



# Advanced Adventures

## The Verdant Vault of Malakum

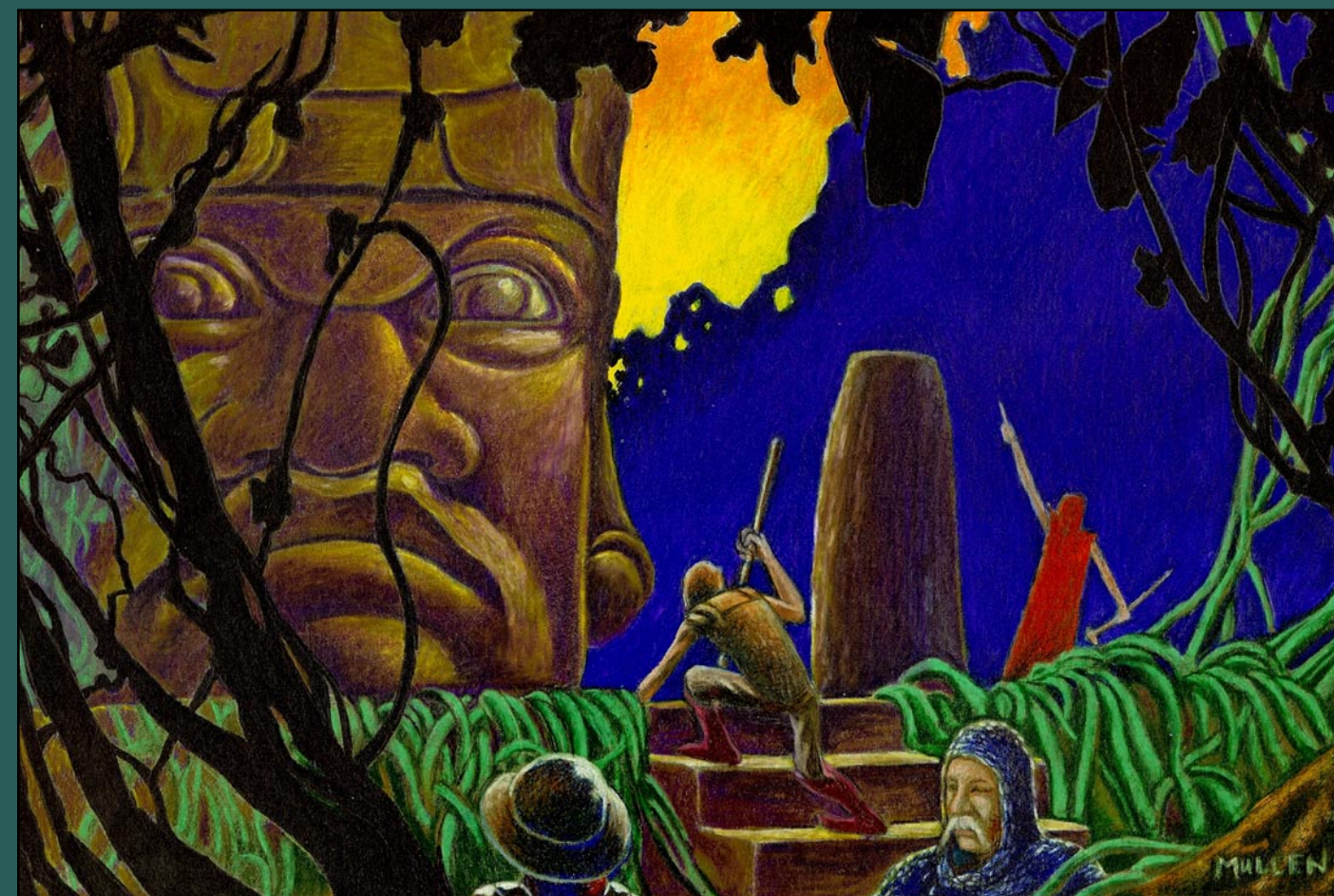
By Alphonso Warden

### The Verdant Vault of Malakum

Well over 2,000 years ago, Malakum ruled his jungle kingdom with a stern hand and possessed a pitiless, cruel nature. He enjoyed performing magical experiments on his own people in which he grafted onto their bodies various plant parts, in most cases killing his victims outright and at other times producing hybrid abominations. It was therefore no surprise that Malakum's people tired of his harsh rule and mounted a rebellion, assassinating him and almost all his advisors virtually overnight.

Fortunately for Malakum, his tomb had been completed several years before his death. Immediately after the mage-king's demise a few surviving members of his priesthood smuggled his body out of the palace for interment and placed Malakum's mummy in his tomb. Their grisly task done, the priests fled into the jungle and the tomb of Malakum has remained inviolate all these centuries...

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An OSRIC™ module designed for 4-6 adventurers of levels 8-10

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**Exeditious Retreat Press**



# ADVANCED ADVENTURES MODULE #14

# The Verdant Vault of Malakum

by Alphonso Warden

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 8-10



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*Author's Note: It is my hope that you and your players derive as much enjoyment in participating in this module as I did in designing it, for in so doing I tried to replicate the general feel of the fabulous jungle romances of H. Rider Haggard and Edgar Rice Burroughs. I must make mention of the recent passing of the man who was the primary architect of this beloved pastime of ours, whose unique vision ignited the imaginations of thousands of fantasy role-playing gamers worldwide. In Memorium Gary Gyga. In Ludis, veritas est.*

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## The Verdant Vault of Malakum

**Introduction:** Well over 2,000 years ago, there existed a vast jungle kingdom ruled by a man called Malakum, who was descended from a long line of mage-kings. Like his regal forebears, Malakum ruled with a stern hand and possessed a pitiless, cruel nature. The sadistic liege was greatly feared by his subjects particularly because of his unnatural fascination with plants of every species. He enjoyed performing magical experiments on his own people in which he grafted onto their bodies various plant parts, in most cases killing his victims outright and at other times producing hybrid abominations. The mage-king also perfected various and sundry magical ointments and poisons extracted from plants, which he always tested on his unwilling subjects. It was therefore no surprise that Malakum's people tired of his rule and mounted a rebellion, assassinating him and almost all of his advisors virtually overnight. Without a ruler, however, Malakum's subjects soon reverted to savagery and eventually fled into the heart of the jungle to live out the remainder of their lives.

Fortunately for Malakum, his tomb had been completed several years before his death. Immediately after the mage-king's demise resulting from an obsidian dagger cut to the throat complements of one of his former servants, a few surviving members of his priesthood were able to smuggle his body out of the palace for internment. After spending several weeks preparing their liege's corpse with exotic oils and powders, these priests placed Malakum's mummy in his tomb. Their grisly task done, the priests fled into the jungle with the rest of the citizens of the city, and vanished into history. The tomb of Malakum has remained inviolate all these centuries...

**STOP! If you plan to participate in this adventure as a player, then stop reading here. Prior knowledge of this module's contents will only spoil your enjoyment of the game.**

**Notes for the Game Master:** The Verdant Vault of Malakum is an OSRIC adventure designed for four to six characters of levels 8 through 10. The party should include at least one thief or assassin (PC or NPC) due to the high number of traps encountered. At least one +1 weapon should be available to the group.

The PCs are brought into the adventure when they are approached by a scholarly hedge wizard named Festin while relaxing in a local inn or mead hall. After inviting the PCs over to his table for a round of drinks on him, Festin explains to the PCs that he wishes to hire them to fully catalogue the contents of a recently-discovered tomb located deep in the surrounding jungle. He offers the PCs 1,000 gp up front to help equip them for the arduous trek through the dense and dangerous jungle, and promises them another 4,000 gp should they provide him with a detailed plan of the tomb and, most importantly, recover the spell book of the legendary mage-king thought to be interred within. Should the PCs accept Festin's offer, he gives them a crude though accurate map to the tomb, which lies three miles away from their present location. If the PCs ask for details on the discovery of the tomb, Festin tells them that a group of local hunters discovered the upper ruins of the tomb while hunting down a wild boar. Being naturally superstitious, the hunters returned to the inn with a wild look in their eyes several days later, informing the barkeeper, a good friend of Festin, of the haunted air surrounding the bleak charnel house. The hunters told the barkeeper, who later told Festin, that they were descended from a powerful but wicked people who built vast cities in the jungle, and that the tombs of their rulers were to be avoided at all costs lest the ghosts of their ancestors place a curse upon them.

Once in the jungle, the PCs can only cover 4 miles per day due to the dense foliage that surrounds them on all sides. This assumes, of course, that the PCs are in possession of porters to carry their supplies and machetes with which to cut their path through the jungle. (Without such concessions, travel distance is reduced to 2 miles every day). As the PCs explore the jungle, the GM should check for wandering monsters twice daily and thrice nightly. There is a 4 in 10 chance per check that a random encounter occurs. When an encounter is called for, consult the following section.

## WANDERING MONSTERS

**Special Note:** In the jungle, clerics attempting to turn undead and evil creatures from the lower planes suffer a -2 penalty to their die rolls. Such creatures that are normally automatically destroyed by the cleric are instead turned. A cleric that can ordinarily automatically turn one type of undead/lower planar creature now needs to roll a 4 or higher to do so. This is on account of the intense aura of evil that pervades the entire jungle.

- 1-2 **Ghasts** (AC 4; MV 150 ft.; HD 4; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8; SA Paralyzation; SD Carrion stench, immune to sleep or charm spells; AL CE) leading a pack of 3-4 ghouls\* (AC 6; MV 90 ft.; HD 2; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA Paralyzation; SD Immune to sleep or charm spells; AL CE). These creatures are all that remains of King Malakum's subjects who refused to leave the city after he was deposed. Because the vast stores of food in the palace were either looted or destroyed during the rebellion, the stragglers were forced to turn to cannibalism in order to survive. Upon death, they arose as ghouls and ghasts and roam the jungle to this very day, attacking anything in sight.
- 2-3 **Spectres** (AC 2; MV 150 ft./300 ft.; HD 7+3; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 plus special; SA Touch drains 2 levels; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; AL LE). A few of the more evil priests of King Malakum arose as specters upon death, and haunt the jungle with an insatiable hunger for the life-forces of the living.
- 2-3 **Giant Spiders** (AC 4; MV 30 ft./120 ft. in web; HD 4+4; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SA Poisonous bite; AL CE). These monstrously overgrown arachnids abound in the jungle. A PC passing by one of the tall trees of the jungle may be caught unawares when one these horrors leaps onto his shoulder and bites him.
- 3-4 **Violet Fungi** (AC 7; MV 10 ft.; HD 3; #AT 1-4; Dmg Rots flesh; AL N). These horrors lash out at the PCs with their tentacles from 10 feet away in an attempt to weaken them with their rot ability.
- 1 **Shambling Mound** (AC 0; MV 60 ft.; HD 11; #AT 2; Dmg 2-16/2-16; SA Suffocation; SD Immune to fire, lightning causes it to grow, cold does ½ or no damage, weapons score ½ damage, immune to all spells save those that affect plants; AL N). The jungle houses several of these creatures. In his many foul experiments, Malakum created these hostile abominations by grafting the tissue from a rare species of carnivorous plant onto the bodies of his unwilling human subjects. These bellicose creatures immediately lash out at any PCs encountered with their two arm-like appendages. If they hit with both ropy members, the PC is entangled and suffocates in 2-8 rounds.
- 6-1 **Will-O-(The)-Wisp** (AC -8; MV 180 ft.; HD 9; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; SD Dimming, immune to all spells save protection from evil, magic missile, and maze; AL CE). A few of these evil orbs of glowing light inhabit the jungle. They attempt to drain the life of any so foolish as to cross their path.
- Quicksand:** These patches of loose, spongy soil can be avoided with a successful save vs. paralyzation. Moderately encumbered victims sink into the muck and drown in 3 rounds. (Lightly encumbered PCs drown in 5 rounds). Those who avoided the quicksand can pull out a sinking companion with a successful open doors roll.
- 1-2 **Tigers** (AC 6; MV 120 ft.; HD 5+5; #AT 3; Dmg 2-5/2-5/10-10; SA Rear claws for 2-8/2-8; SD Surprised 1-in-6; AL N). These great cats are always hungry and attack will anything in sight. They flee if fire is vigorously brandished or they take more than half their hit points in damage.
- 1 **Paleoscincus** (AC -3; MV 30 ft.; HD 9; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; AL N). These massive armor-plated dinosaurs are generally peaceful but have been known to mow down those who get in their way. When Malakum's kingdom was at its height, his warriors would often ride into battle atop these mighty beasts.
- 2-5 **Giant Spitting Snakes** (AC 5; MV 120 ft.; HD 4+2; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3 plus poison; SA Poisonous bite and spittle; AL N). These ophidian terrors shoo off intruders into their domain with a quick expectoration of venomous goo.

## KEY TO THE TOMB OF MALAKUM

The upper works of Malakum's tomb takes shape as a 70-foot-wide by 50-foot-long platform with a 30-foot-diameter stone head sprouting from its middle. The face on the stone head is of a man with a sensuous mouth, a square jaw, a flattened nose, pendulous ears, and bulging eyes, with the crude carving of a crown-like ornament spanning his broad forehead. The platform and sculpture are almost wholly covered in lianas that have grown in place for several centuries, with only bits of the monument's basaltic stonework visible. The tomb is accessed by a 5-foot-square secret door located 5 feet up the back of the stone head. The counter-balanced, 3-foot-thick portal clicks open when its lower left-hand section is depressed. Afterwards, it can be easily pivoted about its center, opening onto area 1 (c.f.). Before being able to access said door, however, the PCs will need to devote at least 6 man-hours to cutting away the thick vegetation covering the queer sculpture. Immediately flanking the stone head to the east and west are 10-foot-tall, 3-foot-wide basaltic columns curiously free of any vegetation. They are actually roper guardians lying in temporal stasis and concealed via illusion. Both spells are deactivated as soon as the PCs come within 10 feet of the stone casque. The ropers immediately spring to attack, surprising the PCs 5 times in 6. They continue battling the potential plunderers of their master's tomb unto death.

**Ropers (2)** (AC 0; MV 30 ft.; HD 12; hp 75, 80; #AT 1; Dmg 5-20; SA 6 poisonous strands; SD Camouflage; AL CE).

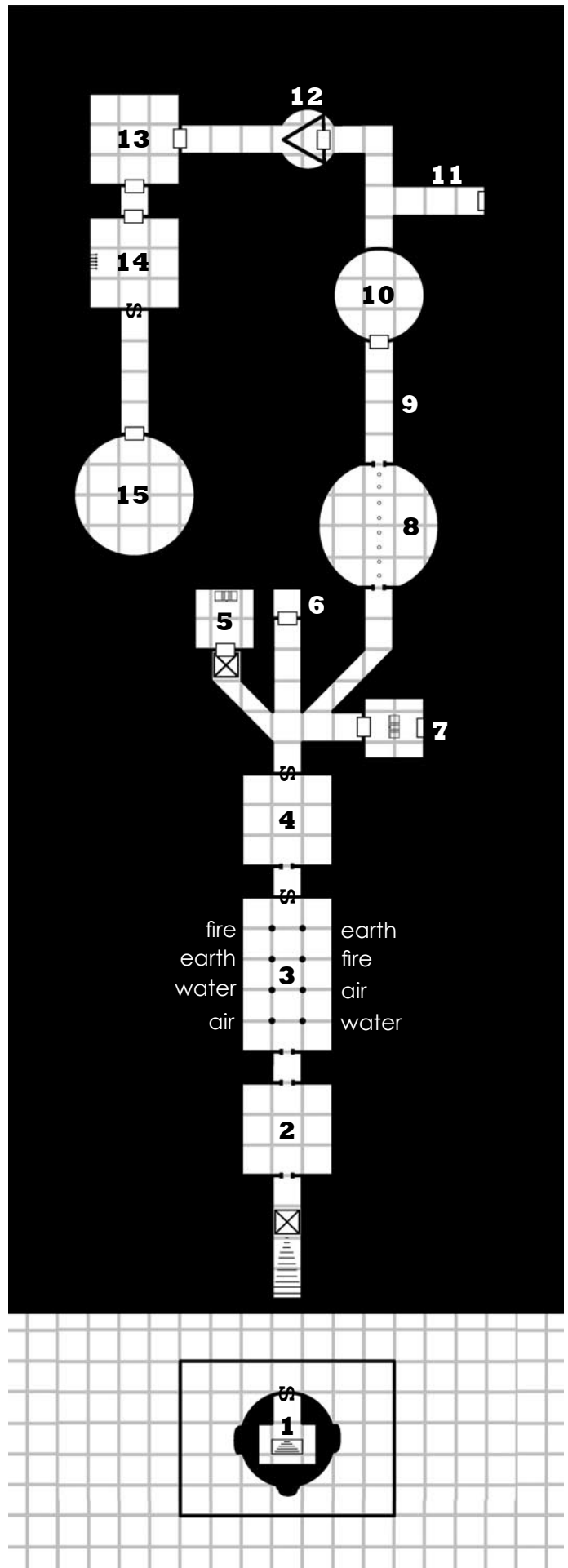
**Dungeon Features:** The stone head is constructed of cyclopean, worked blocks of purplish basalt. The corridors and rooms comprising the main tomb, which lies below ground, were carved directly out of the basaltic bedrock, and are perfectly smooth. Unless stated otherwise, all rooms and corridors have 7-foot-high ceilings. All doors, unless otherwise noted, are constructed of strong steel, are mechanically locked, and are devoid of any decoration. The handles on such are in the shape of orchid flowers. Cup-like stone fonts, mounted high and spaced at regular 5-foot-intervals, line all of the corridors and most of the rooms. They are lit with continual flames. (They function as the spell **continual light**, manifesting as wavering blue flames of cold fire).

**Special Note:** Clerics attempting to turn undead and creatures from the lower planes suffer a -6 penalty to their die rolls. This is on account of the intense aura of evil that pervades the entire tomb. Such creatures that are normally automatically destroyed by the cleric are instead turned. A cleric that can ordinarily automatically turn one type of undead/lower planar creature now needs to roll a 6 or higher to do so.

1. **FOYER:** The austere chamber within the massive stone head measures 20 feet wide by 15 feet long and has a corbelled ceiling. In the middle of the floor lies a steep flight of stone steps that descend 60 feet to the corridor preceding area 2. There are 60 steps in total, and every 3rd and 7th step is trapped. Any weight placed thereon causes all of the steps to rotate, transforming the entire flight into a 60-foot-long slide. Unless the PCs make a successful Dexterity check at a -4 penalty, they plummet into the pit that immediately opens at the bottom of the slide. The pit is 30 feet deep and ends in a shallow pool composed of green slime, black pudding, ochre jelly, and mustard jelly. (PCs making their Dexterity check manage to jump back into room 1 or grab onto the side of pit at the bottom of the slide—50% for either occurrence—suffering 2-12 hp of tumbling damage in the latter instance). Of course, PCs falling into the pit are subject to immediate and automatic hits by all four oozes lairing therein.

**Black Pudding** (AC 6; MV 60 ft.; HD 10; hp 60; #AT 1; Dmg 3-24; SA Dissolves wood and metal; SD Blows, cold, and lightning do not harm; AL N).

**Green Slime** (AC 9; MV 0 ft.; HD 2; hp 16; #AT 1; Dmg special; SA Turns flesh to slime in 1-4 rounds; AL N).



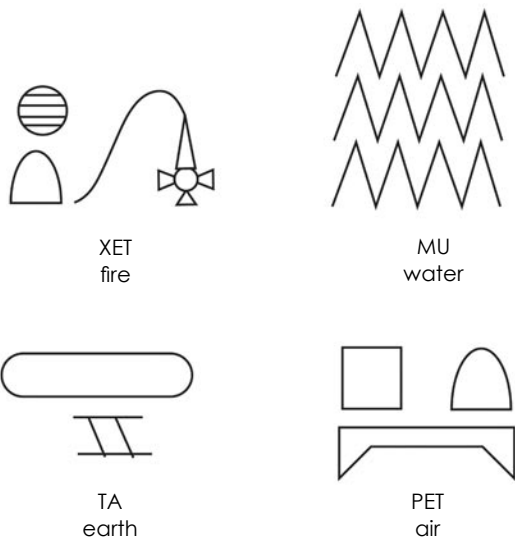
**Ochre Jelly** (AC 8; MV 30 ft.; HD 6; hp 40; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12; SD Lightning bolt divides; AL N).

**Mustard Jelly** (AC 4; MV 90 ft.; HD 7+14; hp 56; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 5-20 or 2-8/2-8; SA Toxic vapor, can divide body in two; SD ½ damage from cold, impervious to electricity, magic missiles cause growth, lightning bolt divides; AL N).

2. **TENDRILS OF TERROR:** The east and west walls of this 30-foot-square room are pockmarked with dozens of 1-inch-diameter holes concealed via illusion. As soon as the PCs step 10 feet into the room, a series of 15-foot-long snaky green tendrils violently erupt from the orifices. Each PC is targeted by four tendrils, two per wall. The tendrils are a variant of the spell **black tentacles**, and force any PC in range to make a saving throw vs. spell/per tentacle to avoid their grasp. A failed save results in the PC suffering 1-8 hit points of damage per tentacle on the first round and 3-10 hit points every round thereafter. Every round that the PCs remain in the room subjects them to another four black tentacle attacks apiece. Once a PC has been totally incapacitated, meaning that all four of his limbs are held in place by the trap, the tentacles violently retract back into the wall, which effectively draws and quarters the victim, resulting in his immediate death. Each black tentacle is AC 4 and has 12 hit points. Apart from hacking through a tentacle, an ensnared PC or one of his companions can tear it free with a successful lift gates roll.
3. **ELEMENTAL EVIL:** The archway to the south opens onto a 30-foot-wide and 50-foot-long chamber, the plastered walls of which are entirely covered in brightly-painted hieroglyphics. Two rows of four hypostyle columns each march from one end of the room to the other. They are festooned with an assortment of hieroglyphic carvings in low relief. However, at eye level short groupings of three or less glyphs stand out in high relief on each of the eight pillars.

Before his transformation into undeath, King Malakum, apart from being a formidable magician, was a learned scholar and world traveler. He was especially fascinated by the ancient land of his neighbors to the east, Kemet, the "Black Land." He would often spend his summer holiday, incognito, relaxing on the verdant banks of the sacred river with a host of loyal retainers to attend to his every need. It is for this reason that Malakum had his royal architects construct this very room, which features a fiendish trap of Kemetian design.

If the PCs indicate an interest in translating the hieroglyphics on the walls, then feel free to insert random phrases from the *Reu Nu Pert Em Hru*, the Egyptian Book of the Dead. (The wall hieroglyphs are mere time-wasters, and should not provide any clues on how to safely negotiate the room). For PC parties



unversed in the written language of the ancient Kemetians, the hieroglyphics can be translated via a successful read languages percentile roll or an appropriate spell such as comprehend languages. Each column bears a single hieroglyphic grouping along its four cardinal directions in high relief, each corresponding to the sign for one of the four basic elements in the cosmology of the ancient Kemetians. (The map indicates which elemental sign is found on a given column). An illustration of the four elemental glyphs along with their translations from ancient Kemetians to English is below left.

Half a round after the PCs step through the entrance archway, a stone panel falls from the ceiling, sealing the room. (The stone panel can only be raised with a successful lift gates roll). At the same time, water begins pouring from smallish holes in the ceiling at a high rate of flow. PCs making an Intelligence check at a -2 penalty notice the water hieroglyphs on the rightmost column nearest the entrance slowly sinking. These glyphs along with those on the other water-aligned column in the room come fully flush with the surface of their columns 1 round later. The water floods the room at a rate of 1 foot per round. Being as the ceiling of the room is only 10 feet above the floor, the PCs effectively have 10 rounds to escape from the room before they begin to drown. PCs can hold their breath for the number of rounds equal to their Constitution scores divided by 3. Beyond this period, they must make further Constitution checks at a -2 penalty for each subsequent round. Those failing any such check drown.

The only way to open the drains on the floor and plug the holes in the roof is to push one of the four fire glyphs on one of the two fire-aligned columns, which causes the remaining seven glyphs to automatically sink into their columns. The PCs should deduce this because fire is the antithesis of water in the ancient Egyptian elemental scheme. Thankfully for the PCs, the room's rate of draining is much more rapid than its rate of flooding. Once the appropriate glyph is depressed, the room drains at a rate of 3 feet per round.

Unfortunately, the PCs must endure two more elemental trials before making good their escape from the room. The moment that all of the water drains away, highly agitated air starts shooting out of the holes in the floor. Again, PCs making an Intelligence check at a -2 penalty notice the air glyphs on the leftmost column nearest the door slowly sinking in. As with the water glyphs, the air glyphs come flush with the surface of their respective columns 1 round later. The winds whipping madly about the room act much like an air elemental's whirlwind attack. The whirlwind takes 2 rounds to form, after which time all caught within it take 2-16 points of damage per round. It dissipates 8 rounds later. While in the whirlwind, the PCs must make successful Dexterity checks at a -2 penalty for every 10 feet of movement attempted. Those failing their checks fall over and cannot act until the next round. The only way to counteract the trap is to depress one of the four earth glyphs on the appropriate two columns in the room. In the elemental scheme of the ancient Kemetians, earth was the antithesis of air, or the sky.

The moment the PCs disable the whirlwind trap, thin columns of flame start shooting up from the holes drilled into the floor. Because the dozens of drain holes in the floor are so closely packed together, being no farther than three inches apart from each other, the PCs immediately start taking 3-12 hit points of fire damage per round, no saving throw allowed. However, the PCs can make item saves vs. fire for their possessions at +2. Again, PCs making an Intelligence check at a -2 penalty notice the fire glyphs on the column nearest them slowly sinking into the column. As you may have guessed, the only way to deactivate the trap is for the PCs to depress one of the water glyphs on the columns, water, of course, being the antithesis of fire in the elemental scheme of the ancient Kemetians. After this is done,

the stone panel closing off the entrance rises back up into the ceiling. At the same time, the secret door along the north wall clicks open into the room, thereby allowing the PCs to exit.

**GM Note:** PCs pushing the wrong button must save vs. spells or be disintegrated.

4. **SON OF THE SUN; DAUGHTER OF THE MOON:** On the opposite wall of this 30-foot-square room is a vividly-painted engraving in high relief. The image on the right is of King Malakum as young man bedecked in a voluminous orange robe. He is holding above his head with both hands a 3-foot-diameter image of the solar disc, which is painted a blinding shade of yellow. (The viewer of the solar icon must save vs. spells or be blinded for 3 turns; a **remove blindness** spell negates). 10 feet away from the image of Malakum is that of his faithful and beautiful queen, Belia. She wears a robe of deepest ebon, and is holding a 3-foot-long and 1-foot-wide silver crescent moon above her head with both hands. Last but not most definitely not least, the 15-foot-high ceiling is studded by dozens of sharp spikes.

One round after the PCs step into the room, a stone panel drops down in front of the archway to the south. (The stone panel can only be raised with a successful lift gates roll). At the same time, the spike-studded ceiling starts its slow descent to the floor. It drops at a rate of 1 foot per round, meaning that the PCs have 15 rounds to make good their escape before being squashed into jelly, dying instantly, no save. The secret to escaping this room involves the sun and moon icons on the painted images. PCs investigating the raised relief of King Malakum (in his ceremonial role as the son of the sun god) discover that the sun icon can be easily removed from the wall. Examination of the back of the icon reveals a 6"-high protrusion perfectly conforming to the shape of the crescent moon icon held aloft by the engraving of Queen Belia in her ceremonial role as the daughter of the moon goddess. Should the PCs place the sun icon over that of the crescent moon and then press down, such action immediately stops the ceiling's descent. At the same time, the secret door along the north wall, which lies between the images of King Malakum and Queen Belia, clicks open into the room. (The secret door cannot be opened by any other means save by the casting of a **limited wish** spell). Being as the solar disc and crescent moon icons lie 5 feet above the floor, the PCs effectively have 10 rounds to solve the puzzle of the room before the descending ceiling makes said icons inaccessible.

PCs wishing to **teleport** out of the room when the ceiling starts its descent are in for a surprise, for a permanent anti-magic ward is in effect herein that prevents the operation of all travel-related dweomer. A better way to stop the ceiling is by standing upright a magical weapon such as a sword or mace. The weapon in question must make a successful item save vs. crushing blow at a -4 penalty each and every round. A failed save means that the ceiling snaps the magical weapon in half, ruining it in the process. Normal weapons, even those crafted from superior metals such as mithril, cannot stop the descent of the ceiling for even one round, and break instantly in such an application. It should be noted that a successful lift gates roll made by a PC can stop the ceiling for one round. (Successful rolls must be made every round thereafter to hold the ceiling in place). The ceiling remains flush with the floor for 10 rounds, and then takes another 15 rounds to fully rise up therefrom, thereby resetting the trap in the room.

As a side note, Queen Belia's tomb has yet to be discovered. It is alleged to contain traps and guardians every bit as deadly as those herein. The search to find this tomb could make for a most interesting follow-up adventure.

5. **TREASURY:** The door to this 20-foot-square room is **wizard locked** at caster level 12. At the far end of the chamber is a massive

stone chest that is protected with two intricate locks (-30% to a thief's open locks attempt) in the shape of lotus blossoms. The locks are made of platinum, and are painted a sickly white color. PCs successfully opening the chest are in for a nasty surprise, for the inside lid of such has a **symbol of fear** scribed thereon. Those looking upon such automatically race out of the room at their full movement rate into the adjoining hallway. The activation of the symbol causes the 10 x 10 x 10 foot block of stone covering the pit just outside the door to this room to phase out of existence as soon as the fear-induced PC walks over it, and he automatically falls to the bottom. Those not under the effects of the symbol can avoid falling into the pit with a successful Dexterity check at a -4 penalty. (The pit trap, it should be noted, cannot be detected by a thief's find traps ability nor can it be detected via magic). Those falling into the 30-foot-deep pit suffer 3-18 hp of damage and trigger an attack by the patch of yellow mold growing on the bottom.

**Yellow Mold** (AC 9; MV 0 ft.; HD -; hp -; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA Poison spores; SD Affected only by fire based attacks; AL N).

Treasure: 3,000 gp in assorted coins, 2000 gp worth of assorted jewelry, and two rubies lie in the chest. One of the rubies has no special properties and is valued at 1,000 gp. The other ruby is a **gem of seeing**.

6. **IMPRISONED FIEND:** The door at the end of this hallway opens onto 10 x 10 x 10 foot block of stone. Magically imprisoned in the block is a babau demon, a former servant of King Malakum who had the temerity to countermand one of his orders. As soon as the PCs open the door, the stone block beyond shatters into the hallway, causing 20 hp of damage to anyone within a 20-foot-radius. (Save vs. petrification for half damage). Such action releases the demon from its **temporal stasis**, and it unleashes its fury on the PCs. Of course, the demon tries to **gate** in some additional help from the Abyss should the need arise. The demon flees the tomb should it be reduced to one-quarter hit points.

**Babau Demon** (AC -3; MV 150 ft.; HD 7+14; hp 60; #AT 1 or 3; Dmg by weapon +7 or 2-5/2-5/2-8; SA Cause darkness 5 ft. radius; 9th-level thief abilities; at will (1/round)—**fear** (by touch), **levitate** (as 10th-level magic-user), **fly** (as 11th-level magic-user), **dispel magic** (as 12th-level magic-user), **polymorph self**, **heat metal** (as 14th-level magic-user); **gate** in babau (25% chance of success); gaze acts as ray of enfeeblement (save vs. spell to avoid; 20 ft. range); SD Cutting and stabbing weapons do ½ damage, cold-wrought iron weapons are at +2 hp additional damage per hit; MR 50%; AL CE). Possessions: **Long sword +3**.

7. **GREEN HELL:** The painted walls of this 20-foot-square room vividly depict a motley assortment of carnivorous plants native to the jungle. In the center of the room sits a massive stone chest, which was placed in the tomb as a ruse, being totally empty. It is protected with two intricate locks (-20% to a thief's open locks attempt) in the shape of orchids. The locks are made of platinum, and are painted a vivid red color. Anyone tampering with the first lock causes the steel door along the west wall to slam shut and **wizard lock** (caster level 12). Nothing further happens until the second lock is manipulated, which may give the PCs the impression that whatever trap was placed in the room has malfunctioned. Failing to remove the trap on the second lock partially animates the paintings on the walls, and one shambling mound, two violet fungi, and two yellow musk monster zombies step therefrom into the room. They fight the PCs to the death, afterwards dissolving into pools of slippery goo.

A steel door lies along the east wall. PCs opening such, which is double-locked, find that it opens onto a well of blackness. PCs stepping past the door are instantly snuffed out, for a plane of annihilation spans the entire length, width, and breadth of the shallow niche built into the wall. The plane functions as a **sphere of annihilation**, but is permanently fixed in place.

**Shambling Mound** (1): (AC 0; MV 60 ft.; HD 11; hp 57; #AT 2; Dmg 2-16/2-16; SA Suffocation; SD Immune to fire, lightning causes it to grow, cold does ½ or no damage, weapons score ½ damage, immune to spells save those that affect plants; AL N).

**Violet Fungi** (2): (AC 7; MV 10 ft.; HD 3; hp 6, 14; #AT 1-4; Dmg Rots flesh; AL N).

**Yellow Musk Monster Zombies** (2): (AC 6; MV 90 ft.; HD 6; hp 42; #AT 1; Dmg 4-16; SD Cannot be turned, immune to mind-influencing spells; AL NE).

8. **PATH OF STARS:** The archway to the south opens onto a 40-foot-diameter pit, the ceiling of which lies 10 feet overhead. The floor of the room lies 30 feet below the level of the entrance and the open exit along the far wall. PCs examining the ceiling can't miss the vertical line of seven 3-foot-diameter black circles painted thereon. The first and final circles start 4 feet away from the north and south walls, and each circle is spaced an equal distance away from its neighbor(s), 4 feet. The floor of the room is composed of 1-foot-diameter motes of bluish white light that slowly move against a black background. PCs coming in contact with the floor are in for a rude surprise, for such is composed of infant stars and the dark matter of space. King Malakum's court sorcerers, via the darkest and most puissant of magicks, were able to accomplish nothing less to snatch up a bit of the night sky and relocate it to this room. As can be guessed, the tiny stars radiate great heat and the dark matter between them acts as a total vacuum. PCs so much as touching either are instantly snuffed out, no save.

Directly in front of the entrance, outside the room, is a 3-foot-diameter pedestal. PCs stepping thereon will cause the black circles painted onto the ceiling to detach themselves therefrom and slowly sink toward the floor. The 3-inch-thick discs stop their descent when they are level with the entrance, not deviating from their original orientation, meaning that they are spaced 4 feet apart from each other. Once at floor level, the discs start flipping over like a coin at regular 1-second intervals. The reverse surfaces of the discs are composed of slightly pulsating white light while their obverse is dead black. The black sides of the discs are nothing more than circular voids that instantly disintegrate anything touching them, unless a save vs magic is made at -4. (The sorcerers detailed above were somehow able to remove part of the essence of a black hole and then fuse such onto the back sides of the magical discs). The white sides of the discs are solid and perfectly safe to walk upon. Unfortunately, when a disc's white face is up, that of its nearest neighbor is in the downward position. When the magical discs are first activated, the one nearest the entrance is white side up, the one after that black side up, and the one after that white side up, etc. Such an effect makes timing one's jumps onto the discs quite difficult and potentially deadly, meaning that the jumper must take no more than one second between jumps. In game terms, the PCs must make a successful Dexterity check at a -3 penalty to safely jump onto and off of each disc. To make matters worse, there is an anti-magic effect in the room that automatically spoils any attempts by clever PCs to **fly** or **teleport** across the floor.

9. **DEADLY BLOOM:** This 40-foot-long hallway ends in the steel door leading to area 10. All along the walls are paintings of rose bushes with abnormally large thorns and wilting leaves. When the PCs are halfway down the hall, the paintings partially animate and shoot a volley of magical thorns. Each thorn attacks as an 8 HD monster, and each PC is subject to 2-5 such attacks. Each hit acts as a spent charge from a **staff of withering**. 1 hit results in 2-5 hit points of damage. 2 hits results in 2-5 hit points of damage and ages the victim 10 years. 3 hits results in 2-5 hit points of damage and ages the victim 10 years and withers one of the victim's limbs. 4 hits does 4-10 hit points of damage and ages the victim 10 years and withers one of

the victim's limbs. 5 hits does 4-10 hit points of damage and ages the victim 20 years and withers one of the victim's limbs. A save versus magic prevents withering of limbs, but all other effects cannot be saved against.

10. **VENUS MAN-TRAP:** The floor of this circular chamber is coated in a green, spongy, tar like substance that reeks of rotting flesh and vegetation. A **wizard locked** steel door (caster level 12) stands along the far north wall. The sticky layer is 8 feet thick and is nothing less than the secreted pollen of the Venus man-trap plant lairing at bottom of the room. The pollen is highly corrosive and eats through metal, wood, and leather like the acid of a black pudding. Once it comes in contact with living flesh, however, it anesthetizes the victim for 2-4 turns. (Save vs. petrification to avoid). Worse yet, the spongy layer acts just like the pools of quicksand detailed in the "Wandering Monster Table" above. The Venus man-trap, which is firmly anchored to the floor of the room, can sense the vibrations the PCs make as they walk across the layer of pollen, and it sends up to seven roopy, questing tendrils, one per PC, to entrap its potential food. These tendrils possess the rot ability of violet fungi and have the gripping strength of those sprouting from the body of a roper. They try to pull their victims through the pollen layer and into the waiting mouth of the Venus man-trap below. The 10-foot-diameter body of the Venus man-trap has 12 HD and 80 hp, is made of a chitinous material giving it an AC of 3, and possess a terrible bite which deals 5-20 hp of damage. It has the usual immunities of a plant and is especially susceptible to a **cone of cold** spell, which stops it for 2-4 rounds before its internal body heat resuscitates it. The abnormally moist Venus man-trap and the equally moist pollen it secretes are totally impervious to normal and magical fire.

11. **LIVING CORRIDOR:** This 30-foot-long length of hallway is a trap and is under an illusion making the walls thereof appear to be nothing more than cold stone, complete with a false steel door standing along its east end. In reality, the digestive tract of a purple worm has been magically grafted onto the walls. As soon as the PCs reach the midpoint of the corridor, the living walls contract and the entrance becomes closed off like the end of a sausage link. The fleshy, sphincter-like membrane that closes off the hallway should be treated as having an armor class of 6 and 30 hit points for those PCs wishing to cut their way through. Each round the PCs remain inside the corridor, they suffer 2-8 hp of constriction damage and an equal amount of acid damage from the digestive juices secreted by the living walls. PCs still in the corridor on round 6 suffocate to death.

12. **POLYHEDRON OF PERIL:** The corridor from the east ends in an inwardly-sloping steel wall. PCs investigating the metal panel can see the faint outline of a 5-foot x 3-foot door, with a metal pull ring depending from its middle. The door opens into the corridor very easily, revealing a four-sided polyhedron with sides 15 feet long and 15 feet wide. In other words, the room resembles a massive 4-sided die. Metal pull rings depend from each of the three interior faces of the room, with another such pull ring jutting from the face serving as the floor. The entire pyramidal chamber rests within a spherical hollow carved out of the living rock. The pyramid's four vertices touch the curved sides of the hollow, allowing it to be magically rotated in every direction. (The visible gaps between the exterior walls of the pyramidal room and its spherical enclosure cannot be penetrated, as they are protected via an impregnable, magical field of force that cannot be dispelled by anything short of a **wish** spell).

One round after the PCs enter, the entrance door slams shut and **wizard locks** (caster level 12). The force by which the door closes is so strong that only creatures with a Strength of 60 can prevent it from doing so. The closing of the door also cleaves through any normal metal implements or weapons that the PCs may try to use as wedges. (Magical weapons prevent the door from closing with a successful item save vs. crushing blow at a -4 penalty). At this

time, roll a 4-sided die. The number rolled corresponds to which of the four pull rings is not trapped. Should the PCs inside the room pull on one the remaining three trapped pull rings, then their action causes the entire room to start rapidly spinning in every direction for 1-4 rounds, causing 4-16 hp of tumbling damage per round before it stops. In addition, the jostling affects the PCs as the spell **confusion** should they fail to successfully save vs. spells at a -4 penalty. Pulling the correct ring causes the entire west face of the room to phase out of existence, revealing the corridor leading to area 13. At the same time, the **wizard lock** on the entrance door deactivates. Should the PCs manipulate one of the four pull rings before the eastern entrance door slams shut, then nothing happens. Also, after the western door has been successfully phased into existence by the aforementioned procedure, the polyhedron returns to its default setting two hours later, once again phasing said door out of existence and reopening the door on the polyhedron's eastern face. Such means that the PCs best not dally in areas 13-15 beyond, because by so doing they will be unable to reenter this room for a strong anti-magic ward is in effect herein that automatically spoils all travel-related spells such as **teleport**, **phase door**, and **passwall**.

13. **BELOVED PET:** The door from east opens onto a 30-foot-square chamber, the floor of which is covered with massive rib bones. The bones are the remains of Malakum's beloved pet, a giant python. Three of the four walls are painted with vibrant scenes showing the king's pet as it was in life squeezing to death and swallowing various and sundry criminals and captured enemies of the state. The last wall shows the mage-king caressing the monstrous serpent as if it were the family dog. Along the south wall stands a 5-foot-diameter steel portal.

The moment the PCs step more than 5 feet into the room, the circular entrance door slams shut, and then it along with the door along the south wall **wizard locks** (caster level 12). At the same time, the bones on the floor start slithering towards each other and taking shape as a massive skeletal snake. Once fully formed, which takes two rounds, the 50-foot-long undead snake rears up and immediately attacks the nearest PC, fighting until defeated or turned. The animation of the snake skeleton can be halted by casting a **dispel magic** spell (against caster level 10) on the bones.

**Giant Python Skeleton** (AC 5; MV 90 ft.; HD 10; hp 70; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6 plus poison/3-18; SA Poisonous bite (save vs. poison at a -2 penalty or die), constriction; SD ½ damage from sharp/edged weapons, immune to sleep, hold, and cold-based spells, holy water does 2-8 hp of damage, turned as vampire; AL N).

14. **GAME OF KINGS:** The PCs find themselves in a 30-foot-square room with five steel levers jutting out from the west wall at a height of 4 feet. A series of hash marks lies beneath each lever, which numbers them from 1-5. (The leftmost lever has 1 hash mark beneath it, the lever after that, two hash marks, etc). There is an inscription carved into the wall directly above the levers. It is written in an ancient form of Common, and requires a **comprehend languages** spell or a thief's read languages ability to decipher. It says: A king is born and sires two sons, one older than the other, and three daughters. The king and his queen die shortly after the birth of their youngest child, a daughter. All such children, sadly, die in a fire shortly thereafter, never having given birth themselves. How many times in this instance was the king reborn? The answer is "once," for the king was reborn, at least in title, only when his eldest son inherited the throne. Being as none of the king's children sired offspring, the direct line of descent ended with the death of the king's oldest son. This means that the correct lever to pull is the one with a single hash mark above it, which corresponds to the number "one." Should the PCs pull said lever, then such action causes a 10-foot-wide section of the south wall to sink into the floor, thereby revealing the corridor leading to area 15. If any other lever is pulled, then the door along the north wall slams shut and **wizard locks**

(caster level 12). At the same time, the east and west walls start moving towards each other, meeting 4 rounds later. Any PCs still in the room at this time are crushed into jelly, dying instantly. PCs wishing to **teleport** out of the room when the walls start moving are in for a surprise, for a permanent anti-magic ward is in effect herein that prevents the operation of all travel-related dweomer. A better way to stop the moving walls is by holding in place a magical weapon such as a sword or mace between them, as outlined in the description for area 4 (c.f.). The walls remain locked together for 10 rounds, and then take another 15 rounds to fully retract, thereby resetting the trap in the room.

15. **BURIAL CHAMBER:** PCs stepping foot into the 40-foot-long corridor preceding this area set off a loud alarm, alerting the greater mummy of Malakum, who immediately starts casting the following spells\* in anticipation of the party's arrival: **wall of thorns**, **plant growth**, **spike growth**, **stoneskin**, **barkskin**, **minor globe of invulnerability**, and **mirror image**. The curved door leading to the burial chamber of Malakum is made of solid steel and **wizard locked** (caster level 12). The chamber itself is a 40-foot-diameter sphere, the door opening therein being located 5 feet from its absolute bottom. Suspended 15 feet above the entrance is the queer sarcophagus of Malakum, which is shaped like a 10-foot-diameter seedpod and is fashioned of acacia wood overlain with a thin plating of gold. Holding the sarcophagus in place over the middle of the floor are two thick creepers (with the hardness of steel) sprouting from the west and east walls of the spherical room. Covering the bottom of the sphere, starting just below the entrance, is a short but thick carpet of jungle foliage, primarily lianas and thorn bushes.

Assuming the PCs set off the **alarm** mentioned above, the seedpod sarcophagus will be open when they arrive and the greater mummy of Malakum will be hanging from the roof of the chamber compliments of his **slippers of spider climbing**. The abovementioned spells will have gone into effect as well, radically transforming the small carpet of foliage at the bottom of the sphere. Malakum will immediately let loose on the PCs with his **wand of lightning** as soon as they enter his burial chamber, initially focusing his attacks on the magic-using PCs before switching to the fighter types. If the battle appears to be going against him, then he will grudgingly set alight his beloved flower garden via a **fireball**, hoping to catch the PCs in the conflagration. Should the PCs somehow manage to reach the roof of the room and engage Malakum in close-quarters melee, then he switches to his rotting touch attacks. In addition, the 10-foot-long liana-like tendrils that the plant mage grafted onto his armpits in one of his ghastly experiments will come into play. Said members attack independently of Malakum as 6 HD monsters. (See statistics block below). In the event that the PCs surprise Malakum, he attacks as soon as they try to pry open his sarcophagus, the lid of which is **wizard locked** (caster level 12) shut. Regardless of what transpires, Malakum fights the PCs to the death.

**Malakum, Greater Mummy\*\*** (AC 0; MV 60 ft.; HD 12+3; hp 80; #AT 1 (punch) or 2 (tendrils)\*\*\*; Dmg 4-16 plus rot or 1-2 x 2 plus weakness (50% from Strength in 1-3 melee rounds); SA Fear, spells; SD +1 weapons to hit, turned as ghost; AL CE). Possessions: **dust of appearance**, **ring of fire resistance**, **slippers of spider climbing**, **wand of lightning** (12 charges), **dagger of sharpness** (as the sword except for reduced damage potential). Malakum casts spells as a 12th level magic-user\*\*\*\*:

- First (4): **charm person**, **light**, **magic missile**, **sleep**  
 Second (4): **barkskin**, **mirror image**, **uncontrollable hideous laughter**, **warp wood**  
 Third (4): **dispel magic**, **fireball**, **minute meteors**, **spike growth**  
 Fourth (4): **minor globe of invulnerability**, **plant growth**, **polymorph other**, **stoneskin**  
 Fifth (4): **cone of cold**, **feeblemind**, **interposing hand**, **sticks to snakes**  
 Sixth (1): **wall of thorns**



Treasure: If the PCs defeat the greater mummy of Malakum, their next objective will probably be to examine the interior of his queer sarcophagus. A hidden compartment on the bottom of such, which can be detected with a successful search for secret doors, contains the following: 8,000 gp in assorted jewels and gold coins of ancient mintage, Malakum's spell book\*\*\*\*, a **bag of beans**, a **tome of clear thought**, a **periapt of foul rotting**, a **libram of ineffable damnation**, and **scrolls of gust of wind and confusion**. Unfortunately for the PCs, the door of the hidden compartment is trapped. Those failing to disarm the trap shatter a small vial filled with deadly yellow mold spores that disperse out into the room, affecting all those within a 15-foot-radius.

\*Malakum casts the latter four spells on himself. He casts the **wall of thorns** in front of the door opening onto the room. The remaining two spells are cast on the foliage covering the floor of the chamber, which should slow the PCs down quite a bit.

\*\*In addition to his greater HD, AC, and damage potential, Malakum, as a greater mummy, retains the spellcasting ability he possessed in life. Also remember that the intense aura of evil in the tomb imposes a -6 penalty to a cleric's attempt to turn undead, including Malakum.

\*\*\*These two 10-foot-long tendrils attack independently of Malakum as 6 HD monsters. Once attached to a victim, their grip can only be broken with a successful open doors roll. Each tendril is AC 4 and has 15 hit points.

\*\*\*\*Malakum has specialized in a form of magic that gives him access to the spell lists of both magic-users and druids. With respect to the latter spell list, he can only employ plant-related spells therefrom.

\*\*\*\*\*Contains only those spells listed in the greater mummy's statistics block. Be that as it may, the spell book does contain formulae for converting the druid spells wall of thorns, barkskin, warp wood, and sticks to snakes into magic-user spells. It should be noted that the grimoire is protected with explosive runes set at caster level 12.

## CONCLUSION

To even partially conclude the adventure, the PCs must, at bare minimum, fully catalogue the contents of Malakum's tomb for their employer, Festin. For doing so, Festin will pay the PCs only half of their agreed upon fee, for he will need to either retrieve the spell book of Malakum himself or hire more adventurers to fetch it for him. If the PCs were able to carry Malakum's spell book out of the tomb, then Festin will be most elated and give them their full fee of 4,000 gp and an additional 500 gp for their trouble.

For GMs wishing to expand the adventure, the dungeons of Malakum's old palace have remained largely unlooted for these centuries. And then there are the tombs of the nine other kings in Malakum's royal line, none of which have ever been discovered...

### HERE ENDS THE QUEST TO DISCOVER THE LOST TOMB OF MALAKUM

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