Dependent States The Cult of selket



BY JEFF LEE



Demonstructures The Cult of selket

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SELKET'S STING

For those who lead their lives in sun-scorched lands, Selket's name is both feared and revered. Her cult is strong among the desert nomads. She protects her faithful and grants them their place in the afterlife. Her name is typically translated as "she who closes the throat," perhaps in reference to the venom of the scorpion, a creature most sacred to her. However, her name can also be read as "she who opens the throat," reflecting her aspect as a goddess of healing, as one who meets the dead in the afterlife, reviving them once more to take their place in service to the gods. Civilization, however, has all but forsaken her. Her city-the City of Scorpions-lies ruined and forgotten in the burning wastes. Her devoted servants work toward the day when she once again takes her rightful place in the hearts and minds of those that live in the great cities and the fertile lands around them. Those who refuse Selket's protection, though, feel her sting.

NOTATIONS: This text refer to the following products: APG = *Advanced Players Guide*, DM = *Deep Magic*, by Kobold Press, MB = *Midgard Bestiary for Pathfinder*, UC = *Ultimate Combat*, UE = *Ultimate Equipment*, UM = *Ultimate Magic*.

LEADERS, ORGANIZATION, AND GOALS

Those that wander the desert are Selket's children. They look to her for defense against the dangers that surround them-venomous creatures, sandstorms, the blazing sun—and for healing for their afflictions. Should outsiders wrong them, they look to her to inflict those very dangers in retribution. The new high priestess of Selket, though happy with the homage paid to the goddess by the nomads, is not altogether satisfied with the situation. Seeing her goddess as the true patron of the southern lands and the one to whom its people owe their blessings, she has taken it upon herself to remind the soft city folk of Selket's power. Selket's Sting is poised to remind them of the harshness of life in these climes, where one mishapbe it drought, fire, or poison-can change everything for the worse, especially for those not in Selket's favor.

Cult leaders are usually charismatic and persuasive. Bards and sorcerers often take up the role. Clerics of Selket and occasionally desert druids with an affinity for scorpions also find positions of leadership within the cult. Selket's Sting is organized in small cells. Each cultist within a cell knows one another and answers to a leader. That leader alone knows to whom the cell answers. The organizer of a group of cells then answers to a priest of Selket. That priest answers to no one but the high priestess herself. Often situated at oases and caravanserai, these fanatics watch for those that cross the desert nomads or abuse the name or reputation of the goddess. Those who fail to repent their deeds frequently find death at the end of a stinger or sometimes a poisoned blade. Some fall asleep and drown in baths, apparent accidents.

In recent days, the cultists have infiltrated the outskirts of towns and cities in civilized areas near flood plains and rivers, seeking to increase Selket's influence-through love or fear. The impetus makes no difference, so long as the people recognize Selket's power. Their places of worship are secret, hidden in basements or abandoned buildings, identifiable only by the likeness of the goddess in sculpture or wall art: a beautiful woman wearing a scorpion headdress or a giant scorpion with the face of a beautiful woman. Rites and celebrations within Selket's cult are orgiastic affairs with wild music played on flutes and percussion instruments, braziers wafting narcotic vapors, and cultists showing their faith and devotion by handling scorpions. Getting stung by the creatures is inevitable, but the faithful see it as a test rather than as a sign of disfavor. The afflicted are treated, and if they survive, it is Selket's blessing upon them.

Out in the dunes rest the ruins of a once great city, the City of Scorpions, once and still the seat of Selket's power. Here, her high priestess resides with her attendants and loyal followers within the still-intact temple of Selket. A great hidden aquifer beneath the city provides life-giving water to those that live there. It is home to a gypsosphinx (see the Midgard Bestiary for Pathfinder) set here by Selket herself as an eternal guardian, and the temple contains myriad mummies to defend against unwanted intruders. Any who find their way in are met by the wrathful Daughter of Selket, who prefers to summon all her nearby faithful and venomous pets to defend against any infidels daring to defile the holy place of her goddess.

THE DESERT SCORPIONS

Selket's cult hosts its own assassins, named for Selket's sacred animal. They are a group of fanatical killers that readily eliminate any target set before them in Selket's holy name. Unlike hired murderers, the Desert Scorpions only kill those the cult's priests denounce as enemies and anyone attempting to interfere with them carrying out the clergy's divine decree. Poisoning is the most common manner of execution, though often their murders are set up to look like accidents or divine retribution. An asp may somehow slip unnoticed into a merchant's bath. Or maybe a priest known for persecuting the faithful of Selket is found dead in a garden, surrounded by myriad scorpions.

The killers of the Desert Scorpions are many and varied. Alchemists, fighters, rangers, and rogues are common among their ranks. Even sorcerers and wizards have been known to serve with them. Many, of course, take the assassin prestige class as they rise in rank. Out in the desert, they wear hot weather outfits the color of the sands so as to better conceal themselves in the wastes. In communities, they use various outfits and disguises, but a member can be identified by a tattoo of a scorpion, in sepia tones, concealed somewhere on the body. As the Desert Scorpions are zealous fanatics, these tattoos are usually only seen on the dead.

SADIKI SEFU, LEADER OF THE DESERT SCORPIONS

SADIKI SEFU

XP 12,800

CR 12

Male dwarf alchemist 9/rogue (poisoner) 3 LE Medium humanoid (dwarf) Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12 DEFENSE AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+ 4 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 natural) hp 93 (12d8+36) Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +6; +8 vs. poison, +2 vs. spells and spell-like abilities Defensive Abilities evasion OFFENSE Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 shortsword +10/+5 (1d6+2/19-20 + poison)

Ranged +1 sling +11 (1d4+3 plus 4 fire damage) Alchemist Extracts Known (CL 9th) 3rd (4/day)—cure serious wounds, fly, haste,

nondetection 2nd (5/day)—cat's grace, false life, fox's cunning,

invisibility, protection from arrows 1st (6/day)—bomber's eye^{APG}, cure light wounds,

detect secret doors, disguise self, shield, true strike **Special Attacks** bomb (16/day, +10/+5 ranged touch [5d6+3 fire], 8 fire splash damage, DC 17 Reflex), concentrate poison, delayed bomb, poison use, precise bombs, smoke bomb, sneak attack (+2d6), swift poisoning

TACTICS

Sadiki prefers to act with stealth, taking enemies by surprise before they have a chance to react. Before engaging a target, he may plant a delayed bomb nearby, using the explosion and fire to distract any guards. He is not especially brave or proud, and if outnumbered or obviously outclassed, he flees, using smoke bombs to cover his escape.

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 10, Cha 8 Base Atk +8; CMB +9; CMD 21 (25 vs. bull rush and trip)

Feats Brew Potion, Extra Bombs (×2), Extra Discovery, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Master Alchemist, Point Blank Shot, Throw Anything Skills Acrobatics +15, Appraise +13 (+15 to appraise metal or stone), Craft (alchemy) +18 (+27 to crafting, +28 to craft poison), Disable Device +15, Disguise +12, Fly +10, Knowledge (local) +15, Perception +12, Sleight of Hand +15, Stealth +15, Use Magic Device +14

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Gnoll SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +9, identify potions), combat trick, master poisoner (+1 to Craft [alchemy] checks to craft poison)

Combat Gear +1 shortsword, +1 sling and 10 alchemist's bullets (loaded with alchemist's fire), potion of fox's cunning, wand of cure light wounds (50 charges), 3 doses blue whinnis, 3 doses large scorpion venom, 2 doses oil of taggit, 1 dose sassone leaf residue; **Other Gear** +1 studded leather armor, amulet of natural armor +1, concealing pocket^{UE}, ring of protection +1, sandals of quick reaction^{UE}, animal glue, alchemy crafting kit, belt pouch, disguise kit, formula book, masterwork thieves' tools, silver holy symbol of Selket The current leader of the Desert Scorpions is a dwarf known as Sadiki Sefu. He looks like many of his people that inhabit the desert areas: shaven head, beard wrapped tightly in gold wire, light tunic, and sandals. However, this mild, unassuming individual has killed more people than half the assassins under his command. He is unwavering in his loyalty to the high priestess and the goddess and is a fearsome foe. His position is normally one of overseer, handing out missions and coordinating the movements of his assassins, but should a great enemy arise to threaten the cult, he does not hesitate to join the fray. Nearly all the various poisons used by the cult are manufactured by Sadiki, or at least under his watchful eye.

GAHIJI

CR 11

XP 12,800 Divine Guardian Gypsosphinx NE Huge magical beast Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, mystic sight; Perception +23 DEFENSE AC 25, touch 10, flat-footed 23 (+2 Dex, +15 natural, -2 size) hp 147 (14d10+70); fast heal 5 Fort +14, Ref +11, Will +12 Immune disease, mind-affecting effects, poison **Defensive Abilities** ability healing OFFENSE Speed 100 ft., fly 180 ft. (perfect) Melee bite +22 (2d6+10) and 2 claws +17 (1d8+5) Space 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft. **Special Attacks** pounce, rake (2 claws +17, 1d8+5) Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th, +19 concentration) At will—augury, detect magic, dimension door (only within the City of Scorpions), see invisibility 3/day—alarm, comprehend languages, greater dispel magic, knock, legend lore 1/day—arcane lock, augury, clairaudience/ clairvoyance, commune, dismissal, forbiddance, guards and wards, hold portal, slay living (DC 24) TACTICS When toying with intruders, Gahiji seeks a high

perch from which to look down and ask his riddles. That way, when combat eventually ensues, he can pounce and utilize his rake attack, usually choosing a lightly armored opponent—a spellcaster, if he can determine one. Should an enemy be separated from its companions, he uses his divine swiftness to overtake the opponent and do as much damage as possible before its allies can reach the combat. Should things go poorly, Gahiji uses dimension door to escape, taking time to heal before ambushing the opponents later. **STATISTICS**

Str 30, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 22, Cha 24 Base Atk +14; CMB +26; CMD +38 (+42 vs. trip) Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Knowledge [arcana]), Skill Focus (Knowledge [history]), Skill Focus (Knowledge [religion])

- Skills Bluff +15, Climb +14, Diplomacy +11, Fly +7, Knowledge (arcane) +15, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (religion) +15, Perception +23, Sense Motive +19, Stealth +11; Racial Modifiers +5 Perception, +5 Sense Motive
- Languages Common, Draconic, Sphinx (if using the *Midgard Campaign Setting*, add Darakhul to his list of languages)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Ability Healing (Ex) Gahiji heals 1 ability damage per round in each damaged ability score.

Blessed Life (Ex) Gahiji does not age or breathe. He does not require food, drink, or sleep.

Divine Swiftness (Ex) Gahiji is gifted with incredible speed, granting him a +4 bonus on initiative rolls. In addition, each of his speeds is doubled.

Mystic Sight (Su) Gahiji sees death coming and often can foretell the manner of a person's death. This ability does not come with a corresponding urge to share that information, however.Gypsosphinxes are notorious for hinting, teasing, and even lying about a creature's death ("If we fight, I will kill you and eat your heart. I have seen it." is a favorite bluff).

Rake (Ex) If Gahiji succeeds with both claw attacks, he is entitled to an automatic follow-up with a rake attack. If the attack roll succeeds, the rake inflicts 2d8+12 damage and may knock targets of Large-size or smaller prone. Make an immediate CMB check; if the Gahiji wins, the raked creature is knocked prone.

Sacred Site (Ex) Gahiji is assigned to guard the City of Scorpions by Selket. He is charged with protecting it from harm and preventing incursions from those not of the faith. Gahiji must keep his vigil until Selket deems his task done. If Gahiji ever moves out of the city's area, he immediately loses the divine guardian template. He cannot regain the template unless he atones for his failure (usually by completing some quest or via an atonement spell) and reenters the city within 1 week. Otherwise, he loses the template permanently, taking 6d6 points of Constitution drain as the years of lost food, drink, and sleep return to him tenfold.

Gahiji, the eternal guardian, is the defender of Selket's holy city. He gleefully destroys those that come to the city who are not followers. While he no longer needs to eat, he still enjoys feasting on the flesh of the slain. To placate his boredom, Gahiji often toys with intruders, putting on a big show by making a grand entrance often swooping down to perch on a pillar or arch announcing himself and appearing impressive, saying they can pass if they answer his riddles first. This is a lie, as he is bound to destroy or repel all invaders.

Here are some of his favorite riddles:

- What begins and has no end? What is the ending of all that begins? Answer: Death.
- I'm white, I'm round, but I'm not always around. Sometimes you see me, sometimes you don't. Answer: The moon.
- Some things, I'm told, are improved by death. Tell me, what stinks when alive but, in death, smells good? Answer: A pig.
- The only weapon which sharper grows when it is used in any row. Answer: A tongue.
- Delivered by breath, scares heroes to death. Answer: A riddle.

THE DAUGHTER OF SELKET

Dakhamunza Sat Selket—or "The Daughter of Selket"—is High Priestess of the Goddess and leader of her cult. All the myriad machinations against the followers of other gods inevitably lead back to her. She is usually found in the City of Scorpions, a once great city now ruined and half-buried in the dunes. Her constant companion, Chatha, a giant scorpion, is never far from her side. The temple also contains many guardian mummies of both the normal and the venomous variety (see the New Material section of this book) as well as living cultists that participate in secret rites and brew the deadly toxins that Selket's Sting uses against their enemies.

DAKHAMUNZA SAT SELKET

XP 38,400

Female human cleric 15 NE Medium humanoid Init +3; Perception +5

Aura doom (20 ft., shaken, Will DC 20 negates)
DEFENSE

CR 14

JEFEINSE

AC 27, touch 13, flat-footed 27 (+ 9 armor, +4 deflection, -1 Dex, +1 natural, +4 shield) hp 131 (15d8+60) Fort +14, Ref +5, Will +15; +3 vs. poison Defensive Abilities vermin sanctuary OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

Melee +2 impervious scorpion whip +18/+13 (1d4+5) or +1 heavy mace +17/+12 (1d8+4)Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 15th; concentration +19) 8th—firestorm (DC 23), summon nature's ally VIII^D 7th—blasphemy (DC 22), destruction^D (DC 23), ethereal jaunt 6th—antilife shell^D, blade barrier (DC 21), harm (DC 22), heal 5th—cleanse^{APG}, silent and still dispel magic, giant vermin^D, insect plague, righteous might, slay living (DC 20) 4th—aura of doom^{UM} (DC 20)*, greater summon swarm^D, neutralize poison, poison (DC 20), restoration, spit venom^{UM} (DC 19) 3rd-bestow curse (DC 18), cure serious wounds, dominate animal^D (DC 18), invisibility purge, magic vestment*, sands of time^{UM} 2nd—bear's endurance*, bull's strength*, death knell (DC 18), desecrate, eagle's splendor*, ghoul touch^D (DC 19) 1st—bane (DC 16), bless, cause fear^D (DC 17), command (DC 16), divine favor, shield of faith*, sun metal^{UC} 0—bleed, create water, detect poison, resistance*

*Consider these spells already cast if Dakhamunza is prepared for combat.

Domains Undead (Death subdomain), Vermin (Animal subdomain)

Special Attacks channel negative energy (7/day, 7d6, Will save DC 25)

TACTICS

Dakhamunza prefers to use her spells and channeling from a distance to allow her underlings to engage opponents, but if pressed, she engages with her



scorpion whip while mounted on Chatha. Should an enemy get in close, she unleashes a harm or spontaneously cast inflict spell to do as much damage as possible.

When not prepared for combat, Dakhamunza's stats are adjusted as follows: AC 20, touch 9, flatfooted 20; hp 101; Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +14; Melee +2 impervious scorpion whip +16/+11 (1d4+3) or +1 heavy mace +15/+10 (1d8+2); Special Attacks channel negative energy (Will save DC 23); Str 12, Con 14, Cha 14; CMB +14; CMD 23

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 8, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 18 **Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 25

- Feats Channel Smite, Command Undead, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Extra Channel, Improved Channel, Improved Initiative, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (necromancy), Still Spell
- Skills Craft (alchemy) +13, Heal +15, Knowledge (nature) +10, Knowledge (religion) +13, Ride +5, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +13
- Languages Common (if using the Midgard Campaign Setting, add Tamasheq to her list of languages) SQ death's embrace, death's kiss (7/day), vermin companion (giant scorpion)
- **Combat Gear** +2 *impervious scorpion whip*, +1 *heavy mace*, large scorpion venom (2 doses), minor crown of blasting, potions of cure serious wounds (2), feather token (whip), scrolls of align weapon, owl's wisdom, and spell immunity; **Other Gear** masterwork buckler, +2 poisonresistant breastplateUE, amulet of natural armor +1, headband of inspired wisdom +2, robe of needlesUE, exotic military saddle, healer's kit, platinum holy symbol (500 gp)

CHATHA, GIANT SCORPION COMPANION

N Large vermin

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21 (+11 natural, -1 size) hp 85 (10d8+40) Fort +10, Ref +3, Will +3; +4 vs. enchantment Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee 2 claws +11 (1d8+4 plus grab) and sting +11 (1d8+4 plus poison)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft. Special Attacks poison (frequency 1 round/6 rounds, effect 1d2 Str damage, cure 1 save, Fort Save DC 18)

STATISTICS

Str 19, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 2
Base Atk +7; CMB +11; CMD 21 (33 vs. trip)
Feats Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (claws), Improved Natural Attack (sting), Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness
Skills Climb +12, Perception +11
Tricks Known: combat training

CULT ACTIVITIES AND ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are several methods of introducing Selket's Sting as adversaries for the PCs in your campaign. They can be either adversaries for single adventures or returning enemies in an extended campaign, where the PCs take the role of defenders of civilization and the true gods against the rising threat of a presumptuous goddess and her fanatical followers.

APL 1-3

- A caravan that the PCs are either guarding or traveling with draws attention during a routine check at a city gate. The discovery of a hidden cache of poisons has the caravan leader arrested for contraband. She protests her innocence and begs the PCs to find the real culprit and clear her name. Subsequent investigation reveals a Selket cultist among the caravan folk and leads to a confrontation with a local cell of Selket's Sting for whom the poisons were intended.
- The PCs are hired by a local government or religious authority to investigate rumors of a dangerous cult operating within the city. The PCs must gather information, leading them to the cell of Selket's Sting, and find a way to infiltrate their ranks. Dangerous initiation rites—like handling scorpions— have to be endured in order for the PCs to gain the trust of the cult and learn of its leaders and plans, eventually performing a "sting" of their own by setting up the cell to be taken down by the local authorities.

• The son of a local merchant is kidnapped by Selket's Sting to be used as a sacrifice. The PCs must track the cultists to their lair, interrupt the ceremony, and save the young man.

APL 4-6

- A rash of scorpion attacks leads to a call from local authorities for a bounty on the creatures as well as a reward for anyone able to find the cause of the infestation and stop it. If the PCs take up the cause, they eventually find a cave in the hills nearby where Selket's Sting cultists are breeding them.
- A local noble publicly disparages the goddess Selket and narrowly avoids an assassination attempt. He receives a note that declares the Desert Scorpions will deliver his soul to the goddess before the new moon ends. He hires the PCs to protect him for the next three days, during which they must thwart various attempts on the noble's life. Snipers, poisoned food and drink, and other freak "accidents" must be thwarted before a final attempt is made, involving a full assault on the

noble's house by a group of Desert Scorpions and a venomous mummy.

• A prestigious art gallery or museum is robbed. The thieves have taken only a single piece: a gold scorpion statuette. PCs must track the thieves back to their lair. There, they find cultists of Selket led by a priestess who is unwilling to give up the relic of her goddess so recently returned to the hands of the faithful.

APL 7-9

• A prophecy or legend states that the region will fall out of favor with a popular deity should the local population of his sacred animals ever leave. Selket's Sting seeks to actively bring this prophecy about, so Selket's influence can reign in the area. PCs must protect the sacred animals and find and stop the cultists before they bring their plans to fruition.

- A renowned alchemist is kidnapped by Selket's Sting, who wish her to create a particularly virulent poison for them to use against their enemies. The PCs must seek out the cult and either negotiate for the alchemist's release or stage a rescue.
- A notorious bandit chieftain is wanted by the authorities and has a sizeable bounty on her head. However, she knows this and is on the run. Furthermore, she is considered a favored daughter of Selket and friendly with the cult. The local government wants to avoid any major transgressions against the cult but wants the bandit captured. PCs must pursue her as she flees for sanctuary in the City of Scorpions and catch her before she makes it into the ruins.

APL 10-12

• A noble lies upon his deathbed, but the followers of Selket refuse to mummify his body for burial until he atones for an incident in his past where he wronged the cult. He begs the PCs to intercede on his behalf, to consult the high priestess and find what can be done to balance the scales. Entering the City of Scorpions requires gaining passage past Gahiji, the eternal guardian, by answering his riddles. If this is accomplished, Dakhamunza demands they travel to an ancient pyramid—filled with deadly traps and mummified guardians—and reclaim relics sacred to the cult.

- The waters of the sacred, life-giving river have become polluted and toxic. All the settlements along its banks are doomed unless the cause can be found. PCs taking up the quest trek upstream to find a strong cult bastion pumping poisons into the river from within their fortress. The cult fights fiercely to protect their secret weapon, an artifact: a great cauldron that constantly produces a miasma of toxins, flowing out in an endless torrent. Should the PCs defeat the cultists, they then need to find a way to destroy the noxious artifact before its toxins turn the fertile floodplains of the river into a poisonous wasteland.
- The cult of Selket can no longer be tolerated. Its cruel machinations against the civilized people of the cities have gone on long enough. The PCs are tasked with crushing Selket's Sting once and for all. First, they must roust any cells in the immediate area, taking prisoners in order to determine where

SELKET'S STING IN MIDGARD

Worship of Selket is common among the Tamasheq nomads of the Sarklan Desert. Her priests hold great sway among them, looked to for protection, healing, and dealers of vengeance. Dakhamunza Sat Selket resides in the City of Scorpions, directing the cult's activities from the temple there with Gahiji, the eternal guardian, ever watchful for the approach of the cult's enemies. Sadiki Sefu calls the free city of Siwal his home, overseeing the activities of the Desert Scorpions from there and producing poisons which are shipped secretly with the caravans headed west to cells throughout Nuria Natal, Given Selket's connection to death and especially mummification, it is not unheard of for nobles to be sympathetic to her followers or, possibly, secretly cult members themselves in order to ensure they are properly delivered into the afterlife upon death. Some tribes of gnolls venerate her name as well.

Selket's Sting, under Dakhamunza's fervent leadership, is forcefully bringing recognition of Selket's power to Nuria Natal, Farms and settlements along the Nuria River have reported increased animal attacks. The animals in question are unusually aggressive in their attacks, leading some to believe they are compelled by magic. Recently, there has been a rash of killings among the merchants in Per-Kush, retaliation by Selket's Sting for underhanded dealings with the Tamasheq. In Per-Bastet, the poisoning of cats has the Reborn Queen-Goddess wroth with anger and the gnolls are unsettled by an unexplained infestation of scorpions in the city. Per-Xor's religious tensions over the cult of Ra-Amon-Ra have been rising in recent months, in no small part to cultists of Selket's Sting playing the established religion of Aten against the messiah cult in an attempt to goad them into open warfare.

the cult is based. This leads to retaliation by the Desert Scorpions, who look to eliminate the PCs before they find the cult's headquarters. Eventually, the PCs confront Sediki Sefu. Killing or capturing the head of the Desert Scorpions brings them the location of the City of Scorpions and the temple of Selket. Alternatively, he escapes, and they follow him there. Finally, the PCs must invade the city, defeat its eternal guardian, and storm the temple of Selket, facing the most fanatical of cultists, monstrous scorpions, and a horde of mummies, and, finally, the Daughter of Selket herself.

PLAYING FOR THE OTHER TEAM

While the cult of Selket is portrayed here as an enemy to set against the PCs, it does not have to be so. Another option is to play Selket's Sting as protagonists that deserve the PCs' aid. View the cult as zealous followers, attempting to help their goddess regain her standing among an uncaring populace that has forgotten her, worshiping jealous gods that wish her to remain out of favor. While Selket is at best a neutral goddess, the case can be made that she plays an important role, given her purview is healing and death—specifically, the proper passage of the dead into the afterlife. In this sort of scenario, the PCs can be secret followers of Selket, helping to spread her influence and increase her worshipers.

This could be a tricky line to toe, as the use of poison and assassination is usually frowned upon by good (or polite) societies. Yet if the opponent is a corrupt government or an overbearing and intolerant religion holding all the power, the underdog may need to resort to extreme measures in order to fight back. Poison could be a weapon of last resort or reserved for those too powerful to deal with on equal terms. Stealth, subterfuge, and guerrilla tactics are perfectly acceptable means of dealing with a greater foe. This can also be dealt with in a Robin Hood sort of fashion. The people may long for a return of the old traditions and may secretly favor Selket's cult, providing what aid they can while outwardly obeying the current regime.

A campaign of this sort would require a bit of retooling. In this case, they need to work in secret with cover stories, disguises, and other methods of hiding their identities and activities from authorities. Should they be discovered, they may have to go underground to avoid capture. Since the PCs are working against the powers that be, they need other resources upon which to draw. A wanted criminal cannot just walk into the market bazaar to do their shopping. However, the black market is glad to sell them what they require. Other outlaws may be willing to work deals based on having mutual enemies.

The PCs of course would be open to the mysteries of the cult. In this case, the Selket's Favor and Expert Embalmer traits (see New Material) would be options for them. The poisoner archetype would be well-suited as a follower of Selket, as would an oracle with the Life mystery. Alchemists specializing in poison bombs or taking the mummification discovery would work thematically as well. Desert druids with vermin animal companions and clerics of Selket with the new vermin subdomain are obvious choices. Victory for the PCs could mean the ushering in of a new age with Selket once again gaining primacy.

NEW MATERIAL

The following new material can function in any *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* adventure.

NEW MONSTERS

The desert demands much from those that would call it home. To survive, creatures must be strong.

MUMMY, VENOMOUS

XP 1,600
LE Medium undead
Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +14
Aura despair (30 ft., paralyzed for 1d4 rounds, Will
DC 17 negates)
DEFENSE
AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+10 natural)
hp 60 (8d8+24)
Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +8
DR 5/-; Immune undead traits
Weaknesses vulnerable to fire
OFFENSE
Speed 20 ft.
Melee slam +14 (1d8+10 plus Selket's venom)

CR 5

Special Attacks Selket's venom, toxic smoke statistics

Str 24, Dex 10, Con —, Int 7, Wis 15, Cha 16 Base Atk +6; CMB +13; CMD 23 Feats Cleave, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (slam) Skills Perception +14, Stealth +11 Languages Common

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, squad (2–6), or detail (7–12) Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Selket's Venom (Su) The venomous mummy's body and wrappings are magically imbued with substances that are highly toxic. Any creature hit with its slam attack is subject to this effect, as is any creature that comes in physical contact with the venomous mummy (e.g. touching the mummy bare-handed, grappling, using a bite attack, and so on) without taking precautions against the poison.

Curse and poison: type contact/slam; *save* Fort DC 17; *onset* 1 minute; *frequency* 1/minute; *effect* 1d6 Con and 1d6 Dex; cure —. Selket's Venom is both a curse and a poison and can only be cured if the curse is first removed, at which point the poison can be magically removed. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Toxic Smoke (Ex) The venomous mummy's poisonimbued wrappings and flesh create toxic fumes when burned. On the round a venomous mummy takes fire damage, it is surrounded by a cloud of toxic smoke in a 10-ft. radius. This cloud persists for a full round after the venomous mummy takes fire damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Toxic smoke: type inhaled; save Fort DC 17; onset —; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1 Con drain/1d3 Con; cure 2 consecutive saves.

These variant mummies are crafted by Selket's faithful to guard their holy sites and tombs. Should Selket be slighted by a particular community, it might feel the goddess's wrath in the form of a group of venomous zombies descending upon them. Retribution is often delivered by killing the leaders of the group, but for greater heresies, a decimation of the population is not unheard of.

SCORPION SWARM CR 4 XP 1,200 N Diminutive vermin (swarm) Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +5 DEFENSE AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +4 size) hp 39 (6d8+12) Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2 Defensive Abilities swarm traits; Immune weapon damage OFFENSE Speed 20 ft., burrow 5 ft. Melee swarm (2d6 plus poison) Space 10 ft.; Reach 0 ft. STATISTICS Str 1, Dex 16, Con 14, Int -, Wis 13, Cha 2 Base Atk +4; CMB -; CMD -Skills Climb +7, Perception +5, Stealth +19 (+23 in deserts); Racial Modifiers +4 Climb, +4 Perception, +4 Stealth (+8 in deserts) SQ swarm traits, vermin traits ECOLOGY **Environment** warm deserts **Organization** solitary, pair, or colony (3–6 swarms) Treasure none SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) *Swarm*: injury; *save* Fort DC 15; *frequency* 1/round for 4 rounds; *effect* 1 Dexterity and 1 Strength damage; *cure* 1 *save*. The *save* DC is Constitution-based.

NEW MAGIC ITEM

It should be no wonder that the magic items tied to Selket are thematically tied to things she holds sacred.

SELKET'S BRACER

Aura moderate necromancy and transmutation; CL 9th

Slot wrists; Price 13,800 gp; Weight 1/2 lb.

This bronze bracer is crafted in the shape of a scorpion, its legs curled around the wearer's wrist, tail raised and ready to strike. Once a day, as a swift action, the wearer can poison a weapon. This weapon must be wielded in the hand upon the same side which the bracer is worn. The tail of the scorpion animates and touches the blade, envenoming it with a dose of giant scorpion venom. Also, as a free action, the wearer can command the bracer to grant her 30 ft. tremorsense for 10 rounds once per day. These rounds do not need to be used consecutively, and the ability can be dismissed as a free action. Finally, the wearer gains a +2 resistance bonus to Fortitude saves against poison.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *beast shape III, poison*; **Cost** 6,900 gp

NEW SPELL

The dangerous life of a cultist, filled with scorching sands and bloody encounters, demands serious magic.

SUMMON SWARM, GREATER

School conjuration (summoning); Level bard 4, druid 4, sorcerer/wizard 4 Casting Time 1 round Components V, S, M/DF (a square of red cloth) Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level) Effect one swarm of centipedes, crabs, death butterflies, scorpions, or wasps Duration concentration + 3 rounds Saving Throw none; Spell Resistance no

You summon a swarm of centipedes, crabs, death butterflies^{MB}, scorpions, or wasps (your choice), which attacks all other creatures within its area. (You may summon the swarm so that it shares the area of other creatures.) If no living creatures are within its area, the swarm attacks or pursues the nearest creature as best it can. You can direct the swarm to attack a creature other than the one nearest by spending a move action.

VERMIN SUBDOMAIN

Associated Domain: Animal.

Replacement Power: The following granted power replaces the *speak with animals* power of the Animal domain.

Vermin Sanctuary (Su): This ability activates automatically in situations where you would be attacked by vermin. Any creature of the vermin type that attempts to attack you must make a Will save (DC = 1/2 your cleric level + your Wisdom modifier). If the save succeeds, the vermin can attack normally and is unaffected by that casting of the spell. If the save fails, the vermin can't follow through with the attack, that part of its action is lost, and it can't directly attack you for the duration of the spell. This ability lasts a number of rounds per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier.

The 4th level animal companion ability for this subdomain uses the rules for the druid rules for vermin companions^{UM}. It otherwise functions as the 4th-level granted power for the Animal domain.

Replacement Domain Spells: 2nd—*summon swarm*, 3rd—*repel vermin*, 4th—*greater summon swarm*, 5th—*giant vermin*

NEW TRAITS

To live by the sands is to die by the sands. Those born under Selket's gaze show the signs of her influence.

SELKET'S FAVOR: You have often participated in the cult's ritual handling of scorpions. While you have been stung, you have always survived the trials of the goddess. You gain a +2 trait bonus to Fortitude saves against poison.

EXPERT EMBALMER: You have studied the embalmer's trade and know the secrets of proper mummification. In areas where mummification is practiced, you gain a +1 trait bonus to Diplomacy checks. Your knowledge of anatomy also provides a +1 trait bonus to Heal checks, and any mummy created by you that is animated gains 3 bonus hit points.

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