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7402

CONAN®

Official Game Adventure

CONAN® The MERCENARY



TSR, Inc.

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Labyrinth Map





INTRODUCTION

The faces of the mercenaries shone strange and ghost-like in the dim blue light. Ompter, the strong but dumb Kushite, gazed dully at the source of the glow; a patch of luminescent fungus they had tied to their last burnt out torch.

"I wonder if you can eat this."

"I doubt it," said Larss, the only member of the group with any lore knowledge. "Could be lethal."

Ompter grunted, "So is starving."

Methinna, who had been almost asleep in the corner, raised her head and shook her hair out of her eyes. Normally it was bright, like liquid gold. But after ten days of walking and fighting in the underground labyrinth it was matted, giving her the appearance of a common workwoman rather than a member of the warrior-nobility to which she belonged.

"Edible or not," she blinked, "we better find more fast. Its beginning to lose its glow.

Running out of food and water is one thing, running out of light in this hell-maze will doom us."

Fur'r snorted a short, nasal laugh. He looked both smug and cynical.

"We were doomed when fatso here lost our gear two days ago."

Ompter's whole body shook with rage and he grabbed the thin, balding thief by the throat.

"Listen weasel," he hissed through clenched teeth, "I've put up with your whining and griping for over a week now, and I'm not listening to it anymore. If it were up to me I would have saved our packs instead of your worthless hide from that tentacled thing. But Larss wanted you saved, so here we are. But so help me, by the many gods of my homeland, if you utter one more..."

Larss' hand clamped over the huge man's

mouth and whispered urgently in his ear, "Quiet! Listen! I think something is on to our scent again."

Off in the darkness they could hear a snuffling, scratching sound, as if some large beast was sniffing and clawing at the cavern floor.

They heard a human voice over the animal sounds. "Sarm, this way. He's picked up a scent."

Methinna peered down the tunnel but could see nothing. "By all that's..," she turned to Larss, her eyes wide with fear, "They're tracking us in the *dark!*"

The glow from the blue fungus dimmed and paled. Larss' face could barely be seen, stern and set as if stone.

"Hold your weapons straight out and strike at anything you touch in front of us. All we can do is wait."

The fungus faded away into darkness while the animal noise drew near.

How to Use This Booklet

In addition to the detailed adventure theme, this adventure contains instructions on how to combine this adventure with TSR's *Conan® The Buccaneer* adventure, so a single adventure can turn into an entire campaign. A map of the underground labyrinth used by the mysterious Priests of Jhebbel Sag is on the inside cover. It also has a blank section that you can develop yourself for future adventures.

But this adventure is not a "dead end." It is designed to be just the beginning of your adventures, or to be easily worked into your present *Conan Role-Playing Game*. You can use the suggested adventure theme, alter it to fit your game's needs, or add to it.

Conan® The Mercenary gives you the best of both worlds; a detailed suggested adven-

ture, but room for creation and change. You are the Judge, and you can alter anything to add mystery, intrigue, the unexpected, and drama to your game.

If you do alter or expand the map and/or the suggested adventure theme, read the following suggestions.

This adventure theme is compatible with *Conan the Buccaneer*. If you do not use that adventure as a prequel, you can relocate this adventure to any country you wish. Just make sure you keep the non-player characters, such as the current Zingaran Brigands, in line with their surroundings (such as becoming Kushite Brigands).

This adventure is designed for use with player characters already in your game campaign and does not include pre-generated

characters. The characters from *Conan the Buccaneer* may be used instead of your player's usual characters if you are continuing that adventure. If Conan is not currently with your group you can add him when your characters are brought before the Baron or he can intervene in their behalf at the Forgotten Grove.

Be careful to balance certain areas. If you add dangerous monsters, traps, or people, make sure that information or treasure is obtainable so that conquering the obstacle is worthwhile. Even clearing a passage to a new area is an achievement.

Finally, if you greatly alter an area make sure it follows a theme, either the one included or one of your own. Your game will be much more enjoyable, both to you and your players, if characters, monsters, villains, and locations all have a logical purpose.

How to Use the Map and Setting

The map of the underground caverns and tunnels found on the inside cover is the core of this setting. It is designed so that you can see the entire labyrinth. The markings on this large map are for the Judge's reference. This booklet contains detailed information on the

circumstances leading up to the party's exploring the caverns, what can be found in certain areas, and their travels through Melena.

The map references are divided into two types, alphabetical and numerical. Alphabetical references refer to fixed locations of crea-

tures, people, plants, items, and features. Numerical markings either further define alphabetical references by indicating the number of creatures in the area, or are references that further define an encounter or feature in the area marked.



Map Key

WH refers to a reference found in The World of Hyboria booklet that comes with the CONAN® Role Playing Game.

Alphabet Key: A letter on the map shows the placement of a creature, plant, herb, or feature. A letter followed by a period and a number indicates that there is more than a single creature present, for instance, RH.3 means that there are 3 Hanging Snakes in the ceiling Roots in the area.

A: Ancient Slaver Chains, see page 29.
B: Bowl of Stats, see page 29.
C: Crack or Crevice, see **Features**.
D: Demon, Strangling, summoned by the priests to guard the artifacts, see WH page 38.

E: Ebony Standards, see page 29.
F: False Wall/Secret Door, see **Features**.
G: Glowing Fungus, see page 28.
H: Harmless Encounter, see this section following.
I: Iron Hooves, see page 29.
J: Jetton of Asap, see page 29.
K: Kladon, see **Features**.
L: Large Bats, see page 26.
M: Masked One, see page 29.
N: Neo-thog in a Tidal Area, see page 25.
O: Omnivorous Moss, see page 28.
P: Priest of Jhebbel Sag, see page 29.

Q: Quicksand, see **Features**.
R: Roots, see page 28.
RH: Roots with Hanging Snakes among them, see page 27.
S: Swamp Beast, summoned by the Jhebbelites to guard the artifacts, see WH page 39.
T: Tidal Area, see **Features**.
U: Undercat, see page 27.
V: Vines, see page 28.
W: White Mold, see page 28.
WE: Web Spinners, see page 27.
X: Xanthic Mushrooms, see page 28.
Y: Yawning Snapper, see page 28.
Z: ZiXit, see page 27.

Features:

The following natural features are spread throughout the labyrinth. More features may be explained in other sections of this adventure.

Crack: This marking indicates that there is a narrower crevice leading away from the exit marked. It is usually large enough to crawl into and can go in any direction, including up or down (Judge's discretion). If a crack leads to anything useful it will be listed under the numerical references. These are just false leads that abruptly end after 1d10 x 5 feet. If a character persists in following them there is a chance he will get stuck.

To check if a character gets stuck, find the column on the Resolution Table that matches the greater of the character's Climbing or General Prowess ratings. Then roll the dice and consult the Resolution Table. If the result is white, the character is stuck. Any other result indicates that he is safe. A stuck character remains so until he rolls a successful check. A check can be made every 15 minutes thereafter.

False Wall/Secret Door: These cleverly disguised sections either are hinged like doors (usually on each end of a shortcut) or large sections of thin stone used to block an area seldom used (like catacombs). The only way to spot these is through a successful orange or red Resolution check against an Observation talent. Tracking talent may also be used if the person being tracked has used a secret door. Secret doors require a Strength talent of 8 to open, False Walls require a Strength talent of over 20 to move. These required Strengths can be a combination of many characters. False walls do not close by themselves and any that are opened will remain so unless closed. False walls that are broken open or solidly wedged open will remain so until someone with a Structural Engineering or Mining talent repairs it (these are NPC, self-explanatory talents.) None of the priests alive know how to do this. It would also take the proper equipment and quite some time.

Kladon: Sections of this underground maze were a kladon mine long ago. Kladon is a chalk-like substance used in making white-wash for buildings. It is easily dug from the walls and a fist sized-chunk can be used to mark a line on the walls for 200 feet. Kladon diluted in a pint of liquid can provide enough paint to make a line up to 400 feet. When this mark is shown on the map it means a vein of kladon is found in the walls.



Quicksand: Occasionally a sandy underground area has mixed with a partial tidal area to form deadly quicksand. It is always a patch that is 10+1d10 feet in diameter. A weighted-down character (heavy armor or large pack) will sink in 3 combat turns if he does not have anything to grasp, like a rope or polearm extended to him by a companion. A normally attired person or someone removing their pack or armor will sink in 12 combat turns unless they belly-crawl to escape the mire. This is the only way to safely move through quicksand. An extremely weighted-down character (three-quarter armor, carrying lots of loot or a body) will sink immediately.

Any character who sinks without having a rope attached can hold their breath and hope to be rescued by his companions. He can hold his breath for a number of combat turns equal to 6 plus his *Stamina* or *General Endurance* rating. He receives 1 point of damage for every turn beyond his limit that he does not breathe.

The quicksand pits are usually 20 feet deep. Because of the bad lighting underground and dust that covers everything, it is almost impossible to detect quicksand before stepping into it. Only by tapping the floor in front of themselves can a group of adventurers hope to detect quicksand traps.

Stalactites and Stalagmites: These eerie formations are often found within the caverns. If they are important, it will be mentioned in the numerical references. Otherwise use their foreboding presence and the eerie shadows they cast when describing an area where nothing else is happening.

Tidal Area: The tidal areas that lie within the caverns are actually smaller tunnels which connect the cavern area to the nearby underground river. The tidal area of the Neo-thog and the large area south of the river are constantly filled with churning water. The others flush up and empty out every five minutes, making the stone there wet and slippery.

Underground River: The subterranean labyrinth is a combination of natural formations and an old kladon mine which was flooded years after it was abandoned. The flooding which occurred because a surface river changed its course, resulted in the main shaft of the mine becoming an underground riverbed. The river runs west and has a strong current. The roar in the river tunnel is deafening and can even be heard through the walls of parallel caverns.

To the east of the map the river continues for three miles and then runs down an incredi-

ble underground rapids that is impossible to climb. Downriver, to the west of the map, the river continues for nine miles before tumbling over a breathtaking waterfall. Anyone going over these falls will sustain 10 + 1d4 points of damage (DR - 35). If a character goes over the falls safely, he will eventually wash out in the Black River.

Hidden Dangers

The dangers adventurers face when traveling in subterranean realms are many: getting lost, dangerous descents and ascents, running out of a light source, starvation, and exotic creatures and plants. A Judge should tell a party just what they see within the light radius and what they might hear outside of their sight. Light sources are listed below. Remember that each square on the map is 10 feet.

Homemade Torch: Light Radius of 5 feet; Duration of 20 minutes. The torch can be used as a club causing + 1 damage, but has a 50% chance of going out per swing.

Purchased Torch: Light Radius of 15 feet; Duration of 45 minutes. The torch can be used as a club causing + 2 damage. It will not go out if used as a weapon.

Small Oil Lamp: Light Radius of 10 feet; Duration of 60 minutes. The lamp can be comfortably held in one hand and easily set down. It is prone to blowing out in strong drafts. It holds one pint of oil.

Large Oil Lamp: Light Radius of 15 feet; Duration of 120 minutes. It can be tiring if the lamp is held with only one hand and is dangerous if knocked over in combat. It will not easily blow out. It holds one quart of oil.

Glowing Fungus: Light Radius of 5 feet; Duration of 60 Minutes. These statistics are good for a large amount of fungus wrapped around a sword or mace. You can actually see the large patches of growing glowing fungus up to 40 feet away as an eerie blue area.

When light brighter than glowing fungus is immediately cast on characters who have been in the dark, any player character or NPC who is not a priest suffers a -2 penalty for all Resolution checks for any actions they wish to perform in the next two combat turns as their eyes begin to adjust. The priests, because of their excellent darksight, suffer a -4 penalty. This includes running into a well-lit area from a

dark one, the sudden flaring of a torch or lighting of a lamp, or any other light source the characters do not slowly (6 combat turns) become used to.

Movement: Because the underground areas are so treacherous, movement is shifted two columns to the left on the Combat Movement and Travel Tables. This means a Movement talent score of 5 allows a person to Crawl at 1, Walk at 2, Jog at 3, and Sprint at 10. But the light sources provide such a limited range that anyone who sprints could possibly be in darkness after one Combat turn. Treat characters who collide with a wall while Sprinting in the dark as if they fell the same distance. Characters who collide with a wall while Jogging use this same formula, but halve the distance.

Moving in total darkness is disorienting and a character can easily wander in different directions if his hand is not touching a wall. A character moving in the open darkness must roll 1d10 every combat turn he moves. Keep track of his movement on the map with a pencil.

Die Roll	Direction
1-2	Left
3-4	Right
5-6	Ahead
7-8	Circle in Place
9-10	Stumble

Combat in the Dark: Anyone fighting in the dark suffers a -6 column modifier and can only swing at sounds or where the last attack came from. If just two people are fighting in the dark, they should move at the slowest character's adjusted walk rate in the same direction. Roll a die and consult the movement chart above for the characters if they lose contact with a wall or identifying surface. If more than two characters engage in melee it can be very confusing. The Judge must keep track of everyone's location as any combat will always be between the two closest beings, unless something identifies them to each other such as calling out their names, the sound of a specific type of armor, the unusual sound a creature makes (like a Neo-thog and an Undercat).

The major exception to darkness fighting is when attacking someone who is either in a light source's radius or backlit by one. An example of the latter would be a party walking down a tunnel toward you, holding a lamp, then pausing while someone scouts ahead without a light. As he comes toward you, he is outlined by the light source directly behind



him. You would still be in the dark and impossible to see. You can strike at him with perfect accuracy but he suffers a -6 column modifier. Firing a ranged weapon into a lighted area is more effective because the targets have even less of a chance of knowing your range, and exact location. Anyone trying to fire back at the shooting attacker who lies in darkness has no chance of hitting him.

Undercats do not suffer the full penalty since they can see very well in the dark. They attack with a -2 column shift in total darkness.

Harmless Encounters: These encounters can be normal bats, rats, lizards, and birds, or a deep red fungus, giant purple mushrooms, swaying

vines that suddenly scurry over the character's feet, or drape over his face. It can also be tricks of the mind; unnatural noises, the feeling that eyes are following them, or a whisper of air that feels like a breath. The encounter should always be harmless to the characters but should not necessarily appear so.

Using 3-D Game Aids: It may be difficult for the players to determine exactly where they are on the map. To clarify positions use 3-dimensional paper characters, cardboard counters, or miniature metal figures to represent the characters. A plain sheet of paper with die approximate walls of the area or obstacles quickly scrawled on it is a common way Judges

show their players the immediate setting.

Now make the map and setting more personalized. The entire cavern network south of the river has been left blank for you to do so. If you wish, use the area south of the river to reroute the course the characters take to Melena. Create a new society of creatures, set traps, invent new clues for future adventures. You can do this with the areas that are already marked. Also, if you create something new, don't forget to number it on your map and add the corresponding number to your written description.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Adventure Theme

This section is for the Judge's benefit and gives a brief synopsis of the entire adventure theme. Whether the Judge wishes to use this for a continuation of *Conan the Buccaneer* or as an independent campaign, the suggested adventure theme is the same.

Once, in another dimension, existed a great and glorious civilization called Melena. The magnificent majesties King Hanyax and Queen Visnatia ruled. Their kingdom represented the highest ideals, the best to which men on their planet could aspire. But into this kingdom of light and goodness came the King of Demons, Yama. So evil was he that his own demonic followers finally drove him from their own world.

Yama quickly destroyed Hanyax's empire and crumbled the civilization that was so grand. Though there was suffering and despair everywhere, a few brave men sought to prevent Yama from spreading his pestilence to other worlds. They were able to steal Yama's most powerful artifact, the Orb, and secure it in Hanyax's tomb. In that location all the magic that was known to them was woven into a barrier of amazing strength. It became the only known location Yama could not enter. But mortals could. For years Yama worked his wiles and finally was able to influence a young, greedy man in the Hyborian age to take the Orb for him.

The horror that now besets the lands of Aldoc resulted. Over a century ago an old priest, wise in the knowledge of secret artifacts

and the ancient tales of Yama, was persuaded by the young thief to tell him of the secret of Melena and the Orb of Yama. The thief learned of its power and yearned to possess it. The aged sage knew of one of the many portals from Earth into the extra-dimensional world of Melena. What he did not know and could not tell the thief was that many curses that surrounded the Orb.

The thief crossed into Melena and, by use of ancient artifacts that were always provided at the departure site, crossed the trans-dimensional gate and made his way safely to the Tomb of Hanyax. What occurred in there is a mystery, but the thief left the tomb a few hours later with the Orb of Yama in hand. Instantly a hot desert wind began to blow from the east. On it, in the distance, was the demon-king Yama. Swiftly he came and plucked the Orb from the startled mortal's hand, then tossed the young man into his fiery maw. While this took place in the land of Khitai, it would greatly effect the people of the Barony of Aldoc in the land of Zingara hundreds of years later.

The Baron Etarti ruled this land, as did his forefathers for centuries. But he could produce no children himself and soon fell into despair over the imminent end of his family's lineage. Soon despair turned into desperation, which became obsession, and finally fanaticism. The Baron turned to the Black Arts for a solution and entered into a pact with the god Yama, "King of the Demons." The demon-liege gave the Baron the powerful Orb of Yama, which would not only give Etarti

control over the magic in his realm, but grant him immortality as well. In exchange, Yama would be able to enter the Hyborian world with ease and once again take up his long quest to control mankind. Etarti could expand his power only if he spread the belief of Yama to his realm. However, there were curses set upon the Orb of Yama eons ago by the eldritch gods. These would eventually upset the Baron's lust for power.

To invoke the curses, the Orb must be stolen from the owner (in this case the Baron). Once this occurred, he or his loyal men would not be able to ascertain its whereabouts. Neutral agents, unaware of the real power the Orb possessed, must be used for this. In such a manner, the Orb may fall into the hands of righteous men who could again secure it in the Tomb of Hanyax in Melena.

Another aspect of the curse was that until it was returned to its former owner or Yama was summoned by its new owner, Yama could not cross from his realm into the Hyborian world. Since the lore of the Orb was generally known to only a few cults, the possibility of Yama's return was greatly reduced. Once stolen, the magic that was suppressed by the Orb's presence will almost immediately rise again to its former state. If the Orb of Yama was returned to the Tomb of Hanyax, Yama's powers would continue to diminish until he was no more. If the Orb is brought into the Tomb, then taken out again, Yama will instantly know of its presence. He will descend upon the Orbholder, retrieve his Orb, and thank him by consuming him on the spot.



Etarti began his rise to power by starting the secret order of the Masked Ones. With their aid, and the power of the Orb, he began persecuting all known religions in his realm to increase his realm. The more he increased his realm, the more he could spread the word of Yama and could, thus, increase his power.

Though he has had possession of the Orb for a decade, the Baron has restrained from tolling the virtues of Yama until his strength among the Zingaran nobleman was unmatched. This he could do by marrying Kaletar, a distant cousin of his and heiress of the vast lands adjoining his. Once Duke Mardy was assassinated, and the Baron inherited the lands, he would begin his mission of converting his subjects to the ways of Yama. The assassination has not yet taken place, but the suppression of all other religions is neatly complete.

The last priests to flee, the followers of Jhebbel Sag, secretly moved into an underground maze of tunnels and caverns near Etarti's capital city of Kaslaer. They later found unexpected support from the Baroness Kaletar, herself a Jhebbelite who was secretly shocked by her husband's persecutions. There they have lived over the years, waning in power and influence, yet waiting for the day when the power of the Baron might be in jeopardy and they could help topple him.

Recently, good fortune has smiled upon the enemies of the Baron. The Baron carelessly left the Orb unprotected and Kaletar stole it. Upon the advice of the Priests of Jhebbel Sag, she sent it with her trusted man-at-arms, Fan-

chix, into their subterranean labyrinth. Once in the land of the priests, the Orb-bearer was shown their most guarded secret, the trans-dimensional gate into the fabled land of Melena, now a desert wasteland inhabited only by Yama, a few mindless creatures, and the shades of men who once lived there.

Fanchix, using the "Melena artifacts" provided by the Jhebbelites, succeeded in returning the Orb to the ancient and wondrous Tomb of Hanyax. Inside the tomb, Hanyax, a statue, spoke to him and told him that instead of destroying the Orb as the priests had instructed, he was to merely place it on a pedestal. Once done, Hanyax instructed Fanchix not to speak of this to anyone, then returned him through the trans-dimensional gate.

Fanchix, wishing to obey Hanyax, did not tell the Jhebbelites of his conversation, only that he had destroyed the Orb. But the next day, only hours after Fanchix had left the priests, one of them awoke from a dream in which the Orb was calling to be rescued. Immediately the priests knew they had been betrayed and sent two of their Undercats to detain Fanchix for questioning. Fanchix, having had an altercation with a Neo-thog (in which he lost the Jetton of Asap), was now on his way out of the caverns. He was caught just as he entered the last cavern that led to the Forgotten Grove. Frightened and bewildered, he attacked the Undercats and was slain by them. The priesthood has not notified the Baroness because they are no longer sure they can trust her.

Meanwhile, the Baron's first instincts, to

have his men search the town for the Orb, have proven useless. It is then that he remembers the curse Yama spoke of if the Orb is stolen. He realizes that neither he nor his loyal forces can detect the Orb, those who stole it, or the place where it is hidden. Only an independent force, mercenaries, can find it and claim it for him. Of course he must be careful what he tells them, lest they discover the true nature of the Orb.

Now, the Baron needs to send a band of mercenaries to recover the Orb. As a precaution, he will send a few Masked Ones to follow them to ensure they do not discover the truth about the Orb. Once the location is known, he need not rely on these mercenaries and can kill them, then hire more to do his bidding. The less those who work for him know about the Orb, the safer the Baron feels.

The Baroness, having heard nothing from Fanchix or the Jhebbelite priests, has been eavesdropping on the Baron in hopes of picking up more information. She will smuggle a note to any mercenaries he hires before they leave.

The Priests of Jhebbel Sag trust no one and want to make sure that no emissary of the Baron crosses over into Melena. Conversely they cannot cross over themselves and need someone to go and destroy the Orb.

The mercenaries have just arrived in Kaslaer and are looking for work. Instead they find trouble.

Give the players the the notes and belt illustration on page 31 when they gain the information.

Adventure Introduction

1. If you use this adventure with the *Conan the Buccaneer* adventure, read the following. If not, read 2.

After completing the mission on Atothar, the survivors set sail for Messantia and home. If they are shipwrecked on Atothar, a Zingaran vessel blown off course by a storm spots them and picks them up. During the return voyage, however, a terrible storm from the south sweeps the vessel north. After two days of battering, the storm abates and the skies clear. Fortunately, land can be seen to the northeast. But the storm was savage and all equipment or gear that was not specifically stated as being battened down is lost. Worse yet, of die members of Antony's crew (NPCs) who had survived the island, only half survived the storm. The others were swept overboard.

The land sighted is Zingara, just north of the Black River. They can see a medium-sized town which Antony believes is the port of Kaslaer. While all may want to sail to Argos, the ship has large leaks and could not possibly go further. Just after she has been unloaded, the sound of groaning, then splintering timber, shakes the wharf and she quickly sinks.

On the docks, one of Mennifir's colleagues will recognize her and greets her with a smile. Aware of the terrible storm, the Nemedian Chroniclers have been searching the coast for a possible emergency beaching of the expedition's ship. Mennifir may fulfill all of her obligations (and receive rewards as described in *Conan the Buccaneer*) right there on the docks. Neither Conan nor Jayapakash are known or wanted in Zingara. Antony sends any remaining crew members back to Messan-

tia along with any information that will help his family. If Martina is still alive and with them, the entire party can agree to send her back to her family. Antony may stay with his new friends and try to raise enough money for a new boat. Xystus will find Zingara boring, so he will stay with the others.

The weary travelers will now most likely want an inn. The Empty Barrel is located a few blocks away. Go to 3.

2. If you are using this adventure on its own, read the following.

The Judge decides how the player characters arrive at Kaslaer in Zingara. This gentle seaside town, dominated by the massive Castle Etarti, is the starting place of the adventure. The characters should have arrived recently after a long journey and be weary. There are a



number of ways in which you can entice your players to send their characters to Zingara:

A. Design a small adventure in which the party is hired as mercenaries to guard a traveling merchant. Devise some short encounters for the journey to Zingara. Upon reaching Kaslaer, the merchant becomes ill and must be confined for months. The characters are paid enough to support them for a while, and are now out of a job.

B. The characters flee to Zingara because they are wanted by a government, cult, religion, or private powerful individual for past offenses. The Judge could bring about retribution for past adventures in which the player characters have offended somebody.

C. The characters are sent into Zingara as spies by a government, cult, religion, or pow-

erful individual. Rumors of sudden bloody purges have reached the outside world. The extermination of magic also worries many people. The group is sent to investigate the massacres under the guise of wandering mercenaries. Although Conan doesn't care much for magic or religions, he despises government persecutions of any type. *Go to 3.*

3. A Quiet Night at the Tavern. Kaslaer is a medium-sized port with a reputation for boredom and frequent, savage pirate raids. The Castle Etarti is unusually large and grand for such a small barony. Recently Kaslaer has undergone an amazing economic rejuvenation under the Baron Etarti. It is now a growing commercial hub and has the potential to become a future major trade center. Unfortu-

nately, expansion has overtaxed the local inns, of which there are few. The Empty Barrel is the only place left with a room. There are soldiers everywhere and the Baron's grip on his barony is tight.

Use the Tavern Map on page 32 of the Conan Game Rule Book for the tavern section of the inn. When the characters enter for a drink and something to eat, there are nine local people inside in addition to the innkeeper. Place the NPCs where you wish, except at the middle diagonal table under the words "table and benches." That is the only clean or empty table in the place. During the course of their meal it will be obvious that the patrons are drinking quite a bit and something is wrong in town. If any of the characters try to listen in on the conversations, they will catch important phrases now and then, including:





"Don't know what they're looking for but they've gone into every home, store, or stall in town on the Baron's command." "Alfonso says he saw a demon last night (general laughter). Says it came out of one of the castle windows (sudden silence)." "Wish Etarti would fall out of one of the windows himself, the wretched blasphemer." "Be quiet man, are ya' daft?" In a quiet voice. "Ya' know there are ears everywhere." "...good thing about him is his choice in wives," followed by a heartfelt "Aye" from all. "Not the man his father was. Cruel!" "...der what they're lookin' for? Sure must be important."

These comments are made so quickly that the characters can say nothing. There is a pause when one of the men leaves for the night. If any of the party asks any questions about what was said or if the character is obviously eavesdropping, one of the locals states rudely that they don't take to spies and

sneakthieves in Kaslaer. This can quickly escalate into a brawl.

If the player characters ask no questions and get up to leave, one of the drunker patrons accidentally bumps into them and a fight starts as a result.

The bar brawl is almost inevitable. See Bar Brawlers on page 25 for statistics. No more than six locals get involved unless there are six player characters in the tavern. Then the other three PCs will join in. These NPCs are accustomed to handling "foreigners" and each fights with two short, club-like saps in the Zingara Fighting tradition. Unfortunately they are drunk and so have a -2 penalty to any Fighting or Agility talent they try to use. Since they are also brawlers they may abandon their clubs for chairs, tables, or mugs if the player characters use edged weapons.

The brawlers circle the PCs and try to herd them to the middle of the room, underneath a huge wooden chandelier. If the player charac-

ters huddle in the middle, the brawlers cut the rope, dropping the chandelier on the players. Each player in the middle receives 3 points of damage and is incapacitated for one combat turn. The brawlers are also fond of throwing their clubs, which does no damage but can distract the mercenaries for one combat turn. All of the brawlers carry three clubs and they often will distract the first character who takes offense by this throw, while one or two more slide behind him and grab him.

The innkeeper remains uninvolved, but will eventually call for the soldiers. The fight either ends with the soldiers arriving after the player characters throw out the locals, all of the characters being beaten by the locals, or by a mutual truce enforced by intervening soldiers. After their food, ale, and fight, the player characters may retire for the night. Nothing is disturbed in their rooms when they return upstairs.

Sweet Dreams

The following dreams appear to the player characters tonight and tomorrow night, or, if there are only a few player characters, over the next few nights. Depending on the number of characters, some might have numerous dreams. It is important that all of the dreams be read. Take each player away from the group to read their character's dream to them. The dreams are vivid so you may repeat the dream or the player may take notes. The players may decide what the player characters tell each other. Part of the challenge of this adventure is for the characters to share information and work as a team trying to work out the meanings of their dreams.

1. You see an incredibly beautiful woman in your dreams. She seems to be dying. She lies on a bed of gold inlaid with pearls and designed in a sea motif. She has the features of a Kshatriyas but the clothes and setting seem to be different from the current inhabitants of Vendya. Her breathing is labored and she looks at you with sad eyes, trying to say something. She lifts her hand toward you, then drops it abruptly as she shudders with her last breath.

2. You dream of sailing on a silver ship and gliding over smooth waters. But your heart is not light. It is heavy with grief as you gaze upon the coffin on the ship's deck. It is golden with inlaid pearls and a sea motif. You feel that it holds someone dear to you. You think to yourself, "When she lies within, I shall face the demon-spawn." Startled by this thought, you leap up fully awake.

3. Tonight your dreams are strange. You see a desert as if you were an eagle flying far overhead. In the distance you spot a beautiful city and head in its direction. As the sun rises you realize you are flying east over the city, decorated in black, as if in mourning. On the eastern outskirts of the city, next to a wide ribbon of river, you see an army assembling, as if to make war with some foe that threatens the city. But you see no foe. You continue flying east across the wide river toward the valleys beyond. A spot of black catches your attention and you swoop lower. It is a funeral procession winding its way back from the valleys to the river. Back in the

valley you see a man standing before huge doors set into a cliff. Noble of visage and dressed for war, he is sobbing. Suddenly he draws his sword and screams something toward the heavens. The glint of sunlight from the sword snaps you out of your dream.

4. Your dreams tonight are terrifying and you wake suddenly, your body soaked with sweat. You remember fighting some awesome evil in a battle. You seemed to know your cause was doomed from the start but you had to try to defeat the foe. Spears raining down on you from the night heavens persists in your thoughts. When you finally drive that fearsome image away another takes its place; a gallant cavalry charge against something abnormally large, then sheets of fire sweeping over the desert and destroying horses and men alike. Above all, the image of an Orb in a taloned hand haunts you.

Read this dream the second night to the character who has already dreamt number 2.



5. You dream, tonight, of sailing on a shining silver ship gliding over smooth waters. But your heart is not light. It is heavy with grief as you gaze upon the coffin on the ship's deck. It is silver with inlaid pearls and is carved in a sea motif. You feel that it holds royalty. You think to yourself, "when they both lie within, the demon-spawn shall reign." This last thought is so terrible that you wake up screaming.

6. Tonight you sleep fitfully, feeling as though someone were standing over you. Finally you roll over and open your eyes. A man is watching you, tall and olive-skinned, with long black hair and deep brown eyes. There is something commanding and reassuring about him that stops you from calling out. "I guard the Orb. Trust no one else, but keep your dreams among your friends, as your true intentions. Yama. threatens all," he says. He grasps your shoulder in friendship and is gone.

Read this the second night to the character who has dreamt number 6.

7. The same feeling of being watched has pervaded your dreams and you hear the same firm voice that spoke to you the night before. "Sell or give away nothing you find, for they may be parts of the great puzzle. Keep the treasure, open the crypt, and touch nothing." Again his hand touches your shoulder, but you awake to find no one there.

8. A man's voice, deep and resonant, whispers in your ear during the night, "Go below, use the belt, find the wards, read the frieze, use the bridge, use the wards, avoid the walls, cross the water, open the doors, wait for me."

9. In your dreams tonight you hear a mystical voice, "What are the dreams of Helena now?" This is followed by the sounds of horse's hoofs, clanking

chains, a bell's gong, then something heavy thudding into muffled ground like tentpoles in sand.

10. Your dreams are being interrupted by far away whispers:
"Dust on tomes and carven frieze;
A noble summoning within his lair.
When a desperate man on
trembling knees
Calls on forgotten gods, beware!"

11. This entire night your dreams are haunted by the feeling that you are in a dying city. People and items are crumbling to dust around you. Even the walls and spires, when you touch them, come crashing down killing scores of people. A sad voice entones, "Melena's doom is set and sealed." You awake in a cold sweat.

12. A cold female voice, from what sounds like a great distance away, chants all night long, "Beware those who use you for their own sake. Trust friends only. You are in an evil land, but must go to one that is worse to destroy the evil."

If the party has an odd number of characters or if you have a large number of players in this adventure you may want to repeat some dreams to different players (especially 8 and 9).

The Baronial Audience. Read the players the following after their dreams have been discussed.

The next morning you all feel on edge and exhausted. You have just dressed when someone knocks on the door. A deep base voice on the other side answers that he is Arturus of the Baron's elite guard and wishes to talk to you. If anyone glances out the window they notice that there are a number of soldiers in front. The possibility of escape is thin at best.

Arturus is here to discuss last night's tavern fight and apologize for the city's rudeness toward strangers. He has an invitation to noon dinner from Baron Etarti, but the "offer" sounds more like a command. His politeness seems genuine and he leaves only when the party agrees to meet the Baron. While his attitude continues to be polite he can become quite insistent about noon dinner if the players balk. He even hints at some type of "employment" to persuade the characters.

If the player characters wish to spend the morning trying to gather information about Aldoc, the Baron and Baroness, or any Lore from their dreams, various things will come to light.

1. General information about Baron Etarti can be gleaned (statistics, fame, claustrophobia, and an abbreviated history except for anything in regard to religion or the Masked Ones).

2. Non-religious information about the Baroness Kaletar can be gleaned (statistics, fame, and an abbreviated history).

3. The Baron and Baroness seem to have a strained relationship. The Baroness is liked by almost everyone.

4. There are either demons or men possessing great talents who disguise themselves as demons about. Some believe they may be in league with Baron Etarti because they have been seen in the castle vicinity more than anywhere else. Some believe they are agents of other Zingaran nobles sent to assassinate the Baron. Some even believe they are conjured up by the survivors of the religious purge to exact vengeance. There is no documented or factual proof for any of this.

5. No religious others, priests, temples, or shrines exist anywhere in the city. Everyone knows that the Baron Etarti persecuted all religious beliefs and clergy a decade ago. No one knows why or what beliefs the Baron or Baroness may hold.

6. Sometimes strange animals can be seen at night with message containers strapped to them. It is believed the elite guard uses them.

7. The Baron is a dictator, but during his reign, the Barony of Aldoc has flourished. He is the last of the Etarti family who have ruled this land as long as anyone can remember. His



marriage to Kaletar will eventually extend his rule over much of Zingara. Everyone is surprised that she is not yet pregnant with the heir, as that is the main reason nobles marry.

8. The local Loremaster knows of no Orbs, but does know of the Lore listed on page 30 including the poem.

9. The most powerful religion before the current Baron came to power was that of Jhebbel Sag. No one knows what has happened to his priests.

10. The last few days the Baron's soldiers have been turning the town upside down looking for something, but no one knows what it is. It is smaller than a skull judging by the places they were looking.

11. Soldiers have been seeking mercenaries in the last day or two. No one knows why. Perhaps the Baron is going to war.

12. The Baroness has shut herself away the last few days.

The noon dinner with the Baron is a good chance for the Judge to develop his acting skills. The Baron is pompous, confident, rich, egotistical, and vain, but needs a small company of mercenaries to do a job for him. He says that the castle has been entered and something has been taken; an Orb that his wife gave to him as a wedding present. She has shut herself away and is angry with him, declaring she will not speak to him again until he recovers the Orb. He seems to be quite embarrassed about this and will explain that he does not want the information to leak out. His soldiers have already done what they can and he does not want to lose their respect by having them look further for a purloined wedding present.

It is worth quite a sum of money to him (Judge's discretion) to have his domestic matters settled. Rewards of positions in his service may also be available for successful characters. If the players seem hesitant he reminds them that they are in his lands and subject to his will. He even conducts them on a tour of his lavish castle, ending in the dungeons.

The Baron will have the castle staff assembled for questioning by the characters. Some of the staff wenches are quite friendly, putting their arms around the male characters in jest. Only a few facts become evident: no one knows anything about the Orb, the Baron and

Baroness have not been getting along of late, and everyone becomes silent if anything is said of demons (they have all seen them on the grounds).

When the interviews are over the Baron returns and, as way of advance payment and to show his good intentions, offers the characters the hospitality of his storerooms so they may stock themselves for a mission. They are each allowed to take up to two pieces of armor, a new weapon of their choice, a horse and saddle, a packmule for carrying their supplies, one week of rations, and their choice of rope, torches or lamps for night searches, arrows or bolts, or water skins.

The characters can spend the rest of the day asking questions around town. When they all meet at the inn that night they discover that one of the male characters has had a note slipped into his pouch or pack without knowing it. This could have been done any time during the day (it was slipped in there by one of the castle wenches who secretly serves the Baroness). Hand the players the appropriate note at this time.

If you value your life and hate evil meet me at moonrise tomorrow night north of town in the Forgotten Grove. Tell no one. The Baron is a dangerous man.

Make sure that the characters know it is too late to leave town tonight; soldiers are everywhere. If a character asks a local resident about the Forgotten Grove, they will think for a moment, then direct the characters to an area about a day's ride north of town. Once they cross over a small bridge there will be a stand of trees to the right and a large hillside beyond. Within the grove there is a faceless statue. No one can remember who the statue is or why it is there—hence the Forgotten Grove. Once the characters are asleep, read the remaining dreams.

The Forgotten Grove. On the outside of the adventure cover is a full-color map of the Forgotten Grove. The characters can reach the grove from the town of Kaslaer by the North Road. After riding a full day by horse, the road turns east over a bridge before it continues to the north. Just across the bridge, on the south side of the road, is a grove of trees nestled against the side of a hill.

The grove is ancient and no one remembers to whom it was devoted. (It was a shrine to

Jhebbal Sag at one time.) In the middle of the grove are the remains of the temple. This area is best described as a Stonehenge-type structure but in far worse shape. Most of the stones have fallen and are broken. The center is still clear, though, and the charred earth shows where many campfires have burned in the past. To the right of the main circle, set farther into the trees but still reachable by an animal path, is a large statue. It has eroded over the centuries and its face is no longer distinguishable. The statue appears to be a humanoid male of a non-threatening nature. There is an eerie silence that surrounds the area.

Surrounding the grove are overgrown heather fields providing perfect cover for game birds, small animals, and awaiting assassins. To the west of the grove and fields, a small but strong river flows to the south. If anyone tries to follow the river south it eventually flows into a large crevice in the hillside and disappears from view. To the south of the grove and fields is a steep hillside. An animal path leads from the grove to a small opening in the hill (large enough for a man in armor to crawl through).

The Judge should arrange it so that the party of adventurers do not arrive until early evening, just before dusk. A thunderstorm will prove useful to delay them for a while. You might even want to add a short adventure of your own at a roadside farm or inn.

When the characters arrive, there will be time to set up camp before moonrise. If they search the area around the statue they find the body of one of the wenches who they questioned at the castle yesterday. She left in the middle of the night to make sure she was here in time. She has been dead for about five hours and died of a crushing blow to the skull. Anyone with a Medicine or Animal Handling talent has a chance of having seen this type of wound before. A successful Resolution check using either of these talents results in the character recognizing a killing blow from a bear claw. The bear is far away by now and stumbled onto her quite accidentally. Before they have a chance to search her, the Zingaran Brigands attack.

The five brigands are at these locations: one near the statue, two in the heather just west of the grove, and two in the heather south of the grove. When one is discovered or if the girl is discovered, they all attack at once, rushing toward the main concentration of player characters. The brigands believe the characters are special soldiers sent by the Baron to hunt them down. This



is obvious to any character listening to the brigands as they are screaming "assassins," "soldier scum," "whatever Etarti paid you to kill us you'll find this brigand band will make you earn it," and "where is your precious Arturus and your fine uniforms, dogs?"

If this confusion can be cleared up before the brigands are killed, they may either make an alliance with the characters or apologize and leave them alone, hither way, they have no desire to extend the combat once the truth is known. If, for some reason, the brigands are getting the best of the player characters, the three Masked Ones who have been trailing the party since they left the Empty Barrel, sneak up on the brigands and quickly eliminate at least three of them, then slip away into the night. It is to their advantage to keep the characters alive until they find the Orb's departure point.

A search of the girl reveals a hand-written note in the same hand as the one slipped to the party yesterday. Hand the players the appropriate note at this time.

The Baron is an evil man who wishes to enslave the world, He worships demons but has now lost some of his power. Destroy the Orb if you find it. For the truth, go below.

That night, while the characters sleep, they all dream of a man with olive-colored skin and long black hair walking among them and laughing gently. He walks down the south animal path right into the hill where the small opening is. Upon awakening the next morning all of the player characters feel an incredible urge to explore the south path from the clearing. There, at the end of the path, is a small opening in the hill, as if a wolf or bear made its den there.

Into the Earth. When a character looks through the small opening in the hill, he sees a tunnel that goes into the hillside for at least

15 feet. The first thing of note is the overwhelming smell of rotting flesh within. After crawling inside for about 15 feet the tunnel opens up into a cavern that gradually slopes down and stretches far back into the hill.

After the party has advanced into the cave about 20 feet they find the body of a soldier who wears different livery than that of Baron Etarti's men. If a Zingaran Brigand is with them he is able to identify it as one of the Baroness's household guards. The soldier has been dead for a few days and it is evident that the killer was some kind of clawed animal or monster. A successful Resolution check using a Medicine or Animal Handling talent determines that the animal was a large feline and the animal is not related to whatever killed the girl in the grove. A bastard sword lies next to the body and has dried blood on it.

A quick search of the body reveals a large supply sack full of xanthic mushrooms, a dirk, flint and tinder, a small metal lamp, and a small container of oil which miraculously was not broken in the fight. The body was also equipped with a buckler, a barbutte, one splint arm guard, a small horn message container, and a strange belt worn over the body's shoulder and of no obvious purpose. Inside the message container is a note in the same handwriting as the two previous notes mentioned in the text.

Fanchix,

The Orb must be secured from the unbeliever. Follow the guide-belt to its destination. Ask those who guard what should be done. If then so desire, cross the silver bridge into Melena. On your return trip leave the warded items within the tunnels for future expeditions. Do not allow the Jetton of Asap to come to harm. It is all that stands between you and the "little ones." Your mission is sacred and the destruction of evil depends on it. That which consumes must be tamed."

K.

The note was from the Baroness Kaletar to her man-at-arms (and lover) Fanchix directing him on the mission that would bring the Orb to the priests of Jhebbel Sag and take it into Melena. The Baroness always instructs by message, never in person. The belt's holes have been punched in a strange pattern.

Hand the players the illustration of the belt and the note found on the body from page 31. The belt's holes are a guide through the twisting caverns below to the trans-dimensional gate. It is read by facing the buckle away from the character. The buckle is the opening at the back of this cavern that leads far below to the subterranean labyrinth. A hole has been punched for every time a decision on direction had to be made in the twisting maze. A hole on the right means turn right, left means turn left, centered means go straight, and a wide slash means search for and go through the secret door in an upcoming area. The Judge should go through the belt guide before the game so he can see how it was made. Sometimes, because of the misperceptions of the belt maker, a straight hole may mean taking a passage that is slightly right of exact center, and other such deviations. The belt is a puzzle which can help the players if they figure it out. The Judge should not assist the players in figuring out the guide.

If the cavern is studied very closely, numerous animal tracks with claws similar to the ones that slashed the dead soldier's body, can be found going back and forth through the cavern. One end of the path is the small opening into the grove area. The other end of the path is a large crevice at the back of the cave. This crevice is in the floor and opens into a descending shaft about 10 feet wide and over 60 feet deep. There are claw marks within this shaft; apparently the animals who made those tracks can climb solid rock. No other trace of animal tracks or lair leavings can be found in the cavern except those of the soldier's, both following the path to the back of the cave and returning to the opening, where he was killed.

There are suitable places to tie a rope at the crevice opening. See page 13 of the Conan Game Rule Book for notes on climbing assisted and unassisted. This shaft is a difficult climb and cannot be done safely without assistance. Most of the crevices listed on the map are unassisted climbs for anyone with the Climbing talent. Any difficult climbs requiring assistance will be noted. The urge that brought the characters into the hill can still be felt, albeit much slighter. It is now a persuading feeling that they should enter the crevice.





THE UNDERGROUND LABYRINTH

The caverns are divided into three main networks north of the underground river: main, north, and west. The main network is mostly used by the Priests of Jhebbel Sag as back-up food sources, animal lairs, and as a security system that must be bypassed to get to the other two networks. They travel through it more frequently than the north but far less than the west. It is their main access to the world above.

The northern network is a single passageway to the trans-dimensional gate. It also contains shrines, storage areas, further security areas, and additional meditation chambers. It is the least used of the networks but most important.

The western network features the living and working quarters of the Priests of Jhebbel Sag. It is separated from the other networks and can only be reached by the treacherous underground river. This is where most of the priests work, eat, and sleep.

Encounters with the Priests of Jhebbel Sag

Eventually the adventurers encounter the Priests of Jhebbel Sag. The reaction of the priests depends on the actions of the adventurers. If the characters attack immediately, the priests will know they are enemies and try to stop them. If the characters talk to the priests and produce the notes from Kaletar they have been given or found to prove that they are on a mission, the priests try to convince them that the Orb is evil and must be destroyed and the Baron should be deposed.

The priests need someone to cross the trans-dimensional gate, go to the tomb of Hanyax, and destroy the Orb. They are still suspicious after Fanchix's deception but they must make sure the Orb is destroyed. Because they test anyone they send into Melena first, they give the characters directions to the general areas where the four "Melena artifacts" are hidden. The priests tell them that they need the items to travel in Yama's world. The characters then must return to the priests with the items. No mention of traps or animals is made, though a clay symbol of Jhebbel Sag is lent to them for the item gathering. It provides protection against the large Bats and Undercats, who allow passage to a character showing this sign.

Once the characters return with the items, the priests provide them with lodging for the night and feed them wondrous herbs and broths. In the morning, all the characters' damage is healed, as are normal wounds (severed limbs cannot be replaced). The priests

then escort them through the large chamber with the ZiXit (thus negating the ZiXit's animation). Before sending the characters over the bridge, the priests give them a copy of the *Dreams of Melena* to help guide them.

If the characters have been friendly, the priests fill their skins from the fountain in area 29 and give them xanthic mushrooms and roots, which will not spoil in the desert heat. They also tell the characters what lore they know concerning Melena, including the Orb of Yama, the Trans-Dimensional Gate, Hanyax, and that the Baroness Kaletar sent them the Orb for disposal. The priests really do not know how the "Melena artifacts" are used or from what they protect the users. Furthermore, they are forbidden from asking.

If the characters bypass the priests and go through the gate on their own, the ZiXit react as explained in their description. If they have found some or all of the "Melena artifacts" they have a chance at success. If they do not have the artifacts with them, the mission is probably doomed.

The Main Network

The following descriptions coincide with numbers on the map and are for the purposes of further clarification of encounters or features in the numbered areas.

1-3. Once the party has descended into the maze and has spent at least 12 hours here, the Masked Ones who have been following them will also descend. After they have looked around for a minute they will realize that this is the beginning of the pathway to the departure point where the Orb left the Hyborian world. They decide that the player characters are now expendable and hide in locations 1, 2, and 3. When the player characters return, the Masked Ones are still waiting at these locations and jump the party in the junction just north of location 2.

4. This small cavern is covered with xanthic mushrooms. It is one of the newer "farms" that the priests have cultivated far afield. Any light introduced into the area that is stronger than glowing fungus attracts the large Bat in the side channel.

5. This smaller channel is another beginning farm operation. An Undercat here guards against any harmless animals that feed on the young mushrooms. When the Masked Ones

have moved into position (see 1-3) the Undercat returns to his lair, location 13.

6. To reach location 6 a character must go through the tidal area. This is a 10-foot section of water that pumps in and out every five minutes. If the character tries crossing it when full, he has a 40% chance of falling into the tidal hole itself. The character immediately submerges, soaking everything carried or worn. Once in the hole, there is a 15% chance that the water suddenly siphons out, sucking the character with it. If this happens, the character emerges in the underground river exactly south of this location.

7. The area south of location 7 and north of the river is the lair of the Swamp Beast. It can see anyone coming down the long, diagonal tunnel because they are outlined by the large glowing wall behind them. It attacks anyone entering this tunnel who is not a priest. The Swamp Beast was summoned to guard, to his death, the first of the artifacts. To the west of the beast's location is a reserve xanthic mushroom farm. On the floor of this farm is the first of the "Melena artifacts," the ancient slaver chains. A character must enter the side cavern to see them.

8. This 10-foot section is actually a 30-foot vertical drop into this cavern. Anyone with Climbing talent can make an unassisted climb up the shaft. Otherwise it must be an assisted climb.

9. This large farm area is quiet and peaceful except for chirping crickets. It smells of produce. The area is protected by a Yawning Snapper behind a wall of vines. Anyone stepping through here is immediately attacked by the Yawning Snapper, but it appears that the vines are attacking. The priests have a semi-narcotic powder they toss into the snapper which allows them to pass freely. There are both xanthic mushrooms and roots growing here. Deep within the tangle of roots, two hanging snakes have recently taken up residence.

10. This 10-foot section is actually a 30-foot vertical rise out of the cavern. The area between locations 8 and 10 is 30 feet lower than the average level of the maze. It is identical in difficulty to location 8. The adventurers must either use a grapple and hope it catches a firm hold or have someone with Climbing tal-



ent risk the climb unassisted, then attach the grapple. Use the following chart when using a grapple. A character without Climbing talent must first roll to see how well he throws the grapple. There is a 75 % chance that the grapple does not go where the character aims it. No check is required for a character with Climbing talent.

The distance of the throw depends on conditions surrounding the thrower (room enough to swing the rope, angle of throw, etc.) and is at the discretion of the Judge. Also, the stronger the character, the longer the throw. There is at least one player character in this adventure who has the strength to make all the throws. The Judge should roll on the following chart for every grapple that is thrown and makes it past the preceding stages.

Roll	Results
01-10	The grapple misses the target entirely. If a vertical throw was being attempted the grapple returns harmlessly to the ground.
11-20	The grapple strikes a rock outcropping, just missing the target area. It ricochets off the rock in an unpredictable manner. If a vertical throw was being attempted there is a 10% chance that the grapple hits someone below (Judge's discretion). Damage range should be 1-4 points.
21-35	The grapple appears to be holding, but once a character climbs up the rope the grapple gives way. In a vertical climb the height obtained before falling is never more than half the height of the climb and should be rolled randomly by the Judge. Falling damage is taken by the character who was climbing. Again, there is a 10% chance the grapple falls on someone below.*
36-00	The grapple is firmly entrenched and there is no chance of it slipping as long as only one character at a time uses it. There is a 20% accumulative chance per character of the grapple slipping on the rope at the same time. For example, three characters on the rope at the same time x 20% is a 60% chance that the grapple will slip per combat turn.

* When characters cross horizontally over a

pit or chasm, the Judge should decide randomly how far the character was across the space before the grapple slipped. That is how far the character falls or swings below the anchor lip. Take half that height and figure falling damage for the climber if the chasm is deeper than the distance the character crossed. For example, Larss has thrown a grapple across a 30-foot-wide pit and caught some rocks on the other side. He is 20 feet across when the hook slips and he swings down into the pit. If the pit is deeper than 30 feet, he swings against the side, hitting hard. Falling damage is as half that height, or the same as falling 10 feet. If the pit was shallower than 30 feet, he would have hit the bottom, so he would take the damage of a 20-foot fall.

11. This is a waste disposal area used by the priests for materials they cannot throw in the river, such as certain foods and broken items, for fear of them surfacing downstream and giving their location away. Glowing fungus grows here along with a thick bed of moss that looks like it might be used as a sleeping surface.

12. These four web spinners are situated over the junction and attack the last person walking past them. They recognize the Priests of Jhebbel Sag who feed them small tidbits to keep them here. They serve as part of their security system.

13. This is an Undercat lair. Xanthic mushrooms grow in the back of the lair. The priests have taught the Undercats how to push their meal remains through the vines into the quicksand so the lair stays clean. The third Undercat who belongs here is normally on duty in location 5. If the Masked Ones are deployed, he joins the others here. Faced with a fierce foe, the Undercats jump through the vines, apparently in retreat. But they actually cling to the rock walls on each side of the quicksand and the floor beyond if the third Undercat is here. They defend themselves from the walls, with just one claw or bite, while trying to draw the invaders into the quicksand.

14. This 10-foot section is actually a 90-foot vertical drop into a cavern. It is a dangerous climb down for anyone.

15. Since the "deception" of Fanchix, the Priests of Jhebbel Sag have hidden the bowl of

stars here and summoned a Strangling Demon to guard it. As the party enters this area they hear a panting sound, as if a large dog were here. This is the sound of the demon "tasting" the air. Then there is utter silence. The demon slipped in through a crack in the wall and cannot be seen until the characters enter the chamber. Then he pounces on the nearest character. His orders are to guard this chamber, so he does not stray more than 10 feet from it, even if someone grabs the bowl and runs.

16. This is a secret passageway used by the priests to bypass the Neo-thog in the tidal area to the south. Anyone entering here sees many footprints, as if this was a much-used passage.

17. The lair of the Neo-thog at first appears to be a normal tidal area, but is not. In addition to the Neo-thog and some glowing fungus, there are two important alcoves here. The first is directly south where Fanchix's Jetton of Asap was hurled by the Neo-thog after ripping it off his neck. The second alcove is location 18.

18. In the past decade many have found their way down here. None have returned to tell of their adventures. One of them, a famous thief, sought refuge down here and was trapped in this alcove by the Neo-thog. His remains are in this alcove, hidden by the vines. Among his remains lie some pitons, a small hammer, and a rotted pouch. Inside the pouch is a red spider about six inches long. It is made of wood and used by the thief to draw attention away from himself. There is also an opal (worth 15 GL) in the pouch. Unless a character has seen an opal in his adventures, he will not know the true value. Just tell anyone looking at it that it is a small, smooth rock with scintillating colors in it.

19. This is a highly polished 20-foot rock slide rising to the north. It is used for sliding baskets of food down from the upper farm cavern to the north. Crawling up is difficult unless a character uses the handholds cleverly hidden in the walls (requires an Observation talent check to find them). Coming back down this slide is hazardous unless the character sits down. Otherwise there is a 50% chance of falling and taking 1 point of damage.





20. This is a rich farm cavern, 45 feet taller than the normal caverns. Huge mushrooms and roots grow everywhere. In the northeast corner of the cave is a cluster of four Hanging Snakes, all in a single 10-foot area. In the northwest corner of the cave, behind some hanging roots, is a passage used by the priests.

21. Area 21 (between and including the two numbers) is a security area. Between the two areas is a pit 10 feet wide, 30 feet long, and 30 feet deep. The bottom of the pit is quicksand. A character who has a Climbing talent can take his chances on the walls but there will be two Climbing checks made for this horizontal climb. A character with no Climbing talent cannot cross without a tope. A character crossing the pit on a rope has an 80% chance of making it across without slipping. This is modified by -5% for every large piece of metal or heavy weight he is carrying (shield, sword, helm). It is further modified by adding a percentage equal to the character's Strength (STR 10 = 10% bonus). It is possible to tightly pack heavy equipment and pull it across by itself.

The appearance of the pit does not give a clue to its quicksand bottom. Only by tossing something in or falling in do the characters realize what it is. Priests who come this way usually bring a wooden plank with them.

22. The cavern to the north is completely lined with glowing fungus and is the brightest natural site in the maze. Some of the priest's rites are conducted here.

23. This area includes the chambers to the north and west. The numerous crevices in this area eventually run to the outside or to the river. The crossdraft is very strong and a torch or small oil lamp will go out immediately upon entering this area, but they can be relit in the west chamber. The west chamber is hidden behind vines. It is a small farm area with one hanging snake for protection. The northern chamber contains three large Bats who attack any non-priest. Review the combat in darkness section on page 4. Each of these caverns is 25 feet high; keep in mind that glowing fungus only has a radius of 5 feet. The shadows and sounds in this area are especially eerie. In the northern chamber are the ebony standards needed to safely venture into Melena.

24. A plant-raft located here can carry five

people. It is used to transport large quantities of food down river to the priest's chambers. It seems to be newly made of woven vines covering inflated animal skins. Three planks of drift wood are also in here, for use as rudders or paddles. Ropes are fed through metal rings woven into the raft, to prevent the raft from being swept away. Anyone with a Sailing talent can immediately recognize the raft as a type of small river barge.

25. This 10-foot section is actually a 100-foot vertical ascent shaft opening up above into chambers 26 and 27. This is a dangerous climb because it is impossible to throw a grapple up the shaft.

26. In this lair of four large Bats is a strong draft that will extinguish homemade torches, has a 75% chance of putting out a small oil lamp, a 40% chance of putting out well-made torches, and a 10% chance of putting out a large oil lamp. Once the large bats have been vanquished, the characters can find a wide crevice in the southeast corner of this room. This crevice is only big enough for an unarmed human to crawl into. It ascends in a corkscrew fashion for over 100 feet and then opens onto a hilltop.

27. This is a waste disposal center used by the priests for materials they cannot throw in the river for fear of them surfacing downstream and revealing their location. Glowing fungus grows in here, in addition to a thick bed of moss that looks like it might be used as a sleeping surface. The chamber looks like someone's personal sleeping quarters.

28. The 20-foot area south of here is solidly filled with vines which grow to the floor. When pushing or hacking through, the characters cannot see where they will step next; into a wall, open air, or quicksand.

29. This hidden and protected alcove has a small fountain. There are many strange runes chiseled around the chamber giving it a highly magical appearance. The water is magically purified. Anyone drinking this water gains back 1 point of damage lost. The maximum anyone can gain in 24 hours is 3 points of damage from the first three drinks.

30. This area is kept secret by false walls that block the entrances. It is a catacombs where the Priests of Jhebbel Sag who have died since

Baron Etarti's persecution began are buried. The atmosphere is unnerving and a horrid smell permeates the air.

31. This 10-foot section is actually a 40-foot vertical descent ramp leading down into a small chamber. This ramp is not polished and the climb is difficult, but not dangerous. At the base of the ramp are passageways to the left and right; either one takes the characters to the same small chamber. Hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the chamber is a 3-foot-wide hall of glowing fungus. It is a strange plant that the glowing fungus has slowly covered. Touching the ball causes it to explode. The explosion covers anyone in the chamber with sticky glowing fungus. Everyone in the room will glow in the dark until they can wash their clothes, equipment, and themselves. The explosion also causes the release of millions of tiny spores which act as a gas cloud for 5 combat turns. No one can see anything in the chamber during that time.

When the characters enter the room they will not see the four web spinners in the shadows unless they specifically mention that they are looking for them. When the characters are in the area, one of the web spinners fires at the ball while the other three fire webs at the characters. If the web spinners miss the characters, they won't know they were attacked. The web spinner shooting at the ball will not miss. After the spores clear, any web spinner who did not hit a character before fires his web again. Meanwhile, those web spinners who have successfully webbed a target run down the line and spit acid at close range, then run back up again and prepare another web.

32. A strange network of small holes in here, because of the churning air and water, give off a horrible monster-like sound. To reach location 32, a character must go through the tidal area. This is a 10-foot section of water that pumps in and out. If the character tries to cross it when full, there is a 40% chance of falling into the tidal hole itself. The character immediately submerges, soaking everything on him or carried. Once in the hole there is a 15% chance that the water will suddenly siphon out, sucking the character with it. If this happens the character surfaces in the underground river exactly south of this location.

33. The area north of location 33 is a large



farm that is normally guarded by an Undercat, Yawning Snapper, and large Bat. But because the priests have moved the last of the "Melena artifacts," the iron hooves, into a side channel here, they have increased security. There is now a giant beetle in the tunnel. This man-sized insect wandered across the trans-dimensional gate some time ago and the priests kept it for a guard. It is so wide that it can block the corridor and only two characters can fight it at any one time. If the characters use much light when battling the beetle, it attracts the attention of the Undercat and large Bat. They enter the fray at once. The large Bat flies overhead and the Undercat crawls up on the wall and attacks with just one claw or bite. All three monsters concentrate their attack on the two characters in front.

34. The vines in this area form a wall across the tunnel. Behind the vines is a small opening in the floor where someone fell through the thin rock a few months ago. Ever since then, harmless animals have been falling into it and breaking away the hole a little more each time. Inside is a very rare form of insect life, the Cavern Ant. The Cavern Ant is completely dormant until food is within a few feet of it, or drops into its nest, then it instantly comes alive.

Anyone who walks up to the vines will break through the floor into the ants' pit. The pit is 15 feet deep, 10 feet long, and 10 feet wide. To burn all of these ants requires two quarts of oil or seven torches. In the bottom of the pit, under the ants, are the few non-edible items the prior victim was carrying: an ivory ring (10 GL) and an unusual metal flask. Inside the flask is golden lotus extract, a rare and expensive elixir that cures any kind of madness (even the Baron Etarti's fanaticism). The amount of gold lunas paid to a character for selling the elixir depends on where he sells it, what the conditions are, and the present balance of the campaign.

35. This small system of passages and chambers between two secret doors is a shortcut used by the priests. It connects the main network with the northern network that contains the shrines of Jhebbel Sag and the trans-dimensional gate. Within area 35 is an Undercat lair, a channel filled with omnivorous moss, and a small root farm. In the middle of the root farm are five Hanging Snakes. Not even the Undercats know they are here.

36. This small docking area has metal rings hammered into the wall and a coil of rope that reaches to the dock entering into the western network (350 feet). It is guarded by a single large Bat whose orders are to notify the priests if any strangers enter this area. Fifteen minutes after this large Bat flutters away, three priests come paddling up the river to this dock to investigate.

37. This area is identical to area 36 except there is no rope here and the dock is for the northern cavern network. Five minutes after this large Bat flutters away three priests, each with a large Bat, come paddling up the river to this dock from the west network to investigate.

The Northern Network

When the player characters first enter this network they will hear a muttering sound down the passage. As they proceed along the passageway the muttering increases to quiet talking (near location 39), then it can be heard as chanting (near location 49), which will grow louder (near location 53) and louder until the characters are not able to hear each other speak (near location 57 on east).

Though there are only a few priests in the trans-dimensional gate room, the strange acoustics amplify their voices. Their chant is a ward preventing Yama's crossing from Melena. Its lyrics and rhythm are bizarre and should cause concern among the characters. There are even passages of silence within the chant where the appropriate hand gestures are to be made. Therefore, the noise will suddenly stop, then slowly start again a few moments later. It is up to the Judge to convey this impression of sound and silence to the players.

38. Another Strangling Demon guards this passageway. He is perched high in the ceiling amid the hundreds of huge stalactites. He is to attack anyone not wearing priest's garments who passes north or south of this area, unless they are accompanied by a priest. He may continue in either direction until he catches and slays them. Then he must return to his perch. The only way to see him is to stand directly beneath and look up.

39. In the back wall of this small chamber is a semi-circular depression neatly cut out. It is surrounded by runes which only a Priest of

Jhebbel Sag can read. Before Fanchix was here, the bowl of stars was kept in this chamber.

40. Old chains are fastened to the wall in this chamber, but they have been occasionally cleaned. They look like the ancient slaver chains artifacts. This is where the priests keep their prisoners; anyone who has entered their domain and cannot be allowed to leave. The chains have not been used for a few years but the remains of an old prisoner still hang here. Two large Bats have made their home here also.

41. Two priests returning from a religious rite walk down the hallway. They have been meditating and both are silent. They cannot be heard above the distant chanting. The glowing fungus in the corridors allows them to see. Only a character with a Danger Sense or Animal Sense talent may attempt a Resolution check to see if they detect these priests. Otherwise the priests notice the party and sneak away. They summon their brethren back down the hallway.

42. This alcove has two horizontal slots carved into its walls. Before Fanchix, the ancient slaver chains were kept here.

43. The entire stretch of wall on both sides of this channel, 115 feet long and 15 feet high, is covered with a mosaic. It was started when the priests first came here so that their story could be told if they all died. The right side shows how they were purged by the Baron and forced underground. The left side is a dream that came to the now-deceased priest who completed this mural. It shows huge sheets of flame sweeping across a desert, destroying a huge army led by an olive-skinned, black-haired man. Any of the characters who look at this mosaic will instantly recognize this as the man in the dreams.

44. This central channel has an entire wall that is a bas-relief of Jhebbel Sag surrounded by all types of animals.

45. This shrine is full of small statues of former leaders of the Priesthood of Jhebbel Sag. There are slow-burning torches alight in here at all times. The party does not recognize any of the images.

46. The importance of this shrine is denoted



by the two Undercats that always guard it. It is a tomb-like chamber with golden braziers burning brightly. Inside are two ivory columns, each one about 20 feet high and 4 feet wide. They have ornate carvings worked into them with an artistry none of the characters have ever seen. One is accompanied by the poem, *The Dreams of Melena*. The other shows two vast panoramic views, one of a remarkable city, alien in architecture but beautiful nonetheless, the other of a king and queen in a tomb that is overflowing with riches. Below the first scene are the words, "Melena, City of the Blessed." Over the second scene are the words, "The Lost Tomb of Hanyax." If any of the player characters get a chance to ask the priests about these columns they will reply that the columns were brought from the ruins of Melena into the Hyborian world ages past.

47. This long chamber was once a massive treasure room, but most of the priesthood's wealth has been sorely depleted. There are five rotting chests, one trunk in good condition, two long planks that the priests use to cross small pits and quicksand, a metal lock box, and a puzzle chest.

There is nothing in the rotting chests and they simply fall apart when touched. The trunk has a "theft-proof lock" that will snap out a long needle with poison on it if touched (the poison is old—3/2/3 hrs). There is a 60% chance of tripping the trap by just touching the lock. The actual entrance into the trunk is beneath, through a sliding door. Nothing is in the trunk except an old written account of how the priesthood was started in Zingara. This is of some value to the Nemedian Chroniclers. The small metal box is empty except for its key. The puzzle chest is six feet high and made of ironwood. It is equipped with five levers, four buttons, three keyholes, and two sliding door sections. To open it, all four legs must be turned counter-clockwise, until it collapses. There is a small sack of sapphires inside worth 120 GL.

48. This small alcove has vertical grooves carved into its walls. The ebony standards were kept here before Fanchix's deception.

49. This priest is just exiting area 50 as the characters approach. If he is not successfully grabbed at once he escapes to location 54 to get help.

50. This is a vestment chamber where the ornate vestments are kept that the Jhebbelites use on special holidays. They are sealed in trunks. Any character trying to disguise himself as a priest in these vestments is identified immediately by the priests, though not by Undercats, large Bats, or the Strangling Demon in location 38.

51. There are four square depressions carved in the walls, each about the size of a one-foot cube. These once held the iron hooves of the "Melena artifacts."

52. The 40-foot passageway to the north of this area is actually a stairway leading 40 feet down. See the Steep Stairway Combat Table in location 55.

53. The 20-foot passageway to the south of this number is actually a stairway leading 20 feet down. Its steepness presents an unstable fighting surface.

54. These two priests are scrubbing the inside of this cavern as a penance for breaking their fast. They can hear any loud voices or unusual noises from area 53 to area 56. They are armed, as are all the priests, and investigate.

55. The area from 55 to 57 is a stairway that descends 100 feet at a treacherous angle. The same dangerous fighting conditions exist on this stretch of stairway as exist on the others in this network. When fighting on steep stairways use the following Steep Stairway Combat Table. Notice the large crevice just to the east and north of area 55. A single defender can block the opening of the crevice and no more than one character can fight him at a time. While the attacker has a level footing, anyone fighting on the stairway must consult the following table every combat turn. There is a priest on guard duty in the crevice at all times.

Steep Stairway Combat Table

Add a percentage bonus equal to the character's Acrobatic talent.

If a character has an ACR-10 then he receives a + 10 on the following roll.

If a character tumbles, figure the damage as a fall for the area tumbled, then halve it.

Roll Result

01-10	Falls and tumbles 1d10 x 10 feet.
11-20	Trips and tumbles 1d10 x 5 feet.
21-30	Slips and tumbles 1d10 x 2 feet.
31-45	Loses footing. No movement or attack allowed.
46-75	Off-balance. No attack allowed.
76-00	Normal combat.

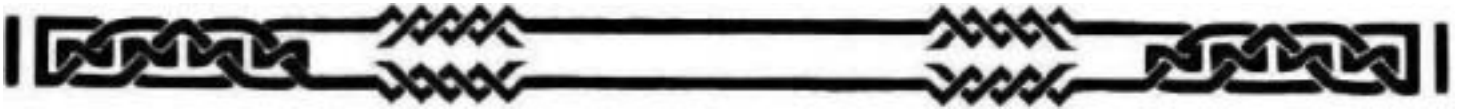
56. This appears to be a vine-covered cul-de-sac. The northeast branch houses another guard priest who, like the one in area 55, is fighting from a vantage point. If he does not think he can take all of the intruders he will run down to area 58 and send the large Bat messengers for help. The stairway continues through the vines to area 57.

57. This is the end of the stairway. The passage east of here narrows to five feet for a distance of 20 feet. If the priest in area 56 has decided to warn the priesthood of intruders, he sends two large Bats to summon help from the western network, sends the other four large Bats into battle, and guards the passage himself where no more than one character at a time can fight him.

58. Any unescorted non-priests who pass under this glowing fungus are attacked by six large Bats.

59. This massive chamber was hewn out of living rock eons ago. It is 60 feet high and has no stalactites or stalagmites in it. It acts as a natural sound amplifier. The chanting is now so loud that it is almost unbearable. There are twelve small stone men in here and four priests. The statues are the ZiXit and animate after the player characters cross through the trans-dimensional gate unless the characters are protected by the Jetton of Asap or have been given permission by the Priests of Jhebbel Sag. If the six large Bats outside of this chamber enter into combat, one of the four priests in here will know and automatically retreat to the area just outside of the vines in the southeast corner and waits. He is not allowed to leave the chamber and does not immediately attack any player characters.

If player characters enter the large chamber, the three remaining priests continue chanting but rise and draw their weapons. When ready (only 1 combat turn) their chanting stops for a



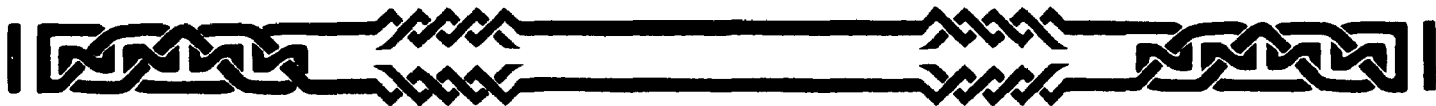
moment and the priest by the vines cries out. "Touch nothing in the tomb, except the Orbs. Destroy those!" The priests demand that the intruders identify themselves and surrender their arms. If the characters try to pass, the priests stop them by force, if necessary. At least one priest quietly continues the chanting, as if its importance is paramount.

If the player characters and priests engage in melee, the priest by the vines whirls and leaps through the great vine curtain, swinging over the quicksand on the other side with a rope. There is a short bow and 100 ARROWS hanging in this alcove. The priest has SHORT BOW-30 ability. A natural rock barricade in the alcove protects the priest if he kneels down. The rocks give his head a protection of 3. He shoots anyone who moves through the vines. Firing arrows through the vines either way causes a -3 column shift.

Anyone trying to charge through the vines hits the quicksand on the other side as the priest removes the rope when he lands safely. If anyone tries to set the vines on fire, they discover that the vines do not burn without oil, and even then they do not burn very well. The priest must save himself so he can identify those who might cross over the trans-dimensional gate. When help arrives from the western network he is able to give an accurate account of what each character looked like who entered the room and attacked the priests.

60. A strange stone ramp here rises about 5 feet along its 10-foot length. A character who walks up the ramp looks as though he is walking straight into the wall. But as he tops the ramp/bridge the wall shimmers, then fades away and the dimensional world of Melena can be seen on the other side. The first noticeable feature is that the ramp has turned into a silver bridge. From the bridge you can see nothing but empty desert to the north, west, and south. Far to the east the remains of a city can be seen, though it is impossible to predict how many hours it would take to walk from the bridge to the city. To the east, behind the city, mountains line the horizon.

The Priests of Jhebbel Sag are forbidden to enter Melena or even walk upon the trans-dimensional gate. But, by gathering all the priests together and following an ancient ritual set down by Jhebbel Sag, they can ward off the passage of any creature from Melena trying to enter their world through the gate.



The Western Network

The first thing the player characters will note when they enter this network, is the overpowering odor. Many things can be identified in the odor: vegetation (mushrooms), and the stale smell of people living in close, unaired quarters. But the strongest odor is the pervasive smell of many animals living together.

Constantly reinforce that heavy smells permeate this network. At this time read the description of the Giant Mole again to completely understand its attack mode.

61. This is a well-maintained dock which has three vine rafts tied to it. It is the only entrance into the personal cavern network of the Priests of Jhebbel Sag.

62. This guard post is manned by a well-trained large Bat and a priest. If any unescorted non-priest enters here, the large Bat flutters to the main diagonal chamber and rings a cocked bell hung in the ceiling. All the priests know that when the bell has been sounded invaders are present. They freeze in place while the Giant Mole digs its way to the intruders. Any priest encountered before the mole strikes defends himself but freezes and calls out to the mole, identifying himself when the mole breaks the surface.

63. This large cavern is a farm area where three priests are currently collecting the last of the declining season's root crops. In addition to their normal katars they also have halberds that they use for cutting down the roots from the ceiling. These priests have HAL-10 ability.

64. This is the storage room where the gathered roots, xanthic mushrooms, and water barrels are kept. Behind the vines are 15-foot-deep storage crevices with handholds chiseled into the walls so the priests can descend into them. It is cool and damp in here, like a cellar, and perfect for storing food. The three priests in this location are currently cleaning the crops for storage. Also kept in this room are small terra cotta oil lamps and larger metal oil lamps, extra wicks, and jars of oil. If a fire should break out in here the entire area between locations 66 and 62 would be charred within an hour.

65. The chamber to the southeast of area 65 is the new season's crop of foodstuffs. The two Hanging Snakes within the side alcoves are pets that the priests use to keep rodents under control. The priest at the opening of the cavern is checking for insect infestation in the xanthic mushrooms. He is not looking down the corridor toward area 62.

66. This huge cavern is the living/sleeping chambers of the priesthood. There are dozens of thick mats on the floor made from vines woven into bags that hold dead vegetation. The six priests here are sleeping, as are four of their pet large Bats hanging from the ceiling. There is a large fireplace in the middle of this room. It is made from a natural crevice that runs out into the underground river. By the time the river opens into the surface world, the smoke is completely dissipated. Dead vegetation and hardened kladon are burned in the fireplaces.

67. This long, diagonal chamber is the meeting hall, dining quarters, and kitchen of the priesthood. Along the north wall are tables and benches carved into the rock. An elaborate bas-relief frieze also runs along that wall and depicts most of the animals found in the forests of the surface world. In the center of the north wall is a massive river-channeled fireplace that doubles as an oven. All around it are metal and stone pots and ladles.

68. Behind the vines and Yawning Snapper lies this secret alcove where the priesthood's sacred scrolls are kept. They are worthless to anyone except the Nemedian Chroniclers, who won't pay much for them. Within their thousands of lines can be traced the history of the order and the ways of Jhebbel Sag. They are kept in beautifully carved bone cylinders.

69. This is actually a 40-foot ascending shaft to area 70. It is a difficult climb but handholds are carved into the rock. The animal smell is strong here.

70. This area is completely vine-covered. A Giant Mole makes his lair here in a soft area. This is where the Giant Mole stays when he is

not hunting or defending the western network. The stench here is overpowering. A large hole in the east wall of the chamber leads to the maze-like tunnels that the Giant Mole has burrowed deep into the earth. They are angled every which way, and any player character who does not break his neck in them almost certainly gets lost. The cave has some human bones in it from the mole's last meal. The characters can find in the debris a jeweled man's necklace (popular in Argos) worth 100 GL and a magical jetton that allows the wearer complete control over any horse he mounts.

71. All of the chambers and alcoves marked as area 71 are private areas for priests to read, play an instrument, do some work, or to be alone. Each has a bench or stool and a table carved into it.

72. This is a 20-foot sloping incline up to chamber 73. It has a rope bannister strung along the west wall for easier ascent.

73. This is the armory chamber and work room. Currently two priests are in here putting an edge on the katars. There are 16 katars in here, two short bows, and 200 arrows in cases. There are also many different types of work tools, including a number of hammers and chisels. Stone workbenches line most of the walls but this is the only location where characters see wooden benches. There is a river-channeled fireplace in here that doubles as a small forge when need be.

INTO MELENA

Once the characters cross through the trans-dimensional gate, the adventure takes an entirely different flavor. This is a sweltering hot desert world and things the characters may have once taken for granted, like food, water, and the weight of armor, can no longer be ignored. A map is not necessary as the only features on this dimension are the city and mountains to the east.

If the player characters insist on going north, west, or south they will either travel for a while and then return to the bridge or eastern route, be eaten by monsters, or run out of water and die. The amount of water they need is twice the normal allotment. Unless they carry a number of waterskins, they discover after the first day that they should return to their world for more water.

Remember, if the characters have come into Melena without the help of the priests, they are prevented from returning. At the top of the bridge they strike an invisible wall. They can see the ZiXit cavern, but it is blurred. The priests can talk to them through this barrier and if they are lucky they can persuade the priests to let them back through.

The daytime temperatures in Melena hover around 100 degrees. Any metal worn or carried gets very hot and can burn flesh if not properly insulated. At night the temperatures plummet and any character not suitably dressed can freeze and become seriously ill. Other considerations such as sun stroke are left to the Judge. If the characters go straight east, these factors should not come into play.

Remember that the ZiXit will follow and attack anyone not escorted by the priests or wearing the Jetton of Asap. The Judge should make a random encounter check in the morning, afternoon, and evening. No creatures go out at night. These random encounters are in addition to the fixed encounters that may be offset by the "Melena artifacts" and are rolled on the table below. Any rolled random encounters during the same time when tracking ZiXit are attacking should be ignored.

Melena Encounter Table

Roll	Encounter
01-40	No Encounters
41-50	Sandstorm
51-65	3 to 7 Black-Taloned Vultures
66-80	1 Giant Beetle
81-95	1 Giant Scorpion
96-00	Yama (only once, then ignore 96-00)

Random Encounter Explanations

Sandstorm: Sandstorms are quite common in Melena. They drop the visibility to a few feet. The characters must cover their eyes, noses, and mouths or risk being blinded or suffocated. The Judge determines the actual risk. If a player character blatantly ignores the Judge's warnings about a coming sandstorm, then drop the amount of damage he can take for the next few hours by 2 because of difficulty in breathing. Anyone trying to make his way across the desert during a sandstorm can become completely lost. Characters who are of desert-dwelling peoples, like the Zuagirs of Shem, certain Kushites, Stygians, or Turanians, can help other player characters avoid the hazards of a sandstorm. A typical Melenese sandstorm can be 1d10 x 20 minutes long.

Black-Taloned Vultures: These birds of prey attack nearly anything they see struggling across the desert below. They are bold because they are hungry. They prefer to attack a lone figure and might feign an attack to divide the party.

Giant Beetle: This creature will always come from beneath. It has complete surprise and a free attack before the adventurers can respond. If it successfully kills one character, it drags it into its lair, an undersand cavern, and eats it, ignoring the other adventurers. There is a 15% chance that any time a giant beetle or a giant scorpion surfaces, the other is nearby and they attack each other. The two monsters completely ignore the characters and fight to the death.

Giant Scorpion: This creature also comes from beneath. It does not have complete surprise and, if it kills a character, tries to drag it away and feed on it in the open.

Yama: This encounter occurs when Yama flies overhead and spots the party. The Judge should describe the "king of demons" as a being whose appearance changes occasionally. It amuses Yama to see humans struggling across his devastated world and he will land to talk to them. Once he lands, any character who looks straight at him and listens to him can add LORE-10 to his talents and a modified form of Madness to his weaknesses. This Madness will always stay at a 2% chance of going into a fit per day (see the Madness weakness). If the character already has Madness as a

weakness, the base chance for the first day is now 3%.

Anyone striking at Yama is frozen until he leaves. Yama does not harm the party in any way. It is to his advantage to have them retrieve the Orb. If there is some lore or information concerning this world that the characters have not yet gleaned, they do so now.

Traveling to Hanyax's Tomb

The trip to Hanyax's Tomb is a 5 to 6 day march. In addition to the random encounters, there are other occurrences along the way. These fixed encounters are found in the poem, *Dreams of Melena* and can be prevented or controlled by the "Melena artifacts."

Fixed Encounter Explanations

**Ghostly hooves in the brooding night,
Beat the bowl of the velvet stars:**

This encounter occurs during the first evening, as the player characters are preparing to camp. The characters hear rumbling in the south, like a horse stampede. After a few minutes a cavalry charge appears, yet no dust arises from behind them. These are the ghosts of Melena's last cavalry and they attack anyone passing this way. If the characters have the iron hooves and bowl of stars in their possession, they must strike the bowl with the hooves, as the poem says. This completely dissipates the ghostly riders for the night.

If the riders are not driven away, each character is attacked until struck by ghostly lances 10 times. Each time the ghosts hit a character, make a Magic Resistance Resolution check (see page 18 of the Conan Game Rule Book). The "spell rating" for the ghostly lancers is 7. Each successful hit from a lance does 1 point of damage. After the charge, the ghosts disappear.

As the party dreams that night the Judge should reread the various dreams to different players. As before, this should be done in private.

**Shadows of spears when the moon is white
Cross the sands with ebony bars:**

This encounter takes place during the afternoon of the second day, when a white moon rises in the east. The sky suddenly darkens as



rain begins to fall. But as it falls, the "rain-drops" become spears. Yama used the "rain" on Hanyax's army with devastating effects. He left it intact to discourage explorers. The characters have time to bring out the ebony standards, if they have them. Crossing the standards, as instructed in the poem, turns the spears back into rain. Failing to do this, the spears fall and cover the sand as far as the eye can see. Each character should treat this as four spear attacks on themselves by someone with SPEAR-30 ability. After the spears have fallen they dissolve.

**But not the shadows that brood her fall
May check the sweep of a desert fire:**

A massive sheet of flames appears in the north on the evening of the third day. This is the attack Yama used to destroy both Hanyax and his army. It is now part of his natural defense system. There is no defense against it except disbelief.

To disbelieve the attack, subtract either the General Knowledge, General Perception, or General Insight rating of the target (whichever is highest) from 8. This determines the column consulted on the Resolution Table. Roll the dice and check the result. A white result means the character fully believes the fire and receives 8 points of damage. A green result means the character partly believes the fire and receives 6 points of damage. A yellow result means the character has doubts about the fire's validity and suffers only 4 points of damage. An orange result means the character has serious doubts about the flame's reality and suffers only 2 points of damage. A red result indicates the character completely disbelieves the flame and suffers no damage.

The players have 4 combat turns before the fire sweeps over them. The first player to express doubt that the flame is real, gains a +25 to his disbelief roll. The second player to announce his disbelief will receive a +20, the third a +15, and so on. Once the horrible flames have lapped over them, they fade away.

**Nor dead men lift a crumbling wall,
Nor magiks steady a falling spire:**

In late afternoon of the fourth day the adventurers reach the ancient, crumbling city of Melena. They first notice the small wing of black-taloned vultures which are taking flight from a small well located on the western edge of the city. Miraculously, this well is pure and

the characters can drink the water. There is nothing at all to indicate there is any other life within the city.

As the poem hints, anyone touching a wall, building, or spire will bring it down on themselves for 3 points of damage. Each building will crumble if touched, and anyone who walks through it will be struck and killed before they reach the other side. The streets are narrow and twisting, with collapsed buildings covering the roads. The best way to survive this city is to avoid it entirely. It takes twelve hours to walk around this huge city.

**Silver chains 'neath a silken sail,
Sapphire eyes in a fearsome prow:**

Eight hours east of the city is a wide river. As the characters approach the waters they see a beautiful silver ship setting sail from the opposite shore. No one appears to be aboard. The ship crosses the river and rests about 20 feet offshore from the characters. It moves only when they move, otherwise it rests peacefully in place. If the characters swim out to the ship, a rope ladder drops down for them. The heroes need to take out the ancient slavers chains, if they have them, and lay them on the ship's deck. They alone allow the ship to be sailed. It sails across the river and docks at an old stone pier at the mouth of a valley.

If the characters do not have the slaver chains they may try to swim across the river, but they must have a Swimming talent to swim the entire river. The water rating for this river is 5.

Tomb doors crack with the stars own wail:

Once across the river, the characters find a footpath leading from the pier into the valley. After walking an hour, the heroes discover a set of mammoth stone doors carved into the mountainside. No one can physically open these doors. As the poem indicates, the bowl of stars must be brought out again and struck for the doors to open. The doors slowly creak open a few feet after the echoes of the bowl die away. This is the only way to enter the tomb.

If the characters had the bowl and lost it in the desert because of a battle or a disaster, then the Judge might want to transport it here, but place it on a 75 foot precipice or in a narrow chasm. Give the players a chance to regain the bowl, but make them work for it. Yama would certainly like them to open the

door and bring the Orb outside. He could transport it for them. Once the door is open the adventurers may enter the tomb of Hanyax.

Before the characters enter the tomb, the Judge should consider the members of the party. If there is an NPC with the characters (a Zingaran Brigand or other NPC), this character has a serious weakness that has not been mentioned up to now: extreme, but clever greed. This character has not wasted his energies on lesser treasures. He is waiting to find the Orb of Yama.

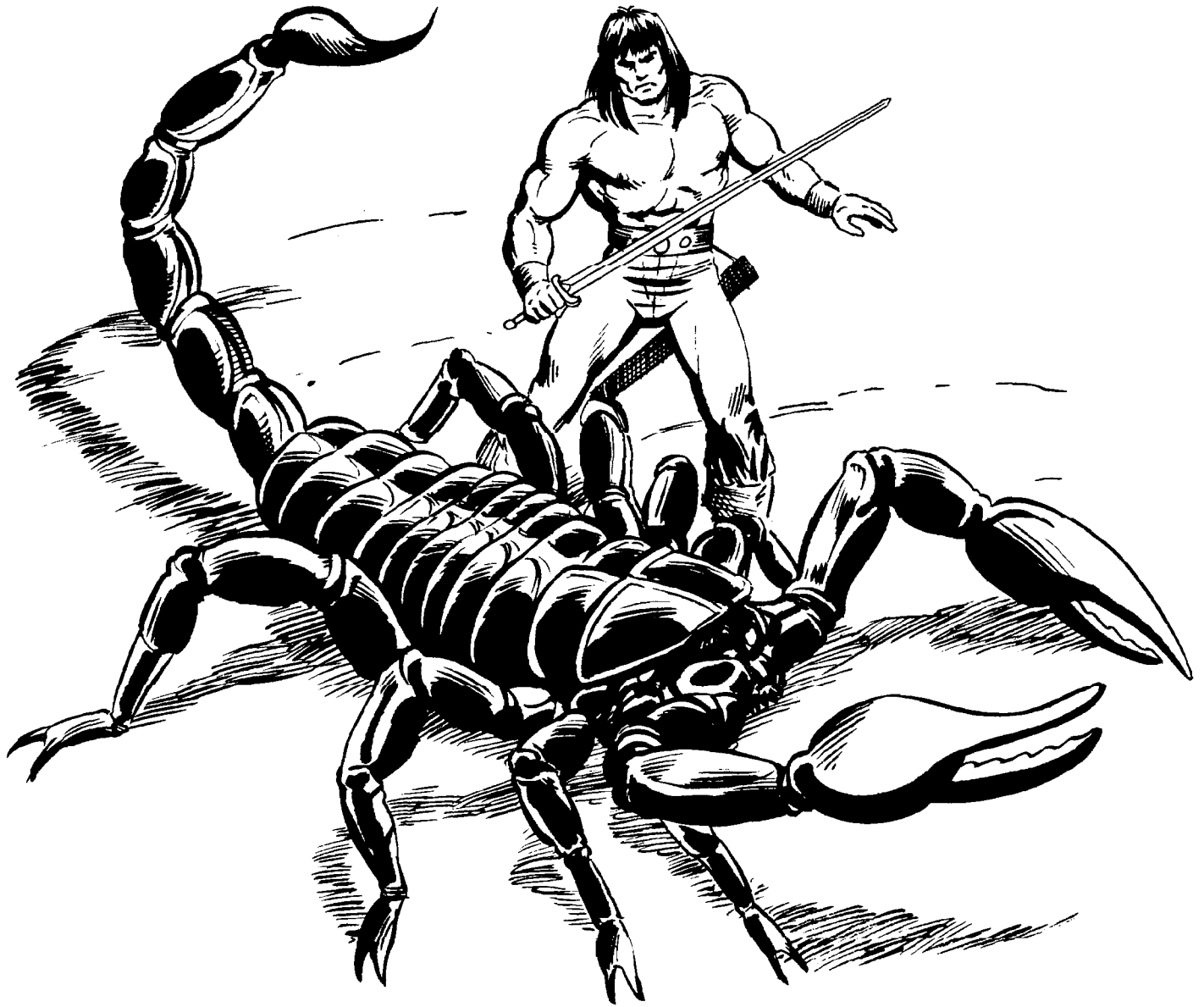
What are the dreams of Melena now?

When the tomb doors open, there is a hiss, as if this vault has been empty for centuries. The air is stale, but breathable inside. No dust has collected, and not even a spider-web has been woven. Whoever may have been here before did not stay long and did not visibly disturb anything.

This chamber is breathtaking. It is about 100 feet long and 80 feet wide. The walls and floor are pink marble veined with purple and inlaid with gold and silver. The ceiling rises fifty feet above and is painted with a beautiful mural. Most of the scenes are similar to ones the characters have seen in their dreams or in the underground labyrinth's murals. Some scenes, not noted before, are pastoral and tell of an idyllic life for the common man under the reign of Hanyax.

Coffers and piles of coins and jewels lie everywhere. A massive obsidian sarcophagus, shaped like a bed, is against the far wall. Sculpted into the headboard are the figures of a sleeping Hanyax and his queen. Against the right wall is a giant gray marble statue of Hanyax. To the left and right of it are identical alabaster pedestals. Each with an Orb on it. One is crystalline with a miniature snake in it (Orb of Grief), the other is ebony (Orb of Yama).

Against the left wall is furniture made from gilded iron. A large mahogany chest contains many bone scroll cases. In each case is a scroll that tells one of the many incredible deeds of Hanyax (each is worth 150 GL to the Nemedian Chroniclers). On a silver stand to the right of the cabinet is a carved ivory scroll case. It holds the Scroll of Timon. Another bureau holds Hanyax's golden armor and weapons. The armor is purely ornamental but worth ten times that of a normal set (Judge's discretion as to what pieces are here). The weapons are a



set of matched bastard swords and a set of dirks. Each is so finely made and has been sharpened to such an edge that it has an additional weapons bonus when using it (+ 1 for the dirks, +2 for the swords).

When the NPC with the terrible greed sees the treasure, he immediately grabs one of the Orbs. It is an even chance that he will grab either one, thinking it is the Orb of Yama. If he does grab the Orb of Yama he immediately runs for the door, ignoring the other charac-

ters. He is caught up in his greed and does not really know what he is doing.

If the characters do not heed the various warnings and start looting the place, Hanyax's shade animates the 12-foot-tall statue of himself and speaks to the characters. He asks why the characters have entered his tomb. If anyone says, "To serve Yama" or "To steal the Orb of Yama," he asks them if they know what evil with which they are threatening the world. If the character's answer shows disre-

gard for the world's woes, he is instantly inflicted with the Madness weakness (as described in the Conan Game) and will find himself at the foot of the silver bridge.

If the character does not know how bad Yama is or what dangers the Orb presents, Hanyax will inform him. If asked why Fanchix left the Orb undestroyed, Hanyax says he instructed him to do so for the purposes of drawing out into the open any of Yama's agents that were capable of entering here.



Then Hanyax could destroy them.

If the player characters or an NPC tries to attack the statue or grab the Orb and run, the animated statue will reach the doors in a few steps and close on them. The statue cannot be destroyed. It can, however, punch at the characters with its fists (BRAWL-50 causing 5 points of damage when it hits, two swings per combat turn). When the characters finally want to stop, Hanyax informs them of Yama's true goal. If the characters are still stubborn or combative, Hanyax punishes them by returning them to the silver bridge and permanently lowering their Damage Endurance by 2.

If, somehow, the Orb is taken out of the tomb, Yama will swoop down in 5 combat turns and snatch up the Orb and Orb-bearer. The first he will keep, the latter he will eat. He will later decide the Orb should not be returned to the reckless Baron Etarti, but should go to someone else who summons him

into that world. If the player characters have been instrumental in returning the Orb to Yama, not only will Hanyax return them to the silver bridge with reduced Damage Endurances but he will also command them to find the Orb in their lifetimes and return it to him. This could be the beginning of a great quest designed by the Judge.

If the heroes reply that they have come to destroy the Orb, Hanyax decides to end the world's potential woes and point out the ebony Orb, telling them it must be struck in the tomb. One hit causes the Orb to disappear in a puff of black smoke. The adventurers are able to hear Yama's cries from outside as he is consumed by his own hate. Hanyax explains that the Orb contained the life essence of Yama and that they have just destroyed him.

If the characters have shown valor and helped Hanyax to accomplish the destruction of the Orb of Yama, he allows the characters to

take one item from his treasure. He warns them about the Orb of Grief. The Judge should grant them one item of magic or worth each. It should reflect their accomplishments and weigh against how long it took them to conquer this entire adventure, what was lost along the way, their individual contributions, and the mistakes they might have made. The rewards should not completely unbalance the game but they should be just. The worth of the item, and any magical powers it might have, are at the discretion of the Judge.

Once the items have been chosen, the characters find themselves at the foot of the silver bridge along with any of their comrades who have fallen valiantly in Melena. They are all alive and well again. They will then hear Hanyax's voice telling them to cross back over to their world. Once across the bridge, the trans-dimensional gate will disappear and the way to Melena will be sealed forever.

OPTIONS

Once you read the entire adventure you can see how it can easily be expanded into a large campaign, possibly even an epic quest. With the blank cavern networks to the south of the underground river, an entirely new aspect can be added to this theme. If this adventure is a continuation of *Conan the Buccaneer* it could take months for the players to finish their various missions. If you wish, you can start *Conan the Buccaneer* at the end of this adventure. One of the treasures found in the caves or given to the party by the priests could be the information Mennifir has that begins the adventure to Atothar. You can even stretch out the time element in this adventure theme to cover weeks of intrigue in Zingara instead of days. You can create your own adventure based on the pursuit of the Baron, or the Baron's last stand. It's all up to you, the Judge.

There is no reason to allow the return of the Orb of Yama into your campaign world, unless you want to start the party on a quest. It is too powerful an evil. The Baron will

attempt to exact revenge against the characters only after he escapes the revenge of the various cults and religions he has wronged. The Priests of Jhebbel Sag will move against him almost at once; talking his army's horses into being uncooperative, calling the animals of the forests to their side, and generally making the Baron a prisoner in his own castle. Another good future adventure might be to have the priests hire the party to seek out and destroy the Masked Ones. The Jhebbelites will not want to or be able to rule Zingara themselves. They only want a return of the old status quo. Ultimately, Kaletar's father could cross the river and restore order, punishing the Baron for his wickedness.

One of the best answers to the character's problems, once they have discovered the Baron's evil, is to take the elixir of the golden lotus found within the game and trick the Baron into drinking it. He will no longer desire the Orb and will even assist them in finding and destroying it. His reward for the

characters returning him to his senses might be quite handsome.

The south network of tunnels and the underground river are also sources of future adventures. The separation of the south network from the other tunnel systems is quite natural and an entirely new culture could exist there. The remnants of the Zingaran Brigands might have their secret lair there. Another magical cult could have had the same idea as the Priests of Jhebbel Sag and can be in hiding. The Masked Ones may be starting a cult of their own, separate from the Baron, now that his power is waning. In each of these cases they will not know of the existence of the Priests of Jhebbel Sag in the networks to the north. The underground river could be the lair of some ghastly monster that is scouring the countryside. A Giant Snake, Swamp Beast family, and the like would be typical inhabitants. Remember, the creature must be large to withstand the river current.



Non-Player Characters

The following people from this adventure may be used by the Judge in further adventures or a campaign. None of them are intended to be player characters.

Baron Etarti

PROWESS	FIGHT	END	KNOW	PER	IN
5	6	4	8	5	3
CLI-10	ZING	DAM-20	READ	AN	AN SEN-15
MOV-15	FIGHT-15	STA-15	YAMISH-17	HAN-5	DAN SEN-5
STR-15	BASTARD	WILL5	WRITE	OBS-20	PERSONAL
THROW-10	SWORD-25	MAG-8	YAMISH-15	TRACK-20	MAG-10
	DIRK-15		SAIL-20	FAME-12	
	MAUL-12		LORE-30		

Fame: Etarti is famous for leading the Zingaran sea forces in battle against pirates and Argossean sea forces. He is also known to have successfully led his family's forces against rival families. His rugged good looks and friendly manner have added to his renown.

Language: Yamish is a cult language used and comprehended only by the members of the Masked Ones.

Weaknesses: FANATICISM, CLAUSTROPHOBIA

The Baron is fanatical in his beliefs that someday Yama will rule all of Hyboria through him. This may be one of the reasons for his personal magnetism.

The Baron has an abnormal fear of narrow or closed spaces. His castle is massive with rooms the size of stables. He cannot enter the tunnels and caverns where the Jhebbelites are hidden.

The Baron Etarti is the last member of an ancient and honorable family who has ruled this section of Zingara. It is his infertility that drove him to the worship of Yama. Because he could not produce an heir, he decided he would simply not die and began searching the world for the black magics which would help him in his quest for immortality. He found what he desired in the hidden kingdom of Meru, a religion dedicated to Yama, the "King of Demons."

Over many years he studied the teachings and scrolls of Yama's priests until he could speak with Yama himself. The demon gave

Etarti the Orb of Yama which not only dampens all other magics in the lands that he ruled but allowed Yama easy access into the world. As long as the Orb of Yama remained in Etarti's possession he would be immortal. The price he paid for this was the life of the only person he loved, his first wife Elsbeth.

Etarti has now purged all other religions and cults from Aldoc and is planning on the expansion of his empire. He began by marrying Kaletar, the only child of Duke Mardy, ruler of the lands across the Black River. When Mardy dies, Etarti will rule all Zingaran land west of the Thunder River and can easily depose the Zingaran king. With the Orb negating all the other noble's magic and supporting religions, Etarti will be uncontested head of Zingara. Next Etarti will march against Argos. In two years time he will have the Argossean crown on his head and then, with a strengthened treaty with the Picts, will start marching against Aquilonia. All of this is possible with the Orb of Yama.

However, the Orb has recently been stolen. Because Etarti's forces cannot locate it he suspects it has been transported to another dimension. It is necessary that the Baron tricks an independent force into looking for the location. The Masked Ones will shadow the independents and, when the location has been discovered, kill them.

The Baron wears clothing and armor befitting his station. His battle-dress is usually a three-quarter suit and he is one of the few men who has mastered Zingaran Fighting in this cumbersome armor.

Zingaran Brigands

PROWESS	FIGHT	END	KNOW	PER	IN
2	1	2	2	1	1
ACR-5	FIGHT	DAM-12	LOCK-5	OBS-5	DAN
MOV-10	AXE-10	STA-8	THIEVES	PICK-8	SEN-15
STR-8	BRAWL-5	WILL-5	CANT-20		

Language: The Thieves Cant is a special jargon used by professional brigands, pick pockets, and cut purses. It sounds very nonsensical to one who does not know it. There is no written equivalent to this fast, sing-song slang.

Weakness: FEAR OF MAGIC

The Zingaran Brigands are a loose brotherhood of various types of thieves. The reign of Baron Etarti has proven very disquieting for

them as they have been forced out of the towns by the Masked Ones. They hold no love for either the current government or the Masked Ones. They currently camp in the Forgotten Grove. Mistaking the mercenary band for one of special soldiers hired to hunt them down, the brigands will attack to defend themselves. Once their error has been discovered they can be quite amiable and might even be persuaded to join the mercenaries. There are five brigands located here and all wear jacks and studded skirts.



Baroness Kaletar

PROWESS 1	FIGHT 1	END 3	KNOW 8	PER 5	IN 3
THROW-10	THROW KNIFE- 10	DAM-9 STA-6 WILL 15	HERB-5 ZING-25 AQUIL-20 ARGO-15 LORE-20	AN HAN-15 MED-25 FAME- 12	PERSONAL MAG-30

Fame: The Baroness Kaletar is famous for her diplomatic skills, her beauty, and her patronage of the arts and sciences. She is also known to have killed a would-be assassin of her father with a throwing knife. She travels extensively, acting as the Baron's ambassador and representative to the royal court.

Weakness: KLEPTOMANIA

The Baroness has an irresistible urge to steal, especially in the absence of economic need. She has always been rich but every so often she steals something for no apparent reason. Sometimes she does not even realize she has stolen an item until she finds it in her pocket. It is through this mild sickness that she accidentally acquired the Jetton of Asap (from her father) and the Orb of Yama (when Etarti had carelessly left it lying about).

Kaletar grew up in a wonderful household with many siblings and

loving parents. She received a better education than her brothers and sisters and is one of the most educated nobles in the Hyborian World (her statistics only reflect talents of remarkable nature). It was natural therefore that she would wed a nobleman of Zingara and rule equally with him. But her marriage to Etarti is a sham; now she must accept that he only married her to advance his position.

During her youth she discovered the followers of Jhebbel Sag and secretly joined them. She has kept in contact with them through the animals they use as messengers. When she recently discovered Etarti's evil plans and the stolen Orb of Yama, she contacted the priesthood and eventually sent them the Orb. She has not yet received word from her aide, Fanchix, if the Orb has been banished. She will secretly eavesdrop on the Baron's conversation with the mercenaries and send them an anonymous note to warn them.

Bat Brawlers

PROWESS 1	FIGHT 1	END 1	KNOW 1	PER 0	IN 0
MOV-5 SIR- 10	BRAWL-5 CLUB-5 ZIN FHT-5	DAM-6 STA-5	Varied- 10	Varied-5	DAN SEN-5

Weakness: DRINK

These are dock workers, unemployed workers, and sailors who hang around in this tavern. Of the nine present only six initially enter a fight.

New Monsters and Creatures

Neo-thog

PRO 4	FIGHT 2	END 4
STR-30 MOV-10	TENTACLE-20	DAM-30 MAG-12

Tentacle: + 3 Damage

The Neo-thog is the result of breeding of a tentacled fresh-water life form by the followers of Jhebbel Sag. The priests called one to their underground lair and have been trying to find another. A Neo-thog will strike into a waterless area but does not completely crawl out of the water. The damage reflected above is from each of its 30-foot-long tentacles, which will be the only pan the player characters can strike. Once two of its four tentacles are severed, the Neo-thog will

retreat. It can only fit two tentacles through a tidal hole at any one time. The Neo-thog is not related to the dreaded Thog.

The Neo-thog has been commanded by the priests to collect anything left in its area. This is how the priests get rid of their waste. If a character enters this area, the Neo-thog will raise two of its tentacles 3 combat turns after its area is entered. Once attacked it will not stop destroying anyone in its area. If a character falls in the tidal area, the monster will drag it through the tidal hole. The Neo-thog will not grab a character as long as anyone moves about within 40 feet of it.

Strangling Demon: Found on page 38 of the *World of Hyboria* booklet in the CONAN® Role-Playing Game.

Swamp Beast: Found on page 39 of the *World of Hyboria* booklet in the CONAN® Role-Playing Game.



Black-Taloned Vulture

PRO	FIGHT	END
3	1	1
MOVE	TALONS-10	DAM-5
FLY-30		POI-5
LAND-2		

Power dives: + 1 damage

The Black-Taloned Vulture is not purely a scavenger but a bird of prey as well, swooping down to attack live creatures and dead with its extremely sharp talons. Its beak cannot be used as a weapon because it is designed to scissor off small pieces of meat, not tear and shred large hunks like the normal vulture.

It hunts in a "wing" of three to seven birds, all swooping from different angles. The damage bonus comes from its high velocity dives which cannot occur more than once every third combat round. Usually a wing of black-taloned vultures will all attack a lone figure during the same combat turn, while they will harrass larger targets, like a group of humans, in rotation. If a wing is reduced to a single bird, he will fly off. There is a 15% chance that he will return a half hour later with more vultures, with an additional 10% cumulative chance of returning for every target that is bleeding. Black-Taloned Vultures are generally found on veldts and deserts.

Cave Ants

PRO	FIGHT	END
1	1	1
CLI-SPECIAL	BITE-SPECIAL	DAM-SPECIAL

Cave Ants are about one inch long. They swarm together in dark places. When dropping into a pit of them, their collective biting causes 2 points of damage per combat turn. If the unfortunate character escapes the pit he will still be covered with Cave Ants and will take an additional 1 point of damage every third combat turn until they are washed or knocked off of him. It is nearly impossible to kill them when massed unless you pour oil on them and burn them, flood and drown them, or lead them into an omnivorous moss, where they will feed on it while it feeds on them. They will follow a trail of blood and can crawl on most surfaces.

Giant Beetle

PRO	FIGHT	END
4	1	3
MOVE-10	MANDIBLE-10	DAM-25
STR-30		POI-5

Mandibles: + 3 Damage

These terrifying six-foot-long insects are usually found in the desert, though one found its way into the priest's underground lair from Melena. These creatures are the color of sand and their shells have a grainy texture. They burrow beneath the desert dunes and lie in wait for a passing meal. Their camouflage is so perfectly matched to their environment that they always surprise their prey and attack first. Once the giant beetle is killed, its carapace can be cut into shields and its two mandibles can be made into swords (identical to Bastard

Swords in size and statistics). Neither beetle shield nor sword will rust or crack with age. The Giant Beetle is the only natural enemy of the Giant Scorpion.

Giant Mole

PRO	FIGHT	END
4	3	5
MOVE-15	CLAWS-20	DAM-30
(DIG MOVE-15)	BITE-15	POI-20
STR-25		

DIG: Can move underground at a movement rate of 15 feet/turn

Once the Orb of Yama was stolen from the Baron Etarti, the Priests of Jhebbel Sag could again practice their magic. In answer to their call a Giant Mole came from the depths and now lives with them, though he does leave to find food—usually large mammals or reptiles. The mole is 15 feet long, but can fit into all the networks' passages except those that are only five feet wide. It is totally blind, but can sense movement hundreds of feet away.

When the intruder alarm is sounded in the western network, all the priests freeze in place. The Giant Mole then burrows beneath the rocks toward the source of the movement. The mole's claws are so sharp that it can dig through most of these cavern's rock foundations. It suddenly bursts forth from beneath the intruding party and attacks them. All the priests know the simple magic that is required for them to communicate with the Giant Mole.

Giant Scorpion

PRO	FIGHT	END
2	3	3
MOVE-5	PINCERS-15	DAM-20
STR-20	TAIL-15	POI-15

Tail: + 1 Damage, Armor: 1 point of protection over entire body

In this adventure, the Giant Scorpion is found in the Melena desert. The body is four feet long with an eight-foot tail that can arc over its body and strike a target standing a few feet in front of it. It burrows into the sand and waits for prey, but does not automatically surprise its prey like the Giant Beetle. It can fight with both its pincers and its tail during the same combat turn giving it three attacks, but only with its different weapons. The Giant Scorpion is not poisonous like its smaller cousins, but uses its bludgeon-like tail to attack. The Giant Scorpion is the only natural enemy of the Giant Beetle.

Large Bats

PRO	FIGHT	END
0(1)	1	1
MOVE	BITE-8	DAM-5
FLY-15	CLAWS-2	POI-5
LAND-1		

These large Bats have been bred and raised by the priests to be watchdogs, companions, and an emergency food supply. They fly by sonar and do not rely on light to see. Anyone not wearing flowing robes is immediately identified by the bats as hostile and is attacked.



Hanging Snakes

PRO 3	FIGHT 3	END 1
STR-20	BITE-30	DAM-10
MOV-10		

Bite: +2 Damage

One of the more dangerous creatures found in these caverns is the rare Hanging Snake. Over a great period of time these snakes tunnel below the surface until they break through into a natural cavern. The Hanging Snakes found here have evolved so that it is very difficult to distinguish them from the hanging roots. Their pigmentation and texture are similar to the roots. They can hang completely motionless for up to an hour. They have a fearsome bite and, once attached to a victim, anchor themselves to the ceiling with the equivalency of a Wrestling rating of 3. Whenever the priests pass through an area of hanging roots they call out to the animals first in the tongue of Jhebbel Sag and warn them of the consequences if they attack.

Undercat

PRO 3	FIGHT 3	END 2
STR-10	BITE-15	DAM-10
MOV-10	CLAW-5	POI-5
AN. REF-15		MAG-5

Claws and Bite: +1 Damage

The Priests of Jhebbel Sag have domesticated these cavern-dwelling wildcats. Their eyesight in the dark is incredible and they suffer no combat penalty in the dark but can also fight in normal light. Their claws are remarkably sharp and they can climb sheer rock walls. In addition to keeping the caverns clean of unwanted rodents, the Jhebbelites use Undercats to carry messages back and forth to the outside.

Web Spinners

PRO 0	FIGHT 2	END 1
STR-1	SPIT-15	DAM-5
MOV-5	BITE-3	POI-5

Spit: +1 Damage

Web Strands take 5 points of damage before they snap

Web Spinners are an unusual form of insect life that resemble a cross between a silkworm and a praying mantis. They are always found in groups of four and can climb and adhere to nearly any surface. Amazingly fearless for their small size. Web Spinners usually attack a lone creature or the last member of a group of animals that passes. They have been known to trap and kill humans. Their web looks like a small cord but has astonishing tensile strength.

For every web that strikes, roll on the Random Hit Location Table found in the Reference Guide. One strike on a limb means it is hampered and must be freed before complete use is regained. Two strikes on a limb will immobilize it completely. It requires three strikes to the gut or chest to severely hamper general body movement. All four strikes on the chest or gut will prevent any movement but arm swinging or kicking. A head strike has a 25% chance of blinding the victim. This is cumulative for each head strike. At four strikes to the head not only will the victim be totally blinded but will also smother.

The Web Spinners' usual mode of attack is to perch high on a wall or ceiling and shoot four shots that will strike from four different directions. The round following the webbing, the Web Spinners spit acid if the victim has been partially immobilized (struck by three webs). It takes them three turns before they can fire another web or spit any more acid. The bite is primarily used for eating purposes.

ZiXit

PRO 2	FIGHT 2	END 2	KNOW 2	PER 2	IN 2
STR-5	SLING-15	DAM-6	SURV-10	TRACK-10	AN SEN-10
MOV-5	SPEAR-10	MAG-6	TRAP-10	OBS-10	DIR SEN-10
ANREF-5		POI-6			
THROW-5		STA-10			

Armor: 1 point protection for the entire body

The ZiXit were natives of the Melena desert before they were enchanted and placed on the Hyborian side of the trans-dimensional gate. They look like small stone statues (3 1/2 feet tall) of hideously ugly men garbed only in their spears, sling-belts, and slingstone sacks. If a character crossing the bridge does not have the Jetton of Asap or the mystic sign of Jhebbel Sag tattooed on the back of his left hand, some of the figures come to life. They only animate after the characters have crossed the bridge into Melena. Then three statues for every character who crossed will come to life, though they are still grayish and have an armored quality to their skin.

The ZiXit wait for a while, then begin tracking the characters. They attack after an hour—long enough to assure that no surviving character can make it back to the bridge to safety. Their primary mode

of attack is to encircle the offenders and use a concentrated slinging of stones to cut them down. Only when the characters scatter will they attack separately.

If the ZiXit are all destroyed they lay about for six hours, then rise up like zombies and slowly return to the cavern on the other side of the trans-dimensional gate. If the ZiXit destroy the characters, they have a victory dance and then return to the cavern along with the fallen characters, all in a zombie-like state. Once across the trans-dimensional gate the ZiXit resume their stoned existence and any zombie-characters line the walls of the cavern and turn to stone. ZiXit completely ignore anyone wearing the Jetton of Asap, even if that person is attacking them. A character with the tattooed mystic sign will not activate the ZiXit by himself but, if in the company of non-protected characters, will be considered an enemy by the ZiXit and will also be attacked.



Exotic Flora

The former leader of the Priests of Jhebbel Sag had extensive magic capabilities and flora and fauna lore knowledge. Most of the plants listed were either created by him or carefully transplanted and nurtured by him. Though he has been dead for two years at the time of this adventure, his plants thrive in their subterranean world and the name *Grynthem* has become synonymous with the ability to make plants flourish.

Glowing Fungus: This fungus grows on moist surfaces and gives off an eerie green glow that is one-third the brightness of a torch. A gathered patch of glowing fungus wrapped around a gutted torch or mace-sized weapon lasts about an hour and will provide light in a 5-foot radius. Fungus-covered walls will show their features clearly but not provide any light source more than 10 feet away.

Omnivorous Moss: This moss-like plant is usually found where a dead animal or plant was located. It can move very slowly, a foot an hour, and consume almost any organic substance it touches. It is sensitive to heat and motion, usually dropping from the ceiling onto an animal that is moving slowly or sleeping. The acid in the plant works with thousands of tiny boring tendrils to quickly break up and eat away food. The penetration time for some substances are listed below.

Substance	Size	Penetration Time
Plants	1 foot diameter	10 seconds
Exposed flesh	Variable	20 seconds
Hair	Variable	45 seconds
Exposed food	1 in. thick	1 minute
Cloth, rope	½ in. thick	2 minutes
Thick cloth, hides	½-1 in. thick	5 minutes
Leather, treated hide	½-1 in. thick	10 minutes
Treated leather	1-2 in. thick	20 minutes
Exposed human bone	Up to 1 in. thick	40 minutes
Exposed animal bone	Up to 1 in. thick	1 hour

The omnivorous moss does not consume glowing fungus, burrowing roots, or xanthic mold. If ripped from the walls, this fungus can still survive but will not move or "eat" for at least an hour. Since it is a luxuriant deep green and extremely thick and cushiony, it is sometimes mistaken for harmless moss; indeed a special plant talent or experience with the plant would be needed to recognize it. This can be an extremely dangerous plant as creatures have been known to make a bed out of it only to wake later finding their rations, their clothes, and sometimes themselves, being consumed. A character sleeping on an omnivorous moss will not be attacked until his outer covering, if any, has been consumed. An unprotected character, or one who has had his protection eaten away, will lose one-quarter of his Damage talent points before he wakes up in pain.

Roots: These roots that occasionally break through a tunnel or cavern's ceiling are boring roots from plant life far above on the surface. They form "hanging fields" which the Priests of Jhebbel Sag

harvest as their main food supply. Usually the thick brown-red roots grow down into the air and hang five feet above the floor, but they are easy to brush aside and do not slow movement. They do limit vision to a few feet, though, and can be dangerous when growing around quicksand or crevices. The roots house many small forms of insect life and provide a hidden nesting place for Hanging Snakes, who have evolved to resemble the roots.

Vines: The vines found in these caverns are dense and often wet. They are a sickly brown color and are quite slimy. They always grow on a wall so when they are indicated on the map the Judge must remember that they are either covering the wall or archway, never on the floor or hanging in the open. The vines provide material for simple baskets, tools, and clothes for the priests. Some of the animals also forage on them.

White Mold: This grayish-white mold grows in the subterranean darkness. It never covers an area larger than a hand span and is so thin that it must be scraped off with a sharp instrument. Three ounces of white mold powder may be collected from a single patch. Each ounce serves as a strong healing agent and anesthetic. When an ounce is stirred into liquid and a character consumes it, up to 5 points of damage inflicted on the character in the last 24 hours will be healed. A character consuming more than three ounces during a 24 hour period will fall comatose for three days. The white mold powder has no taste and no smell. A character can recognize the mold by completing a successful Resolution check if he or she has the talents of Medicine, Herbalism, or Lore.

Xanthic Mushrooms: This thick, bright yellow mushroom grows in shingles on the cave walls, somewhat like forest mushrooms on rotted wood. It is highly nutritional and tastes like acorn squash. The xanthic mushroom lasts longer than the hanging roots after being picked and is perfect for travel rations. Only the priests know of its edibility so others will have to discover its properties themselves.

Yawning Snapper: The yawning snapper looks like a cross between a cactus, a venus flytrap, and a ground-dwelling vine. This carnivorous plant spreads itself over solid rock and covers a ten-foot circle. It at first appears to be nothing but vines growing horizontally along the floor. But underneath, cleverly hidden by its own vines, are large, thick, leathery leaves. Once stepped on or fallen into, these leaves automatically snap shut and this action releases hundreds of sharp needles inside. There are five traps per plant causing 2 points of damage per trap. The trap leaves require 2 points of damage before they can be cut open, otherwise they will stay closed and absorb the blood of their victim. Humans have died in these plants when unfortunately falling on all five traps at once.

The chance for hitting a trap once a character has entered the area is 50%. If a character falls into an area covered by the yawning snapper there is a 30% chance for each of the traps to be triggered. After discovering how many leaves have snapped shut, roll on the Random Hit Location Table to see what they caught. Since these plants often grow on the floor beneath normal wall vines it is very difficult for the uninitiated to detect the danger in time.



Cults and Magical Items

Ancient Slaver Chains: These are the first of the "Melena Artifacts," a collection of magically warded items that help those who cross over into the extra-dimensional lands of Melena. They appear to be two rusty chains with wrist and ankle cuffs on each end. However, the rust flakes off and reveals ornate silverwork laid into the iron. The Ancient Slaver Chains will magically imprison the winds of Melena for a short time, thus propelling a ship across the Dead River to the Tomb of Hanyax.

Bowl of Stars: This is the second of the "Melena Artifacts." It is a bowl of unknown night-blue metal studded with stars of gold. When held in the center, like a bowl, and tapped it makes a pleasant ringing sound. The Bowl of Stars is used to open the Tomb of Hanyax by ringing it like a bell, thus unlocking the huge doors.

Ebony Standards: This is the third of the "Melena Artifacts." They are three black obsidian rods, six feet long, with strange runes inscribed on them and fists carved upon the top of each. Any player character who has seen the Aquilonian army will recognize these as a form of standard the army uses to organize its ranks. The Ebony Standards are used as a defense against the shadow spears of Melena's desert.

Iron Hooves: The fourth of the "Melena Artifacts" is a collection of four hooves made of iron. When the Iron Hooves are held up before the shades of the Melena raiders, the ghostly riders and mounts will sink into the sands.

Jetton of Asap: This magical medallion was created cons ago by one of the Ancient Ones, Asap. It is a powerful jetton used to protect the Orb-carrier from the ZiXit. It was lost in a battle with the Neo-thog and is in that area still. It completely protects the wearer from the ZiXit (they ignore the wearer).

Language: All the Masked Ones speak the common Zingaran language. Varnish is a cult language used and comprehended only by the Masked Ones.

Masked Ones: A secret religious / political assassination cult dedicated to the god Yama (see page 42, *The World of Hyboria* booklet). The founder and leader of the cult is the Baron Etarti, who rules the barony of Aldoc, north of the Black River in Zingara. All of the Masked Ones are Zingarans and have the following statistics as shown on the table below:

Weaknesses: FANATICISM

The Masked Ones are fanatical in their beliefs and have unswerving loyalty to their deity and the Baron. They will attempt to carry out any order assigned to them by the Baron, even unto their own destruction.

PROWESS	FIGHT	END	KNOW	PER	IN
4	4	3	3	4	2
CLI-10	ZING	DAM-20	READ	OBS-20	AN SEN-15
MOV-10	FIGHT-15	STA-10	YAMISH-15	TRACK-20	DAN SEN-5
STR-10	BASTARD		WRITE		
THROW-10	SWORD-15		YAMISH-15		
	DIRK-10				

Orb of Grief: This magic item was created to be a trap for any thief who would loot the possessor's abode. It appears as a six-inch diameter crystalline orb with a miniature snake inside. When a character picks up the Orb the snake will immediately burrow into the character's hand, no matter what covers the hand. Every three combat turns the snake will burrow three inches farther up the character's arm.

The fastest way to stop the snake is to immediately lop off the entered hand. The character will lose his hand but save his arm. If a torch is applied to the hand or arm in an effort to drive the snake out it speeds its movement up to three inches every two combat turns. If a character has a Medicine talent he or she will have one chance at a Resolution check when the snake is in the hand. If the check is successful, they will have killed the snake but only after it has damaged the hand. The character will never be able to perform any dextrous feats with that hand again, including using a weapon.

If the snake is not stopped, it will eat itself to death by the time it reaches the shoulder. The entire arm will be useless and will eventually rot. It will have to be cut off within a week—before the rotting affects the healthy skin of the shoulder. This snake, while magically held alive in the crystal Orb, is quite real. Therefore it is not considered a magical attack and Magical Endurance is not to be considered.

The only method of fighting this terrible fate is through magic. The Scroll of Timon, also found within the tomb, can help. A Natural Magic spell of moderate level, Animal Commanding, can be used to order the snake to the skin's surface and it can then be destroyed by one successful hit by anything. A Summoning talent could be used to summon a creature who could magically withdraw the snake. Or the Judge, if he feels this item is too harsh for his campaign, can determine that the snake will only paralyze the victim's arm for a week. He can also create a potion to restore mobility to the character's arm.

Orb of Yama: This ebony Orb is an incredibly powerful magical item and is not intended for character use in the game. Yama himself gave it to the Baron. It has three different powers:

1. It serves to dampen all of the magics in the possessor's lands except those demonically related.
2. It serves as an easy accessway by which Yama can enter and exit the Hyborian World.
3. It grants the mortal possessor immortality as long as it is in his possession.

The Orb originally came in a special pouch that allowed anyone to pick it up. When it was placed in Hanyax's Tomb it was rolled out of the bag onto a pedestal. No one realizes that this makes the Orb vulnerable and increases its danger. Anyone but Yama who touches the Orb without the special pouch suffers a horrible death. The pouch has been lost in the desert sands of Melena.

Priests of Jhebbel Sag: This is a secret remnant of a once-powerful priesthood in the west that was devoted to Jhebbel Sag (see pg. 42, *The World of Hyboria* booklet). Though declining in membership



and popularity for many generations, it was Baton Etarti who so ferociously persecuted them that they were forced to go into hiding. Jhebbelites, as the followers of Jhebbel Sag are called, know of the Masked Ones and Baron Etarti's plans but have been powerless to intervene.

With the banishment of the Orb of Yama, however, Etarti's power has been jeopardized. Therefore, the Jhebbelites want to ensure that no one who sympathizes with the Baron's cause crosses into Melena to retrieve the Orb of Yama. Their main source of information is the Baroness Kaletar, a secret Jhebbelite herself who sent them the Orb for banishment. Now the Priests of Jhebbel Sag are slowly, regaining their full powers.

All priests are equipped with katars and are so proficient with them that they can attack twice per combat turn with no combat penalties. They wear dark gray robes, shave their heads, but not their faces, and have a tattoo of Jhebbel Sag's mystic sign on the back of their left hand. The priests are extremely pale and may be mistaken for ghouls when first encountered. Their eyesight is good when they are underground or in dim light but they cannot see well in very bright light (bonfire, daylight, four torches within a 20-foot area). The caverns provide all of the food and water the priests need and other items have been supplied by Baroness Kaletar. The average priest's statistics are as follows:

PROWESS	FIGHT	END	KNOW	PER	IN
2	2	4	2	2	3
STR-8	KATAR-20	DAM-12	HERB-20	AN HAN-10	AN SEN-8
MOV-10		WILL-10		MED-10	NAT MAG-10
SWIM-5		MAG-25			OBSESS-10
					DIR SEN-10

Language: All Priests of Jhebbel Sag speak and read Zingaran. Furthermore, they can communicate with each other and with animals through the magical animal speech.

Weaknesses: DISTRUSTED

This weakness is because of the Baron's propoganda and the public's fear of the magical arts.

Magic: The priests can once again perform all of the Natural Magic spells listed on page 6 of the Reference Guide.

Scroll of Timon: This ancient scroll is found within the carved ivory scroll case located in the tomb of Hanyax. It is written in a simple form of an arcane language. Any character who has an Arcane Languages talent must make a Resolution check with +15 because the scroll is so simple. Any result except white is successful and the character can immediately see that the scroll is of great worth. It can be read aloud one time only and then will dissolve. The scroll is of a medicinal nature and can restore life to a character slain within the last 24 hours, cure all the wounds and damage a character has sustained, including any by poison or magic (including the Orb of Grief), or return the ability to hear, see, or speak to a deaf, blind, or mute person. The reader must indicate aloud which option is chosen and which character is to be healed.

Trans-Dimensional Gate: The trans-dimensional gate is a bridge to another dimension that exists in both worlds. It is from this dimension that many evil things have invaded the Hyborian World, including Yama. No one knows how to close the gate but the Priesthood of

Jhebbel Sag now knows how to ward off any who would enter Earth from Melena and are always on guard. Yama is trapped in Melena, a dead world, by this warding and so has turned his attention elsewhere. Not believing anyone would wish to enter Melena, Yama does not guard the gateway on his side; there are enough curses and shades throughout the lands to take care of any large raiding party.

Ruins and Lore

Hanyax: The name Hanyax can be found in lore. He was reputed to be a great king and general of an ancient land, thought to be either Tothra or Melena. It is said that his armies were so vast that they stretched from one horizon to the other when on the march. How Hanyax met his end is not precisely known. One famous account records that a demon-god invaded Hanyax's kingdom, spreading a great plague that killed his wife and decimated him and his armies with magical fire. It is always noted that Hanyax's tomb, said to be the richest of the ancient kings, has never been found. It is supposedly shared by his wife and so thoroughly guarded by Hanyax's shade and an array of deadly artifacts that even Yama fears to enter it.

Melena: Melena has been mentioned in Hyborian lore as a land or a city either in this world or in a magical place. The chief reference to Melena is an ancient poem handed down over the ages. Any character with Lore talent should add +10 to his ranking for the purpose of making a successful Resolution check to remember the poem. If successful, the Judge should give the player the poem on page 31. The poem is also listed below for the Judge's reference.

The Dreams of Melena

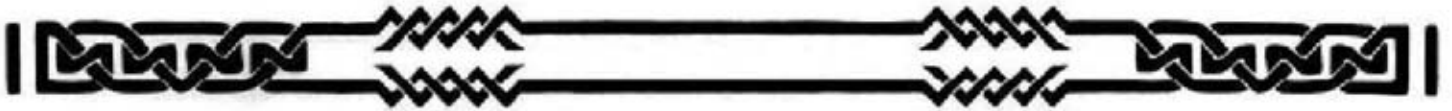
Silver bridge in a broken sky,
 Golden fruit on a withered bough,
 Red-lipped slaves that the ancients buy,
 Where is the glory of Melena now?

Ghostly hooves in the brooding night,
 Beat the bowl of the velvet stars,
 Shadows of spears when the moon is white
 Cross the sands with ebony bars.

But not the shadows that brood her fall
 May check the sweep of a desert fire,
 Nor dead men lift a crumbling wall,
 Nor magiks steady a falling spire.

Yama flies through the desert shy
 Where the armies of Hanyax reeled;
 And though her people still mourn and cry,
 Helena's doom is set and sealed.

Silver chains 'neath a silken sail,
 Sapphire eyes in a fearsome prow,
 Tomb doors crack with the stars own wail,
 What are the dreams of Melena now?



Note slipped to player character

If you value your life and hate evil meet me at moonrise tomorrow night north of town in the Forgotten Grove. Tell no one. The Baron is a dangerous man.

Note from slain girl in grove.

The Baron is an evil man who wishes to enslave the world. He worships demons but has now lost some of his power. Destroy the Orb if you find it. For the truth, go below.

Note found on dead soldier

Fanchix,
The orb must be secured from the unbeliever. Follow the guide-belt to its destination. Ask those who guard what should be done. If they so desire, cross the silver bridge into Melena. On your return trip leave the warded items within the tunnel for future expeditions. Do not allow the Jetton or Asap to come to harm, it is all that stands between you and the 'little ones.' Your mission is sacred and the destruction of evil depends on it. That which consumes must be tamed.

K.

The Dreams of Melena

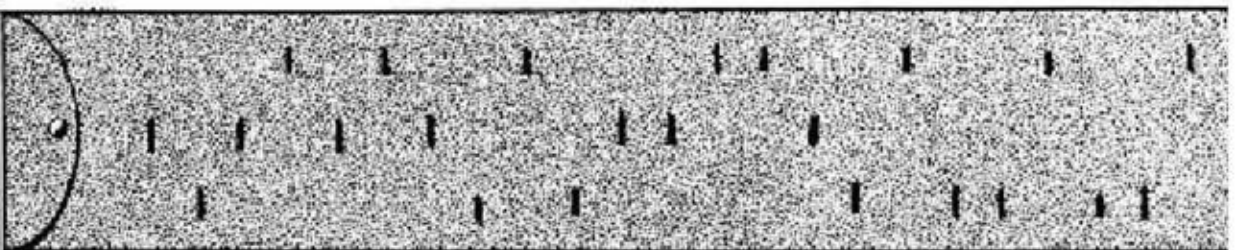
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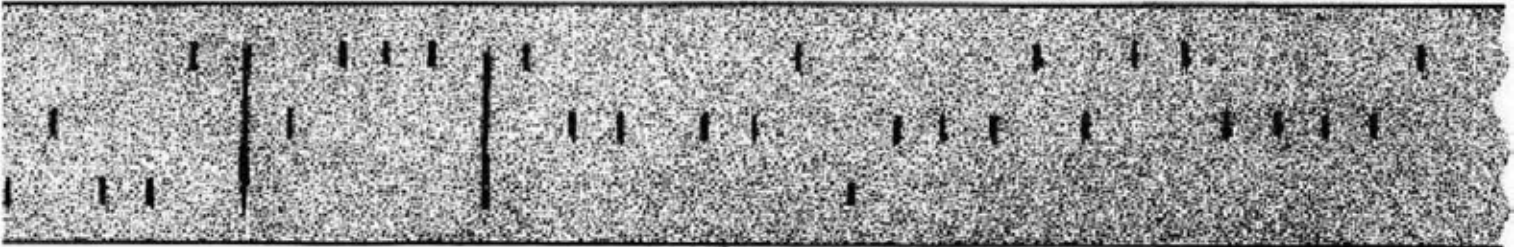
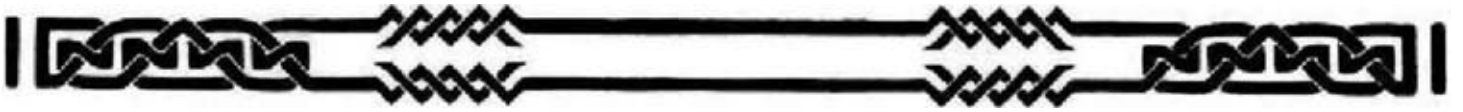
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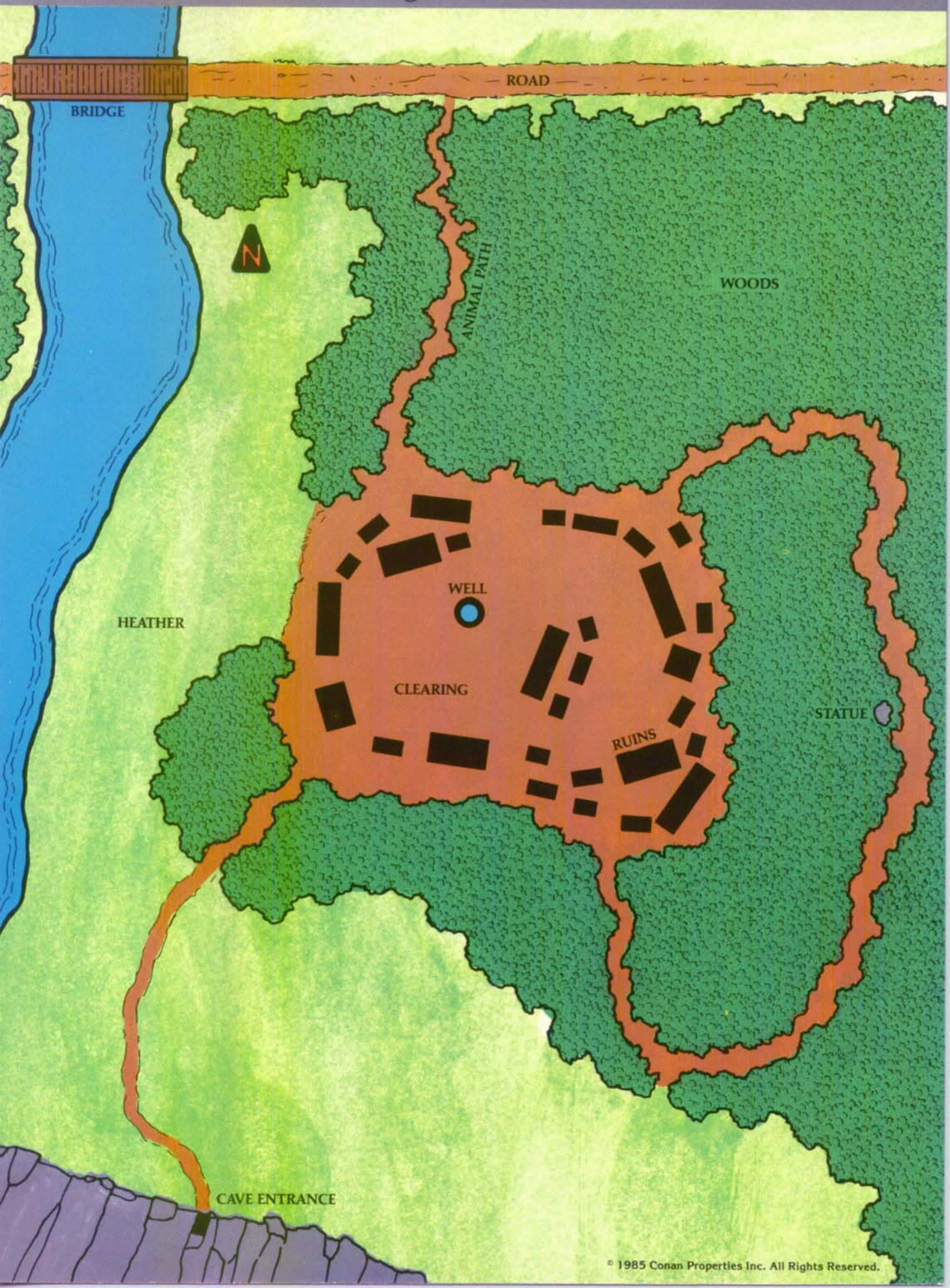
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(Belt continued on next page)



Forgotten Grove



CONAN[®]

Official Game Adventure

CONAN[®] The MERCENARY

By Kim Eastland

Fair fortune or foul brought you and your companions to the Barony of Aldoc, infamous for its bloody persecution of mages and the priesthood of any pantheon. But where there's strife there are those willing to hire a band of mercenaries such as yours. Indeed, fate seemed to smile the first week, for the Baron himself sought your services to recover a bauble, a royal symbol stolen by some lackwit.

But fate played strange games when the trail led to an underground labyrinth. Now you scurvy through slimy caves, stalked by a band of mysterious masked men, unsure if you will ever again see the light of day.

But if any man can succeed, it is the captain of your company. He earned his sword in the frozen wastelands of the north against barbarian and soldier alike. He's one man you'd follow into the netherworld itself, this man called Conan!

This adventure is for use with the CONAN[®] Role-Playing Game and cannot be played without the CONAN[®] Role-Playing Game rules, produced by TSR Inc.

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