

# ADVANCED ADVENTURES MODULE #35

## The Desert Shrine of the Sightless Sisters

by Keith Sloan

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 5-8



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## THE DESERT SHRINE OF THE SIGHTLESS SISTERS

Several days to the east of the desert trading city Isfala, far from any oasis or caravan route, lies the remnants of an ancient Ziggurat, so crumbled with years as to be little more than an odd-shaped mound in the surrounding wastes. The nomads say that it is an ancient temple to forgotten gods, a place of ill omen. Some whisper that it is not quite deserted, and that a sisterhood of devotees remains, guarding ancient secrets.

Although local superstition considers it a forbidden place, for a few coins some less-devout nomads might be willing to give directions or even act as guide, although even the greediest dares not approach the place too closely.

**STOP! If you plan to participate in this adventure as a player, then stop reading here. Prior knowledge of this module's contents will only spoil your enjoyment of the game.**

**Notes for the Game Master:** This adventure is designed for a party of characters level 5-8. A well-balanced party is likely essential for success due to the wide-ranging threats of this not-quite forgotten shrine. Carelessly alerting the dwellers within to a party's presence will greatly magnify the difficulty of this adventure.

The specifics of the location and journey to the shrine are up to the GM, but should involve at least a few days travel in the bleakest of desert wilderness, with all that entails for random encounters and environmental dangers. Alternatively, the shrine can be placed in any sort of terrain within the GM's campaign world, as desired.

Little is known of the shrine in the place from which the party sets forth. However, diligent investigations may reveal that the priestesses that attend to the shrine are all said to be blind yet to be but little impeded by this. How they replenish their numbers over the centuries is not known with certainty, but disappearances of girl children are often attributed to the sisterhood. Thus, a party less interested in simple plunder could potentially be hired by a local family to rescue a missing girl from the shrine.

Alternatively, a party in need of vital information, for themselves or some patron, may discover legends that the shrine was once known as a place of oracles, where the statue of a wise man was said to answer the most obscure of questions with great veracity. Other possibilities include randomly encountering it during a journey, seeking shelter from a sandstorm, or possibly as a location marked on a treasure map.

Whatever the motivation for exploring the shrine, in truth the Sightless Sisters are merely the servants of darker and more dangerous inhabitants of the shrine, as explained below.

**THE SHRINE:** The ziggurat is ancient and crumbling into ruin. However, its general form remains obvious as it rises over 200 feet above the surrounding desert wastes (each step is a uniform 30 feet in height). It is visible for many miles. The shrine is about 400 feet square at its base. It is topped by a twenty foot tall statue of a goddess with a nude human body and two vulture heads, badly eroded by desert winds but still splendid in a disquieting way. Set into the top of the ziggurat, around the statue, are four one foot wide shafts filled with sand (they feed the sand trap in AREA 12). A set of steps ascends the west front of the ziggurat to a grand portico on the third step (of seven) up, where it opens into the ziggurat. There are no steps above this, though climbing would be easy for anyone with skill. There are three secret entrances to the ziggurat, one at the top under the demon goddess statue, one at the base on the north side, and one a few hundred yards out into the desert (see maps).

The Shrine of Stone is home to a sisterhood of Medusae, served by a group of blind female guards whose eyes and tongues have been removed. There are three primary sections of the complex:

an Outer Sanctum (top level) of the female guards, an Inner Sanctum (middle level) that is home to the medusae, and a lower Catacombs level. Each level shows its age, with many cracks, worn steps, and ever-present dust and sand. The interior stone is all of a dull tan.

Although the Shrine is far out in the desert, its inhabitants are very organized with regards to defense. In the event of an attack, they will rapidly organize to repel invaders. The blind guards are all highly trained to compensate for their lack of sight and speech. They communicate quite effectively with each other and the Medusae by grunts, touch, and taps on stone. Invisible opponents gain no advantage against them, unless they are completely silent.

### KEY TO MAIN LEVEL (OUTER SANCTUM)

**Wandering Monsters:** Encounters occur 1 in 8. Check each turn.

#### D6 Encounter

- 1 Use monster from a nearby room
- 2 1-6 **blind guards** (from nearest quarters)
- 3 Single **blind guard** on errand
- 4 **Gorgon** (25% accompanied by medusa)
- 5 **Medusa** (choose one)
- 6 Dungeon Dressing (roll/choose from subtable)

**Dungeon Dressing Subtable:** These may be placed without resort to a die roll, as desired. Unlikely results should just be ignored or re-rolled.

#### D12 Result

- 1 Normal scorpions or spiders
  - 2 Slight breeze, enough to flicker open flames
  - 3 Rats (normal)
  - 4 Nearby noise (clanking, shouting, footsteps, etc.); may be loud or quiet
  - 5 Area of dust-filled air
  - 6 Graffiti on walls, including chalk marks
  - 7 Dust or sand falling from crack above
  - 8 Thick cobwebs
  - 9 Cracks in the floor or walls
  - 10 Area of sand
  - 11 Carvings on walls
  - 12 Smell of old decay
1. **PORTICO:** The entrance to the shrine is built into the third tier of the ziggurat. It is 10' high with four pillars at the front and a low rail except at the center. The entrance is flanked by two statues of human warriors, much eroded by time and wind-blown sand, the white of these statues contrasting strongly with the dull tan of the structure. Over the doorway is the carving of a basilisk, worn almost to nothing. Sitting in the shade by the feet of the northern statue are a number of empty baskets, amphorae, and simple bowls. All are empty but clearly left here recently; it is clear that someone or something provides regular offerings of food and wine to the dwellers of this shrine. A bell hangs above them with a rope hanging down to ring it. If rung, a pair of blind guards from AREA 3 will come forth in 3 turns to collect the sacrifice they believe has been left for the shrine.

2. **THE SHRINE OF STONE:** The main temple chamber is an elaborate affair. The ceiling arches up to nearly 50' high, with a double row of pillars carved elaborately as trees supporting the high ceiling. Four statues (two humans, an elf, and a dwarf) flank



sacred bull in AREA 9. In the event of attack, she will lead the bull out to help deal with intruders. She has 1,120 gp and 32 pp.

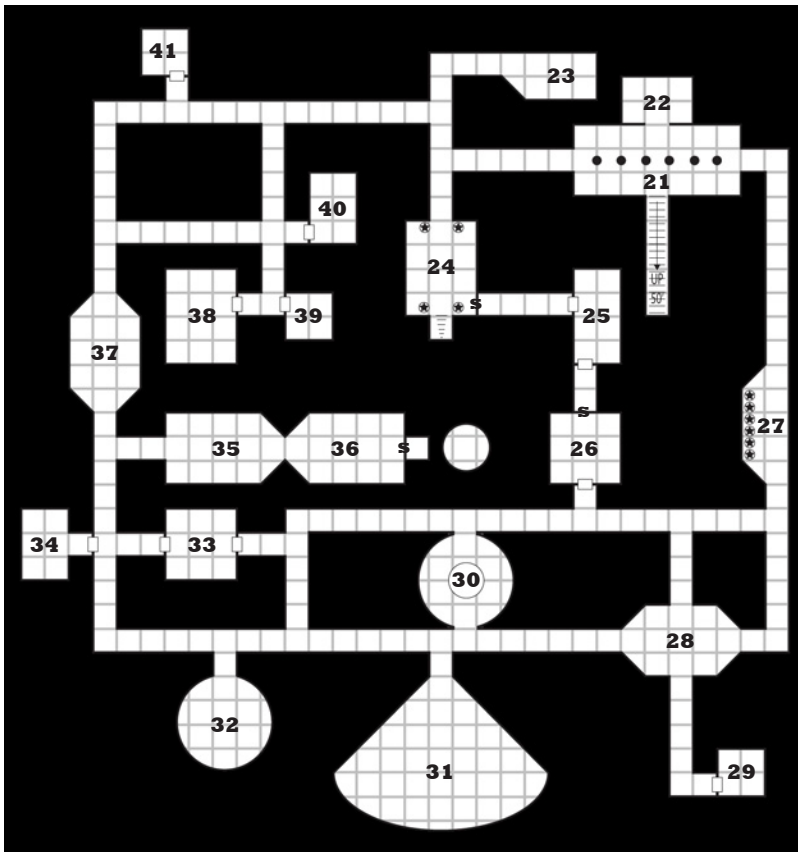
9. CHAMBER OF THE SACRED BULL: A huge **gorgon** (AC 2, HD 8, HP 61, ATK 1, DAM 2-12, SA petrification breath) dwells here in a stone pen of rather fragile construction. It is a pet of the medusae and is vaguely loyal to them, though it is not smart enough to obey commands or actively aid in defense unless guided directly by a medusa. The gorgon is allowed to periodically wander the halls for exercise, during which time the blind guards give it a wide berth, as more than one of their number has been petrified by it in the past. Two statues of goblins and one of a blind guard are in the room, all old and somewhat battered. There is nothing of value.
10. HALF STATUE: There are several additional, unremarkable statues in this room. Odder, however, is a strange half-statue at the southern end of the room. This poor soul, apparently once a human male, is now a statue from the waist up but remains flesh below the waist. The stone of the statue is obviously insupportable, as the strange hybrid is lying on its side. Periodically, the legs will kick and move, but they are not strong enough to do more than rock the statue portion a little. They will respond to stimuli. How this thing remains alive is unclear. The statue part is significantly dinged and chipped.
11. CHAMBER OF HOLY STATUES: This room is crowded with dozens of humanoid statues, all of them victims of petrification. They are haphazardly arranged, and this room is really little more than a statue storage location. A secret door accesses a passage and stairs to a secret door at the northern base of the ziggurat. The passage is unknown or forgotten by both blind guards and medusae.
12. SAND TRAP: The floor of this room is comprised of a dozen wedge-shaped stones that come to a point in the center of the room. If a person steps near the center, the floor wedges will all suddenly drop open about 45 degrees, pivoting on the



- perimeter of the room, and depositing anyone within to a pit beneath the room. Within seconds, the wedges will begin to rise back to their previous position as sand from the shafts atop the ziggurat pours down to act as a counterweight to the mechanism (inaccessible within the walls). Meanwhile, the previous counter-weight volume of sand will pour into the pit, burying anyone that fell in within 1-3 rounds. The pit is sand-filled to about 40' below this room and will fill another 10' each time the trap is sprung. The sand is replenished by the slow accumulation of sand and dust in the shafts atop the ziggurat.
13. PIT ROOM: The center of this room has a pit that drops down to the level below, a blue and red fire burns below. Heat but very little smoke wafts up the shaft. The pit is used by the blind guards to dispose of trash. When needed, it is also the final fate of their dead, the immolations conducted with solemn ceremonies. Climbing or falling into the pit will put one into the fire below (see AREA 30 below).
14. KEEPER OF THE HATCHLINGS: A single **medusa** dwells here (AC 5, HD 6, HP 25, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, SA poison, petrification). She has a shortbow and a dozen arrows, two of which are **poisoned**. She is tasked with caring for the cockatrices in AREA 15. She possesses 1,100 gp and 32 pp. A cockatrice is carved into the stone above the door to the east.
15. HATCHERY OF THE COCKATRICE: This sunken room with a low-domed ceiling is essentially a hen house with nine makeshift cages arranged in a semicircle; six contain a single **cockatrice** (AC 6, HD 5, HP 23, ATK 1, DAM 1-3, SA petrification by touch). They are cared for and maintained by the medusa in AREA 14.  
  
Although in cages, if attacked they will panic and break free; if not threatened, they will not act hostile nor try to break free, though they will lash out at fingers or appendages near the bars. Within one of the cockatrice pens is a single egg. Taking it will certainly cause all of the cockatrices to break free and attack the offender.
16. TRAINING ROOM: This room is used by the blind guards for their martial training, and there is a 30% chance that d4+4 **blind guards** will be present at any given time, as well as all the young trainees from AREA 19. Here, the sisters practice both melee and javelin throwing, honing their ability to detect enemies by sound and air movements. The walls are covered with racks holding wooden swords, padded training armor, javelins, and other supplies. Two javelin targets are along the east wall.
17. BLIND GUARD QUARTERS: Seven female **blind guards** (AC 5, Lv 3, HP 16 each, ATK 1, DAM 1-8) are in this room. Each has a javelin they can hurl before melee, and a small pile of additional ones is kept by the door. One has a **potion of poison** she will use on her blade, if time permits. Their quarters are spartan and they have no treasure.
18. BLIND GUARD QUARTERS: Six female **blind guards** (AC 5, Lv 3, HP 16 each, ATK 1, DAM 1-8) are in this room. Each has a javelin they can hurl before melee, and a small pile of additional ones is kept by the door. They are assigned with the care and feeding of the young trainees in AREA 19; they will attempt to slay them rather than allow any to escape or be rescued. They have no treasure.
19. NOVICE QUARTERS: Young girls are occasionally taken by, or given to, the sisters. They are kept in this room under careful guard when not undergoing training or indoctrination until such time as they are considered full members of the sightless sisters. There are usually 3-6 girls here of varying age at any given time. Depending on the GM's campaign, one or more of them may be prisoners being sought by the party. All but the most recent arrivals will have already been blinded in order to commence their training to enter the sisterhood. Their tongues are cut out

## INNER SANCTUM

EACH SQUARE EQUALS 10 FEET



during the final ritual of entering the sisterhood, held in the Shrine of Stone. Half (rounded up) will be equivalent to first level fighters, though they are unarmed and their loyalty to the sisterhood will be as yet incomplete.

20. **BLIND GUARD QUARTERS:** Eight female **blind guards** (AC 5, Lv 3, HP 16 each, ATK 1, DAM 1-8) dwell in this room. Each has a javelin they can hurl before melee, and a small pile of additional ones is kept by the door. One of their number is usually assigned to listen from a cunningly hidden window to the west of this room that looks out of the ziggurat. Although blind, the guard listens for the sound of the bell indicating a sacrifice is being left at the portico; a party that makes excessive noise may also be heard at GM's discretion. They have no treasure.

## KEY TO SECOND LEVEL (INNER SANCTUM)

**Wandering Monsters:** Encounters occur 1 in 8. Check each turn.

### D6 Encounter

- 1-6 **blind guards** (from Outer Sanctum)
- 1-3 **servants** on errand (from AREA 33)
- Poisonous serpent** (from AREA 32)
- Gorgon** (from AREA 9; 50% accompanied by medusa from AREA 8)
- Medusa** (choose one)
- Dungeon Dressing (roll/choose from subtable)

**Dungeon Dressing Subtable:** These may be placed without resort to a die roll, as desired. Unlikely results should just be ignored or re-rolled.

### D12 Result

- 1 Normal scorpions or spiders
  - 2 Slight breeze, enough to flicker open flames
  - 3 Rats (normal)
  - 4 Nearby noise (clanking, shouting, footsteps, etc.); may be loud or quiet
  - 5 Area of dust-filled air
  - 6 Graffiti on walls, including chalk marks
  - 7 Dust or sand falling from crack above
  - 8 Thick cobwebs
  - 9 Cracks in the floor or walls
  - 10 Area of sand
  - 11 Carvings on walls
  - 12 Smell of old decay
21. **GREAT HALL:** Once an elaborate hall, this chamber has fallen into decay like everything else. The walls are covered with badly faded and cracked frescoes depicting scenes from the Plane of Earth, as well as other stone motifs related to petrification. The six pillars are covered with geometric patterns, many of them with dings and other damage from old age.

22. **SIDE HALL:** This side room appears to be a shrine of some sort. Centered on the north wall is a lumpish stone that may be a vaguely humanoid statue of some sort of earth deity, somewhat sad and forlorn looking. There are a few stone bowls and cups set before it, but they and the entire room is clearly much neglected, as everything is coated in dust and sand that has remained undisturbed for years.

If any sacrifice is made to the god (filling a plate or cup with food or wine, for instance) then the neglected deity will be pleased at being remembered at long last. The first person making such a sacrifice will be granted a minor boon, as follows:

### D6 Minor Boon

- 1 During the next encounter with a creature from the plane of earth, it will avoid attacking that person
  - 2 Person gains a +4 on their next save versus an earth-based attack, including petrification
  - 3 Person gains +2 to hit/damage in the next melee with an earth-based creature, including those earth-based creatures that cause petrification
  - 4 The next impact by stone will cause no damage (this includes falling in a pit, a stone weapon, etc.)
  - 5 Person may break another person's control over an earth elemental, once
  - 6 Person may choose to walk through up to ten feet of stone or earth one time (with gear, but not another person)
- 23: **MEDUSA LAIR:** The door to this room is actually a bead curtain which will tinkle slightly when parted. Dwelling in the darkness beyond is a single **medusa** (AC 5, HD 6, HP 34, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, SA poison, petrification). She has a **shortbow +1** with a dozen arrows, two of which are **poisoned**. She will be quick to shoot at strangers that enter her lair. She possesses 475 gp, 3 gems worth 100 gp each, and a gold necklace worth 1,500 gp. She also possesses the key that opens the iron gate to the Catacombs (AREA 42). Unbeknownst to the medusa, one of the strands of her bead curtain is an open **necklace of prayer beads**.

24. **CARYATID ROOM:** This room is decorated with badly faded frescoes depicting funerary rites of unidentifiable humanoids. Flanking each entrance are a pair of **caryatid columns** (AC 5, HD 5, HP 22, ATK 1, DAM 2-8 SD reduced weapon damage, weapon breakage). The four statues will react only to block anyone not accompanied by a medusa from coming up the stairs from the Catacombs below. Anyone going the other direction will not be stopped. A locked iron gate lies at the bottom of the stairs (key held by the medusa in AREA 23).
25. **SECRET ROOM:** All but the medusae queen Sthenno have forgotten this room. It is an old treasury, heavy with dust, containing 8,500 gp, 50 pp, 10 gems worth 500 gp each, a **potion of healing**, a **potion of clairaudience**, a **potion of treasure finding**, a **wand of wonder** (17 charges), a **potion of stone to flesh**, and 12 **arrows +1**.
26. **MEDUSA LAIR:** One **medusa** (AC 5, HD 6, HP 28, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, SA poison, petrification) dwells here. She has a shortbow and twelve arrows. Her treasure consists of 900 sp, 1050 gp, and a **chalice of plenty** (see Appendix A: New Magic Items).
27. **STATUARY CHAMBER:** A half-dozen statues are lined up along the west wall of this chamber, all petrification victims and of various humanoid races, all facing towards the west wall. There, strange movements are visible in the stone, as if it were opaque and there was something alive beyond it. The wall is not permeable, though it may seem to vibrate and occasionally be bumped from the other side. There is no particular danger here, though it may be most disquieting.
28. **HALL OF CARVINGS:** This hall is covered with carvings that depict subjects related to stone. In some places there are carvings of medusae, basilisks, gorgons, and cockatrice. In other places, earth elementals and other denizens of the plane of earth are the subject. Running full circle around the room above all of this is also the depiction of a strange, stony snake of immense size, its tail in its mouth. There are numerous cracks and signs of damage throughout – all old and never repaired. The impression is one of grandeur, diminished by great age and lack of care.
29. **MEDUSA LAIR:** The medusa **Eulyris** (AC 5, HD 6, HP 42, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, SA poison, petrification) dwells here. One of the older of the sisters, she prefers to remain aloof from her kin. She keeps her most valuable possession on her person, an elaborate wooden comb such as would be used by a noble lady for her hair. The item is magic (see **comb of the lady of the wood** in Appendix A: New Magic Items). She also possesses a small ash and maple chest containing 2,750 gp, 144 pp, 13 gems worth 250 gp each, and a **pearl of wisdom**.
30. **ROOM OF FIRE:** This round room raises in a cone shape to a hole 50 feet above (in Outer Sanctum, room AREA 13). In the center of the room is a stone ring about 3' high and 15' in diameter, within which burns a steady blue-red flame, likely fed by gas venting from below. In addition to debris dumped from above or by the servants on this level, occasionally the medusae will conduct ritual burnings as part of their strange religion. Most times, the room remains empty.
31. **STATUARY SHRINE:** This room contains numerous statues, including many non-humanoid victims of the medusae and their pets. The statues are arranged facing towards the door in arcs aligned to the southern wall, as if they were standing in a theater. Among the many statues are a troll, a giant spider, a wolf, a blink dog, a giant lizard, a giant scorpion, several stirges, a rust monster, and an androsphinx. The room is well-tended by servants and is largely free of dust and debris, though many of



the statues show signs of age – chips, worn areas, and the like. It is otherwise not of interest.

32. **ROOM OF SERPENTS:** Dwelling in this room are four **poisonous serpents** (AC 5, HD 4+2, HP 17, ATK 1, DAM 1-3, SA poison). Though of minimal intelligence, they are bound to Sthenno, the medusa leader, and can be summoned by her. They will be hostile to intruders into their lair, of course. Set upon a stand at the southern end of the room is a small, round shield with the stylized face of a medusa on it (a casual or quick glance might think a medusa is in the room). The shield is the **Gorgoneion**, a potent magic item placed here by the medusae for safe keeping (see Appendix A: New Magic items).
33. **SERVANT'S QUARTERS:** Similar to the blind guards on the level above, there are six **blind servants** (AC 10, Lv 1, HP 6 each, ATK 1, DAM 1-4, SA poison) dwelling in this room. They see to the needs of the medusae of this level. Although not intended to be fighters, each carries a **poisoned** dagger and has some skill in using it. Still, they will avoid battle, though they remain totally loyal to the medusae. They have no treasure.
34. **LIVING STATUE:** In the middle of this room is a 7' tall **living statue** (AC 2, HD 5, HP 30, ATK 1, DAM 1-10 SD edged weapons do ½ damage). It appears vaguely humanoid, but is very roughly chiseled and its features are vague. After one round, it will come to life and attack anyone not accompanied by a medusa. It is not capable of speech. There is no treasure here.
35. **CHAMBER OF MIST AND SHADOW:** This entire room is filled with strangely shifting areas of light and darkness, reducing visibility to ten feet or less. The light comes from no particular source and everything appears somewhat unclear as if the room were filled with mist. The medusa queen, Sthenno, has complete control of visibility in this room and can change it by thought, thus allowing her to rapidly attempt to petrify intruders or keep them confused as to what lays beyond this area as she uses her spells for offense or defense.
36. **LAIR OF THE QUEEN:** The **greater medusa Sthenno** dwells here, the oldest, toughest, and foulest of the medusae (AC 1, HD 9, HP 61, ATK 1, DAM d8+4, SA poison, petrification, spells). She is a fast and powerful warrior, and is far crueler than her daughters. Unlike normal medusa, her lower torso is snakelike. She is a powerful spellcaster in her own right, and carries a **battleaxe +1**, a **shortbow +1**, 12 normal arrows, 6 **arrows +3** (two are **poisoned**), a **potion of extra healing**, a **ring of fire resistance**, and a **ring of protection +3**. She will be at the forefront of any defense against attackers.

Sthenno's Spells (9<sup>th</sup> level ability):

1<sup>st</sup> – **darkness, magic missile (x2), protection from good**

2<sup>nd</sup> – **ESP, invisibility, web**

3<sup>rd</sup> – **lightning bolt, monster summoning I, slow**

4<sup>th</sup> – **minor globe of invulnerability, wall of fire**

5<sup>th</sup> – **conjure elemental (earth)**

In addition to her own formidable strengths, Sthenno can mentally summon and control the **serpents** that dwell in AREA 32. If intruders appear, she will have them come up from behind at the most inopportune time. She also controls visibility in her antechamber (AREA 35).

Sthenno's lair is opulently furnished, and includes rich carpets, tapestries, silks, pillows and the like (total value 5000 gp but heavy and bulky). If it were not for her hideous appearance, the room would look like what might be expected for a human queen or princess.

Sitting on a red velvet pillow atop a small table is the stone head of a human male, which belongs to the headless statue in AREA 2. The head radiates magic and, while it is was obviously once the victim of petrification, for some unknown reason the

head can still speak. For the most part, its speech is just random gibberish, but occasionally (10%) it will say something potentially useful. The head will speak at random times (25% chance per day), but if placed upon the headless statue in the Shrine of Stone, it will speak once per day and can be asked a direct question once per week. The specifics of its random sayings are left to the DM, but should range from the ridiculous and useless, to the important and profound. Direct questions to it will be answered truthfully but indirectly, as befits an oracle. The medusae treat the head as a manifestation or representative of whatever demon goddess they worship, hence the reason it is kept close by Sthenno.

Hidden within a secret closet is a large chest of wood bound in brass. Inside is Sthenno's **spell book** (same as memorized spells plus d4 random spells for levels 1-3 and d2 for levels 4-5), 14,000 gp, 575 pp, 20 gems worth 250 gp each, a gold and emerald necklace worth 5,000 gp, a pair of diamond earrings worth 1,000 gp total, 2 gold bracelets worth 500 gp each, a tiara worth 2,500 gp, a **potion of cloud giant control**, a **potion of frost giant strength**, a **scroll of protection from poison**, a **scroll of protection from petrification**, and a **feather token** (homunculus; see Appendix A: New Magic Items).

37. **PORTCULLIS ROOM:** This room is empty except for a pair of statues of humans, old and worn with age. There is a pressure plate across the center of the room, however, that will trigger rusty iron portcullises to drop at either end of the room. The clanging noise of the gates will certainly attract the attention of all the medusae in this part of the level, who will come at intruders from both north and south while blind servants run the long way around to alert the blind guards on the level above. The trap requires a good deal of effort to reset, as there is no mechanism to raise the portcullises except sheer strength.
38. **HATCHERY:** Two younger **medusae** dwell here (AC 5, HD 6, HP 20, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, SA poison, petrification). They are charged with protecting the medusa's great treasure, a clutch of stony eggs from which more medusae will someday be born. There are currently only 3 eggs in the hatchery each sitting in a basket and swaddled in blankets. The medusae will protect these eggs at any cost and die avenging them if something were to happen to them. The eggs would fetch a mighty price from the right buyer, though it apparently takes many years for them to hatch.
39. **MEDUSA LAIR:** One **medusa** (AC 5, HD 6, HP 33, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, SA poison, petrification) dwells here. She is armed with a shortbow and six **poisoned arrows +1** and wears a **ring of free action**. She is tasked with supervising the nearby hatchery and the younger medusa there. If there is the slightest disturbance or noise, she will immediately head to check on the eggs; she will be most wrathful if they are in danger. Her treasure includes 4,500 sp, 980 gp, 55 pp, and a diamond and gold medallion worth 3,000 gp.
40. **MEDUSA LAIR:** A medusa named **Erinys** (AC 5, HD 6, HP 30, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, SA poison, petrification) dwells here. This creature acts as a scribe or sage of sorts for the medusae sisterhood, maintaining a small library of various volumes and scrolls of lore. Most are very old and, despite the dry air, beginning to disintegrate. Given the rare and esoteric nature of these items, 20 or so of them would be worth d4x100 gp to a collector, though transporting them would require great care. Among the library is a **scroll of stone to flesh**, while another is a **scroll of protection from petrification**. In addition to these items, Erinys possesses 790 sp, 1,420 gp, 30 pp, and **quill of stealing** (See Appendix A: New Magic Items).
41. **MEDUSA LAIR:** One **medusa** (AC 5, HD 6, HP 27, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, SA poison, petrification) dwells here. She has a shortbow and ten arrows. Her treasure consists of 755 sp, 960 gp, and a gold statuette of a nymph worth 1,500 gp.

## KEY TO THIRD LEVEL (CATACOMBS)

**GM Note:** This level shows signs of utter neglect. Except for the medusae funeral chambers, the catacombs are choked with sand and dust, the walls are cracked in many places, and the air is stale and old.

**Wandering Monsters:** Encounters occur 1 in 8. Check each turn.

### D6 Encounter

- 1 Use monster from a nearby room
- 2 **Giant scorpion** (from AREA 50)
- 3 **Medusa mummy** (from AREA 44)
- 4-5 **Poison serpent**
- 6 1-4 **giant centipedes**
- 7 1-4 **huge spiders** (from AREA 53)
- 8 Dungeon Dressing (roll/choose from subtable)

**Dungeon Dressing Subtable:** These may be placed without resort to a die roll, as desired. Unlikely results should just be ignored or re-rolled.

### D12 Result

- 1 Normal scorpions or spiders
- 2 Slight breeze, enough to flicker open flames
- 3 Rats (normal)
- 4 Nearby noise (clanking, shouting, footsteps, etc.); may be loud or quiet
- 5 Area of dust-filled air

- 6 Graffiti on walls, including chalk marks
- 7 Dust or sand falling from crack above
- 8 Thick cobwebs
- 9 Cracks in the floor or walls
- 10 Area of sand
- 11 Carvings on walls
- 12 Humanoid bones

42. **GREAT HALL:** Though there is a fair amount of dust and sand here, this large room appears to have been cleaned in the recent past as the amount of debris is lower than elsewhere. Each entrance to the room is flanked by a pair of humanoid statues, mostly human victims of petrification attacks. All are old and show signs of wear. The passage with the stairs up is blocked by a locked iron gate (the key is held by the medusa in AREA 23). Once-bright frescoes that adorned the walls have largely faded and fallen to dust, leaving no hints of what they once depicted.

43. **FUNERARY PREPARATION ROOM:** This room is dominated by a trio of four foot-high stone biers for use in preparing dead for burial. There is a weak smell of pungent, bitter herbs in this room. There are several amphorae along the center of the north wall that contain various unguents, oils, herbs and the like for use in mummification, as well as a wicker basket full of linen strips. The amount of dust and fallen sand from the decaying ziggurat is lower here than elsewhere on this level.

44. **CRYPTS OF THE ANCIENT SISTERS:** There are ten burial alcoves in this area, each with a bier. The northern six each contains a **medusa mummy** (AC 3, HD 6+3, HP 31, ATK 1, DAM 1-12, SA fear, petrification rot, SD magic to hit, half damage on hit, undead immunities) (see Appendix B: New Monsters). They will rise up and attack non-medusa intruders, pursuing them anywhere on this level but not beyond it. Occasionally, one of the medusa mummies will become restless and wander this level.

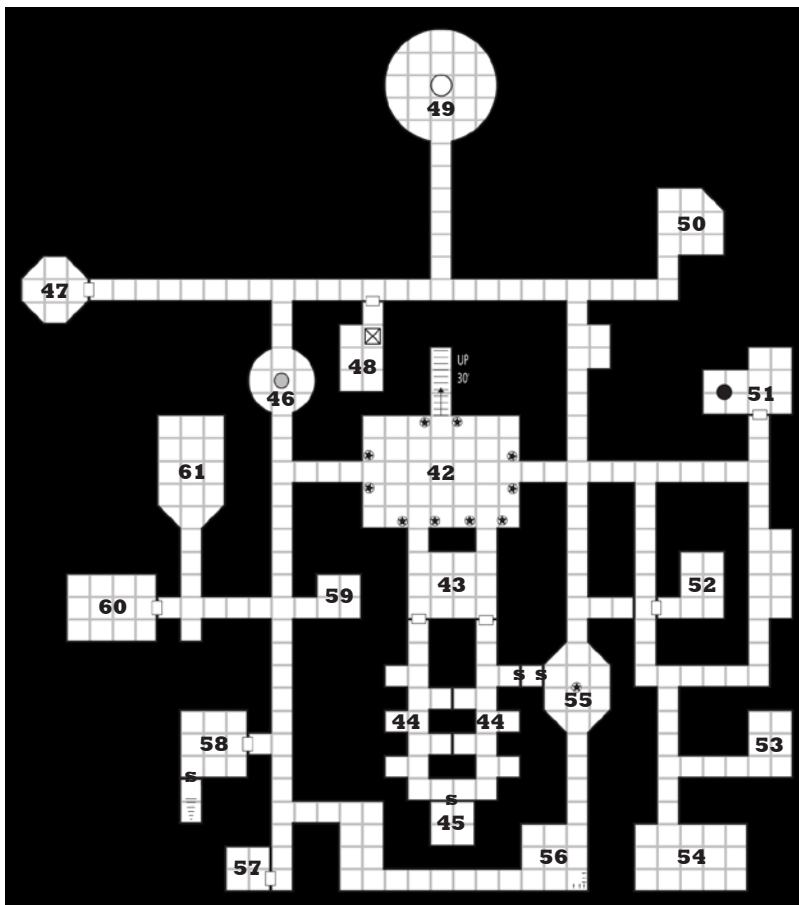
The mummies have no treasure in their tomb, except one that wears a gold medallion depicting a demonic face worth 1,500 gp. However, in the secret passage leading to AREA 55 there is a very old corpse of a dead adventurer, now dried to little more than a mummy himself, one leg and one arm obviously broken. Most of his gear is long rotted or rusted away, except for a few uncapped potion bottles, a leather purse with 66 gp, a spotless **dagger +2** that can **detect goblins and orcs** up to 60' away, and a **ring of invisibility**.

45. **SECRET CRYPT:** A previous medusa queen is interred here, now also a **medusa mummy** (AC 3, HD 6+3, HP 51, ATK 1, DAM 1-12, SA fear, petrification rot, SD magic to hit, half damage on hit, undead immunities) (see Appendix B: New Monsters). Unlike the others of her kind, this medusa mummy still possesses the ability to petrify by sight, as well as the petrification rot by touch. Although she will hear a melee in the outer tombs, she will not come forth to join the battle, but will be prepared for intruders, including possibly using a **stone of controlling earth elementals** she possesses. Her grave goods include a crown worth 4,000 gp, a diadem worth 2,500 gp, a ruby necklace worth 5,000 gp, and a **silver horn of Valhalla**, which she has no voice left to sound.

46. **FOUNTAIN ROOM:** Sitting in the midst of this room is an old fountain, now dry and filled with dust and

## CATACOMBS

EACH SQUARE EQUALS 10 FEET



sand over a foot deep. If either the fountain or the sand in it is touched, there will be a slight noise of stone sliding on stone below the floor, followed by the fountain beginning to operate, but spraying up sand and dust instead of water. The room will soon become choked with dust (save versus poison or begin to choke uncontrollably for d4 rounds). If anyone touches the sand as it sprays up and into the fountain, they must save versus death or be turned to sand themselves (along with all non-magical possessions), the sand then being pulled into the fountain and mixed with the rest. Buried under the sand is a **shortsword +1, +4 versus reptiles** dropped by some previous victim long ago. As long as the sand is not touched by flesh, it can be safely probed without danger.

- 47. SPECTER'S LAIR: A lone **specter** (AC 2, HD 7+3, HP 39, ATK 1, DAM 1-8, SA level drain, SD magic to hit, undead immunities) dwells here, seated on a stone throne-like chair where it contemplates its ancient past in bitterness and malice. The room appears to have once been a small audience chamber of some sort, though now it is sandy and what décor it once had has fallen to dust. It wears a small gold crown worth 2,000 gp. Behind the chair sits a heavy golden bowl worth 4,500 gp. Inside it are 13 gems worth 250 gp each. Beside it sits the **bag of the six demons** (see Appendix A: New Magic Items).
- 48. TRAP ROOM: There is a 20' deep pit trap at the entrance to this room. However, if tripped, the victim will only fall about ten feet onto relatively soft sand that has slowly filled it over the centuries, taking no damage. Buried deep in the sand is a long-dead victim who once carried a pouch with 55 gp and wielded a **mace +1**.
- 49. OLD TEMPLE: This room is domed up to nearly 30' high. In the center stands a 13' tall statue of what appears to be an efreeti with a malicious expression, its ruby eyes seeming to follow those in the room. Under the ever-present dust and sand is a ten foot diameter circle carved into the floor. If this non-visible

circle is crossed, then a whirlwind of dust and sand will begin to spin around the statue along the circle. The spinning sand will then begin to glow red, bursting into a pillar of flame within a round. Anyone foolishly remaining in the pillar will take 6d6 damage (save for ½) each round in the pillar. The pillar will burn out and fall quiescent for 24 hours after about ten minutes of burning. The ruby eyes, worth 2,000 gp each, can then be taken, but anyone prying one loose will suffer a minor **curse** of the GM's choosing. Such curses may include the enmity of a powerful efreeti.

- 50. GIANT SCORPION LAIR: Three **giant scorpions** (AC 3, HD 5+5, HP 24, ATK 3 DAM 1-10/1-10/1-6, SA poison) dwell here, the apex predators of this level, at least among the natural ones. They periodically prowl the level, usually feeding on snakes or the occasional spider, though they do fear their poison bites. A few corpses of old victims dragged here long ago are piled in the southeast corner, amidst which can be found 233 cp, 185 sp, 212 gp, 2 gems worth 100 gp each, and a **potion of healing**.
- 51. THE BLACK HATCH: Just sticking out from the sand and dust on the floor of this room is a round, black stone. The stone is carved with many strange runes and designs of a disquieting nature. The stone appears to be a hatch or cover for something, though what is not clear. The stone is very heavy and indestructible. What is covers is up to the GM, but may be an access way to some subterranean hell, a forgotten level, or perhaps even an extradimensional space or other plane altogether. Of course, it might just be an unopenable mystery.
- 52. ANCIENT DEAD: This room has a half-dozen skeletons in piles below manacles on the wall, obviously of great age judging from the rust and state of the victims. More than a full dozen manacles are empty, some of which seem to have been opened recently, as the rust is scratched to bare iron. The room is otherwise devoid of interest.



53. **SPIDER LAIR:** A small pack of six **huge spiders** (AC 6, HD 2+2, HP 12, ATK 1, DAM 1-6, SA poison, leaping) dwells here, subsisting mainly off of snakes but always interested in something more tasty. There are a few desiccated old corpses here from old victims. Mixed in amidst them are 142 cp, 45 sp, 89 gp, 4 pp, 2 gems worth 100 gp each, and a small ring worth 100 gp.
54. **SERPENT PIT:** There are dozens of normal snakes in this room at any given time, in addition to d4+2 **poisonous serpents** (AC 5, HD 4+2, HP 17, ATK 1, DAM 1-3, SA poison). The snakes enter and exit through numerous cracks in the south wall, seeking relief at times from the desert heat. During daylight, there is a dim glow through these cracks, but they are far too small for use by adventurers.
55. **STONE MEDUSA:** There is a stone medusa in this room, apparently a victim of petrification. How a medusa became petrified is unclear, but it sits here facing north amidst the sand-filled chamber.
56. **TRAP ROOM:** Located across both the north and west entrances to this chamber are pressure plates that, if tripped, will cause 6 darts to fire in the direction of the one who tripped the trap. The two sets of traps are independent of one another and each can only be tripped once without being reset. The darts are **poisoned**, but the poison is old (saves are at +4).
57. **DRY ROT ROOM:** This room reeks of dry rot and the sand on the floors and walls are covered with **yellow mold** (AC 9, ATK 1, DAM 1-8, SA poison). The room is devoid of interest.
58. **EMPTY ROOM:** This room, choked with dust and sand like the rest of the level, is empty except for a secret door. The door leads to a staircase that runs out from the ziggurat under the desert to a hidden entrance in a shallow wash about 200 feet out into the desert.
59. **SCORPION STATUE:** A petrified giant scorpion is in this room, covered in dust. One of its legs is broken off.
60. **WEB WIGHTS:** This small room is completely filled with thick, dusty webs such that its full extent cannot be seen. A dead giant spider lies dried up in the front of the room, clearly quite old. The webs are very tough but easily burned out. However, doing so will release **four wights** (AC 5, HD 4+3, HP 21, ATK 1, DAM 1-4, SA level drain, SD silver or magic to hit, undead immunities) that have been bound up in the webs for many years, unable to escape. Depending on the circumstances, they may be able to surprise an unwary party before they can be stopped. Fire from the burning webs will deal 1d6 damage to them. The room is otherwise empty.



61. **PRISON OF THE SHEDU:** Standing near the north wall of this room is a **shedu** (AC 4, HD 9+9, HP 56, ATK 2, DAM 1-6/1-6, SA psionic abilities, planar travel), paralyzed (not petrified) by some old magic and surrounded by a force field out a few feet from it – the extent of the field is clear as there is no dust or sand in that area. It can be released by a **dispel magic** spell cast against a 14<sup>th</sup> level ability or something more powerful, such as a **wish**. If released, it will be most grateful, saying that it must depart urgently but promising to aid the party in the future if they ever need it. It will not aid them in this particular adventure but will do so in the future, as it is able.

## APPENDIX A: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

**Bag of the Six Demons:** This curious bag appears as a small, black linen sack. Inside its extra-dimensional space dwell six “demons,” elemental powers that are useful in certain situations. Each may be drawn from the bag and used once, at which point the bag will become useless. For each type of elemental demon, there is a 15% chance that it is of a major order of power. The demons are:

**Fire** – this will cause a **fireball** of 8d6 power to strike the desired enemy; no matter the area struck, it will not affect the drawer of the demon or any allies within 20' of him. A major fire demon will cause a **firestorm** that will cause 4d6 damage for 3d6 rounds over a 100' diameter area (save for ½ damage; once again, it does not affect the drawer and allies within 20' of him).

**Air** – this will cause a wind of over 75 miles per hour to blow in the direction the drawer wishes. This is strong enough to blow any aerial creature away from the drawer and to prevent most ground movement against the wind. A major air demon will cause a powerful **tornado** that lasts for d6+4 minutes (damage is 16d6 to those caught in it).

**Water** – this causes a deluge to appear, enough water to fill a 10' cubic space per round. The water will flow away from the drawer and will not affect him. Anything less than giant size will be washed away and possibly drowned (DM discretion). A major demon will cause either a huge **monsoonal storm** or a **tsunami**.

**Earth** – this will cause a large crack to open at the feet of an enemy, who must save versus magic or fall into it and be lost in the bowels of the earth. A major demon will result in a large **earthquake** (20d6), which may harm the drawer (+4 to save for no damage).

**Metal** – This will cause a **lightning bolt** to blast forth from the caster equivalent to a 12<sup>th</sup> level caster. A major demon will cause a **lightning storm** for d6+4 turns over a large area (up to a mile in diameter). Anyone in the affected area not under cover has a 50% chance of being struck by lightning every other round (6d6 damage, save for ½).

**Wood** – drawing this will cause an area of up to 60' diameter to sprout **entangling roots** that will entrap enemies (save versus spells or be trapped for d4 turns). If a major demon is drawn, it will cause a huge forest to appear (DM discretion as to size, but potentially miles across).

**Experience Point Value:** 2,500 **G. P. Value:** 15,000.

**Chalice of Plenty:** This cup is made of filigreed silver and is very ornate. It will, on command, fill with any fine (non-magic) beverage of choice. It can be filled six times per day. **Experience Point Value:** 400 **G. P. Value:** 4,000.

**Comb of the Lady of the Wood:** This item appears to be an intricately carved wooden comb for use by a noble lady. Its carvings depict numerous trees and a woodland setting, and says this in Common: "Throw me to the ground, saying 'let the wood grow' and my family I will bring forth." If this is done, the comb will sprout roots and, within moments, will begin to grow into a great oak tree. However, it will not stop there, as acorns will begin to fall from the tree, leading to more trees in a cascading explosion that will create a full-scale forest of about a mile in diameter, complete with undergrowth, animals, and the like. The woodland is highly enchanted, and can exist in any location regardless of climate, water availability, or the like. It will remain for a year and a day, at which time it will collapse back into the comb. If opened underground, the trees will cause a great deal of chaos as they try to grow, possibly damaging weak structures. However, if in a confined space, after a few rounds of growth, the trees will collapse back into the comb, and it will become inert for a full month, after which it can be used again.

The original oak tree is actually the home to a Dryad who was enchanted long ago and imprisoned in her own comb. When the forest is restored, she will again dwell in the middle of it, where she loves nothing more than brushing her hair with her wooden comb. She will be most appreciative of her deliverance, brief though it may seem to her. **Experience Point Value:** 2,000 **G. P. Value:** 12,000.

**The Gorgoneion:** This item is a small, round shield +1 that displays a stylized medusa face on the front. The shield provides the one who holds it immunity to all forms of petrification. Further, one other person can stand behind the person with the shield to gain a +2 to all saves versus petrification caused by a non-touch attack. **Experience Point Value:** 1,000 **G. P. Value:** 10,000.

**Feather Token (Homunculus):** This token will create a Homunculus (as per MM) that will serve the person who called it forth for 24 hours (except that any class may control it and there is no damage taken if it is destroyed prematurely), at which time it will vanish. **Experience Point Value:** 750 **G. P. Value:** 4,500.

**Quill of Stealing:** This item appears to be a simple quill pen, albeit rather ornate. This pen can be used to steal a signature, or even a wax seal, off of one document and place it on another document in such a manner as to be undetectable save with magic. Only one stolen signature or seal can be held in the pen at a given time and it may only steal once per day. **Experience Point Value:** 4,000 **G. P. Value:** 20,000.

**Skeleton Seed:** These are small nuggets that look like human teeth. When thrown forcefully to the ground, they will sprout into full-sized human skeletons in 1 round and do the bidding of the one that summoned them. They will, however, collapse into dust after d6 hours. They are not true undead and cannot be turned by a cleric. **Experience Point Value:** 100 **G. P. Value:** 400.

## APPENDIX B: NEW MONSTERS

### MEDUSA, GREATER

SIZE: Large (7 feet tall)  
MOVE: 150 ft.  
ARMOR CLASS: 1  
HIT DICE: 9  
ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE: by weapon +1  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Poison, petrification  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: None  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: None  
RARITY: Very rare  
NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1  
LAIR PROBABILITY: 90%  
TREASURE: 10-40k gp (50%), 100-2000 pp (50%), 5-20 gems (30%), 1-10 jewelry (25%), any 4 magic items plus a scroll (35%)  
INTELLIGENCE: Genius

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil  
LEVEL/X.P.: 8 / 1600 + 12/HP

*General information:* Greater Medusa are a sub-species of the more common Medusa, and they are often found as rulers over sisterhoods of those creatures. They are fast, strong, and extremely intelligent. They can use any normal weapon, in addition to the usual Medusa attacks of petrification by gaze and poisonous bite from their snaky hair. Worse, many of these creatures are accomplished magic-users, capable of reaching an ability comparable to their hit dice. They memorize and cast as normal magic-users, and are limited by their spellbooks, as normal.

*Physical description:* The Greater Medusa appears much like the standard Medusa from the waist up. However, below the waist their bodies are that of serpents, coiled and powerful.

### MEDUSA MUMMY

SIZE: Medium  
MOVE: 60 ft.  
ARMOR CLASS: 3  
HIT DICE: 6+3  
ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE: 1-12  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Fear  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Magic to hit  
RARITY: Very Rare  
NO. ENCOUNTERED: 2-8  
LAIR PROBABILITY: 90%  
TREASURE: 1-8k cp (10%), 1-12k sp (15%), 1-8k ep (15%), 1-6k gp (50%), 1-10 gems (10%), 1-6 jewelry (25%), any two magic items plus a potion (15%)  
INTELLIGENCE: Average  
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil  
LEVEL/X.P.: 7 / 1150 + 8/HP

*General information:* In some places, religiously-inclined Medusae are known to mummify and bury their dead. As with humans, at times these medusa mummies can return to life to plague the living. Although no longer able to petrify victims by sight, they have other abilities.

The fear they radiate affects humans and non-humans equally and requires a save versus magic to avoid being paralyzed for d4 rounds (a +1 is granted for each adventurer above an adventurer to mummy ratio greater than six to one). Rather than causing a rotting disease by touch, the Medusa Mummy inflicts a petrifying disease that will result in total petrification within d6 months; for every month not treated, the victim will permanently lose d4 points of dexterity as they slowly turn to stone (reaching zero dexterity means the victim can no longer move at all; other effects at GM's discretion).

They are only hit by magic weapons, and those do but half damage (rounded down). They have the usual undead immunities to sleep, charm, hold, cold-spells, poison, and paralysis. A raise dead spell will turn them into a living medusa with normal powers. They are susceptible to fire. Magic fires are +1 HP per HD of damage. Burning oil does d8 damage the first round it strikes them and double the second round. Holy water does 2d4 damage upon a hit.

*Physical description:* Medusa Mummies are similar to human mummies in most respects.

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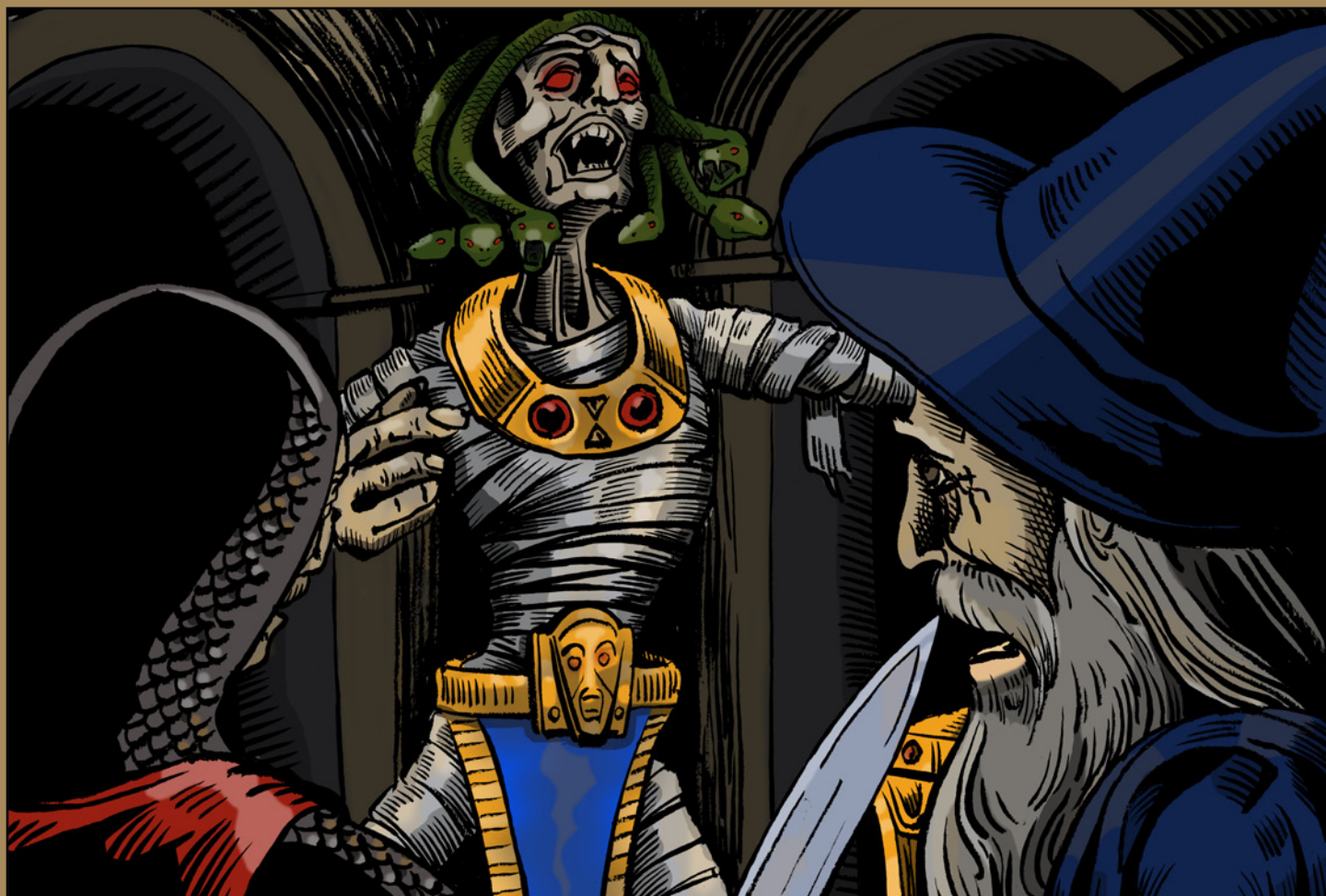
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# Advanced Adventures

## The Desert Shrine of the Sightless Sisters

By Keith Sloan

### The Desert Shrine of the Sightless Sisters

Several days to the east of the desert trading city Isfala, far from any oasis or caravan route, lies the remnants of an ancient Ziggurat, so crumbled with years as to be little more than an oddly-shaped mound in the surrounding wastes. The nomads say that it is an ancient temple to forgotten gods, a place of ill omen. Some whisper that it is not quite deserted, and that a sisterhood of devotees remains, guarding ancient secrets.

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