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Curse of the Sand Lord



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NF I



CURSE OF THE SAND LORD

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THE CURSE OF THE SAND LORD



Welcome to the first official adventure for *Hellfrost: Land of Fire!*

NF1: The Curse of the Sand Lord is designed for a group of four Novice characters with no advancements—fresh-faced heroes embarking on their first major adventure. If you're looking to start play immediately, there are eight pregenerated characters at the back of this book. All the players need do is purchase their gear.

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

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

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The adventure is set in the desolate and sparsely populated area between Suleiman's Road and the Pillars of Suleiman. No locales detailed on the main map of Al-Shirkuh are visited in the course of the scenario, enabling GMs to move the setting to another region with the minimum of effort.

The scenario begins on the night of the last new moon at the start Alak Paret. Thus, the following day will

dawn as Amt Yaus al-Maat Amt Alak Paret ("the first Day of Balance in the first month of harvest season").

The ambient temperature during daylight hours for this region and season is Hot (average 92° F or 34° C).

Background Notes

A thousand years before the arrival of the jinn, around the time the ancient priests of Hekata were engaged in their perverse quest for immortality, the land around the ancient trade route known today as Suleiman's Road was ruled by a small kingdom, one of hundreds that has graced the timeless sands of Al-Shirkuh.

Into the royal house was born Barsul-Tuge. Unlike his predecessors he craved power. After killing his father, he spent much of his early reign subjugating the neighboring lands and tribes. An autocrat and tyrant, he ruled with a rod of iron, and brooked no threat to his authority. Those who dared to speak out were taken from their home and buried alive in the desert sands.

Though his people suffered for decades, they eventually rose up against their cruel master. Barsul-Tuge was carried into the desert to suffer the same fate he had bestowed upon countless others. As the fine grains filled his lungs, stealing his life, Barsul-Tuge vowed revenge, invoking the name of Azanzibul, his people's deity of evil to fuel his curse. A mausoleum was erected over his grave, a warning to others not to disturb the sands.

Within a year Barsul-Tuge's kingdom was no more. A sandstorm lasting a month swept out of the deep desert and consumed the great city, the outlying settlements, and all who dwelt there. Yet Barsul-Tuge's anger was not diminished, for in life he sought mastery over the whole world, and that destiny had been denied him.

Azanzibul, who today is called Iblis, did not claim the king's spirit, nor did he allow others to take it from its earthly tomb. Instead, the dark deity gave Azanzibul a tiny spark of power. Should he master it, he would rise again to fulfill his ambitions.

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Two millennia have passed, and Barsul-Tuge has risen again. He has spent the last few years literally carving out a small subterranean realm beneath his tomb. His formidable will has given him mastery over its walls, and within its dark halls he is the undisputed ruler. Indeed, the sands that once extinguished his life have become his slave to command. Yet Barsul-Tuge, now calling himself the Sand Lord, is not at the height of his powers.

Were he to wait a few centuries longer, he would grow in power to surpass any greater jinn. But Barsul-Tuge has waited long enough. His desire for vengeance and conquest consumes every moment of his existence. His mind is made up—it is time for him to expand his kingdom into the world of mortals. Whether by quirk of fate or the machination of greater powers who sense the rise of evil and desire it crushed, the Sand Lord's plan coincides with the heroes' travels through the region.



Player's Introduction



Read or paraphrase the following text to the players.

For the past month you have been in the employ of Aziz ibn-Jamal, a minor merchant from the great city of Akbmim, City of the Devoted.

Aziz, a man who has never before left the comfort of the city, has arranged a meeting with a Bedu tribe, the Alaghari, along Suleiman's Road. If negotiations go well, he hopes the tribe will agree to carry his cargoes from the caravanserai at Al-Mosk, to the Oasis of the Jinn, where they will sell them to merchants heading to the Free Emirates. He lacks all knowledge of desert life and was in need of bodyguards and advisors. You were seeking honest work. At 50 dinars a week plus room and board, his offer was too good to pass up. Aziz has proven a good employer. He lacks a great deal of common sense, tends to dither, and does not cope well with unexpected situations, but he has paid you promptly for what so far has been very easy work.

After travelling to Qarah by ship, you set off on camels along the trade road. All being well you should be at the rendezvous point in a few hours, and from there it's a slow return to the city and the search for a new employer.

Give the players chance to introduce their characters. They've been working together for a month and would know something about their comrades.

In addition to their purchased gear, Aziz has loaned characters with Riding d4+ a riding camel and saddle. The beasts are to be returned to the merchant at the end of the heroes' employment (which is scheduled for when they return to Qarah).

Aside from Aziz and the heroes, there are ten of the

ADVENTURE CODES

You may have noticed that this adventure has the code "NF1" on the cover. If you're looking to purchase more official adventures, this code will help you decide which scenarios to pick up.

The first letter relates to the specific Rank of the characters the adventure is designed to suit. N stands for Novice, S for Seasoned, and so on up to L for Legendary.

The second letter will *always* be an "F" in this series, as it stands for "Land of Fire." If an adventure cover or full description has no second letter, then it is written for the wintry northern continent.

The number tells how many scenarios of a given Rank have been published already. If you see a cover announcing a scenario as SF3, for instance, then you know at a glance that particular scenario is the third Seasoned adventure for Land of Fire.

Most adventures will be standalone tales, and thus needn't be run in the order of release number. If we publish linked scenarios, there will be an obvious second title on the cover letting you know exactly where the adventure fits in the series.

merchants employees in the camel train. Their camels are laden with sample goods, as well as extravagant gifts for the Bedu sheikh. They have not been given any stats—they are completely incidental to the adventure, and flee at the first hint of any trouble, only to return when it is safe. When you are ready to begin the adventure proper, proceed to the next section.



A Moral Choice



Read or paraphrase the following text to the players.

As the sun begins to sink toward the western horizon it brings with it much needed relief from the searing heat. If everything goes to plan, you should meet up with the Bedu before the sun sets. Off to the north you catch sight of dark shapes wheeling in the late afternoon sky. Vultures!

Have the characters make Notice rolls. With success, they judge the distance to the circling vultures to be around five miles. Given the characters are mounted on camels and the terrain is relatively firm and flat, they could reach whatever they are waiting to feast upon in about an hour. There are four hours to sunset, plenty of time to investigate and still arrive before dark.

Aziz has not noticed the birds. If the characters bring their presence to his attention he stares northward for several minutes. Utterly out of his depth in the desert, Aziz is unsure as to how to proceed. A good man at heart, he would dearly love to provide assistance to any injured travellers. However, they might be too risky. After pondering the situation, he asks his advisors and bodyguards how best to proceed.

The desert is a harsh mistress, and death is not uncom-

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mon. There is no moral requirement for the characters to investigate the source of the vultures' patient circling. However, as heroes, it's hoped they'll do the right thing. After all, they may one day need assistance, and fate has a curious way of remembering good deeds. If the heroes are unsure how to act, allow them to make a Common Knowledge roll (-2 for Hadaree and sand goblin characters). With success, they know the above facts.

Should the characters investigate, proceed to the section immediately below. Aziz and his employees decline to follow the characters. The merchant suggests he and his men rest the camels and brew some coffee. He cannot be persuaded to change his mind. If they advise the train ride on, proceed to **First Meeting**.

The Caravan of Bones

Read or paraphrase the following text to the players.

From a top a small dune the source of the vultures' curiosity becomes readily apparent. Some 50 yards ahead lies the remains of a small caravan. Through the heat haze you can just make out

piles of bones. Strange that the vultures would be attracted to what seem long-dead remains. Wait! Amid the bones something is moving. Squinting, you can just make out a nomad raising his arm, signalling for help.

Although all that remains are bones that look as if they have lain on the sands for weeks, the caravan met its fate just an hour earlier. The Sand Lord was trying out a new power, the ability to summon a localized and potent *ghibli*. Unfortunately for the nomads, they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Fortunately for the characters, the summoning drained the Sand Lord, preventing him from using the power again today.

The caravan comprised four camels and ten nomads. All but one nomad are dead. Any character making a Survival roll deduces the nomads had made camp shortly before their fate befell them.

The lone survivor (marked S on the map) is in a very bad way, and will not survive much longer. His right arm and part of his face have had the flesh stripped away, exposing the white bone beneath and leaving strips of tattered flesh clinging to his muscles. Were this a corpse, it would be grisly but bearable on the stomach and spirit. Seeing a man live in such torment, however, requires a Spirit roll to avoid the effects of Fear. Any character making a Healing roll knows the nomad is essentially dead—not even *healing* will save him from passing over, though it would ease his pain in his last few minutes.

Regardless of whatever medical help is offered, the nomad whispers a final few words before dying.

"Ghibli," his hisses, the wind whistling through his exposed teeth. "Rose out of nowhere. Unnatural." With that he exhales his last breath.

Characters with a nomadic background may make a Common Knowledge or Survival roll (their choice). Those from the city may make Knowledge (Folklore) or Survival rolls. With success, the character knows the *ghibli*, known as the flay wind in Sandspeech, can strip the flesh of a man's bones and scour away metal and leather. On a raise, he also knows that a particularly nasty type of undead known as flayed can be created by the much-feared wind.

No sooner has the nomad died, then a small number of the dead comrades rise to their feet. Read or paraphrase the following text.

With a crack of bone, two of the nomads rise shakily to their feet. Their white bones, freshly stripped of flesh, stand out in stark contrast to the yellow and orange hues of the desert. As they stand, a wind begins to whip up around them, encircling them in a cloud of scouring sand particles.

Unless someone in the party previously declared they were acting as a lookout or someone scored a raise on the above roll (the latter alerting the party to the pos-

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sibility of undead nearby), have the heroes make Notice rolls. Those who fail are Surprised. The undead nomads rise slowly enough that action cards are dealt to all characters not Surprised and the flayed as normal.

Terrain: Moving over the skeletons of the dead camels or nomads or through the scrub plants counts as difficult ground. Gathered, the vegetation equates to 10 pounds of firewood.

Monsters: A pair of nomads (marked F on the map) have been reanimated as undead flayed by the fell wind.

* Flayed (1 per 2 heroes): See p. 24.

Tactics: On the first round, the flayed unleash their Flay Wind special ability, angling the template to catch as many heroes as possible. Should a foe get within 7", the flayed close to melee, using their claws to rend flesh while the swirling sand scours at their flesh.

Treasure: Aside from 50+2d20 dinars in assorted coins and small, low value objects easily sold at market, the heroes may wish to lay claim to the basic trade goods (rolls of cloth, pottery, and such like) the caravan was transporting. The wind has destroyed much of the cargo, but there are still 500 dinars worth of assorted wares. Each 5 dinars worth weighs 2 pounds. Unlike standard booty, these goods can be sold at 75% of the value with a successful Streetwise roll, and 100% with a raise.

Aftermath: A cursory glance at what little remains of the nomads' belongings indicates they were Faithful and followers of Duamutef. Any nomad or follower of Duamutef in the party knows the standard funerary practice is to bury the remains in the desert. Others characters could probably deduce this based on common sense and logic, but it requires a Knowledge (Religion) roll to be sure. There is no reward or penalty for failing to bury the nomads unless a character is a cleric of Duamutef—not performing suitable burial rites to fellow followers constitutes a major sin.

Once the heroes have finished at the caravan, they can return to Aziz and report their findings. The merchant has no interest in any trade goods plundered from the dead nomads—he considers them Asha's reward to the adventurers for performing a good deed.

First Meeting

Read or paraphrase the following text to the players.

The camp is not yet in sight, but your presence has been detected. Up ahead, four riders, their faces concealed beneath sand hoods, sit upon camels. They carry weapons, but all are safely in their scabbards. One of them waves and urges the mount forward at a trot. The rest follow.

As the figure approaches, it pulls back its scarf to reveal a beautiful female face, with large brown eyes and soft, delicate features. Only the steely look in her eyes reveals this is a woman accustomed to the harshness of desert life.

She touches her hand to her heart, mouth, and

forehead, a traditional greeting across Al-Shirkub, and smiles broadly. "Greetings and the blessings of Suleiman upon you, illustrious travellers! I am Beyah Salima dar-Hassim dar-Alaghari," she beams, "the daughter of Sheikh Hassim. I trust you are the merchant Aziz and his escort?"

At this point she politely waits for a reply. Should any hero (as Aziz's "herald") reply in the negative, she apologizes for mistaking them for others and wishes them a pleasant journey. If the character changes his mind, or another speaks for him and corrects him, she makes a mental note that the merchant and his men are not to be trusted. If the party answers positively straight away, her smile grows even wider.

"Truly we are blessed with excellent news! Praise be to Asha you made it safely through the desert. Come, the camp is not far, and my father has a feast prepared in your honor."

Salima's real given name is Arij ("Sweet fragrance"), though she won't use that at any time in their presence. See the sidebar on page 6 for why.

Although the heroes might wish to tell her of the ill-fated caravan they found earlier, Salima does not wish to discuss such things. While her tribe regularly carry cargo for merchants, she has never encountered anyone from any of the great cities in person. She wishes to know everything about the city where the characters grew up, and fires off a barrage of questions. Treat her as a curious child, with no knowledge of city life. Naturally, this means she has little time for fellow nomads, though she is polite to them.

She is used to men casting their gaze upon her, but that does not mean she likes it—she wants to be respected for her skills, at which she has worked hard, not admired for her beauty, which she did nothing to earn. If any character expresses an interest in her marital status, mentions her appearance, or is obviously being over polite in the hope of getting noticed, she responds with one of the following polite put-downs:

* "Tell me, is it the custom of your people to marry as boys, or do you perhaps have an older brother who seeks a wife?"

* "Blink more often. If you continue to stare like that the sun will burn out your eyes."

* "I have a pet already. I do not require another."

Monsters: The only creatures encountered in this scene are Salima and her three escorts. Unless the heroes are insulting to her, there is no combat.

* Beyah Salima dar-Hassim: See p. 23.

* Bedu (3): See p. 24.

The Race

A few miles later, Salima informs the party the camp is less than a mile away. With a sly grin she calls out, "Come,

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THE ALAGHARI TRIBE

The nomads Aziz is meeting are members of the Alaghari tribe. Any nomads in the party may make a Common Knowledge roll at -4 before they reach the camp to determine if they know anything of the tribe—the desert is a large place, and there are many tribes.

With success, the nomad knows the tribe are Devoted and frequently travel Suleiman's Road and the Jinn Road, but nothing more. With a raise, he recalls the tribe is renowned for its pride, and their women have two names—their given name, and one they use when dealing with strangers. Should the roll be a critical failure, the character has confused them for another tribe. He believes them to be Faithful followers of Qedeshet, god of merchants (among other things), and is convinced children must always wear white robes to symbolize their innocence of spirit.

TRUTH ABOUT THE TRIBE

The Alaghari tribe are indeed Devoted, though they have no particular problems with Faithful outsiders so long as they do not try to convert them.

They are a proud people, prone to anger quickly if insulted (or at a perceived insult) and ever ready to spill blood to defend their honor. As with most prideful citizens of Al-Shirkuh, they are masters of understatement when it comes to accepting praise. Women of all ages always use a different first name when dealing with outsiders. This is an old custom, and developed as a means of preventing evil jinn in human form from knowing the true names of their women and spiriting them away in the night.

They have one unusual custom that might give rise to some awkward moments later—merchants are never served food at the same time as other guests. Instead, they receive the leftovers of the sheikh. Though this might seem insulting to outsiders, the tribe considers it an honor. First, it ensures the food is not poisoned. Second, it allows the merchant to instantly judge what the sheikh thinks of him. A large portion of leftovers indicates favor, while a mouthful indicates great displeasure.

show me how well you city dwellers ride!" With that, she spurs her camel into a gallop. Her escorts do the same.

Arrogant and Overconfident characters have no choice but to give chase. Wiser or more loyal heads may wish to remain at the side of their patron, who is no rider, and refuses to spur his camel faster than a slow walk.

The race is divided into three "rounds," each representing several minutes. Each round, the participants make a Riding roll. Each success and raise earns them a token. Whoever has the most tokens at the end of the contest reaches the camp first. In the event of tie, all those sharing the lead must make a final roll to decide who wins what is a very close race—highest roll takes victory by a nose.

If Salima wins and is complimented on her riding skill, she waves it off with a broad smile and a casual, "All

nomads are good riders." If she loses, she compliments the victor, praising both him and his mount.

Rewards: A player character who wins the race gains 1 Glory for the victory and the resultant praise from Salima. The noblewoman pulls a silver adornment from her camel's reins and offers it as a prize. It is worth 20 dinars.

At The Bedu Camp

Sheikh Hassim dar-Alaghari, has come to meet Aziz with 50 of his people. The main part of the tribe is currently further east. Beyah Salima, his only daughter, is also his only child present, and is second-in-command of the camp. They have erected their tents near a small seasonal well, one of the few watering holes considered neutral ground by the local tribes. The sheikh's tent, the largest and grandest in the camp, is adjacent to the well. The rest are arranged in a rough circle around his. See the map on page 11.

Do **not** show the map to the players under any circumstances—it contains information meant only for the GM's eyes. Draw them a quick sketch map.

A tent has been set up for Aziz and his party close to that of the sheikh. Although he has not yet met the merchant, Sheikh Hassim knows a successful business deal could bring his tribe increased riches, and he is prepared to treat Aziz as an honored guest.

The tribe currently has 30 men and 20 women present. Six guards patrol the perimeter at all time, while another pair watch the tethered camels. Two are beyond the boundary, patrolling the desert on camels.

At night, small campfires are lit around the edge of the camp to ward off curious predators. Beside each one is a pile of sand—this allows the Bedu to quickly extinguish their fires without creating tell-tale smoke should the need to remain unseen arise.

INTRODUCTIONS

As the riders arrive, nomads emerge from their tents to help them from their camels and tether the mounts. No nomad touches any of the saddlebags. Once everyone is on foot, a large man in fine robes walks forward to greet the guests. His eyes are alert, his face heavily weathered from years living in the desert, and his neatly trimmed beard is flecked with gray. Salima rushes over to give him a hug, and hastily recounts the camel race.

"You must excuse my daughter," he says, "She is still filled with the impetuosity of youth. A thousand welcomes to our humble camp," he says, bowing his head. "I am Shekib Hassim dar-Alaghari, and you are honored guests in my camp."

The characters should now introduce themselves. As

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hirelings, they are expected to introduce their master as well. If any hero has the Hated Tribe Hindrance, Hassim loudly sucks breath in through clenched teeth. However, he passes no comment, and does not rescind his greeting or the status he has given his guests.

Once the introductions are over, Hassim continues.

"A tent has been set aside for your comfort. Once you are refreshed, please join me in my tent. A simple meal has been laid on for your pleasure."

Aziz, having no knowledge of Bedu customs, asks to know when negotiations will begin. He is already opening saddlebags and pulling out goods. All nomad characters automatically know this is a bad move—until coffee has been drunk, nomads never discuss business. Furthermore, in his eagerness Aziz has forgotten that the new moon hangs in the sky—an ill time to engage in business matters.

Hassim's face begins to lose its smile. A hasty Persuasion roll from *one* hero, coupled with a reasonable excuse (such as "My master is tired and forgets himself in the presence of so noble a lord" or "Forgive him, lord, he is a stranger and means no insult") quickly defuses the situation, and Hassim's smile returns. The smile is quite genuine—Aziz has come across as an idiot, and that bodes well for the forthcoming negotiations.

The characters' tent, which is large enough to accommodate the entire party, including Aziz's minions, is richly appointed, with silk cushions to provide comfortable seating, and thick carpets boasting intricate patterns to keep the chill of the cold sand out of the guests' bones. A fresh pot of fragrant coffee bubbles away on a small charcoal burner, and a selection of sweetmeats, fresh fruit, and sugared nuts sits in a silver dish on a low table. Full waterskins hang from the roof.

It may occur to the characters to enquire among the nomads whether or not the tribe has any customs of which they should be made aware. They are told about the strange custom of merchants always eating the sheikh's leftovers, and that it is a sign of honor. This knowledge should help diffuse an awkward situation later, especially if Aziz is told of the matter in advance.

When the party is ready, proceed to **The Feast**. Aziz's men do not accompany their master. They know from past experiences the invitation to feast in the sheikh's tent does not extend to lowly servants.

As honored guests, any nomad characters know the

heroes may carry weapons to the meal. Drawing them except at the request of the host or in his defense incurs a -20 Glory penalty. The wearing of armor is a major social *faux pas*, as is having spells maintained (or casting them during the feast). Both acts imply an open lack of trust toward the host and doubt his ability to protect them should trouble arise. Any character committing such a flagrant breach of the rules of hospitality automatically loses 10 Glory for each infraction.

The Feast

Hassim sits at the far end of a low table. Salima sits immediately to his right, while Aziz is invited to sit at his left hand (a position of respect and trust). The characters and twice their number of tribesmen and woman are seated further down the table. A female Bedu sits to Salima's right. No cutlery is provided, though every person has a silver plate in front of them.

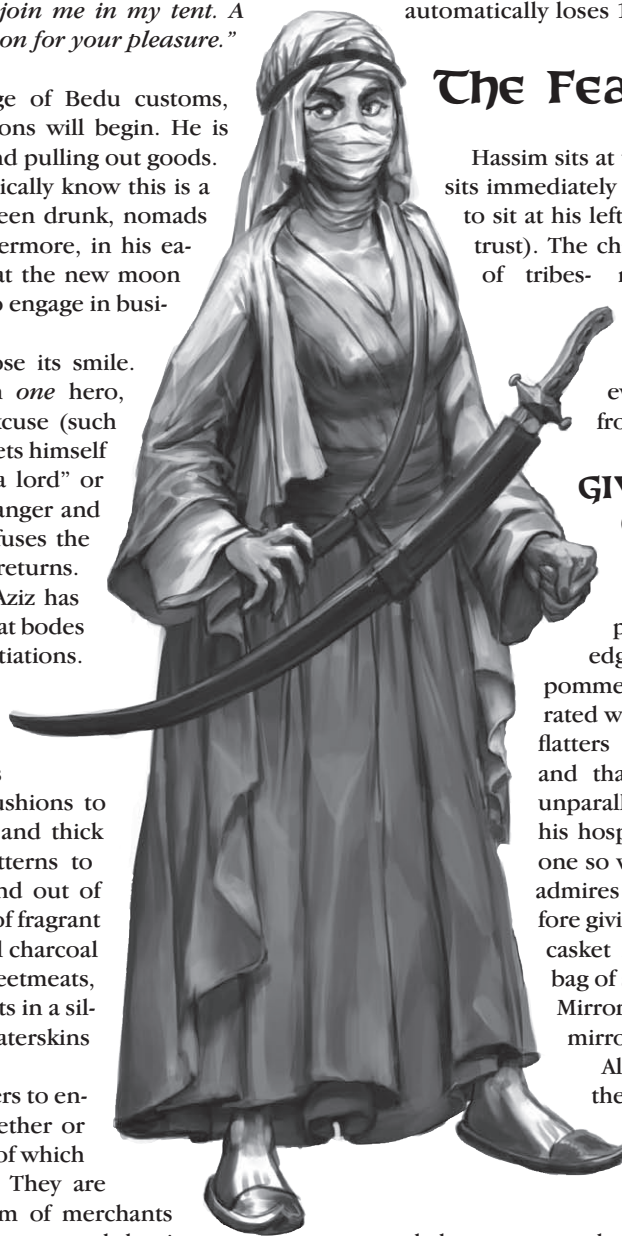
GIVING & RECEIVING GIFTS

Before any food appears, Aziz presents the sheikh with a silver edged dagger with a ruby in the pommel and a finely woven carpet decorated with phrases from the *Hamad*. He flatters his host using eloquent terms and thanks him for his gracious and unparalleled hospitality. After describing his hospitality as a "meager offering for one so worthy of friendship," the sheikh admires the gifts for several moments before giving Aziz a small engraved wooden casket filled with threads of saffron, a bag of salt, and a sliver of glass from the Mirrorsands that has been made into a mirror.

Although they are honored guests, they are technically part of Aziz's retinue, and his gift suffices for them. Any nobles in the party may wish to accord the sheikh gifts, as may any nomads—it

rarely hurts to try and make friends in the desert.

Depending on the value of any gift, examples of the gift the sheikh offers in return include a casket of spices (minimal gift), a small lead-lined box containing a half-pound of crushed ice (moderate gift), and even a sliver of rock from the island in the Mirrorsands, from where Suleiman stood along against the might of the jinn army (maximum gift). The important thing is to be creative.



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GIFT ETIQUETTE

From the highest noble to the lowest peasant, all citizens of Al-Shirkuh offer gifts to friends. Gift-giving is an art, not a science. Through gifts, people pass on unspoken thoughts about their friends. *Land of Fire* is a game of heroes, not worrying over precise social etiquette. Thus, the rules on gift-giving have been kept as simple as possible. Note that these rules are ingrained in citizens, and would be known to the player characters.

- * In every day circumstances, gifts have negligible cost. For instance, a man invited to a friend's house for dinner may bring food to share. Of course, if that friend is an emir, the dish may be solid silver (and retained by the host) and the food expensive.

- * Expensive gifts are only required when offered hospitality as welcomed or honored guests, or if the person in question is a true friend. As a rule, only the head of the party (ideally a noble or character with a higher status profession) should give a gift.

- * To gift an acquaintance or stranger anything may be seen as a bribe at worst and the behavior of an uncouth barbarian at best.

- * The highest value of gift before insult is given is equal to 1% of the value listed on the weregild table in the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*. The lowest value is one-tenth of the above. Thus, a sheikh (equivalent to a duke) would expect gifts ranging in value from 64 to 640 dinars.

Lower values are permissible with a valid excuse. If one has just been robbed, for instance, then one is unlikely to have much of offer a gracious host who bestows honored guest status on one. Not having a gift because one was not expecting to be given the hand of friendship is not an excuse, though.

- * If a character has enough money to offer a gift, then assume he has suitable small goods on his person. Don't worry about where he bought them, or their weight! These are called "standard gifts." A hero may always purchase something specific, of course. This is considered a "special gift."

The main reason for this rule is that the giver can expect a gift of equal value in return. Items may change hands, but the heroes' purses still contain the same amount of dinars. Alternately, the GM may demand the heroes set aside money and purchase a vague item simple called "gifts." The amount of money invested is the maximum amount the hero has to offer.

- * Unless a woman is the ruling noble or a man is a family member, gifts should only be given to a woman by another woman. The reverse also applies. Thus, a female hero given hospitality by a sheikh should offer a gift to his wife or a daughter.

- * Each breach of these rules incurs a -10 Glory penalty at minimum.

AZIZ IS GOING HUNGRY

Hassim's "simple meal" is an extravagant banquet comprising dozens of dishes. Roasted lamb stuffed with nuts and dates, fragrant rice, rich and spicy soup, peppers

stuffed with goat's cheese, candied figs, fresh oranges, and salted beef are just some of the many delights. As befits the honored status of the guests, a dish of salt is provided with the meal.

As is normal among nomads, the food is laid out on large platters. However, unlike in most tribes, the platters are not laid out on the table, but are instead carried to each guest in turn by a servant. While the nomads and characters may help themselves freely, the servants constantly miss out Aziz, refusing to let him grab food.

Unless he knows to wait patiently for leftovers, after five dishes go past his nose Aziz looks at his hirelings, his eyes clearly beseeching them to interfere on his behalf. As noted earlier, this is not intended as a slight toward the merchant, but an honor. Unfortunately, none of the characters have any way of knowing this.

How the characters make their inquiries as to Aziz's enforced abstinence is important. Who they enquire to is less important—they may ask the sheikh or a nomad seated near to them.

Asking if perhaps there is a custom that forbids Aziz from eating in front of the sheikh is an excellent way of avoiding offense, as it makes no accusations of poor hospitality and makes the speaker sound ignorant. Accusing the sheikh of reneging on his welcoming them as honored guests immediately raises the nomad's ire, requiring a very quick and sincere apology (a Persuasion roll at -2) to avoid giving a great insult. Whether they offend Hassim or not, he explains the custom of his people and the meaning behind it.

Offending the sheikh warrants a loss of 20 Glory for whoever insults him. If the matter is quickly defused, the penalty is just 10 points. Avoiding the problem through good roleplaying is worth +2 Glory.

Should they wait and see what transpires instead of enquiring immediately, Aziz is soon given food—plentiful leftovers from the sheikh's plate. Whether or not the heroes take this as an insult toward their boss is up to them. For his part, Aziz is just glad to fill his belly.

In the event insult is given, the meal ends early. Hassim soon claps his hands, sending the servant scurrying away with the platters. Coffee is quickly poured, during which time the sheikh curtly interrogates his guests (see below). Once the coffee is drunk, he dismisses his guests, insisting they must be tired and should rest before negotiations begin in the morning.

SMALL TALK

Whether the meal is cut short or not, Hassim asks the characters about themselves. He doesn't much care for the details—small talk is a traditional way of sizing up guests and judging their personality. After listening to each character's story, he asks them the same question—"What do you think of my daughter, Salima?" Since their stories may be well rehearsed, Hassim is using the unexpected question to catch the hero's off guard. This way they might reveal something of their true nature.

Assuming all is going well with the meal, Hassim hap-

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pily answers any questions regarding his tribe's unusual customs and the route it travels (Al-Mosk to the Oasis of the Jinn for the main part). He refuses to engage in any conversation regarding their other business interests.

Salima is happy to talk with the heroes, but quickly loses interest in proceedings if the conversation begins to turn toward romance.

If the heroes mention the destroyed caravan at any point during the meal, Hassim falls silent for a moment.

"Your news does not surprise me, though I grieve for their passing into Asha's embrace. The desert has felt strange recently. We have heard much talk of sudden storms and strange beings stalking the dunes. But this is not the time for talk of death and mystery. Come, tell me some more of your homeland and the many wonders it contains."

At some point in the early hours of the morning the feast concludes, allowing the heroes to retire to their tent. Those who wish to stand guard with the nomads may do so, but they must be careful not to insult the sheikh by implying he cannot adequately protect them.

The rest of the night passes peacefully, save for Aziz's thunderous snoring. Proceed to the next section.

Passing the Time

Following a simple meal of barley porridge sweetened with honey, bread, and goat's milk in the sheikh's tent, the characters are dismissed—only the sheikh and Aziz will be discussing the trade contract. Two Bedu stand guard outside the sheikh's tent, refusing entry even to Salima. The heroes now have time to themselves.

There are a few places of interest in the camp they might wish to visit. The numbers before each name indicate their position in the camp (see page 11). See the sidebar **Rumors & Hearsay** as well.

Give the players as much time as they want. Before they get bored socializing, head to **Death by Sand** and run the encounter.

3. HEALER'S TENT

Bushra, the tribe's main healer, remains in her tent, along with her male apprentice, a sallow-faced simpleton named Osman. His parents disowned him when his lack of smarts became apparent, and Bushra adopted him.

If the heroes call out or wait to be invited inside, Bushra leaves them outside in the baking heat for 10 minutes before inviting them in. Those who enter uninvited must brave the magical charm that protects her tent.

In her youth, she actually encountered a greater jinni. Though the jinni was clever, he was no match for the healer's quick wits. She beat him in a riddle contest and bade him grant her one wish. The jinni crafted for her a magical talisman, which protects her tent from intruders. Anyone who wishes to enter her tent uninvited must

RUMORS & HEARSAY

The heroes may overhear snippets of conversation or make enquiries into the latest hearsay along the trade road. Have each character make a Streetwise roll while exploring the camp. Success means they pick up one piece of gossip, and a raise two snippets of information. Roll a d10 and consult the table below. Entries in italics are false. Note that an entry may be both truth and false.

d10 Rumor

- 1 Four small caravans have vanished in the desert near here in recent weeks. Praise be to Suleiman we have not yet suffered losses.
- 2 *A powerful ifrit was seen lurking near Suleiman's Road. No doubt he plans mischief.*
- 3 *The desert has come to life.* We have heard reports of men of sand who rise from the desert to attack travelers.
- 4 Wise men say this region is haunted. There is a necropolis somewhere nearby where the dead do not stay in their graves, *and sometimes they wander onto the trade road.*
- 5 Wealth cannot win Salima's heart. A man who desires her affections must prove himself her equal at riding and archery.
- 6 Our healer is old and knows many secrets of the jinn. She makes charms that are said to protect against undead.
- 7 The land to the south is unpopulated. *This has allowed orcs to grow in number.*
- 8 Salima's brothers have vowed to hunt down and kill any man who insults her honor.
- 9 *Be wary of the X tribe. It is said they are slavers!* (Replace X with the name of a nomad PC's tribe, or invent one if there are no nomads in the party)
- 10 The sheikh has not yet appointed an heir. When he dies, his sons will fight for power.

make a Spirit roll at -2 or suffer the effects of Terror. The item has no power outside her tent.

She has the following items for sale at 80% of their normal value. Bushra does not haggle.

Common Goods: Healer's bag

Unusual Goods: Herbalist kit, dried herbs (anything the heroes might need). She also has three healing balms (two cutting and one stabbing), one restorative salve, two purgative draughts, two antitoxin pills, and two stimulant II pills. These are fresh, and are good for 8 days. The price for each dose is 20 dinars to the heroes.

Bushra doesn't say much. She's not being rude—she just doesn't say much to anyone. Getting any gossip from her should be a challenge, but not impossible. Politeness and respect will go a long way in loosening her tongue. Whether or not the party buy anything from her, she grabs a random hero by the arm just before they leave her tent.

The crone stares at you with her penetrating eyes for a moment before nodding to herself. "The jinn

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whisper your name on the wind and through the sand," she croons. "Your journey is just beginning, but they already know your name."

She opens a small box on a table and pulls out three vials. As she forces them into your hand you feel the magic radiating from them. "Use them wisely," she smiles, "lest the desert winds sing a lament to your memory."

The three vials are alchemical *healing* potions. Each contains a single dose and cures one wound.

* Bushra: See page 23.

* Osman: If stats are needed, treat him as a citizen (see p. 24) but with Smartsd4 and Healing d6.

4. TRADER'S TENT

While trade agreements with merchants are handled by the sheikh, Duqaq dar-Layth is one of the tribe's traders, and the only one currently in the camp. He deals with outsiders seeking to purchase supplies. Due to the size of the camp and Aziz's small caravan, he has brought only limited stock.

If the heroes acquired trade goods from the dead caravan, Duqaq gladly accepts them in trade for his wares. Available items for sale are as below. Since the heroes are honored guests, he offers his wares for 75% of their standard price. A character making a Persuasion roll at -2 can get him to part with them for 60%, but no lower. He does sell food, but as honored guests the characters may take whatever they need for personal use for the tribe's communal stores.

Duqaq likes to keep abreast of the news—he finds passing on gossip encourages sales. He always reveals one piece of news to the heroes. Streetwise rolls may be made to learn more, as normal.

Armor: Leather vest.

Melee Weapons: Dagger, spear (both types).

Ranged Weapons: Bow, spear

Ammunition: Arrows (all types)

Common Gear: Any V availability items with a value of 25 dinars or less except crowbar, hashish

Unusual Goods: Duqaq has a few alchemical devices for sale. He tries to hawk these as "special items" reserved only for the "most honored customers." The names in italics are his sales pitch. Play up to the names when describing them.

* *Bountiful cloak:* Cloth imbued with *feast* (Novice level, spread on the ground and a feast appears)

* *Fire giant's blood:* Potion of *boost (Strength)* cast with a success (drink to use)

* *Ifrit in a bottle:* Glass flask containing *obscure* in gaseous form (throw to activate, Range 3/6/12)

5. KADA

As Devoted, the tribe has no need of a temple. Fathi dar-Lut is one of the tribe's imams. He interprets the *Hamad*, counsels the nomads on Suleiman's laws, enforces

morality, and helps settle disputes before they reach the ears of the sheikh. He is also responsible for educating the tribe's children, ensuring they grow up wise and with strong morals.

No matter when the heroes drop by his tent, he is instructing a handful of children in the *Hamad*. He invites any Devoted heroes to speak to the youngsters, asking them to tell how Suleiman's teachings have helped them in their daily lives. Once they have finished talking, Fathi dismisses the children so they can do their chores, and turns his attentions to the characters, asking how he may help them. He offers the visitors coffee and tabac.

* Fathi dar-Lut (1): Treat as a Bedu warrior (p. 24), but add Knowledge (Law) d8 and Persuasion d8.

6. FALCONER'S TENT

Many nomads hunt with birds of prey. Sheikh Hassim has a great fondness for the birds, and is a keen hunter. Whenever he travels he brings with him a small collection birds and his trusted falconer, Masrur dar-Ayser. With the camp being so small, Hassim has just one bird per hero with him. None of the birds are for sale at any price—they are Hassim's private collection.

Given the heroes are honored guests, and thus considered personal friends of the sheikh, Masrur is willing to let the characters try their hand at falconry if they so wish. This takes an hour, and requires a Survival roll. Characters unlikely to have much knowledge of hunting with birds (most except clerics of Upuaut, nomads with a hunting background, and nobles), suffer a -2 penalty. With success, the bird nets a snake. On a raise, it brings back a plump desert hare.

* Masrur dar-Ayser (1): As Bedu warrior (p. 24).

Death by Sand

Read or paraphrase the following text to the players.

The air is rent by a loud scream from the direction of the sheikh's tent. Even before it ends, nomads begin making their way to the scene of the commotion.

Assuming the heroes respond in a timely fashion, continue reading the text below. Should they dally, the sandmen burst forth as described below and launch their attack. In this instance, the heroes will begin elsewhere in the camp.

Hurrying over, you see Aziz babbling frantically and gesturing toward the tent. The color has faded from his face, and his eyes are bulging. With a supreme effort he calms his nerves, points back to the tent, and screams, "Murder!"

As if answering the accusation, two creatures stumble from the tent. Roughly humanoid but de-

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void of facial features, they appear to be men made of living sand!

The Sand Lord has decided it is time to begin his conquest of the desert. Unfortunately for the Bedu, their camp contained the nearest living creatures worthy of his attention. Two sandmen burst through the floor of the sheikh's tent, slashing the carpets with their sand-forged weapons. Before either Hassim or Aziz could react, the sheikh was cut down. Aziz managed to scramble to safety and raise the alarm.

Setting Up the Encounter: If the heroes reacted to the cry quickly, they begin anywhere within 6" of the front of the sheikh's tent. Otherwise, they begin wherever they were when the GM started the scene.

Salima and half the Bedu warriors (see below) are already close to the tent, having rushed over. The GM should place the remaining Bedu randomly around the camp, with none closer than 12" to the front of the sheikh's tent. Aziz, while present, faints as soon as violence breaks out, and plays no part in this combat. The monsters will not attack him.

Two sandmen begin adjacent to the entrance of the sheikh's tent, having just emerged from killing the nobleman. The rest begin beneath the sand, and break through on their action card.

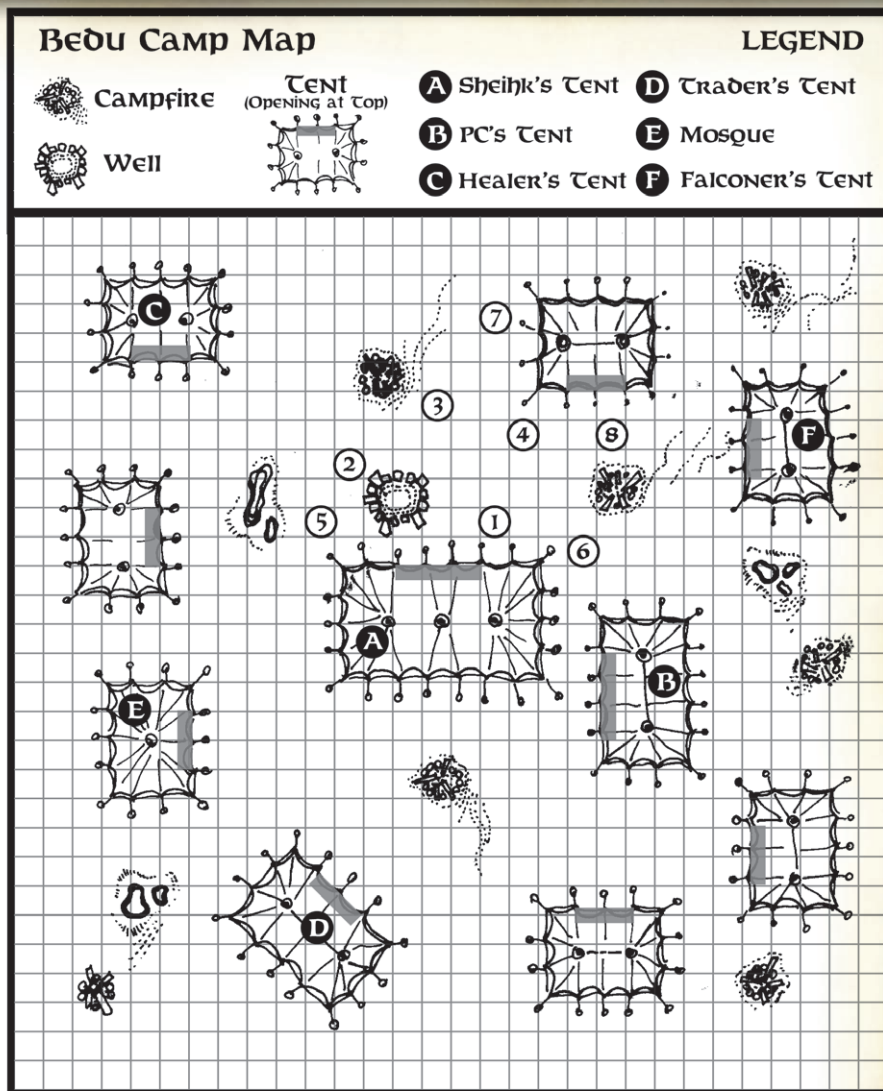
Drawn by vibrations on the surface, the burrowing sandmen erupt close to the sheikh's tent. Roll a d8 for each sandman and place them as close as possible to the indicated point on the map. If one is adjacent to an enemy, it makes it burrowing attack as normal. Should it appear adjacent to two or more foes, decide randomly which one is its intended target.

Terrain: The campfires are not lit and are treated as regular ground.

The stone-lined well is impassable terrain unless a creature can fly or walk on water. Any creature pushed in falls 20 feet (3") before hitting water, whereupon it suffers 2d6+2 damage. The rolled damage is then halved. Characters may make an Agility roll as normal to turn their fall into a dive and negate the damage—the sandmen lack both the brains and knowledge of diving to do this.

There is no risk of drowning—the walls are rough and provide plentiful hand holds. However, the character will have been submerged, ruining any soluble items not in waterproof containers. Sandmen suffer 2d6 damage per round while in the water as they begin to dissolve.

Escape requires Climbing rolls or a rope lowered



down by a comrade. A hero can haul a trapped comrade a number of feet equal to his Strength die per round.

The area between the tent posts are open to the elements. The walls of are Toughness 5. Each 1" of tent is treated as a separate object. A single wound creates a slash that can be moved through as difficult ground, but does not otherwise weaken the integrity of the structure. Moving through the interior of any tent is difficult ground.

Monsters: This encounter involves the player characters, Salima, a small number of male Bedu, and a group of sandmen despatched by the Sand Lord. The players should be given control of Salima and the Bedu.

* Bedu warriors (2 per hero): See p. 24

* Beyah Salima dar-Hassim: See p. 23

* Sandmen (2 per Wild Card): See p. 25

Reinforcements: The aim of the fight is to introduce the heroes to the Sand Lord's primary minions, not slaughter them. Should the fight go badly, a further one Bedu warrior per player character enters the fray whenever the GM deems it appropriate.

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Tactics: The sandmen are under orders to destroy the Bedu camp and kill anyone they encounter. They attack the nearest opponent. They do not use any developed tactics, but Gang-Ups may occur if the closest foe happens to be nearest multiple sandmen.

AFTERMATH

The aftermath of the fight is a scene of chaos and confusion. Women are wailing, children are crying, and the men, their weapons in hand, seek someone to blame. Salima is temporarily stunned at the sight of her father's body, his robe soaked in blood, being reverently carried from his tent. The mood is turning ugly, and the characters are in danger of becoming scapegoats.

The characters need to calm the nomads, and quickly. In order to quell the anger, a character needs to make three Persuasion rolls, each opposed by a Group Spirit roll from the nomads. Assume they have Spirit d6. So long as the heroes win two of the three rolls, they successfully prevent the warriors from wreaking a terrible vengeance upon them.

Should they fail, describe the nomads advancing closer on all sides, the look of hatred in their eyes, and the glint of sunlight on their weapons. Before any foolish actions occur from either side Salima snaps out of her trance. She loudly calls for both sides to back down. Slowly but surely a semblance of order returns.

Salima turns to face her kinsfolk, tears in her eyes but her face set with a steely determination.

"Our guests were not behind this attack," she says quietly. "We have heard strange stories for many months, as well you know. You seek vengeance, as do I, but in Suleiman's name let us not break the sacred laws of hospitality without good cause." She pauses as the warriors sheathe their weapons and lower their eyes to the sand.

"I shall ask Bushra to hear what the jinn say on the wind. She will point us to the source of this crime, and then we will carve my father's name on the perpetrator's flesh."

Salima gestures for you to follow her to Bushra's tent. "The laws of hospitality bind you to provide assistance. I am grateful for what you have done so far, but this matter is not over."

Bushra's Foresight

Bushra is already expecting Salima and the characters, having heard the winds lament Hassim's passing and sensing the characters have a great part to play in what is to follow. She gestures them into her tent without delay and bids them sit.

"Your father was a good man, Beyah Salima dar-Hassim," she says. "He will be sorely missed in this world, but it was his time to pass over and join Asba, and nothing could prevent that."

"A terrible evil is awakening beneath the desert, an evil that has slumbered for long centuries. The jinn do not speak its name, for even they are fearful, but there is perhaps one who knows it and who will whisper it into your ears. You must visit the Old Man of the Dunes and seek his wisdom. Be warned, though, his services do not come easily."

Salima quickly makes up her mind.

"I shall ride out with the warriors and make a bargain with the Old Man. Then my father shall be avenged and his spirit able to rest peacefully."

Nomads native to the Jinn Lands of Old can make a Common Knowledge roll to determine if they have ever heard of the Old Man of the Dunes. Other heroes must rely on Knowledge (Folklore). With success, the character knows only that he is a greater jinni who was spared death because he vowed to follow the teachings of Suleiman. On a raise, he knows the Old Man is a majin (a jinni of earth) with a fondness for fresh honey. Bushra nods sagely if this is mentioned in her presence, and says cryptically, *"You have already won one battle."*

The tribe's honey supplies are depleted after the feast last night. Salima knows where wild honey can be found nearby, but there are risks—it is made by a colony of giant bees.

TIME TO PLAY THE HEROES

Common sense should tell the heroes that Salima and the warriors heading off to enact revenge is a big mistake. The camp is already weakened, and to leave it undefended is to invite disaster. Salima is also now in charge of her people, and looking after them should be her priority. It's time for the characters to act the part of heroes and volunteer their services! Common Knowledge rolls should be allowed if the players don't come to these conclusions themselves.

For Salima, knowing what is the right thing to do and doing the right thing are two separate matters. Her heart is filled with fury, and only wise words from a calm heart can make her see reason.

You can run this scene using the Social Conflict rules or purely through roleplaying.

Roleplaying: Pointing out the above facts ensures the characters' are victorious. The GM needn't make the win easy, but the heroes should prevail in the end.

Social Conflict: If Salima wins then she cannot be swayed from her path. The young noblewoman and the warriors ride to see the jinni (ignoring the honey, if known about). Don't worry, she won't steal the characters' thunder! The adventurers may accompany her if they so desire. Hopefully they will, otherwise things end very badly for the tribe—Salima and her escort learn what they need to know and head off to confront the Sand Lord, but are slaughtered by undead in a necropolis. If the characters win, Salima sees the wisdom

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in their words and agrees to remain in the camp with the warriors, appointing the heroes to visit the jinni in her place.

Salima can give directions to both the giant bees' nest (if a hero has mentioned the honey) and the Old Man of the Dunes. With a little luck, they can be at the nest before nightfall. Reaching the Old Man's home, however, will take the best part of a day's ride. The tribe ensures the adventurers have plentiful food and water in their packs.

If the party heads for the bees, go to **Honey Trap**. If they decide to go straight to the Old Man of the Dunes' abode, proceed to **The Old Man**.

🍯 Honey Trap 🍯

Rising from the desert is a stone spire, roughly 55 feet wide at the base, and rising to a blunt tip that towers 75 feet above the desert. Weathered by wind and sand since the dawn of creation, the surface is marked by a series of deep holes, each about a foot wide. The column merely marks the entrance to the nest, which is underground and reached through the holes. There is enough honey in the entrance tunnels to sate the Old Man's hunger.

Setting Up the Encounter: The giant bees already outside the nest are indicated on the map. They are on Hold. They react to the heroes' presence only if attacked or when a character shoves an arm into one of the holes. The characters may approach from any side they desire.

Terrain: The rock column can be climbed as normal. Areas marked as debris are difficult ground.

The rock around the holes is Toughness 10. This might be important if the characters wish to cause a cave-in to prevent the bees escaping the nest. Alternately, a cloak, blanket, or similar large, flexible object can be stuffed into a hole, while a buckler or similar object can be wedged into a hole. Both methods require an action. A bee cannot escape from a blocked hole, but neither can a character steal any honey.

Monsters: For the purpose of the adventure, there are unlimited bees. Fortunately, they do not swarm, and emerge only in small numbers.

Each round after the first the bees are dealt a black action card, another two bees emerge. On a Joker, 1d4 leave the nest. Deal the bees a card even if none are currently outside the nest. When a bee leaves the nest to join the fray, roll a d8 to determine through which hole it appears. In the event the indicated hole has been blocked, the bee must retreat and find an alternate exit. Do not roll again—one less bee appears this round.

* Giant bees (unlimited): See p. 24.

Tactics: The bees' sole aim is to defend the queen (who is deep underground) and drive off the intruders. The bees do not follow or attack

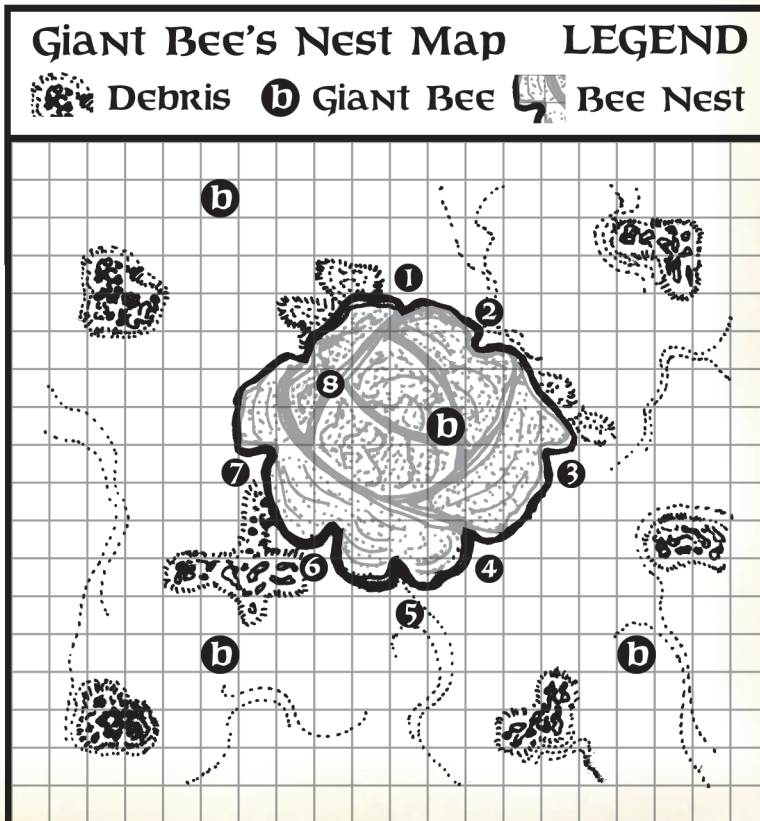
any character who moves more than 15" from the nest unless they are attacked, such as by ranged weapons or spells.

Treasure: The only treasure here is the bee's honey. In order to grab some, a character must be adjacent to one of the holes marked on the map, stick his arm inside, and make a Strength roll as an action. Each success and raise nets him 1 pound of honey. Without excavating the rock and crawling inside the nest proper, a maximum of 20 pounds of honey can be gained in this manner.

The characters have no idea how much honey they might need. When they decide to give up the fight and flee is their choice. Until they do, the bees continue to attack.

🍯 The Old Man 🍯

The Old Man of the Dunes is a name adopted by a powerful greater majin. During the War of Copper Jars, he bowed down before Suleiman and vowed to adopt his new teachings. For his humility and his promise, he was spared punishment. Instead of returning to Jinnistan (the jinn's native realm), the Old Man elected to remain in Al-Shirkuh, for he had come to love the desert and its people. For centuries he has lived in the dunes north of Suleiman's Road—close to his kind's former heartland, but not close enough to be reminded of their demise. He spends much of his time meditating on the *Hamad* and walking the dunes. Those brave or foolish enough to



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seek him out may be rewarded with wisdom if they are deemed worthy.

Although like most greater jinn he encountered Suleiman, he does not speak of the prophet. If questioned, all he ever says is, "He was the best of mortals, and the worst of mortals." He leaves the questioner to determine what that actually means.

The Old Man isn't named for his immortality. He has refrained from using his powers for centuries, and his form is greatly diminished. Indeed, he appears as nothing less than an old human. His head is completely bald, his skin is thick and leathery, and his frame is gaunt. He dresses in a simple loincloth. His teeth are black and rotten, a result of his life-long love of honey. Were it not for his gray eyes, which betray his great age and wisdom, he might easily be mistaken for a desert hermit or a madman. Those who doubt his origins and consider him easy prey have much to fear, for while he chooses not to wield his powers and looks weak, he has not lost his ability to wreak destruction.

Like all greater majin, he cannot be rushed. He speaks when he was decided what to say, no matter how impatient a mortal may get waiting for an answer.

The Old Man has no stats. Adventurers stupid enough to challenge him will be crushed like insects. Even if the party is especially tough, he can simply *teleport* to any locale he has visited before to escape harm.

HOME OF THE OLD MAN

The Old Man's home is a small cave in the side of a rocky outcropping. When the characters arrive, he is sat outside, watching a line of ants struggling to carry a dead beetle back to their nest.

He merely stares at the party if they hail him and introduce themselves. After several minutes delay, he replies with a simple "Welcome." He graciously accepts any gifts of honey, licking his lips as he takes it from the heroes. Such generosity does not go unrewarded. Details can be found later in this section.

Should Salima be present, he becomes quite verbose for a majin. (He knew she was coming, and has had time to prepare his speech.)

"This is not your fate," the Old Man says, looking directly at Salima. "Vengeance is the foot step onto a dark path. A price will be paid for your father's death, but not by you. Go now, and leave those whose destinies are written in the patterns of the dunes to quell the fire in your heart. Their fate is as yet unclear. Should they fail, we will meet again Beyah Arij dar-Hassim, known as Salima."

With that he smiles warmly and waves a hand as if shooing away a fly. Salima and the Bedu vanish into thin air! The jinn has *teleported* them back to the Bedu camp. The Old Man does not inform the characters what he has just done. Instead, he carries on talking as if Salima had never been present.

"You seek the one who has arisen beneath the sands," he continues. "A collision of destinies awaits, and the outcome is veiled. Darkness and light. Who shall prevail, the dunes whisper? My question is, are you worthy of your destiny?" With that he gestures to a narrow cave entrance.

"The greater powers will decide if you are worthy. Four tests await—resilience, speed, strength, weapons. Pick one and nominate a champion. When your chosen one is ready, they may step into my cave. Be warned, mortals—time is not your friend."

If the party comprises less than four characters, reduce the number of tests the party must endure to match their strength. For larger parties, there are still only four tests—someone in the party will not be tested.

Peering into the cave, it appears to be barely large enough for the Old Man to be comfortable. However, as soon as the nominated hero steps inside he disappears from the mortal world. Should a second person try to join the champion, then nothing happens to him—he remains in the cave.

The Challenges

All the tests are tricks. The obvious solution, based purely on the name, will not earn victory.

Give the champions as much time as they want to ponder the problem before them, but do **not** allow the other players to help them in any way. Ideally, conduct each test in a different room and keep them separated until all the challenges have been attempted.

In each test, the champion may attempt three actions and no more. As soon as victory is achieved or a third failed action completed, the landscape fades, leaving the hero in a gray, featureless limbo. When all the challenges are over, the party reappears in front of the Old Man. Hopefully they are a little wiser.

Challenge: This details the basic nature of the task.

Wisdom: Characters who ponder the task before rushing in (unlikely for any Arrogant or Overconfident heroes) or who suspect trickery may make a Smarts roll at -2 to recall a piece of Suleiman's wisdom that might help them in the task. The wisdom applies equally to Devoted and Faithful.

Solution: The actual task that needs to be undertaken to ensure victory. Whether he reaches the solution himself or through Suleiman's wisdom, the player needs to suggest the appropriate Trait to the GM.

Note that the solutions we have given should not be considered the only correct ones. Similar solutions put forward by players should be considered equally valid. Allow them to be creative!

THE TEST OF RESILIENCE

Challenge: The champion appears in a field. He

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stands on the border between lush crops and withered crops. A young woman faces him from the verdant side. The woman presents him with a simple challenge—prevent her from crossing onto the withered side.

Wisdom: “No man may halt the passage of time. All he may do is weather its assault.”

Solution: The woman is a representation of water. She marks both the determined flow of water and the ceaseless flow of time. Her passage cannot be halted by physical means—she slips through any holds or barriers, no matter how solid. To win, the hero need only endure her passing, using his Vigor to resist her movement.

THE TEST OF SPEED

Challenge: The champion appears in an arena, empty save for a young girl. She greets the hero with a smile, and challenges him to beat her in a race to the far end of the arena.

Wisdom: “There is no problem that cannot be overcome. Think it done, and it shall come to pass.”

Solution: Physical speed is not going to earn the character victory. The girl represents the wind, and she is faster than any mortal. No matter how fast the hero runs or what tricks he employs, the girl always wins the race by a good distance. There is no problem that cannot be overcome by the power of thought before action, however. Victory requires a Smarts roll—the hero need only think of winning the race. Success “teleports” the champion to the winning line ahead of the girl.

THE TEST OF STRENGTH

Challenge: The hero appears on a flat, rocky plain. Standing in front of him is a scrawny young boy of the hero's race. He greets the hero politely, and bids him to lift him off the ground in order to pass the test.

Wisdom: “The greatest strength of any mortal lies not in his arms, but in his spirit.”

Solution: This test is not one of physical strength, but of faith. The boy represents a mountain, and thus no amount of brute force or spellcasting can shift him even a fraction of an inch. Instead, the character must make a simple Faith or Spirit roll (his choice) while trying to lift the child in order to succeed.

THE TEST OF WEAPONS

Challenge: The champion appears on a battlefield. Only two combatants remain—the hero and a hulking warrior clad in heavy armor and wielding a scimitar and large shield. The foe challenges the character to wound him, promising he will not strike back.

Wisdom: “A word wielded with precision will wound a man as surely as any weapon.”

Solution: The warrior is a physical representation of the fire that fills men's hearts and make them proud and haughty. It cannot be bested by skill at arms. Any attack is automatically parried. A simple Intimidation or

Taunt roll (hero's choice) wins the challenge by causing the warrior to back down (a wound to his ego) or look shamefaced (a wound to his honor).

The Tests Completed

Regardless of the number of victories, the characters have probably learned something from their endeavors. The Old Man may tut or frown if the heroes don't do well, but he is bound to their destiny as much as they and reveals the information they seek.

“Long ago there lived a cruel king. Like many tyrants his death was not of his choosing. His spirit has grown strong and vengeful. He has arisen as the Sand Lord, and he seeks to make the whole of the desert his realm. You will find him beneath the necropolis that stands 20 miles south of Suleiman's Road. The fates will guide you. Look for the sign of the sun, for therein lies the path to your fate.”

The Old Man will say no more on any topic.

Risking the giant bees' wrath does not go without reward. Before they leave, the Old Man bestows a minor blessing for each whole 5 pounds of honey offered as a gift. Each blessing bestows one communal benny to the party. Any hero can use these as if they were personal bennies. They remain from session to session, but once they're spent they are not replenished.

The Necropolis

When his people buried the Sand Lord alive, they erected a mausoleum over his grave. They did this not to celebrate his passing, but to warn others of his evil deeds and inform them of his fate, a warning to others who sought to walk a similar path. Time and wind scoured the edifice clean of their words.

Later, long after the Sand Lord's people and his vile reputation had passed from history, new settlers moved into the region. They saw the great mausoleum and decided to bury their own dead in the vicinity, believing in their ignorance and lack of evidence to the contrary that it was a holy site. Before they too vanished into the dust of ages, the site had become a sprawling necropolis radiating out from the tomb of the unknown lord that stood at its center.

The tombs were built to mimic the houses of the living. Each is a cube (4 yards to a side), has a single entrance, and a domed roof. Thieves have plundered many of them, and the stonework that once separated the dead from the living have been torn aside or broken. Inside, the crumbling remains of the dead lie on low stone biers. Some tombs were the final resting place of just a single person, while others were used by generations of the same family. Surrounding them

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are the remnants of their grave goods. Much of the valuables have long since been looted, leaving behind a mess of decaying fabric, shattered pottery, and broken, time-aged furniture.

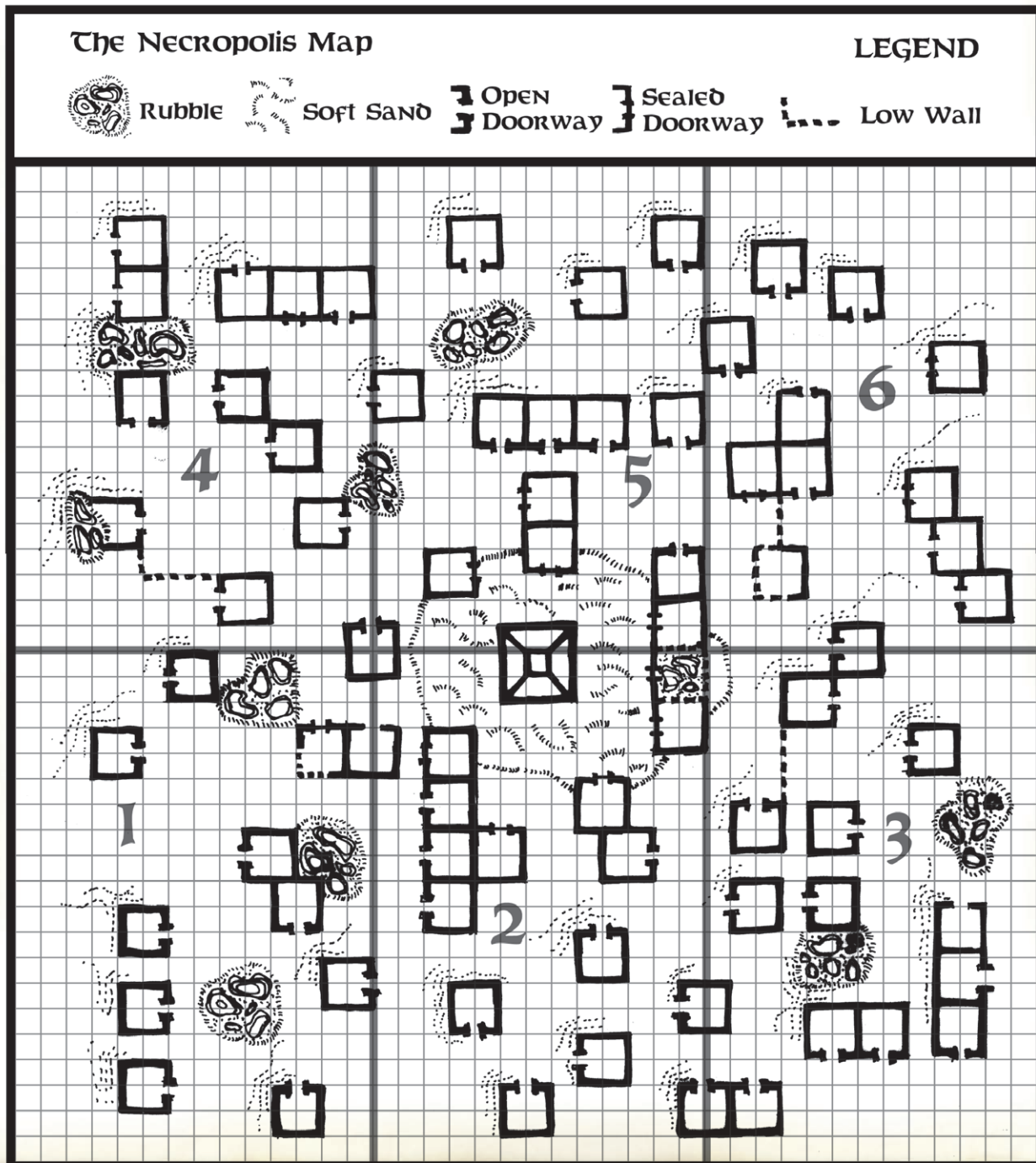
The dead do not rest easily, though. Vengeful spirits still lurk in the dusty bones and withered corpses, and they have no love for mortals.

GM Note: This fight involves a lot of opponents. By moving around the battlefield, employing tactics, and concentrating their attacks, the heroes should be able to weather the prolonged assault. Players who believe

fleeing from monsters is somehow wrong will likely have their characters pay a heavy price.

Running the Encounter: The heroes begin on any map edge of their choosing.

As soon as they are placed, deal initiative cards. The walking undead are automatically disturbed by the presence of living creatures once they venture into the necropolis. The skeletons and skeleton warriors should be treated as two separate groups for the purpose of initiative cards. When he awakens (see below), the sand mummy receives his own card as well.



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Each round, five skeletons and one skeletal warrior emerge from their tombs and move toward the intruders. Reinforcements automatically join the fight each round until all the undead have been accounted for.

The map of the necropolis is divided into six regions. When a group first awakens, the GM should roll a d6. The skeletons activating that turn must all begin adjacent to open tomb doorways in that part of the necropolis. The exact placement within the area is left to the GM.

The sand mummy awakens at the start of the fifth round, and begins adjacent to one of the tombs closest to the Sand Lord's mausoleum (GM's choice as to which one).

Terrain: The terrain is broken down into two main features. The majority of the ground is sandy, but is firm under foot and does not hamper movement. Areas of soft sand and rubble, and low walls (as marked on the map) are difficult ground for those walking on them. They have no effect on burrowing or flying creatures.

Tombs with open doors may be freely entered. The interior, though, is cluttered, and counts as difficult ground. Sealed tombs have a slab across the entrance. These are Toughness 10. One wound shatters the slab, allowing easy ingress.

Monsters: The undead that haunt the necropolis comprise two sorts—those prepared to leave their tombs in search of mortal trespassers, and those who prefer to remain dormant unless their tomb is disturbed. The latter are handled under Treasure below.

* Sand mummy (1): See p. 25.

* Skeletons (total of 10 per hero): See p. 25.

* Skeleton warriors (total of 2 per hero): See p. 25

Tactics: The undead are all mindless, and are driven solely by the desire to rid the necropolis of living creatures. Their goal is simply to destroy the intruders.

Against most parties, the skeletons attack normally, using no special tactics beyond Ganging Up, which they use whenever the opportunity presents itself. Against particularly tough parties, such as those buffed by defensive spells, they use Wild Attacks in a bid to break through the enemy's defenses.

Skeletons: The basic skeletons advance at a walk, and fire their bows at any living creature. While they lack the brains to save their arrows until they reach close range, they may move closer each round at their Pace before firing. When an enemy is within 7" (their Pace), they drop their bows (free action), draw their melee weapons (an action), and move to attack, incurring multi action penalties as appropriate.

Skeleton Warriors: Unless they are within their Pace (7") of a foe, the skeleton warriors always run toward the intruders.

Sand Mummy: The mummy has the brains to use his special powers to his advantage. As soon as he is awakened, he burrows beneath the sand, moving toward the characters as fast as his Pace allows. Once adjacent, he bursts forth, grasping at his intended target with his desiccating touch.

None of the undead will venture beyond the edge of the map. Should the heroes flee, they shamble back to their tombs in preparation for the next foray.

Treasure: In addition to picking the skeletons clean

LOOTING THE NECROPOLIS

Suit	Value	Discovery
Club or Spade	2-10	Empty tomb
Club or Spade	Jack-Queen	1d4 skeletons (see p. 25); no treasure
Club or Spade	King	1d4 skeleton warriors (see p. 25); no treasure
Club or Spade	Ace	1 sand mummy (see p. 25); no treasure
Diamond	2-10	Treasure worth 1d10 d.
Diamond	Jack-Ace	Treasure worth 1d10 x 5 d.
Heart	2-10	Treasure worth 1d10 x 10 d.
Heart	Jack	Jewelry worth 200 d.
Heart	Queen-King	Jewelry worth 500 d.
Heart	Ace	Alchemical device. Roll d6 on the list below.
Joker	—	Majin jinn spirit relic. A pair of sandals of <i>wilderness step</i> . Treat further Jokers as a draw of the Ace of Hearts.

ALCHEMICAL DEVICES

Alchemical devices with a dinar value are for the mundane object after the magic has been used.

d6 Alchemical Device

- 1 *Healing* potion. Cures one wound when drunk; contains one dose.
- 2 Gold armband of *armor* (+2) with light trapping. Activated by pressing a small gemstone. Value 100 d.
- 3 Silver edged dagger of *smite* (+2). Activated by drawing blood with the blade. Value 50 d.
- 4 Potion of *speak language* cast with a success. Activated when drunk.
- 5 Silver rod containing *light*. Activated when struck against something solid. Value 10 d.
- 6 Silver wand containing *obscure*. Activated by flinging it to the floor and pointing to the target spot. Value 5d.

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of their meager possessions, the party is free to explore the various tombs. Despite generations of plundering, there is still a chance of finding something valuable overlooked among the mundane debris, or concealed in a hidden niche in the walls.

Rather than detail the contents of every tomb, the hero's acts of robbery are handled by card draws. For each hour spent looting, draw a single card from the action deck and check the color and value on the table in the sidebar entitled **Looting the Necropolis** on page 15. Shuffle the deck after a Joker is drawn and after each fight if the search is interrupted by hostile guardians. After eight hours, there is nothing left to find of value.

THE MAUSOLEUM

The structure at the center of the necropolis is the mausoleum raised over the Sand Lord's grave. It takes the form of a solid pyramid measuring 6 yards to a side and standing 6 yards high. Carved of sandstone, the sides were once smooth and inscribed with warnings. Centuries of sand-laden wind have scrubbed away any markings and left the surface deeply pitted.

The top of the structure is flat, and forms a platform 2 yards to a side. Although the slopes rise at 45 degrees, they can be scaled without the need for a Climbing roll outside of combat (i.e., when the climber has plenty of time to look for the best route and find secure hand holds). Heroes who try to scale it in the heat of battle must make unmodified Climbing rolls.

There is nothing to be gained by climbing the pyramid save a commanding view over the necropolis.

SIGN OF THE SUN

The Old Man of the Dunes' cryptic statement about the "sign of the sun" refers to a stylized sun disk engraved on the door of the tomb marked "X" on the map. Any character passing within 3" of the door during combat may make a Notice roll at -2 to spot it (he's likely to be distracted by the thought of being hunted by walking dead). Outside of combat, it is detected whenever the characters have had enough robbing the tombs.

Inside the tomb the bier has been shoved aside, revealing a vertical shaft leading into darkness. Although the sand lining the smooth shaft looks soft, it is as hard as stone to the touch, held in place by the Sand Lord's will. The shaft descends vertically for 30 feet. Proceed to the **Sand Lord's Tomb** once the characters have descended.

The Sand Lord's Tomb

The Sand Lord's small tomb complex is excavated from the sand and held stable by his will. Much of the danger comes from the Sand Lord's special powers (see sidebar on **Laws of the Tomb**), which the GM should employ to make life hard on the heroes. The notes below detail the mundane aspects of the tomb.

Lighting: The tomb is not a "living" complex. Most of the Sand Lord's minions are dormant until disturbed or awakened by their master. As a result, it is shrouded in pitch darkness (-4).

Soft Sand: Areas marked soft sand on the map comprise pits filled with fine grain of sand. Any creature entering these sinks into the sand to its knees. Treat them as difficult ground.

Surfaces: The floors, walls, and ceilings are smooth. All ceilings are 10 feet (2") high. Though made of sand, the surfaces are as tough as natural stone to the touch. This prevents burrowing (magical or mundane) except in areas noted as having sandy floors.

1. EMPTY ROOMS

The Sand Lord has created many rooms he does not yet use. Some of these were created as tests of his abilities, others will have some future (but as yet undecided) purpose. They are unadorned and contain nothing of interest to the party. This does not mean there is no danger—the Sand Lord can unleash his special powers anywhere in the tomb, and at any time.

2. ROOM OF CREATION

This large room is actually a gigantic pit, filled to a depth of 18 feet (3") with natural sand. From here the Sand Lord creates new sandmen as and when needed. He has also experimented with creating other sand beings, though as yet without much luck.

Terrain: The sand is solid.

Monsters: Centuries of summoning and magical experimentation have given the sand a form of life. As soon as someone steps onto the sand, a humanoid shape forms from the grains in the center of the chamber and attacks the party. It takes time to form its body. Deal initiative cards as normal.

* Animated Sand (1): See p. 23.

Tactics: The animated sand begins by using its sand blast in an attempt to strike as many foes as possible. Should anyone cast a spell at it, it deems them the greatest threat. It attempts to move adjacent and suck them into its whirlwind. While it does so, it slams a second adjacent target (this incurs a multi-action penalty).

Treasure: The sand is imbued with magical energy. Any sand mage has a +1 bonus to arcane skill rolls here. He may take as much sand as he wishes with him, but remember the encumbrance rules. Unfortunately, its potency fades 32 days after being taken from the chamber, leaving it mundane sand. Furthermore, in order to gain +1 to his arcane skill rolls, every pound of sand used to fuel a spell must be from this room.

Continuation: The passage at the far end leads to a dead end. The Sand Lord began excavating a new tunnel, but ceased work—his power is still weak, and there are limits to his abilities. The sand on the southern wall is soft enough to burrow through, but it leads nowhere—the walls of the existing tunnels and chambers

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are magically hardened and cannot be breached by this means.

3. ROOM OF MEMORIES

As if to justify his need for vengeance, or perhaps focus his rage and prevent it consuming him to the point of impotency, the Sand Lord constructed a chamber to retell his mortal life and the cruel, and in his eyes unjust, fate that befell him. The walls are decorated with friezes telling his life story. Beneath them are lines of text written in his long-dead language.

Terrain: The friezes and script tell the story of the Sand Lord's mortal years. Give the players Handout #1 if they study the friezes. This is their best interpretation of the imagery. Deciphering the written language requires *speaking language*. Give them Handout #2 as well if they use the power. The script is the Sand Lord's take on past events, and is rather biased.

A Knowledge (Religion) roll at -2 reveals Azanzibul is a pre-Jinn name for Iblis, one known to scholars only through rare inscriptions.

Special #1: The Sand Lord has spent ages gazing at the images and focusing his vengeance in preparation for his eventual emergence from his tomb. This has left a tangible psychic residue. Have the characters make a Spirit roll at -2. Characters with the Minor Vengeful Hindrance suffer only -1 bonus. Those with the Major version have no modifier. Success detects strong feelings of vengefulness associated with the room.

Special #2: Any character who brings up the Sand Lord's demise at the hands of mere peasants, his failure to fulfill his destiny, or such like to his face gains +2 to a single Taunt roll. There is an additional +2 bonus if his true name (Barsul-Tuge) is also uttered in the same action. Using his name by itself bestows no modifier.

4. THE LABYRINTH

Cruel in life, the Sand Lord remains cruel in his new existence. The labyrinth was installed as a means of barbaric entertainment. Although a few unfortunate Bedu, captured by his sandmen, have met a grisly end here (their remains have been cleared away), the Sand Lord has yet to test it against truly worthy opponents. Today he finally gets that chance!

In order to activate the traps, the Sand Lord must expend one of his special tokens. This allows the GM to ignore the danger if the party is already badly wounded or low on resources.

Traps: Each of the squares marked "T" represents an area of concentrated shock sand—electrically-charged sand. The sand is part of the solid floor, rather than lying on the surface. Each trap fills a 1" (2 yard) square.

Detecting the faint whiff of ozone associated with shock sand requires a deliberate search and Notice roll at -2. Shock sand cannot be discerned by *detect trap* spells. Neither can the sand be disarmed. However, it can be defeated by jumping across the affected area or, once its

LAWS OF THE TOMB

Over time, the Sand Lord has learned to impose his immense will on his immediate surroundings. This has given him a wider range of powers, but only within the confines of his tomb.

- * The Sand Lord automatically knows the exact location of all creatures inside his tomb provided they are in contact with the floor, walls, or ceiling. This offsets any darkness penalties in combat.

- * When someone other than himself casts a power with an ash, dust, sand, or similar trapping anywhere in the tomb complex, the Sand Lord makes a Spirit roll opposed by the arcane skill roll as a free action. With success, he siphons off the energy, negating the spell. The caster feels the power being drained away before he can shape it.

- * The Sand Lord begins the adventure with two tokens for each Wild Card and one for each Extra in the party. Should the adventurers leave his tomb and later return, he automatically regains tokens to equal this number. For each spell with an ash, dust, sand, or similar trapping the Sand Lord negates, he gains an additional token. As part of his curse, his own powers (these or his spellcasting ones) do not grant additional tokens.

The Sand Lord can spend these to produce any of the following effects within his tomb. Only one power per round may be used and it takes an action. Except when in combat, he is considered to be on Hold, and may attempt to interrupt actions.

- * Create a 1" wide barrier of sand. Toughness 10. Blends in with the natural walls, but can be detected with a Notice (-2) roll or *detect arcana*. This is good for preventing the progress of heroes deeper into the tomb, or confining them to a room with just one exit [Costs 1 token].

- * Grasping arms of sand form from the walls, floor, and ceiling filling a Medium Burst Template. Anyone in the template must make an Agility roll at -2 or be grappled. Escape works as a grapple vs. an attribute of d8 [Costs 1 token, 2 if extended to fill a Large Burst Template].

- * A Cone Template of stinging sand explodes from a wall. Any creature under the template must make an Agility roll at -2 or suffer damage. Torches and lamps are immediately extinguished, and lanterns have a 50% chance of being snuffed out [Costs 1 token for 2d8 damage, 2 if 2d10].

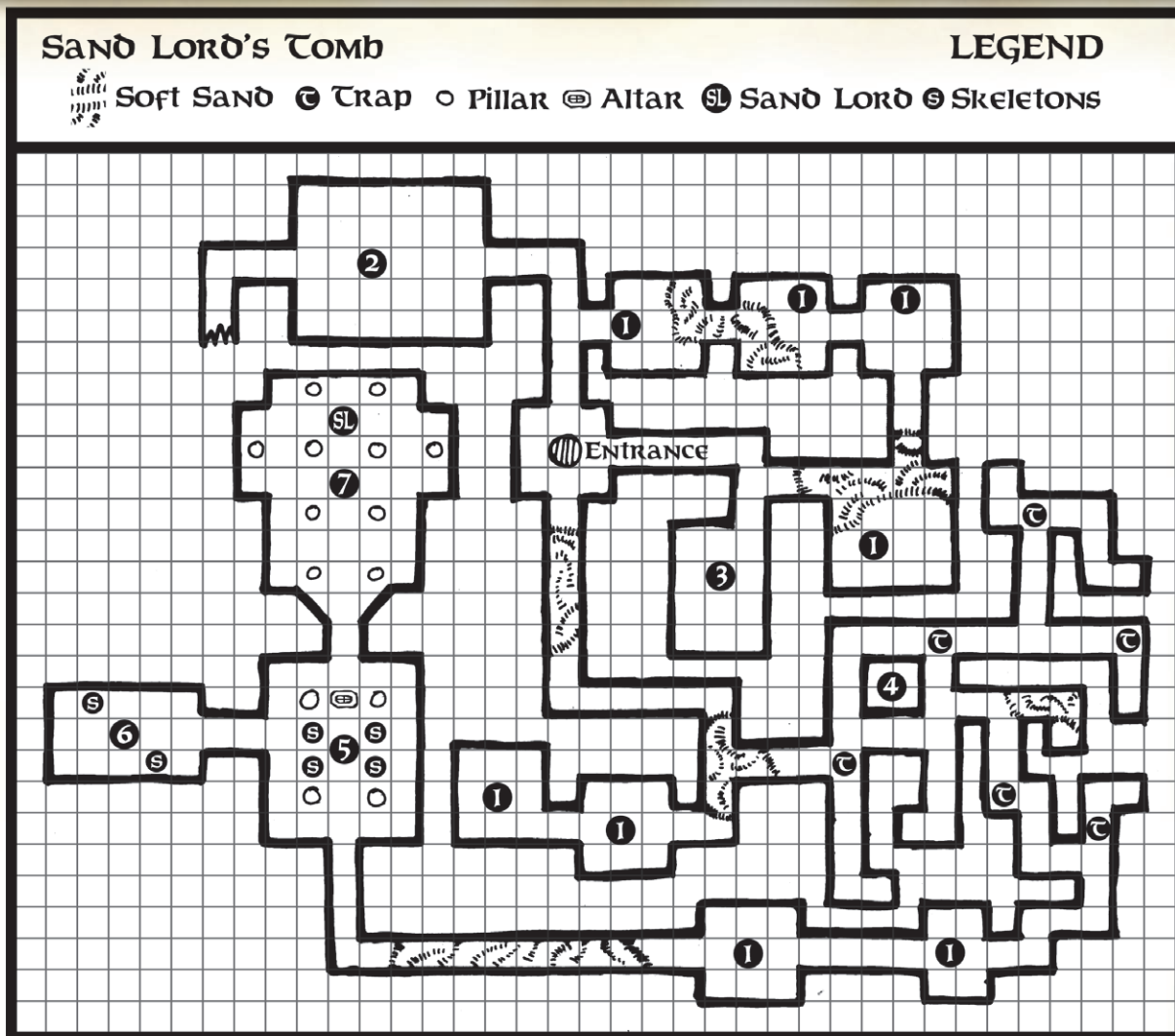
- * Summon 2d4 skeletons from remains in the surrounding necropolis, or 1d4 sandmen from the walls of the tomb. These appear out of any wall the Sand Lord desires [Costs 1 token].

- * Create an area of dense, swirling sand. This acts as the *obscure* power, and fills a Medium Burst Template [Costs 1 token, 2 if extended to fill a Large Burst Template].

effect is known, shorting it out by throwing a small metal object onto the floor.

Walking across the shock sand inflicts 2d6 damage with an electrical trapping. After it is discharged, the trap is spent. Recharging it requires finding and transporting

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more shock sand, something that cannot be done during the adventure.

5. ROOM OF WORSHIP

The Sand Lord is a follower of Iblis, in his guise of Azanzibul. To honor his master he has erected a temple.

Terrain: The temple roof is supported by four pillars of hardened sand. The altar, a slab of sand, is decorated with evil signs, and its surface is smeared with dried blood from previous sacrifices. It can be crossed as difficult ground. The floor is strewn with bones—the unfortunate remains of sacrificial victims. These have no effect on movement.

Special: For centuries the Sand Lord has honored his dark master, imbuing the air with negative emotions. Any character who enters must make a Spirit roll or suffer the effects of Fear. On a critical failure, the Sand Lord's unquenchable lust for vengeance infects the hero. He goes berserk (as per the Edge), and turns on his friends. He must endure the berserk state for 10 rounds minus his Spirit die type (minimum 1 round) before he can attempt

to end his rage. If a Smarts roll to quell his anger fails, he *must* spend the next round attacking his comrades *to the best of his abilities*.

Monsters: One round after the heroes enter, the bones scattered on the floor pull together to form a number of skeletons. The spirits inhabiting them are the tormented souls of innocents sacrificed to Iblis, and are trapped here by the Sand Lord's will.

* Skeletons (1 per hero): See p. 25.

6. ROOM OF TREASURE

The Sand Lord knows he will need to bribe or hire mortal minions as well as his constructs if he is to rule the desert. To that end, his sandmen have been collecting valuables from the trade caravans they have attacked and tombs they have plundered in the necropolis above.

Monsters: The Sand Lord does not fear tomb robbers, but old habits are hard to break. Two sandmen are concealed within the walls, kept there by their master's will. They are on Hold, and awaken if any treasure is disturbed. Check for Surprise.

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* Sandmen (2): See p. 25.

Treasure: In small piles around the far end of the chamber are 500 dinars in assorted coins and small pieces of jewelry, and 700 dinars worth of trade goods. The latter weigh 2 pounds per 5 dinars (140 lbs. total).

Focused on conquest for now, the Sand Lord has not inspected his treasury. Concealed among the trade goods are two alchemical items. The first is an oil of *smite* (+2 damage) with a dire trapping (note that sand is not flammable). As an action, it can be smeared on a single melee weapon or a quiver of arrows. The second is a scroll of *burst* (water trapping) written in Jinn hieroglyphs. It requires a Shooting roll to aim the resulting jet of water.

7. THE SAND LORD'S LAIR

The Sand Lord has patiently tracked the progress of the party through his tomb, registering the deaths of his minions through his unearthly senses. Insects have dared to trespass in his domain, and they must be crushed. This will be a final test of his reparations. With their deaths, his plan to conquer the desert can begin.

Read or paraphrase the following to the players when the party enter the final chamber.

Tall columns rise up to support the ceiling. Each takes the form of a nobleman in poses reflecting majesty and power. At the far end of the room, barely visible in the light from your lanterns, is a swirling cloud of dust. It parts briefly, allowing you sight of a tall man in fine robes.

"Insects!" The voice, full of power and arrogance, emanates from the miniature whirlwind. "You crawl through my home like scavenging beetles, no doubt believing lies about a great destiny. Only fools listen to such talk. A man who desires power must take it by force.

"I am the Sand Lord, and I take my rightful destiny among the insects above. By your deaths I seal the fate of the desert people, and elevate myself to the status of a god incarnate!"

It's time to deal initiative cards! The Sand Lord begins on Hold.

Terrain: The pillars, all of which resemble the Sand Lord in suitably majestic poses, obscure line of sight and can be used as Cover.

Monsters: The only creature present at the start of the encounter is the Sand Lord. When he is wounded (not Shaken), the Sand Lord begins to understand his true nature and the curse that has befallen him. Make a Spirit roll each time he is wounded. Should he fail, his spirit automatically departs its physical shell causing it collapse into a pile of sand. His spirit then passes through the nearest wall and disappears. **Nothing** the heroes do can prevent this. Proceed to **Run or Die** below.

* The Sand Lord (Human Form): See p. 22.

Tactics: As noted in the bestiary entry, the Sand Lord

has had time to cast *armor* and *deflection*. Regardless of how much of the tomb the heroes have explored, this is the final fight within the complex. Use any remaining tokens to make life as miserable as possible for the party! The Sand Lord uses a token each round he can, incurring multi-action penalties as appropriate. When he runs out of tokens, he uses his desiccating touch in addition to any spells indicated below.

Round 1: Attempts to *entangle* the party.

Round 2: Casts *whirlwind* on the party.

Round 3: Casts a triple bolt spell, targeting three separate heroes. He aims for obvious spellcasters first, since they pose the greatest threat.

Subsequent Rounds: As round 3.

RUN OR DIE

Although he is not yet dead, the Sand Lord has been dealt a serious defeat. His sanity has been destroyed by the revelation he is no longer human. Without his will holding it in place, the tomb begins to collapse. The characters have three rounds to escape before the entire structure collapses. Make the threat of imminent death very clear to the party.

Each round, the characters must make an Agility roll. The first is unmodified, the second is at -1, and the third at -2. Having Fleet-Footed or being under the effects of a *speed* spell earns them a +2 bonus. Each success and raise earns the character a token. Characters with three or more tokens at the end of the third round escape unharmed. Those with two tokens suffer a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises. Those with one or zero tokens are buried alive and automatically killed.

Proceed to **The Final Fight** without delay.

The Final Fight

Defeated once again by those he considers beneath him and freed of its earthly shell, the Sand Lord's spirit has, temporarily at least, forgotten his former life and become a thing of primal rage. As it travels upward through the sand, his spirit draws matter around itself, forging a new body that matches its temperament.

One round after the survivors reach the surface, the Sand Lord bursts through the ground in his new guise—a juvenile sand dragon formed of solidified sand!

Setting Up the Encounter: The heroes begin anywhere within 6" of the tomb entrance—the building marked X on the map.

The Sand Lord bursts forth from the ground in the middle of the rubble east of the tomb, scattering rock, mud brick, and sand into the air as he emerges. Have the characters check for Surprise. The Sand Lord draws an action card as normal—any delay between his arrival and action is due to him getting used to his new form.

Terrain: The terrain is broken down into two main features. The majority of the ground is sandy, but is firm

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under foot and does not hamper movement. Areas of soft sand and rubble, and low walls (as marked on the map) are difficult ground for those walking on them. They have no effect on burrowing or flying creatures.

Tombs with open doors may be freely entered. The interior, though, is cluttered, and counts as difficult ground. Sealed tombs have a slab across the entrance. These are Toughness 10. One wound shatters the slab, allowing easy ingress.

Monsters: Undead not previously slain remain in their tombs during the fight—this is not their battle. They emerge afterward if the party begins tomb robbing.

* The Sand Lord (Dragon Form): See p. 22. Having acquired a new body, the Sand Lord has no wounds from the previous fight. He does not renew his bennies, however (it's still the same villain).

Tactics: The Sand Lord remains airborne, spraying the party with his breath weapon. Still unused to flying, his ability to fly can be easily hampered. Should he take a single wound from a Called Shot to his wings or two wounds from any source, he spirals to the ground, landing safely but unable to fly for the rest of the encounter.

Aftermath

With the Sand Lord's second physical form destroyed so soon after his first, he lacks the willpower to form a third. Tammuz claims his spirit, and condemns it to the Bottomless Pit for eternity.

HEROES VICTORIOUS

The threat of the Sand Lord is ended! Since his tomb complex was only held together by his strength of will, it collapses on his death, the voids filling with sand. This causes the surface to sink slightly, destroying a few walls as the ground subsides. Excavating the area to recover and buried treasure will take months of hard work.

While news of their victory remains known to only a few, they have thwarted a major menace. Should they return to the Bedu camp, they are awarded with a week of feasts and gifts worth 300 dinars per hero. In addition, each survivor earns a major favor from the Alaghari tribe (see the free download **Favors**).

While the characters should spread word of their deeds outside the tribe as soon as possible if they wish to earn Glory, the nomads help by carrying news of their prowess along the nearby trade roads.

HEROES DEFEATED

In the event the party is slaughtered, the GM has three main courses of action. First, he can have their replacements stumble across the Sand Lord's dragon form and finish the adventure. The characters have nothing invested in the quest, and the adventure is going to be quite short.

Second, he can rule that Salima learns of their defeat

through Bushra. She visits the Old Man of the Dunes, passes the tests, and goes on to avenge her father by killing the Sand Lord. Her deed wins the affections of her tribe, and she is chosen as sheikha.

Third, the Sand Lord's power grows stronger before Salima can enact her revenge—killing the heroes boosts his self-belief, and thus his power over sand. He becomes a major threat to trade along Suleiman's Road, and his rule lasts until a higher Rank party can defeat him in a new adventure of the GM's devising.

Bestiary



SAND LORD—HUMAN

The Sand Lord appears much as he did in life, and resembles a normal human being. He wears the crown of his ancient office, and is clad in fine robes of gold and silver. This is an illusionary shell created by his memories of his former existence. Sadly, the Sand Lord believes himself hale, hearty, and thoroughly human. This is the true curse of the Sand Lord, and he is the victim.

When wounded, his true nature becomes readily apparent. Instead of blood, his injuries leak a stream of fine, dry particles, for beneath his exterior of humanity all that remains of the tyrant king of old is naught but dust bound together by his will to enact revenge.

Although he has Spellcasting and is susceptible to the Siphoning, the Sand Lord is not a mage. His mastery over sand is a result of Iblis' interference and his formidable willpower. He has developed a range of other powers. See the sidebar **Laws of the Tomb** on page 19.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d10, Vigor d10

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

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

Hindrances: Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Command, Hold the Line, Level Headed, Noble

Treasure: None on person

Special Abilities:

- * **Absorb Magic:** When someone other than himself casts a power with an ash, dust, sand, or similar trapping anywhere in the tomb complex, the Sand Lord makes a Spirit roll opposed by the arcane skill roll as a free action. With success, he siphons off the energy, negating the spell.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison. Ignores wound penalties.
- * **Desiccating Touch:** If the Sand Lord makes a successful Touch Attack (+2 Fighting), the victim must make a Vigor roll at -2. Failure means the character's flesh desiccates. He suffers a level of Fatigue. If he is Incapacitated by the touch, he must make a Vigor roll or die. Anyone killed by this means returns 1d4 rounds later as a sand mummy. Fatigue recovers at the

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rate of one level per 24 hours of rest, so long as the victim has ample water.

- * **I Am the Sand:** The Sand Lord's senses extend throughout his tomb. He always knows the exact location of any creature in his domain provided they are in contact with the floor, walls, or ceiling. This negates all darkness penalties.
- * **Immunity (Sand):** Immune to the effects of offensive spells with an ash, dust, sand, or similar trapping. He ignores defensive spells with such trappings. E.g., a hero protected by sand *armor* receives no benefit from the spell against the Sand Lord's attacks.
- * **Powers:** *Armor**, *bolt*, *deflection**, *entangle*, *whirlwind*. All have a sand trapping.
- * **Susceptibility (Water):** Takes +4 damage from offensive spells with a water trapping.
- * *Alerted to the heroes approach, the Sand Lord casts these spells with a success before they reach his lair. His Toughness reflects the spell. Armor takes the form of sand encrusting his skin, while deflection is swirling sand.*



THE SAND LORD—DRAGON

The Sand Lord's second incarnation is a juvenile sand dragon. The creature is a being of the Sand Lord's primal rage, and lacks most of his normal abilities, including his Edges. Should he survive, these will return as he learns to master his new earthly form.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d12+3, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Hindrances: Vengeful (Major)

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +2:** Solidified sand.
- * **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- * **Breath:** Spits a spray of corrosive sand using the Cone Template. Every target within this cone may make an Agility roll at -2 to avoid the attack. Those who fail suffer 2d8 damage. A dragon may not attack with its claws or bite in the round it breathes.
- * **Burrow (8"):** The dragon can burrow through sand.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison. Ignores wound penalties.
- * **Flight:** Pace 15.
- * **Frenzy:** May make two Fighting attack per round, each at -2.
- * **Immunity (Sand):** Immune to the effects of offensive spells with an ash, dust, sand, or similar trapping. He ignores defensive spells with such trappings. E.g., a hero protected by sand *armor* receives no benefit from the spell against the Sand Lord's attacks.
- * **Size +2:** The creature's body is roughly the same size as a riding horse.
- * **Susceptibility (Water):** Takes +4 damage from offensive spells with a water trapping.
- * **Tail Lash:** The dragon can sweep all opponents in its

rear facing in an area 2" long and 4" wide. This is a standard Fighting attack. Damage is d12+1.

- * **Wings:** A wing buffet can only be used in a round in which the dragon makes no other attacks. Place a Cone Template facing forward from each wing. Every creature in a Template must make an Agility roll with a penalty equal to the dragon's Size. The target's Size also modifies this roll. On a failure, the victim is blown back 1" and falls prone. If the Agility roll is a 1 (regardless of Wild Die), the creature is Shaken, as well.



BEYAH SALIMA

Salima, whose real name is Arij, is the only daughter of Sheikh Hassim and his youngest child. Fiercely independent and proud, she considers herself the equal of any of her three brothers in the arts of riding and archery. Her father has spent years trying to marry her off, but she has yet to meet a man she considers her equal, and she refuses to take second best just to please the sheikh.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d8, Taunt d6, Tracking d6

Charisma: +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Clueless (anything to do with city life), Curious, Loyal

Edges: Attractive, Marksman, Mounted Combatant, Noble, Strong-Willed

Gear: Scimitar (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), burnoose, sand hood

Treasure: Worthwhile



BUSHRA

The tribe's healer is old. She was old when the sheikh was a child, and seems in no hurry to die. Though her body is frail, her mind is razor sharp. That's not to say she isn't eccentric. While not a jinn mage (or any other sort of spellcaster), she has limited foresight and a knack for hearing things jinn whisper into the wind.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Healing d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d10, Knowledge (Monsters: Jinn) d8, Knowledge (Riddles) d10, Streetwise d10, Survival d8, Taunt d8

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

Hindrances: Elderly

Edges: Hedge Magic, Strong-Willed

Gear: Healer's bag, various medicinal herbs

Treasure: Meager

ANIMATED SAND

Manifests as a sandy humanoid but can turn into a whirling cloud of flying dust and grit. It cannot be *banned*, but can be *dispelled*. It resists using its Spirit.

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

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6/8

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
- * **Immunity:** +2 Toughness against all nonmagical attacks.
- * **Sand Blast:** The thing can send directed blasts of sand-laden air at foes using the Cone Template. Foes may make an Agility roll at -2 to avoid the blast. Damage is 2d8.
- * **Slam:** Str+d4.
- * **Whirlwind:** As long as the creature does not move that turn it may attempt to pick up an adjacent foe. Make an opposed Strength check. If the sand wins, then its foe is pulled into the swirling maelstrom of its dusty body. While trapped, the foe is at -2 on all rolls including damage, to hit, and Agility or Strength rolls to free himself, and suffers 2d6 damage per round. The creature cannot move or use its sand blast as long as it wants to keep foes trapped inside its form.

BEDU WARRIORS

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Tracking d6

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

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Scimitar (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), burnoose, sand hood

Treasure: Meager

CAMEL, RIDING

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Camel:** Camels start making Vigor rolls for heat or dehydration until 8th day after water runs out.
- * **Improved Sand Walker:** Camels treat sand as normal ground in tactical combat and as Average terrain when using overland movement.
- * **Kick:** Str.
- * **Ornery:** Camels are contrary creatures. Characters must subtract 1 from their Riding rolls when riding one.
- * **Size +2:** Camels are similar in size to riding horses.

CITIZEN

Use these stats to represent generic non-warrior Bedu the heroes might encounter.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Knowledge (one Craft) d6, Notice d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Edges & Hindrances: —

Gear: Knife (Str+d4)

Treasure: Meager

FLAYED

Flayed are the skeletal remains of unlucky travelers whose flesh the dreaded *ghibli* flayed from their bones. Although they appear as normal animated skeletons, they can harness the power of the *ghibli* to slaughter their foes. Flayed are immune to the *ghibli* and indeed often travel in such storms, searching for more victims.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6

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

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to fear and Intimidation.
- * **Flay Wind:** Flayed can summon, increase, and project the power of the *ghibli*. This uses the Cone Template, and extends out from the flayed. Victims caught in the template must make an opposed Agility roll vs. the creature's Shooting or suffer 2d8 damage.
- * **Swirling Sand:** Flayed are surrounded by a swirling *ghibli*. This fills a Medium Burst Template. When the flayed finishes its movement, any creature under the template takes 2d6 damage, against which only the *armor* spell protects. Attackers inside or attacking through the template suffer a -2 penalty to their attack rolls. The flayed does not suffer this penalty.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from Shaken. Called Shots to no extra damage. Immune to poison and disease.

GIANT BEE

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d4

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

Treasure: Meager, in lair

Special Abilities:

- * **Death Sting:** A bee that inflicts a wound with its stinger automatically dies at the end of the round in which it inflicted the damage.
- * **Flight:** Pace 8.
- * **Poison (+0):** Any creature Shaken or wounded by a sting attack must make a Vigor roll or suffer the effects of Venomous poison.
- * **Size -1:** Giant bees are 3' long.
- * **Sting:** Str+d6, AP 1.

NF1: The Curse of the Sand Lord

SAND MUMMY

The sands naturally desiccate anything containing moisture left buried there for any length of time. In some instances, the anger and fear at their death felt by those killed in the dunes or buried in great sandy patches imbues their blood with unholy energy that transforms the sand and later empowers their broken bodies.

The sand absorbs the blood, bodily fluids, and spiritual energy, desiccating the body and mutating it into a ghastly shadow of the human it used to be. The sand not only dries out the corpse but crystallizes parts of their bodies into a hardy, leathery substance, making them more resistant to damage from all types of weapons. Their hardened skins tend to slow them down, however.

Although they aren't wrapped in the linen gauze one associates with traditional ancient mummies, sand mummies still present a frightening sight. They emerge from the sand and shamble about, moaning, howling, and venting their rage against those more fortunate to remain alive.

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

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

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 11 (2)

Treasure: 1d20 dinars.

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +2:** Hardened skin.
- * **Burrowing (4"):** These mummies can burrow through sand. They can make a surprise attack at +2 to attack and damage (+4 with a raise) by making an opposed Stealth vs. Notice roll.
- * **Desiccating Touch:** Anyone touched by a sand mummy, regardless of damage inflicted, must make a Vigor roll. Failure means the character's flesh desiccates. He suffers a level of Fatigue. If he is Incapacitated by the touch, he must make a Vigor roll or die. Anyone killed by this means returns 1d4 rounds later as a sand mummy. Fatigue recovers at the rate of one level per 24 hours of rest, so long as the victim has ample water.
- * **Fear:** Anyone seeing a sand mummy must make a Spirit roll.
- * **Shuffling Gait:** Mummies roll a d4 running die.
- * **Slam:** Str.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

SANDMAN

Sandmen are crudely shaped humanoids, their forms held together by the strange magic of the Sand Lord. They lack facial features, though this does not hamper their senses of hearing and sight.

The weapons they wield are short, one-handed ones, such as axes, maces, and short swords, but are comprised of solid sand formed from their being. Should one be

disarmed, the weapon collapses into individual grains and a new one quickly sprouts from the sandman's arm.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

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

Treasure: None.

Special Abilities:

- * **Blinding Death:** When a sandman is destroyed, it explodes in a cloud of fine particles. Any adjacent creature (except other sandmen) must make an Agility roll or be Shaken as sand gets into their eyes.
- * **Burrow (6"):** Sandmen can only burrow through sand. When they erupt from the ground, victims must make a Notice roll opposed by the creature's Stealth. If the creature wins, it gains +2 to attack and damage that round, +4 with a raise.
- * **Camouflage:** +4 to Stealth rolls in sandy terrain.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Sand Weapons:** Str+d6. If disarmed, a new weapon forms as a free action at the start of its next turn.
- * **Susceptibility (Water):** Sandmen take +4 damage from offensive spells with a water trapping.

SKELETON

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

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

Gear: Various melee weapons (Str+d6), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6)

Treasure: 1d4 dinars.

Special Abilities:

- * **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to fear and Intimidation.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

SKELETON WARRIOR

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Gear: Rusted bronze breastplate (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), bronze short sword (Str+d6)

Treasure: 1d6 dinars.

Special Abilities:

- * **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.



Duduk the Endurable

Race: Cakali

Homeland: Plain of Ash

Occupation: Jinn Mage

Religion: Devoted

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Investigation d6, Jinn Magic d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (Jinn) d6, Notice d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 4 (d4);
Parry: 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Lame, Loyal, Ugly

Edges: Arcane Background (Jinn Magic: majin), Bite/Claws, Fearless, Nomad Ways

Languages: Beduan, Cakalic, Jinn, Sand-speech

Powers: *Armor, bolt, entangle*

BACKGROUND

Duduk's tribe live on the western fringes of the Plain of Ash. Like all his kind, he grew up on the stories of the jinn's treachery toward his race, and how they rained death down upon their once magnificent cities.

His tribe did not shirk away from the painful memory of their ancestors' doom. All children were required to travel into the ash before reaching adulthood, albeit accompanied by an experienced guide. Partly this was to instill in them a full understanding of what the cakali sacrificed to help others live as free men, and partly to aid in their survival training.

Three days into the trip, the small party was attacked by a rogue lesser ifrit. Their guide died in the first assault, his blasted corpse crumbling to ash like those of his distant ancestors. Unafraid, the youths nonetheless tried to retreat in the face of an enemy they could not hope to defeat. All Duduk remembered before unconsciousness claimed him was a wave of heat rolling over him, and searing pain up his left side.

Fate decreed that Duduk should not die that day, though his life hung in the balance. A patrol from a neighboring tribe searching the Plain of Ash for a band of tomb robbers happened across the final stages of the one-sided battle. Opposed by experienced mages and jinn hunters, the ifrit was swiftly defeated. Duduk, the only survivor, was duly carried back to his tribe. Everyone expected him to die of his crippling injuries, but Duduk proved too tenacious for death to claim.

While straddling the worlds between life and death he encountered Anup, the great founder of their race. He bade the youth to look into his heart and grasp his purpose in life, for unless he did he would pass over the veil of mortality and join with Asha.

Previously unsure as to what path to take in life, Duduk awoke knowing in his heart he wanted to become a jinn mage. Though Suleiman had wisely destroyed or punished many lesser jinn who would not bow before him, there were still a great number who had escaped his wrath. Duduk would master the jinn.

He would bind them to his will as they had done the other races, he would force them to commit acts for the betterment of others rather than for selfish gain or to inflict misery, and he would destroy those jinn that would not repent of their sins, convert to the teachings of Suleiman, and serve due penance. In place of steel and cunning, he would fight them with their own kind, a fitting retribution for a race that once hailed themselves as living gods.

Though the logical choice was for him to study the ways of controlling lesser ifrit as his first art, Duduk opted to master majin. "I shall save the ifrits for last," he told his curious master. "They shall hear of my name on the wind as I grow in power, and wonder in their fell and blackened hearts when I might come to bind them to the yoke of my will."

Duduk departed his tribe several years ago. He has faced and defeated several rogue lesser jinn already, but he knows the path he has chosen to walk is a long one.

DESCRIPTION

Duduk's appearance is striking. The entire left side of his muzzle and much of cheek is a mass of hairless scar tissue and missing flesh. His teeth are visible through the damage, even when he is not smiling. His left leg is extremely weak, and is missing a great deal of muscle.

He wears a necklace strung with colored glass beads. Each bead represents a rogue lesser jinni he has personally slain. To date, it is adorned with six beads.

MANNERISMS

When thinking, Duduk flicks his tongue over his exposed teeth. To those unused to the sight, it gives the impression of a predator pondering its next meal. When faced with prospect of facing a rogue jinni, he becomes excited, caring little for planning, and urging his comrades to enter the fray as soon as possible.



Ghunwah bint Aban

Race: Hadaree

Homeland: Fashir, City of Water
(Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh)

Occupation: Storyteller & Gossip

Religion: Faithful (Qedeshet)

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Folklore) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d6, Taunt d6

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6;

Parry: 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Big Mouth, Pacifist (Major), Stubborn

Edges: Charismatic, Houri, Storyteller

Languages: Beduan, Cakalic, Holy Tongue, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

The youngest child and only daughter of a lowly but honest dockworker, Ghunwah would shirk her household chores and follow her father to work. She had no interest in his profession, nor did she have any great yearning to travel. What attracted her to the noisy, smelly, and crowded waterfront were the ships. More specifically, the crews who sailed them into harbor.

Ghunwah's father always told her a story before bedtime. While she enjoyed the recitals, his repertoire was extremely limited, and even changing the details could not disguise this. The young girl quickly developed a craving for new stories, especially those of other cultures. The docks, where crews from the great cities of the Caliphate and Sultanate met with merchants from lands known to her only in her father's stories, seemed the ideal place to satisfy her yearning.

Over time, mariners and merchants came to know Ghunwah and her desire for stories. While some ignored her as a nuisance, others gladly took a few minutes from the busy schedules to whisper of fantastical cities poking through the sand, the great hero and explorer Sinbad, mischievous jinni ready to prey on those who could not see past their deceptions, and terrible monsters that could eat a man's soul. Ghunwah absorbed the salient facts like a sponge, often spinning her own version of the narrative. In time, her father became the audience and she the storyteller.

As she grew, Ghunwah continued to ignore her chores. Having blossomed into womanhood, she found her pretty looks and natural charisma allowed her to manipulate men with ease. A flirtatious smile, a coy look, or a gentle wiggle of the hips had the local boys queuing up to sweep the yard, beat the laundry, and collect dung for fuel in the hopes of earning a kiss.

Ghunwah's family was poor, and while she had no interest in manual labor or marrying a rich suitor, she provided coin through her storytelling. The wide variety of tales she had picked up, coupled with her natural charm, made her a great success in the public squares.

Success was short-lived, though, and her audiences began to drift away. As her father before, Ghunwah had simply ran out of new tales. While she could have invented new ones, Ghunwah wanted to share existing stories of great heroes, dashing princes, and cruel wizirs. Alas, even her friends at the docks could not expand her knowledge, for she has drained them of their tales.

So it was Ghunwah packed a few belongings and joined a merchant caravan, earning her keep as a storyteller. Not only would travel allow her to share the stories she knew with new audiences, but it would give her the chance to pick up new tales.

Ghunwah has recently fallen in with a band of young adventurers. Though they have yet to achieve any deeds worthy of true fame, the storyteller has a hunch that, given time, they could be the center of a new generation of exciting stories. With her recounting their deeds, they can't fail to achieve great glory!

DESCRIPTION

Ghunwah is pretty, but not truly attractive. However, she exudes an aura of confidence and sensuality that men find irresistible, and she dresses to accentuate her natural curves. Except when throwing one of her tantrums, she has a smile permanently etched on her face.

MANNERISMS

Ghunwah expects to get her own way. She's quite prepared to flutter her eyelids, wiggle her assets, or play the helpless damsel if that helps get what she wants. When things go against her, she folds her arms across her chest and pouts like a spoiled child. She has been known to stamp her feet of occasion.

Ghunwah has a fondness for gossip, and finds it impossible not to spread information she has learned, even if it reaches the wrong ears.



Beyah Sulina Dar-Farouk

Race: Bedu

Homeland: Jinn Lands of Old

Occupation: Noble

Religion: Faithful (Geb-Agni)

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Stealth d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6;

Parry: 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Arrogant, Cautious, Loyal

Edges: Command, Noble, Respected
Tribe

Languages: Cakalic, Giant, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

Beyah Sulina is the only child of the head of her small but prosperous tribe. For generations beyond measure the nomads have lived on the edge of the Heart of Fire, bringing supplies to the various mining camps and carrying away slabs of hewn stone, bags of sulfur, and ingots of metal ore destined for distant cities. The tribe is renowned across Al-Shirkuh for its honesty and its courage—their caravans are frequently attacked by fire giants and their orc allies, and the tribesmen put up strong and determined resistance.

Sulina's father had her late in life. He sired several other children in his younger days, all male, but they died in infancy. While some of his kin shook their heads when a girl was born, the sheikh rejoiced, proudly proclaiming that Geb-Agni, the tribe's patron deity, had given her a great destiny.

Though mollycoddled by her proud parents when she was young, Sulina never became a spoiled child, nor did she expect to be waited on by others. As she grew to adulthood she served her tribe as would any woman, learning the basic tasks the tribe relied on for its survival. When she became a teenager she began learning traditional masculine skills—hunting and fighting.

Now into old age, the sheikh announced Sulina as his appointed heir last year. Shocked, the girl protested, claiming there were male kin, albeit distant ones, far more worthy of holding the position. The sheikh laughed. He admitted that there were better qualified men right now, but he had no intention of travelling to Geb-Agni's forge any time soon. When he answered the god's call, Sulina would be ready.

Although as heir she would be expected to serve alongside the sheikh, learning the diplomatic juggling act required to keep the tribe alive and its bonds with its allies strong, Sulina opted to leave her tribe and travel Al-Shirkuh. Her father voiced no objection, but he did demand to know the reasoning behind the decision.

Sulina explained that it would not do simply to be taught how to manage the tribe's need, nor how to deal with strangers or unexpected danger. In order to be a good leader, she must first learn her strength and weakness, how to make her mark on the world. If I cannot manager difficulties in my own life, she added, what hope have I of managing an entire tribe? In order to acquire that wisdom, she must forge her own path, if only for a few years. Pleased with her answer, which showed wisdom beyond her years, the sheikh asked the tribe's priests to bless her departure.

Sulina left her tribe several months ago as a young girl. Today, after several minor adventures, she has already blossomed into a level-headed and capable warrior. Now she must learn how to be a leader.

DESCRIPTION

A proud Bedu, Sulina always dresses in traditional garb. As an unmarried woman, she keeps her long hair loose, as is the tradition of her tribe. Her eyes are highly unusual—they are tinged orange (her mother told her it was the reflection of the Heart of Fire, and a sign she was destined for greatness).

MANNERISMS

Sulina isn't actually arrogant. As the potential sheikhah of her tribe she knows the nomads will only support her if she is deemed worthy to hold the position in their eyes. Thus, she strives to be the best leader and warrior she can, even if that means taking risks.

However, she is still young and unsure of her strengths. Rather than make decisions that might turn out badly, she prefers to take advice and weigh up a situation before making a decision. Thus, she is torn between doing what is best and doing what she must.

Though she dislikes being alone with men not of her family, she has come to accept that she must adjust to her circumstances, not try to force her beliefs on others.



Ray of Shamash Ismail

Race: Ifrit Jinn Blooded (Hadaree)

Hometown: Qarqas, City of Slaves (Free Emirate States)

Occupation: Paladin

Religion: Faithful (Shamash)

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

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Riding d4, Shooting d6, Survival d4

Charisma: 0 (-2); **Pace:** 6;

Parry: 7; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Delusional (Minor: son of Shamash), Distrusted, Elemental Weakness (Water), Overconfident, Stubborn

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Jinn Blooded (Ifrit), Still Human

Languages: Black Tongue, Sandspeech

Cleric Powers: *Deflection, light*

Innate Powers: *Elemental manipulation (fire)*

BACKGROUND

Ismail was something of a problem child. His innate elemental power manifested when he was very young, and things around him had a habit of spontaneously bursting into flames.

When others in his community shunned him for his unnatural heritage, his mother (an unmarried “working girl”) told him it was because they were jealous. In what would prove to be a mistake of epic proportions, she told the dim-witted youth he was special. It was not foul jinn blood that ran in his veins, she said, but the divine blood of Shamash. This was why there was no earthly father in the household.

Unfortunately, Ismail took this quite literally. The bullying he suffered only worsened when he told his peers he was the son of Shamash. Fortunately for this future eyesight he grew out of his habit of staring into the sun in the hope of catching a glimpse of his “father.”

Though short on brains, Ismail always knew right from wrong. He believed in the cause of righteousness, feared falling into Iblis’ grasp through committing immoral acts, and respected order. Peers who committed bad deeds, no matter how trivial, were punished by one of his beefy fists, for he had grown into a strong young man. This, coupled with his “divine” heritage, meant it came as no surprise to those who knew him when he announced his intention to join the cult of Shamash and serve his “father” as a paladin.

Though about as intelligent as a brick, Ismail managed to grasp the basic tenets of the cult. His examiners were somewhat surprised when he summed up the entire dogma as “order good, chaos bad,” but they could not deny he understood the core of the faith, and his zeal was unquestionable. With a mixture of reluctance and pride, they duly awarded him paladinhood.

Ismail promptly went on a one-paladin law-enforcement spree in Qarqas, City of Slaves. Any citizen who committed even the most trivial morally questionable act was beaten and arrested. None of his superiors doubted his motives, nor his obedience to the faith, but his methods were giving the temple a bad name, and no amount of talking could convince him that sometimes a harsh lecture would serve to bring sinners back to the side of order and save their souls from the Bottomless Pit.

In the end, his superiors unanimously voted to send Ismail into the wilds of Al-Shirkuh. There, they told the slack-jawed paladin, he would find many sinners to save and wicked beasts to slay. Faced with such facts, Ismail gladly accepted the new challenge. For two years the paladin has bullied, berated, and battled his way across the sands, never giving an inch to evil, and forever spouting what little he remembers of Shamash’s holy texts.

DESCRIPTION

Ismail didn’t do well when it came to looks. While not hideous, his ears are too large for his head, his hair (which he dyes bright yellow) is greasy and lank, and his teeth are badly uneven. His eyes are normally dim, betraying the lack of wits behind them, but burn fervently when he is despatching evil. His holy symbol, of which he is exceptionally proud, is made of gold and silver.

MANNERISMS

Ismail is a zealot. In his eyes, any decision he makes he decreed by Shamash, and therefore infallible. He does not appreciate others thinking they know better than the god of order, and is quite vocal in calling those who argue otherwise heretics. The life he leads is morally upstanding, disciplined, and ordered.

His overconfidence stems partly from his belief he is semi-divine, but more from his lack of brains—he’s just too stupid to stop and weigh up the odds of success before embarking on any task.



Ahmed the Monkey

Race: Hadaree

Hometown: Qarah, City of Learning (Al-Wazir Sultanate)

Occupation: Street Urchin

Religion: Devoted

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Lock-picking d6, Notice d4, Stealth d8, Street-wise d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d4

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 8 (d10);

Parry: 6; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Animal Curse (monkey), Illiterate, Poverty

Edges: Acrobat, Fleet-Footed, Thief

Languages: Al-Waziran, Roguetongue, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

Education may be compulsory in the Sultanate, but Ahmed wasn't allowed the luxury of learning his letters. Born to the lowest class of citizen and the runt of the litter, Ahmed was sold to one of the many thieves' guilds operating in the city as a small child by his uncaring parents. Minimal rations and a hard training regime ensured he did not put on much weight as he grew.

Though he began his criminal career as a cutpurse and pickpocket, the guild master saw great promise in the thin youth. His small frame meant he could squeeze through narrow gaps, and he proved a natural climber. These talents quickly earned him his nickname.

In his 10th year, Ahmed was ordered to break into the house of a scholar and steal a certain book. Although illiterate, the book had a distinctive cover, which would make identifying it easier. As nimble as his namesake, Ahmed scaled the walls, slipped through a narrow window, and stole into the house.

His crime might have gone undetected, but the owner had left a bowl of sugared almonds in his study. Starving, Ahmed began filling his cheeks with the sweet treats. He was still eating when the owner returned. Before he could flee out the window, Ahmed was apprehended by a pair of remarkably strong hands.

Unfortunately for Ahmed, the scholar was no elderly mortal sage, but a greater jinni disguised in human form. After recovering the book from Ahmed, he demanded to know the intruder's name. Ahmed duly answered, his words spilled out by fear rather than a sudden honest urge. With a sly grin, the jinni spoke. "If a monkey you wish to be," he laughed, "then a monkey you shall become!" Ahmed, who had heard tales of evil wizards (which this man surely must be to speak such words), expected a puff of smoke at the least, but nothing untoward happened. Then, to his surprise, he was allowed to leave.

That night, while walking the streets rehearsing his excuse for failing his assigned task, Ahmed learned the meaning of the jinni's words. As soon as the sun set, he transformed into a scrawny, screeching monkey. Before he knew it, Ahmed was snatched off the ground by calloused hands and thrown into a sack.

As the sun rose, the unsuspecting merchant who had purchased the monkey the previous evening was rather shocked to learn he was suddenly in possession of a young boy. Unfortunately for Ahmed, the merchant had already returned to his ship and set sail for a distant city. On the journey, the merchant learned of Ahmed's curse. Always out for a quick dinar, he intended to exhibit the boy as a captive jinni. Ahmed has other ideas.

When the ship docked the boy escaped. Hungry and tired, he was caught picking the pocket of an adventurer of good hearts. Ahmed was given a simple choice—follow the hero on his travels and learn how to put his larcenous talents toward an honest life, or face the wrath of the authorities. Two years on, Ahmed is trying to lead a good life, despite the occasional lapse.

DESCRIPTION

Ahmed is a scrawny, gangly youth with a mop of unruly black hair and bright brown eyes. A beaming smile is rarely off his face. Alas, it reveals a distinct set of teeth missing half their number, the result of his constantly stuffing his face with sugary sweets and honey cakes.

MANNERISMS

Despite being an adequate thief, Ahmed is poor for two reasons. First, his love of sweet foods, which borders on an addiction. Much of his income is spent on such products. Second, he is notoriously charitable. Despite growing up on the streets and having few possessions, he knows there are people less well-off than him, and even a small act of charity cleanses the soul and lightens the life of others.

Though he is trying to repent his larcenous ways, his need for sweets means he is often caught with his hands in other people's purses.



Mudar ibn Siddiq

Race: Hadaree

Hometown: Jadid, City of Trade

Occupation: Healer

Religion: Devoted

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Healing d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Survival d4, Taunt d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6;

Parry: 5; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Cursed (Minor)*, God Cursed (Marqod), Mean

Edges: Brawler, Expert Healer

Languages: Beduan, Holy Tongue, Sand-speech

** Cursed (Unique Hindrance): Treats his Strength as two dice lower when using any manufactured weapon.*

BACKGROUND

Mudar never wanted to be a healer. Born a free citizen of Jadid, City of Trade, he elected to follow his father and enlist in the army. Not the most glamorous work, but the pay was steady. He quickly earned a reputation as being hard but fair, and for never backing down from a fight.

Jadid suffered from a minor famine several years ago. The problem wasn't enough to spell doom and disaster, but staple crops were severely rationed by the emir. Unfortunately, people have a habit of panicking, as occurred when a rabble-rouser began spreading rumors the grain stocks were much lower than were being publicly admitted due to rich citizens buying extra rations from corrupt bureaucrats. Within hours the news had spread like wildfire. A mob gathered outside the granaries, and the army was duly summoned to hold them back while officials attempted to pacify the agitated crowd.

Unfortunately, the official chosen to speak lacked the charisma to keep the mob in check. Whether it was a citizen or a soldier who threw the first punch is still hotly debated today. Regardless, violence broke out, and quickly escalated into a full-blown riot. Separated from his comrades, Mudar battled for his life. Without thinking he slashed his blade into the crowd, cutting down an old woman. A priestess of Marqod, she had come to the granary only to gather grain for her temple, where many sick from hunger had gathered. As she lay dying, she cursed Mudar. "Until you have helped alleviate the suffering of others," she cried, "no strength shall your arms have to wield weapons, and no health shall you have in your body." No sooner had the words been uttered than the woman died. Mudar's right arm buckled, unable to grasp his sword.

After the riot had been quelled, Mudar went to the temple of Marqod. He explained what had happened, expressed his guilt over an unnecessary death caused by the red mist all warriors suffer from, but the priests could not lift his curse. That, they said, would have to be lifted by the goddess in her own time.

Mudar tried to resume his duties, but it rapidly became clear the curse was here to stay. Unable to effectively wield a blade, and now suddenly lacking in endurance, he was relieved of his duties. Though Devoted, Mudar returned to the temple and asked to be taught the basics of the healing arts.

Although skilled as a healer, and despite having treated many injuries, his curse would not end. Exasperated, he asked the priests to conduct a divination, so that he might work his penance. They concluded that tending cuts and disease within the safe confines of Jadid would not end his torment. In order that he might appease the goddess, Mudar would have to travel the greater world, placing himself in danger yet unable to defend himself, and tend to the wounds of those striving to make Al-Shirkuh a better place.

For three years he has wandered the burning sands as an itinerant healer. While his ability to wield weapons has been greatly diminished, the curse did not affect his fists. Mudar has become a skilled pugilist, and, despite new scars and a few close shaves, he has survived encounters that would kill a lesser man.

DESCRIPTION

Mudar is a man unhappy with his life, and he shows that in his face. When he isn't scowling, he's normally just miserable. Tall and well-muscled, his physique betrays a poor constitution, which often leaves him short of breath and with flushed cheeks.

MANNERISMS

Mudar is a cantankerous healer. He feels the punishment he has endured is too harsh, and he's quite happy to share his feelings. Much of the time he is sullen. Help is not so much offered begrudgingly, as with a constant stream of how he came to be in his current predicament and how he'd rather be doing something else.

Nuktar the Indispensable



Race: Sand Goblin

Homeland: Jizah, City of the Sphinx
(Kingdom of the Sphinxes)

Occupation: Tomb Raider

Religion: Devoted

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

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Knowledge (History) d6, Lockpicking d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Taunt d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6;
Parry: 5; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Banned Edges, Inept (Minor), Quirk (exaggeration), Phobia (Major: salt), Small, Untrustworthy

Edges: Camel, Sand Walker, Sneaky, Tomb Robber

Languages: Hekatic, Orcish, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

Nuktar happily tells anyone who bothers to ask that he was once in the service of a wise and mighty sphinx, a sage who sent him into the world so that others might benefit from his talents. In truth, Nuktar was born a slave. His master *was* a sage, though he wasn't a sphinx—he was a human who in turn served a sphinx.

His master was tasked with tracking down intact tombs and returning the wealth stored in them to the sphinx's coffers. Unwilling to spend money on hiring expert tomb robbers, the scholar purchased cheap slaves (those deemed too stupid to master a useful trade. i.e., sand goblins) to help explore the tombs. All they had to do was run around the passageways until they found the central treasury. Naturally, more than a few would activate traps along the way at the expense of their lives. When the way was clear, the sage would move in to claim the treasure and the glory.

Despite being useless at everything else he tried his hand at, Nuktar proved a natural at not only spotting traps, but actually disarming them. The sage was a cruel man, prone to mistreating his minions, and he had no remorse for the many sand goblins he had sent to their doom. Nuktar, though not normally one for revenge or deviousness, planned to avenge their deaths.

He disarmed a particularly nasty trap, crossed over the activation plate, and then promptly (and carefully) reset the device. Then he called his master forward, claiming the passage was safe to traverse and the treasure was just around the bend. Seeing the sand goblin ahead, the sage duly walked forward. His demise inside a spray of extremely caustic salt was not quick. Nuktar still suffers from nightmares about it and quails at the sight of salt.

Now a free goblin (Nuktar had no intention of returning to the sphinx), and moderately wealthy by the standards of his race (the tomb held meager pickings, and the spoils were divided among the other sand goblins in the expedition), Nuktar decided to put his awesome talents (his words) to use as a freelancer.

He has recently joined a party of young adventurers keen to make their mark on history. They seem a pleasant enough bunch, and desperately need someone who knows what they're doing. Maybe in a few years he'll retire, but until then Nuktar is prepared to disarm traps (and nothing else) for a fair share of any spoils.

Although not gifted intellectually, Nuktar managed to pick up enough knowledge of Hekatic from his former master to become almost fluent in the dead language. He may be a mangy sand goblin with a vastly overinflated opinion of himself, but no one can deny he is without a handy talent or two.

DESCRIPTION

Nuktar has a nose far too big for his head. He tells people it was given him by a greater jinni, and that he can use it to sniff out traps. He can't. All his nose does for him is constantly run. His top lip is usually crusted in mucus, and when he isn't using his fingers to disarm traps or count coins he has at least one wedged firmly up a nostril. His mangy hair is matted with filth—Nuktar claims the “natural scent” protects him from tomb guardians. In truth he just hates washing.

MANNERISMS

Nuktar isn't a liar, but he does tend to exaggerate things or create fictitious acts to make himself sound more capable than he really is. For instance, he might claim a trap is “just like one I disabled in a pyramid in Hekata,” despite never having set foot inside the cursed realm, or indeed seen that type of trap before.

He is also fond of misusing quotes from the *Hamad* to justify his profession. For example, “Asha helps those who help themselves—which is exactly what I'm doing with these unwanted coins.”



Amka

Race: Hyaenidae
Hometown: The Grazelands
Occupation: Warrior
Religion: Faithful (Duamutef)

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Taunt d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6;
Parry: 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bad Reputation, Greedy (Minor), Habit (Major: alcohol), Loyal, Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Bite, Laugh, Low Light Vision, Liquid Courage, Strong Willed, Tireless

Languages: Hyaendish, Orcish, Sand-speech

BACKGROUND

Amka's family had, according to the elders, lived in the Grazelands since before the humans arrived. Though never aggressive toward the humans, the hyaenidae kept their contact to a minimum. They traded goods scavenged from ruins or caravans attacked by others in return for luxuries, but much of the time they spent hunting in the wilds and defending their territory from others.

By the time Amka was born the tribe has gone up in the world. They ruled over a small ruin, a caravanserai that stood on some long disused trade road. It even boasted a string, though the trickle of water barely provided for their basic needs. Even so, in a land where resources are scarce and jealously guarded, it was enough of a bounty to attract unwanted attention.

The family, which was of moderate size, had a reputation among the local hyaenidae tribes of being very strong. Unfortunately, that strength lay in displays of aggression, not acts of physical violence. Its warriors were ill-equipped to handle a tribe of rapacious orcs who had designs on becoming lords of the ruins. They snarled and barked when the first wave of orcs appeared, but they were no match when melee ensued.

The few survivors were kept as slaves. The orcs made sure they were worked to the point of exhaustion, and then thoroughly beat them. Amka turned to hard drink to blot out the memories, for this the orcs had in abundance and were willing to share—a drunk slave didn't need guarding, meaning the orcs could engage in their fell revelry. The abuse took its toll, and before long Amka found herself alone. Her family, everyone she had ever known or loved, had ceased to exist, their bones picked clean by the fiends who now ruled her ancestral lands.

Amka bided her time, and grew accustomed to the harsh liquor. One dark night, when even the moon hid in shame at what was to come, Amka took a bloody revenge. After killing several sentries by ripping out their throats, she avenged her kin on the orc chieftain. She didn't kill him—that would be too kind a fate. He wouldn't be siring any children anytime soon, though, and among orcs that made him lower than any runt.

The remaining orcs alerted by their chieftain's screams, Amka fled into the desert, relying on her wits and knowledge of the arid region to keep her safe from her pursuers. Three days later, near death, she was found by a traveller. Though wary of her, for hyaenidae have a bad reputation, he gave her food, water, and shelter. She did not offer her life story, nor did the stranger ever ask—he understood all too well what she had endured from the haunted look in her eyes.

That was a year ago, and the pair still travel the sands together. Now, though, they walk with others. Amka has not forgotten her old family, but now she has a new one. They, and strong wine, are all she needs.

DESCRIPTION

Amka's eyes are usually bloodshot, even when she is sober. As with most of her species, she sees personal hygiene as something optional. Her fur is normally matted with a rancid mix of meat juices and wine stains. She is missing several clumps of fur, the result of injuries, but not enough to make her ugly (by hyaenidae standards).

MANNERISMS

Amka is a drunkard. Unfortunately for her companions, drinking has a nasty habit of making her argumentative. Fortunately, rather than reaching for weapons to settle a dispute she usually just displays her sharp teeth. Not that this isn't frightening in itself.

She may no longer have blood family, but her racial instincts remain strong. Her adventuring friends are her new kin, and anyone who thinks he can harass them without suffering a reprisal is a fool. She rarely slays those who make the mistake of offending her—as she says, a dead foe can remember nothing, but a living one must forever face his shame. Anyone thinking of bullying her can expect no mercy—Amka has been a slave and a victim, and will not be that again.


Handout #1: Friezes

LONG ago, seemingly before the arrival of the jinn, a small kingdom arose along what is now Suleiman's Road. A new king ascended the throne, a man bent on conquest. He led great armies against other cities, conquering one after another. Great wealth was brought before him, but the king was not satisfied, and sought greater power and territory. He was a cruel lord, enforcing his rule through the lash. In the end, the people rose up against him. Even his warriors turned on the king. The king was carried into the desert by his people, and buried alive in the sand. Before being consumed, the king cried out in anger, though it is impossible to tell what he said.

Handout #2: Translated Text

My people had ruled the sand along the trade road for generations, but we were nothing. Peace had made my people slaves to the needs of others, not rich, as befitted our status. I, Barsul-Tuge, did what was best for my people. My father was a simpering fool, content to bow to merchants who offered him gold to transport their goods. He died by my hand, and I took his place as rightful king. My armies, driven by my righteous cause to improve their nation, marched against the surrounding tribes, crushing them beneath their heels. Great wealth was returned to my treasury, and the city prospered. But a greater destiny awaited us. Under my rule, we would conquer the entire desert. I was a just lord, but never afraid to punish those who transgressed my laws. And they were many, for the people grew jealous of my authority and power. My majesty and tolerance for the lowly curs was my undoing, for the people grew covetous in the extreme. Even my army turned against me. They carried me into the desert and buried me in the sand like a common dog. But I shall have vengeance. As the sand took my life I called upon Azanzibul to save me. He heard my prayer. I, Barsul-Tuge, shall return. I shall conquer the desert as is my destiny. Death is only the beginning!

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