



# DARK • SUN™

W O R L D

Official Game Adventure

## Black Flames

by Sam Witt



The cover art depicts a desolate, orange-hued landscape under a large, glowing sun. In the foreground, three figures with green, scaly skin and dark, tattered clothing are shown. The central figure has a pained or shouting expression, while the others look on with somber or distressed faces. In the background, jagged, reddish mountains rise against the sky. At the top, a banner with a jagged, metallic edge contains the title 'DARK SUN' in large, stylized letters, with the word 'WORLD' written in smaller letters below it. A small globe is visible in the upper right corner of the banner.

# DARK SUN

W O R L D

Yaramuke  
city of  
black waters

Player's Book



# Black Flames

A DARK SUN™ Campaign Adventure

## Player's Book

### Credits

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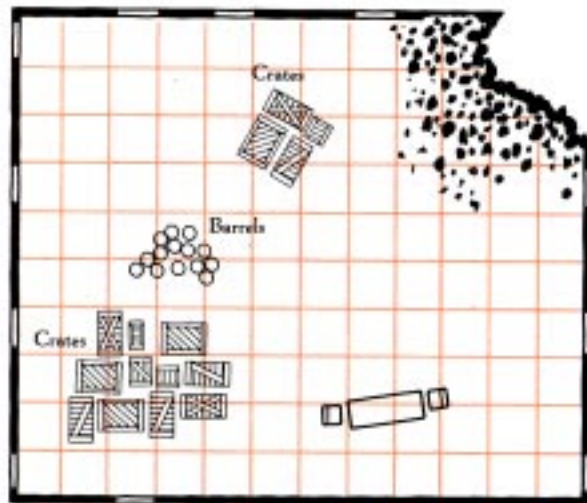


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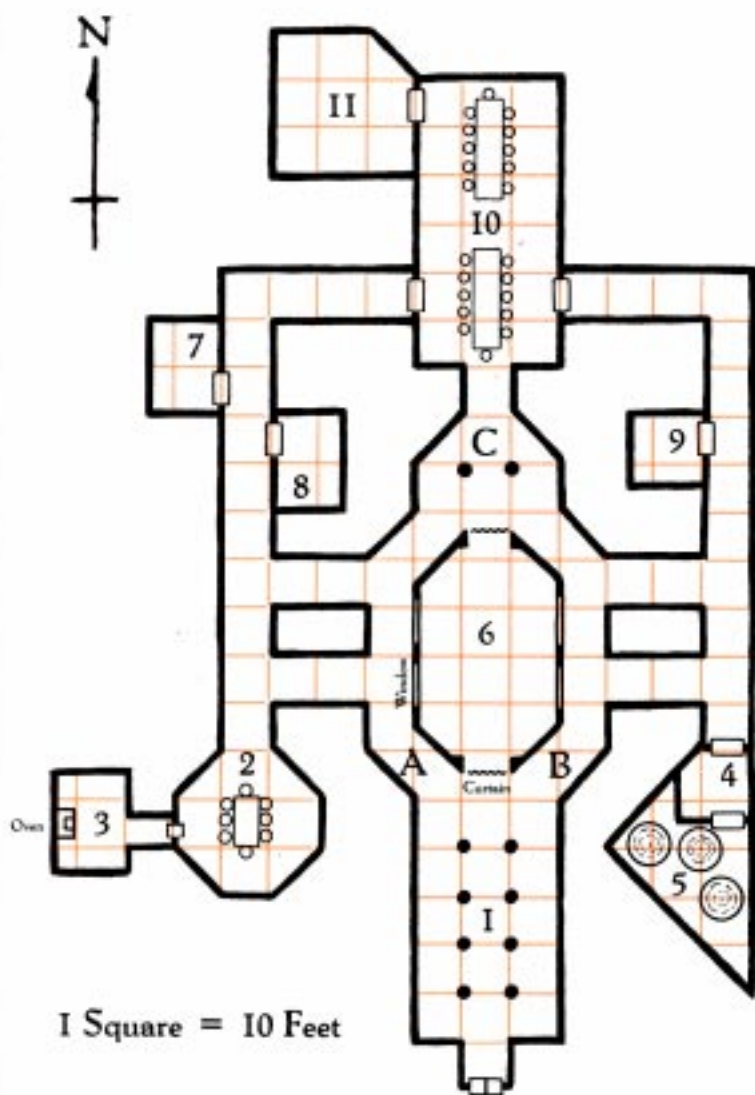
1-56076-580-1

One:  
Warehouse



1 Square = 10 Feet

## Two: The Palace



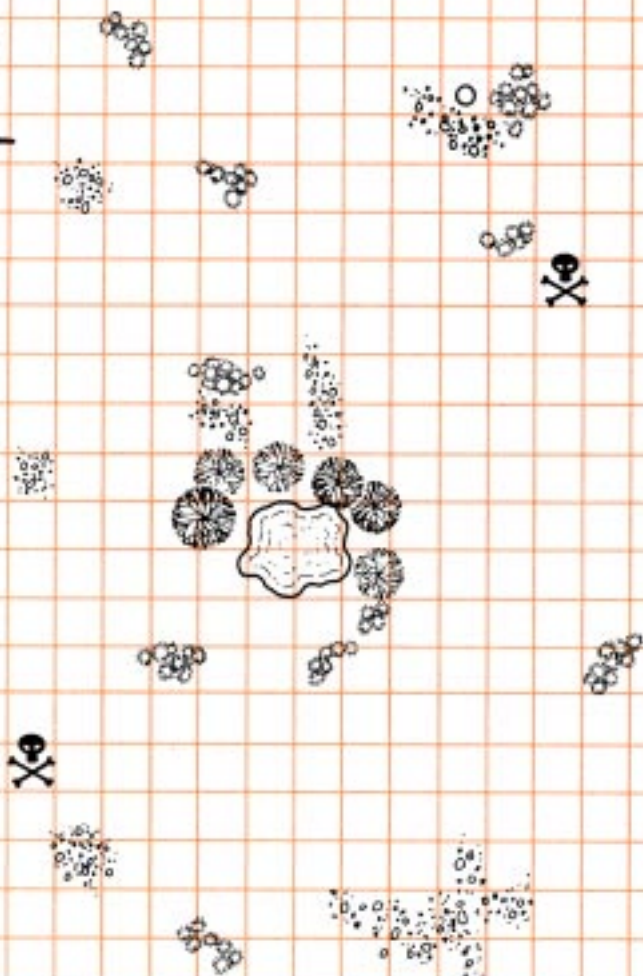
Three:  
Cool Summons



Four:  
Traders



Five:  
Oasis



1 Square = 30 Feet



Six:  
Watering Hole



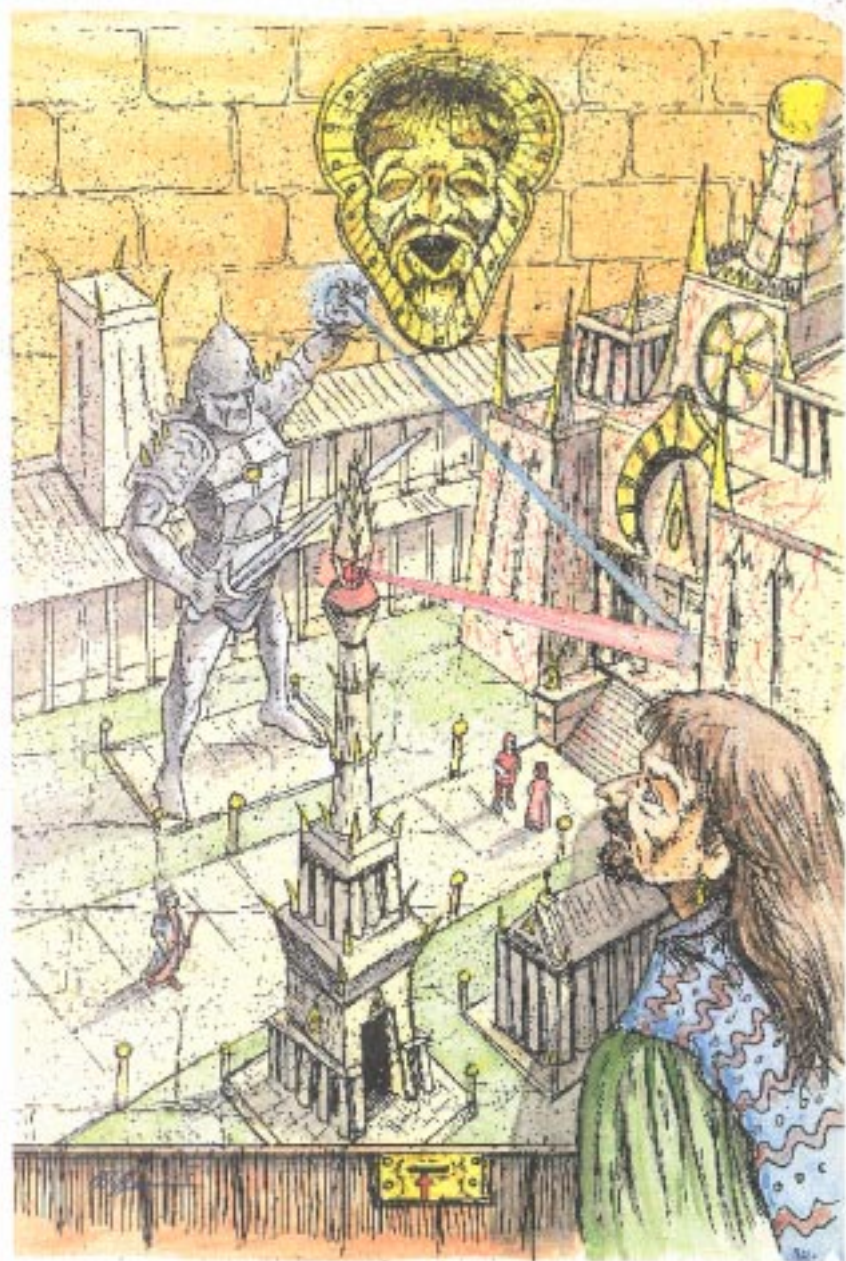
Seven:  
Guiding Farcluun



Eight:  
Ambush

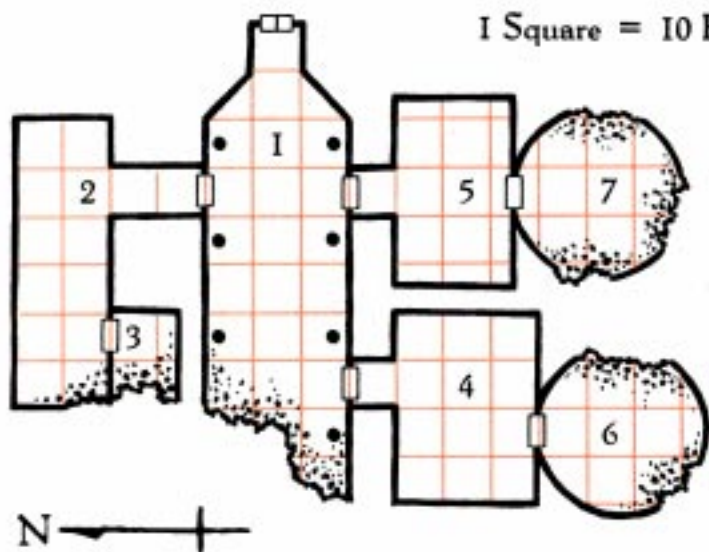


Nine:  
Visitors' Center



Ten:  
Museum

1 Square = 10 Feet



Eleven:  
Hopeless Battle



Twelve:  
Druid of Black Waters



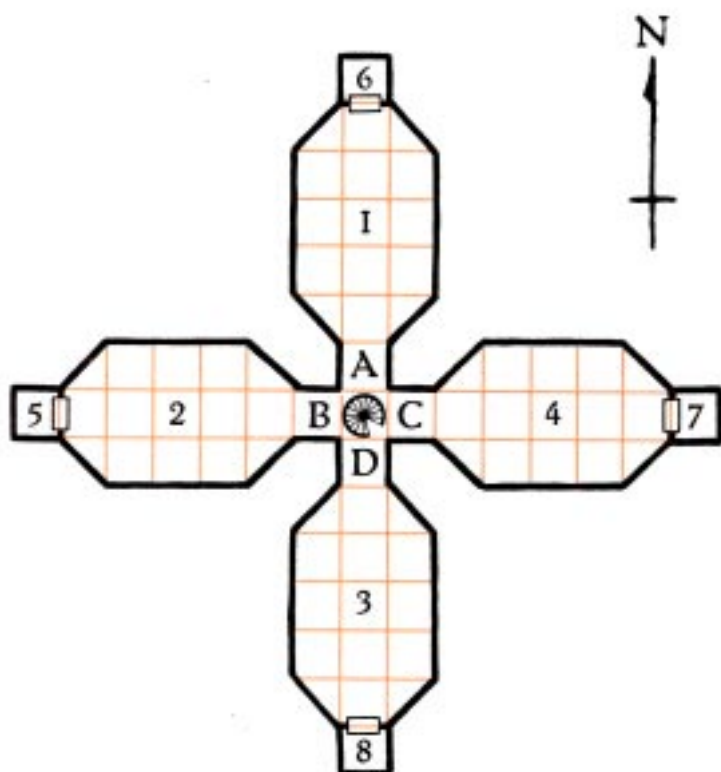
Thirteen:  
Statue





Fourteen:  
Palace Sublevel 2

1 Square = 10 Feet



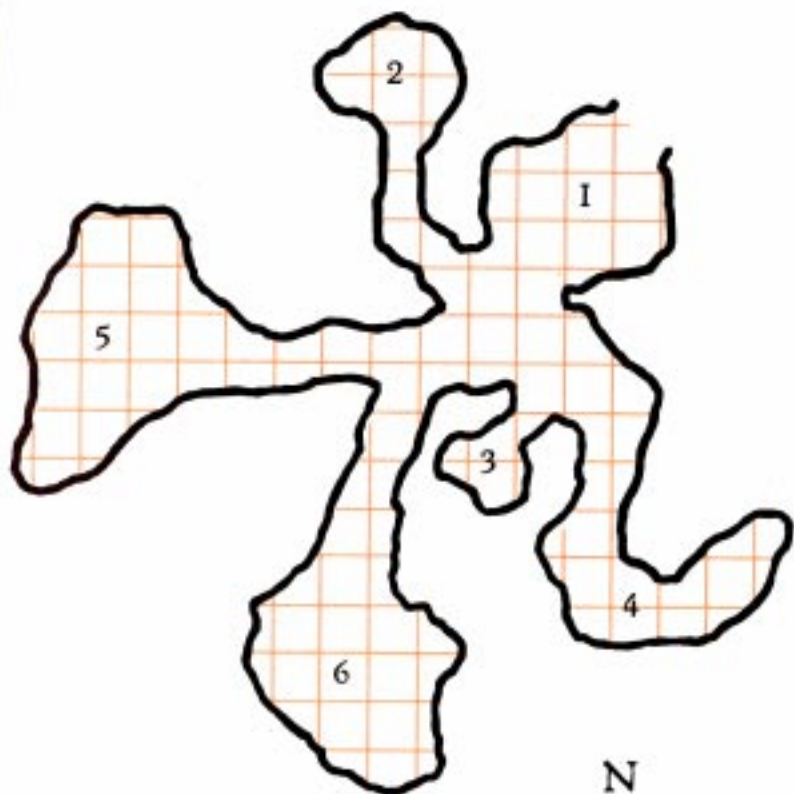
Fifteen:  
Sandstorm!



Sixteen:  
Enemies

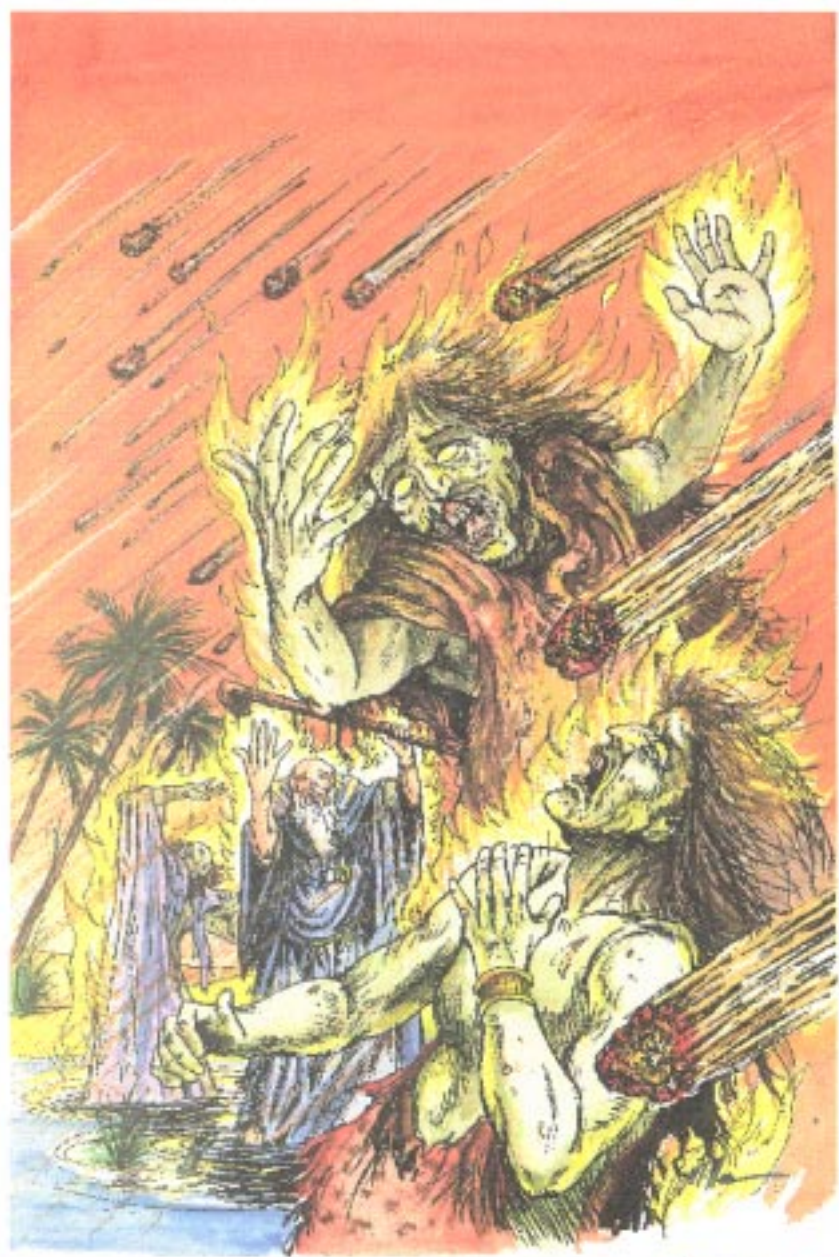


Seventeen:  
Cavern Level 1



1 Square = 10 Feet

Eighteen:  
Black Flames



## Nineteen: Rowan

Female Elf Preserver/Thief  
3rd Level/4th Level  
Neutral Good

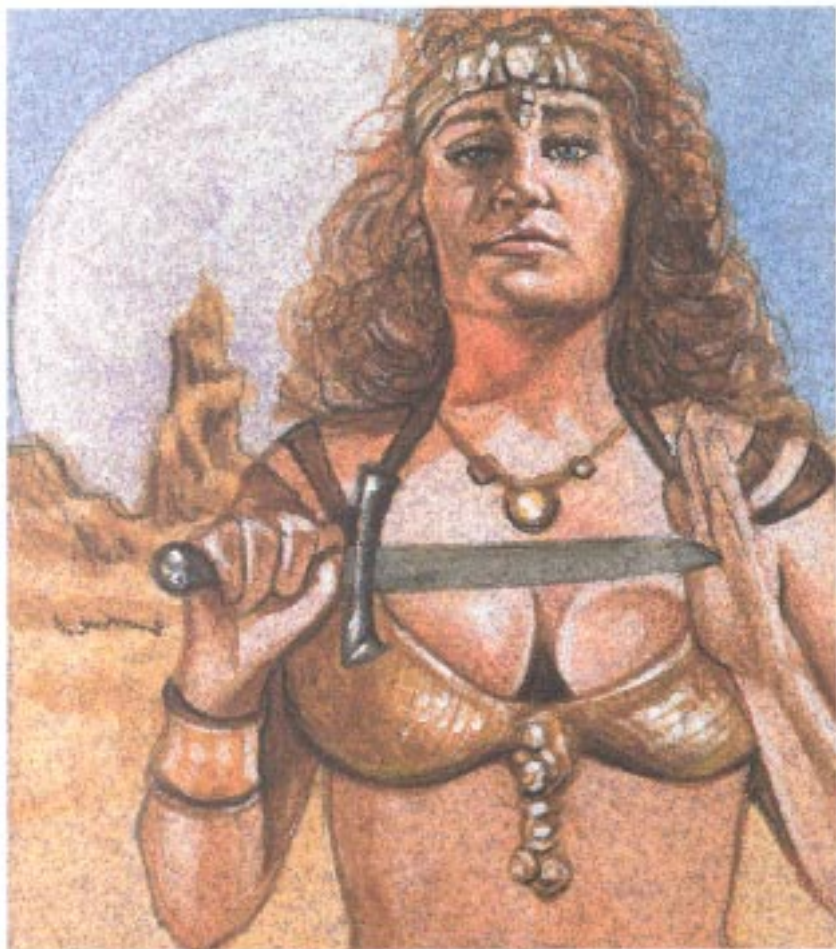
|     |    |     |    |
|-----|----|-----|----|
| Str | 14 | Int | 17 |
| Dex | 21 | Wis | 13 |
| Con | 15 | Cha | 16 |



## Twenty: Shayira the Earth-Singer

Female Human Earth Cleric  
5th Level  
Chaotic Good

|     |    |     |    |
|-----|----|-----|----|
| Str | 17 | Int | 12 |
| Dex | 13 | Wis | 19 |
| Con | 16 | Cha | 14 |



## Twenty-One: Ashathra the Swift

Female Human Bard

5th Level

Chaotic Neutral

|     |    |     |    |
|-----|----|-----|----|
| Str | 12 | Int | 15 |
| Dex | 19 | Wis | 10 |
| Con | 15 | Cha | 18 |





## Twenty-Two: Stug

Male Half-Giant Gladiator  
4th Level  
Neutral?

|     |    |     |    |
|-----|----|-----|----|
| Str | 22 | Int | 13 |
| Dex | 15 | Wis | 11 |
| Con | 19 | Cha | 7  |



## Twenty-Three: Ka'Cha

Male Thri-Kreen Cleric/Psionist  
4th Level/3rd Level  
Neutral

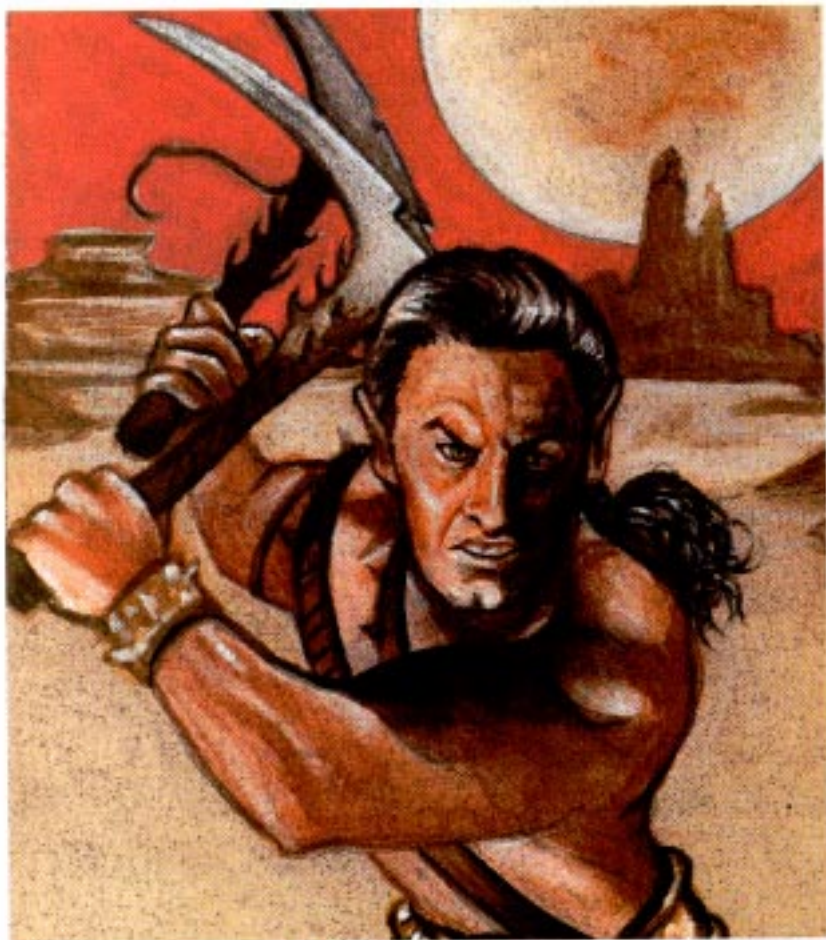
|     |    |     |    |
|-----|----|-----|----|
| Str | 16 | Int | 16 |
| Dex | 17 | Wis | 19 |
| Con | 17 | Cha | 11 |



## Twenty-Four: Galek Sandstrider

Male Half-Elf Ranger/Psionicist  
3rd Level/3rd Level  
Neutral Good

|     |    |     |    |
|-----|----|-----|----|
| Str | 19 | Int | 15 |
| Dex | 16 | Wis | 16 |
| Con | 17 | Cha | 15 |



## Twenty-Five: Galek (continued)

**Reaction Adjustments:** Surprise +1  
NPCs +3

**#AT:** 2 with long bow  
2 with bone impalers  
1 or 2 with daggers

**THAC0:** 18

Bone impalers 16  
Custom long bow with obsidian arrow 15  
Custom long bow with steel arrow 14  
Dagger held/thrown 17/15

**Damage:** Bone impaler 1d8+6/1d8+6  
Obsidian flight arrow 1d6+5/1d6+5  
Steel flight arrow 1d6+7/1d6+7  
Obsidian dagger 1d4+5/1d3+5

**AC:** 4 in hide armor (modified for Dexterity)

**HP:** 29

**Species Enemy:** Dune Freak

+4 to attack, -4 reaction check

**Saving Throws:**

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | SP |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 13 | 15  | 10 | 16 | 15 |

+2 on all saves vs. enchantment/charm spells and similar effects

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Composite long bow, impaler, dagger, spear

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Heat Protection, Rejuvenation, Survival (Stony Barrens), Survival (Sandy Wastes), Tacking

**Languages:** Common

**Disciplines:** Clairsentience, Psychokinesis

**Sciences:** Project Force (Con-2, 10, na), Telekinesis (Wis-3,3+, 1+/rd)

**Devotions:** Combat Mind (Int-4,5,4/rd), Control Light (Int, 12,4/rd), Control Sound (Int-5,5,2/rd), Know Direction (Int, 1, na), Levitate (Wis-3,12,2/rd), Molecular Manipulation (Int-3,6,5/rd), Soften (Int,4,3/rd)

**Defense Modes:** Mental Barrier Wis-2, 3, na), MindBlank (Wis:7,0,0)

**PSP:** 46

**Equipment:** Mekillot hide armor, 2 bone impalers, 2 obsidian daggers, composite long bow (custom-built for Strength damage bonus), quiver with 20 obsidian-head arrows and 7 steel-head arrows, backpack (50 feet of rope, clothing, blanket, 2 week's rations), 4 one-gallon waterskins, 2 large belt pouches, small tent

### Background

At an early age you took for yourself the name of the famed adventurer, Galek Sandstrider, who lived nearly 100 years ago. As with most half-elves, you are a loner. You are the child of an elf mother and a human father and were raised in an elf clan—the Sky Singers, a merchant tribe that wanders from city to city through the vast deserts. As you grew, you learned how to survive and how to fight in the wilderness because you spent much of your time alone, due to the Sky Singers' half-hearted acceptance of you. Eventually you decided that you would be better off without their prejudices and suspicions, and you struck out on your own. As a skilled fighter, you learned that there was always someone ready to pay you for your abilities, and you found work as a caravan guard. You tend to conceal your mental talents, preferring to reserve them for an unexpected advantage in a tight situation. Your life with your former tribe has made you a loner, cautious to trust anyone. It has been your experience that sooner or later the prejudices of all companions surface—forcing you once again to depart for new territories.

## Twenty-Six: Ka'Cha (continued)

**Reaction Adjustments:** Surprise +2  
N P C s 0

**#AT:** 5 with claws and a bite  
2 with chatkcha  
1 with gythka  
1 with quabone

**THAC0:** 18  
Chatkcha 17  
Quabone 18

**Damage:** Claws (4) 1d4/1d4  
Bite 1d4+1/1d4+1  
Chatkcha 1d6+2/1d4+1  
Gythka 2d4/1d10  
Quabone 1d4/1d3

**AC:** 2  
**HP:** 24

### Cleric of Earth Spells:

- Six 1 St-level spells
  - Four 2nd-level spells (includes Wisdom adjustment)
  - *Spheres of Access:* Major to Earth, minor to Cosmos
- Turn Undead

### Saving Throws:

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | SP |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 3  | 13  | 10 | 15 | 14 |

+4 to saves vs. mind-affecting spells

Immune to *cause fear, charm person, command, friends, hold person, hypnotism* (high Wisdom score and thri-kreen resistances)

### Background

You are of the Chtik-kek pack from a region known as the Yellow Hills. Among your pack, you are known as the kilkeket, or seeker. It has fallen to you to go into the world of humans and their ilk and learn what you can of their ways. The Chtik-kek were fortunate to have been visited by a tohr-kreen named Klik-chaka'da (or just Klik), who taught you your intellectual pursuits and skills and helped you develop the powers of the mind. Because of Klik's tutoring, you are more worldly than your clutchmates back in the Yellow Hills, but there are still many things about humans that you do not understand, particularly money.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Claw, bite, chatkcha  
gythka, quabone

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Artistic Ability (Paint), Direction Sense, Endurance, Psionic Detection, Read/Write Common, Rejuvenation, Sign Language, Somatic Concealment

**Languages:** Thri-kreen, common, gith, tohr-kreen

**Disciplines:** Psychokinetic, Psychometabolic

**Sciences:** Detonate (Con-3, 18, na), Telekinesis (Wis-3, 3+, 1+/round)

**Devotions:** Ballistic Attack (Con-2,5,na), Adrenalin Control (Con-3,8,4/rd), Control Light (Int,12,4/rd), Inertial Barrier (Con-3,7,5/rd), Levitation (Wis-3, 12,2/rd), Molecular Agitation (Wis, 7 6/rd), Reduction (Con-2, varies, 1/rd)

**Defense Modes:** Thought Shield (Wis-3,1, na), Tower of Iron Will (Wis-2,6,na)

**PSP:** 53

**Equipment:** Gythka, quabone, 4 chatkcha, leather harness, leather backpack (metal bell, chalk, 50 feet of rope, ceramic whistle), cloak, holy symbol (hunk of obsidian), 1 week's rations

**Starting Money:** 1 silver piece and 12 ceramic pieces

## Twenty-Seven: Stug (continued)

**Reaction Adjustment:** Surprise 0  
NPCs -1

**#AT:** 2 with gythka  
1 with obsidian harpoon  
1 with stone club

**THAC0:** 17  
Gythka 12  
Obsidian harpoon 15  
Stone club 15

**Damage:** Gythka 2d4+12/1d10+12  
Harpoon 2d4+3/2d6+9  
Stone club 1d6+9/1d3+3

**AC:** 6 in hide armor

**HP:** 61

**Wild Talent:** Complete Healing

**Power Score:** Con

**Cost:** 30, 1/round to maintain

**Wild Talent:** Energy Containment

**Power Score:** Con-2

**Cost:** 10,1/round to maintain

**Wild Talent:** Dimensional Door

**Power Score:** Con-1

**Cost:** 4,2/round to maintain

**PSP:** 68

**Saving Throws:**

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | SP |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 13 | 15  | 14 | 16 | 16 |

**Weapon Proficiencies:** All

**Weapon Specializations:** Ambidexterity,  
Two-weapon Style, Gythka Specialization

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Armor Opti-  
mization, Heat Protection, Endurance,  
Blind-fighting

**Languages:** Common

**Equipment:** Hide armor, 2 gythke, 6 obsid-  
ian harpoons, harpoon quiver, stone club, 6  
50-foot coils of giant-hair rope, 4 one-gallon  
waterskins, 2 week's rations, whetstone, blan-  
ket, backpack

**Starting Money:** 100 ceramic pieces

### Background

Born to a father who served as a guard in the service of a templar in Balic, your life as a child was relatively carefree. When you were a young adult, your father was accused of treason and executed, and you were thrown into the gladiatorial arena. There you were taught the skills you know today. After a time, you earned enough to buy your own freedom; you wisely left the city before your masters could change their minds.

Once out of Balic you worked odd jobs and kept moving, not really sure what to do with your life. While serving as a caravan guard, you met a young and cocky defiler named Riganti who took a liking to you and offered you a job in charge of defending his small and secluded cave stronghold. You did this for a time, training the mostly unruly gith of the area to serve as soldiers to defend Riganti from competitors, but soon enough you tired of Riganti and his harsh and arrogant manner. His cruelty to the gith did not set well with you, but you were unsure how to challenge him.

When a band of adventurers invaded the cave complex, sent by a rival to slay Riganti, you chose to leave him to his own fate and departed, never looking back. You have decided that the best course of action for the time being is to travel rather than settle in one spot with one job.

## Twenty-Eight: Ashathra (continued)

**Reaction Adjustments:** Surprise +3

NPCs +7

**#AT:** 1 and 1 (with daggers)

2 with blowgun

1 with light crossbow

**THAC0:** Bone dagger 19 (16 thrown)

Second bone dagger in off hand 20

Blowgun 15

Light crossbow 15

**Damage:** Bone dagger 1d4-1/1d3-1

Blowgun needle 1/1

Blowgun barbed dart 1d3-1/1d2-1

Obsidian-headed quarrel 1d4-1/1d4-1

**AC:** 4 in leather armor (modified for Dexterity)

**HP:** 26

**Wild Talent:** Ectoplasmic Form

Power Score: Con-4

Cost 9,9/round to maintain

**PSP:** 59

**Thieving Percentages:**

PP OL F/RT MS HS DN CW RL

30 30 30 45 40 20 80 0

**Influence Reactions:** -1 die modifier

**Inspire:** +1 THAC0, +1 to saving throws, or +2 morale

**Identify Magical Item:** 25%

**Saving Throws:**

|    |     |    |    |    |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| DM | RSW | PP | BW | SP |
|----|-----|----|----|----|

|    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 12 | 12 | 11 | 15 | 13 |
|----|----|----|----|----|

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Dagger, light crossbow, blowgun

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Dancing, Disguise, Etiquette, Land-based Riding, Local History, Read/Write Common, Tightrope Walking

**Languages:** Common

**Poisons Known:**

- A (Injected, onset 10-30 minutes, strength 15/0)
- B (Injected, onset 2-12 minutes, strength 20/1-3)
- D (Injected, onset 1-2 minutes, strength 30/2-12)
- E (Injected, onset immediate, strength death/20)

**Equipment** Leather armor, bone dagger, second bone dagger in hidden boot sheath, light crossbow, case with 20 obsidian-headed quarrels, blowgun, pouch with 6 bone needles and 6 bone barbed darts, backpack, 1 one-gallon waterskin, 1 week's rations, tinder kit, oil lamp, 1 flask of oil, 50 feet of silk rope, blanket

**Starting Money:** 11 silver pieces and 33 ceramic pieces

### Background

A native of the city of Tyr, you were born to a poor potter and his wife. When you were still quite young, your father became indebted to a minor nobleman of the city who had him enslaved when he couldn't pay up. He was worked to death in the iron mines of the city. Your mother disappeared soon after his death, abandoning you to your fate in the streets of the city.

Quick and agile, you soon discovered that you could take what you needed as a thief. Your daily meal was stolen from a fruit vendor or snatched from a passing wagon. Your clothes were taken from laundry lines. Everything you needed was there for the taking, and you found that a steady hand and a bit of nerve more than made up for a lack of a home or parents to care for you.

When you were twelve years old, you ran across a slender elf woman who carried a dagger that you fancied. You almost had it in your grasp when she whirled and seized your hand, catching you in the act. The woman was a bard who called herself Sandwhisper. Instead of punishing you, she recognized your potential and took you under her wing.

Sandwhisper taught you the skills of the bard: how to sing, how to dance, how to fight—how to kill. Eventually she grew restless and moved on, leaving you to find your own way in the world. You have learned that everyone leaves sooner or later, and the only person you can count on is yourself. You do whatever pleases you for no one else has your best interests at heart.

## Twenty-Nine: Shayira (continued)

**Reaction Adjustments:** Surprise 0

NPCs +2

**#AT:** 1

**THAC0:** Stone-headed mace 19

Steel dagger 17

Sling 18

**Damage:** Stone-headed mace 1d6+1/1d6

Steel dagger 1d4+1/1d3+1

Sling stone 1d4/1d4

**AC:** 6 in hide armor

**HP:** 36

**Cleric of Earth Spells:**

- Six 1st-level spells
- Five 2nd-level spells
- Two 3rd-level spells (includes Wisdom adjustment)
- *Spheres of Access:* Major to Earth, minor to Cosmos

Turn Undead

Ignore Earth 5 rounds per day

**Wild Talent:** Domination

Power Score: Wis-4

**Cost:** Contact, 2× contact cost to maintain

**Wild Talent:** Mindlink

Power Score: Wis-5

**Cost:** Contact, 8/round to maintain

**Wild Talent:** Contact

**Power Score:** Wis

**Cost:** Varies, 1/round to maintain

**PSP:** 59

**Saving Throws:**

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | SD |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 9  | 13  | 12 | 15 | 14 |

+4 to saves vs. mind-affecting spells

Immune to *cause fear, charm person, command, friends, hypnotism* (high Wisdom score)

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Mace, dagger, sling

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Healing, Fire-building, Singing, Stonemasonry, Water Find

**Languages:** Common, gith

**Equipment:** Mekillot hide armor, stone-headed mace, steel dagger, sling, pouch with 20 sling stones, backpack with flint and steel, 6 torches, 1 flask of oil, 1 week's rations, 1 one-gallon waterskin, small glass mirror, quartz crystal, bedroll

**Starting Money:** 6 silver pieces and 24 ceramic pieces

### Background

The daughter of a nomadic family of herders in the southern slopes of the Ringing Mountains, from birth you were marked as an Earth-Singer by your folk. The sign of the Earth-Singer—tattooed circles on the backs of your hands—was given to you when you reached maturity. The rock, the stone, the mountains are all sacred to you.

You stayed with your people for a time, healing the sick and injured, keeping the old ways and observing the honored rites of your ancestors. During your twentieth year, your people came together for their Sun-meeting, held once every seven years. At that time you were beholden to the Earth-Singer of another clan, a powerful and arrogant young warrior named Therek the Lion.

Therek turned out to be a cruel and vain man, and you realized that you could not bring yourself to marry him. It was the law of your people that the Earth-Singer's mate must be chosen for her by the clan-fathers, and your refusal shocked and scandalized the elders. They ordered you to obey, and you were forced to flee. Now you roam the Tablelands, a rootless wanderer who can never go home. Wherever you go, you try to fight for good and help the weak, as you would be expected to do as the Earth-Singer of your tribe.

Your decision to leave your tribe has troubled you greatly. In the months since you have left, your people must have suffered for the lack of an Earth-Singer. But in your heart you know that it would be a greater wrong to marry without love.



## Thirty: Rowan (continued)

**Reaction Adjustment:** Surprise +4  
NPCs +5

**AT:** 1 and 1 (sword and dagger)  
2 with bow

**THAC0:** Bone long sword 19  
Bone dagger 20 (16 thrown)  
Short bow 15

**Damage:** Bone long sword 1d8-1/1d12-1  
Bonedagger 1d4-1/1d3-1

Obsidian-headed arrows 1d6-1/1d6-1  
**AC:** 3 in leather armor (modified for Dexterity)

**HP:** 16

**Preserver Spells:**

Two 1st-level spells  
One 2nd-level spell

**Wild Talent:** Empathy

**Power Score:** Wis

**Cost:** Contact/1, 1 per round to maintain

**Wild Talent:** Contact

**Power Score:** Wis

**Cost:** Varies, 1 per round to maintain

**PSP:** 34

**Thieving Percentages:**

|    |    |      |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|------|----|----|----|----|----|
| PP | OL | F/RT | MS | HS | DN | CW | RL |
| 60 | 40 | 50   | 55 | 60 | 32 | 90 | 15 |

**Backstab:** +4 to hit, 2X damage

**Saving Throws:**

|           |            |           |           |           |
|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>DM</b> | <b>RSW</b> | <b>PP</b> | <b>BW</b> | <b>SP</b> |
| 13        | 11         | 12        | 15        | 12        |

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Long sword, dagger, short bow

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Appraising, Dancing, Direction Sense, Heat Protection, Read/Write Common, Somatic Concealment, Tumbling

**Languages:** Common, elven

**Spell Book (parchment scrolls in bone case):**

- 1st level: *Change self, charm person, color spray, detect magic, magic missile, phantasmal force, read magic*
- 2nd level: *Invisibility, knock, mirror image*

**Equipment:** Leather armor, bone long sword (tribal design, +1 to hit bonus applies), 2 bone daggers, short bow, quiver with 12 obsidian-headed arrows and 3 steel-headed arrows, belt pouch with thieves' tools, 50 feet of giant-hair rope, bone grapple, 2 one-gallon waterskins, 1 week's rations, sandals, cloak

**Starting Money:** 42 ceramic pieces

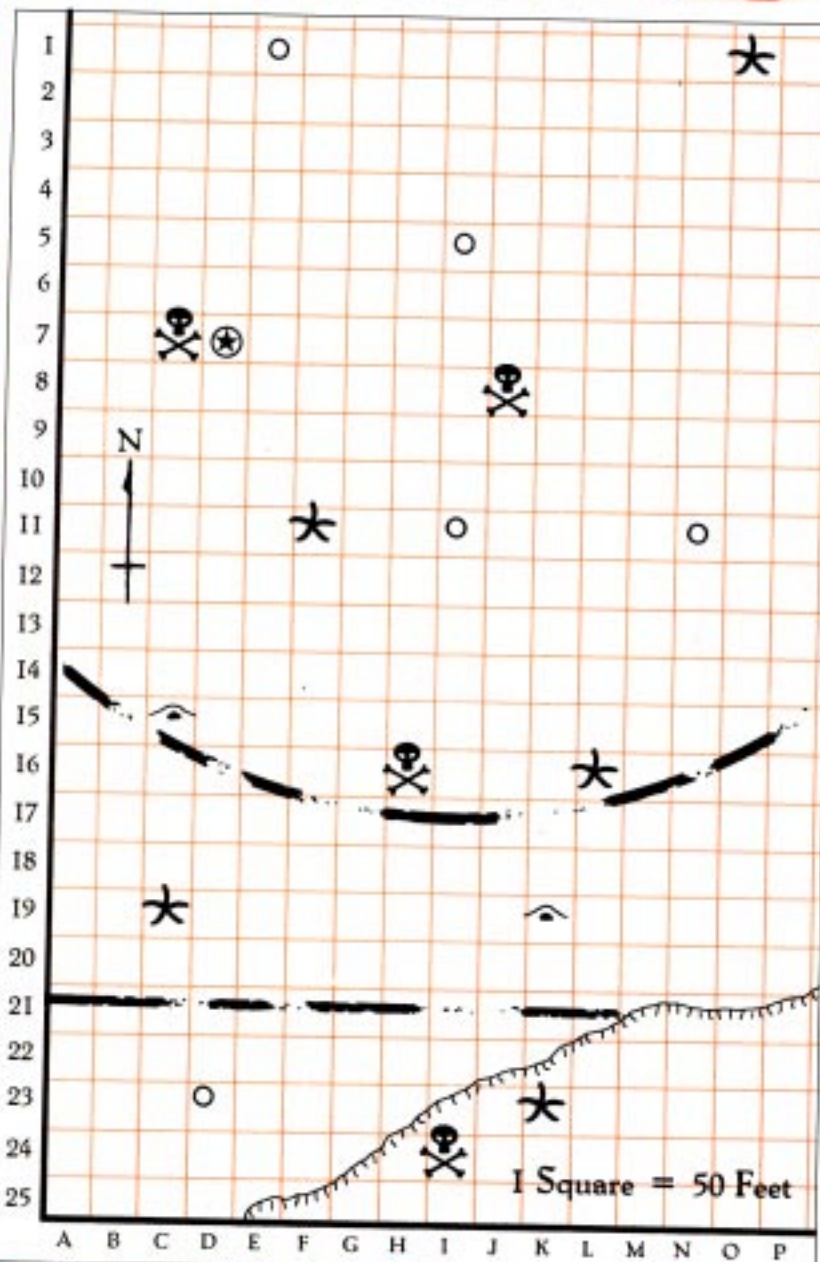
**Background**

Born to the Sun Runners elf tribe in the Tablelands, you were captured at an early age by evil raiders and sold into slavery in Draji. Your life in slavery was a horror that has marked you forever, but your forced servitude taught you many skills. You learned the arts of stealth and guile, stealing away to avoid your master's lash. You learned to filch what extra food and trinkets you could to make your life more tolerable. And most importantly, you learned magic.

In the noble household in which you served there was an ancient scribe slave named Arshon who took a liking to you. He had secretly studied magic many years ago, before he was enslaved, and over the course of decades managed to find and conceal from his masters a few simple spell scrolls. Old and feeble, he decided to pass what few spells he possessed to you, so that you would have a chance for escape and a life of freedom.

Eventually, your day came. You killed the vain noble who had tormented you for years—with his own dagger stolen from the sheath by his side. With your spells and thief abilities, you eluded pursuit and set off in search of a new life. You have been on the run ever since. In Draji you would be marked for death, but the rest of the Tyr region is your home now.

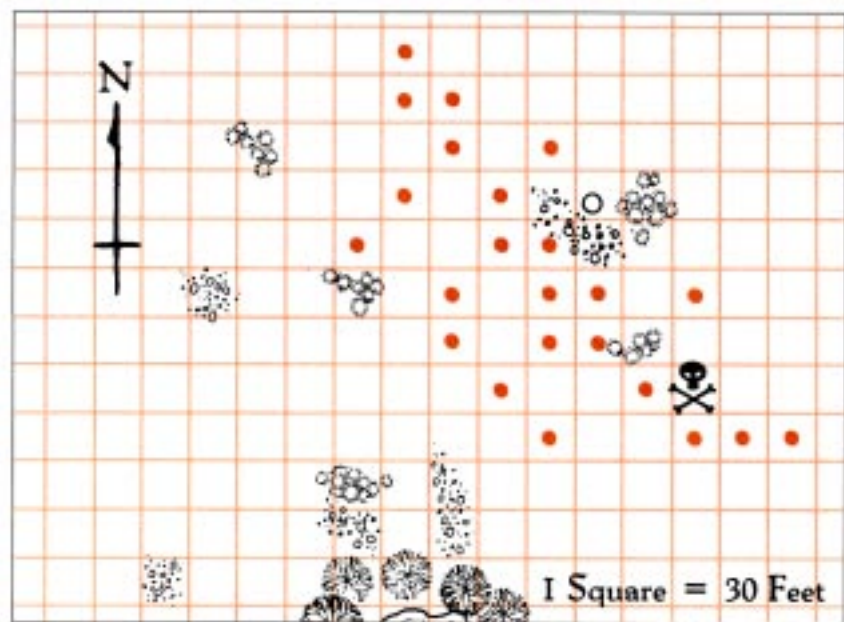
# Thirty-One: Ruins of Yaramuke



Thirty-Two:  
Dragon!



## Thirty-Three: Enemies



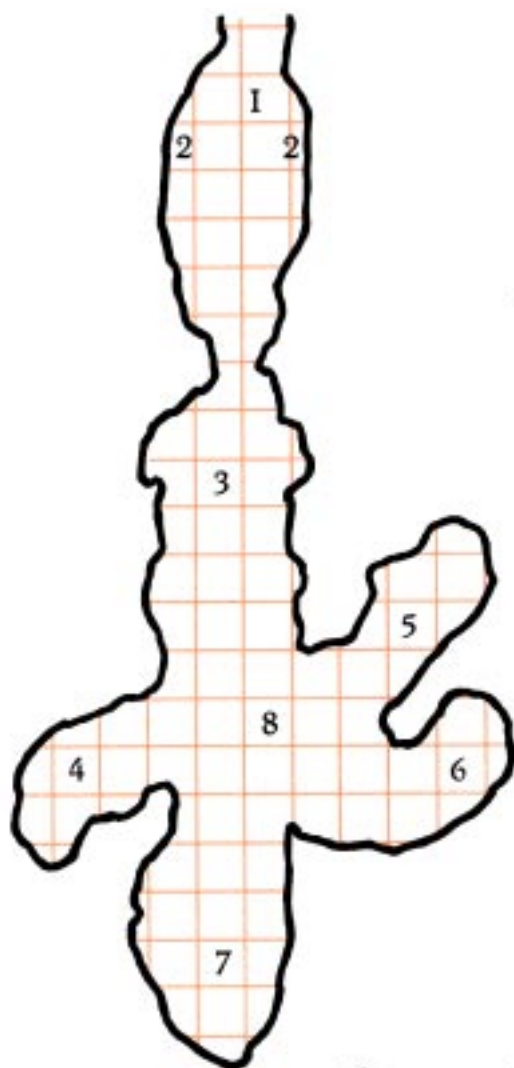
Thirty-Four:  
Run to the Oasis



Thirty-Five:  
Dragons Battle



Thirty-Six:  
Cavern Level 2



1 Square = 10 Feet

Thirty-Seven:  
Fond Farewell





Thirty-Eight:  
Battle for Time

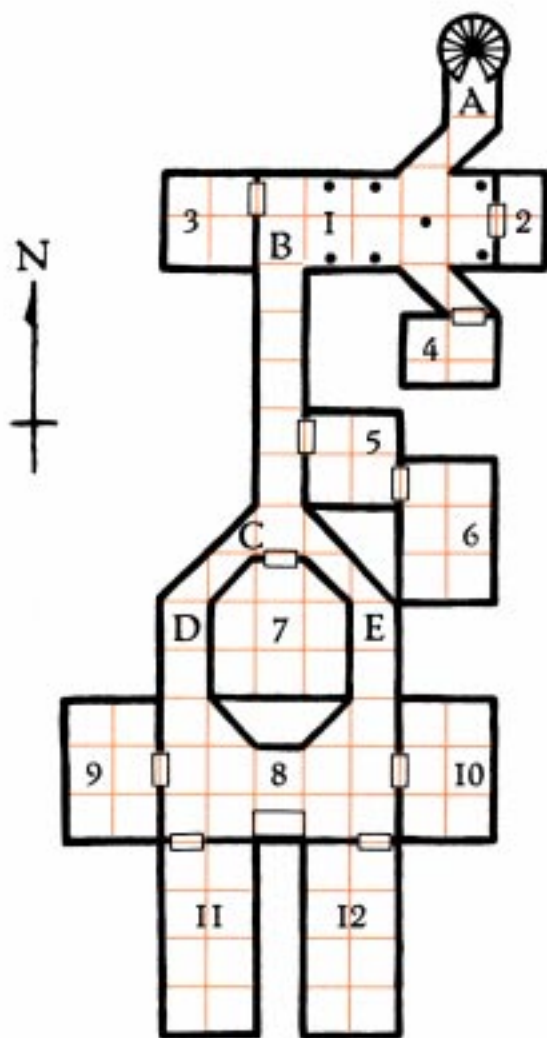


Thirty-Nine:  
Friends?



Forty:  
Palace Sublevel 1

1 Square = 10 Feet



Forty-One:  
Golems



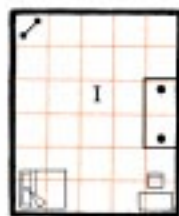
## Forty-Two: Helping Hands



"I trust that you have had your fill of my supplies, kind travelers. Were they satisfying, the food scrumptious and well spiced? The water cool and refreshing, a balm to your thirsty bodies, a rejuvenating draught? Good, good. I am always glad to be of help to those I come across, especially when those I stumble upon can be of help to me.... What? You do not know what it is that you can do for me? Allow me to inform you!

"I am powerful, but I have a certain task that I cannot perform alone. And my servants you see here, while loyal, lack finesse. I seek the fabled treasure of Yaramuke, a city long covered with sand and the dust of ages.... you are going to help me. Why? As an incentive, I must inform you that the water you so greedily drank was from the Oasis of Black Waters. Yes, it is cursed, and a horrid, wasting curse it is. But the cure can be found in Yaramuke, along with the treasure I seek. What say you now, my friends? Will you aid me in my quest?"

# Forty-Three: Barracks



1 Square = 5 Feet



Forty-Four:  
Walking Dead



Forty-Five:  
Betrayal





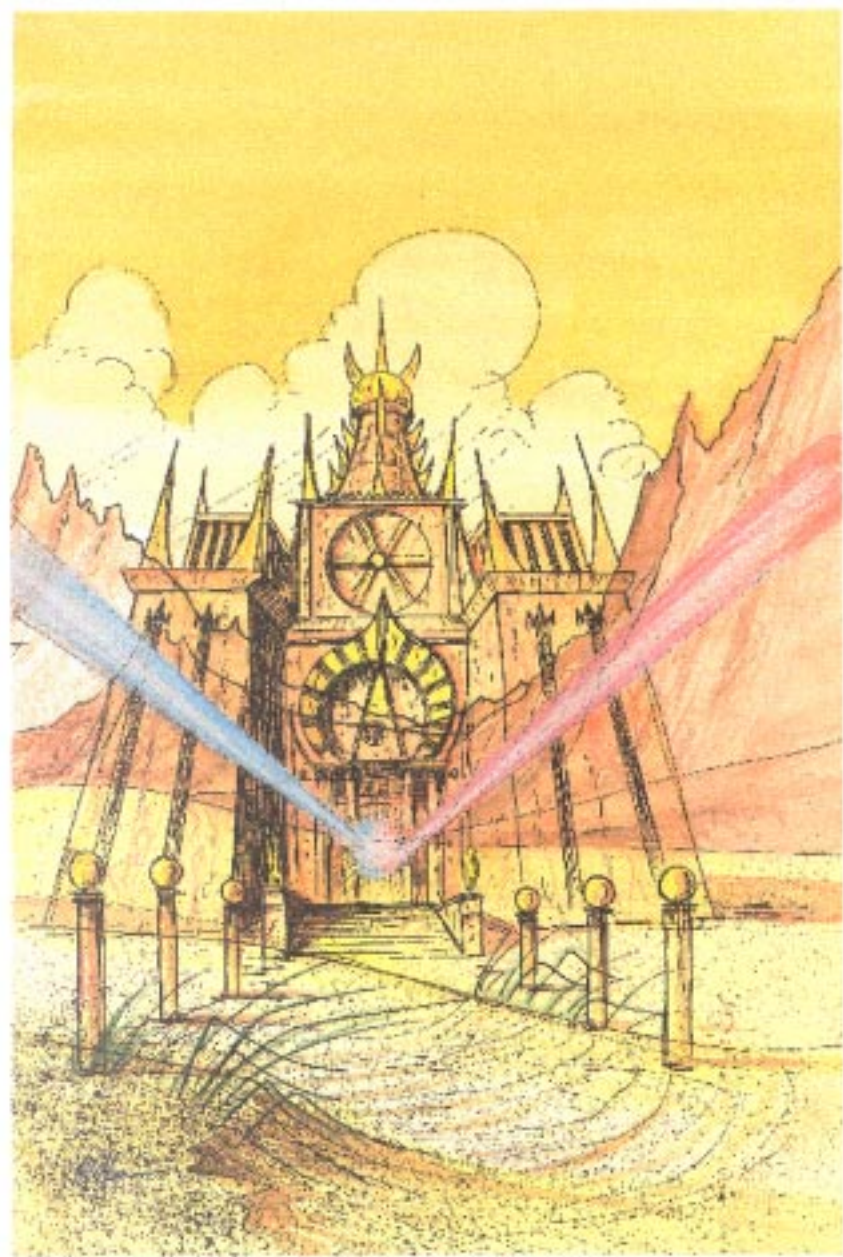
## Forty-Six: The Dragon Speaks



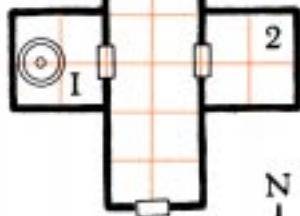
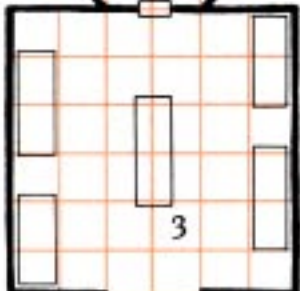
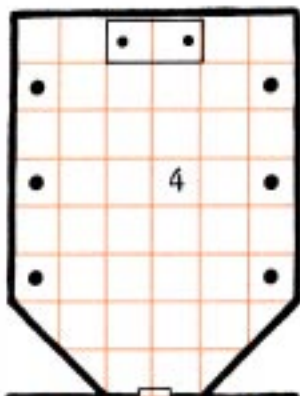
"We come to Yaramuke soon. But there are things you should know. The first is that we seek the Palace of Sielba, the ruler at the time of Yaramuke's fall. The palace will surely lie in ruins now and be covered by the shifting sands of the ageless desert. Still, it must be found.

"That leads me to the next point. Two artifacts, on an *Orb* and the other an object called the *Eye of the Earth*, were said to shine upon the city. It is further said that the *Orb* once rested in the hand of the statue of the first king of Yaramuke, a statue which I know still stands. The *Eye of the Earth* was housed in a Temple of the Earth. If these two artifacts can be placed in their proper positions, the palace's location will be revealed. Now we must rest, for tomorrow our quest begins in earnest."

Forty-Seven:  
The Palace Revealed



Forty-Eight:  
Temple



1 Square = 10 Feet







# DARK · SUN

F O R W O R L D

Varamuke . . .  
city of  
black waters

DUNGEON MASTER™ Book



# Black Flames

A DARK SUN™ Campaign Adventure

## DM's Book

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## Starting the Adventure

*Black Flames* is designed for four to six player characters of levels 3 through 6. The player characters begin the adventure on the road from Urik to Raam, attempting to complete any of a number of assignments.

Farcluun, a 22nd-level dragon, lies in wait along the characters' path. He desperately needs adventurers to help him explore the ruins of Yaramuke. After disrupting the characters' travels with a magically created windstorm, he springs his trap. Zombies and skeletons, disguised as peaceful desert nomads by Farcluun's illusions, "stumble" across the buffeted characters, offering them food and water. Once the characters have drunk, Farcluun drops his illusion to reveal the nomads' true nature. He tells the characters that they have drunk of the dreaded Black Waters and will surely die within a few days.

But Farcluun knows of a cure in the ruined city of Yaramuke. If the characters help him recover certain artifacts (the *Eye* and the *Orb*) from that ruined city, he will be more than happy to help them overcome the poison of the Black Waters. What neither Farcluun nor a the characters know is that Abalach-Re, the Grand Vizier of Raam, isn't going to let them get away so easily with the prize she also desires.

**Materials Needed to Play.** In addition to this module, you must also have the AD&D® 2nd Edition rule books, the DARK SUN™ boxed set, *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, and the DARK SUN *Monstrous Compendium*™ (MC).

You may also wish to familiarize yourself with *Dune Trader*, *Dragon Kings*, and *Tome of Magic* before play begins. *Dune Trader* offers you detailed information about the way traders travel and do business, allowing you to elaborate on the merchant encounters in this adventure as much as you would like. *Dragon Kings* contains invaluable information on dragons and their magic, which gives a wider perspective on dragons—thus helping you to role-play them more effectively. *Tome of Magic* has many new spells as well as the details on wild magic. Some pockets of wild magic dot the ruins of Yaramuke, so you can certainly benefit from reading *Tome*.

**Preparing for Play.** As always, the DM must read the adventure and be thoroughly familiar with it prior to the start of play. Time spent reading this book will speed play and make the game more enjoyable for you and your players. Also before beginning play, you may wish to reread the description of the Black Waters Oasis on page 77 of *The Wanderer's Journal*, found in the boxed set.

Pregenerated characters are included on pages 19 to 30 in the *Player's Book* should the players wish to use them. If you use these pregenerated characters, spend a few minutes before play answering any questions the players may have about their characters. Make sure the players understand their characters' special abilities, such as spells and psionics.

## How to Use This Book

If you have played many AD&D® adventures before, you will notice that this one is quite different. There are three books in the box: the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Book* (which you are holding), the *Player's Book*, and a *Story Book*. The adventure itself is also structured differently. The storyline is similar to a straightforward quest, but in many cases characters will be dealing with several different situations at once. Also, not all the information in the books is necessary to the game. Depending on what the players choose to do, you may wind up skipping some encounters.

This adds a new dimension to the game, increasing the adventure's complexity and flexibility. No longer will your task as DM end at merely describing what lies behind the next door. You will now be refereeing the plots of several NPCs and multilevel stories. But don't panic! While this may sound daunting, *Black Flames* is designed to make your job easier. Each section is clearly labeled and cross-references other adventure sections. Once you have read through the adventure and familiarized yourself with the various NPCs and their motives, running the adventure will be a cinch.

Another difference between this adventure and most others is that the characters can make a lasting impact on the world they live in. If successful, the characters will have defeated a dragon, removed an ancient curse, and explored one of the Tyr region's most famous ruins. While the tale of their accomplishments will surely spread, so will the jealousy of their enemies. The PCs may perform great deeds and gain a powerful ally (Phabum, Druid of Black Waters), but they will also gain the enmity of Abalach-Re, Grand Vizier of Raam, and of S'kin'di, a vengeful 'chowb.





## Adventure Organization

*Black Flames* is based around encounters. These are discrete sections of the adventure comprising a single situation or meeting with NPCs or monsters. Most encounters move the adventure forward, but some (such as those on the journey from Urik to Raam) merely add flavor and will not help the characters finish the adventure. Use these encounters whenever you like, but don't let them overshadow the adventure.

Each encounter is a single page long, and each has several different sections. Not all encounters contain every one of the nine sections described below, but all feature at least a few of them.

**Setup** briefly describes the encounter, lists materials you may need, and also tells you when to use them. **Start** sets the scene for the encounter, most frequently with a short passage you can read to your players. **Encounter** is the heart of the event, describing the general course of the action. **Role-playing** provides notes on the behavior, attitudes, and reactions of the principal NPCs for that encounter. Snatches of sample **Dialogue** that can serve as starting points for role-playing encounters are frequently included in this section. **Statistics** lists any information on NDCs or monsters for that encounter or tells you where to find these numbers. **Outcome** presents the likely results of an encounter. (Of course, not every possibility can be accounted for—only the most likely or logical results. You must be ready to improvise, should the characters attempt something completely unexpected.) **Next** tells you where to look in the booklet to continue play. There is often a number of choices, so you can tailor the adventure to your needs.

*Black Flames* does not use random encounter tables or wandering monsters. Instead, scenes at the beginning of most adventure sections describe an incident involving an NPC, creature, or problem appropriate to the section. In Part One, many scenes involve monsters the characters may meet on the road to Raam. Once the characters are searching the Ruins of Yaramuke, encounters involve important objects and some strategically-placed monsters. Some encounters may be used in more than one location. Use these scenes whenever you need to increase tension or move the story along; these are optional tools, not mandatory encounters. When the characters are at the oasis, encounters involve undead, druids, and dragons.

Finally, background material is included for each of the three sections of the adventure. The background material outlines the different encounters to be used in that section and may describe places or people available in many encounters and scenes.

This information helps you create descriptions and handle unforeseen events.

## Part One: On the Road

Part One of *Black Flames* gets the player characters on the road from Urik to Raam. This adventure offers four methods to accomplish this: Caravan Duty, Guards, Scouts, and Ambush. Feel free to choose whichever route best suits your group's overall style. None of the methods affects play; they simply provide you with variety and choices.

Because *Black Flames* doesn't begin until the characters are on the road from Urik to Raam, the encounters in Part One are only lightly touched upon. You can elaborate on these encounters to any degree you wish, but take care not to make them overly dangerous. If you do, the PCs may be too weak to finish the adventure. The hints for role-playing and setup in Part One are intentionally vague. You should flesh these encounters out according to your players' interests and their characters' abilities.

**Setup.** All the introductory encounters work the same way: someone hires the player characters. It is assumed that these encounters take place in Urik, so you must change the details if you wish to start elsewhere. It is vital, however, that the PCs pass between Urik and Raam at some point, as the adventure begins on that road.

**Caravan Duty:** The characters are approached in Urik by a recruiting agent from House Stel. The House is in dire need of guards for their next caravan, and they are willing to pay well for the characters' services. The agent (you may wish to use Terric Avan if you have Dune Trader) worries that there are traitors in his House. He wishes to hire outside help to ferret them out. He begins negotiations at 2 sp per character for the journey; he will go no higher than 5 sp per character. Wages are slightly higher than normal because the trader needs guards now and because they must defend the caravan against the treachery of their traveling companions.

**Guards:** The characters are hired by Templar Shaziva of Raam to escort her from Urik (where she contacts the characters) to Raam. Her funds are limited, and she can offer the PCs a mere silver piece for this task. However, she has her own mekillot and enclosed wagon, and she will buy food and water for the characters. If the characters are clever enough to ask, Shaziva will also promise favors when they arrive in Raam (it is doubtful that she can keep any promises, as Raam is in the grip of civil unrest, but don't tell the PCs this)—anything from free passage back to Urik to a villa on the outskirts of Raam. She secretly plans to have the characters put to death if they make any trouble once they're in Raam.

**Scouts:** A small armored contingent from House Stel is making plans to chase down bandits along the road between Urik and Raam. They need scouts who can travel ahead of them and locate the bandit tribes. The characters are offered 10 bits a day for their services, as well as crodlu mounts and whatever rations they need. This will be dangerous but exciting work; you should play up the attractive aspects of such duty. The agent from House Stel may hint at a future, permanent position with the House—a perfect springboard for further adventures.



## Part One: On the Road (continued)

**Ambush.** House M'ke knows that House Stel will be transporting a package from Templar Sebik in Urik to his lover in Raam. M'ke wants to force Stel out of favor with the templars by disrupting the caravan and stealing the package. The characters are offered 10 bits a day to take on this mission and to keep it secret. Clever negotiations on the part of the PCs can raise the base salary as high as 13 bits a day.

**Role-playing.** Remember, these encounters are not the meat of this adventure. You should role-play these as completely as necessary but don't shortchange the rest of the adventure. Make the NPCs who contact the player characters devious and hard bargainers; let them try to cheat and trick the PCs. Let the players think that their characters' mission is the main event. In other words, keep these introductory encounters fairly quick and get on with the adventure.

**Next.** The rest of the encounters in Part One are designed merely to add excitement to the journey from Urik to Raam and to lull the players into thinking that this journey is the heart of the adventure. The encounters in Part One can be played in any order. Use as many or as few Part One encounters as you like, but don't overdo it. These encounters are only spice, and too much spice can ruin the meal. Some encounters work differently depending on which of the methods you used to get the player characters on the road. Such differences will be noted in the **Setup** or **Encounter** sections of each encounter.

## Part One: A—Watering Hole

**Setup.** In this encounter, the PCs try to drink from a watering hole—only to find that it is the home of a bog wader. This encounter is most appropriate if the characters were hired to do Caravan Duty or if they are low on water. (If they are caravan guards, it is their duty to check all watering holes.) Players should turn to the *Player's Book*, page 6—watering Hole.

**Start** The encounter begins when the PCs discover a watering hole. Read the following to the players:

“Your journey has been much longer and harder than you expected. You knew the desert was a dismal place, but never has it seemed so desolate. The hard-baked surface of the road reflects the sun’s heat in your faces, and bitter winds line your throats with dust. As you begin to despair of ever finding relief from the desert’s torture, you see the flat, reflective surface of a deep pool of water, not a hundred paces from your path.”

If the PCs investigate the water, continue with this encounter. If they ignore the water, play up the effects of the unrelenting heat and windblown dust for the rest of their journey, and then go on to the next encounter.

**Encounter.** Observant players may notice small, bumpy protrusions on the far side of the water in the illustration in the *Player's Book*. The watering hole has begun to dry out, and this bog wader’s camouflage has suffered for it.

If a character drinks from the watering hole, he or she falls prey to the bog wader. Also, if a character suspects there’s something wrong and attacks the watering hole with any melee weapons, the PC automatically falls prey to the bog wader; such characters are always surprised. Using area affect spells such as *fireball* on the pool will damage it, reducing the amount of available water from 1d6 to 1d3 gallons.

Characters who attack the hidden bog wader with missile weapons have a -4 penalty, and damage rolls are -1 due to the earth covering the bog wader. The bog wader bursts from its hiding place after taking one hit and charges the characters.

**Statistics.** *Bog Wader:* AL CE; AC 4; MV 3; HD 4+3; hp 25; THAC0 15; #AT 5; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-3/1-3/1-4+impaling SZ M; ML 11; see *DARK SUN™* MC for more information.

**Outcome.** The PCs should defeat the bog water with little difficulty. This encounter should merely remind the characters of the hazards of carelessness. The characters may fill their waterskins after the fight.

**Next.** Proceed to another encounter, or go to 1E—Sandstorm!

## Part One: B—Kenku



**Setup.** This encounter with a group of kenku traders occurs sometime shortly before dusk on the road from Urik to Raam. Feel free to set this encounter whenever you wish, as it does not affect the rest of the adventure. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 4—Traders.

**Start.** This encounter may occur at any time during the characters' journey from Urik to Raam. Read or paraphrase the following:

"At first you thought it was a mirage. But now you can see three shrouded figures approaching you. As they near, they raise their hands and wave great hide bags before them. Amazingly enough, they appear to be traders, and they are coming to your camp. A diversion from the boredom of the road!"

**Encounter.** The individuals that have entered the PCs' camp are kenku "traders." The kenku are in disguise, appearing as large-nosed, mute humans. They seem to have at least one of everything in their packs. If the players ask about an item, the kenku have one somewhere on their persons. They have any normal, portable item, although they have no magical items. They also have food and water, but in limited quantities.



The kenku will offer the characters amazing deals during the trading session. They'll take almost any offer, selling items at one-half or even one-quarter their normal price. Once the PCs have spent all they want to, the disguised kenku go into the night, never to be seen again. Characters who buy large quantities of kenku wares will realize their folly after the kenku depart. Kenku have

the power to make trade items from dust, to which the items return 1d8 hours after purchase.

**Role-playing.** The kenku cannot speak, but they appear very respectful, always bowing and averting their eyes. They are actually trying to keep the characters from realizing what they are. Should a character become aware that he or she is dealing with kenku, the kenku will become very fearful, attempting to look as pitiable as possible. Try to make the kenku appear as misunderstood traders trying to communicate as best they can.

**Outcome.** At the end of this encounter, characters are likely to be poorer and players wiser. It is possible for the PCs to attack the kenku (statistics are in the *Monstrous Compendium, Volume Two*), but not likely. Should this happen, the kenku flee and may return to harass the characters at a later, more inconvenient time.



**Next.** From here, choose another encounter in this section, or go to 1E—Sandstorm!

## Part One: C—Belgoi

**Setup.** This encounter takes place at night during the characters' journey from Urik to Raam. In order for this encounter to work, one PC must be standing guard alone. After reading the **Start** text aloud, have the sentry player turn to the *Player's Book*, page 3—

**Start.** Roll the belgoi's con tact attempt. If the roll fails, the belgoi's bell awakens the rest of the party and the belgoi flees into the night. If the belgoi succeeds, read the following to the PC standing guard:

"Just outside camp, you hear a lovely tinkling, as of crystal goblets clinking together."

At this point the belgoi tries attraction to lure the character out of camp. If this succeeds, read the following aloud:

"The sound is too beautiful to ignore. It reminds you of cool, cool water, of blowing breezes an silky shadows. You must find its source.

At this point, the character must walk out to the belgoi, who is 50 feet from camp. If the *attraction* fails, the belgoi attempts to *dominate* the character. Should this fail, it will try *attraction* once again and, if unable to succeed, will wait for the next watch and try again.

**Encounter.** The belgoi is a devious opponent and not to be underestimated. Characters who become the belgoi's target could very well be slain. *Attracted* characters will not immediately see the belgoi as a threat and will be easy prey for its first Constitution drain. After that, the character can act as normal, but the belgoi will try to *dominate* the character and force him or her into submission.

Once a character begins to fight the belgoi, there is a chance that other PCs or NPCs will take notice. Sleeping characters or NPCs will hear the fight if they make a successful Intelligence check at—3 Characters who are awake automatically notice the fight.

The belgoi will flee if anyone comes to the aid of the targeted character. If the party does not hunt the belgoi down and stop it from going for reinforcements, there will be serious repercussions over the next few days (see **Outcome**).

**Statistics.** *Belgoi*: AL LE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 5; hp 32; THAC0 15, #AT 2, Dmg 1d4+2; Constitution drain; SZ M; ML 9; Psionics— *Sciences*: domination; *Devotions*: attraction, contact, ego whip, mind blank, psionic blast; *Defenses*: EW, PB/M-; PSPs 35; see *The Wanderer's Journal* for more information on belgoi.

**Outcome.** If the character is slam or the belgoi is not killed, a number of belgoi equal to twice the number of surviving PCs will arrive outside camp the next night and try to lure other PCs to their deaths.

**Next.** Continue with other encounters in this section or go to 1E—Sandstorm!

## Part One: D—Walking Dead

**Setup.** This encounter brings the characters face to face with the reality of the curse of the Black Waters. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 44—Walking Dead.

**Start** As the characters travel the road from Urik to Raam, they notice a knot of figures walking slowly ahead of them. Before long they overtake the group and realize what a pitiful sight they really are. Read or paraphrase the following

“Never have you seen such a dismal lot of humanity. They moan and beg as you approach, their diseased limbs reaching for you. Truly, these are the walking damned.”

**Encounter.** If the characters stop and try to aid these poor wretches, the leader (Sil Dresh, who looks no better than the others) will warn them away. “We are too far gone,” he says. His people lament, “In our foolishness, we ignored the curse of the Black Waters. Do not make the same mistake as we, lest you too walk the roads of the dead.”

If the characters use healing magic or magical items on Dresh’s people, they will achieve only minimal results and, in some cases (at your discretion), may actually make the people worse. These people are on their last legs, soon to be dead. There is nothing that the characters can do.

The people still have the will to live, though. They will eagerly gulp any water or food offered to them. Yet within seconds whatever they ingest comes back up mixed with saliva and blood. This illness manifests in boils and suppurating abscesses on the skin.

**Role-playing.** This should be a distressing encounter for the players. Their characters will probably want to help these people, but everything they do is inadequate. Dresh is fatalistic and seems resigned to his fate. He speaks little, watching sadly as the characters try to help his people. He says nothing about where he is from or where he was going, fearful that the characters may attempt to trace his path and thus fall prey to the Black Waters.

The rest of his people are not reasonable. They are frantic with the fear of death and the hope of help that the characters represent. They beg for food and water despite their inability to keep it down; they are aggressive in their demands.

*Dialogue:*

“Please, sir, help my little girl!”

“Food! I starve!”

“A drop of water, I beg of you!”

**Outcome.** Regardless of what the characters do, Dresh eventually leads his people away. Later, when the characters themselves are afflicted with the curse of the Black Waters, the memory of this encounter will drive home the severity of their situation.

**Next.** Proceed with the other encounters in this section, or go to 1E—Sandstorm!

## Part One: E—Sandstorm!



**Setup.** This is the only encounter in Part One that is not optional. It is the encounter that moves the characters into Part Two and occurs midway between Urik and Raam. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 15—Sandstorm! after reading the **Start** text.

**Start.** Begin this encounter when the players least expect it. It can occur when the characters are preparing to bed down for the night, during a trading session with the kenku, or as the belgoi attacks. Make sure that this encounter carries the dramatic weight of Part One and brings the characters smoothly into Part Two. When you are ready to begin the encounter, read the following aloud:

"The roaring is so sudden, so powerful, it is as if the world has exploded. Powerful winds suddenly buffet your body, hurling stinging sand into your face. Your mounts scream and bellow in panic, and fear blossoms in your chest. As the roaring of the wind increases and more and more sand flies into your face, you realize that you have encountered Athas's most terrifying beast: a sandstorm."

**Encounter.** The sandstorm is Farcluun's doing. It is the result of a spell that combines *teleport* and *control weather*. Farcluun stumbled across the spell while searching for information about Yaramuke, and it fit his plans perfectly. The storm lasts 5 rounds, then ends as abruptly as it started. Characters with an Intelligence greater than 17 will realize that the storm is not of natural origin, but that is all. No spells or psionic disciplines may be used during the storm, as concentration is impossible.

**Outcome.** The storm does not damage the characters, but when it blows itself out, the characters find that the people who hired them are nowhere in sight, and their small group is all alone. The PCs will also quickly realize that they are no longer on the hard-packed road, but are now lost somewhere in the middle of the trackless desert wastes of Athas.

PCs still have their equipment, but their mounts are lost. The characters feel as if they haven't eaten or drunk for days, but if they check their packs, they will find that the driving sand has gotten into their supplies and spoiled them all.

**Next.** Go to 1F—Helping Hands and continue with the adventure.



## Part One: F—Helping Hands

**Setup.** This encounter begins as soon as the sandstorm from 1E—Sandstorm! ends. Once Farluun reveals himself have the players turn to *Player's Book*, page 42—Helping Hands, and ask a player to read Farluun's speech aloud.

**Start.** As the sandstorm dies down, read the following aloud to the players:

"The wind ceases and an abrupt silence follows. Dust fills the crevices in your armor and the folds of your clothes. While you still have your weapons, armor, and other equipment, you realize that your mounts are gone. An incredible thirst gnaws at you, but you discover your water has leaked out of its container. The desert is cruel indeed."

**Encounter.** Let the players sweat out their characters' situation for a few moments, emphasizing the heat and their characters' thirst. Suddenly, the characters see a small band of nomads coming across the desert. The nomads approach the PCs and are very friendly, even offering food and water. The nomads are actually zombies and skeletons disguised Farluun with a *spectral force* spell. Characters may attempt to penetrate this illusion, but make sure that the spell is not prematurely dispelled. If it is, the characters are liable to come suspicious and not accept the cursed water on which the adventure depends.

Of course, some characters may be too suspicious to drink the cursed waters. As long as some party members drink, don't worry. If the characters are a cooperative party, any unafraid characters will try to help their friends search for a cure. If some suspicious players won't let any of the party drink, Farluun uses all his powers to persuade the party that the food and water are wholesome and fresh. Since the water's curse is magical, *purify food & drink* will have no effect upon it.

The characters may eat and drink as much as they wish. Once they have drunk the zombies' water, Farluun drops his illusion from the undead, although he remains in disguise. he approaches, ask a player to read aloud Farluun's speech on page 42.

**Role-playing.** Farluun is a very old and powerful dragon, though his disguise makes him look like a strong young man. He is very patient and almost seems bored with the proceedings. In fact, he is quite anxious to get on with things. He knows that even as he speaks to the characters, his enemy Abalach-Re is also searching for a way into Yaramuke. Farluun has the advantage for the time being, but he must hurry to keep it. Though he will not harm the characters, he constantly reminds them of the curse of the Black Waters, the effects of which they will begin to feel in a few hours. Farluun seems to be their only hope.

The undead will not attack unless the characters attack them first. The undead will defend themselves, but Farluun will not allow them to kill the characters.

**Outcome.** The characters really have only three choices: 1) help Farluun, 2) fight him and be subdued, or 3) run and die a slow death from the curse.

**Next.** If the characters try to battle the dragon and his undead or try to escape, go on to 1G—Hopeless Battle. If they agree to work with Farluun, proceed to 1H—Outfitting.

## Part One: G—Hopeless Battle

**Setup.** Use this encounter if the characters refuse to aid Farcluun, or if they attempt to escape from the dragon and its undead. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 11—Hopeless Battle.

**Start.** When the PCs refuse to join Farcluun or if they try to run, read or paraphrase the following:

"The man smiles at you, smoky yellow eyes glimmering in the sun. 'You accepted my aid, my hospitality,' he says. 'To refuse to repay such kindness would be most rude.' He licks his lips and cracks his knuckles, then smiles menacingly and adds, 'And most unwise.' Then he makes an almost imperceptible movement with the fingers of one hand. The undead begin to close in."

**Encounter.** Farcluun knows that he is running out of time. Abalach-Re will soon try to claim the secrets of Yaramuke (and the Black Waters) for herself. He also knows that he will probably not find another group as powerful as the PCs in time to complete his quest. He cannot allow the characters to escape, and he uses his undead to stop them.

While the PCs must not escape, Farcluun needs them alive. He commands his undead to use overbearing attacks (*Player's Handbook*, page 97) on the characters. The undead attack in groups of five until the PCs are knocked to the ground. Once a character has been brought down, any number of skeletons or zombies may help keep the PC pinned.

If it appears that the player characters may actually escape from the undead, Farcluun steps into the fray. He uses psionics and magic to subdue the characters, wishing to damage them as little as possible. However, he will attempt to maintain his disguise if possible. Should the dragon and his minions fail to bring the characters under control, he will tempt to beat them into submission. Once they surrender or have been knocked unconscious he will allow them to use his healing fruits. Subtract fruits used in this counter from those in Encounter 1H—Outfitting.

Some characters may still not want to submit to Farcluun's wishes. If this is the case, the dragon will continue to beat them until they agree to aid him. Reminders of the curse may so trigger a stubborn character's preservation instinct. In any event, Farcluun will do everything in his power to make sure that all the characters join him.

**Statistics.** *Skeletons (20)* (as per Monster Table, with the following exceptions): hp 1 (×3), (×2), 4 (×6), 5, 6 (×2), 7 (×3), 8 (-3); Dmg overbearing.

*Zombies (10)* (as per master Monster Table, with the following exceptions): hp 4 (×3), 5, 11 6, 9 (×2), 11, 14, 15; Dmg overbearing.

**Outcome.** The characters must join Farcluun or die. They have no other choices.

**Next.** Bury any unfortunate PCs or continue with encounter 1H-Outfitting.

## Part One: H—Outfitting

**Setup.** This encounter allows the PCs to equip themselves before starting their trek to Yaramuke.

**Start.** Once the characters agree to accompany Farcluun to the ruined city of Yaramuke, read or paraphrase the following:

“Farcluun smiles, his lips parting to reveal jagged teeth and a flickering tongue. ‘Very good,’ he snarls, then whistles tunelessly. A quartet of zombies stumbles forward carrying a huge chest, which they drop at your feet. A choking cloud of sand rises and Farcluun chuckles to himself ‘Open the chest and take what you need, but only as much as you can carry,’ he says.”

**Encounter.** This huge chest contains a small portion of Farcluun’s vast treasure. The characters are allowed to take anything they want, though Farcluun will only allow them to keep what they can carry in relative comfort (no more than Heavy encumbrance). If any of the characters ask if the items are theirs to keep, Farcluun laughs and nods his head. He plans to kill the characters anyway, so such promises are meaningless. The chest contains the items listed below. (See page 72 of the DARK SUN™ boxed set *Rules Book* for information on arm pieces and leggings.)

**Armor:** leather (×4), *feather* +1, half-giant leather, padded (×2), hide (×5), halfling-sized hide, ring mail, scale (×2), bronze breast plate, banded mail arm pieces (×3), chain mail leggings.

**Shields:** bucklers (×5), *buckler* +2, medium (×3), body (×1).

**Weapons:** 8 daggers (bone -4, obsidian ×2, wood, metal), obsidian *dagger* +2, bone footman’s flail, 3 hand axes (obsidian), metal *hand axe* +1, 4 slings, 7 spears, obsidian battle axe, short bow, *short bow* +1, long bow, 2 quarterstaves, obsidian *mace* +1, 6 chatkcha, 2 impalers, *impaler* +1, *gythka* +1, 2 obsidian short swords, bone long sword, metal scimitar.

**Ammunition:** 117 sling stones, 20 bone sling bullets, 17 obsidian sling bullets, 6 metal sling bullets, 20 bone flight arrows, 10 obsidian sheaf arrows, 6 metal sheaf *arrows* +1.

**Stores:** The chest contains enough dried rations and water to last six man-sized characters 10 days. Each day’s food ration weighs one pound, and each full waterskin holds one gallon and weighs nine pounds.

**Miscellaneous:** 15 small sacks, 5 large sacks, 7 small belt pouches, 2 large belt pouches, 15 candles, fire kit, 6 sticks of colored chalk, 2 hooded lanterns, 12 torches, 5 flasks of oil, 50 feet of giant-hair rope, 5 shovels, 3 bone picks (not suitable as weapons), set of bone thieves’ picks.

**Magical Items:** 6 *potion fruits of extra healing* (remember to subtract from this number any fruits used to heal characters earlier), enough spell components for 1d20-10 spells of any level.

**Next.** From here go on to 11—The Journey.

## Part One: I—The Journey

**Setup.** This encounter begins once the characters have outfitted themselves for the journey to Yaramuke. Farcluun is in a hurry (and the poisoned PCs should be as well) to get to Yaramuke, and he hustles the characters along as quickly as possible. Remember, Farcluun maintains his human disguise for as long as he can.

**Start.** Once the PCs have taken all the gear that they can carry from Farcluun's chest, read the following aloud:

"Farcluun watches as you pack the equipment. A smirk curls the edge of his thin lips as he sits in the lap of a zombie kneeling back on his heels. As you complete your preparations, he closes his eyes and the wind rises about you. For a moment, you fear another sandstorm. Then the winds die down again and you look around. Farcluun is standing with arms raised, but his undead are nowhere to be seen. You realize that the undead have returned to the ground where they belong. Without a word or backward glance, Farcluun sets off across the desert."

**Encounter.** It is only about 15 miles to Yaramuke, and Farcluun has chosen a route that detours around the Oasis of Black Waters. Very little happens during the journey. Although the characters are traveling with a dragon of no little power, there are many dangers in the desert—not the least of which is the weather. By this point in their careers most characters should know enough not to burden themselves with lots of metal armor and heavy weapons on an overland journey. Some players, however, may not realize the dangers in burdening characters with these items. Be very particular of the encumbrance rules during this journey and penalize greedy or foolish characters appropriately. Keep in mind, too, the water requirements of those traveling across Athas.

Farcluun carries a one-gallon waterskin, although he needs very little. He has watched the characters very closely, and if he thinks they ignored an important item, he is likely to either have it on his person or to have magical access to it. Of course even Farcluun cannot think of everything, and he has been more than a little preoccupied with his own thoughts. Farcluun will "save" the characters only three times.

The party's trek most likely starts around midday, so the characters will camp with the dragon only one night. While the characters are camping, have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 46—Farcluun Speaks, and ask one of them to read the page aloud. Farcluun relates what he knows of Yaramuke (which is really very little) and emphasize; the need to find Sielba's palace.

**Next.** Farcluun and the characters continue their journey the next day. Continue with Part Two.

## Part Two: The Ruins of Yaramuke

Yaramuke was once a proud city built around a great oasis. Its sorcerer-queen, Sielba, was as just as a tyrant can be, and under her rule the city prospered. Yaramuke's fiercest competitor in all things was Urik, the great thorn in Sielba's side. While Yaramuke's trading caravans brought in much revenue, Urik controlled the Smoking Crown, a valuable obsidian quarry. The Smoking Crown shifted the balance of power in Hamanu's favor.

Sielba conspired with many of the great merchant houses to bring about the fall of Urik through trade embargoes and high prices. When Urik fell, Sielba would control the obsidian quarries and offer good prices to those who had backed her.

Unfortunately, Hamanu caught wind of the scheme before it could be put in motion. Enraged by Sielba's plots, the sorcerer-king of Urik amassed his army. Within a week he was camped outside Yaramuke. Within a month, little remained of Sielba's city, and Hamanu cursed its oasis with foul magicks.

Now all that remains of the city are haphazard piles of stone, which may have once been buildings, and a forlorn statue that stares, one hand upraised, toward the northern horizon. Though Yaramuke was once large and prosperous, time and the elements have nearly erased all traces of its existence. Few treasure hunters come here because of the immense difficulty of excavating the ruins. Until now, the city was thought to contain little of value, since it was sacked by King Hamanu and his army ages ago. And no one has yet found the ruins of the palace; Hamanu's rage seems to have buried it beneath the desert sands.

Characters who explore Yaramuke should take care, for the very land here is dangerous. As time buried the city beneath the sand, layers of rubble became dangerous sinkholes. Hamanu's sorcerous bombardment also tore at the fabric of magic in Yaramuke, creating a number of zones of wild magic. (Both sinkholes and wild zones are described in Geography of the Ruins.)

Another interesting side effect of the intense magical battle is the Wall. How it came to be is something of a mystery, as this magical construct has never been duplicated. Any powerful evil creature (of at least 10 HD) entering Yaramuke is deprived of three of its five senses—only touch and hearing remain to these characters. The Wall permits no saving throw, and even creatures as powerful as dragons are unable to avoid its effects.

The Wall is the reason that Farcluun needs the characters to help him. Abalach-Re is researching magicks to destroy the Wall, while Farcluun has opted to circumvent it by using human proxies—the player characters.

## Part Two: Geography of the Ruins

There is a map of the ruins in the *Player's Book* (page 31—Ruins of Yaramuke) that the players can use throughout Part Two; this map also appears on the next page. The characters enter the ruined city from the southwest, and Farcluun waits for them in the southwest corner of the area. While the Yaramuke ruins contain many distinct features, they also hide much. Hidden throughout the ruins are sinkholes, carnivorous vegetation, areas of wild magic, and, of course, the ruins of the palace. Each feature's location is shown on your map. Naturally, none of the hidden features are shown on the players' map.

As characters explore the ruins, make sure the players tell you which squares they are passing through. Familiarize yourself with the area's hidden features and be prepared to spring its tricks and traps on unsuspecting characters. Players who depend too much on what the map shows will soon find that their characters are in serious trouble. Caution is the watchword within the ruins.

**Sinkholes.** Sinkholes cannot be detected until they collapse. If a character passes through a map square containing a sinkhole, there is a 45% chance that the character will step into the sinkhole (roll or each character in the party). If the PCs were testing ahead with a pole at least 6 feet long, they are allowed a roll against their Dexterity to avoid the sinkhole.

Characters who fail the above rolls and weigh at least 50 pounds will cause a sinkhole to give way. The character falls 1d10+10 feet and sand pours on top of him or her. Unless another character successfully gets a rope to the trapped PC, the sand covers the person in 1d6 rounds. Before he or she is covered with sand, a combined strength of 30 is enough to pull the PC to safety. After a character is covered, the strength total rises to 60, and the character should be treated as drowning (*Player's Handbook*, page 122). Characters attempting to shovel their friends out of a sinkhole will not be able to get to them in time to save them. The following areas contain sinkholes: 1A, 4I, 8J, 12O, 16E, and 19M.

**Spider Cactus.** Some areas that appear to be normal scrub actually contain dangerous spider cacti. A single spider cactus lives in 11E, while 8K has two. There is a 55% chance that any group in the area will pass close enough to the cacti to be attacked. Characters who are actively scanning for dangerous flora or fauna move at half speed, but will notice the small piles of bones around each cactus on a successful Intelligence roll and so will be able to avoid these dreaded plants.

**Wild Magic.** When Hamanu attacked Yaramuke, Sielba defended her city with a stunning display of magic. The two sorcerers' disparate spells were of such power that the very nature of magic has been permanently disrupted in some areas of Yaramuke. Any time a spell is cast in these areas, it becomes a *wild surge* (*Tome of Magic*, page 7). These areas cannot be detected until a spell has been cast within them. The affected areas are 6L, 7D and 8O.



## Part Two: S'kin'di the T'chowb

The t'chowb is an agent of Abalach-Re, Farcluun's enemy. He lurks in the ruins of Yaramuke, searching for the *Eye* and the *Orb* and reporting any intrusions to his mistress. Since beginning his assignment, S'kin'di has befriended the gith and silt runners in the ruined city. He eats the minds of untalented explorers (none have so far found anything he or his mistress are interested in), leaving the bodies for the other monsters. In return for the carrion, the gith and silt runners leave the t'chowb alone.

The t'chowb becomes aware of the characters if they trip the pit trap at location 2C on the map of the ruins (see previous page) or when they enter the palace at 5K. Once S'kin'di realizes what the characters are attempting, he will do everything in his power to disrupt their explorations. Specifically, he will do the following in the order listed:

1. Notify Abalach-Re of the characters' arrival. (The sorcerer-queen of Raam gave the t'chowb a magical stone for this purpose.)
2. Scurry to the silt runners' lair at 15C. The silt runners have agreed to work with S'kin'di and will do what they can to aid him. They will follow the characters throughout ruins an attack them from time to time.
3. Go to the gith cave at 14K. The gith will harass the characters like the silt runners and will back up the reptiles should there be a problem.
4. Get as close to the characters as possible without being seen and watch for a chance to steal the *Eye* and *Orb* from them. If he can do this, S'kin'di will order the silt runners and the gith to attack the characters while he escapes with the prizes.
5. Send a second message to Abalach-Re telling her that either he has retrieved the *Eye* and the *Orb* or that Farcluun and the player characters have entered the ruins of Yaramuke. (S'kin'di will recognize the human disguise of his mistress's enemy.)



Note that S'kin'di does not want to slay the characters. He is more interested in letting them find the *Eye* and the *Orb* so that he can steal them for his mistress without endangering himself.

If S'kin'di becomes aware of the characters only after they have entered the ruins of Yaramuke, he will not perform actions 1,2,3, or 4. He sends the message in action 5, then tells the silt runners and gith to lie in wait for the characters outside the palace ruins.



## Part Two: A—The Museum

**Setup.** The museum is at location 1E on the map of Yaramuke. For this encounter, have the players turn to the Player's Book, page 10—Museum.

**Start.** The museum is almost completely buried in the sand; the doors are barely visible above the line of a dune. Five hundred pounds of sand block the entrance to the museum. Three characters at a time can dig out the sand; each character with a shovel can move one pound of sand per point of Strength per round—without a shovel, a character can move only half that amount. Once the sand is out of the way, the doors pull open easily.

**Encounter.** The walls of the museum are of fine marble, the ceiling and doors of decorated ironwood. Areas numbered on the map of the museum are described below.

**Room 1:** The floor of the main hall is covered with a thick layer of gritty sand and dust, and the supporting pillars are chipped and cracked.

**Room 2:** In this room, broken picture frames hang crookedly on walls defaced with crude graffiti and battle signs.

**Room 3:** A fine collection of rare ceramics once rested here, but now only shards of glazed pottery remain.

**Room 4:** Once-beautiful statuary now lies broken and destroyed in this room.

**Room 5:** What used to be books are strewn about here as a collection of time-faded pages and piles of ashes.

**Room 6:** A rare collection of abstract sculptures used to reside here, but now the pieces resemble bizarre puzzles to be fitted together, not art.

**Room 7:** This room is relatively intact, but its purpose is indecipherable. The walls are lined with mirrors tilted at odd angles. Walking through here is disorienting.

**Room 8:** The door to this room is blocked by rubble. A maximum of two characters can clear a number of feet of rubble in one round equal to their total Strength divided by 10. Little of value remains here save the Orb, a blue-tinted, solid-glass sphere, located amid the rubble.

**Next.** The characters may continue their exploration of the ruins. If the characters have found both the *Eye* and the *Orb* and wish to place them, continue with Encounter 2H—*Eye* and *Orb*.

## Part Two: B—The Barracks

**Setup.** The barracks are at location 5I on the map of Yaramuke. For this encounter, have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 43—Barracks.

**Start.** Only the top of the barracks' clay dome is visible above the dune. Characters must clear away the sand before they can enter the building. It takes one character two rounds to clear sand away from the window to the commander's quarters. Getting to the door on the floor below the commander's quarters is impossible without heavy excavating equipment.

**Encounter.** Once the characters have cleared the sand away from the window into the commander's quarters, they may squeeze in one at a time. Half-giants and thri-kreen cannot fit through and must remain outside.

The barracks once housed an elite group of templars who were Sielba's bodyguards during her frequent trips away from Yaramuke. Unfortunately, the templars were caught off guard by King Hamanu's attack and were slain before they could gather their wits about them. A skeleton fills each bed here, their very bones shattered and charred by some powerful force. Other than these grisly reminders of a war long past, little of interest remains here. Areas numbered on the map of the barracks are described below.

**Room 1—The Commander's Quarters:** The templar in charge of Sielba's personal bodyguard was caught napping when disaster befell his city. Characters who search the bed discover a scorpion hidden among the bedclothes. Unless extreme caution is taken when removing the blankets from the bed, the scorpion automatically gains surprise, striking first. Once the scorpion is defeated, the characters can notice three rings on the skeleton's left hand. All are normal rings with no magical properties, but are of finely wrought copper and are worth 1 sp each. The desk here contains only inconsequential items such as signet seals, wax and a handful of faded papyrus fragments. The altar is bare save for the tattered, molding cloth covering it.

**Room 2- Templars' Area:** If the characters descend the ladder to this room, they find the skeletons of 13 of Sielba's finest templars in the beds here. A chest in the corner once contained their weapons and armor, but Hamanu's looters took most of these after the war. Those who search the chest discover a secret panel in its bottom on a roll of 1 on 1d6. (Thieves may use their Find/Remove Traps score for this search.) A tiny cavity within the chest's bottom holds a steel *dagger* +1. This dagger is attuned to the *Orb* and will vibrate slightly if within 50 feet of it (a character feels these vibrations only if he or she is holding the dagger). Within 20 feet of the *Orb*, the dagger vibrates more intensely; a character will notice the vibrations unless the dagger is in a backpack. Within 10 feet of the *Orb*, the dagger vibrates so strongly that it can be noticed even through a backpack.

**Statistics.** *Scorpion:* AL Nil; AC 5; MV 9; HD 2+2; hp 17; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1, if stung save vs. poison +2 or die next round; SZ S; ML 8.

**Next.** Characters may continue to examine the ruins.

## Part Two: C—Warehouse

**Setup.** The warehouse is at location 11I on the map of Yaramuke. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 1—Warehouse.

**Start.** The warehouse is the only building in the ruins that is more than half-visible above the shifting sands. The upper 10 feet of the building can be seen for quite some distance. Characters can easily enter through a window. The only window large enough to accommodate half-giants and thri-kreen is in the center of the eastern wall. Once at a window, characters must climb 25 feet down to the floor of the building. If the characters enter through a window at the southeast corner, they may easily climb down the rubble pile there. This is a simple task requiring a roll vs. Dexterity. If the character fails, he or she takes 1d4 damage from the tumbled own the sharp, irregular surface.

**Encounter.** The building is mostly vacant. A few chests are piled along the north wall and some barrels and crates fill the northwest corner. However, the containers are in bad repair and whatever they once held has on since decayed. Should the characters examine the crates or barrels, they will fall prey to a dangerous pit trap. All squares adjacent to the crates and barrels are part of the trap, and once more than 100 pounds is placed on any part of the trap, it springs. The barrels, crates, and surrounding area collapses in a cloud of dust, dumping anyone in the trap's area of effect into a 10-foot-deep hole. Characters take 1d6 points of damage from the fall and 1d4 points from the wreckage that falls down on top of them. A successful save vs. paralysis reduces damage by half. Before the trap is sprung, a thief has half his or her normal chance to discover the trap, which cannot be disarmed, only avoided. The pit is the work of the t'chowb S'kin'di (see S'kin'di the T'chowb in this flipbook and the *Story Book* for more information).

Through his psionics and some magical items from Abalach-Re, S'kin'di has transformed the walls of the pit to obsidian. Climbing this glassy rock is impossible for any character but a thief, and even thieves' chances to climb out are reduced by 15%. Should characters attempt to extricate themselves from the pit using grappling hooks and rope, there is a 25% chance that the glassy edge of the pit will give way. Shards of obsidian rain down upon the PCs. These shards are THAC0 17 and each PC may be injured by 1d4 shards. Half-giant characters may attempt to pull themselves out of the pit by their hands, but must protect themselves first. Unprotected hands suffer 1d4 points of damage each. There is a 30% chance of the edge of the pit crumbling while a half-giant climbs out.

**Next.** The characters may proceed with their investigation of Yaramuke.

## Part Two: D—The Temple



**Setup.** The temple is at locanon Text on the map of the Ruins of Yaramuke. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 48—Temple, after they discover the entrance to the temple's basement.

**Start.** Read or paraphrase the following:

"Though little remains of this place save crumbled masonry and shards of fired clay bricks, a sense of pleasant warmth seems to

rise from the ruins. If there was ever a hope of better times for the people of Athas, its secrets once rested here. Perhaps some still do."

**Encounter.** This pile of rubble and wreckage was once the foremost Temple of Earth in the Tyr region. All that remains of the place now is its cramped basement quarters. Characters must spend a good deal of time digging through the masonry rubble and crumbled clay to discover the entrance. If they start at the south end of the ruins, it takes one hour to clear away the basement entrance; otherwise the job requires four hours. Half-giants reduce this time by 20 minutes per half-giant. Areas numbered on the map of the temple are described below.

**Room 1—Fountain:** This room protects a simple stone fountain that is, amazingly, still filled with stale water. Though not fresh, the water is safe to drink.

**Room 2—Cloak Room:** Hanging on pegs here are three robes, each old and moldy and inscribed with the symbol of earth (a flat line with a blue orb above). The robes have no magical properties and are covered with a thick layer of dust.

**Room 3—Workroom:** Priests and preservers once exchanged ideas and information here, benefiting from one another's knowledge. All that remains now are six corpses clad in robes like those found in the cloak room. Searching the corpses reveals a single bronze key as well as several pendants inscribed with the earth symbol. The key opens the door to the Chamber of the Eye.

**Room 4—Chamber of the Eye:** The *Earth's Eye* (see 2H— *Eye* and *Orb*) rests atop the simple altar here. Unfortunately, guarding the *Eye* is a dwarf banshee. The *Eye* looks like an eyeball, complete with iris and pupil, although the white of the eye is inlaid with pictograms of mountains, gorges, and other earthen wonders. In life, this dwarf's focus was to place the *Eye* in its socket—a chamber in the now-fallen tower of his temple—in a yearly ceremony. The dwarf was denied this mission by Hamanu.

**Statistics.** *Dwarf Banshee:* AL LE; AC 0; MV 12; HD 4; hp 26; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+9 (obsidian mace); SA *gaze, malediction*; SD steel or +1 or better weapon to hit; SZ M; ML 17; Psionics— *Sciences:* death field, shadow-form; *Devotions:* body weaponry, cause decay, chemical simulation, double pain; *Defenses:* IF, MB; PSPs 110. the PCs do not have any steel or magical weapons and are without a strong psionist and/or mage, do not use this encounter.)

**Next.** Characters may continue to explore the ruins. If the characters have found both the *Eye* and the *Orb* to place them, continue with Encounter 2H— *Eye* and *Orb*.

## Part Two: E—Silt Runners' Lair

**Setup.** The silt runners' lair is at 15C on map of the Ruins of Yaramuke. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 17—Cavern Level 1. Statistics for silt runners are the Monster Table and the *DARK SUN™ MC*.

**Start.** This encounter begins when the characters enter the cave. Only one character can squeeze through the small opening at a time. Read or paraphrase the following: "The opening to the cavern is low, and you must crawl to enter. The shift from sunlight to the darkness of the cavern is sudden and blinding—for a moment all is black. Then the musky odor of reptiles fills your nostrils and stings your eyes. Smiling down at you are two saurians, claws and fangs at the ready."

**Encounter.** This is home to an especially poor tribe of six silt runners. Areas numbered on the map of the silt runners' lair are described below.

**Room 1—Guard Post:** From here the silt runners can easily watch anyone nearing their cavern while remaining unseen in the shadows. There are two silt runners here at all times; they attack anyone coming into the cave (see the Monster Table). When combat begins, one of the runners sounds the alarm by ringing a bell that hangs from the ceiling. As this is their home, the silt runners will not break off combat.

**Room 2—Waste Pit:** The silt runners dump their garbage into this sinkhole. Anyone unfortunate enough to take a tumble into it falls for 30 feet and takes 3d6-4 damage. Damage is lessened somewhat by the waste at the pit's bottom.

**Room 3—Food Stores:** Surplus foodstuffs used to be stored here, but the area is currently empty.

**Room 4—Sleeping Chamber:** The silt runners sleep in this communal area. Old blankets and moldy straw litter the area, and there is virtually nothing of value here. If the silt runners are not already pursuing the characters, there are two sleeping here. (There is a 15% chance that they did not hear the warning bell.)

**Room 5—Condensation Room:** This room is the most desirable feature of the lair. Due to its proximity to an ancient well, water seeps through the northern wall. Buckets catch the water; they hold 1d3 gallons of water when the characters enter.

**Room 6—Treasure Chamber/Chieftain's Room:** The silt runner chieftain sleeps here surrounded by his tribe's treasure. If the silt runners have already gone after the characters, this room is guarded by a single silt runner. Otherwise the chieftain and one silt runner are here. Like the rest of his tribe, the chief fights with his bare hands and has no armor. Roll on Treasure Type A on the Treasure Types Table, page 73 of the *DARK SUN™* boxed set's *Rules Book*, and have the amount of treasure to determine the group hoard.

**Next.** The characters may continue to explore the ruins of Yaramuke.

## Part Two: F—Gith Cave

**Setup.** The gith cave is at location 19K on the map of the Ruins of Yaramuke. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 36—Cavern Level 2. Statistics for gith are in the Monster Table and *The Wanderer's Journal*.

**Start.** This encounter begins when the characters enter the gith cave. Read or paraphrase the following:

"The cavern is surprisingly spacious past the entrance, as the floor slopes away and the walls curve to either side. You can smell old food and unwashed bodies, though no one is in sight."

The gith are watching the characters very closely. They remain hidden until the characters get deeper into their lair, then they attack.

**Encounter.** Areas numbered on the map of the gith cave are described below.

**Room 1—Entrance:** The entrance to the gith cave is large and high due to the downward slope of the floor. Peepholes are located high on the walls, and gith sentries posted here watch the intruders.

**Room 2—Watch Tunnels:** Three gith wait in each of these tunnels, two at the peepholes and one ready to run and warn the others. Once the characters enter the cavern, the runners warn the rest of the gith to hide.

**Room 3—Main Hall:** This is where the gith eat their meals and settle disputes. Piles of rubbish abound and heaps of rotting scraps line the walls. Once the characters pass through here, the sentries will move into attack position behind them.

**Room 4—Children's Quarters:** When the characters arrive there are no gith children present and the room is mostly empty. A few straw mats litter the floor, but that is all.

**Room 5—Females' Quarters:** The gith have set their first ambush here. When characters enter, the sentries charge to attack, as do the four female gith hiding here (see the Monster Table for gith statistics). Six gith children are also hiding here behind the females. The children are half the size and statistics of the adults and will not fight against the PCs. If none of the characters enters this room, the sentries and two females spring their trap in Room 6 or 7, whichever the characters enter first. In this case, two females charge out of Room 5 to join the fray while the remaining two females stay in Room 5 to guard the children.

**Room 6—Weapons Storage:** Two gith guard the tribe's stash of weapons here. The weapons include 2 bone long swords, 1 long bow, 3 bone maces, and 13 wooden arrows.

**Room 7—Chieftain's Lair:** The main fighting force of the lair is currently hiding here. There are six gith here, along with the gith chieftain. The gith's treasure hoard is also here (roll on Treasure Type I on the Treasure Types Table, page 73 of the *DARK SUN™* boxed set's *Rules Book*, to determine the group hoard).

**Room 8—Sleeping Area:** Several mattresses of straw and mangy pelts cover the floor. If the characters take the time to search the 10 beds, they will find 1d8 cp in each.

**Next.** The characters may continue to explore the ruins of Yaramuke.

## Part Two: G—Visitors' Center



**Setup.** The visitors' center is at location D23 on the map of the Ruins of Yaramuke. Once the characters trigger the mural, have the players turn to the Player's Book, page 9—Visitors' Center.

**Start.** When the characters prepare to enter the ruins of this building, read or paraphrase the following:

"This building seems to have fared better than most in Yaramuke. Its obsidian walls are still standing, though the ceiling collapsed long ago. Even the doors are still on their hinges, albeit somewhat askew."

**Encounter.** The visitors' center, located just outside the city, gave visitors a short history of Yaramuke. Though it now lies in ruins, it can still perform this function if it is activated. Special areas on the illustration of the mural in the *Player's Book* are described below.

**Coin Slot:** If a coin of any size or denomination is placed in this slot, the mural springs to life. If another coin is inserted, the *magic mouth* is activated.

**Mural Wall:** This wall is, surprisingly enough, completely intact. Before a coin is inserted in the slot, only faint outlines of the mural are visible. Once a coin has been inserted, however, the mural springs to vivid life as though lit from within, and the characters can see Yaramuke at the height of its glory. From the statue of Firehand a beam of soft blue light lances down toward the palace doors; from the tower of the Temple of Earth's Wonders a red beam shines down upon the palace doors.

**Magic Mouth:** If a second coin is slid into the coin slot, the *magic mouth* utters the following.

"Here is the majestic city of Yaramuke, carved from barren wilderness by the hand of Emperor Kadiran Firehand a thousand generations ago. As the mural shows, our city has prospered since its founding and since the coming of Empress Sielba. Her palace is blessed by not only the physical representation of Emperor Firehand, but also by the Eye of the Earth, which is held in the tower of the Temple of Earth's Wonders. It is said that when the light of these blessings no longer shines upon the door of the palace, Sielba's rule will come to an end."

The players should now be able to decipher the use of the *Eye* and the *Orb*. The chief difficulty in using the two items is that the tower of the temple is no longer standing. The players will have to estimate the tower's height from its relation to other structures in the mural and come up with some way to elevate the eye to that point. See Encounter 2H—*Eye* and *Orb* for details.

**Next.** Characters may continue to explore the ruins of Yaramuke. If the characters have both the *Eye* and the *Orb*, go to Encounter 2H—*Eye* and *Orb*.

## Part Two: H—Eye and Orb

**Setup.** The statue of Firehand is at location 7D on the map of the Ruins of Yaramuke. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 13—Statue, when the characters approach the statue of Firehand. When sunbeams finally lance through the *Eye* and the *Orb*, have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 47—The Palace Revealed.

**Start.** This encounter begins as soon as the characters try to place the *Eye* and the *Orb* in their proper locations.

**Encounter.** The *Orb* is simple to place, as the characters need only climb the statue and place the *Orb* in Firehand's open hand. Thieves are at a +10% to their climbing skill as the statue is very rough and provides plenty of handholds. Others may attempt to climb with grapples and rope. Half-giants and thri-kreen are far too heavy to climb up and may damage the statue. The statue is approximately 30 feet tall from base to head. The left arm extends another 7 feet above the head.

Placing the *Eye* where it belongs is a bit trickier and calls for ingenuity on the part of the players. Judging from the mural, the tower of the temple is a little more than the height of the statue of Firehand. The characters must come up with some way to raise the *Eye* to a height of nearly 40 feet. There are several ways to do this. First, the characters could use magical or psionic *levitation* to hold the *Eye* in place. Because the sunlight must shine through both the *Eye* and *Orb* at sunset, timing is critical for this approach. Characters could also pile rubble up to the correct height and place the *Eye* atop that. While not easy, this method produces a structure that will hold the *Eye* until sunset without the expenditure of spells or PSPs. Clever characters will surely think of other methods, and you should be fair when the players are especially inventive. This is a critical juncture in the adventure, and while the task must be difficult, it should not be impossible.

If characters become stumped, it may be necessary to prod them. Perhaps the t'chowd steals the items while the PCs ponder the situation. He can use the *Eye* and the *Orb* himself, thereby showing the characters the location of the palace. Of course, the characters can always return to Farluun and ask his advice. If they tell him everything that they have seen (including the mural at the visitors' center), he should be able to piece things together for them. After all, he is a very intelligent dragon.

Once the items are in place and the sun is about to set, beams of red and blue light will lance from both *Eye* and *Orb*. These two beams intersect at 5K on the map of the Ruins of Yaramuke in the *Player's Book*, page 31. Characters must somehow mark this spot, hope that they can remember where it was (Intelligence check at -3), or wait until the next sunset and try again.

**Next.** Proceed to either 2I—Bringing the Dragon or 2J—The Palace.



## Part Two: I—Bringing the Dragon



**Setup.** In this encounter, the characters must guide the blind Farcluun through the treacherous ruins of Yaramuke. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 7—Guiding Farcluun.

**Start.** Read or paraphrase the following to the characters when they return to Farcluun:

"Farcluun is fairly bursting with excitement as he awaits your return. 'It's about time!' he cries when he sees you. 'I was beginning to believe that you had failed. Lead me through the ruins.'"



**Encounter.** It is important to remember that Farcluun has lost three senses: He can only hear and touch what he can reach. The characters must guide the dragon across the ruins, avoiding sinkholes and other traps.

Farcluun is excited and nervous, which is a very bad combination. Though he insists that the characters tether themselves to him, he is much stronger than most of them and has a tendency to whip them around on the end of the tethers. On occasion he may try to run, dragging the characters 50 feet in a random direction. This can be very dangerous, as Farcluun cannot see hazards that are obvious to the characters. This may be the characters' first opportunity to realize that the "man" they are traveling with is more powerful than he appears.

Another danger in bringing Farcluun through the ruins is that S'kin'di will immediately recognize his mistress's enemy (even though he is in his human disguise) and notify Abalach-Re. From the moment the characters enter the ruins with Farcluun, the t'chowb follows them, even down into the palace. Should the characters become aware of the t'chowb's presence, he will try to escape them. S'kin'di then asks either the gith or silt runners (whichever is closer) to distract the characters so that he can get close enough to them to steal their treasures (the *Eye*, the *Orb*, or the *black waters* scroll if they acquire it later). (Remember: In the bestial minds of the gith and silt runners, distraction always means to attack.)

Once the characters get to the palace with Farcluun, the dragon casts *sands of time*. This powerful spell restores the first floor as well as all the two subterranean levels that Farcluun is interested in. Describe this vividly; it's not every day that the characters will witness time rolling backward and the unveiling of such a wondrous piece of architecture. Since he is blind, Farcluun will not know when the palace has been fully reconstructed, and he must rely on the characters for this information. The spell must be cast at least six times before the required portions of the palace are fully restored. Since Farcluun has seven such spells available (one memorized and six scrolls), this should not be a problem.

**Next.** The characters may begin to search the ruins of Sielba's palace.

## Part Two: J—The Palace



**Setup.** Once the dragon casts the *sands of time* spells, have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 2—The Palace.

**Start.** This encounter begins when Farcluun has restored the palace so that the party may explore it. *Sands of time* will not completely restore the palace, only this main floor and two sublevels. The main floor remains open to the sky.

**Encounter.** Numbered areas on the map of the palace are described below. Areas lettered on the palace map will be used in later encounters.

**Room 1—Main Hall:** This is where Sielba held many informal parties and dances. The columns that seem to support the ceiling here are, in fact, obsidian golems. They become active once Farcluun and Abalach-Re engage in battle.

**Room 2—Meeting Room:** The table and numerous stools here mark this place as an informal meeting room of some sort.

**Room 3—Kitchen:** Assorted bone and ceramic cooking utensils hang neatly from pegs around the room. There is also a fireplace with spit, a table, and long counters.

**Room 4—Chanting Room:** Robes of fine silk hang from polished obsidian pegs. Marble benches line the walls.

**Room 5—Bathing Room:** Sielba liked to conduct business in luxury—and what could be more luxurious on Athas than a room with plentiful water? Now empty, the bath's function is still obvious.

**Room 6—Courtyard:** Withered shrubs sere grasses now make this once verdant courtyard seem dismal.

**Room 7—Guest Room:** While far from luxurious, this room has all the basic amenities, including a silver mirror and brush and comb that seem to be worth about 6 sp.

**Room 8—Guest Room:** This room is identical to Room 7: though it lacks the brush, comb, and mirror. Instead a fine bronze wash basin rests on a marble pedestal in the corner. The basin might bring 5 sp for its metal, or twice that for its workmanship.

**Room 9—Guest Room:** This room is identical to Room 7 but without the mirror, brush, and comb.

**Room 10—Banquet Hall:** The tables here are of polished ironwood stained deep red. The stools are made of various materials, all ridiculously expensive. A secret door in the northeast corner opens upon a staircase that now leads up to nowhere, and descends to the palace vaults.

**Room 11—Kitchen:** This kitchen is built on a scale to cook for hundreds.

**Next.** The characters may continue to search the ruins of Sielba's palace.



## Part Two: K—The Palace Vaults

**Setup.** The characters and Farcluun continue to search Sielba's palace. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 40—Palace Sublevel 1.

**Start.** This encounter begins when the characters enter this level of the palace.

**Encounter.** Numbered areas of the vaults are described below. Lettered areas will be used in later encounters.

**Room 1—Main Hall:** This is the main hall of Sielba's treasure vaults. It was obviously abandoned in a hurry, as burst sacks of coins litter the floor. Characters who spend five turns can find 1d100x10 cp, 1d100 sp, 1d10 gp, and 1d4 gems scattered about here. It is unlikely that Farcluun will allow them this much time, however. As in the main hall of the main floor, the pillars here are actually obsidian golems.

**Room 2—Art Room:** This chamber is filled with priceless objets d'art that are too heavy to move.

**Room 3—Gem Room:** Sielba was fascinated with gems, and this room attests to that. Countless gems have been embedded in the walls. Sacks of gems filled to bursting lie on the floor. A hurrum has found its way down here and is living in one of the bags. It begins to hum as soon as the characters enter the area. (See the *DARK SUN™ MC* for statistics.)

**Room 4—Records Room:** Metal-bound books and ledgers fill this room's floor-to-ceiling shelves. These list treasury, debt, income, and other miscellaneous records.

**Room 5—Weapons Storage:** The walls of this room are covered by numerous weapon racks, many of which are now empty. A handful of metal weapons remain (two daggers and one long sword), but everything else here is useless.

**Room 6—Armory:** This room once held Sielba's valuable collection of antique armor. All that remains now are shattered bits of lacquered wood and splintered obsidian. The room's contents seem to have been destroyed systematically.

**Room 7—Sielba's Room:** Sielba liked to oversee the counting of her money and would often grow so weary at this chore that she would need a nap. A huge bed fills most of this room, surrounded by an ankle-deep layer of metal coins. An exquisite gilt-framed mirror, makeup, and a variety of brushes and combs lie on a small table. A secret door in the south wall hides a staircase to Sielba's magic lab.

**Room 8—Counting Area:** A number of abacuses as well as papyrus, quills, and pots of ink lie scattered on tables here. The tables are covered with sacks of gold and silver coins.

**Rooms 9, 10, 11, and 12—Coin Rooms:** The bulk of Sielba's wealth is stored here. Hundreds upon thousands of coins of all types fill these rooms.

**Next.** The characters may continue their search of Sielba's palace.

## Part Two: L—Sielba's Magic Lab



**Setup.** Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 14—Palace Sublevel 2.

**Start.** This encounter begins as soon as the characters enter Sielba's lab from the palace vaults.

**Encounter.** This room contains many of Sielba's prized magical texts and apparati. Numbered areas are described below. Once the scroll is found, go immediately to 2N—Betrayal!

**Room 1—Library of Spell Theory:** During her time as Empress of Yaramuke, Sielba collected a huge assortment of treatises on magical theory. With these she developed the spell of *black waters*. A thorough search of this area takes 60 turns.

**Room 2—Alchemical Laboratory:** This area contains all manner of alchemical supplies of the finest quality. Searching this area takes 40 turns.

**Room 3—Summoning Chamber:** The floor of this room is covered with circles, spirals, and other strange patterns. If the drawings are described to him, Farcluun recognizes this as a summoning chamber. All summonings made in a room such as this are guaranteed to succeed. The only drawback is that it takes more than 100 years to enchant such a room and only its creator can use it. This area can be searched thoroughly in 50 turns.

**Room 4—Draconic Research Chamber:** This room excites Farcluun. A number of large obsidian orbs rest on an obsidian table. A dozen books with dragon-embossed covers are here as well, and Farcluun is most interested in these. It takes 50 turns to search this room, and Farcluun orders the characters to take as many orbs and books as they can. The books measure 8"×14", are metal-clad, and weigh 10 pounds apiece. The orbs range from 1" to 20" in diameter and weigh 1 pound for every 2" diameter.

**Room 5—Recipe Room:** This room contains various alchemical recipes and the like. It will take the characters two turns to search.

**Room 6—Farcluun's Prize:** Sielba kept her most valuable books here. The *black waters* scroll is hidden behind a secret panel in the north wall, which can be discovered on a roll of 1 on 1d8. This chamber takes 10 turns to search.

**Room 7—Dead Experiment:** This room holds strange bones in a very large cage.

**Room 8—Summoning Equipment:** This room holds valuable items for the summoning of a wide variety of creatures and elementals. Unfortunately, these items are all attuned to Sielba, and no one else may use them.

**Outcome.** If the characters are wasting too much time searching the large rooms, you may wish to allow each one an Intelligence check to realize that a valuable treasure is likely to be well hidden, possibly in a secret location. If the characters all fail these checks, Farcluun may say something to this effect.

**Next.** If Farcluun must help the characters find the scroll, go to 2M—Helping Claws. If the characters discover the scroll on their own, go to 2N—Betrayal!

## Part Two: M—Helping Claws

**Setup.** Use this encounter if the PCs cannot find the *black waters* scroll on their own.

**Start** If the characters have searched the palace and Sielba's alchemy lab and have still not discovered the *black waters* scroll, read the following aloud:

“ ‘Fools!’ White-hot anger laces the words torn from Farcluun’s throat. His unseeing eyes orbit their sockets in maddened frustration. ‘I entrusted you with this one simple task and you fail me! So be it!’ With that, his long fingers begin weaving arcane patterns in the air before you.”

**Encounter.** Farcluun is not patient. If the characters are absolutely unable to find the *black waters* scroll, the dragon will aid the search with his magical powers. Though loath to do so, Farcluun will cast true seeing on one of the characters.

There are two problems with true seeing. The first is that the characters must look at the wall that hides the secret panel before the spell wears off. This may be trickier than it sounds, as that wall is hidden by floor-to-ceiling shelves and the books that fill them. The characters will have to clear at least one wall to find the secret compartment and, because Farcluun does not want any books damaged, be careful as they do so. Farcluun had also intended to use this spell to search the palace further and will not be pleased to have to use it up on incompetent helpers.

The second problem with *true seeing* is that any character who looks at Farcluun while under its influence will see him as a dragon. Farcluun will try to prevent this revelation. He’s afraid that the characters may panic and run when they see him as a dragon, and he doesn’t want them to get away before they find his treasure. If he must use the spell, he will tell the character to stand facing a wall, cast true seeing, then sidle out of the room and stay just out of the character’s sight in Room 1. If the character happens to see him as he truly is despite this precaution, play it up for all it’s worth. Farcluun will threaten and intimidate the characters even further, playing on their fears to bend them to his will.

If the characters cannot find the scroll with Farcluun’s magical aid, they are likely to find themselves trapped in a room with a very angry dragon. Farcluun should not fly into a homicidal rage immediately; instead, he may give the characters a time limit, at the end of which he must have the *black waters* scroll. This is an effective tension-heightening device, and one that will fill players with a more immediate sense of urgency than even the curse of the Black Waters gives.

Parties who cannot find the scroll, even with Farcluun’s help, are in deep trouble. The enraged dragon will try to kill them. He has worked very hard to get this far; being thwarted by incompetent hirelings is simply infuriating. Though it will be relatively simple to escape from the blinded dragon, the curse of the Black Waters will still take its toll on the characters. Eventually, they will die.

Kind DMs may have the dragon’s first attack blast through the wall where the scroll is hidden. While the dragon angrily blames the characters for the damage to the magical texts, the scroll will be found unharmed.

**Next.** Once the *black waters* scroll is found, continue with 2N—Betrayal.

## Part Two: N—Betrayal



**Setup.** This encounter begins as soon as the characters find the *black waters* scroll. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 45—Betrayal.

**Start.** Read the following when the characters finally remove the *black waters* scroll from its hiding place (if the *true seeing* spell in 2M—Helping Claws has already let the characters see Farcluun

he really is, don't read the sentences about Farcluun's transformation at the end of the first paragraph):

"A cold chill brushes your skin and raises the hairs on the back of your neck. For a moment it seems that frost will rime the walls of this room, for it has become so cold. You iver for a heartbeat longer, then warmth replaces the bizarre cold. From behind you, Farcluun laughs. You turn to face him, and horror coalesces in your gut like cold steel. No longer a man, Farcluun towers over you, hideously transformed into. . . a dragon.

"Time for your reward, little ones," Farcluun growls. "Come, give me the scroll and I will give you the price of your services." He extends one long finger to you, then curls it beckingly. "The scroll!"

*If the characters don't hand over the scroll, read the following:*

"Puny children! Do you think that I would let you live—that I would let *anything* stand between the scroll and my needs? The drag on roars, the sound filling your head and battering your souls. Before you can react, the dragon launches himself at you."

*If the characters hand over the scroll, read or paraphrase the following:*

"Thank you," Farcluun says as a gravelly chuckle bubbles up from his cavernous chest. The dragon runs a forked tongue over its scaled lips. "Your services have been most appreciated." The sorcerous beast pauses a moment and scratches its chin with the scroll, furrows of thought creasing its horny brow. "However, I do not believe I can just leave you here," Farcluun says mockingly. "You see, I know your kind. I can't take the chance that you'll want this scroll for yourself, that you'll track me and use it to my disadvantage. So, I'm forced to alter your reward a bit. I think," he continues as he laughs ominously, "I think I'll . . . give . . . you . . . DEATH!" The dragon lunges at you, fangs bared, talons thrust forward."

**Encounter.** Farcluun wants to kill the characters. Don't let him kill them, but do give em a good scare. Use this encounter to show Farcluun's power. Tell the players how the dragon, even though blinded, tears great hunks from the walls with a single swipe of his talons and how his breath turns hard stone to oozing slag. Make the players believe that their characters are going to die here. Then, just as the dragon corners them and the chacters think their time is up, spring the next encounter.

**Next.** Continue with 2O—Abalach-Re.

## Part Two: O—Abalach-Re

**Setup.** Begin this encounter once the dragon has the characters cornered. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 35—Dragons Battle, after reading the dialogue in **Start**.

**Start.** After the characters have discovered the *black waters* scroll and played through encounter 2N, read or paraphrase the following:

"Farcluun's tail lashes the floor, agitation making every muscle in his body twitch. His fangs glint in the torchlight, tiny sparks of death dancing across their razor points. The dragon has you cornered.

"Then, from somewhere away, you hear, 'Upstart!' The words are barely a hiss, but Farcluun winces as if they were screamed in his ear, and he whirls toward the sound. Behind him stands a tall woman dressed in noble finery. She stares blindly ahead, seeking Farcluun, and is flanked by squads of putrefy In corpses—zombies armed with metal weapons and mismatched armor.

" 'Abalach-Re!' Farcluun shouts. He has forgotten you, his attention focused on his enemy, whom you realize with terror is the sorcerer-queen of Raam.

" 'Farcluun, you have meddled in my affairs for the last time,' Abalach-Re cries. 'Once again, your bungling attempts to gain power have interfered in my own intrigues.' The woman takes one step forward. 'You sought the scroll of *black waters* for your own ends, without understanding its true powers. Had you traveled to the oasis and cast the spell as you had planned, the curse of the waters would have been lifted. Fool! I will use the scroll to enslave those undead who dwell at the oasis, and all those who drink there from this day forth. Give me the scroll that I may amass my army.'

"With that, the woman changes, her features growing long and vulpine, scales sprouting along her flesh like alien vegetation in a verdant field. In a heartbeat, two of Athas's most deadly creatures lunge blindly at each other and lock in mortal combat."

**Encounter.** This encounter reveals to the characters how to rid themselves of the curse of the Black Waters (they must travel to the oasis and somehow cast the spell), and it weakens Farcluun. When the weakened dragon catches up with the characters again later on, they will have a chance of destroying him.

The two dragons ignore the characters. They have other things on their minds than puny humans. Make this battle sound as exciting as possible. Also remember that both dragons are blinded by the Wall; they are likely to injure any PCs who are slow about running from the battle scene.

Abalach-Re's undead companions are intent upon retrieving the scroll of *black waters* for their mistress, and they will stop at nothing to get it (see 2P—Undead).

The characters are also confronted by the large number of golems that will soon become active in the palace. These powerful creatures will try to stop the characters from leaving with the scroll (see 2Q—Golems).

**Next.** Characters continue on to 2P—Undead.

## Part Two: P—Undead



**Setup.** Escape does not come easily for the characters. Have the layers turn to the *Player's Book*, page 16—Enemies.

**Encounter.** Abalach-Re brought a large contingent of undead slaves with her to Yaramuke. These undead have taken up posts throughout the palace and have strict orders to keep the *black waters* scroll from leaving the building.

The letters on the three maps of the palace in the *Player's Book* refer to the encounters below. Unless otherwise noted, the undead listed below are identical to those found on the Monster Table.

### The Palace (*Player's Book*, page 2)

- A. Three zombies armed with obsidian maces stand guard here. They will back up the skeletons at Area B on this level.
- B. Three skeletons have taken up positions here. Two of them are armed with short bows and have 10 arrows each; the third is unarmed. They will fire up the corridor to the north if the characters come that way.
- C. A squad of four unarmed zombies lurks here. They will try to force the characters down the east hallway into the line of fire of the skeletons at Area B on this level.

### The Palace, Sublevel 1 (*Player's Book*, page 40)

- A. Two skeletons armed with bone scimitars guard these stairs.
- B. Four zombies armed with wood long swords and small shields wait here.
- C. Six unarmed skeletons wait to the left of the door, hoping to catch PCs off guard.
- D. Three unarmed zombies back up the skeletons at Area C.
- E. Three zombies are here, one armed with a steel short sword. the others unarmed.

### The Palace, Sublevel 2 (*Player's Book*, page 14)

- A. Five zombies armed with obsidian axes guard the stairs here.
- B. Four unarmed skeletons mount the stairs ahead of the characters and attempt to hold them back.
- C. Two unarmed zombies back up any undead fallen in this area.
- D. Armed with bone maces, five skeletons move to attack any openings.

**Role-playing.** Keep in mind that Athasian undead are slightly smarter than their counterparts in other settings. Also, these undead are controlled by a powerful magic-user. They are determined and will use good battle tactics to carry out their orders.

You may wish to play out this running battle with miniatures on a large-scale map. Miniatures often help the game come alive for the players and can make it much easier for you to keep track of all the undead that will be running about.

**Next.** Proceed with Encounter 2Q—Golems.



## Part Two: Q—Golems



**Setup.** Encounter, Sielba's ancient magicks unexpectedly protect the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 41—Golems.

**Start.** Begin this encounter at least three rounds after Abalach-Re and Farcluun begin fighting. As soon as the characters enter an area in the palace that has pillars, read the following:

"Even as you begin to fear that there may be too many undead to combat, a new danger presents itself. The pillars supporting the building seem to burst and tall, black figures step from the rubble. They have no facial features and look like nothing so much as crude obsidian statues. The creatures suddenly turn and move, then begin to attack the dead!"

**Encounter.** When Sielba first began improving her palace with magical defenses, she installed many obsidian golems. Unfortunately, she never quite set the triggering circumstances to work properly. The golems were supposed to come to her aid should another dragon ever be so bold as to enter the palace. She inadvertently set the golems not to attack a hostile dragon, but to attack any evil creatures should two dragons ever be in the palace simultaneously. Thus, when Farcluun and Abalach-Re are together in Sielba's palace, the golems are activated.

Every pillar within the palace is a golem, and each golem will move toward the nearest group of undead and begin exterminating them. (In addition to the pillar golems, three more can make timely appearances to save the characters.) The golems do not wield weapons, but their awesome strength and stony composition more than make up for this.

In addition to attacking undead, the golems attack any characters with treasure from the palace. Weapons, coins, gems, and the *black waters* scroll are all palace treasure. Should a character slip past the golems, two begin to track the thief. If the party is seriously weakened, you may wish the golems to stop one mile from the palace. If the party is doing well or is not particularly weakened, you can let the golems track up to any distance. In the latter case, the golems could show up during subsequent battles with the undead or with Farcluun in Section Three, or when the characters have returned to a city. If the golems catch up with the characters after the *black waters* spell is cast, they no longer consider the spent scroll treasure.

A problem Sielba did not take into account was that, once the pillar golems were activated, they would no longer be supporting the palace. The characters have exactly 15 rounds from the time the golems activate to escape the palace before it collapses. They should be able to make it out in time; if not, characters still on the bottom two floors will be killed in the collapse, while those on the first floor will suffer 1d10 points of damage. If the characters are in the palace when it collapses, make sure not to read the description of the palace collapsing in 2S—Flight.

**Next.** Continue with 2R—Ambush!

## Part Two: R—Ambush!



**Setup.** Angry gith and silt runners under S'kin'di's orders try to take revenge on the characters. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 8—Ambush!

**Start.** This encounter begins when the characters escape from the palace with the *black waters* scroll. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

“At last you emerge from the quaking, partially restored ruin of Sielba's palace. Dust and the blood from your wounds coat your skin with a grisly mud. The sounds of battle continue from below, telling you that the dragons still fight, as do the golems and the undead. For the moment, at least, you are free. But such moments are short on the harsh world of Athas. For the night seems to be alive with floating eyes, hissing voices, and the glint of obsidian in the moonlight. Again, our enemies are upon you.”



**Encounter.** When Abalach-Re entered the palace, S'kin'di rounded up the gith and silt runners. They have been waiting for some time now, and their impatience has brought on their bloodlust. If the characters fought these monsters in encounters 2E or 2F, subtract any that were killed from the number in this encounter.

The gith and silt runners have been given very explicit orders: Kill any characters quickly and efficiently. The scroll must not be damaged.

These new foes have spaced themselves around the main door of the palace in a rough semicircle. The silt runners have taken the east side of the door, while the gith have taken the west. Though not particularly brave, neither silt runners nor gith need to check morale during this combat. They fear Abalach-Re far more than they do the characters.

If S'kin'di could not retrieve the *Eye* and the *Orb* from the characters, he will take an active role in their destruction. He lurks in the shadows around the fray as much as possible, using his psionic powers to frustrate and confuse the characters.

**Outcome.** Intelligent players are going to have their characters run for it, and that's just fine. The adventure is building toward its climax, so make sure to keep things moving along at a fairly rapid pace—and to keep the characters alive! If the characters run, they will find it difficult to outpace the silt runners, but they can easily get away from the dangerous t'chowb.

**Next.** Continue with 2S—Flight.

## Part Two: S—Flight

**Setup.** As soon as the characters have beaten their enemies or run for it, have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 33—Enemies.

**Start.** This encounter begins when the characters make their break for the open desert and the oasis of Black Waters. If the characters were trapped in the palace when it collapsed (2Q—Golems), don't read the description of its collapse included below. Read or paraphrase the following:

"You run from the area, knowing that time is short and you must get to the oasis of Black Waters. Behind you the sounds of battle continue—then you suddenly hear a antic, roaring sound! You turn just in time to see Sielba's palace—the stress of war bin too great—collapse in a cloud of dust and obsidian shards. It is with some relief that you realize nothing could have survived the collapse—not even a dragon. Your hearts lighter, you rush into the desert."

**Encounter.** As the map in the *Player's Book* shows, the oasis isn't very far from Yaramuke. Make this journey relatively uninteresting. By this time many of the characters are suffering from the effects of the Black Waters curse. Let them set their own pace, but if they begin lagging, spook them with the sound of night predators on the prowl.

**Next.** The characters' journey brings them at last to the oasis of Black Waters and a date with destiny.

## Part Three: A—The Oasis

**Setup.** The characters discover that a cure is not as close as they had thought. Have the characters turn to the *Player's Book*, page 5—Oasis. (You may wish to refer to the battle map of the oasis that goes with 3C—Enemies, found in this flipbook.)

**Start.** This adventure begins as the characters finally near the oasis of Black Waters. Winded and worn from their adventures and the long run, the end of the curse that Afflicts them seems at hand. But nothing is ever easy on Athas. Read or paraphrase the following for the players:

“As you near the oasis, you slow to an easy trot. You have left your enemies behind, and all seems hopeful. The oasis is strangely peaceful as the first rays of Athas’s sun begin to peek over the horizon. At last, you have time to relax and take a look at the scroll that holds the only cure for the wasting curse afflicting you. Warily, you remove it from its case, casting about for any sign of the undead hordes supposed to haunt the oasis. The scroll itself is unremarkable, a rotting scrap of papyrus. A scanty map on one side shows the area around the oasis; a large star marks its exact location. On the reverse side is a hastily penned jumble of archaic runes and sigils. It seems that the scroll may not be as much help as you had thought.”

**Encounter.** This is a breather, a short break that lets the players and characters catch their breath. Let the players stew a bit about just what they are going to do with this indecipherable scroll. Play up any new effects of the curse that may occur during this period; do what you can to add to the players’ unease. Now is the time for characters to worry about their impending deaths and to come up with desperate solutions.

There are two notable features on the map of the oasis. The first is the oasis itself, a perfectly normal-looking oasis surrounded by a few scrawny trees and some scrubby bushes. Characters will detect this spot as they near it; the powers of the curse intensify the nearer they come to its origin. Those who gaze into the clear waters will see a shadow beckoning them. There is no effect; this just tells the characters that the water knows they belong to it and will soon claim them for its own.

The second feature on the map is the shack of Phabum, Druid of Black Waters. Characters must search for the shack, which looks like just another pile of ruins so common near Yaramuke.

**Next.** If the characters find the druid’s shack on their own, go to 3D—Druid of Black Waters. If the players begin to despair that their characters are sure to die, go to 3B—Friends?

## Part Three: B—Friends?



**Setup.** If the characters don't discover the druid's abode on their own, use this encounter to get them on the right track. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 39—Friends?

**Start.** This encounter occurs if the characters simply don't know what to do next. Read or paraphrase the following:

"You languish in depression, unsure which way to turn. The scroll that was to have been your salvation is incomprehensible and there seems to be no other help. As you contemplate your fate, the ground begins to move. All around you holes form in the earth, and stiff figures crawl out into the light. You realize that emerging before you is the undead legion of Black Waters."



**Encounter.** These aren't typical zombies. In fact, they are likely to be the only good undead the characters will ever meet. Though they look like zombies, they are cursed dead, strange beings cursed with undeath by the Black Waters. They wish to help the characters, but they must get very close before the characters can hear their whispery voices. If the characters let the cursed dead get close

the leader of the undead will say, "Wish no harm. Wish release. Follow; remove curse of Black Waters." She then leads the characters to the hut of Phabum the Druid.

Should the characters attack them, the cursed dead do not retaliate, but try to herd the characters toward the druid's home. Unfortunately, the fracas alerts the counterparts of the cursed dead: the hungry bodies.

The characters may fight the evil zombies at three different times: 1) when they encounter the cursed dead (3C—Enemies); 2) on the way from the hut to the oasis (3F—Run to the Oasis); or 3) when the druid is casting the spell (3G—Battle for Time). Any encounter with such an overwhelming number of undead could easily be lethal, even for a party in good shape. These encounters should add excitement and danger to the adventure, but they shouldn't be a killing machine. Let the characters feel that they might die at any moment, but don't let them be overwhelmed by the undead army. Tailor the zombie combat encounters according to whether the PCs are still in pretty good shape or are on their last legs. Pull your punches if you need to, or let the zombies punish the characters if the PCs need it. Remember that the characters must live to fight the dragon in encounter 3I.

**Role-playing.** The cursed dead are not the characters' enemies, but they aren't congenial. Embarrassed by their condition, they don't like to be examined or stared at and will indignantly chastise any rude characters. Speaking causes them great pain, so they prefer to communicate through gestures whenever possible.

**Next.** If the characters fight the cursed dead, go to 3C—Enemies. Otherwise continue with 3D—Druid of Black Waters.

## Part Three: C—Enemies

**Setup.** The characters must fight an army of undead as they race against time to reach the Druid of Black Waters. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 16—Enemies.

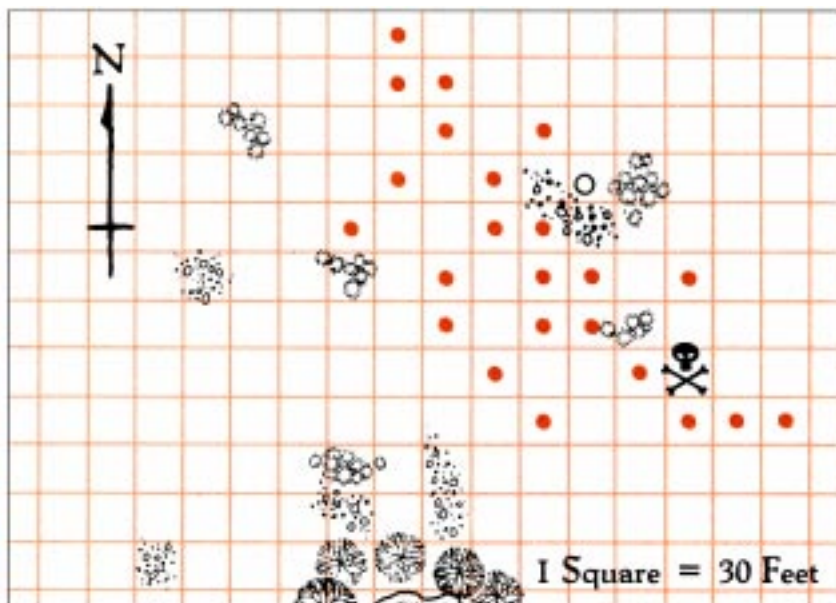
**Start.** Use this encounter only if the characters attack the cursed dead in 3B—Friends? Read or paraphrase the following:

“The undead never retaliate, but they force you on. There are hundreds of them, and it is unlikely that you could defeat them all. The best course seems to be keeping away from them. As you step carefully backward, a strong wind suddenly whips sand into your faces. From all sides comes a long, mournful howl that you are sure isn't the wind. The dust settles again, and you see a second, even larger group of undead advancing toward you.”

This second group of undead are the hungry bodies. While identical to the cursed dead, hungry bodies desire eternal life and wish to gain power by killing the characters.

The two groups of undead move toward each other, trapping the characters between them. There are 300 cursed dead and 500 hungry bodies. The cursed dead will not attack the PCs, but instead try to protect them while attacking the hungry bodies. On the battle map below, each square contains two undead. Fall en zombies are replaced by those next to them. If the characters can keep a square clear of hungry bodies for two rounds, the cursed dead will hold the gap and let them through, reiterating their entreaty in 3B—Friends?

**Next.** Continue with 3D—Druid of Black Waters.



## Part Three: D—Druid of Black Waters



**Setup.** The PCs find their only hope, Phabum, Druid of Black Waters. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 12—Druid of Black Waters.

**Start.** As soon as the characters get to the hut, read the following:

"You see a ruined stone shelter, its wooden door crumbling and its windows hung with tattered cloth. As you approach, you see recently made human footprints leading in and out."

**Encounter.** The characters find Phabum inside the hut and seemingly uninterested in the undead battling outside. Phabum is reclusive, even for a druid; he chose stewardship of the Black Waters because of its isolation. He ignores the undead; they don't harm him and he feels they are simply part of the natural order. Still, Phabum is interested in removing the unnatural curse of Black Waters.

**Statistics.** *Phabum (Human):* AL CG; AC 6 (*cloak of protection* +2 and *Dexterity*); MV 24; Drd 7; hp 43; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (metal scimitar); SZ M; ML 14; Str 14; Dex 17; Con 15; Int 16; Wis 19; Cha 16. Spells: 1st) *cure light wounds, en tangle, invisibility to undead*; 2nd) *dust devil, hold person, trip*; 3rd) *create food & water, plant growth*; 4th) *rejuvenate*. Languages: aarakocra, belgoi, elven, halfling, thri-kreen.

**Role-playing.** Although protective of the oasis, Phabum doesn't like people. Years of living alone have left him with no social skills, so he speaks in short sentences.

**Next.** Go to 3E—Convincing the Druid.

## Part Three: E—Convincing the Druid

**Setup.** The characters must convince the druid to help them before they die.

**Start.** Once the characters meet the druid, they find that he wants nothing to do with them. They must try to make him listen to them. Read or paraphrase the following:

“Haven’t time for ye,’ Phabum says. ‘Oasis important. You not. Take all time. Go now. Leave. Can’t help.’ The druid then slams the door in your faces.”

**Encounter.** Remember that two groups of undead are battling fiercely outside Phabum’s hut while the characters talk with him. The characters must get Phabum to help them. Only he can cast the *black waters* spell. Phabum at first thinks the characters are asking him to do a favor for them. He doesn’t want to get involved in anything that doesn’t have to do with his oasis. The characters must say that the spell will help the oasis before Phabum will pay any attention to them. Then they must make their request again before Phabum will agree. Phabum is also stubborn, and he is likely to ignore the characters, so convincing him should be very difficult indeed. Remember that *charm* spells and the like will not work on Phabum, as his Wisdom is too high.

If the players are at a loss, you might reward their characters with the vital clue on a successful Intelligence check: “Casting the spell will lift the curse on the oasis.”

If the characters can’t convince Phabum, the leader of the cursed dead can burst into the hut fresh from the battle and briefly plead the characters’ case. Phabum will listen closely to her, knowing how difficult it is for her to speak.

**Role-playing** Although Phabum doesn’t talk much, his face is very expressive. In a flash he is startlingly angry, then curious, then disinterested. Use facial expressions when dealing with your players. Phabum also spends much of his time with animals and will grunt or squeal when excited. Some words the characters use may be beyond Phabum and confuse him. Though intelligent, he doesn’t act it. He is as difficult to deal with as a toddler.

**Next.** Once the characters have convinced Phabum to cast the spell, go on to 3F—Run to the Oasis.



## Part Three: F—Run to the Oasis

**Setup.** In this encounter, Phabum and the characters go to the oasis. If they did not fight the hungry bodies in 3C—Enemies, the characters must battle them all the way to oasis. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 34—Run to the Oasis.

**Start.** This encounter begins once Phabum agrees to cast the spell. Read or paraphrase the following:

"The druid asks to see the scroll. You hand it to him and he studies it for a moment, concentration furrowing his brow. Then he nods slowly and looks at you intently. 'Very dangerous,' he says. 'Dead not like. We go oasis. Need time.' Phabum heads for the door, not even waiting for you to follow."

**Encounter.** There are two ways to run this encounter, depending on whether the characters found Phabum's shack on their own or whether the cursed dead helped them.

If the cursed dead helped the characters find Phabum, the undead are still fighting outside the druid's hut when the party leaves; 200 cursed dead and 400 hungry bodies remain. The characters will have to fight their way to the oasis through the sea of zombies, protecting Phabum from them all the way.

If the characters found Phabum's hut on their own, both groups of zombies rise from the ground to do battle as the party heads for the oasis. Make sure to add the appropriate description of zombies rising from the ground (from 3B—Friends?) when you read the art text for this encounter.

The wakened hungry bodies can sense the presence of the *black waters* scroll, and they rush at the party in waves of five or 10 at a time. If the hungry bodies can reach the druid, they try to kill him to steal the scroll. If this happens, the characters will die and become either cursed dead or hungry bodies themselves. The cursed dead try to engage any hungry bodies who attack the PCs, but let at least 20 hungry bodies attack the characters.

Phabum will also do what he can to hold off the undead. Although he is loath to destroy these victimized beings, he will use his spells to protect himself against them. Phabum first casts *invisibility to undead* on himself, which gives him six rounds before the undead can see him again. Despite this spell, the hungry bodies will still be able to sense the location of the *black waters* scroll and will try to get it.

**Outcome.** The odds are against the characters, and it is likely that at least one of them will die fighting the zombies. But remember that the encounter isn't designed to wipe the characters out. If the characters are doing poorly, pull your punches. Make the battle dangerous, exciting, and hair-raising, but don't make it too deadly. Let any character who dies go out a hero. Remember that the characters must live to fight the dragon in encounter 3I.

**Next.** Continue with 3G—Battle for Time.

## Part Three: G—Battle for Time



**Setup.** In this encounter, Phabum casts the spell from the *black waters* scroll. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 38—Battle for Time.

**Start.** This encounter begins once the characters arrive at the oasis. Read or paraphrase the following:

“Phabum walks into the waters of the oasis, the scroll held high in one hand. The water seems to surge up around him, engulfing him in a cloak of water. Then his voice rings out with surprising strength as the undead renew their attack upon you. You only hope you can hold them off long enough for Phabum to cast the spell.”

**Encounter.** In this encounter, the characters must hold off a horde of hungry bodies while Phabum casts the *black waters* spell. Though the players should not know this, it takes about 10 rounds to cast the spell. Once Phabum starts to cast the spell, his *invisibility to undead* ends immediately. He may not cast any other spells once he begins casting the *black waters* spell, nor may he defend himself. It falls to the characters to keep Phabum safe during the casting.

The cursed dead will help the characters fight off the hungry bodies, but their numbers swiftly dwindling as the hungry bodies tear them apart. Unless you must pull your punches to make sure the characters live, every PC faces 10 zombies for each of the first five rounds of the casting. The zombies use whatever tactics you feel are appropriate, from simply charging the characters to clever feints and strategic withdrawals.

At the beginning of the sixth round of the casting, the undead will attack in groups of five instead of 10. The numbers of the hungry bodies have been severely depleted, and the tide of the battle may be turning. Still, five rounds is a long time when you're facing an army.

**Role-playing.** This is a climactic battle scene. Vividly describe the fearsome visages of the attacking undead and their responses to attacks. The hungry bodies are driven creatures who howl and shriek as they fight. They ignore any wound that does not kill them and laugh in terrible, gravelly voices when struck. Give the players a feel of being bogged down in a lopsided battle and let the bitter dregs of defeat always be a hair's breadth away. But remember that the characters must live to fight the dragon in encounter 3I.

**Next.** As the tenth round of the casting draws to a close, continue with 3H—Black Flames.

## Part Three: H—Black Flames

**Setup.** To reach this encounter, the characters have managed to hold off the undead while Phabum unleashed the power of the *Black Flames*. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 18—Black Flames.

**Start.** In the last encounter, Phabum cast enough of the *black waters* spell to break the power of the undead. Read or paraphrase the following:

“Suddenly the undead fall back. Fear springs to cold life in the eyes of some, peaceful relief in the eyes of others. Around you, the air feels tight and constricting, as though it was charged with incredible energies. It’s hard to breathe as the air thickens, and for a moment you fear you will suffocate. A deadly silence spreads across the oasis.

“Phabum’s voice cuts through the quiet, a vocal knife blade. The sky darkens, then flares with pure blue lightning. Thunderheads, as rare a sight as any on Athas, rumble into view, their interiors sparking with frenetic energies. The druid’s chanting grows more intense, and the undead fall moaning to their knees. Phabum’s hands slam together with great force, and the sound is echoed in the roar of thunder. And then the sky splits open.

“Flames fall from the clouds, black teardrops of eldritch fire that sizzle and pop when they touch the undead flesh. Within seconds the dead are engulfed. They do not move; it is as if they have become statues of flesh and flame.

“The flames touch you as well and sink into your flesh. But their touch is soothing, a cool balm to the feverish curse that burns within you. And then the clouds seem to blow away on unfelt winds.

“The flames recede at last, eldritch energies floating from your bodies. You feel rewed, revitalized, as if you could conquer the world. There is no sign of the hundreds of undead that had so recently surrounded you. No bones, no weapons, no ancient scraps of clothing. It is as if they simply never were. A great sense of relief fills you.”

**Encounter.** The curative spell has been cast, and the undead of the oasis laid to rest. The curse has been lifted from the oasis of Black Waters, and never again shall travelers fall prey to its evil.

Play this scene to its full dramatic potential. Although the players should think that this is the end of the adventure, it’s not. Let them savor a sense of relief and accomplishment, but don’t give them too much time to think about what has happened. Describe the relief the characters feel and give them all their hit points and PSPs back (the magic of the *black flames* is a powerful restorative), but no spells.

**Role-playing.** This should be a very dramatic scene. If your players enjoy props, use house fans to whip up a wind (secure maps and character sheets first, though) and dim the lights as the thunderclouds approach. You could also set up a small strobe light to mimic the flashes of lightning (it’s a good idea to have a penlight for reading the adventure). All this will enhance the mood during this encounter.

**Next.** Continue with 3I—Dragon!

## Part Three: I—Dragon!

**Setup.** This scene gives the characters a big surprise: Farcluun isn't dead! And he's found the characters! Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 32—Dragon!

**Start.** This encounter begins after the *black flames* have consumed the undead and cured the characters. Read or paraphrase the following:

“Phabum crawls out of the oasis, exhausted and drenched. As you go to help him, a terrible sensation of dread crawls up your spine. You glance fearfully out across the desert. A large form is approaching at great speed. As it draws near, sunlight glints off reptilian scales and the figure takes on more definition. Incredibly, it is the dragon Farcluun.”

**Encounter.** Farcluun managed to survive both the battle and the collapse of S'ielba's palace. (Abalach-Re also barely survived, though Farcluun left her for dead.) The need for vengeance fills Farcluun's mind. He must make the characters pay for his defeat. He knows that the wounds from his battle with the sorcerer-queen are quite serious, and that he is going to die soon. He wants to take the characters with him and will pull out all the stops to do so.

It will take a minute or so for the dragon to reach the characters, during which they should make whatever hasty preparations they can manage. When Farcluun gets closer, the characters can clearly see that he has been badly hurt and that he is not going to live long. Despite his wounds, he is still quite a threat, and it is likely that one of the characters will die in the upcoming battle.

Phabum will be of no help in this battle, as he is still exhausted from the strain of casting the *black waters* spell. He can do no more than lie panting next to the oasis.

**Role-playing.** Farcluun curses the characters throughout the fight, hurling insults with as much force as his spells. He is enraged at the characters' betrayal and wants them dead. Make the characters feel the terrible fear of having a dragon, even a wounded dragon, after them. It should be a feeling they won't soon forget.

**Next.** When Farcluun finally dies, continue with 3J—Fond Farewells.

## Part Three: J—Fond Farewells

**Setup.** This encounter lets the characters cement their friendship with the Druid of Black Waters and then leave the desert for civilization. Have the players turn to the *Player's Book*, page 37—Fond Farewells.

**Start.** Once the dragon has been defeated, read or paraphrase the following:  
“Phabum seems to have recovered from his magical working and is sitting on a small stone near the oasis. From the look on his face it is apparent that he quite enjoyed the bat-He motions for you to come to him. ‘You fight good,’ he says, a mischievous grin creasing his face, ‘but dragon bad hurt. We do good, but you go now. Someday come back, help me, help you.’ He seems a bit sad, then continues, ‘People come soon, trample everything, hurt plants. No more dead here now, all will come. Much work me do.’ With that, he leads you back to his hovel.”

**Encounter.** Phabum feels he owes the characters something for their part in cleansing the oasis. He will use his spells to help get them on their feet again and will let them stay in his hovel for a night, possibly two. He will also give advice as to what the characters should do next. It is obvious that he is sad to see them go, but equally obvious that he wishes to be left alone with his newly-restored land. He never thought that he would witness the miracle he has today—and he is very tired!

If the characters wish, Phabum will help them cut the dragon up. There’s no telling what uses there might be for parts of such a creature. The head is an excellent trophy, but the characters must be careful not to display it lest they incur the wrath of the sorcerers. The rest of the creature can be used as spell components, though the characters must be quick about the butchering as the dragon’s flesh and blood will rot within three days.

Should the characters ever come back through this area, Phabum will be glad to see them and will offer them food and shelter. He feels a fondness for the people who brought the spell that healed the oasis and he will treat them like family.

When they are ready to depart, the druid gives the characters a map to Urik as well as a few pointers for surviving in the desert. If the characters have told Phabum about the other dragon and her identity, Phabum will also warn them to stay away from Raam, where they are surely wanted men.

**Next.** From here, go to the final encounter, 3K—Aftermath.

## Part Three: K—Aftermath



**Setup.** The characters accomplished a lot in this adventure. But all actions have consequences. Use these adventure seeds once the characters return to a city

**House Stel:** If a House Stel agent hired the characters for caravan duty or to prevent ambush, the House will wonder why the PCs—and the most valuable item from their caravan—suddenly disappeared during the freak sandstorm. The House will certainly wish to find the characters and question them.

**Farcluun's Lair:** Although the characters may search for Farcluun's lair, they will not be able to find it. Dragons have little to do with men, and the PCs can find no leads as to the lair's whereabouts.

**Abalach-Re, Sorcerer-Queen of Raam:** When the PCs escaped with the scroll, not only did Abalach-Re lose her never-ending supply of soldiers, she was thwarted by mere humans. She will hire assassins to do the characters in, and she will do anything possible to hamper the characters and to foil their plans. Abalach-Re will not forget this disappointment, nor will she tire of plotting the characters' destruction. Should the characters ever go to Raam, they will have to maintain disguises. If Abalach-Re's templars discover the characters' true identities, the characters will immediately find themselves arrested and sentenced to death.

**Shaziva:** If Templar Shaziva hired the characters as guards, she may seek out the PCs and enquire why they disappeared during the journey.

**S'kin'di:** S'kin'di was punished for failing the sorcerer-queen. Now minus one eye, the t'chowb has vowed to destroy the characters. He will surround them with a complex plot of blackmail and sabotage which only the t'chowb's death will end. S'kin'di may prove even more dangerous than Abalach-Re: S'kin'di can focus his attention on the characters while Abalach-Re must also run her kingdom. S'kin'di will not reveal himself until the characters are near the bitter end, when he comes forward to gloat.

**Black Waters:** Now that it has been cleansed, the oasis will host many traveling between Urik and Raam. It will soon be renamed Cool Spring. Phabum stays and remains friendly toward the PCs. The characters may become well known for their part in the cleansing, and they may be invited to join a merchant house. On the other hand, their new popularity makes them an easy target for their enemies.

**Yaramuke:** The city remains abandoned. Characters who try to explore it again find it even more dangerous than before. The destruction of the palace's lower levels started a chain reaction that sank the rest of the palace ruins beneath a layer of sand. Treasure seekers will forever wonder what may have been hidden there, but no expeditions are launched to find out.



# Service

by Lynn Abbey

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## Service

Who are you?" Hamanu, king of Urik, inquired.

The king's eyes were the same sulphurous color as the cassock worn by the young man standing in front of the throne.

"Gelmin Plucrates." The young man's voice was faint.

"What are you?"

The proper response—"I am a man of Urik who swears honor and service"—vanished from Gelmin's mind, replaced by a wind he alone perceived.

The wind had always been a part of Gelmin's life. As far back as he could remember, it warned him when he was in danger of falling short of another person's expectations. Sometimes the wind was whisper-gentle and conveyed the exact words someone wanted to hear. At other times the private wind was gusty—like the grit-laden breezes that presaged a dust storm—and cautioned him against an improvident act. And sometimes the private wind was alluring, a perfumed trail that led away from uncharted danger.

The subtle, ever-changing wind did not compel; it merely warned. Often, Gelmin was unsure what interpretation to give such warnings. When he was much younger, he had occasionally disregarded these warnings and always regretted the consequences. He had never discussed this ability with anyone. Whenever he'd considered mentioning it, the wind itself warned him to remain silent.

But the private wind had never blown as violently as it did now, while he stood before the king. From his experience, Gelmin interpreted this as a warning of extreme peril. But what peril could come at his graduation ceremony from the templar academy? Gelmin, who was the son, grandson, and great-grandson of high templars, was assured a lifelong position, if only he could recite the words that were carved over the door of every templar household.

Gelmin tried to remember, but the wind blew the words beyond his grasp, as if silence were the proper response.

"What are you?" the king repeated with evident impatience.

Silence was *not* the proper response. Hamanu was a master of sorcery and the Unseen Way. He had the power to reduce any man to a heap of ash, and the temperament to

use it. Gelmin closed his eyes and allowed the powerful wind to sweep through his thoughts.

"I am a man who lives in stark fear of his king and the Dragon of Tyr."

Gasps rippled around the throne room. Gelmin felt betrayed. He kept his eyes shut so that he would not see the lightning bolt he expected to strike him down on the spot. Gelmin was thankful that family members were not invited to the private ceremony, and thus his parents would not witness his disgrace.

The throne creaked beneath the monarch's shifting weight. Hamanu, who answered templar prayers with his own magic, chuckled aloud. Then the king seized Gelmin's robe.

The young man's eyes popped open. He saw the king's pupils pulsing hypnotically, and he could not move. With his free hand, the king produced a sprig of golden flowers and thrust them into the closure of Gelmin's robe.

"Fear me above all, young templar, and you need fear nothing else," the king said softly. He released Gelmin and spun him around to face his peers. "Gelmin Plucrates. Templar of the Fifth Rank. Agifari-bearer."

Gelmin's eyes opened wider. The loudest sound in the throne room came from the scribe's stylus as he entered Gelmin's name and honors in the rolls. Gelmin's limbs were numb as he walked from the throne. He remained in a daze while the other graduates were questioned by the king, and did not recover his senses fully until the ceremony was over and he was standing before the gates of his own home once more.



Vasealia Plucrates waited in the garden of the family villa. A fountain—that rarest of all Athasian luxuries—cascaded beside her. When she heard the outer gate open, she summoned her husband with a bell-pull, then sat down at the small table where the family ate its meals.

A knife lay beside a bowl of cabra melons. Vasealia used it to make precise cuts in one thick-husked fruit. When she was finished, the husk parted and the succulent meat blos-



somed in her hand. After arranging the fruit on a plate, Vasealia selected another melon.

Unannounced in the doorway, Gelmin watched his mother. Never hesitating, never hurrying, Vasealia brought the same elegant efficiency to cabra-carving that she brought to everything in her life.

Vasealia was not a beautiful woman. Her features were sharp and her dark hair was streaked with gray. Her face was etched with battle scars. In her youth, she had led a front-line unit in Urik's army. If gossip were trustworthy, she'd fought several duels before Hamanu named her High Templar of his Commissary. These days, the tyrant would not begin a campaign until Vasealia Plucrates certified the logistics.

A templar who argued with King Hamanu, and won, was a templar to be reckoned with, but Gelmin had never feared his mother. Fear was not a part of the Plucrates household. There was enough of that, Vasealia said, in the palace.

"Will you join me?" she asked when she finished carving the second melon.

Gelmin ate a cabra wedge before he sat down.

"You've brought honor to the family." Vasealia unfurled the second melon. "We're very proud of you. As proud, I hope, as you are of yourself?" Her eyebrows arched, transforming a statement into a question.

If there was no room for fear in Vasealia's house, neither was there space for deception. Word of Gelmin's near disgrace and unexpected honor had traveled home faster than a newly made templar afoot.

"When I looked at King Hamanu—when I saw his eyes, I was truly afraid. I don't understand why he gave me the agifari blossom."

"To look upon King Hamanu and see him clearly, as you did, is cause for both fear and reward." Vasealia paused as if debating how much to tell her son. After a moment she continued. "Our king is a dragon."

"The Dragon!"

Vasealia picked up a third melon. "Not the dragon, but a dragon. Did you think a man could rule Urik for more than a thousand years? The sorcerer-kings are dragons."

"Hamanu is a god—" Gelmin quoted the fundamental tenet of templar belief.

"Pish. Athas has no gods, only dragons."

"Who knows this?"

"Those who wear the agifari," Vasealia replied. "Those who possess the innate ability to see the king's true nature."

Gelmin plucked the wilted sprig from his robe and laid it on the table. His father was High Templar of Hamanu's private library. The bedtime stories Radis Plucrates had read his son were not the usual nursery fare. Gelmin knew more about dragons than most people, even other templars. The young man still shuddered at the memory of his father sitting beside his bed, entertaining him with stories about the origin of the Dragon of Tyr and describing in excruciating detail each step of the dragon's metamorphosis. Tales of dragon-magic, that malefic union of defiler wizardry and the Unseen Way, were part of his earliest memories. He knew what happened to the levy of slaves Urik sent into the desert each year. They were devoured by the Dragon of Tyr who was only appeased, never fully satisfied, by the sacrifice. But until this moment, Gelmin had believed that the Dragon of Tyr was the only dragon beneath the blood-red sun.

"It can't be," Gelmin muttered, but his mind could already see the truth. Hamanu wasn't a magician *and* a master of the Unseen Way; he was a dragon in one of its preliminary stages. Gelmin turned to his mother. "I didn't see the king's true nature. If I had, I would have refused the agifari. I would rather be ash than serve and honor a *dragon*."

Vasealia laid down her knife. "That would be commendable—if there was only one dragon. But I just told you that all the sorcerer-kings are dragons. To live in the Tablelands is to live under the rule of a dragon."

Gelmin's hand was cold and bloodless when he raked his hair from his forehead. "How could you give him your oath? How can you serve and honor him?"

"I serve and honor Hamanu because I was born in Urik and Hamanu is Urik's king. We are property in his eyes, yet he will defend us against all challenges. If Urik did not have King Hamanu, we would have chaos, followed by *the* dragon. There's a very old saying, my son: Better the enemy you know than the one you don't."



## Service

Gelmin pushed the agifari away. "I thought he was a god. 'Hamanu, King of the World to whom the life-giving waters and the nourishing soils have trusted the mightiest City of Athas,'" Gelmin bitterly recited the first lesson taught to all young templars. "Are there any other lies?"

"This afternoon you saw the king's true nature—even if you did not fully understand what you saw—and won the agifari. If you stood before the king right now . . ." Vasealia shook her head.

The young man knew from past experience that, when his mother had that sad-but-stern look about her, his inner wind should have been blowing in his face, but the air in the courtyard was calm. "I told you before. I didn't see anything, Mother." Gelmin buried his face behind his hands. "I only said what the wind blew into my mind. It just happened to be what the king wanted to hear."

With his face covered, Gelmin couldn't see his mother stiffen when he mentioned the private wind he had never before spoken of. Nor did he hear his father enter the garden behind Gelmin.

"What's wrong?" Radis asked.

"Our son's talent is not what we thought it was. He says he did not see our king's true nature, but merely said what Hamanu wished to hear."

"Talent?" Gelmin raised his head. Talent could describe almost anything, but most often it described an aptitude for the Unseen Way. All Athasians had talents of the mind. Templars, who were endowed with magic by their sorcerer-kings, rarely developed skill in these mental disciplines. "But without study—?" Gelmin began.

Radis sat down. "True mastery of the Unseen Way requires study, but a wild talent merely requires practice. If your talent is not what we suspected, then you must have been practicing it your entire life." He turned to his wife. "Does this change anything?"

While Gelmin tried to figure out what his parents were talking about, Vasealia answered her husband. "No. Gelmin says he felt a 'wind' that told him what our king wanted to hear. Hamanu *was* satisfied; that should be sufficient."

"I know of no talent that relies on wind," the white-bearded scholar replied. "I don't want to send my son on this

mission with only 'wind' to aid him."

Gelmin was annoyed at being talked about as if he was not present. He was an adult now, a templar in his own right. "Please talk *to* me instead of *about* me! Change what? Send me where?"

His mother gave him a look that measured the depth of his newfound independence. "Urik is threatened by an enemy of unprecedented power. Neither the king nor the army dare march against it, but a solitary champion might prevail. I submitted your name and reminded our king that the Plucrates family has served and honored Urik for generations."

Gelmin blanched. A stiff wind, almost as strong as the one he'd felt when he stood before the king, blew directly into his face. If he surrendered to the wind again, Gelmin suspected that he would eagerly agree to be Urik's champion. For the moment—at least until he had more information—he was determined not to surrender, regardless of the wind's advice.

"If King Hamanu, his armies, his cadre of defilers, and all the other templars of the city cannot counter this threat, what makes you think that I can?" Gelmin asked stiffly.

"Be assured that King Hamanu will help you, should you need him," Radis said as he spread two parchment scrolls across the table. Both were freshly inked with Radis's exquisite calligraphy. One was a map of the Tablelands, marked with a symbol of two concentric circles in the emptiness northeast of Urik. The other was an illuminated manuscript entitled *The Legend of the Avangion and the Dragon*. "But he would prefer that the creature be eliminated quietly, without alerting the Dragon of Tyr and the other sorcerer-kings to its existence."

Gelmin picked up the text scroll and scanned the first lines, then said, "I barely believe that the king is a dragon, and now you expect me to accept yet another tale of metamorphs?" In a disgusted tone he read aloud from the scroll: "The creature of golden light sowed discord among the dragons, who fought with each other. Cities were silenced; their fields turned to ash. The avangion was never seen again, and its body was never found." Gelmin threw the scroll to the table, where it rolled into a compact tube.



“Never found’ because it didn’t exist! It’s just a legend.”

Radis cleared his throat. “It is true that the original text is ancient and of questionable veracity. No sites mentioned in the legend can be correlated to any current map of the Tablelands, and King Hamanu states that the Dragon of Tyr has never fought such a being. Nevertheless, since High Sun the king has prophesied the coming of this avangion. At his entreaty, I scrutinized the catacombs myself. This is the only text that alludes to such metamorphs—the natural enemies of dragons. I assure you, Gelmin, our king’s reaction was much the same as yours, but his spells and auguries cannot be denied.

“The text goes on to describe the progression from human to avangion, and the prerequisites for each transformation. Certain . . . items have been purloined from the palace, items the legend claims are necessary for the initial avangion transformation. The king has cast many spells searching for what has been stolen, but with little success. We think the items are shielded by complex glamours. Nonetheless, Hamanu believes the incipient avangion prepares for its metamorphosis near this spot—” Radis put a finger on the double circle inscribed on the map. “Our king believes the avangion will be vulnerable during its transformation and—” Radis smiled wryly, “—given his personal experience of such processes, I am inclined to accept his judgment.”

“Why me?” Gelmin demanded, turning from his father to his mother. “Why not you, with all your experience, if you want someone to uphold the family honor?”

“You are Plucrates and Urik is our life,” Vasealia said solemnly. “If we wish Urik to continue, then we must protect it. Destroying the avangion is an opportunity for great glory. For a templar, sworn to his king and his city, it is also an obligation. As for me—”

Gelmin started to speak, but his mother arched her eyebrow in warning. “It takes no great magic to know that I have dedicated my life to appeasing a dragon’s appetites. The scars on my face are not the only ones I’ve acquired in Urik’s service. I could never get close enough to an avangion to harm it. You, on the other hand, are as yet untouched. Your aura arouses no suspicions.” Vasealia paused, remem-

bering what Gelmin had said earlier. “Perhaps it is your talent, the ‘wind’ that blows you, that makes you uniquely qualified.”

Gelmin picked up the map. His education, which had never emphasized the Unseen Way, had been thorough in other respects. Each year, as part of their examinations, the templar students were sent on training expeditions across the inhospitable barrens. Most students dreaded the treks, some had not survived, but Gelmin had relished the physical challenge. The journey between Urik and the spot marked by the circles wouldn’t be difficult for him.

“What if I don’t find anything?” Gelmin said, consciously yielding to his private wind.

“Then King Hamanu’s fears are groundless and all the high templars, including your father and myself, are fools for taking his concerns seriously.” Vasealia wrapped her sarcasm in a motherly smile.

The room was quiet except for the rippling of the garden fountain. Gelmin stared at the map again. He was tired from the ceremony, and his head throbbed. He wanted to please his parents, whom he loved and respected. He had no desire to please King Hamanu, who was not a life-giving god but a rapacious dragon, the implacable archenemy of life, but . . .

“All right, I’ll go.” The words fell reluctantly from his lips. He walked his fingers across the parchment. “I can requisition supplies and be ready next week.”

Vasealia snorted. “You have three days. I’ve already made your requisitions. I suggest you leave at dawn.”

“Three days!” Gelmin exclaimed. “So soon? Does something happen in three days?”

Radis retrieved the scroll. “By the light of the conjunct moons,’ ” he read, “‘the avangion cast its golden spell. . . .’ Ral will cross the face of Guthay in three days. If the avangion doesn’t cast its enchantment then, it will have to wait another eleven years.”

Gelmin sighed. “Tomorrow, then. At dawn.” He tucked the parchments under his arm and excused himself, leaving behind the wilted agifari blossom.





## Service

The blood-orange sun of Athas rose above the city walls as Gelmin rode through the northern gate. Tapping his kank's antennae with a prod, the young man urged the insect to a faster pace.

A kank could run all day, but Gelmin needed all his strength and will just to stay seated in the saddle. A human's internal skeleton was poorly adapted to the movements of a creature consisting primarily of armor plates. The kank had been trained to follow the road, so Gelmin slipped into an energy-conserving trance. The day slipped by without conscious awareness.

The sun was a ball of fire sinking below the western horizon when Gelmin roused himself and dismounted from the kank. After checking the map to be sure he was still on course, he ate his supper. His body protested, and Gelmin wanted to camp beside the road, but the greatest danger a Tablelands traveler faced came not from feral predators but from fellow travelers. Gelmin climbed back into the saddle and prodded the kank into the barrens.

With both moons shining, the young templar rode until midnight, when the kank demanded a halt. Gelmin unloaded and hobbled the beast, then he gathered his gear into a pile and used the kank-prod to incise a crude circle around it. Sitting inside the circle, Gelmin closed one hand over the medallion of King Hamanu he wore around his neck and raised the other hand above his head. He'd called on-and received-the king's magic many times during his training, but this would be the first time he asked for a spell on his own, with none of his teachers to monitor the results.

"O great and mighty Hamanu, hear my plea!" Gelmin's sweaty palm began to tingle. "Ward me within my circle!"

Energy shot down his arm, jangling every nerve before passing into the ground. Gelmin saw Hamanu's yellow eyes hovering among the stars.

*You will call on me, Gelmin Plucrates, when the moons are conjunct. You will tell me that my enemy is dead, or you will guide my power so that I may slay it.*

The eyes winked and were gone. Shivering, Gelmin wrapped himself tightly in his cloak and slept restlessly until dawn. He was stiff and sore when he awoke, but he was also young; the aches were gone before he broke camp.

Again he rode until midnight. When he invoked Hamanu's name to ward his campsite, the sorcerer-king sent no further messages.

Late the next afternoon, Gelmin noticed a rocky pinnacle in the distance, very near the location on his map where *something* was supposed to be happening. Landmarks were rare in the barrens, and this formation was more prominent than those Gelmin had used in his examination treks. In the cool evening air, tendrils of mist spiraled up the dark finger of rock, a promise that there was open water at the pinnacle's base.

Ral and Guthay met in the heavens as Gelmin neared the pinnacle. He watched in awe as golden light shot up from the shadows toward the moons as they conjoined. The beam brightened momentarily, then faded, but others rose to take its place, growing more intense and lasting longer as pale Ral crept across the face of darker Guthay. Gelmin shivered, but not from the chill air. The legend said that the avangion began its metamorphosis by casting golden light into the heavens to draw down the power of the moons.

Several hundred feet out, a dense hedge circled the pinnacle, forming a barrier that the kank could not penetrate. With beams of light pulsing through the mist, Gelmin circled the hedge, looking for an entrance. When the spire was between Gelmin and the pulsing light, he dismounted and hobbled the beast, leaving his gear lashed to the harness in case he had to leave in a hurry.

The only way to find out what lay beyond the hedge was to force his way through. The wise part of Gelmin's mind knew that the moist leaves slapping his face and the thorny branches snagging his skin were no real danger to him, but his reflexes were Athasian. The strangeness of the golden light, the clinging mist, and the dense vegetation combined to reduce the wise part of his mind to panic. Gelmin was gasping by the time he emerged from the hedge.

Dropping to his knees, Gelmin sucked sweet moisture from the grass surrounding him and waited for the panic to pass. When his pulse no longer deafened him, he realized that the air echoed with high-pitched music. Although Gelmin could not be certain that an avangion had created the potent magic he felt surrounding him, he was confident



that any wizard who could draw down the moons' power would have taken the time to surround himself with equally potent warding.

Gelmin made his way grimly and carefully toward the brightest light. He was so worried about magic that he paid too little attention to the ground beneath his feet and fell face-first into a pool. Gelmin's panic returned with new vigor. He flailed and cursed desperately before he got his feet solidly beneath him. Then he couldn't stop shivering after he hauled himself out of the water.

When exhaustion forced him to relax, Gelmin's thoughts cleared and he realized that the music had stopped. As he reached down to strip the water from his soaking robe, he was alarmed to see himself shrouded in a blood-red aura. At the palace academy, Gelmin had been shown the various defensive manifestations of magic. He could not guess the precise spell surrounding him, but he could gauge its potency by the depth of the reddish light.

He remembered his mother's words: *"I could never get close enough to an avangion to harm it,"* The words echoed as the aura grew dangerously warm. The avangion's warding spell had sniffed out his intentions and had begun its work. His skin would soon be blistering. The pool was an arm's-length away, but the danger was magical, not physical. Cool water offered no refuge.

*Your aura arouses no suspicions,* Vasealia's voice continued inside her son's head. *Perhaps it is your talent, your "wind."*

But there was no wind; the warding spell had no expectations. There was no reason to think he could fool the wards, but faced with incineration, there was no reason not to try. The spell had sensed his intentions as he came through the hedge, so Gelmin shaped benign thoughts, hoping that the action of the wards could be reversed.

*I am not an enemy. I mean no harm. I am afraid, but I am not an enemy. I swear my honor to the power that makes the golden light, the wild water, and the soft, thick grass.*

A cool wind began to blow away from Gelmin as he created expectations rather than conforming to them.

*I am not an enemy. I swear my honor, loyalty, and service to the avangion. I intend no harm.*

Gelmin held the thought of swearing his honor and service to the avangion. The wind blew steadily; the burning aura cooled. He sensed that danger had passed, but he did not open his eyes until his ears were once again filled with music. The red aura was gone. His cheeks were tender, but his skin was unbroken.

He was lying on his back, congratulating himself for his good fortune, when Gelmin realized that he hadn't countered the warding spell at all. As had happened four days earlier, he'd simply spoken the truth. Standing before Hamanu's throne, Gelmin admitted that he feared the dragons whose rapacity threatened life on Athas. Wrapped in the golden mist of this oasis, he had freely sworn his honor and service to the magician who had created such bounty, the one whom he assumed was the avangion.

Gelmin's sudden shift in loyalty was a stunning betrayal of the templar tradition, but he felt no guilt. He had been raised to accept that the price of fertile fields, templar magic, and a stoutly defended city was cruel tyranny. When he learned that King Hamanu was not a god but a dragon, his neatly ordered world had been knocked asunder. Gelmin had been willing to believe that a dragon could be the source of templar magic. He could almost accept his mother's assertion that Urik's best defense against all the other dragons of the Tablelands was its very own dragon. But Gelmin could never, would never believe that dragons brought anything but death and destruction to Athas itself.

Gelmin shed his torpor. It was one thing to promise he would not harm the avangion, but quite another to protect it, especially when King Hamanu expected either proof of its death or a plea for power before the lunar conjunction ended. Gelmin got up and resumed his interrupted journey through the mist toward the brightest shaft of golden light.

The mist thickened as Gelmin walked through it. He pressed on until he discerned a figure within the golden shaft.

Jagged streaks of gold and silver circled the kneeling figure obscuring its age, sex, and race. Then the streaks faded and Gelmin saw clearly. The sorcerer was a crone. Her hair was wispy and pale, falling unevenly to her naked shoulders. Pleats of wrinkled flesh outlined her ribs, and her face



## Service

resembled parchment stretched over a skull. She was surrounded by bones and other objects that Gelmin could not identify. Gelmin had not considered what an avangion would look like, but he hadn't expected an elderly human woman.

*Did you think a man could rule Urik for more than a thousand years? Vasealia's voice spoke from her son's memory.*

If the avangion was a metamorph like the dragon-kings, she was as ageless as Urik's ruler. Gelmin could imagine his mother kneeling in that golden light, and woe betide the man who judged Vasealia Plucrates by her appearance. If the old woman was the avangion, she could take care of herself—provided she knew there was danger.

The gold and silver streaks reappeared with sizzling shimmers. Gelmin knew better than to interrupt high magic, yet it seemed he had no choice. The woman was oblivious to his presence.

"You're in danger," Gelmin shouted. "You must leave at once." His words were absorbed by the mist. King Hamanu expects my invocation. If I don't summon him, he'll use the Unseen Way to find me. There was no indication that the avangion heard him. "He'll succeed—no templar can hide from the king who grants him his magic—and when he finds me, he'll find you. He'll probably kill us both!"

Some enchantments, once begun, must run their course. Gelmin decided that the avangion's metamorphosis must use such a spell. She could not respond until the conclusion of this particular phase of the transformation. He sat on his heels, unconsciously imitating the woman in the golden light.

"I won't kill you," Gelmin whispered. "I can't let King Hamanu kill you. What am I going to do?"

No voice came out of the mist in answer, but a gentle breeze ruffled his hair. It wasn't *his* breeze, but it prodded Gelmin into action.

"I have a wild talent for the Unseen Way," he addressed the ancient woman. "It's a small thing, not worthy of your study, I'm sure. I call it my wind. When I stood before King Hamanu, I surrendered to it and it carried me out of danger. When I triggered your protective magic, I created wind with

my thoughts and reversed the warding spell. I think I can create a wind that will lure Hamanu's magic away from you."

The eerie music harmonized with Gelmin's words, but there was no other indication that the avangion had heard him. Gelmin felt foolish talking to himself, and the more he thought about tricking King Hamanu, the more foolish he felt. With a resigned shrug, Gelmin made his way to the rock spire and examined it. He needed to be exactly on the spot where Hamanu expected to find him, yet as far from the avangion as possible. The obvious direction to go was up.

Gelmin climbed above the mist. When he left the sphere of the avangion's magic, his head cleared and he realized that he had other choices. He could leave the oasis. The kank could carry him beyond the horizon by dawn. Vasealia's provisions would feed him for two weeks. Then what? He couldn't go back to Urik, and templars sworn to one sorcerer-king were unwelcome by others. No, he was not cut out to be a solitary wanderer. He'd make his stand here.

The weathered rock of the pinnacle offered ample hand- and footholds that allowed Gelmin to climb far above the oasis. Just below the apex, he found a crevasse in the rock and wedged himself into it. Ral was still within Guthay's face. The golden between the conjunct moons and the oasis gleamed steadily. Gelmin clutched his medallion and raised his fist into the air.

"Hear me, O Mighty One. Your templar, Gelmin Plucrates is here. I have found the avangion, but I cannot harm her—" He'd decided to tell the truth wherever possible, as the king could likely detect an outright lie, even at this distance. "I am powerless before her. O Mighty King of the World, if you wish your enemy destroyed, you will have to destroy her yourself."

*I will come.*

Gelmin lowered his arm and closed his eyes. He began to shape his thoughts to create expectations instead of merely reading them. *I am the avangion. I am surrounded by light and mist. I am the avangion. King Hamanu will find me, because I am the avangion.*

When Hamanu provided his templars with magic, the



exchange was instantaneous. But Gelmin hadn't asked for magic; he'd asked for the king. He had no idea how long he would have to wait. After a few minutes, he opened his eyes.

Ral bulged away from Guthay. The golden light was no longer steady. It pulsed between the ground and the moons, as it had before Gelmin entered the oasis. Except for the eerie music seeping faintly up from the mist, the night was still. Gelmin flexed his shoulders. He stopped in mid-stretch when he noticed that the sky above the southwest horizon—where Urik lay—was starless. While Gelmin watched, a monstrous cloud grew larger and swallowed more stars.

Gelmin tightened his grip on the brittle rock as panic closed cold hands over his heart. Why had he, even for a moment, thought he could lure King Hamanu's fury toward himself and then evade the consequences? Whatever had possessed him to think such a foolish, hopeless thing?

A geas? Had the old woman been aware of him all the time? Had she cast a spell on him? For a moment Gelmin regretted everything and wished he'd slain the crone himself. He clutched the medallion. Maybe King Hamanu would forgive a young templar's lapse of judgment?

Gelmin recalled the hypnotic yellow eyes. Dragons did not forgive. He was doomed to suffer King Hamanu's wrath, doomed to die. There was some slim chance that if Gelmin continued his deception, the old woman in the mists below—the woman who reminded him of his mother and whom he believed was the avangion—might somehow survive. He asked himself what Vasealia Plucrates would do if she faced his choice.

The High Templar's scarred face rose from Gelmin's memory. She smiled sadly but said nothing. The choice belonged to Gelmin alone. He took up the mental chant once more. *I am the avangion—*

The cloud touched Guthay's face, severing the golden shaft. The music ceased, and the pinnacle was enveloped in darkness. The young man's shriek of terror split the air as the dragon-king began his assault. Frigid wind howled through Gelmin's mind. Perhaps Hamanu merely amplified Gelmin's shivering. Or perhaps, because the Tablelands was a hot, dry realm, the king used the Unseen Way to

pummel his enemy with a substance most Athasians could not imagine: ice.

Gelmin screamed until his throat was raw. He writhed against the rock until blood trickled from his scalp, but he kept his grip and he kept his sanity. He knew that the storm in his mind was only the first portion of Hamanu's attack. The ominous black cloud had consumed half the heavens, but it was still some distance away. He vowed to stay alive until the cloud arrived.

King Hamanu augmented his mental storm with the reality of sharp-edged sleet, hail, and snow. Malefic yellow eyes appeared in the storm cloud.

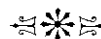
*I am the avangion—the* thought swirled all alone in Gelmin's battered mind as his body suffered Hamanu's conjured wrath.

The globes flattened into ominous slits, then vanished as the dragon-king commenced his final attack.

Gelmin's skull was transformed into a prison of ice, then the walls of the prison began to contract. The young man's voice was cut off abruptly as he screamed. His fingers loosened, one by one, but his body remained wedged within the crevasse. Urik's champion had played his game to the bitter end—

And won.

The jaundiced eyes reappeared in the cloud, and beneath them a dragon's sharp teeth shimmered in a ghastly, satisfied smile. Amid thunderous laughter, the conjured storm whirled around the top of the spire, pelting it with ice and sealing it in a frozen sphere. Then it dissipated without ever touching the oasis far below.



Amiska awoke before sunrise and contemplated the myriad changes the metamorphic enchantment had wrought within her before opening her eyes. She was appalled to see defiler bones lying in the grass; she had hoped her spell would consume them. Of course, her magic had always been less destructive than other Athasian forms. She was a preserver, not a defiler. When preservers could not leave something better than they found it, they left it alone.





## Service

At her age, standing up was painful. When Amiska braced her arms for the necessary push, a gasp of surprise escaped her lips. Her skin was soft and supple. The mottled pigments of age had faded. Even her arthritic knuckles had shrunk to youthful dimensions. With laughter and a few tears, the transformed sorceress pressed her hands against her face and for the first time in many years wished she owned a mirror.

Amiska rose to her feet. She examined her restored body, then hugged herself as the first rays of sunlight touched her. She swayed gracefully for several moments before she noticed a patch of trampled grass. Bliss vanished between two heartbeats. She wrapped herself hurriedly in a much-patched robe and ran her fingers along her forearms.

Amiska's protection spells were encoded in scars clustered between her wrists and inner elbows, where she could recall them with her eyes or fingertips. She gathered spell-casting components from the patch-pockets of her robe. Then, using the life-energy of the oasis as a catalyst, Amiska invoked her spells.

When she felt secure again, Amiska followed a trail of broken grass to the base of the pinnacle. The ground here was damp. Water fell so seldom from Athas's skies that she felt foolish looking up and couldn't identify the whitish glob that shrouded the summit of the peak until a drop of water struck her face.

Rechanneling her thoughts, the avangion lifted off the ground and floated up to examine the ice. It was cold and hard, but not as wet as ice was supposed to be. Indeed, the surface sizzled beneath her touch, confirming her strong suspicion that it had been conjured.

Amiska couldn't count the people who wished her dead, or even those who had the power to achieve their goal. She'd learned to be very careful, but she'd taken risks while gathering the elements for the metamorphosis spell-especially those defiler bones. The bones could have been traced, or the enchantment itself might have drawn attention. Just before Ral met Guthay, Amiska cast every protection spell she knew. It was a formidable array, but none of the components could have transmuted danger into ice. Amiska's wisdom warned her to leave the ice alone. She ignored

its advice and activated a spell that concentrated heat in her hands. Not knowing what to expect, she reached into the ice up to her elbows, and stopped when she encountered stiff flesh.

An unexpected burst of clairsentience gave Amiska the impression that another avangion was sealed within the ice. She frowned, then spread her hands, exposing a frozen face. Although she herself was proof that avangions rejuvenated during metamorphosis, Amiska didn't think the young man she extracted from the ice and transported to the ground had seen the sun rise on his twentieth birthday.

The sun would eventually permit Amiska to straighten the young man's frozen limbs. Until then she contented herself with tidying his clothes. She was adjusting his tunic when she felt the leather thong around his neck and withdrew Hamanu's medallion.

"A templar," Amiska murmured, more puzzled than before.

As a practitioner of secular magic, Amiska didn't have the power to resurrect the dead. The spellcraft needed to communicate with the dead was distasteful to most preservers, but there were times when necromancy was the only answer. After making a small cut in the palm of her hand, the avangion harvested blood from the templar's battered face and smeared it into the incision. She whispered a few unpleasant syllables and waited. Nothing happened. Nothing at all.

Amiska couldn't remember the last time a spell, even a necromancy spell, had failed so completely. The body of a Urik templar that gave the impression of an avangion but could not be touched by necromancy was an ill-omened thing. This time Amiska listened to her wisdom. Kneeling by the templar's head, she gathered salt from a robe pocket and rubbed it into her bloody palm. While the cut smarted, she began the incantation to sever the young man's spirit from his body and banish it to a place from which it could never be recalled. The spell was a familiar one, more closely related to evocation than necromancy. Amiska expected no difficulty when she placed her stinging palm on the templar's forehead.

She was wrong.



The templar's spirit was firmly rooted. Amiska was about to yank it out like an unsightly weed when she realized that frozen was not quite the same as dead.

It was a fine distinction. Uprooting the boy's spirit would have been much easier than healing him, but once she understood the problem, the thought of speeding Gelmin to his death never entered Amiska's mind. She marshaled her mental energy for a long journey along the Unseen Way, fortified herself with magic, then plunged into a difficult healing.

The Tablelands were relentlessly hot and dry; Amiska had no experience with thawing. She made mistakes. The templar's brain nearly turned to mush when she warmed it too quickly. His muscles stiffened and his organs threatened to explode. His spirit nearly escaped more than once. But Amiska persevered, and as the sun sank toward the horizon she sat back with a well-earned sigh.

There had been no room for privacy in such a complex healing. Amiska knew more about Gelmin than he knew himself. She'd learned how he had used his untutored talent to fool a dragon-king, and why the audacious act had succeeded.

Hamanu had to direct his dragon-magic at a specific target, but the king had never encountered an avangion. When the dragon-king reached across the barrens, he had found what he sought and never thought to look further. If he had sensed another presence, perhaps he'd assumed it was his templar.

Amiska cooled herself with water from the oasis pool and marveled at her astounding luck. King Hamanu was a mighty adversary, as intelligent as he was powerful. He could have pierced her defenses, if his arrogance—one of the hallmarks of a dragon—had not convinced him that he'd won an easy victory.

"You've done more than save my life," she said aloud. "You convinced your king that avangions are insignificant creatures, easily destroyed and not worth worrying about."

Gelmin opened his eyes. They were empty at first, then he shuddered like a man who thinks he has safely awakened from a nightmare only to realize that he had never been asleep.

"Are you—?"

Amiska nodded. "I am called Amiska by my friends, and I consider you to be one. Thank you for saving my life." She smiled, then added gently, "Will you tell me why a templar of Urik sacrificed himself to save an avangion's life?"

Gelmin sat up slowly. Everything seemed unfamiliar. He rubbed his eyes and stared at his hands. Memory said nothing had changed; something deeper said memory was wrong. "Did I die?" he asked hesitantly.

"Very nearly. You attracted Hamanu's power as metal attracts lightning. The shock stopped your heart, then the dragon's magic entombed your body before your spirit could escape. That is what you did, but will you tell me why?"

"I don't know." Gelmin tried, and failed, to stand. He took Amiska's offered hand and held onto it. "It was your magic, I guess. I came to destroy you. That's what my king and my family expected me to do. But when I confronted your warding spell, I pretended to swear my honor and my service. Afterward . . ." He let go of Amiska's hand. "My family honors and serves King Hamanu because he is powerful, the Defender of Urik. He is also a cruel tyrant and—my mother tells me—a dragon!" When Amiska's expression did not change, Gelmin realized that the king's true nature must be a fairly widespread secret. "My mother has made her peace with that. My father, too, I guess. But not me.

"You have power, too, but I'm not afraid." Gelmin reached down to the lush green grass. "You made this. The dragons destroy, but you create. You could turn the entire Tablelands into an oasis. I didn't pretend, and I didn't lie. I want to honor and serve you. I want to help you bring Athas back to life."

Smiling sadly, Amiska shook her head. "My abilities are not so great, nor my task so simple. Dragon-magic has had thousands of years to wreak its havoc. One avangion cannot hope to change everything. I'll spend most of my time bolting from one hideout to the next and much less time than I would like restoring Athas—"

"But I'll help you. I'll do whatever you ask."

Amiska placed her hands on Gelmin's shoulders. "Then I ask you to go back to Urik." She felt his shoulders droop.



## Service

"Tell your king you've seen my corpse. He is already confident he has destroyed me. Let Hamanu reward you, and take your place in the high bureaus of Urik."

"I can't go back to Urik. Hamanu is a dragon. He'll know that I've sworn an oath to you."

"I am an avangion, and I've looked deeply into your mind. You have a rare and potent talent. If you do nothing to provoke your king's suspicions-and you may rely on your talent to assist you there- he will believe whatever you write on the surface of your mind. You beguiled King Hamanu, you beguiled my own warding, and I believe you could beguile the Dragon of Tyr."

"But I want to-"

"Bring Athas back to life." Amiska lowered her arms with a sigh. "One High Templar can restore more life to Athas than ten avangions. Learn your city's irrigation system; improve it. Expand the fields. Save only the best seeds for next year's planting. These things will restore Athas and are just as important as bringing down the dragons."

"You sound like my mother."

Without thought or hesitation, Amiska gave Gelmin a hug. "If Athas were different, I would be proud to call Vasealia Plucrates my friend. But Athas is what it is, and it eases my heart to know that you will return to her." Amiska prepared to persuade him still further, but Gelmin shrugged free.

"You will remember me, won't you? You'll remember that I serve you, not King Hamanu?" Gelmin asked.

The avangion nodded and kissed him lightly on the forehead. "You may be certain of it, but remember that you serve Athas, not me."

Her lips left a golden mark on his skin. The mark was quickly absorbed, but it would remain below the surface as long as he gave honor and service to Athas. Another avangion, if there ever were any, would see it clearly. Preservers could see it if they thought to look. Gelmin's children would inherit it if he taught them to serve Athas as he did.

Then Amiska helped her disciple into the saddle and sent him back to serve his king, Urik, and all Athas.



## The Curse of Black Waters



When King Hamanu of Urik destroyed the city of Yaramuke, he was not content to merely raze the city to the ground. He wanted to be sure that no other city would ever spring up in its place to challenge him in the future. His curse was centered upon an oasis within the ruins, a curse that lasts to this day.

The curse of Black Waters, as it came to be known, is a horrid magical sickness with no known cure. Any who drink from the Oasis of Black Waters are cursed, but may not realize what has happened to them. Many, in fact, travel miles from the oasis before falling ill and never realize the cause of their sickness. It took many years and the loss of many lives before the curse became known and the oasis shunned.

Once a character has drunk the cursed water, the magic begins to take effect. Within  $2d10 + 10$  hours of drinking, the first stage of the illness begins. In this stage, the symptoms are barely noticeable; they are often ignored altogether. The character feels some abdominal discomfort, slight muscle cramps, a mild fever, and a dry throat—which, in any case, is not uncommon on Athas. This stage of the illness lasts a number of hours equal to the character's Constitution.

*Game Effects:* None at this stage.

The characters may realize that something is wrong at the second stage of the curse. Abdominal cramping sets in, the character runs a low-grade fever, and red blisters surrounded by hair-thin black lines begin to appear on the face and hands. Characters become increasingly thirsty, though not desperately so. If afflicted characters see water, however, they will do whatever they can to get a drink.

*Game Effects:* Characters suffer -1 to all attack rolls and any rolls made for psionic abilities. Scores for thieving abilities are also affected, each one being reduced by 5%. Characters who see water must attempt to drink it or get at it, unless they can make a successful Intelligence check at -1. This stage begins as soon as the first one ends and lasts a number of hours equal to the character's Constitution +  $2d10$  hours.

The third stage is the most horrible. Huge, hideous boils erupt from the character's flesh, causing great discomfort.

The character's fever begins to rage, interfering with concentration. At this stage, the character is victim to abrupt mood changes. At one moment the character may seem almost euphoric and unnaturally vital, and in the next sink into a deep depression. All characters become consumed by the desire for food and water. Cursed characters will do whatever they can to obtain sustenance, but they will be unable to retain either food or water.

*Game Effects:* Characters' Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution are reduced by two points each. Psionics and spellcasters discover they can hardly concentrate on what they are doing. Any character performing any action that requires concentration must make an Intelligence check at -1. For every hour that this stage lasts, characters must make a Wisdom check or head into the desert in search of food and water. Such characters will not fight those who attempt to restrain them, but they will moan and complain if they are not allowed to seek food. All attack rolls are at -2 for the duration of this stage, as are all psionics rolls. Rogues' thieving skills are reduced by 10%. Finally, characters suffer  $1d8$  points of damage at the onset of this stage. The third stage lasts for a number of hours equal to half the character's Constitution.

The fourth and final stage of the curse robs the character of the will to live. The boils burst, drenching the character in pus and watery fluid. Their sticky clothing becomes painful, and characters will strip off all armor—its weight is too much to bear.

*Game Effects:* Characters find it very hard to move and will refuse to do so unless a successful Intelligence check is made. No further reductions are made to attribute scores, but no psionics may be used or spells cast. At the onset of this stage, characters suffer  $1d12$  points of damage. This stage lasts for a number of hours equal to the character's Constitution, at which time the character dies and becomes either a cursed dead or a hungry body (see next page).

|                   |                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN:  | Black Waters Oasis          |
| FREQUENCY:        | Common                      |
| ORGANIZATION:     | Nil                         |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:   | Any                         |
| DIET:             | None                        |
| INTELLIGENCE:     | Average (10)                |
| TREASURE:         | Nil                         |
| ALIGNMENT:        | Neutral Good (Chaotic Evil) |
| NO. APPEARING:    | 100-1,000                   |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | 8                           |
| MOVEMENT:         | 8                           |
| HIT DICE:         | 1                           |
| THAC0:            | 18                          |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 1                           |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 1d4 or by weapon            |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Nil                         |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Nil                         |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil                         |
| SIZE:             | M                           |
| MORALE:           | Special                     |
| XP VALUE:         | 70                          |
| PSIONICS:         | Nil                         |

The curse of the Black Waters reduces its victims to undead slaves of the oasis. These undead are either cursed dead or hungry bodies, each of which is discussed in more detail below.

Both types of undead must remain within a mile of the Black Waters Oasis. They are cursed to always appear before anyone coming to the oasis, either to warn them away or to lure them to their doom.

## Cursed Dead

These creatures resemble skeletons, although they still have human eyes. They are clothed in tatters and rarely have any weapons to speak of. They are pitiful victims of the curse of Black Waters, tormented by a never-ending thirst that cannot be quenched. They often drink from the oasis, desperate to soothe their parched throats.

If the cursed dead are the first to see characters coming to the oasis, they will do whatever they can to shoo them away. The cursed dead do not wish others to fall prey to the curse. They are not violent and will do nothing to stop those who attack them, for once their physical forms have been destroyed they may lie in peace. Though the cursed dead can speak, it causes them intense physical pain that may last for hours. They only speak when they absolutely must, keeping to short sentences.

The cursed dead are immediately aware if anyone with the *black waters* scroll enters the oasis and will do what they can to guide such characters to Phabum. They will let anyone who does not have the *black waters* scroll leave the oasis without incident. If characters try to leave with the scroll, the cursed dead will do what they can, short of killing the characters, to keep the scroll. It is, after all, their only hope of salvation.

**Combat:** Cursed dead do not fight unless they are forced to. Their bony claws cause 1d4 points of damage.

**Habitat/Society:** The cursed dead must stay within one mile of the Black Waters Oasis; they have no society to speak of.



**Ecology:** Cursed dead warn of the dangers of the Black Waters Oasis, but have no real role in nature.

## Hungry Bodies

Hungry bodies are bloated zombies; their decaying flesh stinks of the grave. But their eyes prove them something other than typical zombies—their eye sockets blaze with black flames. Hungry bodies are normally clothed in tattered rags and carry a variety of weapons.

Hungry bodies desire more than anything else to become powerful undead. They believe that they can accomplish this by luring others to their end at the Black Waters Oasis and make every effort to do this. Unfortunately, they are terribly misguided: They can never rise above their current level and their agony will never end.

**Combat:** The hungry bodies despise the living and will do anything within their power to destroy them. They typically attack in packs of 5 to 10, wielding whatever motley weapons they find lying about the oasis. They never use armor as their clumsy fingers cannot lace or fasten it. They often set up strategic ambushes for unfortunate travelers near the oasis. Packs of hungry bodies often travel their allotted mile from the oasis seeking victims.

**Habitat/Society:** As cursed dead, above.

**Ecology:** The hungry bodies have no role in nature.

|                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN:  | Any                |
| FREQUENCY:        | Unique             |
| ORGANIZATION:     | Solitary           |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:   | Any                |
| DIET:             | Omnivore           |
| INTELLIGENCE:     | Genius (17-18)     |
| TREASURE:         | E (in lair)        |
| ALIGNMENT:        | Lawful Evil        |
| NO. APPEARING:    | 1                  |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | -5 (3)             |
| MOVEMENT:         | 15 (10)            |
| HIT DICE:         | 35+10/130hp (50hp) |
| THAC0:            | 10                 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 2                  |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 1d12 (dragonblade) |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Spells             |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Spell*             |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil                |
| SIZE:             | M                  |
| MORALE:           | Fanatic (17-18)    |
| XP VALUE:         | 20,000 (7,500)     |

Spells: 1) (burning hands, charm person, magic missile, unseen servant, well of fog); 2) blind, (detect invisibility, hypnotic pattern, ray of enfeeblement, Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter); 3) (fireball), lightning bolt, spectral force, (vampiric touch, wraithform); 4) Evard's black tentacles, ice storm, psionic dampener), wall of fire; 5) (animate dead, cone of cold), feeblemind, shadow magic, wall of iron; 6) (chain lightning), death fog, globe of invulnerability, (improved slow, Otiluke's freezing sphere); 7) (conjure greeter elemental), doom legion, (finger of death), sands of time (plus 6 scrolls); 8) Bigby's clenched fist, (incendiary cloud), mind blank, (polymorph other); 9) energy drain, (power word kill, time stop); 10) (abrasion).

Use values in parentheses after Farcluun's battle with Abelach-Re.

**Psionics Summary:**

| Level | Dis/Sci/Dev | Att/Def | Score | PSPs     |
|-------|-------------|---------|-------|----------|
| 1     | 6/12/27     | All/All | 17    | 160 (55) |

**Psionic Powers:**

*Devotions*— aging, ail-round vision, ballistic attack, body weaponry, combat mind, control wind, danger sense, dimensional door, dimensional walk, displacement, dream travel, ego whip, enhancement, gird, id insinuation, inertial barrier, magnify, martial trance, mind thrust, molecular agitation, psionic blast, psionic inflation, psionic sense, psychic drain, stasis field, suspend animation, time shift.

*Sciences*— banishment, clairvoyance, death field, detonate, domination, life draining, precognition, project force, psychic crush, split personality, teleport other, ultrablaster.

DMs must take time to fully understand Farcluun; various psionic abilities and spells if they are to be used to their full effectiveness.

Farcluun is a minor dragon in the scheme of things. But, like all dragons, he dreams of becoming much more powerful and of someday seizing control of a city-state.



Most of the time, Farcluun disguises himself as a powerful human male around 6 ½' tall with long black hair. This effect is produced by a special amulet he created himself. The disguise is virtually impenetrable by anyone save a more powerful dragon. However, the disguise does not alter his mass, which anyone who tries to lift or otherwise move him will quickly find out.

While a man, Farcluun gained a reputation for cruelty rivaled by few others. To fuel his transformation he rounded up an entire tribe of halflings and had them burned alive. Though some wouldn't fault him (halflings are savage cannibals, after all), the act was still undeniably cruel. This sadistic streak did not lessen as Farcluun gained power, but rather increased. Those who cross him should spend the rest of their lives looking over their shoulders for reprisals.

As with all his endeavors, Farcluun is treating the recovery of the *black waters* scroll like a military campaign. He wishes nothing to go awry and will do everything in his power to regulate and control the project to avoid mishaps.

**Combat:** Farcluun is very canny in combat, but will try to stay out of physical confrontation if he can avoid it. If forced to fight, he uses a sword he had specially forged for his enhanced strength and mass. This dragonblade looks like a normal short sword, but in fact does 1d12 points of damage and can't be used by normal beings.

Farcluun far prefers the use of psionics and magic and will use them to dispatch foes whenever possible. The DM should be ruthless in playing him. He is one of the most powerful creatures the characters are likely to encounter and should be treated as such. Killing Farcluun should be a major accomplishment.

## S'kin'di, T'chowb Agent of Abalach-Re

2417

|                   |                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN:  | Any                             |
| FREQUENCY:        | Rare                            |
| ORGANIZATION:     | Solitary                        |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:   | Nocturnal                       |
| DIET:             | Special                         |
| INTELLIGENCE:     | 4+ gain from Intelligence drain |
| TREASURE:         | Nil                             |
| ALIGNMENT:        | Neutral Evil                    |
| NO. APPEARING:    | 1                               |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | 3                               |
| MOVEMENT:         | 12                              |
| HIT DICE:         | 2 (14hp)                        |
| THAC0:            | 13                              |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 1                               |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 1d4 (dagger)                    |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Intelligence drain              |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | See below                       |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil                             |
| SIZE:             | T                               |
| MORALE:           | Very Steady (13-14)             |
| XP VALUE:         | 270                             |

### Psionics Summary:

| Level | Dis/Sci/Dev | Att/Def | Score | P S P |
|-------|-------------|---------|-------|-------|
| 2     | 2/2/7       | EW/TW   | 10    | 45    |

### Psionic Powers:

*Devotions*— contact, daydream, displacement, ego whip, enhanced speed, heightened senses, invisibility.

*Sciences*— mind drain, tower of iron will.

*More information on the t'chowb can be found in the DARK SUN™ Monstrous Compendium. As always, the DM must know the strengths and weaknesses of this NPC to use him to the fullest.*

S'kin'di is an ambitious t'chowb. While most of his kind would be satisfied to simply scuttle about, swiping the intelligence from hapless passersby, S'kin'di has embarked upon a mission. Simply put, S'kin'di wants to become king of the t'chowb. It is his desire to make this demihuman race into the psychic overlords of Athas. And the best way to do this was to get close to the Dragon Kings.

S'kin'di sought out Abalach-Re after he discovered that she often employed "exotic" assassins. Knowing that his natural psionic skills and his knowledge of the art of death would guarantee him a spot in the tyrant's special forces, he journeyed to Raam at once. There he found that it would not be easy to meet his prospective employer. Rather than put up with the bureaucratic nonsense entailed in filing for an audience, S'kin'di did what he does best.

Using his psionic invisibility, S'kin'di entered the palace in the dead of night and slew several of Abalach-Re's own templars with poisoned daggers. Then he violated the inner sanctum of the dragon herself, leaving a note on her pillow: "My services are yours to command." Within hours of sunrise he was a royal assassin.

His service was exemplary, and he became known as the Silent Death. Though his colleagues within the Assassin's Circle never see him, he is well known for his efficiency and ruthlessness.

Thus ruthlessness came to the fore recently when S'kin'di was dis-



patched to remove a certain troublesome caravanner. The man was in fact a powerful magic-user, a preserver working for the Veiled Alliance. S'kin'di barely escaped with his life. Realizing that his contact had given him false information, S'kin'di tortured the woman and sent pieces of her to Abalach-Re. Though the dragon-sorceress could easily have destroyed the t'chowb, she instead chose to see this as a rite of passage. He had escaped a deliberate setup—proving himself too valuable to ignore.

Shortly after this episode, the t'chowb was assigned to the ruined city of Yaramuke. He was to watch any travelers who entered the ruins and report to Abalach-Re herself.

S'kin'di went far beyond the bounds of duty in this task. Within week he had organized the factions living in the ruins. They fulfilled his every need, doing his bidding without question.

S'kin'di will try to save his own skin once he realizes that his mistress's plans to claim the secrets of Yaramuke and the Black Waters for herself have failed. Not wishing to work for a failure, the t'chowb will look for greener pastures. Unless he is killed by the PCs, he will seek vengeance in later adventures. He sees the characters as responsible for a blot on his reputation. He will be unable to rest until they are destroyed.

S'kin'di is devious, so implement his vengeance cleverly. Perhaps he will want to destroy the characters' reputations before delivering the killing blow. Will he follow them from place to place and frame them for heinous crimes? Or maybe he'll track them as they journey across the wilderness, stealing their supplies and killing their mounts. Cruelty and a malicious sense of humor are the trademarks of the t'chowb. Make his vengeance particularly nasty but never fatal, and this NPC will keep the players on their toes for many games.

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# Monster Table

| Name                      | AL | AC | MV | HD | hp   | THAC0 | #AT | Dam                       | ML |
|---------------------------|----|----|----|----|--|-------|-----|---------------------------|----|
| Gith                      | CE | 8  | 10 | 3  | 4, 5 (x2), 6 (x2), 8 (x2), 9, 12 (x3), 13 (x2), 14 (x2)  | 17    | 1   | 1d6-1 (bone short swords) | 12 |
| Gith chieftain            | CE | 8  | 10 | 4  | 30   | 16    | 1   | 1d8-1 (bone long sword)   | 13 |
| Golems, obsidian          | N  | 4  | 6  | 12 | 20 (x5), 23 (x3), 24, 27 (x2), 30 (x4), 34, 37 (x2), 38, 39 (x3), 40, 41 (x3), 42, 43, 47, 48, | 9     | 1   | 4d10                      | 20 |
| Silt runner               | CE | 7  | 48 | 2  | 6, 8 (x2), 14, 16  | 19    | 3   | 1-3/1-3/1-6/psionics*     | 9  |
| Silt runner chieftain     | CE | 7  | 48 | 4  | 21   | 19    | 3   | 1-3/1-3/1-6               | 10 |
| Skeletons, bone maces     | N  | 7  | 12 | 1  | 5 (x4), 8  | 20    | 1   | 1d6-1                     | ** |
| Skeletons, bone scimitars | N  | 7  | 12 | 1  | 3, 6   | 20    | 1   | 1d8-1                     | ** |
| Skeletons, shortbows      | N  | 7  | 12 | 1  | 1, 5   | 19    | 1   | 1d8-1                     | ** |
| Skeletons, unarmed        | N  | 7  | 12 | 1  | 1 (x2), 2, 3 (x2), 4, 6 (x2), 7 (x2), 8  | 19    | 1   | 1d4                       | ** |
| Spider cactus             | N  | 7  | 0  | 3  | 11, 13, 24   | 17    | 8   | 1+***                     | 9  |
| Zombies, obsidian axes    | N  | 8  | 6  | 2  | 6, 7, 8, 10, 11  | 20    | 1   | 1d8-1                     | ** |
| Zombies, obsidian maces   | N  | 8  | 6  | 2  | 8, 12 (x2)   | 20    | 1   | 1d6                       | ** |
| Zombie, steel short sword | N  | 8  | 6  | 2  | 9  | 19    | 1   | 1d6                       | ** |
| Zombies, wood long swords | N  | 8  | 6  | 2  | 5, 7, 8, 6   | 20    | 1   | 1d8-2                     | ** |
| Zombies, unarmed          | N  | 8  | 6  | 2  | 5 (x2), 7, 10 (x2), 11 (x2), 12, 13, 14, 15  | 19    | 1   | 1d6                       | ** |

\*Psionics: (Sciences) clairaudience; (Devotions) combat mind, radar navigation, see sound; PSPs 24.

\*\*Abalach-Re's skeletons and zombies never need check morale.

\*\*\*Save vs. paralysis at +2 or be paralyzed in 2d4. Paralyzed victims take 2d4 + AC damage every round from feeding needles.



## How to Use Black Flames



The two spiral-bound books inside this folder contain the role-playing adventure *Black Flames*. The *DUNGEON MASTER™ Book* contains each encounter the DM™ needs. Other parts of the *DUNGEON MASTER Book* contain background material the DM needs to run a series of encounters. The *Player's Book* contains maps, illustrations, and text the players need for reference. Players should not casually look through the *Player's Book*— the *DUNGEON MASTER Book* indicates when players should turn to a specific page. The *Story Book* contains a short story that broadens understanding of the world of Athas. At the back of this booklet are detailed descriptions of various NPCs.

Each encounter in the *DUNGEON MASTER Book* contains information arranged under the following headings:

- **Setup.** This section tells the DM how to prepare for the upcoming encounter, including what page or pages of the *Player's Book* will be used.
- **Start.** This section tells how to begin the encounter; sometimes it will include a section to be read to the players.
- **Encounter.** The main action of the encounter is detailed in this section.
- **Role-playing.** Descriptions of the NPC personalities and tips on role-playing (including sample lines of dialogue) are given here.
- **Statistics.** Vital game statistics are given here or the DM is referred to the monster table on the inside of this folder.
- **Reactions.** This section appears occasionally, such as when the anticipated reactions of PCs and NPCs are important to the encounter.
- **Outcome.** This section indicates what should result from the encounter.
- **Next.** This section tells the DM what encounter to run next.

# Black Flames

by Sam Witt



A simple trip from Urik to Raam: What could be easier? But unexpected encounters and freakish sandstorms conspire to make this journey more dangerous than imagined. Lost and dying of thirst, your characters unwittingly involve themselves in a strange mission—the motivation behind which lies hidden.

On the adventurers' trail are enraged dragons, desert fiends, and a curse that threatens to drive them mad—or make them one of the walking dead. Their only hope is to enter the ancient ruins of Yaramuke, site of a great battle between sorcerer-kings of ages past.

Yaramuke . . . City of Black Waters. The very name curdles blood.

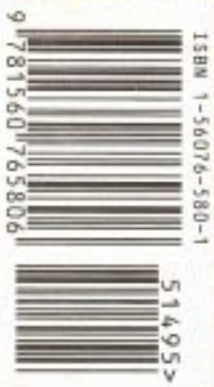
Designed for four to six characters of 3rd to 6th level, *Black Flames* is set in and around the remains of Yaramuke and the cities of Urik and Raam. Let your DARK SUN™ game characters experience new adventure among the ancient ruins of Yaramuke!



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