



THE LASH OF MALLOC

by Travis Heermann

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A small oasis lies along a major trade route through the desert, and The Desert Beetle Inn is not only the most popular establishment in the area, it is the only one! A favorite of merchants and travelers alike, anyone with enough gold can explore their every desire.

Most travelers fail to notice the small items that have gone missing. They manage to ignore the strange sounds in the surrounding desert. And the twisted footprints occasionally seen near the water hole mean nothing. Hushed tales of missing children are laughed away.

That is, until an important young girl disappears somewhere along the trade route... the teenage daughter of a wealthy merchant. With the gold and the will to find his missing child, he intends to stop at nothing to secure her safety.



Requires the use of the
Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook,
Third Edition, published by
Wizards of the Coast®

Lash of Malloc



HOW TO USE THIS PRODUCT

This adventure is designed to be easily dropped into your existing *Third-Edition D&D* campaign. It can be run in a just a single session and makes for an excellent evening's gaming. To prepare yourself to run the adventure, you should read it completely at least once to familiarize yourself with the material. You may wish to photocopy the map in the center of the book for ease of use as well. The text on the back of the book can be read to your players to introduce them to the adventure. After that, you're ready to begin. Good luck!

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

This module requires the use of the *Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition*, published by Wizards of the Coast.® You won't be able to run this adventure without it.

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The *Dungeons* sourcebook contains a plethora of tips, tricks and rules to help make your adventures the stuff of legend. It includes essays on design and construction, overviews of different dungeon types, player advice for surviving underground perils, and a host of new rules, spells, monsters, and magic items.



GAME MASTER BACKGROUND

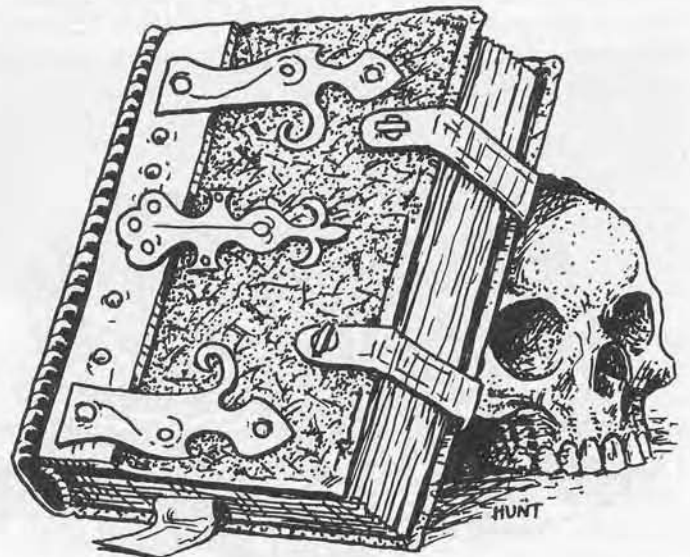
This adventure is designed for four to six characters of third to fifth level.

Deep in the desert along a major trade route lies a small oasis, the only open water in days of travel. At this oasis can be found The Desert Beetle Inn. This bastion of civilization in the middle of a scorching wasteland is a popular resting-place for merchants and travelers crossing the expansive desert. At the oasis they can refill their water supplies, and at The Desert Beetle they can enjoy a pint of ale, sleep in a soft bed, or pay for the attention of a pretty girl. The walled compound of the inn makes it a safe place to defend precious wares from desert bandits.

Malloc, the owner and innkeeper, is involved in several other underhanded activities, the most profitable of which is slavery. He sells young slaves to some of the merchants who pass through. These children — stolen from their families, or captured runaways — end up at The Desert Beetle as servants and prostitutes, or are sold to the highest bidder in secret auctions.

However, there are other unexplained occurrences around the oasis and the surrounding desert: nocturnal thefts of livestock, valuables, and sometimes even of children from right under their parents' noses. A small tribe of desert goblins (see New Monster description) lives in caverns under The Desert Beetle, making larcenous forays to the surface at night. They move like ghosts, striking and fading away. Some victims report seeing small mummies that disappeared into the sand.

Only Malloc knows the true nature of these "desert ghosts." He has formed a mutually beneficial alliance with this tribe of desert goblins. Malloc provides them with an environment rich in slow-moving targets, as long as they do not steal anything from anyone at the oasis itself, and the goblins trade their loot to Malloc, who can turn around and sell it at a tremendous profit.



THE OASIS

Nestled in the shade of several prominent rock outcroppings appears to be a large pool of water, surrounding by several palm trees and flowering bushes, a welcome sight after so many long hours and days of nothing but endless sandy wasteland.

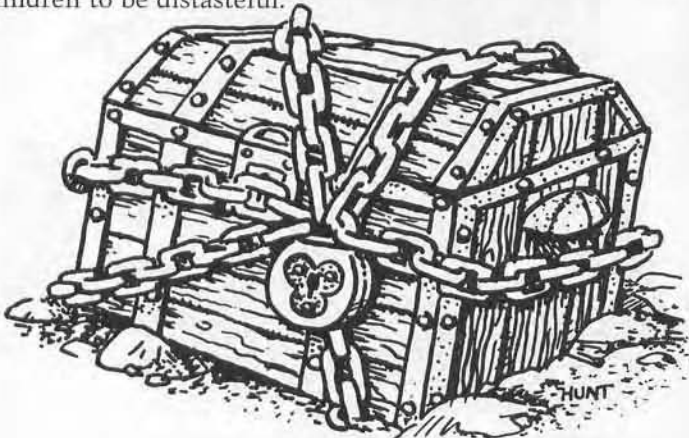
During the day, the party finds 1d4 merchant caravans of 2d20 wagons each. They have stopped to refill their water supplies and take a short rest. As nightfall nears, the band of desert nomads described below arrives at the oasis and sets up camp near the water hole.

If the party arrives at night, they see several fires burning. Torches burn on either side of the closed gates of the inn, all the better for the guards within to see who approaches.

A band of 5d6 desert nomads is camped near the large water hole, and if the hour is not too late they sit around their campfires singing stories, puffing on their pipes, and enjoying their own company. Anyone who approaches the nomads in a non-threatening manner may be invited to join their camp at the DM's discretion.

Desert Nomads: CR 1/2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d8+1; hp 6; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks Scimitar +1 (1d6+1); SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11; AL CG; Skills: Hide +2, Knowledge (nature) +4, Ride +4, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +4. Feats: Track.

Anyone who approaches the nomads may overhear them speaking in hushed tones (Listen check DC 20) of strange little mummies, who disappear like ghosts and steal trinkets, water, goats, or sometimes small children. One of the nomads spotted some strange footprints in the mud near the water hole this morning. He describes the footprints as similar to those of a camel, only with small toes like a child, and talons. The nomads prefer to sleep under the stars. They do not trust Malloc or his henchmen. If the PCs raise the subject of slavery, the nomads find it to be a perfectly acceptable practice, as long as the slaves happen to be enemies captured in battle. They find the practice of enslaving children to be distasteful.



THE DESERT BEETLE INN

The structure is the only symbol of order in the vast, scorching wasteland. It looks like a solid block of stucco rising out of the sand. The entire building is a walled compound with heavy wooden gates facing the east and the west. Both gates appear to bolt only from the inside. The walls stand twelve feet high, with a second story visible standing above the back, and the roofs of some interior buildings just visible over the walls. A four-foot sign stands above the south wall facing the water hole, reading:

*The Desert Beetle
The Coldest Water!
The Finest Spirits!
The Best Bread Anywhere!*

During the day both gates are open, with wagons passing through either east to west or west to east. Camels and horses are watered in the courtyard, while many of the travelers step into the inn for a meal or a drink. Some stay for a short time before moving on, while others stay the night.

During the night, the gates are closed and a **Saracen Guard (hp 32)** stands guard at each one. Each gate has a small view port. The Bouncers stand guard in four-hour shifts. They admit any travelers they deem reputable or wealthy enough. Those who appear short on cash or likely to cause trouble can camp near the water hole.

Saracen Guards (6) Male Human Ftr 4: CR 3; SZ M (humanoid); HD 4d10+4; hp 32; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 18 (+1 Dex, +6 Banded Mail, +1 Shield); Atks Club +7 (1d6+3), scimitar +7 (1d6+3); SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 9; AL NE; Skills: Climb +8, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +1, Jump +5, Ride +7. Feats: Alertness, Power Attack, Quick Draw.

A. THE COURTYARD

The Courtyard is hard-packed sand. A stout wooden rail about 3 ft. high encircles the courtyard so guests may hitch their horses or camels. Two young girls stand drawing water from the well in the center, filling the water trough for the travelers passing through. The girls are dressed in layered white robes for protection from the sun, and their eyes are downcast, their faces sullen.

These girls are two of Malloc's slaves. They are polite and subservient, not to mention quite pretty, and they look to be roughly seventeen. They are not allowed to say they are 'slaves.' They are merely "under contract to him." (This twisting of words is one of the ways he manipulates them.) If pressed, they claim that they are free to leave at any time. A Sense Motive check (DC 17) reveals that they are covering up something. Perhaps they are terrified of Malloc.

Slave Girls (6): CR 1/4; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d6; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AC 10; Atks Melee +0 (subdual, unarmed strike 1d3-1); SV Ref +0, Fort +0, Will +0; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14; AL LN; Skills: Craft (cooking) +1, Listen +1.

B. THE STABLE

At any time 2d4 horses may be found here, along with their tack and saddles. The stable fee is a steep 1 gp per night.

C. COMMON ROOM

Tables, benches, and chairs fill the empty space. The light-colored tile floor is heavily worn and scratched with constant traffic. The air is redolent with the scents of smoke, spirits, and food. There is also another scent, like bread baking, only slightly different. An enormous cask rests behind the bar. Standing behind the bar is a tall, lean man, with a hairless pate polished to a high sheen, a face like a hatchet, and deep-set black eyes. He wears the layered white robes of desert folk. Nailed to the wall behind him is a large wooden placard with the bill of fare chalked upon it, and a note at the bottom which reads in Common, "For special goods and services, speak to the bartender." Serving girls circulate among the patrons, bearing platters of food and drink. A large, well-armed man lounges in a chair beside each entrance, clubs and shields prominently placed beside them.

The prices for food and drink are triple the rates listed in the *PHB*. The Desert Beetle has six guest rooms, all of good quality with sturdy locks on the doors. Each costs 10 gp per night. Sleeping in the common room on a bench, table, or parcel of floor costs 2 gp.

The men beside the doors are **Saracen Guards (hp 32)**, seemingly at ease, but alert for any trouble brewing in the inn.

The man behind the bar is Malloc himself. It is the best place for him to keep an eye on things. He works here throughout business hours, from sunrise to midnight. Under his robes he wears his armor and hides his whip (refer to the *New Magic Item* entry at the end of this adventure for further details), and his sap is always within arm's reach. He is an ugly man, but he is always pleasant and deferential to customers unless they cause trouble. He has a short temper with his girls, and keeps a switch behind the bar to "correct" them if they misbehave. He keeps a ring of keys to all the locks on his person at all times. He trusts absolutely nothing in this world except himself.

The "Special Goods" referred to on the placard means the stolen loot Malloc sells to passing merchants and traders, and the "Services" it mentions are those of his slave girls, as company for the evening.

To anyone who looks to be of sufficient means and weak enough morals he may even offer one of his slaves for sale. "Untrained" slaves — like Julira, the merchant's daughter — are generally kept locked in cells on the second floor, but he does not reveal this unless he has an interested buyer. He never makes this offer to anyone who appears to be too altruistic or kind-hearted. He chooses his clients carefully, seeking those who won't interfere with his plans.

The "Special Goods" are kept in the Emporium on the second floor (see *Area L* on page #7). Malloc charges an up-front fee of 100 gp just to look around in the Emporium, which is refunded toward any purchase price.

PCs who make a Spot check (DC 15) notice that one of the three serving girls is moving very stiffly and awkwardly, as if in great pain. Yesterday, Malloc flogged her for openly defying him when a patron got fresh with her. The bruises and cuts have been carefully placed so they cannot be seen. Malloc has not yet broken her will, so she has not yet been forced into prostitution, but she fears her day is coming soon. If the PCs attempt to speak to her, she says that her name is **Padrea (hp 3)**. She has only been here about a month. Her stepfather sold her to Malloc to repay a debt, and her mother is dead. She has no family who can help her, and nowhere to run. Padrea would do anything to escape. However, she has no friends here. The other girls have ostracized her for resisting Malloc (this makes it difficult on all of them). If they know she was trying to escape they will betray her to Malloc.

PCs that try to help Padrea attract attention quickly.

Malloc, Male Human Rgr 6: CR 6, SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d10+6; hp 46; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +1 studded leather armor); Atks lash of malloc +10/+5 (1d2+4 subdual), sap +6/+1 (1d6+1 subdual); SA *shocking grasp*, 3 times per day, 1d8+10 subdual damage, trip attack +7 bonus to Strength check, disarm +7; SV Ref +5, Fort +6, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 10; AL NE; Skills: Bluff +4, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (nature) +1, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Profession (innkeeper) +4, Search +2, Sense Motive +6, Spot +5, Use Rope +6, Wilderness Lore +6. Feats: Ambidexterity, Exotic (Whip), Focus (Whip), Track, Two-weapon fighting.

D. KITCHEN

A typical looking kitchen. A large grinding wheel is being worked by a fat, sweaty man with a broken nose and a lazy eye. The smells of roasting goat, dried figs, and baking bread are heavy in the air. In the southwest corner of the room, a wooden ladder climbs up to a small door set in the ceiling.

The cook's name is Brudge. He's a quiet, territorial man. Malloc likes to keep him around because he's compliant and listless. He knows about Malloc's dealings but is too stupid and lazy to change how things are. Instead, he keeps to his work, keeping his mouth shut.

He is more afraid of Malloc than any threats the PCs may offer. His Will saves to betray Malloc are at +6.

E. STORAGE ROOM

A room full of sacks of food stores. Several large coils of rope (6 coils of 100' each) are stacked near the door.

F. SLAVES' ROOM

Six crude pallets of straw and rags are arranged in this small room.

After business hours, the six slave girls sleep here. The door is kept locked whenever they are inside.

G. GUEST ROOMS

Two comfortable beds and a basin filled with clean water.

Malloc keeps the security of his customers high on his list of priorities. Thievery is harshly dealt with. He has not built The Desert Beetle's reputation by allowing such things.

H. BACK DOOR

There is no opening mechanism on the outside of this door. Inside, the door is triple-bolted, with a stout lock on the latch.

Malloc uses this door for supply deliveries, and as a possible escape route.

I. TRAP DOOR

At the end of this hallway, a large cask of wine sits on a small table.

A Spot check (DC 20) reveals that this cask is empty, and there are faint scrape marks on the floor indicating that the table can be moved. The wall behind the cask is a false one, concealing a trap door that leads to the Desert Goblin Den.

J. MALLOC'S ROOM

The walls are covered with fine paintings and wall hangings. A solid silver tea set of exquisite workmanship rests on a polished mahogany table, surrounded by four over-stuffed chairs. An enormous feather bed dominates one wall, swathed in red silk sheets. Delicate golden chains and manacles hang from the footboard posts. An elegant rug, woven with golden filaments depicting a fiery battle between djinni and efreeti covers the floor.

During business hours, Malloc is never found here. Between midnight and sunrise, he is here 75% of the time. The rest of the time he spends going through fresh loot in the goblin den or negotiating underhanded deals with disreputable merchants. When Malloc is here, there is a 50% chance 1d3 slave girls (not including Padrea) are chained to the foot of the bed with the golden manacles.

If Malloc is ever cornered by a superior force, he shows no fear, but tries to bribe the PCs into letting him go (with his Bluff +4). He says he has a vast treasure, but it is hidden. It can't be found without his help.

The silver tea set is valued at 500 gp, the four over-stuffed chairs are valued at 50 gp each, and the rug is valued at 700 gp.

K. SARACEN GUARDS' ROOM

This is a plain, undecorated room with six comfortable beds. The room stinks of sweat and unwashed clothing, which lies scattered around the room. A small square table with four chairs sits along one wall.

Sitting on the table is a cup full of dice. A thorough search of the room turns up 2d6 gp of dropped coinage. The guards spend their pay as quickly as they make it. They have no accumulated wealth. Malloc keeps promising them a cut of some of his ill-gotten take, but has not yet followed through.

Two Saracen guards may be found here 90% of the time. All six of them rotate through their shifts, with four guards always on duty, and the other two resting. They obey Malloc because he does not mistreat them (mutiny is bad for business) and he has promised them great wealth in the future. They will not lay down their lives for him, however. They may choose an expeditious time to move on, if necessary.

Any guards here rush to join a fight if one occurs.

L. EMPORIUM

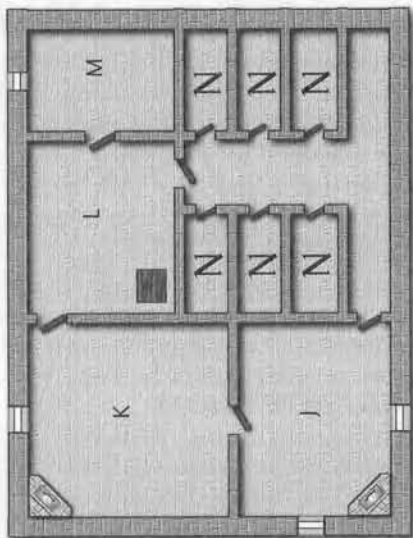
This room is filled with dozens of items, crystal decanters, bolts of fine silk, goblets of silver and gold, and other fine items.

The total value of the items present amounts to roughly 2d10 x 100 gp. In addition, magical items, special goods, and whatever else the GM desires are for sale. Malloc is a wily trader and chances are he stores exotic items that the PCs would not normally find. If the PCs ask for something exotic (like a flying carpet or a spice not found in this region), provide a 5% chance for the item to appear in this room after 1d4 minutes of searching.

M. BEDROOM

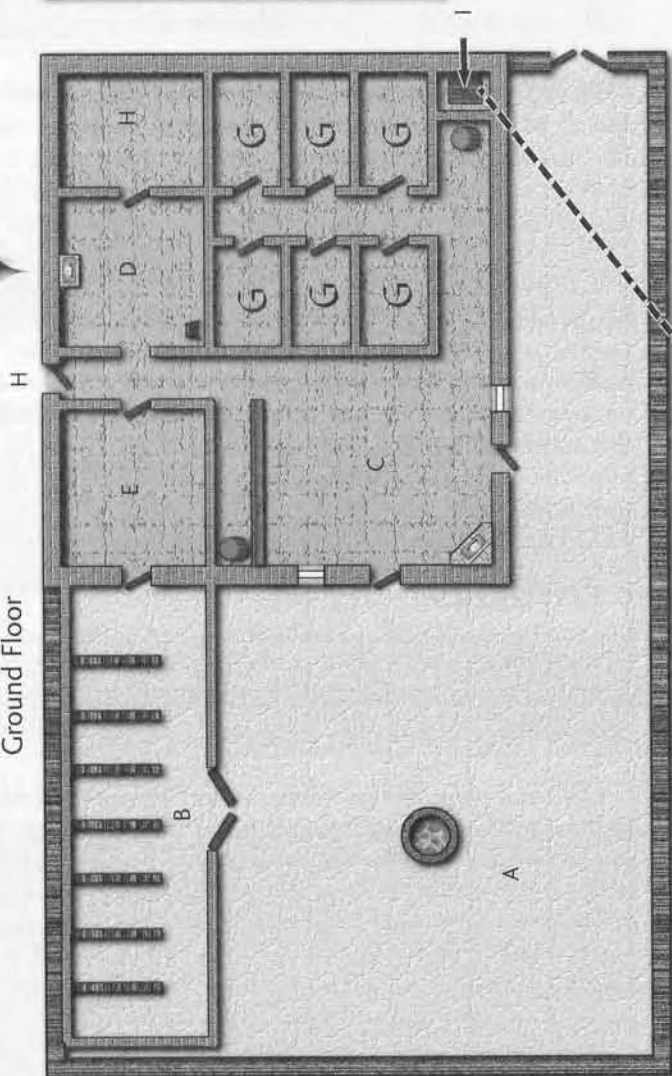
This room is used when one of the downstairs guest rooms is unavailable for a liaison between a patron and a slave girl. There is a 50% chance during business

2nd Floor



0 5 10 15 20
Scale in Feet

Ground Floor



**THE DESERT
BEETLE INN**

(above)

**DESERT
GOBLIN'S LAIR**

(right)

hours that this room will be occupied. It is presently be used to store overflow from the Emporium.

N. CELLS

A single oil lamp burns at one end of this dark hallway, revealing six tightly-locked doors. The doors are stout, ironbound wood, and the locks look to be well-used and freshly oiled.

PCs can make a Listen check (DC 15) to hear weeping coming from one of the locked cells. This is **Julira (hp 2)** the merchant's daughter, a pretty fourteen-year-old girl. The keys to the cells can only be found on Malloc's person. An Open Lock check (DC 25) will open the lock. If the PCs open her cell, they will find her bruised and beaten, but with no permanent injuries. Once she realizes that the PCs are not Malloc, she throws herself at the first rescuer she sees, crying with joy, loudly thanking him for saving her.

DESERT GOBLIN DEN

The tunnels leading into the goblins' lair slope sharply downward. Curved lines in the tunnel passages denote a downward drop of about 2 ft. The long passageways leading off the map to the northeast and the south both extend for about 200 yards and are blocked at the end by two feet of sand concealing the hole.

The ceilings of the connecting passageways are only about five feet high, so taller characters have to stoop. These passageways also slope sharply. Only the natural roughness of the rock makes it possible to traverse these without a Climb check. However, if combat occurs in these sloping areas, characters must make a Climb check (DC 15) every round of combat or slide 2d10 feet down the slope. The goblins are not subject to these Climb checks.

The angle of the slope and small size of the passageway blocks line of sight into the larger chambers unless the PC is within 10 feet of the cavern opening. This also applies to ranged attacks and spells. PCs lying prone on the slope have line of sight within 20 feet of the opening.

There is no light here. The goblins are happy to use their Darkvision, and they do not use fire for cooking, preferring to eat everything raw.

The goblins fight fiercely to defend their home. If a fight breaks out, all the goblins in adjoining chambers come to join the fight. The goblins in room #5 fight only if necessary. They are not skilled with weapons and most of the women defend their children rather than leap into the fray. If the sounds of combat in #3 and #4 grow loudly, the goblins in room 5 race to the escape tunnels.

Should the PCs attack the goblins in #5 first, the goblins in #3 and #4 come to the rescue, fighting fiercely to defend their kin.

The walls of the passages appear to be natural, not cut from the rock. The air is cool and moist, but reeks with a strange fetid odor.

1. MEETING CHAMBER

This chamber is empty except for a small equipment rack.

This room is where Malloc conducts all his business with the tribe of desert goblins living in these caverns. He prefers not to venture deeper into their caves. He is nevertheless aware of the den's two other exits, and their locations above ground.

This room is also Malloc's fallback position. If things get too hot in the inn upstairs, he attempts to flee here, using his men to guard his escape. On the equipment rack hang a longbow and quiver of arrows, a scabbarded masterwork longsword, a lantern half-filled with oil, and a small pouch containing two potions of cure moderate wounds, which he will use if wounded.

The goblins do not come here unless they are expecting a meeting with Malloc.

2. MALE LIVING QUARTERS

The far end of this chamber is lost in the darkness. The ceiling looks to be about 10 feet high. The cavern is littered with refuse: gnawed bones, countless random bits of cloth, and small weapons, all rusted and broken. The room reeks of death, decay, and unwashed goblins.

During daylight hours, forty male desert goblins can be found here. 2d20 of these will be sleeping. During the night, only 2d10 will be here. The rest are out looking for food and loot. They have never had an incursion into their domain, so they are not expecting one.

A thorough search of this chamber yields 2d20 cp, 2d10 sp, and 2d6 gp.

3. SUB-CHIEF LIVING QUARTERS

During daylight hours, all of the tribe's sub-chiefs can be found here: four 3rd level Fighters and one 5th level Fighter. There is a 35% chance that each of them is sleeping. At night this room is empty.

Sergeants (4) Desert Goblin Ftr 3: CR 3; SZ S (humanoid); HD 3; hp 18, 20, 22, 22; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +3 Studded Leather Armor, +1 Size); Atks Short Sword +4 (1d6+1); SV Ref +3, Fort +4, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 6; AL NE; Skills: Hide +10, Listen +3, Move Silently +8, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore (desert) +4. Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative.

Lieutenant (1) Desert Goblin Ftr 5: CR 5; SZ S (humanoid); HD 5; hp 34; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +3 Studded Leather Armor, +1

Size); Atks Short Sword +8/+3 (1d6+2); SV Ref +3, Fort +5, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 6; AL NE; Skills: Hide +10, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore (desert) +4. Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Focus (short sword).

4. GOBLIN CHIEF'S CHAMBER

The **Goblin Chief's (hp 44)** name roughly translates into Common as "Desiccated Sand Spider." He can be found here 75% of the time with his three favorite **concubines (hp 5 each)**. The tribe's accumulated wealth is claimed by the chief: 700 gp, two large black pearls worth 200 gp each, and a gold ring worth 150 gp. Most of their stolen loot they trade to Malloc for food, water, and information on targets.

Goblin Chief (1) Desert Goblin Ftr 7: CR ; SZ S (humanoid); HD 7d8+14; hp 44; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +3 Studded Leather Armor, +1 Size); Atks Short Sword +8/+3 (1d6+2); SV Ref +4, Fort +7, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 6; AL NE; Skills: Hide +10, Listen +8, Move Silently +10, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore (desert) +8. Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (short sword).

5. LIVING QUARTERS

45 desert goblin females (**hp 2**) are found here, along with 40 young goblins (**hp 1**) of various age. All of them fight in the defense of their home if they are attacked, but will leave the PCs alone if they know the chief and other warriors are dead. There are no valuables to be found.

If the PCs make enough noise, the females and young race to the surface using the escape tunnels (see #7).

6. REFUSE CHAMBER

The stench coming from this room is overpowering, even twenty feet from the opening.

PCs must make a Fortitude Save (DC 20) to avoid becoming nauseous within 20 feet of the opening to this chamber. The goblins use this chamber as a combination garbage dump and latrine. There is nothing of value here.

Anyone who spends a full turn in this chamber is attacked by 4 **bombardier beetles (hp 14 each)** living in the refuse.

Giant Bombardier Beetles (4): CR 2; SZ M (vermin); HD 2d8+4; hp 13; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AC 16 (+6 natural); Atks Bite +2 melee (1d4+1); SA Once/round acid spray, Fort save DC 13 or take 1d4+2 damage; SV Ref +0, Fort +5, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 9; AL N; Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5.

7. ESCAPE TUNNELS

Winding up through the rock, this tunnel is short and its steps narrow and steppe. It is hard to navigate by anything larger than small creatures

The tunnels here are short, steep, and hard for anyone larger than small size to navigate. In addition, they are only wide enough for one person at a time. It is 80 feet to the surface and the steps are worn from years of use by the desert goblins.

Medium-sized creatures move at a maximum of 10 feet per round, and have a -4 penalty to Dex while on the steps. are have a +2 circumstance bonus to be hit, and have a -4 to all Dex related skill checks and Reflex saves. Rogues moving.

8. CLAY CHAMBER

A trickle of water seeps from a small fissure in the ceiling clinging to the wall as it cascades over the rock. Drinking water gathers in a hollowed-out cavity in the chamber floor.

The hollow cavity holds a little over one gallon of water, and refills five to ten times per day, depending on the season. It is always half-full when the PCs find it, as the goblins draw their water from here.

Over the years, the amount of water and sand that has trickled through the cracks has created an inordinate amount of clay deposits. So much so, that the goblins make crude clay sculptures. However, since they lack the technology to cook clay (a kiln), they have no pottery.

Because the water supply is so limited, the men have first access to the water and baths are a luxury for those that find an over ground oasis

NEW MONSTER

DESERT GOBLIN

Small Humanoid (Goblinoid)

Desert goblins have adapted to the harsh conditions of the open desert. They are similar in most respects to their "water-soft" cousins, but their environment has made them tougher and more cunning. They often prey upon me chant caravans along major trade routes and bands of desert nomads unlucky enough to stumble into their domain. To avoid the scorching desert heat as much as possible, they prefer to operate above ground only at night.

They are omnivorous and eat practically anything to survive, including carrion, even resorting to cannibalism when food is scarce. Their preferred food is raw flesh (any species), as they savor its high moisture content.

Desert goblins resemble mummified normal goblins. Their skin looks like dried leather in varying shades of tan or dun. Their ears are shorter, their eyes yellow, their teeth and claws cracked and filthy. Their feet have thick pads like a camel's, to allow them to walk on the hot desert sand without discomfort. They generally wear layered robes of light tan or light brown. These colors allow them to blend in perfectly with the desert sand. They are often mistaken

for small mummies — that is, when they can be seen at all.

They also have a unique ability to burrow quickly into desert sand. They can reach a depth of 4 ft. in two rounds. They cannot travel this way, however. This ability is used only to conceal themselves or avoid capture. They can slow their breathing while under the sand so they need no breathing tubes to the surface, and can remain buried for about two hours before having to return to the surface to breathe.

COMBAT

Desert goblins prefer to fight only in large groups. If they do not outnumber their prey by 4 to 1 or more, they usually flee or attempt to hide by burrowing into the sand. They have been known to remain undetected within a few feet of passersby.

They are adept at staging ambushes in the open desert, hiding in the sand until their prey is within their circle. They much prefer to steal what they want and slip away undetected.

Their favorite method of attack is to shower their prey with slung stones to soften them up, then rush and finish them off with short swords.

Skills: Desert goblins gain several racial bonuses which apply only in a desert or underground environment: +8 to Move Silently checks, +8 to Hide checks, +4 Wilderness Lore.

Hit Dice: 1d8+1 (6 hp)
 Initiative: +2 (Dex)
 Speed: 30 ft.
 AC: 16 (+1 Size, +2 Dex, +3 Studded Leather Armor)
 Attacks: Sling +3 ranged (1d4), short sword +1 melee (1d6)
 Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
 Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.
 Saves: Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1
 Abilities: Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 6
 Skills: Hide +10, Listen +3, Move Silently +8, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +4

Feats: Alertness
 Climate/Terrain: Desert only
 Organization: Gang (4-9), band (10-100 plus 100% noncombatants plus 1 3rd level sergeant per 20 adults, and 1 leader of 4th-6th level), or tribe (40-400 plus 1 3rd level sergeant per 20 adults, 1 or 2 lieutenants of 4th or 5th level, 1 leader of 6th to 8th level)
 Challenge Rating: 1/3
 Treasure: Standard
 Alignment: Usually neutral evil



NEW MAGIC ITEM

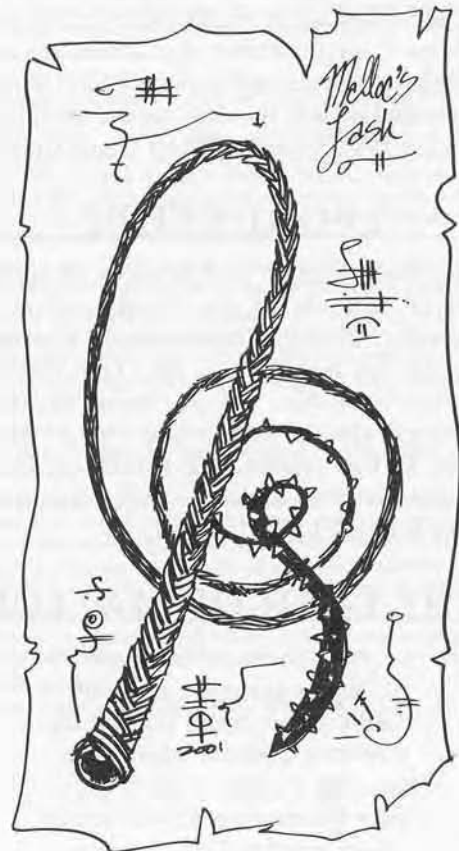
MALLOC'S LASH

Artifact (+2 ghost touch, unholy, wounding longsword)

Description: The innkeeper's lash is a vile-looking bullwhip that is made from a single piece of thick animal hide. The grip is wrapped in leather strips with a polished brass knob on the pommel. The whip tapers to a thin point with a small brass weight attached to the end. The last two feet of length have tiny steel teeth embedded in the leather. In combat it functions as a magical +3 whip dealing 1d2 + 3 damage with the following exceptions:

All disarm and trip attacks made by the wielder are always made with a +7 enhancement bonus to the checks for those actions. If the wielder successfully disarms an opponent, the weapon lands at the feet of the whip wielder, not the original owner. Three times per day, the wielder can speak the command word "kneel" as a free action to deliver a modified shocking grasp to the next person hit. The shocking grasp delivers 1d8+10 hp of magical subdual damage in addition to the normal damage dealt by the whip. As with the shocking grasp spell, if the target is wearing metal armor or carrying a lot of metal, this attack gains an additional +3 bonus.

Caster Level: 10th; Prerequisites: Craft Magic Weapon, shocking grasp; Market Price: 1,000 gp; Weight: 2 lb.



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THE LASH OF MALLOC

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