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BY JEFF GRUBB • PFRPG CONVERSION BY JIM GROVES FOR ADVENTURERS OF 5TH OR 6TH LEVEL

"Wherein foul flesh hides beneath a fair face, and yet the stench persists." They tell the tales in low whispers. They speak of beings which are not quite human, beings that feed upon human flesh. And they say that these creatures walk among us, in the marketplaces and caravanserais, hunting their prey, and bringing it back to their foul master.

The tales are true.

Adventure Background

Oasis of the Blood Moon is an adventure highlighting roleplaying and deception. The adventure has three parts, which may be played concurrently or mixed with other adventures.

The Oasis of the Blood Moon is a lost oasis controlled by ghouls led by Abd-Nezka, the Ghoul Mage. Most ghouls are easily identified by their appearance and their pungent scent, which is a combination of rotted flesh and grave earth. The odor can be covered by strong perfumes and spices, but their appearance normally keeps ghouls to the shadows.

But Abd-Nezka has a powerful magical device, the *fountain of blood*. This item enables his minions to take on human form in order to pass among the living, so that they can kidnap victims to bring back to their lord. The ghouls keep up their masquerade until they make a fatal misstep, which brings the adventurers into play.

Adventure Summary

The adventurers happen upon one of the ghouls' kidnapping attempts. After the PCs do what they can to foil the abduction, the local vizier recruits them to track down the rest of the ghouls and to destroy their magic. In order to do so, they must locate the Oasis of the Blood Moon and infiltrate it, to end the reign of the Ghoul Mage.

Part 1: A Whiff of Spice

THE GRAND SOUK (CR 6)

The adventure begins in the Grand Souk in Siwal. The PCs are there to deal with some sundry details of adventuring: laying in supplies, or arranging to join a caravan or pricing some particularly interesting bauble from their last haul, perhaps around the district of Old Cyreen.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The original *Six Arabian Nights* was written in 2007 and delivered to its patrons in 2008. At that time, Open Design (the publishing label that Kobold Press would arise from) chose to refer to a popular carrioneating undead creature as a "ghul." This name is entirely appropriate from the perspective of real-world mythology, and the original authors used it as such.

Seven years later, however, things are more complicated. Paizo Publishing created a new monster called a ghul, which is an undead genie and a very eerie and setting-appropriate monster. It is neat enough that it is used as a creature in *Eleven Arabian Nights*. Faced with a choice between strict authenticity and the risk of confusing GMs and denying ourselves the use of a nifty open content monster that fits the theme, we decided to change the name. We're reserving the term "ghul" for an undead genie, and "ghoul" in this adventure now signifies a mortal turned undead carrion eater.

We wanted both new and original backers to know the change was no accident but a thoughtful decision made with cause.

The market square bustles, filled with merchants and buyers, beggars and sharp-eyed thieves. Vendors hawk their wares beneath broad awnings, while the camels of a newly arrived caravan bellow over the milling crowds. Your business is interrupted suddenly. A shriek comes from a shaded alley nearby—a female voice crying for help!

At the start of this scenario, the characters are either in the wide thoroughfare between two rows of shops, or in one of the shops on the eastern side of the market. The PCs might ignore the matter and go on with their business Indeed, the merchants seem more interested in protecting their wares than in helping someone in trouble. If the PCs ignore this cry for help, they will still be drawn into the situation—go to part 2. Assuming the PCs decide to investigate, read:

You reach the entrance of a narrow, high-walled alleyway, with three doors and archways along its length. About 15 feet away, a young woman lies collapsed at the feet of a broad-shouldered, snarling man dressed in red. Farther away from you, a second man, similarly dressed, is heading deeper into the alley with a second young woman slung over his shoulder.

The alleyway is in dim light, even during the day, which permits creatures to use Stealth unless the PCs take the actions required to raise the illumination (unless they brandish torches in the marketplace during the afternoon, of course). Treat shop doors as standard wooden doors if details become necessary, with either interior bars or DC 25 locks (owners have keys). All the businesses are open at this time of day.

The secret cellar door marked on the map can be located with a successful DC 20 Perception check. The cellar itself is a simple 10-foot-by-10-foot room accessed by a ladder—more of a hiding spot than a secret lair.

WOMEN: The women are both paralyzed by the ghoul's touch, but not seriously wounded. The victim on the ground is a larger woman who may require being carefully lifted. A careful look makes it clear that the women are paralyzed; no check is required.

CREATURES: Both "men" are ghouls, disguised by the magic of the *fountain of blood*, which changes their appearance but does not mask their scent. For that, they use heavy perfumes. A character who comes within 5 feet of one of these ghouls can make a DC 10 Perception check to notice the odor of rot and decay beneath the smothering scent of perfume. The ghouls attacked Hafa and Randa, two young women shopping. One paralyzed its prey, and is 25 feet past the alleyway entrance, heading the other way.

The closer ghoul (marked G1) is only 15 feet from the entrance, and blocks the way. Those going after the second ghoul (marked G2) must first get past the closer ghoul, who protects their retreat. Note that all the ghouls have Combat Reflexes. The nearer ghoul also provides soft cover to its companion (+4 to AC against ranged attacks).

The nearer ghoul stands and fights, while the other ghoul



entrance to a spice shop owned and operated by a third ghoul, Zehtar al-Tufail (marked MG), also in a magical human disguise. If the PCs enter the shop through the same doorway, they find the shopkeeper very helpful and agitated—he tells them that a ruffian with a woman slung over his shoulder ran through his shop and out into the market.

Actually, Zehtar hid his comrade and paralyzed prey in a shallow basement beneath a trap door (T). Characters who go out the front door find that they have lost their prey. No one in the market has seen the kidnapper or his victim. The pungent spices in the shop (cinnamon, pepper, and cumin) mask the odor of the ghouls. If Zehtar persuades the PCs to run through his shop to the main thoroughfare, he closes his shop for the day within the next minute. If the PCs return thereafter and bang on his door, he protests that he's only a poor merchant and he wants no truck with chases through his establishment. If the PCs attack Zehtar but never find the trapdoor, they are soon questioned by the watch for assaulting a merchant; Zehtar is scrupulous about paying his taxes and is considered a merchant in good standing at the souk.

Ghoul Rogues (3)

CR 3

XP 800 each Ghoul rogue 3 (*Bestiary*)

CE Medium undead

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+4 Dex, +2 natural) **hp** 40 (5d8+18)

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5; +2 bonus vs. channeled energy **Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +2, evasion, trap sense +1; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +7 (1d6+3 plus disease and paralysis), 2 claws +7 (1d6+3 plus paralysis)

Special Attacks disease, paralysis (1d4+1 rounds, DC 14, elves are immune to this effect), sneak attack +2d6

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 19, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 16 **Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20

Feats Combat Reflexes, Escape Route^{UC}, Weapon Finesse **Skills** Acrobatics +12, Climb +11, Escape Artist +12, Intimidate +11, Perception +9, Sense Motive +9, Sleight of Hand +12, Stealth +12, Swim +8

Languages Ghul, Southlands Common

SQ rogue talent (finesse rogue), trapfinding +1 **Other Gear** 5 gp, circular pendant worth 10 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Su) Ghoul Fever: Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 14; *onset* 1 day; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Charisma-based.

DEVELOPMENTS: The player characters might defeat or slay all three of the ghouls, or one or two could escape carrying the smaller of their victims with them. The ghouls flee if channeling is used against them, or if they take more than 20 points of damage, and they carry away Randa, a handmaiden connected to the local rulers.

Soon after the last ghoul is defeated or escapes, the local guards show up. They are polite to the heroes, ask for their names, and request a statement of what has happened from the PCs and the shopkeeper (if he is still around). The guards then escort Hafa away, and carry off Randa (if she was rescued). They will claim the bodies (which still look like men) and take custody of any prisoners. The guards look the other way if the PCs examine the bodies. Each one wears a circular pendant stamped with the image of the full moon, made of blood-red metal.

At this point, the attackers' ghoulish nature has not been conclusively determined. The transformed men have long fingernails and sharp teeth. A successful DC 13 Knowledge (religion) check identifies them as ghouls that are under a permanent polymorph effect. This magical disguise wears off 1 hour after they're slain; see the *fountain of blood* on page 8. Any ghoul fever that spreads before the creatures are identified gets misattributed to some poison the ghouls carry, though a DC 13 Heal check correctly identifies it.

Part 2: Blood Moon Rising

A few hours after the kidnapping incident (regardless of how it turned out), the adventurers receive a polite but firm invitation from Akil ibn Khaldun, vizier to the Sultan Al-Mamun, Defender of the Faithful (or other force of law). Four polite, well-armed guards deliver the invitation. It may be ignored, but more guards arrive, equally polite, and equally firm.

If the adventurers ignored the cry for help (see part 1), sharp-eyed thieves who are not above selling information identified them to the guards as suspects. Otherwise, the guards say that the Vizier ibn Khaldun wishes to reward them for their bravery, and to speak with them of important matters.

The guards show the adventurers to a room in the palace with sumptuous cushions and wall hangings. Servants bring their choice of sherbets or coffee. A low table stands to one side, with a bag for each adventurer. Each bag has 100 gp (a small token of appreciation).

The vizier enters, flanked by guards, and expresses his thanks. This text assumes that one of the maidens was captured; adjust to suit the circumstances.

"Many thanks to you. One of the young women

you rescued was the daughter of a local sheik. Her rescue reflects well on Siwal. However, Randa, the other woman, was a favorite handmaiden, so her capture does not reflect well upon Siwal or the sultan. We need your aid in recovering the kidnapped woman—will you help, noble sirs?"

If both women were rescued, the effusive vizier praises them and asks for their aid in any event. The fact that Randa was harassed in an allegedly safe area during the day reflects poorly on the sultan's good governance of Siwal and a cause for embarrassment. It is perfectly reasonable the sultan wants to send a clear message about the dangers of threating his allies and their families.

Ibn Khaldun is particularly interested in the kidnappers had the heroes seen them before? How did the battle progress? Did they notice anything interesting about them?

After getting the basic answers (and ascertaining that the PCs are willing to aid in exchange for 1,000 gp each plus whatever loot they encounter along the way), he leads them into the next room, where one attacker's body lies beneath a sheet.

The vizier gives the nod. A guard pulls back the sheet—to reveal a ghoul's body, complete with purplish, mottled skin, long flesh-rending nails, jagged teeth, and an inhuman visage. It is dressed in the red garb that the kidnappers were wearing. The wounds are those that you inflicted.

The magic of the *fountain of blood* has worn off. If the PCs slew the other ghouls, their bodies are here. If the characters captured any disguised ghouls, they still have their human appearance, and are prisoners. The vizier's offer is simple—these ghouls have some spell that allows them to pass as humans. They appear organized. The heroes must find the heart of that organization and rip it out.

Should any of the disguised ghouls be still alive and captive, the PCs must confront one and get the information out. This may be done through an opposed Bluff check or Diplomacy (a ghoul's initial attitude is hostile; the PCs need to get it to helpful to find the location), or through making a deal (the captive ghoul would like nothing better than to get far, far away from the human city). As undead, ghouls are immune to mind-affecting effects and therefore cannot be intimidated (though they will act intimidated if they think they can get away with it). A use of channel energy or the Turn Undead feat might throw the fear of the gods into them.

If all the available ghouls are dead, the PCs' challenge is greater. Their undead status makes them immune to *speak with dead* as well as to the idea of raising them and then questioning them. If the ghoul shopkeeper is still alive, he would be a good place to start. (Vizier ibn Khaldun will be more than happy to have the shopkeeper captured and brought in—once he is bathed, his ghoulish stench is obvious). Otherwise, the adventurers are faced with the challenge of locating some new ghouls to question.

The heroes might then attempt a series of patrols, even setting up decoys, or visit the Pauper's Field outside the necropolis in order to discover more of the loathsome creatures. After a few days of such activity, throw a pair of ghouls (it might be better to use ghasts or even dread ghasts) against them to provide prisoners.

Speaking with Undead

The ghouls cannot be threatened, but they do respond well to pain (healing magic), promises, or trickery (see above). Once they are properly convinced, they spill their cowardly undead guts. Here is their story:

We were like any other tribe of ghouls, raiding the graveyards and seeking easy prey among stragglers of the caravans. Into our midst came Abd-Nezka, a powerful mage who bore with him a magical fountain that masks our appearance.

We made our home in the Oasis of the Blood Moon, about three days' travel south. The caravans avoid it because of polluted water, but that does not matter to us. We have a prosperous settlement there. We travel among the prey as merchants, and bring back the youngest and most succulent victims to Abd-Nezka to fuel his magical engine.

If the PCs press for details, they learn there are roughly a hundred ghouls at the oasis, all dressed in "man-flesh." They all smell of the grave, or of heavy scents that mask their grave odor. Abd-Nezka lives in a large cavern behind a waterfall at the far side of the oasis, with four powerful bodyguards and prisoners to feed his magic.

After getting the information, the PCs are left to do with the ghouls as they see fit. They are undead monsters, and any promises the characters made to them do not need to be considered binding. The vizier is more than happy to see them slain. If the PCs request that they be incarcerated, the ghouls can be taken prisoner—but they will escape at their first opportunity, once the characters have left the scene, and go to warn Abd-Nezka of the impending assault.

Part 3: The Oasis

The oasis is a simple one, a pool of turquoise water amid reddish-brown stones, and a cave accessible through a narrow passage. Thorny shrubs and a few camellia bushes provide a modest amount of soft cover.

The PCs have the choice of assaulting the oasis or trying to sneak in. The vizier endorses the latter approach, due to the time factor of keeping the existing hostages alive, including the handmaiden, but is willing to part with a unit of troops (see the sidebar) if the characters insist on such assistance. In any event, he provides the party with three scrolls of *remove disease* (CL 5th) as his contribution to the cause.

INFILTRATION (CR 7)

CREATURES: There are 100 normal ghouls camped around the oasis. If necessary, mark ten 20-foot squares which contain 10 ghouls apiece around the area. These squares represent the area the PCs must navigate through to get to the cave. The intention is not to embroil the PCs in a tedious battle with low-level creatures, but to inspire them to use stealth and cunning.

First and foremost, the characters ought to realize that using any light sources at the oasis will immediately mark them as interlopers, no matter what other measures they take to pass unmolested through the ghouls. (They arrive at the oasis during the day, so a light source is not needed outside, but the interior of the cave is dark.)

Disguise is an appropriate tactic. Though most PCs don't have many ranks in that skill, the characters do have some situational advantages. Smelling of grave earth grants a +6 situational bonus, while dousing oneself with heavy perfume grants a +4 situational bonus. In addition, a disguise kit grants a +2 bonus, and one kit is enough for the entire party.

NOTE: The adventure *The Gravebinder's Daughter* contains a description of Siwal's Grand Necropolis (as does the *Southlands* hardcover), and this enormous city of the dead is an excellent source of grave earth. Alternatively, if the characters have already completed that adventure, they should already know about the necropolis and the useful qualities of grave earth. *The Gravebinder's Daughter* is for higher-level adventurers, but this adventure can serve to foreshadow it a bit.

The Disguise check required to fool the ghouls has a base DC of 17 (they take 10 plus their +7 Perception). They also have a -4 circumstance penalty to their initial Perception checks, because their great numbers make them overconfident. Plus, new faces arrive at the oasis all the time, so the presence of "strangers" among the ghouls is not out of the ordinary.

Make the Disguise check in secret for the entire party, using the best Disguise modifier among the characters for the baseline roll. If the check succeeds, they can move around the oasis without attracting too much attention, and they can get all the way to the cave without incident. Actions that attract suspicion (insulting the natives, attacking them, or otherwise calling attention to oneself) allows the ghouls another Perception check to notice that the bothersome individual is not a ghoul.

If the Disguise check fails, the characters can still move around the oasis without too much difficulty, but if they approach within 20 feet of the cave entrance, the jig is up. One of the ghouls cries out, "Brothers! There is a living heartbeat among us!" The ghouls immediately mass around the PCs on all sides, leaving the cave entrance as their only avenue of retreat. The ghouls do not pursue the characters into the cave, figuring their master will take care of them.

While the PCs are in disguise, the ghouls assume that disguised PCs are undead, as long as they smell right. The PCs can easily gather information about where Abd-Nezka is (in the cave, take the path right through the waterfall). They can learn what the *fountain of blood* looks like and how it works (see page 8).

Confusion reigns if a fight breaks out. Many cowardly ghouls prefer to avoid combat. Each character has to get past two ghouls for the PCs to achieve their objective, whether it's getting out of the camp, reaching Abd-Nezka's lair, or something else.

CR 1

Ghouls (8)

XP 400 each hp 13 (*Bestiary*)

DEVELOPMENTS: If the PCs attempt to sneak past the ghouls and into the cave, award them 3,200 XP whether they succeed or fail. The advantage and reward for a stealthy approach is that a minor fight is avoided with no loss of XP, and the necromancer is less well prepared.

If they fail to sneak past the ghouls, a fight breaks out between the characters and 8 ghouls, and Abd-Nezka has three spells cast in advance instead of just *mage armor* (see his stat block for more information).

If the PCs are just stubborn, they can fight waves of ghouls if they want. There is a small army of 100 of them nearby. The award should be no greater than 3,200 XP no matter how many ghouls are slain, however, and the vizier has pushed them to enter the cave that day—not spend the night resting because they wasted their time and energy on killing monsters that could have been avoided.

THE GHOUL MAGE (CR 9)

The cavern you have entered is circular, about 40 feet across, with a throne resting on a stack of human skulls in the center. A stack of copper basins with blood flowing through them stands on the east side of the cave. Against the west wall, a wooden cage sits closed and secure.

This chamber is in darkness, so the details described above are apparent only to characters who can see in the dark. As noted above, if the PCs activate a light source inside the cave, Abd-Nezka and his minions realize that they are not ghouls and attack immediately. If the party uses darkvision or other means of moving through the dark cavern, they may gain surprise.

The *fountain of blood* radiates a *desecration* aura (with a permanent fixture) throughout the chamber. This effect ends after 20 rounds, when the blood stops flowing.

The cage is primitive but sturdy. It has no lock, but is barred from without, making it impossible to open from within. A move action unlocks it and another opens it. **CREATURES:** Abd-Nezka squats upon his throne here. He is no ordinary ghoul, but a darakhul. Darakhul are an elite race of ghouls that are smarter, stronger, and superior in every way except for their weakness to light. Their strain of ghoul fever can produce darakhul, regular ghouls under their control, or more often than not—kill the victim during their transformation. More details about this signature campaign race can be found in the *Midgard Bestiary* or *Imperial Gazetteer* from Kobold Press.

Abd-Nezka is fat and ugly even for a darakhul, with his distended belly spilling into his lap. He is used to being lionized and praised by his cowardly minions. If the PCs have maintained a charade of being ghouls thus far but fail to do so now, the mage is filled with rage at this intrusion and deception. Two ghoul rogue guards stand on either side of Abd-Nezka, and the wizard casts *enervation, obsidian flow, slow, vampiric touch,* and other spells as the situation warrants, while his guards attempt to hold off melee attacks against him. The *fountain of blood*'s *desecration* effect is accounted for in their stat blocks.

Abd-Nezka

CR 8

XP 4,800

Male darakhul human wizard 7 (*Midgard Bestiary* 28) NE Medium undead (augmented humanoid) **Init** +8; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 16, flat-footed 20 (+4 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +4 natural) hp 71 (7d8+42)

Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +12; +10 bonus vs. channeled energy

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +10; **DR** 5/magic; **Immune** undead traits

Weaknesses daylight

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., burrow 15 ft. **Melee** bite +8 (1d8+5 plus disease and paralysis), 2 claws +9 (1d6+5 plus paralysis)

Special Attacks paralysis (1d4+1 rounds, DC 15, elves are immune to this effect)

Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th;

concentration +12)

8/day—bolster (+2, 3 rounds)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +12)

ASSAULTING THE OASIS

The adventurers might wonder why the local powerful lord doesn't just take an army and solve his problem without the PCs. If the heroes want some help on this mission, the vizier will dispatch a unit of twenty 1st-level fighters under Captain Wadir (a 3rd-level fighter) to aid them.

By approaching the oasis with a military unit, however, the adventurers abandon all hope of surprise, and any



blindness/deafness^{ACG} (DC 19)

- 3rd—extended bull's strength, dispel magic, slow (DC 18), vampiric touch
- 2nd—*darkness, dust of twilight*^{APG} (DC 17), *frigid touch*^{UM}, *spectral hand, stricken heart*^{ACG}

1st—*chill touch* (DC 16), *grease, liberating command*^{UC}, *mage armor, repair undead*^{ACG}, *shield, true strike*

0 (at will)—bleed (DC 15), detect magic, mage hand, resistance

Opposition Schools Enchantment, Illusion TACTICS

Before Combat Abd-Nezka casts *mage armor* daily. If the PCs failed their Disguise checks, he also casts extended

effort to disguise themselves proves fruitless. Abd-Nezka will be fully prepared for them in his lair (with three spells cast in advance). The ghouls put up a good fight, striking against the soldiers first. Instead of running this incident as a full encounter, allow the PCs to fight their way through to the cave by disposing of two ghouls per party member. | SQ = S FT A - Al-Nezka H - Ghast

Blood

Fountain

bull's strength and *spectral hand* (these two spells are not accounted for in his stat block). He is affected by a *desecrate* spell from the fountain (a permanent fixture), and those benefits are included.

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During Combat Abd-Nezka commands his ghasts to protect him while he casts additional spells, extended *bull's strength* a priority. If his ghasts move out of the way or die quickly, *obsidian flow* provides crowd control, and his Nimble Moves and Lunging Spell Touch feats mitigate his own movement. Likewise, *wall of blindness/ deafness* can be used to divide and fence in the PCs. Finally, he has several potent touch spells. Morale Abd-Nezka fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without *desecrate*, Abd-Nezka has the following statistics: channel resistance +4; bite +6 (1d8+3 plus disease and paralysis), 2 claws +7 (1d6+3 plus paralysis); Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +10

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 18, **Con** —, **Int** 21, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 20 **Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 22

Feats Combat Casting, Command Undead, Extend Spell, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Lunging Spell Touch^{ACG}, Multiattack, Nimble Moves, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Climb +18, Escape Artist +11, Intimidate

+13, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +17, Knowledge (religion) +10, Perception +10, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +15, Stealth +11, Survival +10; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Climb, +8 Intimidate, +8 Knowledge (dungeoneering) **Languages** Draconic, Ghul, Infernal, Nurian, Southlands Common

SQ arcane bond (*ring of protection +2*) Other Gear *ring of protection +2* SPECIAL ABILITIES

Daylight Weakness (Ex) A darakhul suffers a –4 penalty to attack rolls and saving throws when in full daylight. A *daylight* spell instead inflicts a –2 penalty to a darakhul.

Disease (Su) *Darakhul Fever*: bite injury; *save* Fortitude; *onset* 1 day; effect 1d6 Con and 1d3 Dex damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Charismabased. A creature that dies while infected with darakhul fever must make a special Fortitude saving throw using its original Constitution modifier (prior to the onset of the disease). If

the result is high enough, the victim rises as a new undead within 1 hour.

Ghoul Rogues (2)	CR 3
XP 800 each	
hp 40 (see page 4)	
ADJUSTMENTS	
Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +7; +8 bonus vs. channeled	d energy

Melee bite +9 (1d6+5 plus disease and paralysis), 2 claws +9 (1d6+5 plus paralysis)

Base Statistics The ghouls receive +6 to resist channeled energy, and +2 on all saving throws and attack and damage rolls.

Fountain of Blood

A minor artifact, the *fountain of blood*'s power is not fantastic on a personal level, but the number of creatures it can affect is nothing less than astounding.

Fountain of Blood

Slot none; **CL** 18th **Weight** 10 lbs. **Aura** strong transmutation

The *fountain of blood* appears as a series of rising, nested brass bowls with a jet sticking out at the top. The fountain requires the blood of a living, human-sized creature to activate. The blood bubbles out of the jet, falls through each of the lower bowls in turn, and then is carried back up to the topmost bowl.

During that time, the owner of the fountain can choose a particular race or creature, and another race or creature of similar size. All creatures of the first kind within 500 yards change into the second kind, as per the *alter self* spell. The effects are permanent until removed by another use of the fountain, by *dispel magic*, or by the death of the affected creature (which assumes its true form 1 hour after death).

Once it has been activated, the fountain radiates a continual *desecrate* effect throughout the chamber. All turning effects take a –6 profane penalty, undead get a +2 profane bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws, and all undead receive +2 hp/HD. This effect lasts until the fountain is removed from the area.

DESTRUCTION

The blood of a willing angel causes the brass bowls to melt away like ice, once the fountain is filled.

Concluding the Adventure

If the heroes fail, the ghouls consume them as a treat. Those who fail their saves might return as ghouls or ghasts. Any captured PCs become sacrifices to the *fountain of blood*.

If the heroes defeat the Ghoul Mage, they can easily dispose of the ghouls at the oasis by proving to them that Abd-Nezka has been destroyed (such as by displaying his severed head). Once they see that their master is dead, they flee into the desert.

The five rescued victims, including Randa the handmaiden (if she was not saved in Part 1), are thankful for their deliverance; they include cruel Khuldjan the caravan guard and mercenary, the kindly maid Salihaa the goatherd, Lucky Musad the potmaker, and grandmother and matchmaker Ramla al-Siddi. When the PCs bring everyone back to town, the vizier rewards them handsomely (1,000 gp each). The *fountain of blood* is an accursed object, but the sultan offers to pay 12,000 gp for it. He locks it in his vaults until he finds the means to destroy it. (Such information might be had from one of the oracles, such as the Sphinx of Golden Ulthar, or from

the learned theurges of Thoth-Hermes, whose libraries contain many bits of largely forgotten lore.)

The network of the ghouls, many of which remain in human form, seeks revenge. At the GM's option, a small party of 2d6 ghouls attacks the party on the way back from the oasis. In the future, the heroes might encounter disguised ghouls attacking at weak moments, or enlisting other undead to do so. Perhaps a powerful merchant who hires them for a dangerous mission is one such ghoul, seeking to send them to their deaths.

DARAKHUL FEVER

When a creature infected with darakhul fever is killed, it must immediately attempt a special Fortitude saving throw, using the Constitution modifier it had before the disease took hold. If the result of the saving throw is lower than 10, the creature remains dead. Otherwise, consult the table below to determine the creature's new incarnation.

Most victims of the disease return to existence as ghouls and ghasts. A creature that has an exceptionally high Constitution modifier (perhaps boosted through the use of *bear's endurance*, a *belt of mighty constitution*, and the like) might rise as a new darakhul. A darakhul is a free-willed undead. A creature that rises as a standard ghoul or ghast is controlled by the darakhul whose fever infected it.

VICTIM RISES AS
Ghoul
Ghast
Dread ghoul
Dread ghast
Darakhul

Bossep

BY DAVID "ZEB" COOK • PFRPG CONVERSION BY JIM GROVES FOR ADVENTURERS OF 5TH TO 9TH LEVEL

"Wherein opposed desires are matched and the passionate and faithful receive their due rewards."

Prelude

"Praise, wise travelers, the bounty of the gods who grant fluency to tell this tale and wisdom to keep the tongue from the immoderation of gossip. For it is only through the exercise of the wit granted unto us that we earn virtue on the face of this world.

"Forgive, esteemed ones, the playful style displayed in the telling of it, for not all our lives should be built of suffering. Know that within this caprice lies wisdom greater than pearls. So it is said in the words of the prophets.

Listen now as I tell you the events told to me by my kin, husband to my sister, a tea-seller in the city of Siwal"

Adventure Background

The premise of *Bottled Desire* is simple: mayhem. Haytham, the third son of the prosperous merchant Kasib, and Nashwa, the only daughter of Mash'al of the Waste, are in love and wish to be married. Alas, while he is a good son of a prosperous family, she is a janni. While humans and their kin live in harmony in Siwal, marriage between man and spirit is another matter. Haytham and Nashwa fear that neither family would approve such a match, so they plan to keep Nashwa's true nature a secret. She will become Nashwa, daughter of Captain Munir, a worthy from a distant city, Sikkim perhaps? Now, all they need is for someone to play the part of the captain, for Nashwa to pass as a human, for Haytham to get his father's blessing, and to complete the rites of marriage—all before her true father Mash'al finds out.

If this were not complication enough, Nashwa's brother Numair has learned of her secret love. He doesn't approve or disapprove, but he intends to have fun. Meanwhile, a small band of fanatic genie hunters have heard rumors of a janni and are scouring the city. And also to be contended with is the jann Mash'al, the actual father of the bride, who has become concerned that his darling pearl of a daughter has been so long from home.

Adventure Summary

The adventure has three phases, each one involving a different encounter area: the teahouse, where a captain must be convinced to play the father of the bride; the market, where Nashwa receives her training while haggling with merchants, dodging foes, and getting fitted for a dress; and the house of Kasib, where the families meet, bargains are made, and everything wraps up.

Bottled Desire is a comical short adventure, suitable as an interlude for your players as they take a rest from the wearying task of defeating yak-creatures, subduing efreet, and cleansing the trade routes of jackalmen. The adventure is intended for mid-level characters, but is quite flexible around 5th to 9th levels. There is no specific class or race requirements for the party, although a mix of male and female characters (and players!) will add to the enjoyment. To gain the most value from the adventure, encourage roleplaying over swordplay.

Special GM Guidelines

Since this is intended as comic adventure, consider the following three useful GM guidelines.

First, unlike other adventures where the GM often choreographs the intricate dance of rules and die rolls, here it is important to be loose and ready to react to your players. Running this adventure is an exercise in improv comedy. There is no telling what players will do in many of these situations, so you must make sure the action moves forward in the spirit of fun. If your players are more serious than the story calls for, it is your task to keep things light.

Second, remember the running joke, the gag that can be repeated in different variations throughout the adventure. The character descriptions below give you some material to work with, such as Nashwa's ignorance of human ways and the genie hunters' outrageous fanaticism. Choose one or two that suit you and work them in throughout.

Third, "When the only tool is a hammer, all problems look like a nail." Specifically, player characters are typically geared for combat, both physically and mentally. Although slaughtering everything in sight could solve many of the situations here, where's the humor in that? Your goal is to put characters in situations where they have to work outside their normal skill sets. Ideally, you should get though the entire adventure without the characters killing anyone (although perhaps not for lack of trying in some cases).

The Cast

This adventure depends almost entirely on the NPCs. Give these characters a voice or a tic that makes them easy to identify during play, and have fun hamming it up a little.

Haytham

A handsome, earnest young man, Haytham (NG male human commoner/expert 2) is generally respectful and honest, a credit to his family name. He is slender and athletic with a full head of dark hair and a fine beard. He can be disarming, which is good because he tends to casually assume that everyone agrees with him and his plans. In this case, it is only love and passion that drive him to this extreme. He anguishes not that he is doing the wrong thing, but that everything will go horribly awry. As things get worse and worse, his panic and despair increase. Haytham is the straight man in this tale, trying to steer everything right even as it goes terribly wrong.

Nashwa

It is easy to see why Haytham is taken with the exotically attractive Nashwa. Her eyes have the almond tilt of distant lands and are the color of fading embers. She smells faintly of roses and smoke, which turns to the odor of brimstone when she is angry. Her accent is difficult to place. A character who succeeds on a DC 30 Knowledge (planes) check or a DC 20 Linguistics check can identify it. She laces her conversation with foreign words, and those who speak any of the elemental languages can translate it. In temperament she is a typical genie, bred to sensual desires and privilege. She has no concept of money or property. She is proud and quick to take offense. She uses magic as easily as others talk. Her running jokes can include casually taking items that don't belong to her, naively over- and underpaying for goods, and using magical overkill for the slightest of insults.

Numair

As handsome as Nashwa is beautiful, Numair is a capricious young janni. Unlike his sister, Numair makes no secret of his heritage; he is a janni and proud of it, and he has no desire to play the part of a mortal. Most notably, Numair is afflicted with the boredom of youth, all the more so given the life span of his kind. He seeks amusement to distract him from the dreary passage of days. Now he sees an opportunity for it.

Numair has learned his sister's intentions but has no plans to stop her, seeing instead the opportunity for some fun. If Nashwa's plans are going too smoothly, he will inject a little chaos; if all seems as though it is going to collapse, he will discreetly aid her plans. Though he's not malicious, he cares little what happens to mortals in the process of enjoying himself. His only real concern is that his father doesn't find out his involvement and ruin everything.

Abdul-Jibral, the Genie Hunter

Leader of the genie hunters, Abdul-Jibral (LG male human paladin 6) is a wiry old man whose hard life is etched in the wrinkles of his leathery face. Unlike most adventurers, Jibral took up arms late in life, after a malicious efreeti destroyed all he held dear. As a result, Jibral dedicated himself to one task—the destruction of all geniekind. Good, evil, innocence, and guilt matter not; being a genie is crime enough in the pages of his holy book.

Unfortunately (or fortunately), Jibral's great passion is not matched by his skill, cunning, or common sense. His sole tactic is to blindly attack at the first opportunity without regard for subtlety or any act that might be considered a survival instinct. He is, however, persistent helped by the fact that he seems to have access to endless resurrection and healing.

The player characters should meet Jibral frequently and will probably dispatch him handily every time. Each time after the first, he appears more bandaged and patched than

DEVELOPER'S NOTE

I put a lot of thought in how *Bottled Desire* should be updated from the original. In the interest of full disclosure, I have not changed it much, and that might be seen as a controversial decision. One might ask, why aren't there more stat blocks? Where are the traps? Why aren't there more skill checks? *Bottled Desire* is a more narrative adventure than is customary for Pathfinder, particularly since Pathfinder is not a particularly narrative-dominated RPG. Why

not change this adventure, then? Because *Bottled Desire* is to me the definitive Arabian adventure of the original anthology. Zeb Cook captured the spirit of Scheherazade's *1001 Arabian Nights* brilliantly and succinctly. The adventure blurs the line between true interactive fiction and an RPG, and as such, I felt that alterations to make it more "conventional" would only destroy its charm. I hope you agree.

—Jim

Jibral's Band

Anyone who would follow Abdul-Jibral into battle must be lacking in something. That is certainly the case with these folks. Mostly, what they lack is intelligence and talent. They are the Keystone Cops of adventurers, constantly rushing to and fro, stumbling over each other, knocking things down, and getting in the way as much as possible.

The three 4th-level paladins and one 5th-level sorcerer of Jibral's band need to be just threatening enough to be taken seriously, but so inept that PCs would be hard-pressed to lose against them. None of them use their voices for anything but jabbering, grunting, and making inarticulate noises of surprise, effort, triumph, and despair. Like Jibral, they are apparently immortal, reappearing at the most inappropriate times more battered than the time before. They are here for comedy, so ham it up at their expense.

Kasib, Father of the Groom

Portly, good-natured with a full, graying beard and pockmarked face, Kasib (N male human sorcerer 8) seems every bit the merchant's merchant, a man with an eye for a deal and cunning skill at negotiation. He has, however, a past that he has kept hidden from all—family, friends, and even local officials. Before he was a quiet family man and humble member of the community, Kasib was a freebooter and sorcerer of no small skill. Working in lands far distant from here, he amassed a small fortune through banditry. He also gained the wisdom to see that such a life could only come to a bad end, and so he gave it all up and settled here. So skillful has his deception been that not even his wife and children know his true powers or his past. Kasib's two concerns are for the happiness of his family and for a quiet, peaceful life in which his past remains forgotten. If these things are threatened, he takes action, although discreetly.

Because of his powers and his background, Kasib will easily know Nashwa for what she truly is. However, his love for his son and his desire to keep the peace will force him to pretend ignorance. His role in this tale is that of *deus ex machina*—if things get so out of hand that there seems to be no other solution, you can have Kasib step in and reveal his true powers, which should bring peace and harmony to both households.

Mash'al of the Waste

Mash'al is an exceptionally large janni, the image of all things that jann consider virtuous—physically powerful, proud of his heritage, quick to act, and skillful with his powers. He is disdainful of mortals, distrustful of humans, and adamant in the superiority of all things jann. He sees no need for his kind to mingle with "lesser beings." Within his family Mash'al is accustomed to being the absolute ruler of his household. No child of his has ever dared defy his will—or so he believes.

In truth, Mash'al dotes on his daughter (and tolerates the antics of his son) so much so that he does not notice that he cannot say no to their desires in the end. All they have to do is convince him that their ideas are his ideas.



In action, Mash'al is filled with threat and thunder, which is often followed by action. If he promises to "roast you alive," he most certainly intends to. It is only against his children (and their desires) that his threats ring hollow. Mash'al's running gag, if you choose to use it, is the way his daughter wraps him around her little finger.

Because Mash'al is the father of the bride, the player characters cannot exterminate him (as much as they might want to). It would ruin all the wedding plans. Likewise, Nashwa will intercede to keep her father from slaughtering the player characters—provided, of course, that they are trying to help her.

Getting Started

The best time to use this adventure is when the players have just completed an epic quest or a hard-fought adventure. (Any other adventure in this volume would do, although the seriousness of The Gravebinder's Daughter and Cult of the Howling God are particularly good contrasts.) They are back in the city, recovering, relaxing, licking their wounds, and trading on their heroic good names. Ideally, the last thing they want is more trouble. This, of course, is just what you should give them. It is better if their previous sessions were grim, harrowing, near death, save the world, and "view the face of the abyss" experiences. This makes Bottled Desire a refreshing break and good pacing for your overall campaign. To get started, select one of your warrior-type player characters as the target, the one who will be asked to play the part of Captain Munir.

Introduce Haytham as an old childhood friend of the character. (If this ploy won't work, Haytham can be a friend of the family, a friend of a friend, a fellow of the same secret society, or whatever association makes sense. The narrative that follows assumes that the "childhood friend" hook will be used. If a different approach is necessary, adjust the relevant passages accordingly.) The target can be either male or female (the latter adds an interesting wrinkle to the proceedings). The ultimate goal is to get the PC to agree to Haytham's scheme out of a feeling of obligation. It doesn't hurt to hint that Haytham's family is well connected, and so Haytham's favor might be useful in the future (in some unspecified way). Having scoped out your target, a messenger appears bearing a hastily scribbled note (give out Haytham's letter, page 19).

The targeted player remembers Haytham as a childhood friend. (Feel free to make up any number of embarrassing tales about the character's childhood—playing warrior and demon, sneaking into the bathhouse during the women's hours, getting caught at mischief, etc.) If they ask around, the characters learn that Kasib, Haytham's father, is a respected and well-to-do merchant in the caravan trade, dealing principally in dyes and cloth goods.

They also find out that Haytham is generally considered a good son. Only a few people whisper that he has been seen escorting a mysterious young woman, though never when his parents were around. (Kasib usually stays on his estate and does not come into Siwal.) If the characters are skeptical about the meeting place, they can easily learn that the Teahouse of Tamir is a popular meeting place on the edge of the Grand Souk—honest and free of the riffraff one finds at disreputable establishments.

Phase 1: The Teahouse

The Teahouse of Tamir is a large, airy two-story building on the edge of Grand Souk, one of the major markets of the city. The carpeted floors are dotted with low tables and cushions where the customers sit, smoke scented tobaccos, and talk. Vendors hawk kebabs, breads, and other foods among the patrons. Tamir, the proprietor, sits on a raised platform in the center, presiding over his servers while handling the till. Like all places near the Souk, the teahouse hums with commerce. Caravan masters and local buyers haggle about salt and silk prices over cups of tea. Gem miners sit discreetly in dark corners showing their stones to local jewelers. Boys dart into the Souk carrying back their masters' contracts.

The teahouse is the heart of many deals. When the PC's arrive, Haytham is waiting for them in a quiet alcove. He greets the PCs courteously—and effusively, in the case of his old friend. Haytham is a good salesman, a credit to his family's name. He reminisces about childhood adventures, marvels at the exploits of the player characters, and talks politics before eventually getting to the issue at hand:

"I have a great favor to ask of my friend, one that will make me, Haytham, beholden to you until the ends of my days, a deed of generosity that will bless me with lifelong happiness and joy. It is so trivial to your great skills that I am embarrassed to ask, but I am without hope otherwise.

"There is a girl, a girl of wondrous beauty and virtue who stole my heart. Fate has decreed that our lives be one, and she has agreed to share mine. But alas, the path of Fate is crooked. There is a small complication. She is from a distant land, cut off from her kin and with no means to see them ever again. This is a terrible thing, for though she freely consents to marry me, and has the means to provide her dowry, how can I present her to my family with no kin to speak for her? If only there was one individual, knowledgeable about distant lands, to assume the part of the parent.

"This person would have to, of course, be respectable, perhaps a captain . . . Yes, a captain named Munir, of a distant land, maybe from Haytham stops, hoping the characters will pick up the thread. In any case, the PCs must be persuaded to take up the task. As an inducement, Haytham offers a "modest sum" (a small sack of gemstones), never referring to it as a bribe, so his friend can "outfit himself as befits a wealthy captain of a distant land." Be sure to point out that Haytham will owe the players a major favor in the time to come, a marker that might be handy someday.

Once the PCs agree, Haytham springs the rest of the details on them. He must go back to his parents, tell them the news, and arrange the meeting between them and Captain Munir. Meanwhile, the "captain" must meet his new daughter. There is one little complication—since she is from a distant land, Nashwa needs someone to help her shop for appropriate wedding clothes, and, as Haytham says, "If one were to help her better understand our ways, then the gods would surely smile upon them." By that evening the feast will be arranged and everyone will travel to his father's house. Before the characters can argue or object further, Haytham hustles away after giving them directions to find Nashwa in the Grand Souk along the Tailor's Arcade.

If the PCs participate with minimum resistance, award them a story award as they have had overcome an encounter with a CR equal to the party's APL (Average Party Level). If they got into the spirit of roleplaying willingly, make the award equal to a CR of APL +1.

Phase 2: Shopping with Nashwa

The Grand Souk is a location of much activity. It is not a single place, but a dense collection of streets, alleys, covered arcades, and small plazas filled with canopied stalls. Somewhere within the Souk, virtually anything can be bought or sold; it is only a matter of finding the right street and the right vendor to complete the deal. Although it seems like a chaos of shop fronts, stalls, and street hawkers, the Souk divides roughly into different collections of professions. The camel dealers peddle their wares near the public fountains, the goldsmiths work along one dark alley, the potters stack their pots outside their workshops while their kilns belch black smoke, and the farmers park their carts of melons, tomatoes, peppers, dates, and bananas along the tight alleys. Servants, mothers and children, old crones,

scarred adventurers, and beggars touch shoulders as they complete their errands. Pickpockets and thieves lounge in shadowed doorways, on the lookout for the unwary or the rare patrols of the city watch. Buyers and sellers haggle, coins clink, and animals bray in the chorus of everyday life.

CREATURE: Haytham's directions lead the PCs into the heart of the Grand Souk at the intersection of the Tailor's Arcade and Cutler's Alley. Beautiful and dressed completely inappropriately for a day at the market, Nashwa is hard to miss, even when surrounded by a throng of eager merchants and hopeful beggars. Over all the hubbub come her oddly accented wails of annoyance. The characters can quickly rescue Nashwa, dispersing the beggars and bringing order to the frenzy of measuring and selling by the tailors.

Nashwa greets the heroes cordially but coolly. Haytham has informed her of their role, but she is naturally distrustful of mortals, especially strangers. She tends to be argumentative about the characters' advice, headstrong in her opinions, quick to anger, and quick to forget a slight in other words, fiercely temperamental. Most of all, she knows that she needs the characters' assistance and bridles at her own helplessness in this situation. Don't make her unsympathetic, but keep the players on edge about what she might do next.

The PCs should have two goals at this point. The first is to find suitable outfits for "Captain Munir" and Nashwa. The second is to get their stories straight, so the deception of Haytham's family can be pulled off without a hitch. Along this path lie a series of "lessons" that Nashwa needs to learn about everyday mortal life. These events, summarized below, play out against the backdrop of purchasing clothes.

CR 8

Nashwa

XP 4,800

Female janni genie evoker 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*) N Medium outsider (native) Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11 DEFENSE AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 18 (+2 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural, +4 shield) hp 96 (12 HD; 6d6+6d10+42) Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +8 Resist fire 10 OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (perfect)

Special Attacks *change size*, intense spells (+3 damage) Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th;

concentration +12) 7/day—*force missile* (1d4+3)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +12)
3/day—quickened *invisibility* (self only), *plane shift* (willing targets to elemental planes, Astral Plane, or

Material Plane only) (DC 19), *speak with animals* 1/day—*create food and water, ethereal jaunt* (for 1 hour) **Evoker Spells Prepared** (CL 6th; concentration +10)

3rd—*dispel magic, fireball* (DC 17), *hydraulic torrent*^{APG}, *greater thunderstomp*^{ACG}

2nd—alter self, hideous laughter (DC 16), toppling magic missile, mirror image, pilfering hand^{UC}

1st—*charm person* (DC 15), *hydraulic push*^{APG}, *memory lapse*^{APG} (DC 15), *obscuring mist, shield*

0 (at will)—dancing lights, mage hand, prestidigitation, $spark^{APG}$ (DC 14)

Opposition Schools Divination, Necromancy TACTICS

During Combat Nashwa's spells reflects her temperamental nature, but she maintains some nonlethal options, such as *charm person*, *memory lapse* (to undo some faux pas), and *pilfering hand* (to just take something without need to cross the market). She also has many crowd-control spells that are less deadly. Finally, she can also use *change size* on those who annoy her, reducing the target to the size of a small child.

Morale Nashwa usually doesn't see her situation as perilous. She is strongly motivated to avoid embarrassment and awkward situations, both for herself and for her future husband. She flees when she must, but usually does not do so out of fear. If things become really unseemly, she uses quickened *invisibility* to make herself scarce—leaving the PCs to deal with her latest unintended disaster.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 18 Base Atk +9; CMB +13; CMD 27

- **Feats** Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative^B, Mobility, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*invisibility*), Scribe Scroll, Toppling Spell^{UM}, Toughness
- Skills Appraise +13, Bluff +14, Craft (weapons) +11, Diplomacy +11, Fly +19, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (nobility) +10, Knowledge (planes) +10, Perception +11, Perform (dance) +13, Ride +8, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +11
- Languages Auran, Celestial, Southlands Common, Nurian, Draconic; telepathy 100 ft.
- **SQ** arcane bond (*ring of protection* +1), elemental endurance

Other Gear *bracers of armor* +2, *ring of protection* +1, belt pouch, spell component pouch, assorted gems (worth 400 gp), gold earrings (worth 50 gp), jeweled necklace (worth 100 gp)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Change Size (Sp) Twice per day, a janni can magically change a creature's size. This works just like an *enlarge person* or *reduce person* spell (the janni chooses when using the ability), except that the ability can work on the janni. A DC 17 Fortitude save negates the effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Elemental Endurance (Ex) Jann can remain on the Planes of Air, Earth, Fire, or Water for up to 48 hours at a time. Failure to return to the Material Plane before that time expires causes a janni to take 1 point of damage per additional hour spent on the elemental plane, until it dies or returns to the Material Plane.

The Lessons and Misadventures of Nashwa

No map of the market or encounter key is provided for the following events; bring them into play as seems best. Start slow and simple, and then gradually pile events on top of each other to make the players more and more frantic. It might take several lessons for Nashwa to grasp human customs, giving you many opportunities to create havoc. Award the party XP as a story award for each lesson/encounter. Unless she's really pushed, Nashwa poses no direct threat to the PCs, so make the award equal to that of an encounter of average difficulty (CR the same as the party's APL). As before, if the players really get into the spirit with minimal prompting from the GM, increase the award to APL +1 (as for a challenging encounter). This variable XP system allows a group of APL 5th and a group of APL 9th to both enjoy the adventure without receiving disproportionately high or low XP awards. When an actual CR is designated, award XP to the PCs according to that value instead.

Propriety

Nashwa's taste in clothing leans more toward the belly dancer than the respectable maiden. While that might not seem a problem ordinarily, she is presently supposed to be shopping for a presentable outfit in which to meet her future parents. Concerned characters might actually question her choices (the GM is encouraged to point out the inappropriateness of her selections), but their concern does not go over well. Be careful not to go overboard. This is not about shaming a female NPC because she's attractive and comfortable with herself. Rather it is a matter of culture, ritual, and making a good first impression. Suggesting that her choices are inappropriate is an

Nashwa's True Nature

When the players meet Nashwa, do not blurt out that she is a janni. A character requires both a successful DC 15 Perception check (to penetrate her passive take 10 Disguise check) and a DC 18 Knowledge (planes) check to discern her race by simple observation. (This DC incorporates her CR with class levels instead of her base racial CR, since she is making an active effort not to seem like a janni.) Instead, let them think she is merely odd. Over time they will probably deduce the truth, but in the meantime you should have fun with it. Nashwa herself does not admit to being a janni, but she litters her conversations with references to "you humans" and even sometimes "you mortals."

insult. Although Nashwa won't roast the characters on the spot for doing so (unless they really push the issue), such talk does infuriate her and make her even more difficult to work with. Tact and diplomacy are needed here to persuade her that if she is seen as immodest by mortal eyes, especially in a public ceremony, Haytham will lose face. While roleplaying this encounter is more fun, a PC might be able to persuade her, or at least mollify her, by using Diplomacy on an opposed check against Nashwa's Sense Motive skill (+12 modifier).

Property and Money, Part 1

From the outset Nashwa does not understand that she must buy things from the merchants. Finding what she likes at a tailor's stall, she takes it and leisurely walks off without paying. The tailor becomes immediately upset, and he demands that the PCs make good on the purchase. Unless the characters agree to meet his price or they start haggling (at a great disadvantage, of course), the merchant howls, "Thief! Robber!" He goes after Nashwa and tries to reclaim what she has taken. Of course, an accusation of thievery is a grave insult to her (since in her mind she was not stealing), and insults are not to be tolerated.

The characters can catch up to her and the merchant before any violence breaks out, and they might be able to defuse the situation by explaining to Nashwa the implications of what she has done. The misunderstanding may be smoothed over with enthusiastic roleplaying or a DC 19 Diplomacy check. Unless she is stopped, restrained, or otherwise talked out of doing so, Nashwa uses her magic and jann abilities on the merchant to fiery effect. That, in turn, triggers an outcry, panic, and the imminent arrival of the city watch led by Captain Wadir. Clearly, Nashwa's getting arrested will ruin Haytham's wedding plans, so the only solution is to run.

Property and Money, Part 2

Once Nashwa is made to understand that she must pay for things ("A ridiculous practice—you mortals are so odd!"), she reveals that she has no coin. However, she does have an ample selection of gems. She has no understanding of their value, though, and starts out paying too much for the things she wants.

For the merchants, too much is not a problemespecially since she cannot haggle. The first or second time she drops a gem well beyond the price of purchase into a merchant's hands, he exclaims (loudly) in wonder at her amazing generosity. In the market, doing that is like launching a giant flare in the night. Within minutes, other merchants besiege Nashwa and the PCs, all hoping for their cut. Nashwa adores the attention. She promptly seizes all manner of merchandise and starts naively underpaying with stones barely worth digging out of the ground. This turn of events of course leads to cries of outrage and struggles as the merchants try to reclaim their goods. Accusations of fraud are leveled against Nashwa and the unfortunate merchant who was overpaid. There are cries

of "Thief!" and "Swindlers!" Nashwa's temper will rise, and before you know it the city watch is once more on its way and it is time to run away again.

Abdul-Jibral and His Men

The third or fourth time Nashwa manages to call attention to herself one way or another, one of Jibral's men notices and deduces her true nature. Sharp-eyed characters see a silent warrior type who was watching the commotion quietly slip away and lose himself down a side alley. Efforts to follow are fruitless. Thereafter, the same sharp-eyed characters may notice two, then three, then four ruggedlooking adventurer-types who seem to be following them.

At this point, perceptive characters notice the crowds thinning out, shopkeepers closing their shutters, and the few remaining merchants nervously giving them better deals. Just when the players reach a small, strangely deserted plaza, Abdul-Jibral steps out of the shadows to join his men. Without hesitation, he screeches "Infidel janni!" and his men charge for the attack.

Their initial target is Nashwa. They engage the player characters as necessary. Jibral's men and Jibral himself show no subtlety or tactics beyond the initial rush. Critical failures by both sides result in comic disasters-awnings slashed down to ensnare, feet stuck in baskets, swords solidly lodged into melons, and so forth. If Jibral is defeated, his men retreat, dragging his body away, just as the rattles of the watch signal their arrival. In any case, the PCs should win after a brisk and enjoyable fight.

Thieves

Flamboyant displays of money attract cutpurses and pickpockets. The next time an altercation occurs, a rogue is on hand hoping to capitalize on the chaos. While Nashwa's gems are a prize, there are any number of other targets to choose from-player characters, outraged merchants, and momentarily abandoned stalls. Of course, in the process the thieves should be detected, either by the characters or the merchants (albeit too late) leading to more hue and cry. Naturally, the robbed merchants accuse the PCs of being in league with the thieves, which will lead to the city watch, which will lead to running away-again.

Jibral Smash!

Jibral's second attempt on the player characters demonstrates his approach to strategy. As the group reaches the center of a narrow alleyway, a furious howl sounds from the rooftops overhead. Jibral and his band (miraculously resurrected from whatever fate they suffered before) appear and without hesitation leap down to surround the party. Unfortunately for them, their leaping is not as good as their shouting, so he and his men rain down like sacks of grain, crashing through awnings, landing on tottering carts, or dangling upside down, their feet caught in the laundry lines that span the street. This fight, if there is one, will be over quickly.

Chases

In any chase situation, particularly when the city watch is about to come on the scene, assume the characters escape unless they do something incredibly stupid like stand and fight. (Try to discourage this.) Force the players to make quick decisions—left or right? Through the doorway or up the stairs? Hide in the basket or behind the melon cart? Throw in bits of other business to add to the excitement—carts overturned, bursting into a harem room, rounding the corner to meet a routine watch patrol, and so on. If you have players who try to map everything, fluster them. Don't give them time or precise directions. Even though their maps are unnecessary, the fact that they cannot trust them will stress them all the more. Don't drag out any chase for more than 3 rounds or so.

City Watch

The watch is a motivating force designed to get the PCs to run away, not a combat opportunity. If the players think they should fight, point out the futility of the idea. The watch has an endless supply of bodies to throw at the problem, and it can only end badly for the characters. An arrest means disgrace, regardless of the facts. The wedding will be delayed. Emphasize to the players that even being questioned by the watch is not a good idea, since their method is to arrest everyone and sort it out later while you're in the sultan's prison. If necessary, hint at the atrocious things that happen in the sultan's prison.

NUMAIR (CR 8)

CREATURE: Just after rounding a corner, Nashwa stops, gasps, and launches into a burst of foreign jabber that even the uneducated can tell is a string of highly inventive curses directed at the young man standing in front of her. Numair, Nashwa's brother, has come to see if the rumors are true. Thereafter follows a rapid and increasingly heated exchange between Nashwa and Numair (in Celestial or Nurian) that culminates in an explosive outburst of swordplay. Nashwa does not try to kill her brother, just thrash him a little. He will not try to kill her or her companions—but he might beat them up a little. After a bit of fun, he will disappear.

Numair

CR 8

XP 4,800

Janni genie rogue 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*) N Medium outsider (native) **Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 16 (+5 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural) hp 90 (12 HD; 6d8+6d10+30) Fort +9, Ref +15, Will +5 Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; Resist fire 10 OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (perfect)

Melee +1 scimitar +14/+9 (1d6+4/18-20)
Ranged mwk longbow +16/+11 (1d8/x3)
Special Attacks change size, sneak attack +3d6
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +11)
3/day—invisibility (self only), plane shift (willing targets to elemental planes, Astral Plane, or Material Plane only) (DC 18), speak with animals
1/day—create food and water_ethereal jaunt (for 1 hour)

1/day—*create food and water, ethereal jaunt* (for 1 hour) **TACTICS**

During Combat Numair loves to exploit the dirty trick combat maneuver to entangle or blind his opponents (by slicing belts or clothing, or flinging marketplace garments over their heads). Shameless, he'll use this to embarrass his sister too, hoping to force the PCs to protect the "bride's honor." If he steals an object from a PC, he immediately demonstrates it in order to taunt them, but eventually returns or drops the stolen item. **Morale** Numair is not playing for keeps. He'll flee if a fight gets too serious or intense (or if Nashwa's temper flares too hot), and return when things have calmed down.

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 17
Base Atk +10; CMB +13 (+15 dirty trick, +15 steal); CMD 29 (31 vs. dirty trick, 31 vs. steal)
Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Dirty Trick, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative^B, Improved Steal, Mobility
Skills Acrobatics +17, Appraise +12, Bluff +14, Climb +13, Craft (weapons) +16, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +14, Fly +25, Perception +14, Ride +10, Sense Motive +14, Sleight of Hand +17, Spellcraft +12, Stealth +17, Use Magic Device +10
Languages Celestial, Draconic, Nurian, Southlands

Common; telepathy 100 ft. **SQ** elemental endurance, rogue talents (combat swipe, fast getaway, fast stealth), trapfinding +3

Other Gear +1 *chain shirt*, +1 *scimitar*, arrows (20), mwk longbow

The Return of Jibral-Again

Just as the characters wrap up their business with Numair, a voice cries out from the crowd.

"Yea, though you lovers of infidels have defeated me, I, Abdul-Jibral the Great and Mighty, rise again to fulfill my glorious oath to my god! Death to the infidel janni! Death to the heretics who defend her!"

There is general shrieking, the crowd parts, and Abdul-Jibral and his band, appropriately bandaged from their last encounter, rush toward the party. This time one of the paladins, instead of swinging a sword, flails with his crutch.

Again, the fight is not meant to be serious, although the player characters should be in more distress since they have just dealt with Numair. The band's injuries can add to the comic results of failures as bandages unravel, head wraps slip down over faces, and the paladins start to become a little reluctant, remembering what the party did to them last time.

NUMAIR RETURNS (CR 8)

Numair appears at a safer distance before greeting his sister. If a truce is established, he teases that he knows what is really going on and warns her that Father should know-while he doesn't care that she has fallen for a mortal, she should not deceive Father this way. It will make him angry.

Nashwa, fearful that Numair will reveal her plot, insists that the characters stop him. Though she has been cross with the PCs in the past, now she pleads for their help. At the same time, they are not allowed to kill Numair (or hurt him too much). They will have to subdue him and do it discreetly, since a fight in public will do nothing but bring the watch. And once Numair is subdued, unconscious, silenced or whatever, they will have to figure out how to keep him securely out of the way until Nashwa and Haytham's plans are done.

The Perfect Outfit

Eventually, Nashwa and "Captain Munir" settle upon the perfect clothing for themselves. If the players have successfully talked Nashwa into the idea of modesty, she chooses an appropriate gown and headdress to wear. Otherwise, she chooses something that will certainly garner attention when she meets Haytham's family tonight. The tailor she selects sits at the far end of the Tailor's Arcade where the covered way opens into a small square where the Street of Carpets (rug dealers) and Arcanist's Street meet. The most prominent merchant in the square is Yusuf, who specializes in magical flying carpets.

Just as the tailor finishes Nashwa's gown, and everything seems well, all hell breaks loose. One last time, more battered, more bruised and more beaten than before, Abdul-Jibral and his men, screaming for revenge, rush wildly across the square-at least as wildly as a batch of bandaged and crippled warriors can. What they lack in sense, they certainly gain points for in determination. However before the PCs can dispatch them once more, the city watch ups the ante.

Alarmed by the outbreaks and lawlessness in the Souk this day (in other words, the trouble caused by Nashwa and company), the guard has guadrupled, guintupled, and dectupled its patrols. At the slightest bit of alarm, watchmen begin pouring into the square along all streets, blocking all the exits. Make it clear that this time, flightat least by normal means—is impossible. If they all want to escape, there is only one way-to commandeer a flying carpet.

But getting out is not that easy. Nashwa will not leave without her outfit and the tailor, half-panicked, can hardly finish the job. Jibral and his men certainly want to stop the characters, and the watchmen want to arrest everyone.

So the players must both stall and hold everyone off for 2 rounds while the last stitches are applied, or drag the tailor along with them as they make their escape. As fate would have it, Yusuf just happens to have two, and only two, *carpets of flying* currently in his inventory—and one just happens to be large enough to hold all the player characters and company. But before they can use it, the PCs have to get the command word out of Yusuf-which a few threats will do, provided they can catch him. This requires a DC 14 Intimidate check, or some equivalent scimitar waving and invocations of authority.

Meanwhile, Jibral and his remaining men, accompanied by Yusuf, take the other carpet in hot pursuit. Yusuf reveals only enough to the PCs to get the *carpet of flying* airborne, certainly not enough to fly it well, so, as the characters attempt to fly away, the carpet careens, tilts, and swoops outrageously as they try to gain control of it. A DC 17 Use Magic Device check allows the PCs complete control over the carpet and a ready escape; without that, it's an opportunity for two or three rounds of ranged combat and spells. Yusuf demands that Jibral show restraint, so as not to put bloodstains on the carpet. ("It's got to be salable, you oaf!")

Fortunately for the characters, even with Yusuf at the helm of the other carpet, Jibral and his band fare little better as they enthusiastically attempt such ill-advised feats as leaping from their carpet onto the characters'. One or two of them should manage to land on the deck and grapple with the heroes, just to create a few harrowing moments before plunging over the side, until eventually the player characters make their escape.

The GM must decide whether the players can keep the carpet of flying. A large size carpet is an expensive item, but the adventure contains little other treasure other than Haytham's modest bribe. If the decision is no, Yusuf will appear in the end at Kasib's house to reclaim his property.

Phase 3: Meet the Parents

That evening, the time has come to introduce Nashwa and the character posing as Captain Munir. The home of Kasib the dye merchant is a lavish villa in Old Cyreen, the best part of town, the sign of a man who has clearly done well for himself and his family. Even on the short notice Haytham provided, Kasib summoned wizards to enspell his household with decorative enchantments and mystical lights. Furthermore he has arranged for many of the wealthy and powerful of the city to attend, and the villa has taken on the air of a great party.

How well it goes depends on two things: first, how successful the characters were at persuading Nashwa to dress appropriately; second, how well "Captain Munir" and Nashwa have prepared for their roles. If Nashwa is dressed scandalously, it sets the household and guests atwitter, dismays Haytham (who is nervous enough already), and brings a questioning scowl to Kasib's brow. Clearly it does not set the stage for a smooth evening.

The second part is even trickier. Unknown to his son, Kasib knows much more of the world than he has ever revealed. He has been to the supposed Captain Munir's distant homeland and will casually question the character about his "home" city. The less happy he is with the answers, the harder he will grill "Captain Munir." He might ask questions such as "How is the ruler of the city? Is he well? Do you know my old friend there, Zarthis? Do the hills still bloom with nightflower in the spring? Your family is part of the Council, then?" Make the player squirm and sweat as he tries to come up with plausible answers.

Furthermore, Kasib will realize that Nashwa is a genie. When she lapses into a strange language, loses her temper with mortal servants, or commits some interesting faux pas of human etiquette, Kasib realizes she is not merely foreign but elemental. From there it is only a short leap to discerning her true nature.

However, these suspicions are not important other than to make the players sweat. Kasib cannot refuse his son, although he can disapprove greatly of his methods and his friends. But just as he is about to extend his blessing, however grudgingly, everyone hears a great commotion in the courtyard as the great, powerful, and enraged Mash'al of the Waste (N male sheikh janni bloodrager 4) flies in on a whirlwind. How he has learned of his daughter's trickery does not matter. He knows, and he is angry.

With a booming voice, Mash'al commands Nashwa to appear and for those who aided her to step forward and face their punishment. He vows that if they hide from his wrath, he will destroy this household and all within it. Haytham is paralyzed with fear, Nashwa is furious with her father, and the guests are in a panic.

It is up to the PCs to bring peace to this situation by calming Mash'al so that he will not destroy the house, but will give his blessing to the union and bring everything to a happy ending. Success at this will require a glib and eloquent tongue. Mash'al is prone to flattery and is at heart a romantic. A DC 20 Bluff or Diplomacy check can win him over, but make the player of the acting character roleplay his entire pitch while you (as Mash'al) look bored and tap your fingers on the table.

Concluding the Adventure

A number of arguments will appeal to Mash'althat word of his mercy will only increase his glory in the world, that this is the path fate has chosen and it would be evil luck to change it, that receiving his blessing places them all greatly in his debt, and even that his daughter will spurn him forevermore should he deny her.

The argument is less important than the role-playing done by the players at this point. If the players cannot make their case, or if they hastily go for their swords, Kasib is forced to act, revealing his powers in order to bring peace to his household and force Mash'al to back down. That, however, is a deus ex machina solution (as mentioned earlier) and should be avoided if possible. If Kasib must intervene, award the PCs a story award as if they had defeated an encounter with a CR equal to the APL. If they persuade Mash'al on their own, make the award equal to APL +1.

In the end, peace is brought to the household, the union is blessed, and everyone will live happily ever after. And right at that point, Jibral and his men land a flying carpet in the courtyard, ready to strike again. . . .

"That, wise travelers, is the end of my story. May the heavens guide you to the blessings of the gods and may your turns of Fate always be to the right and virtuous. Peace go with you now into this night."

Haytham's Letter

Blessing of the Prophets upon you, honorable ____, who stands in the right side of my heart, bound to me by the sweet-scented coils of memory. Long has it been since the days when we played our children's games of warrior and demon, so please forgive me contacting you again after so many years. But it was only since the last fasting day that I learned that you, friend of my beardless youth, reside here within these walls. Great are the praises spoken of you, and truly you have manifested all the virtues you displayed in our younger days.

Now, knowing you are here, I would dishonor all the gods of friendship were I not to prevail upon you to meet with me so that I might repay the generosity you have shown me many a time over in the past. Let me set for you and your friends a table at the Teahouse of Tamir on the morrow morning so that I may gaze once more on the face of my friend and rejoice that the gods have extended their blessings so that I might see you once more. He whom you once named as friend in your youth, Haytham, son of Kasib the dye merchant



BY CLAY FLEISCHER AND WOLFGANG BAUR • PFRPG CONVERSION BY JIM GROVES FOR ADVENTURERS OF 6TH LEVEL

"Wherein the bold and brave may turn the tide against the black flag."

Adventure Background

Desert legends tell of a wise and noble shipwright who once negotiated a territorial dispute between a marid, a shaitan, and a djinni. In gratitude, the three genies shared with him the secret of sailing over the sands. Thus began the era of sandships, marvelous wind-driven vessels that float just above the dunes.

Centuries later, the wizard Utbah Qasim commanded the service of a young female djinni named Nadirah. He forced her to build a sandship of incredible speed and craftsmanship. Not content with the vessel as built, Qasim used ancient rituals to bind Nadirah herself to the ship, and thus to forever serve its captain. With the djinni unwillingly at the helm of the ship, which the wizard mockingly named the *Wind's Mistress*, Qasim commanded a craft of unparalleled quality. The wind always filled her sails, her crew never wanted for food or drink, and the hot desert air roiled and churned to deflect projectiles fired at her.

Fortunately for those around him, Qasim used the *Wind's Mistress* to protect his holdings rather than to wage war. Unfortunately for Qasim, his ship was lost when one of his experiments went awry; the desert sands swept over his tower, his possessions, and the wizard himself.

The Wind's Mistress recently reappeared under the command of Asad al Nar, a tyrannical half-efreeti who uses it to ravage trade caravans. So far, the sultan's efforts to stop him have resulted in the loss of three of his sandships along with their crews. Nigh invulnerable to missile fire and faster than any other ship on the sands, the Wind's Mistress and her new captain sail the dunes unrestrained.

Adventure Synopsis

Sultan Tayeb Al-Mamun approaches the PCs to hire them to deal with a particularly troublesome bandit and his nearly unstoppable sandship. They sail out on one of his sand vessels, the *Sirocco*, using that fast ship to track the *Wind's Mistress* to her anchorage deep within the Sands of Sorrow, and to engage her and her crew. Ideally, they capture the *Wind's Mistress* and return her to the sultan, thus restoring his uncontested dominion over the sands. Along the way, the PCs face some of the horrors that reside there: a salt kraken and a semi-sentient sand maelstrom. When they meet the *Wind's Mistress*, they try to board and secure the ship. After defeating the pirates, the PCs must make a decision: return the ship to the sultan and continue the bound djinni's forced servitude—or destroy the ship, freeing Nadirah but displeasing the sultan.

Part 1: Siwal, City of Gardens

Siwal is the largest settlement in the region, a center of culture and commerce. Minarets of basalt tower over fountains of granite and marble statuary. Built around a natural oasis, Siwal features gardens lining almost all its structures, including its high outer walls. Tall gates allow sandships access to the Iron Spine docks inside the city.

In contrast to the city's opulence, the somber mood of its inhabitants is obvious to the PCs. Children accost them for handouts, preferring food to coin. Barely half of the stalls in the central marketplace are occupied by sellers. Temple bells ring throughout the day, and the wailing of mourners can be heard coming from the enormous necropolis north of the city.

Whether the PCs have just arrived in the city within the past few hours or have been in residence, a servant of the sultan finds them: A tall man in fine robes approaches you, flanked by four soldiers. He greets you with a formal bow and says, "I am Akil ibn Khaldun, vizier to the sultan. Your reputation is well known here. Please, come dine this evening with Sultan Tayeb Al-Mamun, Defender of the Faithful, as guests of the palace. Arrive at sundown." He nods, hesitates for a moment, and then goes back the way he came.

PCs who try to ply him with questions are told, "I am merely a servant. Ask the sultan, noble lord."

At the Palace

The palace is an expansive structure in the center of the city. It is a testament to the sultan's great wealth. Near the palace is the sultan's menagerie, where three rocs roost in a special nest built just for them; they are his hunting animals.

When the PCs arrive, read:

The vizier, Akil, greets you at the palace entrance and ushers you through cool marble halls to the dining area, a set of cushioned seats on a porch overlooking a lush garden. The sultan, a squat man in his fifties, sits at the head of a long table. He says, "Welcome! Sit, eat and drink." He waves to a banquet table full of dates, tea, crispy lamb, grapes, and a roast goat.

The sultan sits quietly while you eat. He smiles but does not eat anything. He seems burdened by the rituals of hospitality.

When the PCs have dined, the sultan speaks. Addressing him with questions during the meal is a breach of etiquette, as a successful DC 10 Diplomacy, Knowledge (local), or Knowledge (nobility) check makes clear. The faux pas is minor, however, and the sultan forgives it. A sharp, scandalized look from servants (or the vizier, if he remains present) helps to set the tone for Siwal's culture.

The sultan clears his threat and says, "Dear friends, a pestilence infects my lands: a parasite gorges itself on the blood of my people, growing fat from other's labors. This parasite is Asad Al Nar, the Lion of Fire. He is an efreeti's son and a brigand. He and his band of cutthroats ravage our trade caravans, killing and pillaging without remorse. He sacks whole settlements and sells my people into slavery.

"How has he been able to do this, you ask, openly defying the will of the sultan? Allow me to explain.

"In the early days, when sandsailing was still new, a mad wizard bound a young djinni to his sandship, imbuing it with great power. This ship, the *Wind's Mistress*, is aptly named. The hot desert air is ever her ally, filling her sails and turning aside arrows.

"The ship was thought lost, but Asad has found her and restored her, and now uses her to raid caravans and settlements. He anchors her deep within the Sands of Sorrow, a treacherous expanse of cursed dunes.

"My people suffer, and I can do nothing. I implore you for help. If you succeed, you earn the gratitude of this sultan and his people—and a

IF THE PCS NEED A PUSH . . .

As the characters exit the palace, a wizened old man who does not offer his name approaches them. He tells them that he is the sworn enemy of one Izz Mu'tazz, a notorious efreeti and the sire of the pirate captain Asad al Nar. He banished the efreeti from this world decades ago, but honor demands that he now do all in his power to bring down the tyrant's offspring. Too old to handle the task himself, he hopes to gain the PCs' aid.

Though he will not speak about himself, a successful DC 20 Knowledge (history) check reveals that the old man is Nasir Sayf al Din, the most famous and respected paladin in these lands. He offers his personal magic items as a gift, to assist them in the cause—a great honor. These include a +2 scimitar, an *amulet of whirlwinds* (9 charges; see below), and a +2 *buckler*. If the PCs accept the mission for the sake of the old paladin, they can quickly inform the vizier (who

has been standing nearby, witnessing this exchange), who invites them back into the palace. The sultan is less congenial on their second meeting but accepts their reconsideration and holds no grudge.

Amulet of Whirlwinds

Aura moderate transmutation; CL 9th Slot neck; Price 18,000 gp; Weight —

This amulet strung on a brass necklace holds a piece of djinn magic: the ability to summon the whirlwind. By expending a charge from the amulet, its wearer can turn into a whirlwind identical to a djinni's for 3 rounds, gaining a fly speed of 60 feet (perfect) with the benefit of the Wingover feat.

The amulet contains 9 charges. When all the charges are expended, the amulet becomes a nonmagical item.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *elemental body II*; **Cost** 9,000 gp *****

The reward is inconsequential to the sultan; he can double that number if he must, though it requires success at an opposed Bluff or Diplomacy check for him to agree to increase it. The sultan has a Sense Motive modifier of +15. If the PCs succeed on the check by 5 or less, grant them a fifty percent increase as the Sultan's final counter-offer.

If the PCs do not agree to help, the sultan thanks them coldly for their visit, and excuses himself. The vizier then escorts the PCs from the palace. See the "If the PCs Need a Push" sidebar.

After the PCs agree to take the mission, the Sultan thanks them profusely before Akil escorts them to another room to meet the captain of the *Sirocco*.

The vizier takes you to meet a fortyish, mustachioed man in a blue uniform and a crisp turban. His skin is dark from the sun, and he examines a map spread on a table. Akil introduces him as Captain Rafiq Ubayid of the *Sirocco*, one of the sultan's remaining sandships.

The vizier's plan is to have the *Sirocco* carry the PCs across the Sands of Sorrow to where the *Wind's Mistress* is anchored. Once the pirates are found, the *Sirocco* will close with the pirate ship and the PCs will board her, at which time the *Sirocco* will disengage from the battle. The PCs will defeat the pirates and then return with the *Wind's Mistress* to the sultan. He stresses that the *Wind's Mistress* must be returned to Al-Mamun. If asked about this requirement, Akil explains that "her naval might is necessary for ensuring the stability and prosperity of Siwal and the sultan's trade routes."

Akil will ask if they need any supplies and provide any mundane provisions requested, within reason (up to a 200 gp limit for any nonmagical items). The PCs must board the *Sirocco* at dawn the next morning; the ship is moored at the sandship docks just inside the main gate.

The Sirocco

The next morning, the PCs find the only sandship currently moored within the stone-paved plaza at the base of the docks: the *Sirocco*. A two-masted, lateen-rigged vessel, she is 50 feet long with a 15-foot draft, a crow's nest 40 feet above the deck, and a crew of eight sailors plus Captain Rafiq Ubayid and his first mate. The ship is Colossal in size, using the vehicle size conversion rules in *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat*. A single ballista sits on her foredeck. Treat the ballista as a two-person crossbow with a reload time of two standard actions (2d8 piercing damage, 19–20/×3) and a 100-foot range increment. A single person firing a ballista takes a –4 penalty on the attack roll. The ship departs as soon as the PCs board. They sail across the desert for three days, during which time the characters have no responsibilities. The crew is quiet and somber, becoming more nervous as the voyage continues. As superstitious as conventional sailors, the crew of the *Sirocco* might share rumors with the PCs if so engaged. With a successful DC 22 Diplomacy check made to gather information, the party can learn that a terrible monster is said to live in the Sands of Sorrow, one that eats entire crews but that has never been seen because it is always veiled in a sandstorm's dust.

Captain Rafiq Ubayid

CR 3

Male human expert 5 LN Medium humanoid (human) Init +5; Senses Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +1 dodge) hp 27 (5d8+5)

Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. **Melee** mwk scimitar +5 (1d6+1/18-20)

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10 Base Atk +3; CMB +4; CMD 16 Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scimitar), Toughness Skills Craft (ships) +7, Knowledge (nature) +7, Perception +9, Profession (driver) +9, Profession (sailor) +9, Survival +9, Swim +8 Languages Southlands Common Other Gear mwk chain shirt, mwk scimitar

First Mate Alea CR 2

Female human commoner 4 N Medium humanoid (human) Init +2; Senses Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +2 Dex) hp 22 (4d6+8) Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +1 OFFENSE

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. **Melee** quarterstaff +3 (1d6+1)

Ranged mwk longbow +5 (1d8/×3)

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 11
Base Atk +2; CMB +3; CMD 15
Feats Light Armor Proficiency, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longbow), Simple Weapon Proficiency (quarterstaff), Toughness
Skills Craft (ships) +3, Perception +4, Profession (driver)

+5, Profession (sailor) +6, Swim +4



Languages Southlands Common Other Gear studded leather, arrows (20), mwk longbow, quarterstaff

Sailors (8) CR 1
Human commoner 3
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; Senses Perception +5
DEFENSE
AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge)
hp 13 (3d6+3)
Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +2
OFFENSE
Speed 30 ft.
Melee club +2 (1d6+1)
STATISTICS
Str 13, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 8
Base Atk +1; CMB +2; CMD 14
Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Mobility, Simple Weapon
Proficiency (club)
Skills Climb +5, Perception +5, Profession (sailor) +6,
Swim +6
Languages Southlands Common
Other Gear club

Sirocco Statistics

The encounters in this adventure do not use ship statistics in favor of simpler, streamlined play. If you want statistics, please select appropriate vessels or close correspondences from the Pathfinder Reference Document or some other nautical adventure source and import those.

Note that, in sandsailing, draft refers to the height of the vessel itself. Sandships typically fly 10 feet above the surface, but can go higher. Add the vessel's draft (15 feet, in the case of the *Sirocco*) to its elevation to determine the deck's height above the ground in case someone falls off.

Part 2: Across the Sands of Sorrow

Sand and heat are tireless, and might take their toll on the party over time if the characters are not careful. There is some shade available below deck, so the PCs are not in danger of taking nonlethal damage. Some risk is unavoidable, however, and each PC who is not acclimated to desert life must make a successful DC 15 Fortitude save or gain the exhausted condition until nightfall. The condition can be removed by magical means. Also, a successful DC 15 Survival check mitigates the effect of this severe weather normally (treat the PCs as if they were stationary). The *Sirocco* sails smoothly, and the PCs can set up whatever watches they like. The sailors start to get nervous on the fourth morning, when they have left familiar sands behind.

After three days of travel, the scenery changes and the desert becomes even less hospitable. Rich golden dunes give way to a featureless expanse of powdery sand the color of bleached bone. A haze dims the sky, yet grants little respite from the burning sun. A palpable feeling of dread permeates the crew. The bleached, cracked ribs of a sandship jut out from beneath a dune. The *Sirocco* has entered the Sands of Sorrow.

The fine, powdery sand here is difficult to traverse on foot (costing double movement). The region is entirely without springs, shelters, or oases. Even hard-bitten nomads, herders, and bandits avoid it.

THE ABOMINATION OF THE WHITE DUNES (CR 9)

CREATURE: Legends tell of a kraken of such evil that the sea gods cursed it to live for a thousand years in the driest desert, cured in salt, never to touch water again. For centuries, it navigated the Sands of Sorrow, searching for creatures to share its torment. Those who know of it call it the Abomination of the White Dunes.

The creature approaches the ship by stealth. The PCs must succeed at an opposed Perception check against its +14 Stealth modifier to notice its wake disturbing the sands near the ship. If they succeed, they notice it just in time and there is no surprise round. If they fail, they are caught flat-footed and the Abomination gains a surprise round. Players using the ship's masts, gunwales, and hatches for protection can gain partial cover against the salt kraken.

BALANCING THE KRAKEN

The CR of the salt kraken is more situational than true to the creature itself. Specifically the encounter assumes four tentacles are grasping the *Sirocco*. If this is not the case, the encounter is more dangerous as the creature's potential damage output becomes much greater. Conversely, if the salt kraken is not living up to the hype against the PCs, consider allowing it to hang onto the ship with only two or three tentacles and put another one or two limbs into play. This raises the threat level slightly and allows you to subtly adjust the difficulty.

It is worth noting this is an epic encounter for four 6th-level PCs. The assumption is the *Sirocco's* crew can do little to stop it, and they rely on the PCs for heroics. The salt kraken doesn't need to be vanquished utterly, if it starts to prove too dangerous. The beast breaks off the attack if it is significantly injured or it loses enough limbs. A creature seizes the hull of the ship: it has long tentacles of withered purple flesh, covered by a translucent layer of salt. As it hauls its bulk alongside, the ship tilts to starboard. A shriveled yellow eye filled with malice rises over the gunwale.

The Abomination erupts from below to grab the *Sirocco's* hull with four of its salt-encrusted tentacles. It lashes at those on board with its two arms and its two remaining tentacles. The two arms are stronger, longer, and tougher than the six tentacles, which are secondary attacks. It bites only against grappled foes that it moves to within reach of its maw.

CR 9

Salt Kraken

XP 6,400

NE Gargantuan magical beast Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 7, flat-footed 22 (+1 Dex, +16 natural, -4 size)

hp 115 (10d10+60)

Fort +13, Ref +8, Will +8

Defensive Abilities aegis of salt; **DR** 2/—; **Immune** mind-affecting effects, poison; **SR** 20

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft., jet 140 ft.

Melee 2 arms +15 (2d8+8/19–20 plus grab plus desiccating touch), 6 tentacles +12 (1d6+4 plus grab plus desiccating touch), bite +14 (2d8+8)

Space 20 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (50 ft. with arm, 30 ft. with tentacle)

Special Attacks constrict (tentacles, 1d6+12), desiccating touch, ink cloud, seize ship

TACTICS

Before Combat The kraken burrows into position directly beneath the stern of the ship.

- **During Combat** The kraken uses four tentacles to secure the *Sirocco*, the remaining two to attack the heroes. The beast is intelligent enough to identify primary threats.
- **Morale** If the kraken loses four or more appendages or is reduced to 30 hit points or fewer, it releases its ink cloud and jets away.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 12, **Con** 23, **Int** 19, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 19 **Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +22 (+26 grapple, +24 trip); **CMD** 33 (35 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Critical (arms), Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (arms)

Skills Intimidate +14, Knowledge (geography) +14, Knowledge (nature) +14, Perception +18, Stealth +2 (+14 burrowing in sand), Survival +15; **Racial Modifiers** +12 Stealth burrowing in sand **Languages** Aquan, Infernal, Southlands Common, Terran **SQ** appendages, tenacious grapple

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Aegis of Salt (Ex)** The salt that encases the kraken forms a protective carapace that provides the creature with DR 2/—.
- Appendages (Ex) An opponent can make sunder attempts against the kraken's tentacles or arms as if they were weapons. Tentacles have 20 hit points, and arms have 10 hit points. If it is currently grappling a target with one tentacle or arm, it must use another limb to make any possible attack of opportunity against the sunder attempt. Severing a tentacle or arm deals damage to the kraken equal to half the limb's full normal hit points. The kraken regrows severed limbs in 1d4 days.
- **Desiccating Touch (Ex)** The curse that afflicts the kraken combines with the rime of salt that covers the creature's flesh to pull moisture from any living being it touches. On a successful grapple attack, the opponent must

make a DC 19 Fortitude save or take 1 point of Constitution damage from the desiccating touch. The save DC is Charisma-based.

- **Ink Cloud (Ex)** The kraken's shriveled ink glands can emit a cloud of blackstained sand and salt in an 80-foot spread once per minute as a free action. The cloud provides total concealment and otherwise functions as the *fog cloud* spell. Those in the area of effect that fail a DC 19 Fortitude save are blinded for 1d4 rounds by the stinging cloud of particles. The save DC is Charisma-based.
- Jet (Ex) The kraken can jet backward under the sand once per round as a full-round action, at a speed of 140 feet. It must move in a straight line, but does not provoke attacks of opportunity while jetting.
- Seize Ship (Ex) As a full-round action, the kraken can attempt to use four of its tentacles to grapple a ship of its size or smaller. (Because the *Sirocco* is Colossal, this ability does not apply during this battle.) It makes a CMB check opposed by the ship's captain's Profession (driver) check, but the kraken gets a cumulative +4 bonus on the check for each size category smaller than Gargantuan the ship is. If the

kraken grapples the ship, it holds the ship motionless; it can attack targets anywhere on or within the ship with its tentacles, but can only attack foes on deck with its arms and can't attack foes at all with its bite. Unlike a standard kraken, the salt kraken does not deal automatic bite damage to a ship's hull.

Tenacious Grapple (Ex) The salt kraken does not gain the grappled condition if it grapples a foe with its arms or tentacles.

DEVELOPMENT: During the kraken's attack, the crew attempts to escape. Four sailors man the sails and another four pry at the arms that hold the ship. Their efforts are not terribly effective, as the dramatic spotlight remains on the heroes.

THE MAELSTROM (CR 8)

Il Zawbaa Saia (literally, "the bad sandstorm") is a semiintelligent storm of sand that roams the Sands of Sorrow. It was once a young djinni named Khalil betrothed to a beautiful female djinni, Nadirah. She disappeared from their city amid the clouds, and he went to search for her. He scoured the desert for decades, his rage often forcing



him into whirlwind form for days at a time. After a century, Khalil was always in whirlwind form. As the years passed, his frustration intensified and his civility waned, until he was but a barely sentient vortex of wind and sand-yet still he searches for his Nadirah. What he does not realize is that she has been bound to the Wind's Mistress.

CREATURES: Il Zawbaa Saia is an enormous maelstrom of sand, 160 feet in diameter. It seems to extend infinitely down into the desert floor, and it kicks up stinging sand and howling winds above the surface. Worse, the maelstrom is a playground for a number of mephits equal to the number of party members.

The encounter keeps mapping simple, since there are only two important areas to consider: inside the storm and on its periphery. This event lasts for 9 rounds, during which the PCs and their NPC allies have two options. They must either steer around the maelstrom in the first 3 rounds, or become drawn inside the storm and destroy the heart of Il Zawbaa Saia, which powers it. If they accomplish neither after the 9 rounds are over, the Sirocco is wrecked, the sailors are dead, and-if they're still alivethe PCs are lost in the Sands of Sorrow.

At the start of the event, read:

Bits of the great sandstorm that approaches you seem to pull at the ship, dragging it closer and closer. You hear something that sounds almost like laughter in the wind.

Escaping the Storm

Have the PCs roll for initiative, and place the dust mephits 30 feet away. Being in the vicinity of the maelstrom impairs vision and hearing (blurring small details and requiring shouts for communication). All ranged attacks have a 20% miss chance, Small creatures (except for the mephits) must make a DC 20 Fly check or a DC 10 Strength check or be blown away, and casting spells requires a concentration check with a DC equal to 10 + the spell level.

The Sirocco is sucked into the maelstrom at the end of 3 rounds. Prior to that, the sandship can be steered clear of the whirlwind with luck and suburb seamanship. The PCs and/or the crew must make a successful DC 20 Profession (sailor), DC 20 Knowledge (nature), or DC 16 Strength check as a standard action. A natural 20 on any check counts as two successes. As long as six or more crew members (including the captain and the first mate) are still alive, each can make a single check each round. The PCs can also make checks each round (Profession (sailor) and Knowledge (nature) are trained skills, but any hero can attempt a Strength check). Some magic is also useful. A character who casts gust of wind contributes two successes, and wind wall, calm emotions (cast at the storm), and control weather all contribute three successes. Other similar spells may apply. If using these spells does not occur to the PCs naturally, a DC 10 Knowledge (nature) or Profession (sailor) check as a free action provides this insight.

The dust mephits personalize the danger and prevent this encounter from being just a series of skill checks. They try to prevent the PCs and the crew from escaping Il Zawbaa Saia during the first 3 rounds. They are immune to all of the storm's effects, and their fast healing is always available.

CR 3

Dust Mephits (4)

XP 800 each hp 19 (Pathfinder RPG Bestiary)

TACTICS

- Before Combat The dust mephits use *blur* when they see the ship approaching.
- During Combat The mephits attack archers, spellcasters, and crew members, in that order, hoping that the maelstrom draws the ship in and destroys it.
- Morale The mephits flee if dropped to 5 hit points or lower. All the remaining ones flee if half or more of the mephits are slain.

DEVELOPMENTS: If the PCs and the crew manage to achieve 9 successes in 3 rounds, the Sirocco narrowly misses the storm and sails clear. Any lingering mephits break off their attack and follow the maelstrom. Award the characters XP as if they had defeated the entire CR 8 encounter.

Sucked into the Maelstrom

If PCs chose to enter the storm or were drawn into it, the environmental conditions go from bad to worse. Medium creatures that are aloft must make Fly or Strength checks to keep from being blown away. Ranged attacks take a -2 penalty except for the ballista, which is unaffected. Casting spells continues to require a concentration check with a DC equal to 10 + the spell level. Flying stones and sand cause 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage each round to those who do not seek shelter. The eight crew members of the Sirocco all hurry belowdecks and are not harmed by the storm.

The PCs have two options at this point. Either they must persuade Il Zawbaa Saia to stop, or they have to destroy his heart. Appealing to the storm's vanity is extremely difficult but possible. Encourage the PCs to play out their appeal to the storm. Effective roleplaying or a successful DC 30 Diplomacy check calms the djinni, who allows the Sirocco to escape.

The other way to stop this madness is to destroy the djinni's heart. This second method is known to any character who makes a DC 20 Knowledge (planes) or Survival check: success reveals that large sand maelstroms are usually the work of the djinn. If one strikes at the maelstrom's center, which takes the form of a mobile golden heart, the monstrosity is defeated. If this option comes into play, read:

You see something momentarily in the swirling sands, a small glinting object. All around you, the howling winds pull at the ship, dragging it deeper and deeper into the maelstrom and weighing down the ship with sand. Several times you think you hear a voice shouting in the wind: "Nadirah!" But you see no one.

The glittering heart of Khalil's whirlwind is a visible bit of sand magic. A DC 20 Perception check is required to spot it due to the swirling sand, but once seen, it is easy to track. The heart has construct immunities, AC 18, Fort +5, Ref +5, hardness 5, and 30 hit points. It can fly 60 feet (perfect) per round and is completely unhindered by the storm. It avoids flying close to the ship, which makes melee attacks against it almost impossible. If the heart drops to 0 hit points, the maelstrom dissipates into a small, swirling dust devil, which leaves the area.

Part 3: The Wind's Mistress

On the seventh day in the Sands of Sorrow, Captain Ubayid and the *Sirocco* meet their main adversary, the *Wind's Mistress*. The two ships happen on each other at close range due to the haze in the region; they will be in grapple distance after a short period of preparations and missile fire.

As you seek shelter belowdecks from the bleary noonday sun, a call comes from the Sirocco's crow's nest. You rush topside to investigate. When your eyes adjust to the blinding haze, you see her the *Wind's Mistress*. A three-masted vessel some 60 feet long with sky-blue sails, she rests serenely beside a small oasis. Abruptly, she surges forward, accelerating faster than you would have thought possible. As the first mate sounds the alarm, the captain plots a course to intercept the pirates.

"Prepare for boarding," Captain Ubayid says. "I will bring us right alongside, and we must repel their attack. Then you will have just a moment to cross over."

As you get closer, you see the pirate ship's crew readying their weapons and holding boarding lines and grapples. A beautiful blue-skinned woman stands in the bow.

Unless the PCs take the helm or convince the captain to undertake a different plan, the ships engage in little maneuvering and just race straight for each other. Asad has no fear of the smaller *Sirocco* and welcomes the thought of taking the ship intact to expand his own fleet.

Approaching Ships

The adventure's final conflict is broken into three encounters that run consecutively. Each encounter further depletes the party's resources, so that when the final confrontation with Asad occurs, the battle is challenging. The pirates also have a larger ship and superior numbers. If the villains were to swarm the PCs all at once, the odds are they would overcome the characters by sheer numbers. The exact round when combat begins may vary, based on how far apart the ships are. The pirates won't attack until the ships have closed to within 60 feet, but the PCs may launch their own long-distance strategy at any earlier time.

At the start of round one, both vessels are effectively at a run. The *Sirocco* moves at 30 feet (120 feet per round). The *Wind's Mistress* moves at 50 feet, or 200 feet per round. The ships start 740 feet apart. The *Wind's Mistress* and the *Sirocco* climb in elevation until the decks of both ships are 30 feet above the sands by round two.

On round two, the ships are 420 feet apart.

On round three, the ships are 100 feet apart. Both slow to 20 feet per round and approach each other warily. The pirates begin their attack in round five, when the ships are 60 feet apart.

Pirate Scorecard

The pirate battle is a four-stage event and can be a little chaotic, for the simple reason that the waves of activity can spill over into other events. This is a short breakdown to make it clearer.

EVENT 1 (CR 6): Four pirate archers fire ranged attacks against the *Sirocco* before the two ships come together. If the PCs have their own ranged attacks and spells, they can try to get rid of these opponents for 3 rounds. When Event 2 takes place, these guys climb down from the rigging to prepare to either join Event 2 (if the PCs board prematurely) or Event 3. It's a good strategy to neutralize these four archers as soon as possible, since it prevents them from adding to the future encounter.

EVENT 2 (CR 8): Now the two ships are side by side and things can start to get confusing. Eight pirates jump from the *Wind's Mistress* to the *Sirocco* and have to be repelled. If the PCs decide they don't care about the boarders and jump across to the pirate ship at the same time, things get complicated. A simple solution for that possibility is to have four pirates board the *Sirocco* (to be defeated by the NPC crew) and four pirates remain to repel the PCs. Any surviving pirates from Event 1 climb down from the rigging and join the defense of the *Wind's Mistress* when the PCs board (either now or in Event 3).

EVENT 3 (CR 7): It is assumed that the PCs board the *Wind's Mistress* now if they didn't do so earlier. The pirates' first mate, Muhtadi, has remained on the aft

castle, observing the start of the battle. He descends now and cries out for four pirates to join him to repel the PCs.

EVENT 4 (CR 7–8): Asad al Nar arrives from belowdecks in the final encounter. If the PCs are worn thin, he fights solo as a CR 7 encounter. The captain can muster two or three pirates to join him for a CR 8 encounter if the PCs are still going strong.

EVENT 1: SKY PIRATES ATTACK! (CR 6)

CREATURES: Asad normally runs with a crew of fifty pirates, but recent losses have reduced that number to twenty. As the ships approach, four pirates have climbed in the rigging of the Wind's Mistress to a height of 15 feet above the deck. They fire upon the Sirocco for 3 rounds until the two ships are side by side. If the PCs return fire, any pirate struck must make a reactive DC 10 Climb check or fall to the deck below. A pirate that takes more than 6 points of damage from a single projectile takes a -4 penalty to hang on to the rigging.

PCs can return fire, but all ranged attacks against the Wind's Mistress or anyone on board fire into total concealment and suffer a 30% miss chance due to the magical deflecting winds that protect the ship. (The winds do not affect the pirates firing at the Sirocco.)

WHERE'S THE DJINNI?

Nadirah is not a standard NPC in this encounter. The djinni is magically bound and integrated into the ship. They are essentially one and the same. For simplicity, her powers are as follows. Nadirah can pilot the Wind's Mistress automatically, without the need of a steersman or crew (with a base +10 Profession (sailor) modifier). She can manifest an illusion of her original form aboard the ship, interact with creatures directly, and cast create food and water and create wine-as per projected image. Furthermore, she can cast gust of wind at-will, and creatures aboard her deck are protected by the swirling winds, which impose a 30% miss chance on incoming missile attacks (similar to wind wall).

The ship crosses the line between magic item and creature. A successful dispel magic renders Nadirah unable to act for 1d4+1 rounds, but the ship should be treated as a CL 18th magic item. Mage's disjunction separates her from the ship, but also slays her instantly. If Nadirah is released from the Wind's Mistress, which only the captain of the ship can accomplish, she becomes a standard djinni in all respects.

CR 2 Sand Pirates (4) XP 600 each Human ranger 3 CN Medium humanoid (human) Init +3; Senses Perception +7 DEFENSE AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +3 Dex) hp 27 (3d10+6) **Fort** +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2 OFFENSE Speed 30 ft. Melee mwk scimitar +7 (1d6+2/18-20) or mwk scimitar +5 (1d6+2/18-20) and dagger +3(1d4+2/19-20)**Ranged** mwk composite shortbow +7 $(1d6+2/\times3)$ Special Attacks combat style (archery), favored enemy (humans + 2)STATISTICS Str 15, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10 Base Atk +3; CMB +5; CMD 18 Feats Endurance, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot,

Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (scimitar) Skills Acrobatics +4, Climb +6, Perception +7, Profession (sailor) +7, Stealth +7, Survival +7

Languages Southlands Common

SQ favored terrain (desert +2), track +1, wild empathy +3Other Gear chain shirt, arrows (20), dagger, mwk composite shortbow (+2 Str), mwk scimitar, 33 gp, 12 sp

CREW: The *Sirocco* requires three crew members to man the sails, while the first mate takes the helm. Captain Ubayid stands amidships giving orders. The remaining five sailors fight any boarders. Two of them man the Sirocco's ballista; advised of the pirate ship's defenses, he waits for an enemy to board the Sirocco before firing.

DEVELOPMENTS: If the PCs rid themselves of these four archers during this event, they save themselves some grief. Otherwise, any surviving archers from this encounter climb down from the rigging to help repel the PCs in Event 2, or they join First Mate Muhtadi in Event 3. Either way, they make a future encounter more difficult.

EVENT 2: BOARDERS HO! (CR 8)

At this point, the Sirocco and the Wind's Mistress should be side by side, and it's possible for either side to board the other ship.

CREATURES: Eight pirates swing across to the Sirocco in an initial attempt to overpower the heroes and their crew. It is assumed that the pirates all land safely on the deck, in order to streamline the encounter. This is a straightforward battle with one possible complication if the PCs don't follow the script.

Player characters can be very unpredictable. While this event assumes that eight pirates will board the PCs' ship and that the heroes will defend it, there is nothing to



prevent the PCs from trying to board the *Wind's Mistress* at the same time.

Unlike the pirates, the PCs must make skill checks to board the pirate ship. Each character can either make a long jump (with an assumed running start) or swing across on a rope by succeeding at a DC 10 Acrobatics check. A character who fails by 5 or more hits the opposing ship's hull, takes 1d6+2 points of damage from the impact, drops all held items, and falls 30 feet to the sand below. A successful DC 25 Climb check made as a reaction allows a failed jumper one chance to grab the edge of the opposing ship's deck. A second successful Climb check made as a move action permits a dangling character to pull himself up.

If the PCs attempt to board during this event, split the pirates up. Four remain on the *Wind's Mistress* to help repel the PCs, joined by any surviving archers from Event 1. Meanwhile, four pirates (instead of eight) storm the *Sirocco*. Assume the *Sirocco*'s crew can repel and slay those invading pirates, to keep the encounter from becoming overcomplicated with NPCs fighting other NPCs.

CR 2

Sand Pirates (8 or 4)

XP 600 each

hp 27 (see page 28)

DEVELOPMENTS: As soon as all the PCs are on the pirate ship, Captain Ubayid steers the *Sirocco* away from the *Wind's Mistress* and lays on the speed to get

his ship out of immediate danger. The sailors fight any boarders that remain, then return to their stations. This development is expected to occur in Event 3, but it could happen sooner. The *Sirocco* is not abandoning the heroes, but after all they are the ones expected to defeat Captain Asad. If the PCs are defeated, Captain Ubayid attempts to flee before the crew of the *Wind's Mistress* can rally and pursue him.

EVENT 3: FIRST MATE CHECKMATE (CR 7)

CREATURES: Once the pirate boarding party from Event 2 is dealt with, Captain Ubayid shouts encouragingly to the PCs, telling them to board the *Wind's Mistress* and take control of the ship from Captain Asad. This is when the PCs should take the offensive if they haven't already.

Once the PCs depart the *Sirocco*, Captain Ubayid steers the ship clear, as described in the Developments section of Event 2.

The first mate of the *Wind's Mistress* has observed the battle from the aft castle, but now leaps into action with four pirates who have been serving as his guards.

If the PCs have had an easy time of it so far, the difficulty can be adjusted slightly upward by allowing Muhtadi a few extra rounds to cast *bull's strength* and *enlarge person* on a few of his guards while Event 2 is wrapping up. Muhtadi, Pirate First Mate

CR 3

XP 800

Male human sorcerer 4 CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +1 Dex) hp 28 (4d6+12) Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +4 Resist fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +4 (1d3+1) **Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 4th; concentration +8)

7/day—*fire ray* (1d6+2 fire damage)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 4th; concentration +8) 2nd (4/day)—*bull's strength*

- 1st (7/day)—enlarge person (DC 15), grease, mage armor, vanish^{APG} (DC 15)
- 0 (at will)—breeze^{UM}, drench^{UM} (DC 14), flare (DC 14), mage hand, message, spark^{APG} (DC 14) **Bloodline** Efreeti

TACTICS

Before Combat Muhtadi casts *mage armor* and takes a position on the aft castle during Events 1 and 2.

- **During Combat** Muhtadi casts *vanish* on himself, followed by *bull's strength* and *enlarge person*. He enters the fray with his *wand of glitterdust* and then makes unarmed strikes using his Sorcerous Strike ability (to use his *fire ray* in conjunction with his attacks) on every blow. Additionally, he might buff his fellow pirates with the aforementioned spells.
- **Morale** Muhtadi is loyal to Asad, but if the battle goes poorly (his attending sailors are dead and he is low on hit points), he offers to surrender. He cannot be persuaded to fight against Asad.

STATISTICS

Str 13, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 18 Base Atk +2; CMB +3; CMD 15

 Feats Eschew Materials, Improved Unarmed Strike, Sorcerous Strike^{UC}, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)
 Skills Knowledge (arcana) +6, Spellcraft +6, Survival +0

(+2 to navigate in the wilderness)

Languages Southlands Common

Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds (2), wand of glitterdust (8 charges); **Other Gear** ring of protection +1, astrolabe^{APG}

Sand Pirates (4)

XP 600 each

hp 27 (see page 28)

DEVELOPMENTS: Once the first mate and his cronies have either fled or fallen, Asad emerges from the lower deck for the PCs' final confrontation.

CR 2

CR 7

EVENT 4: THE LION OF FIRE (CR 7 OR CR 8)

CREATURES: Captain Asad al Nar, the "Lion of Fire," comes up to dispatch the PCs personally. He is a CR 7 encounter by himself, but if the PCs are not having difficulty, the encounter can be adjusted to CR 8 by adding two or three pirates. These additional pirates run interference and provide flanking partners for Asad's sneak attacks. Asad is a skilled feint fighter, however, and can utilize his sneak attack damage by himself if necessary.

Asad al Nar

XP 3,200

Male ifrit slayer 8 (*Advanced Class Guide*, *Advanced Race Guide*)

LE Medium outsider (native)

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +4 Dex)

hp 72 (8d10+24)

Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +5

Resist fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *scimitar* +9/+4 (1d6+2/18–20), mwk kukri +8/+3 (1d4/18–20), or

+1 scimitar +11/+6 (1d6+2/18-20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6 +2 bleed, studied target +2 (2nd, swift action)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +8) 1/day—burning hands (DC 11)

TACTICS

Before Combat Asad quaffs his *protection from arrows* potion.

- **During Combat** Asad picks the most dangerous martial opponent and activates his studied target ability as a swift action. He feints his opponent (with Improved Two-Weapon Feint) and follows it up with his multiple iterative attacks, adding sneak attack damage and bleed. If or when his opponent falls, he spares no time for a coup de grace action, but selects the next most dangerous opponent and repeats the process until the ship is fully under his control.
- **Morale** Asad is too arrogant to believe he can be beaten and fights to the death.

Base Statistics Asad uses his Acrobatics skill to feint his enemies, not his Bluff skill, thanks to Slayer's Feint.

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 10 Base Atk +8; CMB +9; CMD 23

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Two-Weapon Feint^{UC}, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Slayer's Feint^{ACG}, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Skills Acrobatics +15, Bluff +9, Craft (ships) +6, Intimidate +11, Perception +12, Profession (driver) +9, Profession (sailor) +9, Stealth +13, Survival +12

Languages Ignan, Southlands Common

- **SQ** combat style (two-weapon combat), slayer talents (bleeding attack +2, combat trick, ranger combat style, weapon training), stalker, track +4
- **Combat Gear** potion of protection from arrows; **Other Gear** +1 mithral chain shirt, +1 scimitar, mwk kukri, belt of physical might +2 (Dex, Con)

DEVELOPMENTS: If Asad is killed, rendered unconscious, or forced from the ship, the blue-skinned Nadirah immediately materializes next to whoever was responsible and states, "Hail, Captain of the *Wind's Mistress*. I am Nadirah. What is your command?" She obeys any command within her ability (see the sidebar, "Where's the Djinni?" for details about her abilities), but cannot leave the ship. This immediately brings into the surviving pirate crew into line immediately, who volunteer to labor in exchange for their lives and return to civilization. If asked about her circumstances, she relates the tale of how Utbah Qasim bound her to the ship for all eternity (see Adventure Background). If they ask how she might be freed, she explains that she can be freed only when someone destroys the *Wind's Mistress*.

Plundered goods fill the ship's hold: spices, fabrics, grain, and so forth. The total value of the merchandise is 16,000 gp; however, the sultan expects to return these goods to their proper owners.

The PCs have two choices: they can destroy the ship and free the djinni, or pilot the vessel back to the sultan.

Concluding the Adventure

The adventure has three possible outcomes, depending on whether the PCs destroy the ship or save it, and whether they decide to return it or to keep it themselves and defy the sultan.

1. SAIL BACK TO THE SULTAN

The Sirocco follows behind the Wind's Mistress, and the two ships have no issues on the return trip. The maelstrom reappears as they cross the Sands of Sorrow, but the Wind's Mistress can easily outrun it and it shows no interest in the Sirocco. While sailing away from it, Nadirah will look longingly toward the maelstrom from the stern, tears streaming down her face. If asked, she tells them the story of her lover, giving them another opportunity to destroy the ship (if they decide that the lovers should be reunited). If they return to Siwal with the ship, Sultan Al-Mamun rewards the PCs as promised and makes the *Wind's Mistress*, complete with its bound djinni, his new flagship, installing Rafiq Ubayid as her captain.

2. DESTROY THE SHIP

Nadirah explains that to destroy the ship, its new captain must find the maelstrom that circles the Sands of Sorrow and order her to sail into it. The captain and crew can safely exit the ship before getting too close to the storm. Nadirah, now able to act freely, locates the maelstrom instinctively, since it is the spirit of her lost love.

The ship, with Nadirah in the bow, sails on a collision course with the maelstrom. As the two meet, the *Wind's Mistress* lifts skyward and breaks in half like a brittle reed. The pieces fall as splinters in the swirling winds. In the center of the maelstrom, two djinn—a man and a woman—can be seen flying hand in hand. As they disappear, the maelstrom fades away.

If Captain Ubayid learns about the plan to destroy the ship, he argues against it. However, he cannot stop the PCs, and he knows it. When the ship is destroyed, he takes the PCs aboard the *Sirocco* and gives them passage back to Siwal, though he demands they go to the palace to answer to the sultan if the have any honor whatsoever.

3. KEEP THE SHIP

The sultan declares the characters outlaws if the party commandeers the ship. If they try to return to Siwal, they discover that they are not welcome at the docks, which is a bit awkward since the city is the most important hub for cross-desert trade. If they head out for parts unknown, the sultan musters some more resources to recover the ship, sending out a new ship—with heroes aboard—to search for it after about a month.

Aftermath: A Hero's Welcome, More or Less

If the PCs return to Siwal, with or without the *Wind's Mistress*, they will be seen as heroes by the common people, both for defeating Asad al Nar and his pirates and for vanquishing the legendary maelstrom of the Sands of Sorrow.

If the characters come back without the *Wind's Mistress*, Sultan al-Mamun will be quite displeased——merely upset if he thinks they lost it by accident, but furious if he thinks they destroyed the ship willingly (and Captain Ubayid will tell him if he knows). However, honor and the popular opinion of the PCs as heroes prevent him from showing his disapproval overtly. He gives the PCs half of what was promised, since they "performed half of what was asked." He will be generally disinclined toward them at this point, and Vizier Akil ibn Khaldun will recommend that they do not overstay their welcome.

HEARDS DANDED

BY JIM GROVES FOR ADVENTURERS OF 7TH LEVEL

"Wherein love conquers all, and time wounds all heels."

Adventure Background

Never does the course of true love run smooth. Sultan al-Mamun admired the grace and form of Bahiyya, a member of the Zahrah al-Zaina, the greatest dance company in all of Siwal. Bahiyya's true love, however, belonged to the sultan's celebrated court poet, Wasim. So, it was with good cause that the young lovers' hearts sank when al-Mamun invited Bahiyya to join his personal harem. Wasim and Bahiyya nevertheless mustered their courage. Together they planned to beseech the sultan to give them his blessing to wed.

Unbeknown to anyone, a malign spirit, a pairaka div named Naïla, haunted the sultan's dreams. Div are a corrupt offshoot of geniekind. Legends describe genies as instrumental in the creation of the universe, but the div were in turn reborn from the spirits of those genies that died, choking on hatred and resentment. Div despise the mortal races, which they believe are patently unfit and too ungrateful to live in the world that the div once worked hard to create. Div are not content to destroy, they must ruin. Pairaka, in particular, are the enemies of love. Nothing brings a pairaka greater delight than to turn the greatest of virtues into obsession, resentment, objectification, and hatred.

Naïla has observed the couple from afar and plotted their downfall. It is not enough for Naïla to slit their throats; the div has decided to extinguish their joy forever. She has played on the desires of the sultan to objectify Bahiyya and compel her to join his harem in order to end her relationship with Wasim. Naïla cackled to herself as she imagined the sultan not even realizing what he was doing, while the young people were bound by tradition and the rules of society. Never again would Bahiyya dance for sheer joy, while the heartbreak would so ruin Wasim that he would never again compose beautiful verse. This ruination of true love, friendship, and art is what all pairaka crave. Yet, Naïla underestimated the sultan's character. Evil often carries a fatal flaw, seeing only the bad in people and underestimating their capacity for good. While the div watched from hiding, Sultan al-Mamun searched the couple's hopeful eyes and realized how much they meant to each other. Abruptly, he gave his blessing. Outraged, Naïla realized that if she wanted this thing done right, she'd have to do it herself. She lashed out and transformed the sultan into the monkey she envisioned him to be. Bahiyya screamed and Wasim drew his scimitar at the appearance of the suddenly visible div. Naïla was just about to tear the lovers to shreds when the palace guard began to come through the chamber's door. The div disappeared as the young couple fled the chamber and the palace, with the now-transformed sultan perched on Wasim's shoulder.

Her first opportunity lost, the div threw caution to the winds and began a new, grander plan. She assumed the form of the royal vizier, Akil ibn Khaldun, then used her powerful *charm monster* ability on the guards and compelled them to arrest the real vizier as an impostor. If she could not destroy true love, she would ruin the Free City of Siwal. Under the pretense that the sultan is deathly ill, Naïla now pretends to be the vizier as she ruins Khaldun's reputation. Left unchecked, the div will subjugate the city of Siwal under her own brutal reign.

Elsewhere, the poet, the harem girl, and the talking monkey have fled Siwal. The couple and the transformed Sultan al-Mamun have sought the mercy of Sultan Hajani. A powerful djinni, Hajani holds court in a faerie-like village of pavilion tents that surround a phantom oasis in the Sarklan Desert—a magical place that only dreamers and the invited can locate.

Adventure Summary

The PCs have occasion to witness the flight of Wasim, Bahiyya, and the transformed sultan when they set upon the royal guard and the vizier, Akil ibn Khaldun (the pairaka, Naïla, in disguise). After a brief period of questioning, the vizier offers to hire the PCs to track down a pair of thieves who have stolen a valuable magical animal, the property of the sultan. During the course of the investigation, the PCs should realize that the vizier does not have anyone's best interest at heart and should be able to ascertain where the thieves have fled. The heroes must steal special mounts and pursue the couple to the magical court of a janni sultan who resides in the desert.

Once there, the heroes must prove themselves worthy, through either clever storytelling, engaging in a duel, or courting the favor of the mysterious and oddly seductive Porcelain Marionette. Once one of these tests is passed, the PCs encounter the star-crossed lovers and the cursed sultan of Siwal, and the gracious janni sultan provides the knowledge required to break the curse on his mortal counterpart.

The PCs must return to Siwal with Bahiyya, Wasim, and the sultan. The city is in chaos at the hands of the false vizier. They must capture the pairaka and force it to witness an act of true love's triumph, a wedding. Only then can the sultan be restored to his true form. Provided the heroes were heroic, their actions on the sultan's behalf are pardoned, reputations are restored, and peace is returned to the Free City of Siwal.

Important: Meeting the Fake Vizier

The first scene of this adventure does something out of the ordinary. The PCs meet the major villain in disguise, right at the beginning of the story and before their respective agendas are set against one another. The div has considerable prowess in Bluff and Disguise, not including a bonus from her personal polymorph effect. Additionally, Naïla should always have *misdirection* actively protecting her, which obfuscates most detection spells.

To avoid confusion in the following text or a repetitious explanation that the individual is not the "real vizier," all mentions of the vizier refer to Naïla the div in disguise, even when a masculine pronoun is used. Once the players resolve the crisis, they meet the genuine royal vizier, Akil ibn Khaldun himself.

Part One: The Crime

The heroes become involved in the adventure and are hired by the royal vizier to track down a pair of thieves and recover a valuable animal stolen from the sultan. Their investigation should lead them to discover that the so-called thieves have fled into the northern Sarklan Desert and that the "crime" is not what it seems.

Sultan's Palace

The default starting encounter occurs just outside the sultan's palace, though it could take place within the sultan's gardens with a little adjustment in the description.

OUTSIDE THE PALACE (CR 10)

The desert air has started to cool as the full moon bathes the Free City of Siwal in its pale light. The marketplaces are quiet now. The only sounds are music, laughter, and muted voices wafting from coffeehouses and teahouses throughout the city. Shadows stretch across the streets from the play of moonlight on the sultan's gardens and along the walls of temples and noble residences, lessened only by the light of an occasional street torch. Nearby is the domed palace of the sultan, with its adjoining outdoor roc cage, which towers over all structures except the Temple of the Sun.

CREATURES: Wherever the PCs begin, whether on a city street outside the palace or in the sultan's gardens, the GM should describe a pair of figures hurriedly fleeing the palace in the night at a distance greater than 60 feet. Their forms are partially illuminated by a distant street torch or a beam of moonlight. Both appear to be human and are clearly moving together. The PCs can discern that the figures are male and female, moderately well dressed, not heavily armed or armored, and in a hurry.

After the characters have a chance to make whatever observations they can, the GM should immediately describe another event. Four armored men arrive on the scene, either from around a nearby corner or through the trees in the garden. Characters who are familiar with Siwal immediately recognize their livery as that of the palace guard. The guards have their scimitars drawn but do not immediately attack. Instead they gruffly demand, "You there! Stand where you are in the name of the sultan!" If the PCs comply, the guards begin to question them about who they are, where they live, and what their business is being out and about at this time of night. This session takes at least a few rounds, during which each PC is expected to respond personally. From the guards' perspective, they have just been informed that thieves have fled the palace, but they don't have a solid idea of who or what they're looking for-they were ordered to go in immediate pursuit while the "vizier" was still establishing his role. A character who succeeds on a DC 20 Sense Motive check gets a feeling that the guards were dispatched in a hurry and not given a lot of information, but they do not want to admit that.

If the PCs refuse to parlay and draw their weapons, the guards attack. If the PCs flee, the guards give pursuit as best they can. If the PCs immediately point toward where they saw the couple a moment ago, the guards peer into the darkness and then proceed to grill the PCs on who and what they saw, because no one is visible in that area anymore.

The GM need only perpetuate this scene for a few rounds, long enough for the couple to slip away in the

dark. As the guards are winding down their questioning, the vizier arrives on the scene (see Development, below).

Palace Guards (4)

XP 800 each

Human fighter 4 N Medium humanoid (human) **Init** +2; **Senses** Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +2 Dex) hp 34 each (4d10+8) Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1 (+1 vs. fear) Defensive Abilities bravery +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 scimitar +9 (1d6+6/18-20)

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8 **Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +7 (+9 disarm); **CMD** 19 (21 vs. disarm)

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar)

Skills Climb +8, Intimidate +6, Perception +4, Survival +7 **Languages** Common

SQ armor training 1

Other Gear mwk scale mail, +1 scimitar, 10 gp

DEVELOPMENT: As noted above, the vizier arrives a few rounds later than the guards, as if he is checking up on them.

The Vizier (Naïla)

CR 9

CR 3

XP 6,400

Disguised advanced pairaka (see page 47) **hp** 114

Melee mwk short sword +18/+13/+8 (1d6+4/19-20) TACTICS

Before Combat Naïla is polymorphed and disguised as the real vizier, with *misdirection* active (targeted on an object or a guard).

During Combat Naïla fights with a short sword instead of her claws to maintain her disguise. If forced to use magic, she uses her Bluff skill to feign the use of verbal and somatic gestures (so as to conceal the existence of her spell-like abilities).

Morale Naïla won't tarry at the scene but try to escape, either by foot or by magic. Once she does, as the vizier she mobilizes the city guard to locate and arrest the PCs and Wasim and Bahiyya.

If hostilities have broken out between the guards and the PCs, the vizier identifies himself and commands all parties to stop and lower their weapons, shouting to the guards that "These are not the thieves!"

The vizier is momentarily contrite toward the heroes, to

smooth things over. He explains that there was a recent theft from the sultan's palace and the guards were ordered to apprehend the culprits, but everything happened in a hurry and they weren't properly instructed. He asks the PCs if they witnessed anything out of the ordinary, since they were apparently in the area at the time of the theft. After the vizier makes a show of sizing them up and evaluating their competence, he eventually extends an offer: he will pay a bounty of 2,000 gp if the PCs locate the thieves and recover an unusual, rare item they stole. He says that the culprits' lives are already forfeit; the PCs can return the thieves for trial if they want, but proof of death will suffice. The return of the sultan's property is essential. If the PCs are hesitant or reluctant, the vizier grudgingly says he'll pay up to 4,000 gp; otherwise, he says he can speak to other parties who might be willing.

If the party agrees, the vizier provides the following pieces of confidential information:

- The stolen item is a rare and valuable magical animal—a talking monkey, which was a recent gift to the sultan from the Mharoti Empire. The sultan is currently unwell, and the vizier hopes the animal brings him cheer. Additionally, the theft could create a diplomatic problem if the monkey's absence is discovered.
- The thief was an entertainer who had been invited into the palace. His companion and accomplice was a servant whose identity and gender are unknown. The vizier does not volunteer the name of the entertainer, but if specifically asked, he identifies him as Wasim, the court poet. PCs who succeed on a DC 20 Sense Motive check sense that the vizier was reluctant to divulge the man's name but not why. If confronted, the vizier explains that since Wasim was a member of the sultan's court, this information would be embarrassing to the sultan if it got out.

If the PCs want to search the palace for clues, they may present themselves tomorrow and be granted leave to investigate the grounds. This should be a social encounter that launches the adventure. If they meet the vizier and agree to help, award them XP equal to a CR 10 encounter.

If instead the PCs start a fight with the guards, and the vizier cannot calm things down, so that the combat grows to include the vizier as an enemy, the characters have essentially derailed the adventure before it can begin. Whether they defeat the vizier and the guards (an epic combat encounter) or they break off their attack and flee the scene, the PCs become wanted fugitives, and they lose access to the confidential information that the vizier shares with them if things go the way they're supposed to. The investigation portion of the adventure (see below) is invalidated, so if the GM and the players want to continue this story line, they will have to concoct another way for the PCs to locate and apprehend the thieves.

If the characters attempt to track the culprits

BUT WE KNOW THE VIZIER!

This is not the only adventure in this anthology to feature the royal vizier, Akil ibn Khaldun. It is possible the PCs have met him on a prior occasion (in The Sand Pirates), which can create a strange disconnect especially if he doesn't seem to remember the previous meeting and now he acts like a jerk. If Naïla senses that her ruse has slipped, she hatches a lie to cover herself. Use the following as an example. "My pardons, I thought we were acquainted. The Free City and the sultan's court literally have hundreds to thousands of

immediately, a successful DC 20 Perception or Survival check allows the heroes to find tracks that lead from where they saw the thieves into the city's east side. At the place where the tracks abruptly terminate, he PCs find a small container nearby, inside of which are minute traces of dust. The substance detects as magical and can be identified as *dust of tracelessness*.

Part Two: The Investigation

When the heroes investigate the theft, they are likely to discover they have not been told the entire truth. At a minimum, they should discover that one of the alleged thieves is Wasim the court poet, who fled into the Sarklan Desert to a magical oasis to seek sanctuary. Additionally, they learn the means of finding and entering this mysterious locale.

Divided Hearts takes a slightly different approach to investigation than most Pathfinder adventures. The adventure assumes the players always receive the clues necessary to advance the adventure in some form. Yet, interactions with different individuals every year—even my memory is sometimes taxed. What happened between us however, is of no importance now, except that it strengthens my confidence in your ability to track down these thieves."

It is suggested however, that you let the chips fall where they may and limit the div to what she can do with her wits and Bluff skill. The PCs are meant to figure out the truth eventually and players appreciate continuity. Her misstep is their gain.

skill checks are still required. A successful skill check provides additional clues the PCs discover, or indicates that their inquiry was discreet, or both. This alternative approach ensures that any group of players can investigate successfully regardless of their play style, but PCs who invest in skills still have meaningful checks to make.

Why is discretion important? Because the default start of the adventure has the PCs working for the bad guy. They should eventually realize this and turn the tables, but it remains to be seen whether the vizier/Naïla learns how close they're coming to discovering the truth and what she does about it.

Suspicion Points

There are ten suggested leads for the PCs to follow up on, and in five of those encounters the PCs might earn a suspicion point. Naïla has her talons full ruling over Siwal and deflecting questions about the sultan's sudden absence from public appearances, so she does not personally supervise the characters' activities. But the

THE REIGN OF NAÏLA

Hearts Divided is intended to be played over five to seven in-game days, and the GM is encouraged to set a limit on how many leads the PCs can follow in a 24-hour period. The reason for this limit is several events that indirectly affect the adventure but happen wholly in the background.

With the sultan indisposed and the real vizier in a secret dungeon cell, Naïla governs the city and does a poor job of it on purpose. On the first day, she raises taxes. The second day she institutes several illegal searches of private residences by the city guard. The third day she orders soldiers from the barracks to confiscate property on behalf of the city government, the al-Mamun Hospital stops ministering to the poor, and so on. The feeling of unrest and tension among the populace rises day by day, as do the calls for

the sultan to emerge and speak to the people and attend public events.

Additionally, if the investigation is spread out over a few days, it also allows the suspicion point system (outlined in Part Two: The Investigation) to have a gradual effect. Ideally, the PCs should try to avoid gaining any suspicion points, but 1 or 2 points doesn't waylay their progress much and might actually make the truth of what has occurred more obvious. Obtuse groups might earn up to 5 suspicion points. However, with a slower pace they are prevented from earning them all in a matter of hours, and they'll have time to witness the slowly unfolding consequences of their actions.

A simple timeline would be for the PCs to investigate a few leads per day for two, three, or four days, then allow for one day's travel to Hajani's court, one day spent at the oasis, and a day's travel back.


real vizier's network of informants, servants, guards, and spies continue to supply information to the vizier, albeit unknowingly to the creature that has supplanted their master. If the PCs are not careful, Naïla learns they're asking the "wrong" questions—questions that could lead to exposure of her plot. It is important that the GM does not explain this hidden mechanic to the PCs, but tracks their suspicion points secretly. If the players question why they still gain information as a reward after low rolls, the GM can inform them that they automatically receive some basic information and are attempting checks to obtain additional facts. This is actually true, it is just not the whole truth.

As the PCs acquire suspicion points, the vizier reacts accordingly. The GM should apply the effect of the party's suspicion points only once—or at most twice—a day, so it does not appear that the vizier reacts instantly every time the PCs talk to the "wrong person." The vizier's potential reactions are not literally cumulative (for example, it makes no sense for him to warn the PCs, terminate their employment, and then arrest them all at once), but they are cumulative in effect. PCs who don't conduct an effective investigation (primarily through failing skill checks) could earn all 5 suspicion points in a few days, other groups might earn as many as 3 points over three days, and some groups might never arouse the vizier's suspicions—which has its own reward (see "Sandcharger Stables" on page 41).

Suspicion Point Effects

As the characters get deeper into their investigation, they run an increasing risk of attracting the vizier's attention and arousing his suspicions that they are not the best people for the job. The paragraphs below describe what happens when the PCs reach a certain total of suspicion points.

If the characters have 1 or 2 points after the first phase (or first day) of their investigation, the vizier "bumps into" the PCs on the street, requests a meeting, or otherwise encounters them. He begins by asking the status of their investigation and even responds positively to information the PCs have gained without earning a suspicion point. The tenor of the conversation changes eventually, and the vizier encourages them to "not waste time with irrelevant inquiries." He leaves them with the impression that he's going to keep his eye on them (though perhaps not literally) from now on.

*If the PCs accumulate 3 suspicion point*s, they are fired. The vizier can cancel his arrangement with them in person

or through a messenger, at the GM's discretion (if in person, make it a CR 10 encounter using the vizier and the palace guards from the encounter in part one). The vizier coldly denounces them as incompetents and time-wasters who misrepresented their ability to get the job done quickly and quietly. They are told that any further activity from them is unwanted and unlawful, and they'll be arrested if they continue to poke around. If any of the PCs are foreigners, it is suggested they leave town as soon as possible. This encounter should turn into a fight only if the PCs make it so. If combat occurs, the vizier uses *dimension door* to escape early on and then writes out a warrant for the PCs' arrest for treason and assault against a member of the royal court.

If the characters continue to investigate after being fired and accumulate 4 suspicion points, the vizier swears out a warrant for the characters' arrest. The charges are vague and nonspecific (having to do with espionage or malicious mischief). If they don't leave the city immediately, the GM can make things difficult through frequent encounters with city guards who are on the lookout for them, and by increasing the DCs of social skill checks (except for those pertaining to the investigation) by 5 or more.

If the PCs experience the worst possible outcome and acquire all 5 suspicion points, the vizier writes out a warrant as described above, but with an added wrinkle. If the PCs are spotted by the city guard, and they do not leave the city immediately, the soldiers attempt to ascertain where their lodgings are. Late that night, Naïla approaches close enough to use her lustful dreams special ability to weaken the PCs. In the morning, a contingent of guards attempts to arrest them.

Back on Track

One of the risks of the vizier's firing the PCs or swearing out a warrant for their arrest is that the players might get the impression that this is the way the adventure is supposed to play out. The expectation is that they will accumulate no more than 1 or 2 suspicion points. The consequences of higher point totals need to be accounted for in case the PCs actually fail more than half of their opportunities to avoid acquiring a point. If the character are fired or sought as criminals, some GM improvisation may be required.

If the PCs are dismissed from their agreement, wanted by the authorities, and/or unsure about what to do next, use NPCs to point them back in the right direction. Feel free to use original NPCs; otherwise the *Siwal Gazetteer* contains ideas, as do many of the adventures in this anthology. Use these character's voices to convey that the vizier is acting strangely and to point out the suspicious nature of the sultan's absence. If the PCs ask "Why should we care?" Remind them that the sultan is always generous to those who serve his best interests. The bigger and more mysterious the problem is, the greater the reward. This is not an occasion to be subtle. Suggest that they circumvent the vizier, figure out what's really going on, and make their own opportunities.

If the PCs end up arrested and thrown into the dungeons, describe the awful conditions, let the experience serve as a point made, and get them back out quickly before the game becomes boring. Perhaps a rescuer comes in the night with a key to their cell and knowledge of where their equipment is being stored. This savior could be a concerned city functionary or a senior member of the palace guard who doesn't tolerate the vizier's sudden and reckless change in behavior, or perhaps the royal zookeeper, who has decided he's been lied to by the vizier. If the jailbreak calls for a short combat encounter, pit the PCs against four palace guards as they make a break for it, using the stat blocks from part one in a CR 7 encounter. Put the characters back on the streets of Siwal and once more in search of the truth.

Following Leads

During their investigation, the PCs use skill checks to acquire information. When they follow particular leads, a failed skill check results in the group acquiring 1 suspicion point. In other avenues of investigation, a failed check has no adverse effect (except perhaps to deny the PCs knowledge they would have obtained with a success).

The result of following a lead is determined by a single check; the GM should make it apparent to the players that only one character's check result matters, and the PCs should designate that individual each time a check is called for. At the GM's discretion, one or two characters might be able to make aid another checks in an attempt to improve their chances; alternatively, everyone might be able to make an aid another check, but for every one that fails, the skill check is made with a -2 penalty.

Below are described some obvious first avenues of investigation.

Marketplace: The PCs automatically learn from knowledgeable marketplace vendors that no one has attempted to sell an unusual talking animal. If the designated character makes a successful DC 20 Knowledge (local) check or Diplomacy check to gather information, the party is informed that it would be all but impossible to fence such an animal without someone knowing about it. To avoid being tracked, a thief would have to leave the city and sell it elsewhere. Their informants suggest that the PCs find out if anyone observed a monkey being taken through the city gates recently. There is no suspicion point to be gained here, since this is an area of inquiry the vizier expects them to undertake, and what they learn does not compromise his position. (If the PCs have already been to the city gates, the information from the marketplace informant confirms for them that the couple must have taken the monkey along.)

City Gates: A city guard can tell the PCs that he witnessed a couple leaving the city through the northeast gate. He did not notice a monkey, but admits that one could have been concealed in the couple's traveling bag. Both people were astride a single horse and, in his estimation, woefully unprepared to go far from the city. If the designated character succeeds on a DC 20 Diplomacy, Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (local), or Survival check, the PCs either realize or are told that tracking them will be very difficult with the couple's head start. The desert winds obscure tracks quickly, and conditions out there are fierce. There is no suspicion point to be gained here, since the guard can reveal nothing that would concern the vizier.

Royal Zookeeper: Anyone the characters question about the monkey (except the vizier) directs them to Fahad, the sultan's royal zookeeper. Fahad is responsible for all of Sultan Al-Mumen's unusual beasts, including his captive rocs. The zookeeper freely offers that he's never heard of a talking monkey before, until last night. Fahad explains that Vizier Akil ibn Khaldun summoned him, saying that the sultan had received a talking monkey as a gift, but it had been stolen-coincidentally, earlier that same night. The vizier asked him to be on the lookout for the beast and prepare a special cage for it in case it was returned.

If this behavior by the vizier strikes the PCs as odd, they're not imagining it—just after the PCs spoke with the vizier, he began laying the groundwork to cover his lies. With a successful DC 25 Diplomacy check or Sense Motive check, the PCs discern that Fahad finds the sequence of events strange. If this check fails, Fahad becomes skeptical of the PCs, and he reports to the vizier about the PCs' questions and asks a few of his own, which earns the PCs 1 suspicion point. This line of investigation leads nowhere else, but the discovery that the vizier has not been entirely truthful is important.

Palace Staff: If the PCs follow up on the entertainer mentioned by the vizier, any guard or servant at the royal palace can tell them more about Wasim, the court poet. Wasim often stays in the palace as the sultan's guest, but his family resides elsewhere in the city. This information the PCs receive automatically and without risk. If the designated character succeeds on a DC 25 Bluff check or Diplomacy check to gather information, the PCs learn that Wasim requested and received a private audience with the sultan that evening, and the PCs are allowed to search Wasim's guest room. Wasim's quarters contain no clues about the theft, but the characters do find several recently written poems that describe the radiant beauty and grace of Bahiyya (which anyone in the palace can identify as a member of the royal harem). If the PCs fail the check, they still receive the additional information and may search Wasim's quarters, but they also gain 1 suspicion point.

Palace Servants: The vizier mentioned that a servant might have aided the entertainer in stealing the monkey. The PCs might ask the palace servants about one of their number who has gone missing. They are informed that no servant is currently absent. If the designated character makes a successful DC 20 Bluff check, a Diplomacy check to gather information, or a Sense Motive check, the PCs find out that some members of the palace staff have overheard that one member of the sultan's harem has vanished. If this check fails, the PCs still receive the above information but gain 1 suspicion point.

The Sultan: If the PCs want to speak to the sultan, they are stopped dead in their tracks. They are informed that the sultan has fallen seriously ill and can receive no visitors, under the direct orders of the vizier. If the characters try to push the matter, the sultan's servants are unyielding and summon the palace guard. If the PCs get aggressive, the entire resources of the palace are arrayed against them and the vizier is summoned (he will probably terminate their services no matter how many suspicion points they have). Yet, if the PCs are not bullheaded, there are clues to be learned here.

If the PCs are not confrontational and if the designated character succeeds on a DC 25 Sense Motive check, the characters realize the palace staff has been magically compelled. The staff members are not dominated (rather, they are charmed), but the directive they've been given is very clear-no one can see the sultan, no one at all. If the PCs drop the matter without further ado, at the GM's discretion, no suspicion point is earned.

If the designated character succeeds on a DC 20 Heal check, the PCs know that the sultan's illness came on too suddenly for this story to be the entire truth. In similar fashion, a DC 20 Diplomacy check to gather information or Knowledge (local) check reveals that no one they talk to knows of a local healer or temple that has been summoned to minister to the sultan. If the PCs fail these checks, they still get the information but earn 1 suspicion point. This lead is a dead end, but it speaks to the vizier's secret agenda.

Secondary Leads

These investigative leads are not secondary in importance but rather typically require the PCs to investigate some of the leads described above first.

Wasim's Family in Siwal: If the PCs call upon Wasim's elderly parents and are nonthreatening, the couple receives them. They say that they have already been interrogated by the vizier's guards, and they insisted that their son is innocent. They explain that Wasim looks upon the sultan as a friend and a generous patron whom he would never betray. They further disclose that their son has fallen in love with a member of the Zahrah al-Zaina dance troupe named Bahiyya. She had just been invited by the sultan

to join his exclusive harem—a great honor, one that the dancer could not refuse. Unfortunately for the young lovers, an affair with a member of the sultan's harem is against the law. But Wasim had a plan. He intended to tell the sultan, his friend and master, of his abiding love for Bahiyya, and ask if he would release Bahiyya from her obligation and bless their marriage. On the day Wasim was to speak the sultan, he vanished, and now his parents are worried that he has come to harm. The PCs learn all of this information automatically if they are polite and respectful. Because nothing they learn here can possibly come to the vizier's attention, the characters do not risk gaining a suspicion point.

If the designated character makes a successful DC 20 Bluff check or Diplomacy check, it occurs to Wasim's parents that he might have gone to Siwal's master gardener for advice. The master gardener is a mutual friend of Wasim and the sultan and one of the wisest men in all of Siwal. If anyone knows what is going on, they say, it will be him.

THE SULTAN'S HAREM (CR 9)

Unlike other leads in the investigation, this one always results in a full-fledged encounter, which can be combatoriented or social. Previous clues or their intuition might lead the PCs to visit the sultan's harem, but the vizier has taken steps to ensure that the characters don't learn anything here, and that he finds out about it if they do show up. (The vizier never mentioned the harem to them, so if the PCs are questioning anyone in here, he sees it as a sign that they're getting too close to the truth.)

If the PCs enter the harem room at the palace, read:

This large room is sparsely furnished but otherwise designed for comfort. Open archways to the north and south provide entrance and egress to other areas of the palace. The floor is covered in rich, soft rugs, and a runway formed by carpeting runs between the entrances. The corners of the room are filled with mountains of satin pillows, some of them occupied by members of the harem. Tapestries and gauzy silks cover the walls, and smokeless braziers provide soft rosy light. As you take in your surroundings, you attract the notice of the three eunuchs that guard the harem members.

The braziers contain *continual flame* spells rather than ordinary coals.

CREATURES: The vizier has ordered the chief eunuch, Samar al-Nahar, to prevent any outsiders from speaking to the royal harem, and has reinforced that order with his *charm monster* spell-like ability. Samar al-Nahar is a stocky, broad-chested guardian, soft-spoken and polite, but unflappable with a no-nonsense attitude. When the PCs enter the harem room, Samar approaches them and demands to know why they are here. No reason the characters can offer him is sufficient for the chief eunuch, though he'll try to remain as reasonable as he can. For instance, he could offer to question the harem on the PCs' behalf and contact them later, if they agree to leave now. (Whereupon he informs on them to the vizier; see Developments, below.)

Diplomacy and Bluff checks do not work on Samar, but the PCs can make a standard DC 25 Sense Motive check to recognize that Samar is under magical compulsion. If the PCs determine that he has been charmed and remove the effect, they can persuade him to reconsider and allow them to speak to the harem (see Developments).

Otherwise, if the PCs do anything other than leave immediately, he motions to his fellow eunuchs to assist him in detaining the characters for the palace guard.

CR 7

Samar al-Nahar

XP 3,200

Human male brawler 8 (*Advanced Class Guide*) LN Medium humanoid (human) **Init** +2; **Senses** Perception +9 **DEFENSE**

JEFEINSE

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +2 Dex, +1 deflection, +2 dodge) hp 78 (8d10+30) Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +3 OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +12/+7 (1d10+4), or unarmed strike brawler's flurry +10/+10/+5/+5 (1d10+4) **Special Attacks** brawler's flurry, brawler's strike (magic), close weapon mastery, knockout (1/day, DC 18, 1d6 rounds), martial flexibility (7/day)

TACTICS

During Combat Samar remains near the other harem guards so the three of them can fight as a unit. He does not kill PCs who are not actively threatening the harem. **Morale** Samar surrenders if reduced 15 hit points or fewer, as long as the harem is not actively threatened.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
Base Atk +8; CMB +12 (+14 bull rush, +15 grapple, +16 trip); CMD 27 (29 vs. bull rush, 30 vs. grapple, 31 vs. trip)
Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Grapple, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Ki Throw^{APG}, Toughness
Skills Acrobatics +12, Climb +11, Diplomacy +3, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (nobility) +5, Perception +9, Sense Motive +9
Languages Common
SQ AC bonus
Other Gear bracers of armor +3, ring of protection +1
SPECIAL ABILITIES

Martial Flexibility (Ex) As a swift action, Samar can

gain the benefit of a combat feat for 1 minute, or as a move action he can gain two combat feats for the same length of time. Each feat gained counts as one use of this ability, and also counts as a use of the feat if it has a limited number of uses per day. One feat can be a prerequisite for the other feat.

Harem Guards (2)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Human brawler 6 (Advanced Class Guide) N Medium humanoid (human) Init +2; Senses Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 15, flat-footed 12 (+1 armor, +2 Dex, +1 deflection, +2 dodge) hp 54 (6d10+17)

Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +10/+5 (1d8+4), or unarmed strike brawler's flurry +8/+8/+3 (1d8+4)

Special Attacks brawler's flurry, brawler's strike (magic), close weapon mastery, knockout (1/day, DC 17, 1d6 rounds), martial flexibility (6/day), precise strike +1d6 TACTICS

During Combat The harem guards stay near each other to work to flank opponents and utilize their teamwork feats. If a PC is removed from combat, the guards always move to an active target.

Morale If they are close to death, the harem guards surrender as long as the harem is not directly threatened, or if Samar commands them to do so.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8 Base Atk +6; CMB +10 (+13 trip); CMD 25 (28 vs. trip) Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Outflank^{APG}, Precise Strike^{APG}, Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +11, Climb +11, Escape Artist +7, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +7, Perception +9, Sense Motive +8

Languages Common SQ AC bonus

Other Gear bracers of armor +1, ring of protection +1

DEVELOPMENTS: There are a few possible outcomes in this encounter.

If the PCs leave peaceably, they gain 1 suspicion point when Samar reports their intrusion to the vizier. A member of the harem named Paeonia leaves the palace later, locates the characters, and tells them what she knows (see below).

If the PCs free the chief eunuch from his enchantment, he allows them to interview the harem (while supervising from a discreet distance). Paeonia tells the heroes what she knows, and no suspicion point is gained.

If a fight breaks out, the harem stays well out of the way, hiding behind pillows. If the PCs get the best of the eunuchs, they surrender rather than throw their lives away—provided that the heroes promise not to harm the harem. This outcome enables the PCs to speak to Paeonia (see below) before leaving, but they gain 1 suspicion point.

If the eunuchs get the best of the PCs, the palace guards are summoned and the characters are imprisoned (see "Back on Track," page 37). When the PCs are set free in this circumstance, it is Paeonia who liberates them. At that time, she tells the PCs what she knows. The suspicion point system is no longer relevant at this point; the PCs are wanted fugitives and must continue the adventure while avoiding the vizier's guards.

WHAT PAEONIA KNOWS: Paeonia is a friend of Bahiyya and a fellow member of the Zahrah al-Zaina dance troupe. Her information is gained automatically whenever Paeonia has an opportunity to speak to the PCs. She divulges the story of Wasim and Bahiyya, their love for each other, and how the sultan unknowingly complicated their lives by inviting Bahiyya to join his harem—an invitation Bahiyya felt she could not refuse without dishonoring the Zahrah al-Zaina and her family. Bahiyya told Paeonia that Wasim intended to petition the sultan to release Bahiyya from her commitment, but after they were supposed to meet, Bahiyya never returned, and the vizier has forbidden anyone in the palace from speaking about the matter. Paeonia doesn't know anything about a monkey, but she clearly doesn't trust the vizier anymore. Finally, she strongly suggests that the PCs call upon the master gardener. Bahiyya has mentioned Wasim's friendship with him, and she thinks the gardener might know where he's hiding.

MASTER GARDENER: The PCs' investigation eventually leads to a fateful meeting with the master gardener. He is a renowned sage and a friend of the most influential people in Siwal, including the sultan. He can be found in the public gardens on the east side of Siwal, or in the adjacent Gardener's Hall. As long as the PCs are truthful and respectful, the sage shares what he knows.

First, he offers that he has known Akil ibn Khaldun, whom he describes as the "real vizier," for many years, and the person currently governing the city is not that individual. He suspects that the actual royal vizier either labors under a curse or has been possessed by an evil spirit. He cautions that the false vizier is now in control of the city guard and the military. A direct confrontation could lead to bloodshed and needless suffering, not just for the PCs but all of Siwal's citizenry.

Second, he confirms that Wasim and Bahiyya visited him after they fled from the palace, and they did have a strangely self-possessed monkey with them. The couple indicated that their lives were in mortal danger, so he gave them assistance.

He goes on to explain that the PCs should search for Wasim and Bahiyya at the Court of Sultan Hajani in the Sarklan Desert. Hajani is a powerful djinni who dwells at a phantom oasis that is said to be impossible to locate. The sage explains that the oasis exists in a demiplane that is coterminous with Midgard. The border between the planes is invisible and immaterial except for those to whom Hajani has extended a personal invitation—or as legend has it, for those who envision the oasis in their dreams. The sage clarifies that one does not pierce the border by moving through some ethereal plane. Instead, the PCs must cross the boundary both in their physical forms and while asleep.

Although doing this sounds impossible, the gardener has an idea. The sultan has several clockwork horses, which are impervious to the desert sun. These steeds can be directed to travel to a set destination. Were the PCs to lash themselves to their backs of these mounts and consume an alchemical sleep aid, the horses could carry them across the demiplane's border while they dreamed. To accomplish this, the characters need to find the keys that are used to keep the clockwork creatures wound up and to direct them. The gardener presumes that the keys are secured somewhere near the horses, so they might be made ready at a moment's notice.

The master gardener concludes (if the players don't figure it out) that the heroes are going to have to ask the vizier to lend them the mechanical horses, or they're going to have to steal them. He strongly suggests that they seek permission if this is at all possible (and it is, as long as the PCs have no more than 2 suspicion points).

The gardener provides several doses of a mild sleeping potion (enough for two trips, and extra ones in case they're needed) and a map that indicates the likely location of the oasis's border (so they can direct the horses properly). Finally, to allay any concerns the PCs might have, everything the gardener knows about Sultan Hajani suggests that the djinni is honorable and observes the laws of hospitality. There's a chance the heroes might be turned away for forcing their way into the oasis uninvited, but they won't be harmed in their sleep, or refused water.

Part Three: Escape from Siwal

By now the PCs should know that something is terribly wrong with the royal vizier, and the sultan is somehow in trouble, as are the star-crossed lovers, Wasim and Bahiyya. Thanks to the master gardener, they should also know where the couple has sought refuge and the means to get there. The next thing they need to do is obtain the use of some of the sultan's clockwork horses.

SANDCHARGER STABLES (CR 7)

The clockwork chargers are kept in a separate wing of the sultan's private stables. The PCs' investigation has a real impact on how difficult it is to obtain these mounts. If the characters sail through the investigation without gaining

a suspicion point (and they do not tip off to Naïla that they know the truth), they can simply ask to use them to track down the thieves. Naïla doesn't care if the sultan's own resources are used to recapture him. The PCs can skip the rest of the stable encounter and the chase through the city, but they still earn XP equal to the value of these two encounters. Note: this reward applies only if the vizier gives his blessing to use the chargers. It is possible for the PCs to trick the guards into relinquishing the horses without resorting to combat and still be chased.

It's more likely the PCs have at least 1 or 2 suspicion points. If so, they can still ask the vizier to use the horses. The vizier will want to know what they have learned about the thieves' location. Regardless of what the PCs tell him, the vizier grants their request. The heroes can skip the rest of the stable encounter and the chase through the city. This outcome, however, has an impact later in the adventure (see "Death in the Desert" on page 46).

If the PCs have gained more than 2 suspicion points, they're going to have to steal the horses and escape the city.

This wing of the stables lacks the strong animal odor that is prevalent in the other sections. Eight pens are arrayed side by side down an enclosed corridor that runs east and west and is blocked off at the east end. The west end opens into room that the stablekeepers use as an office. Each pen is partially blocked off by a swinging latched door wide enough for a large animal, and inside are food and water troughs that are empty and clean.

The room at the west end contains a desk, a number of chairs, and two worktables covered with small tools. Larger tools and spare pieces of machine equipment are suspended on hooks so that they hang flush against the walls. An open doorway on the opposite side of the room leads to the main stables and a pair of large barn doors that open to the outside.

The pens are not locked, but they are latched shut. The desk is a simple affair, a place for the stable hands and guards on duty to sit and review the post's log, make schedules, and do some administrative work.

CREATURES: Each of the pens houses one clockwork charger (enough for each PC to have one), which is fully wound but needs its key inserted before it obeys a PC's instructions. Due to the value of these automata, four guards are posted in the work room day and night.

If the characters are authorized to use the horses (because they have fewer than 3 suspicion points), the guards have been advised to provide them with the mounts' keys and send them on their way. Otherwise, the PCs are going to have to take other measures.

If the characters don't get the horses automatically, the GM should tell the players what they're getting into before

they accost the guards, who will be skeptical of the PCs. They might come up with a scheme to distract or persuade the guards, such as telling them about a (false) emergency elsewhere in the palace. To resolve this situation with a game mechanic, one member of the party can make a DC 25 Bluff check or Intimidate check to get the guards' cooperation. If that check fails, the guards become aggressive and attempt to detain the characters until the vizier can speak to them personally. As a last (or first) resort, of course, the PCs can initiate combat.

The keys to the clockwork chargers are stored in a heavy lockbox inside a drawer in the desk. At least one guard has the key to the box, and it is trapped (see Traps, below). Note: the heavy clockwork horse is an original creature in this adventure that incorporates elements of an animated object (specifically construction points) and the clockwork subtype. *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* has more information on winding and the clockwork subtype.

Palace Guards (4) CR 3
XP 800 each
hp 34 (see page 34)
Heavy Clockwork Horses (4) CR 2
XP 600 each
N Large construct (clockwork)
Init +4; Senses low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft.;
Perception +3
DEFENSE
AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, -1 size, +2
natural)
hp 21 (2d10+10)
Fort +0, Ref +2, Will -4
Defensive Abilities hardness 5; Immune construct traits
Weakness vulnerability to fire and electricity
OFFENSE
Speed 50 ft.
Melee bite +6 (1d4+5), 2 hooves +1 (1d6+2)
Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.
STATISTICS
Str 20, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1
Base Atk +2; CMB +8; CMD 17 (21 vs. trip)
Fasts Improved Initiative Lightning Defleves

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes **Skills** Perception +3

SQ construction flaws, construction points, difficult to create, swift reactions, winding

Other Equipment special key Special Abilities

Composite Construction (Ex) The construct is made of varying materials. Its hardness is reduced by 5. (+1CP)

DEVELOPMENTS: If the PCs trick the guards into believing they were granted use of the chargers, the guards open the lockbox and hand the PCs the clockwork keys. The charade permits the PCs to get the chargers

out of their pens and get comfortably mounted, but it won't last long—just until the PCs ride outside the stable building. Likewise, if the PCs fight the guards but obtain the keys without setting off the *alarm* spell on the lockbox, they can get outside the stables, but the end result is the same. The GM should start the next phase of the adventure with the chase scene, "Band on the Run" (see below).

If the PCs set off the *alarm* spell while they obtain the keys, things get complicated. The characters should roll initiative, while the GM secretly rolls initiative for four palace guards (these are new guards, if the previous four were sent away or otherwise dealt with). The guards arrive at the location marked X on the stables map at the start of round 4. Bear in mind that in the three rounds prior to that, the PCs have many actions to perform before they can get mounted, such as grabbing a key, moving down the corridor, opening a pen, and moving to a horse. Each character must use a standard action to insert a key into a mount, in order to activate it and attune it to its rider's commands. The guards attempt to pull the PCs down from their horses (requiring a Ride check to stay mounted) or to bull rush them off their mounts or otherwise stop them. If the PCs don't make escape a priority, another four guards arrive at the start of round 8.

Traps: The clockwork keys are protected by more than a simple mechanical lock. The lockbox is 1 foot long, 6 inches wide, and 6 inches deep and thickly lined with lead, weighing 20 pounds. The lock requires a DC 30 Disable Device check to unlock. There are two simple spell traps that must be bypassed or disarmed; otherwise both go off. The spells are CL 6th and are independent, which means the PCs earn XP only for traps they defeat.

Trapped Lockbox CR 2 and CR 5

XP 600 and 1,600

Type magical; Perception DC 26 and DC 28; Disable Device DC 26 and DC 28Bypass secret word ("Ablah," the name of the sultan's

mother), applies to both spells.

Trigger touch; Reset none

Effect *alarm* spell (audible); *glyph of warding* (blast glyph, 3d8 electricity damage; Reflex DC 14 half).

BAND ON THE RUN (CR 7)

Unless the vizier has granted the heroes use of the clockwork chargers, any scheme the PCs used to obtain the horses is going to fall apart rapidly. Guards, stable hands, and palace staff attempt to flag them down, ask them to wait "while we verify this is permitted," or simply demand that they dismount. The vizier might peer down from a palace window and signal for them to be stopped; in any case, the vizier demands their arrest the instant he is made aware of the situation. The GM should make it clear that if the heroes hang around the stables, they won't be going



anywhere. They need to run like the wind for the city gates. Once the characters make clear their intention to leave, horns are sounded, alarms are raised, and a chase ensues.

This encounter uses a variant of the Pathfinder chase rules to represent the characters' flight through Siwal's crowded streets, while the vizier orders the city guard and military to block off avenues of escape, pursue the characters, and prevent them from getting through the city gates with the clockwork horses.

OBSTACLES: In this episode of the adventure, no opponents are represented as pursuers; rather, the PCs are racing against a deadline and must overcome obstacles that they come up against as the chase unfolds. This is an abstract "mini-game" that does not use the chargers' base speed, distance traveled per round, or a specific time frame, although the GM may consider each obstacle to take up 1 minute if that is helpful. The chase is broken into thirteen segments that the PCs must advance through to escape the city (as depicted in the diagram above). It is suggested that the GM jot down the details of each segment on slips of paper to create a set of "chase cards" that are revealed to the players one by one.

Each segment of the chase consists of two obstacles, which are skill checks or other kinds of die rolls. During each segment of the chase, the PCs must attempt one of the indicated checks (their choice) and can attempt both if they so choose. In order to evade their pursuers and escape the city, the characters must advance through 13 obstacles in 10 attempts. Each of these checks is made by a single PC, presumably the character with the best chance of succeeding, although other PCs can attempt aid another checks. Additionally spells and effects that increase skill checks can be allowed, as well as other creative solutions as the GM deems appropriate. For example, a *haste* spell cast on the horses might grant a +2 bonus to all skill checks to represent the group's increased speed. Success on one roll means the party advances to the next obstacle. Success on both rolls means the party advances through three obstacles. For example, if the characters are on the first obstacle and succeed at both checks, the next obstacle they encounter is number four. If anyone fails an attempt to overcome an obstacle, the characters do not advance through the chase; their path is momentarily blocked, and they must face the segment's obstacles again in the next minute. If a check is failed by 10 or more, the PC who attempted the check must make a DC 15 Handle Animal or Ride check. If that check fails, the character falls to the ground and is unintentionally trampled by other PCs' horses, taking 7d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 15 half). During the delay, the character who fell is able to remount and resume the chase.

THROUGH THE GATES: To successfully elude the vizier's forces, the PCs must complete the chase and get outside the city in 10 rounds. If the PCs overcome only one obstacle per round, they automatically lose. To accomplish their objective, the heroes must succeed on both checks in two different segments, in order to clear the gates.

END OF THE HUNT: Regardless of how the chase scene plays out, the characters ultimately get out of the city with their horses (because the clockwork chargers are required to get to Sultan Hajani's oasis). (If they fall short of overcoming the required number of obstacles, the GM can rule that they made a narrow escape despite their bad luck.) When the chase scene is over, award the characters XP equal to a CR 7 encounter.

Despite this "guaranteed" outcome, there is a point to the chase. Success means the PCs escape with fully functional clockworks to use as mounts. But if they fail to get out of town in 10 rounds, the heroes still escape but their horses are damaged and are useful only for transportation until they are repaired—the chargers lose their ability to make melee attacks for the rest of the adventure. It is theoretically possible to repair the horses, but it should be impossible to do so manually (without custom tools and parts). Likewise, magically repairing them requires access to *make whole* or *rapid repair*^{UM} at a caster level beyond the ability of the PCs.

Part Four: Saving the Sultan

The heroes have departed from Siwal. They now have a destination and the means to get there. The clockwork chargers require no water, rations, or rest. Provided they are given proper instruction, the chargers can carry their riders to a desired destination without further direction.

The map from the master gardener indicates where the oasis would be if it existed wholly on Midgard; this is the place the PCs direct their mounts to go. The alchemical concoction he provides to the PCs encourages dream-filled sleep. With those two advantages, the PCs need only travel relatively close to the oasis, wind the clockworks, direct them to the location on the map, and tie themselves to their mounts (so they don't fall off) before going to sleep. The adventure assumes that the PCs accomplish this without trouble, but the GM is free to add desert encounters before the PCs perform this last step to arrive at Hajani's court.

Hajani's Court

Sultan Hajani is not a mortal monarch, but a powerful djinni who rules over a tented community that surrounds an oasis north of Siwal in the Sarklan Desert. The oasis is the stuff of legend, often spotted only as a far-off image that turns out to be a mirage. Actually, the oasis exists on a small demiplane that is coterminous with Midgard. Hajani presides over a perpetual party in this place, and none of his guests can be counted among the banal. Bronze-skinned and scantily clad suli-jann cavort among the crowd. Bards, courtesans, and jesters mingle among strange and exotic guests from across the multiverse. Elsewhere in this vista, shaitan and efreet broker treaties that would be considered unthinkable in the City of Brass.

Entrance into Hajani's oasis is by invitation only, and Wasim the poet is on the permanent guest list, which makes it a perfect refuge for him and his companions. There does exist however, a mystical backdoor. Hajani permits mortals to dream of his splendid court, the side effect of which is that if one dreams while crossing the threshold, the barrier yields. Typically the uninvited are expelled unless they can demonstrate why they shouldn't be, and the primary criteria is not to be boring. Since hospitality is the law in the desert, outsiders are allowed water before they are cast out. Additionally the oasis is neutral territory for all genies, including efreet, though divs are never welcome. Hajani has a strict policy with regard to violence and murder. Duels and physical contests are permitted, but never to the death; nevertheless, the weak and unlucky are best served by being unobtrusive.

LIVING THE WILD LIFE (CR 9)

Read the following description when the PCs awaken. They might be momentarily stiff and uncomfortable from having slept in the clockwork chargers' saddles, as they are roused by the sound of the emissaries that arrive to receive them.

A shimmering blue pond, almost a small lake, is nestled in a sea of white sand and partially surrounded by a copse of desert palm and date trees in the near distance. Closer by are a series of enormous white pavilion tents, set adjacent to each other as if interconnected. The entrance of the closest tent has its flaps drawn open to reveal an area large enough to host a hundred people or more. The air carries the scents of spices, heavy drink, and roasted meat. The sounds of conversation, laughter, and music are everywhere.

CREATURES: As the PCs awaken, they are greeted by the Porcelain Marionette and her escort, a trio of janni guards. The Porcelain Marionette is a living, sentient construct, and the major domo to Sultan Hajani. Her features are sculpted in the form of a breathtakingly beautiful woman, albeit in an expression that is fixed and unchanging. Belying her appellation, the Porcelain Marionette does not move like a puppet. She carries a hand fan, which is actually a minor magic item that can transform into a mask-like representation of her face that depicts whatever emotion she wants to convey other than the serene expression she presents by default. The Porcelain Marionette explains where they are, if the PCs appear confused, as well as introducing herself and identifying herself as a trusted servant of Sultan Hajani. She knows that the characters have not been invited into the oasis, so she politely explains that the place is private propertythey're welcome to replenish their water supplies, but after that they must leave.

If the characters try to explain why they're here and mention Wasim's name, she changes the expression on her mask to a bright smile and confirms that Wasim and his guests are present. The Marionette, not sure of the characters' intentions, informs them that Sultan Hajani prohibits violence here, and any such act would incur the wrath of hundreds of powerful entities. If the characters assure her that they mean no harm, they receive another flash of her smiling mask, and she replies, "Why then, we just need a reason to invite you!"

The PCs now need to demonstrate some reason why they are exceptional and/or interesting enough to mingle in this otherworldly company (see "Obstacles," below). For simplicity and brevity, the adventure assumes that only one such demonstration is necessary for the entire group, but the GM is free to ask each PC to make unique separate attempts. If one PC sufficiently impresses her, it is enough for the entire group to be admitted. Note: this is intended to be a social encounter, although the guards are quick to come to the Porcelain Marionette's defense if necessary. If the PCs gain entrance with a suitable display, award them XP as if they had defeated the Marionette and her guards in combat.

CR 7

CR 5

The Porcelain Marionette XP 3,200

hp 85 (Bestiary 4)

Janni Bodyguards (2)

XP 1,600 each

Advanced janni **hp** 51 each (*Bestiary*)

OBSTACLES: The demonstrations of talent or skill required of the PCs should be challenging but not impossible. Skill checks to resolve any of these attempts should have DCs of 20 or 25, and if the demonstration is best effected in front of a larger audience, the Porcelain Marionette can grant the PCs probationary entrance in order to stage their performance.

- **PUBLIC PERFORMANCE** Demonstrations of song, dance, comedy, and oration are all well received. A dance of veils or a sword dance would go over very well, and other guests can provide accompaniment if necessary.
- **ARTISTRY** The creation of a thing of beauty always merits consideration, whether it's a sketch of a noble djinni, some beautiful calligraphy, or a well-mixed cocktail (by way of Profession [brewer, innkeeper, or cook]).
- GAMES OF CHANCE OR NONLETHAL **COMBAT** This demonstration could be a contest of archery against a janni, in which the one who makes the highest rolls against a target wins. Alternatively, it could be a card game against an efreeti with a series of contested Bluff checks on either side-the PCs, however, should be prepared to actually wager for real stakes (for 1,000 to 5,000 gp or a comparable magic item). A swimming race across the oasis against one of the suli-jann works (assume suli-jann have a +4 bonus to Swim). A character might propose to defeat an opponent in a wrestling match. If so, a striking shaitan with crystalline hair and a perfect smile (and of whatever gender the PC is attracted to) accepts the challenge. Use the default *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* stat block for a shaitan. The winner must pin his or her opponent in a contest using nonlethal combat.
- **ROMANCE** If the PCs successfully chat up a creature of CR 6 or higher, doing that gets them on the guest list. One possible "target" is the Porcelain Marionette herself, who is quite capable of flirtation and coquettish behavior using the many masks at her disposal. The GM should accept sincere roleplaying in this endeavor as an automatic success, or require a Diplomacy check for those who would rather leave the outcome to their character abilities.

Finding the Monkey and True Love

After the characters receive permission to move about freely, they soon find Wasim, Bahiyya, and a small golden monkey. The three are cautious at first, but if the PCs indicate that they understand the situation, the exiles are overjoyed to have allies. If the characters don't have the full story on the vizier at this point, Wasim and the sultan do their best to explain what is really going on and enlist their help. The sultan, speaking in a high-pitched, monkey's voice, offers a great reward if they come to his aid and that of Siwal. Wasim explains that they have not met with Sultan Hajani yet, but they have been told their audience will be soon. As it happens, servants of Hajani come for them soon after the PCs befriend Wasim and escort the entire group to Hajani's private tent.

Hajani is a larger-than-life djinni with laughing eyes, a wide smile, and the girth of an entity who is familiar with luxury. He greets Sultan al-Mamun as an honored guest and his peer in the mortal world. Hajani also addresses each of the others in greeting, including the PCs, and inquires about who they are.

Hajani is sympathetic to the group's plight, but makes it clear neither he nor his guests will enter the arena of mortal politics, even against an evil spirit. Yet, he can help indirectly. First, if the PCs have not determined the true nature of their enemy, he suggests that the culprit is a div, specifically a pairaka-the sworn enemy of true love. The PCs can make a Knowledge (planes) check to determine facts about pairaka, and Hajani's insights and observations grant a +5 bonus on that check. Also, the djinni sultan has heard that the most pernicious of pairaka curses can be undone by a simple elixir made from the paraika's bitter tears. The most effective way to make a pairaka cry is by bringing about the triumph of love—and nothing could be more appropriate than a wedding, he adds with a wink. Lastly, Hajani breaks the news that they're going to need to capture the pairaka alive. He warns them about the div's dimension door ability, and offers them a wand of dimensional anchor with 3 charges. Sultan al-Mamun chimes in to say that there are *dimensional shackles* in his treasure vaults to immobilize the paraika after it has been defeated, as well as cells in his dungeon that prevent magic from being used inside them. He informs the heroes they should incapacitate the div, who must not be slain until she has been forced to cry. The sultan reassures everyone that justice will be served once he is restored to his true form.

Armed with these resources and all the information they need to unravel the situation in Siwal, the characters are ready to return to the city and set things right. Hajani suggests that the group rest before they head back, and he extends full hospitality until they're ready to depart. Although his court is not a marketplace, the PCs might be able to ask around if any creatures have magic items to buy, sell, or trade.

When the group is ready to leave, the PCs must once again wind up their mounts and direct them to return to the city. Wasim (with the monkey on his shoulder) and Bahiyya ride as extra passengers on two of the mounts. The characters have enough doses of the sleeping potion left to get everyone through the interplanar barrier a second time. Their return trip might be uneventful, or not.

DEATH IN THE DESERT (CR 9)

This encounter occurs if the PCs earned even a single suspicion point during their investigation. In that case, the vizier has—at the least—had serious second thoughts about allowing the characters back into the city, especially if they have the sultan in tow. So, she has sent out a few of her minions to waylay them in the desert.

CREATURES: Naïla has not remained idle in the PCs' absence. When not ruining the standing of the real vizier, or destabilizing Siwal's governance, she has taken steps to guard against the sultan's return. She has sent two ghuls and a pair of aghash twins to lurk in the desert near the city and ambush the PCs as they approach the gates.

This encounter provides an opportunity for the PCs to use their mounts in combat if they wish, and if the mounts are capable of fighting.

The aghash have *spectral hand* cast in advance and activate their sandstorm special ability to feign a real desert storm when they spot the characters approaching. The storm might allow them to close and charge the PCs with a surprise attack. The ghuls adopt hyena forms to keep pace with mounted opponents.

During the battle, each ghul pairs off with one of the aghash, so that the ghuls engage in close combat but are backed up by the spell-like abilities of the aghash. The four of them assault the PCs in two pairs from either side. The creatures fight to the death.

Ghuls (2)

XP 1,600 each hp 51 (*Bestiary 3*)

Eyes of the Desert (2)

CR 5

CR 5

XP 1,600 each Advanced aghash hp 52 each (*Bestiary 3*)

Part Five: . . . Conquers All

The PCs have a number of ways to return to the city. If they approach the gates and present the talking monkey, Wasim, and Bahiyya as their prisoners, the guards direct them to report to the palace, provided that the vizier never issued an order for their arrest. If the characters stole the horses but have now brought back their quarry as prisoners, the guards are willing to overlook the theft.

The characters can instead sneak into the city (leaving the mounts inactive in the desert), perhaps through a secret entrance in the wall. Sultan al-Mamun knows the city intimately, and any plausible plan to enter the city and reach the palace should work.

Alternatively, the PCs might march right up to the gates, whereupon the sultan can come clean with the truth. He explains to the astonished guards that he has been absent because of a terrible curse, not an illness, and an impostor

CR 9

has seized power by taking the form of the vizier—but now these heroes have come to put things right. Even while transformed, the sultan has impressive powers of persuasion. The guards are fed up with the vizier's recent behavior (see the sidebar "Reign of Naïla") and the resulting angry populace, so they are happy to let the group continue on to the palace in hopes that these heroes can solve the city's problems.

CONFRONTING NAÏLA (CR 9 OR CR 10)

The sultan's throne room is a long hall with marble tiled floors and a carpeted runway that leads to a raised dais to the north. Upon the platform is a padded throne, with room enough for the ruler's most trusted advisors to stand nearby. Tall marble columns are interspaced throughout the chamber with a solitary exit to the south, which leads to elsewhere in the palace.

CREATURES: Naïla, still masquerading as the vizier, is found seated in the sultan's throne room. Her reaction to the characters' return depends on what terms she last left the PCs.

If the PCs have gained 2 or fewer suspicion points, the div does not attack immediately. If one of the PCs succeeds at an opposed Sense Motive check against her, Naïla lowers her guard long enough for the characters to approach her and gain a surprise round before she reacts.

If the PCs were on bad terms with the vizier when they left the city, Naïla realizes that her reign of terror may be coming to an end. At the sight of the sultan, she wrongly assumes that the PCs had no means to break her contemptuous form curse and sets about to kill and sicken some of the heroes or the sultan before she uses *dimension door* to get to safety.

Naïla does not have the advanced simple template; she instead has additional HD and is otherwise adjusted to be a CR 9 creature. She retains all standard pairaka abilities, but with new saving throw DCs.

Note: if the encounter lacks sufficient challenge, it can be bumped up to CR 10 by adding two ghuls or advanced aghash (see page 46). These creatures are robed figures that stand at the vizier's side, flanking the throne.

Naïla

XP 6,400

Female advanced pairaka (*Bestiary 3*) NE Medium outsider (div, evil, extraplanar, shapechanger)

Init +9; Senses darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness, detect good, detect magic; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 18 (+5 Dex, +8 natural) hp 114 (12d10+48)

Fort +8, Ref +13, Will +12

DR 10/cold iron and good; **Immune** fire, poison, disease; **Resist** acid 10, electricity 10; **SR** 22

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)

Melee 2 claws +17 (1d6+3 plus disease and grab), or mwk short sword +18/+13/+8 (1d6+4/19-20)

Special Attacks contemptuous form, lustful dreams (DC 23), disease, rake (2d6+6)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +19) Constant—*detect good, detect magic*

At will—*charm monster* (DC 20), *dimension door* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *misdirection* (DC 19) 1/day—*insect plague*, summon (level 3, 1d4 dorus 50%) **TACTICS**

TACTICS

Before Combat Naïla encounters the PCs disguised as the royal vizier with a +6 bonus on Disguise checks and her *misdirection* ability active.

During Combat If forced into melee, Naïla likes to grapple, not only to rake but to inflict both diseases. **Morale** Naïla avoids melee with dedicated martial characters if possible. She uses *dimension door* to escape if reduced to 25 hit points or fewer, though the GM should allow and encourage the PCs to use Hajani's *wand of dimensional anchor* prior to this.

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 20, **Con** 19, **Int** 14, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 24 **Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 30

Feats Combat Casting, Deceitful, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +15, Bluff +24, Diplomacy +18, Disguise +20, Fly +16, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (local) +15, Knowledge (planes) +15, Perception +18, Sense Motive +13, Stealth +19

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ change shape (any Small or Medium animal or humanoid)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Contemptuous Form (Su) Once per week as a standard action, Naïla can level a potent curse upon an enemy and transform it into a small animal, as per *baleful polymorph*, if the target fails a DC 23 Fortitude save. Unlike a true spell, this transmutation cannot be

undone by *dispel magic*, but *break enchantment* and higher-level spells do suffice. Drinking a simple elixir created from Naïla's tears automatically ends the effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

- **Disease (Su)** A pairaka carries two diseases. Its claws infect targets with bubonic plague, and any willing contact with its skin (such as through caressing, grappling, or some other means) exposes a victim to the shakes.
- **Bubonic Plague**: Claw—injury; *save* Fort DC 20; *onset* 1 day; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d4 Str damage, 1 Cha damage, and target is fatigued; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.
- Shakes: Contact; *save* Fort DC 13; *onset* 1 day; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d8 Dex damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

DEVELOPMENTS: With the help given them by Sultan Hajani, the PCs should be able to capture Naïla rather than destroy the div. When she is reduced to 0 hit points or otherwise rendered unconscious, Naïla assumes her true form. With help from Wasim and the transformed sultan, the PCs are able to persuade the palace guards to take the pairaka to a special cell in the palace dungeons that has a permanent *antimagic field* effect (which blocks her dimension door ability and shapechanging powers). The characters are also able to locate the real royal vizier, Akil ibn Khaldun, in another cell that has been barred from visitors.

If Naïla escapes, she departs from Siwal never to be heard from again. The sultan is restored to his old self via *break enchantment* cast by a spellcaster allied with the court. The young couple still have their happy ending, complete with wedding, and the heroes are still rewarded by the sultan (see Conclusion, below).

Conclusion

With Naïla taken care of, the PCs can set about helping the sultan and the vizier to put things right. The first order of business is Wasim and Bahiyya's wedding, which is critical to lifting the curse from the sultan. The couple invites the characters to be witnesses at the event. The palace is hastily decked out in red, a color that all pairakas hate pathologically. The Zahrah al-Zaina troupe performs, and a priest from the Temple of the Sun officiates at the ceremony (unless a PC cleric can be called upon).

Naïla is brought to the ceremony in shackles, silenced so she can't disrupt things, and made to observe the ceremony on her knees. A wizard stands by prepared to cast antimagic field if she attempts to change shape to get out of the shackles. When the marriage is complete and everyone else begins to celebrate, Naïla weeps tears of absolute rage. So heated is her fury at the triumph of true love that her tears are sterilized as they roll down her face, freeing them of all her diseases. As the tears drop from her twisted visage, an attendant collects them in a small cup, which Akil ibn Khaldun offers to the monkey. The bride and groom kiss, the monkey laps up the tears-and with a puff of smoke, the sultan assumes his true form. As the celebration after the ceremony gets under way, Naïla—having served her purpose— is dragged off to be beheaded.

During the celebration, Sultan al-Mamun lauds the PCs for their heroism, and makes it all well worth their while. Specifically, the sultan permits them to keep their clockwork chargers and arranges for the mounts to be repaired if they were damaged while escaping Siwal (their purchase price is 8,000 gp each). He additionally grants the characters 7,500 gp apiece, in either gold, gems, or magic items from his royal vaults.

Over the following days, the sultan and the vizier tour the city to make amends, smooth things over with the disgruntled, and restore the good reputation of Akil ibn Khaldun. The PCs will remain in the good graces of the ruler of Siwal for some time to come, while Wasim and Bahiyya will consider the characters lifelong friends.



FOR ADVENTURERS OF 8TH LEVEL

Against the Serpent King pits a party of 8th-level characters against a mad drake who believes he is the current incarnation of the Serpent King, dispatched in antiquity by the other kings, who then buried his blasphemous temple under tons of sand.

Adventure Background

A serpent drake, after decades of denigration as a lowly servant in the Dragon Empire, began to receive visions of a lost temple devoted to a serpent god in Nuria Natal. Sensing that it was his manifest destiny to rise from his humble circumstances, the drake believed the visions proved him to be the living king of serpents. He took the name Apep-Lylh and flew near Corremel to the temple he had seen in his visions. The previous Serpent King's enemies buried it under tons of sand centuries ago in the culmination of a large-scale effort to eliminate Apep-Lylh.

After wriggling his way into the temple, the drake discovered several still-living serpent mummy guardians, as well as some extraordinary varieties of iron cobras, awaiting the return of their master. As further proof of Apep-Lylh's ascendance, the guardians responded to his commands and directed him to breeding pits filled with thousands of venomous serpents now in stasis. When the drake gazed upon the pits, the serpents sloughed off the magic that rendered them dormant and sang sibilant praises to their new lord. The mummies also revealed to Apep-Lylh the notes containing a formula for a liquid that, when combined with a fermented beverage, would transform ordinary people into snake beings under his control.

Armed with this new power and knowledge, Apep-Lylh set his vile plans in motion. He found willing pawns to act as his agents in Corremel, and they opened a brewery that produces a great-tasting honey beer as an alternative alcoholic beverage, one that has not quite caught on with people in Corremel. Apep-Lylh directed his minions to offer a select few patrons of the new brewery the "special blend," laced with the poisonous formula. Satisfied with the first few unwitting subjects who now serve him in the temple, along with several ordinary people drawn to what they view as a new serpent cult, the Serpent King intends to accelerate his plans. Once he and his host convert or devour everyone in Corremel, he intends to turn his attention to conquering the Mharoti Empire.

Adventure Summary

The characters arrive in Corremel during a brewing festival, and they hear about a new brewery that has created in a stir in the city with its inexpensive yet flavorful honey beer, which threatens to undermine the other businesses. Whether or not the PCs investigate this new beverage, they eventually hear rumors of rival brewers who mysteriously fall prey to venomous snakebites. Eventually, a fearful brewer (or an NPC known by the characters) hires them to investigate this new business and the suspicious deaths that have gone ignored by the authorities.

Assuming the PCs agree to look into the brewer's claims, they are attacked by a pair of hooded snake-men who bear surprising resemblances to people they met earlier. At the brewery, they must combat several more snake-people and ordinary venomous snakes and deal with traps set to dispatch the overly curious. After clearing the brewery, they discover a tainted batch of honey beer capable of transforming humanoids into weird snake hybrids. A clue at the brewery and further investigation, including a potentially lethal misunderstanding with snake-like lamias who also seek to thwart Apep-Lylh's rise, leads them to the location of the Serpent King's temple.

Since the temple lies buried under tons of sand, the characters must dig their way into the temple or traverse the narrow tunnel left behind by the drake. Apep-Lylh had attracted members of Corremel's 'thieves' guild and other shady residents of the city with promises of power, and those followers have built several traps to augment the existing traps within the temple. The party must navigate past these traps, destroy the ancient serpent mummies looking to return to the world outside the forgotten temple, contend with a new generation of insane cultists and swarms of snakes, and finally confront an insane drake convinced that he is the living embodiment of the destroyed Serpent King.

Part One: Crisis in Corremel

The characters arrive during one of Corremel's seasonal brewfests, during which several prominent brewers roll out their newest flavors as well as established favorites. The city becomes a raucous place during these weeklong events, and inns and homes open their doors to visitors who flood in from surrounding areas in the Southlands, and sometimes beyond. The talk during this season's brewfest centers around the Lilac Sunset Brewery, founded roughly a year ago, which produces a flavorful honey beer. Other small mead sellers eke out a living in Corremel by providing a novel alternative to the typical alcoholic fare, but none has enjoyed Lilac Sunset's success, especially considering how quickly it has gained its reputation.

The situation involving Lilac Sunset does not sit well with the major established breweries, the owners of which had been in collusion to control the market between them. They typically allow niche sellers to set up, but have the resources to shut down those who become too popular and cut too deeply into their profit margins. However, when the major brewers decided to force Lilac Sunset to stop production, all of their enforcers wound up dead from snakebites, or they fled Corremel after narrowly escaping an attack by "snake people." Although the breweries have enough influence to get the guard to look the other way during some of their shadier dealings, they cannot get the authorities to involve themselves in what they view as a shadow war between the breweries and an upstart.

It is this tense situation that the characters find themselves thrust into when they arrive in Corremel. As they converse with seemingly cheerful brewfest patrons, they sense fear, as if the revelers suspect some hidden danger. Indeed, a surprisingly high number of injuries and fatalities related to snake attacks have occurred in recent months, causing people to habitually check their bedsheets for any unwelcome scaly visitors.

Rumors

The characters will run into many inebriated people on the streets of Corremel, who will be more than happy to share what they know or suspect regarding the city's current state of affairs. With a successful DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information or Knowledge (local) check, a PC learns one of the following rumors (and whether it is true or not). The GM may roll for a random rumor and disregard duplicate results, or choose one specifically.

Events

The events in this part most likely occur in the given order, but the party's course of investigation may change the chapter's flow. For example, suspicious characters might start nosing around the Lilac Sunset Brewery, which immediately draws the cultists' attention and triggers the "Serpent Ambush," followed by "The Poison Victim" as they make an example of one of the PCs' associates or informants, or by "Serpent Detente" as they also pique the lamias' interest.

D8	RUMOR
1	The Lilac Sunset Brewery produces a variety of honey beer that has grown in popularity so that Lilac Sunset is challenging some of the larger, more established beermakers. (True)
2	Snakes have always been a problem in Corremel, but this year has seen a virtual invasion of the beasts. Must be the abnormally scorching heat the past couple of seasons. (Both facts are true, but unrelated to each other)
3	I overheard some "enforcers" talking about making a midnight raid on the honey beer brewery to shut their operation down. (False; planted by Apep-Lylh's cultists in an attempt to garner sympathy for their business)
4	The Sun God King Brewery has entertained the notion of lowering its prices, due to recent competition. I hope this doesn't mean the quality will drop too. (True)
5	I found a snake in my bath water this morning, just swimming around like it belonged there. (True)
6	The guards don't want to alarm anyone, so they're covering up a rash of vampire attacks. (False; they have discovered victims with puncture wounds on their necks who died from snake venom, not vampires, and they have decided that such attacks are natural and not criminal in nature, so they do not see what they have done as a cover-up)
7	Lilac Sunset's brew is highly addictive and has incited violence in people who have succumbed to their unnatural cravings. (False; it's a rumor planted by the other breweries, but converted cultists do seem to have an unusually strong desire for the honey beer)
8	I saw a mound of sand near the ancient Serpent King's temple. I hope no one is thinking of doing some treasure hunting there. Nothing good will come of disturbing the temple, mark my words. (True; Apep-Lylh did not hide all evidence of his excavation from underground to the temple's main entrance.)

The Poison Victim

CREATURE: This event could provide the characters the first clue that something is wrong in Corremel, or might be an act of retaliation on Apep-Lylh's part against the characters.

At an opportune time, the victim Helek Nyx (expert 3), or an NPC known by the party, stumbles into the midst of the characters and collapses. Helek is under the effect of two slow-acting poisons (requiring saves once every minute or every 10 minutes, as pacing requires), and his bloated and necrotized flesh clearly indicates to the PCs that he has been bitten by two different snakes. He is one or two failed Fortitude saves away from death or unconsciousness (he is at Con 2 and Cha 2, the poisons deal 1d4 Con and 1d6 Cha damage, respectively, and his Fortitude save modifier is currently -3). Both poisons require a DC 16 Fortitude saving throw. While trying to fight off the toxins, he rants about scaly, fanged demons that looked like humans but moved like snakes. If a character succeeds at a DC 12 Diplomacy check to calm him down, his eyes clear momentarily and he says, "Honey! I smelled honey! Not the pleasant kind, but the sort from a hive in its death throes." Then he falls back into his raving.

DEVELOPMENT: If the party manages to cure both poisons and heals some of his ability damage, Helek regains his faculties. Grateful for his rescue, he explains that he was making a delivery to the Lilac Sunset Brewery, happened to see a hooded person pour a flask of liquid in one of the vats, and casually remarked on it. An hour after he left, three snake-like creatures of average human height ambushed him and left him for dead.

Reward: If the characters save Helek from his poisons, award them XP as though they had overcome a CR 7 encounter. Helek also offers the party 100 gp, which comprises the sum of his life savings.

SERPENT AMBUSH (CR 8)

As Apep-Lylh's network has expanded, its conspirators usually spot potential troublemakers within a day of their arrival. Assuming the PCs have not specifically conducted their investigations in secret, at some point during their stay in Corremel, Apep-Lylh's cultists will attack them.

CREATURES: The cultists have undergone the first stage of transformation to serpent-people. They can still pass themselves off as normal humans (except for their overly long incisors and baldness), so they can blend into the crowds unless someone spends time to scrutinize their appearance. When the cultists receive the order to dispatch the characters, they attempt their ideal plan of attack, luring their victims into an alleyway. To bring this about, they pay off a patsy to tell the PCs that he or she has information for them but cannot share it in a public place.

Serpent King Cultists (4)

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XP 800 each
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Human monk 4

LE Medium humanoid (reptilian) Init +9; Senses Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 19, flat-footed 15 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural, +3 Wis) hp 37 (4d8+16) Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +6; +2 vs. enchantments Defensive Abilities evasion; Immune poison OFFENSE

CR 4

Speed 40 ft.

Melee mwk siangham +9 (1d6+2) or mwk siangham flurry of blows +8/+8 (1d6+2) or unarmed strike +8 (1d8+2) or unarmed strike flurry of blows +7/+7 (1d8+2), bite +3 (1d4+2 plus poison) **Ranged** shuriken flurry of blows +7/+7 (1d2+2) or shuriken +8 (1d2+2)

Special Attacks flurry of blows, stunning fist (4/day, DC 14)

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 20, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8 Base Atk +3; CMB +6 (+8 grapple); CMD 24 (26 vs. bull rush, reposition, or trip, 28 vs. grapple) Feats Dodge, Extra Ki, Grabbing Style^{ACG}, Improved

Grapple, Improved Initiative^B, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +12 (+16 to jump), Climb +9, Escape Artist +12, Perception +9, Stealth +12

Languages Nurian

SQ fast movement, ki pool (6 points, magic), maneuver training, slow fall 20 ft.

Combat Gear potion of cure light wounds, potion of protection from arrows, potion of shield of faith +3, black adder venom; **Other Gear** mwk siangham, mwk temple sword, shuriken (10), pauldrons of the serpent^{UE}

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) A Serpent King cultist can drink poison and then deliver the ingested poison as part of her bite attack anytime within 1 hour.

DEVELOPMENT: If the PCs capture a cultist, questioning will get them only limited information. The cultist speaks reverently of the Serpent King's resurrection in a deceptive form, and gleefully shares her hope for Corremel's ultimate downfall at the coils of her serpent sisters and brothers. If the characters specifically question her about the brewery, she talks about the sacrament she received there that granted her incredible power. She indicates that she willingly underwent her transformation, but soon others will feel the king's blessing, whether they want it or not.

SERPENT DETENTE (CR 7)

CREATURES: A pair of female lamia commoners, Kavess and Seshla, have arrived in Corremel to investigate their matriarch's vague prophesies about the rise of a new Serpent King and the reopening of his temple. As a devotee of Selget who views the temple's potential resurfacing as the vilest of blasphemies, the matriarch sent them to the city to contact the beings she foresaw as capable of thwarting the nascent god-king. This mission leads them directly to the characters, of course. Since most people in Corremel remember tales of the old Serpent King, they hold to the idea that lamias are savage, evil creatures. Therefore, the lamia matriarch equipped her scouts with hats of disguise, which they use to appear as centaurs (the most acceptable monstrous humanoid form that somewhat matched their general shape). They attempt to conceal their true identities when they converse with the PCs, claiming instead that their centaur leader sent them to find champions who could put a stop to a rising evil she saw in her dreams (mostly true, allowing the scouts a decent chance to use Bluff checks to convince the party).

If the characters see through their disguises, they try to convince the party that they speak the truth and want to avoid unnecessary violence, especially with the inhabitants of Corremel, who naturally disdain serpent people. They come clean about the temple outside Corremel, but caution the characters to gain what information they can in town before going headlong into the dangerous place. They do not know the extent of Apep-Lylh's plans, nor do they know anything about the cultists. If the PCs can somehow make the lamias helpful (as per the Diplomacy skill), one of them will accompany the characters around town during their investigations. The scouts have a starting attitude of indifferent toward the PCs personally, with respect to Diplomacy, even though they might share a common goal. They adamantly refuse to go to the temple, claiming it is a dark place that frightens all lamias, who fear that the temple will curse them for being in its presence.

If this encounter turns into combat, Ka'vess and Seshla will defend themselves and try to convince the characters of their intentions (perhaps applying the ill-advised tactic of using *charm person*). If that fails to work, they attempt to escape, but they will fight to the death if cornered.

CR 5

Lamia Commoners (2)

XP 1,600 each

Lamia commoner barbarian 6

N Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

Perception +6

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge) hp 56 (6d12+12)

Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +1; +2 vs. mind-affecting Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2; SR 11

THE SERPENTINE GIFT

The honey beer from the Lilac Sunset Brewery contains a poisonous substance that first makes addicts of those who drink it, and then slowly corrupts their minds and bodies. For every day the victim does not drink the tainted honey beer, he suffers from the addiction below.

Liliac Sunset Addiction

Type disease; Save Fortitude DC 19

Onset 1 day; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect 1 hour; 1d4 Dex, +2 alchemical bonus on saves against pain effects

Effect 1d4 hours fatigue

Damage 1d2 Con and Str damage, exposure to serpent's gift, cannot naturally heal ability damage caused by serpent's gift

Cure 3 consecutive saves

However, addiction itself is not the true danger. Each day a victim drinks the honey beer, he is exposed to a magical curse that manifests like a disease. Left unchecked, serpent's gift consumes either the victim's mind or body. The curse essentially offers the drinker a choice of having it insinuate itself into its victim's mind (keeping in mind that the victim can forgo the first save to avoid Wis damage), or destroy him.

Serpent's Gift

Type curse, disease, ingested; **Save Fort**itude DC 24 **Onset** 1 day; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect 1d4 Wis damage; if the victim succeeds at the Fortitude save to avoid Wis damage, he must make another Fortitude save (same DC) or take 1d4 Con damage; upon reaching 0 Wis, the victim regains his original Constitution and Wisdom scores, becomes evil (or shifts one step toward evil if the character is a PC), and is compelled to travel to the Serpent King's temple as per *suggestion*, CL 10th. The curse is fatal if the victim's Constitution is reduced to 0 before its Wisdom drops to 0.

Cure serpent's gift can be cured only by successfully casting *remove curse* followed by (within 1 minute) *remove disease* or a successful Fortitude saving throw.

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 30 ft.
Melee +1 scimitar +11/+6 (1d6+7/18-20)
Special Attacks rage (15 rounds/day), rage powers (abyssal blood^{ACG}, lesser abyssal blood^{ACG}, lesser elemental rage^{APG}, no escape)
Racial Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +7) 1/day—charm person (DC 12), ventriloquism (DC 12)

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 12 **Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 23 (can't be tripped) **Feats** Dodge, Extra Rage Power^{APG}, Great Fortitude **Skills** Acrobatics +8 (+12 to jump), Bluff +9, Climb +14,

Disguise +11, Intimidate +10, Perception +6, Survival +5, Swim +14

Languages Draconic, Nurian

SQ fast movement

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* +2; **Other Gear** chain shirt, +1 *scimitar, hat of disguise*

Part Two: Brewery Brawl

The Lilac Sunset Brewery used to belong to a brewer who went out of business three years previously, thanks to the machinations of the cabal of brewers. The irony of a successful operation arising from the ashes of one they forced to shut down is not lost on them, nor is the fact that many of their hired mercenaries have died or fled Corremel after attempting to breach the building.

During the day, two guards (if necessary use two palace guards from Hearts Divided on page 34) stand outside Lilac Sunset's only entrance. They know nothing of the brewery's true nature, but they receive enough pay to dissuade them from asking any questions. The guards politely but firmly turn away any visitors, claiming that the owner does not want anyone contaminating the building and ruining the latest batch of honey beer. If the characters insist on entering the building, the guards suggest that they return after the current brewfest concludes, when the brewery's operators have time to conduct scheduled tours. The guards meet any violence against them with violence and call for the constabulary to assist the offenders, which draws several more combatants to the scene. If the characters influence the guards (magically or otherwise), the guards talk to the day shift manager, who reluctantly agrees to give the PCs a brief tour of the facility. This action marks the party for attack by Apep-Lylh's cultists.

At night, the metal doors (hardness 15, 85 hp) are locked (DC 25 Disable Device to bypass), and the outside guards go home, but the brewery remains occupied. Cultists who are at work spiking one vat of material with the transformative poison watch the doors for intruders. Additionally, the brewery has several traps to kill unwary trespassers. The few interlopers who entered the building and got out alive later fled Corremel (because they realized they were not simply dealing with a rival business), so getting intelligence on the defenses inside this place will prove difficult for the PCs.

1. MAIN FLOOR (CR 10)

Eight vats cover most of the floor's space, and tubing leads out of a pair of vats into a small cooling chamber after fermentation has completed. Ostensibly, this arrangement is to create different blends, mixing various herbs contained within the vats. The tubing is temperature-resistant, yet lightweight enough to allow workers to shift them around to pair together with different vats. Likewise, the cooling chambers sit on wheeled pallets so the workers can move them to accommodate different pairs of tubing. The ceiling is 20 feet high, and the chamber is illuminated by five evenly distributed everburning torches.

CREATURES: Two cultists oversee the brewery after dark. If unwanted guests arrive while they work, they hide behind one of the farther vats and throw shuriken from cover, while allowing the traps to do their work.

CR4

CR 6

Serpent King Cultists (2)

XP 800 each hp 37 (see page 51)

TRAPS: Apep-Lylh paid Corremel's thieves' guild handsomely (through intermediaries, of course) to design traps that the cultists could easily disable so that normal work can occur in the brewery and re-enable when they are carrying out their true mission.

The refrigeration trap, marked RT on the brewery map, catches curious snoopers (or saboteurs) who want to check (or destroy) the first obvious item in the brewery. Once a creature gets close to the chilling unit (indicated on the map), tubing breaks loose and sprays everyone standing to the east and west with refrigerant.

Refrigeration Trap XP 2,400

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset repair

Effect jets of freezing water (8d6 cold damage, DC 19 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets in two 30-ft. cones)

The next pair of traps trigger when something weighing more than 50 pounds steps on a pressure plate, marked HWT on the map. The associated vat to the east of the symbol tips over, spilling boiling honey beer on everything in its path near the pressure plate.



Boiling Honey Beer Traps (2) CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset repair

Effect boiling honey beer (4d6 fire damage, DC 23 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets in a 30-ft. square)

The final trap is a simple pit trap augmented by a *summon swarm* effect that summons venomous snakes instead of the usual creatures. Eliminating the need to deal with the care and feeding of live snakes, the summon spell also leaves no physical evidence for investigators after the fact. The XP award for the trap includes the swarm, which is CR 4 by itself.

Serpent Pit Trap

Type mechanical and magic; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** repair (pit) and none (*summon swarm*)

Effect 40-ft.-deep pit (3d6 falling damage, reduced by snakes summoned by the trap); DC 20 Reflex save avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area); spell effect (variant extended *summon swarm*, summons venomous snake swarm with a duration of 4 rounds)

Venomous Snake Swarm

CR 4

CR 5

XP 1,200 hp 37 (*Bestiary 3*)

DEVELOPMENT: If the characters take a tour of the brewery during the day, the traps are inactive, but a character who has the trapspotter rogue talent (or a similar ability) might notice the mechanics of an inactive

trap (increase Perception DCs to spot the traps by 5). Additionally, all the vats but one contain legitimate blends of material to produce honey beer, which a character can confirm by succeeding at a DC 15 Craft (alchemy), Profession (brewer), Knowledge (nature), or other applicable check. The vat nearest the door leading to area 2 contains the transformative poison, mixed with an otherwise mundane honey beer mixture. A character who makes a DC 25 Craft (alchemy) or DC 30 Knowledge (nature) check recognizes an odor or a consistency reminiscent of cobra venom.

Any captured cultists here are about as useful as their counterparts in part one. They spend most of an interrogation session boasting about how the heroes have arrived too late, and how their lord and master will deliver a painful death unto the interlopers. They also dare the characters to run to the authorities, who will not believe such a fantastic story. All the traps have some aspect of plausible deniability (the tubing ruptured due to the characters' blundering, workers know that the vats are easily tipped over, the pit is used for storage and marked such that no one falls in accidentally).

2. FRONT OFFICE (CR 7)

This room serves as the office of the manager and master brewer, Delilah Har'qan (N female human expert 6), during the day, but she spends most of her time on the floor of the main building overseeing the operation. The room is sparsely furnished; a modest desk and a couple of chairs are the only remarkable features. A door to the north leads to a storage area, and a door to the west leads to the records room.

If the PCs manage to convince the manager to speak with them, she shows them into her office. Apep-Lylh purposely hired Delilah for her expertise in brewing, so her knowledge of the business extends only to the legitimate side of the brewery. Since all the activity suiting the Serpent King's true purpose happens at night, she is sincere when she claims she has seen no suspicious activity. No matter how friendly the characters make her, Delilah does not allow them to search her office or any of the adjoining rooms. The characters are not the law, and she refuses to submit to requests or baseless demands. If the PCs become too persistent, she has them thrown out of the brewery and threatens to call the authorities on suspicion of sabotaging her business.

Characters who break into the brewery at night find considerably more damning information if they manage to spot the false bottom in one of the desk drawers (DC 21 Perception check). Inside the hidden space (see traps below) is a list of names and 30 small cloth pouches, which contain 10 gp each. Characters who succeed at a DC 15 Knowledge (local) check or Diplomacy check to gather information learn that all the people on the list have died due to poisoning or have disappeared. The cultists use the coins to pay off trapsmiths from the thieves' guild to reset the main floor's traps. **CREATURES:** At night, a pair of cultists spend time here tracking orders for the tainted beer and note potential additions to their fold on a list hidden in the desk. If they hear a commotion from the main floor, they remain on guard in the office unless one of their cohorts specifically yells for help.

CR4

CR 5

Serpent King Cultists (2)

XP 800 each

hp 37 (see page 51)

TRAP: The cultists are certain that Delilah Har'qan will not thoroughly search her desk and discover the trapped false bottom in one of the drawers.

Poison Needle Trap

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 25

EFFECTS

XP 1.600

Trigger touch; Reset none

Effect +15 ranged (1d2 plus virulent black adder venom [*save* Fortitude DC 15; *frequency* 1/round for 8 rounds; *cure* 2 consecutive saves])

3. RECORDS ROOM

This room is largely unused, so dust coats all the surfaces except for the desk and the filing cabinet. The desk is a simple piece of furniture with a single drawer that contains writing implements and blank sheets of parchment. The filing cabinet holds records of all shipments of the various brews produced here, most of which are delivered to local taverns in Corremel.

Some of the previous owner's records remain in the filing cabinet, though, and persistent characters can discover an interesting series of events surrounding the former brewery with a successful DC 10 Linguistics check or a DC 17 Perception check and two hours of reading through the archives. The papers identify the previous owner of the brewery as Bertram Minoi, who operated the business under the name of the Wicked Jackal Brewery. One piece of correspondence is from another brewer to Minoi on behalf of the city's local brewers council. The letter affirms that the council had no objection to the establishment of Minoi's enterprise, so long as his offerings were not competing directly with the other brewers' main products (that is, so long as Minoi appealed only to specialty and niche markets). The letter goes on to state that none of the local brewers have threatened or harmed Minoi's family in any way. The letter closes by suggesting that Minoi either has a personal enemy or some other third party that seeks to drive him out of business, perhaps to acquire the brewery once he is forced to sell. By reading between the lines, the PCs might realize that what transpired was the first steps the cult took to acquire a medium through which to distribute its poisoned honey beer.

This information is background that establishes the

4. STORAGE (CR 7)

Many open crates, which contain dry herbs used in the brewing process, litter the west side of this room. A 10-foot-by-20-foot oval carpet covers most of the rest of the floor. Characters who investigate the crates' contents can attempt a DC 15 Craft (brewing) or a DC 20 Craft (alchemy) or Knowledge (nature) check to realize that the herbs are ordinary components for the brewing process. The carpet has sinuous patterns of varying colors and conceals the brewery's most frightening secret (DC 25 Perception check to notice the metal trap door beneath the carpet).

CREATURES: Stored within a metal box under the carpet, an adamantine cobra and a mithral cobra (variants of an iron cobra) wait in dormancy for orders from a reptilian creature to assassinate a target. The cultists have held the cobra constructs in reserve, since the appearance of a metallic snake would certainly arouse suspicion. When a creature without the reptilian subtype opens the box, the cobras activate and attack.

Adamantine Cobra	CR 3
XP 800	
hp 20 (Bestiary)	
Mithral Cobra	CR 3
XP 800	

TRAP: The carpet seems to generate an inordinate amount of static electricity when someone walks across it but is otherwise harmless. When someone lifts the carpet from the floor, however, the patterns transform into brightly colored, snake-shaped arcs of electricity.

Electrifying Snakes Trap	CR 5
XP 1,600	
Type magic; Perception DC 30; Disable Devie	ce DC 30
EFFECTS	

Trigger touch; Reset none

Effect spell effect (*lightning arc*^{UM}, 9d6 electricity damage, DC 17 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (two targets, plus all creatures in the line between them)

Part Three: Serpent Sanctum

Apep-Lylh's base of operations, a hill temple buried under tons of sand, had been dormant for centuries prior to his recent appearance. The previous Serpent King, and many of his devout followers, died while defending his temple from overwhelming attacks by enemy armies. The victors called upon powerful magic to create a localized sandstorm that scoured the halls clean, leaving nothing but bones and the most persistent of unholy glyphs, as well as the serpent mummy servitors that managed to escape the disintegrating blasts of sand. The sandstorm left a towering dune in its wake, completely covering the former temple. The inhabitants of Corremel know the history and location of the place, but very few people visit the site, even on a dare. Many people know that snakes and the restless spirits of the temple defenders infest the dune, and those who have braved the trek die horribly or return shaken to the core by what they have witnessed.

The temple was formerly dedicated to Selqet, until the Serpent King took it over, and it still contains treasures valued by Selqet's worshipers (including an elixir that transforms holy water into a cure for poison). These treasures remain in hidden caches throughout the temple. They have enchantments that render them hidden to the Serpent King and his devotees, so they have avoided the destruction that would surely follow their discovery.

Malign magic, powered by serpentine glyphs, still permeates the structure. This acts as an *unhallow* effect, but it grants a +4 sacred bonus on Will saves to resist mind-affecting spells and effects originating from good creatures, instead of the normal bonus/penalties associated with channel energy. Evil creatures with the reptilian subtype also receive the benefits of *bless*.

A narrow tunnel marks the only obvious entrance to the temple.

Lower Temple

When Apep-Lylh arrived at the temple, his visions drove him to this spot, which happened to provide the easiest access to the temple's entrance. The Lower Temple held chambers for visiting dignitaries (usually serpentfolk or other powerful reptilian creatures) to meet with the Serpent King and a guard station situated in a room adjoining the main hall that twists through the temple. Surprised that the temple had remained relatively free of sand (thanks to centuries of work by the remaining serpent mummies), Apep-Lylh appropriated a couple of existing visitors' chambers for his own needs. The hallway culminates in a snakehead-shaped chamber that serves as a minor shrine and the entranceway to the Upper Temple.

Unless otherwise indicated, the Lower Temple has no light sources. The ceiling in the main hall is 15 feet high, while most of the chambers have 10-foot-tall ceilings. Walls and doors are typically fashioned from sandstone (hardness 8, 80 hp).

5. DESCENT

Apep-Lylh reinforced the sand around this passage with copious amounts of snake venom milked from the serpents he discovered in stasis in the Upper Temple. The dried venom holds the sand together, creating a semipermanent tunnel leading to the Lower Temple's entrance. The rough tunnel allows serpentine creatures to move without restraint, but humanoid creatures do not have that luxury. Each Medium creature moving through the tunnel must squeeze through the space.

HAZARD: In addition, the rough tunnel requires characters to be careful of the poison that lines the walls. A Medium or larger creature must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid becoming poisoned by emperor cobra venom (*save* Fortitude DC 17; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d3 Con; *cure* 2 consecutive saves). A Small or smaller creature does not need to make this save if it moves at half speed.

6. GUARD CHAMBER (CR 6)

A small guard station stands to the north of the main hall. Although Apep-Lylh does not anticipate unwanted guests, he wisely has set guards to attack fools who might blunder in through the entrance and insist on looking around the temple. This also used to be the location from which the cultists would transfer victims to the snake pens in area 12.

Finding the secret door to the north requires a character to succeed at a DC 21 Perception check, since the surrounding stone blends seamlessly with the door, and the sand further masks it.

CREATURES: Two cultists stand watch here. Even though no unauthorized visitors have entered the temple, they remain alert for signs of intrusion. Use the statistics for the Serpent King cultists in Part Two, except that these cultists use temple swords etched with nonmagical, serpentine glyphs.

CR4

Serpent King Cultists (2)

XP 800 each

- **hp** 37 (see page 51)
- **Melee** mwk temple sword +6 (1d8+2) or mwk temple sword flurry of blows +5/+5 (1d8+2) or unarmed strike +8 (1d8+2) or unarmed strike flurry of blows +7/+7 (1d8+2), bite +3 (1d4+2 plus poison)

DEVELOPMENT: If the characters capture at least one cultist, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Intimidate check (or otherwise coerces the cultist) can obtain the 'temple's general layout and an idea of the number of cultists in the Lower Temple.

7. VISITORS' CHAMBER

In the distant past, this area had opulent furnishings used to display the Serpent King's wealth and power. Apep-Lylh has not had time to furnish the temple for regular visitors, so only a couple of hastily set up tables and cushions adorn the room. This room might offer the PCs a brief respite, since it is one of the few unoccupied areas in the temple. Additionally, while the sand wights in the adjoining room might become aware of the characters' presence, the undead horrors do not abandon their lair but might use this awareness to prepare an ambush or a surprise attack.

8. CULTIST RECEPTION ROOM (CR 6)

This area serves the same purpose it did when the previous Serpent King controlled the temple. The temple residents celebrated the newly ordained cultists who survived the gauntlet through area 10. This area also served as a recreation room for cultists who resided at the temple and served as a source of additional guards when the temple came under attack. Currently, cushions line the south wall, but the room is otherwise unfurnished.

The secret door leading out of this room is easier to find (DC 17 Perception check), since the sand wights have absorbed most of the sand in this room.

CREATURES: The spirits of some of the cultists who were slaughtered during a long-ago battle in this room lingered on after death and infused the sand around them with negative energy, enabling them to take on a strange corporeality. These sand wights allow any creature with the reptilian subtype to pass freely, but they will attack anyone else, unless a reptilian creature indicates that such a visitor should be given safe passage. A sand wight uses the same statistics as a wight, but it has better natural armor, has DR 5/—, and is immune to critical hits, flanking, and precision-based damage. The creature receives a CR +1 adjustment to account for these new abilities.

Sand Wights (2) CR 4
XP 800 each
Variant wight
LE Medium undead
Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11
DEFENSE
AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16 (+1 Dex, +6 natural)
hp 26 (4d8+8)
Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +5
Defensive Abilities undead traits; DR 5/—; Immune
critical hits, flanking, precision-based damage
Weaknesses resurrection vulnerability
OFFENSE
Speed 30 ft.
Melee slam +4 (1d4+1 plus energy drain)
Special Attacks create spawn, energy drain (1 level, DC 14)
STATISTICS
Str 12, Dex 12, Con —, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 15



Base Atk +3; CMB +4; CMD 15 Feats Blind-Fight, Skill Focus (Perception) Skills Intimidate +9, Knowledge (religion) +7, Perception +11, Stealth +16; Racial Modifier +8 Stealth Languages Nurian SQ create spawn

9. RETREAT AND REINFORCEMENT (CR 5)

In case the temple guards in area 6 became overwhelmed by their foes, they could pull a rope (now missing) that signaled a cultist in area 13 to drive snakes through the secret passageway to shore up the temple's defenses. The tunnel now serves as home to a recent arrival.

CREATURE: A basilisk, driven away from its hunting ground by an organized group of desert bandits who grew tired of having their fellows turned to stone, made its way to the temple and lairs in the tunnel here. Apep-Lylh discovered the beast during one of his surveys of the place and managed to gain its trust. The cultists are aware of the basilisk, but the creature's cooperation does not extend to anyone but the Serpent King, so they leave it alone.

Basilisk XP 1,600

hp 52 (*Bestiary*)

TREASURE: A cache of protective items remains untouched in the center of this tunnel. Apep-Lylh did not bother to do a full inventory and figured any items in the tunnel would be well protected by the basilisk. The items, 2 *potions of torc of the pharaoh*^{DM} and a scroll containing *greater torc of the pharaoh*^{DM}, sit openly in a sand-choked niche (requiring only a DC 10 Perception check to find).

CR 5

10. ANOINTING PATH (CR 7)

This 5-foot-wide, 7-foot-tall tunnel features a number of brass snakeheads that acted as a gauntlet for prospective cultists. Each snake inflicted wounds into which it would inject poison, and if the candidate survived the gauntlet, he or she was deemed worthy to serve the Serpent King. Apep-Lylh uses a different method to gain cultists (using the spiked honey beer, and then completing the transformation in area 11), but he has kept the snakehead poison reservoirs filled to provide another means to attack intruders.

TRAP: A total of six of brass snakeheads line the tunnel's wall, at roughly 10-foot intervals. While the heads are centered on the walls and thus can reach any creature that passes by them, a crawling creature gains partial cover from their attacks. The characters must spot and disable each trap separately.

Brass Snakebite Traps (6)

CR 2

CR 7

XP 600 each

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 15; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect Atk +14 melee (3d6 plus black adder venom)

11. JUBILATION CHAMBER (CR 7)

This chamber used to serve as a location where the Serpent King or one of his lieutenants would commend a prospective cultist on his or her choice to join the cult. Apep-Lylh now uses this room as the place where a cultist fully metamorphoses into an advanced serpentfolk. The agonizing process takes 1 hour and renders the transformed cultist sickened for an additional hour.

CREATURE: The second creature to undergo the final transformation to a serpentfolk, the Consumed One is a former thieves' guild member who aspired to become one of Apep-Lylh's lieutenants and thus volunteered to drink the tainted honey beer. When the characters arrive, he has just completed his transformation and has the sickened condition (see Hazards, below).

The Consumed One

XP 4,800

Advanced serpentfolk rogue (poisoner) 4

NE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +11; Senses darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +16
DEFENSE

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 17, flat-footed 13 (+7 Dex, +3 natural) **hp** 90 (4d8+5d10+45)

Fort +10, Ref +16, Will +10

Defensive Abilities evasion, uncanny dodge; Immune mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison; SR 19

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 human-bane rapier +16/+11 (1d6+1/18-20), bite +10 (1d6)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6 (+2 bleed)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +6) At will—*disguise self* (humanoid form only), *ventriloquism* (DC 13) 1/day—*blur, dominate person* (DC 16), *major image*

(DC 15), mirror image, suggestion (DC 14)

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 24, **Con** 21, **Int** 18, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 14 **Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 25

Feats Combat Expertise, Great Fortitude, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse **Skills** Acrobatics +15, Bluff +14, Craft (alchemy) +16 (+18 when working with poison), Disable Device +15, Disguise +14, Escape Artist +23, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Perception +16, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +9, Stealth +19, Use Magic Device +18; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Escape Artist, +4 Use Magic Device

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Draconic, Nurian, Southlands Common; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ master poisoner, poison use, rogue talents (bleeding attack +2, lasting poison)

Combat Gear *potion of magic fang, potion of shield of faith* +2, blue whinnis, giant wasp poison; **Other Gear** +1 *human-bane rapier, cloak of resistance* +1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fortitude DC 17; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Str; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

HAZARD: For a creature not undergoing the conversion, the gas is extremely poisonous, dealing 1d4 points of Con damage each round the creature remains in the cloud (DC 23 Fortitude half). Even if the chamber is unsealed, the gas takes 1 minute to disperse, but moderate wind disperses it in 4 rounds, while a strong wind (such as produced by *gust of wind*) disperses it in 1 round.

12. VESTRY

This room adjoining the serpent-filled chamber contains a number of mundane, crimson cloaks adorned with snakelike sigils. A macabre assortment of stitched-together suits of molted snakeskin also hangs from hooks. Cultists wore this snakeskin as part of their ritual duties. The scouring sand destroyed all the room's contents (except the magic items mentioned below), but, at the prompting of the serpent mummies, Apep-Lylh has replaced the vestments.

TREASURE: Two of the crimson cloaks are *cloaks of resistance* +2, and one has *pauldrons of the serpent* worked into it.

13. SERPENT PITS (CR 7)

Four 2-foot-deep, 10-foot-square pits dot this room, and all but one contain hundreds of snakes that writhe around each other. The breeding chambers in the Upper Temple kept many species in stasis, allowing Apep-Lylh to repopulate the pits after he took over. Cultists use the pits as a baptismal font and can control the snakes to attack their enemies. The chamber is currently devoid of cultists.

CREATURES: With no cultists to direct the snakes, they revert to their normal behavior and attack the characters when they enter the chamber.

Snake Swarms (2)

XP 600 each hp 16 (*Bestiary 3*)

Venomous Snake Swarm

XP 1,200 hp 37 (*Bestiary* 3)

TRAP: A large pit full of snakes sits under this room,

CR 4

and a reptilian creature can open the door to the east to initiate a pneumatic process that draws another swarm into the room (without harming the snakes). The process is safe for the temple's inhabitants, but not so much for the characters.

Surprise Snake Swarm Trap

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 25

EFFECTS

- **Trigger** touch (opening the door); **Reset** automatic (up to six total snake swarms)
- Effect draws a snake swarm into a 10-foot square, with one square adjacent to the door; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

14. LOWER SHRINE (CR 6)

This shrine once held a statue of the Serpent King on a pedestal just below a hole leading to the Upper Temple. The victors who routed the king destroyed the statue before calling down their sandy doom. The pedestal remains here, and a pile of treasure surrounds it. Apep-Lylh's transformation has not quelled the avaricious tendencies present in most dragons, and he fancies this location for his hoard. The creatures in the temple slither up the wall to reach the hole, so they do not use the pedestal to get closer to the hole in the 20-foot-tall ceiling.

TRAP: The temple's inhabitants know better than to approach the pedestal, since they would trigger this trap in doing so.

Coin Swarm TrapCR 6

XP 2,400

Type magic; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30 EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset none

Effect spell effect (extended *coin swarm*^{DM} (CL 8th), swarm attack deals 2d6 damage, 4 rounds duration)

DEADLY TREASURE

The spell *coin swarm* originally appeared in *Deep Magic* by Kobold Press. It is reprinted here for GM convenience.

Coin Swarm

School conjuration (summoning); Level druid/shaman 5, sorcerer/wizard 4, summoner 3, witch 5 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, M (1,000 or more coins) Range medium (50 ft. + 10 ft./4 levels) Effect one swarm of flying coins Duration concentration + 2 rounds Saving Throw none; SR no **TREASURE:** If the characters disperse the coin swarm or survive for the spell's duration, they gain a total of 113 pp, 241 gp, 518 sp, and 1,170 cp.

Upper Temple

CR4

When this place was a temple to Selqet, the Upper Temple had an entrance near the junction of the Lower and Upper Temples, but the Serpent King had this entrance blocked in order to leave only one means of entry to the temple. The eastern half of this floor holds a number of small rooms that served as the quarters for functionaries who could quickly respond to the needs of the temple's leaders, who were housed in the western half of the Upper Temple. The original Serpent King converted some of the quarters into snake breeding chambers, which the resident cultists would tend. A wide hallway winds its way throughout this level and terminates at the inner sanctum where Apep-Lylh spends most of his time, plotting Corremel's downfall.

15. ENTRANCE (CR 8)

The hole leads to the far end of the main hall. A number of doors dot the western wall at the south end of the hall, but the hallway is otherwise empty.

CREATURES: Considering the characters' activity in town and based on reports that they have survived attacks in Corremel, Apep-Lylh has stationed two serpent mummies at the entrance to greet any interlopers who make it through the Lower Temple. The mummies attack characters as they emerge from the hole.

CR 6

Serpent Mummies (2)

XP 2,400 hp 67 each (see page 63)

16. INITIATES' QUARTERS (CR 6)

These rooms (with the exception of 16c, which is a privy) usually house two cultists in somewhat cramped quarters.

This devastating spell turns any pile of 1,000 coins or more into a swarm of flying shards of metal with a fly speed of 30 ft. per round. The swarm is under the mental control of the caster as long as she concentrates, and it deals 1d6 points of damage for every 4 caster levels of the spellcaster. The damage is treated as magical for the purposes of penetrating damage resistance.

If the pile contains any coins of unusual metals, such as cold iron, mithral, or adamantine, the swarm can penetrate the relevant damage resistance. Otherwise treat as a standard summon swarm spell, and the swarm follows the rules for the swarm subtype in the *Pathfinder Bestiary*. Each room has two mats on the floor and no personal effects, other than basic clothing. Most of the rooms are empty, as the cultists pursue their duties in Corremel.

CREATURES: Two cultists remain here (in rooms 16a and 16d) to attend to Apep-Lylh, his high priest, and the visiting serpentfolk. If they hear a commotion from combat with the serpent mummies, they will emerge from their quarters to assist the mummies. The cultists are armed with temple swords (similarly to the cultists in area 6 of the Lower Temple).

Serpent King Cultists (2)

CR 4

XP 800 each hp 37 (see page 51)

17. SNAKE BREEDING CHAMBERS (CR VARIES)

CREATURES: Each of the rooms 17a–17d houses a different species of snake, with one bull male and at least a pair of female snakes per species. Room 17e contains an incubation chamber for newborn snakes. When the temple came under attack, the Serpent King managed to put the snakes in these chambers into stasis, so they avoided the temple's purge, allowing Apep-Lylh to repopulate the temple in short order. The doors are closed to prevent the snakes from wandering off, and the cultists on duty see to them once an hour. As an additional protection measure, each door has a switch (a character can find it with a successful DC 18 Perception check), that, if it is not toggled when a character opens a door, opens all the doors, unleashing all the snakes inside. The constrictor snakes are confined to chambers 17a and 17b. while the venomous snakes are held in chamber 17c, and the emperor cobras are housed in 17d.

Constrictor Snakes (6)	CR 2
XP 600 each	
hp 19 (Bestiary)	
Venomous Snakes (6)	CR 1
XP 400 each	
hp 13 (Bestiary)	
Emperor Cobras (3)	CR 5
XP 1,600 each	
hp 51 (<i>Bestiary 2</i>)	
18. EQUIPMENT AND STORAGE ROOMS	

Rooms 18a and 18b hold mundane equipment for the temple's general upkeep. The initiates in area 16 often receive the duty of cleaning out sand using brooms and buckets in these storage rooms. Room 18c holds incense and ritual implements for ceremonies held within the temple. Finally, rooms 18d and 18e are pens that hold livestock the cultists use as food for the snakes in area 17. **TREASURE:** Among the mundane incense stored in room 18c (worth a total of 500 gp) are a block of *incense of mediation* and a block of *incense of transcendence*.

The hay on the floor of room 18d hides a *rod of the python*, which has escaped notice by the temple's residents because of powerful enchantments invoked by Selqet's faithful when the Serpent King took their temple. The rod can be located with a successful DC 25 Perception check (DC 15 if the searching character is good-aligned).

19. IRON COBRA STORAGE (CR VARIES)

This group of rooms houses iron, adamantine, and mithral cobras for use by the Serpent King and his lieutenants. So far, they have not had a use for the constructs, but Apep-Lylh keeps them here as surprises for overly curious intruders who must open every door.

CREATURES: A variety of metal cobras sit dormant in these five rooms. They attack any non-reptilian creature that enters their line of sight. Fortunately for the characters, the rooms in the hall do not operate similarly to the rooms in area 17, and each door must be opened separately. The iron cobras are housed in 19a, adamantium cobras in 19b, mithral cobras in 19c, blood-drinking iron cobras in 19d, and iron emperor cobras in 19e.

Iron Cobras (5) CR 2	
XP 600 each	
hp 15 (Bestiary)	
np 15 (<i>Destury</i>)	
Adamantine Cobras (3) CR 3	
XP 800 each	
hp 20 (Bestiary)	
Mithral Cobras (4) CR 3	
XP 800 each	
hp 15 (Bestiary)	
Blood-Drinking Iron Cobras (3) CR 3	
XP 800 each	
N Small construct	
Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;	
Perception +0	
DEFENSE	
AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+2 Dex, +7 natural,	
+1 size)	
hp 20 (1d10+15)	
Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0	
DR 5/—; Immune construct traits; SR 14	
OFFENSE	
Speed 40 ft.	
Melee bite +3 (1d6+1 plus grab and poison)	
Special Attacks blood drain (1d2 Constitution)	2
STATISTICS	1
Str 12, Dex 15, Con –, Int –, Wis 11, Cha 1	1
	A



SERPENT LASH

Aura moderate necromancy and transmutation; CL 7th

Slot none; Price 14,305 gp; Weight 3 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

The end of this +2 scorpion whip transforms into a serpent's fangs when it strikes an opponent, dealing lethal slashing and piercing damage. Additionally, once per day as an immediate action the serpent lash's wielder can poison an opponent struck by the lash, as per the *poison* spell (DC 16).

CONSTRUCTION

10000

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, magic fang, poison; Cost 7,305 gp

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Base Atk +1; CMB +1 (+5 grapple); CMD 13 (can't be tripped)

CR 4

Skills Stealth +12; Racial Modifiers +6 Stealth SQ find target

Iron Emperor Cobras (2)

XP 1,200 each N Medium construct Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +8 natural) hp 42 (4d10+20) **Fort** +1, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1 DR 5/-; Immune construct traits; SR 15

OFFENSE Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft. Melee bite +8 (1d8+6 plus poison)

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 16, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1 Base Atk +4; CMB +8; CMD 21 (can't be tripped) Skills Climb +12, Stealth +9; Racial Modifiers +6 Stealth SQ find target

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) *Emperor Cobra Venom*: Bite—injury; *save* Fortitude DC 17; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d3 Con; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

20. SACRIFICIAL ALTAR (CR 6)

The bloodstained granite slab in this room was the site of a number of murders during the previous Serpent King's reign, but Apep-Lylh has remained cautious about bringing sacrificial humans to the temple while his overall plans take shape. Additionally, a couple of cultists have stumbled upon the haunt in this location (one did not survive the experience), so Apep-Lylh forbids anyone from entering the room.

A secret door connects this room with area 21. It requires a successful DC 25 Perception check and a DC 25 Disable Device check to unlock.

HAUNT: A previous victim's spirit lingers here and revisits its painful death on any creature that approaches the altar.

Poisonous Disembowelment Haunt CR 6 XP 2,400

AP 2,400

CE haunt (25-ft.-by-25-ft. square room) Caster Level 9th

Notice Perception DC 20 (to hear the sound of pleading for mercy or a quick death)

hp 15; Trigger proximity; Reset 1 day

Effect When this haunt is triggered, the nearest creature is targeted by a *poison* spell (Fortitude DC 17).

Destruction Destroying the *dagger of venom* that was used to kill the victim destroys the haunt.

TREASURE: The *dagger of venom* and a *serpent lash* sit on a table next to the altar, along with several implements of torture and butchery. Apep-Lylh had no use for the weapons and left them in the chamber.

21. SERPENTFOLK VISITORS' QUARTERS (CR 8)

Apep-Lylh has reestablished contact with area serpentfolk and is currently entertaining his first pair of guests, who relax in this room. They do not react to any combat they hear from the other areas, but will prepare spells in case the fight spills into this chamber.

A secret door and a passage connects this chamber with area 20. The door can be located with a successful DC 25 Perception check. Unlike the other door, this one is unlocked, and the serpentfolk are aware of its existence (and they know to avoid the haunt in area 20). **CREATURES:** In addition to the two guests, a serpent mummy lurks in this room, waiting to fulfill any of the guests' needs. The mummy intercedes on the serpentfolk's behalf if intruders force their way into this room.

CR 4

CR 6

Serpentfolk (2)

XP 1,200 each hp 42 (*Bestiary* 2)

Serpent Mummy

LE Medium undead Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

DEFENSE

XP 2,400

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex,

+6 natural)

hp 67 (9d8+27)

Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +8

Defensive Abilities evasion; **DR** 10/piercing; **Immune** undead traits

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite (mouth) +12 (1d8+5 plus grab and curse and poison) and 2 hand fang bites +12 (1d6+5 plus poison) **Special Attacks** constrict (1d8+5)

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** 8, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 17 **Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +11 (+15 grapple); **CMD** 24 (can't be tripped)

- **Feats** Combat Reflexes, Outflank^{APG}, Power Attack, Precise Strike^{APG}, Weapon Focus (bite)
- **Skills** Acrobatics +7, Climb +13, Escape Artist +7, Intimidate +13, Perception +11, Stealth +12
- Languages Scalykind

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hand Fangs Poison (Ex) Hand fangs—injury; *save* Fort DC 17; *frequency* 1/round for 4 rounds; *effect* 1d4 Constitution damage; *cure* 1 save. The save DC is Charisma-based.

- Scalykind Curse (Su) Bite—injury; *save* Will DC 17; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d6 Dexterity damage. Additionally, the victim incurs a –6 penalty on Fortitude saves against poison delivered by any reptilian creature and takes 1 additional point of damage or drain from their poison. The save DC is Charisma-based.
- **Scalykind Language (Su)** A serpent mummy can converse with an intelligent reptilian creature with the ability to speak as if using *tongues*.

22. HIGH PRIEST'S QUARTERS (CR 7)

This chamber served as home to the high priest of the Serpent King in antiquity, and Apep-Lylh uses it for the same purpose.



CREATURE: The term "high priest" does not truly fit the resident, an advanced serpentfolk rogue who was formerly employed by Corremel's thieves' guild.

High Priest CR 7

XP 4,800 Advanced serpentfolk rogue (poisoner) 4 **hp** 90 (see page 59)

23. APEP-LYLH'S REDOUBT (CR 10)

The Upper Temple's innermost sanctum serves as Apep-Lylh's home. He visits with guests and gives orders to his followers from here. The area contains two pools of 3-foot-deep water, which Apep-Lylh hopes to one day use as scrying pools, so he can follow his cultists activities in Corremel and communicate directly with them, rather than acting through intermediaries.

CREATURES: Apep-Lylh and two serpent mummy servitors remain here, regardless of any sounds of combat in the Upper Temple. When the PCs arrive, Apep-Lylh furiously shouts at the intruders and threatens them with destruction if they do not leave the temple. If the characters give him time, he rants about how they have nowhere near the power of the kings that removed him from power centuries ago. He momentarily considers offering the characters the power that comes with the

SINISTER MAGIC

Apep-Lylh has two spells on his list from *Deep Magic*, by Kobold Press. They are reprinted here for GM convenience.

Quicken

School clockwork (transmutation [temporal]; Level bard 0, cleric/oracle 0, sorcerer/wizard 0, witch 0 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S

Range touch

Target one creature

Duration 1 min.

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **SR** yes (harmless) You adjust the flow of time subtly around the target. The target receives a +1 enhancement bonus to initiative for the duration of the spell. This bonus can change a target's initiative during combat.

Withered Sight

School necromancy [temporal]; **Level** cleric/oracle 1, druid/shaman 1, inquisitor 1, sorcerer/wizard 1, witch 1

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, M/DF (a dried eye)

Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target one creature

Duration 1 hr./level (D)

Saving Throw Fortitude negates; SR yes

You magically and rapidly age the target's eyes. The target receives a -4 penalty to Perception checks and a -2 penalty to attack rolls. A *lesser restoration, remove blindness/deafness*, or similar spell of higher level negates the effect.

glorious transformation before dismissing it as a wasted gesture on "do-gooders." If the characters do nothing while the Serpent King postures, the serpent mummies stand on guard for attacks, but they will not initiate combat unless they (or Apep-Lylh) come under attack or Apep-Lylh orders them to do so.

Apep-Lylh

CR 8

XP 4,800

Advanced serpent drake oracle 5 NE Small dragon **Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 17, flat-footed 17 (+6 Dex, +6 natural, +1 size)

hp 116 (5d8+6d12+55) **Fort** +11, **Ref** +12, **Will** +14

Immune fatigue, paralysis, sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (average) **Melee** bite +16 (1d6+1 plus grab and poison), 2 claws +16 (1d4+1)

Special Attacks constrict (1d6+1)

Oracle Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +11) At will—*dominate animal* (snakes or reptilian subtype only) (DC 19), *speak with animals* (snakes only)

Oracle Spells Known (CL 5th; concentration +11)

- 2nd (6/day)—cure moderate wounds, darkness, hold person (DC 18), skinsend[™], summon monster II (snakes or reptiles only), summon nature's ally II (snakes or reptiles only)
- 1st (8/day)—cure light wounds, murderous command^{UM} (DC 17), obscuring mist, pass without trace, shield of faith, summon monster I (snakes or reptiles only), summon nature's ally I (snakes or reptiles only), withered sight^{DM} (DC 17)
- 0 (at will)—bleed (DC 16), detect magic, detect poison, guidance, quicken^{DM}, resistance

Oracle Mystery snakes^{DM}

TACTICS

Before Combat Apep-Lylh casts *magic circle against good* upon himself.

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 23, Con 20, Int 19, Wis 20, Cha 22

Base Atk +9; CMB +14 (+18 grapple); CMD 25 (can't be tripped)

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Extra Revelation^{APG}, Extra Revelation^{APG}, Lunge, Master Alchemist^{APG}, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +14 (+10 when jumping), Appraise +16, Bluff +17, Climb +15, Craft (alchemy) +20, Diplomacy +6 (+10 to influence snakes or creatures with the reptilian subtype), Escape Artist +14, Fly +17, Handle Animal +17, Intimidate +20 (+24 to influence snakes or creatures with the reptilian subtype), Knowledge (nature) +18, Perception +19, Sense Motive +15, Stealth +20, Use Magic Device +19; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Acrobatics, +8 Escape Artist

Languages Abyssal, Draconic, Infernal, Nurian, Scalykind **SQ** oracle's curse (lame), revelations (command snakes, serpent companion, snake summoner, speak with snakes)

Gear scroll of *magic circle against good*, *wand of unholy blight* (3 charges)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Command Snakes (Su) Apep-Lylh can command snakes at will as per *dominate animal*. Creatures with the reptilian subtype are also susceptible to this ability.

Scalykind Language (Su) A serpent drake can converse with an intelligent reptilian creature with the ability to speak as if using *tongues*.

Serpent Drake Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fortitude DC 18; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d4 Con; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Serpent Companion (Ex) Apep-Lylh gains an animal companion, as a druid equal to his oracle level. The animal companion must be a constrictor snake or a venomous snake. His oracle levels stack with his druid levels when determining the powers of his animal companion. This ability does not allow him to have two animal companions at once.

Snake Summoner (Su) Apep-Lylh adds all *summon monster* and *summon nature's ally* spells to his list of known spells, but he can use these spells only to summon a snake or a reptilian creature. If he casts a *summon monster* or *summon nature's ally spell* gained through this revelation to summon a snake or a reptilian creature, he summons one extra monster of that type, and the creatures gain the benefit of the Augment Summoning feat.

SELQET'S POISON PANACEA

Aura strong conjuration; CL 19th Slot none; Price 72,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

This vial of clear liquid has a dropper that allows the user to mix one drop of the liquid with a flask of holy water to create an elixir that produces a *neutralize poison* effect (CL 19th) on the drinker. The vial contains 50 drops of liquid when created.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *neutralize poison*; **Cost** 36,000 gp

Speak with Snakes (Su) Apep-Lylh can speak with snakes as a constant per *speak with animals* effect. He gains a +4 bonus to Diplomacy and Intimidate checks made to influence snakes or creatures that have the reptilian subtype.

POWER OF THE PHAROAHS

The following spells are used in potions and a scroll that the PCs can find as treasure. Originally published in *Deep Magic* by Kobold Press, they are reprinted here for GM convenience.

Torc of the Pharaoh

School conjuration (creation) [force]; **Level** sorcerer/ wizard 2, summoner 2

Casting Time 1 standard action **Components** V, S, F (a small square of gold)

Range touch

Target creature touched

Duration 1 hr./level

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); SR no

A tangible field of force surrounding the subject appears as a gold collar studded with small gems. Though the torc is tangible, it weighs next to nothing and the field of force surrounds the subject on all sides. The force provides the subject with a +4 armor bonus to AC and protects vital areas more effectively. When a critical hit is scored on the subject or when sneak attack damage would be rolled, there is a 25% chance that the critical hit is negated and that damage is rolled normally. Additionally, there is a 25% chance that the sneak attack does not do additional damage.

Unlike mundane armor, a *torc of the pharaoh* entails no armor check penalty, arcane spell failure chance, or speed reduction. Since the *torc of the pharaoh* is made of force, incorporeal creatures can't bypass it.

Torc of the Pharaoh, Greater

School conjuration (creation) [force]; Level sorcerer/ wizard 4, summoner 4 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, F (a small square of gold) Range touch Target creature touched Duration 1 hr./level Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); SR no This spell functions like *torc of the pharaoh*, except the

armor bonus increases to +6, and the chance to negate critical hit damage and avoid sneak attack damage increases to 50%. The spell's visual effect changes to that of a thick gold collar and chest plate studded with large, glittering gems.

Sallantriss

Constrictor snake animal companion

N Large animal

Init +7; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +6 DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 42 (+20)

Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +4

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee bite +9 (1d4+10 plus grab)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (1d4+10)

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 16, **Con** 18, **Int** 1, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 2 **Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +11 (+15 grapple); **CMD** 24 (can't be tripped)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Iron Will **Skills** Acrobatics +7 (+3 to jump), Climb +15, Perception +6, Stealth +4, Swim +15

TREASURE: A vial of Selqet's *poison panacea* sits hidden at the bottom of the westernmost pool. A character succeeding at a DC 27 Perception check (or DC 17 if the water is drained from the pool) finds the vial.

Conclusion

The death of Apep-Lylh spells the defeat of the Serpent King's cult. The snakes that have recently plagued the city diminish and return to their normal behavior. Once the temple is cleared out, the heroes are able to persuade the city authorities to thoroughly investigate the Lilac Sunset Brewery. Previous deliveries of the contaminated honey beer are tracked down and destroyed, and victims who have since drunk the poisonous beverage receive care to break their addiction and the curse. The heroes are credited with the defeat of a serious threat to Corremel, and the GM may optionally use this as a justification for an additional reward if the PCs overlooked some of the treasure.



BY WOLFGANG BAUR AND BEN MCFARLAND • PFRPG CONVERSION BY JIM GROVES FOR ADVENTURERS OF 8TH LEVEL

"Wherein many night terrors may gather, but dawn comes at last."

Adventure Background

Ten thousand heroes lie buried in the Necropolis of Siwal, the great tomb-city. Surrounding them are many more simple resting places, those of commoners, merchants, artisans, and poets. Scattered throughout are the graves of the restless dead, the burrows of ghouls, dank caves inhabited by vampires, and the empty spaces beloved by ghosts. By day, the necropolis is the scene of burials and remembrances of the dead. By night, it is a city unto itself.

By day, three gravebinders work in the necropolis, along with the usual diggers, mourners, embalmers, and so on. The gravebinder's task is to bind the bones of a corpse to eternal rest, to ensure that it will not rise as a zombie, skeleton, or other restless dead arise to plague the citizens of Siwal. The gravebinders' loud ululations and the pattering of their drums can always be heard in the Necropolis during daylight hours. Their work is professional and thorough, and they hear few complaints.

After nightfall, the spirits, ghouls, and vampires hold court in the necropolis. They conduct a dark mockery of civilized life, with fines and punishments for those who break their strange laws.

The living and the undead that populate the necropolis each keep to their own, most of the time. The only exceptions are when the undead dare to travel abroad by daylight to harass or even prey on mourners, and when the living dare to enter the necropolis by night. Robbers sometimes do so to plunder the dead, and desperate souls might enter the necropolis by night to seek some benefit from the dark magic of the unliving. In this adventure, the player characters will brave the necropolis at night for an entirely different reason.

Adventure Summary

The party responds to the pleas of a desperate gravebinder whose daughter has entered the necropolis after nightfall for reasons unknown. During their search, the PCs can talk to an owl harpy, a troll gravedigger, a vampire, and a ghost in the graveyard, as well as see various hyenas and flickering ghost lights, and hear the digging of ghouls deep below the earth. To determine where the gravebinder's daughter is, they must either fight all the nocturnal creatures, or question them and discover her whereabouts. (She is being held captive by the necromancer who hides in his laboratory near the Scholars' Graves.)

Alternatively, the PCs can stumble about and make checks to track her until they find her by process of elimination. Either way, a fun and dangerous night in the necropolis lies ahead.

Starting the Adventure

The adventure begins simply, with a desperate appeal from a man who has no one else to turn to. As the PCs pass near the necropolis one evening, one of the gravebinders approaches them and tells the party his daughter is missing. Like all gravebinders, his work involves the use of charms and simple spells to guarantee undisturbed slumber for those buried in the necropolis. The adventure's default assumption is that the heroes are in the city of Siwal after most of the city has concluded evening prayers, roughly 2 hours after sunset.

A man wearing black mourning garments steps into your path. His cheeks are streaked with dust and tears. "Effendi, kind sirs, you must help me," he says. "I am Panshal al-Marhji. My daughter Aiysha . . . She helps me with the mourners and prayers, but she was last seen entering the necropolis just before sunset. I beg you, as heroes, go and bring her back before she is eaten by ghouls or carried off by a vampire!

"I do not know why she went, but it can only end badly. The city guards are cowards, they will not go in. The necropolis is deadly by night, as I should know, for I am a humble mourner and gravebinder there." He looks to you with eyes filled with desperation.

If the characters ask about compensation, Panshal offers his entire fortune, 3,000 gp saved over many years, to be paid upon his daughter's safe recovery.

If the party accepts, they begin at the eastern gate. Panshal hands them a rough sketch of the necropolis. He has never entered by night and does not know where the various unholy and undead creatures live.

If the adventure is presented as part of a campaign, but the PCs refuse to take it on, there are consequences. Panshal convinces some of the town watch to go with him instead, but no one returns from that foray. The gravebinder himself is transformed into a wight, and he strengthens the necromancer's retinue if the party decides to investigate later on.

The Necropolis of Siwal

The necropolis of Siwal is a city of the dead: white marble and brown bricks of clay jammed together over thousands of tombs and dozens of small shrines, mourning houses, and memorials. The walls around it are low (5 feet high) but topped with spikes. At night, the southern gate (also known as the Anubis Gate), which opens directly into Siwal, is closed and kept under observation by routine patrols of the city's watch. Ancient tradition, from before the necropolis was inhabited by the restless dead, calls for the eastern gate (or the Sun's Gate) to remain open at all times—to greet the God of the Sun each morning. Tomb robbers sometimes go in, and undead sometimes try to climb out. For the most part, though, the cemetery operates without disruption.

The necropolis is known for its size and the famous heroes buried there, but also for the many strange and elegant structures and "quarters" that divide the people into classes by their birth, even in death. The resident head gravedigger, a semi-civilized desert troll named Golamesh Abu Karim (see area L), maintains a small watch fire just inside the eastern gate.

Golamesh is a treacherous civil servant, tolerated as the city's gravedigger. He toils for coins by day, but his real income stems from the banditry he commits by night. The watch fire is a requirement of his posting, another ancient tradition associated with the eastern gate and its association with the God of the Sun. The troll cares nothing for religion but does not slake in this duty. Because Golamesh is infused with elemental fire, flame only heightens his powers. The party might encounter him here in the waning hours of dusk (and on relatively good behavior), but once darkness falls he prowls the cemetery pursing his rackets and schemes.

Tracking Aiysha

Clever parties with some tracking ability may decide that the easiest thing to do is to search for Aiysha's footprints (or at least, a young woman's imprints in the dust) and try to find her that way. This requires both starting at the eastern gate (where she was last seen) and a means to see, whether a light source or darkvision. Carrying a light in the graveyard at night is almost guaranteed to precipitate an ambush by Golamesh the troll. It also means that the party will have no chance for surprise against any of the monsters.

But tracking does work. A series of DC 20 Survival checks is enough to see Aiysha's tracks lead from the gate to the grove of the Black Palms (area D), then to the Caliph's Tomb (F), then to the Mourners' Hall (A), and finally into the Scholars' Graves (H). Since Aiysha had some misadventure at each location, following the trail should lead to the party exploring the locations. If the PCs are reluctant or recalcitrant explorers, the creatures at those locations might trigger the encounters instead. Each successful check leads to a new location in the chain. Failure by 5 or more means the PCs lost the trail entirely, unless they rediscover it again by extraordinary means or through the GM's discretion.

A. MOURNERS' HALL (CR 7)

This mourning hall has flowers and wreaths in plenty, and the smell of incense from the day's burials is still lingering in the air. A few lanterns glow before some of the mausoleums and memorial plaques here, and candles burn in front of the sign of Anu-Akma, the Guardian God of the Dead.

CREATURE: For many years, Khuzaimah the Red Raider was a trade route legend: the bandit whose gang vanished into the dust whenever pursuit threatened him. His lifelong goal was to pass along his great wealth to his wife and son, but his son, Abdul-Quddus, was a religious man and he refused his father's stolen coin. Abdul died young, poisoned by a noblewoman who was rebuffed in her attempts to seduce him and learn the treasure's whereabouts. His parents died of grief not long after, and the secret location died with them.

In his new life as a ghost, Abdul-Quddus lives an afterlife of regret and gloom, alternating between rage against the living and against women in particular, since he blames them for his untimely death. In the matter of women, Abdul is torn: he feels that any woman might betray him, but he still wishes to pass on his father's wealth to a beautiful woman—preferably one that reminds him of his long-dead wife, Rasheeda. To Abdul-Quddus, Aiysha is just such a woman. He wants to possess her, and thus even though, unlike most ghosts, he is neither chaotic nor evil—he has little reason to help the party.



If they visit him (probably because the vampire Larissa suggested it), he speaks to them from within his tomb, a fine mausoleum of white marble inlaid with green enamel. "The living are not welcome here after dark," his echoing voices calls from the tomb. "Return to the city. I wish nothing but to feel the night air again. Leave me in peace." He does not show himself unless the party insists he reveal his form, because he is trying very hard to not reveal his undead status. He is ashamed of his alliance with the necromancer (he provides Ramzhi with raw materials in the vain hope that the necromancer can help end his halfliving status; see area M).

Abdul-Quddus used his *helping hand* spell to lead Aiysha out of Larissa's crypt in the Caliph's Tomb (see area F), and almost got her to the Mourners' Hall when the necromancer's wights caught her and began driving her to the Scholars' Graves (or, alternatively, he manifested and she fled in terror).

Abdul-Quddus wants the party to leave the necropolis so he can hunt for Aiysha in peace (the better to possess her). But he might be enticed into being friendly: bribes of candles, prayers, holy symbols, or sacred texts will win Abdul over—at least for a session of peaceable conversation.

During such a conversation, Abdul-Quddus wastes

no time before making an important request. He wants to take bodily form once more and enjoy a moment of living in one of the PCs' bodies, to "feel the night air." He promises that if someone agrees to do this, he will write down the secret location of his father's stolen hoard (see Treasure, below). If someone is trusting enough to allow Abdul to use his malevolence ability and possess that character, the ghost is true to his word. He says a few prayers, smells the night air, and abandons the body soon as he writes down the information he promised and gives the spoken clue to Aiysha's location described below.

If the PCs do not allow a possession, they can attempt to win Abdul over with smooth talk and share what information he knows. This requires a successful DC 23 Diplomacy check, or an opposed Bluff check. PCs who make a successful DC 15 Knowledge (local) check remember stories about Abdul-Quddus in life, or ghost stories told by gravebinders. This grants some insight into his personal background, which can be leveraged into a +5 bonus on either skill check described above. If the heroes are successful or allow a possession, Abdul-Quddus tells them Aiysha was in the Caliph's Tomb (area F) earlier and left it, then, read the following as Abdul's advice to the party. The last bit is the clue they really need. "Look not to the dead, but to the living, effendi. It is not ghouls or ghosts or vampires who have done wrong; we obey the laws of the necropolis because we must. Look to the troll and the harpy of the palms. Beware the fire dancers. Beware the grave robbers and necromancers. And go to the scholars' graves." The voice fades.

Abdul-Quddus means that the harpy is probably picking at Aiysha's bones, but the hint could also apply to the troll Golamesh Al-Karim (eastern gate or area L)—or to the Necromancer's Laboratory (area M). He may also discuss these leads if questioned, which requires a successful DC

18 Diplomacy or Intimidate check. Note that Abdul-Quddus's restless afterlife is caused by his own guilt, not divine misconduct. He was a faithful man in life and as a result, his own spells and abilities such as *searing light* cause him no injury, and thanks to Selective Channeling he can exclude himself when he channels positive energy.

Abdul-Quddus ("Servant of the Most Holy")

CR 7

XP 3,200

Human ghost cleric 6 (Bestiary)

N Medium undead (augmented human, incorporeal) Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+5 deflection, +1 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 60 (6d8+30)

Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +8

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** electricity 10 **OFFENSE**

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Special Attacks channel positive energy 8/day (DC 18, 3d6 [+6 vs. undead]), corrupting touch (7d6, Fort DC 18 half), malevolence (DC 18), sun's blessing

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +9) 6/day—*lightning arc* (1d6+3 electricity)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 6th; concentration +9) 3rd—bestow curse (DC 16), create food and water, helping hand, searing light^D

2nd—aid, heat metal^D (DC 15), shield other, sound burst (DC 15), spiritual weapon

1st—detect evil, detect law, doom (DC 14), hide from undead (DC 14), obscuring mist^D

0 (at will)—*detect magic, light, resistance, virtue* **D** Domain spell; **Domains** Air, Sun

STATISTICS

Str —, Dex 13, Con —, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 20 Base Atk +4; CMB +5; CMD 21 Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Selective Channeling

Skills Diplomacy +14, Fly +9, Heal +8, Knowledge (planes) +7, Knowledge (religion) +9, Perception +19, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +9, Stealth +9; Racial Modifiers +8 Perception, +8 Stealth Languages Celestial, Southlands Common

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Rejuvenation (Su) The destroyed spirit of Abdul-Quddus will restore itself in 2d4 days. The only way to get rid of Abdul-Quddus is for him to pass on his father's wealth to a beautiful woman.

TREASURE: Abdul-Quddus has a collection of holy texts and calligraphy in his mausoleum that he fights to the death to defend. They are worth 3,300 gp to a worshiper of the Sun God. The information he promises in exchange for possessing a body refers to his father's treasure trove, which is many miles from the city. It is near the Sands of Sorrow, and works well as a plot hook to another adventure.

B. HEROES' GRAVES

This section is filled with the graves of Siwal's great warriors. Most feature a special designation, such as a scimitar or a horse, on their grave markers.

C. CITIZENS' GRAVES

Merchants, artisans, teachers, military men, and other respected citizens are buried in this area of the necropolis. The graves are well tended, and few appear disturbed.

D. THE BLACK PALMS (CR 9)

A small grove of dark palm trees stands here, next to an abandoned shrine. The living trees' leaves are black as a mourning shroud.

Aiysha's trouble began here. She entered the necropolis because she heard the singing of Milandra, an owl harpy. Milandra's song entranced the young woman, but did not hold her for long. When Aiysha awoke from the enchantment, she fled deeper into the necropolis to escape from the harpy's claws.

CREATURES: Milandra the owl harpy makes her home here. She is alert for prey tonight, perched in the window of a nearby building. Unless the PCs take extraordinary measures, she likely observes their approach and begins a confrontation, with song.

A mournful song wafts from the window of a longabandoned window. The haunting vocal melody is compelling, and almost without words except for the soft refrain of "I'm hungry."

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All PCs within 300 feet must make a DC 19 Will save against the harpy's song. Those who fail walk at normal speed toward her. Any PC who comes within 100 feet sees her fire dancers. These inhuman, otherworldly creatures are a swarm of Diminutive fire elementals, like flames escaped from a candle. They pose a serious threat to a party that decides to fight them rather than the harpy, and are especially dangerous if the harpy song captivates some or all of the party. The GM should play up their eldritch, hellfire-like appearance. Even though they have not been summoned, the fire dancers can be held at bay by spells such as *protection from evil* and magic circle against evil. This fact can be determined with a successful Knowledge (planes) check.

The PCs should be able to see Milandra in the window, even at 100 feet in the darkness, thanks to the ambient light shed from the fire dancers. If applicable, read:

All around the owl-woman's perch are small creatures of blue fire, who dance like the djinn to her music. There are a dozen or so, each resembling a small skull wrapped in flames. The heat from these fiery dancers is remarkable and easily felt at a distance.

"Food, my pretty flames," sings the owl woman. "Food for the flames!" Hundreds of the fire creatures begin to gather, coming from every direction. "Do you bring me food for the fire, humans? If you do not, you will all burn."

If the party offers Milandra meat (of any kind, though she prefers rats and dogs) or if they defeat her firedancers, she stops singing and says, "I surrender to you; you may go free." If they ask her anything, she will answer questions. In particular, she admits that a young woman did come into the necropolis earlier in the night.



Milandra, Owl Harpy

XP 3,200

Female owl harpy rogue 4 (Southlands Bestiary 59) NE Medium monstrous humanoid Init +7; Senses blindsight 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural) hp 97 (13 HD; 9d10+4d8+30) Fort +6, Ref +13, Will +11 Defensive Abilities evasion, uncanny dodge, trap sense +1: Resist cold 5 Weaknesses dissonance OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (good) Melee shortspear +15/+10/+5 (1d6+3), 2 talons +13 (1d6+1)

CR 7
Ranged +1 shortbow +17/+12/+7 (1d6+1/×3) Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6, captivating song, hovering darkness, rend (2 claws, 1d6+4) Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +11) 3/day—darkness

TACTICS

Before Combat Milandra uses her *oil of flame arrow*. She remains mindful of clerics and bards, and they become priority targets.

During Combat Milandra sings until the captivated PCs are in the midst of the firedancers, then lets the song end. She spends 1 round performing a Dazzling Display. The following round she uses Shatter Defenses to make ranged sneak attacks against those targets with the shaken condition.

Morale The harpy just wants a meal; if reduced to fewer than 20 hit points or if her swarm is defeated, she offers to exchange information for her life or quickly flies away.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 17, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 19 **Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 29

Feats Dazzling Display, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Shatter Defenses, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Weapon Focus (shortbow)

Skills Acrobatics +13, Bluff +14, Disable Device +13,

Fly +17, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (local) +10,

Knowledge (planes) +7, Perception +15, Perform (sing) +13, Stealth +13

Languages Ignan, Southlands Common

SQ rogue talents (combat trick, weapon training), stealthy flier, trapfinding +2

Combat Gear *potion of flame arrow, potion of barkskin;* **Other Gear** +1 *studded leather,* shortspear, +1 *shortbow,* with 20 arrows

Fire Dancer Swarm

CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 85 (Southlands Bestiary 50)

DEVELOPMENTS: If all the PCs fail their saving throws against Milandra's captivating song, the fire dancers attack and deal damage each round until one of the party members falls unconscious. At that point, if it looks like the PCs need help, Golamesh shows up. The troll throws a good-sized rock at Milandra, telling her to "stop squawking." Milandra stops singing, and before the characters ran react, Golamesh scoops up the fallen PC as his reward. The remaining PCs are freed from the captivating song in the following round, and the missing party member may be rescued from Golamesh's larder.

Even if combat ensues, Milandra is not heavily invested in making enemies of the heroes, she's just hungry. Her attitude remains only unfriendly, and the PCs can try to talk her out of a fight with a successful DC 25 Diplomacy check. If the check is successful, or if she is bartering for her life, Milandra reveals that the vampire named Larissa took Aiysha away. "The girl didn't appreciate my songs, but she'll bleed for her impudence. She is probably already dead." She says that the vampire lives near the Caliph's Tomb in the center of the necropolis.

TREASURE: A small cache of 500 gp is easy to find in the palm grove, but Milandra's greater treasures are hidden in her abandoned building. The easy cache requires a successful DC 18 Perception check, which also reveals a 1,000 gp blue sapphire. The better hidden nest egg requires a DC 24 Perception check, which uncovers a star ruby worth 5,000 gp and a *scroll of call lightning* (CL 7th).

E. SILENT PILLARS

In this area are a set of stelae and memorial pillars carved with the deeds of the sultans and the heroes of the realm. A DC 20 Linguistics check reveals that the oldest date is 500 years ago.

F. THE CALIPH'S TOMB (CR 9)

A large mausoleum dwarfs the surrounding graves here. It is shaped like a cross with four wings, crowned with a small dome. The building is in fine repair, and the grounds that surround it have seen more care than other quarters of the necropolis.

CREATURES: More than ten years ago, Tayeb al-Mamun received a foreign prince into his court, one of the wealthy and cultured sorcerer-traders of the flying city of Sikkim. The man was pale, charismatic, and clever, and soon won the heart of his daughter, Larissa. Though he was not a very pious or martial man, he seemed to make her happy.

Unbeknownst to the others, the foreign prince was also a vampire, and in due time, his undeniable thirst for blood drained his betrothed Larissa to death. She was buried with honor, and the grief-stricken suitor returned to his homeland (or fled the sultan's wrath; it is unclear how much of the true story the sultan knew). Ever since, Larissa the vampire has hidden in the necropolis, visiting the city by dusk and dawn under a thick burqa to find sustenance, and generally making the best of things.

When the PCs approach the Caliph's Tomb, read:

The mausoleum has a single small oil lamp lighting the entryway. The interior is dark and shadowy, but two large dog-like creatures are seen resting around the feet of a woman in a full burqa, her veil revealing only her golden eyes. She waves in greeting and says, "Did my father send you?

Larissa means the sultan, of course, for she fears that someday her father will learn that his daughter yet lives, though only as an abomination. Her mention of her father

could lead the PCs to the wrong conclusion initially (since this is something that Aiysha might ask).

She hates her undead state and her need to feed on the living, but rather than moping in self-pity, she has developed a strong disdain for smooth, charismatic men. Any male PC who tries to use Diplomacy or Bluff with her takes a –8 circumstance penalty due to her innate suspicion.

If questioned, Larissa claims she saw the girl at the harpy grove (which is true), and then that the troll carried her off (untrue). In truth, Larissa dominated Aiysha and thus stole her away from the owl harpy; the two are rivals of long standing. Once she had bled the girl enough to slake her hunger, Larissa called her hounds and went into the night to annoy Golamesh the Gravedigger, expecting Aiysha to stay safe in the mausoleum. Instead, Aiysha saw the *helping hand* of the ghost Abdul-Quddus, and she took the chance of following it.

Larissa attacks only if she can get a male PC sentry alone while the party rests or if the party attacks her or tries to turn her.

Shadow Mastiffs (2)	CR 5
XP 1,600 each	
hp 51 (Bestiary 3)	

Larissa The Black Maiden

XP 3,200

Human vampire fighter 6 (*Bestiary*) CE Medium undead (humanoid, human) **Init** +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 19 (+3 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural) hp 79 (6d10+42); fast healing 5 Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +6 (+2 vs. fear); +4 bonus vs. channeled energy Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; DR 10/ marie 10/eilver Immune undeed traity Pasiet cold

magic, 10/silver; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses vampire weaknesses

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 light flail +13/+8 (1d8+7) or unarmed strike +11/+6 (1d3+5) or slam +6 (1d4+2)

Special Attacks blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, dominate (DC 18), energy drain (2 levels, DC 18), weapon training (flails +1)

TACTICS

Before Combat Larissa summons 2d6 hyenas (instead of wolves) with her children of the night ability at the first indication that the conversation with the PCs may go poorly; she claims that they are her "male escort when meeting strangers." She remains shrouded in shadows

until she must show herself, and keeps wearing her veil during any conversation.

During Combat Larissa attempts to dominate any opposing cleric as her first action, then fights with her flail. She remains close to her mastiffs and wolves to capitalize on her Gang Up feat. She attempts to grapple to exploit her blood drain if at all possible.

Morale Larissa fights until reduced to fewer than 10 hit points, then flees in dire bat form.

STATISTICS

CR 7

Str 21, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** 13, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 20 **Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +11 (+15 grapple, +13 trip); **CMD** 25 (27 vs. grapple, 27 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Gang Up^{APG}, Greater Grapple, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Toughness

Skills Bluff +15, Climb +9, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +9, Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +11, Perception +16, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +15, Survival +7; Racial Modifiers +8 Bluff, +8 Perception, +8 Sense Motive, +8 Stealth

Languages Southlands Common

SQ armor training 1, change shape, gaseous form, shadowless, spider climb Other Gear +1 leather armor, +1 light flail

DEVELOPMENTS: The vampire claims she has not seen Aiysha since the troll took her away, and states her preference for the blood of strong men over the pale blood of virgin girls. If the party takes the hint and offers her a drink of blood without attacking, she tells the characters the truth. The harpy grove was the last place she saw Aiysha, and she also warns them about the necromancer.

TREASURE: Larissa's grave goods are still with her: one of the sultan's family seals (400 gp value for jewelry, but a DC 20 Appraise check or a DC 15 Knowledge (nobility) check reveals its identity as a seal and its value at around 1,000 gp), a set of golden earrings set with jade worth 1,000 gp, and an enormous ruby on a simple silver necklace (5,000 gp). With a successful DC 15 Appraise check, this last item is recognized as the Dawn of Siwal, a famous stone. Trying to fence it anywhere in the city marks the bearer as a robber of the grave of the sultan's dearest departed daughter.

G. THE SPHINX

A large, well-preserved statue of a sphinx stands here.

H. SCHOLARS' GRAVES

This section is filled with the graves of scholars, holy men, and judges. Many are strewn with flowers or small carved stone offerings in the shape of books and scrolls.

I. NOBLE AND CLERICAL GRAVES

These are the grave of the wealthy imams and the relatives of the rulers of Siwal; many of the mausoleums have arcane wardings. Others have been broken open and despoiled by ghouls or tomb robbers.

J. THE PATRIARCH'S TOMB

The newest of the large mausoleums is a building of pinkish marble near the east entrance.

CREATURE: A lantern archon guards this relatively new structure night and day, protecting the body recently interred here (a powerful high priest of the Sun God). The archon knows nothing of Aiysha, but acts self-important and sends the party to the Noble and Clerical Graves.

Lantern Archon

CR 2

XP 600

hp 13 (Bestiary)

K. PAUPER BONES AND GHOULS

The paupers' graves here attract darakhul (Midgard's ghoul race) from time to time; the ground is sometimes disturbed and bones often scattered near such a site, despite attempts to keep the ghouls out. PCs can hear the sounds of digging below with a successful DC 24 Perception check, but this is a red herring. The ghouls avoid contact with the surface.

L. THE BLUE MINARETS (CR 10)

Four minarets surround a collapsed mosque dome. Three of the towers have no stairs up; the fourth has a very narrow stair up to a 50-foot perch, which provides a good view of the necropolis by day.

The exterior minaret walls are covered in enamel tiles of blue and green, making them difficult to climb (DC 28).

CREATURE: Golamesh Abu Karim is a fixture on both sides of the divide between night and day. He digs graves by day, and barters by night with the undead to reveal the graves and dig them up, or to deliver still living victims to feed the appetites of those undead that prefer living prey.

The party can find Golamesh easily, for he keeps a small watch fire near the eastern gate. His presence is meant to discourage living visitors from trespassing at night. After midnight, he usually abandons his post to go grave robbing or to strike bargains with various undead or djinn (see "Tracking Aiysha" on page 68).

Golamesh the Gravedigger Troll CR 10

XP 9,600

Male fire-infused troll brawler 4 (*Advanced Class Guide*, *Advanced Bestiary*)

CE Large humanoid (fire, giant)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 19 (+5 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, -1 size) hp 103 (10 HD; 6d8+4d10+54); fire healing 1, regeneration 5 (acid or cold) Fort +14 (+2 luck bonus vs. poison from spiders), Ref +10, Will +4 Defensive Abilities elemental body; Immune fire Weaknesses vulnerable to cold OFFENSE Speed 40 ft., firewalking (40 ft.) Melee unarmed strike +12/+7 (2d6+5+1d6 fire), bite +10 (1d8+2+1d6 fire) or unarmed strike flurry of blows +12/+10/+10/+6(2d6+5+1d6 fire), bite +10 (1d8+2+1d6 fire) or mwk spade +13/+8 (2d6+5/×3+1d6 fire), bite +10 (1d8+2+1d6 fire) or bite +12 (1d8+2+1d6 fire), 2 claws +12 (1d6+5+1d6 fire) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks brawler's flurry, fire breath (5d6 fire, 30 feet, DC 18, 1/1d4 rounds), heat (1d6 fire), knockout 1/day (DC 17), maneuver training (grapple +1), martial flexibility (Improved Grapple) 5/day, rend (2 claws, 1d6+7)

TACTICS

Before Combat Golamesh often uses the *spider climb* power of his cloak when he leaves his lair, so no one can follow his trail back to his cache of loot and food, and doing so also helps him set an ambush.

- **During Combat** Golamesh is fearless; he dives into combat slashing brutally at the closest and least armored opponents, focusing on them until they are incapacitated. Undaunted by fire, he uses his weapon's reach and his Combat Reflexes to good effect. Preferring the taste of humans over all others, the troll enjoys stalking intruders and trapping them with a *web* spell from his *cloak of arachnida*.
- **Morale** If reduced to 43 hit points or fewer, Golamesh flees into the graveyard and uses the cloak's *spider climb* ability to hide in a graveyard.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 18, **Con** 20, **Int** 14, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 8 **Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +14 (+15 grapple); **CMD** 29 (30 vs. grapple)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Unarmed Strike, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (spade), Multiattack, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Perception) Skills Acrobatics +3 (+7 to jump), Climb +12, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +16, Perception +18, Profession (gardener) +7, Stealth +9, Survival +7

Languages Giant, Nurian, Southlands Common

SQ brawler's cunning, martial training **Other Gear** +1 *chain shirt*, mwk spade, *cloak of arachnida, elixir of hiding*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Elemental Body (Ex)** Golamesh's body has some qualities of a fire elemental. Each time he is subjected to a bleed, precision damage, poison, paralysis, sleep, or stunning effect, he has a 25% chance to avoid it.
- Fire Breath (Su) Golamesh can breathe a 30-foot cone of fire once every 1d4 rounds. Every creature in the area takes 5d6 points of fire damage. A successful Reflex save halves this fire damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.
- Fire Healing (Ex) Golamesh regains 1 hit point for each full round that he remains in contact with a fire at least one size category smaller than himself. When struck by a magical fire effect, he heals 1 point of damage per 10 points of damage that the fire effect would otherwise deal.
- **Firewalking (Su)** Golamesh can climb an object that is on fire as though he had a climb speed equal to his highest speed. Furthermore, he can fly at his highest speed with perfect

maneuverability so long as he remains in contact with fire, and he can walk on flames at his highest speed.

DEVELOPMENTS: Golamesh keeps a larder of fresh, edible bodies to trade to ghouls and a separate set of manacled living victims to feed to vampires. If Golamesh carries off one of the PCs at the harpy encounter, that character is found here at the top of a narrow minaret, which is Golamesh's retreat. There are no stairs leading to the place; magic or two DC 28 Climb checks are required to reach the top (or to descend).

TREASURE: Golamesh keeps a small hoard of stolen grave goods in his hidden lair. It amounts to 1,200 gp worth of jewels, fine burial shrouds, and coins.



M. NECROMANCER'S LABORATORY (CR 10)

This location is the necromancer's well-hidden sleeping quarters and lab, located on the fringes of the scholar's graves (area H) and home to his wights. It consists of a series of underground chambers dug out from sinkholes that have collapsed a few graves here. It is hidden from casual visitors, as the necromancer and his minions have fashioned a makeshift door disguised as a tomb that requires a DC 30 Perception check to locate. At night the faint sound of a scream is heard from this direction and the presence of the wight guardians outside the place betrays the location.

CREATURES: If the PCs fail at all the social niceties and roleplaying opportunities provided in the other encounter areas, they can simply locate Aiysha when they stumble across this location at night and overhear the sound of music and screams. The necromancer Ramzhi al-Sharif seeks to turn the young woman into another wight servant (his attempts to win over the vampire have failed). The

wights are spread out; two are near the necromancer, two others keep watch over Aiysha.

The real villain behind Aiysha's kidnapping is the necromancer, who resents her father's work with the gravebinders. He figures that he can extort a ransom of corpses that have not been gravebound, and then renege on that agreement, because that's the kind of scum he is. He controls four wights who serve him loyally; when the PCs follow the screams to his section of the necropolis, they see the wights first, but not Ramzhi, who stays hidden as long as he can.

The screams grow fainter. Oil lamps flicker among the tombs and the sinkholes from collapsing graves. Two black shapes leap from monument to monument, terrible inhuman forms moving and growling like dogs. They are all in darkness around a woman bound on the ground near two large sarcophagi. The woman screams again.

These are the wights; their master Ramzhi prefers to

hang back but can be seen with a DC 20 Perception check. Alternatively, Ramzhi's Stealth check can be used for an opposed check.

Fifty feet back among the tombs is a hunchbacked man in pale gray clothes, sitting on a ghostly, transparent horse. His face is wrinkled, and the bags under his eyes are as dark as olives. As you catch sight of him, he begins to mutter a spell.

A DC 20 Knowledge (arcana or local) check reveals that some evil wizards of Siwal are accursed and cannot walk upright, have dark circles under their eyes, and gain wrinkles each time they work magic. The man is obviously a diabolist or a necromancer. A successful DC 20 Spellcraft check identifies the spell as *wall of bones* (see sidebar). Although Ramzhi's first action is hinted at, if the PCs successful spotted him in the gloom, the spell should still be cast on his first turn in the initiative order (which gives the PCs an opportunity to act first).

Ramzhi al-Sharif

XP 6,400

Human necromancer 10 NE Medium humanoid (human) Init +6; Senses life sight (10 feet, 10 rounds/day); Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 18 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural) hp 107 (10d6+70) Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +11

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk bone quarterstaff +6 (1d6)

Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th;

concentration +14)

7/day—grave touch (5 rounds)

Necromancer Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +14)

5th—persistent *slow* (DC 17), *vampiric shadow shield*^{ACG}, *wall of bones*^{NPC}

4th—bestow curse (DC 18), enervation, greater flaming sphere^{ACG} (DC 18), ice storm, dazing magic missile 3rd—fireball (DC 17), haste, phantom steed, ray of

exhaustion (DC 17), huste, phantom steed, hy e

2nd—bear's endurance, darkvision, dust of twilight^{APG} (DC 16), false life, fog cloud, spectral hand

1st—*chill touch* (DC 15), *liberating command*^{UC}, *mage armor, ray of enfeeblement* (DC 15), *vanish*^{APG} (DC 15)

0 (at will)—acid splash, bleed (DC 14), detect magic, disrupt undead

Opposition Schools Abjuration, Illusion

TACTICS

Before Combat Ramzhi drinks his *potion of barkskin* and casts *mage armor*, *false life*, and *bear's endurance*.

During Combat Ramzhi casts *wall of bones* to delay the PCs' getting to him. He follows with *haste* (on himself and the two nearby wights) and *spectral hand*. Alternatively, he casts persistent *slow* if the PCs are grouped together.

Morale Ramzhi flees once his wights are dead and he is reduced to 53 hit points or fewer.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 18, **Int** 18, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8 **Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 19

Feats Combat Casting, Command Undead, Dazing Spell^{APG}, Dodge, Favored Enemy Spellcasting^{ACG}, Improved Familiar, Improved Initiative, Persistent Spell^{APG}, Scribe Scroll, Toughness

Skills Heal +11, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (planes) +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Perception +11, Profession (embalmer) +9, Ride +7, Spellcraft +17, Stealth +12

Languages Abyssal, Ghul, Infernal, Southlands Common **SQ** arcane bond (arcane familiar, daemon, cacodaemon), power over undead

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* +3; **Other Gear** mwk bone quarterstaff, *cloak of resistance* +3, *ring of protection* +1

Ramzhi's Daemon Familiar

Cacodaemon daemon (*Bestiary 2*) NE Tiny outsider (daemon, evil, extraplanar)

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +14

DEFENSE

CR 9

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 21 (+9 natural, +2 size)

hp 43 (3d10+3); fast healing 2
Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +8
DR 5/good or silver; Immune acid, death effects, disease, poison; Resist cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect) Melee bite +8 (1d4+1) Space 2.5 ft.; Reach 0 ft. Special Attacks disease, soul lock Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +7) Constant—detect good, detect magic At will—invisibility (self only) 3/day—lesser confusion (DC 12) 1/week—commune (CL 12th, six questions)

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 12

Base Atk +5; CMB +3; CMD 14

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes **Skills** Acrobatics +0 (-12 to jump), Bluff +7, Fly +18, Heal +11, Knowledge (planes) +8, Perception +14, Ride +5, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +10, Stealth +21

- Languages Abyssal, Infernal, Southlands Common; telepathy 100 ft.
- **SQ** change shape (2 of the following forms: lizard, octopus, small scorpion, venomous snake; *polymorph*), improved evasion

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Su) *Cacodaemonia*: Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 12; *onset* 1 day; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d2 Wis damage, *cure* 2 consecutive saves. In addition to the normal effects of the disease, as long as a victim is infected, the cacodaemon can telepathically communicate with the creature over any distance (as long as they remain on the same plane).

Wights (4)

XP 800 each

hp 26 (Bestiary)

TACTICS

During Combat The wights near Aiysha can use the sarcophagi as partial cover.

DEVELOPMENT: This encounter is intended to be the PCs' opportunity to rescue the innocent girl and help her frantic father, but if the characters are reluctant to engage the villains, the only recourse is to make the threat real. The wights will slay the girl before their eyes if the PCs are cowardly. This turn of events should be a last resort. As long as the PCs press the fight, the monsters keep their attention focused on them.

TREASURE: The necromancer keeps a goodly stock of gems on hand, and has also stolen three beautiful silk prayer rugs from the necropolis's shrine as well (3,400 gp total).

Concluding the Adventure

If the party finds Aiysha before dawn, her father Panshal al-Marhji is extremely grateful and pays the promised reward. In the unlikely event that the wights kill Aiysha, if the PCs still recover her body, Panshal is heartbroken, but still pays the party 1,000 gp for their bravery in salvaging her remains.

If Aiysha is not found by dawn, she lures her father into a shadowy tomb the next day and destroys him, expanding the wave of wights yet further.

Priests of the Sun God Aten will purge the necropolis of evil as soon as the problem spills over onto the city streets, but not before.

WALL OF BONES

This spell originally appeared in *New Paths Compendium* available from Kobold Press.

Wall of Bones

School conjuration (creation); Level sorcerer/wizard 5, white necromancer 5, witch 5 Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect wall of interlocking bones, up to one 10-ft. cube/ level (S)

Duration 10 min./level (D)

Saving Throw none; Spell Resistance no

This spell creates a solid wall of very strong, interlocking bones. A wall of bones is 1 inch thick per caster level. It covers up to a 10-foot-square area per caster level. Thus, a 10th-level caster can create a *wall of bones* 100 feet long and 10 feet high, a wall 50 feet long and 20 feet high, or any other combination of length and height that does not exceed 1,000 square feet. The wall can be oriented in any fashion as long as it is anchored. A vertical wall need only be anchored on the floor, while a horizontal or slanting wall must be anchored on two opposite sides. The wall cannot be conjured to occupy the same space as a creature or another object.

A *wall of bones* can be destroyed by a *disintegrate* spell or by normal means such as breaking and chipping. Each 5-foot square of the wall has hardness 6 and 10 hit points per inch of thickness. A section of is breached when its hit points drop to 0. If a creature tries to smash through the wall with a single attack, the DC for the Strength check is 20 + 2 per inch of thickness.

THE OF THE GOD

BY MIKE SHEL FOR ADVENTURERS OF 8TH LEVEL

Adventure Background

Mortal beings pointlessly labor to decipher the motivations of the gods, attempting in vain to understand divinity. The gods have their reasons, and those who worship them often cannot understand those reasons. But there are times when the normally inscrutable politics of the gods look strikingly similar to mortals' conflicts.

The animosity between Aposis, demon-god of chaos and destruction, and Maraut, god of war and healing, was old long before the world was formed. Maraut, also known as the Elephant God, opposed the machinations of Aposis righteously for millennia, much to the dark god's fury. Over three thousand years ago, Aposis and his agents, employing great cunning and a mighty artifact known as the *Black Heart of Malice*, managed to entomb Maraut within a great temple in the Sarklan Desert. Sealed in place by a vile combination of dark sorcery and evil power, the Elephant God has remained hidden all this time, his once-thriving cult extinct, now a footnote occasionally pondered by scholars of antiquity.

Temple of the Elephant God is an opportunity for PCs to breach this long-hidden prison, a Southlands dungeon crawl adventure designed for four 8th-level characters. Will the characters finally liberate Maraut from his ancient desert tomb, or destroy him, thereby earning the moniker "god-killers"?

Speaking with Sanheb Sabas

The adventure opens in the great city of Siwal as curious news is circulating.

Word spreads across the city swiftly: a colorful and intrepid merchant of Siwal, Ahebek the Lucky, is dead. It's no rumor, to be sure; his burned and broken body has been on display at his palatial home in the Jewelers' Quarter, returned there by companions who witnessed his passing. Surviving members of the caravan tell tales of an amazing discovery at the Oasis of the Elephant, halfway from here to the great delta of Nuria Natal. But what can be believed and what has been distorted by migrating from ear to ear is unknown. To hear the true tale, one must find a companion of Ahebek willing to speak of the ordeal.

Locating the merchant Sanheb Sabas to get the story of Ahebek's death can be as simple or elaborate as the GM wishes. Whether the PCs track him down at the Traders' Guild, at the great merchant's funereal manse, or at Sanheb's own finely appointed home is up to the GM, as is how willing the shaken spice trader is to share his tale. When the characters have secured his cooperation, read the following.

The merchant's eye—the one not covered with a gauze patch—drifts between you before he takes a deep draught from his goblet and slams it down on the table.

"So you want the tale, eh? How Ahebek the No-Longer-Lucky met his maker? I'll give it to you, though you may believe me a liar if you've ever made the desert crossing to Nuria Natal. On our way back from Per-Bastet there was a mighty grandfather of a sandstorm, and we sheltered in Blind Nedek's caves. After the desert spent its fury, we headed for the Oasis of the Elephant, naturally, to water our camels and wash the dust from our faces. You know the place? Past tall dunes, a deep pool of cool water surrounded by vegetation, an elephantine rock watching over it all?

"Well, when we arrived, we found what I can only guess the sandstorm revealed. In place of the tall dunes was a rocky hill. Standing against the hill was a long stone colonnade, with five statues of animal-headed men clad in armor, thirty feet tall, all featuring tusks encrusted with gems. "Ahebek shouted out a prayer of thanksgiving to the gods for his fabled luck, and ordered a servant to scamper up the side of an elephant-headed statue and fetch him the gems on its tusks. I had a feeling of foreboding, and warned Ahebek that this place stank of the Ancients, and the Ancients guard their treasures jealously. He ignored me, standing beneath the statue as his man started to pry out that first fat jewel. Well, there was an earth-shaking blast as the statue exploded, sending chunks of rock everywhere. I was struck in the eye," he says, touching the gauze patch with a finger. "My physician says my sight is gone, and he'll likely have to remove the organ from its orbit. . . ."

The merchant pauses, lost in private thoughts. When prompted, he continues, shaking his head before speaking with undisguised bitterness.

"Yes, what do adventuring souls like you care for so small a thing as the loss of an eye? The explosion killed unlucky Ahebek and Peshtalka the Kush-born silk merchant. A dozen porters and attendants and as many camels were slain as well, and ten more camels bearing a fortune in goods fled panicked into the desert. Were it not for my own men calming the few remaining mounts, we would have been stranded there. Only myself, the fig seller Ptedda Ri, and five porters lived. I had the servants gather the bodies of Ahebek and Peshtalka before signs of another sandstorm chased us back to Nedek's caves. We skirted that cursed oasis the next morning and limped back to Siwal.

"Now you know as much as me. Ha! What has it profited you? No more than the journey did me, I expect, though you each still possess two healthy eyeballs."

Not all the details of Sanheb's tale are accurate, as the party will find out. If he is pressed for more information, Sanheb mentions a symbol found on a stone blocking an entrance at the stone colonnade: two narrow triangles in parallel, inverted so that they stand on their points. He'll draw it if asked. A DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check identifies it as the sacred symbol of Maraut, an ancient god formerly worshiped across the Southlands, whose cult died out many centuries ago.

Magic in the Tomb

Aposis and his agents saw to it that the temple-tomb of the Elephant God wasn't easily penetrated: the stone walls and barriers are infused with multiple permanent *dimensional lock* spells to prevent circumvention of locks and portals by spells such as *dimension door* and *teleport*. Such spells can be used for transport from one spot to another as long as no physical barrier would prevent movement over the same distance. Casting a transmutation spell that affects the stone of the structure (such as *stone shape*) requires a DC 28 Spellcraft check, or the spell fails. Successful transmutation spells that actually penetrate from one room to another also inadvertently summon a demon (60% chance), which attacks immediately.

Maraut Lore

Seeking information about Maraut is a wise step before setting out for the Oasis of the Elephant. One or more of the following facts can be gleaned with a successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check. The check result determines how many pieces of information (from one to all four) the characters obtain. If no one in the party succeeds at the Knowledge check, Siwal boasts a number of scholars with such expertise, though some may charge a steep price.

CHECK RESULT

0	
15+	Maraut was worshiped widely across the Southlands. He was known popularly as the Elephant God and was often depicted as a dark-skinned man with the head of an elephant. His worship died out roughly three thousand years ago with the god's sudden and unexplained disappearance.
20+	Maraut was a god of just war, judgment, and healing. Though soldiers venerated him, he was most revered by healers and seekers after justice. His temples were often located in remote settings, such as the desert, requiring worshipers to make a pilgrimage twice a year to his shrines.
25+	Maraut was known to have opposed many of the dark gods, interfering with their cruel plans against the mortal races. This activity brought his cult into frequent conflict with devotees of Set, Aposis, and other evil immortals. His temples were often complexes where priests would be interred upon their deaths, usually beneath the god's main ceremonial chamber.
30+	It's believed that Maraut was somehow murdered by Set or Aposis through the use of overwhelming evil and magical forces. Some speculate that the Elephant God might be revived, but fear that his resurrection may herald divine judgment, or that Maraut becomes transformed into something less noble and righteous.

Inadvertently Summoned Demon

XP 4,800 Nabasu demon (*Bestiary*) hp 103

First Level

The party begins at the Oasis of the Elephant in the map's northwest corner.

1. ORNATE TUSKS (CR 9)

With the Oasis of the Elephant beckoning in the near distance, you're greeted by a striking sight: protruding from the sandy ground is a pair of huge tusks. The beast must have been an enormous specimen in life, for the exposed portions of the curving tusks are nearly eight feet in length.

CREATURE: Closer inspection of the tusks reveals that the ivory has been carved with elegant twisting designs, and bits of gemstones are also embedded in their ivory lengths. Each tusk weighs about 200 pounds, but to take these treasures the PCs must dig in the packed earththe tusks are still attached to a huge skull. Once the earth has been cleared and the skull revealed (or if efforts are made to remove the tusks before the skull is uncovered), a ghostly greenish smoke issues from its eye sockets (emanating from underground if the skull is still buried) and coalesces into the form of an enormous elephant, its features distorted and emanating malevolence. With a hateful trumpeting call it attacks, fighting until destroyed. The creature has the statistics of a festering spirit except for its size (Huge), its reach (15 feet) and its bolstered hit points. The spirit receives a CR adjustment of +1 for these benefits.

Sacrificial Spirit

CR 9

CR 8

XP 6,400 Huge festering spirit (*Bestiary 4*) **hp** 72

DEVELOPMENT: Once the undead spirit is destroyed, the party can more carefully examine the skull. Signs of ritual cuts can be seen in the surface of the bone. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check reveals that this great beast was cruelly sacrificed. This sacrifice of a creature sacred to the priests of this temple by agents of Aposis was the agents' final act of desecration before the site was sealed.

TREASURE: The carved ivory tusks are worth 3,000 gp each, though transporting them may be something of a challenge. If the embedded gemstones are removed, they are worth a total of 500 gp and the value of the tusks is downgraded to 1,000 gp each without them.

2. RUBBLE-STREWN OASIS

The once serene landscape of the Elephant Oasis is a shambles, with hunks of carved and natural stone scattered around the sands. Some fragments bear recognizable features—a hand here, a leg there—but most lost their shapes in the explosion that hurled them about. One fact unmentioned by Sanheb Sabas is the plant growth that surrounds the crystalline waters: it's withered and leached of color, showing no trace of the once vibrant green that marked this place as a respite from the parched desert. Though the sun shines brightly, an oppressive, unnameable pall hangs over the place.

This scene is the aftermath of the explosion described by Sanheb, though the corpses of the men and the camels have mysteriously vanished. The stone fragments are those of the obliterated statue that once stood at area 5. Unbeknownst to the merchant, the evil power contained in the temple-tomb has leaked out and blasted the grounds here. If *detect evil* is employed, the following information is gleaned.

First round: an overwhelming presence of evil. *Second round*: literally hundreds of evil auras about the oasis.

Third round: a strange sense that this evil clings to the very sands of the oasis, its plant life, and other features, like a nauseating film; the objects and areas themselves aren't evil: rather, evil seems to coat them like an oily film. If the PCs dig about, they locate the bones of camels and porters, covered in sand with the flesh stripped from their bodies. It doesn't take great familiarity with the process of decomposition to discern that this state is unnatural (a successful DC 5 Heal check confirms it), and closer examination reveals what appear to be thousands of tiny teeth marks on the bones.

These strange phenomena are the result of the temple-tomb's breaching (see area 5): the evil power that has bound Maraut for millennia has contaminated the area with its filth. This vile aura of evil will take years to dissipate, unless Maraut is liberated from his prison (see Concluding the Adventure). It has no practical effect on the party, except for its impact on the use of *detect evil* and *know alignment* throughout this adventure: everything and everyone in the area detects as evil due to this omnipresent residue.

3. ATTENDANTS OF GOD

Standing watch over the oasis are four stout statues made of polished limestone painted red. They are about 20 feet tall. These heavily muscled forms are clad in archaic armor, bearing wickedly tipped spears, and each has the head of some



animal: a camel, a lion, a baboon, and a hippo. However, each animal has stony tusks jutting out of its head like those of an elephant.

None of the tusks are jeweled, even though that's how Sanheb described them: this inaccuracy is one distortion of the merchant's memory because of the trauma that occurred on his journey. A character who makes a successful DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check recalls that figures of this kind were the attendants of the ancient god Maraut, and were often found adorning the grounds of his temples.

The statues offer many handholds for climbing (DC 15). Each of the four statues has two tusks, which are the eight *stone tusks* described in the Keys of Power sidebar. Each is easily removed by turning it counterclockwise and making a DC 10 Disable Device check.

4. SUBMERGED TUSK (CR 8)

The waters of the oasis are still crystal clear, sunlight dappling its surface. Sitting at the bottom of the pond 15 feet below the surface are more hunks of carved stone painted red. The face of the natural rock to the east, covered with flowering vines, bears more than a passing resemblance to an elephant rearing its trunk, though whether this shape is the result of chance or some truly ancient carving created by wind-borne sand is a mystery. The elephantine visage watches over the pool impassively.

The water is foul, tainted by the evil residue of this place. Casual examination of the underwater rubble from the edge of the pool, which requires a DC 10 Perception check, suggests that the stones are pieces of exploded statue. If the check result is 15 or higher, the observer notices something glittering at the center of the pool floor (see Treasure below).

CREATURE: A submerged cave beneath the rock can't be seen from the surface. This place has long been the home of a benign water naga named Herutob, who lurks there now. The evil energies that spilled forth from the temple-tomb have warped this once noble creature into a malevolent beast. It waits patiently for someone to enter the water, seeking the sparkling item at the pool's center, before attacking.

KEYS OF POWER

Throughout this adventure are references to magical keys that are used to unlock sections of this nigh impenetrable dungeon. They are the eight *stone tusks* that can be recovered from the statues at area 3, and a single *jeweled tusk* that is found in the pool at area 4. Each tusk is approximately 1-1/2 feet long, weighs 75 pounds, and has a four-inch-long threaded end used to screw it into place and unlock a chamber. The *stone tusks* radiate moderate transmutation magic. The *stone tusks* are used in areas 9, 10, 14, 16, and optionally in area 20. The *jeweled tusk* is used in area 6 or area 20.

Herutob

CR 8

XP 4,800

NE fiendish water naga (Bestiary 3)

hp 76

DR 5/good; Resist cold 10, fire 10; SR 12

Special Attacks poison, smite good 1/day (+4 attack, +8 damage)

Languages Aquan, Common, telepathy 30 ft.

TACTICS

Before Combat Herutob casts *mirror image* as soon as a PC enters the water.

- **During Combat** Herutob first uses *suggestion* via telepathy on a PC who has entered the water, implanting the idea that a precious treasure lies within the cave. It then uses *obscuring mist* to cover the surface of the water, preventing any creatures that remain out of the water from seeing what occurs or targeting spells or other attacks. The naga then employs its bite/tail slap attacks and *magic missile* on the unsuspecting submerged PC.
- Morale If reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, the naga casts *expeditious retreat* and attempts to flee the area.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Telepathy (Su) The energies that warped Herutob have also given it the power of telepathic communication, up to 30 ft.

DEVELOPMENT: The flowers here can be harvested by someone who scales the rock (Climb DC 12) and later used as a sacrifice in Maraut's temple, provided that they are properly cleansed of the evil that has infused them (see area 15 for details).

TREASURE: The sparkling item at the bottom of the pool is a *jeweled tusk* still attached to a fragment of the exploded statue's elephantine head. The entire head weighs 300 pounds, but the *jeweled tusk* can be removed in the same way as the *stone tusks* found in area 3. This tusk was originally one of a pair. The other *jeweled tusk*—the

Note: Attempting to screw the *jeweled tusk* into holes intended for a *stone tusk* strikes the one doing so with a powerful jolt of electricity (4d6 damage, DC 22 Reflex save for half). The portal in question doesn't open, and the *jeweled tusk* can be unthreaded without further incident. The only exception is area 20, which accepts both kinds of tusks—though it is more advantageous to use the *jeweled tusk* at that location. Furthermore, the thirty faceted gemstones embedded in the *jeweled tusk* are worth a total of 5,000 gp, but if they are pried out before the tusk is used, the tusk no longer functions as a magical key (the adventure can still be finished but at greater risk).

Additional information can be found in the specific encounter locations.

one Ahebek the Lucky tried to have ransacked—was obliterated in the explosion.

5. BLASTED BREACH

The telltale signs of an explosion are apparent here: jumbled hunks of stone obviously flung from their original resting places, and much of the sand turned to glass from the intense heat of the blast. The explosion also breached the rocky hillside here, and now rays of sunlight illuminate the chamber within.

The opening in the hillside is about 10 feet wide and 5 feet high and offers unexpected access into the temple-tomb's interior (see area 9). Employing this entrance enables the PCs to use the *jeweled tusk* (obtained in area 4) in area 20 rather than area 6 to avoid some misery.

6. TEMPLE ENTRANCE

Square pillars carved from the very rock of the hill support the ceiling of this colonnade, fifteen feet above. A polished limestone block is set in the wall, bearing an etched symbol: two narrow inverted triangles. Above the symbol is a hole three inches wide and four inches deep.

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Closer examination of the hole (Perception DC 12) reveals that its sides are threaded; succeeding on the Perception check by 20 or more also indicates that bits of sparkling particles are imbedded in the stone. The threaded hole accommodates one of the *stone tusks* from the attendant statues (area 3), fitting perfectly. However, nothing occurs once the tusk is in place. Only the *jeweled tusk* that is submerged in the oasis pool acts as a key here: when that tusk is screwed in, it becomes permanently fused with the stone block, which descends 5 feet, allowing access to the space beyond. Note that there is another means of entering the temple-tomb complex without using this key (at area 5), which makes it possible for the PCs to save the *jeweled tusk* for use at the tomb entrance (area 20).

Treasure: If the *jeweled tusk* was used here, it is now physically merged with the stone block and cannot be removed. However, the gemstones can be pried out and taken at this time.

7. ELEPHANT PROCESSION

When the characters come upon this area, read:

The ceiling of this 40-foot-by-50-foot chamber is 20 feet overhead, supported by four stout columns of rock. The walls are polished limestone and show no seams: it appears the chamber was carved from the very rock of the hill. Painted on the walls is a procession of stylized elephants; each animal grips the tail of the beast ahead of it with its trunk, and bears an ornate palanquin on its back. Faded hieroglyphics form the path upon which this elephantine parade tramps. The sunlight from the oasis outside illuminates the southern 10-foot-wide corridor; the rest is in darkness.

Due to the poor condition of the archaic hieroglyphics, a successful DC 20 Linguistics check is necessary to translate this writing. Mere casual examination (no check necessary) locates the name of Maraut repeated a few times. Someone who deciphers the whole script reads it as follows:

Maraut the Mighty, Maraut the Just, Maraut the Benevolent welcomes to his temple all ye pilgrims whose hearts are pure and who bring worthy and proper sacrifice: the flowers of the desert cast in his sacred bowl and set alight to echo the judgment all souls shall one day endure. Face the Elephant God's Wrath, embrace his Balm, but avert thine eyes from Judgment, lest ye be found wanting.

This writing offers clues for would-be pilgrims about the complex. The last sentence refers to the aspects of Maraut in area 9, while the sacrifice of flowers as described here provides a way to descend to the complex's second level (see area 15). (If the PCs have not already gathered flowers during their visit to area 4, this message gives them an opportunity to realize that the flowers are important.)

8. THE BLOODY HALL (CR 9)

How this encounter unfolds depends on the direction from which the party approaches. The boxed text below assumes an approach from the south and must be modified for parties coming from area 9. The wide corridor ends at a barrier made of iron, two inverted triangles etched into its surface at eye level. An odd odor lingers in the air, and ancient stains deep red in color mark the floor to the south of the barrier, as though something had leaked from beneath the stony walls.

The secret doors here are difficult to detect (Perception DC 30), and still more difficult to open (Disable Device DC 36). The lingering odor is coppery, a product of the copious amounts of blood once here, and can be identified with a DC 22 Survival check. When PCs approach the iron barrier, a number of keyhole-like openings are visible. A successful DC 26 Disable Device check is required to unlock this portal, which sinks into the ground with the piercing sounds of grinding metal gears and iron scraping stone. This check is made with a +10 bonus if the character doing the work has seen the gears on the opposite side (area 9). Once the iron barrier is lowered, it cannot be reclosed or its gears reexamined.

CREATURE: Crossing the threshold to area 9 causes the secret doors on the east and west walls to slide rapidly into the ground, revealing six closets with a sticky blood-red liquid clinging to their walls. The coppery smell of blood here is disgusting and overwhelming: all standing in the hall must make a DC 20 Fortitude save to avoid being sickened for 1d4+1 rounds. One round after the niches are revealed, the sticky mess that covers them begins to change into a nauseating mist that coalesces in the center of the hall: it's an ancient undead creature known as a devouring mist, weakened from being unfed for ages. It descends on the PCs in earnest and feeds hungrily until it is destroyed.

Emaciated Devouring Mist CR 9
XP 6,400
Modified devouring mist (Tome of Horrors 4)
NE Large undead (swarm)
Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +26
DEFENSE
AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 9 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, -1 size)
hp 105 (14d8+42)
Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +12
Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2; swarm traits;
Immune weapon damage, undead traits; SR 21
OFFENSE
Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect)
Melee swarm (blood drain)
Space 10 ft.; Reach 0 ft.
Special Attacks blood drain, create spawn
STATISTICS
Str 1, Dex 19, Con –, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 16
Base Atk +10; CMB —; CMD —

Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Channel, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Stealth)

Skills Fly +27, Perception +26, Stealth +23 Languages cannot be communicated with SQ emaciated

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blood Drain (Ex) Creatures in the devouring mist's space at the end of its movement each round take 1d4 points of Constitution damage as it siphons blood out of the victim's body. For every point so drained, the devouring mist heals 5 hit points of damage. Creatures without blood take no damage from the devouring mist.

Create Spawn (Su) Any creature slain by a devouring mist rises as a vampire spawn in 1d4 days, unless the remains are blessed. If the victim had more than 5 Hit Dice, there is a 1% chance per Hit Die that it arises as a full-fledged vampire instead, or a 5% chance per Hit Die if the victim was of the humanoid type.

Emaciated (Ex) Because this undead thing has been unable to feed for thousands of years, it's permanently stunted, weaker than other specimens of its kind. It has d8 rather than d12 HD, its speed is reduced by 10 feet, its channel resistance is reduced by 2, and its spell resistance is reduced by 4. These handicaps reduce its CR by 1.

NOTE: Chances are that most of the PCs will be in the middle of the hall when the secret doors are opened if the characters have approached from the south. If, instead, they are coming from the north, only a single PC is in a space immediately threatened by the beast when the threshold is crossed.

9. ASPECTS OF MARAUT (CR 8)

The following text needs modification if the party first enters this area from the corridor to the south (area 8).

This once-hidden chamber is now open to the elements, a gaping hole blasted in its northeast corner by the explosion that killed Ahebek the Lucky. A drift of sand has blown in, and hunks of rock lie on the floor. Great statues of polished limestone dominate three of the walls, each image depicting a seated humanoid figure with the head of an elephant. Strangely, each 10-foot-tall idol is missing its left tusk. On the southeast wall is an iron barrier festooned with interconnected gears: a clockwork apparatus of considerable complexity.

The iron barrier can be made to sink into the ground as described in area 8 by triggering the intricate gears exposed on the north side of the barrier (Disable Device DC 20). Once the barrier sinks into the ground, the threshold can be crossed, triggering the secret doors in area 8 as described above.

TRAP: The three statues represent Maraut's three aspects. The one on the south wall bears a scimitar, representing Maraut as a war god. On the west wall, the idol's hands are extended in a soothing gesture, representing his aspect of mercy and healing. The northern idol bears an axe and a balance, representing Maraut's role as a god of justice. Examination of the faces of the idols (Perception DC 10) reveals a threaded hole in each one where a *stone tusk* can be screwed into place. Inserting a tusk in either the western or southern idol causes it to descend into the ground about 6 feet, revealing a 10-foot-wide corridor beyond. If a tusk is inserted into the northern idol—the one depicting Maraut as judge—a trap is triggered.

Trumpeted Rebuke Trap

XP 4,800

Type magic; Perception DC 29; Disable Device DC 29 Effects

CR 8

Trigger touch; Reset none

Effect spell effect (*greater shout*, 10d6 sonic damage, deafened 1 round, stunned 4d6 rounds); multiple targets (all those standing south of the northern statue in the cone's area of effect)

10. STONE BLOCK

This limestone block has been polished to a mirrorlike sheen and bears the previously encountered symbol of inverted triangles about 5 feet above the floor. Centered above the symbol is a circular hole three inches across and four inches deep.

Closer examination of the hole reveals that its sides are threaded. It accommodates one of the *stone tusks* from the attendant statues (area 3), fitting perfectly. Once the tusk is screwed in, the stone block descends 5 feet, allowing access to the space beyond. The tusk is now merged with the block and can't be removed.

11. PRIESTS' SARCOPHAGI (CR 9)

The walls of this 30-foot-square burial chamber are covered with paintings depicting the aftermath of a battle, with vestment-clad priests attending to the wounded scattered about the scene. The room also holds a stone sarcophagus sitting on a platform raised one foot off the floor. On its painted lid is a carving depicting a recumbent figure: bald, eyes done up heavily with kohl, arms crossed at the chest. Upon its forehead is the inverted triangle symbol.

These four chambers are nearly identical, except that

in the third room from the left (the one that connects with the passageway leading to area 12), the foot of the sarcophagus faces north rather than south. This is a subtle clue directing the party to the secret door on the north wall (DC 25 Perception to locate). Removing the lid of a sarcophagus requires a DC 24 Strength check.

CREATURES: These sarcophagi were intended as honored resting places for deceased priests of Maraut. Instead, they were used by agents of Aposis for contemptuous interment: three of the priests were skinned alive before being slain, and those skins were used to create mocking constructs called skinstitches. They occupy the three south-facing sarcophagi and are clad in sacred vestments similar to those worn by the priests in the wall paintings. The tanned skins of these constructs have the superficial appearance of having been mummified, so they are easily mistaken for mummies or some other undead creature; a successful DC 26 Knowledge (religion) or Perception check enables the PCs to note the difference. As soon as one of the south-facing sarcophagus lids is removed, the remaining two similar lids are thrown off violently by an unseen force and the constructs arise, converging on the chamber occupied by the PCs with the shuffling gait characteristic of mummies. The constructs fight until destroyed.

Priestly Effigies (3)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each Resilient skinstitches (*Bestiary 4*) hp 52

TREASURE: The corpse in the north-facing sarcophagus is a poorly mummified priest, his body in pitiable condition, bearing marks of abuse. Lying among the scattered and dismembered bones are two scrolls, found only with a thorough search (Perception DC 25): *blessed halo*^{DM} and *holy smite*.

12. DARK SHRINE TO APOSIS (CR 10)

The narrow hall opens into a chamber with rough stone walls, unfinished in contrast to the smooth surfaces of the stonework in the rest of the complex. The walls are smeared with offal and blood, distressingly fresh. The room is divided into two halves by a pit twenty feet deep. Flames from large braziers hanging from the ceiling twenty feet above illuminate the place with flickering light, casting shadows everywhere. Sitting ominously in the southern half of the chamber is a huge pile of skulls, profuse bloodstains covering the pile and spilling down the sides of the pit wall. An ugly atmosphere of malevolence hangs over this accursed place.

CREATURES: This vile chamber is a shrine to Aposis, built by agents of the dark god after Maraut was bound

in his sarcophagus (area 22). *Continual flame* burns in the braziers. Examination of the filth-smeared walls (Perception DC 20) suggests sloppily written characters in Vos'ghaen, though a message, if there is one, is difficult to discern. Vos'ghaen is a derivative of Ankeshelian, which is a dead language from 3,000 years ago. A successful DC 30 Linguistics check identifies the language. Whether the writing is discerned by skill check or magical translation, only the words "devour" and "destroyer" are legible. Ironrung ladders are affixed to the pit walls at the north and south ends, making it seem as though the party can cross the gulf easily. But, as soon as the first PC touches the base of the southern ladder or steps on the floor of the southern end of the room, two bound minions of Aposis emerge from hiding within the deepest shadows near the ceiling.

Minions of Aposis (2)

XP 4,800 each

Advanced shadow demon (Bestiary)

CE Medium outsider (chaotic, demon, evil, extraplanar, incorporeal)

CR 8

Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 22, flat-footed 18 (+6 deflection, +6 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 73 (7d10+35)

Fort +7, Ref +13, Will +9

Defensive Abilities incorporeal; **DR** 10/cold iron or good; **Immune** electricity, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 17

Weaknesses sunlight powerlessness

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (perfect) **Melee** 2 claws +13 touch (1d6 plus 1d6 cold), bite +13 touch (1d8 plus 1d6 cold)

Special Attacks pounce, shadow blend, sprint

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +16)

- At will—deeper darkness, fear (DC 20), greater teleport (self only), telekinesis (DC 21)
- 3/day—shadow conjuration (DC 20), shadow evocation (DC 21)
- 1/day—*magic jar* (DC 21), summon (level 3, 1 shadow demon 50%)

TACTICS

Before Combat Upon arrival, one of the demons casts *deeper darkness*, more or less blanketing the entire chamber. If a PC dispels the effect at any point, the other demon uses its next turn to cast it again. The two of them wait until the heroes reach the southern ladder. During Combat One demon employs *shadow evocation* to cast *ice storm* on those north of the pit or in it, while the other strikes the most formidable-looking PC with a *shadow evocation fireball*. The beasts then descend for claw and bite attacks.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 30 hit points, a shadow demon attempts to summon another of its kind before retreating from melee to employ attacks at a distance using *shadow conjuration* and *evocation*. A demon teleports away if reduced to fewer than 15 hit points. If the PCs produce and maintain a magical bright light source of CL 3rd of higher, the demons flee to elsewhere in the dungeon. They might track down the party and attack again if the lighting conditions change. If so, their first gambit will be to employ *magic jar*.

STATISTICS

Str —, Dex 22, Con 21, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 23 Base Atk +7; CMB +13; CMD 29

- Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes
- Skills Acrobatics +16, Bluff +16, Fly +24, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (local) +14, Knowledge (planes) +14, Knowledge (religion) +14, Perception +14, Sense Motive +14, Stealth +16

Languages Abyssal, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

TREASURE: Upon destroying or driving off Aposis's minions, the party can examine the skulls on the southern perch. Symbols of the dark god smeared on the foreheads of these skulls can be identified with a DC 12 Knowledge (religion) check. These are the remains of some fifty temple workers, minor priests, and pilgrims who were slain when Aposis and his legion of creatures descended. The blood here and in the pit is still sticky, another strange effect of the evil that pervades everything in the tomb. Characters who search through the bold-soaked pile of skulls and succeed at a DC 15 Perception check discover a number of personal holy symbols of Maraut. Their precious metals and stones are worth a total of 2,200 gp. Also found here is a *ring of force shield*, which is easy to overlook but can be found with a DC 24 Perception check.

13. SIMIAN SENTINELS (CR 8)

In the center of each of the chambers down this long corridor is a ten-foot-square pit. A polished limestone statue of a grim-faced simian creature with sharpened tusks protruding from its mouth stands in each of these pits, its head and shoulders extending above the edge of the pit. Each creature holds a staff at its side, crowned with a brass bowl within which bright flames dance. The eyes of each stony face are set with faceted yellow gemstones that reflect the shifting light of the flames, as though sparkling with intelligence.

A DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check reveals that the statues represent Maraut's elite soldiers, the Kurub. The statues are about 38 feet tall, the pits 30 feet deep. There is a 2-foot gap between each statue and the edge of its pit. *Continual flames*

burn in each of bowls, and the exquisitely carved amber stones in the eye sockets radiate moderate transmutation magic. Though polished to a mirror-like finish, the statues have sufficient handholds for climbing (DC 15).

Removing the gems from their sockets requires a DC 14 Disable Device check. Using brute force is an option (smashing the surrounding stone with a hammer, for instance), but such action requires a DC 20 Reflex save to avoid dropping the gem into the pit. There are a total of twelve gems (two from each statue).

TRAP: The last statue in this corridor of chambers (adjacent to area 14) is trapped, triggered by anyone who tampers with the gemstones in it: the victim believes she sees an army of crawling insects emerge from heretofore unseen cracks in the statue and burrow into her skin.

Illusory Insect Trap

XP 4,800

Type magical; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30 EFFECTS

CR 8

Trigger touch; Reset none

Effect spell effect (*enemy within*^{DM}, 3d6 damage per round for 10 rounds; Will DC 20 to disbelieve, Fortitude DC 20 each round to halve damage); single target (the PC on the simian statue). Each round under the influence of the spell, a DC 20 Reflex save is necessary to avoid losing hold of the statue and falling to the floor of the pit in which the statue stands (3d6 damage).

TREASURE: The gemstones are especially fine amber, worth 200 gp apiece. Close examination of the statues' jaws with a successful DC 22 Perception check reveals a seam and a locking mechanism. Disengaging the lock (which requires a DC 20 Disable Device check on the first statue and grants automatic success on all subsequent statues) opens the hinged jaw to reveal 3 glass flasks of holy water (18 altogether, 450 gp value total).

14. GEM KEYED STONE BLOCK

A polished stone block similar to those previously encountered fills a ten-foot space in the east wall of this last chamber, though it bears no obvious markings beyond the inverted triangles.

Close physical inspection of the block's surface with the palm of a bare hand (Perception DC 18) reveals a dozen oval indentations that match the faceted gemstones from the simian statues (area 13). If a gemstone is pressed to an indentation, the gem adheres to the surface and cannot be removed without a DC 18 Strength check. When all twelve are affixed to the stone block, the gems pop out and drop to the floor in unison and the stone block descends slowly into the ground.

15. MARAUT'S TEMPLE DEFILED (CR 9)

The ceiling of this huge chamber twenty-five feet above is supported by two columns of pillars, covered with animal pictograms: lions, camels, monkeys, crocodiles, elephants, and more. On the floor between the pillars is a painting of a slender man in priestly garb, an ankh in one hand and a staff in the other, wearing a tall, conical hat. Upon a large platform to the east is a red elephant-headed statue like those encountered earlier, though this kneeling figure is fifteen feet tall and holds a great bowl before it, eight feet off the ground. In contrast to the idol's sacred features, the walls of the chamber are smeared with filth, a mixture of blood and ordure long dried in place.

A DC 22 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the figure painted on the floor as the Tall One, a supernatural servant of Maraut, a messenger of the Elephant God frequently depicted in Maraut's temples who also vanished at the time of his master's disappearance. Exceeding the DC by 2 or more also reveals that a temple's high priest was often garbed to represent the Tall One. As the characters approach the platform, it becomes apparent to them that the idol is not painted red, but instead smeared from top to bottom with blood and viscera, an act of defilement even more blasphemous than the vandalism on the walls.

CREATURES: Close inspection of the platform and a successful DC 18 Perception check allows the PCs to discover a seam that outlines a 20-foot-by-20-foot section of floor. The seam is concealed by a pattern of desert flowers painted on the floor. PCs who have explored area 4 recognize the pattern as the image of the flowers at that locale. A successful DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) check indicates that this section is a movable barrier of some sort (the means of doing so are described under Development). Touching the idol in any way draws out the incorporeal

forms of priests whose blood was used to desecrate the statue three millennia ago. These maddened, wailing spirits attack until destroyed.

CR4

Wretched Priests (5)

XP 1,200 each

Modified allip (*Bestiary 3*) CE Medium undead (incorporeal) **Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8

Aura babble (60 ft., DC 17)

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+5 deflection, +2 Dex) hp 52 (5d8+30) Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +4

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +3, incorporeal; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee incorporeal touch +7 (1d4+1 Wisdom damage) Special Attacks babble, touch of insanity (DC 17)

STATISTICS

Str —, Dex 14, Con —, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 20
Base Atk +3; CMB +5; CMD 20
Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon
Focus (incorporeal touch)

Skills Fly +18, Intimidate +13, Perception +8, Stealth +10 **Languages** Aklo, Common

SQ madness

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Desecrated Temple (Su) This entire temple chamber, profaned by Aposis's minions, is under the effects of a permanent *desecrate* spell. As a result, these incorporeal creatures gain a +1 profane bonus on all attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws (attack and damage roll bonuses already reflected in stats), as well as +1 hit point per HD (5 total).

DEVELOPMENT: Cleansing the despoiled idol is possible only after the wretched priests are destroyed. It requires

ENEMY WITHIN

Enemy within originally appeared in *Deep Magic* from Kobold Press. It is reprinted here for GM convenience.

Enemy Within

School illusion; **Level** bard 3, cleric/oracle 5, sorcerer/ wizard 5

Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels) Target one creature Duration 1 round/level Saving Throw Will disbelief; see text; SR yes You spit out a curse and point to the target, which receives a Will save. If it fails, the target feels and sees a swarm of terrifying insects crawling under its skin (the specific insects vary by target, but include ants, bees, centipedes, or any insects that particularly frighten the target). These insects deal 3d6 points of damage per round; each round the target would take damage, it receives a Fortitude save to halve the damage.

A target affected by this spell can spend a full-round action slashing at its skin (with a weapon or otherwise) to release the illusory insects; if it does so, this spell ends, but the target takes damage equal to 2d6 + its Strength modifier. The target does not take damage from the insects during the round it spends slashing its skin. 15 flasks of holy water and a full hour of labor. Once that task is accomplished, burning untainted desert flowers in the bowl causes the platform within the floral-bordered floor section to slowly lose material substance over the course of 5 rounds (anyone standing on the area has time to move safely aside). Revealed is the chamber below (area 16). The clues in areas 4 and 7 hint at the procedure, but the GM should remind the players if necessary and lead them to this conclusion. Alternatively, a successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check reveals that the flowers must be burnt as an offering, but success by 30 or more also reveals what happens if tainted flowers are burned (see below). If the players figure it out on their own, award them 4,800 XP as a story award.

The most convenient source of desert flowers necessary for this ritual is at area 4, and those blooms are tainted by the evil that blankets the entire area. If those flowers are burned in the sacred bowl before being washed in a flask of holy water and dried, the platform area disappears immediately, dropping anyone standing there into the chamber beneath it. The chamber below is 30 feet high, but the area directly beneath the opening in the platform is a pit 20 feet deep, for a total fall of 50 feet. PCs who stand in a square adjacent to the main floor can attempt a DC 20 Reflex save to reach out and catch the pit's rim, but all others fall right to the floor below.

Another means of removing the floral-bordered area is available. A character who performs a careful inspection of the statue's fingers beneath the sacrificial bowl and succeeds on a DC 24 Perception check locates a series of pressure points. Pressing them in proper order (requiring a successful DC 28 Disable Device check) causes the area to vanish instantly, as though a tainted sacrifice had been burned in the bowl.

Second Level

16. GALLERY OF TEARS & WHISPERS (CR 9)

A forest of pillars supports the thirty-foot-high ceiling in this enormous chamber. A twentyfoot-deep pit sits at the chamber's center, and walkways between the rows of pillars lead to limestone blocks in center of each wall.

When a character has descended from the chamber above (area 15) and stands on the floor around the pit, read:

A priestly figure, at least eight feet tall, emerges from behind a pillar near the east wall of the chamber and staggers fitfully along the walkway towards the chamber's center. He wears a conical hat that accounts for at least two feet of his height. His face and lips are dry and cracked, as though

from long exposure to the depredations of the desert. Tears course down his ruined cheeks as he whispers hoarsely, reaching out with his hands, desperation written on his ravaged features.

CREATURE: This man was the high priest of this temple when the minions of Aposis descended upon it. He was in temporal stasis and stood behind a pillar 30 feet away from the rim of the pit, until the platform barrier above (in area 15) was removed. As soon as he emerges, call for initiative and note the actions required to descend from the room above or climb out of the pit if applicable. He moves 10 feet per round and ignores entreaties to halt his approach. A DC 12 Sense Motive check suggests he has no ill intent; indeed, he seems to be pleading for aid. His words, spoken in Ankeshelian, cannot be discerned until he is within 15 feet, and also requires a successful DC 20 Perception check: "Aposis corrupts the sacred place of Maraut, and I am pregnant with his dark gift."

When he reaches the PCs, or if they do something to stop his approach, or they attack him, the man collapses and the particularly robust hellwasp swarm within his body bursts forth. The swarm receives a CR +1 adjustment for its additional hit points.

CR 9

Gift of Aposis

XP 6,400 Hellwasp swarm (Bestiary 3) **hp** 112

TREASURE: The priest wears a *phylactery of the* shepherd^{UE} and carries a holy symbol of Maraut worth 500 gp. A scroll tube hidden on his person contains two scrolls (*nova*^{DM} and *searing light*).

DEVELOPMENT: The four limestone blocks in this chamber are identical to those found in area 10. However, once one of these blocks is lowered by using a stone *tusk*, the remaining three cannot be manipulated by any means. A stone tusk inserted into one of the other threaded holes doesn't cause the block to descend but can be easily removed.

17. HOWLING FURY (CR 8)

Read the following as soon as one of the stone blocks in area 16 begins descending.

The howl of an angry wind floods the grand chamber as the limestone block descends, the grinding of stone on stone muffled by an unholy cacophony. The corridor outside is 10 feet wide, but where it leads is a mystery: the wailing wind buffets countless particles of sand, severely obscuring vision. The hateful gale drones without pause, relentless and filled with malevolence.

This sorcerous wind is present only in the corridor that surrounds area 16, moving clockwise at about 30 mph. Though the wind itself poses no serious hazard for creatures larger than Tiny, millions of bits of sharp stone and sand are carried by the wind, dealing 1d3 points of slashing damage per round to anyone wearing less than full plate armor. A shield can provide some shelter (DR 1/—) for the individual holding it. A *wall of force spell* blocks the wind for 300 feet (approximately half the length of the corridor), beyond which the wind maintains its intensity. Control winds can temporary negate the effect for its duration, but lower-level spells that affect the movement of air have no effect. Respite from the onslaught can also be found in small, easily noted niches along the hallway (each accommodates a single Medium or smaller creature), which are magically sheltered from both wind and projectiles. Even though the PCs can choose to simply endure the airborne assault, their vision is reduced to 10 feet and all their skill checks suffer a -2 penalty.

DEVELOPMENT: If the PCs block or neutralize the wind through creative means (such as the spells suggested above), award them experience points as if they had overcome a CR 8 hazard.

18. IRON BARRIER

This broad door is made of iron, red and flaking with oxidation.

Other than its rusting exterior, this door is identical to the one found at the junction of areas 8 and 9 (as viewed from area 8). Close inspection reveals several keyholes: a DC 26 Disable Device check is necessary to disengage the locking mechanism, causing the door to sink into the ground (note the -2 penalty suffered by those exposed to the ceaseless windstorm in the corridor [area 17]). If a character was able to study the intricate gears on the north side of the identical door on the first level (area 9), she gains a +10 bonus to the Disable Device check.

19. CRYPT OF PTEMBENEK (CR 8)

At the western end of this burial chamber is a sarcophagus of brass sitting atop a raised platform. Flanking the exit from the narrow hall that leads to the chamber are two statues of hippo-headed female figures holding palm fronds. Hieroglyphics cover the walls.

The hieroglyphics, translated with a DC 15 Linguistics check, tell the story of a famous high priest of Maraut named Ptembenek. The story describes Ptembenek's deeds of valor in battle as an itinerant healer, as well as his fight against the forces of darkness and entropy, with much praise for his wisdom and compassion. The message identifies this as his burial chamber and warn that only friends of Maraut and righteousness are welcomed here.

TRAP: There are two locks on the northern side of the brass coffin's lid that require a DC 20 Disable Device to unlock. The lid is quite heavy and requires a DC 15 Strength check to lift. The trap itself is independent of the locks and is triggered when the lid is lifted, and therefore requires a separate Disable Device check if it discovered.

Grave Robber's Price

XP 2,400

Type magic; Perception DC 29; Disable Device DC 29 EFFECTS

CR 6

CR 6

Trigger touch; Reset none

Effect spell effect (*breath of the dead*^{DM}, sickened 5 rounds, 10d4 points of nonlethal damage, DC 21 Reflex for half and no sickened condition); multiple targets (all those standing east of the sarcophagus in a 15-ft. cone-shaped burst)

CREATURE: At the instant the trap is triggered, a belker (easily mistaken for an incorporeal undead) emerges from within the sarcophagus. It fights until destroyed.

Belker

XP 4,800 Belker (*Bestiary 2*) **hp** 68

DEVELOPMENT: If the belker is dispatched, the spirit of the mummified body of Ptembenek in the sarcophagus drifts up from the corpse like white smoke, coalescing into a milky, transparent humanoid form. It speaks briefly in Ankeshelian before dissipating: *Ptembenek, high priest of Maraut, thanks you for this liberation. Take what I*

GASP FROM BEYOND

The spell *breath of the dead* appears in *Deep Magic* from Kobold Press. It is reprinted here for GM convenience.

Breath of the Dead

School evocation; Level sorcerer/wizard 4 Casting Time 1 swift action Components V, S

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Area 15-ft. cone-shaped burst

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw Reflex half (see text); SR yes

When this spell is completed, you breathe forth a noxious cone of foul gas. Creatures caught in the area of affect that fail their saves become sickened for 5 rounds. In addition, each creature takes 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per caster level (maximum 10d4). A successful Reflex save halves the damage and negates the sickness.

for the PCs to loot his sarcophagus, and they can take the following items without fear of retribution: 2 beads of force, a *pearl of power* (3rd level), and a *staff of blessed relief*^{UE}, as well as 3 rubies and an emerald, each gem worth 500 gp.

20. IRON BLOCK (CR 8)

This barrier resembles those encountered earliernarrow inverted triangles with a threaded hole above-except that it's made of iron.

TRAP: If either a *stone tusk* or a *jeweled tusk* is screwed into the threaded hole, this iron barrier descends into the ground about 6 feet. However, using a *stone tusk* also triggers a trap. It is possible to locate and disable the trap in advance of using a *stone tusk*.

Boneshatter Trap

CR 8

XP 4,800

Type magical; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30 EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset none; Bypass using the jeweled *tusk* to remove the block

BROKEN BONES

The spell *boneshatter* appears in *Deep Magic* from Kobold Press. It is reprinted here for GM convenience.

Boneshatter

School necromancy; Level cleric 5, sorcerer/wizard 4 Casting Time 1 standard action **Components** V, S, M (a broken bone) Range close 25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels) Target one corporeal creature or object **Duration** instantaneous and 1 minute/level (see text) Saving Throw Fortitude partial (see text); Spell

Resistance yes

The target's bones or exoskeleton shiver and splinter, dealing 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 15d6) to the target, which is also exhausted for 1 minute per caster level from the pain and exertion of the transformation.

If the target makes its save, it takes half damage and is fatigued rather than exhausted. Objects made of bone, chitin, or similar material take half again as much damage (+50%) from this spell. This spell has no effect on creatures that lack both skeletons and hard carapaces. Effect spell effect (boneshatter 9d6 damage plus exhausted for 9 minutes; DC 22 Fortitude partial); single target (the PC who uses the stone tusk on the barrier or unsuccessfully attempts to disarm the trap)

TREASURE: If the *jeweled tusk* was used here, it is now fused with the iron block and can't be removed. However, the 5,000 gp worth of gemstones still encrusted on the tusk may be pried out and taken at this time (see the Keys to Power sidebar for more information).

21. THE WAY IS FORBIDDEN (CR 8)

Columns painted dark gray support the ceiling of this huge chamber twenty-five feet above. Two statues of black iron, humanoid forms with the heads of vultures, brandishing polearms pointed threateningly northward, stand before the entryway. Beyond is a large pool of water, and farther south is a sizable raised platform atop which is a massive sarcophagus.

CREATURES: As soon as a character enters the chamber, both statues begin to weep blood in copious rivulets. After 3 rounds the blood coalesces into forms roughly resembling the statues and both creatures attack. These constructs are easily mistaken for some kind of undead or ooze. They fight until destroyed.

Bloody Vultures (2)

XP 2,400 each

Blood golem (Bestiary 4)

CR 6

hp 64

22. TOMB OF THE ELEPHANT GOD (CR 11)

The water in the pool before the platform is about eight feet deep and crystal clear. The platform is actually two raised surfaces, each one five feet higher than the next lower one. Sitting on the topmost platform is an enormous stone sarcophagus, eighteen feet long, six feet wide, and four feet tall. Its lid is carved to depict a recumbent elephant-headed humanoid, arms crossed at the chest, bearing a scimitar in each hand. The giant sarcophagus and the surrounding platform are abundantly spattered with blood.

There are six spikes of black iron passing through metal loops on the east side of the sarcophagus; the lid is hinged on the west side. The spikes radiate moderate necromantic magic. They're wedged tightly into the loops, and removing one requires a DC 14 Strength check. Any non-evil creature that touches a spike while unprotected



by *protection from evil* or the like takes 1d4 points of damage from the negative energy the spike exudes. Once a spike is removed, that spike becomes harmless. PCs who succeed on a DC 15 Spellcraft check while using *detect* magic figure out the consequences of touching the spikes and that *protection from evil* and similar effects will negate the damage. After all six spikes are removed, the lid can be opened with a DC 18 Strength check. At this time, read:

Though this coffin is sized for a giant, lying within it is a strikingly handsome ebony-skinned man about 6 feet tall. He is bald, and on his forehead is a white tattoo of two inverted triangles. He wears a kilt of whitest linen, heavy bracers of gold on his wrists, and a broad necklace set with turquoise, red garnets, and black pearls. He clutches a misshapen stone of black obsidian the size of a cabbage to his chest with both hands. An aura of power radiates from his perfectly preserved form. One could be forgiven for assuming that he only sleeps, except that his chest does not rise or fall. **Creature:** This figure is the Elephant God, Maraut, cruelly drained of much of his divine power by the *Black Heart of Malice* he now holds to his chest. It radiates only a faint aura of necromancy now. Maraut has lain here for 3,000 years since Aposis and his minions imprisoned him in this sarcophagus. As soon as anything is done to molest his body or possessions, the *Black Heart* shatters like an eggshell and a blast emanates from it (treat as a heightened *pain wave*^{DM}, DC 24 Will partial, 5d6 nonlethal damage plus stunned 1d4 rounds). All creatures within 40 feet are affected and are also knocked back 20 feet (DC 25 Reflex save to avoid the prone condition). At this time, read:

Dusky vapor rises from the shattered remains of the black stone, and the man in the oversized sarcophagus sits up and opens his eyes. They are pure white, without pupils, and his expression is one of righteous indignation.

"I live again," he says in a sonorous voice that seems to fill the whole chamber. He gazes about him, looking at the lot of you scattered about

the room. "Creatures of Aposis!" he intones with palpable fury. "Weak though I am, I shall cast you into the Abyss, where you may cause no more harm to this world!"

At this moment Maraut attacks, thinking the party members are servants of Aposis. The PCs might try to slay the gravely drained Elephant God. However, if they instead want to liberate him, they must convince him that they're not malevolent. When someone first tries to reason with Maraut, the god simply employs *detect evil*: unaware of the evil aura that eclipses everything here, he assumes that his reading of the characters is accurate and renews his attack. "You're lying," he declares. "Your auras stink of vile corruption, like everything else here."

After this first attempt, the PCs must succeed on three Diplomacy checks of decreasing difficulty (DC 25, DC 22, and DC 18). The heroes can attempt these Diplomacy checks in addition to any non-hostile action (such as total defense, movement, or healing). Any hostile action performed with a Diplomacy check (or with an attempt to aid such a check) renders that check an automatic failure. A character can attempt a Diplomacy check each round or aid another, but not both. The GM should encourage players to roleplay these attempts to persuade the crippled god. On the third successful check, Maraut ceases his attacks.

Maraut

CR 11

XP 12,800 Male

LN Medium outsider (extraplanar, lawful) Init +11; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +19 Aura divine majesty (15 ft., DC 21)

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 17, flat-footed 18 (+2 armor, +7 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 149 (13d10+78)

Fort +10, Ref +15, Will +13

DR 10/chaotic; Immune disease, mind-affecting effects, poison; SR 22

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +2 glorious scimitar +22/+17/+12 (1d6+8/15-20) **Special Attacks** elephant's might, gaze of judgment **Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 11th; concentration +16)

Constant—true seeing

At will—detect evil, detect magic, read magic, water walk 5/day—lightning bolt (DC 18), neutralize poison, remove curse

3/day—haste, heal, order's wrath (DC 19)

1/day—righteous might

TACTICS

Before Combat Maraut first casts *haste* on himself, then advances for melee with his +2 *glorious scimitar*. **During Combat** If harassed by ranged attacks, Maraut casts heightened *lightning bolts* at their source. If two or more PCs are clustered together, he employs *order's wrath*, assuming that they're chaotically aligned. He won't repeat this attack if PCs are unaffected by it the first time. If positioned appropriately, Maraut also employs his elephant's might ability to push PCs into the pool.

Morale Assuming he is never persuaded of the party's good intentions, Maraut casts *righteous might* on himself when reduced to 75 hit points or fewer and renews his attacks, fighting until he is destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 22, Dex 24, Con 22, Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 21 Base Atk +13; CMB +19; CMD 36 Feats Cleave, Critical Focus, Improved Critical (scimitar), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Skills Acrobatics +18 (+22 when jumping), Heal +19, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (planes) +19, Knowledge (religion) +19, Linguistics +5, Perception +19, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +23, Swim +18; Racial Modifiers +4 Acrobatics when jumping

Languages Abyssal, Ankeshelian, Celestial, Infernal, True Speech; telepathy 50 ft.

SQ healer

Other Gear bejeweled gold necklace (12,500 gp value), +2 glorious scimitar, bracers of armor +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Aura of Divine Majesty (Su) Even in his depleted state, Maraut radiates an aura of divinity. Those standing within 15 feet who attempt aggressive action against him without first succeeding at a DC 21 Will save make those attacks at a -2 penalty. Rolling a natural 1 on the save means the individual falls prone in supplication for 1 round. The save is Charisma-based.
- **Divinity's Destruction (Su)** If Maraut is slain, even in this crippled form, it's a divine calamity. Maraut's body is reduced to a powdery gray ash, and all those standing within 60 feet are caught in a sonic blast deals 7d6 points of damage and makes them deafened for a full day (Fortitude DC 26 for half damage, deafness reduced to 1 hour). Those killed by this blast cannot be brought back to life by anything short of a *miracle* or a *wish*. A black tattoo of Maraut's sacred symbol appears on the foreheads of those involved in the god's demise, marking them as god-killers forever (see Concluding the Adventure for further information).
- **Elephant's Might (Su)** Three times per day as a swift action, Maraut can create a mighty invisible force equivalent to *forceful hand*. While the force exists, the noise of a stomping, trumpeting elephant is heard. Once per day, in place of one of its uses as per *forceful hand*, he may use this invisible force to strike a blow against a target within 30 feet (ranged touch attack, 8d6 bludgeoning damage). The victim of this blow must also make a DC 21 Fortitude save or be



knocked unconscious for 1d4+2 rounds. The save is Charisma-based.

- Gaze of Judgment (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, Maraut can fix his penetrating gaze on a target within 30 feet as a swift action. The target of the gaze becomes overwhelmed with the enormity of her sins and shortcomings, resulting in a –1 penalty to attack rolls, damage rolls, saves, and skill checks for 1d4+3 rounds. A DC 21 Will save reduces the duration of this penalty to 1 round. The save is Charisma-based.
- **Healer (Su)** At this time, Maraut is able to channel positive energy as an 11th-level cleric: 10/day, DC 22, 6d6. This ability can be used to damage beings that are harmed by positive energy.

Concluding the Adventure

It goes without saying that the PCs would have had no chance against Maraut were he not severely depleted by

a now-destroyed artifact, the Black Heart of Malice. If they do succeed in slaying him, the mark that each now bears cannot be removed and has the following effects: the PC gains a +1 bonus to Intimidate checks involving humanoids and outsiders, and takes a -2 penalty to all Diplomacy checks involving lawful-aligned beings, or a -4 penalty if the being is the servant or devotee of a lawful good or neutral deity. Lawful neutral outsiders attack anyone who bears a mark on sight. The mark isn't necessarily recognized immediately for what it is by nonoutsiders: a DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) check, however, discerns its meaning. These effects are supernatural in nature. How the PCs benefit from their formidable but potentially evil reputation remains to be seen and can certainly play an enormous role in future adventures.

If instead the party has liberated Maraut from his imprisonment and won him over, he shows his gratitude by doing what he can to heal the PCs. When he emerges from the temple into the oasis, there's a miraculous dancing of light as the evil is lifted from the region. Maraut hands them his *scimitar*, *bracers*, and bejeweled necklace, then picks up three stones from the sand and breathes on them; they glow briefly with an inner light as he hands them over. Read the following in conclusion:

"Take all these items as signs of my appreciation, mortals. It will take time for my strength to return, though I feel it replenishing already. When you are in dire need, grasp one of these stones and speak my name. If I can aid you, I shall. And now I must depart, to seek retribution for my suffering, and to gain new worshipers. Blessings upon you all." With that, the Elephant God walks north into the vastness of the desert. Soon his form disappears inside ripples of heat that dance off the glittering sands.

Treat the stones as if each was a *ring of three wishes* with a single wish remaining. The stones can be identified with *detect magic* and a DC 35 Spellcraft check (Maraut's name serves as the command word). The resulting effect is equivalent to the *miracle* spell.

Treasure from Deep Magic

The following spells, which appear on scrolls awarded to the PCs as treasure, appear in *Deep Magic* from Kobold Press. They are reprinted here for the benefit of the players.

Blessed Halo

School transmutation [good, light]; Level cleric/ oracle 5, inquisitor 3, paladin 3 Casting Time 1 standard action Components V, S, DF Range personal Effect glowing halo of celestial light that enhances healing and social skills Duration 1 minute/level Saving Throw none; SR no This spell surrounds your head with a nimbus of

golden light. The halo gives off light equivalent to a *continual flame* spell, and temporarily represses any darkness effect, even those of a higher level, within the radius of its own light.

While the halo is in effect, you gain fast healing 1. This ability is increased by 1 for every three additional levels above 7th (fast healing 2 at 10th, 3 at 13th, etc, to a maximum of 5 at 19th level). Any cure spells you cast while the this spell is active heal 1 extra hp per die. Finally, good-aligned creatures are impressed with your bearing and demeanor, and you gain a +4 sacred bonus to all Charisma-based checks toward such creatures for the duration of the spell.

Nova

School illumination (evocation) [light, force]; **Level** cleric/oracle 5, druid/shaman 5, inquisitor 5, magus 5, sorcerer/wizard 5

Casting Time 1 standard action **Components** V, S Range personal Target you Duration concentration Saving Throw Will negates; see text; SR yes

You glow with a light of increasing intensity—eventually becoming nearly unbearable to look at directly. You may concentrate for up to 4 rounds, increasing the spell's power each round. Concentrating on this spell is a standard action. At any point during your turn, you may release this spell's energy as an immediate action, causing damage to all nearby creatures but not yourself. The duration spent concentrating causes various effects as indicated below.

1st round: You emit dim light in a 10-ft. radius. Releasing the energy in this round deals 2d6 points of force damage to all creatures in a 10-ft. radius.

2nd round: You emit normal light in a 15-ft. radius. Any creature looking directly at you is dazed for 1 round (Will negates); releasing the energy in this round deals 4d6 points of force damage to all creatures in a 15-ft. radius.

- *3rd round*: You emit normal light in a 25-ft. radius. Any creature looking directly at the caster is dazzled for 1d4 rounds (Will negates). Releasing the energy in this round deals 6d6 points of force damage to all creatures in a 25-ft. radius.
- *4th round*: You emit the equivalent of daylight in a 30-ft. radius. Any creature looking directly at you is blinded for 1d4 rounds (Will negates). The built-up energy must be released in this round and deals 10d6 points of force damage to all creatures in a 30-ft. radius. If you fail to release the energy (if you're knocked unconscious or otherwise), you take a full 20d6 points of damage; all creatures within the radius are unharmed.



BY WOLFGANG BAUR AND JEFF GRUBB • PFRPG CONVERSION BY JIM GROVES FOR ADVENTURERS OF 9TH LEVEL

"Wherein evil long dormant returns from an unlikely source."

Prelude

The caravan foolishly took the shortcut from the Red Wadi through the salt flats and the white dunes. The Howlers were ready beneath the sand, their sacred cry stilled to little more than a hum, inaudible over the whisper of sand in the wind.

When the camels balked at the carrion, the Howlers leapt up from their concealment, their cries tearing from their lips as from a single enormous throat. Not a single guard survived. Then it was just a matter of returning to Siwal and finding a sympathetic caravanserai. The faithful had been exiled for years. Now that they had found the bottle, only the blood of the deceivers was lacking. Mehmet planned to taste the blood of all his enemies.

Adventure Background

For long years, the madmen of the Cult of the Howling God lived in the Siwal city slums and along the marshes of Morrai, praising vile gods with human sacrifices and threatening all who opposed them with assassins, poison, and a slow, lingering death. The cult was finally suppressed under the rule of a Sultan-paladin. Its members fled into the deep desert. Since then, the cult has festered and lingered around the edges of the city of Siwal, but it has never dared to show itself in the city as it once did.

Now that has changed. An invisible killer haunts the sultan's city, a devout assassin who strikes down priests and scholars while he shouts curses against the Sun God, and claims that the sun will soon be devoured by the return of the Howling God. People in the slums are terrified. The recent death of the high priest of the Sun God (as mentioned in *The Gravebinder's Daughter*) has made their fears worse. The spiral sign of the forbidden god appears once again in the souks and on the walls of temples; cultists might be everywhere.

The assassin seems stronger than any normal man, able to strike and escape at will as he victimizes priests, scholars, virtuous knights, and holy men. No one has been able to catch him. He returns every few days to take blood from new victims. And he's operating right under the PCs' noses.

Mehmet al-Fasri, the killer, leads a double life. After the Cult of the Howling God was run out of town, he crept back to Siwal and adopted the guise of a hardworking proprietor of a new caravanserai. Over the past decade, he has built the House of Mehmet into one of the finest establishments of its kind in the city and staffed it with junior cult members he keeps under a tight rein. Mehmet has searched for his cult's holy item while hoarding his gold to buy a priceless magic ring. Now he has both objects. The villain is armed with everything he needs, and if he's successful, Siwal will never be the same.

Adventure Summary

The assassin believes that a priest, a paladin, or a scholar magically sealed the *bottle of madness*, an unholy item that releases evil djinn, gibbering mouthers, and other abominations who serve its owner. He's about half right: the bottle does contain a powerful monster, but not one that serves the item's owner.

The assassin wants to open the bottle to get revenge upon the faiths and the city government, which dared to drive him and his dark brotherhood into the desert.

Finding the assassin is tricky. No one knows this phantom killer, at least not in his present identity. It requires guile to track an invisible assassin, and most of his accomplices are mere stooges from the streets who can offer no helpful information. Meanwhile, respected imams are dying in Siwal as the characters investigate. Since the killer can be anywhere and anyone, the heroes can best locate him by determining his next likely targets and force the killer to come to them.

When he is discovered, the invisible killer turns out to be someone the PCs know: the innkeeper Mehmet al-Fasri,

who runs their caravanserai. He has sheltered and fed the PCs, and even been an information contact for them. They have known him for a long time, perhaps years. If the party doesn't stop him in time, Mehmet kills a priest who closed the *bottle of madness* and uses his blood to break the seal. This act unleashes a dark monstrosity, eventually turning the city of Siwal into an abandoned husk in the name of his gibbering god.

Campaign Play

Cult of the Howling God works well as a short 9th-level adventure, but it really shines as a long-term campaign subplot. If the GM has the luxury of starting a Siwalbased campaign, Mehmet and his caravanserai should be introduced early in the PCs' adventuring career. As the campaign progresses, encourage the PCs to use the establishment as a base of operations. Mehmet is an affable, friendly host who can serve as the PCs' favorite local innkeeper. Portray him as a support character, a big wheel who can be pumped for information, gossip, and local knowledge, someone who has shady connections. Allow Mehmet to help with earlier adventures prior to this one. He has no reason to be the PCs' enemy until he has to be-keeping a low profile is how he has survived and prospered for so long. Never let on that he's more than a typical innkeeper.

This setup primes the group for a big betrayal. When this adventure formally begins, the stage is set. Mehmet has a plausible method for spying on the PCs—the servants at his caravanserai, who can pick up information while tending to the characters' needs over dinner. During the days when the party seeks clues about the assassin who strikes down scholars on the streets, Mehmet (or his cousins) get wind of their plans each night as the servants tend to their customers and then report what they have heard. He stays ahead of the party, countering each plot or ambush until he is unmasked or he finds his quarry—a priest who belongs to the faith that sealed the *bottle of madness*.

The House of Mehmet Caravanserai

The caravanserai, like others of its kind, caters to camel trains and caravans as well as to sand sailors and bodyguards of all stripes. It is three stories high, with animals stabled and cargo stored on the ground floor, apartments for travelers and merchants on the next floor, and small apartments for nobles and the owner on the upper floor. A single gate gives access to the courtyard, which is open to the sky and lined with alcoves where merchants can store their wares or house their animals and servants. A fountain in one alcove provides water for cleaning; another fountain drains into a watering trough for animals. The interior of the courtyard houses a blacksmith, a harness maker, a camel dealer, a provisioner, a tailor, and a barber. The second-floor apartments at the House of Mehmet are rooms 20 feet on a side. Each one rents for 5 gp a night, and sleeps up to ten.

Mehmet offers communal meals of rice, hummus, lamb, and kouskous served near the kitchens, and private meals are available for lodgers for an extra 1 sp per person.

If combat breaks out in this area, the PCs should be aware that the caravanserai contains a large number of innocent bystanders: guards, salt merchants, camel wranglers, cooks and dancers, a blacksmith, silk merchants, whores, monks begging alms, and others. There's no way to use an area-effect spell without harming citizens who have nothing to do with the cult.

Mehmet the Innkeeper

Mehmet al-Fasri is a wealthy and industrious man. His horde of distant cousins keeps his place running. These cousins are mostly young men, and all are polite, quiet, and efficient. They make sure that there is no trouble. At night, they watch over the animals and goods, to avoid pilfering or fights. In reality, the cousins are his fellow cultists. They share his secret, because Mehmet trusts them to keep their mouths shut. If statistics are required for them, use the cultist stat block in part 1 of the adventure.

Mehmet takes money from anyone, but he does not care much for priests. A small scene after the first wave of suspicion passes could establish this fact and become a subtle clue. For instance, a drunk in his caravanserai could be a young, heart-smitten scholar. Mehmet runs off some priests who start to intone against drunkenness because they "have no business prying." He admits freely that he believes that priests are general busybodies. He would not wish death upon any of them, but they have no one else to blame when they stir up evil forces and make trouble for everyone else.

Mehmet is evil. He radiates faint evil under *detect evil* spells and similar effects. Mehmet secretly thinks that *misdirection* and *nondetection* tend to create as many problems as they solve, so he freely admits that he has not always been a good person. He is a mere scoundrel now, one who works his way toward redemption (a change in alignment), but when he was a ruthless merchant, he did horrible things in the name of raw profit. He is better, now, but blood is still on his hands, and he accepts his fate until he can make good.

If the heroes press him for details, he will be "honest" (with his cover story described above), but not actually describe his recent activities. He quips that he is only just a "little evil" now. If the GM sees fit, Mehmet can joke about this when the PCs need a favor: "This time I will help you, but don't tell anyone. I have a reputation to uphold. I do one more nice thing, and they kick me out of the Ex-Bandit's Club."



GROUND FLOOR

OPPER FLOORS

Mehmet the Fanatic

Mehmet al-Fasri is the equivalent of the modern "deep cover" agent. He's been living a false life for so long now it is almost seamless. Years ago he saw his cult shattered under the persecution of a cabal of other religions, and witnessed his loyal brothers and sisters being put to the sword as he fled into the desert. He has choked that bitterness down but has never forgotten and never forgiven. Mehmet secretly takes a measure of pride in having the finest caravanserai in all of Siwal, but beneath this deception he is a true believer. He receives no cleric spells or powers in exchange for his loyalty to the Howling God. He remains true to his deity even unto madness. He has spent many years in search of the bottle of madness, the means to open it, and the tools (such as his ring of invisibility) to enable him to get away with his schemes. When this adventure begins, Mehmet's plan is about to get under way.

A search for a secret assassin's lair, if the PCs try that tactic, is unproductive and stymied by the fact that Mehmet has no lair. He lives openly among the people of Siwal as he leads this double life. There is no skull-shaped temple or hidden shrine in a cavern below the caravanserai. The cult members he trusts work as his staff, and he is mindful that they remain polite and hospitable to his guests. If the party does grow wise, characters might encounter Mehmet at work on his scheme. If the PCs confront him, he denies everything and tries to avoid them long enough to put his minions between himself and the party while he gets his armor and poison ready for a final battle. His *portable hole* allows him to carry his personal armory anywhere without its being noticed.

Part 1: Slaughter in the Streets

SUDDEN STRIKE OUT OF THE BLUE (CR 10)

CREATURE: The adventure has an atypical beginning. Mehmet attacks a party member without warning. He targets the party's cleric, paladin, or other divine caster (such as a druid or an oracle), in that order of priority. If no character is a divine spellcaster, the PCs witness a lowto-medium-level NPC cleric being attacked instead. (The medium from the *Pathfinder Game Mastery Guide* makes a suitable alternative target.)

This attack can happen anytime the characters are out on the city streets early in the day. To continue, read:

The streets are crowded. People gather in clusters after morning prayers, a few of them drinking tea



and haggling over the day's merchandise. As you make your way through the crowd, you overhear three men debating the recent rise in sandship piracy. Then, suddenly, a wind rushes down the street, followed by the familiar clang of metal. An invisible assassin becomes visible, and you hear the figure cry, "Death to all priests! Obey the Howling God!"

The rushing wind is caused by the invisible arrival of the assassin, and the clang of metal is his strike against the (presumably armored) target cleric, paladin, or oracle. His battle cry is certainly a clue for the more observant players as well.

Mehmet Al-Fasri

CR 10

XP 6,400

Human assassin 5/slayer 5 (Advanced Class Guide) LE Medium humanoid (human) Init +2; Senses Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 18 (+5 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 shield) hp 79 (10 HD; 5d8+5d10+25) Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +4; +2 vs. poison Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge OFFENSE Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 scimitar +12/+7 (1d6+5/18–20), +1 kukri +10 (1d4+4/18–20) or +2 scimitar +14/+9 (1d6+5/18–20) **Ranged** heavy crossbow +10 (1d10/19–20)

Special Attacks death attack (DC 17), sneak attack +4d6, studied target +2 (2nd, move action), true death (DC 20) **TACTICS**

- Before Combat Mehmet prepares his poisoned weapons and activates his ring of invisibility. He drinks his potion of pass without trace and his potion of spider climb and then studies his victim for 3 rounds to prepare a death attack. He then closes with his target and attacks on a surprise round. He uses his disguise kit to hide his features (see Developments).
- During Combat Mehmet strikes only at his target and ignores all bystanders. He uses spider climb to move out of range of spells and attacks if possible.
- **Morale** If Mehmet cannot kill his chosen target in 2 or 3 rounds, he withdraws. On his first opportunity, he reactivates his *ring of invisibility*. If the PCs continue to pursue him, he leads them to where his three cultist allies can ambush them and cover his escape.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 15, **Con** 13, **Int** 14, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 10 **Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 25

- Feats Blind-fight, Dodge, Double Slice, Iron Will, Toughness, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (scimitar)
- Skills Acrobatics +15, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11, Disguise +15, Intimidate +8, Perception +12, Sense Motive +7, Sleight of Hand +10 (+15 to hide weapons on body), Stealth +15, Survival +11

Languages Abyssal, Nurian, Southlands Common

- **SQ** combat style (two-weapon combat), hidden weapons, poison use, slayer talents (ranger combat style, weapon training), track +2
- **Combat Gear** potion of cure moderate wounds (2), potion of pass without trace, potion of spider climb, shadow essence (3); **Other Gear** +2 studded leather, +1 buckler, +1 kukri, +2 scimitar, crossbow bolts (10), heavy crossbow, portable hole, ring of invisibility, ring of protection +1, disguise kit

DEVELOPMENTS: If Mehmet successfully withdraws from combat and reactivates his ring, he makes no effort to stand still and use Stealth. Consequently, although he can't be tracked, the sound of his passage can still be heard with a successful DC 20 Perception check. Once Mehmet realizes he is being followed, he tries to lure the PCs down some city alleyway and into an area where some of his fellow cultists wait in ambush (see the next encounter).

Mehmet's form is partially revealed if the party successfully uses *invisibility purge* or *dispel magic* against his ring, but he remains disguised. Following is a description of what the party sees:

DEAD IN THE FIRST ROUND

Mehmet has the potential to kill a PC in a surprise round and completely out of the blue. You should be aware of that possibility and know your target player well. This sort of attack is realistically what one should expect from a fanatical, invisible assassin. Yet, it is not everybody's idea of fun to just unexpectedly drop dead. Here are a few critical rules to consider.

Mehmet has to move to the target character before he can strike, and with his Stealth he can probably succeed. To give the PC a sporting chance, have Mehmet take a full move action to get within striking range. With a DC 20 Perception check, a character can hear the sound of this movement.

If things still seem too easy for Mehmet, remember the limitation on what can be done in a surprise round. He has a standard action to attack, but not a full attack (which could certainly kill a PC instantly). He can either use death attack, or make a single attack with his precision and poison—after which he becomes visible. Also remember that a ring of invisibility requires a standard action to activate— Mehmet can turn invisible and leave, but cannot strike again as he leaves the scene.

The figure suddenly becomes visible—a man with heavy shoulders and a fighter's trained stance. Hundreds of painted eyes, like those on the prows of ships, cover his armor. A black turban wraps his spiked helmet, and a cloth covers his mouth and nose. In one hand he holds a small buckler, in the other a scimitar dripping gray liquid.

The party must still unmask him to discover his true identity, or penetrate his disguise with a successful DC 25 Perception check.

In the unexpected but not impossible event that the PCs kill Mehmet, they can still discover the *bottle of madness* and unknowingly release the Gibbering Herald. See "The Bottle of Madness" on page 101.

TREASURE: Mehmet carries his equipment in his *portable hole*, including the *bottle of madness* itself. In addition to what he carries, the *portable hole* also contains 1,700 sp, 3,000 gp, a set of three 500 gp pearls, and a *bronze griffon figurine of wondrous power*.

SECONDARY AMBUSH (CR 8)

CREATURES: Abdul-Sattar, Numair, and Walid are three devotees of the Cult of the Howling God. Mehmet considers them to be dull-witted flunkies, however, and he's careful not to disseminate too much vital information to them—in case they're captured or fall to misadventure.

IF THE PCS DON'T GET IT

If the PCs don't realize the killer is targeting priests and that there are six likely targets, they can be pointed in the right direction. The PCs can ask the sultan for help and advice, and he can provide them with a list of the six imams, all of whom have appealed to him for protection. He can also explain that each of them was instrumental in driving the Cult of the Howling God out of Siwal. Remind the players that the unidentified assassin invoked the Howling God on his first attack on the PCs. If they're still not solidly on the case by the time Qusay abd-R'ad (victim #4) is slain, the city rulers put out a public reward of 8,000 gp, and the sultan asks them personally to investigate.

Mehmet prefers to perform his assassinations alone, but he often deploys these three as a contingency plan to cover his escape. He tasks them with standing ready at a nearby location, prepared to intercept any pursuers that follow Mehmet past where they are hiding. The cultists have no skill in Stealth, so they pull off their ambush from the vantage of complete cover (such as around the corner of a backstreet alley that connects with Mehmet's escape route).

Cultists (3)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each Human fighter 6 N Medium humanoid (human) Init +2; Senses Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +2 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 55 (6d10+18)

Fort +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3 (+2 vs. fear)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk scimitar +10/+5 (1d6+6/18–20), light shield bash +7 (1d3+3) or mwk scimitar +12/+7 (1d6+6/18–20)

Special Attacks weapon training (heavy blades +1) STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 15, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10 **Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 21

Feats Double Slice, Improved Shield Bash, Paired Opportunists^{APG}, Power Attack, Shield Slam, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar)

Skills Intimidate +9, Sense Motive +7

Languages Southlands Common

SQ armor training 1

Other Gear mwk breastplate, mwk light steel shield, mwk scimitar

DIPLOMACY: The cultists do not talk willingly. Their starting attitude is hostile for the purpose of Diplomacy checks, and they must be made friendly before they will divulge what they know. Bluff and Intimidate might be easier, requiring a successful DC 17 check for each. Even if an interrogation is successful, the cultists are ignorant of their leader, whom they refer to as "the Unseen Eye." They are beggars, bodyguards, thugs, or sneak thieves by day. The most they can tell the party is that they think the Eye flies down from heaven, because they often hear his voice above them. (In fact, Mehmet uses *spider climb* on these occasions.) The cultists are aware that the Eye has some grand scheme planned for all of Siwal, but they insist that they have not yet proven themselves worthy of knowing all the details.

Part 2. The Murder Clock

Mehmet's attack makes the story personal for the PCs but likely leaves them with few clues on how to proceed. They don't have long to wait. Every two days, like clockwork, another person falls to the assassin's knife.

The targets are all quite similar, but this fact might not be obvious at first. A successful DC 25 Knowledge (religion) or DC 15 Knowledge (local) check indicates that each person who dies is an imam, a leader or religious scholar. These aren't just any clerics, but significant community leaders over the past decade. After the first murder, the PCs receive a +2 bonus on these checks to establish a profile of the victims, and the check for any particular murder can be rerolled if the previous checks failed. Spotting the pattern is important because it helps the PCs predict future targets. Stopping an invisible assassin is much easier when you know what day he will strike and can narrow down his list of targets. These initial checks are the clues the PCs have to proceed on.

Six important imams live in the city of Siwal; several others have retreated to neighboring cities or taken tours into the hinterlands to escape the cultists. Not every target is fated to die. Victims #1, #3, and #5 survive the attempted attacks, though they are wounded. If victims #2, #4, and #6 are not protected, they are murdered. If the PCs do not intervene and stop Mehmet somehow, by the time he kills victim #6, Nabil abd-Zaahir, Mehmet has both the knowledge and the means to open the *bottle of madness*. Mehmet's targets are, in order:

- **1. TEMEL**, a bearded scholar and respected interpreter of the Law
- 2. JAFSAH, daughter of Yusra, who serves Rava, the Goddess of Fate
- **3. MASAHIR AL-JILAN,** a priestess of Yemaja, the goddess of the Waters
- **4. THE JUDGE AND SCHOLAR QUSAY ABD-R'AD,** a mild old man and former paladin of Aten, the Sun God

- WASIMAH THE ELDEST, a white-haired priestess and an oracle of Thoth-Hermes, the ibis-headed God of Knowledge
- 6. NABIL ABD-ZAAHIR, acting high priest of Aten

The methods of Mehmet's attacks vary. Also, the particulars of these murders can be switched to different targets if the PCs prevent one murder from taking place, such as by ushering an imam out of town. The brave targets that fall are:

VICTIM #1: The bearded scholar Temel is a judge and an interpreter as well as a follower of Takhar, god of law and patron of desert warriors. As a younger man, he was a captain on caravan routes, and his instincts are still good; he dodged the brunt of the first attack, threw a chair at his assailant, and called for help. All he knows is that a man with a veiled face wanted him dead. As a judge, though, he has many enemies. He does not give it too much thought until he hears about additional victims of attacks.

VICTIM #2: The priestess Jafsah, daughter of Yusra who serves Rava, trusts her seven bodyguards to keep her safe, and she does take precautions, but the bodyguards left her side during prayers. It is customary that men and women go to different sides of the Goddess's temple. An unseen attacker cuts down Jafsah on holy ground. Three or four "women" in full veils help finish her off (these are some of Mehmet's "cousins" whom he employs at his caravanserai). In the ensuing panic, the culprits escape.

VICTIM #3: The priestess Masahir al-Jilan, follower of Yemaja, goddess of the waters, is fortunate that she was attacked when she was summoning a water spirit in order to question it. Thinking quickly (and having heard of the murder of Jafsah), she turned the water spirit against her attackers; they were soon drenched and reeling, and fled the scene, Masahir al-Jilan is eager to see the miscreants brought to justice, but her divinations have revealed no helpful information.

VICTIM #4: The judge and scholar Qusay abd-R'ad is a mild old man who cannot be bothered to travel and who was a powerful paladin in his younger days. He refuses to cower in his home, and is cut down in the public bazaar in full view of dozens of witnesses. If the party does any questioning, a DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information yields eyewitness accounts that the attacker appeared from nowhere and then rapidly vanished. The description is of a masked man in armor covered with painted eyes, and the effect sounds clearly like *invisibility*.

VICTIM #5: If the party protected Qusay abd-R'ad or arranged for priests to be protected, the attack fails and Mehmet strikes against Wasimah the Eldest, oracle of Thoth-Hermes. However, her oracular powers warn her of the attack and she prepares an ambush that Mehmet barely escapes.

VICTIM #6: Nabil abd-Zaahir serves the Sun God in the wake of the patriarch's recent demise. He is a bit of a comical coward who moves into the House of Mehmet

caravanserai, because "there is no trouble to be found in the House of Mehmet." Nabil does not go out into the streets at all and becomes more disruptive over time, and more and more paranoid as priests die. Mehmet saves him for last because, after all, "there is no trouble to be found in the house of Mehmet." Nabil dies from a single blow through a window (a successful death attack) at night, and he lies exsanguinated like a butchered calf. Mehmet diverts suspicion from himself by making a horrible uproar, decrying the shame and the loss of his reputation, blaming the cult. He's a pretty good liar.

If victim #6 dies before the PCs bring the invisible assassin to ground, Mehmet now has the blood of the priest of Aten, which enables him to open the *bottle of madness*. As Part 3 of the adventure begins, he is planning how to unleash the Howling God and perhaps destroy the sultan at the same time.

Rumors for the Finding

While the PCs conduct their investigation or try to anticipate the assassin's next move, rumors course through Siwal. Spending time and effort tracking down rumors about the case each day might pay off, but the odds are slim. The PCs can try the gather information use of Diplomacy, Knowledge (local), or Knowledge (religion), making one check per day. The results are cumulative.

10+ The howling means that demons are haunting the city. Pray for salvation! (*False; there are no demons here.*)

15+ The howling and the poisoning of priests first occurred ten or twenty years ago, when the city exiled a black cult for worshiping a god-devouring demon. It's a good thing the Sultan sent them packing; that demon took human sacrifices. (*Partly true, but not that helpful.*)

20+ The banished cult was called the Howlers. They believed in resurrection in the body of a hundred-eyed demon, or the fusion of souls, something like that. (*True; but their theology isn't really relevant.*)

25+ The priests and scholars who were attacked were all from groups that passed sentence on the Howlers, and enchanted them to leave Siwal and never return. Perhaps the cult survived its time in the wilderness. (*True; give the party the list of six religious leaders.*)

30+ An old Howler was said to be one of the caravanmasters, someone who settled down years ago. You don't suppose that the merchants are behind the killings? (*True enough*; *Mehmet was a caravan-master before he settled down and bought the caravanserai. Doesn't prove he's guilty*, *but the party might start looking in the right direction.*)

The Bottle of Madness

The *bottle of madness* is a minor artifact that was created to summon and contain the Gibbering Herald. Priests of the Sun God sealed it so the god's fanatics could never open it, much to Mehmet's frustration. The warding has a weakness, however—the blood of one of the Sun God's Mehmet stores the bottle in his *portable hole*. He is loath to open it in his caravanserai (an indication that he has grown a little attached to his alternate life as an innkeeper). He will if he must, however, but not without some bitterness. He would much rather open it in the Sultan's Palace, or the Temple of Aten, for maximum showmanship and chaos.

Bottle of Madness Slot none; CL 18th; Weight 1 lb.

Aura strong conjuration

DESCRIPTION

This brass bottle is incised with flowing script all around the neck and opening. The seal on it is solid black adamant. It cannot open for an evil character without either a mage's *disjunction*, *miracle*, or *wish*—or the blood of a priest of the god who sealed the bottle. (Any priest of the Sun God will do the trick, or the blood of three priests of other gods.)

The bottle has a guardian invisible stalker. Anyone who touches the bottle who is not a member of the Cult of the Howling God summons the stalker within 1d4 minutes. During this time, the bottle makes a slowly rising noise, from a slight whistling to a whooshing, to a windy rush and finally a howling wind. The stalker fights until destroyed, making horrible shrieks as it does so. If the guardian is killed, a new one arrives 24 hours later.

Opening the bottle releases the Gibbering Herald into the world. The herald can return to the bottle if it is left open, though it is unlikely to do so willingly.

DESTRUCTION

The *bottle of madness* can be destroyed only after the Gibbering Herald is slain.

Invisible Stalker

XP 3,200 hp 80 (*Bestiary*)

Part 3: The Herald Arrives

Three ways to release the Gibbering Herald exist, which means that the party is certain to fight it eventually. The three possibilities lead to very different encounters with varying constraints on the PCs' ability to blast it with area effects. The options are:

- **1. IF NABIL ABD-ZAAHIR (VICTIM #6) IS KILLED,** Mehmet either unleashes the Herald on the public or schemes to open the bottle at the Sultan's Palace or the Temple of the Sun God (GM's choice for what works best for the campaign).
- **2. IF MEHMET HEARS THE PARTY COMING TO CONFRONT HIM** before he can slay Nabil abd-Zaahir, he attempts to wound the party's cleric and use blood from that attack to open the bottle. This is a bit of a *deus ex machina* device, but it ensures that the Herald comes out in actual play—most likely inside the caravanserai.
- **3. FINALLY, THE PARTY MIGHT TAMPER WITH THE BOTTLE,** which can be found as treasure among Mehmet's effects. Bardic lore reveals that the bottle contains a very powerful creature, which can be released only by the "blood of the pious." In this case, the seal should be easy for any good-aligned character to release with the application of a drop of blood or two. As a minor artifact, the bottle defies all magical attempts to identify it, but a successful DC 30 Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (religion) check reveals its story.

THE GIBBERING HERALD (CR 10)

The bottle shakes and howls even louder when the stopper falls out of it. Something oozes out through the bottle's narrow neck. At first it resembles milk, but then something more solid flows through with a distinctive pop. It's an eyeball that seems suspended in the milky flesh. Pop! Pop! POP! Six, ten, twenty more come out of the bottle in a blink.

At some point in the last three heartbeats, the oozing mass acquired teeth and filled up an area the size of an elephant. Its three dozen eyes blink, its hundred teeth snap, and it spits blinding light as it oozes toward you, howling like a demon.

CREATURE: The Herald is a force for chaos and destruction. It has no function beyond inspiring fear in the people. Only cultists of the Howling God can command it (treat a successful attempt as if the Herald were charmed but not directly controlled).

CR 10

The Gibbering Herald

XP 9,600

Advanced gibbering mouther

CE Large aberration

Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16
DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+6 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size)

hp 138 (12d8+84)

Fort +11, Ref +10, Will +13

Defensive Abilities all-around vision, amorphous, **DR** 5/ bludgeoning; **Immune** critical hits, precision damage Offense

SPEED 10 FT., SWIM 20 FT.

Melee 6 bites +15 (1d6+4 plus grab)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks blood drain, engulf (6d6+24 damage plus 2 Con damage, **AC** 14, hp 14), gibbering, ground manipulation, spittle

TACTICS

During Combat The Herald softens the ground near it with ground manipulation, inhibiting movement. If it successfully blinds an opponent with its spittle, that target becomes the focus for its attacks. Unlike a normal gibbering mouther, the Herald can strike at range with the Lunge feat.

Morale The Herald does not know it can be defeated. It fights viciously to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 22, Con 25, Int 4, Wis 17, Cha 13
Base Atk +9; CMB +14; CMD 30 (can't be tripped)
Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lunge, Vital Strike, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (bites)

Skills Climb +13, Perception +16, Swim +12; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception

Languages Aklo

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blood Drain (Ex) On a successful grapple check after grabbing, several of the creature's mouths attach to its target. Each round it maintains its grapple, the Herald's mouths automatically deal 1d6 points of bite damage and 1 point of Constitution damage as the creature drains its victim's blood.

Engulf (Ex) This ability functions as swallow whole, except for the following changes. An engulfed creature is trapped in the gibbering mouther's body, where several of its mouths continue to feed and drain blood. Unlike a normal gibbering mouther, the Herald can engulf one Large foe, or two Medium or smaller foes at one time. If it does engulf multiple foes, the bite damage (including the Strength modifier bonuses) and Con damage are divided between them equally. If an engulfed creature cuts its way free (the mouther's damage reduction still applies to those inside), the mouther simply flows together again and can still use its engulf attack.

Gibbering (Su) As a free action, a gibbering mouther can emit a cacophony of maddening sound. All creatures other than gibbering mouthers within 60 feet must succeed on a DC 23 Will save or be confused for 1 round. This is a mind-affecting compulsion insanity effect. A creature that saves cannot be affected by the same mouther's gibbering for 24 hours. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Ground Manipulation (Su) At will as a standard action, a gibbering mouther can cause stone and earth under its body to grow soft and muddy. The ground remains muddy for 1 minute after the mouther moves off the location. A gibbering mouther can move through these areas with ease, but other creatures treat them as difficult terrain.

Spittle (Ex) Each round as a free action, a gibbering mouther can emit a stream of acidic spittle at one target within 30 feet. On a successful attack, the target is blinded for 1d4 rounds unless he succeeds on a DC 23 Fortitude save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Concluding the Adventure

The party likely finds Mehmet and defeats him. He releases the Gibbering Herald as his dying action if at all possible. This means two tough combats in close succession, but the Herald can be outrun. If Mehmet dies, his caravanserai closes for mourning while the cousins set things right.

When the House of Mehmet reopens, it is under the ownership of Mehmet's sister, the black sheep of the family, an almond-eyed, long-haired scholar of the Goddess of Fate. Her name is Pembe umm Haroun, and she is a strictly observant lawful good woman who is quite innocent in the ways of business. Pembe's finances will never run as smoothly as Mehmet's did, but she upholds his rule, "No trouble to be found in the house of Mehmet," in a whole new way.

WASHBOUND

BY JOSHUA STEVENS AND WOLFGANG BAUR • PFRPG CONVERSION BY JIM GROVES FOR ADVENTURERS OF 10TH LEVEL

"Wherein an ancient wrong may be redeemed, or put to the sword and quenched forever."

Adventure Background

To be born a noble djinni is the greatest honor bestowed on any living thing—or so say the djinn, at any rate. Fate asks little of these noble djinn, except that if they are captured or freed by a mortal, they must thrice grant that mortal's desires. The djinn take this duty very seriously and refer, in somber and reverent tones, to one subjected to this servitude as being wishbound.

The punishment for disobeying the law of the wishbound is to become al-Aeshma—a terrible fate for the djinn. The power of the wish ungranted casts these djinn into the Plane of Fire, to be tortured by the efreet every day until they are driven mad. After 1,001 years

WHY THE DECEPTION?

The original adventure depicted Laleh deceiving the PCs, and this re-imagining does not deviate from the original story. This approach runs the risk, however, of making Laleh a less than sympathetic NPC, so it is worth adding some context.

Genies are part of the Arabian adventure paradigm, but they have their own culture, traditions, and values apart from mortal society. Free-spirited as djinn are, their culture is strict with regard to the laws regarding wishes—possibly due to the cosmic anarchy that might ensue if those laws weren't in place.

In this instance, Laleh has tried to find sympathetic parties to support her cause and has been thoroughly rebuffed and rebuked—to the degree that her own brother has threatened to harm her if she pursues the matter. She hides from her sibling in Siwal even now. It does not occur to her that mortals, especially foreigners, might have a different reaction to the truth.

In conclusion, if it works for your players for Laleh to come clean and tell the truth, then do it—it could make a memorable scene. The most significant change is that Arad's attack in Part Two might not be such a surprise, and that's a small price to pay for a better game experience. of torment, the al-Aeshma must endlessly wander the desert—disgraced and cast out from family and kin.

Rabak Seun was once such a noble djinni, until he was forced to serve a vile sorcerer. Over a century, Rabak the djinni died inside as he helped his master become a lich and kill innocents. The sorcerer's final wish was for Rabak to hand over his two infant children, so that he might exploit their becoming wishbound once their father was free. Rabak slew his master instead, thereby saving his children but damning himself.

Given over to the efreet for his crime, he became known as Aenah-Daeva, or the Fallen One. When he returned to the sands alone, Aenah-Daeva wandered the desert as a creature of slaughter until the Lords of the Air imprisoned him in the stone walls at Kala Hamam, also known as the Black Bath. Since that time, generations ago, the desert tribes have shunned that oasis. Using trickery and a magical black falchion—a wicked extension of his own corrupted soul—Aenah-Daeva pursues his only remaining pleasure in life: the gory death of all who foolishly enter his warded cage.

Adventure Summary

Aenah-Daeva's daughter, Laleh, hires the PCs to escort her from the garden city of Siwal to the deep desert oasis of Kala Hamam. She hopes to finally embrace the father she never met and, if possible, to free him from his imprisonment. Laleh lures them with a fake treasure map, and promises the party fabulous riches if they help her explore Kala Hamam.

Laleh's brother Arad learns of his sister's goal and forms a djinni hunting party, seeking to waylay Laleh on the road to Kala Hamam and turn her away from her course. If she cannot be swayed, Arad is determined to commit an honor killing. He has persuaded a pair of his cousins, Fatin and Nasir, to help him stop Laleh, whose actions he believes will further disgrace their family.

Once the characters reach the Black Bath, they must survive the dangers there and face Aenah-Daeva. When Laleh reveals her true reason for wanting to explore Kala Hamam, Aenah-Daeva experiences a moment of repentance before his black blade regains control of his mind. If the PCs can rid Aenah-Daeva of his sword, he might be redeemed, and a long-suffering family might be reunited. If not, his death would still be a mercy for a tortured soul.

Of course, none of this will sit well with Aenah-Daeva's vengeful blade-which schemes to find its way into the hands of another wielder and twist that person to exact its revenge.

Part One: Laleh

The adventure begins in Siwal when the party passes a blind snake charmer in the Grand Souk. Blind Bhara (N venerable male human sorcerer 5) has a lot of knowledge of what is heard on the streets, from implausible rumors to the rumblings of rebellion. He acts as a messenger and a proxy agent for Laleh in this scene.

Read the following:

"A moment of your time, effendi," whispers a filthy vagrant near the alleyway. Both his eyes are sewn shut, and the blind beggar sits with his legs crossed, holding a reed flute, in front of a chipped, glazed pot.

The man seems to know exactly where you are standing, despite his being blind. He flashes you a toothless smile as you inspect him. "A woman, with a voice like honey and carrying the scent of myrrh, came to me at dawn and told me to give you this." He plays a simple melody, and a large black cobra with emerald eyes rises slowly from the pot, arching its spine and whipping the air with its forked tongue. The snake moves rhythmically to the sound of the flute, turns slowly, and faces you fully extended, holding a small scroll between its fangs.

"I know nothing else," the man continues. "She said she would explain. And alas, she has made a messenger of poor Blind Bhara without recompense. Alms, effendi? Alms for an old man who has waited long hours in the hot sun?"

"Poor Blind Bhara" was in fact paid handsomely for his services, but Bhara never turns down an opportunity to make money. The cobra snaps at the PCs when they take the scroll, but it doesn't attack. The scroll is for the PCs whether they pay Bhara or not (give the players a copy of the handout, page 118).

If they pay Bhara, he pretends to be so impressed by their generosity that he offers to sell the party his "most valuable possession" to protect them. He produces a small opaque bottle from inside his turban and offers to sell it to the party for 20 gp, claiming it is a bottle of "magic tears that will cure any injury." The liquid is just brackish water, but he has cast magic aura (strong conjuration (healing) aura, duration 5 days) on the bottle, to make it appear magical if examined.

Wily and always looking for a free meal, Bhara nevertheless means well. He keeps his money in his pot, knowing that thieves are far less likely to steal from a large cobra than a crippled old man. The cobra, named Kurat, is Bhara's viper familiar. As a familiar, Kurat has an Intelligence of 8, and Kurat and Bhara can speak to one another. Kurat serves as the old man's eyes, and the two frequently whisper to each other softly. Furthermore, decades of blindness have enabled to Bhara to acclimate to his condition, granting him the blindsense universal ability.

The scroll invites the party to dinner and contains directions to Laleh's riad (a house built around a courtyard garden) near Old Cyreen. The invitation promises that "opportunity and wealth await you, should you accept this most humble invitation."



RIAD OF THE BRISK WINDS (CR 9)

When the party arrives that night, Laleh's manservant greets the heroes warmly and leads them to her chambers. Read the following introduction:

Wall-to-wall tapestries of exquisite design adorn this large room, and sumptuous silk pillows cover most of the floor. Atop a heap of these blue and white cushions, fanned by two eunuchs holding large palm fronds, rests one of the most gorgeous creatures you have ever seen. Before you lies a ten-foot-tall djinni of regal bearing, eating. She seems to be concentrating on a bowl of dates, but she motions for you to be seated.

"I am Laleh Seun. You have earned quite the reputation for yourselves. I asked you here tonight because I have need of heroes with fearless hearts. I believe that a great treasure lies in the desert sands, not far from here, begging to be seized. The sands would be harsh for a lone woman like myself. Thus, I have need of your . . . particular skills, to help me obtain what I seek."

Laleh divulges more over dinner and produces a treasure map for the PCs to pore over; it shows Kala Hamam along with some cryptic notes about a "wealth of ages" being buried there. It takes four days to reach the Black Bath, and Laleh wants to go as soon as the characters can be ready to depart. She is being dishonest about the prospect of treasure, and an opposed Sense Motive check can indicate that fact, as well as truth-detecting magic-though she might be loath to submit to such magic and irritated by the insinuation that she's lying (even though she is).

If confronted, Laleh admits that she has another interest, and it isn't treasure. She stresses that she harbors no ill will toward any of the characters, and she genuinely wants their help concerning a personal matter. Laleh is willing to forfeit any share of treasure, and promises that if there is none to be found, she will compensate them. These statements are truthful. If the PCs press for specifics, it is suggested that she divulge her intention to reunite with her father whom she has never met. If necessary, she further adds that he has labored under a curse since she was an infant. After such a confession, Laleh admits that either her father or the locale where he is bound could be very dangerous.

Finally, few women (mortal or otherwise) have Laleh's beauty. She is a proud spirit who would never deign to trade on her personal favor. Yet, in time-honored Arabian Nights tradition, she is not above a steady, penetrating stare to dazzle the eyes of a wonder-struck hero, or a lingering soft touch on one's hand or arm.

If the PCs ask elsewhere about the Black Bath before they depart, most people refuse to even talk about the place. With a successful DC 30 Diplomacy check to gather information, the party learns that desert tribes shun the haunted place as unclean and dangerous. Unfortunately, there are no sandships in town, and Laleh prefers to walk or ride. Assuming that she and the PCs come to an agreement, Laleh is ready to depart as soon as possible.

Laleh Seun

CR 8 XP 4,800 Female djinni vizier (Bestiary) CG Large outsider (air, extraplanar) Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12 DEFENSE AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, -1 size) **hp** 75 (10d10+20) Fort +5, Ref +13, Will +9 Defensive Abilities air mastery; Immune acid OFFENSE Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect) Melee 2 slams +15 (1d8+6) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. Special Attacks whirlwind **Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 9th; concentration +12) At will-invisibility (self only), plane shift (willing targets to elemental planes, astral plane, or material plane only) (DC 18) 1/day—create food and water, create wine (as create water, but wine instead), gaseous form (for up to 1 hour), major creation (created vegetable matter is permanent), persistent image (DC 18), wind of recall 3/day-wish (only for non-genies who capture her) STATISTICS Str 23, Dex 19, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 17 Base Atk +10; CMB +17; CMD 32 Feats Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative^B, Lightning Reflexes, Wind Stance Skills Acrobatics +4, Appraise +12, Bluff +16, Craft (mapmaking) +12, Diplomacy +13, Fly +22, Knowledge (planes) +12, Perception +12, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +12, Stealth +10

Languages Aquan, Auran, Ignan, Southlands Common, Terran; telepathy 100 ft.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Wind of Recall (Sp) This ability replaces the standard djinni wind walk ability. Wind of recall functions like word of recall, except that Laleh turns into a wind that blows back to her chosen refuge (her home in Siwal).

Part Two: A House Divided

Laleh's brother, Arad, has searched for her for some time now, and has finally caught up to her in the city of Siwal. Arad knows about Laleh's desire to free their father from imprisonment, and he intends to keep that from happening. It's more than just a family thing: The once noble Seun house was disgraced when Rabak became al-Aeshma, and Laleh's attempt to have her father freed is forbidden by djinn law.

Arad has sworn a blood oath to stop Laleh before she brings further shame on their house—an honor killing. Two members of the Mardun family, cousins to the Seuns and a lesser house beholden to them, joined Arad's blood oath to stop Laleh and whoever she has rallied to her cause.

Desert Travel

It is difficult to challenge 10th-level characters with environmental conditions when they have the ability to conjure water (which Laleh herself possesses) and access to spells such as endure elements. To avoid tedium, it is suggested that as long as the PCs take proper precautions for desert travel, the first two days pass without incident. The GM should still inquire whether the group travels by day or night, what magical resources they use to travel, and how they are using their nonmagical supplies. During the day, the temperature is at least 90° F, and it drops to just below 40° F at night. A review of cold and heat dangers in the Environment chapter of the Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook is recommended, as hourly Survival checks are required for unprotected characters. Laleh is acclimated to extreme temperatures, and as an extraplanar elemental creature is not affected. All creatures in the party (including mounts) must have the means to see in order to make progress at night.

Don't deliberately trick the players, but if they ask Laleh, she is willing to use her powers to provide provisions, and even create shelters (like pavilion tents) with her *major creation* and *create food and water* special abilities. Bear in mind that the PCs need something to carry water in (because she can create water only once per day), and such creations, even permanent ones, are susceptible to *dispel magic*.

During these two days in the desert, Arad and his hunting party watch and study the PCs, using flight and *invisibility*. The heroes are sized up, and the djinn take note of how they travel and what daily magical resources they use (through Spellcraft checks). The GM should take what they know about the PCs and grant the genies a certain measure of "metagame" knowledge to simulate these days of observation. For example, the genies might already know who the party cleric is and be prepared to take her holy symbol by surprise (depriving her of the ability to channel energy or cast spells that require a divine focus), or Fatin might preemptively cast *dispel magic* on a character that he already knows relies on *mage armor* every day.

High and Dry

When the PCs make camp before their third day of travel, Arad's band tries to thwart their progress. Even though the Mardun brothers have sworn an oath, they prefer to undermine the expedition rather than engage in outright kinslaying and the possible murder of innocents.

Fatin Mardun flies into camp invisibly. He bypasses whoever might be on watch and enters the PCs' tents, using gaseous form if necessary, followed by reduce person in order to fit. (Note that Laleh requires a Large shelter to accommodate her natural form.) Fatin sets about confiscating whatever tools the PCs are using to make their travel easy (perhaps wands or scrolls of endure elements or the like). Fatin should have some insight into their daily preparations from the previous two days, and he is adept in Stealth and Sleight of Hand. If necessary, he can cast *identify* (or any other required spell) with the Silent Spell metamagic feat, thanks to his metamagic adept ability. The djinni sorcerer can also use his wand of unseen servant to call forth an ally that goes about puncturing waterskins. Finally, Fatin's wand of shrink item enables him to spirit away whatever else the PCs have been using to make the journey bearable.

Fatin is not a common sneak thief, however, who robs the heroes of their best items. The theft itself says something about the robbers and their quest, and shrewd players might realize this, or the GM might offer some hints to simulate what the PCs might conclude. Specifically, the thieves have no trouble moving through the desert quickly, unseen and without leaving tracks. Furthermore, they're more interested in thwarting the PCs' expedition than in killing the characters outright. The idea of the robbery is to make the journey dangerous, two days out from Siwal with another two days to Kala Hamam. Even 11th-level characters should be daunted by hourly Fortitude saves with escalating saving throws.

Fatin flees as expeditiously as possible if exposed; otherwise he has all of the stolen items on him if the PCs confront him again. If the PCs cast a spell like *locate object*, the results are interesting, and reflect that their possession is moving across the desert in a fast-moving orbit centered on their position.

If Fatin is successful, the party should discover the thefts when they resume their journey. Laleh is reluctant to turn back to Siwal, arguing that she can *create wine* at will so no one will go thirsty, and pleads that surely these powerful heroes can endure some discomfort. If she is questioned about who would undermine their expedition, Laleh offers only that there might be another group interested in the treasure. If the characters press hard, Laleh explains about her father as mentioned in their first meeting with her, and says that there are djinn who would not approve of her efforts to meet him.
DESERT DECEPTION (CR 12)

Arad's band makes another attempt to stop Laleh's expedition, again stopping short of bloodying their own swords. On the third day of the PCs' journey, the hunting party uses Fatin's scroll of *hallucinatory terrain* to subtly warp the terrain so as to send the PCs in the direction of a trap, specifically the hunting grounds of a pair of monstrous aerial predators. This adventure assumes that without cause to disbelieve, the PCs have no means to interact with the illusion and gain a Will saving throw against it. Rather, the spell is used to augment the DC of a Survival check to notice the changes.

Have one character make a DC 30 Survival check for the entire party. This PC is likely the one who has the best Survival modifier with all applicable factors applied, such as a ranger's favored terrain bonus. Since this is a reactive skill check, aid another checks and the use of take 10 or take 20 are disallowed. If the check is successful, the characters avoid the encounter, and the party continues directly on to Kala Hamam. Furthermore, the character who succeeded at the check is fully aware that some agency employed magic in an attempt to trick the group.

If the check fails, the encounter takes place. For every 5 by which the check fails, the party has traveled 1 hour prior to the encounter and must make applicable hourly Survival checks for hot conditions (and might choose to remove medium or heavy armor). This extra time spent in the desert doesn't impact events at Kala Hamam significantly, but could influence the encounter if the party is fatigued or not fully armored when it begins.

Creatures: Two monstrous, two-headed rukhs scavenge this part of the desert in search of travelers, wild camels, or other wildlife to devour. Similar to rocs, rukhs are scrawny, vulture-like predators of incredible size. Their appearance is heralded by a cloud of common vultures that follow them like flies in hopes of grabbing any scraps they leave behind. The ordinary vultures do not attack the PCs, but might inadvertently warn the heroes that danger approaches. Characters who succeed at a DC 15 Perception or Survival check are not surprised when the rukhs suddenly crest a rolling sand dune and fly in their direction from 160 feet away. Any PC who succeeds by 5 or more has 1 round of advance notice of their appearance (and may in turn warn their comrades).

If the rukhs prove to be difficult opponents, they could break off at some point and attack the company's camels and mounts, providing a momentary respite for the PCs.

CR 10

Rukhs (2)

XP 9,600 each hp 147 (*Bestiary 4*)

DEVELOPMENTS: If the PCs succeed on the first Survival check and avoid the encounter, award them a 9,600 XP story award.

After the rukhs are defeated (or driven off, at the GM's discretion), the PCs are able to correct their path toward

Kala Hamam. Curious PCs who succeed at a DC 15 Perception or Survival check can use the ordinary vultures' flight path as a trail leading back to the rukhs' gigantic nest near a rocky outcropping.

TREASURE: The rukhs are too stupid to collect treasure, but they have some incidental valuables left over from other prey. Among the bones and debris of past victims in their filthy nest are a +*1 menacing scimitar*, a *potion of lesser restoration*, a diamond platinum wedding ring worth 500 gp, 311 gp, 94 sp, and 1581 cp.

Showdown in the Sands

CREATURES: Arad has had enough games as the PCs persist on their journey to Kala Hamam. At the end of the third day of the PCs' journey, the djinn use *persistent image* to create the illusion of a battle scene between travelers and desert raiders. Read:

You see a wisp of smoke rising over a distant dune. The wisp quickly turns into a billowing cloud, as great plumes of black smoke gush forth and stain the blue sky like spilt ink on a canvas. You hear faint screams of agony, the rending and snapping of wood, and the clash of steel against steel.

The djinni hunting party waits until the PCs approach the "battle" before springing their trap. The djinn quietly surround the PCs while invisible, picking their targets before attacking. By the time the PCs can directly interact with the illusion (and therefore make a saving throw to disbelieve it), the djinni have already launched their attack, and its purpose is served. If the PCs have some means to discern the illusion without interacting with it (difficult but not impossible), then they have sufficient warning that something is wrong, and a surprise round is not out of the question—although the djinn maintain the advantages that their invisibility affords.

Fatin has instructions to launch the attack by casting *dismissal* upon Laleh, which sends her to the Plane of Air. Fatin technically needs to make a DC 11 caster level check to use his scroll, and Laleh is entitled to a saving throw. It is suggested that these events play out without die rolls, however, since this removes Laleh as another NPC for the GM to run and because the encounter is designed to be challenging for four PCs without her involvement. Laleh uses *plane shift* to return to Midgard and rejoin the PCs after the battle.

Soon after the initial onslaught, Arad loses all sense of decorum. In round two, he shouts at his melee opponent, first in Auran, then in Common.

The leader of this band, initially cool and collected, grows wild-eyed and reckless in battle. Practically foaming at the mouth, he screams at you in a strange tongue. Slipping into Common, he demands, "Why would you help her? Are you sons of pigs and demons? You would shame us further? You would free him . . . that . . . that beast? You wretched little fools. What has she promised you? Gold? Her body? Bah! The sands will drink your blood!"

Arad Seun

CR 9

XP 6,400

Male djinni vizier fighter 1 (Bestiary) CG Large outsider (air, extraplanar) Init +9; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13 DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 19 (+5 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 115 (11d10+55)

Fort +9, Ref +14, Will +8

Defensive Abilities air mastery; Immune acid

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee +1 falchion +18/+13/+8 (2d6+11/18-20) or 2 slams +12 (1d8+3)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks whirlwind

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +14)

At will-invisibility (self only), plane shift (willing targets to elemental planes, astral plane, or material plane only) (DC 20), create wine (as create water, but wine instead)

3/day—*wish* (to capturing nongenies only)

1/day—create food and water, gaseous form (for up to 1 hour), major creation (created vegetable matter is permanent), persistent image (DC 20), wind walk

TACTICS

Before Combat Arad launches his attack while invisible. During Combat Arad targets the most martial PC. Morale Arad flees when reduced to 40 hit points or fewer (see Developments).

STATISTICS

Str 25, Dex 21, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 21 Base Atk +11; CMB +19; CMD 35 Feats Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative^B, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Toughness, Wind Stance

Skills Acrobatics +4, Appraise +14, Craft (weapons)

+10, Fly +22, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (planes) +14, Perception +13, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +12, Survival +10

Languages Aquan, Auran, Ignan, Southlands Common, Terran; telepathy 100 ft.

Other Gear +1 chain shirt, +1 falchion

Nasir Mardun

CR 9 XP 6,400 Male djinni fighter 4 (Bestiary) CG Large outsider (air, extraplanar) Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13 DEFENSE AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 19 (+5 armor, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, -1 size) hp 108 (11d10+48) Fort +10, Ref +12, Will +7 (+1 vs. fear) Defensive Abilities air mastery; Immune acid OFFENSE Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect) Melee +1 scimitar +15/+10/+5 (1d8+7/18-20), mwk kukri +15/+10 (1d6+6/18-20) or 2 slams +11 (1d8+3) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. Special Attacks whirlwind **Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 9th; concentration +12) At will-invisibility (self only), plane shift (willing targets to elemental planes, astral plane, or material plane only) (DC 18), create wine (as create water, but wine instead) 1/day—create food and water, gaseous form (for up to 1 hour), major creation (created vegetable matter is permanent), persistent image (DC 18), wind walk TACTICS Before Combat Nasir starts the combat invisible.

During Combat Nasir targets clerics and other support characters for his onslaught. Morale See Developments.

STATISTICS

Str 22, Dex 22, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 17 Base Atk +11; CMB +18; CMD 35

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Double Slice, Improved Initiative^B, Improved Two-weapon Fighting, Lunge, Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Rend, Wind Stance

Skills Acrobatics +6, Appraise +12, Craft (armor) +13, Fly +24, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (planes) +12, Perception +13, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +12, Stealth +14

Languages Aquan, Auran, Ignan, Southlands Common, Terran; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ armor training 1

Other Gear +1 chain shirt, +1 scimitar, mwk kukri

Fatin Mardun

XP 6,400 Male djinni sorcerer 7 (Bestiary)

CG Large outsider (air, extraplanar)

Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 17, flat-footed 19 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, -1 size)

CR 9

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect) Melee 2 slams +12 (1d8+3) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. Special Attacks whirlwind

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +14)

- At will—*invisibility* (self only), *plane shift* (willing targets to elemental planes, astral plane, or material plane only) (DC 20), *create wine* (as *create water*, but wine instead)
- 1/day—*create food and water, gaseous form* (for up to 1 hour), *major creation* (created vegetable matter is permanent), *persistent image* (DC 20), *wind walk*
- **Sorcerer Spells Known** (CL 7th; concentration +12)

3rd (5/day)—*dispel magic, shifting sand*^{APG} (DC 19), *slow* (DC 19)

- 2nd (7/day)—frigid touch^{UM}, invisibility, mirror image, pilfering hand^{UC}
- 1st (8/day)—*identify*, long arm^{ACG}, mage armor, magic missile, reduce person (DC 17), shocking grasp
- 0 (at will)—breeze^{UM}, detect magic, mage hand, mending, message, prestidigitation, read magic

Bloodline Arcane

TACTICS

- **Before Combat** Fatin casts *mage armor* before the fight (reflected in his stat block). He starts invisible and launches the encounter by casting *dismissal* on Laleh (see above).
- **During Combat** Fatin casts area spells such as *slow* and *shifting sands* early, while the PCs are still grouped together. His metamagic adept ability allows him to cast toppling *magic missile* or intensified *shocking hand*. He might also cast *dispel magic* on PCs he has observed casting *mage armor* (or other buffs) on themselves in

UNTHINKABLE: CAPTURE!

If the PCs take Arad hostage (or, the gods forbid, make Laleh herself a prisoner), they may gain three wishes. You can allow a wish to be granted, or pay homage to the very roots of D&D by twisting that wish in a subtle or scurrilous fashion.

For instance, what if they wish for the release of Laleh's father? Why. The wish is granted . . . and now the PCs are trapped inside Kala Hamam, a great evil is loosed upon the world, and Laleh and her now angrier brother take Aenah-Daeva's place to atone for their father's sins. Oops. . . .

Be sure the characters understand that djinn cannot simply grant wishes, they must be captured first—a fate to which they do not submit willingly. the days prior. Overall he supports the two warriors or harries spellcasters.

Morale See Developments.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 23, **Con** 16, **Int** 16, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 20 **Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 32

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Improved Initiative^B, Intensified Spell^{APG}, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (transmutation), Toppling Spell^{UM}, Wind Stance

Skills Acrobatics +6 (+2 to jump), Appraise +13, Bluff +14, Craft (gemcutting) +13, Fly +22, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (planes) +13, Perception +17, Sense Motive +14, Sleight of Hand +15, Spellcraft +18, Stealth +17, Use Magic Device +18

Languages Aquan, Auran, Ignan, Nurian, Southlands Common, Terran; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ arcane bond (*ring of protection* +1), bloodline arcana (+1 DC for metamagic spells that increase spell level), metamagic adept (2/day)

Combat Gear scroll of dismissal, wand of shrink item (10 charges), wand of unseen servant (8 charges); **Other Gear** ring of protection +1

DEVELOPMENTS: Once Arad is reduced to 40 hit points or fewer, he uses *whirlwind* to flee, enraged and screaming, into the desert sky. He does not return, and his role in the adventure is over.

The Marduns have sworn a blood oath to defend Arad's family honor, which means they're not inclined to surrender, and if Arad is killed in combat before he can flee, they fight to the death.

Any act of cowardice on Arad's part, however, disgusts the Mardun brothers and creates a mitigating circumstance. If Arad gets away, a reactive DC 15 Sense Motive check allows the PCs to ascertain that Fatin and Nasir won't quit the battle on their own, but their fleeing companion has undermined their resolve.

A successful follow-up DC 30 Diplomacy check shifts the cousins' attitude to unfriendly and persuades them to break off the attack. They hotly inform the PCs that they won't trouble them again, but if they want any sort of explanation, they should talk to Laleh (who returns to the scene right on cue). To their female cousin, they implore, "Don't revisit the shame that has already befallen your house! Abandon your folly and be truthful with these mortals!"

If Arad escapes or is killed and the cousins also fall in battle, Laleh returns soon thereafter. If the PCs question her about the leader's tirade concerning her, she reveals that the leader's name is Arad, and he and his henchmen have been trying to steal her map for some time.

The PCs can realize with a successful DC 18 Perception check that Arad and Laleh look enough alike to be relatives, perhaps even brother and sister—a contention that Laleh hotly denies. A successful opposed Sense Motive check against Laleh's Bluff check makes it apparent that she is being evasive. If the characters press her, she



admits the full truth but appeals to the PCs' sense of heroics, saying that she is only trying to redeem the father she never knew—the father who sacrificed everything so that she could live free. She adds that there could still be great treasure. This confession is a last resort.

Laleh likewise confesses the truth (she has no alternative) if her cousins break off their attack and force her hand. The Mardun brothers will not deign to listen to another word she says, leaving the characters to make their own decision about whether to believe her. As a final gesture before the cousins depart, Fatin returns whatever equipment he stole from the PCs earlier (otherwise it is found on his corpse).

Part Three: Kala Hamam

After four days in the desert, the PCs arrive at Kala Hamam. Play up the contrast between the harshness of the dry desert outside the gorge and the healthy smell of water and greenery within.

Smooth golden sand gives way suddenly to rocky terrain. Before you, a stony gorge sits like an angry scar among the dunes. Made of gray rock shot through with black veins, this gorge is lonely and windswept. The only way to get to the bottom

AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE

If the PCs try to investigate the Kala Hamam area using flight instead of entering through the archway at ground level, they quickly find that there's not much to see from the air. Clouds of flies and the caverns themselves hide everything of interest. Laleh suggests landing and approaching on foot, using the previous ambush by the djinn as an argument against flying. "Any other djinn will expect me, and by extension you, to fly in. They'll set a ward to stop us. Let us walk; they won't expect it."

She's partly right; Kala Hamam's defenses include a powerful permanent *blade barrier* trap created by the djinni sultans who damned Aenah-Daeva to this place

of torment. It affects only fliers that descend to within 50 feet of the ground.

Wind of Knives

XP 3,200

CR 7

Type magic; Perception 31; Disable Device 31 EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (*arcane eye*); **Reset** automatic **Effect** spell effect (*blade barrier*, 11d6 force damage, DC 24 Reflex save for half damage, multiple targets (all creatures descending into the gorge from a height of 50 ft.) of the gorge that doesn't involve climbing down jagged rock is a natural stone archway, slightly off center, seemingly created by some ancient river. The desert tribes have a name for this foreboding place: Kala Hamam, or "the Black Bath."

As the PCs near the passageway, about 100 feet from the entrance, any mounts they have brought begin bleating wildly and refuse to move any closer (paladin mounts and animal companions excluded). A DC 25 Handle Animal check allows the party to bring the animals closer into the gorge. If left unattended, they begin honking and grunting in wild fear and retreat from the gorge if able. Familiars react the same way, but can be coaxed into entering the place without a skill check.

As you come out the other end of the archway, you notice an oasis at the far end of the gorge, and a series of cave entrances that cause the wind to whistle, like a hollow reed flute. Strange inscriptions at regular intervals mark the walls of the gorge approximately 10 feet from the ground. Aside from the breeze that runs through the gorge, the place seems unnaturally still, with the only movement coming from swarms of black sand that flit around near the ground.

The inscriptions are warding spells, written in Auran, that lock Aenah-Daeva into this place. A character who can read Auran and succeeds on a DC 30 Linguistics check (or can cast *read magic* on the writing) learns that the inscriptions are an unusual form of abjuration. A DC 25 Spellcraft check reveals that what the PCs see is a unique magical warding designed to contain evil outsiders.

1. THE BATH (CR 8)

Kala Hamam takes its name from the natural spring in the oasis on the far side of the gorge, which does indeed look like an inviting bath. The gorge is a passage between two walls of black stone approximately 120 feet long that ends abruptly on the other side of the oasis, where a third wall rises up to form a dead end.

The whole oasis seems as if the earth coughed it up as a single mass. An abundant grove of palm trees shades the area, and clean, blue water fills the bath, darkened slightly by the stone that lines the basin.

As soon as all the PCs have entered Kala Hamam, the black flies attack. Just before the attack, Laleh turns invisible and departs to find her father. If circumstances have caused her to confide her true purpose here, she explains herself to the characters as she flies away. "While you explore, I will seek out my father. He may be less inclined to attack me!" Whether she offers this explanation or not, the impulsive (chaotic) djinni leaves them to fend for themselves at this point.

Laleh is suddenly nowhere to be found. She was talking as you entered the archway, and she was standing next to you just a moment before.

A few moments later, thousands upon thousands of black flies begin to emerge from every corner of the gorge and congregate into an opaque black cloud that covers the entry archway, preventng the PCs from leaving the way they came.

The flies form an impenetrable wall at the archway and fill the sky overhead as they flow toward you, like a black ocean wave. The cloud threatens to engulf you.

Botfly Swarm (4)

XP 1,200 each
N Fine vermin (swarm) (*Pathfinder Chronicles: Heart of the Jungle*)
Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

CR4

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 18 (+8 size) hp 40 (9d8)

Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities swarm traits; **Immune** mind-affecting effects, weapon damage **Weaknesses** swarm traits

OFFENSE

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (good) Melee swarm (2d6 plus infestation) Space 10 ft.; Reach 0 ft.

Special Attacks disease, distraction (DC 14), suffocation

Str 2, Dex 11, Con 10, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 2 Base Atk +6; CMB —; CMD — Skills Fly +12 SPECIAL ABILITIES

Infestation (Ex) *Botfly larvae:* Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 14; *onset* 1 day; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d4 Con damage; *cure* surgery or *remove disease*. The saving throw DC is Constitution-based.

A living creature injured by a botfly swarm's attack must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or be infested with the swarm's larvae. The larvae can be cut out of the host with a DC 15 Heal check, though each attempt inflicts 1d8 points of damage whether or not it's successful. A *remove disease* spell destroys all larvae without further harm to the host. Immunity to disease offers no protection, as the infestation is caused by parasites and is not a true disease. An infestation may be cured only through specific means (in this case, using *remove disease* or cutting them out). A successful saving throw without these methods temporarily avoids the Con damage but does not cure the target.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Bath makes for a natural destination once the flies start attacking—the water of the Bath will drown the attacking flies or at least cause them to disperse after a short while. If the players don't realize this on their own, a reactive DC 15 Knowledge (nature) or Survival check makes this fact known.

A pit, completely hidden (*hallucinatory terrain*, CL 13th), is directly in line between the PCs and the Bath (see area 2).

2. PIT OF THE FEAST (CR 10)

TRAP: In a 70-foot-deep hole directly between the entrance to the gorge and the bath, the black flies of Kala Hamam devour their prey and breed. The pit floor is slick with gore and fat, and lined with the corpses of Aenah-Daeva's victims. The flies have devoured the husks of the rotting victims and gnawed them down to their bones, leaving sharp and jagged edges jutting from the bottom of the pit. Aenah-Daeva's *hallucinatory terrain* ability obscures the sound of the nesting flies and the pit's fetid odor. Note that, as with all pit traps, creatures that perform full-round actions to run (excluding simply taking a double move) are not entitled to a Reflex saving throw to avoid a pit and fall in automatically.

When a character falls into the pit, it seems to others as if the individual just vanishes into thin air. As with any pit, nothing prevents a following PC from stopping and avoiding the pit. However, PCs must interact with the illusion to see through it, and it affects multiple senses. Even afterward, a following character might not know the dimensions of the phenomena. The illusion can be interacted with by probing the ground ahead or observing someone else disappearing. If the PCs want to disbelieve the illusion based upon seeing a character vanish, it is recommended that they take a full-round action to carefully study the area prior to making a saving throw. Use the trap's Perception DC and Reflex save (which are based on the trap's CR) when a character first encounters the pit. Use the illusion's DC 18 Will save once a character knows something is wrong.

Pit of the Feast

CR 10

XP 9,600

Type magical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 25 EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect 70-ft.-deep pit (7d6 falling damage); pit spikes (Atk +15 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d6+5 damage

each plus disease [filth fever]); DC 25 Reflex avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area).

DEVELOPMENTS: PCs at the bottom of the pit must make a DC 18 Acrobatics check to avoid slipping in the gore and taking another 1d4 points of damage from the jagged bones. Each injury brings another chance of being infected with filth fever.

The swarms the PCs were battling may follow a creature into the pit. As soon as two or more swarms descend, their buzzing ricochets off the walls and drowns out all sound. Casters take a -4 penalty to Concentration checks within the pit. Further, if the PCs want to speak to one another while in the pit with the swarms, their characters must make DC 20 Perception checks to hear what was said.

Treasure: A successful DC 18 Perception check reveals a +1 *flaming/frost scimitar* beneath the bones and corpses. It is encrusted with brilliant blue sapphires, and blue flame that both burns and chills wreathes the blade. The wielder can give the blade either the flaming or the frost quality, switching between the two as a swift action. Named the Star of Heaven, this blade was forged for one of the many sons of Pasha Mozad, a famous former general of Siwal's army. The intelligent falchion *Fana al-Besra* forced Aenah-Daeva to cast off the blade, forbidding him to wield any other weapon.

3. THE DEVIL'S FLUTE

Seven cave entrances mark the wall of the gorge to the right of the entry archway. A wind blows in and out of them, producing a strange keening wail. The echo of mad laughter can be heard from within, punctuated by more howling winds coming from the caves.

Tribesmen call these caves the Devil's Flute; one can hear the sounds they make outside the gorge during windstorms.

Each cave is approximately 20 feet in diameter with an earthen floor and no light source. A hidden passageway that connects two caves can be located with a DC 20 Perception check. These passageways are not "doors" per se, but barriers constructed of cunningly placed rocks, which Aenah-Daeva can slip through easily in *gaseous form*. It requires a full round action to unblock one in addition to the standard action to locate it. If the fight with Aenah-Daeva goes poorly, he might turn invisible and use *gaseous form* to glide into the hiding spot unseen, regenerate while the PCs hunt for him, and emerge later to resume the fight.

The hidden passageway off to the far west leads to a small antechamber. The passage is concealed by a heavy canvas painted to look exactly like the surrounding rock walls with sand and rock incorporated to enhance the effect. The canvas slides out of the way if discovered, which requires a DC 30 Perception check. Aenah-Daeva can slip



past it with only a single move action, as can any creature aware of it, leaving the passage concealed in their wake. The canvas itself is a piece of art worth 400 gp if removed carefully. The antechamber behind it is Aenah-Daeva's private sanctum, which he uses as an alternative hiding place while harrying the PCs.

A LIGHT SHINES INTO DARKNESS (CR 13)

Aenah-Daeva can be encountered anywhere in the caves. When he confronts the PCs, read:

The loose earth on the floor before you swirls and congeals, forming a hulking mass of sinew and rage. Its skin as black as polished obsidian, the thing in front of you has a large, ragged hole in its chest, as if its heart had been physically ripped out. Its eyes emit a demonic red light and seem to burn holes right into your soul. Raising a black falchion over its head, the creature howls and charges.

CREATURE: This is Aenah-Daeva, an al-Aeshma. Noble djinn who refuse to honor their obligation to grant a wish (not counting perverting its intent) are considered to have defied celestial law set in place by powerful djinni sultans from the Plane of Air. These defiant spirits are condemned, given over to efreet for 1,001 years of torment, and

stripped of their *wish* ability. Al-Aeshma are exceedingly rare. The common school of thought is that djinn simply cannot refuse to grant a wish. It is more accurate to say that defiance of the law is never considered an option, for what creature would ever volunteer for the wretched consequence? What remains after this sentence is almost a mockery of the djinni's former self. Note that Aenah-Daeva is not bound to Kala Hamam because he is al-Aeshma, but because he became a homicidal maniac when he was cast back to Midgard, and so is twice damned.

The manifestation of *Fana al-Besra* (see below) is a unique anomaly. It exists perhaps because Aenah-Daeva's transgression was an act of selfless love—but jinn law cared not in the least. Thus the black blade was born to injustice, and the Wind Lords are unaware of its existence and what they have done. Note that Aenah-Daeva is a CR 12 creature, but receives a CR+1 adjustment for significant equipment.

Aenah-Daeva CR 13	3
XP 25,600	
Male al-Aeshma	
CE Large outsider (air, native)	
Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +17	
DEFENSE	
AC 27, touch 16, flat-footed 20 (+6 armor, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, –1 size)	
hp 151 (16 HD; 10d10+3d10+3d8+67); regeneration 3 (fire and holy)	

Fort +15, Ref +17, Will +11 (+1 vs. fear)

Defensive Abilities bravery +1, evasion, trap sense +1; **Immune** acid, poison

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee *Fana al-Besra* +23/+18/+13 (2d6+12/15-20), or 2 slams +21 (1d8+7)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

- **Special Attacks** air hatred, dust devil (3/day, 10–30 ft. high, 3d8+7 on contact then 1d8+7, DC 22), ill wind (Fort DC 19), sneak attack +2d6
- **Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 9th; concentration +13) At will—*invisibility* (self only), *putrefy food and water* 1/day—*create food and water, gaseous form* (for up to one hour; see text), *hallucinatory terrain* (DC 18), *insect plague, major creation* (vegetable matter becomes permanent), *persistent image* (DC 19)

TACTICS

Before Combat Aenah-Daeva uses *hallucinatory terrain* to disguise the Pit of Feasts daily, and therefore that ability should be considered used. He does not attack invisibly at first, but unless the PCs approach the Devil's Flute stealthily, he hides and ambushes them for an opening sneak attack.

During Combat Aenah-Daeva employs hit-and-run tactics, particularly with reach combined with Spring Attack. He uses *invisibility* to set up additional sneak attacks, and the cave's ceiling height permits him to fly over the heads of his opponents. If cornered or in close quarters, he might use his dust devil special ability, which coordinates with his Wind Stance feat. *Gaseous form* permits him to seep into either of the concealed areas in order to buy time to regenerate. If he retreats to his sanctum off cave 7, he uses *major creation* to block it with rubble and then dismisses the spell after he has healed enough.

Morale See Developments for events that transpire when Aenah-Daeva is reduced to 40 hit points or fewer.

STATISTICS

Str 24, Dex 23, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 19 Base Atk +15; CMB +23; CMD 41

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (falchion), Improved Initiative^B, Iron Will, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Vital Strike, Wind Stance

Skills Acrobatics +19, Appraise +10, Bluff +14, Craft (painting) +14, Diplomacy +12, Disable Device +7, Fly +25, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (planes) +12,

Perception +17, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +15, Survival +17 Languages Auran, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ armor training 1, bound, rogue talents (fast stealth), trapfinding +1

Other Gear Aenah-Daeva's ring, Fana al-Besra, +2 mithral chain shirt

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Air Hatred (Ex) Al-Aeshma receive a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls against airborne opponents.

- **Bound (Su)** Al-Aeshma can no longer *plane shift*, as they are bound to this plane. Further, al-Aeshma must always be anchored to the earth. Even in *gaseous form* or sandstorm form, some piece of an al-Aeshma must always touch the ground. An al-Aeshma's maximum altitude while flying is 50 feet (10 squares).
- **Dust Devil (Su)** The whirlwind of an al-Aeshma is composed of skin-flaying sand. This functions identically to the whirlwind ability with the following exceptions. When a target first comes in contact with the dust devil and fails its Reflex saving throw, it takes triple the creature's base slam attack damage plus their Strength bonus (3d8+7 damage in Aenah-Daeva's case). The target takes normal slam attack damage from the whirlwind if it is subsequently picked up bodily and suspended inside the cyclone. This damage counts as both bludgeoning and slashing.
- **Ill Wind (Sp)** An al-Aeshma may choose to modify its *gaseous form* spell-like ability to be fouled with choking scent of its spiritual decay. The al-Aeshma's *gaseous form* acts as a *stinking cloud* effect with a range equal to the al-Aeshma's occupied squares. When passing through any square occupied by another creature while in *gaseous form* (which still may draw attacks of opportunity normally), the target must make a Fortitude saving throw with a DC equal to 10 + 1/2 racial HD + Cha bonus or be affected (DC 19 for Aenah-Daeva). The al-Aeshma may turn this ability on and off as a swift action. This ability is dependent on *gaseous form* and has no effect by itself. The save DC is Charisma-based.

DEVELOPMENTS: When Aenah-Daeva is reduced to 40 hit points or fewer, Laleh appears within 10 feet of him or in the nearest possible square. Tell the players that combat is temporarily suspended (to allow for some dramatic free actions on the part of the NPCs) and resume the fight where it left off after this interlude is over. Read:

Laleh suddenly appears near the demonic djinni and shouts, "Father! No! I have come to free—you must stop! These men are not your enemies . . . they have brought me to you! Rabak Seun, I am your daughter—I am Laleh Seun!"

The creature stops in mid-swing. The red light in its eyes fades, and it stumbles backward as it puts one hand to its forehead. "Laleh? How can this be? How have you found me . . . You look so much like your moth—" And with that, the creature breaks off in mid-sentence as its eyes shift back to its ebony falchion.



The black blade seems to tremble of its own accord and releases a wave of vile black smoke. Curling about the cave, the smoke envelops everything as it passes. Red embers appear again in the beast's eyes and rapidly rekindle into their former baleful fiery light. Its face twists back into a snarl as it curses, its voice oddly hollow. "Rabak Seun is dead, foolish girl. There is only Aenah-Daeva." The creature raises the terrible sword and advances upon Laleh to cut her down.

Horror-struck, Laleh does not defend herself, and her shock is immediately evident to the PCs. The heroes are confronted with a choice: either slay Aenah-Daeva, or—if they pick up on the clues—separate him from his falchion. Since Aenah-Daeva is an NPC, rather than leave this determination to an unpredictable Ego Will saving throw, the separation attempt is best left to the direct heroic actions of the PCs. *Break enchantment, dispel evil*, or *remove curse* breaks the falchion's hold automatically. Additionally, a successful disarm combat maneuver or simply rendering him unconscious and kicking the blade aside works just fine.

As soon as Aenah-Daeva dies or the PCs break the sword's hold, the blade melts into an animated oil slick that speeds out of the cave, heading for the open desert. It pauses to coalesce into the oozing, dripping liquid shape of a black cobra and speaks to the characters telepathically. "You think to destroy me? You have no comprehension of the millennia of torment and suffering poured into every second of my creation! You've won this day, but I remain a blight upon this world!" It hisses. "Know this and despair!" It then flees into the desert, its curse echoing in the party's minds.

Alternatively, the PCs might try to disarm Aenah-Daeva before he's reduced to 40 hit points, even before the black sword makes its nature known. If this occurs, the scene depicted above can be altered to accommodate this development. Laleh appears and makes her plea. *Fana al-Besra* uses *suggestion* to compel Aenah-Daeva to pick the falchion back up Aenah-Daeva spends a few rounds trying to get the sword back before he comes to his senses and confesses the weapon's unwholesome grip on his mind. At that point, Fana al-Besra flees into the desert in liquid snake form as described, and father and daughter can be reunited.

TREASURE: Aside from his armor and his wedding ring, which he stores in the hole in his heart (see *Aenah-Daeva's ring* in the sidebar), the al-Aeshma maintains a treasure trove in the small sanctum off cave 7. It contains the following items.

- A large collection of lovely paintings, each obviously created by a talented hand. Most of them show a beautiful woman that looks like an older version of Laleh (this is Laleh's mother, Soudabeh). One painting, covered by a velvet drape, sits on the floor in the corner. It depicts two infant djinn, one male and one female. Many small water stains cover the painting, as if someone has cried over it many times. A DC 20 Appraise determines that the collection is worth 2,500 gp.
- Four masterwork scimitars with strange markings etched into the blades in Nurian. A successful DC 22 Linguistics check enables the blades to be placed in a specific side-by-side formation. The pattern revealed serves as coordinates and a treasure map to the fabled Spire of Modesh, a locale inhabited by purple worms. This can be a plot hook for a future adventure.
- Seven large and very old cuneiform-scripted jugs (each worth 65 gp, total 455 gp) overflowing with silver coins (220 silver coins in each, total 1,540 sp).
- A bleached dire camel's skull (35 gp to a collector) filled with perfectly cut rubies (1,100 gp total).
- A large chest overflowing with gold coins (3,387 gp) and jewelry (2,200 gp total).
- The following magic items: an emerald gilded hard leather case, containing a *carpet of flying* (5 ft. by 5 ft.), a gold key that functions as a *chime of opening* with 10 charges, and a *clear spindle ioun stone* grasped inside a severed, mummified hand.

The Black Sword

Fana al-Besra means "Ecstasy of Flesh." When the Wind Lords condemned Aenah-Daeva to millennia of torment, they thought to strip him of the power of the wish. As puissant as those unearthly sultans are, it was beyond them to neutralize a djinni's partial mastery of reality, which has been ingrained in their nature since the dawn of time (and is expressed as the wish ability). Although the Wind Lords were able to suppress Aenah-Daeva's wishcraft, that primal power didn't just go away. In fact, it manifested differently after they abandoned Rabak Seun to his suffering. His act of selfless love was the cause of his inhumanly cruel punishment, so that his soul was splinted and his personality fractured. His wish power turned on itself and became foul, like a cosmic cancer. No physical hand forged this abhorrent weapon-it wished itself into existence and contains all that terrible power.

As an artifact, *Fana al-Besra* cannot be destroyed by any normal means. Rather, its essence must be reintegrated back into Aenah-Daeva—by restoring him back to the noble djinni he was before. This outcome requires the Wind Lords to overrule their earlier judgment. It does not suffice for them to issue Aenah-Daeva a pardon. That would suggest a transgression that has been forgiven. Instead, the djinni sultans must admit that the law that Rabak Seun violated was unjust. While this might seem like a trivial difference, they are loath to admit to misjudgment. This may not make sense to the PCs, and that is intentional. The laws of mortal and spirit are different, and each resists the imposition of the other. Destroying an artifact requires a mighty deed, and in this case it requires godlike beings to change their mind.

Fana al-Besra

- Slot none; Aura strong necromancy; CL 17th; Weight 16 lbs.
- Alignment chaotic evil; Senses blindsense, darkvision (60 ft.), *read magic*

Intelligence 12; Wisdom 12; Charisma 20; Ego 26 Language telepathy (Auran, Southlands Common)

Aenah-Daeva's Ring

Aura strong conjuration; CL 17th Slot ring; Price 125,000 gp; Weight — DESCRIPTION

Aenah-Daeva's jeweled wedding ring is the only

memento of his former life with his beloved, Soudabeh. Aenah-Daeva binds himself to the ring once more and makes it a gift to the PCs for reuniting him with his daughter. The ring turns into a variant *ring of djinni calling*. In this circumstance Aenah-Daeva is still a prisoner of Kala Hamam, but the Lords of the Air grant him a slight reprieve for his unexpected and heartfelt oath of service to mortals—something Aenah-Daeva had sworn he would never do again. As a result, the ring's wearer can call upon Aenah-Daeva once a week, for a maximum of one hour each time, to perform a good act. When the act is complete, he is sent back to Kala Hamam. If he is commanded to perform any evil or selfish act, he is sent back immediately. Rubbing the ring (a standard action) calls Aenah-Daeva, who appears on the following round by means of a special gate. The ring also acts as a *ring of protection* +1. If Aenah-Daeva dies, the ring becomes nonmagical and worthless.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Forge Ring, gate; Cost 62,500 gp

DESCRIPTION

This +2 unholy adamantine falchion of life-stealing rarely chooses to "speak," instead preferring to read surrounding thoughts. Inhabited by a malicious evil, it senses those that have murderous intent and speeds toward such an individual when it seeks a new wielder. It seduces a potential wielder with promises of bloodshed and vengeance. Its wicked black blade is flecked with gold, with a large, pulsating ruby set in the pommel. The hilt and grip are cast to resemble a strange serpent, coiled to strike, with the ruby grasped in its fangs. The sword has no dedicated purpose (or power) other than its personal desire to cause ruin. *Fana al-Besra*'s life stealing abilities function identically to a *sword of life stealing*. Furthermore, it has the following powers.

• Three times per day, *Fana al-Besra* can cast *deathwatch*, *detect thoughts* (DC 17), and *suggestion* (DC 18).

It pleases the lady of the Riad of the Brisk Winds to take notice of your strong arms and fearless hearts. She rejoices in your tranquility and magnificence and stretches forth her hands to the gods in heaven that they might prolong your stay in Siwal. And if it pleases you, she would offer you a repast at her humble abode. Jf you would partake, bring yourself to the Old Gate by dusk, and pass within. Your steps should carry you past the Souse of Mehmet and unto the turning of the way past the Garden of Wisdom, and along the street unto the dwelling with the blue archway. If you find yourself by the great granary, you should turn about and retrace your steps unto the arch. Opportunity and wealth await you, should you accept this most humble invitation.

• Once per day, *Fana al-Besra* can assume liquid form and move of its own accord as an oily black substance, with a base speed and climb speed of 60 ft. It can remain in this form for up to 4 hours.

DESTRUCTION

The Wind Lords must exonerate Aenah-Daeva of wrongdoing, restore his existence as a djinn vizier wholly and completely, and reintegrate *Fana al-Besra* into his being.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs slay Aenah-Daeva, Laleh is beside herself with grief and rage. Eventually she flees, vowing revenge on the party.

If the PCs spare Aenah-Daeva and break *Fana al-Besra*'s hold, the redeemed djinni embraces his daughter and weeps uncontrollably. Aenah-Daeva allows the characters to take anything they want from the Black Bath (including the scimitar from the Pit of Feasts, which he retrieves for them). He drives away the flies and then encourages the PCs to stay and rest for a few days, and enjoy the bath's cool waters.

Laleh embraces each of the PCs as friends, and asks them to forgive her for her trickery and capriciousness in obtaining their aid. No matter what was discussed in Siwal, she will not accept any treasure. Instead, she offers her friendship for life.

Whether the PCs accept Aenah-Daeva's offer to stay or not, upon their departure he gifts them with a special ring (see sidebar). Aenah-Daeva is still a corrupt creature (his alignment is changed to neutral), but his enduring love for his children proves that he can be redeemed. Even though the Wind Lords still keep Aenah-Daeva imprisoned at Kala Hamam for his past transgressions, the site becomes much less haunted and dangerous.

After it escapes into the desert, *Fana al-Besra* finds another soul to possess—Laleh's angry brother, Arad (if he survived). Distraught since his defeat, Arad quickly falls prey to *Fana al-Besra*'s promises of revenge. Several months later, a djinni bearing Arad's description gains infamy as "The Butcher of the Waste," the vicious leader of a bloodthirsty band of marauders pillaging along the silk caravan roads.



BY ARI MARMELL FOR ADVENTURERS OF 11TH LEVEL

Far to the southeast, beyond the ordered lands and lush growth of Nuria Natal, surrounded by leagues of blasted rock and sand-choked desolation, stands an unlikely bastion of civilization. Here, a tiny trickle of the great River Nuria ends at an oasis too small to be worth the ink necessary to mark it on any map. Here the sands literally turn black, spreading like drying blood from the base of a pyramid too narrow, too awkward, too twisted to be the result of any skilled hand. Or possibly any sane one.

Also spread at the monument's feet is a tiny village, a community that has taken the name Black Sands. Numbering less than a hundred, the people here are insular and hostile, though their enmity is often masked by a fragile facade of amiability. They have their own reasons for welcoming outsiders, reasons that have nothing whatsoever to do with friendship, but rather speak to a history and a bloodline of otherworldly malice. And they aren't even the worst things here....

Although written for use in the Southlands campaign setting, *The Pyramid of Black Sands* can be dropped into almost any setting you prefer. The scenario is best suited for four or five characters of 11th level, but you can modify it for use at almost any level with a bit of effort.

Adventure Background

Neither Black Sands itself, nor the pyramid looming over it, come from anything resembling a traditional background. Understanding how the current situation came to be will enable you to run the scenario more effectively, and also to use it as a jumping-off point for future adventures.

Slaves of the Serpent

Centuries before Nuria Natal became the kingdom it is today, a great wizard arose among the now nigh-extinct serpent people. Even more obsessed with mastering magic than others of his ilk, the creature Vaashkennathka sought a means of continuing his efforts beyond death. Through research and spell, he delved into the knowledge of the planes, seeking a form of immortality great enough to satisfy him.

As his obsession grew, Vaashkennathka gathered his apprentices, minions, and mammalian slaves—mostly humans and dwarves—and set up residence far from civilization, where a narrow tendril of the Nuria prodded at the wastes of the Sarklan. Here his servants built a

THE PLATEAU OF LENG

Throughout the worlds of the Material Plane, many have come to dread the sight of the black sails. The ebony galleons of Leng drift on the currents between planes, and few civilizations seem beyond their reach. Sometimes the denizens of Leng come to trade, offering riches in exchange for strange magics or ancient secrets. Sometimes they come to advise, whispering in the ear of king or criminal as befits their agenda. Sometimes they come for slaves, taking whom they wish for their labors, experiments, or worse. And sometimes their objectives are utterly unknowable, for the denizens do not think as humans or dwarves do, or even as the more monstrous inhabitants of the natural world do. A pocket dimension of brutally harsh conditions and creatures unlike anything in the natural world, Leng is the source of many of this adventure's horrors. Like a number of the *Pathfinder* RPG's most hideous monsters and locales, Leng is inspired by the work of author H.P. Lovecraft.

Lovecraft is not to everyone's tastes, however, and you are by no means required to incorporate Leng into your own campaign. The masters of Black Sands could just as easily descend from creatures of the Abyss, Pandemonium, some distant and corrupted land on the Material Plane, or anywhere else of chaotic evil mien that best fits your game. village, and here the serpent wizard cast great magics. Some were drawn from his own talents, others from the scrolls and staves of his people, but all were devoted to one purpose: to make the newly founded village and its environs impenetrable to dimensional magic. No teleportation; no *gates*; no *plane shift*—other, of course, than those employed by Vaashkennathka himself.

Then Vaashkennathka declared that he would soon return with the secrets of other worlds—and, to the shock of his servants and slaves, promptly fell into a deep slumber, along with the most powerful of his apprentices.

Dreams and Nightmares

Years became decades, and the village grew. Initially the remaining serpentfolk kept order among the others, but the humans and dwarves rapidly grew too numerous for them. Because the reptiles had the skills to govern, the people permitted them to remain in charge—with the understanding that any mistreatment or abuse of power would quickly see them destroyed.

Then, in a single night, every man, woman, and child had nightmares of a horrid battle. Of spells and hexes exchanged over the deck of a black ship, while the ship was tossed about in a tempest of alien seas beneath a starless sky. Not each vision was identical; rather, one followed from the last, as though the villagers individually witnessed the traverse of a genuine vessel that had somehow become lost in the world of dreams.

When the sun rose the next morning, that same black ship lay wrecked upon the banks of the tiny stream, a waterway far too small to accommodate it. Even with its hull staved in, the ship emanated a palpable feeling of unease, so that only the bravest would approach. And from that wreckage came the survivors of the ship's awful struggle, of the ambush that had been laid just beyond the borders of a horrid planar plateau: First emerged Vaashkennathka, then a handful of the dread and inhuman denizens of Leng. The people watched the injured outsiders in horror as the creatures' blood ran but did not spill from their wounds, as their damaged flesh failed to bruise.

They are unlike mortal beings, the people of Leng; they feel pain differently, think differently. The serpentmage was patient, though, and after some years of study and experimentation, even these mad creatures were compelled to give up their secrets. Of all the lore Vaashkennathka extracted, perhaps the most vile was the answer to his lifelong quest. He would become immortal and all but indestructible.

After another year and more of preparation, Vaashkennathka gave himself to undeath, becoming one of the world's earliest liches—and, using means unknown outside the confines of Leng, created a phylactery all but invulnerable to even the greatest magics.

The lich, however, would be distracted and disoriented during the ritual of transformation, and the denizens of Leng had not been idle. Only two, named Tsourga and Vuldeng, remained neither transformed nor slain by Vaashkennathka's experiments, but these two had rallied many of the villagers, the humans and dwarves who had come to prefer their decades of relative freedom. By catching Vaashkennathka at the very end of his transformation, they were able to destroy the newly undead creature before he could react.

Temporarily, at least.

The Pyramid

For a time, the villagers kept watch over the phylactery, destroying each new body that emerged as Vaashkennathka began to re-form. They knew, however, that this could be only a temporary solution—as did Tsourga and Vuldeng, who hesitated to depart until the threat of the serpent-lich had been truly ended. They knew not how to destroy the phylactery, for it proved immune to any physical damage and any magic they could inflict upon it.

Thus did those last two aliens trek into the desert, seeking the edges of the magical barrier that kept them from stepping between worlds. From there, Tsourga and Vuldeng returned to the Dimension of Dream, where they acquired raw material not quite like any natural stone, and workers not quite like any natural creature.

The pyramid, which should have required years to construct, was completed in weeks. Using their own power and the magic of the surviving serpentfolk—who knew better than to protest—the denizens of Leng constructed a framework from the wooden timbers of their ship, to support those not-quite-normal stones. They placed guardians and constructs, some of their own creation and some the result of Vaashkennathka's experiments, within. Warped ushabti, undead aliens, and other formidable creatures all stood between the outside world and the final resting place of the serpent-lich.

Then they departed, those final two survivors, presumably returning to the vile landscape whence they came.

Today

Generations passed. The sand in and around the village became a glistening black color, tainted by the interaction of the old spells and the corrupt magic within the pyramid. The villagers split into two overlapping groups: normal humans and dwarves, both living beneath the rule of those that had the blood of Leng in their veins—the result of Vaashkennathka's having bred them together many times in the course of performing his procedures.

Today the people of Black Sands remember only bits and pieces of their history, and it is couched in the obscuring veil of myth. They believe that their upper class descends from some great savior, thus granting those individuals the right to rule. They believe that they should turn over any travelers to their rulers for enslavement or experimentation, for the descendants of Leng have inherited much of their forebears' mad urges.

And they know not what lies within the crooked pyramid in whose shadow they dwell, only that it is their sacred duty to keep any outsiders from entering.

Part 1: Approaching Black Sands

The pyramid is the first hint that something other than more barren desert lies ahead. It rises into sight above the trackless dunes, slowly, somehow ominously. Even from a distance, it looks unlike the pyramids, tombs, and monuments of Nuria Natal. Its steps are uneven, its spire twisted, as though the entire edifice were built ever so slightly ... crooked.

A small village reveals itself as one draws near the pyramid, spreading outward from its base. It appears to be little more than a smattering of huts and shops, with few buildings taller than a single story. As with the pyramid, the town's layout is just slightly off kilter. While the larger and more worn structures are built along logical lines, leaving obvious roadways between them, the newer buildings seem to have been plunked down anywhere, in some cases even blocking what would otherwise be a convenient thoroughfare.

Along one side of the village, some distance from the pyramid, a tiny stream—barely more than a trickle through the desert—wends its way to a small, sparkling pool.

All of this detail seems secondary, however, to the environment itself. Around the pyramid, throughout the village and for hundreds of yards beyond, the desert itself is somehow stained. The sands here are a deep and glistening black.

The Town

Although Black Sands is clearly an odd place, it doesn't initially appear overtly hostile or hazardous.

Black Sands

LE village

Corruption +0; Crime +0; Economy -4; Law +2; Lore -4; Society -4

Qualities insular, racially intolerant (all but humans and dwarves)

Danger 0 (until the whole village turns against the PCs); **Disadvantages** cursed, impoverished

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government council

Population 101 (58 humans, 30 dwarves, 8 fiendish humans, 5 fiendish dwarves)

NOTABLE NPCS

Mouth of the Council Kesophoth (LE male fiendish human rogue 10)

Chief Experimenter Aharamun (LE female fiendish human wizard 9)

Loremaster Tahnakophet (LE female fiendish dwarf witch 10)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value —; Purchase Limit 50 gp; Spellcasting — Minor Items —; Medium Items —; Major Items — Note: Due to the unusual nature of Black Sands, and its innate (if concealed) hostility to the PCs, most of these values are different from what the rules might otherwise indicate. Under no circumstances will the people of Black Sands sell the PCs magic items or spellcasting services.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Pulling PCs into this adventure, or working it into an ongoing Southlands campaign, should prove relatively simple. Some possible means of doing so are provided here.

Ancient Treasures: The few tales and rumors that speak of Black Sands suggest that some great prize—perhaps wealth, perhaps ancient magic and knowledge—awaits within the pyramid. Even many of the people of Black Sands believe this, since they have long since forgotten precisely *why* they defend and revere the monument.

Some of these rumors might have been deliberately planted, perhaps by serpentfolk who have somehow unearthed knowledge of Vaashkennathka and hope to see him restored. This is a good option if you want introduce a recurring "behind the scenes" villain.

Search and Rescue: A merchant caravan on the way to Nuria Natal was driven from its route, perhaps by

a natural phenomenon such as a sandstorm, perhaps by bandits or monsters of some sort. In any event, one of the caravan guards—delirious from dehydration and heatstroke—stumbled his way back to civilization, raving about a "village on the blackest sands" of which he caught a glimpse, just before he was separated from the others.

The PCs might be swept up in this search simply for any reward offered, or because they feel it's the right thing to do, but you can also give this a more personal touch. Include the relative of a friendly NPC among the missing. The PCs' friend might ask their aid as a personal favor.

Perils of Exploration: Perhaps the PCs have been driven off the main byways during a journey, or are traveling within the bounds of the Sarklan Desert for their own reasons. The whims of fate might cause them to stumble onto Black Sands by (seeming) coincidence.

The People

The citizens of Black Sands attempt to make the PCs feel welcome at first, though their social graces and attitudes are somewhat stunted from disuse. (Any character who attempts a Sense Motive check against any of the native population gains a +2 circumstance bonus.) If possible, the villagers lull the PCs into a feeling of safety, allowing them to settle in or even sleep before attempting to subdue them for experimentation by the village rulers. If they cannot accomplish this, or if the PCs fight back, most of the citizens retreat, leaving combat to those among them who are actually trained for such things.

In any case, whether they are faking friendship or otherwise, the people of Black Sands make it very clear that the newcomers are not, under any circumstances, to enter the pyramid. They fight hard to keep the PCs from doing so, but they also refuse to pursue the characters into—or even near—the pyramid itself. Thus, even if the PCs don't initially intend to explore, they might go into the pyramid as a place of refuge.

The tactics and exact numbers of combat-capable villagers are deliberately left vague. You can have them attack in small groups, each group easily defeated by the PCs; in groups of more skilled individuals, to provide a genuine combat challenge; or en masse, forcing the PCs to make use of delaying tactics and tricks.

Most of the opposition the PCs will face in the village are humans and dwarves with levels in the adept or warrior NPC class. (The town certainly has commoners and experts as well, but these are unlikely to engage in battle unless absolutely necessary.) The adepts and warriors range in level from 1st to 8th.

In addition, roughly a dozen of the citizenry—the upper class—are descendants of Leng, people with madness and cruelty running through their veins. These are humans or dwarves with the fiendish template, and each one has levels of fighter, rogue, witch, or wizard. They normally range from 6th to 10th level. The upper-class citizens involve themselves in battle only if it becomes clear that their underlings are incapable of handling the newcomers.

The fiendish citizens have goatish legs and hooves, tiny horns on their heads and at various other points on their bodies—such as down the spine or at elbows and knees and long, split, tendril-like tongues. They normally hide these traits beneath "ceremonial" robes and silk masks when in front of strangers, at least until those newcomers are properly secured for experimentation. (Or, of course, until battle breaks out.)

If answers are forced from them—through intimidation, charm magic, or the like—common citizens can tell the PCs that they were once under the thrall of a great wizard, and that their rulers today descend from their saviors and liberators. One member of the upper class can provide further details: that this wizard was one of the serpentfolk, who sought immortality; and that the villagers' desire to enslave and vivisect strangers is a biological imperative, not something they do toward any specific purpose. Both the common citizens and the upper class, of course, insist that nobody is permitted to enter the pyramid.

Locations and Features

Most forms of teleportation or planar travel do not work in the area of the black sands, which includes the village and its surroundings, and the pyramid itself. Line-of-sight teleportation (such as *dimension door*) functions only if the starting point and the destination are both within the black sands. Any other form of teleportation or plane shifting simply fails.

When the black sand is studied up close, it does not appear to be covered or coated in anything. It still feels and behaves as sand should. It's just black, without any apparent cause for its color. If a character casts *detect magic* on any portion of the black sand, the entire area radiates ancient traces of abjuration, conjuration, transmutation, and necromancy.

A community this tiny has few specific locations of import, since the place consists primarily of private dwellings and workshops, but a few locales do exist with which the PCs might become uncomfortably familiar.

THE LABORATORY (CR 12)

This single room takes up almost the entirety of a squat, stone structure. No windows allow light inside, and the doors of thick, heavy wood can be bolted both from within and without. The air is thick and cloying, the sort of vile stench that gets caught in the back of one's throat.

A variety of tables, chairs, and frameworks, all equipped with restraints, are scattered about the room. Along one wall, a long table holds an almost uncountable number of tools—blades, vises, screws, needles, and implements far worse—as well as a variety of cups, bowls bubbling with blue mist and purple liquids, and copper pipes over a flickering flame.

The tables and frameworks, as well as portions of the walls and floor, are encrusted with dried fluids, the least offensive of which appears to be blood.

This is where the upper class of Black Sands performs its occasional alchemical "studies" on unwilling victims. If the PCs are defeated in combat while in the village, they wake up here, each strapped to a table, a chair, or some other device. How they escape is up to them.

With a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) check, a closer examination of the tools and reagents—as well as a supply of materials shoved in the back of a small closet—reveals that this laboratory could also serve to construct ushabti, if one had access to the proper spells and raw materials. **CREATURES:** If the PCs are sneaking about in the village still pretending to be friendly, the laboratory might be empty, or might contain only a single fiendish villager. If hostilities have already broken out, the laboratory is manned at all times by the four individuals described here.

Black Sands Silencer

XP 6,400

Female fiendish human rogue 9 CE Medium humanoid (human) Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+5 armor, +4 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 80 (9d8+36)

Fort +5, Ref +10, Will +6

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +3; **DR** 5/good; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 14

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 shortsword +12/+7 (1d6+3/19-20) **Ranged** dagger +10/+5 (1d4+2)

Special Attacks smite good, sneak attack +5d6 +5 bleed

Before Combat The silencer poisons her sword and dagger if she has warning of a fight about to begin.

During Combat The silencer looks to throw a dagger at a flat-footed opponent on the first round. She utilizes positioning attack to set up a flanking situation, and watches for the soldier to use Shatter Defenses.

Morale The silencer withdraws if reduced to 20 hit points or fewer.

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8 Base Atk +6; CMB +8; CMD 22

Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quick Draw, Toughness, Twist Away^{ACG}, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (shortsword)

Skills Acrobatics +16, Bluff +11, Climb +14, Disable Device +18, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (local) +7, Perception +13, Sleight of Hand +16, Stealth +16, Survival +10

Languages Nurian

SQ rogue talents (bleeding attack +5, positioning attack, resiliency, weapon training), trapfinding +4

Combat Gear shadow essence poison (2); **Other Gear** +2 studded leather, +1 shortsword, daggers (5), amulet of natural armor +1, mwk thieves' tools

Black Sands Spiritualist

XP 6,400

Male fiendish human witch 9 CE Medium humanoid (human) Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +7

DEFENSE

CR 9

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural) hp 61 (9d6+27) Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +8 DR 5/good; Resist cold 10, fire 10; SR 14 OFFENSE

CR 9

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk whip +5 (1d3–1 nonlethal)

Special Attacks hexes (cackle, cauldron, evil eye [-4, 7 rounds], flight [*feather fall* at will, *levitate* 1/day, *fly* 9 minutes/day], slumber [9 rounds]), smite good

Witch Spells Prepared (CL 9th; concentration +13) 5th—whip of centipedes^{ACG}

- 4th—black tentacles, enervation, poison (DC 18)
- 3rd—*barrow haze*^{ACG}, *sands of time*^{UM}, *spit venom*^{UM} (DC 17), *vampiric touch*
- 2nd—*false life, glitterdust* (DC 16), *pernicious poison*^{UM}, *stricken heart*^{ACG}, *vomit swarm*^{APG}

1st—ear-piercing scream^{UM} (DC 15), enlarge person (DC 15), hex vulnerability^{ACG} (DC 15), long arm^{ACG}, mage armor

0—(at will)—bleed (DC 14), detect magic, resistance, *spark*^{APG} (DC 14)

Patron Occult

TACTICS

Before Combat The spiritualist casts *mage armor* at the beginning of the day. This effect is included in the stat block.

During Combat The spiritualist relies heavily touch and ranged touch spells and tries to cast *long arm* and/ or utilize Lunging Spell Touch early on, especially after he's flying. *Barrow haze, hex vulnerability*, and Accursed Hex make his hexes especially potent. If circumstances require melee, he casts *whip of centipedes* while still trying to remain out of threat range.

Morale The spiritualist flees if reduced to 20 hit points or fewer.

STATISTICS

Str 8, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 12 Base Atk +4; CMB +3; CMD 16 Feats Accursed Hex^{UM}, Brew Potion, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Lunging Spell Touch^{ACG}, Weapon Focus (whip), Whip Mastery^{UC}

Skills Acrobatics +8, Craft (alchemy) +20, Fly +14, Heal +12, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (planes) +14, Perception +7, Spellcraft +16, Swim +3

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Infernal, Nurian, Southlands Common

Black Sands Soldier

XP 3,200

Male human fighter 8 NE Medium humanoid (human) Init +2; Senses Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 20 (+7 armor, +2 Dex, +3 shield) hp 80 (8d10+32)

Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +3 (+2 vs. fear)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. **Melee** +1 mighty cleaving khopesh +15/+10 (1d8+8/17-20) **Special Attacks** weapon training (heavy blades +1)

TACTICS

During Combat The soldier typically starts with Dazzling Display. He then partners with the silencer (if she is still present) to use Shatter Defenses against an opponent they both threaten.

Morale The soldier fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10 Base Atk +8; CMB +12; CMD 24

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dazzling Display, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (khopesh), Improved Critical (khopesh), Intimidating Prowess, Power Attack, Shatter Defenses, Toughness, Weapon Focus (khopesh), Weapon Specialization (khopesh) Skills Climb +9, Intimidate +15, Survival +8 Languages Nurian

SQ armor training 2

Combat Gear potions of cure moderate wounds (2), potion of darkvision; **Other Gear** +1 breastplate, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 mighty cleaving khopesh

Black Sands Magician

XP 3,200

Female dwarf wizard 8 NE Medium humanoid (dwarf) Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10 DEFENSE

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 19 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural, +4 shield) hp 70 (8d6+40)

Fort +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8; +2 vs. poison, spells, and spelllike abilities

Defensive Abilities defensive training

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk quarterstaff +4 (1d6-1)

Special Attacks hand of the apprentice (6/day), hatred **Wizard Spells Prepared** (CL 8th; concentration +11)

4th-confusion (DC 17), greater invisibility

3rd—reach *frigid touch*^{UM}, *haste, ray of exhaustion* (DC 16), *vampiric touch*

2nd—*mirror image, pilfering hand*^{UC}, scorching ray, stone *discus*^{ACG}

1st—adhesive spittle^{ACG} (DC 14), liberating command^{UC}, mage armor, shield, vanish^{APG} (DC 14)

0—(at will)—*detect magic, ghost sound* (DC 13), *mage hand, resistance*

TACTICS

CR 7

Before Combat The magician casts *mage armor* each day and casts *shield* at the first sign of trouble. The effects of both spells are included in her stat block.

During Combat The magician casts *greater invisibility* and then *haste* on her allies. She uses her metamagic mastery to cast reach *vampiric touch*. She harries enemies with additional spells as she's able. She might use her *wand of fox's cunning* to increase the DCs of her and the spiritualist's spells, and cast *vanish* on the silencer to aid her in the use of her sneak attacks. **Morale** The magician is too stubborn to flee and fights to

the death.

STATISTICS

Str 8, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 8

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 16 (20 vs. bull rush and trip) **Feats** Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Reach Spell^{APG}, Scribe Scroll, Toughness

Skills Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (planes) +14, Perception +10 (+12 to notice unusual stonework), Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +14

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Common, Nurian, Dwarven **SQ** arcane bond (*amulet of natural armor* +1), metamagic mastery (1/day)

Combat Gear wand of fox's cunning (8 charges), wand of levitate (10 charges); **Other Gear** mwk quarterstaff, amulet of natural armor +1, spell component pouch, traveling spellbook (worth 910 gp, 37 pages filled)

The Sanctum

CR 7

Clearly old and just as clearly unused, to judge by the thick layer of dust and beetle carapaces all over the place, this room nevertheless was once a place of import. If the cobwebbed and grimecoated braziers and rotted kneeling cushions were not sufficient evidence of that fact, the vast array of engravings in the stone walls certainly are. They appear to be an odd form of ancient language, some combination of hieroglyphs and pictograms.

Located in the heart of the largest building in Black Sands, which now serves as a home for several of the fiendish rulers, this chamber was once the sanctum of Vaashkennathka himself. Although entry isn't strictly forbidden, most of the villagers, even those who dwell inside this building, prefer to avoid it.

The hieroglyphs were carved over the span of years, at Vaashkennathka's instruction, chronicling what was supposed to be his rise to power. If the writing is translated (from an ancient variant of Aklo)—either by magic or with a DC 23 Linguistics check—it reveals to the PCs a summary of everything written in the Adventure Background section, above, up to the point when Vaashkennathka was preparing his transformation. (The writing does not specify that he was to become a lich, only "immortal and all but indestructible."

Part 2: The Pyramid

Whether searching for treasure, looking to escape hostile villagers, or merely curious, the PCs should eventually find their way into the pyramid of Black Sands. Later, they might well wish they hadn't.

Depending on what they do there, everyone else might wish they hadn't, too.

Alien Connections

Not all the principles of the pyramid's construction are based in the rational laws or the physical dimensions that mortals are familiar with. Because it incorporates the black ship as a framework, and raw materials from the Dimension of Dream were used in its construction—based on a design by the mad denizens of Leng—the pyramid of Black Sands contains corridors and other locations that do not follow the normal rules of reality. The result is that anyone who passes into or through such a place can wind up not where they expected—or, on occasion, nowhere at all. Note that, despite being unnatural, these locations do not register as magical.

FEATURES OF THE PYRAMID

Unless specified otherwise, all areas within the pyramid have the following basic features.

Ceilings: Ceilings are 10 to 15 feet high in passageways, 15 to 20 feet high in chambers.

Doors: Doors are thick stone (hardness 8, hp 150, break DC 28). Most are not locked, but require a DC 12 Strength check to open due to their sheer weight; once open, however, they remain ajar. Those that *are* locked (as noted) require a DC 25 Disable Device check to open.

Illumination: The pyramid is lit only by whatever light sources the PCs bring with them.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Random encounters aren't especially common within the pyramid. For each hour that passes, roll 1d20 and consult the following table.

Roll	Result
1-14	No encounter
15-17	1d3 scarab beetle swarms (<i>Pathfinder</i> <i>Adventure Path #79: The Half-Dead City</i>) (CR 3–6)
18–19*	Patrol of 3–4 ushabti (<i>Southlands Campaign Setting</i>) (CR 11–12)
20*	Animate dream (Bestiary 2) (CR 8)

* These encounters can occur only once each. If either result is rolled again, treat as no encounter.

The first time the PCs encounter one of these phenomena, a DC 30 Perception check is required to notice anything suspicious before they pass through it. The check is not necessary if someone actually maps the pyramid and realizes that a particular corridor cannot possibly lead to where it seems to end. The Perception check to notice other anomalies drops to DC 24 once the PCs have experienced one. A DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) or (planes) check allows a PC to figure out what these phenomena are, once she has noticed or passed through one.

Once a character has arrived at an unnatural location's final destination (see below), she can retrace her steps if she does so on her next turn. Otherwise, the angle's exit point becomes lost in our mere three dimensions, and the trip is effectively one-way.

When rolling for results when a PC passes through an alien connection, it is simplest to have the same result apply to the entire party, assuming the others follow within a round or two. If you're willing to split the party, however, you can roll for each character individually.

Unnatural Corridors

Some of the alien connections lie in what appear to be normal corridors. A character who looks into one sees the location to which it leads, as though it were right there, and may or may not have even a faint inkling that something is amiss.

The pyramid contains three unnatural corridors, marked on the map. When a PC enters one, roll 1d12 and consult the table on the next page to determine where the character ends up.

Unnatural Points

The other sort of alien connection can appear on any solid surface—the floor, a wall, or a large item such as a pillar. The pyramid has two to five (1d4+1) of these. They can appear wherever you choose to put them, and

Unnatural Corridors Table

Roll Result

- 1 5The PC arrives at the corridor's final destination (given inside the relevant encounter area, below).
- 6 The PC arrives at the corridor's final destination, but with gravity reversed. The PC is standing on the ceiling, looking "up" at the floor. All the PC's items, attacks, spells, and other effects share the PC's orientation. This effect ends when the PC leaves the destination area.
- 7 8The PC falls through a pitch black, howling void and takes 1d6 points of falling damage. (A DC 15 Reflex save halves the damage.) Roll again; if this result comes up more than once, the damage dice are cumulative when the PC finally ends up in a location.
- The PC finds herself inside one of the pits in 9-10 area 8.
- 11 12The PC finds herself in the barren interplanar wasteland of area 11.

Unnatural Points Table

Roll	Result	
1-8	The PC appears in the area corresponding to the number rolled. (In the case of area 8, the PC appears on the walkway/platform, not in the pit.) There is a 20% chance that the PC appears with the reversed gravity effect, as described above.	
9–11	The PC falls through a pitch black, howling void and takes 1d6 points of falling damage. (A DC 15 Reflex save halves the damage.) Rol again; if this result comes up more than once, the damage dice are cumulative when the PC finally ends up in a location.	
12-14	The PC finds herself inside one of the pits in area 8.	
15–17	The PC finds herself in the barren interplanar wasteland of area 11.	
18-20	The PC finds herself on the outside of the pyramid, either at the very top or on one of the steps/levels.	

they do not move once placed. A PC accidentally passes through one if she steps on it, leans on it, or the like.

When a PC passes through an unnatural point, roll 1d20 and consult the table above.

Approaching the Pyramid

The pyramid isn't any more appealing close up than it is from a distance. Consisting of ten different "stepped" levels, the ziggurat is uneven; not one of its levels seems perfectly centered. Something is ever so slightly off about the stone itself, too. The color, the rough patches where the rock is split or cut, appear wrong when viewed from out of the corner of the eye—a wrongness that seems to disappear when the site is examined directly.

A stairway of smaller steps, carved into the larger ones denoting the levels, leads up to a dark alcove on the fifth tier of the pyramid. Presumably, the entrance lies within.



Indeed, within that alcove stands a pair of locked double doors. Beyond runs a long, dusty hallway that eventually ends at a second set of double doors—the entrance to area 1. These doors are locked as well and require a DC 25 Disable Device check to open.

TRAP: The 15-foot-by-5-foot area 10 feet in front of the double doors is trapped. A pressure plate triggers heavy rocks to fall and crush intruders. Those squares become difficult terrain until the debris is cleared away. Two hidden bypass switches (cleverly concealed buttons in the masonry) are located against the walls on either side of the pressure plate. If either of the switches is depressed, the pressure plate is not triggered for 30 seconds after weight is placed on it. The switches require a DC 25 Perception check to locate.

Falling Block Trap

CR 5

XP 1,600

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** manual; **Bypass** (hidden switch) DC 25

Effect Atk +15 melee (6d6); multiple targets (all targets in a 15-ft.-by-5-ft. area)

AREA 1: ENTRYWAY AND FALSE TOMB (CR 11)

The ponderous doors grate open to reveal an enormous gallery. A row of columns lines both sides of the chamber, and each individual pillar is its own work of art. Some are engraved with intricate, winding patterns; others are practically statuary, carved to resemble beast-headed men or coiling serpents. The walls were once covered in heavily painted frescoes, but now only traces of ink, gold leaf, and lapis lazuli remain between scattered worn spots to show what once was.

At the far end of the gallery, where angled walls cause the area to narrow, stands a stone bier and a sarcophagus.

This grand hall is very obviously—almost *too* obviously—the resting place of a much revered figure. In fact, this false tomb was built for the purpose of fooling intruders and grave robbers. The architects hoped that outsiders would believe this to be the extent of the pyramid's interior and would depart after searching this room alone, believing there was nothing more to see.

Which is not to say the builders left it undefended.

CREATURE: One of the denizens of Leng on whom Vaashkennathka experimented lies within the sarcophagus, ready to rise again. Unless the PCs are being exceptionally quiet, once they're within 10 feet of the sarcophagus, the mummy throws back the hinged lid (triggering the trap; see below) and rises to attack. If the party approaches quietly, make a secret opposed Perception check to see if the mummy hears them anyway.

Mummified Denizen of LengCR 9XP 6,400

Mummified denizen of Leng (*Bestiary 2*, *Bestiary 4*) CE Medium undead (outsider, chaotic, evil, extraplanar) Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16 Aura frightful presence (30 ft., DC 20, 1d6 rounds)

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 20 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural)

hp 105 (10d8+60); fast healing 5, planar fast healing **Fort** +12, **Ref** +13, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities unusual anatomy; **DR** 5/—; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 30, electricity 30; **SR** 19 **Weaknesses** vulnerability to fire

OFFENSE Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +14 (1d6+4 plus 1d6 Dexterity drain), 2 claws +14 (1d4+4)

Special Attacks burst of vengeance, Dexterity drain (DC 19 Fortitude save negates), dust stroke, sneak attack +5d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +15)

Constant—tongues 3/day—detect thoughts (DC 17), hypnotic pattern (DC 17), levitate, minor image (DC 17)

1/day-plane shift (self only), locate object

TACTICS

During Combat The mummy is a straightforward combatant, relying on brute strength and Dexterity drain to whittle down the PCs. **Morale** The mummy fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 18, **Con** —, **Int** 16, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 21 **Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 29

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deceitful, Dodge, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Persuasive, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +22, Diplomacy +7, Disable Device +12, Disguise +12, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (planes) +13, Perception +16, Profession (sailor) +8, Sense Motive +16, Sleight of Hand +17, Spellcraft +11, Stealth +21, Use Magic Device +18; Racial Modifiers +4 Stealth, +4 disguise when disguised as a medium humanoid Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Nurian, Southlands Common; tongues

SQ no breath

TRAP: A symbol of insanity has been placed on the sarcophagus's lid. Unless it is noticed and disabled beforehand, the symbol is triggered if someone touches the lid or if the mummy raises the lid to emerge.



Symbol of Insanity Trap

CR 9

XP 6,400

Type magic; Perception DC 33, Disable Device DC 33 EFFECTS

Trigger spell; Reset none

Effect spell effect (symbol of insanity; continuous *confusion* effect until removed, DC 22 Will save negates); multiple targets (all targets within 60 ft.)

TREASURE: As part of their effort to make this tomb look complete, the builders left considerable wealth herein. Within the sarcophagus are four heavy bars of silver (worth 200 gp each), a gold and alexandrite choker (worth 1,500 gp), and a pair of *sandals of quick reaction* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment*).

A secret, lead-lined panel is set in the bottom of the sarcophagus and requires a successful DC 28 Perception check to detect. Beneath the panel (which blocks spells

such as *detect magic*) is a cracked and stained ivory cylinder that is now worthless, but inside it are two scrolls of *greater restoration*. The builders left these scrolls as an emergency contingency in case something went awry in setting up the trap. The assumption was that the scrolls, if left unused, would be difficult to locate and thus easily overlooked in favor of the more obvious riches, if invaders survived the trap's effect and the mummy's onslaught.

If the PCs insist, they can scrape some of the remaining gold and lapis lazuli off the walls, but doing this requires 20 minutes and yields a total of only 27 gp.

Development: In addition to the mummy, the trap, and the secret panel, the sarcophagus hides one more secret. A hidden winch on the outside, which is located with a successful DC 25 Perception check, causes the entire thing—bier and all—to flip back toward the wall on hidden hinges. This movement reveals a sloping passageway leading down.

AREA 2: SLOPING PASSAGE

This narrow passage is made even more claustrophobic by old bas-reliefs along the walls. Most are too worn to be easily interpreted, though they appear to consist primarily of humanoid figures.

The slope of the corridor is far from gentle, as if the architect or the laborers meant to carve out stairs but neglected to do so.

PCs who move at half speed can traverse this hallway without mishap. Anyone who moves at over half speed must attempt a DC 15 Acrobatics check midway through the movement. On a failed check, the character falls prone and rolls 5–20 feet (or until she runs into another creature, who must then make his own check to remain standing), and takes 1d4 points of damage. Note that these conditions apply to the other two sloped passages between area 3 and area 5, and area 3 and area 9—as well.

Additionally, any random encounters that take place in these sloped corridors should have an XP award equal to CR +1 for unusual and unfavorable terrain.

AREA 3: ODD FORK

This peculiar room serves as a nexus for branching corridors that lead to rooms at different elevations. One ramp goes north and up at a sharp angle. The center of the chamber is taken up by a ramp that leads to a new passageway sloping upward to the southwest. Beyond it, on the far side of the room, another open archway leads to a continuation of the passageway south, heading farther downward into darkness.

AREA 4: THE DOOR THAT IS NOT

Either the builders of this pyramid changed their plans during construction, or one of them had a sick sense of humor. The upward passage ends here at a stone wall, on which is carved the image of a door.

PCs might scoff and begin hunting for the "secret door." They won't find it. There isn't one. This really is just the image of a door, carved into a wall of solid rock. Or at least, that's all it is *now*.

DEVELOPMENT: A DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (planes) check tells a PC that something's just a bit off, though not what.

After the PCs have passed through at least one of the unnatural corridors (and *only* corridors; points do not count), they have shifted into "phase" with the door. If they come back this way a second time, the engraving has been replaced by a genuine, unlocked door. A PC who makes the Knowledge check described above and then passes through an unnatural corridor feels an urge to return and revisit this location when she next passes through area 2 or area 3.

AREA 5: SECOND FALSE TOMB (CR 12)

This enormous chamber looks very much like the grand hall at the entrance of the pyramid—but only if the architect had begun to go mad. The gallery is asymmetrical; some of the walls run at odd slants, while others have far more niches and angles than seemingly necessary. The great carved columns stand not in rows, but scattered haphazardly through the room. The sarcophagus is, unsettlingly enough, the room's most normal feature.

The chamber's riches are piled around the base of the sarcophagus, rather than being inside it, and can be seen glinting from a distance.

If intruders realize that the first tomb is a ruse, give them a second tomb to plunder. *Then* maybe they'll leave. Or such was the thinking of the denizens of Leng.

CREATURES: Another of the undead denizens of Leng occupies this chamber, and attacks as soon as it observes the party. While he is the room's greatest threat, he's far from the only one, as possessed pillars lurk among the more normal columns, and a crystalline demon hides within the heap of treasure.

Ghost Denizen of Leng CR 10

XP 9,600

Denizen of Leng ghost (*Bestiary*, *Bestiary 2*)

CE Medium undead (outsider, chaotic, evil, extraplanar, incorporeal)

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +24
DEFENSE

DEFEN

AC 22, touch 22, flat-footed 17 (+7 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 115 (10d8+70)

Fort +14, Ref +11, Will +6; +4 bonus vs. channeled energy

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 30, electricity 30; **SR** 19

OFFENSE

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee corrupting touch +14 (10d6; Fortitude DC 22 half) **Special Attacks** corrupting touch, sneak attack +5d6, *telekinesis* (once every 1d4 rounds)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +17) Constant—*tongues* 3/day—detect thoughts (DC 19), hypnotic pattern (DC 19), levitate, minor image (DC 19) 1/day—plane shift (self only), locate object

TACTICS

During Combat The ghost attempts to remain out of sight of ranged attackers as much as possible, flitting into and through pillars and walls in order to break line of sight. It also might attempt to lure PCs into reach of the room's other guardians. It pursues enemies anywhere in the pyramid except area 8, but will not leave the structure.

Morale If reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, the ghost attempts to lure the PCs into area 6, where it can pick them off while they deal with the opponents there.

STATISTICS

Str —, Dex 18, Con —, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 25 Base Atk +10; CMB +14; CMD 32

Feats Deceitful, Dodge, Mobility, Persuasive, Weapon Finesse

- Skills Acrobatics +4 (+8 to jump), Bluff +24, Diplomacy +9, Disable Device +12, Disguise +14, Fly +12,
- Intimidate +17, Knowledge (Enter Choice) +14, Perception +24, Profession (sailor) +8, Sense Motive
- +16, Sleight of Hand +17, Spellcraft +12, Stealth +25, Use Magic Device +20; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Perception, +8 Stealth, +4 disguise when disguised as a medium humanoid
- Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Nurian, Draconic, Southlands Common; *tongues*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Rejuvenation (Su) The ghost denizen of Leng rejuvenates after 2d4 days. Unlike most ghosts, this alien has accepted its undead state and its service as a guardian. It can be persuaded to let go of this reality only when Vaashkennathka's phylactery is destroyed, after which it accepts the throes of death.

Crystalline Guardian

CR 8

XP 4,800

Advanced crystalline devil (*Southlands Bestiary* 36) **hp 112**

TACTICS

During Combat The demon waits in its carbuncle form until a PC approaches the treasure, or until it sees an opportunity to attack a combatant that is heavily distracted by the other two guardians. At this point, it transforms and attacks. The demon is bound to this treasure, so it fights to the death and does not pursue beyond the confines of this room.

Possessed Pillars

XP 2,400 each

Possessed pillar (Southlands Bestiary 78)

hp 74 тастіся

During Combat The constructs are the most straightforward of the guardians. They attack when the first PC comes near, and fight until destroyed (though they do not pursue beyond this chamber).

CR 6

CR 6

CR 3

TREASURE: Not counting the demon, the riches piled at the base of the sarcophagus include scattered coins worth 400 gp, a collection of small gems (the better to hide the demon) worth a total of 1,300 gp, an obsidian and silver hand mirror worth 2,900 gp, and an *eagle cape (Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment)*.

AREA 6: SERVANTS' CHAMBER (CR 10)

As might be expected of an ornate tomb, this adjoining chamber is full of objects meant to serve the deceased in the afterlife. Multiple statues of fired clay and ceramic represent servants or bodyguards, while sofas and chairs—ravaged by time—provide a place of rest.

CREATURES: Several of the statues, and a few pieces of furniture, animate to attack intruders.

Living Statues (3)

XP 2,400 each Terra-cotta soldiers (*Bestiary 3*) **hp** 64

Animated Furniture (6)

XP 800 each

Medium animated objects (*Bestiary*) **hp** 37

DEVELOPMENT: The secret door requires a DC 25 Perception check to locate. The warped spiral staircase beyond leads to area 7.

The final destination of the unnatural corridor in this area is the walkway in area 8.

AREA 7: VAULT OF NIGHTMARE (CR 10)

Even in the depths of this peculiar tomb, this room is particularly bizarre. Two sides are chiseled straight and sharply angled—even if some of those angles seem to serve no purpose—but the rest of the chamber's perimeter consists of smooth, uneven curves. They seem almost like waves or tides in the stone, making the chamber look not so much unfinished as partly melted.

In addition to the stairs, a passageway leads

onward where the straight and wavy walls meet, and there might be a passageway across the room as well. It's difficult to tell, because the room appears distorted, as though being viewed through a warped window.

The chamber is indeed unfinished, but not for any architectural reasons. Rather, in this one spot, the heavy use of dream materials in construction protruded into the Dimension of Dream itself. Not a genuine planar rift, but more of a weak point with just a bit of leakage, it was still perilous enough to make any further construction in this spot a bad idea.

CREATURES: Every now and again, entities of the Dimension of Dream slip through this weak patch in the fabric of reality. Usually they remain within this cavern, comforted by its quasi-dreamlike nature, until they pass back into their own realm. Occasionally, they go wandering; see area 8.

At the moment, the chamber's greatest danger is an animate dream that has recently slipped through the cracks and is starving for the sustenance of mortal mind and emotion. The greatest danger, but not the only one, as semi-sentient scraps of dream take the form grasping hands that extrude from the walls themselves.

Note that the ankhat described here are slight variants on the original creature. They do not possess keystones and are limited to this chamber by the strange artifice of the denizens of Leng. Whatever means the denizens possessed to control the ankhat, they took away with them.

Animate DreamCR 8XP 4,800Animate dream (Bestiary 2)hp 90TACTICS

During Combat The animate dream is starving and nearly feral. It immediately attacks the PC with the highest Wisdom score—unless doing so would expose it to multiple attacks from intervening characters—and attempts to drain Wisdom with an attack or two before using spell-like abilities on its targets.

Morale It fights to the death. If it pursues the PCs beyond this room, it has a 95% chance of vanishing and reappearing in the pits at area 8, where it remains trapped.

Bad Dreams in the Walls (4)

XP 1,200 each

Ankhat (*Pathfinder AP#79: The Half-Dead City*) N Small outsider (earth, elemental, native) **Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 30 ft.; Perception +8

CR 4

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+1 Dex, +5 natural, +1 size) hp 34 (4d10+12) Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2 Immune elemental traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.; structural mobility Melee 2 slams +8 (1d6+3) Ranged urn +6 (1d4+3) Spell-Like Abilities (CL 2nd; concentration +3) At will—open/close, prestidigitation 1/day—repair structure

TACTICS

During Combat The ankhat extrude from the walls and attack anything they can, except other creatures of dream. They lack the self-awareness to worry about self-preservation, but they do not (and cannot) pursue beyond this chamber. They are aware enough to attempt to flank with or otherwise fight in concert with the animate dream.

STATISTICS

Str 17, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 13
Base Atk +4; CMB +6; CMD 17
Feats Improved Initiative, Throw Anything
Skills Craft (carpentry) +6, Craft (stonemasonry) +6, Knowledge (engineering) +10, Perception +8, Stealth +12; Racial Modifiers +4 Knowledge (engineering)
Languages Aklo

SQ integrated body

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Integrated Body (Ex) An ahkhat has no true body. It instead derives its form from the structure it inhabits, emerging from the walls, floors, and ceilings as an extension of the structure. An ahkhat cannot manifest from broken areas of a structure or separate from the building's surface at any time; it can only move within the building materials of the structure it's attuned to. An ahkhat occupies the same space as whatever area of the structure it is presently manifesting from.

If an ahkhat is, for whatever reason, moved 10 or more feet away from its structure, it takes 1d8 points of damage; at the beginning of its next turn, the ahkhat immediately returns to the nearest space within its structure as a free action. If an ahkhat is killed, its manifested body disappears as it's immediately reabsorbed by its attuned structure. When not manifesting from a structure, an ahkhat can't be attacked normally, but it is instantly destroyed if 75% of its attuned building is destroyed.

Repair Structure (Sp) This functions like *make whole*, except this ability is strictly limited to the structure the ahkhat inhabits and permanent fixtures attached to the structure. For example, walls, doors, cabinets, and portcullises could be repaired with this ability, but not furniture or an adventurer's equipment.

Structural Mobility (Su) An ahkhat can move through solid walls, floors, and ceilings of any material except metal. Its movement leaves behind no tunnel or hole, nor does it create any ripples or other signs of its passage. It cannot move through significantly damaged or ruined sections of a structure until they are repaired. If an area containing an ahkhat is targeted with a *passwall* spell or similar effect, the ahkhat takes 1d8 points of damage and is immediately shunted to the nearest available space in its attuned structure.

DEVELOPMENT: Because this chamber is partly a protrusion of dreams into the real world, it often shifts in subtle and nonsensical ways. At the end of every round, roll 1d6 and consult the following table.

Roll Result 1 Something cosmetic changes-the color of a character's armor, the shape of a shield, the sound of a voice, the texture of a wall—with no mechanical impact. 1d4 PCs move 1d4×10 feet in a random 2 - 3direction. (This change occurs instantly, with no travel through the intervening space. This effect cannot send a PC out of the chamber or into a solid object.) Random portions of the floor rise or sink by 4 2d10 feet. 1d4 PCs either gain or lose (50% chance of 5 either) 2d6 hit points. If this takes them above maximum hit points, the extra are considered temporary hit points. 6 One PC is temporarily replaced by a monster (DM's choice) of a CR equal to the PC's level. The player controls this monster, which retains the PC's goals and memories. Any damage dealt to or conditions inflicted on the monster carry over to the PC when it shifts back. This transformation lasts for 1d3 rounds, or until the PC leaves the chamber.

The final destination of the unnatural corridor in this area is area 3.

AREA 8: THE DIMENSIONAL ENGINE (CR 12)

If the PCs arrive on the walkway or the platform, read:

Walkways wind around the perimeter of this vast chamber, and lead to a platform in the center of the gallery. A small room occupies one corner of that platform, but the chamber is otherwise wide open. Around the platform gape three angular pits, each giving off a peculiar azure glow.

If the PCs look down, as they almost assuredly will, or if they arrive in one of the pits, read:

The walls of this multisided pit are smooth and sheer, and illuminated by a wavering azure light that shines from below.

The "floor" is not a floor at all, but rather is the base of some sort of impossible machine. Massive cogs of stone turn this way and that, causing large crystalline cylinders to rotate, occasionally exposing cylinders of pure light beneath them. The air is filled with a faint buzz, though it seems more a sensation than an actual sound.

This room is a safety valve of sorts. The architects knew that, on occasion, creatures of dream, or from the spaces between worlds, might emerge via area 7 or through an alien connection. They worried that such creatures might interfere with area 10, or might escape the pyramid. (The denizens of Leng didn't much care whether the region was ravaged by otherworldly beasts, but they didn't want to draw outside attention to the pyramid.) Thus, they built this engine, designed to capture any such creatures as they emerged from an unnatural location or from area 7. Such creatures become unable to depart—the effect does not trap normal creatures, so the PCs are safe from it—and eventually fade back to their own space.

The engine is not 100% effective (as indicated by the wandering animate dream on the random encounter table), but it works most of the time.

CREATURES: At the moment, the pit has imprisoned several creatures that slipped through unnatural connections from other worlds. All resent being trapped, and are happy to take their anger out on anyone in the pits with them. Note that all the creatures here are wise enough to take cover in the tunnels (see below), if the PCs decide to simply lob attacks from the platform. (If the animate dream in area 7 pursued the PCs, it might be here as well.) The XP award for this encounter has been adjusted to CR +1 due to the dangerous and disadvantageous environment.

Xhkarsh (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each Xhkarsh (*Southlands Bestiary* 114) hp 102 each

TACTICS

During Combat The xhkarsh use their climb speed to their advantage (they cannot leave the pits, but can approach the top), seeking more effective attack angles or even attacking a PC on the walkway. If possible, one attempts to possess a spellcaster to aid in destroying the other PCs, and then help the other xhkarsh find a means of escape. They're not allied with the hound of Tindalos per se, but don't hesitate to take advantage of PCs who are battling the creature.

Hound of Tindalos

CR 7

XP 3,200 Hound of Tindalos (*Bestiary 2*) hp 85

TACTICS

During Combat The hound races to attack any mortal target it can reach, driven by frustrated fury. It avoids the xhkarsh rather than attacking them, and is willing to harry any PCs engaged in fighting them.

DEVELOPMENT: The huge pieces of the machine are in constant motion, albeit slowly. PCs who move at only half speed are fine. A PC who moves faster must make a DC 18 Acrobatics check or fall prone and take 2d12 points of damage as limbs are grabbed and ground between cogs. If a PC rolls a natural 1, or fails the check by 10 or more, she falls *through* the machine after being chewed. Treat this as the "falling through the void" result of passing through an alien connection.

The pits are 50 feet deep, and require a DC 26 Climb check to scale. Each pit is connected to the others by 10-foot-wide tunnels.

The unnatural corridor in the room atop the platform has its final destination in area 1.

AREA 9: THE GREAT GALLERY (CR 11)

The door leading into this room from the sloping passageway is locked and requires a DC 25 Disable Device check to open.

This uncharacteristically "normal room" narrows slightly toward the far end, leading to a pair of large double doors, but is otherwise a simple rectangular chamber. The only real oddity is the carvings that cover nearly every available foot of every wall.

Every known language in the Southlands region is represented in the carvings, as well as other, older tongues. Letters, hieroglyphics, pictograms, and more all deliver the same message: "Cursed and damned be whosoever opens these doors."

Since several of the languages are familiar, it requires only a DC 10 Linguistics check to recognize that every piece of writing, even those in unknown languages, says more or less the same thing.

Ironically, had the denizens of Leng actually used this space to tell what was beyond the double door, that might well have kept curious adventurers out. In their madness, their paranoia, and their disdain for other beings, however, the idea of simply explaining themselves never crossed their minds.

Traps: This room features a variety of mystical wards and curses. The first trap is on the floor just inside the north doors. This spell trap has an unusual feature: if it is activated, the summoning spell is not cast until 2 rounds have passed. This time delay allows the PCs to enter the room and possibly encounter the other traps without realizing that this one has yet to manifest.

The other two wards are multiple independent traps. They are triggered, or discovered and disabled, independently from each other. The PCs are awarded XP only for the traps they defeat. The symbol and the spell trigger glyph are woven together in the same designated area, and both trigger when anyone approaches within 10 feet of the doors to area 10.

Life-Draining Floor Trap XP 6,400

Type magic; Perception DC 28; Disable Device DC 25 EFFECTS

CR 9

CR 7

- **Trigger** proximity (*glyph of warding*, 10-ft.-by-5-ft. area); **Duration** 1d6 rounds; **Reset** none
- **Effect** spell effect (*vampiric touch*, Atk +9 melee touch [4d6 negative energy damage]); multiple targets (all targets in a 40-ft.-square area north of the southern doors)

Symbol of StunningCR 8XP 2,400

Type magic; Perception DC 32, Disable Device DC 32 EFFECTS

- **Trigger** proximity (*symbol of stunning*, 10-ft.-by-5-ft. area); **Reset** none
- **Effect** spell effect (*symbol of stunning*, stunned condition for 1d6 rounds, DC 20 Will save negates); multiple targets (all targets within the room)

Summon Monster VI Trap

XP 3,200

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31 EFFECTS

- Trigger proximity (*alarm*); Reset none; Onset Delay casts spell 2 rounds after activation
- Effect spell effect (*summon monster VI*, summons 1d3 Large air elementals)

Large Air Elementals (1–3)

CR 5

XP (see trap)

hp 68 each (Bestiary)

DEVELOPMENT: The double doors to area 10 are locked and require a DC 25 Disable Device check to open.

AREA 10: THE ETERNAL EXECUTION (CR 14 AND CR 11)

The instant the doors begin to swing wide, your ears are assaulted by the sounds of butchery—the wet slap and sharp crack of heavy blades digging through meat and bone.

CREATURES: A trio of ushabti have been stationed here for generations, and they have but two simple tasks: Do not allow the body of Vaashkennathka to re-form, and stop any who would presume to usher in his return. Two ushabti attack the PCs on sight and pursue them outside this chamber if necessary. The third defends the location, but never moves more than 30 feet from its sacred charge.

As soon as the doors open, two of the ushabti charge the party, so it is entirely possible that some of this combat takes place in area 9. Once the PCs have an opportunity to fully look into this room (and if two of the ushabti are still over half hp), continue with the following.

The chamber beyond is relatively small. Like the previous one, it's fairly well squared off, except for a narrowing on the far end—a sharp curve, this time, rather than straight walls. In the alcove formed by that curve, a mutilated body lies on the floor. It looks almost unfinished, as if made of random bits of muscle and tissue over bone.

Ushabti (3)CR 11XP 12,800 eachhp 148 (Southlands Bestiary 28)TACTICS

During Combat The guardians' attacks are merciless and unending. They focus on the wounded and concentrate their attacks, hoping that if they kill one or two of the PCs, the others will retreat.

Morale The ushabti do not pursue beyond area 9 (and one remains within 30 feet of the lich's corpse), but otherwise fight to the death.

DEVELOPMENT: This can be a difficult final encounter. Evaluate the PCs' condition. If they seem worn down, consider not having the third ushabti join the fight until one of the other two has been destroyed. Doing this lowers the danger level of the encounter. Alternatively, the GM can have the last ushabti speak to the players in a grave and formal tone (it speaks Aklo and Nurian). It explains its eternal vigilance and warns of the return of the lich. It states outright that none before them knew of a means to destroy the phylactery. The GM should exercise this option to avoid imposing the burden of watching over the body upon the PCs, since it solves the mystery and offers them a way out.

When the dust has settled, the PCs are left with a mystery: the mangled body on the floor. Anyone who examines the curved wall finds a square hole in the center of the curve. It's just about wide enough for a male human to stick his entire arm inside, but far too deep for grasping fingers to locate anything.

The PCs also ought to be careful about where they stick their appendages. If it is not detected and disarmed, one final trap activates 2 rounds after this hole is first disturbed.

CR 11

Breath of the Desert Trap

XP 12,800

Type magic; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30 EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (alarm); **Reset** none

Effect spell effect (elemental *cone of cold* modified to deal fire damage, 15d6 fire damage, DC 17 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets in a 60-ft. cone)

The hole runs a good 20 feet back into the stone. If the PCs retrieve what's at the very end—perhaps by using a pole and adhesive, or telekinetic magic—they find a small cube of dark metal, covered in snake-like runes. Closer examination reveals that the cube is constructed of adamantine, and *detect magic* reveals heavy auras of abjuration and necromancy.

The PCs now have their hands on the phylactery of Vaashkennathka. The architects of the pyramid designed this setup so that there was only one spot—on the floor at the center of the curve—that could qualify as nearest to the phylactery—and Vaashkennathka always appears in the nearest possible location. This was the only way to ensure that the body would continue to form in the same spot every time, allowing the ushabti to do their job. What the PCs do with the phylactery—or if they even figure out what they've got—is entirely up to them.

AREA 11: PLAINS OF NOWHERE (CR 9)

This place does not exist in the real world; it is a pocket of space between spaces. If the PCs arrive here, read:

A moment of sickening disorientation, and then you are simply . . . elsewhere. Everything is cast in a hazy shade of sickly violet, from no light source that you can see. The ground and sky are both flat, separated only by the faintest difference in hue. They blend together in the distance, making the horizon—if there is one—impossible to pinpoint.

Those grotesque skies appear empty, but the earth (if earth it is) is not quite so barren. Walls, the same color as the ground and thus difficult to see from any distance, stand scattered across this alien plain. All are perfectly angled rectangles of this size or that, but everything else about them appears random: their height, their thickness, their placement. They form no structure, simply standing with wide spaces between them, as if they had grown naturally.

Here and there, somewhat less frequently than the walls, jagged cracks form rifts in the earth. From what you can see, they're narrow enough to jump across—but wide enough to make accidents a genuine risk.

You smell nothing in the air. You feel nothing; no wind, no heat or cold. And you hear nothing—until a hideous, shrieking howl shatters the silence.

CREATURES: Two hounds of Tindalos haunt this bizarre non-space, and shred anything that dares set foot in their domain. Two of them appear 1d6–1 rounds after the first PC arrives. (If the result is 0, the hounds gain a surprise round.) They can emerge only from fixed angles or corners, so they always materialize beside the walls in this domain.

Hounds of Tindalos (2) CR 7 XP 3,200 each

hp 85 each (*Bestiary 2*) TACTICS

During Combat The hounds initially go for the weakestlooking target, and prefer to gang up, flanking, harrying, and tearing until the prey is dead. They change targets if something else poses a greater threat, however. If combat moves near to any of the walls, they take full advantage of their teleportation abilities. **Morale** The hounds fight to the death.

DEVELOPMENT: The walls are exceptionally smooth, and thus require a DC 25 Climb check to ascend, unless one is short enough for a PC to reach or jump for the top. Leaping across a rift requires a DC 12 Acrobatics check. (The rifts aren't all that wide, but the unnaturally smooth footing makes the jump tricky.) All checks and saves to avoid being knocked prone on this ground take a -2 penalty.

If a PC falls into a rift, she plummets into a howling void, as described on the unnatural corridor or unnatural point table (depending on which brought her here in the first place). At the end of every round, roll 1d6 and consult the following table.

Roll Result

1	Nothing unusual occurs.				
2	Several walls appear or disappear nearby.				
3	Several rifts open or close nearby.				
4	An additional hound of Tindalos appears				
т	through a nearby angle and joins the attack				

5–6 The PCs find themselves falling, as though they had slipped into one of the rifts.

Concluding the Adventure

The party's exploration of the pyramid of Black Sands can end in a variety of ways, each with its own repercussions.

The PCs might realize what the ushabti are doing, and what sort of threat the partially formed body represents, and choose to leave them alone. If so, they earn XP as though they had defeated the ushabti, since they have made an exceptionally wise decision—and avoided dire consequences for the region.

Odds are, however, that's not what happens.

Whether the PCs take the phylactery or leave it here, it once again begins re-forming the ancient serpent-lich. If the PCs can somehow prove the pyramid's actual purpose to the villagers of Black Sands, they might take over as guardians of the phylactery. (Though they'll still probably try to murder the PCs.) Proving such a fact is far from easy, however, and might require substantial diplomatic efforts or further adventures.

Alternatively, the PCs might have to take on the duties of the guardians themselves, destroying each new body as it forms until they can find some other alternative. If they fail to stop Vaashkennathka from reassembling, the PCs will have released an ancient, exceedingly potent, and quite possibly insane serpentfolk lich. What Vaashkennathka might do now is anyone's guess (and your prerogative), but it cannot be good for the people of the Southlands.

If they *do* figure out what it is, the party might set out to destroy the phylactery, but the defensive magics surrounding it are alien and quite potent; the cube is, in this regard, very nearly a minor artifact. Without access to spells on par with *wish* or *mage's disjunction*, the PCs have to quest for knowledge of how to destroy the thing.

That information exists, of course—somewhere on the horrid plateau of Leng.



BY AMBER SCOTT FOR ADVENTURERS OF 11TH LEVEL

Adventure Background

Over a century ago, the archaeologist and explorer Meskhenet had a reputation as one of the greatest tomb robbers of her day. Meskhenet's reputation was only partially deserved, though. She was an expert at locating and entering tombs, using her combination of stealthbased and arcane powers to bypass ancient guardians, but Meskhenet was no common plunderer. She sought the knowledge of ages past and yearned to bring the history of her people to light.

A devotee of Nakresh, the demon monkey god, Meskhenet delved deep into lost tombs to recover arcane knowledge buried for thousands of years. She often left a site more carefully hidden than when she found it, its traps reset and guardians intact. Meskhenet despised foreign tomb robbers and refused to share the knowledge of a tomb's location with any but her most trusted allies. As she built up her personal arcane knowledge, she gradually forgot her desire to bring history to light. She became selfish and ruthless in her pursuit of buried secrets.

Meskhenet lived to a fine old age, an unusual occurrence in her profession, and when she felt her death close upon her, she ventured out into the Stone Desert one last time. She followed clues hidden in riddles and on monuments and fought her way past uncountable dangers until she discovered a temple of Nakresh concealed within a rocky cliff. Meskhenet entered the temple and never emerged; she had seemingly found her final resting place with her god. A rockfall moments later buried the entrance to the temple, hiding it from the outside world.

When Meskhenet descended into the tomb to die, she found another explorer already there. A wizard had used his powers to bypass the guardians and traps of the tomb and then set up a laboratory here to carry out secret experiments. Meskhenet slew the trespasser in an epic magical battle, and decided afterward that this battle had been a final test set by Nakresh—one she had passed. The other wizard had clearly been researching a way to preserve himself after death; Meskhenet picked up his research where it left off, transforming herself into a lich before old age could take her.

Now, a hundred years later, rumors have surfaced that the entrance to the temple has emerged into the light once more. Could time have naturally revealed this old tomb? Or is this a test set by Nakresh to find a follower worthy of his attention? Either way, it's certain that Meskhenet's tomb is full of traps, guardians, and treasures, and as the news spreads, adventurers in search of fame and fortune are setting out to explore the Tomb-Palace of Nakresh.

Part One: Across the Stone Desert

Ideally, this adventure begins in a town or a city that the PCs routinely visit. One of their regular contacts approaches them with a proposition to explore the tomb-palace. Use the boxed text provided but replace Yazan's name and the meeting place with appropriate details for the PCs' contact. Yazan could alternatively be a trusted source of one of the PCs' allies, and through this ally Yazan requests a meeting.

If the PCs are new in the area, their reputation as adventurers precedes them, and a local backer approaches them with his proposal. The backer, a man named Yazan (LN human male expert 3), works as an antiquities dealer and knowledge broker in the city of Cinderass. Yazan invites the PCs to his shop, a small building filled with neatly arranged displays on shelves and pedestals. Each of the items for sale has a tag indicating the item's price and place of origin.

After the PCs arrive, Yazan produces a small gold statuette of the many-handed monkey god, Nakresh. The grinning monkey-faced demon lifts his eight hands to the sky, each one closed and seemingly concealing an object within its fist. Nakresh's teeth are chips of lapis lazuli that shimmer in his wide, pointed grin.

"This is Nakresh the Many-Handed," Yazan says, "patron of thieves and wizards. I'm sure you've all heard the tales of his deeds. How he slipped a ring off Bastet's finger without her notice, because he liked the way it sparkled? His followers have always coveted wealth in any form, but arcane practitioners also follow his doctrine. I've heard that many seek to steal precious spells with the same devotion that others steal gold and jewels."

Yazan sets the statue down carefully on the counter. "There's a story of one of these wizard devotees who lived in the area over a hundred years ago. Her name was Meskhenet, and she was an expert in stealing knowledge from hidden tombs. When she disappeared, people said she had gone to a temple of Nakresh in the desert, and the demon god had rewarded her for her faithfulness by hiding her resting place and setting guardians and traps around her body."

With a flourish, Yazan pulls a freshly inked map from behind the counter. "It seems that Nakresh has a reason to bring Meskhenet to light again, because I heard from travelers that the templetomb has recently been discovered. A caravan passing by noticed that a rockslide had revealed the entrance. The caravan master is an old friend of mine, and he gave-well, sold-me the information first. That means we can get to the temple before anyone else and see what prizes it holds. All I ask is a mere one-fourth share of whatever you find. What do you say?"

Yazan has neither the skills nor the interest to accompany the PCs into the tomb. If the PCs protest that they're doing all the work, Yazan points out that without him, they'll never find the tomb. If the PCs bring up the danger in antagonizing a demon god, Yazan says that if Nakresh wanted the tomb buried, it would have stayed buried. "Perhaps this is a test," he muses. "Perhaps Nakresh is looking for heroes brave and skillful enough to take on his challenges. The reward could be richer than I expected!"

With a compelling argument and a successful DC 25 Diplomacy check, the PCs can wheedle Yazan down to a 20 percent share. With a successful DC 32 Diplomacy check, Yazan agrees to go down to 15 percent, but with the caveat that he gets first pick of the treasure to determine his share. Otherwise he is content to allow the PCs to determine what portion of the treasure he receives, though he states a preference for art objects and jewels.

Once the PCs and Yazan reach agreement, he provides them with the map. The tomb-palace is a week's journey into the Stone Desert, hidden in a deep ravine. The PCs encounter no difficulty in traveling to the tomb-palace, but once they reach their destination, they find they're not the only ones looking for Meskhenet's resting place.

AMBUSH IN THE RAVINE (CR 11)

Yazan's contact in the caravan is not the only individual who has noticed the entrance to Meskhenet's tomb. A pack of gnolls scouting the area for their raiding group saw the tomb doors and relayed the information when they returned to camp. Their leader, Zafiah, recognized from the scout's description that the tomb was one of Nakresh's sacred places. As a disciple of Nakresh, Zafiah believes she is destined to claim the tomb and the riches within for herself. She immediately dispatched a group of gnolls to guard the entrance while she broke camp and prepared the rest of the pack to follow. The advance group of gnolls is staking out the tomb from the concealment of a cluster of fallen rocks.

Unless the PCs take precautions, the gnolls spot them advancing down the ravine and attack. The PCs might not initially realize the threat the gnolls present, but Zafiah's training and Nakresh's favor (or so the gnoll leader tells her troops) makes the pack much more dangerous than average gnolls.

Four gnoll snipers hide on ridges above the ravine, two on the north wall and two on the south. The north ledge is 15 feet high, and the south ledge is 20 feet above the ravine floor. Both ledges provide cover, which permits the archers to make ranged sneak attacks. Four more gnoll skirmishers hide behind rock outcroppings. The skirmishers wait for the archers to fire before they charge out of hiding and attack the PCs.

Gnoll Snipers (4) CR 5				
XP 1,600 each				
Male or female gnoll rogue 6				
CE Medium humanoid (gnoll)				
Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10				
DEFENSE				
AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +1				
natural, +2 dodge vs. traps)				
hp 66 each (8 HD; 2d8+6d8+30)				
Fort +8, Ref +9 (+2 vs. traps), Will +1				
Defensive Abilities evasion, uncanny dodge				
OFFENSE				
Speed 30 ft.				
Melee mwk spear +7 (1d8+1/×3)	5			
Ranged +1 longbow +11 (1d8+1/×3)	F			
	a (39			



Special Attacks sneak attack +3d6 TACTICS

Before Combat The gnoll snipers conceal themselves on the rocky shelves above the ravine and keep watch for intruders. It is their role to launch the ambush, preferably with a surprise round.

- **During Combat** The gnolls on the north ledge concentrate their fire on an enemy wearing the heaviest visible armor, while the gnolls on the south ledge concentrate fire on an enemy wearing no armor (or the lightest visible armor). Between shots, the gnolls attempt to hide behind the rock cover so they can pop out and deliver another sneak attack next round.
- **Morale** Under Zafiah's command, the gnolls fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 19, **Con** 17, **Int** 10, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 8 **Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20

Feats Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow)

Skills Bluff +10, Disable Device +15, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (local) +11, Perception +10, Stealth +15, Survival +6

Languages Gnoll, Southlands Common

SQ trap sense +2, trapfinding +3

Other Gear +1 studded leather, +1 longbow, mwk spear, 75 gp

Gnoll Skirmishers (4) CR 5
XP 1,600 each
Male or female gnoll ranger 6
CE Medium humanoid (gnoll)
Init -1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13
DEFENSE
AC 18, touch 9, flat-footed 18 (+8 armor, -1 Dex, +1
natural)
hp 72 each (8 HD; 2d8+6d10+30)
Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +4
OFFENSE
Speed 20 ft.
Melee +1 <i>scimitar</i> +11/+6 (1d6+5/18–20), mwk short
sword +11 (1d6+2/19-20)
Ranged spear +6/+1 (1d8+4/×3)
Special Attacks favored enemy (earth outsiders +2,
humans +4)
Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 3rd; concentration +5)
1st—charm animal (DC 13), entangle (DC 13)
TACTICS
Before Combat The gnoll skirmishers conceal
themselves in the rockfall around the entrance to
the tomb. They prepare to cast <i>entangle</i> the moment
enemies come into view.
During Combat The gnoll skirmishers charge into
battle, focusing on enemies the gnoll snipers have not
yet targeted. They flank enemies whenever possible and
prevent their targets from easily retreating.

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Morale Under Zafiah's command, the gnolls fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 8, **Con** 17, **Int** 8, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10 **Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 20

Feats Endurance, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Focus (short sword)

Skills Climb +9, Handle Animal +11, Perception +13, Survival +13

Languages Gnoll, Southlands Common

SQ favored terrain (desert +2), track +3, wild empathy +6 **Other Gear** +1 *splint mail*, +1 *scimitar*, mwk short sword, 75 gp

DEVELOPMENTS: If she escapes, Zafiah comes back with six more gnoll skirmishers and six gnoll snipers, after the PCs enter the tomb-palace. Zafiah quickly evaluates the situation and then enters the structure with two skirmishers and two snipers, leaving the rest outside to guard the entrance. Zafiah hangs behind the four gnolls she brings with her into the tomb-palace and watches carefully for signs of an ambush.

There's no firm timeline for when the PCs encounter Zafiah and her quartet of gnolls. At some point after the PCs have cleared several rooms and recovered at least one cache of puzzle tiles, the gnolls attack from the rear. Zafiah calls off the attack when the tables turn against her forces, using her *cloak of the mountebank* to return to the band of gnolls outside. There she calls on her remaining gnolls and sets up an ambush for the PCs at the entrance for whenever the PCs leave the tomb.

The gnolls can arrive on the scene whenever it's dramatically appropriate. If the PCs have an easy time in the dungeon and quickly overcome its guardians, the gnolls could arrive on the heels of a difficult fight and engage the characters when their resources are strained. Alternatively, once the PCs have collected all the puzzle tiles and discovered how to open Meskhenet's tomb, Zafiah could appear at the last minute to seize the prize for herself.

Zafiah

CR 9

XP 6,400 Female gnoll rogue 3/wizard 7 CE Medium humanoid (gnoll) Init +9; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 17, flat-footed 14 (+2 armor, +1 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural, +1 dodge vs. traps) hp 74 (12 HD; 2d8+3d8+7d6+24) Fort +8, Ref +10 (+1 vs. traps), Will +6 Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 sickle +6/+1 (1d6) **Ranged** spear +11/+6 (1d8-1/×3) Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +11) 4th—confusion (DC 18), fire shield, rainbow pattern (DC 18)

3rd—fireball ×2 (DC 17), heroism, protection from fire 2nd—blur, burning gaze, invisibility, protection from arrows, scorching ray

1st—burning hands ×2 (DC 15), color spray (DC 15), disguise self, protection from law, silent image (DC 15) 0 (at will)—detect magic, drench (DC 14), ray of frost, resistance

TACTICS

Before Combat If Zafiah believes she can catch her enemies by surprise, she casts *fire shield* and *invisibility sphere* to conceal as many of her gnoll allies as possible. **During Combat** Zafiah tries to take out as many enemies as possible with *fireball* followed by *confusion*. She avoids targeting her own gnolls with *fireball* when possible, but doesn't mind catching only one in a blast. After exhausting her most powerful spells, Zafiah enters melee, attempting to flank with her gnoll followers. **Morale** If reduced to 25 hit points or fewer, Zafiah disappears using her *cape of the mountebank* and returns to the entrance of the tomb-palace to regroup with her followers. If none of Zafiah's followers remain, she tries to flee into the desert where she atones for her

failure to Nakresh and swears the PCs will die by her hand someday.

STATISTICS

Str 9, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 11, Cha 10
Base Atk +6; CMB +5 (+7 trip); CMD 22 (24 vs. trip)
Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Craft Magic Arms and Armor^B, Dodge, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Scribe Scroll
Skills Bluff +15, Diplomacy +14, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (local) +18, Perception +15, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +20, Survival +15
Languages Draconic, Gnoll, Southlands Common,

Languages Draconic, Gnoll, Southlands Common, Terran

SQ rogue talents (fast stealth), trap sense +1, trapfinding +1, arcane bond (holy symbol of Nakresh)

Combat Gear *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), alchemist's fire (2); **Other Gear** +1 *sickle, belt of incredible dexterity* +2, *bracers of armor* +2, *ring of protection* +1, *cape of the mountebank*, travel spellbook (contains all prepared spells), 85 pp

Part Two: The Tomb-Palace Revealed

1. SANDSTONE GATES (CR 10)

Stone double doors, twelve feet tall and eight feet wide, sit deep in the side of the ravine. A carved monkey head grins from the center of the door, mischievous or malevolent depending on the angle from which it is viewed. Dust and grit lies heavily in the furrows of the carved whorls that surround the image of Nakresh, indicating that the entrance has been buried for some time. Pebbles and fragments of stone lie in a thick bank against the base of the door.

The rockslide only partially revealed the door, and an hour's steady work (*soften earth and stone* reduces this time to 30 minutes) is required to clear away the remaining debris. Even when the doors are cleared, though, they prove difficult to open. The carved mouth of the monkey demon is 4 inches deep, and the door's good-quality lock is hidden in the back of the opening. A permanent *arcane lock* spell on the door increases the lock's Disable Device DC to 40. A *dispel magic* spell (with a target caster level check of 25) or a *knock* spell reduces the lock's Disable Device DC to 30.

TRAP: A trap also guards the door; the monkey demon's mouth is ready to breathe fire on an unwary tomb robber.

Fire-Breathing Monkey Demon Trap CR 10

XP 9,600

Type magic; Perception DC 34; Disable Device DC 34 EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (*darkvision* and *see invisibility*); **Reset** automatic

Effect 5d6 fire damage and 5d6 profane damage; DC 20 Reflex for half damage; multiple targets (all targets in a 30-ft. cone)

2. NAKRESH'S WELCOMING HANDS (CR 10)

A fine layer of dust coats the floor of this vast hall. Beneath the dust stretches a perfectly flat black marble floor from which rise four black marble pillars. Sandstone walls stretch up to reach a vaulted ceiling, seemingly carved out of the desert rock itself. Four golden pillars stand against the western wall, and four matching ones against the eastern wall. When they reach the ceiling, the golden pillars end in golden paws that reach across the arch, not quite touching each other, as if the entire hall were wrapped in Nakresh's golden embrace. Three exits lead from this chamber: two doors to the east and west, and a set of double doors to the south.

CREATURES: When the PCs first enter this area, the possessed pillars become aware of them but don't immediately attack. The pillars were crafted with instructions to attack intruders fleeing the tomb, undoubtedly injured and laden with their plundered treasure. If the PCs leave this area and return later, the pillars attack as soon as a potential target passes within 5 feet.

CR 6

Possessed Pillars (4)

XP 2,400 each N Large construct **hp** 74 (*Southlands Bestiary* page 78)

3. THE DESERT AND THE SEA (CR 13)

A wide and bare tile floor stretches across this large chamber. An elaborate mural on the north wall depicts a desert sandscape with rolling dunes beneath a starry sky. On the south wall, a mural depicts a shoreline where crashing waves drive against a jagged cliff.

On the other side of the room, two stone statues of a four-armed monkey-faced creature flank an arched corridor that leads deeper into the tomb. Ancient words are engraved above the archway.

An examination of the tiled floor reveals that each square is divided into four 2-1/2-foot-by-2-1/2-foot squares, each of which bears a small glyph. With a successful DC 25 Linguistics or Knowledge (arcana) check, a character identifies half the glyphs as an ancient sign for "water" and the other half as an ancient sign for "fire." A *read magic* spell also reveals this information. See Trap, below. The text above the archway is written in Abyssal and translates as "Harmony is discovered in the reconciliation of oppositism."

CREATURES: Aside from the trapped floor, another complication is that the two monkey-faced statues on the far end of the room are actually gargoyles. A hidden shaft in the ceiling has enabled them to leave this chamber to hunt, while Nakresh's magic has kept them alive. The gargoyles maintain their disguise as statues until two characters have moved halfway across the floor or all the PCs take flight, at which point they animate and attack. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check allows a character to realize that Nakresh has eight arms, not four, and might lead the PCs to be more suspicious of the statues.



Four-Armed Gargoyles (2)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

CE Large monstrous humanoid (earth) (*Pathfinder Adventure Path #48: Shadows of Gallowspire*)

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 23 (+1 Dex, +14 natural, -1 size)

hp 105 (10d10+50)

Fort +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9 **DR** 10/magic

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (average) **Melee** bite +15 (1d8+6), 4 claws +15 (1d6+6/19–20), gore +15 (1d4+6) **Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. **Special Attacks** rend (1d6+6)

TACTICS

During Combat The gargoyles hover in combat and avoid the trap altogether.

STATISTICS

Str 23, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 11 Base Atk +10; CMB +17; CMD 28 Feats Great Fortitude, Hover, Improved Critical (claws), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Fly) Skills Fly +18, Perception +15, Stealth +10; Racial Modifiers +2 Stealth (+6 in stony environs) Languages Southlands Common, Terran SQ freeze

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Freeze (Ex) A gargoyle can hold itself so still it appears to be a statue. A gargoyle that uses freeze can take 20 on Stealth checks to hide in plain sight as a stone statue.

TRAP: The entire floor of this room is an elaborate trap. Within each square, there are four smaller tiles. Two opposing tiles must be stepped on in pairs, so that a fire glyph and a water glyph are covered at the same time. Out of combat, if a PC knows what the glyphs represent and realizes the idea is to cover two different ones at the same time, it is not difficult to "hopscotch" across the room. In combat, PCs have a choice. They may treat all the squares as difficult terrain to simulate the care that must be used in moving square to square. Alternatively, they can move at their normal speed with no penalties but must attempt a DC 10 Acrobatics check per square as a special free action as part of the movement. On a failed check, that square detonates. PCs may not squeeze with each other into a single square in this instance, and movement through each square is evaluated separately. A Large creature can still navigate the room, but does not have the option to move quickly with Acrobatics checks and takes squeezing penalties the entire time.

If PC sets off a square, either by not understanding the requirement or by moving too carelessly, the trap deals either fire damage (from a fire glyph) or cold damage (from a water glyph). The GM rolls to randomly determine which type of glyph explodes. The trap perpetually sustains itself through magic; a tile is not "safe" once detonated. However an individual tile can be disarmed with a successful DC 30 Disable Device check. Once a tile has been disarmed, it remains inert and safe to stand on for 1 hour, after which the trap resets that tile.

Tandem Tile Trap

CR 10

XP 9,600

Type magic; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30 EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (alarm); Reset automatic

Effect 8d6 fire or cold damage, DC 22 Reflex save for half damage

TREASURE: A successful DC 22 Perception check allows a PC to notice that a square on the far side of the room bears no glyphs. This square is untrapped, and a portion of it can be lifted to reveal a secret compartment. Within the compartment are three small stone tiles, each approximately 2 inches by 1 inch, bearing the letters CY, ME, and SP.

4. DESCENT OF EUPHORIA (CR 11)

TRAP: Past the gargoyle chamber, the passage turns north. At the junction of the two corridors is a pit trap, but not a simple pit cut into the ground. This trap consists of a 30-foot tunnel leading south. When a character enters the area marked T, a *reverse gravity* effect causes that individual to "fall" into the pit (that is, the source of gravity is not down but shifts to due south). To observers from behind, it appears that the victim is suddenly propelled sideways through the (illusory) south wall,

whereupon the character disappears. To the victim, it seems the world suddenly tilts to the side, leading to a fall straight down into a pit.

A *permanent illusion* hides the trap; a *detect magic* spell or similar effect notices that the patch of wall radiates a moderate illusion aura as well as a strong transmutation aura (for the *reverse gravity* effect). At the bottom of the pit is a swarm of magically sustained prismatic beetles, which may render the victim of the pit trap unable to muster an effort to escape.

Prismatic Sideways Pit Trap CR 10

XP 9,600

Type magical; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 26 EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect 30-ft.-deep pit (3d6 falling damage); **DC** 30 Reflex avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area); prismatic beetle swarm at the bottom of the pit

Prismatic Beetle Swarm

XP 3,200

hp 55 (Southlands Bestiary page 79)

5. COLLAPSED CHAMBER (CR 7)

This door to this chamber is locked; a successful DC 25 Disable Device check or DC 14 Strength check is required to open the door.

Beyond the door to the west is a large, partially collapsed chamber. The carved reliefs on the walls indicate this area was once a preparation chamber for bodies. The images show priests washing and perfuming bodies, then embalming the corpses and wrapping them in bandages. The final images of the scene have been obscured by the collapse, and a spill of sand and rocks covers the floor.

The tremors that revealed the entrance to the tombpalace also partially collapsed this chamber.

Creatures: Two emperor cobras have crawled into this chamber and made it their new lair. They rise up and hiss immediately upon seeing the PCs, but do not attack unless provoked. A ranger or a druid, or a PC with access to *charm animal* or similar spells, might be able to calm the cobras or even win their trust. This chamber could be a safe place for the PCs to rest, thanks to its sturdy door, especially if the cobras can be charmed into acting as guards.

A 3-foot-wide, 14-foot-long uneven crevice (not shown on the map) allows the serpents to slip in and out of this chamber and provides a passage to the desert outside.

Emperor Cobras (2) XP 1,600 each hp 51 (Bestiary 2) **CR 7**

CR 7

TREASURE: Buried beneath the sand in the southeastern corner of the room is a clutch of three emperor cobra eggs. They are worth 100 gp each to a rare animal trainer or a gourmet.

6. DEVOTED SERVANT OF NAKRESH (CR 10 & 11)

This room was clearly once a grand temple. Images of Nakresh's sinister face leer down from the walls, and four black marble pillars engraved with demonic runes hold the ceiling aloft. A marvelous circular sandstone altar, twelve feet across and five feet tall, sits in the center of the room. Twisting, snakelike carvings cover the sides of the altar, and eight golden paws rise from the altar's center to hold an offering bowl. A shining steel longsword sits to the left of the offering bowl, and a round bronze shield sits to the right.

To the north beyond the altar, an archway leads to a trapped hallway and a locked door. A headless skeleton lies on the ground, its separated skull having rolled a few feet away.

CREATURE: If an intruder approaches within 10 feet of the altar, or if the sword, shield, or offering bowl is disturbed, the weapon and shield float into the air and the guardian of this chamber manifests. The guardian was once a priest of Nakresh who died over half a century ago. Nakresh placed his servant here as an incorporeal warrior with the head of a demonic monkey. Unlike most pharaonic guardians, this creature is chaotic evil. It attacks intruders remorselessly.

Pharaonic Guardian

CR 11

XP 12,800

CE Large undead (incorporeal) (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Osirion, Legacy of Pharaohs*)

Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 21, flat-footed 18 (+5 deflection, +7 Dex, +4 shield, -1 size) hp 142 (15d8+75) Fort +10, Ref +12, Will +12 Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal; Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect) Melee +3 ghost touch longsword +19/+14/+9 (2d6+3/17-20) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. Special Attacks insightful strike, judging gaze, soulrending wings Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th) 3/day—suggestion (DC 18) 1/day—greater command (DC 20)

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 25, **Con** —, **Int** 13, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 21 **Base Atk** +11; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 34

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Vital Strike, Stand Still, Step Up, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (longsword) Skills Fly +13, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (history)

+16, Knowledge (religion) +19, Perception +21, Sense Motive +21

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Auran, Terran; telepathy 100 ft. SQ guardian sword and shield

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Guardian Sword and Shield (Su) A pharaonic guardian can imbue any Large sword and shield with a +3 enhancement bonus and the ghost touch ability. This effect lasts as long as the guardian wields the items and for 1 minute thereafter. The guardian uses these items as if its Strength score equaled its Charisma score.

- **Insightful Strike (Ex)** A pharaonic guardian gains a +4 insight bonus on attack rolls against foes whose thoughts it has read with its judging gaze ability.
- **Judging Gaze (Su)** A pharaonic guardian's gaze attack reads the minds of those it sees, as the *detect thoughts* spell with 3 rounds of concentration. This gaze has a range of 30 feet, and can be negated with a successful DC 22 Will save. This is a mind-affecting divination effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Soul-Rending Wings (Su) As a standard action every 1d4 rounds, a pharaonic guardian can flare its wings to fire rays of soul-cutting light in two 30-foot lines extending away from it. Living creatures in the lines gain 1 negative level (Reflex DC 22 negates). A creature whose mind the pharaonic guardian has read with its judging gaze ability takes a -2 penalty on this save. Negative levels from this ability are made permanent at the next sunrise unless the creature succeeds at a DC 22 Fortitude save. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

TRAP: Additionally, the hallway leading into the room to the north (area 7) is trapped with a number of scything blades. The trap is treated as a separate encounter from the guardian.

Decapitating Blade Trap

XP 9,600

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 28; **Disable Device** DC 28

Bypass hidden switch (Perception DC 30) EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** automatic (immediate) **Effect** Atk +20 melee (3d8+3/×4); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft. square)

TREASURE: The golden paws atop the altar can be pried loose and are worth 250 gp each. The longsword and the

CR 10

heavy metal shield are masterwork but nonmagical once the guardian drops them.

Tattered remains of adventuring garb still cling to the headless skeleton, and the its backpack contains a *potion of good hope* and a *swarmbane clasp*^{UE}.

7. TOMB OF THE GUARDIAN (CR 10)

The stone door to this room is locked, requiring a successful DC 25 Disable Device check or DC 18 Strength check to bypass.

Two silver lanterns hanging from the ceiling light this small chamber. A stone sarcophagus sits in a place of honor against the far wall, its lid carved in the likeness of a hawk-nosed man holding a curved sword to his chest. A brass-bound chest sits at the foot of the sarcophagus.

Each of the finely crafted silver lanterns contains a *continual flame* that goes out when the lanterns are removed from the tomb. The lanterns themselves are worth 150 gp each. Within the sarcophagus are the mortal remains of the guardian that patrols area 6. With a DC 20 Heal check, a character can tell from examining the body is this was a human woman who died over five hundred years ago. A successful DC 25 Perception check reveals a small key hidden in the corpse's closed right hand.

Treasure: The chest in the room is locked, but using the key in the sarcophagus or making a successful DC 35 Disable Device check or a successful DC 20 Strength check opens the chest. Within is a silver and emerald armband shaped like a serpent (750 gp), a +1 *frost battleaxe*, 3,400 sp, 820 gp, and three puzzle tiles. These rectangular tiles are marked with the letters HI, PS, and CHI, and otherwise identical to the ones found in area 3.

8. GOLDEN DOORS (CR 9)

Two huge golden doors along the north wall dominate this vast chamber. Two halves of a demonic monkey face meet in the center of the door panels to form a grinning, yet malicious, visage. Thousands of tiny demonic runes only an inch across cover the rest of the doors' surface. Ten feet away from the looming portals stands a black marble table with nine shallow, rectangular indentations in its surface. Each indentation is roughly two inches by one inch in size, and arranged in a three-by-three pattern. Smaller, unmarked stone doors lead east and west out of this chamber.

The two golden doors are magically sealed by a persistent *arcane lock* effect. To open the door without solving the puzzle on the table requires a successful DC 50 Disable Device check, a successful DC 28 Strength check, or a *dispel magic* spell cast with a DC 31 caster level check followed by a successful DC 40 Disable Device check. A *knock* spell cast with a DC 30 caster level check followed by a successful DC 40 Disable Device check also opens the doors. If the gold plating is carefully removed from the doors and preserved intact, it is worth 1,000 gp. Doing this requires a DC 25 Disable Device check (or a DC 10 Craft check with any Craft skill related to metalworking). If the check fails, the plating is marred and the raw value of the gold is only 500 gp.

The table in front of the door is made of black marble and contains nine indentations on the surface, which match the puzzle tiles in areas 3, 7, and 10 perfectly. At the top of the table (nearest the door), an image of a golden eye is set into the table's surface. The nine indentations form three rows of three.

To open the north door, the characters have to place the nine tiles found in the dungeon (in areas 3, 7, and 10) in the indentations in the proper order. The tiles, when properly combined, spell out the names of three monsters, each of which has a different number of eyes. The names need to be placed in increasing order of eyes from the top row to the bottom. Thus, the first row requires the tiles to spell CY CLO PS, the second row requires SP HI NX, and the third row CHI ME RA. When the tiles have been correctly placed, the golden doors swing open ponderously with an echoing groan. As an additional game aid, the GM may wish to create the puzzle tiles on posted notes or 3 x 5 note cards, and permit the players to move them around to solve the puzzle, prior to the characters' placing them in the indentations.

TRAP: If a tile is placed in an incorrect spot, a shocking floor trap detonates, whereupon the trap resets for the next attempt. PCs with the trapfinding ability can disarm the trap, but doing so does not unlock the doors (see above for those requirements). Only solving the puzzle both disables the trap and permits passage. If this trap is successfully disabled with either method, it resets after 10 minutes.

Shocking Floor Trap

XP 6,400

Type magic; Perception DC 26; Disable Device DC 26 EFFECTS

CR 9

Trigger location; **Duration** 1d6 rounds; **Reset** automatic (immediate or 10 minutes, see text)

Effect spell effect (*shocking grasp*, Atk +9 melee touch [4d6 electricity damage]); multiple targets (all targets in a 40-ft.-square room)

9. PRIEST'S CHAMBER (CR 2)

Quiet muttering punctuated by the occasional harsh chuckle echoes in this small chamber. Tattered curtains, once fine silk hangings, cling to the rough stone walls. A decrepit wooden bed frame still holds up a limp straw mattress. Shredded bits of cloth and smashed pottery litter the floor. In the far corner of the room, an emaciated figure wearing the remnants of fine robes whispers to itself as it rocks back and forth.

CREATURE: The unfortunate soul here was once Jalat, a cleric/thief who worshiped Nakresh. During what was supposed to be a routine tomb exploration, Jalat carelessly triggered a trap and was mortally wounded. The panicked thief tried to pray to a multitude of good gods to save his soul at the last minute, but his hypocritical prayers only damned his soul for eternity. Nakresh set his fallen follower here as punishment, knowing that any explorer who was skilled enough to enter the tomb could easily defeat Jalat.

In truth, Jalat poses little or no threat to the PCs. He retains some of his intellect but has been trapped here for over a century and is mostly insane. He has no reason to immediately attack the PCs, and if they try to talk to him they find him willing to discourse, though difficult to understand.

Jalat fluctuates between thinking he has just died and begging Nakresh for forgiveness, and recalling his true circumstances and begging the PCs to free him. (The front door has been buried for decades, and Jalat doesn't realize he can walk outside the tomb now—though if he does so now, there's a chance he is cut down immediately by Zafiah's gnolls.) Setting Jalat loose in the desert is an evil act (as he will undoubtedly find innocents to prey on).

Jalat knows a great deal about the traps in the dungeon and can give hints on how to bypass them if the PCs are truly stuck. With a successful DC 24 Diplomacy check (or a promise to let Jalat free), a character can convince Jalat to give a hint regarding a specific puzzle.

Area 3: "Two by two you must proceed, step in step, heehee, or the fire burns and the water freezes!"

Area 7: "The eyes, the eyes, think only of the eyes. Fewest first opens the way beyond."

Area 10: "Nakresh, my lord, he is the patron of wizards! Show him you've been studying and he may let you pass, heehee!"

Occasionally Jalat becomes agitated and attacks, especially if the PCs refuse to show him the way out of the dungeon. After one or two rounds of combat, though, he forgets what he was doing and resumes muttering to himself.

Jalat (Huecuva)

XP 600 Male huecuva (*Bestiary 3*) hp 16

10. ARCANE HALL (CR 12)

The white marble walls of this narrow hall darken as the wall stretches from south to north, progressing through darker and darker grays until the hall becomes night black at the far end. Spiky golden runes, eight pairs in all, appear at regular intervals along the wall. An ornate black marble altar stands at the far end of the room.

With a successful DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check, a PC recognizes that the eight golden runes are Draconic in nature and represent the eight schools of magic. If a living creature moves more than 5 feet into the hall, an illusion triggers and appears in the square marked A.

TRAP: The illusion is of a bandage-wrapped mummy, decayed and brittle but clothed in a fine silk robe embroidered with the symbol of Nakresh on the chest. The mummy appears somewhat translucent and hovers a few inches off the floor. The illusion is programmed and harmless and repeats the same motion over and over again: it performs a spellcasting gesture and mouths unvoiced words, and a second later a spell effect manifests in visual form. Described below are a series of tests; whether the PCs succeed or fail at each one, the illusion of the mummy floats northwards to administer the next successive challenge.

To progress through the room, the PCs must watch the spellcasting mummy illusion, correctly identify the spell it casts, and speak the spell name out loud. Each illusion casts a spell of a different school and level (see the table below). To identify the spell, a character must succeed at a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + spell level). (The illusion is silent and does not utter verbal components, which accounts for the increased difficulty of these checks.) If a PC successfully translates the runes on the wall, this knowledge provides the school of the spell in question and reduces the Spellcraft DC by 5.

This hazard is constructed with nine stages (or subtraps) but counts as a single trap with respect to XP awarded. If a PC moves north from one row of squares to the next without correctly identifying the spell and speaking its name aloud, that stage of the trap detonates. An emanation of desiccating magic spreads out from the mummy illusion in a line from east to west across the room, and damages any creature within 20 feet south of that line. A *wall of force* effect (CL 15th) blocks off the room behind the mummy illusion, and prevents PCs from taking a running jump over the tiles or flying across the room. The wall retreats backward with the mummy

CR 2

Row	School	Spell	Spellcraft DC	Visible Manifestation
A	necromancy	chill touch	21	A black glow appears around the mummy's hands
В	abjuration	resist energy	22	A sheen of frost covers the mummy's chest
С	illusion	displacement	23	The mummy becomes blurry and indistinct
D	evocation	ball lightning ^{APG}	24	Balls of electricity float around the mummy's head
E	enchantment	symbol of sleep	25	The mummy traces a glowing symbol in the air
F	divination	true seeing	26	The mummy's eyes glow with a blue light
G	transmutation	statue	27	The mummy turns into the stone image of a pharaoh
Н	conjuration	black tentacles	24	The mummy, now physical, casts <i>black tentacles</i> and potentially entraps PCs

illusion and vanishes after the last stage. The sub-traps detonate only once per illusory test. If the PCs trigger one stage of the trap, they can remain where they are—that is, they keep whatever progress they have made going forward, even if a sub-trap is triggered. Each sub-trap emanates from a series of tiny magical runes engraved on the floor beneath the mummy's illusion, potentially enabling a character to identify and disable that stage and advance forward, without the need to identify the spell. The final stage of this exercise (at row H) brings forth the creature described below.

Horrid Wilting Emanation TrapCR 9XP 6,400

Type magic; Perception DC 33; Disable Device DC 33 EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (alarm); Reset none

Effect spell effect (*horrid wilting*, 15d6 damage, DC 20 Fortitude save for half damage); multiple targets (all creatures within 20 feet of the mummy illusion)

CREATURE: The final mummy illusion in the sequence is no illusion at all. With a successful DC 25 Perception check, a PC notices that the final mummy appears more solid than the others and stands on the ground instead of hovering slightly above it. Any character who succeeds at this Perception check is not surprised when the mummy attacks; otherwise, the mummy gains a surprise round as it attempts to cast *black tentacles*.

The characters might be suspecting a reversal of this sort, particularly since Nakresh is the patron of trickery as well as arcane magic. The PCs might have put a number of defenses in place, in which case the mummy guardian could be at a disadvantage. If the characters make reasonable precautions that might defend them against the mummy's attack, their precautions should afford them an advantage in this battle.

The mummy, who teleports in when the PCs cross into the final area, is a servant of Nakresh gifted with innate spellcasting abilities. The mummy opens combat by casting *black tentacles*, hoping the characters will mistake it for another illusion and wait patiently until the spell detonates.

Arcane Mummy of Nakresh CR 11

XP 1,600
Unique mummy sorcerer 8
CE Medium undead
Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +14
Aura despair (30 ft., paralyzed for 1d4 rounds, Will DC
22 negates)
DEFENSE
AC 28, touch 12, flat-footed 26 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +12
natural)
hp 129 (8d8+8d6+65)
Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +11; +2 vs. poison
DR 5/—; Resist electricity 5; Immune undead traits
Weaknesses vulnerable to fire
OFFENSE
Speed 20 ft.
Melee claws +18/+18/+13 (1d6+10 plus mummy rot)
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 16th; concentration +20)
4th (4/day)—black tentacles
3rd (6/day)—protection from energy, rage, stinking cloud
(DC 17)
2nd (7/day)—acid arrow, blindness/deafness (DC 16),
bull's strength, burning gaze (DC 16)
1st (7/day)—cause fear (DC 15), chill touch (DC 15),
mage armor, magic missile, ray of sickening (DC 15),
true strike
0 (at will)—acid splash, bleed, detect magic, flare, ray of
frost (DC 14), read magic, resistance, touch of fatigue
(DC 14)
Bloodline abyssal
TACTICS

Before Combat The arcane mummy becomes aware of the PCs as soon as they enter the chamber. It casts *mage armor* on itself (reflected in its statistics) followed by *protection from fire* (which can absorb up to 120 points of fire damage). **During Combat** If most of the PCs are trapped in the *black tentacles*, the arcane mummy casts *stinking cloud* to affect as many characters as possible, then wears them down with *burning gaze* and *acid arrow*. When at least two PCs threaten it in melee, the arcane mummy switches to claw attacks.

Morale As an enchanted servant of Nakresh, the arcane mummy fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 24, Dex 14, Con —, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 18 Base Atk +10; CMB +17; CMD 29

Feats Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Eschew Materials, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor × 2, Power Attack, Toughness, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Perception +14, Spellcraft +9

Languages Common, Draconic

SQ arcane bond (ring), arcane mummy, bloodline abyssal (summoned creatures gain DR 3/good), claws

Gear gold monkey face ring worth 200 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Arcane Mummy (Su) This mummy has been infused with arcane powers by the will of Nakresh. It uses its mummy Hit Dice plus its sorcerer level to calculate its caster level (this affects the CMB and CMD of its *black tentacles*).

TREASURE: Atop the altar at the far end of the hall are the remaining puzzle tiles: CLO, RA, and NX. These rectangular stone tiles are otherwise identical to the ones gained in areas 3 and 7.

11. MUMMY'S CHAMBER

This small chamber is where the arcane mummy rests in a dreamless stasis until living creatures enter the room, at which point it awakens and prepares to play its role in the puzzle/trap in area 10.

12. TIRELESS GUARDIAN (CR 12)

The door to this room is hidden in the stone wall. A successful DC 25 Perception check allows a character to notice the door.

The hieroglyphs on the otherwise plain sandstone walls in this room depict the story of a woman in traveling robes, beginning with her crossing the desert. The scenes that follow show the woman delving into tombs, fighting mummies and skeletons, escaping from perilous traps, and discovering shining artifacts. The final scenes on the wall show the woman descending into the tomb in which you now stand and entering a chamber filled with bookshelves, long tables covered with arcane equipment, and a stone sarcophagus in the center of the room. The grinning face of Nakresh looks down from each wall, carved in relief at the top of all the hieroglyphs.

In the center of this sand-floored, untiled chamber stands a humanoid figure carved of shimmering green crystal. It stirs, bringing its massive fists up into a guarded pose.

PCs who succeed on a DC 10 Knowledge (engineering) or DC 18 Wisdom check realize this is the only room on the tomb-palace that does not have a solid stone floor.

Creature: Because Meskhenet was confined to this tomb once she began her research into lichdom, she was unable to find a more secure hiding place for her phylactery. She hid it in this chamber instead, and over many years crafted a smaragdine golem to guard it. The golem attacks anyone who opens the door to, or enters, this chamber other than Meskhenet herself.

CR 12

Smaragdine Golem

XP 19,200 hp 118 (*Southlands Bestiary* page 56)

TREASURE: To more securely hide her phylactery, Meskhenet locked it in a bronze box with an amazing lock (DC 40 to unlock) and then buried the box six feet beneath the sand floor of this chamber. On a shelf carved into the west wall sit three thumb-sized rubies, each one worth 1,000 gp. Hanging above the shelf is a +2 *light steel shield*. Meskhenet hopes that anyone entering this chamber will believe the golem was set here to guard the rubies and will leave without looking for her phylactery.

Even Jalat in area 9 doesn't know the true purpose of this room, but extremely thorough PCs might decide to dig up the sand floor or use divination magic if they suspect this chamber has a dual purpose. If the PCs do find the box, within it is an ivory canopic jar with a lid shaped like the face of a monkey. A successful DC 25 Spellcraft check, or the use of *identify* or a similar spell, reveals that this item is Meskhenet's phylactery. Note, *detect magic* will not reveal the phylactery's presence unless it is dug up (at least so that no more than 3 feet of dirt covers it). After the PCs encounter Meskhenet and should they identify her as a lich, a *locate object* spell fixed on her phylactery does lead them to this spot.

13. WELL CHAMBER

A golden lantern hanging from the ceiling sheds a warm light over this circular room. In the center of the chamber, the stone lip of a well rises one foot above

the sandy floor. The well is filled with what appears to be water, to within a few inches of the rim. On the south side of the ledge that surrounds the well sit two goblets. They look identical in every respect, except for their composition: one is carved out of wood, the other made from stone. Around the edge of the well runs a line of elegant writing. On the east wall is a set of double stone doors, which stand closed.

The writing is in Terran, "You find me in water but never the sky. I'm not in the city but lurk in the wild. I won't help you to reap, but I'll help you to sow. Drink from my cup if my answer you know."

Jalat in area 9 speaks Terran and can translate the text, but only if the PCs promise to lead him out of the tomb and let him go free. The riddle refers to the composition of the cups, and the answer is the letter "w," found in "water," "wild," and "sow." This realization might lead the characters to conclude (correctly) that the wooden cup is beneficial.

A character who scoops water out of the well with the wooden cup and then drinks from the cup is healed of 3d8+15 points of damage. If a character who drinks has suffered any ability damage, that individual also recovers 1 lost point from a random ability. The wooden cup's power affects a specific drinker only once every 24 hours, and the cup loses its power if it is removed from the tomb.

If any character drinks from the stone cup, both goblets crumble into dust.

The PCs might be rightfully suspicious of the well and choose not to drink from either cup. This tomb is as much a test set by Nakresh as it is a resting place, and the demon lord of trickery likes to place puzzles in the way of explorers to see how clever and resourceful they are.

The stone doors lead to Meskhenet's tomb. They are locked with a complex lock (DC 30 to unlock). A character who unlocks the door with a Disable Device check can also attempt a DC 30 Stealth check. On a success, Meskhenet does not hear the PCs unlocking the door (though if they made considerable noise in this room, she might already be aware of their presence). A DC 24 Strength check can break down the door; a failed attempt automatically alerts Meskhenet to the PCs' presence.

14. MESKHENET'S TOMB (CR 13)

A grand chamber unfolds beyond the stone double doors. Bookshelves line the northern wall of the room, each one stuffed with tomes bound in cracked, faded leather. Glass jars, ceramic bowls, mortars and pestles, stacks of parchment, and inkpots cover two long marble tables near the north wall. A stone sarcophagus stands upright in the center of the room, and to the south an alcove holds a four-poster bed draped with brittle, multicolored silk.

A withered form hovers before the sarcophagus. Heavily embroidered robes hang from its skeletal frame, and a golden crown sits atop a skull still draped with limp, black hair. The figure stares with burning blue eyes and brandishes a staff, rasping, "You have disturbed my tomb and my research. For that, you will join me in death!"

Since attaining lichdom in the lab she commandeered long ago, Meskhenet has remained content in this chamber, researching spells and crafting magic items. She created her own staff and crown as well as the smaragdine golem that guards her phylactery and the possessed pillars in the entrance chamber.

Now intruders have come to challenge her, just as Meskhenet challenged the previous resident of this tomb. Meskhenet suspects this event, too, is a test set by Nakresh, and she is determined not to fail.

CR 13

Meskhenet

XP 25,600

Female human lich wizard 12

CE Medium undead (human)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +25 **Aura** fear aura (60 ft., DC 21)

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 14, flat-footed 23 (+6 armor, +2 deflection, +2 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 128 (12d6+84)

Fort +12, Ref +9, Will +13

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; rejuvenation, DR 15/bludgeoning and magic; **Immune** cold, electricity, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (good)

Melee +2 quarterstaff +8/+3 (1d6+2), touch +6 (1d6+6 negative energy)

Special Attacks paralyzing touch

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 12th; concentration +20) 6th—*chain lightning* (DC 25), *cloak of dreams, mass*

suggestion (DC 25), phantasmal killer (DC 24)

5th—cone of cold (DC 24) \times 2, dominate person (DC 24), feeblemind (DC 25)

4th—ball lightning^{APG} × 2, confusion (DC 23), crushing despair (DC 23), detect scrying, stoneskin

3rd—*dispel magic* × 2, *displacement, fireball* × 2 (DC 22), *hold person* (DC 22), *vampiric touch*

2nd—false life, flaming sphere (DC 21), hideous laughter \times 2 (DC 21), resist fire, scorching ray, touch of idiocy

1st—charm person (DC 20), chill touch (DC 19), color spray (DC 19), magic missile × 3

0 (at will)—*daze* (DC 19), *ghost sound* (DC 18), *ray of frost, touch of fatigue* (DC 18)

TACTICS

Before Combat Meskhenet casts *detect scrying* once per day and might be alerted to any scrying attempts the PCs make. If she becomes aware of the PCs' approach, she casts *stoneskin* to gain DR 10/adamantine, *false life* to gain 17 temporary hit points, and *resist fire* on herself (these benefits have not been added to her statistics).

- During Combat Meskhenet opens with mass suggestion, imploring the PCs to run away before they die. She casts dominate person on the first character to deal damage to her and feeblemind on the first PC she sees cast a spell. Meskhenet uses chain lightning and cone of cold to deal maximum damage to the largest number of PCs she can and casts phantasmal killer on anyone who engages her in melee.
- **Morale** This is Meskhenet's home and she cannot abandon it, nor can she leave her phylactery behind. She fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** 22, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 20

- **Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +6 (+8 trip); **CMD** 21 (23 vs. trip)
- Feats Combat Expertise, Craft Construct, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Focus (illusion), Toughness
- Skills Appraise +23, Disable Device +15, Fly +17, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +23, Knowledge (geography) +23, Knowledge (history) +23, Knowledge (local) +23, Perception +25, Sense Motive

Crown of Meskhenet

One of Meskhenet's greatest creations, crafted after many failed attempts had been abandoned, this crown never leaves her skull. The swirling gold bands recall the shape of desert dunes, and dozens of tiny emeralds, rubies, and sapphires nest among the skillfully forged curlicues.

Aura faint transmutation; CL 8th Slot head; Price 82,000 gp; Weight —

DESCRIPTION

The *crown of Meskhenet* confers a number of abilities on its wearer. First, it grants the wearer a +4 enhancement bonus to Intelligence. Treat this as a temporary bonus for the first 24 hours the crown is worn. After being worn for 24 hours, the crown also grants a number of skill ranks in Disable Device and Knowledge (dungeoneering) equal to the wearer's Hit Dice. These ranks do not stack with any ranks a creature already possesses.

Second, the *crown of Meskhenet* grants its wearer a fly speed of 30 feet (good) as if under a constant *fly* spell (though with a lower base speed than that spell usually grants).

Third, the wearer of the *crown of Meskhenet* receives a persistent +6 armor bonus to AC. This bonus comes from an invisible force effect identical to *mage armor* except that it grants a higher armor bonus than that spell usually does.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *fly, fox's cunning, mage armor*; **Cost** 41,000 gp.

+25, Spellcraft +23, Stealth +25; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Perception, +8 Sense Motive, +8 Stealth **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Giant, Terran **SQ** arcane bond (staff)

Other Gear +2 quarterstaff, belt of incredible dexterity +2, cloak of resistance +3, crown of Meskhenet, ring of protection +2, 3 packages of granite and diamond dust (250 gp each), keys to all locked rooms and chests in the tomb, gold and ruby ring (360 gp)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Rejuvenation (Su) When Meskhenet is destroyed, her phylactery (hidden in area 12) immediately begins to rebuild the undead spellcaster's body nearby. This process takes 1d10 days—if the body is destroyed before that time passes, the phylactery merely starts the process anew. After this time passes, Meskhenet awakens fully healed (without any gear left behind on her old body) and consumed by a burning need for revenge against those who destroyed her.

Paralyzing Touch (Su) Any living creature Meskhenet hits with her touch attack must succeed at a Fortitude save or be permanently paralyzed. *Remove paralysis* or any spell that can remove a curse can free the victim (see the *bestow curse* spell description, with a DC of 21). The effect cannot be dispelled. Anyone paralyzed by Meskhenet seems dead, though a DC 20 Perception check or a DC 15 Heal check reveals that the victim is still alive.

TREASURE: Meskhenet's room contains several items of interest. The bookshelves hold an arcane library worth 5,000 gp to a collector. Using the library in conjunction with research on a new spell or arcane topic grants a +2 circumstance bonus to the relevant Knowledge (arcana) and Spellcraft checks.

One of the books on the shelf is Meskhenet's spellbook, which includes all her prepared spells as well as *mage alarm*, *arcane sight*, *armor*, *charm monster*, *comprehend languages*, *detect secret doors*, *fly*, *fox's cunning*, *locate object*, *magic weapon*, *misdirection*, and *tongues*.

Three wooden chests, unlocked, sit in Meskhenet's bedchamber. They contain 18,400 cp, 7,820 sp, and 2,250 gp. Within Meskhenet's sarcophagus is a +1 keen dagger in a fragile and well-used scabbard. This was Meskhenet's preferred weapon when she was alive.

Concluding the Adventure

Yazan is delighted by the PCs' success. He happily claims his share of the treasure, using whatever arrangement the PCs previously agreed to. If the PCs cheat Yazan or refuse to give him his share, the man has little recourse, but he bitterly promises to spread word of their misdeeds far and wide. The PCs might find that a merchant or two refuses to deal with them over the next few months, and in time Yazan could come up with a way to get his revenge against the PCs (such as by hiring a thief to steal back what is rightfully his).

When Meskhenet dies, she collapses into dust with an agonizing wail, knowing that not only has her (unnatural) life come to an end, but she has disappointed Nakresh with her failure.

Unless the PCs find and destroy Meskhenet's phylactery, her body begins re-forming in area 12. It takes Meskhenet 1d10 days to re-form, at which point she immediately sets out to avenge herself against the PCs. While she was entombed in her research lab, Meskhenet was content to stay underground crafting magic items and researching spells. Now that her equipment and treasure is likely gone, she emerges from the tomb without hesitation. She attacks and kills a party of adventurers she finds crossing the desert and reequips herself with their meager belongings. She then sets about rebuilding her lair.

Several weeks after the PCs leave the Tomb-Palace of Nakresh, they hear rumors that merchants to whom they sold their bounty have been attacked and robbed, and in some cases murdered. Yazan, the contact who first informed the PCs about the tomb's existence, is one of the first to be attacked. The PCs should quickly realize that Meskhenet has risen and is reassembling her belongings. A follow-up adventure could take place in which the PCs research liches, track down Meskhenet's phylactery, and destroy her once and for all.

If Zafiah escaped into the desert, she too swears vengeance on the PCs. She claims the empty tomb-palace as her new lair (provided that Meskhenet has not re-formed and reclaimed it) and recruits more gnolls for her pack. After months of training and planning, she ambushes the PCs the next time they venture into the desert.

If the PCs set Jalat free, they hear rumors several weeks later of an emaciated figure in the desert who preaches the word of Nakresh before attacking lone travelers in the sand. Several have escaped the mad prophet's attacks, but a few have died.

If the characters successfully destroy Meskhenet and claim the treasure of the tomb-palace for themselves, they may find in time that they have caught the attention of Nakresh himself. His interest manifests in small ways at first. A character who casts *summon monster* unexpectedly receives a fiendish version of the creature called; a wizard or a thief receives healing from an unknown source in the midst of combat; a character spontaneously gains and then loses the ability to read Abyssal. The PCs have proven themselves worthy adventurers, and Nakresh is interested in their paths. Months, even years, after clearing the tomb-palace, the PCs may find themselves drawing the unwanted—or perhaps desired—attention of Nakresh the Many-Handed.

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