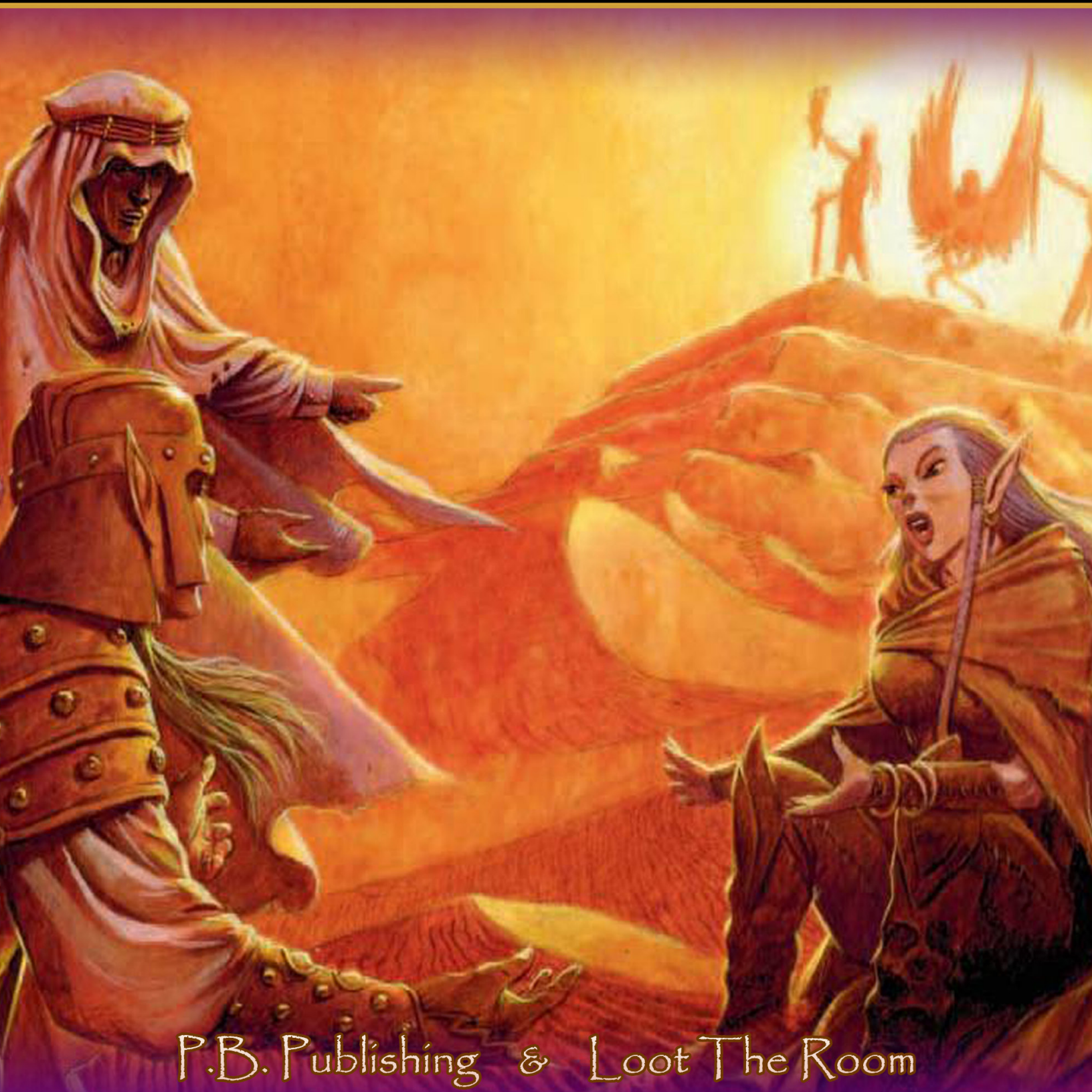


TREMORS IN THE SAND



P.B. Publishing & Loot The Room

Enter the desert ridden yuan-ti temple to discover an evil plot for power in this adventure for the world's greatest roleplaying game

TREMORS IN THE SAND

Credits

Author: Roland Morgen & Phil Beckwith (P.B. Publishing)

Editor: Chris Bissette (Loot The Room)

Layout: Phil Beckwith (P.B. Publishing)

Cover Artist: DM's Guild Creator Resource

Interior Illustrators: Dean Spencer, Matt Morrow (Purple Duck Games), Jeremy Hart, Bartek Blaszczec.

Layout Background: Publisher's Choice Quality Stock Art © Rick Hershey / Fat Goblin Games

Battle Map Cartographer: Chris Bissette (Loot The Room)

Hex Map Cartographer: Phil Beckwith (P.B. Publishing)

Special Thanks to: Benoit de Bernardy

Playtesters - Matt Zerbe (DM), Joseph Kern, Brittany Hostetler, April M. Martin, Christopher D. Crane, Toriano A. Thomas, Robert Flowers, Esteban Arroyo (DM), Julisa Arroyo, Jonathan Deoraj, Armani Gregory, Andrealiz Martinez (DM), Norma Liz Perez, Hector M. Lebron, Cesar Rodriguez, Norman Rodriguez, Georgia Prato (DM), Clark Jurisic, Brodie Fairhurst, Ben Stockdale.

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DEAN SPENCER

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

T*remors in the Sand* is a Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition adventure designed to be completed in about 5–7 hours of play.

The combat encounters have been calculated to present a tough challenge to four characters of 4th level, that is, Average Party Level (APL) is 4. Information is supplied in the text explaining how to scale down the encounters for **APL 1** through **APL 3**.

Not every loose end is tied up in the following text, nor every possible reaction accounted for. Be ready to improvise, and do so with confidence! Unless stated otherwise, assume NPCs have the stats of a **Commoner (MM, p345)**.

The adventure comprises three chapters.

- **Chapter 1**—Introduction
- **Chapter 2**—The Adventure Begins
- **Chapter 3**—The Temple
- **Conclusion**
- **Appendices A, B, & C**

Resources. This adventure is written to utilize the three core rulebooks, the Players Handbook (PHB), Monster Manual (MM), and the Dungeon Master's Guide (DMG). It is also written to utilize Volo's Guide to Monsters (VGtM), however, we are aware that not everyone who runs this adventure will own the source book; as such, use the following conversion points to replace the VGtM monsters with ones from the core Monster Manual book.

MONSTER REPLACEMENT

<i>VGtM Monster</i>	<i>MM Replacement</i>
Yuan-ti Broodguard	Yuan-ti Malison Type 2 (MM, p309)
Yuan-ti Pit Master	Yuan-ti Malison type 1 (MM, p309) – Increase HP by 20
Enchantress	Mage (MM, p347)

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure is a mix between a hex crawl to begin the journey, and a time based location adventure to complete it. The maps in **Appendix C** will help you, the Dungeon Master (DM), to drive the desert travel and scenes as our

heroes explore the desert and different rooms accessible to them within the temple. There is an encounter time tracker table to assist you with keeping track of the time as it slowly runs out for our brave adventurers.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

This adventure is designed to utilize the Milestone leveling system, by which it is expected that the characters start at a level between 1 and 4 at the beginning of the adventure. Upon defeating Ilishara and thwarting her plans to awaken and swap minds with the tarrasque the heroes should advance by one level on completion.

This is only a suggestion, however, and you, as the DM, are in no way forced to use this method. This adventure runs perfectly fine with Experience Points (XP) based leveling, and you are encouraged to use XP if it is a better fit for you and your playing group. There are also XP reward options at the conclusion of this module.

BOXED TEXT

This adventure includes boxed text to assist those DMs who like to have a description of a scene or location. The use of boxed text is by no means required; many great DMs avoid the use of boxed text and instead feel more comfortable describing the action in their own words. You should consider what works best for you and your group. If you choose not to read aloud any of the text provided, you should at least paraphrase the information to keep the players aware of their environment.

SETTING & LOCATION

Tremors in the Sand is designed to be used in any setting. With some tweaks in the lore of the desert and the Yuan-ti tribe, a savvy Dungeon Master can drop and play this adventure into any setting and any campaign where there is a desert environment.

HOOKS: AL SHAGAR

The characters need a reason to venture into the desert in the first place. The following are some simple suggestions that can be reworked or tweaked depending on player preference or DM style.

- In this region, rumors exist that an abandoned dragon's lair can be found in the desert, just north of an easily recognizable rock formation. A wealthy explorer has sought the party's aid in finding, and possibly pillaging this lair. He is willing to pay for all supplies. The characters must meet him in a lonely trading post named *Al Shaḡar*.
- The party has been hired to escort a caravan to the small trading outpost, *Al Shaḡar*, which serves as the last supply point for any souls wishing to venture into the desert.
- In a nearby town, a local lord has posted a reward for the capture of Yuan-ti marauders who have harassed merchants doing business at the *Al Shaḡar* trading post.

SYNOPSIS (WHAT THE DM SHOULD KNOW)

Tremors have been heard and felt in the hot sands of a desolate and dangerous desert. A gifted mystic named **Ilishara** has received a vision from the dark powers to which she dedicates herself. This vision has beckoned her to summon the most destructive creature known to exist on this plane; the **tarrasque**. This is no easy feat, but Ilishara is no ordinary young woman. Her great ambition is to summon the behemoth and swap minds with it, creating for herself a physical form that measures up to her own mental prowess.

After researching the matter, Ilishara has come to learn that the slumbering tarrasque lies beneath the ruins of an old, abandoned temple that was built in the side of a cliff in the desert. Recently, a band of marauding **Yuan-Ti** laid claim to the temple. Upon reaching this place, Ilishara slyly convinced the Yuan-Ti that she had been sent to them as a messenger of Merrshaulk, a slumbering serpent god to whom these particular serpent folk devote themselves. Ilishara claims to have come to summon Merrshaulk and has convinced the Yuan-Ti to assist her, using a **Rod**

of Rulership (DMG, p196) magically boosted to last 24 hours, and a promise of great power.

The tremors in the sand are a direct result of the dark rituals that Ilishara performs, and the slow awakening of the tarrasque. With the hour close at hand, she will stop at nothing to fulfil her ambitions.



CHAPTER 2: THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

AL SHAGAR TRADING POST

When the party members come to within 300 feet of the trading post they notice that it has been raided and appears to be empty. Read the following text aloud:

The air in this region feels dry, hot, and unforgiving. Gusting winds lift up the sand and it swirls around you, dancing, rising, and falling back to the ground. You can see the trading post as it comes clearly into view. A few stands and small storefronts stare back at you, empty and barren. As the wind dies down for a second, silence pervades the surroundings. Suddenly, the voice of an old man reaches your ears. He calls for your aid.

The old man is actually an **Ancient Brass Dragon (Chaotic Good) (MM, p104)** named G'lanthor. In this form, though, he calls himself **Spence**. Spence regularly does business at this trading post, always in search of new artifacts and relics to add to his hoard, which lies in the desert.

If the characters interact with Spence, this is what he is willing to tell them:

- He arrived at the trading post just in time to see a band of “snake people” running off and dragging captured merchants and traders with them east into the desert.
- Travelers and merchants have recently heard and spread rumors of snake people operating out of an abandoned temple which was built into the side of a cliff.

If the characters press Spence for more information, on a successful **DC 15 Charisma check** he will add the following:

- He saw one human collaborating with the snake people. She was dressed in a black robe and held a glowing rod in her hand.
- He survived only by hiding underneath a cleverly hidden trapdoor in his small store.
- For the past few days, he and others have been hearing and feeling tremors and rumbling sounds that seem to be coming from the south-east.

As Spence, G'lanthor puts on a front as something of an old buffoon with a sharp wit. He urges the party to pursue the bandits, save

the captives, and remove the Yuan-Ti threat. If the party heeds his entreaties, Spence will offer them “something special” to aid them in their journey and promise a fantastic reward if they return successful. Spence points east out into the desert to provide a little direction.

As a sign of his appreciation for this help, Spence gives the party the following items before they embark on their journey:

- A lamp of the mesmerizer (see **Appendix B**)
- A **Periapt of health (DMG, p184)** – Only if the players are 4th level or above.

While conversing with Spence, any character can attempt a **DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check**. On a success, a character will sense that there is certainly more to Spence than meets the eye, and he may very well be hiding something from the party.

Besides hiding the fact that he is a dragon, Spence is also not willing to divulge his two greatest reasons for seeking the party's aid.

- First, he wants no one to find his lair.
- Second, he knows that the tarrasque lies beneath the desert sands.

In fact, he is part of an order of dragons, **The Keepers**, who have taken oaths to prevent the creature's awakening and protect the world if it does awaken.

He cannot pursue this matter just yet because he needs to inform the Elder Golden Dragon, **Brystyr**, of the brewing trouble. He will make an excuse that he needs to travel to the nearest town to inform a local duke or lord of what has happened.

Note: If the characters fail the mission, and survive the tarrasque's awakening, then you, as the DM, may want to include the order of dragons, known as The Keepers, as a major faction in your ongoing story/adventures.

TO THE TEMPLE

Hexes. Finding the temple is played through a miniature hex crawl. Each hex is roughly a mile long, and each hex that isn't occupied by a feature (the town, or the temple) is an opportunity for one of the below random encounters.

Using the Hex Map. When showing the map to your players, ensure that the temple icon is not showing and you are using the 'player's map'. The first hex that the players enter, you should run the encounter below entitled 'DE-1 The Lone Yu-anti'. Once that encounter is complete, allow the party to comb the desert in search of the temple. If they have questioned Spence deeply enough, they should have enough information to find the temple quickly. Otherwise, the heroes will stumble upon the temple before too long. Once the party enter any hex adjacent to the temple hex, run the encounter entitled 'DE-2 Spotting the Temple'.

Tracking the Yuan-ti. If any of the characters wish to attempt to track the yuan-ti marauders through the desert, they must succeed on a **DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check** once per hex AND they must be within a hex that the **Yuan-ti** traveled (see *DM's Hex Map*). On a successful check, reveal to the players which hex the yuan-ti moved to next. On a failed survival check, advise the players that they have lost the trace of the yuan-ti.

Random Encounters. In addition to the challenges presented by the desert climate and terrain, there also exists a very real threat the party will encounter predators or natural dangers. Roll on the following table once for every hex that the party travels through on the way to the temple. As always, the rolls on this table can be altered to better suit the APL. Simply subtract or add monsters to make the encounters more challenging or less deadly.

DESERT ENCOUNTERS

1d20	Effect
1-3	Nothing unusual happens. Characters see seemingly endless yellow dunes.
4-5	With the warm climate of the desert come swarms of scarab beetles, as clouds of these desert dwellers strike the party per the following scaling information: APL 1: 2 x <i>Swarm of Insects</i> (MM, p.338) APL 2: 3 x <i>Swarm of Insects</i> APL 3: 4 x <i>Swarm of Insects</i> APL 4: 6 x <i>Swarm of Insects</i>
6-9	The party wanders by an oasis. Here they can rest and gather some fresh water. This beautiful place is free of any dangers.
10-11	In the distance, the characters can see the remains of an old ruined caravan. On closer inspection they find that it has already been looted, however, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers 2 x <i>potions of healing</i> (DMG, p188).
12-13	DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot <i>quicksand</i> (DMG, p.110), on failure 1d4 characters (DM's discretion), become stuck in it.
14-15	1d4 <i>giant scorpions</i> (MM, p.327) attack.
16-17	A sandstorm blows through the area and gives the party's next Wisdom (Survival) check disadvantage .
18-19	1d4 <i>half-ogres</i> (MM, p.238) + 1d2 <i>ogres</i> (MM, p.328) attack.
20	The temperature rises, every party member must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw , suffering 1 level of <i>exhaustion</i> (PHB, p.291) on a failed roll.

DE-1 THE LONE YUAN-TI

When the party enters the first hex to start off on their trek across the desert in search of the temple, they come across an injured yuan-ti half stuck in **quicksand** (*DMG, p110*). He calls for help from the party, and will readily join them should they assist him.

His name is **Messhna Sssalak'un**, he and his yuan-ti brethren were under the charm effect of the evil mystic Ilishara. After the group committed the kidnapping of the trading post's residents, the spell effect wore off, and Messhna broke away from the group once his conscience came back to him. Unfortunately, the lone yuan-ti misjudged a dip in the dunes and was caught in a patch of quicksand.

CREATURES

1 x **Yuan-ti Pureblood** (*MM, p310*)

DEVELOPMENT

If the party adopt Messhna, he is able to show the party the 'safe' way to travel through the sands. Have him act as a guide following the yuan-ti trail as shown on the DM's map of the desert hex crawl. Whilst this is happening, reroll any random encounters that include combat or quicksand.

During their travels together throughout the desert sands, Messhna divulges the information found in the '*What Messhna Knows*' paragraph.

WHAT MESSHNA KNOWS:

- There were roughly 10 people taken during the raid on the trading post.
- The young woman in dark robes issues most of the commands.
- A hideous man with beautiful serpents for arms has forced some of the prisoners to drink a potion that has turned them into 'snake-men'. He won't acknowledge them as yuan-ti.
- The dark mystic plans to swap minds with a slumbering tarrasque buried beneath the temple to the south-east, this is the source of the tremors as the beast slowly awakens.

ROLEPLAYING MESSHNA

Messhna wants retribution and to kill the dark mystic Ilishara, who took his free will away from him. He will offer to help the party at all costs, and guide them through the desert on the safest path. Messhna will become an invaluable ally in combat and will not shy away from attacking his own kind due to his cold-hearted racial trait.



DE-2 SPOTTING THE TEMPLE

When the party enters any hex adjacent to the hex that the temple is in, the party members spot the ancient building's façade from a distance. Read the following:

Just at the edge of your view, through the haze, you see a high cliff wall adorned with marks of great architecture. Columns rise nearly to the top of it, and two great statues on either side of the entrance stare toward you like giant guards on duty. Tremors pass through the ground periodically, rattling the bones in your body. You also notice an oasis about a mile from the temple entrance, its glistening pool shining in the sunlight.

A **passive Wisdom (Perception) of 14** and higher allows a character to spot 4 figures that appear to be running toward them. If a character succeeds on this, add the following to the previous narration:

A small figure moves swiftly in the distance. It appears to be a human man. Behind it, you can see what appear to be humanoid snakes. They follow the man, like a predator pursuing game.

The figure in front is an escaped captive (**commoner**). Behind him are three Yuan-Ti Purebloods. If the party sees the figures running and decides to approach them, roll initiative.

CREATURES

1 x **Commoner** (MM, p345)

3 x **Yuan-ti Pureblood** (MM, p310)

DE-2: ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

APL 1: Remove 2 Pureblood and reduce remaining Pureblood to only 1 acid splash per day.

APL 2: Remove 1 Pureblood.

APL 3: Remove 1 Pureblood.

REALITIES OF THE DESERT

Travel in the desert can exhaust even the hardest and most well-conditioned people. You can make this encounter more challenging by having the party members and the captive make a **DC 13 Constitution saving throw** at the start of each of their turns. If they fail, their speed is reduced by half. The Yuan-Ti, being accustomed to these climes, do not have to make these saving throws. This mechanic can be ignored for those player races that have any specific feats that negate the effects of the desert.

TACTICS

When the encounter begins, the man is 500 feet from the party and 150 feet in front of the **Yuan-Ti**. The captive (**commoner**) will use the dash action each turn and yell for help once he spots the party on a successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check**.

The **Yuan-Ti dash** until they catch up to the man. They attempt to cast suggestion on him as soon as they are within range. They do not want to kill him. Their aim is to capture the man and take him back to the temple.

As the party approaches, the **Yuan-Ti** engage in combat immediately; however, as soon as there is only 1 Yuan-ti left alive, it will retreat and hope to rendezvous with its allies at the temple.

DEVELOPMENT

If the party defeat the Yuan-Ti and save the captive, he can share what he knows:

- There were roughly 10 people taken during the raid on the trading post.
- The woman in dark robes issues most of the commands.
- A hideous man with serpents for arms has forced some of the prisoners to drink a potion that has turned them into 'snake-men' (**Yuan-ti Broodguard - VGtM, p203** - or Yuan-ti Malison Type 2, MM, p309).
- There are powerful tremors and rumblings coming from underneath the temple.
- There is a secret door in the base of the southern statue that sits outside the temple.

The man cannot survive the trip back to the trading post on his own, so he will ask for the party's protection. If the party offers to protect him, he will pull out a precious stone from a pouch he wears (roll on the **100gp Gemstone table (DMG, p134)**). He will promise to reward the party with more valuables if they can save his friends and escort them back to the trading post.

HOW TO RUN: PERCENTAGE CHANCES

When an encounter dictates that there is an XX% chance of an event happening, the Dungeon Master (DM) should roll 1d100. If the result is equal to or less than the chance percentage supplied by the encounter, the event triggers and is included in the encounter. For example; in the opening encounter at The Temple, there is a 20% chance that rubble from the ceiling falls on the party. The DM should roll 1d100, and on any result between 1 and 20, the rubble does indeed fall. However, any result between 21 and 100, the rubble does not fall.

The Oasis. This rare mark of beauty in the harsh desert should be a sight for sore eyes for the weary adventurers. The oasis provides a safe zone for the characters to take a rest, recharge, and have a drink before heading into the hostile temple. Allow the players to take a long rest uninterrupted whilst in the oasis. No Yuan-ti come by this place now that they inhabit the temple.

Once the party is ready to go on, proceed to the next section. If the party do not kill the Yuan-ti but continue to pursue them, maintain initiative.

CHAPTER 3: THE TEMPLE

There is a map of the temple provided in **Appendix C**. Tremors occur as per the Timed Event table below, but feel free to add tremors and other environmental events as you see fit. When this happens, there is a 20% chance that rubble from the ceiling will fall on characters, dealing 1d4 damage to a character (see *How to run: Percentage Chances sidebar* on p10). The intensity of these tremors increases as time passes. For each roll, the probability increases by 1%. Additionally, there is a **5% chance** that a chasm will open in the ground. When this occurs, characters must succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw** to jump away from the chasm or a **DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check** to hold on to the edge, falling into a 10-foot chasm and taking 1d6 damage on a failed roll.

Lighting. Unless otherwise mentioned, all areas are unlit and dark.

Time. This is largely a time-based adventure once the characters enter the temple. From the time the party enters the temple, they have **4 hours (in-game)** until Ilishara succeeds in summoning the tarrasque. Assume that each encounter eats 30 minutes from the clock. Track the time on the *Event-Time Tracker table* (see p.11) to assist with the environmental cues as the time runs out.

THE ENTRANCE

Read the following text as the party approaches the temple entrance:

This magnificent temple harkens back to a different age, a time long forgotten. Wind erosion has assaulted the stonework, but it has been surprisingly preserved. Two massive statues stand on either side of the entrance. They resemble men for the most part, but the one on the right has the head of an owl and the other has the head of a serpent. Glyphs painted in red cover the double doors.

How the party enters this place depends upon what course of action has been taken. If the party is pursuing the Yuan-Ti, they will see them enter through a secret door at the base of the

owl-headed statue. The prisoner can also inform them of this door's existence.

Note: Keep in mind that pursuing the Yuan-Ti directly into the temple is very dangerous for the party!

If the party arrives alone, they will need to investigate the entrance. The double doors are roughly 15 feet tall, made of wood, and reinforced by iron. They have not been opened in centuries, and are barred from within by a wooden plank. In order to enter through these doors, a character must succeed on a **DC 22 Strength (Athletics) check**. Busting this door open will alert all of the Yuan-Ti present in areas 1, 2, & 4 of the temple. If this happens, all Yuan-Ti will rush to the altar in **Area 2**, open the secret door and descend to **Area 4** in order to defend the temple and warn Ilishara. Numbers vary based on APL, though there are roughly 15-20 Yuan-Ti in the temple along with Ilishara.

A successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check** informs characters that the markings on the door are fresh and made with blood. A successful **DC 16 Intelligence (Religion) check** allows a character to recognize these glyphs as representations of an ancient serpent god, Merrshaulk.

The other option for entrance into the temple is a secret door on the base of the statue that stands to the right side of the double doors. A successful **DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check** allows characters to spot the secret door. It is cleverly hidden, but easy to open once discovered. It closes automatically 10 seconds after opening.

If the party enters through the secret door, go to **Area 1A**. If the party enters through the main doors, go to **Area 2**.

EVENT-TIME TRACKER TABLE		
<i>Time Spent</i>	<i>Encounter Completed (DM's Entry)</i>	<i>Event (After location encounter is completed)</i>
30 min (3.5 hrs left)		The first major tremor strikes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The earth rumbles slightly. Dust and sand crumble from the ceiling if the characters are inside the temple.
60 min (3.0 hrs left)		Nothing happens.
90 min (2.5 hrs left)		A second major tremor rumbles through the earth. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A passive Wisdom (Perception) of 13 and above notices that this tremor is stronger than the first. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check determines that something of enormous size lies beneath the ground and is beginning to move. This is causing the tremors.
120 min (2.0 hrs left)		Nothing happens.
150 min (1.5 hrs left)		A third major tremor shakes the entire temple savagely. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is obvious now that the tremors are increasing in strength. Large blocks of temple stone fall about the party. Each character must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 1d4 bludgeoning damage from falling debris on a failure. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check determines that, with the current interval rate of tremors and their strength increases, the signs suggest that the party have under 2 hours to stop their source before the earth cracks open and swallows the entire area.
180 min (1.0 hrs left)		Nothing happens.
210 min (0.5 hrs left)		A fourth major tremor hits. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This tremor is the strongest yet. Large cracks start to run through the floor, as the temple, and the earth it is built on, split beneath the character's feet. The characters must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw as the earth cracks open in many places about them. A failed save results in the character falling into a gaping hole, tumbling northward through rubble and split-earth. They take 20 feet of falling damage (2d6), and end up in Area 5 (DM's discretion on placement). Those characters left standing, notice that the Yuan-ti minions are fleeing and abandoning the temple. Any Yuan-ti that need to pass the party on their escape route ignore the party, or if engaged by the characters, attempt to plead for mercy and their freedom.
240 min (0 hrs left)		If any of the characters are in Area 5 , run that encounter. Otherwise: see 'Failing the Mission' section under Chapter 4: Conclusion .

THE LEGEND OF MERRSHAULK

Legend tells that this god, once revered among many Yuan-Ti of this area, now slumbers and is waiting to be awakened. Most, though, claim this god to be dead. Merrshaulk is, in fact, the Tarrasque that lies beneath the temple.

AREA 1A

Read the following as the party enters this area:

You find yourselves in a dark hallway. The musty air within this place threatens to choke you. A smell of rot fills your nostrils. A low rumble shakes the ground and teases your ears.

This hallway is covered in dust and completely dark once the secret door closes behind the party. The hallway ends and appears to lead nowhere. A successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** allows a character to either feel a draft of air moving through a crack in the door or spot an opening that reveals a secret door. This door moves on a central pivot, rotating as it is pushed from either side.

AREA 1B

This hallway leads to the central chamber of the temple and to what were once quarters for members of this temple. If the characters go toward the central chamber, see **Area 2**. If they head in the other direction, they will come to a door.

There are two **Yuan-Ti Broodguards** patrolling this hallway. They have been commanded to guard the door that leads to what Ilishara now calls her quarters.

It's Locked and Trapped! The door to this room is locked and trapped. The trap requires a successful **DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check** to detect small holes around the lock, and a further **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check** to determine that they are likely gas outlets. A successful **DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check** allows a character to pick the lock. On a failed lockpick attempt, a toxic gas is released from a vial that sits within the lock and released via the holes. If a character fails this check, all creatures within 5 feet of the door must make a **DC 12 Constitution saving throw** or suffer one level of **exhaustion** from the gas. If the throw fails by more than 5, the character is also **poisoned**.

CREATURES

2 x **Yuan-ti Broodguards** (VGtM, p203)

AREA 1B: ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

APL 1: Replace both with one Yuan-Ti Pureblood and reduce to only 1 acid splash per day.

APL 2: Replace with Yuan-Ti Purebloods.

APL 3: Remove one Broodguard OR Replace with Yuan-Ti Purebloods.

AREA 1C

Read the following:

This room is surprisingly clean. All of the walls look as though they have hardly aged with time. A small bedroll lies in the corner, a small backpack beside it. A faint scent of perfume lingers.

Ilishara has claimed this room as her own. It remains nearly spotless because of powerful magic that still permeates this temple.

Within the **backpack** are a few of Ilishara's possessions. These include a spare set of clothes, a hairbrush, a withered toy doll, a dagger, soap, and a waterskin. The dagger is a *dagger of fear* (see **Appendix B**). Everything else in the bag is mundane.

If the characters investigate the **bedroll** and turn it over, they will find *Ilishara's Journal* (see **Appendix B**).



AREA 2

This is the central worship area of the temple. Read the following as characters enter this room:

Three columns line both sides of this room, leading up to a high, vaulted ceiling. Rows of benches line the floor, most of them appearing intact. To the sides of the double doors, small statues of human figures stare blankly at you. Across from the doors, at the other end of the room, you can see a magnificent altar sitting atop a marble dais. Hallways near the altar lead out of this room.

Roll a d20 when the characters enter this room. If they chased the Yuan-Ti into the temple, add 5 to this roll.

AREA 2 ENCOUNTER

1d20	Who is present in the area
1-5	No one is present
6-10	1d6 <i>Yuan-Ti Purebloods</i>
11-15	1d4 <i>Yuan-Ti Broodguards</i> + 1d4 <i>Yuan-Ti Purebloods</i>
16-19	1d4 <i>Yuan-Ti Broodguards</i> + 1d4 <i>Yuan-Ti Malisons</i>
20	Soakash, a <i>Yuan-Ti Pit Master</i> , a <i>giant constrictor snake</i> , and a <i>Yuan-Ti Broodguard</i>

SECRET DOOR

Within the altar lies a well-hidden secret door that opens up to a passage leading down to **Area 5**. From left to right, there are three sculpted heads on the altar: a serpent, a human, and an owl.

The inscription on the altar reads:

**Only the wise know what lies below
Slumbering deep as deep can go
Choose true, brave soul, if passage you seek
Choose the face that will not speak
The secrets buried long ago**

The Logic. The logic of the inscription clue is that only the human has the ability to *choose* not to speak (i.e. it *will not* speak versus *cannot* speak).

Opening the Door. Characters who are close to this altar can easily notice that these faces can be depressed. Pressing the **human face** opens the secret door.

Pressing either of the other two faces will trigger a level 1 *magic missile* spell, targeting the character who depressed the face. This effect can be removed with *dispel magic*.

Note: If your players are struggling to solve the puzzle and it is beginning to slow your game down, at a point determined by you as the Dungeon Master, have one of the players roll against a **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check**, on success their character deciphers the puzzle, *explain the logic explained above*. On failure, they do not solve it, and will likely not make it to the final battle with Ilishara in time to stop her.

STATUES

The two small statues on the southern end of the room were once very potent shrines, but they have been disturbed by the Yuan-Ti and Ilishara. A **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check** will reveal that both statues appear to be missing items that were once around their necks.



AREA 3

This is the library. When characters enter this room, read the following:

Dusty and dilapidated bookshelves line the eastern and western walls of this room. On them sit several books, most eaten by time and insects. The western wall has partially collapsed, turning into a pile of rubble. Bones can be seen scattered on top of the loose earth and stone.

A successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check** reveals that these bones are not human, nor are they very old. If any characters spend more than 1 minute exploring the rubble, a **black pudding** attacks.

Most of the books on the two shelves fall apart when opened. If characters spend 10 minutes searching the shelves, allow them to make a **Wisdom (Perception) check**. On a roll of **17** or higher, a character finds a spell scroll hidden within a book that seems to have been a journal for a priestess. The scroll is a *scroll of augury*.

CREATURES

1 x **Black Pudding** (MM, p241)

AREA 4

This is the area where the Yuan-Ti hold their prisoners. Read the following:

Screams of pain and pleas for mercy echo throughout this hallway. Through the entrance, you can see humans tied up, bloodied and begging for their lives. You overhear hissing and threats spewing forth from the mouths of the serpent faced guards.

If Soakash was not encountered in Area 2, add the following:

One of these guards extends his serpentine limb and wraps it around the throat of a gutsy prisoner. After a whisper into the prisoner's ear, the captive ceases resisting and falls back to the ground, staring blankly at the wall.

This guard is Soakash, a Yuan-Ti Pit Master. He is the true leader of this group of Yuan-Ti. He is always accompanied by a giant constrictor snake and a Yuan-Ti Broodguard. There are 7

prisoners (commoner) in this room. None of the prisoners are tied up. All seem utterly terrified of Soakash, the constrictor, and the guards.

CREATURES

If Soakash is present:

- 1 x Soakash - **Yuan-ti Pit Master** (VGtM, P206)
- 1 x **Giant Constrictor Snake** (MM, p324)
- 1 x **Yuan-ti Broodguard** (VGtM, p203)

If Soakash is **NOT** present:

- 3 x **Yuan-ti Broodguard** (VGtM, p203)

AREA 4: ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

APL 1: Replace Soakash with Yuan-Ti Pureblood and reduce to only 1 acid splash per day. Replace Constrictor with Poisonous Snake. Remove the Broodguard.

APL 2: Replace Broodguard with Yuan-Ti Pureblood. Replace Soakash with Yuan-Ti Pureblood.

APL 3: Remove the Broodguard and/or the Constrictor.

ROLEPLAYING SOAKASH

Soakash is no fool. He is not above trying to make a bargain. Ilishara's powerful magic has charmed his companions, but its effects on him are wearing off. He has begun to doubt that she has truly come here to summon Merrshaulk. He will defend himself with his powerful magic if necessary, but he would not hesitate to attempt to convince the party that he stands against Ilishara. He may offer to lead them to her and even assist them in driving her off or killing her. He wants this temple for himself and his Yuan-Ti kin and is willing to do whatever is necessary to make it so. He will even give up his prisoners, knowing very well that he can capture more almost any time he wishes. Soakash is not above attempting to kill the party if he feels he has the upper hand.

Note: If Messhna is with the party, he will vouch for his superior, Soakash, however, if the encounter ends in conflict with Soakash, Messhna will side with the party, in a devious plan to take leadership once Ilishara has been dealt with.

AREA 5

Entrance Passage. The hall that leads down to the ritual chamber has become much more treacherous now that the tremors have grown stronger. Sand and dirt are beginning to fall from cracks in the ceiling and the floor is splitting open. While travelling through this passage, which is 100ft long, characters have **disadvantage** on all **Wisdom (Perception) checks** and the area is considered **difficult terrain (PHB, p182)**. At the end of this passage, just before it opens into the main chamber where Ilishara performs the ritual, a chasm has opened up. It is 12 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 20ft deep. What remains of the floor forms a precarious ledge. This ledge requires a successful **DC 17 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** to navigate. However, if more than **200lbs** of weight is placed on the ledge at any time, then that particular spot will crumble. A character who succeeds on a **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check** can roughly calculate the maximum amount of weight (200lbs) that the ledge can hold before collapsing.

The Main Chamber. This area is incredibly large, with a gaping hole roughly 15ft in diameter in the center of the room. As the characters enter this chamber, read or paraphrase the following:

The quakes nearly deafen you. Sand, stone, and dirt fall all around you. Within the short breaks between tremors, you can hear a horrendous screaming that fills the chamber. You can see the girl in black holding a prisoner over the edge of a widening chasm in the ground. She holds a dagger up above her head and yells something in an unearthly language. Beside her stand two brutes, each with a bound prisoner in their grasp.

If Soakash or Messhna are with the party continue to read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly, without warning, your yuan-ti companion/s strike, rushing at the dark mystic first. They curse loudly in their native tongue, as her eyes turn to meet them.

Unless Soakash or Messhna rush into combat, and due to the noise, falling debris, and complete focus on the ritual, there is a chance that Ilishara

and her servants will not notice the party as they enter the room. You can allow a **Stealth check** for the party contested by a **Perception check** with disadvantage by **Ilishara**, the two thugs, and the prisoners. If the party successfully sneaks up on her, they will be able to reach the villain in time to save the prisoner. If, however, the characters fail the stealth check, Ilishara notices them and immediately buries the dagger deep into the prisoner's heart. When she does this, read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly, the mystic snaps her head towards you, sensing your presence.
"Trespassers! you cannot stop me now, for I am within reach! The Tarrasque will be awakened and mind swapped at my beckoning! Bow before me and join me in my ascent!" With this an incredibly powerful tremor widens the hole by another 20 feet in diameter, causing debris to fall from the ceiling and shatter about you. The woman in black feverishly grins at you as her dagger strikes down, biting deep into the prisoner's chest. She stares you with a hunger for power in the eyes before she lets the lifeless body topple into the pit below.

ROLEPLAYING ILISHARA & THE TACTICS SHE USES

Before running this encounter, familiarize yourself with Ilishara's description in **Appendix A**. How this encounter plays out may vary depending upon whether or not the party arrives with **Soakash**. Regardless of this, **Ilishara** takes a similar approach. She would much rather persuade the party to join her than engage them directly. Her first instinct may be to use the **Rod of Rulership (DMG, p196)** she possesses or any of her powerful charming spells. The rod has not been used yet this day.

Ilishara suffers from **madness (Appendix C: Ilishara's Journal)** and considering her complete dedication to the task at hand, she may decide that talking is not an option.

Use your discretion, tailoring her actions to fit the style of play that you and your group prefer. She is accompanied by two obedient men who she recruited when passing through the trading post days before. **Herschel (cult fanatic)** and **Vril (berserker)** will not hesitate to sacrifice themselves to save Ilishara.

CREATURES

1 x Ilishara - *Enchanter* (*Appendix A*)

1 x *Cult Fanatic* (*MM*, p345)

1 x *Beserker* (*MM*, p344)

AREA 5: ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

APL 1: Remove Vril. Remove Herschel.

APL 2: Give both Herschel and Vril stats of cultists.

APL 3: Give Herschel stats of a cultist. Reduce Vril's maximum HP to 30.



CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This brings us to the conclusion of Tremors in the Sand. Depending on how fast your group of players performed will determine which of the following outcomes to describe to them.

SUCCEEDING THE MISSION

If the players do indeed stop Ilishara before she completes her evil plans, read or paraphrase the following:

As the final blow strikes the mystic truly, she falls to her knees. Tears stream her face before her eyes deaden and her body falls limp. A slight tremor rumbles the ground again but it is not loud enough to mask the voice that now, somehow, carries over it.

“Ahh! Good show! Great work everybody! It was almost too late, but I had faith in you, you know?” The old man, Spence, from the trading post, now stands before you at the entrance to the chamber. Noticeably his eyes now glimmer with a brassy sheen. He hobbles on his walking staff to the edge of the gaping hole and retrieves a scroll from beneath his dusty robes. Unfurling it, Spence begins to chant a beautiful lullaby in a spidery language. As the scroll begins to flame alight and burn away, the tremor eases and the hole begins to slowly heal itself.

“Now, let us leave this place before the whole thing topples down on us shall we?” he motions to you as a group and leads the way out.

Once the players are outside with **Spence**, he will reveal himself in his true form, an **ancient brass dragon**. He explains to any characters who listen, that he is a part of an order of an order of dragons, The Keepers, who have been divinely tasked with protecting the world from awakening the tarrasque slumbering beneath the sands. Due to his fledging age, and his disability, Spence is nothing more than a sentry, reporting any news and threats back to the head keepers. Spence has lost the knack for commanding his innate draconic magic, and suffers from an impendency with his breath weapon due to his age. As the party left the trading post on their journey, Spence continued on his duty to deliver his report, returning just in time with the unique scroll that could ease the slumber of the tarrasque once more.

REWARDS

On successfully stopping Ilishara and her evil designs, the party should either **gain a level** or receive **5000 XP** to be shared amongst the party members.

Besides rewarding a Level Up or XP for completing the mission and defeating foes, the party can also receive the following rewards:

- 100XP for each prisoner rescued (if applicable)
- 1d4+2 x **50gp gems** from the runaway captive if he lives
- Spence will reward each party member 100gp upon return.
- If they rescued the prisoners and defeated Ilishara, roll 1d2 times on **Treasure Hoard: Challenge 5-10 (DMG, p137)**. Otherwise, roll 1d2 times on **Magic Item Table F (DMG, p146)**.
- Ilishara wears two necklaces, which she stole from the statues in **Area 2**. They are each worth 200gp. However, if they are both placed back on the statues, the party members will be completely healed and each will have an 18% chance of receiving a **blessing (DMG, p. 227)** from the statues.



FAILING THE MISSION

Failing the mission is to fail in stopping Ilishara from awakening the tarrasque. The problem here is that the tarrasque is slumbering underground, and under the temple. When it awakens the heroes are at 'ground zero', and by rights should perish. This is one of the tougher decisions that a DM needs to make, especially at these low levels. There are ultimately two options and you, as the Dungeon Master, should choose one, and use the boxed text provided to describe the event.

Note: Even if the PCs survive the awakening, they still have a *TARRASQUE* walking around destroying the area. This may lead to further adventuring for the characters and might be a great Tier 2 – Tier 3 story arc. But be prepared.

Once the timer hits the 4 hour (in-game) mark as shown on the fillable *Event-Time Tracker* table in **Chapter 3**, read or paraphrase the following:

As you step over the rubble-ridden floors of the temple another tremor hits. This one, however, is far stronger than any that came before it. After a moment of pure chaos, you realize that this tremor is not stopping. Suddenly the floor splits in two as spires of deep earth soar up and through the temple roof, destroying it. A chasm opens before you and from within you see one giant orange eye lined with dusty horns. It flickers its reptilian eyelids as the hot sun bursts through the collapsing building. Then the floor heaves up, down, and back up again as you are launched from your feet.

You each land and look back to see the earth being broken through like a lizard breaching its shell at birth. The world seems to break apart as rubble, earth, and flame burst from the ground. Then the head of the tarrasque emerges from the chasm. Its roar is deafening. A woman in black stands upon its snout, cackling with newfound power. The tarrasque shakes its head and she falls, only to be caught by the tarrasque's jaws.

"Noooo, I command you, receive my mind and..." is all she lets out before the jaws close down over their first meal in a millennium. A giant scaly foot breaks the surface no more than 200 feet away and soars through the air towards you.

If the characters are to **perish**, read on to the following:

This moment seems to last for an age as the foot drops closer and closer. Rubble and dirt pour from the scales, and you realize it is too late. There is no time to escape, as the gargantuan reptilian foot closes over you. Then there is nothing but oblivion.

If the characters are to **survive**, read on to the following:

This moment seems to last for an age before the foot drops closer, and closer. Rubble and dirt pour from the scales as it slams down with earth-shattering force, only feet away from you. The beast lifts its foot high into the sky again as your vision is swallowed by the mighty torso moving over and away from you. Before long the gigantic beast is far enough away for you to gather yourself and make your escape. When you finally pull yourself from the wreckage you see, far off towards the horizon, the tarrasque headed for the trading post where you were not so long ago.



APPENDIX A: NPCs



ILISHARA (ENCHANTER)

Medium humanoid (human); lawful evil

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 65 (15d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +6, History +6

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages any four languages

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Mind Melt (1/day). Ilishara chooses up to four creatures within 60ft of her. She does not need to see these creatures. She sends a psionic wave of energy forth from her mind. The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or find themselves under one of these effects:

MIND MELT

1d6 Result

1. The creature is paralyzed until its next turn
2. The creature must immediately use its reaction to run away in fear
3. The creature is charmed by Ilishara and attacks her nearest enemy
4. The creature takes 3d6 psychic damage and falls prone
5. The creature is blinded for 1d4 minutes
6. Ilishara controls the creature's next turn

Spellcasting. The enchanter is a 9th level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The enchanter has the following wizard spells prepared:

Can trips (at will): friends, mage hand, mending, message

1st level (4 slots): charm person,* mage armor, magic missile

2nd level (3 slots): hold person,* invisibility, suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): fireball, haste, tongues

4th level (3 slots): dominate beast,* stonkskin

5th level (2 slots): hold monster*

*Enchantment spell of 1st level or higher

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6 - 1) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d8 - 1) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

REACTIONS

Instinctive Charm (Recharges after the Enchanter Casts an Enchantment Spell of 1st Level or Higher). The enchanter tries to magically divert an attack made against it, provided that the attacker is within 30 feet of it and visible to it. The enchanter must decide to do so before the attack hits or misses.

The attacker must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the attacker targets the creature closest to it, other than the enchanter or itself. If multiple creatures are closest, the attacker chooses which one to target.

ROLEPLAYING INFORMATION

Ideal: Knowledge is the only way to true power.

Bond: I will stop at nothing to achieve my task and prove myself to the dark powers.

Flaw: I am growing increasingly mad and fear I may lose control of myself one day.

APPENDIX B: MAGIC ITEMS (HANDOUTS)

LAMP OF THE MESMERIZER

Wondrous item, uncommon, requires attunement

The light of this lamp never dies. A character attuned to the lamp may will it to shine a light. The effect is immediate, and does not use an action. Extinguishing the light requires only the desire to do so. It shines a bright light in a 20ft cone and dim light 20ft beyond this. As an action, the user of the lamp can cast prestidigitation (unlimited use) or hypnotic pattern (1/day).

DAGGER OF FEAR

Uncommon, requires attunement

This is a magical +1 dagger. A creature hit by this dagger must make a **DC 12 Wisdom saving throw** or find itself under the effects of the fear spell. This saving throw can be repeated at the beginning of each of the creature's following turns. Once a creature has successfully passed the saving throw, the fear spell no longer works against the creature for 1 day.

This dagger is cursed. Whenever a creature attacks with it, they must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or fall under the dagger's fear effect, the source of the fear being the missed target

APPENDIX B: MAGIC ITEMS (HANDOUTS)

ILISHARA'S JOURNAL

Wondrous item, rare

The parchment in this journal was crafted from an ancient sentient tree. The tree, when alive, granted wishes to the pure of heart. Now, in this form, rather than wishes, the pages of the journal inflict curses. A creature who opens the book must succeed on a **DC 16 Wisdom saving throw** or be compelled to read it for one hour, unwilling to do anything else. This throw must be repeated after that hour. Only a remove curse spell can end this effect. Regardless of the result of the saving throw, reading the book has different effects depending on the amount of time spent reading it.

READING THE JOURNAL

<i>Amount of Time</i>	<i>Who is present in the area</i>
1 minute	Roll on the Short-Term Madness table (DMG, p259)
1 hour	Roll on the Long-Term Madness table (DMG, p260)
1 day (24 hrs)	Receive one blessing (see DMG, p. 227) Roll on the Indefinite Madness Table (DMG, p. 260)

A character who spends at least 10 minutes reading the journal will learn more about Ilishara's past. Feel free to share some of the information from the synopsis section above with this character.

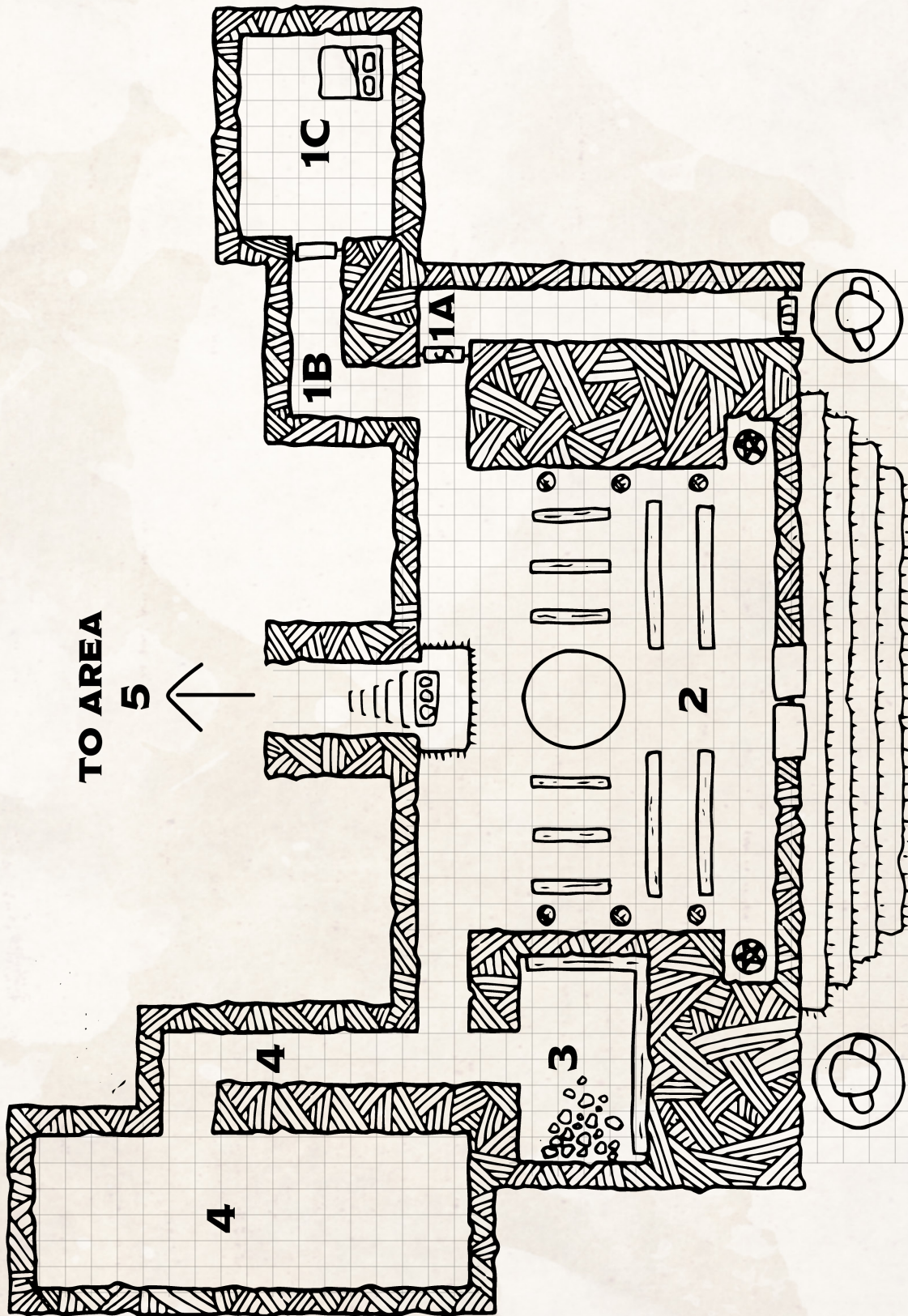
APPENDIX C: MAPS (PLAYER'S DESERT HEX MAP)



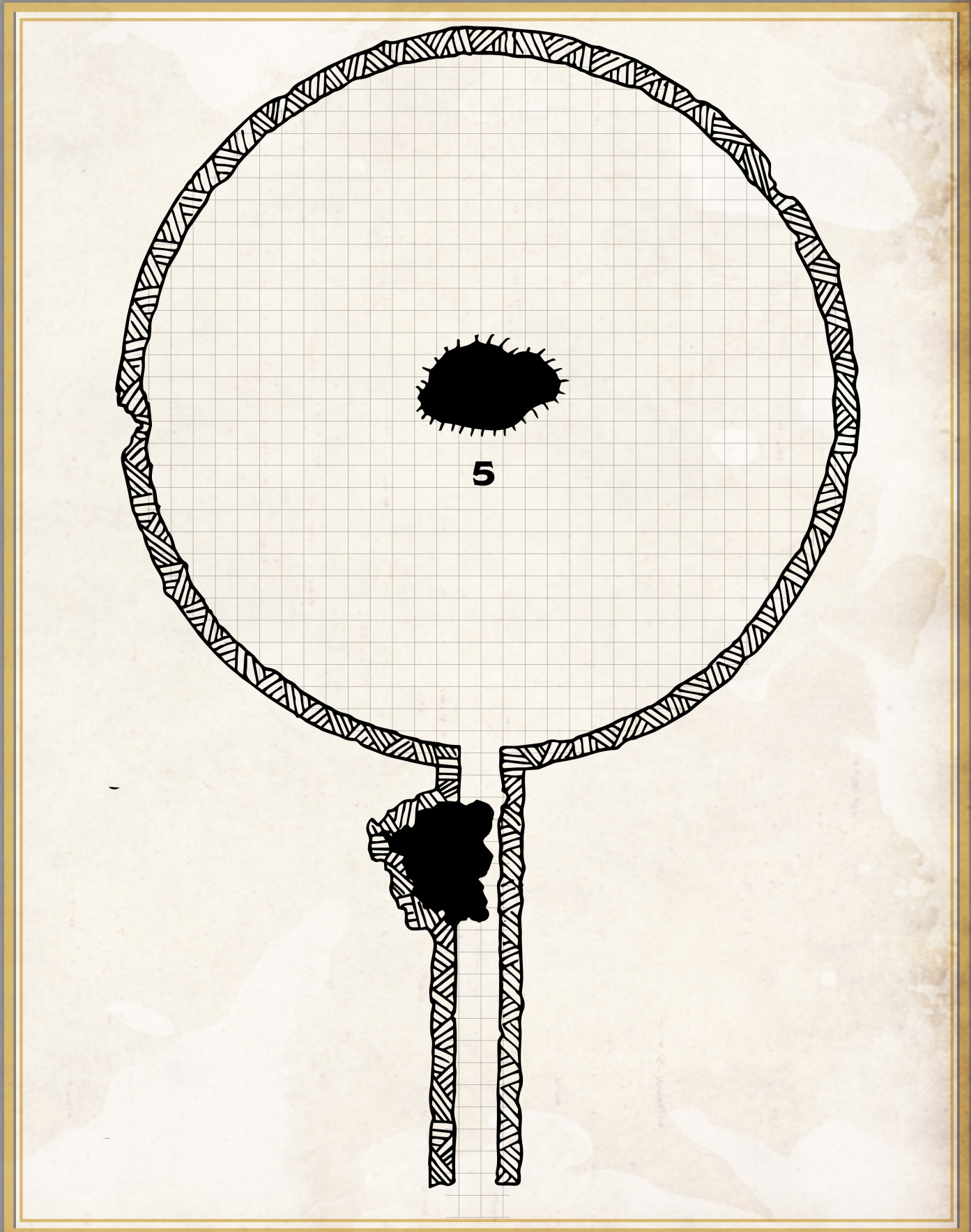
APPENDIX C: MAPS (DM'S DESERT HEX MAP)



APPENDIX C: MAPS (DM'S TEMPLE MAP)



APPENDIX C: MAPS (DM's TEMPLE MAP)



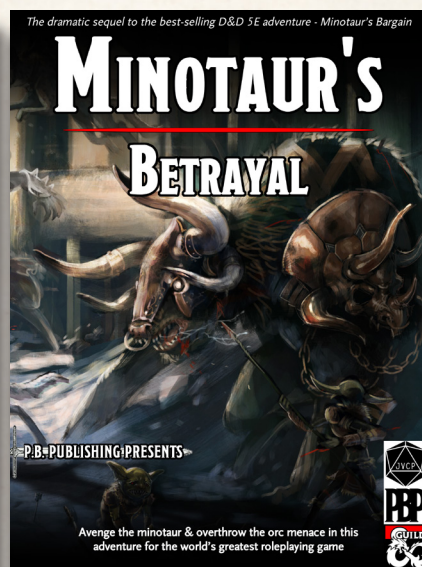
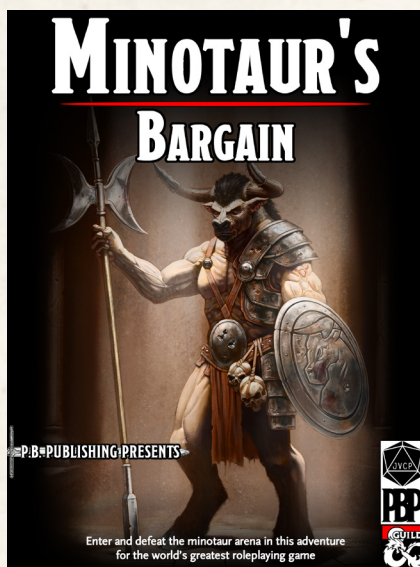
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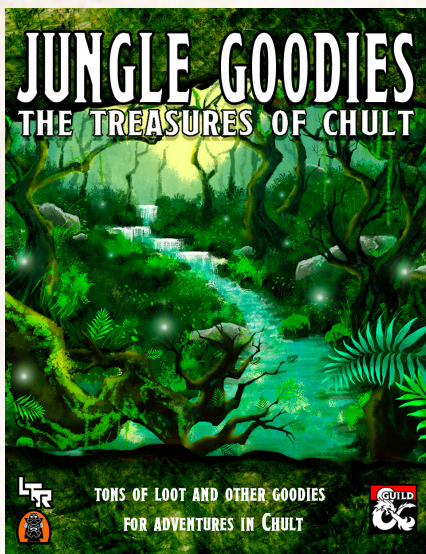


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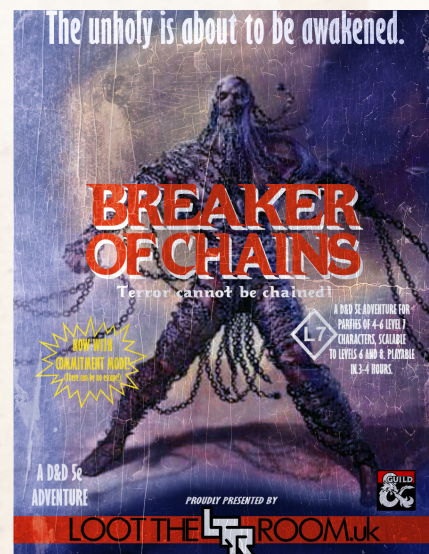
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