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Dungeon Crawl Classics #45

Malice of the Medusa

by Andrew Hind

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 1-3



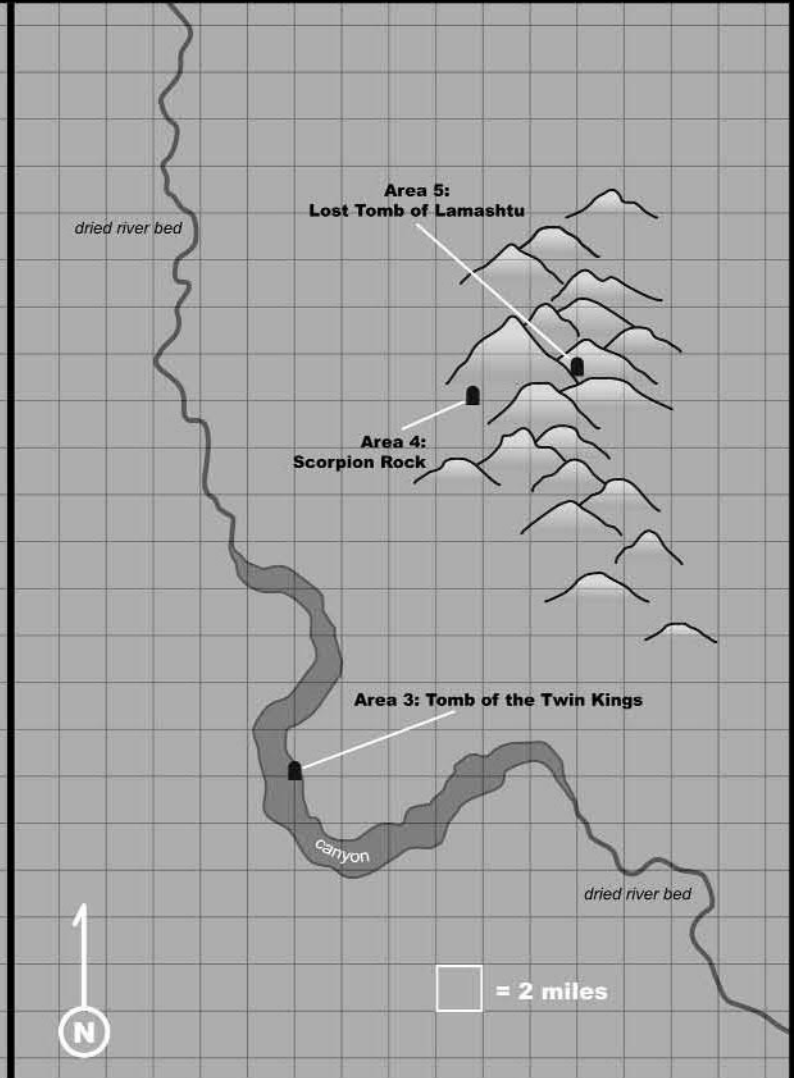
Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics adventures don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you remember, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

In the slums of a small desert-shrouded city, the malformed and degenerate huddle in darkened alleys, their ranks growing with each passing year. More and more children are birthed with horrible snake-like deformities, a result of the creeping influence of demon worship among the downtrodden of society. Now a troubling plague has befallen the higher castes: inexplicably and without warning, members of the ruling elite catch fire and within moments are reduced to mere bones. Terrified and powerless, they turn to the heroes for salvation. All the clues point to one place: the lair of a powerful medusa and her spiteful curses...

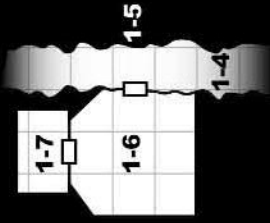
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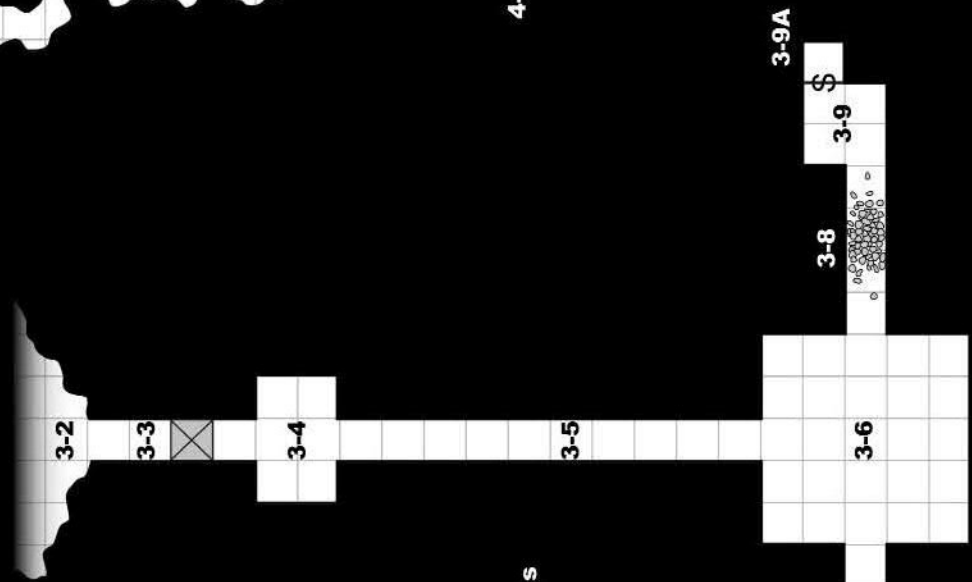
Malice of the Medusa



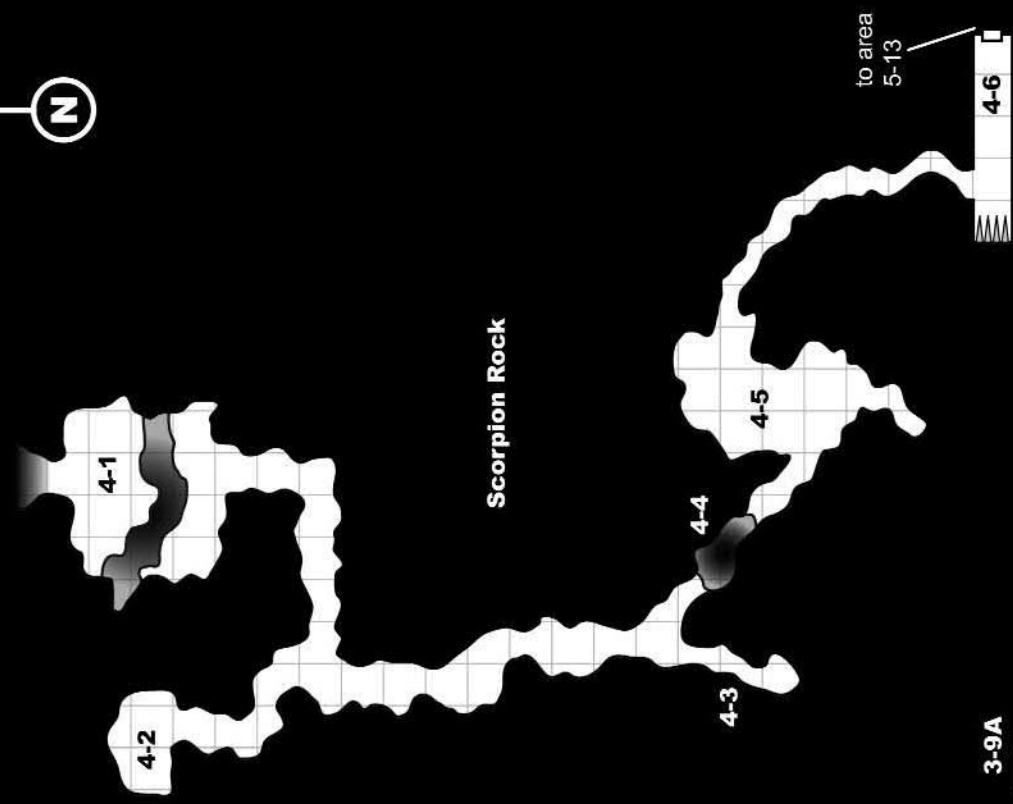
Aedan's Sanctum



Tomb of the Twin Kings



Scorpion Rock



□ = 10 ft.

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Introduction

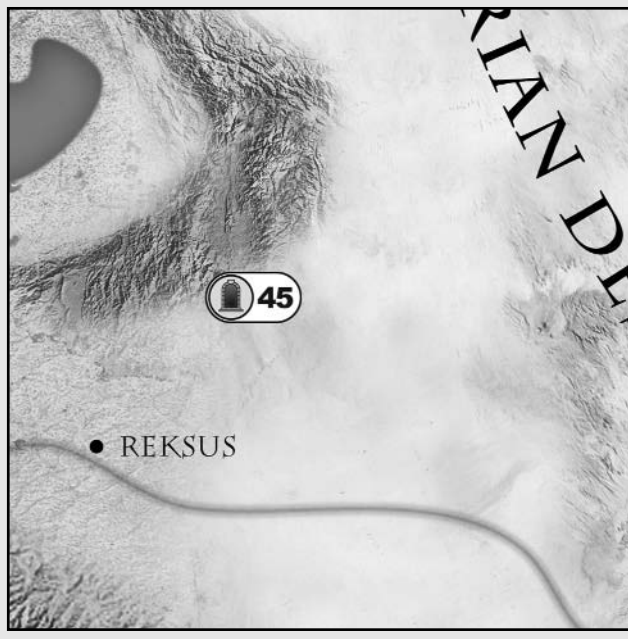
Remember the golden days of role-playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs that aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

Malice of the Medusa is an adventure for 4-6 1st or 2nd level PCs, adaptable to levels 1 through 4. The adventure begins in the town of Khemair and progresses into the Ghetrian Wastes in a generic world setting; GMs may substitute any small city and desert region for Khemair and the Ghetrian Wastes.

While the composition of the player character group is not dictated by the adventure, the talents of a cunning rogue, a wilderness-wise ranger, and a pious cleric will prove useful. Ultimately, a healthy blend of classes is ideal. Refer to the Scaling Information section for suggestions on ways to tailor the adventure to your party's particular strengths and styles of play.

DCC World

If you are using the world of *Áereth* from DCC #35: *Gazetteer of the Known Realms*, the ill-fated town of Khemair is located at the foot of the Sentinels, on the western rim of the Ghetrian desert. Once a trading post of moderate means, the recent spate of mysterious deaths has discouraged merchants of means who instead have chosen to cast their lot with the Lirean Sea.



Adventure Summary

Hired by Khemair's Council, the PCs begin to investigate the cause of the mysterious murders plaguing the town. One after another, the nobles of Khemair's upper class are being immolated. After witnessing the full horror of the situation for themselves, the PCs delve into the catacombs beneath the town in search of a tomb robber with vital information. From there, the characters head off into the dangerous expanse of the Ghetrian Wastes, where they overcome natural hazards, are attacked by predatory dune beasts, and are saved from a horde of dervishes by the seemingly fortuitous arrival of a locust swarm.

The true nature of the threat to Khemair becomes clear after the heroes visit a scorpion-inhabited cave and explore an ancient tomb complex. To defeat Ssedenska and her minions, the PCs must brave the dangers of a long-forgotten temple dedicated to Lamashtu, where they will face all manner of evil and depravity. Only at the end do the PCs learn that a mysterious benefactor, a being of infernal origin, has been assisting them in the fulfillment of their quest. Whether this spells success or doom for the PCs, is up to the whims of fate and the courage of the heroes to decide.

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in *italics* are classed NPCs. **EL** – the encounter level.



<u>Loc</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Encounter</u>	<u>EL</u>	<u>Scaling Information</u>
1-1	5	C	Flaming skeleton	1	<p>Malice of the Medusa is intended for four to six characters of 1st or 2nd level, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. The adventure is naturally more suitable for scaling up to accommodate larger, more experienced PCs than down for smaller parties of 1st or 0-level (see DCC 35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms for rules on 0-level PCs). That said, with some work on the GM's part, anything is possible. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:</p> <p>Weaker Parties (three or fewer PCs): Permit the PCs to hire a handful of 1st level warriors to serve as spearmen and shield bearers. Where multiple enemies are present, reduce their number by half. Reduce the level of all named NPCs by one. Reduce all trap DCs by 2 (e.g. DC 18 becomes DC 16) and reduce their damage by one die (e.g. 3d6 becomes 2d6). Change the ghost in area 3-6 to a ghoul, the gloom bat in area 3-8 to a bat swarm, the monstrous scorpion in area 4-1 to Small, the jackal-headed zombie in area 4-2 to Medium-sized; have only one rotted mummy in area 5-16, and make the snake swarm in area 5-22 a CR 1 creature.</p> <p>Spearman, male human War1: CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 10, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d8+1/x3, spear); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 9.</p> <p><i>Skills and Feats:</i> Climb +3, Intimidate +1, Jump +3, Ride +1, Swim +2; Toughness, Weapon Focus (spear).</p> <p><i>Languages:</i> Common.</p> <p><i>Possessions:</i> Padded armor, spear, waterskin, 5 days of trail rations.</p> <p>Stronger Parties (3rd or 4th level, or seven or more PCs): Where multiple enemies are present, double their number. Add two character levels to all named NPCs. Increase all trap DCs by 2 and increase damage by one die. Add a second ghost to the tomb of Hotep and Shishak in area 3-6. Change the monstrous scorpion in area 4-1 to Large. Increase the subterranean octopus in area 5-10 to a 3HD creature, and add a ball-and-chain golem (effectively a Large construct) to area 5-8. In area 5-8, give Sasserine a <i>potion of cure serious wounds</i> and <i>bracers of armor</i> +2. Change the anaconda in area 5-14 to a giant constrictor snake with a CR of 5, and give Ssedenka an <i>amulet of health</i>, a <i>+1 ring of protection</i>, and a <i>potion of invisibility</i>.</p>
1-2	5	C	4 thugs	2	
1-4	6	C	2 mongooses	1/2	
1-5	7	T	Poison needle trap	1	
1-6	7	T	Crossbow trap	1	
1-7	7	C	<i>Aedan Kharsus</i> , human Rog2	2	
2-2	10	C	40 dervishes, human War1	12	
3-1	11	C	Vipers	variable	
3-2	12	C	8 dervishes, human War1	4	
3-3	14	C/T	Spiked pit trap, tomb viper	2	
3-4	15	C	6 skeletons	2	
3-6	15	C	Animated chariot	3	
3-7	16	C	Ghast	3	
3-9	17	C	Gloom bat	3	
3-2 (Revisited)		C	4 dervishes	2	
4-1	19	C	Medium monstrous scorpion	1	
4-2	19	C	Jackal-headed zombie	3	
4-4	20	C/P	Scorpion swarm, broken bridge	4/1	
4-5	21	C/P	Slowsilt, 2 stirges	1	
4-6	22	T	Wind trap	4	
5-1	22	C	Medium monstrous scorpion	1	
5-3	24	C	3 dervishes	2	
5-4	24	C	2 dervishes	1	
5-5	24	C	<i>Jebel</i> , human Rgr2, 6 dune beasts	4 4	
5-6	25	C	Ankheg	3	
5-7	25	C	<i>Mansooth</i> , half-orc War2	1	
5-8	26	C	<i>Sasserine</i> , brightvenom drakon	2	
5-10	27	C	Subterranean octopus	2	
5-11	27	C	<i>Tarshbak</i> , ogre	2	
5-12	28	C	Animated chains	2	
5-14	29	C/T	Anaconda, flood trap	7	
5-15	30	T	<i>Fire trap</i>	4	
5-16	31	C/T	3 rotted mummies, lodestone pillar trap	3/variable	
5-17	32	C	<i>Ssethno</i> , <i>Euryale</i> , <i>Gorgana</i> , human Mnk1	3	
5-18	33	C	Allip	3	
5-19	34	C	6 small skeletons	1	
5-22	35	C	Ssedenka, mutant human Sor2, snake swarm	4	

Getting the Players Involved

Here are three ways to get the PCs involved in Khemair's problem:

- A cleric or paladin PC is ordered to Khemair to save the city from the unholy corruption that threatens to



Background Story

Ssedenka was born in Khemair many years ago, the child of a merchant and his sorceress wife. To the horror of her parents, the newborn's torso was covered in shining scales that merged into a serpentine tail at the hips. And instead of her mother's flowing red hair, Ssedenka's head was covered in a mass of coiling snakes. The horrified parents knew they couldn't possibly keep such a child, but nor could they bring themselves to kill the babe. Deciding to let fate make judgment upon their child, Ssedenka's parents took her into the desert – far from the prying eyes of Khemair residents – and left her at the base of a rock formation called Scorpion's Tail. But fate did intervene, and instead of being devoured by wasteland predators, the child Ssedenka was found and raised by superstitious desert dervishes.

Years passed, and as Ssedenka matured and her magical powers developed, the burning hatred she felt for her parents and their society grew until it consumed her. Now a powerful spellcaster, she returned to the outskirts of Khemair, resolved to make the entire community pay for her life of suffering.

Ssedenka's fury earned the attention of Lamashtu, the wicked demoness of Old Ghetria, who led Ssedenka to an ancient temple dedicated to her worship. From her secluded lair, Ssedenka began to corrupt the weak, fearful, and superstitious masses of Khemair's slums. As Lamashtu's influence spread, more and more of the city's children were born bearing the demoness' mark. Perversely, this only caused the peasants to turn to Lamashtu in prayer, begging the demoness to spare their children.

Sadly, the educated and affluent classes of Khemair were just as easily corrupted. At the advice of seers and elders, they sought to placate Lamashtu's hunger by offering up their own newborn children. The nobles left every firstborn babe at the base of Scorpion Rock, and for a time, the demoness seemed satisfied. But in truth, she was only awaiting the time when the masses would rise up against their cruel masters in an orgy of blood and chaos.

This wasn't enough for Ssedenka, however. She had no intention of waiting for the city of Khemair to implode, and sought other means to strike terror in the hearts of her enemies. Her wicked prayers were answered with the discovery of a desert tomb. There, wrapped in the embrace of an ancient mummy, was the *blaze bone*, a scepter of immense power. With it, she could perform an elaborate ceremony to literally burn her enemies alive. Armed with the *blaze bone* and the ability to strike with utter impunity, Ssedenka's revenge would be complete.

consume it. The holy warrior's first goal is to solve the city's immediate threat, but secondly, to investigate the activity of the cult of Lamashtu.

- At the behest of wealthy merchant-lord, the party escorts a merchant caravan to the desert oasis of Khemair. When they go to collect their pay, the heroes discover that their patron has been killed in a mysterious fire.
- The PCs are approached by an agent on behalf of Khemair's ruling council, asking for their services in a matter of some importance. He offers a substantial reward for adventurers willing to assist the beleaguered community, and then slips away into the night....

Get me to the Dungeon!

GMs can skip the urban investigation of chapter 1 and the desert travel of chapter 2, instead jumping immediately into the heart of the action. To do so, start the PCs at the lip of the dried riverbed in chapter 3. Assume that Amik Sha provided the PCs with all the information characters would have gleaned from their investigations in Chapter 1. This will enable the players to proceed with a clear understanding of their goals and the challenges before them.

This option is especially advisable for weaker parties, and for groups looking for shorter gaming sessions.

Chapter 1: Khemair

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – A Fiery Discussion (EL 1): However they are hooked into the adventure, the PCs begin with an audience before Amik Sha, head of the town council and a prominent nobleman. Read or paraphrase the following:

“I’m glad you’ve come,” says the imposing man seated behind the desk. He runs a powerful hand through his steel-grey beard and eyes you with a keen, appraising gaze. “My name is Amik Sha, and I speak on behalf of the town council. You’ve heard the rumors of nobles and merchants being burned alive by magical flame, no doubt? I’m afraid the stories are all too real. Suddenly, and without cause, members of Khemair’s elite have been struck down by eldritch fire.”

“We have scant leads, so what I’m about to tell you is all we have. The common classes, the filth of our society, have long been swayed by the dark lady Lamashtu, a demoness of the foulest order. Her wicked mark can be seen in the hunched back, the twisted limb, and other deformities common among the peasantry. We have avoided her wrath by secretly leaving our first born child upon her desert altar at Scorpion Rock. It’s cruel, true enough, but playing upon the demoness’ fondness for infant flesh is our only recourse.”

“When the fiery assassinations began, we dispatched agents into the desert to investigate. Their hearts were sent back in a box – they had been turned to solid stone!” Amik Sha shudders slightly at the memory. “The attached message, by someone named Lady Medus, warned us against sending further agents into the wastes.”

“Just a week ago, a man stumbled out of the desert. The poor soul was treated by priests at the Hospice for frightful burns that covered the entirety of his body. The knave has since disappeared from the Hospice, but we’re convinced he is somehow connected to the murders. Find the man, Aedan Kharsus, and you’ll likely find the source of what ails our city.”

Amik Sha leans back. “Can you, will you, help us?” he pleads.

Allow the PCs to answer and perhaps ask a few questions, then read or paraphrase the following:

Amik Sha runs a hand across a suddenly sweating brow, wiping away the sheen that covers his face. Suddenly his eyes grow wide in terror and his mouth opens in a silent scream. He convulses for a moment and then bursts into flame.

There is nothing the PCs can do to save him. The fires are magical in nature and are unaffected by water, smothering, or attempts to magically control them. Within a single round the councilman is dead. The next round, his flame-shrouded skeleton turns its fury upon the PCs.

Amik Sha, Flaming Skeleton: CR 1; Medium undead; HD 1d12, hp 7; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +0; Grp +1; Atk +1 melee (1d4+1 plus 1d4 fire, claw); Full Atk +1 melee (1d4+1 plus 1d4 fire, 2 claws); SA explosive destruction; SQ damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fire and cold, undead traits; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 13, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Feats: Improved Initiative.

Explosive Destruction (Su): When the skeleton is destroyed, it explodes in a burst of flame that showers all adjacent creatures with fire and bone shards for 1d4 fire damage and 1d4 piercing damage. Creatures may make a Reflex save (DC 11) for half damage.

Area 1-2 – Browbeating (EL 2): Run this encounter at a time of your choosing while the PCs remain in Khemair. A group of thugs, degenerate disciples of Lamashtu, assaults the PCs to scare them off. Initially the thugs use nonlethal tactics combined with verbal threats to try to run the party out of town. If this fails to dissuade the PCs, the thugs switch to lethal force and their wicked daggers. If two or more thugs die or fall unconscious, the remainder flee.

Characters may feign acquiescing to the thugs’ demands. If they do, the thugs may make a Sense Motive check opposed by the PCs’ lowest Bluff check. If they succeed, the thugs see the PCs’ ploy for what it is and continue with the beating. On a failed check, they give the PCs the rest of the day to get out of town and then slink away.

Development: If captured, the thugs can provide no information about Ssedenska, the lost temple of Lamashtu, or the murders-by-fire. They operate on their own initiative and are not part of a structured cult, so that line of questioning is a dead-end as well. However, they are street-savvy, so not only are they familiar with Aedan Kharsus through repu-

tation, but also have heard persistent rumors that he maintains a hidden sanctuary in the catacombs below town.

Thugs, human War1 (4): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8+2, hp 10; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+2, nonlethal, sap) or +4 melee (1d4+2/19-20, dagger); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Intimidate +3, Move Silently +2; Dodge, Weapon Focus (dagger).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Sap, dagger, pouch with 13 cp.

Area 1-3 – Investigating the Hospice: The Hospice of Gorhan is a crumbling structure located alongside the river in the heart of the Lower Quarter. Its cloistered clerics and nuns selflessly serve the poor, nursing illnesses and tending wounds. When Aedan stumbled out of the desert, he was brought here knowing that the clerics were sworn to aid any needy soul, and to find a place where he would be safe from persecution while recovering from his injuries.

If the PCs question the clerics they learn the following information:

- When Aedan arrived he was dehydrated, his feet bloodied from lengthy desert trek, and his entire body was severely burned.
- He rewarded the clerics for their dedication with a gold ring. Runes on it indicate the ring belonged to Hotep the Cinderborn (Decipher Script DC 12, Knowledge (history) DC 14, or Appraise DC 16).
- Aedan knew members of the watch were positioned outside ready to pounce on him the moment he left the hospice. The guards have been stationed at every hour of the day, but none saw Aedan leave.
- He maintained his innocence, claiming he had nothing to do with the murder spree claiming noble lives.

If the PCs organize a thorough search of the hospice, they discover (with a DC 15 Search check, or a DC 10 Survival check by someone with the Track feat) a faint bloodstain beside a loose flagstone in the basement. Lifting the stone reveals a forgotten entrance to the town's catacombs, explaining how Aedan slipped away without being seen.

Aedan's Sanctum

Aedan constructed a secret lair for himself in the ancient catacombs beneath the town. A small maze, it takes the PCs 1d4 hours of searching them for the PCs to discover his lair. During this time, the party may stumble upon a pair of dire rats or a restless skeleton, at the GM's discretion.

Upon entering the catacombs, each PC must make a DC 10 Will save to overcome the lingering sense of unease associated with the ancient burial grounds. All who fail the check find themselves frightened and on edge, which imposes a -2 penalty to all skill checks and attack rolls while they remain within the tunnels.

Catacomb Features

Unless otherwise noted, the catacombs share the following features:

Walls and Ceilings: Passages are hand-carved, but only crudely so, and average only 7 feet in height. Climbing these walls require a DC 15 Climb check.

Doors: All doors in the catacomb are simple wood construction. The dampness in the air means they tend to swell and stick when closed; a stuck door requires a DC 13 Strength check to open.

Simple Wooden Door: hardness 5, hp 10, break DC 13; Open Lock DC 13

Lighting: The tunnels of the catacombs themselves are unlit, but Aedan's rooms (areas 1-6 and 1-7) are dimly lit by flickering candles.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-4 – Tunnel (EL 1/2): Read or paraphrase the following:

The tunnel is about six feet in diameter, cut through solid rock. The walls are lined with alcoves filled with bones and scraps of rotting garments. About 20 feet away is a wooden door set into the web-shrouded walls. Light flickers around its edges and through gaps in the aging planks. In the shadows near the door, something moves.

Creatures: Aedan keeps a pair of trained and fiercely loyal mongooses to deal with any poisonous snakes he may encounter while robbing tombs. They attack anyone who approaches the door.

Mongoose (2): CR 1/4; Tiny animal; HD 1/2d8, hp 2; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +0; Grp -12; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d3-4, bite); SA attach; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SV Fort +2,

Ref +4, Will +1; Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 5.

Skills and Feats: Balance +12, Climb +10, Hide +11, Move Silently +8, Spot +3; Weapon Finesse.

Attach (Ex): If a mongoose hits with a bite attack, it uses its powerful jaws to latch onto the opponent's body and automatically deals bite damage each round it remains attached. An attached mongoose loses its Dexterity bonus to Armor Class and has an AC of 12. An attached mongoose can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself. To remove an attached mongoose through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against the creature.

Area 1-5 – Door (EL 1): A flimsy wooden door, rigged with a simple lock (DC 13 Open Lock check) and a poison needle trap, bars entry to Aedan's hideout.

Poison Needle Trap: CR 1; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Atk +8 ranged (1 plus scorpion venom, Fort save DC 12, initial and secondary damage 1 Con); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 20.

Area 1-6 – Aedan's Room (EL 1): Read or paraphrase the following:

Candlelight illuminates this small room. Stacked wooden crates conceal the far wall, while a lone sarcophagus adorned with the sedate image of an eagle-headed woman leans against the wall to your left. A bullseye lantern, shovel, crowbar, coil of rope, a small brush, and a light hammer and pick lay upon a warped table. Another wooden door leads off of the east wall.

The crates contain various items stolen from crypts, tombs and graves that Aedan has yet to find a buyer for. Much of it is damaged or mundane (the lot would sell for 500gp), but there are some valuable pieces amidst the grist (see Treasure below for details).

The sarcophagus has perplexed Aedan, as it appears to be locked by both mechanical and magical means (it even gives off a faint magical aura). Yet it defies all his attempts to open it and he refuses to resort to brute force lest he damage whatever is inside or, worse, unknowingly release a trap or awaken a guardian. What he doesn't realize, and which the PCs may not realize either, is that the sarcophagus is a fake designed to draw attention and cause thieves to expend time and spells in it. The lid simply does not open and there is nothing at all inside. Players making a DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) check or a DC 20 Disable Device check will recognize the sarcophagus for what it is.

Trap: Aedan has set up a simple trap to serve as a last line of defense. A fine tripwire runs across the floor, connecting to a loaded crossbow that is partially hidden amidst the stack of crates opposite the door. As well as firing the crossbow, the tripwire causes several small bells to ring, which alert Aedan to the party's presence.

Treasure: The items on the table are the tools of Aedan's trade, all mundane except for small brush. It looks like nothing more exotic than the type of brush with which a tomb robber would sweep away sand and debris from a delicate item. In truth, however, it is a *brush of mending* (see Appendix III: New Magic), used for repairing recovered items.

The crates are used by the tomb robber to transport his ill-gotten gains. Each is packed with straw and conceals a hidden bottom (Search, DC 15). All of the hidden compartments are empty.

Crossbow Trap: CR 1; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Atk +4 ranged (1d8/x2, bolt); Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 13.

Area 1-7 – Bedroom (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

A small cot, a barrel serving as a table, and a stool are the only furnishings in this small chamber. Atop the barrel is a mass of curled parchment, a thick, dusty tome and a flickering candle that casts a dull, eerie glow across the rooms' walls.

If the PCs succeed in making it this far without alerting Aedan, the scoundrel is here, resting on the cot. Aedan is a grizzled, middle-aged human who wears well-worn clothes and is never without his trusty whip at his hip. Despite being healed by the clerics, his skin is still raw and scarred from the burns he endured and his hair has yet to grow back beyond mere stubble.

Questioning Aedan: Aedan is suspicious of the party and fears he'll be implicated in the murders of the town's nobles. As a result, it's rather difficult to earn his trust and get him to talk. His initial attitude is indifferent. Consult the values below to see what information the PCs learn.

- *Indifferent:* He's a tomb robber and recently had some misfortune while exploring a crypt.
- *Friendly:* He stumbled upon a hidden canyon out in the wastes in which lay the ancient tomb of two kings. One was Shishak, famous for parting the River of Venom to lead his people to settle this land. The other king was Hotep the Cinderborn, his successor, who was noted for razing the cities

of his enemies. The tombs were being excavated by slaves under the direction of dervishes. It was while observing their progress that Aedan was attacked and nearly reduced to cinder.

- *Helpful:* Aedan saw who was overseeing the excavation work: a snake-woman, with the head and upper body of a beautiful human, and the lower torso of a serpent. He's willing to draw a map to the hidden valley...for a small fee.

Treasure: Atop the table is a book recording the history of Shishak and Hotep the Cinderborn. Characters can use it throughout this adventure and beyond as a point of reference, providing a +2 circumstance bonus to Knowledge (history) checks involving the rulers and their reign. For a brief history of Shishak and Hotep the Cinderborn, see the sidebar below. In addition to the book, there are several scrolls on the table, including a map to the crypt of Hotep the Cinderborn, a *scroll of identify and comprehend languages*, and a *scroll of resist fear*.

Aedan Kharsus, male human Rog2: CR 2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 2d6+4, hp 14; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +1 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger) or +1 melee (1d3 nonlethal, whip); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding; AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +5, Balance +6, Climb +5, Decipher Script +5, Disable Device +7, Jump +5, Knowledge (history) +3, Knowledge (geography) +3, Open Lock +7, Search +5, Spellcraft +3, Spot +5; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Lightning Reflexes.

Languages: Common, Draconic.

Possessions: Whip, dagger, leather armor, thieves' tools, belt pouch with 75 gp.

Chapter 2: Into the Wastes

No detailed map of the desert region is provided, allowing GMs to more easily adapt the adventure to various campaign worlds. The journey should be a harrowing one, however, across merciless terrain and in oppressive heat. PCs should be menaced both by the environment and by the monsters that dwell within it.

Areas of the Map

Area 2-1 – Desert Trek (EL variable): With Aedan's map as a guide, it is a fairly straightforward march, requiring only a few DC 8 Survival checks to stay on course. It is roughly 25 miles to the tomb, across desert unbroken save for the occasional dried wadi. A party of characters moving on foot can make the trek in two days. Each failed Survival check to stay on course increases the number of days required to reach the destination by one and increases the difficulty of subsequent Survival checks by +1.

As one would expect in the desert, heat and thirst are dangers as real as that presented by any of monster. PCs will have to husband their supply of water and take precautions to protect themselves from the heat. Rules for handling such threats are covered in the DMG.

The wastes are desolate and there is only a 10% chance of a random encounter. Check for wandering encounters four times per day: once at dawn, once at noon, once at dusk, and once during the night. If an encounter occurs, roll on the below table to determine the nature of the encounter.

1d14	Encounter
1-2	Medium monstrous scorpion
3	1d4 dune beasts
4-5	2d4 dervishes
6-8	1d6 hyenas
9-11	Peccary (wild pig)
12-13	Duststorm
14	1d6 inanimate skeletons uncovered by sandstorm

Gamescience Dice

The wandering monster tables in this adventure utilize the unique dice manufactured by Gamescience. Gamescience is a pioneer in the development of new polyhedrons. After all, they invented the 100-sided die – what could be cooler than that? Their product line also includes the 1d3, 1d5, 1d7, 1d14, 1d16, 1d24, and 1d30. If you don't have the appropriate dice for the wandering monster tables in this adventure, you can substitute other dice as appropriate: for 1d3, divide 1d6 by 2; for 1d5, divide 1d10 by 2; for 1d7, roll 1d6+1; and so on. To acquire some of these amazing dice for yourself (yes, they're real), ask for Gamescience dice by name at your local game store, or visit www.goodmangames.com. Retailers can call 228-392-4177 to reach Gamescience.



Medium monstrous scorpion: CR 1; Medium vermin; HD 2d8+4, hp 13; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, claw); Full Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws) and -3 melee (1d4 plus poison, sting); SA constrict, improved grab, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Hide +4, Spot +4.

Constrict (Ex): A monstrous scorpion deals automatic claw damage (1d4+1) on a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): A monstrous scorpion that hits with a claw attack may start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d3 Con.

Dune Beasts (1d4): CR 1; Medium magical beast; HD 2d10+2, hp 13; Init +2; Spd 40 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+3 plus dehydration, bite); SA dehydration; SQ improved tracker, lowlight vision, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Listen +3, Spot +8; Alertness.

Improved Tracker (Ex): Dune beasts use Spot checks instead of Survival checks to follow their quarry's trail.

Dehydration (Ex): The saliva of a dune beast carries a powerful poison that causes the victim to suffer terrible dehydration. The poison takes 1d4 minutes to take effect, dealing 1d6 points of non-lethal damage and causing the victim to become exhausted. A successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) halves the damage and reduces the exhaustion to fatigue. The subject must make an additional Constitution check each hour to avoid nonlethal damage until he drinks at least a liter of fresh water.

Dervishes, human War1 (2d4): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8+1, hp 9; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp

+1; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6/18-20, scimitar) or +3 ranged (1d6/x3, short bow); AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +2, Ride +5, Survival +4; Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Scimitar, shortbow with 20 arrows, buckler, 8 sp.

Hyenas (1d6): CR 1; Medium animal; HD 2d8+4, hp 13; Init +2; Spd 50 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+3, bite); SA trip; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Hide +3, Listen +6, Spot +4; Alertness.

Peccary: CR 2; Medium animal; HD 3d8+12, hp 25; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d8+3, gore); SA ferocity; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 4.

Skills and Feats: Listen +7, Spot +5; Alertness, Toughness.

Ferocity (Ex): A peccary is such a tenacious combatant that it continues to fight without penalty even while disabled or dying.

Duststorm (CR 3): While the peripheral dust and debris – a swirling, billowing cloud over a mile wide – is sufficient to blot out the sun, rendering even darkvision worthless, it poses little danger to the PCs. The heart of the duststorm, however, is another matter. Any PC born and raised in the desert, or succeeding on a DC 10 Survival check, realizes the danger posed by the heart of the dust storm, but this is of precious little help. A DC 15 Survival check allows a PC to keep her wits during to storm, safely avoiding the heart of the storm, and finding cover until the storm passes. PCs failing this check, or caught unawares, must contend with the heart of the storm.

Over 900 ft. in height and just as wide, the heart of the storm is a deadly to PCs and mounts alike. Those within the path of the heart must seek cover immediately; those unable to find cover must hold their breath or inhale the swirling dust. A PC can hold her breath for a number of rounds equal to twice her Constitution score. After this period of time, the character must make a DC 10 Constitution check every round in order to continue holding her breath. Each round, the DC increases by 1.

When the character finally fails her Constitution check, she begins to drown. In the first round, she falls unconscious (0 hp). In the following round, she drops to -1 hit points and is dying. In the third round, she drowns.

Additionally, a PC exposed to the storm takes 1d2 points of damage per round from the scouring sand, dust, and debris.

The dust storm moves at a rate of 90 ft. per round; the heart of the storm passes over PCs in 10 rounds, but at the GM's discretion can remain longer to threaten the heroes, or vanish as quickly as it came.

Area 2-2 – Dervish Delight (EL 12): Read or paraphrase the following:

The clouds above are molten copper as the last rays of the falling sun strike them. Above, the distinctive scimitar-shaped wings of the night harriers cut across the twilight in search of prey. At first the sound is so imperceptible that it nearly goes unnoticed, but within moments it rises to a drum of hoofs as two score of dervishes race across the rocky wastes to intercept you. Scimitars wave menacingly above forms clad head-to-foot in white robes, and fierce warcries echo through the approaching gloom.

Dervishes are a menace to all desert travel, pillaging caravans and staking prisoners out in the sun to die cruel deaths. The PCs will have heard rumors of their ferocity already, and should recognize the danger they are in.

Tactics: The dervishes begin 150 feet away from the PCs, and race towards their victims as fast as their light-footed stallions will carry them. Their goal is to close with the PCs and overwhelm them with sheer numbers. If more than a third of their number perish or are incapacitated, the remainder will flee into the gathering darkness.

Development: Forty dervishes is clearly too many for the PCs to defeat, but let the heroes sweat it out for several rounds, and encourage them to desperation. After all, it's in the defense of hopeless caus-

es that epics are made. Then, just as it looks as though the PCs are about to be overrun, a maddening buzz suddenly drowns out the sounds of combat, and the sky is blotted by a rapidly growing black mass. A swarm of locusts descends upon the area, enveloping everything within a square mile.

Though the players won't immediately know it, the locusts present no threat to them. They may blind the PCs, fly into them, and crawl over their skin, but they cause no physical harm. The same cannot be said of the dervishes, who face the full brunt of the locusts' fury (a Listen check at DC 15 will hear their pained screams over the din of the locusts).

PCs may look upon the locust swarm as divine intervention, and they're right...after a fashion. It wasn't a benevolent deity that sent the insects to save the characters, but rather the demon lord who was formerly mated with Lamashtu. He has no desire to see the interests of the woman who betrayed him advanced, fearful that one day her power may be restored to challenge him once again. It's in his best interests that the PCs succeed in their quest. Though the demon lord has many far more pressing issues than the fate of some band of heroes, at the GM's whim the demon lord may intervene again on the PCs behalf. Be certain, though, that even the slightest aid from this wicked patron will cost the PCs much in the end.

Dervishes, human War1 (40): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8+1, hp 9; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6/18-20, scimitar) or +3 ranged (1d6/x3, short bow); AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +2, Ride +5, Survival +4; Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Scimitar, shortbow with 20 arrows, buckler, 8 sp.



Chapter 3: Twin Tombs for Twin Rulers

The River of Venom

After days of overland travel, the PCs arrive at a dried river bed that cuts through the wastes like a jagged knife wound. This is area 3-1 (not pictured on map). The river bed is about 50 feet deep and more than 100 feet across, its sides steep enough to warrant Climb checks (DC 10) to safely navigate. A day spent searching will uncover a navigable track leading down to the base that's wide enough for even mounts to safely traverse.

PCs may not immediately recognize it as such, but this canyon was the River of Venom alluded to in ancient stories. Its cool, shaded confines still make it an ideal habitat for snakes, and there is still a residue of Lamashtu's magic at work here: all snakes have maximum hit points and the DC to resist their poison is raised by 2 (this is reflected in their statistics). The vipers lurk under rocks, hiss and spit at PCs, and the larger ones pursue the heroes.

As before, roll four times per day with a 10% chance of a wandering encounter. If an encounter occurs, refer to the following table:

1d14	Encounter
1-4	Tiny viper
5-8	Small viper
9-11	Medium viper
12-13	Large viper
14	Constrictor snake

Tiny Viper: CR 1/3; Tiny animal; HD 1/4d8, hp 2; Init +7; Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.; AC 17, touch 15,

flat-footed 14; Base Atk +0; Grp -11; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1 plus poison, bite); SA poison; SQ scent; AL N; Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 4, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +15, Listen +6, Spot +6, Swim +5; Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 12, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

Small Viper: CR 1/2; Small animal; HD 1d8, hp 8; Init +7; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft, swim 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +0; Grp -6; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d2-2 plus poison, bite); SA poison; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +11, Listen +7, Spot +7, Swim +6; Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 12, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

Medium Viper: CR 1; Medium animal; HD 2d8, hp 16; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +0; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4-1 plus poison, bite); SA poison; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 8, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +12, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +7; Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

Who were Shishak and Hotep the Cinderborn?

These two rulers – twins, in fact – occupy a misty place somewhere between fact and fantasy, mythology and history. How much of the stories told of these legendary figures are accurate remains open to debate. Shishak was said to have led the first settlers into the Ghethrian Wastes, fleeing some undefined oppressive evil in their homeland. They were plagued by famine and disease the entire journey, but though their numbers dwindled, they persevered. The River of Venom, an expanse of millions of poisonous snakes, presented one final, seemingly insurmountable obstacle. Shishak would not be deterred. Holding his staff aloft, the king entered the slithering mass and parted it, allowing his people to pass safely. A few short months later, just after the refugees had established their new homes, Shishak mysteriously fell ill and died.

Shishak's twin brother, Hotep assumed the throne. Many whispered that he had murdered his brother, a theory supported by his subsequent ruthless behavior. Hotep ruled with an iron fist, clamping down heavily on his people, imprisoning or killing so-called subversives, and even burning communities that spurned his authority. He was reviled as a tyrant, and few mourned his eventual passing.

What history doesn't record is that Hotep was driven into tyranny by the vile Lamashtu. It was her influence that blighted their former land; it was she who plagued their flight; it was she who poisoned Shisak; and it was her widespread corruption of the populace that led to his oppressive and sometimes extreme governance. Though Hotep has been condemned by history, it was his ruthlessness that freed Khemair of Lamashtu's vile grasp.

But now, Ssedenka's machinations threaten to undo even the Cinderborn's sacrifice.

Large Viper: CR 2; Large animal; HD 3d8, hp 24; Init +7; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft, swim 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 1; Base Atk +2; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4 plus poison, bite); SA poison; SQ scent; Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +8, Listen +5, Spot +6, Swim +8; Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

Constrictor Snake: CR 2; Medium animal; HD 3d8+6, hp 30; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d3+4, bite); SA constrict 1d3+4, improved grab; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Climb +14, Hide +10, Listen +7, Spot +7, Swim +11; Alertness, Toughness.

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a constrictor snake deals 1d3+4 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a constrictor snake must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Tomb Background

The unusual twin tomb design was designed to honor the twin rulers. Shishak died first and his burial within the tomb went as planned. When Hotep joined his brother in death some decades later, fate intervened to keep them apart.

Just as construction of Hotep's burial wing was nearing completion, a cave-in sealed the entrance and trapped a team of eight workers and their overseer, Ben-Zuriel. Desperate to survive and hopeful that someone would surely come to save him, Ben-Zuriel slaughtered the laborers, ate their flesh and drank their blood. Little did he know that those outside the tomb saw the cave-in as an omen warning them away from the tomb. The workers decided to leave the tomb unfinished, burying the sarcophagus of Hotep elsewhere (in a tomb Ssedenka discovered a few years ago, but which lies beyond the scope of this adventure). With no means of escape and no assistance coming, Ben-Zuriel died of dehydration. Neither he nor the workers would rest easy in death, however. Ben-Zuriel arose as a ghastr and the laborers as skeletons.

Tomb Features

Unless otherwise noted, the tombs share the following features:

Walls and Ceilings: The tomb consists of brick-lined tunnels and rooms, both of which feature wooden ceil-

ing supports (construction was never completed, so these wooden supports were never replaced with supporting stone pillars). Climbing these walls requires a DC 14 Climb check.

Doors: All doors in the dungeon are made of iron-reinforced wood. They tend to swing shut 1d4 rounds after being opened. Unless otherwise noted, they are unlocked.

Iron-Reinforced Wooden Doors: 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 23.

Lighting: The entire complex includes sconces arranged at regular intervals along the walls, but none are lit nor do they have torches in them. It should be noted that air quality within the tomb is poor and musty, so flames cast 25% less light than normal.

Areas of the Map

Area 3-2 – Entrance (EL 4): The PCs arrive at the twin tombs just as the caved-in entrance is reopened. Read or paraphrase the following:

Cresting the final dune, you see an excavation site overlooking the canyon. Under the watchful eye of several scimitar-wielding dervishes, two dozen slaves are busy removing rubble from what seems to be the entrance to an ancient tomb, long sealed by a cave-in. Harnessed camels, driven by their trainers, pull the larger pieces of debris away from the opening. A cheer rises up from the slaves as the final large stone is removed, but the cheer is quickly silenced as the tomb emits a low, bone-chilling moan.

Flanking the entrance, two large statues depicting hawk-faced humans eternally stand guard. These imposing 10-foot-tall figures dare anyone to try and enter the tomb.

Show the players handout A. Both the slaves and dervishes cower from entrance, and refuse to enter the tomb. Talk of bad omens and death begins circulating amongst them. Even the camels appear frightened.

Closer inspection of the statues reveals that they depict two distinct individuals; a DC 12 Knowledge (history) check identifies them as Shishak and Hotep. They are immovable and will crumble at any attempt to cut them free.

There is no light inside the tomb, but the characters can see a long straight corridor proceeding into the hill. Just at the edge of their vision, they can see that the hallway widens into a room, but the size and contents of the chamber cannot be determined without a closer investigation.

Development: After recovering their wits, the

dervishes round up the slaves and set up camp a short distance from the tomb. A single rider is sent to alert Ssedenka of their progress and the rest settle down to await her arrival. If the PCs eliminate the rider, it will be 1d4+1 days before Ssedenka grows suspicious and arrives in person to check on the proceedings at the tomb. This provides ample time for the PCs to explore the tombs and free the slaves, if they so choose.

The cover of darkness offers the best opportunity for the PCs to slip into the tombs unmolested. Three guards remain alert at the camp all night, but the camp is far enough away that even with a roaring fire the likelihood of PCs being spotted is negligible (+2 circumstance bonus to Hide checks). The dervish's nerves are frayed by their fear of what lies within the tomb, so even if the PCs fail Move Silently checks, the dervishes will chalk the noise up to restless dead or unleashed spirits and refuse to leave the presumed safety of their fire. Only if the PCs fail the check by 5 or more will the dervishes recognize the sound and send four of their number to investigate. Under no circumstances will the dervishes enter the tomb, even in pursuit of the enemy.

The slaves are a potential resource in a fight against the dervishes. Their captors have abused them physically and kept them on minimal rations, assuring their submission. If the slaves see the PCs launch an attack, though, they quickly throw off their fears and join the fight against the dervishes in a sudden uprising. This represents their one bid for freedom, so they fight desperately to the death.

If the PCs question any of the slaves, they can get directions to Scorpion Rock. Slaves know that "the demon" Ssedenka makes sacrifices upon the altar at Scorpion Rock, but are unable to tell the PCs where she makes her lair – only that it must be somewhere nearby.

If the PCs succeed in capturing and interrogating any dervishes, they may find the same information. Furthermore, a DC 15 Intimidate check ensures that the dervish betrays his serpentine mistress. The dervish recounts how Ssedenka makes her lair beneath the ruin of an ancient tower.

If the PCs slay all the dervishes, or don't think to question any of the slaves, they will be in for a difficult challenge finding their way to Scorpion Rock. A GM can use one of the following suggestions, or make up his own means of gently shepherding the PCs to Scorpion Rock.

- Just inside area 3-2, there is the crushed body of a dervish who died trying to raid the tomb during the excavation. The corpse has a broken scimitar,



a crushed bow, and the scroll mentioned below.

- As the PCs are exiting the tomb, each is forced to make a Will save. The PC with the lowest is visited by the spirit of Shishak that very night, demanding that the PC search out Ssedenka and end her reign of terror. If the PC refuses the quest, the spirit returns every night, each visitation inflicting 1 point of Con damage on the PC; any cumulative Con damage is healed instantly should the PC elect to seek out the lair of the medusa.
- As the PCs are exiting the tomb, they are ambushed by a band of 1d12+6 dervishes sent by Ssedenka (stats as listed below). The desert raiders announce that they have been sent by their serpent mistress to slay the PC and reclaim the *Staff of Shishak*, but if the PCs succeed in slaying or incapacitating more than 5 of the dervishes, the rest flee back to Scorpion Rock. The PCs can track the dervishes back to their lair; a search of any of the dead dervishes turns up the scroll listed below, as well as a crude map leading back to Serpent Rock.

Treasure: If the PCs succeed in defeating any of the dervishes, a DC 10 Search check of the corpses turns up a scroll case wrapped in the glittering skin of a snake. Inside the case is a sheet of parchment, which reads:

Find the fell staff of the damned serpent hater and return it to me. The staff must be destroyed – I will brook no dissent.

~Ssedenka

The letter is stamped with the image of several snakes twisting in on one another. The staff mentioned in the missive is the *Staff of Shishak* found in area 3-8a. PCs gaining this powerful magic item will prove deadly foes of Ssedenka, and once the staff is in their possession, she will stop at nothing to defeat them.

Dervishes, human War1 (8): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8+1, hp 9; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6/18-20, scimitar) or +3 ranged (1d6/x3, short bow); AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +2, Ride +5, Survival +4; Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Scimitar, shortbow with 20 arrows, buckler, 8 sp.

Slaves, human Com1 (20): CR 1/3; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d4+2, hp 6; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +0; Grp +0; Atk/Full Atk +0 melee (1d4/x4, light pick); AL NG; SV Fort -1, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +2, Craft (various) +2, Handle Animal +3, Ride +2, Spot +2; Iron Will, Toughness.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Digging tools.

Area 3-3 – Short Hallway (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

Just past the entrance, a corridor extends straight into the hill at a slight downward angle. Cobwebs and dust are everywhere, and a stale odor permeates the hallway. Within the first five feet of the opening, you can see the cause of the cave-in that sealed the tomb. A 10-foot-square section of the roof is missing; apparently this was the rubble that was just excavated by the slaves. A crushed and broken plank of wood lies beneath the rubble.

If the characters succeed in a DC 10 Search check, the shattered remains of 2 skeletons are found, intermixed with the piles of debris. A DC 12 Search check reveals some ancient tools around the remains. Anyone with the ability to set or remove traps realizes that these individuals were putting the final touches on a trap and most likely triggered it by accident.

Trap: Just before the entrance to the next room is a 10-foot-square pit trap. If weighted with 100 pounds or more, the stone slab swings away,

revealing a 20-foot drop onto sharpened wooden spikes. PCs can discover this trap by making a Search check (DC 13). On the far side of the pit is the mechanism that will reset the trap and lock the slab in place, allowing for safe passage across the trap. The long broken plank near the entrance allowed the workers to cross the pit safely.

Monster: A tomb viper, an abnormally large undead cobra infused with necromantic energy, has been tasked with protecting the crypts. It lurks within the stone walls of this hallway using its ability to meld with stone, waiting for victims to pass by.

Tactics: The tomb viper attacks isolated or vulnerable characters first, such as someone who fell into the pit trap, a scout operating on his own, or a character distracted with a task. It fights to its destruction, having no instinct for self-preservation. Its only purpose is to defend the tomb.

Tomb Viper: CR 2; Medium undead animal; HD 2d12+3, hp 16; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d6 plus 1d6 necrotic poison, bite) SA necrotic poison; SQ damage reduction 5/-, darkvision 60 ft., *meld with stone*, surprise, undead traits, vulnerability to fire; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 15, Con –, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Climb +8, Hide +8, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +8; Weapon finesse (bite), Toughness.

Meld with Stone (Su): A tomb viper can enter a stone surface once per day as a standard action as per the spell *meld with stone*. While inside the wall, any carvings or paintings alter to accommodate the viper's image. The undead snake can see and hear out of the stone surface.

Necrotic Poison (Su): Necrotic energy courses through the tomb viper, infusing its fangs with the raw energy of undeath. This deals an extra 1d6 points of damage with each successful melee attack. A successful Fortitude save (DC 14) halves this additional damage. Characters killed by the poison rise in 2d6 minutes as zombies. Necrotic poison heals undead rather than harms them.

Surprise (Ex): When melded with stone, a tomb viper receives a +15 circumstance bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks the round after emerging.

Spiked Pit Trap: CR 2; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 10 ft. deep (1d6, fall); multiple targets; pit spikes (Atk + 10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+2 each); Search DC 13; Disable Device DC 15.



Area 3-4 – Antechamber (EL 2): As soon as the first character crosses the pit trap, read or paraphrase the following:

You stand in the entrance to a 20-by-30 foot rectangular chamber. The walls of the dusty chamber are inscribed with hieroglyphics and depictions of various scenes.

On the floor are piles of bones, the skeletal remains of human or humanoid beings. The bones are dusty and very old. A pile of scrap fabric and leather is piled in the far northern corner. As you look, the bones begin to stir and rise from their dusty beds. Six skeletons scramble towards you, a fiery red glow emanating from their eye sockets.

Show the players handout B. The key milestones in the lives of Shishak and Hotep are depicted on the walls of this chamber. They range from birth to death. One image depicts Shishak, golden light bursting from his staff, parting the snakes of the Sea of Venom. Another depicts Hotep overlooking a burning town. Beneath the burning buildings, snakes are depicted latched onto the feet of the terrified populace and a bestial-faced woman is seen writhing in agony. This hints strongly at Hotep's true motivation for destroying the villages that opposed him.

The old rags and leather scraps on the floor are the remains of the clothing, work belts, and so forth that the skeletons were wearing before they were killed. They have been piled up and are being used as a nest by a few rats that have found a crack in the wall nearby.

Creatures: Because of the nature of their demise, the skeletons have an intense hatred towards the living and attempt to kill the PCs as quickly as possible.

Treasure: Scattered among the tattered remains are 2 gp and 14 sp. Everything else in this room is worthless.

Skeletons (6): CR 1/3; Medium undead; HD 1d12, hp 6; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +0; Grp +1; Atk +1 melee (1d4+1, claw); Full Atk +1 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws); SQ dark-vision 60 ft., damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, immunity to cold, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 13, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Feats: Improved Initiative.

Area 3-5 – Long Hallway: Read or paraphrase the following:

The corridor continues for about 100 feet at a downward slope. Hieroglyphics adorn these walls, depicting the journey from the mortal world to immortality. The dust along this corridor has recently been disturbed.

Nothing else of interest is found in this hallway.

Area 3-6 – Main Room (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

The corridor opens into a large room, 50 feet square. Six empty sconces line the walls, one on each side of the passage you entered from and two each on the left and right walls, flanking the room's two exits. Scattered around the room are various objects, some of which you recognize from the hieroglyphics seen earlier in the tomb. A large chariot stands in the north east corner of the room, and various display stands hold garments, a suit of armor, a sword and scabbard, furniture, and dozens of personal effects. The dust in this room is marred by narrow humanoid footprints. As you begin to explore, an ominous creaking emanates from the northern corner of the room. Suddenly, the suit of armor grabs the sword from its scabbard and leaps on the chariot. Together they charge towards you.

The chariot and armor are considered a single Large animated object. The animated object charges the characters, attempting to run them over. The chariot is quite agile and can turn in place. Sidestepping the chariot does not come without consequences – the charioteer employs its scimitar to strike down PCs that avoid being run-down by the chariot. If the heroes flee back the

way they came, the chariot will pursue them up the long hallway to the edge of the antechamber before rolling back down the ramp to await their return. The incline does not negatively affect the speed of the chariot.

Treasure: The contents of the room are worth 2,000 gp to any collector. The sword wielded by the animated armor is a +1 *longsword*, rare in design and quite beautiful. The armor is the equivalent of masterwork full plate.

Animated Chariot and Charioteer: CR 3; Large construct; HD 4d10+30, hp 52; Init +0; Spd 60 ft.; AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +10; Atk +5 melee (1d8+4, slam); Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+4, slam), and +3 melee (1d6+3/18-20, scimitar); SA trample; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -4; Str 16, Dex 10, Con -, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Feats: Multiattack.

Trample (Ex): The chariot can trample Small or smaller creatures, dealing 1d8+9 damage. Opponents who do not make attacks of opportunity against the object can attempt Reflex saves (DC 15) for half damage.

Area 3-7 – Hotep’s Burial Chamber (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

This 20-foot-square chamber is bare except for a central stone slab where a sarcophagus would normally lie. Strangely, no sign of the coffin can be seen.

If the suit of armor and the chariot animated and attacked the PCs, the ghost that haunts this chamber is alerted to their presence and is hidden behind the stone slab. The undead horror springs forth and attacks when the characters reach the center of the chamber.

Read or paraphrase the following:

As you reach the center of the room, an emaciated, wretched human figure leaps towards you from behind the stone slab. Its burning red eyes roll in their sockets and its teeth gnash hungrily as it stumbles forward.

Treasure: There is not much of interest here for the PCs; the sarcophagus never made it to this resting spot. Upon the ghost’s corpse the PCs find two golden rings; one is worth 50 gp, the other is a +1 *ring of protection*. A DC 15 Search turns up a tattered scroll, a diary that describes the work progress and Ben-Zurriel’s final days. Show the players handout C.

Ghast: CR 3; Medium undead; HD 4d12+3, hp 29; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +5; Atk +5 melee (1d8+3 plus paralysis, bite); Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+3 plus paralysis, bite) and +3 melee (1d4+1 plus paralysis, 2 claws); SA ghoul fever, paralysis, stench; SQ darkvision 60 ft., undead traits, +2 turn resistance; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 17, Con -, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Balance +7, Climb +9, Hide +8, Jump +9, Move Silently +8, Spot +8; Multiattack, Toughness.

Ghoul Fever (Su): Disease–bite, Fortitude DC 15, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex. See the MM for more information on ghoul fever.

Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by a ghost’s bite or claw attack must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Even elves can be affected by this paralysis.

Stench (Ex): The stink of death and corruption surrounding these creatures is overwhelming. Living creatures within 10 feet must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1d6+4 minutes. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same ghost’s stench for 24 hours. A delay poison or neutralize poison spell removes the effect from a sickened creature. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creatures resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws.

Area 3-8 – Cave-in: Read or paraphrase the following:

The long corridor descends deeper into the tomb. A series of images adorn the walls, displaying images of a dead king ascending into godhood. Just past the hieroglyphics, the tunnel is blocked by several stone slabs that have fallen from the ceiling. Beyond, the tunnel continues into darkness, but to pass you’ll have to remove the rubble or squeeze in among the slabs.

PCs can pass with a DC 14 Escape Artist check. Moving the slabs requires several DC 20 Strength checks. Removing a single block reduces the Escape Artist check to DC 12, while removing a second allows the characters to crawl through with relative comfort (DC 10 Escape Artist). Removing a third block eliminates any impediment.

Development: The sound of moving blocks has a 2-in-6 chance each round of attracting the attention of the ghost from area 3-7, who arrives to investigate two rounds later (unless it has already been destroyed).

Area 3-9 – Shishak’s Burial Chamber (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

You enter a 20-foot by 20-foot chamber. On a stone slab in the center of the room is an ornate sarcophagus adorned with glittering gems.

Show the players handout D. This chamber holds the sarcophagus of King Shishak. A closer inspection of the sarcophagus reveals it to be sealed and to radiate magic. It bears an inscription that can be deciphered with a DC 12 Decipher Script check: “Here lies Shishak, before whom serpents in the fold quiver. His glory be unto the wise...but to the simple goes but everlasting damnation.” Below this is another inscription, which reads: “No sooner spoken than broken.” The cryptic passage is a riddle.

The sarcophagus can be broken open or its mortar chipped away and the heavy lid lifted off (Strength check DC 16). In either event, the PCs reveal themselves to be unimaginative (or ‘simple’) and are cursed according to the first inscription. For the next 1d4 days, all food and drink they consume, other than water, spoils as it touches their lips (Will save, DC 15 to resist).

Solving the riddle results in a far more rewarding outcome. “No sooner spoken than broken” refers to silence. If a *silence* spell is cast upon the sarcophagus, a secret door in the wall that otherwise would likely have gone unnoticed (Search DC 30) slides open, revealing area 3-9a.

Monster: A gloom bat, a flying predator from the Plane of Shadows, has found its way into the tomb and taken roost within the chamber. It views any living creatures as potential prey, but flees down the corridor if reduced to less than half its hit points.

Treasure: The gems (there are a total of 30) on the sarcophagus are actually non-precious stones, pretty but not of any great value in and of themselves (worth 5 gp each). Inside the sarcophagus lies a skeletal form, a decoy designed to fool tomb robbers, sealed with a golden staff worth 200 gp.

Gloom Bat: CR 3; Small outsider (extraplanar); HD 3d8+3, hp 16; Init +5; Spd fly 60 ft. (perfect); AC 19, touch 16, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +0; Atk/Full Atk +9 melee (1d6+1, bite); SQ darkvision 120 ft., shadowflight, shroud of darkness, immunity to acid, electricity and poison, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Hide +19, Listen +11, Move Silently +15, Spot +11; Dodge, Weapon Finesse (bite).

Shadowflight (Su): Any time a gloom bat takes

wing, it can move through the Plane of Shadows rather than through the Material Plane. This slows the creature’s movement by half, but does not provoke an attack of opportunity. Passing through the Plane of Shadows allows the creature to pass through barriers and obstacles found on the Material Plane. The gloom bat remains in the Plane of Shadows only while moving and returns fully to the Material Plane at the end of each move action.

Shroud of Darkness (Su): Gloom bats are surrounded by constantly roiling darkness. Any melee or ranged attack directed at it has a 20% miss chance unless the attacker can locate it by some means other than sight. A *true seeing* effect allows the user to see the gloom bat’s position.

Secret Stone Door: 4 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 60; break DC 28.

Area 3-9a – Shishak’s Sarcophagus: Read or paraphrase the following:

As the wall slowly swings open, groaning on ancient gears, you see a small antechamber beyond. The room is just large enough to accommodate a sarcophagus of gleaming gold.

This sarcophagus is unlocked, untrapped, and unsealed. Inside lies the mummified remains of Shishak. Clutched in his skeletal hands is a weathered wooden crook, the relic known to posterity as the *Staff of Shishak* (see Appendix III: New Magic for details of this powerful item). Only good-aligned characters are able to wield the staff; all others who touch it suffer 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round. The sarcophagus is a treasure in itself, easily worth 1,000 gp. However, removing it should be considered sacrilege, as Shishak is revered as a saintly figure. Any good-aligned character who profits by it finds herself under the effects of a permanent bane spell.

Area 3-2 (Revisited) – Exiting the Twin Tombs (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following as the PCs exit the tomb:

Four men stand above you, swaddled in loose clothing and armed with shortbows and scimitars. One steps forward as the others draw back the strings of their shortbows.

“Surrender your weapons, tomb robbers, or suffer the wrath of Ssedenka, mistress of the Ruined Tower of Lamashtu!”

The air is still as the dervishes await your answer.

Regardless of the PCs’ actions, the dervishes have but a single aim: to kill and capture all the PCs. The



Chapter 4: Scorpion Rock

Unless otherwise noted, the caves share the following features:

Walls and Ceilings: The caves of Scorpion Rock are, except where otherwise noted, naturally formed. The walls are rough and dry, with many handholds that aid in climbing. Climbing these walls requires a DC 10 Climb check.

Lighting: The caves are unlit, except for area 4-1, where thin streams of sunlight enter through the open cave entrance and provide faint illumination. Otherwise, the caves are in complete darkness.

Noise: The caves are eerily silent. Noises echo a great deal through the tunnels, providing +2 circumstance bonus to Listen checks.

Scorpion Rock Exterior

When the PCs arrive at Scorpion Rock, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Rising from the flat desert expanse is a rock formation reminiscent of a striking scorpion. Scorpion Rock is spoken about only in hushed whispers, as if to mention its name was to call a curse upon oneself. A squat hill forms the scorpion's body, and two man-made mounds form the pincers. An unusual pillar of stone, arched like a scorpion's stinger, rises from behind the hill into the heat-shimmered sky. Before the hill is an altar of stone, surrounded by piles of bleached bones. Behind the altar, a cave leads into the very core of Scorpion Rock. A well-worn trail leads from the altar and winds its way into the hills.

The altar consists of a raised dais, about four feet high and two feet in diameter. Etched into its sides are faded depictions of a beautiful, eyeless woman leaning over cribs and cradling babies in her arms. If anyone studies the etchings, they see that the woman has razor-sharp teeth and sharp claws. PCs making a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check recognize the depicted figure as Lamashtu, the vile demoness responsible for stillborn and deformed children, an entity with a well-known appetite for infants.

The scattered bones are all small in size. Characters making a DC 12 Heal check realize that they are of small children.

The trail leads to Lost Temple of Lamashtu, detailed in Chapter 5.

dervishes assume that the PCs have been weakened by the encounters in the tomb, and thus are overconfident in their ability to defeat the PCs.

If captured, the dervishes can lead the PCs to both Scorpion Rock and the Lost Temple of Lamashtu. The dervishes have a team of 4 camels tied up just outside of the tomb. If released, the camels will also make their way back to Scorpion Rock.

Dervishes, human War1 (4): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8+1, hp 9; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6/18-20, scimitar) or +3 ranged (1d6/x3, short bow); AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +2, Ride +5, Survival +4; Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Scimitar, shortbow with 20 arrows, buckler, 8 sp.



Areas of the Map

Area 4-1 – The Scorpion’s Maw (EL 1): Read or paraphrase the following:

The cave measures about 40 feet long and 30 feet wide. The middle of the cave is rent by a chasm and fallen stone litters the cavern floor. Beyond the chasm, the cave narrows, becoming a tunnel that winds deeper into the earth.

The rocky floor provides unsteady footing for anyone attempting to traverse the cavern. PCs must make a Balance check (DC 15) for every 10 feet traveled. A failed check indicates that a rock shifts underfoot, causing characters to stumble for 1d3 points of nonlethal damage. PCs who stumble are prone and must make a Reflex save (DC 10) or have a foot pinned under the shifted rock, which requires a Strength check (DC 12) to lift.

Creature: As soon as the first PC stumbles or comes within 10 feet of the chasm, a monstrous scorpion climbs free of the rift and attacks.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The familiar shape of a scorpion, this one as large as a pony, appears from the darkness of the chasm. With surprising speed and silence, the creature darts towards you, tail high and pincers raised. You barely have time to ready yourselves before it is upon you.

Tactics: The scorpion is a mindless killer, attacking the closest creature. Once a victim has been seized in its massive pincers, the scorpion will attempt to drag it into the chasm and onto a ledge 20 feet below. The scorpion only uses its sting if it feels threatened.

Treasure: The scorpion doesn’t keep treasure, but the remains of a prior victim lying upon the ledge provide the PCs with a reward for ending the creature’s menace. There they find a masterwork rapier, a silver earring worth 20 gp, and a +1 dagger.

Medium monstrous scorpion: CR 1; Medium vermin; HD 2d8+4, hp 13; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, claw); Full Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws) and -3 melee (1d4 plus poison, sting); SA constrict, improved grab, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Hide +4, Spot +4.

Constrict (Ex): A monstrous scorpion deals automatic claw damage (1d4+1) on a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): A monstrous scorpion that hits with a claw attack may start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d3 Con.

Area 4-2 – Crypt of the Jackal Giant (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

Thin smoke streamers coil through the air before you, stinging the eyes. It seeps out of thin cracks in the rock at your feet, probably escaping from a volcanic cavern somewhere below. The smell of brimstone makes your head spin and your legs unsteady.

A ledge has been carved out of the rock face to your right, atop which lies a massive corpse. Dried skin stretches across a powerful frame easily eight feet in height, and the creature’s jackal-like head is twisted by the grim smile of death, sharp teeth protruding from pulled back lips.

The smoke is noxious and nauseating. Characters must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) or spend the next 1d4 rounds doubled over in sickness. All characters suffer a -2 penalty to all checks and attack rolls while in the chamber and for 1d10 rounds after exiting.

Creature: The petrified corpse is ancient in origin, predating human habitation in the region and representing an unheard of and quite possibly extinct race of humanoid. If the corpse is disturbed in any fashion, it animates as a zombie and attacks.

Tactics: Though mindless, the zombie is relentless in its desire to destroy the living. Using its find prey ability, it will pursue and track those who woke it from its peaceful slumber, fighting until destroyed. In combat, the zombie does little more than pummel opponents into submission, relying on brute strength to defeat its foes.

Jackal-headed zombie: CR 3; Large undead; HD 8d12+3, hp 55; Init -2; Spd 40 ft. (can’t run); AC 15, touch 7, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +4; Grp +14; Atk/Full Atk +9 melee (1d8+9, slam); SA find prey; SQ damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +6; Str 23, Dex 6, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Feats: Toughness.

Find Prey (Ex): This zombie unerringly tracks those who awake it, as though guided by *discern location* as cast by an 8th-level cleric.

Area 4-3 – A Tight Squeeze: Read or paraphrase the following:

At first, it looks as if the tunnel simply ends in a bare rock face. Then you notice the small, narrow opening behind a fold in the rock. It looks barely wide enough for an average-size human to squeeze through on hands and knees.

Tiny-sized characters can pass through this cleft easily enough, but larger PCs must make a series of Escape Artist checks to pass. Characters who fail a check become stuck and must make a second check at +5 to free themselves by backing out. If this also fails, the character is fully trapped and may only be freed by the assistance of others.

To maneuver into the opening, characters must first squeeze their heads and shoulders in first, then twist their hips. This requires a DC 10 Escape Artist check. The tunnel begins fairly straight, but soon it begins to twist and turn at crazy angles through the rock. Negotiating these turns requires a DC 15 Escape Artist check. After this, the tunnel shrinks in size so that the character must crawl forward on his stomach, all the while his back and sides scraping against rough-hewn rock. This requires a DC 18 Escape Artist check to navigate. Small creatures get a +2 circumstance bonus. Of course, PCs have as much time as they like and are free (even expected) to take 20 on these checks.

After passing this final obstacle, the PC emerges in a small cave, no more than eight feet in diameter and perhaps five feet in height. Here, a spring bubbles from the rock to create a small pool of water.

Development: Drinking from the pool grants the ability to withstand desert heat for 24 hours, per *endure elements*, and heals 1d8 points of damage. Additionally, PCs can choose to trade 500 XP for a specific supernatural ability, dictated by their character class, per the *permanency* spell. Monks, fighters, barbarians and rangers gain the advantage of *magic fang* (+1 enhancement bonus on attack and damage rolls for unarmed strike); rogues, paladins, and druids gain *resistance* (+1 bonus on saves); wizards and sorcerers acquire *detect magic*; while clerics and bards receive the ability to *comprehend languages*. The ability lasts for a total of 1 month. The ability can be gained only once, and cannot be stacked.

The pool is magical and naturally occurring. Attempts to bottle the water or otherwise take it from the pool fail; it instantly transforms into worthless sand.

Area 4-4 – Scorpion Swarm (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

The tunnel is interrupted by a deep pit that stretches 20 feet across and 30 feet into the darkness below. The shadows at the bottom of the pit seem to waver and reflect glimmers of light, as if the pit ends in a watery pool. At one time, a rope bridge extended across the void, but now only the fragile remains dangle uselessly from the other side.

The walls here are rough and irregular, making it possible for PCs to climb across the chasm with a DC 15 Climb check. PCs may consider sending a character across to secure one or more lengths of rope to the bottom of the bridge so that it can be hauled up and re-tied. The bridge needs to be secured with a successful DC 10 Use Rope check to ensure its strong enough to support their weight (the PC can take 10 on this roll if he wishes). Even then, the PCs face a dilemma: the first five feet of boards have long since rotted away.

Characters can jump the span of rotted boards with a successful DC 10 Jump check (a standing long jump, as getting a running start of 20 feet is not possible). However, with every PC that does so, there is a 3-in-6 chance (1-in-6 for Small characters, 5-in-6 for Large) that the rotted boards give way and drop the PC into the pit below. PCs can instead choose to shimmy across the rope, requiring a DC 10 Climb check.

However they get across the first five feet, crossing the rest of the rotted and swaying bridge requires a DC 10 Balance check; a failure by 5 or more indicates that the PC has fallen into the pit.

Creatures: A swarm of scorpions, thousands in number, live at the bottom of the pit. Any PC falling into the pit is immediately swarmed by the deadly scorpions.

Treasure: The companions of the adventurer who fell victim to the monstrous scorpion in area 4-1 lie at the base of the pit beneath the carpet of scorpions. Besides a few bones, all that is left is a *potion of cure moderate wounds* in a metal flask, a +1 *light crossbow* with 10 bolts, two long swords, a suit of chain mail, and a total of 50 gp and 80 sp.

Scorpion swarm: CR 4; Diminutive vermin (swarm); HD 9d8-9, hp 31; Init +4; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +6; Grp -; Atk (2d6 plus poison, swarm); SA distraction, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immune to weapon damage, swarm traits, tremorsense 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 1, Dex

19, Con 8, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Climb +12, Spot +4; Weapon Finesse.

Distraction (Ex): Every round, characters within a space occupied by a swarm must make a DC 13 Fortitude save for be nauseated for 1 round.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Con.

Area 4-5 – Slowsilt Cavern (EL 1): Read or paraphrase the following:

An open cavern yawns before you. Sand trickles down from above in fine streams and pools on the ground, creating small dunes that span the length and breadth of the room. Occasionally, the smooth surface of the sand is marred by faint depressions which look like footprints.

The sand is unusually fine and somewhat clingy, almost like mud. Characters making a Survival check (DC 16) realize it is not like any sand that would naturally occur in the region. The sand also gives off a faint magical aura of indeterminate nature. It's actually a rare and dangerous form of sand called slowsilt. Characters entering a field of slowsilt find themselves *slowed*, as per the spell, unless they make a DC 20 Strength check. Characters who fail the check by more than 5 are actually bound in place, unable to lift their feet from the sand's grip.

The footprint-like depressions are actually just natural phenomenon, formed by shifting sand, breezes, or water dripping down from above during the desert's rare rainfalls.

Creature: This cave contains several small crevasses in the ceiling that link to the outside. They cannot be traveled by creatures larger than Tiny, but provide a means by which stirges may come and go. A total of 5 stirges nest in these crevasses, but only 2 are present when the PCs arrive; the rest are off hunting.

Tactics: The stirges are attracted to the sound of creatures thrashing about as they struggle in the sand, so they attack only characters that have actually entered the cave, focusing their attention on the individuals who are most thoroughly trapped by the sand. The stirges have their fill after draining four points of Constitution each, at which time they fly back to the crevasses above to digest their meals.

Development: Enterprising characters might think to collect slowsilt for their own use. A gallon of slowsilt (stored in a clay jug or break-away waterskin, 5 lbs) is as effective as the *slow* spell cast by



an 8th-level sorcerer. Throwing this improvised weapon works like a tanglefoot bag.

Slowsilt: Moderate transmutation; CL 8th; Craft Wondrous Item, *slow*; Price 1,200 gp.

Stirges: CR 1/2; Tiny magical beast; HD 1d10, hp 5; Init +4; Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +1; Grp -11 (+1 when attached); Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (attach, touch attack); SA attach, blood drain; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL N; Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 3, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Hide +14, Listen +4, Spot +4; Alertness, Weapon Finesse.

Attach (Ex): If a stirge hits with a touch attack, it uses its eight pincers to latch onto the opponent's body. An attached stirge is effectively grappling its prey. The stirge loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and has an AC of 12, but holds on with great tenacity. Stirges have a +12 racial bonus on grapple checks.

An attached stirge can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself. To remove a stirge through such grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against the stirge.

Blood Drain (Ex): A stirge drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage in any round when it begins its turn attached to a victim. Once it has dealt 4 points of Constitution damage, it detaches and flies off to digest the meal. If its victim dies before the stirge's appetite has been sated, the stirge detaches and seeks a new target.

Area 4-6 – Doorway of Death (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

The tunnel branches off here. To your right is a dead end, the rock face lined with dozens of spear points, evidence perhaps of some ancient trap. To your left, the tunnel continues for another thirty paces before ending in a stone door. Etched into the door is the image of a female figure with eagle talons for feet and a lioness' head split wide in a ferocious roar. The door's handle rests inside the dark cavity of the toothy mouth.

The door is locked. Any PC that attempts to force the door or who fails in an attempt to pick the lock triggers a trap that causes a hurricane-force wind to erupt from the door's mouth. The wind picks up Medium or smaller creatures and throws them against the spear-lined wall opposite, inflicting 4d6 points of damage. This wind lasts for three rounds.

All creatures may make a Fortitude save (DC 20) each round to keep their footing in the face of the wind. Those within five feet of the door can make a desperate lunge for the handle and attempt to hold on in the face of the windstorm. This requires a Strength check (DC 20) each round until the wind abates. PCs picked up by the wind may try to maneuver themselves towards the intersecting hallway with a Tumble check (DC 20), and then pull themselves into the tunnel with a DC 15 Strength check.

Development: Characters who successfully bypass or disable the trap and pick the lock on the door find themselves emerging through a long-sealed secret door set masterfully into a large mural along the north wall of area 5-13.

Stone Door of Death: 4 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 60; break DC 28; Open Lock DC 25.

Wind Trap: CR 4; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; multiple targets (all creatures in this area); hurricane-force winds (see the DMG) and spears (4d6 damage); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 24.



Chapter 5: Lost Temple of Lamashtu

Many parts of the once expansive complex that is the Lost Temple of Lamashtu (most notably a tower constructed of abyssal rock) have fallen into complete ruin, and even those sections that remain have only been partially re-inhabited by Ssedenska and her minions. The complex consists primarily of two dungeon levels: the first has been taken over largely by dervishes and mortal followers, while the deeper, more sinister tombs and ritual chambers remain the domain of Ssedenska and various timeless, forgotten guardians.

Unless otherwise noted, the dungeons share the following features:

Walls and Ceilings: Passages are smoothly carved and average eight feet in height. Climbing these walls requires a DC 18 Climb check.

Doors: All doors in the dungeon are made of iron-reinforced wood. They tend to swing shut 1d4 rounds after being opened. Unless otherwise noted, they are unlocked.

Iron-Reinforced Wooden Doors: 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 23.

Lighting: The entire complex includes sconces arranged at regular intervals along the walls. On Level 1, these sconces will have lit torches in them as the areas all have humanoid habitation. On Level 2, however, the sconces are empty.

Temple of Lamashtu, Level 1

On Level 1, where there is significant humanoid habitation, indistinct noises typically echo down the hallways. Often times, their sources are difficult to determine as a result of the complex's unusual design; Listen checks have a -2 penalty when attempting to identify noises and their origins. Level 2 is all but silent, with only an occasional ghostly cry piercing the darkness. Try as they might, PCs will never find a source for these mournful cries. They are simply echoes of the torment Lamashtu has put countless women through during her foul existence.

Areas of the Map, Level 1

Area 5-1 – Ruined Tower (EL 1): Read or paraphrase the following:

Before you rises the ruins of a tower, looming wraith-like out of a clinging mist. The tower is cylindrical and made of a smooth, reflective dark stone. Little else can be discerned about its original design, however, as it has long since

collapsed in upon itself, leaving little more than a pile of rubble in its stead.

The tower was once an imposing structure composed of infernal stone transported here by the legions of Lamashtu's demon prince mate. When the two lovers had a falling out, the demon prince collapsed the tower in a fit of spite. The stones are immune to all magic of all kind, making them ideal for fortress walls; only divine power could have undermined them and brought the tower crashing down.

If characters search through the rubble, they may find (with a DC 13 Search check) a narrow seam in the rubble. Climbing down through the rubble leads to remains of the tower's staircase. The spiral stairs lead down to level 2 of the underground temple.

Monster: The crumbled ruins serve as lair for a monstrous scorpion that has been tainted by prolonged exposure to the infernal rock. Its tail ends in a terrible, demonic humanoid head with forked tongue and a grimace of malice. This head bites for the same damage, including poison, as does a normal scorpion's sting.

Tactics: The scorpion attempts to overpower one creature through grapple and poison, then retreat into the depths of the fog-shrouded ruins to devour its prey in privacy.

Development: The abyssal rock negates all spells cast within the area, per the spell *antimagic field*. PCs can only discover this the hard way, through trail and error. Fighting in and amidst the rubble is problematic, as the ground is extremely uneven and occasionally unstable. Each round, characters must make a Balance check (DC 15). A failed check indicates the character has stumbled and is considered prone for the remainder of that round. A check failed by 5 or more indicates that a slab of masonry shifts, dumping the PC into a 10-foot deep cavity. The PC suffers 1d6 points of damage from the fall and must make a Climb check (DC 12) to extricate himself from the cavity.

Making the fight more difficult is the thick mist that clings to the tower and rolls down the hillside. Here, in the tower shell, the mist is thick enough to obscure all vision past five feet (as per *obscuring mist*). A creature five feet away has concealment (attacks have a 20% miss chance), while creatures further away have total concealment (50% miss chance, and the attacker cannot use sight to locate the target). It should be noted that the monstrous scorpion is completely unaffected by the mist because, as with all scorpions, its body is covered in highly sensitive hairs that detect all movement within a 60-foot radius.

Medium monstrous scorpion: CR 1; Medium vermin; HD 2d8+4, hp 13; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, claw); Full Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws) and -3 melee (1d4 plus poison, sting); SA constrict, improved grab, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., vermin traits; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Hide +4, Spot +4.

Constrict (Ex): A monstrous scorpion deals automatic claw damage (1d4+1) on a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): A monstrous scorpion that hits with a claw attack may start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d3 Con.

Area 5-2 – Entrance: Read or paraphrase the following:

About 100 feet from the base of the ruined tower a tunnel is cut into the hillside. The tunnel proceeds on a gentle downward slope under the rusted remains of a portcullis, ending 60 feet later at a heavy wooden door. Six skittish horses are hitched halfway down the corridor, huddled together as if seeking comfort from one another in the face of some unseen danger.

The horses are easily identifiable (DC 10 Knowledge [local]) by breed and tack as belonging to desert dervishes. They are frightened by the unnatural fog, but PCs may well expect some further danger lurking nearby.

A DC 10 Search or Spot check reveals small, round holes in the tunnel ceiling. PCs making a DC 14 Craft (engineering) check will recognize these as being used for depositing burning pitch, acid, or other liquids on approaching enemies. These defenses are no longer operating, but again, the PCs don't know that.

If the PCs intend to make a stealthy approach, they need to keep the horses calm and quiet. This requires a DC 16 Handle Animal check, use of a ranger's wild empathy ability, or a spell such as *calm animal*. On a failed check, the horses begin to neigh, snort, and stomp their hooves with fear and agitation. This has a 30% chance each round of attracting the attention of the dervishes in area 5-3, effectively alerting the temple's denizens to the presence of the PCs.

Area 5-3 – Guard Room (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

A large wooden door blocks the passageway. The lack of dust or accumulated sand suggests heavy traffic has passed through these doors of late, and the sound of raucous laughter emanates from beyond.

PCs making a successful Listen check (DC 10) hear at least two voices (DC 15 tells them the exact number: 3) just beyond, as well as occasionally another voice, deeper in timber and far away. The dervishes are speaking their own guttural form of Common; a Sense Motive check at DC 12 allows the PCs to get the gist of the conversation, which consists of little more than lewd banter. The other voice speaks in Giant (Tarshbak the ogre, from area 5-11); PCs who understand the language hear insults and demands for silence.

Creatures: Three bored dervishes lounge around the room, occupying their time with small talk while passing around a wineskin. The dervishes are surprised if the door's lock is picked and the PCs haven't been so foolish as to announce their presence.

Tactics: As soon as they recover from their surprise, the dervishes defend themselves and attempt to raise an alarm. If outnumbered or obviously outclassed, they will attempt to conduct a fighting retreat to area 5-4, joining up with their fellows to fight a coordinated defense.

Development: There is a 40% chance each round of combat that the occupants of areas 5-4 and 5-11 will be alerted and arrive 1d6 rounds thereafter.

Dervishes, human War1 (3): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8+1, hp 9; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6/18-20, scimitar) or +3 ranged (1d6/x3, short bow); AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +2, Ride +5, Survival +4; Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Languages: Common, Giant.

Possessions: Scimitar, shortbow with 20 arrows, buckler, 8 sp.

Reinforced Wooden Door: 2 in. thick, hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 18; Open Lock DC 18.

Area 5-4 – Barracks (EL 1): Read or paraphrase the following:

A pair of narrow alcoves stand facing each other from across the room, each holding a humanoid figure carved of stone. In one alcove is a representation of a woman with an idealized figure, though her legs end in jackal's feet and her head is that of a fearsome lioness topped by a set of donkey ears. She holds in one hand a snake, and in the other a baby. In the opposite alcove is the figure of a winged demon with raptor claws on both hands and feet. Its head, that of an eagle, lies broken at the statue's feet. Several pallets are scattered about the middle of the room.

If not already called as reinforcements to area 5-3, a pair of dervishes will be found lounging upon the pallets, wearied by a recent patrol.

Dervishes, human War1 (2): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8+1, hp 9; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6/18-20, scimitar) or +3 ranged (1d6/x3, short bow); AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +2, Ride +5, Survival +4; Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Languages: Common, Giant.

Possessions: Scimitar, shortbow with 20 arrows, buckler, 8 sp.

Area 5-5 – Kennels (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

Torchlight illuminates this filthy room. The walls on either side are lined with cells, three per side, each one little larger than a closet. Through the bars, fierce baboon-like creatures hiss, scream and swipe at each other. Dirty straw, animal waste, and dried blood covers the floor. A figure wrapped in black robes cracks a whip at the unruly beasts.

The ape creatures are actually dune beasts, carnivores kept as hunting beasts by the nomadic bands of the wastes. The robed figure is their handler, Jebel.

Tactics: Jebel fights with his longsword while using his whip to release the latches securing the cell doors, releasing the dune beasts to attack the PCs. To successfully release a latch, he must succeed at a melee attack (AC 14). Once released, the dune beasts attack with unbridled ferocity. They do, however, listen to commands issued by Jebel and will call off the assault if he orders it.

Jebel the Beast Handler, human Rgr2: CR 2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 2d8+4, hp 17; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk +4 melee (1d8+2/19-20, longsword) or +4 melee (1d3 nonlethal, whip); Full Atk +0 melee (1d8+2/19-20, longsword) and +0 whip ranged (1d3+2 nonlethal, whip); SA favored enemy (animal), two-weapon combat style; SQ wild empathy; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Handle Animal +5, Hide +4, Knowledge (geography) +3, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Ride +7, Spot +5, Survival +6; Animal Affinity, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Track.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Padded armor, longsword, whip, black robes, coil of rope (50').

Dune Beasts (6): CR 1; Medium magical beast; HD 2d10+2, hp 13 each; Init +2; Spd 40 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+3 plus dehydration, bite); SA dehydration; SQ improved tracker, lowlight vision, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Listen +3, Spot +8; Alertness.

Improved Tracker (Ex): Dune beasts use Spot checks instead of Survival checks to follow their quarry's trail.

Dehydration (Ex): The saliva of a dune beast carries a powerful poison that causes the victim to suffer terrible dehydration. The poison takes 1d4 minutes to take effect, dealing 1d6 points of nonlethal damage and causing the victim to become exhausted. A successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) halves the damage and reduces the exhaustion to fatigue. The subject must make an additional Constitution check each hour to avoid nonlethal damage until he drinks at least a liter of fresh water.

Area 5-6 – Collapsed Tunnel (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

You find yourself standing on the edge of a pit, the tunnel having collapsed into a heap of blocks, rock, and dirt 20 feet below. The pommel of an ornately crafted sword sticks out of the debris below, and nearby a skeletal arm outreached, as if to take up the ancient blade. At one time the tunnel likely continued past this point as well, but it seems that whatever upheaval created this sinkhole also caused the tunnel beyond to crash in upon itself.

Climbing down to the base of the sinkhole requires a DC 13 Climb check. Once there, characters can

examine the sword, a +1 *keen longsword*. The skeletal arm is all that remains of a dervish chieftain who displeased Ssedenka. She took pleasure in watching him scream as the ankheg lurking just below the debris took his life.

Monster: The ankheg still lurks below the sand, waiting patiently for another victim to fall into its grasp.

Development: A Search check (DC 15) reveals a partially concealed hole partially hidden behind a stone block that passes through the collapsed wall of area 5-6 and on to level 2 of the temple.

Ankheg: CR 3; Large magical beast; HD 3d10+12, hp 28; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 9, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +3; Grp +12; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (2d6+7 plus 1d4 acid, bite); SA improved grab, spit acid; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Listen +6, Spot +3; Alertness, Toughness.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, an ankheg must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If the ankheg is damaged after grabbing its prey, it retreats backward down its tunnel at its land speed (not its burrow speed), dragging the victim with it.

Spit Acid (Ex): 30-ft. line, once every 6 hours; damage 4d4 acid, Reflex DC 14 half. One such attack depletes the ankheg's acid supply for 6 hours. It cannot spit acid or deal acid damage during this time.

Area 5-7 – Antechamber (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

A fierce-looking half-orc, square-featured and sallow-skinned, squats before a small brazier, dropping tea leaves into a boiling pot. His hair is combed over to the opposite side of his gray-ing head, and his eyebrows curl up like dried worms. A large scimitar hangs across his back, and the way he moves suggests that he knows well how to use it.

The scimitar-wielding warrior is Mansooth, the eunuch bodyguard and servant to a drakon emissary (located in area 5-8). He enjoys many privileges and has been given the honor of overseeing his master's concubines, so Mansooth is utterly loyal...unto death if so required.

Tactics: Mansooth is solely concerned with protecting his master. While he may have little hope against defeating a full party of adventurers, he

nonetheless stands his ground resolutely, refusing to back down or surrender. He pulls arrows from his body and throws them back at the PCs in defiance; he ignores painful wounds without even the hint of a scream; and even disarmed he continues to fight with his bare hands. The only way he heroes will get past this dedicated warrior is by stepping over his corpse.

Mansooth, male half-orc War2: CR 1; Medium humanoid (half-orc); HD 2d8+2, hp 15; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d10+3/18-20, two-handed scimitar); AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +3, Jump +3, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +2, Listen +1, Spot +1; Alertness.

Languages: Common, Drakon.

Possessions: Two-handed scimitar, leather armor, cooking gear.

Area 5-8 – The Emissary (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

This opulent room stands out in stark contrast from the remainder of the dungeon. Candles burn atop tall silver candle holders, an ornately woven rug covers the floor with satin pillows strewn about, and a small altar to some serpentine deity stands off to the side. A man abruptly stands from a kneeling position before the altar. Tall, gaunt, hook-nosed, with sharply angled eyes and a pencil-thin moustache that dangles nearly to his collarbone – the man has the distinct look of a vulture. He glares at you with yellowed eyes and raises a hand to reveal a snake-headed wand of gold.

This room serves as temporary quarters for an emissary from the drakon, a humanoid race of serpentine ancestry. He has been dispatched to open dialogue with Ssedenka with the goal of forming an alliance against humans and other races of good. In fact, his people view this strange snake-woman as an omen from the gods that the day of humanity's downfall is near at hand. It is a day Sasserine, the emissary, genuinely looks forward to.

Sasserine's odd heritage isn't immediately recognizable in the shadowy gloom and in the chaotic flurry of combat, but as soon as he is defeated it becomes plain. The skin along his neck, arms and temples is covered in a patina of fine scales; his tongue is long, slender, and forked, and his perfect white teeth include a set of hooked fangs.

Tactics: Sasserine begins combat by firing his fang wand at the most powerful looking hero. He

reserves his charming gaze ability for a mages or clerics, if present, hoping to turn them into mental pawns and use their spell-casting abilities in his favor. Sasserine does his best to avoid melee combat; he finds it barbaric and dislikes the taste of human blood.

Treasure: In addition to what he carries on his person, Sasserine has brought treasure to buy an alliance between his people and Ssedenka. The treasure takes the form of 5 gems worth 100 gp each. The gems are sewn into one of the silk pillows and requires a DC 20 Search check to locate unless PCs specifically rip apart the pillows. Many of the items in the room are of value as well. The silk pillows would fetch 25 gp, the rug a similar amount, and the silver candle holders 10 gp apiece (there are 12 in total).

Sasserine, male brightvenom drakon: CR 2; Medium monstrous humanoid (reptilian); HD 3d8+3, hp 16; Init +5; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d4 plus poison, bite); SA charming gaze, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft., deceive; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +4, Climb +8, Hide +2, Knowledge (arcane) +2, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +3, Spot +4, Swim +8; Alertness, Improved Initiative.

Languages: Common, Drakon.

Possessions: Wand of magic missile (1st) with 15 charges, 100 gp, silk robes.

Deceive (Su): Once per day, a brightvenom drakon can assume the appearance of a human, elf, or half-elf of the same height and weight as itself. The effect resembles the *disguise self* spell and lasts for 1 hour per character level. The brightvenom drakon gains a +10 bonus on Disguise checks when the ability is used to effect a disguise.

Charming Gaze (Su): As *charm person*, 30 feet, Will DC 13 negates.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

Area 5-9 – Storage: Read or paraphrase the following:

The door creaks open to reveal a room cloaked in cobwebs and dust. A well-worn path has been cut through the dust to the nearest corner, in which numerous crates, barrels, saddlebags, and sacks have been stacked. On the far wall, barely visible through the shroud of dust and webs, is some sort of carved inscription.

Treasure: This room contains goods stolen by the dervishes from travelers and poorly protected caravans.

The trove includes 6 boxes of candles, each holding 100 candles (worth 6 gp); two barrels of decorated clay jugs wrapped in straw, with 20 per barrel (worth 16 sp); two barrels of common wine (worth 40 gp); 7 empty saddlebags (each worth 4 gp); a crate with 10 light hammers (each worth 1 gp); 4 sacks, each with a week's trail rations (worth 14 gp); and a small locked box (1 in. thick, hardness 5; hp 1; break DC 17; Open Lock DC 20) with 3 flasks of alchemists fire (worth 20 gp each). Note that if the last box is broken open, there is a 50% chance each that the flasks will be broken in the process.

Area 5-10 – Well Room (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

The only feature of interest in this room is an old well made of cut stones piled in a circle with an open top. A two foot length of frayed rope dangles uselessly from its side, the bucket nowhere to be seen.

Monsters: The well plunges 60 feet before it hits water. The inhabitants of the complex aren't able to make use of the valuable resource because the underground lake has recently become the home of a large and vicious subterranean octopus. The terrible creature crawled up from the unknown depths, drawn by the lure of easy prey. Any time a bucket is sent down to retrieve water, the territorial beast destroys it and shreds the rope.

Tactics: The octopus has developed a taste for human flesh and aggressively stalks humans. The octopus will actually climb the rough hewn walls of the well, bracing its tentacles against the sides for support. It lurks there, awaiting someone curious enough to approach the well. If it manages to grab hold of a victim, it drops back into the water, pulling its victim with it (opposing Strength checks).

Subterranean Octopus: CR 2; Medium animal (aquatic); HD 3d8+3, hp 13 each; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +5; Atk +6 melee (0, arms); Full Atk +6 melee (0, arms) and +0 melee (1d4+1, bite); SA improved grab; SQ ink jet lowlight vision; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 3.

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Escape Artist +12, Hide +8, Listen +3, Spot +3, Swim +11; Improved Grapple, Weapon Focus (arms).

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a subterranean octopus must hit an opponent of any size with its arms attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and automatically deals bite damage.

Ink Cloud (Ex): A subterranean octopus can



emit a cloud of jet-black ink 10 feet high by 10 feet wide by 10 feet long once per minute as a free action. The cloud provides total concealment, which the subterranean octopus normally uses to escape a losing fight. All vision within the cloud is obscured.

Jet (Ex): A subterranean octopus can jet backward once per round as a full-round action, at a speed of 200 feet. It must move in a straight line, but does not provoke attacks of opportunity while jetting.

Area 5-11 – Tarshbak's Domain (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

A heady smell, like that of animal waste and unwashed bodies, clings to the air here. The chamber is barren of furnishings, save for a mass of discolored pillows in one corner and a large amphora. Chained to the wall beside the foul bed and gagged for silence is a bruised and disheveled woman, tears streaking her dirt-stained face and her eyes wide in terror.

Monster: This room is the personal bedchamber of Tarshbak, a runt of an ogre who has risen to a position of leadership among the dervishes due to his unusual cunning. He lies in ambush, clinging to the wall above the doorframe, ready to pounce on the unwary after they pass below. PCs need to make Spot checks opposed by Tarshbak's Hide skill to see him before the ambush is sprung.

Tarshbak uses his strength and cunning to bully his way to a position of authority over his fellows and now leads the group of dervishes that has placed its bets with an allegiance to Ssedenka. The imprisoned woman is Tarshbak's current plaything, a merchant's wife named Sedila who was captured in a

raid upon a passing caravan only a fortnight ago. The amphora is half-full of watered-down wine, bland and not particularly valuable.

Tactics: Despite his great strength (compared to the rest of the dervishes) and considerable skill in combat (even among his own kind), Tarshbak has learned the best way to stay alive is through caution. He prefers to sneak up behind enemies already engaged in combat or to lie in ambush. If reduced to less than 5 hit points, Tarshbak attempts to flee and will scatter caltrops in his wake to slow pursuit.

Development: If Tarshbak is here and alerted when the PCs arrive, he'll be poised above the door ready to pounce. Sedila will attempt to alert the PCs to his presence by nodding her head in his direction. PCs can make a Sense Motive check (DC 10) to understand her meaning.

Tarshbak, male ogre: CR 3; Large giant; HD 4d8+4, hp 22; Init -1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 13, touch 8, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +10; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+3, heavy mace); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 17, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +2, Climb +8, Hide +0, Intimidate +2, Listen +3, Spot +3; Persuasive, Weapon Focus (heavy mace).

Possessions: Heavy mace, caltrops, 30 gp.

Area 5-12 – Secret Prison (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

Through the darkness, you see chains dangling from large iron rings embedded deeply in the cold stone. Struggling fiercely against his confinement is an emaciated figure with dull mustard-color skin, a lizard-like head, and twin horns protruding from just above sunken, beady eyes. Iron spikes pin his moth-like wings to the wall behind him, chains ending in great iron balls weigh down arms and legs.

The creature trapped here is Chersil Keres, a half-fiend sorcerer/fighter sent here millennia ago by his infernal master to uncover the machinations of Lamashtu. He was captured, imprisoned, and forgotten. The chains are inscribed with arcane symbols that prevent outsiders from using their natural magical abilities (similar to *magic circle against chaos*). They are also animated constructs, made of iron with a hardness of 10.

Tactics: The chains animate and attack anyone who approaches within five feet of the captive. They are bound to the wall, however, and therefore have no freedom of movement. Intelligent players can take advantage of this flaw to defeat them handily.

Development: Chersil begs to be released, offering riches in return (a promise which, in typical infernal manner, he has no ability or desire to follow through with). If freed from his centuries-long imprisonment, read the following:

“My thanksssss, my eternal thanksssss,” the prisoner says, a forked tongue sliding between razor sharp teeth. “I will not participate in a charade, I of course hail from the regionssss you would call the Abysssss. It’s ssssimply ssssplendid that you came when you did. I sssshudder to think of another millennia in such ssssolitude.” He begins filing long, eagle-like talons on the rough stone work. “Imagine if ssssomehow you were imprisssioned here. Ssssurely, you would catch your death. And that would be most unfortunate.”

Satisfied with his newly groomed talons, the figure smiles and stalks towards you, his movement that of a predator. “My friendsssss call me Cherssil the assssassss. My enemiiesss don’t call me anything; they never get the opportunity. You’ve done me a great sssservice. My masssster, the Lord of the All Above, Masssster of the Infernal Aerie, Ssssovereign of Ssswarmss, ssssent me to this temple many, many yearsss ago to complete hisss work. Hissss mistreesss, a foul witch named Lamassshtu, betrayed my lord’s trust and for that sssshe was sssstripped of her title and imprisssioned. I was sssent here to sssee that her cult wasss desssstroyed, her power erased. I wasss – thiss isss mosst embarasssing to sssay – I wasss captured before my work was complete.”

Chersil will not accompany the characters. His first priority is to return to his abyssal realm, and will use his *gate* ability as soon as he has questioned the PCs about the current status of Lamashtu’s cult. If he is convinced that the interests of the PCs coincide with those of his master, Chersil will use his spells to reinforce the characters, casting *resistance* and *mage armor* upon PCs, but immediately after leaves them to their own devices.

Chersil Keres, male half-fiend Ftr2/Sor2: CR 5; Medium outsider; HD 2d10+2d4-4, hp 17; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +3; Grp +3; Atk +6 melee (1d4, claw); Full Atk +6 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and +3 melee (1d6, bite); SA smite good, spells, spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 15; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 9, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +6, Concentration +3, Gather Information +4, Hide +6, Intimidate +4, Move Silently +6, Sense Motive +2; Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Draconic.

Sorcerer Spells Known (save DC = 12 + spell level; caster level 2; 6/5): 0 – *daze, detect magic, disrupt undead, read magic, resistance*; 1st – *mage armor, true strike*.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day – *darkness*; 1/day – *desecrate, gate*. Caster level 4th.

Animated Chains (4): CR 2; Medium construct; HD 2d10+20, hp 31; Init +0; Spd -; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, slam); SA constrict; SQ darkvision 60 ft., hardness 10, low-light vision, construct traits; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -5; Str 12, Dex 10, Con -, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Constrict (Ex): The chain deals 1d6+3 damage with a successful grapple check against Large or smaller creatures.

Area 5-13 – Hall of Horrors: Read or paraphrase the following:

The room before you is barren save for frescoes depicting scenes of torture and death. An uneasiness paired with a sense of impending doom settles over you and your companions.

This chamber's purpose is two-fold. First, it serves as a defense against the uninitiated making their way into the holy chambers below. Secondly, it hardens acolytes with visions of the abyss and the hell that awaits them there.

The frescoes in this chamber are enchanted with a permanent *fear* effect cast by a 5th-level sorcerer. PCs who fail a DC 15 Will save by more than 5 are overwhelmed as images of horror and pain bombard their senses. These PCs fall into a catatonic coma lasting 10 minutes per point by which they missed the save (i.e., if the character misses his Willpower save by 5 points, he is out for 50 minutes). A catatonic character cannot be awakened by any means short of dispelling the effect. This is not a *sleep* effect, so elves are not immune.

Secret Door: A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Search check or a DC 30 Spot check notices a secret door skillfully concealed within the frescoes. This door only opens from the other side, so characters wishing to go through it must batter it down. If they succeed, they find that it leads into the depths of Scorpion Rock, area 4-6.

Stone Secret Door: 4 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 60; break DC 28.

Temple of Lamashtu, Level 2

The second level of the temple is infused with a necromantic aura which saps the vitality of good-aligned characters. Indeed, the aura seems to feed on blood; wounds remain open and continue to bleed despite efforts to staunch the flow. PCs wounded by slashing or piercing weapons lose 1 additional hp per round per wound. Closing a wound requires a Heal check (DC 15) or the use of a *cure* spell. GMs should record all hp lost in this manner, adding them to the hp pool in area 5-17.

The source of this malediction is a bloody altar found in area 5-17. Destroying the altar removes this unholy curse.

Apart from the necrotic curse, the second level of the dungeon shares all the features of level 1.

Areas of the Map, Level 2

Area 5-14 – A Watery Grave (EL 5, 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

The walls of this round, dome-ceiled room are decorated with faded mosaics. Though the details are unclear, what's apparent is chilling: infants being killed in various ways. Besides the doors, one each on the east and south walls, the only item of interest in this room is a single, ornately-carved pillar in the center of the room depicting people performing mundane tasks from harvesting crops to sleeping cozily in their beds. Coiled around the entire pillar, as if to crush all of civilization, is a massive marble snake. A cold feeling of unease overcomes you as you survey this room.

The mosaic imagery on the walls acts as a *cause fear* spell; characters entering must make a Will save (DC 14) or be shaken for 1d4 rounds. Even those who succeed at the save are shaken for one round.

This room serves as a bulwark against intruders, and is nothing more than an elaborate trap. The PCs can bypass the trap simply by knowing (or guessing) the correct door to use.

Trap: The east door is a fake, serving only as a trigger for the chamber's trap. As soon as this false door is touched, stone walls slide down over the north and south doors, sealing the room. At the same time, a hidden drain connected to an underground lake opens up and begins to pour water into the room. The water rises six inches every round, so that in 20 rounds the 10-foot-high room is completely flooded. Drains slowly leach the water away at a rate of one foot every five minutes; the room

empties in 30 minutes, and the stone walls retract into the ceiling.

Once the room begins flooding, a successful DC 16 Disable Device check can stop the flooding. Alternately, a DC 23 Strength check permits a hero to lift one of the stone walls, permitting her companions to pass beneath to safety (or simply permitting the water to escape without filling the chamber).

Creature: As the trap is triggered, the snake coiled around the pillar animates, transforming into a live flesh-and-blood snake that sheds its marble casing just as a real snake would shed its skin. The serpent attacks for 10 rounds before being magically rebound to the pillar. If the trap is activated again at some later date, the snake animates once more. While the snake is fully alive, it remains elementally bound to the stone pillar and is therefore vulnerable to Earth domain spells. *Soften earth and mud*, for example, eliminates the creature's natural armor (the PCs will note muddy silt leaching from the snake's body); while *stone shape* returns the snake to its inanimate form coiled around the pillar. At the GMs discretion, clerics with the Earth domain may be permitted a Spellcraft check (DC 20) to recognize the creature's vulnerability.

Anaconda: CR 2; Medium animal; HD 3d8+6, hp 19; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d3+4, bite); SA constrict 1d3+4, improved grab; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 17, Con 3, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Climb +14, Hide +10, Listen +7, Spot +7, Swim +11; Alertness, Toughness.

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a constrictor snake deals 1d3+4 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a constrictor snake must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Flood Trap: CR 5; mechanical; touch trigger; automatic reset; multiple targets (all targets in this room); liquid; Search DC 12; Disable Device DC 16.

Area 5-15 – Secret Door and Secret Chamber (EL 4):

This room has not been disturbed in centuries. PCs must succeed on a Search check (DC 15) to find the secret door. This door is opened by stepping twice on a loose flagstone in front of the door, which causes it to slide up into the ceiling. Alternately, the heroes could batter down the door (hardness 5; hp 15).

Read or paraphrase the following:

Though the room is small, no more than 10 feet by 10 feet, the walls are lined with shelves that hold countless books and scrolls. The only other furnishing is a simple study desk and stool.

Many of the books and scrolls crumble to dust as soon as they are touched, or else the words are so badly faded with time that they are now all but illegible. The sum of the library would sell for 500 gp, though an interested buyer may be difficult to come by (perhaps requiring an adventure of its own...). Nevertheless, several notable books stand out among those that have survived:

- A spellbook containing all 1st, 2nd, and 3rd level necromantic spells.
- A wicked tome that holds the bound essence of Amalekite, a babau in the service of Lamashtu. She imparted the services of her assassin to her mortal followers, but thus far none have come forward to demand his fealty. If summoned (a task requiring a successful DC 20 Concentration check), Amalekite is bound to serve for 1 day per caster level, after which time he leaves for the Abyss, intent on freeing his mistress. If the summoner fails the Concentration check, the binding ritual goes awry. Amalekite still appears but is not bound to the summoner's will. The babau laughs contemptuously at the mortals, attempts to gouge out the eyes of the caster for having the gall to gaze upon magic he cannot control, and then immediately leaves for the abyss. Note that employing a demon for any purpose (even to accomplish good deeds) is a wicked act sure to corrupt the souls of good-aligned heroes.

Amalekite, babau: CR 6; Medium outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, evil); HD 7d8+38; hp 66; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +7; Grp +12; Atk +12 melee (1d6+5, claw); Full Atk +12 melee (1d6+5, 2 claws) and +7 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA sneak attack +2d6, spell-like abilities, summon demon; SQ damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to electricity and poison, protective slime, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 14, telepathy 100 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Climb +15, Disable Device +12, Disguise +13, Escape Artist +11, Hide +19, Listen +19, Move Silently +19, Open Lock +11, Search +20, Sleight of Hand +11, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks), Use Rope +1 (+3 with bindings); Cleave, Multiattack, Power Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic.

Sneak Attack (Ex): Amalekite can make a sneak attack like a rogue, dealing an extra 2d6 points of damage whenever a foe is denied his or her Dexterity bonus, or when Amalekite is flanking.

Spell-Like Abilities (Su): At will – *darkness*, *dispel magic*, see *invisibility*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only). Caster level 7th.

Protective Slime (Su): A slimy red jelly coats Amalekite's skin. Any weapon that touches it takes 1d8 points of acid damage from the corrosive goo, and the weapon's hardness does not reduce this damage. A magic weapon may attempt a DC 18 Reflex save to avoid taking this damage. A creature who strikes Amalekite with an unarmed attack, unarmed strike, touch spell, or natural weapon takes this damage as well but can negate the damage with a DC 18 Reflex save.

Summon Demon (Sp): Once per day, Amalekite can attempt to summon 1 babau with a 40% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 3rd-level spell.

- The final tome was used to bring priests closer to Lamashtu's ideal. After reading the text, characters undergo a painful transformation that causes 1d6 damage and causes the character to become bestial in appearance. Roll on the below table to determine the results:

Roll	Result
1	Ass ears (+1 Listen)
2	Eagle feet (Climb and Balance +1)
3	Lioness head (Intimidate +1, bite attack for 1d6 damage)
4	Snake scales (natural armor +1)
5	Jackal Legs (Move Silently +1)
6	Roll twice.

Additionally, the affected PCs gains a +3 bonus to on Animal Empathy rolls targeting their creature. There are side effects, however. First, afflicted characters suffer -2 to Charisma. Secondly, characters become vulnerable to several spells that are typically targeted only at animals, including *animal trance*, *calm animals*, *charm animal*, *dominate animal*, *hide from animal*, and *hold animal*. A character can only read the book once. The effects are permanent and can only be removed by *remove curse*, *limited wish*, *wish* or *miracle* spell.

Trap: The first and third volumes listed above are each trapped with a *fire trap*.

Fire Trap: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; multiple targets (all creatures within a 5-foot-radius);



spell effect (*fire trap*, 8th-level wizard, 1d4+8 damage, DC 14 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29.

Area 5-16 – Crypt (EL 3, Variable): Read or paraphrase the following:

The ceiling of this 30-foot-high chamber is supported by carved pillars decorated with arcane runes, scenes of plagues and blighted crops, and images of snakes entwining and cavorting with naked women. A shallow pool filled with milky red liquid sits in the center of the room. Opposite is another door.

Though it looks like anything but, this room is actually a crypt to Lamashtu's priestesses of yesteryear. The mummified bodies are hidden within the pillars themselves, standing erect in upright spaces measuring three feet deep and wide and six feet high. Flies buzz around inside the crypts, despite the fact that the crypts have been sealed for centuries. Each crypt requires a DC 20 Search check to locate and a DC 15 Strength check to open. There are six pillar-crypts in total, but only three are occupied.

The pool contains unholy water.

Trap: The pillars are both tomb and trap. Stepping into the room triggers a pressure plate that magnetizes the lodestone pillars, forcibly drawing on all iron-based metal objects within a 12-foot-radius. Any creature wearing or carrying iron-based equipment is pulled towards the pillar at great speed; those failing DC 20 Strength checks crash into the pillar, suffering 1d6 falling damage. If the iron item is merely being held, the holder must also make a DC 20

Strength check to prevent the item from tearing free of his grasp and smashing against the pillar.

Creatures: The crypts contain female priestesses, embalmed in an unholy ritual and wrapped in flayed human skin. Each one grips a primitive axe called a biliong, the distinctive preferred weapon of Lamashtu and her cultists (see sidebar for details). When a priestess of Lamashtu dies, the worn and bloodied head of her weapon is replaced with a new one crafted of gold. As a result, the bilions represent a tempting prize for PCs. Unfortunately, as soon as a crypt's seal is broken, the corpse animates as a mummy.

When a mummy springs to 'life,' a cloud of flies emerges from its mouth and swarms agitatedly around it. No ordinary flies, these are infernal insects sent by Lamashtu's former mate to defile her followers in death and ensure they did not revive to restore her influence. They've been feeding on the mummies for centuries, leaving them little more than hollow, vulnerable shells. Any blow to a mummy with a bludgeoning weapon inflicts double damage.

Additionally, the flies inflict 1d4 points of damage to the mummies each round, and serve to blind them (-4 to all attack rolls) as they crawl into empty eye sockets. The flies ignore all other creatures completely.

Tactics: A mummy begins combat by flailing upon the living with its biliong. Each round there is a 3-in-6 chance of the strapping rotting away and the axe head falling out of its fitting. The mummy is considered flat-footed that round. After that, the mummy attacks with arms outstretching, attempting to crush the enemy beneath its mighty fists.

Treasure: The golden bilions are worth 75 gp. In addition, the priestesses wear bejeweled phylacteries made of gold (worth 600 gp each), which are actually *blood phylacteries*, minor magical items (see area 5-17 for details).

Biliong

The biliong is an ancient tool of war and is the preferred weapon of Lamashtu's followers. It features a square iron blade fitted into a large wooden handle. The handle is typically carved in the likeness of a fierce animal to infect its victims with terror. The total length of the weapon is 21 inches.

Medium martial weapon; Cost 6gp; Damage 1d6; Critical x3; Range Increment –; Weight 15 lbs; slashing.

Rotted Mummies (3): CR 3; Medium undead; HD 8d12+3; hp 25; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +4; Grp +11; Atk/Full Atk +11 melee (1d6+7/x3, biliong) or +11 melee (1d6+7 plus mummy rot, slam); SA despair, mummy rot; SQ darkvision 60 ft., undead traits, vulnerability to fire; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 24, Dex 10, Con –, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Hide +7, Listen +8, Move Silently +7, Spot +8; Alertness, Great Fortitude, Toughness.

Despair (Su): At the mere sight of a mummy, the viewer must succeed on a DC 16 Will save or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds. Whether or not the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by the same mummy's despair ability for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Mummy Rot (Su): Supernatural disease – slam, Fortitude DC 16, incubation period 1 minute; damage 1d6 Con and 1d6 Cha. The save DC is Charisma-based. See the MM for details on mummy rot.

Lodestone Pillar Trap: CR 3; location trigger; automatic reset; Strength check DC 20 resists; multiple targets (all targets in a 12-foot-radius); 12 foot fall (1d6 damage); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 24.

Crypt door: 6 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 90; break DC 15.

Area 5-17 – Hall of Blood (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

You and your companions are dwarfed by the immensity of the hall before you. Tall, intricately carved pillars support the roof some 30 feet above. Metal cages, some containing skeletal denizens, dangle from a latticework of beams crisscrossing the ceiling. A pedestal rises from the center of the room, atop which hovers a glob of crimson encased in a thin, vein-lined membrane. There is an oppressive feeling to this room, and the cold stone weeps beads of moisture.

Three female dervishes, women who fell under the sway of Ssedenka, lurk among the latticework. These women have trained themselves in the fighting arts and have honed their bodies into deadly weapons.

Tactics: The women are identical and try to confuse enemies by initially attacking one at a time. They tumble through the party, attacking spellcasters and heroes with ranged weapons before retreating to a safe distance. They use the hall to their advantage, ducking behind the pillars and try-

ing to get the PCs to split up, before using their Jump skill to retreat into the shadowy confines of the latticework above.

Development: The altar is both a grotesque homage to Lamashtu and a powerful magical relic. The source of the heinous necrotic field that extends across the temple's lower level, the altar also serves as a boon to any characters wearing a *blood phylactery* (Ssedenka, or any PCs wearing a phylactery taken from the mummies in area 5-14) by providing a pool of additional hit points to draw upon. The membrane currently holds 10 hp + any which has been bled from the PCs. As a character wearing a *blood phylactery* draws upon these hit points, the membrane begins to shrink like a deflating bag. These hit points cannot be used to heal wounds, but are expended first whenever a PC wearing a *phylactery* is struck for damage. A *blood phylactery* has a range of 5 miles; if a blood phylactery is taken further than 5 miles from the altar, the connection is forever and irrevocably severed.

Destroying the altar destroys the magical bleeding field, and also eliminates its use as a hit point pool.

Altar of Lamashtu: hardness 8; hp 120, break DC 28.

Ssethno, Euryale, and Gorgana, female human Mnk1 (3): CR 1; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8+5, hp 13; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +0; Grp +0; Atk +0 melee (1d6, unarmed) or +2 ranged (1d4/19-20, dagger); Full Atk -2/-2 melee (1d6, unarmed) or +2 ranged (1d4/19-20, dagger); SA flurry of blows, unarmed strike; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Balance +6, Climb +4, Hide +6, Jump +4, Move Silently +6, Tumble +6; Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Toughness.

Languages: Common, Draconic.

Possessions: Daggers (4), white robes, sandals, 2 serpent armlets worth 50 gp each.

Area 5-18 – Shrine of Lamashtu (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

A large statue of a shapely woman with a lioness' head, ass's ears, and an eagle's taloned feet dominates this chamber. The foul statue holds a snake in one hand and cradles a dog to her chest with the other. A dozen or so forms wrapped tightly in yellowed fabrics and positioned in fetal positions lie strewn about the statue's foot. Thick dust obscures the walls and floors, yet no trace of decay touches the corpses. A single rough-hewn stone stands off to the right, its face covered with ancient sym-

bols resembling snakes, blood oozing from its cracked surface.

The statue is dedicated to Lamashtu and depicts the demoness in her true form, not the pleasing shape she assumes for her mortal followers. Centuries ago, she was banished by her demon lord lover for her treachery, and since that time she has languished in an infernal prison. Lamashtu was able to retain influence on the Material Plane by infusing some of her essence into this very statue. As a result, it pulses with her evil. Good or neutral living creatures approaching within 30 feet of the statue feel the palpable evil emanating from it and suffer a -2 penalty to all attacks, saving throws, and skill checks until they leave the area. This is an enchantment (compulsion) mind-affecting effect.

The room is also wrapped in a dark energy that preserves the corpses; this is a powerful magical effect similar to *gentle repose*. Corpses within this room do not rot, remaining viable for all manner of necromantic uses regardless of the passage of time. There are currently 14 corpses in the room. Removing the bandages reveals all the corpses to be of human ancestry, all female, all clutching infants to their chests, and all appearing fresh as if they were only recently slain.

Good or neutral-aligned females who enter the room begin to feel a dark sense of foreboding. Those who come within 10 feet of the statue must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or be compelled to kneel before the standing stone. Those who do so must make a DC 20 Fortitude save or become afflicted by a terrible curse that renders them barren. This can only be cured by *remove curse*, *limited wish*, *wish*, or *miracle*.

If the PCs translate the runes on the upright stone (DC 15 Decipher Script), give the players handout E.

Creature: This sacred chamber is far from unguarded. Over the millennia, countless women have been driven to suicide by the death of their children. The spirits of many of these mothers are trapped within Lamashtu's statue. When non-believers enter, a faint trace of black smoke begins to roil out of the statue's mouth, coalescing in three rounds as an allip. Note that the statue has a near limitless supply of spirits to draw upon; if one allip is slain, another takes its place by next sundown.

Tactics: The allip first reveals itself with a maddening cacophony of babies wailing and sobbing women despairing over the loss of their children. The sound has no immediately discernable source. As soon as its *babble* ability has taken effect, the allip manifests itself and attacks. It thinks nothing of

its own survival and fights until destroyed.

Treasure: A Search check (DC 16) reveals that the snake-head on the statue screws off, revealing a hollowed depression within. Inside are several rolled-up scrolls: a *scroll of augury*, a *scroll of contagion*, a *scroll of remove curse*, and a *scroll of cause fear*.

Secret Doors: There are two secret doors in this room. A DC 15 Search check reveals the first, which opens into area 5-20, a narrow spiral staircase leading to area 5-22. The other door can be found with a DC 20 Search check. This secret door opens into a tight vertical shaft that descends via a metal spiral staircase. It exits into area 5-19.

Development: Destroying Lamashtu's influence in the temple is worthy of a sizable reward. To do so, one must cleanse the chamber of evil with holy water (500 gp worth), and cast both *consecrate* and *hallow* spells. Finally, the statues must be toppled. As soon as this is completed, a swarm of allips erupt from the statue and flee into the world. Everyone in the chamber is assaulted by 1d4 allips each round for three rounds before the undead flee, leaving the chamber in silence. The power of Lamashtu has been struck a serious blow, for which the PCs should receive a 1,000 XP group story reward. Good-aligned clerics and paladins earn an additional 250 XP each for their efforts.

Allip: CR 3; Medium undead (incorporeal); HD 4d12; hp 26; Init +5; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp -; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d4 Wisdom drain, incorporeal touch); SA babble, madness, Wisdom drain; SQ darkvision 60 ft., incorporeal traits, +2 turn resistance, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +4; Str -, Dex 12, Con -, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Hide +8, Intimidate +7, Listen +7, Search +4, Spot +7, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks); Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.

Babble (Su): An allip constantly mutters and whines to itself, creating a hypnotic effect. All sane creatures within 60 feet of the allip must succeed on a DC 16 Will save or be affected as though by a *hypnotism* spell for 2d4 rounds. This is a sonic mind-affecting compulsion effect. Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same allip's babble for 24 hours.

Madness (Su): Anyone targeting an allip with a thought detection, mind control, or telepathic ability makes direct contact with its tortured mind and takes 1d4 points of Wisdom damage.

Wisdom Drain (Su): An allip causes 1d4 points of Wisdom drain each time it hits with its incorporeal touch attack. On each such successful attack, it gains 5 temporary hit points.

Area 5-19 – Bone Reliquary and Ritual Room (EL 1): Read or paraphrase the following:

The plaintive cries of a wailing baby reach your ears. Following the heart-wrenching sound into a small room, you are horrified to see the terrified infant strapped to a flat, stone block. At the child's head and feet are skulls, each one topped by a flickering wicker candle. As the candles burn down, the flames grow brighter and the child screams louder. The floor of the room is littered with small humanoid bones lying ankle-deep, evidence of the sheer number of children sacrificed to some heinous deity. The horror of this room repulses you, but the desperate cry of the baby steels your resolve to act.

Ssedenka discovered an obscure ritual that allows her to destroy her enemies from afar, and this is where she performs it. The two necessary components are the *blaze bone* and the infant child of the intended victim. She considers it delicious irony that the very tradition that protects the nobles of Khemair from Lamashtu's evil – that of leaving babies to die in the desert – leaves them vulnerable to her own assaults.

Lamashtu as a Deity

Lamashtu is a vile demoness who has fallen from the lofty position of consort to an Abyssal Lord to inmate in an infernal prison. Her power and influence are now just a shadow of what they once were. Nevertheless, there are those who fear her power...and those who embrace it. She preys upon humanity, particularly unborn or newborn babies, and is responsible for misshapen and diseased offspring. In addition, she has also been known to create nightmares, spread illness, blight crops and poison wells. Many common people whisper Lamashtu's name to ward off these evils, unknowingly feeding her power. Some fiendishly-inclined individuals actively worship her as a deity, electing to become her thrall and spreading her vileness throughout the Known World.

Because she is currently imprisoned and out of favor amongst her fellow demons, clerics of Lamashtu are limited to spells of 4th level or less. Her domains include Death, Destruction, Evil, and Trickery. Her favored weapon is the biliong or club. Snakes, donkeys, lions, asses, dogs and apes have all been associated with Lamashtu's cult.

As the PCs enter, Ssedenka's latest ritual is reaching a crescendo. When the candles burn down, the child will perish in a ball of flames, leaving nothing but bones. At the same time, its father will meet a similar fate. To prevent this dual tragedy, the PCs have but four rounds.

Monsters: To prevent the heroes from interfering with the ritual, the bones lying across the floor animate into six small, roughly humanoid forms. They animate as soon as anyone enters the room and return to their natural states once the intruder passes the threshold again or the ritual comes to fruition, whichever is first.

Tactics: The skeletons do anything possible to prevent PCs from interrupting the ritual; indeed, that is their sole purpose. If they outnumber the PCs, they resort to grappling in the hopes that they can overpower the characters and restrain them. Failing that, they simply aim to delay and disrupt the characters for as long as possible.

Development: Moving through the mass of bones, where footing is uneven, slows PCs to 50% of their normal speed. Characters who move forward at full speed must make a Balance or Escape Artist check (DC 12) or stumble, losing the remainder of the round and considered prone. At the same time many of the bones are broken and jaggedly pointed; moving beyond 50% of one's speed results in 1 point of damage each round.

Saving the child is worth 200 experience points. Smart players might do so without ever confronting the skeletons; perhaps by using *mage hand* to knock over the candles or by shooting out the wicks with ranged attacks against an AC 20 target. Such ingenuity should be rewarded, so give the players experience as if they had defeated all six skeletons in combat.

Sadly, the child is malformed. Its legs are twisted and it's unlikely the child will ever be able to walk properly. No resident Khemair will take in the tainted baby, so its fate lies in the hands of the PCs. Healing it requires the casting of both *remove curse* and *restoration*.

Child skeletons (6): CR 1/6; Small undead; HD 1d12, hp 6; Init +6; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +0; Grp -5; Atk +0 melee (1d3-1, claw); Full Atk +0 melee (1d3-1, 2 claws); SQ damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, undead traits; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 9, Dex 15, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Feats: Improved Initiative.

Area 5-20 – Secret Stairs: The secret door to this area requires a Search DC 15 check to find.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The door swings open to reveal a narrow, metal spiral staircase that winds sharply into the rock below. The walls are carved with various arcane sigils – some recognizable as snakes and jackals, others too alien to comprehend.

This staircase leads to area 5-22 and emerges from a pillar.

Area 5-21 – Pit: Read or paraphrase the following:

The tunnel comes to a dead end, the hallway blocked by an impassable wall of rubble. Just before the debris is a dark hole where the floor evidently collapsed, creating a gaping maw that drops into darkness. From the lip of the pit, you see the shadowy outlines of a room 30 feet below. Strangely, the floor seems to undulate and roll in an unsettling fashion.

This pit drops 30 feet into area 5-22, the lair of Ssedenka the Lady Medusa. Safely climbing down into area 5-22 requires a DC 12 Climb check.

Area 5-22 – Coils of the Serpent (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

A carpet of snakes, numbering in the thousands, covers the floor of this chamber. Great pillars reach up the ceiling above, casting deep shadows against the relief-adorned walls. Steps climb to a raised dais, atop which stands a three-foot-tall golden serpent statue surrounded by foul-smelling, greasy candles. A snakeskin rug has been laid out before the statue, presumably where one kneels in benediction to whatever power the serpent represents.

Monsters: This chamber is Ssedenka's personal sanctum. She'll always be found here, laying in wait for the final confrontation with the PCs, though exactly where she begins is determined by how the characters gain access to the room. If they enter via the secret stairs in area 5-20, Ssedenka will be hiding in the shadows behind one of the pillars. If, on the other hand, they enter from the pit in area 5-21, their opponent is within the secret staircase (area 5-20).

The snakes provide another challenge, ruthlessly swarming any non-reptilian creature that enters the chamber.

Appearance: Ssedenka is a classically beautiful woman, and wears a simple white robe, her forearms encased with serpentine armlets of ham-

mered gold. Her face is attractive, though in a brooding way, for her flawless skin is never creased by smile. But while she has undeniably beauty, she is also repulsive at the same time. Hips give way to a snake-like lower torso that writhes and undulates, and her head is topped by a mass of hissing red snakes.

Tactics: Ssedenka is a resourceful combatant, and while she has a strong sense of self-preservation, she is no coward. Indeed, her burning hatred for humanity ensures that she fights ruthlessly and against odds that would cause lesser beings to flee.

Assuming she has time to prepare for a fight, she'll cast *resistance* and *mage armor* upon herself. When she finally enters into combat, she begins with *paralyzing gaze* aimed at the most potent-appearing individual and then *charming gaze* at a spell-caster. Ssedenka avoids melee combat as long as possible, relying upon the power of the *blaze bone* to destroy her enemies. When at last she has no choice, she draws a scimitar and throws herself into hand-to-hand combat. Ssedenka attempts to flee if reduced to less than 10 hit points.

Treasure: The golden snake statue weighs 150 pounds and is worth 1,000 gp.

Ssedenka, the Lady Medusa, female mutant human Sor2: CR 4; Medium monstrous humanoid (reptilian); HD 3d8+6 plus 2d4+4, hp 28; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +4; Grp +5; Atk +5 melee (1d6+1/18-20, scimitar) or +5 melee (1d4+1 plus poison, bite); Full Atk +5 melee (1d6+1/18-20, scimitar) and +0 melee (1d4+1 plus poison, bite); SA charming gaze, constrict, improved grab, poison, spells, stonesskin 1/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., keen senses, resistance to fire +10; AL CE; SV Fort +3 Ref +5 Will +6; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +5, Concentration +7, Hide +3, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Spot +2; Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scimitar).

Languages: Common, Draconic.

Charming Gaze (Su): As *charm person*, 30 feet, Will DC 15 negates.

Constrict (Ex): Ssedenka deals 1d4+1 hit points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, Ssedenka must successfully hit a Large or smaller creature with her bite attack. She can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If she successfully makes the grapple check, she establishes a hold and can then constrict.

Paralyzing Gaze (Su): As *hold person*, 30 feet, Will DC 15 negates.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

Stonesskin (Sp): Once per day, Ssedenka can use *stonesskin* as a spell-like ability as a 7th level caster.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/5, save DC = 12 + spell level): 0 – *detect magic, disrupt undead, ray of frost* (+6 ranged touch), *read magic, resistance*; 1st – *expeditious retreat, mage armor, magic missile*.

Possessions: Scimitar, *blaze bone* with 25 charges, *amulet of stone, blood phylactery*, two serpent armlets worth 50 gp each.

Snake Swarm: CR 2; Tiny animal (swarm); HD 3d8, hp 13; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp -; Atk/Full Atk (1d6 plus poison, swarm); SA distraction, poison; SQ half damage from slashing and piercing, scent, swarm traits; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 4.

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Listen +7, Spot +7; Alertness, Weapon Finesse.

Distraction (Ex): Any living creature that begins its turn with a swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 11 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude save 10, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs defeat Ssedenka, they earn the gratitude of Khemair's ruling council and the town's elite. Countless doors are open to them and wealthy patrons aplenty seek out the heroes. The difficulty of all Diplomacy and Gather Information checks made in the wealthy quarter are reduced by 2. Future adventures can be spun off this association. Ssedenka's plots, though, have made the aristocracy realize just how precarious their position is within Khemair, and if at some point the PCs no longer prove an asset, they will be cast aside...or worse.

Cultists of Lamashtu – of which there are many in Khemair – will hold a grudge against the PCs and harass the party if they remain much longer in the community. If Ssedenka survives, the sorceress bears a life-long enmity towards the heroes; she'll strive to destroy both them and Khemair in the future. Finally, the characters' close association with the privileged classes makes them unpopular among the commoners. While the average peasant is too preoccupied with survival to consider doing the adventurers any harm, they are nonetheless cold and suspicious of their motives. The difficulty of all Diplomacy and Gather Information checks made in the slums rises by 2.

Numerous adventures can be spun off of the events detailed within *Malice of the Medusa*. Here's a small sampling:

- The government is on the verge of toppling. Beset by dervish attack from without, and a seething rebellion from within, it seems just a matter of time before Khemair collapses under the weight of its own corruption. Can the PCs stave off the threat? Should they even try?
- Amalekite the babau returns from the abyss and attempts to secure the PCs' aid in freeing his mistress. In exchange, the demon offers a substantial reward: riches beyond the characters' wildest dreams, power, perhaps even respite from Lamashtu's evil for the entire populace of Khemair. The quest would have to be epic in scope, culminating in a prison-break deep within the Abyss and a showdown with the demon lord that first imprisoned Lamashtu. Can it be done? Can the word of a demon be trusted?
- Sasserine carried a scroll case full of drakon plots in various stages of development. Any of these could lead into an adventure, story-arc, or even a campaign. The drakon are plotters and schemers of the highest order, so one can be sure that their plans are multi-layered, deeply camouflaged, and terrible in their designs.

Additional Experience Point Rewards

The goal of the adventure is to free Khemair's noble of Ssedenka's looming threat. Doing so should be worth a 250 XP group reward. GMs should consider giving out smaller rewards for other results, such as returning with the details of the drakon machinations (100 XP group reward) and 'discovering' the twin tombs of Hotep and Shishak (100 XP group reward). Characters who find a suitable home for the *Staff of Shishak* rather than using it as a personal plaything should be rewarded for their piety with a 500 XP reward.



Appendix I: Khemair

History records that the valley in which Khemair is situated was once lush with deep grasses and thick woods. A thriving settlement took root here, the people growing crops to feed the inhabitants of the resource-poor Ghetrian Wastes and servicing caravans crossing the desert expanse. That all changed when Hotep the Cinderborn, a cruel and vindictive desert king, razed the town to the ground. The fires were magical in nature, blighting the land to this day. Now, the once-green valley is blackened and charred, while the once-fertile soil has been replaced by fields of shifting ash in which nary a blade of grass grows. Even the water, upon which all life depends, has become polluted and foul – drinking it requires a strong stomach or liberal use of purify food and drink spells.

The poor of Khemair, sickly and impoverished commoners, inhabit the base of the valley where the air smells of soot and flash-fires are known to spontaneously rise from the ground. An expanse of hovels perches precariously upon the shifting ash, while a few lucky buildings – taverns, shops and the like – rise like mansions atop rocky knolls. Many of the poor are diseased or malnourished and in dire need of salvation. Unfortunately, none is forthcoming. The town's aristocracy views the masses with fear and suspicion, concerned that the seething resentment that rolls through the Lower Quarter will one day manifest in an organized revolution. Persecution of suspected dissidents and the 'chaos-marked' (those bearing defects of any kind) is becoming increasingly common and harsh.

The wealthy and the noble-born inhabit the lands overlooking the valley. Here the land is free of the blight that has made the area below all but uninhabitable. The soil is rocky and barely arable, but it provides enough sustenance to keep the privileged in good health and the rest alive, if just barely. The community is ruled by a Town Council elected from among the nobility, merchants, and craftsmen; the interests of the Lower Quarter receive no representation in government.

Riin's Desert Outfitters

Oman Riin, a burly man and former drover, operates a small stables and outfitter servicing caravans and other desert travelers. He sells horses and donkeys, wagons, and all manner of tack and harness. In addition, he does blacksmithing and wheelwright duties, and stables animals while their owners are in town. Riin is extremely knowledgeable about desert travel, and while he will no longer venture out into the wastes (for reasons he will not discuss but which surely have to do with the scars that savage his face), he freely offers his advice. Riin is troubled, however, by a dire bat that roosts in the rafters of his stable. He's resolved to kill it several times, but just as he's about to perform the deed he has a change of heart. The funny thing is Riin has no idea why he

doesn't go through with it; he *really does* want the bat gone before it causes his animals any harm.

The Flaming Footprint

A modest inn favored by traders and caravan drovers passing through Khemair, the Flaming Footprint is run by Hobie Dimberry, a sunburned halfling who only recently arrived in Khemair. The inn earned its name from the flaming footprints that mysteriously appear in the floorboards many mornings. Within hours, the prints have faded, leaving the wood unmarred. The phenomenon has existed for decades, but recently took an ominous turn when the footprints appeared before startled patrons and several people were left blistered as an unseen being brushed past them.

Absal Hekau

The Hekaus have enjoyed the lucrative and prestigious position of Lamplighter for five generations, passing down the title and duties from father to eldest son. Absal Hekau is a streetwise gentleman; he's been walking the night streets of the Upper Quarter for nigh on thirty years now, making sure lamps are lit and ensuring no one pilfers the valuable oil, and during that time has developed a strong intuitive understanding of the shadowy goings-on in the city.

Absal is due to turn over the position to his son, but puts off that day as long as possible. He suspects that his son is involved in activities that will bring shame upon the family and will cause them to lose the hereditary Lamplighter position.

The Mill

One of the most powerful and feared persons in Khemair is Inquisitor Caamasi, responsible for rooting out all manner of threats. A deadly warrior and skilled wizard, Caamasi is ruthless and efficient in carrying out her duties. She's also rumored to be insane, often babbling in an ancient tongue. The Inquisitor's other signature trait is a disconcerting nervous twitch that begins in her left eye and moves down the side of her face to her left arm. Inquisitor Caamasi operates out of an imposing stone structure that superficially resembles a fortress. In fact, it had been a gristmill when the valley consisted of golden seas of wheat fields. Rebuilt and reinforced, The Mill is now the center of the upper class's oppression of the poor of Khemair. The water wheel still turns, but today it powers instruments of torture and grindstones that crush the bones of the condemned into dust.

Khemair (Small Town): Conventional; AL N; 800 gp limit; Assets 72,000 gp; Population 2,000; Mixed (96% human, 2% dwarf, 1% halfling, 1% other).

Authority Figures: Inquisitor Caamasi (female Rgr8/Wiz5/Asn3), Theila Muldron, councilwoman (female human lich Wiz10), Rivan Sha, councilman, brother of deceased Amik Sha (male human Ari5), Absal Hekau, lamplighter (human Ari1/Rog1/Ftr2).

Others: City guard, War1 (450); Scarlet Lancers, elite cavalry, Rgr2 (52).

Appendix II: New Monsters

DUNE BEAST

Medium Magical Beast

Hit Dice: 2d10+2 (13 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 30 ft.

Armor Class: 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 11

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+4

Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d6+3 plus dehydration)

Full Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d6+3 plus dehydration)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Dehydration

Special Qualities: Improved tracker, low-light vision, scent

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4

Skills: Climb +10, Listen +3, Spot +8

Feats: Alertness

Environment: Desert

Organization: Solitary or troop 10-40

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 2-3 HD (Medium)

The creature resembles a baboon, but even a brief glance reveals that it is not – or is perhaps no longer – an ape. Its face is simian, with a broad drooling mouth filled with large teeth, while two large orbs that gleam like burning embers serve as the creature's eyes. Its body is bony and slender, with a red abrasive skin pulled tightly over a jutting ribcage and long, powerful limbs.

Dune beasts were at one time normal baboons, but they have long since been tainted by some infernal power. Now they are vicious and ever-hungry predators, scouring the desert for victims large and small. Not even human villages are safe from their plague, and people



GLOOM BAT

Small Outsider (extraplanar)

Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (16 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: Fly 60 ft. (perfect) (12 squares)

Armor Class: 19 (+1 size, +5 Dex, +3 natural), touch 16, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+0

Attack: Bite +9 melee (1d6+1)

Full Attack: Bite +9 melee (1d6+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: Darkvision 120 ft., immunity to acid, electricity and poison, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10, shadowflight, shroud of darkness

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +4

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7

Skills: Hide +19, Listen +11, Move Silently +15, Spot +11

Feats: Dodge, Weapon Finesse

Environment: Any temperate, underground, or the Plane of Shadows

Organization: Solitary or colony (5-8)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Advancement: 4-6 HD (Medium)

From the darkness emerges a creature with bat-like wings, slashing at you with needled teeth as it dives past. The darkness seems to wrap itself around the creature like roiling smoke, making it difficult to make out precise details. Despite the shadow, you can still make out a sinuous, almost serpentine body.

Gloom bats are not really bats at all. That's merely a label attached to them by horrified individuals without a better frame of reference. Learned scholars know that gloom bats are native to the Plane of Shadows and only migrated to the Material Plane when a nexus between the two was opened. Those few that exist on the Material Plane exist deep underground or in dark, forgotten ruins.

Darkness is a component of their very flesh, seeping through them like wisps of black smoke. Shadows bend unnaturally to conceal them, wrapping around their bodies much as a bat might wrap itself with its wings while asleep. As a result, they are highly effective hunters, and can take sustenance from any living creature that can be killed.

COMBAT

Gloom bats are aggressive, striking before adversaries can even react. They prefer to fight in the darkness where they are at an advantage, so will attempt to lure opponents into shadowy recesses, caves, or other fore-

live in constant fear of the night that a troop of dune beasts will descend upon their community.

Dune beasts require no fresh water and derive all their hydration from the blood of their victims. Indeed, they loath fresh water and avoid even its proximity.

COMBAT

Dune beasts usually attack in groups, seeking to overwhelm foes through sheer weight of numbers. Fearless in the assault, they often attack prey much larger than themselves. But they are also patient, and will stalk a wounded creature for miles until they succumb to dehydration.

Improved Tracker (Ex): Dune beasts use Spot checks instead of Survival checks to follow their quarry's trail.

Dehydration (Ex): The saliva of a dune beast carries a powerful poison that causes the victim to suffer terrible dehydration. The poison takes 1d4 minutes to take effect, dealing 1d6 points of nonlethal damage and causing the victim to become exhausted. A successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) halves the damage and reduces the exhaustion to fatigue. The subject must make an additional Constitution check each hour to avoid nonlethal damage until he drinks at least a liter of fresh water.



boding locales.

Shadowflight (Su): Any time a gloom bat takes wing, it can move through the Plane of Shadows rather than through the Material Plane. This slows the creature's movement by half, but does not provoke an attack of opportunity. Passing through the Plane of Shadows allows the creature to pass through barriers and obstacles found on the Material Plane. The gloom bat remains in the Plane of Shadows only while moving and returns fully to the Material Plane at the end of each move action.

Shroud of Darkness (Su): Gloom bats are surrounded by constantly roiling darkness. Any melee or ranged attack directed at it has a 20% miss chance unless the attacker can locate it by some means other than sight. A *true seeing* effect allows the user to see the gloom bat's position.

Skills: Gloom bats have a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, Move Silently and Spot checks.

TOMB VIPER

Medium Undead Animal

Hit Dice: 2d12+3 (16 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Armor Class: 17 (+2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+1

Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d6 plus 1d6 necrotic poison)

Full Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d6 plus 1d6 necrotic poison)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Necrotic poison

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 5/-, darkvision 60 ft., *meld with stone*, surprise, undead traits, vulnerability to fire

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +3

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 15, Con -, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 1

Skills: Balance +11, Climb +8, Hide +8, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +8

Feats: Weapon Finesse, Toughness^B

Environment: Any tomb

Organization: Solitary, swarm (4—9)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: –

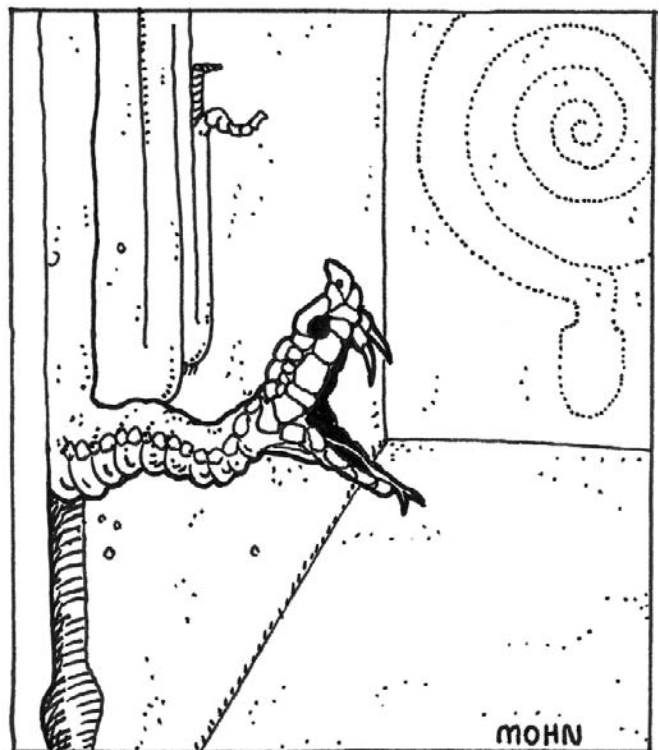
Alignment: Neutral

Advancement: 3-5 HD (Large), 6-18 HD (Huge)

With a deathly hiss that sends chills down your spine, a wall-carving of an asp suddenly springs to life and strikes with venom-dripping fangs. The snake is wrinkled and emaciated, like a dried up husk, and dark voids take the place of eyes.

A tomb viper is an undead snake that has been preserved by alchemical means and bound magically to a crypt or vault to serve as an eternal guardian. It has the ability to meld with stone and innocuously blend itself with bas-reliefs and other wall carvings. As a result, it almost always achieves surprise.

Tomb vipers are always derived from poisonous snakes, most often asps, but also frequently cobras and sidewinders.



COMBAT

Tomb vipers are aggressive, biting with the expectation that their necrotic poison will kill their prey.

Meld with Stone (Su): A tomb viper can enter a stone surface once per day as a standard action as per the spell *meld with stone*. While inside the wall, any carvings or paintings alter to accommodate the viper's image. The undead snake can see and hear out of the stone surface.

Necrotic Poison (Su): Necrotic energy courses through the tomb viper, infusing its fangs with the raw energy of undeath. This deals an extra 1d6 points of damage from the negative energy with each successful melee attack. A successful Fortitude save (DC 11) halves this additional damage. Characters killed by this

poison rise in 2d6 minutes as zombies. Necrotic poison heals undead rather than harms them.

Surprise (Ex): When melded with stone, a tomb viper receives a +15 circumstance bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks the round after emerging.

Skills: Tomb vipers have a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Balance and Climb checks. A tomb viper can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened. A tomb viper has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

Appendix III: New Magic

Amulet of Stone: At first glance, the amulet appears to be nothing more than a small pebble affixed to a slender chain. Closer appraisal reveals the stone to be finely crafted in the shape of an eye.

The amulet grants the wearer a +1 natural armor bonus, and once per day it can protect the user as per *stone-skin* cast by an 8th-level sorcerer.

Strong evocation; CL 12th; Craft Wondrous Item, *stone-skin*; Price: 5,000 gp.

Brush of Mending: Appearing as nothing more than a mundane hand brush, with soft bristles and a handle made out of aged wood, the only means of identifying its arcane ancestry is the rune etched into the end of the handle.

While activated, the brush grants its wielder the ability to cast *mending* as if they were a 10th level spellcaster. The brush must be in physical contact with the target and swept over the damaged area in order affect repairs. The magic of a *brush of mending* may be called forth twice per day.

Faint evocation; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *mending*; Price 450 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Blaze Bone: The *blaze bone* is, upon casual inspection, nothing more than a 3 ft. long bone blackened by fire. Closer inspection reveals that tiny runes and arcane symbols are etched into the surface and that the bone is warm to the touch.

At the cost of 1 charge, the wand wreathes its target in a corona of flames, inflicting 1d6 points of damage each round for two rounds. The range for this magical effect is 35 ft. A character that dies by this fire is reduced to ash and cannot be restored to life short of through a *limited wish* or *wish* spell. While wreathed in fire, the victim deals 1d3 points of fire damage to anyone within a 5-

foot-radius.

In addition, without expending charges, the wand grants the user resistance to fire 10.

If used by a follower of Lamashtu in area 5-19, the *blaze bone's* range can be extended as far as 500 miles. This requires an elaborate ritual that takes 72 days to complete, after which the caster loses 500 XP. In order to perform the ritual, the caster must have been instructed by a demonic delegate sent by Lamashtu – usually an erudite babau or cambion.

Alternately, the caster can attempt to deduce the ritual by studying the Bone Reliquary (area 5-19). After a period of study (no less than a week) the caster may attempt the ritual, first attempting a DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check and a DC 25 Spellcraft check. If both checks succeed, the ritual is a success and the caster loses the XP. If the ritual is a failure, the caster loses a total of 1,000 XP, drawn from his howling soul by cruel Lamashtu herself.

Faint abjuration and transmutation; CL 6th; Craft Wondrous Item, *protection from energy (fire)*, *produce flame*; Price: 37,500gp; Cost 18,750gp + 1,500 XP; Weight 5 lbs

Blood Phylactery: These small, jeweled and golden phylacteries are granted to the mummified priestesses of Lamashtu and her most devoted living followers within the Lost Temple of Lamashtu. A *blood phylactery* grants the wearer access to the extra hit points stored in the Altar of Lamashtu. These hit points cannot be used to heal wounds, but are expended first whenever a creature wearing a *blood phylactery* is struck for damage. If taken more than five miles from the Altar of Lamashtu, the *blood phylactery* is severed and ceases to function.

The Altar of Lamashtu extends a necrotic field across the lower level of the Lost Temple of Lamashtu. Wounds dealt to good-aligned creatures by slashing or piercing weapons in this area lose 1 additional hit point per round per wound: these lost hit points feed into the Altar of Lamashtu and power the *blood phylacteries*.

If the Altar of Lamashtu is destroyed, the necrotic field ceases to exist, and the *blood phylacteries* are reduced to simple golden jewelry.

Faint necromancy; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *death knell*; Price 12,000 gp.

Slowsilt: This sand is unusually fine and somewhat clingy, almost like mud. Creatures entering a field of slowsilt find themselves *slowed*, as per the spell, unless they make a DC 20 Strength check. Characters who fail the check by more than 5 are actually bound in place, unable to lift their feet from the sand's grip.

Enterprising characters might think to collect slowsilt for their own use. A gallon of slowsilt (stored in a clay jug or break-away waterskin, 5 lbs.) is as effective as the *slow* spell cast by an 8th-level sorcerer. Throwing this improvised weapon works like a tanglefoot bag.

Moderate transmutation; CL 8th; Craft Wondrous Item, *slow*; Price 1,200 gp; Weight 5 lbs./gal.

Staff of Shishak: The *Staff of Shishak* looks like a simple wooden crook, weathered from exposure to the elements and fragile with age. Quite to the contrary, the *Staff of Shishak* has several powers, all of which are directed towards snakes and snake-like creatures.

First, it grants the wielder a permanent +4 bonus to Fortitude saves against snake venom and +2 bonus against gaze attacks of drakon and medusa. In addition, the staff is considered a +2 *serpentbane quarterstaff* (drakon and medusa, despite being humanoid, are as vulnerable as normal snakes).

Powers called forth by planting the staff upon the ground and calling out 'Nahushtan' include:

- *hide from animals*, snakes only (1 charge)
- *repel vermin*, snakes only (1 charge)
- +2 bonus to Fortitude saves to against snake venom for all good-aligned beings within a 30-foot-radius of the staff (2 charges)
- *neutralize poison* (3 charges)

When discovered, the *Staff of Shishak* has 25 charges. When the last charge is expended, it vanishes, reappearing somewhere else in the Known Realms, fully charged. As a relic harkening back to the reign of the Greater Gods, the *Staff of Shishak* cannot be recreated by man.

Strong divine, CL 15th; Weight 5 lbs.

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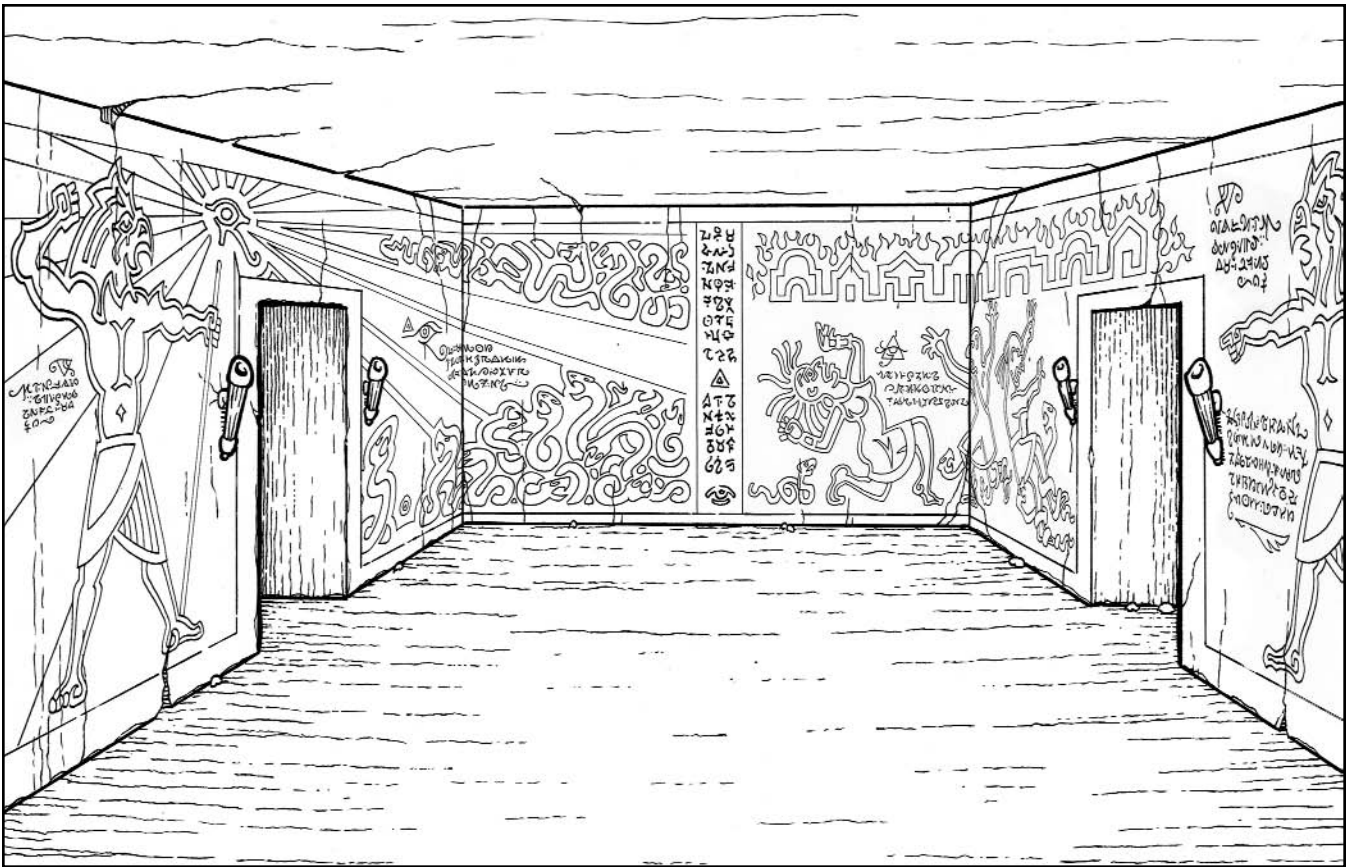
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Players' Handout A

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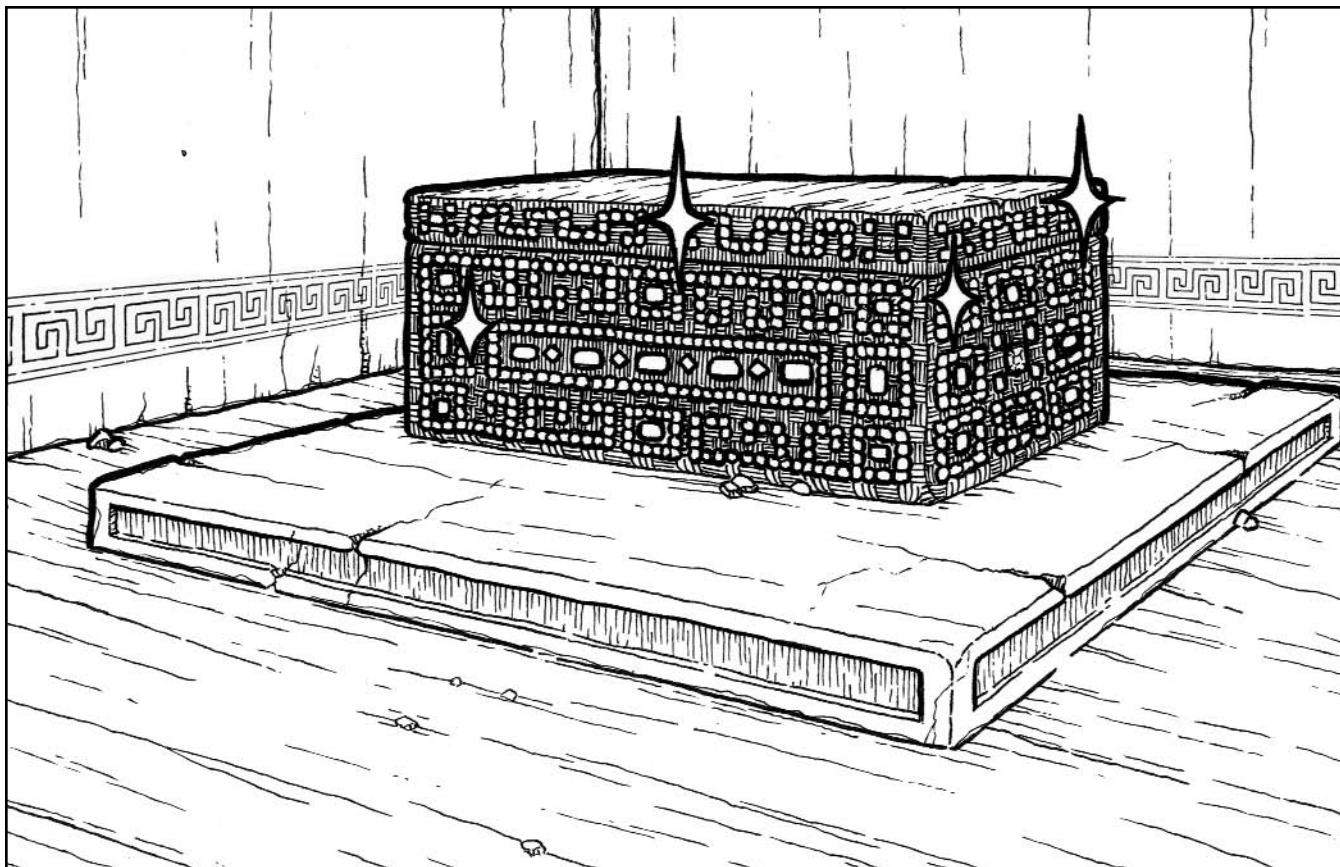
Players' Handout B

I'm certain of little, except that I am bound to an eternity in hell. It's been days, weeks perhaps, since the cave-in trapped us within the tomb. Our tomb. Our food and water has long since run out, and yet we live. But our lives are rapidly becoming a wakeful nightmare, and I commit my guilt to the page in an attempt to assuage those who must judge me. Know that, while in life I was possessed of some whimsy, I hath never shown any shred of deceit or hurtful omission. What I write is the tragic truth.

We hath hoped to be rescued, and so to stave off death until salvation arrived we sustained ourselves on our comrades who were broken in the cave-in. We consoled ourselves with the knowledge that these men were bound to die of their injuries, but in truth we took their lives to save our own. And now, as I feel changes coming over me, I realize the full repercussions of what I have done. I dread I shall live forever now. I am damned, and justly so.

Trim along dotted line.

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KNOW YE THAT LAMASHTU, THE PRINCESS OF DARKNESS, SHE WHOSE BREATH CURDLES THE WOMB AND WHOSE CARESS SPOILS THE YOUNG, WATCHES OVER US ALL. SHE HUNGERS NOT FOR THE BLOOD AND BONES OF NEWBORN CHILDREN AND THEIR PRIDEFUL MOTHERS. NO, SUCH IS JUST THE PRICE WE PAY FOR OUR UNFAITHFULNESS. LAMASHTU, OUR MISTRESS, HUNGERS ONLY FOR OUR FIDELITY. BOW TO HER, OFFER HER YOUR SOUL, BECOME HER BLESSED CHILD, AND YE SHALL KNOW NOTHING BUT PROSPERITY AND A BOUNTIFUL HOME.

Dungeon Crawl Classics Miniatures

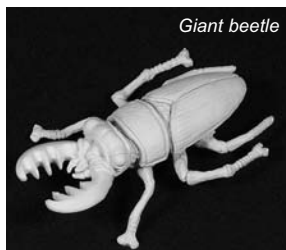
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Kobold Sorcerer



Deadly Fungus



Giant beetle



Giant centipedes



Otyugh



Darkmantle



Stirge Swarm

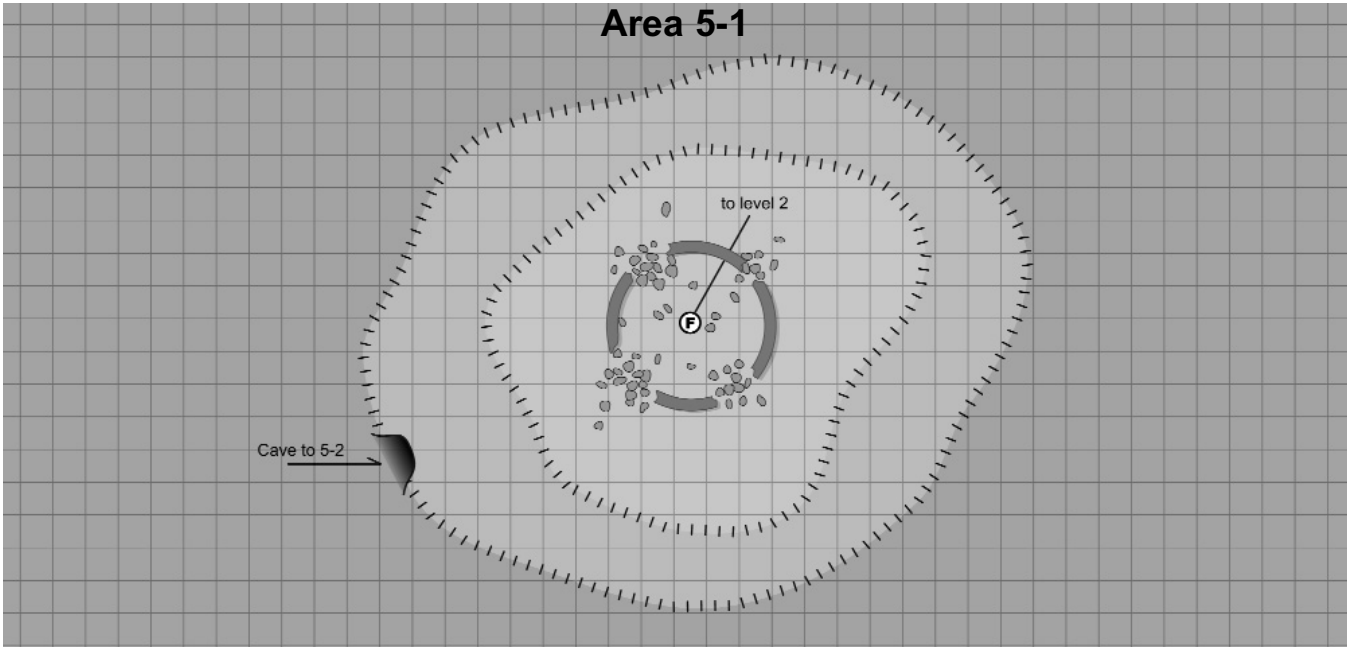


Lizardman Fighter

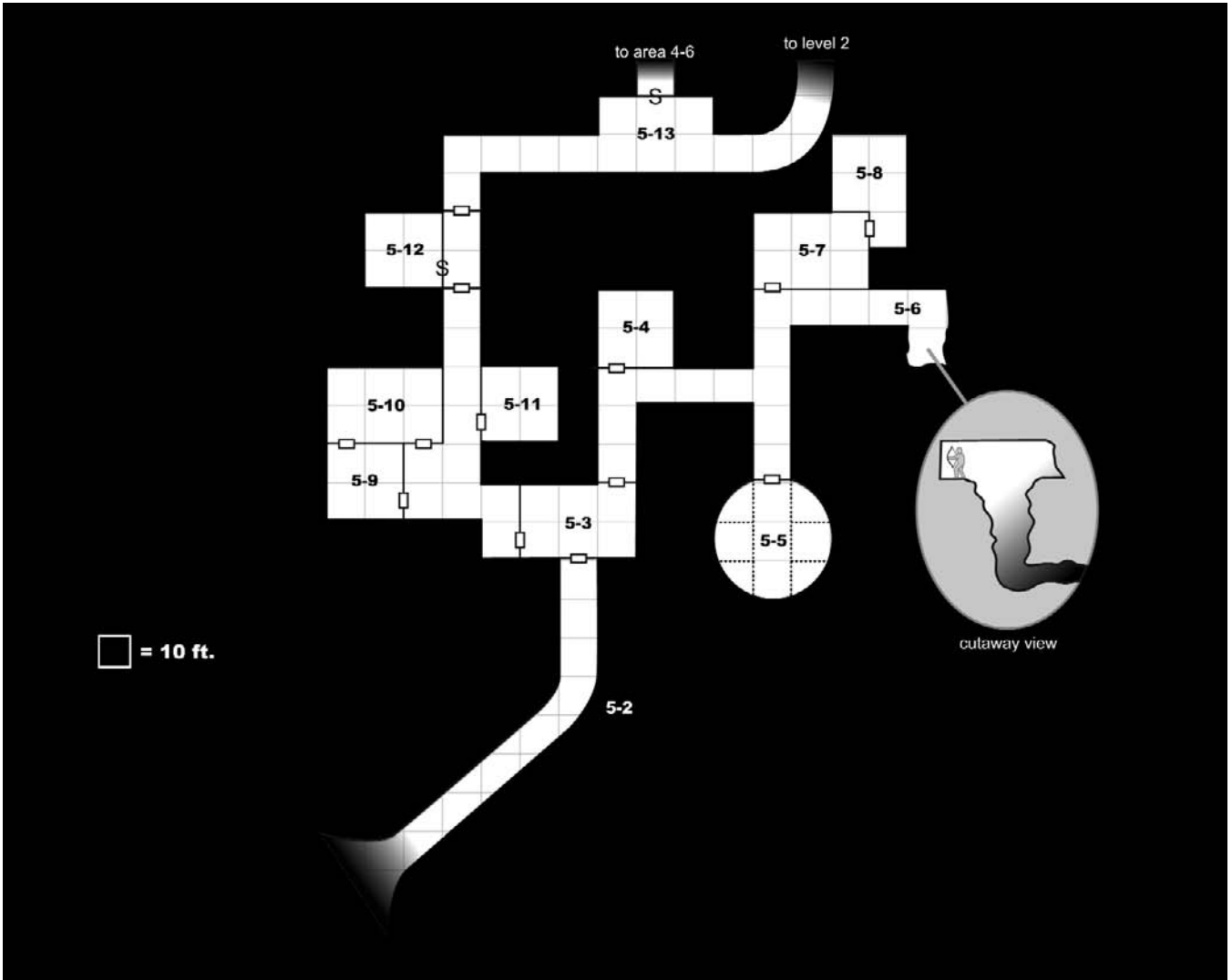


Raging Owlbear

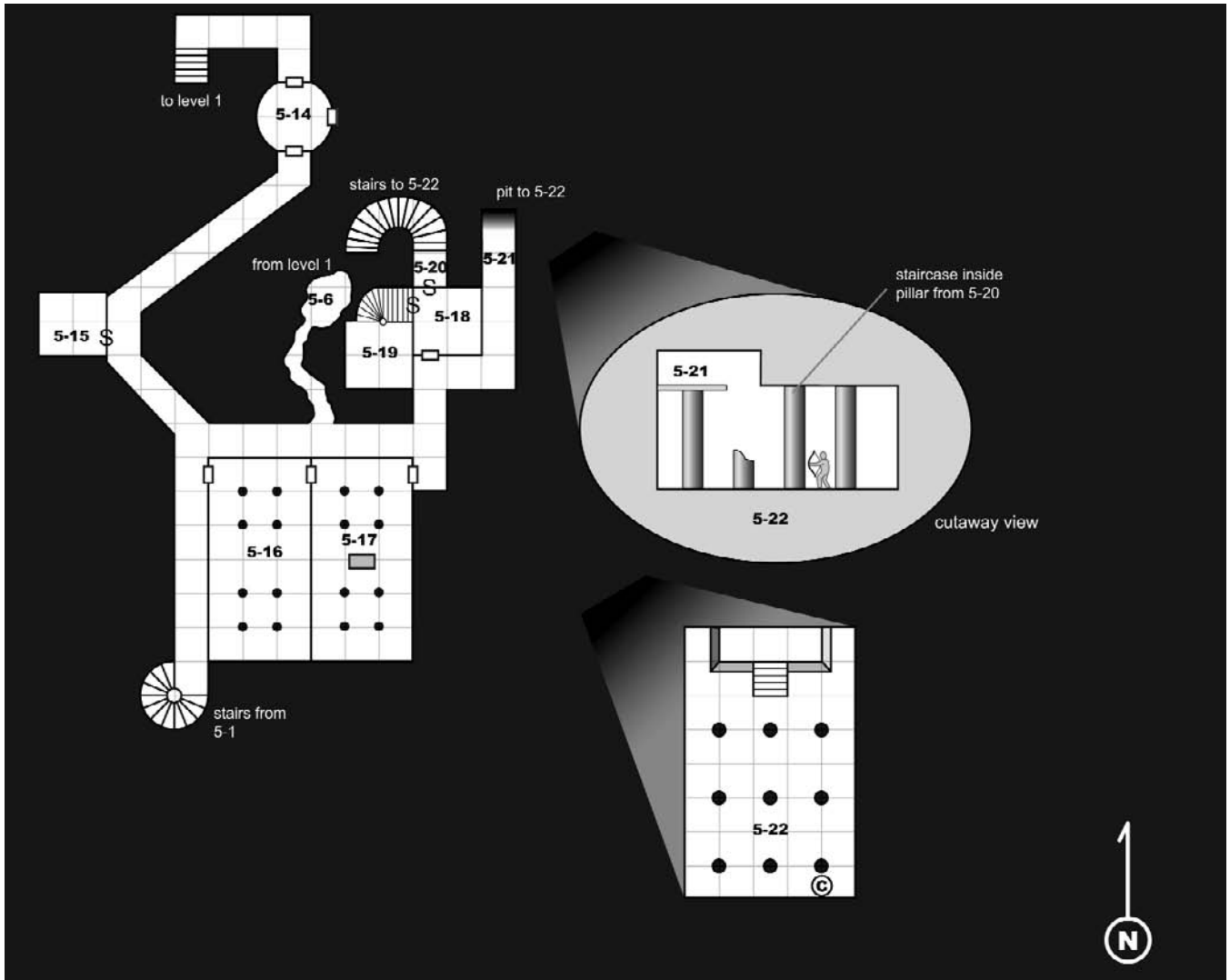
Area 5-1



Chapter 5, Level 1



Chapter 5, Level 2

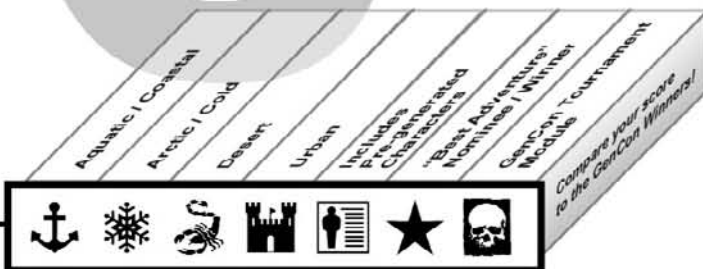


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LEVEL	#	ADVENTURE								
			Anchor	Snowflake	Scorpion	Castle	Person with Checklist	Star	Skull	
0	0	Legends are Made, not Born							✓	
	35A	Halls of the Minotaur							✓	
1	2	Lost Vault of Tszathzar Rho								
	29	The Adventure Begins								
1-3	39	Ruins of Castle Churo								
	1	Idylls of the Rat King								✓
	24	Legend of the Ripper				✓		✓		
	28	Into the Wilds								
	41	Lost Arrows of Aristemis							✓	
	44	Dreaming Caverns of the Duergar							✓	
1-13	14	Dungeon Interludes								
2	11	The Dragonfiend Pact								✓
	31	The Transmuter's Last Touch								
2-3	42	Secret of the Stonearm				✓				
3-5	3	The Mysterious Tower								
	36	Talons of the Horned King		✓						
	43	Curse of the Barrens		✓						
4-6	17	Legacy of the Savage Kings							✓	
	26	The Scaly God							✓	
	27	Revenge of the Rat King				✓				
	35B	Thief Lord's Vault				✓				
5-7	37	The Slithering Overlord								
	7	Secret of Smuggler's Cove	✓							
6-8	23	The Sunken Ziggurat								
	10	The Sunless Garden								
	16	Curse of the Emerald Cobra							✓	
	20	Shadows in Freeport				✓		✓	✓	
7-8	34	Cage of Delirium				✓				
	5	Aerie of the Crow God								✓
7-9	8	Mysteries of the Drow							✓	
	19	The Volcano Caves							✓	
	38	Escape from the Forest of Lanterns							✓	
	40	Devil in the Mists	✓						✓	
8-10	6	Temple of the Dragon Cult								
9-11	12	The Blackguard's Revenge		✓						
	25	Dread Crypt of Srihoz								
10	30	Vault of the Dragon Kings		✓				✓		✓
10-12	4	Bloody Jack's Gold	✓							
11-13	12.5	The Iron Crypt of the Heretics		✓				✓	✓	
12-13	18	Citadel of the Demon Prince								
12-14	21	Assault on Stormbringer Castle							✓	
14-15	15	Lost Tomb of the Sphinx Queen				✓			✓	
14-16	22	The Stormbringer Juggernaut	✓						✓	
	32	Golden Palace of Zahdran				✓			✓	
15	13	Crypt of the Devil Lich							✓	✓
21-24	33	Belly of the Great Beast							✓	



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- Dungeon Crawl Classics #36: Talons of the Horned King
- Dungeon Crawl Classics #37: The Slithering Overlord
- Dungeon Crawl Classics #38: Escape from the Forest of Lanterns
- Dungeon Crawl Classics #39: Ruins of Castle Churo
- Dungeon Crawl Classics #40: Devil in the Mists
- Dungeon Crawl Classics #41: Lost Arrows of Aristemis
- Dungeon Crawl Classics #42: Secret of the Stonearm
- Dungeon Crawl Classics #43: Curse of the Barrens
- Etherscope
- DragonMech
- DM Campaign Tracker
- Underdark Adventure Guide
- The Power Gamer's 3.5 Warrior Strategy Guide

This world-neutral adventure is easy to set in the world of Aereth, as described in *Dungeon Crawl Classics #35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms*. See inside for full details.



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