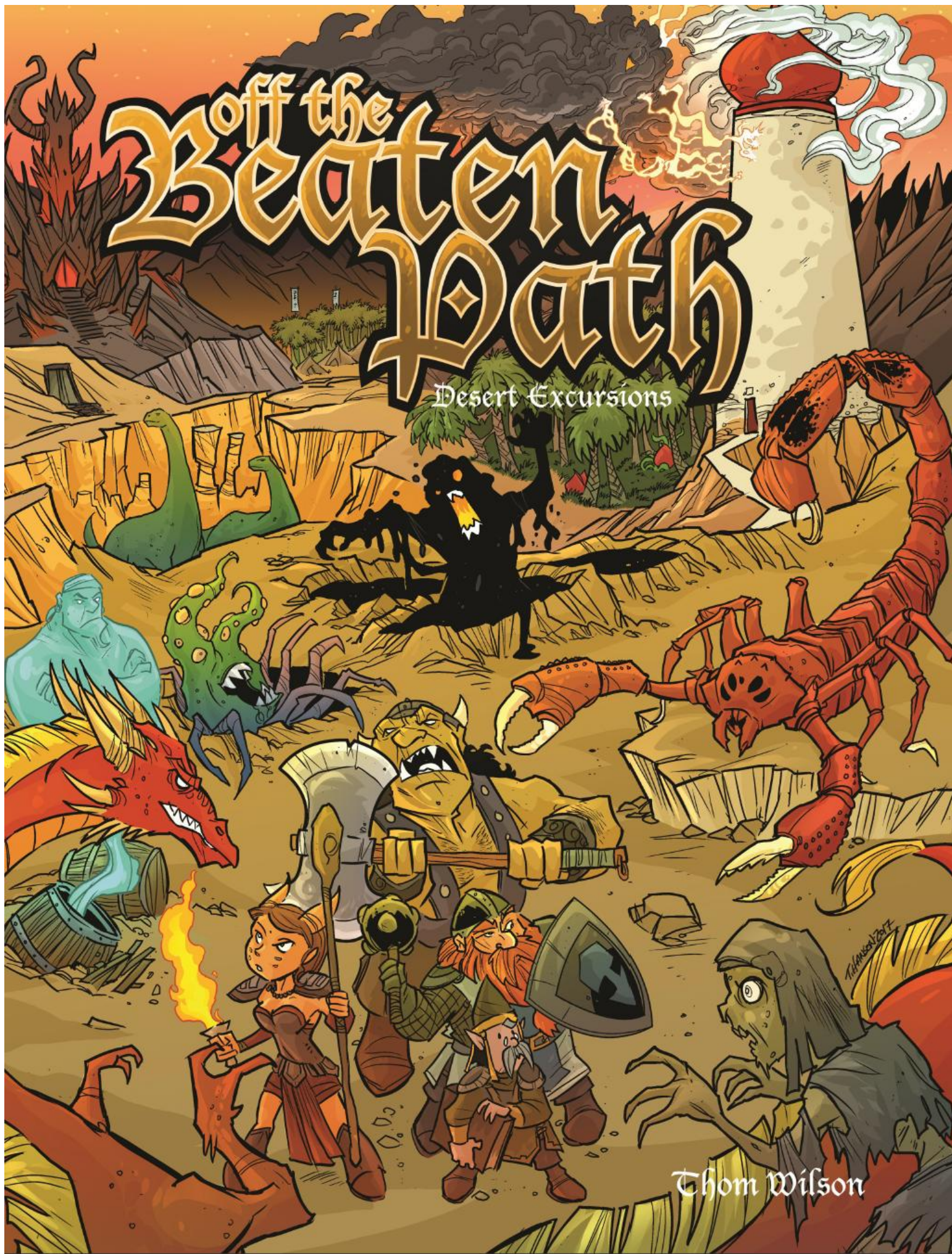


Off the Beaten Path

Desert Excursions



Thom Wilson

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It's tough being a tabletop game master (GM). You plan and create, building adventuring material from hours of writing or hundreds of dollars of purchases, only to have your players avoid your hooks and go off the planned path. Or maybe, you're unprepared for the next session because of real life interference. These things happen, right?

Well, wouldn't it be nice to have one or more Fantasy Roleplaying Game adventures at your finger tips? A series of unrelated, stand alone adventures that can be played whenever you need a side quest. **Off the Beaten Path: Desert Excursions** is the perfect supplement for GMs who need that last minute scenario for their wayward group. Inside, you'll find 23 one to two page desert adventures perfect for your low to mid level group.

Desert Excursions? Yes, the 23 adventures found within this book *start* in the desert but may take the characters up into ancient towers, under sand dunes, within dark holes or into remote villages. What they all have in common is their starting point; each short scenario begins in a desert somewhere, easily inserted into your campaign as needed!

Off the Beaten Path: Desert Excursions has been printed in two versions; a system neutral book was created for any fantasy roleplaying system—empty boxes are provided for the GM to pencil in monster stats and treasures for their system of choice. The *Swords & Wizardry*™ (S&W) book was created to support the growing needs of players of the ever-popular *Swords & Wizardry*™ system (S&W) by Matt Finch and Frog God Games ©. Either book is easy enough to convert to any fantasy roleplaying system.

Adventure Difficulty. Each adventure in this book is rated from Easy to Moderate, with a few Hard scenarios added for good measure. Most Easy adventures are playable by characters of beginning to lower levels. Moderate adventures are about twice as hard as the Easy rated encounters. Although not impossible, the Hard adventures should challenge characters of higher levels. The table below offers suggestions for common systems. Adventures that span difficulties would be good for a mix of characters on the fringe of both categories.

Adventure Ratings	
Difficulty	D20 System Levels
Easy	1-2
Moderate	3-4
Hard	5-6
Very Hard	7-8 or higher

How to Use This Book. Each short adventure has several distinct features that help the game master run the encounters. A quick look at any of the adventures that follow and a review of this section will help the GM get ready to run an adventure quickly.

Adventure Background: A quick background to get the ball rolling. Most Excursion adventures don't need a detailed story; they are usually brought in to fill time or to handle a change in plans. This section is usually one or two paragraphs.

Difficulty / Characters / Locale Table: The three row table provides a simple guideline to help GMs choose their quick, fill-in adventure. The locale is a recommended starting point but can be modified as necessary.

Adventure Start: This section provides a starting point for the characters. It is usually followed by a *read-aloud* text block.

Read-aloud Text Block: Boxes filled with a grey interior contain text that is meant for the players. GMs should read these sections aloud when necessary or needed.

Monster Statistics: Each foe encountered within the adventure will be given a special section for statistics. The system-neutral book provides an open, bordered text box for GMs to pencil in stats for the encountered creatures. The *Swords & Wizardry*™ version of the book has detailed statistics found within a lightly shaded text box. Note that creatures found within the Excursions adventures that are not within the S&W rules have been given new statistics.

Special Encounter Challenges: Bordered or shaded text boxes are also found for special challenges, saving throws, or other important encounter checks. The system-neutral book again leaves the box empty for the GM to add details from the system they are using.

Magical and non-Magical Treasure: Valuable treasure is often **bolded** to stand out amidst the other text; non-magical items with silver or gold piece values are easily spotted in the same manner. Magical items in the system-neutral book are either given loose abilities or left as open text boxes for the GM. The S&W book provides more detailed statistics for magical treasure, created within the constructs of that simple system.

Special Thanks: A very special "thank you" goes out to Matt Finch for his work on *Swords & Wizardry*™, and to Frog God Games © for allowing me to use their logos on this book. Additionally, to all of the Kickstarter backers—thank you!!!

The Oasis Trap

Adventure Background: Any long trek through a desert region puts a strain on travelers' resources, especially the most precious of elements - water. An oasis with water, fruit and shade is an incredible find within a scorching desert.

Unfortunately for the adventurers, a group of desert bandits are using this oasis as a trap. They are hoping that the promise of water and shade lures the thirsty and weary travelers into their well-organized trap.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Easy to Moderate
Number of Characters:	2-4
Adventure Locale:	Oasis (desert)

Adventure Start: After days of travel, the characters see an oasis to the south of their location. This is the first vegetation they have seen since entering the vast desert, and they see no other structures in any other direction. Read the following to the players:

Scanning the horizon, you can see nothing but the heat rising from the rolling sand dunes in every direction. Something in the south catches your eye – a couple of palm trees jut out over the low sand dunes over a mile away.

Oasis

Six palm trees, a number of small bushes, and a small pool of clear water are within the protective circle of several sand dunes. The pool is nearly 25' in length and 15' at its widest points. Reaching a depth of four feet, the clear and clean water of the pool is fed by an underground river. Dozens of colorful fish swim about the oasis pool. A small but delicious desert fruit is found on the bushes, and several coconuts hang from the palm trees.

Entering the outer edge of the desert oasis, you find a small pool of clear water encircled by a few palm trees and bushes with a fiery red fruit within their branches. Small, colorful fish swim around the oasis pool.

Areas 1-3: Net Traps

Three separate pairs of net traps have been set by the bandits around the palm trees. Each individual net activates when any amount of pressure touches the inner portion of the trap. The ropes of each trap are tied to a nearby tree, suspending any caught within the net several feet above the ground. Each of the six net traps activate independently.

Net Trap Check: Roll under Dexterity (-4)

Just as you step to the pool's edge, you sense something is wrong. The soles of your feet detect more than the fine sand along the water's boundary as the sharp twang of ropes snap above you! A net trap!

Areas 4-5: Bandits

Three **bandits** wait in each of these locations, hoping to capture some or most of the travelers in the net traps before they move in to attack. They are not interested in capturing prisoners – they seek only to rob travelers and dispose of the bodies behind the eastern dunes. Each bandit carries a dagger, a curved sword, and a short bow.

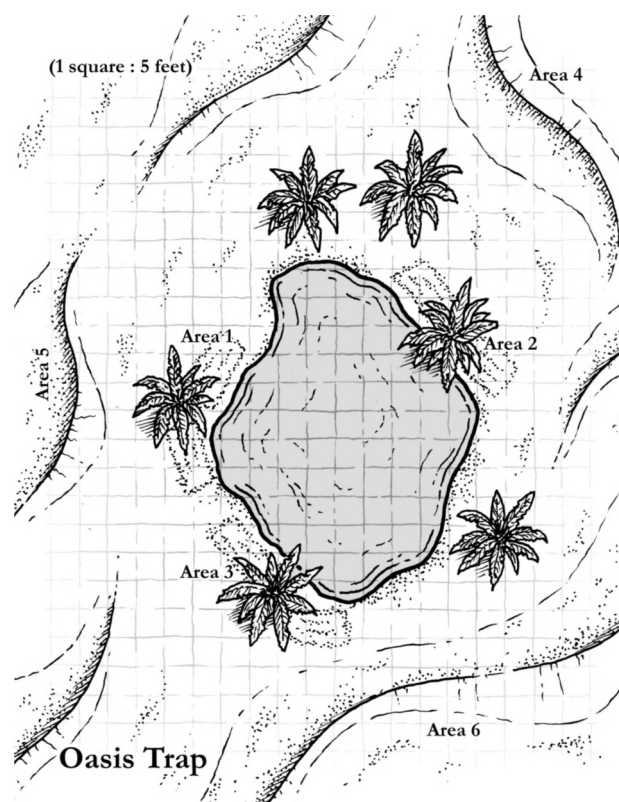
(6) and (2) Bandits, Stats: AC 7 [12], HD 1+1, HP: 6 each, Attacks: Weapon, Move 6, Special: none.

Area 6: Bandit Leader

The ruthless **leader of the bandits** maintains this position until the bandits from areas 4 and 5 engage the characters after the traps activate. He and two additional **bandits** carry finely made scimitars and spears. Additionally, the leader carries a **Pendant of Fire Resistance**. A hidden lockbox (known only to the bandit leader) in the nearby sand dune is filled with **100 gp** and **250 sp**.

Bandit Leader, Stats: AC 5 [14], HD 2+1, HP: 12, Attacks: Weapon, Move 6, Special: none.

If captured, the bandit leader will trade his freedom for the contents of the lockbox.



Tomb of the Cursed Shahzadah

Adventure Background: Nearly one hundred thousand moons have passed over the desert since Shahzadah Khalim Azo-Fahir was locked in his tomb, drugged to unconsciousness but very much alive. His two protectors, both born in a foreign land far to the west, were also forcibly sealed within the same tomb, to suffer the identical fate as their prince – starvation and death.

All three died within their prison-tomb, each vowing with their last breaths to return again to destroy their murderers. They have indeed returned, cursed to a life of undeath, and await their freedom.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Easy to Moderate
Number of Characters:	3-6
Adventure Locale:	Tomb (desert)

Adventure Start: The characters have either heard of this lost tomb from a local desert village or have happened upon it accidentally.

Tomb Exterior: Dune Valley Floor

A narrow valley appears to have been cut between two rolling dunes, as a violent wind tears eastward through the expanse. Several pocked pillars stand against the wind, forming two lines perpendicular to the strange sand dune chasm. The southern end of pillar line disappears into the sand but the opposite end terminates at a strange rock wall.

Area 1: Tomb Entrance

The door to the tomb is covered in runes, mostly erased from years of sand and wind, but a few words remain legible; *–Prince*, *–cursed* and *–death* are found amongst the ancient lettering (after a successful check).

Your eyes have not lied; there is a door at the end of the pillar row, where the northern edge of the valley ends in sand and rock. Worn runes and faded lettering appear on one small section of the wall, and a single brass ring can be seen within an indented space nearby.

Tomb Door Check: Roll under Strength (-4)

Although the door was magically sealed, the protective lock has weakened over time. Once unlocked, the brass ring is used to pull open the ancient door.

Area 2: Tomb Entry Hall

The door opens to reveal a short, narrow hallway covered in a thick layer of dust. Wall sconces, which should be dry after many years of inactivity, burn dimly with eerie blue flames. The walls are lined with

the same lettering and runes as found on the entry door, repeating every few feet on both sides. At the hallway's northern end, a larger space appears.

Pressure plate traps line the east and west walls of the corridor. Activation of either trap causes the doors to Areas 4 and 5 to open, unleashing the Skeletal Horrors within.

(2) Pressure Plate Checks: Roll under Dexterity (-4)

Additionally, a horizontal pressure plate at the northern end of the hallway opens the door to Area 6. There is a 50% chance that the undead Prince will emerge. He instead may wait for the group to get through the fire trap in Area 3 before exiting.

Pressure Plate Check: Roll under Dexterity (-4)

Area 3: Urn of the Endless Flame

A large square room contains five urns, with one in each corner and the largest vessel in the middle of the room. Each urn burns with a blue fire. There are doors on the north, west and east walls.

Four equidistant pressure plates span the area between the central urn and nearby edge of the room, each one activating the urn fire trap when depressed. Fire erupts from the center and nearest two corner urns to burn any living thing within five feet of the depressed plate.

(4) Pressure Plate Checks: Roll under Dexterity (-4)
Fire Trap Damage: 3d4 damage

Although the pressure plates in Area 2 can open the doors to the three tombs, each one can be unlocked normally.

Area 4 Door Unlock: from plates or as Thief skill
Area 5 Door Unlock: from plates or as Thief skill
Area 6 Door Unlock: as Thief skill

Area 4: Tomb of Fen-Lo, First Protector of the Prince

Both Fen-Lo's and Chi-Bin's tombs are identical in design; a single stone slab sits in the rear of the otherwise empty room. If Fen-Lo has not been released by the pressure plate traps in Area 2, he will be lurking in here, waiting for release.

Fen-Lo (Skeletal Horror) Stats: AC 5 [14], HD 3, HP: 15, Attacks: 2 Claws (1d4 each), Move 12, Special: edged weapons, fire attacks and cold attacks deal half damage.

Fen-Lo was buried without any personal effects or treasure.

Area 5: Tomb of Chi-Bin, Second Protector of the Prince

Chi-Bin was a much shorter man than his counterpart, Fen-Lo. Unless previously freed, he also awaits release from his chamber.

Chi-Bin (Skeletal Horror) Stats: AC 5 [14], HD 3, HP: 15, Attacks: 2 Claws (1d4 each), Move 12, Special: edged weapons, fire attacks and cold attacks deal half damage.

Like his counterpart, Chi-Bin was sealed in his tomb without anything of value.

Area 6: Tomb of Shahzadah Khalim Azo-Fahir

Wrapped in filthy and decaying strips of cloth, the rotting form shambles forward to greet you. Its sharpened talons gnaw at the air between you and it as its mouth opens. Its hacked tongue gurgles an incomprehensible babble of noise. The creature's eyes glow with a blue flame, a flame of hatred and revenge.

Khalim Azo-Fahir (Mummy) Stats: AC 3 [16], HD 5+1, HP: 26, Attacks: 1 Fist (1d12), Move 6, Special: Rot (prevents healing), hit only by magic weapons (half damage).

Although stripped of his wealth by his prince-brothers, he was buried with a handful of personal items for his journey into the afterlife. A chest of personal belongings, including clothing and a stash of coins, are found near the prince's sarcophagus.

Tomb Items**Item**

Several small bags of coins, total value: 500 gp, 1500 sp.

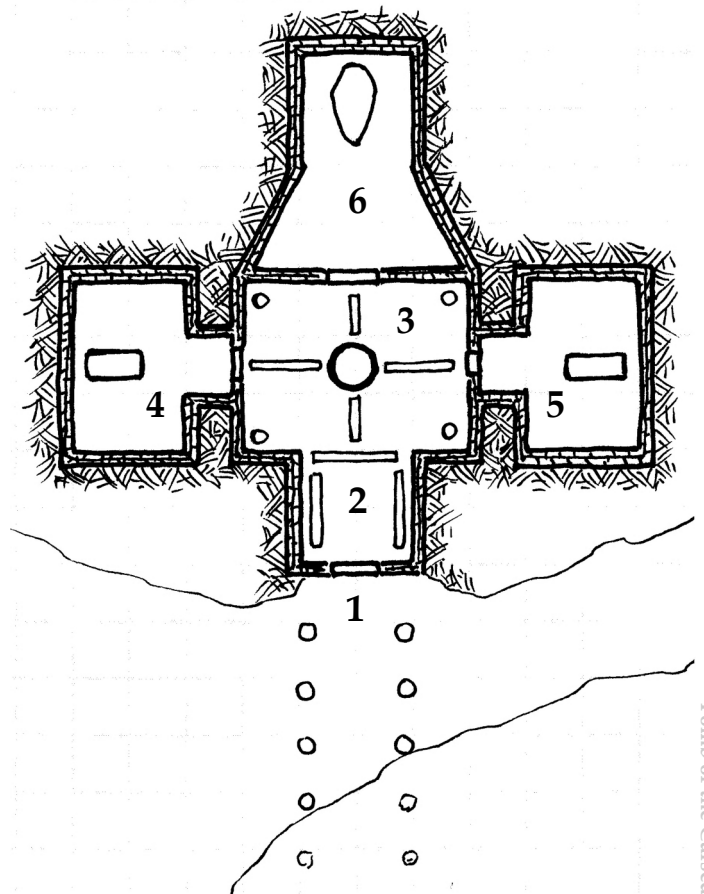
Desert Saber of the Sands—A finely made tulwar with a finish almost as clear as glass. It provides resistance to fire and adds a bonus +1 to hit fire-based creatures.

Robes of the Greedy Merchant (Cursed)—Simple white robes that force the wearer to haggle over every price, making every negotiation nearly impossible. Cannot be removed. Can be worn over armor.

The Liar's Necklace (Cursed)—The wearer's words are often twisted into lies and deception as they exit their mouth—the wearer may wish to say one thing, but the words that are spoken are twisted and untrue. Cannot be removed.

Ring of Valuation—The wearer can identify the minimum and maximum sale value of any non-magical treasure (artwork, gems, jewelry, etc.), estimating within +/- 10% accuracy.

Each of the three undead creatures feel compelled to return to their tombs after a few hours of lingering within the other parts of the tomb. The doors to their tombs automatically close within twenty four hours of their opening.



When the cursed prince is slain, he and his two protectors will finally be able to rest; their forms turn to dust following Khalim's destruction. The tomb will collapse within 4 hours of Khalim's true death.

Optional Background: The eldest of three sons of Shah Azo-Fahir, Prince Khalim was a notorious gambler, liar and womanizer. It was rumored that Prince Khalim poisoned both his parents to get his seat on the throne early. His two younger brothers, Vensaan and Ahmeen, formed several plans to remove their brother from power. Each attempt to take Khalim from his throne failed until they managed to have one of the Prince's harem girls drug him and his protectors with a spiced wine. The Prince and his two protectors awoke in the newly fashioned tomb later that night. Unable to leave, they starved to death weeks later.

Note that the tombs of his murderous brothers can be found in a later Excursions adventure (#30, Tomb of the Murdering Princes, pgs. 12-13).

The Warlock Scorpion

Adventure Background: A nest of unnaturally large scorpions lies between three nondescript sand dunes. Four man-sized desert scorpions prowl the area, constantly searching for easy prey and additional trinkets for their nest. One aged female matriarch and three male suitors have been guarding the nest of petrified scorpion eggs for many years, impossibly hopeful for their unlikely hatching.

The ancient female was once a human warlock; she was blinded and polymorphed by a rival wizard, and cast out into the desert over a hundred years ago. She retains little memory of her previous life as a human warlock but is able to use a few of her magical powers “naturally.”

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty: Moderate to Hard

Number of Characters: 3-5

Adventure Locale: Sand Dunes (desert)

Adventure Start: Carrion birds will be circling an area near the adventurers.

A dozen black carrion birds circle an area ahead of you, just over several sets of sand dunes. They are getting closer to the ground after each turn of their spiral.

The vultures are circling a pair of desiccated camels, recently caught by the scorpions. After feasting, the scorpions have left the partially decomposed beasts out in the open to attract more prey, and perhaps humans, their favorite meal of all.

Camel Trap

Three bold vultures have landed upon the rotting corpses of two camels, their flesh viciously torn from the bones in more than half their frames. The small birds begin to peck at the fleshy remnants, while the rest continue their cautious descent. Nearby, leather bags and blankets have been ripped from the camels and tossed aside.

The scorpions will not rush out of their nest to attack the birds until many more land on their trap. However, if the scorpions sense movement nearby (the characters), they may wait until they are closer to exit their nest.

Characters that approach the camels will scare off any birds that have landed, sending them back into a circling pattern above. Four empty leather bags and two riding blankets are within ten feet of the remains.

The Scorpions

Softly shifting sands nearby gets your attention. Turning quickly, you see four impossibly **large scorpions**, each one larger than you, pushing their way up through a previously hidden hole in the ground. Three of the insects look like their tiny counterparts, but the fourth looks ancient and unnatural. It has fiery-red gemstones in place of its eyes and several golden ring piercings are seen in its tail, claws and legs. The stinger drips with a dark, foul substance.

(3) Large Desert Scorpions, Males: AC 3 [16], HD 6, HP: 30 each, Attacks: 2 Pincers (1d10) and Sting (1d4 + poison), Move: 12, Special: Lethal Poison sting.

The males will attempt to surround the group, forming a tight triangle to rip with their claws and sting with their tails. The female uses her *fire ray* attack first before firing poisonous droplets from her tail at the characters.

Large Desert Scorpion, Matriarch: AC 1 [18], HD 8, HP: 40, Attacks: 2 Pincers (1d12) or Special, Move: 12, Special: Fire Ray (from gemstone eyes) for 2d6, or Poison Droplet Darts (from tail) for 1d6 + poison (lethal poison damage).

If the female dies, the remaining males will retreat to the nest to defend the eggs. The female fights to the death. Her valuable gemstone eyes can be removed.

Scorpion Nest

A narrow hole drops sharply into the ground. The air is noticeably cooler below.

Running over seventy five feet, the descending tunnel ends in a large chamber nearly fifty feet below the surface. Light is necessary in this completely dark space.

The tunnel ends in a low, wide chamber filled with hundreds of grapefruit-sized eggs on one side, and dozens of trinkets and shiny items piled to the other. A small pool of clear water bubbles between the two areas.

The water from the small pool is drinkable and free of contaminants. Roughly one gallon of new clean water rises to the pool each day. The small pool holds about ten gallons in total.

Most of the shiny trinkets are low-value items, but hundreds of gold and silver coins, rubies, emeralds, and diamonds are found amongst the scattered piles of baubles. Each one-pound scorpion egg is petrified, turned to sandstone long ago.

The Troublesome Tar Pit

Adventure Background: A small fissure in the rock layer below the sandy dune surface has slowly allowed tar to seep upwards, creating a small pond of the black substance. At the center of the pond, a black mace floats a few feet above the tar, held aloft by the magical charms of the tar elementals within. The elementals are evil and hope to lure travelers into the tar pit to retrieve the mace.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Easy to Moderate
Number of Characters:	3-5
Adventure Locale:	Tar Pit (desert)

Adventure Start: The smell of tar and oils can be detected from a half mile away. As the characters close in on the odor, read the following:

Using your nose as a guide, you follow the strange odor until you reach a depression between sand dunes. A small forty-foot wide pond of jet black, thick material bubbles before you. Floating above the pond is a spiked mace, blacker than the pond's contents and suspended by an unknown force. A cluster of strange cones lay on the northern edge of the oily pond.

Magic suspends the mace above the tar pit, held in place by the **four tar elementals** that lurk deep within the pond. Any attempt to move the mace, either from the edge of the pit or from within, awakens the elementals. Any character that disturbs the pond also awakens the magical creatures.

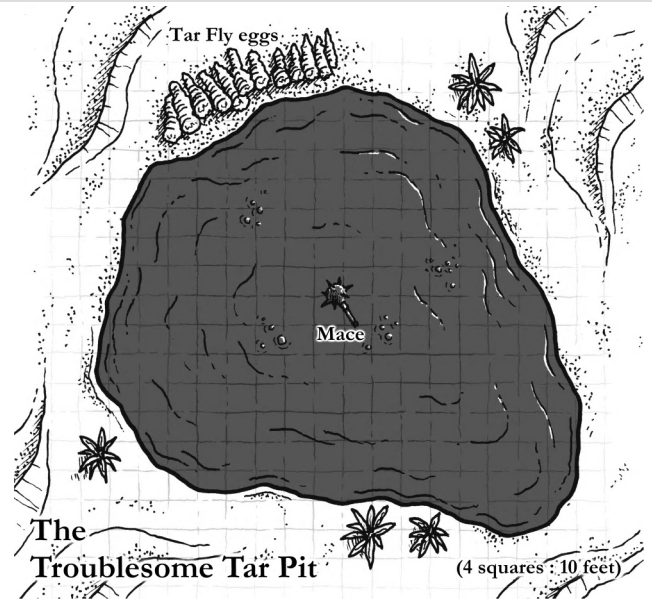
The strange black cones are tar fly eggs, soon to hatch into flesh-eating **larvae**. If disturbed, the eggs will open to allow the two foot long tar fly grubs to exit, seeking their first meal. Additionally, there is a 50% chance that the **swarm of tar flies** will return to the pit to check on their eggs.

(12) Tar Flies, Stats: AC 6 [13], HD 1, HP: 5 each, Attacks: Sting (1d3) and Disease, Move 6, Special: disease causes 1 HP damage per day until cured.

Both the tar flies and their larvae carry a flesh-eating disease that is spread on a successful bite.

Check versus Disease: Save versus Poison

Combat with the tar flies or their larvae will not necessarily awaken the elementals below the surface; however, any disruption to the tar pond will get their immediate attention.



The tar within the pond has a numbing effect, causing a loss of speed and dexterity to those who come in contact with the material. Stepping into the pond or getting any tar on the skin will require a check to avoid a loss in movement and agility:

Tar Numbness Check: Roll under Constitution (-4)

A failure of three or more checks will cause a temporary paralysis, lasting 1 hour.

Each tar elemental can attack from a distance by throwing tar balls at the characters, or move closer to splash tar upon their victims. Additionally, an elemental can attempt to push or move their victim into the tar pit, hoping to drown them.

(4) Tar Elementals, Stats: AC 4 [15], HD 4+1, HP: 21 each, Attacks: Fist (1d3) or thrown Tar Ball (1d3), Move 0, Special: each successful attack requires a check for numbness (as above).

The skeletal remains of several human and mammalian victims are found within the tar pit.

Tar Pit Treasures: 125 sp, 75 gp, **Dagger +1**, **Shield +1**, a cursed **Medallion of Projected Thoughts**, and a **Necklace of Firebaubles**.

Once the tar elementals are dispatched, the magic holding the mace aloft will end, dropping the mace into the tar pit. It will slowly sink to the depths of the pit if not retrieved within 5 minutes. The mace is magical and extremely valuable.

Black Mace, properties: +1 versus Chaotic foes, +2 versus undead. Once per day, the wielder may heal half their missing hit points (round up).

Village of the Condemned

Adventure Background: Of the several villages along the ancient northern caravan routes, none is more notorious and avoided as Jamila, now known as the Village of the Condemned. Tales of the howls of lamenting women and their crying children coming from the sand-swept village urge travelers off the old routes, taking newer trails through the scorching deserts far from the village.

The old stories tell of the inhospitable villagers of Jamila, refusing the stay of traveling gypsies during an epic sandstorm. Cursed words were left on the ears of the once beautiful villagers, their homes made into hateful and wretched places. The villagers were condemned to a fitful life of undeath—unable to die yet ever hungry for human flesh...

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Easy to Moderate
Number of Characters:	3-5
Adventure Locale:	Village (desert)

Adventure Start: The characters are either travelling the old northern caravan route or have come to investigate the legendary village.

Windswept sand lashes at your face as you move along the ancient and deserted northern caravan road. In the distance, heavy clouds gather signaling a possible developing storm. The area is bleak and sun-scorched. Up ahead, your eyes detect several structures clustered on either side of the road; their layout gives the appearance of a small village.

The Road into Jamila

There are ten small buildings that have weathered the sun and hundreds of sandstorms; several more have fallen into piles of stone and dried wood. The village will be quiet during the day, as its ghastly denizens slumber in the shades of the dilapidated buildings. At night, the village comes alive: Undead villagers roam the boundaries of the accursed area and strange lights appear in various shutterless windows. Occasionally, the howls of the maddened villagers and the incessant sobbing of hungry children can be heard throughout the area.

At night, most of the undead villagers roam the area and are not bound to any specific building (unless indicated in an area description). Table A provides possible random encounters in the village. Unless otherwise noted, these encounters are additional villagers beyond what are found within the buildings.

Table A—Random Encounters

(6) Zombie Children, running between buildings
(1) Skeletal mother, searching for a lost child
(3) Hungry Zombies, digging under a fallen building
(2) Zombie guardsmen, eternally standing at post

Area 1: Desert Flower Inn

The inn is one of the three two-story buildings in Jamila. The first floor is a single open space, while the second floor split is into ten small rooms for travelers.

Five hungry zombies roam the first floor.

(5) Desert Zombies, Stats: AC 8 [11], HD 2, HP: 10 each, Attack: Strike (1d8), Move 6, Special: immune to sleep and charm spells

A small steel box can be found behind the front desk. It contains **33 sp** and **17 gp**.

There is a 50% chance that one room on the second floor will contain a trapped desert zombie.

Area 2: Jamila Trading Post

Once a frequently visited shop, the trading post has been picked clean of many of its wares in the front room—the back room still contains several useful items. Unfortunately, **three skeletal creatures** have been trapped in the supply closet for years.

(3) Desert Skeletons, Stats: AC 8 [11], HD 1, HP: 5 each, Attack: Strike (1d8), Move 12, Special: immune to sleep and charm spells

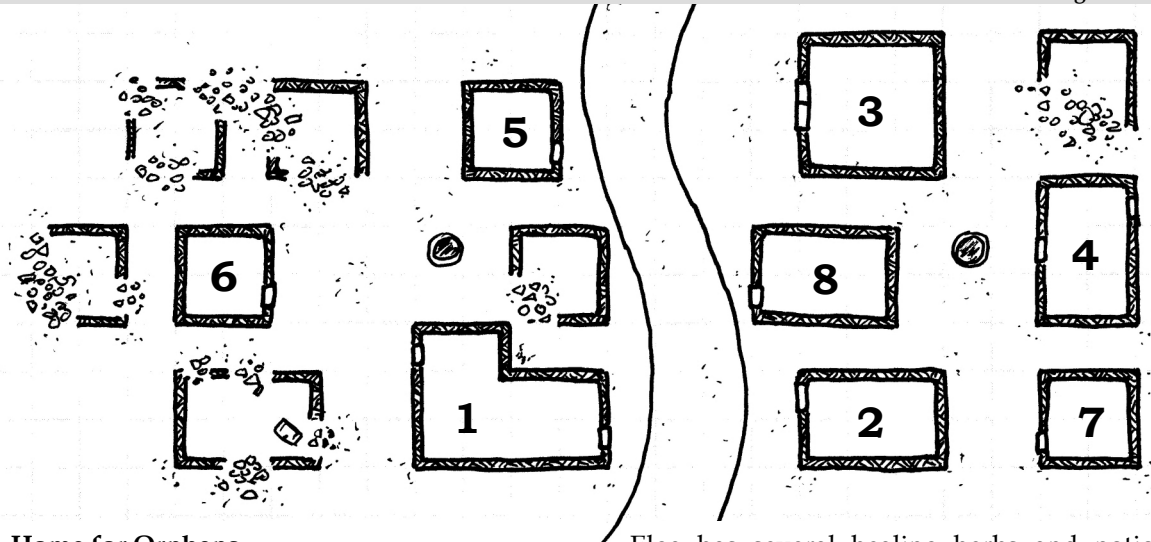
Three strong ropes, a lantern, five torches, two leather sacks, and backpack are piled upon the shelves of the small closet. A locked wooden chest contains **125 sp**, **50 gp**, and **two Potions of Neutralize Poison**.

Area 3: Temple of the Sun Goddess

Wide marble stairs lead through open double doors into the abandoned temple. Condemned villagers avoid the temple; the Sun Goddess keeps her church clear of undead. Although the front and back exits are open, no villagers will try to enter the area.

A thorough search of the priest's quarters in the back will reveal a diary by the last head priest. It details the story of the gypsies, their curse and the slow fall of the village. The last entry indicates that the head priest attempted to flee the village in search of outside help.

An ornate, golden box is found under the altar. The box itself is well made and worth 100 gp. Inside, **275 sp** and **100 gp** are found.



Area 4: Home for Orphans

Without any family or adults to care for them, these orphans suffered until their undeath. A **dozen Zombie children** of various ages roam the locked, two-story building. During the day, the six smaller children lie on the floor sobbing and crying out for help.

(6) Desert Zombie Children (older), Stats: AC 8 [11], HD 1, HP: 5 each, Attack: Strike (1d6), Move 6, Special: immune to sleep and charm spells

(6) Desert Zombie Children (younger), Stats: AC 8 [11], HD 1/2, HP: 2 each, Attack: Strike (1d4), Move 6, Special: immune to sleep and charm spells

A locked pantry in the back of the house contains rotted food, and wooden bowls and cutlery. An ornately made wooden serving bowl, found on a top shelf, is magical; the **Never Hungry Bowl** provides a full meal for six children (three adults), twice per day.

Area 5: Jamila Smithy

Once unlocked, the door to the smithy opens into a well-stocked blacksmith's workshop. Various metals are available to mend damaged armor or create new items. Several curved swords, daggers, and shields are stacked in one corner, awaiting patrons that will never come. Dozens of farm implements and other common tools are stacked on shelves and tables. A single hammer sits upon an anvil, its steel gleaming in the darkness. The item is a **Hammer of the Smith**, a magical tool of great value. In the proper hands, this item helps to create masterwork weapons.

Area 6: Home of Elga Heartspire

The former home of the town's healer is locked up and barred from the inside. Within, the once beautiful Elga lurks about, seeking a way to escape.

Elga—Desert Ghast, Stats: AC 4 [15], HD 4, HP: 20, Attack: 2 Claws (1d3), 1 Bite (1d6), Move 14, Special: paralyzing touch

Elga has several healing herbs and potions stacked upon her shelves; the characters can find **four Healing Potions** and **one Extra Healing elixir**. Additionally, a small belt pouch hanging from Elga's waist contains **22 sp** and **5 gp**.

Area 7: Home of Assan-de-Kolmari

Jamila's captain of the guard, Assan-de-Kolmari was once a tall, strapping warrior, his frame displaying thick musculature and weapon skill. Today, his bony and sickly body whispers of years of waste, somehow surviving on nothing but hate and despair. Assan-de-Kolmari wanders about his one-story home waiting for the death that may never come.

Assan-de-Kolmari—Desert Wight, Stats: AC 5 [14], HD 3, HP: 15, Attack: Claw (1 hp + level drain), Move 9, Special: level drain, hit by silver/magic weapons.

Assan-de-Kolmari's magical longsword hangs from his waist belt, unused for many years. A small wooden box under his simple bed contains **200 sp** and **75 gp**.

"Sunsorrow", magical longsword, Stats: +1, +2 when wielder is in direct sunlight.

Area 8: Village Office

The two-story building formerly housed the town officials, their offices filling the first floor. The second floor was home to Jamila's chieftain, Agrostali-el-Remiz, and his family. Both floors of the building are empty of cursed villagers but a teenaged zombie prowls the stairs between the levels.

Desert Zombie, Stats: As on page 6.

A floor safe under a desk in the chieftain's office contains **250 sp** and **100 gp**.

The gypsy curse on the village will be lifted if every undead villager is destroyed with intense fire and buried outside the town borders.

Drunken Cask Genie

Adventure Background: Not all desert genies are trapped within exquisite bottles, awaiting their freedom in trade for bestowing wishes to their lucky new master. Although uncommon, a caste of less powerful genies are known to exist; their uncouth and drunken behavior coupled with their deceptive words make them a bane to any who find them. Genies of this sort are generally found in common items, often trapped by powerful djinni as retribution for an unkind word or betrayal of trust.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Moderate
Number of Characters:	2-4
Adventure Locale:	Trail (desert)

Adventure Start: Moving along a desert trail, the characters will spot an overturned cart ahead, several casks and wooden chests spilled on to the sand.

The spot in the distance you've been tracking for some time has now turned into a recognizable object—a broken cart, collapsed in the middle of the trail, has dropped its contents into the sand nearby. Nothing seems to be moving near the cart.

The cart's axle and right wheel are broken, shattered in multiple places. Merchants and their camels have left the broken cart behind, taking the most valuable items with them. Several wine casks and chests are found near and under the cart. Besides a few pieces of silk and blank vellum rolls, the chests are empty. Much of the wine has evaporated in the hot sun, but one cask feels much heavier than the rest.

Genie Cask

A single wine cask found under the rest has evaded the hot sun's rays and is seemingly full. Uncorking the cask releases a lone **Cask Genie**, drunk from the wine and ready for some fun.

One cask seems to have been spared by the desert heat, its weight indicating full contents. A single stopper in its side has prevented the contents from spilling out.

[Assuming the wine cask is uncorked] Instead of valuable wine, a reddish gas quickly escapes the small cask and forms a large humanoid shape nearby...

At first, the genie will appear thankful for its release, promising a reward for character who uncorked the wine cask. The characters may find that genie is drunk,

his words slurred and his movements unstable. The genie will continue to offer a reward, a single wish, to the character who freed him.

"Thank you, thank you! I am in your debt for rescuing me from that horrible place!" [burp] "Now, a reward for my freedom, yes? I am but a lowly djinn, with little power on this plane. I can offer one of these four things as a reward."

Of course, the genie has enough power to twist the seemingly simple rewards into awful results.

"Your first option is a set of armor that cannot be damaged or penetrated by normal weapons, making you invincible to common attacks. Second, to be fluent in all known languages. Third, to bring forth a woman (or man) who will always love you. Lastly, a sultan's treasure! Which do you choose, master?"

Of course, the "rewards" are nothing more than evil, twisted actions, and will impact the character in the following ways: **Option 1:** the armor is solid stone, immediately encasing the character who suffocates to death in minutes. **Option 2:** the character speaks full sentences made up of words from all different languages, making it impossible to communicate. **Option 3:** the character's mother or father appears, alive or dead. **Option 4:** the massive treasure hoard is stolen and now the sultan's assassins are after you! They may even appear immediately!

The characters may get upset and threaten the genie. Although the genie will tell the characters that he cannot be harmed, he is flesh and blood outside his imprisonment. He can summon one of the three groups of creatures to assist him in combat:

(2) Minor Air Elementals, Stats: AC 2 [17], HD 8, HP: 40 each, Attack: Strike (2d8), Move 36 (flying), Special: Whirlwind, immune to non-magic weapons

(3) Blink Dogs, Stats: AC 5 [14], HD 4, HP: 20 each, Attack: Bite (1d6), Move 12, Special: Teleport

(1) Fire Drake, Stats: AC 1 [18], HD 10, HP: 50, Attack: Bite (2d10), Move: 12, 24 (flying), Special: immune to fire attacks

If the characters do not engage the genie in any way for 5 minutes, he disappears into thin air.

Cask Genie, statistics: AC 2 [17], HD 8, HP: 45, Attack: Strike (2d8), Move 36 (flying), Special: Whirlwind, immune to non-magic weapons, (*Invisibility and Dispel Magic, 1 choice per round, used instead of Strike attack*)

The Protective Mother

Adventure Background: Sandwyrms were once the plague of many desert villages and caravans throughout the wastelands. Their natural chameleon hides and burrowing abilities made them hard to detect before they attacked countless victims. Over the centuries, most have perished but a few deserts still hold a few of the dragon descendants. One such beast has made its home near the trail the characters are traveling upon...

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Moderate
Number of Characters:	4-6
Adventure Locale:	Open Area (desert)

Adventure Start: As the characters travel the desert trail, they hear the faint sounds of persistent burrowing and feel a slight shaking under their feet.

The curious sound of shifting sands coupled with a slight quivering under your feet pauses your travel upon the road. You can both hear and feel that something large is moving closer to you, either on or below the ground...

Bursting from the ground from an unexpected position, the **sandwurm** immediately sets itself upon the characters. The large creature moves through sand and soft earth with ease using its dagger length claws and triangular shaped head. This particular creature is a pregnant female and is especially protective of its nearby nest.

The sandwurm will target the weakest character if possible, trying to quickly send a message to the group that she is not to be taken lightly.

A narrow and long reptilian creature bursts forth from the ground, showering your group with sand and loose earth. The creature looks like a smaller, wingless dragon. Its claws are nearly a foot in length and its eyes burn with fiery hatred.

Female Sandwurm, Stats: AC 4 [15], HD 6, HP: 30, Attack: 2 Claws (1d6+1) or Bite (1d8+1) and Tail Bash (1d8), Move 24 (flying), Special: fire attacks deal half damage, hides in the sand, surprising foes

She fights to protect both her young wyrmling in her nearby lair and the incubating egg in her stomach (see sandwurm reproduction in the next section). The sandwurm cannot breathe fire or cast spells, but can attack with two claws or a bite and tail bash each turn. She will fight until the characters are dead or flee the area, or she reaches half her health total. If severely injured, she will burrow below ground to return to her nest. If

the characters follow her there, she will fight until dead. Note that the tunnel the sandwurm creates collapses behind her; the characters cannot follow her that way. They may be able to track her movements from above by feeling the earth move.

Sandwurm Lair

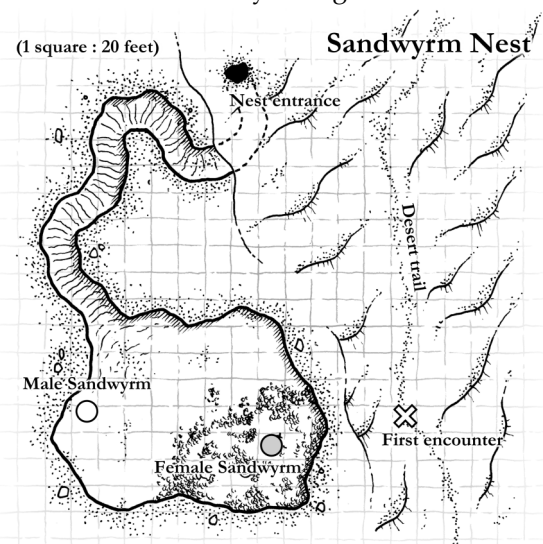
The sandwurm's nest is several hundred feet from the trail encounter. A hole in the ground leads sharply downward to a large cavern that the sandwurm uses to raise her children. A young male sandwurm, a product of a previous pregnancy, is nearly mature enough to leave the lair. He is roughly half his mother's size but is a fierce and capable combatant.

Young Male Sandwurm, Stats: AC 5 [14], HD 5, HP: 25, Attack: 2 Claws (1d6) or Bite (1d8) and Tail Bash (1d6), Move 24 (flying), Special: fire attacks deal half damage, hides in the sand, surprising foes

Many merchant caravans and travelers have provided the sandwurm with a wondrous bed of treasure. There are hundreds of **small gems** of every color (each ranging from 1 to 5 gp in value), **2500 sp**, **1250 gp**, and several finely crafted weapons and armor.

Interesting Items: A suit of finely made rigid leather armor (+1 to AC), two suits of smaller sized chainmail armor (MV +3, 1/2 weight), several well-made blades, and a magical sickle that deals double damage.

Notes on Sandwurm Reproduction: The sandwurm mates once every three years, each time with a different male. It takes 7 days to create the single sandwurm egg which the female immediately swallows into its second, smaller stomach. It remains within the protected stomach, receiving selective nutrients from the mother, for up to 18 months. Once the egg reaches full size (nearly two feet in length), the female regurgitates the hard egg. Within 72 hours, the egg hatches producing a three to four foot sandwyrmling.



Valley of the Old Lizard

Adventure Background: A lone dinosaur, trapped within a secluded desert valley, is nearing the end of his natural life. Although old, he is far from frail. Numerous merchants, adventurers, and other travelers have lost their lives wandering into the strange depression it calls its home. Recently, the old lizard has fallen into a deeper section of the valley and cannot exit the area.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Moderate
Number of Characters:	4-6
Adventure Locale:	Valley (desert)

Adventure Start: A strange sloping entrance to a desert depression should interest the characters as they travel through the desert. The high walls of the chasm opening block out the harshness of the sun, cooling much of the valley's interior.

Miles of identical sand dunes are suddenly interrupted by a narrow sloping path leading into the ground. The walls on either side of the path quickly become steep as the path drops sharply.

Faint footprints can be found on the valley entrance trail; wagon wheels, armored boots and camel prints are found intermingled in the sands along the path.

The path winds sharply, dropping ever deeper into the strange valley. Sheer walls surround the narrow trail until it reaches the bottom of the valley after descending a hundred feet.

Area 1: Valley Opening

As the trail levels off, the side walls of the narrow chasm path split apart, revealing a large valley. The outer edges of the valley are rarely touched by the harsh sun. Vegetation grows plentifully along the steep walls while the center of the area remains barren and rocky.

After a sharp turn in the narrow trail, the ground levels off. Each chasm wall turns away from the sandy path, revealing a wide valley far beneath the desert above. A pile of white, sun-bleached tree trunks is seen fifty feet from your position at the valley opening.

A pile of old dinosaur bones looks like tree branches from the valley opening. Closer inspection reveals the large creature's bones.

Area 2: Caravan Remains

The remains of a caravan are found here, the merchants and wagons trapped by the old dinosaur. A few human and camel bones are found mixed in with the sand

and stunted brush. Amidst the crushed wagons and broken gear, the characters can find several small boxes and chests containing a total of **127 sp, 39 gp**, and a bag of rubies (100, each worth 5 gp).

Several broken wagons are half-buried under sand and dry, leafless bushes. A few bones are seen poking out from under a broken wheel. The wagons look like they were crushed from above.

Area 3: Cave

A wide entrance leads to a small cave in the valley wall. Just a few feet within the opening, a shallow pool of cool water bubbles up from underground.

Area 4: New Sinkhole

This section of valley has recently sunk into the ground over forty feet, trapping the old lizard in a small space without food and water. The aged dinosaur is a few days from expiring. He will use every bit of his energy to jump out of the sinkhole to chase the characters if he detects them in the valley.

Old Lizard (dinosaur), stats: AC 5 [14], HD 12, HP: 60, Attack: Bite (3d8) and Stomp (1d8), Move 15, Special: Chew (extra 2d8 damage after attack)

Although desperate to escape, the old dinosaur may be too weak to jump out of the sinkhole. It's up to the GM if the old lizard can escape his entrapment.

The dinosaur had cornered a group of adventurers in this part of the valley before he was trapped. Several loose items including a few swords, shields and helmets are found on the ground. **87 sp** and **26 gp** are in a few belt pouches nearby. Additionally, a quiver of **ten +1 magical arrows** is found under a pile of excrement.

Valley of the Old Lizard



Lost City of Demons

Adventure Background: A millennia of sandstorms have swallowed up the fabled City of Demons, leaving only the tips of four towers poking through the dunes. The city was once a crucial portal to the demon planes but has not been used for many ages. The top floors of the tallest city towers are all that remain accessible.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Moderate to Hard
Number of Characters:	4-6
Adventure Locale:	City Roof Tops (desert)

Adventure Start: Four conical protrusions break up the monotony of the rolling dunes of the desert. The characters should see the four points jutting through the sand in the distance.

It has been [hours/days] since you've seen anything of interest, and the rolling dunes of the desert make you feel like you haven't traveled very far. The boredom of your trek is suddenly broken as you spot four shapes sticking out of the desert up ahead.

The tops of the four towers can be seen from a mile or two away. Nearly thirty feet of each tower stands above the drifting sands of the desert floor. The circular tower floors are forty feet in diameter. The city under the towers is buried well below the sand. Each tower is 200 feet apart from the next in line, forming a square. Access to the rooftop levels was once made through circular staircases, now filled with centuries of sand. Digging to the lower levels would take several characters many weeks.

Each tower top floor is equipped with a magical transport pad that can move one person between each tower. Long ago, when the transports were suspended, four demons were trapped in transport but will emerge when the devices are now used. There are only four demons in total, one for each portal. No more demons will emerge from the portals, regardless of the number of transports the characters attempt.

Once a character steps upon any transport pad, they will transport to the opposite (diagonal) tower. In their place, a **Balor demon** will appear, extremely agitated from being trapped for centuries. Use the statistics below for each of the four demons. *Of course, the DM may use different demons or named demons if they wish.*

Balor Demon, statistics: AC 2 [17], HD 10, HP: 50, Attack: Sword (1d12+2) and Whip (special), Move 6/15 (flying), Special: whip drags foes close to be burned (3d8 damage)

Tower 1: Observation Lounge

City residents and visitors would use this area to look upon the wondrous city and the desert beyond. Once ornate and well-crafted furniture has been shredded in to pieces from hundreds of sandstorms. Any items that were found here have long since disappeared. The large windows, missing their original glass, provide an excellent view of the desert and the other towers.

Tower 2: Open Air Library

Broken and empty shelves line the limited wall space on this tower's top floor. No books or scrolls remain, the windstorms sweeping them away into the desert years ago.

Tower 3: Art Gallery

Exotic sculptures, exquisite paintings, and artifacts from other planes are all damaged beyond recognition, making each item worthless. A locked box in the floor (area 3a) still holds a magical artifact from an unknown and faraway world.

Magical Jade and Ebony Statuette (demon shape), properties: Allows owner to summon a Dretch or Lemure demon once per week; 50% chance it is uncontrollable. The demon remains until slain or 24 hours pass.

Secret Floor Safe, Detection Check: 1 in 6 chance

Unlock Box Check: as Thief or 1 in 20

Tower 4: Noble's Entry

Transport to this tower was once restricted to only the city's nobility but now allows access from the opposite tower. The luxurious open air top floor was once the pinnacle of beauty and wealth. Gilded furniture and wall ornamentation have faded over time, their value lost to the harsh elements of the desert. The area is missing the furniture and sculptures once present.

Like the other three towers, the stairwell down to lower floors is completely impassable, filled with sand and debris from years of abandonment and sandstorms. A careful search just inside the door to the stairwell will reveal a hidden cache of wealth, presumably left here for a noble's emergency departure.

Secret Cache Check: Roll under Wisdom (-4)

A silken bag of mixed gems and coins is found in the hidden niche. **878 sp, 588 gp**, and a thousand mixed gems (each worth 10 gp) are in the purple bag.

Other Treasure Found While Searching the Sands in the Towers

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. A handful of gold pieces | 2. Several small valuable gems |
| 3. A silver, jeweled dagger | 4. An old bottle of fine wine |
| 5. A golden brooch of a djinni | 6. A brass key on a red ribbon |

Tomb of the Murdering Princes

Adventure Background: After murdering their brother Khalim, younger brothers Vensaan and Ahmeen Azo-Fahir co-ruled the desert region for many years. As the twin rulers neared old age, their sons prepared a vast tomb to store decades of their accrued wealth. Before the families could fill the tomb with piles of gold and jewels, a raiding bandit-king and his army overran the small desert empire, stealing every ounce of treasure. Only a handful of valuable items escaped the thieving band—the most precious artifacts of the Azo-Fahir family had already been sent to the new tomb.

Both ruler's families were slain in the battle but were allowed to be laid to rest in the family tomb. Servants deposited the bodies as instructed and permanently sealed the crypt.

This adventure continues from *Excursions #22*.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Moderate to Hard
Number of Characters:	3-5
Adventure Locale:	Tomb (desert)

Adventure Start: The story of the bandit-king and the demise of the Azo-Fahir empire is well known in the region. The tomb's location has always been a lost secret, even unknown to the region's sages, but a merchant caravan believes they saw something like a tomb entrance after a recent sandstorm. After he shares the details with the characters, the group arrives at the entrance of what appears to be an old tomb.

Area 1: Tomb Entrance

The caravan merchant was not wrong. What he glimpsed from the old trail as a strange protrusion in the sandy dunes was indeed a set of doors. They are unusual, set at an angle as if the doors lead into the ground. Each of the two doors were once inscribed with ornate script and images but only partially-legible lines and worn patterns remain.

The Azo-Fahir family lineage was detailed on the doors, indicating who was buried within but the details are no longer legible. The two doors are magically sealed, requiring a difficult lock check (without magical assistance) to open.

Entrance Doors Lock Check: 1 in 20 or 2 in 20 (Thief)

The doors will open into a narrow stairwell that descends steeply into the tomb. When the doors open, the characters will immediately know that the doors have been sealed for many years.

Area 2: Prayer Room

The stairs end in a square chamber, surprisingly well lit by a large brazier in each of the corners. Four stone benches form a square within the center of the room. Hallways exit the north, south and east sides of the area.

Visitors to the Azo-Fahir family crypt would have been instructed to sit upon the benches and offer prayers to the dead before venturing further. Failure to do so invokes the wrath of the **fire elementals** guarding the chamber. The elementals reside within each brazier, and will exit to engage any intruders who attempt to enter the passage nearest their location (two fire elementals per hallway).

(4) Fire Elementals, Stats: AC 2 [17], HD 8, HP: 40 each, Attack: Strike (3d8), Move 12, Special: Ignite materials (items get saving throw); immune to non-magic weapons

The fire elementals will not attack any character who have sat upon the inner benches, unless they are themselves attacked.

Area 3: Family Crypt

In their rush to bury the dead, servants of the Azo-Fahir family quickly dropped the female family members in three coffins. Each of the Prince's wives were given their own stone coffin but the five daughters were dumped into the last available space.

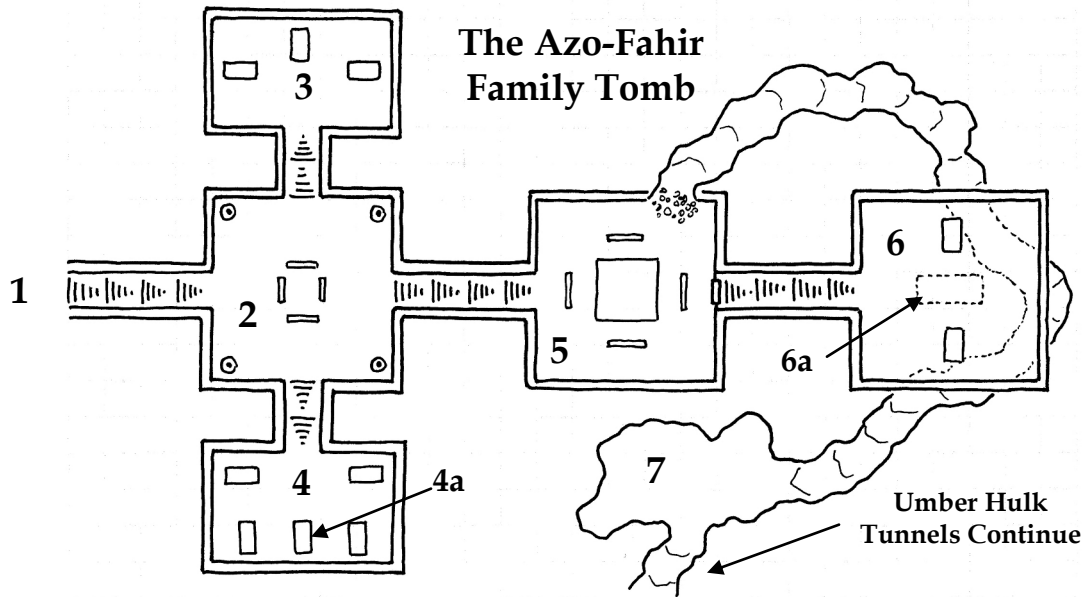
Several small steps drop you into a burial room with three stone coffins. Two are sealed but one has no lid at all. A small chest can be seen near each coffin.

The remains of the Prince's wives and daughters are found here. The chests contain trinkets and personal items of little worth. Simple gold and silver jewelry are found on each of the wives (two necklaces worth 50 gp each, six gold and silver rings worth 25 gp each, and two simple crowns of gold, each worth 100 gp).

Area 4: Family Crypt

A short set of stairs descends into a room with five stone sarcophagi. Faded tapestries depicting proud men in battle hang from three of the walls.

Each of the sons were given their own coffin, but were stripped of anything valuable before burial. Prince Vensaan's oldest son had the family treasure vault key sewn into his arm years before his death. The **brass key** can be found near his skeleton (found in coffin 4a). Enchanted with pairing magic, the brass key will pull strongly toward the lock in area 6. Any who carry the key will feel as if is pulling them deeper into the crypt.



The Azo-Fahir Family Tomb

Area 5: Reflection Room

Another set of stairs lowers your group into another square chamber. A dry, rectangular pool is in the center of the room, surrounded by four stone benches. You see a closed door on the east wall and a strange opening on the north side of the room.

Water elementals once protected the area, much like fire elementals of room 2. Any character attempting to access the next room (area 6) will awaken the **ghostly water elementals** lurking in the dry pool.

(2) Ghostly Water Elementals, Stats: AC 2 [17], HD 8, HP: 40 each, Attack: Strike (3d8), Move 12, Special: immune to non-magic weapons; draining touch (reduces Strength by one with each successful strike)

Rubble and broken stone litter the floor near the northern wall opening. This is the passage created by the Umber Hulks below in area 7 and beyond.

Area 6: Burial Chamber of the Princes

A simple yet well-constructed wooden door stands between the Reflection room and burial chamber of the twin princes.

Door Lock Check: as Thief or 1 in 20 chance

Although hastily buried, Prince Vensaan and Ahmeen Azo-Fahir were laid to rest in the two coffins designed for them years earlier.

You descend yet another set of stairs, finally ending in a room with two ornately detailed coffins. Three walls are engraved with a combination of ancient writing and images of a noble family at reign.

Each prince was buried in noble garments but was stripped of any valuable items. The lids of the coffins are easy enough to remove by two or more characters.

Close inspection of the walls will reveal tiny holes scattered throughout. Flesh eating scarab beetles will exit these holes if the lock of the floor treasure vault is opened without the key (found in area 4).

Area 6a: Floor Treasure Vault

Finding the hidden floor vault is quite difficult and the lock is of equal challenge.

Floor Door/Lock Check: 1 in 8 chance

If the lock is opened by any means except for the family key, **scarab beetles** will pour into the room for several rounds.

Swarm of Scarab Beetles, Stats: AC 7 [12], HD 10, HP: 50 total, Attack: Swarm (1d4 x 1d6), Move 9, Special: swarm 1-2 characters per turn

Stacks of gold and silver bars, bags of gems, boxes of jewelry, and the matching blades of the princes are found within the secret treasure vault. There are forty silver bars (100 sp each) and twenty gold bars (100 gp each) mixed in with the assorted gems (1d100 x 5 assorted sized gems), and 1d10 sets of expensive jewelry.

Each of the prince's scimitars are imbued with elemental magic; Vensaan's favors fire and Ahmeen's, water.

Vensaan's Fire Scimitar: +1 to-hit and damage, +2 to-hit and damage to cold-based creatures
Ahmeen's Water Scimitar: +1 to-hit and damage, +2 to-hit and damage to fire-based creatures

Area 7: Umber Hulk Lair

The winding passage eventually leads to the lair of a pair of Umber Hulks. While extending their underground labyrinth, they've accidentally uncovered the Azo-Fahir tomb. They aren't really interested in the tomb but continue to burrow below...

The Dromedary Stampede

Adventure Background: Several thousands camels are stampeding across the desert, chased by strange desert aberrations. The camels are in a near insane panic and will trample over anything in their way.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Easy to Moderate
Number of Characters:	3-5
Adventure Locale:	Varies (desert)

Adventure Start: This adventure can take place in any open desert space, caravan trail, or oasis. The characters will see the cloud of sand approaching and hear the thundering hooves from a quarter mile away. [GM Note: Use this encounter when the characters are sleeping or at rest in the evening to make the situation much more difficult.]

A sudden, thundering noise in the distance gets your attention. Looking in that direction, you see a billowing cloud of sand moving toward your location. The ground shakes violently as the noise reaches a near deafening pitch. Is this a sandstorm or something else?

Several thousand **camels** are rushing in the direction of the characters as they flee the deadly **sand sharks** that are chasing them. Younger and faster camels are out front, and will meet the character's location as part of the first stampede wave. A second wave of camels, the bulk of the stampede, will quickly follow up the first group. The third and last wave of old and sick camels are barely just ahead of sand sharks.

Stampeding Camels (swarm), First Wave, stats: AC 7 [12], HD 9, HP: 45 total, Attack: Swarm (see table) Move 20, Special: swarm half the characters

The waves of camels can be treated as a "swarm" or can be managed with Dexterity/Agility checks. A sample table below can be used for the latter.

Stampeding Camels

Wave	Check *	Failed Result **
1	Half Dexterity (1)	Character takes 1/3 total damage from trampling.
2	Two Thirds Dexterity (2)	Character takes 1/2 total damage from trampling.
3	One Third Dexterity (1)	Character takes 1/4 total damage from trampling.

* (#) is number of checks that wave per character, ** each failed check results in damage from total health, not remaining!

Table 1

Read the following when the first wave of camels is in sight.

When the noise becomes nearly unbearable and the ground shakes so strongly as to almost knock you off your feet, the details of the oncoming cloud become visible. Thousands of camels are stampeding in your direction!

The second wave follows the first by only 30 seconds.

Hundreds of camels burst through your location, continuing on past you. You barely have time to take a breath when you realize that another wave of camels, considerably larger than the first, is nearly upon you!

Stampeding Camels (swarm), Second Wave, stats: AC 7 [12], HD 10, HP: 50 total, Attack: Swarm (see table), Move 18, Special: swarm half the characters

Note that the second wave of camels represents nearly 75% of the stampeding herd. It is the biggest "swarm" of the three waves.

The third and final wave follows a minute later.

Another hundred or more camels bring up the rear of the stampede. Old and injured camels head straight at you, their gait slower but no less dangerous. Dozens of strange creatures, diving in and out of the sand and snapping their large teeth at the camels legs, are driving the camels forward.

Stampeding Camels (swarm), Third Wave, stats: AC 7 [12], HD 8, HP: 40 total, Attack: Swarm (see table), Move 14, Special: swarm half the characters

Most of the sand sharks will continue to press the camels, ignoring the characters as they pass. Six sand sharks will peel off from the rear of the stampede to engage the characters.

Six of the aberrations withdraw from the stampede and begin circling your location. Smelling blood, they tighten the circle with each pass. Their smooth skin shines in the light as their powerful flippers propel them through the sand. Each mouth is filled with hundreds of massive teeth, easily able to rip a man's limb from his torso.

(6) Sand Sharks, stats: AC 2 [17], HD 5, HP: 25 each, Attack: Bite (1d8+1), Move 15/5 (burrowing), Special: leaping (30 feet) and surprise attacks (1 in 6)

The stampede will continue in the direction they were heading for many hours after they pass the character's location.

Tower of Elemental Fury

Adventure Background: A freak sandstorm descends on the character's location... this is no weather-influenced storm, but instead, a battle between sand and wind elementals! The characters are caught between two rival factions of elementals, forced into combat for all eternity. The fight between elementals occurs every thirty minutes, even throughout the night, as long as the magical device on the tower's top floor remains active.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Easy to Moderate
Number of Characters:	3-5
Adventure Locale:	Sand dunes, Tower

Adventure Start: The characters either stumble upon a deserted tower or have been making their way to the structure since spotting it from afar. As they begin searching the tower exterior, a furious battle between sand and wind elementals begins.

Just as you begin search the tower exterior, an almost instant sandstorm develops around the structure. Sand whips your exposed skin as gusts of air threaten to knock you from your feet.

It shouldn't take too long for the characters to figure out that wind and sand elementals are locked in furious combat. Several humanoid shaped entities made from either sand or forceful air pummel each other around the base of the tower. Any characters caught in the midst of the battle are targeted and may take damage. Characters that take action against one side or both are also targets as an enemy.

(12) Sand Elementals, statistics: AC 5 [14], HD 6, HP: 30 each, Attack: Strike (1d8), Move 12, Special: knockdown with critical hit

(8) Wind Elementals, statistics: AC 4 [15], HD 7, HP: 35 each, Attack: Strike (1d8+1), Move 12, Special: knockdown with critical hit

Although nearly impossible to hear while in the sandstorm, similar but smaller battles between the wind and sand elementals are occurring throughout the tower as well. Once one side is defeated or the sand timer tips over, the groups disappear. Use the table in the next column to quickly resolve combat between the elementals.

The tower leans badly to one side as it slowly falls into ruin. Five floors are accessible - the lower levels are buried in hundreds of years of sand. Each level has a circular staircase that leads to the next level.

Elemental Combat Resolution (roll d8)

1. A sand elemental attacks party	2. A sand elemental dies
3. A wind elemental attacks party	4. A wind elemental dies
5. Two sand elementals die	6. Two wind elementals die
7. Two elementals die (random)	8. Three elementals die (random)

The timer tips every half hour – for the first 30 minutes of the flip, the elementals reform and prepare. In the second half of the hour, the battle begins again. Note that the battles between the elementals occur around the tower and on every level except the topmost floor (unless the magical device is destroyed).

Tower, Ground Floor

Part of the floor has sunken into the ground making the staircase to lower levels inaccessible. There is nothing of interest here.

Tower, Second Floor

Once a sitting room, the area is now filled with broken furniture. Several old scrolls are found inside an intact glass case. Each tells part of a story of two rival kings, each able to harness the earth or wind.

Their stories describe the life-long battle between their realms and families. The last scroll details how the gods, tired of their incessant battling, trapped the two kings in a perpetual sand timer, to fight their battles in this single location forever.

Tower, Third and Fourth Floors

Both floors are unstable, barely holding together after years of wind and sand damage. Besides a few trinkets, the areas are empty.

Tower, Fifth Floor

The center of the room is filled with a single, magical device. A spinning sand timer with a globe of swirling wind floats in mid air. Each time the sand timer tips over, it starts the elemental battle again.

The outer globe is protected from simple physical or magical disruption, but if the device is struck enough times (50 hp damage) it will explode, destroying the device forever. The explosion causes 10 damage (save for half) to any on the level, and releases the two trapped elementals (sand, wind). They will both try to attack the other and any characters that get involved.

Each elemental swirls with remnants of their past kingly life - precious gemstones and metals are seen swirling in the elemental forms. Once dead, the valuable gems and metals will drop to the floor.

Dropped Treasure: 950 sp, 434 gp, 1d20 rubies, 1d20 emeralds (50 gp each), 1d12 diamonds (100 gp each)

Treasure of Rhahim-el-Nabaz

Adventure Background: A once-deep oasis pool teeming with life has slowly dried up, leaving behind a huge crevice in the desert sands. Caves once created by the swirling water well below the surface are now the homes of several desert denizens who call these areas home.

Legend says that a rich merchant, surrounded by bandits, dumped his vast wealth into the oasis pool. Hundreds of treasure seekers have sought out the legendary treasure, most of whom have met their demise in the caves of the dried chasm. No one has yet claimed to have found the treasure of Rhahim-el-Nabaz.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Easy to Moderate
Number of Characters:	3-5
Adventure Locale:	Chasm (desert)

Adventure Start: Characters will spot the chasm from the peak of a nearby sand dune. An obvious and seemingly well-worn trail spirals into the chasm before reaching the bottom nearly one hundred feet below.

Area 1: Trail

An obvious trail descends into the deep chasm, circling the depression nearly one full time before reaching the bottom. A mixture of tracks, animal and human, are

easily seen on the trail, both heading down into and coming up from the chasm. Fifty feet farther down the trail, you see several shapes piled amidst the dirt and sand.

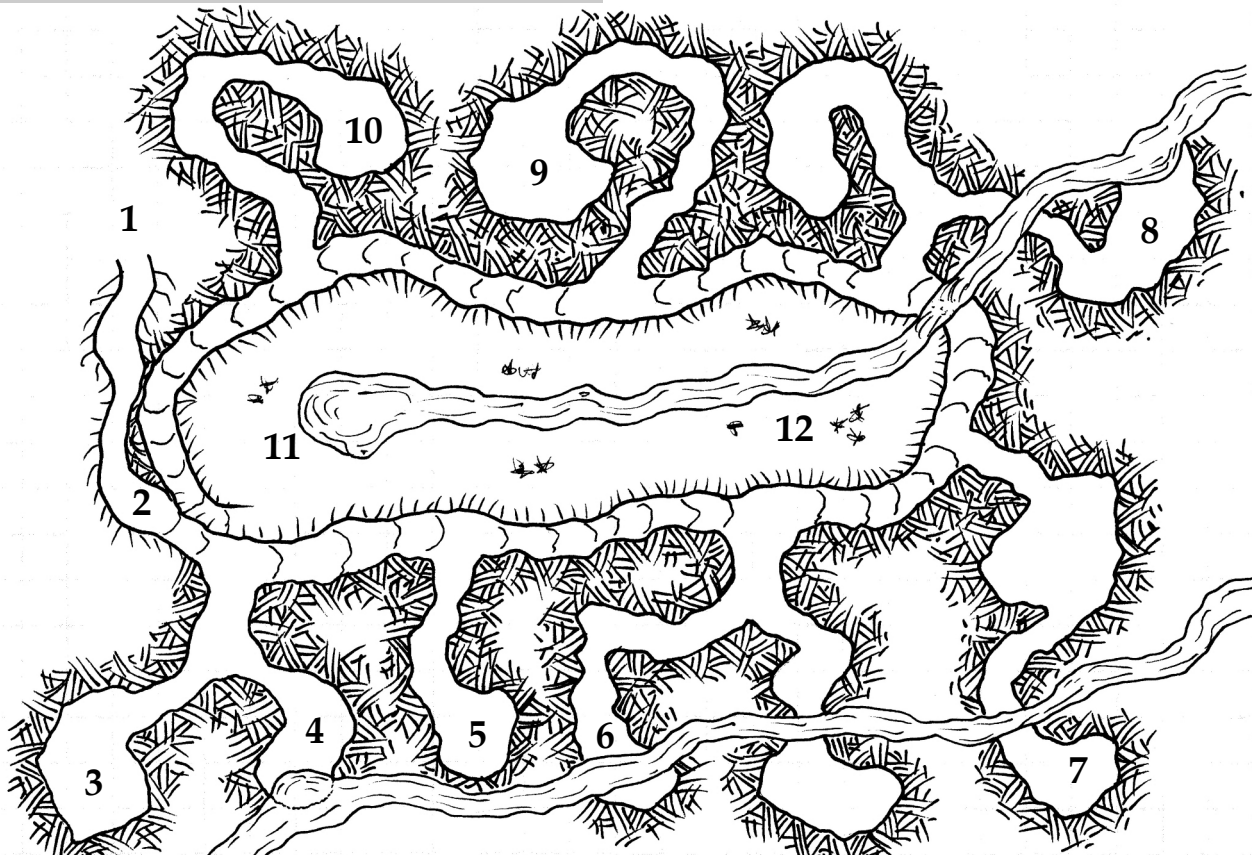
A successful animal or tracking check will reveal many of the types of creatures who live below. Also, it is possible to learn that a large group of humans descended into the chasm a few weeks ago.

Area 2: Dead Treasure Seekers

Six treasure seekers and two camels entered the chasm two weeks ago, searching for the lost treasure of the fabled merchant, Rhahim-el-Nabaz. They encountered the desert scorpions (from area 3) here, with three humans and a camel succumbing to venom. The remaining humans and camel fled further down the trail, one treasure was trapped in area 5 and another farther below.

Rotting camel flesh mixed with human remains is smelled long before being seen. As you approach the pile of carcasses, you see three humans with daggers and scimitars, crumpled against the rock wall, and a heavily burdened but dead camel closer to the trail's inner edge. All have been dead for at least two weeks.

Searching the dead humans will uncover a parchment that details the story of Rhahim-el-Nabaz. Additionally, valuable digging supplies are found on the camel's back. Each dead human carries **5d10 sp**.



Area 3: Den of Scorpions

Twelve desert scorpions, each a foot in length, inhabit the western cave. They enter and exit the cave several times per day and night, and often battle with their neighbors (centipedes) in area 4.

(12) Desert Scorpions, Stats: AC 3 [16], HD 2, HP: 10 each, Attack: 2 Pincers (1d4) and Sting (1 hp + poison), Move 9, Special: Lethal poison sting

Area 4: Centipede Cave

Cavern centipedes can grow up to four feet in length; the six here are no exception. They rarely leave their den, except at night to venture out to the chasm floor to hunt. An underground stream that pools in the back of their cave provides clean, cool water for the creatures.

(6) Large Centipedes, Stats: AC 5 [14], HD 2, HP: 10 each, Attack: Bite (1d8 + poison), Move 15, Special: Lethal poison sting

Area 5: Trapped Treasure Seeker

Approaching the wide cave entrance, you hear a faint moan coming from within. It sounds human.

One of the treasure seekers escaped the scorpion attack, only to fall victim to a cave in this area. The last of his group left him behind, continuing down to the bottom of the chasm.

A battered human in light-colored clothing is pinned under several large boulders. Both of his legs up to his groin are pinned under dozens of rocks. Blood has pooled up under the man's lower half but his eyes remain open, searching the entrance as you approach.

There is little that can be done to save the man at this point; he is mere hours from death. He will ask for water but is resigned to his fate. He will answer basic questions before expiring.

Area 6: Lizard Lair

Colorful little desert lizards cover the floor and walls of this chamber, with many splashing in the stream at the far end. They will swarm any intruders, attacking each character in groups of twenty or more.

Swarm of Desert Lizards, Stats: AC 4 [15], HD 5, HP: 25 total, Attack: Bites (1d2 x 1d4), Move 12, Special: Swarms 1-2 characters at a time

Area 7: Surrounded!

The last camel from the expedition is trapped in this cave, surrounded by a score of colorful desert lizards. Searching for water to drink, the camel was surprised by lizards from area 6. The poor beast will not survive the next few hours having taken dozens of bites already.

The camel is laden with supplies, including a box of silver and gold discovered in a previous expedition (250 sp, 100 gp).

Area 8: Shade or Shadow?

What appears as an empty cave is actually occupied by a pair of Shadows seeking refuge from the burning sun above. The foul creatures are trapped here but lay in wait of those seeking water from the underground pool.

(2) Shadows, Stats: AC 7 [12], HD 2+2, HP: 12 each, Attack: Touch (1d4 + Strength Drain), Move 12, Special: hit only by magical weapons, Strength Drain

Area 9: Buried Treasure

A thorough search of the cave will reveal a hidden treasure, buried by a group of treasure hunters several years ago. Unfortunately, they perished shortly after completing the dig (their skeletons are found within the cave). A single wooden box with two hundred rubies, emeralds, sapphires and diamonds was the only treasure found from Rhahim-el-Nabaz's hoard. The 200 gems are each worth 5 gp.

Area 10: Living Statues, Keykeepers

Rhahim-el-Nabaz also dropped two magical statues into the pool, the guardians of his treasure. Each carried a single key that could be used to open one of the two large treasure chests he had. A key is missing from the key chain around one of the statues, but the other remains. The statues do not animate until the key is touched or moved.

(2) Living Statues, Stats: AC 2 [17], HD 4+1, HP: 21 each, Attack: 2 Strikes (1d6), Move 3, Special: hit only by magical weapons

When the key is successfully removed from the chain, the statues return to a solid, unmoving state.

Area 11: Found Treasure

A half-buried treasure chest sits at the bottom of what remains of the small oasis pool. It is unlocked and empty, having been discovered many years earlier. Some of the contents are found in area 9. The rest has been removed, taken to places unknown.

Area 12: Rhahim-el-Nabaz's Treasure

Buried under years of sand and silt, the second treasure chest of the fabled merchant remains hidden from view. It is opened with the key from area 10.

Treasure: 1,100 sp and 849 gp; a bag of large sapphires (25 gems, each worth 100 gp); a **Dagger +1**; a **Ring of Protection +2**; **Wand of Magic Missiles** (3 charges); a **Cloak of Elvenkind**; and **Bracers of Defense**, AC 3.

Check to Find Chest: 1 in 10 chance

Check To Open Chest: as Thief

Desert Inn of the Nightfeeders

Adventure Background: Vampires have long been in control of the remote desert village of Mohanti, subjugating its citizens for generations. A clan of nine vampires, including their leader Kasnal, live under the village's inn. During the day, they work within the inn, serving food and alcohol to travelers, and at night, they prey upon their customers.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Hard
Number of Characters:	4-6
Adventure Locale:	Village (desert)

Adventure Start: With no other settlements for miles, Mohanti looks as good a stop as any. The characters should arrive during the day, preferably close to night.

Area 1: Mohanti Front Gate

As you near the small village, you notice two distinct features; the area is unnaturally quiet and a large wall surrounds the settlement. An obvious unmanned entrance to the village can be seen, a short wooden gate that stands slightly ajar.

Villagers hide in the homes both day and night, venturing out only to fetch game hung by the well by the vampires, or to pull a few cups of water from the nearly dry cistern. Many of the villagers are vampire thralls, and will not exit their homes during sunlit hours. The few that aren't under the power of the vampires will avoid travelers, keeping their doors locked at all times. Only residents of the homes highlighted on the map (areas 3 and 4) will interact with the villagers.

Area 2: Dry Well

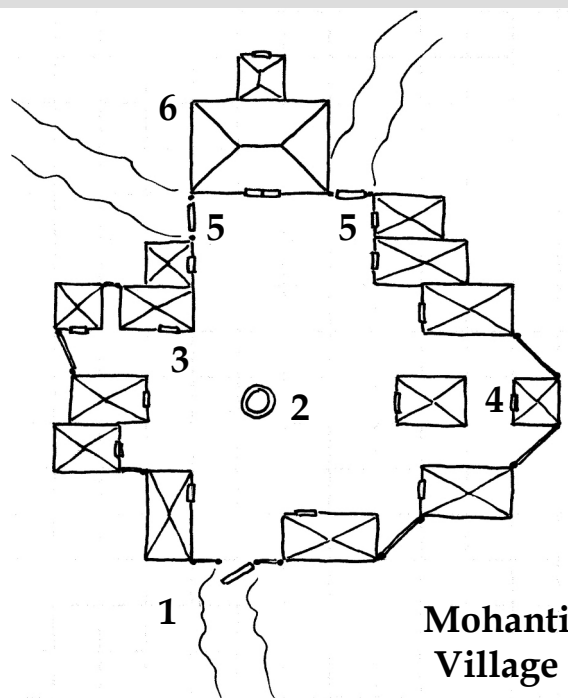
Little rain falls in the area and underground springs below the village are nearly dry. Only a few cups of water are found in the cistern each day.

Six wooden racks surround an old, dusty well. The racks are stained red but are empty.

When they aren't feeding on hapless travelers at the inn, the vampires will hunt the surrounding desert for local game. After drinking the blood of their prey, they will leave the meat on racks by the well for the human villagers. It is rare to spot villagers here during the day, and almost never at night.

Area 3: Home of Gabardo Nazarouf

Passing another boarded up and closed home, you hear a faint whisper from behind a shuttered window. A voice asks, "Help us. Please." The next sound is that of a deadbolt sliding free.



The Nazarouf family is one of only a few left in Mohanti that have children undamaged by the village vampires. Gabardo and his wife, Asaana, have kept the three children hidden from sight. The parents know that it is only a matter of time before the children are discovered; they will give the adventurers their life savings to the group to take the kids from the town (100 sp). Gabardo and Asaana have been recently bitten and are falling under the sway of the vampires. Before they completely turn, they are hoping to save their children from the same fate.

Neither Gabardo or Asaana will admit to being vampire thralls, instead using other excuses such as a lack of food and water, or a fabricated village disease to convince the adventurers to take their children away.

Area 4: Home of Zhaneela the Unclean

This home appears to be ready to fall down at any moment; the walls are leaning inward and the roof seems to consist more of holes than good material. An off-key whistling is heard from within, the melancholy notes drifting out into the village street. A sign over the front door reads, "Zhaneela—Seer of the Unseen".

A human fortune teller, untouched and unwanted by the vampires, lives in this deteriorating home. She is one of the few that roam about the village, both at day and night, unmolested by the evil undead. She has concocted a potion that makes her blood repulsive to the vampires. She provides fortune teller services to any who visit her, but will not divulge the true identities of the innkeeper and his staff unless paid handsomely for information (at least 100 gp). Zhaneela will likely flee the village once the adventurers pay her for exposing the truth.

Area 5: Rear Village Gates

Each of the gates in the rear of the village are magically locked and trapped, opened with keys held by Kasnal, his wife Jaznasu, and the inn's bartender, Orgg. Any attempt to unlock the gates without the keys from either side causes a shock bolt to strike a nearby person.

Magical Gate Lock Check: as Thief or 1 in 20 chance

Magical Gate Trap Check: as Thief

Shock Bolt Damage: 2d4 damage

Area 6: Mohanti Desert Oasis Inn

The two-story wooden structure at the north end of the village appears severely wind damaged; any paint that might have been on the building is long gone and the bare wood now visible is sand-pocked and stripped. A sign over the double doors swings in the wind and reads, "Desert Oasis Inn – All are Welcome!" You hear muted conversation from within.

Entering the inn at night reveals a gory scene; the vampires will be either feeding on a merchant who has stopped for the night, or several desert creatures, captured by the hunting vampires. The vampires will immediately attack any who enter the inn after sunset.

Arrival during the day finds the vampires, dressed as common desert dwellers, sitting around the inn, acting civilized and welcoming. The owner of the inn, Kasnal, will be excited to greet guests, bringing them to an open table and calling for his wife, Jaznasu to bring wine to the tired travelers. During the day, six vampires will play as commoners or travelers, chatting with the group, as the other three (Kasnal, Jaznasu, and Orgg) serve food and drink to all. The vampires will size up the group, planning their evening attack.

Area A: Inn Common Room

Three large tables and a dozen chairs fill the center of the room. A bar is opposite the front doors, and separates the common room from the kitchen entry. Stairs on either side lead up to the second floor while stairs underneath these descend to the cellar below. At night, the room doubles as a sleeping area for travelers, free of charge. Two large fireplaces on the south wall provide heat at night.

Area B: Bar

Orgg serves several beers, ales and meads from his bar. His rates are quite reasonable and he often gives out "samples" for free. A lockbox behind the bar holds 50 sp and 10 gp.

Area C: Kitchen

Villagers work in the kitchen, spared from mutilation or death by providing free labor to the vampires. They prepare all manner of desert fare. They will not attack their masters, nor will they help the adventurers in any way.

Area D: Private Room, Second Floor

The inn has a single private room on the second floor, with four beds and a wardrobe. Kasnal will rent the room for 10 sp per night. He will give the adventures a key to the door, but keeps a second copy for himself.

Area E: Cellar

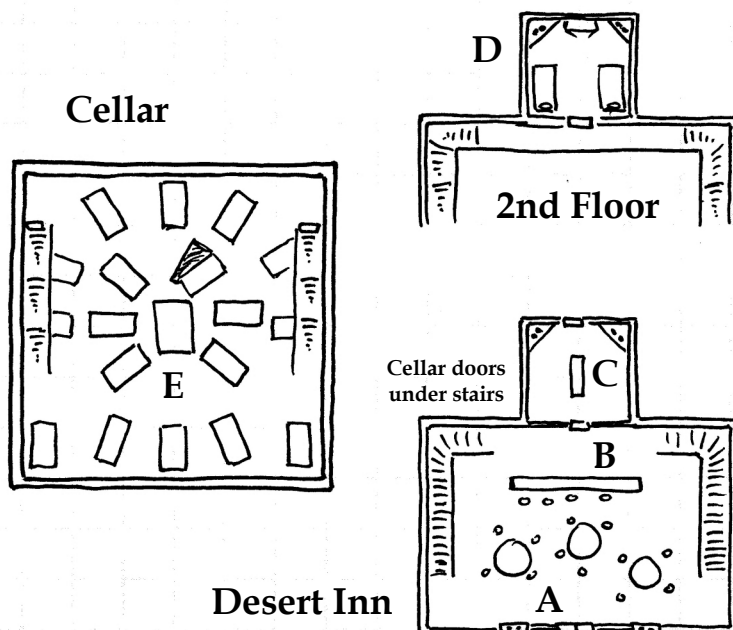
Two locked doors lead to the large cellar under the inn [each vampire has a key]. Eighteen coffins circle the center of the room, with a large, black coffin within the middle. Kasnal and Jaznasu rest in the central coffin, and the rest of his clan use other coffins nearby.

At night, the vampires will attack the adventurers where they sleep, either in the common or private room. Kasnal and Jaznasu will allow the other seven vampires to attack first, only joining in the fray to support the clan.

(6) Vampires, Stats: AC 2 [17], HD 7, HP: 35 each, Attack: Bite (1d10 + Level Drain), Move 12/18 (flying), Special: Hypnotic Gaze, Summon Wolves. Level Drain
Orgg and Jaznasu, Stats: as above except HD 8 and 40 hp each.

Kasnal, Stats: as above except HD 9 and 45 hp.

The vampires have accumulated a small hoard of wealth from their victims; a spare coffin in the room holds several bags of coins (865 sp, 244 gp), gems (250 assorted gems, each worth 10 gp), jewelry (three dozen rings, necklaces and bracelets, each worth d100 gp), and a box of **magical potions** (five healing and one invisibility).



Oasis of the Sunken Goddess

Adventure Background: A semi-intelligent group of plants protect an ancient shrine to a forgotten goddess of nature who once cared for the plants in the tiny oasis where they still live. Animated cacti, creeping vines and poisonous leafy plants guard their water source and the surrounding fauna as if their goddess still commanded their duty.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Easy
Number of Characters:	2-4
Adventure Locale:	Sand Dunes (desert)

Adventure Start: The characters will see the small oasis in the distance, likely making their way to the location for desperately needed water and fruit.

As the distantly-spotted area grows larger upon your approach, you are relatively sure that this oasis is real. Tall trees bend over what looks to be a small pool. Plants surround the water, crowding the resource as if to claim it for their own. You see no other living creatures at or near the oasis.

Plant creatures rarely move too far from the oasis as they lose energy quickly without being close to water. They will observe the adventurers' approach but will not engage until the group enters the oasis.

Flowery cacti will be the first to act, firing their needles at the characters from a distance. The cacti can move, if necessary, but naturally launch their needles at moving targets until they get within touch range.

Suddenly, from the cover of palm trees and green foliage, strange cacti *move* into the open and toward your direction! Flashes of silvery projectiles pass your face as you search for cover. Are they firing their needles at you?

(10) Animated Cacti, Stats: AC 9 [10], HD 1-1, HP: 4 each, Attack: Shoot Needles (1 hp) or Strike (1d4), Move 3, Special: none

While the adventurers are engaged with the cacti or seeking cover from their dangerous needles, **creeping vines** from under the fauna will attempt to grapple the legs of their foes, entangling and binding their limbs. The vines will try to subdue characters, allowing other plant creatures to move in for their attacks.

You feel a tug at your leg as a vine slowly circles your boot, inching upwards. The vines are trying to grab you!

(20) Creeping Vines, Stats: AC 9 [10], HD 1/2, HP: 3 each, Attack: Strike (1 hp), Move 3, Special: Grapple (grab victim to restrain arms and legs, grapple attack gains +3 to-hit after successful strike)

Small, mysterious plants shift about the surface of the ground, seeking exposed flesh to touch. **Poisonous leafy plants** are able to move along the ground to reach fallen or unaware characters, hoping for a surprise attack. Their leaves are poisonous to the touch, causing long slumbers for even the heartiest of men.

A swarm of broad-leafed plants shuffle along the ground, batting their wide limbs at your legs and arms...

(30) Poisonous Leafy Plants, Stats: AC 9 [10], HD 1/2, HP: 3 each, Attack: Strike (1 hp + poison), Move 3, Special: victim must save versus poison or fall to sleep for 1d4 rounds.

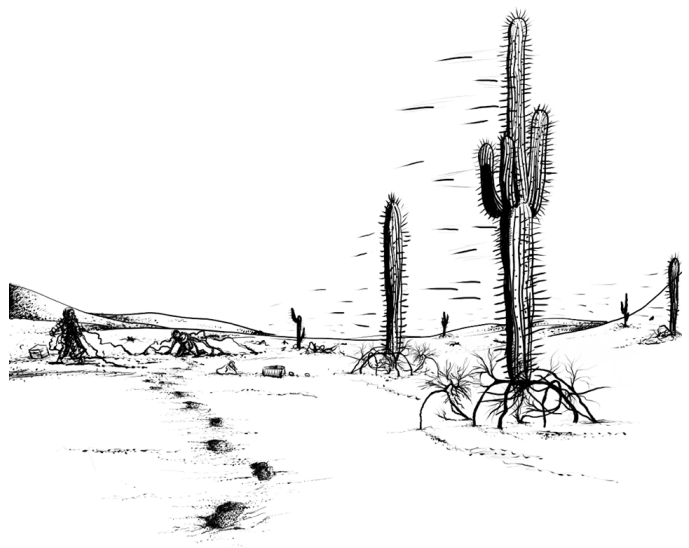
The plants work together to drive foes away from their precious water source and the shrine found under the surface of the pool. None of the plants will stop their attacks, regardless of how many are destroyed.

Oasis Pool and Shrine

A gem encrusted shrine is found under the water; hundreds (5d100) of rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and diamonds cover the 1,000 pound marble statue of a beautiful, forgotten goddess. Each gem is worth between 5 and 10 gp.

The water within the pool is clean and very refreshing, doubling the natural healing process during long rests. Water from the pool also instantly awakens those under the sleep affects from the poisonous leafy plants.

New plants will grow at a rate of one per day.



Pit of the Many-Legged Princess

Adventure Background: An ageless primordial ooze is worshipped far below the surface by multigenerational offspring. The chameleon ooze is treated as a princess, her many eyes and tentacles seen as a wondrous beauty to her followers. She craves the flesh of top-dwelling humanoids and has struck a deal with caravans and villages in the area; she will keep her minion oozes in check if the merchants and villagers bring her humans, elves, and halflings each new moon of the month. They are staked at the top of her pit for her minions to fetch a few days before her lunar cycle sacrifice.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Hard
Number of Characters:	4-6
Adventure Locale:	Pit (desert)

Adventure Start: The characters either come across the next set of sacrifices, tied to their posts near the pit's entrance, or have talked to a repenting kidnapper, eager to rid himself of his heinous duty. They find themselves at the pit's edge, staring down into a deep hole.

The oval-shaped pit mouth is nearly twenty feet across at its widest point, with jagged rocks and debris bunched up along its edges. Several stakes are planted around the opening, each with a dozen bloody ropes restraining a single exhausted yet terrified commoner. The sun has worn out the poor prisoners, their strength sapped and their wills broken.

Pit Entrance

Most prisoners have no idea why they were kidnapped and left here. There is a 1 in 10 chance that one may know the reason for their capture and what they await below.

The smaller sand ooze minions will emerge from the pit at dusk to drag the prisoners down to the sacrifice. A dozen of the two foot creatures will slide out of the pit's mouth to gather up the meal for their princess. They will engage the characters fiercely, using their sand burrowing ability to gain surprise attacks. If there are any elves or halflings in the group, the minions will target them first (their princess craves the fairer races). The minions will ignore dwarves, gnomes, and half-orcs.

(12) Sand Ooze Minions, statistics: AC 8 [11], HD 3, HP: 15 each, Attack: Acid-laden Strike (2d4 + stun), Move 3, Special: immune to blunt weapons and cold; stunning tendrils; burrow.

Each minion refrains from killing characters, instead overwhelming them with their stunning tendrils, and dragging them down into the pit for their princess.

The pit is over 100' deep, descending down into the cold and lightless cavern below. The walls are jagged and rough, making a climb possible (but still hard).

Climb Check, each 20': as Thief or Dexterity -4

Sleeping Holes

Ten sleeping holes for sand ooze minions are found along the descent. Each hole will usually be filled with three to five oozes at any time of the day, except for when the Princess has begun her sacrificial event below. Each sleeping hole is roughly 8-10' tall and 5' wide. Most holes are 10-20 feet deep.

Altar-bed of the Princess

The Many-legged Princess lounges upon her flat altar, spending nearly twenty hours per day sleeping to conserve energy until her next feeding. As it nears the new moon, she spends more time awake, agitated and hungry. She occasionally feeds on smaller, disfigured sand oozes the few days before the prisoners arrive. A slow-moving, underground stream surrounds the altar, filling the entire bottom of the cavern.

She is nearly flat, with dozens of eyes of different sizes on her top, outermost shell. She coils hundreds of varying length tentacles under her when she rests, but brings forth both long and short tendrils when she fights, eats or moves. She uses her tentacles to whip attack and grapple foes. She tries to incapacitate her victims with several tentacles, pulling them under her to be slowly dissolved by her digestive juices. She can also squirt her digestive liquids up to 20'.

The Many-legged Princess, statistics: AC -2 [21], HD 12, HP: 70, Attack: 4 Strikes (1d4 hp, grab) or Squirt digestive juices (1d6+1), Move 3, Special: immune to non-magical weapons and cold; 2 successful attacks grapples victim (pulls under her for 2d6+2 damage)

The New Moon Sacrifice

The ooze princess will receive her prisoners on the altar-bed, grasping each firmly with three to four tentacles. She will take each victim and dunk them into the clear water stream flowing around her bed, careful not to drown them, preferring to keep them alive for feeding. She will dip them into the pool a number of times, until she feels they are clean enough for eating.

Once clean, she tucks the victim under her wide frame, allowing her digestive juices to melt them down to a jelly-like goo. Victims are often alive for several long minutes while their skin, muscles, fat and bones break down into mush. She can slowly desiccate multiple victims while she prepares the next for eating. She cannot break down steel or hardened leather.

The ooze princess can use her tentacles to move her from the altar-bed to the side walls of the pit, which she can ascend with ease. If she feels she cannot defeat the characters, she will either exit the pit above, or preferably, slide into the stream to exit the cavern.

Dozens of steel weapons, shields and armor are found littered across the wide altar-bed. Additionally, several small pouches and backpacks can be found on the sacrificial platform and in the water around it.

Notable Treasure: 10d100 sp, 5d100 gp, 1d2 x 1d4 magical items, 4d12 normal items, d100 arrows/bolts

The Starlit Arena of the Dead

Adventure Background: Wakana-Tal is a small settlement found in a desolate stretch of dry plain. A popular caravan route passes through the village, not because of its great location or numerous resources, but because of its unusual entertainment. Each moonless and clear night, just as the sun sinks down beyond the horizon, a strange occurrence befalls the village. Dead warriors shamble out of the depths of an ancient tomb, seeking vengeance on the living. What should have terrified most villagers, scattering them into the desert and beyond, instead created an economic opportunity. The villagers have erected a circular picket wall around the tomb opening and use the small area as an arena for gladiatorial fights. Caravan guards, adventurous travelers, and young villagers test their strength and wits in combat with the undead, all while spectators take bets. Large sums of money trade hands each night, making many of the townsfolk wealthy. Unfortunately, many of the brave heroes fall to the undead warriors, and are dragged into the tomb by the undying victors for unknown purposes. It is said that some of the fallen return to battle again, shuffling to the surface to face their next foe...

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Easy
Number of Characters:	1 or more
Adventure Locale:	Village (desert)

Adventure Start: The characters arrive in the village of Wakana-Tal and find it strangely busy, upbeat, and prosperous.

Wakana-Tal

The village has over thirty small homes, nestled close to each other to block out wind and sand storms. Two large buildings are found in the village center; the Temple of the Sun and the Starlit Inn and Tavern. Several small shops are found at the edge of the village square, offering typical wares and services.

Townsfolk are friendly and somewhat trusting, welcoming visitors as they enter. They are quick to point newcomers to the Starlit Inn and Tavern and will call out to muscled and burly adventurers, referring them to Grussle the Betmaker, who sits out front of the Inn. If the characters ask for further information, townsfolk will comfortably mention the coming night's fights. Each villager will divulge the truth about the arena and its undead combatants. It's not a secret but more of a prideful industry of their small town.

Starlit Inn and Tavern

The two-story structure has a large common room, bar, seating for thirty, and six double private rooms. Hraan Jarksus runs the inn and is a welcoming, jovial fellow. Impossibly slender but full of energy, Hraan quickly spots warrior types and excitedly makes conversation, almost ignoring other archetypes. Barmaids serve alcohol and food quickly to patrons, delivering large portions at inexpensive rates.

Grussle the Betmaker sits out front of the establishment, looking for new talent for the evening games. He will approach combat-worthy characters, quickly offering a way for them to make easy coin. He will offer **10 gp** to any character that wants to battle in the town arena that night. He will fully disclose the battle and possible opponents. If any of the characters agree, Grussle will set the match up, posting the details on the inn door for the townsfolk to see. Characters signed up for battle become instant celebrities in town.

Temple of the Sun

The large church stands opposite the Starlit Inn and Tavern, and provides services an hour before sunset each day. Father Durgnan has long ago stopped protesting the unholy battles in the nearby arena, instead focusing on turning visiting combatants away from the village. He halfheartedly tries to persuade characters from taking up arms against the dead, asking them to refuse to fight. Regardless of their choice, he offers prayer services before the battle and healing to any injured afterwards.

Starlit Arena

Not a soul in Wakana-Tal knows why the dead emerge from their underground tomb, but they have seen the event for as long as most can remember. Two stone doors are set in a large rock in the center of the walled arena. Several rows of benches circle the outer wall, providing spectators comfortable seating for the matches. Grussle the Betmaker sits in a reserved spot, taking bets from spectators and paying winners after each match. Bets are 2 sp per match, paying 3 sp to those who correctly pick the victor of each battle.

No one can predict how many undead will emerge each battle. Between one and three undead warriors will exit the doors, instantly searching for the living. The high walls prevent their escape from the stockade. They will remain shambling about the arena until they've defeated all foes or the sun rises. If the undead warrior falls to the living, another (or group) emerges an hour later. At the end of the night, just before the sun rises, the dead collect the remains of their fallen brothers and any of the living killed in battle, and return to the depths. The doors don't open again until the next moonless and clear night.

Dead Gladiators—roll 1d10

Roll	Undead Foe	Treasure
1-2	1 Skeleton	None
3-4	1 Zombie	None
5-6	2 Skeletons	None
7-8	2 Zombies	None
9	3 Skeletons	1 non magical, valuable item
10	3 Zombies	1 magical item

Characters can loot the dead corpses as part of their victory agreement (includes valuable and magical items, if present). Note that no one has ever tried to descend into the underground tomb, fearful for the great number of dead warriors within. Father Durgnan has tried to get the doors sealed but cannot gain the support of the town. There is undoubtedly a grand adventure behind those double doors...

Caravan of Shadows

Adventure Background: It is not uncommon to encounter caravans along established desert routes. Merchants travel to and from villages, trading goods and delivering much needed supplies and services. Not all caravans have the best intentions, however, instead masquerading their appearance as simple merchants to hide a darker purpose. One such caravan crosses the desert, making their way to an evil shrine with bound sacrifices. Cultists disguised as merchants have camped for the evening when the characters arrive.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Easy to Moderate
Number of Characters:	3-6
Adventure Locale:	(any) Desert

Adventure Start: As the sun dips in the west, the adventurers come across a caravan, encamped for the evening. Caravan guards stop the adventurers while one fetches the caravan's leader.

Caravan Encampment

Six wagons have been circled around a large campfire, where several caravan merchants prepare their evening meal. Half a dozen guards are stationed around the wagon's perimeter (see areas 5, and three guard tents). The caravan leader, Jhem Anfal Khaleen appears welcoming and willing to share the warmth of their fire and wine from their casks. He will introduce the two other merchants who sit nearby; Dronn Borga is the caravan's blacksmith and Falena Faenalla is the group's fortune teller. Both will appear uninterested in the adventurers and will not willingly start conversations or offer their services. After a short meal, the blacksmith and fortune teller retire to their wagons. Jhem Anfal Khaleen will allow the characters to camp within the wagon circle near the warmth of the fire.

Jhem Anfal Khaleen will consider ambushing and kidnapping the group in the middle of the night if he feels they are easy targets. If successful, he'll strip them of their gear and add them to the other sacrifices in wagon #4.

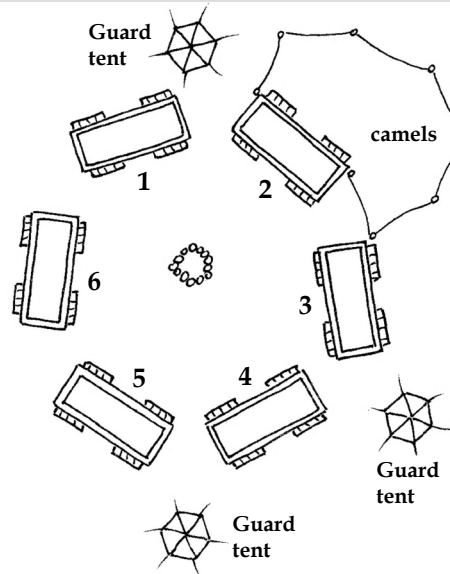
Wagon 1: Blacksmith

Dronn Borga's wagon contains a small area for his personal effects and holds several blacksmith supplies and tools. If one or more of the characters asks for services or to see what Dronn has for sale, he will politely refuse stating that he's too tired. He avoids inquiries to his abilities or profession, and wishes to be left alone.

The blacksmith wagon contains a small anvil, several blacksmith tools, three daggers, a long sword, and a steel helm. Additionally, he has two bags of raw materials for crafting items.

Wagon 2: Supply Wagon

Jhem Anfal Khaleen doubles as the supply merchant for the caravan. His wagon has all manner of supplies which he sells



or trades when the caravan reaches a settlement. He will be open to trading or selling a few items but claims much of the supplies are to be delivered to a nearby village on the next day. Bags of bread and dried meat, casks of wine and barrels of beer are piled high in the wagon. Other common supplies such as rope, torches, leather bags, bolts of cloth, and a few simple tools are also scattered amongst the wagon.

Wagon 3: The Mystical Falena

The fortune teller will try to avoid giving readings but if persuaded (with 10 or more gp), she will pretend to use her "gifts" to tell the character's futures, or assist in their current quest. Savvy characters will realize that Falena is a fake. If discovered, she may raise an alarm, calling the caravan guards for assistance. Jhem Anfal Khaleen may use this event to try to capture the group.

Wagon 4: Unmarked Wagon

Sealed and locked, this wagon has no obvious purpose. Any who sneak into the wagon will find a few supplies in front of a locked cage of four bound and gagged commoners. If freed, the near hysterical commoners will tell of their capture and their upcoming sacrifice to an evil god. They have heard the ramblings of the cultists and their journey to the distant temple. The chance that the panicked commoners attract the guard's attention (from nearby guard tents) is 25% per commoner freed.

Lock Checks, (door and cage): as Thief or 1 in 20

Wagon 5: Guard Wagon

Three guards will be in this wagon at night while the remaining three patrol the exterior of the wagon circle. They will rest here until Jhem Anfal Khaleen calls them into capturing the group or morning comes.

(9) Caravan Guards (cultists), stats: AC 7 [12], HD 2, HP: 10 each, Attack: Weapon (1d6 or 1d8), Move 12, Special: none

Wagon 6: Passenger Wagon

A comfortable wagon with seating for four passengers is empty. Many who have traveled using the passenger service of this caravan have never reached their destination, instead ending up as sacrifices to the cultist's evil god.

Guard Tents

Each tent is used by a single guard for shelter during night duty. The guards in these tents watch over Wagon #4 and the camels, respectively.

Mesa Temple of Atha'al

Adventure Background: Centuries ago, the priests of the forgotten god Atha'al hid away their most powerful artifacts, storing them in well protected and remote locations. Each high priest chose a location far from the others, ensuring that all the artifacts would be hard to collect by treasure seekers long after they passed into the next world. One such location is found in a remote wasteland, high atop a desert mesa. One of the four set pieces of the high priest of Atha'al is found within the lost temple at its top.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Moderate to Hard
Number of Characters:	4-6
Adventure Locale:	Mesa (desert)

Adventure Start: A faint desert trail leads to a single, flat topped mountain in the distance. Winding through sand dunes and desert scrub, the old trail eventually ends at the base of the strange crag.

There is no doubt, the trail ends here. Thousands of storms have piled up sand at the edge of the base, but not high enough to reach the peak of the short mountain.

The flat top of the mountain is over two hundred feet above the desert floor. One hundred handholds have been etched out of the side of the mountain, providing characters with a straight yet difficult climb to the top. A thorough search of the area at the end of the trail will produce several human skeletons, each with dozens of broken bones. Many poor souls have either fallen from their climb, plummeting to their death below, or have been thrown from its top.

(10) Climb Checks, each 20': as Thief or Dexterity -4

Area 1: Mesa Entrance

The stone ladder ends at the edge of a wide mesa. Over a hundred feet away from the cliff's edge, a single crumbling structure stands in the middle of the area. Six tall pillars hold up a rounded roof that covers a single object in the center of the structure. Other structures on the flat mountaintop once stood ages ago, their location marked by piles of marble or half-pillars standing crookedly in several places.

A dozen statues are scattered through the mesa's flat surface. The area is barren, with only a few scrub bushes and withered trees barely surviving the harsh climate atop the mesa.

Each statue was created in the likeness of a former acolyte-warrior of Atha'al. Each marble sculpture has seemed to ignore the weather; the details of each statue look as if they were chiseled recently. Any time a character moves within 20' of a statue, it animates, its stone form turning to flesh. Once transformed, the animated sculpture attacks characters, attempting to incapacitate them with their paralyzing touch. Once paralyzed, the statue will try to throw the character from the top of the mesa. Once "killed", the statues will reform as a stone sculpture in their original starting place. They will be able to reanimate after a full day's sun.

Animated Statues, Stats: AC 2 [17], HD 8, HP: 50 each, Attack: Punch (2d6 + paralysis), Move 6, Special: Paralyzing Punch (failed save paralyzes victim)

Area 2: False Temple

In the center of the solitary building, a large glass dome covers an empty pedestal. When any character steps within 5' of the glass dome, it magically rises up to allow access to the marble stand. Unfortunately, the ancient scroll that once sat upon the pedestal has long since vanished. Characters that examine the underside of the roof will find writing in a long forgotten language; a successful History or Language check will reveal that the scrolls contents were also inscribed in the roof in case the scroll was lost or destroyed.

Read Language/History Check:

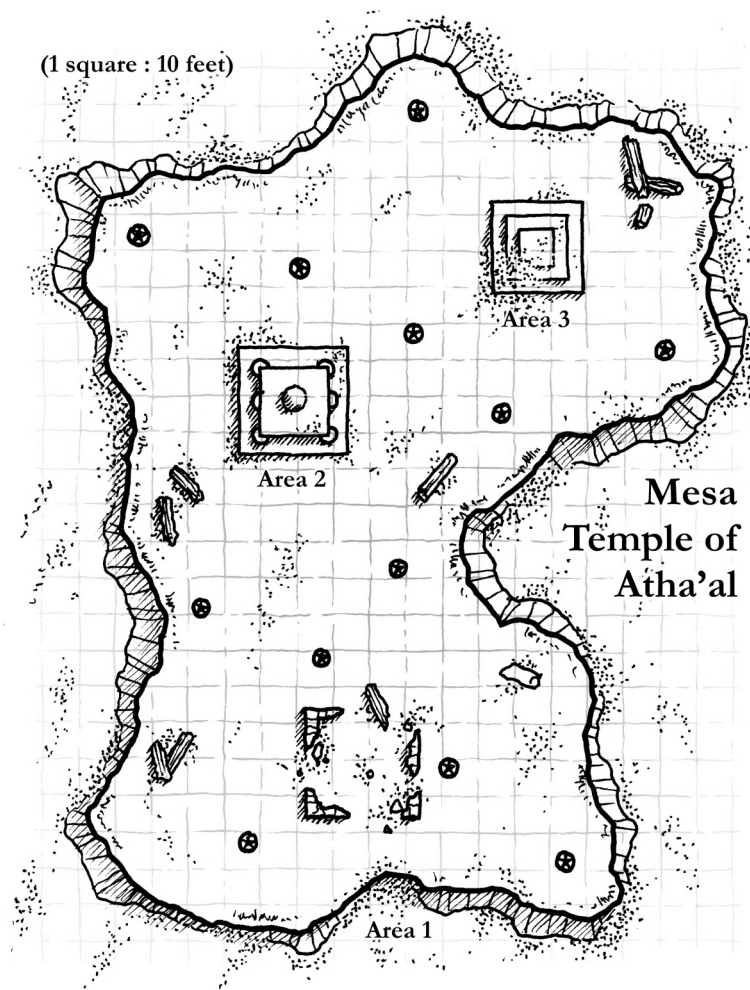
Sixth Scroll of Atha'al: *"The all-powerful and one true god, Atha'al, preserves us and keeps us safe. We, in turn, safeguard his priestly robe, the Mantle of Atha'al. It remains hidden and safe within his desert temple, visible only to those worthy enough of his double vision. To those unworthy, leave or be burned to ash."*

After each sentence there is an eye symbol, each drawn in a different state. The table below provide the order and description of each eye symbol.

Eye Symbols		
Order	Sentence	Eye State
1	After first	Closed eye
2	After second	Heavy lidded eye (as if just awakened)
3	After third	Squinting eye (as if searching)
4	After fourth	Fully open eye (as if angry or aware)

Table 1

Find Eyes on Pillar Check: roll under Intelligence -4



A careful search of the pillars will reveal that the outer four each have one of the eyes. Touching the pillars will emblazon the symbol on the roof. If touched in the correct order (1-4), the true temple of Atha'al will rise from the mesa plain (area 3 on the map). If four pillars are touched out of order, a lightning bolt from each outer pillar strikes one random living being within the false temple. The symbols on the roof dim after a lightning strike.

Lightning Damage: 1d8 x 4 (four pillars) each target

Area 3: True Temple of Atha'al

When the correct sequence is initiated, a three-tiered pyramid begins to push through the sands, revealing a thirty-foot marble structure. A black sleeveless robe floats magically above the top of pyramid, suspended three feet from the highest point. It is lined with glowing, white thread. Any neutral (or mostly neutral) character that tries to remove the mantle from its suspended state will release a fire elemental near the pyramid. Each subsequent fire elemental gets stronger (higher challenge rating). Only a non-neutral character can remove the cloak and stop the fire elemental attacks.

Fire Elementals, Stats: AC 2 [17], HD 10, HP: 50 each, Attack: Strike (3d8), Move 12, Special: Ignite materials, immune to non-magic weapons, immune to fire damage

Each subsequent elemental, bonuses: add 1 HD and 5 hit points to each subsequent fire elemental that is released.

A secret compartment under the mantle holds a locked and trapped golden box, filled with 100 diamonds (valued at 100 gp ea) and 100 opals (valued at 50 gp each). The box itself is worth 250 gp.

Find Secret Compartment Check: 1 in 10

Open Lock Check: as Thief or 1 in 20

Find/Remove Trap Check: as Thief

If the trap is not found or removed successfully, any within 50' radius (centered on the box location) are immediately scorched by intense sunlight. Dozens of beams of light burst from the sky, targeting each living creature in the area of effect.

Sunfire Damage: 1d10+1 per target

Each character or creature affected by the divine Sunfire must roll on the table below for additional effects.

Sunfire Effects – roll 1d10	
Roll Result	Effects
1	Double Sunfire damage (as above)
2	Blinded for 1d6+1 hours
3	Limb paralysis for 1d4+1 hours
4	Memory loss of last 4d6 hours
5	No additional effect
6	Roll again, ignore results 5 and 6
7	Raised orange lines under skin (perm)
8	One weapon or item imbued with fire
9	Blessed* for the next 4d6 hours
10	Fully healed of all physical damage
* minor benefit in whatever system is being used	

Table 2

The Mantle of Atha'al

The magical mantle has the defensive bonus of plate mail and is completely weightless. The wearer may also choose to prevent one foe each day from attacking them. The foe will not be able to target the wearer of the mantle (but still can affect the wearer with indirect attacks).

Note that this adventure is the second part of a four-part "Temple of Atha'al" series, started in the Forest Excursions series (*Excursions Adventure #17*).

The Buried Tomb of El'Ghaaz

Adventure Background: Great kings and pharaohs of old were buried with wondrous splendor, their tombs often filled to the brim with vast treasure. However, not every historical figure was placed in a massive tomb upon their death. Advisors to powerful leaders sometimes had a place among royalty and were given small, private tombs of their own. Once such counselor was El'Ghaaz, known by many as "The Ear of the King." His tomb was built away from the leaders he consulted and eventually buried under decades of sand.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Hard
Number of Characters:	2–4
Adventure Locale:	Desert

Adventure Start: A recent sandstorm has revealed the upper half of two brass doors set into stone structure.

Your eyes detect a glimmer in the distance, as the sun reflects off of something metallic and shiny.

Tomb Entrance

The two doors are clearly identifiable upon approach. They are half buried under sand but are easily cleared after an hour of digging by at least two characters.

Each door has a single image engraved in its exterior – a raised, one foot long human ear in the middle of each door is visible upon close inspection. Although they look to be part of the door, both ears have removable brass plugs in the ear holes. If both plugs are removed, the doors unlock.

Door Unlock Check: as Thief or 1 in 20

Area 1: Tomb Inner Entrance

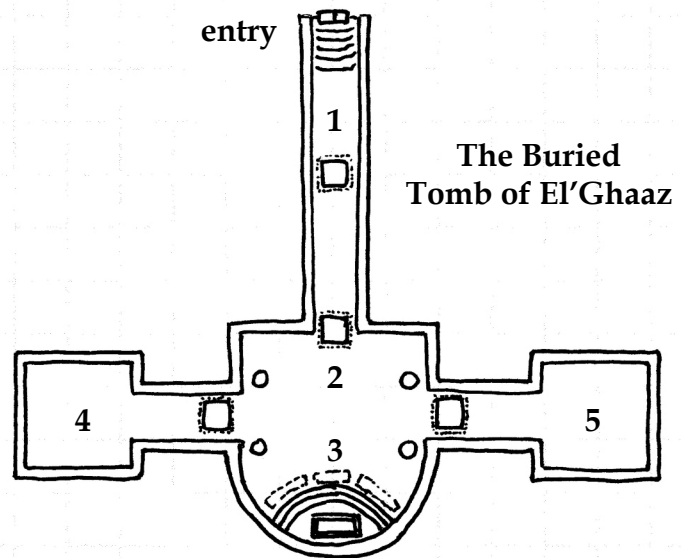
Steep yet well-constructed stairs lower the characters beneath the surface of the desert. A long hallway follows the short stair, extending due south into darkness.

A floor trap midway through the ancient tunnel rings a gong deep within the tomb and begins filling the chamber with deadly gas. Once the trap has been activated, characters must make a poison saving throw every 30 minutes or fall into a deep sleep. If the sleeping character remains in the tomb for more than 12 hours, they never awaken.

Poison Gas Trap Check: as Thief

Poison Gas Saving Throw: save Death Ray / Poison

The gong awakens the decaying zombies in areas 4 and 5. They will begin seeking the living within five turns of the single gong ring.



Area 2: Tomb of El'Ghaaz

A wide floor trap across the north end of the main tomb area activates the five-foot-square tiles, turning the entire floor into a trap. Five retractable spears in each tile jab out whenever weight is placed upon the small section of floor.

Spear Trap Check: as Thief

Spear Attack, Damage: 1d4 per spear (5)

Two marble statues of ancient warriors guard each entrance in the east and west walls. A white sarcophagus sits upon a dais at the other end of room.

Area 3: Sarcophagus of El'Ghaaz

Activating the traps in the floor surrounding the dais at the south end of the room animate the four marble statues. They will try to prevent anyone from escaping.

(4) Animated Statues, stats: AC 2 [17], HD 10, HP: 60 each, Attack: Strike (3d4), Move 6, Special: immune to non-magic weapons and fire

The lidless sarcophagus is filled to the top with silver and gold coins, goblets, and simple jewelry. There are **8500 sp**, **2250 gp**, and another 10,000 gp worth of valuable items in the coffin. Additionally, the partial remains of El'Ghaaz are found within the treasure pile. He still clutches his prized possession, a **Rod of Influence** [bonus to Influence/Persuasion checks, doubles length of *Charm*, *Sleep* or control type spells].

Areas 4 and 5: Attendants

10 decaying zombies are in each room, awaiting the call to protect their former master, El'Ghaaz. A floor trap (similar to that in area 1) is near each room's entrance.

(10) Decaying Zombies, stats: AC 8 [11], HD 2, HP: 10 each, Attack: Strike (1d8), Move 6, Special: immune to sleep and charm spells

Ghost Ship in the Wadi

Adventure Background: A narrow channel between rolling desert dunes was once an overflow outlet from a great river long since disappeared. A small merchant ship, lost upon the fast-moving river during a particularly harsh rainy season, took a wrong turn and navigated through the outlet until it ran aground at the wadi's natural end. The merchant ship was carrying a great treasure - an artifact made of solid gold. Sworn to defend the treasure with their lives, the soldiers stayed with the ship while the merchants and sailors left to find help. A rescue team never arrived and the soldiers died of starvation and thirst.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Moderate to Hard
Number of Characters:	4-6
Adventure Locale:	(dry river bed) Desert

Adventure Start: Characters will either hear of the great ship stuck in the desert dunes or happen upon it in their travels.

At first, you think your eyes are playing tricks on you, as often occurs within the heated desert, but you are almost sure that the masts of a great ship loom up ahead. A ship in the desert?

When the characters reach the top of the nearest sand dune, they can see that an old ship has been partially buried in a narrow channel between the sandy ridges. The moderately deep crevice has protected the ship from years of sand and heat, but it is still showing its age. Boards from the hull have pulled free of the ship, exposing the interior in several places, and the deck and bulwarks appear rotted and brittle. Small fragments of the ship's yellowed sails hang limply from splintered masts.

If the characters approach the ship from the side or front, they will see a plain figurehead above the forepeak. Carved in the shape of a woman blowing a kiss, the large figurehead is actually a **Desert Siren** and the great artifact the soldiers were protecting long ago.

Desert Siren (artifact creature), stats: AC 0 [19], HD 4, HP: 20, Attack: Siren Song (failed save "paralyzes" victim for 1d4 rounds), Move 0, Special: Desert Siren's Song: If passed three times, a character is immune to the song for 24 hours.

When the characters are within sight, the siren will begin its melancholy tune, captivating weaker-willed adventurers with the sorrowful notes. Characters failing to avoid the magical music will be brought to tears, unable to move and will lose much of their will to live. The Siren's song leaves unmoving lips, making it hard for adventurers to initially pinpoint the music's origin. Her eyes will glow a bright red as she sings her sad tune.

Siren Song Check: save versus Spells and Staffs

Within three rounds of the Siren's song initial note, twenty **Skeletal Soldiers** will rise on the deck and from within the hull and pour out onto the sands in search of foes. They will target saddened characters first, cutting them down with rusty scimitars and broken rapiers. Each skeletal soldier wears fragments of chain mail armor and shredded silken garments.

(20) Skeletal Soldiers, stats: AC 8 [11], HD 1, HP: 5 each, Attack: Strike (1d6), Move 6, Special: immune to sleep and charm spells

The desert siren continues her song until all characters are charmed, no characters are within her view, or her eyes are covered. If the figurehead's exterior is closely examined, it will be noticed that it is covered in a thick layer of sand and dust. After scraping the desert materials off the artifact, the characters will find its golden exterior. The figurehead weighs nearly 1000 pounds and is over eight feet in length. It is secured to the ship with molded, bent rods in three places and may be freed by twisting off the six large screws within the interior of the ship (behind the forepeak). [If using the formula of ten gold pieces to a pound, the artifact is worth 10,000 gp in gold alone, not including its magical property value.]

Ship Interior

Most of the interior of the ship is crumbling inward and will likely collapse fully within fifty years. The floorboards and stairs are unsafe and may give way if any significant weight is put upon the old timber. The lower half of the ship is buried in the sand and inaccessible unless characters spend weeks digging through the hard packed desert floor. However, **Sand Beetles** have built a small tunnel and lair under the rear of the ship. If characters enter the ship and descend to the floor of the desert within it, they will most likely stir the beetles from their slumber.

(12) Sand Beetles, stats: AC 5 [14], HD 2, HP: 10 each, Attack: Bite (2d4), Move 9, Special: burrow, surprise

A large, locked chest can be seen half buried in the sand near the Sand Beetles tunnel entrance. Characters may be able to see the chest from the deck above or from outside (through one of the many holes in the hull).

Unlock Padlock Check: as Thief or 1 in 20

Although the interior of the chest appears empty, a single item within has been made invisible by a powerful spell. If touched, the invisibility spell will be canceled, revealing a magical javelin lying at the bottom of the chest. The rest of the items were removed from the chest by the merchant when they left the ship long ago; the javelin was missed when the chest was cleaned out.

Javelin of Lightning

1d8 additional lightning damage and thunderclap on strike, and has a 5% chance to cause a freak rain storm.

The Scorpion's Kiss

Adventure Background: An inadvertent discovery of a lost tomb in a remote area of a nearby desert has sages excited about potentially learning new secrets of ancient realms and forgotten kings. Lost within a maze of deep chasms, a merchant and his family found the entrance to an archaic tomb. Too afraid to enter the menacing burial chamber alone, the merchant and his family fled the small valley and miraculously found his way back to civilization. After reporting the find to the sage guild, an expedition was created, funded by the local lord with an interest in history and (of course), the possibility of great wealth.

Unfortunately, the valley is protected by sand pygmies, a race of short men and women sworn to protect the tomb from outsiders. They serve the dead kings and queens of old, and are the only beings able to feed and care for the protector of the tomb, a deadly shadow death worm.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Hard
Number of Characters:	4-6
Adventure Locale:	Tunnels (desert)

Adventure Start: Characters are asked to join an archaeological expedition as guards (or happen upon the forbidden valley by chance). Note that if the characters are accompanying the researchers, any plundering or defiling of the tomb will be discouraged by the intellectuals.

After days of blistering hot travel within a maze of deep gorges cut through the remote desert, you finally reach the rumored entrance of an ancient tomb. Wondrous carvings within the stone walls of the gorge illustrate the daily lives of kings of an ancient race of short, wide-shouldered men. A wide opening into the gorge wall leads away into absolute darkness.

The ever watchful **Sand Pygmies** will be ready to attack if any member of the expedition tries to enter the tomb. The protectors will emerge from shadowed cracks in the walls, from under hidden pits in the valley floor, and sliding down ropes anchored atop the gorge walls. Nearly fifty of the short, powerfully built men will rush to encircle the expedition, gesturing for the group to surrender. Their entire body is wrapped in narrow strips of cloth, giving them a mummy-like appearance. If the group declines to surrender, the sand pygmies will attack.

(50) Sand Pygmies, Stats: AC 7 [12], HD 1+1, HP: 6 each, Attack: Weapon (varies), Move 12, Special: Using the stunning poison of the Shadow Death Worm (save versus Poison or victim is stunned 1d4 rounds)

If more than half of the sand pygmies fall in battle, the rest will retreat back into the shadows to await the expedition's next move. They will be content with their sacrifice, knowing they have weakened the group for the death worm within the tomb. If the expedition leaves the valley without entering the tomb, the sand pygmies will stay hidden but watchful. How-

ever, if the expedition enters the tomb, the sand pygmies will set up outside the tomb for one final attack, surprising survivors as they exit.

Area 1: Tomb Entrance

A wide, sloping tunnel leads downward into the tomb for fifty feet before opening into the main chamber (Area 2). There are pressure plates 25 feet inside that alternate every five feet – on each side of the tunnel. These plates cause several (3 or 6) razor-tipped darts to fire at the unfortunate victim triggering the trap. Table 1 below has more details.

Table 1 – Trap Hallway

Section	Pressure Plate	Dart Direction
A	30' mark, left side	right side, 3 darts traveling left
B	35' mark, right side	left side, 3 darts traveling right
C	40' mark, left side	right side, 3 darts traveling left; ceiling, 3 darts traveling downward into the space opposite the pressure plate
D	45' mark, right side	left side, 3 darts traveling right; ceiling, 3 darts traveling downward into the space opposite the pressure plate
E	50' mark, both sides	both side, 3 darts (each side) traveling both directions

Detect Floor Trap, Check:

damage:

Area 2: Main Chamber

A smoldering fire in an urn in the center of the room provides just enough light to highlight the shape of the chamber and the two side tunnels. A **Shadow Death Worm** lurks in the darkness at the outer edges of the chamber, hungry for its next meal of human flesh. It attacks with surprise each round, appearing suddenly to bite a random group member before disappearing again.

Shadow Death Worm, Stats: AC 3 [16], HD 8, HP: 40, Attack: Bite (2d6), Move 18, Special: stunning poison (save versus Poison or victim is stunned 1d4 rounds), hides from group on a 1 in 6, then surprise attacks

If the group can add significant light to the room, it will nullify the creature's surprise attack. The creature has never tasted defeat, believing it can prevail until its last breath. When it dies, its form changes from shadowy wisps of smoke to flesh and bone.

A secret door leads to the burial chamber of the last king and queen of the ancient, short race of men that once ruled the desert valley.

Area 3: Floor Trap

A wide pressure plate in the floor just before the western burial chamber activates a ceiling trap, dropping a massive giant block of stone on the spot of the pressure plate. It deals a tremendous amount of damage to any standing on the plate and seals off the chamber.

Detect Floor Trap, Check: as Thief

damage: 5d6

Area 4: Tomb of the Great King, Albaznaful

A single sarcophagus on a slightly raised dais is all that is found in this large room. The sides of the sarcophagus are covered in pictorial writings, illustrating the macabre and unfortunate life of a boy-king. Using the illustrations, the group can perceive that the young king died before reaching adulthood.

The sealed tomb holds the remains of the cursed King Albaznaful. If the lid of the tomb is removed, the group will see a golden coronet with a pile of bone dust. The gem encrusted crown is extremely valuable (10,000 gp value), but the bone dust is cursed; even Albaznaful's remains long after death are dangerous. There is a chance that any character that pulls the crown from the remains will be affected by the weakening curse that plagued the boy-king his entire short life.

Open Tomb, Check: under Strength -4

Avoid Cursed Dust, Check: under Constitution -4

Cursed Dust Effects: a statistic reduced by one each day

Area 5: Floor Trap

Narrow pressure plates in the floor on both sides of the hallway activate eight swinging barbed vines that lash out in random directions along the walls for the rest of the tunnel. It is almost impossible to avoid all the whipping and snapping vines as they twirl in every direction.

Floor Trap, Check: as Thief

Avoid Barbed Vines, Check: Dexterity -4 **damage:** 3d4

Area 6: Tomb of the Armless King

Much like area 4, a single sarcophagus is found at the far end of the room. An armless, short man lies within, in a preserved state. The magic of the tomb seals his body from the destruction of time. Once the lid is removed, he will begin to rapidly decay. However, the armless king will rise as soon as the tomb is opened and will attack any expedition member he sees. Having no arms, he can only bite at his targets with his filed teeth. He will decay through five combat rounds, finally succumbing to the quick deterioration and dissipating into minuscule granules of bone dust.

Armless King, Stats: AC 5 [14], HD 5, HP: 25, Attack: Bite (1d6), Move 9, Special: immune to sleep and charm spells

The armless king was laid to rest on a magical flying carpet. It appears as a well made, thick rug woven with strands of golden thread. It is extremely light and any character holding the rug has a chance to realize its magical power of flight.

Magic Carpet, Abilities: up to three medium riders can travel (move: 18) at low altitudes (under 500').

Area 7: Invisible Traps

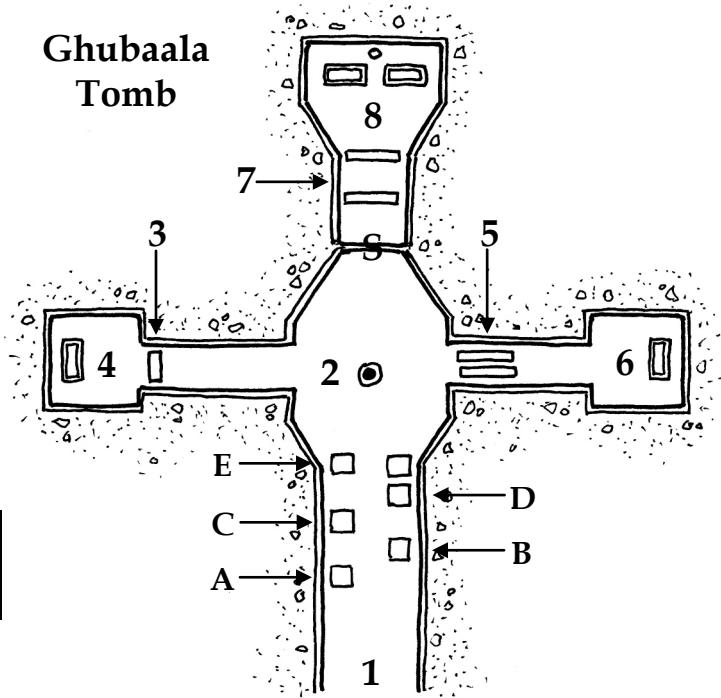
Two floor traps are invisible until triggered and when activated, use powerful magic to temporarily paralyze the victim. Affected are unable to perform any action until freed.

Invisible Trap, Check: as Thief

Break Free, Check:

save versus Spells / Staffs (victim paralyzed for 1d4 rounds)

Ghubaala Tomb



Area 8: King and Queen of Ghubaala

Two sarcophagi, set end to end across the back of the room, hold the remains of the last king and queen of Ghubaala, a small nation of desert pygmy people that have been gone for many centuries. A four-foot pedestal behind the two tombs holds a single glass bottle of swirling, viscous liquid. The fluid within the container constantly changes colors within the red, yellow and brown palettes.

If any member of the expedition reaches the midway point of the room (between the last floor trap and the sarcophagi), both lids of the tombs will burst upward. Two mummified pygmies will emerge, enraged at being awakened from their slumber.

King & Queen, Stats: AC 3 [16], HD 7, HP: 35, 30, Attack: 2 Claws (1d4), Move 12, Special: only hit by magical weapons, mummy rot

Each pygmy mummy wears numerous pieces of jewelry; characters will find dozens of rings, necklaces, bracelets, and earrings once the wrappings are removed. Most jewelry pieces are made of solid gold set with different gems of various sizes.

The strange elixir on the pedestal is the legendary *Scorpion's Kiss*, a powerful artifact only thought to exist in stories and rumor. When fully consumed, the elixir will benefit the character with a full restoration or harm them with a deadly poison. The glass container is nearly indestructible and refills missing liquid slowly, filling the bottle completely by every full moon. Consuming the elixir before it is full changes the chances of beneficial or harmful effects.

Elixir, Scorpion's Kiss, Abilities: When the bottle is full, 50% chance to fully heal and 50% to deal 3d8 damage. When not full, 30% chance to heal 3d8 damage and 70% chance to deal 1d8 damage.

The Monstrous Monolith

Adventure Background: In a remote section of the desert wasteland avoided by all sensible caravans and traveling merchants, a lone pyramid peaks out from the sands. Some say that the pyramid contains legendary treasures and immeasurable wealth. Others say the structure is empty, plundered long ago by accursed thieves. Although many stories exist, no one is quite certain what the great monolith holds. Those that venture out to learn its secrets never return.

The pyramid is actually a naturally formed ridge on the back of a monstrous creature, a Desert Leviathan. Approaching travelers will learn too late that the triangular shaped structure is not a pyramid as the massive creature emerges from the sand.

Adventure Summary

Adventure Difficulty:	Very Hard
Number of Characters:	6-8
Adventure Locale:	Plains (desert)

Adventure Start: Characters learn of the mysterious pyramid, fabled to have a great treasure hoard, or see the monolith in the distance while traveling through the desert.

A structure in the distance has a distinct triangular shape, similar to the architecture you have heard of in distant lands that housed the remains of old kings and their lifelong wealth. You cannot guess its size from this distance but to be able to see it from here, assumes that it is large enough to enter.

The Pyramid

Characters will see additional details of the structure as they approach although they will never see a door or entrance from any side. The structure will appear thinner on two sides and will have an inexact, triangular shape (imperfect angles). No other structures or formations are seen near the pyramid.

When the characters get within 50 feet of the structure, the **Desert Leviathan** will begin to pull itself from the sand with shockingly quick speed. It takes only one turn for it to pull itself out of the sand entirely.

As you close to fifty feet, the pyramid bursts up from the desert floor, joined by several structures emerging from the sands on either side of the monolith! Wait, those aren't buildings... they are strange formations on the back of a monstrous creature the size of a small village!

Desert Leviathan, stats: AC -3 [22], HD 30, HP: 150, Attack (3): Bite (8d6), Stomp (6d8) and Crushing Tail (6d6), Move 18, Special: Immune to fire, lightning, poison; swallow (50% chance on successful bite, deals automatic 1d6 damage each round until freed), burrow

The creature is over one hundred feet tall and over two hundred feet in length. It has six legs, each ending in flat, wide feet with massive six foot claws. Its impossibly large mouth with three rows of long sword-length teeth seems capable of swallowing an entire caravan wagon with ease. The desert leviathan moves with surprising quickness for its size, capable of striking multiple targets in a single combat round. Wide-set eyes allow the creature to see in nearly every direction except directly behind it (and under it, of course).

Leviathan Hole

If the characters manage to defeat the desert leviathan, they will find that its hole is filled with the remains of many slain adventurers. Hundreds of suits of armors, weapons, backpacks and sacks line the floor of the hole. Although many items may be damaged from the weight of the creature, there will be many useful items found in the area. The GM should use their favorite resource of magical items to determine the actual items found. Multiply the number of magical items by ten to determine the number of non-magical items of the same type (where applicable, of course).

Treasure Found – Roll 1d20 Three Times per Character

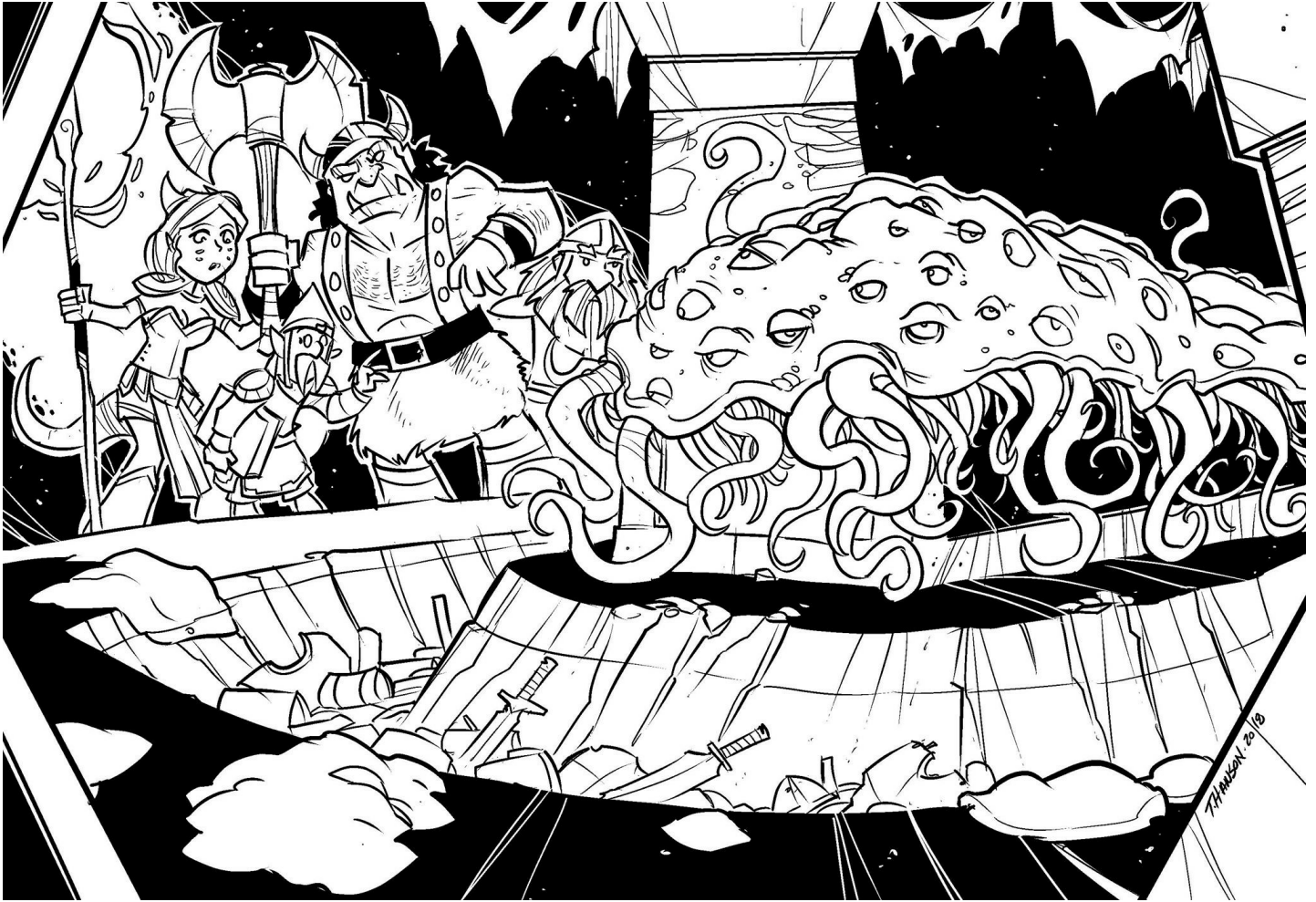
Roll	Item	Roll	Item
1	Armor, Heavy	11	Ring
2-3	Armor, Light	12	Rod
4	Back or Sack	13	Staff
5	Bracers	14	Wand
6-7	Miscellaneous	15-17	Weapon, Melee
8	Necklace	18-19	Weapon, Ranged
9-10	Potion	20	GM Pick

Notable Magic Items

Cask of the Oasis: A small wooden cask that magically refills once per day to store 5 gallons of clean, cool water.

Blade-spear: A well-balanced short sword that with a spoken command word, extends its handle to the length of a small spear. May be thrown the same distance as a javelin. Same bonus to-hit and damage in both forms (+2).

Glass of Stone Answers: When held and asked a yes/no question, the stone fills with one of three colors; blue signifies a yes, red is a no, and gray for an unknown response. The stone may only be used once per day.



The group encounters the Many-legged Princess in her lair beneath the desert sands (Excursion adventure #36, page 21).

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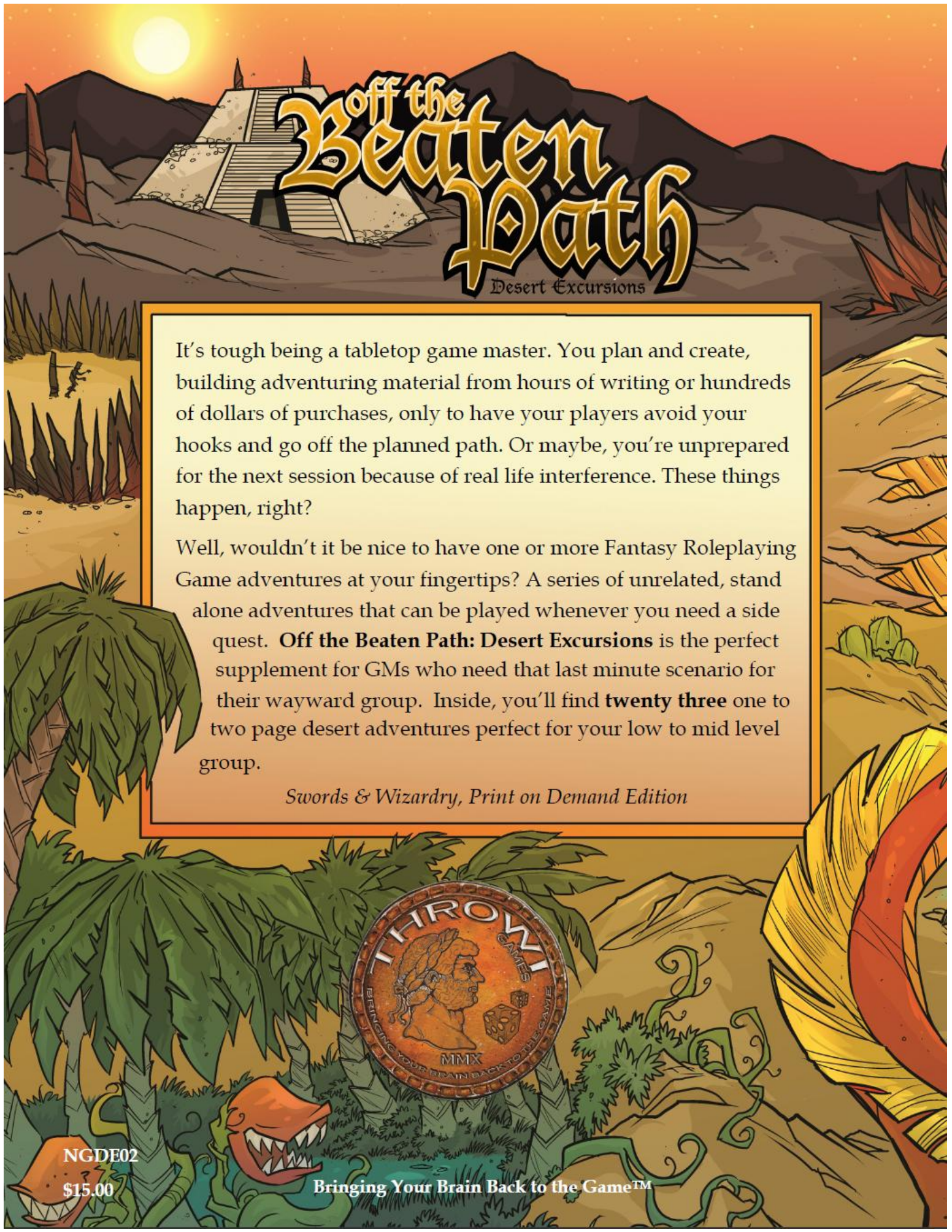
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* backer contributed a title name to the book: *Ghost Ship in the Wadi* (dafadu, pg 27); *The Scorpion's Kiss* (Mick Reddick, pg 28)

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GM Notes



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