

# RAVAGED EARTH

AMAZING EXPLOITS #1



QUEST FOR  
THE LOST OASIS



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# QUEST FOR THE LOST OASIS

**A RAVAGED EARTH ADVENTURE!**

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# QUEST FOR THE LOST OASIS

## BACKGROUND

Zerzura is a fragrant oasis located in a wadi, or valley in the Libyan Desert in southwestern Egypt. Settled by primitive people, the area prospered and grew, its hidden location preserving its inhabitants.

During the 1200s, a splendid city arose in the oasis, one that prospered from trade with the outside world. Zerzura, or the Oasis of the Little Birds, was a splendid whitewashed city filled with artisans and magic and delightful pleasures.

In 1835 Egyptologist John Gardner Wilkinson heard the legend from an Arab who claimed he found an oasis called "Zerzoor" three days west from Dakhla.

W.J. Harding King made several trips into the desert from 1908 until 1911, searching in vain for the lost oasis.

In 1923, the Oxford-educated Ahmed Mohamed Hassanein Bey led an expedition to find Zerzura. Traveling on camel, Hassanein Bey explored and mapped most of the Libyan Desert, but failed to search vast swaths of land near Gifl Kebir, an immense plateau and formidable obstacle.

Egyptian Prince Kemal el Din in 1924 did investigate the areas around the Gifl Kebir and the Great Sand Sea and surmised several wadis that could contain Zerzura. Based on Kamal el Din's information, maps were made of the area, but most of the land still remained unexplored.

That was until 1932, when an expedition led by Count Laszlo Almásy, Colonel Pat Clayton, English baronet Robert Clayton East-Clayton and Wing Commander H. W. G. J. Penderel sighted green valleys in the Gifl Kebir via aeroplane. Convinced they had found Zerzura, the team, led by Almásy, attempted to reach the fabled city by land.

They set out in 1933, heading to the Gifl Kebir. Almásy had a copy of *The Book of Hidden Pearls*, a 15<sup>th</sup> century tome that described Zerzura. Using the book, Almásy made several notations throughout his

journey, and interviewed several locals who had stories of the lost oasis.

But tragedy likely struck, for the expedition was never heard from. Most people say they probably succumbed to the harsh desert climate, while others insists Bedouin raiders felled them.

In early 1936, a trader in Cairo sold an original copy of *The Book of Hidden Pearls* to an Englishman, who showed it to a friend in London. To their astonishment, the book was Almásy's copy, containing the explorer's notes! They surmised the book was discovered in the desert by a wandering caravan and sold in Cairo.

The book will be presented to the Royal Geographical Society for further study.

What the English don't know is Mussolini's agents are also investigating the Zerzura legend. Seduced by tales of treasure, Mussolini wants to capture the city for himself, plundering its riches. The fascist dictator sent one of his most capable archeologists, Dr. Giovanni Buscolini, to the meeting in London. From his office in Tripoli, Buscolini had studied the Zerzura legend and the past attempts to find it.

Since Zerzura's probable location is on the border with Egypt and Libya, the Italians believe they can spearhead an expedition to search for the fabled city before anyone gets wise.

## ACT ONE: THE CURIOUS FIND

The adventure begins at the Royal Geographic Society in London, where a mutual friend, Lord Cyril Battersby, famed explorer and soldier, invited the heroes to attend a special meeting. Battersby is part of something called the Zerzura Club, a group of adventurers obsessed with searching for Zerzura.

### *Scene 1: A Meeting of Gentlemen*

A fine banquet is held for the Royal Geographic Society, and Battersby promises a special surprise for the evening – an unveiling of a rare tome called *The Book of Hidden Pearls*, a 15<sup>th</sup> Century Arabic book that describes a wondrous whitewashed city constructed around a hidden oasis in the Libyan Desert in southwestern Egypt.





One of the guests, an Italian archeologist who introduces himself as Giovanni Buscolini, expresses interest in the Zerzura legend.

*"I hear from Bedouin caravans that a fabled oasis does indeed exist in a palm-laden gully in the desert, perhaps sheltered by a canyon. Legend says Zerzura is a beautiful white city resplendent in gold and treasure. Whoever enters the city is welcome to the riches within," Buscolini says, wide-eyed.*

After supper, coffee, port and cigars are served and Battersby makes his presentation.

He shuffles up to the podium, his old war wound giving him a bit of trouble. A box made of cypress and citron wood adorned with arabesque patterns rests on the podium.

Battersby launches into his presentation:

*"Traders crossing the desert in the 13<sup>th</sup> century first mentioned of the legendary lost oasis of Zerzura, a resplendent city in the middle of a tropical oasis. The Book of Hidden Pearls, dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, describes this elusive place.*

*This copy of The Book of Hidden Pearls was found in the Libyan Desert near Gilf Kebir, an immense plateau in the Libyan Desert where Zerzura is rumored to be located. Some Bedouin traders found the box in the desert among the dunes.*

*As many of you are aware, fellow explorer and adventurer László Almásy surveyed the desert by aeroplane in 1932, searching for Zerzura. Almásy and three other explorers disappeared during a 1933 expedition, when they set out from the Dakhla Oasis aboard motorcars equipped for desert travel. Almásy had a copy of The Book of Hidden Pearls with him. In fact, I believe this was his exact copy, for it contains notations written in 1933 while he was on his infamous expedition.*

*Almásy's fate is unknown, but many believe he perished along with countless others who search for Zerzura. Nobody has searched for the lost oasis since.*

*I present to you, on good authority, László Almásy's very own copy of The Book of Hidden Pearls."*

After Battersby's speech, he opens the box. A brittle book bound in crumbling string rests within. The book, entirely in Arabic, chronicles the journeys of traders and adventurers around North Africa and the Middle East in the early 1400s. Its jacket contains the notation *"By the Aqaba Pass west of Gilf Kebir, there's the Cave of Swimmers. Where the ancients drew scenes from life, Zerzura awaits in a fragrant valley. – L. Almasy."*

The book mentions Zerzura in the following passage in Arabic:

*You will find palms and vines and flowering wells. Follow the valley until you meet another valley opening to the west between two hills. In it you will find a road. Follow it. It will lead you to the City of Zerzura. You will find its gate closed. It is a white city, like a dove. By the gate you will find a bird sculptured. Stretch up your hand to its beak and take from it a key. Open the gate with it and enter the city. You will find much wealth and the king and queen in their place of the sleep of enchantment. Do not go near them. Take the treasure and that is all.*

The men in the room show their reverence for the book with a few pleased gasps, the levity is broken when hooded figures crash through the skylight and rappel to the floor below. They produce rapier swords and automatic pistols and surround Battersby. One of them scoops up the box with the book and strides towards the exit, while the others protect him.

The hooded figures are really Italian soldiers sent by Mussolini to steal The Book of Hidden Pearls.

The Italians put up a good fight, but aren't suicidal. If it looks like the tide is turning for them, they will abandon the combat and flee, whether they have the book or not.

If the battle is too rough for the heroes, the society members join in with their own pistols and swords they pull from the walls.

During the chaos, Buscolini escapes.







### HOODED ITALIAN ENFORCERS

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

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

**Hindrances:** Loyal (to Mussolini)

**Edges:** Back Alley Scrapper, Dodge

**Gear:** Hoods, black uniforms, dagger (Str+d6), pistol

*"This can mean one thing, my friends. You must locate Zerzura and discover what became of Almásy," Battersby said. "The society will fund your expedition, but you will need an able and stalwart guide. His name is Colonel Rupert Smythe, a military man and member of the Zerzura Club. He lives somewhere in Egypt. Find him and he'll guide you. The only man who knows Smythe's whereabouts is Omar al-Wafa, a scholar at American College in Cairo. If you do this, you will be rewarded. I wish you godspeed in your endeavor!"*

### A Call to Adventure

If the Italians escape with the book, Battersby is naturally upset. If the heroes prevent the book's theft, the gentlemen explorers honor them.

No matter what happens in the aftermath, Battersby realizes unsavory elements are curious about locating Zerzura.

Battersby furnishes you with a letter of introduction, \$1,000 for supplies and a chartered flight to Cairo. Battersby also gives you a map of Egypt, prepared by His Majesty's Royal Cartographers.





## Scene 2: Wild Flight

The flight from London to Cairo is mostly uneventful. The chartered flight consists only of the heroes and the pilots. The heroes can use their time on the aeroplane to sleep, read or relax. Nothing exciting really happens until the aeroplane approaches Cairo.

The aeroplane's pilot is really an Italian spy. The pilot releases the fuel from the aeroplane's tanks, then enters the passenger's compartment with a gun. He threatens the heroes as he makes his way to the rear hatchway. If nobody makes a move to stop him, the pilot opens the hatchway and parachutes out of the aeroplane to safety. Not wanting to take any chances, the spy rigged a small bomb in the cockpit and timed it to go off five minutes after he bails out.

Heroes making a Smarts roll in the cockpit will see the aeroplane is out of fuel. The plane's engine's sputter, and the craft begins its slow dive.

Heroes making a Piloting roll at -2 can bring the craft down like a glider. If this happens, the plane takes heavy damage and everyone not restrained in the cabin or cockpit takes 2d10 damage.

Diffusing the bomb is another matter. The bomb is fastened to the co-pilot's seat with heavy chains (Toughness 10). After the pilot bails, deal the players action cards. Everyone takes their actions normally. After five rounds, the bomb in the cockpit explodes. Heroes in the cockpit can make an Agility roll to avoid taking the full 2d12 damage from the explosion. Heroes in the cockpit take 2d10 damage from the bomb.

Heroes wishing to avoid this fate can diffuse the bomb before it detonates. To do this, a hero would need to make a Knowledge (explosives) or Smarts roll at -2. If they make the roll, they may roll a Lockpicking roll to diffuse the bomb. If the heroes don't make their Knowledge or Smarts roll, any attempt to diffuse the bomb is made at a -2. If a hero busts on their Lockpicking roll to diffuse the bomb, the bomb automatically explodes.

If the heroes cannot put the aeroplane down, it crashes near the Nile in a bank of reeds five miles from Cairo.

## ACT TWO: CAIRO NIGHTS

Cairo is the largest city in Africa and a hive of activity. Located on the Nile River in northern Egypt, Cairo is a bustling place, filled with bazaars, marketplaces, fancy department stores and museums filled with antiquities and rare objects.

### Scene 1: Hostile Takeover

Tracking down Omar al-Wafa is easy with a Streetwise roll. The educator teaches at American College in Cairo, located in the modern Qasr El Nil district.

When the heroes arrive at al-Wafa's office, they hear a loud argument. If heroes investigate, they find a young man in his late 20s, wearing glasses, a suit and a fez behind a desk. A thin man with dark features is also here, accompanied by four muscular men in black uniforms.

Omar al-Wafa appears relieved the heroes arrived, and introduces himself. He introduces the bearded man as Alessandro Torregrossa, a member of the OVRA, is here with his fellow fascist soldiers. Torregrossa ignores the heroes and focuses his attention on al-Wafa.

*"Mr. al-Wafa. Perhaps I wasn't clear. I need to know the location of one of your past associates, a Colonel Smythe. It is very important I find him," Torregrossa says.*

*"Mr. Torregrossa, I do not know the nature of your visit, but I do not give the names of my friends to strangers," al-Wafa says.*

*"The nature of my visit is none of your concern. I come on the highest authority of my government. The OVRA wish to speak to your friend," Torregrossa says.*

*"OVRA?" al-Wafa asks.*

*"The Organization for Vigilance and Repression of Anti-Fascism," Torregrossa clarifies.*

*"I am not concerned what your secret police want. You will not intimidate me in my own country," al-Wafa said.*

*Agitated, Torregrossa and his men leave the office.*





Al-Wafa apologizes to the heroes for witnessing that confrontation. He tells them Torregrossa has lingered around the college asking questions about Col. Smythe. Al-Wafa will only cooperate with the heroes if they show him the letter of recommendation from Battersby.

If the heroes do this, Al-Wafa tells them where Col. Smythe is.

*"Last I heard from Colonel Smythe, he was living at Kharga Town in the Kharga Oasis. It's a pretty remote place along the Forty Days Road," al-Wafa says.*

Travel to Kharga is dangerous for foreigners not familiar with native customs. Al-Wafa suggests accompanying the heroes to Kharga. He wants to catch up on old times with his friend Smythe and could use a change of pace from the city.

Al-Wafa tells the heroes to take an hour to gather the necessary equipment they need and meet him by the docks in Giza, where he charts a small steamboat. The heroes can stop at several shops or the bazaar and get equipment for their journey.

### OMAR AL-WAFA



Omar al-Wafa is a young man in his late 20s with a mustache, beard and glasses. He is an expert in the occult any Egyptian magic, and is a good professor, but somewhat reserved.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Knowledge (occult) d8, Knowledge (Arabic) d8, Knowledge (Egyptian history) d6, Investigation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6

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

**Hindrances:** Curious, Milquetoast

**Edges:** Scholar, Jack-of-all-Trades, Dodge

**Defining Interests:** the occult, ancient Egyptian mythology, classic literature, city knowledge (Cairo)

**Knack:** Just A Scratch

**Languages:** English, Arabic

**Gear & Equipment:** Suit, fez, Webley Bulldog revolver, books of arcane knowledge and lore

### Scene 2: Den of Thieves

If you want, run this encounter when the heroes are shopping in the marketplace. As the heroes browse the shops, they hear a small boy crying from an alley. If they investigate, they find a boy weeping as a group of large men push him around.

The boy is actually part of the ruse to lure gullible adventurers into the alley while the thieves rob them. As soon as the heroes intervene, the men attack, while the boy runs away. There are two thieves for every hero.

### THIEVES

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Climbing d6, Guts d6, Gambling d6, Intimidation d8, Lockpicking d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Taunt d8

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

**Hindrances:** Greedy, Mean

**Edges:** Dodge

**Gear & Equipment:** Various assortment of guns, knives and clubs.

### ACT THREE: DOWN THE NILE

The trip down the Nile takes a few days and can be as simple or as complex as the GM wants to make it.

The stats for the steamboat Al-Wafa chartered are:

**Acc/Top Speed:** 2/10; **Toughness:** 10 (2); **Crew:** 1+5

Al-Wafi proves to be good company, talking to the heroes about Egyptian architecture and local myths. He knows very little about Zerzura, adding that Col. Smythe was the expert of the lost oasis.





Several hours into the trip, the heroes have a random encounter. Pick a card to determine the encounter from the following table:

Card	Encounter
2-5	<b>Giant Crocodile:</b> A giant croc attacks the steamboat. The beasts' stats are listed below.
6-8	<b>Plague of Locusts:</b> A swarm of locusts attack the boat. Use the Swarm stats from the SWEX book for the locusts.
9-10	<b>Stuck:</b> The boat becomes stuck in the muddy silt. It takes heroes three successive Strength rolls at -2 to push the boat free.
J-K	<b>Bandits:</b> Some bandits aboard another boat shoot at your boat. They try to board your vessel and rob the heroes. For the bandits' stats, use the Thieves' stats above.
Joker	<b>Supernatural Horror:</b> Some ancient Egyptian supernatural horror, such as a mummy, an undead or other fiendish creature, attacks the boat.

## GIANT CROCODILE

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d8, Notice d6, Swimming d10

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

### Special Abilities

**-Armor +2:** the giant croc has a thick skin

**-Aquatic:** Pace 5

**-Bite:** Str+d6

**-Rollover:** The giant croc grabs his prey and rolls over and over, causing an additional Strength die in damage.

## Asyut

After a few days of travel, the steamboat docks at Asyut (pronounced "As-yoot"), an ancient city 195 miles south of Cairo. A colonial fort is here, along with shops, mosques, hotels and schools. Asyut is one of the last bastions before the heroes hit the Forty Days Road to Kharga.

Asyut offers places for the heroes to freshen up before hitting the dusty desert road.

## ACT FOUR: ROAD TO KHARGA

Heroes can rent camels and horses in Asyut for their trip to the Kharga Oasis. Both horses and camels cost \$50 each, but heroes can use Persuasion to haggle the prices down.

### Scene 1: Forty Days Road

Wending a distance of a thousand miles from Asyut to the Sudan, the Forty Days Road (Darb al-Arba'in) named for how long it took to make the journey, was primarily used to transport slaves into Egypt. Slaves bought at a market in Dongola from Sudan were marched north into the desert, where they were unshackled. Trapped in a hostile climate, the slaves were helpless, and relied on what little water they could get for sustenance on their brutal journey to Kharga Oasis and finally Asyut.

The Forty Days Road is no longer used for transporting slaves, but caravans still do use it as a trade route, carrying spices, silks, and other goods, which travel by camel and trucks from Sudan.

Travel along the Forty Days Road is fraught with many hazards, including blinding sand storms, dehydration, scorpions, vipers, jackals, thieves and supernatural creatures such as the undead.

If the heroes want to travel with a trade caravan, there will be safety in numbers if anything unpleasant arises. By camel or horse, the trip can take two days.





## Scene 2: Kharga Oasis

Kharga Oasis is a lush oasis consisting of a sprinkling of communities and ruins 63 miles south of Asyut along the Forty Days Road. Sprawling over 120 miles, and cut by cliffs and dunes, Kharga Oasis is a fertile land, ripe with agriculture. In settled areas, farmers let their goats graze and donkeys and horses work at waterwheels, irrigating the farmland. Both ancient Egyptian and Roman ruins dot the landscape around the oasis.

The Temple of Hibis, just north of Kharga Town, was completed in 522 AD by the Persian ruler Darius I. The Romans altered the temple and archeologists who still explore the site note these architectural differences and the strange hieroglyphics on the walls.

### Kharga Town

A developed settlement, Kharga Town is a fortified city with a colonial outpost consisting of a small garrison of troops. The town is a collection of mudbrick buildings and shady alleyways. Kharga Prison, part of the ancient fort, is the home to any who run afoul of the law. There are no shops or markets in Kharga Town; a majority of goods are obtained when caravans pass through.

An antiquities office, for the registration of artifacts unearthed in nearby ruins and tombs, is here. Archeologists should be licensed with the Egyptian government and report any findings to this office.

Bagawat Necropolis, an old Coptic cemetery, containing the tombs of early Christians, is outside of Kharga Town.

The heroes can get a room at the local inn, and begin their search for Col. Smythe.

Smythe's hangout is a tavern called the Desert Flower. Smythe is usually here, drinking himself into a stupor with some local British soldiers and swapping war stories.

## An Unlikely Proposal

Smythe is glad to see al-Wafa, and the two friends rejoice. Smythe is less than happy to hear about Zerzura, or the quest to find Almásy. Smythe recalls how he accompanied Almásy into the desert in 1929 and 1932. He regretted not being there for his friend in 1933 and has remained soused ever since, wallowing in the loss of his friend.

Smythe may have fallen on hard times, but he's a scrappy, stalwart military man and fighter. He's too proud to beg for handouts and has kept himself employed at the tavern, tending bar and running card games with other soldiers. He thinks Zerzura is only a myth, but Almásy's copy of The Book of Hidden Pearls will convince him.

Al-Wafi warns Smythe about the OVRA and Italy's search for Zerzura. This angers Smythe enough to take action and join the heroes.

### COLONEL RUPERT SMYTHE



Col. Smythe is a world-weary British soldier and explorer now jaded with his life. He's in his late thirties, and still kept his rugged exterior, although it's a little bruised and scarred.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Guts d8, Climbing d6, Driving d6, Gambling d6, Healing d6, Knowledge (military tactics) d8, Investigation d8, Lockpicking d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Repair d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d8, Taunt d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d6

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

**Hindrances:** Cautious, Habit (Alcohol)

**Edges:** Rugged, Common Bond, Back Alley Scrapper

**Defining Interests:** Regional Knowledge (Egypt), Knowledge (military tactics), Culture (Arabic)

**Knack:** Unerring Sense of Direction

**Languages:** English, Arabic

**Gear & Equipment:** Khaki uniform,





compass, binoculars, automatic pistol, rifle, mess kit, bedroll, canteen, wristwatch

### ***Scene 3: On the Road Again***

Smythe suggests the expedition should go to Dakhla Oasis, about 75 miles west of Kharga Oasis. The way cuts through eroded sandstone cliffs and rock formations on a well-worn road.

Smythe has a modified touring car with a propeller mounted to the rear for speed and bulkier tires with extra traction to skirt the sandy conditions. The off-road vehicle seats up to four passengers comfortably. He has an additional vehicle one of the heroes can drive if necessary.

Al-Wafi doesn't accompany the heroes to Dakhla Oasis, but returns to Cairo.

### ***DESERT SURVIVAL***

Trekking across deserts is extremely hazardous to those not acclimated with the harsh arid climate.

Every day the heroes travel in desert environments, they must make Survival rolls at -2 due to the harsh climate in the morning and evening hours they travel. Traveling during the day, the heroes must make a Survival roll at -4.

Heroes must also drink fresh water each day to add a +1 to their Survival rolls. If heroes wear proper traveling gear, such as wide-brimmed hats, gloves and long-sleeved clothing, this adds +1 to their Survival rolls.

### ***Scorching Heat***

Deserts in Egypt reach 140 degrees during the day, with most of the heat a result of direct sunlight and reflective heat off the sand. The temperature of desert sand ranges from 30 to 40 degrees more than the air temperature.

This intense heat makes it all the more important for shelter and water during the daylight hours. It's wise to travel at night, when the temperatures are cooler. Heroes suffer no penalties when traveling at night, but they should bundle up because it can get cold.

### ***Sunburned***

A person's exposed skin turns red after hours of unprotected exposure to the sun's rays. Roll a 1d8 if a hero is in the desert without sufficient clothing or headgear. On a 1, the person is sunburned. A Healing roll will medicate sunburn. If the roll fails, the person experiences discomfort for 1d4 days.

### ***Heat exhaustion***

If the hero fails a Survival roll in the desert, he suffers heat exhaustion. Headaches and dizziness are symptoms of this condition, and the victim must get in the shade and be given fresh water after the first hour or will immediately go Shaken. A few hours of rest is necessary to recover. This requires a Healing roll at -2 to cure heat exhaustion.

### ***Heat stroke***

Busting on a Survival roll in the desert means your hero has suffered heat stroke. Heat stroke can be fatal if not treated. The hero must have fresh water within the first hour after getting heat stroke, or they immediately become Shaken. It takes a Healing roll at -4 to cure heat stroke, otherwise the person remains Shaken if he wasn't already.

### ***Sandstorms***

Sandstorms occur frequently, about once a week in the deserts. They restrict visibility and the stinging sand can blind you if you're not wearing protective eyewear. Sandstorms interfere with radio transmissions as well.

Sandstorms move quickly and can reach speeds of up to 120 miles per hour and bury everything in sand and last for 1d4+2 hours. It's good advice to seek shelter during a sand storm.

Heroes caught in sandstorms cannot see more than a few feet in front of them and suffer a -4 penalty to any vision-based skill or action. In addition, they must make a Fatigue roll at -2 every hour until they find shelter.





## Mirages

A mirage is an optical illusion caused by refracted light through heated desert air. They occur deep in the desert and make objects appear to move and shimmy, but upon closer examination, the viewer realizes what he thought was an oasis was just an illusion.

## Wildlife

The desert is home to a variety of animals and creatures, most of them poisonous or deadly. Wasps, flies, scorpions and snakes are commonplace. Jackals are nocturnal hunters. Vultures and falcons are common birds.

## ACT FIVE: DAKHLA OASIS

Surrounded by pink cliffs, Dakhla Oasis sprawls out over 50 miles from east to west and 16 miles north to south. It is a green oasis, surrounded by lush palm trees and vegetation. Several small settlements are nestled around the oasis, which has been inhabited since prehistoric times. Farming is plentiful, and the lands highly cultivated, with olives, dates and rice yielding the most success.

Deir al-Hagar Temple, built during Roman rule, is a crumbling ruin outside the oasis. The temple was dedicated to the Theban triad, Amon-Re, Mut and Khonsu. The Egyptian god Seth is also depicted predominantly in statues around the temple.

A rumor that an explorer who sacrificed one of his native guides to a spirit that guarded the temple so he could receive an elusive treasure within. Whether this is true or a local ghost story remains to be proven. So far, nobody has the guts to enter the temple.

### Deir al-Hagar Temple

If your heroes are the adventurous types (and they probably are), then they might want to explore the temple. An avenue of crumbling sphinxes leads to the temple, whose walls are adorned with cartouches of Roman emperors mixed with Egyptian deities. The temple entrance is blocked by a sand dune.

Clearing the entrance reveals a large chamber with columns that opens to a long hallway leading to a sanctuary. The sanctuary's ceiling is decorated with stars and constellations and the goddess Nut, representing the heavens and Geb, who represents the Earth. A depiction of the god Osiris is at the center of the cosmic scene. Understanding who these gods are requires a Knowledge (Egyptology) roll. The sanctuary contains a sandstone slab with dark stains on it. A Notice roll reveals that the stains are dried blood. This is where Gerhard Rohlfs sacrificed a worker to a spirit in 1874 when he explored the temple. Heroes can see skeletal remains in a pit near the slab.

The efreet, or spirit, still guards the temple and will attack the heroes if they linger around the sanctuary.

## EFREET

Called efreet in Arabian lore, this malevolent spirit haunts the temple, demanding a human sacrifice. The spirit's motives are to sow as much chaos and division as possible.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fiery Winds d8, Fighting d6, Intimidate d10, Notice d12, Taunt d10, Stealth d12+2,

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

### Special Abilities

**-Ethereal:** The spirit is immune to all attacks except magical ones.

**-Fear -2:** The spirit causes Guts checks at -2 when it manifests itself.

**-Fiery Winds:** d10+d4 Telekinetic attack

There's still treasure left in the temple. A secret door requiring a Notice roll at -2, leads to a hidden room containing a gold amulet depicting the Theban triad of Amon-Re, Mut and Khonsu. The amulet is worth \$10,000 to a reputable antiques dealer, but legend has it that it bears a curse...





## Scene 1: Mut

Mut (pronounced “moot”) is the capital city of Dakhla Oasis. Mut is a mudbrick town surrounded by ancient ruins and splendid palm trees. The town lies on the edge of the Great Sand Sea to the south.

The Mamur, or governor, of Dakhla, Effendi Abd er Rachman Zoher, resides in Mut and keeps the place orderly.

Though Dakhla Oasis is larger than Kharga Oasis, Mut remains a relatively smaller settlement compared to Kharga Town. There’s one hotel, a few shops and a market where one can purchase camels and donkeys. A garage offers a skilled mechanic that can repair vehicles and dispense gasoline. Mut’s inhabitants learned to tolerate visitors, but mainly keep to themselves.

Mut el-Kharab (Mut the Ruined), lies south of town. These are the remnants of the ancient city, buried beneath the sands. The ruins of several Roman buildings are here, including a dilapidated fortification.

## Dark Riders Attack

As the heroes settle down for the night, Smythe looks over a map of the Libyan Desert. He tells the heroes the best way for them to travel would be across the Great Sand Sea to Gilf Kebir, and then to Aqaba Pass, where the Cave of Swimmers is.

Just as the heroes get comfortable, they hear the sound of gunfire and villagers screaming.

As they exit the hotel, they see the town’s constables in a panic as a group of riders on black horses ride into town. The riders, armed with scimitars and pikes, attack the villagers mercilessly. There are ten dark riders in all, each one dressed in the garb of desert warriors, with long black robes and Bedouin headdress.

The dark riders fight until half of their number is slain, then they retreat south into the desert.





## **DARK RIDER**

The dark riders are undead warriors created to protect the city. The riders are dispatched whenever the city is threatened. Riding undead steeds, the dark riders terrorize nearby villages, frightening the populace and deterring desert exploration.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation Notice d8, Riding d10, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, Throwing d6

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

### **Special Abilities**

**-Fearless:** Dark Riders don't suffer Fear effects and can't be Intimidated.

**-Undead:** Dark Riders add +2 to their Toughness and to recover from being Shaken. Dark Riders also don't suffer from additional damage from called shots.

**Low Light Vision:** Ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

**Gear & Equipment:** Scimitars, pikes, swords

## **ACT SIX: THE GREAT SAND SEA**

The Libyan Desert stretches from southern Libya into western Egypt and consists of massive sand dunes, shifting sands, mountains and rocky formations. One of the most inhospitable areas of the Sahara Desert, the Libyan Desert is a treacherous place for travelers.

Use the rules for desert travel each day the heroes are in the desert.

Two days out in the desert, the heroes encounter a Bedouin encampment, complete with large tents and a camel caravan.

## **Scene 1: King of the Desert**

Unfortunately, this encampment is home to bandits led by the self-proclaimed King of the Desert, a hearty Bedouin with three wives and an army of well-disciplined enforcers.

Heroes in the camp are immediately outnumbered by desert warriors and calmly told to surrender their weapons. They're brought to the largest tent in the encampment, one decorated with silks, rugs, intricately-woven baskets, plush furniture and pillows and small cages containing a variety of exotic monkeys and birds. Classical music emanates from a small hand-cranked record player, and servants with ostrich feather fans cool a portly man in a turban, burnous and boots who rests idly on a pile of pillows.

The man says, in English:

*"Greetings to you. I am the King of the Desert. I take it you are not aware of my reputation or my power here. Maybe you can pay me some sort of tribute and I can let you pass this desert unscathed. If you do not, then my men will use you for target practice. That is a fair deal, yes?"*

The King of the Desert will take money or valuables worth \$100 or more, but not less. He's not a bloodthirsty tyrant, just a practical man trying to turn a buck through robbery and theft, and plies his trade in the desert away from the British forces.

To prove his goodwill, he even offers the heroes a decent meal and shelter if they tell him what they're doing so far into the desert.

He doesn't know what became of Almonessy's expedition, but heard tales of dark riders attacking neighboring settlements. The King of the Desert said his men witnessed these beings, malevolent creatures he surmises are from hell. He thinks Zerzura is only a legend, a tale told to enchant Western explorers.

If the heroes cough up a tribute, they are given their weapons back and not harmed. If the heroes are stubborn and refuse, or if they make trouble, the King of the Desert loses his patience and had his men attack. There are about 100 Bedouin warriors in the encampment.





## KING OF THE DESERT



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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d8, Knowledge (desert) d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Riding d10, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Survival d10, Taunt d8

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

**Hindrances:** Cautious, Greedy (Major)

**Edges:** Command

**Defining Interests:** money, women, Arabic poetry, classical music

**Knack:** Unerring Sense of Direction

**Languages:** English, Arabic

**Gear & Equipment:** Traditional Bedouin headdress, robes, golden rings, curved dagger, revolver

## BEDOUIN ENFORCER

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Taunt d6, Tracking d8

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

**Hindrances:** Bloodthirsty

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Dodge

**Gear & Equipment:** rifles, pistols, traditional Bedouin clothing

## Scene 2: Rumble in the Dunes

Two days travel from the Bedouin camp, the heroes stumble upon the Italians, who are also searching for Zerzura.

The Italian expedition consists of four tankettes and three transport vehicles, each containing soldiers. A fourth transport vehicle contains OVRA officer Alessandro Torregrossa and archeologist Giovanni Buscolini. The Italians immediately order the heroes to surrender. If the heroes resist, the Italians attack.

If things are looking bad for the heroes, Smythe suggests they surrender, hoping a temporary alliance might buy the heroes some time.

Buscolini and Torresorra could kill the heroes, but keep them alive, hoping to use Smythe's expertise. They take the book from Smythe and use it to find the Cave of Swimmers.

If the heroes befriended the King of the Desert, the nomad chief sends his men to fight the Italians. Smythe suggests the heroes make a break for it and head towards Aqaba Pass.

If the heroes did not make nice with the King of the Desert, the nomad chief attacks the Italians anyway, but his warriors target the heroes as well. The heroes may be fighting both the desert warriors and Italian soldiers here.

## CARRO VELOCE CV35 TANKETTE

Known as L3 tankettes, these small tanks are heavily used in the desert.

**Acc/Top Speed:** 4/10 (20 mph)

**Toughness:** 16/12/12 (8/6/6); **Crew:** 2

**Weapons:** 37mm main gun with one light machinegun

## ITALIAN SCOUT CAR

**Acc/Top Speed:** 10/20 (50 mph)

**Toughness:** 12 (4); **Crew:** 1-4

**Weapons:** .50 machinegun

## ITALIAN SOLDIER

The Italian Libyan Colonial Division troops are predominant in Libya and Ethiopia in the 1930s.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Driving d6, Guts d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

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





**Hindrances:** Loyal (to Mussolini), Overconfident

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Dodge

**Gear:** Pith helmet, uniform, Carcano M38 short rifle (24/48/96 range, 2d8 damage, 1 ROF).

### ALESSANDRO TORREGROSSA

Torregrossa is an OVRA officer tasked with finding threats to fascism abroad. He's a muscular man with a somber expression and a sadistic streak.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Knowledge (law enforcement) d8, Knowledge (torture techniques) d6, Intimidation d8, Investigation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8, Survival d6, Tracking d8

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

**Hindrances:** Loyal (to Mussolini), Mean, Bloodthirsty

**Edges:** Command, Block, Dodge, First Strike

**Defining Interests:** Art, Architecture, Cooking, Culture (Italian)

**Knack:** Eagle Eye

**Languages:** Italian, English

**Gear & Equipment:** Khaki uniform, hat, badge, whip, Beretta M1918 machine gun, canteen

### DR. GIOVANNI BUSCOLINI

A wiry man with a mustache and a bad temper, Buscolini is Mussolini's archeologist, searching the desert for Zerzura.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Knowledge (Egyptian history) d10, Healing d8, Investigation d8, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6

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

**Hindrances:** Mean, Obsession (to find Zerzura)

**Edges:** Scholar, Connections (Mussolini), Investigator

**Defining Interests:** Culture (Egypt), Mythology (Egypt), Knowledge (Arabic Legends)

**Knack:** Lip Reader

**Languages:** English, Arabic

**Gear & Equipment:** Journal, Egyptian maps, compass, revolver, canteen

### Scene 3: Gilf Kebir

The Gilf Kebir (Great Barrier) is a 7,770-square-milometer limestone and sandstone plateau that towers 1,000 meters from the desert. It consists of two massive land formations connected by a thin isthmus at its center, the Aqaba Pass.

Because of its enormous size, the Gilf Kebir is an obstacle travelers in the Great Sand Sea have to contend with, usually spending days traversing the shifting dunes around the plateau.

Some parts of the Gilf Kebir taper into narrow wadis, or valleys, and might offer shade, or caves. Because of the cooler climate, the wadis can be hospitable to vegetation and animal life.

### Desert Cavern

Fifty miles from Aqaba Pass the plateau rises along the desert. A small cave opening can be seen in the plateau walls ten feet above the desert floor.

The cave entrance is five feet high, but opens to a large cavern about 20 feet high. Primitive illustrations of figures appearing to swim adorn the walls here. More drawings of ibis, horses and human hunters with bows and arrows illustrate the cave walls toward a passageway.

Moving further into the cavern, the drawings change to that of birds – several birds with outstretched wings cover the cave walls and ceiling.

The caverns continue for miles, until they terminate at a large open valley surrounded on all sides by steep cliff walls.





## **ACT SEVEN: ZERZURA OASIS**

Lush vegetation grows on the valley floor: palm trees, date trees, fig trees, olive groves and reeds grow wild around an oasis of fresh water. Ibis wade in the shallow depths, while several swallows and doves flitter about the trees.

The water is fresh and sweet and fortifies anyone who drinks it.

A vine-choked stone path wends its way through the green valley to the whitewashed mudbrick city of Zerzura.

### ***Zerzura's Secret History***

The real history of Zerzura is complicated, and begins in the early 1400s with the city's decline.

The king and queen of Zerzura had a beautiful daughter, who was in love with the court magician and seer. Since the magician wasn't royalty, the king and queen sharply forbade him from contact with their daughter. Saddened at the prospect of never having her true love, the princess committed suicide. Enraged at the loss of his beloved, the magician placed a curse on Zerzura. The curse killed the king and queen and the city's guards. All of the birds, which graced the oasis flew away, never to return until the city was deserted. Without their rulers or guards, the city fell into chaos and the people left. With his last ounce of energy, the magician resurrected the guards and tasked them with attacking neighboring encampments to frighten any curious explorers away.

Centuries later, stories about Zerzura enticed western adventurers, who went looking for this elusive oasis.

### ***Front Gate***

Zerzura's front gate is a marvel of medieval Arabesque design, with stucco flower designs inlaid with lapis lazulai. Over the heavy wooden doors is a statue of a bird on a perch. The bird's mouth closed. A metal chain hangs near the door and vanishes through a hole in the gate.

If the heroes pull the chain, the mouth of the bird statue opens, revealing a tarnished silver key. Since

the bird statue is about 15 feet from the ground, the heroes will have to climb a portion of the gate.

Once they get the key, they can use it to unlock the gate, which opens reluctantly with a Strength roll.

### ***Plaza***

The beautiful white city is weathered and in ruins. Some buildings have held up well through the centuries, while vines and creeping vegetation uprooted some structures from their foundations.

The flagstones on the plaza are cracked and marred by vines and trees grow wild.

Heroes exploring the area can make Search rolls to find several artifacts, including baskets, dyed rugs, tools and other remnants from the 1300s.

### ***Tower***

A crumbling stone tower rises above the buildings near the plaza. A spiral staircase wends its way to a small room at the top of the tower. Shelves of handwritten manuscripts and scrolls rest on shelves. The floor is covered with an oriental rug and a copper lantern hangs on the wall.

The documents, written in Arabic, tell the tale of Zerzura and the ancient trade routes. One scroll recounts an ancient curse placed on the city. The curse claimed the life of the king and queen and their guards, who rose from the dead to become the dark riders. Breaking the curse means finding the Dagger of Swallows and spilling human blood in the throne room.

### ***Zerzura Palace***

A mighty domed palace rises at the plaza's opposite end, atop a flight of jagged, eroded steps. Birds roost in its towers and on its weathered dome.

The palace's interior is a hodge-podge of arabesque frescoes of birds and depiction of merchants and artisans. The floors are inlaid with brass and bronze and undisturbed dust and debris litters the ground.







The throne room, located behind two immense doors, contains a pool that has gone dry centuries ago. Seated on two thrones are the desiccated bodies of what appear to be a king and a queen, each dressed in moldering silks and tarnished crowns.

Standing between the thrones is a basalt pillar, on top of which is a gold statue of a bird with ruby eyes.

Anyone touching the king or the queen are in for a rude awakening. Both corpses animate and attack the heroes if disturbed.

Use the Zombie stats found in SWEX.

### ***Almásy Returns***

After a few minutes in the throne room, the heroes hear rustling in one corner. A disheveled man cautiously approaches them. His scraggly beard and

slovenly clothes indicate he's been here for a while.

The man regards the heroes with suspicion until they prove their intentions are friendly. He then introduces himself as Laszlo Almásy.

Almásy tells the heroes the dark riders brought him to Zerkura after his party perished in the desert. In truth, the dark riders cornered Almásy's party, who fought them off valiantly for hours. When the situation looked grim, the dark riders offered to spare Almásy if he killed his own men. Fearful and selfish, Almásy murdered his companions, and was taken as prisoner to Zerkura.

The dark riders resurrected Almásy's companions and they became dark riders themselves.

Almásy has spent years in the Oasis of Little Birds, growing mad with the things he's seen, his conscience in tatters after being a prisoner.





The crafty adventurer wants to leave Zerzura, but not without the golden bird statue, the only thing of value in the lost oasis. He knows the curse of Zerzura from reading the manuscripts in the tower and wants the heroes to help him break the curse, but doesn't want them to realize they're assisting him. He refuses to leave, telling the heroes the golden bird is Zerzura's greatest treasure.

### LASZLO ALMÁSY



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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Climbing d6, Driving d10, Gambling d6, Guts d8, Healing d6, Knowledge (desert) d8, Investigation d6, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Piloting d10, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, Survival d8

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

**Hindrances:** Greedy, Delusional

**Edges:** Florentine, Ace, Rugged, One Hand on the Wheel

**Defining Interests:** Aviation, Automobiles, Fine Wines, Regional Knowledge (Egyptian desert)

**Knack:** Internal Clock

**Languages:** Hungarian, German, English, Arabic

**Gear & Equipment:** Tattered clothing, hunting knife, canteen, broken compass, Lee-Enfield rifle

### Power Play

Buscolini, amazed at the golden bird, stares at the statue wide-eyed.

*"At last! The treasure of Zerzura! It must belong to Mussolini and Rome! We must have it!" the archeologist says, and instructs one of the Italian soldiers to grab the statue. As the soldier puts his hands on the golden bird statue, a small click is heard, and the soldier drops down dead!*

Have the heroes make a Notice roll at -2 to detect a tiny dart coated with poison stuck in the soldier's neck. Buscolini directs one of the heroes to get the statue.

### Golden Bird of Zerzura

Created by artisans and goldsmiths in 1275, the golden bird is a unique clockwork device. Standing a foot tall, the statue has red rubies for eyes, diamond-encrusted wings and a beak and talons accentuated with pearls.

Anyone trying to remove the golden bird from its basalt pillar receives a shock: the bird's mouth opens and a poisonous dart flies out. Avoiding this takes a raise on an Agility roll. If the dart strikes, the hero must make a Vigor roll at -4 or be poisoned.

The poison is particularly potent and will cause death in 3d6+10 seconds if it's not treated with a Healing roll at -2 or a healing spell at -4.

The statue has an unlimited amount of poisoned darts and a Toughness of 14.

Magic spells cast on the statue don't work because the golden bird has an automatic dispel arcana power.

The bird can only be removed by spilling human blood in the throne room with the Dagger of Swallows.

### Dagger of Swallows

Fashioned from steel with a hilt resembling a winged bird, the Dagger of Swallows once belonged to the court magician of Zerzura. The magician enchanted the dagger when he was exiled from the city around 1440. Should the dagger spill human blood in the throne room, the curse will be broken, rendering the golden bird harmless. The statue won't shoot poison and could be removed from its pedestal.

The dagger can also be used to control the birds of Zerzura. Treat the dagger as enchanted with the beast friend power.

Normally, the dagger inflicts Str+d10 damage.

Almásy knows he can't cut himself with the





Dagger of Swallows; he tried and the spell wasn't broken. He must cut someone else, and the heroes look like good targets.

### ***The Birds***

Almásy uses the Dagger of Swallows to command the birds to attack the heroes. A loud fluttering of wings erupts as the birds fly into the throne room. Treat the birds like a typical swarm, as described in the SWEX.

When the heroes and soldiers are halfway through fighting the birds, Almásy slashes randomly with the Dagger of Swallows. Roll a d6. If the roll is 1-3, Almásy hits a player. If the roll is 4-6, he strikes a soldier.

The wound is deep and draws blood, which splatters on the floor. When this happens, the birds suddenly fly away and the sky mysteriously grows dark outside.

At this point, the dark riders show up and ride their horses in a menacing circle in the main plaza.

### ***Dark Riders Return***

The dark riders are undead soldiers resembling 13th century desert warriors. Riding black horses, the black riders are armed with scimitars and pikes, and are tasked with keeping travelers away from Zerzura.

Anyone killed by them is transformed into a soulless dark rider and must spend eternity guarding Zerzura. There are currently 20 dark riders in the city.

The Italians begin sniping at the dark riders, who move to attack. In the chaos, Almásy grabs the golden bird statue and attempts to flee.

### ***AFTERMATH***

How the heroes escape Zerzura is up to them. If the Italians are losing the fight, they'll retreat to the caves, pursued by the dark riders. Any soldier or Wild Card killed rises after two rounds, transformed into a dark rider and begins attacking the heroes.

Once the golden bird is removed from the city, the buildings begin crumbling and a rockslide buries the palace.

If Almásy survives and is brought back to civilization, the Zerzura Club rewards the heroes with \$1,000. The reward increases to \$1,500 if they possess the golden bird.

If Smythe survives, he rewards the heroes with a case of wine from the tavern.

If Buscolini or Torregrossa survive, they'll be suitable villains to torment the heroes in the future.

If the fascists steal the golden bird, Il Duce has his valuable treasure, and adds it to a horde of other relics in his collection. Italy tightens its grip on Libya and her troops are bolstered with confidence as they continue their march into Ethiopia.

The GM may reward an additional Experience Point to any player who roleplayed their character exceptionally well.

### ***The Real Almásy***

Mentioned in Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient*, Count Laszlo Almásy was an actual explorer, pilot and soldier.

Born in Hungary in 1895, Laszlo Ede Almásy was a pilot with the Austro-Hungarian Royal Air Force during World War I. A Hapsburg monarch once mistook him for royalty and called him "Count", a moniker that became his permanent title.

After the war, he journeyed to Africa where he worked in the Steyr car factory, established an aviation school on the banks of the Nile and raced cars. He explored the Sudan, East Africa and Egypt aboard Steyr automobiles in 1929. In 1932, along with Sir Robert Clayton East-Clayton, Patrick Clayton and Wing Commander Penderel, Almásy explored the Gilf Kebir in the Libyan Desert for the fabled lost oasis of Zerzura, scouring the desert by aircraft and automobile. During World War II, Almásy served in General Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps, putting his expertise of the deserts to good use for the Reich.

He was arrested in Budapest and tried after the war by a people's court, which found him not guilty.





## Jeremy Denton, Orientalist

**Rank:** Novice

Raised in a proper British household, Jeremy Denton had a fine education and upbringing. When he was a boy, his family moved to Cairo, where his father served as an attaché with the British embassy. Immersed in the culture, Denton developed an appreciation and obsession with the Middle East. He returned to England to attend Oxford, where he studied Arabic. Denton has a wide knowledge of Near Eastern traditions, and traveled the Middle East and Egypt extensively.

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

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Charisma:** 0;  
**Toughness:** 5

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d4, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Far Eastern culture) d8, Knowledge (Arabic) d6, Shooting d4, Streetwise d8

**Hindrances:** Curious, Cautious, Outsider

**Edges:** Connections (Oxford University), Investigator, Scholar

**Defining Interests:** City Knowledge (Cairo), Culture (Arabic), Literature

**Knack:** Photographic Memory

**Languages:** English, Arabic

**Gear & Equipment:** Cap, silk jacket, pistol, curved dagger (Str+d6), dusty tomes and Arabic journals

**Quote:** "It's not exotic...just different."





## Lionel Radcliffe, Explorer

**Rank:** Novice

With a soldier for a father, young Lionel Radcliffe had a valiant role model. Radcliffe's father treated him to stories from past battles and remote areas like Africa and China. Enchanted with these tales, Radcliffe joined an expedition to the Congo, where he uncovered a lost tribe of warriors. Barely escaping with his life, he returned to civilization to chronicle his exploits.

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

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Charisma:** 0;  
**Toughness:** 6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Healing d4, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Tracking d6

**Hindrances:** Heroic, Overconfident

**Edges:** Luck, Rugged

**Defining Interests:** Area Knowledge (African jungles), Culture (Africa)

**Knack:** Unerring Sense of Direction

**Languages:** English, African tribal

**Gear & Equipment:** Compass, machete, binoculars, revolver, maps

**Quote:** "There is much of the world that needs discovering."





## Veronica Knight, Mercenary

**Rank:** Novice

Veronica's missionary parents were killed by a notorious Chinese crime lord in Shanghai when she was only a girl. She was raised in an orphanage and taught how to fight by an elderly monk. Veronica fled the city during a Japanese attack, and settled in Paris, where she tangled with several underworld types. When the French needed help in Algeria, Veronica offered her services as a mercenary. Tough and resilient, she single-handedly defended a Foreign Legion fort from attack, after the legionnaires fled in panic. She hopes to gain enough money as a mercenary to find the man who killed her parents and make him pay.

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

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Charisma:** 0 (-4);  
**Toughness:** 5

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Lockpicking d6, Notice d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

**Hindrances:** Bloodthirsty, Deathwish, Stubborn

**Edges:** Back Alley Scrapper, Combat Reflexes, No Mercy

**Defining Interests:** Military history

**Knack:** Eagle Eye

**Languages:** English, French

**Gear & Equipment:** Khaki jacket and pants, boots, canteen, survival knife, rifle

**Quote:** "Everyone has their price."





## Reginald Hartley, Mesmerist

**Rank:** Novice

A man in Boston awoke from a restless sleep, and couldn't remember his past. Besides the clothing on his back, he had with him a diary in his own handwriting, one belonging to Reginald Hartley. With this jarring revelation, Hartley discovered he had the power to cloud men's minds. Thus begins a strange saga of a man desperate to find his true identity. Hartley honed his talent as a circus performer under the stage name Mephisto the Magnificent. He's touring the world, hoping to uncover his true identity and the source of his unique mental abilities.

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

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Charisma:** 0; **Toughness:** 5

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Psionics d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6

**Hindrances:** Amnesia, Overconfident

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Psionics), Mentalist, Alertness

**Powers:** cloud mind, stun, deflection

**Power Points:** 10

**Defining Interests:** Literature, Victorian history, the occult

**Knack:** Psychometry

**Languages:** English, German

**Gear & Equipment:** Suit, derby, revolver, sword cane.

**Quote:** "Look into my eyes..."





## Theo Cavendish III, Playboy

**Rank:** Novice

Born into wealth and privilege, Theo Cavendish the Third didn't have to work hard at much. He saw his father and older brothers enter the family law firm, but didn't join them, instead preferring a life of excitement and adventure. While on holiday in Morocco, he saved the life of a beautiful princess. As excited as he was, he refused any money, realizing doing good was its own reward. Cavendish uses his family wealth to travel and right wrongs, but always has ample time for relaxation, sport and women.

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

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Charisma:** +0/+2/+4; **Toughness:** 5

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Boating d4, Guts d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6

**Hindrances:** All Thumbs, Milquetoast, Obsession (quest for adventure)

**Edges:** Animal Magnetism, Cat's Pajamas, Rich

**Defining Interests:** Yachting, Polo

**Knack:** Johnny-on-the-Spot

**Languages:** English, French

**Gear & Equipment:** Often sporting the finest adventurer garb, he prefers wearing a tuxedo when/where feasible, wristwatch, money clip with \$500, automatic pistol

**Quote:** "In the art of seduction, I am Rembrandt."





## Hamid Jarrah, Bedouin Nomad

**Rank:** Novice

Early life in the Sinai Peninsula was difficult, traveling around with your people and trading goods from small villages and cities. You grew up tough and strong and felt the sun on your bronzed skin and drank fresh waters from springs and lakes. Yet it was that awful night that haunts you still – when your whole family was slaughtered by a rival tribe. You fled into the desert, taking with you a few meager possessions. You made it to Cairo, dehydrated, hungry and weak, yet you vowed revenge on those responsible for the deaths of your loved ones. After many years of city living, you returned to the desert a man with a grim purpose, yet you do not fear the vast expanses and rolling dunes, for you are a nomad and have heat in your heart, and sand in your blood.

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

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Charisma:** 0; **Toughness:** 6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Tracking d4

**Hindrances:** Vengeful, Illiterate, Poverty

**Edges:** Nerves of Steel, Two-Fisted, Rugged

**Defining Interests:** Regional Knowledge (Desert)

**Knack:** Heroic Inspiration

**Languages:** Arabic, English

**Gear & Equipment:** Jalabiyya (hooded robe), kufiyya (traditional headdress), two Webley Bulldog (.24) revolvers, H & H Double Express rifle, sword (Str+d6), canteen, bedroll, coffeepot and coffee, tobacco, dried dates and meat.

**Quote:** "The desert speaks to me."

