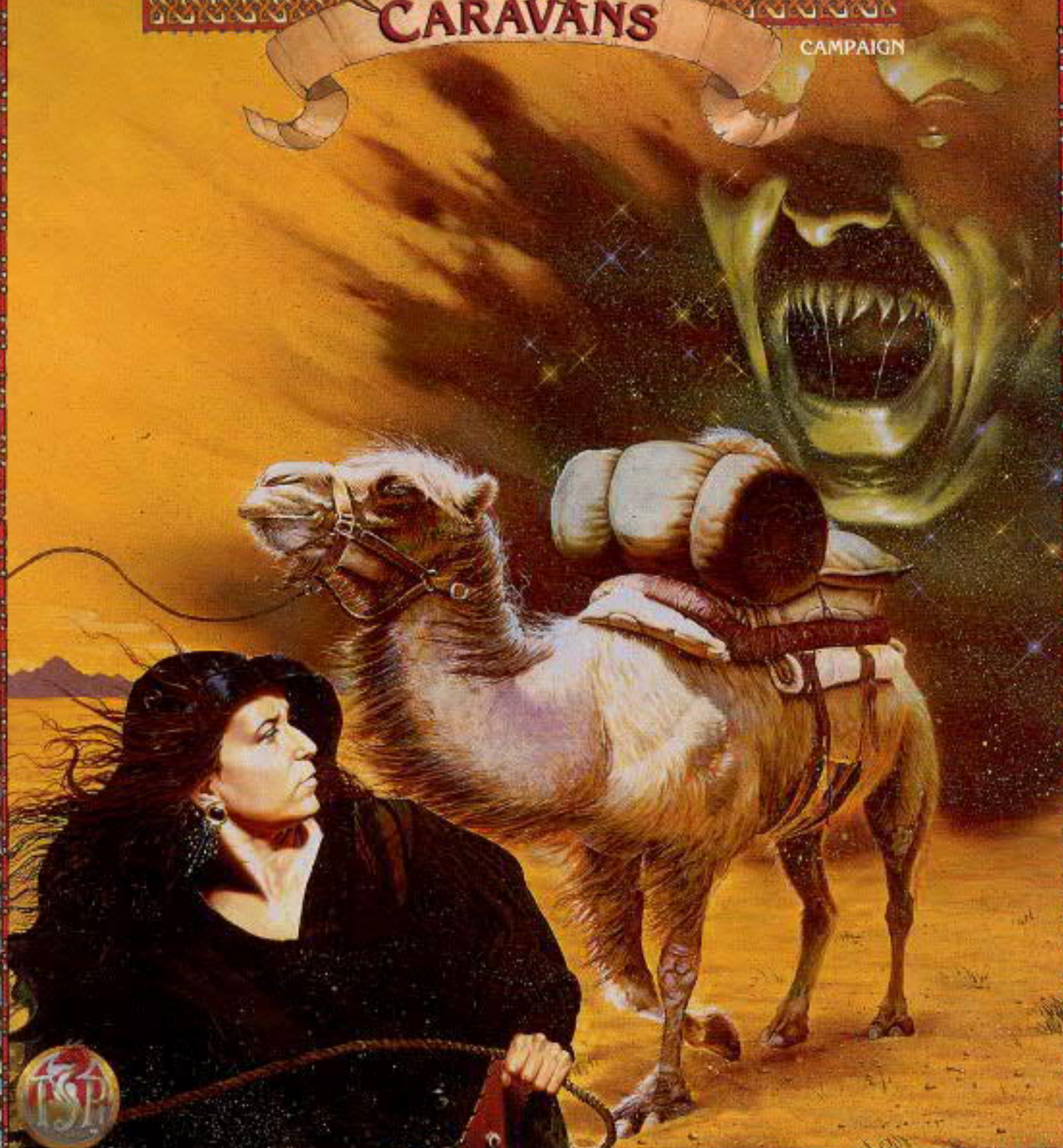


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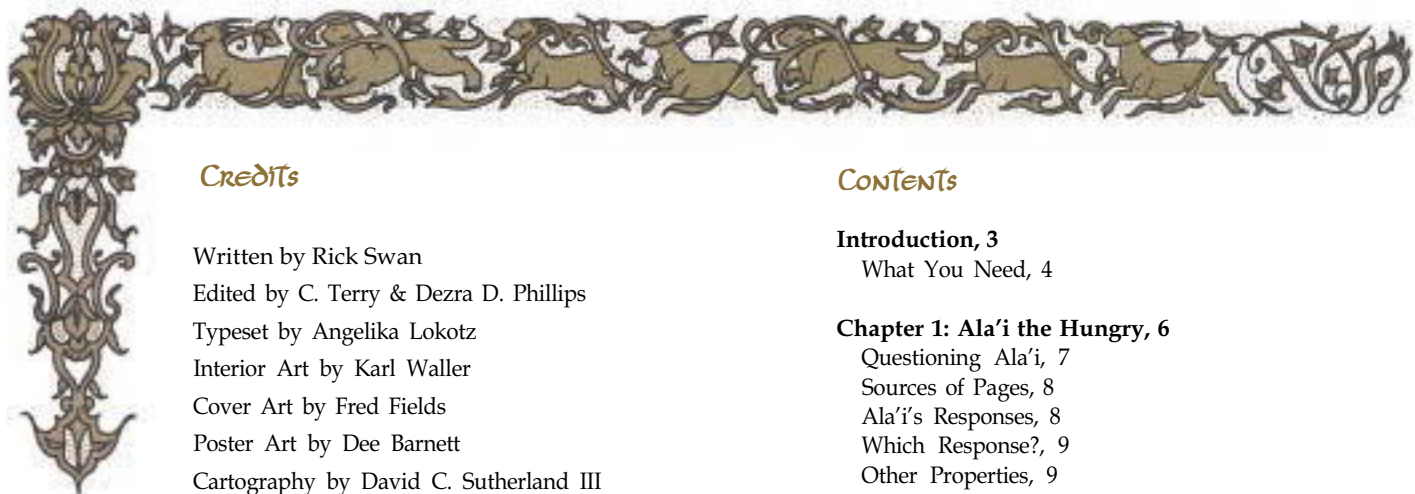
CAMPAIGN

CAMPAIGN GUIDE



Caravans

Campaign Guide



Credits

Written by Rick Swan
 Edited by C. Terry & Dezra D. Phillips
 Typeset by Angelika Lokotz
 Interior Art by Karl Waller
 Cover Art by Fred Fields
 Poster Art by Dee Barnett
 Cartography by David C. Sutherland III
 Special thanks to Wolfgang Bauer

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TSR, Inc.
 POB 756
 Lake Geneva
 WI 53147
 U.S.A.



TSR Ltd.
 120 Church End
 Cherry Hinton
 Cambridge CB1 3LB
 United Kingdom

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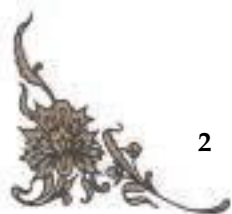
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Introduction

Returning from the bazaar, Husar saw his favorite niece sitting on a low stone fence, idly tossing pebbles into the dirt. Her face was drawn, the corners of her mouth turned down. She looked as if she had swallowed a pitcher of sour milk.

"What is the matter, my child?" asked the elder.

Jamilia threw another stone and watched the dirt settle around it. "Nothing."

"Very well," replied Husar. He straightened the cowl around his slim shoulders. "Be sure to leave some stones for the other sullen children." He turned to leave.

"Wait," Said Jamilia. She tossed her black, silken hair behind her shoulders.

Husar paused. He looked down his strong, aquiline nose at her. "Yes?"

"I failed my history examination today," she said, running tapered fingers over the stones cemented in the fence. "My instructor said I must take it again."

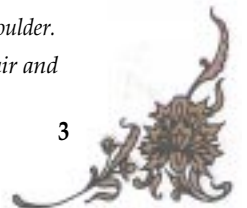
"Then you have nothing to feel bad about," said Husar. "Apply yourself diligently, and you are certain to pass the examination in your second attempt."

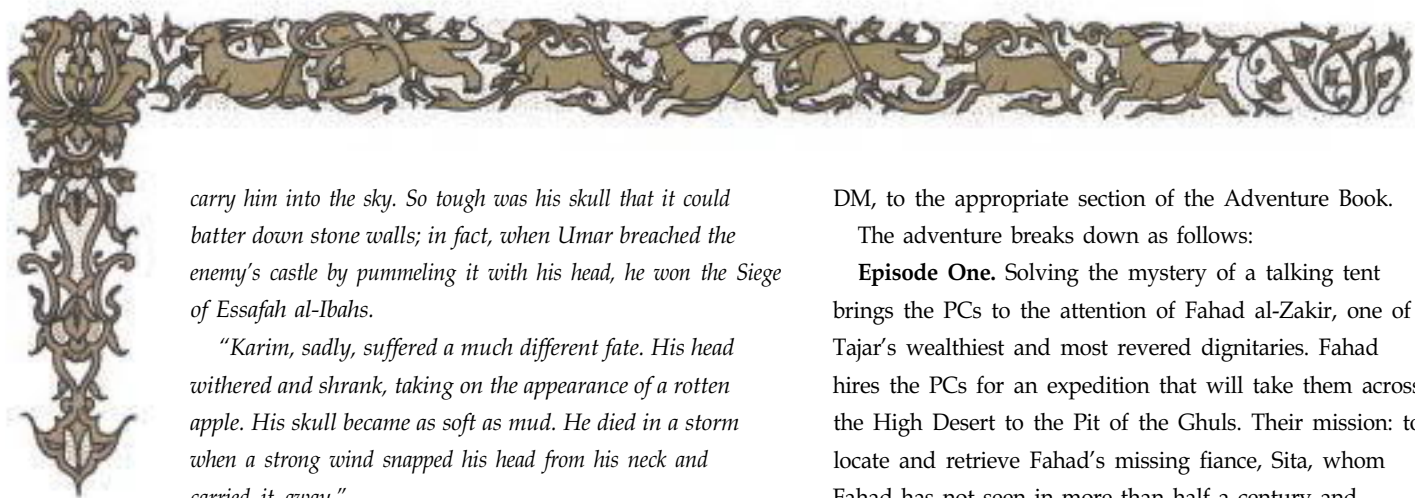
"But I do not want to study history. It is a waste of time. I have no use for so many facts."

Husar settled down beside his petite niece. "Hear this story, my child. It is about two twin boys, Umar and Karim. In appearance, they could not have been more similar, boasting chiseled features and strong bodies worthy of a sultan.

"But in outlook, they could not have been more different. Umar loved books and learning. By age two, he could identify birds by the sound of their songs. By age six, he could speak three languages. Karim, however, had no use for such things. He reacted so violently to his parents' efforts to teach him reading and writing that they eventually gave up. Karim took pride in his ignorance, declaring that experience was a far better teacher than books, and that his brother was a fool for wasting his life stuffing his head with useless information.

"By the time the twins reached adolescence, their dispositions had manifested themselves physically. Umar's head had doubled in size, becoming as large as a boulder. It was a marvelous thing; at will, Umar could command his head to inflate with air and





carry him into the sky. So tough was his skull that it could batter down stone walls; in fact, when Umar breached the enemy's castle by pummeling it with his head, he won the Siege of Essafah al-Ibahs.

"Karim, sadly, suffered a much different fate. His head withered and shrank, taking on the appearance of a rotten apple. His skull became as soft as mud. He died in a storm when a strong wind snapped his head from his neck and carried it away."

Jumilia looked at her uncle incredulously. She cupped her hand over her mouth to stifle a giggle. "I have listened to many of your fantastic tales," she said, "but none so fantastic as this. Is it really true?"

"No," admitted Husar. "But it might as well be."

Welcome to Caravans, an epic adventure of treachery, intrigue, and romance set in Zakhara, the Land of Fate. The adventure is designed for three to five player characters (PCs) of levels five to nine, with a total of 20 to 30 levels for the entire party.

You, the Dungeon Master (DM), should familiarize yourself with all of the materials in this set before beginning play.

What You Need

Caravans assumes you have access to the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*, the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* accessory (or the first two volumes of the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®*), and the *AL-QADIM® Arabian Adventures* sourcebook. The *AL-QADIM MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix* and the *Land of Fate* boxed set are helpful but not mandatory.

The Adventure Book

The 64-page Adventure Book consists of six episodes. Most likely, the PCs will move through the episodes in sequence, but because their actions are unpredictable, they may decide to pursue the episodes in a different order. The "What Next?" section at the end of each episode discusses the party's options and directs you, the

DM, to the appropriate section of the Adventure Book.

The adventure breaks down as follows:

Episode One. Solving the mystery of a talking tent brings the PCs to the attention of Fahad al-Zakir, one of Tajar's wealthiest and most revered dignitaries. Fahad hires the PCs for an expedition that will take them across the High Desert to the Pit of the Ghuls. Their mission: to locate and retrieve Fahad's missing fiancée, Sita, whom Fahad has not seen in more than half a century and whom he still dearly loves.

Episode Two. This episode details the party's trek across the High Desert, fraught with scheming genies, suspicious strangers, and ferocious monsters.

Episode Three. The party meets an eccentric mystic who gives them access to a powerful magical item, but only if they help him deal with a bizarre entity from another world.

Episode Four. At a military camp deep in the High Desert, the party becomes embroiled in an ancient feud between two warring tribes and meets a sorcerer with a deadly secret.

Episode Five. An investigation of Vahtov, the village where Sita was last seen, leads to an ancient crypt and an alliance with a mysterious, shapeshifter.

Episode Six. A deadly confrontation in a fiery palace beneath the Pit of the Ghuls determines the fate of Fahad's lost love.

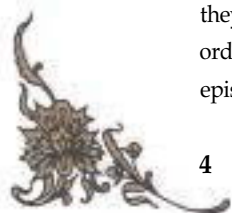
The Campaign Guide

The 32-page Campaign Guide, which you're reading now, contains source material to supplement the information in the Adventure Book:

Chapter 1. This chapter describes Ala'i the Hungry, a magical item that the PCs acquire in Episode One of the Adventure Book.

Chapter 2. Here you'll find descriptions of key locations in the High Desert, with commentary by one of Zakhara's most esteemed traders.

Chapter 3. This chapter provides information relevant to desert travel, including caravan organization, water sources, and camel behavior.





Chapter 4. Included here are profiles of two major nonplayer characters and a section summarizing the statistics of most of the monsters featured in the adventure.

DM's Maps and Players' Aids

Other components in this box :

- A poster-sized reproduction of a magical silken carpet called Ala'i the Hungry. The PCs acquire this powerful item during their quest. Chapter 1 of this book explains how to use it.
- An eight-page handout booklet, including two *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* pages. Carefully remove the staples from this booklet to separate the sheets.

The Adventure Book explains when and how to use each of the player handouts (PH's).

- Six card sheets, color on one side, black and white on the other. Four of the colored sides are Ala'i's Responses, representing Ala'i the Hungry in various states of activation. Chapter 1 of this book explains their use. The other two colored sides are DM maps (Tajar and Environs and the High Desert). The six black-and-white sides contain tactical maps and diagrams for encounters described in the Adventure Book.

That's it. You're ready to begin. May Fate grant you a clear mind, a keen eye, and a strong heart!





Chapter 1

Ala'i The Hungry

Jamilia found her uncle asleep in the shade of a towering palm. "Wake up, Uncle," she said excitedly. "See what I bought! Is it not exquisite?"

Husar rose and wiped the sleep from his eyes. Before him, his niece proudly displayed a violet tapestry embroidered with an intricate pattern of stars and sunflowers.

"It is for Mother's birthday," she said. "I spent the money I earned grooming camels for Ahmad the herdsman. It cost only two silver pieces."

Husar ran his hand along the edge of the tapestry, a few of the fibers working loose in his hand. It was worth no more than two silver pieces, if that. But the thought would mean more to Jamilia's mother than the craftsmanship. "It is a fine piece," he said, "You struck a good bargain."

Jamilia rolled her treasure into a bundle, then sat beside her uncle in the cool shade. "The merchant said the tapestry would not be out of place hanging beside Ala'i the Hungry," said Jamilia. "What a strange idea, a tapestry hanging next to a person."

Husar laughed. "No, my child. Ala'i is not a person. It is the name of a carpet. A most famous and most magical carpet. Listen!

"Ages ago, there lived a sha'ir named Ala'i ibn Dissafah, a man with eyes as brown as almonds and a thick mane of ebony hair. A man blessed by the gods, Ala'i had distinguished himself in not one but three fields of endeavor. First, he excelled as a seer, a prophet so skilled that he could predict the number of drops that would fall in a rainstorm. Second, he was a weaver of consummate artistry, producing caftans so splendid that maidens swooned at the sight. And third, he was a brilliant scholar, proficient in poetry, philosophy, and literature.

"But though Ala'i was an exceptional man, he was a man nonetheless. And like all men, his days on this world were limited. Ala'i mourned his old age, not because he feared death, but because of all he wanted to do. 'I regret having not spent more time in study,' he lamented to a genie. 'Would that I had spent less time spinning cloth and telling' fortunes, and more in the company of great poets and writers.'

"'I cannot give you back your youth,' said the genie. 'But I can offer you a second life of sorts, one drawn from your three great skills. If, that is, you are willing to abandon this life for one quite different.'





"Without hesitation, Ala'i agreed.

"With a wave of his hand, the genie caused a loom of light to rise from the sand. 'Spin,' he instructed Ala'i. 'Use your hair for the yarn.' Ala'i grasped a lock of his hair and pulled. To his amazement, the hair stretched to many times its normal length. Guided by the genie, Ala'i began to spin, using his hair to produce a multicolored cloth. But, the more hair Ala'i pulled, the smaller his body became, until at last there was nothing left but his head. The genie finished the job, pulling more of Ala'i's hair until the head, too, had disappeared, and there was nothing left of Ala'i but a pile of cloth.

"From this cloth, the genie fashioned a carpet emblazoned with all manner of symbols and decorations. Centered in the carpet was an image of Ala'i's head. Said the genie: 'Let it be known that the reborn Ala'i hungers for the written words of great thinkers. In return for these words, he will share his gift of prophecy. So shall it be for a thousand and one years.' With that, the genie disappeared. "

Jamilia was wide-eyed. "Does Ala'i still exist?"

"Oh yes," replied her uncle. "Ala'i the Hungry is now owned by Fahad al-Zakir. It is said that Fahad has used Ala'i to help him accumulate his great wealth."

"Has Fahad used Ala'i selfishly?"

"In a sense, he has. But Fahad is a good man. His businesses provide many jobs, and his investments have enriched our community.

"Is Ala'i bad? The carpet, I mean."

Husar stroked his niece's long black hair. "No, my child. The carpet is neither good nor bad. It merely is. "

Ala'i the Hungry is the name of a powerful magical item resembling a silken carpet. If used properly, Ala'i can predict the future, supply clues to mysteries, and suggest the best courses of action. Ala'i's information, however, can be frustratingly imprecise; both wisdom and diligence are needed to decipher his messages.

The carpet is 4 feet wide and 6 feet long, as soft as a kitten's fur, and decorated with colorful symbols, illustrations, and maxims. The image in the center of the carpet represents Ala'i ibn Dissafah himself, eyes closed, waiting for inquiries.

When the PCs acquire Ala'i the Hungry in Episode One, give the players the poster-sized reproduction, which they may retain for the entire adventure. For reference, the top of Ala'i's head points to the top of the carpet, and his chin points to the bottom.

Questioning Ala'i

A character may question Ala'i by rolling the carpet out on a flat surface, then placing his hands, palms down, on either side of Ala'i's image. The question may be as general or as specific as the character likes.

After the character asks his question, he must feed Ala'i. Owing to Ala'i ibn Dissafah's love of the written word, the carpet eats only loose pages from books of great literature, poetry, and philosophy. If Ala'i accepts the offered page, then he will answer the question. If Ala'i rejects the page, he remains silent.

An acceptable offering must meet the following requirements:

- It must be a single page. Ala'i will not accept multiple pages or full volumes.
- The page can be no smaller than the hoof of an infant camel (approximately 3 inches wide), nor larger than a sultan's dinner plate (about a foot and a half in diameter). Ala'i prefers parchment and paper, but at the DM's discretion, he may accept writings on cloth, hide, or even stone.
- The page must be intact, with no rips, holes, missing pieces, or significant fading. The writing may cover one or both sides of the page. An acceptable page must include at least two paragraphs of text or four lines of verse (but quality writing will not be rejected because of length).
- The page must be at least one century old.
- The page must be written by a scholar, poet, philosopher, or renowned thinker of at least 15th level. Any character class or kit is acceptable, though Ala'i prefers sha'irs, barbers, pragmatists, and hakimas.
- The page must be written in the author's own hand.



As long as a character has a supply of suitable pages, he may ask as many questions as he likes.

Sources of Pages

Suitable pages are made available to the party in Episodes One, Two, and Five, represented by Players' Handouts (PH) 1 to 12. Give these handouts to the players as directed in the Adventure Book.

The text on the handouts has no special meaning or relevance. Any page makes a suitable offering for any question.

If the PCs are having a hard time, you may make additional pages available elsewhere in the adventure. For example, while traveling through the High Desert, the party might spot a rusty chest half buried in a dune. The chest might contain gold pieces and a page or two of poetry. For these "extra" pages, you can recycle handouts that Ala'i has already devoured or make your own.

Ala'i's Responses

Even if the character supplies Ala'i with a suitable page, Ala'i may still reject it. He may have studied that page before, or he may not be interested in that subject. Because Ala'i is an honorable carpet, he won't accept a page if he doesn't have an answer to the question. (You can control the information supplied to the PCs by deciding which questions Ala'i will answer.)

If Ala'i can't or won't respond to a character's question, nothing happens. The character can keep the page and use it again later.

If Ala'i chooses to respond, the page disappears; Ala'i the Hungry has "eaten" it. The eyes of the image on the carpet open, and he responds in one of the following ways:

1. Sections in the center of the carpet darken.
2. One of the four star-bordered scenes in the corners begins to change and moves like an animated cartoon.





3. One of the eight maxims glows in a soft light, the letters appearing to hover above the carpet's surface. Each response lasts about 10 seconds. The carpet then reverts to its original state, and Ala'i closes his eyes.

Which Response?

Each episode in the Adventure Book describes how Ala'i responds to particular questions. For instance, in Episode Five, if the PCs ask Ala'i how to get inside the crypt, Ala'i responds by changing the color of certain sections or squares in the center of the carpet. As indicated in the text, you then give the players the card sheet labeled "Ala'i's Response 3," showing how the carpet has changed. Perceptive PCs should be able to get into the crypt based on Ala'i's clue. (See page 45 of the Adventure Book.)

A question doesn't have to be phrased in a particular way to elicit a response, so long as Ala'i understands the gist of the inquiry. In the previous example, if the PCs ask Ala'i any general question about how the crypt works, the carpet changes accordingly.

The party may ask questions other than those mentioned in the text. As DM, you may have Ala'i refuse to eat the offered pages and ignore such questions, or you may have Ala'i eat the pages and respond with maxims. Ala'i responds with whichever maxim you decide best fits the question. Or, if you prefer a random response, roll 1d8 and consult Table 1.

In addition to offering maxims, Ala'i can respond to questions not addressed in the text by changing his appearance (at your option, of course). For instance, by darkening a number of sections, Ala'i can indicate quantity; if a PC asks how many days' travel to the nearest village, Ala'i might respond by darkening two squares (indicating two days). If a character asks about the following day's weather, Ala'i might respond by animating the mountain scene (the upper left star-bordered area) to show storm clouds, followed by a sky filled with jagged lightning bolts. Don't forget—before Ala'i responds to any question, he must be fed.

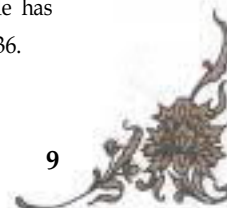
TABLE 1: Random Maxims

D8 Roll	Ala'i's Response
1	"As patience breeds success, haste breeds failure."
2	"When the camel kneels, even the unwearied should rest."
3	"The bread that you bake, so you must eat."
4	"A tent built indifferently will be the first to collapse."
5	"A satisfactory answer is not always the most obvious."
6	"A butchered pig has no need to fear the oven."
7	"If the arrow is not aimed, what matters the direction of the wind?"
8	"The wise man knows the limits of facts."

Other Properties

In addition to his fortune-telling skills, Ala'i the Hungry also has the following magical properties:

- Ala'i can be folded into a packet about 3 inches square, weighing only a few ounces.
- He is immune to all forms of normal and magical fire. He is also immune to damage from acid and electricity. If torn or ripped, Ala'i can no longer respond to questions. However, tears and rips automatically repair themselves in 24 hours, after which the carpet responds normally. If Ala'i is torn into two or more pieces, he repairs automatically if the pieces are laid out in the proper form and left alone for 24 hours.
- Ala'i functions as a carpet of flying, described in Appendix 3 of the *DUNGEON MASTER* Guide. He has a two-person capacity and moves at a speed of 36. Ala'i can carry a maximum of 300 lbs.





Chapter 2

Trader's Tour of The High Desert

When he arrived for the appointment with his niece, Husar carried a package wrapped in a white silk. The sight of the package inflamed the young one with curiosity.

"What have you brought me, Uncle?" Jamilia asked. "A caftan for the spring? Some new riding boots? A loaf of sesame bread?"

The elder settled on a stone bench. "Sit," he said. Jamilia snuggled beside him.

"When we spoke yesterday," continued the elder as he opened the package, "you lamented your life in Tajar, so removed from-what was it you said?"

"From civilization," said Jamilia. "We are stuck on the edge of the desert. I wish to see the world, but there is little to see here except sand."

"Ah yes," said the elder. He folded the silk and tucked it into the sash at his waist. Jamilia saw that her uncle had brought a book, a very old one, judging from the frayed pages and cracked leather cover.

"I borrowed this from Fahad al-Zakir," said Husar, leafing through the pages. "There are only a few copies, and they are very expensive. We are fortunate to have a friend like Fahad willing to share."

"The name of the book is *Inquiries and Impressions: A Trader's Tour of the High Desert* by Sahja al-Hijan, an explorer and merchant of exceptional accomplishment. Sahja made his fortune in the High Desert, trading with overlooked villages and tribes that others dismissed as too isolated. Upon his retirement, Sahja recorded his experiences and paid scribes to produce copies. Sahja sold the copies to fellow traders at premium prices. He used the profits to construct a luxury barge on which he continues to live to this day, adrift in the Golden Gulf."

"And why," asked Jamilia, "would this book interest me?"

"Because," said Husar, "Sahja knew the High Desert to be a land of infinite mystery and endless surprise. He wrote of places that even the maps of the Grand Caliph fail to note." Husar turned to the first page. "In Sahja's own words: 'He who looks at the High Desert and sees nothing but wasteland may as well trade his eyes for stones.'"



Jamilia ran her finger along the tome's ragged spine. "It sounds interesting," she said. "Perhaps I will suspend my opinion of the High Desert until I hear what Sahja has to say."

"An open mind," said Husar, "is an admirable quality. Especially for a world traveler."

(Following are excerpts from *Inquiries and Impressions: A Trader's Tour of the High Desert* by Sahja al-Hijan.)

It is with humility that I share these observations, gathered from a lifetime of travel in the High Desert. With equal humility I remind the reader that Fate smiles on the diligent, that the Loregiver blesses the hard-working, and that success is not the province of the smartest, the strongest, or even the bravest, but of he who is most prepared.

The High Desert is one of Zakhara's two great deserts—the other being the Haunted Lands. Extending from the waters of the Suq Bay and the Golden Gulf to the Mountains of the Lizard's Tongue near the Great Sea, the High Desert covers a vast range. Most dismiss it as a barren ocean of sand, of interest only to camels and nomads. But to those of us who feel a desert breeze is like a lover's caress, it remains a place of exquisite beauty and endless surprise, whose secrets could not be divined in a thousand lifetimes.

The most common misconception about the High Desert involves its very form. Many believe it to be a flat wasteland, as featureless as a pane of glass. But the surface has an irregular texture, as if it had been chopped, scooped, and sliced by drunken giants. Powerful winds whip the sands to create a startling variety of dunes. Some tower high enough to block the sun. Others resemble deep troughs, swirling stars, immense crescents. Areas without mountains to break the wind are often blown free of sand, leaving plains of polished stone as smooth as a newborn's belly.

While it is impossible to list all points of interest, the astute traveler should note the sites detailed as follows. (To make this tour easy for the traveler to follow, I have listed the sites in alphabetical order.)

AL-ADIB River

Known also as the River of Courtesy, the Al-Adib snakes from the plains of the High Desert to the Golden Gulf, crossing more than 100 miles. With its rancid waters and dull-witted *battan* fish, the river is most certainly excluded when the gods tally their proudest achievements.

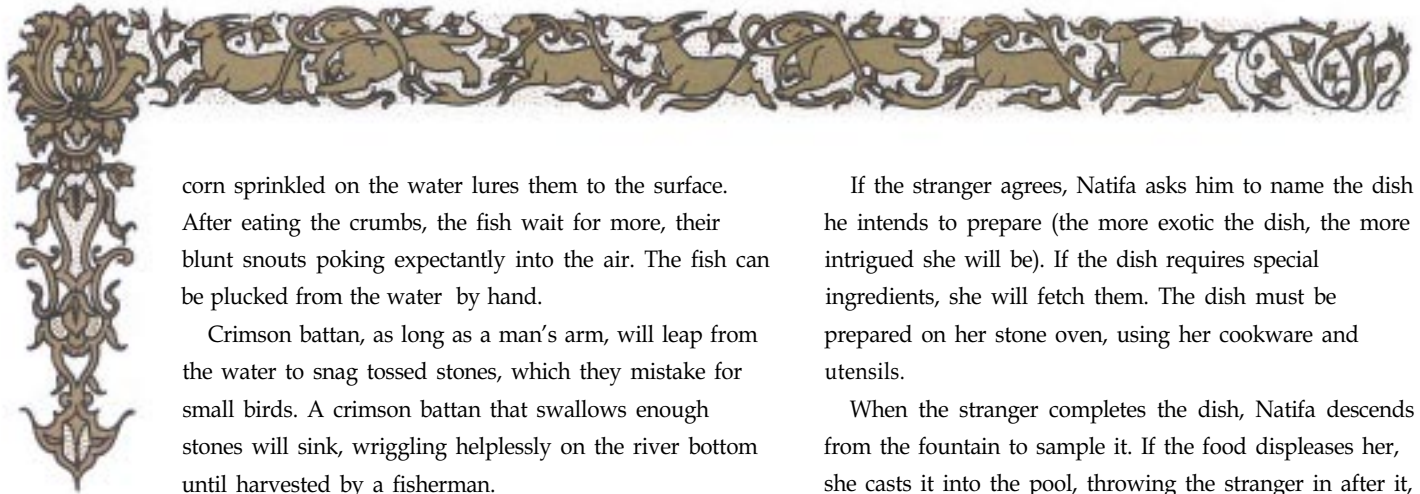
Slums line the shores of the western Al-Adib. For centuries, the peasants used the waters as a dump, a place to dispose of melon rinds, soiled dishdashahs—long robe-like garments—and even donkey carcasses. Sheikh Ahi al-Hadd forbade the practice some years ago, but for the most part, the peasants ignored the decree. Portions of the river reek of garbage, filth so thick that a fish an inch below the surface cannot be seen. Better to roll in the mud than bathe in the western Al-Adib. And do not even consider drinking its waters; you are better off dipping your cup in a camel trough.

Farther east, where the river meets the gulf and the waters clear somewhat, ships of sea merchants and aristocrats jam the harbors. Wary of beggars and nosy peasants, the ship owners allow a stranger only a moment's prayer before his head is separated from his neck. Unless you have contacts in the harbor, or have plenty of coin (a silver piece usually will sheath the blade of a grumpy mariner), stay away. Merchants who make peace with the locals, however, will find a rich market for fishing gear and fine wines.

The western Al-Adib dribbles off in a web of tributaries, many only a few inches deep. While not as contaminated as the river farther east, the waters here are no more drinkable, thanks to the salty minerals lining the river bottom. Resourceful nomads boil the water, then strain it through porous cloths to remove the minerals. But it is a tedious process, taking most of the day to purify a single gallon.

The deeper tributaries of the western Al-Adib teem with game fish, who seem to thrive in the salty waters. The plump golden *battan* are as delectable to eat as they are easy to catch. A handful of bread crumbs or ground





corn sprinkled on the water lures them to the surface. After eating the crumbs, the fish wait for more, their blunt snouts poking expectantly into the air. The fish can be plucked from the water by hand.

Crimson battan, as long as a man's arm, will leap from the water to snag tossed stones, which they mistake for small birds. A crimson battan that swallows enough stones will sink, wriggling helplessly on the river bottom until harvested by a fisherman.

To prepare fried battan, first dress them, then coat them with a mixture of goose egg, water, wheat flour, and the juice of a cucumber. Place the fish in a pan of camel fat and fry them until the flesh flakes at the touch of a knife. Delicious!

Burning Pool of Natifa

West of the Mountains of Forgotten Dreams, adjacent to a cluster of crescent-shaped *barchan* dunes, lies a pool of salty water 40 feet across and 20 feet deep. Aquatic arafaj, spindly plants resembling bundles of dry grass, cover the surface of the pool. The enchanted arafaj bum continuously, illuminating the pool with a glow that can be seen 10 miles away. The arafaj bum as long as they remain in contact with the pool; even a rainstorm will not extinguish the flames. A fountain surges from the center of the pool, spraying water 20 feet into the air. The water emits a sweet aroma, a mixture of lemon and roses.

Near the southern edge of the pool stands a stone oven, along with a collection of gleaming copper pots, pans, kettles, forks, knives, and plates.

A ghost named Natifa, who appears as an elderly woman with rich brown skin and shoulder-length hair as white as a chicken egg, lives on the bottom of the pool. Natifa occasionally surfaces to perch atop the fountain. When a stranger approaches, Natifa may ask him to prepare her a meal. If the stranger declines, Natifa politely but firmly asks him to leave. If she is in a playful mood, she may toss a handful of flaming arafaj in his direction.

If the stranger agrees, Natifa asks him to name the dish he intends to prepare (the more exotic the dish, the more intrigued she will be). If the dish requires special ingredients, she will fetch them. The dish must be prepared on her stone oven, using her cookware and utensils.

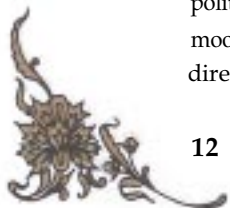
When the stranger completes the dish, Natifa descends from the fountain to sample it. If the food displeases her, she casts it into the pool, throwing the stranger in after it, then disappears. The stranger will have to navigate the flaming arafaj to return to shore.

If Natifa enjoys the dish, she shows her appreciation by aiding the stranger, usually by offering information. She knows the best route to virtually every location in the High Desert. She also predicts the weather with uncanny accuracy and tracks the movement of bandits. Indeed, by following her advice, I was able to avoid an encounter with the treacherous Sons of the Wolf at the Jamal Oasis.

Her favorite recipes? From personal experience, I can attest to her fondness for *dolmat*—boiled onions stuffed with rice, almonds, and mutton—and baked battan fish drenched in clarified goat butter. Both, it should be noted, take the better part of a day to prepare, but it is every bit worth the preparation.

Fabada

The primitive tribes of Fabada, who raise sheep in the pastures along the northern border of the Mountains of Forgotten Dreams, have established one of the High Desert's most durable communities. The tribes, known collectively as the Numtanajd, consist of the descendants of three families: al-Shazzi, al-Waughiwani, and al-Zab. Though custom forbids marriage between members of different tribes, they intermingle at will, working and playing side by side. Every year at summer's end, each family, comprising about 500 members, elects a male of at least 50 years as a representative, called the *kharah*. To indicate their status, the newly chosen kharahs cut all the hair from their heads, then burn it in



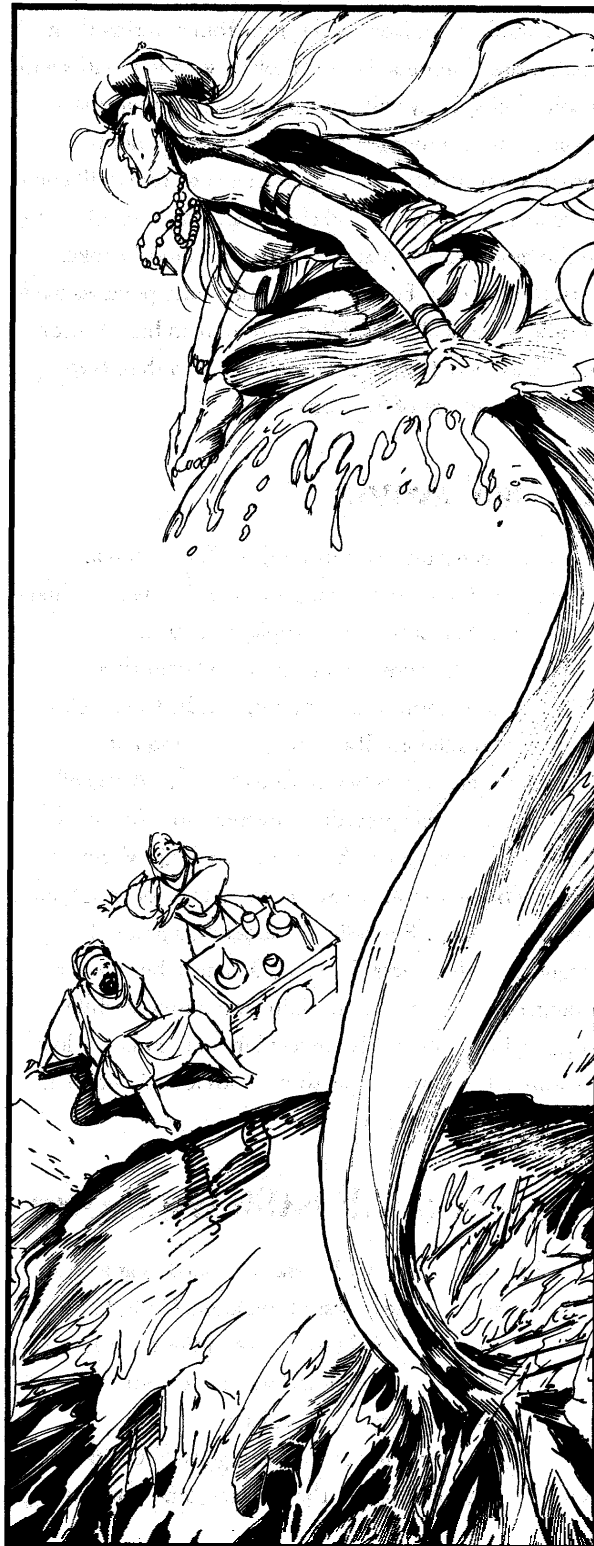
a ceremonial fire. The kharahs make decisions for the entire community. No action will be taken by the Numtanajd unless the kharahs unanimously agree.

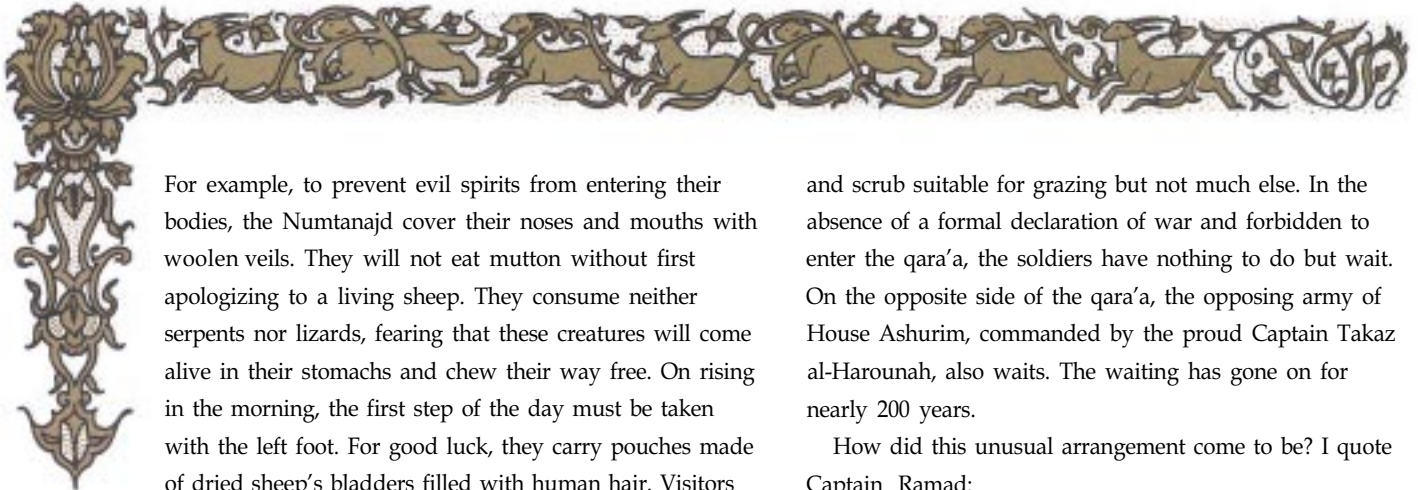
The Numtanajd have two types of homes, permanent structures they call *haristas*, and portable tents called *gohtas*. The *haristas* resemble cylindrical wooden frames laced with grass, fortified with mud and small stones. The thick walls keep the interior relatively cool, even during the blistering heat of summer. *Pohtas*, formed by stretching woolen blankets over a rectangular frame of thin sticks, can be tied in a bundle and easily carried. A woolen floor mat provides protection from the hot sand.

The tribesmen arrange the *haristas* and *pohtas* in tight circles. At night, they herd their flocks into the center to keep them safe from wolves. Domesticated dogs, including white *saluqi* greyhounds native to the Mountains of Forgotten Dreams, patrol the perimeter of the circles, yelping at the first scent of an unfamiliar animal. As an additional precaution, the tribesmen refrain from shearing the wool around their sheep's necks, allowing it grow in thick rings. Wolves typically slay sheep by tearing their throats, and the thick neck wool makes this more difficult.

The enlightened nomadic tribes of the High Desert, the House of Dhi'b in particular, consider the Numtanajd to be simple-minded heathens, filthy and repellent. This assessment, though harsh, is understandable. The average Numtanajd adult has fewer teeth than fingers, bathes only if he happens to be caught in a rainstorm, and considers carrion a delicacy. But the Numtanajd are peace lovers, and they placate their intolerant neighbors with gifts of mutton, wool (for saddle blankets and tents), and a tangy beverage called *rakiq* made from sheep's milk and garlic. Traders also can obtain these items from the Numtanajd by offering coffee, honey, and salt.

Dealing with the Numtanajd can be both pleasant and rewarding, as they rarely haggle over prices and treat strangers as family. But they insist that visitors respect their taboos, which are as numerous as they are bizarre.





For example, to prevent evil spirits from entering their bodies, the Numtanajd cover their noses and mouths with woolen veils. They will not eat mutton without first apologizing to a living sheep. They consume neither serpents nor lizards, fearing that these creatures will come alive in their stomachs and chew their way free. On rising in the morning, the first step of the day must be taken with the left foot. For good luck, they carry pouches made of dried sheep's bladders filled with human hair. Visitors may be expected to contribute a lock from their own heads as a gesture of friendship.

Genies' Anvil

Caravans heading northwest from Tajar often are tempted to cross this gloomy "anvil" to reduce their travel time. Few survive to complete the trip.

The obstacles here are numerous and daunting. Blinding dust storms prevent a camel rider from seeing the ears of his mount. Rain seldom falls, and natural sources of water are as rare as rose blossoms. A day of blistering heat may precede an evening so cold that a traveler may awaken with frost in his beard. Worse, the Anvil is home to the House of Sihr, a tribe of enlightened jann led by Amir Bouladin al-Mutajalli, a janni of legendary ruthlessness. The amir assumes the worst of strangers; be prepared to explain your business while dodging his scimitar. My advice: Ignore the tales of lost treasure cities buried beneath its sands and circumvent the Anvil by any means.

House Fajirik Military Camp

The armies of House Fajirik, stationed near a bleak expanse of desert west of the Jamal Oasis, have little to occupy their days and few opportunities to spend their money. It is a frustrating situation for the soldiers, but an ideal one for an enterprising trader.

Under the command of the distinguished Captain Ramad bin Yusuf al-Kahn, the soldiers stand watch along the southern border of a qara'a, a barren field of weeds

and scrub suitable for grazing but not much else. In the absence of a formal declaration of war and forbidden to enter the qara'a, the soldiers have nothing to do but wait. On the opposite side of the qara'a, the opposing army of House Ashurim, commanded by the proud Captain Takaz al-Harounah, also waits. The waiting has gone on for nearly 200 years.

How did this unusual arrangement come to be? I quote Captain Ramad:

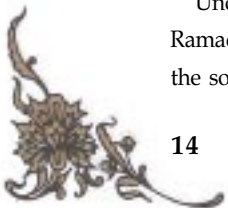
"Centuries ago, the elders of House Fajirik and House Ashurim laid claim to their own dirahs, regions of rolling hills and rich soil where vegetables and grain grew in abundance. Because the qara'a was five times the size of the combined dirahs, both Houses shared it. Harmony prevailed, and the Houses prospered.

"This arrangement endured until a yearlong drought sapped the moisture from the dirahs. The vegetables and grain withered in the sun. The soil turned to dust. The Houses lost interest in sharing the qara'a, as its scraggly plants now seemed critical to survival.

"A bloody war ensued. For four years, two of Zakhara's strongest and best-trained armies fought over scrub brush and weeds. How many lives were lost? One for each worthless twig, maybe more. And to show her disapproval, Fate ensured that the powerful magic invoked by the Houses destroyed the qara'a, reducing it to dead sand.

"Weary of war, the leaders at last negotiated an *allag*, a temporary truce. Under the terms of the *allag*, the qara'a would become a neutral area, forbidden to members of either House. To guarantee compliance, each side would maintain a permanent camp and patrol the border of the qara'a. Our camp was established to the south, House Ashurim to the north. Because of the legacy of distrust, the leaders decreed that the *allag* would last for a single century, at which time the terms would be renegotiated.

"The *allag* expired ten years ago. It was I who renegotiated for House Fajirik. With the approval of Captain Takaz, the *allag* was renewed for another century under the same terms.





“Ninety years from now, the House leaders may again renew the allag, or opt for *niga*, a declaration of hostilities. Or they may choose *hidna*, a cessation of war, in which case all our people can take down their tents and leave this wretched place for good.”

A strange story, to be sure. But as long as the allag persists, so shall the material needs of the armies. A trader will find on both sides of the *qara’a* customers for war camels, barding, and other military supplies, as well as blankets, candles, and soap. The soldiers of House Fajirik pride themselves on their refined palates and enjoy dried meats and exotic spices. The soldiers of House Ashurim, who lack the sewing skills of their adversaries, perpetually run short of *abas*, trousers, and stockings.

The commanders of both Houses expect top quality and are willing to pay premium prices, usually in gold, of which they have a seemingly inexhaustible supply stored in underground caches. Etiquette has prevented me from inquiring about the source of their riches. But word has it that each House is funded by wealthy patrons in distant cities—Tajar for House Fajirik, Qudra for House Ashurim.

Why such interest in this forsaken land? Quite simply, revenge! Ancestors of the patrons competed for the hand of the same woman, a fair-haired beauty named Safana whose bones now lie a thousand feet beneath the sands of the *qara’a*. Safana died by her own hand, the result of her inability to choose between her suitors. The patrons hold each other’s ancestors responsible for her death.

Hulm

A thousand curses upon this village of infidels! I have not once, not twice, but three times taken my wares to Hulm—by invitation, I might add—only to be ambushed, beaten, and left for dead in the desert. My naive faith in humankind and, admittedly, the promise of a new market lured me back after my common sense told me to stay away. Would that someone bum the wretched place to the ground!

Jamal Oasis

The best-known and arguably most hospitable oasis in the High Desert, Jamal boasts a mud-brick caravanserai large enough to house a small army, with a pool so clear you can count the pebbles on the bottom. Hungry travelers may feast on *baitan-jan*, a leafy eggplant that grows profusely on the eastern perimeter. Camels may graze in the primrose-covered hills to the north. Though the House of Asab, a wealthy and imperious desert tribe, claims the oasis as their own, they generally permit travelers to use it, so long as said travelers do not overstay their welcome.

The pious may address the enlightened gods in the Jamal temple, a cylindrical structure of wind-blasted granite topped by a minaret etched with dozens of religious aphorisms. Though the ravages of time have left most of the words indecipherable, an intact aphorism near the bottom of the minaret clearly reads: “How can any man born of earth claim to divine the true purposes of the gods?” Rumor has it that inquisitive djinn periodically return to the temple on the darkest nights of the summer to debate the meaning of this aphorism. Humans bearing fresh apples, a favorite treat of the djinn, are allowed to join the debate. The djinn sometimes reward perception and sagacity with wishes, but punish trivial musings with face slaps and other physical reprimands.

Mountains of Forgotten Dreams

Southeast of the Genies’ Anvil, the Mountains of Forgotten Dreams claim peaks as high as 5,000 feet, many of them former volcanoes; you can still find sprinkles of chalky ash in the foothills along with chunks of porous lava rocks. Traversing the mountains poses few problems, thanks to the wide passes slicing the range every few miles. Travelers should be wary of falling boulders, many of which are large enough to squash camels.







Few animals live in the central peaks, but the lower slopes contain enough brush to support rabbits, jackals, and wild dogs. Of particular interest to traders are the white saluqi, a type of miniature greyhound popular with sportsmen and collectors. White saluqi grow no taller than a man's knee, but are as fast as gazelles and as strong as mules. They have stubby tails, sharp teeth, and short fur. Excellent hunters, white saluqi pursue their quarry relentlessly, chasing rabbits until they fall from exhaustion. And I have never seen a dog so fearless. I once witnessed a saluqi slay a scorpion the size of a war horse. White saluqi make loyal, affectionate pets and bring up to 50 gp in the bazaars of Tajar.

White Saluqi of the Mountains of Forgotten Dreams: Int semi- (3-4); AL N; AC 7; MV 24; HD 1+1; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SZ S (2' tall); ML 18; XP 35.

Pit of The Ghuls

A foul and dreadful place, the Pit of the Ghuls is a deep valley surrounded by a ring of granite hills, many of them laced with labyrinthine passages that wind deep inside the earth. Winds blowing across its cold sand carry the stench of decay, like that of a fish left too long in the sun. Vicious creatures lurk here, many engaged in territorial conflicts marked by an abhorrent level of brutality. A renegade djinni, for instance, has constructed a palace from the skulls of his foes, while a hyena-headed giant impales his enemies on the thorns of immense cacti.

A talkative nomad told me that the pit once contained an ocean, ruled by an arrogant giant who demanded that the gods recognize him as an equal. The gods responded by hurling a moon-sized boulder into the ocean, splashing the water into the surrounding desert and crushing the giant and his army of minions. The pit swallowed the boulder. The Lake of the Ghuls, a salty pool in the northern section of the pit, holds what remains of the ocean. Spirits of the giant and his minions stalk the pit, preying on any traveler foolish enough to trespass.

And why would anyone trespass? The reason is as old

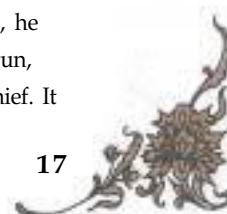
as the desert itself: greed. The giant ordered the creation of seven life-size statues in his own image, one each of gold, silver, turquoise, onyx, emerald, amber, and ruby. The arm of the turquoise statue was recovered several years ago and now resides in a museum in Ajayib. The remaining statues, including the rest of the turquoise figure, lie buried somewhere in the pit. Treasure seekers must face not only the spirits of the giant and his aides, but a multitude of other horrors, including wolves that speak like men, vultures with claws like scimitars, and gargantuan scorpions made of fire.

Quabah

South of the Pit of the Ghuls lies Quabah, a small, forlorn village surrounded by clusters of star dunes. Its tormented inhabitants make for good customers. The village was originally founded as a religious retreat by nomads from the Mountains of the Lizard's Tongue, devoted acolytes of Hajama the Courageous and Haku, Master of the Desert Wind. Strictly celibate and exclusively male, the Quabah brotherhood lived an ascetic existence of toil and self-denial, sleeping on beds of stones in the open air, storing their meager possessions in pits concealed by leatherleaf branches.

Quabah culture changed forever when a revisionist leader, Yezeed, reinterpreted their doctrines to allow marriage. Under Yezeed's direction, the brotherhood manufactured gaudy religious trinkets, which they traded to superstitious hill barbarians for brides.

Within a generation, it was no longer necessary for Quabah males to trade goods for wives, as women from across the High Desert began to show up in droves, offering themselves as mates. Who could blame them? Quabah husbands were obliged to treat their wives with the same reverence due the gods, serving them with deference and submission, fulfilling their every wish. Should a wife desire a steed, the husband would secure a herd and let her take her pick. Should her toes ache, he would offer his back as a foot rest. Should her nose run, he would offer the aba from his back as a handkerchief. It





was an arrangement many women found difficult to resist.

Though most Quabah males accept the conditions of marriage, others wonder if Yezeed's reinterpretation violated their forefathers' original intent. They gather in small groups to analyze religious doctrine, often concluding that they have corrupted the will of the gods. A stranger might ask, "If you are convinced that marriage is wrong, why not renounce the concept and revert to the old ways?" "Too late," the reply would come. "The damage has been done. And besides, perhaps the gods did indeed intend marriage. And if so, then our doubting is a blasphemy." The stranger might conclude that Quabah doctrine evokes guilt, no matter how it is interpreted.

Quabah husbands seek to purchase anklets, caftans, slippers, brooches, and any other items they can give to their wives as gifts. In most instances, they will accept the quoted price, as they lack the inclination to haggle. They have little to trade, aside from crude quartz pendants and dull marble rings, and often will plead for credit. But beware. Moving coins from a Quabah purse is like emptying Suq Bay with a spoon. Upon my retirement, I was still collecting on a 100 gp debt incurred for the purchase of a golden bracelet some 10 years earlier.

Interestingly, Quabah seers have predicted that "storms of green fire" will destroy their village in the not-too-distant future. In anticipation of this disaster, many have abandoned the village to settle along the southern border of the Pit of the Ghuls and in the hills to the east.

Raziz

If I were a fly or a rat, I can think of no better place to live than Raziz. Located between the Range of the Marching Camels and Mountains of Forgotten Dreams, Raziz appears to have been dropped from a height, pelted with refuse, and left to fester in the sun. Piles of garbage surround the village like a fetid bulwark. Streams of sewage run freely in the muddy streets. And animals—flea-bitten dogs, scrawny goats, wheezing camels—outnumber the citizens.

It is said that of peasants and princes, Fate plays no favorites. Raziz provides the evidence, as she has been blessed with an artesian well that produces more than enough water to satisfy her citizens. The well nourishes vast stretches of spear grass and primrose. The animals feed on the vegetation, and the villagers feed on the animals. Preoccupied with stuffing their bellies, the citizens of Raziz never developed a culture. They lack the will to do little but eat, sleep, and dance.

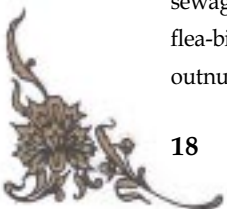
To say that Razizians are fond of dancing is like saying a parched field is fond of rain. Any occasion—a wedding, a full moon, even the birth of a goat—serves as an excuse to organize a dance. The villagers gather in a circle and, to the accompaniment of clapping hands and the tuneless plunking of single-stringed lutes called rababahs, they take turns running into the circle and hopping about like fleas on a griddle.

The dancing styles of men and women differ significantly. Women strip the shoes from their feet and make broad leaps from one side of the circle to the other, vigorously swinging their hair about their heads. The men keep their shoes on, tottering from foot to foot with their legs held rigid. They also carry blunted swords painted in bright shades of blue and red, which they strike at the ground in time to the music. When the clapping and plunking reaches a crescendo, the dancers embrace, kissing each other squarely on the mouth, as if the act of both sexes dancing together weren't shocking enough!

Lazy but amiable, the citizens welcome visitors, traders included. They are ready customers for leather boots, stockings, and any type of musical instrument. But do not expect engaging conversation. Their interest in the outside world is limited to tales of war and bloodshed. The more lurid the story, the more they enjoy it.

Spire of Kor

A natural granite column, the Spire of Kor looms over the desert sands ten miles west of Raziz. It rises nearly 400 feet and is topped by a plateau of black quartz.





About a century ago, nine mystics from Raziz claimed the column in honor of Kor, the Great God of Wisdom. With a djinni's help, they carved a spiral path around the column leading to the quartz plateau. There they conducted religious ceremonies for worshipers from across the desert.

The ceremonies were discontinued when a Tajari caravan discovered the broken bodies of all nine mystics near the base of the column. Some believe that the mystics had offended Kor, and the enraged god hurled them from the plateau. Others, myself included, believe that they were engaging in a private ritual involving large amounts of wine; the revelers stumbled off the edge of the plateau and fell to the ground by accident.

On the High Holy Day of Ahad—the first day following the end of Qawafil (June)—the skeletons of the nine mystics dig themselves from their sandy graves, scuttle up the side of the spire like spiders, then spend the night pleading with Kor to forgive them. At dawn, they return to their graves. The undead mystics are said to retain all of the magical abilities they had mastered in their former lives, which they use against anyone who interferes with their yearly nocturnal prayers.

Tajar

The northernmost of the Pearl Cities, the gateway to the Golden Gulf, Tajar is the seasoned trader's paradise and the novice's nightmare. The shops and bazaars burst with goods from all corners of Zakhara and beyond. Gem-encrusted scimitars, spices with strange names, flowing abas of crimson silk and silver thread are but a few of the treasures to be had here. "If it is not available in Tajar," goes the saying, "it is not available."

But merchandise of such quality also attracts merchants of the first rank, and they have little tolerance for amateurs. They may confiscate and destroy goods of poor craftsmanship. Blatant incompetence, such as clumsy haggling or inconsistent pricing, is met with derision, ostracism, and possibly imprisonment. The

merchants welcome competition but also monitor the newcomer. Should a newcomer offer the same goods as an established merchant, but at a lower cost, he may be asked to boost his prices. If the newcomer ignores the request, his camel may mysteriously disappear. If he still ignores the request, the newcomer himself may disappear.

Merchants and customers often settle disagreements with swords. City officials generally avoid interfering in such disputes, so long as taxes are paid, permits are in order, and the occasional gold piece finds its way to the proper palm. Indeed, traders sometimes speak of "Tajar tongue," an affliction associated with the Mahaskha brothers, dealers of garlic and salt. When a customer makes an offer in poor faith, the Mahaskha brothers respond by holding him to the ground and slicing out his tongue with a razor.

Newcomers, then, should avoid the bazaars and central marketplaces, concentrating instead on the side streets and back alleys where vendors of more modest means peddle their wares. Though the customers may not be as numerous, back street vendors can ply their trade with a minimum of interference. Sellers of goat's milk, figs, parasols and honey are always welcome.

Novice traders should be scrupulously honest in their transactions, at least until they acquire the services of dependable bodyguards. Though expensive, off-duty security personnel of Sheikh Ali al-Hadd, Tajar's ruler, make superb guards. Their sense of duty, however, may compel them to report blatant violations of the law.

The people of Tajar love music, and a mere lack of talent rarely prevents determined musicians from performing. A compliment, no matter how ill-suited to the quality of the performance, is sure to win the favor of a street musician. Because gossip sticks to these musicians like mud to a cow's hoof, they can prove valuable allies in navigating the treacherous waters of commercial Tajar. They can tell you which shipments have been delayed in the Al-Adib harbor, which officials to bribe, and which Mahaskha brothers have the sharpest razors.





Vahtov

By the look of its crumbling buildings and collapsing temples, it is hard to believe that Vahtov was once considered one of the High Desert's greatest cities. Four centuries ago, a group of human refugees from the House of Nasr united with a tribe of dwarf nomads from the Mountains of the Lizard's Tongue to excavate the rumored gem and gold deposits beneath the Pit of the Ghuls. They established a settlement named Vahtov, a dwarven term meaning "fated fortune." The dwarves contributed their mining expertise, while the human askars and sorcerers kept the monsters of the pit at bay. In this way they worked together.

The rumors of treasure were not overstated. Within a few years, a mountain of emeralds and turquoise had been recovered, along with enough gold ore to fill a small ocean. The humans and dwarves spent lavishly to improve the city, constructing palatial homes of polished marble, streets of gleaming onyx, and silver watchtowers that brushed the clouds.

But in time, the relationship soured. The humans grew weary of risking their lives to defend the city; the dwarves resented the humans' reluctance to dirty their hands in the mines. A civil war erupted after an emerald mine collapsed and the humans refused to assist in rescue operations. The dwarves responded by destroying all the remaining mines. Human sorcerers toppled dwarven temples with lightning bolts; the dwarves poisoned an artesian well favored by the humans. The conflict continued to escalate, and within a year, the city was reduced to rubble.

A desperate human called on a djinni for help, begging for an end to the hostilities. The djinni caused all of the citizens of Vahtov to shrink to the size of insects. No longer able to lift their weapons, the diminutive combatants soon lost their taste for war. A week later, a flock of monstrous ravens from the Pit of the Ghuls swarmed into the city to feast on the tiny citizens, plucking them from the streets like berries from a bush. A handful of survivors retreated into the

wilderness. They set aside their differences, entered a crack in the ground, and established a new settlement deep inside the earth. Their descendants, none of them larger than a man's thumb, are said to still occupy this secret underground city. As for the treasure, it all has been appropriated by scavengers from the Pit of the Ghuls.

For about two hundred years after the end of the war, ruined Vahtov stood empty, as rumors persisted that it was a haunted, accursed place. It likely would have stood empty forever were it not for a group of refugees from the House of Tayif, cast from the tribe for refusing to participate in a raid against a band of docile shepherds. The Tayif refugees, led by Ali al-Adid, were sent into the desert on foot, where they traveled aimlessly for weeks. Exhausted and near death, they at last arrived in Vahtov. Ali claimed the city on behalf of "the dispossessed and the powerless. Let it be known that from this day forward, they will never be without a home."

Vahtov soon acquired a reputation as a haven for outcasts. Exiles of every race and creed sought refuge in the village, where they were welcomed regardless of their circumstance, appearance, or convictions. Today, Vahtov's population exceeds 2,000, a remarkable mix of religious heretics and disgraced soldiers, the elderly and the infirm, the disfigured and the despoiled.

While little effort has gone into rebuilding, the citizens seem content. A gray-haired elf shares a *hauz*, a narrow garden, with her blind halfling neighbor. A three-legged centaur, assisted by an obese giant, carries firewood to homebound widows. A crippled dwarf offers mint tea to a young woman with a face scarred by fire. The villagers proclaim their unity with small star-shaped tattoos on the ankle, the underside of the wrist, and between the toes. Every three years of residency makes a villager eligible for an additional tattoo. I have seen elven residents whose hands are sprinkled with a hundred stars.

A centaur named Akidya currently rules Vahtov, and she maintains order by strict enforcement of the law. Assault, theft, and debauchery are all punishable by





death. Trials are nonexistent, as Akidyā serves as judge and jury. City militia, also centaurs, administer punishment on the spot. Since the villagers are reluctant to risk Akidyā's wrath, tranquility prevails.

Vahtov citizens tend to regard strangers with suspicion, which is understandable, since many of them have had to endure years of scorn. But most respond favorably to kind words and friendly smiles. Traders should be able to interest the residents of Vahtov in a variety of goods, including herbs, robes, and lanterns. Because money is a luxury, they prefer bartering, offering goods of dubious quality: leaky waterskins, fragile crockery, sour wine. Instead of accepting their products, consider having them work off their debts by grooming your camels or repairing your abas.

Vishap's Teeth

One of the High Desert's most striking features, Vishap's Teeth comprise a series of four immense pyramids made of dark granite, worn smooth by centuries of windblown sand. Though most believe the pyramids to be natural formations, some primitive tribes, including the Numtanajd of Fabada, swear they are the actual teeth of a sleeping vishap, a wingless evil dragon that preys on the weak and relishes human flesh. If the Numtanajd are correct, then woe to Zakhara should the beast awaken!

Yarrat

It is said that the leather-skinned dwarves of Yarrat must be cousins of the lizard, as they share the lizard's knack for survival. The Yarrat dwarves possess an ability for finding water; they have as many as a hundred secret pools in and around the Genies' Anvil. Their diet, which consists of *orbi*, a fat tuber growing on underground vines, provides all the nourishment they need. Desert tribes hire the dwarves as trackers and hunters. But for the most part, Yarrat has few ties with the rest of the world.

Nestled near the southern tip of the Genies' Anvil, Yarrat can be considered a village only in a general sense.

It consists of clusters of pits dug into the sand, shaded by ironwood trees. Each family claims a pit beside a tree and lines it with primrose leaves and grass. The family hangs, their possessions (waterskins, blankets, buckets) from the branches of their tree. As a family acquires more children, the eldest are encouraged to seek mates and dig their own pits.

Yarrat females practice a special type of spellcraft called sahar, using colored stones gathered from the Genies' Anvil. A suitable stone must have both a smooth side and a rough side. The color of the stone symbolizes a location, person, or animal: black for land, blue for sea, white for a woman, red for a man, brown for a camel. Should the practitioner crush a white or red stone while speaking a person's name, the person suffers the effects of an *evil eye*. If the practitioner covers a white and a red stone with sand while speaking the name of a man and a woman, the man will be enamored of the woman the next time he sees her, as if he had consumed a *philter of love*.

If the practitioner casts, the stones like dice, she can foretell the future. A stone with its rough side up indicates illness or misfortune (for a man, his camel, and so on). Two stones touching may indicate travel. For example, if the blue and red stones touch, a man will be traveling by sea. If the white and red stones touch, however, they foretell a marriage. Experienced practitioners can divine surprisingly detailed fortunes. A Yarrat practitioner not only foretold the death of Atma Qaird, my longtime traveling companion, but she predicted the time of day (high noon), the location (five miles east of Tajar), and the circumstance (a serpent bite).

The villagers have few material needs, but a persistent trader may be able to sell them sandals, oil, and weapons (daggers in particular). Approach these dwarfs with openness and honesty, for they will never again deal with a person who takes advantage of them. While Yarrat villagers rarely have money, they will pay their debts in water, a commodity often more valuable than gold or gems.





Chapter 3

Sahja's Lore

Jamilia looked up from the book. "Uncle," she said, "we have spoken before about the importance of water to the desert traveler. Could a person be taught to live without water?"

"An interesting idea," said the elder, closing the book, "and one that has, in fact, been tried. "Listen:

"Many years ago, the House of Dhi'b, the enlightened Sons of the Wolf, 'asked' seven of their strongest young warriors to participate in an experiment. Refusal meant death for the warriors' families.

"The warriors were sequestered in a cave in the Mountains of Forgotten Dreams. A dozen Sons guarded the entrance. The warriors each were given a bucket containing one gallon of water. The following day, one drop would be removed from the day's ration, Two drops would be removed on the following day, and another drop every day after until the warriors would receive no water at all. The Sons employed a sorcerer to enchant the warriors to improve their chances of success.

"The experiment did not go as planned.

"When the warriors ration had been reduced to a half-gallon, they begged the guards for relief. When the ration was less than a cup, the warriors were driven mad with thirst. When the ration was only a few drops, the warriors attacked the guards, slit their throats, and –"

"I do not wish to hear the details," groaned Jamilia. "I assume that is the end of the story."

"It is only the beginning," said Husar. He opened the book again.

Caravans

More excerpts follow from Sahja al-Hijan's *Inquiries and Impressions: A Trader's Tour of the High Desert*.

The goods have been secured. The customers await. Now, how to cross the desert to reach them?





To the seasoned trader, there is only one answer: the caravan. A group of like-minded travelers with a common goal, the caravan provides protection, companionship, and a dispersal of responsibilities. While the solitary traveler must act as guide, cook, healer, and water-gatherer, a caravan spreads these duties among many.

A caravan consists of a variable number of riders and mounts. The rice merchants of Mina have been quite successful with donkey caravans, though their trade routes tend to be short. Elephant caravans are said to be common in the Furrowed Mountains, while some elven tribes of the Haunted Lands claim to use oversized hyenas. Still, because of its tolerance for heat, resistance to dehydration, and formidable endurance, the camel remains the mount of choice.

What is the optimum number of camels for a caravan? It is a question to be considered carefully. Too few, and the trader may find himself completing his trek on foot should any of his mounts die. Too many, and the trader may be besieged by bandits or predators, or he might spend a lot of time with stubborn or ailing mounts. A caravan must include a number of camels needed to carry the riders, supplies, and trade goods. Beyond that, I suggest a minimum of one spare camel per rider for short trips (those of no more than two days between villages or oases) and two spares per rider for longer journeys.

Novice travelers should err on the side of caution and take more camels than may seem necessary. Experienced travelers will learn to get along with fewer. I have traversed the length of the High Desert, from Tajar to the Mountains of the Lizard's Tongue and back again, with a single pair of camels. In contrast, the caravans of the Huzu spice traders number in the thousands. A typical Huzu caravan employs a dozen scouts (who travel 10 to 20 miles ahead to look for obstacles), 50 to 100 armed guards (riding ahead, behind, and on either side of the caravan to provide protection from marauding bandits and deadly creatures), and a caravan master, usually an experienced desert rider (carried in a litter by four camels, one per corner, each of which is ridden by two mamluks who serve as the master's personal aides).

Caravan Supplies

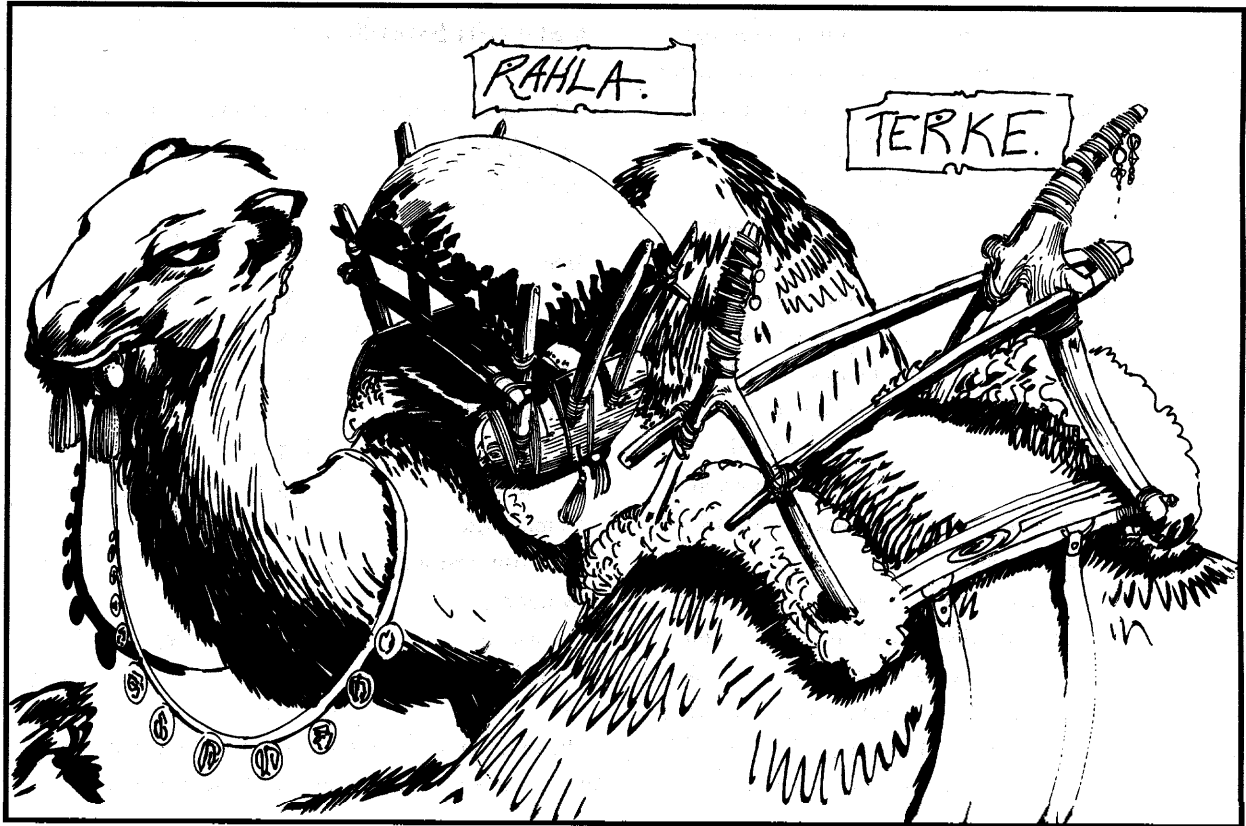
The following information supplements the price lists in Chapter 6 of the *AL-QADIM Arabian Adventures* rulebook.

Item	Cost		
	A	N	B
Camel apron (leather)	20 sp	15 sp	12sp
Camel grooming kit	7 sp	5 sp	3sp
Camel saddle			
rahla	1gp	7 sp	5sp
terke	2gp	1gp	7sp
Camel stick	5 cp	3 cp	2cp
Date bag (leather)	5sp	3sp	2sp
Water bag			
minun	2gp	1gp	7sp
thilaiithi	1gp	7sp	5sp

In addition to his personal gear (clothing, tent, eating utensils, medicines, weapons), each rider should obtain the following items of the highest quality he can afford:

- A camel pack saddle. Two saddle types favored by desert riders are the terke and the rahla. The terke, a cagelike construction of horizontal bars, rests in front of the hump, allowing the rider to guide the camel with his feet and legs. The rahla, smaller and less confining, also rests in front of the hump, but does not allow the rider the freedom to direct the mount with his feet. However, the lightweight rahla is easier to attach and makes for a more comfortable ride.
- Bit and bridle. For long trips, it is worth the expense to invest in new tack; a worn bridle is difficult to replace in the middle of the desert.
- A saddle blanket made of wool or other soft material to prevent chafing. The blanket also can be used to fan an overheated mount and shoo away flies.
- A leather apron that fits in front of the saddle and hangs over the mount's sides, nearly to its knees.
- Two large leather saddlebags, which hang on either side of camel's back.





- A camel stick, made of any type of hardwood, to motivate an uncooperative mount and direct its movement.
- A leather date bag for camel treats. Leather helps keep dates fresh, and is therefore preferable to other materials.
- A camel grooming kit, including a brush with stiff bristles, a metal hoof pick, and a wool massage cloth.
- Water bags, which can be made of goat, sheep, or camel skin; camel skin is the most durable. Two popular types of camel skin bags are the thilaithi, which holds up to 2 gallons, and the minun, a larger, high-quality container holding 3 to 5 gallons.

A desert camel can carry 400 to 520 pounds, rider included, without significant stress. Even when fully loaded, a healthy camel should be able to travel for 12 or more hours a day. Expect a caravan to cover up to 30 to 40 miles per day, less during days of excessive heat and rough terrain, more when conditions are favorable. When

practical, a caravan should move by night in the summer and by day in the winter.

A caravan should break every 10 to 20 miles. While the camels rest or graze, the riders may relax with a cup of coffee or a handful of figs.

Camels

Tough an excellent pack animal, the common desert camel makes a poor war steed. The desert camel is not inclined to risk its life for its rider. Rather than confront an opponent, it will sink to the ground and refuse to move. If danger persists, the camel flees. If coerced with prods or kicks, the camel responds by hissing, spitting, and biting until the rider gets it through his head that cooperation is not forthcoming.

More suitable for combat is the war camel, a special breed developed by culling the strongest males from desert camel herds and crossing them with the swiftest





females. Self-assured, courageous, and responsive, the war camel relishes warfare, snapping at an opponent with its teeth, rearing to pummel with its forelegs. Owing to their lean bodies, war camels cannot carry as much weight as desert camels and thus are less useful as pack animals.

Camels of all breeds require care and attention to maintain good health. While they will eat vegetables, fruit, and the occasional chunk of dried meat, camels flourish if simply allowed to graze in fields of weeds, grass, and wildflowers. Camels absorb water from this vegetation, along with salt, necessary for optimum vitality. In the desert, riders should seek out hamdh, a brown shrub with slender, twisted stems containing rich deposits of salt. This plant can be found on lake shores and near the foothills of mountain ranges.

In the coolest months, there is no need to water camels, so long as they have access to fields in which to graze. During the hottest months, it is best to water them every two or three days. While a camel can survive for a week without water even in the worst conditions, it will eventually succumb to dehydration, evidenced by shallow breathing, a flaccid hump, and a general listlessness. If a camel grows too weak to drink under its own power, the rider may pour a cupful of water into the beast's nose. It absorbs the water through the lining of the nostrils. A camel so treated can exist another day without drinking.

Temperature fluctuations have little effect on healthy camels. But older camels or those in poor condition are more susceptible to disease and exhaustion from prolonged exposure to the cold. If traveling in the Genies' Anvil or other areas of chilly temperatures, camels should be brought inside the tents at night. If the tents are too small, the camels should be allowed to stick their heads and necks inside. For camels with an aversion to tents, or if tents are unavailable, place blankets or rugs across their backs; leaving the humps uncovered for comfort. A hole to accommodate the hump prevents the blanket from slipping off.

On warm evenings, camels may be allowed to graze. Be aware that young camels may attempt to return home. If sufficiently homesick, distance is no deterrent. A camel

Camels of The High Desert

Desert camel: Int animal to semi- (1-4); AL nil; AC 7; MV 21; HD 3; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA spitting, trample; SZ L (8' tall); ML 12; XP 65.

War camel: Int animal to semi- (1-4); AL nil; AC 7; MV 21; HD 3 + 3; THAC0 16; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-6/1-6; SA spitting, trample; SZ L (8' tall); ML 13; XP 95.

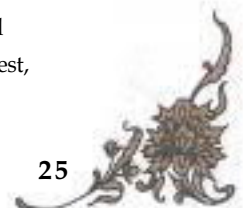
An ill-tempered camel has a 50% chance of spitting on a person who attempts to ride it or use it as a pack animal. A spit attack has a 25% chance of blinding the victim for 1 to 3 rounds. A frightened herd of camels has a 25% chance of stampeding. Any person or creature in the path of a stampeding herd who does not take cover will be trampled by 2d4 camels. Trampling inflicts 1 to 4 points of damage per camel. A trampled victim cannot get back on his feet until the stampede passes.

Carrying Capacity (In Pounds)

	Desert Camel	War Camel
Normal	250	200
Encumbered	400	300
Fully Encumbered	520	400

on its first caravan once abandoned me at the Jamal Oasis in the middle of the night. It was later discovered in Tajar, the city of its birth, over 100 miles away.

To discourage camels from wandering, give them snacks of dates before you retire. A sip of water or a dab of honey also may persuade them to stay. Tying a camel to a tree, incidentally, tends to make it angry. It may pull against the restraints all night long, yowling in protest, making sleep impossible.





Water

Under normal conditions, a desert traveler needs a gallon of water per day. A camel requires much less—it can survive as long as a week without drinking—but will suffer the same effects of dehydration as a man if deprived long enough. Before a caravan embarks, it is vital to obtain sufficient water to last several days. The pools, fountains, and artesian wells common to most villages and cities are dependable sources, but be prepared to pay. Officials in Aziz and Hulm have been known to charge up to three silver pieces per gallon for fresh water.

In the High Desert, a traveler must rely on known sources (oases, lakes, and water holes) or pray for the benevolence of Fate. He will not be able to rely on rain. The annual rainfall rarely exceeds 5 inches; the area comprising the Genies' Anvil and the Pit of the Ghuls is fortunate to receive 2 or 3 inches. In some places, such as the Mountains of Forgotten Dreams, an entire year's rain may fall in an hour. A clear sky may abruptly give way to a downpour, drenching the north side of a mountain but leaving the south side as dry as dust. Rain falling on a hot day may turn to steam the instant it strikes the ground.

Occasionally, rain splashes down mountain slopes and collects in basins along the foothills to form lakes. Because the sand and stone lining these basins prevents absorption, the lakes may stand for weeks or even years. Several such lakes, modest in size but containing drinkable water, exist along the southern edge of the Mountains of Forgotten Dreams and the northern border of the Range of the Marching Camels. Still, lakes are uncommon in the High Desert, as they are usually dried by the sun before they can be replenished by new rain.

More common are water holes, small bodies of fresh water fed by underground springs. Some are large enough to support a sailing ship, others are no bigger than a mouse's ear. To find a water hole, search valleys and plains with profuse vegetation; an abundance of animal life is also a good indicator.

Oases sometimes develop near large water holes, but these should be approached with caution. Nomadic tribes and the occasional monster often claim an oasis as private property. Trespassers may be attacked or devoured.

Travelers without access to lakes or oases should familiarize themselves with the following alternative sources of fresh water:

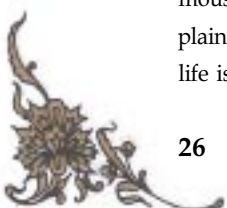
Duhuls

Fissures along the western tip of the Mountains of Forgotten Dreams and the hillsides east of the Pit of the Ghuls may lead to underground wells called *duhuls*. To get to the water, the traveler must enter a fissure and crawl on his belly through a narrow passage. When navigating such a passage, which may be 200 feet long and no more than 4 feet in diameter, he may have to endure cuts from rough stone, as well as nips and stings from ants and beetles. The passage will end in a small cavern containing a natural pool of fresh water.

While a traveler should be able to squirm through the passage, he may have trouble locating a suitable fissure. Fortunately, nomads have marked many of the *duhul* fissures with symbols called *wasms*, etched in stone with daggers or chisels. If a traveler finds a fissure marked with a *wasm*, he can avert a violent confrontation by negotiating with the nomad who "owns" it. Nomads will grant permission to enter if given a chunk of turquoise or other ornamental stone, or if the traveler agrees to share half of the water he removes from the *duhul*.

Thamilas

On the plains north of the Range of the Marching Camels, the traveler may encounter depressions in the sand containing puddles of opaque, yellowish fluid. Despite their appearance, these depressions, called *thamilas*, are filled with drinkable water from recent rainstorms. Silt and minerals account for the discoloration. To purify *thamila* water, boil it for an hour, let the minerals settle, then boil it again. The water tastes like dirt, but is safe to drink.





Ab'i

Tufts of spindly brown grass indicate the presence of ab'i tubers. Pull up the grass and dig; the tubers lie about 3 feet below the surface. Strong winds also may expose ab'i tubers; they appear as smooth stones, blood red.

Each edible tuber, as big as a camel's hump, is filled with a half-gallon of cloudy water. To obtain the water, squeeze the tuber over a container.

Tortoises

Desert tortoises, the size of a man's foot and golden brown in color, store about a pint of water in the leathery sacs beneath their shells. The boiled meat is quite tasty, too.

Barrel Cacti

Using a sword or long knife, slice off the top of a barrel cactus (a thick, basket-shaped cactus covered with long spines, found throughout the High Desert). Remove the pulp, then mash or squeeze it to obtain several pints of water. The pulp may also be placed in the mouth and sucked. But take care not to swallow the pulp, as it can cause severe stomach cramps.

Other Suggestions

If a cool evening follows a hot day, examine the leaves of plants the following morning. They may be covered with dew, which can be collected with rags, then squeezed into a container.

Dig holes several feet deep near the edges of sand dunes, at the base of foothills, or wherever green vegetation grows. These are the most likely locations of underground water.

The sound of chirping may lead you to a water hole, particularly at dawn and sunset when many birds prefer to drink.

Hazards

Travelers may be surprised by the variety of hazards in the High Desert. A few of the more treacherous:

Hazards—DM's Information

Heat

Under normal conditions, characters who are properly dressed, drink plenty of water, and refrain from excessive exertion should be able to tolerate the desert heat, which typically averages from 80 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. But higher temperatures are not unusual, particularly in the summer. When the temperature exceeds 100 degrees and a character fails to rest and drink enough water, he must make a Constitution check once per hour. If he fails his check, he suffers the damage indicated on the following table:

TABLE 2: HEAT-RELATED DAMAGE

Temperature	Dmg Per Failed Con Check
100-109	1d2
110-119	1d3
120+	1d4

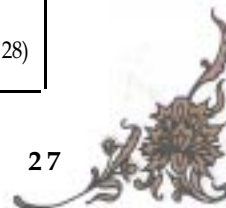
Mirage

The guidelines in Chapter Seven of the *Player's Handbook* regarding illusions also apply to desert mirages. Disbelieving a mirage requires a successful Wisdom check, with penalties or bonuses to the check determined by the DM. (For instance, an especially vivid mirage of a lake might require a penalty of -4.) Note that identifying a mirage doesn't make it disappear; the viewer simply recognizes the mirage for what it is.

Helpful Statistics

Burrowing owl: Int animal (1); AL N; AC 5; MV 1, Fl 27 (D), Br 3; HD 1; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-2; SZ-T (1' tall); ML 7; XP 65.

(continued on page 28)





(continued from page 27)

Seven Wanderers (ju-ju zombies): Int low (5-7); AL NE; AC 6; MV 9; HD 3+12; hp 26, 28,30,30,32,33, 35; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12 or by weapon: 1-8 (scimitar); SA strikes as a 6 HD monster; can climb walls as a thief (92%); can detect water up to a mile distant; can destroy water (16 gallons) when within 30 yards, once per day; SD + 1 or better weapons to hit (blunt and piercing weapons cause half damage); immune to *sleep, charm, hold, death magic, magic missiles, cold-based spells, psionics, illusions, electricity, and poisons*; fire causes half damage; turned as spectres SZ M (6' tall); ML 19; XP 975.

Bandits

Bandits prey on the unwary in all corners of the High Desert. Raiding clans of the House of Dhi'b may be encountered in the south and south-central regions. Vicious elven brigands lurk west of the Genies' Anvil. A band of camel-eating giants awaits caravans east of the Pit of the Ghuls.

Avoid making smoky camp fires, which alert bandits to your location. Examine corpses for cut throats and sword wounds, sure signs of an ambush. If there are no claw or bite marks from scavenging animals, the victim probably died recently, and the bandits may still be in the area. Above all, keep your eyes open and weapons at hand.

Heat

Extreme temperatures can be deadly. Dry winds, reflected sunlight (from plains and rocks), and heat radiating from the sand can aggravate an already blistering day. An overheated traveler may experience stomach and leg cramps, severe headaches, dizziness, and confusion. If these symptoms persist, the traveler should rest in a shaded area, lying on a blanket or rug for protection from the hot sand, and sip small amounts of water every few minutes. The body should remain covered, allowing the clothing to absorb sweat, which helps cool the skin. Gentle massage may also provide relief.

Mirages

Visual illusions are among the desert's cruelest tricks. Imagine the disappointment of a parched traveler who sees a lake of clear water, only to have it vanish at his approach. A mirage may make the horizon disappear, obscure an oasis, or conceal a trail. It may appear as a rainstorm, a pocket of fog, or a shimmering sea. Travelers should rely on their common sense to distinguish the real from the unreal, remaining skeptical of unusual landmarks or sights too good to be true.

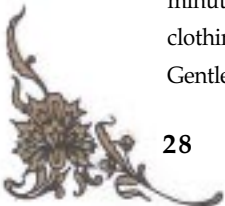
Burrowing Owls

The golden-feathered burrowing owl, found mainly on the plains north of the Range of the Marching Camels, has talons twice the size of a normal owl. It digs holes in the sand, 3 to 5 feet deep, where it spends the day asleep. Groups of 2 to 8 owls often burrow near ab'i tubers. Travelers attempting to excavate the tubers risk awakening the owls, who will attack with their claws.

Seven Wanderers

Victims of a barbaric water deprivation experiment conducted by the House of Dhi'b, the Seven Wanderers exist as undead abominations, doomed to spend eternity roaming the High Desert in search of water. The Wanderers resemble human corpses with crimson eyes and leathery gray skin. They wear shredded abas, carry grime-encrusted scimitars, and mutter incomprehensible phases under their breath.

A Wanderer stumbles through the desert until it detects water, which it can sense a mile away. Once water has been detected, the Wanderer unerringly moves in that direction, assaulting anyone who gets in its path. When it comes within 30 yards of the detected water, it raises its arms, and the water vanishes without a trace. If left unmolested after destroying the water, the Wanderer will stagger away. Mainly active at night, Wanderers are especially threatening to campers.





Chapter 4

Adversaries and Allies

Husar came upon his favorite niece with her head buried in her hands, sobbing as if her heart had been broken. "Do not cry so much," he said, settling beside her. "You will stain the sleeve of your shirt." He handed her a handkerchief and produced a bag of dates from his aba.

Jamilia dabbed her eyes with the handkerchief and accepted a date. "Oh, Uncle," she sniffed. "What makes people so cruel?"

"Ask me the number of grains of sand in the High Desert," the elder replied.

"Perhaps I could answer that."

"My friend Amsha has betrayed me," said Jamilia. "She told me how much she admired my copper bracelet, the one that you gave me on the last harvest holiday. Then this afternoon, I overheard Amsha mocking me to another girl, saying that my bracelet was not fit for a gout collar." A tear trickled down her cheek. "Why do people behave as they do?"

"What I know about the behavior of people," said Husar, "I have learned from observing camels. Listen:

"Some camels have a devious look. Other camels appear friendly. Now, some of the devious-looking camels are quite mean, but many are congenial. On the other hand, while some of the friendly-looking camels are even-tempered, many are hostile.

"That is all I have learned about the behavior of people."

Jamilia had stopped crying. She looked at her uncle with disbelief. "If that is all you have learned about the behavior of people," she said, "you have not learned very much."

Husar took another date from the bag, looked at it briefly, and turned to his niece. "I am afraid you are correct."

8th-Level Human Merchant Rogue

STRENGTH:	7
DEXTERITY:	15
CONSTITUTION:	10
INTELLIGENCE:	15
WISDOM:	
CHARISMA:	15
ARMOR CLASS:	8
THACO:	
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT POINTS:	45
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	None
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	6' 1"

Thief Abilities:

PP: 95%	OL: 50%	F/RT 35%	MS: 55%
HS: 35%	DN: 35%	CM: 55%	RL: 25%

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, dart, knife, short sword.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Direction sense, haggling, reading/writing, riding (camel), survival (desert),

Equipment: Brown aba trimmed in gold, gold-embroidered keffiyeh, leather armor, dagger, short sword, knife, 10 barbed darts, desert camel (with all of the camel equipment listed in the "Caravans" section of Chapter 3 of this Campaign Guide), leather pouch containing 12 turquoise chunks (10 gp each), two silver bracelets (100 gp each), silver pendant in the shape of a camel's head (300 gp), and a flask containing two doses of *potion of healing*.

Physical Appearance: Khafaz's handsome features and immaculate grooming conceal a devious personality. Though he's in his mid forties, his lean, tight body and lustrous skin make him appear much younger. A bushy black beard and curling mustache decorate his long face. He is soft-spoken and quick-witted, with a disarming smile and sparkling eyes.

Background: Khafaz learned his business skills as a teenager, operating gambling games of dubious legality in the alleys and side streets of Tajar. With his gambling money, he purchased trade ships to carry salt and horses from Tajar to Huzuz, reinvesting the profits to finance caravans to the far reaches of the High Desert. His success brought him to the attention of Fahad al-Zakir, who hired him as an administrator at a handsome salary. To supplement his salary, Khafaz operates as a black marketeer and extortionist. To date, he has been able to conceal these unsavory activities from his employer.

Role-playing Notes: Fahad al-Zakir insists that Khafaz aid the party in crossing the High Desert to Vahtov in search of Sita, his beloved. Khafaz's primary concerns, however, are his personal safety and the size of his purse. He intends to accumulate as much personal wealth as possible, skirting the law as necessary. His status as Fahad's aide provides him with innumerable



opportunities to arrange shady business deals, which he conducts behind Fahad's back.

In general, the party will find Khafaz companionable and obedient, as well as an excellent guide. He points out interesting landmarks and discusses their history (having read Sahja al-Hijan's *Inquiries and Impressions: A Trader's Tour of the High Desert*, he knows most of the information in Chapter 2 of the *Campaign Guide*). He also enjoys spinning tall tales, which, with a wink, he acknowledges may be more fancy than fact (a sandstorm that buried a 100-camel caravan in a hour, ghostly rattlesnakes that attack unsuspecting travelers in their sleep, a saltwater lake made from the single tear of a genie). As the journey progresses, however, he exposes the darker side of his personality should any of the following situations arise:

- Khafaz blames his personal aide, Turin, for any mishap befalling the party, regardless of Turin's actual involvement. Further, Khafaz rarely passes up the chance to insult the poor fellow. Turin passively accepts these insults, accustomed to such treatment.
- Khafaz makes lecherous advances toward any attractive female PC, putting his arm around her waist, stroking her hair, and whispering suggestive remarks.
- In combat, Khafaz leaves the fighting to the rest of the party, hanging back or taking cover until the battle ends. If accused of cowardice, he offers reasonable excuses, all of them lies. ("I was guarding the flank," "I was looking for help," "Sand blew in my eyes and blinded me.")

5th-Level Human Desert Rider

STRENGTH:	9
DEXTERITY:	8
CONSTITUTION:	12
INTELLIGENCE:	7
WISDOM:	10
CHARISMA:	5
ARMOR CLASS:	8
THACO:	16
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT POINTS:	40
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful neutral
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	None
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	5' 4"

Weapon Proficiencies: Club, dagger, scimitar, short sword, staff.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Animal handling, animal lore, riding (camel), survival (desert), tracking, weather sense.

Equipment: White aba, leather armor, dagger, scimitar, desert camel (with all of the camel equipment listed in the "Caravans" section of Chapter 3 of the *Campaign Guide*), cloth pouch containing 15 sp and 2 gp, copper ring inscribed with his mother's name (1 gp).

Physical Appearance: Turin is a shy, homely man in his early thirties. His unattractiveness accounts for much of his poor self-image. A childhood disease resulted in the complete and permanent loss of all body hair, a condition for which he has suffered interminable ridicule. His bulbous nose is twice too big for his round head. His droopy eyes and huge ears give him a comical, even ridiculous appearance.

Background: Turin was born on a medical ship in the Suq Bay during the trade wars between Wasatt and Huzuz. His mother, a poet and a nurse, comforted the dying with verse and disposed of the dead in the sea. Their ship was capsized by a zataran, a gargantuan aquatic turtle, and all passengers drowned with the exception of the five-year-old Turin. Clinging to a fragment of the hull, he drifted ashore about 100 miles north of the Magrib, on the southern tip of the High Desert. Turin wandered through the desert for a week, until he a tribe of nomads rescued him.

The next 10 years of his life Turin spent with the tribe, developing a remarkable talent for desert survival. He could calm the most frenzied mount with a soothing touch, identify a distant bird from a single call, and find water where others saw only sand.

Turin's serene life came to abrupt end one summer's night near the Jamal Oasis when the tribe was ambushed by the House of Dh'ib. Turin would have lost his life along with the rest of the tribe had it not been for the timely arrival of Khafaz ibn Dahz, who was leading Tajari soldiers on a military exercise. Khafaz drove off the raiders and found Turin cowering under a palm tree. Khafaz loaded the teenager onto his camel, intending to sell him as a slave when the opportunity arose.

But on the way back to Tajar, Turin effortlessly found the trail of an escaped camel and predicted the onset of a rainstorm with uncanny accuracy. Clearly, the boy was too valuable to sell as a slave. Khafaz petitioned his employer, Fahad al-Zakir, for permission to hire Turin as a personal aide. Fahad agreed, and Turin has worked for Khafaz ever since.



Turin's duties include accompanying his employer on trade caravans, caring for his camels, cleaning his clothes and in general, doing whatever Khafaz commands. Khafaz regards Turin as a barbarian and treats him like an animal. Because Khafaz saved his life, Turin feels he must endure his insults and reprimands, no matter how humiliating or painful.

Role-playing Notes: Turin is eager to please, hard-working, and servile. Though respectful of others, he trusts no one but Khafaz, an attitude that Khafaz encourages. Though he offers opinions if asked, he defers to the other man's judgment in all matters.

Turin longs to write poetry like his mother, a skill for which he has no discernible aptitude. He scribbles verse constantly, reading it to anyone who will listen. Indifferent to criticism and compliments alike, he believes his efforts are works-in-progress whose true quality cannot be determined until he revises and polishes them.

Following are samples of Turin's poetry, which he may share with the party at any time.

Lo the haughty camel
Where is he wandering;
What within his inner mind
Does he spend his hours pondering.

The desert air blows warm and strange.
Whipping memories in its many sands
Who among us cannot say
If in the dunes the gods reveal their plans.

Take my spirit, oh brutal night!
Clutch it hard against thy breast
And like an eagle in its mountain home
Keep it safe within thy nest.

TABLE 3: MONSTER SUMMARY

For quick reference, this table lists the vital statistics for most of the monsters featured in the adventures found in Caravans. Refer to the text, the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*, and the *AL-QADIM MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* Appendix for details.

Name	AC	MV	HD/hp	THACO	#AT	Dmg	Remarks
Ankheg, desert	2/4	12, Br 6	8/48	13	1	3d6+1-2	4d4 acid spit
Centaur, desert	6	21	3/22	17	3	1d4/1d4/1d6	night vision
Copper automaton	3	9	6/21	15	2	1d6/1d6	1d6 heat
Copper automaton, arm	3	3	6/special	15	1	1d6	
Gen, lightning	5	Fl, 12	13/99	7	1	1d6	saves as 13 HD, monster, electricity, immunities
Genie, noble djinni	1	12, Fl 36	10+3/75	9	1	3d8	create objects, become whirlwind, immunities, spells
Ghul, great	0	18, Br 3, CI 12	4/28	15	3	1d6/1d6/2d6	+1 weapon to hit, spells, immunities
Ghul, lesser	2	12, Br 1, CL3	3/20	17	3	1d4/1d4/2d4	+1 weapon to hit, spells, immunities
Maskhi	5	9	4+1/30	17	2	1d3/1/3	polymorph
Mold, brown immature	9	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	2d8 heat drain
Salamander	5/3	9	7+7/50	13	2	2d6/1d6	1d6 heat (each attack)
Silat	3	15	7/48	10(13)	3	1d4+7/1d4+7/ 2d4+7	Strength 19, iron or magical weapons to hit, polymorph, regenerates 1 hp/round
Skeleton, desert, giant	1	15	13/44	7	1	1d10 or 2d6+7	immunities
Skeleton, giant, eagle	7	3, Fl 48	4/25	15	3	1d6/1d6/2d6	dive, immunities
Skeleton, roc	4	3, Fl 30	18/55	5	2/1	3d6/3d6 or 4d6	grab, immunities
Snake, black sand adder	6	12	3/15	17	1	1-2	poison
Snake, black sand adder	5	15	2+1/9	19	1	1	poison
Snake, cobra	5	15	4+2/23	17	1	1-3	poison, hypnotic stare
Turtle, giant desert snapping	0/5	3, Br 1	10/58	11	1	6d4	shoot neck and grab
Vishap (great wyrm)	-4	8, Jp 6	16/52	5	3	1d4+12/1d4+12 2d6+12	spells, tail lash, immunities
Zin	5	12, Sw 12	5+1/30	15	1	1d6	5th-level bard abilities, spells, <i>polymorph</i>



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Caravans

Adventure Book



Credits

Written by Rick Swan
 Edited by C. Terry & Dezra D. Phillips
 Interior Art by Karl Waller
 Poster Art by Dee Barnett
 Cartography by David C. Sutherland III
 Typesetting by Angelike Lokotz
 Special thanks to Wolfgang Bauer

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TSR, Inc.
 POB 756
 Lake Geneva
 WI 53147
 U.S.A.



TSR Ltd.
 120 Church End
 Cherry Hinton
 Cambridge CB1 3LB
 United Kingdom

9459XXX1901





Episode One

The Talking Tent

Jamilia sat on her uncle's lap and watched the bearers pass in front of her home, their muscles straining from the weight of the baskets perched on their shoulders. "Uncle," she asked, "what is in the baskets that makes them so hard to carry?"

Husar smoothed a wrinkle in the sleeve of his aba. "Opals," he said. "Many hundreds of them, I suspect."

"Opals? I do not think I have ever seen an opal."

"Opals are rare here in Tajar. Fahud al-Zakir had them brought from Hilm, a city across the sea."

"For what purpose did Fahad import the opals?"

"He intends to use them to decorate the roof of his summer home. Surely you have seen it. The walls are inlaid with flecks of gold. The pillars are polished mahogany. An impressive place, indeed."

Jamilia watched the bearers until they disappeared over a hill. "Fahad is lucky. He has everything."

"Not everything," corrected the elder. "Only that which money can buy. All his wealth, for instance, has been unable to compensate for the loss of his true love."

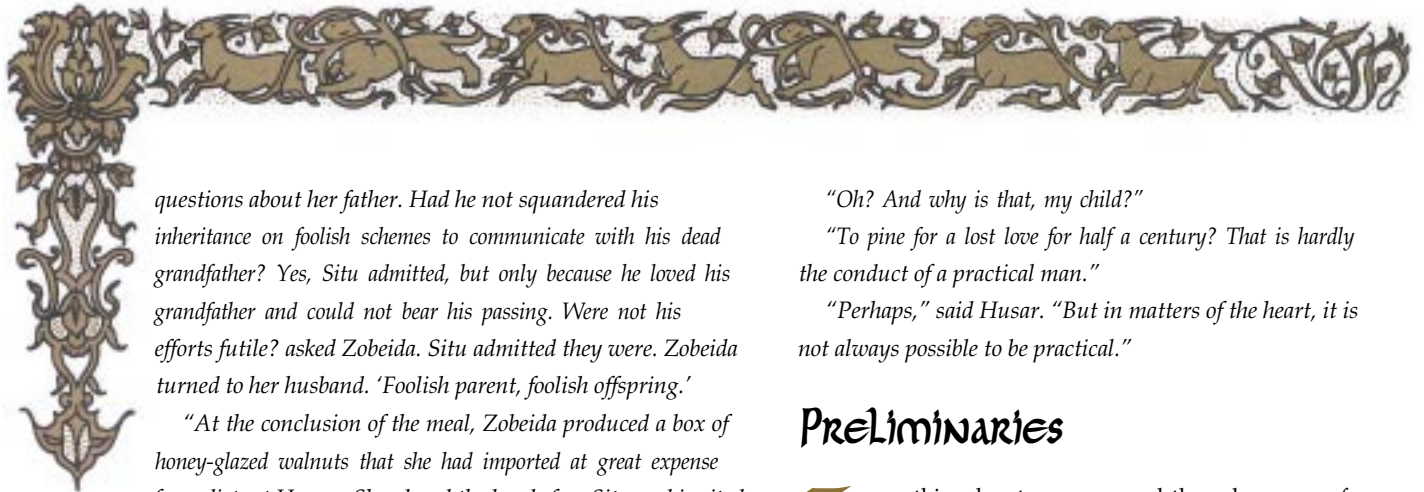
"Is it true that Fahad was unable to marry because of a bad meal?"

Husar smiled. "In a sense. Listen: Many years ago, when I was no older than you, Fahad fell deeply in love with a maiden named Situ. The daughter of a fisherman, Sita was a fragile beauty with the grace of a dancer and skin as soft as a wild dove. Though Situ had many suitors, she was smitten by Fahad's commanding manner and agreed to marry him a month after they met. Fahud arranged an elegant dinner where he would present his bride-to-be to his parents for their approval.

"Fahud's parents already knew of Situ. They were less than enthusiastic about having her for a daughter-in-law. Essafah and Zobeida believed a fisherman's daughter would make an unsuitable mate for their son, who already had distinguished himself as a trader. Still, Fahad's parents decided to reserve final judgment until after the dinner.

"Initially, the dinner went well. Sita proved quite charming, listening with rapt attention to Essafah's rumbling stories of his son's adolescence and laughing politely at his labored jokes. Zobeida, however, was unmoved. She embarrassed Sita with rude





questions about her father. Had he not squandered his inheritance on foolish schemes to communicate with his dead grandfather? Yes, Situ admitted, but only because he loved his grandfather and could not bear his passing. Were not his efforts futile? asked Zobeida. Situ admitted they were. Zobeida turned to her husband. 'Foolish parent, foolish offspring.'

"At the conclusion of the meal, Zobeida produced a box of honey-glazed walnuts that she had imported at great expense from distant Huzuz. She placed the box before Situ and invited her to sample them. Tentatively, Situ removed a nut from the box, nibbled it, then spat the pieces into her hand, knowing at that instant that upon spitting she had committed a severe breach of etiquette. She looked helplessly at Fahad

"'Perhaps that nut was rotten,' Fahad said to his mother.

"'No,' said Zobeida, her eyes locked on Sita. 'They are fresh, every one. Try another.'

"Her hand shaking, Sita did as she was told. She began to bite the nut, then dropped it. She sprang from the table and fled from the room, tears flooding her eyes.

"Fahad rose to go after her, but Zobeida held his arm. 'The girl has insulted your mother,' she said. 'She is not worthy to join this family.'

"Fearing that Fahad would run off with Sita, Zobeida insisted that Essafd arrange for the girl to be arrested on a fabricated charge of disloyalty to the sultan. A quick trial followed, and Sita was banished from Tajar. Eventually, she settled in Vahtov, a dismal community on the far side of the High Desert. Fahad promised his parents that as long as they lived, he would not attempt to contact her.

"More than fifty years have passed since Fahad made that vow. He has kept his word."

"Why did not Sita eat the walnut?" asked Jamilia.

"No one knows for sure," replied the elder. "But I have heard that she suffered from a bad tooth and was too shy to speak up. However, it was the reaction, not the reason, that offended Zobeida."

"But Fahad did marry," Jamilia said, "did he not?"

"Yes," said Husar. "But it was a marriage of convenience. Fahad needed heirs."

"I had always thought Fahad wise and practical. He doesn't seem that way to me now."

"Oh? And why is that, my child?"

"To pine for a lost love for half a century? That is hardly the conduct of a practical man."

"Perhaps," said Husar. "But in matters of the heart, it is not always possible to be practical."

Preliminaries

To run this adventure, you need the color maps of Tajar and Environs (Card 1, front), and the High Desert (Card 2, front) found in the Caravans box. Also required are the black-and-white map of the Medicine Tent (Card 1, back), the poster reproduction of Ala'i the Hungry, two pages of Lihaka bin Khadiga's poetry (PH1 and 2), and the list of terms (PH13). (Carefully cut the handouts apart if you haven't done so already.) Before play, review the material about Ala'i the Hungry, plus the character profiles of Khafaz ibn Dahz and Turin (see Chapters 1 and 4 of the *Campaign Guide*).

For the spectators, workers, and other incidental characters in this episode, use the following statistics. Feel free to vary the hit points and weaponry.

Typical citizen (hm or hf 0 lv1): AL N; AC 10; MV 12; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon: dagger or club (1d3) or spear (1d6).

Getting Started

The episode begins on a dry summer day just beyond the northern border of Tajar. The player characters (PCs) may be natives of Tajar, sightseers from another region, or traders who have just completed their business in the city and are preparing to return home.

They arrive on a high bluff overlooking a stretch of mostly empty desert. Below them, about 100 yards distant, about a hundred people have gathered near a large tent. The rectangular tent is made of dull yellow cloth, held taut by ropes attached to wooden stakes. The front flaps, the tent's only opening, are closed. The people are keeping their distance. From their simple dishdashahs





and casual manner, most look like peasants and farmers. Some stand and chat. Others sit on faded blankets, munching fruit. The atmosphere is relaxed and festive.

About a dozen workers are gathering brush and sticks, stacking them in piles around the tent. It is slow, tedious work, owing to the scarce vegetation in the area. The piles are barely a foot high.

A middle-aged man with a neatly trimmed mustache and narrow eyes sits astride a magnificent black stallion, overseeing the workers. Beside him, a bald man on a small gray horse scribbles intently on a parchment scroll, occasionally addressing the man on the stallion. Both men wear brown abas and yellow sashes. The man on the stallion has golden embroidery on the hem of his aba and also wears a gold-embroidered *keffiyeh*.

A young man in a white aba paces nervously in front of the tent, careful not to get too close. Every few seconds, he stops and wrings his hands, then resumes his pacing. No one pays him much attention.

A woman in her early twenties sits on a sand dune a few yards from the pacing man. She holds her head in her hands and appears to be sobbing. Two workers, one on either side of her, stand at attention, holding spears.

On the bluff not far from the PCs, two plump men with scraggly beards and cheerful demeanors recline in the shade of a tall palm tree. They stare expectantly in the direction of the tent, taking sips from a green bottle, which they pass between them.

One of the men notices the PCs and nudges his companion. Both smile and wave. "Greetings, friends!" one shouts. "Come join us! We will have a wonderful view of the fire!"

If the party wishes to join the men, continue with the next section. If the party prefers to investigate the plain, go to the "Plain Talk" section (page 6).

In The Shade of The Palm

The men introduce themselves as Daasim and Harid, two street cleaners from Tajar. They offer the player characters their bottle (containing grape wine, diluted

with water). They ask the PCs to disclose their names, homelands, and occupations, but don't pry, accepting whatever information the PCs care to share.

"Fate has blessed us with a truly memorable day," says Daasim. "The fire should be magnificent."

"Do you think," says Harid, "that we will see the spirit rise from the flames, or will it escape into the ground?"

"An excellent question," replies Daasim. "Perhaps our new friends have an opinion. Do you know the ways of spirits!"

Harid interrupts. "Did you hear the tent speak?"

The PCs may have questions of their own at this point. Several possibilities are listed below, along with suggested responses from Daasim and Harid.

What's going on here? Daasim: "An evil spirit took over the tent. The spirit will not come out, so those who work for Khafaz ibn Dahz are going to burn it down with the spirit inside. We heard of this from a friend in the city and got out here as fast as we could." (Neither man knows how the spirit got inside the tent or what it wants.)

What did the tent say? Daasim: "Something to the effect of: 'Anyone who comes in will be killed.'" Harid: "No, it said, 'Death awaits anyone who comes in.'" Daasim (to the PCs): "Neither of us actually heard the tent speak, you see. But this is the rumor."

Has the tent spoken again? Harid: "No."

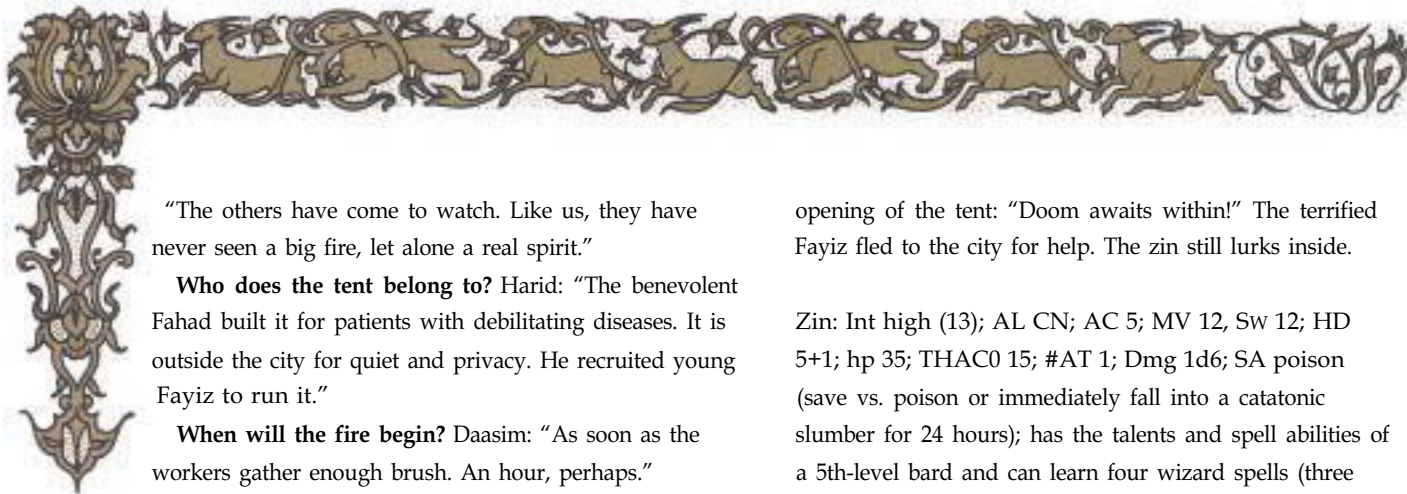
Who are the people on the plain? Daasim: "The man on the black stallion is Khafaz ibn Dahz, Fahad al-Zakir's chief administrator." (Any PC who makes a successful Intelligence check recognizes the name of Fahad al-Zakir, one of Zakhara's most renowned businessmen and philanthropists, noted for his charity work and generous heart. If all fail their Intelligence checks, Daasim fills them in. The PCs have never heard of Khafaz.)

"The man on the gray horse is Turin, Khafaz's assistant. Those wearing the brown abas are workers under Khafaz's supervision.

"The pacing man in the white aba is Fayiz, a healer. He conducts his medical practice in the tent.

"I do not know the name of the weeping woman, but I believe she has a daughter that Fayiz was treating."





"The others have come to watch. Like us, they have never seen a big fire, let alone a real spirit."

Who does the tent belong to? Harid: "The benevolent Fahad built it for patients with debilitating diseases. It is outside the city for quiet and privacy. He recruited young Fayiz to run it."

When will the fire begin? Daasim: "As soon as the workers gather enough brush. An hour, perhaps."

What's inside the tent? Harid: "Just some medical equipment and Fayiz's belongings." Daasim: "I heard the daughter of the weeping woman may be inside. Too bad. But if an innocent must die to get rid of an evil spirit, then so be it."

Harid and Daasim have no other information. If the party needs more incentive to investigate, Daasim mentions that he heard the mother has offered a reward for the rescue of her daughter, "as if anyone would be so foolish." The two men won't go with the PCs, but wish them good luck, should they head for the plain.

The Secret of The Tent

As part of his medical research, Fayiz secured three baskets of poisonous serpents. He intended to use the venom as a component for medicines. Unknown to Fayiz, two of the creatures were the spawn of a zin, an intelligent shapeshifting spirit snake that delights in elaborate pranks.

This morning, while Fayiz was away on an errand, the zin slithered inside the tent and rescued her children from a basket, helping them escape through a hole in the back of the tent. The zin then released one black sand adder from its basket and placed another in a jug on some shelves, preparing the tent for a joke she planned on playing. She moved the third basket containing dune vipers and a cobra to a room in the back of the tent. Next, she wrecked Fayiz's equipment. Finally, she hid Fayiz's patient—a girl just 6 inches tall—in a cupboard. (Fayiz himself shrank the girl; see page 7 for details.)

When Fayiz returned from his errand, the mischievous zin used *ventriloquism* to make a voice cry from the

opening of the tent: "Doom awaits within!" The terrified Fayiz fled to the city for help. The zin still lurks inside.

Zin: Int high (13); AL CN; AC 5; MV 12, Sw 12; HD 5+1; hp 35; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA poison (save vs. poison or immediately fall into a catatonic slumber for 24 hours); has the talents and spell abilities of a 5th-level bard and can learn four wizard spells (three 1st-level, one 2nd-level); SD 60' infravision; can *polymorph* into human or demihuman form at will; SZ M (6' long); ML 10; XP 2,000.

Spells: *enlarge*, *unseen servant*, *ventriloquism*, *invisibility*. (For more information on zin, see the **AL-QADIM® MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®** appendix.)

Plain Talk

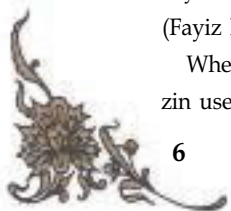
After the PCs descend the bluff, they may mingle among the spectators. Most of them ignore the party, but a few offer friendly greetings. They don't know anything more than Harid and Daasim.

If the PCs approach any of the workers, they decline to speak, referring the party to their supervisor, Khafaz.

They may question Fayiz, the weeping woman (Dhiba), Khafaz, or Turin. All four know the same information about the tent. (Fayiz left the tent this morning to run an errand. When he returned, the tent spoke to him. Frightened, he fled into the city and sent news to Khafaz, who decided that the tent had been possessed by a spirit and ordered it burned down.) Fayiz knows exactly what the tent said ("Doom awaits within!"), which he told to Khafaz.

Additional information that these individuals know is detailed below. If approached courteously, they will speak with the PCs and answer honestly. When the PCs finish their questions, proceed to the section titled "Khafaz's Offer" (page 8).

To discourage the party from attacking Khafaz or his men, make it clear that there are dozens of armed workers in the area. If the PCs attack despite this warning, see "Khafaz's Offer" (page 8).





Dhiba

Dhiba (use “typical citizen” found on page 4 for her statistics) has stringy brown hair, soft blue eyes, and wears a tattered dishdashah. She sobs uncontrollably and won’t speak to the PCs until they calm her.

Once calmed, Dhiba explains that she is a homeless widow who makes a modest living selling straw dolls in the bazaar. Her only child, a 12-year-old girl named Iyda, recently contracted a disease that caused blisters to break out all over her body. Unable to pay for medicine, Dhiba contacted Fahad, who arranged for Fayiz to treat Iyda at no charge. She left Iyda in Fayiz’s medicine tent, assured that her daughter was making progress.

When Dhiba heard that Khafaz was planning to bum the tent to rid it of an evil spirit, she rushed to the plain and pleaded with him to stop; her daughter was still inside. Khafaz refused. “He said he was sorry,” she blubbers, “but the spirit probably had killed Iyda already. He forbade me to go in.”

Dhiba begs for the party’s help. “If my daughter is truly gone, then I want to see her body. Please, can you make Khafaz understand?”

If the PCs hesitate, Dhiba shows them an amber necklace hanging around her neck. “My father gave me this on his deathbed,” she says. “If you find my daughter, it is yours.” The amulet is worth 400 gp.

Fayiz

Fayiz is about 30 years old, wears a spotless white aba, and looks to be on the verge of tears. He seems eager to share his troubles, even with strangers.

Fayiz (hmP/p/3): AL NG; AC 10; MV 12; hp 13; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon: scimitar (1d8).
Spells: *cure light wounds*, *purify food and drink*.

Fayiz continually trips over his tongue, his words a nervous jumble.

After a hasty introduction, he begins to babble. “Circumstances beyond our control often dictate our actions. Does that not seem reasonable? Am I not a

reasonable man? Do I not look reasonable? Have I not lived my life in a reasonable manner?” He tells how the tent threatened him and says he had no choice but to alert the authorities. “How was I to know that Khafaz would bum down the tent? It was not my decision to make. I am not a seer. How was I to know?”

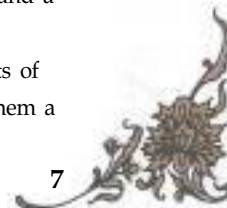
If asked about Iyda, Fayiz acknowledges that he is treating her. As far as he knows, she is still in the tent. “The spirit has killed her by now,” he says, but admits he can’t be sure. As for Dhiba, Fayiz expresses sympathy, but says there is nothing he can do. Would Fayiz consider retrieving the girl from the tent? He seems horrified at the thought. “Absolutely not. I have patients elsewhere in the city. It would be irresponsible to risk my life.”

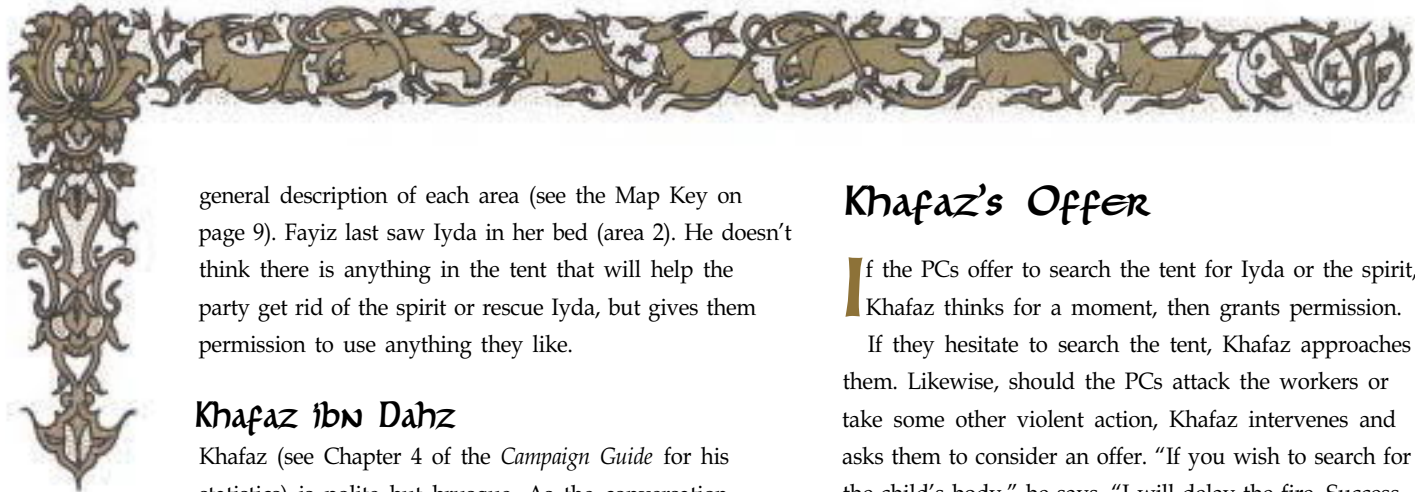
If the PCs express interest in retrieving Iyda themselves, Fayiz perks up. “An excellent idea. I’m sure Khafaz would approve.” Fayiz offers two pieces of information to help them.

First, Fayiz says that Iyda is “smaller than average.” How small? Fayiz holds his hands about 6 inches apart. He explains that he was treating Iyda with a salve made from wasp eggs and rare herbs from the High Desert. “But I had only a small amount of salve and I had to cover her entire body.” So two days ago Fayiz gave the girl a special potion of diminution that caused her to shrink. The effects of the potion last for a week.

Second, Fayiz tells of his intention to develop medicines from snake venom. “I had three baskets of serpents for my research, but apparently the evil spirit released them,” he says, noting that a black serpent had slithered from the front of the tent about a half-hour ago. Two of the workers killed it with stones. “I fear some of the serpents still may be loose in the tent.” He says there were four dune vipers (“brown, about four feet long, quite aggressive”), two black sand adders (“bigger and faster than the vipers, but not as dangerous”), two foot-long blue snakes of unknown origin (the zin’s offspring; unknown to Fayiz, they are no longer in the tent), and a giant cobra (“ten feet long, maybe longer”).

If the party asks, Fayiz tells them the tent consists of four rooms, divided by cloth partitions, and gives them a





general description of each area (see the Map Key on page 9). Fayiz last saw Iyda in her bed (area 2). He doesn't think there is anything in the tent that will help the party get rid of the spirit or rescue Iyda, but gives them permission to use anything they like.

Khafaz ibn Dahz

Khafaz (see Chapter 4 of the *Campaign Guide* for his statistics) is polite but brusque. As the conversation progresses, he becomes annoyed at the party's meddling in a matter that he considers official business.

Khafaz confirms all the information offered by Dhiba and Fayiz. If asked why he is setting fire to the tent rather than pursuing a less destructive alternative, Khafaz says, "Fire is the safest and quickest way to deal with evil spirits." He refuses to elaborate. (In fact, Khafaz has chosen the most expedient way to handle the spirit. He hopes to impress Fahad with his decisiveness. The loss of the tent, he knows, will be incidental to a man of Fahad's wealth. And driving out the spirit in front of so many spectators will enhance his reputation.)

If the PCs ask about Iyda, Khafaz shrugs. "The evil spirit probably has killed her already." Why not retrieve her body? "I will not risk my men for a corpse. And the spectators are too cowardly to make the attempt." What about Dhiba? "She is half crazed from the heat. If allowed to enter the tent in her condition, she would surely die as well. I will not have her death on my conscience."

When Khafaz tires of the PCs' questions, he will ask them to move away. "There is work to be done here."

Turin

Turin (see his statistics in Chapter 4 of the *Campaign Guide*) continues to scribble on his parchment. He refers all the PCs' questions to Khafaz. Before they depart, Turin asks them to listen to a verse from the poem he is composing: "A spirit from the darkness moved into the healer's tent/Who knows what evil to do it meant?/But Khafaz's fire made it scatter/Will it return is another matter." Regardless of the party's response, the poet returns to his parchment and resumes scribbling.

Khafaz's Offer

If the PCs offer to search the tent for Iyda or the spirit, Khafaz thinks for a moment, then grants permission.

If they hesitate to search the tent, Khafaz approaches them. Likewise, should the PCs attack the workers or take some other violent action, Khafaz intervenes and asks them to consider an offer. "If you wish to search for the child's body," he says, "I will delay the fire. Success will earn you the mother's gratitude, and that of great Fahad himself." He hints that Fahad also may give them a reward. (This is a bluff; he has no idea if Fahad will reward them. Though Khafaz believes the party will die if they enter the tent, he is willing to risk their lives on the slim chance that they might succeed. Should the PCs retrieve the child or defeat the spirit, Khafaz plans to take credit by telling Fahad they were acting on his orders. If they fail, he is no worse off; the lives of a few strangers are of no consequence.)

If the PCs agree to search the tent, Khafaz reminds them that he will not be responsible for their safety. Neither the workers nor the spectators will accompany or assist the party in any way. If the party hasn't yet spoken with Fayiz, Khafaz suggests they talk to the healer about the serpents that may be loose inside.

He will delay the fire for an hour; then the tent will bum, whether the PCs have returned or not.

Medicine Tent

Refer to the map of the Medicine Tent (Card 1, back). The outer walls and 8-foot ceiling are made of dyed yellow wool. Brown woolen curtains, called *qata*, serve as partitions, dividing the tent into four sections. Loose flaps cover the openings that connect the rooms. A series of 1-foot squares, spaced about 5 feet apart and 6 feet from the floor, have been cut into the walls of the tent to provide light and fresh air. Netting has been sewn over the holes to keep out insects.

Two 1-foot holes in the floor of the tent (areas 2g and 4e), dug by a desert fox a few weeks ago, lead to a passage





that winds to a nearby stream. The zin is currently hiding in the passage. She plans to move between areas 2g and 4e and play tricks on anyone who enters the tent. When the zin gets bored, or when Khafaz starts the fire, she will leave through the passage and escape into the stream.

Map Key

1. Entryway

Fayiz uses the entryway to treat emergencies and store some odds and ends.

1a. Rumpiled Rug. A faded brown rug, 10 feet square, made of several layers of burlap lies on the floor. There is a lump under the rug, about 3 feet long and 3 inches wide. The lump doesn't move, even if prodded.

The lump is a wooden stick that Fayiz uses to open the ventilation flap for the stove in the storeroom (area 3c). The zin placed it here, hoping trespassers would mistake it for a serpent.

1b. Empty Baskets. Two baskets, about 3 feet in diameter and 4 feet tall, contained serpents. The empty baskets now lie on their sides, their lids off. (The zin moved the third basket containing the dune vipers and cobra to Fayiz's room, area 4.)

1c. Junk. On a small wooden shelf, fresh bandages, a ceramic water container, a cloth pillow, and a coil of rope are kept. Nothing remains but debris left by the serpents: ceramic fragments, shredded rope, and torn bandages.

1d. Sealed Pot. A gray clay pot, about half the size of the wicker baskets (1b), is sealed with a clay cap. A dipper fashioned from a turtle shell lies beside it. The cap is easy to remove.

The pot is filled nearly to the brim with liver-brown camel urine. Fayiz uses the urine to treat wounds, kill head lice, and induce vomiting.

2. Treatment Room

Fayiz treats his patients in this room. Iyda has been his only patient in some time.

2a. Water Container. A barrel-size container made of leather (called a *haudh*) is filled with fresh water. Several clay cups and small ceramic basins lie beside it.

2b. Medicine Cupboard. A wooden cabinet opens to reveal three shelves of flasks, jars, and bags, along with a mortar and pestle, and a bundle of white rags used for bandages. Most of the bags and jars contain herbs and minerals that are easy to identify. The flasks contain camel urine (similar to that in area 1d), saltwater, and fresh water. Among the more unusual items:

- A jar of black paste. The paste feels grainy and smells like charred wood. (The paste, called *kuhl*, is applied to the inside of the eyelids to treat sore eyes.)
- A scrap of hide containing a list of strange terms. (Give the players PH 13. The words are explained in the "Aftermath" section, page 12. A successful ancient languages proficiency check will translate them.)
- A 6-inch diameter bowl made of red crystal, worth 5 sp. (See the "Aftermath" section, page 12.)

2c. Shelves. Three wooden shelves, 1 foot wide and 10 feet long and spaced 3 feet apart, line the left wall. A clay jug rests on each shelf, in addition to an assortment of empty clay bowls and glass containers. The jug on the bottom shelf is filled with soiled rags. On the top shelf is an empty jug, while on the middle shelf sits a jug containing a black sand adder placed there by the zin.

Black sand adder: Int animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 12; HD 3; hp 21; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2; SA poison (save vs. poison or become incapacitated for next 24 hours; -1 modifier to save; onset time 2d4 rounds); SZ M (6' long); ML 9; XP 270.

The zin, peering from her hole (area 2g), casts *enlarge* on the middle jug as soon as any PC comes near the shelves. The enlarged jug topples to the floor and breaks, releasing the adder. The adder attacks any character in the immediate area before slithering toward the tent wall. If attacked, the adder fights back, but if left alone, it noses under the tent wall and escapes.

2d. Hammock. A child-size hammock called a *hababa*, made from sheep skin stretched between four wooden poles lies near the front of the room. Iyda was resting here before the zin captured her and hid her in Fayiz's quarters





(area 4). The hababa contains a handkerchief that the tiny Iyda used for a blanket and a sock stuffed with feathers that she used for a pillow. Next to the hababa is a small table with a bowl of water, a clean rag, and a clay dish holding a smear of yellow salve (Iyda's medicine).

2e. Beds. These six identical beds, called *mattrahs*, consist of feather mattresses on wooden frames, feather pillows, and white linen sheets. The sheets hang over the sides of the frames and touch the floor. None of the beds look like they've been slept in.

When one or more PCs approaches this area, the zin uses *unseen servant* to jiggle the sheets on a bed, making it appear that something beneath the sheets is trying to escape. If a PC investigates, the zin uses the *unseen servant* to poke and prod two dune vipers under the bed frame.

Dune viper (2): Int animal; AL N; AC 5; MV 15; HD 2+1; hp 13, 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison

(save vs. poison or suffer an extra 2d4 points of damage and make all attack rolls at a -2 penalty for the next 24 hours, no modifier to save; onset time 1d4 rounds); SZ S (4' long); ML 8; XP 175.

The annoyed vipers slither from under the bed frame to attack anyone in the area. Each viper attacks until it loses half or more of its hit points, at which time it attempts to escape by slithering under the nearest wall.

2f. Shelves. These shelves are similar to those near the west wall (area 2c). A clay jug filled with dirty rags rests on the bottom shelf. The middle shelf holds extra sheets and pillows. A wooden box on the top shelf contains two loaves of bread, some dried figs, and a small container of mushrooms.

2g. Hole. If a PC approaches this hole, the zin withdraws, then enters Fayiz's room (area 4) from the other hole (area 4e). A successful animal lore proficiency



check by any PC determines that an animal dug the hole, probably a desert fox.

The Zin's Retreat. When the PCs have finished exploring this room, or as soon as they encounter the vipers (area 2e), the zin retreats through the hole (area 2g) and goes to Fayiz's room (area 4). The zin *polymorphs* into the form of an elderly human woman, removes two vipers from the basket (area 4c), then gets into Fayiz's bed (area 4d). (See area 4 for details.)

3. Storeroom

The storeroom contains Fayiz's personal items. The zin has destroyed most of them.

A few rounds after the first PC enters the room, a voice from area 4 begins to cry, "Help! Somebody please help!" The voice sounds like that of an elderly woman, feeble and sickly. (This is the zin; see area 4.)

3a. Desk Debris. A wooden desk lies on its side next to a shattered chair. Documents are scattered everywhere, including patient records (none of them of interest) and Fayiz's personal log (meandering narratives about visits to relatives' homes and critiques of his favorite inns). Among the debris are two books with ripped pages: *Medicinal Applications of Common Herbs* and *Healing Techniques of the Ancients* (neither of interest).

3b. Barrel. A wooden barrel contains chunks of dried camel manure, called *jalla*, used as fuel for the fireplace (area 3c) and coffee preparation (area 4a). The box has been dumped, spilling the *jalla* all over the floor.

3c. Cooking Area. The cooking area includes a brick fireplace, a few pots and pans, some cups and plates, and an assortment of eating utensils. The stove was tipped over, the pots dented and bent, the plates shattered.

A 3-foot-square cloth flap covers an opening in the ceiling, used for extra ventilation when Fayiz cooks. He usually keeps a long wooden pole here to open the flap, but the zin moved it to area 1a.

4. Fayiz's Room

This room is Fayiz's private quarters. The zin hides in the bed (see "The Zin's Plan" section below).

4a. Coffee Preparation. This area, called the *qahwa*, includes a small iron stove (which holds hot coals or *jalla*), a ceramic kettle (for boiling water), a few cups and spoons, a coffee grinder, and a sack of coffee beans.

4b. Cabinet. A 5-foot-square wooden cabinet stands 6 feet tall in Fayiz's room. The closed door is unlocked.

On a shelf in the cabinet is the 6-inch *Iyda*. Her hands and feet are bound with string. A scrap of cloth around her mouth keeps her quiet.

Also on the floor of the cabinet is a 12-foot giant cobra. The zin has turned the cobra invisible. The coiled cobra rests comfortably in the darkness.

Giant cobra: Int animal; AL N; AC 5; MV 15; HD 4+2; hp 27; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3; SA poison (if save vs. poison succeeds, victim suffers extra 10 points of damage; if save vs. poison fails, victim dies; -2 modifier to save, onset time 2d4 rounds); hypnotic stare (victim must save vs. paralyzation or remain stationary for 1d6 turns); SZ M (12' long); ML 10; XP 420.

4c. Clothing and Basket. Clean abas, shirts, and trousers (Fayiz's clothing from area 4b) have been piled haphazardly in the corner. Next to the pile is an empty basket, identical to the baskets in area 1b.

4d. Bed. The bed in this area is identical to those in area 2e. An elderly, toothless woman in the bed, sheets pulled to her chin, repeatedly gasps, "Help! Please help!" (The woman is the polymorphed zin. Under the sheets, she holds a dune viper in each hand. See area 2e for dune viper statistics.)

4e. Hole. This hole is similar to the hole in area 2g.

The Zin's Plan

When the first PC enters area 4, the zin (as the old woman) begins to shriek, "Help! Save the little girl! In the cabinet!" If the PC approaches the zin, she insists that he help the girl first.

Should the PCs open the cabinet, they will see the bottled girl. If they reach for the girl, or make any other type of disturbance, the invisible cobra spreads its hood





and rises. The cobra strikes at the nearest PC, becoming visible as soon as it makes its attack. The enraged cobra fights to the death, striking at any character within range. If the opportunity presents itself, the cobra uses its hypnotic stare to immobilize a PC, then directs its attacks against the character.

As soon as the cobra strikes, rendering it visible, she begins to laugh hysterically, unable to contain herself at the successful execution of her elaborate joke. She throws off her sheets and tosses her vipers at the nearest PCs. The vipers take one to two rounds to get their bearings, then strike at any characters in the immediate vicinity. After making a strike or two, they slither toward the nearest wall and attempt to escape.

After hurling the vipers, the zin resumes her normal shape. If a PC comes near her; the zin attempts to bite; otherwise, she watches the party deal with the serpents, then heads for the hole (area 4e).

If the party decides to check the old woman before they open the cabinet (area 4b), the zin throws off her sheets, flings the vipers at the PCs, then attempts to escape through the hole (area 4e). They may still have to deal with the cobra if they investigate the cabinet.

Capturing The Zin

Should the PCs capture the zin or prevent her from escaping, she threatens to destroy them with her powerful spells. "I can turn you all into serpents! I can turn your offspring into serpents, too!" (She's bluffing.) If this doesn't work, she becomes indignant, telling how Fayiz stole her babies, and she was only seeking revenge on him; she means the party no harm. Failure in this results in the zin begging for mercy and apologizing for her jokes; she even says she'll get rid of the cobra. Should the PCs agree not to harm her, the zin emits a series of sharp hisses, which draws the cobra's attention. The cobra calms down, then slithers under the nearest wall. The zin apologizes again, then slips into the hole.

If the PCs detain the zin, they can do what they like with her; she will attempt to escape at the earliest opportunity. Should the PCs tell Khafaz about her, he

demands custody, promising a fair trial for the creature within the next few days.

Aftermath

The outcome of this part of the tale depends on whether or not the PCs rescued Iyda. Details follow.

If The party rescues Iyda

Upon seeing her daughter safe, Dhiba thanks the PCs profusely, then gives them her amber necklace as promised. Fayiz examines Iyda and finds that, although she still suffers from the disease, she is no worse for the wear. She will return to her normal size soon.

As thanks for saving his tent, Fayiz allows the PCs to keep any of the items from the medicine cupboard (area 2b). If they ask about the list of terms (PH13), he explains that he bought the list and the red crystal bowl from a traveling merchant. He translates the terms: *mugas* = scissors, *na'al* = horseshoe, *misht* = a woman's wooden comb, *ibra* = a small needle, *kharza ma al nigat* = a round yellow pebble. Fayiz gives the list and the bowl to the party as a gift; should they not have the bowl, he fetches it for them. If they want the list, he gets that, too. (Note: The bowl will come in handy later on in Episode 6, but the list has no real bearing on this adventure.)

Khafaz congratulates the party on their success. He seems genuinely happy (and he is, since he plans to take credit for the entire operation). "On behalf of my employer," he states, "I invite you to spend the evening at the Golden Cutlass, one of Tajar's finest inns. Tomorrow afternoon, my men will take you to Fahad, so that he may express his appreciation in person and speak to you of other matters." (Khafaz has a standing order from his employer to find a party of courageous outsiders for a secret mission; if pressed, he will tell this to the PCs, but won't provide any details.) If they hesitate, Khafaz says that Fahad will be extremely disappointed if they turn him down; refusal could be considered an insult. (If necessary, remind them of the importance of honor in Zakharan culture.) If the player characters agree, Khafaz





has a contingent of workers escort them to the Golden Cutlass. The spectators, impressed with the PCs' performance, cheer and applaud as they pass.

If The PCs failed To rescue Iyda

Upon learning that her daughter was not rescued, Dhiba collapses in tears. Fayiz rushes to the party to learn what they discovered, then sobs when he hears the news. Grateful for their efforts, Fayiz allows them to keep anything they found in the medicine cupboard and translates the list (PH13). If the PCs didn't find the list or the bowl, however, Fayiz won't say anything about them. Khafaz says he admires their courage, then orders his men to bum the tent. He extends the same invitation to spend the night in the Golden Cutlass (see above) and says he'll fetch the PCs tomorrow afternoon for an audience with Fahad. (He believes that Fahad will still be interested in the PCs, despite their failure.)

The tent ignites in a ball of flame. No sign of a spirit manifests itself. The zin escapes through its hole. If Iyda's fate is up to the DM, consider the following possibility: She tips over her bottle, avoids the serpents, and follows the zin down her hole. A day later, a fisherman discovers the tiny Iyda near a riverbank and returns her to Tajar, where she finds her mother.

On The Town

The party spends the night at the Golden Cutlass as Fahad's guests. They sleep on silken sheets, their heads resting on fat pillows stuffed with duck down.

The party may spend the following morning any way they wish. They may round up the items on Fayiz's list (PH13); all except the yellow pebble can be purchased for a few copper pieces from street peddlers. Locating a pebble requires less than an hour's search. If the party asks around about Fahad, they hear nothing but compliments; Fahad is revered as an honest, though reclusive, philanthropist. Few are as admiring of Khafaz. Many believe him to be untrustworthy and devious. No one, however, can prove that Khafaz has committed a crime.

Audience with Fahad

That afternoon, a dozen soldiers arrive at the Golden Cutlass to escort the party to their meeting with Fahad. The soldiers are cordial but have little to say, answering most of the party's questions with a shrug or "That you must ask Fahad."

In a clearing north of the city, centered in a shallow valley surrounded by leafy palm trees, sits an immense white tent. Two soldiers armed with scimitars stand at attention on either side of the entrance. One of the soldiers accompanying the PCs gestures for them to follow him, then opens the tent flap for them to enter.

Inside, a maiden dressed in a flowing violet caftan dabs the sweat from the PCs' brows and offers them goblets of fresh water. Leading them across a rich carpet to the opposite side of the room, she opens a flap in the wall.

In a dark room filled with vases overflowing with wildflowers, an old man sits on a silk pillow. Thin arms protrude from the folds of his emerald green aba. His cheeks are hollow, his eyes glassy. He appears troubled, not noticing the PCs until the maiden clears her throat. "Ah, my guests," he says. "Please sit." Two servants bring silver trays of bread slices and an assortment of jellies.

After the PCs make themselves comfortable, the old man introduces himself.

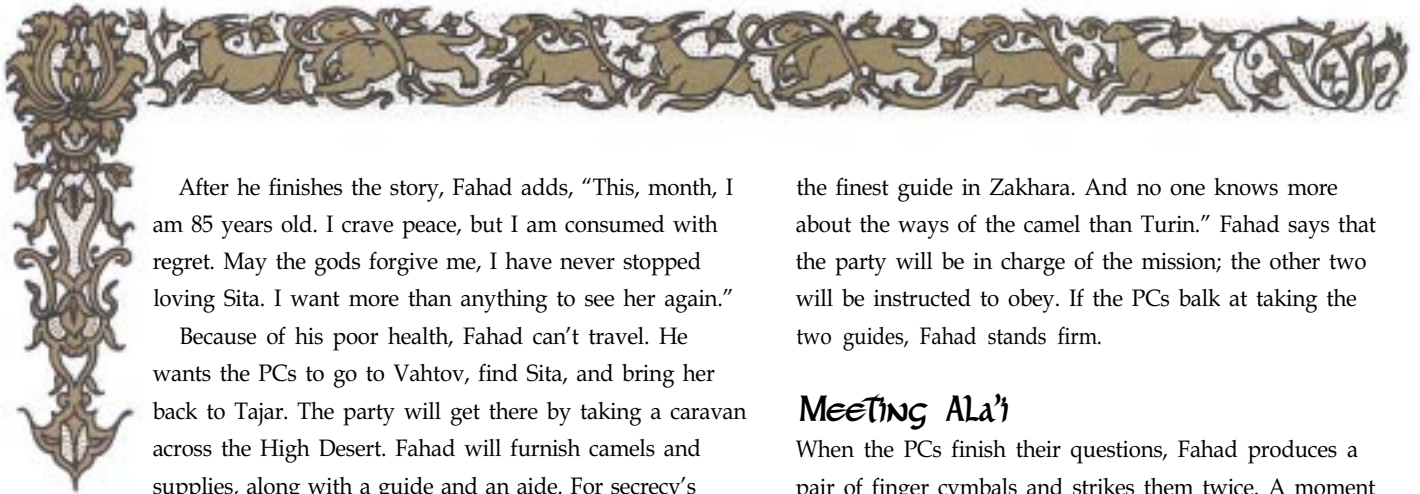
Fahad al-Zakir (hmF/a/15): AL LG; AC 10; MV 6"; hp 30*; THAC0 6; #AT 2; Dmg by weapon: dagger (1d3); Str 9, Dex 7, Con 7, Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 16.

(* reduced due to age and illness)

Fahad asks the party their names, homelands, and occupations. He speaks in a soft voice, tinged with sorrow. "Khafaz has told me of your courage yesterday at Fayiz's tent," he says. "It is a mark of exceptional honor to risk one's life for a stranger."

Explaining that he has been looking for worthy men and women to undertake a dangerous mission, he then tells them the story of his lost love. (Paraphrase Husar's parable, which begins this episode.)





After he finishes the story, Fahad adds, "This, month, I am 85 years old. I crave peace, but I am consumed with regret. May the gods forgive me, I have never stopped loving Sita. I want more than anything to see her again."

Because of his poor health, Fahad can't travel. He wants the PCs to go to Vahtov, find Sita, and bring her back to Tajar. The party will get there by taking a caravan across the High Desert. Fahad will furnish camels and supplies, along with a guide and an aide. For secrecy's sake, the party will pretend to be a trade caravan, delivering camels to a military camp. If the PCs succeed, Fahad promises them a handsome reward. (They may name their own reward, subject to the DM's approval.) If they hesitate to accept the mission, Fahad appeals to their sense of honor. "I am a serious man who does not make requests frivolously. Do not insult me with a refusal." (Again, you may need to remind the PCs of the importance of honor in Zakhara.)

Questions And Answers

Fahad encourages questions from the PCs. Some possibilities follow, along with suggested responses.

Why have you chosen us for this mission? "On the advice of Ala'i the Hungry."

How do you know Sita is still alive? That she still lives in Vahtov? That she will want to come back with us? "Ala'i the Hungry has told me so."

Who is Ala'i the Hungry? "In time, it shall be revealed."

How will we recognize Sita? "She would be 80 years old by now. She has a birthmark resembling a tiny crescent moon on her nose."

Why is secrecy necessary? "Many would consider my involvement to be an insult to the memory of my parents. At my age, the opinions of others do not concern me. But my children would suffer. I do not wish to burden them in this way." If Sita becomes back to him, Fahad plans to keep their reunion to himself.

Who will be our guide? "Khafaz ibn Dahz and his assistant Turin, whom you met at Fayiz's tent, Khafaz is

the finest guide in Zakhara. And no one knows more about the ways of the camel than Turin." Fahad says that the party will be in charge of the mission; the other two will be instructed to obey. If the PCs balk at taking the two guides, Fahad stands firm.

Meeting Ala'i

When the PCs finish their questions, Fahad produces a pair of finger cymbals and strikes them twice. A moment later, a servant appears. Fahad whispers to him. The servant bows and leaves. "You will now meet Ala'i the Hungry," Fahad says to the party. "He will be accompanying you also."

The servant returns with a silken carpet, which he unrolls on the floor. "My friends," says Fahad, gesturing toward the carpet, "this is Ala'i." (Lay out the poster-size reproduction of Ala'i for the players to examine.)

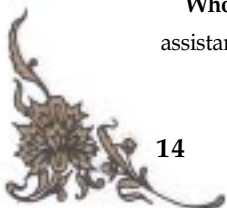
He says that Ala'i can predict the future and offer sage advice to those wise enough to decipher his messages.

Fahad tells them how the carpet came to be. (Paraphrase Husar's parable at the beginning of Chapter 1 of the *Campaign Guide*.) He then explains how Ala'i answers questions and describes Ala'i's special properties. (Summarize the information in the "Questioning Ala'i" and "Other Properties" sections of Chapter 1 in the *Campaign Guide*.)

The old man again sounds his finger cymbals. A servant brings a silver box the size of a large book. Fahad opens the box and removes three pieces of yellowed parchment. He gives two pieces to the party, keeping one for himself. (Give PH1 and PH2 to the players.)

"These pages are food for Ala'i," he says. "Do you wonder why I send you for Sita with such urgency? Ala'i will answer."

Fahad places the page on Ala'i's face. "Great Ala'i, tell what Fate has in store for me within the next six months." Ala'i accepts the page, and the star-bordered pastoral scene in the lower right-hand corner fades away. The following images appear inside the border, one fading into the next:





- An old man wearing an emerald green aba sits beneath a tree.
- The area within the starred border turns black.
- A black horse with white legs rears inside the black area, then vanishes.
- The original image pastoral scene reappears.
“The black horse with the white legs is *shukali*, a symbol of death” says Fahad. “I will be dead in six months. Ala’i is never wrong.”

Gifts

Fahad removes a blank parchment and a piece of charcoal from the silver box and draws a rough map. “The High Desert,” he says. He points out several areas. (Make a sketch map for the players, based on the map of Tajar and the Environs—Card 1, front—and the map of the High Desert—Card 2, front. Include Tajar, the Pit of the Ghuls, and the places listed below. Details aren’t necessary, since Khafaz and Turin, the party’s guides, have the routes and landmarks memorized.)

- Raziz. “Mamoon al-Phahsh lives in this village. He owes me many favors. Tell him you work for me, and he will give you extra pages to feed Ala’i.”
- The Camp of House Fajirik. “Khafaz sells supplies on my behalf to the commander of this camp. To enhance your credibility as traders, you will be delivering six war camels to Captain Ramad bin Yusif al-Kahn. He can be trusted. He has many contacts throughout the High Desert. He may be able to provide you with valuable information.”
- Quabah and Hulm. “Both of these tiny villages may be able to supply water, food, and, possibly, information.”
- Vahtov. “This is where you should find Sita. Alas, I have no contacts there.”

The PCs may visit these places in any order they choose: If time runs short, or the desert proves too daunting, they may skip any location other than Vahtov.

Fahad opens the silver box again. “Ala’i has advised that you take along as many of Sita’s personal items as

possible. I have two rather unremarkable mementos from her youth.” Fahad offers the items to the party:

- A set of three iron bells on a cord. The largest is the size of a plum, the smallest the size of a marble. When shaken, the bells sound a ‘chord. “Secured to the tail of a camel, the bells can help locate the animal in a sandstorm.” (The string of bells is actually a musical toy. Its significance is explained in Episode Six.)
- A white linen cloth, about a foot square, with an eagle embroidered in one corner. (The cloth is an ordinary handkerchief. It has no special properties and no special purpose in the adventure. If the PCs believe the cloth to be significant, neither encourage nor discourage their speculations.)

Departure

After spending the night in Fahad’s tent, the party arises at dawn to breakfast. Khafaz and Turin await outside. Khafaz has brought two camels for each PC, four camels for himself and Turin, and six war camels to deliver to the House Fajirik camp (see Chapter 3 in the *Campaign Guide* for camel statistics). Khafaz has camping gear for everyone and an ample supply of food and water. If the party wants any special weapons or equipment, Fahad has a servant fetch the items. (Veto any unreasonable requests.) No magical items are available.

Khafaz leads the caravan, with Turin behind him. The PCs may arrange their camels any way they like, though their guide prefers a single file.

What Next?

Continue with Episode Two. (DM’s Note: For maximum enjoyment of this adventure, do your best to keep Khafaz and Turin alive through Episode Six. Fate may intervene for the pair to arrange fortuitous escapes from life-threatening situations.)





Episode Two Perils of The High Desert

A final tug of the needle and her work was complete. Jamilia held up the repaired waterskin for her uncle's approval. "A fine job," said Husar, admiring the neat row of knots. "You are a skilled seamstress."

Jamilia folded the pouch and placed it in her mule cart. "I was wondering, uncle," she said. "Have you ever seen a desert turtle?"

"Many times," the elder replied. "Their corpses are scattered like stones all across the High Desert."

"My instructor told me that the turtle carries a pair of large pockets under its shell for the storage of water."

"Your professor is correct."

She pointed to the newly repaired waterskin. "Many desert travelers carry these, true?"

"Correct."

"And have not many desert travelers died from a lack of water?"

"Again, this is correct."

"I was thinking," Jamilia continued, "that perhaps it is a mistake for desert travelers to carry small waterskins. Wouldn't it be wiser for them to emulate the turtle, and carry containers the size of their backs?"

"My child," replied the elder. "You and I are not the only ones who know what the turtle conceals beneath his shell. That is what makes him so popular."

"Popular? Jamilia was puzzled. "I do not understand."

Husar placed his arm around his niece's shoulder. "The dead turtles I spoke of? How many do you think died of old age?"

Preliminaries

To run this episode, you will need the color map of the High Desert (Card 2, front), "Aia'i's Response 1" (Card 3, front), and the black-and-white Djinni's Pit Game diagram (Card 2, back). You should also review Chapters 2 and 3 of the *Campaign Guide*.





This episode simulates the party's journey across the High Desert and features a variety of encounters that you may use any way you like. For instance, after the party leaves Fahad's tent at the end of Episode One, you might run one or two encounters before they arrive at their first destination. Run another on their way to their next, and so on. The encounters may occur in any order. You also may add encounters of your own design based on the material in the *Campaign Guide*.

Water Shortage

The party leaves Tajar with enough water to last for several days. Khafaz knows where to find a few natural springs and some small oases along the way. Still, unforeseen circumstances may reduce or deplete the party's water supply:

- A character or camel contracts a disease requiring large amounts of water.
- While the party sleeps, a mischievous genie turns their water to mud.
- Bandits ambush the party and steal their water.
- While unloading gear to set up camp, Khafaz or Turin sets a waterskin in front of a camel, which accidentally crushes it.

If faced with a water shortage, and the sources discussed in Chapter 3 of the *Campaign Guide* aren't available, the PCs may ask Ala'i for help. (If this doesn't occur to them, Khafaz suggests it.) Ala'i accepts the proffered page, then transforms; show Ala'i's Response 1 (Card 3, front) to the players.

If the PCs happen to be within the area enclosed by the dotted line on the High Desert map, they see four pyramids in the distance that resemble Ala'i's highlighted symbols. (If they don't make the connection, Khafaz points it out.) If they aren't within the dotted line, Khafaz studies the symbols, then says that the symbols appear to represent a rock formation called Vishap's Teeth. He tells the party the direction and approximate distance from their current location. "But there is no water. The Teeth are solid stone."

Despite Khafaz's pronouncement, the party may decide to investigate anyway. When they come within 100 yards of the Teeth, they see a small hill of brown rock, about 40 feet in diameter, in front of the smallest pyramid.

"Strange," says Khafaz. "I was here just a month ago, and there was no hill."

The hill is actually the shell of a giant desert snapping turtle, its head and limbs withdrawn.

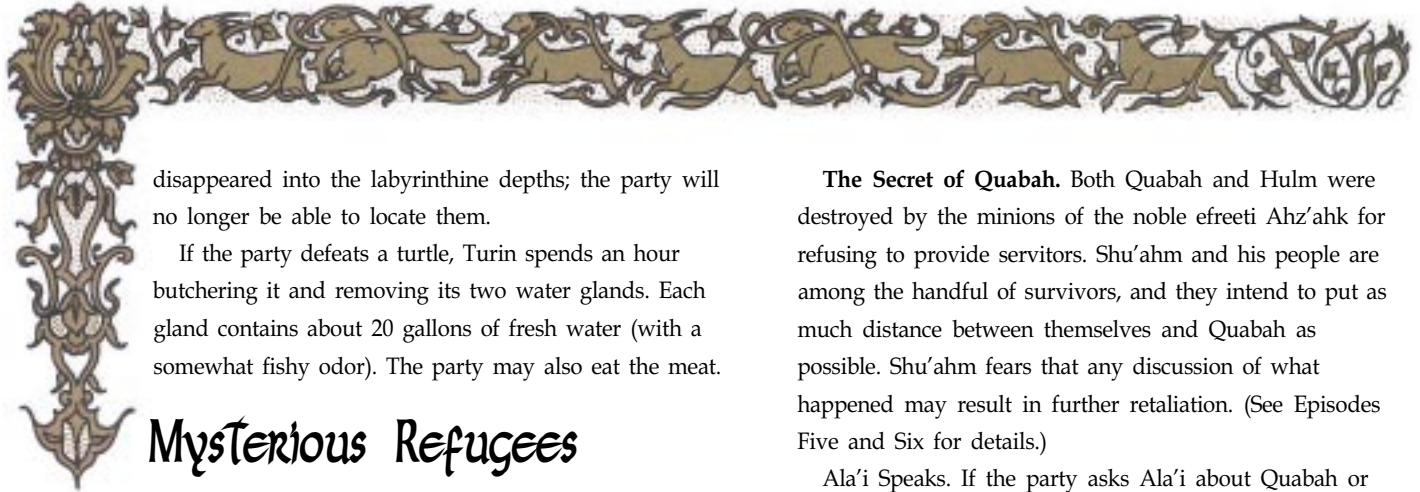
Giant desert snapping turtle: Int non- (0); AL N; AC 0 (shell)/5 (head and limbs when not withdrawn into shell); MV 3, Br 1; HD 10; hp 58; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 6d4; SA can shoot forth neck up to 10 feet away to bite and grab victim; grabbed victim suffers automatic 6d4 hit points of bite damage each round; grabbed victim can be freed with successful bend bars/lift gates roll; SZ G (40' diameter); ML 14; XP 3,000.

If the party approaches cautiously, Turin identifies the creature once they get within 20 feet. "I have never seen a desert turtle so immense," he says. "But if it is like its smaller cousins, it has glands under its shell that contain fresh water."

If left alone, the turtle remains hidden in its shell. If the party attacks the turtle, or disturbs it in any way, it thrusts its head and limbs from its shell and lunges. The turtle continues to attack until it loses half its hit points, at which time it attempts to escape into a 50-foot-diameter tunnel behind a sand dune about 30 yards from its original location. The PCs may follow the turtle into the hole, but 100 feet inside, they will be attacked by a second turtle (use the same statistics). The second turtle is partially buried in loose sand and is difficult to see; the party suffers a -3 surprise roll penalty. The second turtle shoots its neck to its full 10-foot length and tries to grab the nearest character. While the first turtle clammers deeper and deeper into the tunnel, the second turtle continues to attack. It will fight to the death, so long as the party remains in the tunnel.

Neither turtle will leave the tunnel. If the turtles are left alone for 30 minutes or more, assume they have





disappeared into the labyrinthine depths; the party will no longer be able to locate them.

If the party defeats a turtle, Turin spends an hour butchering it and removing its two water glands. Each gland contains about 20 gallons of fresh water (with a somewhat fishy odor). The party may also eat the meat.

Mysterious Refugees

A line of two dozen camels trudges over a sand dune, heading in the party's direction. The human riders are gaunt and haggard, caked with dust and thoroughly exhausted. The leader cries for the party to stop. If the party complies, the leader and a companion approach.

The leader, a 40-year-old man with a pocked face and stringy hair, introduces himself as Shu'ahm. Behind him, "my son, Ushak," a teenager with sad eyes and a wispy beard. (For these NPCs, use the generic citizen statistics at the beginning of Episode One.)

Shu'ahm asks the party for as much water and food as they can spare. "We have come far with very little. My people are weak. The camels may not last." Shu'ahm graciously accepts whatever the PCs offer.

If asked where he is from, Shu'ahm hesitates. Ushak says, "We are from Quabah. A place—"

"Quiet!" shouts Shu'ahm. He turns to the PCs. "A place far away." He will say no more about their homeland.

Should the PCs ask where he is going, Shu'ahm says, "The nearest village. Perhaps you could direct us? We have been wandering for many days."

Asked what happened to him or his people, Shu'ahm says only, "It is best not to talk of such things."

Before they part company, Shu'ahm asks the party their own destination. Before they respond, Ushak says, "Turn back if you are going to Quabah. Or Hulm—"

Shu'ahm cuts him off. "Silence! We will never again speak the names of these places!"

He thanks the party for their courtesy, then leaves, Ushak tagging behind. Neither Shu'ahm nor his people will speak further with the PCs on any subject.

The Secret of Quabah. Both Quabah and Hulm were destroyed by the minions of the noble efreeti Ahz'ahk for refusing to provide servitors. Shu'ahm and his people are among the handful of survivors, and they intend to put as much distance between themselves and Quabah as possible. Shu'ahm fears that any discussion of what happened may result in further retaliation. (See Episodes Five and Six for details.)

Ala'i Speaks. If the party asks Ala'i about Quabah or Hulm, Ala'i accepts the proffered page. The star-bordered illustration of the mosque in the lower left corner fades away. The following images appear inside the border, one fading into the next:

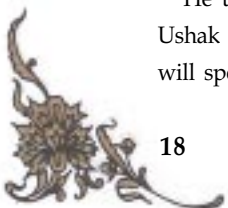
- A village crowded with tents, wooden buildings, and stone temples takes shape.
- Green flames rise to consume the village.
- The area within the starred border turns black.
- A black horse with white legs rears inside the black area, then vanishes.
- The original image of the mosque reappears.

The horse is a *shukali*, which the PCs have seen previously (in the "Meeting Ala'i" section at the end of Episode One). The carpet is telling the party that the village has been destroyed, but will not elaborate.

Pit Game

On a flat stretch of desert, the caravan comes across a shallow pit about 50 feet in diameter and 10 feet deep. In the center of the pit is a smooth gray boulder, about 5 feet across. Further investigation reveals a series of these pits arranged in a circle. (Give the player a sketch of the Initial Position on the Djinni's Pit Game diagram (Card 2, back); indicate which pits have colored boulders and which are empty. Don't label the pits with letters; they are for your reference only.)

If the party ignores the pits, the encounter is over. If a PC enters a pit or touches a boulder (or disturbs a pit or boulder in any other way), a 100-foot whirlwind descends from the sky, spraying sand in every direction and causing the camels to rear in panic. The whirlwind subsides,





revealing a scowling 12-foot humanoid wearing billowing silk pantaloons and dripping in gold necklaces.

Noble djinni: Int high (13); AL CG; AC 1; MV 12, Fl 36 (A); HD 10+3; hp 75; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 3d8; SA create food, water, or wine for 4d6 persons; create goods lasting 24 hours of nonmagical cloth (25 cubic feet), wood (16 cubic feet), or metal (brass, copper, or tin, 9 cubic feet); create illusion with visual, thermal, audible, and tactile components without concentration until dispelled; become *invisible*; assume *gaseous form*; *windwalk*; form a 20' (base) x 60' (top) x 100' (height) whirlwind that kills non-aerial creatures of 3 HD or less, others suffer 3d6 points of damage; cast *gust of wind* at will, *cloudkill* once per day, *control weather* once per week, *airwalk* on up to seven creatures once per day, *windtomb* once per year (all spells cast at 20th level of ability); grant three *wishes* to his master; SD immune to air-based attacks (including poison gases, gaseous breath weapons, *cloudkill*, wind control, and all elemental air spells); SZ L (12' tall); ML 16; XP 10,000.

"Who are you?" booms the djinni. "Why have you disturbed my game?" He parleys briefly with the PCs. When he realizes the party's interference was not intentional, he explains that the pits and boulders are a game that he and a fellow djinni have been playing for nearly a decade. The djinni was pondering his next move when the party came along.

"You must still be punished," he says, "but I offer you a chance to save yourselves. It is possible to win the game on this turn. Take my turn for me. If you succeed, you shall be rewarded. If you fail—"

If the PCs decline to play, the djinni punishes them as described below, then disappears. Otherwise, he explains the rules:

- 1) A turn consists of two moves.
- 2) During a move, a player removes the boulders from two adjacent pits (say, C and D, or K and L) and places them in the two empty pits. A pit can hold only a single boulder.

- 3) The object of the game is to arrange the boulders in the pits so that the gray and black boulders alternate. Further, the two red pits (A and B) must be empty in order to win.

The PCs have 10 rounds to finish the turn (to make two moves). The djinni will move the boulders as instructed. (See the Djinni's Pit Game diagram under "Final Position" for the solution.)

If the PCs succeed, one or more of the following rewards are granted (as decided by you, the DM): replace their soiled clothing with brand new garments, create 5 to 20 (5d4) gallons of water, or point out the location of a treasure (a topaz bust of a goat's head, lost by a traveler, worth 1,500 gp; the bust is buried beneath 5 feet of sand).

If the PCs fail, the djinni inflicts one or more of the following punishments on them: The djinni creates the aromatic illusion that their skin gives off the odor of camel urine (giving them a -3 Charisma penalty until the illusion is dispelled or 48 hours passes), encases their camels' feet in brass blocks (the camels can't move until the blocks disappear in 24 hours), or creates the illusion of a 100-foot crimson scorpion (which spooks the camels and causes them to scatter).

Phantom Rain

A few miles in the distance, the party sees what appears to be sheets of falling rain. Turin says they should hurry toward the rain as fast as they can to replenish their water supply and refresh themselves with a shower. But Khafaz insists that the rain is an illusion. "It is only phantom rain, created when real rain falls and passes through hot air. It sizzles away as if it were falling on a skillet. Not a single drop reaches the ground." The PCs must decide who to believe.

It takes at least an hour to travel to the rainy area. Once there, the PCs discover that their guide was right; only phantom rain is falling. Khafaz berates Turin for his foolishness, blaming him for wasting their time. He begins to lash Turin with a strap (the lashing causes no damage; it is intended to humiliate). The lashing





continues for 10 rounds unless the PCs intervene or demand that Khafaz stop. If stopped, he apologizes.

Terror in The Night

While camped for the night, the party is awakened by the terrified bleat of a camel. The back half of one of their camels has disappeared beneath the surface of the sand. Something is pulling it down!

The camel is being attacked by a desert ankheg. (Except for the potency of its enzymes and the frequency of squirts, this creature is identical to the normal ankheg described in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*TM.)

Desert ankheg; Int non- (0); AL N; AC 2 (overall)/4 (underside); MV 12, Br 6; HD 8; hp 48; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 3d6 (crush) plus 1-2 (acid); SA grabbed victim suffers crushing damage and acid damage (from digestive enzymes in mouth) every round; can squirt a stream of enzymes 30' once every hour, causing 4d4 points of damage (save vs. poison for half damage); SZ H (20' long); ML 9; XP 975.

If the PCs take no actions within five rounds after being awakened, the camel will be lost. Otherwise, anyone who rushes to its aid will see the ankheg's mandibles locked around its leg. Any successful attack directed at the ankheg causes it to release the camel.

Should the ankheg be forced to let the camel go, it scrambles from its hole and attempts to grab the nearest character, spewing enzymes at whoever gets in its way. It attacks until it has 10 hit points or fewer; it then attempts to retreat into its hole. If the PCs allow the retreating ankheg to escape, it won't bother them again.

If the PCs rescue the camel within five rounds, it suffers no serious damage; it moves at half speed for the next two days, then completely recovers. If more than five rounds pass, the camel has only 2 to 5 (1d4+ 1) hit points remaining. The wounded camel won't be able to move at a speed greater than 1 and will lose hit points at the rate of 1 to 4 (1d4) per day until it dies. Potions of

healing or spells such as *cure light wounds* may hasten the camel's recovery.

Hungry Digger

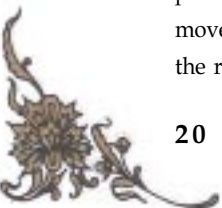
The party happens upon a feeble old man with a scraggly beard digging in the sand with a crude wooden spade. (Use the typical citizen statistics at the beginning of Episode One for the old man.) He waves, chatters amiably in a language they don't understand, then returns to his digging. Khafaz identifies him as a nomad, "primitive, ignorant, and filthy." He understands bits and pieces of the man's language. "His name is Huntab, and he searches for food. He says the *orbi* plant, an underground vine with edible tubers, grows here and would appreciate it if we helped him dig. I suggest we leave this creature to his scratching and be on our way."

If the PCs ignore Khafaz and offer to assist, the old man gratefully accepts their help. Within an hour or two, they've excavated a thick vine bearing two gray bean-shaped tubers about 4 feet long. The ecstatic old man shaves off chunks of the tuber and pops them in his mouth, inviting the party to do the same. The tuber tastes like raw potato, but it is filling and nutritious.

In gratitude, Huntab directs the party to a pool of fresh water only a few hundred yards away. He also tells them that the crushed *orbi* vine can be used to scare away "big bugs that eat camels." Neither Khafaz nor Turin has any idea what he means by "big bugs." (Huntab is referring to desert ankhegs, described in the "Terror in the Night" encounter above. A handful of the pulped vine, which smells like lemon, causes an ankheg to automatically release its prey and retreat.)

What Next?

Depending on the party's choice of destinations, continue with Episode Three (Raziz), Four (the camp of House Fajirik), or Five (Quabah, Hulm, and Vahtov).





Episode Three

On The Spire of Kor

When I finish school," said Jamilia, "I want to see everything there is to see." Husar uprooted a tangle of weeds and tossed them in a bucket. While her parents were at the bazaar, Jamilia was spending the afternoon with her uncle, tending his garden.

"A noble ambition," said the elder. "But how do you propose to achieve it?"

"Simple," she said. "I plan to visit every place in the world."

"That could take a long time," said Husar. "There are the Haunted Lands across the Golden Gulf, the Corsair Domains to the north, the distant Land of the Yak-Men. And there are other worlds to consider as well."

"Other worlds? There are other worlds beside this one?"

Husar rose, wiping the dirt from his hands. "Indeed. Some are vast oceans of blazing fire. Others are sunless plains of black ice. Still others are clusters of steaming gems. Many are inhabited."

"Inhabited?" exclaimed Jamilia. "What kind of people live in such awful places?"

Husar cocked an eyebrow. "Who said they were people?"

Preliminaries

You will need the black-and-white map of the Spire of Kor (Card 3, back) and eight pages from Ayfalah Ayfah's *To Know is Not To Know* (PH3 to 10). You should also review the sections on Raziz and the Spire of Kor in Chapter 2 of the *Campaign Guide*.

Arrival in Raziz

The citizens of Raziz give scant notice to the caravan's arrival. If a PC approaches a citizen, he eyes the PC with suspicion, but warms up if offered a few friendly words or, better yet, some food or a trinket.

There are few secrets in a village so small, and nearly everyone knows about Mamoon al-Phahsh and what they consider to be his crazy ways. If the PCs ask a





citizen about Mamoon, he giggles, as if the PC has told him a joke. When the citizen regains his composure, he directs the party to Mamoon's home. He declines to answer any other questions about the crazy man, occasionally succumbing to a laughing fit, as if Mamoon's very name is the most hilarious thing he has ever heard.

Family Feud

Mamoon lives in a tent on the edge of the village. The burlap tent is riddled with tears, haphazardly repaired with cloth strips of various colors. A red blanket covers the entrance. Next to the blanket, a frying pan hangs from a gnarled tree branch. Khafaz tells the PCs to bang on the pan with a stone "to alert the pigs inside."

A few moments after the party bangs the pan, an old man appears in the door way. At least 70 years old, the man stares at them with dull eyes, wiping bread crumbs from his mouth with the hem of his ragged dishdashah. "Who are you?" he asks in a cracking voice. "What business have you here?" If the PCs mention Mamoon's name, he brightens and asks them to come in.

Waleed al-Ashakaz (hmF/a/4) : AL LG; AC 10; MV 6 (reduced due to old age); hp 25; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon: dagger (1d4).

The interior of the tent is dreary and dirty. Greasy splatters stain the walls. Cups smudged with milk and crusted plates are scattered about floor mats made of woven *thammam* (a type of thick grass). The single concession to luxury is a small incense burner in the corner, which fills the tent with the aroma of *udh* (a sweet-smelling wood).

Against the back wall of the tent sits a man so enormous that he uses four sashes tied together to hold up his trousers. In his mid 50s, he has a friendly smile, a shaggy white beard, and the manners of a pig. He stuffs himself from two stone bowls, one filled with mashed rice, the other with onion shavings.

"My son," says Waleed, "and Mamoon's older brother, Ajib al-Phahsh. Retired from the goat trade."

"Bad knee," says Ajib, reaching for another handful of onions.

Ajib al-Phahsh (hmF/a/4): AL LG; AC 8 (leather); MV 6 (reduced due to body weight); hp 35; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon: cutlass (1d6).

"Where are your manners, Father?" asks Ajib, his cheeks packed with rice. "Ask them about the *kiswah*."

"My apologies," Waleed says to the PCs. He points to the greasy walls. "Your *kiswah*?"

Khafaz nudges the nearest PC and whispers in his ear. "Many visitors have wiped their hands on the wall, a sign of hospitality among these louts. The *kiswah* is a matter of etiquette. When a moneyed stranger visits a poor man, the visitor is expected to give a piece of clothing as a gift." Waleed graciously accepts a scarf, a shirt, or any other piece of clothing the PCs care to offer. If they hesitate, Khafaz snatches the *agal* from Turin's head and tosses it toward Waleed.

After accepting the *kiswah*, Waleed invites the party to join him on the floor. Ajib passes them the rice and onion bowls. The two men engage the party in polite chatter until the PCs bring up Mamoon. Waleed's face fills with despair. "My poor child," he says, shaking his head. "How misguided he is."

"Misguided!" says Ajib. "He is an idiot!"

"Do not speak that way of your younger brother!"

Father and son begin to argue, Ajib making fun of his brother's lack of common sense, Waleed defending Mamoon's kind heart. The PCs may interrupt with questions. Following are some possible queries and responses:

What can you tell us about Mamoon? Waleed explains that Mamoon is a 50-year-old anchorite mystic. With no ties to any organized faith, he acquires his spells through meditation. Mamoon considers himself an explorer and a scholar, and he spends his days seeking new experiences. "He may have the spirit of an adventurer," says Ajib, "but he has the brains of a monkey." Waleed admits his son "is prone to





recklessness." Ajib cites several examples of his brother's misadventures: an ill-advised wager with a genie turned him into a stone camel; when discovered as a stowaway on a trade ship, he was set adrift at sea for six weeks; an attempt to ride a roc left him stranded in the desert with a broken leg. "Each time, it was I who found him and brought him home," says Ajib. "But never again."

Where is Mamoon now and what is he doing? A few days ago, Mamoon left for the Spire of Kor. "He earned a small fortune as a guide," says Ajib, "then squandered it all on some device, purchased from a sorcerer, that will supposedly take him to another plane of existence." Why does he want to go to another plane? "Because he has never been to another plane and wants to see what it is like. Reason enough for an idiot." Ajib knows nothing about the device; the sorcerer is long gone. Khafaz identifies the Spire of Kor as a natural rock formation resembling a stone pillar "as tall as a mountain." The spire is less than a day's journey from Raziz.

How does Mamoon know Fahad al-Zakir? Waleed says that Fahad shared Mamoon's fascination for unusual relics, and they became friends.

Does Mamoon have the pages we need to feed Ala'i? "Probably. He carries junk with him wherever he goes," croaks Ajib.

How can Mamoon be saved? "Mamoon looks up to his older brother and has always listened to him," says Waleed. "If Ajib told Mamoon to abandon this foolishness, he would." Ajib admits that if he tells Mamoon to do something, he usually complies. "But I am through risking my neck for him."

Can anyone else in the village help us get the pages? "I doubt it," sighs Waleed. (The villagers consider Waleed and his family to be laughable buffoons at best, dangerous eccentrics at worst. No one in Raziz will help the family or the party.)

The Fate of Mamoon

When the PCs finish their questions, Waleed and Ajib drift into an argument about Mamoon's chances of

survival. Ajib insists his brother will be safe. "Fate looks out for babies and idiots. He will get along just fine." But Waleed isn't so certain. "Mamoon is tampering with forces he cannot control. As his brother, you are responsible to help him."

Ajib asks the party their opinion. "What do you think? Will Mamoon survive this act of folly, as he has so many times before? Or is my father correct, that Mamoon's recklessness will lead to his death?"

Unless the PCs think of it themselves, Khafaz suggests they ask Ala'i about Mamoon's fate. If they decline, continue with the "Party's Decision" section on page 24.

If the PCs consult Ala'i, the carpet accepts the page. The star-bordered illustration of the mountains in the upper left hand corner fades away. The following images appear inside the starred border, one fading into the next:

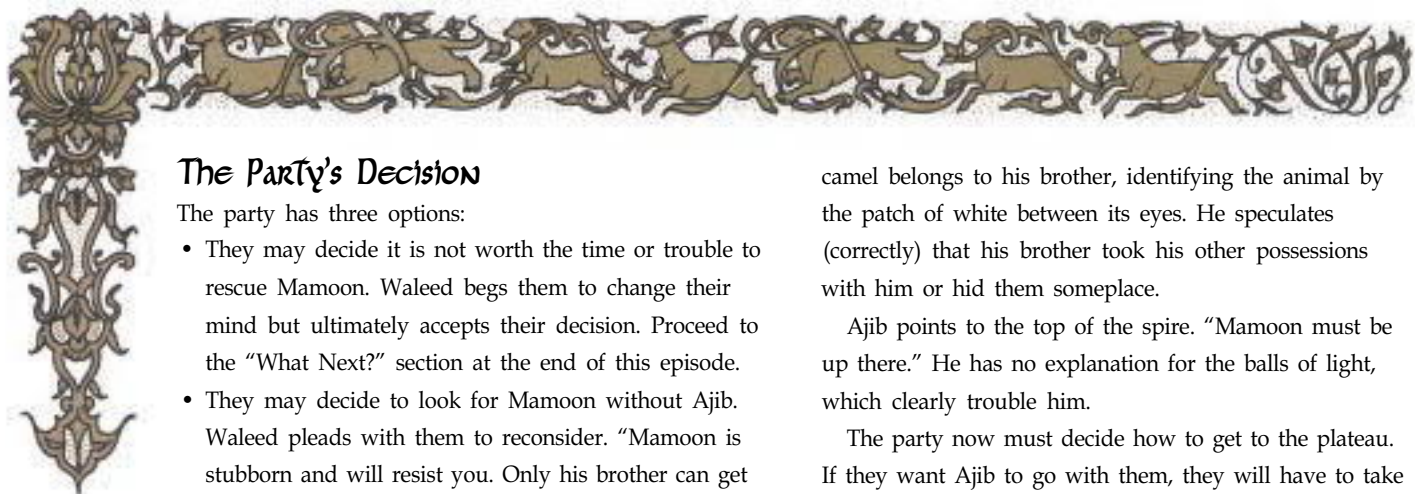
- A gray pillar rising from a plain of sand. ("The Spire!" says Waleed, eyes wide.)
- A close-up image of the top of the pillar, a smooth black plateau. A beardless man wearing a dull yellow aba lies on the plateau. ("Mamoon," says Ajib. "He has worn the same aba for years.")
- A lightning bolt superimposed over the previous image.
- The area within the starred border turns black.
- A black horse with white legs rears inside the black area, then vanishes.
- The original image of the mountains reappears.

Waleed and Ajib appear confused. "A horse?" asks Waleed. "I do not understand." The PCs have seen the *shukali* before (in the "Meeting Ala'i" section of Episode One). If they hesitate to explain the image, Khafaz jumps in. "The horse is a death symbol," he explains heartlessly.

The color drains from Ajib's face. Waleed is near tears. "If the prophecy is correct," he says to Ajib, "your brother is doomed. Will you not reconsider?"

Ajib looks flustered, no longer sure of the correct course of action. "I do not know if it is even possible to save Mamoon. But I do know this: I will not make the effort alone."





The Party's Decision

The party has three options:

- They may decide it is not worth the time or trouble to rescue Mamoon. Waleed begs them to change their mind but ultimately accepts their decision. Proceed to the "What Next?" section at the end of this episode.
- They may decide to look for Mamoon without Ajib. Waleed pleads with them to reconsider. "Mamoon is stubborn and will resist you. Only his brother can get him to cooperate." If they decline to take Ajib, go to the "Journey to the Spire" section.
- They may decide to take Ajib with them. Go to the "Journey to the Spire" section.

Note to the DM. The rest of the episode assumes that the party takes Ajib along. If they leave Ajib in Raziz, ignore all references to him.

Journey To The Spire

Too heavy to comfortably ride a mount, Ajib hoists his massive bulk into the back of a wooden wagon, pulled by two trained camels. Ajib brings plenty of food for the trip, including a basket of figs, a bundle of dried goat strips, and a pot of pistachio nuts.

While Ajib obeys the PCs and defers to their judgment in all matters, he whines and complains throughout the entire trip—his camels move too slowly, the sun shines too brightly, his back hurts, he needs to get out of the wagon and stretch (requiring the assistance of at least one PC), and, above all else, his brother is an idiot.

Arrival

The Spire of Kor, a granite column nearly 400 feet high, rises from a plain of sand about 10 miles from Raziz. A smooth path, 15 feet wide, spirals upward around the spire. The top widens to form a plateau of black quartz. Balls of light dart around the plateau like moths flitting around a candle. (See "The Plateau" section on page 25 for more about these lights.)

A camel wanders aimlessly near the base of the spire. When it sees Ajib, it trots over to meet him. Ajib says the

camel belongs to his brother, identifying the animal by the patch of white between its eyes. He speculates (correctly) that his brother took his other possessions with him or hid them someplace.

Ajib points to the top of the spire. "Mamoon must be up there." He has no explanation for the balls of light, which clearly trouble him.

The party now must decide how to get to the plateau. If they want Ajib to go with them, they will have to take the spiral path. If the party offers to magically move him with *levitate*, *fly*, or similar spells, he flatly refuses to cooperate, swearing the stress will kill him. (It won't, of course, but he believes it will.) He is too heavy for Ala'i to carry, though a PC may ride Ala'i to scout the plateau. The party may ride their camels or walk, leaving their mounts to graze. Ajib will have to ride in his camel cart, as he is in no shape to climb.

Khafaz refuses to go up the spire, regardless of the method of transport. "A thousand apologies," he says, "but I am burdened by a paralyzing fear of heights. I would swoon and fall. And dead, I am no good to you." Even if directly ordered to go, Khafaz politely but firmly declines. He asks permission for Turin to stay with him, "for companionship and protection." Turin will stay or go, as decided by the party.

If the PCs use magical means to take them to the plateau (and leave Ajib behind), go to "The Plateau" section. If they use the path, continue with the "Spiral Path" section.

The Spiral Path

Stage the following encounters when the party reaches the approximate locations indicated on the Spire of Kor map (Card 3, back). A character tumbling from the path to the ground below suffers 1d6 points of damage per 10 feet fallen (to a maximum of 20d6 points).

1. Gap. A 10-foot-long, 15-foot-wide, 10-foot-deep gap in the path completely blocks the party's progress. Rocky projections line the walls of the gap and can be used as handholds; a PC shouldn't have any trouble lowering himself into the gap and climbing up the other side.





Camels, however, can't climb in and out of the gap, nor can they jump over it. Ajib isn't athletic enough to climb. Anyone falling into the gap suffers 1d6 points of damage.

There are at least two possible ways to cross the gap:

- The party can fill the gap with rocks and sand, a process taking 2 to 5 (1d4+1) hours (depending on how many characters pitch in).
- The party can remove the sides from Ajib's wagon and lay them across the gap to form a makeshift bridge.

2. Scout. A tiny humanoid made of white light (a lightning gen; see "The Plateau" section below) soars from above, hovers briefly in front of each character's face, then zips back toward the plateau. The creature comes and goes so quickly that the PCs barely have time to get a look at it, let alone act.

After the creature flies away, Ajib orders his camels to stop. "That's it," he says, clambering out of the wagon. "I'm leaving." He begins to waddle down the path, away from the party. If the party doesn't stop him, he'll get to the gap (area 1), where he has no choice but to wait. If the party lets him go, they'll find him on their way down.

If the party stops Ajib, he whines for them to leave him alone. He relents, however, at even the mildest coercion from the PCs, climbing back into his wagon to resume the journey, muttering about how he plans to wring his brother's neck if they find him alive.

The Plateau

The 120-foot-diameter plateau consists of smooth black quartz. Six clear glass rods, each 8 feet tall and as thick as a man's wrist, have been embedded in cracks about 25 feet from the perimeter, forming a rough circle. Streams of blue light extend from the poles to a common apex 100 yards in the air, directly over the center of the plateau. A small black rip swirls and writhes near the apex like a gaping hole against the blue sky.

A scrawny 50-year-old beardless man wearing a dull yellow aba lies in the center of the plateau, eyes closed, his hands folded across his chest. This is Mamoon. It was he who placed the rods, which are in the process of opening a portal to another plane of existence. Mamoon

is waiting for what he presumes will be a benevolent entity to emerge from the portal and take him away on an exciting adventure.

Mamoon al-Phahsh (hmP/my/4): AL LG; AC 8 (leather); MV12; hp 40; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon: dagger (1d4).

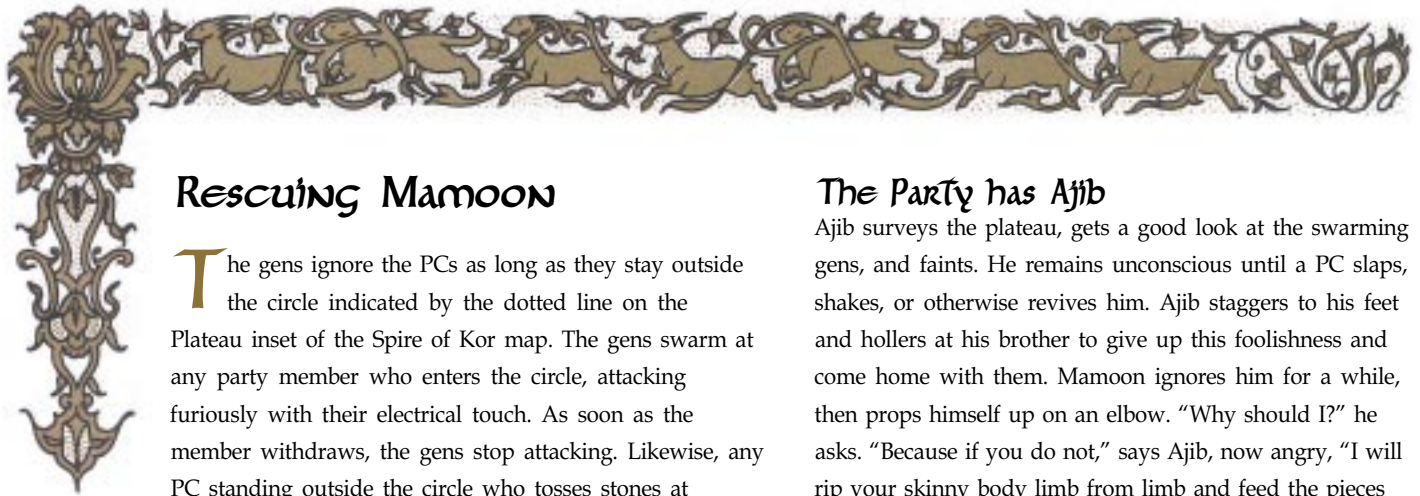
Spells: *cure light wounds, detect evil, locate plant and animal, flame blade, hold person*. Wears an *amulet versus undead* (turns undead as a 5th-level cleric).

Twenty tiny humanoids made of white light, their legs resembling jagged bolts of electricity, continually flit over the area bound by the glass rods, moving in random directions. They scrupulously avoid coming anywhere near the glass rods. Occasionally, a gen slips through the rip in the sky, only to reappear a few moments later to resume fluttering over the plateau. (The gens are keeping an eye on things until the portal widens sufficiently to allow their master to emerge.)

Lightning gen (20): Int Low (5); AL N; AC 5; MV Fl 12 (B); HD 13; hp 99 each; THAC0 7; #AT 1 (touch); Dmg 1d6 (electrical damage); SD makes saving throws as a 13 HD monster (saving throws against electricity based attacks save are made with a +2 bonus); all electricity-based attacks made against it suffer a -2 penalty (damage assessed at -2 per die); SZ S (1' long); ML 18; XP 4,000.

About Lightning Gens. Lightning gens hail from a pocket quasi-elemental plane of lightning where they serve powerful entities as heralds and familiars. Cautious and aloof, they generally avoid combat, but will attack with their electrical touch when necessary to defend themselves or their master. Their relatively high Hit Dice, THAC0, and saving throw numbers reflect the strength of the entities they serve. Though lightning gens will not respond to sha'irs from the Prime Material Plane, they are otherwise similar to the gens described in the *Arabian Adventures* rulebook.





Rescuing Mamoon

The gens ignore the PCs as long as they stay outside the circle indicated by the dotted line on the Plateau inset of the Spire of Kor map. The gens swarm at any party member who enters the circle, attacking furiously with their electrical touch. As soon as the member withdraws, the gens stop attacking. Likewise, any PC standing outside the circle who tosses stones at Mamoon or disturbs him in any way becomes the target of gen attacks until he stops.

The PCs may examine, dislodge, or even shatter the glass rods without triggering a gen attack; the gens never go near the rods. If the PCs destroy or remove the rods, the light beams remain in place; the magic to open the portal already has been activated, and nothing short of a wish can reverse it.

What happens on the plateau depends upon whether or not Ajib is with the party.

The Party is Alone

Mamoon, fully conscious, ignores all pleas, shouts, and threats from the PCs, until he finally props himself up on one arm and yells at them to go away. "This is a private adventure! You are not invited!" If the PCs persist, Mamoon uses *hold person* to restrain them, and *flame blade* to intimidate them. But under no circumstances will he intentionally harm the party.

A character holding a glass rod, or even a small fragment of a rod, can keep the gens at bay and enter the circle. The gens will not come within 10 feet of the glass. Any character with a Strength of 12 or more can lift Mamoon and carry him off. Two or more characters with a combined Strength of 12 also can accomplish this. Mamoon will kick and scream, but he can't put up much of a fight. Once the PCs have removed him from the plateau, he accepts his fate and won't attempt to go back.

As the party descends the spire, the gens follow at a distance. They won't attack.

The Party has Ajib

Ajib surveys the plateau, gets a good look at the swarming gens, and faints. He remains unconscious until a PC slaps, shakes, or otherwise revives him. Ajib staggers to his feet and hollers at his brother to give up this foolishness and come home with them. Mamoon ignores him for a while, then props himself up on an elbow. "Why should I?" he asks. "Because if you do not," says Ajib, now angry, "I will rip your skinny body limb from limb and feed the pieces to the hogs!" After another round or two of insults, Mamoon reluctantly gets up, dusts himself off, and joins Ajib. Mamoon sulks for the duration of the episode, though he cooperates fully with the PCs.

The gens follow the party as they descend the spire, but won't attack.

Events

Whether the PCs are alone or have Ajib with them, the following events occur as soon as Mamoon leaves the circle (Round 1). For maximum impact, feel free to have any event occur sooner or later.

Round 1: Thunder rumbles, almost imperceptibly at first, then louder, as if the gods were rattling boxes of boulders. Streaks of lightning slice the sky.

Round 3: A deafening peal of thunder is heard overhead. The rip in the sky stretches and widens.

Round 5: A gigantic humanoid arm, made of glowing light, snakes through the rip in the sky. The hand looks big enough to scoop up a herd of camels. Its fingers resemble lightning bolts.

Round 8: The hand sweeps over the surface of the plateau, making wide circles. It fondles the sides of the spire, running its fingers over the stone surfaces. The hand avoids contact with any of the characters. The PCs may attack the hand if they wish. The hand has an AC of -1, but regenerates all lost hit points a round after it loses them. *Dispel magic* and similar spells have no noticeable effect; nothing short of a wish will make the hand withdraw. If a character intentionally touches the hand, he suffers 8 to 64 (8d8) points of electrical damage (half damage if he makes a successful saving throw vs. spell).





Descending The Spire

The hand continues to grope the spire as the party descends. Ajib is hysterical. Mamoon is speechless. The hand never touches a character or a camel, but it comes close. As the hand sweeps by, the PCs feel the hair rise on the backs of their necks and smell the coppery, electrical odor of a lightning strike.

When the party passes below line A (refer to map), the hand grasps the upper section of the spire (area B) and grips it tightly.

Upon entering area C, the hand begins to rock the spire back and forth. The rocking causes a portion of the spire to crumble, triggering a shower of stones. A PC who flattens himself against the side of the spire avoids damage; likewise, a character who holds a shield over his head deflects the stones and loses no hit points.

Otherwise, exposed characters are “attacked” for three rounds by the stone shower. The shower attacks as a 3 HD monster (THAC0 17), inflicting 1 to 6 points of damage per successful attack. For convenience, assume that if a PC saves himself, his camel also avoids damage. But if he is attacked by the stones, so is his camel. You also may assume that Fate protects Ajib and Mamoon from harm.

When the party reaches area D, the hand snaps the spire, lifting the entire area B section (from line A on up) into the air. The hand disappears through the rip in the sky, taking the spire with it. The lightning gens follow close behind. As soon as the last gen enters the rip, the rip vanishes. (If the PCs failed to convince Mamoon to leave the plateau, he is pulled into the rip along with the spire, never to be seen again. Any characters on the plateau with Mamoon also will be lost.)

Aftermath

After the party reaches a safe distance from what’s left of the spire, Ajib chastises Mamoon for his recklessness, who sheepishly apologizes, adding that he will be more careful next time. “Next time?” rages Ajib. “Once I get you home, I will chain you to a tree!”

If asked about the pages for Ala’i, Mamoon brightens. “Ah, yes. Ala’i the Hungry. A most amazing relic. Belongs to my friend Fahad. How is the old rascal? The last time—”

Ajib swats him and grumbles, “Get the pages!”

Mamoon leads the party to a mound of sand about 50 yards north of the spire. He digs away a few inches of sand, then hauls a wooden chest from the hole. “My worldly possessions,” he says. The chest contains a dagger caked with dirt, a few gold coins, a drawing of Mamoon in a bronze frame, and several pages of yellowed parchment. “From the philosopher Ayfalah Ayfah’s *To Know is Not To Know*,” he says, identifying the parchment. “These words have brought me great comfort over the years, but I would be honored if you accepted them. I assure you that Ala’i will find these pages delicious.” (Give PH3 to 10 to the players.)

“What else do you have?” snaps Ajib. Mamoon hesitates, then removes a silver amulet from his neck. “Hand it over,” says Ajib. “You won’t be needing it anymore.” He gives it to the party. (This is Mamoon’s *amulet versus undead*.)

If the players ask about Sita or Vahtov, Mamoon rubs his chin and says, “Can’t say I know anything that can help you, but I’ve heard tales of hard times in Vahtov. Hard times all around there, to tell you the truth.” He doesn’t know any details.

Anxious to return home, Ajib bids the PCs farewell and hollers at Mamoon to get in the wagon. He then whistles for his brother’s camel, who obediently joins them. Ajib adds Mamoon’s camel to the team, then they are on their way back to Raziz.

What Next?

The party continues their trek across the High Desert. You may return to Episode Two and run one or more encounters. Otherwise, proceed to Episode Four (the camp of House Fajirik) or Episode Five (Quabah, Hulm, and Vahtov).





Episode Four Battle of The Empty Glass

Husar happened upon his favorite niece lying on the ground, her head propped in her hands. She was studying the movements of two swarms of ants, one red, one black, and did not notice her uncle's arrival until his shadow fell across her face.

"Good day, Uncle," said Jamilia, glancing up, then returning her gaze to the insects. "The ants are at war. They have been fighting for over an hour. It is most fascinating. Come down and see."

With effort, the aged Husar knelt beside his niece. "Have you determined the cause of this great battle?"

She pointed to a scrap of bread crust the size of her thumb. "Both the red ants and the black ants desire the bread. Look how many have fallen." She pointed to dozens of scattered corpses. "They are very determined."

"I am not surprised," said the elder. "After all, moldy bread is at stake."

The elder's sarcasm did not escape Jamilia, but she ignored the remark. "Well, I think war is interesting. It takes great courage to fight for a cause. The ants are risking their lives for something important to them. The victors will win the crust. The losers will get only crumbs."

"Crumbs or crust," said Husar. "To the dead ants, it will make no difference."

Preliminaries

You'll need the black-and-white map of the Empty Glass Battlefield (Card 4, back), Ala'i's Response 2 (Card 4, front), and Jaman's prayer folders (PH14 to PH16, folded to conceal the writing inside). You should also review the section "House Fajirik Military Camp" in the *Campaign Guide*.

Use the following statistics for the soldiers encountered in this episode. If you like, vary the hit points and weaponry.





Typical soldier (hmF/dr/1): AL LG; AC 8 (leather); MV 12; hp 9; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon: short sword (1d6).

Reception

As the PCs head toward Ramad's military camp to deliver the camels Fahad had given them to further their ruse as traders, a contingent of camel riders appears on a ridge of hills about a mile or so from camp. The riders wear black abas with violet trim and carry gleaming swords. The riders easily outnumber the PCs three to one, enough to discourage the PCs from taking any hostile actions.

Three of the riders break from the group, riding toward the party at a leisurely pace. Khafaz recognizes the uniforms. "Ramad's men," he says, and tells the party to wait for their approach.

The leader of the riders, a young man with a humorless expression, asks the PCs their names and business. He recognizes Khafaz and smiles. "The traders. You are expected." The leader identifies himself as Zabahk.

"How goes the war?" asks Khafaz.

Zabahk shrugs and says nothing. He beckons for the party to follow. Though he will engage the party in small talk, he declines to comment about the war. Along the way, they pass a field of weeds and scrub bushes (area 1), three soldiers tending a small herd of goats, and a rock formation in the shape of an arch.

The Camp of House Fajirik

Ramad's military camp consists of neat rows of black camel-hair tents on a sandy plain. Smoke from cooking fires drifts into the sky, and a soft breeze carries the delectable odors of roast mutton and vegetables.

Some of the soldiers lie flat on their backs outside their tents, sound asleep. Others polish their saddles or groom their camels. Two soldiers, their faces covered with scarves, stand a few feet apart and shriek at each other. ("They are practicing a battle cry called the *nakhwa*," says

Khafaz. "Some soldiers fight with concealed faces. They use the *nakhwa* as identification, so friends are not accidentally attacked."). No one shows interest in the PCS.

Zabahk leads the party to a clearing in the center of the camp. Two men approach. One is young and has a withered left leg; he uses a gnarled wooden staff as a walking stick. The other man is older but muscular and fit, and he carries a bronze shield. Standing nearby is an old, thin man with long, dangling earrings.

The muscular man turns to the party. "I am Captain Ramad bin Yusuf al-Kahn." He motions to the thin man with long earrings. "Hirakur, a skilled sorcerer and my second-in-command." Then Ramad nods toward the young man. "Jaman, spiritual counselor of the House Fajirik." Jaman bows.

Ramad examines the camels. "Fine specimens," he says. He turns to Khafaz. "Two months ago, you sold me nine horses. Two were lame. It was fortunate my men caught up with you to correct this oversight."

"Er, yes it was," says Khafaz, squirming.

Ramad slaps Khafaz on the shoulder, laughing. "The matter is forgotten. Now, how much for the camels?"

"Per animal, 200 gold pieces," says Khafaz.

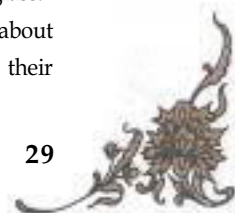
"Wrong," says Ramad. "100 each." He tells Zabahk to fetch the money. "I have yet to decide, Khafaz, if you are a shrewd merchant or a common thief." He laughs again.

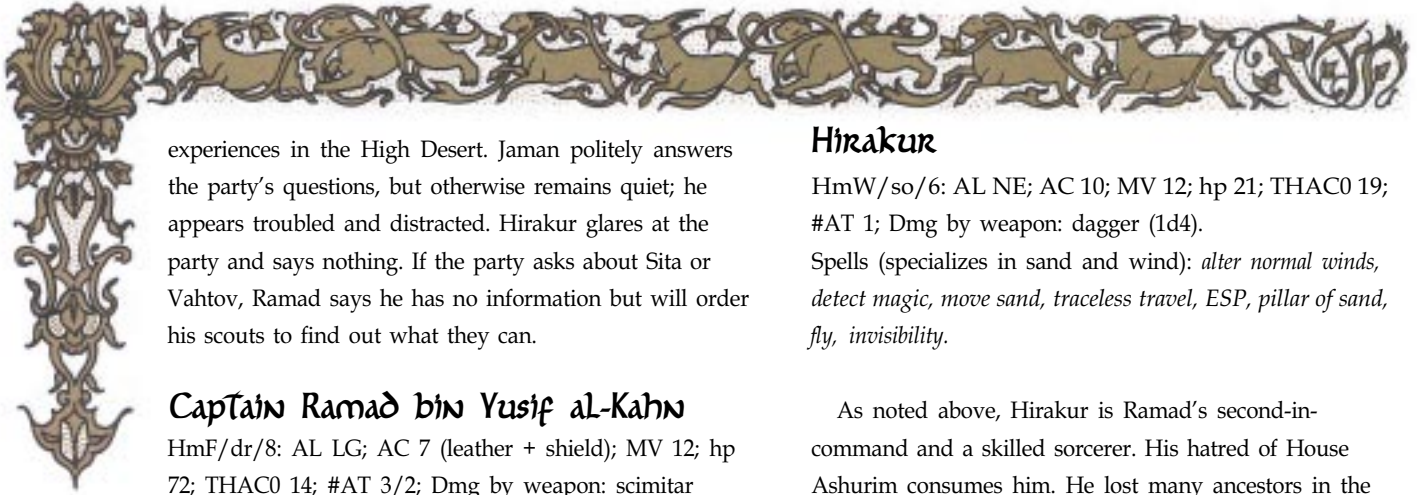
Ramad invites the party to come to his tent "for talk and refreshments. Hirakur and Jaman will join us."

Coffee with Ramad

Aside from the four soldiers standing guard, Ramad's tent looks no different than the others in the camp. He dismisses the guards and sits on the ground in front of the tent. A soldier brings a wooden tray containing a metal coffee pot, a bowl of dried lamb, and a brass box. ("A *finajin*," whispers Khafaz, indicating the brass box, "A gesture of good will. Ramad honors us.") Ramad opens the *finajin* and removes coffee cups made of yellow glass.

The captain keeps the conversation light, asking about news from Tajar and encouraging the party to tell of their





experiences in the High Desert. Jaman politely answers the party's questions, but otherwise remains quiet; he appears troubled and distracted. Hirakur glares at the party and says nothing. If the party asks about Sita or Vahtov, Ramad says he has no information but will order his scouts to find out what they can.

Captain Ramad bin Yusuf al-Kahn

HmF/dr/8: AL LG; AC 7 (leather + shield); MV 12; hp 72; THAC0 14; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon: scimitar (1d8).

Ramad serves as the commander of the House Fajirik, an enlightened nomadic tribe consisting of about 400 members, all of them serving in the army. Though he presents himself as boisterous and easygoing, Ramad is unsentimental and thoroughly professional. Determined to keep peace with the rival House Ashurim, he prefers compromise and negotiation to violent confrontation. He encourages an informal atmosphere to keep morale high.

If asked about the war, Ramad explains that a treaty exists between House Fajirik and House Ashurim. The terms of the treaty, called an *allag*, prohibit either side from trespassing on a flat field of sand called a *qara'a*. Each house remains confined to a tribal zone called a *dirah* on either side of the *qara'a*. (If the PCs want more details about the *allag*, see the "House Fajirik Military Camp" entry in Chapter 2 of the *Campaign Guide*.)

"The *allag* may seem like madness to you," says Ramad. "The *qara'a* is worthless. But so long as the *allag* prevents bloodshed, may it last a thousand years."

All of the soldiers share Ramad's commitment to the *allag*, except Hirakur, who has urged him to ignore it and attack the hated House Ashurim. But Ramad won't consider violating the *allag*.

Jaman believes Hirakur plans to retaliate against House Ashurim on his own, and he has revealed this to Ramad. But the captain trusts Hirakur and thinks the well-meaning Jaman is overreacting to rumors.

Hirakur

HmW/so/6: AL NE; AC 10; MV 12; hp 21; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon: dagger (1d4).

Spells (specializes in sand and wind): *alter normal winds*, *detect magic*, *move sand*, *traceless travel*, *ESP*, *pillar of sand*, *fly*, *invisibility*.

As noted above, Hirakur is Ramad's second-in-command and a skilled sorcerer. His hatred of House Ashurim consumes him. He lost many ancestors in the original battle of the *qara'a* and has vowed to avenge them. But Ramad refuses to consider military action. Nor has the sorcerer been able to convince any of the soldiers to abandon Ramad and follow him.

Hirakur has decided to take matters into his own hands. Recently, he began to gather the components needed to conjure a powerful entity to unleash on his enemies. He now needs only a single component.

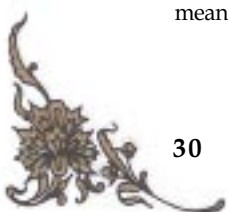
Two weeks ago, Kibrahin, an aged sha'ir who served as the House Fajirik's religious advisor and Ramad's counselor, found out about Hirakur's plan. The sha'ir confronted Hirakur, who denied the allegation. That night, Hirakur placed a poisonous serpent in Kibrahin's tent, thus killing the sha'ir. Kibrahin's death was presumed by all to be an accident.

Jaman

HmP/sh/4: AL LG; AC 8 (leather); MV 9 (reduced due to injury); hp 20; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon: staff (1d6).

Spells: *cure light wounds*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *augury*, *know alignment*.

Jaman became Ramad's spiritual advisor after Kibrahin died (see above). The young sha'ir was Kibrahin's student and closest friend. Kibrahin told Jaman that he suspected Hirakur was scheming to violate the *allag*. Kibrahin planned to use magic to stop Hirakur. He shared his plans with Jaman (see the "Stone Arch" section on page 32 for details). Two days later, Kibrahin was dead.





At Ramad's behest, Jaman assumed Kibrahin's duties. The young sha'ir continues to grieve over his mentor, whom he believes Hirakur murdered.

Jaman tried to tell Ramad of his suspicions about Kibrahin. The captain accused him of an overactive imagination. Jaman hopes he can convince the PCs to help him, but knows he must proceed with caution. He doesn't want to give Hirakur reason to murder again.

Jaman is sensitive, insightful, and reserved. He has a withered left leg, the result of a childhood illness. Without his staff, he can barely walk.

Two Events

At some point during the conversation with Ramad, the following two events occur:

Hirakur's Inquiry. "Your pardon, Captain," Hirakur says, "but might I ask our guests where they were born?" If a PC asks why he is interested, Hirakur replies, "Simple curiosity, nothing more." Ramad tells the PCs they may answer if they wish, but are under no obligation to do so.

If a PC answers by naming a city or village, Hirakur interrupts, "Please be more specific. Were you born in a private home, a camel barn, a medical facility?" Khafaz declines to answer, but after Hirakur glares at him, he says he was born in his grandmother's house in Tajar. Hirakur listens impassively to any information the PCs care to share, finally asking, "Was anyone born in a cemetery?"

Hirakur turns to Turin. "How about you?"

"I was born on a cadaver barge," he mutters. "My mother was a healer. She comforted the dying. It was during the trade wars in Suq Bay."

Hirakur rubs his chin. "Not a cemetery, but perhaps it will do." He hands Turin a small square of silk. "Wipe your hands with this, then your brow, then your neck." Turin does as he is told. He returns the cloth to the old man. "For a defensive weapon I am developing," says Hirakur to the group. He will not answer any other questions about the cloth. "Who knows the way of sorcerers?" shrugs Ramad. (The significance of the cloth is explained in the "Stone Arch," section.)

Jaman's Gift. Jaman excuses himself, returning with a

leather folder bearing the image of a stylized gust of wind, the symbol of the god Haku. "A favorite prayer," says Jaman. "Please accept it as a gift from House Fajirik."

"One moment," says Hirakur. He snatches the folder from Jaman, opens it, and reads it. "Very well," he says, and passes the folder to the party. (Give the players PH14.)

Ramad is surprised by Hirakur's rudeness. "Why did you do that?"

"We know nothing about these strangers," he says. "Jaman is young. He may have given them privileged information. Accidentally, of course."

Ramad allows the incident to pass and resumes the conversation. The PCs may examine the folder.

A few minutes later, Jaman asks the PCs to return the folder. "My apologies," he says. "But I neglected to sanctify the folder with the blessing of Haku. It will take but a moment." (Take PH14 from the players.) After he retrieves the folder, the young sha'ir turns away from the group and mutters a few words of prayer. He then returns the folder to the PCs. (Keep PH14 hidden away, and give the players PH15 instead. Jaman has substituted an identical folder for the one he took back.)

If the PCs open the folder, they see the following message:

Meet me at the stone arch near the House Fajirik Dirah in one hour. Secrecy is imperative. Hundreds of lives depend on your compliance.

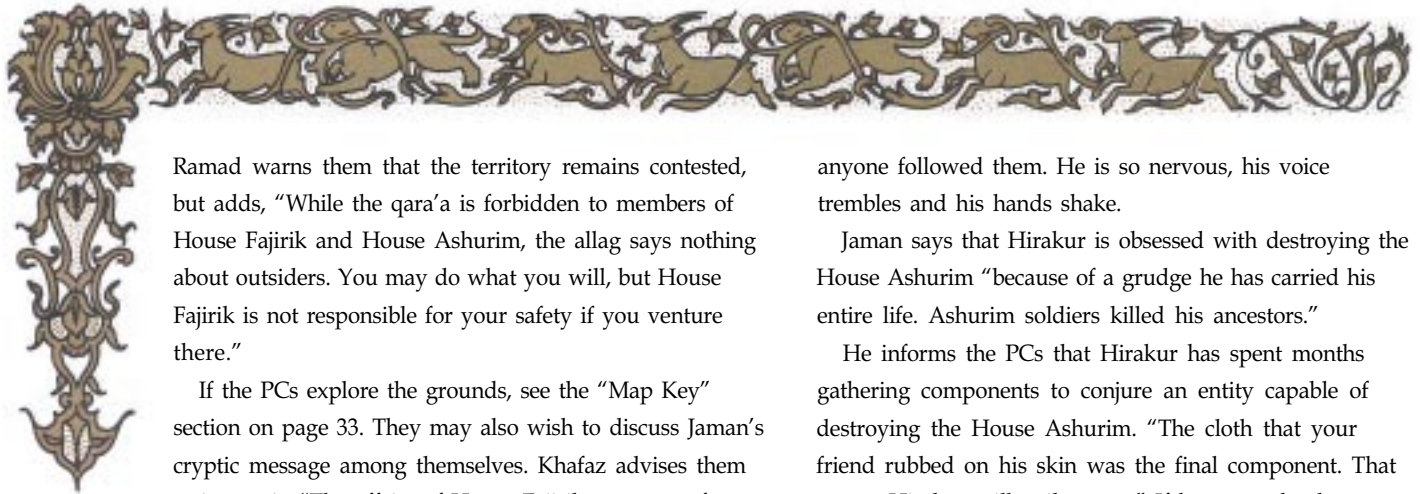
– Jaman

Jaman avoids the eyes of the PCs for the rest of the conversation, staring silently at the ground.

Turning Point

After the Jaman's Gift event, the conversation winds down. Ramad invites the PCs to spend the night in the camp. His duties preclude him from spending more time with them, but he gives them permission to explore the camp at their leisure. If they ask to see the qara'a,





Ramad warns them that the territory remains contested, but adds, "While the qara'a is forbidden to members of House Fajirik and House Ashurim, the allag says nothing about outsiders. You may do what you will, but House Fajirik is not responsible for your safety if you venture there."

If the PCs explore the grounds, see the "Map Key" section on page 33. They may also wish to discuss Jaman's cryptic message among themselves. Khafaz advises them to ignore it. "The affairs of House Fajirik are none of our concern," he says. The PCs may want to interrogate Jaman, but they won't be able to find him; he is taking a circuitous route to the stone arch so he won't be followed. Nor will they be able to locate Hirakur, who is in seclusion and making final preparations for this evening's conjuration. If the PCs reveal the note to Ramad, he shrugs it off. "Jaman is a good man," the Captain explains, "Humor him, if you like. I have other matters requiring my attention."

If the PCs decide not to meet Jaman at the stone arch, they will have little chance of stopping Hirakur. If the PCs stay at the camp until the following day, they will learn the tragic consequences of Hirakur's plan, described in the "Defeat" section at the end of this episode. If you would like to give the PCs a chance to reconsider, Jaman runs them down an hour or two after he realizes they are not coming. He begs them to listen; if they do, he gives them the information in the "Stone Arch" section.

Should the party decide to meet with Jaman, Khafaz asks their permission to remain in the camp so he and Turin can solicit orders from the soldiers for future deliveries. (Khafaz is telling the truth; this is exactly what he'll do if allowed to stay.) If the PCs insist that Khafaz accompany them, he grudgingly complies.

The Stone Arch

The PCs should have no trouble locating the stone arch, since they passed it on their way to the camp (see the "Reception" section above). Jaman is hiding in the weeds. He thanks the PCs for coming, then asks if

anyone followed them. He is so nervous, his voice trembles and his hands shake.

Jaman says that Hirakur is obsessed with destroying the House Ashurim "because of a grudge he has carried his entire life. Ashurim soldiers killed his ancestors."

He informs the PCs that Hirakur has spent months gathering components to conjure an entity capable of destroying the House Ashurim. "The cloth that your friend rubbed on his skin was the final component. That means Hirakur will strike soon." If he succeeds, the fighting between the Houses will begin again. "Ashurim tribesmen are scattered across the High Desert. If their army is destroyed, they will hold Fajirik responsible. There will be no allag this time. Only death."

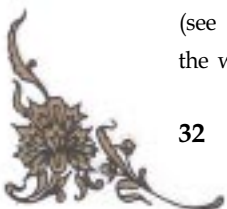
Hirakur's intentions were disclosed to Jaman by Kibrahin, "a sha'ir who served the army of House Fajirik for a half century. He was my mentor and friend," remembers Jaman. "Kibrahin informed Ramad of his suspicions but had no proof. And without proof, Ramad would not act."

Kibrahin was discovered dead in his tent two weeks ago, the victim of a snakebite. "I believe Hirakur placed the serpent in Kibrahin's tent because he knew too much," says Jaman. "But I could not prove it, and my mentor's death was declared an accident."

A few days before he died, Kibrahin told Jaman that he had made arrangements to counter Hirakur's plan. "He said it was important I knew of these arrangements, in case something happened to him." Kibrahin had trapped a djinni named Z'ah in a genie prison—a necklace made up of golden spheres. For his final wish, he requested that the djinni help stop Hirakur. "When any one of the spheres is touched and the djinni's name—Z'ah—is spoken," explains Jaman, "the djinni will use its powers to counter whatever entity Hirakur has conjured."

"The djinni," Jaman continued, "has already received its instructions. Anyone can now call it forth to execute its final orders."

Kibrahin hid the golden necklace in the qara'a. Jaman produces another prayer folder and hands it to the PCs. (Give PH16 to the players.) "I made this map of the





qara'a for you, showing the location of the necklace." He tells them to begin at the star dune; each box represents 10 paces (about 10 yards). "The necklace is in a shallow pit covered with stones," he says. "The necklace itself is a magical weapon. Each of its spheres can be used to smite a foe." He doesn't know any other details about the necklace.

Jaman pleads for the party to help him stop HiraKur. "I cannot do this alone," he says. "I have the will, but not the ability." He pointed to his crippled leg. Jaman wants the PCs to meet him at his tent just before sunset. "From there, we will go to the qara'a and recover the necklace. We must travel lightly. Bring your weapons, but leave your camels and the rest of your belongings at camp. If anyone should ask, I will tell them we are going into the desert to discuss religious matters.

"If I am wrong, and HiraKur has not chosen this night to conjure his creature, we will return to the camp. But if I am correct, we will be ready."

Jaman invites questions. Some possibilities follow, along with suggested responses:

How can you be sure about all this? "Kibrahin was a cautious man, not prone to hasty conclusions or false conjecture. His death verified his worst suspicions."

Didn't Kibrahin violate the conditions of the allag by entering the qara'a to bury the necklace? "Yes. But he felt that strict adherence to the allag was not worth the blood of hundreds. I feel the same way."

Why haven't you already gotten the necklace? "I am following Kibrahin's instructions. He feared that if the necklace were relocated, HiraKur might find out about it."

If you're going with us, why do we need a map? "In case I am detained."

We are not forbidden to enter the qara'a. Why don't we get the necklace now? "It is a foolish risk to do so in the daylight. And the longer we have the necklace in our possession, the more time HiraKur has to find a way to steal it from us."

Why didn't Kibrahin stop HiraKur? "Because up to the time of Kibrahin's death, HiraKur had committed no actual crime."

Why didn't Kibrahin tell Ramad of his suspicions about HiraKur? "He did, but Ramad would not make a case against HiraKur until he had ample evidence."

What type of entity will HiraKur conjure? "I do not know."

What exactly will the djinni do when released? "I do not know."

Can't we recruit Ramad or some of the soldiers to help us? "I have tried, but they do not believe me. They are not willing to enter the qara'a and violate the allag on my word alone."

When the PCs finish their questions, Jaman asks if he can count on their help. If they decline, he is disappointed, but accepts their decision. "Perhaps Fate did not intend for you to participate. I will handle this situation the best I can, alone." (The PCs might reconsider their decision after the events in the "Two Corpses" section; see page 34.)

If the PCs agree to help, Jaman says he will be spending the rest of the day in his tent, praying and meditating. "Come for me just before the sun sets." He advises them to return to camp, before their absence arouses HiraKur's suspicions. Jaman will return by a different route.

The Empty Glass Battlefield

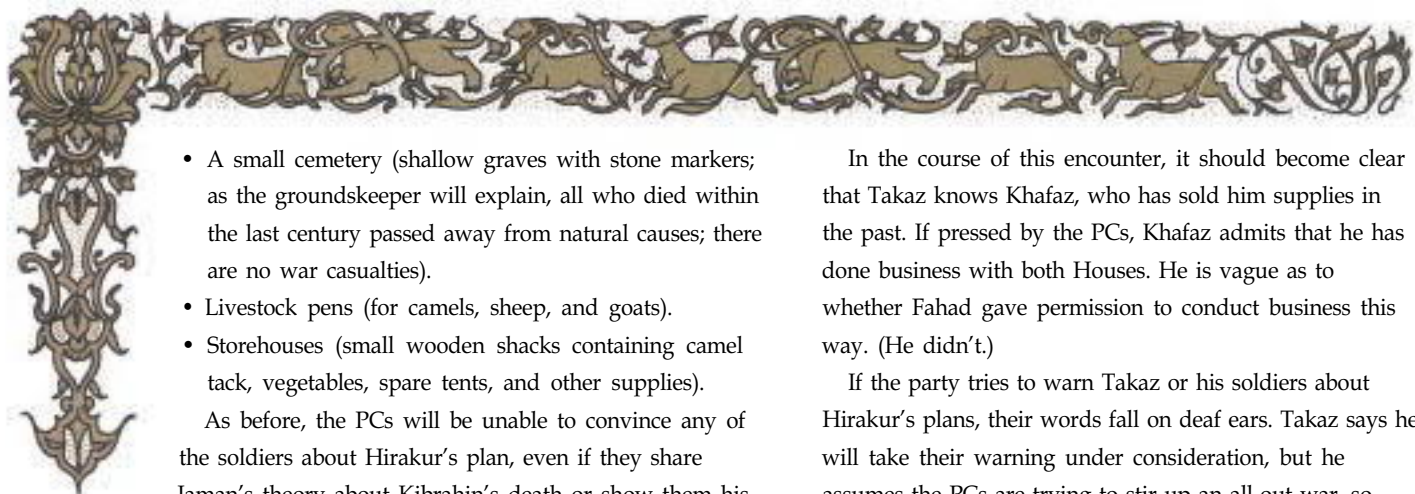
After leaving the stone arch, the PCs may spend the remainder of the daylight hours resting in their tents. They are also free to explore. Refer to the Map of the Empty Glass Battlefield (Card 4, back).

Map Key

1. Dirah of the House Fajirik. This is an area of rolling hills covered with weeds and brush, including the flammable arafaj bushes. Brown *hamdh* bushes, rich with salt, are favored by camels. The stone arch is located near the southeast corner of the dirah.

2. House Fajirik Military Camp. About 400 soldiers call the camp home. Natural springs supply water, and patches of rich soil enable the soldiers to grow carrots, cucumbers, and other vegetables. The camp also includes:





- A small cemetery (shallow graves with stone markers; as the groundskeeper will explain, all who died within the last century passed away from natural causes; there are no war casualties).
- Livestock pens (for camels, sheep, and goats).
- Storehouses (small wooden shacks containing camel tack, vegetables, spare tents, and other supplies).

As before, the PCs will be unable to convince any of the soldiers about Hirakur's plan, even if they share Jaman's theory about Kibrahin's death or show them his sketch map (PH16).

3. Patrol Zone. Soldiers from both House Fajirik and House Ashurim continually patrol this sandy plain separating the two camps from the qara'a. About 50 soldiers from each House patrol 24 hours a day, working eight-hour shifts. Because both Houses have honored the allag since its inception, the patrolling soldiers have become lazy and complacent. Many spend their shifts hunting jackals and gossiping, often with soldiers from the enemy House. A PC wanting to enter the qara'a should have few problems slipping past the patrols. If the soldiers intercept him, they let him go once assured that he has no official affiliation with either House.

4. Hills. Chains of sand-blanketed hills, averaging 200 to 400 feet high, form a natural barrier around the qara'a. The hills block the line of sight of the patrolling soldiers in area 3.

5. Qara'a. Other than the occasional hamdh bush, the qara'a contains only sand and a few hills.

6. House Ashurim Military Camp. Home to about 300 soldiers, the Ashurim camp resembles the Fajirik camp and includes most of the same physical features. A natural lake supplies fresh water.

If the PCs approach the camp, they will be met by a contingent of soldiers wearing black abas with blue trim. The soldiers escort them to the camp commander, Takaz al-Harounah, a squat, 50-year-old man (use Ramad's statistics for Takaz, varying the weaponry and hit points). Takaz goes through the motions of hospitality, but unless the PCs have something to sell, he tries to get rid of them as quickly as possible. He has no useful information.

In the course of this encounter, it should become clear that Takaz knows Khafaz, who has sold him supplies in the past. If pressed by the PCs, Khafaz admits that he has done business with both Houses. He is vague as to whether Fahad gave permission to conduct business this way. (He didn't.)

If the party tries to warn Takaz or his soldiers about Hirakur's plans, their words fall on deaf ears. Takaz says he will take their warning under consideration, but he assumes the PCs are trying to stir up an all-out war, so they can supply arms to both Houses.

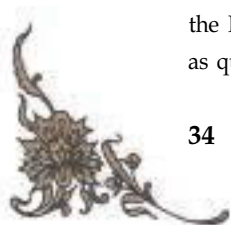
7. Dirah of the House Ashurim. Except for its slightly smaller size, the Ashurim dirah is identical to the Fajirik dirah (area 1).

Two Corpses

Just before sunset, dozens of soldiers are crowded around Jaman's tent. If the PCs push their way through the crowd, they find a morose Ramad standing over two corpses. One is a scorpion the size of a wolf, its body cracked and broken, its antennae snapped. The other is Jaman, a puncture in his chest. "Someone heard a scuffle," says Ramad sadly. "We got here as quickly as we could, but we were too late to save Jaman."

The PCs may examine the corpses, if they wish. It indeed appears that the scorpion was beaten to death. If they use *detect poison* or a similar spell on Jaman's body, they will discover that he died from an herbal poison, not scorpion venom. (Hirakur murdered the young sha'ir. While Jaman meditated, the sorcerer slipped into his tent and doctored his drinking water with an herbal poison. Hirakur also placed the battered scorpion corpse on the floor, then made a wound in Jaman's chest to make it appear that the scorpion stung him. Using *invisibility* and *fly*, Hirakur fled unseen to the qara'a.)

If the PCs offer evidence of Jaman's murder, Ramad is shocked, then outraged. "There has not been a murder in this camp as long as I have been in command. I will insist on a full investigation." (Ramad won't find a suspect, and the investigation will be dropped.)





Despite the demise of Jaman, the PCs still won't be able to convince Ramad that HiraKur poses a threat. "I have been patient with your fantasies," he warns. "But my patience has a limit."

If the PCs decide to go to the qara'a, Khafaz asks to remain in the camp. He cites a variety of reasons, but in fact, he's afraid. If the PCs insist, Khafaz grudgingly comes along. Otherwise, he and Turin remain in the camp.

The Search for Z'ah

The party's trip to the qara'a is uneventful. Once night falls, moonlight drenches the desert sands, enabling them to see moving objects at a distance of 100 yards, stationary objects at 30 yards. All is still.

If the party follows the directions on Jaman's sketch map (PH16), they'll come to a pile of rocks near a clump of cacti. But the rocks have been scattered, the pit excavated. Kibrahin's necklace isn't there. Scratches and deep grooves surround the pit. Any PC making a successful Intelligence check identifies the scratches as those of a wild animal. Those with the animal lore proficiency knows this automatically; with a successful proficiency check, the animal is identified as a lizard.

Unless they decide to give up and leave the qara'a (in which case, proceed to the "Defeat" section), the PCs may consider three options:

1. Consult Ala'i. If they ask the carpet to help them find the necklace, he accepts their offering of a page and transforms. (Give the players Ala'i's Response 2.)

Ala'i's darkened squares form a map, patterned after Jaman's sketch map (PH 16). Each darkened square represents 10 paces. The path begins at their current location, the empty hole. If the PCs follow the correct path, they will find Kibrahin's necklace.

The path ends near the base of a hill where a golden necklace is tangled in a hamdh bush. The necklace consists of nine golden globes the size of grapes, and a single silver globe attached to the necklace with wire.

Kibrahin's necklace is actually a *necklace of missiles*. The golden spheres can be hurled to a distance of 70 feet,

bursting as *fireballs*: one 11-dice *fireball*, two 9-dice, two 7-dice, two 5-dice, and two 3-dice.

The silver sphere imprisons Z'ah, Kibrahin's djinni. If a PC touches the sphere and speaks the djinni's name, go to the "Z'ah's Return" section.

2. Try to find the necklace themselves. It is possible for the party to find the necklace without Ala'i, but it will be difficult. A PC with the tracking proficiency probably has the best chance of success. However, instead of using the tracking modifiers on Table 39 in Chapter 5 of the *Player's Handbook*, use a single modifier of -10 to account for the poor lighting, sandy ground, and other variables.

If a PC comes within a reasonable distance of the necklace—say, 50 to 100 feet—give him a 20% chance per five rounds of searching to spot it. The search shouldn't go on indefinitely. If the PCs haven't found the necklace within a half-hour or so, they will have to do without it; proceed to the "Z'ah's Return" section and ignore all references to Z'ah.

3. Don't look for the necklace. Proceed to the "Z'ah's Return" section. Ignore all references to Z'ah.

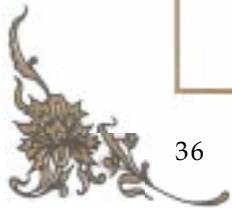
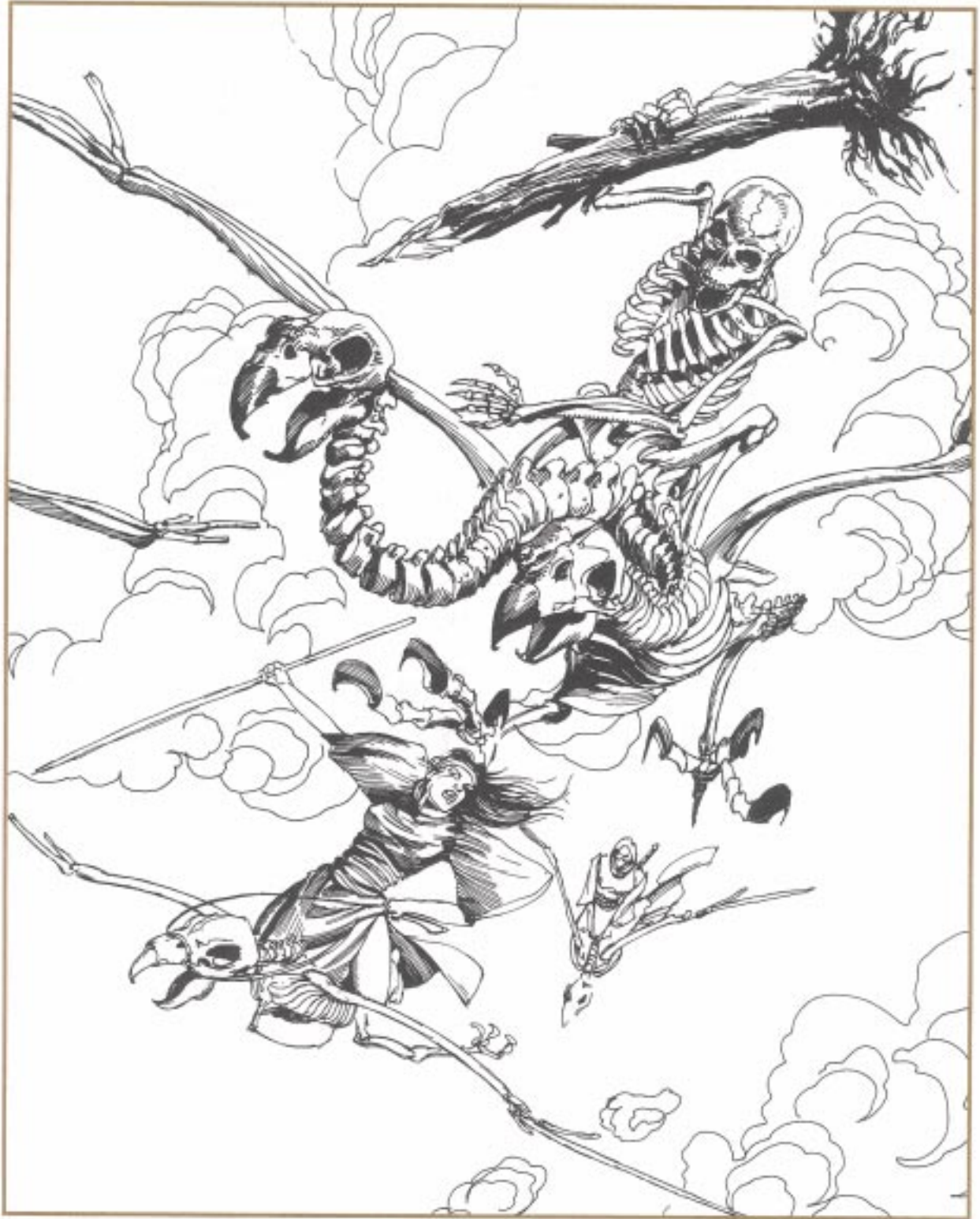
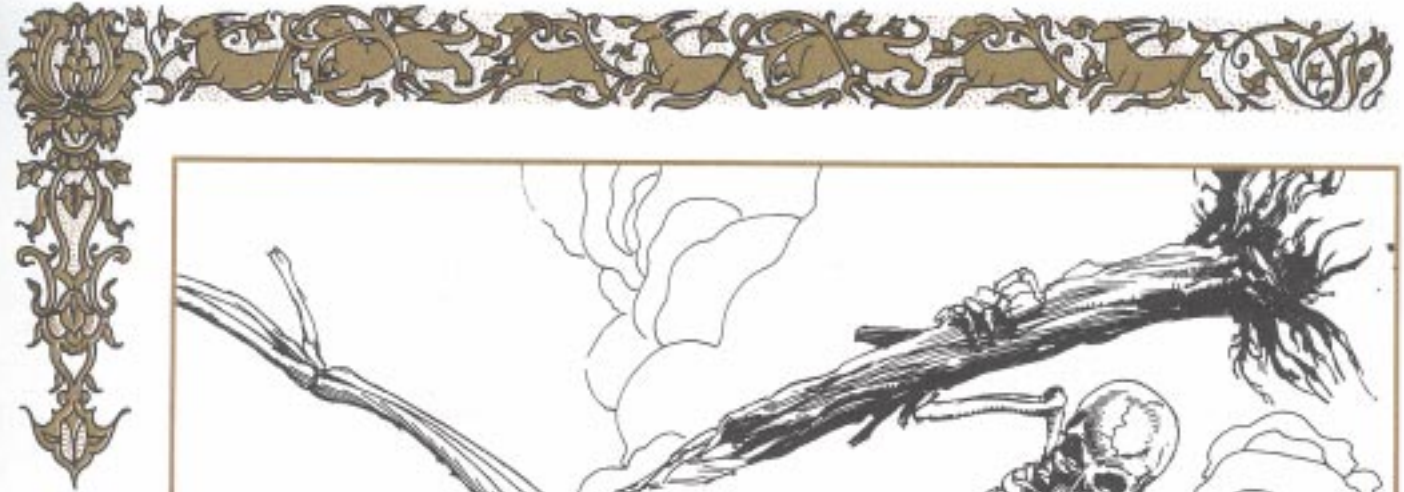
Z'ah's Return

The silver sphere shatters in an explosion of gray smoke. The smoke rises and swells, becoming an immense cyclone that spins over the party's heads. The cloud dissipates to reveal a 12-foot humanoid with rippling muscles, wearing silk robes and silver jewelry. (This is Z'ah, a noble djinni; use the noble djinni statistics from the "Pit Game" encounter in Episode Two.)

Arms crossed over his massive chest, his eyes narrow and angry, Z'ah hovers over the PCs. When he eyes the PC who freed him, the djinni lifts him off the ground by the neck. "Who summons me?" he hisses. After the PC responds, Z'ah asks, "And what of Kibrahin?" he listens to whatever the PC (or the party) cares to share about Kibrahin. He sets the PC on the ground, then floats into the sky, studying the northern border of the qara'a.

If a PC says anything to Z'ah, the djinni turns to him







and thunders, "I know the terms of my release and I intend to fulfill them! Now silence!"

A glowing figure, vaguely humanoid, appears on the northern horizon, edging over the hills. It moves toward the party in a series of hesitant, erratic jerks. As the figure nears, the PCs see not one, but three distinct shapes.

A giant humanoid skeleton is astride an immense skeletal bird. The giant is as tall as three men, the skeletal bird three times the size of the giant. Both are made of glowing bones. The giant clutches a wooden spear as big as a tree trunk, whittled to a fine point. The skeletal bird clutches a squirming human in its scythelike beak.

The skeletal bird flings the human in the party's direction. The human tumbles into the sand and lifelessly rolls against a dune. If the PCs investigate, they identify the human as HiraKur. He is dead.

Reanimated desert giant skeleton: Int Low (7); AL CE; AC 1; MV 15; HD 13; hp 44; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 (fist) or 2d6+7 (giant spear; range of 3/6/9); SD immune to all *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells; immune to all cold-based attacks; immune to *fear* spells and never needs to check morale; crumbles to dust at 0 hit points; SZ H (17' tall); ML special; XP 6,000.

Reanimated roc skeleton: Int Animal (1); AL CE; AC + MV 3, Fl 30 (D); HD 18; hp 55; THAC0 5; #AT 2 or 1; Dmg 3d6/3d6 (claws) or 4d6 (beak); SA if both claws hit, victim is grabbed (can grab two victims at once if they are within 10 feet of each other); if victim is human, humanoid, or demihuman, there is a 65% chance that his arms are pinned to his sides, making melee weapon attacks and spell-casting that requires gestures impossible; a roc releases its victims if it suffers damage equal to a quarter of its hit points; SD immune to all *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells; immune to all cold-based attacks; immune to *fear* spells and never needs to check morale; crumbles to dust at 0 hit points; SZ G (60' long + wingspan); ML special; XP 10,000.

During the original battle of the Empty Glass, House Fajirik recruited a desert giant and his roc mount to fight

the armies of House Ashurim. House Ashurim sorcerers defeated the creatures, and their bones had been buried beneath the sands of the qara'a ever since. HiraKur planned to reanimate their skeletons and order them to resume their attacks on House Ashurim. But because of HiraKur's flawed magic (he needed a cloth applied to a person born in a cemetery; technically, Turin didn't fit this requirement), he was unable to control the skeletons. The roc turned on HiraKur and killed him. The giant and the roc now intend to destroy everything they see.

Z'ah's Departure

Z'ah resents his indentured servitude and intends to fulfill the terms of Kibrahin's wish only in a literal sense. He will give the PCs the means to defeat the giant and the roc, but will not become directly involved.

After Z'ah sees the reanimated giant and roc, he gestures toward the ground in front of the PCs. Skeletal forms with bony wings and beaks push their way through the sand. Moments later, a flock of giant eagle skeletons stands before the party, awaiting their commands.

Reanimated giant eagle skeleton (varies, according to the number of PCs): Int Animal (1); AL N; AC 7; MV 3, Fl 48 (D); HD 4; hp 25; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6/1d6/2d6; SA if dives more than 50 feet, it doubles its normal flying speed, adds +4 to its attack roll, and doubles its claw damage (can only attack with claws when diving); SD immune to all *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells; immune to all cold-based attacks; immune to *fear* spells and does not check morale; SZ H (15' wingspan); ML special; XP 270.

A flock of giant eagles was also casualties in the original battle. Z'ah has revived them as reanimated skeletons, one for each PC (plus extras for Khafaz and Turin, if they are present).

"Your mounts," says Z'ah. "And my servitude has ended!" Gray smoke envelopes Z'ah, and he disappears.





Battle in The Sky

The following special rules apply during the qara'a battle. You may supplement them with any of the Aerial Combat Optional Rules from Chapter 9 of the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*.

Preparation

All of the reanimated eagle skeletons (hereafter called eagles) have the same abilities; you may vary the number of hit points. Though there are the same number of eagles as characters, two characters may ride the same eagle. Once the battle is under way, however, any eagle without a rider for 10 consecutive rounds flies away from the qara'a and will not return. (The eagle heads for the open desert; when the enchantment wears off in a few hours, the eagle again becomes inanimate bones).

An eagle responds to the spoken commands of its rider, moving, attacking, and taking all other actions exactly as told. Both the rider and the eagle may attack in the same round. A character must use at least one hand to hold on to the eagle at all times (making two-handed weapons, such as bows, difficult, if not impossible, to use). An eagle will not attack without a rider to command it.

The airborne riding proficiency is *not* needed to ride these enchanted mounts. But a PC who has this proficiency can execute all of the special actions listed in the proficiency description (see Chapter 5 of the *Player's Handbook*), including guiding the mount with his knees and feet to keep his hands free. A PC doesn't need to have the proficiency for eagles; if he has it for *any* type of flying mount, the bonuses apply in this situation.

The DM controls the actions of Khafaz, Turin, and their respective mounts. Depending on how much help the DM wants to give the PCs, the two men may stay as far away from the battle as they can get (relinquishing their eagles to PCs who lose theirs), refuse to mount their eagles at all (in which case, the eagles soar away 10 rounds later), or join the attack (that is, Turin fights alongside the PCs, and Khafaz fights to protect himself).

Chance of Falling

In the heat of battle, a PC may fall from his mount. Determine the chance of falling for each character before the battle begins.

The base chance of falling is 70%. This presumes that the PC is engaged in combat and also allows him to have one hand free to wield a weapon. (Under normal circumstances, if the PC isn't engaged in combat and is flying carefully, he has no chance of falling.) Modify the base chance as follows:

- -50% if the rider has the airborne riding proficiency.
- -2% for each point of the rider's Dexterity above 10 and each point of Strength above 12 (assuming 18 as a maximum in both cases).
- +2% for each point of the rider's Dexterity below 10 and each point of Strength below 12.

All modifiers are cumulative. The final chance of falling can't be more than 90% or less than 10%.

Once combat is under way, check each airborne PC's chance of falling every six rounds. The DM may increase or decrease the frequency. For example, check more often for a PC who flies recklessly, less often for one not under direct attack. Check for falling on *any* round that a PC without the airborne riding proficiency isn't using at least one hand to hold on to his mount.

If a PC fails his check, he tumbles from his eagle. If he makes a successful Dexterity check, he grabs the eagle at the last moment. He may then pull himself back on (an action taking one full round).

A failed Dexterity check means the PC begins to plummet. If he has at least 50 feet to fall before he hits the ground, his eagle will attempt to dive underneath him; he must attempt another Dexterity check to grab the eagle. If the check succeeds, the PC can pull himself on (which takes a full round). If the check fails, he continues to fall, suffering 1d6 points of damage per 10 feet fallen (to a maximum of 20d6 hit points). If he survives the fall, his eagle descends to the ground to retrieve him; it takes the PC one full round to remount.

The giant isn't required to make falling checks.





Battle Notes

The giant and the roc retain some but not all of the properties of their normal forms. Their morale is higher, their intelligence is lower, and they crumble to dust when reduced to 0 hit points. They also have some of the special defenses associated with undead, though they cannot be turned.

Though once a shrewd and calculating warrior, the giant is now little more than a mindless killer. He never speaks, nor will he voluntarily dismount. Though he strikes with his fist at any enemy within range, he prefers to attack by throwing his spear, usually at an eagle. After throwing the spear, the giant will ride the roc to retrieve it.

The roc snaps and claws at anything it can reach, with most of its attacks directed at the eagles. The roc will attempt to snatch any grounded PC in its claws.

Though the giant doesn't make falling checks, he will plummet to the ground if the roc disintegrates (if it reaches 0 hit points). The giant loses 1d6 hit points per 10 feet fallen (to a maximum of 20d6 points). If he survives, he continues to attack with his fists and spear.

The soldiers of House Fajirik and House Ashurim will not participate in this battle. The activity may draw the attention of some of the patrol zone soldiers (area 3), but they hesitate to intervene, as entering the qara'a violates the allag. Some may hurry back to their commanders to report what they've seen, but by the time reinforcements show up, the battle will have ended.

A PC may fly back to the House Fajirik camp to get help, but the battle will probably be over before the Fajirik soldiers can take action. Contacting the House Ashurim camp will also be futile. Commander Takaz won't be able to rally his troops in time to intervene.

Ending The Battle

The battle continues until one of the following conditions occurs:

- The PCs are beaten, or they withdraw from the qara'a. The giant and the roc head north, toward the House Ashurim military camp. Go to the "Defeat" section.
- The giant and the roc are defeated. Go to the "Victory" section.

Defeat

The giant and the roc attack the House Ashurim camp. Its army eventually defeats the creatures, but not without a price: much of the camp is destroyed, and over half the Ashurim soldiers are lost. An Ashurim patrol zone soldier reports that he saw a House Fajirik sorcerer conjure the creatures from the sands of the qara'a. Takaz vows vengeance on House Fajirik and declares the allag invalid. A surprise assault on the Fajirik camp follows, triggering an all-out war that will last for years. Consumed by the war effort, Ramad won't have time for the PCs and sends them on their way.

Victory

A Fajirik border zone soldier observes the qara'a battle, and reports every detail to Ramad. When the party returns to the camp, the captain thanks them on behalf of both Houses for averting another war. As a reward, he gives them two magical weapons from his army's arsenal: a *scimitar* +1 and a *katar* +2. If the PCs previously asked about Sita, Ramad says he has some bad news. "According to my scouts, Sita is dead. She died of natural causes some ten years back. I am sorry, my friends." He has no details.

What Next?

Depending on where the party wants to go next, continue with Episode Three (Raziz) or Episode Five (Quabah, Hulm, and Vahtov). Along the way, you also may run one or more encounters from Episode Two.





Episode Five

The Crypt of Vahtov

Walking home from her lessons, Jamilia asked her uncle about death.

"An odd question from one so young," said the elder.

"Mother says Grandfather's fever is worsening, and he will probably die," Jamilia said, matter-of-factly. "I want to know what will happen to him."

"I respect your forthrightness," said Husar. "You deserve a forthright response.

Listen: Interment customs vary from culture to culture. We follow the traditions of our ancestors, us do many in Tajar.

"The departed is first bathed, dressed in fresh linen, then buried to a depth of least four feet. A woman always prepares the body of a woman. A man always prepares the body of man.

"The spouse of the deceased remains at home to mourn for three months. If the surviving spouse is a woman, she may only see another woman, designated by the family, who brings her food, water, and news. If the surviving spouse is a man, a man handles these duties."

"And what if the spouse leaves home?" asked Jamilia.

"Then woe to the spirit of the deceased! It spends the first three months in the afterlife locked in iron chains. It is released only after the spouse pays the proper respects."

"And the afterlife? What is that like?"

"Many wise men believe it to be a land where the sun always shines and the air is always cool. Water flows in abundance. There is no disease, no hunger, no sadness."

"It sounds like a wonderful place," marveled Jamilia.

"Indeed it does," agreed Husar. "But wise men can be wrong."

Preliminaries

You'll need the black-and-white maps of the Vahtov Crypt and Ugaq's Cave (Card 5, back), and Ala'i's Response 3 (Card 5, front). You also should secretly note the PCs' Constitution scores and saving throws vs. poison.

You may use the typical citizen statistics from Episode One for the Vahtov villagers. While most of the villagers are human, there are also a fair number of





dwarves, elves, and halflings, along with representatives of any other race the DM cares to include. As this is a village of outcasts (see the “Vahtov” entry in Chapter 2 of the *Campaign Guide*), many villagers have physical aberrations such as excessive weight, lurid tattoos, and scarred faces. The DM is encouraged to use his imagination.

A militia force of desert centaurs provides security. They can be seen throughout the village, green cloth wristbands indicating their status. Smaller than sylvan centaurs, desert centaurs have thick chests and thin legs. The males sport long beards, females wear veils. Half of the militia centaurs are armed with light lances, the others carry short composite bows and scimitars.

Militia centaur (desert centaur): Int Average (8); AL NG; AC 6; MV 21; HD 3; hp 22; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4 (hooves) and weapon: 1d6 (light lance or composite short bow) or 1d8 (scimitar); SA suffer only a -1 attack penalty in darkness, even with missile weapons; SD can see clearly up to 200 yards in moonlight; SZ M (6' tall); ML 13; XP 120.

Quabah and Hulm

On their way to Vahtov, the party may wish to make a side trip to Quabah or Hulm. Both villages have been decimated, with nothing left but crumbled stone, splintered wood, and scorched earth. Except for rats and insects, there are no signs of life. The party may search the rubble but will find nothing of interest; scavengers have made off with all items of value. If the PCs ask Ala'i what happened to the villages, see the “Mysterious Refugees” encounter in Episode Two.

Goat Herders

On the outskirts of Vahtov, the party sees two female centaurs wearing green wristbands attempting to maneuver a herd of goats into a wooden pen. If the PCs offer to help, the centaurs thank them but insist they

have the goats under control. “Have you any goats?” asks one of the centaurs. “If you do, keep them out of Vahtov.” The centaurs are busy rounding up the goats and won't answer any questions. “Speak with Akidya,” they suggest, “in the sunflower garden, in the center of the village.”

Insect Harvest

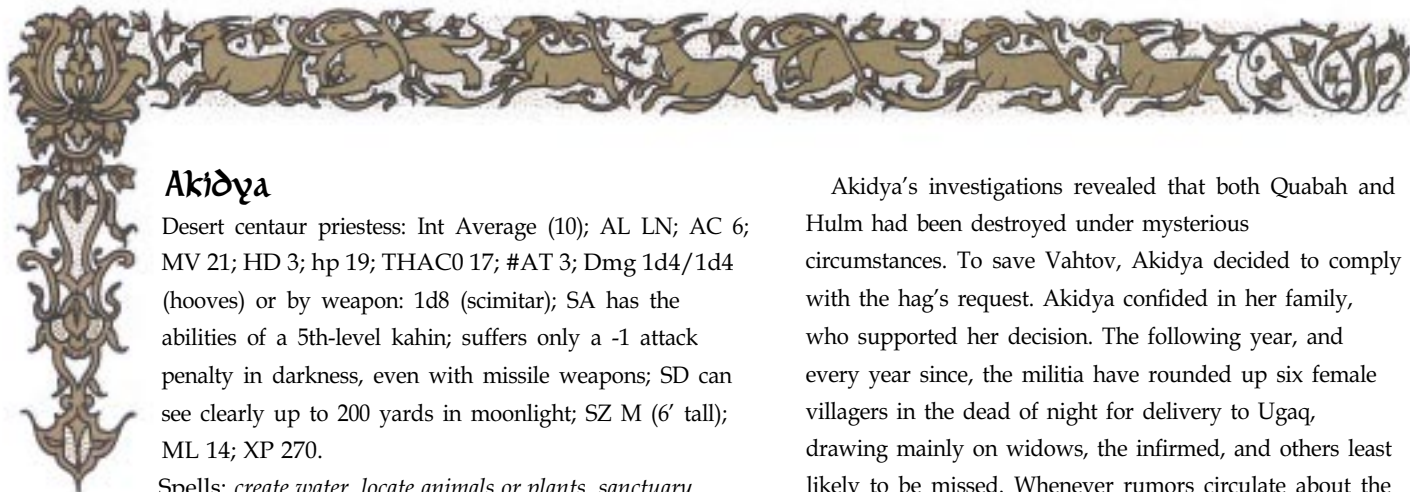
Past crumbling stone buildings, down filthy streets littered with spoiled food and soiled rags, the party arrives at the center of the village, a spacious garden of sunflowers enclosed by a rickety wooden fence. A dozen villagers squat in the garden, plucking black insects from the sunflowers and tossing them into rusty buckets. Near a towering stone wall—the remains of a once impressive building—stand three centaurs, two males and one female. Beside them stands a wiry humanoid with wide green eyes, a flowing blond mane, and six-fingered hands ending in talonlike claws. Bracelets and rings of all sizes and types cover the humanoid's arms and fingers. The centaurs wear green wristbands; the lone female centaur also wears a *khazama*, a small silver nose ring with a turquoise setting.

The centaurs and the humanoid sweep insects from the wall and drop them into buckets. The female centaur, who appears to be supervising, points to an insect near the top of the wall, about 20 feet up. The humanoid instantly shapechanges into a 6-inch-long gecko. The gecko clammers up the wall, slurps up the insect with its tongue, then returns to the ground, where it turns back into a humanoid.

The humanoid points out the party to the female centaur. She ambles over to introduce herself. “Welcome to Vahtov,” she says, friendly but guarded. “I am Akidya, the administrator.” She points to the humanoid. “My assistant, Ku.” Ku nods and continues to pluck insects.

“Are you passing through?” asks Akidya. “Or have you come to help with the harvest? We have been infested by black *surra* flies. They bite goats and make them sick. They are also quite tasty.” She pops a *surra* fly into her mouth.





Akidya

Desert centaur priestess: Int Average (10); AL LN; AC 6; MV 21; HD 3; hp 19; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4 (hooves) or by weapon: 1d8 (scimitar); SA has the abilities of a 5th-level kahin; suffers only a -1 attack penalty in darkness, even with missile weapons; SD can see clearly up to 200 yards in moonlight; SZ M (6' tall); ML 14; XP 270.

Spells: *create water, locate animals or plants, sanctuary, augury, withdraw, pyrotechnics.*

Though she modestly refers to herself as an administrator, Akidya is the sole and absolute ruler of Vahtov, and the khazama (nose ring) is a symbol of her status.

Akidya formerly served as a priestess and waterfinder for a large centaur tribe near the Mountains of the Lizard's Tongue. To alleviate her tribe's chronic food shortages, Akidya advocated the domestication of animals. But the tribal elders considered her recommendation an affront to their traditions. She was expelled from the tribe, along with the family members who supported her.

Fifteen years ago, Akidya arrived in Vahtov where, thanks to her charismatic personality, she became leader by acclamation. She installed her family members as personal guards and village militia. Akidya chose Ku to be her primary aide, correctly believing that his intimidating appearance would dissuade challenges to her authority. The villagers consider her tough but fair-minded.

Her Secret. Shortly after Akidya became leader of Vahtov, she was approached one night by a vile hag with two ram's horns curling from each side of her head. The hag introduced herself as Ugaq, the "herald of a mighty efreeti who can turn this village to ashes." The efreeti required brides; as the village leader, it would be Akidya's responsibility to provide them. "A year from this night, and every year after that, you will provide me with six females. If you tell anyone of our arrangement, or fail to comply, expect the same compassion shown to Quabah and Hulm." With that, Ugaq disappeared.

Akidya's investigations revealed that both Quabah and Hulm had been destroyed under mysterious circumstances. To save Vahtov, Akidya decided to comply with the hag's request. Akidya confided in her family, who supported her decision. The following year, and every year since, the militia have rounded up six female villagers in the dead of night for delivery to Ugaq, drawing mainly on widows, the infirmed, and others least likely to be missed. Whenever rumors circulate about the missing females, Akidya meets privately with those responsible, suggesting that the rumors cease immediately "lest our community suffer the same fate that befell Quabah and Hulm." In rare instances, Akidya has arranged for the murder of villagers suspected of knowing too much.

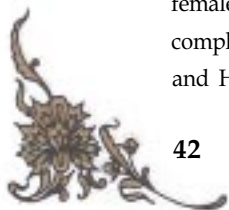
Ku

Maskhi: Int Average (8); AL N; AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+ 1; hp 30; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1d3/1d3 (claws) or weapon: 1d6 (spear); SA when changing shape to ambush an opponent, opponent suffers a -4 penalty on surprise; SD can change shape to any of the following forms retaining same number of HD and hit points: gecko (6" long, AC 5, MV 9, can walk on walls, ceilings, and similar surfaces), palm tree (8' tall, AC 0, MV 0), granite (appearing as a boulder, standing stone, or outcropping of a larger rock formation; AC 0, MV 0); SZ M (6' tall); ML 13; XP 975.

Ku is a humanoid shapechanger called a maskhi, banished from his wilderness community for undercooking a jackal that poisoned nine of his companions. Akidya found him wandering the desert, brought him back to Vahtov, and made him her aide.

Despite his apparent devotion to Akidya, Ku is primarily motivated by self-interest. With an insatiable appetite for jewelry, he serves Akidya because she buys his loyalty with rings and bracelets. Reserved and guarded, he has no close relationships in Vahtov aside from Akidya.

His Secret. Akidya has confided in Ku about her arrangement with the hag Ugaq. Unknown to the





centaur, Ugaq has also been in contact with Ku. She pays him with silver bracelets and other jewelry to keep an eye on Akidya; Ugaq wants to make sure that the centaur isn't planning to double-cross her. Because the hag has a seemingly endless supply of jewelry, Ku is anxious to remain in her favor.

Questioning Akidya

While Akidya and Ku resume their insect harvest, the party may ask questions. Akidya banter with the party, as long as they engage in small talk. But if the conversation turns to Quabah, Hulm, or Sita, Akidya becomes elusive and increasingly uncomfortable. She responds as described below, prefacing most of her answers with: "Why do you wish to know this?" or "It is strange you should ask such a question." Questions directed to Ku are answered with a shrug or a grunt.

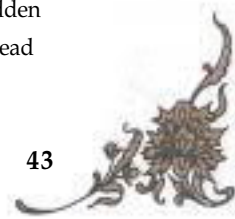
What happened to Quabah (or Hulm)? "I do not know. I have little contact with the rest of the world." If

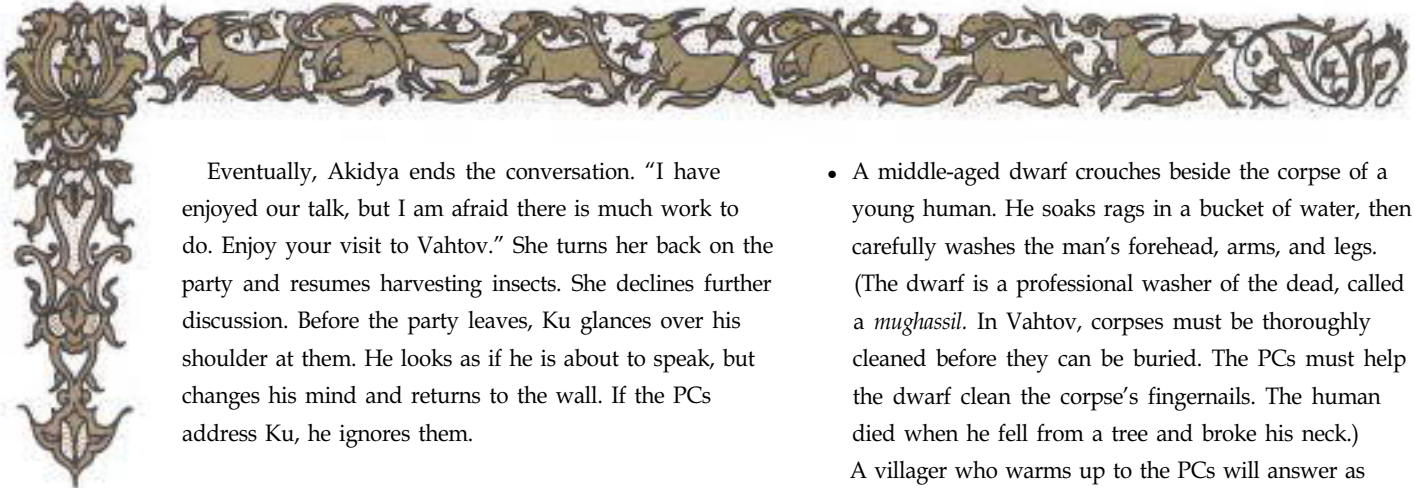
pressed, she says, "I have heard rumors of a fire, but I have no way of knowing if the rumors are true." (She is lying. She knows that Quabah and Hulm were destroyed because they failed to supply brides to Ugaq, though she doesn't know who or what caused the damage.)

Do you know Sita? What happened to her? Akidya pauses to think. "She was a skilled teacher of reading. Popular with the children. I am sad to say that she died of a fever plague ten years ago." (Another lie; ten years ago, the centaur militia abducted Sita and presented her to Ugaq, who took her away.)

Where is Sita now? Akidya ponders her answer carefully. "Buried in the Vahtov crypt." (Since many of the villagers believe that Sita is in the crypt, and the PCs may be talking with them, she believes this response is less likely to arouse the party's suspicions.)

May we see her body? "I am afraid not. It is forbidden by law." (True. Vahtov law prohibits disturbing the dead for any reason.)





Eventually, Akidya ends the conversation. “I have enjoyed our talk, but I am afraid there is much work to do. Enjoy your visit to Vahtov.” She turns her back on the party and resumes harvesting insects. She declines further discussion. Before the party leaves, Ku glances over his shoulder at them. He looks as if he is about to speak, but changes his mind and returns to the wall. If the PCs address Ku, he ignores them.

Exploring Vahtov

There is little of interest in Vahtov, a depressing collection of weatherworn stone buildings and shabby wooden shacks. Once proud estates are now cattle barns; mosques are used to store grain. Street peddlers sell most of the goods valued at 2 gp or less listed in Chapter 6 of the *Arabian Adventures* rulebook, but the quality is poor; the abas are frayed and patched, the onion soup smells like camel’s breath.

Despite their miserable living conditions, the villagers seem content and friendly, though suspicious of strangers. To loosen the villagers’ tongues, the PCs will have to spend a few minutes in soothing small talk, offer small bribes, or help them with routine tasks. Violence will get them nowhere; the villagers will yell for help, and one or more militia centaurs will come to the rescue.

Following are a few typical villagers; the DM may invent others if you wish. The best way get each villager to speak is given in parentheses.

- An old woman sits on a stone, winding wool into a ball. (The PCs must listen to lengthy stories about the tedious exploits of her seven grandchildren.)
- An overweight man huffs and puffs as he attempts to dig a hole in the ground with a stick. (He explains that the hole is a *wjujar*, a makeshift fire pit used to make coffee. The PCs must help him dig the hole and wait for his coffee to boil, a process taking about 15 minutes.)
- A bored militia centaur languishes in an alley. (The PCs must bribe him with 1 gp or an item of equivalent value.)

- A middle-aged dwarf crouches beside the corpse of a young human. He soaks rags in a bucket of water, then carefully washes the man’s forehead, arms, and legs. (The dwarf is a professional washer of the dead, called a *mughassil*. In Vahtov, corpses must be thoroughly cleaned before they can be buried. The PCs must help the dwarf clean the corpse’s fingernails. The human died when he fell from a tree and broke his neck.)

A villager who warms up to the PCs will answer as many questions as they ask. The DM may choose responses from the options given below (one response per question).

What happened to Quabah (or Hulm)?

- “Never heard of the place.”
- “To talk of these places is to invite retribution from the gods.” (The villager declines further conversation.)
- “I heard they had a big fire, maybe a year or two back.”
- The villager looks terrified and refuses to answer any more questions.

What can you tell us about Sita?

- “I did not know her.”
- “A kind woman, so I hear.”
- “The best teacher of reading we ever had. She died suddenly of a fever ten years ago. Very sad.”
- “Here one day, gone the next. Some say she was sick. She didn’t look sick to me.”

Where is Sita now?

- “I have no idea. Is she dead? Then she is in the cemetery, I suppose.”
- “She rests in the crypt, with other honored citizens.”
- “I heard that she left the village about ten years ago in the company of a young woman.”
- “Well, she was never buried as far as I know. And I usually hear everything that goes on around here.”

Where is the cemetery? Everyone knows the location of the cemetery (in a valley north of the village). But because of cultural taboos against disturbing the dead, no one will agree to accompany the PCs.





Now What?

When the PCs finish questioning the villagers, they may return to the sunflower garden, but they will find Akidyra no more helpful than she was before. Ku is gone. "He is supervising the insect harvest elsewhere in the village," explains Akidyra. (In fact, Ku is hiding in the cemetery at her request, waiting to see if the party disturbs the crypt.) If the PCs decide to explore the cemetery, go the "Vahtov Cemetery" section. If they decide to leave the village and go elsewhere, go to the "Ku's Offer" section on page 48.

Vahtov Cemetery

Located a few hundred yards north of the village, the Vahtov Cemetery lies in a shallow valley surrounded by barren hills. Hundreds of graves fill the cemetery, resembling heaps of sand arranged in long lines. Chunks of fist-size stone mark the graves. The unmarked stones inform gravediggers which plots are already occupied but give no indication of who is buried below.

Near the northern perimeter of the cemetery stands an aging gray granite building. Except for an engraving over the front door of a ringed moon (the symbol of Selan the Beautiful Moon), the building is featureless. This is the crypt where Sita allegedly is interred.

Map Key (Crypt Exterior)

A stairway leads down into a small, sandy courtyard (area 1) enclosed by a 3-foot-tall stone wall. A stone basin (area 2), about 3 feet in diameter, stands on a pedestal in the center of the courtyard. (Before paying their respects to the dead, family members bring water to wash their hands and faces in the basin.) Smaller pedestals and basins, 2 feet in diameter, rise in the corners of the courtyard (areas 3a to 3d). Each corner basin contains 10 indentations about an inch deep and 2 inches wide. Some of the indentations hold a few grains of sand.

The crypt is solid granite, 10 feet thick. The front door (area 4) is an arch-shaped seam in the wall, 6 feet high

and 4 feet wide. The door has no handle or any other obvious way to get it open. The seam is so tight that the blade of a razor can't slip through.

Unless the party has access to *passwall* or a similar spell, they may be at a loss as to how to get inside. If they ask Ala'i for help, the carpet accepts a page, opens his eyes, and transforms. (Give the players Ala'i's Response 3.)

Ala'i's darkened squares indicate how many indentations in each of the corner basins must be filled with sand to open the door. Ala'i's upper left quadrant corresponds to basin 3a, the upper right quadrant to 3b, the lower left to basin 3c, the lower right to 3d. The correct combination, which causes the door to slide open (and remain open for two hours), is:

- 3a: Any two indentations filled with sand.
- 3b: Any four indentations filled with sand.
- 3c: Any one indentation filled with sand.
- 3d: Any three indentations filled with sand.

If the PCs fail to get inside the crypt, go to the "Ku's Offer" section. If they succeed, continue with the "Crypt Interior" section.

Map Key (Crypt Interior)

The dark interior of the crypt smells of must and rot. The walls are stone, the floors are packed sand. A narrow passage leads to the main chamber.

5. Main Chamber. This room is empty except for two man-shaped copper sculptures near the north wall. The left sculpture has spearlike projections in place of forearms extending from its elbows. The right sculpture, its arms resembling those of a man, holds a broom.

A rat scuttles across the floor near the sculptures. The left sculpture suddenly comes to life and impales the rat with its spear. The sculpture carries the rat through a doorway in the east wall; it returns a moment later without the rat. The right sculpture then becomes active, sweeping the area where the left sculpture speared the rat. Their work complete, both sculptures stop moving.

The sculptures are copper automatons, created more





than a century ago by the designers of the crypt. The automatons keep the crypt clean and vermin-free, and protect it from grave robbers.

Copper automaton (impaler): Int Low (5); AL N; AC 3; MV 9; HD 6; hp 21; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6/1d6 (impaling arms); SA arms glow red-hot after two rounds of normal attacks, inflicting an additional 1d6 damage each round thereafter; SD falls apart and becomes inactive if reduced to 0 hit points; SZ M (6' tall); ML 20; XP 650.

Copper automaton (sweeper): Int Low (5); AL N; AC 3; MV 3; HD 6; hp 22; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6/1d6 (fists); SA fists glow red-hot after one round of normal attacks, inflicting an additional 1d6 damage each round thereafter; SD falls apart if reduced to 0 hit points (but arms may become active 10 rounds later; see below); SZ M (6' tall); ML 20; XP 650.

The automatons remain immobile until either is disturbed or a PC approaches a grave (area 8). The automatons then attack any of the PCs they can reach, the impaler using its spearlike arms, the sweeper dropping its broom and using its fists when combat begins. The automatons will not enter the mourners' chamber (area 6) nor will they leave the crypt. Once activated, the automatons attack until all the characters are dead or have left the crypt. If the party flees the crypt, the automatons stop moving. They will not become active again unless disturbed or a grave is approached.

The automatons have fallen into disrepair over the decades, and it doesn't take much to disable them. An automaton reaching 0 hit points falls apart and collapses into a pile of junk. The pieces continue to glow for an hour, and any character who touches a piece suffers 1 to 6 points of heat damage.

The sweeper is a special variation of copper



automatons. Ten rounds after it falls apart, its arms reactivate. The arms have half the hit points left to the sweeper automaton after it fell apart. (For example, if the sweeper had 19 hit points remaining when it fell apart, one of its arms has 10 hit points, the other has 9.) Each arm crawls toward the nearest character and attacks. Though the arms are too weak to do physical damage, their hot touch inflicts 1 to 6 points of heat damage. If an arm is reduced to 0 hit points, its fingers fall off, the pieces spasm, then lie still.

Copper automaton arm (2): Int non - (0); AL N; AC 3; MV 3; HD 6; hp see text; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SZ S (3' long); ML 20; XP 65 each.

6. Mourners' Chamber. A small room contains an elevated stone slab, a stone basin similar to the one outside (area 2), and stone benches along the wall. (Mourners pay their final respects in this chamber and wash the corpse one last time before interment.)

7. Disposal Pit. A 10-foot-deep pit is filled with decaying rats, roaches, and other vermin collected by the impaler automaton. It contains nothing of interest.

8. Graves. The corpses have been laid to rest in cavities in the stone walls. Each cavity is about 4 feet wide, 3 feet tall, and 8 feet long. A corpse is inserted head first, with the feet pointing toward the main chamber. The grave is then sealed with bricks and mud. As is customary in Vahtov, none of the graves are marked.

The brick seals can be broken with hammer blows or a few good kicks. In most cases, nothing is left of the corpse but bones. Shreds of white cloth are draped over some of the skeletons. Except where noted, the race of the corpse is obvious, but a successful Intelligence check must be made to identify the sex. (A PC with the healing proficiency can identify the sex automatically). The contents of the graves are as follows:

8a. Adult dwarf skeleton. (Male.)

8b. A pair of oversized foot and leg bones, along with a set of hip bones about twice the size of a normal

human's. (Male. A second successful Intelligence check identifies them as the bones of a desert giant.)

8c. More oversized bones, including ribs, arms, and a skull; all are covered with brown fuzz. (This is the rest of the desert giant skeleton from grave 8b. The fuzz is a type of immature brown mold. Unlike normal brown mold, the immature mold doesn't increase in size and only damages characters who touch it.)

Immature brown mold: Int non- 0 (0); AL N AC 9; MV 0; HD N/A; THAC0 N/A; #AT 0; SA drains heat from any warm-blooded creature touching it, causing 2d8 points of damage; SZ see text; ML N/A; XP 15.

8d. Adult elf skeleton. (Female.)

8e. Adult human skeleton. (Male.)

8f. Child human skeleton. (Female.)

8g. A collection of broken and shattered bones, scorched black. (Neither the sex nor the race is immediately obvious. A successful Intelligence check with a -4 penalty or a successful healing proficiency check identifies the bones as the remains of a human male who died in a fire.)

8h. Adult human skeleton with a short sword resting on the rib cage. (Male. This is Ali al-Adid, the founder of Vahtov. The weapon is a *short sword* +2.)

8i. Adult centaur skeleton. (Male. These are the remains of a militia centaur, the oldest sibling of Akidya.)

8j. Adult human skeleton with two heads. A fire opal is imbedded in the forehead of each skull. A piece of parchment has been wedged between the fingers of each bony hand. (Female. She was the victim of a cruel experiment by an evil wizard. The opals are worth 1,000 gp each. The parchments, specially treated to withstand decay, were placed here so the departed would have something to read in the afterlife. The pages may be used to feed Ala'i'; if the party takes them, give the players PH11 to 12.)

8k to 8m. These graves are empty and unsealed, to be used for future interments.





Ku's Offer

After the PCs emerge from the crypt, a gecko hops from the top of the crypt and polymorphs into Ku. (If the PCs didn't go to the crypt and are on the verge of leaving Vahtov, the gecko crawls from a saddlebag, or a nearby palm tree, and *polymorphs* into the maskhi.)

"A moment of your time," Ku says. He claims he can take the party to a woman who knows where to find Sita. He does not know the name of the woman and will not speculate whether Sita is dead or alive. For this service, Ku wants some jewelry. If asked how Ku knows about the woman, he says mysteriously, "My people hear things that others cannot." (Ku plays dumb about the identity and function of Ugaq. He intends to deliver the party to the hag and hopes that she will pay him, too. Although Ugaq didn't ask for the party, he figures that the female PCs will make good servitors for Ahz'ahk and that Ugaq can eat the males.)

If the PCs threaten to expose Ku to Akidya, he shrugs and tells them to go ahead. "Breaking into a crypt is a blasphemous offense. Do you think Akidya will believe grave robbers?" (He's right; she won't believe a word the PCs say. She'll order her militia to escort the party from the village. Shortly thereafter, Ku reappears and makes his offer again.) If the PCs didn't enter the crypt, Ku insists that Akidya will never take their word over his. (And she won't.)

Should PCs attack Ku, he quickly surrenders. If they promise not to harm him, he promises to take them to the woman who knows about Sita. (Ku hopes that Ugaq will be able to overcome the party and that he will still earn a reward for their delivery.)

Declining to cooperate with Ku brings a warning from him that he is their only hope of finding Sita. (He's probably right.)

If the PCs ask Ku his price, he asks, "What is my assistance worth to you?" The maskhi isn't much of a negotiator and will be satisfied with any piece of jewelry the PCs offer (especially bracelets and rings). If they don't have jewelry, Ku accepts any other items of value.

Ugaq's Cave

Ku leads the party across a barren stretch of desert to a hill on the perimeter of the Pit of the Ghuls, about 10 miles north of Vahtov. The journey is uneventful. Ku remains in his gecko form, riding in a PC's saddlebag or trouser pocket, "so as not to attract attention."

Ku points out a 10-foot-diameter hole in the side of the hill. "This will lead us to the woman you seek." He suggests they all go in together. If any of the PCs decide to stay behind, Ku warns them that lingering in the area can be dangerous. "A pair of mated vishaps claims this territory as their own. You will be safe in the cave." He points to several human bones, gnawed and broken, scattered in the sand. "The remains of trespassers," he explains. If the PCs aren't familiar with vishaps, Khafaz describes them as "flightless dragons with teeth like daggers and ravenous appetites." Neither Khafaz nor Turin has any intention of remaining outside. (Ku thinks he is telling the truth about the vishaps, though the creatures are long gone. One of them is buried under a crumbled section of Ahz'ahk's palace; see Episode Six.) If any of the PCs still wish to remain outside, Ku urges them to reconsider, but he will ultimately accept the decision they make.

Map Key

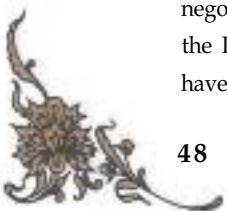
The walls and floors are rough granite. Ceilings rise 12 feet. Except for the main chamber (area 2), all areas are dark. The dry air smells faintly of rotten meat, hot oil, and cherries.

1. Passage. The entrance to the cave opens to a narrow passage, sloping down. Dim light is visible from the north end. (As soon as the PCs enter this area, see the "Meeting Ugaq" section on the next page.)

2. Main Chamber. Ugaq's living area includes:

2a. A carpet for sitting and sleeping (*mafrash*), bearing the faded image of a sunflower. (Ugaq stole it from Vahtov.)

2b. A brass incense burner mounted on a 3-foot brass stand (*mabkhar*).





2c. A shallow pit containing cakes of cherry-scented incense, a basket of wild mushrooms (*iftur*), a flask of oil, a bundle of rags, a bucket of kindling, and several torches.

2d. A brass brazier, similar in appearance to the *mabkhar*, filled with oil.

2e. A small pit containing a fire, fueled by rags and kindling.

3. Dining Area. A chamber that reeks of rotten meat has the bones of Ugaq's recent victims littering the floor. On the floor near the wall are a cleaver (dmg 1d6) and three knives (dmg 1d4 each).

4. Sand Pit. A pit of glowing green sand that has the consistency of quicksand fills the sand pit. (The pit is a portal to Ahz'ahk's palace; see the "Showdown" section on page 50.)

Meeting Ugaq

As the party nears the northern end of the passage (area 1), they hear the voice of a young woman calling from the chamber ahead (area 2). "Who is it? Who is out there?" Ku responds, "It is Ku. And some friends, eager to speak with you."

Out of the darkness steps an innocent-faced human maiden, no more than 20 years old, carrying a torch and dressed in rags. She narrows her eyes and gives a glance at Ku that suggests irritation, then looks at the PCs and smiles pleasantly. "I am always glad to meet Ku's friends. Please come in." She turns, beckoning the PCs to follow.

The maiden is Ugaq, a *polymorphed* *silat*.

Ugaq (young *silat*): Int Very (12); AL CE; AC 3; MV 15; HD 7; hp 48; THAC0 10 (13); #AT 3; Dmg 1d4+7/1d4+7/2d4+7 (claws and bite); SA superhuman Strength (19); SD affected only by magical or iron weapons; regenerates at the rate of 1 hp/round; can *polymorph* all but one part of her form (usually the feet) three times/day; MR 30% SZ L (10' tall); ML 14; XP 5,000. Wears a *ring of invisibility and inaudibility*.

Though not expecting Ku, she is nonetheless intrigued by the PCs. Ugaq plans to subdue the party as described

in the "Something in the Air" section. If the PCs see through her ruse or attack her at any point, go immediately to the "Showdown" section.

Something in The Air

As Ugaq leads the party to the main chamber (area 2), she chatters incessantly about the weather, the PCs' clothing, and other inane topics to keep them distracted. If asked her name, she identifies herself as "Ugaq, the caretaker of these caves." If asked about Sita or her relationship with Ku, she avoids a direct answer, responding with, "An excellent question, and one that I will discuss at length as soon as we get settled" or "Allow me to gather my thoughts, and I will be happy to answer any questions concerning that."

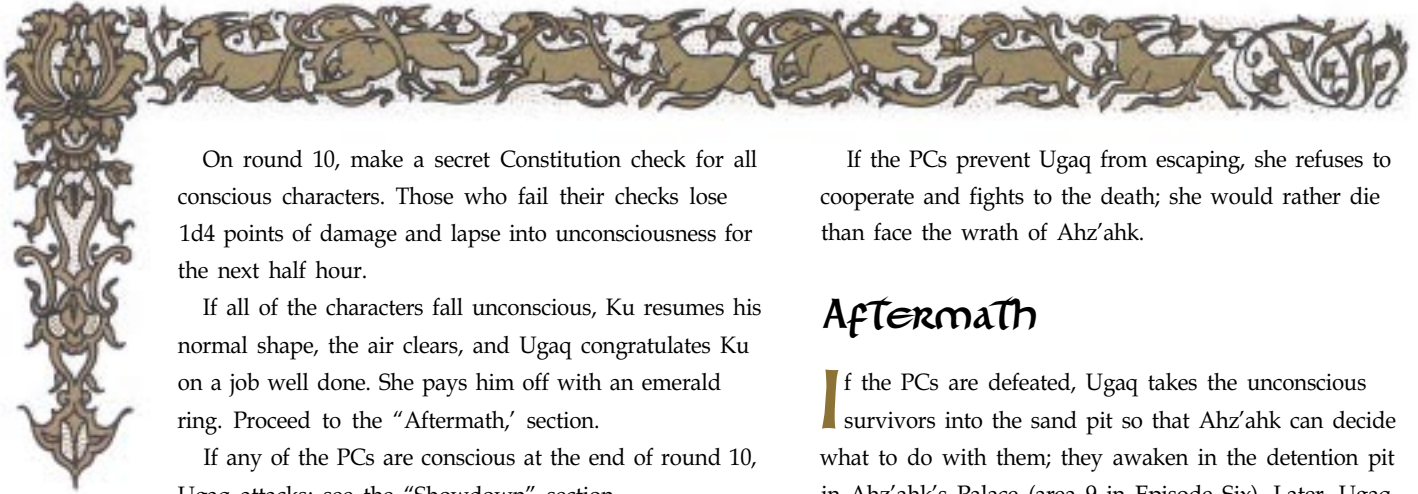
When they enter the main chamber, Ugaq says, "Oh, it smells so bad in here." She lights the incense in the *mabkhar* (area 2b) with her torch. The chamber begins to fill with the sweet aroma of cherries. (The scent is poisonous; its effects are described below.) "And it is far too dark and gloomy." She moves over to the brazier (area 2d) and lights it, the flaming oil illuminating the chamber in a soft glow. Gray smoke spirals from the brazier, producing a harsh, oily odor that competes with the incense.

The *silat* invites the PCs to rest on the *mafrash* and offers them some *ifturs* from the storage pit (area 2c); the *ifturs* are bitter but edible. Ku lingers by the south opening of the chamber. Ugaq continues to babble, hoping to keep the PCs' minds occupied while the poison incense does its work. (Ku and Ugaq are immune the fumes.)

On the third round after Ugaq lights the incense, the PCs begin to feel sick to their stomachs. As inconspicuously as possible, Ku withdraws into the passage (area 1), then *polymorphs* into a 6-foot-diameter boulder to block the flow of air.

On round 7, make a secret saving throw vs. poison for all of the characters. Those who fail their throws lose 1d6 points of damage and lapse into unconsciousness for the next hour.





On round 10, make a secret Constitution check for all conscious characters. Those who fail their checks lose 1d4 points of damage and lapse into unconsciousness for the next half hour.

If all of the characters fall unconscious, Ku resumes his normal shape, the air clears, and Ugaq congratulates Ku on a job well done. She pays him off with an emerald ring. Proceed to the “Aftermath,” section.

If any of the PCs are conscious at the end of round 10, Ugaq attacks; see the “Showdown” section.

Showdown

If the PCs see through Ugaq’s plan and attack (or if any of them are still standing after round 10), she resumes her normal form of a 10-foot-tall, hunchbacked hag, slashing with her claws and snapping with her razor-sharp teeth.

If 10 rounds have elapsed, Ku changes back to his normal form and attacks, thrusting his spear like a sword.

If 10 rounds haven’t yet elapsed, Ku remains in his boulder form to prevent fresh air from entering. The characters must still make saving throws and Constitution checks during the rounds indicated above. The poison ceases to be a threat if the PCs extinguish the incense or dislodge Ku. He resumes his normal shape if he is pushed aside (requiring two or more characters with a combined Strength of 25) or loses half his hit points.

If Ku loses half his hit points, he also loses his enthusiasm for fighting. He spends one round in his normal form, frantically wondering what to do next, while Ugaq screeches at him for his stupidity. He then *polymorphs* into a gecko and disappears into a crack in the wall, never to be seen again.

Ugaq panics if the battle isn’t going well (for instance, if she loses half her hit points). She becomes *invisible* and races to the sand pit (area 4). Unless the PCs catch her, she leaps into the sand and vanishes (they may meet her again in Episode Six).

If the PCs prevent Ugaq from escaping, she refuses to cooperate and fights to the death; she would rather die than face the wrath of Ahz’ahk.

Aftermath

If the PCs are defeated, Ugaq takes the unconscious survivors into the sand pit so that Ahz’ahk can decide what to do with them; they awaken in the detention pit in Ahz’ahk’s Palace (area 9 in Episode Six). Later, Ugaq will return to her lair and eat any dead PCs at her leisure.

If the party defeats Ugaq or she escapes, they may enter the sand pit. When a PC submerges, he feels as if he being consumed by flames, then lapses into unconsciousness. (He revives, unharmed, in Ahz’ahk’s Palace; see Episode Six.) Khafaz and Turin unhesitatingly follow the PCs into the green sand; they are not about to be left behind to face a vishap.

If they aren’t sure how to proceed after they deal with the silat, they may consult Ala’i for advice. (Khafaz suggests this if they don’t think of it themselves.) If the PCs ask any question relating to the green sand, Ala’i accepts a page. The star-bordered illustration of the mountains in the upper left hand corner fades away, replaced by the following series of images:

- A pool of green sand.
- A man stepping into the sand.
- The man stands near a river of green fire.
- The original image of the mountain reappears.

(Ala’i is telling the party that stepping into the green sand will take them to the river near Ahz’ahk’s palace, described in Episode Six.)

What Next?

Continue with Episode Six, in which the PCs end up in the Palace of Ahz’ahk.





Episode Six

The Palace of Ahz'ahk

Unable to sleep, Jamilia summoned Husar to her room and asked for a tale.

"What tale shall it be?" asked the elder, kneeling beside his niece's bed.

"The djinni who tricked the moon? The fish who . . ."

"No, no, Uncle," said Jamilia. "I want a frightening tale!"

"A frightening tale? But will not such a tale disturb your dreams?"

"I am not a child," said Jamilia indignantly. "I am twelve years old."

"Very well, then," said Husar. "Listen: In another world where men are not welcome, there exists the City of Brass, a place of golden castles and streets of gleaming metal. But those who dwell there are dark of heart, a vile assembly of monsters and killers. The cruelest of all is the ruler, the Sultan of the Efreeti, known also as the Lord of Flame, the Potentate Incandescent, and the Tempering and Eternal Flame of Truth. Beneath him serves a court of fiends, none more fearsome than the noble efreeti.

"The noble efreeti are hulking abominations with hair of brass and skin the color of basalt. They employ betrayal and murder to further their ambitions."

Jamilia pulled the sheets to her chin.

Husar continued. "In an age before men worshiped the righteous gods, one of the Sultan's servitors, a noble efreeti named Ahz'ahk with crimson horns and eyes like blazing coals, grew discontent with his lot. Aware of his servitor's displeasure, the Sultan summoned Ahz'ahk to an iron chamber in the center of his palace.

"Speak freely," said the Sultan. 'I would know of your distress.'

"It is that I have so little,' said Ahz'ahk, 'while you have so much. Compared to you, my wealth is trivial, my power insignificant. And . . . ' The efreeti hesitated.

"Speak!" boomed the Sultan.

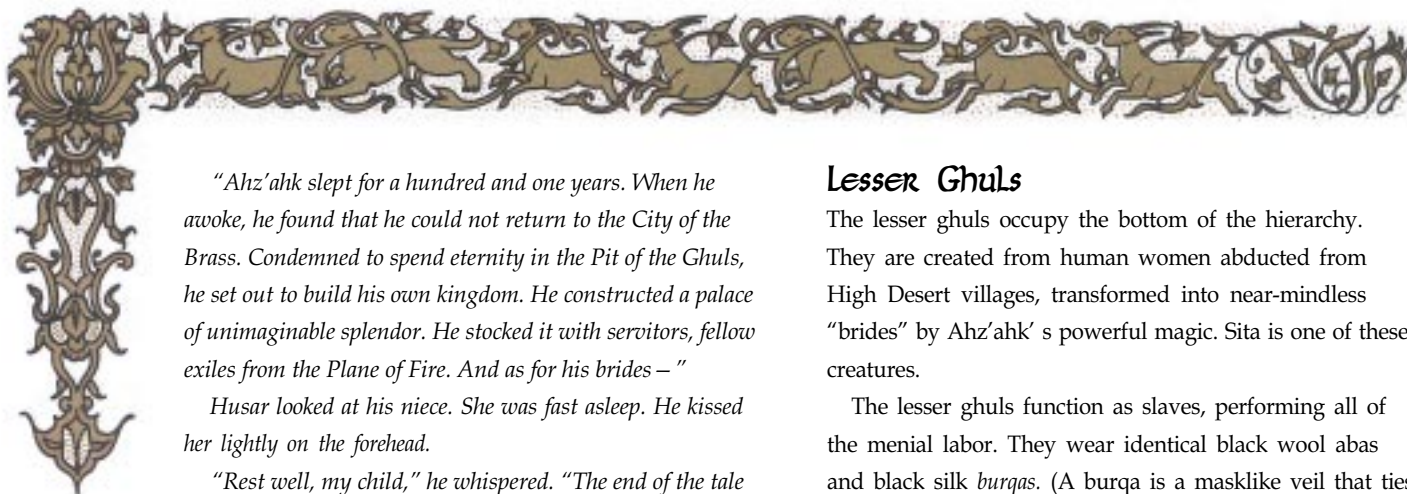
"And so many brides. Many, many brides. I wish these things for myself.'

"I appreciate your candor,' said the Sultan. 'I will relieve you of your torment by removing you from its source.'

"No, Sultan!" cried the efreeti. 'I did not mean -'

"You want what I possess? Then I will give you the opportunity to acquire it yourself.' And with a wave of the Sultan's hand, the efreeti was wrenched from the City of Brass and cast into the Pit of the Ghuls.





"Ahz'ahk slept for a hundred and one years. When he awoke, he found that he could not return to the City of the Brass. Condemned to spend eternity in the Pit of the Ghuls, he set out to build his own kingdom. He constructed a palace of unimaginable splendor. He stocked it with servitors, fellow exiles from the Plane of Fire. And as for his brides –"

Husar looked at his niece. She was fast asleep. He kissed her lightly on the forehead.

"Rest well, my child," he whispered. "The end of the tale will wait for another day."

Preliminaries

You'll need the black-and-white map of Ahz'ahk's Palace (Card 6, back), as well as Ala'i's Response 4 (Card 6, front). You also should review the great ghul and noble efreeti entries in the handout booklet.

Background

This episode takes place in the palace of Ahz'ahk, the home of a noble efreeti exiled from the City of Brass. Located deep beneath the Pit of the Ghuls, the palace contains hundreds of servitors, responsible for maintenance, security, and construction. They also attend to Ahz'ahk's every whim.

Recently, a venerable vishap from the Pit of Ghuls breached the palace by way of an underground passage. Ahz'ahk and his servitors attacked and defeated the vishap, but destroyed much of the palace in the process. The servitors are currently in the process of removing debris and rebuilding the damaged chambers.

Occupants

About 85% of the occupants of the palace are lesser ghuls, 10% are great ghuls, and 5% are salamanders. The occupants follow a rigid chain of command, with Ahz'ahk as the ruler.

Lesser Ghuls

The lesser ghuls occupy the bottom of the hierarchy. They are created from human women abducted from High Desert villages, transformed into near-mindless "brides" by Ahz'ahk's powerful magic. Sita is one of these creatures.

The lesser ghuls function as slaves, performing all of the menial labor. They wear identical black wool abas and black silk *burqas*. (A *burqa* is a masklike veil that ties around the head with silken cords, hanging down to completely conceal the face and neck. The eyes show through a pair of slits.) The lesser ghuls color the tips of their fingers red with henna, a symbol of subservience.

The lesser ghuls will not speak with the party. If approached, they cover against the floor or wall, covering their eyes and moaning until the PCs withdraw.

Lesser ghul: Int average (8); AL NE; AC 2; MV 12 (Br 1 or Cl 3); HD 3; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/2d4 (claws and bite); SA *invisibility*, *polymorph self*, and *shocking grasp*, all at will; SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and cold-based magic; +1 weapon to hit; -1 to their attack rolls in daylight; SZ M (6' tall); ML 8; XP 975.

Great Ghuls

The great ghuls assist with routine chores, but mainly function as supervisors of the lesser ghuls. Ahz'ahk creates great ghuls from the ranks of the lesser ghuls, a reward for loyal service. Like the lesser ghuls, the great ghuls wear black abas and *burqas*, and they color their fingers with henna. To signify their higher status, they wear jewelry: silver rings with turquoise settings (*khamzars*) on their little fingers, strings of golden beads (*kitbats*) woven into their hair, and bracelets of glass beads in bright colors (*dalags*). Ahz'ahk does not allow any of his great ghuls to become mages.

In most situations great ghuls will not speak with the party. If a PC approaches one, she hisses and claws the air until the character moves away.





Great ghul: Int high (13); AL NE; AC 0; MV 18 (Br 3 or Cl 12); HD 4; hp 28; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6/1d6/2d6 (claws and bite); SA *invisibility*, *polymorph self*, and *shocking grasp*, all at will; SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and cold-based magic; +1 weapon to hit; -1 to their attack rolls in daylight; SZ M (9' tall); ML 8; XP 1,400.

Salamanders

Salamanders oversee the great ghuls, act as guards, and occasionally plot strategy with Ahz'ahk. They are identical to those described in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*.

Salamander: Int high (13); AL CE; AC 5 (head and upper body)/3 (lower body); MV 9; HD 7+7; hp 50; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2d6+1d6 (tail plus heat)/1d6+1d6 (spear plus heat); SD only affected by magical weapons, magical creatures, or beings of 4+1 HD or better; immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells; immune to fire-based attacks; cold-based attacks cause an additional 1 point of damage per die of damage; SZ M (7' long); ML 13; XP 2,000.

Getting Started

If Ugaq defeats the PCs at the end of Episode Five: They awaken in the detention pit; begin this episode with the "Imprisoned," section on page 57.

If the PCs defeated Ugaq and entered the sand pit at the end of Episode Five: Begin at area 1 (see the Map Key on page 54). After leaving the arrival area (area 1), the PCs may explore the chambers and passages of the palace. Unless disturbed, the ghuls ignore the party. You may enliven the palace exploration with any of the following encounters:

- A lesser ghul stumbles from the shadows, stares into the face of a random PC, gropes his clothing, then walks away.
- A salamander bursts through the surface of a liquid fire trough, snarls at the party, then submerges. If the PCs probe the trough for the salamander or otherwise

disturb the creature, the salamander hauls itself from the trough and attacks, retreating into the trough and slithering away if on the verge of defeat.

- A great ghul dunks the head of a shrieking lesser ghul into a liquid fire trough, then yanks her out by the hair. The lesser ghul slumps to the floor. The great ghul shambling away. A few minutes later, the lesser ghul staggers to her feet and stumbles to the nearest chamber. If the PCs interfere at any point, both ghuls shriek and hiss at them until they withdraw.

When any of the following events occur, go to the "Salamander Strike" section on page 57:

- The PCs attack a great or lesser ghul.
- The PCs damage a portion of the palace, are excessively noisy, or otherwise draw attention to themselves.
- The PCs have explored most of the palace, the players are getting restless, and/or you decide it is time to move on.

Finding Sita

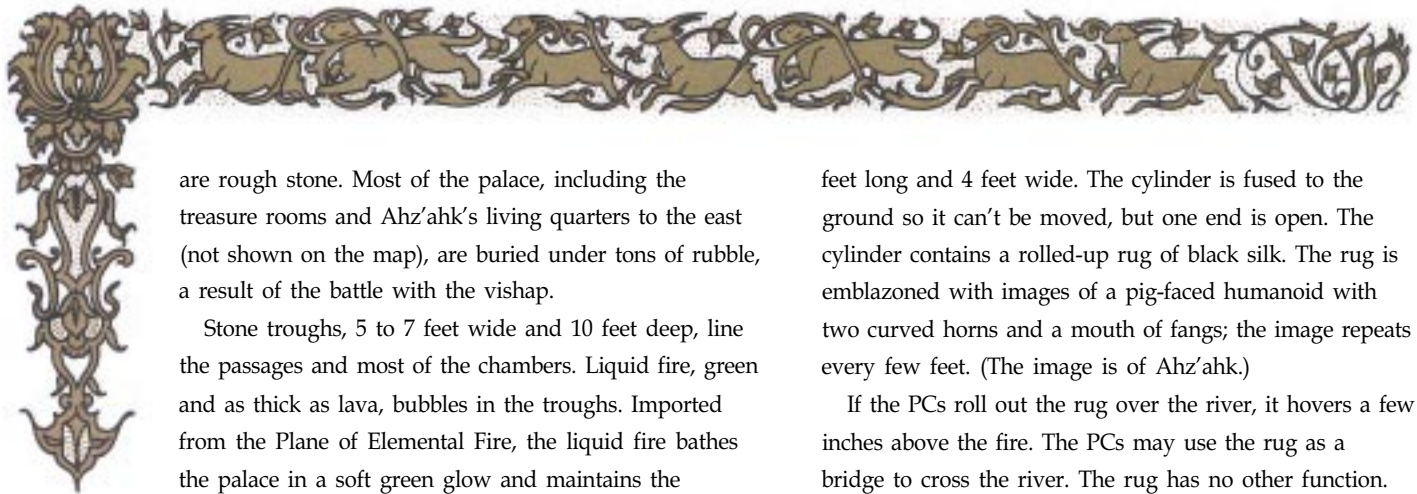
At any point in this episode, the PCs may ask Ala'i how to find Sita. Ala'i accepts a page and transforms; give the players Ala'i's Response 4 (Card 6, front), in which the darkened squares form an arrow pointing to the symbol of the bell.

Ala'i's clue indicates that Sita will respond to the iron bells that the PCs got from Fahad at the end of Episode One. To respond to the bells, however, Sita must be able to hear them. Sita will only hear the bells if they are sounded in area 12. (See "Reclamation of Sita" on page 62 for more details.)

About The Palace

Carved into a thick layer of solid granite, the palace consists of several large chambers linked by winding passages. There are no doors; ivory arches embedded with life-size onyx sculptures of Ahz'ahk's homed head mark the chamber entrances. The 20-foot-diameter passages





are rough stone. Most of the palace, including the treasure rooms and Ahz'ahk's living quarters to the east (not shown on the map), are buried under tons of rubble, a result of the battle with the vishap.

Stone troughs, 5 to 7 feet wide and 10 feet deep, line the passages and most of the chambers. Liquid fire, green and as thick as lava, bubbles in the troughs. Imported from the Plane of Elemental Fire, the liquid fire bathes the palace in a soft green glow and maintains the temperature at 100 to 110 degrees.

Normally, salamanders can't abide temperatures lower than 300 degrees. However, lounging in the liquid fire for an hour or so every day allows them to function in the palace's relatively cool environment. Anyone other than a native of the Plane of Fire who touches the liquid fire, ghuls included, suffers 2d4 points of damage per round.

The odor of rot (from the ghuls) and charred wood (from the liquid fire) is evident throughout the palace. All is quiet, with the silence occasionally broken by a distant scream (of an agonized ghuls) or the rumble of falling stone (from the unstable portions of the auditorium, area 12).

Map Key— Ahz'ahk's Palace

1. Arrival Area. The party awakens in a dark granite cave next to a pit of green sand, identical to the pit in Ugaq's cave (area 4, Ugaq's Cave map). If a PC jumps into the pit, he feels a burning sensation, lapses into unconsciousness, and awakens beside the pit in Ugaq's cave. (The PCs may be tempted to use the pit to return to the High Desert and look for help. If so, remind them that finding help is unlikely.)

A 10-foot-wide opening in the south wall is the end of a passage that leads to the River of Fire.

2. River of Fire. A river of liquid fire, 30 feet wide and 10 feet deep, separates the arrival area (area 1) from an entryway marked by an ivory arch (area 3). A 15-foot-wide granite ledge hugs the river on either side. Contact with the river inflicts 2d4 points of damage round.

Just outside of the area 1 cave lies a copper cylinder, 10

feet long and 4 feet wide. The cylinder is fused to the ground so it can't be moved, but one end is open. The cylinder contains a rolled-up rug of black silk. The rug is emblazoned with images of a pig-faced humanoid with two curved horns and a mouth of fangs; the image repeats every few feet. (The image is of Ahz'ahk.)

If the PCs roll out the rug over the river, it hovers a few inches above the fire. The PCs may use the rug as a bridge to cross the river. The rug has no other function. (Unless the PCs remove the rug, it remains in place for the duration of the episode. After Ugaq delivers a fresh batch of females to the palace, it is her job to roll up the rug before she returns to her lair in the High Desert.)

Should they not roll out the rug, they may use Ala'i to ferry them across the river. Otherwise, if they follow the ledge north, they will come to a place where the river narrows to 10 feet (area 2a). A successful Dexterity check enables them to jump across; a character who fails falls into the liquid fire.

3. Main Entry. The ivory arch that marks this passage bears an onyx image identical to the images on the silk rug (area 2).

4. Preparation Chamber. The aroma of sulfur and lemons drifts from the entrance to an unoccupied square chamber. Black marble tiles cover the walls, floor, and ceiling. Along the west and north walls rest 10 copper containers, each the size and shape of a coffin. The containers are uncovered and empty. Against the east wall stand two copper barrels (2 feet in diameter, 3 feet tall; the left barrel contains sulfur, the right a lemon-scented incense), a copper tub (4 feet in diameter, 3 feet tall, filled with a powdered red metal similar to iron), and a copper cabinet (3 feet tall, containing rolls of black silk bandages). A copper incense burner is in each corner.

Ahz'ahk's minions bring captured human women to this room and transform them into lesser ghuls. The minions fill the burners with lemon-scented incense from the right barrel; the scent induces a comalike state in the women, similar to that of a *temporal stasis* spell. (The





incense doesn't affect the minions.) The minions dust the women with sulfur from the second barrel, wrap them with bandages from the cabinet, place them in the copper containers, and cover them with a layer of powdered metal from the tub. Incantations from Ahz'ahk complete the procedure. After several months in the containers, the women are transformed into lesser ghuls.

If the PCs light the incense, the room fills with a sickening sweet lemon odor. Any character who fails to save vs. poison feels dizzy, then collapses. If a collapsed character remains in the chamber for an additional round, he succumbs to the effects of a *temporal stasis* spell. The condition persists for 1 to 4 hours, or until it is canceled by a *dispel magic* or temporal reinstatement spell.

5. Dressing Chamber. This square chamber, surfaced with black marble tile, bustles with activity. Six lesser ghuls sit on the floor against the west wall, a great ghul standing over them. The lesser ghuls are sewing abas and

burqas, tearing strips of black cloth with their teeth, then stitching them together with silver needles. Dozens of completed abas and burqas hang from copper hooks.

A great ghul lies on a marble table near the east wall. A lesser ghul combs her hair with a brush that looks like the rib cage of a small animal. A second lesser ghul sprinkles blue oil on her hair from a copper bowl.

Because Ahz'ahk insists on well-groomed servitors, the lesser and great ghuls use this room to attend to their appearance.

These ghuls are unusually nervous. If the PCs linger in the entryway, the great ghuls groan and hiss. If the PCs don't withdraw, the ghuls begin to shriek; go to the "Salamander Strike" section. Any attempt to steal the abas or burqas also triggers the Salamander Strike.

6. Feeding Tank. The sounds of slurping emit from a circular chamber at the end of a hallway. The marble-tiled room contains a shallow copper vat, 3 feet high and



20 feet in diameter, filled with a lumpy substance that smells like rotten meat and looks like curdled milk. A dozen lesser ghuls kneel at the vat, dunking their heads, then resurfacing, licking the lumps from their chins.

The ghuls feed here, eating a foul gruel prepared in the storage chamber (area 7), which substitutes for their normal diet of human corpses.

7. Storage Chamber. Rows of copper shelves, extending from the ground to a height of 50 feet, fill most of a large chamber. The shelves hold a remarkable array of items: man-size bolts of black silk and wool cloth; copper barrels of henna, sulfur, and incense; immense blocks of turquoise, quartz, and alabaster. Another shelf is piled with black marble tiles and planks of solid silver. Yet another is crammed with towers of ceramic bowls, stacks of mirrors, and bundles of iron rods.

Ghuls are everywhere. As two great ghuls look on, a dozen lesser ghuls climb copper ladders leading to the highest shelves and arrange the stacks and bundles in even rows. Other lesser ghuls drag copper carts piled with obsidian chunks. Still others polish the shelves with rags.

Near the north wall is a copper tank 5 feet tall and 30 feet in diameter. The tank contains a thick liquid that reeks of rotten meat.

A black marble ramp leads to a 20-foot-diameter circle of violet light on the east wall. The light circle radiates a mild heat, comparable to that of a campfire. The circle of violet light is a portal to the Plane of Elemental Fire. Only natives of the Plane of Fire can use the portal. If a PC touches the portal, he finds it as solid as a stone wall; he must also make a successful Constitution check or suffer 1 to 2 points of heat damage.

This chamber stores some of the raw materials necessary for the maintenance and restoration of the palace; nothing here is useful to the PCs. (The mineral blocks and silver planks, though valuable, are too awkward to carry.) The tank brews the gruel fed to the ghuls in the feeding tank (area 6).

After the PCs have explored the chamber for a few rounds, they notice a salamander slithering between the

rows of shelves. The salamander doesn't see them. If the PCs remain in the chamber for another five rounds, however, the salamander spots them; go to the "Salamander Strike" section.

8. Barracks. Dozens of tunnellike cavities, 3 feet in diameter and 10 feet long, have been cut into the granite walls of a snaking passage. About every tenth cavity contains an immobile ghul. The passage ends in a square granite chamber containing a pool of liquid fire (area 8a).

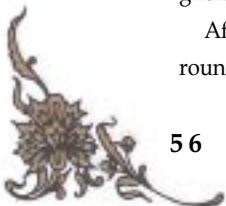
The cavities serve as barracks for the ghuls. While the ghuls don't require sleep as they did in their former lives, they do crave privacy. Once a week, they are allowed to curl up in a cavity and enjoy a few hours of solitude. If a PC disturbs a resting ghul, she groans and pulls herself deeper into the cavity. If the disturbance persists, she shrieks for help; go to the "Salamander Strike" section.

The salamanders use the fire pool to refresh themselves. If the party remains in area 8a for more than five rounds, they see a dull red tail covered with wispy appendages break the surface, then submerge. If they linger in the area, a salamander rises from the pool and hisses at them. If the party doesn't leave, the salamander cries for aid; go to the "Salamander Strike" section.

9. Detention Pit. A pit, 40 feet square and 20 feet deep, has been cut into the floor of a granite alcove almost directly south of the feeding tank. Indentations in the west wall of the pit serve as a makeshift ladder. The pit is unoccupied.

10. Mineral Bath. The floor of this luxurious chamber is made of gleaming ivory, the walls of polished turquoise. Four crystal chandeliers, each holding hundreds of tiny black candles, hang from the corners of the mirrored ceiling. A velvet carpet leads from the entryway to a sunken silver tub, 20 feet in diameter. A bronze palm tree rises from the center of the tub; thin streams of water trickle from its leaves. The room is unoccupied.

This is Ahz'ahks private mineral bath. The water has no special properties.





11. Ahz'ahk's Sanctum. This room of breathtaking splendor is fit for a sultan. Each alabaster wall, framed in curtains of crimson silk, contains a 10-foot bas-relief of a pig-faced humanoid with two horns and a mouth of fangs. The horns are ruby, the eyes black diamond. A crystal globe dangles from a silver chain in the northeast corner; clusters of red and yellow lights hover like tiny stars inside the globe. A red velvet carpet covers the floor from wall to wall. Centered in the room stands an immense bed made of black porcelain, reinforced with strips of bronze. A dozen black satin pillows are neatly piled at the head of the bed; a stack of black satin sheets rests at the foot. The room is unoccupied.

This is the only one of Ahz'ahk's sanctums that survived the vishap attack. (The others were east of the auditorium.) Any PC making a successful Intelligence check identifies the crystal globe as a sort of clock. (It tracks the passage of time in the City of Brass.)

12. Auditorium. Two salamanders stand guard at the arched entryway (area 12a). The chatting salamanders won't immediately see the approaching party. However, if the party attacks, comes within 20 feet of the entryway, or otherwise draws attention to themselves, the salamanders shout an alert. Go to the "Salamander Strike" section. (If a character manages to get inside consult the "In the Auditorium" section on page 60 to tell him what he sees.)

13. Disposal Chamber. A circular granite chamber contains a deep pool of liquid fire, tapped from the Plane of Elemental Fire. The pool supplies liquid fire through a fissure underground for the troughs that run throughout the palace. It is also used for the disposal of rubble, corpses, and other debris.

Salamander Strike

Alerted by the shouts of a servitor (or by some other disturbance), four to six salamanders charge from the darkness and confront the party, demanding their

surrender. If the PCs flee, the salamanders pursue. Should they attack, the salamanders respond with their spears and lashing tails. If necessary, reinforcements arrive in sufficient numbers to convince the party that further resistance is futile. Prodding the party with spears, the salamanders herd them to the detention pit (area 9).

Imprisoned

If Ugaq subdued the party at the end of Episode Five: The party awakens in the bottom of the detention pit (area 9). A lattice of glowing white threads seals the top of the pit. Ugaq (hereafter referred to as the jailer) tosses a stone at the lattice; the stone sizzles away in a puff of smoke. Ugaq refuses to speak with the PCs. (The lattice is similar to a wall of force. Touching it inflicts 3d6 points of heat damage. It can only be removed by a salamander; these creatures are immune to its heat.)

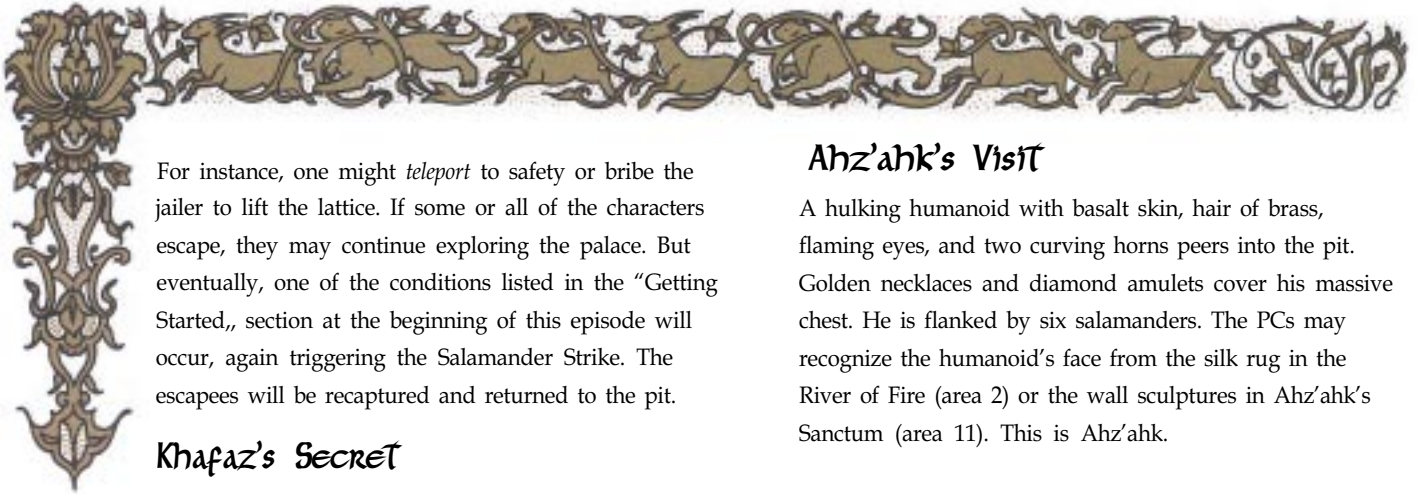
If the party was captured in the "Salamander Strike" section: The salamanders lead the party to the detention pit (area 9) and force them in. A PC who resists or refuses to climb down is pushed, suffering 2d6 points of damage when he hits the bottom. When the party is inside, two salamanders unroll a carpet resembling a lattice of glowing white threads, completely covering the opening of the pit. A salamander tosses a stone at the lattice. The stone disappears with a sizzle. (See above for the lattice's properties.) With it secured, the salamanders return to their duties elsewhere in the palace; one remains to guard the pit (hereafter referred to as the jailer).

Events in The Pit

The following events take place while the party is imprisoned in the detention pit. The events occur in the order given, although the amount of time that passes between the events is up to the DM. At your discretion, some of the events, may occur simultaneously (such as "Ahz'ahk's Visit" and "Khafaz's Secret").

Though the wall of force lattice should keep the party in the pit, inventive PCs may be able to stage an escape.





For instance, one might *teleport* to safety or bribe the jailer to lift the lattice. If some or all of the characters escape, they may continue exploring the palace. But eventually, one of the conditions listed in the “Getting Started,” section at the beginning of this episode will occur, again triggering the Salamander Strike. The escapees will be recaptured and returned to the pit.

Khafaz's Secret

Khafaz huddles in a corner with his aide, away from the PCs. He whispers to Turin, glancing in the party's direction to make sure they can't overhear. The discussion stops if a PC approaches. If asked what he was talking about, he says, “I was informing Turin how I wish my estate to be dispersed, should I die in this place.” Turin refuses to comment. (What Khafaz actually told him is detailed in the “Khafaz's Betrayal” event below.)

Kuhj's Visit

The lattice rolls back, and a salamander with a metallic patch strapped over one eye climbs into the pit. The salamander's name is Kuhj. Six other salamanders peer into the opening, spears raised, ready to strike if the PCs attack Kuhj.

After contemplating the party for a few minutes, Kuhj glances up to make sure the guards aren't paying attention, then asks under his breath, “Which of you is the commander?” If no one volunteers, he approaches the most physically imposing PC. “My informants have told me,” he says in a low voice, “that you seek a female human. True?” If the PC asks why he wants to know this, he says only, “Curiosity.” Should they say they are indeed seeking a female, Kuhj smiles and nods. But a refusal to comment, the salamander says, “I will assume your silence means yes.” If the PC denies that the party is seeking a female, Kuhj laughs. “You may be a good warrior, but you are a poor liar. Your face betrays you.”

Kuhj climbs out of the pit, then orders the guards to replace the lattice.

Ahz'ahk's Visit

A hulking humanoid with basalt skin, hair of brass, flaming eyes, and two curving horns peers into the pit. Golden necklaces and diamond amulets cover his massive chest. He is flanked by six salamanders. The PCs may recognize the humanoid's face from the silk rug in the River of Fire (area 2) or the wall sculptures in Ahz'ahk's Sanctum (area 11). This is Ahz'ahk.

Ahz'ahk (noble efreeti): Int high (13); AL LE; AC -1; MV 12, Fl 30 (B); HD 13; hp 98; THAC0 7; #AT 2; Dmg 4d8/4d8; SA and SD spell-like abilities, immunities (see the noble efreeti entry in the handout booklet for details); MR 15%; SZ L (15' tall); ML 18; XP 11,000.

Ahz'ahk studies the party impassively. If a PC speaks to him, a salamander shrieks, “Silence! You have not been given permission to address the great Ahz'ahk!” The efreeti glares at the party a few moments longer, then leaves without a word.

Khafaz's Demand

Khafaz screams at the jailer, demanding an audience with Ahz'ahk. “If you do not comply, you will live to regret it!” If the PCs ask Khafaz what he's up to, he says, “Saving our lives.” Should they tell Khafaz to be quiet, he complies, but resumes his screeching, as soon as the PCs withdraw.

The jailer insists on silence, but Khafaz is unrelenting. Finally, the jailer calls for a salamander and mumbles a few words to him. The creature leaves, returning 20 minutes later. “Permission has been granted,” says the jailer as the lattice is pulled back. Six salamanders with raised spears make sure that no one but Khafaz climbs out.

Turin insists that he has no idea what Khafaz is doing. If the PCs press for a response, however, Turin says only that Khafaz is “going to help us escape.”





Khafaz's Betrayal

As the day wears on, Turin becomes increasingly anxious, refusing to speak with the PCs and repeatedly craning his neck to see if anyone is approaching the pit.

Three hours after the "Khafaz's Demand" event, he reappears, this time in the company of two salamanders. He and the salamanders peer into the pit seemingly relaxed and cheerful. "Do you have anything to say to your friends before they die?" a salamander asks Khafaz.

"Farewell," he says, waving and grinning. The salamanders find this hilarious, snorting and guffawing, slapping him on the back as they depart.

The color drains from Turin's face. "He has betrayed us! He lied to me!" If the PCs calm Turin, he explains that Khafaz told him that after arranging an audience with Ahz'ahk, he was going to offer to pay the efreeti a fortune in gold for the party's release. "He swore me to secrecy. He said he didn't want you to know, because you might interfere with the negotiations. But this is the last indignity I will ever suffer from Khafaz," says Turin, his voice shaking with rage. "I will live to see him dead."

Party's Fate

The jailer hollers into the pit. "Your fate has been decided. Your corpses will be fed to the ghuls. If you have not starved to death within a few days, we will find some other way to end your lives." The jailer has nothing else to say to the party.

Kuhj's Offer

Kuhj returns to the pit with six salamanders. He climbs inside, the salamanders guarding the rim to make sure he isn't attacked.

When Kuhj is convinced that the guards aren't paying attention, he motions for the PCs to come close. "I can tell you where to find the female you seek and how to escape from this place. In return, you must take me with you and help me destroy Ahz'ahk. Will you agree?" If the PCs want details, Kuhj says that he can't outline his plan now, fearing that the guards may overhear. Asked why he is willing to help them, Kuhj says, "Ahz'ahk plucked the

eye from my head for neglecting to bow when he passed. I will have my revenge."

Kuhj cuts off any other questions, insisting on an answer from the party. If the PCs agree to cooperate, he says he will come back soon, then leaves the pit. Continue with the "Deadly Alliance" section.

Should the PCs decline, Kuhj urges them to reconsider, then leaves the pit. Allow the PCs to languish in the pit for a few hours, without food, water, or contact with anyone else. Kuhj eventually returns, asking if they've changed their minds. If they have, continue with the "Deadly Alliance" section. Should they hesitate, you might point out that their situation is becoming desperate and the likelihood of escape appears increasingly remote. If the PCs refuse to cooperate with Kuhj, the salamanders intend to hold them in the pit until they starve.

Deadly Alliance

An hour after Kuhj leaves the pit, he returns, creeping up behind the unsuspecting jailer. Kuhj whips his tail around the jailer's neck, jerking the creature off balance, then plunges his spear into the jailer's chest. He removes the lattice and climbs into the pit, clutching a bundle of black cloth to his chest.

"Listen closely," hisses Kuhj. "It is only a matter of time before we are discovered." He explains that to move freely in the palace, they must disguise themselves as ghuls. He unwraps the bundle and distributes black abas and burqas. The burqas conceal their faces, the bulky abas cover their bodies. Kuhj produces a container of henna paste and directs the party to dye the tips of their fingers. He gives an assortment of khamzars, kitbats, and dalags to the two tallest PCs. "These ornaments will identify you as supervisors." (Those wearing the jewelry will appear as great ghuls, the others as lesser ghuls. If the PCs survive the adventure, they may keep the jewelry, which has a total value of 2,500 gp.) To maintain the ruse says Kuhj, the characters disguised as lesser ghuls should refrain from speaking; if absolutely necessary, they may utter single words. The PCs disguised as great ghuls may speak in





short phrases, keeping their voices low and guttural. Further, the “great ghuls” should keep their backs hunched, so as not to draw attention to their height. (Great ghuls tend to be taller than humans.)

While the PCs dress, Kuhj explains his plan. He tells them to go to the auditorium (area 12), ignoring the guards as they enter. “Servitors continually pass in and out of the chamber. Once inside, search for the female.” After the PCs find her, they should locate a crack in the floor “over an image of Ahz’ahk’s left eye. Draw water from the well near the south wall. Pour water into the crack. Continue to pour water until a distraction occurs. Then flee the chamber.” Kuhj says he will be waiting for them near the main entrance to the palace (area 3).

If the PCs have questions, Kuhj answers as follows:

Why do you need us? Why don’t you do this yourself? “Ahz’ahk watches us closely. I would never be able to execute this plan without attracting his attention.” (Actually, Kuhj wants the PCs to take all the risks. If they fail, he can deny involvement and pin the jailer’s murder on them.)

What kind of distraction will occur when we pour water down the crack? “I have heard rumors that it will detain Ahz’ahk. I am uncertain as to the exact effect.” (He’s lying. The vishap who recently invaded the palace lies beneath the collapsed eastern portion of the auditorium, its head positioned in a space below the cracked floor. The wounded vishap is not yet dead, but it is dying; soon it will succumb to dehydration. Kuhj believes that water poured into the crack will moisten the vishap’s head and revive it. The revived vishap is likely to resume its attacks, enabling Kuhj and the party to escape the palace in the resulting chaos. He won’t share this information with the PCs, fearing they will back out.)

How much water do we pour in the crack? “It will be obvious when the distraction occurs.”

What makes you think Sita is in the chamber? “I know it to be true.” He won’t elaborate. (He’s guessing, even though he happens to be right. He just wants to get the party into the auditorium to carry out the rest of his plan.)

How do we find Sita? Is Sita: a ghul? Can she be changed back to a human? He says he doesn’t know (though he suspects that Sita is no longer human).

Why should we trust you? “You have no other choice.”

If the PCs agree to Kuhj’s plan, continue with the following section. Should they refuse, he asks them to think it over; he returns a few hours later. If they still refuse, Kuhj withdraws his offer, leaving the party to starve and knowing he can blame them for the murder of the jailer.

In The Auditorium

If the PCs wear the ghul disguises, they will be able to walk past the guards at the auditorium entrance (area 12a) with no problem. If they aren’t disguised, they may be able to slip past the guards some other way, such as by *teleporting* or becoming *invisible*.

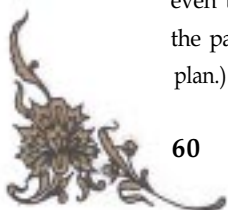
As long as disguised party members do nothing to attract attention (casting spells with dramatic effects, destroying property, starting fights), they will be able to move freely in the auditorium. The salamander guards will notice any unusual actions, however, triggering the Salamander Strike. Unless they are *invisible* or their appearance is otherwise concealed, undisguised characters will be noticed immediately here; go to the “Salamander Strike” section.

If the PCs are confined to the detention pit a second time, Kuhj will visit them again, bringing replacement disguises if necessary. But this will be their last chance with Kuhj. If their actions trigger the Salamander Strike a third time, they’ll be left in the pit.

Auditorium Description

Ahz’ahk holds court in a massive cylindrical chamber, 400 feet in diameter with a 150-foot ceiling. This was also the site of the vishap battle, which destroyed much of the auditorium and the palace chambers to the east.

The walls are polished marble, swirls of pink and green against a sea of ebony; the east wall is a mountain of







rubble. Dozens of crystal chandeliers hang from the silver-plated ceiling. The alabaster floor is covered in a mosaic of onyx, turquoise, and quartz tiles depicting Ahz'ahk's head; the chin points toward the doorway, the horns toward the rubble. Both the walls and the floor are laced with cracks. A well near the south wall contains water from an underground spring. An opening in the south wall leads to the disposal chamber (area 13).

Nearly 200 lesser ghuls and a dozen great ghuls are working here. A few are on their hands and knees, scrubbing the tile image of Ahz'ahk, occasionally rising to fill their buckets with fresh water from the well. Others polish the marble walls with black silk cloths. Most of the ghuls, however, labor to remove the rubble of the east wall, hauling marble chunks on copper carts or carrying them by hand to the disposal chamber. (One of the rubble carriers is Sita. With her aba and burqa, she is indistinguishable from her companions.) Several salamanders stationed around the perimeter of the chamber pass the time by lounging in the liquid fire troughs and exchanging lewd jokes. Ahz'ahk is not present; he is relaxing in his sanctum (area 11).

Reclamation of Sita

The PCs may search for Sita by lifting the burqas of the ghuls and looking for the moon-shaped birthmark on her nose. They may do so for five rounds (giving each PC who participates a 5% chance of success) before a great ghul demands that they stop. If they persist, the great ghul shrieks for help; go to the Salamander Strike.

They will have better luck with Fahad's iron bells or Fayiz's red crystal bowl (both from Episode One). If they sound the bells or display the bowl, Sita may respond.

After the PCs have either sounded the bells or displayed the crystal bowl for five rounds, a salamander slithers over and demands to know what they are doing. If a PC gives a reasonable explanation ("A special tribute to our master," "A guard ordered to us to bring this to the chamber," etc.) or invokes the name of Ahz'ahk ("Ahz'ahk requested this."), the salamander shrugs and slinks away. If the PCs don't offer an explanation, or if

they attack, go to the Salamander Strike.

Should they ring the bells for a total of 10 rounds, Sita staggers toward the source of the sound. She stares at the bells for a moment, then tentatively runs her fingers along the metal. She utters a single word in a low, cracking voice: "Mother." (She recognizes the bells from her childhood, a gift from her mother.)

If the PCs display the red crystal bowl in plain sight for a total of 20 minutes, Sita notices it. She approaches the bowl, touches it, then says, "Father." (Sita's father used a similar bowl in his futile attempts to communicate with his dead grandfather.)

The PCs can confirm Sita's identity by checking the birthmark on her nose. After responding to the bells or the bowl, she will react to her name also. Otherwise, she is unable to communicate. For the rest of the adventure, she will follow the PCs and perform any simple actions they request of her. It will be weeks before she recovers her memory and her ability to speak. (There is no method available in the palace to transform her back to a human.)

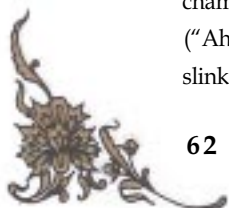
Revival of The Vishap

A jagged crack, about 3 feet long and 6 inches wide, can be seen plainly above the left eye of the tile image of Ahz'ahk (area 12b). If the PCs decide not to pour water in the crack as instructed by Kuhj, they may leave the auditorium; continue with the "Ambush" section on page 63.

Otherwise, the PCs may use any of the wash buckets scattered around the auditorium to draw water from the well to pour into the crack. The ghuls ignore them, assuming they are completing some assigned chore.

After they have poured a few gallons, an echoed roar rises from beneath the auditorium. A little more water, and the floor begins to tremble. Some of the ghuls begin to moan, dropping their marble chunks and nervously stumbling into each other.

A few more gallons, and the floor erupts. The head of a vishap snakes through the crack, roaring and snarling. The vishap struggles to free itself from the rubble,





squirring through the widening crack, finally bursting through the floor in a shower of marble and shattered tile. Any PC within 50 feet of the vishap has a 20% chance of being hit by flying rubble, suffering 1 to 4 points of damage. (A PC covering himself with a shield or finding protection in some other way won't be harmed.)

Vishap (venerable): Int high (13); AL NE; AC -2; MV 18, Jp 6; HD 14; hp 61 (reduced due to injuries from rubble); THAC0 7; #AT 3 and 1; Dmg 1d4+10/1d4+ 10/2d6+ 10; SA tail lash at up to four man-size creatures, inflicting 2d4+10 points of damage each (victims must make a Dexterity check or lose their footing and be unable to attack in the subsequent round); has the following spell-like abilities: sleep 2/day, invisibility 1/day, suggestion 1/day, charm monster 1/day, undetectable lie 1/day; SD detect invisible creatures or objects in 120' radius; immune to all enchantment/charm spells; SZ G (68' body, 65' tail); ML 14; XP 16,000.

The enraged vishap slams into the nearest wall, rocking the entire auditorium. The panicking ghuls swarm in every direction, clawing the air and shrieking for help. Two salamanders hurl themselves at the vishap, but it shakes them off like fleas.

A cloud of smoke materializes in midair, solidifying into the form of Ahz'ahk. Quaking with anger, he demands that the vishap leave the palace. The vishap responds by leaping at the efreeti. A moment later, they are rolling on the floor, a tangle of scaly hide and basalt flesh.

Every round the PCs remain in the chamber, they risk damage from falling debris, an attack from a panicking ghul, or a slap from the vishap's tail. For convenience, assume that each PC has a 30% chance of suffering damage per round. (Roll 1d10: 1 to 5 = 1 to 2 points of damage from falling debris; 6 to 8 = 1 to 4 points of damage from a ghul attack; 9 = 2d4 points of damage from a falling chandelier; 10 = 2d4+ 10 points of damage from the vishap's tail lash.) A PC moving carefully (half

his normal movement rate), actively protecting himself, and staying alert for falling objects has only a 10% chance of suffering damage per round.

If the PCs make their way out of the auditorium, continue with the "Obstacles" section.

Obstacles

As the PCs proceed through the passages, heading for the main entry (area 3), run some or all of the following encounters. Then go on to the "Final Confrontation" section.

(Note: Run this section only if the PCs successfully revived the vishap.)

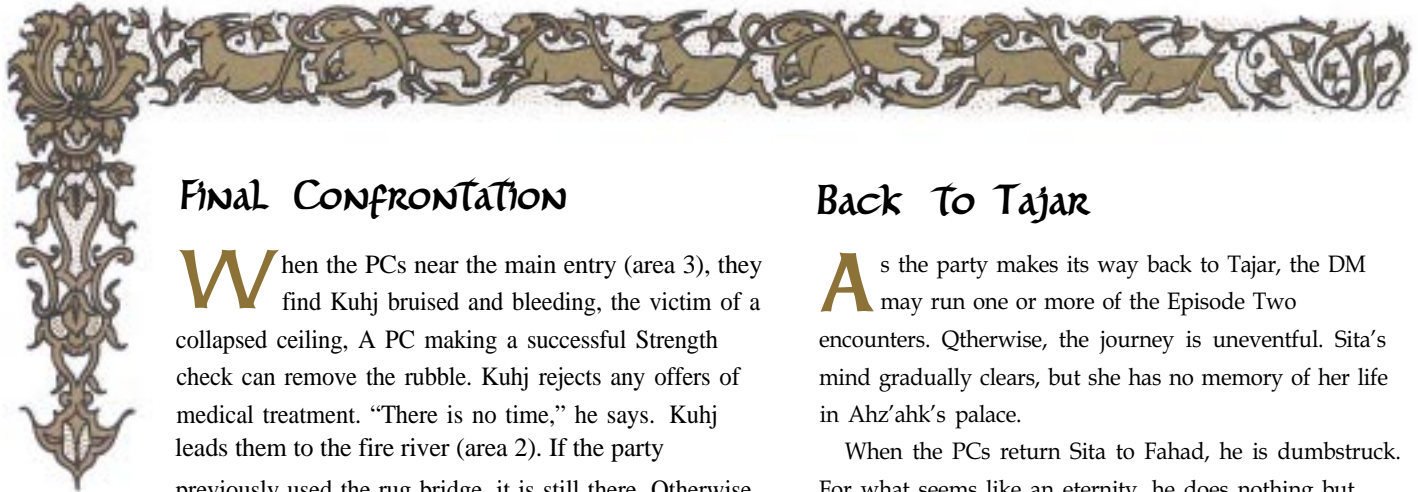
- Liquid fire has leaked from a cracked trough, filling the passage with a 10-foot-wide puddle. Touching the liquid fire inflicts 2d4 points of damage. Characters making a successful Dexterity check can jump the puddle.
- Granite chunks fall from a damaged ceiling, extending 3d20 feet ahead of the party. If the party passes beneath the ceiling, each character has a 30% chance (per 10 yards of ceiling) of being struck by a chunk large enough to cause damage. A successful Dexterity check enables the PC to dodge the chunk. If the check fails, he suffers 1 to 4 points of damage.

Ambush

Within 10 rounds after the PCs leave the auditorium (area 12), they are ambushed by six salamanders, three appearing behind the party, three in front. The salamanders have been hunting the party since their escape from the detention pit and have been ordered to execute them. They will not be deterred by the party's ghul disguises. They fight to the death, using their lashing tails and metal spears. If the party survives this encounter, continue with the "Final Confrontation" section.

(Note: Run this section only if the PCs failed to revive the vishap.)





Final Confrontation

When the PCs near the main entry (area 3), they find Kuhj bruised and bleeding, the victim of a collapsed ceiling. A PC making a successful Strength check can remove the rubble. Kuhj rejects any offers of medical treatment. "There is no time," he says. Kuhj leads them to the fire river (area 2). If the party previously used the rug bridge, it is still there. Otherwise, Kuhj manages to swim across the river, where he removes the rug from the copper tube and rolls it out.

As soon as the party nears the arrival area (area 1), a familiar figure appears in the opening: Khafaz, grinning like a madman and clutching a staff of thunder and lightning. (Ahz'ahk stationed him here to guard the exit and gave him the staff to use as a weapon.) "You cannot leave," he sneers.

Before the PCs can react, Kuhj charges. Khafaz blasts him with a lightning bolt, killing him instantly.

"Turin!" barks Khafaz. "To my side!"

The aide glances at the PCs, then obediently, joins Khafaz.

"Now," says Khafaz to the party, "we go back to the pit."

Turin flings himself at Khafaz, knocking him, to the ground. The staff tumbles from his hand and rolls out of reach.

Khafaz is unable to do anything except struggle with Turin for the next two rounds. If the PCs don't respond, he shakes off Turin, recovers his staff, and attacks, attempting to kill all the PCs. If they take his staff, or if it becomes clear that they will defeat him, Khafaz surrenders and begs for mercy. The PCs can do whatever they like with him, including restraining him and taking him back to Tajar. They may keep the staff.

Entering the green sand (area 1) takes the party back to Ugaq's cave. Their camels still graze outside. Shortly after their return, the PCs hear a sound deep inside the earth, like that of a mountain crumbling. Then silence.

Back To Tajar

As the party makes its way back to Tajar, the DM may run one or more of the Episode Two encounters. Otherwise, the journey is uneventful. Sita's mind gradually clears, but she has no memory of her life in Ahz'ahk's palace.

When the PCs return Sita to Fahad, he is dumbstruck. For what seems like an eternity, he does nothing but stare. "How did this happen?" he says at last, his voice shaking. Sita weeps, avoiding the gaze of her old love, while the PCs tell their story.

Fahad thanks the PCs for their efforts and gives them the rewards he promised in Episode One. If the PCs brought back Khafaz, Fahad gives them a bag of emeralds as a bonus, worth 10,000 gp.

In months to come, the PCs will hear many rumors about Fahad and Sita. Some say that he found a sorcerer to change her back to a human. Others say that those efforts failed, and to be with his beloved, he himself joined the ranks of the undead. Their true fate remains a mystery.

"Uncle," asked Jamilia. "Whatever became of Ahz'ahk?" Months had passed since the elder had begun the tale.

"Gone," replied Husar. "Killed by a vishap. Buried in the rubble of his palace."

"And Sip?"

Husar cocked an eye. "What do you know of this?"

"Only what my friends say. That she and Fahad were reunited. That they left Tajar and never came back."

The elder remained silent.

"Did they go into the desert?" asked his niece.

"I am not certain," said Husar. "But if you craved peace, where would you go?"

Jamilia squinted into the horizon. A breeze nudged the desert sand into gentle drifts. In the distance, an eagle cried.

The girl smiled at her uncle and rested her head on his shoulder.



ph1

The stars on high fell to earth
And became desert flowers
To remind us of the garden in which we
dwell
The gods exhaled and the winds made
us tremble
But we stood straight
We embraced the darkness
We gathered the desert flowers
We joined with the river
Our faith as strong as the currents
And we filled our cups at dawn

ph2

My heart's decree gave little comfort
I was not prepared for memory's
departure
That faded like a shadow
I shed tears of fire
Kindled by the sun and moon
A yearning for brightness
An acceptance of sorrow
Is this my lot?
The nature of things remains unclear
In the distance I hear
The laughter of jackals

P H ₃

The mental processes related to physical experiences I have little use for, or rather, I question them as much as a man should question an image perceived from a great distance. For many of the processes are all but spontaneous, devoid of serious reflection, resulting in conclusions that are poorly reached. Too many give too much weight to initial impressions, never bothering to allow their experiences to season in the mind. Experiences, then,

P H ₄

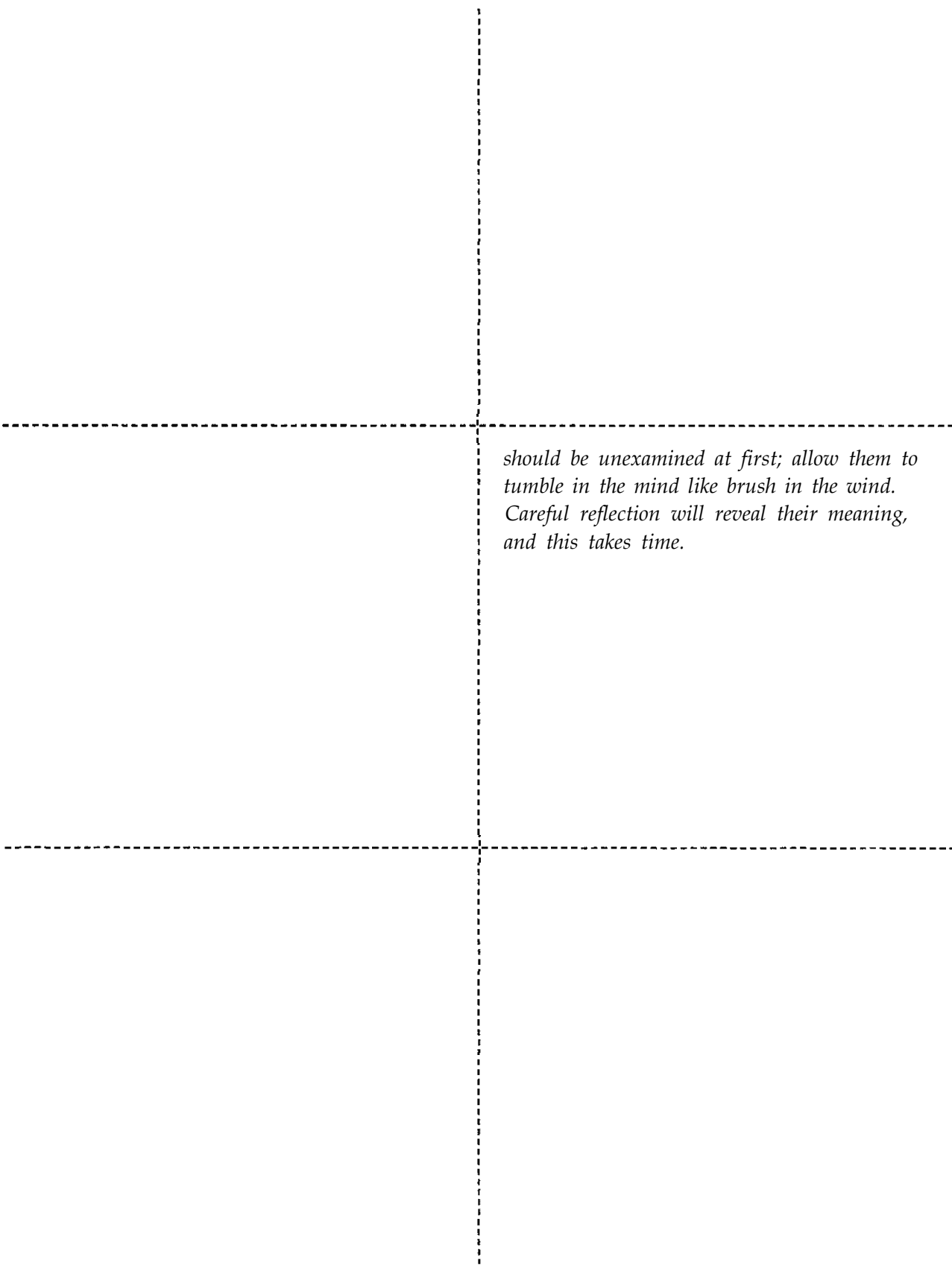
History is written in the volumes that stand before our eyes, and by that I mean the very world in which we live. But can those volumes be understood until the reader has mastered the language? Until he knows how the words are spelled? The unlearned man denies himself access to these volumes, and he may stare at them until his hair turns gray; they have no more meaning to him than a column of numbers has to a camel.

P H ₅

When a thought lies undisturbed, unless blown by the winds of reason, it will decay and vanish, much as the onset of winter removes the fallen leaves of autumn. But if that thought is put in motion, when it is turned upside down, pushed back and forth, taken apart and put together again, only then does it become alive and grow. Pause and consider the miracle here – that man has within him the power of limitless creation within his own imagination.

P H ₆

In large part, what distinguishes man from animal is his faculty for perceiving consequences. An animal acts, then reacts. A man hesitates before acting, as the possible results of his action play out in his mind. Only then does he act, or perhaps on reflection, chooses not to. Man is also capable of experiencing the absurdities of existence; pondering those absurdities may occupy him for a lifetime, allowing him to delight in the world of his mind, while an animal perceives existence only as an endless cycle of rest, comfort, and fear.



*should be unexamined at first; allow them to
tumble in the mind like brush in the wind.
Careful reflection will reveal their meaning,
and this takes time.*

P H 7

To add texture and depth to an ordinary life, it is necessary to adopt and develop opinions, even if in their initial form they are uncertain and vague. Opinions are the first steps on the road of truth. Should the traveler stumble, should an opinion prove unworthy or unsatisfying, he may set it aside and choose another. The road has many steps, many paths.

P H 8

Let us imagine that we are asleep and dreaming, our heads filled with images of a random nature, some pleasing, some frightening. The wise man knows that dreams are but illusions. But it must be acknowledged that these images that appear to us in sleep could not be imagined unless they had real world parallels—for where else could they come? An artist cannot paint a true picture of a palm tree unless he has seen

P H 9

Some take a casual approach toward ideas, as if their minds were rooms of limited space and the excess must be thrown out in order to make space for the new. The first to be cast aside are those ideas not clearly understood or those which have no obvious application. Foolish man! Today's useless idea may be tomorrow's insight. The mind is not a room, but a universe; it cannot be filled in a thousand lifetimes.

P H 10

Mathematicians have a great advantage over moralists, as the information of the mathematician can be clearly stated and supported by facts. A square is always a square; it is never a circle. The moralist, meanwhile, struggles with ambiguity and uncertainty; killing may be an immoral act when it occurs in the street, but an act of high morality when it occurs on the battlefield. Does this mean that

PH11

The tent has collapsed
The fingers of the traveler are
withered and broken
He has crossed the dark land
Not speaking
Not hearing
The trees give testimony to a
grand effort
A lizard wears his scarf
A serpent sips his water
In his final dawn
He muses on his father's words

PH12

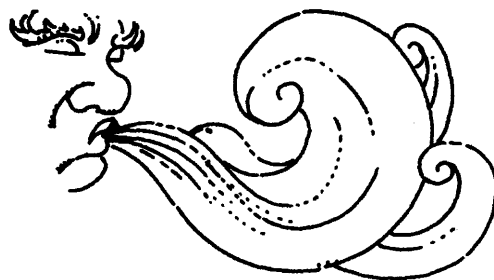
Turn inward and hear the
sermon
Of gray ancestors
Whispering in a hard breeze
Smoothed hair
A gilded tide
A brisk cloud
He cried to the gods on raised
knees
The answer came on dusty
bridges and roads of bone

one. Dreams hold secrets which the wise man would do well to examine, for the unconscious mind is truth unshackled.

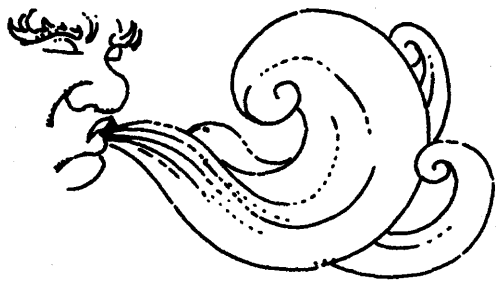
moral education is beyond the grasp of the ordinary man? Of course not. Just as an infant requires experience before he can distinguish the circle from the square, so must a man acquire experience before he can distinguish the moral from the immoral.

PH13

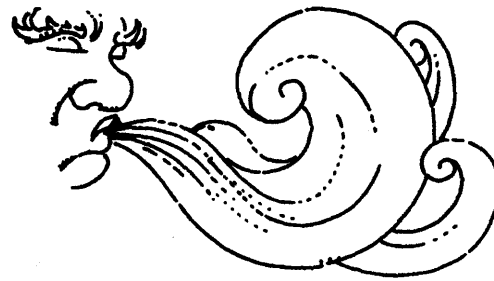
Mugas
Na'al
Misht
Ibra
Kharza ma al Nigat



PH14
PH14



PH15



PH16

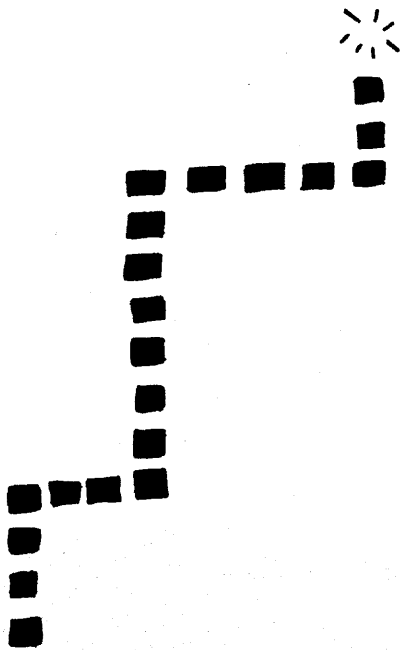
GLORY TO Daku FOR HIS BLESSINGS
GLORY TO Daku FOR HIS FAVORS
Let us share in his great
purpose
May he accept us as PARTNERS
May he look upon us with
affection
May the world grow GREATER
UNDER HIS GUIDANCE

PH14

MEET ME AT THE STONE ARCH NEAR
THE HOUSE FAJIRIK DIRAH IN ONE
HOUR. SECRECY IS IMPERATIVE,
HUNDREDS OF LIVES DEPEND ON
YOUR COMPLIANCE.

JAPAN

PH15



PH16

CLIMATE TERRAIN:	Elemental fire, desert
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Sultinate
ACTIVE TIME:	Day
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very to Exceptional (11-16)
TREASURE:	U
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil
No. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	-1
MOVEMENT:	12, Fl30 (B)
HIT DICE:	13
THACO:	7
No. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACKS:	4-32/4-32
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	15%
SIZE:	L (15' tall)
MORALE:	Fanatic (18)
XP VALUE:	11,000

These hulking warlords are the cruel rulers of the efreet, though in theory they obey the Sultan of the City of Brass. They plot and scheme against one another with a degree of cunning and skill usually seen only in the Lower Planes. They care nothing for humans and generally try to corrupt those sha'ir powerful enough to command them.

A noble efreeti is more imposing than a common efreeti, though they share the same appearance: skin the color of basalt, hair of brass, and eyes of flame. The noble efreet wear baggy pantaloons, a shoulder harness for swords and daggers, and massive jewelry, generally arm bands and earrings. Because the males enjoy showing off their muscled chests and broad shoulders, they only wear tunics and cloaks when cold demands it. Noble efreet depend on force and treachery rather than wit, appearance, and skill to persuade their fellow nobles to follow them. They choose weapons, clothes, and jewelry not just as adornments, but to intimidate others.

Combat: Noble efreeti are powerful warriors, trained in magical and physical combat from a very young age. Although they are masters of strategy and trickery, they delight in bloodshed, leading their followers in battle rather than skulking in the rear.

Noble efreeti can perform each of the following spell-like functions three times per day: grant *wishes* to creatures from the Prime Material Plane; become *invisible*; assume *gaseous form*; use *detect magic*, *enlarge*, *sunscorch*, *wall of fire*, and *misdirect*; *polymorph* themselves; and create *illusions* with visual, olfactory, tactile, and audio components that last without concentration until touched or magically dispelled. When in gaseous form, noble efreet resemble smoke, often in an undefined pillar shape. When polymorphed among humans, a noble efreet often takes the form of a colorful rooster or a youth of sterling features.

A noble efreet can also produce *flame arrows*, *sundazzle*, and *pyrotechnics* at will. Non-magical fire attacks do no harm to the noble efreet; magical fire causes half damage. In addition, once per day noble efreet can sow *fire seeds* or surround themselves with a *fire shield*. Once per week they can use *fire track*. Once per month a noble efreet can cast *conflaguration*.

Noble efreet perform all magic at the 16th level of spell use.

When hunting, noble efreet enjoy the kill but prefer not to do



all the work of wearing down an opponent themselves. They usually watch as their common efreet hunters and summoned creatures (such as hell hounds) harry the prey, then throw themselves into battle at the last minute to claim the kill. They also employ flying creatures of the Elemental Plane of Fire as "hawks" in their hunts.

Habitat/Society: Noble efreet fall into two camps: those native to the City of Brass and those who command the efreet of the Prime Material Plane. The large, imposing palaces of noble efreet in the City of Brass swarm with servants. A typical noble household consists of 1-6 noble efreet, 4-40 common efreet who serve as overseers and bodyguards, 10-100 jann and other imported slaves, 10 summoned intelligent elemental creatures for specialized tasks, 2-4 nightmares, and 3-18 elemental hawks and hounds. While most noble efreet fill their palaces with rich works of gold, priceless ceramics, and masterfully woven rugs and tapestries, others merely create illusionary treasures to impress their visitors.

The noble efreet of the Prime Material Plane are servants of the six great pashas who rule them in the sultan's name. Their camps are generally deep in the desert, often in ruined or abandoned cities.

Noble efreet are great patrons of the hunt and are often found whiling away their days using elemental hawks and hounds to track down odd animals of the Elemental Plane of Fire. When hunting slaves, they use bronze chariots pulled by nightmares.

Ecology: Noble efreet see all living things as either their servants or their enemies. They acknowledge no one but their caliphs and pashas as their masters. They usually react to other races by forcing them into servitude, destroying those who cannot be enslaved.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Great Desert, mountains	Lesser Desert, mountains
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Pack	Solitary or pack
ACTIVE TIME:	Night	Night
DIET:	Scavenger	Scavenger
INTELLIGENCE:	High (13-14)	Average (8-10)
TREASURE:	C	B
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil	Neutral evil
No. APPEARING:	1-3	1-3
ARMOR CLASS:	0	2
MOVEMENT:	18 (Br 3 or Cl 12)	12 (Br 1 or Cl 3)
HIT DICE:	4	3
THACO:	15	17
No. OF ATTACKS:		
DAMAGE/ATTACKS:	1-6/1-6/2-12	1-4/1-4/2-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Magic use, shapeshifting	Magic use, shapeshifting
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Spell immunities, +1 weapon to hit	Spell immunities, +1 weapon to hit
hit		
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	M (7-10')	M (5-6')
MORALE:	Average (8-10)	Average (8-10)
XP VALUE:	Common: 1,400 1st- to 4th-level mage: 2,000 5th- to 7th-level mage: 3,000	975



The great ghuls are undead elemental cousins of the genies, the most wicked members of an inferior order of jann. They haunt burial grounds and feed on dead human bodies. They are usually female; all are beguiling and seductive shapechangers. No matter what form they take, their feet remain those of a donkey, though they often wear special boots or long robes to conceal this aberration. Ghuls delight in devouring the flesh of their victims and then sucking the marrow from their bones.

Great ghuls have thick hair and bushy eyebrows that often droop over their eyes. Their hands end in clawed fingers, and their feet and sometimes their ears are those of a donkey. Their jutting jaws are powerfully muscled, their pale white skin cold and clammy. They have the hunched posture of normal ghouls. Because great ghuls are aware of how their appearance repulses other creatures, they disguise themselves with cosmetics, clothes, and jewelry.

Combat: Great ghuls attack with their claws and teeth. They can only be struck by magical weapons. Great ghuls can use each of the following spell-like abilities at will: *polymorph self*, *shocking grasp*, and bestow *invisibility*.

Like most undead, great ghuls are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and cold-based magic. They are not affected by paralysis or poison. All ghuls suffer only half damage from falls.

Great ghuls can be turned as ghosts; mage ghuls are turned as wraiths. They suffer 2-12 points of damage from holy water, and a -1 penalty to their attack rolls in daylight.

Normally, only jann slain by great ghuls become ghuls themselves. All other races are usually slain and devoured.

About one in every six great ghuls is a mage of up to 7th level of ability. Great ghuls may even become sha'ir, thus gaining some measure of power over other genies. Other great ghuls study the magical provinces of flame, sand, and wind. Ghuls who study the magic of the sea are extremely rare. All ghuls are immune to the binding and capturing powers of the sha'ir.

Habitat/Society: Great ghuls live in secluded ruins or caves found in the emptiest deserts or on the highest mountains. Because of

their sharp claws and incredible strength, great ghuls from the mountains are able to climb sheer rock walls that would daunt most mountaineers. Desert ghuls are not as adept at climbing, but can dig through sand or soft stones.

Because great ghuls are feared by humans and despised by genies, they rarely keep their own form, even when at home in their ruins or caves. Habitual shapeshifters, they are excellent liars and actors.

Ecology: Great ghuls serve the genies (when required), but tyrannize normal ghouls, whom they consider unrefined and unreliable. Great ghuls who become sha'ir tend to be secretive; the other genies resent and fear the ghuls' power over them. Such great ghuls are often destroyed when their homes are discovered.

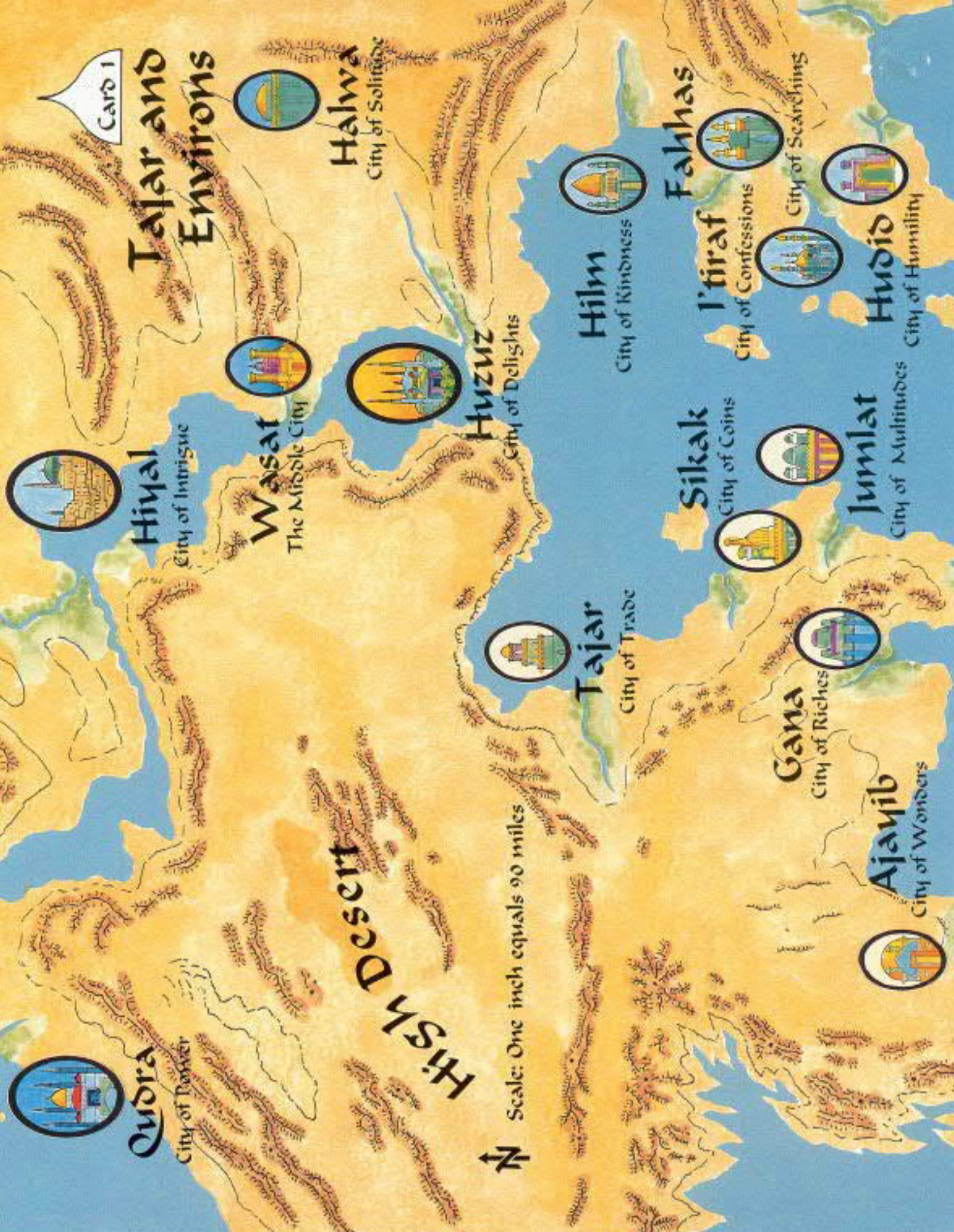
Although great ghuls avoid contact with other races, they occasionally aid humans or others who come to them seeking help against genies. Sometimes they help humans in quests which the ghuls find interesting; they do this without expectation of reward.

Lesser Ghuls

Lesser ghuls are submissive, less aggressive versions of great ghuls, usually functioning as servitors for noble efreeti, slayer genies, and other powerful entities. They may also serve ghul mages and, on occasion, great ghuls. Except for their smaller size, lesser ghuls resemble great ghuls. However, they appear sad and miserable, wracked with sorrow over their wretched existence. Some sob continuously, others bury their faces in their hands and grieve in silence.

While most great ghuls are former jann, lesser ghuls are former humans. A human slain by a mage ghul may become a lesser ghul if the mage ghul sits with the human corpse for an entire night, its hands on the corpse's head. At dawn, the corpse rises as a lesser ghul. Some entities, such as noble efreeti, can transform humans to lesser ghuls, lesser ghuls to great ghuls.

Though capable of attacking with the ferocity of great ghuls, lesser ghuls generally shun combat, fighting only when cornered or threatened. They suffer a -2 penalty to their attack rolls. Otherwise, they have all of the magical abilities and vulnerabilities of great ghuls.



Card 1

Tajar and Environs

Qudra
City of Power

Hiyal
City of Intrigue

Wasat
The Middle City

Fishn Desert

Halwa
City of Solitude

Huzuz
City of Delights

Tajar
City of Trade

Hilm
City of Kindness

Fahas

Sikak
City of Coins

I'tirat
City of Confessions

Gana
City of Riches

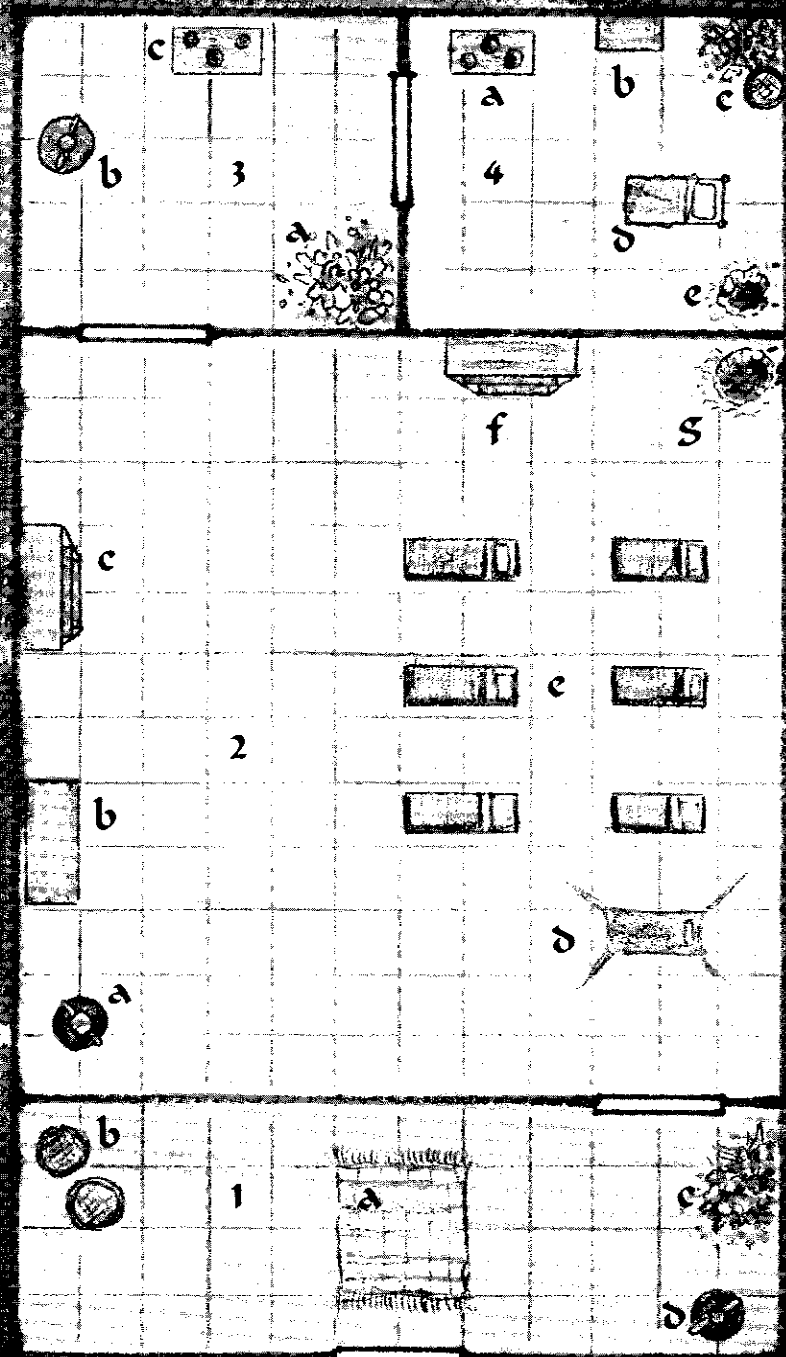
City of Searching

Jumlat
City of Multitudes

Hudid
City of Humility

Ajayib
City of Wonders

Scale: One inch equals 90 miles



Scale: One inch equals 30 miles

Genies' Anvil

Pit of the Ghuls

Hulm

Quabah

Vahfov

Yaitai

Fabada

House Fajrik

Military Camp

Jamal Oasis

Spire of Kor

Raziz

Burning Pool of Natifa

Vishap's Teeth

Range of the Marching Camels

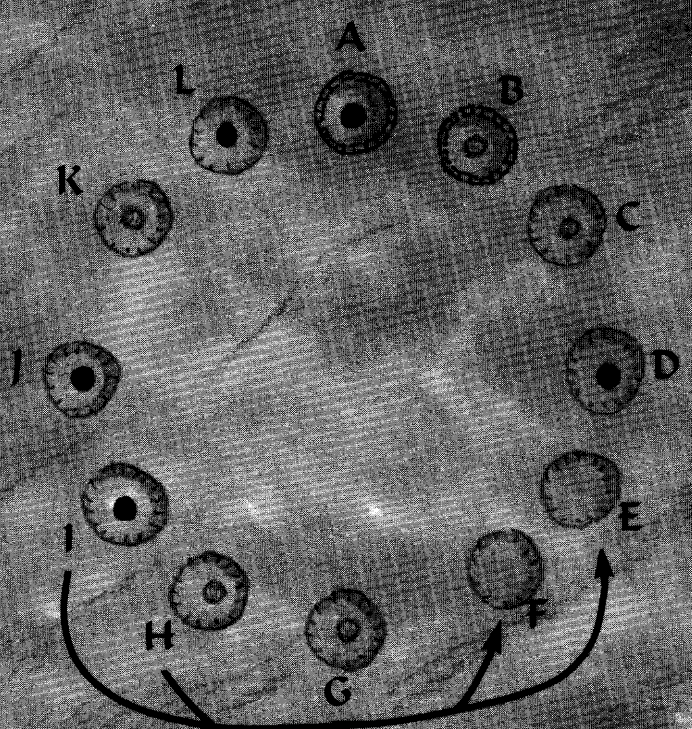
High Desert



Djinni's Pit Game

(Episode Two)

Initial Position



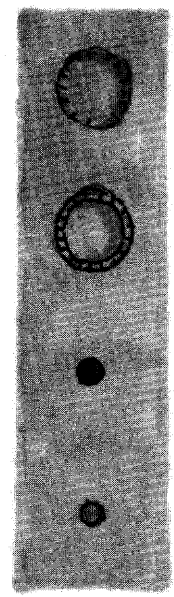
First Move

Normal Pit

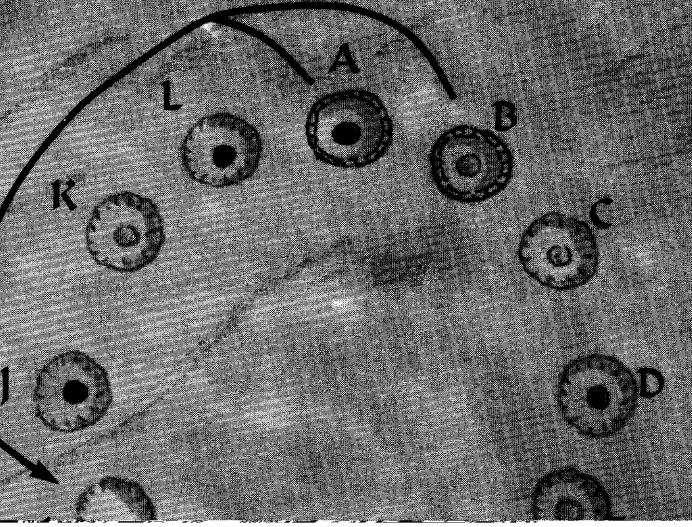
Red Stone Pit

Black Boulder

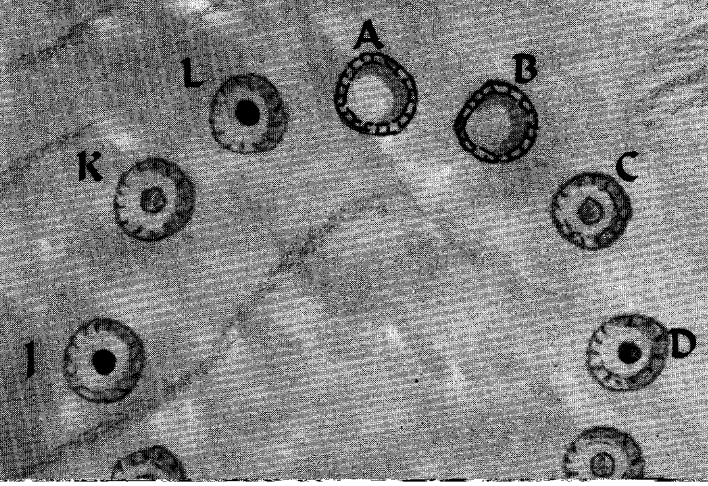
Gray Boulder



Second Move



Final Position



As patience breeds success, haste breeds failure.



If the arrow is not aimed, what matters the direction of the wind?
If the wise man knows the limits of facts,
If a butchered pig has no need to fear the oven.

Ala's Response 1

When the camel kneels, even the unwearied should rest.
The bread that you bake, do not
Flout built indifferently will be the first to collapse.
The bread that you bake, do not
Must you eat?



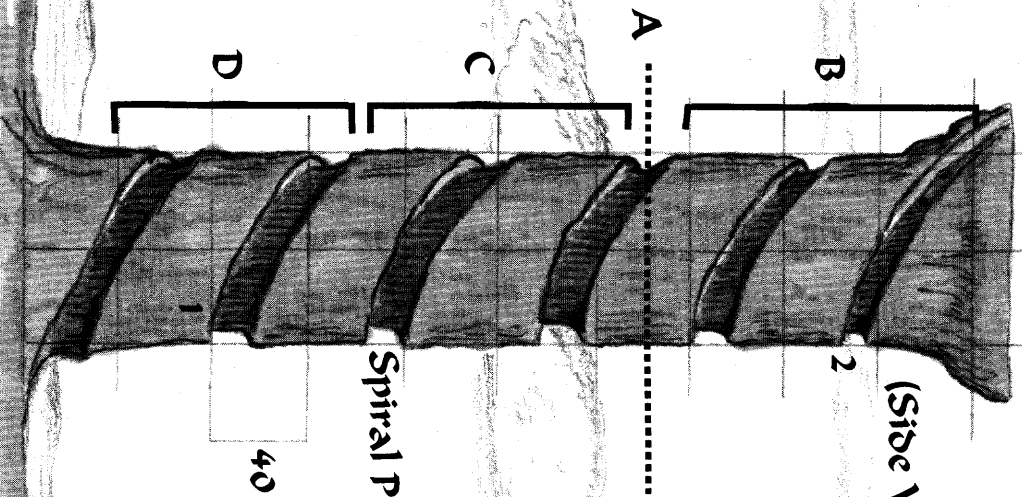
It is satisfactory answer is not always the most obvious.



Spire of Kor

(Episode Three)

(Side View)



Spiral Path

40 feet



Spiral Path
(Down)

Glass Rod
Body
(Mammoth)
20 feet

It's patience breeds success, haste
breeds failure.



Ala'i's Response 2



If the arrow is not aimed, what matters the direction of the wind?
If butchered pig has no need to
fear the oven.

When the camel kneels, even the unwear should rest.
Hicent built indifferently will be the first
to collapse.
The bread that you bake, so
must you eat.

The wise man knows the
limits of facts.

It's satisfactory answer is not always
the most obvious.

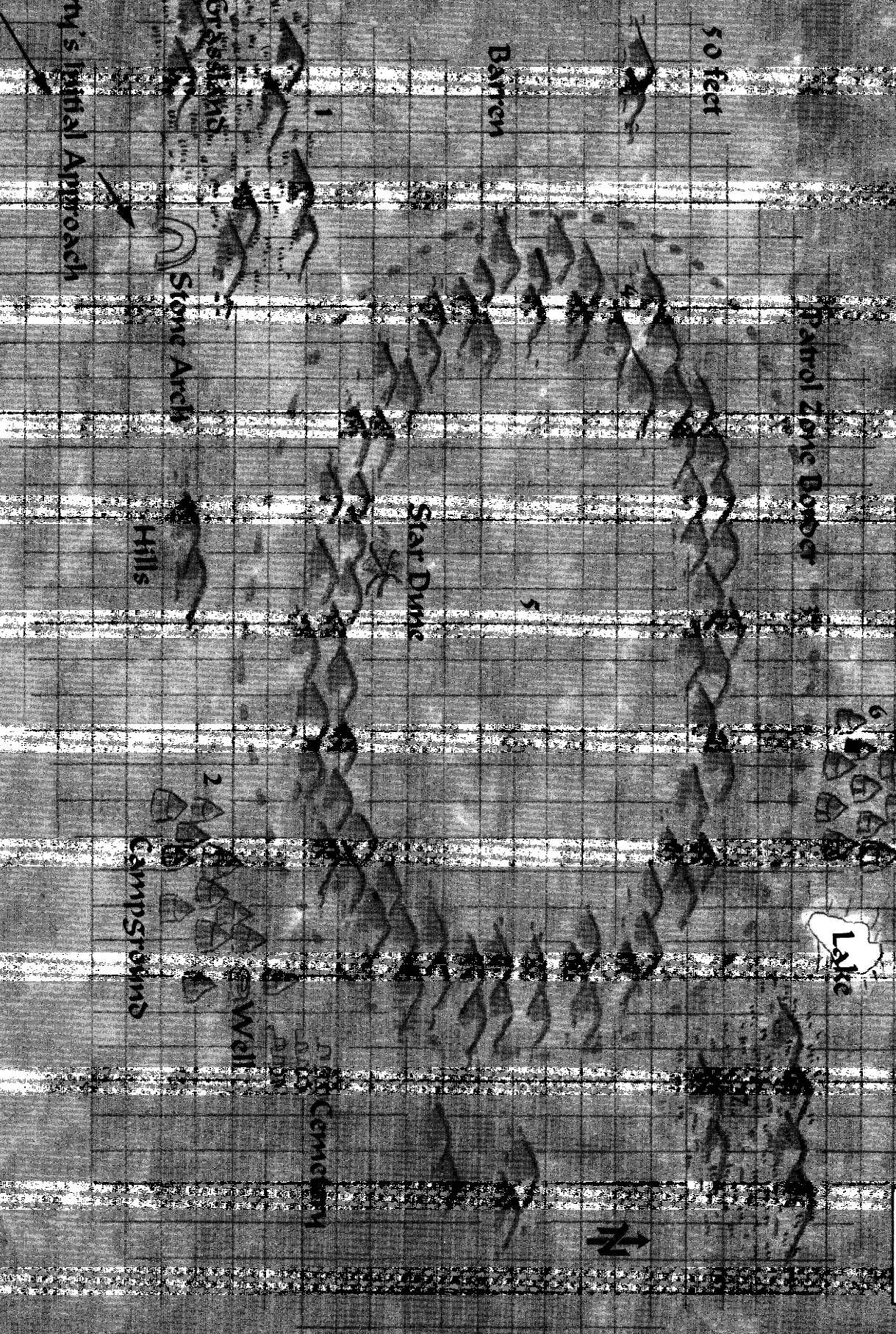
Card 4



Empty Glass Battlefield

(Episode Form)

Card 4

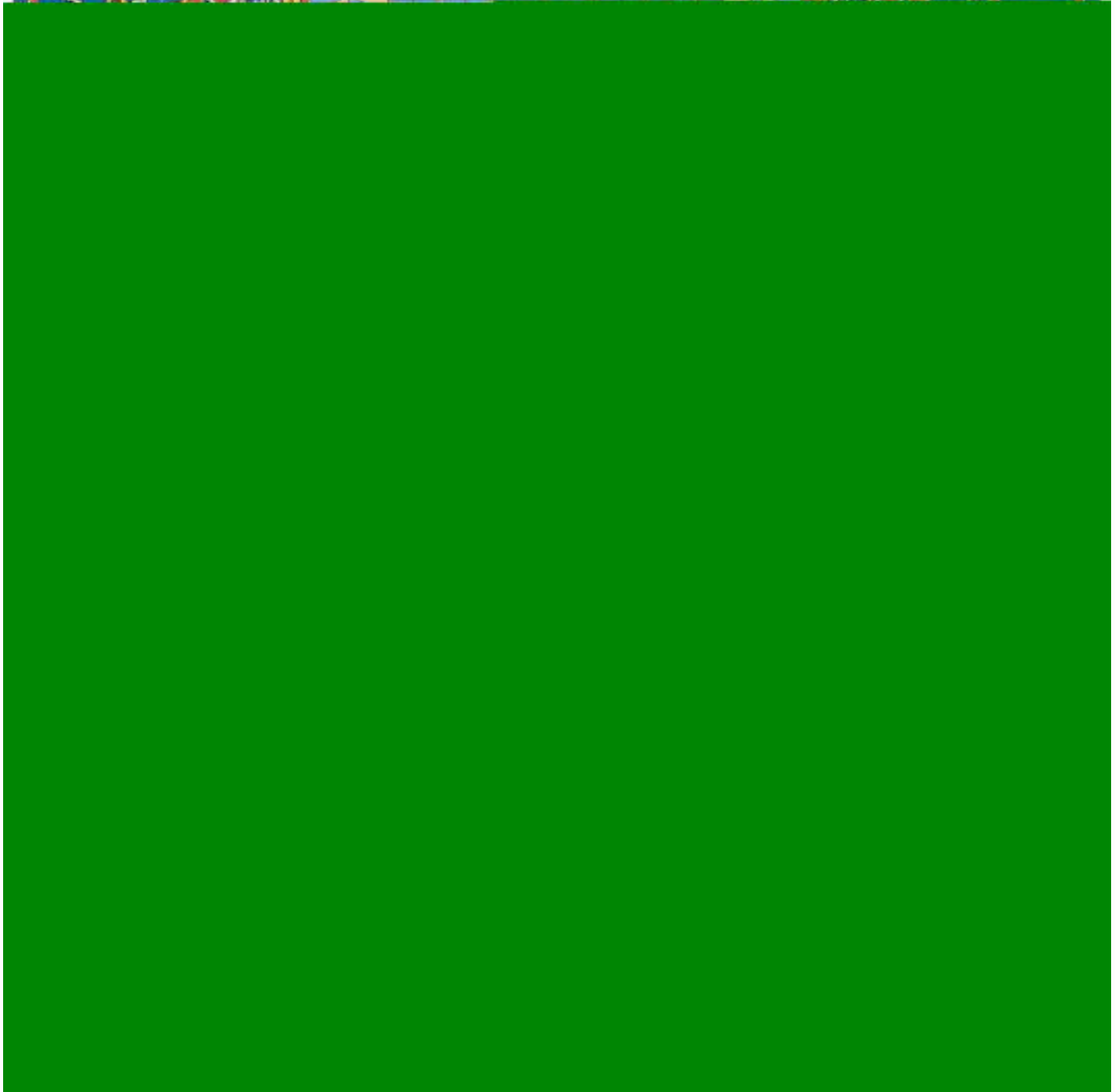




It's patience breeds success, haste
breeds failure.

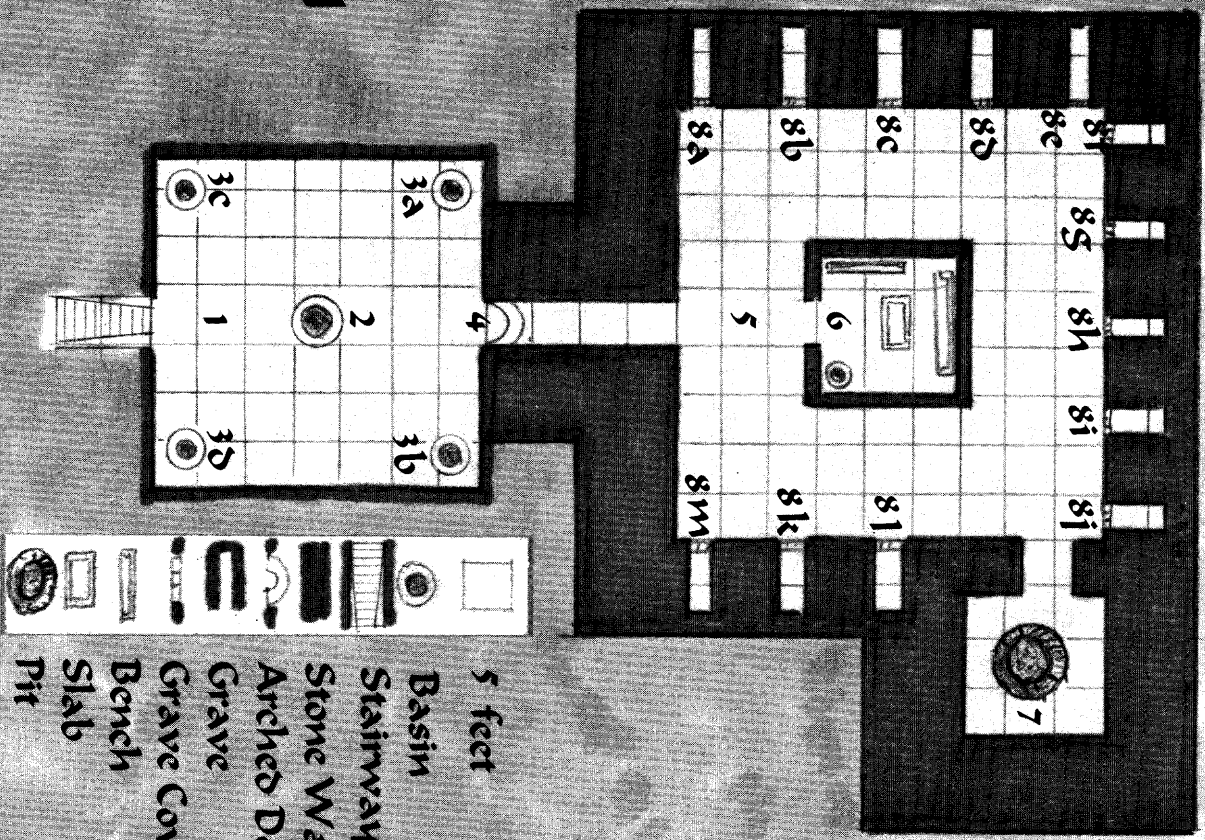


Ala'i's Response 3



Vantov Crypt

(Episode Five)

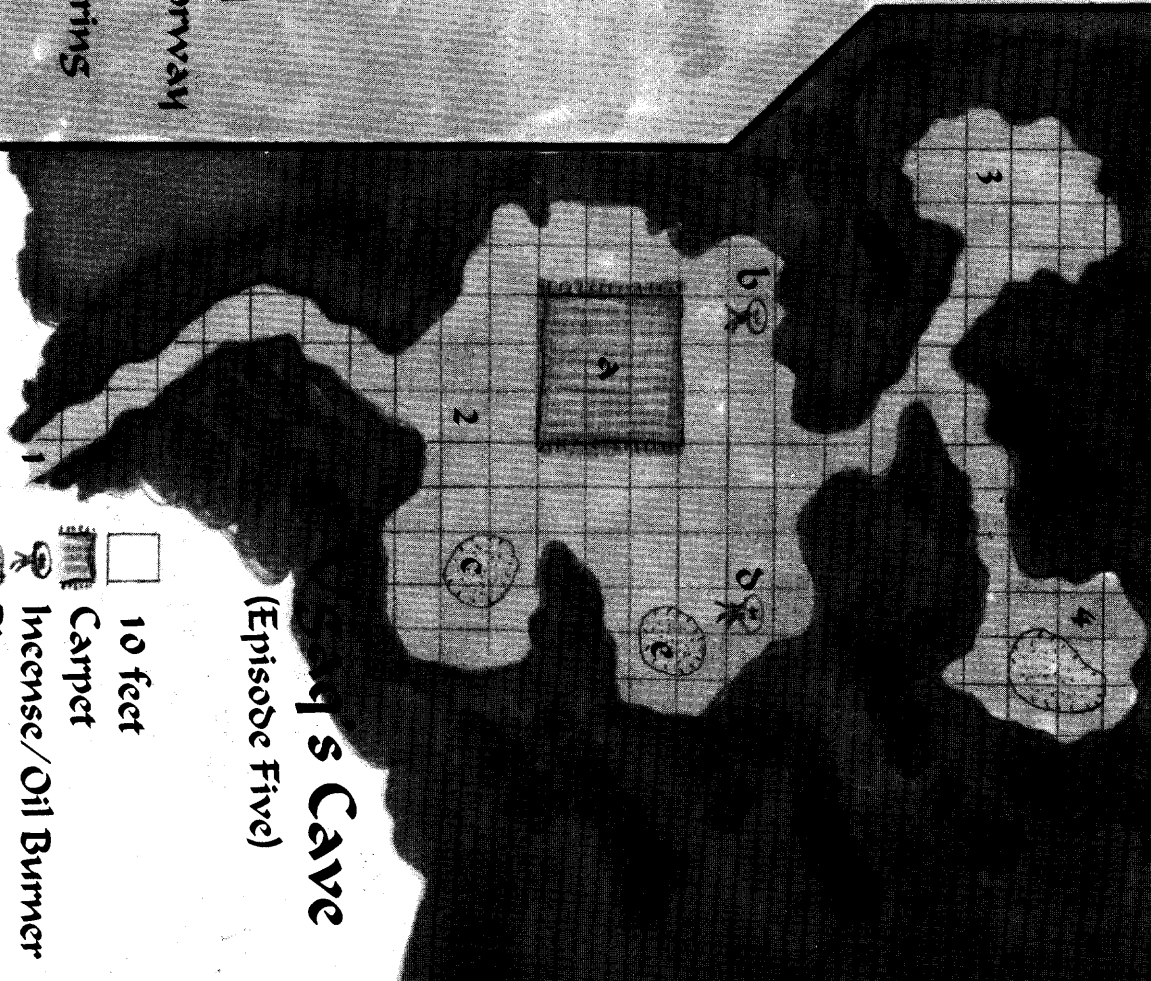


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Card 5

King's Cave

(Episode Five)

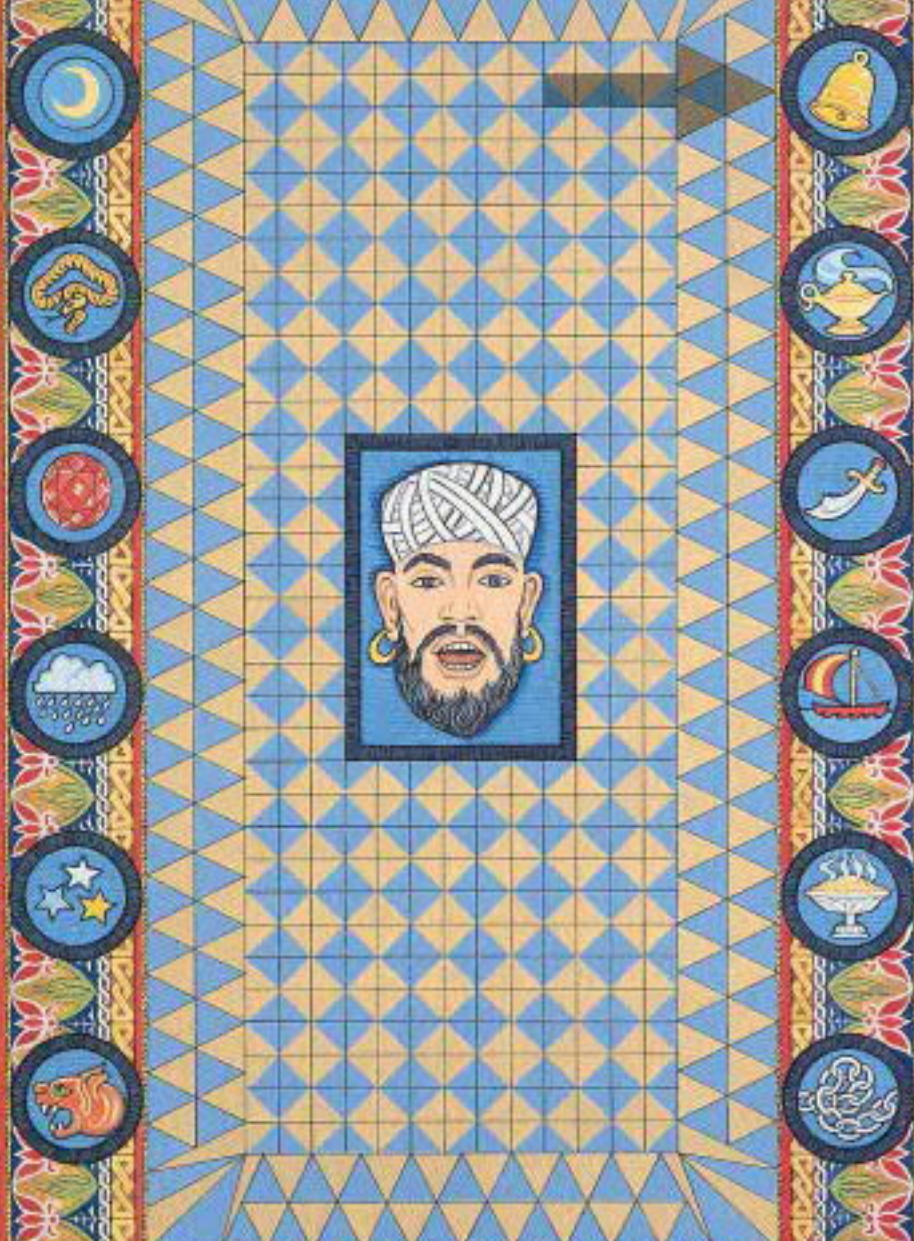


His patience breeds success, haste
breeds failure.



Ala's Response 4

If the arrow is not aimed, what matters the direction of the wind?
If a butchered pig has no need for
tear the oven.

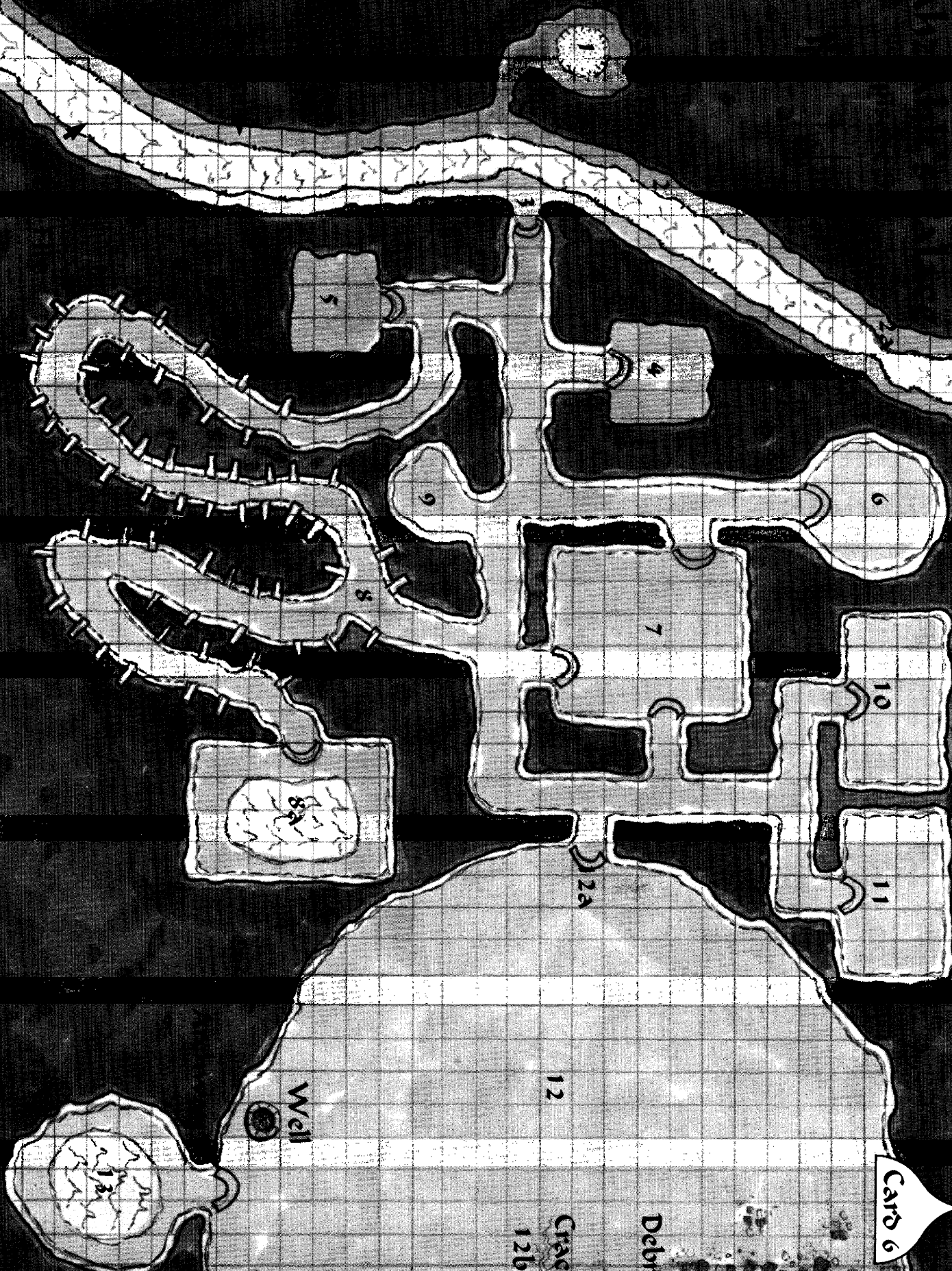


When the camel kneels, even the unwear should rest.
Hectic built indifferently will be the first
to collapse.
The bread that you bake
must you eat.



The satisfactory answer is not always
the most obvious.





Card 6

Debris

Crack

12b

Well

2A

11

10

7

9

8

8a

5

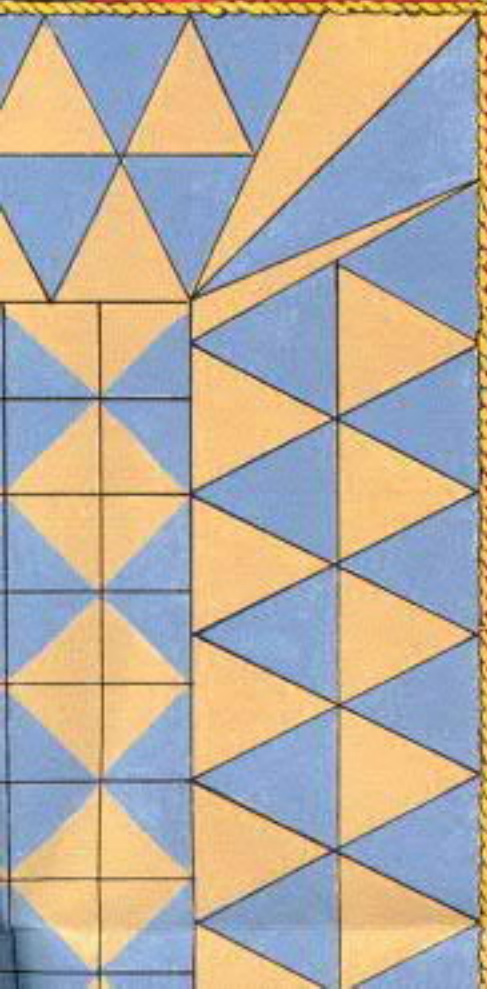
12

6

3

1

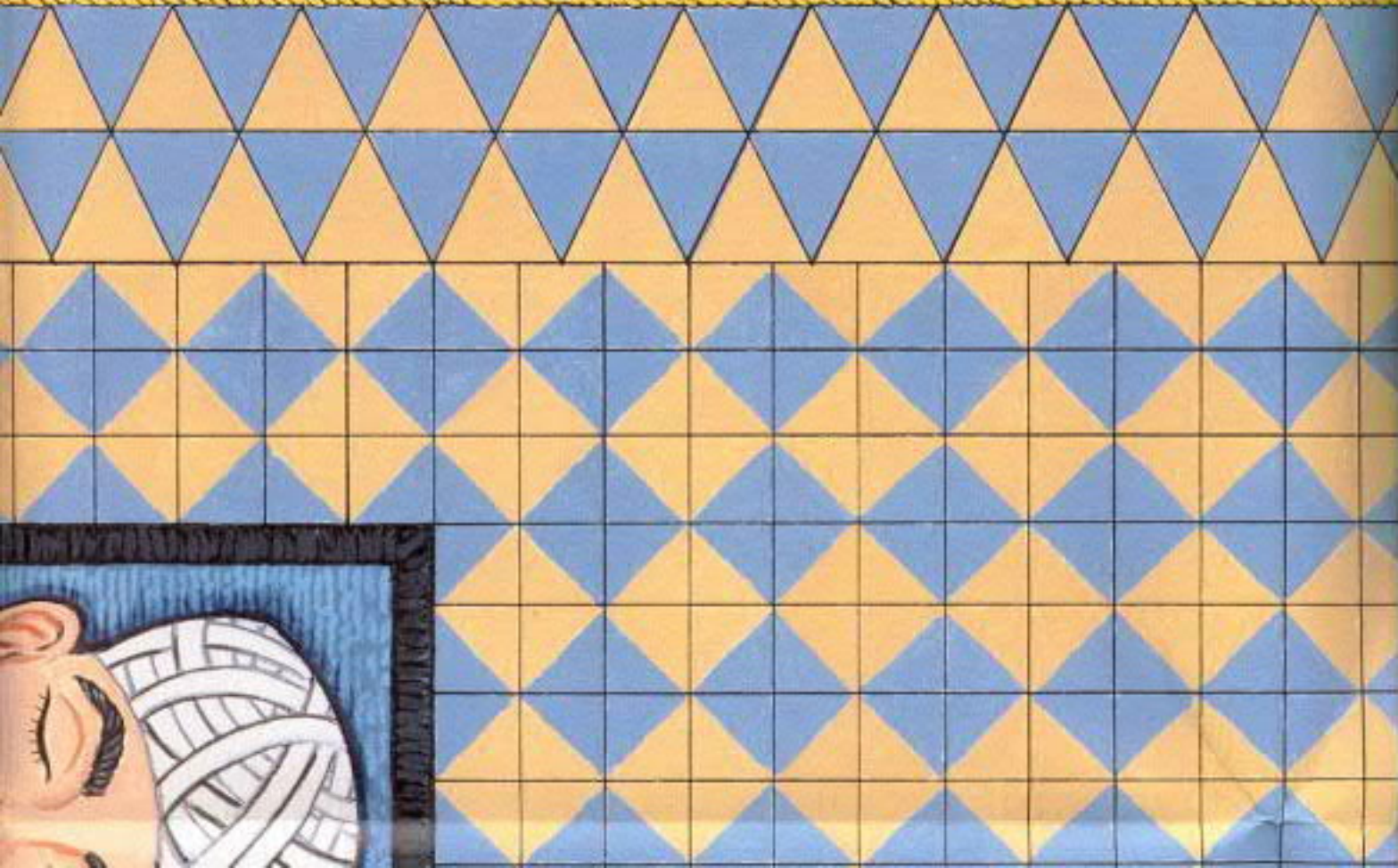
ed to



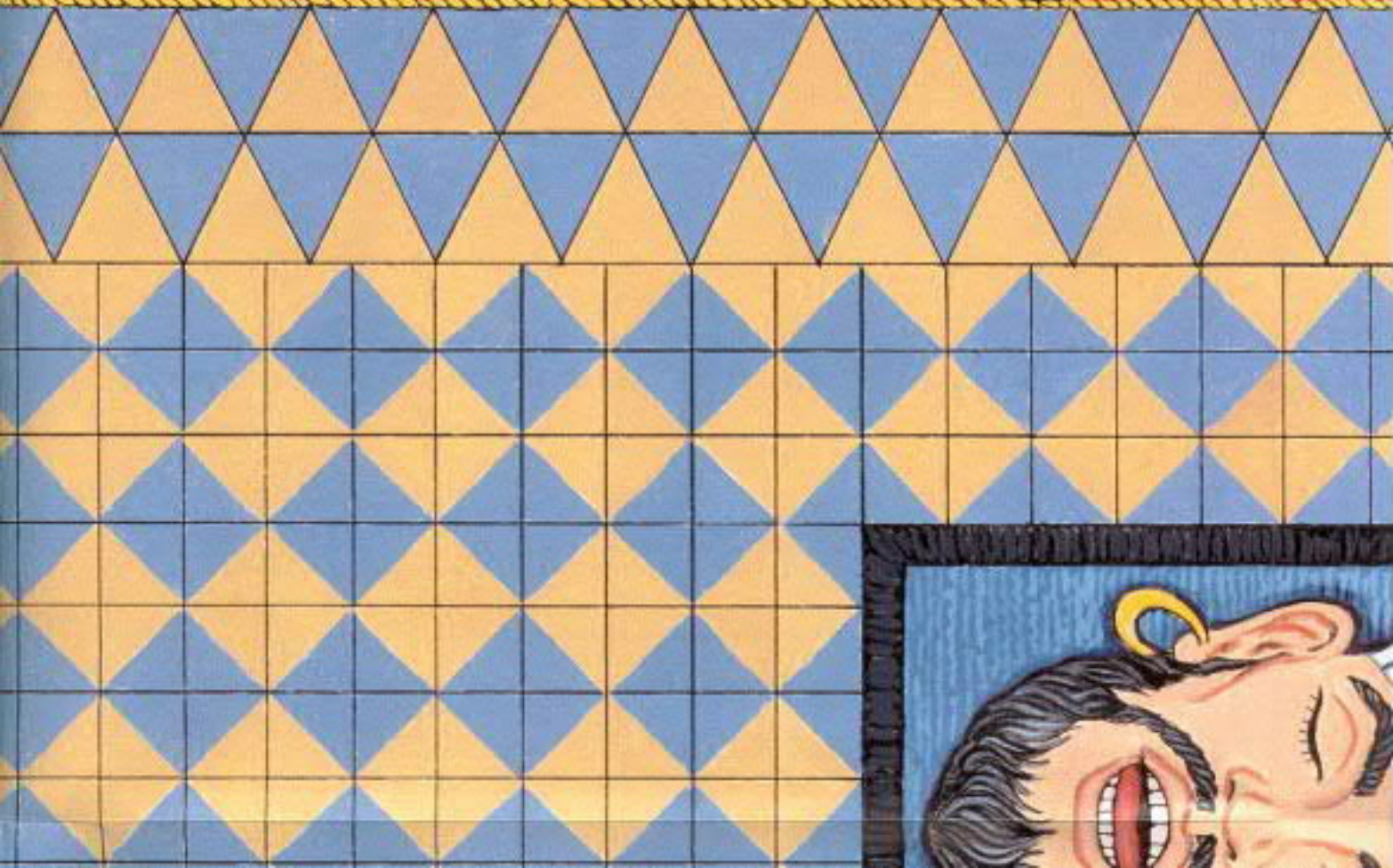
His patience breeds
breeds fair

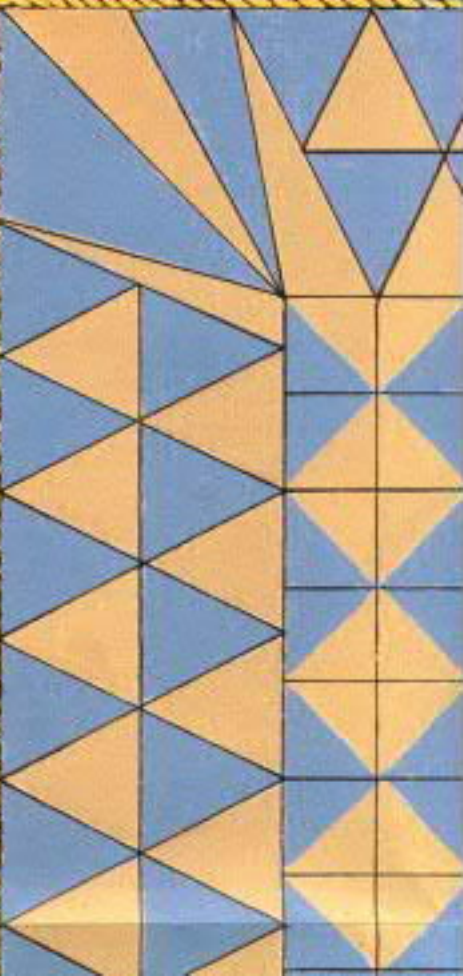
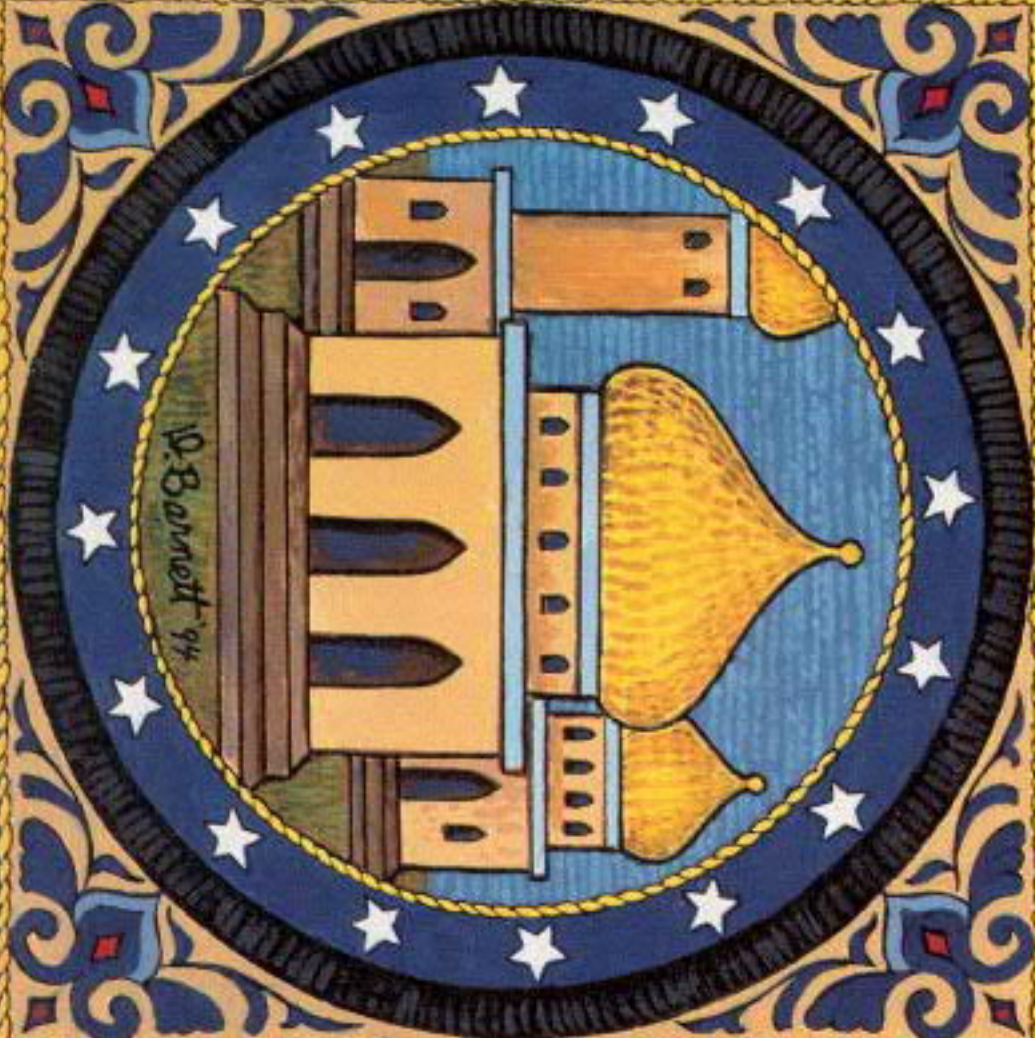
matters the direction of the wind?

A butchered pig has no need
fear the oven.



If the arrow is not aimed, what matter
wise man knows the
limits of facts.

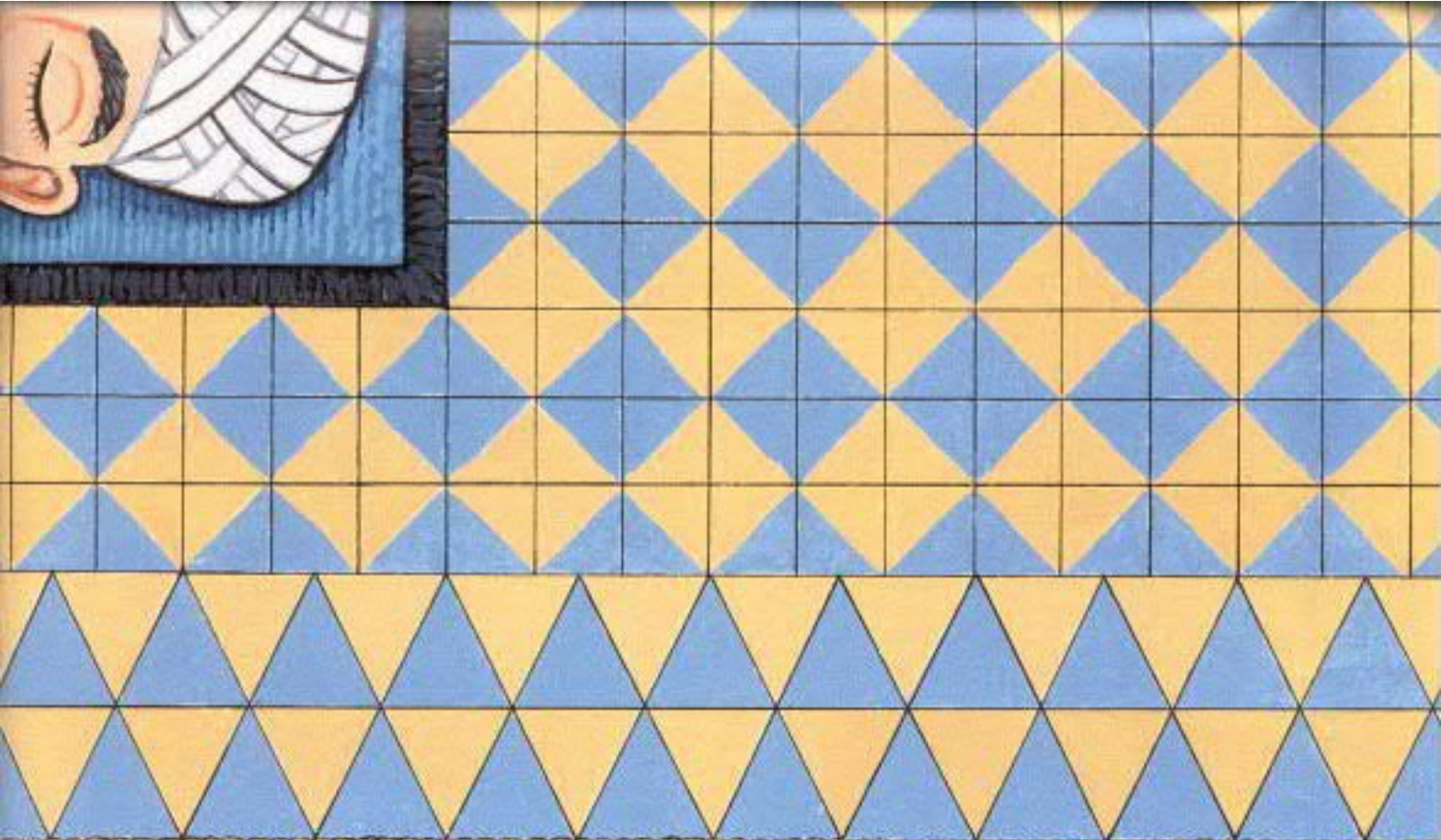




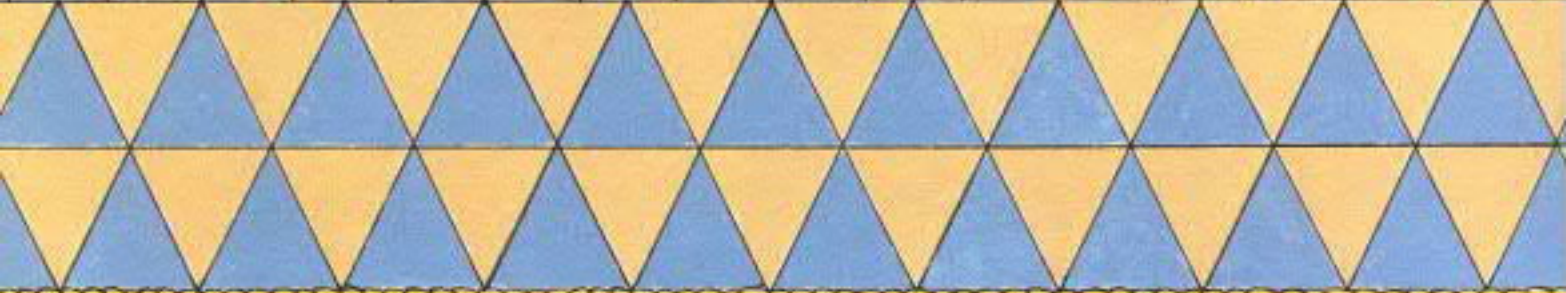
of success, haste
and failure.



Factor



When the camel kneels, even
the most indifferently built will be the first
to collapse.

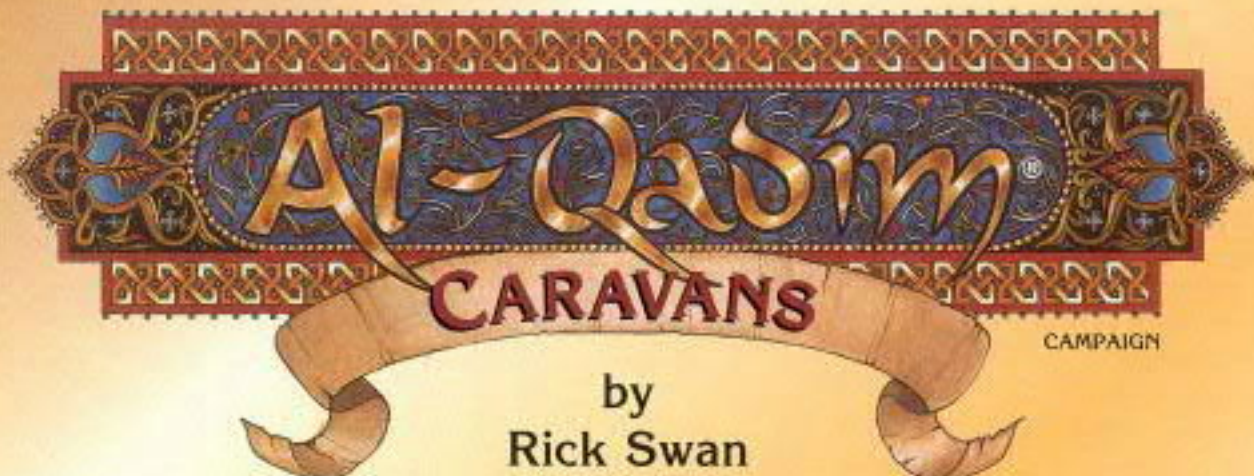


even the unwearry should rest.
The bread that you bake
must you eat.

A satisfactory and
the most



208



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Rick Swan

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