8), picking the lock (Lockpicking roll), or scaling the wall and entering via the open shutter (Climbing at –2). Karam's house, like most belonging to moderately wealthy citizens, is surrounded by a courtyard. Unless the heroes make a lot of noise that seems out of place to the neighbors, no one comes to investigate their intrusion.

Should the a watch patrol be summoned, the guards arrive a few minutes later. They question the heroes for a few minutes. Unless a character makes a complete

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mess of this, they quickly satisfied they are legitimate employees. Since no obvious crime has yet been committed, they soon leave. The GM will have to handle any unexpected situations, such as the heroes deciding to attack the watch. Glory penalties should be applied for assaulting the guard without provocation.

EMPLOYMENT TERMINATED

The house is quiet. Nothing seems out of place until the heroes enter their patron's study. Give the players Map #1 at this time.

The elderly figure of Karam ibn Ramzi is seated in his favorite chair. His eyes are wide open, his tongue hangs from the corner of his mouth, and his lips are blue. It is fairly obvious he is dead.

The following clues can be found after a successful Notice roll (one per clue). The characters can keep rolling until they are convinced there is nothing of interest left to find. The clues are *automatically* discovered by characters performing an appropriate action (such as checking inside the sage's mouth).

If you're running this adventure for party with access to *gravespeak*, the heroes might try to converse with Karam. The sage recalls nothing of his attacker, save for a sudden iron grip around his throat and the smell of honey. Should the heroes inquire as to the nature of his research, the optional scene below occurs immediately (even if you weren't planning on using it) and before Karam can answer. No further contact can be made with the sage's spirit under any circumstances.

The Sage's Corpse

- * The sage's throat displays the tell-tale bruises of strangulation. The marks indicate his killer attacked him from behind. Karam's neck is smeared with a thick, golden substance, and his nose is blocked with the same goo. It is easily discerned as honey.

- * Lodged at the back of the sage's mouth is the tip of an index finger. It has been bitten off. The flesh is discolored, having a yellow hue, and is unusually firm. There is no indication the wound bled. Should any character be so gross as to lick it (-2 Glory), the finger tastes of honey. Sniffing it requires a Notice roll at -2 to detect a faint trace of honey.

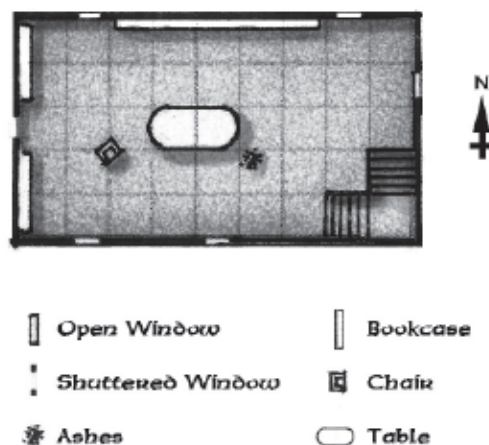
- * The corpse's temperature is that of the air inside the house, indicating his death occurred at least several hours ago, and probably sometime during the night.

The Ashes

- * The ashes are cold. A pool of hardened wax lies at the center of the remains. A successful Common Knowledge roll indicates at least a dozen scrolls were burned here. Among the ashes is a scrap that survived the flames. It is part of a letter written in Holy Tongue, but all that remains is the name of a person—Saad ibn Nabighah—and that of the nearest city.

Heroes native to the nearest great city can make a Common Knowledge roll at -2. Other heroes must make a Knowledge (Area: appropriate city) roll. On a success, the

Map 1: Karam's Study



hero recalls a relative going to see an eccentric astrologer by that name. Otherwise, the heroes will need to inquire in the city to learn something about the individual. When they are ready to depart, proceed to **The Big City**.

The Bookshelves

Karam kept scrolls and a few manuscripts covering a wide range of subjects. The bookshelf in the northwest corner of the room houses his collection of religious works. Gaps in the collection clearly indicate several scrolls are missing. An Investigation roll reveals there is material on every deity save one—Ashtart.

WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

Karam had stumbled across a reference to the lost temple of Melissah and had grown curious. His investigations were not subtle, and had not gone unnoticed by Apithera's agents. Having learned the heroes had gone into the desert to collect a box, Apithera became convinced Karam had found the key she sought. Her plan was to murder Karam, destroy all evidence of his search to prevent others following the trail, and steal the key.

The previous night, after Karam had locked up his house for the night, he retired to his study. As always, he left a single shutter open for the cool breeze. A melified zombie climbed up the walls and strangled the sage, exuding honey from its corpse so that its grip would be virtually unbreakable by the frail scholar. The creature, guided by Apithera from afar, then destroyed any evidence it could find concerning the temple. Unfortunately, the sandstorm that delayed the heroes' return meant she acted too soon—Karam did not have the key.

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CITY ETIQUETTE

The player characters may be aspiring heroes, or even famous ones, but they are not exempt from the laws of the land or social etiquette. Most cities don't tax the wearing of armor or carrying of weapons, but that doesn't mean it is socially acceptable to parade around the streets like you're about to match off to war.

As a general rule, wearing armor in any settlement not under attack (or imminent threat) attracts attention and raises suspicions. Wearing armor in public, unless one has official paperwork allowing him to do so, gives a character a Charisma penalty equal to the highest protection rating.

Anyone may carry a dagger in public—daggers are universal tools, and often used for eating. This does not apply to snaketooth daggers, which are a "clear sign" the owner is an assassin. Other weapons should be sheathed, encased in a leather covering (such as with axes, spears, and polearms), or otherwise set to prevent them being used in a hurry. Readying a weapon for use counts as an action, though Quick Draw can offset this.

Walking around with a drawn or unguarded weapon is a surefire way of attracting the city watch. Questions will be asked, time will be wasted, and the heroes are likely to receive an on-the-spot fine (1d20 dinars) and a dressing-down. Sassing the watch or threatening them is going to lead to arrests, time in jail, and possibly more serious charges. Even if the watch don't respond, walking around with a drawn weapon (except a dagger) earns a further -2 Charisma penalty—people get nervous around things designed to kill.

Wearing armor and carrying weapons to social engagements is a definite cause for Glory loss (for every single offense) unless a character has been given express permission to do so. Even daggers should be sheathed out of politeness.

OPTIONAL SCENE

Except for one specific circumstance detailed above, this part of the adventure includes no combat. It serves to help set the scene and provide a few clues as to the dangers that lie ahead. For groups that thrive on combat, a violent encounter can easily be added. It too serves to reveal something of the perils ahead. If you are going to run this scene, do so while the characters are scouring the study for clues.

Any character with Danger Sense can make a Notice roll at -2. With success, he can alert his comrades that something is wrong, giving them a +2 bonus to the next roll. On a failure, he rolls below as normal.

Have each character make a Notice roll. With success, they detect the flesh of Karam's corpse begin to writhe

an instant before a swarm of bees streams forth from his mouth and nose. Deal successful heroes an action card as normal. Those who failed the roll are Surprised. The bees begin on Hold.

Terrain: The squares containing the chair and table can be traversed as difficult ground.

The bookshelves are not particularly heavy (or stable) and can be toppled with a successful Strength roll. They fall into the square they occupy, and the squares in front of that. Anything underneath takes 2d6 damage, and the squares become difficult ground. Any player characters under the bookshelves are automatically knocked prone and pinned until they make an Agility or Strength roll at -2 as an action to escape. Another character can free a trapped comrade by making a Strength roll as an action—the bookshelves do not have to be lifted very high for the trapped hero to wiggle free.

Monsters: This encounter involves just a single swarm of very angry bees. Parties with access to area effect spells will have an easy time. Others will not be so lucky. Place the center of a Small Burst Template over Karam's corpse.

* **Bee swarm (1):** See p. 30. The swarm fills a Small Burst Template and has Toughness 5.

PLUNDER?

Characters who want to plunder the sage's house for valuables can sell his knickknacks, books, and other assorted belongings for 2,000 dinars by making a successful Streetwise roll after 8 hours in the markets, or 3,000 with a raise. This blatantly criminal act causes them to lose 10 Glory. There may be further repercussions when Karam's heirs discover the theft.

Each character is owed 100 dinars by Karam for delivering the casket, however. Taking this much and no more warrants no Glory loss as it is a debt settled.

THE CONTENTS REVEALED

With their patron dead and a murder to solve, the characters may decide the contents of the box will provide a useful clue. Opening the casket without damaging it beyond repair requires a Lockpicking roll at -2. Doing so is no longer a breach of trust, and doing so may enable the heroes to bring Karam's murderer to justice.

Whenever the box is first opened, give the players the contents of Handout #1. Though the heroes do not yet know it, they now possess the keys to open the barriers in the lost temple of Melissah.

Each figure is a bee, made of solid gold with slivers of ruby inlay for its wings. Each set of wings is engraved with a pair of letters. The letters are magical—anyone viewing them sees them in his native alphabet.

Note: It probably won't take the players long to realize that four of the bees spell out the name Melissah, and deduce that these are the most important bees. The others are worth 25 dinars apiece should they think of selling them. Don't panic if they do! The other bees gain

magical powers in the temple, and all the heroes do by selling them is rid themselves of useful tools later.

The GM should make a secret note of who is carrying the golden bees. Don't attract too much attention to this by openly asking the players—just listen to their conversation. Unless they specifically state who is carrying them, or openly divide them among their number, assume the hero who opened the casket has all of them on his person. This will be important later.

❖ The Big City ❖

The journey to the home of Saad ibn Nabighah is not part of the adventure. The GM should feel free to add an encounter or two if he wishes. Just remember the heroes are in civilized and well-traveled lands, and are walking along a major trade road—they might encounter desperate bandits hoping to prey on a small caravan, but a rampaging monster is most unlikely.

There are two three major scripted encounters in the city, but the city itself is just a backdrop. GMs should read the relevant entry from *Land of Fire* to get a feel for the chosen city, but needn't worry about specific details. For ease, assume that any items the heroes might wish to purchase are available for sale somewhere in the city.

FINDING SAAD

Finding the house of Saad ibn Nabighah requires a successful Streetwise roll. One roll may be made each hour, though heroes may Cooperate. If asked, whoever gives them directions reveals that Saad is an astrologer and wise man, whose talents are much sought by the inhabitants of his neighborhood. On a raise, the characters learn he has a sweet tooth. Should they think to buy the sage a gift, they can pick up all manner of sweet treats from a shop or stall for a few dinars.

Saad lives in a poor part of the city, though the area is far from being a slum. His house is modestly sized and appointed, and home to himself and one servant, Ali, a young urchin the mystic adopted many years ago. Neither has any stats—Saad is not long for this world, and Ali immediately flees if violence occurs.

GAINING AN AUDIENCE

Read or paraphrase the following when the heroes knock at the sage's door.

The door creaks open after a few moments to reveal a scruffy haired boy of no more than ten summers. His cheeks seem strangely bulged. He eyes you up and down before politely inquiring as to what you want. As he speaks, a tell-tale dribble of date juice leaks from the corner of his mouth. With a furtive glance over his shoulder, he wipes the juice away with his sleeve.

RANDOM CITY ENCOUNTERS

The chosen city may be a backdrop, but the heroes do not have the streets to themselves. Tens, if not hundreds of thousands of people, live behind the walls. The GM should add a few random encounters to help breathe life into the city. Roll a d10 whenever you feel is appropriate.

1) A one-armed beggar sits on the edge of the street, an empty copper bowl in front of him. Both faiths promote charity as a good act. The first person (if any) to deposit a dinar into his pot is rewarded with a stream of thanks. His generosity earns him a +1 Glory. Subsequent encounters with beggars do not grant this bonus.

2) An attractive female cleric of Tamarni tries to lure the heroes to her temple with promises they can engage in all manner of pleasures.

3) A camel panics and charges off through the streets, causing citizens to flee for their lives. A small child, shocked into inaction, is directly in its path. Stopping the camel can be run as a chase, or handled with a single roll (such as Persuasion to calm it down, Ride to mount it and bring it under control, or casting *beast friend*). The grateful owner rewards a successful hero with 1d6 dinars.

4) An urchin tries to cut the purse of a random hero. Have the chosen victim make a Notice roll opposed by a d8. With success, the urchin calls off the attempt. On a failure, the hero loses 1d10 dinars or a small item, such as a dagger.

5) A patrol of one experienced watch (sergeant) and five typical watch approach the party. They impose fines for any breach of weapon etiquette (see sidebar on page 4) and give them a caution if they are wearing armor.

6) A servant is being whipped by her cruel master. The heroes can end the beating with Intimidation or Persuasion, as they see fit. Violence will result in the city watch being summoned.

7) A storyteller (see *Land of Fire*, p. 162) challenges passersby to a storytelling contest, to be judged by the audience. This uses opposed Knowledge (Folklore) rolls. The loser (or losers, if more than one hero wishes to participate) pays the winner 10 dinars.

8) A young boy is struggling to carry a heavy load of laundry back to his mother's house. He offers no reward if assisted, but he knows the city very well and can point the heroes to any location or establishment they might be seeking.

9) A stranger mistakes a randomly chosen character for someone else. He may think the hero is an old friend, a debtor, an escaped criminal, or something else of the GM's devising.

10) A hero sees someone drop a purse in the street. Inside are coins amounting to 20 dinars. The character can keep the lost money (nothing happens) or give it back to the owner (+1 Glory).

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Asking to see Saad is enough to gain the characters entry. Ali offers to take any weapons (except daggers) and armor, stacking them in a corner by the door. Failure to disarm and remove armor incurs a loss of 5 Glory. Whether or not they comply, Ali then leads the party upstairs. If questioned about Saad, the young servant replies only that his master is a wise man who sees many things in the stars. Ali has never heard the name Karam ibn Ramzi before.

Pushing aside a heavy curtain, Ali gestures you into a gloomy room. Despite the heat, the windows are shuttered, illumination provided by small oil lamps hanging from the ceiling.

"Master," Ali says, "you have customers. From the looks of them they are mighty heroes in search of wisdom."

A faint rattle, a laugh perhaps, echoes through the room. "I have told you before about making assumptions," a croaking voice replies. "The stars will reveal if heroes or fools present themselves. Show them in, and then go prepare some refreshment for my guests." Ali gestures you inside, then scurries away down the stairs.



MEETING SAAD

Saad sits in the center of the room, smoking a pipe. Even in the gloom it is obvious he is elderly by any standards. His hair and beard are gray with age, his skin is heavily wrinkled, and his eyes betray a weariness of the world not found in youth.

With a slight gesture he motions for the party to sit on the cushions arranged in front of him. He accepts any gifts of sweets or cakes with a wide, toothless smile, and offers to produce a horoscope for the party (not individual characters) as a reciprocal gift.

He does so only if every member of the party agrees—the horoscope will reveal nothing otherwise. Should they all agree, Saad gathers up charts from a nearby table, asks a few questions (such as where the characters were born and their faith), and begins drawing up the horoscope. After a few minutes, he is done.

Draw a card from the action deck. A red card or Joker indicates fortune smiles on the characters. Each hero immediately gains one benny. This remains until used or the adventure ends, whichever comes first. A black card indicates bad luck will plague the heroes in their current endeavor. They immediately lose one benny. Characters with no bennies forfeit the next one they would earn this session. Furthermore, the characters begin each session with one fewer bennies than normal until the adventure ends. Heroes with Bad Luck may well begin to feel they are truly cursed!

Once the gift giving is complete, Saad gets down to business by asking the nature of their visit. Let the players say whatever they want regarding their reasons for calling. All that is important is that they mention the name Karam ibn Ramzi, reveal that he is dead, and mention that Saad is their only lead. Until they do, the mystic gently prompts them to speak truthfully and tell him everything, no matter how unimportant it might seem.

Should the heroes have opened the casket, they might show the golden bees to Saad. He studies each one carefully, mutters under his breath, but offers no comment.

Once he has heard enough, Saad speaks.

"Poor Karam," he sighs. "I knew him of old, though we seldom had the fortune to meet in person.

"He contacted me by letter some months ago, wherein he claimed that he had stumbled across a reference to a lost temple and desired to know more. I provided him with

Map 2: Saad's House



Upper Level

- ⌂ - Shuttered Window
- ⋮ - Open Window
- { - Curtain
- ▬ - Table
- - Oil Lamp
- ⊙ - Cushion
- ▩ - Chest
- ▭ - Bed
- X - Weapons



Ground Floor

- 1 - Ante-chamber
- 2 - Linen Store
- 3 - Living Room
- 4 - Ali's Bedroom
- 5 - Kitchen
- 6 - Storage (fuel)
- 7 - Storage (general)
- 8 - Saad's Study
- 9 - Saad's Bedroom

what little information I had at the time, but promised I would consult further. His last mis-sive indicated he had found something of value, and that trusted agents had been despatched to retrieve it. That was perhaps one week ago.

"I had warned him of a dark shadow in his horoscope, but the stars revealed nothing of his untimely fate, else I would have warned him and his agents to proceed with great caution.

"Ah, Ali has returned!" Saad says, his head turning toward the curtain. "Let us eat, and then I shall reveal more of my findings. The fates have decided that Karam's quest become yours, and it is best you know what you seek, yes?"

Ali carries in a tray laden with a steaming pot of coffee, small cups for everyone, and plates loaded high with plump dates, sweetmeats, sliced tomatoes, herb-infused flat breaded, and a pot of honey. He places the honey in front of Saad, but offers the rest to the heroes. After a few minutes of stuffing his face with bread dipped in honey, Saad continues speaking.

"Karam believed he had discovered a forgotten temple dedicated to Melissab, goddess of bees. She is the minor goddess of bees, whose bounty I particular enjoy." He grins another toothless

smile as he offers you the honey pot. "This is most delicious., Please, help yourselves. Ali can always fetch more if we run out."

Saad pauses for a few minutes as he wedges his boneyed bread into his mouth, chews slowly, and swallows. "Oh, age brings many blessings, but also its fair share of curses," he mutters, slapping a bony hand against his forehead. "Here I am prattling on, when I could have saved your ears and just given you the correspondence in which Karam reveals all he knows. Eat, while I look for the scroll."

Ali helps the old mystic to his feet. Saad shuffles over to a table, picks through a few scrolls, finally finds the one he is looking for, and returns to his former position.

Before he can hand it over to you, his body goes rigid and his eyes roll back to reveal the whites. His mouth suddenly opens wide, and a stream of bees spews forth.

MORE BEES!

It's time to make Notice rolls to avoid Surprise. Characters with Danger Sense who passed their roll can shout

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a warning, giving their comrades +2 to their Notice rolls. The swarm of bees begins on Hold. Ali runs for his life and hides in the linen closet. He plays no part in the combat.

Remember, unless the characters have accepted Glory penalties for being discourteous to their host, they are armed only with their daggers and are probably unarmored. Their equipment is located downstairs, at the point marked "X" on the map. Donning armor will take several minutes at best.

Special: Any character who specifically he said he was eating the honey offered by Saad must make a Vigor roll at the start of the second round, before action cards are dealt. Obese characters, who are naturally more gluttonous unless the hero's background gives another cause for the affliction, suffer a -2 penalty to the roll.

Success means the character is Shaken as he suffers painful stomach convulsions. On a raise, he suffers no effect. Failure means he is Shaken *and* disgorges a giant bee. Deal the bee an action card this round. On a critical failure the poor sap suffers a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises as well as birthing a bee.

Terrain: With the shutters closed, the lighting in the room is Dark (-2). This affects the giant bee equally, but not the swarm. Opening a shutter is an action for an adjacent character, but requires no die roll. Opening one shutter changes the lighting to Dim (-1). Two or more removes the penalty altogether.

Moving through a square occupied by a table is difficult ground. The cushions do not give any movement penalties. Saad's corpse lies in front of the most northerly cushion. The scroll he was about to give the characters is clutched in his lifeless hands.

The oil lamps is Saad's study hang from the ceiling on thin chains. They are lit. As an action, one can be ripped from its chain and thrown (Range 2/4/8). On impact, they split open, setting fire to one square. Anything in the square suffers 1d10 damage from the flames and has a chance of catching fire.

There is plenty of scenery the heroes might use during the fight. The curtain might be ripped down and thrown over a giant bee, for example (perhaps a grapple with a +2 bonus). A character might try and use the dates to lure a giant bee away from a fellow (a Smarts Trick). Without their weapons, such actions should be encouraged. Although we have provided a few suggestions, the GM is left to determine how to handle the exact mechanics based on the specific action.

Monsters: In the first round, the only monster is the swarm of bees. At the start of the second round, Saad's body splits open as a giant bee emerges from inside the now dead sage. Any character facing Saad when this happens must make a Spirit roll to avoid the effects of Fear.

Note that the swarm will not attack the giant bee, even if it enters their template.

* **Bee Swarm (1):** See page 30. The swarm fills a Small Burst Template. Place it centered over Saad's corpse.

* **Giant Bee (1):** See page 29. It begins play in the square occupied by the most northerly cushion. It takes

time for the bee to emerge from the sage. Deal it an action card as normal.

AFTERMATH

Once the bees have been dealt with, the immediate threat is over. Saad is dead—nothing more can be done for him other than saying prayers for his soul. Ali reemerges from his hiding place and seeks out his master. He bursts into tears if permitted to see Saad's corpse or is informed of his master's death. What the characters do with the servant boy is up to them. If they elect to adopt him, the GM should create him as an Extra. He has the Young Hindrance. Otherwise, he can be handed over to the watch (who place him in an orphanage) or to a temple.

Give the party Handout #2 when they get around to examining the scroll. Try as they might, they cannot learn the meaning of the name Potnia, though it will be important later.

The only clues to moving the adventure forward are the mention of the temple of Ashtart and the honey pot. If no one picks up on the honey, Ali makes reference to it, claiming the honey must be cursed. He acquired it for his master only yesterday, and can guide the heroes to the vendor, Akil ibn Fudail, who handed that specific pot over to him, claiming it was a "special delivery." Akil accepted no payment, insisting the honey was a gift.

Queen Apithera was behind Saad's death. Knowing of the mystic's involvement through Karam's correspondence, she arranged for a pot of special honey to be delivered to the vendor he normally uses. Mixed with the honey was a blob of Apithera's regurgitated royal jelly. It was this that caused the creation of both the swarm and the giant bee inside Saad (and any affected heroes). Her plan was to have Saad die before the heroes reached him, but the old man had a plentiful supply, and Ali decided to save his recent purchase for a special occasion.

Temple of Ashtart

If the GM has moved the scenario to the Sultanate, then the local "temple" of Ashtart is just a shrine, a small, part of a single complex dedicated to all the gods, though one decorated with garlands of fresh flowers and palm leaves. In the Caliphate, Emirates, or Kingdoms, it is a grand affair. The temple proper is closed to those who do not follow Ashtart or one of her minor aspects, but all are permitted into the greater precinct. Here there are rows of fruit trees and shady palms, and gardens of fragrant herbs and and colorful flowers. There are also has many bee hives. While these will not trouble the heroes, the adventurers may be wary of the buzzing insects.

The characters are met at the gate by a junior cleric, who enquires as to the nature of their business. She listens attentively to their news, before inviting them to sit beneath a shady palm while she fetches a superior.

Minutes later and older priestess greets the characters.

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Fresh dates and *nehta* are offered to them by laity who act as servants. The conversation between her and the heroes is given below as a series of likely questions and statements and her answers. GMs will need to fill in the blanks for other questions. Only one thing is important to responding to unexpected questions—she is politely dismissive of their claims (lost temple stories are two a dinar).

Q: We believe we have found a lost temple to Melissah. What can you tell us about it?

A: *"Very little, in truth. Stories of such a temple have been circulating in our priesthood since blessed Suleiman brought us back into the gods' light. Attempts have been made to find it down the years, but none have been successful. Not even the cult of Melissah has enjoyed any success, and one would think they stood the best chance. Perhaps it did once exist, but now it is just a story."*

Q: What did the divine royal jelly do?

A: *"Ask a dozen of my peers who knows of the legends and you will hear a dozen different answers. Some say it was a great gift to mankind, others that it was not for our consumption."*

Q: Did you know Karam ibn Ramzi or Saad ibn Nabighah?

A: *"I know nothing of the former, but I knew the latter by reputation. With the permission of our order he visited our library several times in the last month, but he kept the nature of his research secret. He is man of good renown, and we did not pry."*

Q: We keep getting attacked by bees.

A: *"Bees are industrious and peaceful creatures, unless disturbed in their work. The months have been warm, and perhaps they are agitated. We shall say prayers to calm them. Until then, we have herbal remedies that should alleviate the pain from their stings."*

GM Note: Freshly made herbal antitoxin and healing (bee sting) remedies are available for 10 dinars each. Alchemical *beast friend* spells that affect only bees are also available at the temple. Given the heroes' recurring problem, they can buy a maximum of four for 75 dinars each, a 25% saving. They won't be any use against the bees under Apithera's command, but the heroes and clerics don't know that.

Q: We have these golden bees. What do you make of them?

A: *"Beautiful creations, and certainly of some antiquity, but I fail to see they are anything but trinkets. They are certainly not magical, or indeed special. Look, I have two on a necklace myself. Many of my order wear them. The letters inscribed on your bees' wings are probably just the initials of the owners. My order would be prepared to buy them from you for 50 dinars each, or exchange for alchemical devices of equal value."*

Q: But these ones spell out the name of Melissah!

A: *"And had you a dozen more, they might well spell*

HONEY

The denizens of Al-Shirkuh have used honey since before the arrival of the jinn. As well as being eaten with bread as part of a meal, honey is used in cooking to provide sweetness and, mixed with certain herbs, to make candy. The cult of Ashtart knows the secret of transforming it into *nehta*, a sickly sweet, mildly alcohol drink.

Honey is also used for medicinal purposes. It aids in soothing stomach upsets and sore throats, and when smeared on burns and wounds it acts as both an antibacterial and antiseptic. In game terms, a quarter-pound smeared on a burn or wound provides the benefits of a herbal healing salve.

Herbalists who use a half-pound when creating a herbal remedy can produce medicinal candy. The benefit of this is the herbal brew remains potent for one month, instead of the usual one week. Naturally, this applies only to brews that can be eaten—a sweet is little use as a healing or warming remedy, for example, as these must be applied to the skin.

A pound of honey costs 2 dinars and has an Availability of Special. It can be found in the bazaars and souks of the great cities, but elsewhere is for sale only where there is a temple of Ashtart, bees are kept, or wild bees are found.

out the name of Suleiman, or your grandmother. You see what you hope to see, nothing more."

Q: May we browse your library? It may reveal something about the lost temple that will aid us.

A: *"I doubt you will find anything you do not already know, but as a favor to Saad, you may."*

GM Note: Investigation rolls take four hours. Only one person may make the roll in any given period, though others may assist through Cooperative Rolls. Success reveals nothing about the lost temple other than what the heroes already know. On a raise, they find a passing reference that hints at a location on the north side of the Pillars of Suleiman, in what was once a province of the doomed Kingdom of Magor.

HONEY VENDOR

Akil ibn Fudail has sold honey since he has a young lad, eventually taking over his father's business when the old man retired. Though implicated in a sinister plot, he is an innocent pawn.

Ali has no idea where Akil lives, only which stall he operates in the souk. The heroes might try questioning locals in the hope of catching him at home, but no matter how high their Streetwise rolls they won't find his house before he has left for work. Thus, visiting the souk

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is their only choice (beside staging an ambush in his house, which will upset his wife and three children).

The souk opens at sunrise, and is crowded within minutes as shoppers head out for supplies of the freshest produce. Heroes openly carrying weapons or sporting armor without concealing it beneath robes cause the crowd to part amid shocked stares, and the city watch to be summoned to impose fines.

His stall, like the others in the souk, is small. Essentially it is a single room, with shelves stocked high with goods. Any aggressive action on the part of the adventurers will be noticed by shoppers, who immediately alert the watch. The souk has two watch patrols, and they respond to alarms within 3d4 rounds.

Akil sells pots of honey, as well as bees' wax candles, lumps of wax, and colored wax sticks for use with seals. Unaware he has done anything wrong, the vendor greets the heroes with a wide smile and a hearty welcome.

Akil is shocked if accused of murder, albeit indirectly. His tears and wails are just as much for the loss of a valued customer. He has nothing to hide, and reveals the following information during the interrogation. Whether he blurts them out in a continuous babble or responds to direct questions depends on the heroes' approach.

- * He receives all his honey and wax from a farm a day's walk from the city. He has known the owners for years, and trusts them implicitly. He can provide directions, and offers to write a letter of introduction.

- * When the latest delivery arrived (two days ago), it was accompanied by a woman dressed in full robes. All that was visible were her eyes, which were an unusual golden hue. Akil suspected she was an ifrit jinn blooded. Oddly, the men accompanying her were also fully robed, going so far as to cover their eyes with thin veils. Akil assumed they were new employees, seasonal workers hired to help gather the honey harvest. (Akil did not notice their strange gait—his attention was on the woman.)

- * The woman, who gave no name, handed him a particular pot and insisted that it be given to Saad ibn Nabighah or one of his servants when next they purchased honey. She claimed it was a special blend, and knowing of his sweet tooth it was to be a gift. Since Akil wasn't charged for the pot, he agreed.

- * The woman's voice was strange. Soft yet powerful, it had a strange quality. Convinced she was jinn blooded, Akil at first describes it as being like the hiss made when damp wood burns. Only if prompted by the heroes does he change his mind and say it was more akin to the buzzing of bees.

Getting Help

Before leaving the city (or perhaps after reconnoitering the farm), it may occur to the heroes to contact the city watch and inform them of recent events. The duty sergeant at the nearest watch station takes down their particulars and duly records their version of events. He is extremely dubi-

ous about claims of bees spewing from people's stomachs and giant bees in the city, and makes no attempt to hide his disbelief. Talk of a sinister cult (something invented by the characters as they have no proof any such cult exists) gets slightly more attention, but his probing questions quickly reveal the heroes' lack of hard evidence.

Getting the watch to investigate the farm is impossible. First, the watch has no authority outside the city walls unless actively tracking a known criminal. Second, there is no evidence the farmers are involved in any crime. This doesn't mean help from the city authorities is unavailable, though. A successful Persuasion roll (-2) convinces the sergeant to pass the information onto the local army commander, whose men are responsible for patrolling the wilds.

Eager for his men to do something other than patrol the city walls, the military commander agrees to send a small force to investigate. He insists, though, that the characters accompany his men. The sergeant leading the force makes it very clear to the heroes that in the event their accusations prove false and the farmers press charges, the heroes will be arrested and hauled back to the city to face justice.

Alternately, the heroes may decide to return to the temple of Ashtart and try to secure help. The priestess they met earlier sees them again. A Persuasion roll convinces her to send *fadeen* (laity who serve as temple guardians alongside a cult's paladins)—the farmers are known to the temple, and the cult has an interest in ensuring nothing is amiss.

Regardless of whether they are city soldiers or *fadeen*, the military forces comprises one sergeant and a number of common soldiers to bring the total force up to two NPCs per player character. Stats for 10 soldiers can be found at the back of this adventure. You have our permission to photocopy that page. Cut the stat blocks and hand them to the players. Until combat begins, the soldiers remain under the GM's control.

◉ The Honey Farm ◉

Regardless of whether or not the heroes have extra numbers, the journey to the honey farm takes the best part of 8 hours. One encounter occurs, but only if the heroes have failed to secure military aid.

A PASSING PATROL

Several hours out from the farm, the heroes encounter a military patrol. Its strength is one sergeant and common infantrymen enough to bring their total number to two NPCs per player character. The patrol is based in the city the heroes recently departed, and has almost finished its routine tour of the surrounding area. Their route took them past the farm, but they noticed nothing unusual and did not call on the farmers. They are now returning to their barracks.

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The soldiers stop the party and ask their names and business. The sergeant is polite, especially to any who introduce themselves as nobles, having no reason to be suspicious, even of an armed party—only fools travel the wilds unarmed.

Should the party mention their suspicions that the farm is involved in something sinister, the sergeant immediately offers the services of his patrol—no die roll is required. Much to his disgust, most of his men are little more than raw recruits, and completely untested in combat. If it transpires there is something going on at the farm, this may be their chance to taste battle.

The Farm

The farm belongs to Shamil ibn Qutuz and his wife, Basilah. Also present are their two adult sons, Mujab and Nadir. All four have been enthralled by Apithera, and are now her slaves. They have been obedient long enough that they have no hope of resisting her commands. Their former farmhands were murdered by Apithera, but continue working on the farm as mellified zombies.

Until Apithera took over the farm, its primary crops were honey, sunflower seeds, and sunflower oil, all of which were sold in the city. Other crops were for home use, with the fruit trees being specifically cultivated for the bees to produce flavored honey.

When the characters arrive, Shamil and his wife are standing near the hives. Their sons are inside the farmhouse, along with Queen Apithera. The mellified zombies are working in the fields, and are completely covered by robes to prevent their true nature being detected by visiting neighbors or passing patrols. The GM should place them in different fields as he sees fit. A large number of mundane bees are buzzing around the farm, but they have not formed a swarm—they are simply going about their daily business of collecting pollen. There are also a few giant bees present, but they are inside the middle granary, which they are using as a nest.

FEATURES OF THE FARM

The fields extend further than shown on the map, which focuses on the farmhouse and its immediate surroundings. Any character born and raised in a city will recognize certain features of the farm, such as the granary, which are a standard beehive design. The nature of the crops will be evident to all the heroes.

Though the characters will not have the opportunity to examine much of the farm before combat breaks out, they are listed here for when the fight ends. Entries not listed contain nothing unusual—the GM should devise trappings as he deems appropriate.

Granaries: The three granaries are a domed beehive design. Made of bricks and coated in a mix of dung and straw to render them airtight and watertight, they were once used to store the family's grain and fruit. The middle granary is currently home to a small colony of giant bees.

THE GOLDEN BEES

The letters on four of the golden bees spell out the name Melissah. These are the fabled keys that unlock the wards of power protecting the temple. You'll find more on them and how they function in the section **The Lost Temple of Melissah**.

The remaining eight bees are a form of alchemical device, albeit not one that registers to mortal touch. The two letters are the code for a spell available to clerics of Ashtart. The characters will need to work this out for themselves, though if they are really struggling the GM might allow Common Knowledge rolls to deduce the meaning.

When the name of the correct spell is spoken and the bee released (an action), the magic contained within is released. This consumes the bee, rendering each bee a one-use device. These spells cannot be *dispelled* or *negated*, but have an extremely short duration. They do not stack with other similar spells.

The various spells effects are as below. Except in one case, no arcane skill roll is required.

AR (Armor): Target gains +2 Armor for 3 rounds.

BA (Barrier): Creates three 1" segments of living bees. The three sections must touch each other to form a continuous line. Toughness 10. Lasts for 3 rounds.

BL (Blast): A 2d6 *blast* filling a Medium Burst Template. The target location must be in line of sight. Aimed using Faith (if a cleric of Ashtart or Melissah) or Spirit.

CF (Champion of the Faith): Target gains the Holy Warrior Edge for 3 rounds. Queen Apithera counts as a supernatural evil opponent for this purpose, as do mellified zombies.

DE (Deflection): Attackers are -2 to attack the target for 3 rounds. Counts as +2 Armor against swarms for the duration.

FE (Feast): Creates a meal of honey, bread, and dates for five persons.

HE (Healing): Cures one wound. If the target has two or more wounds, then two wounds are cured.

SM (Smite): The target has +2 to damage rolls using any weapon he holds for 3 rounds.

Oil Press: The interior of the oil press, once used to produce sunflower oil, has been transformed into a shrine. In the center stands a wax statue of an elegant lady, but with the wings and stinger of a bee. Characters who clearly saw Apithera during the fight can make a Smarts roll to realize the image is not Melissah, but that of the priestess. Such an act borders on sacrilege.

Any hero possessing two of more golden bees feels them vibrating. Should the bees whose wings spell out the name Melissah be brought in here and released from whatever storage device they are in, they take to air. They

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flit around the statue before hovering in front of the face. Out of nowhere, a swarm of bees manifests. They hover in a thick cloud over the face of the statue for a few moments, then move to form two eyes and a mouth. The golden bees form the irises.

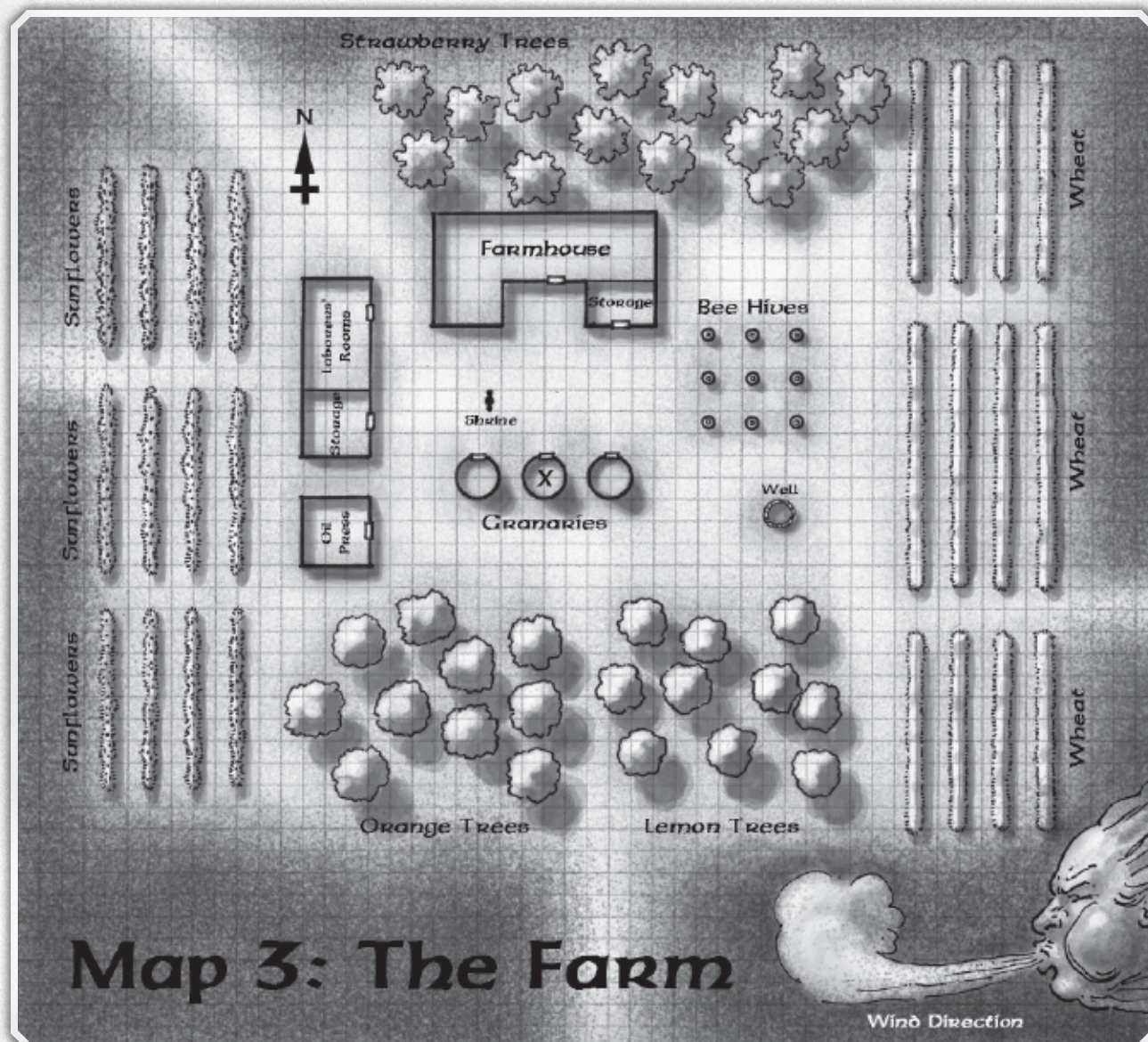
"My own child seeks to become my mortal peer," buzzes a female voice. "No law as she yet broken, yet she must be stopped, for I am friend to mortals, not their ruler. You have proven yourselves valiant and resourceful, and it falls to you to go to the great temple and take what she seeks. Succeed, and my precious gift to mankind shall be yours. It shall be the last I offer, for that gift belongs to an older time. Fail, and all mortals shall bow before the one who calls herself the Golden Queen. My children will guide you."

"Should help you seek, speak the name of power upon the wings of my golden children, select the recipient, and release it into the air."

The gold bees fall to the floor, while the mundane swarm flies out through the door and gathers by the hives. The statue's face is unrecognizable, having been chewed by the bees. When the characters are finally ready to depart, the swarm of mundane bees flies ahead of them, guiding them toward the lost temple of Melis-sah and whatever fate lies in store.

Faithful who think a deity has just spoken to them may make a Common Knowledge roll. Success reminds them that the gods do not speak directly to mortals, and what they have just witnessed was a form of herald. The herald's cryptic clue regarding the bees is explained in the sidebar.

Shrine: The family's small shrine to Ashtart takes the



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form of a carved wooden palm tree. It stands 6 feet tall. A hero carrying two or more of the golden bees who moves adjacent to the shrine gains the benefits of a *deflection* spell cast with a success against attacks made by the giant bees. This does not stack with similar spells. He also gains +2 Armor against the swarm's damage. No visible effects of these blessing manifest, leaving the hero unaware of the divine help. The GM may wish to drop subtle clues, such as fewer bees in the swarm attacking, or a giant bee hesitating before attacking.

TALKING TO SHAMIL

As the heroes approach, Shamil goes to meet them. He intercepts them between the lemon and orange orchards. His greeting is polite, but far from warm. Characters who make a Notice roll at -2 spot that one of the workers has ceased his toil and is now staring at them from the edge of the field. Apithera is using his senses to spy on the characters. Unless the zombie is close, the priestess cannot hear what transpires.

In a flat voice, Shamil imparts the following information during his questioning by the heroes. He never volunteers information, and speaks only in reply to direct questions or insinuations.

- * He dismisses any notions that something is amiss at the farm. He admits sending a recent shipment of honey to the city, but denies a special gift was sent to anyone—he has never heard of Saad, and would have no reason to gift him a special pot of honey.

- * He denies all knowledge of knowing a “golden eyed” woman, insisting the only people resident are his family and the laborers who work for him.

- * Asked why the workers are wearing robes, Shamil claims it is to protect them from the bees. Enquiries as to why he and his wife and not similarly clad are met by the response that the bees know and trust them.

Apithera is surprised the heroes have tracked her down, but has no desire to reveal her presence unless forced. Attacking Shamil, moving toward the house, disrobing a “field worker,” or an attempt to examine the middle granary or oil press are enough for her to signal her minions to attack.

Her alarm call is the droning of a monstrous bee, which reverberates across the entire farm. More alarmingly, the mellified zombies, Shamil, and Basilah take up the unearthly call, producing a loud, buzzing cacophony. Have the heroes and their allies make Spirit rolls to avoid the effects of Fear. The effect remains until the battle ends. Then proceed to the next section.

DEFEND THE QUEEN!

Apithera's alarm call may scare the heroes, but it also means the element of surprise is lost. Deal action cards as normal. Apithera has a means of escaping (and fully intends on using it), but she has no desire to surrender her hold over the farm without a fight or allow her enthralled minions to be interrogated. This is battle to the death.

Terrain: The prevailing wind blows from east to west. This becomes important if offensive incendiary spells are used to ignite the crop fields.

Movement through the fields containing barley, sunflowers, or wheat is difficult ground. Visibility within these fields is limited. An adjacent enemy has Light Cover (-1). A foe 1” away gains Medium Cover (-2), while one 2” away has Heavy Cover (-4). Beyond this, the enemy is effectively invisible.

Should an offensive spell with a fire-trapping (but not heat) be targeted at the crops, they ignite on a roll of 5-6 on a d6. Beginning the round *after* the attack was made, any one in an area alight suffers 1d10 damage and has a chance of catching fire. Each round, roll a d6 to see if the fire spreads. On a roll of 5-6 on a d6, adjacent squares in the direction of the prevailing wind catch fire.

The fruit trees can be used as Cover. They have Armor +8 for the purpose of attaching through their trunks. Igniting them causes just a single tree to burn.

Buildings are made of mud bricks, and have Armor +8 for the purpose of attacking through the walls.

The beehives are Toughness 8, and grant +2 Armor if used for Cover. Destroying a hive by means other than coldfire, cold, fire, or heat immediately causes a Small Burst Template Swarm of angry bees to join the fray at the start of the next round. Should Apithera be present, these bees immediately fall under her control. Otherwise, they attack the nearest creature (except other bee swarms).

Monsters: The enemy comprises a mix of creatures. If the party has refused military support, this encounter may prove quite taxing. Even entering the fray unaided, good tactics, such as igniting the crops, may swing the battle in their favor, though.

- * **Queen Apithera:** See page 27.

- * **Bee Swarm (1):** See page 30. This swarm fills a Medium Burst Template and has Toughness 6.

- * **Enthralled Farmers (4):** See page 29.

- * **Giant Bees (1/hero):** See page 29.

- * **Mellified Zombies (1/hero):** See page 30.

- * **Soldiers (2/hero) (Use Generic NPC):** See page 98.

Tactics: Queen Apithera remains until four rounds have elapsed or she takes two wounds, whichever comes first. She then consumes her potion of *sanctuary*. *It is very important she is not killed*. If necessary, the GM should fudge Soak rolls to ensure her survival.

Before vacating the farmhouse and revealing her presence, Apithera's first action is to cast *deflection* on herself. On subsequent rounds, she emerges from the farmhouse (the heroes should get a good look at her) and uses *obscure* spells to hamper the attackers, placing the templates so as best to shield her from archers and spellcasters. Once suitably warded against immediate dangers, she uses *bolt* spells to pick off visible enemies.

On the off-chance she moves adjacent to a corpse (most likely one of the NPC soldiers), she spends an action regurgitating royal jelly into its mouth, transforming

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the lifeless lump into a mellified zombie. It joins the fray at the start of the next round.

Should she start a round adjacent to a living attacker, she attempts to grapple, using her Sticky special ability for a +2 bonus. On a raise, she uses her next action to kiss them, regurgitating royal jelly into their mouths as part of her Enthrall ability.

Treasure: If the party cannot speak Magorian or cast *speak language*, then each enthralled farmer has a potion of *speak language*. They will need to use them sparingly.

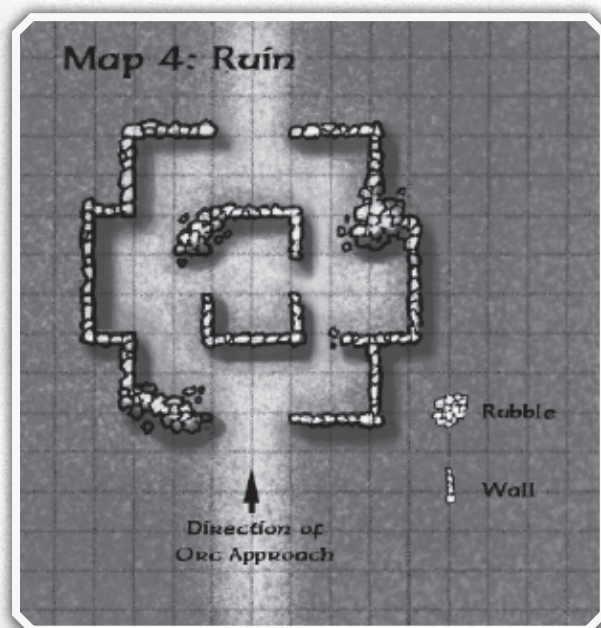
AFTERMATH

Interrogation of any farmers taken alive proves impossible—Apithera's hold over them is too strong for them to reveal anything except her goal of making the Al-Shirkuh a hive mind. Surviving soldiers intend to charge them with attacking a military patrol and cavorting with a necromancer—the mellified zombies are evidence of the latter. The soldiers have no jurisdiction outside the outer boundaries of the city (some 50 miles), and will not accompany the heroes any further—what lies ahead is their fate alone.

The soldiers confiscate the farm in the name of their emir. It will be put up for auction in a few weeks, and the proceeds used to fill the emir's coffers. Heroes who wish to bid for it need a minimum of 5,000 dinars.

Characters set on plundering the farm find 500 dinars in assorted goods, in addition to any treasure found on the various monsters. The soldiers plunder it, even if the heroes refrain. The plunder comprises items such as bowls and rugs, rather than coin. Commonly referred to as trade goods, every 5 dinars worth of plunder weighs 3 pounds. Surviving soldiers will expect their fair share.

The two granaries still in use contain enough food to ensure the party will not go hungry, and the well ensures they will have ample water for the journey head.



On the Road

The journey to the lost temple of Melissah is one of some 200 miles from Hulwan, City of the Gods. The temple lies in the northern foothills of the Pillars of Suleiman, in the neutral zone between the Caliphate and Sultanate. On the main Land of Fire it is in hills south of the “e” is Pillars of Suleiman.

Unlike the characters' previous journeys, all of which have been relatively short, this one will take the better part of a week from Hulwan. Three encounters are detailed below. Which ones the GM uses is for him to decide. Parties who lack *healing* magic might meet only the itinerant healer, while those in good spirits who still spoil for more action can pit their swords, spells, and wits against an orc patrol.

Dry Wind

When the wind blows to the northwest and southwest from the Salt Basin, the air becomes so dry it literally sucks the moisture out of anything it touches. Desert folk refer to this as the *irifi*.

The storm blows for 1d4+1 hours. Victims caught in the storm must make a Vigor roll at -2 each hour or suffer a level of Fatigue from thirst. Rather than seeking shelter (Survival roll at -4 made each hour, one roll per group), heroes with plenty of water may try to weather the storm by drinking extra amounts of water. Two quarts are required per hour the wind blows, +1 quart per point of positive Size of the character. Assuming water is available, victims suffer no ill effects (though their water supplies may be greatly diminished afterward). Should water run out, or the heroes choose to stop drinking, they gain Fatigue as above.

Itinerant Healer

At some point during the day, the characters spy a lone tent. Outside, munching on the sparse vegetation, a single camel is tethered to a stout post.

Nomadic characters automatically know the polite thing to do is call out—approaching too close without announcing oneself is impolite, and risks the characters being mistaken for bandits. Hadaree may make a Common Knowledge roll before wandering too close. On hearing a call, a female cakali steps out of the tent and squints against the burning sun. After a few moments she beckons the characters forward.

She greets the characters politely in Sandspeech, introduces herself as Suzan, an itinerant healer and herbalist, and offers them hot coffee and dried dates. Suzan has no stats—the adventures could overpower her without any risk to their skins (though with a heavy stain to their Glory). Assuming the heroes are polite, she reveals the following:

- * She has been scouring the area for desert herbs.
- * She has the following dried herbs for sale for 5

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dinars per batch—2 x antitoxin, 1 x numbing, 2 x purgative, and 1 x stimulant II. She has two healing (cuts) remedies she brewed last night, which she is prepared to sell for 15 dinars apiece.

* If the heroes impress her with their honesty, devotion to duty, and tale of fighting against a vile cult (or other sinister villain of their choosing), Suzan gifts the party with a single potion of *healing*. It cures one wound. She refuses to accept anything in return, claiming that to help those on a noble quest is reward enough.

* She has seen a few ruins on her recent travels, but nothing one might describe as a temple. She warns the heroes that orcs inhabit the mountains, though she has seen none in recent days.

* Her tribe abandoned their ancestral homeland after the jinn invasion. Being Faithful (Suzan honors Marqod), they eventually settled in the Caliphate.

* She will not join with the heroes in their quest. Her tribe is not far away, and she intends to meet up with them on the morrow in preparation for a pilgrimage to Marqod's Well.

RUINS

As evening draws in, the character spy crumbling ruins not far ahead. Investigation reveals the ruins are deserted, though there are remains of a small campfire. A successful Survival roll indicates the fire is two days old, while a raise shows whoever sat here dined on desert hare (small bones in the fire). The ruins are not extensive, but they offer shelter from the wind, and allow a properly placed campfire to be lit without being seen far and wide. If the GM thinks the party will avoid the ruins, perhaps sensing a possible ambush, he might wish to lure them in by placing a small well here so they can refill their waterskins.

Unfortunately for the characters, the ruins are frequently used by orc patrols loyal to Apithera. They know sound carries further at night, and while not attempting to be deliberately stealthy, they are moving quietly and refraining from talking loudly. A sentry can make a single Notice roll at -2 when the orcs are 16" away to detect their presence from creaking armor, muffled grumbles, and other such noises. Otherwise, the first he knows of their approach is when they appear out of the gloom a mere 10" away.

Unless the characters have built a raging campfire or are making a lot of noise, their presence goes unknown to the orcs—the glow from the embers is not visible outside the ruins, and

sounds of snoring are dampened—they make a Notice roll only if the sentry has failed to take steps to conceal his presence. Once in line of sight to the fire, the orcs automatically detect the heroes' presence.

In the unlikely event neither side detects the other before coming face-to-face at short distance, both sides need to make Notice rolls to avoid Surprise.

Special: Rousing a sleeping comrade can be done with a shout, shove, or kick as a free action (assuming the sentry isn't Surprised). On the first round after waking, sleeping heroes are Shaken. After that, they may act normally (no roll to unShake is necessary). Remember, sleeping in armor is very uncomfortable—sleepers are considered to be unarmored unless they want Fatigue from sleep deprivation. It is impossible to don armor before the attack begins.

Though the characters are unarmored, there are only a few orcs and they have no magical support. The party should have the element of surprise on their side.

Terrain: The sky is clear. Unless the GM is keeping a calendar and noting the phases of the moon, assume it is not full. Ambient lighting is thus Dark (-2). On a full moon, the lighting is Dim (-1).

The heroes' campfire (assuming they actually lit one) has reduced to glowing embers by the time the orcs attack. It reduces the lighting penalty one step within a Medium Burst Template centered on the fire.

The outer walls are between 3 and 4 feet high, while the inner walls are around 6 feet high. Areas of rubble count as Difficult Ground.



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Monsters: The orcs are members of the Deadly Sting, a small tribe whose chieftain has become a thrall of Queen Apithera. Though the warriors dislike the notion of having a human (of sorts) as their ultimate superior, Apithera allows them to engage in violence against intruders into the area and permits them to keep any spoils.

* **Bee Swarm (1):** See page 30. The swarm makes an appearance only if the orc carrying them has chance to throw the nest (see below). The orcs are not immune to the bees' attack.

* **Orc Warriors (1 + 1 per hero):** See page 29. One carries a bee hive wrapped in a blanket.

Tactics: Exposed to enemy ranged weapons, the orcs attempt to charge into the building as quickly as possible. Orcs rarely carry scabbards, and thus their melee weapons are already in their hands. The orc carrying the hive unfurls it at any obvious spellcasters. Otherwise, he aims it so as to affect as many heroes as possible.

Lost Temple of Melissah

Although the region behind the Pillars of Suleiman is today largely lifeless desert, it was not always so. Water was carried from the foothills of the mountains through a *qanat* network, transforming the landscape into a fertile plain. Here, the cult of Melissah chose to construct an impressive temple in honor of their deity. Foregoing the traditional design, they erected a place of worship shaped like a monumental conical bee hive.

Melissah was so pleased with their labors that the golden statue of her in the holy of holies was gifted with a special power. Every millennium, one drop of divine royal jelly would be produced. Such an act was close to breaking the terms of the Compact, but it was agreed that the time frame involved did not constitute gross interference in the affairs of mortals.

As the jinn encroached further south, a decision was made to abandon the temple. Had the cult more time, the fabled statue would have been moved to a new site and a temple located around it, but fate had been especially cruel—the jinn attack coincided with the production of the first drop of divine royal jelly. As it was, it was, the jelly was collected with only days to spare. What became of that precious drop is unknown.

Now too late to move the statue in the face of the jinn advance, the priests worked long days and nights on a miracle that would protect the temple until the time came to reclaim it. Forging powerful wards and magical keys, they sealed the temple against even the powers of the mighty jinn, and fled into the desert.

Flight did not help the clerics, for the jinn soon captured them and added them to their growing army of slaves. The keys, however, had already been hidden,

and would remain so until a chain of events (possibly divine in origin) delivered them into the hands of the characters.

FEATURES OF THE TEMPLE

Descriptive Text: The start of each entry contains a varying amount of information in italics. This highlights the salient features of the room from the characters' perspective on first entering. It should be paraphrased to them in whatever flavorful terms the GM prefers.

Doors: Except as noted in area descriptions, doors are wooden and locked. They can be opened with a successful Lockpicking roll or brute force (Toughness 8).

The Four Wards: In addition to barring entry to the holy of holies (Area 2.7), the wards also protect the temple against unauthorized intrusion. *Teleporting*, walking through walls, floors, or ceilings while *ethereal*, tunneling, blowing apart the walls, and anything else players might think of is doomed to fail until the ward for that level is deactivated. Even then, such movements as noted above are possible only on that level.

On Level 4, for instance, there is an energy barrier over an oculus. Until a golden bee is placed in the appropriate receptacle, entry onto that level except via the stairs is impossible. Deactivating the ward on that level weakens the barrier around the holy of holies and removes the energy barrier across the oculus, but affects no other part of the temple.

Lighting: Except where noted, the temple is in pitch darkness (−4).

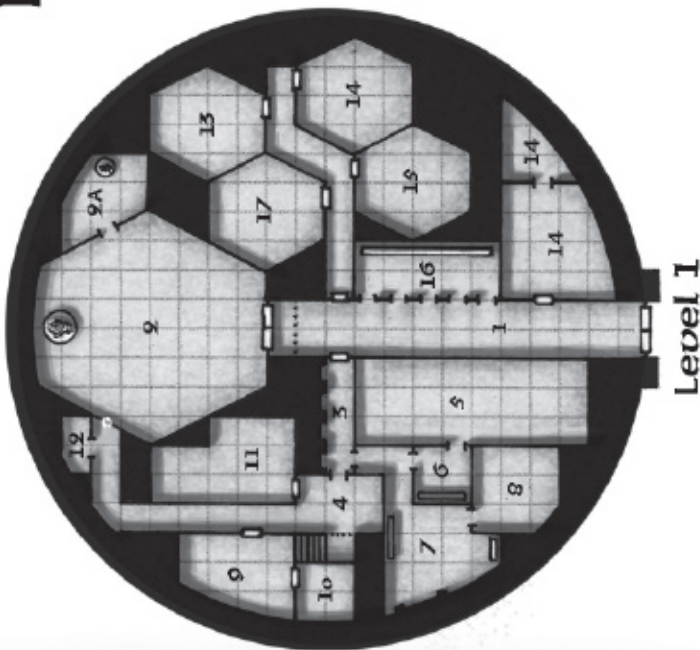
Mellified Zombies: In order to safeguard the temple, a number of clerics volunteered to undergo a terrifying ordeal—they were mellified while still alive. With Melissah's blessing, their spirit remained tethered to their mortal remains. For some 1200 years they have waited patiently for the day their devotion was deemed at an end and their souls could journey to the Afterlife (something only a high priest of the cult could bring about) or the day dawned for them to fulfill their last orders and defend the temple against any intruders.

Although undead, they are not servants of Iblis. They are supernatural, but not evil just because they oppose the heroes. Thus, they cannot be affected by either the Champion or Holy Warrior Edges. The same caveat applies to the various other guardians, such as stone giant bees, bee swarms, and wax golems.

Clerics of Tammuz who face a mellified zombie may make a Faith roll to realize these creatures exist with the blessing of a benevolent deity for a specific purpose—to guard the tomb. While they are the heroes' foes, they are not abominations that need to be destroyed on religious grounds, and ignoring them or attempting to communicate with them does not constitute a sin.

Objects: Only rooms containing monsters are given terrain descriptions. Should the violence spread to other areas, assume that any space containing a passable object, such as a table, is Difficult Ground.

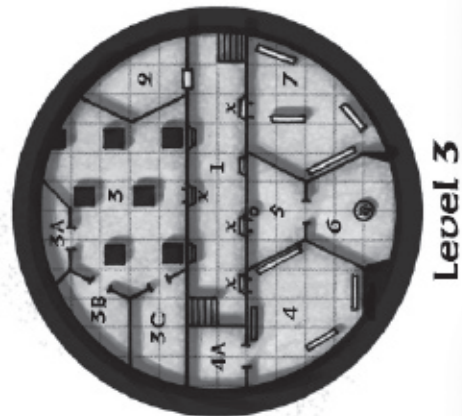
Map 5: Temple of Melissah



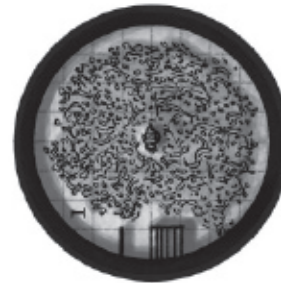
Level 1



Level 2



Level 3



Level 4

- Arch
- Door
- Bed
- Upright Sarcophagus
- Horizontal Sarcophagus
- Altar, Table, Trough, etc.
- Bee Statue
- Animated Curtain
- Pillar

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Spells: The bees in the temple count as magical creatures for the purposes of *beast friend* spells or miracles. Only a cleric of Melissah using that spell, or Queen Apithera's innate ability, affects them.

Stairs and Ceilings: The various sets of stairs wind up through the structure for 50 feet (8"). Unless otherwise stated, ceilings are 12 feet (2") high.

APIThERA APPEARS!

Until all four wards are deactivated and the holy of holies accessible, *sanctuary* spells cast by clerics of Ashtart do not register the temple's existence. When the last ward deactivates, a wave of spiritual energy sweeps across the land. This is detectable only by clerics of Ashtart and Melissah, who receive the feeling of an ancient power awakening from a long sleep.

Sensing her chance, Apithera consumes her second potion of *sanctuary*. This causes her to appear in the upper temple (Area 2.1). She then proceeds toward the holy of holies. On no account does she arrive before the heroes have chance to claim the divine royal jelly! If the party is relatively undamaged (GM's call based on his knowledge of their injuries), she has already cast *deflection* (with a success) before consuming the potion. Otherwise, she has no spells active. As soon as she arrives, she *summons* three giant bees.

Because of these active miracles, she suffers a -3 or -4 Maintenance penalty due to her active spells. Remember, as the giant bees are slain, so this penalty drops.

The final showdown between the priestess and the heroes is likely to occur in Area 2.4.

Level 1

As well as being a place of worship for laity, the ground floor contained the clerics' dining hall and kitchen, and small workshops for crafts deemed essential to the temple's smooth running, among other things.

Apithera's orcs penetrated the lower level months ago, but without the keys they were unable to proceed to the higher levels. After looting anything of value not specifically tied to the cult's religious practices—Apithera killed a sub-chief who suggested stealing the golden statue in the lower temple—a token force was left here to deter other visitors. The orcs are lazy, and do not bother to patrol the areas they have managed to access.

ENTRANCE

* *Two huge bronze doors stand between pylon gates. Both are heavily pitted by windblown sand, but bee motifs are still visible.*

Inspection of the doors reveals a number of faint symbols etched into the bronze. A Knowledge (Arcana) roll reveals these were the basis for *glyphs*. *Detect arcana* reveals no trace of any active magic.

The doors, though each six feet wide and 20 feet high, are cunningly counterbalanced, and can be pushed open by anyone using both hands. Before they left, the clerics asked their colleagues in the cult of Ashtart to ward the doors. Dozens of orcs died attempting to break into the temple. Their remains have since been cleared away.

1.1 PROCESSIONAL WAY

* *A long corridor stretches away into darkness.*

* *Some distance along it is a faint red glow.*

* *The air is thick with the stench of bodily waste.*

The processional way is the main thoroughfare, and was constructed deliberately wide to allow laity to move to and from the temple quickly.

The foul smell emanates from Area 1.16, which the orcs are using as a toilet.

Trap: The red glow is part of the warding protecting this level. Touching the impassable barrier inflicts 1d6 damage and knocks the character back 1". When the ward on this level is deactivated, the energy barrier disappears. The main reason for placing the barrier here was to force intruders through Area 1.3, which contains powerful defences.

1.2 LOWER TEMPLE

* *Atop a wide circular dais stands a life-sized wooden statue of a giant bee wearing a crown.*

* *Many dozens of small hexagonal niches around the lower walls contain pools of molten wax.*

* *Inscribed on the walls in Magorian are various phrases, such as "Labor cleanses the soul," "Strength lies in order," and "Toil for the good of all."*

* *The ceiling is styled like a honeycomb, with statues of giant bees crawling across it.*

The lower temple existed to satisfy the spiritual needs of laity. The statue is colored with yellow and black paint, but contains nothing of any value. The wax is all that remains of candles once used to illuminate the room. The clerics left the candles burning when they left, resulting in them melting to nothing. The various phrases are religious sayings intended to remind the faithful of their duty to work hard and serve their community as part of an orderly society.

Ceiling: The ceiling is domed and 30' high.

Monsters: Several of the stone bees on the ceiling are animated constructs. As soon as any character crosses beyond an imaginary line drawn between the center of the state and the center of the double doors, the bees fly down and attack. The sound of them detaching from the ceiling and a flutter of dust means the heroes are not Surprised.

* **Giant Stone Bees (2 per hero):** See page 29.

1.2A SHRINE TO ASHTART

* *A 12' tall wooden statue depicting a young maiden with wheat sheaves for hair and a bee's stinger stands*

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against the east wall. Her arms are held open, the palms facing downward.

Any Faithful character recognizes the statue as Ashtart, albeit in a slightly unusual pose—she is usually depicted with a palm leaf in her right hand and a bee hive in her left. Devoted characters may make Common Knowledge roll to recognize her—she is one of the most widely recognized deities. As a sub-sect of Ashtart's cult, and part of the local farming communities, the shrine ensured Ashtart received due recognition.

The statue's left palm has an indentation in the shape of the golden bee ornaments in the heroes' possession. Placing one of the ones whose letter spell out Melissah in the slot deactivates the ward on this level.

1.3 CORRIDOR OF FAITH

** Inscribed on the door in Magorian is a warning—
"Only those with faith may pass and live. Befriend my
children and you shall pass without hindrance."*

** Four large alcoves line the north wall.*

** Through an archway at the far end, a dull red glow
can be seen.*

Before the clerics left the temple, the normally mundane statues in this corridor were enchanted with potent miracles through lengthy sacrifices and rituals. It was their hope that the cult would one day reclaim the temple, and thus the miracles would be a deterrent only to unauthorized intruders.

Each of the alcoves contains a stone statue of a crowned bee. When a living creature steps in front of a statue while entering from the east, he alone hears a disembodied voice speaking in his native tongue. If the question is ignored or not answered correctly and he attempts to proceed west, the character suffers 2d6 damage (ignoring all forms of armor). Passage from west to east is not hindered in this way.

Clerics of Melissah, and those of her patron, Ashtart, would be able to avoid the danger simply by casting *beast friend* before entering. Only their version of the miracle works in this manner.

A: *"Who is my father?"*

The correct answer is "Shamash." Followers of Ashtart, Shamash, or Melissah know the answer automatically. Other characters must guess or make Knowledge (Religion) rolls. If the players are struggling to guess, a Common Knowledge roll reveals that bees are industrious and their society is well ordered. This could point to either Qedeshet or Shamash, leaving the heroes to have a stab at the answer.

B: *"Show me a token of my faith."*

Clerics of Ashtart, Shamash, or Melissah would simply display their holy symbol. Openly showing one of the golden bees whose lettered wings spell out part of Melissah's name is enough to pass this test.

C: *"Who is the father of my enemies?"*

The correct answer is "Upuaut." Birds eat bees, and Upuaut is their patron. Followers of Ashtart or Melissah know the answer automatically. Other characters must

guess or make Common Knowledge or Knowledge (Religion) rolls (their choice).

D: *"Who is the Pure Mother Bee?"*

The correct answer is "Potnia." The name was supposedly given to the first queen bee, from whom all others descend. The name formed part of the deeper mysteries of the cult, and was never mentioned to outsiders, including novices yet to take holy vows and laity. Since the time of the jinn it has been forgotten, even by the modern cult (though the title is still spoken in prayers).

1.4 GUARDROOM

Paladins stationed here when the temple was in working order ensured no unauthorized intruders reached the higher levels without being challenged.

Trap: The stairs are blocked by part of the warding protecting this level. Touching the impassable barrier inflicts 1d6 damage and knocks the character back 1". When the ward on this level is deactivated, the energy barrier disappears.

1.5 REFECTORY

** Two long tables, each surrounded by a dozen stools
dominate the center of the room. Laid out on the table
are wooden bowls. Beside each one is a wooden spoon.*

Regardless of rank, all clerics were expected to eat communal meals. There is nothing here of value.

1.6 WASHROOM

** A large stone trough lines the west wall.*

Clerics would wash their hands and faces before and after eating. There is nothing of any value.

1.7 KITCHEN

** A large fireplace dominates the west wall.*

** Pots and pans hang on hooks on the north wall.*

** A long table occupies the center of the room.*

There is nothing of any value.

1.8 LARDER

** Withered remains of fruits and vegetables lie on
shelves, dry hunks of meat hang on hooks from the ceiling,
and barrels fill much of the floor.*

The dry air in the temple has preserved much of the fresh food once stored here, but not in an edible state. Similarly, the contents of the barrels (water and *nektā*) has naturally evaporated to nothing. There is nothing here of any value.

1.9 MINT

The door is reinforced (Toughness 10).

** Small anvils and a collection of basic metalworking
tools are scattered around the room.*

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Although not the governing authority in the region, the cult had the right to mint its own legal tender. The dies are still here. Coins struck by them have a bee on one side and a palm leaf on the other. Their value was the equivalent of one dinar in modern terms.

1.10 STRONGROOM

The door is reinforced (Toughness 10).

** Small boxes sit on wooden shelves.*

The boxes once contained blank gold discs waiting to be stamped, as well as coins already stamped. In the weeks before the temple was abandoned, these were handed out to the local communities in the hope they could start a new life elsewhere in Al-Shirkuh.

Trap: Inscribed on the inside of the doorjamb is a *glyph*. If the door is opened without using a key (or lockpicks), the *glyph* detonates when the door is pushed inward. It casts a double 2d6 *bolt* (bee trapping), targeted at the nearest creature.

1.11 ARMORY

The door is reinforced (Toughness 10) but unlocked.

** Empty weapon racks and armor stands.*

The temple kept a store of basic arms and armor to support its *fadeen*, and arm the farming communities that supported it should they be attacked. The tools of war were given to the villagers before they began their ill-fated flight from the advancing jinn. There is nothing of any value.

1.12 ROBIN ROOM

** Black and gold striped robes hang on pegs.*

Clerics attending services in the chapel would swap their everyday robes for these ones, which were blessed by the high priest.

Secret Door: From this side, the secret door is blatantly obvious, as are two plugs set in it at eye level for an average human. A locking bar prevents the door being opened from the other side.

Clerics used this to enter the lower temple without having to mix with the laity in the processional way. By summoning a swarm of bees inside the temple where the door opened, a cleric could enter unseen, giving the laity the impression he had materialized from within the swarm. When they wanted to leave the same way, they would pray before the door. A cleric posted on the other side would remove the plugs to reveal eye holes, allowing him to check the identity of the person calling out. He would then unbar the door.

1.13 ORC BARRACKS

** Filthy straw pallets and half-eaten meals cover the floor.*

This room, once a workshop, is currently serving as the orcs' barracks. The place stinks of stale sweat, rotting food, and other odors best left to the imagination.

Lighting: A handful of candles provide Dim (-1) lighting.

Monsters: At any one time, half the orcs are awake gambling their pitiful stash of coins with dice, sharpening weapons, or eating. The other half is asleep. Orcs roused by their comrades or loud noises in the vicinity are automatically Shaken.

** Orc Warriors (2 per hero):* See page 29.

1.14 EMPTY ROOMS

These rooms were once workshops. After breaking in, the orcs removed the contents and carried them back to their lair in the mountains.

The first time the heroes enter one of these rooms, draw a card from the action deck. A black card indicates a lone orc is in the room. He might be bored, and scratching crude images into a wall with the tip of his weapon, or too lazy to walk all the way to the toilet.

1.15 WAX WORKSHOP

** In the center of the room is a fire pit. Above it, attached to the ceiling via a pulley and chain, is a huge iron cauldron.*



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* *Tables around the edges of the room contain all the tools necessary to make candles. There are also clay moulds for making statuettes of bees.*

The cult used bees wax to make candles and holy effigies. The candles were used to light the temple, but also sold to laity, as were the wax bees.

Treasure: Although the orcs have burned dozens of candles during their occupation, there are still three dozen finished candles on one of the tables. The various tools weigh 5 pounds, and are collectively worth 20 dinars to a chandler.

1.16 PURIFICATION ROOM

* *Five archways provide access into a long, narrow chamber. A long, deep stone trough fills the eastern half.*

Before entering the lower temple, laity would wash their hands and faces. The orcs have defiled it by using it as a toilet.

Level 2

The second level was the spiritual heart of the temple, home to its priests and paladins, and where the most sacred work was carried out.

2.1 UPPER TEMPLE

* *The top of the stairs is flush with the floor. A low wooden balustrade serves to prevent anyone from accidentally falling down the stairwell.*

* *An altar made of gold-veined black marble stands to the east.*

* *The walls are decorated with murals depicting bees collecting nectar from flowers and delivering it back to a crowned queen bee whose image is on the ceiling directly over the altar.*

* *Behind the altar, a glittering curtain made up of strands of gold bees blocks sight and access to the rear of the temple.*

* *Six statues of giant bees (3' tall) holding small iron braziers in their front pair of leg stand at various points around the room.*

While the laity worshipped in the temple on the lower level, the clergy honored their deity in this holy place.

The curtain (the long dotted line on the map) is made up of gold bees strung together on silk threads. It served to allow clergy to move around behind the temple without disturbing services.

The guardians in the room attack when a character moves within 1" of the altar or tries to deface one of the statues. The small braziers clatter to the ground as the animated stone bees release them.

Terrain: The braziers held by the stone bees are not lit and contain no charcoal or oil. Separate to the statue, a character can remove one as an action (this does not count as defacing the statue). Move-

ment through a space containing a statue is Difficult Ground.

Movement through a space containing part of the altar is Difficult Ground.

Monsters: The room is protected by a number of stone giant bees and an animated curtain. The stone bees nearest the altar are the animated ones.

* **Animated Curtain (1):** See page 28.

* **Giant Stone Bees (1 per hero):** See page 29.

Treasure: When the curtain is defeated, the bees fall to the ground and revert to being mundane gold bees. Collected together, they amount to 700 dinars worth of treasure. Each 50 dinars worth weighs one pound.

2.2 PALADINS' QUARTERS

* *Four sets of bunk beds indicate this room was once home to eight people. No attempt has been made to remove any of the bed linen.*

* *Two small wooden chests stand at the bottom of each bed. Their lids are open.*

* *A stone basin stands on a slender pedestal beside the only other door.*

This room was home to the temple's force of paladins. The chests were used to hold their personal effects, as well as things like spare robes. The basin was used for washing. There is nothing here of value.

2.3 ARMORY

* *Racks and stands indicate this room was once an armory.*

This room served as the paladins' personal armory.

Treasure: The paladins left behind armaments they could not carry—50 standard arrows, two quivers, three short spears, one long spear, one medium shield, and a suit of human-sized leather armor.

2.4 HALLOWED HALL

* *From the upper temple (Area 2.1), the heroes can see wax sculptures standing in deep niches. The statues are life-sized and remarkably detailed.*

All clerics who died in service to the temple were mummified and entombed in a necropolis elsewhere in the foothills of the northern Pillars of Suleiman. To honor certain high priests, wax replicas (their faces modelled from death masks) were installed in this hall, allowing living clerics to leave offerings and say prayers without having to make the arduous journey to the necropolis. The main necropolis is not detailed here, and can be used by the GM to form the basis of another adventure.

When the plan to abandon and trap the temple was being drawn up, it was decided to invest in the creation of a small number of wax golems to serve as additional guardians.

Trap: The instant the first two characters have passed through the short dotted line separating this area from the upper temple, a barrier of living bees (Toughness 10)

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fills the void. At the same time, a couple of the statues in the niches reveal themselves to be wax golems. This occurs only the first time the heroes pass into this area.

Secret Door: The second most southerly niche in the west wall has a secret door in the back wall. Locating it requires a deliberate search and a Notice roll at –2. Success also finds the release mechanism. Pressing it causes the door to swing inward.

Terrain: The wax statues fill the niches, making movement from those spaces impossible.

Monsters: The number of wax statues that animate is equal to one per two heroes in the party, not those currently in this area. For parties with more than four characters, any additional wax golems animate in niches selected by the GM.

* **Wax Golems (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 29.

2.5 TREASURY

* *There a dozen small chests on the floor.*

* *Scattered around the floor are handfuls of gold coins.*

Like modern cults, the clerics of Melissah garnered money through donations, rent of land, the selling of spells, herbal remedies, and alchemical devices, and other services. They spent a large portion of their treasury on the creation of the wax golems in Area 2.4, and took what they could carry when they sealed the temple. Even so, they could not carry the entire treasury contents, and left coins behind in favor of saving spiritual objects and alchemical devices.

Treasure: There is 1250 dinars in assorted gold coins. The coins are not technically legal tender, since they bear the stamp of no modern ruler, but few merchants will refuse them. Due to nefarious acts like clipping, coins are valued based on their weight, not their face value.

2.6 OFFERING ROOM

* *Inscribed on the floor in gold letters (in the Mago-rian tongue) is the phrase, “Your offering is pleasing to the goddess.”*

* *In the center of the room is a large iron brazier stamped with images of bees. Attached to one side of a brazier is a metal disc, on which are small, waxy lumps.*

* *The only other exit is an archway across the other side of the room.*

Through the archway lies the holy of holies (Area 2.7). Before entering, the high priest would burn a piece of fragrant incense. This served to purify his body and mind, and appease the deity. The normal incense burned here has been replaced with a poisonous substance.

Dropping one of the gold bees whose letters spell out the name Melissah releases a cloud of sweet-smelling vapors. The bee is destroyed, and one of the wards protecting the holy of holies is deactivated.

Terrain: Movement through any square containing part of the brazier is Difficult Ground.

Trap: Despite over a millennium passing, the coals in the brazier are still hot. Dropping a piece of incense into the brazier releases a cloud of smoke that quickly fills a Small Burst Template centered on the brazier. Everyone in the room must make a Vigor roll at –2 or suffer an automatic wound as the smoke blisters their eyes, skin, and lungs.

Treasure: There are six lumps of “incense.” Each has a value of 10 dinars, though only an assassin or other evil soul would be interested in purchasing them.

2.7 HOLY OF HOLIES

* *Surrounding the archway on both sides are carved with images of bees. In two lines they march up either side of the archway toward an image of a crowned queen bee carved into the capstone.*

* *Within is a gold statue of a queen bee the size of an adult human. It wears a gold crown. From its maw drips a glistening drop of amber liquid.*

The holy of holies is the most sacred space in any temple. The statue is not merely a representation of the deity—it is believed to be a physical incarnation. Thus, the holy of holies is the deities home in the mortal world. Since the beginning of civilization, only the high priests are permitted free access to this space.

Close inspection of the carved bees around the arch automatically reveals the processions have oddities. For each ward deactivated, there is a gold bee in one of the two lines. For each ward yet to be deactivated, there is a gap in the procession.

Casting *detect arcana* on the archway reveals it is filled with power magic. The caster must make a Spirit roll, with a cumulative –1 penalty for each ward still intact, or be Shaken by the brilliance of the aura.

Trap: Attempting to pass through the archway before all four wards are deactivated may prove fatal. With all four wards intact, anyone attempting to pass through the barrier by any means suffers 4d6 damage and is knocked back 4”. For each ward deactivated, the damage is reduced by 1d6 and the knockback by 1”.

Treasure: The only real treasure here is the blob of divine royal jelly dripping from the statue’s maw. The power of the jelly is not fixed. Rather, individual GMs can use one of the suggestions below or create something of their own devising. Regardless of what it does, it works only once. The chosen power is automatically known to any character who touches it.

* Though rumored to grant immortality, the jelly cannot cheat death, at least not completely. It can, however, revive the recently dead. Forcing the jelly down the throat of someone dead no longer than their Vigor die type in rounds (an action) returns them to life with three wounds. No magic or miracle can replicate this effect, making it a unique, and powerful, gift.

* Whoever eats it gains limited power over bees. Once per day, he can attempt to cast *beast friend* (bees and giant bees) or *summon beast* (bees and giant bees only). The choice of spell each day is up to the hero. Clerics of

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Ashtart or Melissah use Faith. Other characters use Spirit as their arcane skill die.

* Smearred onto an injured character, it removes up to three levels of wounds.

* Eating it grants the character increased vigor. He permanently gains one die of Vigor (or +1 if already at d12), as if he used an advance. Should Apithera somehow gain possession of the royal jelly and consume it, this is the effect she gains. The fact it does not grant her immortality and the power to enslave minds automatically causes her to go berserk, as per the Edge.

* A cleric of the bee goddess who eats the jelly gains instantly one die in Faith, irrespective of her Spirit die. A non-cleric gains the Arcane Background (Miracles) Edge, Faith d4, and becomes a priest or paladin (his choice) of Melissah.

2.8 PRIESTS' QUARTERS

* Seven sets of bunk beds indicate this room was once home to 14 people. No attempt has been made to remove any of the bed linen.

* Two small wooden chests stand at the bottom of each bed. Their lids are open.

* A stone basin stands on a slender pedestal beside the only other door.

This room was home to the temple's priests. The chests were used to hold their personal effects, as well as things like spare robes. The basin was used for washing. There is nothing here of value.

2.8A MEDITATION ROOM

* The north wall is made up of hexagonal niches some four feet to a side.

The hexagons stretch from floor to ceiling. Intended to remind priests of their goddess' divine hive, priests would sit in these and meditate on worldly and spiritual matters. There is nothing here of value.

2.9 PURIFICATION ROOM

* A large, deep stone trough stands against the west wall. It is empty.

Before entering the corpse preparation room (Area 2.10), the clerics would thoroughly wash their entire bodies so as not to transfer their sins to the deceased they were about to handle.

2.10 CORPSE PREPARATION

* Three stone slabs, their upper surface inscribed with writing around the edge and a crowned bee in the center, occupy the center of this room.

* A large stone trough stands against the northeast wall.

The corpses of clerics awaiting mellification were ritually washed, their injuries tended so as not to transfer to their spirit in the Afterlife, and prayers for

a safe passage to Melissah's celestial hive spoken over them.

The writing is Magorian, and takes the form of prayers to Melissah to accept a recently departed soul into her embrace and forgive it any sins committed during its mortal incarnation.

2.11 HONEY STORAGE

* The floor is made up of shattered clay amphorae.

The amphorae once contained the vast quantities of specially blessed honey required to mellify a corpse. Before abandoning the temple, the containers were ritually smashed to prevent the sacred honey falling into the hands of intruders, and as an offering to Melissah.

2.12 MELLIFICATION ROOM

* Three stone sarcophagi lie in this room. Each is on its back, forming a trough. None have any lids.

Once prepared, corpses were placed in the sarcophagi and submersed in honey until their flesh has been preserved from decay. The honey that remained was then scraped out and eaten in a ritual meal. This act was believed to transfer any illness or sins from the corpse to the living, who could then receive treatment or repent, so freeing the deceased from carrying them in the Afterlife.

Monsters: All three sarcophagi contain mellified zombies. Unless the heroes have been stealthy, they have heard their approach and begin on Hold. If anyone leans over one of the sarcophagi, they attack. Check for Surprise. Otherwise, they wait patiently until they hear the intruders moving away and then silently rise to follow them. Climbing out of a sarcophagi is an action.

* **Mellified Zombies (3):** See page 30.

2.13 HIGH PRIEST'S OFFICE

* A table and four chairs are the only furnishings.

This room was the high priest's office, from where the mundane business of the temple was conducted. There is nothing of any value.

2.13A BEDROOM

* A single bed, small chest, low table, and washtub are the only contents.

This was the high priest's bedroom. There is nothing of any value.

2.14 SENIOR PALADIN'S OFFICE

* A table and four chairs are the only furnishings.

This room was the senior paladin's office, from where the mundane business of the protecting the temple and organizing guard rotas was conducted. There is nothing of any value.

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2.14A BEDROOM

** A single bed, small chest, low table, weapon rack, armor stand, and washbasin are the only contents.*

This was the senior paladin's bedroom. There is nothing of any value.

2.15 MEETING SPACE

** Low benches line many of the walls.*

** Three narrow pillars, each decorated to resemble a mass of bees crawling toward the ceiling.*

Clerics would sit here to discuss business. Honored guests would be seated here before meeting with either the high priest or senior paladin. There is nothing of value.

Level 3

The third level was dedicated to research and alchemical and herbal work, all of which was carried out by clerics. Very few laity ever entered here.

3.1 LESSER HALLOWED HALL

** Seven tall stone sarcophagi stand upright along the hallway. Three stand flush against the north wall, and four along the south. All are shut.*

Originally, there were a number of archways leading off this hallway to chambers. Before the temple was abandoned, the priests installed the sarcophagi to conceal these rooms.

Sarcophagi: The sarcophagi are secured flush to the wall by iron bolts on the inside. All of the sarcophagi are shut, but none are sealed or otherwise secured against opening. No roll is required to open them, though doing so takes an action. Each sarcophagus lid is hinged to open to the left. The lids are carved with images of priests clad in striped robes.

The one in front of the library has an additional design to the others—the image on the lid wears a necklace of bees, similar in design to the gold bees the heroes carry, save there are no letters on its wings. This is intended to lure trespassers into the library, rather than the room containing the true ward.

The four marked “X” on the map have no backs, and open directly into the chamber beyond.

Terrain: The sarcophagi take up a lot of room. Movement through a square containing one is Difficult Ground.

Monsters: The three sarcophagi not concealing an archway each contain a mellified zombie. As soon as any sarcophagus is opened, the zombies shove open the doors (an action) and move to attack.

** Mellified Zombies (3):* See page 30. Armed with short swords (Str+d6).

3.2 LOUNGE

** Aside from wooden benches, this room is empty.*

The clerics used this room to discuss matters of interest with peers, take a break from their daily chores on this level, and to meet with honored guests. It contains nothing of value.

3.3 LIBRARY

** This oddly shaped room has tall, square pillars that support the ceiling. To a height of six feet, each face is carved with small hexagons. Many contain scrolls.*

** Three archways lead off this room.*

A major religious site in the region, the temple was held a well-stocked library. In an age before books, the knowledge was written on scrolls, which were housed in the various niches.

Pillars: The pillar in front of the entrance has an indentation the same size and shape as the gold bee tokens the heroes possess. Although intended to look like a ward, this is in fact a trap. Contained inside the pillar in a magical hibernation is a swarm of bees. Should one of the keys be inserted into the indentation, it promptly falls back out. The front of the pillar then crumbles away, releasing the awakened bees.

Terrain: Movement through a square containing a scroll pillar is Difficult Ground.

Monsters: Depending on the party's strength and ability to deal with a swarm, there is either one Medium Burst Template (Toughness 6) or two Small Burst Template (Toughness 5) swarms.

** Bee Swarm:* See page 30.

Treasure: Scrolls are not particularly heavy, but they are bulky. Only the most valuable texts were taken by the fleeing clerics. Most of those left behind are of little use save to scholars or clerics of Ashtart and Melissah. Each 5 pounds of scrolls has a value of 100 dinars. The collection has a base value of 4000 dinars (and thus weighs 200 pounds). A Streetwise roll is required to find a sage who will purchase them (as per Selling Goods in the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*). A temple of Ashtart offers 2500 without need for a Streetwise roll, with half the amount in coin and half in alchemical devices.

There are also a few special scrolls not included in the above, either because the heroes may consider them worth keeping or because they have a special value. Finding one requires an Investigation roll, the ability to read Magorian, and one hour. The characters may search for as long as they want. Prices are base amounts, and will be modified by Streetwise rolls.

** A herbalist text.* Armed with this volume, a herbalist has +1 to his rolls when creating antitoxin and healing (swarm) remedies. The latter applies to any bites, scratches, or stings inflicted by any type of swarm. Worth 300 dinars to a herbalist.

** A translation dictionary between Magorian and Hekatic (its parent tongue).* Allows a character who knows one of the languages to make a Common Knowledge roll

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to decipher text in the other. Typically, this method allows the equivalent of a page of script to be translated in one hour—slow, but still useful to parties lacking a broad linguistic base. Worth 200 dinars to a scholar, tomb robber, or the cult of Tammuz.

* A tome of necromantic lore written in Hekatic. Grants +1 to Knowledge (Arcana) and Knowledge (History) rolls, but only with regard khem-hekau magic. Worth 400 dinars to a khem-hekau mage or tomb robber, or the cults of Iblis or Tammuz.

3.3A WRITING SUPPLIES

* Large scrolls and sealed clay pots sit in hexagonal niches carved into the walls.

* The niches in the west wall hold ivory scroll cases.

The scrolls are rolls of blank papyrus. When a scribe or scholar needed papyrus, he would cut the desired length from one of the bundles. The clay pots once contained various colored inks. All that remains in the bottom is a hardened residue.

Treasure: Unlike the ink, the papyrus has weathered the passage of time in the dry interior of the temple. There is the equivalent of 400 sheets of parchment in the niches. There are also 20 scroll cases. They lack wax ends, and thus are not waterproof.

3.3B READING ROOM

* Low benches line the walls.

Scholars would sit here to read scrolls from the library. There is nothing of interest.

3.3C SCRIPTORIUM

* Low tables and stools fill this room.

* On various tables are papyri partially written papyri, open clay jars, and writing implements.

For a fee, scholars could request a copy of a scroll from one of the temple scribes, or copy it out themselves. The jars once contained ink, but the liquid has evaporated to leave a hard residue on the bottom.

3.4 HERBALIST WORKSHOP

* Tables, shelves, and stools stand scattered around the room. Some of the tables contain small pieces of equipment.

A character with the Hedge Magic Edge automatically recognizes the equipment as the sort used by herbalists. Other characters can deduce this with a Common Knowledge roll. The equipment has no intrinsic value.

3.4A HERB STORE

* The walls are carved with small hexagonal niches.

The room was the herb store. Most of the niches are empty, but six still hold sealed clay pots.

Treasure: The jars are labeled in Magorian, and

contain dried herbs to create 1 x anti-inflammatory, 2 x antitoxin, 1 x healing (regenerative), 2 x purgative, and 1 x stimulant II remedies. Despite their age, the care with which they were preserved and the airtight seals have ensured the dried herbs are still effective medicines. They cannot be refreshed, however.

3.5 PURIFICATION ROOM

* Six musty black and gold striped robes hang on pegs to the left of the entrance.

* There is a large font to the east of the door, carved to resemble a flower with its petal open horizontally. Carved bees stand on the petals. The depression in the center of the pedestal is empty.

* There is an archway in the southern wall. Inscribed above it in Magorian is the phrase, "Only the pure of flesh and heart may receive wisdom."

Clerics seeking guidance from Melissah would ritually wash themselves here before donning ceremonial robes. The former symbolized physical purity, and the latter spiritual purity. In order to pass safely into the adjoining divination chamber (see below), the characters (or at least one of them) must do the same. They must work this out for themselves, though. One quart of water is required for the ritual washing.

While laity of any faith may call upon any god to aid them, clerics and others who have devoted their life to a single deity are expected to call only upon their patron. A cleric who performs the ritual washing and dons one of the robes is committing a minor sin. A successful Common Knowledge roll reveals this in advance of making the affront.

3.6 DIVINATION CHAMBER

The description is as the heroes see the room from outside the entrance.

* The walls are decorated with hexagonal carvings and images of bees.

* In the south is a large statue of a queen bee wearing a gold crown. Its yellow and black stripes glitter in the light of your lanterns.

Clerics seeking a solution to a vexing problem or guidance in their life would come here to converse with their deity. Only on the rarest of occasions would Melissah, through a herald, impart a true divine revelation. Much of the time, the simple acts of mediation and prayer were enough for the mortal to find the answer he sought. Even so, this is a holy place.

As soon as any living creature enters the room, it becomes filled wall to wall with a swarm of angry bees. Any person who has not ritually washed and donned ceremonial robe suffers an automatic 2d4 damage per round he remains in the chamber. Those who did as instructed are not harmed by the bees. Except through one means (described below) the swarm cannot be harmed or hampered—slain bees are instantly replaced by new ones.

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The statue is five feet tall and represents Melissah. Inscribed in Magorian on the plinth of which it stands is the phrase, "Speak honestly, and receive wisdom."

A hero need only speak of his desire to find the ward deactivation point on this level (or something to that effect). Upon uttering his desire, the statue rears up to reveal an indentation on its abdomen the size and shape of one of the golden bees. Placing one of the four bees that spell out the name Melissah in the indentation cause it to transform into stone and fuse with the statue, which then resumes its normal pose. One of the wards on the holy of holies deactivates, and the bees in this chamber vanish.

Treasure: The stripes on the statue are thin layers of gold and onyx worked into narrow channels in the statue's stone body. Collecting the precious substances takes an hour, and nets the thief a paltry 200 dinars worth of material. The crown lifts off the head easily, and is worth 300 dinars.

Should the statue be defaced in any way, it spews out a Large Burst Template swarm of bees (Toughness 7). Check for Surprise. Only the desecrator and those who fight against the bees are subjected to attack—the swarm ignores other creatures, even if they enter its template.

3.7 ALCHEMICAL LABORATORY

** Long tables hold an array of pestles and mortars, tongs, glass and clay jars, worked sticks, and other assorted odds and ends.*

** The floor is strewn with smashed glass and clay receptacles, loose pages of papyrus, small balls of wax, and such like.*

Novice characters won't have access to the Alchemy Edge, but spellcasters may well have seen an alchemist's workshop during their apprenticeships. A Common Knowledge roll reveals the room for what it is.

The clerics abandoned the room in a hurry, sweeping items of value off the tables and leaving behind anything they deemed unessential. The papyrus fragments contain instructions for creating various alchemical devices, but none are complete—they are simply stray pages dropped by the fleeing clerics.

Treasure: In their haste to leave, the clerics accidentally left behind two alchemical devices. *Detect arcana* is the easiest and safest way to sort the magical devices from mundane objects. Touching them with bare skin reveals their magical nature, but takes time—30 minutes to find both. More characters searching reduces the time accordingly (four characters, for instance, can complete a search of the entire room in just 8 minutes).

** An unfurled scroll written in Magorian containing a deflection spell cast with a success. The target is surrounded by a cloud of bees.*

** A small pot of honey imbued with fly cast with a raise. Eating the honey activates the power. The user grows bee's wings for the duration.*

Level 4

The uppermost chamber in the temple was once a sacred herb garden, from where the temple's herbalists would gather raw materials. Bees would fly through the oculus to feed before returning to their hives. The miracle used to seal the temple has kept the plants alive, though without regular tending weeds have taken over.

4.1 HERB GARDEN

** The walls are curved, and rise upward to a height of 50 feet (9") at their pinnacle. At the top, where the walls should meet, is an oculus. The hole is sealed with a buzzing wall of golden energy.*

** The walls are carved like the interior of a beehive, with hexagonal niches forming the honeycomb. Each niche is several feet wide and five feet deep.*

** Stone statues of giant bees cling to the walls.*

** Much of the floor is covered in twisted vegetation to a height of three feet.*

** The air is humid, so much so that the vegetation is fresh and the walls drip with moisture.*

While the lower niches are merely decorative, the upper ones contain statues of giant bees. These are not visible from the ground. Concealed beneath the vegetation in the center of the room is a low altar in the form of a giant bee. It appears to be made of solid gold, but in fact stone coated in gold leaf. On the back of its head is an indentation that perfectly fits one of the smaller bees the heroes are carrying.

As soon as a character moves onto a patch of vegetation or one of the bee statues is attacked, have the party make Notice rolls to avoid Surprise. Characters who declared wariness of their surroundings receive a +2 bonus. Those who fail are Surprised as giant stone bees begin to release themselves from the walls and emerge from the niches.

Altar: A hero who moves adjacent to the concealed altar may make a Notice roll as a free action to spot it beneath the weeds. It is low enough that a character walking over it will detect nothing other than a slight rise and fall in his progress. Clearing away the weeds to reveal the indentation requires a Strength roll at -2 as an action.

Placing anyone of the engraved golden bees into the indentation (an action) immediately causes the giant bees to return to one of the upper niches and revert to statue form. It also deactivates one of the four wards protecting the holy of holies. The golden bee fuses with the altar and transforms into mundane stone, rendering it worthless.

Lighting: Little of the light from the energy barrier across the oculus reaches floor level. The ambient lighting is Dark (-2).

Oculus: A creature trying to pass through the oculus from either direction suffers 1d6 damage on touching the energy field, and is thrown back 1" by the shock.

Bestiary

QUEEN APITHERA

Apithera bint Melik was fascinated by bees from an early age. She learned to appreciate their industriousness, their unity, and their absolute loyalty to their queen. Shortly after becoming a priestess of Melissah she began to see the sentient races as nothing but a disorganized, fractured rabble greatly in need of a unifying force. Suleiman did his best to bring order out of chaos, but his teachings have been twisted or forgotten, dividing the races even further instead of uniting them. Should the races be of one mind, wars and suffering would become a thing of the past, for all would be equal parts working for the greater good, albeit under her iron rule.

Dark magic and the consumption of great quantities of mundane royal jelly have warped her mind even further, altered her physical form, and imbued her with strange powers.

Though always beautiful, her firm flesh is now a radiant gold color, giving her an unearthly quality. Her voice, while still soft, has the buzzing quality of bees. She can command bees, both normal sized and giant, with a word, for all of their ilk answer to her summons as their queen-in-waiting. Should she be wounded, she sheds not blood, but thick, golden honey.

Apithera believes that the divine royal jelly in the temple of Melissah will grant her two more powers—immortality, and the ability to enslave the minds of every mortal into a hive entity under her guidance. Pray to the gods she is not successful.

Two of her powers, listed under *Regurgitate*, are unlikely to be used during play, though if the opportunity presents itself she will not refrain from wielding them to best effect. They are included mainly for completeness, as she has used these abilities to create her cult. She has many other powers, such as creating bees inside people through dark magic and tainted honey, but these are plot devices, not powers she can wield freely in combat.

Magic Items: Apithera has two potions of *sanctuary*. One was created by a khamsin jinn mage under her thrall. It teleports the drinker (and only the drinker) to a concealed spot not far from the temple of Melissah. The heroes will not get their hands on this item, as she uses it in an earlier encounter. The second is a strategic gamble. Once the wards on the lost temple are down, Apithera

Terrain: Movement through the vegetation is Difficult Ground. The vegetation does not burn.

Monsters: On the first round, one giant stone bee per 2 heroes attacks. At the start of each round thereafter, roll a d4 and half the result (rounding up) to see how many giant bees join the fight. Roll a d12 for each bee and read the result like a clock face (north marks the “12” position). This indicates from which section of wall the bee emerges. There are a total of 12 bees. Once that many have been animated, no more appear.

* **Giant Stone Bees (12):** See page 29.

Treasure: The only object of value is the gold altar. Close investigation quickly reveals the gold is only a thin layer of leaf. Peeling of the gold takes several hours, and nets the heroes only 200 dinars worth of treasure. Such an act may count as desecration (this is the GM’s call—the temple is abandoned but still consecrated), and lead to divine repercussions.

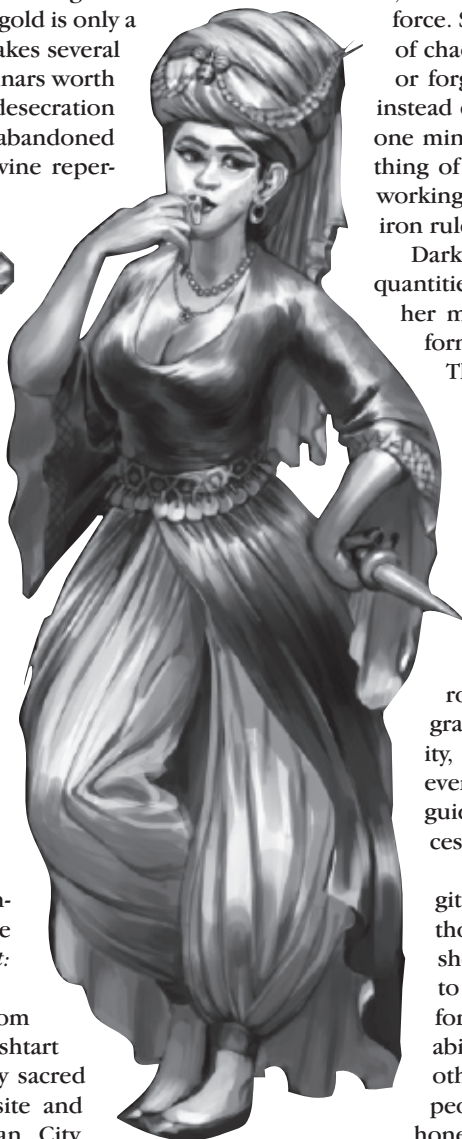
Aftermath

With Apithera slain, those in her thrall are released. They have no memory of actions undertaken while in her power, and cannot account for the lost time. The threat to the desert has ended, even if no one but the heroes is aware of their brave deed. Of course, Apithera may have had an apprentice who shared her views, and the threat of a renegade cleric set on carrying out her mistress’ plans or enacting revenge on her killers may yet haunt the victorious heroes.

The existence of the temple remains a mystery to the cults of Ashtart and Melissah unless the characters choose to reveal it. Should the heroes do so, the cult they inform rewards them with a favor. See the free expansion in the Hellfrost section of the Triple Ace Games website, or *Hellfrost: Rassilon Expansion*.

Although the temple is too far from civilization to reopen, the cults of Ashtart and Melissah are quick to remove any sacred objects before thieves discover the site and plunder it. These are taken to Hulwan, City of Gardens, and installed in the only current temple of Melissah amid great pomp and ceremony.

At the GM’s discretion, and assuming the heroes did not plunder any sacred objects, the high priestess of Melissah may introduce them to Emira Rihana bint Daud. Such an audience would be extremely brief, and far from private, but having their name known by such a powerful person is a reward not to be sniffed at.



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OPTIONAL SWARM RULES

The following rules for swarms are optional. The first is designed to make swarms more of a challenge, while the second modifies Toughness to allow for differences in template size.

NEW SPECIAL ABILITIES

* **Distracting:** Having hundreds or thousands of biting or stinging insects swarming around you is extremely distracting. Any character who begins his turn inside the swarm's template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken from a non-damaging source. (Being Shaken by this means does not mean the hero is stunned into inaction. Rather, his resolve has broken, and instead of concentrating on the task at hand he is wildly trying to brush off or swat away the creatures. This does not constitute an attack on the part of the hero.)

* **Merge:** If two Small Burst Template swarms overlap, they form into a single Medium Burst Template swarm automatically. Three Small swarms form a Large Burst Template swarm, as does the merging of a Small and Medium swarm. Swarms may never exceed a Large Burst Template in size.

* **Resilient:** An Extra swarm larger than a Small Burst Template which takes a wound is not automatically destroyed. Instead, it shrinks to the next smallest template size. A Small Burst Template swarm taking a wound is destroyed. Area effect attacks which inflict multiple wounds shrink the template by one size per wound caused.

VARIABLE TOUGHNESS

Swarms have varying Toughness. Small Burst Template swarms are Toughness 5, Medium ones Toughness 6, and Large ones Toughness 7. Vigor remains unchanged from a d10.

hopes it will teleport her inside the building, which is the closest temple technically dedicated to Ashtart.

Her dagger is the stinger from a giant bee. Once per day, it can inject a dose of Venomous (+0) poison into a victim Shaken or wounded by the attack simply by squeezing the hilt. This can be declared after damage is rolled.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (3)

Gear: Short sword (Str+d6), enchanted dagger (Str+d4, see above), 4 x potion of *healing* (cures one wound), 2 x potion of *sanctuary*

Treasure: Rich

Special Abilities:

* **Armor (+3):** Hardened honey-infused flesh.

* **Powers:** *Bolt* (bee stings), *deflection* (swarm of harmless bees), *fly* (grows bee's wings), *obscure* (thick swarm of harmless bees), *summon beast* (bee swarms and giant bees only).

* **Queen Bee:** No bees, no matter their source, will ever attack her. Should she so desire, she can extend this protection to other creatures. She has a permanent and constant *beast friend (bees)* spell in effect that affects even conjured bees. She also has the Command Edge with regard to giant bees and bee swarms she controls or has summoned.

* **Regurgitate:** By spending a benny, Apithera can regurgitate royal jelly. None of these abilities is a spell, and thus they cannot be thwarted by *dispel* or *negate arcana*.

* **Create Zombie:** Spitting the jelly into the mouth of a corpse instantly animates it as a mellified zombie. The undead remains until destroyed. Apithera can use the senses and control the actions of her slaves at any distance, though doing so counts as an action.

* **Enthrall:** She can also regurgitate the jelly into the mouth of a living creature (normally through a kiss). The victim must succeed at an opposed Spirit roll to resist, or become her slave. The effect is permanent (but can be resisted if the victim is commanded to act against his better nature, as per the *puppet* spell), though instantly negated if Apithera is slain.

* **Slam:** Str.

* **Sticky:** Apithera can voluntarily ooze a sticky residue. This gives her +2 to make and maintain grapples, and grants her the ability to crawl up walls and across ceilings at her full Pace (but not run).

* **Susceptible (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from fire and heat.

* **Swarm Host:** When Apithera is wounded by any means except coldfire, cold, fire, or heat, she spits out an Extra bee swarm for each wound suffered. Place a Small Burst Template adjacent to Apithera. The swarm is dealt an action card at the start of the next round.

ANIMATED CURTAIN

The animated curtain takes the form of strands of gold bees on silk threads. It is a form of golem.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: —; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Treasure: None.

Special Abilities:

* **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

* **Grapple:** Reach 1. Each round the grapple is main-

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tained, the victim automatically suffers 2d4 damage to his least armored location as the bees sting him.

- * **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like *puppet*.
- * **Pseudo-Swarm:** The curtain takes no damage from piercing weapons (such as arrows or spears) or blunt weapons (like hammers and maces). A character can try to rip the bees from the curtain with his bare hands. A successful Fighting roll inflicts his Strength damage.

BEE, GIANT

Normally, bees only attacked when provoked. The bees encountered in this adventure (giant and swarms) are not mundane creatures, being either under the command of Apithera or guided by Melissah. Characters with Beast Master are not spared their assaults.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d4

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Death Sting:** A giant bee that inflicts a wound with its stinger automatically dies at the end of the round in which it inflicted the damage.
- * **Flight:** Pace 8.
- * **Poison (+0):** Any creature Shaken or wounded by a sting attack must make a Vigor roll or suffer the effects of Venomous poison.
- * **Protect the Queen:** Once per round, an individual giant bee adjacent to Apithera throws itself in front of any attack aimed at her. The attack is made against the bee instead of Apithera.
- * **Size -1:** Giant bees are 3' long.
- * **Sting:** Str+d6, AP 1.

BEE, GIANT STONE

These animated statues, placed in the temple as guardians, have sharp stings, but deliver no poison. This also means they do not die when they impale a victim. Though the same size a living giant bee, their stone form makes them tougher opponents.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d4

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (2)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +2:** Stone bodies.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Flight:** Pace 8.
- * **Size -1:** Giant bees are 3' long.

- * **Sting:** Str+d6, AP 1.

ENTHRALLED FARMERS

The farmers, one man, one woman, and two adult children, have been enthralled by Apithera.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d6, Shooting d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4)

Treasure: Meager

Special Abilities:

- * **Protect the Queen:** Once per round, an individual farmer adjacent to Apithera throws himself in front of any attack aimed at her. The attack is made against the farmer instead of Apithera.

GOLEM, WAX

Even when the temple was active, the cult of Melissah paid ushabti mages to fashion golems from bees wax to serve as sentinels. While many wax golems employed elsewhere were featureless humanoids, these specimens have been exquisitely carved to resemble the most important high priests of the order.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Hardened by Cold:** Immune to cold (but not coldfire or ice). Damage from cold attacks should be rolled as normal. Each "wound" inflicted by such attacks reduces the golem's Pace and running die roll by one, but gives it one point of Armor (max. +6). In cold temperatures, a wax golem gains Armor equal to the Vigor modifier to resist the cold, but loses equal Pace. A wax golem whose Pace drops to zero freezes solid—it can take no actions and has Parry 2. For each hour in temperatures above freezing, the golem recovers one point of Pace and loses one point of Armor.
- * **Size +2:** Wax golems are the same size as humans, but are made of dense wax.
- * **Slam:** Str.
- * **Weakness (Fire):** Takes double damage from cold-fire, fire, or heat.

ORC WARRIOR

These orcs are subservient to Queen Apithera, and have renamed their tribe the Deadly Sting.

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Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Gear: Leather armor (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short sword, axe, or mace (Str+d6), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6)

Treasure: Meager, per 3 warriors

Special Abilities:

- * **Protect the Queen:** Once per round, an individual orc adjacent to Apithera throws himself in front of any attack aimed at her. The attack is made against the orc instead of Apithera.
- * **Size +1:** Orcs are larger than humans.
- * **Tribal Trait:** Some orcs carry a bees' nest wrapped in

heavy blankets. With a Throwing roll, the orc can unfurl the nest to Range 2/4/8. This deviates as an area effect attack. The round after the nest lands, a Small Burst Template (Toughness 5) swarm of angry bees enters play.

SWARM, BEE

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Treasure: None.

Special Abilities:

- * **Distracting:** Any character who begins his turn inside the swarm's template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken from a non-damaging source.
- * **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like *puppet*.
- * **Sting:** Bee swarms inflict hundreds of tiny stings every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location.
- * **Susceptibility (Cold):** Takes +4 damage from cold and coldfire (but not ice).
- * **Swarm:** Parry +2. Because the swarm is composed of scores, hundreds, or thousands of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can swat at them to inflict his damage in Strength each round. Bee swarms are foiled by jumping in water.

ZOMBIE, MELLIFIED

Though the mellified zombies in this adventure are the creation of Apithera, she was not the first to create them.

It is said that before the jinn invaded Al-Shirkuh clerics of Ashtart would end their lives through a process of self-sacrifice. According to legend, they would consume naught but honey, and even bathe in it daily. Eventually, their sweat and feces would consist of honey, at which time death was certain. The cleric's corpse was then wrapped in a funerary shroud and place in a sarcophagus, into which was poured a great quantity of honey. On the lid was engraved the date of the interment. Exactly one hundred years later, the sarcophagus would be opened, and the honey-impregnated corpse broken up and sold as medicinal candy.

The part regarding the all-honey diet and eating the corpse are largely fictitious. The matter stems from the practice of tomb robbers, who sometimes sold chunks of mellified corpses as medicine. Is it true that some clerics of Ashtart in olden days were once placed in honey-filled sarcophagi to preserve their flesh for eternity. Those unfortunate corpses awakened by necromancers are known as mellified zombies.

Unlike regular zombies, the flesh of a mellified animated corpse is in a remarkable state of preservation. Save for the yellow coloration and dead eyes, one of these strange creatures could easily pass for a living creature at a distance. At least until it walks—they have an odd, loping gait.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Treasure: Worthwhile (stuck to corpse)

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor (+2):** Hardened honey-infused flesh.
- * **Slam:** Str.
- * **Sticky:** A mellified zombie can voluntarily ooze a sticky residue. This gives it +2 to make and maintain grapples, and grants it the ability to crawl up walls and across ceilings at its full Pace (but not run).
- * **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from fire and heat.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

Melissah

The write-up for Melissah will also appear in *Realm Guide #11: The Grazelands*. It is included here for completeness. Details of Hive Day—the goddess' high holy day—can be found in that supplement.

Titles: Queen Bee, Great Pollinator, Buzzing Lady, Mistress of Countless Stings.

Aspects: Bees.

Affiliations: Ashtart, Shamash.

Symbol: A golden bee.

Priesthood: Queens (priests); Drones (paladins).

Herald: None.

Holy Days: Each Yaus al-Niwt during Alak Paret. Hive Day is a high holy day.

Duties: To protect bees and bee hives.

Sins: (Minor) accidentally harming a bee, damaging a bee hive, not eating honey once a month; (Major) purposefully harming a bee, destroying a bee hive; (Mortal) killing a bee.

Signature Power: *Beast friend* (bee swarms and giant bees only).

Powers: *Aura, bolt, deflection, fly, obscure, stun, summon beast* (bee swarms and giant bees only).

Trappings: All trappings relate to bees. Many spells can be represented by swarms of bees, while *beast friend* and *summon beast* may involve the cleric making buzzing sounds or performing a dance similar to that of bees.

After accepting the bees as her worshippers, Ashtart

left them to their own devices. Bees were solitary creatures at this time, and they proved easy pickings for the birds, who blamed bees for causing for causing them to lose their sweet voices. Melissah, a lesser daughter of Shamash, took pity on the bees. She taught them the secret of building hives, in which they would be safe from birds, and convinced them to live together, for in numbers lay strength.

The early hives were chaotic, for the bees argued much of over who should do what work. Melissah divided the bees into two castes—rulers, who would always be females, and workers. In order to prevent further disputes, it was agreed that only one queen would inhabit each hive. Thus did bees become industrious and well-organized workers. Greatly pleased by her activities, Ashtart promoted Melissah to the statue of goddess of bees.

The only active temple to Melissah stands in Hulwan, City of Gardens. Bees are considered sacred animals in Hulwan. Killing one is punishable by a stiff fine, while being stung is a sign of misfortune, requiring the victim to make a donation to the temple in order for the bad omen to be removed. Every temple to Ashtart honors Melissah, its sacred bee hives serving as a living shrine. Melissah is only ever depicted in art as a bee wearing a crown. Most statues and drawing of Ashtart have a bee in them somewhere.

Priests are charged with ensuring the bees work hard pollinating the crops, placating the queens, and gathering honey. Paladins are responsible for protecting the hives against predators. More importantly, clerics of both types are important members of farming communities, where they work closely with the cult of Ashtart. Labor disputes are often mediated by clerics of Melissah, for bees are among the most industrious and harmonious creatures. While many clerics thus live in farming communities, some are itinerants, for Melissah's subjects can be found across Al-Shirkuh.

Ceremonies are strange, almost comical, affairs to outsiders. Dressed in robes of black and gold, clerics dance in elaborate patterns while shaking their rears and making loud buzzing sounds. Sacrifices involve flowers, which go to seed Melissah's garden, honey, the only food the goddess eats, and birds, the mortal enemies of bees.

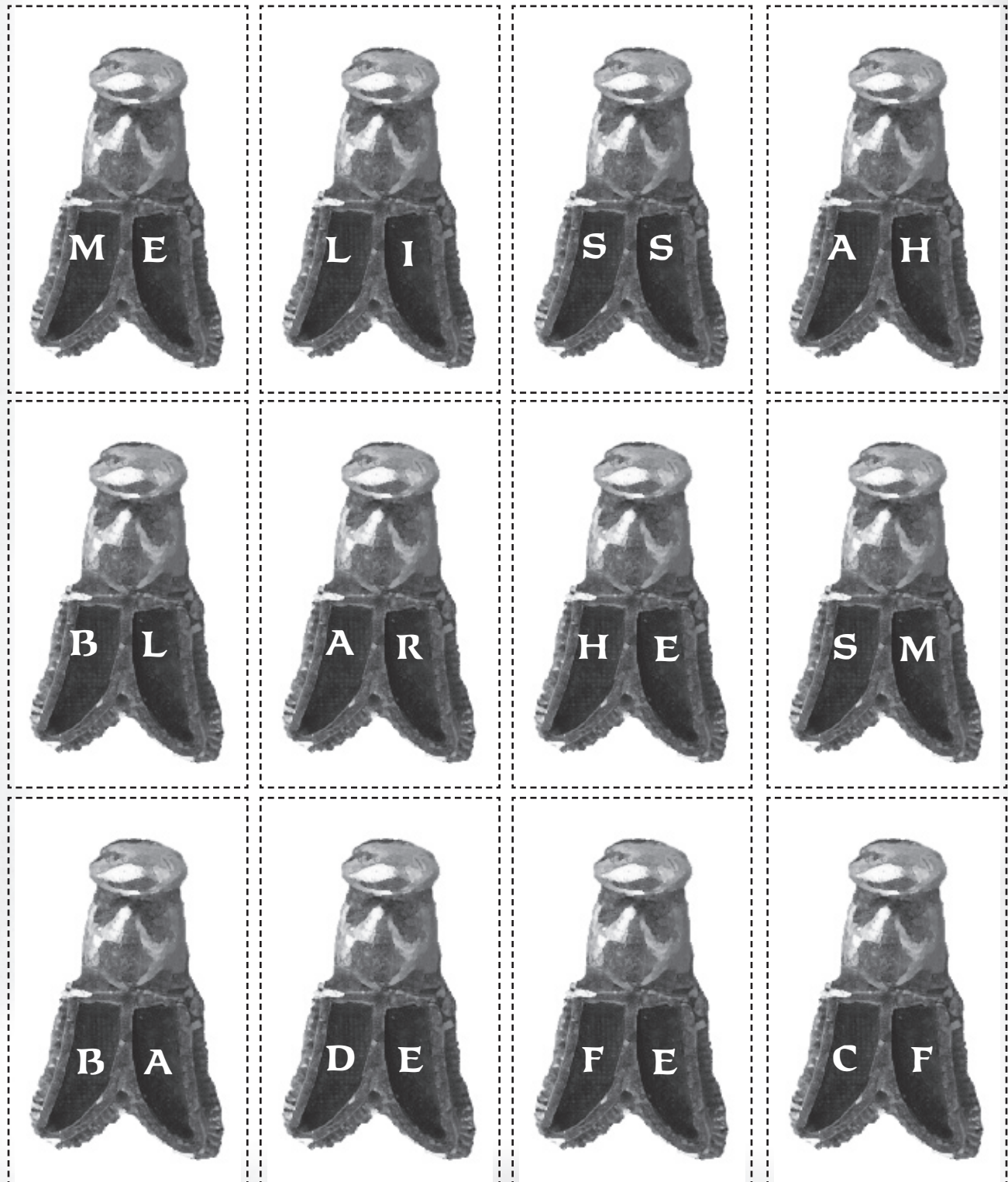
Character Guidelines: Clerics, like bees, are expected to be sociable and hardworking. Persuasion is useful for mediating industrial disputes, as well as helping organize people involved in common tasks, while Streetwise represents the ability to integrate oneself into society. Leadership Edges also represent the communal and cooperative nature of bees, though they are not essential. In terms of attributes, Agility represents the bees' nimbleness, Spirit its tenacity, and Vigor the resilience of the hive.

Paladins strike fast and often, delivering multiple blows as quickly as possible. Frenzy and Sweep are well-suited to this style, though Two-Fisted is also suitable.

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Player Handout #1

CUT OUT BEFORE PLAY BEGINS



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Player Handout #2

My friend,

Since last we communicated I have uncovered more information about the subject of my research. Everything I have learned leads me to believe I have discovered the existence of a major temple dedicated to Melissah, goddess of bees. I am sure this news will bring a smile to your face.

The temple is ancient, founded before he jinn enslaved the races. Within, so it is said, stood a gigantic statue of the deity in her guise as a queen bee. Obscure tales say that a single drop of royal jelly drips from her mouth every millennia. Obscure legends speak of this substance granting immortality, or at least fending off all earthly diseases. Others whisper of more sinister effects that I am loathe to put into writing.

While I have yet to unearth the exact location of the site, I have learned that when it was abandoned due to the threat of jinn conquest the clerics placed four powerful wards to prevent their greatest treasure falling into the wrong hands. Believing they would one day return, they created keys to disarm the spells. I am unsure of their nature, but I believe a Bedu contact has managed to secure them on my behalf and at no little expense. Agents, who I trust implicitly for their honor and bravery, are already en route to collect them.

As I write this, something troubles me. The shadow of which you spoke seems somehow tangible now, though I always had an active imagination. Still, I cannot help but feel some terrible fate threatens not only me, but the rest of the world. I can do little but pray by agents are successful, and that you can help locate the temple.

Perhaps I should take my news to the temple of Ashtart. I am sure the clerics would be interested in my discovery. Next I must discover the meaning of the name Potnia! I am sure it is important in some aspect of my quest.

Your friend as always,
Karam ibn Ramzi

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SERGEANT MAHMOUD

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command

Gear: Scale hauberk (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry), pot helm (+3), scimitar (Str+d8)

PRIVATE ASHRAF

Personality: Gung Ho

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), pot helm (+3), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

PRIVATE KHULUS

Personality: Crude

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), pot helm (+3), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

PRIVATE NAJI

Personality: Lazy

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), pot helm (+3), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

PRIVATE AMIR

Personality: Experienced

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), pot helm (+3), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

PRIVATE GHANIM

Personality: Bright

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), pot helm (+3), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

PRIVATE IYAD

Personality: Clueless

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Clueless, Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), pot helm (+3), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

PRIVATE MUTI

Personality: Bright

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), pot helm (+3), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

PRIVATE ABDUL-SABUR

Personality: Fearless

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), pot helm (+3), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

PRIVATE 'URWAH

Personality: Heroic

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), pot helm (+3), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

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NF3

DARKNESS AT DARSHAB



NF3: Darkness at Darshab is designed for a group of four Novice characters with 10 to 15 Experience Points. If you're looking to start play immediately, there are eight pregenerated Novice characters in the *Land of Fire* free download section on the Triple Ace Games' website. All the players need do is advance them accordingly and purchase their gear.

The encounters in this adventure are designed to automatically scale up or down based on the party's size. For parties of higher Rank, the GM should increase the number of opponents. As a rule of thumb, add one powerful or two weak Extras (your choice if multiple types are present) to the encounter for each Rank the party is above Novice. For instance, if a party of four Veteran adventurers encounter ghûls numbering one per hero, a party of four characters must fight a total of eight ghûls—four for the party size, plus an additional four because the party is Veteran.

Additionally, it is impossible to balance encounters in a published scenario to ensure every possible party configuration has a fair chance of success. Some parties will bristle with potent spellcasters and powerful warriors that can wade through scores of foes, others will comprise cunning rogues and thoughtful sages better suited to investigation and problem-solving. Most will likely fill a middle ground, and this is the option we have taken when writing the scenario. If after reading the adventure the GM decides his individual party will find the encounters too easy or too tough, he should adjust the opposition to provide a more suitable challenge.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES

This adventure is set in the Free Emirate States, though no exact location is given beyond being nearer the mountains than the sea. The GM is free to move it to one of the other great civilized realms, and can do so with minimal reworking. However, because the population is mixed creed, we suggest it be placed near a border, rather than in the heartland.

The season has not been specified, allowing the GM to set it any time he wishes. Remember to pay attention to the ambient temperature whenever the heroes are outside a settlement. Inside one, it is assumed they are able to drink the required amount of water to stave off heat stroke and dehydration.

SUGGESTED VIEWING

Part of this adventure is set in a natural cave system inhabited by ravenous ghûls. Before running this adventure, GMs might want to watch *The Descent*. It's a modern horror film, but it perfectly portrays the difficulties of subterranean exploration (even with modern equipment and techniques), and the villains of the film are not that different from ghûls.

Background Notes

The village of Darshab is one of countless other small settlements—too insignificant to appear on all but the most detailed and localized maps, and largely ignored by the world. A simple farming community, the villagers earn a living by selling excess crops to the nearest great city and catering to the small trade caravans that call on the settlements in the area every few months. Lying beyond the boundaries of any of the great cities, Darshab is an independent community run by an elected headman. The population is divided between Devoted and Faithful, and the two creeds have lived in harmony since the village was founded well over 200 years ago. The only arguments concerning religion are between parents trying to decide how to raise their children, and these are usually settled both quickly and peacefully.

All in all, Darshab is a sleepy backwater, the sort of place heroes in search of adventure pass through without stopping for long. At least, it was.

A little over a year ago, Fazri, a priest of Giaour, father of ghûls, discovered a pack of the undead living in a cave

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system not far from Darshab. Without a strong leader, and fearful of being hunted, they preyed almost exclusively on cave creatures, lost goats, and the occasional shepherd. Despite his faith, Fazri knew the ghûls would not bow before him without good cause. In order to win their respect and assert his authority over them, he hatched a vile plan.

Working with his bodyguard, Ahmed the Strangler, Fazri infiltrated Darshab. There, he slowly worked to build up a cult to Giaour. In return for devotion, loyalty, and dining on sentient flesh, he promised select townspeople immortality. The price was high, but the rewards were greater, and weak men are easily swayed.

At first they preyed on outsiders, kidnapping and eating lone strangers or individual members of caravans, whose disappearance they could put down to them running away in the night, along with a few choice valuables. Over time, the caravans became more infrequent, and the cultists turned to the residents of Darshab both to sate their appetites and expand the cult.

Fazri's long-term goal is to create a cult of Giaour that not only eats well, but which expands into neighboring villages, and perhaps even the great cities. Naturally, he sees himself as the head of the cult.

Not every victim is consumed by the cult, though. Fazri ensures the ghûls receive a supply of fresh meat. Through this, he hopes to assert his dominion, for it is he who controls when they feed. His plan is not without problems. At times the ghûls have grown

impatient, and, having grown accustomed to fine dining, threatened to attack Darshab in force. Fazri has managed to keep them in check by warning them that the disappearance of an entire village will cause others to investigate. The cult's activities in Darshab have not gone unnoticed by the locals. The sudden disappearances of villagers have raised concerns, as has the changed nature of the cultists (they have become far more secretive and withdrawn). Neighbors have become distrustful of friends they have known all their lives, and strangers receive a cold welcome from all but a few. Disappearances and the odd atmosphere have caused merchants to find new routes, resulting in fewer caravans calling.

A darkness has fallen over Darshab, and unless someone brings it to an end, the village may soon be converted in its entirety. Strengthened by their success, the ghûl cult may then begin to expand its fell influence.

CHARACTER INVOLVEMENT

Why the characters find themselves in Darshab is left to the GM to determine. A few possible ways of involving the characters are given below.

- * One of the party has received a letter from a relative (Uncle Farouk) who lives in Darshab. If none of the heroes are from the Free Emirates, then an old friend or mentor called Farouk works just as well. In his letter he speaks of strange events, but does not elucidate. He urges the character to come and investigate. When the characters get there, they find the NPC is missing.

- * A merchant who passed through Darshab a few weeks ago told the nearest emir of the strange atmosphere pervading the village. Although out of his jurisdiction, the city and the village maintain good ties. A messenger was sent, but he failed to return (the ghûls ate him). A second messenger also vanished. Unable to send military help without raising the ire of his neighbors, the emir resorts to hiring adventurers to investigate the situation. The emir makes it clear that their visit is unofficial, and that he cannot help them if they get into trouble. A successful conclusion will earn each party member 300 dinars.

- * A cleric (Shamash or Tammuz works best, given their hatred of darkness in its varying forms) has a dream in which he sees a village being swallowed by darkness. On waking, all he knows is that he has to get to a place called Darshab. Despite never having been there before, he can unerringly lead them straight to the settlement.



NF3: Darkness at Darshab

GM NOTES

The initial part of the adventure, the investigation in Darshab, follows no set script. The characters are free to go where they want and talk to whoever they want. Don't try to rush the characters through the early part of the adventure. Progress should be slow but steady, with rumors earned through patience, kind words, and politeness, not intimidation and threats. The adventure in Darshab is a tale for social characters and investigators, not combat thugs.

Eventually, they will gather enough corroborating evidence to lead them to one of the cult centers. Only when they have spent sufficient time investigating the cult and frustrating its plans should they discover a map that points them in the direction of the ghûl warren. The map does make mention of ghûls, though! There isn't a handout map—getting to the caves is incidental to the plot, and no encounters occur along the route.

Where this is located is up to the GM to decide. Before this happens, they may attract the attention of the cult, which will seek to remove them through violent means.

NPC Reactions: Except where noted, all NPCs begin with an initial reaction of Uncooperative. They'll perform any normal duties required of their profession, but do not pass on any rumors or perform other tasks. The characters can improve the attitude of non-cultists with Persuasion rolls as normal. Due to the pervading air of fear and suspicion, their attitude can be increased no more than one step per day, no matter how well the characters' roll. Thus, in order to get any useful information, the party will need to be both patient and persistent.

Cultists are never swayed by kind words and sweet smiles, though, and remain Uncooperative. Their attitude can be lowered, however.

Bad Heroes: The characters may need to be reminded that their actions have consequences. If they start kicking down doors and roughing people up, the local authorities will seek to arrest them. Heroes they may be, but the law applies to them as it does anyone else. Should the party go on a killing spree without plenty of evidence, the emir will eventually learn of it somehow. He will seek swift justice on behalf of the citizens, especially if he hired the heroes. Murder is a capital offense.

Final Words: Once you've read the adventure, you'll likely have questions. What happens if the heroes arrest a cultist and take him to the headman or militia captain? What happens if they kill someone in a fight? Is there a panic if they publicly display a slain ghûl's corpse? There isn't room to cover every possible eventuality, and this is where your skills as a GM come in. Go back and re-read the section on Darshab. There's a lot of information. Familiarize yourself with the various NPCs, where they can be met, and how they react to the heroes. Think about how you'd react if an armed warrior started attacking your neighbors or discovered a cannibalistic undead living in your community. Maybe the peasants will be utterly terrified, but maybe a character with good Leader-

ship Edges can stir them up into a ragtag army prepared to take back their village.

The important things to remember are that the cult is there to be found out and destroyed, and the heroes find a map leading them to the next part of the adventure.

THE CULT'S ACTIVITIES

The cult does not halt its activities just because the heroes have made an appearance. On any night the characters are not a target for kidnapping, draw a card from the action deck. A black royal card (Jack through Ace) means they have set their sights on one of the locals. Roll on the table below to determine who.

d10 Intended Victim (Area Located)

- 1 Janna the Herbalist (#8)*
- 2 Tamir & Amsah (#2)
- 3 Mawahib and her children (#17)*
- 4 Salwa the Crazy Cat Lady (#5)
- 5 Thabit & Wid (#27)*
- 6 Qamar and Ihsan (#9)
- 7 Yazan (#15, room 8B)
- 8 Raghid & Sinrilli (#30)*
- 9 Qays and his family (#24)*
- 10 Rasmi and his family (#18)

Under cover of darkness, Ahmed the Strangler and the three ghûls from the caravanserai pay a visit to the victim. Ahmed activates an alchemical *silence* spell, allowing the raiding party to break down the door in silence and attack the inhabitants while they sleep. Unless the heroes are present to thwart this, the attack automatically succeeds. The unconscious captives are then carried to the warehouse.

Entries marked "*" are kept there until the next night, when they are murdered, butchered, and stored ready for local consumption. Others are held at the warehouse for 1d4 days, after which they taken to the ghûls' lair to sate their base appetites.

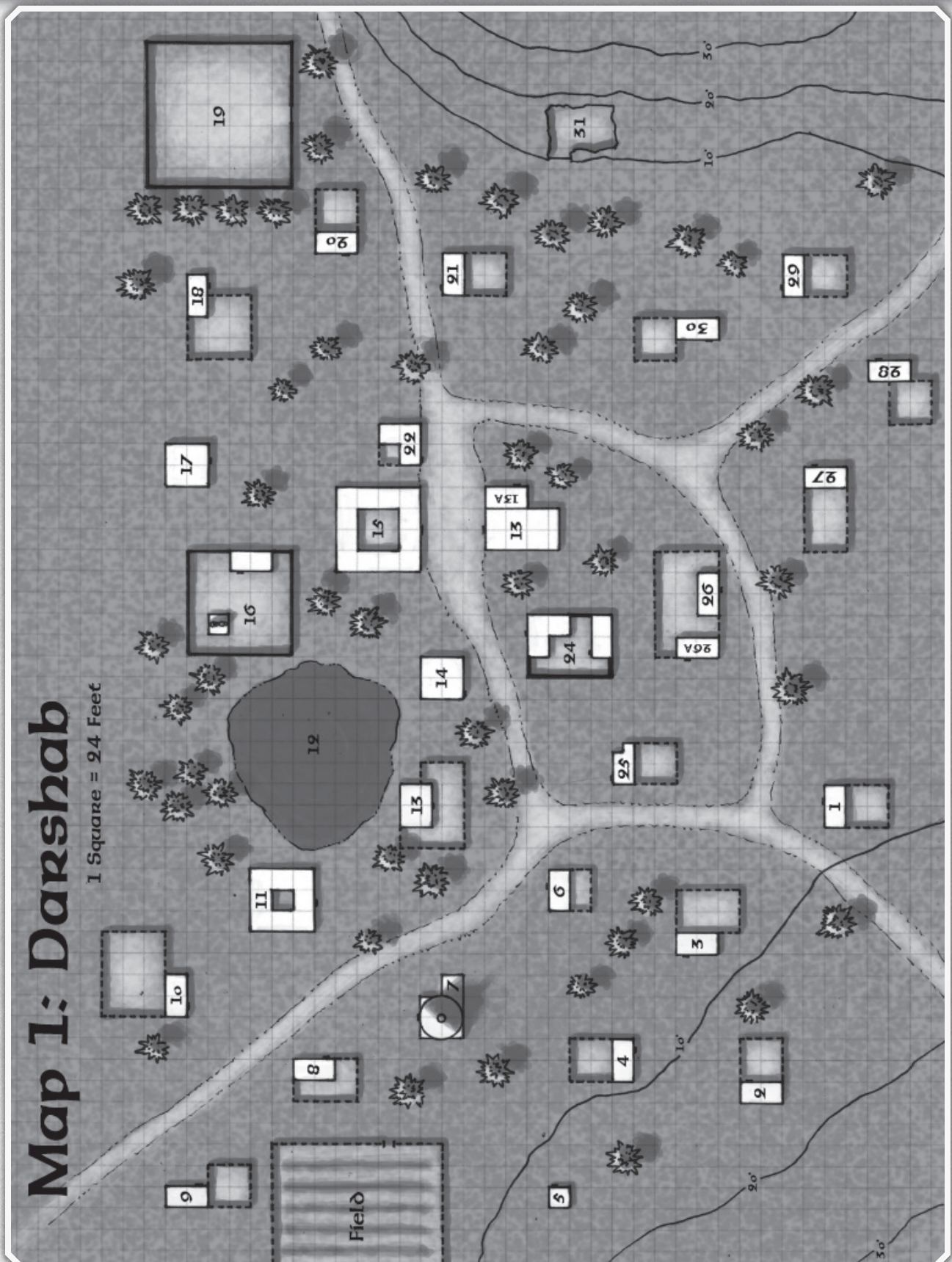
KIDNAPPED CHARACTERS

There is a chance that the heroes will become victims of the cult. This is especially true if they choose to stay at the local caravanserai (one of the cult's headquarters), but nosy characters heard asking too many questions face being attacked wherever they decide to lodge.

Figuring the characters to be more of a threat than simple farmers, any attack is led by Ahmed the Strangler, and either the three ghûls from the caravanserai or the three servants from the caravanserai. Such attacks are always made at night. See the caravanserai (Area 15) for details of how an attack is staged.

Rather than end up as dinner immediately, defeated heroes are drugged to ensure they do not wake up any time soon, stripped of their gear, securely bound, and kept in the secret room in the warehouse until the next night. If the heroes haven't hatched an escape plan by then, they are destined to be eaten. The characters' gear is stored in one of the caravanserai's strongrooms.

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Darshab

This section details the various buildings within Darshab. Entries suffixed with “(C)” contain cultists. Particular attention should be paid to these.

By day, life continues in Darshab pretty much as it did before the darkness fell, though with an added air of fear and mistrust. The citizens tend to avoid eye contact with each other and greetings are kept short. Strangers are treated courteously, but kept at arm’s length. By night, doors are locked, windows are barred, and only the bravest leave their homes. Except where noted in the text, the villagers never open their doors before the sun rises.

Save for specific entries noted below, buildings are single storey mud brick structures with flat roofs. Only a few buildings have maps. Other structures, especially domiciles, contain only a few rooms. Part of the building is taken up with a workshop (for craftsmen), storage, or goat sheds. The enclosures adjoining each building are, for the most part, small gardens. Here the residents grow staples like lettuce, onions, tomatoes, and onions, plus a few non-medicinal herbs.

Descriptive Text: The start of each entry contains a varying amount of information in italics. This highlights the salient features of the room from the characters’ perspective and should be relayed to the heroes when such information would be apparent. It should be paraphrased to them in whatever flavorful terms the GM prefers.

Looting: The villagers are mostly poor farmers. Except where noted, assume they have Worthwhile savings concealed somewhere in their house. Citizens with as Worthwhile Treasure rating have double that amount.

1) FARMER (C)

** A neat bouse with a well tended garden.*

** A young man is skinning a rabbit outside the front door. A crossbow leans against the wall.*

** Two young girls are playing in the dust with wooden dolls.*

Characters who make successful Notice rolls realize the crossbow is loaded. On a raise, they spy someone watching them from one of the windows.

Inhabitants: Adan, his adult son Nibras, and his two young daughters live here. The adults are the most recent members of the cannibal cult. Technically the girls are as well, but they are too young to realize what they are eating or to take part in any ceremonies. Adan’s wife, Isar, was freely given over to the cult three weeks ago because she refused to join. Adan tells everyone that she has gone to visit her sick mother in the nearest city.

The family were formerly Faithful followers of Ashtart, and still maintain a pretense of going to the shrine (#16) for major ceremonies.

*** Adan & Nibras:** Treat both as Generic NPCs, but

add Shooting d6. Each has a crossbow (Range 15/30/60, Damage: 2d6, AP2, 1 action to reload).

Initial Reaction: The young man, Nibras, eyes strangers warily before sharply ordering the girls to go into the house. They quickly obey. Nibras offers no form of greeting, though he nods curtly in reply if one is given. The figure watching the party is his father, Adan. He has his crossbow ready, though out of sight.

Nibras refuses to engage in small talk. If specifically asked, he points the characters to the caravanserai (if they want somewhere to stay), headman’s house (if they ask who is in charge), or the kada (if they want religious facilities). As soon as the rabbit is prepared (a few minutes work), he ups and enters the house without any form of farewell.

2) FARMER

** The yard is bare except for grass.*

** A young woman is milking a goat in the yard.*

The woman is preoccupied in her work, and does not notice the characters’ approach. She is startled if hailed. Draw a card from the action deck. A black card indicates she screams in fright. Her husband quickly emerges from the house brandishing a dagger and warning the heroes to leave his family alone.

Inhabitants: This building is home to Tamir, his wife Amsah, and two young children (one boy and one girl). They are Faithful, and follow Ashtart.

*** Tamir & Amsah:** Treat as Generic NPCs.

Initial Reaction: If the encounter has got off to a potentially hostile start, tensions can be defused with a Persuasion roll. If the Persuasion roll fails, Tamir maintains his aggressive stance while ordering his wife inside. He then backs away into the house, whereupon he slams the door shut. He has nothing more to do with the heroes today, and will not leave the house while they are present.

With success, Tamir lowers the dagger. (He sheathes it only on a raise.) He ushers his wife inside, telling her to tend to the children. He then apologizes for his behavior, stating that things aren’t like they used to be, and precautions need to be taken. He explains further only if the heroes raise his attitude to Friendly.

Improved Reaction: Once befriended, Tamir reveals what little he knows. He does not invite the heroes into his house, however.

*** His neighbors (#1 and #3)** have become withdrawn in the last few weeks. The families used to gather regularly for a meal, but the other couples have begun making excuses. Even their children no longer play together.

*** While walking back from the shrine (#16)** one night, Tamir saw three cloaked figures enter the caravanserai. There was something unsettling about them. (These were the ghûls that live there.)

*** Religious services** have ground to a halt since the clerics who used to live at the shrine (#16) disappeared. No one knows what happened to them.

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3) FARMER (C)

** The garden is overgrown with weeds.*

** An attractive young woman is sitting on a chair outside the house sewing.*

Inhabitants: The farmstead is home to Zaki, his wife Inaya, and their adult daughter Ayat. All three are converts to the cult of Giaour. Dedicated carnivores, they have stopped growing crops in their garden. The family has all-but abandoned their former faith (Ashtart), and no longer attend the shrine (#16).

*** Zaki, Inaya, and Ayat:** Treat as Generic NPCs.

Initial Reaction: Ayat is friendly but reserved. She asks more questions than she answers, in an attempt to learn as much about the strangers as possible, especially their motives for being in Darshab. She dismisses any talk of strange happenings, claiming that times are merely hard right now. People moving away in search of better prospects and a lack of traders has lead to people's imaginations running wild.

Once the heroes leave the house, Ayat informs her parents as to their arrival in Darshab. Zaki promptly goes to inform Fazri (#7), while Ayat is assigned to follow the heroes discretely and report back on where they go and to whom they talk.

If one of the heroes takes a shine to her, Ayat openly flirts. Later in the adventure, and only if the characters investigations have roused the cult's suspicions, that character receives a note inviting him to meet with her

in the trees behind the oasis after dark. This is a trap. If the character goes alone, he is attacked by the three ghûls. A defeated hero is bundled off to the warehouse to await his fate. Otherwise, Ayat fails to attend. If later questioned about her absence, she claims her parents caught her trying to sneak out of the house.

4) GOATHERD (C)

** A small flock of goats is munching on bushes outside the house. A man is watching over the flock.*

Characters who make a Notice roll at -2 detect the man is eying the animals hungrily.

Inhabitants: Taj and his wife Tabassum live here with their infant son. Both adults are cultists, though they maintain the trappings of their former faith (Devoted).

*** Taj & Tabbasum:** Treat as Generic NPCs.

Initial Reaction: Taj responds to hails or introductions with a wave, but nothing more. If asked what he is doing, he says he is a goatherd and has brought his animals down to introduce to his ram. If his hungry look is mentioned, he says that one of the animals is going to be butchered for a family feast, and he can almost taste his wife's spiced lamb. Taj is telling the truth.

Questioned about the odd state of affairs in the village, he denies any knowledge of such things, saying that his work means he is often in the hills for weeks at a time and sorely lacking in idle gossip for strangers.

Taj's wife is listening from the house. If the conversation begins to drift toward a cult, she appears in the doorway and calls her husband inside, saying that she has prepared coffee for him. Taj then makes his excuses. Under no circumstances will he allow the heroes inside. If pressed, he says their infant son has a mild fever and needs both rest and quiet while the poultices from the herbalists (#8) do their work.

5) CRAZY CAT LADY

** Several large cats are lying outside the front door as the party arrives. They spit and snarl if a hero attempts to stroke one.*

** The lintel is inscribed with the holy symbol of Tamarni—a cat's paw.*

Inhabitants: This house is home to Salwa, a Faithful follower of Tamarni. Of advanced years, Salwa now lives alone, save for her dozen cats—her husband died many years ago, and her adult children have all left home to seek their fortunes and start families in the big city. The cult has ignored Salwa so far for the simple reason that she is brain-addled and thus neither a



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threat or of any use as a convert. She is on their menu, though, and may be kidnapped during play.

Her cats are named after the major deities and display a property relevant to that god. Marqod, for instance, is highly protective of Salwa, but is otherwise a peaceful creature. Iblis, a jet black female with a sinister, green-eyed stare, skulks around under furniture, while Karmelos is a ginger tom with a hostile attitude (especially toward cakali and hyaenidae) and sharp claws he likes to sink into exposed legs. Tamarni, the head cat, is curious by nature, and also demands frequent ear scratches and belly rubs from visitors.

* **Salwa:** Treat her as a Generic NPC, but with Smarts, Strength, and Vigor d4 (Toughness 4) and Clueless.

Initial Reaction: Salwa begins with a Friendly attitude, but only because she mistakes one of the characters for one of her grandchildren come to visit. The GM picks the hero. Salwa refers to the chosen adventurer as Tarub if female or Bandar if male. Protestations she has made a mistake are totally ignored.

She discusses family matters the characters have no clue about, such as how life is in the big city, and so on. Fortunately, virtually any answers they give are accepted. Only after an hour of small talk does she begin discussing the situation in Darshab. What she has to say is mostly nonsense and red herrings, but there are a few nuggets of truth.

* Her cats don't like the big black dog that lives in the cave (#31). (She is referring to the cakali wizard.)

* The herbalist (#8) is a wicked woman who doesn't like cats. She tried to poison one of them the other day. (This is false. One of the cats chewed on some grass and vomited, a perfectly natural feline thing.)

* There used to be fish in the oasis when she was younger, but they all vanished. Her cats like fish. (There were never any fish in the oasis.)

* The man at (#30) killed his wife.

* She went to visit her husband's grave the other day to lay flowers, but he'd gone away. (She won't expand on this, other than saying that he was no longer there.)

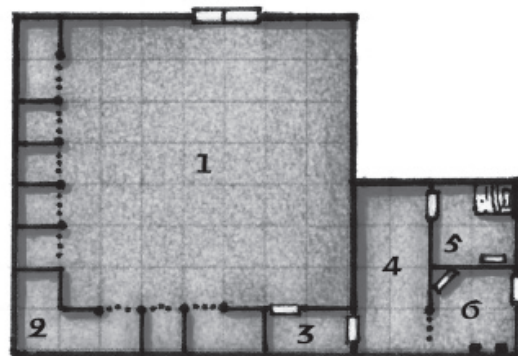
6) BUTCHER (C)

* *Part of the building is an open fronted shop. Inside, carcasses and various cuts of meat hang from hooks.*

With Darshab being a mixed community, the butcher's caters for both Devoted and Faithful. Both creeds have different methods of animal execution and food preparation in accordance with religious doctrine, and the various meats are labelled as to which creed they are acceptable. Whoever is serving in the shop asks strangers which creed they follow. Goat, lamb, and mutton are the main animals butchered and sold, but there are also desert hares and species of wild bird.

All five occupants know the art of butchery. It is they who prepare captives for eating. This bloody work is never carried out in the shop, though. Rather, all such meat is cut up in the warehouse. Some of it is sold here,

Map 2: Kaḏa



■ Table ¶ Archway ■ Fireplace

though. The cuts are kept wrapped in palm leaves in a back room, and sold only to known cultists.

Inhabitants: The house is home to Shanin, his wife Sabaa, and their three adolescent sons, Raja, Raji, and Rasil. All five are cultists, though they continue living according to the Devoted creed they once followed.

* **Shanin, Sabaa, Raja, Raji, & Rasil:** Treat them all as Generic NPCs. Shanin has Strength d8, Berserk, and carries a big cleaver (Str+d6).

Initial Reaction: When the characters enter, Shanin is chopping up a rack of lamb ribs using a heavy cleaver, while, Raji is preparing a leg of goat meat.

Though loyal to the cult, the grisly task of murdering and butchering his neighbors, not to mention then eating them, has left Shanin's mind in a delicate state. If the heroes begin asking questions about any subject, roll a d6. On a 5+, Shanin's mind temporarily snaps and he begins shouting at them to leave while brandishing his cleaver in a menacing way. Raji quickly apologizes, claiming that his father is not well. He then tries to calm his father down. Roll a d6 again. On a 1-4, Shanin calms down. He promptly retreats to the adjoining house for a lie down. On a 5+, Raji fails, and Shanin goes berserk (as per the Edge) and attacks the party.

Should the characters respond using lethal force, Raji draws his knife and sides with his father while calling on his brothers (who are in the adjacent house) to help. They join the fray at the start of the third round. Otherwise, he pleads with the party to show restraint and help him subdue the butcher.

Assuming no one is murdered (at which time the militia captain (#26) and imam (#7) will be informed) and/or Shanin remains calm, the butchers act as normal shopkeepers, asking what meat the heroes want to buy, and suggesting a rack of lamb ideal for braising or goat meat perfect for frying with onions and spices.

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7) KADA (C)

** This building has a golden dome.*

As a mixed community, Darshab caters to the needs of both Devoted and Faithful. The main doors are open from an hour before sunrise to an hour after sunset.

Devoted gather here at dawn, midday, and dusk to pray and meditate on the path to Oneness while the imam reads passages from the *Hamad*. At such times there are 2d6 Devoted villagers here, as well as the imam.

Inhabitants: The imam is in fact Fazri, the vile priest of Giaour. He had the old imam murdered and took his place, thus allowing him to be at the heart of the community and privy to gossip. His position also allowed him into the homes of Devoted villagers. He concocted the story that the previous imam retired, and left in the middle of the night so as to avoid painful farewells from a community he so dearly loved.

Although originally Devoted, Fazri never much studied the *Hamad*. Even after a year masquerading as an imam, his in-depth knowledge of the creed is lacking. Catching him out on the nuances of the *Hamad* is likely to be relatively easy for a true imam, but Fazri is prepared for such rare occurrences. He claims that despite his age, he has been an imam only a short time, and was posted here so that he might improve his knowledge in a practical environment.

** Fazri:* See page 62.

Initial Reaction: The first time the heroes visit (assuming it is not during prayers), Fazri, dressed as an imam, is alone in the main hall. He is seated in one of the small alcoves, partly concealed by the shadows. Until spotted (requires a hero to enter the alcove or make a Notice roll from the main hall), or if a character attempts to enter the library or the purification room, he eavesdrops on their conversation.

Once spotted or forced to reveal himself, he apologizes for not greeting the characters immediately, claiming that he was meditating on the mysteries and wonder of Asha. In fact, he was plotting who next to abduct and whether they should be fed to the cultists or the ghûls.

Fazri is keen to know why the heroes are in Darshab, but has no wish to appear too keen to learn about them. His questions should be phrased as genuine and polite curiosity, rather than an interrogation.

KADA MAP

The interior is shown on the map opposite.

1) Main Hall: The east wall is covered with a colorful mural showing a great gathering of jinn bowing before Suleiman. The *Hamad* makes no stipulation in which direction prayers must be offered, and the first imam of Darshab chose the Mirrorsands. In front of the mural is a lectern, on which is a gilded and well thumbed copy of the *Hamad*. The alcoves are private areas, where Devoted can sit and meditate in peace. Each is lined with wooden benches.

2) Library: Access to the well stocked library is open

to anyone, but only when the kada is open. The texts are a mixture of Devoted religious treatises on various aspects of the creed and minor volumes on other topics.

One of the volumes is entitled *Against the Darkness*. The book is found on a successful Investigation roll made after an hour of browsing.

The first few pages describe how, some 120 years ago, Darshab was plagued by creatures of the night. The imam, who was also a jinn mage, cast them out and forced them to forever reside in darkness. The story relates to the ghûls arrival in the area and how they came to reside in the caves nearby. The rest of the book has been hollowed out in such a manner that merely flicking through the pages will not reveal the long but narrow, hidden space.

In the hollow is a glass vial containing two different colored liquids. This is an alchemical *light* device activated by shaking the vial.

3) Purification Room: Contains a white robe worn by the imam during prayers and a font in which he ritually washes before entering the kada.

4) Living Room: Contains cushions for seating, a low table, and a few knick-knacks, but nothing of interest or value to the heroes.

5) Bedroom: A bed, small table, stool, and a chest containing spare clothes occupy this room. Fazri has left nothing incriminating the cult, though he has made one small mistake—one of his robes is spotted with blood. Questioned about this, he claims he was in the butcher's shop (#6) ensuring the meat was prepared in accordance with the *Hamad* when he got splattered with blood. Should the characters make follow up inquiries, the staff at the butchers confirm this.

6) Kitchen: The kitchen is lacking in foodstuffs and the hearth has not been lit in days. Except when dining on special meat (eaten in the warehouse), Fazri eats in the caravanserai.

8) HERBALIST

** Bunches of herbs and roots hang outside the door.*

A character who takes time to inspect the herbs can make a Knowledge (Alchemy) or Survival roll (his choice). Success identifies most of them as medicinal herbs. A few, however, are commonly used by superstitious sorts to ward off evil spirits.

Inhabitant: This building is the home, workshop, and shop of Janna, an elderly Devoted herbalist. She also doubles as the local doctor and midwife, though she is not an expert in the healing arts. She has escaped the cult's privations thanks to her scrawny, bony frame (not enough meat on her bones for a soup) and because she has avoided asking too many questions. Janna is not ignorant of what is happening, though, and has formed several suspicions. Alas, not all of them are correct.

** Janna:* Treat as a Generic NPC, but add Hedge Magic, Healing d6, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, and Survival d6

Initial Reaction: During the day Janna can be found

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in her workshop. She greets strangers courteously, but warily, offering no information beyond her name and occupation. She keeps guests on the doorstep unless they can convince her of their good intentions. This requires raising her attitude to Friendly.

Improved Reaction: Once her trust is earned, she invites them inside. There she offers them mint tea and freshly baked flat cakes flavored with fragrant herbs and honey. Salwa then shares her suspicions with the party.

* She cautions the party to avoid staying at the caravanserai (#15). Three strangers stayed there a week or so back, but no one has seen them since or saw them leave Darshab.

* She doesn't like the new imam (#7). There is something odd about him, and it was strange that the previous imam left for the city in the middle of the night without saying any farewells.

* The man who lives at (#30) has been acting very strangely since he returned from a trip to the northern continent in the middle of the night. Janna was called on to provide herbs to alleviate "women's problems," but was denied entry when she went to deliver them, and has never seen a woman leave the house.

* She doesn't like the way the butcher (#6) looks at her when she visits the shop. He's also developed a very bad temper, though she knows of no reason why his demeanor should have changed.

Services: Janna grows a variety of common medicinal plants. These have no rarity modifier to Knowledge (Alchemy) rolls when preparing brews, but are only available for remedies with a purpose modifier of -1 or better.

She makes sure there is always a fresh amount in the garden for urgent orders, and preserves any excess for future use. Plants required for more complex brews are picked in the hills and dried.

She keeps the following herbal remedies in stock: 2 x anti-inflammatory, 3 x antitoxin, 2 x purgative, and 2 x restorative. These are for sale at 15 dinars a dose.

Janna sells dried herbs for 5 dinars a batch and fresh ones for 8 dinars. She charges 20 dinars to brew a herbal remedy from herbs in stock, but 50 dinars if she has to first gather ingredients. The latter also takes 1d4 days for her to track down the right plants and roots.

Should the characters desire Janna to make a herbal remedy for them, or if they seek to purchase dried herbs to concoct their own, draw a card from the action deck. A red numbered card indicates she has dried herbs available. A Joker or red royal card (Jack through Ace) means she has fresh herbs growing in her garden, subject to the conditions above. If the characters are after plants for a complex remedy, then the card indicates she has dried herbs available. Otherwise, she is currently out of stock.

Her services as a doctor cost 10 dinars per Healing roll, or 5 dinars if she is helping a more qualified healer.

Her workshop contains materials that count as both a healer's bag and herbalist's kit.

9) RETIRED PEGASUS GUARD

** A well appointed house. A riding horse grazes in a small paddock attached to the house.*

The horse is a riding horse. As the heroes approach, a woman emerges from the back door, enters the paddock, and begins grooming the horse.

Inhabitants: This building is home to Qamar and her fiancée Ihsan. Qamar is a former member of the Pegasus Guard, and Ihsan is a veterinarian. Both are Devoted.

The couple are newcomers, having arrived just seven months ago. Before that they briefly lived in Qina, City of Smells. Seeking somewhere they could settle down and raise a family in peace, they bought a vacant property in Darshab (the previous occupants had fallen prey of the cult early on). Though amiable, the atmosphere of fear and suspicion in the village has prevented them from making any real friends.

Once befriended, Qamar is willing to help the party, but only in minor ways. She will assist in bringing down the cult, but only if the party have firm evidence and the support of the headman. She will not accompany them to the caves, however.

* **Ihsan:** Treat as Generic NPC.

* **Qamar:** See page 65. Note that her stats are for when she is fully armed. Adjust as appropriate for normal social situations.

Initial Reaction: The woman is Qamar. Her partner, Ihsan, is inside, eavesdropping on the conversation. He is very protective of his wife, despite her being the trained warrior. If he feels the party is acting aggressively, he charges out brandishing Qamar's scimitar and shield. If the GM wants to play this for laughs, he can stage events to force this. For example, Qamar may ask to see a character's scimitar, perhaps to admire the blade. Ihsan doesn't hear this, though—all he sees is a stranger drawing a weapon.

As the Guard is relatively small, women uncommon, and Qamar only recently resigned, there is a chance a Pegasus Guard character has met her before. Draw a card from the action deck. A Heart numbered card means he has seen her before, but doesn't know her name. A royal Heart (Jack through Ace) means he knows her name. A Joker indicates they served together at some point. If the hero greets her by name, or reminds her of their service together, she is immediately Friendly.

Otherwise, Qamar is initially Neutral toward the heroes, though still a little guarded in her replies. Her mood immediately improves to Friendly if any of the heroes are obviously serving Pegasus Guardsmen, or if they reveal themselves to be retired members. While she won't reveal her former allegiance immediately (she is still a little embarrassed that she chose love over duty), she believes she can trust those heroes. Otherwise, her attitude can be improved with a Persuasion roll as normal.

Should the party fail to earn her trust, she reveals nothing of interest on this meeting.

Improved Reaction: Once Friendly. Qamar invites the

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characters into the house for a light meal and coffee. The couple then reveal their views on affairs in Darshab.

- * The militia captain (#26) is either incompetent or in on whatever is happening. There have been three of disappearances since they arrived—three strangers from the caravanserai, the old man at (#20), and the family from (#28)—and the captain has failed to do anything.

- * They were hoping to get married soon after arriving, but they don't like the imam (#7). They can't put their finger on anything specific—he just seems odd.

- * The couple used to drink at the caravanserai (#15), but the staff and villagers who frequent it left them with an air of unease.

- * Qamar has taken to riding her horse for exercise after dark so as not to alert people to her proficiency. She has seen people coming and going from the warehouse (#23) at odd times.

10) FARMER

- * *Three small children are playing with a ball outside the house.*

Inhabitants: Abdul-Samad, his wife Asmaa, and their three young children live here. They are Devoted.

- * **Abdul-Samad & Asmaa:** Treat as Generic NPCs.

Initial Reaction: If the heroes approach the children or call out, Asmaa scurries out of the house with a terrified look on her face and bundles them inside. Abdul-Samad then appears, his hand resting on his dagger hilt. He warns the characters to clear off or he'll inform the militia captain. Abdul-Samad is no warrior, and any hostile action has him beating a quick retreat. Only later, when the heroes have moved on, does he rush to let the captain know there are "possibly hostile" strangers in Darshab.

It is possible to win the family over, but they are very frightened. Persuasion rolls have a -2 penalty. Even if their attitude is improved, they have little of interest to say—something is wrong in Darshab, and they're keeping to themselves until it blows over.

11) BATHHOUSE

- * *A sign proclaims this building to be a bathhouse.*

- * *The interior was obviously once well appointed, but is in need of minor repairs.*

Whatever their social class, citizens of Al Shirkuh see bathing as both important for cleanliness and a social activity. Bathhouses are where they gather to conduct business and share gossip.

Darshab's bathhouse is divided into four areas. The west and east wings contain the baths and massage tables. Men use the west wing while women use the east wing. The northern area is the family's home, while the southern rooms are for storage of firewood, oil, soap, linen, and such like. An inner courtyard provides space for bathers to relax and enjoy freshly prepared coffee (included in the price of a bath or massage). It also contains a statue of Apsu.

The bathhouse is open from dawn until dusk. At any given time, there is a 10% chance one of the villagers (chosen at random by the GM) is taking a bath or having a shave. Fazri never bathes here, however.

Inhabitants: This bathhouse is home to, and run by, Al Hakam, his portly and evert-cheerful wife, Abrar, and their adult daughter, Adara. Adara has a teenage son who helps around the place when he isn't trying to impress the local girls or sulking over some perceived restriction on his life. His father died of sickness three years ago. The family are Faithful and follow Apsu.

- * **Al Hakam, Abrar, & Adara:** Treat as Generic NPCs. Al Hakam and Abrar have Healing d6, while Adara has Healing d4.

Initial Reaction: The family is openly Neutral toward the heroes. Business has fallen off in recent months, and they are eager to get money where they can. They are all notorious gossips. However, they only gossip to customers who take a bath or massage.

- * The farmer from (#1) says his wife went away to see her mother, but there is something fishy about that story. More likely she has left him for another man and he's too proud to admit it.

- * A young couple moved into (#9) several months ago. They're obviously living together as man and wife, but they're not married. Scandalous, isn't it?

- * The imam desperately needs his nails cutting. A man in his position should take more care of his appearance.

- * Caravan trade has diminished over the last year. Used to be the bathhouse was full of strangers in need of a wash and shave. Still, the warehouse (#23) must be doing good trade as there are still bundles of goods being carried into it from the caravanserai.

- * The caravanserai (#15) has a new employee. Completely bald, he is. Not much call for a barber there.

- * Odd that the clerics (#16) should have left so suddenly. I heard that they had been recalled to their temples, though I'm not sure why.

Services: A shave costs 1 dirham. A simple wash with hot water and soap costs 3 dirhams. A relaxing hot bath costs 2 dinars. A full massage cost 4 dinars (and removes one level of Fatigue caused by Bumps & Bruises). If the heroes have any minor ailments or injuries, they are pointed to the herbalist (#8) for cures.

The bathhouse also offers laundry services. Prices range from a quarter dirham for a lone garment to 5 dirhams for a heavy load.

12) OASIS

- * *A large pool of clear water surrounded by palms.*

The oasis provides Darshab with drinking water, water for the bathhouse, and water for the villagers' small gardens. Its presence also ensures the ground is fertile enough to support large fields of cereal crops.

The trees are date palms. Technically their crop belongs to the clerics who lived at the shrine (#16). Since they "left," the headman (or rather his poor servant) has taken over the duty of harvesting them. They are sold

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to the local shop, and the money kept at the headman's house in preparation for giving to the clerics' replacements when they arrive.

Characters who use the oasis as a bath or toilet, or use it to launder their clothes, are confronted by the militia captain (#26) within an hour and fined 50 dinars for polluting the village water supply.

13) HEADMAN

** The house and its adjoining garden are larger than many others in the village.*

Being outside the territory of the emirs, the founders of Darshab chose to dispense with hereditary nobility. Elections for the position of headman are held every five years, and any adult who has been a permanent resident for at least one year is entitled to stand.

Inhabitants: Marwan Effendi, the headman, and his trusty but elderly manservant Rushdi, are the only occupants. Marwan Effendi has been headman for the past 18 years. His longevity in the post is a mix of his talent for organization, and the villagers' dislike of constant change. Unless Marwan Effendi really messes up, he is probably in the job for life.

Rushdi has been a family retainer most of his adult life. He served Marwan's father, formerly a prosperous farmer, and took up his position beside the headman when he became head of the family on his father's death. Both are Devoted.

*** Marwan & Rushdi:** Treat as Generic NPCs. Marwan has the Noble Edge.

Initial Reaction: Knocks at the door are answered by an elderly man (Rushdi). He politely inquires as to the characters' business. If they say they wish to see the headman, he claims to be such. Should they state their intention to investigate the problems besetting Darshab, claim to be looking for Uncle Farouk, or hint they are working for the emir, he invites the characters in and offers them coffee while they explain their business in full.

Marwan Effendi strongly suspects hashish smugglers are behind the disappearances. Fearful that assassins will be sent to silence him, he has nominated poor old Rushdi to greet any strangers and pose as headman until he is sure of their good intentions. During the conversation, Marwan Effendi eavesdrops from a hidden alcove concealed by a tapestry.

Both Rushdi and Marwan Effendi begin as Uncooperative. If the heroes can prove any claims made earlier (such as by hinting that certain people are involved in something nefarious or producing a letter), that automatically rises to Neutral. A Persuasion roll can improve this to Friendly on the first encounter. Once the attitude rises to Friendly, Marwan Effendi reveals his presence and apologizes for the deception.

Improved Reaction: Once the party has earned the headman's trust, he is very open with his suspicions. While Rushdi goes off to the kitchen to prepare a meal for his guests, Marwan Effendi discusses the current state of affairs with the characters.

** Some sort of evil is taking over Darshab. People have been disappearing, while others are acting very strangely. Marwan Effendi suspects it is a hashish smuggling ring. In his opinion, the owners of the caravanserai (#15) and the warehouse (#23) are definitely involved. Those who have stumbled across the secret are kidnapped, no doubt to be used as slaves in the hashish fields, or worse, murdered and their corpses dumped in the hills.*

** A cakali moved into a cave (#31) some months back. He keeps to himself, and has refused all invitations to join in community activities. Marwan Effendi is of the opinion that he is mastermind behind the hashish smugglers.*

** The butcher (#6) is a changed man. Until a few weeks ago he used to be amiable, but his temper become almost unmanageable. He might be addicted to hashish.*

** The carpenter (#24) was asked to manufacture the headman a new bed. Usually his work is of high quality, but the bed he produced was substandard. The man appeared exhausted, and isn't taking on much new work.*

** The general store (#14) was recently closed for two weeks, and the owners and their servants absent. They returned late one evening, but have refused to discuss their whereabouts. It's very suspicious that they increased their prices afterward.*

** Two clerics used to live at the shrine (#16). They left suddenly about a year ago, seemingly in the middle of the night. Marwan Effendi has written to the nearest temples, but no replacements have been sent.*

** Jackals have been digging up the graveyard (#16). The village has never had problems like this before.*

14) GENERAL STORE

** The front of this building is open, revealing it to be some sort of general store.*

Darshab's general store is open from dawn until dusk. The owner is normally behind the desk, while his two servants are potting about readjusting stock or keeping the place clean and tidy.

Inhabitants: The general store is run by Layth and his wife Fadwa. They are assisted by two servants—Daltok (a sand goblin) and Hiyam (female Hadaree). All four are Faithful. The humans follow Wedeshet in his aspect of god of trade, while Daltok follows Tamarni.

The couple have run the store for many years, Layth having inherited it from his father. They had hoped to retire and leave the business to their only child, but she decided village life was too boring, and left for the big city. The family's disappearance (as Layth explains once befriended and if confronted on the matter) is totally innocent, but rather shameful.

Their daughter fell in with a bad crowd, and became addicted to hashish. Although she soon ran out of money, her supplies kept giving her the drug. Eventually, they called time on her and demanded she pay them back. Layth and Fadwa were forced to use their life savings to settle the debt, and even then it wasn't enough. They still owe 300 dinars, and have been forced to increase their

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prices to raise the money. The criminals have the daughter hostage, and have threatened to sell her to slavers unless the money is raised soon. If the party wants to rescue the girl, the GM can create a new scenario.

* **Layth, Fadwa, Daltok, & Hiyam:** Treat as Generic NPCs. Layth has Persuasion and Streetwise d6. Daltok has the sand goblin racial Edges & Hindrances, as well as Lockpicking and Stealth d8.

Initial Reaction: Layth and Fadwa are Uncooperative, but only because their mind is on their daughter's plight. They know strange things are occurring in Darshab, but they are the least of their problems. Their attitude will not rise above Neutral while their daughter is imperilled.

Improved Reaction: Although the storeowners won't befriend the party, they and their servants are still a source of information.

* Certain people (#1, #3, and #4) seem to be spending less money at the store and more at the butchers.

* Both the smith (#25) and carpenter (#24) spent weeks working in the warehouse (#23). They were apparently strengthening the doors and adding a new padlock. This was strange because Darshab has never suffered any bandit attacks or been targeted by thieves.

* The man in (#30) buys enough grain and bread to feed two mouths, yet he lives alone.

Services: The store should stock any items with a V availability, but the reduced number of caravans calling at Darshab has meant his stock has not been replenished.

The store won't be resupplied during the adventure, so once an item is purchased, there are no more to be had.

Prices are 25% higher than normal. Haggling can reduce these, but to no lower than 10% above normal. Characters looking to sell goods can do so at the store. Layth offers 15% of the true value, rising to 25% with a successful Streetwise roll.

Armor: Aside from the militia, no one in Darshab has much call for armor. There is a 20% chance of a leather vest being in stock, and a 50% chance of a buckler. No other items of armor are available.

Weapons: The store stocks only basic weapons. There are two bows, four slings, six daggers, and five short spears. Ammunition stocks are 40 normal arrows and 50 sling stones. If the heroes are looking for something else, Layth suggests they visit the carpenter (#24) or smith (#25).

Animals & Gear: None.

Clothing: Only normal clothing and burnouses are available for purchase. Heroes looking for other garments are pointed toward the weaver (#21).

Common Goods: Layth has a good stock of most basic wares. He is out of crowbars (the warehouse owners purchased the last two) and healer's bags (no call for them). Characters who inquire about hashish are told in no uncertain terms that the store never stocks it. Layth is openly offended by the notion that he would sell illegal drugs. A few hours later, though, they are contacted by Daltok. He has a secret supply of six smokes worth he is

willing to sell for 25 dinars a smoke. He can be haggled down to 15 dinars if the heroes threaten to tell his boss.

Unusual Goods: None. If the characters inquire about dried herbs, he points them toward the herbalist (#8).

Food: The shop has a bakery at the back, and sells fresh flatbread cooked to order. It also sells sacks of grain and seed. The bread is available plain (one-quarter dirham per two flatbreads), flavored with herbs (one-quarter dirham each), or stuffed with mince meat and vegetables (one half dirham each).

Slaves: None.

15) CARVANSERAI (C)

* *The largest building in town has the distinctive square shape of a caravanserai.*

Formerly a safe refuge for weary travelers, the caravanserai is now one of the ghûl cult's headquarters. Should the characters stay here overnight, the cult will attempt to kidnap them sooner rather than later.

Inhabitants: Living here are



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Mubin and his two adult daughters, Amber and Cala. There are also three servants—Lut, Mahjub, and Ziyad. Fazri's bodyguard, Ahmend the Strangler, is posing as a fourth servant. Mubin's wife died several years ago of natural causes, leaving him to raise the girls alone. The family and servants all claim to be followers of Qedeshet, but are actually devout cultists.

* **Ahmed the Strangler:** See page 63.

* **Mubin, Amber, Cala:** Treat as Generic NPCs. The girls have Attractive, and Persuasion and Streetwise d6.

* **Lut, Mahujb, & Ziyad:** As Generic NPCs, but Fighting d6 (Parry 5).

* **Ghuls (3):** See page 64.

* **Yazan ibn Shihad:** As Generic NPC, but with Knowledge (Folklore) d8.

Initial Reaction: The characters first encounter will be with Lut, who is acting as gatekeeper. He inquires how long the characters will be staying, but demands no payment. Instead, he orders the inner doors to be opened, and asks the characters to wait while he fetches the owner.

Mubin greets the heroes as if they are powerful lords, bowing low and using all manner of flattering terms. He immediately offers the majority of the party Room 8A, claiming it is the coolest room and furthest away from the noise of daily life in the caravanserai. The room can only accommodate three people, though. Mubin refuses to allow mixed genders to share the same room unless they are married, claiming that he is old fashioned in that regard. Unless one of the heroes wants to rent the last private room, Mubin shows them to one of the double occupancy rooms on the opposite side of the courtyard.

Mubin is trying to split the party, something to which the heroes may object. Play him as a groveling businessman seeking to honor his few guests, not as a conniving cultist out to gain fresh meat.

If asked about the disappearance of the three travellers (possibly mentioned by the herbalist), Mubin states that they left early so as to make good progress on their journey. If the party asks what room they stayed in, Mubin shows them to the room opposite 8A. They actually stayed in 8A, but Mubin is playing a bluff—he hopes the characters will be suspicious of staying in that room, and thus opt for room 8A instead.

Amber and Cala are notorious flirts. Mubin instructs them to try and wheedle information out of male heroes concerning their reasons for being in Darshab.

Services: The caravanserai offers accommodation and stabling. Triple occupancy rooms costs 3 dinars, double occupancy quarters 6 dinars, and single occupancy rooms 10 dinars. All prices are per person per night. Stabling costs 2 dinars per mount.

Drinks and tabac are available in the drinking hall (Area 7), but there is no food or bathing facilities. Guests are permitted to cook food in the courtyard, while those seeking a bath are pointed toward the bathhouse (#11).

Map 3: Caravanserai



Bed

Fountain

Trough

CARAVANSERAI MAP

The interior is shown on the map shown above.

1) Entrance: The entrance is blocked at each end by strong double doors (Toughness 12). The second set is barred on the courtyard side.

2) Gatekeeper's Quarters: Each of the servants takes it in time to act as gatekeeper. Their job is to open the gates for caravans (or other visitors) and collect money up front. Once negotiations are complete, the gatekeeper bangs on the upper doors, calling out that there are paying guests to be admitted. This procedure ensures that the cultists have time to conceal any illegal activities before strangers enter the caravanserai proper.

3) Office: Visitors wishing to speak to Mubin in private are seen here. The small room is poorly furnished, as Mubin likes to play the part of a humble caravanserai owner who spends his income on providing for his guests rather than lining his own coffers.

4) Owner's Lounge: The family room for Mubin and his daughters. Honored guests were once fed and entertained here, but these days only the imam (#7) receives such invitations.

5) Master Bedroom: One of the boards in the middle of the bed can be removed. Inside the hollow is Mubin's personal wealth (620 dinars).

6) Girls' Bedroom: Both girls share a single room.

7) Drinking Hall: This room serves not only guests, but anyone in the village, as it is the nearest thing Darshab has to an inn. Alcohol, coffee, and tabac are available day and night.

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During the evening there is a 75% chance that the servants from the warehouse (#23) are here, 25% chance of the militia captain (#26), 30% chance of Fazri (#7) being present, 50% chance of the adult cultists from buildings #1, #3, and #4 (roll separately for each), and 90% Yazan, the guest from Room 8B, is telling a story to entertain the patrons.

8) Guest Rooms: Guest rooms are rated by the number of beds they contain. Each room has one or more beds, a table, stools, small chests for storing personal items (every chest has a key in the lock; Mubin has duplicates), and a washbasin.

8A) Guest Room: The secret door leading into this room cannot be opened from this side. Cunningly crafted, it requires a Notice roll at -2 and a deliberate search to detect it. Should its presence be mentioned to Mubin, he claims it was once a doorway, the guest room formerly being a lounge area for the servants. He assures them it has been bricked up, and that their privacy is assured.

8B) Guest Room: This room is currently occupied by Yazan ibn Shihad, an itinerant storyteller. He earns his keep entertaining the locals with tales of adventure. For now, the cult intends to keep him around—his presence helps dismiss talk of anything nefarious occurring—but he is on their menu.

Yazan has a Neutral attitude, but becomes Friendly if there is a fellow storyteller in the party, or if the heroes regale him with tales of their own adventures. He has detected the air of fear in the village, but has no suggestions as to its cause. Everyone at the caravanserai has been very nice to him, and the service is excellent. He claims to be a sound sleeper, but has in fact been drugged every night to ensure he does not disturb any cult activities.

9) Stable: The long stalls can each house up to four horses or camels. They are currently unoccupied. Each contains two hay bales. Water troughs allow the animals to be watered and washed.

10) Strongrooms: Caravans typically deposit their goods in the main courtyard. Those with particularly valuable cargoes can hire one of the strongrooms for 50 dinars per night, irrespective of the amount of goods they wish to store. The doors are reinforced (Toughness 10) and the locks complex (-2 to Lockpicking rolls). If the heroes have fallen foul of the cult and been kidnapped, their goods are stored in 10B.

10A) Ghûl Quarters: Three ghûls from the warren use this room. Fazri keeps them here to help with kidnapping villagers and strangers. Mubin refuses to allow the characters into this room, claiming that a caravan left expensive goods here for safekeeping until it returned.

11) Open Courtyard: The paving in the center of the courtyard is designed in the shape of Upuaut's holy symbol. Three fountains provide a steady trickle of water, and help to keep the space cool. Numerous patches show signs of scorching where visitors lit cooking fires.

12) Servants' Quarters: This room is home to the

servants, as well as Ahmed the Strangler. The secret door only opens outward into the adjoining guest room.

KIDNAP!

Ideally the cult hopes to kidnap the characters from room 8A, but its plan is similar wherever the party takes up temporary residence. Minor details should be adjusted accordingly.

Characters who drink in the drinking hall are given a slow acting soporific. This kicks in three hours after being imbibed. Characters who fail their Vigor roll fall asleep for 2d6 hours. Should the heroes still be in the hall, Mubin and the patrons laugh this off as drunkenness. In the unlikely event all the heroes fall asleep, the cults' work is done—the characters are stripped and carried over to the warehouse. Otherwise, they wait until the heroes retire for the night before acting.

If the party is staying at the caravanserai, the raiding party consists of Ahmed the Strangler and the three servants. Otherwise, the servants are replaced with the ghûls. Should the characters have boasted of their prowess, Ahmed is also armed with Fazri's *slumber* device.

Ahmed first activates one of his alchemical *silence* devices. This allows them to move and act without fear of being heard. It is important you remember this—many spellcasters will be stymied, characters cannot rouse their comrades by shouting, and most Leadership Edges will not function in total silence. Of course, this works both ways.

If the party is in Room 8B, then the cultists open the secret door and rush into the room. In the event the party is in another room or building and has barricaded the door, Ahmed downs his *boost Strength* potion and smashes down the door.

Sleeping heroes are dealt a Finishing Move as an action. This is nonlethal, and merely renders the characters unconscious for 2d6 hours. Against wakeful targets, the cultists wield clubs (Str+d4) and inflict nonlethal damage. Naturally, the ghûls try to paralyze opponents.

Should the characters be subdued, they are stripped and carried to the warehouse, where they are locked in the cells until the next night.

16) SHRINE

** A low stone wall surrounds a house and a pair of statues on a raised platform.*

From outside the enclosure, the statues are recognizable as Ashtart and Qedeset. Though primarily a farming village, Darshab's caravanserai encouraged the cult of Qedeset to erect a shrine to his trading aspect.

It is evident the area is being tended and used—the grass is cut short, and there are offerings laid at the statues' feet. Even without clerics to lead them in prayers, those Faithful villages still beholden to the gods continue to worship here.

The house is deserted, but still furnished. Divided into two separate dwellings, it was formerly home to a

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priestess of Ashtart and a priest of Qedeshet. Fazri saw the miracle workers as a potential threat to his plans, and they were the first villagers to be kidnapped and eaten.

The cults received the headman's letters asking for replacements, but before they could act on the information they received another set of messages. Forged by Fazri, they informed the clerics' superiors that the pair had been called away suddenly to tend to a matter of faith in another village, and were now safely returned to their duties.

17) BARRACKS

The village's small caravanserai lacks room to house caravan guards. When in Darshab, they are provided accommodation in this simple structure. No one is currently resident, and the door is locked. Only the militia captain (#26) and the headman (#13) have keys.

Rows of bunk beds can hold up to 16 people. A hearth and bread oven provide both heating and cooking facilities, while oil lamps hanging from the rafters provide ample illumination. The only other furnishings are a long table, 16 stools, and a large washbasin. Jugs of water and provisions are placed here only when the building is occupied.

If the characters have made friendly contact with the headman and convinced him of their noble intentions, he permits them to use the building while they are in the village, but only if they raise the subject. The militia captain, if asked, refuses, claiming it is against regulations to allow civilians to use it as a doss house. He acquiesces if the headman has given his permission, but is quick to inform his fellow cultists.

Should the cult learn the characters are sleeping here, it may decide to kidnap them. Fazri first makes a visit. He claims to be checking the visitors are comfortable while simultaneously encouraging them to take advantage of the comfortable beds in the caravanserai (#15), but is secretly gathering information on exactly where each character is sleeping.

18) FARMER

** Two large, vicious looking dogs are chained to a post outside the front door. They bark and snarl as the characters approach.*

Inhabitants: Rasmi, his wife Ain, their teenage daughter Duha, and younger son Sumrah live here. They are Faithful and follow Ashtart.

Duha is an attractive girl, but receives little attention from the local boys due her to lame right leg. Bullied when she was younger, she has become dreadfully shy.

** Rasmi, Ain, & Duha:* Treat as Generic NPCs. Duha is Lame (Pace 4).

Initial Reaction: Rasmi comes out to see what his dogs are barking about. When he sees the characters his hand instinctively reaches for his dagger, but he stops short of drawing it. He orders the characters to move on, saying there is nothing for them here.

He quickly changes his attitude to Neutral if one of the characters is a cleric and displaying a holy symbol, or introduces himself as a cleric. He apologizes for his words, muttering that dark times have fallen on Darshab and a man has to protect his family.

Improved Reaction: Rasmi is desperate to talk to someone, but doesn't know who he can trust anymore. Once Neutral, he is prepared to talk to the characters, though only ever outside his house.

** It's disgraceful that the clerics (#16) should leave us in our hour of need. We tithe regularly, and yet the cult abandons us when we most need their support.*

** Prices in the general store (#14) have increased dramatically. It's daylight robbery what they charge now.*

Additional: At some point during the adventure, the characters should see Duha struggling back from the general store with a heavy bag of groceries. This can occur before or after the heroes visit the house.

If approached, she goes rigid, like a startled rabbit, and her eyes widen in fear. Spoken to politely and respectfully, she allows the characters to carry the bag for her. It takes a Persuasion roll at -2 to get her to speak beyond mumbling a brief thank you, though.

** I was good friends with Farouk (#20). I used to help him with his groceries and tend his garden. I can't believe he would just up and leave without saying goodbye to me. I have a feeling something terrible has happened to him, but the militia captain (#26) says there was no sign of foul play.*

Rasmi, if not Neutral or better, sees the party approach the house, and rushes out to snatch the bag and order his daughter inside. Should he already have spoken to the heroes, he says that his daughter knows little of men or the wider world, and he has no wish to have her head filled with talk of adventure by homeless adventurers.

19) GRAVEYARD

** A high wall surrounds the area. Peering through the gates, the characters see the distinctive shapes of graves, but only a few headstones.*

The gates are not locked. Darshab's Faithful are interred here. Few citizens have the money to mummify their loved ones, so corpses are simply washed, wrapped, and placed in the ground. Similarly, grave markers are expensive, and most families go without.

Some of the graves have clearly been disturbed and refilled. Digging down just a few feet reveals tattered burial shrouds, but no sign of any bones. The villagers don't like to talk about this, but everyone has been told the same story by the militia captain (#26)—jackals dug up the remains and stole the bones. The culprits were in fact the ghûls from the caravanserai (#15). On the way back from kidnapping a villager, they decided to grab a snack before Fazri could bring them back to heel.

20) DESERTED

** This house needs a fresh lick of paint. Its windows*

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are shuttered tight and a plank has been nailed across the front door.

There is a 20% chance during the day that Duha (#18) is tending the garden. See #18 for details of how she reacts to strangers and what she has to say if not encountered already.

This was the home of Farouk, a man possibly known to one of the heroes. He noticed things were wrong in Darshab early on, and chose to investigate. If he was the adventure hook, then the cult kidnapped him and gave him to the ghûls in the warren shortly after he wrote to the character. The militia captain (#26) duly investigated, but found nothing out of the ordinary. He deduced that the old man had chosen to leave Darshab, and sealed up the house until new owners could be found.

The house is still furnished, but all of Farouk's personal possessions were taken by the cult. They are stored in the strongroom now inhabited by the ghûls until they can be properly disposed of. Characters who search the house can make a Notice roll at -2 for each hour. With success, they locate a loose panel, behind which is a small scroll. Before he was kidnapped, Farouk wrote down a message in case something happened to him.

I suspect an evil cult has wormed its tendrils into our quiet village. Those from the caravanserai and warehouse are worthy of further investigation, and I have my suspicions about the herbalist, butcher, and the strange man who claims to live alone.

The latter refers to the man at (#30).

21) WEAVER

** Woven mats, carpets, and prayer rugs hang outside this building.*

** A young lad, perhaps 13 years old, is swiping at plants with a long stick.*

This building is the home and workshop of the village weaver. As well as selling mats and rugs, she weaves and tailors clothing.

Inhabitants: Mawahib the weaver lives here with her teenage son, Mulhim, and three younger daughters. All are Devoted. Mawahib retired here after her husband, a soldier, was killed fighting orcs shortly after they youngest child was born three years ago.

*** Mawahib & Mulhim:** Treat as Generic NPC.

Initial Reaction: Mulhim (the boy) dreams of being a soldier, like his father, something his mother finds abhorrent. On seeing the characters, he rushes over to them, aiming for whoever best fits the stereotypical image of a warrior. Showing no fear of the stranger, he asks if the character is a mighty hero. Without waiting for an explanation he carries on talking, puffing his chest out as he states his father was a brave soldier in the service of the emir and that when he grows up he is going to join

the army. He has absolutely no concept that soldiering is hard, dirty work, and battle is just another word for pain and misery.

After a few minutes, Mawahib comes out to tell her son his food is ready. Seeing the characters no doubt tooled up like they are ready to go to war, she rushes over and pulls Mulhim away. After rebuking him sternly she orders him inside. Sulkily, the boy obeys.

Mawahib turns on the heroes. There are tears in her eyes, and her fist are clenched tight by her side. She tells them that the boy's father was a soldier, but he was slain fighting orcs. Mulhim is her only boy, and she has no wish for his head to be filled with stories of glory earned on the battlefield. Characters who concur and offer to tell the boy that war is brutal and bloody, and that there is no glory in killing (or similar) raise Mawahib's attitude to Neutral. Should they espouse the glory of soldiering, her reaction drops to Hostile and she demands they leave immediately.

Otherwise, raising her attitude to the point she will pass on information requires time and multiple visits.

Improved Reaction: Even after three years in Darshab, Mawahib is still something of an outsider. Her feeling of isolation has only increased as the cloak of darkness has fallen over the village.

** Its very strange that the family at #28 left so suddenly, seeing as how they paid me up front to weave a new rug for them only a few days before.*

** The family at (#1) used to be very friendly, but they have become withdrawn recently.*

** I don't like the new imam (#7). I offered to weave new prayer rugs to honor his arrival. I said I'd include the passage from the *Hamad* about ministering to the needs of those in search of help, and he gave me a blank look, as if he had no idea what I was talking about.*

Services: Formal and tailored clothes can be purchased here at 60% less than the standard rulebook prices. Nomal clothes are available from the general store (#14). Formal clothes take 1d6 hours to adjust, while tailored clothing requires 1d4 days and several measuring sessions per set.

While it is unlikely the characters would wish to purchase a tapestry, they might be interested in a prayer rug. These small, hard-wearing rug are used by both creeds when praying. They are often embroidered with images of the god or sayings from the *Hamad*. They cost 5+ dinars (depends on the quality) and weigh 2 lbs.

22) MONEYCHANGER

** The windows on this building are barred and the door is reinforced with metal bands.*

Coins are heavy, especially in large quantities, and hard to conceal from bandits. The moneychanger offers to exchange coins for gems of equal value (less a 5% commission). He also purchases gems at 75% of their true value.

The interior is divided into three mains areas. Much of the building is taken up with living quarters for the

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owner and his bodyguards. The front door (Toughness 10) leads directly into a small room cut in half by a brick wall. A large metal grille allows merchants to deal with the owner without him risking being robbed.

A windowless, fortified room with a reinforced door (Toughness 10) and very complex lock (–4 to Lockpicking rolls) contains the moneychanger's wares. The room is further protected by a *glyph* that combines *slumber* with *voice on the wind*. Both activate as one spell if the door is opened without using the key. The owner paid a fortune for this, as it has an arcane skill of d12+2. The *voice on the wind* spell sends an alert to the owner, informing him his strongroom is being burgled.

Inhabitants: This building is home to Mumtaz and his two guards, Nasib and Nasim (twins).

Mumtaz is a notorious miser. He has a fortune in coins and gems in his strongroom, yet he spends only the bare minimum on himself. His guards are well paid, though, so as to deter them from taking bribes. Mumtaz is interested in money, not gossip. He is also wary of strangers, especially ones who come into his business carrying weapons. Persuasion rolls to get him to open up suffer a –2 penalty.

Nasib and Nasim are identical twins. Even Mumtaz gets them mixed up on occasion. They do not drink, smoke, or take drugs (save for the odd herbal remedy to keep them awake), and they leave the premises only one at a time. They wear a constant scowl and rarely speak to anyone except each other and their employer.

* **Mumtaz:** Treat as a Generic NPC, but with Smarts and Spirit d8, and Persuasion d8, Streetwise d6. He also has Improved Arcane Resistance.

* **Nasib & Nasim:** Treat as Militia (p. 65), but with Spirit d8, Fighting d8, and Block and Shieldwall (Parry 8). They do not carry slings.

Initial Reaction: Mumtaz greets the characters cordially from behind the safety of the grille, and asks if they are buying or selling. Blank or confused looks cause him to grow irate, and he snaps the same question again. On the third go he expands the question, asking whether the party wants to buy or sell gems.

Improved Reaction: Getting Mumtaz to become friendly enough to talk requires a lot of patience. Even then, he has little to say, for he does not socialize with the other villagers.

* The caravanserai (#15) hasn't been doing any real business of late. Three travellers passed through a few weeks back, but they soon left. Sounds like the quality of service has gone downhill.

* Prices have gone up at the general store (#14), not that the quality of their merchandize has improved any.

* The militia captain (#26) struts about like a seasoned warrior, but I doubt he's ever drawn his sword in anger. I certainly wouldn't rely on him to protect anyone, nor those idiots that parade around after him.

Treasure: The strongroom contains 4000 dinars and 1000 dirhams in coins, and a number of gems (200 x 25 dinars, 100 x 50 dinars, 25 x 100 dinars, 5 x 500 dinars, 1 x 1000 dinars, and 1 x 2000 dinars).

23) WAREHOUSE (C)

* *This long building bears the holy symbol of Qedesbet on its walls.*

By day, the warehouse doors are shut but not locked. Nazih, the owner, and one of the laborers are always in here during the day, moving things around, checking for vermin, and arranging supplies to be delivered to the local craftsmen.

By night, the door is locked with a heavy padlock (Toughness 10). Two of the laborers are always on duty inside in case a prisoner escapes, though they tell people they are guarding the valuables inside from thieves. No one has yet managed this, and the pair spend their time playing cards or gossiping. They count as inactive sentries. Heroes who manage to sneak into the warehouse undetected have a 50% chance of hearing them discussing "the next collection" and "the next special dinner."

Inhabitants: The house adjoining the warehouse is occupied by Nazih, the owner, and his three laborers—Altair, Fadl, and Labib. All claim to follow Qedesbet, but are key minions of Fazri and his vile cult.

* **Nazih:** Treat as a Generic NPC.

* **Altair, Fadl, and Labib:** Treat as Generic NPCs, but with Strength d8, Fighting d6 (Parry 5), and Stealth d8.

Initial Reaction: Nazih is polite, but informs the characters that the interior is out of bounds as it holds valuable goods. Characters who want somewhere to store goods are directed to the caravanserai (#15). Nazih adds that they can find comfortable beds there as well.

WAREHOUSE MAP

The interior is shown on the map below.

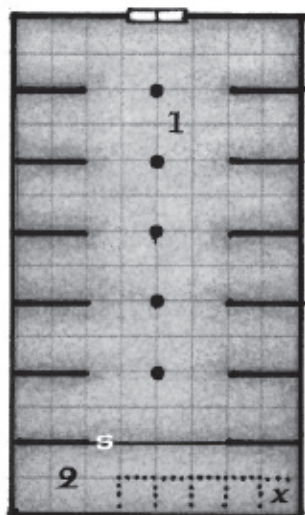
1) Main Warehouse: The warehouse is divided into 12 separate areas. These are used to store goods left by caravans for collection on their return trip, as well as raw supplies (such as rolls of cloth, timber, and metal ingots) used by Darshab's various craftsmen and barrels of wine and sacks of coffee beans for use in the caravanserai. It also doubles as the village granary, and holds sacks of grain awaiting sale through the shop and collection by caravans from the city, as well as seeds to be sown the next planting season.

The rear wall is a recent addition and is actually made of wood painted to match the rest of the interior. Tapping it reveals the nature of its construction. None of the villagers ever enter the warehouse, so its existence has gone unnoticed. If the heroes have learned that the carpenter (#24) and smith (#25) did work here and raise the matter, Nazih says they were strengthening the doors and replacing the padlock.

The secret door is hidden behind a stack of empty crates. Character snooping around the rear of the warehouse who make a Notice roll at –2 detect faint scrape marks on the stone floor where the crates have been repeatedly pulled aside. When these are moved, a careful search of the wall and a Notice roll at –2 reveals the

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Map 4: Warehouse



secret door's existence. The panel swings open when the top right corner is pressed

2) Secret Room: If the characters are captured by the cult, they are locked in the cells. The cultists are not stupid—the heroes are separated as much as possible, and known (or suspected) spellcasters are both bound and gagged. How the heroes plan to escape is left to their ingenuity.

Should they still be here the night after their capture, then Fazri, Ahmed, the butcher (#6), and the three servants from the warehouse enter the chamber. Fazri does not waste time with introductions or monologues. If he still has his *slumber* device, he uses it to subdue as many heroes as possible. The characters, unconscious or not, are removed from their cells one at a time, pummeled senseless, and butchered!

Abattoir: The western end contains a large, blood soaked wooden table, on which lie a variety of cleavers and knives, the sorts used by butchers. This is where kidnapped victims intended for the cult's consumption are butchered.

Cells: Much of the back wall is taken up with five metal cages. The locks are brand new, as are the bars (the smith (#25) crafted these for the cult). The locks are Toughness 8. The bars extend several inches into the floor and ceiling.

The cell marked "X" contains a woman. Fazri initially planned to have her shipped to the ghûl warren, but decided to keep her back for sacrifice at a later date. She is deeply traumatized, having witnessed her husband's murder and dismemberment (and potentially several others, depending on how long it takes the heroes to locate the room). Getting her to talk requires a Persuasion roll at -4 and an hour of gentle conversation.

Her name is Minnah, and until very recently she lived

at #28. She has no idea how she got here, or how long she has been a captive. She starts to talk about her husband, but breaks down in tears, pointing to the butcher's table at the end of the room.

24) CARPENTER (C)

* *Two buildings are joined by a walled enclosure.*

* *A man is wearily sawing planks in the yard.*

The L-shaped building is the carpenter's house. The other building is his timber store and workshop.

Inhabitants: The house is occupied by Qays the carpenter, his wife Izdihar, and two small children. They maintain the pretense of being Devoted.

Qays has become addicted to human flesh. Denied its sweet taste for too long, he quickly becomes lethargic. Fazri is concerned his addiction will endanger the cult, and has added to the carpenter to the list of people he intends to do away with.

* **Qays & Izdihar:** Treat as Generic NPCs. Qays has Knowledge (Craft: Carpentry) d8 and Habit (Major: human flesh). Qays begins Fatigued. Each day the characters are in Darshab, the GM should make a Vigor roll to see if the carpenter becomes Exhausted. If this occurs, the butcher makes a house call to deliver some human flesh to alleviate his longing. If this occurs twice, Fazri orders the carpenter and his family kidnapped the next night before they become a liability. This replaces any random draw to see who the cult targets.

Initial Reaction: Qays looks up if addressed, but quickly returns to his work, acknowledging the heroes with a tired nod. If they are persistent, he stops his sawing and walks over to ask what they want. It is clear from his labored breathing that he is exhausted.

Asked about affairs in Darshab, he admits things are odd. He blames the cakali hermit (#30), claiming that he isn't all he seems. Qays obviously knows the cakali is innocent of any cult activity. He is hoping that the heroes might investigate and reveal something of interest that he can then pass on to Fazri. Questioned about his recent work at the warehouse, he says he was helping strengthen the doors.

Services: Qays may be a cultist, but he still needs to make a living. He has the skills to make wooden small and medium shields, staffs and spear hafts, arrow shafts, and bows. He charges 75% of the normal price (spear hafts are priced at 25 dinars each).

The quality appears good, but anything he makes is flawed. Staffs, spears, and bows all crack if the user rolls a natural 1 (regardless of Wild Die) on his attack roll. Arrows always break, and shields have two points less Toughness than normal.

25) SMITH (C)

* *The loud clang of metal on metal indicates this is a smithy. A young lad, perhaps 10 years old, is busily pumping the bellows.*

The smithy actually occupies the smaller part of the

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building. It is open to the elements on the north and east sides.

Inhabitants: The house is home to Jul the smith, his wife Lunah, and their three children. Jul claims to be a follower of Geb-Agni, while his wife is Devoted.

* **Jul & Lunah:** Treat as Generic NPC. Jul has Knowledge (Craft: Smithing) d8, Strength d8, and carries a heavy hammer (Str+d6).

Initial Reaction: Jul welcomes the characters to the smithy and asks what they need manufactured or repaired. He denies any knowledge of anything sinister in Darshab, blaming loose tongues and minds left to wander caused by lack of hard work. He admits several families have left town, but blames this on the lack of merchant caravans calling, adding that in hard times folk go where there's money, and likely they left during the night to avoid embarrassment for lacking the stomach to stick things out until the situation improves.

He is kept busy, he says, thanks to the need to repair plows and tools, and by the work he did reinforcing the warehouse doors a while back.

Services: Given sufficient time, the smith can manufacture scale hauberks and metal shields. These take one day for every two pounds of weight. He can forge metal weapons in a number of days equal to half their weapon damage die (so a scimitar would take 4 days). Arrow heads can be produced at the rate of a dozen per day, and spear heads at the rate of three per day. These weapons are functional, but rudimentary. He charges cost 80% of normal to create any metal items.

26) MILITIA CAPTAIN

* *Two houses share a common compound.*

* *The compound is bare earth. Straw dummies and shields on wooden posts indicate this is a martial practice area.*

Building 26 is the home of the militia captain and his wife. Building 26A is home to Darshab's permanent militia—a fighting force of just three men. It also houses the village armory, such as it is (10 spears short spears and medium shields) and a single jail cell.

Inhabitants: The main house is inhabited by Militia Captain Abdul-'Adl and his wife Hajar. The militia barracks is home to three permanent militiamen—Bandri, Fath, and Ubaid. The captain, Hajar, and Fath are Devoted. Bandri and Ubaid are Faithful and honor Karmelos.

The term “peacock” is often applied to officers who look good in their brightly decorated uniform, but who have no concept of true leader-

ship. Abdul-'Adl is a peacock who dresses like a seasoned warrior. His armor is scruffy, his shield is dented, and his scimitar is notched. They were all purchased second-hand from a merchant. The captain has never seen battle, though its unlikely he'd run due to his stubborn streak. In combat, he is a danger to himself and those around him.

He should be played as a cocksure but ultimately useless official. More importantly, he should be a frustration to the characters from an early stage. Armed strangers in his town mean he is likely to follow them at a non-discrete distance, constantly on the lookout for a reason to challenge them to submit to his authority.

Several bits of information point to the captain being a cultist. He isn't—he's just utterly incompetent. He isn't stupid, but he has no concept of how to investigate crimes. Unless there is a body, he shrugs off disappearances as people leaving home, or accepts whatever Fazri, in his guise as imam, tells him to think.

That he is no warrior should be played out to the characters. When he tries to draw his scimitar, he drops it. He uses incorrect terms for unusual weapons, or when talking about military tactics. For instance, he might claim his men are trained in the phalanx, only to then add that line abreast is the best defense against cavalry.

The militiamen aren't much better. They took the job because he wages were decent and the odds of getting involved in anything other than a drunken brawl were bordering on zero.



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* **Captain Abdul-'Adl:** See p. 65.

* **Hajar:** Treat as Generic NPC.

* **Bandri, Fath & Ubaid:** See Militia (p. 65).

Initial Reaction: The first time the characters meet Abdul-'Adl should be while they are walking around the village. Clueless as to any evil in Darshab, and oblivious to the strange atmosphere, he begins as Neutral.

He inquires as to their names and business in Darshab. The captain is polite, but rather pompous in his attitude—he is the law, and he wants the characters to know that if they step out of line, he will arrest them.

Improving Abdul-'Adl's reaction depends on how he is treated. Heroes who treat him with mockery, scorn, or disrespect, who cause trouble, or who talk about evil cults lower his attitude to Unfriendly. Treated with respect, he will slowly warm to the heroes. Better still, a character who offers to help train him and his men (while managing to make it sound like he is incompetent) causes his attitude to rise to Friendly, possibly even Helpful.

Improved Reaction: Abdul-'Adl has nothing to say about sinister happenings, but only because he has failed to pick up on anything untoward. His use may come later, if the heroes decide to raid any of the cult headquarters and feel they need additional muscle. Unless he is Friendly, any approaches are met with a warning not to start a fight.

27) FARMER

* *A plump woman is banging out washing in the yard. Two toddlers are pulling up onions.*

Inhabitants: Thabit, his wife Wid, and their five children, all of whom are under 10 years of age, live here. They are both staunch Devoted.

* **Thabit & Wid:** Treat as Generic NPCs.

Initial Reaction: Wid (the woman) greets the strangers with a polite hello, but gently ushers the children indoors. She asks the heroes their names and where they are from, then inquires as to their business in Darshab. At any mention of investigating the strange goings on she invites the adventurers inside for coffee. She introduces them to her husband, who is rather shocked to see a party of heavily armed people trudge into his house.

Wid is Friendly to the heroes; her husband is initially Neutral. Over coffee and fresh bread stuffed with pork mince and tomatoes, Wid reveals the following information. As she does, she keeps turning to her husband and saying, "Isn't that right, dear?" Before the bewildered man can reply, she carries on talking.

* Our neighbors (#28) suddenly upped and left in the middle of the night. We got on very well with them, and they made no mention of leaving. (This occurred the night before the characters arrived in Darshab.)

* We contacted the militia captain the next morning, when we went round to drop off some bread and there was no reply. I make a lovely flatbread, don't I, dear? Anyway, he investigated and said there was nothing suspicious. Nothing suspicious, I tell you! Goodly folk don't just up and leave under cover of darkness now, do they?

* That butcher! Let me tell you that he's giving the best cuts to certain people and leaving the rubbish for us! I was outside the shop the other when I heard someone asking for "special meat." I was going to speak my mind, but young Ramziyah had an upset stomach and had a little accident. That reminds me, will use hold her while I fetch some clean clothes for her? (Hands a random hero a small, foul-smelling child, who promptly throws up on him.) Anyway, I had to rush home, and never saw who was asking. If you ask me it was that girl from (#3). Complete lack of modesty, that one!

28) DESERTED

* *The house is deserted. All the furniture is still there, but there are no personal possessions.*

Until the night before the characters arrived, this house was home to Murtada, a farmer, and his wife Minnah. The cult abducted them the night before the characters arrived in Darshab. Murtada was butchered, his flesh give to the butcher to hand out to cult members. Poor Minnah is still alive, and is currently a captive in the warehouse (#23).

29) FARMER

* *A man is holding a young girl by the arms, while a woman is trying to do something to her face. The girl is kicking and shouting.*

Inhabitants: Naji, his wife Kifah, and their teenage daughter Hadeel occupy this building. All three are Faithful, and worship Ashtart.

Hadeel is 17 years old. Her parents have tried to arrange a match, but the girl shows no interest in the local boys. Not that they have much interest in her—Hadeel is a tomboy through and through, and disdains feminine things. Desperate for her to get married and start a family ("like a good girl should") they try to play match-maker with one of the heroes once they become Friendly. Ideally a Noble or Rich character, but anyone who looks and sounds like a good marriage prospect will do. Hadeel, naturally, wants nothing to do with the character, and makes her views very clear.

* **Naji, Kifah, & Hadeel:** Treat as Generic NPCs.

Initial Reaction: If the heroes draw weapons, all three villagers run screaming into the house, convinced the characters are bandits. Should they opt to call out, Kifah, the woman, steps back a pace. The characters can see the girl's face is covered in smudged make-up. Kifah then explains that they are trying to make their daughter look presentable for a change, but she won't have anything to do with it. With her smudged make-up, she looks more like she has suffered an accident.

The couple has noticed a certain amount of strangeness in the village, but they ignore gossip and have only a small circle of friends. With no inkling that anything truly sinister is going on, they begin as Neutral.

Improved Reaction: Once convinced the characters

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are friendly, the couple shares the following information. They don't have a great deal to say, though.

* We used to be close friends with the people in (#1), (#3), and (#4). They don't call on us anymore, and whenever we go round there they make up excuses not to see let us in. I don't know what we could have done to offend them.

30) THE STRANGE WIFE

* *The small garden is perfectly tended, and the plants are remarkably healthy.*

Inhabitants: The house is occupied by Raghid and his wife, Sinrilli. Both are followers of Eostre Plantmother.

Sinrilli is a hearth elf, a rarity in any part of Al-Shirkuh, yet alone a backwater village. Several months ago, one of Raghid's many cousins offered him the chance to make some money on a trading voyage to Rassilon. While there, he met Sinrilli. Despite cultural differences and the language barriers, the pair found something in common through their faiths—he was formerly a follower of Ashtart, and she honored Eostre Plantmother. A whirlwind romance followed. In the days before he was due to leave, Raghid asked Sinrilli to marry him and return to his homeland. She agreed.

Sinrilli duly returned to Al-Shirkuh, but the strange sights, smells, and noises frightened her. She agreed to stay with her husband, but has so far refused to leave the house—Raghid had to smuggle her into the village in the dead of night. Since returning, Raghid has barely left the house. He spends much of his time teaching Sinrilli Hadaree customs and Sandspeech, while trying to convince her that she must introduce herself to their neighbors sooner or later.

* **Raghid & Sinrilli:** Treat as Generic NPCs. Sinrilli has the hearth elf racial Edges & Hindrances.

Initial Reaction: Raghid answers the doors to any knocks, but only a crack. He eyes the characters suspiciously before asking their names and business. Assuming they are non-confrontational, he slips out the door, keeping it as closed as possible, then shuts it behind him. Raghid is initially Uncooperative, but only because he is trying to protect his wife from strangers until she is ready to make a public appearance.

Questioned about a woman in the house, Raghid denies it. His nervous glance back toward the house is apparent for all to see. Pressed on the subject, he admits his wife is inside, but claims she is very ill. He reacts suspiciously if a hero claims to be a healer, adding that she is "not that ill."

Asked about his recent time away, he openly admits that he was part of a trading venture to Rassilon, the northern continent. In the event a character reveals knowledge of the northern lands, or better yet speaks one of the languages (most likely this will be Classical Anari or Trader, but anything is possible), Raghid's attitude improves to Neutral. He asks whether the character knows anything about hearth elves, claiming he saw one but knows nothing of the strange race. He

knows enough about his wife's people to spot any obvious lies. Further knowledge coupled with a Persuasion roll makes him Friendly, and he invites the characters inside.

Improved Reaction: Raghid introduces the characters to his wife. She is initially scared, but can easily be soothed by a hero speaking to her in Hearth Elven or Trader. She recognizes the other major civilized languages, but does not speak them. Her Sandspeech is poor—akin to a very young child in both grammar and vocabulary. Raghid then tells his story.

Since his return, he has not talked to anyone, and he knows nothing of any strangeness in Darshab.

31) THE WIZARD'S CAVE

* *The cave entrance is sealed by a wooden door marked with hieroglyphic script.*

The writing is Cakalic and simply says, "Welcome to all who come with peace in their hearts."

The cave is a natural feature. Until the current occupant moved in, teenagers would meet here to drink and smoke, make out, and do other things teenagers do, while younger children used it as a fort in games of make-believe. The occupant has done his best to make the space homely, adding rugs to the floors and basic furnishings. Fortunately for him the cave is "dead," so he has no need to worry about water dripping down the walls.

Inhabitants: The cave is home to Okreg Skyswimmer, an elderly cakali jinn mage. Okreg moved into the village two years ago, but has largely kept to himself. He chose Darshab because it was remote, and it offered somewhere he could pass away his remaining years in peace. As far as the locals are concerned, he is a crazy hermit who wants to be left alone.

* **Okreg Skyswimmer:** See p. 63.

Special: Having realized something is wrong in Darshab, Okreg has been keeping an eye on the village at night, using his *invisibility* to escape detection. If the characters have started making life difficult for the cult before calling on Okreg, he quickly learns of it and decides they warrant further investigation. Once convinced they are on the side of law and order, he invites them to his gavel. His attitude to them will be Friendly. Move straight on to Improved Reaction below.

Initial Reaction: Okreg takes several minutes to answer the door, but the characters can hear him calling out that he's coming as fast as he can. He plays the harmless hermit roll very well, and leans heavily on his staff while peering at the callers through his dark eyes.

He begins as Neutral—he is fairly confident that would be attackers do not knock politely, and has enough magical lore to make their lives problematic if they tried anything untoward. Okreg asks no questions—he just stares at the characters, waiting patiently until they introduce themselves. If any characters are jinn mages and announce themselves as such, he raises an eyebrow but passes no comment. Eventually he tires of the conversa-

Map 5: Ghul Warren

1 Square = 18 Feet



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tion, suggests they call on the headman and avoid staying at the caravanserai, and closes the door.

Okreg then decides to use his *invisibility* to follow the characters around the village to ensure they are trustworthy and not agents of the cult. When suitably convinced by their attitude and actions, he makes contact in order to share his knowledge.

Improved Reaction: Okreg has learned much of what is going on, though he is not yet sure of the nature of the cult or its true plans.

- * The butcher (#6) seems to be a central figure, though the mage is unsure of his exact role. Okreg has seen him going to the warehouse late at night on several occasions. Each time, he returns to his shop carrying a heavy and bulky sack.

- * The imam (#7) displays a distinct lack of knowledge concerning the mysteries of the *Hamad*, and spends a lot of time at the caravanserai drinking coffee. He too has been spotted going into the warehouse after dark.

- * The caravanserai (#15) is not a safe place. Several people have disappeared while staying there. The servants have been seen carrying long objects wrapped in heavy cloaks to the warehouse.

- * The militia captain (#26) is a good man, but completely incompetent. He might prove an ally, but first he must be swayed from listening to the imam, on whose advice he is too reliant.

- * One night, Okreg saw three figures carrying a heavy load out of the warehouse and into the hills. He followed them to a cleft in the rock. They lowered the bundle into the ground before returning to Darshab. The mage made no attempt to enter the hole, but he did notice the faint stench of decaying flesh on an up-draft. Okreg can supply directions to the entrance. This is the same cave as the map they heroes might find, and is an alternate means of locating the ghûl warren.

Although willing to share information, Okreg is not prepared to join an adventuring party. His age is against him, and he has fought all the battles he intends to fight. He is prepared to use his magic to continue spying on the cult if asked to do so, but he will not endanger himself. Should the party be woefully lacking in martial strength or magic (GM's call), he offers them one or more alchemical devices.

Asked why he has not taken on the cult, he raises an eyebrow in a manner that clearly indicates he thinks the speaker is an idiot. He then states that even with magic, one old cakali can do little to change the world. Younger bodies with keener instincts and brighter futures are required to tackle this threat.

Treasure: Aside from a handful of dinars, Okreg has a stash of alchemical devices already brewed. He has 3 x potions of *healing* (each cures one wound), 1 x amulet containing *deflection* (cast with a success), 1 x candy imbued with *environmental protection (water)*, 1 x potion of *quickness* (cast with a success), and 2 x feathers containing *bolt* (one single 3d6 *bolt* and one double 2d6 *bolt*, both with earth trappings).

◉ The Warren ◉

The ghûls Fazri is trying to become leader of lair in a natural cave system in the foothills of the mountains. Make sure you have read **Exploring the Underworld** at the end of this adventure.

Atmosphere: The exploration of the caves should be a terrifying experience. Outside the heroes' feeble light sources there is only utter darkness, and dripping or flowing water masks noises unless particularly loud and/or close. If you've taken our advice and watched *The Descent*, you'll know exactly how to use the ghûls to best effect. If not, go watch the movie now. Seriously.

Combat Maps: There are no combat scale maps of the caverns. Depending where the characters are, and the nature of the tunnel or cavern they are exploring, the GM should quickly sketch something. Remember, the characters' line of sight is limited to the area their lanterns or torches illuminate.

Directions: There are no compasses in Al-Shirkuh. You should refer to directions in terms of left, right, forward, and backward, rather than points of the compass.

Light Sources: Light sources provide normal illumination within their listed radius, Dim (-1) lighting at up to twice the listed radius, and Dark (-2) lighting up to three times their listed radius. A lantern has a 4" radius, and thus its "lighting ranges" are 4/8/12.

Main Map Scale: The width of tunnels is exaggerated on the map. Except for squeezes, most average two to six yards (1" to 3") in width and height. Caverns measurements are as per the map scale. Caverns average 20 yards (10") in height.

Movement: As a rule of thumb, movement outside of combat is four map squares (80 yards) per five minutes. This takes into account minor sumps, steep gradients, small climbs, rough terrain, and so on. This rate also assumes the heroes are wary of the dark and the unknown dangers that lurk in it. The passage of time is important for determining how long light sources burn and alchemical devices last. Extensive exploration may lead to the characters requiring meal breaks, and maybe even sleep.

Slopes: The longer the arrows, the gentler the slope. Sloping tunnels of less than 3 squares are considered steep. See page 68 for details.

Squeezes: Unless otherwise stated, squeezes are just a single game inch in length. They are chokepoints, rather than lengthy tunnel constrictions.

1) A LONG DROP

The entrance used by the cultists to lower in captives is a narrow cleft at the top of a hill. The shaft into which the cleft opens drops a total to 50 yards (25"), but does so in three distinct drops.

The first drop descends 20 yards (10") to a ledge capable of supporting two characters. The second drop is

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16 yards (8"), this time to a wider ledge (can hold three characters) on the opposite side of the shaft. The final drop is 14 yards (7"), and deposits the characters into the cave system.

Abseiling in the narrow shaft requires a Climbing roll. Success means the hero safely descends a number of game inches equal to his Strength die. Failure means the hero failed to move for some reason, but he does not fall. A critical failure means the spelunker has lost his grip and fallen, or, if the rope is not tied around his waist, smashed into a wall, whereupon he takes a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises.

Sigil: Scratched into the wall at the bottom of the shaft is a circle, its rough shape smeared with black soot. Followers of Geb-Agni of Upuaut may make a COmoon KNowledge roll to recognize it as the holy symbol of Nergal, minor deity of underground exploration (see *Realm Guide* #6). Other characters must use Knowledge (Religion).

2) CLERIC'S REST

Lying in the bulge above where the cavern narrows is what appears to be a pile of gold dinars. This is, in fact, a glitterbug swarm.

Monsters: The swarm usually preys on small animals and the occasional captive lowered down to the ghûls. The ghûls have learned to live with the swarm. The bugs protect the undead from unwanted intruders, and that is a small price to pay for the loss of the occasional meal.

* **Glitterbug Swarm (1):** See p. 66.

Treasure: Beneath the swarm are the remains of a priest of Nergal. The cleric stumbled across the cave several weeks ago. Believing she had found a previously unknown cave system, she promptly set out to explore it. Young and inexperienced, she fell foul of the swarm. In what remains of the unfortunate cleric's backpack are two alchemical *light* spells imbued into gems (rub them to work), a potion of *boost Climbing* (cast with a success), and a potion of *boost Swimming* (cast with a raise).

3) THE LONG CRAWL

This tunnel is 6 yards (3") across, but only two feet high. In order to move along it, the heroes must crawl. This reduces their Pace to one map square per five minutes. Halfway along, the tunnel narrows to a tight squeeze.

Terrain: Although not technically a squeeze, crawling through such a confined space hampers combat abilities. Only small shields may be employed. Characters of effective Size +1 suffer a -4 penalty to attack rolls and their Parry rating, Size +0 heroes incur a -2 penalty, while those with an effective Size of -1 are at -1 penalty.

Monsters: For each square of movement the characters complete, the GM should draw a card. A black royal card (Jack through Ace) indicates a giant centipede from Area 7 has heard their movement and come to investi-

gate. The centipede is long, but it is not hampered by the height of the cavern. This places the lead characters at a distinct disadvantage. Worse, those in the rear are unable to attack with missile weapons or spells thanks to their comrades blocking line of sight to the monster.

* **Giant Centipede (1):** See p. 63.

4) CHARNEL PIT

The ghûls dump the marrow-sucked bones of their victims in this sunken cavern. Over the centuries the undead have been here, the detritus has filled the chamber to a depth of two feet. Most of the bones are those of animals—giant centipedes, goats, and sheep, but human remains are evident in the jumbled mass.

Fear: If the characters have not yet encountered any ghûls in the caverns, then the presence of the bones requires them to make a Fear roll at -2 to avoid Fear. If they know the nature of their prey, there is no modifier. The penalty remains for 10 minutes after the adventurers leave this chamber.

Terrain: Movement across the floor of the cavern in combat is Difficult Ground.

The cliff at the northern end of the cavern is 30 feet (5") high. The cliff at the southern end is 24" (4") high.

Monsters: The presence of the lost temple to Iblis and the ghûls has given birth to a bone swarm. Held together by a mindless infernal spirit, the swarm violently reacts to the presence of living creatures. The creature is perfectly concealed by the other bones. Have the heroes check for Surprise when it attacks.

The GM can use the terrain and lack of good lighting to mess with the heroes. One might see a skeletal hand twitch at the edge of his vision. This might be the bone swarm moving to engage, but it could just as easily be a bone disturbed by the heroes' passage.

* **Bone Swarm (1):** See p. 65.

5) POOL OF OOZE

Long ago, this huge cavern was home to a colony of fungals. They existed even after the ghûls took up residence, but soon fell to their privations. The fungus is this chamber has rotted thanks to water seeping through the rock to form a pool of green-brown ooze.

Stench: Movement through the ooze causes a vile stench to fill the air. Characters must make Vigor rolls once they begin wading through the filth or become Fatigued until they breathe cleaner air for five minutes.

Terrain: The area encompassed by the pool quickly slopes away to become waist deep on an average human character, and chest deep on Small heroes. Waist deep water is difficult ground and prevents running by any hero. Chest to neck deep water can be waded through at just 2" per round.

Monsters: The ooze is home to a dozen giant maggots. These normally feed on the slime, but they are quite partial to flesh. The disturbance caused by characters wading through the ooze attracts their attention. (Every

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now and then one slithers its way into Area 8, where the ghûls quickly dispatch it.)

The maggots begin submerged in the slime. Have the characters make Notice rolls at -2 opposed by the maggots' Stealth when they enter three times the radius of their light source. Success means they spot ripples in the water closing in on their position and can react. Otherwise, check for Surprise when the maggots close within 5" of the characters.

* **Giant Maggots (2 per hero):** See page 64.

6) GHUL LAIR

This large cavern is home to a number of ghûls. Stalactites hang from the ceiling, while stalagmites rise up from the floor. Large boulders are present enough to make tactical maps more interesting, but do not overly hamper movement. The shaded areas are columns that rise from floor to ceiling, blocking line of sight and preventing movement through those squares.

Monsters: A pack of ghûls inhabit this cavern. There is little the characters can do to avoid detection—their light sources can be seen some distance away, and even if they extinguish them, the ghûls have infravision.

The ghûls are hungry, but they are not stupid—anyone entering their lair is likely capable of defending themselves. The ghûls sneak to outside the furthest extent of the heroes' illumination, listening to their conversations and trying to judge their strength. Operating as a pack, one then reveals its presence as a shadowy figure at the edge of the heroes' vision, drawing the intruders attention (and likely their fire) while the rest circle around to attack from the rear. They may perform this action several times in the hope of identifying spellcasters before actually launching their assault. One may even pluck up the courage to make a lone attack.

Do not be too quick to attack the party. Tease them with potential targets first. Let them fire off arrows and cast spells into the darkness. Sacrifice one or two ghûls on solo attacks. While they're examining the body or trying to help a paralyzed comrade, do the same again. Let them kill a few ghûls and grow in confidence. Then, when you're ready, unleash the remaining pack in a do-or-die assault.

In the event the characters decide to flee, the ghûls follow them. Play them as patient hunter. They are quite prepared to follow the characters and strike at the most opportune moment, such as when a character is stuck in a squeeze or if one becomes separated. They also know the layout and can see in the dark. Combined, these al-

low them to run ahead of the characters and prepare an ambush.

* **Ghûls (3 per hero):** See p. 64.

7) ABANDONED FUNGAL CAVERN

This cavern was the fungals' primary fungus farm. Without careful tending, the fungus has dissolved into a slippery, spongy mass that covers the entire floor. Other species have grown to towering mushrooms that block line of sight. The ghûls have learned to avoid this cavern.

Terrain: The floor is slick (see page 68) and knee deep on an average human in rotting fungus. Movement in combat is Difficult Ground.

Running the Gauntlet: For each square the characters move through the cavern, the GM should draw a card from the action deck. On a black royal card (Jack through Ace) he should consult the table below.

Jack: A dense cloud of spores is released by a patch of fungus. Every character must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken for 1d6 rounds as he is overcome by violent vomiting. Draw a second card. *Any* black royal card indicates a giant centipede has heard the noise (see Ace below for details).

Queen: The heroes pass through a patch of witchbane fungus. The spores of this toadstool inhibit spellcasting



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by preventing a mage weaving magical threads. Anyone entering a square containing it must make a Smarts roll or be unable to invoke magic (but not miracles) for 1d6 rounds.

King: The characters walk through a patch of burn-bloom fungus. It excretes a powerful acid. The characters suffer 2d4 damage at the end of their movement. All damage is taken to the legs.

Ace: Giant centipedes (see page 63) slither through the fungal mass searching for cave rats and other small creatures. Alerted to the presence of potential prey, one of the voracious hunters moves to investigate. Have the characters make Notice rolls opposed by its Stealth. With success, the characters detect it at the furthest extent of their light source. On a failure, the creature is only spotted at the edge of the light sources' "good lighting" radius. Check for Surprise regardless of the range. There are a maximum of six of the creatures here. When these have all been killed, treat the draw as no event.

8) POOL

Water cascades into a natural depression from cracks in the ceiling and along subterranean channels. The water is icy cold, but perfectly safe to drink.

Terrain: The water is waist deep on an average human character, and chest deep on Small heroes. Waist deep water is difficult ground and prevents running by any hero. Chest to neck deep water can be waded through at just 2" per round.

9) THE RAPIDS

Water fills this steep, downward sloping tunnel to within a foot of the ceiling, and flows in a strong current. Any character moving to within one square of the upper end of the tunnel must make a Strength roll or be swept off his feet and carried down the tunnel. Once in the tunnel, there is no hope of fighting the current or regaining one's balance—all he can do is try to enjoy the ride.

Whether swept into the tunnel or willing explorers, characters must make a Swimming roll on their downward journey. Failure leads to a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises.

At the lower end, the water cascades over a 20' high waterfall. Characters must make an Agility roll as they are unceremoniously propelled over the precipice. Success means the hero takes no damage from hitting the water. Failure inflicts 1d6+1 damage.

Remember, the characters will be virtually fully immersed during the descent and submerged when they hit the pool in Area 10. Unprotected items will be waterlogged, and possibly ruined.

10) FORGOTTEN DARKNESS

One of the reasons the ghûls chose this cave system for a lair is that it already stank of darkness and evil. The source of this is an ancient and long-forgotten temple

to Iblis. The ghûls have never worshipped here—those inclined to bow before a deity do so to Giaour alone.

The southern end of the cavern is dry ground. Once the area becomes illuminated, the character see two skeletons locked in eternal struggle. One is clad in rotting black robes, the other in a heavily rusted chain hauberk. The former has a scimitar (not rusted) thrust through its rib cage, while the latter has succumbed to a curvy-bladed dagger (not rusted) stabbed deep into its chest. Several other black-robed skeletons lie on the floor nearby.

The black-robed figures are former worshippers of Iblis, slain by a lone cleric of Shamash who tracked them to their hidden lair. While he managed to kill the lesser members with ease, he and the cleric of Iblis dealt each other simultaneous deathblows.

Fear: The stench of evil hangs heavily in the air. The characters must make a Spirit roll or suffer the effects of Fear. This remains until they are away from the chamber for 10 minutes or the statue (see below) is destroyed. While the statue remains intact, the roll must be made each time the heroes enter the cavern.

Statue: Near the back wall of the chamber is a life-sized rotting wooden statue. It takes the form of a skeletal human with a goat's head. The figure is one of the many forms Iblis takes in the imagery of his cultists.

Terrain: The water is waist deep on an average human character, and chest deep on Small heroes. Waist deep water is difficult ground and prevents running by any hero. Chest to neck deep water can be waded through at just 2" per round.

Monsters: The other skeletons are actually moldbone skeletons. They remain inanimate until someone touches the curvy-bladed dagger, takes the cleric of Iblis' amulet from around his neck, or destroys the statue of Iblis.

* **Moldbone Skeletons (1 per hero):** See p. 65.

Treasure: Inspection of the two death-locked skeletons reveals each is wearing a holy symbol around its neck. These reveal their allegiance to any Faithful. The cleric of Shamash's holy symbol is made of gold with a silver lunar disk. That of his rival is made of jet.

The scimitar registers as a relic to the touch. Only a follower of Shamash can attune to the weapon, though. When attuned and wielded, the blade grants the user the Champion Edge, but only against demons and creatures that actively worship Iblis. (Remember, most undead in Hekata owe Iblis no allegiance.)

The dagger is also a relic. A character who attunes to it discovers it grants +1 to Fighting rolls and damage, but only against followers of Shamash or Tammuz. Clerics of those deities who learn of its powers but do not seek to destroy the blade are committing a mortal sin.

The statue is heavily rotten and shatters with a single blow. Doing so immediately removes the taint of evil from the cavern. As the statue crumbles to dust, so to do the bones of the cleric of Iblis.

11) DEAD END SUMP

This tunnel runs for 100 yards (50") and is completely

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filled with water. Due to the strong current flowing from the pool, an explorer doubles his Swimming Pace. Unfortunately, the far end is a tiny crack, through which the water is expelled as a natural spring that eventually feeds into the nearest major river. The crack is wide enough only for a Size -2 character to exit through.

12) PITS OF MISERY

The floor of this cavern is dotted with a number of natural pits. Each pit is 15' deep and filled to a depth of three feet with water. When they can control their appetites, the ghûls keep captives here. While they prefer to consume living flesh, they are uncaring if their prisoners die of hypothermia first—dead flesh is still a welcome meal.

Depending on the cult's activities, one or more prisoners may have been kidnapped and sent to the caverns. For each NPC, draw an action card. A red card or Joker indicates that person is alive and in one of the pits. They are uninjured, but as Exhausted through cold. A black card means the ghûls could not control their hunger, and the person has already been consumed. Regardless, their are two captives in the pits.

The first is Omar, a simple shepherd who was captured by the ghûls yesterday. He is Fatigued through cold, hungry, and absolutely terrified—he knows what the creatures are and the fate that awaits him. He has no wealth or favors to offers rescuers.

The second is Dimah bint Aza, a Devoted Bedu majin jinn blooded houri. She has been here for three days, and is Exhausted. She has been a slave for much of her adult life, bought and sold by various men. Some treated her well, but her last master was an abusive merchant. Dimah is prepared to offer her services to one rescuer for a year and a day, after which she expects to be freed. During her service, she tries to seduce her new master into enacting vengeance on her former owner.

* **Omar:** Treat as a Generic NPC.

* **Dimah:** Treat as a Generic NPC, but add Persuasion d8, Attractive, and Houri. If the GM prefers, he may create her character from scratch.

13) THE MAZE

The Maze, as the name suggests, is a network on interconnecting tunnels. It isn't particularly extensive or complex, but in the dark, it is easy to get turned around or confused, especially with no compass to point the way. With each map square being 10", it is not easy to detect the curve of some tunnels.

Unless the characters are actively being hunted by ghûls, the GM should draw a card every 20 minutes the party spends in the maze. A Club indicates a lone ghûl is in the Maze, making its way between Areas 6 and 14, or vice versa. For each square the characters move through, have the ghûl make a Notice roll to detect their presence.

The undead's tactic is to work out where the party is,

maneuver behind them, sneak up, and try to paralyze the characters at the rear. It then retreats into the darkness as quickly as possible, only to return and repeat the tactic at the first opportunity.

14) COLUMNED LAIR

This cavern is home to a number of ghûls.

Terrain: The shaded area are natural columns extending from floor to ceiling. They block line of sight and prevent movement through those squares.

Monsters: See the description of the previous ghûl lair (Area 6) for how to handle events. In the event the characters have already run into ghûls, one or more undead may come here to gather reinforcements.

* **Ghûls (2 per hero):** See p. 64. If the party has been having an easy time, then one of the ghûls can be made a Wild Card.

15) TEMPLE TO GIAOUR

The ghûls honored Giaour long before Fazri turned up on their doorstep.

Mouth of Giaour: In the center of the chamber is a narrow hole (counts as a Size -3 squeeze). Surrounding it is a rough circle of stalagmites, which give it the impression of being a fanged maw. The ghûls refer to this as the Mouth of Giaour. Offerings of meat and bones are thrown into the hole to sate their god's hunger.

How deep the hole goes and to where it eventually leads is up to the GM. If he is looking to expand the cave system, then the shaft leads to a lower set of tunnels. Otherwise, it ends in a large cave with no exits.

Tunnel: The ghûls do not enter and leave the warren by the deep shaft. Concealed behind a large boulder is a narrow tunnel. A character who makes a Notice roll at -2 while in the vicinity of the boulder detects a slight breeze. Moving the rock requires a Strength roll at -4. After 200 yards of twisting, turning, and descending, the tunnel emerges in a dry ravine in the hills.

Fazri may think he has the upper hand when it comes to the ghûls, but they have not yet revealed the existence of this escape route to the cleric.

Treasure: Ghûls have little use for gold and silver. Strewn around the chamber are 2,000 dinars in assorted coins. Some of these date back over a century. It takes one character 10 minutes to locate and collect 200 dinars worth of treasure. At the GM's discretion, there may be map that leads to another adventure.

Aftermath

The characters earn a minor victory by defeating Fazri and smashing the cult operating in Darshab. Depending on their thoroughness, they may expose every member and bring them to justice. Presented with the testimony of Minnah and evidence uncovered by the characters,

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Alternate Ghul Abilities

The ghul stats in this adventure and in the core book are for common creatures. Though rare, other abilities are known. To make a ghul more powerful, or just more unusual, GMs can add one or more of the abilities below.

* **Improved Paralysis:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by a ghul's claw attacks must make a Vigor roll at -2 or be paralyzed for 2d6 minutes.

* **Infected Wounds:** A character Shaken or wounded by the ghul's claws, irrespective of whether or not he is paralyzed, must make a second Vigor roll or his wounds become infected. Unless *healing* is applied to cure the disease within 10 minutes, the character suffers a -2 penalty to all natural healing rolls. The penalty also applies to spellcasters attempting to cast *healing* on the victim for the purpose of curing wounds. Subsequent infections do not produce a cumulative effect—a victim is either infected or he is not.

Removing the infection requires consuming a dose of antibiotics (see sidebar on page 64) for five consecutive days. The hero may then make a Vigor roll. With success, the penalty is removed. Failure means he remains infected, but may begin another dose of treatment.

* **Mortal Form:** By day, the ghul's appearance involuntarily reverts to its mortal appearance, allowing it to mingle freely with the living. While changed, the creature does not register to *detect undead* spells, though it remains susceptible to spells like *warding (undead)* and *weaken undead*. Despite appearances, it retains all its special abilities save for Claws. At sunset, it automatically reverts to its ghul form. The ghul can revert to its undead form at will, but cannot resume mortal form until the next dawn.

* **Spells:** Some ghuls are clerics of Giaour, while others are mages. In the latter instance, ghul magic and khem-hekau are most favored. A typical cleric or ghul mage has d8 arcane die and knows *boost trait* (Fighting, Notice, Stealth, Tracking only; no lower), *fear*, *obscure*, and *smite*. Practitioners of khem-hekau know *boost/lower trait*, *entangle*, *fear*, and *obscure*.

Notes on Ghul Paralysis

The paralyzing effect of a ghul's claws is a form of toxin, and thus antitoxin herbal remedies grant a +1 bonus to the Vigor roll. Remember, though, the character must have already taken the drug—it has no effect if consumed after the fact. After infection, a purgative is the only effective herbal remedy. Paralysis can also be removed by using *healing* within the first 10 minutes. This application of the power does not cure any wounds, however.

Marwan Effendi is quick to hold a trial and find the cultists guilty. Their punishment is death by beheading. Imams, clerics of Tammuz, and Headsmen may all be called upon to play a part in proceedings.

Should the heroes head straight off to the warren after killing Fazri and smashing the cult centers in the warehouse and caravanserai, however, the surviving cultists are quick to leave town. They know what fate awaits them, and they have no wish to hang around to meet it. Tracking them down can be used as a follow on scenario of the GM's devising.

The villagers are grateful to the heroes, but have little to offer them. They scrape together 500 dinars in total, but are keen to show their thanks through a grand feast and offering the heroes a permanent home in the village (likely there are now a few vacant properties). Whether the heroes accept the offer or not, they will receive a warm welcome in Darshab to the end of their days.

A major victory is earned only through destroying the cult and eradicating the ghuls in the warren. Having grown accustomed to fresh meat, the ghuls are not about to let Fazri's death phase them. After a few weeks without a delivery, the ghuls begin to make their presence felt in Darshab under cover of darkness. Whether they manage to control their hunger and take only the occasional victim or go mad and slaughter the entire village is up to the GM.

If the characters have refused to investigate the warren, then having them in the village when the ghuls attack *en masse* is a fitting epic finale. Such a scene gives heroes with Leadership Edges chance to shine as the militia, Okreg, Qamar, and pretty much every able-bodied citizen able to control his fear (Spirit rolls will be required of other villagers to avoid cowering in terror) stands in defense of the village. Even with just 5 ghuls per hero (the total population of the warren), it will be a very tough encounter—the attack comes at night, the defenders are scattered across the village, and one blow from a ghul's claws is likely enough to render most NPCs paralyzed. Even if victorious, the villagers will beseech the heroes to find the ghuls' lair and ensure no more remain.

Bestiary

FAZRI, CLERIC OF GIAOUR

Fazri has faithfully served Giaour for many years. He knows he is close to attaining full ghul status, but has been unable to achieve the final step. He hopes that the formation of a large cult will provide him with the spiritual energy and strength he requires.

Fazri's transformation into a ghul is almost complete. He is gaunt and wiry, and has lost much of his body hair. His claws are long, thick, yellow nails. Their appearance is unusual, but they are not obvious weapons. He

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attempts to pass his appearance off as a non-infectious illness.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Knowledge (Law) d6, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Stealth d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Arrogant, Ugly

Edges: Alchemy, Arcane Background (Miracles), Charismatic, Command, Fast and Silent, Lurker

Powers: *Boost trait* (Fighting, Notice, Stealth, Tracking only; no *lower*), *fear*, *obscure*, *silence*

Languages: Bedu, Black Tongue, Hekatic, Sandspeech

Gear: Mace (Str+d6), 2 x potions of *healing* (each removes one wound), glass vial containing *slumber* gas (Medium Burst Template, cast with a success)

Treasure: Worthwhile

Special Abilities:

- * **Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Infravision:** Halves penalties (round down) for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- * **Keen Nose:** +2 to Notice and Tracking rolls against living targets.
- * **Paralysis:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by Fazri's claw attack must make a Vigor roll or be paralyzed for 2d6 minutes.



AHMED THE STRANGLER

A former soldier is the employ of Sirhan, City of Stars, Ahmed deserted after strangling a comrade during an argument. Rescued from death in the desert by Fazri, he now works as the priest's bodyguard. Ahmed is tall, well-muscled, and completely shaved. He wears only a simple loincloth, leaving his muscled arms and torso naked.

Ahmed's favorite method of subduing foes is, not surprisingly, strangulation. This works as a grapple, except any damage is nonlethal. Remember, once his hands are around a victim's throat, armor does not apply.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Healing d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Loyal, Mean

Edges: Brawler*, Brawny, Quick, One Step One Kill

Languages: Black Tongue, Orcish, Sandspeech

Gear: Fists (Str+2), potion of *boost Strength* (cast with a success), 2 x gold coins imbued with *silence* (Medium Burst Template)

Treasure: Meager

* *Ahmed has an immensely strong grip. The damage bonus from this Edge applies to grapple damage.*



OKREG SKYSWIMMER

Okreg is a retired jinn mage, and a master of khamzin

and marid jinn magic. His fur is turning gray and his strength has diminished, but he has lost nothing of his magical power. Still, his adventuring days are long over.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Healing d6, Intimidation d10, Jinn Magic d10, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d12, Knowledge (Folklore) d8, Knowledge (History) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Survival d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Elderly

Edges: Alchemy, Arcane Background (Jinn Magic), Bite/Claws (Str+d4), Fearless, Nomad Ways, Sand Walker

Powers: *Bolt* (air/water), *deflection* (air), *elemental manipulation* (air & water), *environmental protection* (air & water), *fly* (air), *healing* (water), *invisibility* (air), *quickness* (air & water)

Languages: Bedu, Cakalic, Jinn, Sandspeech

Gear: Staff (Str+d4, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2-hands)

Treasure: Worthwhile

CENTIPEDE, GIANT

Giant centipedes are voracious hunters. Covered in thick, black chitin and possessing mandibles capable of ripping through the toughest armor, they are greatly feared by those who must explore the subterranean depths these creatures call home.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 13 (3)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +3:** Thick chitin.
- * **Bite:** Str+d8, AP 2.
- * **Large:** Attackers add +2 when attacking a giant centipede, due to their size.
- * **Size +4:** Giant centipedes grow up to 24' long but are rarely more than two feet wide.

GENERIC CLERIC OF GIAOUR

These deranged mortals honor Giaour, father of ghûls (see p. 66). As a result of their unholy diet and religious devotion, their physical appearance has begun to alter toward that of a ghûl. Their treasure is usually of archaic design, being scavenged from corpses.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Tracking d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Ugly, Yellow (priests only)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Command, Fast and Silent

Powers: *Boost trait* (Fighting, Notice, Stealth, Tracking only; no *lower*), *fear*, *obscure*

Gear: Leather armor (+1), short sword (Str+d6)

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Ghul Magic

Requirements: Novice

Arcane Skill: Ghul Magic (Smarts)

Starting Powers: 3

Powers: As per Giaour.

Not all ghuls or those who seek to become one honor Giaour. Those of the Devoted creed, being corrupt in both flesh and spirit, follow the path of Druj. In order to progress, mages must frequently dine on the flesh of sentient beings. Like the undead they seek to become, most prefer to scavenge in graveyards after dark, so as to conceal their unholy appetite. Ghul magic is outlawed by all the civilized races. Those caught practicing it face only one sentence—death by beheading.

Casting: Ghul mages must be able to speak to work their magic.

Game Mechanics: When the character is in a graveyard, tomb, necropolis, or other area commonly associated with death, he gains +2 to all Ghul Magic rolls. For the purposes of Champion and Holy Warrior, ghul mages count as supernatural evil creatures—there is no such thing as a non-evil practitioner of this dark and fell art.

Tainted Flesh: Mortal practitioners undergo physical transformation as per clerics of Giaour (see p. 66), swapping Ghul Magic for Faith. At Ghul Magic d8, he automatically gains the Ugly Hindrance.

Trappings: Spells must have a necromantic or darkness trapping whenever possible.

New Herbal Remedy

Antibiotic (0): Antibiotics are used to treat diseases. All diseases allow a Vigor roll, typically once per day or once per week. One dose of antibiotic must be taken every day for the appropriate period for the medicine to have any effect. Assuming this is done, the victim makes his next Vigor roll to shake off the disease at +2. Multiple doses otherwise have no additional effect.

Treasure: Worthwhile

Special Abilities:

- * **Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Infra-vision:** Halves penalties (round down) for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- * **Keen Nose:** +2 to Notice and Tracking rolls against living targets.

Paladin: To create a paladin of Giaour, apply the following changes to the stat block: Spirit d8, Fighting d8, Parry 6, Assassin.

GENERIC NPC

These stats cover most minor named characters. Ad-

justments are noted in the relevant entry. The cultists all share a special ability.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Knowledge (one Craft) d6, Notice d6, Stealth d4

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Edges & Hindrances: —

Languages: Bedu, Sandspeech

Gear: Knife (Str+d4)

Treasure: Meager, unless noted otherwise

Special Abilities:

- * **Cultist:** The cultists believe they are on the road to immortality, and they are not about to blow their golden opportunity. They cannot be cajoled, tricked, or forced into revealing anything about the cult.

GHUL

Ghul is the Hadaree term for evil spirits that haunt the night, abducting and eating babies, consuming flesh, and striking terror in peaceful souls. They subsist on the dead flesh that abounds in places of death. If pressed, however, they gladly prey on the living, favoring the weak, witless, dying, or helpless.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d10, Tracking d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Treasure: Meager per 3 ghuls

Special Abilities:

- * **Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Infra-vision:** Ghuls halve penalties (round down) for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- * **Keen Nose:** Ghuls get +2 to Notice and Tracking rolls against living targets.
- * **Paralysis:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by a ghul's claw attacks must make a Vigor roll or be paralyzed for 2d6 minutes.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

MAGGOTS, GIANT

These bloated monsters are three feet in length and roughly a foot in diameter.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d4.
- * **Size -1:** Giant maggots are three feet long.

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MILITIA CAPTAIN ABDUL-'ADL

Abdul-'Adl is far from a seasoned warrior. He got the post because he was the one who suggested to the headman that Darshab have a militia. He has a scar on his right cheek from a scimitar. Sadly, he was the one wielding the scimitar—he tried to twirl it in his hand and ended up cutting his face.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Battle) d4, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Loyal, Stubborn

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Languages: Bedu, Sandspeech

Gear: Leather (+1), scimitar (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), dagger (Str+d4)

Treasure: Worthwhile

MILITIA

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d4, Notice d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6(1)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Languages: Bedu, Sandspeech

Gear: Leather (+1), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), medium shield (+1 Parry), dagger (Str+d4), sling (Range: 4/8/12, Damage: Str+d4)

Treasure: Meager

QAMAR

Qamar once served with the illustrious Pegasus Guard. Qamar was part of a detachment assigned to escort an ambassador to Qina, City of Smells. When her pegasus took ill, she took it to a veterinarian. The couple soon fell in love. Faced with the choice of obeying her vows and rejecting her feelings or giving in to them, Qamar opted to follow her heart and resigned her post.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Riding d8, Shooting d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Command, Fast Mount, Frenzy

Languages: Al-Waziran, Orcish, Sandspeech

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry), scimitar (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4)

Treasure: Worthwhile

SKELETON, MOLDBONE

Infected by a virulent mold, their bones are dirty gray or yellow, and very fragile.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d4

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Gear: Varies, but typically a short sword, axe, or mace (Str+d6)

Treasure: Meager per 3 skeletons

Special Abilities:

* **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.

* **Choking Cloud:** A wounded moldbone skeleton explodes in a choking cloud of bone and mold. All adjacent air-breathing creatures must make a Smarts roll or hold their breath. Failure means they inhale mold spores and becomes infected. Each week thereafter, the victim must make a natural Healing roll or gain a level of Fatigue. This can lead to Death. The only hope for a cure after the first 10 minutes is a course of anti-fungal herbal remedies (treat as per antibiotic). Victims who die from the spores become inanimate moldbone skeletons once their flesh rots.

* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.

* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage. Immune to disease and poison.



SWARM, BONE

A bone swarm is a pile of skulls and skeletal limbs inhabited by a lone necromantic spirit. Controlling so many bones is extremely taxing, and bone swarms have a habit of becoming inanimate if the spirit loses concentration. The concentration required means the bone swarm has a lower Spirit than other swarms. A bone swarm typically fills a Medium Burst Template.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 8

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

* **Bite and Claw:** Bone swarms inflict hundreds of tiny bites and scratches every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location.

* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.

* **Jumble of Bones:** If a bone swarm is dealt a deuce, the spirit temporarily loses control of the remains. During this round its Parry drops to 2 and it can take no actions, including free ones such as moving its Pace and attacking.

* **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like puppet.

* **Swarm:** Parry +2. Because the swarm is composed of scores of bones, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his damage in Strength each round. It is not foiled by jumping in water.

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- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison; Ignores would penalties.



SWARM, GLITTERBUG

Glitterbugs are small insects with unusual camouflage. By some quirk of fate, their wing cases are round, golden, and glitter in light. Unless the bug moves, it looks exactly like a gold dinar. When a swarm gathers, it has the appearance of a pile of treasure. A smell of decay often accompanies a settled swarm—the stench of their last victim's remains, hidden beneath the pile of "treasure." The swarm covers an area equal to a Medium Burst Template.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Treasure: Meager

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Swarms inflict hundreds of tiny bites every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location.
- * **Camouflage:** Heroes approaching a stationary glitterbug swarm must make a Notice roll opposed by the swarm's Stealth to detect anything amiss. Those who fail are Surprised when the swarm attacks.
- * **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like puppet.
- * **Swarm:** Parry +2; Because the swarm is composed of scores, hundreds, or thousands of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his damage in Strength each round. Glitterbug swarms can be foiled by jumping in water.

Giaour

Due to its unsavory practices and thoroughly evil nature, membership of the cult of Giaour should not be open to player characters.

Titles: Eater of the Dead, Father of Scavengers, The Hunter in Darkness, The Cannibal God.

Aspects: Ghûls, cannibalism, darkness, scavengers.

Symbol: A clawed hand.

Priesthood: Night Stalkers (priests); Night Hunters (paladins).

Herald: None.

Holy Days: Nights of the new moon are holy days.

Signature Power: Fear.

Powers: *Altered senses, bladebreaker, beast friend* (scavengers, such as hyenas and vultures, only), *boost trait* (Fighting, Notice, Stealth, Tracking only; no lower), *burrow, corpse senses, disease, fatigue, fog cloud, heat mask, obscure, sacrifice, silence, smite* (bare hands or claws only), *strength of the undead*.

Trappings: Spells must have a necromantic or darkness trapping whenever possible.

Special: As a mortal cleric grows in power, so he gradually transforms into a ghûl. He gains one of a ghûl's special abilities based on his Faith die. At d4 he gains Keen Nose. With additional steps he acquires Infravision (d6), Claws (d8), Paralysis (d10), and finally Undead (d12), whereupon his transformation is complete. At Faith d8, he automatically gains the Ugly Hindrance.

A lowly warrior in the service of Shamash, Giaour, alone and starving, the only survivor of a terrible battle, survived by feasting on the flesh of the fallen. After tasting the forbidden flesh, he found normal sustenance would not suffice. Secretly he began to haunt the battlefields, waiting until the fighting had ended before scurrying from the shadows to gorge himself. When he could not find corpses, he murdered weaker godlings for their flesh and marrow.

Over time, his physical form began to alter into something bestial and unholy. Fearful that his master would discover his secret appetite, Giaour retreated into the shadows and became a thing of darkness. Even today, Shamash has no knowledge of what befell his former servant. He believes him another casualty of the terrible war that wracked the heavens. It is said that ghûls prefer to hunt in darkness so their god's true nature remains secret from the enemy of darkness.

Giaour is the patron of ghûls, madmen who strive to become ghûls (usually to gain immortality), and cannibals. Due to the perceived nature of their animal cousins, hyaenidae are sometimes accused of worshipping Giaour. In reality, they are no more or less likely to join his cult than any other race.

Temples to Giaour exist, though only in the dark and secret places where ghûls gather in great numbers. Most communities have only shrines. Focal points for veneration are likely to be piles of gnawed, marrow-sucked bones rather than statues. Ghûls may be unholy creatures, but they are not mindless. In their crude art, Giaour is depicted as a member of their species wearing a crown of bones and a cloak of tattered skin. Often he is shown feasting upon Shamash, the enemy of all things that favor darkness.

Mortal clerics are accepted by the undead creatures they strive to become. Thanks to their miracles, they often rise to positions of leadership. When living and ghûl clerics exist in the same community, mortals are expected to defer to the undead. In reality, the pecking order is determined by one's ability to dominate other members. Packs led by priests favor stealth and scavenging of the dead, whereas those commanded by paladins are more likely to seek out living flesh. Giaour's cult is universally outlawed.

Ceremonies involve consuming flesh. Living beings are favored. These unfortunates are eaten by the worshippers while still alive. When fresh flesh is not available, dead flesh suffices. Through these feasts, Giaour gains sustenance.

EXPLORING THE UNDERWORLD



These rules first appeared in Region Guide #11: Ertha's Realm. They are repeated (and revised for Savage Worlds Deluxe) here as they apply equally to all lands.

GENERAL NOTES

While a cave system shares many similarities with a “dungeon,” such as passages equating to corridors and caves equating to rooms, the underworld is far less mundane than even the most wondrous dungeon. It is the GM's role to get this across to the players through his descriptions of the subterranean expanse.

The underworld is a realm of utter darkness. Whereas dungeon explorers might well be able to guess a room's dimensions upon entering, those delving into the depths of the earth might be faced with a cavern hundreds of yards across. Outside their feeble sphere of light the darkness presses ominously, concealing the presence of pitfalls, tunnels, and monsters. Should the light fail, the darkness hits home like a hammer blow, instantly depriving the heroes of their primary sense and completely disorienting them.

In some areas there is utter silence, making it easier to detect approaching foes and harder to sneak up on them. In others, waterfalls, turbulent rivers, or the steady dripping of water from high above effectively mask sounds, leaving the characters subject to ambush.

Surface ruins are rarely that large. While the heroes may grumble about walking a few hundred feet only to encounter a dead end, those venturing into the earth goddess' domain may walk for miles, only to find the passage ends suddenly.

Dozens of tunnels at different height levels may branch off from a single chamber, making it almost impossible to ensure no enemies are creeping up from behind. Trying to draw a map is painfully slow, for elevation plays a crucial role, and while accurately pacing 20 yards down a straight corridor is easy, plotting a passage that rises and falls, twists and turns, is not so simple.

While some caves are vast, much of the time the heroes will be in claustrophobic corridors, forced to squeeze through narrow gaps that seem intent on crushing the explorer for his trespass. Armor, beloved of all adventurers,

must frequently be removed in order to fit through a narrow gap, depriving the character of his protection.

Slick, glittering walls must be scaled or descended, flooded sumps must be traversed, gaps over dizzying falls crossed, narrow ledges over bottomless pits inched around with backs pressed to the walls, forests of towering fungus navigated without disturbing their spores, slick floors force travelers to advance slowly, and deep, dark, cold waters flood many passages, forcing those who wish to advance deeper to swim into the unknown.

Water is often plentiful, but it is not always potable. Mineral salts and toxic chemicals taint much of the water, and even boiling it cannot remove all the taint. Near the surface one can find rats, bats, small lizards, and edible fungi. Deeper down, food becomes virtually non-existent unless one happens to find a forest tended by fungals. Similarly, there is no firewood for cooking fires or branches to make torches. Heroes expecting to have an extended stay below ground need to ensure they are well equipped, or doom awaits.

⬠ New Rules ⬠

Exploring beneath the surface properly requires some new setting rules. These are intended to help simulate the dangerous conditions involved in exploring the unknown regions and add a new dimension to game play without stifling an adventure with complex rules.

All of the rules in this section are completely optional, included for GMs who want added detail. While using just the core rules provides for an adequate adventure, it also reduces subterranean exploration to the same level as a standard “dungeon crawl,” robbing the players and their characters of the opportunity to fully explore the realm and overcome the varied dangers it presents.

Light & Sound

Aside from some areas lit by phosphorescent molds and fungi, or by the flickering light of molten lava, once one

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Survival Hints

Before you set foot beneath ground, make sure you're equipped to survive!

Useful Skills: Caverns are not worked "dungeons." Climbing and Swimming are vital skills if one is going to overcome the many hazards and obstacles. Healing, Notice, and Survival are also important.

Useful Spells: The following spells are among the more useful for surviving below ground Realm: *boost/lower trait* (Agility, Vigor, Climbing, and Swimming), *bridge*, *environmental protection (water)*, *feast*, *fly*, *growth/shrink* (mainly the latter), *leaping*, *light*, *refuge*, *sanctuary*, *teleport*, *wall walker*, *wandering senses*, *water walk*, *wilderness step*.

Useful Equipment: Most of the equipment listed here is standard adventuring gear, but it's worth double checking your party is properly tooled up—there aren't any shops!

As a minimum, the party needs the following gear: backpack, climbing gear, crowbar, firewood, flint and steel, flasks, grappling hook, hammer, lantern, oil, pick, rations, rope (and plenty of it), waterproof satchel or scroll case, waterskin, whale blubber.

descends beyond the cave mouth or sink hole entrance one enters a domain of total darkness. Although many mages and clerics shun the *light* spell as a waste of time, beneath the earth it is one of the most useful spells—it weighs nothing (unlike oil and lanterns), and functions equally well underwater. If the party spellcaster doesn't know the power, the heroes should invest in plentiful alchemical devices.

DARKNESS

Once the lights go out, there is absolutely no visual point of reference to help with navigation. Heroes can become turned around without realizing it. Unless a hero can touch a wall to guide him, all movement is in a random direction, determined by rolling a d8. Roll once for each movement action, not for each square. If someone calls out, the character can make a Notice roll at -2 to head in the general direction of the caller.

Heroes in complete darkness wishing to move faster than half their Pace cannot feel ahead to see what lies in front of them. While this might occasionally lead to a bump or bruise, it may also lead one to plummet into a deep hole. In areas of difficult ground, the hero treats each 1" movement as 4" if he wishes to navigate carefully. Progress will be slow!

Any hero moving faster than half his Pace must make an Agility roll. A -2 penalty applies if the terrain is difficult ground. A -4 penalty occurs if he runs. These modifiers stack. Failure causes the hero to stumble, fall, or slam into an obstacle or wall. Typically this leaves him Shaken, though in areas of very rough ground, or if the hero slides down a slope, he may suffer Bumps and Bruises instead.

DETECTING LIGHT

While light is necessary for subterranean exploration, it

also reveals an explorer's presence to the denizens of the underworld. A light source can be detected at a distance equal to 20 times its illumination radius if the surrounding darkness is pitch black. A torch, which has a 4" radius, can be seen 80" (160 yards) away, for instance. In Dark conditions, reduce this to 10 times the radius, and in Dim lighting down to 5 times the radius. This assumes a relatively straight line between light and viewer. Twisting corridors and obstacles, such as stalagmites, reduce these distances.

NOISE

The underworld can be a domain of total, oppressive silence or a cacophony, depending on the nature of the cave. Modifiers to Notice rolls based on the ambient noise are detailed below.

Mod	Ambient Noise
+2	Cave is utterly silent (i.e. no water)
-2	Drips of water or fast flowing water
-4	Waterfall or rapids

MOVEMENT, General

"Dungeons" typically have paved, or at least level, floors. Flat surfaces are extremely rare in the Underearth and more often than not one is climbing rather than actually walking. Combined with narrow fissures, the inability to see far ahead, dead ends, labyrinthine tunnels, tight squeezes, sumps, climbs, and crossings, adventurers are lucky to move more than one-half mile per hour in most caves. In many instances, a movement rate of just a few hundred yards per hour is more realistic.

Many combat encounters should feature large areas of difficult ground (such as rubble or water), as well as obstacles such as boulders and stalagmites that break up the map, provide cover, and block line of sight.

DIFFICULT GROUND

Below are some examples of difficult ground heroes may encounter underground.

Slick Floor: Water, mud, mold, fungus, or small loose stones may cause the floor to be slick. Any hero who runs and rolls a 1 on his running die slips and falls prone at the start of his run.

Steep Slopes: Steep slopes are typically between 30 and 45 degrees. The slope is difficult ground. Anyone running downhill *must* make an Agility roll at the end of their movement. With failure, they move an additional 1d2" after their intended movement. On a roll of 1, regardless of Wild Die, they slip and fall prone after the additional movement. Steeper slopes must be climbed.

Water: Knee deep water is difficult ground. Waist deep water is difficult ground and prevents running by any hero. Chest to neck deep water can be waded through at just 2" per round. Deeper water requires a hero to swim.

SUMPS

The Underearth is not a fun place for those suffering

NF3: Darkness at Darshab

hydrophobia or who cannot swim, for water is a common though not altogether ubiquitous feature. A sump is a passage flooded as high as the roof. The only safe way through a sump is to swim (though brave spellcasters can try to *teleport* into the unknown).

Swimming rolls are only required if the water is fast flowing. However, with no chance to surface for air, Swimming Pace (half Swimming die, rounded up) is far more important. The lead hero, the trailblazer diving into the unknown, is taking a huge risk every time he enters a sump, for he has absolutely no idea when it might end and thus when his lungs may next savor fresh air. Remember, given time to fill his lungs, a hero can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to 2 plus half their Vigor die.

Rope Use

One of the most important pieces of equipment a spelunker needs is rope, lots of rope. (Climbing gear is also important.)

Knots: Tying a basic knot requires two hands and takes an action. Untying a knot requires only one hand but takes a complete round, during which the hero may only take free actions. It can be achieved quicker, but this requires an Agility roll. Failure means the action is wasted and knot remains tied. Average quality rope has Toughness 4 should the hero decide to cut the rope.

Abseiling: Also known as rappeling, abseiling is a means of descending a sheer surface by using a fixed rope. The hero abseiling winds the rope around his body and uses friction to control his descent. Without safety harnesses, abseiling is a risky venture.

Abseiling requires a Climbing roll at +2. Penalties may apply for strong winds, but the surface being descended has little effect. Success means the hero safely descends a number of game inches equal to his Strength die. Failure means the hero failed to move for some reason, but he does not fall. A critical failure means the spelunker has lost his grip and fallen, or suffers a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises as he bashes into a wall.

Grappling Hooks: Throwing a grappling hook requires a Throwing roll and has a Range of 3/6/12. If the thrower spends an entire round swinging the hook first, taking no other actions except free ones, he increases the range brackets by half his Strength die.

Walls or ledges with scant handholds give a -1 or -2 penalty, depending on the scarcity. If the roll fails because of the modifier, the grappling hook bites, but it is not completely secure, though tugging on it does not reveal any problem. For this reason, the application of modifiers should be kept secret from the players.

Each time a character using the attached rope rolls a 1 on his Climbing roll, regardless of Wild Die, the GM should roll a d6. On a roll of 1 the hook comes loose, causing the hero to fall unless he makes a Climbing roll at -2. Modifiers for scarce handholds and wet surfaces apply normally.

Belaying: Heroes can reduce the distance a roped climber falls by using belays. The first climber, who must have a rope tied around him, moves ahead. When he

PROFESSIONAL EDGE

DUNGEON CRAWLER

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+, Climbing d6+, Stealth d6+, Survival d6+

The adventurer has spent a great deal of time exploring beneath the earth and has learned many tricks to ensure he comes out alive.

The hero treats his Size as being one step lower with regard to tight squeezes. He also gains +1 to Climbing, Stealth, and Survival rolls when in an underground environment, be it natural caves or an artificial construction.

NEW EQUIPMENT

Air Bladder: An airtight sack crafted from leather or an animal's bladder, inflated as needed by blowing into it. Inflating an air bladder takes one minute. An inflated air bladder grants +2 to Swimming rolls to remain afloat. Cost: 10 d; Weight: 2 lb.

Chalk: A lump of chalk, handy for marking walls to record one's passage. Good for hundreds of uses. Cost: 1 d, Weight: 0.5 lb.

Iron Spike: A 9" long iron spike with a flat end for ease of hammering. Cost: 5 dh; Weight: 0.5 lbs.

Hollow Reed: A slender straw. Allows a hero to breathe while submerged, with only the straw protruding from the water. Cost: 1 dh; Weight: n/a.

Lard: Rendered animal fat, provides +1 to Vigor rolls to resist cold, but only for 2 hours. It is as effective as oil for helping squeeze through narrow gaps. Cost: 12 d; Weight: 1 lb.

reaches a set distance, he hammers home a spike and knots the rope to it. Should he fall, he falls only the length of the rope to the last belay. The GM should roll a d10 for the belay. On a roll of 1 it fails, and the hero falls further until the next belay takes up the strain. Repeat until the hero hits the ground or a belay holds.

Rather than using a spike, a character behind the climber can act as a belay by bracing himself to take the weight should his comrade fall. If the hero ahead of him falls, he must make a Strength roll to take up the strain or fall as well.

Rope Bridges: Crossing a rope bridge counts as difficult ground. GMs who require more details on this and other hazards should check out *Perilous Places*, available from the Triple Ace Games website.

Temperature

Air: While the air temperature underground does fluctuate, and actually increases as one descends deeper, most of the underworld the heroes are likely to explore remains around 40-50 degrees F regardless of season,

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making it equivalent to a Hearthland spring. Adventurers thus require no special cold weather clothing.

Water: Many rivers, streams, pools, and lakes exist below the ground. Never warmed by sunlight, they are bitterly cold. The rules for immersion apply to all underworld water sources.

SQUEEZES

Not every location the heroes explore has neatly worked passageways a uniform two yards wide. Within the unlit bowels of the subterranean world there are passageways too narrow or low (or both) to allow unhindered passage. For convenience, such places are simply called “squeezes.” A squeeze represents any difficult area, whether that is a single choke point just a few feet deep or a long, winding tunnel.

MOVEMENT

All squeezes have a rating. This may be negative or positive. The lower the number, the tighter or more awkward the squeeze. In general, positive numbers are used only when an adventure features creatures larger than typical humans. Squeeze ratings are not directly comparable to Size—they are merely an indication of difficulty. Thus, even an adult human may try to wiggle through a squeeze with a -4 rating.

If the squeeze rating is greater than or equal to the character's Size, he can maneuver with no problem. If the squeeze has a rating lower than the hero's Size the character must make an Agility roll as a free action each round he wishes to move through the passageway. This is modified as shown below. For these purposes, a typical human adult is Size +0. Sand goblins and characters with the Small Hindrance rate as Size -1. Obese heroes and adventurers who opted for the Brawny Edge with a muscular build are considered Size +1.

If the squeeze rating is five points or more lower than a creature's Size, that creature cannot maneuver through the squeeze without special circumstances. For instance, a giant snake (Size +4) could not move through a -2 squeeze by these rules. However, even a giant snake is quite thin. As a rule of thumb, treat such creatures as being four Sizes lower for these purposes.

Within a squeeze, only heroes completely unaffected by the terrain may move through an allied character's space. Even then, occupied squares count as difficult ground. However, two characters cannot share the same space at the end of movement.

Mod Reason

- X Difference between squeeze rating and Size*
- X Encumbrance penalty
- +1 Greasing with pot of oil or whale blubber
- +2 Acrobat Edge
- +2 Disciple of Geb-Agni Edge
- +2 Full round action**

* A Size +1 hero maneuvering through a -3 squeeze suffers a -4 penalty, for instance.

** The hero takes no actions other than trying to move through the squeeze.

RESULTS

Critical Failure: The hero is stuck fast. On subsequent rounds, he must make an Agility roll modified as above as an action. Success means the character is free but does not move this round. On a raise, he also moves 1". One hero directly behind or in front of the stuck character may assist with a Cooperative roll using Strength to push or pull his comrade free. In addition, a stuck hero who tries to escape his predicament who rolls a 1 on his Agility die, regardless of Wild Die, suffers a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises.

Failure: Hero is temporarily stuck and cannot not move this round.

Success: The hero moves up to half his Pace this round but cannot run.

Raise: The hero can move his full Pace but can't run.

Example: *Abmed the Portly (Size +1) is exploring a cave system when the tunnel suddenly narrows for a few feet. The squeeze is rated at -1. Abmed must make an Agility roll with a base penalty of -2, the difference between his Size and the rating. The explorer is traveling light (no Encumbrance penalty). Being prepared, he liberally daubs himself with oil (+1). Since he is in no rush, he takes a full round action to fit his corpulent form through the squeeze (+2). Abmed's final modifier is +1. He rolls a success and moves up to half his Pace. If the squeeze had been rated at -4 or lower, Abmed could not maneuver through it because the difference would be 5 steps.*

COMBAT

Fighting in a tight squeeze is not easy. Cramped conditions limit a hero's ability to swing a weapon, dodge or parry blows, and wield a shield effectively. Compare the squeeze rating to the hero's Size as shown below.

Squeeze vs. Size	Shield	Attack/Parry*
1 point lower	Small/Medium	-1
2 points lower	Small	-2
3 points lower	None	-4
4 points lower	None	None**

* Parry cannot drop below 2. Spellcasting that requires gestures or movement is similarly affected.

** No attacks may be made by the hero. Parry is treated as being 2, regardless of its normal value.

Example: *Abmed is halfway down the tunnel when he is attacked by a giant rat. Being Size -1, the rat is unhindered by the narrow passage. The difference between the squeeze rating (-1) and Abmed's Size (+1) is two. Abmed can only use a small shield, his Parry is lowered by two, and any attacks he makes are made at -2. The rat, which would not normally be a serious threat, has now become much more deadly.*

THE LAST VOYAGE OF SINBAD



SF1: The Last Voyage of Sinbad is designed for a group of four Seasoned characters with 20 to 25 Experience Points. If you're looking to start play immediately, there are eight Novice characters in the *Land of Fire* free download section on the Triple Ace Games' website. All the players need do is advance them and purchase gear.

In order to run this adventure, the GM needs *Realm Guide #5: The Southern Ocean*. This contains rules for underwater combat, and ship navigation and movement. The additional locales, monsters, and ship statistics will prove invaluable to GMs who want to expand the scope of the adventure or add their own encounters.

Encounters are, for the most part, designed to automatically scale up or down based on the party's size. For parties of higher Rank, the GM should increase the number of opponents. As a rule of thumb, add one powerful and/or two weak Extras to the encounter for each Rank the party is above Seasoned. For instance, the finale of the Island of Lightning (p. 78) pits the heroes against four cyclops and six orcs. A party of four Veteran heroes would face five cyclops and eight orcs.

Additionally, it is impossible to balance encounters in a published scenario to ensure every possible party configuration has a fair chance of success. Some parties will bristle with potent spellcasters and powerful warriors that can wade through scores of foes, others will comprise cunning rogues and thoughtful sages better suited to investigation and problem-solving. Most will likely fill a middle ground, and this is the option we have taken when writing the scenario. If after reading the adventure the GM decides his individual party will find the encounters too easy or too tough, he should adjust the opposition to provide a more suitable challenge.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The adventure takes place in the Southern Ocean. The GM is free to change this to the waters off the Emirates or Kingdoms, but he will need to make alterations to the text.

The season has not been specified, allowing the GM

to set it any time he wishes. Pay attention to how much water the characters consume. Inside a settlement, it is assumed the heroes are able to drink the required amount of water to stave off heat stroke and dehydration.

ADVENTURE FORMAT

Soon after the tale begins, the heroes are given a map, along with a crystal lens that reveals the location of an unnamed island not on normal maps because of its small size. (The islands in the adventure all have names, but they are for the GM only.) This adventure details four islands, and the GM decides which island is marked. He can place it anywhere on the map he wants. For a short adventure, the island should be placed close to the characters' starting point. For a longer tale, the island should be further afield.

Visiting the island, the characters become embroiled in a short adventure. At some point during the adventure, the heroes gain a colored crystal lens. When the map is viewed through the lens, the location of a new unnamed island appears. Here they will play through another adventure and gain another lens until all four islands have been visited. The color of each lens discovered is determined by the GM, as through this he chooses the order in which the islands are visited. The fourth island visited contains the treasure the heroes seek.

The four islands and the color of the lens that reveals them on the map are as below. Remember, one of the locations is already known to the party at the start of the adventure, so its lens will not be found during play. Similarly, the final island holds the object of the quest, not a crystal lens. Thus, while the party will visit four islands in total, they will only acquire three lens through adventures.

- * Island of Lightning (Blue)
- * Island of Mourning (Red)
- * Island of Outcasts (Orange)
- * Island of Sheep (Yellow)

Here's an example of how the exploration might unfold. The GM first decides the order in which the heroes

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will visit the islands. He decides to use the order above. As the first island to be visited is the Island of Lightning, the characters also possess the blue crystal lens. The crystal lens found there is black, which points the way to the Island of Mourning. On that island, the heroes find an orange lens, which leads them to the Island of Outcasts. The lens found on that island is yellow, and indicates the location of the Island of Sheep. There they find the object they seek.

Background Notes

Long ago, but not so long that the teachings of Suleiman were unknown, an evil cult constructed a gateway to another dimension. A band of heroes interrupted the final ritual, preventing the gateway from opening. Yet the world was not safe. One of their number, a diviner (a mage whose art allows him to see the flow of time), foresaw a time when the stars would align and the gateway would open of its own accord.

Heroes would be needed again in the future, but the wizard was unsure how to alert them to the danger. The creation of a prophecy or story would not suffice by itself, for tales were often altered to suit different audiences. Working with other mages, the wizard created a solution—a quest that would test the worthy yet to be born. He created four crystal lenses, a magical map that revealed their location, and a supposed treasure. These he scattered in remote places, trusting in Fate to guide heroes to them at the appointed hour. As a precaution, he also concocted a story that the great Sinbad, the fabled mariner of old, had been tricked by a jinni and imprisoned beyond the gateway.

The appointed hour of the opening draws near, and the various threads and complex plots woven long ago are finally beginning to fall into place.

Research by Falah al Din al Jabr, a mathematician (a mage who works his art through solving arcane equations) and Brother of Sinbad, steered him to the gateway, wherein he believed Sinbad was trapped. Here he discovered a thick book containing a single equation, a lure left by the ancient wizard, for while Falah al Din was not a hero, he would be the hand that guided those fated to undertake the quest. Solving the equation, he believed, would unlock the gateway and release Sinbad.

Although the last page of the equation was missing, Falah al Din diligently toiled at a solution for ten years. Yet it proved beyond his ability. Fate then played a hand, as the wizard of old had hoped. Through his contacts, Falah al Din learned of a map that purported to reveal the location of something called the “Key to Beyond.” Believing it to be the missing page he seeks, the mage paid a fellow Brother to acquire it for him. The delivery is now late, and Falah al Din is worried, for he has also learned that his discovery has reached the ears of sinister powers who seek to travel through time for their own ends. Fortunately for him, they have yet to discover his location. Furthermore, fate is about to deliver a band of heroes into his lap.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins in *media res*, with the heroes as passengers on a ship. Why they are there and where they were heading is left for the GM to determine based on his campaign. Very soon after, the characters unceremoniously arrive on a small island. This island is too small to be indicated on the main map of Al-Shirkuh, and can be located anywhere in the Southern Ocean the GM decides. Naturally, it should be relatively close to the route the ship is taking.

⦿ Abandon Ship! ⦿

The sea has been cruel, and the vessel has been blown far off course by a terrible storm that has swamped the vessel. Worse, the ship is under attack by a band of kreana. Use the deck plans from the back of the adventure for this encounter. The players place their characters first, then the GM places the kreana.

The aim of this fight is to start the adventure with a bang, not kill the heroes. While the characters can suffer wounds and even Incapacitation, the GM should fudge any die rolls that would result in death.

Duration: The fight lasts for exactly five rounds. At the end of the fifth round, the ship crashes into a reef, tearing its hull from stem to stern. The characters are thrown into the sea, and quickly lose consciousness. Proceed immediately to the next section.

Terrain: The moving deck is an Unstable Platform. It counts as Difficult Ground as the characters struggle to keep their balance and brace themselves against the howling wind. Characters who fall overboard must make Swimming rolls each round to avoid drowning.

Each round, the kreana’s action card determines other hazards the combatants must cope with, as shown below. These affect the kreana equally.

Club: The ship suddenly lurches to the left. Everyone must make an Agility roll or slide one square left. A creature standing on the edge of the exposed deck when this occurs must make an Agility roll or fall into the sea.

Diamond: As above, but the ship lurches to the right.

Heart: A sudden squall gives all creatures –1 to any physical action and reduces visibility to 6” this round.

Spade: A powerful wave crashes over the deck. Every one must make an Agility roll or be knocked prone and Shaken by the impact.

Joker: No additional effect.

Monsters: Four of the crew are still alive. The rest have either been killed in combat or swept overboard. Initially, there is one kreana for each hero, plus an additional one for every two crew members. Throughout the fight, a slain kreana is replaced at the start of the next round as one climbs onto the deck. The replacement begins wherever the GM wishes.

* **Crew (1 per hero):** As Generic NPC. See p. 98.

* **Kreana:** See p. 98.

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◉ A Story Told ◉

The characters wake on a sandy beach. The storm has passed and the sun is shining. Their wounds have been cured, and all their equipment is piled together nearby. Seated not far away is an elderly bearded man in plain gray robes. He is writing something in a book. As the characters stir, he greets them with a warm smile.

"Welcome back to the world of the living," he calls out. "Do not fear, the storm has passed and you are quite safe. Fate has been especially kind today for us both, yes? Are you hungry?"

The man, Falah al Din, scurries over with a large platter of cold meat, dates, olives, and flatbread. He explains that he was on the beach marvelling at the fury of a storm when, illuminated by flashes of lightning, he saw a ship in distress just off the coast. Fate washed the unconscious heroes onto the shore, whereupon he applied alchemical *healing* potions to treat their injuries and made them as comfortable as possible. Likely questions posed by the heroes are presented below, along with their host's answers.

Q: Who are you?

A: *"Please forgive my rudeness. I have grown unused to visitors during my self-imposed exile. My name is Falah al Din al Jabr. I am both a Brother of Sinbad and a mathematician."*

Q: What is a mathematician?

A: *"A mage who works his art through solving arcane formulae."*

Q: Where are we?

A: *"On a small island. I do not think it has a name. Certainly it is too small to appear on most charts, and, aside from me and a few companions it is deserted."*

Q: Why are you here?

A: Falah asks what the characters know of Sinbad the Sailor's fate. Tales of the fabled mariner are common across Al-Shirkuh. Characters who make a Common Knowledge or Knowledge (Folklore) roll (their choice) recall the common theory that he vanished while on an 8th voyage of adventure. On hearing this, the scholar smiles broadly.

"I believe I have found what fate befell Sinbad. Concealed in a cave on this very island is a gateway that leads to a realm beyond our own. My research leads me to believe that a jinni tricked Sinbad into stepping through, and then sealed it behind him, trapping him in limbo. With it I found a tome, in which was inscribed an equation that, when solved, would open the portal."

"Sinbad was no fool, and no doubt suspected the possibility of treachery. Given that the foreword is penned in writing most definitely of his hand, I am of the opinion he hid it here so that he might be rescued."

NEW ARCANES BACKGROUND

MATHEMAGIC

Requirements: Novice

Arcane Skill: Mathemagic (Smarts)

Starting Powers: 3

Powers: *Analyze foe, arcane resistance, banish, bladebreaker, boost/lower trait, burrow, confusion, deflection, detect/conceal, dispel, elemental manipulation, energy immunity, fear, fly, fortune's favored, hamper movement, knockdown, leaping, lock/unlock, negate arcana, precognition, quake, quickness, smite, speed, stun, teleport, wall walker, wandering senses, water walk, wilderness step*

Mathematics began with the cakali. While humans lost much of their knowledge during the jinn occupation, the cakali never forgot. Following the War of Copper Jars, the study of mathematics again flourished. While most civilized beings in Al-Shirkuh understand basic mathematical principles, concepts such as algebra, binomial theory, cubic and quadratic equations, irrational numbers, mathematical induction, and spherical trigonometry are the reserve of scholars. Mathemagicians are wizards who manipulate the threads of magic not by summoning jinn, dancing, or through force of will, but through solving complex equations that combine mathematical and arcane principles.

Casting: The formula that makes up each spell is unique and unchanging, but includes variables based on the target, range, trapping, and optional effect that the wizard must calculate during the casting process.

In order to cast spells, a mathemagician must either be able to speak or write. He does not require pen or paper for the latter—he can use a finger to draw in sand, or even "write" in the air.

The equations that make up a spell vary in length and complexity. A Novice spell can be cast (i.e., written and solved) as a single action. To cast a Seasoned spell, the wizard must spend one additional action speaking or writing the equation before making his arcane skill roll. A Veteran spell requires two additional actions. These actions must be taken on consecutive rounds or the casting automatically fails. While "preparing" in this manner, the mathemagician can be disrupted.

Trappings: Mathemagicians do not choose trappings when they learn a spell. By altering a variable in the basic equation of a spell, they can pick their trapping at the time of casting. Having a trapping with no associated game mechanic (even if it has a showy effect) involves no modifiers. For a trapping that involves a game mechanic, the mathemagician must spend an additional action preparing and solving the equation.

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The Missing Page

When the characters find the object of their quest, it is not what they expect. They find a piece of parchment with the words “The eyes that do not see shall reveal the truth” written in Sandspeech. The rest of the page is filled with gibberish. Viewed through any one of the lens, some of the characters rearrange themselves. When viewed through all five stacked together in any order, give them Handout #2.

No Boating?

Obviously, there are going to be groups playing this adventure in which the heroes don't have a d4 in Boating between them. Promote one of the NPC crew to captain. He has Boating d8, Knowledge (Seas) d8, and the Master Mariner Edge. While he is responsible for piloting the ship, the heroes are still in command of the vessel.

Replacement Characters

Should a player character be killed during the adventure, the GM will have to work his replacement into the adventure in a logical way. The obvious way is to wait until the heroes reach a major city, though there is no guarantee they will do this. The islands the characters will visit are all inhabited, and it is possible the character is either visiting or a local.

“Alas, the book is missing its final page. Without it the equation cannot be solved and the portal opened. Believe me, for I have spent ten years trying.

“Several months ago, I learned of a map that purported to reveal the location to something called the Key to Beyond. This must surely be the missing page I seek. I paid a man to find the map and bring it to me. Alas, he is now two days overdue. I am engaged in work that requires intense concentration, and so ask if you would track him down and find the map.”

Q: Who is this man, and where can we find him?

A: “His name is Naji ibn Shakir, a fellow Brother of Sinbad.” Naji lives in whatever major city is closest to the island. Any character who is a member of the Brotherhood of Sinbad can make a Common Knowledge roll at -2. On a success, he has heard of Naji by reputation. He is a notorious rogue, and prone to getting into trouble. On a raise, he has not only met Naji in person, but the two shared a minor adventure. It involved a lot of running away from very angry people, and through no fault of the hero. Naji still owes the hero 150 dinars, his share of the spoils.

Q: How do we get there?

A: “I have a ship secreted in a cove and a small crew.”

Q: What's in it for us?

A: “If you would assist me by tracking down my contact, securing the map, and locating the Key to Beyond, you will have the opportunity to meet the greatest explorer who ever lived. Should you desire more tangible rewards, instead, I am not without wealth enough to compensate you for your time.”

Should the heroes accept Falah al Din's offer, the old man escorts them to his ship, which lies several miles from their current location. The ship, a jalibut, is named the *Golden Voyager*. On the walk, Falah questions the heroes about their knowledge of the seas and sailing prowess. Any character with Boating d6+ is named as captain. Otherwise, one of the crew fills that role (see sidebar opposite). The wizard also explains that the ship's figurehead is magical. He details the powers and provides the activation words, but cautions the characters that the magic is finite. He doesn't say how many more times the figurehead can be used—he didn't know himself.

The ship is crewed by eight mariners, who Falah introduces to the adventurers. Their stats are presented at the back of the adventure. Cut these out and give them to the players. The crew are not combatants—they are present to help sail the ship, to give the GM the opportunity to create roleplaying situations, to mutiny if things go badly wrong, and such like, not provide additional muscle for the heroes. They remain on the ship, leaving the heroes to complete the various adventures. In the event any are forced, tricked, or persuaded to make land, treat each one as an additional player character for the purposes of determining the number of monsters in a given encounter.

THE GOLDEN VOYAGER

The jalibut is a small lateen-rigged ship, the type used by Sinbad in the movies. It is commonly used by merchants when coastal trading, as it handles poorly on the open seas. Reduce Handling by 1 when more than 10 miles from the coast. The ship has water and provisions enough to last the entire crew (including the heroes) for two weeks.

Acc/Top Speed: 3/8; **Handling:** +1; **Toughness:** 12 (2); **Crew:** 4+10; **Cost:** 3,000; **Availability:** T

Notes: Heavy Armor

Special: The figurehead is carved to resemble a marid. The ship has three bennies. These can be spent to cast *boost Boating* (on the captain only), *mend* (this version removes associated critical hits that affect the vessel as well), and *zephyr*. The ship has an arcane skill of d10 and a d6 Wild Die. Spent bennies are gone forever.

Searching for Naji

Once the heroes reach the city, they can begin asking about Naji's. One character may make a Streetwise roll every 4 hours. Other adventurers can help through Cooperative rolls. With success, they are directed to a tavern (Caliphate) or hostelry (Sultanate) called the Last Port of Call. A raise directs them to the house of Hawazin bint Rizq.

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THE LAST PORT OF CALL

The owner of the Last Port loses his smile the instant Naji's name is mentioned. He admits that Naji has a room upstairs, but he hasn't returned in two days. He makes frequent mention that Naji owes him 30 dinars for rent and food, plus a further 20 dinars for damages caused in a fight four days ago. Unless Naji's bill is settled, the owner is of no further help. If paid, he suggests they track down Naji's girlfriend, Hawazin bint Rizq. He doesn't know where she lives.

Another Streetwise roll and four hours of asking questions guides the characters to the girl's house.

HAWAZIN'S HOUSE

Inquiries at Hawazin's house are met by her mother, Shimah, a stern, no-nonsense matronly woman. She glowers at any males who ask for her daughter unless they are obviously (or introduce themselves as) clerics, mages, or imams (as appropriate to the realm). Such characters must weather a barrage of complaints that the girl is lazy, hangs out with the wrong crowd, neglects her chores, and needs a stern lecture on morality and duty.

Convincing Shimah to allow them to talk to Hawazin requires either a Persuasion roll or roleplaying that they mean the girl no harm and only seek information from her. Suitably convinced, the mother shows them to Hawazin's bedroom, loudly stating, *"Good luck getting any sense from her. She's been in tears for two days straight and hasn't left her room."*

Hawazin is reluctant to reveal anything about Naji, and gentle persuasion is required to get her to open up. Eventually, she says that Naji owes a lot of money to some very bad people after a spate of bad luck gambling. They have threatened to kill him unless they get 2000 dinars by noon tomorrow. She cannot hope to raise that sort of money. Hawazin, who was with Naji when he was grabbed, was told to deliver the money to a warehouse near the docks.

THE WAREHOUSE

The warehouse is a front for one of the city's thieves' guilds, to whom Naji owes 2000 dinars. Day or night, the main doors are closed, but not locked. Opening them quietly requires a Stealth roll. Note that a stealthy entry must be suggested by the characters—do not automatically assume they are doing so. Success means the heroes enter undetected. On a failure, the thugs are alerted to the intrusion.

Unless detected, the characters catch the thugs by Surprise when they decide to attack. Make a Notice roll for each thug individually. Characters who opt to attack before any of the thugs get the Drop on them.

Monsters: The thieves nearest Naji are taking turns in giving him another beating and describing how they are going to skin him alive before cutting out his organs if his debts are not paid on time. The thugs supposed to be guarding the door are watching, and have their backs to the heroes. Treat them as inactive sentries.

Map 1: Warehouse



T - Thief
N - Naji
■ - Crates

The thieves are low-level goons, and no match for well armed heroes with magical resources. Each time two of them drop, make a Spirit roll for the others. Failure means they try to flee. Should they escape, they give descriptions of the characters to their superiors. Heroes returning to the city at a late date may face repercussions from far more capable thieves.

* **Thugs (2 per hero):** Treat as Generic NPCs (p. 98) but with Fighting d6, Parry 5, and short swords (Str+d6).

Aftermath: Naji is conscious, but battered and bruised. He thanks the characters for rescuing him, but has no inclination of rewarding them. If his bill at the Last Port is mentioned, he promises to pay the heroes back when he can.

When the map is mentioned, Naji points to the dead thieves and innocently says he was going to deliver it, but he ran into some old friends. He walks over to one of the thugs' bodies and takes the rolled up map from inside the thief's robes. Give the players Handout #1 at this point. The heroes should notice the map shows coastlines, islands, and geographical features, but is otherwise blank. When they verbalize this, Naji throws them a large, colored crystal lens engraved with arcane runes and tells them to look at the map again through the crystal. Doing so reveals a red "X" at the location of the first island to be visited.

A Knowledge (Arcana) roll reveals the runes to be powerful symbols of banishment and sealing. Each of the lenses yet to be discovered carries the exact same sigils.

Naji has no interest in joining the heroes' quest. All he wants now is to slip out of the city before the guild comes hunting for him, and find a nice, quiet place to hole up until the heat dies down.

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ENCOUNTERS at Sea

Depending on the GM and the players, the journeys between the various locales can be waived away with a simple “You arrive after X days,” or involve additional encounters. This section details a few sample encounters. Some of these are fully fleshed-out, while others are seeds for the GM to expand as he feels fit.

The GM should be careful not to sink the heroes’ ship—without it, the adventure comes to a sudden halt. By all means inflict a wound or two—the characters have the ability to make some magical repairs, and can conduct mundane repairs if they strike land.

Corsairs

The characters spy a sail on the horizon. A Notice roll at this distance has a –4 penalty (no penalty if using *farsight*). If all the characters fail, they must wait until the ship closes, whereupon they roll again at –2 (+2 with *farsight*). A third, unmodified roll (+4 with *farsight*) is permitted at close range. Anyone who succeeds spots the sail is decorated with a bloodthirsty image indicative of corsairs. The corsair vessel is a boom. It’s larger than the *Golden Voyager*, but not as maneuverable.

In the event the characters decide to attack, go straight to the Chase rules. If the characters wish to flee, the captains make opposed Boating rolls (modified by Handling and cooperation from the crew as normal). Modifiers to the heroes’ roll apply based on the range of the corsair ship at the time the heroes opt to set sail and escape. Opting to turn tail after the first Notice roll incurs no penalty. After the second, the penalty is –2. After the third, the modifier is –4. If the heroes beat the corsair captain’s roll, they evade the corsairs. Otherwise, it’s time to use the Chase rules.

* **Corsair Captain:** As a regular corsair (p. 97), but he or she is a Wild Card.

* **Corsairs:** The number of corsairs is equal to 2 per hero, plus one for each NPC crew member.

* **Boom:** Acc/Top Speed: 4/10; Handling: +0; Toughness: 14 (2); Crew: 12+15; Notes: Heavy Armor.

The Fisherman’s Tale

Some five miles from the mainland coast or an inhabited island, the lookout spies a small boat bobbing up and down on the waves a mile or so ahead. A figure can be seen standing in the vessel.

When the heroes draw closer (or sooner if they employ *farsight*), they can see the figure is an extremely thin man. He is thrusting a long fishing spear repeatedly into the ocean. Closer still, and they hear him cursing loudly in the native language of the nearest major realm.

If hailed, he stops his activity and cursing, holds his arms aloft, and calls out to the adventurers.

“O Guardians of the Righteous, Brave Wanderers of the Seas, I beseech you, give succor and aid to an old man in his time of need!”

The fisherman, Mustafa the Fisherman, explains that a terrible and fearsome marid has taken up residence in the waters, and the fiend is eating or driving away all the fish. As a result, he and his family have not had a proper meal in many weeks. Mustafa is poverty-stricken, and if asked for a reward all he offers is his eternal thanks and prayers.

Depending on how the group likes to play, ridding Mustafa of his problem can be a narrative or combat encounter. Either way, in order to locate the creature, the characters need *environmental protection (water)*. A successful Tracking roll (made every ten minutes) locates it on the ocean floor. The sea is 300 feet (50”) deep.

NARRATIVE

The marid is a greater jinni who takes a form similar to a merman and goes by the name Pasha Abdul-Ghani (“Servant of the Self-Sufficient”). No stats are provided—the jinni can easily avoid combat, and attacking it won’t ultimately help Mustafa. It came to the area several weeks ago after receiving a plea from the fish, which had grown weary of being hunted every day and receiving no compensation for the loss of friends and family.

Abdul-Ghani demands that Mustafa pay for what he takes, with interest added on for all the fish the fisherman has already caught. The jinni’s fee is 1 dinar for every fish caught, an exorbitant sum.

The heroes can convince the jinni that fish, by the will of Asha or Apsu as appropriate to their faith, exist to be eaten, and that Mustafa is a good man trying only to feed his family (which is true) with well chosen words. This uses the Social Conflict rules. The jinni has no counter-argument, meaning the party’s spokesman makes three unopposed Persuasion rolls.

Using an arcane power to aid the argument (such as *boost Persuasion* or *charismatic aura*) incurs a –2 penalty to the Persuasion roll—in the jinni’s eyes it implies the heroes either have no faith in their silky words or are trying to trick him. Being discourteous, such as forgetting to use a lofty title to flatter the jinni, also incurs a –2 penalty. These modifiers stack. Good roleplaying should be rewarded with a +2 bonus.

Tokens Result

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 0 | Abdul-Ghani refuses to change his decree. Mustafa must pay or risk the wrath of the marid each time he sets out in his boat. |
| 1-2 | The jinni changes his mind, but only a little. He allows Mustafa to fish freely on two days each week. The fisherman and his family will eat, but their bellies will never be truly full. |
| 3-4 | Abdul-Ghani sees wisdom in the hero’s words, and allows Mustafa to fish as he did before. |

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- 5+ The jinni blames the fish for trying to trick him, and rewards Mustafa with full nets every time he fishes. He also gives the fisherman 200 dinars worth of pearls to compensate him. Grateful for the characters' aid, Mustafa gifts half the pearls to the party.

COMBAT

Mustafa's marid is, in fact, a giant snapclaw lobster (p. 100). It wandered into the fishing grounds by an act of fate, but having found the hunting good it has no intentions of leaving any time soon.

A Good Day's Fishing

The crew spy a large shoal of fish and demand the heroes slow down so they can replenish supplies. Every character may make a Survival roll. Success means he catches 1d6 man days of fish, 2d6 with a raise. When gutting the catch, one of the player characters, chosen at random, finds a gold signet ring with a phoenix emblem worth 20 dinars.

The former owner of the ring was killed by a rival and dumped into the ocean. The GM is left to decide who both parties are and the reason behind the crime. In the next great city the heroes visit, someone recognizes the ring. Mistakenly believing the wearer either knows about the murder or is a relative looking for revenge, they take drastic steps to silence the character.

Message in a Bottle

While net fishing over the side of the ship, one of the crew brings up a glass bottle sealed a wax stopper. The contents are left to the GM to devise. Examples include a written message that leads to a new mini-adventure; a love letter written by a mariner whose ship was sinking, in which he asks the finder to deliver the note to his wife; or perhaps a lesser jinni forced into the bottle. In the latter case, the jinni might take out its vengeance on whoever open the bottle, or it may thank them by pledging servitude for a month. It could offer to guide them a buried treasure in return for its freedom. Jinn are renowned for lying to mortals, but maybe this one is being sincere.

Sargasso

The ship enters an area of water choked with floating seaweed. The

captain must make a Boating roll at -2 (the crew provide cooperation as normal) each hour or day, depending on the size of the affected area. Success means the ship moves half its normal speed for that time period. A raise allows the ship to move at full speed. Failure means the ship makes no headway. Repeat the roll each day or hour as necessary. A critical failure indicates the next roll to escape is made at -2.

Sole Survivor

Far from any land, the characters spy a small rowboat at the mercy of the tempestuous ocean. Investigation reveals a lone occupant; an attractive young woman. She is unconscious. A Healing roll reveals she is sick from dehydration. Upon being give water, the woman soon awakens. She introduces herself as Falak bint Hudhafah.

Falak claims to have been a passenger on a ship sailing between two ports. The GM should pick these based on where the encounter takes place. The ship sank in a storm, but Falak managed to swim to the ship's boat, which had broken free when the vessel went down. This, she says, happened two days ago.

Falak is not the innocent traveler she seems—she is a succubus (see page 100). She was indeed a passenger on a ship, but it did not sink in a storm. She used her powers to first divide and then kill the crew before scuttling the vessel. With no need to eat or drink, she set herself adrift



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in the hope of finding another ship of gullible souls on which to feed.

Within a day, the first crew members begin to complain of extreme fatigue or die suddenly (GM's choice). Swayed by her charms, males in the crew are quick to defend Falak against any accusations leveled against her by the characters. Eventually the heroes should discover her true nature and defeat the demon, but not before the GM had has some fun as Falak tries to alienate the characters from their comrades or tries to seduce them.

Storm

The sky turns black, the wind begins to howl, waves pound the ship, and rain lashes down. Every mariner worth his salt knows the ship is about to be struck by a storm. The *storm* spell can end this encounter very quickly, so it's not worth running it if the party have access to the power. GMs who own *Hellfrost Encounters Book 1* can use a longer system, found in **Encounter 46. Thunor's Wrath.**

First roll 1d6+3 30 minute increments to determine the length of the storm. The GM then draws a card for each increment to determine the ferocity of the storm for that period.

The captain makes a Boating roll each round and subtracts the penalty shown on the table below from his total. The crew makes a Group Boating roll at the same time, adding +1 to the captain's total for each success and raise. Add Handling bonuses or penalties to both rolls. The penalty to the roll, and the damage the storm inflicted if the roll is missed, depends on the storm's intensity for the 30 minute period. Storm damage is applied to the ship's base Toughness, ignoring armor.

Card	Penalty	Damage
2	-4	4d6
3-10	-2	4d6
Jack-Ace	-1	3d6
Joker	+2	3d6

Island of Lightning

The island's interior comprises low hills surrounded by thick forests. It is home to a small band of cyclops and their orc allies. The orcs kidnap mariners and fishermen, and force them to work in mines, extracting ore for the cyclops' forges. In return, the one-eyed fiends ensure the orcs are kept supplied with weapons and armor, as well as allowing them to keep the spoils of their raids.

Death on the Beach

High cliffs dominate much of the coast, but investigation reveals several narrow sandy beaches. Once all the

characters are safely ashore, read aloud or paraphrase the following text.

A man wearing only a loincloth bursts from the nearby forest. His hair and beard are long and straggly, his frame thin, and his eyes wild. On seeing you he charges forward, his arms outstretched. He staggers a few yards before collapsing. Protruding from his back are two arrows. Seconds later, a small band of orcs brandishing bows and swords emerges from the vegetation.

The man is an escaped prisoner. Half-mad from starvation and toil in the mines, his plan was to dive into the ocean and try to swim to safety. Even if he drowned, it was a more favorable fate than being worked or beaten to death by his cruel captors. By the time a character reaches him, he has died from his injuries.

Neither side is surprised, so deal both sides action cards at this point. Deal the orc archers and swordsmen separate action cards.

Terrain: There is no map for this encounter. The beach is 40" long and 8" deep. One long edge is marked by the surf, and the other by the forest. The characters begin at the water's edge, while the orcs start on the beach at the edge of the vegetation.

Monsters: While all the orcs are armed with short swords, half of them (rounded up) currently hold bows. Although equal in number to the heroes, the orcs make the snap decision to try and capture them rather than retreat back to their camp and raise the alarm.

* **Orc Warriors (1 per hero):** See p. 98.

Aftermath: The man's back is criss-crossed with long scars—the unmistakable signs of multiple and savage floggings. Heavy calluses cover his hands and the soles of his feet. His right arm has a faded tattoo. A character native to the nearest great city who makes a Common Knowledge roll recognizes it as the insignia of the emir's navy. Other heroes may use an appropriate Knowledge (Area) to deduce this.

Characters inspecting the orcs's bodies discover their weapons are good quality and virtually brand new.

The orcs have left a path through the vegetation a blind man could follow. Whether the characters elect to follow it or explore in a separate direction, they eventually reach the same point—the orc camp.

Orc Camp

The orcs have established a camp at the base of the hills, roughly a mile inland. As well as the brutish warriors, the camp houses their mistreated captives.

APPROACH

The forest around the camp has been cut back to form a clearing 8" (16 yards) wide. Unless an alarm has been raised or the characters do something to

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reveal their presence (like light a fire, cast a spell with a showy trapping, or start arguing loudly), they can sit in the vegetation at the edge of the forest and study the camp with no risk of being detected. The trees are too spindly to provide more than Medium Cover (-2).

GENERAL NOTES

The scenario is based on a party of four players, and there are 16 orcs. Some of these are asleep, others do not have their weapons drawn, and most are spread out around the camp. They also lack arcane powers, and are not expecting an attack. That said, they are not stupid.

If an alarm is raised, or if they spy intruders, they will join the fray. Thus, while the heroes initially have the element of surprise, it is likely to be lost unless they are both quick and careful.

While individual orcs change position throughout the day, the general location of warriors and prisoners marked on the map does not change between day and night. That is, there are always the same number of orcs in the barracks, manning the watch tower, and so on.

How and when the characters decide to attack is their choice. The GM needs to be prepared for any plan the players concoct—some groups may opt for a frontal assault, while others will prefer stealth. Remember, if the heroes make their move at night, then poor lighting modifiers come into play. Unless the GM is tracking the phases of the moon, assume the ambient lighting after sunset is Dark (-2).

1) PALISADE

The camp is surrounded by an 8 foot high wooden palisade. The double gates are shut, but are never barred.

2) WATCHTOWER

The watchtower is 20 feet high. It is a simple construction of four legs topped by a flat, open platform.

Terrain: Climbing the ladder is Difficult Ground. The orc gains Cover based on the distance the heroes are from him. The further away they are, the more visible he is. From immediately adjacent to the tower, for instance, he is impossible to hit due to the angle.

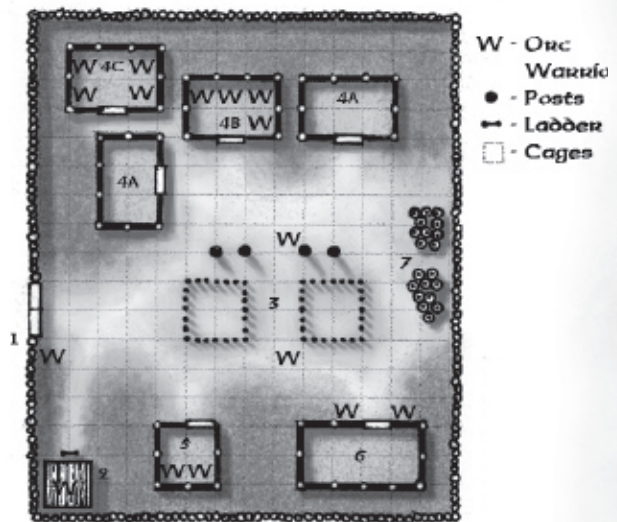
Monsters: A single orc mans the tower. Although not asleep, he counts as an inactive sentry, being more interested in the suffering of the prisoners undergoing punishment than watching the perimeter. He is armed with a bow, and has a short sword in his belt. He also carries a signal horn. Should he detect the heroes, his first action is to blow his horn.

* **Orc Warrior (1):** See p. 98.

3) PRISON AREA

While the orcs' accommodation is far from luxurious, it beats the exposed cages in which their prisoners are

Map 2: Orc Camp



housed. The floor of each cage is covered in filthy, bug-ridden grass. Each cage holds ten prisoners.

The two sets of posts are where prisoners are tethered to receive punishment. Tethered between each pair by rope bonds (Toughness 6) is a prisoner. These were co-conspirators in the escape attempt, and have been flogged senseless.

Locks: The padlock on each cage can be picked or smashed (Toughness 8).

Monsters: The prisoners are overworked, diseased, and poorly fed. Although Fatigued and unarmed, those in the cages are prepared to fight alongside the heroes if released. Recovering their Fatigue will take several days of rest and ample provisions. The ones on the end of orc punishment are conscious, but effectively Incapacitated—they cannot even walk unaided if cut down.

The various prisoners are not described, leaving the GM to determine their race and gender. None are spell-casters. At the GM's discretion, one may be known to a hero. Perhaps they travelled together once, belong to the same organization, or were childhood friends.

Two orcs patrol this area of the camp, taunting the prisoners and rattling their cages. One carries a whip (Reach 1, Str+d4) instead of a short sword. Every now and then he cracks it at the cages for no particular reason other than to remind the captives who is in charge, or lashes one of the tethered prisoners.

* **Orc Warrior (2):** See p. 98.

* **Prisoners (20):** As Generic NPC. See p. 98.

4) ORC BARRACKS

The orcs live in crude bamboo huts with palm leaves for roofs. Thick sleeping mats woven from grass are

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placed at various points. Each hut normally holds four orcs. The two huts marked "A" are currently empty—the occupants are at work around the camp.

Monsters: The orcs in hut "B" are asleep. They begin Shaken when roused. They are unarmored (Toughness 7) but keep their weapons close by. The orcs in hut "C" are awake, but are preparing for bed. Treat them as inactive sentries. They too are unarmored (Toughness).

* **Orc Warrior (8 total):** See p. 98.

5) KITCHEN

Like the barracks, the kitchen is just a crude hut. The center of the floor is dominated by a large stone hearth, over which hangs a cauldron of soup. Hunks of meat hang from the walls.

Hearth: A character who enters, or begins his turn in, the hearth, suffers 1d10 damage and has a chance of catching fire.

Soup: The soup, intended to feed the orcs, is flavored with herbs and various small animals, such as rabbits and birds. It may not be the most flavorful meal, but it is edible. There is enough in the cauldron to feed all 20 prisoners a small bowl. Even this is far more than they would normally get in a day—typically just a thin broth.

Monsters: The orcs are at work here. Both wear their armor, but are currently armed with heavy cleavers (Str+d4). Their short swords hang from their belts.

* **Orc Warrior (2):** See p. 98.

6) SHED

Larger than the other huts and more sturdily built, the shed is where the orcs store picks and shovels, buckets, coils of rope, and other items essential to the mining operation.

Monsters: Two orcs are leaning either side of the door, talking quietly in their guttural language.

* **Orc Warrior (2):** See p. 98.

7) BARRELS

Barrels: The various barrels contain potable water collected from streams in the hills and preserved food taken from merchant vessels the orcs attacked. There is enough for 60 man days in total. The prisoners (once released) claim these for their journey home.

QUESTIONING THE CAPTIVES

The captives are extremely grateful for their liberation, and reveal the following information.

* They are a mix of fishermen and merchantmen. After they were taken captive, their ships were scuttled.

* The orcs are not the true masters of the island. Ore is dragged outside the gates of a small fort deep in the hills, but the prisoners are led away before the gates open. No prisoner has been taken inside and returned, and thus

the layout is unknown. The orcs seem fearful of whoever lives there. The prisoners can provide directions.

* The orcs always blow a horn three times before reaching the gates. Obviously it is some sort of signal.

* The mines are not far away, but there is no one working them. A prisoner escaped shortly before the heroes arrived on the island, and the orcs have temporarily shut down production until he is recaptured or slain.

* The orcs have a boom concealed in a sea cave. Armed with weapons from the slain orcs and tools from the shed, they intend to overpower the few orcs guarding the ship, gather up supplies, and leave the island as soon as possible. (The prisoners are grateful of offers of help in securing the ship, but are convinced they can handle a few orcs now they are armed. As one says, "Vengeance and the yearning to see our families will power our arms.")

The Cyclops' Fort

The journey to cyclops' fort takes two hours. The fort, built by the cyclops' ancestors, sits on a rocky pinnacle 100 feet above the surrounding terrain. The only path to the gates is a wide, natural causeway that spans the gap between the pinnacle and a larger hill.

Like the orcs in the camp, the cyclops have little fear of being disturbed, and do not bother to post sentries. When the orcs come with a delivery of ore, they signal their approach by blowing horns.

Doors: All doors are five feet wide and ten feet high.

Lighting: After dark, all rooms are illuminated by lanterns. The courtyard is never lit. The ambient lighting depends on the time of day.

1) MAIN GATE

Heavy wooden gates reinforced with metal bands protect the entrance to the fort. From outside, a Notice roll detects the sound of metal on stone, along with cursing in Orcish. The gates open inward and are barred from the inside. Without a battering ram or powerful spell (the gates are Toughness 14, Heavy Armor), some form of magic must be employed. Alternately, the heroes can blow a horn three times.

Five minutes after the horn is sounded, the two orcs in Area 2 unbar the gates and drag them open. Unless killed quickly, they shout an alarm on seeing intruders. At the start of each round of battle after the first, make a Notice roll for the cyclops in Area 6 to detect the clamor. Very loud noises, like explosions from spells, are heard without a Notice roll.

2) COURTYARD

Sounds of metal on metal can be heard from anywhere in the courtyard. The noise emanates from the circular building.

Terrain: The pile of ore is Difficult Ground.

Monsters: Two orcs have been assigned to break up

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the lumps of ore and carry the chippings into the furnace room for smelting. The orcs are not wearing any armor, and have Toughness 7. Each is armed only with a huge hammer. This functions as a maul (Str+d8, AP 2 vs. rigid armor, two hands, -1 Parry). Without their shields, and using the mauls, the orcs have Parry 4.

* **Orc Warriors (2):** See p. 98.

3) CORRIDOR

If an alarm is sounded, the occupants of the barracks gather here. Orc defenders use their bows through the arrow slits, which grant them Heavy Cover (-4) while the cyclops rushes into the courtyard.

4) BARRACKS

These rooms serve as barracks for the cyclops and orcs stationed in the fort. The rooms are poorly furnished, with just sleeping mats on the floor and a small hearth for cooking. The orcs' room has an iron cooking pot and six wooden bowls.

4A: This room is currently home to six orcs. Production of ingots runs day and night, with each orc working an eight hour shift. Two of the orcs are already at work (see Area 2), two are sleep, and two are busily consuming a meal of rabbit stew cooked on a small hearth, having recently finished their shift.

4B: Currently unoccupied.

4C: The two cyclops who live here are at work in the smelting works (see Area 6).

4D: A lone cyclops is eating his breakfast (the remains of a dead prisoner) in his room. His colleague has been called to work in the forge (see Area 7).

Monsters: None of the orcs wear armor (Toughness 7). Those asleep are Shaken when awakened. All have weapons close at hand, as does the cyclops.

* **Cyclops (1):** See p. 97.

* **Orc Warriors (4):** See p. 98.

5) TEMPLE

Cyclops worship Adad, Father of Storms, who they believe is the father of their race. Among other races, he is a minor deity associated with Upuaut. The air in the temple hums with electrical charge, causing the heroes' hair to stand on end and tiny sparks to play over metal armor and exposed metal weapons.

Magical Aura: A character casting a spell with an electricity trapping in the temple has a +1 bonus.

Statue: Adad is represented as a cyclops with a crystal eye. His arms are outstretched, palms upward. Stretched across them are four cyclops' lightning bolts. After forging lightning bolts, the cyclops place the spears in Adad's hands. Although perfectly serviceable the instant they are finished, the act is a ritual, performed to honor Adad.

Trap: If the characters investigate the temple, draw a card each round. On a black suit, the presence of metal on the characters generates a discharge of static electric-

Map 3: Cyclops's Fort



■ - Forge
 ■ - Ingots
 ● - Ore Pile
 □ - Chute
 ⚒ - Anvil
 + - Arrow Slit
 | - Open Door
 ⚡ - Statue
 W - Orc Warrior
 C - Cyclops
 S - Storm Lord

ity. Every character in the room suffers 2d4 damage with an electricity trapping.

Treasure: Each lightning bolt has Range: 5/10/20, Damage 3d6, and explodes in a Small Burst Template on impact. The are launched using Throwing.

If this is not the last island in the quest, then the crystal lens forms the eye of the statue. Otherwise, the eye is a colored crystal carved to form an orb. It is worth 5 dinars as a curiosity.

6) SMELTING WORKS

The ground is bare rock. Ore excavated by the miners is dumped in a pile just inside the gate. A narrow hole in the roof directly above the forge carries away smoke, but it does nothing to remove the heat.

Terrain: The forge is four feet high. The coals are generating a fierce heat. Any character who somehow enters, or begins his turn in, the forge suffers 2d10 damage and has a chance of catching fire.

The chute is a square opening (2 feet to a side) cut through the wall at a steep downward angle. Molten slag and other impurities from the smelting process are deposited through here.

Monsters: Two cyclops are toiling here smelting the ore to produce usable metal. Their clubs and lightning bolts are leaning against the wall near the chute.

* **Cyclops (2):** See p. 97.

Treasure: There are 100 iron ingots stacked in two piles in the northwest corner. Each weighs 10 pounds and is worth only 20 dinars to a smith due to the poor purity of the original iron ore.

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7) FORGE

The forge is used to construct mundane weapons and armor, which the cyclops give to their orc minions, and the race's fabled lightning bolts.

Terrain: Each square containing an anvil is Difficult Ground. The forge is four feet high. The coals are generating a fierce heat. Any character who somehow enters, or begins his turn in, the hearth suffers 2d10 damage and has a chance of catching fire.

Monsters: A cyclops smith is beating metal into a lightning bolt using a large blacksmith's hammer (Str+d8, AP 2). He has no club or lightning bolts.

* **Cyclops (1):** See p. 97.

Treasure: The cyclop's hammer is made of star metal. The sides are engraved with stylized lightning bolts, and runes. A Knowledge (Arcane) roll reveals the runes signify "creation" and "lightning." It does not register as magical to the touch, but does to *detect arcana*.

Despite not being a true magic item, centuries of being used to create lightning bolts (a process known only to cyclops) have imbued it with special properties. A spellcaster who uses it to manufacture metal alchemical devices or spirit relics with an electricity trapping has +1 to his arcane skill rolls. As a weapon, it requires a minimum Strength of d8 to wield one handed, and inflicts Str+d8, AP 2 damage. The hammer weighs 10 pounds and is worth 2,000 dinars to a spellcaster.

8) STORM LORD'S QUARTERS

A thick sleeping mat covered in furs, crude table, three-legged stool, and sturdy chest are the only items of furnishing.

Monsters: By day, the cyclops storm lord is in his room going over production reports from the mines or meditating. At night, he is asleep. Should he be roused from his slumber, he begins Shaken. His first action in combat is to cast *deflection* on himself.

* **Cyclops Storm Lord (1):** See p. 97.

Treasure: The cyclops' treasury is housed in a locked chest (Toughness 8). It contains 500 dinars in assorted coins and small pieces of jewelry. If this is the last island, the object the heroes seek is in the chest.

Island of Mourning

The first settlers reached the island some two millennia ago. Driven out of Hekata during the religious purge, they were among a small number who chose to forge their own path. Seeking a refuge the vengeful pharaohs would never find, they opted for a life beyond the southern coast. The population remained small down the generations, for the island became the center of a small mercantile confederation, and as such was more akin to a royal court and grand market than a true town.

Three centuries after the colony's founding, Lord Damotrix and his wife Lady Menesta ascended the throne. Their love was legendary. Whereas previous rulers kept their affections behind closed doors, the pair were often seen in public holding hands and even kissing.

Their time together was fated to be short. Lord Damotrix died suddenly, sending his wife into a black pit of despair that has never been rivaled before or since. (Storytellers will speak of many such loves, but they know nothing of Damotrix and Menesta.) Such was her longing for her husband that his soul was unable to leave its mortal form, for even Djemuti (the Charioteer of the Gods who collects souls) was driven away in a state of utter sadness by her mourning.

Although still the master of the island, she withdrew from public life. Retreating to her husband's tomb, she spent every moment by his glass sarcophagus, beating on its with her fists and washing away grime with her tears. For 50 years her people contin-



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ued to leave offerings outside the tomb, and each day they would find them gone, a sign their ruler still lived. The day finally dawned when the offerings remained untouched. Believing Menesta dead, the people sealed up the tomb.

Such were her mournful cries and continuous laments that the spirit of every mortal who died on the island became tethered to the mortal realm. By the time Menesta died, the spirits of the dead outnumbered the living. Even her death has not broken the curse. Menesta's spirit is imprisoned in its withered husk of a body by a trap of her own making. She cannot cease her grieving and release her hold on mortal life until Damotrix's soul has been claimed by the gods, but they cannot claim it until Menesta stops grieving.

Corrupt Hekata has fallen. The jinn have conquered and been conquered. New religions and kingdoms have arisen. Still Menesta grieves for the man she loved.

THE ISLAND TODAY

The buildings and inhabitants appear much as they did many centuries ago. This is not surprising, given that the last living souls left long ago, fearful to remain less their souls become imprisoned. The modern denizens are the ghosts of those with the strongest wills. Unable to pass beyond, they chose to carry on living as they had always done, albeit without much interest, rather than become mindless spirits following a set pattern night after night down the ages.

Such is the nature of the island that they have material form and do not register to *detect arcana* as supernatural. The heroes will be dealing with ghosts, but they have no way of knowing this.

Their language had not fully evolved away from Hekatic when they died. While understandable to a character who speaks Hekatic, conversations take a little longer due to odd words and unusual pronunciations. Magoian works as well, but conversations are slower still.

AND Everybody Dies!

The characters are not just idle witnesses to a ghost story—they are about to become part of it. As the characters near the island, the GM should involve them in a fight against powerful or multiple enemies. Perhaps a family of reef giants (see *Realm Guide #5*) attacks the ship, a sea dragon takes offense to their presence in its hunting grounds (see *Hellfrost Rassilon Expansion*), or a horde of kreana swarm over the decks with murderous intent. Use whatever monsters you have to hand. Make the battle big and memorable.

What is important is that the characters and NPC crew are all killed. Cheat if you have to, but everybody must die. Don't worry about doing this—these deaths are not permanent. Once the last hero is slain, immediately pick up the story by having their ship sail into port with the adventurers and crew completely uninjured. Refuse to

answer any questions about what just happened, or how they are still alive.

Note that once they step foot ashore, the characters cannot return to their ship by any means until the adventure is over—their spirits are now trapped by Menesta's grief. They are ghosts, but retain all their normal statistics—everything on the island is effectively a ghost, so the heroes interact with it as per the real world. Heroes who die in battle on the island are truly dead, just as if they died in normal circumstances.

A Place Out of Time

The bustling town (known as Ankhura to the inhabitants) immediately comes across as slightly odd. The buildings lack the domes and arches so common in the great kingdoms, the people dress in simple linen loincloths (men) and dresses (women), both genders wear black eye make up, and their language is archaic. A Knowledge (History) roll reveals the architecture and dress is akin to ancient Hekata or Magor. Any hero who speaks either tongue quickly realizes the native language is a close match, but not a direct one.

Any hero who inquires should be told the number of buildings could cater for a population of some 5000. A stroll through the town brings the realization there is barely 1000 inhabitants. Should the topic be raised, the locals simply reply that they moved on and do not expand it any further.

The people are friendly, but seem oddly resigned, as if nothing much matters to them. Play anyone the characters care to talk to as apathetic. The market is brimming with goods, but all metalwork is bronze. The traders do not call out their wares when the characters approach, nor do they haggle. Once the characters catch onto this, they will likely begin making ridiculously low offers. Regardless of the value of the item, any offer is accepted.

Devoted characters do not find a kada, nor any objects or writings even remotely related to their faith. Mentioning words like imam, kada, *Hamad*, or even Suleiman is met with blank stares and comments along the lines of, "*I do not know these things of which you speak*" and "*You speak of strange things.*" The denizens died centuries before Suleiman was born.

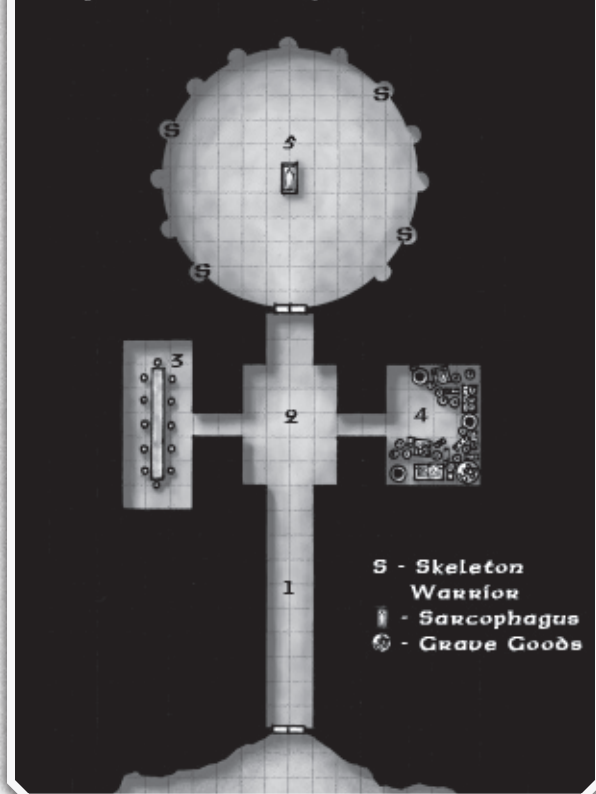
After a few hours, have each character make a Notice roll. With success, they realize the locals show each other absolutely no affection. There are no young couples holding hands, no mothers showing affection to their children, and no terms of endearment spoken. If this is brought up, the locals just stare at them before muttering, "*Love eventually becomes grief, and grief becomes a prison,*" or words to that effect. It was ultimately love that bound them to their fate, and as a result they shun close company lest it tie them further to their fate.

THE WAILING DEAD

This encounter occurs the instant the sun sets. The

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Map 4: Tomb of Damotrix



GM should endeavor to delay the heroes in town until it happens, as an important clue is given. Without it, the heroes will face only death if they try to take on the “villains” of the adventure.

As soon as the last glimmer of the sun’s disc slips below the horizon, the air turns bitterly cold. Many hundreds of pale spirits materialize in the graveyard. Individually at first, and then with one voice, they begin to wail a sorrowful lament.

They gather in strength outside the temple of Tammuz, whose doors are open (even if the heroes closed them earlier). A figure dressed in the garb of a priest of Tammuz appears in the doorway. The spirits plead to be let in, but the sorrowfully priest shakes his head and slams the doors in their faces. At this point, a number of darker spirits materialize out of the growing darkness. They ignore the ghosts (both “living” and spectral), and attack the heroes.

Once these have been dealt with, the ghostly procession then begins to file inland in a long funeral march. Should the characters follow, they find themselves outside the sealed entrance to Lord Damotrix’s tomb several hours later. Here the spirits again begin to wail, but this time they beg for release from their earthly prison. This continues until dawn, when they gradually fade into nothingness as the sky lightens.

Monsters: The manifest griefs are the mindless material form of Lady Menesta’s lamentations.

* **Manifest Griefs (1 per hero):** See page 98.

TEMPLE OF TAMMUZ

Tammuz was an important deity to the refugees from Hekata, for it was his clergy who stood against the darkness of necromancy. Whereas necromancy promised only a semblance of mortal life, Tammuz promised paradise in the Afterlife. Furthermore, Tammuz would protect them should Hekata’s military come hunting for those who fled the pharaoh’s wrath.

When Lord Damotrix died, his wife invested a fortune expanding the small temple in the hope that the god of death would return him to her side. While she grieved, Tammuz enjoyed much worship, for Menesta’s people grieved with her. When it became apparent the spirits of the dead were trapped on the island, the temple enjoyed another surge in popularity as people beseeched the god to release them. The god’s impotency to end the problem soon gave way to a dramatic fall in worshippers and a loss of status.

The building is the second largest in town. Only the royal palace is larger, and that is seemingly abandoned. If asked about their lord, the inhabitants reply only that he died. They have no concept of time, and thus cannot give an accurate date.

By day, the temple is deserted. The doors are closed, but not locked. No one pays them any attention if they push them open. It is evident it has not been maintained properly for many decades—the plaster has fallen away in great chunks, walls are cracked, dust covers every surface, and defaced statues lie toppled. The only images that are intact show a beautiful woman weeping at the foot of an upright transparent sarcophagus. Inside the sarcophagus is an armored man.

By night, the temple is inhabited by the ghost of the last priest. He died trying to free the island of the curse. If the characters knock, the doors swing open by themselves. The interior of the temple has changed. Rather than a ruin, it appears as it did in its heyday, with decorated walls, oil lamps casting light, and statues intact and standing. The priest is kneeling before the main altar. He takes no notice of the characters, and nothing they do can harm him.

He mutters the same words over and over again; “*I have failed you, my lord. Love has become a heavy chain that I cannot break, and we are bound by its burden. Were the sign of Tammuz to touch the lord, then he might be freed from his bonds, and us with him.*” With that, he casts off his holy symbol. It skids across the floor and lands at the characters’ feet.

GRAVEYARD

The town’s graveyard lies adjacent to the temple. There are very few grave markers—they are expensive luxuries, and only the rich can afford them. Most citizens are simply buried in communal pits. One of the pits is still open. At the bottom are around 50 corpses, all preserved by natural means rather than elaborately mummified. Faithful characters notice there are no grave goods, a very odd occurrence. Should the heroes decide to dig

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elsewhere in the graveyard, they come across a funeral pit where the dead have a handful of grave goods. These are simply things like wooden bowls or a single tool associated with a particular craft.

To begin with, the people buried their dead as normal, even after Menesta's curse took effect. When it became apparent the dead were not going to the Afterlife, the living ceased carrying out proper funerals, seeing little sense in wasting perfectly serviceable items on those who could never have use for them.

LORD DAMOTRIX'S Tomb

Damotrix's tomb was carved into the side of a hill, as was the tradition in Hekata before the first pyramids were raised. With pyramids too closely associated with the necromancy in their eyes, the inhabitants followed the tradition of their earlier ancestors.

The entrance is sealed by mortared stone blocks. An hour of back-breaking labor using suitable weapons or tools clears them aside. The air is stale.

Descriptive Text: The start of each entry contains a varying amount of information in italics. This highlights the salient features of the room from the characters' perspective and should be relayed to the heroes when such information would be apparent. It should be paraphrased to them in whatever flavorful terms the GM prefers.

Lighting: Unless the heroes provide illumination, the nest is Pitch Black (-4).

Sorrowful Aura: A palpable aura of grief strikes the heroes like a hammer as soon as they step inside. The characters must make a Spirit roll or suffer a -1 penalty to all Spirit rolls while inside the tomb. Clerics of Tammuz, who as overseers of funerals are used to feelings of grief, receive a +2 bonus.

1) HALL OF MEMORIES

** Colorful images painted onto smooth plaster line both walls.*

The images along the walls tell the story of Damotrix and Menesta. Their names are prominently mentioned many times over. They show the couple in affectionate poses—holding hands, kissing, and cuddling, and all in front of their people. In traditional style of ancient Hekata and later Magor, the pair are shown as much larger figures than ordinary citizens.

Further along, the scenes turn more morose—Damotrix lying in state and then being placed in his sarcophagus, Menesta in mourning clothes and weeping at the feet of her dead husband. One important scene at the far end of the corridor shows Tammuz stretching out his right hand, in which he holds a key, toward Damotrix, but Menesta defiantly standing in his way.

Followers of Tammuz know the key signifies the key to the heavenly doors to the Afterlife. Other Faithful heroes may make Common Knowledge rolls to recall this, while Devoted require Knowledge (Religion).

2) CHAPEL

** Faithful heroes automatically discern this is a chapel honoring Tammuz, god of death.*

** A statue of Tammuz stands in the niche. It is heavily raked, as if by nails. In its left hand it clutches a balance, the god's holy symbol. Its right hand has been broken off. It lies on the floor, along with the key it normally holds.*

Many early Hekatan tombs honored Tammuz with a small shrine or chapel as means of ensuring the dead was well received in the next world. Angry at the deity, Menesta attacked the statue. The holy symbol is not part of the statue, and lifts out if pulled. Like the one thrown them by the cleric earlier, this can be used against Lord Damotrix later in the adventure.

3) HALL OF ETERNAL FEASTS

** A long stone table is laid out as for a feast for ten people.*

** The goblets and plates are pottery, but the food, all of it fruit, is made of gold.*

Grave goods are commonplace in Faithful tombs, for the soul will use these in the next world as it did in life. Like mortals, souls also require sustenance. Inscriptions and prayers offering the deceased vast quantities of food and drink are often placed with the dead to ensure he does not want, as are actual meals. In Damotrix's case, these offerings take a material form—golden fruits.

The number of seats catered for not only the lord, but for his household staff in the Afterlife as well.

Treasure: A character picking up any of the fruits quickly realizes it is not solid gold. Each item is carved from wood and covered in a layer of beaten gold. The various golden foodstuffs are collectively worth 500 dinars and weigh 50 pounds.

4) TREASURY

** This room is stacked to bursting with everything from furniture to game sets to musical instruments.*

This room contains the mundane items Damotrix would require in the next world. The items reflect his high status in their construction and their quantity. Furniture is made of mahogany or other rare woods and intricately carved. Game pieces are carved from ivory. Bundles of cloth are the finest linen. Cataloguing everything would take many weeks, and ultimately produce items worth very little in most cases due to their fragility after the passing of many centuries.

5) MAUSOLEUM

** In the center of the hall stands a glass sarcophagus. Within, the heroes can make out the form of a man in bronze armor.*

** At the foot of the sarcophagus lies a figure. A bony hand strokes the glass, and deep sobbing can be heard.*

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** Armored skeletons slump in alcoves around the circumference of the hall.*

The figure weeping at the foot of the sarcophagus is Lady Menesta. The armored warrior encased in the glass is her husband, Lord Damotrix.

This battle will be tough on the heroes, more so if they failed to visit the temple of Tammuz first and deduce the means of freeing the lord from his wife's unwitting curse. Until Lord Damotrix is released from his sarcophagus and slain, his wife is immortal. While not much of a combatant, her special abilities, combined with the attacks of other entities, make her very troublesome.

Sarcophagus: Lord Damotrix's sarcophagus is made of thick glass and has Toughness 10. If this is not the last island, the crystal lens forms part of the lord's shield. Otherwise, he has the parchment they seek in a scroll case tucked into his belt. Both objects are visible through the glass. The round after the sarcophagus is broken, Lord Damotrix animates and joins the battle.

Monsters: A number of manifest griefs appear out of thin air in the first round of combat, but not until their action card comes up. They begin adjacent to Menesta.

The skeletons in the alcoves are loyal soldiers of Damotrix. They agreed to follow their lord in death, so as to accompany him to the Afterlife. Like him, their souls are trapped. This means they do *not* count as evil creatures for the purposes of the Champion and Holy Warrior Edges. The skeletons remain inanimate until one is attacked or their master's sarcophagus is attacked, whichever happens first. At this time, those marked "S" on the map all animate. Although they defend themselves in response to a hero's attack, they only receive an action card the round after one of their activation conditions is met.

Every alcove contains a skeleton. Lady Menesta can use *zombie* on those not marked "S" to provide reinforcements during the battle.

*** Lady Menesta:** See p. 96.

*** Lord Damotrix:** See p. 96.

*** Manifest Griefs (1 per hero):** See p. 98.

*** Skeleton Warriors (1 per hero):** See p. 99.

Special: The instant Lord Damotrix is slain, proceed to **Aftermath** below.

AFTERMATH

Lord Damotrix's earthly form crumples to the floor. In its place stands a spectral version of the long-dead lord. As his shade materializes, the same thing happens to Lady Menesta. The couple rush to each other and embrace, the love they share for each other clearly evident. They then turn to the heroes. As all this takes place, a beam of light strikes the floor of the tomb, illuminating a circle two yards across. Hand-in-hand, the couple walk into the light.

"In my grief I forgot that death is just the beginning of a new life," says Menesta. "The rage I felt toward you for harming my husband has broken the chains, and we are free to depart, along with

those we once ruled over and I so cruelly bound. I pray Tammuz is merciful." She then cocks her head, as if listening to a voice.

"You have done the powers that rule the universe a great service today. Go with their blessing and continue your lives. You will be called when the time comes again to journey beyond."

With that, the beam suddenly vanishes, along with the spectral figures. As the light vanishes, so the heroes find themselves on their ship in the position it was when it was attacked. The object they sought on the island is in their hands, as is any treasure taken from the tomb before the final fight. Any wounds from the fight against Damotrix and Menesta are healed. Anything the characters purchased from the market vanishes once the island is out of sight—it never truly existed. Spent money is not returned, however.

Should they return to the island, they discover it is uninhabited. The buildings are time-ravaged ruins, and have evidently been this way for countless years. The tomb is as they left it, but with one exception—all the treasure is gone. The lord and lady, seeking to lessen the burden on their soul, divided the treasure among the countless trapped souls, thus ensuring all had at least something to use in the Afterlife.

Island of Outcasts

Though small, the island has fertile soil, ample fresh water, and forests inhabited by abundant wildlife. The first settlers, political outcasts, arrived 220 years ago. Over time, the island has become a refuge for those outcast by society for their mental or physical infirmities, their beliefs, their race, or even their appearance. So long as they are willing to work, they are ensured a place in a society that judges others solely on merit.

The locals refer to the island simply as Home, as they do the only settlement, a bustling little harbor town of some 600 souls. The religious bias is mixed, with the town boasting both a kada and a small temple to Marqod (which doubles as an apothecary). Although a town, Home is isolated from major trade routes. As such, treat it as a village for the purposes of purchasing goods.

The heroes should arrive late in the afternoon.

A Warm Welcome

No sooner has the ship berthed at the wharf than a well-dressed man with salt and pepper hair, no left arm, and a heavily-notched scimitar tucked into his wide belt sash approaches. He bows politely, introduces himself as Captain Rafiq, and asks to speak to whoever is in charge. Rafiq informs the heroes that the island's ruler, Kutaiba Pasha, warmly invites them to dine at his house as his

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honored guests. When the heroes are ready, Rafiq escorts them to a large house on the edge of town.

During the short walk through the busy little settlement, the characters cannot help but notice the large number of ailments among the population. Hindrances like Blind, Lame, One Arm, One Eye, One Leg, and Ugly (from scars and disease, rather than simple unattractiveness) seem overly common. There is also a noticeable absence of beggars. Rafiq, if questioned about this, replies enigmatically that “things are different here.” Should the heroes ask about his infirmity, Rafiq says only that he lost his arm to orcs a long time ago. Heroes making a Notice roll get the distinct impression he has no wish to discuss the topic further.

At the pasha’s house they are greeted politely by a servant, a cakali with a withered right arm and only two fingers on his left hand. He indicates where weapons and armor may be securely stored, and then leads the guests to meet his master. The house is richly appointed, but without being ostentatious or garish.

Kutaiba Pasha is the wrong side of middle age, and his face, bald pate, and hands are vividly disfigured by deep burn scars. A banquet more befitting the table of an emir has already been laid out. During the meal, Kutaiba Pasha makes small talk, inquiring about the heroes reasons for visiting, their previous exploits, and news from the mainland. Once the characters’ bellies are full, he gets down to business. He invites the heroes to follow him to an adjacent room.

A JOB FOR HEROES

Laid out on a bier is a young woman of perhaps 20 years. Her face is relaxed, and she appears to be sleeping. If this is not the last island in the quest, then the girl wears a large, colored crystal lens as part of a necklace. Attempts to touch the girl are stymied by an invisible, impenetrable barrier that extends an inch from her body.

“This is my daughter, Shana. A stranger came to our town and, on seeing her, desired that she become his wife. I refused such a marriage, for the stranger was of sinister disposition and my heart told me that he was full of wickedness. Oh, by the fates, how right I was! Angered, the stranger revealed himself to be Jabal, a wizard of the dark arts, and calling upon fell charms, he placed her in the magical sleep in which you see her now.

“The wizard said that unless I changed my mind within a year and a day, my daughter would never wake yet never truly die, condemning her soul to limbo for all time. That deadline is midnight a mere two days from now, and I fear I must make a decision no father should be called upon to make.

“I am a man of peace, but I now ask that you aid us. Kill the wizard and break his charm. There is no other way.”

Kutaiba Pasha knows that the wizard lives in a tower on a spit of rock a day’s sail to the south. Asked why the villagers have not attacked the wizard, the nobleman replies that they are not heroes, nor competent in the arts necessary to defeat one skilled in the arcane arts.

Asked about the lens, Kutaiba Pasha replies that it was a gift from Shana’s late mother on the day her daughter came of age. Where his wife acquired it he has no idea—she possessed it before they met and travelled Al-Shirkuh extensively.

Sooner or later, the heroes will bring up the matter of payment. Kutaiba Pasha’s head drops at this point, and he asks the heroes to name their price. Should they reply only that they want the crystal lens (and maybe something easily provided, like fresh provisions for the ship or maybe crew to replace lost NPCs), the nobleman accepts without hesitation. The heroes should be rewarded with 2 Glory for their selflessness. Should they desire money, he offers 500 dinars, but is prepared to go as high as 3000—he has no more at his disposal. Asking for Shana’s hand in marriage results in the pasha refusing—*“Would I swap one poor suitor for another so easily?”*

Once the heroes have accepted the quest, Kutaiba Pasha offers them quarters in his house for the night. He is not offended if they choose to sleep on their ship or in town. Should they desire the latter, he pays their bill.

Kutaiba Pasha smiles wanly if the topic of conversation changes to his burns or the large number of infirmities among the citizens,

“It takes a stranger to remind me of such things. I was once a bureaucrat serving the Caliph. My injuries are the result of a fire, after which I was shunned for my appearance. Rafiq was an officer in the Sultan’s army. He lost his arm in battle and was thereafter forced to beg for a living. Both of us could have been useful members of society, yet society chose to cast us out. Here, we judge people solely on their abilities. We do not ask for charity, nor do we offer it.

“Rafiq, for instance, remains a capable warrior, and the people duly elected him captain of the guard. Similarly, my humble skills as a bureaucrat earned me the title and position of pasha when my predecessor died.”

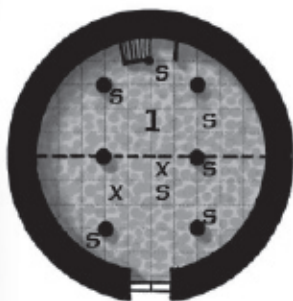
We’re off to Kill the Wizard!

Although the dark powers Jabal serves desire his soul, they are prepared to wait. Sensing the characters’ ship approaching, they send a strong wind that drives the vessel away from the island. The captain must make a Boating roll. Fellow heroes may make a Cooperative roll, while the NPC crew make a Group roll.

With success, the captain makes good progress.

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The Tower of Jabal the Black



Level 1

S - Skeleton
X - Trap
● - Column

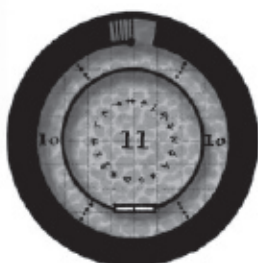


Level 2

G - Golem
B - Bones



Level 3



Level 4

The heroes arrive the following morning, giving them 12 hours to complete their task. On a raise, he gets them to the island just after midnight, ensuring they have a whole 24 hours. Failure means the ship arrives with just 4 hours to spare. Treat a critical failure as a failure, but the ship also suffers an automatic wound as well.

THE TOWER

The wizard, Jabal the Black, lives in a tower of black stone that stands on a spit of ugly, barren rock that rises from the ocean. His desire to marry Shana has nothing to do with love. His lust is purely selfish—he wants her life force so that he might extend his own existence beyond its allotted years. Brought up to see the virtue in all creatures, Shana is a paragon of innocence, and the dark masters Jabal serves demand such sacrifices.

Aura of Evil: Jabal has committed many wicked acts in the tower over the centuries, and the entire island is cloaked in an air of depravity and vileness that gnaws at the soul. When the characters first set foot on the island, they must make Spirit rolls or suffer the effects of Fear until the black tower has been out of sight for 24 hours or Jabal has been slain, whichever comes first.

Khem-hekau mages, including Jabal, gain +2 to arcane skill rolls. This is already factored into Jabal's statistics.

Warded: Jabal does not appreciate uninvited guests. Movement into, within, or out of the tower using *etheral*, *teleport*, or similar powers is impossible. Any hero who attempts such magic is temporarily transported into a nightmare realm of suffering and pain. He must make a Spirit roll at -2 or suffer the effects of Terror.

1) HALL OF BONES

The floor looks like the aftermath of a battle. Piles of bones and rusted weapons and armor litter it ankle deep. Jabal uses the bones to create skeletons when needed.

Doors: The outer doors are closed and locked—they are not much of a barrier to the heroes, but every minute he can delay them brings him a minute closer to the deadline. Toughness 10. Lockpicking rolls are at -2.

Terrain: The bones do not impede movement. The columns can be used for Cover (Armor +6).

Trap: The two squares marked "X" contain *glyphs* concealed beneath the bones. Stepping on one casts a *fear* spell (d10 arcane skill, d6 Wild Die) centered on that point. *Detect arcana* reveals their presence.

Monsters: Either the round after the first *glyph* is activated or when the characters reach the dotted line, whichever comes first, piles of bones pull together and animate as skeletons. Since they are immune to the effects of the *glyphs*, the skeletons attempt to activate any not yet triggered, but only if one or more characters is within 2" of the *glyph*.

* **Skeletons (2 per hero):** See p. 99. For tough parties, use skeleton warriors (p. 99) instead.

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2) TORTURE CHAMBER

While Jabal occasionally employs torture as a means of gathering information, he most often uses it as a sick form of amusement. The torture chamber contains a rack, an iron maiden shaped like a Hekatic sarcophagus, a table holding various implement of torture (like pincers for tearing out nails, hooks, and thumb screws), a pillory, and a brazier in which irons are heating—Jabal hopes to capture at least one hero alive and sate his appetite for cruelty at his leisure.

3) CELLS

This room contains four cells made of iron bars, and two gibbets suspended from the ceiling.

Gibbet: One of the gibbets holds the rotting remains of a human captive (Jabal forgot about him). Around his neck hangs a holy symbol of Shamash. The unfortunate prisoner was a follower of the sun god, but not a cleric.

4) GOLEM CREATION ROOM

This room is dedicated to the construction of bone and corpse golems. It is a cross between a laboratory and an abattoir. Assorted body parts lie on benches along with surgical tools; a large corpse comprised of stitched together limbs occupies a large table; piles of bones are dotted around the floor; a large vat of boiling water contains a corpse (Jabal is removing the flesh), and blood stains are evident on the flagstones.

Monster: One of the piles of bones is actually a prototype bone golem. Jabal has yet to set it to work, though he has given orders for it to protect the workshop. Two rounds after the characters enter, the golem gathers it self together and attacks. Check for Surprise until the heroes have stated they are being wary.

* **Bone Golem (1):** See page 97.

Treasure: Among the clutter is a stained volume written in Hekatic that describes how to create bone and flesh golems (*Hellfrost Bestiary* and *Creature Guide Compendium One* respectively). A khem-hekau mage creating one of these golems can add one Combat Edge or Monstrous Ability of his choice from the appropriate stat block to his creation for free. Note that Improved versions of an Edge still require the basic version to be added first.

5) LIBRARY

Tall bookcases stand against the walls. Jabal's library is dedicated to necromancy and the undead. Most of the collection comprises scrolls, and many are made of thin, almost translucent, skin. A Healing roll identifies this as human skin. Topics range from Hekatic mummification rituals to essays on famous necromancers to harvesting corpses for their organs. There is nothing special about any of the scrolls or tomes.

The Black Book

A hero who studies the book cover to cover (takes one month) is contacted by the unholy beings, who manifest as shadows when the reader is alone.

They offer him the opportunity to take Arcane Background (Khem-Hekau) with an automatic Khem-Hekau d6. This costs the hero no advancements. Power comes at a price, though, as Jabal has learned. For each khem-hekau spell cast, the GM draws one card per Rank of the spell. So one card for a Novice spell, two for Seasoned, and so on. A black royal card (Jack through Ace) causes the hero to lose a *permanent* die in Vigor. Multiple royal cards in the same draw do not produce a cumulative effect. The victim, for such he is, dies when his Vigor drops below d4.

6) TROPHY ROOM

As well as being a semi-immortal power-crazed necromancer, Jabal is a collector of objects relating to his art and ancient Hekata. This room contains nine slender plinths, atop each of which is one of the sorcerer's trophies. Each exhibit is labelled in Sandspeech.

GM's should feel free to add flavor to objects linked to people if the heroes attempt with Investigation or Knowledge (History) rolls.

* *Collection of Hekatic Coins* (Worth 100 dinars based on their weight in gold)

* *Early Hekatic Funerary Rites* (Mundane scroll written in Hekatic; worth 50 dinars to a scholar)

* *Fang from a Vampire* (Vampires are not known in Al-Shirkuh. This example comes from Rassilon)

* *The Mind of Evil* (Glass jar containing a human brain in preserving liquid)

* *Mummified Head of Pharaoh Khemmeses III*

* *Late Dynasty Hekatic Canopic Jar* (Empty)

* *Ring of Utgash the Vile* (A gold band decorated with skull motifs; worth 10 dinars)

* *Scale from the Dragon "Night-Prince"* (Undead dragon scale; crumbles to dust if picked up)

* *Sword of Kerotex, Vanguard of Darkness* (Bronze short sword)

Trap: The Ring of Utgash registers as magical to *detect arcana*. One of Jabal's most prized possessions, he has protected it with a *glyph*. Anyone but him touching the ring activates a double 3d6 *bolt* (arcane skill d10, d6 Wild Die) that takes the form of clawed, spectral hands.

7) LABORATORY OF HORRORS

Jabal creates alchemical devices here. A khem-hekau mage devoted to the blackest aspect of his art, the ingredients are vital fluids, organs, and bones harvested from sentient creatures. Dozens of jars containing the unwholesome ingredients occupy shelves.

Treasure: Among various papers is a tome of lore. It

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grants a khem-hekau mage with the Alchemy Edge +1 to arcane skill rolls when creating alchemical devices.

8) BEDCHAMBER

Jabal is preoccupied with power, not the trappings of wealth. His bedchamber is furnished only with a simple bed, a small table, a stool, and a chest containing spare robes and the like.

Secret Door: Detecting the secret door requires an active search of the room, 10 minutes, and a Notice roll at -2. Failed rolls can be repeated.

Treasure: If this is the last island to be visited, then the object the characters seek is in the chest.

9) SANCTUARY

The sanctuary is empty. Jabal returns here when using his *sanctuary* spell, but otherwise spends no time here.

Trap: There is a *glyph* on the wall opposite the door. Unless the correct command word is spoken as the door is opened from Jabal's bedchamber, it casts two 2d6, AP 2 *bolts* (arcane skill d10, Wild Die d6). These take the form of horned skulls.

10) CORRIDOR OF ARMS

Both sides of the circular corridor have been enchanted by Jabal, using a gift bestowed by the dark powers. The area between the lines registers as magical to *detect arcana*. It is not a trap, as such, and cannot be detected by *detect traps*, nor is the enchantment subject to *dispel* or *negate arcana*.

Monsters: When the first hero reaches the dotted line furthest from the stairs, skeletal arms clutching short swords extend from the walls on the outer wall. Each square within the dotted lines contains one animated arms. These are a form of construct, and have only limited stats, as detailed below.

* **Skeletal Arm:** Strength d6, Vigor d4, Fighting d6 (Str+d6), Pace 0, Parry 5, Toughness 4, Construct (+2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison), Immune to all effects relating to a stat they do not possess, such as Tests of Will and Tricks.

11) SUMMONING ROOM

* *The center of the room is dominated by a circle of arcane rooms. In the middle are various objects.*

The top room of the tower is where Jabal communicates with his dark masters. The center of the floor is marked with a circle of runes. A Knowledge (Arcana) roll reveals many of these to be potent symbols of communication, darkness, power, and summoning. The entire circle registers as magical to *detect arcana*.

Within the circle are five black candles arranged in a pentagram, a silver bowl containing a few drops of blood (Jabal's), a dagger, a human skull, a thick book, and a

large hourglass. The black sand in the glass indicates how many hours remain until the midnight deadline.

Traps: The circle is protected by a *glyph* spell. Anyone except Jabal who crosses the perimeter causes a *fear* spell to be cast (d10 arcane skill, d6 Wild Die) centered on the center of the circle.

Monster: Jabal stands in the center of the circle, his *armor* a cloak of writhing shadows. In his left hand are clutched all three teeth of *zombie*. He throws these as his first action, causing three skeletons to spring into life. They act on his action card for this round.

* **Jabal the Black:** See p. 96.

* **Skeletons (3):** See p. 99.

Tactics: Should he suffer two wounds, he activates his amulet of *sanctuary* (an action). This takes him to his hidden lair. He then drinks his *healing* potion. If necessary, he recasts *armor* as well. He quickly makes his way down to the Hall of Bones, where he proceeds to cast *zombie* until he reaches the limit of his Maintained spells, suffers the Siphoning, dies of old age, or is forced to engage the heroes in battle once more.

Should he suffer three wounds at any time after consuming his *healing* potion, Jabal attempts to cast *fly* and flee the island. Unless the characters take him down before he is out of range, he escapes. He returns to seek revenge on the characters at some future point of the GM's choosing.

Treasure: The only item of value is the book. Written in Black Tongue, it details how to contact the dark power Jabal follows. Any character who skims the volume and makes a Knowledge (Arcana or Religion) roll realizes it is a volume from which no good can come, dealing as it does with demonology and necromancy. Should a hero be so foolish as to study it, see the sidebar above for details. Clerics of Shamash and Tammuz who do not destroy the book once learning of its contents are committing a mortal sin.

Special: Killing Jabal does not end the enchantment on Shana. To free her, the hourglass must be smashed. This can be done as an action. No die roll is required.

Island of Sheep

This island's rugged terrain makes it useless for anything other than raising sheep, which feed on the tough grass covering the hills. Wool and preserved meat are collected by ship from the nearest major city, which brings in luxuries and basic goods the local cannot manufacture from the outside world. Until recently, the island was home to just 200 souls and several thousand sheep. Today, there are less than a tenth of those numbers remaining.

If the island has been placed nearer the Caliphate, the residents are mostly Faithful and follow Ashtart. Closer to the Sultanate, and they are predominantly Devoted. The few NPCs the characters meet in the adventure follow the dominant creed.

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FORGOTTEN HISTORY

Unbeknownst to the inhabitants, the island has a dark history. Long ago, in an age before Hekata was blighted, a cult made its home in caves high in the hills. Lured by false promises from their leader, actually a priest of Iblis, the cultists were tricked into committing suicide in the belief they would be reborn immortal. The priest kept his word, though the rebirth was not in the manner the cultists' assumed. Their souls were given new life as horrible creatures, somewhere between bird and bat, forced to feast on the blood of sentient creatures to survive.

The vampire birds' privations on the inhabitants eventually attracted clerics of Shamash. Though the fell host was not defeated, they were sealed inside a dark cave beneath the temple by a magical ward. Unable to reach the outside world and feed, they were forced into a state of torpor.

Two weeks ago, a shepherd stumbled in the main cave while searching for lost sheep. Though what he discovered there scared him, he continued his exploration, lured by the promise of treasure. Seeing a golden plate imbedded in a wall, and not able to translate the warning on it, he promptly pried it loose. Before he could leave with his prize, the shepherd was overcome by a flock of vampire birds, awakened from their millennia-old slumber by the removal of the magical ward.

Since then, the host has grown larger as more birds have wakened. Hungry beyond the ken of men, they have slaughtered much of the human and sheep population.

The Heroes Arrive

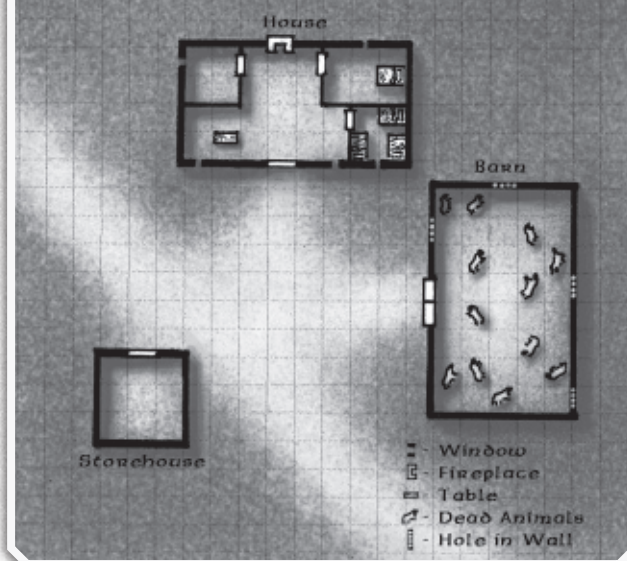
The only harbor is a small cove. The water is deep enough for the ship to pull close to shore, allowing the crew to jump into the surf and wade ashore. Wagon ruts etched into the stone over many years clearly show the island is inhabited. Following them for a mile, the heroes come to a simple mud brick house with a flat roof. Nearby is a barn and a smaller outbuilding (a storehouse to hang meat), both of similar design to the house.

House: Day or night, the door to the house is shut, the windows are shuttered, and smoke drifts steadily from the chimney stack. The interior is divided into four rooms—a central living area (the largest room), which also has the cooking hearth; a master bedroom; a second, smaller bedroom, and a back room. The house is poorly appointed, belonging as it does to simple shepherds.

Barn: The doors open outward. They are closed, but not barred. Inside are three dozen dead sheep. There is no evidence of an attack by a predator—the remains are not torn apart, and there is no blood on the straw covering the ground. Closer inspection reveals the carcasses are withered, and have dozens of small holes (about a quarter inch across) in their flesh. A Healing roll reveals they have been dead for about a week. Areas containing dead sheep are Difficult Ground.

Investigation of the barn reveals several holes in the

Map 6: Farm Buildings



roof, as well as missing bricks in the walls. The gaps are small, large enough only for a rat or small bird to enter.

Storehouse: The door, which open inward, is barred (on the outside). The interior is empty save for hooks on the end of ropes dangling from the ceiling beams. The storehouse is structurally sound. There is no lock, but the characters can use the bar to wedge the door shut.

BY DAY

If the heroes call out a greeting or knock on the door to the house, it creaks open a crack after several minutes delay. A sallow faced woman of middling years peers out, pauses briefly as if unsure about her callers, and then opens the door. She quickly ushers the visitors inside, casting an eye to the sky as she does.

Inside are three children, a boy of 12 (Mahrus), a girl of 10 (Anmar), and a girl of 4 (Talibah). All three look hungry, and their faces betray both a lack of sleep and streaks left by tears.

The woman introduces herself as Nadia. She beckons the heroes to sit as she pours each of them a bowl of thin soup from a large iron pot hanging over the fire. The soup is tasty (flavored by herbs), but has only tiny lumps of gristle and pitifully small cubes of root vegetables. The flatbread served with the soup is stale.

It should be readily apparent to the heroes that the family has very little food. Allow them a Notice roll to work this out otherwise. Nadia casts aside her pride and gratefully accepts offers of food from the characters. She eats sparingly, sharing most of it among her children. Nadia smiles with obvious gratitude if the heroes leave any (or all) of the soup or bread, accepting whatever excuses they offer for their breach of hospitality.

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Only once her guests have eaten does Nadia agree to talk. The salient facts of her story are given below. The GM should roleplay her revealing of this information, rather than reel it off as dry facts.

* Ten days ago, her husband (Qutuz) discovered many sheep dead in the hills where they graze. The same thing happened for the next few days. Eventually, he moved what remained of the flock into the barn.

* Qutuz left a week ago, intending to visit a neighbor to see if he had suffered similar problems. He has not yet returned. (Qutuz is dead. He was caught in the open after dark and killed.)

* The day after Qutuz left, Nadia discovered the animals dead in the barn.

* With little food in the stores, and unwilling to eat the meat of the slaughtered sheep, Nadia has been forced to ration food.

* She has heard strange noises at night, like the beating of wings, and something has tried to enter the house by bashing on the shutters and door. She no longer leaves the house, even during the day.

* In a hushed voice, she admits that had the characters not arrived and offered her a glimmer of hope, she was preparing to poison her children when the food ran low to spare them the agony of starvation.

Nadia offers the heroes' the back room as sleeping accommodation. There are no beds, just a few cushions that have seen better days.

At some point during the night (and every night thereafter the characters remain at the farm), a swarm of vampire birds attacks the farm. Sleeping characters are rudely woken by loud thumping on the shutters and door. Sleeping on the ship does not spare the adventurers from the vampire birds' attentions. Simply use the ship floorplans and adjust the fight accordingly.

Monsters: Each round, make a Group Strength roll at -2 for the birds. With success, they bash through one of the shutters and swarm inside at the rate of 1d4 per round. Blocking the narrow window requires a Strength roll by a character, and a suitable item, such as a table or medium or large shield. This is opposed by a Group Strength roll from the birds streaming through. Should the vampire birds fail a total of five rolls, they give up and return to their nest. Characters brave enough to rush outside see them flying into the interior, toward a large hill.

Though not combat trained, mother and son fight to protect their home should the birds enter.

* **Nadi and Mahrus:** As generic NPCs. See p. 98.

* **Vampire Birds (5 per hero):** See p. 100.

BY NIGHT

If the characters arrive after dark, Nadia does not open the door under any circumstances—her fear of the creatures that hunt in the dark overrides any urge to save lives. At some point before the character seek shelter, have them make Notice rolls. The penalty for poor light-

ing depends on the time of night. Success spots a dark cloud moving toward the house.

The "cloud" is a flock of vampire birds. The characters have six rounds to react if they detect them. Otherwise, they have just a single round as the beating of wings becomes apparent.

Monsters: The flock vastly outnumbers the heroes and its members Gang Up whenever possible. Should the characters remain in the open and try to win the day by force, it is likely they will all die. A better tactic is to hide in the barn or storehouse.

The birds cannot breach the storehouse, and give up after an hour. They can squeeze through the various holes in the barn as if moving through Difficult Ground. The walls are Toughness 10. The vampire birds do not try to bash through, but characters unleashing powerful offensive spells might cause a breach.

Against defenders in the barn, they flee once half their number is dead. Characters who act quickly when the flock leaves see the birds flying into the island's interior, toward a particularly large hill.

* **Vampire Birds (5 per hero):** See p. 100.

Exploring the Island

Blind luck will not lead the heroes to the vampire birds' lair, nor do they leave any tracks. The only ways to locate their lair is to watch the birds when they give up attacking the farm, or cast *insight* on a dead specimen.

Of course, the characters are free to do as they wish. Aside from a few other besieged farms on the other side of the island and sheep that have managed to escape detection by cowering in caves at night, there is little life. During their wanderings, the heroes might stumble across another farm (whose inhabitants are all dead), the remains of sheep, or possibly even Qutuz's blood-drained corpse.

Nadia bursts into tears and wails loudly if her husband's remains are returned. Her distress in turn sets the children off. After venting her grief, she thanks the heroes for bringing her husband home. She then asks if they will help with the appropriate funerary rites.

LOCATING THE LAIR

Once the characters have located the likely nest of the vampire birds, Nadia explains that the islanders avoid the place. It has a bad reputation, though she knows no specific reason why—the knowledge was passed down from her parents, and their parents before them.

Due to the rugged ground, it takes the characters six hours to reach the hill at a brisk pace. Assuming they leave at dawn, that leaves them roughly four hours of daylight to locate the entrance to the nest amid the many cracks and crevices. Each hour, the party may make a Cooperative Notice roll. Success reveals a cave suitable for hiding in once darkness falls. On a raise, they discover a cave entrance marked with plentiful guano.

Once the sun sets, a flock of vampire birds some

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200 strong streams from the cave entrance and takes to the air. They circle for several minutes (allowing them a Group Notice roll to detect characters not already in cover) before separating and flying off to hunt. Should the heroes be detected in the open, they are pretty much dead—every vampire bird in the flock zeroes in on them as the closest meal. If they found and are using a cave, the flock does not detect them.

The Nest

Before willingly ending their lives, the cult transformed a network of small caves into worked chambers and corridors, with smoothed walls, floors, and ceilings. Rather than serve to house the entire cult, which had grown quite large, it served as their headquarters. The true nest is a vast cavern. Exploration of the nest proper is beyond the scope of this adventure—it is home to hundreds of vampire birds, and any heroes someone bothering to enter it can expect a swift death.

Descriptive Text: The start of each entry contains a varying amount of information in italics. This highlights the salient features of the room from the characters' perspective and should be relayed to the heroes when such information would be apparent. It should be paraphrased to them in whatever flavorful terms the GM prefers.

Lighting: Unless the heroes provide illumination, the nest is Pitch Black (−4).

Wandering Monsters: Every 10 minutes of game time, the GM should draw a card from the action deck. A black numbered card indicates 1d4 vampire birds leave the nest (Area X) and head toward the entrance at Pace 10. They attack any living creature in their path. A black royal card (Jack through Ace) means 2d4 birds emerge. During the day, the birds fly close to the entrance, sense the sunlight, and return to the nest.

1) ALCOVES

The interior of the deep alcoves is not visible until a hero draws level. Each one contains a skeleton clad in rusted scraps of scale armor. The hilt of a rusted dagger protrudes from their ribs. At their feet are the skeletal remains of snakes.

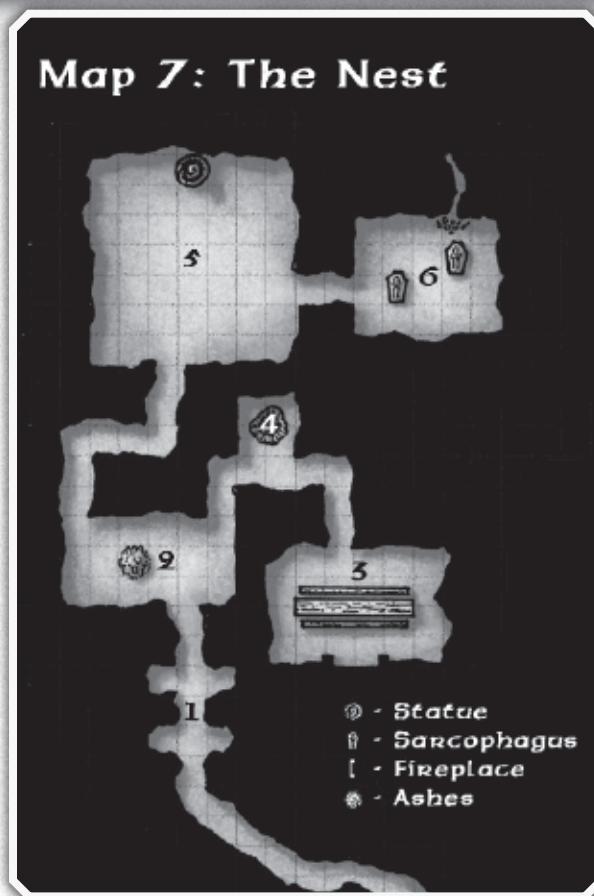
The occupants were guards in life. When the time came to perform the great ritual that would ensure their immortality, they allowed themselves to be bitten by the venomous serpents before thrusting their dagger into their hearts to make sure of death.

2) LIBRARY

** The walls are carved with small niches.*

** A patch of the floor contains a large pile of cold ashes. The ceiling above is stained with soot.*

When the cult of Shamash stormed the site, they quickly deduced some vile cult had occupied the chambers. In order that their fell teachings could not corrupt



others, every scroll was gathered up and burned. A few fragments survived the conflagration, as heroes poking through the ashes automatically discover. Written in a long-dead tongue, they require *speaking language* to read. Most are gibberish—parts of prayers or holy texts. One, though, records the final act of the cult.

...into the womb of the earth. There we shall accept the kiss of the immortal ones so that we shall become like them. Guards shall remain here to protect us until the act is done, and then join us in death and rebirth. All praise Garnishga!

Garnishga is the name of the supposed deity the cult honored. It is a meaningless name, concocted by the cleric of Iblis as a front for the worship of his true master. This, combined with the passage of time and destruction of knowledge by the jinn, means the characters have no chance of knowing anything concerning the name.

3) REFECTORY

** A long table flanked on its long sides by wooden benches dominates the room.*

** Slumped on the table are a number of skeletons in rotten robes.*

** A small iron cauldron hangs in a fireplace.*

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** The ground is littered with snake skeletons.*

When the cult was active, this room served as both kitchen and dining hall for those in attendance. As with the guards in the alcoves, these cultists elected to remain in the temple and accept death.

4) SNAKE PIT

** A deep hole filled with tiny bones.*

The cultists kept venomous snakes in the pit to use in their rituals. When the cultists died, the snakes were the first victims of their new, blood-hungry form. The pit is ten feet deep, though three feet is made up of bones.

A hero who takes 30 minutes to sift through the bones discovers avian and human bones. The former were over-eager vampire birds, who fell prey to the serpents' venom. The latter were cultists who changed their minds about going through with the ritual, and who were thrown in by their peers.

Treasure: A Notice roll at made every 30 minutes searching through the pit rewards the searcher with 2d6 dinars in old gold coins. A total of 30 dinars worth can be found in this manner.

5) TEMPLE

** The character's torches or lanterns illuminate a giant snake near the opposite wall, its mouth wide open and fangs poised to strike! Its eyes glitter sinisterly.*

Whether or not the GM wants to deal action cards is up to him. The snake is, in fact, a wooden statue covered in preserved snake skin. If cards are dealt, have the characters make a Notice roll as a free action before they take an action to learn of its inanimate nature.

Snakes have always been regarded as immortal creatures, for they can renew their health simply by shedding their skin. Although long associated with Iblis, the dark god's persuasive and devious cleric convinced the gullible cultists that this was a lie perpetrated by the gods to stop mortals seeking eternal life. The cult came to worship snakes as a symbol of the prize they craved, and in doing so unwittingly gave offerings to Iblis.

Treasure: If the characters are searching the island for a crystal lens, it covers the statue's left eye. Its right eye is a large but flawed semi-precious stone the same color as the gem worth 50 dinars. If this is the last island to be visited, both eyes are gems.

Monsters: When the first of the statue's eyes is pried out, or if it is struck by an overzealous hero, the statue animates. This is the result of a curse laid down by the cult to punish thieves.

** Snake Statue (1): See page 99.*

6) NEST ENTRANCE

** Two ornately carved stone sarcophagi lie in the center of the room.*

** Near one of the sarcophagi is the pale and withered*

corpse of a human male clad in peasant clothes. In his hand he clutches a large sack.

A casual inspection of the walls reveals a rough hole about three feet in diameter. Beyond is a natural passage that winds downward into the heart of the hill for 100 feet before emerging in the roof of a huge cavern. The rock around the opening has been purposefully cut to form a square half an inch deep and five feet in diameter. On the floor below the opening is a pile of broken stone. Pieced together, they match the dimensions of the square indentation. In the center of the square is a hole, some three inches across.

The stone was placed to block the hole, which leads to the vampire birds' nest. The indentation once held the ward keeping the creatures captive. In order to remove it, the shepherd had to smash the stone.

Corpse: The corpse belongs to the treasure-seeking shepherd. The flesh is marked with circular puncture wounds, and the corpse is clearly drained of blood. A Healing roll reveals it is roughly two weeks old.

Inside the shepherds' sack is a gold disc, three inches wide and an inch deep. Engraved on one side is a stylized sun disc partially overlaid by a second disc. Followers of Shamash automatically recognize this as their god's holy symbol. Faithful characters who honor another deity may make a Common Knowledge roll to deduce this, while Devoted who have never seen the symbol before (as determined by previous adventures) must make Knowledge (Religion) rolls. Removing the disc negated the ward placed on it.

The disc is solid gold, and has a value of 200 dinars. It can be spent as money—merchants simply carve off a chunk of appropriate value.

Sarcophagi: The two sarcophagi hold the skeletal remains of former "priests" who died before the cult carried out its final, fatal act. Removing the lids requires a Strength roll at -4. Each skeleton is bedecked in jewelry worth 200 dinars and clad in fragments of robes. If this is the final island to be visited, then one of the skeletons also clutches a scroll—the object the heroes seek.

Monsters: One round after the characters enter this room, a small swarm of vampire birds emerges from the hole in the wall and attacks.

** Vampire Birds (2 per hero): See p. 100.*

The Gateway

With the four lenses and instructions on how to use them now in their possession, the heroes can return to Falah al Din's island. Because the GM has responsibility for placing the islands, the journey home may take many days or weeks. Despite this, the GM needs to convey a sense of urgency. Have the sun darken for no earthly reason, jinn whisper of a terrible storm coming, and feelings of dread wash over the characters.

Should the heroes opt to detour or tarry for any reason, the growing sense of foreboding costs them a

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benny. This is not recovered until the adventure ends. The longer they delay, the more bennies they lose. This loss of bennies rolls over from session to session.

FALAH'S FOLLY

When they reach the island, the mathematician is waiting for them on the beach. He rushes into the surf, impatiently crying out that something is wrong with the gateway. He urges them to follow him to its location with all haste. On the way, he explains that the stones began to hum last night, and the noise has been steadily growing in intensity. He is of the opinion that unless the formula is completed soon, Sinbad may be lost forever.

Falah al Din is stunned when the true nature of the gateway is revealed to him. He tugs at his hair, beats his fists against his chest, and curses himself for being so foolish, crying out that he was blinded by his own beliefs and wailing that had he acted sooner the world might have been prepared to face the darkness sooner.

THE GATEWAY OPENS

The gateway is located in the center of a huge natural cavern (50" across and 20" high). It takes the form of a simple trilithon—two upright standing stones and a lintel—measuring 24 feet (4") high and 12 feet (2") across. As soon as the characters enter the cave, the area between the stones begins to darken—the stars are right, and the gateway is opening!

The mathematician plays no part in this fight—saving Al-Shirkuh is the responsibility of the heroes. As the portal first begins to open, tendrils of darkness writhe outward, lashing wildly and striking random points along the cavern wall before withdrawing into the void. Falah is struck in the chest and collapses. He is still alive, but no power the heroes possess can awaken him until the portal is destroyed.

Gateway: The gateway takes four rounds to open fully. Each round, inky blackness fills roughly one quarter of the area between the stones. At the start of each round the portal is opening (and continuing once it has fully opened), one demonic soldier per hero emerges from the gate. Snarling and snapping, the fiends rush across the cavern to attack. Unless the heroes can deal with them quickly, the party risks being overrun by sheer weight of numbers.

Starting at the end of the first round after the gateway has *fully opened*, the GM should draw a card from the action deck. A deuce means a rage demon has passed through the portal. At the end of each round

after the first, draw an additional card—the longer the gateway is open, the higher the chance the demon will make an appearance. There is only one of these beasts, no matter how many deuces are dealt. One it appears, stop drawing cards.

Throwing a Lens: The lenses are shaped like discs, and can be thrown to Range 4/8/16. If the hero misses, roll for deviation to see where the lens lands. A result that carries it beyond the portal means it curves around un upright or flies over the top—failure never results in a lens accidentally passing through into the void. A hero may throw a maximum of one lens per round.

Throwing a lens into the void before it has fully opened has no effect—the crystal simply passes through and lands on the other side with a loud clatter. Once the gate is fully opened though, each lens thrown in causes the portal to shrink by one quarter. Each time the portal shrinks by 25%, the number of demonic soldiers that appear at the start of the next round is reduced by one.

A terrible wail echoes through the cavern each time this occurs. As the last one flies through, the gateway cracks and collapses. A wave of brilliant light pulses outward from the gateway, bowling the heroes to the floor and destroying any demons still running wild.

Monsters: There are an unlimited number of demonic soldiers. Although individually weak, their strength lies in their numbers. The soldiers are not very bright, but they know how to fight. They try to Gang Up on the



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strongest looking heroes and spellcasters who have revealed their presence.

* **Demonic Soldiers:** See p. 98.

* **Rage Demon (1):** See p. 98.

Aftermath

With the gateway closed and the stones destroyed, the threat to Al-Shirkuh is over. Falah al Din al Jabr quickly recovers his senses. He is most apologetic about not being able to fulfill his promise and introduce the heroes to Sinbad. Although upset that he wasted many years of his life, he has not given up his quest to find the route of Sinbad's final voyage. In thanks for their help, he offers the party either 500 dinars per character or ownership of the *Golden Voyager*. The crew, having grown used to the heroes, offer to remain with the ship.

If the party takes the money, the mage offers to drop them in any of the great coastal cities of the Caliphate or Sultanate they wish. If they take the ship, he asks to be taken to the nearest major port as a final favor.

Should a character wish to learn mathemagic, Falah al Din is happy to tutor them in the basics on the journey. The hero may take Arcane Background (Mathemagic), but must do so with his next advancement or the opportunity is lost.

Bestiary



LADY MENESTA

Lady Menesta died many centuries ago, but she has not given up her grasp on her former life. Her corpse is a withered husk, naturally mummified by conditions in the tomb. While she resembles the desiccated remains inside a mummy's wrappings, she is not a mummy in the standard *Land of Fire* sense of the word.

Arcane Abilities: Her arcane powers are a manifestation of her grief, not a true spellcasting ability. She does not suffer the Siphoning or Maintenance penalties. There is no limit to the number of spells she can Maintain.

Undead Status: Lady Menesta is undead and is of supernatural origin, and her grief has caused countless spirits to be denied the Afterlife, but she is not evil. Champion and Holy Warrior do not apply when combating her. Clerics of Tammuz should feel compelled to destroy her, though, simply because she is denying others their right to an Afterlife.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Spellcasting d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 8

Treasure: Worthwhile

Special Abilities:

* **Berserk:** Lady Menesta goes berserk the instant her

husband's sarcophagus is attacked. In this state, she can no longer use her arcane powers. Any spells currently active immediately end.

* **Dirge:** Lady Menesta generates magical effects through her mournful voice and knows the following spells: *confusion*, *entangle* (special: the power takes the form of uncontrolled grief, and victims must use Spirit to resist/escape), *fatigue*, *fear*, *lower trait* (no boost), *panic* (no bless), *zombie*.

* **Fast Regeneration:** Makes a Vigor roll each round, even after death. Success removes one wound, and a raise two wounds. +2 to recover from being Shaken.

* **Fearless:** Immune to fear and Intimidation.

* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison. No wound penalties.



LORD DAMOTRIX

When animated, Lord Damotrix fights to protect his wife. He makes his way to her side as quickly as possible, withdrawing from melee and allowing his enemies a free strike against him if necessary.

Special: With both Fast Regeneration and Undead, Lord Damotrix has +4 to recover from being Shaken.

Undead Status: As with his wife, Damotrix is undead and supernatural, but not evil.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 13 (3)

Edges: Block, Dodge, Frenzy.

Gear: Bronze corselet (+3), bronze scimitar (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry)

Treasure: Rich

Special Abilities:

* **Fast Regeneration:** Makes a Vigor roll each round, even after death. Success removes one wound, and a raise two wounds. +2 to recover from being Shaken.

* **Fearless:** Immune to fear and Intimidation.

* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison. No wound penalties.

* **Weakness (Tammuz):** A successful touch attack (+2 Fighting) by a character wielding a holy symbol of Tammuz inflicts an automatic wound on Damotrix. Injuries inflicted in this manner, or by any mundane of magical attack by a cleric of Tammuz, cannot be Soaked, nor does Fast Regeneration remove them.



JABAL THE BLACK

What Jabal lacked in talent, he more than made up for in desire. It was that burning lust that drew the attention of unholy powers. Their deal was simple—magical power in return for Jabal's soul when he died. Believing that through necromancy he could learn to cheat death, and thus his masters, Jabal accepted.

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The dark powers were ancient and knew all of man's tricks. Each spell Jabal cast caused him to age prematurely. Sensing the opportunity for more evil, the dark powers taught the sorcerer how to drain life from those of virtuous heart and pure souls and renew his youth. Of course, the powers gave nothing away easily. His chosen sacrifice would have to be handed over to him by a loved one. Despite this limitation, Jabal was successful many times. Each sacrifice pleased the dark powers, for not only had a pure life ended, but Jabal had further damned his soul to a most horrible fate.

Jabal is currently around 80 years old (not for the first time), having failed to secure a sacrifice for many years.

His stats reflect his having cast *armor* with a success.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d10+2, Khem-Hekau d10+2, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Charisma: -4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Hindrances: Mean, Vengeful

Edges: Alchemy, Arcane Background (Khem-Hekau), Improved Nerves of Steel, Level Headed, Spell Finesse (Armor Penetration: *bolt*), Strong Willed

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), amulet of *sanctuary* (to his sanctuary room), potion of *healing* (cures one wound), 3 x teeth of *zombie* (each one creates one skeleton)

Treasure: Rich

Spells: *Armor*, *bolt* (AP 2), *corpse senses*, *dispel*, *entangle*, *fear*, *fly*, *glyph*, *sanctuary*, *zombie*

Special Abilities:

- * **Fearless:** Immune to fear and Intimidation.
- * **Premature Aging:** Each time Jabal casts a spell, draw one card from the action deck for each Rank of the spell (one for Novice, two for Seasoned, and so on). A black royal card (Jack through Ace) means he has aged enough to weaken his health. His Vigor die drops by one die. Draw of two or more royal cards do not produce a cumulative effect. He crumbles to dust when it drops below d4.

BONE GOLEM

This bone golem is one of Jabal's early prototypes. As such, its stats differ from those in the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10 (1)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +1:** Bone.
- * **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fear:** Characters seeing it must make a Spirit roll.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Size +1:** Stands 7' tall.

CORSAIR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Swimming d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor)

Edges: Steady Hands

Gear: Leather armor (+1), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), axe (Str+d6), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6) or throwing spears or axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage: Str+d6)

Treasure: Worthwhile per two corsairs

CYCLOPS

Cyclops (plural and singular) are a race of one-eyed giants. Despite raising herds of goats to sate their daily needs, they have a taste for human flesh. According to legends, they were once a slave race of the jinn, for whom they crafted lightning bolts.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Gear: Big club (Str+d10; 2-hands); 3 lightning bolts

Treasure: Meager per 3 cyclops

Special Abilities:

- * **Lightning Bolts:** Lightning bolts resemble short spears, with a crackling head of electricity instead of a blade. Range: 5/10/20, Damage 3d6, Small Burst Template.
- * **One Eye:** -2 to all trait rolls involving depth perception, such as Throwing.
- * **Size +2:** Cyclops stand over 8' tall.



CYCLOPS STORM LORD

The nobles of the tribes are the storm lords. Worshipers of a minor deity known as Adad, Father of Storms, they are the only spellcasters known to cyclops. The leader of the tribe in this adventure is not particularly powerful, and knows only two miracles.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+3, Vigor d8

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Gear: Big club (Str+d10; 2-hands); 3 lightning bolts

Treasure: Worthwhile

Special Abilities:

- * **Lightning Bolts:** Lightning bolts resemble short spears, with a crackling head of electricity instead of a blade. Range: 6/12/24, Damage 3d6, Small Burst Template.
- * **One Eye:** -2 to all trait rolls involving depth perception, such as Throwing.
- * **Powers:** *Blast* (lightning strike), *deflection* (winds).

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- * **Size +2:** Cyclops stand over 8' tall.

DEMONIC SOLDIER

Demonic soldiers take a variety of forms. Some are covered in wickedly sharp spines, while other have enlarged teeth or elongated claws. Most are bestial appearance, though this varies from near-human to abominable. Stripped of their personality and intelligence, demonic soldiers are relentless, remorseless killing machines.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5/7

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Berserk:** Demonic soldiers can go berserk at will.
- * **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; +2 Toughness against non-magical attacks, except for star metal.
- * **Size -1:** Demonic soldiers are rarely larger than 4' tall.
- * **Weakness (Star Metal):** Demons have lower Toughness against star metal weapons.

GENERIC NPC

These stats cover all NPCs incidental to the plot, such as generic ship's crew, as well as minor named characters. Additional skills can be added at d6 as the GM needs.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Knowledge (one Craft) d6, Notice d6, Stealth d4

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Edges & Hindrances: —

Gear: Knife (Str+d4)

Treasure: Meager, unless noted otherwise.

KREANA WARRIOR

Kreana are a breed of "fish men" distantly related to sharks. They are covered in gray or green scales, have tail fins, webbed hands and feet, and mouths filled with three rows of razor sharp teeth. They dwell amid sunken ruins or in sea caves off the coasts of Al-Shirkuh, in societies run by their priests. They detest all land dwelling creatures, and sometimes raid coastal settlements for "food" and treasure.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

Treasure: Meager, per 3 warriors.

Special Abilities:

- * **Aquatic:** Pace 10. Kreana can run while swimming.
- * **Armor +1:** Scales.
- * **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Dehydration:** Kreana must immerse themselves in water (salt or fresh) at least one hour out of every 24. Those who don't are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.

MANIFEST GRIEF

The lamentations of Lady Menesta have taken on material form. They appear as pale human skulls trailing wisps of black smoke. From the mist extend two arms tipped with long claws. When Menesta is slain, her manifested griefs die as well.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6

Pace: 12; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- * **Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Focused Emotion:** Immune to Fear, Smarts Tricks, Tests of Will, and any mind-affecting spells (such as *confusion* or *puppet*).
- * **Life Sense:** Manifest griefs ignore all penalties for poor lighting.
- * **Semi Corporeal:** The griefs are vulnerable to non-magical attacks, but their attacks bypass all armor except *armor: Deflection* protects as normal. They may pass through solid objects, like walls, at will.
- * **Shared Grief:** With a raise on the grief's Fighting roll, victims must make a Spirit roll or be overcome by intense feelings of grief and loss. The character is Shaken for 1d6 rounds. This replaces the usual +1d6 damage.
- * **Size -2:** The thoughts are tiny creatures.
- * **Small:** Attackers are -2 to attack rolls due to the creatures' Size.

ORC WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Gear: Leather armor (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short sword (Str+d6), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6)

Treasure: Meager

Special Abilities:

- * **Size +1:** Orcs are larger than humans.



RAGE DEMON

Remorseless and pitiless, rage demons exist only to kill, wading through ranks of foes, oblivious to their injuries. Filled with unending fury, these hulking monstrosities are the elite warriors of the Abyssal armies.

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Their barrel-chested torso, bulging arms, powerful hooved legs, and small, tusked, leonine head are covered in skin of burnished bronze scales. Two huge horns jut forward from its tiny head. When the demon succumbs to its rage, the scales glow a deep red, like burning coals.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10+2, Intimidation d8, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 10 (2)/12 (2)

Edges: Improved Frenzy, Improved Sweep

Gear: Serrated great sword (Str+d10+2, -1 Parry, 2 hands)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +2:** Bronze scales.
- * **Berserk:** When a rage demon is Shaken by a physical attack, a Smarts Trick, or a Test of Will, it automatically goes berserk. It gains +2 to all Fighting, damage, and Strength rolls and its Toughness, but Parry is reduced by 2.
- * **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; +2 Toughness against nonmagical attacks, except for star metal.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Furious Fighter:** Rage demons know Improved Frenzy and Improved Sweep. They always use the latter if two or more foes are within striking range, regardless of the presence of allies.
- * **Impervious to Pain:** Suffers no wound penalties.
- * **Improved Sweep:** Rage demons attack with wild abandon, caring nothing for who they strike.
- * **Size +2:** Rage demons average 8 feet tall and weigh over 500 pounds.
- * **Weakness (Star Metal):** Demons have lower Toughness against star metal weapons.
- * **Wild Abandon:** Rage demons only ever use Wild Attacks. Modifiers are already factored into the stat block.

SKELETON

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Gear: Various melee weapons (Str+d6)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to fear and Intimidation.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

SKELETON WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Gear: Rusty bronze breastplate (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), bronze short sword (Str+d6)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.



SNAKE STATUE

Created by a cult duped into following Iblis, the snake is an animated wooden construct covered in real snake skin. It carries a limited amount of venom in a reservoir. It measures 20 feet long, but is only one foot in width. The statue has one eye because the characters will have removed one to cause it to animate.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Treasure: Its eyes.

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +2:** Solid wood.
- * **Bite:** Str+d4.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **One Eye:** -2 to all trait rolls involving depth perception.
- * **Poison:** A character Shaken or wounded by the

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snake must make a Vigor roll or suffer the effects of weakened venomous type poison. Treat failure on the Vigor roll as a success, success as a raise, and a raise as no effect. It can inject poison only three times before its reservoir runs out.

- * **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from fire, but not from heat.

SNAPCLAW LOBSTER, GIANT

Snapclaw lobsters are voracious hunters. By snapping together their enlarged left claw, they generate an acoustic wave that stuns prey. They then move in to dine at their leisure. Normal specimens are a threat only to small fish, whereas giant ones can stun a shark.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 0; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (3)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +3:** Thick shell.
- * **Aquatic:** Pace 8. Rolls a d10 running die when escaping from combat.
- * **Claw:** Str+d6.
- * **Stun:** As an action, the lobster can generate a shockwave filling a Cone Template. Creatures in the template must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken for 1d6 rounds.
- * **Size +1:** These creatures weigh over 400 pounds.

SUCCUBUS

Ask any citizen of Al-Shirkuh and he'll tell you succubi are female demons of lust. Their earthly visage is of a stunningly beautiful female. Beauty, however, is only skin deep. Their true form is of a hideous crone or withered man. According to clerics and imams alike, these demons were once mortals who could not control their lusts. Given that these are true demons, not corrupted souls, such tales are morality lessons rather than proven facts.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d10 Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d12+2

Charisma: +6; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6/8

Treasure: None.

Special Abilities:

- * **Claws:** Str+d6.
- * **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; +2 Toughness against nonmagical attacks, except for star metal.
- * **Kiss of Death:** These foul creatures have more than

one way to kill. In combat, a succubus must grapple a victim first. Successive attacks are then made as Touch Attacks. With success, the victim must make a Vigor roll opposed by the demon's Spirit or lose one die of Vigor, two on a raise. If Vigor drops to zero, the demon has sucked out the victim's life force, killing him. Assuming the victim survives, lost Vigor returns at the rate of one die per day.

- * **Lure:** A succubus can make a Persuasion roll as an action to seduce any mortal, even one trying to kill it. With success, the victim is Shaken. On a raise, he is Shaken and enamored of the demon. He puts up no resistance if it tries to kiss him. Rather than a Called Shot to deliver the kiss of death, the demon requires only a Touch Attack. Removing the Shaken condition also removes the infatuation.
- * **Very Attractive:** Their illusory appearance gives them +6 Charisma. A *detect arcana* spell penetrates the illusion. The demon uses its Spirit to resist the spell. If the demon wins, the caster detects nothing unusual.
- * **Weakness (Star Metal):** Demons have lower Toughness against star metal weapons.

VAMPIRE BIRD

A vampire bird resembles an unholy cross between a crow and a bat, but are considerably larger. They have the feathered body and head of a crow, the leathery wings of a bat, and a long, thin, hollow beak, through which they suck the blood of the living.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

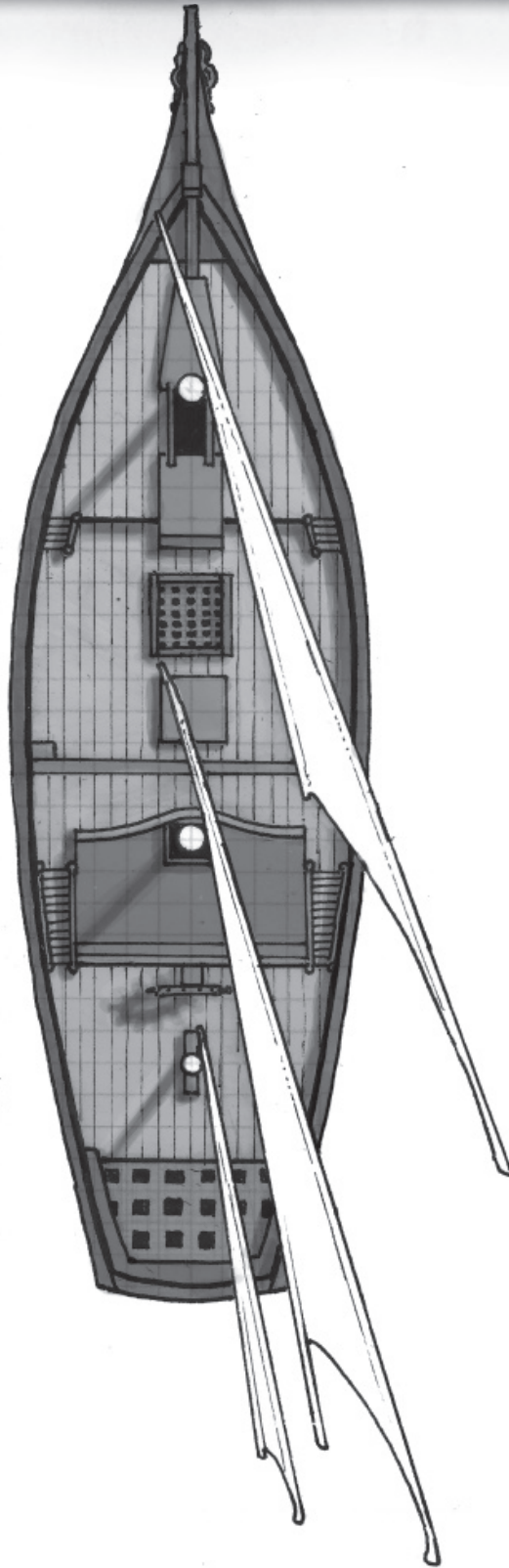
Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: —; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d4.
- * **Blood Drain:** If a vampire bird scores a raise on a Fighting roll, it has impaled its prey with its beak and begins draining blood. Victims suffer a Fatigue level each round until they die or the bird is pulled off. Removing the bird requires an opposed Strength roll.
- * **Flying:** Pace 10.
- * **Infra-vision:** Halve penalties for poor lighting against heat-producing targets.
- * **Size -2:** A vampire bird's body is one foot long.
- * **Small:** Attackers are -2 to attack rolls due to the creature's Size. The birds' attack are at +2 versus creatures of Size +0.
- * **Weakness (Sunlight):** Vampire birds become listless if exposed to sunlight. Each round, they must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue. This can lead to Incapacitation, but not Death. One level of Fatigue is recovered for every ten minutes outside of sunlight.



Ship Deck Plan

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Crew of the Golden Voyager

SHIHAB AL DIN

Gender: Male; **Race:** Hadaree; **Religion:** Devoted;
Personality: Clueless
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Swimming d6
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Clueless, Loyal
Edges: —
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4)

TABARI (COOK)

Gender: Male; **Race:** Cakali; **Religion:** Faithful (Apsu); **Personality:** Mysterious
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Survival d6, Swimming d4
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Code of Honor, Loyal
Edges: Claws (Str+d4), Fearless, Nomad Ways
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4)

'ABAL (CARPENTER)

Gender: Female; **Race:** Hadaree; **Religion:** Devoted;
Personality: Agile
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Repair d6, Swimming d6, Throwing d6
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: —
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), two throwing knives (Range: 3/6/12, Damage: Str+d4)

LIGISH THE UNWASHED

Gender: Male; **Race:** Hyaenidae; **Religion:** Devoted;
Personality: Crude
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Taunt d6
Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Bad Reputation, Greedy (Minor), Loyal
Edges: Bite (Str+d6), Laugh, Low Light Vision, Tireless
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4)

WALID

Gender: Male; **Race:** Hadaree; **Religion:** Faithful (Upuaut); **Personality:** Cruel
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Swimming d6
Charisma: -4; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Loyal
Edges: —
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4)

SHADIN

Gender: Male; **Race:** Hadaree; **Religion:** Devoted;
Personality: Sneaky
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Swimming d4
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: —
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4)

HUSN

Gender: Female; **Race:** Hadaree; **Religion:** Faithful (Upuaut); **Personality:** Fearless
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Swimming d6
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: Courageous
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4)

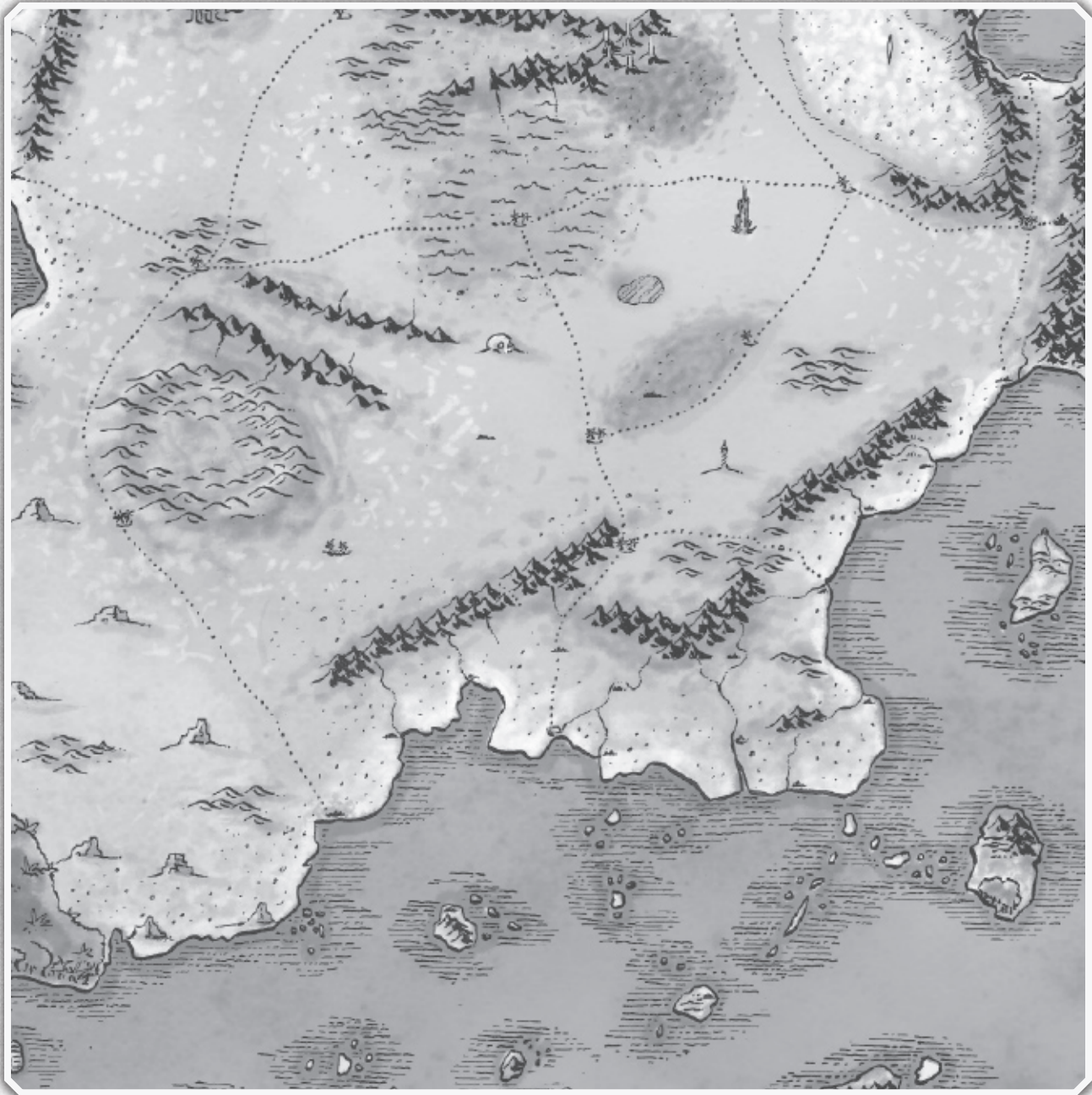
AWS

Gender: Male; **Race:** Hadaree; **Religion:** Devoted;
Personality: Heroic
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Swimming d6
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal
Edges: —
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4)

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SF1: The Last Voyage of Sinbad

Handout #1



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HANDOUT #2

If you have found this message after questing for the four crystal lenses, then I apologize for misleading you, O sons and daughters of the future. My intentions were noble, as you shall see.

The gateway is not a prison for Sinbad the Sailor, but a portal to a dark dimension. The quest you have undertaken I laid out long ago, and my bones are surely dust by the time you read this. Soon the portal will open, for no power known to mortals can prevent the stars from aligning into a malevolent pattern. The quest you have endured marks you as true heroes, and heroes are what are required to stem the tide of evil that will emerge to destroy this world.

Return to the gateway with haste, O brave and noble souls. When the gateway fully opens, and not before, throw each lens into the void beyond. The order matters not. Only when all five are so discarded will Al-Shirkuh be saved.

Fear not, for you have proven yourselves worthy of this final challenge. You have been tested, and you have been found worthy. Though I shall never know your names, I salute you across the gulf of time. May the hand of Suleiman be upon you and guide you.

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SF2

REIGN OF FIRE



SF2: Reign of Fire is designed for a group of four Seasoned characters with 30 to 35 Experience Points. If you're looking to start play immediately, there are eight pregenerated Novice characters in the *Land of Fire* free download section on the Triple Ace Games' website. All the players need do is advance them accordingly and purchase gear.

The encounters in this adventure are designed to automatically scale up or down based on the party's size. For parties of higher Rank, the GM should increase the number of opponents. As a rule of thumb, add one powerful or two weak Extras (your choice if multiple types are present) to the encounter for each Rank the party is above Seasoned. For instance, if a party of four Veteran adventurers encounter fire giant warriors numbering one per two heroes, a party of four characters must fight a total of three giants—two for the party size, plus an additional giant because the party is Veteran.

Additionally, it is impossible to balance encounters in a published scenario to ensure every possible party configuration has a fair chance of success. Some parties will bristle with potent spellcasters and powerful warriors that can wade through scores of foes, others will comprise cunning rogues and thoughtful sages better suited to investigation and problem-solving. Most will likely fill a middle ground, and this is the option we have taken when writing the scenario. If after reading the adventure the GM decides his individual party will find the encounters too easy or too tough, he should adjust the opposition to provide a more suitable challenge.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES

While no exact starting point is given, the adventure is set somewhere in the lower half of the Sultanate. The GM is free to change this, but will need to alter the location of the villain's lair and clues pointing to its location accordingly. The town of Harma, around which much of action takes place, was created for this adventure, and has no canonical location.

The season has not been specified, allowing the GM to set it any time he wishes. Regardless, the ambient temperature is one level higher (toward Infernal) than normal for the time of year.

Pay attention to how much water the characters consume. Inside a settlement, it is assumed the heroes are able to drink the required amount of water to stave off heat stroke and dehydration.

Background Notes

Arrogant and conceited in their unearthly power, few jinn reacted to the early days of the War of Copper Jars with anything but amusement. The slaves had revolted many times during the jinn's centuries long reign, and each time they had been brutally crushed. As the jinn more than once remarked, ants do not kill elephants.

By the time they realized the danger, they were already on the back foot. Desperate to turn the tide in their favor, jinn artificers toiled to create new weapons. One such creation for the Crown of Fire. Intended to be worn by a greater ifrit, it would greatly enhance their formidable powers, giving them almost total mastery of fire and everything connected to it.

The power of the Crown was wielded only twice, each time to devastating effect. The first time, its power incinerated the homeland of the cakali, transforming it into the Plain of Ash. The second time was at the Battle of the Fallen Sun, in which Suleiman finally defeated the jinn and the Mirrorsands came into being. The Crown was not destroyed in that titanic battle, nor did it ever fall into Suleiman's hands. Secreted away by unknown hands, it was placed deep inside a mountain far from the jinn's center of power, where none of their enemies might seek to look.

The relic may have remain hidden until the End of Days, but it was not to be. Several weeks ago, a fire giant priest of Geb-Agni, Mezzilik and a handful of warriors stumbled across the Crown quite by accident. Banished from his homeland for his part in a plot against King Sur-

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tur, the giant was seeking a new lair from which to plot revenge. Realizing its might, and arrogant beyond reason, he donned the Crown. The power of a thousand ifrit tore through his body, transforming him into something greater than a fire giant. Through the Crown he plans to eventually usurp Surtur, but until he has mastered all its abilities, he is content to experiment by terrorizing the surrounding lands. One side-effect of his new power is an increase in local temperature.

While he unleashes fiery beings and devastating incendiary rain, his loyal warriors and orc minions, the latter renamed the Burning Crown, have begun taking advantage of the chaos to plunder the area.

Smoke Means Fire

The characters begin on the open road, ideally within one of the four great civilized realms. The GM should determine why they are journeying to fit the nature of his campaign. Examples include returning from a previous adventure, journeying to one of the great cities after having spent time elsewhere, visiting friends or relatives, and being engaged in some minor task for a patron.

After breaking your fast with a Bedu caravan this morning, you resumed your journey with fresh news and full stomachs.

Roll twice on the Rumors and Hearsay Table (see sidebar on page 107) for gossip and news passed on to the heroes by the Bedu. Then carry on by reading aloud or paraphrasing the following text.

The day has turned out like the others during the past week—uncharacteristically hot for the time of year.

“As morning turns to afternoon, a lone cloud drifts through the sky. Large and pregnant with anger, it roils across the sky, casting a pall of darkness across the land as it passes overhead and continues its journey. Instead of cooling shade, its passage overhead leaves the air feeling even hotter than before.

As your thoughts begin to turn to finding a suitable camp before sunset, you spy thin columns of thick, black smoke rising into the sky from up somewhere not far ahead.

Any heroes born in the Sultanate may make a Common Knowledge roll. For each 200 miles from their home city, there is a cumulative –1 penalty. Other heroes must make Knowledge (Area: Sultanate) rolls, with a flat –4 penalty. The modifiers are high, but not without reason—the civilized realms are large, and few know the location of very single settlement. With success, the

characters knows there is a farming village in the general vicinity of the smoke. On a raise, they know the village is named Qatif.

The source of the smoke is indeed the village. On investigating, the heroes see a small settlement, perhaps home to a few hundred souls, surrounded by irrigated fields. Several of the fields are well alight, the flames licking into the sky. Villagers can be seen trying to extinguish the flames, their cries and lamentations competing to be heard with the crackling flames.

Hopefully the characters will assist in putting out the fires. If they chose to ignore the situation, they each lose 5 Glory their unheroic act. Proceed to **Mysterious Message** below.

FIRE FIGHTING

Extinguishing the fires is handled abstractly. The action is divided into three rounds of undefined length. Each round, deal action cards as normal. Every character gets to describe how they are fighting the fire that round, and select an appropriate skill. The GM can assign modifiers if he deems them appropriate. Some examples are included below. After every character has acted, the villagers then get to play their part. No matter how the GM describes their various attempts to save their crops, they make a single d6 Group roll.

Note that while some villagers will be assisting a hero in his given task, they do not make Cooperative rolls—their help is covered by the Group roll.

In order to save the day, the party and villagers must accumulate tokens equal to twice the number of player characters, plus two. Thus, a party of four heroes needs 10 tokens. The number of tokens earned depends on the result of their actions.

Earning 10 tokens before the end of the third “round” means the flames are extinguished. Great swathes of crops have been lost, but enough has been saved to ensure the villagers will not starve. Failure means the fires destroyed the crops, leaving the inhabitants facing a bleak year ahead.

Raise: Gain two tokens. Multiple raises have no additional effect.

Success: Gain one token.

Failure: Gain no tokens.

Natural 1: A natural roll of 1 on the Trait die (regardless of Wild Die) means the character (or villagers) suffer a level of Fatigue from exhaustion, heat, minor burns, or smoke inhalation. This cannot be recovered during the contest except by *succor*. A hero can still suffer Fatigue and score successes because of his Wild Die result.

Critical Failure: Lose one token. This cannot cause the accumulated total to drop below zero.

Example Actions

* **Beating.** Armed with a cloak, blanket, or some other object, the hero begins beating out the flames. This is a Strength roll.

* **Cut fire breaks.** The heroes can use Fighting to hack down the crops to prevent the fire spreading—better to

lose a few sections of crops to the sword than the entire field to fire.

* **Faith.** At the GM's discretion, a cleric may be allowed to make a Faith roll to have some minor miracle related to his deity occur. This is not a blanket new ability to be used in every session, and its use here costs a benny.

* **Organize a bucket chain.** Either Intimidation (barking orders) or Persuasion (discussing his plan) can be used. Charisma bonuses from the Attractive or Very Attractive Edges do not apply to the Persuasion roll—no one currently has time to admire the heroes or make friends. At the GM's discretion, a character with the Command Edge gains a +1 bonus.

* **Powers.** Magic and miracles can be use directly and indirectly. The GM has the final say on whether a specific power can be used directly or indirectly, or whether it will have no effect at all.

Direct powers typically affect a large area, and so allow the caster to accumulate successes. *Storm* is the obvious direct power, though a raise may do as much harm as good as strong winds flatten the crops as yet untouched by the flame. It may also hamper the activities of the other characters. A *whirlwind* or *zephyr* can cut fire breaks or blow the flames away from undamaged crops. *Blast* or *burst* can be aimed at areas already on fire.

Indirect powers don't affect the fires directly, and thus do not grant successes toward the required total. For instance, casting *boost Strength* on a character beating out the flames increases the target's chances of scoring a raise, but does nothing to affect the wider situation.

AFTERMATH

Regardless of the outcome, the villagers are grateful for the heroes' help. Even failure earns handshakes and praise—fate had decreed the crops would be destroyed, and no earthly power can resist its wishes.

After quenching their thirst with cool water and washing away the soot and dirt that clings to their skin and clothes, the characters are invited to attend the elderly headman, Ali ibn Adan, at his house for supper.

The fare is simple, yet plentiful. If the heroes saved the day, then this is not an issue. Should the crops have been destroyed entirely, then it is obvious the food now laid out before them represents a sizeable portion of the village's emergency supplies. Every character knows that eating all the food is rude, implying the host failed to provide enough to sate his guests' appetite. Conversely, eating too little implies the food was poor. Striking the right balance requires a Smarts roll from each hero. Ali says nothing about the amount of food consumed, though his eyes betray his true feelings.

A stickler for custom, Ali avoids discussing the day's events until after the meal is eaten and coffee drunk. During the feast, he makes small talk, asking the heroes about their previous adventures. Ali does not freely volunteer any information. Instead, he responds to the heroes' questions. Typical questions and answers are given below.

RUMORS & HEARSAY

Throughout the adventure, the heroes may overhear snippets of conversation or make deliberate enquiries into the latest hearsay. Some desert denizens the characters encounter pass on fixed information, while others grant a free roll or two on the table below. The heroes may also be asked to make Streetwise rolls to see what news they pick up. For the latter, success means they pick up one piece of gossip, and a raise two snippets of information in any given scene.

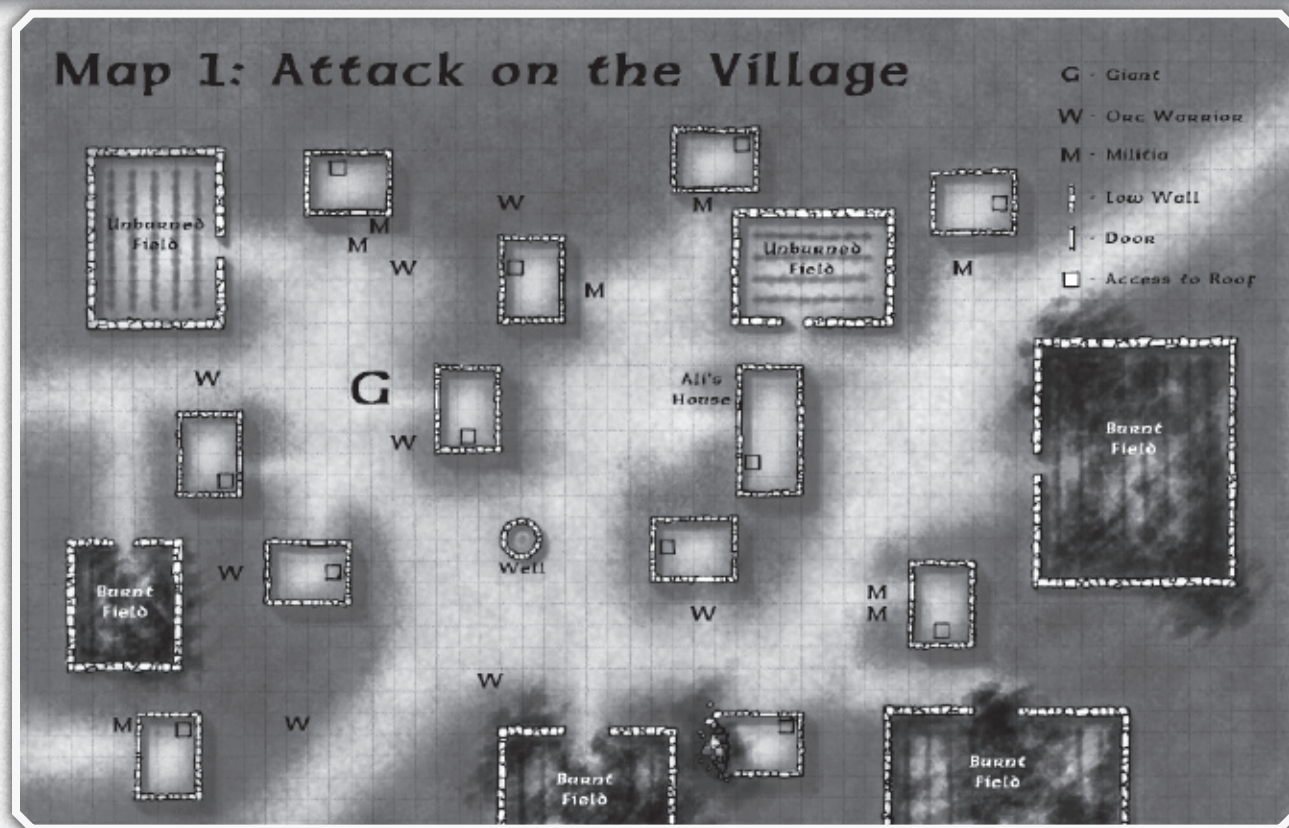
When randomness is required, roll a d10 and consult the table below. Entries in italics are false. Note that an entry may be both truth and false.

Try to avoid just passing on the information as written. Speak in the manner of an NPC of your choosing, and flavor the text with appropriate mannerisms. For instance, a trader with whom the heroes are dealing might begin, "Have you heard the exciting news, O Master of Generosity?" A Faithful might swear upon the name of one of the gods that what he has to say is truth.

d10 Rumor

- 1 Pasha Omar ibn Nimr of Harma is trying to emulate Musayid, City of Winds, by hosting a flying carpet race. As well as a fabulous prize, he is even providing the carpets.
- 2 Strange weather has been reported across the land. Travelers speak of fire *and stones* raining from the sky.
- 3 Trade in the region is being hampered by a sudden surge in orc attacks.
- 4 *The cult of Apsu has cursed the land.* Unless the heat abates, disaster awaits!
- 5 A fire giant has been seen in the area. One so far from the Heart of Fire can only mean trouble.
- 6 Several villages have been burned to the ground in recent weeks. *I heard it was the work of a jinn mage.* [After this rumor has been heard once, the GM should swap the cause—fire elementals, ifrits, a lava or sun dragon, a cleric of Geb-Agni, orcs, and bandits are all suitable fall guys]
- 7 *It is so hot that people are spontaneously bursting into flames.*
- 8 Merchants and nobles are taking advantage of the heat to charge more for water. It's despicable to make money from the suffering of others! [True, but irrelevant]
- 9 *I heard a wise man say that the increase in temperature means the jinn are returning to seek vengeance for the War of Copper Jars. We are all doomed!*
- 10 *The heat is a mirror of our sins burning at our souls. Repent and all shall be well!*

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Ali also lets slip two random rumors. Roll on the Rumor and Hearsay Table (see page 107), but reroll a result of 1—Ali has already spoken what he knows of this topic. The rumors should be worked into his replies.

Q: What started the fires?

A: "O Sons of Good Fortune, it was the mischief of the jinn. After noon had passed, a black cloud rolled across the skies. We hoped it would bring with it nourishing rain, but instead it gave birth to droplets of fire that scorched flesh and burned our crops. The unending heat left the plants dry, and they caught fire like straw put to the torch. Pasha Omar will be most troubled by this calamity."

Q: Has anything like this happened before?

A: "Not here, but Bedu traders have spoken of firestorms. This was not the same, for the storm lasted but a few minutes and then the cloud vanished as if it has never existed."

"If you are planning on visiting Harma, you might enquire of Baysan bint Sadad. Some say she talks to the wind. Certainly she knows many things."

Q: Who is Pasha Omar?

A: "Pasha Omar ibn Nimr is our liege lord, and master of the town of Harma, which lies not a day's walk south of here. It is by his grace that my family has governed this village for many generations. The news will

disturb him greatly, for not only has he many mouths to feed, but he is preparing for a great celebration."

Q: What celebration is Pasha Omar planning?

A: "Pasha Omar desires to please the spirits of the winds, so that they might blow cool air across the land. He has organized a great race, but I know nothing more."

Q: What is Pasha Omar like?

A: Omar pauses for several long moment before replying, his eyes flitting nervously between you. "He is a good man, like his father before him, but... he often becomes distracted by events lesser men might deem trivial."

Once the questioning ends, Ali loudly bemoans the fact that he must inform Pasha Omar of the terrible news, and yet must also remain here to oversee repairs and begin making the fields ready for fresh planting. He whines about fate and duty, and wrings his hands while casting a sly glance at the characters. It should be fairly obvious to the heroes that he is looking for volunteers to shoulder the burden of being the bearers of bad news to his lord. Offering to pass on the news elicits a flurry of praise from the old man.

By the time the questioning is complete it is well after sunset. Ali insists the heroes stay in his house as his guests, promising that by morning he will draft a letter

of introduction for them to hand to Pasha Omar so as to speed up their chance of getting an audience.

Glory: Helping to save the crops earns the characters 1 Glory, but only if they were successful. Causing offense at the feast if the fields were completely destroyed incurs a -1 Glory penalty. These are in addition to any awards earned at the completion of the adventure.

Night of Fire

The heroes are not expected to act as sentries. Unwilling to gain a bad name for making demands of guests, Ali actively tries to discourage such activity. He even promises to have the militia perform guard duty, something they never normally do, in order to spare his guests. Having satisfied his obligations through his protestations, he eventually relents if the characters insist on standing watch.

Several hours after they turn in, an orc patrol led by a solitary fire giant, happens across the village. Believing they have nothing to fear from a handful of peasant farmers, they decide to raid the settlement for prisoners, and to sate their violent urges.

A character on sentry duty outside of a building spots the approaching patrol when they are 48" away from the edge of the village (10" in Dark conditions). The attackers are advancing at 6" per round. Otherwise, the first the heroes know of the attack is the blowing of horns, shouts of alarms, and cries of panic as the attackers begin their assault.

FEATURES

Alarm! Heroes roused from their sleep begin the combat Shaken. They can grab weapons and shields easily enough, but will not have time to don armor.

Lighting: Clear skies, bright stars, and the moon make the ambient lighting Dim (-1). If the GM is keeping a calendar and the date indicates a new moon, then the lighting is Dark (-2) instead.

Terrain: The low walls are drystone construction and are 3 feet high. They can be crossed as part of normal movement, but count as Difficult Ground to all except the fire giant, who simply steps over them.

The parapets surrounding the roof of each house are two feet high. They can be used as Cover (+6 Armor).

The fields marked as "Unburned" count as difficult ground. The crops in the burned fields were destroyed, and do not impede movement.

Monsters: The attackers are a lone fire giant warrior and a small number of orcs. Helping the heroes are a small number of militia. They are loyal, but poorly trained and equipped, certainly no match for their enemies.

Assuming no heroes were on watch, the attackers begin as marked on the map. The heroes begin inside Ali's house. No interiors are shown—the characters are effectively just inside the door for the purposes of entering the fray. The militia begin in the indicated positions.

* **Fire Giant Warrior (1):** See page 132.

* **Orc Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 132.

* **Militia (2 per hero):** See page 135.

Treasure: Aside from what little the attackers are carrying, the only treasure is knowledge—the presence of a fire giant and the orcs unusual shield emblem. The characters have never seen the design before, and thus cannot roll to see what they know of it.

Casting *insight* on a shield or any attacker's corpse reveals the terrifying image of a hulking figure with hair and beard of living flame, and cracked black skin through which can be seen veins of glowing lava. On its head is a crown that appears to be made of molten rock. The caster must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken. A critical failure causes Terror.

Aftermath

Ali is shocked by the attack. Orcs have been known to attack small caravans, but they have never dared come so close to a settlement before. That they had a fire giant with them is particularly troubling.

Though hardly his fault, Ali is most apologetic toward the heroes, but thanks them profusely for once again coming to his people's rescue, and honoring the bonds of hospitality. Although he is not obligated to reward them, he offers the party two alchemical devices. The first is a potion of *fly* cast with a raise. The second is a wand of *bamper movement* cast with a success that creates a Large Burst Template of turbulent wind. Ali explains that these were gifts from Pasha Omar, but he has yet to find a use for them. Perhaps the heroes will have more luck.

Come the morning, Ali presents the heroes with enough food and water to see them safely to Harma, and the letter of introduction.

On The Road

Several hours after leaving the village the party happens across the burnt remains of a small camp. Salient facts the heroes can discover with a casual examination of the site are given below.

* There are six corpses (four human, one sand goblin, and one cakali). All are naked. The bodies show evidence of slashing injuries, but there is no blood. The wounds appear cauterized, the flesh around them blackened and blistered. There is no evidence scavengers have feasted on the remains.

* The travelers' packs have been emptied out onto the sand. The packs show slight signs of scorching.

* The campfire is not only burning, it appears that someone has recently heaped a lot of fuel on it—the flames lick a good five feet into the air.

A successful Healing roll indicates the corpses are at least one day old. A raise lengthens that to two days. A Tracking roll reaches the same conclusions by examining the footprints in the sand. Checking further afield, a

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tracker can make a Tracking roll to deduce the travelers approached from a different direction to the heroes.

Casting *insight* on one of the corpses reveals an image of a fire-swathed scimitar and fleeting glances of a reptilian, orange-skinned creature.

The contents of the packs are very sparse (see **Treasure** below). A Notice roll at -2 brings the sudden realization that there is absolutely nothing combustible among them—no blankets, no clothes, and so on. The only object of note is a scroll case. Inside is a sheet of parchment written in Sandspeech. It is an advertisement for the flying carpet race in Harma. Beyond listing the date of the event (tomorrow), it reveals nothing of interest.

Having deduced the time since the travelers died, the characters might well wonder how the campfire has remained burning unattended.

The fire is currently home to a fire salamander. Normally native to the Heart of Fire, this specimen was summoned to the area by the power of the Crown. Having killed the travelers, it made itself a nest in the embers of their fire, using whatever it could find to keep the fire going—although the temperature is hotter than normal, it is still colder than the salamander prefers. It is desperate for something else to burn, and the characters are its next intended prey.

The salamander remains dormant until someone tries to extinguish the fire, someone moves adjacent to the flames, or the party makes to leave the area. The salamander, which begin on Hold, then proceeds to strike. Time to check for Surprise!

There is no map for this encounter. The terrain is essentially flat desert.

Monsters: The salamander knows that once the last fuel in the fire is consumed it will begin to die. Escape into the desert is not an option, leaving it no choice but to fight to the death.

* **Fire Salamander:** See page 133.

Treasure: The salvageable contents from the travelers' packs are two sets of flint and steel, four clay pots containing preserved meat and fruit (each enough for one person), a bag of salt, and an empty metal flask (the former contents of which are easily deduced to have been oil). All of the travelers have daggers. There is one short sword, that appears to have been melted by some great heat, and a metal buckler.

◉ Harma ◉

Population: 2,700 (92% Hadaree, 5% jinn blooded, 2% sand goblins, 1% other)

Ruler: Pasha Omar ibn Nimr, Master of Winds

Religion: Mixed (Ashtart, Upuaut)

Imports: Trade

Exports: Trade, vegetables

The characters arrive at the gates late in the afternoon. Huge banners can be seen fluttering from the walls and tallest spires, and there is a queue of traffic waiting to pass through the main gates. Many of those waiting are merchants, though there is a goodly number of citizens from the surrounding villages as well.

Everyone in the queue knows about the forthcoming flying carpet race—it's why they are here. Pasha Omar has proclaimed tomorrow to be a day of celebration, in which the winds will be honored and the heat driven away. The victor will receive a fabulous prize, though no one actually knows its nature. Rumors range from a flying carpet to an honor title to sacks of gold. The town is also hosting a great market, temporarily transforming it into a city for the purpose of making purchases.

The heroes may make a Streetwise roll to hear other rumors while waiting their turn to enter. Reroll results concerning the race. If they ask about Pasha Omar, proceed to **Tell me of Omar** below.

Characters who jump the queue receive a plethora of colorful and creative insults from those waiting in the baking heat. The city guard show no interest in any claims of being on



official business, and order them to return to their place or face arrest.

After an hour, the characters reach the front of the queue. The city guards eye them up and down suspiciously before informing them that the wearing of armor and carrying of weapons requires a special permit, which can be provided there and then for 20 dinars per person. They can be haggled down to 10 dinars, the actual fee. The permit comprises a copper brooch, which must be displayed at all times in public. Doing so offsets any penalties for walking around like a hero is about to go off to war (see *NF2: The Golden Queen* for details on city etiquette). Characters who refuse to pay have two choices—hand over all their weapons and armor to the guards (returnable when they leave) or stay outside.

There is also a one dirham gate tax to be paid, though the guards initially ask for 5 dirhams.

The guards have no interest in the characters' stories of fiery rain, fire giants, or orcs. Such claims are heard all too often in recent times. If presented with Ali's letter, they don't even bother to open it—they just direct the characters to the pasha's palace in the center of town. Heroes interested in entering the flying carpet race are directed to a large tent just inside the city gate.

Events in the city are relatively fluid. There are a number of locations the heroes might wish to visit, and it's their choice as to the order they do so. Proceed to the relevant section as required. Note that there is one fixed event, **Market Mayhem**, that occurs at some point before the race begins. It's up to the GM when he chooses to run it. Use the random encounters on page 111 as necessary while the heroes move between locales.

The flying carpet race begins at 10 o'clock, after morning prayers, the day after the party enters town. Head to **The Race** at the appropriate time.

Tell Me of Omar

Before presenting themselves to the noble, the characters might decide to learn as much as they can about Pasha Omar. They can each make one Streetwise roll while in the city, and another while in the noble's waiting room. For each success and raise, pick one of the facts below.

SUCCESS

* Omar taxes his people only lightly, the town making its money from being a popular trading center.

* Omar is generally considered an acceptable, if occasionally eccentric, ruler.

* He has a great love of birds, especially ones with bright plumage. He keeps them in a special room in his palace, which only he is allowed to enter.

* Omar is Devoted, but the city celebrates all the festival days of Upuaut and the pasha sponsored the construction of a shrine to the deity.

* Pasha Omar is fascinated by the winds, and likes to be addressed as Master of the Winds.

RANDOM CITY ENCOUNTERS

Hamra's population has swelled to almost double. The streets are crowded day and night with visitors attending the flying carpet race and great market. The GM should add a few random encounters to help breathe life into the town. Roll a d10 whenever you feel is appropriate.

1) A patrol of one experienced watch (sergeant) and five typical watch approach the party. They check to see if the heroes have armor and weapon permits. Those without a permit are fined 100 dinars, and then charged a further 25 dinars for a permit.

2) A member of the opposite sex to the most charismatic hero entering the race becomes fixated with that character. They follow him or her around the town like a lovesick puppy, composing bad poetry, and buying small and usually inappropriate gifts. This encounter occurs only once. Depending on the hero's actions in town, the infatuation may grow stronger.

3) A visiting cleric of Upuaut is selling potions of *fly* for 250 dinars apiece. He has three left.

4) An arrogant noble and his entourage sweep through the town, heading for the palace. The noble's guards shove people out of the way, while maidens sprinkle flower petals before their lord. One of the heroes receives a rough shove. He must make an Agility roll or fall face first into a pile of elephant droppings.

5) A young boy tugs on a hero's arm and hands him a purse, claiming the character dropped it. He eagerly awaits a reward. Inside are 50 dinars. Moments after the boy skips off, a merchant approaches the same hero and accuses him of stealing his purse.

6) A young girl is crushed under a cart and seriously injured. Unless one of the characters makes a Healing roll, or casts *healing*, the girl dies. If saved, her parents, poor but honorable folk, offer the party free accommodation at their house as reward.

7) A herbalist approaches one of the heroes entered in the race and offers him a dose of freshly made stimulant II tonic for 25 dinars. Use of the drug is not considered cheating. Note that taking it affects concentration spellcasting, which includes activating spirit relics.

8) An ifrit blooded is being harassed by citizens who blame "his kind" for the hot weather. Intimidation or Persuasion can be used to calm the mob. The victim offers his thanks, but nothing more.

9) A young boy visiting the town has lost his parents and asks the heroes for help. Tracking them down takes 1d4 hours and requires a Streetwise roll.

10) The characters are invited to take part in a kite flying contest. It takes one hour. Have the heroes roll Agility. Roll four d6 and a d8 (separately) for the other contestants. Highest roll claims a 10 dinar prize.

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* Omar is married (to Zaina, the daughter of a powerful merchant from the nearest great city) but has no children of his own. He and his wife adopted three orphans. The oldest, Effenda Barika bint Omar, recently turned 14, and was named as heir. The other children are Fanan (female, 12) and Muhtadi (male, 9).

RAISE

* Among Omar's courtiers are two wizirs who advise him on the mood of the windw. One is a cleric of Upuaut and the other a khamsin jinn mage.

* Like the wind, Omar can be stubborn and unyielding once his mind is made up, but he is also prone to changing his mind on a whim, especially when "he" has a good idea.

* Omar's children are all khamsin blooded orphans.

Audience with Omar

Pasha Omar lives in a fine palace at the heart of the town. The palace guards refuse entry unless shown the letter from Ali. After a cursory inspection of the seal, one of the guards scurries away to fetch a court official. The official, a pompous bureaucrat who looks down his nose at the characters (save for nobles, whom he positively fawns over), double checks the seal, asks the heroes' their names, and then politely but firmly asks the characters to remove their weapons and armor—only daggers may be carried into the pasha's presence. Refusal ends any hope of an audience.

Disarmed, the heroes are then escorted through the palace to a waiting room. A dozen other people are seated inside, all waiting their turn to speak with Omar and glad to be out of the oppressive heat.

The official gestures to a bench and tells the characters they will be called in due course. They now have a wait of 1d4 hours unless they bribe the official with at least 50 dinars, in which case they are shown in as soon as the current petitioner finishes (20 minutes). During their wait, they can make a Streetwise roll to pick up rumors.

THE PASHA SPEAKS

When the time comes for the heroes' audience, the pompous official steers them through into the pasha's court, while whispering to them to remember their station and show due respect.

Harma may be a small town, but the pasha's court has a grandeur befitting a great city. Slender marble columns rise to support a ceiling far overhead decorated to resemble the night sky. Seated on perches protruding from the column are all manner of birds, from colorful parrots to keen-eyed hawks.

On a raised dais at the opposite end of the hall is a throne carved to resemble a hawk with out-

stretched wings. Seated on it is a slight figure, with raven black hair and a silk robe decorated with peacock feathers that hang from the neckline.

Flanking what must be the pasha are two figures. On his left stands a male cakali, a holy symbol of Upuaut hanging from his neck. On his right is a human female wearing flowing silk robes that seem to billow in a gentle breeze of their own making.

Lining the route to the throne are steely-eyed guards armed with halberds. Behind them is the usual gaggle of courtiers and hangers-on found in palaces across Al-Shirkub. As you approach the throne, you sense every one looking at you.

Once the heroes reach the correct distance from the throne, the courtier introduces the characters by name. Polite heroes should now bow and state their reason for requesting an audience.

Pasha Omar should be played as a spoiled child. No matter what evidence the heroes present him of fiery rain, fire giants, or magical crowns of fire, he refuses to take any action—all that matters to him right now is the flying carpet race, not wild stories and rumors spread by malicious gossips seeking to ruin his big day.

Played well, the characters should become angry at his attitude. Before they open their mouths, they should remember their station. Insults result in a few points of lost Glory, while threats involve the characters being confronted by the guard, followed by an extended stay in the dungeons. Typical statements and responses are given below.

ENTERING the Race

The flying carpet race registration tent is manned by Nibal bint Asil, a khamsin blooded bureaucrat whose dark, tousled hair clashes with her piercing blue eyes. She greets the heroes politely before explaining about the race. Although she has repeated these facts countless times in the last few days, her enthusiasm has not waned one iota. She speaks rapidly, barely pausing for breath. Treat her like an excited child.

* *"The race is open to anyone. The most generous Pasha Omar has agreed to provide the flying carpets. There's no entry fee, either."*

* *"You'll need to be brave to take part. The race takes place through the streets, and the carpets will not fly higher than 20 feet off the ground. Can you imagine it? Darting and weaving through the streets like a bird! The course is a circuit of three laps through the town, beginning and ending outside the palace."*

* *"Don't worry about injuries! Pasha Omar has a supply of healing potions, and some of the best physicians in the land are here."*

* *"The winner will receive a really fabulous prize. Pa-*

sha Omar has yet to tell anyone what it is. It's a surprise, to be announced before the race beings. Oh yes, I almost forgot, the race takes place tomorrow, two hours after morning prayers. You'll need to be outside the palace an hour before the race starts to select your carpet."

If the heroes begin discussing stealing a carpet among themselves (forgetting Nibal is sitting right in front of them), or inquire about security measures, the bureaucrat explains with a deep frown that the carpets are specially enchanted, and automatically stop working if anyone tries to fly beyond the city walls.

The GM, speaking through Nibal, should try to encourage as many characters as possible to sign up to the race. No special skills are required—controlling a flying carpet uses Agility. Characters who wish to enter need to sign a register, but nothing more. They are given a gold badge (value 5 dinars) that signifies they are a competitor. Worn publicly, the badge grants the character +1 Charisma—everyone wants to talk to the contestants, if only to find out on whom to place their bets. Nibal informs any characters who sign up that the badge is to be handed in before they are assigned a carpet.

Sage Advice

Finding the house of Baysan bint Sadad is easy enough—all the characters have to do is ask a local. Seated outside, watching the world go by, is a young woman. Clouds of pale smoke drift from her nostrils as she draws on a long, slender pipe.

In a response to the first character's attempt to open conversation, the woman looks the hero up and down, tilts her head and frowns as if listening to a distant voice, and proclaims in a tired voice, "You will meet the man/woman of your dreams and enjoy a long, happy life. That will be 2 dinars, please." Attempts to open dialogue by mentioning the names of Ali or Qatif get little response—she has never heard of either.

The only way to catch her attention is to mention the fiery rain or fire giant. As soon as this occurs she gestures for the characters to be seated.

"I apologize for reading your future," she says with a wry smile. "Someone started a rumor that I was a khamsin blooded who heard the future on the wind. It's a damn nuisance, but if people are willing to pay to hear what they want to hear, then who am I to argue."

"I am Baysan bint Sadad, a sage by choice and a fortune-teller by necessity. Tell me your story from the beginning, and leave nothing out."

Baysan closes her eyes, leans back, and smokes her pipe while the characters tell their story. She appears inattentive, but is carefully listening to every fact. If the characters mention the orcs' shield design, she opens her eyes and asks if they have one of the shields with them.

NICE DUNGEON!

No matter how important they think themselves, the heroes are not above the law. Overt criminal behavior will attract the city guard sooner rather than later. Such characters are given one chance to come quietly. Those who refuse or who resist arrest will be attacked with lethal force. The guards can also call upon reinforcements to help with particularly troublesome criminals. Getting arrested is worth a 5 point Glory loss; resisting arrest carries a 10 point loss.

The heroes are thrown into the dungeons to await their turn in court. Unless the charge is particularly heinous (like murder or heresy), their wait is 2d6 hours. During this time they can make a Streetwise roll to learn rumors—their fellow prisoners have a lot to say, though mostly about how innocent they are of the charges against them.

Brought before an overworked judge, they heroes fined 1d6 x 50 dinars each. Heroes who cannot, or will not, pay are returned to the dungeons to await sale as a slave after the race has finished.

It's probably time to plan an escape and leave town. Better luck in the next adventure!

Otherwise, she disappears inside and returns with pen, ink, and parchment, and asks them to draw the design.

"Can it really be?" she muses, biting her lower lip and furrowing her brow. "This image might well be a reference to the legendary Crown of Fire!"

She pauses at this point, as if expecting the heroes to agree with her. When it becomes obvious they have no ideas what she is talking about, she continues.

"During my time at university, I came across a collection of old stories. One of them described the Battle of the Fallen Sun. It made mention of the ifrit elder who lead their army wearing a crown of living fire, from which he drew powers beyond the scope of anything seen before. It hinted that with it be literally called the sun from the sky, though I admit poets are renowned for their imagination."

"My tutors dismissed it as anything but a fanciful story, for no other work ever spoke of such a thing. No one knows what became of the crown—the original poet spoke no more of it, and I have found no other references to it."

"Someone must have found it, though. The fiery rain, the salamander, the orc shields, and the fire giant are all evidence of that. With that in their possession they would make a greater ifrit look like a newborn child in terms of their power."

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"You must find and destroy the crown! I need to find my old papers. I am sure I'm forgetting something important. Come back here tomorrow at sunset. By then, I might have more information for you."

If anyone brings up Ali's comment about her hearing things on the wind, Baysan lets out a loud laugh.

"Do you seriously believe that? I know things because I read books and I make it my business to talk to visitors about their homelands."

SECOND VISIT

When the heroes return, Baysan looks exhausted. She explains she has been up all night reading through her old notes, and talking to a few friends around town.

"I'm sorry, but I found nothing of any interest. Well, there is one thing, but I'm not sure if it is relevant. After the War of Copper Jars, not everyone was happy with the situation. There were plenty of people who worshipped the jinn like gods. In place of Suleiman's teachings, they formed jinn cults. A sect of ifrit worshippers built a temple about 45 miles north of here."

"It was sacked centuries ago, but rumors persist of a secret vault in which they concealed their greatest treasures. I failed to find it during my initial research, but maybe you'll have more luck."

"Other than that, there is a pool in the nearby hills, about 30 miles west of here. The Bedu say a jinni has lived there since the end of the War of Copper Jars. Maybe you can barter with it for information."

Minor Locales

In addition to major areas and events of importance to the adventure, there are a number of locales the party may decide to visit of their own accord. Likely ones are detailed below.

BLACKSMITH

Characters whose weapons were partially melted by the fire salamander are likely to look for a means of repairing them. Harma boasts two blacksmiths, both of whom can return a weapon to a serviceable state inside two hours. They charge 10% of the weapon's full price to make repairs.

INN/HOSTEL

The influx of visitors has led to a shortage of accom-

modation and an increase in prices. Finding an inn with spare rooms requires a successful Streetwise roll (one roll can be made every two hours). Three inns are briefly described below. The characters may pick which one they prefer.

Otkars' Palace: The name is misleading. The Palace caters for the lower end of the market. The beds are hard, the straw mattresses home to many bugs, and the food just above palatable. Current rates are 2 dinars for a communal berth, 5 dinars for a bed in a twin room, and 10 dinars for a private room. Only cheap meals are available.

The owner, Otkar, is prepared to give the most charismatic flying carpet race contestant a free private room, but on the condition he wears a long cloak during the race that sports the phrase "Eat at Otkar's Palace" in bright letters on the back.

The Oasis: Clean and presentable, with a good selection of food and drink. The Oasis is one of the better inns in town, and the high prices have kept away the riff-raff. The current rate for a bed in a communal room is 5 dinars per night. A bed in a twin room is 8 dinars, and a private room 20 dinars. Only average and expensive meals are available. Entrants into the flying carpet race receive more favorable rates (half the amounts above), as well as a free average meal.

Smoky Jo's: Run by Jokray, a one-eyed cakali. The interior of the inn is always thick with smoke. Jokray has contacts with the local thieves' guild, and procures smuggled tabac at a fraction of its true value. He sells a single smoke's worth for 12 dirhams, but only to his regular customers or guests who purchase a private room (the cost is included in the price). He can secure hashish for 8 dinars per smoke.

His current rates are 1 dinar for space in the common room, 3 dinars for a bed in a twin room, and 12 dinars for a private room (including a free smoke of tabac). Cheap and average meals can be purchased here.

KADA

Harma's major kada is the Kada of the True Path. The imam, Durar bint Jaun, knows nothing of the Crown of Fire. In her eyes, the increasing temperatures are a direct result of sinful behavior on the part of the town's inhabitants. While she has not publicly objected to the flying carpet race, she is privately concerned that Pasha Omar is straying from the path to Oneness by his virtual worship of the winds.

If the party mentions the fiery rain or fire giant, she mutters that the ifrits have grown restless in recent times, and that can never be good news.

SHRINE TO UPUAUT

Pasha Omar's obsession with the wind has led him to sponsor a shrine to personally Upuaut, an unusual act for a Devoted ruler. Unusually, the shrine stands not near the city gates, but in the center of a grand plaza currently

transformed into a marketplace. It takes the form of a stone column upon which are inscribed prayers. Atop the column is a chimerical golden bird with the head of a hawk, the wings of an eagle, and the tail feathers of a peacock. In its beak it clutches a pair of silver sandals.

The base of the shrine is covered in offerings—used sandals, models of ships and chariots, keys (bent and broken to prevent them being used again), birds carved from wood or made of straw, and scrolls upon which Faithful have written prayers.

Three small tents stand nearby. These are the temporary homes of visiting clerics, drawn here by the flying carpet race and the need to resupply. Together, they operate a small stall selling votive offerings of the types mentioned above. Prices range from 1 dirham to 10 dinars, depending on the item and its quality. They also have a few alchemical devices for sale.

The large number of visitors with money, coupled with no local alchemical device shop, have encouraged the clerics to inflate their prices. Business has been brisk, and the clerics have only the following items left.

- * A glass vial containing a captured gust of wind. When crushed, a *deflection* spell cast with a success is cast on whoever was holding it (150 dinars).

- * A potion of *fly* cast with a raise (300 dinars).

- * Two colored candles shaped like birds that contain *voice on the wind* spells. One is capable of 20 words (250 dinars) and the other 40 words (550 dinars). The candles must be lit to activate the spell. When the message is delivered, the wick extinguishes, leaving them as mundane candles.

The clerics have traveled some distance to attend, and have picked up lots of gossip. They impart one random rumor for free if conversed with, and another if a character purchases an alchemical device.

TEMPLE TO ASHTART

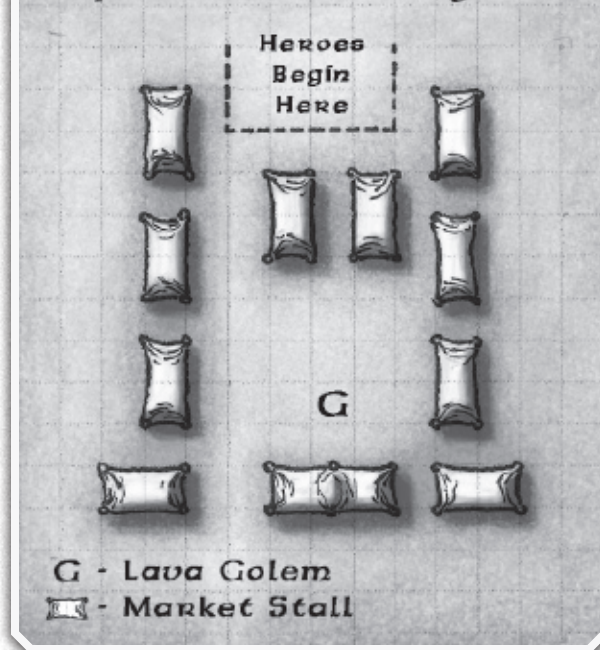
Omar is Devoted, but a goodly portion of the population is Faithful. To appease their spiritual needs, the pasha's ancestors permitted the construction of a temple.

The temple is smaller than those found in the great cities of the Caliphate, but follows a similar design. The walled precinct is full of workshops, granaries, gardens, orchards, and apiaries, and is open to any civilized being. The rectangular, columned temple is restricted to followers of Ashtart.

Heroes who want to report the burning of Qatif's fields are quickly ushered to a shaded garden, where they are attended by Qubilah, the high priestess, and Abdul-Khaliq, the senior paladin and a cakali. (His given name is Raktash, but he hanged it on taking his vows). Qubilah is middle-aged, attractive, and a mother to ten healthy children. The warrior's leather armor is stained with horizontal black and gold stripes, and his woolen cloak is pinned at the shoulder by a brooch in the shape of a huge bee.

After listening attentively, Qubilah promises to send seeds to the village as soon as possible—she knows Ali

Map 2: Market Mayhem



personally, and the villagers have always been diligent with their temple dues. As one of Pasha Omar's advisors, she swears to bring the matter to his attention through official channels. Abdul-Khaliq vows to scour the area for more orcs, as well as provide a small force of *fadeen* to provide security until the threat is deemed over.

The cult sells dried herbs and herbalist's kits at standard prices. It also has a small stock of alchemical devices in stock, which they are willing to sell to the heroes.

- * Three potions of *healing*. Each cures one wound (100 dinars each).

- * One oil of *smite*. Smear on a weapon, it transforms into a solid mass of stinging bees (100 dinars).

- * A tiny model palm tree carved from wood. When placed on the ground, it transforms into a *refuge* cast with a success. The trapping is a shady grove of palms (200 dinars).

- * A golden bee imbued with *sentry* (first variant cast with a raise; 200 dinars).

Marketplace Mayhem

At some point, the characters will pass through either the main souk or one of the many markets. They might do so on their way to another location, or in order to purchase equipment. During the festival, which technically ends at sundown on the day of the race, the town is treated as a city for the purpose of purchasing goods.

Harma does not have any resident alchemists. Outside of one random encounter with a priest, the only alchemical devices for sale are found at the temple of Ashtart and the shrine of Upuaut.

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NO ONE ENTERED THE RACE!

So what do you do if no one in the party has entered the race? Well, for a start you can ignore all the race rules. The attack of the lava dragon happens no matter what the characters do, and the creature isn't about to land on a convenient roof so a bunch of heroes can beat it to death. Once the dragon arrives, it begins laying waste to parts of the city away from the heroes. If they want to fight it (and as heroes we hope they do), then they'll need to jump onto a flying carpet.

RAMPAGING GOLEM

"The market is a throng of sounds and sights, as well as dense crowds. Fragrant spices and exotic oils compete to overpower the stench of camels and cooking meat. Hawkers call out their wares, promising the best quality and prices anywhere in the city.

"Suddenly the air is rent by multiple screams. The crowd ahead scatters to reveal a hulking humanoid form, a man of stone with orange, glowing veins visible through thin cracks.

"With a roar, it spits a glob of glowing liquid at stragglers scrambling to escape its presence. As the globules hit, clothing and hair bursts into flames, and the sickly smell of burning flesh overpowers all other odors. Mercifully, their screams do not last long."

Still experimenting with the abilities of the Crown, Mezzilik has managed to create a lava golem (of sorts) using only the power of his will. Imprisoned within its material shell is a very angry lesser ifrit.

Desiring to test its effectiveness, the fire giant arranged for his orc warriors to make contact with local smugglers. In return for a sizeable fee, some of which went to the town guard to look the other way, they have managed to bring it into the city inside a very large crate. The smugglers have no idea what they are transporting, and the money they received has swayed them from being curious.

Mezzilik's hold over the jinni has weakened the further the creature is away from him. Angry at being chained to a corporeal form and made to bow before a mere mortal, the jinni has had enough.

FEATURES

Terrain: The market stalls are flimsy affairs—four legs, a flat surface, and a colored cloth canopy. They have Toughness 6 (Armor +2 if used as Cover). Movement through a space occupied by a stall requires the character to crawl underneath or vault over the top of the table. The latter requires an Agility roll as an action. They can

be flipped over as an action, spilling their wares into the squares immediately in front of the stall.

The stalls contain a variety of wares. None are detailed, giving the players the opportunity to make suggestions. Common items, such as fruit, clothing, or pottery, require nothing special from the players. For there to be a trader with something more useful, like jugs of water or vinegar, a player has to spend a benny.

Monsters: The lava golem is a tough opponent, but it is only an Extra and it is outnumbered.

* **Lava Golem (1):** See page 134.

AFTERMATH

The city guard are alerted to the disturbance soon after it starts, but unless the characters are having serious problems, they don't arrive until the fight is over.

They question the characters about what occurred, but make no attempts to arrest them—there are plentiful witnesses to corroborate their version of events.

If the characters have already visited Omar, they have no hope now of getting a second audience—the pasha is too busy preparing for the race. If they have yet to see him when this encounter is run and produce their letter of introduction now, they are escorted to the palace.

The Race!

Although the race has been built up by many of the NPCs to be a grand event, as far as the adventure goes it is a minor scene. Due to events beyond their control, the characters won't even get to finish the race. This does not mean it will be boring, though. In fact, it gives the heroes a rare opportunity to be involved in a dogfight against a dragon while tearing through the town streets mounted on flying carpets.

The section is also included to give the GM the rules he needs to stage other races—the citizens of Al-Shirkuh enjoy racing camels, chariots, ships, and carpets, and there are several major events with rich prizes.

"The atmosphere in the city is one of barely restrained excitement this morning. Citizens have already begun gathering on the roofs in order to get the best view of the race. A huge throng is slowly progressing toward the square outside the pasha's palace."

Exactly an hour before the race is due to begin, Pasha Omar and his family appear on a balcony overlooking the square. The crowd lets out a huge cheer.

"Citizens of Harma," the pasha calls out, "this day honors the winds and those who command them! With their blessing, the heat that has affected us shall be blown away." The crowd cheers again.

"The winner of the race shall be accorded the title

‘Son of the Wind’ and receive from my own hand a spirit relic that will allow him to take to the skies as often as he pleases!’ Again, the crowd show their delight with loud cheers.

“The contestants will now step forward to select their carpets. In the name of Suleiman, peace and blessings upon you all. And may the winds blow good fortune your way!”

RACERS, PICK YOUR CARPET!

As Pasha Omar finishes speaking, dozens of servants emerge from the palace gates carrying racks, on which are hung a dazzling variety of carpets. With great care, each carpet is unfurled and laid on the ground.

The carpets are all jinn relics, but ones crafted at great expense to obey certain rules the rider cannot change. First, they have a maximum ceiling of 20 feet—Pasha Omar wants the race to take place *through* the streets, not over them. Second, any attempt to take a carpet beyond the town walls causes the enchantment to end immediately, causing the carpet to drop from the sky. Finally, their speed is limited at 8 (roughly 20 mph)—the pasha doesn’t want a bloodbath.

Base Flying Carpet: Acc/Top Speed: 8; Handling: +1; Toughness: 7; Crew: 1+3.

The names of each of the 40 contestants are called in random order from the register. Deal each character a card to represent the order they are called. On his turn, the character must make a Smarts roll. Ushabti mages may substitute Ushabti for Smarts. Whatever skill they use, they gain a +1 bonus to the roll.

Raise: The hero manages to spot a particularly fine specimen. It has Handling +2, instead of the usual +1. Only two of these are available. Subsequent heroes must settle for a fine looking but otherwise standard carpet as if they rolled a success.

Success: The hero selects a standard carpet.

Failure: The character selects a sturdy but relatively inflexible carpet. It has Toughness 9, but Handling +0.

Critical Failure: The carpet the hero chooses appears to be a normal carpet, but is actually in danger of unravelling with the stress of the race. At the start of the second lap, its Handling drops to +0. On the third lap (and during the subsequent fight) it becomes –1.

Once everyone has a carpet, a courtier reads out the basic rules of the contest.

* The race is to be three laps of the city, starting and finishing at a point level with the gate to the pasha’ palace. Two flagpoles mark the start and finish line.

* Any use of magic or miracles beyond the enchantments already worked into the carpets is prohibited, and will result in instant disqualification.

* Any form of physical violence toward another contestant or their carpet will result in instant disqualification. (Note that nothing is mentioned about wearing armor or carrying weapons. No one else does, but characters who have paid for a permit may choose to do so without raising too many eyebrows).

The rules for running the race are presented as a hand-out at the end of this adventure. Give the players a copy.

After the last hero has crossed the finished line at end of lap 2, proceed immediately to **Unregistered Flyer** below.

CONTESTANTS

There are 40 contestants in the race, but most are just ordinary citizens who are there to crash out in spectacular style and get in the way of participating characters. There are two Wild Card NPCs actively competing against the heroes, plus one Extra with some talent for each hero in the race. You’ll only be dealing cards and making die rolls for these select few—the rest of the faceless racers can be ignored except in descriptions of how they end their race.



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* **Ahmed:** Agility d10, Spirit d8, Wild Card (male Hadaree)

* **Dhuka:** Agility d6, Spirit d8, Ushabti d8, Wild Card (female Hadaree ushabti mage)

* **The Others:** Agility d8, Spirit d8

UNREGISTERED FLYER!

At the start of the third and final lap, a juvenile lava dragon dominated by Mezzilik descends on the town. The fire giant doesn't know about the race, nor does he much care—the dragon was ordered to cause chaos and destruction, and the town is a perfect target.

Read aloud or paraphrase the text below. It doesn't matter if one of the heroes is way ahead in the race—either one of the general contestants manages to overtake him, if only for a few seconds, or he closes in on a straggler at the back of the field. In the event the heroes are all spectators, you'll have to modify the text accordingly.

"The crowd are on their feet cheering wildly as the flying carpets tear across the line to begin the final lap. The rider ahead of (insert name of leading hero) glances back nervously as his rival bears down on him.

"Suddenly his carpet bursts into flames. A terrifying roar drowns out the crowd as the dark form of a lava dragon swoops down and consumes the burning rider and rug before either hits the ground.

The dragon is visible to all the heroes, which means they must all make Spirit rolls to avoid Terror. That done, you can deal action cards.

This combat is not a static battle fought on a map. The dragon swoops along the streets, blasting buildings with its incendiary breath and swiping at the screaming crowd. It stays low to avoid missile fire from the guard towers along the wall, and because chasing the flying carpets is fun. Heroes not on flying carpets are never in range of the dragon—if they want to save the town, they need to get airborne.

Should some of the heroes be contestants and others spectators, a character on a carpet can swoop down and collect those viewing. The round he does this takes him far from the action. He cannot make attacks, nor can the dragon attack him.

If the heroes are unarmed, they can grab dropped weapons from panicking citizens or soldiers. Allow them to grab the same type of weapons they would normally wield with an Agility roll as an action. Obviously, this won't help characters who normally carry Trademark Weapon, jinn relics, or true relics.

Characters who fly from the combat in order to find and don their armor have ruled themselves out of the fight. Should all the heroes run, then they must live with growing number of casualties and damage to property caused in their absence.

Run the fight using the Chase rules. This is a dogfight, so there is no time limit. If the heroes do not engage the dragon for 10 minutes (for any reason), it leaves of its own accord, having reduced much of the town to ruin and grown weary of arrows by rallied city guards.

Climb: The carpets are limited to a height of 20 feet and the dragon prefers to stay low. As a result, Climb is unimportant in this fight.

Monster: The dragon is an Extra. If the party has multiple spellcasters with damage-causing powers, the GM may wish to upgrade it to a Wild Card in order to present more of a challenge.

* **Juvenile Lava Dragon (1):** See page 134.

AFTERMATH

Naturally, the race has been abandoned. If the heroes killed the dragon without delaying to get their armor, Pasha Omar acts quickly to turn the disaster into something to celebrate. Whoever dealt the lethal blow is proclaimed a hero of Harma. He receives a permanent +1 Charisma bonus while in the town, and is awarded the jinn relic meant for the winner of the race. Wounded characters are plied with *healing* potions enough to remove all their current injuries.

Pasha Omar also requests the characters attend him in private. He makes no apology for his early refusal to act. Rather, he makes the characters an offer—stop whoever is behind the attacks, and he will make the adventurers rich men and women.

Otherwise, the day is declared an official day of mourning (and will be remembered every year) as citizens collect their dead for burial and try to salvage possessions from their ruined homes and businesses. The characters still need to end the threat behind the attacks, but must do so without hope of any reward.

Treasure: The jinn relic takes the form of a brooch shaped like a flying carpet. It contains *fly*.

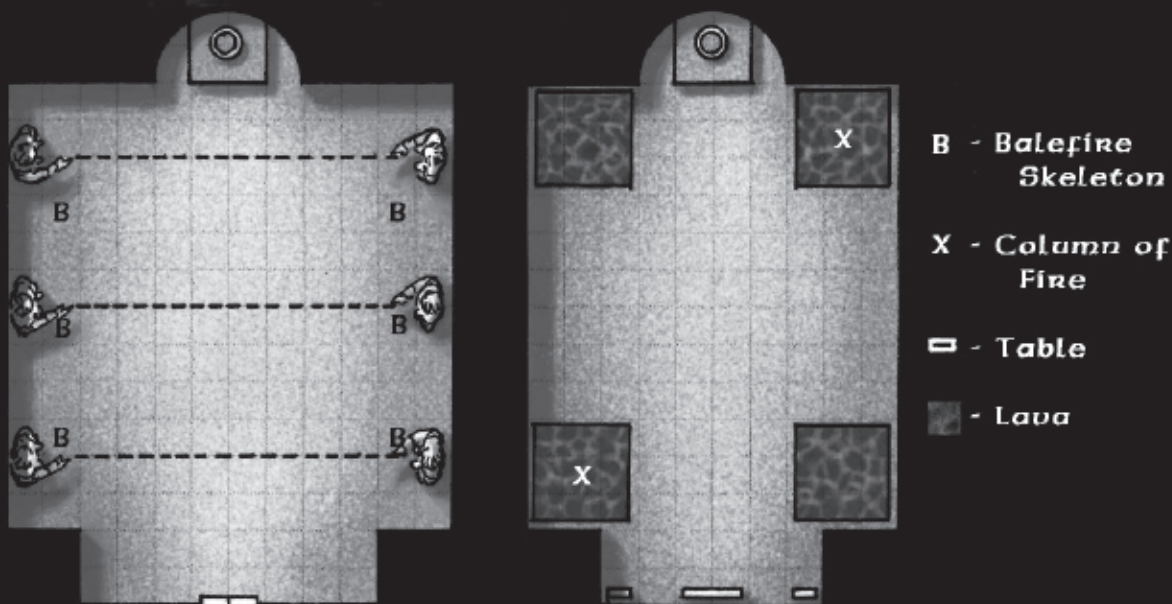
WHERE NEXT?

Until the characters make their next appointment with Baysan, they have no clues to act upon. Following the meeting, they have directions to two locales—the old headquarters of a jinn-worshipping fire cult, and the jinni's pool. No encounters are provided for the short journeys. As always, the GM may add some if he so wishes.

The Fire Cult

Baysan's studies were quite correct. Though the vast majority of slaves yearned for freedom and sided with Suleiman, a small number thought the jinn gods, and chose to fight alongside their masters. Though the jinn were defeated, several cults worshipping them sprang up in the early years after the War of Copper Jars. These

Map 3: Fire Cult



were the forefathers of the Penitents. Unlike their modern counterparts, these ancient jinn worshippers had no bias against jinn magic. They practised the art freely, but saw their relationship as one of petitioner and willing servant, rather than master and slave.

One such cult constructed a temple honoring the ifrits, who they saw as the mightiest of all the jinn, far from the Jinn Lands. Their greatest treasures they secreted in a concealed vault constructed by the power of the jinn, a chamber accessible only through one specific means. With the greater ifrits still in hiding from Suleiman, it was the cult that was entrusted with safeguarding the Crown of Fire. Their thoughts of using its power were quickly abandoned—every mortal who tried to wear it was consumed by fire.

The cult grew powerful. Its attempt to found a new state with jinn worship as the state religion met with fierce and violent opposition. The temple was plundered (though the vault was never found) and its members put to the sword. Those who surrendered and refused to repent of their wicked ways were drowned, an ignominious end for fire worshippers.

As the persecutions began, the cult had the foresight to move the Crown to a new hiding place. Even as the cult was crushed, its misguided members held hope that one day the relic would be recovered and used to take revenge on the mortals who dared raise arms against the jinn. Though they hoped for swift retribution, it was not to be. With the cult's leadership dead, knowledge of the Crown's existence was lost and the magic that

powered access to the vault quickly faded. Within a few generations, the vault's existence was known only in vague legends with little basis in truth. Many scholars and treasure hunters scoured the ruins, but all came away empty handed.

As a side effect of Mezzilik donning the Crown of Fire and awakening its abilities, the ancient magic in the temple has rekindled. The way to the vault is now open for those who survive the reactivated ancient traps.

Upper Temple

The fire-blackened doors open easily into a large vaulted chamber. Standing along the north and south walls are six colossal statues, each depicting a greater ifrit with its right arm extended and its index finger pointing to the statue opposite. At the far end of the temple, atop a low, square dais nestled in a semi-circular alcove, is a swirling column of flame.

When you sketch out the map for the players, do **not** include the dotted lines!

The power of the Crown of Fire, coupled with ancient enchantments laid down by greater ifrits, prevents *detect* spells from unlocking the secrets of the temple. Attempts automatically fail, and the caster must make a Vigor roll or suffer 2d4 damage with a fire trapping. The damage

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ignores all forms of armor. The caster also has a chance of catching fire.

The characters are free to explore the upper level as they want. Nothing happens until the first hero crosses the central dotted line. As soon as this happens, fiery barriers spring forth from the jinn's fingers along all three dotted lines, dividing the temple into four zones. If the first character tries to *teleport* across the room (perhaps believing rightly that there is a trap), he appears in the area encompassed by the center and right barriers.

At the same time, several skeletons rise up through the floor. Each bony fiend is swathed in multicolored flames.

Statues: The six statues were once painted. All that remains today are a few flecks of red paint on their muscled torsos. The statues are magical, but thanks to the power of the Crown of Fire the enchantment on them cannot be *dispelled* or *negated*.

Fiery Barriers: The barriers are Toughness 10. They draw their power from the Crown of Fire, and cannot be *dispelled* or *negated*. The barriers block line of sight and are solid. Creatures pushed into them take damage as normal, but with a fire trapping. They also have a chance of catching fire.

Dais: Carved in Jinn at the base of the dais is the phrase, "Wisdom from fire." The depression on top of the dais is filled with a column of fire. It cannot be extinguished by any means the characters possess. (The flame dies the instant the Crown of Fire is destroyed, forever sealing off the vault.) The flame radiates an intense heat, but this is illusory. Objects can be thrust into the flame without any ill-effect.

A character who steps into the flame is instantly teleported to the hidden vault beneath. His friends, however, see the hero's hair ignite, his flesh melt, and his bones crumble to dust as he writhes in agony. Again, this is an illusion. Only one character at a time can enter the flame, and the teleporting does not work until the previous user steps out the flame at the other end.

Monsters: The flaming skeletons rise smoothly out of the floor. If the party contains an odd number of heroes, then there is one additional skeleton. For instance, five characters would face a total of seven skeletons; six because there are four heroes, plus an extra one for the fifth character. Divide the skeletons equally between the two areas enclosed by the fiery barriers. Any odd skeleton should be positioned in the segment containing the most characters.

* **Balefire Skeletons (3 per 2 heroes):** See p. 132.

The Vault

The reason the vault can be reached only through the column of flame is that it does not exist in Al-Shirkuh. Created by the awesome might of greater jinn, it is a pocket dimension outside of space and time. Characters teleported here appear in an exact replica of the temple's dais and column of flame.

Through the flickering flames of the twisting column of fire you watch the temple disappear in an impenetrable heat haze. The haze quickly dies down, leaving you staring at a different scene. In the corners of the room are four pools of bubbling lava. Across the room, you can just make out three long stone tables.

The vault is similar in basic layout to the upper level, but is slightly narrower. Stepping out of the flame, the characters are hit by a wall of hot, humid air that sears their lungs with each inhalation and causes them to immediately break out in a sweat.

Four rounds after the first character enters, two lava oozes slither forth, one from each of the pools of molten rock marked "X."

FEATURES

Pocket Dimension: Communication between the upper level and vault is impossible through any means, as is entering or leaving the vault except through the column of flame.

Stone Tables: The tables are carved from basalt, a volcanic rock. Tipping one over requires a Strength roll at -4 as an action.

Temperature: Any character who rolls a 1 on a Trait die (ignoring Wild Die) while performing a strenuous physical action suffers a level of Fatigue from Heat.

Terrain: The surface of the lava is flush with the floor. A hero who enters, or who begins his turn in, lava takes 3d10 damage and has a chance of catching fire.

Monsters: Installed as guardians of the vault, the oozes could be commanded by cultists who knew the secret words of power.

* **Lava Ooze (1 per 2 heroes):** See p. 135.

Treasure: The three tables hold items of interest.

* The central table has nothing but a heavy chain made of meteoric iron and an unlocked padlock of the same material. The chain is 10 feet long, weighs 20 pounds, and has Toughness 10. The padlock has the same Toughness. Close inspection of the padlock reveals two small sigils around the keyhole. A successful Knowledge (Arcana) roll reveals these to be archaic symbols for "creation" and "fire." Neither is magical, though both were forged by ifrit artisans.

When closed, the padlock can be opened only one of two ways. The mundane method is to use Lockpicking at -4. Failure means the lockpick melts. The second method is to use *elemental manipulation (fire)* to create a tony flame inside the keyhole.

The chain and padlock were used to secure the Crown of Fire while it was in the cult's possession.

* On the northern table is an assortment of "holy" relics—a fingernail, a tooth, a lock of hair, and a jar of steaming phlegm, all gathered from greater ifrits. None radiates magic. Having absorbed a lot of spiritual energy from prayers offered up to them, they are not without their uses.

A jinn mage using one of the items in the creation of an alchemical device containing a spell with a fire or heat trapping gets +2 to his arcane skill roll. Used to create an ifrit spirit relic, they grant +1 to the creation roll. Each object can be used only once, only one can be used in a given alchemical device or spirit relic, and each is consumed in the first creation roll. Learning of these uses requires a hero to study the objects for a day and make a successful Knowledge (Arcana) roll.

Each item is worth 100 dinars to an ifrit jinn mage.

* On the southern table is a large meteoric iron key, a face mask made of the same material, and a scroll.

Key: The key doesn't open anything in this adventure. The GM can make use of it in an adventure of his own devising or treat it as a curiosity (10 dinar value).

Mask: The face mask registers as a spirit relic to the touch. It contains the *environmental protection (fire)* spell. Activation requires a Spirit roll while pressing the mask against one's face. The mask glows red hot when the bound ifrit activates the spell, burning the user's face. He permanently gains the Ugly Hindrance.

Scroll: The scroll was written by a cultist, and details where to the Crown of Fire was concealed. Read the following to the characters when they peruse the contents. The scroll then bursts into flames and crumbles to ash.

"The Crown has been concealed from the undeserving. Seek it at the feet of the Ifrit who sits among the Four Victims, beyond the Maw of Yellow Teeth, in the Pit of the Ifrit's Blood."

"Four Victims" refers to the Four Jinn, four isolated peaks located in the southern bulge of the Al-Wazir Sultanate. The "Maw of Yellow Teeth" is a cave, with stalactites and stalagmites stained yellow by sulfurous gases.

If the players have access to the map of Al-Shirkuh, let them find the Four Jinn themselves. If they don't have the map, or they need help, a successful Knowledge (Area: Sultanate) roll deduces the meaning of the Four Jinn.

◉ Marid's Pool ◉

The jinni mentioned by Baysan is Sirdara Jalpindara, Radiant Pearl of the Oceans, Commander of the Currents, and Mother of Whales, a greater marid. Never an ally of the ifrits, she played no role in the War of Copper Jars. That did not spare her Suleiman's attentions, though. She refused to bow before Suleiman and accept his teachings, arrogantly proclaiming that she could no sooner follow the laws of a mortal than a mortal could command the tides. The prophet saw things differently, and bound her to a small oasis until such time as she had learned her lesson.

Jalpindara's stats are not included in this adventure. Should the characters decide to become violent, she simply disappears into the pool. Nothing can sway her to come out, and the heroes have lost a powerful ally. If

the GM has *Realm Guide #2*, she has the generic stats for a greater marid with the added ability of being able to *teleport* the characters anywhere in the world without requiring a die roll.

Following Baysan's directions, you reach the edge of a small oasis. The watering hole isn't very large, and thin wisps of steam drift lazily from its calm surface. Aside from a few juniper bushes, there is no vegetation.

If the heroes call out, a disembodied voice asks them their business. Should they try to fill up their waterskins from the pool before making friendly contact with Jalpindara, the water forms into a huge hand and swats them away. No damage is taken as the hero flies through the air and slams into the sand, though he is Shaken.

Regardless of the characters' answer, Jalpindara rises up from the water. Her skin is the color of the deep sea, her hair dark and worn long, knotted like seaweed and braided with colorful shells. Clad in green silk robes, she glides to the surface of the pool and stands upon its watery service.

Whether or not they have any fondness for jinn, the characters are natives of Al-Shirkuh. They know it is always best to treat them with respect, rather than face their ire, especially when one is seeking information or favors from them.

If the heroes have mentioned their quest regarding the Crown of Fire and been polite (preferably deferential and flattering) thus far, she offers them a drink from her pool. The water is palatable, but very warm.

"Disgusting, isn't it?" the marid mutters. "And I am charged to live in it! A curse on all ifrits and their toys!" She clenches her fists, the water involuntarily bubbling violently to match her mood.

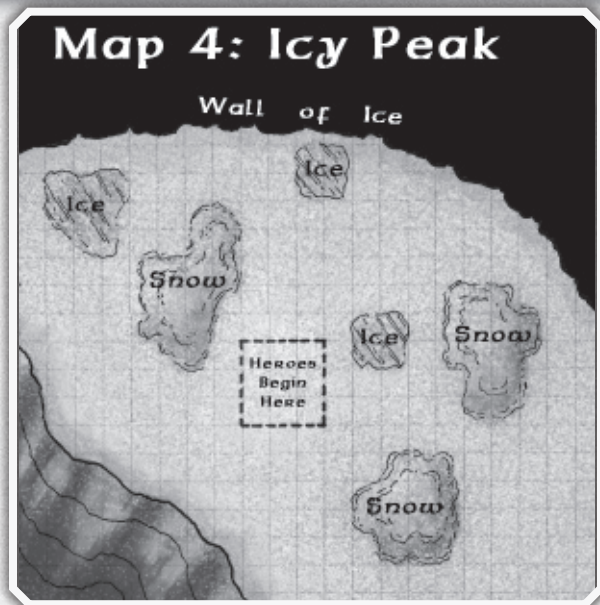
"I heard of the Crown of Fire when your kind still knew their place beneath our heels.

"Suleiman has chained me to this puddle, but I am not without power. I offer you a trade, mortals, a favor for a favor. Though I cannot leave this place, I can still send you far into the world.

"Far to the east I have seen mountains whose peaks are permanently encased in ice. There I shall send you. In the space of four hours you must cut for me as many blocks of ice as you can. Do well, and I shall use part of them to forge you weapons. Please me, and I shall also reveal the secret of defeating whoever wears the crown. Do we have a deal?"

As soon as any character accepts the deal, Jalpindara teleports them deep into the Mountains of Death without waiting to hear objections or allow the characters chance to don warmer clothes. Proceed to the next section.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire



Land of Ice and Cold

The heat of the desert is suddenly replaced with biting cold and a howling wind that numbs your flesh. Gone is the hot sand, replaced by snow and ice. As far as the eye can see is nothing but mountain after mountain.

No sooner have the characters arrived than a local denizen attacks. As they get their bearings, what they thought was an ice boulder unfurls itself into a towering humanoid figure made of living ice. The elemental's awakening negates any surprise. Deal action cards as normal.

FEATURES

Temperature: The ambient temperature is -8°F (-22°C). The Hellfrost Curse is in effect, giving characters casting powers with a heat or fire trapping a -3 penalty to their arcane skill rolls. Never having faced such cold temperatures, the heroes know nothing of the Hellfrost Curse. Apply the penalty in secret.

Terrain: Areas marked as deep snow are difficult ground. Areas marked as rough ice are difficult ground. In addition, anytime a character runs, a 1 on the running die means he has slipped and fallen at the point where his run began. Agility rolls involving other forms of movement (such as avoiding an area-effect attack or a Trick such as running up an ice wall) suffer a -2 penalty. If the Agility roll fails, the character falls and is Shaken.

A character who falls or is pushed over the cliff edge falls 40 feet onto rocks, suffering $4\text{d}6+4$ damage.

Monsters: The glacier elemental is a tough opponent, especially since fire magic is hampered by the cold.

* **Glacier Elemental (1):** See page 133.

CUTTING ICE

Numb fingers, the effects of high altitude, a lack of suitable tools, and a shortage of time place a finite limit on how many blocks of ice the characters can harvest in the short time allotted them. Have the characters make a Vigor roll. Failure causes a level of Fatigue from Cold. They must then make a Strength roll for the first two hours of ice cutting. Alternately, the characters can make a Cooperative Roll. Each success and raise (no limits) nets the party one block of ice. Then have them make another Vigor roll to resist gaining more Fatigue as the cold and physical exercise take their toll, followed by a second Strength roll. This represents their second two-hour work period.

After the second Strength roll is made, Jalpindara's magic wears off. No matter how far they might have moved from the point they arrived, the heroes and the ice blocks are transported back to the oasis.

A Bargain Fulfilled

Jalpindara happily keeps her side of the bargain so long as the characters return with some ice and throw it into the pool. For every block of ice brought back, the jinni will either create 10 arrows or carve a melee weapon. For the latter, the weapon has a $\text{d}4$ damage die if one block is used, $\text{d}6$ for two blocks, and so on.

For instance, if the characters bring back 10 blocks they could have her create 20 arrows (2 blocks), a scimitar ($\text{d}8$ damage die, 3 blocks), a spear ($\text{d}6$ damage die, 2 blocks), a dagger ($\text{d}4$ damage die, 1 block), and a short sword ($\text{d}6$ damage die, 2 blocks).

Make sure you explain how this works to the players, as the choice of weapons is theirs.

Each ice weapon counts as magical weapons with a cold trapping for the purposes of harming creatures with Susceptibility (Cold) or Weakness (Cold). Arrows are automatically destroyed after each use as the head melts or shatters. A Fighting roll of natural 1 (regardless of Wild Die) means a melee weapon's damage die is permanently reduced by one die type, either by melting or chipping. This is applied after handling the result of the Wild Die. When the die drops below $\text{d}4$, the weapon melts.

The ice weapons weigh half as much as conventional weapons of the same type. Once the Crown of Fire is destroyed and Mezzilik defeated, the weapons melt within 24 hours. Nothing the heroes do can stop this.

Jalpindara also reveals the secret as promised, but not in a straight-forward way—jinn never break a promise, but they often twist things to make life difficult.

"Seek to destroy the source of power, not the one who wields it. While the former exists, the latter cannot be slain."

If the party asks the jinni about the "Four Victims," she ponders for a few moments before replaying that the heroes must mean the Four Jinn. She is prepared to

teleport the party there if they ask, but demands a gift first. There is not set value for the gift—the characters should use their imaginations. Even a compliment or hastily constructed poem suffices, so long as it is suitably flattering to a jinni's inflated ego.

❖ Ifrit Peak ❖

Jalpindara has no idea where the Maw of Yellow Teeth is, and deposits the characters at a random point at the base of Ifrit Peak. For each day they search, one character may make a Notice roll at -4 . Unless the party splits up (which makes communication troublesome as they move further apart), other heroes can assist only through a Cooperative Roll. Success locates not orc camp. Though a cave is not immediately visible, the cliffs behind the camp are stained yellow, and the foul stench of sulfur is unmistakable. Failure has no effect other than the consumption of water and a wasted day.

Should the heroes decide to delay searching (or attacking the orc camp once they locate it), perhaps to go on a shopping spree in one of the nearby cities, the GM should harass them with attacks by any fiery creatures of his choice.

Orc Camp

Through the Crown of Fire, Messilik has constructed a basalt wall around the entrance to the Maw of Yellow Teeth. It serves as a camp for his orcs. When the Crown of Fire is destroyed, the magic used to create and hold the walls in shape fails, causing them to collapse in a heap of rubble.

Large rocks allow the characters to close to within 24" without being seen. From their vantage points, they can make out the sentries on the walls. The only way to reach the gates is by crossing open ground.

FEATURES

Battlements: The wall is crenelated. Orc defenders using their bows have Medium Cover (-2) if standing and Heavy Cover (-4) if crouching.

Gates: Toughness 12. The orcs have little to fear, and the heavy wooden gates into the compound are left open day and night. A single orc can shut one of the gates in eight rounds. Two orcs can do so in four rounds, three in two rounds, and four orcs in a single round. Pushing the gate counts as an action but not die roll is required.

Pool: A hot, sulfurous spring provides the orcs with drinking water. The water is unpalatable to the heroes.

Shelters: Toughness 4. The orcs have constructed crude shelters out of

hides. Aside from the one containing the priest, the shelters are just covers mounted on pools, and have no side walls.

Temple: Concealing the entrance to the Maw of Yellow Teeth is a hide tent that serves as both a temple and the home of an orc priest of Geb-Agni. The tent has Toughness 4. A wound from a slashing weapon creates a tear a hero can pass through, but does not otherwise affect the structure. Inside is a crude stone effigy of a fire giant wearing a crown.

The entrance to the caverns that lie beyond the tent are blocked. See Area 1 below for details.

Monsters: The defenders represent only a small portion of the fire giant's minions. The rest are out on patrol in the mountains or conducting raids.

By day, the orcs in the shelters are awake. Their weapons are sheathed. Those outside are technically on duty, and have their weapons close by. They can pick them up as a free action. At night, the orcs in the shelters are sleep. On waking, they are automatically Shaken.

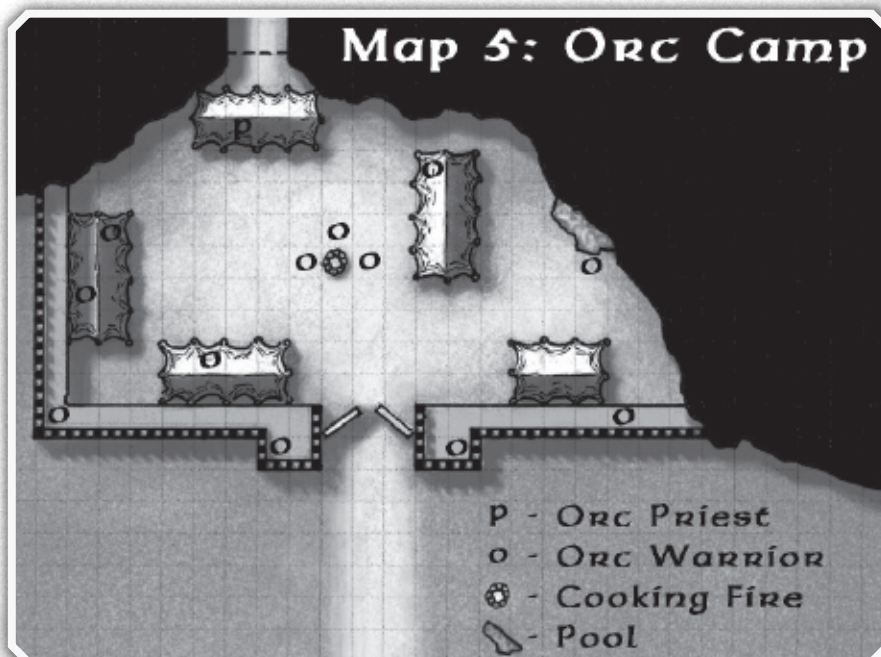
Day or night, the orcs manning the walls have their bows ready. They count as active sentries.

* **Orc Priest (1):** See page 135.

* **Orc Warriors (3 per hero):** See page 135.

Tactics: At the first sign of danger, the sentries fire arrows while shouting an alarm. The archers are not stupid, but until the characters return missile fire, they do not duck out of cover between shots. Once ranged fire is returned, they fire and then duck out of sight behind the battlements, thus denying their foes a target.

The orcs in the camp rush to close the main gates. The priest is no combat, and remains in his tent until he cast cast *armor*, *deflection*, and *smite*, in that order. In the event the characters have overrun the camp before he finishes, he tries to lift the portcullis and escape into the caves to warn his master.



Map 6: Caves of Fire

1 square = 4 yards



The Giant's Lair

The caves and tunnels now home to Mezzilik and his minions are natural, the result of volcanic activity. The presence of the activated Crown of Fire has fuelled their heat, breathing new life into the once-cooled lava.

Ceilings & Walls: Passages are an average of 25 feet (4") high. Caverns vary between 50 (9") and 100 feet (16"). Floors and walls are mostly smooth, and clearly the work of natural forces (i.e., great heat). Except where noted, floors count as normal terrain.

Descriptive Text: The start of each entry contains a varying amount of information in italics. This highlights the salient features of the room from the characters' perspective and should be relayed to the heroes when such information would be apparent. It should be paraphrased to them in whatever flavorful terms the GM prefers.

Lighting: Unless otherwise stated in individual area descriptions, all caves and chambers are Pitch Black (-4), requiring the party to bring its own illumination.

WANDERING MONSTERS

The inclusion of wandering monsters in the caverns is optional—some GMs like them, others do not. For those who want to include them, draw an action card whenever you feel like it. Every 30 minutes of game time is a good figure. A royal card (Jack through Ace) indicates one of Mezzilik's minions is passing nearby. Roll a d4 and consult the table below to determine their nature.

d4 Wandering Monster

- 1 Patrol of 2d4 orc warriors.
- 2 One fire ifrit
- 3 One fire giant warrior (1) and 1d4 orcs
- 4 A pack of 1d4+2 cinder hounds

Important: Wandering monsters can serve to keep the party on their toes, but common sense should always override card draws. If the party has cleared an area of the caverns and there is no logical way new monsters could be in the area should the heroes return there, then ignore the result. For instance, areas 8 through 10 are not going to contain wandering cinder hounds if the occupants of Area 9 have been defeated already—there is no way they could have got there.

On the other hand, wandering monsters could be found in Areas 1 through 5 if the heroes backtrack, having recently returned from a patrol in the outside world.

1. ENTRANCE

Sulfur-stained stalactites and stalagmites, interlocked like teeth, block access to the passage at the point on the map marked by the dotted line. The central mineral growths are each engraved with an arcane rune. If the characters have already discovered and deciphered the sigils on the padlock (see p. 120) then they immediately recognize them as runes for "creation" and "fire."

A fire-based creature (including ifrit jinn blooded) who touches the growths causes them to recede, giving the im-

pression of a maw opening. Casting *elemental manipulation (fire)* on the protrusions produces the same effect.

2. CINDER PIT

* *The northeast corner of the chamber sinks away into a pit seemingly 10 feet deep. At the bottom is a white, powdery substance.*

* *At the top of the pit is a cramped metal cage attached to a long chain. The chain is secured to the cavern floor by a thick metal spike.*

Not content with summoning ifrits and salamanders, and creating lava golems, Mezzilik has been conducting unholy experiments on living subjects. Through a vile enchantment, living victims lowered into the cinder pit are infused with the glowing embers, imbuing them with resistance to heat and making them subservient to the Mezzilik's commands. The process has proven successful with animals, such as hounds, but higher intellect creatures have so far died a horrible death.

Cage: The cage and chain are both made of meteoric iron. Inspecting of the cage bars reveals each is inscribed with three arcane sigils. A character making a successful Knowledge (Arcane) roll deciphers them as "flesh," "transformation," and "fire."

Pit: The pit is actually 50 feet deep in total. The white powder is cold ash, and coats 40 feet of glowing cinders. A hero who steps into the pit sinks to his waist before the cinders beneath his feet compress enough to balance his weight. He suffers 2d10 damage per round and has a chance of catching fire.

Slope: Scaling the slope leading into the pit counts as difficult terrain in either direction.

Monsters: Disturbing the ash atop the cinders causes a cinder mote swarm to take to the air and attack.

* **Cinder Mote Swarm (1):** See p. 132.

3. HANGING CAGES

* *A dozen metal cages are suspended 10 feet above the floor. Chains looped around books in the floor run through metal hoops hammered in the ceiling to the top of each cage.*

* *Weak cries and murmurs begin echoing through the chamber when the light from the characters' torches or lanterns strikes a cage containing a captive.*

Captives taken by the fire giant's orcs are kept here until Mezzilik finds a use for them.

Cages: Solid black circles indicate occupied cages. The four nearest the entrance each hold a caravan guard. The two to the north hold merchants. The orcs barely feed and water the prisoners, and they are all Exhausted. They have no desire to join the heroes if rescued, but pass on the following information.

* The merchants are named Hala (f) and Al Tijani (m), and the guards (all male) are Fahmi, Husam, Mahir, and Sufyan. Husam is a Bedu, the rest are Hadaree. The GM is free to add extra details as he sees fit.

* They are members of a small overland caravan that

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was heading to Akhmim from Sha'ib when it was attacked by orcs led by a pair of fire giants. They are unsure how much time has passed since their capture, but estimate it to be about two weeks.

* Initially there were ten of them, but four were taken away by orcs at various times. Terrible screams were heard from the southern cavern, and the captives did not return.

* One of the captives speaks Orc. He heard them speak in fear of someone or something called "Mezzilik." (None of the surviving captives has seen the fire giant).

* They intend to take what supplies they can and head for Al-Wazir, the nearest city. The two merchants promise to reward the characters with 500 dinars (in total) once they return to the businesses in Sha'ib. They give the characters the addresses of their offices.

4. BUBBLING MUD

** The floor is coated with gently bubbling mud..*

Characters who study the area for a minute see an area of mud suddenly explode upward.

The cavern floor is a shallow basin that fills the area between the dotted lines. The mud is two feet deep and counts as difficult ground. It is heated by a river of lava running deep beneath the floor. Although warm, it is not hot enough to inflict damage.

Mud Geyser: Every now and then, the heat in one area builds up sufficiently to cause a violent explosion of briefly superheated mud. For each round the characters are in the mud, deal each of them a card. A deuce of any suit indicates one of them is standing in the wrong place when an eruption occurs. The hero suffers 2d6 damage to his least armored location.

5. CINDER HOUND KENNEL

** (If the heroes have not killed the hounds) This room contains a number of large, shaggy dogs. As one they turn their heads. Snarling, they leap to attack, their open maws revealing an unearthly fiery glow and yellow teeth that more resemble stalactites and stalagmites.*

** (If the heroes have killed the hounds) Save for a few patches of cold ash, this cavern appears to be empty.*

Mezzilik's experiments have resulted in the orcs' war hounds being transformed into cinder hounds. The fire giant keeps them kenneled within the caves, where they serve as guard dogs.

Monsters: Should the heroes make excessive noise in Areas 4 or 6, or the passageways that link the two, have the cinder hounds make Notice rolls. Success means they detect the intruders and move silently to investigate. They are under orders to attack any creatures other than other fire creatures, orcs, and their master.

Although animals, the cinder hounds possess a hunter's cunning. They lurk in the shadows, patiently waiting for an opportunity to catch their prey at a disadvantage (such as sneaking up from behind, or leaping at victims trapped in the mud).

* **Cinder Hounds (2 per hero):** See p. 132.

6. BOAT LANDING

** (6A) Four long canoes rest on a narrow beach of black sand. (Other areas) One long canoe rests on a narrow beach of black sand.*

** Beyond the beach is a large expanse of water swathed in swirling mist.*

** The whole area reeks of rotten eggs.*

A great subterranean lake (see Area 7) sits in the heart of the cavern system. In order to move around between different areas, Mezzilik's minions use crude canoes.

Canoes: Each canoe can comfortably hold eight human-sized creatures, two fire giants, or one giant and four human-sized creatures. The canoes and oars are made of wood impregnated with a fire-retardant herbal extract to protect them against the fire giants' innate heat. The canoes are Toughness 8, Handling +0, and Top Speed 4.

7. LAKE OF STEAM

** Mist rises from the waters of a lake.*

** The whole area reeks of rotten eggs.*

The lake is actually only part of the surface of a vast underground water source that extends far below the level of the caverns inhabited by Mezzilik's forces. It drops away almost vertically to a depth of 500 feet.

Lighting: Even with illumination, the steam gives Dim (-1) lighting and prevents the characters from seeing further than 10".

Smell: The rotten egg smell is sulfur gas. On shore it is nauseating but tolerable. On the lake surface, the concentration is higher. Characters who do not cover their mouth and nose must make a Vigor roll each round or be Shaken from a fit of coughing.

Water: The mist is in fact steam. A magma chamber far below the level of the lake floor heats the water. At the surface, the water is hot enough to generate steam, but it is not boiling. Briefly submerging a hand or other body part requires a Vigor roll to avoid being Shaken from the sudden heat and pain. Any character who falls in suffers 1d10 damage per round, ignoring all armor save for the armor spell. *Environmental protection (beat)* is required to eliminate the danger, while *environmental protection (water)* safeguards only against drowning.

Even when cooled, the water is undrinkable due to high levels of sulfur. A character who drinks so much as a mouthful must make a Vigor roll or suffer stomach cramps. Treat this as a level of Fatigue that is removed an hour after swallowing the tainted water. *Succor* by itself isn't much use, as the Fatigue returns within minutes of the spell being cast. A purgative herbal tonic, or *healing* cast within 10 minutes, removes the toxin from the hero's system.

Fish: Despite the temperature and sulfur, the water is home to several varieties of blind cave fish. While palatable to the orcs and fire giants (who consider the fish a delicacy), other races find the taste of their flesh utterly disgusting. It has the same effect as drinking the water.

Monsters: The swirling steam is home to a steam jinni. The creature has lived here since the end of the

War of Copper Jars, and was initially hostile to Mezzilik and his minions. Since the fire giant priest destroyed its mate, it has preferred to remain concealed and leave the fire giant and his minions in peace.

Each round the characters are traversing the lake, the GM must draw a card from the action deck. On a deuce, the jinni detects the movement and silently drifts through the steam to investigate. When it sees the heroes are neither orcs nor fire giants, it attempts to ingratiate itself with Mezzilik by destroying them.

* **Steam Jinni (1):** See p. 134.

Expanding the Cavern: Should the GM wish to expand the cave system, he can add submerged tunnels in the walls of the chamber. These link to other caverns, some of which are only partially flooded. In order to explore them, the heroes will need access to *environmental protection (water)* spells.

8. HALL OF PRIESTS

* *Large clay urns stand atop waist-high stone pillars.*

When the fire cult decided to conceal the Crown of Fire, it also elected to remove the cremated remains of former priests to the caverns. As neither Devoted nor Faithful, the souls of the priests entered a state of limbo. Now the Crown of Fire is active, they have been drawn back to the worlds of mortals.

Urn: Each circle on the map represents an urn. Toughness 3. The urns are approximately one foot in diameter and two feet in height. Each is sealed with a stopper sealed with wax. Written on the urns in the language of the jinn is the same phrase, "In death, given to fire."

A character who rattles an urn hears the unmistakable sound of metal on clay. The sound is caused not by any treasure, but by the molten remains of the priest's badge of office, a worthless trinket.

Monsters: Ephemeral and invisible, the spirits are utterly powerless to purposefully affect the world around them. Their presence is still felt, though, for the air hangs heavy with feelings of despair and death. Living creatures entering the cavern must make a Spirit roll to avoid the effects of Fear until they leave. The orcs are terrified of this place, and never voluntarily come here anymore.

Should an urn be unstoppered or smashed, the spirit gives unholy life to the ashes and fragments of bone that once formed its mortal body. The ash gathers itself into a balefire skeleton. Check for Surprise.

Rather than attacking the characters, the first skeleton animated attempts to smash other urns in range, thus allowing its kindred spirits to regain a passing semblance of earthly form.

* **Balefire Skeletons (12):** See p. 132.

9. MAKESHIFT FORGE

* *On reaching the beach, the characters hear the rhythmic sound of metal on metal.*

* *Nearing the entrance, the characters can make out a small number of orcs.*

Lava from one of the many underground rivers of molten rock has broken through the surface to form a small pool. Mezzilik knows from experience that bored orcs soon become restless and argumentative, so he has set his minions to work in the makeshift forge. After scraping off the cooler crust, the orcs heat metal in the lava before beating it into armor and weapons.

Approach: The orcs face away from the entrance, and the constant sound of their hammering serves to conceal the heroes' approach. The characters have +1 to Stealth rolls until the alarm is raised. The fire giant counts as an inactive guard.

Lava Pool: Any character entering, or who begins their turn in, the lava suffers 3d10 damage and has a chance of catching fire.

Lighting: Lanterns and the light of the lava pool provide good lighting.

Monsters: They begin near to the lava, where they hammer at making short swords with heavy hammer. Watching over them is a fire giant warrior. He is leaning against the wall below the outcropping on the eastern wall, and is invisible to characters approaching from the northern tunnel until they have a clear line of sight or he chooses to reveal his presence. Heroes approaching from the western tunnel can detect him if they take time to peer through or over the barricade.

The orcs have no shields and are unarmored. They have Toughness 7. Each fights using half finished short swords. These inflict Str+d6-1 damage. Heroes wearing cloaks or voluminous robes have a chance of catching fire if struck by the blades, which are red hot.

* **Fire Giant Warrior (1):** See p. 132.

* **Orc Warriors (1 per hero):** See p. 135.

Treasure: Six finished short swords, 24 arrow heads, and four spearheads are stacked against one of the walls. There are ten bars of raw iron. Each weighs 5 pounds and is worth 20 dinars to a smith.

10. FORBIDDEN CAVERN

* *The entry to this chamber is blocked by a makeshift barricade.*

* *Aside from holes in the western and southern walls, the cavern appears empty and uninteresting.*

The orcs originally intended to use this cavern as a barracks or storeroom. It quickly became apparent that the holes were home to numerous giant centipedes. Whereas the orcs' strength was finite, the centipedes appeared limitless in number. In the end, the orcs decided it was better to abandon all attempts to use the cavern and barricade the entrances.

Barricades: The barricades can be smashed down (Toughness 10), or dismantled more carefully and quietly with half an hour of work.

Holes: The holes are roughly three feet across and appear natural. A character wishing to explore one must crawl, preventing him from using any weapon longer than a dagger and any shield except a buckler. Even then, the restricted space gives him -2 to Fighting rolls.

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The tunnels run for miles through the rock, which is softer than the volcanic rocks that form the rest of the caverns. Some eventually emerge on the surface.

Monsters: Each round the characters explore this cavern, the GM must draw a card from the action deck. A deuce of any color indicates one of the giant centipedes has detected their presence and chosen to investigate. Eternally hungry, it sees the characters are a tasty meal.

The number of centipedes is effectively unlimited. Sooner or later the heroes will follow the orcs' lead and abandon the chamber.

* **Giant Centipedes:** See p. 132.

11. FUNGUS CAVERN

* *On approaching, the characters notice the air becoming more humid.*

* *The cavern floor is covered in large patches of fungus or all shapes, sizes, and colors.*

* *Narrow paths, seemingly deliberately cut to reveal the bare rock surface, weave through the fungus.*

This cavern is home to a colony of fungals. The natural warmth provided by the subterranean lava river coupled with the moist air from the lake made it an ideal place to plant and grow fungus, their staple diet.

For untold centuries the fungals quietly toiled, ignorant and uncaring of the surface world. The cult of fire paid them no heed, and the fungals reciprocated in kind. The orcs, however, prized the edible species of fungus as a handy food source, and took to taking what they need-

ed. At first the fungals did nothing, but as the orcs' grew more daring, they were forced to defend their crops and homes. Though poor combatants, their natural spores proved sufficient to drive the orcs away. Since then, they have chosen to defend their lair against all intruders.

Descending Tunnel: The tunnel to the east winds downward for many hundreds of feet, eventually emerging into a vast chamber similar to the fungus cavern. GMs who have *Creature Guide: Fungals* may opt to populate the cavern as an expansion to the adventure. Otherwise, the GM can elect to have the tunnel closed by a rockfall after before it reaches the lower chamber.

Fungus: The fungus grows to varying heights, from tiny growths to towering mushrooms over ten feet high. The fungus provides Medium Cover (-2). A creature in the fungus is not visible more than 2" away due to the density of the growths. Movement through the fungus is difficult ground.

A hero moving through the fungus who draws a deuce as his first action card in a round (even if an Edge allows him to draw multiple cards) has disturbed fungus with a nasty effect. Check the suit of his card below. Note that the fungals never disturb these fungi.

* **Club (Burnbloom):** Excretes a powerful acid. Creatures who walk through a burnbloom patch suffer 2d4 damage. Assuming the hero is walking, all damage is taken to the legs.

* **Diamond (Flash Fungus):** The fungus throws up a cloud of spores in a 1" square. These ignite on contact with naked flame, producing a brilliant flash. Any creature within a Medium Burst Template of the fungus must make an Agility roll or be Shaken as it is momentarily blinded.

* **Heart (Witch Bane):** The spores of this toadstool inhibit spellcasting by preventing a mage weaving the magical threads. The character must make a Smarts roll or be unable to invoke magic (but not miracles) for 1d6 rounds.

* **Spade (Sneeze Spore):** The character must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken for 1d6 rounds as he is overcome by a violent sneezing fit.

Paths: The pathways are 1" across. Though the bare rock is moist with condensation, it is not slippery.

Monsters: When the characters enter, the fungals are tending to the fungus patches. Given their form, they are virtually indistinguishable from the taller mushrooms until they move. Detecting them requires a Notice roll opposed by the fungal's Stealth.

Although prepared to defend their lair using every means at their disposal, the fungals are not aggressive toward creatures simply passing through the



cavern. They react only if someone moves through a fungus patch, destroys any of the fungus, or attempts to harvest any of it.

The paths divide the fungus into a dozen separate patches. Should the fungals attack, the GM should place no more than one fungal per patch.

* **Fungals (3 per hero):** See p. 133.

Treasure: At some point, a hero should see a scattering of gold coins among one of the fungus patches. The coins are out of arm's reach. Investigation nets him 4d6 dinars (lost by one of the orcs, who is now fertilizer), but also causes the fungals to attack.

Characters who take 15 minutes to study a patch of fungus may make a Knowledge (Alchemy) or Survival roll (player's choice). Success locates 2d4 clumps of bread balls. Bread balls are edible fungus, and can be eaten raw. They have a similar texture and equivalent nutritional content to bread, hence the name.

12. SALAMANDER PIT

* *A dull orange glow emanating from the far end of the chamber is noticeable as soon as the characters enter the cavern.*

* *The source of the glow is a large pool of lava, the surface of which is two feet below the level of the cavern floor.*

The lava is welling up from a natural molten river deep beneath the ground. The surface lacks a crust. A character studying the lava can make a Notice roll to detect faint ripples, as if something is swimming beneath the surface.

Lighting: The glow of the lava provides natural Dark (-2) illumination.

Lava: Any character who enters, or who begins his turn in, the lava suffers 3d10 damage and has a chance of catching fire.

Monsters: On exploring the caverns, Mezzilik's orcs, to the cost of several lives, discovered a pair of fire salamanders already resident. The fiery fiends initially rebuffed the giant's offer of an alliance, but have reluctantly been ensnared by the power of the Crown of Fire. They attack five rounds after any hero peers over into the inferno that is their lair, or immediately if anyone throws anything into the lava.

If circumstances allow, they maneuver behind the characters and attempt to Push them into the lava.

* **Fire Salamanders (1 per 2 heroes):** See p. 133.

13. LAVA CHUTE

* *The end of the passage is a near vertical chute.*

Passage: The floor slopes steeply, and is both wet and slippery, the water natural seepage from the rock of the mountain above. A character who moves at higher than half his Pace must make an Agility roll or slip and slide 2d6" before arresting his fall. A hero who runs makes the roll at -2 and slides 3d6".

Chute: The chute at the end descends almost vertically for 100 feet. The slides are completely smooth and

slick through natural water seepage from the rock above (-4 to Climbing rolls).

Expansion: GMs wanting to expand the cavern system can use this to open up a new sublevel. Otherwise, the bottom end is a small cavern with no exits, these having sealed up centuries ago. In addition to the tube's length, there is a gap of 30 feet between the end of the chute and the cavern floor.

14. RIVER OF LAVA

* *The temperature in this room is higher than anywhere else the heroes have explored in the caverns.*

* *The cavern is divided by a 36 feet (6") wide river of molten lava that flows through the chamber some 20 feet below floor level.*

* *At either end of the chasm the lava disappears, passing beneath rock that has resisted its fiery touch.*

* *Spanning the molten river is a single slab of basalt. The bridge is six feet wide, and extends four feet to either side of the chasm.*

The lava river is a natural feature, though before Mezzilik took possession of the Crown the top 10 feet had cooled to form a solid crust.

Note that any loud sounds in this cavern, such as combat, automatically alert Mezzilik (Area 16) to the presence of intruders and allow him to prepare for their arrival.

Bridge: The bridge is 6 feet (1") wide. This presents no difficulty even for fire giants. A character falling off the bridge drops 20 feet, suffering 2d6+2 damage from the fall. This is the least of his worries.

Lava: A character who enters, or begins his turn in, the river of lava suffers 3d10 and has a chance of catching fire. He is swept 1d6" toward the northwest by the current at the end of each round. Should he still be alive when he reaches the end of the cavern, he is forced beneath the surface and begins to drown. A character resistant or immune to fire can swim in the river, but treats it as rough water. The lava is 40 feet deep.

Monsters: As soon as each character reaches the far side of the bridge, no matter the mode of transportation, the GM should draw a card from the action deck. A red royal card (Jack through Ace) means one of the fire giant warriors from either Area 15 wanders into this cavern. His first reaction is to call an alarm in a loud voice, before drawing his axe (an action) and rushing to attack.

Alternate: If the party has had an easy time thus far and is still in possession of plentiful undamaged ice weapons, the GM might wish to have fire ifrits living in the lava scale silently up the walls and emerge onto the bridge in front of, behind, and/or in the middle of the party as they cross the bridge. Only Push attacks would cause the heroes to fall, but the limited amount of room will cause tactical problems.

15. FIRE GIANT BARRACKS

* *Bones of varying sizes are scattered on the floor. There are four piles of ash, each some 25 feet in length,*

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three feet deep, and eight feet across. The ashes are depressed, as if something large has been lying on them.

With his newfound power, Mezzilik no longer has any need for bodyguards. Old habits die hard, though, and four fire giants have been assigned as his protectors. The position is more to make the giants feel useful and prevent them from grumbling about having to work with the orcs, who they see as an inferior race.

Note that any loud sounds in these caverns, such as combat, automatically alerts Mezzilik (Area 16) to the presence of intruders and allows him to prepare for their arrival.

Ashes: The ashes are slightly warm. The giants use them as mattresses.

Monsters: Although each chamber accommodates four giants, only half that number are present. The others are on raids, have been killed already (Area 9), or are wandering monsters.

Should those present hear any loud noises from Area 14 (such as a cry of alarm from a wandering comrade), they quickly investigate. Their axes hang from their belts, for in each hand they clutch a boulder. Should they spy attackers on the bridge, they move as close as possible without running before throwing the rocks. The rocks have sufficient force to cause knockback, which likely means the target is going to fall into the lava.

* **Fire Giant Warriors (1 per hero):** See p. 132.

Treasure: One of the giants (GM's choice) took part in the raid on the caravan that netted the prisoners in Area 3. He confiscated a potion of *healing* (cast with a success) and a throwing dagger imbued with a single 3d6 *bolt* with the trapping of a dagger made of magical energy (no specific game mechanic). The spell is activated by mimicking throwing the dagger. Rather than give these to Mezzilik, he chose to keep them. They are concealed in his mattress, and found by anyone making a Notice roll while digging through the ash.

16. MEZZILIK'S LAIR

* *Parts of the cavern are hidden behind towering pillars of rock that stretch to the ceiling 40 feet overhead.*

* *There are three pools of bubbling lava.*

* *The only visible occupant is a hulking fire giant. His hair and beard are living flame, his coal-black flesh is streaked with veins of lava, and upon his head he wears a three-pronged crown that appears to be made of semi-cooled lava.*

If Mezzilik has been alerted to the heroes' approach, he acknowledges them with open contempt, calling them "insects" and "worthless fools." Otherwise, his greeting is one of unbridled rage as he roars about "vermin crawling through his home," "an affront to his majesty," and "the sign that the time to crush the lesser races has dawned."

Fiery Barrier: The "+" symbols on the map mark the line of a fiery *barrier* created and Maintained by the Crown of Fire. When the Crown is destroyed, the *barrier* instantly disappears. Until then, the flames are solid and are Toughness 10. Should a section be destroyed, it reforms at the start of the next round, before any actions

take place. The flames generate fierce heat. Any character adjacent to the *barrier* who rolls on a natural 1 on his Trait die (regardless of Wild Die) has strayed too close. He suffers 2d6 damage and has a chance of catching fire.

Lava: Any character who enters, or who begins his turn in, a lava pool suffers 3d10 damage and has a chance of catching fire.

Monsters: Initially, Mezzilik is the only occupant. If the heroes are involved in a fight in Area 14 or 15, Mezzilik hears the din (unless the characters use *silence* to conceal the sounds). One round of preparation is lost as he listens to identify the sounds, and another while he comes to grips with the fact that someone dares to challenge his rule in his own lair. Given time, he spends the next four rounds summoning lesser ifrits. Two of these take up position inside each of the circular lava pools, remaining submerged until called to attack.

Knowing that Mezzilik is immune to their searing flames so long as he wears the Crown, they freely employ their Flame Strike ability against the heroes, maneuvering so as to catch as many as possible in a template.

* **Mezzilik (1):** See p. 131.

* **Lesser Ifrits:** See p. 134.

Tactics: Arrogant in the extreme, Mezzilik does not cast *deflection* or *smite*, even if he knows the adventurers are coming. Once the Crown is destroyed, though, he gives up his next attack to cast *deflection*.

Should the party have avoided making a noise and alerting Mezzilik to their presence, his actions on the first four rounds after they enter his lair are the same—summon a lesser ifrit (an action), move without running to get as close as possible to an intruder, and attack using his axe (incurring a multi-action penalty). If he knows he cannot get in melee range this round, he summons a jinni, moves without running, and casts a single 3d6 fiery *bolt*, the latter with a multi-action penalty, instead.

Treasure: Behind the fire *barrier* is Mezzilik's treasury. Despite his orcs' raids, the fire giant is not a wealthy creature—he has no need for material goods. His total treasury comprises:

* 2000 dinars in assorted coins.

* 3000 dinars in assorted trade goods plundered from caravans. Every 5 dinars worth weighs 2 pounds. Note that trade goods are not booty. Once a buyer is found, the characters receive their full value.

* Three alchemical devices—a potion of *warrior's gift* containing Frenzy, gloves of *wall walking*, and an arrow of *stun* (cast with a success).

* A scimitar with a midnight-blue blade. Engraved on the blade in Magorian is the name "Windcutter." Windcutter is not magical, but it is capable of inflicting normal damage (Str+d8) on air elementals and khamsins.

With a successful Knowledge (History) roll at -2 or Knowledge (Monsters: Jinn) roll at -4, a hero recalls the sword was forged during the War of Copper Jars to harm khamsins. Investigation can be used once the heroes reach a library or other source of written information. A hero openly wielding the blade has a -2 Charisma penalty when dealing with greater khamsins.

Aftermath

With any luck, the Crown of Fire has been destroyed and Mezzilik slain. The heroes have won the day, and another threat to Al-Shirkuh has been ended.

Should the party be defeated and its members slain, their replacements are unlikely to have the abilities necessary to take on the fire giant (remember, a replacement hero start with Experience Points based on the previous character's Glory). Mezzilik grows more confident in his ability to control the Crown, and soon embarks on a scheme to conquer the southern Sultanate. As his fledgling empire grows, so more orcs flock to the region.

When the new characters have reached a suitable Rank, they can take on the continuing threat of Mezzilik. Until such time as the fire giant is defeated, the temperature remains one level hotter than normal. This brings with it problems like poor rains, withered crops, and diminishing water supplies.

REWARDS

If Pasha Omar offered the characters a reward, then he is good to his word. The nature of the reward depends on the type of campaign the GM is running.

Static: If the GM wants to give the heroes a base of operations, Omar grants them stewardship of a village as his vassals. If the GM has the *Resource Management* supplement, the characters gain a Population 2 agricultural Resource. They are joint rulers, and thus any annual income must be divided between them as they see fit.

Characters without the Noble Edge who wish to take it may do so, but must use their *next* advance. On doing this, Omar grants them the honor title *effendi*. The title is used after their given first name—only true nobles prefix their given name with a title—and does not grant them the Rich Edge or any men-at-arms. Ten men-at-arms come with the village, irrespective of how many characters become honor nobles.

On the death of hero, his title is null and void—it does not pass to his children. When the last hero dies, the village reverts back to Omar's control. Of course, by the time this happens the characters may have performed other deeds in the defense of Harma and earned hereditary titles, allowing the land to pass to their descendants.

Wandering: If the campaign is to be one of wandering adventurers, Omar gifts each survivor 2000 dinars in coin and jewels. He proclaims them all Champions of Harma. Whenever they are in town, they gain +1 Charisma. If Omar awarded one of the characters an honorific earlier, the bonuses do not stack.

Bestiary



MEZZILIK

A priest of Geb-Agni, Mezzilik had long craved power above and beyond his position. Along with other con-

spirators, the cleric sought to usurp King Surtur. The plan was doomed from the outset, for one of the conspirators sold out his comrades in return for favors from the fire giant king. Mezzilik was one of the fortunate ones—he managed to escape his lord's wrath with his life intact.

Now in exile, Mezzilik, a handful of fire giants, and a small number of orcs fled far from the Heart of Fire in search of refuge. Though his great plan had failed, he soon replaced it with a lesser goal—to carve out his own kingdom among the weaker races.

Had he not stumbled into the Maw of Yellow Teeth in search of a suitable lair, he might have been a minor thorn in the side of one of the great realms. Instead, fate decreed that he would find the Crown of Fire. It was long months before the giant dared do it, for he sensed its terrible power. Summoning his will and calling on his faith, Mezzilik eventually succumbed to the lure of power, and placed the Crown upon his head. Lesser giants may well have been consumed, but Mezzilik's lust for authority won the day.

Now imbued with new powers (many not detailed below), the giant's plans to become the lord of the Heart of Fire are back track. Once he unlocks the final secrets, he will bring about a revolution, and then expand the rule of the fire giants across Al-Shirkuh.

Important: Until the Crown of Fire is destroyed, there is absolutely nothing the heroes can do to physically harm Mezzilik. He is still subject to Tests of Will, Tricks, Pushes, and so on, though.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d12+3, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d8, Faith d10, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Throwing d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 13 (2)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles)

Hindrances: Arrogant

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), great axe (Str+d10, -1 Parry, AP 1, carried in one hand).

Treasure: None.

Special Abilities:

- * **Crown of Fire:** The Crown counts as a Small Target, has Toughness 10 (4 vs. ice weapons and spells with cold, coldfire, ice, or water trappings), and is destroyed when it takes its 4th wound. It grants the giant the following innate powers. For each wound taken, one power is lost. Start with the first power below and work down. Mezzilik is automatically Shaken when the Crown is destroyed.

- * **Improved Aura:** Mezzilik's Fire Aura special ability inflicts 2d10 damage.

- * **Summon Lesser Ifrit:** As an action, the giant can summon one lesser ifrit per round. The jinni appears adjacent to Mezzilik, but is not dealt an action card until the round after it is summoned.

- * **Command Servants of the Flame:** Creatures with Immunity or Resistance (Heat) within 10" of the giant are +1 to Spirit rolls to recover from being Shaken.

- * **Invulnerability:** So long as he wear the Crown, the giant is immune to damage from any source.

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- * **Fire Aura:** Fire giants radiate fearsome heat. At the end of movement, all adjacent foes suffer 2d6 damage.
- * **Improved Sweep:** Fire giants can attack all adjacent foes at no penalty.
- * **Large:** Attackers gain +2 to attack rolls against fire giants, due to their size.
- **Powers:** *Barrier* (wall of lava), *bolt* (fire darts), *deflection* (heat shimmer), *hamper movement* (ground melts), *smite* (fiery blade).
- * **Resistance (Heat):** Immune to background heat. Half damage from heat and fire attacks.
- * **Size +5:** Fire giants are over 20' tall.
- * **Susceptibility (Cold):** Takes +4 damage from cold-fire, cold, and ice attacks.

BALEFIRE SKELETON

Swathed in balefire of varying color and with bones charred jet black, these unholy fiends can scorch nearby foes and throw crackling balls of balefire at distant enemies.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d8

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Balefire Aura:** At the end of its movement, all adjacent creatures (except other balefire skeletons) suffer 2d6 damage.
- * **Balefire Ball:** Range: 6/12/24; Damage: 2d6 plus chance of catching fire. Uses Shooting.
- * **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to fear and Intimidation.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage. Immune to disease and poison.

CENTIPEDE, GIANT

Giant centipedes are voracious hunters. Covered in thick, black chitin and possessing mandibles capable of ripping through the toughest armor, they are greatly feared by those who must explore the subterranean depths these creatures call home.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 13 (3)

Treasure: Meager, in lair

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +3:** Thick chitin.
- * **Bite:** Str+d8, AP 2.
- * **Large:** Attackers add +2 when attacking a giant centipede, due to their size.
- * **Size +4:** Giant centipedes grow up to 24' long but are rarely more than two feet wide.

CINDER HOUND

Cinder hounds appear similar to large dogs with shaggy gray coats and eyes like glowing coals. As they move, their coats, actually a layer of ash, flake away, revealing the bodies beneath to be made of densely packed, glowing cinders.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d10, Tracking d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d4.
- * **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fleet Footed:** Cinder hounds roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
- * **Go for the Throat:** Cinder hounds instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly-armored location.
- * **Resistance (Heat):** Immune to background heat. Half damage from heat and fire attacks.
- * **Size -1:** Cinder hounds are relatively small.
- * **Susceptibility (Cold):** Takes +4 damage from cold-fire, cold, and ice attacks.



CINDER MOTE SWARM

Cinder motes are tiny creatures related to fire sprites. They move in great swarms, appearing as a dark cloud of broiling ash illuminated by raging flames from within. Cinder motes fill a Medium Burst Template.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d12 Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d8

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Burn:** Swarms inflict hundreds of tiny burns each round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 fire damage to everyone in the template. Creatures have a chance of catching fire.
- * **Split:** Mote swarms are clever enough to split into two smaller swarms (Small Burst Templates) should their foes split up. The Toughness of these smaller swarms is lowered by -2 (to 5 each).
- * **Swarm:** Parry +2; Because the swarm is composed of scores, hundreds, or thousands of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his damage in Strength each round.

FIRE GIANT WARRIOR

Fire giants are hulking humanoids, with jet black skin and hair and beards the color of flames. Masters of metal-

working, they wear thick chain hauberks and wield huge, two-handed axes. Most honor Geb-Agni.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 14 (2)

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), monstrous axe (Str+d12, -1 Parry, AP 2, 2-hands), thrown rock (Range: 5/10/20, Damage: Str+d10)

Treasure: Meager.

Special Abilities:

- * **Fire Aura:** Fire giants radiate fearsome heat. At the end of movement, all adjacent foes suffer 2d6 damage.
- * **Improved Sweep:** Fire giants can attack all adjacent foes at no penalty.
- * **Large:** Attackers gain +2 to attack rolls against fire giants, due to their size.
- * **Resistance (Heat):** Immune to background heat. Half damage from heat and fire attacks.
- * **Size +5:** Fire giants are over 20' tall.
- * **Susceptibility (Cold):** Takes +4 damage from cold-fire, cold, and ice attacks.

FIRE SALAMANDER

These bright orange creatures normally live in the Heart of Fire and the surrounding Desert of Ash, though can be found anywhere there is sufficient heat. Though they appear as bipedal reptiles, they are a sentient species. They can survive in moderate temperatures for several hours before needing to return to their infernal pits.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: —

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Gear: Flaming scimitar (Str+d10; chance of catching fire)

Treasure: Worthwhile, in lair

Special Abilities:

- * **Fiery Body:** Nonmagical attacks “melt” as they impact the salamander’s body. The creature has 4 points of armor against such attacks and the attacker must roll a d6. On a 5-6, wooden weapons catch fire. On a 6, metal weapons melt. They damage die is reduced one step until Repaired by a blacksmith. A weapon reduced below d4 is destroyed. Anyone who attacks a fire salamander with their bare hands and hits suffers an automatic 2d6 damage. Salamanders often grapple their foes to scorch them in this manner.
- * **Immunity (Heat):** Immune to background heat. Take no damage from fire or heat attacks.
- * **Susceptible (Water):** Magical water-based attacks cause +4 damage. Nonmagical water has no addition-

al effect.

- * **Weakness (Cold):** Takes double damage from cold, coldfire, or ice or fire.

FUNGAL

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Gear: Sickle (Str+d4).

Special Abilities:

- * **Plant:** +2 to recover from Shaken. No effect from Called Shots. Immune to piercing attacks.
- * **Spores:** Once a day, a fungal can release spores in a Medium Burst Template centered on the fungal. The template remains in place until the fungal’s next action. Any creature in or who enters the template must make a Vigor roll or be affected. (A victim caught in multiple clouds must roll for each one separately.) Each template contains only one type of spore. GMs can either pick an entry from the table below or roll a d4. All fungals are immune to these spores.

FUNGAL SPORES

d4 Spore

- 1 **Paralysis:** The victim is paralyzed for 2d6 rounds, during which time he can take no actions.
- 2 **Choking:** Victims are Shaken for 1d6 rounds. This does not count as a physical attack.
- 3 **Blinding:** The victim is blinded. He has -6 to all Trait rolls involving sight, and his Parry drops to 2. He may make an Agility roll each round with no penalty to rub the spores free of his eyes. This counts as an action. With success, the spores are removed but it consumes the entire round. With a raise, the hero regains his sight and may act as normal.
- 4 **Berserk:** The victim automatically goes berserk (as per the Edge) and attacks the nearest creature, friend or foe, with a Wild Attack. If there are multiple targets available, roll randomly to see which one the victim attacks. Calming down is as normal for the Berserk Edge.

GLACIER ELEMENTAL

Glacier elementals are towering, hulking anthropomorphic slabs of living ice in which are embedded small stones and other debris.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 13 (3)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +3:** Comprised of packed ice.

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- * **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
- * **Immovable:** Immune to any form of knockback or effect which causes them to fall over.
- * **Size +3:** Glacier elementals stand around 8' tall but weigh hundreds of pounds.
- * **Slam:** Str+d8.
- * **Unstoppable Run:** Glacier elementals roll a d4 running die. When they run, any creature in their path must make an opposed Strength roll, both sides adding their Size, or be knocked prone and crushed for d12+6 damage. Characters of Size equal to or lower than the elemental who succeeded are pushed along with the creature. Creatures of larger Size than the elemental's movement who resist halt the elemental's movement.

JINN, LESSER IFRIT

Attributes: Agility d12+1, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fiery Touch:** Str+d6; chance of catching fire.
- * **Flame Strike:** Ifrits can project a searing blast of flame using the Cone Template. Characters within the template must beat the spirit's Shooting roll with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage, plus the chance of catching fire.
- * **Immunity (Fire):** Takes no damage from any source of heat or fire.
- * **Invulnerability:** Ifrits are immune to all nonmagical attacks, but suffer 1d6 damage when doused in at least a gallon of water, +2 per additional gallon.
- * **Weakness (Cold):** Takes double damage from cold, coldfire, or ice.

JINN, STEAM

Steam jinn share some of the abilities of both ifrits and marids. They manifest as humanoids comprised of semi-solid steam. Few manifest legs. Instead, they trail away from the torso into a wisp of steam.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: —; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
- * **Flight:** Pace 6. They may never "run."
- * **Immunity:** Takes no damage from nonmagical attacks.
- * **Steam Blast:** Steam jinn can send directed blasts of

superheated air at foes using the Cone Template and a Shooting roll. Foes may make an opposed Agility roll to avoid the blast. The damage is 2d10 to the least armored location.

- * **Seep:** Steam jinn can squeeze through any porous gaps as if it were difficult ground.
- * **Whirlwind:** As long as the jinni does not move that turn it may attempt to pick up a foe. Make an opposed Strength check and if the elemental wins, then its foe is pulled into the swirling maelstrom of its steamy body. While trapped, the target is at -2 on all rolls including damage, to hit and Strength rolls to free himself, and suffers 2d6 damage per round. The elemental cannot move as long as it wants to keep foes trapped inside its form.

LAVA DRAGON, JUVENILE

Lava dragons' scales are predominantly black, but as they walk or fly flashes of red from the underside show through, giving them the appearance of molten lava on the move. They breathe a stream of molten rock (treat as fire). This specimen has not mastered spellcasting.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (2)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +2:** Thick scales.
- * **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- * **Breath:** Breathe molten rock in a Cone Template. Every target within this cone may make an Agility roll at -2 to avoid the attack. Damage 2d10. Victims have a chance of catching fire.
- * **Fear:** Anyone who sees the dragon must make a Spirit roll to avoid the effects of Terror.
- * **Flight:** Pace 12.
- * **Frenzy:** The sun dragon can make two Fighting attacks each round, both at -2.
- * **Immunity (Heat):** Takes no damage for heat or fire-based attacks. Immune to background heat.
- * **Level Headed:** Draws two action cards and acts on the best.
- * **Size +3:** The dragon measure 20' in length.
- * **Tail Lash:** The dragon can sweep all opponents in its rear facing in an area 1" long x 2" wide. This is a standard Fighting attack. Damage d12.
- * **Weakness (Cold):** Takes double damage from cold, coldfire, and ice attacks.

LAVA GOLEM

Although superficially similar to stone golems, lava golems have fiery ichor running through their rock bodies. Their eyes glow red and their fists are superheated.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (3)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +3:** Magically hardened stone.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Size +1:** Lava golems stand over 8' high and weigh 2,000 pounds.
- * **Spit Lava:** Lava golems can spew a glob of molten lava. Range 6/12/24, Damage: 2d10, Medium Burst Template. Targets under the Template may make an Agility roll at -2 to escape the glob. Victims have a chance of catching fire.
- * **Superheated Fists:** Str+d10. Victims have a chance of catching fire.

LAVA OOZE

A lava ooze is a living blob of molten rock indistinguishable from natural lava. They are found in volcanic areas across Al-Shirkuh, but are most common in the Heart of Fire. A typical lava ooze fills a Small Burst Template, but rumors abound that larger specimens exist deep in the Heart of Fire.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d12, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Camouflage:** A lava ooze hiding among volcanic rocks or lava has +4 to Stealth rolls.
- * **Engulf:** A lava ooze may make a grapple attack against every creature under its template. On a success, it has engulfed its foe. Each round the grapple is maintained thereafter, the victim suffers 2d8 damage from heat. Victims have a chance of catching fire.
- * **Immunity (Heat):** Immune to background heat. Takes no damage from fire or heat attacks.
- * **Mindless:** Immune to Fear and Tests of Will.
- * **Sticky:** The molten body of a lava ooze is extremely viscous. On a roll of 1 on the attack die, regardless of Wild Die, the weapon has become stuck in the creature. It suffers 2d8 damage per round until destroyed or freed. Freeing the weapon requires an opposed Strength roll.
- * **Susceptible (Water):** A lava ooze takes +4 damage from water-based attacks. A gallon of water causes 1d6 damage.

- * **Weakness (Cold):** Takes double damage from cold, coldfire, or ice attacks.

MILITIA

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d4, Notice d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Leather (+1), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), dagger (Str+d4), sling (Range: 4/8/12, Damage: Str+d4)

Treasure: Meager for every 5 soldiers.



ORC PRIEST

Mezzilik's orcs worship Geb-Agni in the guise of their fire giant master.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Gear: Leather armor (+1), mace (Str+d6), medium shield (+1 Parry)

Treasure: Worthwhile

Special Abilities:

- * **Powers:** *Armor* (stone skin), *bolt* (stones), *burrow*, *deflection* (swirling rocks), *elemental manipulation* (fire and earth only), *smite* (fire).
- * **Tribal Trait:** Resistance (Heat). Take half damage from heat and fire attacks, and are immune to background heat and fire.

ORC WARRIOR

Formerly members of the Fireblood tribe, the orcs have renamed themselves the Burning Crown in honor of their new patron. Their shields carry the emblem of a black three-pronged crown swathed in red flames.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Gear: Leather armor (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short sword, axe, or mace (Str+d6), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6)

Treasure: Meager

Special Abilities:

- * **Size +1:** Orcs are larger than humans.
- * **Tribal Trait:** Resistance (Heat). Take half damage from heat and fire attacks, and are immune to background heat and fire.

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Flying Carpet Racing Rules Sheet

Laps

The race comprises three laps through the winding streets, not over them. Each lap is divided into four sections, each representing a quarter of the course. During the race, the contestants will earn tokens. These tokens indicate their relative position to each other, not where they are on the circuit.

Starting

At the start of the race, the jinn relic carpets are yet to be activated. Before they do anything else, every contestant must make a Spirit roll to command the bound jinni to cast its *fly* spell. These rolls are made simultaneously.

Raise: The carpet darts off, earning the rider 2 tokens.

Success: The rider gains one token.

Failure: The bound spirit refuses to obey the command. The character can try again next round.

Roll of 1 or Critical Failure: A roll of natural 1 on the Spirit die (regardless of Wild Die) or a critical failure brings about the Siphoning. Check the rules under the Spirit Binding Edge in *Land of Fire* for how this affects the carpet and its rider.

A Siphoning result of 5 or lower means the character is out of the race. Otherwise, he may roll again (after first getting rid of his Shaken) when the spirit recovers its powers.

Racing Roll

During each of the four sections on a lap, the contestants are dealt action cards as normal. Jokers function as they do in normal combat. Every racer must make an Agility roll. Clerics or Upuaut and ushabti mages may use their arcane skill in place of Agility for this purpose. Handling applies as a fixed modifier.

In order to get ahead, a hero may be Daring or Reckless in his flying. Being Daring gives a -2 to the Agility roll, but if the hero succeeds he gains one extra token. Reckless incurs a -4 penalty, but adds two tokens.

OBSTACLES AND CRASHES

A Club suit indicates some sort of problem the character must overcome, represented by a penalty to his roll based on the value of the card.

The nature of these problems is up to the GM, but suggestions include flying through a line of washing, a tight corner, a low walkway across the street, fans of another contestant throwing fruit, being distracted by a pretty spectator, and a sudden gust of wind.

Duce: A major obstacle (-4 penalty).

Three to Ten: A minor obstacle (-2 penalty).

Jack to Ace: A trivial obstacle (-1 penalty).

RESULTS

The result of the Agility roll determines how far the racer moves ahead, or what fate befalls him, for that section of the race.

Raise: The character earns three tokens.

Success: The racer gains two tokens.

Failure: The flyer gains one token.

Failure with a Club: Failure because of a modifier given by a Club card means an accident has occurred. Depending on the nature of the obstacle, either the carpet takes 1d6 damage from a collision at relatively low speed, or the hero must make a second Agility roll (no modifiers from Handling or the card) to avoid a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises. A Shaken result for the carpet gives the rider a -2 penalty to his next Agility roll.

Whether he avoids the collision or not, the hero earns no tokens for this round—the obstacle has slowed the character down.

Remember, flying carpets count as vehicles, and can take four wounds before being destroyed. Each wound gives the flyer a cumulative -1 penalty to steer.

Critical Failure: Regardless of his card suit, the character suffers a major collision. This works as above, except either the carpet takes 2d6 damage or the character makes an Agility roll at -2 to avoid Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises.

Victory

Because the race is handled abstractly, victory is only determined once every contestant has made his fourth roll on lap three. Whoever has the most tokens crosses the line first.

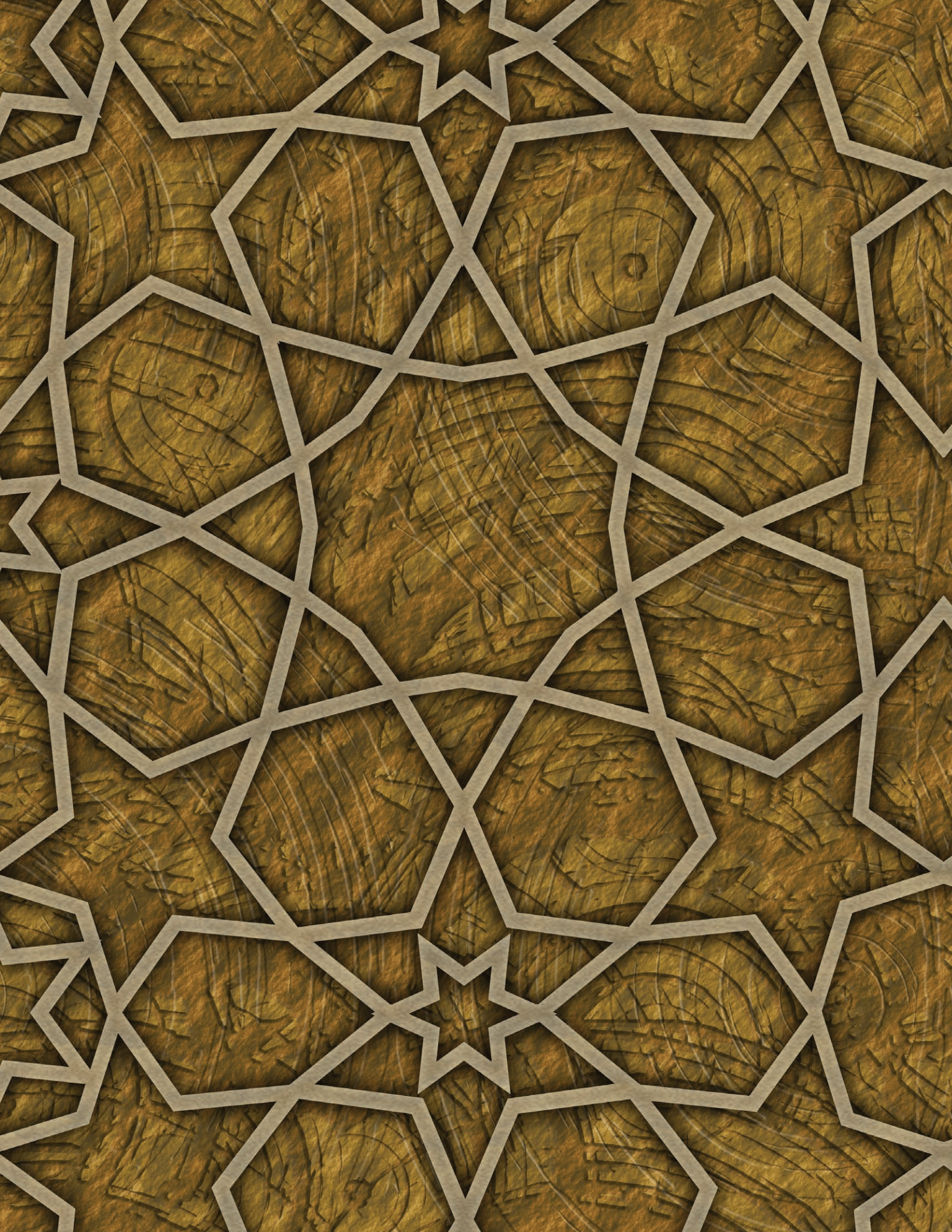
Should two or more contestants have the same number of tokens when the race ends, then the contest is extremely close (the equivalent of a modern photo finish). Everyone who shares the lead makes one last Agility + Handling roll. No cards are drawn. Whoever scores the highest total comes first.

Action

The GM is responsible for not having the race descend into a string of boring dice rolls. Like the commentator of a race, he is responsible for describing the action as carpets jostle for position, crashes occur, and daring overtaking maneuvers bring the crowd to its feet.

Whenever a Club is drawn, the GM should also describe how one of the lesser NPCs crashes out of the race. Have them fly through people's windows, get tangled in laundry, slam into walls as they fail to take a corner, and plow into the ground as they lose control.

Racers, start your carpets!



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