

Sorcerer Island

An Introductory Adventure for
Five Ancient Kingdoms

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Published by Running Beagle Games
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ISBN 978-0-9845932-5-5

IMPORTANT NOTE: READ THIS FIRST!

UNLESS YOU PLAN TO RUN THIS ADVENTURE AS THE DRAGON MASTER, YOU SHOULD **STOP READING** IMMEDIATELY! This booklet provides the notes for an introductory adventure scenario of the **5AK** adventure game and is intended only for the eyes of the player who plans to act as Dragon Master (**DM**) during the game. If you want to run a player character (**PC**) through the adventure, it may spoil the entertainment to know the secrets of the scenario ahead of time...part of the fun of an adventure is the gradual unfolding of events and encounters in the course of play and adapting to challenges as they arrive. However, once you've had a chance to play it, you're certainly welcome to read the adventure...hopefully it gives you ideas for crafting your own adventures when it's your turn to take the part of DM.

SORCERER ISLAND: Setting Introduction

Nearly five hundred miles west of Bagdabha lies the ancient Assygarian city of **DAMOSCENAS**, one-time capital of the Salamaic Empire, prior to the foundation of magnificent Bagdabha. Since it's removal as the home of the caliphate and Salamaic power, Damoscenas is but a shadow of itself with a population somewhat less than 50,000, despite its renown as a manufacturer of high quality weapons ("**Damoscenan steel**") is a phrase well-known through all the **Five Ancient Kingdoms**).

Still, it remains the seat of governorship for the **Syranian** province, and there are emirs of Assygarian descent who would like to see Damoscenas returned to its former glory, a sultanate independent of Bagdabha. The religion of Salama has never quite taken hold in Damoscenas, with nearly half the population being of the Chisholm faith and the other half worshipping the old pagan gods of Assygaria. For the most part, it is the rulers who pay lip service to the Salama religion, and they tread lightly so as not to stir the region into armed revolt. So long as the poll tax is observed, people are allowed to go about their business as they have for the last several centuries.

Such is the case with most of the province as one travels west to the great **Sea of Rhyma**. Less than seventy miles lie between Damoscenas and the coast, an exceptionally rough and mountainous land peopled with hardy folk inclined to follow the "old ways" now that the capital has moved farther inland. Even so, some have embraced both the teachings and philosophy of the Prophet, and a follower of the True Faith will not feel terribly out-of-place (Damoscenas itself boasts several beautiful mosques constructed within the last century). But it is a wild territory, and dark stories filter out to other parts of the empire, luring adventurers of every stripe.

25 miles off the coast, perhaps half a day's travel under sail with good winds, lies a dark outcropping of storm-drenched stone – a black mountain of ominous rock rising from the sea, daring sailors to step ashore and face its danger. Old maps give it the

name “Devil’s Point” and legends say the isle was once a peninsula joined to the mainland (till vengeful gods destroyed its bridge of stone in their rage). The locals, however, call it **SORCERER ISLAND**, and it is believed to be the final resting place of **XUTHUS OF DELOSI**, a wicked sorcerer who lived centuries before the coming of the Prophet.

Delosi was an ancient island kingdom, revered as the birthplace of the twin sibling gods Dia and Deus, similar in many respects to the Holy City of Chem...until the Rhyma Empire decided to destroy it five centuries ago as a point of “naval strategy.” It is not known if Xuthus was actually of Delosi, nor whether he was born there before or after it was razed, but it is always cited as his place of origin. What is known is that he was a decadent magician that trucked with demons and creatures of infernal origin and that his black magic was the scourge of the coast prior to his destruction. What the legends do not say is how exactly the sorcerer met his end, and some whisper Xuthus might one day rise again, such was his power.

Regardless of the truth, Sorcerer Island is considered a haunted place (at best) or the lair of demons (at worst). It is believed pirates and brigands use it as a hideout for coastal raids and if there are not still artifacts of Xuthus to be found in its caves, perhaps there is buried treasure to be unearthed by enterprising adventurers.

PLAYER CHARACTER MOTIVATIONS

For any game of **SAK**, it is important to consider the motivations of the player characters and the reason they might embark on a journey into perilous danger. Giving the players reason for their characters’ adventure not only helps put them in the proper mindset, but leads them to make choices based on that motivation, allowing them to reap the rewards of doing so (XP bonuses) and enriching the game play experience for all participants.

The following possible motivation tie-ins are given for the adventure:

Excitement/Curiosity: “Who wouldn’t want to know if the island is really haunted?”

Fortune: Pirate loot or the sorcerer’s buried treasure.

Knowledge: Is the island really haunted? Historic knowledge and fact-finding.

Family: As per *fortune*, but for the PC’s family.

Glory: Make a name for yourself by braving the infamous site.

Duty: Destroy the pirates that use the island as a base of operations.

Love: A chance to impress one’s paramour.

Vengeance: Destroying pirates or as per *fortune* (a means to an end).

Faith: Need to eradicate a site of demonic evil and power.

Power: Items of magical power left behind by the sorcerer.

Revolution: As *fortune* but to finance the revolution.

Fool of Fate: “We’re going on an adventure?”

SORCERER ISLAND: The Adventure

Sorcerer Island is a **basic adventure** of the type described in **Book 3**: a static environment to explore in the form of an ancient tower on a small island. For the sake of simplicity, DMs can simply start a group of PCs on the shore of the island. If players are interested in more **expert** style play, they can take part in chartering and outfitting a ship (an ambitious undertaking for starting adventurers), and DMs are free to expand the basic scenario, drawing on the notes in the introduction and using the PCs' motivations for a more involved game experience, perhaps involving the intrigues of the local emirs and their relationship (or lack thereof) to Bagdabha.

Regardless of how the PCs get to Sorcerer Island, it should be presumed they DO get there, arriving on a dark, overcast day (or windy, rainy night). The island seems perpetually besieged by storms and gloom, and even the mildest days of summer are marked with a constant drizzle. The southern beach is the only place to put ashore, and the rocky shoals prevent all but shallow-bottomed boats and galleys from reaching its grey and rocky sand.

The sections that follow provide maps and keyed locations for PCs to explore. Please note that scale differs from map to map. At the end of this booklet are **random encounter tables** for all sections.

Sorcerer Island



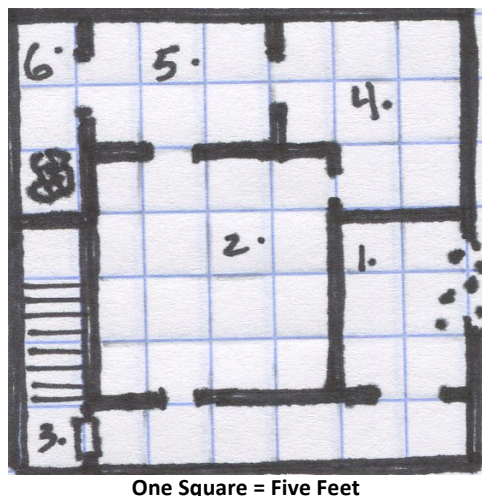
The main feature of the island is the rocky outcropping that dominates the center of the island. Not large enough to be considered a mountain, it still poses a huge, natural barrier with sheer cliffs 200' along the south and east (on the eastern side, these rise

straight out of the sea). The hill can be scaled with moderate effort from the northwestern side, but there is quite a bit of thick jungle (the dark patches on the map) that must be traversed. The island is less tropical and more swamp-like; animals spotted tend to be of the reptilian variety (snakes and lizards of prodigious size) or rodents and vermin. The place feels cold and grey, and the whole island has a stench about it (especially in the jungle) of things dead and left to rot. Worms, grubs, and insects are also in abundance; these feed the other local fauna.

The tower that was once home to Xuthus is high upon the cliffs, where the hill levels off (it is not drawn to scale on the map, being emphasized for its prominence). It is an unusual structure, huge and yet squat: a square tower measuring nearly forty feet long on each side and almost as tall, tapering slightly as it rises. Strangely, it appears to have neither doors nor windows, and it is weather-beaten and of obvious age. The walls are nearly three feet thick at the base, but on the east side there is a collapsed section that allows ingress: a hole wide enough for the entry of a (large) human.

The Tower: Level 1

GENERAL NOTES: the lack of windows in the tower means a lack of illumination. Daylight can somewhat find its way into the gloom of chamber #1, but unless the hole is widened, it is fairly dim. Torches or other light sources will need to be used in all other parts of the interior except where otherwise noted.



1. A grimy, dingy chamber, littered with refuse, bones, and rubble. The remains of a fire are near the entrance hole and the room smells of smoke. An archway to the

south leads to a narrow (five foot wide) corridor; its narrow confines prevent two people fighting side-by-side, except with a -1 penalty.

2. Four slouching figures sit on their haunches in the darkness of this chamber, ripping the flesh from the bones of their meal. These **beastmen** are dirty and near-naked, clad in rags and animal skins and armed only with primitive hand-weapons (i.e. clubs). They are hostile and consider this floor of the tower to be their “territory” (**reaction checks** at -2); they do not venture upstairs, and are fearful of the guardian.

Four (4) Beastmen (HD 1, *No Armor* (7 to hit/kill), Mettle 6+, Save H1); the largest has a copper bracelet with lapis stones worth 50 gold dinars.

3. The door of this rounded archway has rotted to almost nothing, with rusted iron bands hanging loose in their fixtures; it is possible to push through the wreckage of the door without disturbing the few pieces that remain. Beyond, a stone staircase leads upwards into darkness.

4. This room is used as the sleeping den of the beastmen, but is unoccupied when they are engaged in hunting or eating. There is nothing of value.

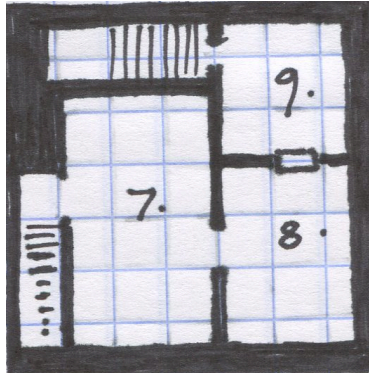
5. Bound and gagged in this chamber are two former **pirates**, now captives of the beastmen. The older one is hopelessly insane, and can do nothing but babble nonsense (or shriek in terror); the younger (**Jaq**) is desperate to escape before his turn comes to be the evening meal. Jaq will promise to show the PCs where he and his former shipmates have buried their treasure on the island. Unknown to him, his older companion actually possesses a map to the location, hidden in his tunic!

Brigand “Jaq” (HD 1, *No Armor* (7 to hit/kill), Mettle 8+, Save T1); the treasure is buried in a large sea chest on the north side of the island, and contains 1500 gold dinars worth of plunder (mostly of the *bulky* variety; the chest weighs close to 150 pounds). It will take half a day to dig up, assuming the party has digging equipment. However, depending on his treatment at the hands of the PCs, Jaq may try to betray them (or try evading them in the jungle) rather than giving up the treasure. He knows his fellow pirates will be returning to the island sometime in the near future.

6. This narrow chamber is empty, save for a large hole in the stone floor. Incautious individuals (like those fleeing in panic) have a 2 in 6 chance of accidentally falling in. The chute is slick with foulness, and any attempt to climb down without ropes or proper gear will most likely result in slipping (even thieves suffer a -1 penalty to climb rolls). Fortunately the chute is at an angle (more like a steep slide), and falling individuals will suffer no more than one hit of damage (and no damage at all with a successful save versus traps).

The Tower: Level 2

GENERAL NOTES: the second floor still has stone interior walls, floor, and ceiling, all cunningly supported by the walls and supports of the floor below. The lack of windows makes the air feel thick and stale in these upper levels.



One Square = Five Feet

7. This large stone chamber is bare of furnishings, unless one counts the dried and desiccated remains of a long-dead beastman. Standing in front of the eastern archway is a large (7'+) stone statue of a bareheaded man. This is a **living statue**, and it speaks to anyone approaching stating:

"Know thee that I am the guardian. None may pass save for the master."

The statue will repeat this warning whenever approached, and will attack anyone who attempts to pass it for the room beyond. It cannot be reasoned with, though it will answer some questions. Asked what lies beyond, it will state *"The master's possessions."* Asked 'who is the master,' it states *"The master of the tower."* Asked how long it will guard the archway or who has given it authority it will say *"until the master comes,"* or *"the master"* respectively. It will not stop individuals exiting the forbidden archway, and it will not pursue opponents out of the room; the statue cannot navigate the stairs and will fall and shatter if somehow forced to do so.

Living Statue (HD 3, *Heavy Armor* (11 to hit), Mettle -, Save H3); note that only magical weapons can harm living statues, so unless a PC has an *heirloom weapon* a group of 1st level adventurers probably won't have the means to defeat the monster in conventional combat. Players need creative methods to defeat or bypass the guardian, and receive double XP if they can find some way to destroy it.

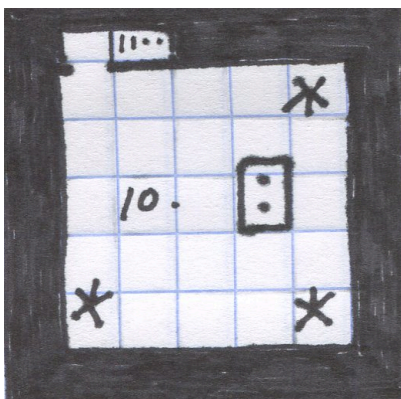
8. The furniture in this sitting room – several chairs, a low table, a small shelf, and several cushions – is surprisingly well-preserved due to the dry air and the presence of

the guardian. Unfortunately, most of the items have been rendered brittle with age and will disintegrate if handled, let alone moved. Mounted on the wall is a large mirror in a silver frame (200gd, 20#) and several well-preserved weapons of Damoscenan steel (two swords, a battle axe, a spear, and a flail) which are worth five times their normal value if sold at market. A normal quality shield also hangs on one wall, but provides no protection, shattering the first time it is struck in combat.

The door in the north archway is made of heavy, cast iron and remains strong with almost no rust. It is barred from the other side and has neither lock, nor apparent means of opening (Xuthus used **move object** to slide the bar, though an **open** spell also accomplishes the task).

9. This was the sorcerer's treasure chamber, a place to store his most prized possessions. Unfortunately for adventurers, Xuthus valued power more than material goods. Two small chests stand against each of the north and east walls; they are constructed of ancient wood and iron bands and shatter easily if any amount of force are applied against them. **Chest #1** is filled with large gold coins of ancient design (2000gd value, but 100# of weight). **Chest #2** is filled with silver coins of similar type (400gd value, but 100# of weight). **Chest #3** is has several glass bottles filled with a potent acid; these will be shattered if the chest is roughly handled, splashing the opener for a hit of damage (and ruining greaves and boots). A successful save versus traps will prevent the damage. If carefully removed, these bottles (there are four) can be hurled at opponents and do two hits of damage regardless of armor or special defenses (a successful attack roll is still needed). **Chest #4** has a small metal box filled with precious stones (500gd value, but only half a pound of bulk, or two pounds if kept in their box). Next to the western archway is a wall sconce holding an ancient torch. The stairway leads upwards; it is made of stone and very narrow.

The Tower: Level 3



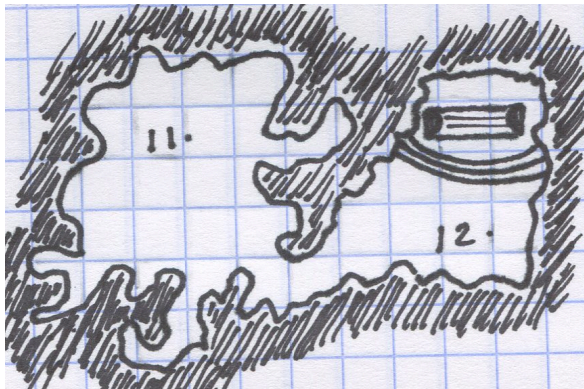
One Square = Five Feet

10. This was the sacred sanctum of Xuthus, where he communed with his patron demon and worked his darkest magic. An ancient stone altar – really just a long flat table for sacrifices – is prominent. It is occupied with two objects: a stone bowl (darkened with bloodstains) and a fist-sized crystal cut with many facets. Large, wax candles still occupy the corners of the chamber, and provide plenty of light when lit.

To guard his sanctum in his absence, Xuthus charged a **half-spider abomination** with the task of watching the chamber until his return. Effectively immortal, the creature has endured centuries without sustenance; it is ravenously hungry and will attack the first person to enter the room that is not carrying an open flame. Adventurers will be **surprised** at double the normal chance (0-4 on a D6) as it drops from a shadowy alcove in the ceiling. The abomination cannot be surprised.

Half-Spider (HD 3+2*, *Light Armor* (10/14 to hit/kill), Mettle 6+, Save H4); the crystal on the altar is the only thing of value, being an artifact gifted to Xuthus by his demonic patron. Anyone who holds it can command the half-spider (at least enough to keep it from attacking; **reaction checks** are needed for it to obey other commands), and it can be used once per day to cast the equivalent of a **Secret Knowledge** spell with the following adjustments: knowledge is not revealed over D6 hours, but over D6 minutes of gazing into its depths, and the save versus magic to prevent insanity is made at a -1 penalty for every single truthful answer received (instead of every two answers). The crystal radiates both magic and **evil**.

Beneath the Tower



One Square = Ten Feet

GENERAL NOTES: several yards of stone foundation separate the first floor of the tower from the natural caverns beneath (please note the change in scale compared to the upper level maps). Although not marked on the map, there are many cracks and

crevices in the walls through which subterranean denizens can crawl and slither, though these are too small for a human for a human to pass.

11. A large, natural cavern without illumination. The air is warm and clammy; there is a heavy mist and moisture in the air, though no noticeable source of heat or water. The floor is uneven and littered with boulders and broken stalagmites, and small reptiles of all shapes and size can be found throughout, basking in the warmth of the cave. A giant python makes its lair in the cave, subsisting off its scaly brethren, but willing to try other prey (like the PCs). Due to the mist and darkness, the python surprises PCs on a D6 roll of 0 to 4.

Giant Snake (HD 2*, *No Armor* (8/12 to hit/kill), Mettle 7+, Save H2); scattered around the floor of the cave are several small gemstones (six in total, each worth 50gd and requiring D6 turns of searching to find). A python is a constrictor-type snake, not poisonous; it wraps itself around an opponent on a successful attack roll and crushes its victim over subsequent rounds (one hit of damage per round).

12. Upon a natural stone dais in the northern part of this cave is a huge stone sarcophagus, more than ten feet long and five feet wide, carved all over with a sea of monstrous faces. The top is inset with a single enormous slab of blood-red stone (though it is covered with dust and grime), too large and heavy to move, and too thick to break except with many hours of labor and brute force.

Within the sarcophagus lies the corpse of **Xuthus of Delosi**, waiting to be raised from the dead. Xuthus cast *life after death* several centuries ago to remove himself from the attention of his enemies until such time as they had perished. All that is necessary to bring him to life is the burning of some incense upon the sarcophagus slab (a small brazier lies dusty and forgotten on the floor of the dais) while saying his name three times. Upon waking, Xuthus will use *rock to mud* to turn the red slab to a liquid state, rising from a pool of blood colored liquid in dramatic fashion.

Xuthus of Delosi (Sorcerer 7, Alignment Chaotic (Power); STR 15, INT 16, WIS 13, DEX 7, CON 9, CHA 5, SOC 9. Advantages: *Ogre-Kin*, *Linguist*. Spells known: *move object*, *see invisible*, *locate object*, *water breathing*, *beast speech*, *clairvoyance*, *change shape*, *hold creature*, *curse*, *telekinesis*, *extend life*, *rock to mud*, *secret knowledge*, *conjure demon*, *life after death*, *power word*). ADDITIONAL NOTES: the DM should roll 7D6 for the sorcerer's HPs if brought to life, doubling the total due to his *Ogre-Kin* advantage. Xuthus is huge (nearly 7' tall) and hideous in appearance due to a combination of his extended age, monstrous blood, and demonic corruption. He is a cunning strategist, arrogant, and vengeful. Despite his alignment he treats his own vows (and those of others) as binding agreements. Xuthus began his slumber of death before the rise of the Salamaic faith but is very familiar with the older monotheistic religions and will treat it the same as the others: with a mixture of contempt, loathing, and fear.

Random Encounter Tables

The Dragon Master should roll for random encounters as described in **Book 3**: once per turn, with a **zero** indicates an encounter. Each turn is ten minutes long within the tower, and one day long on the island outside the tower. The DM should also check once for random encounters during the night if an adventuring party decides to sleep in the swampy wilderness of Sorcerer Island.

Within the tower, random encounters **ONLY** take place on the first floor, and always take the form of D6 beastmen (even if the beastmen in **area #2** are slain). Depending on where they are encountered, they are either returning from a hunting excursion (empty-handed) or are investigating the noise and lights of the adventurers. Unless the PCs have left prominent warning signs, or outnumber the creatures by 2-to-1, beastmen act with extreme hostility and aggression to the invasion of their domain.

Outside the tower, the DM should roll on the following table when an encounter in the wilderness is indicated (the same table is used for both day and night):

<u>Roll D6</u>	<u>Encounter</u>
0	Quicksand! All adventurers must save versus traps to avoid being caught. PCs sink in 2D6 minutes, unless they can pull free (make an open doors roll every minute to escape; add +1 for each non-caught character lending assistance; an anchored rope prevents sinking)
2	D6 beastmen, hunting (as per encounter area #2)
3	D6+1 pirates (use brigand stats) searching for their missing companions; see tower encounter area #5
4	Single crocodile
5	Poisonous snake – use the giant vermin stats, but character is poisoned, not diseased, on a failed save. One such bite isn't fatal, but will sicken the character for D6 days (-2 penalty to all dice rolls)
6	A large iguana, rat, or other nuisance startles the party suddenly before disappearing into the brush

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ISBN 978-0-9845932-5-5