



Pamean Games presents



The Curse of
ALTHAN-YA



an adventure for Brass & Steel





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Brass & Steel: A Game of Steampunk Adventure
Gaming supplement

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SPECIAL THANKS

To the gang who first sought the tomb of Althan-Ya at GenCon 2012, your ideas and plans helped shape the expanded version of the scenario. Thanks for the inspiration!



FOR MORE INFORMATION

about Brass & Steel and Pamean Games, visit us online at: www.pameangames.com

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The Curse of Althan-Ya


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PROLOGUE

GAME MASTER NOTES



Prologue

INTRODUCTION



This scenario was conceived and first run as a convention scenario for Brass & Steel but has been tweaked and expanded into the book (or e-document) you hold in your hands. Freed from a four-hour convention time limit, additional scenes and subplots have been added to the scenario to give the narrative more texture. Though this adventure was designed to be run as a one-shot scenario with pre-generated characters, it can be (relatively) easily adapted for use with most Brass & Steel adventuring groups and integrated into an ongoing campaign.

The characters are recruited into a dangerous race against a dastardly Austrian archaeologist to find the lost tomb of the legendary Akkadian sorceress Althan-Ya and secure its secrets for the greater glory of the British Empire. As the action begins, the characters will use their social skills and contacts as they trace the movements of their Austrian nemesis through black markets of Cairo. They will then face Bedouin raiders on a journey through the desert and strange magics at an oasis isolated from modernity. As the scenario winds down, the characters will attempt to defeat the Austrians by guile or force of arms and claim the tomb as their prize.

Prologue

GM-ONLY WARNING



The following text is intended to be read only by Game Masters. If you are a Player Character (PC), you are hereby warned that spoilers aplenty follow and if you read further you risk diminishing the fun to be had by you and your fellow players. You have been warned.

Prologue

PREPARING THE SCENARIO



Mechanics

This scenario uses version 1.5 of Brass & Steel: A Game of Steampunk Adventure. A single d20 will be the only die required to play.

Materials

Everything needed to run this scenario is contained in this book or the core rules of Brass & Steel. The few items of equipment that appear in this book and not in the main rulebook are detailed in their appropriate section.

Setting

This adventure takes place entirely in British Egypt in the summer of 1905. The first part takes place in the ancient capital of Cairo and the latter part near a desert oasis some distance southwest.

Cairo is the administrative center for the British colonial government in Egypt. Cairo was founded in the 10th century near the capitals of Ancient Egypt and was made the seat of government in the mid-12th century. The succeeding sultans and emirs greatly expanded the city with citadels, palaces, gardens, great markets and formidable city walls. The Ottoman Turkish Empire took control of the city in the early 16th century and held on to it for three centuries until an independent dynasty arose in the early 19th century. Fighting between the semi-independent Egypt and the Ottoman Sultan provided the opening for the British to occupy Constantinople in 1839, effectively ending the Ottoman state. Independent Egypt held out until 1882, when an economic crisis prompted a British invasion and occupation. Egypt is now well-integrated into the British Near East Provinces, with Cairo as the regional capital. The city has a European-influenced downtown near the River Nile and a sprawling Old City, home to the majority Muslim population, the sizeable Coptic Christian minority and a small Greek community. The Old City is also home to a thousand years' worth of mosques, markets, palaces, and historical monuments.

Mission Hook

All of the pre-generated characters are already in Cairo as our story begins. The characters are to be recruited by



agents of Britain's Special Branch, or SB, to undertake a mission of grave importance on a severely curtailed schedule. The pre-generated characters all have hooks that give them reasons to take on the mission, but a different group of characters might require some additional incentives to get them on the job. When using a group of characters from an ongoing campaign, the Game Master will need to do some fiddling to make sure there is incentive enough for the team to take the job. If one or more of the PCs already have ties to Special Branch, all the better. In addition, non-pre-generated characters will have to get to Cairo very quickly to get on the trail of the Austrian team, which already has a lead. It is perfectly plausible that Special Branch would have a small and fast airship available to whisk the team to Cairo. Game Masters can adjust the timeline as needed to ensure the Austrians don't get too far ahead of the PCs at the outset.

The Pre-Generated Characters

The original set of player characters used to run this scenario at GenCon 2012 can be found in the appendix at the end of this book. There you will find detailed character backgrounds, goals, impressions of the other

PCs, and their character sheets. However, in this section we have included short descriptions of the characters to give the reader perspective as they read through the adventure. Even if this scenario is run with a pre-existing group of characters, almost all of the provided pre-generated characters would be very suitable as GM-controlled Non Player Character (NPC) consultants to aid the PCs.

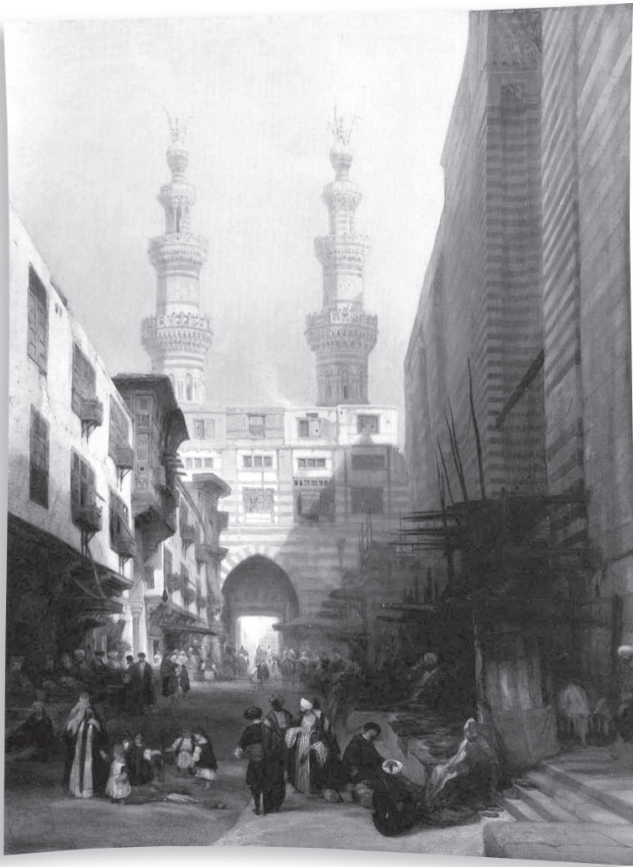
Victor Loret is a French professional archaeologist in late middle age. He has had a distinguished career in Egyptology and is in partial retirement, splitting his time between Cairo and a teaching position at the University of Lyon. Victor knows Cairo quite well and is an expert at managing archaeological digs. He also has access to material resources that would be helpful in financing an expedition. He has little in the way of combat skills. As an NPC Mssr. Loret could provide valuable insight into how archaeological digs are conducted and could use his connections to help outfit the PC's for a desert expedition.

E.A. Wallis Budge is an expert on ancient languages, an arcanist of moderate power and a rare expert on the legend of Althan-Ya. He is also familiar with the illegal antiquities trade, from the standpoint of trying to stamp it out. As an NPC, Budge's facility with ancient languages and the lore of Althan-Ya would be very useful, almost too useful. If you use Mr. Budge as a consultant NPC, be sure he doesn't upstage the PCs.

Eddie Cook is a con artist masquerading as a famous tomb raider. Apart from his rather formidable social skills, Cook is likely the handiest in the group with firearms. He is probably least useful as a stand-alone NPC because his function in the pre-generated group is mostly as a foil to Victor Loret, the professional archaeologist, and to bring a bit more combat skill to the group, this latter quality being one that an existing group of player characters probably possesses on their own.

Rabia, the Bedouin guide, has the skills and connections to outfit an archaeological expedition and guide it through the desert. She would also be very helpful in any negotiations with other Bedouins in the wild. She would be an excellent candidate for an add-on NPC. In fact, the PCs will almost definitely be in the market for a native guide whatever their circumstances and Rabia is tailor-made for the role.

Marjorie Duncan is a Scottish ex-patriate living and working in Cairo as a procurer in the illegal antiquities trade. She is a Dreamer of moderate power and an accomplished negotiator. As a NPC, her contacts in



David Roberts, *The Minarets of the Bab Zuweyleh, and Entrance to the Mosque of the Metwalls, Cairo*



the illegal antiquities market would be very useful, but could be replicated by the Background Advantages of a PC. Similarly, her Dreaming ability would be useful only if, for some reason, the PCs lack a Dreamer.

Drusia dala Vacchio is a scion of a prominent Italian merchant family. She is a mechanical genius, designing, building and piloting her own line of gyrocopters. She makes her living in Cairo as a pilot, a mechanic, and as an aerial scout and mapper. Her skills will be very useful to the group as they attempt to trail a hostile force through the desert. She would work well as a guest NPC in her role as an aerial scout and secondarily as a person with local connections who could help organize and provision a desert expedition.

Prologue

THE BIG PICTURE



What's Really Going on and Why

Britain's Special Branch has learned from a spy that an archeological team working for the Austrian Ministry for Arcane Services, the Ministerium für obskure Dienstleistungen, has made a startling discovery in the Syrian Desert. In the ruins of the ancient Mesopotamian city of Mari, a team led by notorious Austrian archaeologist and mystic Eduard Herr Glaser has uncovered a cuneiform tablet that hints at the location of the tomb of the great Akkadian sorceress Althan-Ya – somewhere in Lower (northern) Egypt. The spy knows that Herr Glaser does not know precisely where the tomb is and overheard plans to acquire more Akkadian-era artifacts once they arrive in Egypt. What the spy did not know, and therefore was not able to tell his contact in British Intelligence, was that the tablet found in Mari indicated that there was a temple in Lower Egypt dedicated to the worship of Althan-Ya and in that temple was hidden the secret to her final resting place. Herr Glaser suspects the temple hasn't been found because no one is looking for it; Althan-Ya is not well-known outside of arcane circles. He intends to remedy that omission by personally inspecting all of the available artifacts from the time of Althan-Ya. Of course, all of this business about a tomb is a bit suspect given that the fragmentary evidence available to historians indicates that Althan-Ya disappeared attempting a 12th inoculation, which would seem to obviate the need for a tomb. Nevertheless Special Branch, and by extension

Her Majesty's government, is forced to take these claims seriously given the storehouse of arcane lore and artifacts that might be contained inside an unspoiled tomb. However, as Special Branch does not ordinarily indulge in combat archeology they haven't the time to mount a careful operation made up of regular SB operatives. Herr Glaser and his team may already be in Egypt hunting for the tomb. They have no choice but to assemble a team of their own with whoever might be nearby and available to intercept Herr Glaser, with suitability coming in at a distant third.

Herr Glaser's information is not as conclusive as Special Branch fears, but he has some good leads. The tablet Herr Glaser found in Syria mentions a map inscription that would point the way to Althan-Ya's tomb. This map inscription can be found adorning a wall in the hidden temple to Althan-Ya in Lower Egypt. Herr Glaser knows from existing evidence that the hidden temple is probably near ancient Memphis and Giza, as that was the center of Akkadian administration of Lower Egypt during the period of occupation. In 1905 both those sites are in the vicinity of the modern city of Cairo. Additionally, Herr Glaser knows that a cache of Akkadian-era temple documents on cuneiform tablets were discovered last year and have been filtering through the illegal antiquities market of Cairo for several months. Herr Glaser arranges private airship transport to Cairo for himself, a few aides, and a number of bodyguards.

Herr Glaser's team arrives in Cairo a couple of days before the PCs begin to track them. Flush with an infusion of funds from his superiors in the Austrian government, Herr Glaser directs his lieutenants to start outfitting for an expedition into the desert. He does not know where the tomb is yet, but he wants to be prepared in case a trip into the desert wastes away from the Nile valley becomes necessary. While his underlings prepare the expedition, Herr Glaser himself begins systematically visiting dealers in ancient antiquities, both legitimate and black market, in the hopes of finding clues to the location of the hidden temple of Althan-Ya. After three days and a number of dead ends, Herr Glaser gets lucky and finds the right clay tablet in the possession of an eccentric and venerable Greek collector known only by his first name – Christos. The tablet in question reveals that the hidden temple of Althan-Ya was, in fact, built into the base of the Great Ziggurat of Giza. The base is the unfinished lower section of the Pyramid of Khufu. It is the platform on which the invading Sumerians built their Great Ziggurat. This information is startling, given that modern, i.e. 1905, archaeology is completely ignorant of any passages or



chambers into the unfinished lower third of the pyramid, assuming that anything the Egyptians hadn't finished had been filled in or built over by the invading Sumerians.

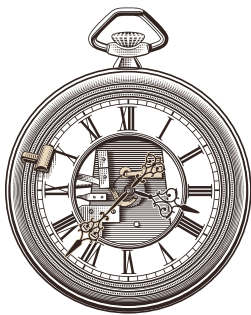
Herr Glaser quickly assembles his bodyguards and sets out at night for the Great Ziggurat at Giza. Upon close examination of the passages into the lowest level of the ziggurat, Herr Glaser finds a hidden portal into the Grand Gallery of Khufu's pyramid. Descending into the base of the pyramid, Herr Glaser finds a greatly expanded set of chambers which form the hidden temple of Althan-Ya. Even more to his surprise, he finds a small group of cultists worshipping Althan-Ya in the main sanctuary. The few cultists are quickly subdued by Herr Glaser's bodyguards and held captive while Herr Glaser copies the map inscription found on one of the walls of the inner sanctum. Herr Glaser finishes his copy of the map and then orders his soldiers to deface the original on the wall of the temple. Leaving the cultists bound, Herr Glaser returns to Cairo to ready the expedition to venture into the open desert, for the map indicates that the tomb is located near the Bahariya Oasis, which is about 360 kilometers southwest of Cairo.

Having prepared for this contingency, Herr Glaser's caravan of motorized vehicles leaves the next morning shortly after dawn. Herr Glaser has also prepared for the possibility of being followed and taken the precaution

of hiring a troop of Bedouin raiders to harass anyone following in the path of his caravan. It takes Herr Glaser's caravan about two days to reach the Bahariya Oasis and another day to find the site of the tomb. It then takes about two days of digging to reveal the entrance to the tomb.

As noted, the scenario as written assumes that the team of PCs is starting a couple of days behind Herr Glaser's team of Austrians. The adventure will open with a scene in which the characters meet with representatives of Special Branch and are offered the job of tracking down and intercepting the Austrian team and then finishing the job by locating the tomb of Althan-Ya. The characters are briefed on the situation and given what little information Special Branch has regarding the current whereabouts of Herr Glaser and his team. If the characters are not already in Cairo, there will be an interstitial scene in which the characters are whisked to Cairo in a fast courier airship operated by Special Branch.

Once in Cairo, the PCs get to work tracking down the Austrians, whom they know to be in Cairo and whom they strongly suspect must be outfitting an expedition. The characters perform legwork investigation and learn that a group of German-speaking Europeans have, indeed, been outfitting for an expedition into the desert. They also learn that someone (Herr Glaser, of course) has been



Timeline

This timeline predominantly details the actions of Herr Glaser and his expedition. Given that the movements of the characters will vary widely with the success of their investigation and their chosen mode of transportation only their starting points

are noted. The Game Master should feel free to modify this timeline in any way she finds increases the dramatic tension.

Day 1 – Herr Glaser and his team travel by privately chartered airship from Aleppo (Syria) to Cairo. Herr Glaser begins his search for clues to the location of

the hidden temple while the rest of his team begins outfitting a desert expedition.

Day 2 – Herr Glaser continues searching. If the PCs start somewhere other than Cairo, their briefing can be late in this day and their journey to Cairo takes place overnight.

Day 3 – In the afternoon, Herr Glaser locates a tablet revealing the location of the hidden temple and in the evening visits the hidden temple and finds the map. Cairo-based PCs are briefed in the morning. Regardless of starting point, PCs begin their search for the Austrians.

Day 4 – Herr Glaser's expedition leaves Cairo for Bahariya Oasis shortly after dawn, travels for about twelve hours and then makes camp for the night.

buying up all the Akkadian cuneiform tablets in the city. Supposing that the last dealer visited by Herr Glaser was the one who had what he was looking for, they home in on Christos, and visit him in his house in the old Islamic quarter of Cairo.

On the first day, while the PCs are looking for clues to the Austrian's activities in Cairo, Herr Glaser has found the tablet he needs and visits the hidden temple that very night. Assuming the PCs work quickly, they can find Christos, who kept rubbings of the tablets in his possession, and get the location of the hidden temple some time on the day after Herr Glaser visited the temple. When the PCs go to the Great Ziggurat they interrupt a full-blown gathering of Althan-Ya cultists, called to their place of worship to discuss the recent incursion by Herr Glaser and his group of ruffians. Depending on how the PCs handle the situation things could get violent with the already-kicked hornet's nest of cultists or the encounter could end peacefully with the PCs able to convince the cultists that they have a mutual enemy in the person of Herr Glaser. Either way, the PCs are faced with a defaced and illegible map. After using a bit of Dreaming ingenuity or negotiation with the cultists, the PCs recover the image of the map and learn the location of the tomb.

The PCs depart for Bahariya Oasis or, if they haven't already started preparing, frantically outfit for an

expedition into the desert and then depart. Following the trail of the Austrians into the desert wastes, the PCs are attacked by Herr Glaser's band of hired Bedouin bandits. If the PCs are particularly persuasive and well-funded, they have the opportunity to bribe the Bedouins into changing sides. With the Bedouins eluded, defeated or converted, the PCs continue on in pursuit of the Austrians.

Arriving in the vicinity of the oasis, the PCs have a number of different options on how to proceed. Presumably they will want to ambush and kill or capture Herr Glaser and his team. Complicating this goal are Herr Glaser's team of non-combatant native laborers and a set of alert sentries, along with some unexpected firepower.

Assuming the PCs prevail in their confrontation with the Austrians, the group now finds the tomb in a state of partial excavation; just how partial depending on how long the Austrians have had to dig before the PCs arrive. Upon entering, the PCs discover that the tomb is built into a Locus with some unusual and dangerous effects. The PCs discover that the tomb was looted in antiquity but there are a few items of value left hidden in nooks and crannies.

The PCs contact Special Branch with news of their success and the less hastily assembled team of operatives come in and take over, leaving the characters with a generous payday but little else to show for their labors, unless they chose to hide some of their spoils from their employer.

Day 5 – Depending on when the PCs investigate the temple and how quickly they have prepared for an expedition, today is the earliest they could possibly set out for the oasis. The Austrians travel for a total of about twelve hours and make camp for the night.

Day 6 – Herr Glaser's team reaches the oasis late in the day and makes camp on the southern edge of the town of El-Bawiti.

Day 7 – Herr Glaser's team begins their search for the site of the tomb in the morning. They find the site by mid-afternoon and set up their base camp.

Day 8 – The Austrians begin their excavation.

Day 9 – Still digging.

Day 10 – Yet more digging until the tomb entrance is uncovered around mid-day. Herr Glaser and a few picked men enter the tomb shortly thereafter.

Day 11 – Due to the unusual Locus conditions in the tomb, the examination and removal of artifacts takes two full days.

Day 12 – Still looting.

Day 13 – Herr Glaser isn't there to fully document the site with professional rigor, so they take their photographs and their loot and set off for Alexandria by mid-day.

If the PCs are this far behind, the Austrians loot the tomb and break camp, heading toward Alexandria to elude any pursuers.

KEY PLAYERS & ANTAGONISTS

Eduard Herr Glaser, Austrian archaeologist and suspected agent of the Austrian crown

(Note: Though Eduard Herr Glaser was a real historical Arabist and archeologist, his age and background have been modified so that he may serve as our villain. We extend our sincere apologies to Herr Glaser's surviving descendants, if there are any.)



Eduard Herr Glaser was born the son of a poor Jewish itinerant merchant. Despite his socio-economic handicaps he excelled in school and was educated in Prague. After a brief stint of military service he attended the University of Vienna, where he acquired fluency with several European and Semitic languages. It was

there that he also acquired a keen interest in the Jewish mystical tradition known as the Qabalah. After completing his studies in Vienna, Herr Glaser traveled extensively in North Africa and Arabia under the patronage of his mentor in the Qabalah, Dr. Heinrich Müller. In addition to his appointment at the University of Vienna, Dr. Müller was an agent of the Austrian Ministry for Arcane Affairs. Müller gradually brought Herr Glaser into the fold and made him a full agent of the ministry. Herr Glaser was subsequently tasked with a series of archeological missions whose explicit aim was to uncover ancient arcane wisdom which could be of use to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Herr Glaser developed a reputation as a ruthless taskmaster and cunning manipulator, bending local authorities to his advantage. Herr Glaser's most recent excavations were in the ruins of the ancient Akkadian city of Mari, where he found the tantalizing clue to the location of Althan-Ya's tomb.

Herr Glaser is clever and thorough, leaving little to chance. He will use all means at his disposal to locate and secure the tomb for his patrons. He will give competitors a single warning, after which he will not hesitate to use deadly force to eliminate his rivals. Herr Glaser is fluent in Egyptian Arabic and well-versed in local custom. He is also well-

funded and maintains a small force of bodyguards who can serve as an assassination or sabotage squad if the need arises.

Althan-Ya, Ancient Akkadian Arcanist

Though not directly appearing in this adventure, it may be useful for the Game Master to possess background knowledge regarding the pivotal figure whose tomb is the ultimate object of this scenario.

Until the last few decades, the legend of Althan-Ya was all but forgotten. A combination of the rise of modern archaeology and the growing, gradual acceptance of Arcanists into mainstream society has resulted in the discovery of new information about an old legend and a surge of academic interest in the ancient sorceress. It turns out that the legend of Althan-Ya was much better preserved in the annals of arcanism than anywhere else. A few histories maintained by the most ancient orders of arcanism have made their way into European academic circles, depicting a figure of frightening power who has served as both exemplar and warning to generations of arcanists. Combining the historical accounts of the ancient arcane societies with the supporting evidence provided by surviving clay tablets from the period gives the following, still fragmentary, account of the life of the woman known as Althan-Ya.

There is no knowledge regarding the early life of the woman who became the most powerful Arcanist known to history. She rose to prominence as the court arcanist of Sargon, founder of the Akkadian dynasty of Mesopotamia in the early 23rd century BCE. In the native Akkadian accounts, her name is mentioned in many of the clay tablets relating details of Sargon's fifty-four year reign, but other than praising her sagacity and loyalty to Sargon no mention is made of her arcane power. In stark contrast to the domestic accounts, contemporaneous writings from neighboring kingdoms refer to her as a supernatural creature or demi-god of immense power. In Arcanist histories, opinion is split. One account portrays her as a demon-spirit called an Utukku, bound to Sargon's service by an arcane ritual granted him by the Akkadian sun god, Shamash. The other accounts insist she was a mortal woman who came by her power through repeated Inoculations of Alchemical Salts. Both versions depict her arcane power as vital in several of Sargon's battlefield victories during his wars of conquest to reunite the empire of Gilgamesh. The histories make much of Althan-Ya's alleged eleven successful Inoculations and speak of the transformations the later Inoculations worked on her body resulting in an alien, serpentine form. The arcane histories also speak of a cult of worship that emerged in

Althan-Ya's later years as she became ever more powerful and alien. As the great king Sargon aged his power waned and that of Althan-Ya and her cult of worship grew. The accounts say Althan-Ya ruled in Sargon's name in the last years before her ill-fated twelfth attempt at Inoculation. The exact circumstances surrounding the final attempt at Inoculation are not preserved in the available histories. All that is known is that Althan-Ya spent months preparing for the ritual, her minions scouring Sargon's empire and beyond for the specific types of Alchemical Salts she thought necessary to grant her success in her next Inoculation. Then nothing; she disappeared, presumably while attempting the ritual of Inoculation. Sargon outlived Althan-Ya by mere months, and his son Rimush is said to have spent the entirety of his nine-year reign purging the empire of Althan-Ya's cult. The thoroughness of this purge could account for the lack of documentary evidence of the cult and its practices. Still, no purge is ever completely successful and whatever records the Austrian archaeologist Eduard Glaser found in the desert of Syria survived Rimush's vengeance.

Prologue

SCENE STRUCTURE



In this, our inaugural tabletop adventure for Brass & Steel, we have devised a scene structure we hope presents information to the Game Master in an efficient, easy to read and easy to reference manner. The scene subsections are briefly explained below.



Overview

This section is split into three parts and designed to give you a starting point to the narrative.

How We Got Here :: The scenes in this adventure are presented in numbered order with full and certain knowledge that no plot structure survives contact with the players. With that inevitable mutability in mind, each scene begins with a section called "How We Got Here" in which we attempt to enumerate the ways in which the narrative may have approached the scene in question.

Synopsis :: In this section we summarize the scene for easy reference by the Game Master. The main action and goals of the scene are briefly described.

Opening Montage :: This next section might seem a bit unusual. In it we present a third-person narrative cut-scene in the cinematic style often used in video games and in the opening shots of a film. The cut-scene is meant to establish the mood of the scene and give a small hint to the players of what is to come during the scene. The Game Master may choose to read these cut-scenes verbatim but should not feel obligated to do so. If this sort of cut-scene does not suit the group's play-style, the GM may instead use them as a source for their own descriptions during the scene.



Locations

In this section we give a rundown of all the locations that are likely to be visited by the characters during the scene. Important information regarding these locations, such as security measures, important clues, or loot will be noted in the location description so that the Game Master needn't hunt through the rest of the scene trying to find out how many guards are patrolling the perimeter, for example. If a location has a map associated with it, a small version will be placed in this section while the full-size version for printing will be placed in an appendix at the end of the book.



Action

This section contains the bulk of the narrative information for the scene. In it we describe the ways in which we think the scene could play out. The section contains detailed background information designed to give the Game Master the tools and context they need to effectively narrate the scene. Some details covered in Locations and Major Players may be repeated here in a further attempt to avoid the dreaded "hunting through the adventure text while the players look on expectantly" situation that we all know well.



Twists and Turns

This section includes advice on how to modify the narrative as described in the previous section. Advice on how to lengthen or shorten a scene or how to make a particular encounter more or less deadly might be included. Optional encounters may also be described in this section.

In addition, we give advice on how to handle some of the nearly infinite ways that players may twist the narrative into something quite different than what is covered by the information in the Action section. This advice isn't necessarily designed to railroad the players back into the



narrative track but rather to present alternative means by which the narrative goals of the scene may be achieved.



Key Players

This section contains descriptions of any NPCs that appear in the scene. Characters that are not likely to be combatants will have any relevant game statistics contained in-line with their capsule description.


Important or likely combatant characters will have a mini character sheet included with their description.






Where We're Going Next

This section bookends the "How We Got Here" section. Advice is given on how this scene might lead into other scenes in the adventure, regardless of the numbered order.







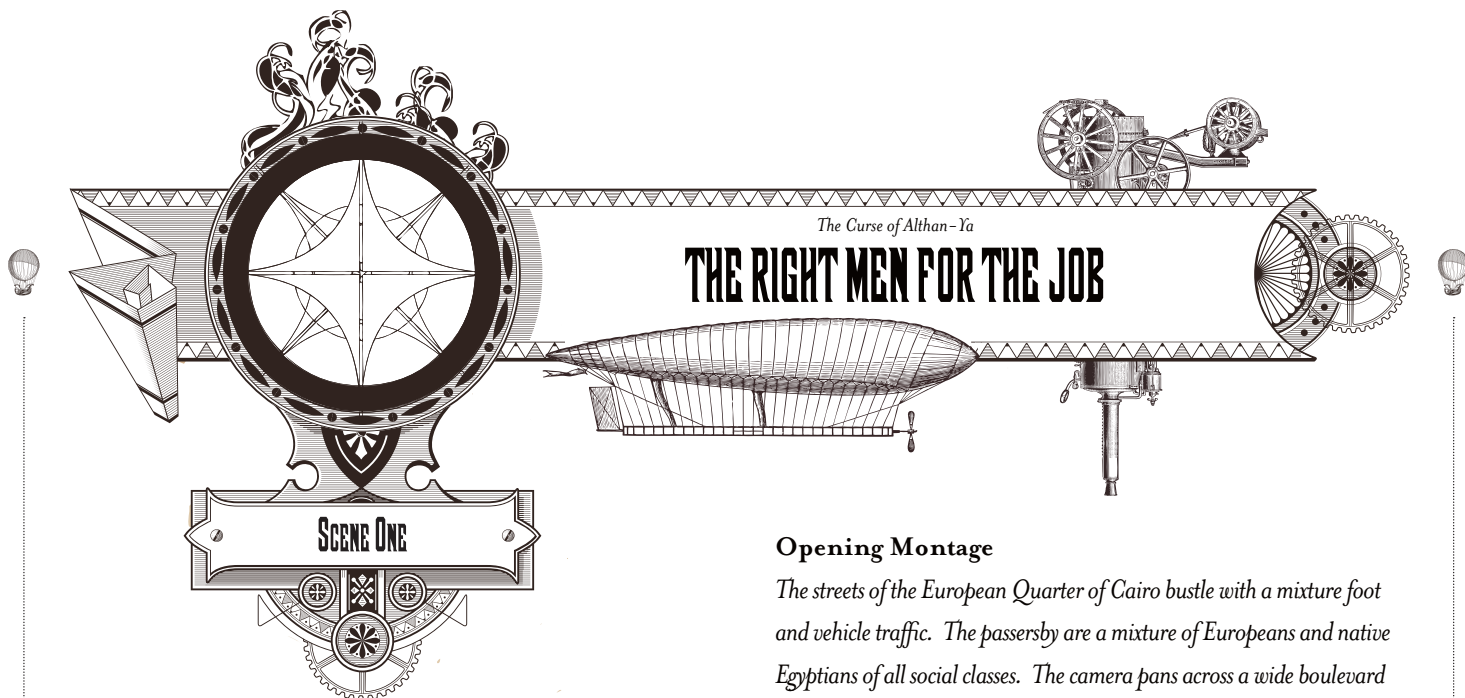


SCENES

THE CURSE OF ALTHAN-YA







 **SI • OVERVIEW**

How We Got Here

The PCs are either contacted as a group or, in the case of the pre-generated characters, individually by a person who claims to represent Her Majesty's government. The invitations are cryptic, but hint at substantial remuneration for several days work.

Synopsis


Having been contacted to meet with a representative of the British government, the characters converge on the British Consulate compound where they meet with representatives of Special Branch. A mission of critical importance to British security is outlined and the characters' cooperation is requested.

Opening Montage

The streets of the European Quarter of Cairo bustle with a mixture foot and vehicle traffic. The passersby are a mixture of Europeans and native Egyptians of all social classes. The camera pans across a wide boulevard fronted by buildings in the European neo-classical style. The camera moves down Maghrebi Street toward the Nile, stopping at an unassuming four-story stone building in the Western colonial style. A sign identifies the structure as the Hotel d'Angleterre. The camera follows a well-dressed patron into the lobby where an unctuous man in his mid-thirties hurries forward and introduces himself as the general manager of the hotel, one Auguste Wild. As the manager escorts the guest to the lounge, the camera moves up the stairs to a room on the third floor. The camera swoops through the keyhole to reveal an odd scene. Two people, a man with salt and pepper hair and mutton chops and a younger woman with auburn hair, both dressed in middle-class business attire, lean over a table covered in maps, photographs, loose documents and folders stamped "Most Secret." The man and woman regard each other with frank hostility as the gentleman checks his watch expectantly.

 **SI • LOCATIONS**

The primary location for this scene is a guest room on the third floor of the Hotel d'Angleterre on Maghrabi Street. The d'Angleterre is an unglamorous four-story stone building with apartment-like rooms for extended stay business travelers. Special Branch maintains a room here to conduct business.

 **SI • ACTION**

Under normal circumstances a job of this sort would not be outsourced, but the Austrians have a lead and Special Branch cannot afford the time it would take to assemble a team from their own ranks. The two agents of Special Branch present themselves as mid-level government functionaries and are cagey about revealing exactly which branch of Her Majesty's government they represent, or even revealing their own names. If pressed, they will admit to representing Special Branch but will then make it clear that their



HOTEL D'ANGLETERRE.

THIS First-class Hotel has been transferred (Season 1892) into the magnificent new building situated in the Ismailia Quarter. Expressly constructed for an Hotel on the most approved Sanitary Principles, and combining every Modern Comfort: Electric Light, Hydraulic Lifts, Saloons, etc. etc.

Proprietor: **GEORGE NUNGOVICH.**

Manager: **A. AULIGH.**

involvement in this matter is to stay a secret. They lay out the situation with Herr Glaser and his Austrians to the full extent of their current knowledge. The Austrians have found some sort of clue in Syria that leads them to believe the tomb of legendary Arcanist Althan-Ya is actually somewhere in Lower Egypt. The leader of the Austrians is an archaeologist named Eduard Herr Glaser, a notorious blackguard in the field and a suspected member of the Ministerium für obskure Dienstleistungen, the Austro-Hungarian Empire's semi-secret government ministry charged with arcane affairs and espionage. The only lead the SB agents have is that Herr Glaser and his team are already in Cairo, looking for Akkadian-era artifacts. They know this because of their spy at Glaser's dig in Syria and also via a message they just received from an agent working security at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo who recognized Herr Glaser's trademark mustache and fez. The agents will, if asked, divulge the name of their man in the museum, Wallace Clyburn. The exact parameters of the mission are to locate Herr Glaser, stop him from looting the tomb of Althan-Ya and secure said tomb for the British government. The characters are offered significant remuneration for their services. Just how much is left to the Game Master, as what might be a huge windfall to one group of Brass & Steel characters might be a pittance to a well-heeled group. If the characters wish to haggle over monetary terms, let them but the agents will not hide their disdain for dickering over what they regard as an already generous offer. Particularly destitute groups may successfully negotiate an advance of up to fifty pounds sterling to cover operating expenses. The characters must also agree to abide by strict secrecy until such time as Her Majesty's government decides to make the discovery public. If the characters express concern about such a major archeological find being kept from the public, the agents will assure them that after a short time the tomb will be opened up to professional excavation

by archaeologists of any allied nation. Of course, Special Branch has no intention of actually following through on that promise until well after they have removed anything of arcane significance from the tomb.

Assuming the characters accept the job, the agents tell them to communicate and submit progress reports via the expedient of messages left for Room 307 at the Hotel d'Angleterre on Maghrebi Street. The agents make absolutely clear that the group is to apprise Special Branch of their destination before they leave Cairo in pursuit of the Austrians if they should discover the location of the tomb. The agents discourage further meetings until the job is complete but may agree to if the characters make a compelling case that further face-to-face interaction is necessary.



SI • TWISTS & TURNS

If the characters balk at accepting the mission, be creative with incentives. Perhaps one or more of the characters has a criminal record in the UK, or an allied state, that could be expunged. Monetary compensation in an amount appropriate to your campaign should be offered. Citizens of the British Empire can be cajoled to do their duty to the Queen.

If the characters are low on funds, Special Branch can arrange for about 50 £ to cover expenses.

If the group of characters is totally lacking in appropriate Background Advantages to do the necessary legwork to find Herr Glaser, the agents can give the group a list of illegal and quasi-legal antiquities dealers in Cairo.



With some work the remainder of this scenario could be run with the PCs striking out on their own to find the Austrians or even joining forces with them perhaps. It is likely that the presented inducements will be sufficient to make this unnecessary to all but the most recalcitrant group of players.

SI • KEY PLAYERS

The two nameless Special Branch agents are dressed in middle-class English business attire. One is a man in his early fifties and the other a woman in her early thirties. The woman, in particular, possesses a military bearing despite her civilian clothing. Both of them are polite but not forthcoming with any information not absolutely necessary for the completion of the mission. They will not answer questions about Special Branch except, if pressed,

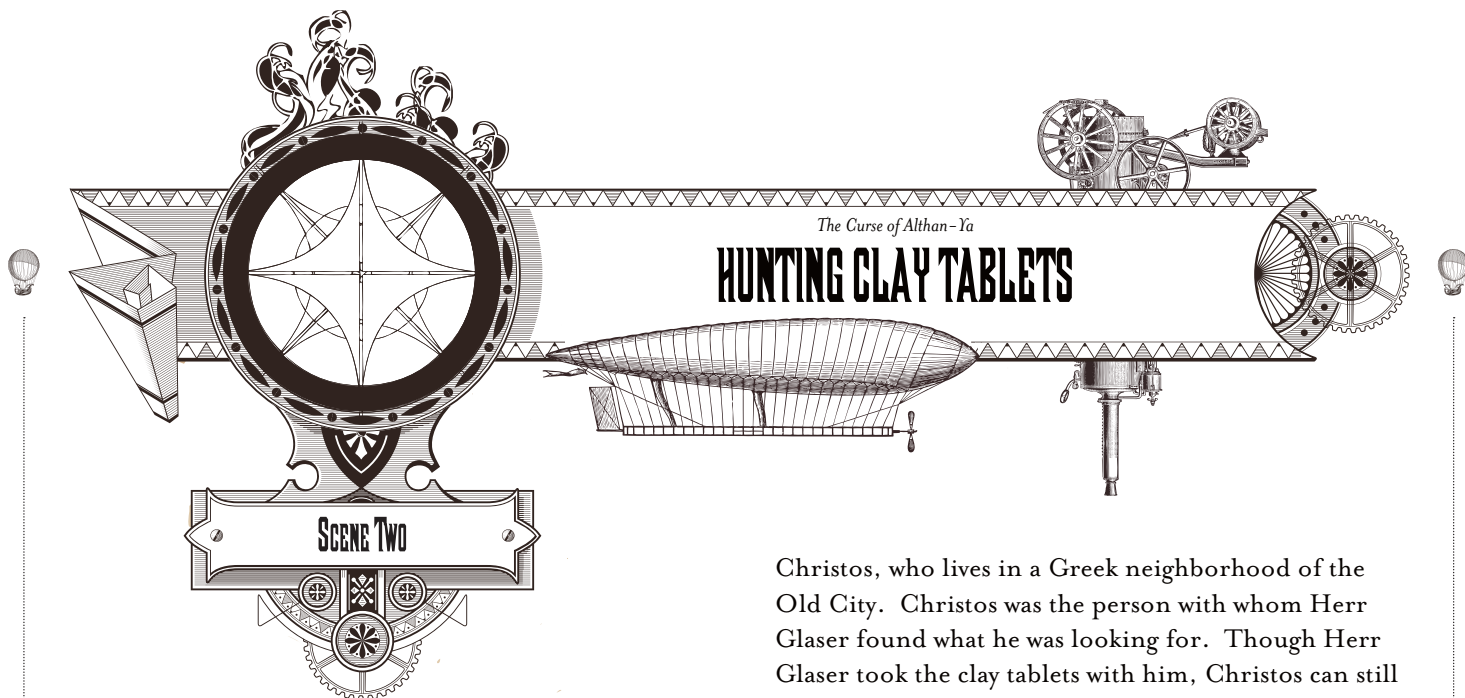
to cryptically reference the direct backing of Her Majesty. Particularly perceptive characters may notice a hint of hostility between the two agents.

Auguste Wild :: The general manager of the Hotel d'Angleterre. He is an Englishman in his mid-thirties, well-dressed and impeccably polite to guests while being a terror to the staff.

SI • WHERE WE'RE GOING NEXT

This scene leads directly to Scene 2, in which the characters attempt to locate the trail of the Austrian team in Cairo. There is some latitude for different approaches regarding how to proceed, but all of the obvious ones are covered in Scene 2.





s2 • OVERVIEW

How We Got Here

The characters have taken the job, now they need to find Herr Glaser and his team.

Synopsis

Having a single lead, that Herr Glaser is searching Cairo for Akkadian-era artifacts, the characters must attempt to pick up Herr Glaser's trail. Characters use connections gained via Background Advantages to figure out whom Herr Glaser has contacted and if he has been successful in his search. The characters may visit the Egyptian Museum and will definitely visit some number of black market dealers before they find the one that was in possession of the artifact Herr Glaser was looking for. The search can take as little as one day or as many as six, depending on the luck and social skills of the searching characters. The final destination in this scene is the home of a Greek collector named

Christos, who lives in a Greek neighborhood of the Old City. Christos was the person with whom Herr Glaser found what he was looking for. Though Herr Glaser took the clay tablets with him, Christos can still help the characters, if they are polite and persuasive.

Opening Montage

A brilliant sunbeam stabs boldly through the dusty old leaded-glass window. It catches hundreds of dust motes dancing in the gentle air currents. Steam rises slowly from a cup of tea on an old chipped blue ceramic saucer. A man stands over a table. The sunlight glimmers a bit in his vividly gray hair. His fingers tap gently on the table. Twice with the left hand, three times with the right. Twice with the left hand, three times with the right. After several moments, the old man suddenly takes three steps across the room, somehow failing to disturb several large stacks of scrolls, books, and small artifacts. He looks critically at a towering dark wooden bookshelf. After a moment, removes a folder containing a set of etchings from the fourth shelf, and places it one foot further to the left, and one shelf lower. A line of tension eases from his face, and he returns to his table. He takes a sip of tea. His fingers tap, much more slowly now: twice with the left hand, then after a noticeable pause, three times with the right.

s2 • LOCATIONS

Cairo Overview

The legwork portion of this scene will take place throughout the city of Cairo; therefore the Game Master is advised to become at least minimally familiar with

the layout of the city. The city of Cairo is split into two main sections. The newer quarters, situated near the river, are laid out with wide boulevards in the fashion of French cities, but the eastern parts of the city retain, almost unimpaired, their Oriental aspect, and in scores of narrow, tortuous streets, and busy bazaars it is easy to forget that there has been any change from the Cairo of



Jean-Leon Gerome, *View Of Cairo*

medieval times. Here a line of fortifications still marks the eastern limits of the city, though on the north large districts have grown up beyond the walls. Neither on the south nor west towards the river are there any fortifications left. The government offices and other modern public buildings are nearly all in the western half of the city. On the south side of the Ezbekia Gardens are the post office, the courts of the International Tribunals, and the opera house. On the east side are the stock exchange and the *Crédit Lyonnais*, on the north the buildings of the American mission. Most of the large and luxurious hotels which the city contains for the accommodation of Europeans are on or near the west side of the gardens. Facing the river immediately north of the Great Nile bridge are the large barracks, called *Kasr-en-Nil*, and the new museum of Egyptian antiquities (opened in 1902).

The eastern half of Cairo is divided into many quarters. These quarters were formerly closed at night by massive gates, though only a few of these gates remain. In addition to the Muslim quarters, usually called after the trade of the inhabitants or some notable building, there are the Copt or Christian quarter, the Jews' quarter and the old "Frank" quarter. The last is the Muski district where, since the days of Saladin, "Frank" merchants have been permitted to live and trade. Some of the principal European shops are still to be found in this street. The Copt and Jewish quarters lie north of the Muski. In the Copt quarter are also Armenian, Syrian, Maronite, Greek and Roman Catholic churches. In the Copt and Jewish quarters the streets, as in the Arab quarters, are winding and narrow. In them the projecting upper stories of the houses nearly meet. *Sebils*, or public fountains are numerous. These fountains

are generally two-storied, the lower chamber enclosing a well, the upper room being often used for scholastic purposes. Many of the fountains are fine specimens of Arab architecture. While the houses of the poorer classes are mean and too often dirty, in marked contrast are the houses of the wealthier citizens, built generally in an elaborate arabesque style, the windows shaded with projecting cornices of graceful woodwork and ornamented with stained glass. The shops of the merchants are small and open to the street. However, the greater part of the trade is done in the bazaars or markets, which are held in *khans* or storehouses, two stories tall and of considerable size. Access to them is gained from the narrow lanes which usually surround them. The *khans* often possess fine gateways. The principal bazaar, the *Khan-el-Khalil*, marks the site of the tombs of the Fatimite caliphs.

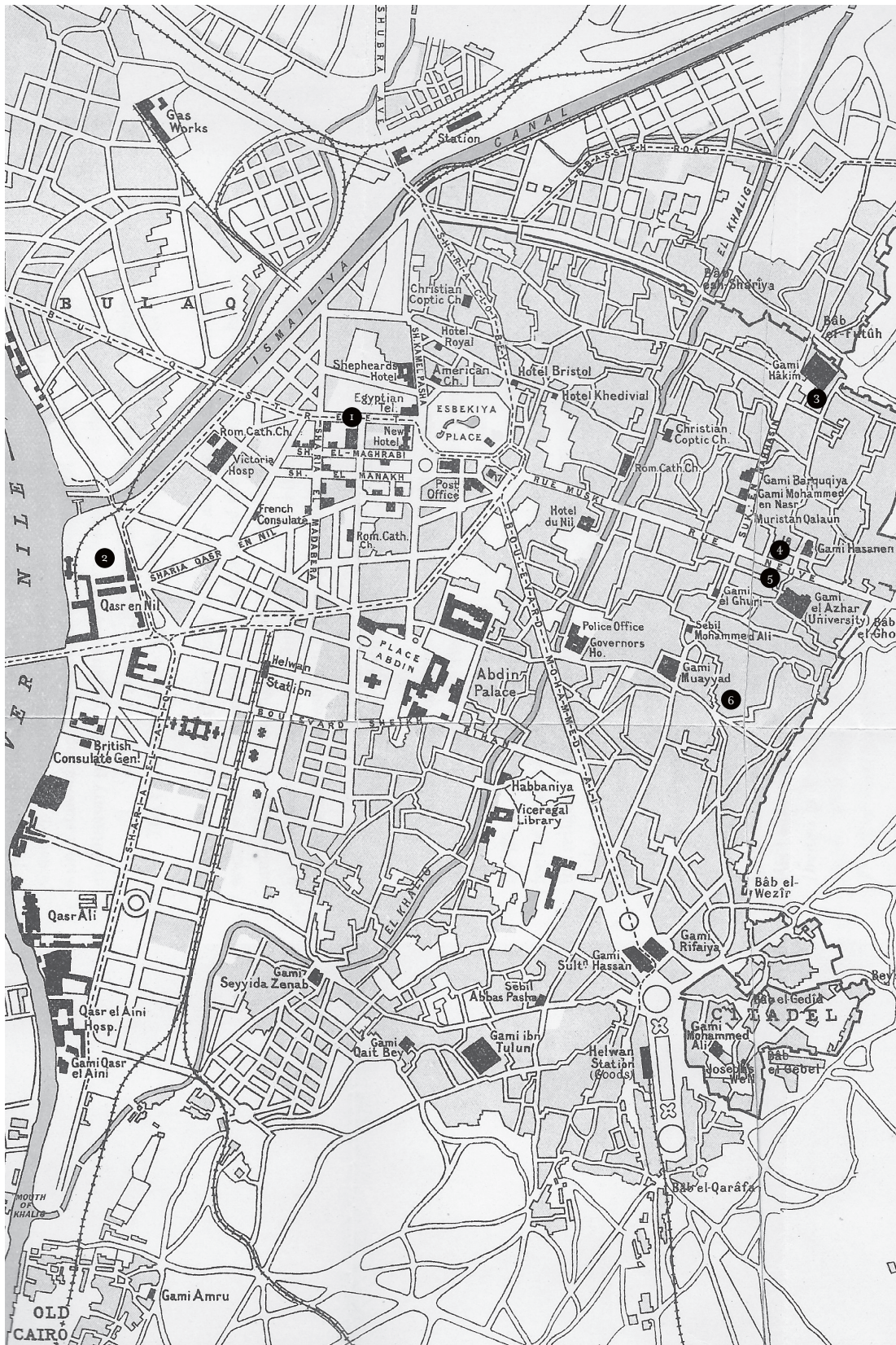
The Egyptian Museum of Antiquities

The museum of Egyptian antiquities was founded at Bulak in 1863, being then housed in a mosque, by the French savant Auguste Mariette. In 1889 the collection was transferred to the Giza palace, and in 1902 was removed to its present quarters, erected at a cost of over £250,000. The museum is a large two-story neoclassical structure entirely devoted to antiquities of Pharaonic times, and is the most valuable collection of such antiquities in existence, except in historical papyri, in which it is excelled by the British Museum.

Al-Muizz Street, in the Old City of Cairo

To get to Christo's house, characters will have to travel through the old Islamic quarter of the city. The main street in this part of the city is called Al-Muizz. This street





Cairo

- 1 Hotel d'Angleterre
Scene 1, page 15
- 2 Egyptian Museum
Scene 2, page 18
- 3 Wikala of Qaytbay
Scene 3, page 26
- 4 Khan al-Khalili market
Scene 3, page 27
- 5 El-Fishawi cafe
Scene 3, page 29
- 6 Christo's house
Scene 2, page 22





Legwork Table

Fate + (2 x Background Advantage)

<i>Degree of Success</i>	<i>Result</i>
○	Poor success in locating appropriate contacts. Base search time of five days.
1-2	Moderate Success. Base search time of four days.
1-5	Good Success. Base search time of three days.
6+	Excellent Success. Base search time of two days.



Wit + At Home Among Strangers

<i>Degree of Success</i>	<i>Result</i>
○	Faux pas and lack of social grace puts contacts on edge. Add one day to base search time.
1-2	Character is just getting by, but contacts are not very forthcoming. No adjustment to base search time.
1-5	Character fits in well and says the right things at the right times. Subtract one day from base search time.
6+	Character fits in like a native and puts contacts completely at ease. Subtract two days from base search time.



Wit + False Promises

<i>Degree of Success</i>	<i>Result</i>
○	There is either no cover story, or else the character fails to stick to the chosen cover story. The Austrian team becomes aware of the player characters' search within twelve hours on the first day.

1-2	Certain details about the characters' true intentions are let slip, resulting in the Austrian team being notified of the characters' enquiries around midday on the second day of the search.
3-4	The character weaves a convincing web of deceit. It will take until the fourth day after the start of the search for the Austrian team to become aware of their pursuers.
5+	In addition to the previous level of success, the characters learn of Herr Glaser's request to be informed of others asking about the same tablets.



is home to many architectural treasures of medieval Cairo. As the group makes its way down Al-Muizz Street, the muezzins of several nearby mosques can be heard calling the faithful to twilight prayers. The call to prayer echoes from the close walls of the nearly deserted medieval streets of the old city. If the GM wishes to make this segue more atmospheric, it is easy to find recordings of the call to prayer, called the Adhan, on the internet.

Christos's House

The venerable Greek collector known as Christos lives in the Coptic quarter of Old Cairo, in a small neighborhood that has long been home to the city's Greek population, on a street called Haret el Roum (Street of the Greeks). There is a simple strong wooden door in an unadorned stretch of street. Inside are a series of small rooms, most of them filled to bursting with all manner of objects from books, magazines and old furniture to ancient artifacts of Egypt's past. The seemingly haphazard arrangement of what may be priceless artifacts of bygone eras will alarm any character with an academic background. There is a sitting room with a kitchen alcove that is the only relatively uncluttered chamber in the whole house.



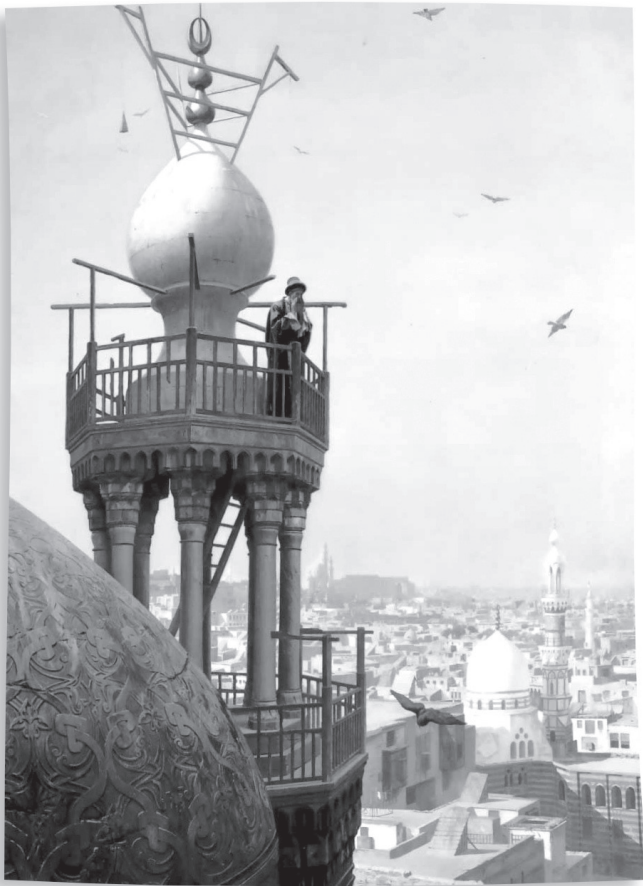
s2 • ACTION

The characters will probably want to set up a base of operations in Cairo. There are a number of hotels catering to Europeans in the modern downtown of Cairo, near the river. Consult the map of Cairo included in



Section VIII for the names and locations of several of these hotels. Higher class hotels may frown upon guests coming and going at all hours of the night, so care must be taken not to attract too much attention. Lower class hotels have the advantage of a more disinterested management but also lack the security of the more expensive hotels.

Once they have established themselves in Cairo, the characters will likely wish to get started tracking down Herr Glaser. They know that Glaser was at the Egyptian Museum, but frustratingly, they aren't sure what he was looking for. They also suspect that Glaser will be contacting the many black market antiquities dealers in the city in an attempt to examine or acquire more Akkadian-era artifacts. Only by following in his footsteps, visiting whoever he visits and subtly questioning them, will they figure out what Herr Glaser seeks and be able to know when he has found it.



Jean-Leon Gerome, *A Muezzin Calling From The Top Of A Minaret The Faithful To Prayer*

At the Egyptian Museum

The characters may choose to follow up the lead regarding Herr Glaser's visit to the Egyptian Museum. Special Branch has an agent named Wallace Clyburn placed in

the museum's employ. Wallace works as a guard and while he sees who comes and goes from the museum, he was unable to observe Herr Glaser's activity in detail. It will be difficult to inconspicuously have a conversation with Clyburn while he is on duty, but a message could be passed and he will agree to meet them after his shift. Sadly, Mr. Clyburn has little to add to what he already told his superiors in Special Branch. He was given a description of Herr Glaser a few days ago and, lo and behold, Glaser appeared yesterday morning (this timing may be different depending on when the characters visit the museum) and asked to speak with museum director, Gaston Maspero. Clyburn did not see what happened next. If the characters manage to arrange an appointment with Mssr. Maspero they can learn that Herr Glaser asked permission to inspect the museum's collection of artifacts from the period of Assyrian occupation. Maspero granted that permission and Herr Glaser spent most of the day inspecting the collection. In the late afternoon, Glaser thanked Maspero for his indulgence and left with some notes he had taken. If pressed, Mssr. Maspero will divulge a bit more information. As Herr Glaser was leaving, Maspero asked him if he had found what he was looking for. Glaser admitted that he had not and looked, to Maspero's eyes, quite weary and frustrated.

Searching the Black Market

The characters will also wish to explore the antiquities black market in the city. It is assumed that this part of the scene will not be extensively role-played out. To that end, a system is presented below to resolve the search while keeping the scene abstract. However, the GM is encouraged to expand on this scene if it seems that the PCs are having fun with it and disregard the abstract system in favor of roleplaying the interviews in detail.

If the Game Master wishes to keep the scene abstract, the characters may use appropriate Background Advantages to find connections in the black market in an effort to figure out what Herr Glaser is looking for. The most obviously useful Background Advantage is Criminal Underworld, which could be used to find useful contacts with a **Fate + (2 x Criminal Underworld)** test. However, several other Background Advantages could be used with the complication of requiring a second degree of connection to get to the desired contacts. Academics, Intrepid Explorers, Police Constables, and Special Branch could all be used to turn up contacts that could, with proper incentive, steer the character toward dealers in the illegal antiquities trade.



The Game Master should call for representative tests of the characters' Connections, as detailed above, and of the characters' social skills. Have the players describe generally how they will interview the dealers - their cover story, are they mentioning Herr Glaser by name, and so on. Once the characters have devised their investigation plan, test **Wit + At Home Among Strangers**, **Wit + False Promises**, and **Wit + Huckster's Eye**. Test these skills once each for the whole scene and then ascertain the character's overall success in their investigation by referring to the Legwork sidebar. Testing **Wit + At Home Among Strangers** will indicate how well the character is able to interact with contacts in Cairo. The **Wit + False Promises** test gives an indication of how well the character conceals information from those she interacts with and how well she sticks with the chosen cover story. The **Wit + Huckster's Eye** test will determine how well the character is able to read her interviewees and detect misdirection. All of these test results can guide the narration of the scene and scale the depth of information revealed about Herr Glaser's activities. The minimum search time is one day, which would result in visiting Christos in the evening of the first search day.

Once the GM has established the time frame for the characters' legwork search, they can then parcel out the following information at appropriate intervals. Essentially, more success on the legwork tests means fewer dead ends and more information gained from fewer interviews. If the search time is very short, then the time interval between updates will be measured in hours. If the search time is three days, an update can be given at the end of each day. A long search time does not mean failure, but it does have consequences, resulting in Herr Glaser's team having a more significant head start into the desert. Also, a long search time can lead to interesting encounters if the GM chooses to narrate additional encounters with paranoid and obstreperous black marketeers.

As the characters conduct the legwork, they will gradually build a rough timeline of where Herr Glaser went and when. The first update will reveal that Herr Glaser has been zeroing in on antiquities dealers who specialize in the period of Akkadian dominance in Egypt. This makes sense as that was the period when Althan-Ya was active. The second update will reveal that Glaser has been systematically rounding up all the Akkadian-era cuneiform tablets he can get his hands on. Higher levels of success can reveal extra tidbits like the fact that the Austrians seems very well-funded and that Herr Glaser specifically asked to be informed if other parties came asking after him or asking for the same type of item he was interested in. If

the characters become aware of this last item, the GM can call for a **Wits + Leadership & Intimidation** test (a bribe will give a bonus) to induce one of the dealers to divulge the contact information Herr Glaser gave them. If the characters wish to follow up that lead, it will lead to the coffee shop encounter detailed in Scene 3. In the third and final update the characters' investigation will reveal the name of the last dealer the Austrians dealt with, a Greek named Christos.

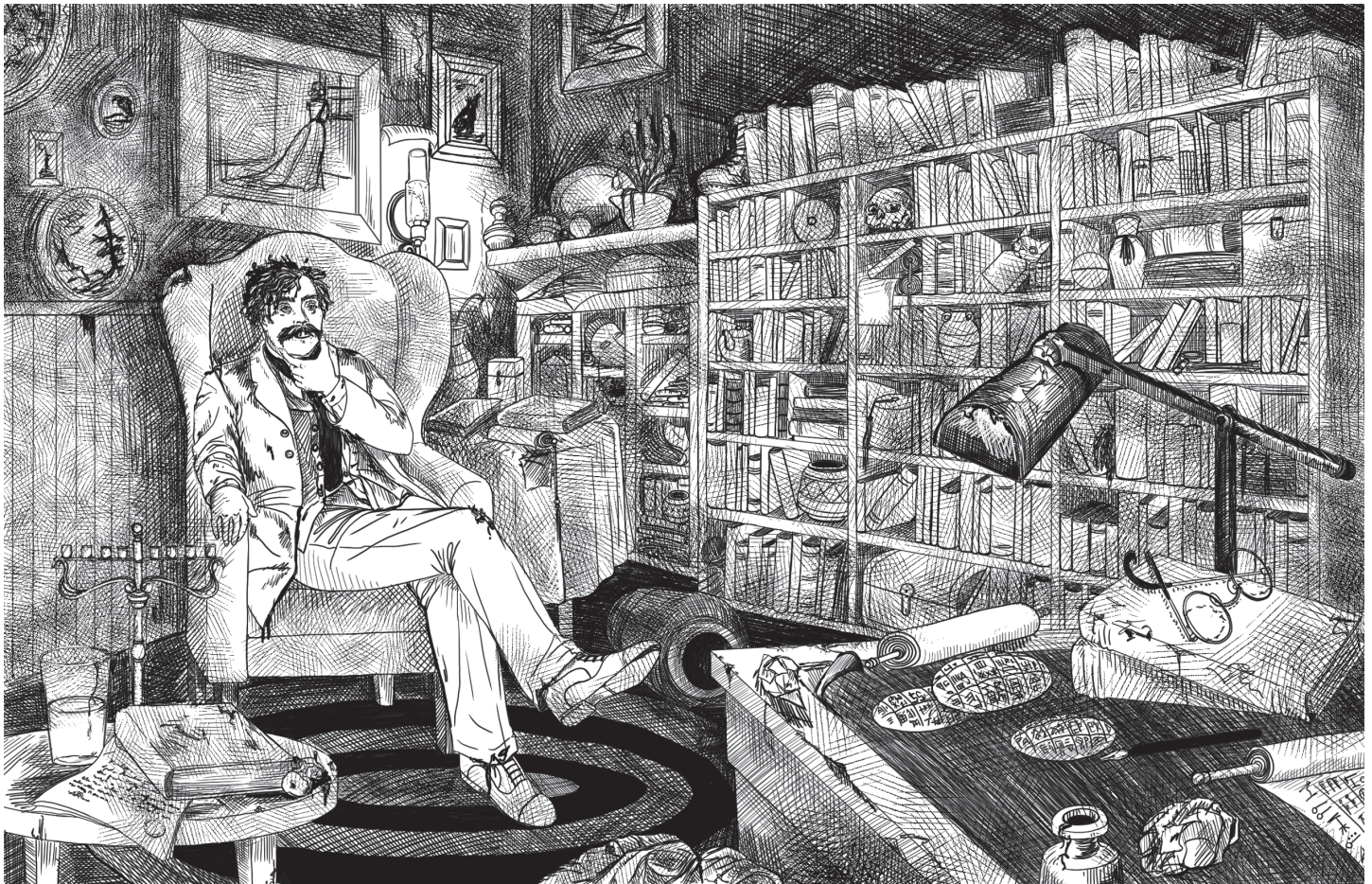
Hoarders of Cairo

It turns out that the last dealer that Herr Glaser visited was a Greek collector known only by his given name, Christos. He maintains a house in a Greek neighborhood of the old city of Cairo, on Haret el Roum, the Street of the Greeks. For more details on Christos' house and the scenic route to get there, please see the Locations section earlier in this chapter. Christos' house is entered via an unmarked door in a featureless alley wall. Christos employs a young Coptic girl named Marta to cook and clean. It is she who answers the door and shows the characters to the one relatively uncluttered room in the house, where she nevertheless has to shift books and papers to clear sitting space. If there are more than a couple of player characters present, there will not be room for everyone to sit and the room will feel quite crowded. When Christos enters the room, he is quite friendly and offers the group tea, which Marta of course prepares.

Christos is a chatterer and his English is quite good, so he peppers the characters with questions about themselves while Marta prepares the tea. If the characters are attempting to use false identities as a cover, Christos' chitchat will present a formidable challenge to their skill in subterfuge. Savvy characters can try to steer the conversation to safer topics, like Egyptian history and the artifacts in Christos' personal collection. If the characters ask about Herr Glaser, Christos shakes his head sadly and says he cannot possibly break confidentiality with his clients; his business relies on his discretion. This confidentiality is, of course, negotiable. Depending on the characters' approach, False Promises, Buy Low, Sell High, or Leadership & Intimidation may all be used to change Christos' mind. This test is also made easier (+2) by the strong-arm tactics Herr Glaser used with Christos to convince him to part with the actual tablets.

Luckily for the characters, Christos makes rubbings of every single tablet that comes into his possession and he can be persuaded to let the characters examine the rubbings of the twenty or so tablets he sold to the Austrian. In his dealings with Herr Glaser, Christos kept the existence of





the rubbings a secret lest they be taken as well. Christos goes into an adjacent room and engages in a fifteen minute search for the rubbings amid the piles of papers and artifacts piled precariously all about the chamber. He eventually returns with the appropriate set of rubbings and instructs Marta to bring another lamp so that they may inspect the inscriptions. At this point if the players are using the pre-generated characters, it will be trivial for Wallis Budge to translate the tablets. If none of the PC's can read Akkadian cuneiform, they will need to find someone who can. If the GM is in a hurry and wishes to avoid an additional complication, she can simply supply Christos with the necessary linguistic skill. If the GM wishes to make the scene a smidgen more complicated, the characters will have to hunt down an antiquarian who can read the tablets. This could involve going to the Egyptian Museum or visiting the offices of the Egyptian Antiquities Office.

Once the characters have a translation of the twenty tablets, there is only one that actually seems relevant. The tablet in question is a transcription of a set of prayers and rituals used by priests in the Cult of Althan-Ya. Most importantly, the tablet mentions the completion

of a temple dedicated to the worship of Althan-Ya in the gargantuan base of the Great Ziggurat of Giza, just outside of Cairo. This information makes the characters' next destination pretty obvious, but the characters may still be unclear as to what they expect to find there. The original intelligence given them by the Special Branch agents made no mention of a temple and hinted that Herr Glaser already knew the approximate location of the tomb. They characters may travel to Giza laboring under the misapprehension that the tomb is hidden somewhere inside the temple. Since this is not true, the confusion could result in some amusing complications in Scene Four.



s2 • TWISTS & TURNS

This is hardly an action-packed scene, but it can be made more so if the GM wishes. Herr Glaser is not stupid; he knows that other organizations are probably keeping track of his movements and he expects that his sudden move from his dig in Syria to Cairo to have been noticed. Therefore, he has been careful to watch for pursuers. Just exactly when, or even if, Herr Glaser becomes aware of the characters' investigation into his activities depends on how



discreetly the investigation is being conducted and, more importantly, whether the GM wishes to complicate this scene. Careless investigation, such as directly using Herr Glaser's name or explicitly asking about recent "Austrian customers," will clue the antiquities dealers in to what is going on. Herr Glaser paid extra to the dealers with the proviso that they contact him if other parties came looking for him or the same sort of tablets. One of these dealers could contact Herr Glaser with information about the characters and their descriptions. The investigating character's success on the **Wits + False Promises** test, as detailed in the Legwork sidebar, can guide the decision about whether or not to introduce this complication.

If Herr Glaser is informed of the characters' activities he will arrange for a local welcoming party. The most likely time and place for the ambush would be after dark and near the characters' hotel, but the GM should arrange the ambush wherever and whenever it seems plausible. The ambush should consist of some local toughs; a mixture of native Egyptian muscle and some European ne'er do wells. Their orders are not to kill, but to rough up the characters and make them think better of pursuing their investigation further. Adjust the number of assailants to give the characters a challenging but non-lethal fight. Make it clear to the players that the assailants are using non-lethal weapons. In game terms, the attackers will withdraw once they've inflicted at least one or two solid hits on each of the player characters. If a PC falls unconscious, the attackers will not kick him/her while they're down. If the fight seems to be going against the ruffians, they will attempt to withdraw.

The default is to match the number of attackers to the number of characters present. Give the attackers combat statistics one or two points less than the player characters for a moderately challenging encounter. Arm the attackers with brass knuckles, blackjacks, and the like. If the players respond to the attack with lethal force, consider letting the attackers pull knives and perhaps a light pistol or two. The GM could also choose to increase the number of assailants, in which case lower their combat statistics so that the characters are not overwhelmed.

If any of the ruffians are captured and interrogated, they know only that they were hired by a Germanic gentleman who gave them descriptions of the characters and the name of the hotel they were staying in. The "German" paid in advance and gave no name or contact information. The hire took place in a shisha café behind the El Hussein Mosque in the Old City. Investigation of that café will be in vain, as the Austrians used it only once, for hiring the ruffians.

If the characters choose to respond with lethal force, which may involve screams and gunshots, they will probably garner the attention of the local constabulary. In addition the deaths of his hirelings, rather than a sound thrashing, will let Herr Glaser know that the characters are not pulling punches and he will plan his subsequent actions accordingly.

Exactly how long the characters spend doing this legwork can depend on how the Game Master tweaks the timeline. If the GM wishes to give the characters a chance to intercept Herr Glaser's team before they leave Cairo, then either delay Herr Glaser or permit the characters to find Christos very quickly.



s2 • KEY PLAYERS

Wallace Clyburn :: A guard employed by the Egyptian Museum. He is also an informant for Special Branch. He is a large, florid man in his late thirties, sporting a Yorkshire accent. He will cooperate with the characters in their inquiries but he will not be much help. What he knows is detailed in the Action section.

Gaston Maspero :: Mssr. Maspero is a famous French Egyptologist and the first director of the Egyptian Museum. He is a balding, white-bearded and bespectacled man of sixty years. He speaks fluent English with a very strong French accent. If the characters appear respectable and approach him politely, he will answer their questions regarding Herr Glaser.

Christos :: An eccentric old man of Greek Egyptian descent. He speaks Greek and Arabic equally well and dresses in a manner that would be, to Western Europeans eyes, indistinguishable from native Egyptians. A tall, but slightly stooped man, he has a shock of silver hair and an impressive mustache. He is friendly, but a bit scatter-brained. He has an amazing ability to find anything he wants in the incredible clutter of his home. The only statistics the Game Master is likely to need for Christos are the ones dealing with social tests. Christos has a Wit of 6, False Promises 6, Huckster's Eye 7, and a Buy Low, Sell High rating of 7.

Marta :: About fourteen, she is a homely Coptic Christian girl from a poor family. She is Christos' housekeeper and cook. She is meek in demeanor but if anyone threatens Christos they are likely to find Marta slashing their hamstrings with the small knife she conceals on her person.

Local Ruffians :: A mixture of native Egyptians and Europeans, all in the muscle-for-hire business, either by



choice or circumstance. None of them are dressed well and nearly all of them could use a shave and a bath. They will try to get the characters alone at night in a dark alley. They will flee if the fight turns decisively against them or if law enforcement arrives on the scene.



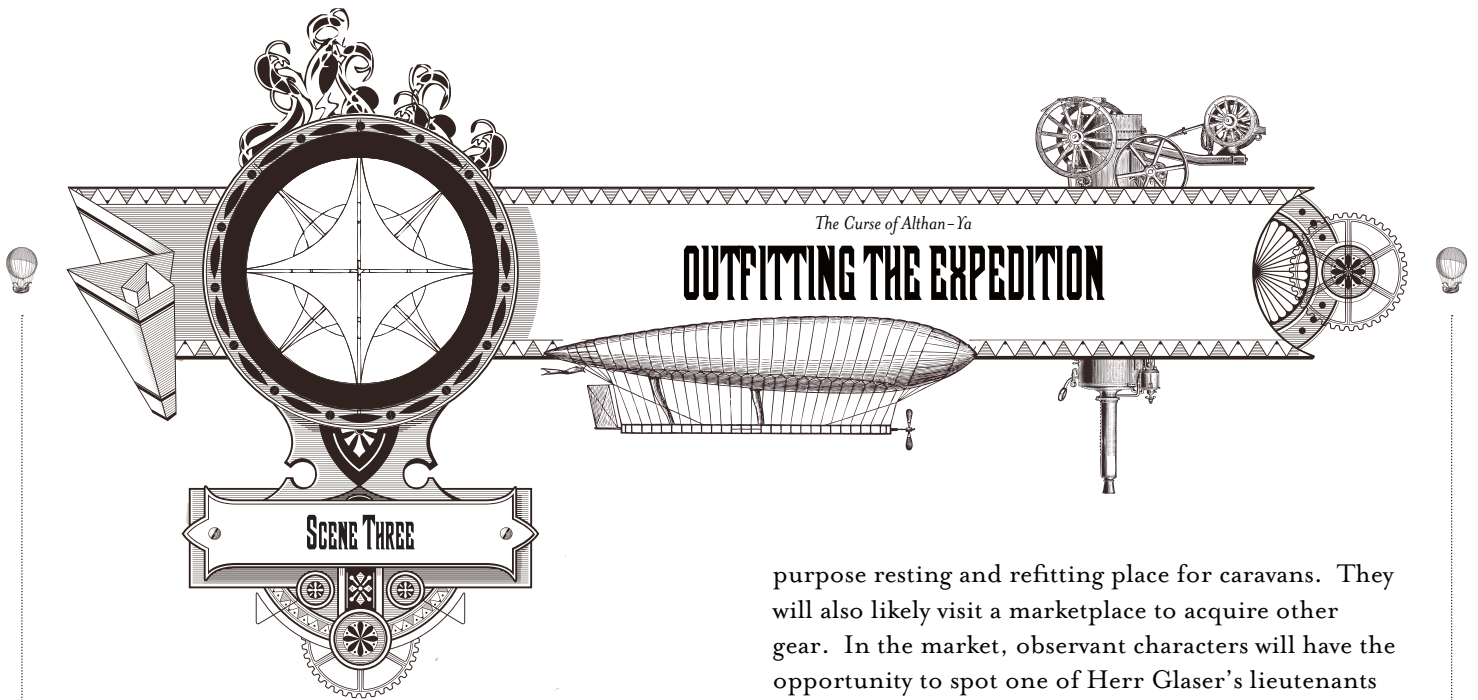
s2 • WHERE WE'RE GOING NEXT

This scene likely overlaps with some or all of Scene Three. If the characters manage to get one of the dealers

to reveal how they were supposed to contact Herr Glaser and the characters choose to pursue the lead immediately this scene leads directly to the portion of Scene 3 where the characters can encounter one of Herr Glaser's lieutenants in a coffee shop in a bohemian section of the Old Islamic Quarter of Cairo, near the Al-Azhar University.

If Scene 3 wraps up concurrently with this scene, then it is on to Giza and the Hidden Temple in Scene 4.





s3 • OVERVIEW

How We Got Here

This scene will likely take place in parallel with Scene 2 with the team splitting up to simultaneously find the trail of the Austrians and prepare for the distinct possibility of a trip into the desert. Alternately, this scene may not take place later in the scenario if the characters choose not to start preparing for an expedition until they know for sure they will need one.

Synopsis

The characters will need to acquire the necessary transportation, gear, and provisions for an expedition into the desert. They will have to choose animals, vehicles, or some combination of the two. Unless the characters include a wealthy individual, the characters probably won't be able to get everything they want. The characters will likely visit a caravanserai, known in Egyptian Arabic as a *wikala*, which is a sort of all-

purpose resting and refitting place for caravans. They will also likely visit a marketplace to acquire other gear. In the market, observant characters will have the opportunity to spot one of Herr Glaser's lieutenants making an arms purchase.

Opening Montage

The camera pans down from high above. First the outline of the great city becomes visible. A pattern of buildings, roads, and other human structures etched onto the ancient landscape. Then the districts of the city come into view. The camera races toward the ancient heart of the city. A large stone building appears, a hollow square enclosing a courtyard full of riotous activity. As the camera approaches, a wave of sound crashes upward to meet it. The frantic haggling of merchants and the cries of urchins mingle with the whickering of horses and the peculiar, malign braying of camels. Finally, the camera races past this building, and alights upon a pair of men making their way through the tumultuous urban crowd. One is trim, handsome, and fashionable, in a European way, despite the thin patina of dust that has settled on his tailored suit. The other is sturdy and scarred, indifferent both to his rather unkempt appearance and to the tumult around him. He makes a space for his smaller companion, and the two are quickly swallowed by the crowd.



s3 • LOCATIONS

This scene will take place within the city of Cairo and its immediate environs. Outfitting a desert expedition will likely take the characters to a bazaar and a caravanserai. Specific examples of these locations are detailed below.

Wikala of Qaytbay

Any effort to outfit a desert expedition will likely need to visit a caravanserai that caters to merchants and caravans. There is one such place, called the Wikala of Qaytbay, located on the northeastern edge of the city, just inside the medieval city wall near the gate of Bab al-Nasr. The floor-plan of the building is a rectangular courtyard that, on the



Pascal Xavier Coste, *Sabil and Wikala of Dhul Fiqr Oda Basha*

ground floor, is surrounded by a group of storage areas. Above it are three stories, which include residential units for merchants. The place is constantly buzzing with commerce and the coming and going of international caravans. Animals and provisions may be acquired at this location.

Khan al-Khalili Bazaar

This extremely busy market is in the heart of Old Cairo. There are three ornate gateways into the area, which is filled with shops, warehouses, open-air market stalls, small hostels and coffee shops. The coffee shops are frequented by both merchants and by many of the students of nearby Al-Azhar University. In fact, the area has taken on a somewhat Bohemian character as prominent personalities of Egyptian art, music and literature discuss and exchange ideas away from watchful eyes of their British overlords.

Jael's Arms Shop

Jael's shop is in the Khan Al-Khalili Bazaar. It is more a small, dusty warehouse than a shop. There are a number of open crates with old rifles sticking out and piles of old handguns on rickety tables. If he has any modern, or even new, stock, it must be hidden out of sight.



s3 • ACTION

There is a great deal going on in this scene, but much of it is in the arena of gear acquisition. Regardless of when the characters make the decision to start outfitting for a trip into the desert, they will need to acquire transportation and provisions. The group will also have to decide whether or not to hire laborers, on the assumption that there will likely be some excavation involved when they reach the tomb of Althan-Ya. The GM faces a large range of possibilities, with the characters possibly traveling light and fast by motor vehicle or perhaps leading a caravan with camels, diggers, and a month of provisions. Outfitting an expedition of this sort will get expensive very quickly, so the characters' Background Advantages, and the Resources they bestow, will be important considerations for this scene. Below are some suggestions on how to handle the search for the necessary gear.

Camels will be much cheaper and easier to acquire than motor vehicles, but they will slow the pursuit of Herr Glaser accordingly. Motor vehicles will speed the characters' progress, but will be expensive to acquire and prone to breakdown in the desert. The choice may be complicated



by timing, as the characters may be outfitting the expedition before they know precisely where and how far they are going. It will of course not be obvious to the characters, but if they choose animal transport they will likely arrive at the tomb after its entrance is uncovered by the Austrians, whereas mechanical transport will enable them to arrive while the tomb entrance is yet uncovered unless the GM chooses to complicate things further for the characters through an entirely justified mechanical breakdown.

The Game Master should refer to the section at the beginning of Chapter 5 of the Brass & Steel rulebook for information regarding acquiring gear. However, here is an example using one of the pre-generated characters included in this adventure and the more detailed version of gear acquisition from Chapter 5 of the rulebook.

Mssr. Loret has Academic Resources at a rating of 4, which means he is quite well off. If he wishes to acquire a couple of steam-powered lorries and a steam car to transport the characters and their gear he will make a **Reason + Resources** test with the following modifiers: He is in his home turf, which grants +2. The Expense Rating of a steam car/lorry is 3, which is below Mssr. Loret's Resource rating of 4, which grants a +3 bonus. Steam cars and lorries are "Common," which grants an additional +2. Loret's Reason is 8 and his Resources 4, which gives a final test value of $8+4+2+3+2 = 19$, which gives him a very good chance of acquiring the steam-powered vehicles he is seeking. The base time of five days is reduced in similar fashion to just over two days.

Keep in mind that Mssr. Loret is ideally suited to putting together this sort of expedition. A character with lesser Resources, a lower Reason attribute and not familiar with Cairo will have a much harder time acquiring motor vehicles. On the other hand, camels in Egypt are Expense Rating 2 and Very Common, which makes them a much better choice if the characters are ill-suited to acquiring expensive gear in Egypt. For instance, a character with Reason 5 and Resources 3 will likely face a test against 15 to acquire the necessary camels in a timely manner. This test would also be a good candidate for use of a Fate Card for a re-roll. An appropriate Major Arcana card could be used to acquire very rare goods normally outside the character's reach, such as a Maxim gun or Hotaether-powered vehicles.

Camels, camel drivers, laborers, caravan guards and desert provisions can be purchased or hired at the Wikala of Qaytbay whereas motor vehicles, weapons, and other gear can be acquired in one of the many shops of the Khan al-Khalili Bazaar. If the group is using the pre-generated characters provided in the appendix, the Bedouin guide

named Rabia will know precisely what sorts of equipment and manpower the expedition is likely to need and where to get it. The Game Master may have Rabia's player test **Reason + Call of the Wild** (plus her bonus from the "Creature of the Desert" advantage) or simply assume Rabia has the necessary knowledge and inform the player that hiring guards is a prudent precaution for any desert expedition. If Rabia is not with the group, any hired NPC guide will encourage the group to hire caravan guards. Those caravan guards are typically of the extended family of the guide, and vary widely in competence and equipment. For purposes of the detailed gear acquisition system in Brass & Steel Chapter 5, the caravan guards come in grades one to three in Expense Rating and come in three grades of Rarity - Very Common, Common, and Rare. Expense Rating 3 and Rare quality guards are the best one can acquire in Cairo and are basically professional soldiers. On the other hand, if the characters choose Very Common or Common-grade caravan guards at Expense Rating 1 or 2, feel free to burden the characters with ill-equipped and cowardly caravan guards who will flee at the first sign of serious trouble. Hiring a smallish number of camel drivers and laborers is Expense Rating 2. Hiring a larger number of workers will amount to Expense Rating 3. These sorts of workers only come in Very Common and Common rarities, and the only difference is how likely they are to run off in the night if the expedition should start to experience setbacks.

A Chance Encounter

While the characters are in the Bazaar, they will have the opportunity to spot one of Herr Glaser's lieutenants, a man named Gerhard Steiner. Herr Steiner is in the market at the shop of a small-time Egyptian arms dealer named Jael. Herr Steiner is purchasing a crate of obsolete British service rifles to equip the Bedouin raiders Herr Glaser has hired to ambush any pursuers in the desert. The weapons he purchases are beat-up Martini-Henry carbines, about fifteen of them, and some ammunition.

The characters have the opportunity to spot Herr Steiner coming or going from Jael's shop. Call for **Wit + Investigator's Eye** tests for each character who is wandering the bazaar. Give a bonus to players who specifically mention that their characters are on the lookout for anything suspicious or unusual. If one or more characters choose to investigate they can follow Herr Steiner. A successful opposed **Wits + Stealth and Camouflage** test versus Herr Steiner's **Wit + Investigator's Eye** will be required to remain unseen. Herr Steiner will proceed, accompanied by a single bodyguard, to Jael's shop. He will briefly negotiate in a mixture of fractured English





Aloysius O'Kelly , *A Nargileh Cafe, Cairo*

and Arabic and then give instructions to have the crate of arms taken to a group of waiting Bedouins just outside the Gate of Ibn Tulun, at the southern edge of the city. Herr Steiner will then leave with his bodyguard while Jael arranges for a hand cart to take the arms to the Bedouins.

The characters will now have the choice of whether to continue following Herr Steiner, follow the delivery boy, or split up and do both.

If the characters follow Herr Steiner, he and his bodyguard don't go far. They make their way to another part of the bazaar and settle in the El-Fishawi coffee shop on Al-Badistand Street. Herr Steiner is at this café because it is here that Herr Glaser instructed each of his contacts in the antiquities black market to send word of other interested parties.

There are many ways this scene could progress, depending on what the characters decide to do. If they choose to confront Herr Steiner and pump him for information, they're in for a tough challenge, even if they manage to convince Steiner that they're just strangers seeking a "friendly" fellow European face amongst the crowds of native Egyptians. Herr Steiner is clever and no fool. He

won't give away anything regarding his own task or the plans of Herr Glaser if he can help it. An opposed test of a character's **Wit + False Promises** versus Steiner's **Wit + Huckster's Eye** can be used to resolve the situation. Give Herr Steiner a small bonus because he is very much on his guard. Give the PCs a bonus if they come up with a particularly compelling cover story. What Herr Steiner knows depends on the timeline. If this encounter takes place before Glaser finds the map in the hidden temple, then Steiner knows only that Glaser is heading out to Giza to investigate a lead. If the encounter takes place after Glaser visits the hidden temple, then Steiner knows only that Glaser is taking his expedition into the desert southwest of Cairo. Steiner's instructions are to continue showing up at the El-Fishawi café each day in case one of the antiquities dealers reports in and also to keep checking the telegraph office for any word from Herr Glaser.

If the characters settle down to watch, Herr Steiner waits until shortly after sundown, at which point he and his bodyguard hire a carriage to take them back to Shephard's Hotel. Only Steiner and his bodyguard are staying there; Herr Glaser and the rest of his team are staying elsewhere. If the characters manage to break into Herr Steiner's hotel room, they find nothing of interest. If they decide to kidnap Herr Steiner, let them have at it. Steiner's bodyguard will fight to the death but Steiner himself will surrender after taking any level of wound. What Herr Steiner knows under interrogation remains the same as detailed above, but the test will likely be **Wit (or Might) + Intimidation** versus **Willpower + Heroic Vigor**.

If they choose to follow the delivery, Jael soon engages the services of one Ahmed and his hand-cart. Ahmed will take the quickest route to his destination, weaving through the dense foot traffic on his twenty-minute trip to the Gate of Ibn Tulun. It will be a bit of a challenge for any following characters to keep up but it will be easy to remain unseen, as Ahmed is concentrating on maneuvering his cart. Perhaps call for **Agility + Olympian Spirit** tests, with the characters losing Ahmed only if all of them fail the test. If one or more characters intercept Ahmed and force him to stop, he will protest loudly in Arabic, in earshot of many passersby. Arabic-speaking characters can try to calm Ahmed and negotiate with him. Ahmed is actually pretty easily bought off; he'll try for a full British pound sterling first but will quickly be talked down to a handful of shillings, for which price he will do whatever the characters ask him to do with the crate of rifles. Characters also have the option of threatening Ahmed but the public venue will complicate things quickly if a group of Europeans accost a native boy in a street full of other natives. If the characters



follow Ahmed to his final destination, they will witness an exchange with a group of rough-looking Bedouin camel riders just outside the southern city gate. The Bedouins very quickly distribute the carbines and the ammunition and ride off, leaving a slowly settling cloud of dust. Ahmed disappears with his cart back into the streets of Cairo, looking for another job.



s3 • TWISTS & TURNS

If the characters settle down in the café to watch Herr Steiner, you can spice things up by having one of the black market dealers that the PCs visited come to the café to report their visit. If any of the PCs present at the café were present at the meeting with the dealer, the dealer will recognize them and alert Herr Steiner. Things could get interesting at that point; use your imagination.



s3 • KEY PLAYERS

Jael, the Arms Dealer :: Jael is a lean, middle-aged Coptic Christian with a neatly trimmed moustache and hard black eyes. He has adopted a blend of Western business clothes with some more traditional elements. He bargains hard but does not indulge in the persistent whinging displayed by some merchants in the bazaar.

Gerhard Steiner :: Herr Steiner is a Vienna city boy, through and through. He is of medium height, with medium brown hair and blue eyes. He is impeccably dressed in Austrian fashion. Steiner is a Lucid Dreamer working for the Austrian government. He has been attached to Herr Glaser to assist him and keep watch over him. Glaser has astutely determined that Herr Steiner is best kept in Cairo, watching for and discouraging pursuit. Herr Steiner is not a fighter; he will use Ephemera to cover his escape if there is unavoidable violence.

Attributes: Might 4, Vitality 5, Agility 5, Reason 7, Willpower 6, Wit 7, Fate 5

Skills: Duck & Cover 4, False Promises 7, Huckster's Eye 7, At Home Among Strangers 6, Olympian Spirit 4, Heroic Vigor 4, Investigator's Eye 5, Dreamer's Eye 6,

Lucid Dreaming 6, Clarity of the Self 5, Languages of the Spirit 5, Morphean Artifice 6

Gear: Medium Clothing (Armor 1), 3x Lucidose Vials

Ephemera: A Milling crowd, a pack of feral dogs, a shambling mummy, an out-of-control automobile, a raging bonfire, and a shadowy pursuer.

Damage Boxes: 10 Physical, 11 Stamina

Max, Steiner's bodyguard :: Max's lower-class origin in rural Austria is unimportant. What matters is that he is a large man with a number of unsavory violent urges. He is tall and bulky, with blonde hair and dark eyes glaring out over an oft-broken nose. He looks uncomfortable in his suit and ready to take out his irritation on anyone who threatens Herr Steiner.

Attributes: Might 8, Vitality 6, Agility 7, Reason 4, Willpower 5, Wit 5, Fate 5

Skills: Duck & Cover 6, Up Close & Personal 8, Barking Irons 6, Sergeant's Eye 6, False Promises 3, Huckster's Eye 4, Leadership/Intimidation 5, Olympian Spirit 7, Stealth & Camouflage 5, Heroic Vigor 7, Investigator's Eye 4

Gear: Medium Clothing (Armor 1), Blackjack, Heavy Pistol

Damage Boxes: 13 Physical, 11 Stamina

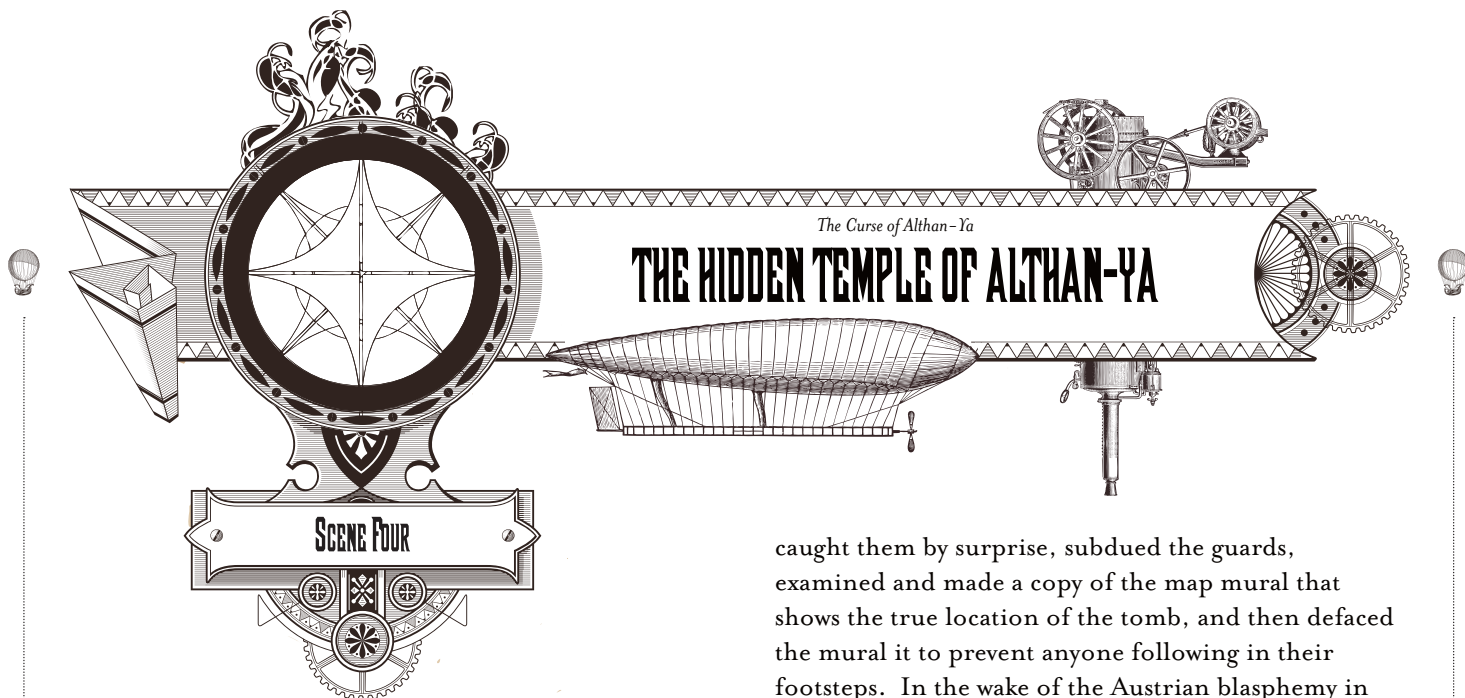
Ahmed, Delivery Boy :: There are thousands of teenage boys in Cairo pushing around delivery carts; Ahmed is one of them. He is neither brave nor a coward. He can be bribed because it means putting more food on the table for his numerous siblings. He is dust-covered in ragged clothing and runs on bare feet like black stones.



s3 • WHERE WE'RE GOING NEXT

This scene may be occurring simultaneously with Scene 2 and will likely lead into Scene 4. However, this scene could overlap with Scene 4 if the group stays split up. If the group waits until after Scene 4 to gather supplies, then this increasingly inaptly numbered scene will take place in between Scene 4 and 5. Flexibility is a priority for us at Pamean Games!





s4 • OVERVIEW

How We Got Here

There are only two ways to get to this scene. Either the characters tracked down Christos in Scene Two and acquired a translation of the Akkadian clay tablet that mentions the temple to Althan-Ya in the Great Ziggurat, or else they managed to get the information out of Herr Steiner, the Austrian dreamer. If their information came from the latter, then the characters are going into the scene blind, knowing nothing about the temple and knowing only that Herr Glaser went to Giza to follow up a lead.

Synopsis

The group walks into a hornet's nest. Modern-day cultists of Althan-Ya guard still worship in the temple hidden under the Great Ziggurat. The Austrians

caught them by surprise, subdued the guards, examined and made a copy of the map mural that shows the true location of the tomb, and then defaced the mural it to prevent anyone following in their footsteps. In the wake of the Austrian blasphemy in the inner sanctum of their temple, the cult leaders have called a meeting of their entire membership, some thirty men and women of varying ages. It is this meeting that the group walks in on. The cultists will initially not be well-disposed toward the characters who intrude on their meeting and the group will either have to bluff, negotiate or fight their way past the cultists to find out where Althan-Ya's tomb is.

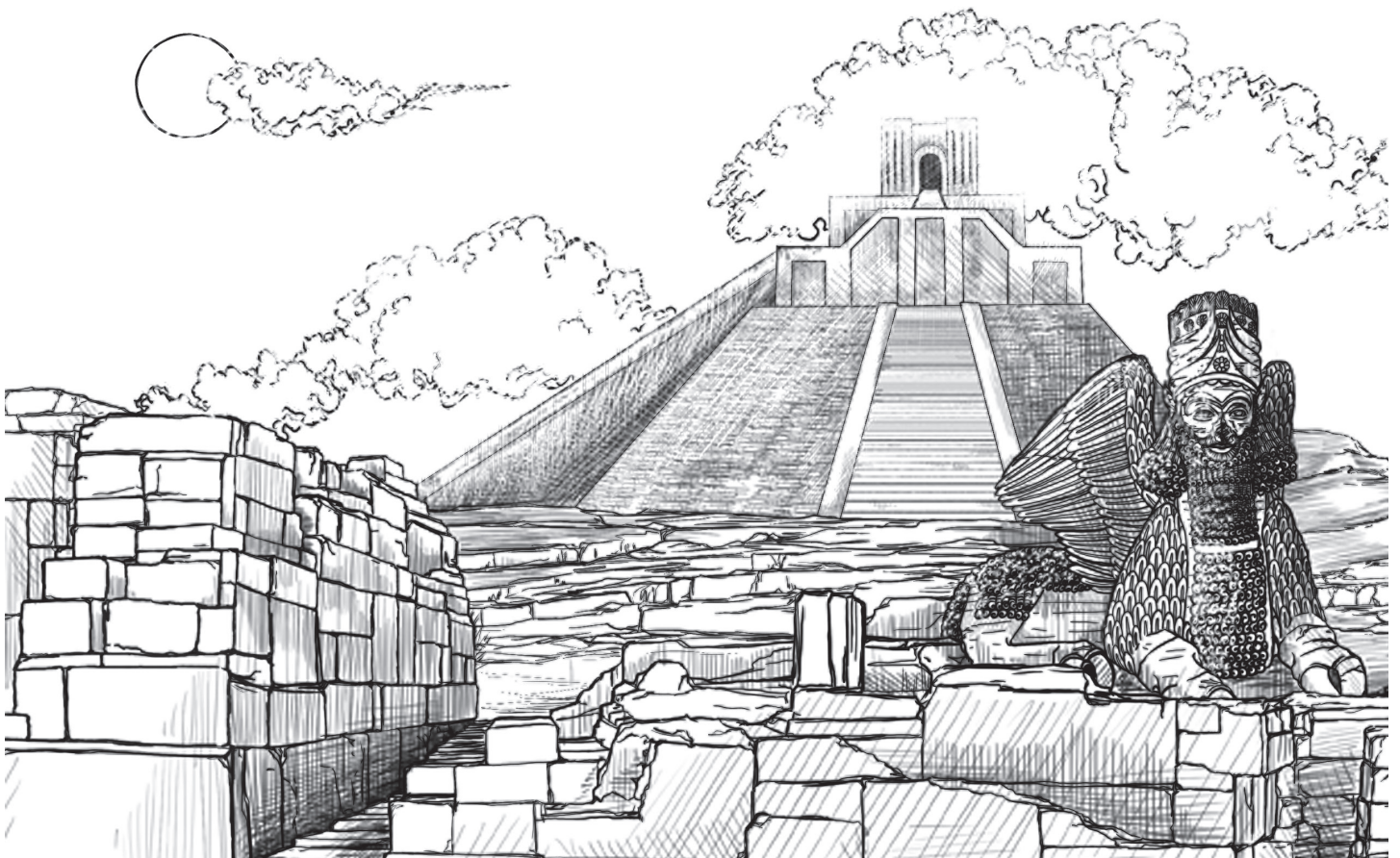
Opening Montage

The monumental ziggurat built by Gilgamesh four and a half thousand years ago broods over the Nile, a potent reminder of the foreign occupation Egypt suffered long ago and suffers again in the modern age. A lone, hooded figure makes its way across the shining sand under a moonlit sky. The figure climbs the steps up to the platform where pyramid ends and ziggurat begins. There is the flare of a torch being lit and then nothing as the figure is swallowed by the darkness within.

s4 • LOCATIONS

The Great Ziggurat of Giza is built on and around the lower third of the pyramid of Khufu. Specifically, the original pyramid ends at the 70th course of masonry, at a height of just less than 164 feet above ground level. The Sumerians converted the topmost completed level of masonry into a finished platform for the base of the ziggurat. The ziggurat itself consists of four "stages"

topped by a trapezoidal-shaped temple in the Sumerian style. The sloping walls of the stages were buttressed. The height of the first stage was about forty feet while the second stage rose some twenty feet. The third stage was more inset, about twelve feet in height and crowned by the temple. The access to the top was by means of a triple monumental staircase, which all converges at a portal that opened on a landing between the first and second stages. The ground-level end of the staircase projects out



an additional hundred feet beyond the pyramid base (two hundred feet in total horizontal distance from the top).

The internal chambers of the pyramid had nearly been completed when construction halted. The top end of the corbelled vault of the Grand Gallery protruded just a couple meters above the last completed course of masonry on the pyramid. The Sumerians simply sealed up the Grand Gallery entrance and built their own terraced steps around it. Unlike most other Sumerian ziggurats, there are passages and chambers in the bottommost terrace built on the base. The passage into the base of the ziggurat branches into perpendicular passages and continues further on. There are three chambers of nearly equal size, one at the end of each of the corridors.

Three centuries after the completion of the Great Ziggurat, the great Akkadian sorceress Althan-Ya claimed it for the worship of her own proclaimed godhood. Secret work was undertaken under her supervision that reopened the sealed chambers and passages of the pyramid base. The subterranean chamber was greatly expanded into a secret temple for the worship of Althan-Ya. The expanded

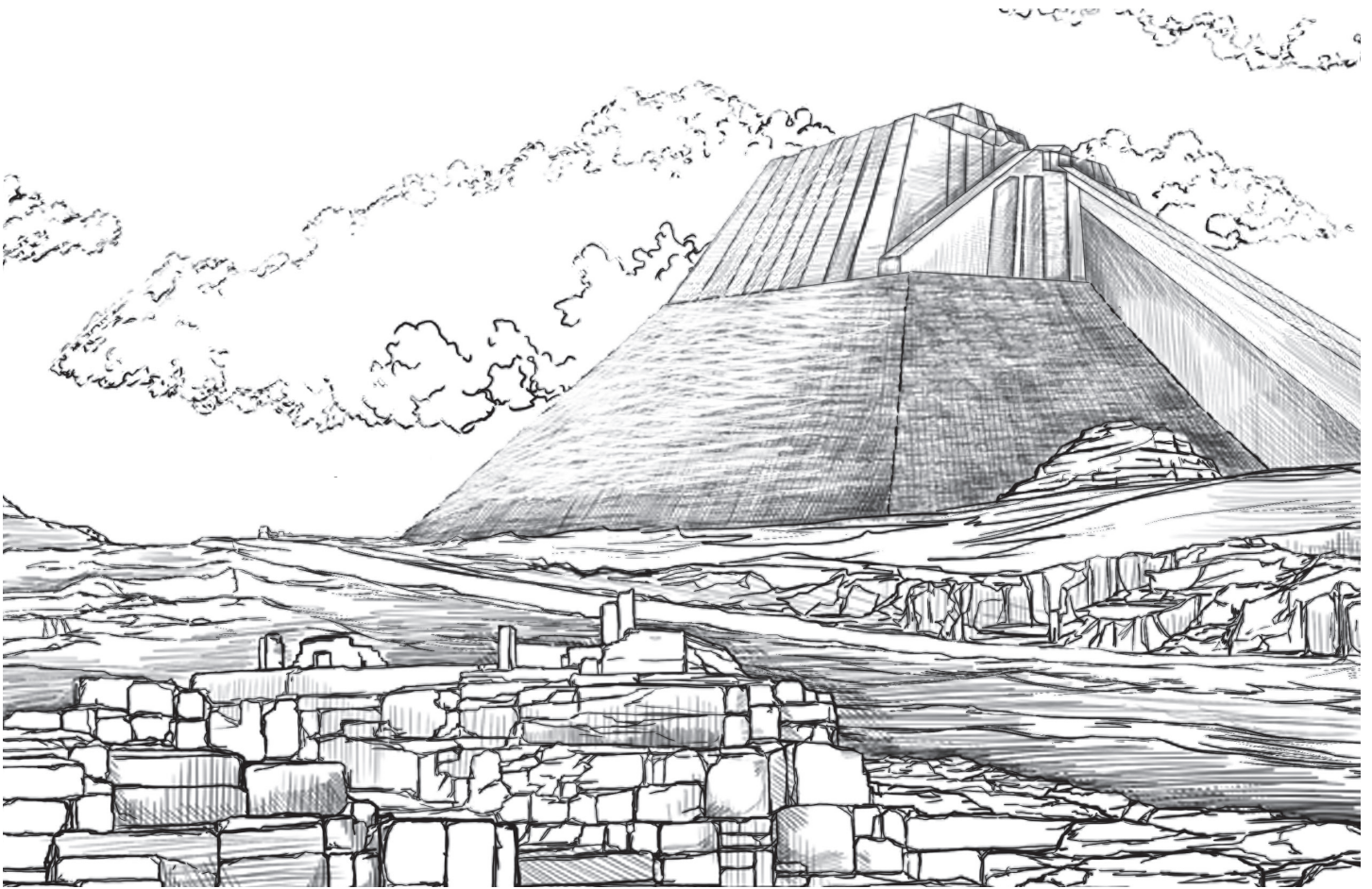
subterranean temple was elaborately decorated with painted wall friezes depicting the victories of Althan-Ya and the emperor Sargon, with scenes of Althan-Ya dispensing justice and performing great feats of sorcery. The secret entrance into the hidden temple complex is in the main corridor, just past the four-way intersection.



s4 • ACTION

This scene assumes the characters will approach the Giza plateau at night, as the area is thronged with tourists during the day. It would not be impossible to find the secret entrance and enter the temple during the day, but it would be very difficult to do it unseen. One of the complications is that the cultists of Althan-Ya have thoroughly infiltrated the administration of the Giza monuments and comprise the entirety of the security detail. Following the raid by the Austrians, the cultists are on alert and, during the day, have at least one of their guards keeping an unobtrusive eye on the stretch of corridor wall that hides the entrance to the temple of their patroness.





At night, the plateau is all but deserted. The emptiness both helps and hinders the characters. If the group decides to scout the area, looking for anything suspicious they won't have long to wait. A couple of hours after sunset, a progression of hooded figures make their way, in singles and pairs, across the empty stretch of sand between the nearby Arab village at the base of the plateau and the base of the Great Ziggurat. Without the crowds of tourists, it is hard to miss the activity on a clear, moonlit night. After about an hour, the progression stops, with approximately thirty people having made the journey across the sand.

With the cultists having practically hung a sign out advertising their meeting, it is safe to assume the characters will investigate the passage into which all these hooded figures are disappearing into. At night the cultists will have left a single guard in the corridor hiding the temple entrance. The guard and the meeting make the entrance easier to find for the characters. They will need to deal with the guard quickly and quietly, lest he alert the congregation below. It may be possible to distract the guard with a well-placed Ephemera, though he will not stray too far from his post. The temple entrance is very slightly

ajar and can be found with a standard **Wit + Investigator's Eye** test. Keep in mind how the characters deal with the guard, as it may affect later negotiation with the cultists if they decide to kill or seriously injure the guard.

Upon entering the secret entrance, the group finds themselves at the top of the Grand Gallery, exactly as it exists in the real-world version of the Great Pyramid. (An internet search will reveal a great deal of useful information about the Great Pyramid, unfinished though it is in the world of Brass & Steel.) Descent through the gallery leads to a smaller passage that descends further. Here is where the interior diverges from the real-world equivalent. The descending passage has been widened to a more comfortable height and well-worn stairs are carved into the limestone blocks. The passage reverses itself near the original entrance of the pyramid and descends further down into the bedrock beneath the pyramid. In place of the incomplete subterranean chamber present in the real world, there is instead a large underground temple dedicated to the undying glory of Althan-Ya. Currently there are about thirty members of her latter-day cult present for worship and a meeting to discuss the

Austrian incursion. It does not matter how many nights have passed since the Austrians invaded the temple, the meeting conveniently takes place whichever night the characters visit.

If the characters approach the main sanctuary of the temple stealthily, they can overhear part of the meeting, which is being conducted in a mixture of Arabic and ancient Akkadian. If the characters make a more dramatic entrance, either intentionally or unintentionally, the entire congregation falls silent and turns their smoldering gaze upon the intruders. The characters will have to act fast if they wish to avoid a violent confrontation. If the pre-generated characters are being used, Wallis Budge can actually understand the Akkadian tongue and knows enough cult lore that he can probably fake it pretty convincingly as an Althan-Ya cultist; a description not far off the mark, to be honest. Other characters without so well-fitted a background can still wing it if they speak Arabic and have gotten their hands on the translation of the clay tablet detailing the rites of the cult. For those eschewing the “impersonate a cultist” route but who still wish to negotiate or bluff can seize the moment and make appropriate social tests to sway a hostile audience. Declarations of malice toward the Austrian interlopers will help, as will fluency in Arabic. A truce can be arranged if the cult leader is sufficiently convinced that the characters are sincere in their desire to visit vengeance upon the Austrians.

The alternative to bluff and negotiation is violence, which is apt to get messy and quickly. Though the numbers heavily favor the cultists, only a handful of them are armed and those only with melee weapons. If the cultists were sufficiently incensed, they could simply rush the characters en masse and tear them apart. However, a quick show of deadly force with superior firepower, arcanism, or sufficiently frightening Ephemera will cow the noncombatant majority of the cultists and leave the characters facing only the handful of armed cultists who are willing to fight. Subduing the armed cultists will leave the characters dealing with another ten or so frightened and angry cultists hiding in the corners, the balance of the cultists having fled back up the staircase during the combat unless steps were taken by the characters to prevent them escaping. The chief priest of the cult, named Kazemde, was not fighting and will attempt to negotiate with the victorious characters in Arabic or his broken English.

Whether through violence, guile or negotiation the characters will likely have a chief priest willing to talk. The characters can learn some details about the Austrian raid, including a description of their leader, which matches the

description of Herr Glaser. The chief priest is extremely upset at the blasphemy and desecration carried out by the Austrians. He will point out the defaced mural near the back left corner of the temple. He describes the destroyed mural as a map to the celestial resting place of Althan-Ya’s spirit. He is wrong, of course. These latter-day cultists have passed down a form of the Akkadian tongue, but they have lost the ability to read the cuneiform runes upon the temple walls. The mural actually depicts rather specific geographic landmarks and directions. Of course, the characters have no way of knowing this unless they can see the undamaged mural; which they can, if they have a lucid dreamer among them. A lucid dreamer can visit the Reverie of the chief priest and uncover a very vivid memory of the vital map mural. The dreamer can capture the image as an Ephemera and can then evoke it once per day so that it is visible to others. If the characters lack a dreamer, the chief priest can be convinced to do his best to draw the mural on paper. Exhaustive comparisons between this hand-drawn map and British survey maps of Egypt will eventually reveal the approximate location of the tomb. If the characters have access to the image of the original mural and are able to translate the cuneiform markings, they have a much easier time locating the tomb on the survey maps. Test **Reason + Call of the Wild, Reason + Soldiering**, or any other skill the GM thinks grants skill with maps and orienteering. Assign a -2 penalty to the test if the character is using the hand-drawn map. Either way, the characters are finally competing on an even playing field with the Austrians.



s4 • TWISTS & TURNS

A daytime attempt to penetrate into the temple can be handled in a number of ways. The GM can just make it too difficult to get in unseen. If that seems too heavy-handed, the group could get into the temple, only to find it empty and have no way of knowing that the defaced mural depicted the map they need. If you’re feeling generous you could have the chief priest be in the temple alone when they arrive, subject to negotiation or interrogation.

If the group chooses a violent confrontation with the cultists and you think they don’t feel bad enough about it you could have some cultists escape the temple to the nearby village, where they can raise an angry mob with a story about Westerners defacing their Egyptian national treasures, or something. If the group lingers in the temple, they could face a much larger torch-wielding mob when they exit the Ziggurat.



If a fight does break out and the GM wishes to make the fight more dangerous, the cultists can be tweaked to make them more dangerous and the chief priest given Arcanist abilities, as noted in Key Players below.

s4 • KEY PLAYERS

Armed Cultists of Althan-Ya :: These individuals are armed with cudgels and a rusty sword or two. They are not very dangerous, with skill totals of about ten in the relevant combat fields. They can be made more dangerous by adding skill or firearms, at the Game Master's whim.

Chief Priest of Althan-Ya :: A fairly clever and charismatic Egyptian man in his forties, the chief priest's personal name is Kazemde. Weathered features, a whipcord thin frame and eyes that have seen the Abyss make this man

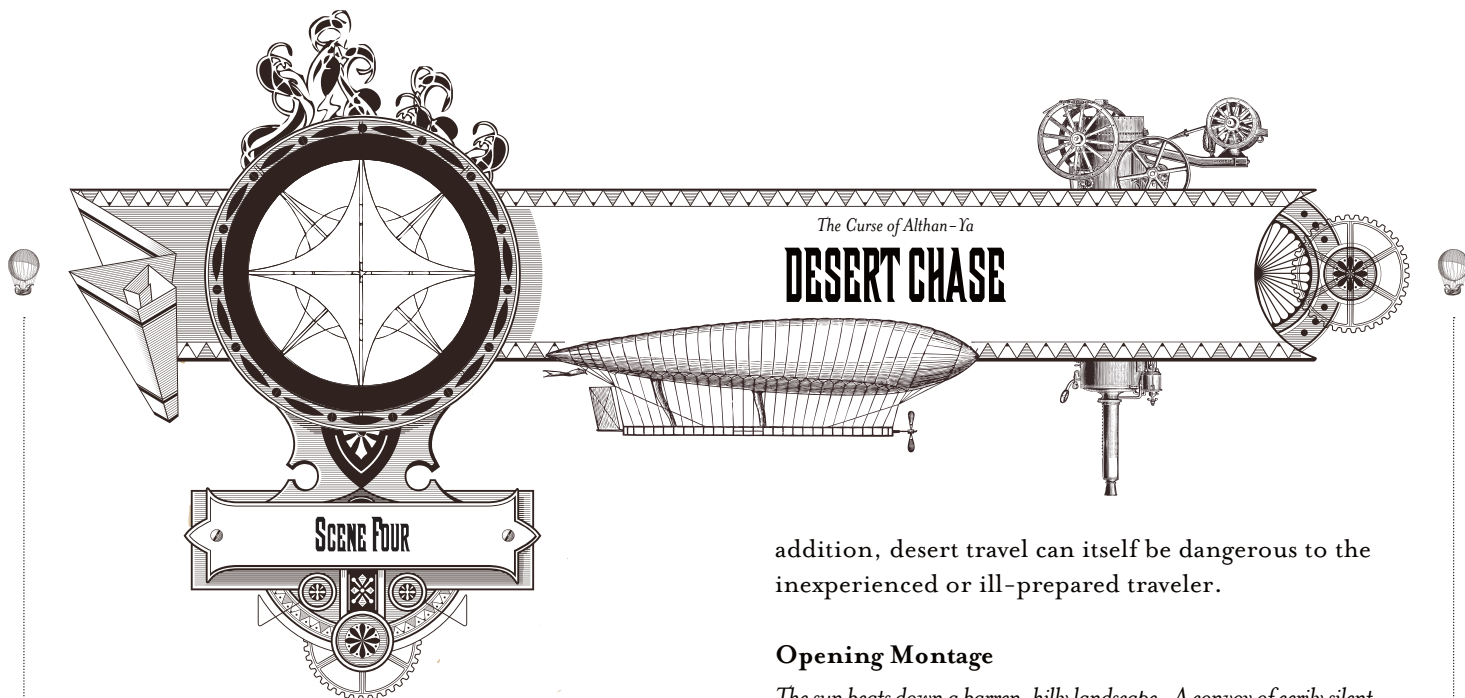
appear formidable, though he is not physically dangerous. If the Game Master desires the chief priest to be more personally dangerous, give him Arcanist abilities of whatever magnitude seems appropriate, with an emphasis on patterns with invisible or subtle visual effects. For the purposes of negotiation or resisting interrogation, the priest has attributes Wit 6, Willpower 8, and skills False Promises 6, Leadership/Intimidation 7, and Huckster's Eye 6.



s4 • WHERE WE'RE GOING NEXT

If the group has already prepared for a desert expedition, then go directly to Scene Five and the journey to Bahariya Oasis. If they have not yet prepared for the journey, it's backward to Scene Three to acquire the necessary transport and provisions.





s5 • OVERVIEW

How We Got Here

Depending on when the characters started outfitting for a desert expedition, they are either coming here from Scene Three or Scene Four.

Synopsis

This scene covers the journey from Cairo to the vicinity of the tomb of Althan-Ya, approximately 225 miles to the southwest. Herr Glaser has arranged for Bedouin raiders to ambush any pursuers. In

addition, desert travel can itself be dangerous to the inexperienced or ill-prepared traveler.

Opening Montage

The sun beats down a barren, hilly landscape. A convoy of eerily silent trucks is led by a similarly silent luxury car. A line of evenly spaced limestone hills is just visible in the distance behind the convoy. The lead car halts road at the top of a ridge overlooking a wide but shallow depression and the trucks follow suit. Figures from one of the trucks scurry out and set up a canopy while others set up surveying equipment. When the workers finish their work, a slim figure wearing a western suit and a fez steps out of the lead car and walks over to the canopy, where he takes a series of bearings with the surveying equipment, focusing on the distant line of hills. There is a faint exclamation of satisfaction and the be-fezzed figure starts barking orders as the trucks descend, one by one, into the depression.

s5 • LOCATIONS

The Desert

A location only in the narrative sense, the desert terrain between Cairo and the Bahariya Oasis will feature prominently in this scene. The landscape in this region is quite diverse, with many different terrain types. The most common type is rough, hard ground with low hills and shallow depressions. There are areas with treacherous soft ground and a few areas with the more stereotypical long sand dunes. Luckily, there is a road of sorts between Cairo and the oasis settlement. It isn't much more than a trail, but it has the benefit of bypassing the worst terrain and the steepest inclines. The Bedouin attack, if it takes place,

can happen anywhere the Game Master sees fit. There are plenty of likely ambush points and places to hide.

Bahariya Oasis

Also known since ancient times as the "Northern Oasis" it is situated in a depression about 60 miles by 25 miles wide and completely surrounded by high black escarpments. The valley floor is covered with lush groves of date palms, ancient springs and wells and is strewn with numerous conical hills which probably once formed islands in a great lake during Prehistoric times. The largest settlement in the oasis is El-Bawiti, a small town of a couple thousand people. Smaller villages are scattered around the depression that holds the oasis, wherever there is water to be found. The people here call themselves Wahati ("of the

oasis” in Arabic) and are composed of the descendants of the ancient people who inhabited the oasis, Bedouin tribes from Libya and the north coast, and other people from the Nile Valley who came to settle in the oasis. They speak their own peculiar dialect of Arabic and are nominally Muslim. Under the surface, things are a little bit stranger. In addition to a significant minority of Coptic Christians, there are other, more ancient faiths represented. The most prominent of these is the cult of the ancient Egyptian Ibis-headed god Thoth. There is a reason for this situation. There are a number of Loci in the region and Bahariya has, since ancient times, been a destination for arcanists of many nations seeking to harvest materials which they can distill into alchemical salts or to find fertile ground for their arcane experimentation. The upshot is that even in the modern era, Bahariya Oasis has more than its fair share of Arcanists in residence. The most organized group is the fraternity of priests at the Temple of Thoth, whose members claim a direct line of descent from the ancient Egyptian sorcerers. All visiting Arcanists are expected to introduce themselves at the temple of Thoth and seek permission before they study or harvest from the nearby Loci.

The Temple of Thoth

This temple looks like it came straight out of the New Kingdom and conforms to the same layout as temples from that period, though not as grand in scale as some of the surviving examples in the real world. The statues, walls, and columns are vividly painted and the whole complex is in good repair. Hairless priests in linen garments can occasionally be seen coming and going. The temple is generally closed to the public and does not minister to anything like a congregation. The locals are blasé about the temple, saying it has always been there and the priests perform the rituals to keep the sun rising and the springs from drying up. Most of the population is comfortably polytheistic, in the sense that they get their personal spiritual guidance at the mosque or the church, but also fully believe in the power of Thoth and his caretaker priests.



s5 • ACTION

This scene can be extremely variable in duration, both in terms of game time and real time. According to the mural map, the tomb is near the Bahariya Oasis, which is about 224 miles southwest of Cairo. The journey can take as little as two or three days if the travelers have motorized transportation. On the other hand, a camel train only moves as fast as the men walking with the caravan, and will cover no more than forty kilometers per day. The camel



Jean-Léon Gerome, *Arabs Crossing The Desert*

train will therefore take about nine or ten days to reach the oasis. The basic assumption is that the Austrians are wealthy enough to afford motorized transportation. If the player characters are not wealthy enough to match that and must travel by camel train, they will end up arriving at the oasis at least six days behind the Austrian expedition. By that time, the Austrians are likely to have uncovered and looted the tomb and may even have left for Alexandria. The easiest way to fix this situation is to delay the Austrians. The Austrians could travel by camel train as well, or perhaps the excavation takes longer than what is outlined in the timeline. Though it would take the adventure beyond the scope of this book, even the circumstance of the Austrians having already looted the tomb and departed need not be the end of the line, as the group could follow the Austrians to Alexandria and steal the Althan-Ya loot from them before they depart the country.

The Bedouin Attack

This encounter can take place anywhere and at any time during the journey that the Game Master feels is appropriate. The Bedouins know the territory extremely well and can choose their moment, whether it be a daytime ambush or a night raid on the characters' camp. If the characters became aware of the existence of the Bedouin raiders in Scene Three, they may take extra precautions or eschew the main caravan trail entirely in favor of an alternate route. Leaving the main trail will likely slow down the travel speed of their group unless they hired the higher quality camel (or lorry) drivers and guides during Scene Three. Even this evasion may prove fruitless, as the Bedouin camel riders know this area well and can travel quickly enough to sweep the countryside on either side of the main caravan trail. Have the appropriate player character or NPC make



Reason + Call of the Wild tests to determine how successfully they navigate the desert wilderness.

The deadliness of this encounter depends on Game Master discretion and on how the characters handled the attack by ruffians in Scene Two. If the characters used deadly force on the ruffians, then Herr Glaser is far more likely to give the Bedouins orders to exterminate the characters' expedition. If the characters handled the ruffians more gently, the Bedouins are more likely to have been given orders to harass the characters' expedition, targeting vehicles, animals, and provisions in such a way as to make it difficult for the expedition to continue. The deadliness of the Bedouin attack will also depend on how many caravan guards, if any, the group hired in Cairo and their quality. If the characters did a poor job vetting their guards, they may flee at the first sign of a serious attack.

This encounter can end in a couple of different ways. No matter what else happens, if the Bedouins take more than a few casualties, they will withdraw. They are a band of brothers (in some cases literally), and to them no payoff is worth losing more than one or two of their number. If the Bedouins are just there to harass, they will stampede animals, set fire to provisions, take some

potshots at the characters and then ride off in a cloud of dust. If the Bedouins are there to kill, then they will either be driven off by the characters and their entourage, or else the characters themselves will themselves be killed or captured. Death is probably too great a penalty for failure at this juncture, so if the fight is going against the characters, offer them chance to surrender. If the players equate surrender with Total Party Kill™, remind them that the Bedouins usually ransom captives and rarely kill them. In this case, even if Herr Glaser has given the kill order, the Bedouins will not forego the opportunity for some substantial ransom. If the characters have valuables with them, some social tests can negotiate a settlement immediately. The worst case scenario would involve the characters being held for some days as one of their number is taken back to Cairo to arrange for ransom payments. If the characters were not far behind the Austrians, this may not be the end of the line. If, on the other hand, the characters were already well behind their quarry, the mission will either end in failure or, at the Game Master's discretion, lead to extending the chase to the Austrian's next destination after they finish looting the tomb, which is Alexandria.



Louis Comfort Tiffany, *On the Way Between Old and New Cairo, Citadel Mosque of Mohammed Ali and Tombs of the Mamelukes*



At the Oasis

The principle town of the Bahariya Oasis is El-Bawiti, home to a couple thousand residents and centered on the springs and wells that give this oasis life. The oasis seems especially lush after the journey through the desert. The houses are mostly mud-brick, surrounded by date palms. There are a few mosques in the town, a Coptic Christian Church and the Temple of Thoth. The well-maintained Egyptian temple is hard to miss but is not generally open to the public. If the group has hired a local Bedouin guide, and that guide has witnessed any display of arcane power by one of the characters, he or she will mention that by tradition Arcanists are required to introduce themselves at the Temple of Thoth. If any of the Arcanists in the group decide to introduce themselves to the priests of the temple, see the At the Temple section below.

There is a caravanserai on the southern edge of the town where the group can rest and resupply. Gossip among the workers at the caravanserai will reveal when the Austrian expedition arrived and stayed only a single night before setting out toward the south. If pressed, one of the more experienced local caravan guides present at the caravanserai will admit the Austrian caravan was seen heading in the direction of an area the locals call QḌrat el-AbyaḌ. With a muttered prayer the guide will say only that this area is avoided by all sane persons and that periodically the winds will reveal weathered blocks of dressed stone, which are soon covered again by the shifting sands.

The characters will presumably not want to linger in El-Bawiti, but if they arrive in the oasis late in the day their guides will advise spending the night at the caravanserai rather than proceeding in darkness. If the characters do learn where the Austrians were headed and wish to send one or more of their number ahead to scout QḌrat el-AbyaḌ, use the information from the next scene to detail that encounter.

At the Temple

If the Arcanist(s) in the group decide to introduce themselves at the temple they will be greeted at the entrance by a young female acolyte who will guide them into the first colonnaded courtyard where all interactions between the priests and the public take place. A shaven-headed priest in linen clothing and paper sandals emerges from an inner courtyard to speak with the characters. The priest speaks Coptic and some Arabic, along with the Demotic used in temple rituals. If the characters speak none of these, assume the acolyte shares a common language and can act as translator. The priest will ask the purpose of their visit to the oasis. He will ask if the character(s) intend to make

use of the Loci in the region and if they intend to harvest materials from them. This could cause some confusion if the characters do not know the arcane reputation of the oasis. Have the character test **Wit + False Promises** if they wish to cover their ignorance and claim they are in the oasis to study the Loci. Assume the priest has a **Wit + Huckster's Eye** skill total a couple points less than the player character's skill total. If the characters succeed in convincing the priest that they are here for the Loci, the priest thanks them for introducing themselves and informs them of the requirement to tithe ten percent of any arcane resources they extract from the nearby Loci to the temple. If the characters admit to their true purpose, the priest is very interested, though he tries to hide it. The Austrians did not introduce themselves, and the temple has already heard rumors that an excavation has been set up in an area known to contain a Locus. If the characters are particularly astute and persuasive, this encounter presents the opportunity to make common cause with the priests of the Temple of Thoth and gain an ally for the confrontation with the Austrians. Just what resources the priests might lend to the effort will depend on the scale of the coming confrontation, as discussed in the next scene.



s5 • TWISTS & TURNS

A Game Master who wishes to emphasize the harshness of the desert journey may easily extend the duration of this scene. Instead of attacking once the Bedouins can be used to harass the characters more sporadically over the course of the entire journey, gradually ramping up the intensity of the attacks as they near the oasis. Ideally, this will evoke a great deal of tension, as the characters get increasingly jumpy trying to anticipate the next attack. In addition, the quality of the laborers hired back in Cairo will matter in this situation. Very Common-quality workers will start to desert as soon as the caravan starts coming under attack, slipping away in the night with stolen provisions. Common-quality workers will have a bit more loyalty and will only start deserting if the situation gets dire.

In complete contrast to the just-described twist, there is a remote but plausible chance that the Bedouin raiders can be bought off by the characters. If the characters have a great deal of portable wealth carried with them, they could bribe the raiders to change sides. The use of an appropriate Major Arcana Fate Card could also be used to get the raiders to switch sides. This turn of events would contribute toward the larger narrative "pitched battle" option, as discussed in Scene Six.



There is also the chance that the characters will have been so spectacularly successful in their investigation that they will catch up with the Austrians en route to the oasis. In this case, the Game Master will need to refer to the information on the Austrian expedition contained in the next scene and then wing it. Keep in mind that the Austrians will be making sensible decisions regarding their nighttime camps, situating themselves on a rise with good sight-lines and posting sentries.

Finally, if the GM wishes to make the confrontation with the Austrians in the next scene even more difficult it is perfectly plausible that Herr Glaser would have left an Egyptian hireling in El-Bawiti to watch for the arrival of any pursuit. Unless the characters avoid El-Bawiti altogether, the scout will witness their arrival and then travel the few miles to the dig site and warn Herr Glaser. Forewarned Austrians are a bit more dangerous than complacent Austrians so use this option with caution.

s5 • KEY PLAYERS

Bedouin Raiders :: These men and women are hardened to life in the desert. They are all expert camel riders and masters of desert survival. Their combat skills would likely vary quite a bit, but for the sake of simplicity the

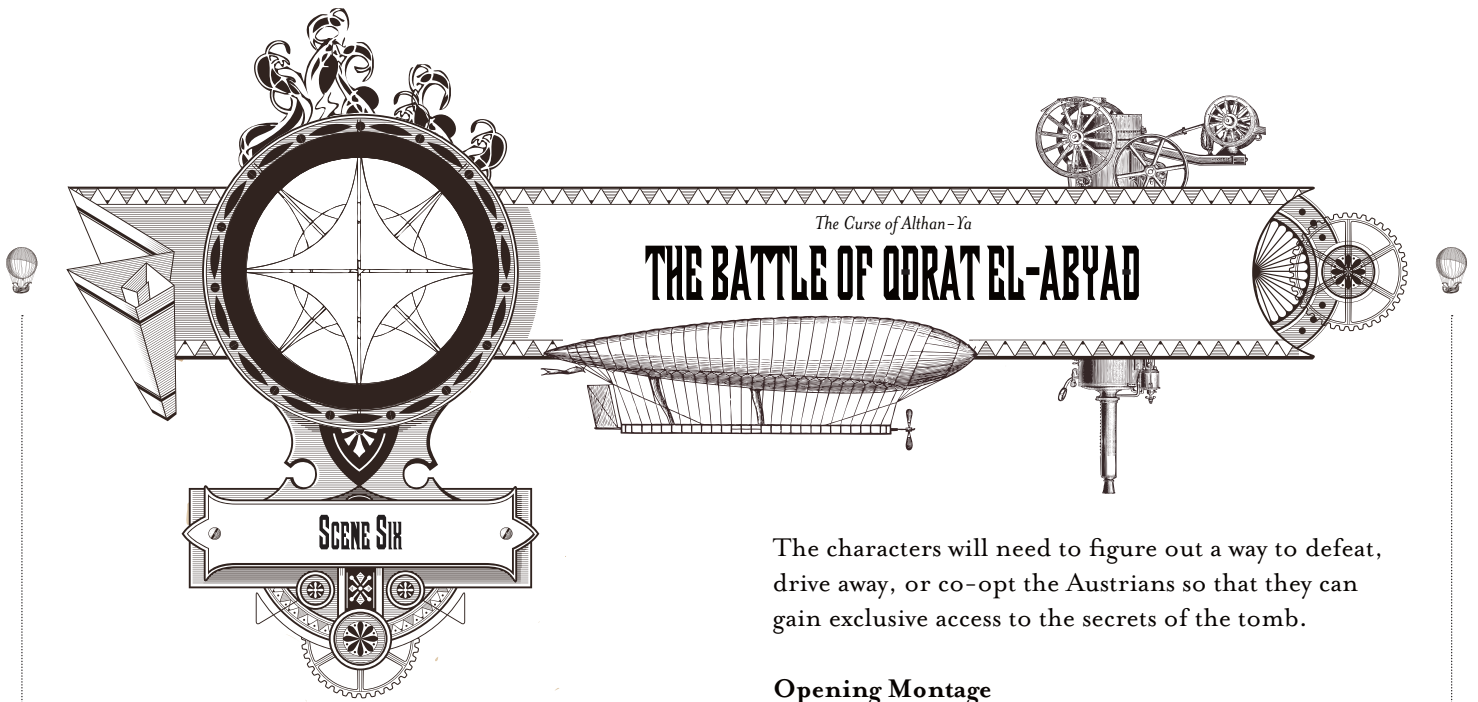
Game Master can assume that most of them have primary attributes/skills at six and secondary attributes/skills at five, giving, for example, a Bash & Stab skill total of about 12 and a Barking Irons skill total of 10. Designate a couple of leaders with attribute/skill ratings a couple points higher than the rank and file. These ratings can, of course, be tweaked to match the desired threat level and the PC's collective combat prowess.

Priest of Thoth :: For ritual reasons, all priests of Thoth are entirely depilated, lending them an odd visage without eyebrows. The particular priest that the characters meet is tall, slim, and curiously pale-skinned. He has a number of small scorch marks on his linen clothing, as if tiny fires regularly break out on his person, which they do. If asked, he will give his name as Yuny. He will be dispassionate and brusque with the characters, as he is with all foreigners. In the extremely unlikely event of a violent confrontation, the priest is an Inoculated Arcanist with a specialty in fire-based Patterns.

s5 • WHERE WE'RE GOING NEXT

Reaching the oasis safely will lead directly to Scene Six, in which the group locates the area where the tomb is located and confronts the Austrian expedition.





s6 • OVERVIEW

How We Got Here

This scene proceeds directly from the previous scene. The only exception is if the characters somehow confronted the Austrian expedition during the journey between Cairo and the oasis. If the latter is true, then the tomb is unguarded and the action proceeds to Scene Seven.

Synopsis

After all the time spent chasing the Austrians, the characters have finally caught up to their quarry. The Austrians are camped at the site of the tomb and, depending on when the characters arrive, are probably well into excavating the exterior of the temple in an attempt to find the entrance to the burial chamber.

The characters will need to figure out a way to defeat, drive away, or co-opt the Austrians so that they can gain exclusive access to the secrets of the tomb.

Opening Montage

A Barbary falcon flies serenely over the desert, riding the thermals. Far below, a strangely conical hill juts out of the desert at the edge of a sandy depression. The falcon's keen eyes pick out every detail, including the large encampment of men and vehicles in the depression. However, the falcon's tiny brain is interested only in certain patterns, like that of the small bird flitting from perch to perch among the jumbled stones in the depression. The falcon begins its stoop dive, falling toward the ground with incredible velocity. In the final seconds of its dive, the air around the falcon acquires a cerise glow, as though the falcon's passage were heating the air around it. When the falcon strikes its prey, the noise of the impact and the short cry of the dying bird are accompanied by a shower of multi-colored light, which wavers and then disappears in the minds of the diggers who looked up from their labors to observe the falcon's dive. The diggers shake their heads, mutter a yellow prayer and continue their digging, cerulean sparks scintillating around their shovels as they work.



s6 • LOCATIONS

QḌrat el-AbyaḌ

Assuming they've got the distance unit conversion right, the tomb is several miles southwest of the main settlement of the oasis. The map references landmarks that are no longer present but fortunately there is a reference to a more permanent landmark. South of the settlement of El-Bawiti there is a line of four hills, the northernmost being

the tallest, arranged in a straight line that points directly at the tomb to the southwest. If the group did any asking around at the caravanserai in El-Bawiti, they will have heard the name QḌrat el-AbyaḌ and that travelers avoid it. The name refers to a strangely conical hill surrounded by a roughly circular sandy depression, as though at the center of an ancient crater a bit less than two kilometers in diameter. This is, indeed, the site of the tomb complex of Althan-Ya, which is built at the base of the conical hill. Whoever arrives first, the PCs or the Austrians, will

see only a few protuberances of dressed stone near the base of the hill. Over the centuries, sand has filled the depression, raising the ground level by several yards and almost completely covering the exterior portions of the tomb. Depending on when the player characters arrive, the Austrians will have made a variable amount of progress clearing the sand away from the exterior temple, revealing the weathered remains of a strange fusion of Assyrian decorative and architectural style overlaid on the layout of a fairly standard Old Kingdom Egyptian mortuary temple. Herr Glaser cares little for any of that. Once he has discerned the general layout of the temple he has instructs his diggers to tunnel straight toward the sanctuary at the back of the temple, where the temple connects to the base of the hill, on the presumption that is where the burial chamber can be found.

The Austrian camp is below the northern rim of the depression, near a break in the ridge which provides a gentler slope and the only entry point for vehicles. Herr Glaser would have wished to place the encampment closer to the actual dig site, but the increasing severity of the Locus effects with proximity to the temple makes that impractical. The size of the camp is variable, depending on the Game Master's decisions. However, the standard would be for the camp to consist of Herr Glaser, his six bodyguards, about thirty diggers and about another fifty caravan guards, camel drivers, cooks, and other camp followers. Assuming the natives are staying four to a tent, that makes for approximately twenty-five tents, centered on the larger pavilion of Herr Glaser. Herr Glaser's tent is large enough to be divided into two rooms, one for sleeping and one for working. Two of his Austro-Hungarian bodyguards are on duty at all times outside his tent, making occasional circuits but usually staying near the entrance. The perimeter of the camp is guarded at all times by the native Egyptian caravan guards. There are six guards on duty at any time, out of a total of eighteen. The guards work in four hour shifts. One pair of guards patrols at the top of the crater edge, watching for anyone approaching from the oasis town to the north. The other two pairs ceaselessly patrol the perimeter of the camp below. A sandbagged gun emplacement has been constructed at the edge of the camp facing the ramp descending from the break in the crater wall. A machine gun of German make is placed inside. It is not manned unless the alarm is raised, in which case one of the Austro-Hungarian bodyguards and two of the natives man the weapon. Though the weapon is set up to face the crater rim, it could be easily moved to cover the interior of the camp in about thirty seconds (about ten combat turns).

The Locus

The entirety of the depression is an arcane Locus, a weak spot in the barrier between dimensions. The physics of an alien universe leak into our own in this spot. There are a number of strange effects present in this Locus, all of them very weak near the crater wall and becoming gradually stronger the closer one moves toward the hill in the center. A couple of the effects are narratively important. One of the effects is that a state of sound-color synesthesia is induced in anyone present. In short, this means that voices, music, and assorted environmental sounds trigger color and firework shapes that arise, move around, and then fade when the sound ends. As noted, this effect becomes more pronounced the closer a character gets to the central hill. At the edge, only very loud sounds produce faint colors while at the base of the hill, or inside it, the effect is pervasive and very distracting. The Game Master should apply penalties (scaled with proximity to the center) to any visual-based tests unless the test takes place in a state of complete silence.

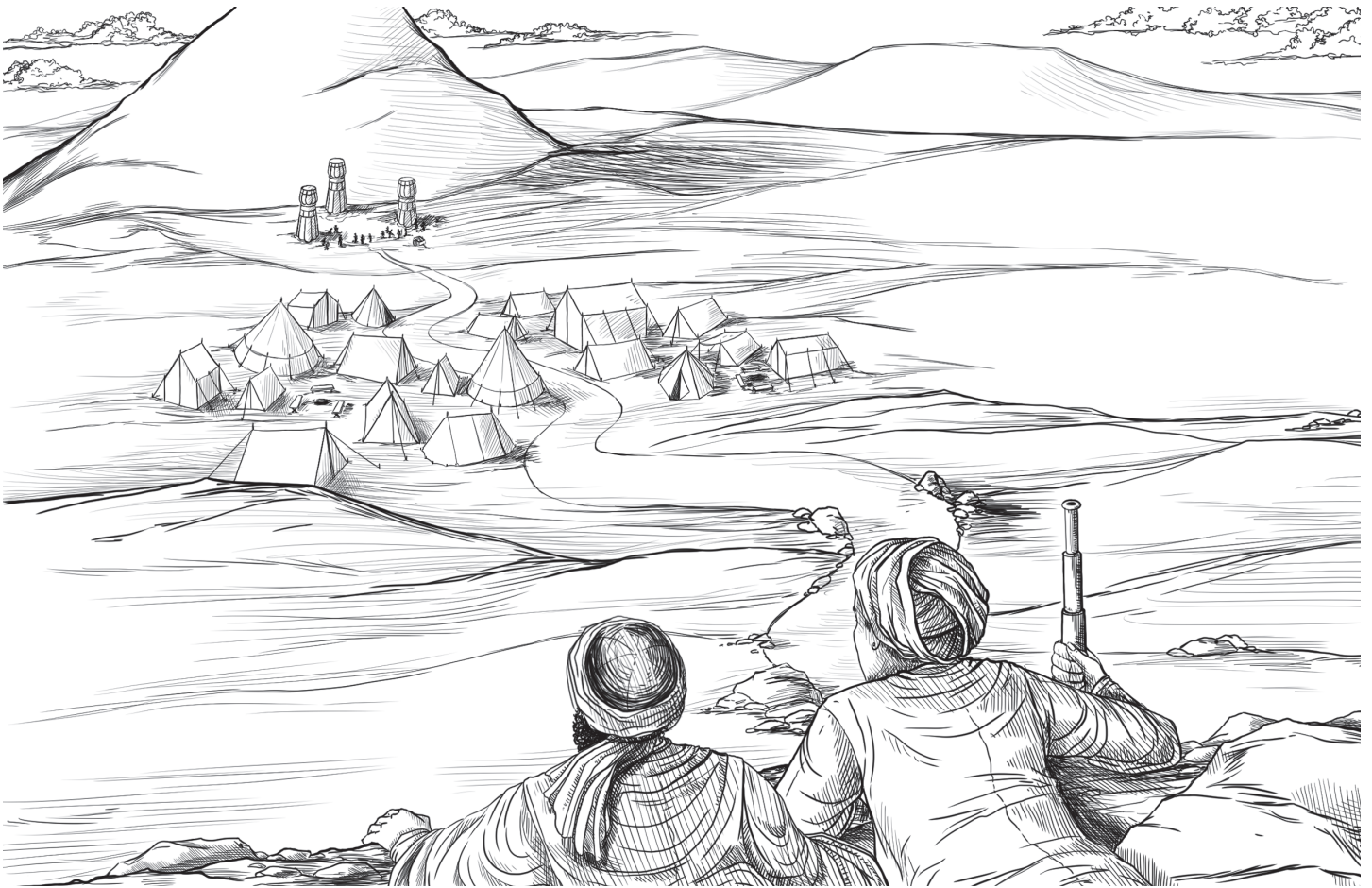
The other effect of note is invisible and dangerous. Something about the physics at work in the Locus interferes with the oxygen transfer of red blood cells. Again, this effect is weak at the periphery and stronger near the central hill. Think of the effect as being analogous to the thinning of oxygen with altitude. Symptoms will manifest somewhere between thirty minutes and a few hours after entering the depression, depending on how close to the character is to the central hill. The symptoms include headache, fatigue, nausea, dizziness and shortness of breath. Physical exertion will shorten the onset time and increase the severity of the symptoms.



s6 • ACTION

The action in this scene will depend heavily on a number of variables, so the best we can do is give advice on handling a few of the more likely scenarios. The Game Master will have to improvise from there. The scale of this confrontation can vary from a small-scale shootout all the way up to a pitched battle. A daytime infiltration, a la *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, will be extremely difficult to pull off as this dig is much smaller than the more famous one in the aforementioned film and nervous extra diggers are likely to be noticed. Still, if the characters come up with a brilliant plan don't let small details get in the way of a good time. A nighttime infiltration to strike at the Austrian core of the camp is also possible. Here are some of the considerations that are likely to play a role in this scene:





- How many caravan guards did the characters hire and how reliable are they?
- How many of the characters are skilled in combat and how well-equipped are they in terms of weaponry?
- Have the characters enlisted the aid of the priests of Thoth?
- Did the characters bribe the Bedouin raiders to switch sides?

If this is the first time the characters have even seen the Austrian expedition, the Game Master has a great deal of flexibility in tailoring the size and composition of the antagonist force to suit his/her dramatic preferences for this scene. If the characters are travelling light with few additional guards and none of the reinforcements mentioned above, the GM could choose to keep the confrontation small and thus restrict the Austrian expedition to a similarly small size. If the characters have a large force and one or both of the allies noted above, and the Game Master wishes this scene to have a more epic, *Lawrence of Arabia* vibe, then the Austrian expedition will have

a small core of Austrian soldiers and a large number of native auxiliaries.

In the first scenario described above, a lot will depend on the characters' plan of action but the encounter is likely to still be manageable in terms of the standard Brass & Steel combat rules. In the latter scenario of a pitched battle, it will be impractical to conduct the entire battle with the standard combat rules. In this latter case, our advice is to narrate the larger battle and the efforts of allied forces while focusing in on the activities of the player characters. For instance, the Game Master could narrate how the turncoat Bedouin raiders charge into the ranks of the opposing caravan guards, sowing chaos and allowing the player characters to close in on Herr Glaser and his Austrian bodyguards, where the confrontation can be played out in standard combat turns.

Pitched Battle Scenarios

These scenarios presume the PCs are attacking with a largish force and that the GM will be describing much of the action narratively. In all cases, Herr Glaser is not interested in dying for the cause and will attempt to

surrender if it is obvious that the tide has turned against his forces.

If the PCs attack during the night, the majority of the camp's inhabitants will be sleeping and sentries will be posted around the perimeter of the site. A sufficiently stealthy approach followed by a charge will produce a predictable amount of chaos. The Game Master should make a representative test of the PCs' **Agility + Stealth & Camouflage** versus the Egyptian sentries' **Wit + Sergeant's Eye**. Aside from guiding the narration of the allied portions of the combat, success or failure on this test will determine just how awake and prepared the Austrian core, including Herr Glaser, is when the PCs arrive on the scene, amid the chaos of the larger battle. As an example, if the PCs are very successful on this test they may encounter the Austrians singly or in pairs as they emerge from their tents, whereas failure could indicate that the Austrians have rallied together, taken defensive positions and manned the machine gun nest.

A daytime raid can work nearly as well if the approach of the PCs' forces can be concealed via clever use of Ephemera or other trickery. A sudden fusillade of fire down into the camp from the crater's edge could be quite effective in sowing panic among the laborers and other non-combatants. Again, narrate the larger battle while the PCs attempt to find Herr Glaser amid the chaos. During the day, Herr Glaser will likely be at the site where digging is taking place, accompanied always by a pair of his Austrian bodyguards. The downside of this daytime approach is that it will give Herr Glaser plenty of time to organize a defense at the actual site of the tomb complex. Unless the PCs figure out a way to cover their approach from the camp to the actual dig site, a distance of about three hundred meters over open sand, they will be vulnerable to Austrian gunfire coming from the cover of the temple. In addition, the machine gun emplacement will be manned within ten combat turns of the alarm being raised. Any successful plan will likely involve taking out the machine gun nest early in the attack.

In either of these scenarios, killing Herr Glaser or forcing him to surrender will effectively end the battle if the hired native forces become aware of the situation. The battle will turn into a rout as the now-leaderless forces attempt to flee with any gear they can get their hands on, leaving a looted mess of the camp. Some number of non-combatants will have tried to surrender and, unless the PCs are being particularly bloodthirsty, will present the group with a decision about what to do with prisoners. They could let them go or, if they failed to hire their own labor, convince them to stay on and work for a new employer.

Infiltration Scenario

The PCs could attempt a nighttime infiltration, hoping to capture or kill Herr Glaser while he is asleep in his tent. Clever use of Ephemera and Arcanist Patterns, as well as good old fashioned stealth, will be essential to any variation on this plan. Herr Glaser's large tent is, of course, near the center of the encampment. Complicating this plan is the fact that two of Glaser's bodyguards are on duty outside his tent at all times, working in four hour shifts. If the characters are able to sneak past the outer sentries, silently navigate to Glaser's tent and then take out his guards without raising the alarm, they will indeed find Herr Glaser asleep on his cot. Further complicating this plan is that the PCs will have to decide what to do if they're successful. If they opt to kill Herr Glaser in cold blood, so be it, but they will have to then either deal with the rest of the bodyguards or else sneak back out of the encampment and hope that when the rest of the encampment's inhabitants discover their employer is dead they will fall apart and disperse. If they choose to capture Herr Glaser they will need to convince him to order the surrender of his bodyguards and hired native auxiliaries. This shouldn't be too difficult if Herr Glaser's choice is "or death." None of his followers are the type to disobey an order to surrender in a heroic attempt to rescue their leader.

The PCs will still have to decide what to do with their surrendered Austrians and all of the native Egyptians they hired. If the PCs are themselves short on laborers they could negotiate with the native foremen and come to a new employment arrangement. If they brought their own labor force they could instead convince the Austrians' hired help to decamp and go home. In either of these cases, the PCs will probably have to hold the surviving Austrians captive on site as it would be foolish to hope Herr Glaser would abide by any promises he would make in exchange for parole for the Austrians.

What happens if the attack or infiltration fails?

There aren't a lot of good failure scenarios for this scene. If the PCs commit to a poor attack plan or simply get very unlucky in combat, the best possible outcome is to be taken prisoner by the Austrians. Herr Glaser isn't particularly bloodthirsty and will certainly accept the surrender of anyone who offers it. The Austrians will treat prisoners passably well, securing them in a tent and providing food and water. Narratively speaking, the only way forward at this point is for the characters to escape captivity and try again. Escaping without outside assistance will be pretty difficult. Herr Glaser, an Arcanist himself, will know to keep any PC Arcanists sedated to prevent them using their powers and the rest of the characters will be bound and under guard.



Sadly, the best solution is to introduce the dreaded *deus ex machina* and have an outside agency come to the rescue. Likely candidates include survivors who may have fled from the battle, one of the Bedouin raiders (if the PCs converted them) or one of the priests of Thoth. Even if the priests of Thoth were not enlisted to aid in the battle, they could still plausibly have sent one of their number to spy on the Austrians and could see it as in the temple's interests to set the PCs free. In any case, someone sneaks into the camp at night and releases the PCs, thus giving them a second go at killing or capturing Herr Glaser.



s6 • TWISTS & TURNS

There are so many different ways this scene could play out, a Twists and Turns section seems a bit superfluous, doesn't it? Feel free to pencil in "Twists and Turns" where it says "Action" earlier in this scene.



s6 • KEY PLAYERS

Eduard Glaser :: His background is detailed Scene Five. Herr Glaser is an Arcanist of moderate power, having Inoculated only once. His arcane Patterns are Shatter, Pressure Blast, Greater Deflection, and Hero's Leap. His

casting totals for all Patterns can be simplified to 16 and he has 22 power points.

Austro-Hungarian Bodyguards :: These six men and women are a mixed bunch from all parts of the Austro-Hungarian domain. They are moderately, though not fanatically, loyal to Herr Glaser. A couple of them might fight to the death for their employer but most will try to withdraw or surrender if the fight is going against them. They are all well-trained and have attack skill totals of 14 and all other applicable combat skill totals of 12. As always, tweak these numbers if you find it necessary to adjust the threat level.

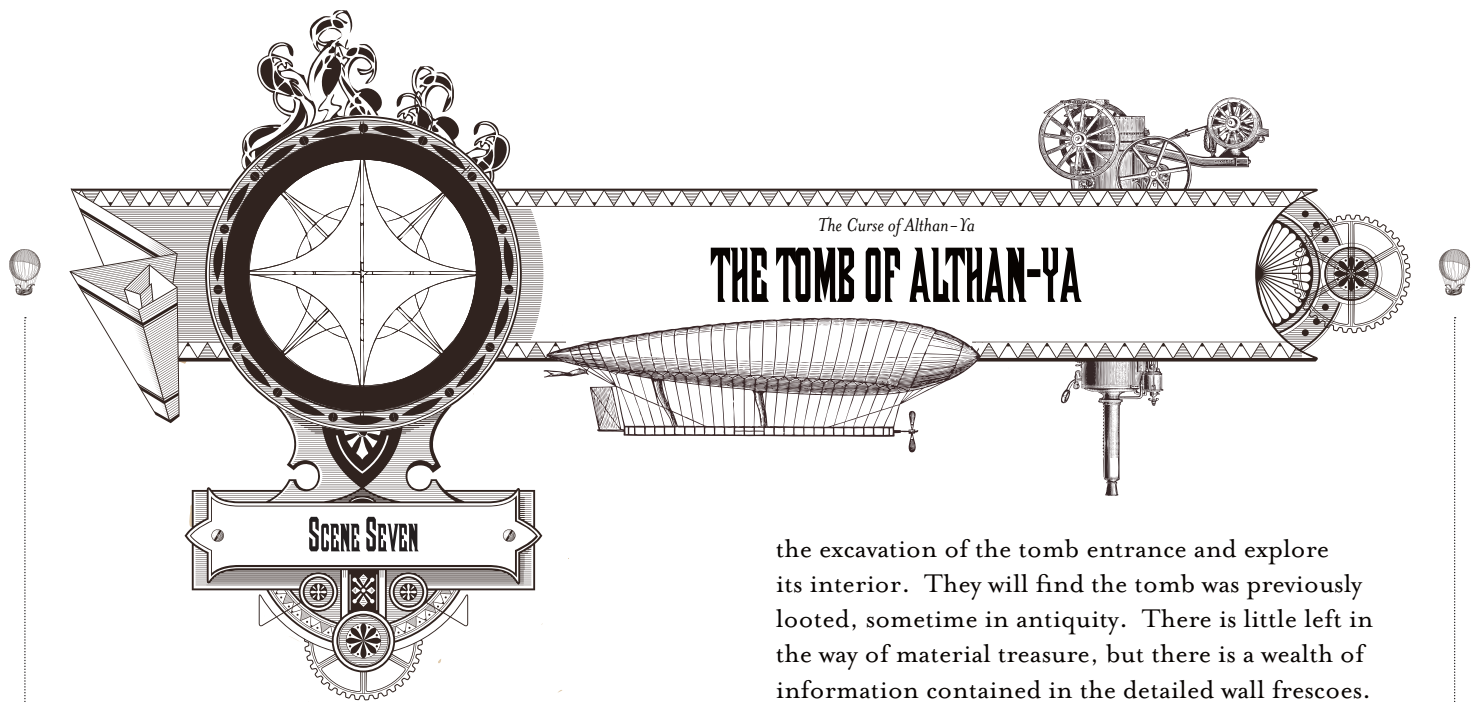
Egyptian Caravan Guards :: These poor fellows are destined to fight and die in narrative form at the whim of the Game Master. The only time their statistics are likely to matter is if they are trying to detect infiltrating Player Characters. Their **Wit + Sergeant's Eye** total is 9 and their Willpower, used to resist Ephemera, is 5.




s6 • WHERE WE'RE GOING NEXT

Once the characters have successfully defeated the Austrians and secured the dig site they have to complete the excavation and explore the tomb in Scene seven.





 s7 • OVERVIEW

How We Got Here

This scene presumes the player characters have prevailed over the Austrians in the previous scene and are now able to finish the excavation and explore the tomb at their leisure. If this is not true and the characters are attempting to infiltrate the tomb without confronting the Austrians directly, then the Game Master will have to use the information in this scene and improvise the rest.


Synopsis

With the Austrians and their hirelings killed, captured or driven off the characters may now finish

the excavation of the tomb entrance and explore its interior. They will find the tomb was previously looted, sometime in antiquity. There is little left in the way of material treasure, but there is a wealth of information contained in the detailed wall frescoes. Exactly which artifacts are left for the characters to find is up to the discretion of the Game Master.

Opening Montage

An eerie blue glow suffuses a stone chamber, faintly illuminating carved and painted walls whose sinuous figures seem to move in the flickering blue light. It has been an eternity since air stirred in this place, millennia since blasphemers came and looted the treasures lovingly placed in the sacred tomb. Now there is a scratching, a tumble of sand and gravel and once again blasphemers come to look on the tomb of Althan-Ya.

 s7 • LOCATIONS

As mentioned in the previous scene, the tomb complex of Althan-Ya is a fascinating amalgam of Assyrian architecture and decorative motifs overlaid on a layout that closely resembles other Egyptian mortuary temples of the Old Kingdom period. The inner sanctum itself is not completely filled with sand, though it is buried. The rear wall of the inner sanctum abuts the hillside. The tomb entrance was originally concealed by a plaster and a screen, but after its abandonment and subsequent looting, the entrance is no longer plugged and is now partially

filled with sand and rubble. Beyond the entrance there is a sloping tunnel that extends five meters down into the hillside. At the end of the passage there is another door of plaster that was broken down in antiquity. There is an Akkadian cuneiform inscription on the lintel above this second doorway that reads, in phonetic *Akkadian*, *šumma awDl-um šD šarrDq i-ddDk*, which roughly translates to, "If a man should come into this place without permission, he is a thief and will be killed." Beyond this doorway is a rectangular chamber, four by eight meters, littered with broken fragments of wood, stone and pottery. It appears the ancient looters smashed anything they didn't remove and the floor of this chamber is covered in detritus. The

walls of this chamber are decorated though pretty badly damaged. Still visible are fresco paintings in the Assyrian fashion depicting a figure that must be meant to be Althan-Ya, though confusingly she is depicted differently in different panels. In some, she is depicted as a severe but normal-looking woman seen advising the king or dispensing justice. In others, she is shown with an oddly flattened nose and large eyes. In still others she is depicted wearing a horned headdress and serpent mask, surrounded with a strange blue aura and floating above cowering worshippers or defeated enemies.

In one end of this chamber there is a half-sized doorway, still covered by the twisted remains of decorative copper grillwork that was cut and bent out of shape to allow passage. This next chamber is smaller than the first, only three by six meters, and mostly filled with a large granite sarcophagus. The sarcophagus lid is smashed into several pieces and lies on the floor next to the base of the sarcophagus. The sarcophagus itself is filled with bones. A quick inspection will yield only that these are the jumbled bones of at least six individuals and that they were definitely not mummified. Three walls of this chamber were carved in relief and painted. Though the paint has faded somewhat, the carvings themselves are in good condition. These carvings are even more bizarre than in the previous chamber. Althan-Ya is depicted as an anthropomorphic serpentine creature, with a huge head and a long, sinuous torso. Any lower limbs are hidden by a robe-like garment covering the creature. The panels depict this creature performing great feats of sorcery - masses of enemies dropping dead under her gaze, a city's buildings crumbling under an onslaught of fire and lightning, and the like. It's all pretty horrific stuff. There is also a strange depiction of Althan-Ya on a barren landscape. The cuneiform accompaniment to this panel can be interpreted as boasting that her powers were so great that she transported herself to the moon and returned. This is clearly beyond the scope of arcanism as known in the modern era, but then no one in recorded history has been known to undergo more than five or six Inoculations, compared to the eleven legendarily attributed to Althan-Ya. It is hard to imagine exactly what she was capable of and just how much of what is depicted in the carved panels is hyperbole.

The fourth wall in the room is a bit different. It, too, is painted with scenes very similar to those described in the preceding paragraph. The difference is that this wall is not carved but is instead a very primitive form of fresco, in which the paint is applied over a plaster layer. The fresco has held up very well in the dry, sealed environment of the tomb but there are some cracks showing. The peculiar thing is that a faint blue glow shows through the

cracks in the fresco. If the characters enter this chamber with a dim light source, the glow is fairly obvious. If the chamber is better lit, then call for a **Wit + Investigator's Eye** test to detect the blue glow. If the characters remove pieces of the fresco (which should horrify any professional archaeologists in the group) a very strange wall surface is revealed. It is transparent and made of some extremely hard crystalline substance at least a couple of inches thick. The crystal barrier seems to be the wall of a tank filled with clear liquid, perhaps water, perhaps not. Closer inspection reveals that the liquid level is slightly below the level of the ceiling. Inside the tank are three narrow stone pedestals, each of them about three feet high. On top of each pedestal lies a metallic cylinder about eighteen inches tall and about six inches in diameter. Faint cuneiform etching can be made out on the surface of the cylinders. Most unusual is that the entire chamber is illuminated by an eerie blue glow emanating from the crystal wall, which seems brightest in the vicinity of the metal cylinders. At the bottom of the tank are the skeletons of a several serpentine creatures of unidentifiable genus.



s7 • ACTION

There isn't a great deal of action in this scene. There is a great deal of narrative description, but little in the way of game mechanics. In some ways, the confrontation with the Austrians was the climax, and the denouement of finding the tomb to have been thoroughly looted might be a little bit of a letdown.

Depending on how much labor they have available and when they arrived on the scene, it might be days before the tomb entrance is uncovered. That can be narratively covered in a few minutes. The description of the tomb itself should still be pretty gripping. Be sure to keep in mind the effects of the Locus, at their strongest here inside the hill, when narrating this scene. Any sound the characters make will be accompanied by a burst of colored light. In addition, anyone spending more than about thirty minutes inside the tomb will begin to feel faint and will pass out within an hour. Exertion aggravates the symptoms and in the tomb itself will cause nosebleed and vomiting after only a few minutes of intense physical activity.

The Carnelian Stone

As described in the Location section above, the tomb is pretty well looted except for the metal cylinders behind the crystal wall. Anything made of precious metals or gemstones was carted away in the ancient past. However, there is one thing in the main chamber that was missed by the looters. Underneath the jumbled bones in the



sarcophagus is a brownish-red sphere of polished stone that looks like carnelian. If an Inoculated Arcanist touches the stone they immediately feel a sense of dislocation and then a sense that thoughts of alien origin being forced into their mind. It is not words precisely, but it is phrased as a sort of command to take the stone out of this place and out into the world. In actuality, this is a sort of dimensional linkage device. Althan-Ya had a particular universe that she preferred to summon materials from and whose physics were of a type very inimical to human life, which she found quite useful. Her affinity with this particular universe was such that when she attempted her twelfth inoculation, and failed, her consciousness was transferred to this other universe, there to dwell as a being of pure energy but alone and without the power to return. The carnelian stone is not a physical gateway to this other universe but is instead a sort of anchor to Althan-Ya's existence in our universe. It therefore provides a crude sort of telepathic link between Althan-Ya's consciousness and any Inoculated Arcanist that holds the stone.

Yes, this is a big deal. No, you don't have to use it in your game if you don't want to. The original idea was that this could possibly lead to further stories in which the carnelian stone is handed from one hapless victim to the next as Althan-Ya searches for an Arcanist with the power and daring to figure out how to re-instantiate her into this universe. Althan-Ya is thoroughly mad, but not in a chaotic manner. Instead she is methodical and insidious, biding her time and searching for the right vessel to bring her back into her birth-universe. She can influence the thoughts of whoever holds the stone, but it is not precisely mind control. The influence is very subtle, but it becomes less so the longer a person possesses the stone, eventually making it very difficult for the arcanist to resist Althan-Ya's suggestions. The "curse" in the title was meant to hint at how possessors of the stone would gradually be driven mad trying to find a way to bring Althan-Ya back into the world. This is a pretty intense story line to ask any player to deal with, as the logical endpoints are madness, and probably death, for the character in question or finding a way to bring an ancient, psychotic and immensely powerful sorceress back into the world. Neither outcome is for the faint of heart. See the Twists and Turns section below for some more ideas on how to come up with an alternate ending that may better suit your and your players' tastes and the dramatic needs of your campaign.

The Metal Cylinders

This is a bit cruel, we admit. Yes, the blue glow is Cherenkov radiation and no, the characters have no chance of knowing what that is or immediately associating it with

"Danger!" The crystalline wall is very strong and made of a single piece of pure alien quartz-like crystal. Still, it is not impervious and sufficiently determined characters could figure out a way to breach the wall with blunt force, Arcanism or careful use of explosives. However, the wall is the only thing blocking the radiation emanating from the water and the metal cylinders. If they break the wall the radioactive water will flood the chamber, irradiating anything it comes into contact with. Contact with the water or the actual metal cylinders for more than a few minutes will result in a dose of radiation high enough to cause acute radiation syndrome, a term for which even a casual internet search will result in sites that describe the symptoms in horrible and excruciating detail. The metal cylinders, miraculously still airtight, contain scrolls made from a bizarrely flexible opaque substance unlike anything the characters have ever seen. Akkadian cuneiform is etched into the scrolls, which each unroll to a length of about ten feet. Each scroll discusses some aspect of arcane theory. If translated and studied they reveal valuable arcane lore. However, the cylinders and, to a lesser extent, the scrolls themselves are radioactive. As noted before the cylinders are highly radioactive and very dangerous. However, the scrolls themselves are only slightly radioactive. Anyone taking the time to translate and study the scrolls will be accepting a cumulative dose of radiation sufficient to induce a milder version of the acute radiation syndrome symptoms for months or even years. The acute and the chronic symptoms can be mitigated by repeated doses of the Physicane elixir but can only be permanently eliminated by a custom elixir that will have to be crafted by an expert alchemist at great expense.

The first scroll describes rituals and techniques for Arcane Inoculation. Studying this treatise will grant the reader a +2 bonus to all subsequent tests for Inoculation. However, side effects and debilities gained from Inoculation will tend toward bodily transformations.

The second scroll describes techniques for Freeform Conjuring. A thorough study of the scroll will teach the Arcanist a number of techniques which have the cumulative effect of allowing the Arcanist to spend Power on Conjuring as though their Inoculation Grade were one higher than it actually is. This will allow the Arcanist to conjure more material or material of a higher quality than would otherwise be possible. The downside is that the materials conjured with these techniques all come from a category of universes whose materials become radioactive in our own universe. Details are left to the imagination of the Game Master.



Flask of the Honeyed Curse

(P, A)

Cost: 6

Focus: N/A

This pattern is carefully-structured and requires a flask of clean, pure honey in order to function properly. The forces that it unleashes shift the chemical bonds within the honey, and transform it into a stew of different pheromones. Some affect humans, and these inspire loathing and discomfort. The majority, however, are borrowed from a number of insect species native to the ancient near east. Not all of these species are common throughout the world, but ants, mosquitoes, and several varieties of fly are all in the mix. A person doused with this solution will not have an appreciably different smell to normal humans, although senses enhanced with arcane power may detect the pheromones. Dogs and other animals will be uncomfortable around such a person. The person themselves will feel nervous and angry, and suffer a -4 on all social tests while the effects persist. Others viewing the character will be disposed to find them loathsome and worthless. Insects will be irresistibly drawn to

the character, however, and driven into a mad frenzy by the mix of chemical signals, as they attempt to mate with, eat, and generally swarm over the poor victim of this substance. This cocktail loses its power over the course of two weeks, and the effects on a victim fade over the course of 48 miserable hours.



Fearsome Trumpet of Conquest

(P, C)

Cost: 10 or 22

Focus: N/A

This staggeringly powerful pattern creates a vast ultrasound shockwave in a 45 degree arc in front of the arcanist. This arc extends for 300 feet. This pattern inflicts devastating damage to many types of structure within its path. Brick and stone structures will suffer the most damage, but all structures will be harmed. Living creatures in this path will suffer 24 points of stamina damage, and will likely be disoriented and physically ill. Elephants will be driven utterly mad. The 10 point version affects a single target up to the size of a small building or a 20' x 20' section of wall. The 22 point

version is the full 45 degree arc and 300 foot length.



Shield of the Impregnable Tower

(C)

Cost: 10 + 5/minute + 2/attack

Focus: 5

This impressive defensive pattern was originally designed to defend a small group of soldiers from projectile attacks; for example, a group of archers atop a defensive tower or a group of soldiers atop a siege tower. The pattern creates a thin, polarized barrier that drains kinetic energy from any object that passes through it and confers the equivalent of 16 points of additional armor to anyone inside the barrier against attacks originating outside the barrier. The barrier is a ten-foot diameter sphere centered at a point within line-of-sight of the invoking Arcanist. The center-point of the barrier can be moved in the Arcanist's turn with a Free Action. Ranged attacks originating inside the barrier are unaffected. A running person will bounce off the barrier, but a very slow-moving person can inch their way through.

The third scroll contains several Patterns lost to modern Arcanism. Three such Patterns are detailed above, but the Game Master should feel free to invent additional Patterns using the rules on page 104 of the Brass & Steel rulebook.



s7 • TWISTS & TURNS

If you find it too disappointing that there isn't any monetarily valuable loot in the tomb; gold, jewels and the like, or if you don't like the possibly campaign-changing implications of the dimensional link, then feel



free to change the story to better suit your needs. Have the characters find another small hidden room that the tomb robbers missed in antiquity. Fill it with grave goods inspired by the ones found in the real world with Tutankhamen. (Do remember that Tutankhamen has not yet been discovered in the world of Brass & Steel.) Make some of it portable enough for the characters to attempt to smuggle it out. Change the dimensional link into some other less scary artifact of arcane power or add other magical gewgaws.



s7 • KEY PLAYERS

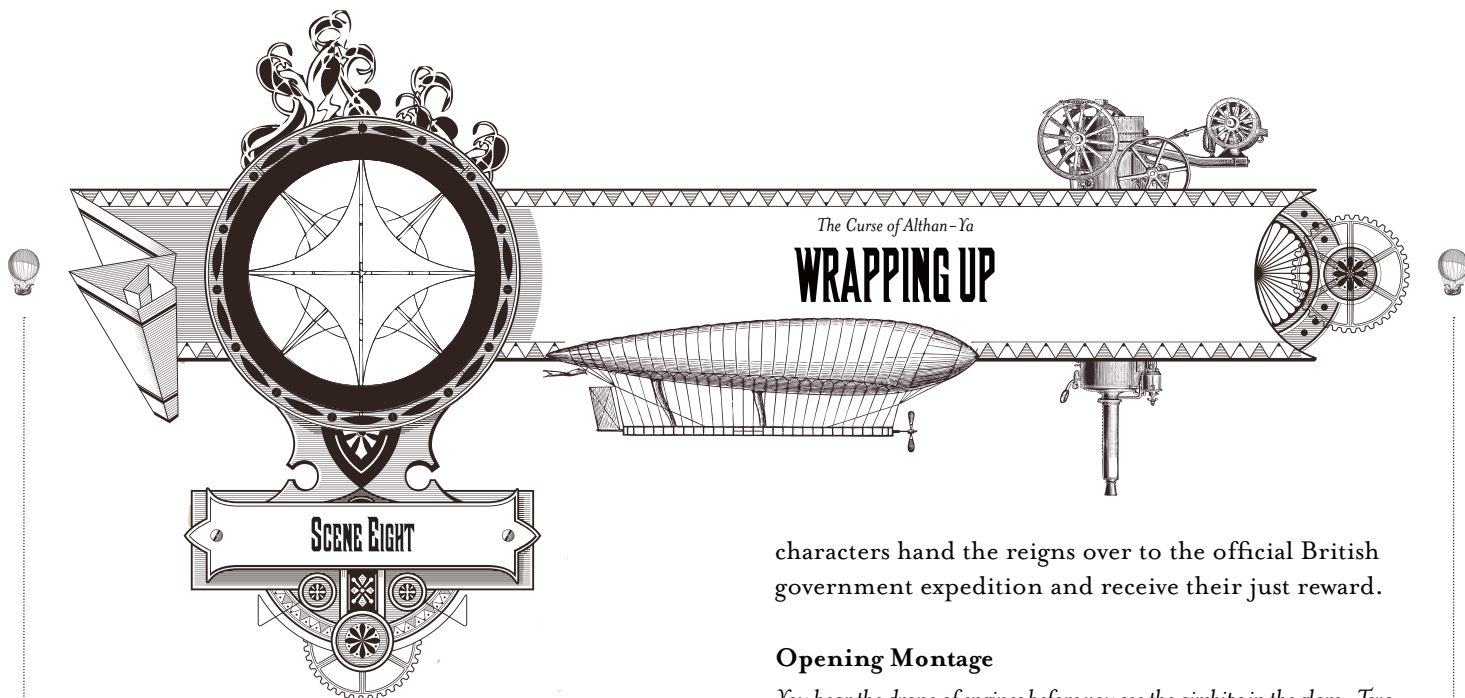
There are no new NPCs introduced in this scene.



s7 • WHERE WE'RE GOING NEXT

The train is nearly at the station. The characters get what's coming to them in Scene Eight.





The Curse of Althan-Ya
WRAPPING UP

SCENE EIGHT



s8 • OVERVIEW

How We Got Here

This scene proceeds directly from the previous.

Synopsis

Having successfully defeated the Austrians and made a preliminary exploration of the tomb of Althan-Ya, the

characters hand the reigns over to the official British government expedition and receive their just reward.

Opening Montage

You hear the drone of engines before you see the airships in the glare. Two airships, one sleek and deadly, the other huge and ponderous, descend out of the azure sky. The larger of the ships has the Union Jack prominently displayed on the sides of its lift bag.



s8 • LOCATIONS

This scene takes place at the tomb site at QḌrat el-AbyaḌ and back at the Hotel d'Angleterre in Cairo.



s8 • ACTION

Whether or not the characters attempt to get word back to the British government a less hastily assembled team of Special Branch operatives will eventually arrive on site to take over the excavation and exploration of the tomb. How long passes until this happens depends entirely on whether or not the characters followed orders and notified Special Branch that Bahariya Oasis was their destination. If they did follow orders they have a couple days at most before the official team arrives. If they did not notify Special Branch,

then they have a week or more before operatives trace their movements and follow in their footsteps.

Once the official team arrives, via two airships, the characters are "invited" to return to Cairo aboard the smaller of the two airships for a debriefing and a settling of accounts. Though probably expected, the abrupt way in which the British government team shows up and takes over the site may nevertheless be startling and provoke some protest among the characters. The leader of the Special Branch team, the female agent from the briefing in Scene One, will gently but forcefully remind the characters that their mission brief was to intercept the Austrians and secure the tomb for the British Crown. As they have fulfilled that mission brief admirably, it is time for them to hand off responsibility and return to Cairo to collect their promised reward.



The agent will also remind them that they must leave any artifacts with her when they return to Cairo. She promises that they will be compensated fairly and any scholars on the team are promised later access to anything found in the tomb. This is, then, the big decision point for whoever is holding on to the Carnelian Stone. The whispers from the stone are persuasive and they are saying “Keep me.” The stone is unremarkable enough that it is not even obvious that it came from the tomb. Therefore it shouldn’t be very hard to smuggle it aboard the airship back to Cairo if that is the intent. The scrolls are a different matter, assuming the characters broke into the crystal tank to retrieve them. They will be harder to smuggle back to Cairo and the characters may have to resort to burying them in the desert somewhere with the intent of coming back later. Actually smuggling them aboard the British airship will require some serious **Wit + Skullduggery** rolls.

Once aboard the smaller light attack airship, the characters are quickly whisked back to Cairo, covering in a few hours territory that may have taken a week or more with great hardship to traverse on the way out. Upon arrival at the military airfield in Cairo, an unmarked civilian carriage takes the characters back to the Hotel d’Angleterre, where they the older, male Special Branch agent from Scene One awaits them with a younger man. Now is the Game Master’s chance to channel the U.S. government agents from the end of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, as they politely but persistently stonewall any attempts by the characters to find out what will be done with the artifacts found inside the tomb or

when the tomb might be announced publicly and opened to non-government scholars. The characters are paid whatever was promised, plus a substantial bonus if things went very well. They are also reminded that they agreed to keep this mission secret until such time as Her Majesty’s government chooses to make the tomb’s existence public. The agents will end the interview as quickly as they can and escort the characters to the hotel entrance. The characters will be left on the pavement outside the hotel, successful, well-compensated, but probably a bit frustrated.



s8 • TWISTS & TURNS

The only likely twist here is if you choose the alternate ending where the tomb has some valuable and portable loot and then the characters get caught trying to smuggle some of it back to Cairo. If they get caught, no bonus will be paid on top of the original agreed-upon remuneration.



s8 • KEY PLAYERS

There are no new NPCs introduced in this scene.



s8 • WHERE WE’RE GOING NEXT

Finis







EPILOGUE

POST-GAME NOTES AND APPENDIX



WRAPPING UP



Future Plots

The obvious ongoing plot would involve the Carnelian Stone, if you choose to use it. Look for a future sequel covering this topic or make up your own. The stone will subtly but persistently try to influence its bearer to research methods by which Althan-Ya could be reincarnated into an earthly vessel. Whether the character chooses to pursue that goal or instead attempts to rid themselves of the stone's influence there are several stories that could unfold from the situation. One option could be that the method of Althan-Ya's reincarnation could be the possession of the body of the arcanist who performs the ritual. Other options include possessing various types of homunculi, including animals or crafted items.

If the characters performed well and they had no previous relationship with Special Branch, they may now be contacted from time to time to perform other jobs that need doing.

The pay for this mission should be substantial enough that characters whose highest Resources level is less than three should be able to raise that rating by one point. For the more wealthy characters, double their per-session spending money for several months of game time to represent the windfall. Alternately, give a character a one-time bonus on a Resources test to acquire a particularly rare or expensive piece of gear or a vehicle.

Contacts

The characters will have likely met, or created, some new contacts in this story. If the characters converted the Bedouin raiders to their side and fought with them against the Austrians, the Bedouin leader could become a contact. The priest from Temple of Thoth in El-Bawiti could be a useful contact for arcane characters. Christos is a good resource for knowledge about antiquities. Even Jael, the Coptic arms dealer, might come in handy in the future.

MAPS



A map of Cairo and the surrounding areas is provided on page 19 in Scene 2. Map of Cairo taken from *Cairo of To-day: A Practical Guide to Cairo and Its Environs*, 1899 edition, by Eustace Alfred Reynolds-Ball

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS



The group of pre-generated characters include: a French professional archaeologist, a British Arcanist and scholar of Althan-Ya, an ethically questionable American tomb raider, a Bedouin guide of the Alagat tribe, a Scottish expatriate antiquities dealer and Dreamer, and an Italian gadgeteer and gyrocopter pilot. Ready to use character sheets for these characters are included in this section.





Victor Loret



Age: 46

Height: 5' 10"

Weight: 14 stone

Sex: Male

Graying, balding, Van Dyke beard and wire-rim spectacles.

A bit of a paunch.

Outrageous French accent.



Background

Born in Paris in 1859, you became interested in Egyptology in primary school. You studied with Professor Gaston Maspero at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes and the College de France. After you finished schooling, you traveled to British Egypt in 1881 and became a member of the French Archaeological Institute in Cairo. Your first assignment was working among the royal and private tombs at Thebes. You were very successful and were made director of the institute in 1886. Between 1897 and 1899, you were the Director General of the Egyptian Antiquities Service and excavated in the Valley of the Kings, producing impressive results. In 1898 you found the tomb of Amenhotep II. Amenhotep II's mummy was still located in his royal sarcophagus but the tomb also proved to hold a cache of several of the most important New Kingdom Pharaohs such as Thutmose IV, Amenhotep III and Ramesses III. Your reputation secure, you've been writing and teaching the last few years, traveling between Cairo and your position at the University of Lyon. Now the British government has approached you to lead a top-secret archaeology mission. You are curious to hear Her Majesty's representative explain how one carries out an archeological expedition with dozens of laborers and camel drivers "in secret."

Goals

- Don't let the Austrians, or anyone else, bungle this incredibly valuable excavation.
- Your team is a bunch of amateurs and rogues; keep them in line if you can.

What you think about the other PCs

E. A. Budge - You've met Budge several times both professionally and at parties. He seems very knowledgeable but a little intense for your tastes. He does, however, have the linguistic skills the expedition is likely to need.

Rabia - You know this Bedouin by reputation. She is alleged to be less duplicitous than is the usual tendency of her profession. No Western expedition can make do in the desert without a native guide.

Marjorie Duncan - You've heard her name mentioned in discussions of the less savory aspects of the antiquities trade. Given your situation, it seems her participation is a necessary evil. Keep a watch on her lest she attempt to make off with something priceless.

Eddie Cook - What on Earth is Special Branch thinking, bringing this barbarian in on this expedition. Have they seriously fallen for this charlatan's cock and bull story? If he's an Egyptologist, you're the Sultan.

Drusia dala Vachio - You've never heard of her but she apparently flies some sort of small deathtrap and the British seem to think this skill will be in some way useful.





E.A. Wallis Budge



Age: 49

Height: 5' 6"

Weight: 12 stone

Sex: Male

Short and stout, silver beard and mustache.

Wire-rim spectacles on a round face.

Florid complexion.



Background

Saddled with a lower class birth and the unwieldy name of Ernest Alfred Thomas Wallis Budge, you have overcome your disadvantages to raise your station in life. You became interested in languages before you were ten years old, but at age twelve you were forced to leave school and begin work as a clerk at the firm of W.H. Smith. Fascinated by the Semitic languages, in your spare time you studied Hebrew, Akkadian and Syriac with the aid of a volunteer tutor. Your hard work and aptitude were noticed and you acquired patrons who raised the money necessary for you to attend Cambridge University, where you studied Semitic languages from 1878 to 1883.

During your time at Cambridge that you were initiated into a secret order of Arcanists devoted to the legendary Akkadian sorceress, Althan-Ya, who was reputed to have undergone an unthinkable eleven Inoculations of Alchemical Salts. Sadly, your aptitude for arcanism was not quite as exemplary as your talent for languages and you progressed but little in the arcane arts. You did, however, become with the legends of Althan-Ya, devoting all of your spare time in the following years trying to uncover more information about the legendary sorceress.

After Cambridge you began work at the British Museum, curating the museum's collection of cuneiform tablets. In 1891 you were deputed to investigate why artifacts from digs in Iraq and Egypt meant for the museum were turning up on the London antiquities black market instead. During your investigations, you traveled widely in the British Near East Provinces, gaining familiarity with the illegal antiquities trade in Baghdad, Constantinople, and Cairo.

From 1895 to 1904, with the backing of the British Museum, you lead several digs in Iraq and Syria at sites associated with Althan-Ya. You found yourself in fierce competition with an Austrian archaeologist name Eduard Herr Glaser over access to dig sites. Luckily, with the backing of the British government, you were able to get the upper hand and access to the most promising sites. Your

investigations came to an abrupt end when you were nearly killed by unknown assailants in a Baghdad market. Gravely wounded in the attack, you have spent the last two years convalescing and writing in Cairo.

Goals

- Find the tomb! The Austrian bastard Herr Glaser may have the lead but they can't know more about the mysteries of Althan-Ya than you do.
- Try to prevent Special Branch from taking control of everything from the tomb, should you find it. Try to keep something for yourself and your colleagues in the society back at Trinity College.

What you think about the other PCs

Victor Loret - He is quite the accomplished Egyptologist and you aren't surprised Special Branch brought him in on this. However, his methods might be a bit too - ahem - straight-laced for what may transpire in the days to come.

Rabia - You've heard good things about this guide from colleagues and recommended her to your local contact in Special Branch. She knows the territory and you've been told she won't shrink from a scuffle.

Marjorie Duncan - You'd heard that this was where the scoundrel landed after you chased her out of the British Museum. Still up to her old tricks, it seems, working the illegal antiquities trade from this end of the supply chain. Her contacts will be quite useful in tracking down Herr Glaser so you'll hold your nose and work with her.

Eddie Cook - The American has a quite unbelievable (in the sense of not-to-be-believed) resume of relic-hunting and tomb robbing. However, if even a quarter of what he claims to have done is true, he might be useful on this expedition.

Drusia dala Vachio - You've heard talk about her gyrocopters at parties from British nationals who have had the dubious pleasure of riding in one. Scouting by air could be very useful on this trip, as long as you don't have to go up in the thing yourself.





Edwin "Eddie" Cook



Age: 29

Height: 6' 1"

Weight: 16 stone

Sex: Male

*Tall, muscular, handsome, blonde and blue-eyed.
You project an aura of confidence to everyone you meet.*



Background

You were born and raised in Detroit, Michigan, with a traveling salesman for a father and an alcoholic fortune teller for a mother. You learned very early on that everyone has a scam going; the successful people in the world just have the better scams. You ran away from home and joined the circus when you were fifteen, where it turned out you had a talent for hoaxes. You concocted a series of exhibits featuring shrunken heads, fake mummies, a skeleton of the "missing link" between humans and animals, and so on. Eventually you got bored with the circus and went freelance. You ran a series of scams all the way to New York City, where your fake mummy act really took off. You prefer not to say where you got the bodies or your embalming supplies and your real name is not Eddie Cook. You started to get so popular that people were asking uncomfortable questions about your history and credentials. You needed some background, so you hired a down-on-his-luck journalist to ghost-write you a bona fide memoir of your exploits breaking into tombs and ziggurats in Egypt and the Near East. Not a word of it was true, but it sure did sound good. In order to sell your scam to the more sophisticated crowd on the East Coast, you had to actually learn some stuff about Ancient Egypt and Assyria, enough to fake it convincingly anyway.

Life was good for a few years and just when you were getting bored and ready to move on to a new gig, some rich guy approaches you and says, "Hey, why don't I pay you to go back to Egypt and Syria and you can be my personal collector of antiquities?" The money was good, so you said yes. It's two years later and you've been banging around the Near East with a crew and a budget, digging in sites until the authorities catch wind and chase you out. You've learned some desert savvy and even picked up some Arabic. You've kept a steady stream of gewgaws flowing back to New York and the money keeps flowing back in your direction. Now a guy who claims he's with British Intelligence says he wants you at some

briefing this afternoon. For the first time in years, you're thinking that maybe, just maybe, you're getting in over your head with this Egyptologist scam.

Goals

- For the love of Mike, don't let on that you don't really know what you're doing. You've been fooling people like this for years. It'll be fine, really.
- See if you can't find some or another trinket that you can sell for enough money to finance an early retirement.

What you think about the other PCs

Victor Loret - This guy is the real McCoy. The less you talk to him the better. A good tactic might be to pretend not to understand his outrageous French accent.

Wallis Budge - You don't know him from Adam but he seems a queer sort.

Marjorie Duncan - You're pretty sure you sold some of your "special items" to her a while back. She's definitely not part of the Establishment.

Rabia - You've dealt with a number of these Bedouin guides in the last couple years. Have to keep your eye on them; they have a tendency to run off at inconvenient times.

Drusia dala Vachio - Personally, you don't think engine grease is sexy but hey, to each their own.





Marjorie Duncan



Age: 30

Height: 5' 5"

Weight: 9 stone

Sex: Female

*Wavy, shoulder-length auburn hair, blue eyes and a sprinkling of freckles across the nose.
Medium height and slim.*



Background

Born in Edinburgh to a wealthy mercantile family, you wanted for nothing as a child. As a teen you developed an interest in oriental subjects and were encouraged in this pursuit by your parents. You attended Cambridge at Girton College, the first residential college for women established in England. You studied oriental history, languages and religions. You also fell in love with a well-respected psychology fellow at Downing College. He introduced you to the world of lucid dreaming and, in the end, ruined your reputation. He refused to marry but you loved him enough to keep the relationship a secret. After a few years of this secret life you became pregnant. Your lover betrayed you, denied paternity and publicly accused you of slander and other misdemeanors. He had the backing of the chancellor and you had very little evidence. You were expelled from Girton and sent home to Edinburgh. Your parents were supportive at first, but grew increasingly uncomfortable with your presence. When the child was born, you acquiesced to your parents' demand that the child be adopted by a married couple. The bonds with your parents badly damaged, you decided to move to London and find work there. Your parents gave you a stipend and you found work in the Acquisitions Department of the British Museum. Once you had steady employment, your parents cut off the stipend and made it clear you were not welcome to visit. Deprived of your accustomed standard of living, you began to look for additional income. Over the next several years you became heavily involved with the illegal antiquities trade in London, diverting shipments meant for the museum to the black market. Your dreaming skills made it almost easy to gather the necessary information about shipments. The additional income from your illegal activities allowed you to live a more comfortable life but eventually you got sloppy. The British Museum started an investigation into the missing antiquities and, before too long, the clues led to you as one of the responsible parties. You liquidated your assets and fled the country before you could be prosecuted.

You've spent the last several years traveling between Constantinople and Cairo, working the illegal antiquities trade as a procurer but not a seller. It's not quite as lucrative as the London market, but it's a living.

Goals

- You know all the right people to get this investigation started. Try to keep Victor Loret and Wallis Budge away from your contacts in the trade or they might never trust you again.
- Help the team find the tomb. If you don't find it, you can't pocket anything to sell later.
- Try to negotiate a pardon in exchange for your help. It would be nice to visit London and Edinburgh again, even if your family won't see you.

What you think about the other PCs

Victor Loret - This man is the Establishment in the business of Egyptology. He was the Director General of the Egyptian Antiquities Service until a few years ago. You'd heard he'd moved to Lyon but apparently you'd heard wrong. He's not going to like how you operate.

E. A. Budge - You've heard of him, he's some sort of savant with ancient languages. You take his presence to be a good sign that the loot on this trip might be lucrative indeed.

Rabia - You don't know the woman, but every expedition of Westerners into the desert needs its native guide.

Eddie Cook - He's made quite a splash in the illegal antiquities trade the last couple years. He sends most of his loot back to his mysterious patron across the Atlantic but he fences some of the choice pieces on the side for his own benefit. You can respect his entrepreneurial spirit.

Drusia dala Vachio - You like her spunk and air cover could come in handy. However, if you take machines into the desert you have to expect them to break down.





Rabia of the Alagat



Age: 23 Height: 5' 8" Weight: 10 stone Sex: Female

Weather-beaten, classic Arab features with sharp eyebrows and an impressive nose.

Long glossy black hair kept in an intricate braid.

Quick, dark eyes and a seldom-used, but radiant, smile.



Background

You are a younger daughter (or son) of the Sheikh of the Alagat tribe, Barakat. Your mother is not his principal wife and you have many elder brothers. When you were a teenager, you started helping out the British tourists that wanted, for some strange reason, to experience the "authentic Bedouin lifestyle." You quickly gained a reputation among the Westerners as a reliable guide who was unlikely to flee at night with the expedition's money box. You enjoy the work and it is far more lucrative than herding goats. You get to meet strange people from all over Europe and take their money. This job, however, feels wrong. Something about the tension in the eyes of your employer tells you that the danger on this trip won't be you arranging for your cousins to scare the tourists into giving you a bonus for protecting them from a staged ambush. Still, the money is very good and you are in your home territory.

Goals

- Keep the Europeans alive and well and get them where they need to go.
- See if you can't keep a little something for yourself.

What you think about the other PCs

Victor Loret - The Frenchman is a bit officious for your tastes, but aren't they all? You've heard from other guides that he isn't bad as an employer. It appears that he is the one giving the orders on this trip.

Wallis Budge - The man speaks Arabic better than you do; he even speaks the Egyptian dialect perfectly. There is something off about the man, but you can't say what precisely.

Marjorie Duncan - Very strange accent on her English. You have no idea what she does.

Eddie Cook - Ahh, the famous American explorer. You've read his memoir to practice your English. If the memoir is to be believed, this man has been plundering the tombs of your native land for many years. Strange then, that you've only heard of him in the last two years.

Drusia dala Vachio - You've seen her gyrocopters flying over the city and dreamed of soaring over the desert in one. Maybe you can talk her into letting you ride along.





Drusia dala Vachio



Age: 28

Height: 5' 9"

Weight: 10 stone

Sex: Female

Tall and slim with an easy smile.

Sun-darkened skin, dark blue eyes and a long black braid.

A working-person's hands with grease under the fingernails



Background

Your family is an old and honorable one in Florence, but not as wealthy as it once was. You were a precocious child and had a disconcerting habit of disassembling and reassembling your father's pocket watches. After you attempted the same thing with the grand old clock in the foyer, your parents installed a workshop for you next to the stable and bought crates of old watches, clocks and other machinery for you to tinker with. When you came of age your family had enough money, and enough progressive ideas, to send you to school in Bologna, whose university was perhaps the first in Europe to award degrees to women. You studied engineering and graduated with honors in 1899. An uncle of yours living in the large Italian expatriate community in Alexandria offered you a job with his engineering firm. After a few years designing airship engines you decided to go into business for yourself, building and repairing the new gyrocopters. On the side, you've been working for the British Colonial authority, scouting for surveyors, ferrying diplomats and the like. Now your usual British contact is asking to retain your services for the next week to deal with a matter of some urgency. You wonder what it could be.

Goals

- Keep all machinery running smoothly, which can be a challenge in the desert.
- Show off the utility of your particular brand of gyrocopter. Word of mouth is valuable and government contracts are lucrative.

What you think about the other PCs

Victor Loret - He's some pezo gordo in Egyptology circles. Found a big tomb a few years back. Guess he's the kind of fellow you need if you're looking for a tomb.

Wallis Budge - He's a strange one. He is apparently an expert on this legendary person you'd never heard of until today.

Marjorie Duncan - You don't know her. You have no idea what she brings to the expedition.

Rabia - You've liked the several Bedouin you've met during your time in Egypt; very free spirits. Rabia seems like she's reliable.

Eddie Cook - The American has quite the reputation, and not a good one. He's taken a figurative (and literal, that one time) steam-shovel to the world of Egyptology in the last couple years. It is hard to believe that he and Mssr. Loret are in the same room together without coming to blows.



