

# The Compass of Amun-Re

**An Any-System Key  
Pulp Egypt Scenario**

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Episode One: Catacomb Crawl .....	4
Episode Two: Italian Intrigue .....	7
Episode Three: The Burning Legion .....	10
Epilogue .....	12
The Mallory Expedition .....	13
Any-System Key .....	16

## Credits

Written, Designed & Produced by **Peter Schweighofer**

**Photo Credits:** All photos courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division; p. 1, LC-USZ62-127803; p. 2, LC-DIG-matpc-05726, LC-USZ62-117121; p.4, LC-USZ62-108979; p. 9, LC-DIG-prok-10108; p. 11, LC-USE6-D-003987. To the author's best knowledge, these images have no known copyright restrictions. Experience the Library of Congress online at [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov).

## Any-System Key

You can use this adventure with your favorite roleplaying game system. Just check out page 16 and use the rules there to match descriptive gamemaster character abilities and task difficulties to corresponding values in your preferred game. Use the customizable stat forms found in the adventure margins to note values for character stats in your game. Visit the *Any-System Key* page at [griffonpubstudio.com/NESys.html](http://griffonpubstudio.com/NESys.html) for examples of customizing stats into those of your favorite game system.

*The Compass of Amun-Re* Copyright 2009 by Peter Schweighofer; All Rights Reserved. Licensed users of this book may print unlimited copies for personal use only.

Published by Griffon Publishing Studio. Visit us on the web at:  
[griffonpubstudio.com](http://griffonpubstudio.com)



The British Consul in Cairo hires the Hartwell College archaeological expedition to explore the Temple of Amun-Re at Siwa Oasis and retrieve an artifact that might lead to the remains of an ancient Persian army lost in the desert. They must evade others seeking to use the Compass of Amun-Re for their own nefarious ends in the region's growing political tensions.



The



# Egyptian Gazette

CAIRO, FRIDAY, APRIL, 12, 1935

2 piastres



SAKKARA EXCAVATION

## LACAU SUSPENDS EXCAVATION

### GUARD POSTED AT SITE

BY ARCHIBALD LITTLEDALE

Special to the Gazette

SAKKARA, April 8—Pierre Lacau, director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, ordered the Hartwell College excavations at a Sakkara pit tomb closed last week, citing repeated incidents and controversies surrounding the expedition. "A series of occurrences brought on by bad judgment and slipshod practices have cast a bad light on the archaeological community here," he said. "I have temporarily rescinded Hartwell College's concession to excavate at Sakkara pending further investigation of these incidents and review of the expedition's academic and scholarly qualifications." Lacau replaced the locked grate over the tomb pit and posted a small squad of guards to prohibit access to the site around the clock.

Members of the Hartwell College expedition were outraged at the action, believing Lacau's suspension of their

Continued on Page Three

## MEDIUM MEASURES PSYCHIC ENERGY

CAIRO, April 9—Celebrated Austrian medium Madame Marianne von Teufel announced this week that she and a German colleague recently measured "psychokinetic energy" generated from reading aloud a copy of the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead.

Assisted by prominent occultist Professor Gerhard Traumer, von Teufel read aloud the actual Egyptian words to the entire scroll while her colleague monitored a custom-manufactured instrument purported to detect spiritual energy in the vicinity. The two report that readings increased as they read more of the papyrus, claiming proof of spiritual energy focused on key people, locations, and artifacts in the physical world.

Traumer, an expert assigned to the Ahnenerbe, an organization investigating the origins of German ancestral culture, claimed the experiment legitimized the power of ancient Egyptian magic, though

Continued on Page Nine

## MALETTI LEADS EXPEDITION

### CAIRO TO TRIPOLI BY AUTO

CAIRO, April 11—Famed Italian adventurer Umberto Maletti departed Cairo to undertake a desert trek across the Sahara to Tripoli. The expedition seeks to bolster morale at home about Italy's colonial endeavors in Africa. Maletti intends to tour through several oases, including Siwa in Egypt and Jalo, Kufra, and Murzuk, surveying Libya's more remote regions. Maletti previously traveled through regions of the Sahara with renown Hungarian explorer Count Lazlo Almassy.

"By starting in Cairo we seek to show our goodwill to our international neighbors," Maletti said. "We seek to survey the desert not simply for Italy, but for the benefit of all people." He remained optimistic in light of recent Italian tensions with Abyssinia.

The expedition includes one automobile and a truck for supplies, plus an Italian biplane to scout out the best overland routes

Continued on Page Three

## CONGRESS APPROVES EMERGENCY RELIEF

WASHINGTON, DC, April 8—The Congress of the United States of America approved an Emergency Relief Appropriations Act to provide a large-scale public works program for millions made jobless by the economic depression. The legislation authorizes an unprecedented \$5 billion to fund President Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration, an agency tasked with creating jobs constructing schools, bridges, government buildings, roads, and

Continued on Page Five



PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

## Introduction

Siwa Oasis, April 1935—The characters, members of the Hartwell College Egyptian Expedition, stand amid the ruins of the Temple of Amun-Re atop a rise in Siwa Oasis in the desert 300 miles west of Cairo. They were charged with retrieving and using an ancient artifact supposedly hidden within the temple or the catacombs below, the Compass of Amun-Re, by Stanley Hyde-Thompson, the British Consul-General. The Egyptian Antiquities Service recently shut down the heroes' regular dig at Sakkara given the unusual number of controversial events surrounding the excavation of the tomb, and Hyde-Thompson has leverage with influential people who can lift the ban on work there. In return for Hyde-Thompson's help, the characters are investigating a rumor he heard: an ancient "compass" sorts hidden in this temple can lead to a Persian army reportedly lost in the desert in antiquity.

Hyde-Thompson claims he heard rumors of the compass from a reliable source (whom he refuses to reveal). This source claims the artifact resides somewhere in the ruined temple at Siwa Oasis, in a chamber guarded by an ancient, magical ward. The Consul-General personally saw a papyrus pertaining to the compass, and it warned "Only those who have the courage to unflinchingly face Sekhmet without fear or violence can retrieve the compass." The artifact purportedly consists of two inscribed stone disks, the slightly smaller one set within a groove in the larger one. The inner disk supposedly turns to point in the direction of the vanquished army. Hyde-Thompson says the compass was created so the ancient Egyptians of Siwa could locate the invaders' remains to personally collect trophies (traditionally weapons, armor, and severed hands) to commemorate Amun-Re's victory.

Hyde-Thompson expects the heroes to retrieve the artifact from Siwa Oasis, use it to find the lost Persian army, and bring back as much proof of its existence as they can carry. To this end he's fully outfitted their expedition lorry with necessary provisions and tools (see the "What's in the Truck?" sidebar).

Use the character outlines provided on page 13 or make sure each hero has some connection to the expedition: bodyguard, student, assistant archaeologist, museum representative, driver, privileged observer. Allow players to introduce their characters and describe their role in the expedition. Give players copies of "The Egyptian Gazette" handout to set the mood and offer some information on contemporary events.

### The Lost Army

Characters with any skills in history or archaeology easily recall a quote from the ancient Greek historian Herodotus about an army the Persian king Cambyses sent to besiege Egyptian rebels at Siwa Oasis in 525 BC:

"The men sent to attack the Ammonians started from Thebes, having guides with them, and may be clearly traced as far as the city Oasis [the Kharga Oasis]... Thus far the army is known to have made its way; but thenceforth nothing is to be heard of them, except what the Ammonians, and those who get their knowledge from them, report. It is certain they neither reached the Ammonians, nor even came back to Egypt. Further than this, the Ammonians relate as follows: That the Persians set forth from Oasis across the sand, and had reached about half way between that place and themselves, when, as they were at their midday meal, a wind arose from the south, strong and deadly, bringing with it vast columns of whirling sand, which entirely covered up the troops, and caused them wholly to disappear. Thus, according to the Ammonians, did it fare with this army."

### EXPEDITION LORRY

The expedition truck (or the British army lorry) has a cab up front for a driver and two passengers and a payload area covered with canvas stretched over several metal ribs. The truck isn't terribly nimble, but is sturdy enough to endure rough handling.

*Top Speed:* 35 mph

*Driver:* 1

*Passengers:* 10

### WHAT'S IN THE TRUCK?

Hyde-Thompson ensured the expedition lorry carries reasonable supplies for a desert expedition lasting upwards of three weeks:

3 Shovels

1 Pick

2 Crowbars

2 Coils Rope (50 feet each)

1 Pair Binoculars

1 Magnetic Compass

3 Tents

4 Kerosene Lanterns

Set of Sand Mats (for "unsticking"  
vehicles stuck in soft sand)

Camp Equipment

Food Provisions

Gasoline Cans

Water Cans

### Difficulty Values

Routine \_\_\_\_\_

Challenging \_\_\_\_\_

Hard \_\_\_\_\_

Improbable \_\_\_\_\_

## Episode One: Catacomb Crawl



**T**he Temple of Amun-Re at Siwa Oasis remains a sprawling ruin of fallen blocks and columns, with only the innermost regions remaining structurally intact.

After driving the expedition lorry across the desert track and parking it near the Siwa village square, the heroes find themselves atop a rocky butte overlooking the oasis. The temple ruins dominate the top of the rise. From the exterior the characters determine the structure follows the standard architectural layout of many Egyptian temples, with a ruined forecourt, inner columned hall, and an interior sanctum.

The heroes can choose when to begin their temple exploration: morning, afternoon, or dusk. They can spend their spare time in the village of Siwa, though they find few supplies to purchase and nothing but fearful, superstitious rumor about what lies within the temple (angry afreets, spirits of the dead, flesh-eating ghouls, horrific traps).

### Surface Ruins

The temple forecourt lies in ruin: crumbling walls, toppled pillars, fallen stone blocks. The inner court retains portions of its heavy roof, but only the inner sanctum and the antechambers leading from it offer any complete cover. During the daytime ambient sunlight provides enough illumination for the main sanctuary, but the other rooms have only the dimmest of light.

Anyone examining the numerous hieroglyphics decorating walls and columns who makes a *Challenging archaeology* or other appropriate skill roll translates proclamations celebrating the visit Alexander the Great made here in 332 BC, praises to Amun-Re for his wisdom and the revelation of great mysteries, and thanksgivings for the god's defeat of the invading Persian army. With a subsequent *Hard search* roll those examining the hieroglyphics find inscriptions relating to the mysterious compass hidden in the temple vault and guarded by powerful magic. It repeats the earlier warning: "Only those who have the courage to unflinchingly face Sekhmet without fear or violence can retrieve the compass."

Anyone making a general survey of the area and making a *Hard search* roll discovers a tape measure off along one side of the ruined forecourt. From its position above the ever-drifting sand that covers the area and several nearby bootprints, they realize someone's recently been taking measurements in the temple. The tape measure has the mark of an Italian company.

A niche beyond the inner sanctum contains a crumbled colossus of Amun-Re as a ram, presumably the divine image from whence the oracle spoke. Only the kilted thigh, legs, and base of the sculpture remain. Anyone examining the statue more closely and making a *Hard search* check notices two even holes in the rock wall against which the statue's head once sat. The holes seem to delve deeper into the temple, carrying the sound of a light breeze up from some hidden chamber.

One of the side chapels off an anteroom contains vivid, well-preserved hieroglyphics and carvings exclusively dedicated to Amun-

### Competitors

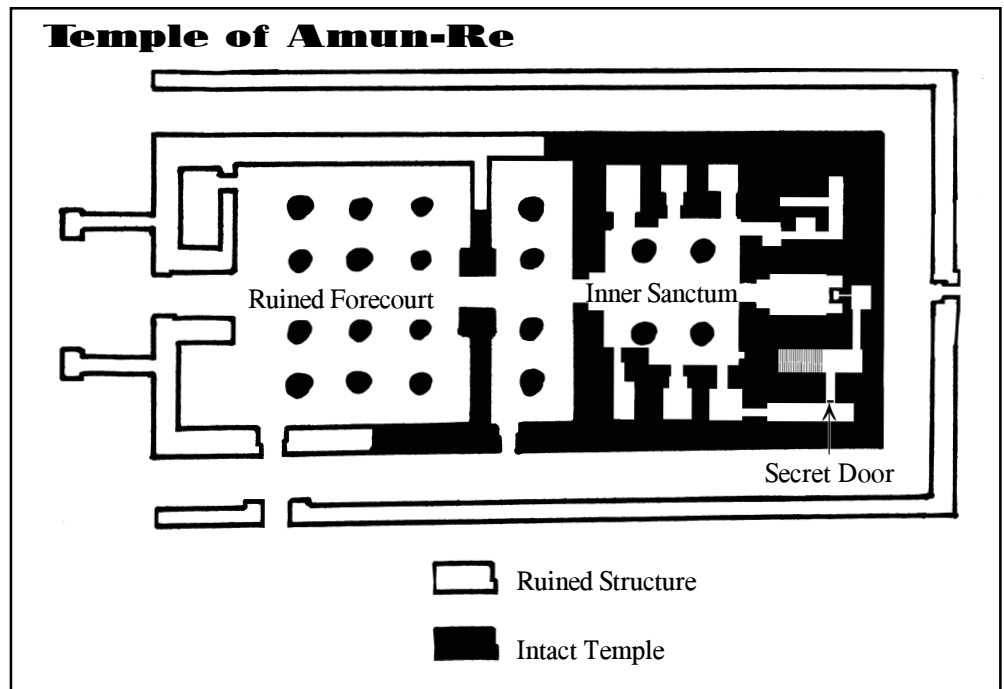
The heroes explore the catacombs in competition with two small groups: a band of Italian desert explorers sent to retrieve the artifact, and a party of nationalist, religious fanatics bent on protecting it.

The Italian expedition maintains its distance from the heroes, preferring to shadow their movements, observe their activities, and skulk nearby without forcing a direct confrontation. The characters might mistake their muttered voices, flickering torchlight, and footsteps for those of malevolent creatures lurking in the labyrinth. The Italians don't move in to ambush the heroes until they're certain the characters have retrieved the Compass of Amun-Re; whether or not their attempt to steal it is successful, they swiftly retreat from the labyrinth to regroup at their expedition vehicles parked at the village outskirts.

A more secretive group, the Fellowship of the Hidden God, named after Amun-Re's epithet "The Hidden One," also waits in the shadows, monitoring the heroes and the Italians. They employ various features of the labyrinth they know so well to hinder both parties. The Fellowship members avoid direct contact, preferring to harass and confuse the intruders indirectly with mysterious sounds and reflected torchlight that drives heroes toward various obstacles (collapsed ceilings, unstable debris, hidden traps). They strike only when they have the advantages of surprise, greater numbers, and a swift escape route. Its furtive members have a knack for slipping away before getting caught, though their combat tactics suffer as a result of their need to mask their true identities. They dress in dingy white robes with the skirts tucked into their sashes for easier movement, with turban sashes concealing their faces.

Re's victory over the Persian invaders; the inscriptions contain specific references to priests summoning the oracle to deal with the Persian crisis. Anyone closely examining this small space and making a *Challenging search* check discovers a loose block of stone. Another *Hard search* roll uncovers the hidden catch that releases the cyclopean block, allowing it to swing inward into a darkened space beyond. A small chamber here once allowed a priest to speak for the oracle, his voice echoing through the holes behind the statue's head in the inner sanctum. The characters also discover a steep staircase delving deeper into the rock.

At any point the heroes reach a dead end or the action slows too much, the ground beneath one character cracks and collapses into a darkened space below. (Give the hero a chance to jump to safety or grab onto a stone near the edge lest he fall and sustain damage.) This entry into the catacombs requires ropes or other climbing devices to safely descend.



### Catacombs

Whether entered by the staircase or through a collapsed hole, the chambers and passages beneath the temple honeycomb the entire hill. The heroes require light sources to adequately explore the labyrinth. They must also cope with the constant moaning of desert winds blowing through the catacombs from cracks in the rocks, concealed exits, and ventilation holes. The sounds might mask the movement of others in the labyrinth or distract the characters from hidden dangers at hand.

The heroes encounter a series of rooms and events during their exploration, all leading to the treasury vault (see below) where the compass resides. Feel free to use or discard these encounters to best suit the adventure's time, difficulty, tension, and pace.

**Burial Niches:** A wide passage contains niches in its walls meant for the burial of ancient priests. Their tattered, mummified remains still rest within the stone alcoves; though their outstretched claws might catch on an unsuspecting character's gear or clothing, they do not magically animate to attack the heroes (at least immediately...).

**Secret Panel:** As they explore the corridors and chambers the heroes find a large, loose stone that might serve as a secret door to hidden regions of the labyrinth. Unfortunately any active searching or prodding loosens the stone, sends it tumbling, and brings down the ceiling! The heroes must make *Challenging dodge* checks to evade falling rock; the incident might also split up the group and block off an avenue of advance or escape.

**Scriptorium:** A round, domed chamber served as the secret temple scriptorium. Small niches in the walls that once stored sacred papyrus scrolls now hold nothing but dust. Smashed wooden benches, writing boxes, and other implements sit heaped in a pile of refuse. Anyone searching the debris or the papyrus dust disturbs a nest of rats that angrily scurry about before running off down a passage.

**Others:** As the heroes delve down corridors and through small chambers they hear evidence that someone else is down here with them...footsteps, muffled voices, clattering gear. Sometimes they think they spot glimmering torchlight around one corner. It is an undead mummy tracking their movement, or one of the two other groups intent on recovering the Compass of Amun-Re? Either the Italians or the Fellowship members (or both) could try intercepting and attacking the heroes, or the characters might try sneaking up behind them

### SEKHMET STATUE (BOSS)

Competent Skills:

*intimidation* \_\_\_\_\_

*notice* \_\_\_\_\_

Expert Skills:

*fight* \_\_\_\_\_

*strength* \_\_\_\_\_

Signature Skill:

*endurance* \_\_\_\_\_

Gear:

*spear* \_\_\_\_\_

*Notes:* Since they're made of stone, these statues ignore half the damage inflicted upon them.

\* To use avatars of Sekhmet instead of statues, make *fight* their Signature Skill and demote *endurance* to an Expert Skill; ignore the half-damage notation, but provide them with suitable armor for additional protection.

to learn their identities and agendas. See the "Competitors" sidebar for more information.

**Bats:** While exploring a corridor the heroes inadvertently startle a huge nest of bats. The flapping swarm, wildly seeking to fly out of the catacombs, knocks several characters off-balance onto a portion of sand that covers ancient boards over a deep well; in the confusion anyone fleeing over it breaks the wood and falls through! They must grab the edge, dodge for the other side, or seek help from someone else before they plummet into the darkness.

### Treasury Vault

The heroes finally reach a massive barrel-vaulted hall; the far wall contains a niche with a small altar upon which sits an artifact. Two statues of the goddess Sekhmet wielding long spears tower on each side of the alcove. The sandy floor and decorated walls offer no traps; but once anyone proceeds halfway across the chamber, both Sekhmet statues come to life! One immediately engages the heroes in combat while the other moves along the wall to block the sole exit.

The heroes have one chance to stop the attacking statues: following the warning from the papyrus Hyde-Thompson saw and inscriptions on the temple walls, they must stand perfectly still, without retreating or attacking, as the statues advance and prepare to strike. Any move to escape, evade, or fight as the statues charge forward results in combat. If the characters boldly hold their ground, the two statues halt and return to their dormant state directly before them. Once they pass this test, the heroes can move about the chamber without fear of the statues' wrath.

**Encounter Option\*:** Instead of pitting the characters against animated statues, imbue the colossi with the divine power of Sekhmet to become avatars of the warrior goddess. As glowing, more fluid beings, they move faster and more gracefully, becoming a more deadly challenge in combat. They still respect the courage of anyone brave and cool enough to stand steady and unflinching in the face of their ferocious advance.

When they finally retrieve the Compass of Amun-Re, the heroes find that it indeed consists of two inscribed stone disks, one set within the other, no more than 10 inches in diameter overall. The slightly smaller one is set within a groove in the larger one. Those who makes a *Challenging archaeology* or other appropriate skill roll can translate the inscribed hieroglyphics; they declare that the compass points to those places where Amun-Re's divine wrath has directly touched the earth, presumably in destroying his adversaries and the enemies of Egypt. (Those examining the wall decorations in the treasury vault can also deduce this information.) When a character initially picks it up the compass pulses with a dull yellowish glow; the inner "needle" disk begins turning as soon as they begin moving the artifact, always pointing slightly west of true south (about 187 degrees).

### Ambushes

Once the heroes retrieve the compass, the other parties lurking in the catacombs actively try stealing it. The Italians seem the boldest, ambushing the characters along their return route. They set upon the heroes with torches and fists; the Italians refrain from discharging firearms in the labyrinth's close quarters, but they have no scruples brandishing guns to intimidate the heroes. They disperse and flee if the fight clearly goes against them, if their leader gives the signal to retreat, or if anyone fires a gun (the percussive flash in the close quarters momentarily stuns and confuses everyone).

The Fellowship of the Hidden God moves in on whoever leaves the earlier ambush with the compass. They might fall upon the heroes as they successfully evade the Italians, or they could assault the Italians to get the compass, giving the heroes a chance to sneak up on the fray and steal the compass back in the confusion.

The Fellowship uses the element of surprise to lie low and trip adversaries with short staves; they use them as clubs, preferring to subdue their enemies as they scramble to grab the compass. If the skirmish goes against them or opponents employ more deadly weapons, the Fellowship members lash out with daggers to impair their adversaries before fleeing back into the dark labyrinth.

### FELLOWSHIP MEMBER (Henchman)

Competent Skills:

*climb* \_\_\_\_\_

*dodge* \_\_\_\_\_

*fight* \_\_\_\_\_

*notice* \_\_\_\_\_

*run* \_\_\_\_\_

Expert Skill:

*stealth* \_\_\_\_\_

Gear:

*staff* \_\_\_\_\_

*dagger* \_\_\_\_\_

## Episode Two: Italian Intrigue

The action depends on who emerges from the catacombs with the Compass of Amun-Re. The Italian cross-Sahara expedition stopped at Siwa Oasis to explore the temple catacombs and retrieve the Compass of Amun-Re before following it themselves to the lost Persian army. If the heroes have the artifact, the Italians regroup and try taking it by force. If the Italians have the compass they make immediate preparations to leave the oasis and travel south into the desert.

A tall, lanky scoundrel named Umberto Maletti leads the Italian expedition. Maletti looks and acts rough around the edges, concealing his ruthlessness behind a cover of civility and charm. Most times he seems almost too relaxed in dealing with the members of his team or even interacting with the heroes; but in tense situations where action counts, the friendly facade vanishes and he grimly makes plans, barks orders, and moves with deadly efficiency.

The Italian team members need such dramatic leadership. Like their leader, they relish their casual attitude toward everything; but in a pinch they tend to bungle things with oafish clumsiness and a general ineptitude. They're more interested in savoring the adventure of a desert expedition than engaging in the gritty work of stealing some dirty old artifact. The team members still obey their leader, though their hearts aren't truly in their work. (Include enough Italians to pose a serious threat to the heroes.)

### Heroes Embark

The characters probably want to leave Siwa Oasis as soon as possible when they escape the catacombs with the compass. Unless they specifically left someone to watch their lorry and ward away the locals—or hired someone reliable from the native population—the characters find their truck disturbed. If the Italians reached it first, one man rifles through the supplies in back, taking stock of the inventory and determining what they can use for their own expedition (essentially all of it); another has the engine hood open to inspect the innards in preparation for driving off with the truck. If the Siwans got to the lorry, they happily toss things from the payload into the waiting crowd, which cheers and scrambles for whatever equipment comes their way.

Chasing off anyone meddling with the lorry proves easy; the Italians run off to their own expedition vehicles if discovered, and the locals disperse at any show of anger or force (though if the heroes tolerate them they might hang about for more handouts). Retrieving what they can and packing it back into the truck takes precious time, unless the characters prefer to simply leave with what equipment remains. If they're aware of the Italian expedition, and have no scruples about theft, they might find some way to highjack the vehicles (and the supplies inside) parked at the village edge.

However the characters manage to leave Siwa Oasis, the Italians give chase—especially if the characters took their vehicles—pursuing with whatever means they have at their disposal: any vehicles left behind, an old jalopy fond behind a villager's house, even horses and camels.

### Italian Departure

If the Italians snatch the compass from the heroes, they make a dash for their vehicles parked on the village outskirts. The characters emerge from the catacombs just in time to see the Italians head off into the warren of mud-brick houses surrounding the temple hill. They can pursue on foot, with the expedition lorry (assuming they retrieve it from anyone pillage its supplies), or with horses or camels hastily “borrowed” from the natives. The Italians lead them on a wild chase through the village, bashing their way through crowds, the bazaar, narrow alleys, crumbling houses, and heaps of trash. The terrain offers many opportunities to outflank the enemy, prepare ambushes, and try stealing the compass back.

Once the Italians reach their vehicles they load up and quickly move out. The ground vehicles easily start up and drive southward, though quick-thinking or fast-acting charac-

### UMBERTO MALETTI (BOSS)

#### Competent Skills:

*archaeology* \_\_\_\_\_

*bluff* \_\_\_\_\_

*charm* \_\_\_\_\_

*fight* \_\_\_\_\_

*intimidate* \_\_\_\_\_

*notice* \_\_\_\_\_

*search* \_\_\_\_\_

*survival* \_\_\_\_\_

*tactics* \_\_\_\_\_

#### Expert Skills:

*command* \_\_\_\_\_

*dodge* \_\_\_\_\_

*drive* \_\_\_\_\_

*shoot* \_\_\_\_\_

*stealth* \_\_\_\_\_

#### Signature Skill:

*navigate* \_\_\_\_\_

#### Gear:

*pistol* \_\_\_\_\_

*pocket knife* \_\_\_\_\_

*canteen* \_\_\_\_\_

*compass* \_\_\_\_\_

*flashlight* \_\_\_\_\_

### EXPEDITION MEMBER (Henchman)

#### Competent Skills:

*carouse* \_\_\_\_\_

*charm* \_\_\_\_\_

*drive* \_\_\_\_\_

*notice* \_\_\_\_\_

*shoot* \_\_\_\_\_

*stealth* \_\_\_\_\_

#### Expert Skill:

*fight* \_\_\_\_\_

#### Gear:

*pistol* \_\_\_\_\_

*pocket knife* \_\_\_\_\_

*canteen* \_\_\_\_\_

*flashlight* \_\_\_\_\_

## Italian Vehicles

The Italian expedition parked its three vehicles on the outskirts of the village near a patch of hard sand that serves as an impromptu airstrip. The pilot (a member of the expedition with *pilot* as his *Expert Skill* instead of *fight*) casually lurks near the biplane, occasionally climbing around it to check the engine and the control surfaces. Another Italian leans against the AS37 truck smoking a cigarette and smiling at local passers-by; though he keeps an eye on the Fiat car also parked nearby.

### FIAT 500 COLONIALE

The Italians outfitted this soft-top sedan for desert travel with overinflated tires, exterior racks for additional supplies, and spare fuel cans in the trunk. It carries any equipment and personnel that doesn't fit into the truck.

*Top Speed:* 50 mph

*Range:* 350 miles

*Crew:* 1

*Passengers:* 4

### AS37 TRUCK

The Italians' lorry isn't as large as the characters' but still serves to carry all the expedition equipment and personnel.

*Top Speed:* 35 mph

*Range:* 300 miles

*Driver:* 1

*Passengers:* 8

### FIAT CR.32

The mainstay of the *Regia Aeronautica* (the Italian air force), this sturdy biplane with fixed landing gear has civilian markings, though the machine guns remain in place. It serves as a scout vehicle for the ground vehicles, but also provides aerial protection if required.

*Top Speed:* 224 mph

*Range:* 485 miles

*Crew:* 1

*Ordnance:* 7.77mm machine guns (2) firing forward

ters might find some way to hop aboard the truck or otherwise waylay the car. The biplane takes a bit more preparation to take off. While the pilot primes the propeller, pulls the wheel chocks, and gets the engine going, the heroes have an opportunity to overtake the aircraft and overcome the pilot. The fight might revolve around the whirling propeller as a deadly obstacle, or continue after take-off as the heroes cling to various parts of the aircraft.

If they fail to overtake the Italians and retrieve the compass, the heroes might try buying horses or camels to continue the chase; the former proves faster at immediately catching up to them, though the latter move more slowly but travel farther. They might also avoid a direct confrontation and instead follow their tracks through the desert, keeping a safe distance until they realize the Italians have found the location of the lost Persian army.

## Fellowship

In either case members of the Fellowship of the Hidden God, in the guise of natives attracted by the commotion, discreetly hinder both the heroes and the Italians in any of their activities within the village. They put obstacles in their path during any chase (rolling wagons, herds of goats, throngs of confused locals, obstinate camels, even a wedding procession), sneak up to sabotage expedition vehicles, and ultimately try ambushing whichever party still possesses the compass.

For additional dramatic effect, extend the Fellowship's reach beyond Siwa Oasis. The heroes might believe themselves safe in the open desert, but the cult might call on their "Hidden God" to raise up sandstorms, mire vehicles in vast patches of "soft" sand, or summon skeletal creatures from the remains of those who died in the sandy wastelands. In a more conventional move, the Fellowship members pursue on horses or camels intent on overtaking the characters or preparing an ambush ahead which livens up their desert travels.

## Into the Desert

Once the heroes manage to evade their adversaries, they set off into the desert either in possession of the Compass of Amun-Re or in pursuit of it. (For other options, see the "Giving Up the Chase" sidebar.) The compass constantly points south-southeast, shifting occasionally as the heroes veer off course, and pulsing with a faint golden glow that gradually grows brighter as they proceed.

### Giving Up the Chase

What if the heroes give up the chase after emerging from the temple catacombs?

If they retrieved the compass, they might decide to return to Cairo instead of following it into the southern desert. They face numerous obstacles on the desert track back to the city: the Italians pursue with the truck and car (possibly armed with a previously concealed heavy machine gun), with air support from the CR.32 and its machine guns. Members of the Fellowship of the Hidden God with firearms might also prepare an ambush on horseback, or use ancient magic to summon a sandstorm to strand the heroes. Once in Cairo, they remain in danger of burglaries, muggings, and other violent attempts to steal the compass until they hand it off to British Consul-General Stanley Hyde-Thompson; even then they're not certain if he has the purest of intentions for the powerful artifact...

If the Italians took the compass and head off into the desert, the characters might simply give up and return to civilization. In this case they don't receive aid from the Consul-General in re-opening their dig at Sakkara, but, after a few weeks in Cairo, suddenly find themselves the targets of strange attacks by burning zombies of ancient Persian soldiers who seemingly emerge from nowhere to exact vengeance (see "Episode Three: The Burning Legion" below). Their failure to pursue the compass results in the Italians (and their German allies) finding the lost Persian army and resurrecting it to do their sinister bidding.



Depending on the circumstances, the characters might catch up with the Italians and force a confrontation; or they might have to fend off a direct attack from members of the Fellowship. Interjecting other brief encounters during this portion of their quest could liven up an otherwise dull journey; none are essential to the plot, though they may enhance the atmosphere:

**“Soft” Sand:** The characters quickly learn to avoid patches of “soft” sand, areas where the ground isn’t hard that suck the lorry tires and mire them in shifting sand. Luckily both their truck and both Italian vehicles carry sand mats, long, woven mats with rope handles at one end used to tuck under tires to give them traction in the soft sand. This simple solution ultimately works, but it requires a good deal of pulling on the sand mats, pushing the vehicle, and patience. The heroes lose precious time if they’re pursuing the Italians or fleeing any adversaries.

**Italian Biplane:** If the heroes failed to steal or damage the Italian Fiat CR.32 biplane, it soon finds them as it scans the desert in a methodical pattern south of Siwa Oasis. The aircraft makes several diving attacks at the characters, strafing them with machine guns and possibly damaging any vehicles (or people), thus slowing the expedition. With limited fuel, however, the attack does not last very long, and the biplane does not return.

**Supply Cache:** One day out of Siwa the heroes spot a cache of supplies some desert explorer (possibly the Italians) hid for future expeditions. If the Italians set out ahead of the heroes with the compass, the supplies are strewn across the sand: empty cans for gasoline and water, empty food tins, and empty wooden crates. The Fellowship might have passed the heroes, discovered the cache, used what they could and scattered the rest to the sands, denying its use to anyone else. The heroes might spend time digging for overlooked gear, but they find only a few items to supplement their own provisions. The site offers proof that either they’re on the right trail pursuing the Italians or the Fellowship is anticipating their movements.

**Mirage:** The desert drive quickly becomes tedious. With the oppressive heat and the monotonous terrain of endless sand dunes, the characters either lapse into sluggish lethargy or begin seeing things in the quivering waves of heat. They might spot any number of imaginary objects on the horizon: a temptingly cool oasis, ships gliding over the sands, Bedouin moving on a distant dune, squadrons of airplanes, even a shimmering white city. All are illusions, heat-induced exaggerations of oddly shaped dunes, stone cairns, low, rocky hills, and other desert features. Such diversions can easily distract the driver and send him into “soft” sand (see above) or over the edge of a dune the wrong way, tipping the truck over.

**Distant Aircraft:** At various points the heroes think they spot an aircraft far on the horizon, though they cannot positively identify it’s type or nationality. Anyone making a *Hard notice* roll or a *Challenging pilot* check believes it’s a multi-engine craft with either two or three propellers, not the single engine of the Italian biplane. The aircraft remains in the distance and never approaches enough for a positive identification. The characters might suspect someone’s watching their movements from a distance, but they don’t realize the more powerful force secretly behind the Italian expedition to obtain the compass waits to swoop in once the heroes discover the lost Persian legion...

**Sandstorm:** Roiling brown clouds on the horizon herald the rapid approach of a sandstorm. Whether or not they spot and identify it, the heroes have precious few minutes to find some shelter for their truck (in the leeward side of a dune or along some rocky hill or ravine) and tie up the canvas covering the payload area. Naturally occurring or summoned by Fellowship members, the sandstorm halts the expedition and half-buries its vehicles. If they’re pursuing the Italians, it wipes their tracks from the sands, forcing the heroes to scout around to find new tracks when both parties resume their trek in the morning.



## Episode Three: The Burning Legion

### BURNING WARRIOR (Henchman)

**Competent Skills:***dodge* \_\_\_\_\_*endurance* \_\_\_\_\_*intimidate* \_\_\_\_\_*notice* \_\_\_\_\_**Expert Skill:***fight* \_\_\_\_\_**Gear:***spear* \_\_\_\_\_*sword* \_\_\_\_\_*shield* \_\_\_\_\_

*Notes:* Piercing weapons (guns, arrows, spears) inflict minimum damage; slashing or bashing weapons inflict half damage; dismembered parts continue functioning, even independently, until a called shot to the head (with increased difficulty to hit) destroys it.

After several days the heroes come upon the location of the lost Persian army; or if they're still pursuing the Italians they can follow the expedition there. The Compass of Amun-Re, if it remains in their possession, continues pointing to this area, emitting an intensifying golden glow and an almost uncomfortable amount of heat as it gets closer to the site.

The characters finally reach a broad valley at the edge of the dunes where the winds have blown the sand away, revealing a vast plain of blackened rock dotted with innumerable fist-sized globules of glass. They find no apparent evidence of ancient structures, charred or bleached bones, or artifacts left behind by an army.

How the heroes manage to examine this unworldly terrain depends on whether they possess the compass, if they continued their quest with pursuers on their trail, or if they followed the Italians without the compass. Characters who eluded the Italians have relatively free reign to roam around the blackened valley collecting and examining the glass clumps. If their adversaries arrived first, however, the heroes might cautiously observe from a distance (the nearest dune offers adequate cover) rather than forcing a direct confrontation.

### Glass Prison

When the heroes pick up a glass clump and closely examine it, they notice a tiny golden light shining within the opaque glass. The glow increases slightly when the characters handle the globule, speak, or otherwise pay it any attention. The light seems to exhibit qualities of intelligence and life. The glass clumps contain the cursed remains and warped life energy of one ancient Persian warrior, imprisoned here and buried beneath the sand centuries ago by the divine wrath of Amun-Re.

Should any globule sustain a sharp blow sufficient to break any normal glass jar—a fall onto a hard surface, crushing between supply crates, smashing into other hard objects—it shatters in a burst of light. A human figure emerges from the shards: an emaciated warrior with charred skin and burning, coal-ember eyes who still wears tattered tunics and leggings and brandishes a spear and battered shield. An eternally cursed soul filled with vengeful anger turns the corpse into a somewhat subservient zombie. Warriors from globules intentionally broken instinctively identify their commander (whoever broke the glass), march up to them and stand at attention in ranks awaiting further orders. Those whose glass prisons were accidentally smashed, or whose “commander” isn't easily determined, mill about aimlessly waiting for someone to take charge.

Controlling the burning warriors requires someone to make a *command* or *cast magic* roll, with a slight bonus for those who released them from their glass prisons. The difficulty depends on the complexity of the task, ranging from *Challenging* for simple orders (march in formation, move in a general direction, take cover) to *Hard* for more complex requests (engage a particular enemy, execute a complicated tactical maneuver, wait before an action, stop a particular activity). This procedure also works if different people vie for control over the warriors, with each party making an appropriate opposed roll. In such contests magical-based skills have a greater advantage over command-based ones.

Almost 1,000 glass globules litter the valley floor, with some still buried in the sand along its perimeter.

Assuming the Italians reach the valley first, they innocently explore the area and collect samples of blackened rock and glass lumps. If the biplane remains operational in Italian possession, it lands on the flat ground and remains to offer support. They establish a small encampment at the valley's northernmost end, intending to remain one night, then pack up and head west across the desert the next morning. To inject an interesting incident to liven up the heroes' surveillance, allow the Italians in their ignorance to break open one of the glass clumps and frantically deal with the undead Persian warrior who emerges.

If the characters reach the valley first or eliminated their Italian competition earlier, they have free reign to explore the terrain for a short while.

### NAZI PARATROOPER (Henchman)

**Competent Skills:***climb* \_\_\_\_\_*dodge* \_\_\_\_\_*jump* \_\_\_\_\_*fight* \_\_\_\_\_*notice* \_\_\_\_\_*run* \_\_\_\_\_**Expert Skill:***shoot* \_\_\_\_\_**Gear:***rifle* \_\_\_\_\_*knife* \_\_\_\_\_*survival pack* \_\_\_\_\_

## Nazi Takeover

Though the Italians might not comprehend the full impact of their discoveries in the valley, their allies the Nazis fully realize the potential for an undead legion, even one armed with the primitive weapons of the ancients.

After the Italians or heroes make a cursory search of the area, an airplane cruises overhead. It returns a moment later and starts ejecting a platoon of paratroopers. Having followed the expedition from a distance, Nazi scout planes reported the valley's location to an awaiting transport which took off immediately to ensure the Nazis take full advantage of this discovery. The Nazi paratroopers come from a secret, militant SS unit charged with investigating and forcibly appropriating occult artifacts.

Once they land the paratroopers gather their chutes, stow them in a pile, and seek out their commander, Hauptsturmführer Perser, for further instructions. (*Hauptsturmführer* is the SS equivalent of a *Hauptman*, or *Captain*.) When it's clear the Nazis have taken control Perser directs the the Junkers Ju-52 tri-motor transport plane to land on a flat, clear stretch of the valley floor.

If the Italians occupy the valley, Perser strides up to their leader Maletti and begins issuing orders; he commends them for their discovery but essentially dismisses them. The Italians begin packing up their camp and dutifully leave, though quite resentful at the loss of their hard-earned gains.

The heroes pose a greater problem for Hauptsturmführer Perser. Unless the characters made extraordinary efforts to conceal their presence in a desert environment with little cover, the Nazis spot them in their first aerial flyby. A detachment of paratroopers races toward their position, guns at the ready, to capture them. The heroes could flee immediately, but any delay in their departure (packing the truck, scrambling for samples of the glass globules, pulling a vehicle from the sand) prevents their successful getaway. Though the Nazis refrain from shooting the characters, they have no qualms damaging vehicles to prevent escape. Although no nation currently entertains a state of war with Nazi Germany, Perser cannot afford to allow the heroes to witness his activities and report them to authorities; he has no qualms eliminating them and, if questioned, offering evidence that their expedition succumbed to the dangers of the harsh desert. Perser seeks to dispatch the heroes in the course of his experiments with the resurrected Persian army and erase any evidence of their presence (camp, expedition vehicles, tracks) later.

When the Nazis have subdued the characters and taken control of the valley, Perser orders his troops to break open 10 glass clumps, summoning that many burning warriors. The Hauptsturmführer initially commands his sergeant to organize the Persians into ranks and bark various orders at them, measuring his subordinate's ability to control the zombies with simple willpower alone (assume the sergeant has *command* as his Expert Skill). The sergeant proves adequate at ordering the burning warriors to undertake simple orders like moving around and staying in formation, but with more complex requests—attack particular targets (as opposed to fighting everyone in sight), march to a specific location, executing particular tactics—his barked commands send the Persians into a confused muddle, some shambling off randomly, others fighting the nearest living opponent, others milling about aimlessly. (Incidentally, the Persians seem to understand all languages; they act more on the intent, willpower, and emotional gist of a command rather than the actual wording of it.)

When it's obvious the sergeant's control wavers, Hauptsturmführer Perser steps in and tests his control abilities using his *cast magic* skill. After putting the burning warriors through a few basic maneuvers, he orders them to attack the heroes, starting with a single zombie and then moving on to set the remaining horde upon them. He might even allow the heroes to openly defend themselves with weapons to further judge the burning warriors' abilities to withstand damage.

Despite the presence of several paratroopers pointing guns at them to enforce silence, bold characters might try exerting their own wills with *command* or *cast magic* to try wresting control of the burning warriors from Perser. Intrigued, Perser allows this contest to continue to further judge various means of controlling the Persian zombies.



### HAUPTSTURMFÜHRER

#### PERSER (BOSS)

Competent Skills:

*archaeology* \_\_\_\_\_

*bluff* \_\_\_\_\_

*dodge* \_\_\_\_\_

*intimidate* \_\_\_\_\_

*notice* \_\_\_\_\_

*persuade* \_\_\_\_\_

*tactics* \_\_\_\_\_

Expert Skills:

*command* \_\_\_\_\_

*fight* \_\_\_\_\_

*shoot* \_\_\_\_\_

Signature Skill:

*cast magic* \_\_\_\_\_

*Gear:*

*pistol* \_\_\_\_\_

*survival pack* \_\_\_\_\_

During these demonstrations the other Nazi paratroopers focus on the unnatural burning warriors and their other prisoners; few, if any, have the tactical presence of mind to post a watch on the dunes or monitor the valley's perimeter....

### **The Hand of Amun-Re**

While the characters and Hauptsturmführer Perser test their control over the burning warriors, Amun-Re (or some other phenomenon one might attribute to the Hidden God) prepares yet again to unleash his wrath on those who would threaten his precious Egypt.

Anyone who manages to pull their attention away from the gruesome experiments controlling ancient zombies might notice the beginnings of two natural peculiarities: sandy clouds rising from the ground on the seemingly growing and intensifying overhead.

Attentive heroes must somehow alert each other and the Nazis, though their captors initially dismiss their intentions as intentional distractions from the experiments at hand. Perser has no intention of allowing the characters to go free once his paratroopers capture them. The open desert terrain offers little hope of successfully sneaking away.

The characters might take advantage of the confusion and panic when the Nazis suddenly realize their endangered by inexplicable and impending natural catastrophes. Once the Nazis recognize the approaching threat, they quickly grab as many glass clumps as they can and race off toward their plane. They'd rather save their own skins and leave the heroes to their own fate than waste precious time gunning down a crowd of inept civilians.

Running for expedition vehicles offers few obstacles other than avoiding panicked paratroopers, who have no qualms knocking over any characters who get in their way. The heat gradually increases and the wind begins whipping up sand and light debris. Once they reach their truck, the heroes must drive it to the valley edge and crest the first steep dune, requiring a *Hard drive* roll lest the lorry tip over on the steep slope or become stuck in soft sand. Taking off in any aircraft—including the Italian biplane if the heroes “borrowed” it or the Nazis' Ju-52 tri-motor transport—proves extremely difficult given the rising winds and the increasing amount of airborne sand that can clog sensitive engines. Taking off in the gale requires a *Hard pilot* check, but staying aloft long enough to clear the valley involves making an *Improbable pilot* test.

Everyone must flee the blackened valley before the sandstorm arrives or find themselves trapped in the burning prisons of the glass globules. The unbearable heat incinerates anyone left in the valley and disintegrates any remaining Persian warriors; the sandstorm's blast entombs their souls in molten glass and completely covers the area, making it indistinguishable from the rest of the desert.

## **Epilogue**

Having just escaped the scorching touch of Amun-Re—or some inexplicable natural disaster, however they want to rationalize it—the heroes regroup and set off on the long journey back to civilization.

When they finally reach Cairo, the characters might have little to show the Consul-General for their troubles. At the very least Hyde-Thompson listens to their account of the expedition with great interest, though he takes no notes.

If the heroes managed to can recover the compass from the Nazis (or conceal it from them in the first place), the Consul-General gladly accepts it as an artifact retrieved from the expedition he sponsored. He insists on keeping any of the enigmatic glass clumps the heroes collected as essential to the security of His Majesty's government.

Even if the characters only bring back a detailed report of their activities, Hyde-Thompson gives each of them a small monetary bonus in addition to promising his support in persuading the authorities to re-open their dig at Sakkara. Their devotion and sense of duty also earns them a powerful ally behind the scenes in Cairo diplomatic circles, a subtle but powerful supporter who might aid them in further Egyptian adventures.

## **The Mallory Expedition**

Use these six members of the Hartwell College's expedition, formerly under Professor Mallory's leadership, as templates for characters to use in this scenario or any Pulp Egypt adventure. Use them as written or adjust them to the campaign's themes and players' preference. Customize their skills using the *Any-System Key* found on page 12.

### **ELLIOTT HAMILTON**

**Occupation:** Archaeologist

**Age:** 29 **Gender:** Male

**Physical Description:** Slight build, glasses, studious features, mop of blonde hair, dressed in tweed jacket and cap.

**Background:** As Professor Percy Mallory's protege, you've served as his assistant and colleague on various expeditions to Egypt. You're good friends, and spend many evenings smoking pipes and discussing theories about life in ancient times. You're a diligent scholar, studious academic, and meticulous archaeologist. You respect Mallory, even if you often sit off to the side taking on the daily tasks of the dig while he basks in the limelight. You're a quiet fellow used to listening more than barking orders.

You have a thorough understanding of Arab culture and of ancient Egyptian language and history. Thanks to generous financing from Hartwell College, you and the expedition rarely want for funds. This also ties you to the institution, obliging you to spend your time administering the expedition and overseeing the logistical aspects of its operations.

### **ELLIOTT HAMILTON (BOSS)**

**Competent Skills:**

*climb* \_\_\_\_\_

*dodge* \_\_\_\_\_

*persuade* \_\_\_\_\_

**Expert Skills:**

*deduce* \_\_\_\_\_

*search* \_\_\_\_\_

*speak Arabic* \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature Skill:**

*Egyptology* \_\_\_\_\_

**Equipment:**

*pocket knife* \_\_\_\_\_

*satchel* \_\_\_\_\_

*electric torch* \_\_\_\_\_

*magnifying glass* \_\_\_\_\_

*notepad, pencil, ruler, brush*

### **MACK TANNER**

**Occupation:** Wayward Adventurer

**Age:** 35 **Gender:** Male

**Physical Description:** Tall, well-built, with rugged good looks and a shock of wavy brown hair. Wears a leather jacket, brown fedora, and sturdy expedition boots.

**Background:** Your wanderlust and natural curiosity have led to a life of varied adventure across the globe: mountaineering in the Rockies, treasure hunting in India, smuggling in Italy, exploring along the Amazon. Along the way you've picked up a few useful skills that help you hold your own in a fight and get by using your wits. When you found yourself in Cairo looking for a job, you signed on with the Mallory archaeological expedition to Sakkara. Your varied past and often rough demeanor sometimes inhibit courteous interaction with others, but you get along well enough with your fellow expedition members. Although you have few academic skills that help with the dig, you oversee general security, make sure the native *fellaheen* workers stay in line, and keep the less worldly excavation personnel out of trouble.

### **MACK TANNER (BOSS)**

**Competent Skills:**

*navigate* \_\_\_\_\_

*notice* \_\_\_\_\_

**Expert Skills:**

*bluff* \_\_\_\_\_

*climb* \_\_\_\_\_

*dodge* \_\_\_\_\_

*fight* \_\_\_\_\_

*sneak* \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature Skill:**

*shoot* \_\_\_\_\_

**Equipment:**

*Webley revolver* \_\_\_\_\_

*compass* \_\_\_\_\_

*satchel* \_\_\_\_\_

**ISABELLE NEAVE (BOSS)**

## Competent Skills:

*bluff* \_\_\_\_\_*brawl* \_\_\_\_\_*charm* \_\_\_\_\_*dodge* \_\_\_\_\_*gamble* \_\_\_\_\_*navigation* \_\_\_\_\_*streetwise* \_\_\_\_\_

## Expert Skills:

*drive* \_\_\_\_\_*ride* \_\_\_\_\_*shoot* \_\_\_\_\_

## Signature Skill:

*pilot* \_\_\_\_\_

## Equipment:

*Derringer* \_\_\_\_\_*flight jacket, leather helmet, goggles***ISABELLE NEAVE****Occupation:** Vehicle Ace**Age:** 23 **Gender:** Female**Physical Description:** Gorgeous figure accentuated by boots, riding pants, leather jacket, silk scarf, goggles and flight cap.**Background:** A rich upbringing exposed you to extravagant toys like motorcars and aeroplanes, so you naturally developed an affinity for and proficiency in operating them. You were in Cairo when your degenerate brother squandered the family fortune. You found work driving or piloting those wealthy enough to afford automobiles and aeroplanes (though they'd never let a woman do such work for the army or Royal Air Force). You still have a flair about you from growing up rich, though this means you spend more money than you make. Everything's an adventure to you, even overseeing transport and logistics for the Mallory expedition. You drive their lorry, picking up supplies and hauling artifacts back to the warehouse in Cairo. When you're not driving, you watch the dig and gamble with the *fellahin*.**IBRAHIM AL-KASSAM (BOSS)**

## Competent Skills:

*dodge* \_\_\_\_\_*endurance* \_\_\_\_\_*lift* \_\_\_\_\_*persuade* \_\_\_\_\_*streetwise* \_\_\_\_\_

## Expert Skills:

*fight* \_\_\_\_\_*intimidate* \_\_\_\_\_

## Signature Skill:

*command* \_\_\_\_\_

## Equipment:

*stout stick* \_\_\_\_\_*pipe, kaftan, tarboosh***IBRAHIM AL-KASSAM****Occupation:** *Fellahin* Foreman**Age:** 52 **Gender:** Male**Physical Description:** Hulking, dark-skinned Arab with full graying beard wearing a tarboosh and sashed kaftan**Background:** A native Egyptian, you have worked among the ancient ruins all your life. You began hauling and sifting dirt from excavations for *ferengi* (foreigners) who came to dig seeking tombs and treasures. You befriended many and soon rose to become a foreman, directing crowds of *fellahin* peasants on vast excavations and advising great archaeologists how best to unearth Egypt's regal past. You deal sternly with workers, who need strict leadership and supervision, but you've also earned their respect. Those unfamiliar with your work often treat you as infirm or senile considering your great age. To your employers you offer quiet suggestions and paternal encouragement; they are friends whom you faithfully serve.

**ARCHIBALD LITTLEDALE**

**Occupation:** Reporter

**Age:** 25 **Gender:** Male

**Physical Description:** Tall and wiry, with a thin mustache, wearing a dapper suit and broad-rimmed hat, and carrying a pen and pad in his hand.

**Background:** As the son of a cotton mill owner in the Nile Delta, you spent much of your youth in Cairo among both wealthy Europeans and common Egyptians. You made friends with everyone you met, finding something interesting in each person and encouraging them to talk about themselves and their work. You used this natural rapport when you got a job reporting for Cairo's English-language newspaper, the *Egyptian Gazette*. You cover various beats: archaeological digs, society gossip, business news, military happenings. Cairo can be a pretty rough city, so you carry a two-shot Derringer in your pocket in case of trouble. You maintain a wide cast of low-level contacts throughout Cairo, people who can offer more information or other angles on stories you're researching. Your solid understanding of Arabic culture also aids you in navigating the exotic terrain of Egyptian society.

**ARCHIBALD LITTLEDALE  
(BOSS)**

**Competent Skills:**

*dodge* \_\_\_\_\_

*sneak* \_\_\_\_\_

*speak Arabic* \_\_\_\_\_

**Expert Skills:**

*bluff* \_\_\_\_\_

*charm* \_\_\_\_\_

*notice* \_\_\_\_\_

*persuade* \_\_\_\_\_

*search* \_\_\_\_\_

*streetwise* \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature Skill:**

*investigate* \_\_\_\_\_

**Equipment:**

*Derringer* \_\_\_\_\_

*camera* \_\_\_\_\_

*notepad, pen*

**MAJOR WILSON BROOMHALL**

**Occupation:** British Military Officer

**Age:** 41 **Gender:** Male

**Physical Description:** Aging fellow with stern face, meticulously trimmed mustache, army uniform and hat, and military bearing.

**Background:** Life had little direction until the outbreak of the Great War. You received a commission in the British Army and fought the Hun in France. Since then you've remained in the service, rising in rank and going wherever His Majesty required: India, Hong Kong, Singapore, British East Africa, and lately Egypt. You understand obedience and the chain of command, but realize individual soldiers must rise to the occasion to prevail. You hold authority over lower-ranked British military personnel and have the respect of many Englishmen in Egypt. Your duty to King and country is beyond reproach, though many native Egyptians treat you with resentment for occupying and ruling their country. Between your light duties at the Cairo garrison, you dabble in archaeology, tagging along on excavations, observing, and occasionally helping to supervise operations.

**MAJOR WILSON  
BROOMHALL (BOSS)**

**Competent Skills:**

*brawl* \_\_\_\_\_

*dodge* \_\_\_\_\_

*navigate* \_\_\_\_\_

**Expert Skills:**

*investigate* \_\_\_\_\_

*streetwise* \_\_\_\_\_

*survival* \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature Skill:**

*command* \_\_\_\_\_

**Equipment:**

*Webley Mk4 revolver* \_\_\_\_\_

*riding crop* \_\_\_\_\_

*army uniform*



# Any-System Key



## An Adaptable Stat System

By Peter Schweighofer

The *Any-System Key* describes character skills and task difficulties in terms that easily translate into different game systems. These terms do not key into any one game engine, but serve as general guidelines to give readers an overall sense of how they fit within their own game's stat and difficulty scale. *Any-System Key* publications provide settings, characters, adventures, and other source material adaptable to your favorite roleplaying game.

---

---

## Character Stats

Assume characters have the average rating in most skills, with several rated at the level of a competent professional, a few considered expert in their field, and sometimes one signature skill for which the character is renown.

### SKILL LEVELS

*Competent Skills:* Displays a professional level of training

*Expert Skills:* Possesses specialized knowledge

*Signature Skill:* Ranks among the best in the world

Three character levels further describe their abilities. Henchmen do not possess Signature skills and only have one Expert skill. Bosses have the usual complement of skills. Masterminds boost all their skills by one level; their Competent skills have the same value as Expert skills normally possess, Expert skills have values equivalent to the Signature level, and Signature skills increase by one increment beyond their maximum game value.

### CHARACTER LEVELS

*Henchman:* No Signature Skill, only one Expert Skill

*Boss:* Normal skill levels

*Mastermind:* Skills boosted one level, Signature Skill gains bonus

An equipment category defines a character's possessions (or an animal's natural weapons) gamers can easily look up for damage, cost, and other stats in their preferred game.

### Example:

ORC (Henchman)

*Competent Skills:* archery, brawl, carouse, climb, intimidate, track

*Expert Skills:* fight

*Equipment:* leather armor, sword

## Task Difficulties

*Any-System Key* publications use four levels to describe the degree of difficulty for tasks undertaken by a person with professional training and proficiency in relevant skills.

### TASK DIFFICULTIES

*Routine:* Low chance of failure (25%).

*Challenging:* Moderate chance of failure (50%).

*Hard:* High chance of failure (75%).

*Improbable:* Almost certain chance of failure (99%).

### Example:

The characters must leap across a chasm to reach safety. Doing so successfully requires a *Challenging jump* roll; they have a moderate chance of failure, but also a moderate chance of success. If flames leaped out of the chasm, the difficulty might increase to *Hard*; not only must they jump the chasm, but they must withstand intense heat.

## Higher Level Games

Running a setting or scenario with heroes who seem to waltz through encounters? Simply raise the gamemaster character levels and the task difficulty levels. Nothing turns Henchman-level mooks into challenging opponents better than upgrading their Expert skill into a Signature skill.

## Fits Your Favorite Games

Game character skills have different degrees of competence defined by stats. Simply figure out which stats best represent the levels of Competent, Expert, and Signature skills and use those values when integrating *Any-System Key* material into your game.

The same applies for difficulties. Just match the *Any-System Key* difficulty descriptions with the corresponding values for rating tasks in your own game.

Visit the Griffon Publishing Studio website  
[griffonpubstudio.com](http://griffonpubstudio.com)  
for more *Any-System Key* material, including free adventures  
and sample character stats.  
The *Any-System Key* is © 2009 Peter Schweighofer