

CASTLES & CRUSADES

PALTHAR'S SUNDRY



DAVIS CHENAULT



PALTHAR'S SUNDRY

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PREFACE

An old map, a copper coin, the name Palthar! The three may mean little to common folk, but to those who dabble in the arcane, the name Palthar carries with it a hint of power. Though not well known, in the small circles of the learned, the name Palthar is associated with travel to other planes of existence and through time. Palthar disappeared nearly a century ago, as did the location of his abode; an abode rumored to contain powerful magics and an array of interplanar travel spells. Could this map lead there? And what is the meaning of the coin?

INTRODUCTION

The PCs receive an ivory map case. Inside is a map to a location in a distant wilderness area. At the top of the map are the words "Palthar's Sundry." Along with the map is a simple copper coin. The way the PCs receive the map is best left up to the Castle Keeper. It could be in a treasure pile, an antiquarian's shop, stolen or even purchased in a bazaar. It is important that the name Palthar is recognized or researched and the PC gather that Palthar was a well-regarded arcanist who travelled the many planes of existence and who disappeared some century or more ago.

The map leads to a place somewhere deep in the wilderness. Again, this is best left up to the Castle Keeper. The coin is important in the complex. It is a simple coin with an image on it. Though it is unclear who the image is of and none would recognize it except the most learned of those who dabble in the deadly undertaking of traveling the planes of existence. The image is of Kuetztotec, the Many Bodied One and he who exists in many places at the same time.

Palthar's Sundry is a complex constructed by Palthar and some friends while exploring an area rumored to have a temple to Kuetztotec in it. After Palthar located the temple, the inhabitants of that temple, driders, decided it was necessary to keep their lair secret and attacked Palthar on his way back to the complex, killing him and his friends. The driders then occupied the complex. This all occurred a little more than a century ago.

The map belonged to one of the engineers who designed and worked on the complex. It only shows the location of the complex; none of the scheme or layout of the interior is shown. The coin is an important artifact which was used by the engineer to transport him from wherever he was back to the complex. By placing the coin on the ground and stepping on it, then using the right incantation, the person stepping on the coin is transported to Room 9 in the dungeon. The spell to enact the coin's power is in written on the floor in Room 9.

LOCATION

Palthar's Sundry is located midway up a steep cliff face about 500 feet high. A narrow set of steps have been carved out of the cliff face that lead down to the complex's entry. These steps are well made and show little signs of wear. They are narrow, making fighting on them difficult. Anyone attempting a difficult

maneuver on the steps such as fighting, jumping or similar, must make a dexterity check to succeed. For combat, failure indicates any attack suffers a -3 penalty to hit and defensively no dexterity or shield bonus is added to the AC in that round. A failure by 10 or more indicates a fall from the cliff. If one just acts defensively, no check is required.

ROOM 1: ENTRY

The entry to the complex is open. There was once a door here but has long ago been ripped from its iron hinges. The interior is musty, dirty, and filled with debris from the years past. Just inside the door is a pile of bones. The interior is blanketed with webs. Thick webs!

There are 10 small spiders in 1a and 1b. The bones are of various animals the spiders have eaten over the years. The webbing does not catch fire easily due to its moisture content. The spiders wait until the PCs are in the tunnel to attack. Should the PCs light the webbing on fire, the spiders scurry back to Room 1 proper and curl up in balls in the corners of the ceiling until the PCs arrive. Then they attack. There is no webbing or very little in Room 1. It takes about 30 minutes for the webbing to burn and alerts everything in the complex to the presence of intruders. Preparations will be made to meet them. The room has a shattered and rotten table in it. Iron pegs are on most of the walls. A brass brazier lies on the floor. A large marble statue of a man reading a book is in the center of the room. This is a statue of the egotistical Palthar. The statue weighs 1000lbs and is worth 500gp.

SPIDERS, SMALL x10 (These neutral animals vital statistics are HD 1d4, HP 3 each, AC 14 and Move 10/10 (climb) feet. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d2 damage. Their special abilities are poison, web and twilight vision.)

ROOM 2: CHAMBER

This chamber was used to store clothing and mundane travel gear. There is a fireplace on the north wall about 3 feet wide and deep. A broken table and some chairs are scattered around. These are covered in a small amount of web as are the corners of the room. An armoire has been knocked over; bowls, rotted clothing, boots and old shoes are scattered around.

The driders came through here and destroyed everything. The fireplace is piped to the outside of the complex to somewhere below the set of steps. It is obvious that it has not been used in ages. All the furniture is moldy and rotten. It will fall apart if manipulated. Nothing of value is in here.

There are however, some stirges nesting up the chimney. They leave by the vent but nest right inside the vent. If disturbed, they attack.

STIRGES x12 (These neutral magical beasts vital statistics are HD 1d6, HP 4 each, AC 16 and Move 10/40 feet. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a touch attack for 1d3 damage. Their special abilities are attach, blood drain, agile, darkvision 60 ft, and twilight vision.)

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ROOM 3: ARMORY

This was an armory and preparation room for Palthar and his companions. It served as a training area and store room for goods needed on expeditions. The driders ransacked it for valuables and destroyed that which they did not need.

There is thick stringy web crossing the room and covering most everything. There are weapons racks on the wall, some hooks in the ceiling, 4 broken chests and a chest of drawers knocked over onto the floor.

ROOM 4: SLEEPING CHAMBER

There are two beds covered in webs in this chamber. Three broken trunks are also in here and several rotting items of clothing and personal items are scattered on the floor. The southeast corner of the room is thick with webbing and intermixed in it are many tiny balls of tight cocoons of webs.

Like the previous webbing in Room 1, this is difficult to catch on fire. The webbing in the southeast corner is filled with eggs. There are roughly 10,000 eggs in here about half of which could emerge at any time. Burning the webbing would kill almost all of them but inevitably some would survive. If left alone, none of the eggs hatch. If burned, the spiders from Rooms 5 and 6 come up to attack. Baby spiders are harmless though they do swarm the PCs causing much irritation. After being caught on fire, 5000 eggs hatch and the spiders scurry, swarming the PCs. This cause the PCs to make all checks at -1 to -3. Any spell casters must make a wisdom check to successfully cast that spell. All combat rolls suffer a -1 to -3 as well (to hit, damage, etc.). The baby spiders remain on the PCs for 1-10 minutes.

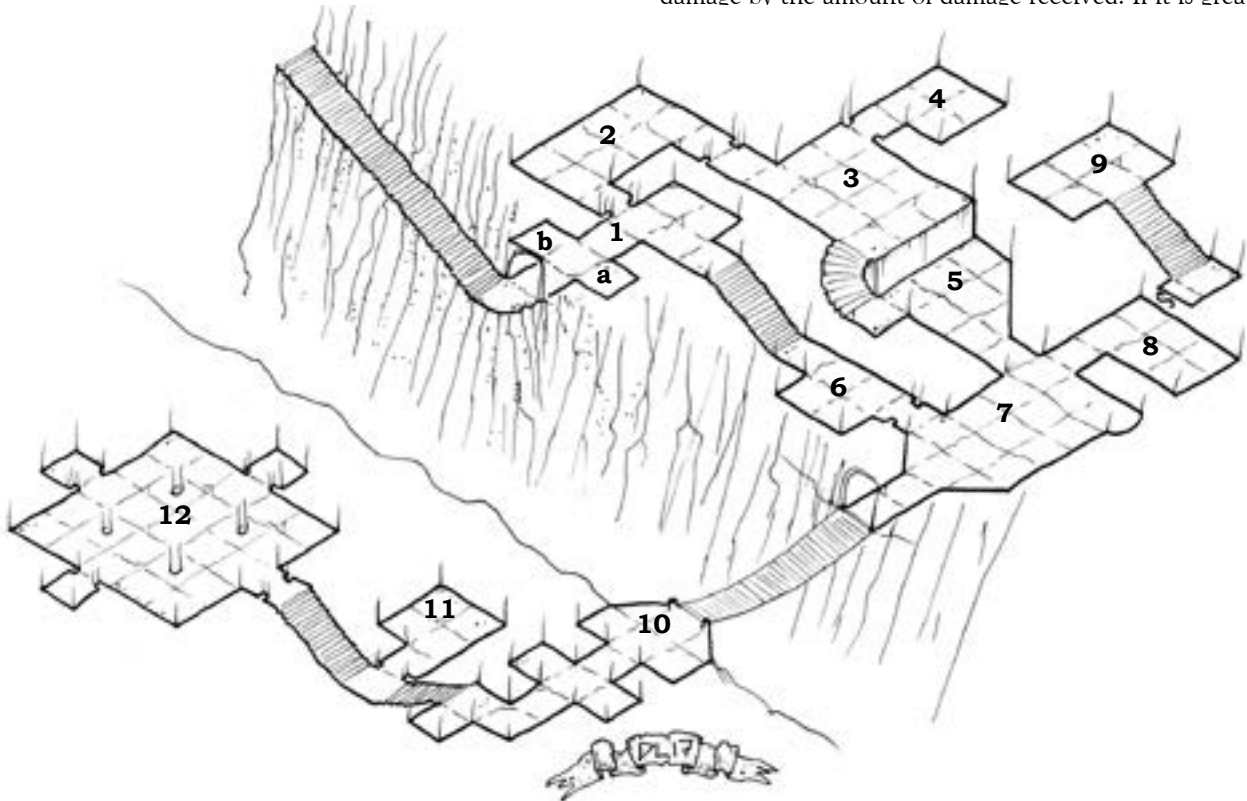
STEPS TO ROOMS 5 AND 6

The steps leading to both these rooms have a trap. Both the corridors are covered in a mixture of drider web, large spider web and a thin filament of razor-sharp, very strong webbing that can cut through armor and bone. Four medium spiders wait at the bottom of the steps to attack any PC moving down the steps. They cling to the ceiling and walls while attacking.

The webbing in the hallways is thick and stringy and covers the whole of the corridors with only a space wide enough to walk through in the center. A wisdom check ((CL 0) allows the PCs to note two types of webs. One is thicker and "juicier" than the other. A ranger notes this as a tracking check. The filament cannot be detected, it is buried beneath the other webbing.

If the webs are burned, the medium spider webbing burns as normal and should take an hour to clear. The drider web burns only very slowly if at all. In attempting to burn drider web, the web must fail a save (CC 6) or it will not burn. If both the webs burn, the filament can be seen. It is impervious to fire. If just the large spider web burns, the filament can be detected on a wisdom check (CL 3) or tracking check (CL 0).

The filament crisscrosses the lower portion of the steps, about three to six inches off the floor. There are a dozen filaments crossing the floor. If seen, they can be avoided if movement is at ¼ pace. A dexterity check is necessary for any faster movement, for each filament; at ½ move (CL 0), at full move (CL 3), at greater than full move, i.e. the PCs are running, (CL 6). Those who fail their dexterity check take damage. The filament causes 3d4 points of damage. Divide the HP of the PC receiving the damage by the amount of damage received. If it is greater than



half, the PC must succeed at a constitution check (CL 8) or an ankle has been severed.

The thread has an AC 16 and HP 20 should anyone try to cut through it or snap it.

SPIDERS, LARGE X4 (*These neutral animals vital statistics are HD 3d8, HP 17 each, AC 15 and Move 30/20 (climb) feet. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1-6 damage. Their special abilities are poison, web and twilight vision.*)

ROOM 5: BED CHAMBER

This was a sleeping chamber used by a member of Palthar's group. There is a rotted bed, a broken trunk and a bureau knocked over and broken. Webbing covers the entire room. There is nothing of interest in here. Two large spiders have a nest in here, though they should have attacked by the time the PCs get here (they attack while the PCs are descending the steps).

ROOM 6: COOKING AREA

There are two large pot-bellied stoves in here and some wooden shelving against the east wall. Most of the shelves have been destroyed. There is broken crockery all over the floor as well as a few odd and end pans, cookware and utensils of various types. The pot-bellied stoves are vented to the outside. Webbing covers most of the room. Two large spiders nest in here though they should have attacked anyone moving down the steps while they are on the steps. There is nothing else of interest in here.

ROOM 7: DINING ROOM

This chamber served various purposes, from dining to meetings, discussions, spell casting etc. There is webbing covering everything. A massive oaken table is turned over on the floor. Chairs, smaller tables, serving platters, cookware and utensils are scattered around the room. Several crumpled-up tapestries are piled on the floor against the south wall.

The spiders in Room 8 become aware of the PCs at this point. They wait an opportune moment to attack. The tapestries against the south wall are tattered and worn. That is, all but one. There were half a dozen small tapestries hanging on the wall.

One of the tapestries is a flying carpet. It is buried at the bottom of the pile. The driders were not paying any attention to the tapestries when they were torn from the wall. As soon as it is revealed any PC notes that it is special because it is in perfect condition. The carpet is only large enough to hold one medium sized creature or two small creatures (or humanoids).

A footbridge connects this room to the opposing cliff-face (Room 10).

8 STORE ROOM DEN

This was used as a storeroom. This was basically a cloak for the secret door leading to Palthar's secret chamber (Room 9). Currently there are two very large spiders in this room. The

spiders attack the PCs as soon as they enter this room (or may have earlier should it have been to their advantage to do so.) These large spiders are unique. They each have 6 smaller spiders that ride on their backs. These smaller spiders keep the larger ones clean and tidy up after them, help in fights, process food, arrange webbing etc. As soon as the larger spiders attack, the smaller ones crawl off and attack as well.

The room is nearly full of webbing excepting two large bowl-shaped areas the spiders rest in. Beneath the webbing are broken shelves, crates, and debris. Most is rotted and useless. There are several picks, shovels and dinnerware in here. There is also a small iron box buried beneath some debris that was never found. The lock on it has corroded with the ages making it impossible to pick. The hinges have also corroded over the years. The box's lid can simply be removed. Inside are six potions: 3 *cure serious wounds*, 1 *levitation*, 1 *neutralize poison*, 1 *gaseous form*.

The secret door is behind some webbing. The web must be removed for the door to be revealed. Once this is done, the door is readily visible since it was left slightly ajar by the driders.

ROOM 9 PALTHAR'S DEN

Palthar used this room to store his most valuable objects and those of his friends. The driders located this room, ransacked it and made off with the valuables and destroyed whatever else they could. There are dead baby spiders all over the place in here and some webbing. The larger spiders never came in here and the baby spiders came in here and starved. All the traps that were once in here have been sprung.

There is a scattering of books and scrolls on the floor, some broken glass and decanters, ceramics shards, shattered staves and other bric-a-brac. There is also a broken pedestal, shattered chairs, shelves and several knocked over and bent braziers. Amongst all the debris is a large circular carving on the floor. It is about 4 feet wide. In its center is the likeness of a figure with what appears to be many bodies but one head. All around the engraving is an inscription in an arcane language. There is nothing of value in here.

The likeness on the floor is of Kuetztotec, the Many Bodied One. Around this is an inscription. It is written in the arcane tongue so only a magic user or illusionist can read it. The image is the same as that on the coin found in the scroll case. The inscription is a rather simple but very specific spell. The words, when spoke while standing over the coin will transport that person from wherever they are to this location. This does not work from the outer planes, only from within the prime material plane.

ROOM 10: THE WEB CAGE

The area from the entrance to the bend in the hallway is covered in thick webbing. This is drider silk webbing. It is thick, gooey, moist and sticky. Moving through it is difficult. Every ten feet of movement through this area requires a CL 5 dexterity check. If the check fails, the recipient is stuck, taking 1-10 rounds to free themselves. On each round the PC struggles, they must make another dexterity check. This could add up quickly. The

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easiest way to free oneself is to wait for 3-18 rounds as the gooey stickiness just gives way and releases the person held.

Burning this web is difficult. It has 100hp per 10-foot square area. Normal fire cause 1-6 points of damage a round. Up to four fires can be set in one ten square foot area. Each round the web is allowed a physical save (CC 6) to prevent any damage.

The alcoves have 12 eggs in them each. These drider eggs resemble sack-cloth like balls hanging from the webbing. Removing them from this environment will kill them. Otherwise they hatch in roughly 4 months.

ROOM 11: STORE ROOM

Once an alcove for prayer, the driders have turned this into a storeroom. They collected everything they wanted to keep and placed in here. They also have a few personal items in here. There are some clothes hanging from pegs on the wall, an open box with some coin and jewelry in it, two maces, a large bastard sword, two bows, a stack of arrows etc.,

The box contains 5000gp in coin and jewelry in it. Everything else in the room is mundane. The clothing has no associated pants, just shirts, cloaks and hats.

ROOM 12: CHAMBER OF THE DRIDER

This large room, unlike the rest of the complex, has a granite slab floor and walls. The room is supported by four narrow columns. There is some webbing strung between the columns and the floor. The area between the columns has no webbing. There are alcoves located on the east, west, and north walls. There are four braziers in here. None are lit, and all are standing upright with wood and coal in them. A tattered carpet lies on the center of the floor with a dozen or large brass bowls and platters on it. There are bones lying all around the carpet. A

large, four-pipe hookah sits to the far north end of the carpet.

The driders use the alcoves as sleeping quarters. Mixed in the webbing is some of the razor-sharp drider webbing encountered in Rooms 5 and 6. These strands crisscross the room and create the same problem as before.

There is one drider in each of the alcoves. The drider in the northern alcove is dead. The other two are not aware of this yet. If the party have been stealthy and quiet, the driders will be asleep. If not, the driders will be waiting here prepared for a fight.

The alcoves contain a wad of webbing used as a bed and a space for weapons, personal good and treasure. Each drider wears 1000gp worth of jewelry.

The western alcove contains a trunk with 2000gp, 1500gp in jewelry and ornamental trinkets. There are two scrolls, each with 2 spells on them. The spells are determined by the CK or at random. The northern alcove contains the body of dead drider (died in his sleep of a heart attack). There is a +1 *longbow*, a +1 *shield* and a +2 *glaive*, a trunk with 3000gp worth of coin, jewelry and trinkets in here as well. The eastern alcove contains two satchels with 3 scrolls in each, the scrolls each have 2 spells on them. Two scrolls have magic user spells, two have druid spells and two have cleric spells. There is a small box containing 1000gp in mostly religious trinkets.

DRIDER x2 (These are chaotic evil, aberrations whose vital statistics are HD 7d8, AC 17, HP 48 and 32 and move 30/15 (climb) feet. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapons type, +2 long sword and +1 flail, and bite for 1-4 damage. Their special abilities are spells at 7th level cleric, web, poison, Darkvision 60 feet, fighter class abilities, SR 3 and elf traits.)



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Now this map has turned up, associated with his name. And this coin, this curious, curious coin. Could this map lead there? And what is the meaning of the coin?

A mid-level adventure for 3-5 characters.



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