

# Al-Qadim

## REUNION

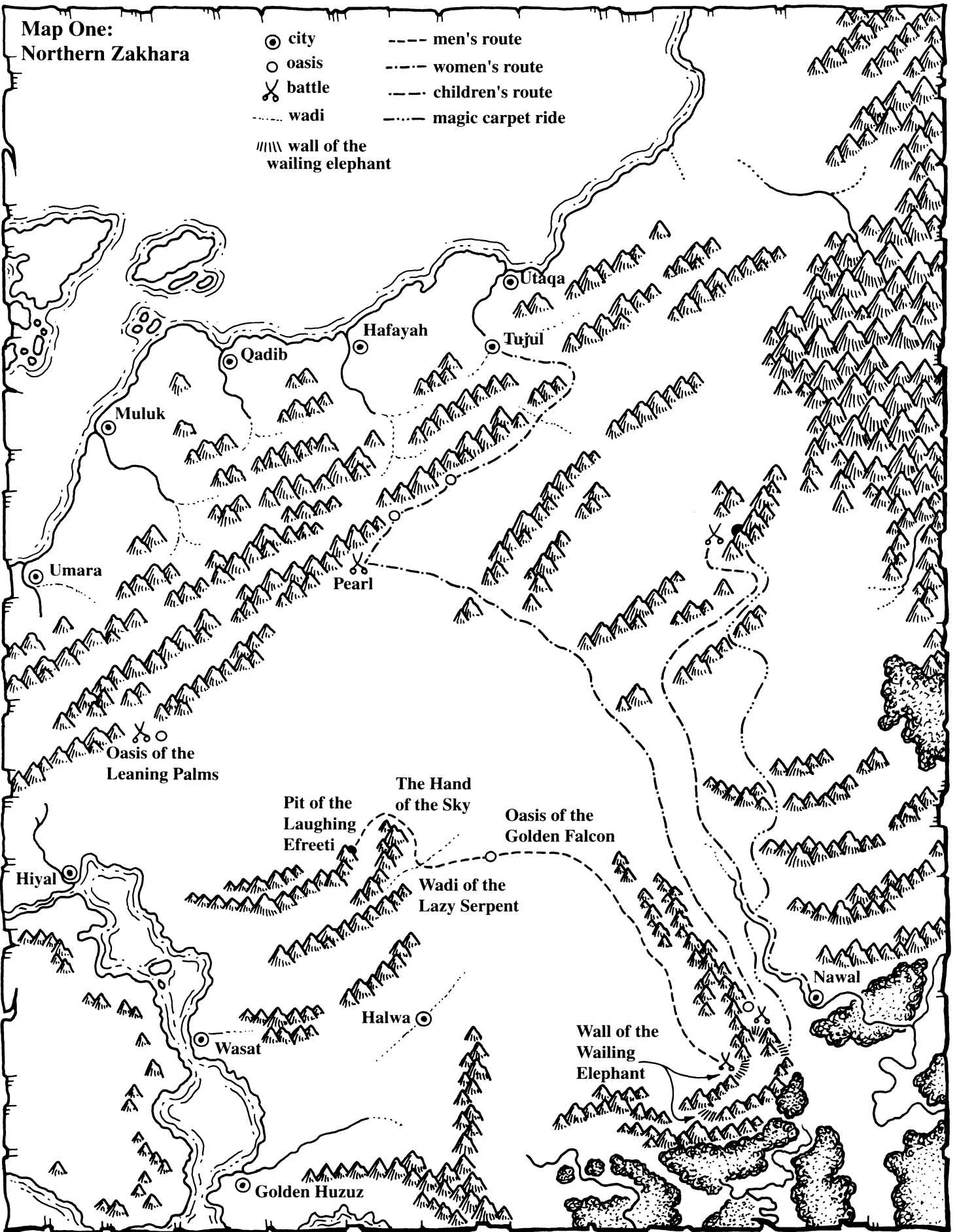


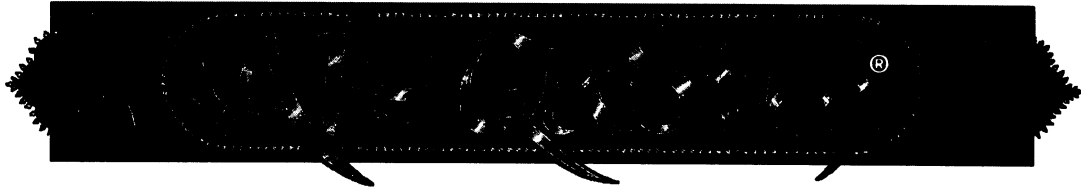
By Jackie Cassada & Nicky Rea



**Map One:  
Northern Zakhara**

- ⊙ city
- oasis
- ✂ battle
- ⋯ wadi
- ▨▨▨ wall of the wailing elephant
- men's route
- - - - - women's route
- ⋯ children's route
- ⋯ magic carpet ride





Game Adventure

# Reunion

by Jackie Cassada and Nicky Rea

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# Introduction

**S**et in Zakhara, the Land of Fate, *Reunion* attempts to capture the flavor of that unique setting, both in the characters and in the encounters. The story is a simple one—a desert tribe has been captured by raiders in the employ of an evil and ambitious mage. They have been delivered into slavery where men, women, and children are separated. The three parts of this adventure see first the men, then the women, and finally the children escape from very different situations, making their way to a hidden oasis known only to their tribe, where they can be reunited with their families and friends. Although each chapter involves a journey from captivity to freedom, the situations themselves are very diverse.

This adventure is unusual in that the players take on very different roles in each chapter. In the first chapter, they each play one of the men of the tribe; this section is intended to challenge the players' tactical and problem-solving expertise while providing plenty of opportunity for both combat and roleplaying. In the second chapter, they each play one of the women of the tribe; this section focuses more on negotiation skills—although the potential for combat is still present, and at least one combat is inevitable. In the third and final chapter, they each play one of the children of the tribe; this section should provide the most varied and innovative range of approaches, since most of the characters must improvise. Note that while it is certainly possible to play this adventure with the same characters throughout, or indeed with outlanders who are not members of the Tribe of the Flying Eagle, such an approach causes the players to miss out on the challenge of roleplaying the different points of view and facing the challenges inherent in each. Also, should any phase of the adventure end in disaster the DM can simply jump to the next chapter with its new set of player characters.

## Books Needed to Run the Adventure

**I**n addition to the books normally needed to play AD&D® (in this case, the *Player's Handbook* and the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*), in order to play this adventure the DM will need the *Arabian Adventures* rulebook. Spells detailed in this rulebook are marked with an asterix (\*) throughout this adventure. The AL-QADIM® *Land of Fate* boxed set, while useful for its detail and explanations of life in Zakhara, is not a necessity, nor is the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® appendix for al-Qadim, as we have tried to detail the pertinent statistics for all the encounters.

## Roleplaying the NPCs

**P**art of the fun of the al-Qadim campaign setting comes from playing creatures and villains that are “larger than life.” The DM is encouraged to have fun doing so, so long as it is not at the expense of forcing the players off center stage. Though most of the pertinent NPC speeches

are written out in full, the DM should break them up into natural patterns, paraphrasing and encouraging the PCs to ask questions or interact with you and among themselves. So long as the information is given to the players, and so long as the flavor of al-Qadim is maintained, the DM should feel free to improvise.

## Plot Synopsis

**A**ll the player characters in this adventure are members of the Tribe of the Flying Eagle. Captured by raiders in the hire of an evil elemental mage, they have been divided up so that the men are used as slaves in the mage's mines, the women have been sent to his harem, and the children have been given to the temple of a fiery god, whose priests the flame wizard is trying to impress. Fate intervenes in the form of a noble djinni, who is at long last fulfilling the final wish of a long-dead tribal chieftain.

In Chapter the First, the men have the opportunity to overpower their guards, recover some of their equipment and their horses, and escape from the mines. Their journey to the Oasis of the Midnight Waters, their tribe's ancestral homeland, takes them deep into the Zakharan desert. They are plagued by a ghost mount, battle a sandstorm, meet some desert centaurs, and fight against werehyenas. They are being pursued, however, and finally, within sight of the last leg of their journey, they must fight a final, desperate battle to win their freedom. If they are successful, they can reach the hidden oasis and safety, where they hope to be reunited with their families and loved ones.

In Chapter the Second, the women must slip out of the mage's harem and brave the dangers of his formal gardens where “terrible things” guard it by night. In the city, these women of the desert must beg, borrow, or bargain for the items they will need to make the arduous trek across the blazing sands to their home. Encounters with the merchants and colorful characters of the bazaar, with the mamluks who are charged with guarding the city, and with a qadi (judge) who must hear their case and rule for or against their freedom all provide splendid opportunities for roleplaying and innovative problem solving. Finally, they too must make their way across the desert to the oasis where their families await them.

Chapter the Third should be as freewheeling and fun as the DM can make it while still managing to keep some control over the game. The PCs here are all children, and their solutions to problems should be shaped by their sense of wonder; they need to be clever and imaginative rather than aggressive. Though there may be some combat, the overall emphasis is on breath-taking escapades and the wonders of Zakhara. From their confinement in the temple, the children escape to the precarious safety of a caravan leaving the town where they have been held. Fleeing bandits and the destruction of the caravan, they enter the “palace” (cave) of the aforementioned noble djinni, who challenges them to a series of games. If they win, they are gifted with a flying carpet to take them home and, after a hair-raising aerial encounter, can fly to the Oasis of the Midnight Waters, where all are finally brought together, at last.



## Chapter the First:

# “What a Piece of Work is Man”

**N**ote to DM: Priest PCs should choose their spells before play begins. Remind the players that their characters have no spellbooks, components, or holy symbols, so only spells which do not require them will be useful. Wizard PCs currently have no memorized spells, having expended them all in defense of their people at the time of their capture and having had no opportunity to re-memorize them since. Sha’ir are a special case: assume that their gen have been captured or driven off at the time of their enslavement and so can grant their sha’ir no spells until the two are reunited.

## Player Introduction

**F**or generations the Tribe of Altair, the Flying Eagle, has wandered the desert freely—until the raiders. May their names be stricken forever from the Scrolls of the Blessed! Like a punishing whirlwind of sand they swept down upon your tribe while you were camped at the Oasis of the Leaning Palms. You fought well against insurmountable odds. Even your children took up arms to defend their families. But the accursed marauders had first treacherously poisoned the waters of the oasis so that, drugged by its languors, you were unable to overcome their minions of dark, unspeakable powers and evil, fiery magics. You were overwhelmed and delivered into the horrors of slavery.

But that was not the worst of it. You were separated into three groups: the women were taken to the harem of the evil fire mage, Shihab al-Nawadi, The Magnificent, Flame of the Desert, Scourge of the Land. The children were sent to the Temple of Zuhayr, Lord of Flames, a local god whom you suspect is just Kossuth, the cold god of elemental fire, under another name. And you, the men of Altair, were conveyed to the mines known as the Pit of the Laughing Efreeti.

Here you have labored under the curses and lashes of your overseers to extract precious ores from unyielding rock. Forbidden access to the light of the sun or the cool breezes of the desert evening, you have lost all sense of the passage of time. Though you cannot have been here for more than a cycle of the moon, it seems as though you have dwelt here forever—or for one long, interminable night. Your cruel captors have vowed that if any one escapes, the rest of his work detail shall be put to death; if an entire work party escaped, all the remaining slaves would be sealed in the mines to slowly starve and suffocate.

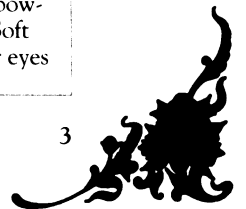
Added to the harshness of your toil has been the constant worry over the fate of your wives, beloveds, sisters, mothers, sons, and daughters. Imagining their torments has been almost more than you could bear. You have frequently entertained thoughts of escape, but your plans have always come to naught. Now, at last, it seems that Fate has heard your supplications. During your last period of sleep, all of you dreamed a dream . . .


## Encounter One:

### “Your Wish Is My Command”

Read the following aloud to the players:

**T**he aroma of crushed jasmine and of sandlewood fills your nostrils, overpowering the stench of sweat and filth to which you have become inured. Soft strains from a zither and the tinkling of cymbals fill your ears. You open your eyes





to a wondrous sight. Before you shimmers a bright figure of a young man dressed in fine silks with a jeweled turban on his head. He hovers rather than stands before you, and you notice that where his feet should be there are only swirling mists. You realize that you are face to face before what can only be one of the lords of the djinn. With a flourish of his hands, he acknowledges you and begins to speak:

“Men of the Tribe of the Eagle in Flight, your days of suffering and bondage are almost at an end! Times and times ago, the founder of your tribe freed me from my own dire imprisonment. For that service I granted him three wishes.

“The first was to so ward your ancestral home, the Oasis of the Midnight Waters, that no enemy of your tribe could find it or cause harm to those who dwelled therein. This I did, and to this day, as you know, only members of your tribe can find the oasis. And while the Children of Altair remain within its boundaries, no enemy can assail you or cause you harm.

“The second wish was to make certain that his tribe would flourish and that, so long as there were sands in the desert, it would never die. So it has been—and is likely to continue to be, for you have produced generations of children upon whom Fate has smiled, and many misfortunes which have destroyed other tribes have passed you by.

“His third wish, however, demonstrated the workings of a most clever and astute mind, as well as the possession of a great and selfless heart. Foreseeing that there might come a day when disaster should strike his tribe, he made his third wish thusly: that if ever the time should come that his tribe should lose that most precious of gifts, their freedom, I should come to their aid and help them—men, women, and children—make their arduous way to freedom.

“My friends, I believe that time has come. I have devised a scheme whereby you may, in small groupings so as to better your chances, escape from this hideous and (may I say) smelly place. I have put the means whereby you may free yourselves near to hand. Your opportunity will come when next the taskmasters come to take you to your labors.

“Act quickly, follow the golden trail, and avail yourselves of such items as Fate puts in your path. Once you are outside, find the landmarks that will lead you to your true home, the Oasis of the Midnight Waters.”

### Running This Encounter

This encounter should set the tone for the players, planting them firmly in the land of al-Qadim. Deliver the djinni's speech as expressively and flamboyantly as possible. Rather than simply reading through the prepared monologue, allow the player characters to interact with their visitor. He ends by handing any sorcerer, elemental mage, or ajami within the group either a scroll or *ring of spell storing* with a few spells, urging him to use it wisely; the PCs find these items on their persons when they awake. Suggested spells are *magic missile*, *\*sand quiet*, *\*enlarge desert creature*, and *lightning bolt*. Any sha'ir he presents with a small cage

which he opens to reveal that character's gen, now freed from the mage's imprisonment (if the gen was slain in the battle at the oasis, he introduces the character to a new one). He then takes his leave:

“I go now to bring the means of deliverance to your women and your children. Though your journey to freedom will not be without danger (alas, I cannot order everything in the universe to bend to your desires!), know that Fate smiles upon your endeavor. Forget not to call upon Her in your darkest hour.”

With a grand obeisance, he disappears in a swirling cloud. Proceed immediately to Encounter Two.

### Encounter Two: “Strike as Swiftly as the Lynx of the Desert”

**F**or the first time since coming to this accursed place, you awake from your sleep feeling rested, refreshed, and inspired with hope.

Give the players some time to get into character and make at least some tentative plans. Encourage the players to hold any tactical discussions in character. If they start talking about plans from a player point of view rather than a character one, and can't be persuaded to speak in character, go immediately to the next encounter. If they ask about the usual guard complement, tell them the information given below. As soon as they are ready, or after five minutes or so have passed (whichever comes first), proceed with the following:

As you lie in readiness, you hear the sound of approaching footsteps. The overseers are coming to unlock your leg manacles and lead you deeper into the mines for another day's backbreaking labor.

There are four guards, accompanied by a pair of savage, dog-like creatures with two snarling heads. While one guard stands at each end of the line of manacled characters, two other guards undo the chains from their tethers and jerk the characters to their feet. The beasts stand with the rearmost guard, growling and drooling with feral anticipation. Describe this to the players so that they know what their characters are facing and can make decisions based on what the PCs can see.

**Guards, 2nd-level askar (four F2):** AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; 15, 13, 12, 10 hp; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (scourge) or 1d6 (short sword); AL NE; XP 65 each.

**Death Dogs (2):** AC 7; MV 12; HD 2+1; hp 14, 12; THAC0 19; #AT 2 (one with each head); Dmg 1d10/1d10 (bite); SA bite inflicts lethal rotting disease (save vs. poison or die within 4d6 days); knocks opponent prone on a natural roll of 19 or 20; SZ M (6 feet long) ML steady (12); Int semi (3); AL NE; XP 120 each.



**Note for the DM:** This fight is meant to be a serious challenge: the player characters have no weapons and only a few spells, so some kind of plan is essential if they're to overcome the guards. If they wait until the guards have finished unlocking their manacles and then attack them, they will have one round of surprise and, if the DM is feeling unusually generous, might automatically gain initiative in the next round. Encourage them to improvise if they are so inclined. Unless they improvise weapons (from chains, mining tools, etc.), consult the punching and wrestling tables for bare-handed attacks or allow the characters to roll normal attacks, inflicting a single hit point of damage per successful hit.

If they attempt non-standard actions, such as trying to shove one guard into another, have them make first an attack roll and then, if successful, an opposed Strength roll (assume the guards to have Strengths in the 13 to 14 range). Success goes to the character who rolls highest without actually exceeding his Strength score. Use the same mechanic if they try other unorthodox maneuvers, simply deciding which ability score best applies—for example, grabbing a weapon from a guard's belt requires first a successful attack roll (to get a good snatch at the weapon's hilt) and then an opposed Dexterity check (to see if the guard realized what was happening and got there first).

Characters bitten by the death dogs need not despair—healing awaits them at their destination, if only they can reach it in time. In the meantime, they can console themselves with the thought that “we have no fate but the fate we are given”—at the very least, they'll die free men!

If a character should call upon Fate, roll a d10. On a 1 or 2, his opponent slips on something wet and loses that round's attack; on a 3 or 4, his opponent takes double damage from the next hit; on a 5 or 6, his opponent automatically misses the character the next round; on a 7 or 8, his opponent loses heart and tries to run for help; on a 9 or 10, nothing happens. This benefit only occurs once.

Assuming the player characters defeat their jailers, they would be wise to search the bodies. Each guard has on his person a curved short sword, a scourge, and a jambiya. Each wears leather armor (which should fit a normal sized human or half-elf). Two of the guards carry rings of iron keys. One unlocks the heroes' chains and shackles; the other has a single large iron key that will open the door to the outside of the mining complex. In addition, the guards have between them a total of 25 copper bits (copper pieces) and a pair of dice. The death dogs have spiked collars, one on each neck (and therefore four in all), for which ingenious characters may find some use.

### Encounter Three: “Trail of Gold, Man of Copper”

All around you the sounds of battle have died. A few quick calls ascertain that the other groups have also won their battles and are making their way to freedom along the “golden trail.” But what golden trail?

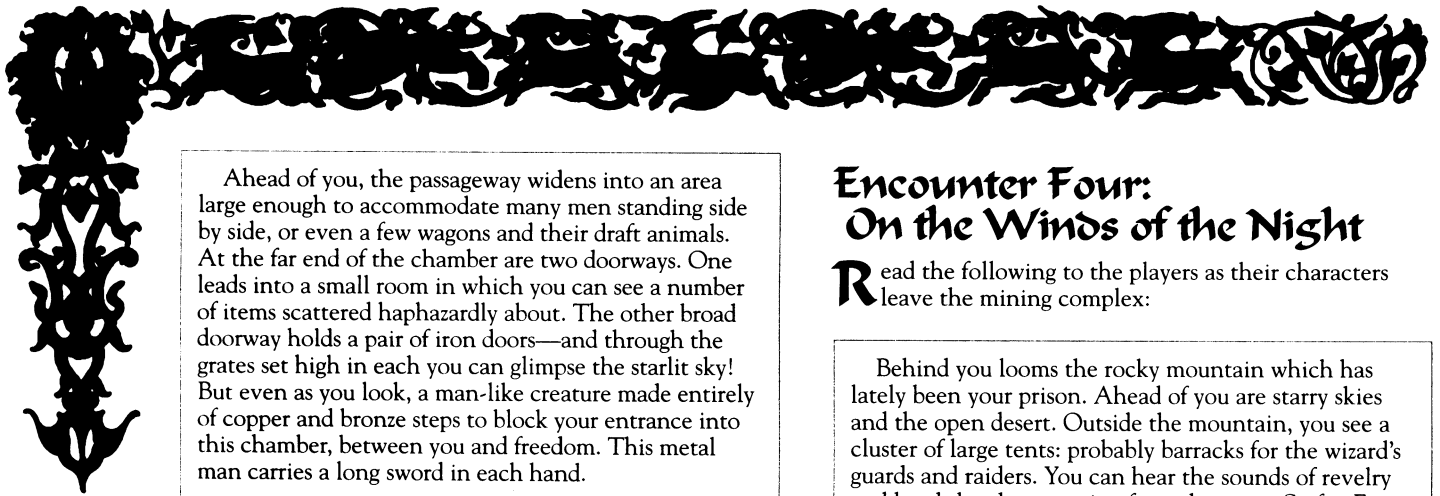


The “golden trail” referred to by the djinni is a thin vein of gold running through the walls of the mining complex (an illusion created by the genie that will last for six hours before fading from view). Any character who states he is looking for “something golden” may make an Intelligence roll to spot this golden vein (and a Wisdom check to realize that it was not there the day before). Characters may also get started in the right direction by stating that they are attempting to follow the sounds of their tribesmen or to track their footsteps. Ask the characters to make Tracking or Detect Noise rolls as appropriate. Light sources may be obtained from the occasional lamp on shallow shelves along the walls, but they are very smoky and light only a 10 foot radius.

As they travel through the labyrinthine tunnels, other sounds will become more faint and die away; the djinn has arranged for the groups to spread apart and take differing routes in order to insure that not all of them are recaptured if Fate turns against them. Unless the player characters “follow the gold” they will become hopelessly lost. Calling upon Fate might cause a character to stumble in such a way that, rising, he catches a glint off the tunnel wall and so discovers the golden path.

Assuming that the escapees follow it, describe a series of twisting and turning tunnels, all marked by a thin line of gold. Let the players converse quietly, but remind them that noises louder than a low whisper carry great distances through the rocky tunnels. A few noises of guards searching for them may make this short interlude more exciting. Let the players bind wounds, distribute armor and weapons, establish a marching order, and move through the passages for some time before they come across the following (see **Map Two: Man of Copper**).





Ahead of you, the passageway widens into an area large enough to accommodate many men standing side by side, or even a few wagons and their draft animals. At the far end of the chamber are two doorways. One leads into a small room in which you can see a number of items scattered haphazardly about. The other broad doorway holds a pair of iron doors—and through the grates set high in each you can glimpse the starlit sky! But even as you look, a man-like creature made entirely of copper and bronze steps to block your entrance into this chamber, between you and freedom. This metal man carries a long sword in each hand.

**Copper Automaton:** AC 3; MV 9; HD 6; hp 39; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+1/1d8+1 (bronze *long swords* +1) or 2d8+1/2d8+1 (bronze *long swords* +1 plus heat); THAC0 15; SA starting with the third round of combat, the copper automaton's fists glow from internal heat, causing its weapons to do additional damage (2d8 rather than 1d8 per strike); SD immune to all fire-based spells, illusions, and mind-affecting spells; SZ M; ML 20 (fearless); Int low (7); AL N; XP 650.

The automaton is a guardian placed here by the evil wizard to guard the treasure and prevent unauthorized passage through this exit (similar guardians wait by the mine's other exits, but the characters will not have time to reach them before encountering a guard patrol of roughly three times their number). The creature will automatically attack one of the fighters, effectively forcing him into combat. Other PCs making successful Dexterity checks may squeeze past the combatants into the larger area, thus gaining access to the small room beyond which contains items necessary for their survival.

The small room contains treasure looted from the tribe which the mage has not yet distributed to his men, planning to use them as bribes to attract henchmen. The specific items found should be for the most part appropriate to the player characters' kits and classes. The following items represent a typical selection: a two-handed sword, a scimitar, a jambiya, a *jambiya of quickness* +2, four throwing daggers (two are *daggers* +1), a scythe, a *spear* +1, a throwing axe, a short bow, twelve arrows (four are *arrows* +1), a staff (actually a *weapon of concealed wizardry* +1, which does not detect as magical), ten sling bullets (but no sling), a razor, a holy symbol, a spellbook, a healer's pack (containing herbs, salves, bandages, compresses, etc.), and some material components (enough for player character spellcasters to cast any spells known to them twice but no more). Note that should the party defeat the automaton, its two magical bronze long swords can be claimed as treasure. If the party is getting too badly mauled through bad dice rolls, they can make a run for it, as all of them are faster than the automaton (although it will hurt them badly as they struggle to unlock and open the heavy iron doors, unless some hero valiantly stays behind to do battle with it).

## Encounter Four: On the Winds of the Night

Read the following to the players as their characters leave the mining complex:

Behind you looms the rocky mountain which has lately been your prison. Ahead of you are starry skies and the open desert. Outside the mountain, you see a cluster of large tents: probably barracks for the wizard's guards and raiders. You can hear the sounds of revelry and harsh laughter coming from that area. So far, Fate has been with you; no general alarm has been given. And—wonder of wonders!—someone has readied horses, your own beloved horses, for your hasty departure. Sturdy mounts, enough for all of you and one extra, stand waiting for you to leap astride them and flee into the safety of the desert.

The djinni has indeed liberated the horses of the Tribe of Altair from the pen in which they have been kept, but an extra beast has insinuated itself into the ranks of the waiting animals. The characters' own horses are fine examples of horseflesh: swift, obedient, and sturdy. The extra "horse" appears to be all of this—and more. It stands several inches taller than the other horses, its coat is a glossy black. It will seem uncommonly eager to be ridden, attempting to get between a horse and its prospective rider. It may, in fact, succeed in tempting one of the characters to mount it rather than his own horse . . . to his dismay.

**Ghost Mount:** AC 5; MV 30; HD 3; hp 19; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d8/1d8/1d6 (hoof/hoof/bite); SA rider must make a Wisdom check at -2 at beginning of ride or be carried away at full speed for at least 75 miles (9 hours) before being abandoned in some desolate spot (thrown for 1d6 damage plus item saving throws vs. crushing blow upon landing; leaping from the horse at anytime prior to this causes 3d6 damage plus the item saving throws), if the Wisdom check succeeds the mount obeys the rider but he must make a saving throw vs. death magic at the journey's midpoint or be drained of life energy and transformed into a wraith; SD immune to poison, paralysis, *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, cold-and-death-magics; SW holy water (2d4 hp damage per vial), destroyed by *raise dead* or *resurrection* (save vs. spell to resist); ML champion (15); Int low (6); AL NE; XP 420.

This encounter tests the tribal values of the characters, particularly the desert riders, who have Riding proficiencies and are good or superior horsemen. Suspicious characters may make a save vs. spells to disbelieve the mount's appearance; success means that character sees the creature for what it is: a malnourished, battered, and scarred wraithlike horse with wild and shining eyes. If a character actually spurns the horses of his tribe for this sleek stranger, then he must pay the penalty, and the other characters will probably end up chasing after and then tracking him, drawing them far out of their way. If no one falls for the ghost mount's ploy, the creature follows them until it is either killed or somehow driven away. A *protection from evil* spell will







discourage it from following the characters, or it can be turned as a wraith, causing it to gallop away and not return.

Aside from their saddles and bridles, the horses have saddlebags which contain clean clothing (abas, sashes, kefiyehs, and agals) and boots. Bread, cheese, figs, olives, meat, salt, and coffee enough for several days are also there, along with firewood, cooking utensils, feed for the horses, and enough water for animals and men for several days.

## Interlude

The group's destination, the Oasis of the Midnight Waters, is a journey of many days. Tell the players that as children their characters each learned a simple rhyme telling them the landmarks to look for when seeking the Oasis of the Midnight Waters:

The reach must exceed the grasp  
 Silent sleeping is the asp  
 Beyond the waters of the hawk  
 Mournful is the tusker's talk.

This little bit of doggerel contains the directions necessary to find their tribal home. First, the characters must locate a rock formation known as the Hand of the Sky. Then they must turn south towards the seasonal river called the Wadi of the Lazy Serpent, and from hence east to the Oasis of the Golden Falcon. The fourth and final landmark, the Wall of the Wailing Elephant, guards the Oasis of the Midnight Waters itself and prevents anyone not of their tribe from reaching it.

The first few days of their journey should be blissfully uneventful, allowing the characters time to heal up and put the trauma of their enslavement behind them. Call for a few rolls for Desert Survival, Fire Building, Direction Sense, Set Snares, and other appropriate skills. Note that the djinni gave them no tent, no blankets, and no means to light a fire. As the characters well know, deserts are blisteringly hot by day but freezing at night. They should travel mostly by night and in the early hours of dawn, sleeping during the hot parts of the day. As experienced inhabitants of the desert, they know to do this without any proficiency checks. Unless you want to play out the desert trek in detail, read the following aloud to the players:

Time passes in a blur of chilly evening rides and long days of uneasy rest under the hot sun of the desert. Your abilities have been taxed to the fullest to insure that you have enough food and water for your horses and yourselves and to find adequate shelter and concealment during the hottest parts of the day. But that is a small price to pay to breathe the clean air of the desert again as a free man. On the second day of your journey, you spotted the towering Hand of the Sky, a rock formation that serves as one of the landmarks on the trail you must travel to safety. Turning south, you then traveled several days more before finding the nearly dry wadi whose serpentine bed has given it the name the Wadi of the Lazy Serpent, marking your second milestone and provided you with a little badly needed water.

Now, nine days into the desert and near the halfway mark of your flight, Fate has apparently turned Her attentions elsewhere: you are bereft of both food and water, and your next landmark, the Oasis of the Golden Falcon, is another full day's travel. Your horses are suffering from the lack of water most keenly, and you are afraid that some of them may soon become too weak to carry you—thus slowing you down and compounding your situation. Accordingly, you have broken camp earlier today and pressed on in hopes of reaching the oasis before nightfall. Although the wisdom of your fathers cries out against this, if you wait longer you might not make it at all or might miss the oasis in the dark, which would spell certain doom for you all.

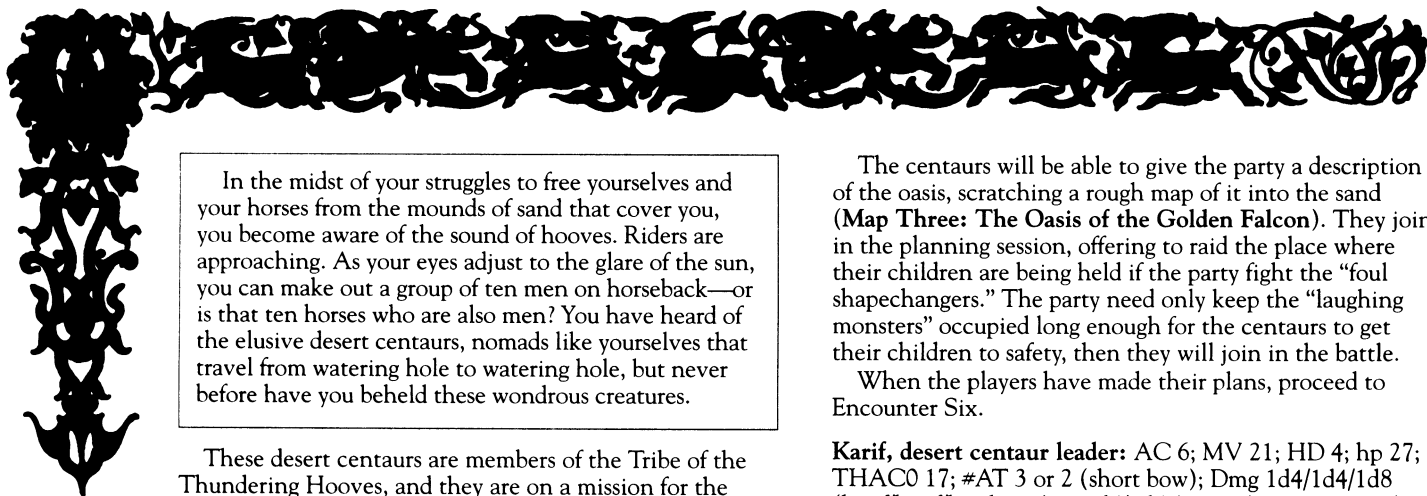
Note that if the ghost mount is still with the party, it will not show signs of fatigue or dehydration (another clue that it is not what it seems). Anyone who mounts it out of desperation meets with the same fate described under Encounter Four. If the characters put any vital equipment (such as their waterbags) on the creature, it rides off at once and does not return.

## Encounter Five: "Riders on the Storm"

About midday on the ninth day, have the players make Wisdom or Desert Survival checks to notice a large dusty cloud appearing on the horizon and approaching rapidly. The party is about to be assaulted by one of the desert's most formidable natural forces: a colossal sandstorm. They suffer 1d2 points of damage per round while the storm lasts (an hour) and are blinded for 1d6 turns if they fail saving throws vs. wand/rod/staff. Only lying prone with a cloth across eyes, nose, and mouth or some magical protection will negate these effects (being desert riders, the characters should not neglect to protect their horses as well). In addition, the characters will be buried alive beneath the shifting sand. They can dig themselves out in 1d3 rounds but must make Strength and Constitution checks each round; failing the Strength check adds an extra round to the digging time, while a failed Constitution check causes the temporary loss of 1d4 points of Constitution. A character reduced to zero Constitution cannot move and suffocates in 1d10 rounds unless rescued. Characters with the Endurance proficiency only need make the Constitution check every other round. Characters who win free may attempt to aid their buried fellows, reducing the number of rounds required to escape by one (additional diggers do not decrease the time). Those who survive regain lost points of Constitution at the rate of 1 point per turn. Note that while few if any characters are likely to perish here unless Fate has turned Her face away (bad dice rolls), there is a real danger that they may lose most of their mounts (assume that the horses have an average Constitution of 15), tripling their travel time thereafter. If the ghost mount is still with them, they find it serenely waiting atop the sand, seemingly unaffected by the sandstorm.

While the characters are extricating themselves and their mounts from the sands, read them the following:





In the midst of your struggles to free yourselves and your horses from the mounds of sand that cover you, you become aware of the sound of hooves. Riders are approaching. As your eyes adjust to the glare of the sun, you can make out a group of ten men on horseback—or is that ten horses who are also men? You have heard of the elusive desert centaurs, nomads like yourselves that travel from watering hole to watering hole, but never before have you beheld these wondrous creatures.

These desert centaurs are members of the Tribe of the Thundering Hooves, and they are on a mission for the good of their people. They approach the party carefully but are not hostile unless the party threatens them. If asked to help extricate men and horses from the sands, the centaurs willingly pitch in, attending first to the horses. Once all the survivors are free, and have been given water and food (thus establishing a salt bond), the centaurs ask for the characters to repay their good deed in kind:

Studying your benefactors more closely, you see that they present a truly marvelous image. There are seven stallions and three mares. The males stand more than six feet tall and have long flowing hair and long, elaborately curled beards. The women stand nearly as tall and their hair, too, flows manelike over their shoulders and down their backs. Their faces are partially concealed by gauzy veils, but what you can see indicates that both sexes are quite handsome. One of them, a particularly muscular male with streaks of grey in his dark brown hair and beard, steps forward as spokesman.

"We have aided you in your time of need, as the Laws of the Loregiver require of all believers. Now we ask that you repay kindness in kind, so that Fate will smile upon you. We come from the Oasis of the Golden Falcon, where we had hoped to spend several days enjoying its pure waters and feasting on its abundance. Instead we have found that a pack of shapechangers has claimed the oasis as their hunting ground. There are but five of them, but they are treacherous and cunning and can appear as either human or hyena—this we have seen with our own eyes.

"They have managed to capture our colts and fillies—surely Fate turned Her face from us that day—and are holding them hostage against our good behavior. We are afraid that they want our children for food, yet we dare not attack them ourselves, lest our children come to harm. If, however, another group of travelers should assault them, they would have no reason to use someone else's children as a defense. What have you to say?"

Most parties should not be averse to helping the centaurs. First of all, they owe them a favor. Secondly, all the party members should be moved by the parallels between the captivity and danger facing their own children and the young centaurs. Lastly, the party is in desperate need of the water and food available at the oasis which they have just been informed has become a werehyena den, so self-interest if nothing else should encourage them to ally with their benefactors.

The centaurs will be able to give the party a description of the oasis, scratching a rough map of it into the sand (**Map Three: The Oasis of the Golden Falcon**). They join in the planning session, offering to raid the place where their children are being held if the party fight the "foul shapechangers." The party need only keep the "laughing monsters" occupied long enough for the centaurs to get their children to safety, then they will join in the battle.

When the players have made their plans, proceed to Encounter Six.

**Karif, desert centaur leader:** AC 6; MV 21; HD 4; hp 27; THACO 17; #AT 3 or 2 (short bow); Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d8 (hoof/hoof/battleaxe) or 1d6/1d6 (arrows); SZ M; ML elite (14); Int average (10); AL NG; XP 175. Special Ability: Tracking (14).

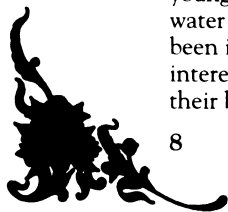
**Desert centaurs (9):** AC 6; MV 21; HD 3; hp 21, 19, 18×3, 16, 15, 14, 9; THACO 17; #AT 3 or 2; Dmg by weapon (five have light lances for 1d6 that do double damage on a charge, four have scimitars for 1d8 and composite short bows for 1d6, and all have hooves for 1d4/1d4); SZ M; ML elite (13); Int average (8); AL NG; XP 120 each.

## Encounter Six: "No Laughing Matter"

The Oasis of the Golden Falcon would be a major oasis in the Zakharan Desert if it were on any of the major caravan routes. Since it is not, it remains little used, and travelers who stumble upon it consider it a real find. A large pool of water (nearly large enough to qualify as a lake) sits in a hollow surrounded by dunes. Rocky crags push their way out of the desert and cradle one side of the pool, providing shade in the hottest part of the day. A number of date palms and shade palms, as well as other fruit-bearing plants, grace the oasis, which is also the home of small herds of wild goats and gazelles as well as a number of desert hares and dhabbi (lizards). The oasis gets its name from the golden falcons who nest atop the crags and whose shapes can be seen soaring high into the sky as they hunt for food. There are a number of cave openings in the rocks. One of these is currently being used by the werehyenas to hold their hostages, three young females (fillies) and two young males (colts) of the People of the Thundering Hooves.

The sun is nearing the western horizon as you reach the top of a tall dune. Karif and his warriors motion you to a halt, indicating with their hands that the Oasis of the Golden Falcon lies just beyond the dunes. The sun will be setting soon and night will fall with its characteristic suddenness upon the desert. You know that once it is dark, the werehyenas will probably retreat into their cave, and you will have a hard time separating them from their prisoners. You will have to strike soon if you are to accomplish your goal.

Since the centaur's map was merely scratched in the sand, the characters do not have it available for reference unless they prudently thought to make a copy. If the characters observe the oasis for a few minutes, they will see four





men and a woman moving about in this green and pleasant place. All of them are tall and wiry, with long dark hair tied back over their necks. One is sitting just outside a cave mouth. Two others are playing some sort of game involving sticks and small stones. The remaining pair lean against two of the shade palms, apparently lazily “on watch.”

This encounter differs from earlier combats in that this time the player characters have an opportunity to plan their attack. The DM must decide, based on the group’s approach, whether the plan will proceed without a hitch, whether the werehyenas are surprised (giving the characters the advantage), or whether something goes wrong. If the characters manage to draw the cave guard away from the cave mouth early in the fight, the desert centaurs make a lightning strike on the cave and free their children. While four of the centaurs escort the children to safety, the rest ride down to join the battle like avenging whirlwinds, arriving four rounds after the combat started.

This is a relatively tough encounter; although there are only five opponents, the werehyenas are potentially formidable foes who can seriously hurt the party (see below). If the party is doing poorly, allow the centaurs to come to their assistance a few rounds early. If the party is doing well against the werehyenas and appear to be able to defeat them without external help, delay the centaurs’ aid (the children may be charmed, or hobbled, or an additional werehyena may be lurking inside the cave).

If the party approaches and feigns to have come to the oasis without knowing what the inhabitants are, the werehyenas will remain in human form to try their *friends* ability on them. They will also be in human form (at least for the first round) if the characters manage to pull off a surprise attack by sneaking up on them. If the characters rush them, screaming battle cries and waving weapons in an attempt to draw them out away from the caves, the werehyenas all change into wereform for battle, since they realize that their attackers are not about to stand around long enough to fall for their *friends* ability.

**Werehyenas:** (5) AC 5; MV 12; HD 5+1; hp 36, 31, 30, 28, 21; THACO 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2d6 (bite) or 1d8 (scimitar); SA *friends* spell (once per round when in human form, base Charisma 14–15, duration 1d4+12 rounds), locks jaw on natural roll of 19 or 20 (automatic bite damage every round thereafter, victim’s movement slowed by 6, does not let go unless damaged for 10+ hp); SD immune to nonmagical weapons (all apparent wounds from such close at the end of the round inflicted), immune to all enchantments and charms, pass without trace in hyena form; SW cold iron, fear of fire (held at bay by a torch, flees in terror if suffers 6+ points of fire damage); SZ M; ML average (9); Int very (12); AL NE; XP 1,400 each.

## Encounter Seven: “The Wall of the Wailing Elephant”

After resting with the desert centaurs in the relative safety of the Oasis of the Golden Falcon, you refilled your waterskins, replenished your food supplies, and continued on your journey. Only one more

landmark remained, some eight days to the southeast: the Wall of the Wailing Elephant.

Late in the evening on what should be the final night of your journey, you see an enormous wall of darkness cutting into the sky, obscuring the stars. This is undoubtedly the Wall of the Wailing Elephant, so named because of its monstrous size and because the winds of the desert blow through holes in the upper parts of the rock escarpment, making an eerie sound halfway between a moan and an elephant’s battle trumpet.

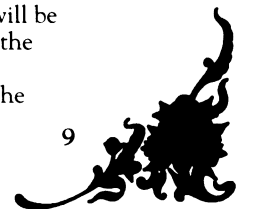
Hidden somewhere in this steep rocky barrier is a secret doorway that opens onto the valley wherein lies your goal: the Oasis of the Midnight Waters. Your hearts beat quickly within your breasts as you anticipate a joyous reunion with your loved ones and fellow tribespeople.

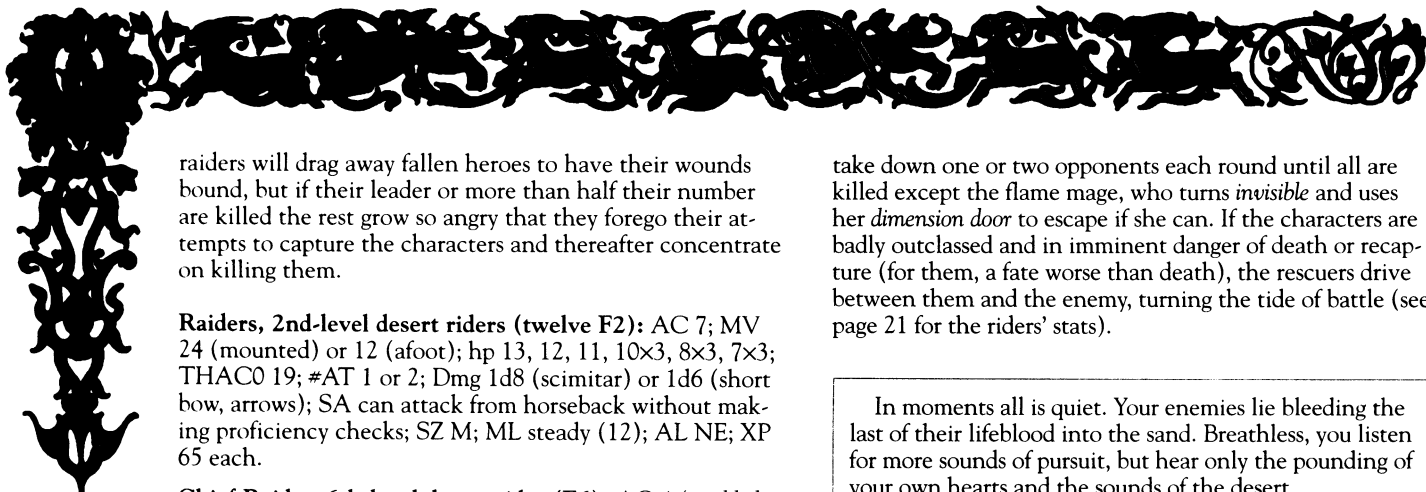
Suddenly, from behind you come the triumphant baying of saluqi, the thunder of many galloping horses, and the battle cries of the accursed raiders who attacked your tribe, and you know that somehow they have managed to track you down. You have but a few moments before they are upon you. Ahead of you is the Wall. Behind the Wall is safety, but you cannot hope to find the entrance before the raiders attack. You know that here you must fight the most important battle of your lives, to save yourselves and to keep the secret of the hidden oasis.

This is the climactic encounter of this chapter, and it should be a tough battle for the player characters; they will have to demonstrate good sense and clever tactics to win this one on their own. Fortunately (for them), if they remember the djinni’s words at the beginning of the adventure and his enjoinder to call upon Fate in their “darkest hour,” they receive unexpected aid from beyond the Wall.

See **Map Four: The Wall of the Wailing Elephant** for placement of the attackers. The characters can race for the Wall to make their stand and reach it in two rounds; the attackers will be able to use spells and missile weapons two rounds later. Thus, the characters should have those two rounds to take offensive and defensive actions before they are actually attacked. The flame wizard dismounts at a safe distance and takes a stationary position in order to cast spells; two raiders stay behind to defend her while the others rush the characters. In their first available round, the raiders fire arrows while Bahiyya casts a *fireball* (see below). Note that this is not the wizard who holds the women captive in his harem, but a colleague of his who has been promised that any of the men she can recapture will be given to her to start her own selama, or male harem (while physically attractive, she has the personality of an ill-tempered camel; hence her low Charisma score). Since she wishes to capture them alive and unscarred, she centers her first *fireball* in the air above the party, high enough so that most of its force discharges against the escarpment. Characters making their saves take only one-quarter damage; those failing their saves take half-damage. She then calls out for them to surrender. If they do not, they will be hit by a barrage of arrows and the leader will charge the strongest fighter with his lance.

After this, both sides will be involved in melee. The





raiders will drag away fallen heroes to have their wounds bound, but if their leader or more than half their number are killed the rest grow so angry that they forego their attempts to capture the characters and thereafter concentrate on killing them.

**Raiders, 2nd-level desert riders (twelve F2):** AC 7; MV 24 (mounted) or 12 (afoot); hp 13, 12, 11, 10×3, 8×3, 7×3; THAC0 19; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1d8 (scimitar) or 1d6 (short bow, arrows); SA can attack from horseback without making proficiency checks; SZ M; ML steady (12); AL NE; XP 65 each.

**Chief Raider, 6th-level desert rider (F6):** AC 4 (*studded leather*+1, Dexterity bonus); MV 24 (mounted) or 12 (afoot); 30 hp; THAC0 15 (14 with short bow and Dexterity bonus, 13 with lance plus Strength and specialization bonuses); #AT 3/2 (lance specialization) or 2 (short bow) or 1 (any other weapon); Dmg 1d6+3 (lance plus Strength and specialization bonuses), 1d8+1 (scimitar, Strength bonus), 1d6/1d6 (arrows), or 1d4+1 (jambiya, Strength bonus); SA lance specialization (double damage when charging); SZ M; ML elite (14); AL NE; XP 420. Str 17, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 11, Chr 14.

**Saluqi greyhounds (4):** AC 7; MV 18; HD 2; hp 15, 13, 14, 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (bite); SA speed (-2 initiative bonus), overbear (a pack of four will attempt to pull down a single opponent, making a joint attack roll as if against AC 10 plus any Dexterity or magical bonuses, knocking him to the ground on a successful attack and stunning their target if he fails a saving throw vs. paralyzation; hounds gain +4 bonus to attack prone opponents, who lose all Dexterity bonuses; opponent must spend full round to regain feet; all spellcasting attempts by the target fail even if the overbearing does not knock the victim down); SZ S; ML elite (14); Int semi (4); AL N; XP 120 each.

**Bahiyya sitt-Alim, 8th-level elemental flame mage (W8):** AC 6 (Dexterity, *aba of protection* +2) or better (*shield spell*); MV 24 (mounted) or 12 (afoot); 20 hp; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3+1 (katar or punch-dagger); SA spells (from universal and elemental flame categories only, her flame spells do +1 hp of damage per die); SD spells (+2 bonus to saving throws against flame attacks, -2 hp damage per die from flame spells); SZ M; ML steady (12); AL NE; XP 2,000. Str 12, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 9, Chr 7. Spells: *burning hands*, *magic missiles* ×2, *shield* (already cast); *flaming sphere*, *invisibility*, *levitate*; *fireball* ×2, *\*sunscorch*; *dimension door*, *\*sunfire*.

If a character Calls Upon Fate, read the following:

With a grinding sound, a huge slab of rock in the Wall behind you slides open, revealing a passageway within the rock itself. From this massive doorway, six riders clad in dark robes and bearing scimitars that gleam in the moonlight emerge and bear down upon your enemies. With the sound of clashing swords, they cleave through the raiders, joining their battle cries to yours.

If the characters have been doing well or holding their own, simply play out the battle, and have their new allies

take down one or two opponents each round until all are killed except the flame mage, who turns *invisible* and uses her *dimension door* to escape if she can. If the characters are badly outclassed and in imminent danger of death or recapture (for them, a fate worse than death), the rescuers drive between them and the enemy, turning the tide of battle (see page 21 for the riders' stats).

In moments all is quiet. Your enemies lie bleeding the last of their lifeblood into the sand. Breathless, you listen for more sounds of pursuit, but hear only the pounding of your own hearts and the sounds of the desert.

One of the black clad riders approaches you. She says, "Welcome to the Oasis of the Midnight Waters, kinsmen. Lest you be astonished at our dress, know that we are your friends and cousins, and that it is our sacred duty to guard the entryway to the earthly paradise that lies beyond. We have been awaiting your arrival with great anticipation, as you are the last group of men to make your way to safety. Let us move swiftly, for healing and comfort await you beyond the Wall."

These warriors are a brotherhood known as the Keepers of the Midnight Waters, a secret society formed from the ancestral tribal chief's first wish, whose sacred duty is the protection of the Oasis and the guardianship of the entrance to it. They are permanent residents of the Oasis, recruiting new members in secret from the tribe as necessary. They will guide the PCs through to the oasis.

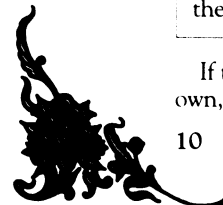
## Epilogue

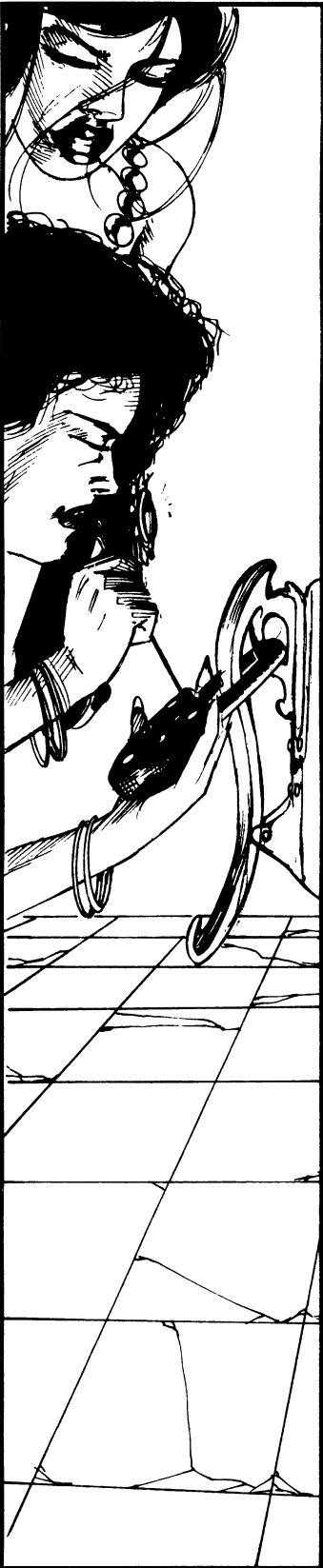
The journey through the rock is a short one. Soon you emerge on the other side of the escarpment. Below you a gentle downward slope leads to a valley that seems to glow in the light of the moon. In the center of the valley is a clear pool of water, whose surface reflects the Zakharan sky in all its starry glory. You can just make out the dark shapes of a number of tents, backlit by many small cook fires. The smell of roasting gazelle wafts towards you on the cool breeze, and you hear quiet laughter and soft music drifting from the campsite. You see a group of people clustered near the base of the escarpment, looking up towards you.

Although it is too dark to determine for certain, you seem to sense the quickening of hope in their gaze. As you approach, you can make out the forms of many men of your tribe, those who escaped when you did and whose journey was shorter, but probably no less filled with wonder and peril. Anxiously you scan the crowd that comes to greet you, looking for the absent faces of those loved ones—your women and children—who are dearest to your heart. May the powers of the ten thousand gods grant that Fate has been kind to them!

With a prayer on your lips, and hope in your hearts, you continue down into the valley towards the Oasis of the Midnight Waters.

End of Chapter the First





## Chapter the Second: “The Female of the Species”

In this chapter, the women of the tribe must slip out of the flame mage’s harem and brave the dangers of his formal gardens where “terrible things” lurk by night. In the city beyond his walls, these women of the desert must beg, borrow, or bargain for the items they will need to make the arduous trek across the blazing sands to their home. Encounters with the mamluks who are charged with guarding the city, with the merchants and colorful characters of the bazaar, and with a qadi (judge) who must hear their case and rule for or against their freedom all provide splendid opportunities for roleplaying and innovative problem solving. Finally, they too must make their way to the oasis where their families await them.

### Player Introduction

You are all members of the Tribe of Altair, the people of the Eagle in Flight. Captured by desert raiders, you were separated into three groups—men, women, and children—and each group was sent to a different place: the men to the mines, the women to the harem of the mage who masterminded the attack on your people, and the children to the temple of Zuhayr, Lord of Flames. Despite the Laws of the Loregiver which state that no enlightened people may be enslaved, you have been so enslaved for about one month. Divided into “instructional groups” of six each, you have been forced to undergo interminable lessons from the mage’s three insufferable wives and sniping from his concubines on how to be submissive and obedient to your odious “master” in all things. These women are beneath your contempt, but Shihab al-Nawadi, your captor, is another matter; he is truly dangerous. So far you have not been molested, but time is fast running out. Your plans for escape have come to naught—until now.

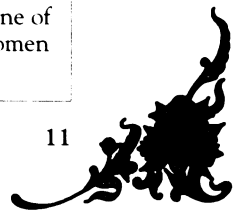
### Encounter One: “The Maiden of the Midnight Waters”

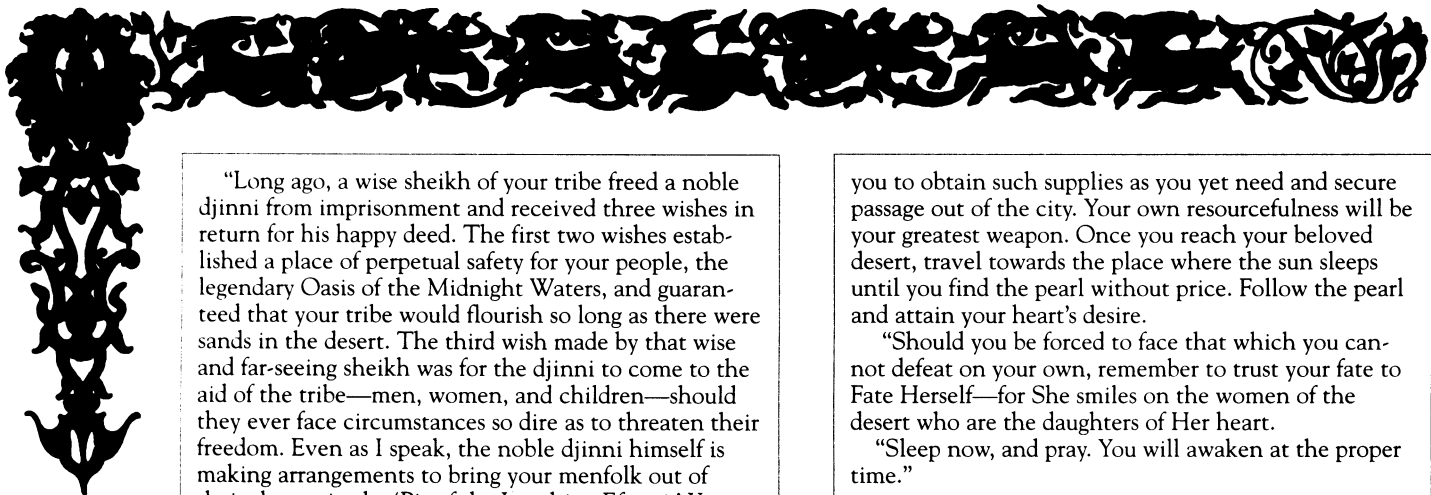
Read the following to the players; use all the skills at your disposal to make this encounter come alive for the players.

A sound like the soft breeze of the desert fills your ears and a gust of cool air banishes the stifling, perfumed heat of this accursed harem. You open your eyes and wonder at the sight of a woman standing tall and straight in your midst. She is clad in the garments of the desert so beloved to your people. Her unveiled face is as golden as the sands of the desert at noon, but her black hair flows unbound over her shoulders and down her back like the still waters of an oasis at midnight; you even imagine you can see stars reflected in her hair. On her shoulder perches an eagle, wings uplifted as if poised for flight.

All around you, the others sleep. The snores of the mage’s wives and concubines can be heard from their chambers, while the eunuch guards slump at their stations, their eyes closed and their breathing heavy and regular. Only you, the captive women of the tribe of Altair, are awake. The maiden gestures to you in greeting and speaks:

“Do not be alarmed, sisters of the desert. None but you can see or hear me. These other fools have fallen into an enchanted slumber from which they will not soon awaken. In fulfillment of an oath made by a lord of the djinn to one of your tribe’s ancestors, I have come to bring promise of deliverance to the women of the Flying Eagle. Hear my tale!





"Long ago, a wise sheikh of your tribe freed a noble djinni from imprisonment and received three wishes in return for his happy deed. The first two wishes established a place of perpetual safety for your people, the legendary Oasis of the Midnight Waters, and guaranteed that your tribe would flourish so long as there were sands in the desert. The third wish made by that wise and far-seeing sheikh was for the djinni to come to the aid of the tribe—men, women, and children—should they ever face circumstances so dire as to threaten their freedom. Even as I speak, the noble djinni himself is making arrangements to bring your menfolk out of their slavery in the 'Pit of the Laughing Efreeti.' Your children will soon find the means to escape the temple in which they are confined. It was deemed more suitable and fitting that I, the Maiden of the Midnight Waters, whose spirit dwells forever in the oasis of that name, bring to you the keys that will unlock you from your foul captivity.

"We have no fate but the fate we are given! This day's dawn will see your fate placed in your hands. Heed my words carefully, for they may make the difference between your freedom and a fate worse than death. Just before sunrise, while the sky is dark and the people of the city still sleep, gather what things you wish to take with you. You are already divided into small groups. Each group will take a different path to freedom, so that pursuit will be more difficult. With the blessings of Fate, all of you will find your way to the Oasis of the Midnight Waters where you will be reunited with your beloved families."

At this point she begins to give instructions to the individual groups. The player characters find they cannot hear her words to the other groups; the wise among them should guess that this is a precaution to prevent any who are recaptured from being forced to tell where the others are. She restores any missing holy symbols and hands each wizard a scroll with a crystal prism on a silken cord (for even if they regain their spellbooks they will have no time to stop and learn spells). Suggested spells on the scrolls are *burning hands*, *magic missile*; *knock*, *levitate*; *dispel magic* (first scroll) and *jump*, *sleep*; *invisibility*, *web* (second scroll), but the exact selection will of course depend upon the composition of the player character party.

When it is the player characters' turn, read or paraphrase to following:

"You, my sisters, make your way just before dawn to the gate which opens onto the harem garden. On your way you will pass a small chamber from which you may retrieve some of the items which were taken from you. Be wary, for any loud noise will awaken the eunuchs and could lead to your recapture.

"Once inside the garden, make your way to the garden walls and thence to freedom. Again, caution must be your companion, for it will yet be dark and some of the creatures who prowl the garden at night may still be at large. Once outside the garden, it will be up to

you to obtain such supplies as you yet need and secure passage out of the city. Your own resourcefulness will be your greatest weapon. Once you reach your beloved desert, travel towards the place where the sun sleeps until you find the pearl without price. Follow the pearl and attain your heart's desire.

"Should you be forced to face that which you cannot defeat on your own, remember to trust your fate to Fate Herself—for She smiles on the women of the desert who are the daughters of Her heart.

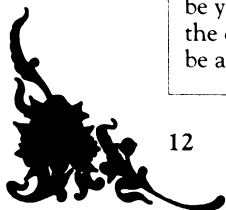
"Sleep now, and pray. You will awaken at the proper time."

## Encounter Two: "Of Stealth and Silence"

Since the women have had sufficient sleep to be considered "rested," allow any cleric among them enough time to choose her spells. Allow them a few minutes to bid fond farewells to the women of the other groups, then ask the players if their characters take time to make a quick search through their luxurious prison to see if they might find a few items that may prove useful on their journey. The following things are available if the players decide to take them: assorted scarves, jars of perfumes, assorted pieces of fine cloth, small rugs, cushions, lamps with oil, and a plethora of skimpy, impractical clothing. Since they are without money in a strange city, they may think to take some items for barter to get the things they will need. Any merchant rogue can make Appraising rolls to estimate each item's approximate worth (use the equipment lists in *Arabian Adventures* as a guide); the DM may decide that she will already have done so to relieve the tedium of the previous month's inactivity. However hard they search, they will find no clothing other than harem garb such as they are already wearing. If someone asks about relieving the guards of their weapons and/or clothing and armor, remind them of the Maiden's warning against breaking the magical sleep. Should they persist, the only way to extract weaponry from the sleeping eunuchs is via successful Pick Pockets rolls; a single failure wakes the guard. Any attempt to murder the sleeping eunuchs, wives, or concubines results in all the rest being awakened by the victim's dying moan. The vengeful PCs now have only minutes before all the household guards arrive in overwhelming force; they will have to run for it.

After the players have spent a few minutes raiding the harem, or as soon as they are ready, read or summarize the following (altering as needed if they have foolishly raised the alarm):

You leave the confines of the harem and pass down a small corridor that leads to the garden gate. To your left you see a door, while to your right there is a hallway that leads to the eunuch's quarters wherein sleep the harem's guards. Ahead of you is the gate to the garden. Silence and stealth are of vital importance at this point, for you have no guarantee that the guards



outside the harem are affected by the magical sleep. Behind the door, you know, lie some of your possessions, while ahead of you is the path to freedom.

See **Map Five: Harem & Garden**. The door is locked and trapped with a simple alarm which can be negated by a successful Find Traps roll followed by a successful attempt to disarm. Anyone who tries to pick the lock will have to use makeshift lockpicks (improvised from earrings or some other piece of harem jewelry) at a -10% penalty. A *knock* spell will open the lock but not disarm the alarm unless used in conjunction with clerical *silence*. If all else fails, the stronger women among the group could try to break the lock (bend bars/lift gates rolls; up to three at a time may try).

If, despite their best efforts, something goes wrong, a gong will sound, alerting three of the harem guards who are off duty and sleeping. The players will hear noise from the hallway to their right and have a round or two to prepare for the new arrivals.

**Harem Eunuchs, 2nd-level askar (three F2):** AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 16, 18, 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (scimitar) or 1d6 (club) or 1d4 (blunted scourge); SZ M (each over 6 feet tall); ML champion (15); AL LE; XP 65 each.

The guards are sleepy and will take a round before appearing to melee with the women. They initially strike to subdue with club and scourge, since they wish to return the women undamaged to the harem; only after one of their number has fallen do they employ deadly force. If the battle takes more than four rounds, two additional guards will appear (same stats as above except hp 13, 14). After that, the next guard contingent (fourteen strong) arrives ten rounds later—hopefully after the women have made good their escape.

The door opens onto a small room in which are stashed several chests (all locked, none trapped). A ring of keys hangs from a peg on one wall. If the chests are opened, whatever equipment the DM thinks appropriate can be retrieved, with the following as defaults: *scimitar +1*, *cutlass +1*, *jambiya +2*, *dagger of returning +1* (a dagger that returns to the thrower's hand on each successful hit but falls inert to the floor on a miss), *hand axe +2*, *staff +2*, long bow, quiver with sixteen arrows (four are *arrows +1*), two javelins, six darts, a sling with six bullets, five juggler's balls, a pouch of thieves' tools, a healer's pouch (contains herbs, salves, bandages, etc.), a musical instrument (e.g., a set of pipes), one pair of riding boots, any missing spellbooks, and enough material components to cast any spell known to the women twice.

If the women are successful and do not raise an alarm, proceed immediately to Encounter Three. If they make a run for it before finishing their battle with the guards, they will not be pursued, since the eunuchs dare not venture into the garden while it is still dark. Instead, the guards go at once to the master chamber and attempt to awake the wizard and inform him of the escape. It will take them some time to summon up enough courage to disturb their master, however, so he will not be able to respond for some time.



### Encounter Three: “What Walks At Night Is Best Avoided”

The garden of the harem, which in the light of the afternoon sun seemed peaceful and placid like a still oasis, now appears as a place of sinister shadows in the predawn darkness. The carefully pruned paths seem to twist like sinewy serpents between the rows of fig trees and olives. All is hushed and silent now, save for the creaking of cicadas and the occasional call of a bird. Suddenly, a noise (*Nas! Nas!*) breaks the stillness as several hideous creatures hop into view, blocking you from the wall you must scale and cutting off your retreat into the safety of the harem.

**DM Note:** The creatures are nasnas, grotesque man-like monsters with only half a body (one arm, one leg, half a face, and half a torso). Tell the players that their characters have heard of these things as strong, vicious, and insane. Spellcraft or Legend Lore checks, if successful, recall to mind legends that they are the offspring of unfortunate women who have eaten enchanted fruit given them by evil mages—praise Fate that Shihab is not yet of sufficient level to create the tainted fruit! The same check reminds them that nasnas have a hooting attack which can paralyze their foes. Although Shihab has twenty of these guardians patrolling his nighttime garden, only a few are near enough to confront the women initially.



**Nasnas (5):** AC 6; MV 9 (hop); HD 2+2; hp 14, 13, 9, 12, 9; THAC0 19 (17 with Strength bonus); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+5 (scimitar, Strength bonus); SA hooting scream (all within ten feet must save vs. spell or stand paralyzed with fear for 1d4+1 rounds); SD immune to nonmagical weapons; SW cold iron weapons inflict normal damage; SZ M; ML steady (12); Int low (7); AL LE; XP 270 each. Str 18/95.

This encounter must be run very carefully if the players are to be challenged yet still be able to continue the adventure. Use the nasnas' hooting power sparingly at first, as it could severely unbalance the encounter. Note that both rawun (bard) abilities and magical *silence* can negate the hoot's effects. If the battle is proceeding too easily for the characters, bring in a few more creatures, while making it clear that there are still others waiting to attack (the characters can hear them hooting in the distance). Remember that the women are not expected to kill all twenty of the nasnas but should have to work for their victory over at least some of them. If necessary remind the players that their characters' objective is not to clean the garden of monsters but to reach and climb the wall.

Allow the characters to disengage after the initial melee and make a run for it. Their greater movement rate should allow them to reach the wall before the nasnas. Time will be of the essence here, as the characters must quickly scale the wall (either through their own abilities or with the assistance of others). Any character who succeeds in a Climb Walls roll at +10% can scale the wall in one round, as can anyone using *levitate*. Those who have no climbing ability will need assistance in the form of a boost or makeshift rope (the scarves from the harem will do nicely); either of these aids gets them up in one round. Note that such a rope can only hold one person at a time, and that those doing the boosting cannot climb in the same round that they help someone else.

The rest of the nasnas reach the wall three rounds after the characters arrive; any women still at ground level are subject to attacks. Those already on top can assist those below by using spells or missile fire, allowing the women remaining on the ground to break off combat and scale the wall (alas, such characters will be subject to attacks from behind during the climb). Once over the wall, they will not be pursued.

### Encounter Four: "Buy, Sell, or Trade"

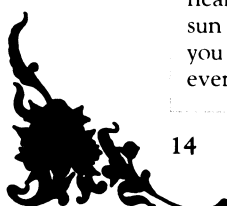
At last you are free from the confinement of the mage's harem! Now other challenges await you as you find yourselves at large in the unfamiliar streets of this unknown town. As you make your way through the maze of strange streets and alleys, the sky begins to lighten. From the buildings that crowd you on either side, people begin to emerge. All around you, you can hear the muttering of the prayers of the faithful as the sun rises on another Zakhara day—a day which for you has already begun with danger and which promises even more adventure.

As al-Badai, or desert nomads, the player characters are unfamiliar with the ways of the al-Hadhar or city dwellers. They do not even know which city they are in, as the mage has carefully kept this information from them during their captivity. While their first impulse may be to hole up somewhere, this is not a good idea, as it provides more time for their pursuers to organize and track them down. Dressed as they are, it will be difficult for them to convince passing citizens that they are really desert riders; most will avoid them or, worse, approach them with lewd intent. If the players appear to be at a loss, remind them that their goal is to return to their home and loved ones. They will need supplies to journey across the desert and such things are likeliest to be found at the bazaar. If the players ask questions about what they can see around them, remember that everything about the city, from buildings (tents that are never struck!) and streets (stone-paved paths) to the ways of the inhabitants (where do they keep all their horses? And where's the grass to feed them?) will strike them as decidedly odd. They will, however, notice that everyone seems to be going in the same direction. Following the flow of traffic brings them to the bazaar, where they see veiled women carrying water jugs on their heads, turbaned men opening up shops for the day's business, beggars claiming their favorite corners, and the like.

Depending on what the characters choose to do, it is possible that Encounters Four and Five may occur in reversed order. If they go to the authorities, proceed to Encounter Five and then Six, returning to Encounter Four after they have seen the qadi—assuming all goes well at their trial, that is. If the characters try to slip out of town and into the desert without making preparations (not recommended for characters with high Wisdoms), proceed to Encounter Five; the mamluks will find and arrest them as they are leaving the city.

Characters who explore the bazaar (see **Map Six: The Bazaar**) may encounter any of the following.

- A. Sammam, the grocer—a short, balding, cheerful man (Chr 13) who can sell the women a variety of foodstuffs (mostly fresh fruits and perishables, unsuitable for a long desert journey).
- B. Ferran, the baker—a wiry, solemn-looking older man (Chr 10) who sell flat bread in whatever quantity needed.
- C. Janan, the weaver—a slim woman (Chr 14) wearing a veil (not a full chador), who can provide the women with suitable desert clothes.
- D. Yusra, the herbalist—an aging crone (Chr 11), heavily veiled, from whom the characters may buy herbs and various items which could be used as spell components.
- E. Omar, the tentmaker—a shifty young man (Chr 9) who sells tents.
- F. Suha, the seer—a mysterious woman (Chr 16) in a black chador (signifying that she is married), who will offer to tell the women's fortunes and who can also sell them other, rarer, components for spells. If the characters agree to have their fortunes told, Suha will drop into a trance and intone the following:





“If Fate allows, you will journey far in search of happiness, yet your present is not without peril. You will have to justify yourselves before those who, meaning no harm, may still do harm. Rely on the truth and the Laws of the Loregiver, that justice may be done.”

This speech will become clear in Encounters Five and Six. If this encounter is being run after the trial, simply change her speech to the following, which contains a clue for Encounter Eight:

“If Fate allows, you will journey far in search of happiness, yet your present is not without peril. Beware, for that which seems most familiar may be a cloak for that which you do not desire to encounter.”

- G. Jafar, the waterseller—an old and crotchety man (Chr 8) who will provide water by the skin or in quantity.

Use the price lists in *Arabian Adventures* for reasonable prices for the items the players may wish to buy. Note, however, that it will require some serious haggling for characters as obviously out of place as the PCs to be able to get the merchants down to anything resembling a fair price. Since every merchant is an expert haggler, the DM may want to use the following optional system: have the PCs' spokeswoman roll 1d6 and add the results to her Charisma score. Then roll 2d6 and add that to the merchant's Charisma score. If the player's roll is higher, the price is reduced. If the player character wins, the bargaining may continue for two more rounds. If the player loses, the price is fixed and no further bargaining may continue. The merchant initially asks twice the usual asking price (e.g., “four dinar”); one success knocks this down to the usual asking price (“for such a beautiful lady, two dinar”), a second success reduces this to the normal price (“you are as hard of heart as you are fair of skin! One dinar!”), and a third success drives it down to a bargain price (“alas! my aged father and I will starve together! five dirham”). Note that all this bargaining takes time, doubly so if the characters are bartering, as they must then go through the process twice with each transaction (once to establish the price of the item they want and once to set the value of what they're offering), and that merchants will feel obliged to ask even higher prices of customers who are obviously in a hurry or otherwise distracted (a minimum of triple the usual asking price).

**Note for the DM:** this series of mini-encounters should serve to further enhance the atmosphere of the adventure. It gives the PCs a chance to interact with some of the townspeople and learn a little about the al-Hadhar, or Settled Folk, at first hand. However, the women will quickly find themselves object of much unwanted attention due to their harem clothing. Male merchants may make polite but appreciative remarks about how rarely they get to see such “feminine pulchritude” or may ask the identity of the individual who is so generous as to allow the “flowers of his garden” to bloom for other eyes to see. Female merchants may attempt to warn the characters that their appearance is arousing a great deal of interest. It should




become evident to the women that they can stay in the bazaar no longer than is absolutely necessary.

When they are sufficiently nervous and have equipped themselves with necessities such as food, clothing, water, and perhaps some spell components, have them notice a booth at the far end of the bazaar:

At the edge of the bazaar you finally spy the last (and possibly most important) of the things you will need for your journey into the desert in search of the Oasis of the Midnight Waters. A colorful canopy protects a line of horses from the sun. Strung across the canopy is a banner which proclaims “Mounts of the Eagle.” As you turn in that direction, you hear a loud whinny from one of the horses, sounding like a call of recognition.

Given their background, at least one of the characters should be a desert rider; that character recognizes the cry as coming from her own horse (“Light of the Sky”). This realization should bring the women converging upon the horseseller.

Mahmud ibn-Farid al-Nasr is a merchant for the Tribe of the Eagle (distantly related to the characters' tribe). If asked, he will explain that the noisome animal was sold to him but a day or two ago by a man from the city who said his master was displeased with the animal's temperament. Recognizing the fine breeding of a desert horse, Mahmud bought it at once but has not been able to find a suitable buyer since the horse refuses to let itself be ridden by anyone. The characters can haggle with him for mounts; Mahmud is an honest



man and though he will be curious as to why a group of harem women should be planning to leave the city, he will not press them for explanations if they seem disinclined to answer. If they tell him their story, he is deeply moved and urges them to seek out the mamluks and take the matter before a qadi. After the women have made arrangements with Mahmud for mounts, whether he has advised them to seek justice or not, run the following encounter.

## Encounter Five: “The Mamluks of the Mighty”

**B**y this time, the mage has reported his “escaped slaves” to the mamluk group known as “The Mighty,” who police the town of Tujul. Accordingly, mamluk patrols have been going about the town asking questions as to the whereabouts of several runaway women. Some of the merchants the player characters visited earlier have told the mamluks about the strange women and pointed out the direction they took. Now, at last, the mamluks have found their quarry. Note that if the characters seek out the mamluks instead of the other way around, this encounter and the one following will need adjusting; notes on doing so are given at the end of this encounter.

As you conclude your bargaining with Mahmud, you hear a loud voice from behind you call out, “There they are! Seize them! People of Tujul, do not interfere in the workings of those who enforce the Laws of the Loregiver!” You catch sight of a patrol of ten mamluks, bearing the symbols of their society on their cheeks. They are headed rapidly in your direction.

The mamluks will surround the player characters as their leader orders the women to surrender to the justice of “the Mighty” and accompany them to the court of the qadi or local judge. Attacking the mamluks is a bad idea but panicky PCs may attempt it nonetheless. If the women resist arrest, the mamluks seek to subdue them. They will be joined by more mamluks at the rate of 1d4 per round until all the women are subdued. The crowd will not interfere to help the PCs, since they believe the mamluks are acting in accordance with the law and, if anything, will assist the mamluks in subduing these lawbreakers. If instead of fighting the women attempt to explain what they are doing and plead for justice, Fadilah orders them to accompany her to the qadi.

**Patrol of the Mighty, 1st-level and 2nd-level mamluks (four F1 & five F2):** AC 6 (lamellar armor); MV 12; hp 22, 20, 19, 16; 13, 11, 10, 9, 9; THAC0 20 (1st-level) or 19 (2nd-level); #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (khopesh); SZ M; ML champion (16); Int high (13); AL LN; XP 35 each (1st-level) or 65 each (2nd-level). Con 16.

**Fadilah abd al-Azim, 4th-level mamluk sergeant (F4):** AC 5 (lamellar armor, Dexterity bonus); MV 12; 36 hp; THAC0 17 (16 with khopesh specialization); #AT 3/2 (weapon specialization); Dmg 2d4+3 (khopesh specialization, Strength); SZ M; ML fanatic (18); AL LN; XP 270. Str 16, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 13, Chr 13. Fadilah is

a tall, graceful woman who has been entrusted with command of this platoon. She is proud and commanding, and does not like having her authority questioned.

**Changes Necessary to Encounters Five and Six if the Women Ask for Justice:** If the women seek justice, they will find the mamluk platoon before it finds them. Fadilah will listen to the women, then ask that they accompany her to the qadi to press formal charges against their enslaver. Encounter Six will have a correspondingly different flavor as well, with the characters treated as supplicants rather than potential criminals. They will be asked to remove their weapons before appearing before the qadi but they will be given suitable attire if they need it and in general be treated much more politely than if they were in custody. Fadilah requests that they wait while the mage is summoned to answer their charges. They will be taken to a comfortable room and given some light refreshment (herb tea and sesame cakes). After about an hour, they will be told that all is in readiness for their hearing. They will then be taken before the qadi and see the mage being brought in under escort. The hearing will proceed as written in Encounter Six. The mage will still be allowed to speak first since he still has the higher perceived station, and the outcome will still depend on player character roleplaying.

Whichever way the women enter the custody of the mamluks, once they have done so, go on to the next encounter.

## Encounter Six: “The Laws of the Loregiver”

**R**ead the following to the players. You may have to alter it slightly to fit the exact circumstances. See above for changes as needed.

Zakharan justice is swift. The mamluks lead you through the streets of the town, away from the bazaar and your purchases, away from the freedom you so desperately sought and so briefly enjoyed, and into a building whose stark stone walls and polished floors seem to echo with authority. You are taken to a guarded waiting room—not a prison cell, but so like one as to make little difference to you. Any weapons you still have are confiscated. Your requests for suitable attire are denied, although you are offered veils that would cover the lower half of your face. After a wait of perhaps an hour, you are summoned into the presence of the qadi who will decide your fate.

The room to which you are led is a simple one. Seated at one end of the room is a small man of middle years and dignified features. A pair of mamluk guards flank him, standing at attention, their hands resting on the hilts of their swords. This is obviously the qadi. To one side of the room stands a figure whose face you will never forget. You saw it first when, having just slaughtered your husbands and brothers, he leeringly appraised you as the latest acquisitions to his harem. Shihab al-Nawadi, the Magnificent, Flame of the Desert, Scourge of the Land. Your captor, your “master,” your tormentor.



As you are led forward to confront your judge and your accuser, you notice a stooped figure clad in a black chador seated near the door, snoring slightly. An exhausted beggar seeking relief from the sun, perhaps, or a supplicant whose plea will be heard after a decision regarding your fate is made.

The mamluks who escort you into the qadi's presence bow respectfully to him. Their leader salutes the qadi and says "Respectful one, these are the women accused of escaping from lawful enslavement."

The qadi nods in understanding, dismisses the mamluks, and regards you impassively. After a moment, he says "You have been accused of wrongfully leaving the women's quarters of the mage Shihab al-Nawadi. He claims that you have resisted all attempts at enlightenment and that you openly flaunt the Laws of the Loregiver which state that the unenlightened may be enslaved for their own benefit so that they may be brought to the true knowledge of the law. I will now hear testimony from all who are involved in this matter."

The qadi will then turn to the wizard (the DM should explain to the players at this point that the judge is obviously expecting the mage, as having the highest perceived station, to speak first). If any of the women attempt to speak out at this time, the qadi will first motion and then command them to

"Keep silent! You will have your opportunity to speak in due time." Then he adds, not unkindly, "To



seem to usurp the privilege of station does not speak favorably for any claim to enlightenment you may wish to make."

The wizard steps forward and bows graciously to the qadi. Although he looks frequently at the women when he makes reference to them, he will not address them directly at this time. He says:

"Oh, Enlightened One, surely you can see for yourself the rudeness of these desert women who stand before you! They have been lawfully entrusted into my care so that they may be taught the ways of those who honor the traditions handed down to us so long ago. You know my position in this matter. I brought them out of their unenlightened, barbarous state as wanderers in the desert in order to show them a better way of life as enlightened individuals. I beseech you to see that justice is done and that they are returned to my protection."

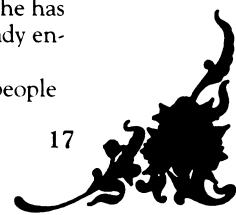
After he has made his speech, he will bow once more and step back smugly. The qadi will nod gravely at the mage and then address the women.


"It is now proper for you to make such arguments in your own defense as you are able."

**Note to the DM:** At this time, the characters may attempt to convince the qadi that the mage had no right to enslave them. In many ways, although this is not the final encounter of the round, it is the climactic one since it revolves around the central tenet of Zakhara faith and life: the Laws of the Loregiver. These laws state, among other things, that only unenlightened people may be enslaved (unless they have committed some crime or otherwise forfeited their right to be free). The qadi's decision will hinge on whether the characters were enlightened before or after they were enslaved.

A number of arguments will go far to convince the qadi of the characters' enlightenment:

- Any cleric who is a pragmatist, moralist, ethoist, hakima, or mystic is, by definition, enlightened (kahin and outland priests do not qualify, and identifying herself as such in fact weakens the player character's case). Producing her holy symbol (or, if it has been taken from her, requesting that the mamluks return it) and possibly even casting a spell all go far to prove her claims. Faris may also prove their enlightenment in this manner.
- A rawun or barber's knowledge of the songs and stories of Zakhara will demonstrate her own familiarity with the traditions of enlightened people, both al-Badia and al-Hadhar.
- Any merchant rogue's knowledge of the ways of the al-Hadhar will prove her knowledge of civilized ways.
- A sha'ir's familiarity with genie lore proves that she has information available only to those who are already enlightened.
- Other characters may describe the lives of their people





—including their knowledge of the rules of hospitality and their tolerance of others—to demonstrate that they are indeed enlightened.

Allow the players to roleplay out this scene, coming up with their own arguments to attempt to convince the qadi of their enlightenment. If the players are familiar with the al-Qadim game world, they should know what arguments will impress the qadi. If they have never played in this setting before and do not know what to do, the DM should inform them of the following basics of “enlightened behavior”:

1. Respect for the Laws of the Loregiver.
2. Obedience to the proclamations of the Grand Caliph.
3. Worship of enlightened gods (Hajama, Kor, Najm, Selan, Zann, etc.).
4. Tolerance of others.
5. Charity and hospitality.
6. Avoidance of forbidden acts such as murder of the innocent, spreading the belief that no gods exist, disobeying the word of the Grand Caliph, and enslavement of the Enlightened.

Encourage the players to present their arguments to the qadi in order of their character’s original station, as they would customarily do. Remind them that it is considered impolite to interrupt someone of higher station (something their characters would know). When all their arguments have been made, the mage will exclaim:

“Blasphemous lies! These women have undoubtedly heard just enough of their lessons to attempt to deceive you! I have lived in this town for many years. I have obeyed its laws, paid considerable taxes to the authorities for its upkeep, and have kept an enlightened house. I have done all these things in accordance with the laws! The women lie! Throw them in prison! Let them taste the darkness of true unenlightenment. When they have been reminded of their pitiful state, then let them be returned to me and I will strive yet again to convince them of the error of their ways! I seek only their good. How can you doubt my word, who have so faithfully endeavored to support this magnificent city with all my wealth and powers?”

At this point, the qadi will look at the characters and say:

“The esteemed mage’s words carry much weight. He has indeed lived here for many years, and before this day no complaint about his actions has ever come to my ears. You, on the other hand, are strangers and, as such, unknown to me.” He pauses for a moment, holds up his hand for silence, and solemnly announces “There is yet one voice that must be heard.”

He looks beyond you. Following his gaze, you see that he is staring at the old crone at the far end of the room. She raises her head and fixes a pair of piercing dark eyes on the qadi, who says simply, “Mother?”

The old woman stands up and hobbles forward, her eyes bright. She bows to the qadi and takes up a place

at his side. Inclines her head towards you before turning to face your judge, she says: “These women speak the truth, as has been revealed to me by Kor, the Venerable, whom you know I serve.” She gestures contemptibly towards the wizard. “He lies! His words hiss in my ears like the buzzing of locusts. He has, by the testimony of these honest and enlightened women, broken the Laws of the Loregiver by committing a forbidden act—these women were already enlightened before they were enslaved.”

As she speaks, the mage begins to mutter angrily under his breath. Before anyone can react, he vanishes in a puff of smoke. The qadi orders his mamluk guard to “find and seize the defamer of the laws.” Then he turns to the women and says:

“The mamluks will comb the town until they find him, enlightened ones. Stay, and hear my decision. Your possessions will be returned to you and you will be escorted with all honor back to the place from which you were so abruptly and wrongfully taken. There you will be allowed to proceed with whatever business you were in the act of pursuing. As partial recompense for your suffering, suitable raiment will be provided for you and you may keep whatever goods you had with you or had bargained for when the mamluks took you into custody. Go now, as you have been, in the path of enlightenment, and may you go with peace in your heart.”

The mamluks escort the characters from the chamber and provide them with abas (loose robes) that should assuage their wounded modesty. Some of the characters may wish to press charges against the mage, and may insist that something be done about their menfolk and children. The qadi will allow them to formulate an official accusation (providing pen and parchment for this purpose). He will assure them that when the mage is found, even if they are elsewhere, he will see to it that Shihab is brought before a court of justice—even if he has to appear as accuser himself.

He will, however, mention that both the mines in which the men linger and the temple to which the children have been consigned lie outside his jurisdiction and other authorities must be contacted before action can be taken to free them according to the law. The characters should realize that no more can be done in Tujul and that hanging around waiting for the mage’s capture will not get them any further on their journey. Returning to the bazaar and claiming their mounts from Mahmud, however, will.

If the characters have not yet been to the bazaar (Encounter Four) and bought the goods they will need for their journey, they may do so now. The element of danger will largely be missing, since the characters are no longer considered fugitives, so the encounter may be run primarily as a colorful role-playing event. Once the characters have purchased their supplies, encountered the mamluks, and appeared before the qadi, regardless of the order of the events, they will be ready to leave the town of Tujul and head for the desert. Proceed to Encounter Seven.



## Encounter Seven: “To Find the Pearl Without Price”

You gather your belongings, mount your horses, and leave the town of Tujul behind. Ahead of you is the endless Zakhara desert. Somewhere in the desert is your ancestral home, the Oasis of the Midnight Waters, but its exact location is unknown to you. All of you learned as children a rhyme which identifies the landmarks you must seek to find the legendary oasis, but you have been taken so far from lands you know that you would first need to be guided back to a familiar area in order to begin your search for the landmarks! In order to find the oasis, then, you must first find the “pearl without price”—whatever and wherever it is.

Allow the characters some time (if possible) to debate possible courses of action. If they do not remember the Maiden’s words, a successful Intelligence check reminds them that they were told to travel towards the direction of the “sleeping sun” (i.e., westward). The journey should last at least fourteen days; play out the trek but paint it in broad strokes, not painstaking (and tedious) detail. During this time, they will have no hostile encounters. Inform them that they know enough about desert survival to travel primarily at night, resting during the day in their tents. Ask them to describe their general actions as they travel, then call for appropriate rolls on proficiencies such as Desert Survival, Cooking, Herbalism, and the like to ensure that they do not run out of food or water. Use the following random encounters to spice up their journey:

- In the distance, clouds of dust and high winds herald the approach of a sandstorm. If the characters stop where they are and take some reasonable precautions, the sandstorm will pass well ahead of them, doing only minor damage (1d2 hp) from incidental sand debris. Give them all Wisdom rolls to realize that unless they insist on riding into the storm, they will not be caught up in it.
- They come upon a wadi (seasonal river-bed) which has nearly dried up. A thin trickle of muddy water lies at its bottom. Clerics can purify any water that is collected, rendering it fit to drink, or characters with Desert Survival can strain out enough drinkable water for the ladies and their horses.
- They arrive at a small oasis, where they can rest and refresh themselves at its waters, gather a few figs and olives to supplement their food, etc.
- High overhead, they spy what looks like a carpet flying about erratically. They may think it is the mage or someone in his employ attempting to track them, and so may take cover as best they can. The carpet is too high up and too far away for them to correctly ascertain who or what is upon it or to affect it with any spells (in actuality, the carpet is carrying some of the children, as is described in Chapter the Third, but the characters will have no way of knowing that!).

If the DM prefers to simply “get on” with things, use the following prepared text.

You travel steadily westward, deep into the desert that is your home, glorying in the freedom that is once again yours. The delights of sun and sand call out to you and feed your spirits with fresh hope. You travel in the early morning, rest during the hottest part of the day, travel again at twilight and into the evening, and rest again in the deepest hours of night. Twice in fourteen days, you arrive at an oasis, where you replenish your carefully rationed supplies of water and food and graze the horses. As each new day begins, you hope that it will bring to you the pearl you seek. As each day ends, you wonder if somehow you missed the sign that would tell you that the pearl was within reach.

On the fifteenth day of your journey, just before dawn, you hear a mournful wailing sound from the dunes ahead.

If the characters go to investigate, describe the following:

An enormous, wingless dragon-like creature is locked in battle with a giant white camel. The overgrown lizard is easily 70 feet long from its scaly shoulders to the tip of its furiously lashing tail, while the camel—were it standing—would tower some 30 feet into the air. The camel is already severely wounded and clearly losing the battle. It struggles feebly to defend itself with its enormous hooves even as its life blood flows into the sand. Obviously this is the source of the cry you heard. As you take in this spectacle, the camel turns its soft liquid eyes towards you and murmurs “Can this be the deliverance which Fate has foretold unto me?”

The camel is, of course, a Camel of the Pearl—the “pearl without price” sent by the djinni noble in fulfillment of the old sheikh’s third wish to lead the women to the Oasis of the Midnight Waters. The dragon-like creature is a vishap, a flightless Zakhara dragon. For once, the player characters get to be the instruments of Fate instead of Fate’s petitioners, as they have the ability to save the noble (and intelligent) beast from certain death. A concerted effort by the characters should result in the defeat of the vishap after a hard battle. The camel will need some healing, as she has only 3 hp remaining and is considerably weakened from loss of blood. At the very least, she will need to have her wounds bound until she can recover sufficiently to heal herself.

When the battle is over, the camel will look searchingly at the characters. She will heal any who are in need, even stinting herself to see that their injuries receive attention. Then she will address them in a soft and kindly voice:

“I give you thanks for my life, daughters of the desert. My name is Jumanah, or Silver Pearl, and I only regret I have nothing with which to repay you for so great a service to me.”

If the characters identify themselves as members of the Tribe of Altair or mention that they have been seeking a pearl without price, the camel will exclaim:

“But it is to you that I have been sent! Let us begin our journey as soon as we are able, for I will lead you to the Oasis of the Midnight Waters, even as I have been charged.”

Allow the characters to interact with Jumanah a little. She should be sweet-tempered, caring, and more than willing to talk, ask questions, or tell (remarkably earthy) stories. Use her to draw out any players who have been cut out of the action for awhile or who haven't been able to assert themselves over more competitive or talkative players.

**Jumanah, Camel of the Pearl:** AC 6; MV 24; HD 5; 30 hp (currently 3); THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8/2d6+special (bite/trample); SA trample (if hit, target is knocked prone and cannot rise so long as trampling attacks continue, camel gains +4 attack bonus against prone targets); SD spells, can travel without food or water for up to a month; MR 10%; SZ gigantic (30 feet tall); ML elite (14); Int high (14); AL LG; XP 1,400. Wis 17. Spells (as 7th-level Cleric): *bless*, *cure light wounds* x3, *protection from evil*; *aid* x2, *chant*, *know alignment*, *speak with animals*; *cure blindness or deafness*, *remove curse*, *remove paralysis*; *cure serious wounds*. Special Abilities: *create food and water* (thrice per day), *cure disease* (at will, by licking recipient's face), *fool's gold*, *invisible* (at will), *neutralize poison* (at will, by licking recipient's face).

Camels of the pearl serve the cause of good and righteousness, seeking out people and places where they can be of service. They are glad to shoulder burdens, but insist that those they assist help themselves as well. They enjoy the company of other lawful good beings, but are also willing to try to convert others through their good example.

**Vishap, adult (age level 6):** AC 2; MV 18, jump 6; HD 10; 68 hp (currently 42); THAC0 13; #AT 3 and 1+; Dmg 1d4+6/1d4+6/2d6+6 (claw/claw/bite) and 2d4+6+special (tail lash); SA camouflage (scales blend in with surroundings, granting it a +4 bonus to surprise), tail lash (can affect up to four opponents, victims who fail a Dexterity check lose their footing and cannot attack the following round), spell-like abilities; SD exceptional senses (detects invisible creatures within sixty feet), immune to all enchantments and charms, spell-like abilities; MR 10%; SZ huge (40 feet long plus 40 foot tail); ML elite (14); Int high (14); AL NE; XP 11,000. Special Abilities: *adept linguist*, *invisibility* (once per day), *sleep* (twice per day), *suggestion* (once per day).

Vishaps are crafty, cowardly, vain, and greedy. They fight through stealth and deceit and greatly relish human and demihuman flesh.

## Encounter Eight: “The Wizard’s Revenge”

In the company of Jumanah, you travel onward into the desert with renewed hope. You have never had a camel tell you stories, but Jumanah's knowledge of the ancient past is as remarkable as her point of view is unusual—she must be a veritable rawun among her kind!

Almost a month to the day since you began your journey from Tujul, Jumanah informs you that “just beyond that oasis” lies the way to your home. As you crest a high dune of sand, you look down upon a verdant patch of green in the desert. Some way past the oasis, you can barely make out the outline of a high rock escarpment. You know from your tribe's legends that this escarpment can only be the “Wall of the Wailing Elephant,” which contains the hidden passage to “the Oasis of the Midnight Waters.”

**Background for the DM:** Since his disappearance at the qadi's hearing, Shihab al-Nawadi has been doggedly attempting to locate the missing women. He is out for revenge, since much of his wealth has been confiscated and his reputation in the town of Tujul is now ruined. He has pulled out all the stops to find them and has finally managed to locate them (after all, a 30-foot-tall camel is hard to miss!). He has been able to ascertain the general direction in which they are traveling and knows that they must pass through this oasis to get wherever they are going, although he does not know that the huge mass of rock in the distance is their actual destination.

He has, therefore, set up an ambush for the women. Using a *permanent illusion* which makes use of the real oasis, he has slightly altered the landscape to conceal himself and his allies (see **Map Seven: The Wizard's Revenge**). The characters will not automatically get a chance to disbelieve, since they are expecting an oasis. Even the Camel of the Pearl is fooled by Shihab al-Nawadi's clever ploy.

**Shihab al-Nawadi, 12th-level elemental flame mage (W12):** AC 4 (*bracers of defense* AC 6, Dexterity bonus); MV 12; 35 hp; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+2 (*staff +2*) or 1d4+1 (*jambiya +1*) or by spell; SA spells, specialist bonus (+1 point of damage per die with flame spells); SD spells, specialist bonus (+2 bonus to saving throws against flame damage, -2 hp per die from flame damage); SZ M; ML elite (14); AL NE; XP 4,000. Str 11, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 8, Chr 7. Spells: *\*avert evil eye* (already cast), *burning hands*, *magic missile* x2; *detect invisibility*, *flaming sphere*, *invisibility*, *\*sundazzle*; *dispel magic*, *slow*, *spectral force*, *\*sunscorch*; *dimension door* x2, *\*sunfire*, *wall of fire*; *advanced illusion*, *domination* x2, *\*flesh mirage*; *permanent illusion* (already cast). Special Equipment: Smoke Puff powder (cast down when becoming invisible, this makes a puff of smoke which gives the impression that the mage has teleported away.)

Should the PCs defeat Shihab and capture his spellbook, it contains the following spells: *affect normal fires*, *\*avert evil eye*, *burning hands*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *\*fire truth*, *magic missile*, *phantasmal force*, *read magic*, *shield*, *unseen servant*; *\*banish dazzle*, *blur*, *detect invisibility*, *\*fire arrows*, *flaming sphere*, *improved phantasmal force*, *invisibility*, *pyrotechnics*, *\*sundazzle*; *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *infravision*, *invisibility 10' radius*, *slow*, *spectral force*, *\*sunscorch*, *tongues*; *dimension door*, *\*enhance fire creature*, *fire shield*, *fire trap*, *\*sunfire*, *\*sunwarp*, *wall of fire*; *advanced illusion*, *conjure (fire) elemental*, *domination*, *\*fire track*, *\*flesh mirage*; *eyebite*, *\*flameproof*, *\*flame of justice*, *permanent illusion*, *true seeing*.



**Bandits, 2nd-level desert riders (ten F2):** AC 8 (leather armor); hp 14 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1 (scimitar) or 2 (long bow); Dmg 1d8 (scimitar) or 1d6/1d6 (arrows); SZ M; ML steady (12); Int very (11); AL NE; XP 65 each.

**Roleplaying and Tactical Notes for the DM:** Shihab al-Nawadi is egotistical, vain, enraged by failure or being thwarted. He hates to lose and has all the charm and self-control of a bratty three year old, though he is quite intelligent. This only makes him more dangerous, as he will use his spells to his best advantage. He is quite adept at illusions as well as having several powerful offensive spells at his command. The characters will have to work together, employ clever tactics of their own, and use any advantages they gain to the fullest to survive. Luckily, the mage wants to punish them, and he likes to gloat. Therefore he spaces out his heavy-damage spells, rather than just throwing them all in quick succession. Use this to keep some characters alive who might otherwise die just from unlucky dice rolls. Of course, if characters insist on really stupid actions which blow up in their faces, go ahead and let the dice fall as they may. Likewise, if one of them sacrifices herself so that the others can survive, don't take away or downplay the dramatic potential of the scene by having her cheat death.

This should be one tough battle. The mage is very powerful and uses his spells to kill, rather than capture, the women. He wants revenge and seeks their destruction, but luckily he wants them to suffer first. Thus, he spreads out his *magic missiles* so that each character is hit by one missile (this also prevents PC spellcasters from using spells that round—he may be vicious, but Shihab is no dummy). His bandits fire arrows at the women, concentrating on warriors and spellcasters. The effects of the illusion last until dispelled, placing the characters at a significant disadvantage (only the mage and his allies will know which trees are real, where the actual line of the water begins, etc.). The Camel of the Pearl will fight alongside the women in this battle, although Jumanah primarily uses her spells to heal wounded characters. She does have the ability to *dispel magic*, and a kindly DM may decide at some point during the combat to have her attempt to dispel the illusion if the spell-casting characters are unsuccessful or failed to memorize the spell.

If a character Calls Upon Fate, remembering the Maiden's speech, black-clad riders suddenly charge from the direction of the escarpment, arriving within a round. They enter the battle and draw off any remaining bandits (killing them handily within a round or two). This leaves the characters to finish off the wizard, if they can. When the last bandit falls, Shihab realizes that Fate has turned Her face against him and uses his spells to flee if he can, unless he is clearly winning. If the characters do not call upon Fate and manage to defeat the mage by themselves, in the lull after the battle they suddenly notice a group of black-clad riders approaching from the direction of the escarpment. In either case, read the following to the players:

The black-robed riders approach you in the aftermath of the battle. Their leader pulls back her veil and bares to you a face beautiful as the stars. She says "Daughters of the Tribe of Altair, rejoice. We are the Keepers of the Midnight Waters and have come to lead you to your ancestral home."

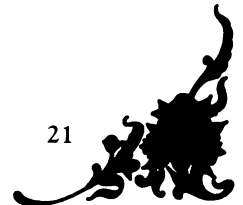
**Zahra bint-Altair, Keeper of the Midnight Waters, 8th-level holy slayer (T8):** AC 6 (Dexterity bonus); MV 24 (mounted) or 12 (afoot); 42 hp; THAC0 17 (16 with scimitar specialization); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+2 (scimitar, specialization) or 1d4 (jambiya) or 1d2 ("talons of the hawk"—i.e., tiger claws); SA weapon specialization (scimitar), thief abilities (+4 to attacks and triple damage on backstabs); SD thief abilities; SZ M; ML fanatic (18); AL LN; XP 1,400. Str 11, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Chr 15. Pick Pockets 45%; Open Locks 25%; Find & Remove Traps 60%; Move Silently 95%; Hide in Shadows 95%; Detect Noise 95%; Climb Walls 95%.

**Keepers of the Midnight Waters, 5-level holy slayers (five T5):** AC 8 (Dexterity bonus); MV 24 (mounted) or 12 (afoot); hp 23, 20, 19, 17, 15; THAC0 18 (17 with scimitar specialization); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+2 (scimitar, specialization) or 1d4 (jambiya) or 1d2 ("talons of the eagle"—i.e., tiger claws); SA thief abilities (+4 to attacks and triple damage on backstabs); SD thief abilities; SZ M; ML fanatic (17); AL LN; XP 420 each. Dex 16. Pick Pockets 10%; Open Locks 15%; Find & Remove Traps 30%; Move Silently 90%; Hide in Shadows 90%; Detect Noise 55%; Climb Walls 85%. Some of the riders will have *potions of healing* with them which they will use to help heal any wounded characters. If any characters have died, they will be carried to the Oasis of the Midnight Waters for honorable burial in their ancestral home. Jumanah will bid her friends farewell and wander off once more into the desert "until Fate wills that we meet again." Continue with the following:

The riders lead you to a secret entry in the wall itself. On the other side is a gently sloping downward path that leads to a welcome sight. Before you lies an oasis of breathtaking beauty. A cluster of tents surrounds a pool of limpid water. Beyond the tents, herds of horses and goats wander freely. A group of people wait expectantly at the foot of the escarpment.

You recognize some of the faces in the crowd that awaits your arrival. At long last you are reunited with your menfolk. As you embrace each other with tears of joy on your faces and praise to all the ten thousand gods on your lips, you search anxiously for other faces still missing. With mixed gladness and anticipation, you begin to pray for the safe arrival of your beloved, and still absent, children.

End of Chapter the Second





## Chapter the Third: “Teach Your Children Well”

This part of the adventure should be as freewheeling and fun as the DM can make it while still managing to keep some control over the game. In it the PCs are all children, and their solutions to problems will be shaped by two considerations: their relative weakness in combat and their vivid imaginations. Encourage innovative approaches and improvisation; to succeed, the characters need to be clever and imaginative rather than aggressive. Though there will be some combat, the overall emphasis is on breath-taking escapades and the wonders of Zakhara. From their confinement in the evil temple, the children escape to the precarious safety of a caravan leaving the town where they have been held. Fleeing bandits and the destruction of the caravan, they enter the “palace” of the noble djinni charged with freeing their tribe, who challenges them to a series of games. If they win, they are gifted with a *flying carpet* to take them home and, after a hair-raising aerial encounter, can fly to the Oasis of the Midnight Waters, where all are finally brought together at last.

### Player Introduction

You are all members of the Tribe of Altair, the people of the Eagle in Flight. Captured by desert raiders, you were separated into three groups—men, women, and children—and each group was sent to a different place: the men to the mines, the women to the harem of the mage who masterminded the attack, and the children to the temple of Zuhayr, Lord of Flames. Despite the Laws of the Loregiver which state that no enlightened people may be enslaved, you have been so enslaved for about one month. Divided into small groups (the better for them to control you, you suspect), the boys have been dressed as miniature temple guards, complete with turbans and (dull) jambiyas (a blatant attempt to corrupt you into eternal servitude) and the girls forced to wear full-length chadors that cover them from head to toe, leaving only eyeholes (stifling attire for any born to the freedom of the desert). Any child who protested too strongly was taken away for “discipline” and never return—sacrificed, you suspect, on the temple’s altars. You have pretended to be meek and obedient, awaiting your chance to regain your freedom. Your plans for escape have come to naught—until now.

**Note to DM:** All the characters in this chapter should be 1st-level beginners of between eight and twelve years old.

### Encounter One: The Flame of Hope Burns Bright

Your slumbers are disturbed by a sound of rushing wind and the crackle of roaring flame. The doors to your chambers burst open suddenly and you hear a voice calling out to you: “Children of the Tribe of Altair! Arise, small eagles! The time has come for you to spread your wings and fly! Arise from your beds and come to me!”

Before you have time to think about the wisdom of doing so, you find yourselves clambering over your sleeping pallets and making your way out of your rooms into the large hall that separates the dormitories of the girls from those of the boys. Standing in the middle of the hall is a creature who might be a man were it not for







a few remarkable qualities: coppery red hair and marble-white skin, feet like the talons of eagles, and a pair of enormous flame-like red wings. As you stare at him in wonder and amazement, you realize that his wings are flame!

Just as you are almost convinced that the hideous Zuhayr himself has come to claim you as his sacrifices, the creature looks at you with eyes like reddish stars. He smiles, and the sharp features of his face seem to radiate a goodness that could never come from the god worshipped in this despicable temple. He speaks:

“Little ones, tonight is the night of your deliverance. I am sent by the gods themselves in answer to a petition from a djinni noble who owes your tribe a boon. Hear me, and the opportunity for freedom will be yours. Disregard my words, and before another night passes, your bodies will be consigned to the flames of He Who Is Worshipped In This Place Of Defilement.

“Gather yourselves together in your accustomed groups. Each shall take a different route to freedom, the better to baffle these evil fools. The priests sleep under a magical charm and will not awaken until dawn.” He turns to your group. “Go past the chambers of the priests and enter a passage that will take you towards the back door of the temple. In that chamber you will find some of your possessions—things that you may find useful along the long road before you. Take care, however, for that chamber is not unguarded.

“Once you are outside the temple, make your way to the walls of this city, where you will find the means whereby you may leave Nawad and begin your journey to the safety of the legendary home of your people, the Oasis of the Midnight Waters, there to be reunited with your families and friends.”

If any of the children are fledgling priests or wizards, he hands the mage(s) a silver bracelet and says, “Since you will have no time to relearn spells before your flight to freedom, take this and use the spells within it wisely.” He then hands any priest his or her holy symbol and says, “Pray quickly, child, for your spells shall be granted despite your lack of rest.” The bracelet is a *bracelet of spell storing* and works just like the ring of the same name: its suggested spell complement is *color spray*, *improved phantasmal force*, *invisibility*, *levitate*, and *suggestion*, although as always the DM should customize the spells depending on the player character(s). After patting any of the smaller children reassuringly on the head, he continues:

“I must instruct the others as to their paths. Go quickly, for you must be outside the city before the sun rises. We have no Fate but the Fate we are given! Be as the fledglings of the Flying Eagle and let the winds of Zakhara guide you to your home.”

The DM is encouraged to make this encounter as interesting for the players as possible in order to end this tripartite adventure with a sense of wonder. Since the characters are all children, the players may want to interrupt frequently. Allow them to do so within reason, but make it

clear that while the asuras is of good alignment and very patient, it is a powerful being and somewhat intimidating. Also, make the characters aware of the sounds of snores from the nearby priests, and how loud they themselves sound when talking in the hall. Although the priests will not awaken unless the children do something really stupid (such as shaking them and shouting “hey, Mister!” in their ears), allow the possibility that they might add somewhat to the suspense. Make certain that all the information contained in the asuras’ speech is given to the players, although the speech need not be read exactly as written.

Allow the players a few moments to make plans. Tell them that their characters can see the asuras giving instructions to other small groups of children but cannot hear his words. If the PCs wish to ransack the dormitories for things to take with them, make alterations in their clothing, etc., tell them that events seem to be moving quickly and that it is possible to spend only a few minutes at these occupations. Also remind them that they will be unable to lug great burdens with them through the temple or on the streets. Let each character collect a few reasonable items—a gutted cushion to serve as a sack, strips of bedding for makeshift ropes, one or two lamps with oil, etc.

**Jeobahm the asuras:** AC -2; MV 12, fly 33 (A); HD 8; 60 hp; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d10/1d10/1d8 (talon/talon/scimitar); SA spells; SD spells, Wisdom 21 (immune to *charm*, *command*, *fear*, *forget*, *friends*, *hold person*, *hypnotism*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *scare*, and all illusions); MR 40%; SZ M; Int genius (18); AL CG; XP 7,000. Spells (as 9th-level priest): seven 1st-level, seven 2nd-level, six 3rd-level, four 4th-level, and two 5th-level (the DM should choose the spells to suit the situation in the unlikely event that a spell list is needed). Special Abilities: fiery eyes (*true seeing* thrice per day, *\*fire truth* at will—eyes dim whenever a lie is told to the asuras).

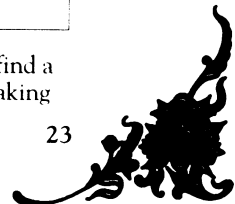
When the players are ready, go on to the following encounter:


## Encounter Two: “Restless Bones”

Before running this encounter, remind any clerical PC to choose spells and make sure a wizardly PC knows what spells are in the bracelet and what they can do. Once everyone is ready, continue:

Quickly and quietly you follow the instructions given to you by the fiery messenger of good. The halls of the temple are vast and silent. The light from a few low-tamped hanging braziers casts eerie shadows on the polished walls as you pass, as if spectral images accompany you on your stealthy passage. You pass by the chambers of the priests of the temple and those of the temple guards. Suddenly, you are face to face with a weathered door that boasts a large, ornate lock.

The door is securely locked. The characters must find a way to pick the lock or otherwise open it without making





much noise. If they remember the asuras' promise that the priests will not awaken until dawn, they may not be so concerned with alerting the priests—but the DM may wish to give them Intelligence or Wisdom rolls to realize that nothing was said about the temple guards' awakening, and that the guards' quarters are close enough so that very loud noises may, in fact, alert them (unknown to the characters, loud noises will alert the creatures on the other side of the door to the presence of intruders as well).

A character who manages to improvise a crude lockpick may attempt to pick the lock; its antiquated condition and its large size allow the character to triple his or her usual percentage, which more than offsets the -10% penalty for using non-standard lockpicks. Stronger characters may attempt to break the lock with the hilt of a jambiya or other improvised materials. If they wrap their striking implements in cloth, they can muffle the sound. Allow a reasonable amount of creativity in approaching this problem.

Although loud noises will alert the temple guards, it will take them several rounds to appear. The DM can use their distant but rapidly approaching shouts to create a sense of urgency and spur the player characters on to greater efforts. If several unsuccessful attempts to fiddle with or break the lock still yield no success, have the forerunner of the approaching guards, a giant of a man, slip on some spilled oil as he charges towards them, careening forward like a wildly flailing human bowling ball to smash into the door, knocking it down and himself out. The sound of his approaching fellows should impel the characters to move quickly into the room. See **Map Eight: Restless Bones**.

The corridor you have entered is vast, dark, and musty smelling, as if it has seen little use. It must be over fifty feet long, with a simple wooden door at the far end. Stepping inside, your feet slide over inches of dust. Suddenly, you hear the shuffling sounds of footsteps other than your own and a clattering that sounds like bones knocking together.

If the characters have light sources, inform them that they can see a host of charred and blackened skeletons clad in the remnants of chadors or tattered abas (robes) stepping from darkened niches in the walls of the chamber, blocking the corridor. If they have no lights, just describe sounds, as whatever is in here approaches closer and closer.

**Skeletons of the temple (18):** AC 7; MV 12; HD 1; hp 8×2, 7×2, 6×2, 5×3, 4×3, 3×3, 2×3; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (scimitar—note that skeletons do not do standard weapon damage); SD immune to fear, *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells or cold-based attacks; half-damage from edged or piercing weapons; SW holy water (2d4 hp per vial), may be turned, take normal damage from fire and blunt weapons; SZ M; ML special (never need make morale checks); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 65 each.

This should be a tough battle for low-level characters. Any priest among the children can attempt to turn the skeletons (up to twelve of them per round), which should

reduce the number of opponents the characters have to face to a reasonable number. If the turning attempt fails, the characters will have a difficult time overcoming so many skeletons if they most uncharacteristically decide to just slug it out with the undead monsters. Use the following guidelines, if necessary, to insure that the round doesn't end too abruptly with a party of dead characters:

- No more than two skeletons will attack any one character at a time (there simply isn't room).
- Successful hits by these skeletons might do less damage than normal (assume these aged guardians are in the final stages of decrepitude, reducing their combat effectiveness). Similarly, the skeleton's movement rate might be reduced, allowing the agile children to dodge around them and avoid their blows.
- The skeletons do not attack seriously wounded characters who lie down on the floor and play dead. If all the characters do so, the skeletons return to their niches and will not attack again for another two rounds once the characters start moving (if the fight is going badly, let the PCs make Intelligence checks to notice that the skeletons ignore fallen characters and think of this strategy).

If all else fails and it appears that the characters will lose both the combat and their lives, have them make Intelligence rolls to notice the door at the far end of the room and the small cluster of items lying on a low table conveniently near an open chest. PCs who attempt to disengage and run for the door may grab items as they go by, although stopping to pick and choose costs them a round and enables a skeleton to get in an attack. When the battle is over, or when it is otherwise appropriate, read the following to the players:

At the far end of the chamber is a door, barred from the inside. A key ring hangs on a peg next to the door. Not far from the door is a long, low table which holds a number of items that look familiar to you. Next to the table is an open cedarwood chest.

The items belong to the children; their exact composition depends upon the player character classes but could include any or all of the following: a *sword of the believer* (passes right through any enlightened target, doing no damage, but acts as a +1 weapon against all other opponents), a miniature scimitar (does damage as a short sword), a *vorpal dagger*, two short bow with a total of 26 arrows, a spear, three javelins, a sling with six bullets, an apprentice's spellbook, enough spell components to cast any spell known to the characters twice, a healer's pouch (containing bandages, herbs, salves, and the like), a water-skin, a tinder box, and pouchful of smooth stones with a set of lockpicks and five copper bits hidden in a false pocket, a rope, a pocketful of raisins and another of currants, a pair of riding boots, a bottle of ink, a few pretty rocks, and a total of thirteen copper bits. The chest is empty and can be used to carry some of the items if necessary.



## Encounter Three: “A Beggar at the Walls of Nawad”

Once outside the door, you find yourselves staring at twisting streets and cramped, hovel-like buildings. Some little way down one of those streets, you can just make out in the grey light of pre-dawn a looming wall of sandblown bricks. Few people are out on the streets so early in the morning, but the moaning of camels and the tinkle of harness bells indicates to you that at least one caravan is preparing to leave the city to get an early start on the day's heat. The asuras' directions echo in your minds: make for the walls of the city, where you will find the means whereby you may begin your journey to your legendary home. Perhaps this caravan is the means of your deliverance.

The characters should head for the sounds of the caravan. Describe their journey down narrow streets where beggars lie sleeping against the walls of buildings and occasional dogs nose through the refuse for morsels of discarded food. When the characters are within sight of the caravan, they have the following encounter:

Ahead of you is the city wall, and a caravan is lined up at the gate that is even now opening to let it pass. Tall camels with colorful trappings stand, patiently or otherwise, in a somewhat orderly line, while at the head of the caravan a brightly garbed merchant haggles with a gate guard over some last minute details. You see a few individuals laden with small burdens mounting upon some of the camels—obviously passengers. As you approach the end of the caravan, a bedraggled figure accosts you, dirty bowl in hand. He implores: “For the love of the gods, have you any of your wealth to spare for one of Fate's forgotten children?”

The beggar will effectively block the children's passage down the narrow street. If the children try to ignore him or are actively rude to him, he begins a loud wailing, which will attract the attention of a pair of guards from the walls (see below).

If, on the other hand, the children take the time to give something of some value to the beggar (even some lamp-oil), the beggar will throw himself on the ground in front of them, attempting to kiss their feet, and exclaim:

“May you find fortune and favor in the eyes of all the gods! May you and your children and your children's children be blessed! May you never thirst for water and may you never lack for comfort!”

The beggar will hand a smoothed piece of a brownish-yellow rocklike substance to the character who first gave him something or who first spoke in favor of showing enlightened charity to the less fortunate, saying:

“May you find this essence of amber as sweet as I have found your charity, O Wise Children. Remember it at need.”

Then he will leave them, wandering past them down the street crying joyously for alms.

**Note to the DM:** Although this is a relatively short encounter, it is an important one. One of the tenets of enlightened behavior is the practice of charity and hospitality. The characters, as enlightened people, should stop to help those who are even less fortunate than they are. The beggar has been (unknown to him) charmed and placed in the children's path by the noble djinni aiding their tribe, as both a help to them and a test to make sure that they have not been led away from the teachings of their people during their indoctrination at the temple.

The “stone” is a chunk of perfumed incense made from the essence of amber. The children may recognize it (Intelligence or Appraising checks) and, if so, would know that it is considered quite valuable. It may be useful to the characters later in the adventure (see Encounter Eight). They may wonder what is going on when a poor beggar pleads for alms, yet gives them riches in return for their charity.

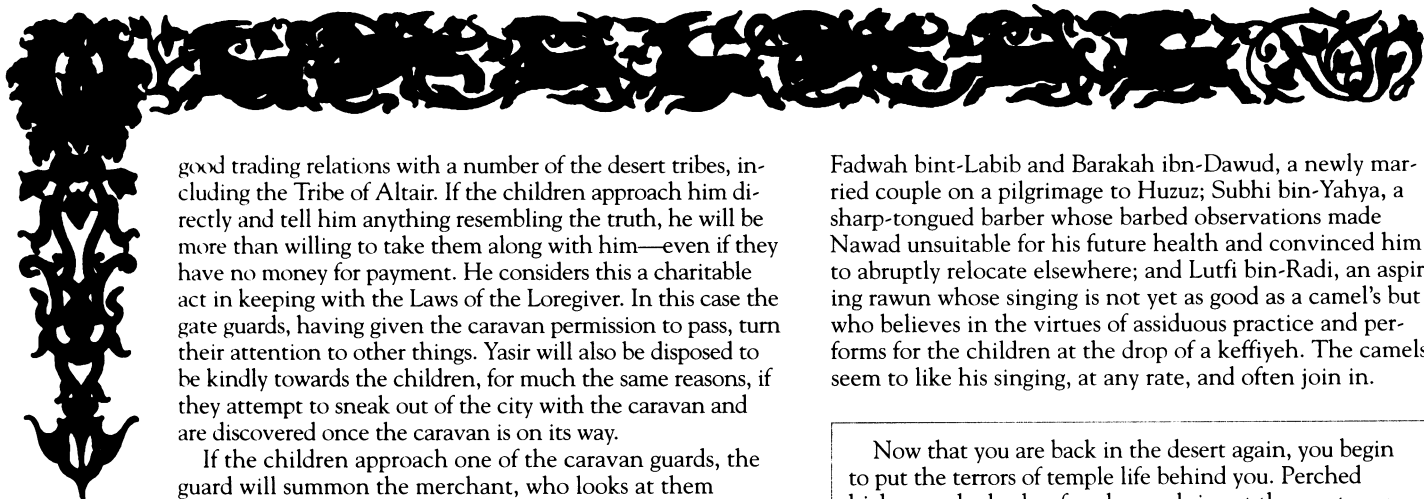
If the children are rude to the beggar, a pair of guards descend from the wall, arriving a few minutes after he begins to wail. If, by this time, the children have made it to the caravan, the beggar points them out to the guards, claiming at the top of his lungs that they are trained midget assassins who have “stolen his meager gatherings.” This will affect the mood of the next encounter.

## Encounter Four: “The Caravan of Yasir bin-Naji”

You arrive at the rear of the caravan just in time to hear the gate guards say to the merchant, “All is in order. Go in peace, and may prosperity await you behind every dune.” You must act quickly if you are to leave the city in the protection of the caravan.

The characters can do one of several things: they can call out to someone at the rear of the caravan and ask for passage; they can approach the merchant directly as he goes to mount his camel; they can simply follow along behind the caravan until they are outside the gates of the city (in which case they will eventually have to join it or face exhaustion and death by thirst and starvation on their own). If they were rude to the beggar, one of the caravan guards will have heard the beggar's loud complaints. This could cause complications, as the children will be unable to join the caravan by stealth and the caravan guards will be unwilling to take alleged thieves into the caravan of their own accord. The DM must be prepared to deal with any of these approaches and their consequences.

The caravan belongs to a merchant named Yasir bin-Naji, a wealthy man who harbors a deep love for the desert (which is why he travels with his caravans instead of setting himself up in one of Zakhara's major cities) and who has had very



good trading relations with a number of the desert tribes, including the Tribe of Altair. If the children approach him directly and tell him anything resembling the truth, he will be more than willing to take them along with him—even if they have no money for payment. He considers this a charitable act in keeping with the Laws of the Loregiver. In this case the gate guards, having given the caravan permission to pass, turn their attention to other things. Yasir will also be disposed to be kindly towards the children, for much the same reasons, if they attempt to sneak out of the city with the caravan and are discovered once the caravan is on its way.

If the children approach one of the caravan guards, the guard will summon the merchant, who looks at them through a brightly colored gem (a *gem of seeing*) held up to one eye on the end of a stick and says, “What wondrous thing has Fate brought to my unworthy attention?” If they spurned or mistreated the beggar, the caravan master will not be inclined to take them on as passengers regardless of their pleas unless the children tell him of their plight. In that case, the merchant will stick his neck out for the children and tell the guards that he will vouch for them with his own good name. Later on, after the caravan has traveled some way out of town, he casually mentions the Zakharan precepts concerning charity and subsequently brings up the subject of giving alms to the less fortunate (drawing the obvious parallel between their behavior and his own action regarding the children) from time to time thereafter, hoping to soften their hard young hearts.

Eventually, the children should find a place on the caravan and set out for the desert and home. The caravan master will provide them all with appropriate desert garb from among his stores (the girls will probably be overjoyed to shed their chadors if they have not already done so—besides, abas are certainly more comfortable for riding camels). In addition, he will see to it that they are each given a waterskin and the basic necessities they need to travel through the desert (a blanket, a jambiya for eating if they do not already have one, and the like).

## Encounter Five: “Into the Great Wide Open”

This is not so much a single encounter as a series of free-form events and possible interactive encounters meant to simulate a long journey by caravan. Emphasize the strong sense of “family” among the members of the caravan—even the passengers, who share stories and meals together every evening. Remind the players that the children have been starved for the comradeship of desert folk after the rigid discipline and confinement of temple life. Do your best throughout this “encounter” to evoke in the players a sense of what it is like to be a part of a caravan, and to establish a sense of belonging.

The caravan consists of Yasir himself and his camel, six camels which carry his wares, six caravan guards (Abbud, Faruq, Imad, Khalil, Nasim, and Sabir) mounted on camels, and three camels equipped with litters which carry passengers. Do not get bogged down by details or waste time calculating encumbrances and the like; simply state that the merchant will rearrange the pack camels’ loads to accommodate the children as riders. Their fellow passengers are

Fadwah bint-Labib and Barakah ibn-Dawud, a newly married couple on a pilgrimage to Huzuz; Subhi bin-Yahya, a sharp-tongued barber whose barbed observations made Nawad unsuitable for his future health and convinced him to abruptly relocate elsewhere; and Lutfi bin-Radi, an aspiring rawun whose singing is not yet as good as a camel’s but who believes in the virtues of assiduous practice and performs for the children at the drop of a keffiyeh. The camels seem to like his singing, at any rate, and often join in.

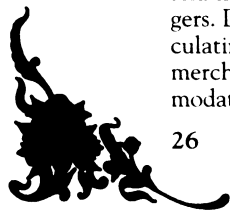
Now that you are back in the desert again, you begin to put the terrors of temple life behind you. Perched high atop the backs of pack camels is not the most comfortable way to travel—not like the sleek desert horses of your people—but at least you are out in the open spaces. From your high perch you can see far ahead of you into the desert. The expanse of sand and sun or sand and stars is a veritable feast for your eyes, so long restricted to the inside of Zuhayr’s dark shrine. Each stop at an oasis for rest and refreshment awakens memories, both happy and sad, of other oases where you and your families camped. You wonder what has become of your mothers and fathers, your grandparents and elder brothers and sisters, and all the rest of your kin.

It troubles you that you are not certain that the caravan is heading in the direction of your legendary home, the Oasis of the Midnight Waters, and you are afraid to mention your tribal secret to those who are not of your tribe. All you can do is remember the words of the fiery messenger and trust that the wish made so long ago has not worn thin with the passing of time.

Note the characters do know the little rhyme given on page 7 but do not know what the lines refer to. While Yusir has been like a father to them in their own parents’ absence, he is not a member of their tribe and so should not be told about the secret oasis. However, at some point, as the camel-men and passengers are exchanging stories about the desert, allow the children to overhear a reference to either the Hand of the Sky or the Wadi of the Lazy Serpent; Intelligence or Local History checks permit them to correctly identify the name in question as belonging to the mnemonic. Subtle nudging of the conversation enables them to realize that the caravan will eventually pass near the landmark in question on its return journey.

Allow the players to play out a few sample days of desert travel, interspersed with events to create opportunities for characters to roleplay or use their proficiencies and ingenuity, as in the following examples:

- The caravan attempts to cross a wadi (seasonal river bed) that has dried out except for a large muddy strip down the middle. One of the children’s camels steps into an unexpectedly deep trough of mud and becomes mired. If the player characters look around, they can see that other camels are similarly trapped and are being hauled out by various members of the caravan. The children will have to combine their abilities to dislodge their beast.
- The sudden appearance of a sand-snake startles the camel one of the characters is riding. The camel bolts and begins galloping in a random direction away from



the caravan. If a chase ensues, have the players make rolls on a 1d20 plus half their Wisdom to close the distance between their character and the fleeing camel (assume the fleeing beast got at least a round or two's head start). Subtract the character's roll from 21 (the movement rate for a frightened camel) to determine the amount of distance closed by a pursuing character or opened by the fleeing camel. If the rider of the fleeing camel fails a Dexterity check (ask for these every few rounds), he or she falls off the camel, taking 1d6 points of damage. A successful Riding proficiency check made at a -4 penalty or a Wisdom check at a -8 penalty allows the fleeing camel's rider to gain control of the animal and slow it down. A second success as above will allow the character to turn the panicked animal around.

- The caravan stops at an oasis already occupied by a vast herd of goats watched over by several herdsman (and -women) mounted on camels. Once it is clear that the caravan is only passing through and will stay no longer than a day, they will be made welcome by these rather abrupt individuals who seem to take no notice of station but are well-versed in the hospitality of the desert. The herdsman (actually tasked genies) smell strongly of the animals they tend, and their conversation revolves almost exclusively around their herds.

## Encounter Six: "Bandits and Black Clouds"

After many weeks of travel, you notice a change in the desert land around you. The endless dunes become less endless, now and again giving way to rocky scrublands. Tall stone formations jut into the sky in stark splendor. One particular grouping of rocks attracts your notice. Perhaps it is because they loom almost directly in front of you. Perhaps it is because of the dark areas that appear to be gaping cave mouths that lead you to speculate about creatures said to inhabit such sinister holes in the rock. Perhaps it is the sight of a horde of mounted riders barreling down upon you from out of the desert, loosing a barrage of arrows in your direction. Two of your caravan's guards suddenly pitch forward with hoarse cries to lie motionless on the dry sands as cries of "Ambush! Bandits!" go up all around you.

Describe about twenty hardened-looking men on scraggly horses charging with loud yells towards the caravan. Ten of the bandits fire two arrows each at the caravan guards, two of whom fall in the first round. The characters, as children, will not yet be targets. It should be obvious to them, however, that these bandits will soon overrun the caravan, either killing everyone and taking Yasir's wealth as booty or else attempting to capture (and possibly enslave) the non-combatants—including them. The characters will have one round for ranged attacks or spells before the bandits will be upon them.



### The Bad Guys:

**Bandits, 1st-level and 2nd-level desert riders (ten F1 and ten F2):** AC 8 (leather armor); MV 24 (mounted) or 12 (afoot); hp 16, 15 ×2, 14 ×2, 11 ×2, 10 ×2, 9 ×4, 8 ×2, 7, 6, 5, 4 ×2; THAC0 20 (1st-level) or 19 (2nd-level); #AT 1 (scimitar) or 2 (short bow); Dmg 1d8 (scimitar) or 1d6 (arrow); SZ M; ML elite (13); Int very (11); AL CE; XP 35 each (1st level) or 65 each (2nd level).

**Bandit Leader, 4th-level desert rider (F4):** AC 7 (leather armor, Dexterity bonus); MV 24 (mounted) or 12 (afoot); 26 hp; THAC0 17 (16 with khopesh specialization); #AT 3/2 (khopesh specialization); Dmg 2d4+2 (khopesh plus specialization bonus); SA weapon specialization; SZ M; ML elite (14); AL NE; XP 175. Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 11, Chr 11.

### The Good Guys:

**Caravan Guards, 2nd-level askar (six F2):** AC 8 (leather armor); MV 21 (mounted) or 12 (afoot); hp 16, 11, 10, 9, 9, 8; THAC0 19; #AT 1 (melee weapon) or 2 (short bow); Dmg 1d8 (scimitar) or 1d6 (arrow) or 1d4 (jambiya); SZ M; ML champion (15); Int very (12); AL LN; XP 65 each.

**Yasir bin-Naji, 4th-level merchant-rogue (T4):** AC 6 (leather armor, Dexterity bonus); MV 21 (mounted) or 12 (afoot); 19 hp; THAC0 19; #AT 1 (jambiya) or 2 (thrown daggers); Dmg 1d4 (throwing dagger or jambiya); SA backstab (+4 bonus to attack, double damage); SD thief abilities; SZ M; ML champion (16); AL NG; XP 175. Str 9, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 14, Chr 16. Pick Pockets 30%;

Open Locks 15%; Find & Remove Traps 35%; Move Silently 5%; Hide in Shadows 0%; Detect Noise 60%; Climb Walls 55%; Read Languages 65%. Special Equipment: *gem of seeing*.

The battle will proceed roughly as follows: the bandits will fire an initial volley of arrows (as noted above) and two of the caravan guards will immediately fall to the ground, dead or dying. The defenders will have one round to cast ranged spells or fire missile weapons before melee. The caravan guards will fire arrows, dropping 1d4 bandits.

Since there are only five active caravan combatants with the caravan, including Yasir (the other passengers cower behind their camels or in their litters while the battle is going on, shrieking in terror), the bandits massively outnumber the defenders. If the characters engage in melee (and they should), they will fight one opponent at a time. It should be clear to the characters that the bandits will eventually win this battle. It should also be clear to the PCs that their enemies do not seem particularly disposed towards taking prisoners.

Run a few rounds of combat, allowing each character a chance to have a good fight. Try not to kill them! Use of the Death's Door rule is strongly recommended (should a character drop below zero hit points, binding wounds before he or she reaches -10 hp will stabilize the character). If necessary, have one of the passengers from the caravan find courage from the children's example and make a valiant charge into the fray to bind a character's wounds. It is not necessary to actually roll for the combat for the caravan guards and their opponents. Simply describe the sound of clashing blades, the screams of wounded horses and camels,

and the general tumult of battle as a background to the individual melees of the characters. If the characters are exceedingly smart and manage to turn the tide of the battle, bring in reinforcements in the form of a second wave of ten more bandits (same stats as above). The battle should be exciting and the characters should realize that they are losing.

After a few rounds of battle, or when all the characters have taken some damage, describe the following:

As you fight for your lives and for the lives of the people whom you have come to know, you suddenly become aware of a change in the atmosphere above you. An ominous darkness fills the air, distracting both you and your opponent of the moment. As you pause, even in the heat of battle, you see a fearsome sight. Roiling black clouds in the distance are headed rapidly in your direction. Inside the horrendous cloud, flashes of bright red lightning can be seen. The winds pick up around you, and you can hear a distant howling that seems to grow closer by the second. Bits of soot and ash sting your face along with the sand that even at this distance is beginning to swirl into the air. You hear Yasir cry out in horror, "Aiiii! May the Ten Thousand Gods preserve us from this horrible fate! It is nothing less than a Black Cloud of Vengeance!"


Combat gives way instantly as the bandits run shrieking back into the desert, seemingly oblivious to their direction. "Make for the caves!" cries one of the passengers. "It's our only hope to escape destruction!"

Tell the characters that they see the remaining caravan guards scooping up wounded companions and attempting to force panicked camels towards the caves, while the passengers are likewise making their way to possible safety. Yasir is attempting to orchestrate the flight. Read or paraphrase the following:

The bandits have fled for the dubious safety of the open desert. The survivors of the caravan are hastily making their way to the nearby caves. You see a low-mouthed cave that looks deep enough to shelter the six of you, and you hear Yasir's voice behind you call out above the steadily increasing howl of the winds: "Make for that cave, children; if Fate allows, we will meet outside after the storm. Run! Run quickly!"

Make certain that the characters all head in the same direction. Those concerned with the fate of their fellow passengers, guards, camels, etc. can see the other members of the caravan (those who survived the battle, at any rate) reaching other caves and disappearing inside. If they try to make for those other caves, describe the angry cloud which is practically on top of them. It whips them about fiercely and tosses them in the direction of the cave. If they simply will not let themselves be pushed in the right direction, let them scatter to the four winds and head in whatever direction(s) they want. Before they have taken ten steps, a sudden whirlwind surrounds them and swirls them off their feet. When it disperses, they find themselves in a large cavern. Proceed to Encounter Seven.





The Black Cloud of Vengeance will not actually attack the children, but its very presence makes it impossible for them to stay or venture outside. For full details on this extremely destructive “creature,” consult the appropriate listing in the al-Qadim MC appendix. It is far too strong for the characters to handle and should only be used to move them in the right direction.

**Black Cloud of Vengeance:** AC -3; MV fly 24 (E); HD 20; 160 hp; THAC0 5; #AT 2; Dmg 6d10/7d10 (winds/fiery rain); SA fiery rain intensified, not diminished, by its howling winds; SD immune to fire magic and weapons of less than +3 bonus; MR 30%; SW will never attack sites occupied by genies or mosques; SZ G (thunderstorm-sized); ML fearless (19); Int exceptional (16); AL CE; XP 20,000.

## Encounter Seven: “My Wish Is Your Command”

The increasing din of the storm, coupled with hot gusts of wind and the rain of fire, drives you further into the cave. Once inside, you find that the passage widens so you can stand up. Towards the cave mouth, the heat is becoming intolerable—you can only imagine what it must be like on the surface, directly underneath the fearsome cloud. Desirous of putting as much distance between yourselves and the vengeful cloud as possible, you wander deeper and deeper into the tunnel. Soon you become aware that this cave is truly mammoth, a complex of tunnels and chambers that extend deep into the earth. Phosphorescent mosses light your way, and though the path goes on and on, the main tunnel does not branch, so you have no fear of becoming lost.

Ahead of you, you begin to smell smoke—not the stench of fiery ash and brimstone that tainted the Black Cloud of Vengeance, but a sweet, enticing aroma of sandalwood and jasmine. The sound of softly tinkling bells fills the air around you as you turn a final corner in the passage and see a sight only rarely seen by mere mortals—and then, mostly in legends.

A large cavern looms in front of you. It is lit by balls of colored light that dangle from the ceiling, some sixty feet overhead. The walls are draped in richly woven hangings and tapestries, while the floor of the cavern is covered in carpets of marvelously intricate designs. The lights twinkle off a fabulous array of gleaming weapons, goblets, bottles, jeweled statues, and other wondrous items. A massive figure sits at the far end of the cave on a sumptuous pile of cushions; were he standing, he would be at least twelve feet tall. His flowing trousers and embroidered vest proclaim him to be a personage of some wealth, while the massive amounts of gold and silver jewelry he wears indicate that he is not a particularly humble individual. You also notice on closer examination that the “cushions” upon which he sits are not cushions at all, but colorful masses of clouds which support his hovering figure. He looks at you with piercing eyes, smiles slightly, and speaks:

“Truly the unravelings of wishes are ever devious! Welcome, children of the Tribe of Altair, to my most

humble temporary abode. I am he to whom you owe your escape from the pitiful temple of a sniveling aspirant to godhood! You may address me as ‘Most Noble Djinni,’ ‘O Magnificent One,’ ‘Splendiferous-And-Ever-To-Be-Unequaled-One,’ or simply ‘Kind Master.’”

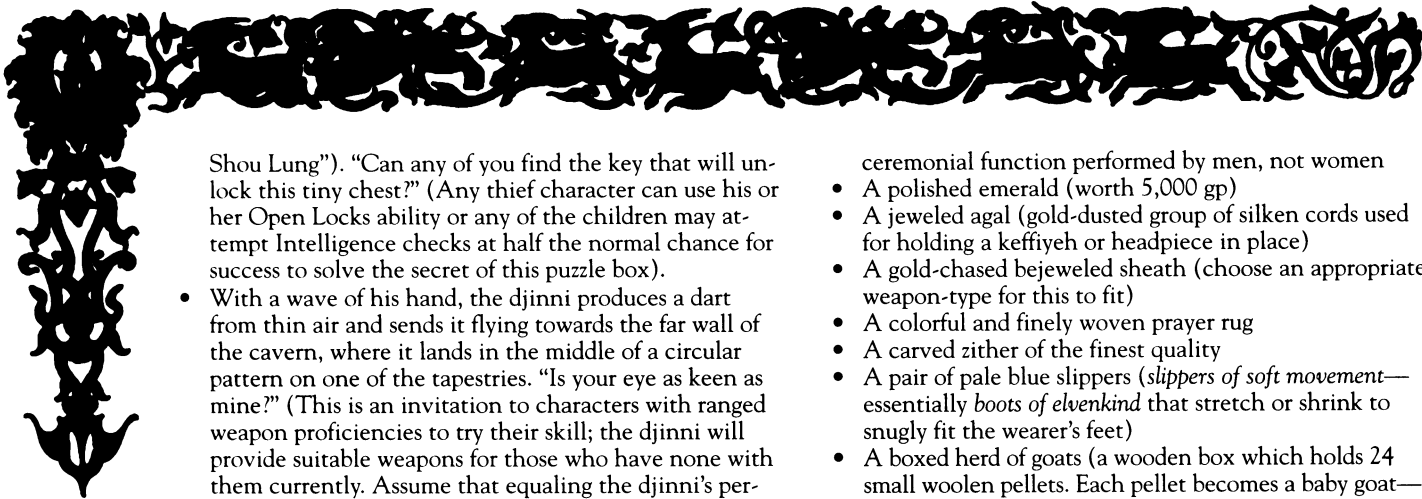
Allow the characters to respond to the djinni’s greeting. After an exchange of names and polite expressions (assuming the children remember their manners), he continues with the following speech or some reasonable facsimile thereof:

“You are the last of the children of your tribe to escape your imprisonment. Alas, you still have far to go on your journey to the Oasis of the Midnight Waters, and I can see that my messenger did not think ahead clearly enough to provide you with more explicit directions—else you would not be here. I shall have to take time myself to remedy that situation, it seems. But meanwhile, there is a slight disturbance outside and we have some little time to wait before the inclemency passes.

“I can see that you are poorly equipped; it would be an insult to your families to have their children return to them as beggars. I propose some contests, a few simple games to while away the time. Should you win—or should you please me by your attempts, since some of these contests you cannot hope to win—I will allow you to choose from among these trinkets some token to take with you when you leave, in memory of our sport. Should you lose, you will owe me some small service—or perhaps remain here until I become inclined to move elsewhere . . . but you will not lose or displease me, will you, children of the desert?”

Make it clear to the characters that although the djinni sounds stern, he does not appear to be malicious—merely desperate for amusement and eager for company but too proud to admit the fact. If the characters agree to the djinni’s contests (and they would be fools to spurn him), he will offer the following challenges:

- With a flourish of his hand, he produces a handful of gold dinars and lets them spill on the ground. “I have created something out of nothing. Can any of you do the same?” (Any character with illusion spells or *audible glamers* memorized can “create” pictures or sounds; a priest character might *create water*. Failing that, clever use of Pick Pockets or Juggling skills could produce clever slight-of-hand tricks that might delight the jaded genie, so long as the child carries them off with panache).
- He plucks an enormous scimitar from the cavern wall behind him and, still seated on his cushion of cloud, flourishes it in the air over his head. “Can any of you exchange blows with my blade and display your skill with the weapons I see you bear?” (Any warrior among the children can attempt to hit the djinni’s blade [AC 6], the more dramatically the better, but best of all would be for a character with Display Weapon Prowess to give an exhibition of that skill).
- From his treasure trove he produces an intricately carved wooden and ivory box (“from the far land of



Shou Lung”). “Can any of you find the key that will unlock this tiny chest?” (Any thief character can use his or her Open Locks ability or any of the children may attempt Intelligence checks at half the normal chance for success to solve the secret of this puzzle box).

- With a wave of his hand, the djinni produces a dart from thin air and sends it flying towards the far wall of the cavern, where it lands in the middle of a circular pattern on one of the tapestries. “Is your eye as keen as mine?” (This is an invitation to characters with ranged weapon proficiencies to try their skill; the djinni will provide suitable weapons for those who have none with them currently. Assume that equaling the djinni’s performance requires a successful attack against AC 4).
- The djinni concentrates for a moment, and the image of a group of musicians appears in one corner of the cavern. They begin to play a lively dance tune. “I have heard that the children of the desert are unmatched for their grace of movement. I should like to see some examples of your prowess in that area.” (This challenge is tailor-made for dervishes, though children with Dancing or Tumbling skills may put these to good effect as well. The DM is encouraged to ask the player to demonstrate at least the rudiments of his or her character’s dance).
- The djinni then says, “Before I present you with my final challenge, I wish to extend to you a courtesy which is due to any guest. I would like for you to propose a contest of your choosing. I will have to be the judge as to whether I will allow it, as I have yet one final challenge which I wish to keep as a surprise.” (The PCs must suggest a contest).
- Lastly, the djinni says, “Are there any of you who call yourselves riders of the desert?” (Any desert rider worth his or her salt should recognize such an obvious cue). “I should like to see some of your vaunted expertise—but I see you lack a horse.” (At this, the djinni will smile smugly. He calls out something in a soft but commanding voice, and from the shadows beyond him will appear, as if summoned, a horse—or several, if more than one player character chose this kit. The child will recognize the animal as his or her own beloved steed). “If you consider this a worthy mount, young rider, leap upon his back. I am told you are very good at that sort of thing. Alas, there is not room for you to demonstrate your skills at a gallop, so this one poor action will have to suffice.” (Due to the cluttered footing, each character attempting this challenge must make a successful Riding proficiency check or slip at an inopportune moment and come crashing to the floor. Only his or her dignity is injured as the djinni laughs delightedly, while the faithful mount nuzzles its young master or mistress comfortingly).

If the children rise to the occasion and best the djinni or meet his challenges, he will allow them to select an item apiece from his treasures.

### Items Available:

- A shining, beautifully decorated coffeepot (one of the most treasured items among the al-Badia or nomads, usually lovingly tended and handed down from generation to generation). Note that coffee-making is a

ceremonial function performed by men, not women

- A polished emerald (worth 5,000 gp)
- A jeweled agal (gold-dusted group of silken cords used for holding a keffiyeh or headpiece in place)
- A gold-chased bejeweled sheath (choose an appropriate weapon-type for this to fit)
- A colorful and finely woven prayer rug
- A carved zither of the finest quality
- A pair of pale blue slippers (*slippers of soft movement*—essentially *boots of elvenkind* that stretch or shrink to snugly fit the wearer’s feet)
- A boxed herd of goats (a wooden box which holds 24 small woolen pellets. Each pellet becomes a baby goat—eighteen female, six male—when taken from the box and the command word inscribed on the lid spoken. This item could help their tribe replenish its stolen stock.)
- A *cutlass of quickness +2*
- A *potion of dreaming* (gives the imbiber a vision containing clues about something he or she is seeking)
- A crystal vial holding three applications of aromatic *oil of attractiveness*
- A saddle of finest leather, chased with gold and lined with softest sheepskin.

To those children who fail their challenges he will say sternly,

“As I stated, I require a service from you—but it will, I hope, not be onerous. Emulate the example of that wise sheikh who used his wishes to care for his tribe and direct your thinking to the preservation of your people. Also, I further charge all of you, winners or losers, that should you ever free another of my kind from captivity in a bottle, by all the gods of the desert, do not stretch out your wishes to encompass a thousand years!  
“Now the storm has abated, and I must fulfill my promise to return you safely to your home.”

He motions the children towards a small carpet that lies rolled up in one corner of the cave.

“Take that carpet outside and unroll it. Climb upon it and sit squarely in the center. By the winds of Fate, that carpet will take you to your home and your loved ones. Should you need, you may command it to rise or lower, go forwards or backwards, and turn left or right by speaking the appropriate command.”

At this point he hands any desert riders among the children a silken halter apiece and says, “Place this upon your steed and lead it upon the carpet. It will guarantee that your horse, at any rate, shall not fall off—no matter how tumultuous the ride.” Then he bids them farewell and concludes

“Now go, and go quickly—so that my service to your old ancestor will at long last be complete. May Fate smile upon you, my little friends, today and in all the years to come. Do not fear for your companions in the caravan—they too, will find their way to their fated destination, but that is another story . . . .”

Go on to Encounter Eight.



## Encounter Eight: “Magic Carpet Ride”

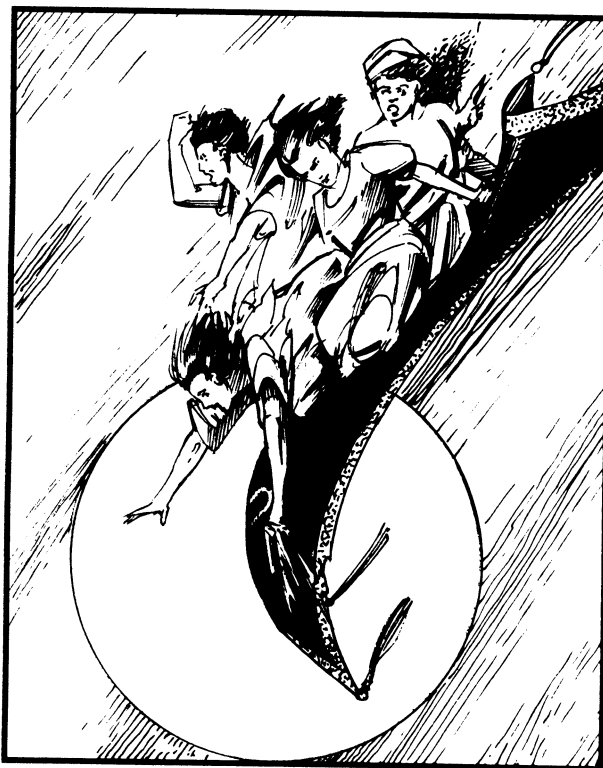
Outside, the storm has passed and left miles of ash and soot in its wake. You unroll the carpet—and unroll the carpet—and unroll the carpet, until before you spreads an enormous expanse of intricately woven rug. The large center of the carpet is a black medallion with silver stars strewn across the breadth of it. You mount the carpet—and, yes, there is ample room for all of you. Without warning, the carpet rises in the air and you sweep across the desert, headed at last for home!

If there were any desert riders among the children, expand the line in the boxed text to read “ample room for all of you and your beloved steed(s).” When the carpet first moves, have all the characters make Dexterity checks. Those who fail are tumbled about and fall off unless they can make a second Dexterity check at a  $-2$  penalty (in which case they grab on to the tassels that line the carpet’s edge) or are caught by another character who kept his or her balance (a similar Dexterity check, again at  $-2$ , indicates success; failure indicates the would-be rescuer overbalances and tumbles off as well). Since the carpet had only begun to rise, no one falling off takes any damage other than a mouthful of sand and a faceful of ashes—presumably someone will have enough presence of mind to command the carpet to stop rather than sail off and leave their unlucky fellow(s) behind. The players should consider this fair warning: so long as the children remain seated or take any reasonable precautions, they will be perfectly safe, but standing or walking about on a fast-moving undulating platform high in the air without any railing is simply asking for trouble.

Once they are well and truly underway, the carpet soars at a smooth, gradual incline that quickly gets them surprisingly high up. If the players ask what the children see below them, describe lots of desert far below and tell them they can see clouds underneath them if they look over the edge. Mention a “teeny-tiny caravan,” the camels walking in line like desert ants, winding their way to a small spot of green (an oasis). Make it clear that the characters are hundreds of feet up in the air and that it is a loooong way down. Allow an hour or so of time to pass for the characters, then continue with the following:

After your initial discomfiture at this novel way of travel, you settle back to enjoy the experience of sailing through the air high above the sands of the desert. Birds pass you by at eye level (sometimes you even pass them!). You feel like you are truly the Children of the Flying Eagle. Even your horses seem to enjoy feeling the breeze on their faces without having to exert themselves by galloping.

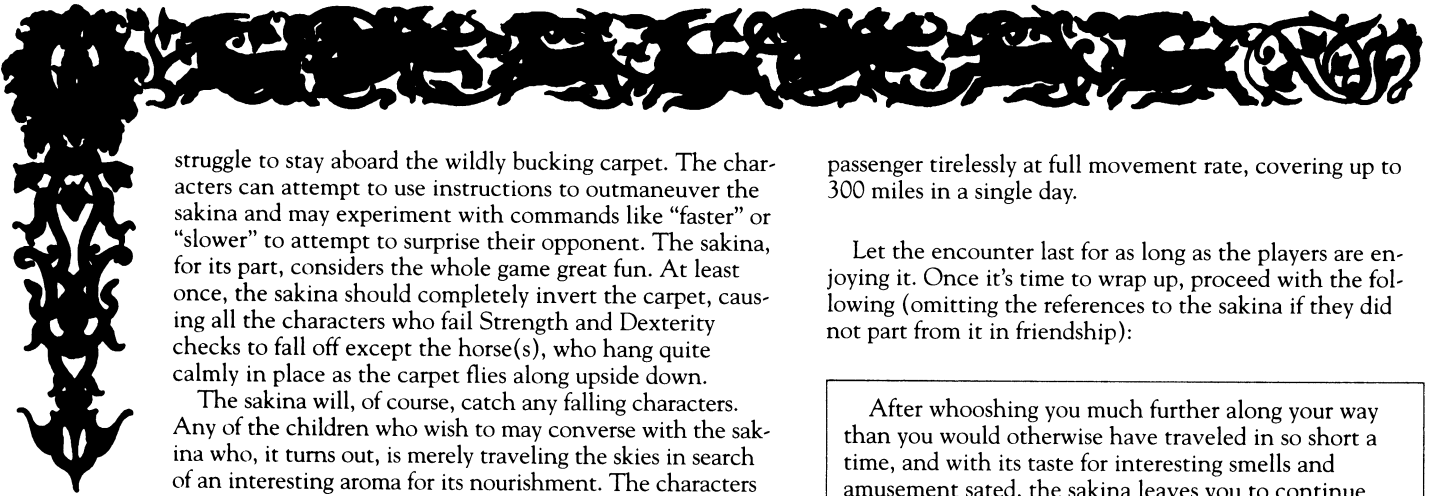
Suddenly, you feel a jolt from underneath the carpet. From beneath you comes the sound of soft giggles, and a whispery voice, saying “Ah! What manner of creature is this that trespasses upon my domain? I shall have some sport with it!”



Before you can respond, the carpet tips straight up on its end and you feel yourselves sliding inexorably downward.

Have the characters make Dexterity checks to attempt to grab hold of the carpet. Those who fail have a second chance (as before, at  $-2$  penalty) to clutch the tassels at its fringe before it suddenly straightens out once more and bolts through the air, with the characters trailing along behind like living tails on the world’s greatest kite. Should more than one character try to shout instructions in the same round, the carpet attempts to obey them all (characters who shout “stop!” will no doubt regret it as their momentum whirls them forward right off the opposite edge). Those who failed both checks will find themselves plummeting towards the ground, only to find themselves suddenly turning as light as air and being blown around by the prevailing winds. The carpet begins to spin around and around, climbing in an ever-tightening spiral as if caught in an inverted whirlpool, all to the accompaniment of soft, whispery giggles. Note that the djinni’s halter prevents any horses riding on the carpet with the children from being dislodged, regardless of what happens to the characters—even if the carpet turns upside down!

The children have encountered a sakina, a mischievous air sprite who roams the sky looking for interesting scents and amusing adventures. Sakina are not malicious, and the characters should realize this and understand that harming this one would be a bad idea since it is likely to have friends in “high places” who would be displeased if it were attacked. Play this encounter as a rough-and-tumble aerial



struggle to stay aboard the wildly bucking carpet. The characters can attempt to use instructions to outmaneuver the sakina and may experiment with commands like “faster” or “slower” to attempt to surprise their opponent. The sakina, for its part, considers the whole game great fun. At least once, the sakina should completely invert the carpet, causing all the characters who fail Strength and Dexterity checks to fall off except the horse(s), who hang quite calmly in place as the carpet flies along upside down.

The sakina will, of course, catch any falling characters. Any of the children who wish to may converse with the sakina who, it turns out, is merely traveling the skies in search of an interesting aroma for its nourishment. The characters may coax it into leaving the carpet alone (after righting it) by offering to “feed” it with various scents from their possessions—perhaps even preparing it a savory meal from whatever supplies they may still have with them. With luck, one of the characters will remember the essence of amber given them so long ago by the beggar (see page 25), and offer this to the sakina—assuming they still have it! If they choose to attack the sakina, it flies away at once, leaving them to drift on the wind. In that case, their only option is to try to use directions to somehow get the carpet beneath them once more before they all plummet (they may have to shout in unison to get the carpet to hear their commands if it is some way off). If they do attack the sakina, all the djinni’s gifts to them disappear (except the carpet and halter, which stay with them until they reach solid ground again).

**Sakina:** AC -4 (0 when visible); MV fly 48 (A); HD 7+7; 56 hp; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 3d6+special (buffet of wind); SA wind-buffet causes opponents who fail a Dexterity check to stumble backwards (automatically losing initiative the following round), *control winds* thrice per day (as per the 5th-level cleric spell, at 14th-level of clerical ability), *ride the wind* (thrice per day, can make up to seven characters of up to 700 pounds each light as air for seven turns, with the sakina controlling their altitudes at will to raise or lower the target up to 120 feet per round); SD normally invisible, immune to nonmagical weapons; MR 50%; SZ M; ML champion (16); Int high (14); AL CG; XP 5,000. Special Ability: can carry a single human-sized

passenger tirelessly at full movement rate, covering up to 300 miles in a single day.

Let the encounter last for as long as the players are enjoying it. Once it’s time to wrap up, proceed with the following (omitting the references to the sakina if they did not part from it in friendship):

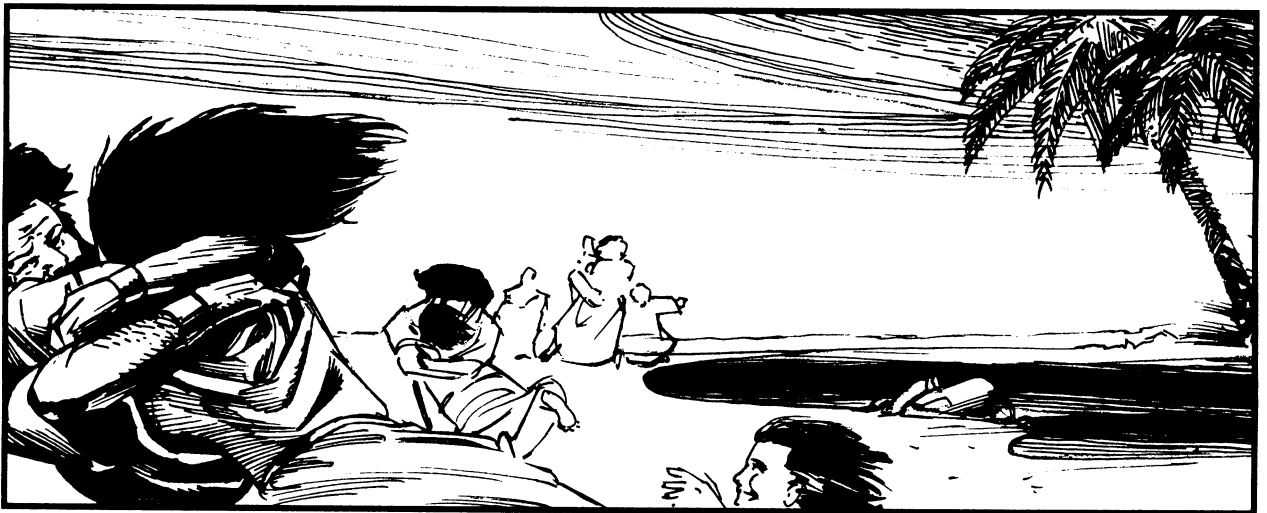
After whooshing you much further along your way than you would otherwise have traveled in so short a time, and with its taste for interesting smells and amusement sated, the sakina leaves you to continue your journey. You fly onward through the night, and though the air around you is cold, you suffer no ill effects from the chill. As the sun begins to dawn, you see far below you a large rock escarpment, past which the wind howls like an elephant’s trumpeting. The carpet sails high over it and begins a gentle descent. Before your eyes, growing larger by the second, is a beautiful oasis, complete with tents and herds and people milling about and staring upward at the sky—at you!

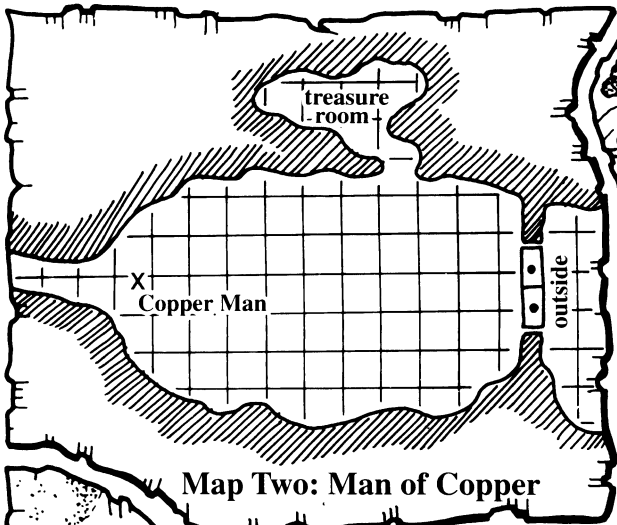
## Epilogue

As you get closer to the ground, you begin to recognize familiar faces—the children who were with you in the temple shout up at you and wave in delight. You anxiously scan the adults in the crowd—and your hearts leap with joy as you see the faces of mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, friends, a grandfather—all your loved ones. As the carpet wafts gently to the earth, you rush into waiting arms and thank Fate and the djinni that have brought you to such a joyous reunion with your people in the safety of the Oasis of the Midnight Waters.

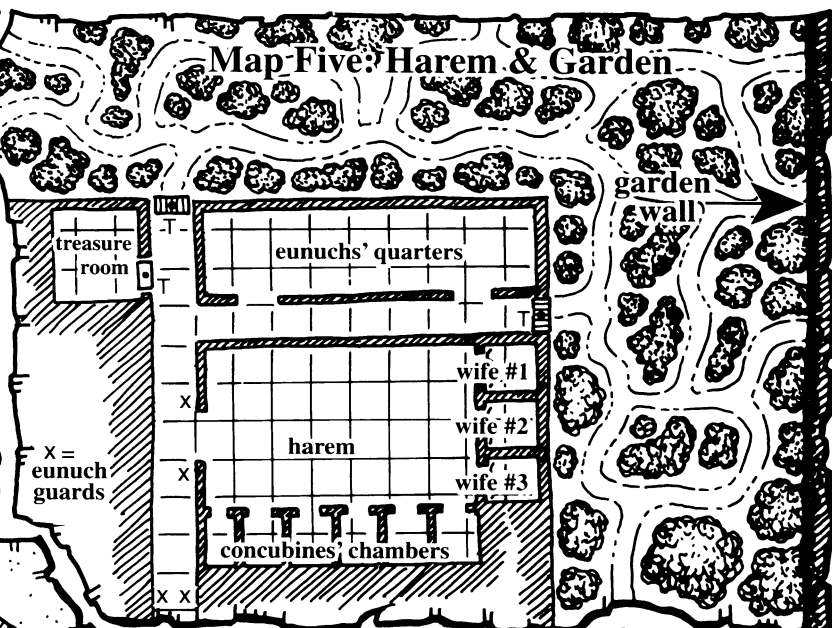
*We have no Fate but the Fate we are given!*

**THE END**





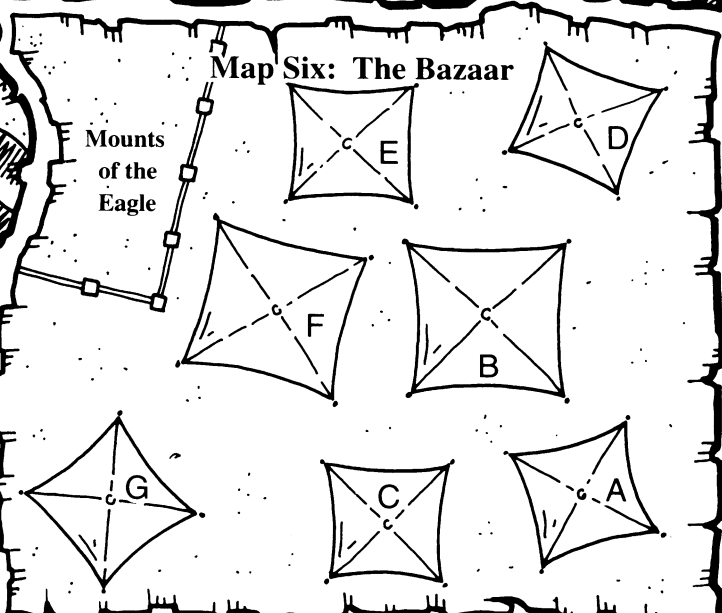
Map Two: Man of Copper



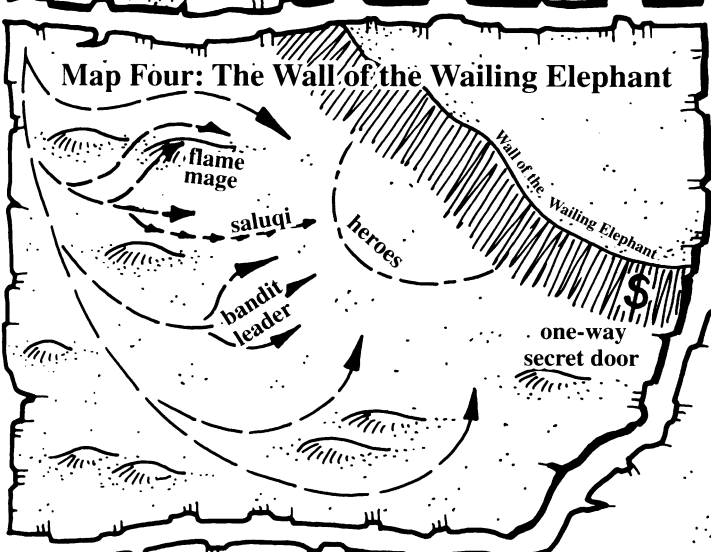
Map Five: Harem & Garden



Map Three: Oasis of the Golden Falcon



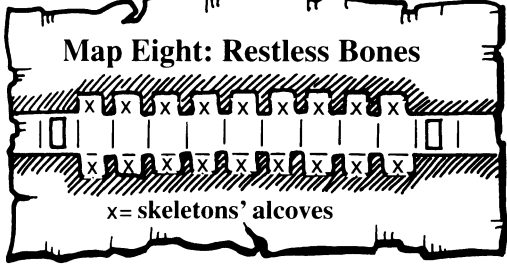
Map Six: The Bazaar



Map Four: The Wall of the Wailing Elephant



Map Seven: The Wizard's Revenge



Map Eight: Restless Bones

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