

LEGENDARY ADVENTURE 5



BENEATH THE
FESTERED SUN

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Beneath the Festered Sun

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Wēlcōmē tō Advēntūrē Pāth Plūg-Īnṣ!

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You will see us use phrases such as "Egyptian Adventure Path" instead of the title of the 14th adventure path published by Paizo Inc, covering issues #79 to 84. Or, you may see us use names such as the "Risen Pharaoh," the "Tomb City," the "Pharaoh Kingdom," or the "Goddess of the Dead" instead of the proper names of specific characters or places from those adventures or gods from the world setting. While we can create compatible products under the Open Game License, we still have to be respectful of certain content Paizo owns. Because we want to be very respectful of their content and work in partnership with them, we use these "replacement phrases." Plus, this helps the product have a more general appeal to those who may be running a home campaign that fits the same themes. In any event, we are 100% confident you know what we are talking about and will have no problem making the required connection. So, enjoy these pregenerated characters for use in your "Egyptian Adventure Path," seeking your fortune in the "Tomb City" and beyond. See, that wasn't so hard, was it?

Spēcial Elēctronic Fēātūrēs

We've hyperlinked this product internally from the Table of Contents and externally with links to the official [Pathfinder Reference Document](#) as well as [d20PFSRD](#). If it is in the core rulebook, we generally didn't link to it unless the rule is an obscure one. The point is not to supersede the game books, but rather to help support you, the player, in accessing the rules, especially those from newer books or that you may not have memorized.

Contents

| | | | |
|---|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Adventure Background | 6 | E. House Of Hallowed Resurgence | 22 |
| Adventure Summary | 7 | E1. Hallway | 22 |
| Dealing with a Sandbox | 7 | E2. Offices | 22 |
| | | E3. Workshop | 22 |
| | | E4. Storage | 23 |
| | | E5. Library | 23 |
| | | E6. Supplies Cabinet | 25 |
| PART ONE: A HIGH DAY COMES | 8 | F. Yaro's House | 25 |
| One Dire Morning | 9 | F1. Parlor | 25 |
| Kapanek's Curse | 11 | F2. Kitchen | 25 |
| | | F3. Backyard | 25 |
| | | F4. Bedroom | 26 |
| | | F5. Yaro's Laboratory | 26 |
| PART TWO: Reckoning | 12 | G. Mafiri's Estate | 27 |
| A. Anubian Encampment | 12 | G1. Manor House | 27 |
| A1. Entrance and Sleeping Tents | 12 | G2. Courtyard | 27 |
| A2. Reformation Circle | 13 | | |
| A3. Waste Pit | 14 | | |
| A4. Bakery Shop | 15 | | |
| A5. Shadow Pavilion | 15 | | |
| B. Old Cistern | 17 | | |
| B1. Access Patio | 17 | | |
| B2. Underground Cistern | 18 | | |
| C. Grand Temple of the Goddess of Death | 19 | PART THREE: | 31 |
| C1. Temple Backalleys | 19 | Enters Kerux | 31 |
| D. Astronomer's Guildhouse | 21 | | |
| D1. Gyep's Office | 21 | Concluding The Adventure | 33 |

What You Will Find Inside the Beneath the Festered Sun



When a heretical priestess met execution at the hands of conspirators, her immortal consort vowed to carry out her dying curse. Now, after centuries of plotting and waiting, the sky and stars have aligned perfectly to finally unleash her long-simmering revenge. Amidst the excitement over this celestial conjunction, a lone voice proclaiming the coming danger is mysteriously silenced and the wrath of the burning sun smites the population with a scorching curse. The authorities are overwhelmed, but can your heroes forestall this agonizing vengeance set in motion ages ago? To save the soul of a city, they must confront its past and its present to save its future, destroying the accursed avatars of a long-dead enemy—all before the twilight of the Festered Sun.

Beneath the Festered Sun is a 3rd-level adventure for the 5th Edition of the world's most famous roleplaying game. Set in a fantastic Egyptian-style kingdom long since fallen into decay and corruption, it features a blend of dungeons to explore, mysteries to unravel, and interludes of intrigue and battle alike in and around the necropolis of Owot-ti, with opportunities for characters of every kind to shine. The Legendary Games tradition is to combine rich story and background, innovative layout, beautiful aesthetics, and excellence in design that is second to none, allowing you to enliven and enrich your campaign in amazing and exciting ways. This product is the latest in that tradition, and we hope you enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed making it. Game on!



Adventure Background

In the years preceding the great plague of Owot-ti, over two millenia ago, the city trembled under religious disputes as a schism born within the church spread around the streets and reached the palaces of the wealthy. The traditionalists, adherents to official tenets of the church of the Goddess of Death, accused a former seminarian called Kapanek of being the source of heresy.

Groomed from orphanhood to join the clergy, Kapanek deviated from her mentors' orientation still as a teenager. Eschewing the teachings of the Goddess of Death, she studied the old gods, favoring the doctrines of the guardian of the dead Anubis over those of her professed Mistress. Her attempts to reconcile the ancient faith with new dogma was promptly rebutted by her teachers, but, as the girl refused to capitulate, talk of blasphemy arose, until she was deemed incapable of pursuing priesthood.

Her expelling could have been the end of it, but Kapanek's encounter with a herald of the old gods, shortly after her discharge, gave her a sense of divine duty. Like the god Anubis, the emissary brought news of the netherworld, and possessed the head and tail of a jackal—except, in his case, a dead, skeletal one. Unbeknownst to Kapanek, the creature called Kerux was hardly a true herald, but rather a being native to the Negative Energy Plane and bonded to the girl's essence. Thus, what Kapanek believed to be a blessing granted by divine providence was in fact a necromantic manifestation unwittingly shaped by her own willpower. The false epiphany of meeting Kerux drove Kapanek to share her unconventional religious views.

Without a family or home, Kapanek lived in the streets preaching thrown-together beliefs to any who would listen. Initially little more than a nuisance, she eventually gathered enough of a following to warrant a reaction from the local church. However, when the priests decided to act against her, Kapanek had become engaged to an influent man. His name was Nehu-Thepre, a prestigious member of the council, responsible for overseeing tax collection in Owot-ti.

Nehu-Thepre had by chance watched one of Kapanek's sermons, and her take on the afterlife and perpetuity of the soul seduced him as much as her eloquence and beauty. After their matrimony, Kapanek's social position improved greatly, for the frustration of her adversaries. As the wife of an important government official, she was nearly untouchable.

The arrangement caused indisposition with the local nobility: not only had Nehu-Thepre brought a commoner to their midst, but worse—a heretic. The church of the Goddess of Death held sway over many noble families, and Nehu-Thepre soon found himself a pariah in the high circles of Owot-ti. In respect to her husband, Kapanek stopped preaching publicly. In the following years, the couple led a quiet life raising two children—at least until the plague came.

Outraged by the ongoing, viral dissemination of Kapanek's teachings among plebeians and nobles alike, the clergy and aristocracy, sponsored by the patriarch of the wealthy Mafiris family, pinned the sickness on the heretical movement. The epidemic was still starting, and no one knew then that the followers of the Goddess of Madness and Monsters were behind it. Had they rallied forces against the true culprits, the city's fate could have been different. Instead, by promoting hearsay and superstition, the church and the noble houses, under Farou Mafiris' leadership, threw the people against Kapanek and her subjects.

Groups enticed by the conspirator's accusations hunted down the heretics for days, until finally breaking into Nehu-Thepre's palace, where they slaughtered Kapanek's whole family before her eyes. Kapanek was dragged out and executed as her enemies watched gleefully and authorities stood idle; with her final words, she swore a chilling curse against the city and the descendants of all who had wronged her.

The horrible persecution had of course no effect in stopping the outbreak, and the madness, violence, and death that followed the mind-twisting disease were so devastating that the tale of Kapanek fell to the background over the years, a shameful reminder of a dark time. After the plague ended, few were left who had witnessed her curse, and the tale died out within a couple of generations.

Not all forgot. Some of her followers fled and joined other cults of Anubis, recording Kapanek's curse in the writings of their religion. Meanwhile, Kerux, Kapanek's now unfettered servitor, stayed behind to ensure his mistress' vengeance would come to fruition. For thousands of years, Kerux has schemed and cut deals to set the stage for the second coming of Kapanek, scheduled to happen under the next Festered Sun—a legendary astronomical event unseen since the dawn of the age of Pharaohs.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

In the morning of the Festered Sun, the PCs head to the old necropolis to carry on their recent routine of tomb-raiding, and after having admittance denied, the PCs meet a city official who announces the temporary closing of the necropolis. The guards and church staff normally stationed at the site to supervise the entrance and exit of explorers have been relocated to other functions in order to contain a wave of civil unrest sweeping the city.

The official recruits the PCs, as well as other adventurers, to aid with the situation, and sends the hired help to check on leads that could explain the causes of the problem. The PCs go out on an investigation that takes them to different parts of town over the days of the Festered Sun.

In the Anubian encampment, a sect founded by the wronged priestess Kapanek offers salvation through conversion, unaware that one of their own is responsible for the curses plaguing Owot-ti. Not far from there, a crowd gathers around the old cistern seeking another kind of relief, while on the other side of town a magical bubble slowly grows engulfing everything on its way.

Around the Grand Temple of the Goddess of Death, gremlins revel in the chaos, and a reawakened mummy attempts to escape the House of Hallowed Resurgence—where it is coincidentally trapped with the one person who holds the answers the PCs seek. The house of a deranged witch also hides secrets that clarify some of the strange happenings.

After battling their way through various challenges, the PCs must still overcome one last enemy. The millennia-old Kerux behind the calamity watches their every move, ready to pounce at the PCs' weakest hour. Should they survive the attack of the vicious creature called Kerux, Owot-ti's salvation is within their grasp.

DEALING WITH A SANDBOX

Unlike linearly structured adventures, in which the PCs advance through the story in a predicted manner, a sandbox adventure—like the one in your hands—assumes that the PCs explore the scenario in any desired order, within certain boundaries. Here, we have narrowed down the exploration to locations that directly relate to this adventure and help move the story forward. Every place and encounter uncovers a different piece of a puzzle that, once assembled, gives the PCs a picture of the whole situation.

Some sandboxes function more freely than others, but the format in general reinforces a sense of agency as sets an investigative mood. On the other hand, this approach requires the GM to really stay on top of the story. A sandbox-styled adventure presumes a dynamic world, in which the PC's actions in one place may have unforeseen impact on some other encounter later. For this reason, a good preparation is crucial.

While there is a lot to discover about the events currently unfolding in Owot-ti, learning about Kapanek and Kerux's pasts is as much a part of the adventure as stopping the curse is. Ignoring the reasons behind one's journey can lead to frustration, whereas gradually unveiling the whys and how generates an enjoyable and immersive experience. NPCs like the astronomer Gyep, the nosoi Verliwoz, the vulnudaemon Kapanek, and even the Anubian acolytes offer the GM ample roleplaying opportunities to expose the PCs to the rich background of *Beneath the Festered Sun*.

Finally, there is the issue of pacing. Considering the number of encounters in this adventure, the PCs are likely to need a break to recompose, heal, and refresh spells and other abilities. The Festered Sun initially lasts 48 hours, giving them at least one night's rest, but the GM is free to adjust the duration of the phenomenon as he sees fit. The distances between the encounters is left intentionally vague, to allow the PCs to move at the "speed of plot"—meaning, time spent going from one place to the other should work on behalf of the story. A GM not fond of this approach can easily place the locations in the city map presented in the Egyptian Themed Adventure Path and estimate the distances.

The adventure's conclusion assumes that the party succeeds, but nothing prevents the GM from making the PCs face the consequences of failure; in this case, the "Concluding the Adventure" section can be replaced by a better fit to the tragic outcome.

PART ONE: A HIGH DAY COMES

For over a year, the scholars of Owot-ti have awaited the coming of the *Festered Sun*, a rare celestial event recorded only once in scientific literature. Predicted by the local gnome astronomer Gyep upon observing the movements of an atypical mass of meteors drifting through the stars, the phenomenon is currently on its cusp. Yet, despite the general excitement, Gyep has lately grown apprehensive, for his most recent research on the subject unearthed a seemingly apocryphal Anubian scripture that correlates the Festered Sun to the coming of a great curse—one that specifically targets his very hometown.

Not a superstitious person himself, Gyep tried to shake off such notion, but the rumors of an unfamiliar Anubian sect recently arrived in the city struck the gnome as too much of a coincidence. Gyep shared his concerns both with the Astronomers' Guild and with representatives of the City Council, but with little to go on except for a

crumbling scripture of unknown authorship, the issue received no attention. The lack of support prompted Gyep to temporarily forego his astronomical studies in favor of delving into the history behind the Anubian manuscript, which mentions the days of the great plague of Owot-ti and describes in verses the curse cast by a heretic priestess called Kapanek.

While the gnome prepares for the worse, the City Council and the Astronomers' Guild inform the population about the unique phenomenon. All over town, the government assembled podiums in areas of intense traffic, from which public announcers explain in general terms what is about to happen: in the following days, the sky will be darker and painted orange, while the sun, partially covered by a chain of asteroids, shall appear spotted and covered in sores. The speakers—often astronomer themselves—encourage their listeners to ask questions and elucidate all doubts, doing their best to reassure everyone that this so-called Festered Sun, despite the ominous moniker, is a harmless, natural event.

As the PCs return from a day of dungeon crawling in Owot-ti's necropolis, they come across a pair of robed men distributing their last loaves of fresh bread to passers-by. Upon spotting the PCs, one of the acolytes approaches



to preach the word of Anubis, claiming that only those who follow the ancient god shall be spared of the tribulations ahead. Without going into much detail, they explain that if the old gods answer the prayers of their long-dead prophetess, the Festered Sun will bring much suffering to the people of Owot-ti. A DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals they are empathetic to the people and genuinely worried about the potential problems ahead. Having finished for the day, the acolytes excuse themselves inviting the PCs to visit their camp at some other time, should they desire to join the old religion.

After this odd encounter, the PCs stumble upon one of the public speakers deployed by the city council. Hanging around for a while, the party can make the following checks to determine what they learn (or perhaps what they already know) regarding the events to come.

CHARISMA (PERSUASION) OR INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY)

A brief interaction with the speaker and the small crowd reveals some of the following information.

10+ This latest round of public announcements is more of a formality than a necessity, since the Festered Sun has already been heavily publicized in the region. Owot-ti even acquired some notoriety among astronomers for having one of its own detect and predict the phenomenon.

15+ Despite the authorities' reassuring statements, newly arrived acolytes of the ancient gods preach salvation through the old faith, claiming the Festered Sun shall bring mayhem Owot-ti. According to gossip, even the Astronomer's Guild is somewhat divided on the matter.

20+ The Astronomer's Guild is understandably enthusiastic about the event, but the church of the Goddess of Death and the government seem indifferent, their hands full with the opening of the necropolis to explorers. The common folk fail to see how the whole thing has anything to do with their lives—except for those who buy into the rumors that these rare cosmic conjunctions invariably unleash calamity. Additionally, a respected gnome astronomer found an old scripture that mentions the unraveling of a curse with the coming of the Festered Sun, but the document was discredited and the whole idea deemed ludicrous by his peers.

ONE DIRE MORNING

The eve of the Festered Sun ends uneventfully. At sunrise the following day, the sky still looks ordinary, and there's yet no sign of the anticipated changes to the sun. The

people of Owot-ti go about their day-to-day business, while the members of the Astronomer's Guild set up equipment in squares and open spaces to watch the rare episode.

Arriving at the Necropolis, the PCs encounter an unusual scene: instead of checking for credentials and allowing the explorers in, the guards and members of the church are guiding the arriving adventurers into a large annex—an unadorned square hall, with small windows carved high on the sandstone walls. Asking other adventurers about what is going on provides the PCs with nothing but conjectures. Attempts to leave the hall are thwarted by the few guards positioned onsite (6 [thugs](#), *Monster Manual*), as they firmly insist that everyone stay for their own safety. Though they are unable to go into further detail, the guards confirm that someone will soon speak to the impatient explorers.

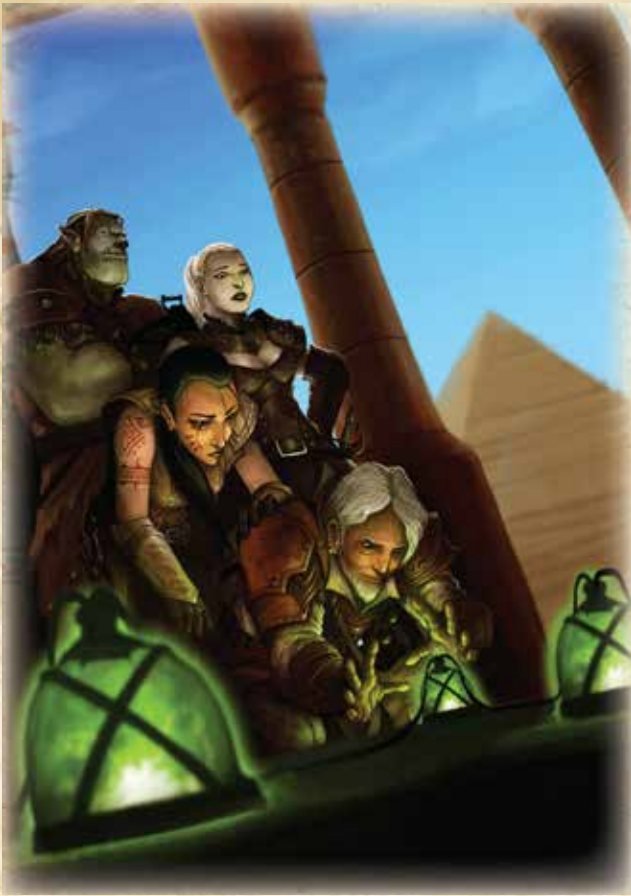
As time passes, the light that seeps in from the high windows slowly shifts, until a distinct orange hue tints the whole chamber, and the PCs notice many of the adventurers showing physical discomfort. A few fall unconscious unexpectedly; a DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check shows swelling, sunburns, and signs of dehydration that point to sunstroke.

After over an hour of waiting, a veiled man, dressed as a city administrative officer, enters the hall. He raises the veil to reveal a receding hairline and a long and thin aquiline nose. With a somber expression, he addresses the small crowd gathered inside.

"Good morning", the young council representative greets in a high-pitched voice. "We're sorry to have kept you waiting, but we seem to be running short on staff. With our limited numbers, we could not organize and guarantee the lawfulness of your expeditions today." The man pauses to bite his cracked lips, and swallows dry as he goes on.

"Unfortunately, a situation has come up in the last hour, and the personnel we did have was reassigned to other duties. Thus, the administration decided to shut down the necropolis until further notice. Because of this situation I mentioned, we cannot ensure your safe return to your lodgings, so we ask that you all remain in this hall for now, and we'll arrange that you have a comfortable stay. Meanwhile, I'd like to have a word with a representative of each team here present, if you will."

After the representatives of the adventuring parties present themselves, the young official introduces himself as Ruja, and invites everyone to a small, poorly lit office connected to the main hall by a narrow corridor. As Ruja walks, he closes all the curtains on the way. A DC 15 Intelligence (Medicine) check indicates he is suffering from initial stages of sunstroke. The PCs' representative may



recognize some of the other explorers from a previous night at a famous inn, where they had the chance to get to know their competition. Ruja pours himself some water and starts talking.

A number of disturbances have been occurring all morning in Owot-ti. The day started with a sudden flood in the north, as the quick-running river rose and advanced on the shore districts. The guard rounded up the residents to a safe area and organized boats to rescue people dragged by the currents. Just as the situation got under control, the Festered Sun began, wreaking further havoc.

Initially, everyone went silent watching the event. Over the minutes in which the sky turned orange and the sun, just as foretold, took on a sickly visage, people stared mesmerized at the blistering star, oblivious to the world around them. After a while, shouts of despair started to break the silence all over town. Hundreds of people fell unconscious or went blind, with hundred others presenting painful swelling and burns on the skin. In the past hour, the townsfolk have noticed that exposure to bright light is accompanied by physical pain, accelerated sunstroke, and an urge to abandon all activities to simply look at the sun until one's eyes can no longer take it.

While people desperately seek help from the church and authorities, street criminals all over Owot-ti take advantage of the chaos to plunder, putting additional strain on the guard. To make matters worse, many who could help were also struck by the illnesses. The church is mobilized to help the sick, and the City Council issued a curfew to restore order; between enforcing the decree, containing the raids, and helping the victims, there are few people left to actually investigate the matter. Ruja asks for the adventurer's aid on this front.

Owot-ti is a small city with very few heroes, and its most powerful individuals are too involved in political and religious matters to actually get their hands dirty. Unaware of the true dimension of the problem, the City Council allowed Ruja to look for extra help, aware that his position in the necropolis put him in contact with adventurers of great talents and skill, as shown by their recent exploration of the tombs.

Ruja offers a later payment of 1,500 gold pieces to each group that accepts to help, and asks that the representatives return with their parties to give him an answer. The young official is actually willing to negotiate the reward, but only does so on a case-by-case basis. For this reason, when the adventurers return, he speaks to each group individually.

CHARISMA [PERSUASION] OR WISDOM [PERCEPTION]

The PCs are the last to see Ruja, but this can work to their advantage: by overhearing the preceding meetings or talking to other groups as they step out, the PCs walk in better informed to negotiate terms.

10+ Most meetings are quite short. It seems only two parties accepted the job—the all-female group of explorers and the band of halflings with specially trained fighting dogs.

15+ The group led by the female Egyptologist wizard demands to choose their next exploration site, but walk out without a deal after Ruja refuses the proposal.

20+ Some adventurers refuse Ruja's offer outright, accusing the administration of closing the necropolis only to forcefully obtain help. In most cases, however, Ruja is simply unable to comply with the demands of the parties. The two accepting parties did manage to improve their arrangements, though.

25+ From what the PCs pick up, Ruja is likely to offer at least one of the following additional benefits: 1. upfront payment; 2. an extra 300 gp; 3. tax exemption in the form

of a 5% value increase to items retrieved from the necropolis; 4. a one-time 50% discount on services provided by the church of the Goddess of Death; 5. one year of free lodging in a mansion in the central district.

If the PCs simply accept the original offer, Ruja smiles and acknowledges their decision.

If the PCs confront Ruja with a counter-proposal, they may attempt one DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) check to get a better offer. At the GMs discretion, Ruja may accept the PCs terms or randomly offer one of the additional benefits listed above, plus one more for each 5 by which the PCs beat the difficulty. If negotiations come to a halt, Ruja reminds the PCs that unless the issue is resolved, there are no guarantees that exploration of the necropolis will be resumed any time soon.

After coming to an agreement, Ruja gathers the PCs and the other two parties in the small room to distribute assignments. He explains that, as they speak, the military wing of the church of the Goddess of Death, led by its humorless leader and able inquisitor, is occupying the necropolis. They believe that the adventurers may have disturbed or disrespected the dead, causing the problems; currently, they wish to reenter the tombs opened the previous days to check on their conditions.

Though Ruja does not exclude the lead inquisitor's hypothesis, he insisted with the City Council that other venues be investigated. The PCs can choose which assignment they take on first, though they eventually visit all the locations in this adventure as the other two groups fail to complete their missions. At this moment, Ruja mentions three points of interest.

First, he wants to investigate the Anubian sect recently established in Owot-ti; considering their latest line of preaching, the problems could be related to them. Choosing this mission sends the PCs directly to area A. **Anubian Encampment.**

Second, Ruja deems it is necessary to find the astronomer Gyep, who seems to be the only one with consistent information regarding this alleged curse. Gyep tried to warn the city council about it, but was ridiculed. The gnome is not at his private residence and no one has seen him since the night before. If the PCs choose this mission, they are forwarded to Gyep's office in area D. **Astronomer's Guildhouse.**

Third, there have been reports of a strange mirage around the Mafiris estate that is yet to be explained. A few

KAPANEK'S CURSES

The scriptures preserved by the Anubians and uncovered by Gyep in historical archives speak of Kapanek as the prophet and martyr of an obscure branch of Anubian faith. The verses of her curse, as registered by an anonymous author, read as follows:

*When pustules stain the golden face of Ra
Before the watchful crows begin to caw
The eyes that once turned blind to misconduct
Shall watch the sun and have their seeing plucked*

*And burning sores will sprout under daylight
Till those who walked the day must walk the night
Or feast on blood and find its sweet relief
Repulsive, mortifying, vile and brief*

*Ten thousand years may pass, or maybe less
Five hundred floods and wars, or maybe more
Until the renaissance I thus profess*

*Someday the souls around the sycamore
Will whisper while accepting death's caress:
"Behold the vengeance Kapanek once swore"*

Gyep offers the PCs an interpretation of the verses later, in area D. **House of Hallowed Resurgence.** The arrival of the Festered Sun triggers the following curses afflicting Owot-ti are instantly lifted. To lift them, the PCs must defeat all the five different aspects of Kapanek before the end of the event.

DAYBURN

Type curse; Save Constitution save DC 14 negates
Effect The target takes 1d6 points of damage for every minute of exposure to bright light, including daylight. If this would reduce a creature to 0, it is unconscious rather than dying.

SUN BLINDNESS

Type curse; Save Constitution save DC 14 negates
Effect The target is blind except in dim light or darkness.

A blindfold or similar cover over the eyes protects the wearer from contracting the sun blindness curse. Likewise, wearing heavy clothing that completely covers the skin delays the progression of the dayburn curse; in that situation, the victim takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage for every hour of exposure to bright light. True worshippers of Anubis are immune to the curses.

scouts were dispatched earlier this morning, but no one has returned. In fact, no member of the wealthy Mafirir family—the oldest and most traditional clan of Owot-ti—has been spotted today, and not even their servants were seen leaving the house all morning. This assignment takes the PCs to area G. **Mafirir Estate.**

Ruja gives the PCs a document exempting them of the curfew order. Whichever mission the PCs choose, the other adventure parties are dispatched to the two remaining locations. As the PCs move from one place to another or try to reach Ruja to inform on their progress, the GM should let them receive news of the other parties' failure to report back, compelling the PCs to investigate all areas.

Each time the PCs contact Ruja, his condition has worsened as the effects of the dayburn curse advance; he tries to hide it from the PCs out of pride (DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) check). As an aspirant to the city council, he refrains from showing weakness to anyone; plus, having heard that this particular affliction mainly affect the poor, Ruja feels ashamed that his humble origins might have made him a victim, too. Even if confronted by the PCs, he denies any discomfort and urges them to keep doing their jobs. However, he fails to pass on any information the PCs relay, too debilitated and distracted by the curse to inform his superiors about the results of the PCs' investigations.

As soon as the PCs leave the old necropolis and step under the Festered Sun for the first time, they feel compelled to look up. Resisting the urge requires a DC 10 Wisdom save; failure means the PC is fascinated and keeps staring at the sun for 1d4 rounds, at the end of which he must make a save against the sun blindness curse (see sidebar **Kapanek's curses**). Creatures immune to charm are immune to this fascination effect.

A creature who succeeds at its Wisdom save can take an action to shake an affected creature and break the compulsion effect before the sun blindness curse sets in.

PART TWO: Reckoning

A. ANUBIAN ENCAMPMENT

A couple of months ago, the wandering Anubians found an abandoned lot on the poor quarter of the lower district, just southeast of the old necropolis. The terrain had

so far evaded occupation due to an infestation of deadly assassin vines, but with arduous work the group managed to clear the area and set up camp.

Surrounded by short wooden boards thrust in the ground emulating a fence, the encampment comprises sleeping tents, a rudimental bakery shop, the reformation circle, and a large ceremonial tent dubbed the shadow pavillion. Around twenty acolytes live in here, under the tutelage of Brother Thute, who is more of a mentor and councilor than an actual sect leader. Thute is actually a human-looking cover for Kerux, disguised via his shapeshift ability to mingle with the followers of Anubis; because of the limitations of his shapeshifting, he never spends more than a few minutes each day with other acolytes.

For centuries, Kerux has kept this small sect active, making sure the teachings of Kapanek live on, despite the heretical nature of her tenets—both to Anubian faith and to the church of the Goddess of Death. Posing as Thute, Kerux convinced the nomadic group to come to Owot-ti and witness the retribution foretold in their sacred scriptures. Familiar with the story of Kapanek, the acolytes heeded their mentor's advice, though the group truly believes that they come to offer salvation to the city that wronged their prophetess—which is why they distribute bread as an invitation to join their beliefs and escape the wrath of Kapanek. Little do they know that Kerux has tampered with the Anubians' bread, which delivers the dayburn curse to all non-Anubians who ingest it. Instead of saving people's souls, the acolytes are unwittingly spreading more suffering.

A1. ENTRANCE AND SLEEPING TENTS

Dressed in brown, worn-out cotton robes, a dozen or so barefoot men and women walk and talk amid the simple tents set up in the entrance of a camping ground. An opening in the low fence surrounding the encampment indicates the entrance; between the many small tents in the forefront, a large pavillion appears in the back, erected next to a steep slope. The shade of a palm tree alleviates the heat from the strange sun shining above.

Arriving at the Anubian encampment, the PCs are cordially welcomed by two acolytes ([acolyte](#), *Monster Manual*), who recognize them from the interaction the day before. They are happy to see the PCs have come to hear more—at least that is what they assume until the PCs make their intentions clear.

The acolytes' starting attitude towards the PCs is friendly, as long as they believe in the PCs' interest in converting

to their faith. Keeping the ruse requires a successful DC 12 Charisma (Deception) check. If the PCs fail the check or flat-out declare that they are there investigating other matters, the acolyte's attitude immediately becomes one step worse. With a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Intimidation) check, the PCs are allowed to question the acolytes and explore the grounds.

A conversation with the helpful Anubians uncovers the story of their coming to Owot-ti and the establishing of the campground. Regarding Kapanek, they reveal that the woman was a priestess who lived millennia ago in the city and was killed, along with her family, due to religious persecution. Before dying, Kapanek swore a curse against the city, and her followers fled to create the very sect they are now part of.

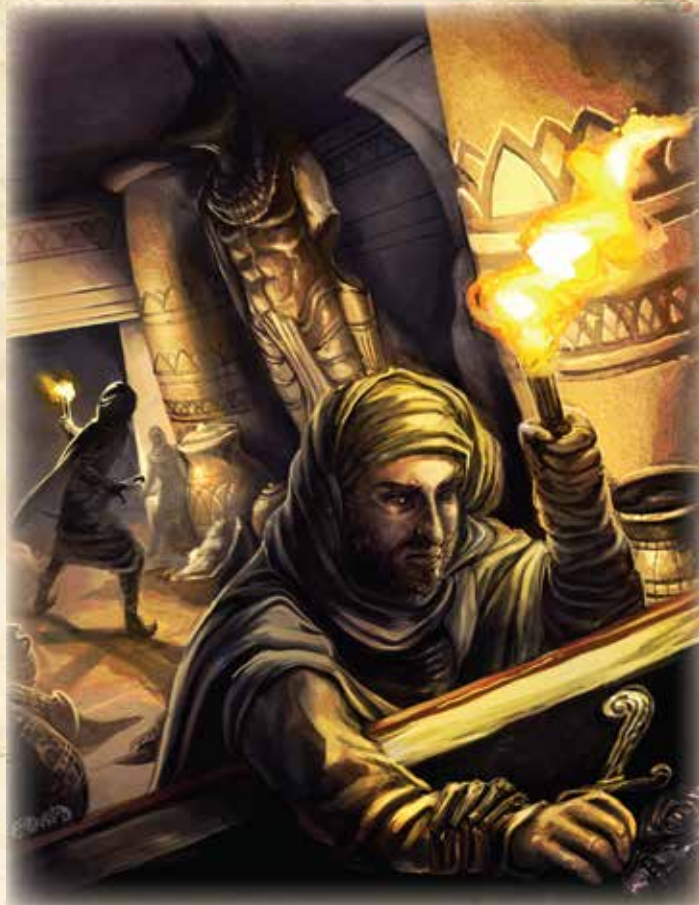
The acolytes also claim that, despite the vengeful promise of their prophetess, they have come to offer the help of Anubis, for it is believed that those who share their faith can escape the curses. They have no idea of how to lift the curse, other than everyone converting (a possibility that the acolytes offer to the PCs). For this reason, their arms are open to well-meaning visitors, and the PCs are free to wander around the camp to see how they live—as long as they are careful not to disturb the rats living in the waste pit.

Finally, the acolytes add that despite their best efforts, no one has yet taken them up on their offer. In fact, some desperate folks did come to the camp in search of help, but turned away after hearing rumors that the water stored in a decommissioned city cistern was a magical elixir that could heal burns and the blindness brought by the Festered Sun. If this is not the first location the PCs visit, then the acolytes mention a previous group of female adventurers, seemingly afflicted by the curses, that also followed the mob to the old cistern.

On a failed Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Intimidation) check, the acolytes refuse to aid or offer any explanation, and ask that the PCs wait inside the Shadow Pavilion where they can speak to Brother Thute, who shall decide whether they are to collaborate.

The structures set up close to the encampment entrance are sleeping tents for the acolytes. Their interiors are unadorned, except for patterned old carpets, laid down on the floor under cushions that serve both as pillows and seats.

Treasure: Searching inside the tents produces only mundane objects of personal use, one of which is a small book of scriptures marked on the page that shows the



poem about Kapanek (see sidebar **Kapanek's Curses**). Examining the sleeping tents and going through the private belongings makes the acolyte's attitude one step worse, unless the PCs specifically ask for permission.

A2. REFORMATION CIRCLE

This inconspicuous circle of stones is where the Anubians perform the conversion rites. The area is dedicated to Anubis, as per the spell *hallow*.

An intelligent humanoid that pledges devotion to Anubis while praying inside the area becomes immune to the effects of the dayburn and sun blindness curses. A creature that does not wish to truly convert may gain the same benefits by fooling the magic circle with a DC 25 Charisma (Deception) or Intelligence (Religion) check.

If any of the stones is removed, the circle loses all magical properties until that stone is put back in its place.

Creatures: hundreds of rats inhabit a waste pit nearby. As the PCs approach the Reformation Circle, they notice an abnormal number of animals in the area; before they realize it, swarms of hungry rodents are upon them.

SWARM, DESERT RATS

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 36 (8d8)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 8 (-1) | 18 (+4) | 11 (+0) | 1 (-5) | 10 (+0) | 3 (-4) |

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

SPECIAL TRAITS

Swarm: The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny rat. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Bites: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. Hit: 7 (2d6) piercing damage. A creature hit must make a DC

11 Constitution check or be afflicted with Sewer Plague.

A3. WASTE PIT

Unaccustomed to life in the city, the desert-dwelling acolytes have imprudently dug a waste pit right outside the camp's fence. The growing pile of refuse attracted rodents in massive numbers, causing a serious infestation problem.

Creatures: Rats can be easily spotted wandering around camp, though the acolytes have found that as long as they keep the wheat flour locked up and the oven sealed, the rats tend to keep to the waste pit. Still, throwing away the garbage everyday becomes a riskier task, since the animals get agitated whenever someone approaches the fence. The discarding of more garbage usually distracts them long enough for the acolytes to get back to the camping, but in the past weeks, the problem grew so much that the acolytes even stopped using the area southwest of A2. **Reformation Circle** in fear of attacks.

Recently, the Acolytes started dumping their garbage somewhere else in hopes the rats would leave, but up to now this has only made the animals hungry and more aggressive.



A4. BAKERY SHOP

A wooden stand built next to a rudimentary earth oven make up the bakery shop used by the acolytes. Here they bake the bread distributed around town, an old custom of their order. The wheat flour is carefully stored in sacs inside wooden cabinets, and a workbench suitable for up to three cooks takes up most of the space.

Enchanted by Kerux with a *bestow curse* spell, the earth oven turns anything cooked inside it into an ingestible transmitter of the dayburn curse. A *detect magic* spell shows a faint necromancy aura on the oven, and a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) reveals its true purpose.

Treasure: One of the cabinets holds 60 gp worth of rare spices and the recipe for the rather tasty Anubian bread. The PCs also find one fresh loaf of bread; a PC that eats the bread must succeed at a DC 14 Constitution save or contract the dayburn curse. The bread emits the same magic aura as the oven.

A5. SHADOW PAVILION

Wooden poles spring from the carpeted floor to sustain this large tent. In the center of the dim pavilion, four robed men stand in prayer around a turning globe set atop an ornamented stone pedestal. Illuminated by an inner fire, the central piece projects over the red-and-yellow checkered fabric the revolving image of humanoid creatures with animal heads, depicted in the style of the ancients.

The fabric of this particular tent is thick enough to prevent most of the daylight from seeping through, creating a condition of dim light. PCs arrive at this area either by freely exploring the camp or brought by the acolytes to see Brother Thute, who is currently joined in prayer by three other men. A tanned, bearded middle-aged human man, Brother Thute interrupts the worship as soon as he notices the PCs' arrival. Thute's robes are black with golden embroideries.

The object in the tent's center is a metallic globe cut out with the anthropomorphic shape of ancient gods. The globe spins on its base and projects the cut out images over the tent; with successful DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check, the PCs recognize the silhouettes as belonging to Anubis and other deities of the old regional pantheon.

Brother Thute (or, better still, Kerux) is less than courteous with the PCs, and demands to know who they are. Regardless of the answer, the disguised Kerux immediately takes the PCs for meddlesome intruders; unlike the Anubian acolytes, Kerux does not believe in salvation and,

after thousands of years of waiting, wishes to see the whole town burn for the crimes against Kapanek.

Pretending to be offended by the interruption, Kerux excuses himself stating that any information he can give or decision he can make are the same as his brothers'. When leaving the shadow pavilion, Kerux conveys a secret message ordering a hidden ghost to attack the PCs. The PCs can notice the sign with a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check, though they are unable to decipher its meaning. It does, however, set them on alert, providing a +2 bonus to Wisdom (Perception) checks made to detect the ghost inside the tent.

Creatures: Concealed among and moving at the same speed as the projections on the fabric, a shadow lurks in wait of Kerux's orders. The undead arose spontaneously after Kapanek's demise, a result of the rupture in her soul the moment she died. It has followed Kerux as a faithful ally over the years. Part of Kapanek's fractured soul, the shadow looks exactly like her silhouette.

The monster acknowledges Kerux's sign and attack the PCs from their hidden position. When the shadow attacks, the acolytes inside the tent flee in horror.

Outside the pavilion, a surviving assassin vine (marked AV on the map) camouflages between regular vines on the slope north of the tent. It usually feeds on the rodents that roam the camp, and has so far gone unnoticed to the acolytes. The shadow, however, knows about its presence, and uses it for tactical advantage. The assassin vine attacks anything that comes within its reach.

KAPANEK'S SHADOW

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 45 (10d8)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 7 (-2) | 13 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 17 (+3) |

Skills Stealth +4 (+6 in dim light or darkness)

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

SPECIAL TRAITS

Amorphous: The shadow can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Shadow Stealth: While in dim light or darkness, the shadow can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

Sunlight Weakness: While in sunlight, the shadow has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

ACTIONS

Strength Drain: Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 15 (4d6 + 1) necrotic damage, and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest. If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a new shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

ASSASSIN VINE

Large plant, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (7d10+14)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

| | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 17 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 2 (-4) | 13 (+1) | 9 (-1) |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|

Resistances cold and fire.

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages None.

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Camouflage. Assassin vines have advantage when hiding amongst foliage.

ACTIONS

Slam. melee 5 ft., 1 target. +5 to hit, 2d10+3 (14) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 13) and restrained until the grapple ends.

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10ft., one Medium or smaller creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the assassin vine can't constrict another target.

Development: While the PCs fight the ghost, news of the attack spread through the camp. Past the initial terror, the acolytes organize a quick evacuation, with only a handful left behind to observe the combat. After the PCs defeat the shadow, these remaining cultists thank the PCs for destroying the dangerous undead abomination, whose existence they knew nothing of.

The acolytes keep using the term *sheut* to refer to the undead monsters, which is a word that describes the piece of the soul contained inside one's shadow. If the PCs ask about that, the Anubians convey their belief in the different aspects of the self, as explained in the first half of the sidebar **Five Aspects of the Soul**.

If the Anubians have not yet delivered the information contained in section A1, they do now, and offer the PCs 2 *potions of lesser restoration* and 2 *potions of healing*. At this point, the PCs can also investigate the different areas of the encampment, in case they have not done so.

After praising the PCs for their prowess and bravery, the acolytes mention trouble at the old cistern nearby, where dozens of people assembled under the promise of a cure.



FIVE ASPECTS OF THE SOUL

According to the belief system defended by Kapanek and her followers, every person exists thanks to the communion of distinct parts of the self, namely:

Ren: the name, foundation of one's identity, without which no one can be addressed.

Ib: the heart, seat of moral, emotions, and rationality, where the essence of life lies.

Sheut: the shadow, a gift from the sun god Ra. A parallel, unbound existence that moves through realms the body cannot reach.

Khat: the physical body, shrouded in all the mysteries of its perfect inner workings, with which one interacts with the material world.

Akh: the spirit, transfigured in death to exist immortally in the afterlife.

When Kapanek died, her innate arcane abilities and the power of her curse split her soul into these different aspects, which were harvested by Kerux and given form through disreputable deals and necromantic magic.

Kapanek's *ren* endures in Kerux himself. For over two millennia, Kerux has continuously mentored Kapanek's remaining followers to keep her memory alive. Kapanek's *ib* is preserved in her heart and blood, used to create the blood golems that hide in the city's old cistern. Her *sheut* dwells in the Anubians' camp, while her mummified body stored in the House of Hallowed Resurgence perpetuates the physical *khat*. Finally, the reincarnation of Kapanek's spirit into a vulnudaemon manifests her *akh*.

Only by destroying the monsters that personify these five aspects will the PCs put an end to the curse and restore order to the city of Owot-ti.

B. OLD CISTERN

Excavated inside a small hill, the old cistern was built to harvest rainwater and ensure easy access to water away from the river shore. Throughout history, it has also served as a reliable supply during times of flood, when the river advances into town allowing the refuse and litter on the streets to soil the watercourse.

Unfortunately, the cistern became contaminated decades ago; unable to clean or drain the entirety of the reservoir, the government opted to shut the complex down, and undertook construction of a new cistern on another site. The pumps at the bottom of this hill were sealed off,

the well's structure on the access patio dismantled and barred, and the service entrance locked behind a rusting iron gate.

B1. ACCESS PATIO

Atop the hill, on the paved patio that once gave access to the decommissioned cistern below, a small crowd throngs around the abandoned well. Frantic men, women, and children push each other, each trying to reach a woman made of blood standing on the edge of the water hole. Those that get to the eerie creature without being stomped or thrown downhill cling to the woman's outstretched arms in abandon, sinking their teeth in her glistening skin and gorging in the blood that flows from her forearms.

An easy and gradual ascent uphill leads the PCs to the access patio. Dressed in heavy hoods to block the sun, the people gathered here do everything in their power to reach the well and drink the strange woman's blood, which is said to alleviate the ailments caused by the curses. Even those who have already drunk from it continue to hang around trying to have seconds; from the number of unconscious, trampled bodies on the ground, this seems to have been going on for a while. If the PCs visited another location before the Anubian encampment, they notice that the adventurers of the all-female party are among the fallen.

Creatures: The creature standing on the well is a lesser blood golem, one of the two constructed at Kerux's request. With a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check the PC notice similarities between the shape of this golem and of the shadow encountered before.

By entering the patio, the PCs are caught up in the tumult, and must fight their way out of the small crowd. Composed of unarmed civilians, the crowd is alarmed to see newcomers bearing arms, and lash out worried that the PCs will try to hack their way to the woman on the well or forcefully remove them from the scene.

The crowd blocks access to the patio, and is much larger than the 7 combatants listed, as many want to partake of the blood, but won't throw themselves into a frenzied brawl. They are oblivious to the PCs' presence until they try to get past the crowd or notice the PCs' weapons (PCs must beat their passive perception of 10 on a Charisma (Deception) check. Only roll once per PC for the entire crowd.)

The PCs may reason with the mob, talking down 1 thug for every successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) or



Charisma (Intimidate) check. If the crowd is attacked with lethal force, the DC for these checks increases by 5. Once the combatants are defeated, the rest of the crowd will disperse.

THUG (7) (CHALLENGE 1/2)

XP 100
hp 32

Development: After the crowd is controlled, either forcibly or through diplomacy and intimidation, the townspeople stand down and clear the way for the PCs. The blood golem gestures for the PCs to approach, offering them its blood; it is otherwise unresponsive. If the PCs try to attack the golem, it liquefies and falls through the iron bars, traveling back to the cistern using a passage that connects the main pool to the bottom of the well (marked S in map B. Old Cistern).

The PCs can now interact with the folks reunited in the patio. A general sense of shame hangs in the air now that everyone has come to their senses and family and friends realize what they have done. People rush to each other's aid, helping the injured and crying over their dead, some keep passing out due to the effects of the dayburn curse.

Speaking to the PCs, they explain that, earlier that day, they were convinced by a black-robed man to come to the

cistern, where a woman in red would give them something to ease their suffering. The first people to get there were scared and reluctant to approach the woman, until one blind girl tried the blood and regained her eyesight. Those who drank the woman's blood timidly admit that, although the blindness and skin burns are gone, they have been replaced by a craving for more blood.

To access the cistern, the PCs must open or break an iron gate (DC 25 Strength check to break) and a simple wooden door (DC 10 Strength check to break), both equipped with a simple lock (DC 15 Dexterity check to open with thieves' tools). Alternatively, they can partially remove the rusty iron bars over the well with a DC 15 Strength check and take the golem's route, making a 30 feet descent and then swimming 80 feet underwater until reaching the main pool.

Ingesting the golem's blood exposes the drinker to a potentially addictive substance; see **Bloodfeast** below.

BLOODFEAST

Type ingested

Effect gives advantage on Constitution checks, gives disadvantage on Wisdom checks, negates the effects of the dayburn and sun blindness curses.

When it wears off after 1 hour, you gain disadvantage on Constitution checks for 3 days or until you imbibe another dose.

Effect Feeding on human blood after the first hour triggers the drug's effects for another hour.

B2. UNDERGROUND CISTERN

The sound of dripping water echoes inside the pitch-black chamber, hinting at its enormous size. The humid air fustigates the nostrils with a putrid stench of rotten blood mixed with moldy and decaying water.

Sealed off from the surface world, the underground cistern is plunged into complete darkness. Three flights of stairs connect the outer gate to the water tank, where a stone collonade supports the high vaulted ceiling.

A walkway advances into the pool. A shallow rim, submerged in 2 feet of water, runs around the cistern's perimeter; the center of the tank is 15 feet deep. A creature completely submerged in the muddy water gains total concealment (even against opponents with darkvision).

Creatures: Decades ago, Kerux commissioned the making of a golem, demanding that the blood of Kapanek be used in its creation. Only recently did Kerux return to collect the construct, and after years without hearing from

Kerux, the golem's creator had dumped the golem prototypes in the old cistern, where they remained dormant until Kerux located and activated them. Now, following Kerux's command, the constructs resurface one at a time through the well to offer their blood for consumption.

Having retreated back to the muddy waters of the cistern, the golems are ready to attack any who trespass their domain.

LESSER BLOOD GOLEM (2)

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 90 (12d8+36)

Speed 10 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 18 (+4) | 1 (-5) | 11 (+0) | 10 (+0) |

Damage Resistance: bludgeoning

Damage Immunities: poison, psychic

Condition Immunities: charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., blindsight 60 ft.

Languages understands common but can't speak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

SPECIAL TRAITS

Magic Resistance: The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Blood Drain: The golem drains blood from any grappled target at the start of its turn, doing 4 (1d4+2) damage. The golem heals for as much damage as the blood drain inflicts.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee weapon attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 12)

Before Combat The golems remain submerged, close to the walkway, completely out of the PCs' sight. Their special senses allow them to notice the PCs proximity and set up an ambush.

During Combat The constructs attack from the flanks, employing the same tactics. In the first round, they attempt a drag maneuver to pull the PCs into the murky pool; if the maneuver is successful, the golems tries to grab their foes and keep them underwater while using the blood drain special attack. If the golems cannot bring the fight in the water, they get out of the pool to attack the PCs.

Morale The golems fight until destroyed.

Development: By the time the PCs leave the cistern, the patio outside the entrance is nearly deserted: most of the townsfolk have left and taken the wounded with them. With nothing left to explore here, the PCs can return to the necropolis and speak to Ruja, or head to other locations as they see fit.

C. GRAND TEMPLE OF THE GODDESS OF DEATH

A trio of monaciello gremlins lives clandestinely in the attic of Owot-ti's Grand Temple, dedicated to the Goddess of Death. The malicious triad seizes every opportunity to torment the congregation. Sawing off bench legs, changing objects from place, "customizing" tapestries, and waking up priests with sneezing powder are some of the tasteless shenanigans in their repertoire. When Kerux suggested the gremlins a new prank for them to pull, the three pests were only too eager to hear him out.

Kerux's proposal was simple: to swap the good bread, handed out by charitable churchgoers, for the Anubians' infected bread, which would make everyone sick. The gremlins, of course, found the idea hilarious, and spent the next weeks convulsing with laughter every time a poor soul grabbed a soiled loaf from the donations cabinet.

C1. TEMPLE BACKALLEYS

Outside the temple, folks enduring the dayburn and sun blindness curses make their way through narrow alleyways to reach the temple's main entrance in search of a cure.

Creatures: Now that the Festered Sun has triggered all curses, the gremlins feel like their work is truly paying off. The trio ventured out of the temple to commemorate the success of their prank by further taunting the community; they lurk in the backalleys making easy targets out of the curse's victims. The PCs stumble into the monaciello gremlins while they are in the middle of harassing an old couple blinded by the curse.

This encounter can take place any time the PCs are moving between locations, at the GM's discretion.

GREMLIN, MONACIELLO (3)

Small fey, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 36 (8d6+8)

Speed 30 ft.



| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 6 (-2) | 17 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 11 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 13 (+1) |

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive perception 11

Languages Aklo

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

SPECIAL TRAITS

Magic Sack: A monaciello gremlin has a magical pouch that functions as a Bag of Holding for it, but reverts to being a normal pouch if ever separated from the gremlin.

Stymie Channeling: Any creature within 20 feet of a monaciello gremlin attempting to Channel Divinity must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be unable Channel Divinity for that turn.

Innate Spellcasting: The gremlin's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 11). The gremlin can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *prestidigitation*, *ghost sound*, *silent image*

1/day each: *glitterdust*

TACTICS

Morale If two of the gremlins die or fall unconscious, the remaining one surrenders.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee weapon attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage.

Development: Fearing for his life, the surviving gremlin drops to the floor and wallows begging for his life; it speaks only in aklo. The fey pleads for mercy while confessing to all his antics, including the substitution of the bread; in this particular case, he tries to pin all the blame on the man with the jackal head (he does not know Kerux's name). The gremlin promises to abandon the temple if the PCs let him go, and flees looking for a new place to settle if allowed to leave.

The old couple attacked by the gremlins thanks the PCs and asks for help to reach the Grand Temple.

Treasure: Each gremlin carries a purse with 520 gp stolen from the church.

D. ASTRONOMER'S GUILDHOUSE

Located north of Owot-ti's central district, a couple of blocks from the river shore, a modest three-story wooden building shelters the respected Astronomer's Guildhouse. Affected by the river flood, the building's ground-floor is partially underwater.

The guildhouse's unimposing façade seems lacking, considering the prestige the guild holds, but is indicative of how little time its affiliates spend dealing with city politics or finances. A quirky group of scholars and researchers, the guild members would much rather spend their time studying and debating their latest discoveries than actually running the guild, which lives on mostly because of the excellence of its astronomers' work.

Given the limited available space, only the most distinguished guild members afford the privilege of having their own office inside the guildhouse, and the idiosyncratic gnome Gyep is one of those few. Well-liked and respected among his peers, Gyep carries but one stain in his curriculum: the preposterous hypothesis that the Festered Sun, a harmless natural occurrence, would somehow trigger an ancient curse. Needless to say, no one is likely to hold that against the gnome anymore.

In fact, since the strange blindness and skin burns appeared, Gyep has been in high demand to explain in details that which no one cared to listen to before, but the guards sent to fetch the astronomer at his residence came back empty handed. Gyep is known to spend more time locked inside his small cubicle in the guildhouse than in his spacious home a mile away; for this reason, his office is more likely to produce a clue of the gnome's whereabouts.

Talpah, a grey-haired small woman, is expecting the PCs to show them to Gyep's office. A good friend of the gnome, the nice old scholar escaped the curses by heeding Gyep's advice and not leaving the guildhouse. In a good mood, she chats with the PCs and wishes them good luck in their search, adding that Gyep does not like people going through his.

If this is not the PCs' first stop, then Talpah informs them that another group of adventurers stopped by ear-

lier, looking for Gyep as well. After one look at the office, the halflings decided it would be easier to let their dogs track the missing astronomer by scent, and went away taking one of Gyep's fez hats.

D1. GYEP'S OFFICE

Behind a mundane wooden door stands an unusual office. The disorderly state of the cramped cubicle suggests at first the work of a burglar—or, more likely, that of a small hurricane. A second look makes it clear that there is method to the chaos, and this is apparently the typical arrangement of Gyep's workspace. Celestial charters and handwritten notes cover the walls from top to bottom, while huge heaps of papers, books, and scroll cases litter the floor, shelves, and desk—the latter, barely discernible buried under a wide array of astronomical tools and devices pointed upwards, towards the skylight on the ceiling.

It is hard to make sense of the mess in Gyep's office. The 10-foot-by-10-foot square room on the top floor is so crammed with items that it seems impossible to take more than two steps without tripping over or stepping on something. The information the PCs actually seek is inside a hidden compartment on the desk (DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice), duly booby-trapped.

Traps: Gyep recently set up the snoop-snitch trap to catch colleagues who keep nosing around his work. If a PC opens the secret desk compartment without disarming the trap a solution of glowing ink and cyan-colored marker dye splashes in the PC's direction, and a loud but harmless explosion triggers. The ink cannot be removed for three days, and any dyed object or creature glows until the dye is removed. This is Gyep's method of singling out snoops. The trap can be spotted with a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, and can be disarmed with a DC 16 Dexterity check with thieves' tools. A PC can attempt to pick the lock without thieves' tools or proficiency with them, but gains disadvantage on the check.

Treasure: In the secret compartment, the PCs find a box with a note attached to it, that reads "Do not forget". Opening the box, the PCs find a *scroll of invisibility*, a *scroll of mending*, and blueprints for the conservation and research wing of the House of Hallowed Resurgence. Next to the box, there is a jar with an unpeeled onion immersed in pomegranate vinegar—a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check reveals this to be a regional delicacy called pickled soul. Eaten like an apple, the extremely sour and acidic dish is generally more of an acquired taste than an instant favorite.

Placed under the box and jar are the damaged parchment with the verses of Kapanek's curse, a study report

about an unidentified mummy in the House of Hallowed Resurgence's collection, an inventory of properties owned by the traditional Mafiris family, and copies of historical letters exchanged between one Farou Mafiris and the clergy of the Goddess of Death, dating from the time of the great plague, in which they plot against the heretic Kapanek and her husband Nehu-Thepre.

E. HOUSE OF HALLOWED RESURGENCE

Morticians, doctors, and alchemists comprise the ranks of the House of Hallowed Resurgence, the seat of Owot-ti's embalmer's guide. Originally just one among many funerary organizations, the institution developed into a major academy specialized in anatomy, chemistry, and medicine, sought by students of the arts of embalming and mummifying who long to improve their craft.

Like many of the city's non-essential services, the House of Hallowed Resurgence decided to close its doors during this time of crisis. The guild's leader, a cunning alchemist with a mummified left hand, suspended the guild's activities after hearing gossip that blamed an Anubian cult for the afflictions running rampant on the streets. Fearing for the integrity of the Anubian chapel inside the building, she thought best to lock the place up until the matter is resolved.

When the PCs arrive, all accesses are blocked, but the streets are nearly deserted, so a break-in hardly draws attention. Using the blueprints found in Gyep's desk compartment, the PCs easily reach the conservation and research wing on the ground floor.

E1. HALLWAY

This 10 feet wide hallway ends in the conservation and research departments, on the building's northwest wing. Windows on the east wall, one of which is broken, overlook the inner garden.

To the west, a narrow corridor leads to the staff offices, while the library, the storage room and a workshop are accessible from the L shaped turn at the end of the main hallway. A window on the wall to the west allows the PCs to see inside one of the offices; the other two, connected to area E3. **Workshop**, are closed with wooden blinds.

Every once in a while, the PCs hear muffled, stomping noises echoing in the hallway. A DC 10 Wisdom (Percep-

tion) checks pinpoints the library as origin of the sound. A DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check indicates the recent passage of a barefoot Medium humanoid biped. The same tracks can be found inside area E4. **Storage**.

E2. OFFICES

The office's doors are all unlocked. A superficial examination shows nothing unusual, but with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check in any of the offices the PCs find some valuables: a necklace with a gold disc bearing a jackal's head, worth 100 gp, and an obsidian signet worth 5 gp.

With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion), the PCs identify the disc as a gold holy symbol of Anubis. A DC 15 Intelligence (History) check reveals the signet to be a token of membership of the embalmer's guide.

E3. WORKSHOP

This workshop looks like it was abandoned in a hurry: the workbench stools and the chair by the study desk are tripped over, and the last occupant did not bother to collect his utensils or roll up the ragged cloth laid out over the workbench in the middle of the room.

The wooden door separating this room from the hallway is secured with a simple lock (DC 15 Dexterity check to pick open).

After being denied permission to examine a mummy from the House of Hallowed Resurgence's collection, Gyep decided to visit the embalmer's guildhouse in the still of the night to conduct his research in secret. The gnome broke in through a window in the hallway and entered the offices relying on a nearly spent *chime of opening*, and then fetched the keys for the library and storage. With free access to all rooms, the astronomer moved the mummy from the storage to the workshop, where he spent the night studying it before accidentally falling asleep over the desk.

Gyep woke up the following morning startled by the sound of soft footsteps. He peeped out of the window in fear of having been caught, only to witness a hooded man walking down the corridor. Moving from the blinds to the door's keyhole, Gyep continued to watch as the black-robed figure, bearing a jackal skull for a head, entered the storage, where he remained for a few minutes before stepping out and calling out for Kapanek.

At this moment, Gyep noticed something move behind him: the mummy he had been analyzing was up and heading for the door, answering to Kerux's call. Instinctively, Gyep locked up the workshop and repeatedly cast *silence*

to silence the mummy before its presence was noticed. The gnome managed to distract the undead and lure it into the library, away from Kerux, but got cornered inside the supplies cabinet, leaving the mummy trapped in the library. Thanks to Gyep's magic, Kerux left the House of Hallowed Resurgence without ever realizing what had happened right next to him.

A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) or Wisdom (Survival) check in the workshop shows signs of altercation between a Small and a Medium humanoid creatures.

E4. STORAGE

The storage door is unlocked. Five pairs of shelves loaded with boxes stand up side by side dividing the area in four parts. The boxes hold objects of scientific importance but little market worth. In general, the items stored in this area are either awaiting restoration or further analysis; some are kept just for their educational value.

While Gyep spied on him, Kerux spent time in here going through the boxes and looking for Kapanek's mummy. Not finding anything, he assumed the mummy had awoken and escaped through the broken window in the hallway; Kerux then left, hoping the creature would come to him at some point.

E5. LIBRARY

A stained glass skylight filters the exterior illumination and tints the semicircular library in beautiful colors. Placed atop a long dais two steps above the library level, bookshelves perpendicularly positioned against the circular wall point towards the entrance, where a shriveled up woman covered in rags slams against the library's door, desperate to get out.

The large library contains an extensive bibliography on embalming and chemistry in general. The strong wooden double door to the hallway is locked with an average lock reinforced by an *arcane lock* spell cast by Gyep (DC 25 (Dexterity check with thieves' tools, break DC 25)). Gyep and the mummy entered the room via the smaller door that opens into the neighboring workshop—and which is now unlocked.

Creatures: The creature inside the library is in fact Kapanek's mummified body, reanimated as an undead monstrosity. The mummy spent years asleep, but woke up to Kerux's call. Right now, its only goal is to leave the library and rejoin Kerux. It sees any creatures in its path as an obstacle, and attacks on sight.

MUMMY

CHALLENGE 3

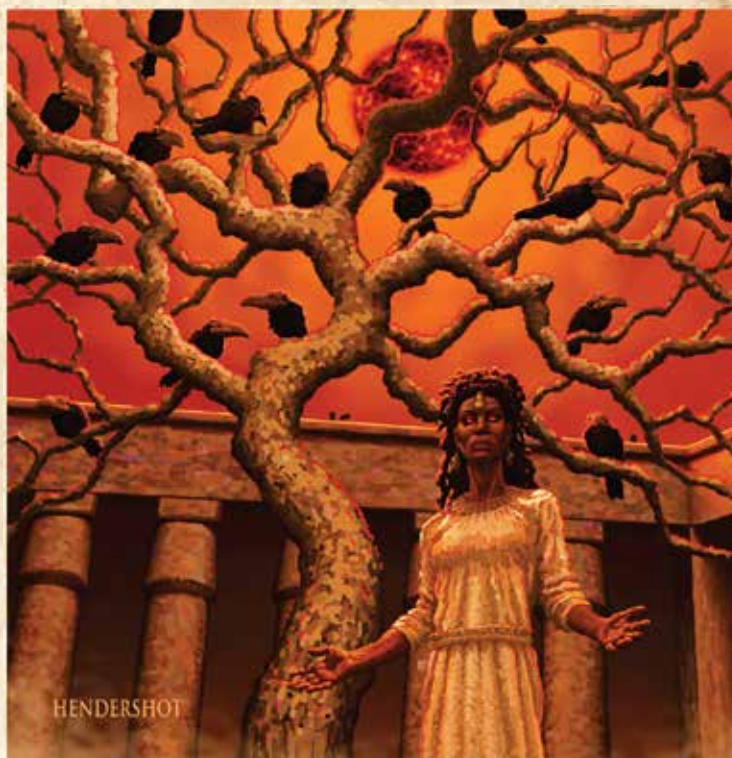
XP 700 (*Monster Manual*)

hp 58

Development: After defeating the mummy, the PCs see a cyan-haired gnome with large glasses open the door on the south corner of the library. He sticks his head out and thanks the PCs for ending his ordeal. The gnome walks up to them and introduces himself: he is Gyep (uses Mage NPC stats). Depending on when the PCs arrive, he might have stayed hidden for over a day.

If one of the PCs got splashed by the snoop-snitch trap, Gyep notices the dye stains and bluntly asks what they were doing in his office at the Astronomer's Guildhouse. Otherwise, he is just curious to know why the PCs are here. He then goes on to explain how he ended up locked in the closet.

Gyep is happy to learn there are people eager to hear his theory about the curse, but having been stuck in the cabinet since the beginning of the Festered Sun, the gnome is totally unaware of the current situation in Owot-ti. He asks the PCs to bring him up to date, and then rushes to the workshop to lay out a dozen of parchments over the workbench. Gyep minutely goes over the documents to supply a full summary of his investigation on this so-called Kapanek's curse. The exposition is likely to answer many of the questions directed at Gyep.



What are you doing here? “I came in secret because the embalmer’s guild denied me permission to study the mummy. I’d heard about it before; archaeological findings date it to the years of the great plague. It was a long shot, but I wanted to confirm the mummy’s identity—which I inadvertently did when that skull-headed jackal-man called out for Kapanek, and the mummy arose to answer.”

Who is Kapanek? “Kapanek is the person I’m looking into. She was a heretic who went against the church of the Goddess of Death in the days of the great plague of Owot-ti. She was also an orphan groomed by the church to join the clergy, but her devotion to the old gods—especially Anubis—caused her excommunication. After that, she gathered followers by preaching on the streets, and even married one of her admirers—a wealthy tax collector named Nehu-Thepre, with whom she had two children.”

How did she die? “Back then, the clash between the dwindling old faith and the burgeoning creed of the Goddess of Death was an even more serious issue than it is today; even after marrying into the aristocracy, Kapanek amassed powerful enemies who resented her humble origins and unconventional doctrines.

According to the chronicles and letter exchanges I uncovered in the municipal archives, it was Farou Mafiris, patriarch of the Mafiris family at the time, who engendered the plot to pin the plague on Kapanek and her sect. Farou and his allies convinced the population that the madness disease was a result of the apostasy growing in the heart of Owot-ti, and that the sickness would end once the city got rid of the infidels.

The heretics were killed or driven out of town, but the worse fate fell to Kapanek: she watched the cruel murder of her husband and children before facing public execution.”

How did her mummy get here? “That is a good question, indeed. The files say one of the guild members simply donated the body to the guild, but that feels too convenient, considering the circumstances. The man’s name is Yaro, I found his address, too.”

What is the meaning of the verses? “At first, I thought the verses were romanticized, but I now believe Kapanek ushered the poem verbatim. Curses are unique in how they challenge our notions of magic, and my research taught me that in these cases the wording matters as much as the intentions. Perhaps that appeals to some obscure patron—who knows?

The first verse sets the stage for it all—the Festered Sun. The crows could be observers from the afterlife, maybe. The third verse establishes the targets: all who were conniving with the misdeed perpetrated against Kapanek. At this point, I’d dare say this extends to anyone in Owot-ti who is not a devotee of the old gods. Then, come the burning and blinding curses you told me about, which seem to be alleviated by the consumption of blood. This vulnerability to sunlight and the appetite for blood remind me of another supernatural disease: vampirism. It wouldn’t be surprising if the curse evolved to that, though I hope not.

The first tercet gives an ample time frame for the curse to happen, with the last line requiring Kapanek’s renaissance in Owot-ti. That is actually a trade-off on her part: strict conditions tend to empower curses. The last verses worry me the most. Wherever this sycamore grows, it’s the pivotal point of the curse’s final stage: some cataclysm that threatens the lives of everyone in the city.”

How do we stop it? “We need to break one of the conditions. We cannot stop the Festered Sun, but we can rid Owot-ti of Kapanek’s presence. The problem is, where—and what—is she? The mummy you destroyed was a just a part of the puzzle, and we have only until the end of the phenomenon to solve it all.”



And what about the Festered Sun? “Oh, except for serving as a trigger, it has nothing to do with the curse. It’s a remarkable event, though, caused by the passage of a massive line of asteroid between the sun and our world. Apparently, the asteroid line interferes with gravitational pull, increasing solar activity. I think the so-called sores on the sun are actually solar explosions, so large and powerful that we can see them with the naked eye. The gravitational interference could also explain the river flood. I’d love to investigate this theory further, but right now we have other priorities.”

If the PCs have not yet been to the Anubian encampment, Gyep suggests a visit to investigate their connection with the ongoing disturbances. He also gives the PCs Yaro’s address.

Reward: Gyep’s initial attitude towards the PCs is helpful. If the PCs befriend the gnome, they gain a resourceful ally. What Gyep lacks in combat skills he makes up in knowledge; from this point on, whenever the PCs need information, they can come to the gnome and use his Intelligence check results to answer their questions, at the GM’s discretion.

Gyep also lets the PCs keep the contents of the box found in his office. The only item he will not part with is the spyglass.

E6. SUPPLIES CABINET

This small room stores stationary supplies, which have all been toppled over by Gyep. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, the PCs can winnow enough materials to scribe 5 levels worth of spells into their spellbooks.

F. YARO’S HOUSE

One of many alike in a modest neighborhood of Owot-ti, this one-story mudbrick row house hides a curious piece of Kerux’s story.

The wizard Yaro lived here alone for many decades, but about seven years ago the household received another resident. Miestra, Yaro’s only sister, moved in to tend to her sick brother. Struck by severe dementia, Yaro wasted away over the course of the last decade, both physically and mentally. Little more than a living dead, he spends his days in bed, babbling incomprehensibly and staring at the

ceiling with his bony fingers clutched over a fragile chest. If not for his sister’s care, the old man would be gone already, unable to stand up or even feed himself.

On the eve of the Festered Sun, Kerux paid a visit to Yaro to collect orders placed years before—a mummy and a blood golem created out of Kapanek’s remains. The sight of the monstrous Kerux

sent Miestra into a screaming fit, quickly silenced by its claws. When Kerux sat by Yaro’s bed and showed himself to the old man, Yaro immediately recognized the visitor, despite the mental disorder; in a rare moment of clarity, he revealed where the blood golems and mummy were.

The windows and curtains inside Yaro’s house are closed, creating an ambience of dim light in all ground-floor rooms unless the PCs open them up to let some natural light in. The candles on the walls are burnt out.

F1. PARLOR

A dead middle-aged woman lies on the floor of the parlor, her neck completely lacerated by Kerux’s claws. A DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check roughly establishes the time of death—the night before the Festered Sun.

The kitchen, backyard, and bedroom all open to the parlor, but there’s one other entry to the room. A secret trapdoor (DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check to detect) hides the access to the house’s basement, where Yaro ran his unlicensed business for many years.

Traps: When Yaro’s dementia forced him to abandon work, he locked up the laboratory and set up a magical trap to protect his books, journals, trinkets, and tools. Opening the trapdoor triggers a spell that summons the guardian of Yaro’s life’s labor, an **earth elemental**.

Treasure: Miestra, the dead woman in the parlor, carries in her pocket a canister of smelling salts.

F2. KITCHEN

There is nothing special about this typical kitchen, only a recently used oven and cabinets filled with food and eating and cooking utensils. A DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check indicates that the oven was used in the night preceding the Festered Sun, judging from the amber and ashes.

F3. BACKYARD

Four walls set the boundaries of this well tended backyard. A DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies several

types of vegetables planted in the garden, enough to feed a family of two for several days. The earth was fertilized and worked by Miestra, a skilled agriculturist. Clean sheets hang from a clothesline attached to the walls.

F4. BEDROOM

A tiny, skinny man lies motionless on the bed pushed against the north wall. He stares wide-eyed at the floor, gasping for breath every now and then, oblivious to everything around him. Besides the bed, the room's decoration includes a straw mattress used by Miestra, a clothes cabinet, two chests, and a trough used for bathing and washing.

If the PCs use on Yaro the smelling salt found with Miestra (or employ a similar method), the old witch snaps out of his trance for a moment and notices their presence. Yaro can barely move or speak, but the PCs can still try to engage him; he gives short replies to up to three questions before drifting away for the rest of the day. His answers are honest, but to understand the man's poor enunciation and clumsy gesturing, the PCs must succeed at a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check.

F5. YARO'S LABORATORY

Yaro's laboratory is plunged in total darkness. Chemical gases leaked from embalming fluid containers have built up in the chamber over time; the pungent fumes cause nausea and irritation of the respiratory tissue when inhaled.

The room is filled with metalwork and woodwork tools, medical equipment, and an assortment of alchemical equipment. Piled up chests store years worth of personal notes and professional projects spread over dozens of leather-bound tomes. A mummified cat sits on top of a shelf; it was once Yaro's familiar, but the deranged witch killed and embalmed the animal to prevent his spells, stored in the feline, from falling into someone else's hands.

Creatures: A wight, the last project Yaro worked on before dementia completely took hold, still dwells in the laboratory. Already suffering from severe paranoia, Yaro ordered the undead to protect the room from all intruders. Obeying its creator's last command, the wight attacks the PCs as soon as they step inside. Additionally, the room is filled with embalming gases, causing 7 (2d6) poison damage, or half that on a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, you gain the poisoned condition for 3 rounds. Every 10 rounds of addition-

al exposure to the gases causes these effects again.

Development: The night Kapanek died, Kerux went back for her corpse. He removed Kapanek's heart and placed it in an enchanted canopic jar, along with the blood scraped off the ground, and then had the body mummified in honor to their post mortem doctrines. For centuries, Kerux kept the mummy and jar safe from harm, but about sixty years ago, he found a new purpose for these physical remains. Kerux reached out to a then young Yaro, who was starting a surreptitious business building constructs and experimenting with the creation of undead.

Yaro's collection of yearly journals, cleanly organized and labeled, contains not only notes on the hundreds of constructs and undead created over the course of a career, but also a detailed account of a meeting with someone named Kerux, described as a man bearing a jackal's skull for a head, about sixty years ago. These passages present numerous notations, question marks, and underlined words; they stand out from the otherwise clean and organized entries. The issue seems to have been some sort of obsession in Yaro's life. The notes include the following facts.

Kerux commissioned the making of an undead mummy out of an unidentified embalmed cadaver, and a blood golem, using a heart and harvested blood as raw materials. Yaro accepted the job, paid in advance, and within a couple of months finished the mummy. The golem was trickier: he used up all the coagulated blood Kerux collected, but the amount and condition resulted in a construct of poor quality. In his second attempt, he liquefied the heart and added blood from other sources, but again, the results were unsatisfactory. He kept trying to perfect the golems, but as Kerux failed to return, Yaro slowly abandoned work on these projects and simply left the mummy and golems stored in his lab.

As decades went by, Yaro started to develop a mild paranoia toward the creatures. Their slumbering presence was unsettling; he would sometimes return to his lab and find them in different poses, or at times feel their spiteful stare over him. Soon, he could no longer get any work done under their hollow watch. Presuming Kerux would not return for them after that many years, Yaro decided to get rid of the creatures.

The golems were dumped in the old cistern. The mummy, he thought, was more dangerous; he decided to leave it under the care of the House of Hallowed Resurgence for study and safekeeping. His donation stated only that the mummy had come to him through a stranger that never

came back to reclaim it. The whole account spans several books and years, but Yaro's indexing skills fortunately make it easy to piece it all together.

Rewards: Exploring Yaro's laboratory, the PCs forage an alchemist's lab kit, a healer's kit, masterwork artisan's tools, and a locked iron box with 500 gp (DC 15 Dexterity check to open with thieves' tools).

G. MAFIRIS ESTATE

The Mafiris estate is one of the oldest and most lavish properties in the rich district. It dates back to the reconstruction of Owot-ti years after the plague, when the city expanded beyond its original perimeter and walled off what would later become the old necropolis.

One of the few families to remain in Owot-ti following the plague, the Mafiris guided the other remnants through the times of hardship. The family practically ran the town at one point, but their influence greatly declined after the church of the Goddess of Death returned officially to rebuild Owot-ti. The Mafiris retain nonetheless a privileged position, with its matriarch Dejam Mafiris holding a seat on the City Council. Under the guise of a traditional and respectable house, however, the family hides more than one skeleton in the closet—one in particular pertaining to Kapanek.

As far as the clan is concerned, their ancestor Farou Mafiris went down in history as a local hero for his role in keeping the city on its feet in the aftermath of the plague. His part in the foul plot to eliminate Kapanek and her disciples is less well known—in fact, it could have been completely erased from time had not some of his scheming letters found their way to old church records, later moved to the municipal archives—the same ones miraculously found by Gyep's tireless scrutiny.

Kapanek knew that Farou worked actively against her, but never thought he would succeed in his ploys. Yet, he did, and reaped in the process a prominent place in Kapanek's curse—for a centennial sycamore grows in the Mafiris manor's central courtyard, a weak spot from whence a breach between planes recently developed.

Since the first morning of the Festered Sun, a shimmering membrane separating the material plane from Purgatory has been slowly expanding out of the tree, and the speed with which it advances increases with each passing hour. A dome has so far engulfed the whole property along with its residents; by the end of the Festered Sun, it

will have swallowed the whole city. For now, the victims transported into Purgatory are still alive, but every minute spent in the realm weighs on their souls. Because of Kapanek's curse, the mortals trapped in this bubble will most likely die as soon as the Festered Sun finishes its cycle, each of them victim of a *power word: kill* spell. The survivors shall carry her curse forever, gaining the vampire template on a failed DC 12 Charisma save.

From the outside, the dome's interior looks like a washed out, flickering version of the material plane; yet, its precise threshold is barely noticeable, requiring a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot. A PC who fails this check might accidentally walk into Purgatory, though he remains visible to anyone outside the dome. In Purgatory, the Mafiris manor stands right before the PCs; looking back, they can no longer see the city—or anything, for that matter. If the PCs wish to return to the material plane, they must seek another path.

Identifying the current plane requires a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check. The dayburn and sun blindness curses do not function in Purgatory

G1. MANOR HOUSE

Tall pyramidal obelisks flank a long flight of stairs leading up to an intricately carved stone portico. The front doors, made from noble wood, are wide open, inviting the PCs in. As they explore the many beautiful halls of the luxurious residence, the same scene plays over and over. Children, men, and women—the members and servants of the Mafiris family—wander around aimlessly, crying and sobbing dispiritedly.

If the PCs started the adventure exploring area A. **Anubian Encampment**, then they spot the group of all-female adventurers displaying that same apathetic, defeatist behavior. If the PCs started by visiting area C. **Astronomer's Guildhouse**, they run into the halfling adventuring party instead.

These people have been too long in Purgatory under the effects of Kapanek's curse and lost all will to fight or live; if spoken to, they keep repeating "We're dead" or "Kapanek is returned". Eventually, the PCs reach the courtyard.

G2. COURTYARD

A leafless tree grows on the belvedere inside the courtyard, a flock of crows in strange masks perched atop its branches. Stone-paved lanes connect the courtyard doors to the central dais and divide the patio into four symmetrical halves, each punctuated with a glistening



golden pond bustling with waterlilies.

Under the tree, a woman in flowing white garments peacefully watches an old matron bleed out at her feet while a crimson stain slowly crawls up the hem of her gown. The woman's lips do not move, and yet, her voice echoes all around, rousing a feeling of utter desolation. "Come, enter. It won't be long, now."

This courtyard is accessible from four different directions; the GM may randomly choose any of them as the PCs' entry point. The ponds are only two feet deep, and the belvedere's floor in the center of the courtyard is 5 feet above the ground.

The PCs can identify the tree in the courtyard as a sycamore by succeeding at a DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) or a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check; the latter also reveals the symbolism behind the tree. Scriptures of the old religions speak of sycamores lining the gates of the afterlife, offering sustenance to the dead.

The brown-skinned woman in a white gown is Kapanek. Although her initial attitude towards the PCs is hostile, her

demeanor does not show it: the woman speaks calmly if addressed. Should the PCs engage in dialogue, Kapanek obliges them, introducing herself and truthfully answering all questions about her life. The daemon speaks telepathically only.

If her dead husband and children come up in the conversation, she instinctively activates the aura of doom. Kapanek does not answer questions about Kerux or the curse; at the most, she mentions that, by the time the Festered Sun ends, all these people who have wronged her will be judged for their deeds. She vilifies the Goddess of Death for tormenting her in the afterlife and attacks verbally anyone carrying her symbol; she also speaks ill of the Mafiris and of the people of Owot-ti in general, for succumbing to the whims of the church and aristocracy instead of accepting the old gods who first blessed them.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) identifies Kapanek as a daemon hailing from Abaddon and the masked crows as psychopomps indigenous to Purgatory.

Creatures: The old Egyptian woman lying unconscious on the floor is Dejam Mafiris, the clan matriarch—also a dilettante wizard. Upon realizing that her family was in grave danger, Dejam confronted Kapanek, but with a memorized spell list ill suited for combat and a body weakened by advanced age, she was easily subjugated. Dejam is currently unconscious and stable. Kapanek has no intention of killing Dejam at this moment, and will happily wait until the old matriarch perishes along with every other victim of her curse.

Reincarnated as a *vulnudaemon*, Kapanek looks much as she did in life: beautiful, imposing, and terrifying. Her dark hair is braided and styled up in a beehive shape, and her strong features are made harsher by the grim look on her face.

Like all souls who perish, Kapanek faced trial before the Goddess of Death. For the evil curse released upon the world, she was condemned to Abaddon—in her mind, an unfair punishment that overstepped Anubis' arbitration. There, clinging to her last vengeful wish, Kapanek stormed through unthinkable horrors to reemerge as a daemon. She found out that even from beyond the grave, her link with Kerux lingered, albeit in a different way. Over the many centuries the two have been apart, Kerux has managed to communicate with Kapanek and keep her informed of his actions.

The connection with Kerux only strengthened Kapanek's determination. She has patiently waited for this

moment, and now that retribution is at hand, will stop at nothing to see it through. The daemon longs to witness the end of her husband and children's murderers, oblivious to the fact that that very same people have been dead for almost as long as she has. Kapanek's pain and hatred know no reason anymore, nor any boundaries.

The "crows" sitting on the sycamore branches are psychopomps of the nosoi type. Psychopomps are creatures native to Purgatory, who concern themselves with the souls transitioning between life and death. Among them, the nosoi are the clerks, scribes, and messengers of the hereafter. Each of them wears a beaked funerary mask, and they have all come here drawn by the impending death of thousands—and, in part, by curiosity, too. The nosoi are quiet spectators of the tragedy at course; predicting a large workload close ahead, the tiny crow-like creatures have already started studying Kapanek's victims to prepare their cases in the courts of the Goddess of Death. Noncommittal bureaucrats, they do not take sides in this quarrel: their job is to observe, document, and report.

KAPANEK, VULNUDAEMON

Small fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 88 (16d6 + 16)

Speed 20 ft., fly 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 14 (+2) | 17 (+3) | 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 13 (+2) | 11 (+0) |

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison, acid

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Abyssal, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

SPECIAL TRAITS

Aura of Doom: A vulnudaemon radiates an aura of dread and helplessness, which it can activate or suppress as a bonus action. Anyone within 30 ft. of the vulnudaemon must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or gain the frightened condition for as long as it is within the aura. A creature who makes a successful saving throw is immune to this aura for 24 hours.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn): The vulnudaemon deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the Kapanek that isn't incapacitated and she doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Innate Spellcasting: The vulnudaemon's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 11). The vulnudaemon can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *blur*, *invisibility*

ACTIONS

Multiattack: Kapanek makes three attacks: two with her shortsword and one with her bite.

Bite: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Shortsword: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Before Combat Kapanek does not attack unless the PCs do first—she is actually willing to let them go and just wait for her vengeance to run its course.

During Combat On the first round of combat, the vulnudaemon activates the aura of doom (if it's not active already) or a bonus action to set off the frenzied nosoi flock hazard, and then casts *invisibility*. While invisible, she casts *blur*, commands her quasit minions to enter combat, and assumes position to make a surprise attack. When possible, she flanks with the quasits to benefit from her sneak attack.

Morale If reduced to 10 or less hit points, Kapanek surrenders, unwilling to jeopardize her own plans. At the first chance, she turns on the PCs and tries to kill them at once for obstructing her path.

QUASIT (3) CHALLENGE 1

XP 400 (*Monster Manual*)

hp 7



Hazard: During the combat, Kapanek avails herself of the nosoi's presence to create a hazard against the PCs.

By telepathically broadcasting a cacophony of horrendous sounds and abhorrent images from Abaddon, Kapanek sends the nosoi into frenzy for 1 round. The creatures take to the air occupying the area indicated on map G2. Courtyard, cawing maniacally while bumping into anything in their paths. Creatures in the occupied area take 1 point of slashing damage each round (medium or heavy armor negates the damage) and have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks due to the nosoi's ear-splitting cries (a Constitution DC 13 saving throw negates the condition). A prone creature takes no damage from this hazard. The PCs also experience Kapanek's telepathic transmission, but suffer no additional penalties from it.

Starting and maintaining the telepathic transmission requires a bonus action. As an action, a PC can attempt a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check to calm down the nosoi and cancel the effects of the hazard for 1 round.

Development: If the meeting with Kapanek takes place before other encounters in this adventure, the PCs might choose not to fight her initially, but ultimately they will have to return and kill the vulnudaemon to stop the curse.

After combat, the PCs may attempt to revive Dejam Mafiris. The old woman tells she woke in the morning hearing the loud sobs of the servants, who got sucked into this realm (which she recognizes as Purgatory) without ever realizing. She sensed the danger afoot, and gathered her children, grandchildren, and in-laws for an escape. By the time they left the manor, however, it was too late: the city outside their doorstep had vanished. Dejam then went back to investigate the matter, watching everyone around her give in to an unexplainable apathy and depression. She found Kapanek trespassing in the main courtyard and got into a fight with the daemon.

Even if the PCs are unable to heal Dejam to hear her account, they can always rely on another eyewitness: the nosoi called Verliwoz. The tiny psychopomp approaches the PCs and reports the same events as Dejam—and more.

Verliwoz was the nosoi responsible for documenting Kapanek's case before her judgment, and later tasked to follow up on the consequences of her curse. Over the years, counting on a network of informants, Verliwoz has built quite a file on Kapanek and, more importantly, on Kerux. On more than one occasion, the nosoi has managed to learn the content of Kapanek and Kerux's communication, intelligence he is willing to give the PCs in exchange

of an unexpected treat: a *pickled soul*, like the one found in area D1. **Gyep's Office.** Verliwoz is determined to taste the famous vinegar-dipped onion, and if the PCs don't have it, he offers to follow the PCs until they can make the exchange. With a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check, they can convince Verliwoz to accept something other than the pickled soul.

While in the company of the PCs, the nosoi keeps bickering with any familiars the group has. After centuries of dealing with paperwork, Verliwoz wants to leave Purgatory and lend his services to a spellcaster with whom he may learn a new trade. In the future, a PC in need of a familiar might find Verliwoz willing to serve.

After the PCs get Verliwoz his treat, she accepts to answers their questions.

Who are you? "Verliwoz, at your disposal. I am a scribe in the bureaucracy of Purgatory—the one in charge of filing Kapanek's case."

What do you know about her? "In life, Kapanek was not all bad. Unfortunately, her quest for the old gods got her associated with wicked elements who abused her faith and trust. Of course, I speak of Kerux, sprung from the Negative Energy Plane, a creature made of death and decay. From the very beginning, Kerux posed as an envoy of Anubis to fool Kapanek. I must admit however that, except for this fundamental lie, Kerux has always been loyal to her, even after she was condemned to Abaddon."

If Kapanek was not evil, why was she sent to Abaddon? "Oh, but she was, in the end. The prolonged affiliation with Kerux took its toll. Since he first appeared before her, something evil tarnished Kapanek's soul, a repressed viciousness that burst out and shattered her soul when her family died in front of her. Kapanek's dying curse set in motion dark forces, which is why the Goddess of Death decided she should go to Abaddon for this extremely hateful and destructive deed."

Can you tell us about the curse? "I know Kerux is behind the lesser aspects of it, but the real danger is the expanding Purgatory bubble. It will eventually swallow the city and, by the end of the Festered Sun, the mortals trapped inside will die and face final judgment—the lucky ones, at least. The others will become vampires, trapped between life and death and out of Purgatory's reach."

Why don't you do something about it? "Though the time has not yet arrived for most of Kapanek's victims, the Goddess of Death cannot directly interfere with the

dealings of mortals—not beyond her attributions as judge and keeper of the afterlife. As for us scribes... well, we are here just waiting to do the paperwork. If no one stops the curse, we're about to get busy with this many incoming souls."

How does Kerux fit in all this? "When Kapanek died, a part of her soul lingered in Kerux, severing their original bond but spawning a new one. Kerux developed shamanic powers that allowed him to reach out to spirits of the netherworld, until he found Kapanek once more. She was still waiting in Purgatory, at the time, and the way she plotted with Kerux to enact her revenge also weighed against her during trial. Kerux became her agent in the material plane; if not for his role in harvesting the remaining pieces of Kapanek's soul, the curse would never have happened."

What pieces? "There are five: one lives on in Kerux, and another spawned her reincarnation as *vulnudaemon*. I am not sure what form the other three fragments have taken."

Unless the PCs have their own means of interplanar travel, they still need to find the way back to the material plane—and there is currently one not even Kapanek knows exists.

For once, the extravagancy of the opulent Mafiris is on the PCs' side: the ponds in the courtyard were filled with water from the Lake of Gold, where the sacred crocodiles dwell—the difference being that, in the Mafiris' case, the pond is covered in gold dust all year long. Additionally, the ponds have all been consecrated to the Goddess of Death. The blessing of the Goddess and the gold coating prevented the pond from crossing over completely into Purgatory, and its surface became a secondary membrane temporarily separating the two planes.

Careful observation of the gold-covered pond shows the ghostly image of white crocodiles and the reflection of the majestic church of the Goddess of Death, in the city center (DC 10 Intelligence (History) check to recognize the building). A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check hints at a connection between the pond and the Lake of Gold; beating the DC by 5 or more immediately identifies the portal.

By remaining submerged in the pond for 2 rounds, the PCs come out in the material plane, floating inside the Lake of Gold in the city center. Luckily, the caretaker of the rare breed of white crocodiles that inhabit the lake keeps the beasts well fed; upon spotting the PCs, the

crocodile keeper holds back the animals and orders the PC out of the lake, throwing them off the promises furiously without caring to hear an explanation.

If the *vulnudaemon* is still alive when the PCs use the portal, she does not interfere; in fact, she only observes, trying to understand what the PCs are doing. Only too late she realizes they have discovered a way out of the Purgatory dome.

PART THREE: ENTERS KERUX

Born in the eternal void of the Negative Energy Plane, Kerux knew only darkness until being inadvertently pulled out of his home by Kapanek's magic. Due to his countenance in the material world, shaped in part by Kapanek's own volition, the priestess took him for an envoy of Anubis, and named him Kerux—the herald. This first summoning bonded the two forever.

Kerux cherished the moments spent with his mistress, learning her ways away from the misery of his home plane; so much, that he never dared correct the misunderstanding about his identity, in fear of losing the priestess' favor. If ever a soul damned to the emptiness of death could know love, Kerux did—and it was ripped from him when Kapanek died.

For all this, the loyal Kerux has lived the past millennia for this moment: Kapanek's revenge is, above all, his own. Yet, without realizing, Kerux has turned her mistress into a mere spectator of her own curse. By collecting and depositing the pieces of Kapanek's soul into crude mockeries, Kerux instrumentalized she who would be a prime mover. Even the *vulnudaemon*, the closest thing to what Kapanek once was, pales in comparison to the priestess' strength and glory in life. Today, Kerux is the one actually pulling the strings.

After years plotting, he knows the city like the palm of his hand: the places, the people, the social structure, and—more importantly—who the major figures are. The coming of the Anubians, the distribution of the blighted bread, the unleashing of the blood golems, the unrest provoked by the dayburn and sun blindness curses: all of these are, first and foremost, distractions to throw off the

council, the guard, and the church from the real threat, while still inflicting maximum suffering in the process.

Kerux knew that the efforts to contain the riots and heal the sick would paralyze the council and stretch the guard and the clergy thin. He also planted misinformation to send the leader of the church inquisitors into a wild goose hunt inside the old necropolis. In the end, by removing key players from the board, Kerux hoped to see the Purgatory bubble expand mostly undisturbed.

Too late did he find out there was one variable unaccounted for: the group of adventures seemingly bent on ruining his carefully laid out plot. The reopening of the Necropolis took Kerux by surprise, bringing new and unknown actors to the stage. Though some of them proved innocuous, such is not the case with the PCs, who have successively destroyed each of Kapanek's aspects.

During the passage of the Festered Sun, Kerux monitors the developments in Owot-ti employing an inconspicuous network of spies. Using the *speak with animals* spell, Kerux receives news from all species of birds in the area, and has a pretty decent idea of how his plan is panning out. This is how he learns about the PC's continued interference. Every time a PC uses a *speak with animals* spell during this adventure, there is a 20% chance that PC intercepts the secret communication and learns that the party is under surveillance.



Kerux's first instinct is to lie low and hide until the celestial anomaly is over; after all, as long as one of Kapanek's aspects lives on, the curse will continue. Yet, worried about the unforeseen turn of events caused by the PCs, Kerux resorts to divination to decide on his course of action. Using a *scroll of augury*, Kerux discovers that, indeed, the PCs are a threat, and going into hiding will not prevent them from finding him. Interpreting the omens, Kerux decides to act first and deliver a deadly blow in the PCs' moment of weakness.

Counting on his bird informants, Kerux locates the spot of the PC's final encounter in Part Two. He then uses *clairvoyance* to spy on the combat, and swoops in right after to attack.

Read or paraphrase the following to get the fight under way:

In the blink of an eye, a bizarre flying humanoid comes into sight. The man with a skeletal jackal's head quickly circles above, like a vulture ready to descend on carrion, his dark robes and bony tail flailing rapidly in the air as he approaches exposing sharp claws.

A chilling voice gives off his discontent. "Your intrusion stops now", the creature proclaims hatefully.

Because of the nature of the final encounter, this combat likely takes place either in area **B. Old Cistern**, **E. House of Hallowed Resurgence**, or **G. Mafiris Estate**, though other locations are possible at the GM's discretion. The GM should allow the PCs to finish the development section of the previous encounter, and give them a chance to quickly get back on their feet before the final showdown.

If the area of this last combat turns out to be **G. Mafiris Estate**, the GM should disregard the planar portals in the courtyard ponds; at this point, since Kerux is the last remaining aspect of Kapanek, the PCs must defeat Kerux to end the curse and return to the Material Plane.

If the final encounter takes place in area **E. House of Hallowed Resurgence**, Gyep helps the PCs against Kerux. The gnome spent all his spells on Kapanak's mummy, but he can still use cantrips to aid in the battle.

When Kerux arrives, the PCs may attempt a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check to avoid being caught completely by surprise. The PCs can also make a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check in combat to get a hunch that Kerux is familiar with their abilities and fighting styles; Kerux uses the knowledge gained while observing the previous combat to fight more effectively.

KERUX

Medium elemental, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 110 (16d8 + 32)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 20 (+5) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 11 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 9 (-1) |

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Ancient Egyptian, Egyptian

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

SPECIAL TRAITS

Spellcasting: Kerux is a 6th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *burning hands*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *enhance ability*, *false life*

3rd level (1 slot): *clairvoyance*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Kerux makes one bite and two claw attacks.

Bite: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Erase from Time. *Melee touch attack.* The target must make a DC 15 Constitution save or vanish from existence, reappearing in the same space (or nearest unoccupied space) 3 rounds later.

Before Combat Kerux prepares for battle by casting *enhance ability* for Constitution and *false life*.

During Combat In the surprise round, Kerux casts *burning hands* against the PCs. After that, he goes for the PC with the greatest damage-dealing potential and uses the *erase from time* special attack. Kerux flies above the battlefield picking the PCs one by one, coming down to attack when possible.

Morale When reduced to below 15 hps, Kerux attempts to flee and hide from the PCs until the Festered Sun ends.

Development: Kerux is an outsider stranded in the material plane; his physical existence derives from Kapanek's powers. Once the PCs destroy him, Kerux fades away to the Negative Energy Plane; without Kapanek to summon

him back, he fundamentally ceases to exist as the PCs know him. His death also destroys Kapanek's *ren*, the last fragment of her soul. Without her presence in Owot-ti, the conditions for Kapanek's retribution are no longer met, and the curse expires instantly.

The Purgatory dome disappears and returns the engulfed area to the material plane, while the people affected by the dayburn curse, the sun blindness curse, or the bloodfeast addiction immediately recover from their afflictions.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Just as Gyep affirmed, the Festered Sun was only a trigger for Kapanek's curse, and represented no danger in and on itself—except for the unpredicted floods. As an indisputable evidence of this notion, the astronomical event peacefully follows its natural course for the remaining of its duration, after the PCs lift the curse. Gyep makes the most of the phenomenon's final moments to observe it avidly.

Ignorant to the tribulations the PCs faced, the people of Owot-ti still blame the the Festered Sun for the disturbances, despite a sudden recovery still during the phenomenon. The painful skin sores, the supernatural sunstroke, and the peculiar light blindness disappear as swiftly as they come, and normalcy returns to the streets and houses of Owot-ti. For the rest of the day, townspeople share the same feeling of waking up from a bad dream, a tingling sensation of having narrowly escaped death. After such mayhem and anguish, the contrast with the ensuing silence and solemnity is stunning. Anonymous heroes, no one pays attention to the PCs as they walk down the streets.

And this is how the Mafiris would have it. Having traveled to Purgatory and met Kapanek, Dejam Mafiris, her family, and her retainers are some of the few who know what actually happened. The role of her ancestor in such a pronounced episode is shameful and impacts negatively on the Mafiris name, to the benefit of political rivals; this, Dejam will not have. She maneuvers to silence her servants and anyone else aware of the curse—which includes Gyep, Ruja (if the PCs report back to him), and the PCs themselves.

Recovered from the curse, Ruja seeks out the PCs to learn how they fared. He honors his deal and rewards the PCs for their help, but when Ruja retells the PC's tale to the City Council, Dejam Mafiris promptly rebuts the story and criticizes Ruja for spending money with swindlers. Dejam's efforts cause the council to issue a statement officially crediting the curse's manifestations to the Festered Sun,

though the church of the Goddess of Death frowns upon that version of the facts. With order restored, the council and the church agree to reopen the old necropolis.

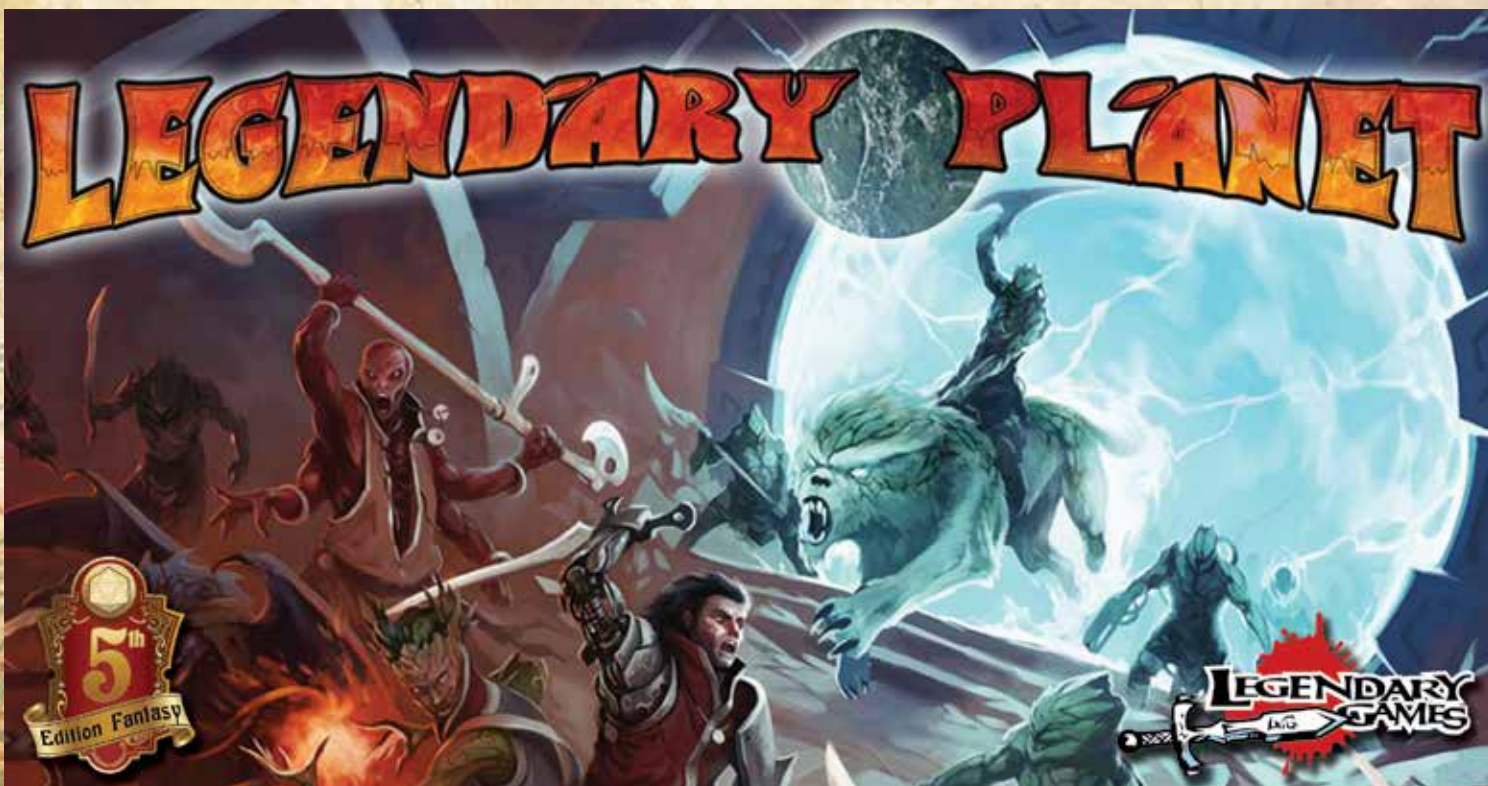
Gyep also goes against the official statement and conveys the real story to his fellow astronomers. To these excited scholars, however, the PCs' adventure is less exciting than the chance to swap notes and craft theories about the physics and metaphysics of the Festered Sun. Gyep in particular is busier than ever, exchanging letters with intellectuals from all parts to compare the sighting from different parts of the globe.

Down on the streets, the Anubians spread the true tale of Kapanek, now under a different light, and exalt the action of the PCs. Kapanek's former followers abandon their prophetic to rethink their dogmas; the sect dismantles

as each acolyte seeks a new vessel for their faith. Most of them seek other cults of Anubis to join.

Back in Purgatory, the nosoi Verliwoz resume his day-to-day tasks. After scribbling the final lines of Kapanek and Kerux's story, he resigns from his post to pursue new experiences, and meets the PCs once more. Both Verliwoz and Gyep can become recurrent NPCs.

Though the PC's fame is neither sure nor immediate, the tale of their adventure slowly spreads, stirring jealousy in the other adventure parties. All around town, opinions are divided: while some disregard the story as absurd gossip, there are many that believe it and glorify the PCs' actions. From this point on, the PCs are likely to meet extreme reactions in their social interactions in Owot-ti, taken for charlatans by some, and heroes by others.



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G2. COURTYARD

1 square = 5 feet



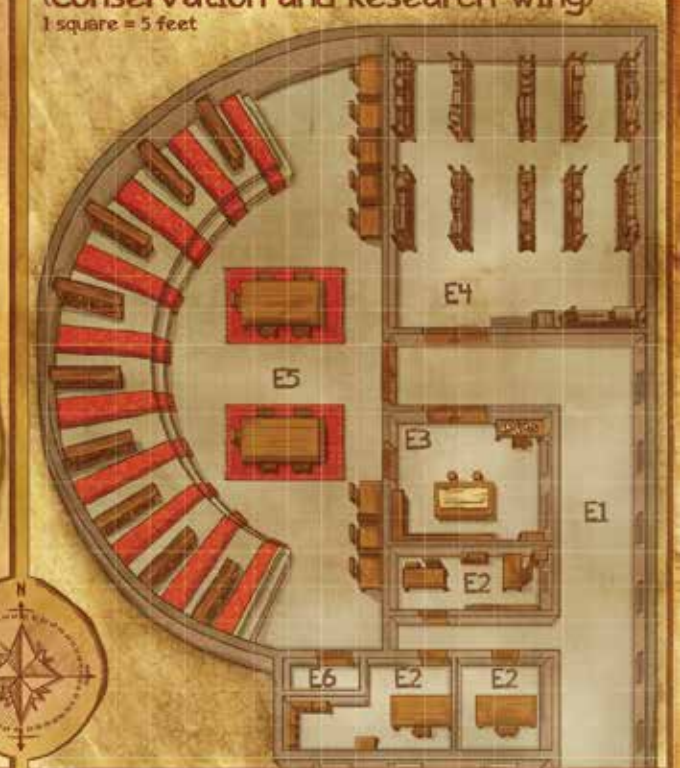
A. ANUBIAN ENCAMPMENT

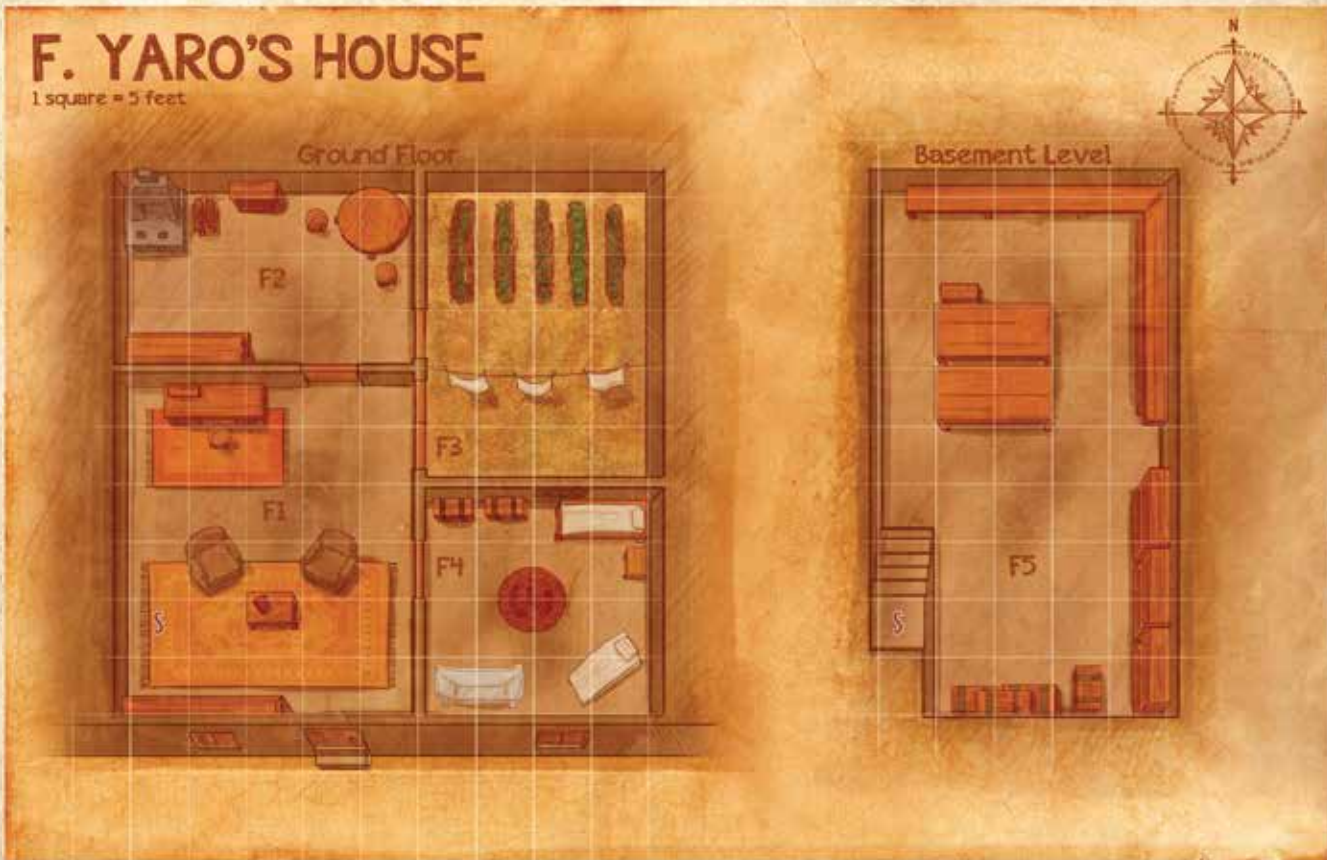
1 square = 5 feet



E. HOUSE OF HALLOWED RESURGENCE (Conservation and Research Wing)

1 square = 5 feet





G2. COURTYARD

1 square = 5 feet





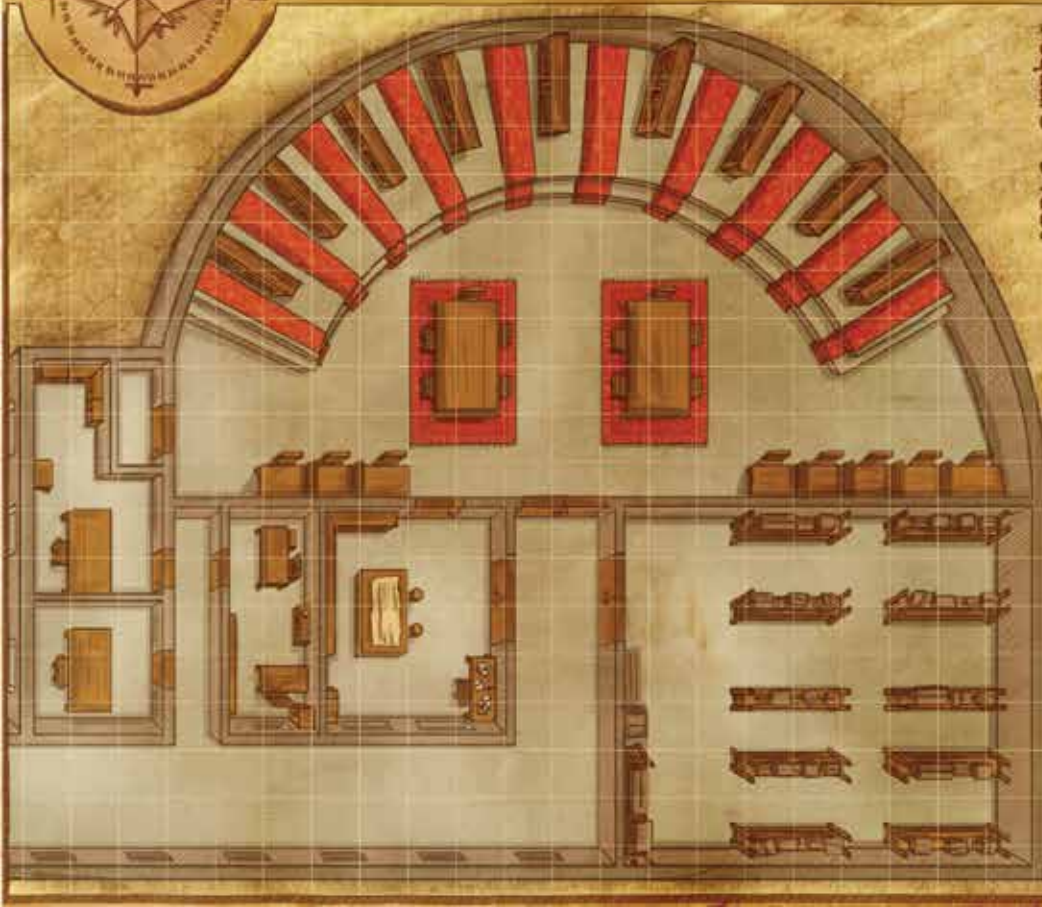
A. ANUBIAN ENCAMPMENT

1 square = 5 feet



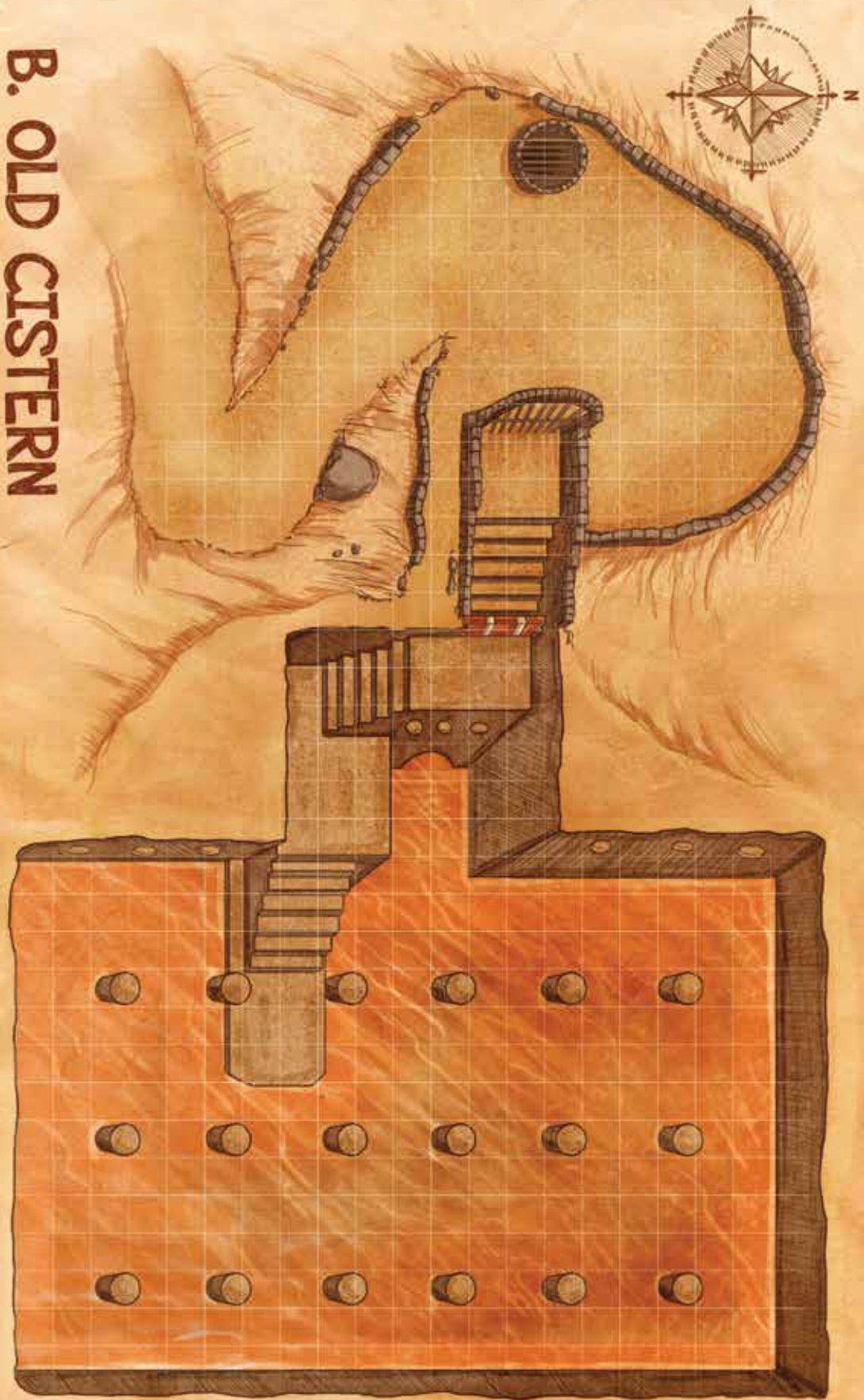
E. HOUSE OF HALLOWED RESURGENCE (Conservation and Research Wing)

1 square = 5 feet



B. OLD CISTERN

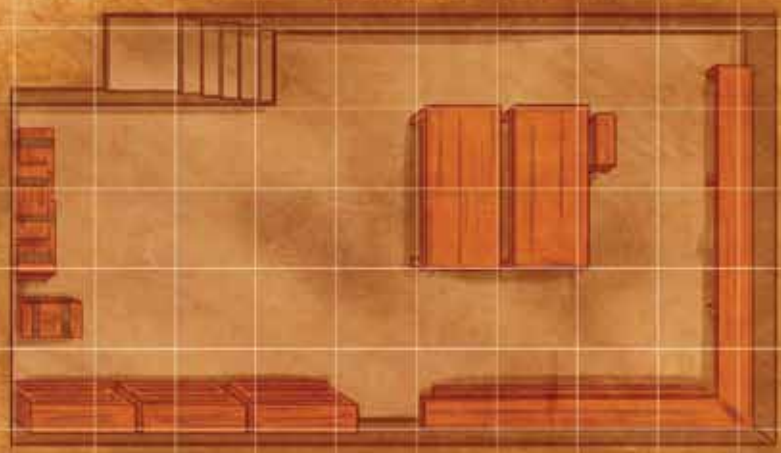
1 square = 5 feet






F. YARO'S HOUSE

1 square = 5 feet



LEGENDARY ADVENTURE 5

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