

CONAN[®]

TALES OF THE BLACK KINGDOMS





THE BLACK KINGDOMS AND THE REALMS OF THE SOUTH

CONAN[®]

TALES OF THE BLACK KINGDOMS

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Introduction

Welcome to the Black Kingdoms

OF THE MANY adventures faced by Conan the Cimmerian, his exploits in the many lands of the Black Kingdoms are by far some of the most tantalising and tempestuous of the various tales. The purpose of this trilogy of adventures is to give other Hyborian adventurers a chance to experience the Black Kingdoms as well.

The three scenarios in this book are designed to be run as a single campaign, but it is possible to include them as individual scenarios in a larger campaign. A party of stalwart adventurers can become embroiled in the Wadai revolt, while another group can discover the mysteries of Atlaia or battle the cultists of Jullah in Kush. Characters who follow the scenarios as a campaign will stand to gain the most out of each adventure as alliances are formed, broken, and linger on from one tale to the next. Ultimately, it is up to the individual Games Master to do with these scenarios as he sees fit.

In *The Shadows over Zabihela*, characters arrive in this southern Kushite port to discover that dark forces are at work. The daughter of a local noble family is kidnapped in a bloody raid by the cultists of Jullah. As the characters seek to free the girl, they discover that the cult Jullah, normally revered by the commoners of Kush, has been corrupted by a mad priest who seeks to awaken the god. In the midst of this carnage is a mysterious treasure map that provides clues to an ancient and mysterious ruin.

The Ruins of Atlaia begins with the characters shackled and enslaved by Tibu raiders under the rule of a Ghanatas mercenary. The adventurers escape, and resume their quest, following the trail of a crumbling map to its ultimate destination. Struggling to survive the harsh desert environment and caught between warring Atlaian factions, the heroes make their way towards a strange sceptre, an ancient pyramid and an older, more terrible entity, even as Atlaia descends into bloody civil war.

In the final chapter, *The Red Citadel* is the heart of the frontier city of Aurik, as well as the haven of the mysterious Red Brotherhood, a secret society that serves the vile wizard Quaridos. The characters arrive in Aurik looking for a stolen treasure and revenge, only to stumble into a plot by the local Wadai to overthrow the city and end the slave trade of

the region. The characters are forced to choose sides in a conflict that can only end in war.

Each scenario includes a concluding section in which all Non-Player Characters and new creatures are gathered. In addition, the appendix includes some new common animals that are native to the Black Kingdoms and may be referenced for any of the scenarios.

Each of these tales is written in the spirit of Robert E. Howard's works, which means a great deal of combat, bloody betrayal and unexpected twists. To reflect the narrative nature of the source material, each scenario is built around a series of encounters. This format is designed to reflect a narrative pace, by which the Games Master can present each element of the tale in a sequence that will help the players feel as if they are experiencing a story straight out of the pages of their own Conan tale. Plenty of advice and suggestions on what to do when the players decide on unexpected courses of action are provided. Games Masters should find that most players will gravitate towards the storyline rather than away from it, but if they do take off in strange directions, do not discourage them. Simply use the material at hand to develop alternate pathways through the storyline. In each scenario, there is plenty of material with which to extrapolate all sorts of alternate adventures.

Players should choose a well-rounded group of characters, and the scenarios assume that most or all of the characters will be Hyborian foreigners. Characters should include some thieving skills, and a scholar would be helpful to the group as well. While all three scenarios assume the characters have a certain measure of heroism and a good nature, it is by no means impossible for the party to display a darker side in the course of any of these scenarios.

Characters who begin the full story arc of *Conan: Tales of the Black Kingdoms* should start at approximately 3rd level and between five and six party members. By the end of *The Red Citadel*, they may well have reached 6th or even 7th level. Games Masters should be sure to control the flow of experience at the end of each adventure to suit his tastes, but the characters should go up at least two and possibly three levels before the final curtain falls.

Without any delay, read on to discover tales of intrigue, war and dark magic in *Conan: Tales of the Black Kingdoms*.

Shroud Over Zabhela

IN THE FABLED Kushite port of Zabhela, a shroud of devilry has settled upon the people. In the night, shadowy servants of the primal ape god Jullah stalk restlessly, seeking someone or something unknown. The ebony Gallah, a tall and proud people, murmur dark rumours and cast wary glances at strangers arriving in the port. In the elegant quarters of the Chaga, ruling class of all Kush, nobles hide their daughters behind opulent walled compounds, fearful of uprisings or worse. In the midst of this unrest, a northern ship manned by Argossean merchants and Hyborean mercenaries arrive in port, seeking refuge from a long journey at sea. Little do they know that they have only just begun a dangerous journey into the heart of the Black Kingdoms.

The Shroud over Zabhela serves as the opening scenario for *Conan: Tales of the Black Kingdoms*. If you intend to run these scenarios as a linked campaign, then you should begin the tale here. This scenario assumes that the characters have not yet arrived in the region of the Black Kingdoms. All other scenarios provide opening points that assume the characters have been in, or travelled to the Black Kingdoms prior to the start of the adventure.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

Artelios is an Argossean, exiled from his native land for political indiscretions nearly two decades ago. Now, many years later, Artelios has found that his life in Zabhela is more important to him than his career in Argos and so he has come to accept his new home in Kush. Early on he took the daughter of a Chaga nobleman to be his wife and this young woman, Erithemes, grew to become a powerful figure in local politics and religion. Serving as a priestess of Derketa, Erithemes has raised their 16 year old daughter, Tarethis, to follow in her footsteps.

Unfortunately, Artelios' old debts from Argos are about to be called in. Artelios overreached himself and hired a thief to procure a legendary map detailing a fabled temple of untold riches in the heartlands of Atlaia. This map had been in the hands of his old nemesis, Lupos, an Argossean nobleman who was murdered six months ago. Artelios was swift to act, hiring men in Messantia to retrieve the map from Lupos' estates during his funeral.

Unfortunately for Artelios, another man had designs on the map as well. Quaridan is a Zamoran who operates a guild of slavers and assassins called the Scarlet Hand out of the Red Citadel in the Wadai land of Bzambe. He was extremely displeased at the theft of the map and has sent agents of the Scarlet Hand to exact revenge on Artelios and to retrieve the map.

Quaridan's agents arrived in Zabhela even as Artelios' ship, *Pride of Messantia* sailed into port. The mercenary crew of the ship includes the characters, which protected the vessel from piracy. Quaridan's men decide to strike the first evening, looting and then setting the ship afire when they fail to find the map.

Meanwhile, Erithemes grooms her daughter Tarethis for entry to the cult of Derketa, unaware of her husband's deceptions or any looming disaster. One terrible evening Tarethis is kidnapped during a bloody raid on Artelios' estate. Erithemes is panicked, for the word is that the priests of Jullah seek sacrifices and that their beast-god has grown restless and mad. During the kidnap, the Scarlet Hand also invade the Artelios estate seeking out the map their master so desperately desires, but once again it has gone missing, for Artelios gave it to his hired sea captain for safe-keeping, fearing that the cultists seek the map and not his daughter. In the midst of all this, the player characters struggle to stop the various forces that rally against them.

Erithemes, stricken at the loss of her daughter, pays the adventurers to find her, directing them to a mysterious shaman. This shaman, named Eshiba, has his own grudge to settle with the cult of Jullah and has been waiting for these characters. He takes them to the secret temple of the ape god for a grand supernatural showdown.

THE HEROES

The Shroud over Zabhela is written for five to six characters of between 3rd to 4th level. If the average character starts at 3rd level, then he may have a chance to reach 4th level by the end of the tale.

The player characters are the mercenaries who arrive on board the Argossean ship, *Pride of Messantia*. Some might have arrived from other

destinations, but they should all have an opportunity to join the ranks of the merchant prince Artelios' private guard.

If you wish to provide an alternate opening to the story, or if your players have already somehow acquired a ship of their own, then simply have their vessel chartered to haul cargo to Zabhela. Alternatively, you can assume that the party has no initial relationship with Artelios and that he is seeking out likely foreign mercenaries at the appropriate tavern along the docks.

THE CITY OF ZABHELA

Zabhela is the southernmost port of any note in the kingdom of Kush. While it is not the most exotic of Kushite cities, it is most certainly efficient. Every day several ships laden with foreign goods drop anchor and engage in local commerce. Zabhele is the starting point for the numerous overland caravan routes that snake their way through the region and stretch as far north as the Stygian city of Sukhmet and as far east as the borders of Iranistan.

Zabhela is divided into three distinct areas. The Trader's Row hugs the docks, where most traffic between ships and caravans takes place and numerous taverns, inns, warehouses, slave stockades and sundry other buildings which cater to the interests of foreigners and merchants can be found. Although the bulk of Zabhele is not walled, this region is afforded some protection by its proximity to the Upper City.

The Upper City is the haven of the wealthy Chaga class, who rule Zabhele from their guarded palatial villas that surround the palace of the regent. A tall, defensible wall and battlements surround the Upper City itself. Here, the aristocratic descendants of the ancient Stygians who long ago conquered Kush dwell in their lofty domains, isolated and safe from the commoners. The Upper City is actually situated on a plateau, which is nothing less than a great earthen hill that has been formed over the countless generations of humanity dwelling on this site. There are rumours of hidden catacombs and forgotten passages

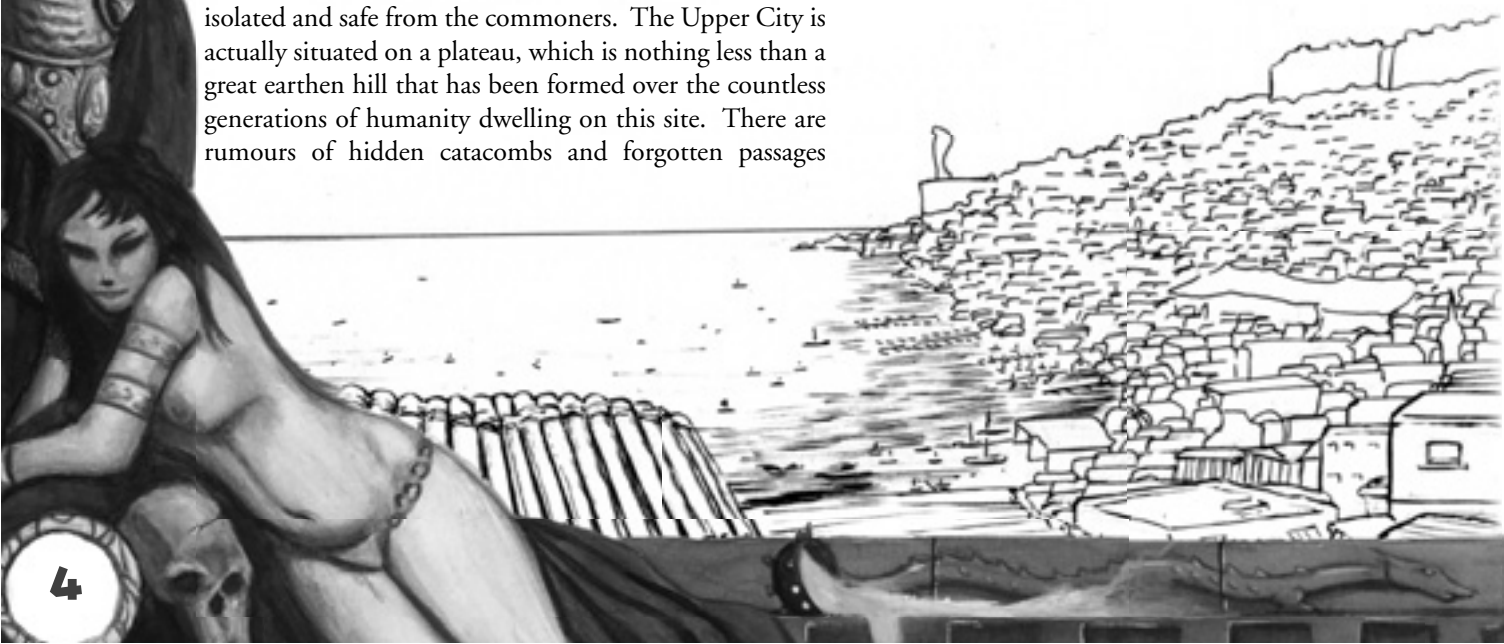
buried in the mound atop which the Upper City rests, filled with forgotten secrets of old.

In the shadow of the Upper City is the Shanty, the areas of the city where the lowly Gallah are permitted to dwell. This sprawl of ramshackle buildings and flimsy shacks is the largest and most prominent section of Zabhele. The Gallah are the natives of Kush, who have been oppressed by the Chaga for countless generations. Though the city itself has a population of around 9,000 many more dwell in the tented communities around the city and the true population may be closer to 80,000 people, all living within Zabhele's 40 mile radius.

Zabhela also has a large migratory population. Foreigners from all regions of the world come and go with great regularity. Seasonal merchants and caravans often call Zabhele home for a few weeks or months throughout the year. Local tribes of the Gallah also move into the Shanty, provoking the ire of their more sedentary brethren. The transitory nature of Zabhele's population ensures that the city is in a constant state of flux.

The Regent of Zabhele is a Chaga called Naferakphon. He is an elderly statesman who has two heirs, both daughters, who seek to marry other Chaga in the near future, to produce a proper heir for Zabhele. Theramidos is a notable servant of Set, but his active interest in religion is flimsy at best, for he is far more involved in the economic development of the city.

Religion in Zabhele mirrors that of the traditional faiths prevalent throughout Kush. Hidden away in the beautiful temples and shrines of the upper city, the Chaga worship Set, while the Gallah seek the protection of the ape god Jullah. At the time of this scenario, Jullah has been more terrifying than helpful, as the cultists of the ape god run amok in the city streets, kidnapping virginal women and



murdering others, for mysterious purposes under the cover of darkness.

Characters who wish to explore the city during their visit will find many opportunities for employment, adventure and mischief. Furthermore, if the characters ever return to Zabhela should they survive the events destiny has in store for them, they may have a number of opportunities for new mischief. Caravans are always looking for a few able bodies to provide labour and protection and are generally already fairly cosmopolitan. Adventurers so inclined to seek work as guards or labourers will find such employment readily available.

The Zabhela city guard is stocked with Gallah, but the officers always come from Chaga stock. The Chaga give foreigners a certain respect and so it is possible for the characters to pursue positions as officers in the ranks of the city defence. Warriors in the service of the city guard have to deal with petty theft, unjust murders, protection of the city from hostile nomadic tribes, piracy along the coast, uprisings among the Gallah and the many other persistent threats to Zabhela. Characters will probably find that they are underpaid for the risks involved unless they can secure positions of leadership.

ENCOUNTER ONE: THE ARRIVAL

The scenario opens on a hot, humid day along the docks of Zabhela. The streets are packed with dockworkers, foreign merchants, sailors and slaves. The characters have provided much needed protection for the *Pride of Messantia*, which braved the notoriously dangerous waters of Black Coast to arrive at this bustling seaport. The captain of the galleon, a one-eyed Argossean named Kalamos, has promised to meet the mercenaries at a smoky local tavern to deliver their pay once he retrieves funds from the vessel's owner, a nobleman named Artelios.

The docks are bustling with activity, hagglers, beggars and hungry children immediately besiege disembarking travellers for food, coin and sales. A young child with a pet monkey accosts one of the characters, begging for food, while the monkey attempts to lift the character's purse. Nearby, a tall Stygian slaver with his Puntish bodyguards offers to sell a medley of young women who have all been captured from nameless tribes of the Black Kingdoms. In the distance, a circle of sailors and locals has formed around two men who have at last met to settle a blood debt, as each man attempts to bleed the other with wicked blades.

In the midst of all this, a nearby vessel is attempting to load an immense cage, which hangs precariously from a block and tackle. Pacing back and forth within the cage is a lion, which moves with nervous fury at its fate. The loading ship hails from Stygia, where the lion is most likely destined for the gladiatorial pits. Perhaps a minute or so after one or more characters notice this event as they work their way along the dock, the pulley ropes snap and the cage shatters on the dock. The lion bursts free in a flurry of violence, gutting its nearest captor. The remaining Stygians flee, leaving the lion to assault the terrified crowd. A woman, not more than 18 summers, falls beneath the stampeding crowd. The lion moves in her direction before spotting the characters, whereupon it moves to attack them with savage ferocity.

LION

HD: 8d8+24 (39 hp), **Init:** +10; **Spd:** 40 ft.; **DV:** 15; **DR:** 2; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+12; **Atk:** Claw +7 melee; **Full Atk:** 2 claws +7 melee and bite +2 melee; **Dmg:** Claws 1d5+5, bite 1d10+2; **Space/Reach:** 10 ft. (2)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** Pounce, Improved Grab, Rake (1d6+3); **SQ:** Low-light vision, Scent; **SV:** Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 21, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills & Feats: Balance +7, Hide +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +11, Spot +5; Alertness, Run

The lion is crazed, though whether from its captivity, the fall or something else, no one can say. Even if the characters ignore the threat of the lion, they find that the lion chooses not to ignore them. It will methodically move through the fleeing crowd, pursuing the slowest character, in an attempt to destroy him. Indeed, an observant character may attempt a Wisdom check (DC 14) to grow suspiciously certain that the lion seems to be intentionally pursuing the party members.

Should the characters manage to outrun the lion, the beast will elude opposition from local guards before disappearing into the maze of buildings of the Trader's Row. Unbeknown to the characters, the lion has been driven mad by the touch of the beast god, Jullah and it is driven to seek out and destroy them. The Games Master should feel free to have the lion continue to stalk the characters through the city should it survive this encounter.

Saved by the actions of the quick-thinking adventurers, the helpless woman is extremely grateful, seeking out the characters to express her thanks. Her name is Tarethis and she is a native of the Chaga class, though

she has Argossean blood, as well. Tarethis offers the characters a reward for saving her, in the sum of 20 gold lunas. If the characters reveal their connection to the *Pride of Messantia*, she will reveal herself to be Artelios' daughter and promise to put in a good word for them. Tarethis will then go about her business with the Stygian vessel. This is the first encounter the characters have with Tarethis and it will not be the last time she will need rescuing!

The characters are then left to their own devices for the remainder of the day. The ship's captain has promised them their pay this evening, at a nearby tavern called the *Sailor's Folly*. Let the characters explore the city as they see fit until they are ready to head to the tavern.

ENCOUNTER TWO: THE FIRE

As dusk arrives, night in Zabhela proves to be as humid and hot as the day. The characters arrive at the *Sailor's Folly*, where they prepare for a night of drinking and revelry with the pay from Captain Kalamos. Unknown to them, the wait for the captain will be a long one.

During this time, the characters have a chance to pursue some local rumours and speak with other sailors and locals about the city and the region. Any character who wish to may attempt a Gather Information check to learn one or more of Zabhela's rumours.

Eventually, the characters will tire of eating, drinking, wenching and gossiping. They will notice that the night has grown long and Kalamos still has not appeared. Suspicions begin to rise, as their shipmates begin to suspect that Captain Kalamos might be trying to dog them out of their pay. Suddenly, a shout from the docks draws the attention of the sailors in the tavern. Someone has set the *Pride of Messantia* on fire!

Whether the characters respond or not, the sailors in the tavern rush to aid in a bucket brigade, for their livelihood is about to go up in smoke. If the characters go to the aid of the burning ship, they will discover that it is their own vessel on fire.

Worse yet, as they arrive, they see that the fire has jumped from their ship to the Stygian galley adjacent to it and that both ships are now aflame.

RUMOURS IN ZABHELA

During their stay in Zabhela, the characters will have an opportunity to hear many rumours, from tavern talk to market place gossip. A Gather Information check will lead to different rumours based on the level of success.

DC 10 Rumours

The regent has been suspicious of threats to his rule lately and the city watch has been patrolling vigorously at night.

People are fearful and stay indoors at night. A hideous wild beast beats men to death and rips the hearts from pummelled corpses.

Young women have been disappearing from the city streets and more than one mutilated body of a traveller has been found.

DC 15 Rumours

The priests of Jullah have been moving through the streets of the Shanty telling of horrible terrors in the night.

One priest of Jullah claims that the ape god seeks a consort.

Last night, a local nobleman's daughter was snatched from the streets and her consort was killed.

DC 20 Rumours

Almost all of the women who have been abducted are single, unwed virgins.

Some of Zabhela's residents believe that there is only one specific woman that will satisfy the beast god and the cultists of Jullah seek this woman to be his bride.

There are mercenaries in town and one carries the mark of the Scarlet Hand.

DC 25+ Rumours

A local tribal elder named Eshiba is angered, for his son's twin daughters had been stolen away by the cult of Jullah and his son died trying to save her.

Eshiba claims to know something of the cult of Jullah.

Eshiba is a powerful shaman of the Kushites.

The Scarlet Hand has threatened the Argossean merchant Artelios over an unknown matter.



Despite the best efforts of both characters and crewmen, both vessels are ultimately lost, although the efforts of the bucket brigade will prevent other vessels from catching fire. Sailors who served aboard the *Pride of Messantia* will be angry and will approach the characters, demanding to know if they have seen the captain. In fact, the captain seems to have gone missing completely!

As the ship burns the characters should be given a chance to make a Spot check (DC 16) to notice a shadowy figure watching the flaming ships. He will dart into the maze of alleys and streets off of the harbour should any character approach in an attempt to lose them. This man is Anubar, a Bamulan mercenary and rogue who is under the employ of the Scarlet Hand. He was sent here this evening to sabotage the *Pride of Messantia* and find a valuable map. Characters may attempt to follow the mercenary and if the characters find Anubar, he will deny any knowledge of the fires and try to talk his way out of any suspicion. If necessary he will concoct a story about how he was paid to sabotage the Stygian ship. Anubar will not admit his ties to

the Scarlet Hand, though if the characters slay Anubar, his Scarlet Hand cohorts will eventually notice his absence.

ANUBAR

Bamulan thief 3/soldier 1; HD: 3d8+1d10+12 (35 hit points); **Init:** +13; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 14; **Parry DV:** 13; **DR:** —; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+3; **Atk:** Dagger +3 melee; **Full Atk:** Dagger +3 melee; **Dmg:** Dagger 1d4+2, 19-20 x2/AP 3; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** Sneak Attack Style (dagger) +2d8/+2d6; **SQ:** Trap Finding, Eyes of the Cat, Trap Sense +1, Literate; **SV:** Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 12

Skills & Feats: Appraise +4, Balance +9, Bluff +7, Climb +6, Disguise +5, Gather Information +5, Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +8, Survival +2, Spot +2; Improved Initiative, Light-Footed, Power Attack

Possessions: Dagger, staff, traveller's gear
Notes: Anubar and his twin Renik (see pg. 10) are tall, lean and muscled men from the kingdom to the south. They were captured as young men in a battle with Zimbabwean slavers years ago and sold to an Iranistani man looking for impressionable recruits in the Scarlet Hand. Apprenticed to a master assassin they have learned much in a short time.

Their most recent duties have taken him to his homeland and then Zabhela.

Shortly after the fires are under control, a bulky Kushite slave with a message will approach one of the characters. The characters are asked to come to the estate of Lord Artelios on a matter of great urgency. The Kushite messenger will offer to guide them to the estate. If they decide to travel on their own, the slave will remind them of the danger of travelling in the city at night.

At the conclusion of this encounter, the characters should have a number of mysteries on their minds. The missing captain and their gold might lead some characters to suspect foul play. Whether the characters decide to set out in search of the captain, head for the estate of Artelios or return to the tavern, it will not take long to uncover the truth.

ENCOUNTER THREE: THE MURDERED CAPTAIN

Before night's end, the characters will have found Captain Kalamos. If they decided to follow the Kushite messenger to Artelios' estate, then the mortally wounded captain will be found en route. If they returned to the tavern, then Kalamos will eventually stagger in, drenched in his own blood, with enough energy only to impart his dire warning, unless the characters make it exceedingly difficult for the dying captain to find them.

If the characters decided to follow the Kushite servant, he will not speak as they follow him along. Any character who explored the city earlier in the day, or who knows the location of the estate of Artelios, may make a Knowledge (geography) skill check (DC 12) to catch on that the servant seems to be taking an unusual route, which passes through the seedier quarter of the Shanty district. If questioned, the servant will promise that he is taking them a safe way. Should any characters become threatening to the servant, he will flee for his life into the maze of buildings, but will try to lure the characters the remainder of the way into a trap. Midway through the slums of the Gallah district, cultists dedicated to Jullah are waiting to dispatch the characters.

The trap is centred on a small plaza surrounding an old obelisk. The obelisk is one of many ancient artistic remnants of Zabhela and is covered by centuries of cryptic graffiti and etched prayers. The houses are one and two story huts, with mud walls and thatched roofs. As the characters follow or pursue the servant into the plaza, they will see Captain Kalamos a man slumped against the obelisk, struggling to get up. When he recognises the characters, he will beg piteously for help and it is evident that he is near death, a death made certain by the terrible chest wound that cannot be closed. His right arm appears to be shattered and useless, as if a great beast has toyed with him. Blood streams down his face from a gash on his forehead.

The captain's message is chilling, 'They want us all dead!' he cries. 'You must warn all of the sailors, all of them! They came for her, they did! I escaped, but they hunt me even now!' With that, a terrible shriek is heard, as a wave of ferocious warriors, wearing only the sacred arm bands of the ape god Jullah, come rushing down each street leading into the plaza. There will be three such cultists for each



character in the party plus one elder and the servant who lured the characters here (use Jullah Cultists details). The traditional fighting style of the cultists is to use their bare hands to beat, grapple and crush their opponents much as their sacred god would. They fight with a mindless frenzy that might seem overwhelming initially, but they lack organisation, preferring to rely on animal instincts.

JULLAH CULTISTS

Kushite soldier 1; HD: 1d10+2 (8 hit points); **Init:** +6; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 13; **Parry DV:** 13; **DR:** —; **BAB/Grp:** +4/+4; **Atk:** Unarmed +4 melee; **Full Atk:** Unarmed +4 melee; **Dmg:** Unarmed 1d6+3, x2/AP 0; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** —; **SQ:** —; **SV:** Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills & Feats: Climb +7, Intimidate +4; Brawl, Improved Unarmed Strike

Notes: The cultists of Jullah are drawn from the young men and women of the Gallah in Kush. The fierce devotion to the god, orgiastic rituals, blood sacrifice and strange hallucinogens that are used in the course of rituals make them deadly, efficient killers who learn to kill with their bare hands. The most promising go on to become elders, priests of the cult.

JULLAH ELDERS

Kushite soldier 2/scholar 2; HD: 2d10+2d6+6 (24 hit points); **Init:** +6; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 14; **Parry DV:** 15; **DR:** —; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+3; **Atk:** Unarmed +7 melee;

Full Atk: Unarmed +7 melee; **Dmg:** Unarmed 1d6+4, x2/AP 0; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **Magic Attack Bonus:** +1; **Base PP:** 5; **SQ:** Kushite Traits, Background (lay priest), Knowledge is Power; **SV:** Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills & Feats: Climb +7, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (nature) +4; Brawl, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Improved Grapple, Ritual Sacrifice

Sorcery Styles: Nature Magic; **Spells:** *summon beast*

Notes: Dedicated servants of Jullah, the elder priests of the cult have proven themselves time and again with their ferocious dedication to the god and have mastered the art of unarmed combat. The priests of Jullah have begun a path of enlightenment which will lead them to deeper truths and mysteries beyond the militant component they knew as cultists and have taken the first steps to learning the means by which the beasts of Jullah may be called upon.

If the characters for some reason did not decide to follow the guide or seek out Artelios this evening and instead sought to retire to an inn or remain at the tavern, the captain will eventually find his way to the characters and in so doing lead the cultists to the characters. The venue



of the conflict will change, but the effect will be the same. Observant characters may make a Spot check (DC 10) to notice that one of the assailants is the servant who delivered the message to them earlier.

When the characters defeat the attackers, they will find Captain Kalamos dead, unless a particularly heroic effort was made during combat to try and save him. If the Games Master feels that the group could use an extra Non-Player Character to help them out, he could allow Kalamos to live and later recover enough to assist the party.

CAPTAIN KALAMOS

Argossean pirate 3; HD: 3d8+3 (20 hit points (currently -9)); **Init:** +5; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 12; **Parry DV:** 14; **DR:** 4; **BAB/Grp:** +2/+5; **Atk:** Cutlass +5 melee; **Full Atk:** Cutlass +5 melee; **Dmg:** Cutlass 1d10+3, 19-20 x2/AP 2; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** Sneak Attack +1d6, Sneak Subdual; **SQ:** Ferocious Attack, Pirate Code, Seamanship, To Sail a Road of Blood and Slaughter; **SV:** Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12

Skills & Feats: Appraise +3, Balance +6, Bluff +4, Climb +5, Disguise +2, Gather Information +10, Intimidate +4, Move Silently +5, Profession (sailor) +9, Spot +2, Survival +2, Use Rope +6; Diehard, Endurance, Iron Will

Possessions: Cutlass, leather jerkin, treasure map, nautical charts

Notes: Captain Kalamos works for Artelios, providing shipping services for the exiled Argossean from his homeland to Zabhele in Kush. Kalamos is a man of middle years, with no love of danger. He prefers flight from adversity to direct conflict, though he did learn to take care of himself in his youth. Kalamos is an efficient seaman, but not a natural born leader.

An investigation of Kalamos' body will reveal that his one good hand is clutching an object fiercely. Prying it from his death grip reveals some sort of odd leather parchment. The leather is unusually supple and has been well kept in oil, but someone, likely the captain, seems to have removed it from a proper scroll case. The scroll is etched with symbols carved on the hide, which bear no resemblance to any writing the characters should know. It is, in fact, written in a bastardised form of Atlantean. While the characters might not be able to read it, the rest of the leather parchment obviously contains a map. A Knowledge (geography) check (DC 15) will reveal that there are identifiable landmarks on the map, including the Zarkheba River to the south and the coast of Kush. More details of the map can be found on pg. 30.

Regardless of what the characters make of this map, they realise that they are in danger this night and that something terrible has happened at their destination. Unless they get some strange idea to move on entirely, the characters will find their way to the estate of Artelios.

ENCOUNTER FOUR: THE SLAUGHTER

Unless the characters decide to approach Artelios' compound at a later time, they will find it besieged by cultists of Jullah. If the characters do err on the side of caution, then the Games Master may presume that the immediate conflicts detailed here have passed and that the survivors are picking up the pieces. The cultists' raid will have ceased by dawn and Tarethis will be a captive of the servants of the Ape God.

The Upper City is a walled complex atop an ancient plateau. Artelios' estate is nestled within the walls of this palatial borough, with a beautiful inner plaza, an elegant fountain statue of Mitra and a compound which houses over 100 slaves and workers as well as the merchant's family, friends and guards. The main gates of the estate are wide open when the characters arrive and a handful of frightened slaves flee into the night, screaming futile prayers of mercy and forgiveness to Jullah. If the heroes try to stop one of the fleeing slaves, they will babble on and on about how they have been unkind to the great lord Jullah and his kin and must seek obeisance as soon as possible for working in the house of a foreigner. The slave will go mad with fear if the characters try to drag the poor soul back into the complex.

Artelios' compound is described in some detail to allow the characters an opportunity to explore the complex as they find it. Observant characters will notice that no members of the city watch seem to have responded to the obvious clamour of violence and destruction that must have sounded from the estate. Indeed, it seems that no one at all came to the aid of the Argossean merchant and his household. Characters who move through the compound will find numerous corpses, most of them with shattered bones and terrible bruises, but almost all of the victims have had their hearts ripped out. It looks as if no weapon was used to make the cut and even the bare handed fighters which the characters dealt with earlier would not be strong enough to do this.

Throughout their exploration of the compound, the characters may encounter several cultists of Jullah still roaming the halls, looking for victims. Games Masters can go easy on the characters if they have taken a beating so far, or can double up on cultists if they look like they could use a good fight. Just refer to the statistics for the Jullah Cultists on pg. 8.

At a suitably appropriate time one of the characters should stumble across someone who at first glance appears to be a servant or guard of the compound. A Spot check (DC 20) will suggest otherwise, revealing the man, Renik, who bears an uncanny resemblance to Anubar, to be acting rather suspiciously. Anubar (see pg. 7), Renik's twin, who the characters spied at the docks during the ship fire, may also accompany this man if he was not killed earlier. Either way, the men will seek to escape the characters.

RENİK & ANUBAR

Bamulan thief 3/soldier 1; HD: 3d8+1d10+12 (35 hit points); **Init:** +13; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 14; **Parry DV:** 13; **DR:** –; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+3; **Atk:** Dagger +3 melee; **Full Atk:** Dagger +3 melee; **Dmg:** Dagger 1d4+2, 19-20 x2/AP 3; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** Sneak Attack Style (dagger) +2d8/+2d6; **SQ:** Trap Finding, Eyes of the Cat, Trap Sense +1, Literate; **SV:** Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 12

Skills & Feats: Appraise +4, Balance +9, Bluff +7, Climb +6, Disguise +5, Gather Information +5, Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +8, Survival +2, Spot +2; Improved Initiative, Light-Footed, Power Attack

Possessions: Dagger, staff, traveller's gear

Notes: Renik and his twin Anubar (see pg. 7) are tall, lean and muscled men from the kingdom to the south. They were captured as young men in a battle with Zimbabwean slavers years ago and sold to an Iranistani man looking for impressionable recruits in the Scarlet Hand. Apprenticed to a master assassin they have learned much in a short time. Their most recent duties have taken him to his homeland and then Zabihela.

Renik, and Anubar, if he survived, are here to find the leather map, which the characters should have found in the possession of Captain Kalamos earlier. For an especially entertaining twist, the Games Master could have a few of the cultists appear at about the same time the characters spot the Scarlet Hand agent(s), ensuing in a furious three way melee as the Scarlet Hand seek to escape in the middle of a fight. Once again, they will refuse to name their employer, though this time the characters find the strange, arcane sign of the Scarlet Hand tattooed in the inside of their forearm.

THE ARTELIOS ESTATE

A1: Storage Rooms

Throughout the estate can be found a number of storage rooms filled with various valuables and comestibles. It is possible that one or more servants and minions of Artelios' estate will be cowering in one of these storage rooms, hoping to be overlooked in the carnage.

A2: Servants' Quarters

There are enough servants' quarters to house over 100 slaves and minions of the compound, though many of these quarters are now empty or filled only with murdered corpses in the wake of the attack.

A3: Private Residences

There are a number of private residences for various family members, guests and business partners. Some of these are likely to be carefully barred, their occupants cowering within, hoping to avoid being found by the attackers. Some may even have a couple of guards with them, standing ready to defend any who should attempt to gain entry.

A4: The Courtyard

At the heart of the compound is a resplendent inner courtyard in which can be found a pleasant garden with a beautiful but morbid sculpture of Derketa, resting on a seat of human bones while studying a mirror. The courtyard has seen some fighting and a handful of guards are still locked in battle with a dozen or so cultists. If the characters assist, they will gain the thanks and aid of the guards who survive the conflict.

A5: Bath Chamber

A large colonnaded wing containing a private bath chamber for the family overlooks a beautiful view of the eastern walls of Zabhela, against which this compound is built. Six cultists of Jullah are in this room, having just scaled the wall beyond to crawl through the open windows into the bath chamber. The characters can see the grappling ropes caught against the far wall of the overlook, revealing how the cultists gained entry to the compound. Prudent characters may cut these ropes to prevent further cultists from entering the estate via this route.

A6: Cisterns

This great chamber contains four deep cisterns and a manual pump system for circulating the fresh water through the compound. Any character who ventures too close to one of the cisterns must make a Spot check (DC 14) or be surprised by a lone cultists who surges up from beneath the water to attempt a sneak attack.

A7: Artelios' Study and Quarters

The private chambers of the family are found in the south wing and include Artelios' modest accommodation and study. He appears to have amassed quite a collection of old tomes and a vast collection of scrolls, almost all of which appear to be records for his business. Should characters have the time to make a Search check (DC 15), they might come across a book, kept beside a reading table, which is an untitled travelogue written by an adventurous Zingaran soldier two centuries ago. The soldier appears to have travelled extensively in the Black Kingdoms and writes a great deal about a kingdom called Atlaia, as well as making reference to a treasure map he found and returned home with, having never been able to decipher the arcane script.

A8: Tarethis' Private Quarters

This wide chamber is filled with silken tapestries and smells of incense and perfumes. Tarethis' private quarters show signs of recent entry, as the main door has been shattered, as if by an impressive force, and a guard lies dead nearby, his head ripped from his shoulders. Characters who make a Spot check (DC 10) notice a spatter of blood and strange, claw-like scrape marks from this passage that seem to lead toward the shrine of Derketa.

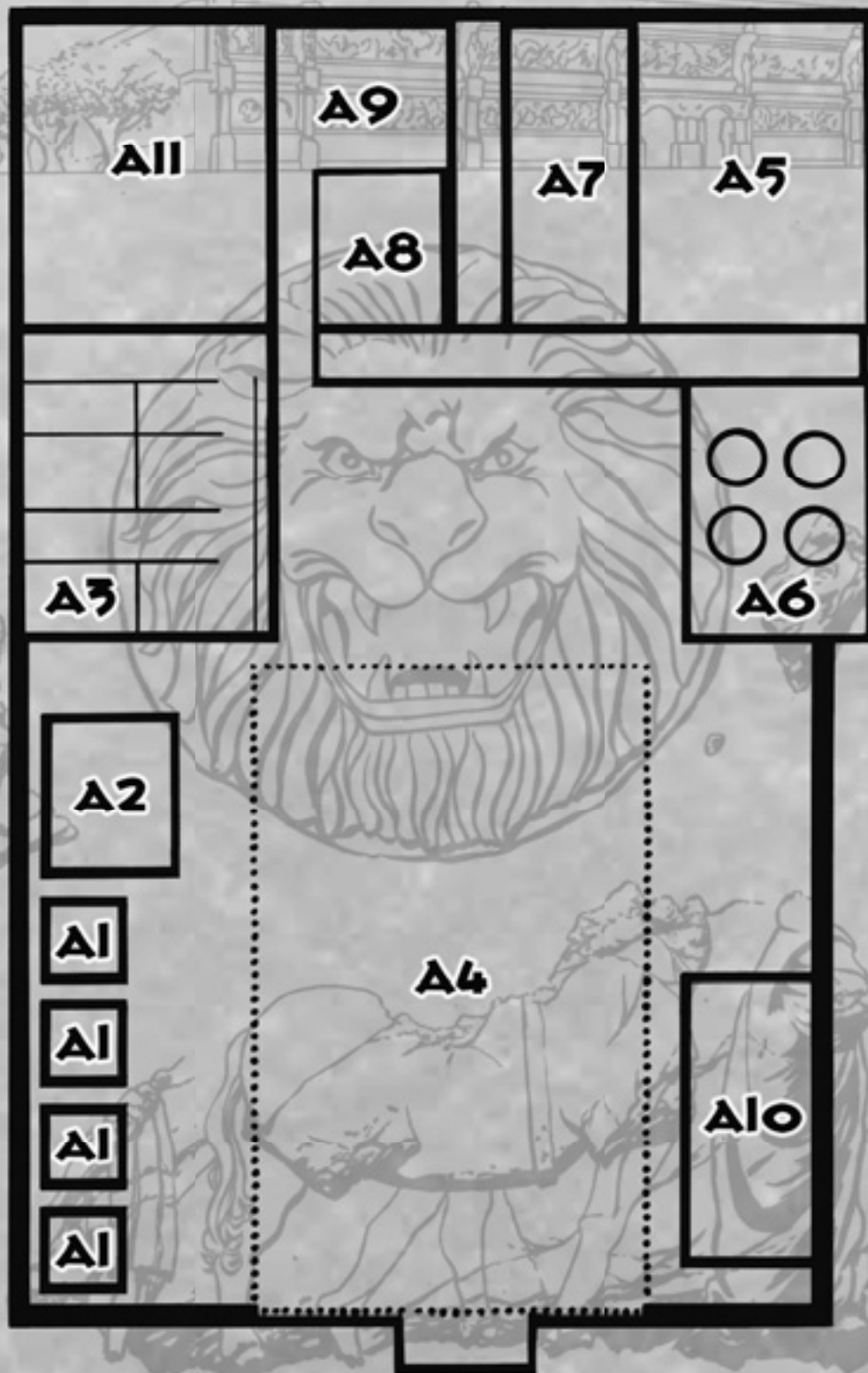
A9: Erithemes' Personal Meditation Room

Though she beds with Artelios in his quarters, the noble priestess of Derketa seeks solitude here, in a padded chamber laden with silks, tapestries and potent charms. Amidst all of the carnage, the meditation room remains unmolested.

A10: The Barracks

Protecting the family are the guards in the barracks where Artelios keeps a constant garrison of hired mercenaries, almost all of them foreigners. This evening, the work of the cultists was made short and sweet by the betrayal of servants who showed their loyalty to Jullah by poisoning the wine of the guards. Almost all of the guards succumbed to the potent dose of purple lotus juice, which was introduced into the evening meal and now only a handful stands against the invading cultists. Characters may find one or two surviving guards when they arrive (1st level soldiers, hit points 10), to serve as allies, provided they can convince the guards that they are not also hostile. Most of the guards are Shemitish, Argossean and Kothian, so they will welcome the sight of other Hyborians into the compound. None of the guards have any idea of what is going on and their commander was among the first to drink the poisoned wine.

THE ARTELIOS ESTATE



and be strangled in his paralysis by a frenzied disciple of Jullah.

A11: The Shrine of Derketa

The characters will at last stumble into the chamber containing the Shrine of Derketa, a monument to the dark goddess and the location of a desperate scene. Here, the last of Artelios' guard has been slain and Artelios himself is crumpled on the ground, unconscious and possibly dead. A dozen cultists stand in awe of a great white ape holding a hysterical young woman who the characters may deduce is Tarethis. She bears a striking resemblance to her mother, but with sandy hair and fair skin, belying her Argossean and Kushite heritage. The immense ape is poised to leap from a balcony providing a view outside the city, for this side of the compound is nestled against the outer walls. Erithemes is collapsed on the ground, near the great beast, begging for her daughter's life. 'Take me!' she pleads. 'Not my Tarethis, she is so young, no!' With a powerful blow, the beast will send her flying.

This frozen tableau lasts but a moment before everyone explodes into action. The characters will be unable to do anything about the ape, as it leaps from the balcony with the girl, to disappear down the steep wall and into the shadows of the Shanty below. The cultists cry in triumph and attack. Their leader is an especially ferocious Elder of Jullah (see pg. 8). Artelios may recover enough at this time to join the fray if the characters could use the help, but only if the Games Master deems it necessary.

RAND ARTELIOS

Argossean noble 6; HD: 6d8 (27 hit points); **Init:** +4; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 13; **Parry DV:** 16; **DR:** 6; **BAB/Grp:** +4/+4; **Atk:** Broadsword +7 melee; **Full Atk:** Broadsword +7 melee; **Dmg:** Broadsword 1d10+2, 19-20 x2/AP 5; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** -; **SQ:** Argossean Traits, Title, Rank Hath its Privileges, Wealth, Special Regional Feature (Hyborian), Social Ability (refuge), Lead by Example, Enhanced Leadership; **SV:** Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 15 **Skills & Feats:** Appraise +10, Balance +3, Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +4, Forgery +4, Gather Information +10, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Profession (sailor) +4, Profession (merchant) +8, Ride +6, Sense Motive +8, Use Rope +3; Deceitful, Leadership, Negotiator, Parry

Possessions: Broadsword, noble's outfit

Notes: Artelios is a tall man for whom life has been good. His gut is overly large, but his frame is still somewhat muscular and he sports a bushy moustache and a goatee. He still wears the emblem of the royal crown of Argos on his breastplate and carries a finely crafted broadsword at



his side. Artelios is a well-intentioned man who makes bad decisions. He has prospered as a foreign merchant in Zabhela, but his sense of greed continues to get him into trouble. His latest venture with a map stolen from his old rival in Argos is just more of the same, but this time it puts his family in danger.

Assuming the characters survive, they will face a grateful Artelios, who thanks them for their timely intervention. When he learns of who they are, he expresses sorrow at the loss of both ship and captain. Artelios will offer to keep the characters on retainer and will pay them a healthy sum of 50 gold lunas to cover their lost pay and as thanks for their daring arrival. If questioned about Tarethis, he will seem distraught, but at a loss as to what action to take. A character that attempts a Sense Motive check (DC 20) will get the feeling that Artelios' daughter is not his primary concern right now. Indeed, as they become acquainted, Artelios will try to learn if Captain Kalamos had a map on his person, or if the characters know of such a thing. He will explain that the captain was bringing it to him and that he thinks it may be very valuable, possibly even what

the cultists were really after and that he might need the map to ransom his daughter from them. Another Sense Motive check (DC 20) will lead the character to suspect that Artelios is being deceitful.

Artelios will offer rooms to the characters and ask that they stay for the rest of the evening in case the cultists return. He will place his seven surviving guards under the command of the characters, notably the one who seems to have the most talent for leadership (Games Master should use their best judgement here).

In the morning, Erithemes will return to consciousness, sobbing at the loss of her daughter. When she learns that Artelios has not mounted a search party, she will grow furious and confront him behind closed doors. Some time later, Artelios will storm from the compound, muttering something about investigating his loss at the docks. Erithemes will send a servant for the characters shortly thereafter, with an invitation to her private meditation chamber.

Erithemes, who is badly bruised from her encounter with the great ape, will beg and plead for the characters to rescue her daughter. She offers them 100 gold lunas in exchange for Tarethis' return. She also says that she is suspicious of her husband, for his lack of concern for their daughter has her deeply troubled.

'I have sought the guidance of Derketa,' she says, 'and have seen only death should I rely on my husband to save our daughter. I implore you, find her and bring her back to me. I know not where you can find her, but I have knowledge of a man who might. He is old, but wise and some say he once walked the path of Jullah in his youth. His name is Eshiba and he dwells in the district of the Gallah. Go to this man and tell him I ask now for my favour. He will understand and he will help you.' With those cryptic words, she will offer the characters an additional 100 silver pieces to aid in equipping themselves, as well as buying their immediate loyalty. She asks them not to speak with her husband on the matter, for she is afraid that Artelios will pay them more not to find his daughter. Erithemes is certain now that her husband has been up to no good, but she cannot prove it.

ERITHEMES ARTELIOS

Kushite scholar 4/noble 3; **HD:** 4d6+3d8 (29 hit points); **Init:** +4; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 13
Parry DV: 11; **DR:** —; **BAB/Grp:** +5/+5;
Atk: Knife +5 melee; **Full Atk:** Knife +5 melee; **Dmg:** Knife 1d4–1, x2/AP 0; **Space/Reach:** 5

ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **Magic Attack Bonus:** +5; **Base PP:** 8; **SQ:** Kushite Traits, Background (lay priest), Knowledge is Power, Title, Rank Hath its Privileges, Wealth, Special Ability (savoir-faire) ; **SV:** Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +10; Str 9, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 17, Wis 16, Cha 17

Skills & Feats: Appraise +10, Bluff +10, Craft (alchemy) +4, Decipher Script +5, Diplomacy +13, Forgery +10, Gather Information +10, Hide +2, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (geography) +10, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (local) +13, Knowledge (nobility) +13, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +10, Move Silently +2, Perform (ritual) +7, Sense Motive +13, Survival +4, Spot +5; Persuasive, Priest, Ritual Sacrifice, Skill Focus (Knowledge (arcana))

Sorcery Styles: Counterspells, Divination, Hypnotism; **Spells:** *astrological prediction, entrance, hypnotic suggestion, psychometry, rune of Jhebbal Sag, warding, visions*

Possessions: Knife, regal shift, belt, various rings, bracelets, necklaces and a silver tiara

Notes: Erithemes is the youngest daughter of one of Zabhela's greater nobles, the general Uliman, right hand man to the Regent. She is married to the foreign exile Artelios, who has made himself a popular man in Zabhela over the years through his network of trade relations



with Argos, Zingara and Koth. Erithemes is a dedicated priestess of the goddess of Derketa, lady of the mysteries of death and maintains an active shrine to the goddess within her private compound. She loves her daughter, Tarethis, very much and is very protective.

The characters are invited to stay at the compound as guests for as long as they wish, but Erithemes expects them to act within a fortnight or less, for she believes that if there is a sacrifice or ceremony planned for Tarethis it will be on the next full moon at that time. She will pay for professional healers to tend to the wounds of the characters if necessary and when they are ready, she will demand that they seek out Tarethis.

The characters may choose to speak with Artelios. He will decry his wife's actions as those of a heart-broken mother and ask that the characters not pursue this venture. He will emphatically describe how the cultists of Jullah are cannibalistic and that he knows his daughter must be dead. If he does not seem to have convinced them, Artelios will offer the characters a sum of 200 silver pieces to simply leave the matter be and take the first ship or caravan out of Zabhele.

If the characters ever bring up the matter of the mysterious map they found, Artelios will demand that it be given over to him, as he claims it was stolen by the captain and is of considerable value. He will offer up to 200 silver pieces for the map, though if he has already paid the characters to ignore Erithemes' requests, his charity will have run out and will offer only 100 silver pieces. If the characters insist on more, he will agree to pay them a larger sum at a designated time that evening down by the docks. Artelios will then hire about a dozen thugs to meet the characters at the docks and kill them for the map. This could lead to a whole different angle at this point, in which the characters start a feud with the suspicious nobleman.

Regardless of what transpires between the characters and Artelios, if the characters decide to rescue Tarethis, they may eventually begin their search in the common quarter of the city.

ENCOUNTER FIVE: DARKNESS STIRS

With little else to go on, the characters enter the Shanty, the squalid home of the Gallah. Here, it seems even the locals are being terrorised by the cultists of Jullah, who seem out of control. Many young women have been kidnapped and a few men as well, their partially devoured corpses have later been found on the outskirts of the city.

An local elder named Eshiba, suspecting the followers of Jullah are responsible for the kidnap of his son's wife and daughters and the death of his son, has taken up arms against the cultists. Though Eshiba is pushing 50, he is a powerful man and fearsome warrior nonetheless. He claims to know the location of the temple to Jullah, as he was once a servant of the ape god long ago.

The characters have been given instructions on where to look for Eshiba, but it seems that he will be more elusive than expected. Any character may attempt a Gather Information check (DC 18) to determine his current location. Add a +4 circumstance bonus for a bribe worth one or more silver pieces. The character may question the locals as to Eshiba's whereabouts and learn that he has left the city and now lives in a farming community near the coast called Shemanza.

Any characters seeking to question the locals about Eshiba may also attempt a Sense Motive check (DC 15) to notice a certain amount of nervousness on the part of the locals. If pressed on the matter, they will back away and refuse to speak any further with the characters (further Gather Information checks will be at DC 22, if the characters have not secured that information yet). A character may try to Bluff (DC 20) or Intimidate (DC 18) the frightened locals. Success will get them babbling about how Eshiba is a powerful shaman and he is not to be angered. They feel that they risk drawing his wrath if they even speak his name.

Travelling to Shemanza seems easy enough, as the journey is mostly through lush, cultivated farmland dotted with the huts of peasant farmers and shepherds. The characters will arrive in Shemanza after a few hours' walk or an hour's ride. From here, Zabhele is all but invisible in the distance, swallowed by the dense tree line, with only a handful of spiralling towers from the Upper City still visible. The scent of the sea is present, however, as the village of Shemanza is situated just off the coast.

The characters will sense that something is wrong in the village as soon as they arrive. No children are playing games, no farmers hock their produce, no craftsmen mend tools and no shepherds tend to their flocks. The village is eerily quiet and only a few furtive souls move about, mostly men, who quickly slam shut doors and bar windows. In the centre of the community is a great object not unlike a maypole, its base surrounded and decorated with dozens of human skulls. At the top of the pole hangs a body, strung up by its legs. The pole is red with the crusted blood of the

hanging corpse. Characters who make a Spot check (DC 10) will notice that the man is naked save for the armband of the cultists of Jullah.

Eshiba will approach the characters, calming the villagers. He is an ancient man, but tall and powerful, wrapped in a deep red cloak adorned with sacred talismans and etched bones. His face is painted white and his grey hair is wild and unkempt. The ancient shaman will say nothing, waiting for the characters to speak. If the characters should, for some reason, decide to attack Jullah, two-dozen villagers will charge out from the once silent huts surrounding the plaza and defend him. They revere the shaman and do not want to see him come to harm.

ESHIBA

Kushite scholar 4/soldier 1; HD: 4d6+1d10+15 (36 hit points); **Init:** +1; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 13 **Parry DV:** 11; **DR:** –; **BAB/Grp:** +4/+4; **Atk:** Staff +7 melee; **Full Atk:** Staff +7 melee; **Dmg:** Staff 2d4+4, x2/AP 4; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **Magic Attack Bonus:** +4; **Base PP:** 9; **SQ:** Kushite Traits, Background (lay priest), Knowledge is Power; **SV:** Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +10; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 18, Cha 15

Skills & Feats: Concentration +6, Craft (herbalism) +6, Decipher Script +8, Handle Animal +8, Hide +2, Heal +11, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nature) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +10, Move Silently +5, Search +8, Survival +6, Spot +6; Iron Will, Priest, Ritual Sacrifice

Sorcery Styles: Counterspells, Divination, Nature Magic
Spells: *animal ally, astrological prediction, summon beast, greater summon beast, rune of Jhebbal Sag, warding, visions*
Possessions: Eshiba carries only a staff, a loose cloak of tiger hide, a pouch and sandals. In the pouch he carries *The Black Skull of Jullah*, an enigmatic artefact that can close a portal opened to that dark god's domain on the moon.

Notes: Eshiba is a venerable shaman who moves among his people and offers healing and wisdom. He was once an initiate in the cult of Jullah, but lost the way and left it years ago. He now returns, as his family has been terribly wronged by the wayward actions of the cult, to seek an end to the madness.

SHEMANZA VILLAGERS

Kushite commoner 1; HD: 1d4 (4 hit points); **Init:** +0; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 10; **Parry DV:** 11; **DR:** –; **BAB/Grp:** +0/+1; **Atk:** Tool +1 melee; **Full Atk:** Tool +1 melee; **Dmg:** Tool 1d2+1; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** –; **SQ:** Illiteracy; **SV:** Fort



+0, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10

Skills & Feats: Climb +2, Handle Animal +2, Hide +2, Jump +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +2, Spot +4, Survival +2, Use Rope +2; Track

If the characters speak with Eshiba, he will listen and respond in very simple answers. He is not a man of many words, but he is, in fact, a great potential ally for the characters. Eshiba's history with the cultists of Jullah is long. Once, he was an initiate of the cult and he spent many years in its service. The people of Kush value the worship of Jullah, for while he is a god of the apes and son of the great beast-god Jhebbal Sag, Jullah is seen as a protector of the people of Kush against the Set worshipping Chaga.

Two decades ago, Eshiba left the cult to marry a woman and they had a son and four daughters. He raised a great family. Five years ago, his son married and his wife later gave birth to twin daughters of his own. A week ago, Eshiba's family was destroyed by the very cult he once served, when they raided his household in the city, slaying his son. His eldest daughter, who was to be married in a month, was kidnapped, as were both of his son's twin

daughters. Now, Eshiba plots revenge and as he quietly assesses the merits of the characters, he begins to see the opportunity before him.

Eshiba will, eventually, decide to tell his tale to the characters and explain to them that he feels something has gone murderously wrong with the worshippers of Jullah. The women, Eshiba feels, are being taken to appease Jullah, for even Eshiba has felt a profound sense of disturbance in the world of the beasts. Though he does not know why Jullah would be restless, Eshiba knows that the cultists seek to fulfil an old ceremony by finding a virginal bride for the beast god, to quell his anger.

Eshiba explains to them that he knows of the secret temple in which this ceremony will likely take place and offers to take the characters to this location. In exchange, he wants them to promise that they will free and save as many of the captured women as possible, including both the highborn Tarethis and his daughter and granddaughters. If the characters agree, Eshiba will then offer to provide them with talismans to protect them against the awesome anger of the beast god, for Jullah's will among the apes of the jungle is great. If they accept, Eshiba will offer to perform a ritual of purification to aid them in their confrontation with the servants of the beast god.

The ritual will take two hours and with the aid of several young men and women in the village who are Eshiba's apprentices, he will speak the chants and paint the characters with ritual war paint. The net effect of this ceremony is primarily psychological, but the characters will gain a +1 circumstance bonus to attack and damage rolls when confronting the beasts and servants of Jullah until the next sunrise.

Eshiba will then tell them that time is of the essence and that if they are to confront the cult, then the party must leave immediately. The journey takes them further south, down a forgotten path that meanders along the cliffs of the coast. It is possible during this time that a number of native animals, driven into a frenzy by their bestial god, will surge out of the dense jungle and attack the characters. There will be a number of these creatures equal to the total number of characters minus one and this will be the first chance for the characters to feel the effect of their sacred war paint.

By nightfall, the party will have reached an overlook jutting out along the coastline and Eshiba will seek out a series of pictographic marks along the rocks. He will then reveal a crude, nearly invisible set of stairs leading down the steep cliffs. 'It is here,' he will intone, 'that those who worship Jullah take their victims to appease the angry god.' He

will remind everyone to have their totems and weapons ready, as they begin the journey down the stairs.

ENCOUNTER SIX: THE TEMPLE OF JULLAH

The temple of the Ape God, Jullah, is carved out of the ancient stone cliffs along the western coast, in a region known for its deadly rock outcroppings. There, the cultists have been gathering young, virginal women to sacrifice to Jullah, for the beast god has been greatly agitated of late. The eldest priest of Jullah is called Ashanata, a man who was born a child of Jhebbal Sag, after his insane mother lay down in the grove of the primal god. Ashanata was resentful of his heritage, not fully understanding it until he was discovered by the cult of Jullah. There he rose quickly in its ranks to become the chief priest. He has been a dedicated servant of Jullah ever since, but of late, Ashanata has gone mad and constantly spouts terrifying revelations of doom. He claims that all of the spawn of Jhebbal Sag has been driven into frenzy, as their all-father has been angered by troubles in the distant lands of Wadai. To appease the beast god, Ashanata called upon the most sacred ritual of the ascended bride, to offer up an innocent young woman to be the bride of the great ape god.

Indeed, Tarethis has been spirited away by agents of the cult to be this bride, as have many other women, for the ceremony calls for one hundred women to be sacrificed. The catacombs of the temple contain a great pit in which the slaves are being kept, until they can be given over to the physical manifestation of Jullah.

Jullah, in fact, has been materialising in the body of a great white ape, which the characters will recognise from the night of the raid on Artelios' compound. This is the guardian beast of the temple and it roams the halls, searching for intruders, living off of the meat of victims given to it by the cultists. This great white ape is the medium by which the priests of the cult communicate with Jullah, who will possess the body of the beast during special ceremonies.

On this night, as the full moon rises, a special ceremony is being conducted, for Jullah is to be summoned from the outer darkness, that he may seize the offering of his hundred sacrifices and choose his bride. The rest, most likely, will be devoured. The characters, of course, will have arrived at the right



time to dispatch this menace and put an end to the corruption of the cult.

The entrance to the temple catacombs is found midway down a 200 foot cliff face overlooking a rocky expanse along the Black Coast. The entrance is impossible to find without following the precarious, narrow chiselled stairs Eshiba revealed to the characters. During their descent, fierce winds gust up from the west and threaten to sweep the characters off of the stairs and into the jagged rocks a hundred feet below. Any character that fails a Reflex saving throw (DC 10) may suffer this fate, though a merciful Games Master should grant them the chance to catch a slim ledge and hang on for dear life until a rescue can be affected.

TI: ENTRANCE

Once characters have made it to the slight ledge, which opens up to the gaping hole in the wall, around which the maw of a great ape has been chiselled, they will find that the hole goes not ten feet in before coming to a heavy, sealed iron door. The door looks like it could be forced with Strength check (DC 22), but Eshiba will

reveal that he knows the way and exposes a hidden lever off to the side, along the cave entrance. This lever opens the door noiselessly. It seems to be oiled and well cared for. If the characters should, for some reason, have found their way here without Eshiba, a Search check (DC 20) is required to find the lever.

The passage cuts deeper into the cliffs, exposing a series of caverns formed countless years ago at a time when the sea level was higher or the cliffs were submerged, allowing the waters to form a network of grottoes and tunnels through the earth. For generations now the cult of Jullah has kept watch here. The tunnels are polished and smooth, with ornate pictographic images of the beast god and his sacred rites painted in yellow, black and red paint along the walls. As they wander the halls, the characters will have a chance periodically to encounter cultists, great apes or even an elder priest or two.

GREAT APE

HD: 6d8+18 (35 hp), **Init:** +8; **Spd:** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; **DV:** 15; **DR:** 2; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+12; **Atk:** Claw +7 melee; **Full Atk:** 2 claws +7 melee and bite +2 melee; **Dmg:** Claws 1d10+5, bite 1d8+2; **Space/Reach:** 10 ft. (2)/10 ft. (2); **SA:** Crush (3d8+5), Improved Grab; **SQ:** Low-light vision, Scent; **SV:** Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 21, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7

Skills & Feats: Climb +14, Listen +6, Spot +6; Alertness, Toughness



JULLAH CULTISTS

Kushite soldier 1; **HD:** 1d10+2 (8 hit points); **Init:** +6; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 13; **Parry DV:** 13; **DR:** —; **BAB/Grp:** +4/+4; **Atk:** Unarmed +4 melee; **Full Atk:** Unarmed +4 melee; **Dmg:** Unarmed 1d6+3, x2/AP 0; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** —; **SQ:** —; **SV:** Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills & Feats: Climb +7, Intimidate +4; Brawl, Improved Unarmed Strike

Notes: The cultists of Jullah are drawn from young men and women of the Gallah in Kush. The fierce devotion to the god, orgiastic rituals, blood sacrifice and strange hallucinogens that are used in the course of rituals make them deadly, efficient killers who learn to kill with their bare hands. Those who are most promising go on to become elders, priests of the cult.

JULLAH ELDERS

Kushite soldier 2/scholar 2; **HD:** 2d10+2d6+6 (24 hit points); **Init:** +6; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 14; **Parry DV:** 15; **DR:** —; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+3; **Atk:** Unarmed +7 melee; **Full Atk:** Unarmed +7 melee; **Dmg:** Unarmed 1d6+4, x2/AP 0; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **Magic Attack Bonus:** +1; **Base PP:** 5; **SQ:** Kushite Traits, Background (lay priest), Knowledge is Power; **SV:** Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills & Feats: Climb +7, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (nature) +4; Brawl, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Improved Grapple, Ritual Sacrifice

Sorcery Styles: Nature Magic; **Spells:** *summon beast*

Notes: Dedicated servants of Jullah, the elder priests of the cult have proven themselves time and again with their ferocious dedication to the god and have mastered the art of unarmed combat. The priests of Jullah have begun a path of enlightenment which will lead them to deeper truths and mysteries beyond the militant component they knew as cultists and have taken the first steps to learning the means by which the beasts of Jullah may be called upon.

T2: SACRIFICIAL PITS

In the centre of this immense chamber is a great open pit, leading down some 40 feet into an isolated cavern below, where 100 women who have been kidnapped over the last two months are gathered. Nearby barrels of salted fish and grain are stacked against a wall, waiting to be lowered down by a heavy pulley and lever system to keep the women fed until the ceremony. In fact, the pulley and lever set up may be the easiest way to bring the women up from below.

Among the women are Eshiba's daughter and twin grandchildren, but Tarethis is not there. If the heroes can reach them, the women will explain that Tarethis was taken from the pit a short time ago, they believe, to be sacrificed to Jullah. Astute characters may notice that there really seems to be no easy way, aside from the pulley system, to bring the women up from the pit. In fact, it seems likely that the foul god, once summoned, is expected to enter the pit and do as it will with the women below and the pictographs that decorate the walls suggest as much.

T3: PRIEST QUARTERS

Further in, the characters may stumble across the priest quarters where the elder priests dwell. These musty cubicles are ripe with the scent of the black lotus and other opiates. It is likely that the characters will stumble across at least one priest, eyes staring vacantly at a prayer mandala hanging before him, his mind wandering the farthest echelons of the nether realms in search of hideous secrets.

T4: GRAND COURT

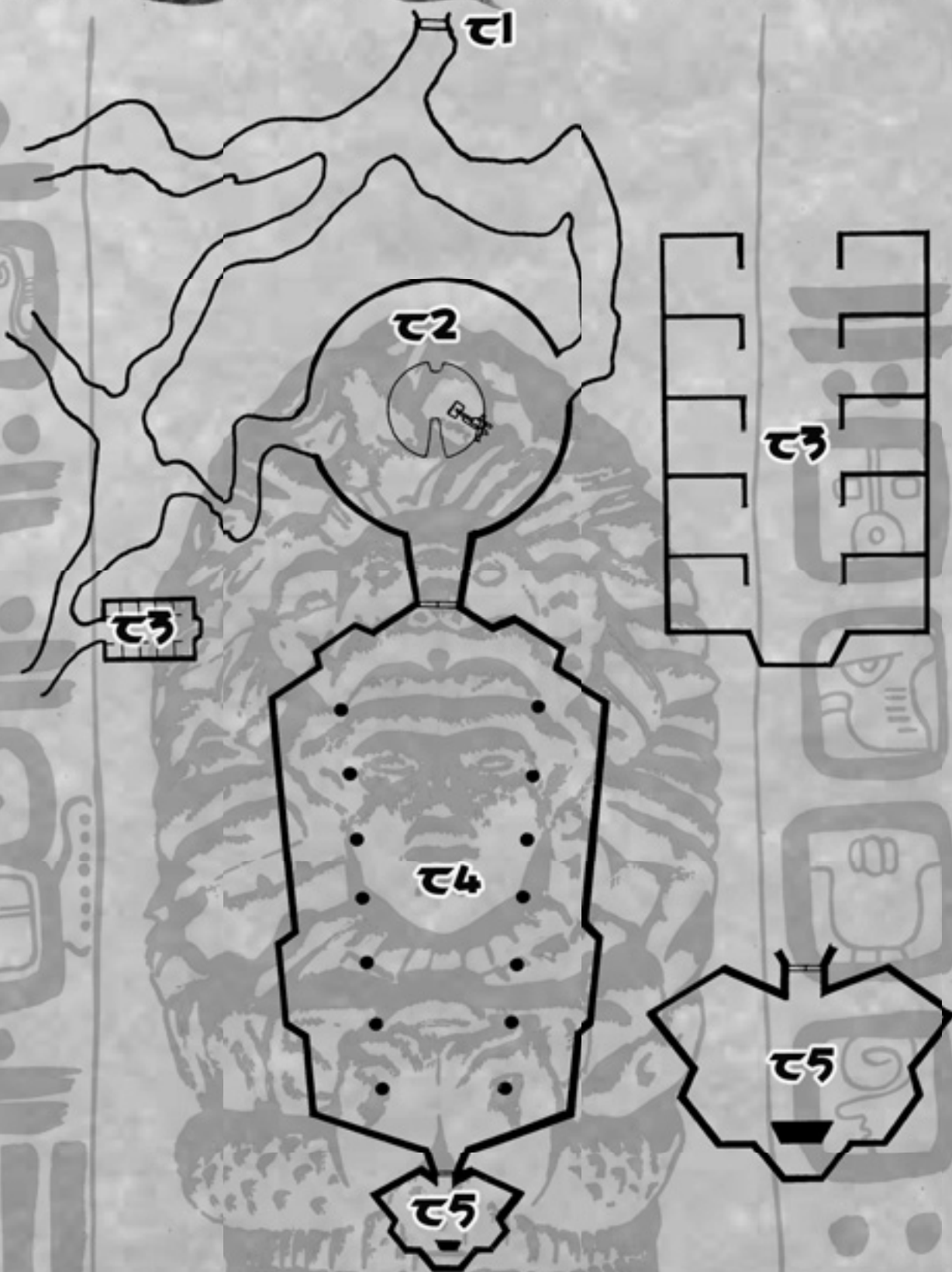
There is a grand court located just before the entrance to the sacred temple (T5) itself. The grand court is an immense, cathedral-like chamber, lavishly decorated in wicker tapestries, wall paintings and human skulls to serve as the passageway into the sacred temple beyond. It is here that the characters will encounter the guardian of the temple, the enormous white ape that they briefly encountered at the Artelios estate. It will be found prowling the grand court, guarding the far doors that open to the inner temple, where the priests have gathered to enact the ritual summoning Jullah. Ominous, primeval chanting can be heard in the temple beyond. A frightened scream erupts in the distance and any character present can guess that Tarethis must be conscious in the chamber beyond, bound to the dark altar.

THE GUARDIAN OF THE TEMPLE

Large Animal; **HD:** 8d8+22 (58 hp), **Init:** +9; **Spd:** 30 ft., climb 60 ft.; **DV:** 15; **DR:** 5; **BAB/Grp:** +6/+15; **Atk:** Claw +10 melee; **Full Atk:** 2 claws +10 melee and bite +5 melee; **Dmg:** Claws 1d6+5, bite 1d6+2; **Space/Reach:** 10 ft. (2)/10 ft. (2); **SA:** —; **SQ:** Low-light vision, Scent; **SV:** Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +3; Str 21, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7

Skills & Feats: Climb +16, Listen +7, Spot +7; Alertness, Diehard, Toughness

Notes: This enormous beast is perhaps the largest of the great



THE TEMPLE OF JULLAH

apes of the Black Kingdoms to have ever been bred. Its enormous girth has been sustained by countless sacrifices in the Temple of Jullah, where it has been trained from infancy to be a cruel, vicious killer.

The great ape will attack the characters with such ferocity that it seems as if it is already a thing possessed. The characters will have nine rounds in which to dispatch it before the ceremony beyond in the temple is completed and the gate to the trackless otherworld of the moon where Jullah dwells is opened. Games Masters might allow characters to make a Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15) to guess how close to completion the ritual is. Alternatively, Eshiba, if present, will shout out that the priests must be stopped immediately.

T5: THE TEMPLE OF JULLAH

The Temple of Jullah is filled with 12 of the elder priests, all wrapped in the ecstasy of the ceremony. Guarding the priests are 12 cultists, who tremble and bow fearfully before the swirling essence of a shimmering, otherworldly portal that opens above the black altar atop which the naked Tarethis is strapped. Unless the characters arrive



SHROUD OVER ZAHELA

more than ten rounds after they entered the grand court, three black, hairy tentacles tipped with skull-like heads which extend long, slaving green tongues will have protruded from the portal, slowly surveying the temple chamber. One moves closely to the bound Tarethis, who screams piteously as it runs its tongue along her belly. Another remains close to the chanting form of the high priest Ashanata, who is the only priest in the room that is cognisant of his surroundings.

TARETHIS

Chaga noble 1/scholar 1; HD: 1d8+1d6 (8 hit points); **Init:** +3; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 13; **Parry DV:** 10; **DR:** -; **BAB/Grp:** +0/+0; **Atk:** Knife +3 melee; **Full Atk:** Knife +3 melee; **Dmg:** Knife 1d4, x2, AP 0; **SA:** -; **SQ:** Chaga traits, Background (lay priest), Knowledge is Power, Title (Lady), Rank Hath Its Privileges, Wealth; **Base PPs:** 5; **Magic Attack Bonus:** +4; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1) x 5 ft. (1); **SV:** Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 18; **Skills & Feats:** Bluff +8, Concentration +1, Craft (alchemy) +9, Decipher Script +4, Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +9, Hide +4, Knowledge (arcana)

+8, Knowledge (nobility) +8, Knowledge (nature) +4, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Perform (sing) +5, Perform (ritual) +13, Search +4, Sense Motive +9, Spot +4, Survival +2; Negotiator, Ritual Sacrifice, Skill Focus (Perform (ritual))

Sorcery Styles: Divination; **Spells:** *astrological prediction*

Possessions: Erithemes wears a knife, regal shift, belt, various rings, bracelets, necklaces, and a silver tiara.

Notes: Tarethis is the beautiful young daughter of Rand and Erithemes Artelios. With striking features, sandy brown hair done in long braids, and a voluptuous young figure, Tarethis is a difficult presence for any full-blooded man to ignore. She is a very innocent girl, raised among the nobility of the Chaga class and shielded from the harsh realities of life. The cult of Jullah has determined that she would make an excellent bride for their beastly god.

ASHANATA

Kushite scholar 6; HD: 6d6+12 (37 hit points); **Init:** +4; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 14 **Parry DV:** 16; **DR:** -; **BAB/Grp:** +4/+4; **Atk:** Dagger +8 melee; **Full Atk:** Dagger +8 melee; **Dmg:** Dagger 1d4+4, x2/AP 5; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **Magic Attack Bonus:** +7; **Base PP:** 9; **SQ:** Kushite traits, Background (lay priest), Knowledge is Power, Low-light Vision, Wild Empathy, +1 level bonus with Nature Magic spells; **SV:** Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +8; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 18

Skills & Feats: Appraise +7, Decipher Script +6, Forgery +10, Handle Animal +6, Hide +10, Intimidate +13, Listen+14, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (nature) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Move Silently+13, Search +12, Survival +5, Spot+5; Child of Jhebbal Sag**, Power Attack, Priest, Ritual Sacrifice

Sorcery Styles: Nature Magic, Summoning, Warding

Spells: *animal ally, demonic pact, master-words and signs, summon beast, greater summon beast, summon demon, rune of Jhebbal Sag, warding*

Possessions: A staff, knife, one vial of black lotus juice with three applications.

Notes: Ashanata is one of the bastard offspring of Jhebbal Sag, the beast god that spawned Jullah. He spent many years growing up with a life of hardship and eventually left civilisation to become a dispirited recluse. He was visited in a dream by Jullah and realised that it was his destiny to serve the great and terrible ape god.

** Feat from *Conan: The Scrolls of Skelos*



JULLAH ELDERS

Kushite soldier 2/scholar 2; HD: 2d10+2d6+6 (24 hit points); **Init:** +6; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 14; **Parry DV:** 15; **DR:** -; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+3; **Atk:** Unarmed +7 melee; **Full Atk:** Unarmed +7 melee; **Dmg:** Unarmed 1d6+4, x2/AP 0; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **Magic Attack Bonus:** +1; **Base PP:** 5; **SQ:** Kushite Traits, Background (lay priest), Knowledge is Power; **SV:** Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills & Feats: Climb +7, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (nature) +4; Brawl, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Improved Grapple, Ritual Sacrifice

Sorcery Styles: Nature Magic; **Spells:** *summon beast*

Notes: Dedicated servants of Jullah, the elder priests of the cult have proven themselves time and again with their ferocious dedication to the god and have mastered the art of unarmed combat. The priests of Jullah have begun a path of enlightenment which will lead them to deeper truths and mysteries beyond the militant component they knew as cultists and have taken the first steps to learning the means by which the beasts of Jullah may be called upon.

The ritual is delicate and it only takes the slaying of three or more of the priests to disrupt the flow of dark energies necessary to keep the portal open. The cultists in the chamber will rise from their prostrate grovelling, but characters entering the temple will find all participants of the ritual flat-footed on the opening round they enter. Only the tentacles of the beast god, a small portion of its much greater form, can react normally, but Jullah will not strike out until attacked.

THE TENTACLE SPAWN OF JULLAH (3)

Medium Outsider; HD: 2d8+4 (13 hp), **Init:** +4; **Spd:** Special; **DV:** 13; **DR:** 5; **BAB/Grp:** +2/+2; **Atk:** Tentacle +7 melee; **Full Atk:** Tentacle +7 melee; **Dmg:** Tentacle 1d4+5; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/30 ft. (6); **SA:** Paralyzing Lather; **SQ:** Darkvision; **SV:** Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 20, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 3

Skills & Feats: Hide +6, Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Search +5, Spot +5; Combat Reflexes, Improved Unarmed Strike

Notes: The tentacle spawn of Jullah are ectoplasmic tendrils drifting in from the outer darkness of the moon, probing and feeling for the strange environment that has just opened before the cosmic body of the dark god. Like so many dreadful entities, the true form of Jullah is never as it seems, as characterised by these abominable appendages.



If the ritual is disrupted, then the portal will begin to shrink and disappear in 1d6 rounds. During that time, the god, realising it is about to lose its portal, will lash out at those responsible and one tentacle will try to break Tarethis' bonds and drag her back to its lunar realm.

If the ritual is not disrupted in time, on the 11th round, at least two of the tentacles will reach out and seize Ashanata or another appropriate male victim in the room with a grappling attack and drag them into the maw of the portal, where the victim is absorbed into the hairy, black mass of Jullah. Two rounds later, a great mouth-like opening will spit out an impossibly large ape-like form, the mutated body of the victim, to wreak havoc on the crowd in the chamber. This incarnation of Jullah will seek to grab Tarethis, before forcing its way through to the chamber of the sacrificial pit to sate its lust for virgin flesh. If the characters did not manage to aid the women in escaping, they will find it necessary to pursue the beast to try and stop it.

THE BLACK SPAWN OF JULLAH

Large Outsider; HD: 10d8+22 (95 hp), **Init:** +18; **Spd:** 30 ft., climb 60 ft.; **DV:** 24; **DR:** 5; **BAB/Grp:** +10/+19; **Atk:** Claws +17 melee; **Full Atk:** 2 claws +17/+12 melee and bite +12 melee; **Dmg:** Claws 1d6+7, bite 1d6+4; **Space/Reach:** 10 ft. (2)/10 ft. (2); **SA:** Rend (2d6+7), Manifest Tentacle Spawn; **SQ:** Darkvision, Scent, Call of Jullah; **SV:** Fort +13, Ref +14, Will +7; Str 24, Dex 22, Con 20, Int 20, Wis 18, Cha 20

Skills & Feats: Climb +20, Knowledge (arcane) +18, Knowledge (nature) +18, Listen +18, Spot +18, Swim +15; Alertness, Diehard, Endurance, Improved Grab, Improved Initiative

Notes: The image of the black spawn of Jullah is, in fact, that of a great and powerful ape. Much like the beasts of its namesake, Jullah's corporeal form with which he chooses to walk among men with is that of a hulking primate. The black spawn is covered in black, tar-like blood, a sort of afterbirth from the womb of the dark god on the moon, but should the beast be given time, it will shed this guise, to appear as a perfect specimen of the great apes, with a chilling intelligence behind its red, weirdly glowing eyes.

During any of these possible events, Eshiba, if he has not fallen victim to another fate, will attempt to move close to the portal and shove the ancient artefact he has been carrying with him into it. This object, carved out of what seems to be meteoric iron in the image of an ape's skull, will instantly shut



the portal and dissipate the incarnation of Jullah if it has already materialised.

You can use this moment for dramatic effect. Eshiba could be mortally wounded and hand the stone artefact to one of the characters, asking them to toss it into the portal. Alternatively, Eshiba could be snagged by one of the tentacles and dragged in, unexpectedly closing the portal. In any case, when the portal shuts, the various manifestations of Jullah, both ape form and tentacles, collapse into ectoplasmic piles of wretched matter.

In the midst of this, the characters should, hopefully, rescue Tarethis. If the Games Master dislikes happy endings, then it is always possible for Tarethis to suffer some hideous fate or a mortal wound in the midst of the combat, but if the characters are doing well to struggle against the ominous forces against them, then the girl should live.

AFTERMATH

Once the portal is shut and the beast god is gone, the cultists of Jullah will flee in terror. The characters will find themselves with a medley of foreign and Kushite women to escort back to Zabhela, where they will be widely

recognised for their bravery. If Eshiba lives to the end of the encounter, he will stay behind, asking the characters only that they safely escort his daughter and grandchildren back to safety, for he realises now that he must remain here to rebuild the cult of Jullah and help those who were led astray by the mad visions of Ashanata.

Any scholars or sorcerers among the characters may have an opportunity to speak with Eshiba of this strange affair and Eshiba will tell those characters that, indeed, something has profoundly disturbed the beast god, but that it rebels against an even angrier spirit, that of the primal god, Jhebbal Sag. Eshiba cannot say what has caused this distress among the beast gods, but senses that the issue cannot be resolved by a simple virgin sacrifice.

Characters who kept a friendly relationship with Artelios will be provided an opportunity to continue serving as his personal guard. If the characters turned over the map to him, Artelios will later offer them an opportunity to join a caravan headed east, where he intends to find the treasures of the map in Atlaia. Meanwhile, Erithemes will reward the characters as promised for recovering her daughter.

It is suggested that characters who complete the scenario and rescue both Tarethis and the other captives should each receive 2,000 experience points for the effort and a +5 modifier to their reputation for the gratitude of the citizens of Zabhela. Indeed, even the regent of the city himself might invite the characters to attend one of his exclusive evening parties in honour of their deeds.

Additional experience should be awarded based on the levels of heroism and daring shown in facing the various foes and encounters throughout the scenario, at the Games Master's discretion. If Eshiba is alive at the end of the scenario, the characters should each earn another 250 experience points for that alone. Specific rewards for each encounter in the scenario could be offered as well, if it seems appropriate. Ultimately, the Games Master should regulate the rewards to insure that the characters advance at a rate comfortable for his campaign, but it is suggested that the total reward be enough to advance a 3rd level character to 4th level (3,000 points).

The Ruins of Atlaia

WITHERED CRONES IN Stygia speak of the mysterious Atlaians, giants among the fiercest tribes of the Black Kingdoms, dwelling in stewardship over the ruins of an empire so ancient that they cannot even name it. Great armies led by ancient chief-kings gather before crumbling temples that stretch like mountains into the sky. They participate in great ceremonial battles in honour of the powerful orisha that rule the lives of these mysterious people.

For countless generations, the northern tribes of the kingdoms of Atlaia have held their annual vigil, but this year, things are different. The great princes travelled to the Temple of Olorun, home of the supreme lord of the divine orisha, where they were to receive the crowns of victory for which the nations of Atlaia would engage in mock battle. The high priest of the temple might also have chosen one or more princes to become members of the order, renouncing their royal heritage. Instead, the princes found only death, a temple turned tomb, haunted by the wailing cries of forgotten ancestors and a terrible drought, drying up the rivers and wells of Atlaia.

Each prince returned to his people with the tale of tragedy and each king decreed that one of the other tribes was responsible for the desecration and that only the ultimate sacrifice would be sufficient to appease the wrath of Olorun. War began anew, but the ceremonial nature was gone. The verdant jungles and burning savannahs of Atlaia run red with the rivers of blood, shed in deadly combat.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The characters are hapless victims of circumstance when the scenario opens, for they have signed on with an eastern caravan which fell victim to a fierce raid. The raiders, members of the fierce Tibu nomads, have been preying upon villages in Zamballa and could not resist a plump Kushite caravan. The characters become captives of the Tibu, who follow Orafa, a powerful Ghanatas captain who seems very interested in local rumours of the struggles in eastern Atlaia.

The Tibu are proficient slavers and are headed from Tombalku to the edge of Atlaia, where their Ghanatas captain believes he can make a tidy profit selling his slaves

to the Atlaian clans, knowing they will need sacrifices for their annual ceremonies.

The characters will receive a chance to escape when the Tibu become ironic victims of another raid, this time perpetrated by the western Atlaian warriors of the Yaraba clan. The Yaraba are actually a greater threat, for they seek victims to sacrifice to the orisha gods, an appeasement to make up for the desecration of their greatest temple.

The characters, assuming they effect an escape, will find themselves lost within the deepest and most dangerous territory of the warring Atlaian clans. Characters who managed to secure the treasure map in *The Shadows over Zabhela* will come to recognise that they are very close to the destination marked on the map. They will also realise that they are not the only foreigners to have made it this far, for agents of the mysterious sorcerer Quaridan have tracked the characters to this remote land, to recover both the map and treasure for their dark master.

The characters soon find that they are trapped on all sides, with no one save a young local princess as an ally, who can help them reach the destination on the treasure map. Hidden deep within an ancient valley they find a pyramid which their map claims is the location of a fabulous treasure. It just so happens that this is the very Temple of Olorun, desecrated with the blood of its murdered priests that brought Atlaia to war. But they are not the first to find this temple, for a deluded Stygian general and his troops have already seized the temple and are searching for its secrets. The characters will be given a chance to solve the secrets of the temple while stopping the Stygians.

THE HEROES

The Ruins of Atlaia is designed for characters of 4th to 6th level, with the chance to advance a level by the adventure's end.

The characters begin the game in shackles, part of a chain of slaves comprised of captives from numerous villages throughout the southern lands of Zamballa and abroad, as well as members of their own caravan. The caravan began in Zabhela and travelled west, crossing over 200 miles of rough, arid grassland and rocky terrain, trading with several local

communities along the way, before a midnight assault by Tibu raiders. The battle was swift and bloody, with more than half of the caravan dead or wounded, while the rest taken by overwhelming force to be enslaved.

If your characters are continuing from the previous adventure, *The Shroud over Zabhela*, then they may very well have been in possession of the treasure map that was sought by the noble Artelios and the Scarlet Hand until it fell into the hands of the slavers. If they gave the map to Artelios during the adventure, then Artelios himself formed the caravan. The caravan's duties were ostensibly to seek out trade with eastern Atlaia, but in reality, Artelios wanted to follow the trail on the treasure map.

If the characters kept the map and Artelios is no longer in the picture, then they decided to travel in the safety of numbers and joined an eastward caravan which, had it survived, would have travelled to eastern Zamballa for local trade. The raid has put them in an unfortunate situation, but they are still travelling in the direction they want.

If you are running this scenario separately, assume that Artelios (page 13) is the caravan master and that he has a copy of the treasure map. During the course of events, when the characters have an opportunity to escape during the Yaraba attack, Artelios will barter with the characters for their aid by revealing the secret of the map and offering them a share of the treasure. If the characters refuse or somehow do not come to take possession of the map, the adventure can continue without any real difficulty, since the characters will later have a chance to meet the Atlaian princess Erishka, who can lead them to the Temple of Olorun.

During the opening act of Encounter One, all characters begin stripped of all weapons, armour and equipment. Their gear has been divided up among the Tibu slavers and if they are very lucky then they might be able to retrieve some items during their escape.

THE KINGDOMS OF ATLAIA

Atlaia is a mysterious land, about which few tales and fewer truths are spoken. The land is located along no commonly used trade route and the people of Darfar and Keshan do not engage in trade with the Atlaian clans. Indeed, warfare along the borders of these kingdoms is a regular affair.

The Atlaians themselves claim to be stewards of their land. They divide themselves into twelve great kingdoms, each ruled by a clan that proclaims a venerable ancestry extending back to the time of the Old Empire. Though the sages of Atlaia say that the Old Empire was also called Atlaia, this is not true. Some Hyborian scholars have found esoteric references to Atlaia in ancient Acheronian texts, suggesting that the region is at least as old as that evil empire and perhaps predates it. A now lost copy of the ancient *Codex of Xoth* is said to make reference to the region, but that it was a land of primitive savages in ancient times and so the Old Empire might have been founded by an invading force sometime after that ancient Lemurian sorcerer wrote his evil tales.

Densely packed, gnarled jungles and dry savannahs punctuate Atlaia's landscape. A lengthy range of ancient mountains, called The Ogun, run across the land and provides a natural barrier to travel from west to east. The thickest of the jungles in this land is called the Olu-Igbo, named after the orisha of the jungles. Interspersed throughout this region are numerous tribal kingdoms, each dwelling in the remnants of the ancient empire over which they hold stewardship.

The ruins of Atlaia are vast and more numerous than the inhabited regions. The architecture of the ancient cities and temples which dot the land are immense, suggesting a very large race of men founded the lost empire. Indeed, the modern people of Atlaia are giants among men, standing six or even seven feet tall, with deep ebony skin. Despite this, they seem to have lost the architectural talents of their ancestors, for they cannot repair or rebuild the ruins in which they dwell.

The modern architecture of Atlaian cities is based on thatch and reed huts, with adobe foundations. Most permanent buildings not built atop ruins are at least partially sunken into the earth, so that when entering and Atlaian house one is actually walking down steps, partially below ground. This helps to keep the temperature of their houses somewhat more comfortable in the burning summer heat. Rainfall is minimal in this land and flooding rare. It is a celebration any time when it rains, for what few crops are regularly cultivated desperately need every drop of moisture. Most Atlaians are pastoral farmers, raising herds of water buffalo, goats and various local fowl.

The most amazing of the ancient ruins are a series of incredible temples, each one a great ziggurat standing sometimes as high as 300 feet. Each of these amazing monuments are almost always surrounded by a ruined complex of buildings, thought to have served as lesser

OLORUN AND THE ORISHA PANTHEON

The people of Atlaia worship a plethora of gods, which they call orisha. The orisha are revered by many tribes of the Black Kingdoms and are considered ancient spirits and caretakers of the land. The chief orisha is Olorun, lord of the gods, king of the sky and earth. Olorun is also called Olodumare, the Master of Endless Space. The orisha require many ceremonies and offerings of those who worship them and the Atlaia are extremely obedient.

There are several greater orisha, who are considered very powerful and there are numerous lesser orisha, who are minor spirits and demons of little consequence. Some additional orisha include:

Orunmila: The son of Olorun, Orunmila is the lord of divination and is carefully tended to by a sect of seers in Atlaian society.

Obatala: The King of the White Cloth, maker of the land and patron of the first and most ancient city of the Old Empire. The ruling class of the Atlaians reveres Obatala in shrines.

Ogun: The lord of iron, Ogun is the patron god of smiths, hunters and warriors. The great Ogun Mountains are named in his honour.

Eshu: The god of chance and misfortune, as well as the messenger who moves between gods and men. Eshu is a dangerous being and his appearance is presaged by language becoming incomprehensible, for he is the lord of languages. He carries the sacrifices offered to the gods up to their mysterious realm in the Endless Space.

Olu-Igbo: The lord of the bush and jungle, possibly a child of Jhebbal Sag.

Shango: The lord of thunderbolts, said to have been worshipped by the Old Empire as well. His temple is located in the southern end of Atlaia and is kept by a mysterious group of priests who are chosen only from among women of the clans.

Sonponno: This dark orisha is the lord of diseases and bringer of the plague. Evil witch doctors have been known to summon Sonponno to commit acts of devilry.

Requirements of Worship: Each of the orisha require specific annual ceremonies and sacrifices. A follower of any particular orisha must pay a tithe worth two silver pieces per month to the appropriate temple or shrine, or offer one animal in sacrifice per year. Sonponno and Eshu must receive a human sacrifice annually. Olorun and the other orisha only require a human sacrifice if the worshipper has fallen out of favour or failed to participate in the ceremonial warfare of the summer.

Benefits of Worship: Spells (any except Oriental Magic).

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus most orisha cults require knowledge of the Nature Magic sorcery style. There are special requirements to join the priesthood of Olorun. The character must be a member of the ruling clans of Atlaia and must be chosen at the end of the ceremonial warfare of summer. Only women may join the cult of Shango.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard, sorcery teaching is also available in any style except Oriental Magic.

Typical Punishments for Disloyal Priests: Captured alive, then released in a ceremonial hunt to be killed in sacrifice.

temples, schools, libraries and other structures for the learned ancients.

The largest and most impressive of the ancient temples is found in a valley, nestled in the heart of the Ogun Mountains. Here, the fabled Temple of Olorun stands, still kept alive by an ancient priesthood that claims a direct ancestry with the Old Empire. It chooses new members for the priesthood from among the 12 royal clans of the Atlaians. Each year, a prince from each clan must journey to the temple, to receive a token of Olorun in the form of a jewelled crown. Each prince returns to his clan and

kingdom with the crown, to present it to his king. During the summer months, great war parties will then gather and travel to the base of one of the great temples, determined by ancient seers, to fight in ceremonial combat for the right to own the other crowns. The battles are usually bloodless, with warriors counting coup and fatalities rare. Occasionally, challenges between princes will lead to duels to the death.

When the summer is at an end, the tribe with the most crowns of victory journeys to the Temple

of Olorun, where they present their trophies, along with the spoils of war, gifted from the graceful losers of other kingdoms. The priests accept the offerings and once again take ownership of the crowns. They will occasionally choose a prince from the winning clan, if they feel he is worthy enough to join their ranks. At the end of this ceremony, a great blessing from Olorun is performed and the ruling clan of the winning kingdom is considered favoured for the next year and its king is proclaimed the spiritual ruler of the Old Empire.

ENCOUNTER ONE: BLOODY AMBUSH

The scene opens on a hot, arid track of land, a great cloud of dust hovering in the still air as dozens of shackled feet shuffle along a dry river bed. Fierce masked warriors on horses ride back and forth, periodically goading the chain of slaves onward. Occasionally, a slave collapses and does not get up again. A rider will stop only to remove the iron shackles and jab a spear through the dying man's ribcage in a rare act of mercy.

The characters are somewhere along the length of this line of slaves, similarly manacled, disarmed and carefully watched by the Tibu warriors who hold them captive. Though there are perhaps 100 slaves, the 30 Tibu warriors and their fierce Ghanatas captain make more than make match for the road-weary, sun-beaten prisoners. Whispers among the slaves, who are a mix of Zamballan peasants and Kushite caravaneers travel up and down the line. The troupe has been in a forced march for three days now, continuing east with amazing speed. Not ten minutes ago, the Ghanatas captain, called Orafa, road ahead with three scouts, to the crest of a jagged hill overlooking the basin. In the distance, keen eyes spot an additional rider, with whom they seem to be discussing business.

The chain grinds to a halt, when a signal is given at the ridge. As the prisoners collectively seek to lie down for a much needed moment of rest, something startles a nearby horse. The Tibu warrior suddenly flies from his saddle, a lengthy javelin protruding from his chest. From the nearby brush along the dry river, war cries echo through the basin and a hail of javelins spear both rider and prisoner alike. The raiders have been ambushed!

The characters are in the midst of a delicate situation. They are all suffering from thirst, hunger and even sunstroke and while they may have recovered from any wounds suffered during the capture of their caravan, no

one is armed and ready for a fight. All of the characters may attempt a Spot check (DC 10) to notice that the first guard, who plummeted from the saddle with a javelin through his chest, had the key ring that unlocks the manacles on their feet. It will take a round to retrieve the key and start unlocking their shackles. Additionally, the characters will notice that the dead rider no longer needs his equipment, which includes three water skins, a spear and a jagged dagger. Additionally, the javelin in his chest appears to be intact.

During the length of this combat, each character has a 25% chance per round of being targeted by the ambushers for a javelin strike. There are 40 Atlaian soldiers of the Yaraba clan lurking in the bush to both sides of the path, about 100 feet from where the characters are situated. Each soldier is armed with a dagger, six javelins and a war club. An additional ten soldiers can be seen on the ridge, battling Orafa and his fleeing men. They will expend all javelins if possible before engaging in melee.

TRIBAL WARRIOR

Kushite barbarian 1; HD: 1d10+2 (12 hit points); **Init:** +3; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 11; **Parry DV:** 13; **DR:** —; **BAB/Grp:** +1/+4; **Atk:** Hunting spear +5 melee; **Full Atk:** Hunting spear +5 melee; **Dmg:** Hunting spear 1d8+3; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** —; **SQ:** Fearless, Track, Versatility (–2 penalty); **SV:** Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 9

Skills & Feats: Bluff +1, Climb +5, Hide +3, Intimidate +3, Jump +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +3, Spot +6, Survival +4; Endurance, Fighting-Madness

Possessions: Hunting Spear, loincloth

Notes: These statistics are used for all warriors of the Adja, Tibu and Yaraba tribes.

In the midst of the carnage, any character seeking out his own weapons or gear claimed by the Tibu may attempt an impromptu Search check (DC 16) (dodging a hail of javelins, after all). For every two points by which the character succeeds the DC of the check, he recovers one additional personal possession of the Games Master's choice. Characters may also attempt to grab the reigns of one or more spooked horses that have lost their riders. There is one horse in such a condition on the opening round that is available and a 30% chance of additional horses becoming available each round thereafter until the javelin fire ends. A successful Ride check (DC 20) will allow the character to calm and mount the horse. The Tibu use woven saddle blankets and saddlebags. These bags may contain some additional supplies at the Games Master's discretion.

The characters need only survive long enough to remove their leg manacles and gain armament, at which time they can attempt to escape the trap. Any character that attempts to flee the trail and run through the bush may do so. One or two Atlaiaans will draw melee weapons and attempt to stop the character, but will only pursue for about three rounds before giving up. Unknown at this time to the characters, the Tibu were here to see an Adja clansman of the Atlaia about selling the slaves, but the Yaraba learned of this and decided to intercept the exchange. They had been waiting patiently, hidden in the bush, for more than a day to slay all involved for the glory of Olorun.

Among the prisoners are a number of fellow caravaners who the characters may wish to aid in escape. If the characters are working for Artelios (see pg. 13), he will have already attempted to bribe them with the promise of the treasure map, which was taken from him by Orafa. With Artelios is a diminutive, shifty Stygian named Kophethu, who Artelios insists must also be freed. Kophethu is awkward and unpleasant, but promises a reward from his family if returned to safety. In fact, Artelios needs Kophethu because only the Stygian can read the cryptic writing on the map.

If Artelios is not present, due to a premature death in an earlier adventure, then the Games Master may substitute another figure to serve as the desperate leader of the caravan if he wishes. Alternatively, if the characters have had possession of the map all along, then it is suggested that Kophethu be the scholar who was brought into the fold, as he was the only one who could read the map. His trustworthiness was established by the characters prior to leaving Zabhela, though some may never trust any Stygian. In addition, Kophethu has a hidden agenda that does not become evident until much later in the adventure.

KOPHETHU

Stygian Thief 4/Scholar 1; HD: 4d8+1d6+12 (35 hit points); **Init:** +14; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 15; **Parry DV:** 13; **DR:** 4; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+3; **Atk:** Short sword +4 melee or Stygian bow +7 melee; **Full Atk:** Short sword +4 melee or Stygian bow +7 melee; **Dmg:** 1d8+1, 19-20 x2, AP 2 or Stygian bow 1d12, 19-20 x2, AP 2; **SA:** Sneak Attack Style (dagger, short sword) +2d6/+2d8; **SQ:** Stygian traits, Background (independent), Knowledge is Power, Trap Disarming, Eyes of the Cat, Trap Sense +1; **Base PP:** 7; **Magic Attack Bonus:** +2; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1) x 5 ft. (1); **SV:**



Fort +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +6; **Str** 13, **Dex** 17, **Con** 12, **Int** 16, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 13

Skills & Feats: Appraise +10, Balance +5, Bluff +8, Climb +5, Craft (alchemy) +9, Decipher Script +11, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +10, Disguise +8, Heal +6, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (local) +4, Listen +6, Perform (ritual) +3, Profession (translator) +7, Ride +10, Search +7, Sleight of Hand +8, Spot +8; Point Blank Shot, Improved Initiative, Light-Footed

Sorcery Styles: Counterspells; **Spells:** *warding*

Possessions: Leather jerkin, belt pouch with 80 silver, Stygian bow with a quiver of 40 arrows, one vial of paralyzing poison (five uses; Fortitude save (DC 14); paralysis for 1d6+4 rounds), short sword, desert robe, sandals, water skin, backpack with rations, Stygian book of languages (+4 circumstance modifier to Decipher Script).

Notes: Kophethu is an agent of the city of Kheshatta, sent to track down and bring the rogue general Kephros to justice for abandoning his post and taking an entire garrison of men with him. Kophethu, despite being a trained killer and mercenary, is still an accomplished scholar and student of esoteric

THE TREASURE MAP OF THE LAST EMPEROR

This map may have been in the hands of the characters for some time, they may be discovering it for the first time in their escape from the raid, or they may eventually have to pry it from Orafa's dead hands. The map is a soft, leather parchment made from an unknown skin. It has been kept very carefully throughout the years and depicts an archaic, stylised map of the region, along with numerous stanzas of text in an ancient language that resembles cuneiform. The odd line markings tattooed on the map are utterly indecipherable to all but the most educated scholars.

Any character that succeeds on a Knowledge (geography) check (DC 15) can recognise the winding path of the Zarkheba river, as well as some cryptic markings that match up to known cities, including the quasi-mythical Tombalku. Even more tantalising are the strange marks to be found much farther inland, beyond the river, including the marker for a city that the characters may never have heard of the Gazal and an eastern mountain range in the heartland of the Black Kingdoms, known as the Ogun Mountains. Inside this range of mountains can be seen a stylised depiction of a great pyramid.

If a Decipher Script check (DC 28) is attempted (+4 circumstance modifier if the character knows Old Stygian), the character can determine that the map's strange script seems to provide directions of how to get to the pyramid in the centre of the map. The map itself has a signature, that of one who calls himself 'High Priest Molun'. Furthermore, it appears to provide a lengthy, untranslatable inscription that seems to be some sort of heroic poem or eulogy. The only words that seem to bear any resemblance to words and characters in modern dialects include 'Alta,' the words 'Last Emperor,' and a word that is exactly the same in Stygian for 'lingering evil.'

languages. He is not an evil man, but has a strong sense of practicality.

During the characters' escape, a Spot check (DC 15) will reveal that the raider captain, Orafa, has ridden away along with at least two other men and seems to have escaped the Atlaians. The Atlaians do not have mounts, so will not pursue.

Characters can attempt to hide their tracks and obscure their trail as they escape. Any character with Survival can attempt a

check (DC 15) to obscure the tracks of escape once they are out of range of any attackers. The character may gain a +2 modifier to the check if he has the Track feat. If characters do not do this, then the Atlaian Yaraba will pursue them at leisure and the characters will be ambushed by a group of 12 soldiers following their trail at an appropriate later date chosen by the Games Master.

Once the characters have made good their escape, they realise that they are in obviously hostile territory, with no idea where to go to find friends. If anyone has studied the treasure map prior to this point, they can make a Knowledge (geography) check (DC 12) to recognise the line of mountains to the east as a prominent marking on the map, key to the treasure site it described. The mountains were called Ogun, according to the translation provided by Kophethu, named after a local Atlaian god.

Characters who are keen on recovering the treasure map from Orafa may realise that they can track him, if they are willing to return to the site of the ambush and follow his tracks from that point. So long as they spend more than a day away from the ambush point, no Atlaian warriors will be present and all of the bodies will be gone. The trail of Orafa will not be difficult to find, with a Tracking check (DC 10), as the raider captain appears to be followed by about 15 Atlaian soldiers on foot.

Unless the characters decide to turn around and retreat back to distant Zabhele then proceed to the overland journey through the harsh lands of Atlaia.

ENCOUNTER TWO: JOURNEY THROUGH ATLAIA

The characters have arrived at a region of disputed land. The borders of the Atlaian kingdoms of Yaraba and Adja run down the middle of this great basin leading up to the jagged forests before the mountains. Since the summer began and the Atlaian kingdoms have descended into bloody civil war, the Yaraba and Adja have been in perpetual conflict.

The good news for the characters is that while the Yaraba believe that only the blood of their enemies will satisfy the wrath of Olorun, the Adja are more merciful and do not see foreigners as having anything to do with this affair. Instead, the Adja feel that one of the princes must make

a truly great sacrifice. The king, named Agabundah, has called upon his eldest sons to decide who should offer themselves to Olorun in sacrifice, to appease the god for the desecration of his temple. The sons decided that the one to defeat the greatest warlord of the Yaraba would be worthy of the honour and so they fight to earn that status. In the midst of all this, Olorun's daughter, Kirisi, has decided that she alone must be the one to be sacrificed and has run away, into the wilderness, to find her own path to the Temple of Olorun.

The characters find themselves travelling through this dangerous land, with enemies on all sides. During their passage, the precautions they take will factor into the chances that they have an encounter with hostile forces. If the characters attempt to cover their tracks, stay away from any paths they find and keep wide of any villages or towns, then they will get progressively better modifiers to the chance of an encounter. Of course, if they move straight toward a village or other encounter, then there will be no avoiding it.

The characters should attempt a Survival check (DC 14) for each day of travel, to forage for food and water in a region suffering from a drought and water is especially hard to find without digging into the earth. They will find that one water skin will provide enough sustenance for one character per day. If they made good an escape with any comestibles from Orafah's raiders, then they may be able to refill their water skins if they find a water source.

Food is not so difficult to locate, as there is still plenty of game in the area, including hares, antelope and ostriches. Of course, just about any large beast the characters encounter and bring down may be turned into a food source. If the characters have been unsuccessful in finding water for the day (failed a Survival check) but fought and defeated a beast, they may gain some sustenance from the beast.

If a day goes by when no Survival check is made, the characters will suffer 1d6 nonlethal points of damage per hour of sunlight (assume about 12 hours), unless a Constitution check (DC 15 modified by the Endurance feat) is made. Characters in this difficult circumstance may indeed seek out civilisation just to escape dying from thirst and sunstroke. Note that if the characters have mounts, the mount will have to make Constitution checks (DC 15) or suffer the nonlethal damage per hour and the characters may make an initial Constitution check (DC 10) to avoid additional damage, as they are not suffering as much as their mounts.

The characters have about 100 miles of harsh desert and rough terrain to cross before they reach the base of the Ogun Mountains and possibly more if they are trying to track down Captain Orafah. For each day of travel, they can manage an average of 12 miles of travel over harsh terrain on foot, or 24 miles of travel if on horseback. At this rate of travel, the characters will have eight or nine days on foot to reach the Ogun Mountains, or four days on horseback.

For each day spent travelling, the characters are likely to experience 0-2 events (1d3-1) from the following table. Games Masters may choose which events happen from the following chart, or he may roll to add an element of randomisation. Descriptions of each event follow the chart. No matter how many encounters they have before reaching the Ogun Mountains, the characters must encounter Erishka and Orafah's Party somewhere along the way before that time.

Atlaia Event Table

1d20	Event
1-3	Yaraba village
4-6	Adja village
7-9	Wild beasts
10-13	Trail
14	War party
15-16	Watering hole
17	Ruin
18	Battlefield
19-20	Stampede

EVENT DESCRIPTIONS

Yaraba Village: The Yaraba village will contain approximately 200 men, women and children, of which 2d20 are armed warriors (see pg. 28). The Yaraba are extremely hostile to outsiders and the characters, and unfamiliar with local ways and customs, will have no way to tell who occupies the village that they are approaching until it is too late. Once the characters have survived an encounter with a Yaraba village, they may attempt a Knowledge (local) check (DC 12) in the future to identify features of the village from a distance that indicates it belongs to the Yaraba. Unless the characters hide their presence, any open contact with the Yaraba will lead to conflict.

Adja Village: The Adja village will contain approximately 200 people, of which 2d20 are also warriors (see pg. 28). Unlike the Yaraba, the Adja have no vendetta or hatred of outsiders and will welcome the characters, offering curiosity

and (if given reason) mild suspicion. If the characters offer information on their encounters to date with the Yaraba, the Adja chieftain will be especially grateful and offer to supply the characters with a week's worth of water and rations in exchange for the information. Characters who succeed with a Diplomacy check (DC 15) are embraced as friends and the Adja will offer to replenish the armament of the characters with weapons of their own.

Wild Beasts: The characters stumble across dangerous beasts. Roll on the Animal Encounter table to determine what they must deal with. A character may attempt a Handle Animal check to calm the beasts encountered and move away, avoiding a confrontation. The DC for such a check is provided on the chart, according to the type of animal.

Trail: The characters have stumbled across a well-used path. A Survival check (DC 10) will establish what sort of trail it is: Roll 1d6: On a 1-3 it is an animal trail. On a 4-6, it is a human trail. If the characters decide to follow the trail, then this will affect the nature of their next encounter. The Games Master can decide how, or use the following guidelines. An animal trail will have a 50% chance of leading to a watering hole; otherwise it will lead to a wild beast encounter. For a human trail, roll 1d4: on a 1 it leads to a Yaraba village. On a 2 it leads to an Adja village. On a 3 it leads to a watering hole. On a 4 the characters encounter a war party travelling along the path.

War Party: The characters have the misfortune to stumble across a war party. The band may be relatively small (2d20 warriors, see pg. 28) or much larger (100 or more warriors heading off to a raid). Characters should have ample opportunity to Spot (DC 15) or Listen (DC 12) to discover the war party before hand. If they somehow miss the war party and stumble across it, the Games Master should decide or roll 1d10 to see if the war party are Adja (1-4), Yaraba (5-8), or some other Atlaian clan (9-10). The Yaraba will be instantly hostile, but the Adja may not attack if the characters attempt a Diplomacy check (DC 15). If the characters have previously encountered a village of Adja and befriended them, then they may get a +2 circumstance modifier to the Diplomacy check. If the roll is made by more than five, the Adja commander may even ask the characters if they would like to participate in a raid against a Yaraba village (see pg. 31 for more details). If the war party is from a different Atlaian clan,

Animal Encounter Table

1d20	DC	Animal Encounter
1-3	18	1d6 Hyenas*
4-6	10	1d10 Jackals (as Dog entry)*
7-9	18	1d4 Lions**
10-12	14	3d6 Elephants*
13-14	10	2d12 Vultures**
15	18	A lone rhinoceros**
16-18	5	2d20 Gazelle**
19-20	20	Asp (Snake, Small Viper)*

* See *Conan the Roleplaying Game*

** See the Black Bestiary (pg. 73)

Hyenas: These predators may initially encounter the characters in a small pack, which will pursue the m, to be gradually joined by a larger number until as many as 40 to 50 hyenas are following the characters, looking for a sign of weakness. This is potentially the deadliest encounter for the characters.

Jackals: Jackals usually appear in pairs and are unlikely to attack the characters unless they are wounded.

Lions: The characters may not have to worry about the lions unless they are being stalked. The lions will attempt to hide to stalk the characters. If they succeed, then they will target a character that seems wounded or slow, first.

Elephants: These immense pachyderms are not interested in the characters unless provoked. There will be one bull elephant for every three or four females and young, who will attack if threatened.

Vultures: Vultures will attack if provoked or threatened, but are not normally hostile. If the characters make their way through the midst of the scavengers, a male may attack to defend its territory.

Rhinoceros: These notoriously short-tempered beasts are likely to pick a fight on general principles, though it may lose interest in characters that spilt up and run in different directions.

Gazelle: Gazelles are never hostile, but could provide food for desperate characters.

Asp: This snake is not a direct threat, but will instead be hidden in the path of the characters. The characters can make a Spot check (DC 25) to notice the snake before stepping on it, at which time the unfortunate character is caught flat-footed and the snake will attempt to strike.

then the characters may still attempt a Diplomacy check, but success merely means that they will pass the characters by. Any failure of diplomacy will lead to combat.

Watering Hole: The characters have stumbled across the most precious of resources, a wide, shallow muddy watering hole. The watering hole will be the congregation

point for any number of species, all enjoying the water while mutually ignoring each other. Characters may attempt to retrieve water without disturbing the animals. The water is muddy, but still refreshing if they have been without for any amount of time. The characters can leave the region of the watering hole by making a Move Silently check (DC 10) to slip away from the area before any local predators notice them. If they fail, they may attract the attention of a hungry beast (see the ANimal Encounter table).

Ruin: The characters stumble across the immense ruins of some ancient city, part of the lost empire atop which the Atlaian kingdoms dwell. The ruins are particularly old and weathered and no single structure over one storey remains standing. These ruins are completely devoid of life. Characters will find that they can rest here in safety and a careful search of the area may reveal old cisterns that still hold water. The water is stagnant, however, and a breeding ground for mosquitoes. If the characters do not boil the water before drinking it, they risk catching a disease. In such a case, the character must make a Fortitude check (DC 14) or come down with a fever in 1d3 days, after which they will suffer 1d3 Constitution damage per day until they make two successful Fortitude checks (DC 14) over a two day period.

The ruins are otherwise a safe place to camp and remain safe from predators, with shade from the sun. If the characters make a Search check (DC 15) they can find cryptic writing in the ruins, along certain walls. If the characters either own or have had a chance to study the enigmatic treasure map, they will notice that the cryptic writing on the map is suspiciously similar to the writing in the ruins.

A Games Master who wishes to add some extra danger to this event may decide that the ruins have remained undisturbed because they are haunted or are home to some deadly predator. During the night, the occupier will discover the heroes' presence in the ruins and stalk the characters.

Battlefield: The characters stumble across a desolate track of land on which a bloody conflict ended only in death for those involved. The festering corpses of men from both sides lie everywhere while vultures, jackals and hyenas fight over the remains. The characters quickly realise that this is an opportunity to loot the area for weapons and equipment. The battlefield is strewn with discarded equipment, including spears, daggers, long bows, javelins, hide armour, shields and possibly even some intact water skins.

Stampede: The characters are travelling along the base of a hill near a dry riverbed when they begin to hear a distant rumble. The Games Master may allow an initial Listen check (DC 15). If the check is made, then the rumble is heard early enough that they can tell it is getting closer. After a minute, it is loud enough for all to hear. Cresting the hill, a large water buffalo appears, followed by several more and then an entire stampeding herd. The water buffalo come down the hill in a great wave towards the characters.

Characters have a minute or so to react to this imminent threat. A quick Hide or Survival check (DC 16) will allow a character to spot an appropriate safe spot nearby, behind a rock, under an overhang along the hill side, or down the lip of the dry riverbed. Characters who fail to find safety risk getting trampled, taking 4d6 points of damage from trampling. Characters may make a Reflex save (DC 15) to take half of the damage from this effect. The herd of wild cattle roar by, taking no more than a minute or two to pass the area. There is a 10% chance after the buffalo have passed that one of the beasts has broken a leg as they charged down the hill and through the riverbed. If the characters are desperate for food, this beast will make an easy target.

ENCOUNTER THREE: ERISHKA

As the characters make their way through a rough, barren stretch of cracked earth, along which only an occasional desiccated animal corpse can be found, they spot a figure in the distance, who stumbles and then falls. On closer inspection, they find a young Atlaian woman, dressed lightly for travel, with empty water skins and a single spear. This is Erishka, with long, beaded hair, thin but pretty features and a muscular frame. Erishka has passed out from exhaustion, but on being revived she will be at first startled by the characters' presence, then grateful for their intervention.

Erishka will reveal something of her story with an eagerness to tell of her journey, about how she is the daughter of Agabundah, the king of the Adja clan of Atlaia and how she seeks out the Temple of Olorun, where she plans to offer herself as a sacrifice to the great orisha, that he might cease his anger and lift the drought upon the land. She explains that the warfare between clans has escalated out of control and that her brother, prince Ebar, travelled as is traditional to the temple earlier this year and found it desecrated. In



essence, Erishka can be a valuable source of local lore to the characters in this harsh land.

Erishka explains that she can lead the characters to the temple, if they will accompany her so that she may fulfil her purpose. She has already lost her horse while trying to escape from Yaraba warriors and fears she will not make it to the temple on her own. If the characters show her the treasure map or speak of it, then she will excitedly exclaim that she knows of what they speak and that there were four such maps made by the priest Molun.

If given the treasure map, Erishka will surprise the characters by reading it, explaining that the map is written in the language of old Atlaia, the ancient empire that founded all of the cities that are now in ruin throughout the land.

'The scroll provides the map to the temple,' she explains, 'as well as instructions on how to enter and find the Lost Emperor of Atlaia.'

Characters may deduce from this that she is describing the tomb of what may have been the last king of a crumbling realm

and that there may, indeed, be a great treasure in this king's lair. Erishka will speak further of how it would be truly glorious if the lost emperor was found, for he would be able to unite the kingdoms of Atlaia once more, thus ending the cycle of war. It is evident that she believes that this emperor is not dead, but merely waiting to be released. The characters might get a suspicious chill at this notion, but it matters not, for how could such an ancient king be anything more than a spectral remnant of himself?

The characters now have two duties to perform. Erishka joins the party and will serve as their guide to the Temple of Olorun. If they have the treasure map by now, then they also have the option of finding this lost emperor's tomb.

ERISHKA

Atlaian barbarian 3/scholar 1; HD: 3d10+1d6 (20 hit points); **Init:** +9; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 15; **Parry DV:** 11; **DR:** 4; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+3; **Atk:** Staff +3 melee; **Full Atk:** Staff +3 melee; **Dmg:** 2d4, x2, AP 1; **SA:** —; **SQ:** Black Kingdoms traits, Fearless, Versatility, Bite Sword, Crimson Mist, Trap Sense +1, Knowledge is Power; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1) x 5 ft. (1); **Base Power Points:** 8; **Magical Attack Bonus:** +4; **SV:** Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 18

Skills & Feats: Appraise +3, Bluff +6, Climb +6, Decipher Script +11, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (history) +3, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +12, Move Silently +9, Survival +6, Spot +12; Diligent, Endurance, Skill Focus (Decipher Script), Track

Sorcery Styles: Divination; **Spells:** *Astrological prediction*

Possessions: Staff, backpack, water skin, sandals, various rings and necklaces worth 100 silver pieces

Notes: The daughter of the Adja king, Erishka is a woman with a purpose. Tall, lean and very kind, she is beloved by her people and seeks only to end the bloodshed between Atlaians. Erishka is self-sacrificing, naturally wise and tries to find the best solution to all problems. She has occasional visions and sometimes hears voices that she believes are the whispers of the orisha.

ENCOUNTER FOUR: ORAFI'S PARTY

The characters may have been pursuing Orafi and his two companions since they escaped in the midst of the ambush, or they may stumble across the trio by accident. Orafi has, in fact, been travelling eastward toward the Ogun

Mountains as well, as he tries to puzzle out the cryptic meaning of the treasure map he came into possession of. Whether he took it from Artelios or the characters, Orafa is very clever and he recognises the geographic landmarks on the map well enough to know that it marks something in the Ogun Mountains, something that must be important.

Travelling with Orafa is his sole surviving Tibu lieutenant called Mukana and the man with whom he was going to do business, a member of the mysterious Scarlet Hand named Alam'Enshadar. Alam'Enshadar was wounded during the ambush and he has been at Orafa's mercy since they fled. Alam'Enshadar had, in fact, paid Orafa to find and raid the caravan of the characters, specifically to locate and retrieve the treasure map. Alam'Enshadar is under the direct employ of his enigmatic master, the sorcerer Quaridan, who dwells in the Red Citadel, close to the frontier outpost of Aurik.

ALAM'ENSHADAR

Zamorian thief 6; HD: 6d8+12 (39 hit points); **Init:** +12; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 17; **Parry DV:** 17; **DR:** 7; **BAB/Grp:** +4/+6; **Atk:** Short sword +7 melee finesse; **Full Atk:** Short sword +7 melee finesse; **Dmg:** Short Sword



1d8+2/19-20 x2/AP 3; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** Sneak attack style (short sword), sneak attack +4d6/4d8 plus 2 pts Str damage, *crippling strike*; **SQ:** Zamorian Traits, Trap Disarming, Trap Sense +2; **SV:** Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 13

Skills & Feats: (NB. In urban environments also has +1 circumstance bonus to Climb, Hide, Listen, Move Silently and Spot) Bluff +10, Disable Device +7, Disguise +10, Gather Information +10, Hide +9, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (local) +9, Move Silently +8, Open Locks +7, Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +12, Spot +8, Tumble +12; Brawl, Eyes of the Cat, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Light-footed, Physical Predator

Possessions: Brigandine, steel helmet, short sword, buckler

Notes: Alam'Enshadar is a freelance mercenary who fell into camp with the slowly spreading cult of the Scarlet Hand some years ago. He has been most recently appointed to find the map and perhaps even the treasure it locates, for his mysterious master. Alam'Enshadar is chiefly interested in his own well-being and while he glorifies the brotherhood of his peers, he is not above returning to his mercenary ways, despite his ties to Bzambe and the Red Citadel in the Wadai tribelands.

Alam'Enshadar could prove to be both an enemy and ally of the characters. He will side with them if it seems to his benefit and will betray them just as quickly. He feels no personal loyalty to any companions save other members of the Scarlet Hand, though he may be willing to invite some trustworthy souls to join the organisation.

Orafa, however, has his own designs on the treasure map. He cannot read it, but his knowledge of the region is pretty sharp and he can recognise the geographic landmarks on the map. Following these pointers, Orafa has realised that they mark a hidden valley in the heart of the Ogun Mountains and that the odd, decorative pictures along the margins of the map suggest to him jewels, coins and other great treasures. He is certain that the map is telling him where to find the lost hoard of the old empire of Actlaia.

The characters will first gain sight of Orafa and his band in the distance. Orafa and his men made their escape with horses, but one was slain in the pursuit, while a second died from exhaustion, so they are now on foot with only one mount left. The three will initially be spotted in the distance, a couple miles away and unless the characters attempt to hide immediately, they will also be seen. In such a case,

Orafa and his cohorts will move into the bush to prepare an ambush. Otherwise, they will continue to travel as normal.

The characters can now push to close the gap between the two parties. Orafa and his men are moving at a normal walking pace. The characters can close the gap with horses but will make enough noise to spoil any chance of surprise, or they can attempt a forced march. Once the distance has been closed, then it is only a matter of engaging in combat or negotiating.

Unless the characters arrive to find that they tipped Orafa off and he waits in ambush, they can either close to attack or attempt to negotiate. In fact, Orafa is open to talking and will suggest that they all join forces to share in the treasure together. If the characters attempt to Sense Motive (DC 12), they will easily figure that he plans on betraying them at the earliest opportunity.

If combat ensues, then Orafa and Mukana will fight so long as it seems they have the upper hand. Alam'Enshadar will try to remain on the side, looking for an opportunity from either side. If he feels he can stand to gain by striking against Orafa, Alam'Enshadar will do so, to try and show the characters that he is not really an enemy. Alam'Enshadar will then attempt to bluff his way into gaining the trust of the characters, explaining that he was a simple merchant who sought to buy goods and slaves from Orafa and that he has no part in any of Orafa's plans, though he will suggest that he knows how to read the treasure map (a lie) and will offer his services to the characters. If any of the characters make a Sense Motive check that beats a DC set by his Bluff skill, then they suspect something is amiss with his tale. Otherwise, he will seem quite believable.

ORAFa

Ghanatas barbarian 6; HD: 6d10+24 (72 hit points); **Init:** +5; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 14; **Parry DV:** 18; **DR:** 4; **BAB/Grp:** +6/+6; **Atk:** Ghanatas knives +11 melee; **Full Atk:** Ghanatas knives +11/+6 melee and +11 melee; **Dmg:** Ghanatas knife 1d8+6, 19-20 x2, AP 6; **SQ:** Ghanatas traits, Fearless, Versatility, Bite Sword, Crimson Mist, Trap Sense +2; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1) x 5 ft. (1); **SV:** Fort +9, Ref



+5, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 13

Skills & Feats: Bluff +7, Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Ride +7, Survival +8, Spot +2; Diehard, Endurance, Mobility, Parry, Two-Weapon Combat Proficiency, Uncanny Dodge, Track, Weapon Focus (Ghanatas knife)

Possessions: A scimitar, leather jerkin, the treasure map, a brace of Ghanatas daggers, water skin, pack with rations, sandals, a light war horse with saddle and bit and a pouch of 85 silvers.

Notes: Orafa is a professional slaver and a well-rounded mercenary who has spent years exploiting the neighbouring kingdoms around the deserts of Ghanatas. His fascination for pain and lust for torture is famous among those who have served under him and some slaves have been known never to make it to the auction block due to Orafa's cruel interests. His greed is great, as well and while Orafa is illiterate, he is slowly beginning to puzzle out the visual elements of the treasure map he found.

MAKUNA

Kushite borderer 3; HD: 3d10+6 (25 hit points); **Init:** +6; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 14; **Parry DV:** 12; **DR:** –; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+4; **Atk:** Hatchet +7 melee or hunting spear +7 melee; **Full Atk:** Hatchet +7 melee or hunting spear +7 melee; **Dmg:** Hatchet 1d6+1, hunting spear 1d8+1; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** –; **SQ:** Combat Style (Two-Weapon Defence), Favoured Terrain (forest) +1, Track; **SV:** Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 9

Skills & Feats: Climb +2, Hide +6, Jump +3, Knowledge (geography) +7, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Spot +4, Survival +6; Alertness, Eyes of the Cat

Possessions: Two hatchets, hunting spear, traveller's gear

Should either Orafa or Mukana escape, they will flee just far enough to avoid pursuit; they will then proceed to track the characters. Orafa will have no intention of letting the treasure fall into the hands of foreigners and will lurk in the background until later in the adventure, reappearing to make mischief at a time of the Games Master's choosing.

If the characters take Alam'Enshadar into their confidence, he will indeed seem to be familiar with the writing on the treasure map. In fact, he is bluffing his way through it all, but Alam'Enshadar has grown curious himself about this treasure which is so valued by sorcerers and adventurers alike and has decided to see this affair to its end. The mercenary believes that he can retrieve the treasure for Quaridan and deliver it to the Red Citadel, where the sorcerer will reward him greatly for his loyalty in recovering not only the map, but also the object that it marks. If the treasure is too great to retrieve, then he can seek a means by which to slay the characters and secure the treasure until a proper expedition can be mounted to retrieve it.

ENCOUNTER FIVE: THE PASSAGE OF THE MOUNTAIN GOD

At last, the characters will arrive at the foothills of the Ogun Mountains. Assuming that they have either the map or Erishka in their possession, they have the means by which to locate the hidden passage up the rocky cliffs. The passage is a steep, narrow incline of slight steps chiselled into the rock. As the characters ascend, the steps will gradually grow broader and easier to climb, until at last they appear to be full, wide steps carved by giants.

As the characters ascend the steps up through the mountains, they get a better view of the land beyond. A hawk-eyed character who manages a Spot check (DC 22) might pick out a line of warriors moving through the bush up to the general area of the lower hills and cliffs where the pathway begins, adding some tension to the possibility of unwelcome company. In fact, these are soldiers of the Adja, who have been sent to find and retrieve Erishka, though she will not say so. Near the limits of vision is another war party, this one Yaraba, sent to find the same girl who escaped their clutches just days earlier.

The stone staircase gradually ends at the entrance to a great cleft in the mountains, forming a narrow valley that cuts through the rocky expanse. The imagination of the characters begins to play with them, as it seems that much of the stony expanse around them has been worked by the hands of man in the distant past, but is now so weathered and worn through the ages that they appear to be nothing more than fanciful bluffs, buttes and cliffs. Petroglyphic runes and strange symbols dot the surfaces around the staircase, with odd symbols that are vaguely suggestive of inhuman forms.

The narrow cleft in the mountains is rough and uneven, save for a crude path that runs down the centre of the passage. More of the evocative rock art, as well as the strange sense that the whole expanse of the mountains is some worn monument to a forgotten civilisation, continue to persist. As the group passes through the mountains, Erishka begins to murmur a quiet chant under her breath. 'There are orisha in the mountains,' she explains. 'You must have their permission to pass.' Fear is evident in her eyes.

The characters will gradually get the sense that they are being watched by unseen entities. The rough pathway through the rocky cleft will take the rest of the day to traverse, and night will fall before they have reached the end. 'We should continue,' Erishka will say, as she grows more frightened than ever by dusk, 'the guardian orisha do not like trespassers at night.'

Right around dusk, characters can make Survival rolls (DC 10) to find a suitable overhang along the cleft for camping. The overhang contains a great deal of the enigmatic, vaguely disturbing petroglyphic art with the half-human forms and suggestive imagery. The characters may choose to continue travelling through the night. In any case, characters who are on watch or keeping an eye out while journeying may make Spot checks (DC 20) to see if they

notice the odd, reflective eyes in the night, like dull red pairs of stars that move up and down the cliff walls, pacing the party from somewhere above. A Listen check (DC 12) will reveal sounds of skittering feet and clicking claws along the rock, along with an occasional inhuman grunt.

The characters will nonetheless seem safe from these mysterious predators, while Erishka grows hoarse with her crude mantra. If anyone shoots an arrow or throws an object at the creatures, they will scatter and disappear for a short time, only for twice as many to reappear later. No aggressive act will be committed, until at last, sometime around midnight the waxing moon in the sky is covered behind dark clouds and a total darkness fills the narrow canyon.

A sense of preternatural dread will fill the party as dozens of beasts begin howling into the night, baying at the darkness and the loss of the moon. A sudden rush of sound in the darkness, followed by a horde of terrible, limber, half-human beings with jackal-like heads and bodies covered in coarse fur descend down the walls and upon the party. The guardian orisha strike under the cover of darkness, using it to their full advantage. There will be a number of beasts equal to the size of the party plus 1d6 extras (or double that if the characters had previously taken pot shots at the creatures).

GUARDIAN ORISHA

Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD: 3d8+12 (25 hp); **Init:** +10; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 19; **DR:** 4; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+3; **Atk:** 2 slams +23 melee (2d10+9); **Full Atk:** 2 claws +7 melee (1d6+3, x2, AP 4); **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/10 ft.

(2); **SA:** Wounding; **SQ:** Scent, light blind, darkvision; **SV:** Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 19, Con 18, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 1

Skills & Feats: Climb +18, Hide +10, Move Silently +10, Listen +4, Spot +4; Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (claws)

Notes: The guardian orisha are an ancient race of prehuman entities that prowl the hidden valleys of the Ogun Mountains, preying upon trespassers and inhabiting hidden caves. Though the origins of these ancient beings are lost to time, they may have once been survivors of whatever cataclysm befell the ancient empire of Atlaia. Atlaians with the proper prayers and offerings are permitted to pass through their territory, but the extraordinary senses of the guardians make it easy for them to tell the difference between Atlaians and foreigners. These senses are so good that they can even recognise ancestral heritage.

They never come out in the daylight, unless there is total cloud cover. They are so fearful of the light that they even shun the moon.

Dark vision (Ex): The guardian orisha can see for 120 feet in complete and partial darkness with no penalty.

Light blind (Ex): As nocturnal creatures, the guardian orisha have developed a severe fear of light which imposes a -4 penalty on all actions and attack rolls when exposed to sun or moonlight and a -1 penalty when within the radius of artificial light such as from a torch.

Wounding (Ex): Each strike of the guardian orisha's claws will continue to do a single point of bleeding damage each round after the initial wound. The effects are cumulative with multiple strikes and a Heal check (DC 15) must be made to stop the bleeding.

Skills: All guardian orisha have a racial bonus of +8 to their climb skills. They have adapted exceptionally well to scaling the rough cliffs of their mountain homes.

Curiously, the guardians will ignore Erishka, who continues to wail out the mantra of protection she was taught, an ancient prayer of supplication to the guardians. Any character that remains within ten feet of her will be safe as well. Any character that spent the day trying to learn her prayer may attempt a Perform check (DC 15) to



replicate it. Success means that that character will be safe as well, though they do not get the ten foot protection of Erishka. Erishka and any other character performing the mantra of protection must make a Concentration check (DC 10) during each round that combat takes place to avoid being distracted and breaking the sequence of the mantra. If they fail, the effect is lost and the beasts will immediately target that character. If no one is in battle, then the characters need only make a single check for the remainder of the moonless night, which lasts two minutes.

The creatures will harass the party until the clouds break after two minutes (20 rounds) of combat. They will then flee up the walls, howling and baying like jackals. They will not attack the characters again for the remainder of the night, as no more clouds pass by the moon of sufficient strength to obscure it. The Games Master can keep the characters on their toes, however, by suggesting that this could happen at any time.

If the characters remained in camp during the night, then by dawn they can resume their journey and arrive at the hidden valley of the temple with about four more hours' journey. If they journeyed through the night, the characters arrived at the valley about three hours after midnight, their passage in the dark taking longer, where Erishka proclaims that the legends of her people state that the guardian orisha do not enter and so are safe.

Either way, the secret valley marked on the treasure map now looms before them and in the heart of a lush, deep jungle-filled volcanic basin can be seen an immense ziggurat, the largest of its kind in the region of Atlaia. In the early morning light, characters can see that there appear to be great braziers surrounding the temple at the top of the pyramid, pouring forth fire and smoke. Erishka will be surprised, for she was told by her brother that the priests of the temple were all dead and that the temple stood empty, save for the angry spirits of the past. Thus arises the new mystery of who now occupies the temple.

ENCOUNTER FOUR: THE SECRET VALLEY

The secret valley basin is about 30 miles in length, the pyramid lies at the exact centre. The 15 mile journey to the pyramid will take about six hours on foot, for while a cobblestone road leads from the cleft to the pyramid, it is overgrown with dense foliage from the wild jungle within the valley.

During the journey, characters will have ample opportunity to hunt for wild game, of which there is a copious amount, as well as refill their water skins from numerous small streams and ponds that dot the expanse, which seem to hold water very well. There is a 40% chance that any pool the characters approach will be sulphurous hot springs and thus poisonous to drink from. A character may make a Survival check or Craft (alchemy) check (DC 12) to figure this out. If they do not, a character that drinks of a sulphurous pool will become ill if he fails a Fortitude Save (DC 14) and takes 1d3 temporary Constitution damage.

The temple will at last loom high above the characters as they break through the jungle line to a clearing around the great edifice. The massive pyramid stands 200 feet high, with nine successive layers cut through by a great staircase leading to a colonnaded temple at the top. Great stone braziers rest at each of the four corners of the base and the top, along with smaller braziers along the length of the staircase. Midway along the length of the staircase rests a large stone entrance, from which two double doors are spread wide open. All of this is most impressive, but the matter, which will most concern the characters is four fair-skinned soldiers, dressed in silks and holding scimitars. Unless the characters made efforts to hide themselves before entering the clearing, these mysterious soldiers will have seen the party and will now be approaching them

TEMPLE GUARDIANS

Stygian soldier 3; HD: 3d10+6 (25 hit points); **Init:** +3; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 13; **Parry DV:** 15; **DR:** 5; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+6; **Atk:** Broadsword +7 melee or Stygian bow +5 melee; **Full Atk:** Broadsword +7 melee or Stygian bow +5 melee; **Dmg:** Broadsword 1d10+3, 19-20 x2 AP 3 or Stygian bow 1d12 x3 AP 5; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** —; **SQ:** Formation Combat (heavy infantry); **SV:** Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 11

Skills & Feats: Climb +3, Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +5, Jump +3, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Perform (ritual) +2, Ride +4, Search +4; Alertness, Brawl, Weapon Focus (broadsword)

Possessions: Broadsword, Stygian bow, mail shirt

Whether the characters attempt to hide, parley or fight, the soldiers remain a persistent threat in the outer perimeter of the pyramid. One soldier carries an ivory horn, which he will use to sound an alarm in the first round of combat if they are attacked. If the characters manage to kill him first, another soldier will try to grab for it on the next round and so forth.

Likewise, they are not stupid and will flee if obviously outnumbered.

Should the characters attempt to parley, they will discover that these men speak only the local Kushite dialect which is common among the Atlaia and Stygian. Indeed, these appear to be Stygian soldiers and will introduce themselves as servants of the Mighty Kephros. Characters who wish to make a Knowledge (nobility) check (DC 25) can identify the name of Kephros as belonging to a Stygian general from the city of Kheshatta. If this does not alarm the characters, then their next revelation will. The soldiers will ask the characters to accompany them to the throne room of the great pyramid, where Kephros will hold audience with his first visitors. Why an audience? Because they claim that he is the rightful heir to the throne of this land! The soldiers will reveal that Kephros has returned because his ancient ancestors have called upon him to return to the lands of Atlaia and claim his rightful inheritance to the throne of the Old Empire. They seem very certain that this is his destiny and that they have all been hand-picked because their own genealogy claims that they have ancestry which hails from this region at some time in the distant past.

It is possible that the characters will have engaged the soldiers and learned none of this. It does not matter, for upon gaining entry to the temple, they will have ample opportunity to speak with the mad Stygian Kephros and his retinue of followers. If they gain entry to the temple by invitation, then they may proceed directly to the Grand Chamber (P4). Otherwise, they may be doing this the hard way. If the characters are approaching the temple aggressively, battle will be the principle resolution with the Stygians. If they try to enter by more deceptive means, then it is possible that they will discover the other two hidden entries to the pyramid, including the sacrificial pit at the top in the colonnade (P3) and the secret door in the rear compound (P1).

ENCOUNTER FIVE: THE PYRAMID OF OLORUN

The great pyramid has served as a temple for a thousand generations. Long before the Atlaia worshipped Olorun, the temple was used to worship darker and more ancient beings that predate the history of all mankind. The structure itself was built from the basalt of the basin around it and is a great, dark edifice



to these unknown gods and beyond. To the characters, any Stygians claiming that their ancestors built this temple might not seem so far off.

Erishka, however, is dismayed at the foreign invaders and immediately suspects that the reason she has been sent here in her visions is to cleanse the temple of the Stygians and indeed, that the anger Olorun has shown his people through the drought may, in fact, be because the Stygians are responsible for the slaughter of the priests who dwelt here. She will beg the characters to help her in repelling this threat to the temple and the region.

The following key to the Pyramid will break down each principle location of interest. If the characters have managed to decipher the script on the map, or have had Erishka do so, this will know by now that it describes the precise location of the entrance to the Lost Tomb of the Emperor.

A NOTE ABOUT THE STYGIAN

All of the Stygian soldiers belong to a sect that believes they are descended from the founders of the lost and

ancient empire of Atlaia. Each soldier is equipped with a Stygian bow, a large shield, a quilted jerkin and a scimitar. Out of the total garrison of 80, 70 are 1st level soldiers are 10 are 3rd level lieutenants all serving under a captain named Akbethos.

KEPHROS'S SOLDIERS

Stygian soldier 1; **HD:** 1d10+2 (12 hit points); **Init:** +2; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 12; **Parry DV:** 13; **DR:** 4; **BAB/Grp:** +1/+3; **Atk:** Broadsword +3 melee or Stygian bow +4 melee; **Full Atk:** Broadsword +3 melee or Stygian bow +4 melee; **Dmg:** Broadsword 1d10+3, 19-20 x2 AP 3 or Stygian bow 1d12 x3 AP 5; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** —; **SQ:** —; **SV:** Fort +4, Ref +2, Will —1; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 11

Skills & Feats: Climb +3, Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +4, Jump +3, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Perform (ritual) +2, Ride +4, Search +3; Alertness, Brawl

Possessions: Broadsword, Stygian bow, leather jerkin

KEPHROS'S LIEUTENANTS

Stygian soldier 3; **HD:** 3d10+6 (25 hit points); **Init:** +3; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 13; **Parry DV:** 15; **DR:** 5; **BAB/Grp:** +3/+6; **Atk:** Broadsword +7 melee or Stygian bow +5 melee; **Full Atk:** Broadsword +7 melee or Stygian bow +5 melee; **Dmg:** Broadsword 1d10+3, 19-20 x2 AP 3 or Stygian bow 1d12 x3 AP 5; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** —; **SQ:** Formation Combat (heavy infantry); **SV:** Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 11

Skills & Feats: Climb +3, Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +5, Jump +3, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Perform (ritual) +2, Ride +4, Search +4; Alertness, Brawl, Weapon Focus (broadsword)

Possessions: Broadsword, Stygian bow, mail shirt

AKBETHOS

Stygian soldier 5; **HD:** 5d10+10 (37 hp); **Init:** +2; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 13; **Parry DV:** 21; **DR:** 6; **BAB/Grp:** +5/+8; **Atk:** Dagger +8 melee or Scimitar +8 melee; **Full Atk:** Dagger +8 melee or Scimitar +8 melee; **Dmg:** Dagger 1d4+3/ 19-20 x2/ AP 4 or Scimitar 1d8+3/ 18-20 x2/ AP 5; **SA:** Formation Combat (heavy infantry); **SQ:** Stygian qualities; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SV:** Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +1 (–1 vs. Corruption); Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8

Skills & Feats: Handle Animal +1, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcane) +5, Perform (ritual) +3, Search +9, Survival +8; Endurance, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Parry, Power Attack

Allegiances: Stygian priesthood, Stygian nobility, unit commander

Possessions: Antique scale corselet, dagger, scimitar, steel cap, antique large shield

Beside the soldiers, Kephros arrived with over 200 slaves, which he now employs around the clock to dig deep into the area which he believes will reveal the Tomb of the Last Emperor. Though he may well believe that he is the rightful heir to the ancient Atlaian throne, Kephros has also seen in his vision that he must find the sceptre and crown of the Last Emperor to be recognised by the people of the land. He also believes that these artefacts will grant him awesome power and make his rule unstoppable. Unfortunately, he does not realise that he and all who are now in the temple, are helpless pawns of a much greater, darker evil.

PI: THE OUTER COMPOUND

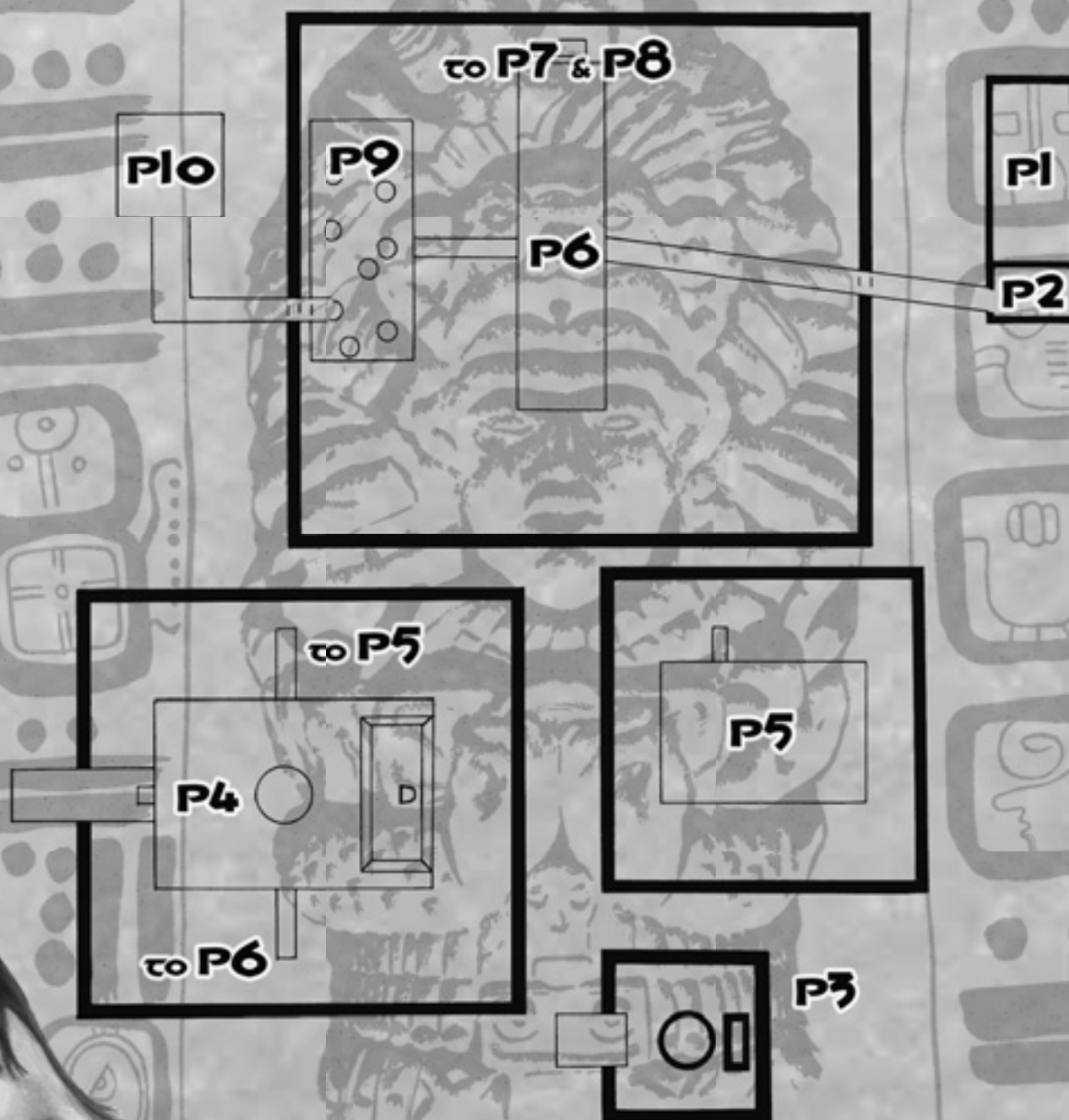
Beside the temple, there is a smaller compound of buildings located in the rear, all of which are abandoned save for the Stygian soldiers garrisoned there. Inside the main chamber of this outer compound, the Stygian soldiers have set up barracks. Only 40 soldiers are currently garrisoned here, however, the remainder are inside the temple, assisting their general in preparing the temple for a new era of occupation.

At any given time, 40 men will be resting and working on repairing the outer compound. Characters who enter the main chamber here will almost certainly catch the soldiers off guard, unless the alarm was previously raised.

P2: THE OFFICERS' QUARTERS AND HIDDEN ACCESS

This wing of the outer compound is tighter and has already been cleared of debris and plant life. At any given time, two or three sergeants and one lieutenant will be within this area, resting and discussing the work to be done. They have set up simple cots and fashioned a table on which they have heaped maps, scrolls and markers for their plans. A character who takes the time to search through the scrolls and maps may be able to discern some of what is going on here. The character may make an Intelligence check (DC 18 or DC 10 if that character speaks and reads Stygian) to discover that there is a much larger army on the way, one which was to be summoned when the advance team led by Kephros himself found the temple and secured it. The notes on the scrolls suggest that the Stygians

THE PYRAMID OF OLORUN



found the temple abandoned, however and make no reference to any priests dwelling in the temple. This, of course, would seem to be contrary to the tale Erishka has told the characters.

Hidden in the back of this chamber is a monument, a great stone effigy carved in the shape of some sort of leering, demonic visage. At the base of the statue is an ancient glyph, which Erishka can translate as meaning, 'The sinister path leads to danger.' The officers dwelling here have been placing candles in its eyes and burning them at night for light by which to work, but a clever character who makes a Search check (DC 18) will notice that if they reach all the way into the hollows of the eyes, there is a hidden chamber beyond. Furthermore, that character can feel a lever on the other side. The lever can be reached through either socket. If the character tries to pull the lever through the left eye of the statue, it will release a dead weight that both opens the secret passage beyond as the head sinks into the earth and drops a rusted metal blade down on the character's arm. The blade is corroded enough that it only deals 3d6 points of damage, should the character fail a Reflex Save (DC 18). The right eye, meanwhile, is completely safe to reach into and pull the lever from.

The stone idol, once sunken into the earth, can be raised again by pulling the lever within the room beyond. The small room has a low ceiling and barely enough room to cram the whole party into. The wall beyond holds the same leering face as the characters saw from outside the room, but the eye sockets are hollow and the glyphs below are translated to mean, 'Most sacred of Atlaia, enter,' by Erishka. Anyone in the party who is Stygian or knows the language of Old Stygian may disagree with her interpretation, for the glyph of Atlaia, to them, means Atlantis. More mysteries are afoot!

When the characters at last figure out that they can reverse the lever, it will raise the secret door through which they just passed and the stone head on the inner wall will then sink into the earth, exposing the slanting passage that leads to the pits of darkness.

P3: COLONNADE

The top of the 200 foot pyramid consists of a small colonnade, inside which can be found a deep, hollow pit running straight into the centre of the massive structure. The colonnade itself appears to have been used for a variety of purposes and includes a single throne at the far end, facing the staircase entry point. Each of the pillars is carefully sculpted in the image of strange, half-human beasts. Erishka, if present, will elaborate that each column

depicts an image of one of the great orisha. An astute character who is attempting to search the area will notice that one column, behind the throne, has been defaced and it seems to be the only such column to have any damage at all. If asked, Erishka will explain that the column belongs to Eshu, the messenger and that one should not speak of this god lest he appear.

The pit in the centre of the colonnade is eight feet in diameter and has smooth masonry, with few easy handholds. The bottom of the pit is invisible from above, but characters with enough rope and conviction could make an attempt at climbing down. The hole descends 80 feet, opening up from the ceiling of a grand chamber (P4). Characters may attempt to climb down. The base DC is 20 for the climb, reduced to a DC of 15 if the characters have a rope, or DC 20 if it is a knotted rope. Because the climb is so treacherous, anyone securing a rope to one of the columns should make a Use Rope check (DC 10) to make sure of the knot. If the Use Rope check fails by less than five, then roll 1d3; that is how many people make it down the rope before the knot starts to slip. Anyone on the rope the round it starts to slip can rappel down very quickly (Climb check (DC 20)) and take 1d6 points of rope burn damage (DR will apply against this damage if wearing gloves or gauntlets). If they fail, then the rope will give way in the next round. Otherwise, a total failure of Use Rope will result in the knot giving way on the first try. Such a character may attempt a Reflex save (DC 15) to grab the edge of the pit before plunging to certain death.

P4: GRAND CHAMBER

The primary chamber of worship is located in the heart of the pyramid. For countless generations the carefully selected priests of the Atlaian kingdoms have kept vigilant watch over the temple, while offering countless prayers and sacrifices to Olorun. The main entry to the pyramid is midway up its length and after a short passage through a 30 foot long corridor it opens into this large chamber.

Large stone columns, six on each side, serve as the primary support for the high-ceilinged chamber. Even with half of the pyramid above it, the architecture of this chamber is strong enough to sustain such a large open area. The room is divided into two sections. There is a lower area, its floor decorated with ancient mosaics depicting the glory of the ancient empire. Overlooking this is an elevated stage, with two staircases by which to reach it, upon which can be found a large, ancient altar carved of black stone. The image of the altar is reminiscent of an immense clawed hand, rising from the earth, to clutch at whatever

terrible gift has been placed upon it. Behind the altar rests a large throne, with a similar style of design, as if the giant's other hand offers a place of rest for a powerful high priest.

The centre of this room contains a large bowl, a stone cauldron of sorts, which is positioned directly beneath a hole in the ceiling that leads to the colonnade at the top of the pyramid, 100 feet above. The dim light that makes its way down the shaft provides just enough illumination for the characters to see by.

At any given time this chamber contains 20 guards, positioned around the chamber. Two exits, including a staircase up on the south side and a passage down on the north side are evident, with two guards standing before each. There will be a guard placed in front of each of the 12 columns. The remaining four guards stand at the top of the elevated stage around the throne.

Resting on the throne, breathing deep a narcotic lotus burning like incense on the altar before him, is Kephros, the Stygian general who has taken control of the pyramid. Unless the characters were trying to sneak into the room, Kephros and his guards will be expecting them. Kephros is an imposing figure, with a large frame of wiry muscles, a bald head decorated with serpentine tattoos and a suit of mail to accompany the wicked curved sword at his side. Unlike the traditional notion of the unscrupulous Stygian scholar, Kephros is a man bred for war.

GENERAL KEPHROS

Stygian soldier 7/scholar 1; HD: 6d10+1d6+8 (48 hit points); **Init:** +4; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 14; **Parry DV:** 18; **DR:** 8; **BAB/Grp:** +7/+7; **Atk:** Broadsword +10/+5 melee; **Full Atk:** Broadsword +10/+5 melee; **Dmg:** 1d10+2, 19-20 x2, AP 5; **SA:** —; **SQ:** Stygian traits, Formation Combat (heavy infantry, skirmisher), Background (pact), Knowledge is Power; **Base Power Points:** 6; **Magic Attack Bonus:** +4; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1) x 5 ft. (1); **SV:** Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 17

Skills & Feats: Climb +10, Craft (alchemy) +5, Decipher Script +10, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (arcane) +9, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (local) +8, Perform (ritual) +5, Profession (soldier) +8, Ride +11, Search +9; Cleave, Combat Expertise, Leadership, Parry, Power Attack, Ritual Sacrifice, Weapon Focus (broadsword)



Sorcery Styles: Summoning; **Spells:** *Demonic pact.*

Possessions: Kephros wears a golden headband worth 50 gold lunas. He wields a finely crafted broadsword, mail shirt and breastplate, a leather cape, heavy boots, silver arm bands worth 30 silvers each, a serpentine brooch of jade worth 50 silvers and has a dagger on his belt.

Notes: Kephros is a general of Kheshatta, a powerful Stygian fighter who has earned his rank battling against foreign raiders and in countless military engagements over the years. He is the unfortunate victim of his bloodline, as his distant ancestors held an ancient pact with the demonic being Eshu. Eshu sought out Kephros, calling to him from his prison beneath Atlaia's Pyramid of Olorun, deceiving Kephros into believing he is destined for greatness. Kephros has learned some small dark arts to communicate with Eshu.

If the characters were brought to the grand chamber by escort, or have not yet provoked hostilities, then Kephros will initially be very hospitable. 'I am Kephros, a general of Kheshatta, glorious capital of the south. Welcome, travellers, to the domain of the new Empire of Atlaia, of which I am the rightful heir. I greet thee and I invite thee into my kingdom.' His eyes stare with an odd glimmer, as if he is seeing far more than the characters standing before him. It is, some might say, the glimmer of madness.

QUESTIONING KEPHROS

Some of the questions the characters could pose for which Kephros has an answer follow below. You can use these as an idea of the manner and nature of Kephros' conversations. One fact should become clear to characters, that the man is mad with power and driven by a strange vision. If they learn that the ancestor he spoke with was called Eshu, this will be disturbing news for Erishka or anyone else who has heard tell of the god of the same name.

Q: 'Why did you leave Kheshatta to come here?'

A: 'I experienced a vision of my ancestors. An ancient king, who called himself Eshu, told me it was my destiny to come to the ancient pyramid and find his lost tomb. Here I would be able to claim the sceptre and crown of the Old Empire and return to the rightful rule of my ancestral lands.'

Q: 'Doesn't that go against the Pharaoh of Stygia? What about the sorcerers of Kheshatta? Are they in on it?'

A: 'When I am done restoring Atlaia to its lost glory, the Pharaoh will beg to be my vassal. As for those vile adepts in the Black Ring, when I return to Kheshatta, I shall make them all bow before me. Eshu has shown me in the visions just what I must do.'

Q: 'The people of Atlaia will never bow before a Stygian master.'

A: 'With the sceptre and crown of the Emperor, they will have no choice but to obey me. If not, then I shall destroy them all.'

Kephros is a pompous, egocentric man who has envisioned his own glorious destiny. So long as all is civil, he is happy to answer any questions the characters pose to him, so long as they are willing to answer his in turn. Some of his questions will involve who the characters are, where they came from, why they came to be here and who their companions are (if any). If the characters try to offend, attack or question his right to the ancient throne of Atlaia, Kephros will grow agitated and soon demand that the guards seize the characters, disarm them and throw them in the excavation chamber.

Regardless of the characters' attitudes towards Kephros, Erishka will be beside herself with rage. She will accuse him of killing all the priests of Olorun, to which Kephros will laugh and deny that there were any priests here at all when he arrived. 'This temple was quite empty,' he said, 'and even if a few local savages did come here to worship, they were all gone when we arrived. You are surely mistaken.' Although the characters might fear that Erishka will anger Kephros, the reverse becomes true. In fact, Kephros will take an odd liking to any female members of the party and be willing to humour them with more questions and answers than the rest of the group.

Note that if, at any point, the characters reveal their strange treasure map to Kephros or speak of it, he will grow very suspicious and demand more information from them. If the characters seem innocent enough to Kephros or simply hand him the map, he may choose to elaborate, explaining to them that in his visions, he was warned that those who followed the writings of a false prophet would

come, to try and usurp his rightful claim to the throne. Kephros will have made his mind up to slay the characters by now, regardless of their compliance with him, once he knows they came with the map. This problem with the map could work out in the characters' favour if, in fact, Orafa and his crew still have it.

The characters are likely to have attacked Kephros by now and if they have not, some of his megalomaniacal ravings are almost certain to spur them into action. The evil general seems deranged and his eager soldiers all brainwashed into believing this a grand venture. Should combat ensue at any point, guards at the entry to the lower area and guards near the outside entry will rush to summon more soldiers. Kephros will try to slip away from combat as quickly as possible by pushing in a knob on his throne, activating a secret passage directly behind the throne. This tight passage leads directly to an alcove in the shadowed halls (P6). He will seek to make his way to the excavation chamber (P7) where he will rally his forces and urge the slaves to work twice as hard in uncovering the capstone of Eshu's grave. Characters who try to follow will discover that the hidden passage has been sealed from the other side and cannot be opened the same way until reopened from within.

If guards escaped to summon more soldiers, then half of the troops from the excavation chamber (P7) will arrive ten rounds after combat began. Additionally, all guards still alive in the outer

compounds (P1 and P2) will arrive two minutes (20 rounds) after combat begins.

Assuming the characters defeat the soldiers of Kephros, they are now free to begin searching the pyramid in earnest. Depending upon whether or not they stopped any guards from seeking help, or whether they dispatched the current soldiers quickly or not, the characters may be fleeing with lots of pursuit. The soldiers will chase them if they take the downward passage, but they will choose to wait in the grand chamber rather than follow the characters if they take the upward passage to the mausoleum (P5).

P5: THE MAUSOLEUM

The upper complex of the pyramid is a great mausoleum, in which generations of Olorun priests have been interred. There is only one way into the mausoleum, which is directly above the grand chamber (P4). Characters who reach this chamber will discover that the Stygians have left it alone, for even they are unwilling to disturb the dead. In one corner, heaped in a great pile, are two dozen emaciated corpses, all hideously slain. The characters have discovered the murdered bodies of the Olorun priests, as the Atlaian princes who travelled here some months ago found them. The bodies appear to have been slain in a gruesome manner, rent and torn as if by some sort of immense, foul beast which sought only to kill and not eat. If Erishka is present, she will seek out the body of the elder high priest, a man who she said was called Molun. When she finds Molun's body, she will discover that he still wears the sacred necklace of Olorun. She will retrieve the necklace and speak a prayer. Astute characters may realise that this man was the author of their treasure map, or at least a descendant, as the map is supposed to be centuries old.

Suddenly, the body of the high priest will animate, grabbing whatever character is nearest. The desiccated flesh of the dead priest will croak out an ominous proclamation. 'Avenge us,' it moans. 'Eshu seeks release. Do not let him. Only the Last King may slay the evil one. Stop Eshu. Avenge us!' The body will go limp then, as its ghostly life lets go.

Characters easily spooked by the corpse will begin to get the sensation that there is a terrible wave of force within the room. All characters should make a Will Save (DC 10) or be overcome by superstitious dread, as it seems that the entire mausoleum is filled with

THE MYSTERIOUS KOPHETHU

The characters may have picked up the assistance of the mysterious translator Kophethu, an aide to Artelios or the characters, who sought rescue during the attack on the slavers' caravan in encounter one. If Kophethu was allowed to join the party, then he will take a sudden and deadly interest in Kephros, explaining to any character with whom he holds some trust that the general is a mad man who must be stopped. Kophethu will not mention any alliances if he can help it, but will explain that he is, in fact, an assassin sent by the rulers of Kheshatta to find the mad general and bring him to justice.

Kophethu is in fact a professional assassin and initiate of the Black Ring. He knows the true story of general Kephros, of how the man had been contacted by a demon from the outer darkness, which has lured him into the deserts of Atlaia for some previously unknown purpose.

Now that the general's scheme has been revealed and his location discovered, Kophethu will shed his disguise as a simple translator and go to work. Should he feel it necessary, he will invite the characters in on the hunt, but Kophethu prefers to work alone and will be just as likely to disappear on the characters and pursue the general on his own.

Alternate Plot Idea: Kophethu as a character

Some Games Masters might want to consider this option in a game with six or more players. Have one of the players actually play a Stygian that has the skills of an assassin or provide the statistics of Kophethu to the player for this scenario. By doing this, Games Masters can include the side plot of the assassin seeking the general, but integrate it into the actions of the heroes. Games Masters who find too many Non-Player Characters tiring to manage may prefer this option.

the spirits of the restless dead, angry at the defilement of their ancient pyramid. Characters who are overcome find it impossible to stay and remain shaken for 1d6 rounds, suffering a -1 penalty to all skill checks, saves and combat rolls for that time.

P6: SHADOWED HALLS

A long, narrow chamber dominates the lower region of the great pyramid with a dozen supporting columns on each side. Midway down this chamber are two large stone doors. At the far end of the chamber is an open passage descending deep into the earth to the excavation chamber

(P7). The opposite end contains the staircase that returns to the grand chamber (P4). Midway along this passage, one of a number of alcoves containing torch sconces is actually the far end of the secret passage leading up to and behind the throne in the grand chamber. If Kephros has used the passage to escape, then it will be open the next time the characters pass through here. Otherwise, a Search check (DC 25) must be made to discern that it is there and that turning the torch sconce will open the door. This could, potentially, give the characters an unexpected edge on the brooding Kephros in the grand chamber, if they have not yet had that encounter, but the secret passage at the far end is tricky. It can be opened only from outside, by depressing a spherical switch on the throne in the grand chamber. The passage will open for 15 seconds, then close. From inside, a similar button can then be pushed to reopen it. However, the door will not open to whichever side has the depressed button. If the throne's button has been used, only the secret passage's button will open the door and vice versa. Thus, unless Kephros activates it himself, so long as he is in the other chamber, the secret passage will not open until he depresses the throne trigger.

The shadowed halls have some other details of note. If characters are moving through here with a good light source, they may notice the colourful murals along the walls, depicting a variety of ancient rites that seem to involve sacrifices to many strange gods. Once again, as with the columns in the colonnade, one particular deity seems to have had his image and name stricken from all depictions on the wall. Erishka will confirm, if asked, that this image is, indeed, of Eshu, the one to be feared.

P7: EXCAVATION CHAMBER

After a long, winding passage through rough-hewn earthen tunnels, the characters are now deep beneath the pyramid and almost certainly beneath ground level for the basin. The tunnels they move through were clearly dug many centuries ago, though by whom no one can say. Occasionally, the tunnel walls reveal massive basalt stonework, partially exposed from the digging, suggestive of a much larger, buried complex of ruins which the soil of the basin has long since covered. The tunnel will at last open up into a hollowed lava tube, with a fine layer of sand on the floor. The lava tube has been modified by extensive excavation. Every 40 feet, torch sconces are set into the walls and hundred upon hundreds words are carved into the wall. Any character familiar with the Kushite language can read some of the words, which appear to be the names of slaves. In fact, it seems as if there are thousands of such names, in several languages, dating back many centuries.

Long ago, it seems, the slaves who were forced to dig through to this tunnel and beyond made it a tradition of placing their name on the wall as they passed by to do their work. The most recent names are in Stygian and appear to be only weeks old.

Eventually, the lava tube will end after gradually sloping downward for about 1,000 feet and opening up into a massive natural cavern. The cavern itself is lit with dim torchlight from pole sconces that form a crude path across the 300 foot domed chamber. The far end is lit in a dim haze of light and dust and the persistent noise of clattering pick axes and shovels echoes throughout the underground passage. Even from the entrance, the characters can make out what appears to be a large chain gang of slaves digging furiously away at the far wall of the chamber. The ancient cavern, formed out of a great hollow in the lava fields, is now filled with chipped stone and sand.

There are four guards within a few dozen feet of the entry, resting comfortably and discussing their strange turn of fortune with General Kephros, unless they have been alerted to the presence of the characters. Characters need only succeed a Move Silently check (DC 10) to creep up on these guards, as the noise of the excavation beyond drowns out their movements.

Characters who make their way across the cavern will pass through a crude shanty town in which the slaves are living. There are another dozen guards, slave masters armed with whips, to ensure that the dig continues unabated. These guards will try to stop the characters, though one or more will try to make a break for it to seek help. There are close to 200 slaves working here from as many different backgrounds. The slaves will not interfere in any combat and will flee if attacked. All of the slaves are manacled and will in fact be very grateful to be freed and a few will pledge loyalty to the characters that free them.

The far wall of the cavern has been heavily excavated, exposing worked stone and huge, monstrous statues hidden beneath the volcanic rock of the cavern. Any character with Knowledge (architecture) or Knowledge (geography) may make a check (DC 15) to realise that the hundred plus slaves working day and night on exposing this construction are digging away at basalt that must have completely covered a far, far older structure. Indeed, it appears that the diligent workers have exposed a grand entry, flanked on both sides by partially-exposed 20 foot tall statues. The statues are demonic in appearance, with long, snaggle-toothed faces and wickedly clawed hands and feet.

Though each statue is 20 feet tall, they are both images of squatting beings that would, if real, stand much taller.

The central entry, where the slaves are busiest, reveals a large stone double door through which the slaves have hacked open an entrance. Inside, two dozen slaves toil away in a chain line, hauling out sand, soil and rubble that has filled the passage beyond, in an attempt to expose the inner entrance of the structure. From this point, if the characters arrived here before meeting Kephros in the grand chamber (P4), then they will discover that the slaves have just finished exposing the doors at the end of a 40 foot long corridor inside the entombed structure. The double doors, carved out of some unknown red stone, depict images that will frighten any Atlaian present, including Erishka, as they depict the image of Eshu, the dark god of the orisha pantheon. Ancient script, written in the language of the Old Empire of Atlaia, covers the door. A Decipher Script check (DC 28, +4 modifier if the same character successfully deciphered the treasure map, or reads Old Stygian) will reveal the suggestion that the script is a warning and that a potent magical ward was etched upon this portal. It seems as if someone wanted to keep something inside from escaping.

Wise Characters might realise that there is an obvious supernatural threat beyond these doors. There are many possible ways to deal with this threat, from simply sealing up the passage and leaving as quickly as possible to hunting Kephros down and eliminating the one who seeks to awaken the entombed devil god. If characters were lucky enough to get to this point before Kephros makes his move, then they have a variety of preventative options. If they are foolish, however, or do not comprehend the threat, then it is possible that the characters themselves will break the seal and open the door, requiring a Strength check (DC 22) to break open. In such an event, read on to what happens when Eshu is released from his tomb (P8).

If Kephros makes it here before the characters, he will arrive in time to bask in the glory of fulfilling his dark visions. Unknowingly, Kephros has been a pawn of Eshu, who sought out those who had the blood of ancient Atlaian ancestors, not those of the ancient lineage of royalty, but of those primeval servants of old who summoned Eshu forth from the outer darkness in the era of Atlantis. In the dreams and visions Eshu has sent forth to the Stygian general, Kephros has been duped into believing his destiny lies within the chamber beyond.

Kephros will arrive here before the characters under

two circumstances: if the characters have encountered him in the grand chamber and he makes his escape from there, then the general will go directly to this location, most likely with at least a dozen guards to accompany him. Alternatively, if the characters never make it to the grand chamber, but instead become distracted for more than a day from the time they arrived at the pyramid with some other task, then at the Games Master's discretion Kephros will take leave from the grand chamber and come to this location as a matter of course. In any case, unless he is stopped, Kephros will open the warded double doors and enter the Tomb of Eshu.

P8: THE TOMB OF ESHU

Upon opening the warded doors of the ancient tomb, a rush of desiccated air and the stench of untold aeons will assail the characters present. The doors open to reveal a short hall, lined with human-sized demonic statues, opening into a vast, dark chamber that reeks of the dust of the ages.

Even though this chamber has clearly been sealed for thousands of years, within a minute or two of entering, characters will be able to detect the faintest of breezes. Torchlight will begin to flicker, casting eerie shadows across the walls of the chamber. The light reveals a wide, circular room lined with heavy columns. An altar rests in the centre, positioned before an ominous looking statue. The statue depicts some sort of tall, armoured being with six arms, and an immense cleaver grasped in each hand. The helmet of the being looks like some sort of draconic skull. The entire floor of this chamber appears to be a maze of drainage trenches, cut into narrow, shallow lengths along the floor. A Spot check (DC 12) will reveal that the pattern is, indeed a sort of maze and all of the trenches end at the foot of the great statue.

If the characters have arrived behind Kephros, then they will find the general prostrate before the altar, shouting out some sort of barely human chant, punctuated by the name of Eshu. Up to a dozen guards will be evenly spaced around the area and will rush to engage intruders. As the characters enter, Kephros will stop for a moment and laugh. 'You are too late!' he will scream. 'I have awoken he who shall make me your master!'

Characters will likely want to dispense with Kephros and he will be ready. As combat ensues, each soldier slain will bleed into the trenches and the blood will take 1d4 rounds to seep along the trench line of the floor until it pools at the foot of the statue, where a curious thing will occur. The blood will begin to run up the body of the statue, turning it a dark, glistening red. In two rounds, when the

blood reaches the head, the eyes will suddenly glow like rubies and the statue will come to life!

The characters are now in for a deadly fight with the manifestation of Eshu. The hideous construction of stone and blood will be surrounded with the sounds of whispering voices from some nameless realm and a new voice will join the whispering for each foe it slays. The dark god Eshu now walks free and its plans have come to fruition. The only real hope of stopping Eshu now lies with the discovery of the Tomb of the Lost King. Characters who confront Eshu may have a chance of spotting a thin slot on its chest (Spot check DC 15), where the *Blade of Azag* can be plunged to petrify the animated statue. No other means of stopping Eshu will prove especially effective.

MANIFESTATION OF ESHU, THE STONE GOD

Large Outsider/Construct (demon); HD: 14d10 (77 hp); **Init:** -1; **Spd:** 20 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 19; **Parry DV:** 24; **DR:** 8; **BAB/Grp:** +14/+18; **Atk:** 2 slams +23 melee; **Full Atk:** 6 blades +23 melee; **Dmg:** Slam 2d10+9, blade 2d10+9, x3, AP 16; **Magical Attack Bonus:** +8 *Corruption*



check; Space/Reach: 5 ft. (1)/10 ft. (2); **SA:** -; **SQ:** Magical Resistance, Reanimate; **SV:** Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 39, Dex 9, Con -, Int 23, Wis 21, Cha 21

Skills & Feats: Climb +31, Listen +18, Search +18, Spot +18; Combat Reflexes, Greater Cleave, Power Attack

Notes: The Manifestation of Eshu appears as a 13 foot tall armoured warrior with six arms, each carrying an immense sword. The statue is animated through a blood sacrifice. The disembodied spirit of Eshu is trapped within the statue and will gradually return to full awareness over time.

The best means of defeating the statue is to plunge the *Blade of Azag* into a slot in its chest, severing the ethereal connection between statue and god. The blade must remain in the chest of the statue for one year before the essence of the stone god fully departs.

Reanimation (Su): Any victim slain by the Manifestation of Eshu will arise in exactly one hour as a member of the risen dead (see *Conan the Roleplaying Game*). This undead being may be communicated with by the Manifestation of Eshu telepathically from any distance and will obey all commands given by the stone god.

Magic Resistance (Ex): The Manifestation of Eshu receives a +8 modifier to all saving throws versus magical attacks and effects, except those of a priest of Olorun.

Though Eshu now walks free in the form of its stone body, the ancient demon is still trapped in its ancient dreams and only just beginning to awaken. The statue will initially move about the underground complex, slaying all it meets. Each victim of the stone god will reanimate as a member of the risen dead (See *Conan the Roleplaying Game*). These undead minions will continue the will of the dark god, defending its new domain and excavating its dark palace beneath the volcanic flow.

Eshu will eventually come to full consciousness in a week, but hopefully not before the characters have a chance to stop him. In the event that the entity is allowed to proceed unchecked, the Games Master can come up with a variety of entertaining scenarios for the future, in which fresh, brave characters seek out the ancient pyramid haunted by an enigmatic stone god and his undead minions, toiling away to uncover a vast, ancient city beneath the basalt.

Should the characters ever defeat Eshu, either through the use of the *Blade of Azag* or other means, proceed to encounter five.

P9: PITS OF DARKNESS

Characters entering this chamber, either by the secret passage from the outer compound (P2) or the passage from the shadowed halls (P6) will find this large room holds eight deep, seemingly bottomless pits. If they came by the secret entrance, they discover that there is no mechanism for opening it from inside the chamber.

Each pit descends into the earth with no handholds on their smooth and unblemished walls. The pits are about ten feet in radius and any descent will be perilous. Any character that has deciphered the treasure map (Erishka or Kophethu could translate, if present) can determine that the map says all but the eighth pit lead to certain doom. The eighth pit, according to the map, leads to the entrance of the Tomb of Azag. Characters are then left in a quandary: which of the eight pits is the correct one?

Characters who study the pits can try to find clues as to which is the one they are looking for. A Search check (DC 20) of small but articulate runes along the lip of each pit will reveal that specific names in the old Atlaian language are scripted on each pit. A Decipher Script check (DC 28, +4 circumstance modifier if the character has read Old Stygian or deciphered old Atlaian before) will reveal that each of these pits appear to be places of sacrifice, into which victims were cast, one for each of the eight orisha. The eighth pit belongs to Olorun, the supreme Orisha. Should the characters choose any other pit, they will descend to certain doom in a deep, flowing field of lava beneath the earth.

The eighth pit descends 50 feet and ends in a smooth passage, adorned with ancient imagery of the Emperor Azag. The depictions are divided into three parts. The first murals are of an ancient, fabulous civilisation, eventually torn down by barbarian invasions. The second mural shows the rise of the Old Empire and a war against what could well be ancient Acheronians. It is in this second mural that a great emperor can be seen, accepting a sceptre from an inhuman, serpentine humanoid. The third mural shows the end of a great conflict and a beautiful sword plunged into the heart of a six-armed giant. The final mural shows the form of Azag in death, surrounded by mourners, with the sceptre in one hand and the sword in the other.

The passage ends in wide double doors, with a simple message: *'Azag, steward of the last true men of Atlantis.'* The message is written in three languages: Acheronian, Old Stygian and Old Atlaian, but Erishka or any one else who has been

translating the treasure map will find this message easy to read.

Anyone who makes a Search check of the hall (DC 20) will notice a nearly seamless juncture between floor and walls, suggesting that there is something beneath the stone under their feet. The stone resonates slightly, as if a bit hollow and carries unnatural warmth from deep volcanic activity.

The doors of the tomb have no obvious handle or opening mechanism. A Search check (DC 20) reveals that there are three very slight pressure-plates, one for each of the three languages on the door. The correct plate to push is the one written in Old Atlaian, for it is the language of the true people. Pushing the plates of the other two words will activate a trap, as ancient cogs in the walls begin to grind and the floor beneath the characters recedes into hollows in the walls. Beneath the floor is a drop of 50 feet into a chasm filled with flowing lava, where a very much active caldera seethes with geological intensity. Characters have about four rounds before the floor withdraws completely to try and grab on to the wall sides or hang on to any rope that may still hang from the shaft. Once the floor is gone, it will remain this way for ten rounds before the great hidden tumblers fall into reverse and the stone floor slowly falls back into place and the trap is reset. During those ten rounds, any character that fails a Reflex save (DC 16) loses his grip and slips. If the character fails by more than five, he plunges to his death, otherwise he catches on to a handhold along the pit and must then try climbing up the chasm before the hall floor resets.

If the characters still need to get through the door, they can try to push another button or bash their way through. The door has a hardness of 8 and 80 hit points. Each round that the characters smash at the door, there is a 20% chance that they accidentally set off the trap again.

P10: THE TOMB OF AZAG

Once through the door, the characters expose the rather modest chamber in which the ancient Emperor Azag was entombed. An ancient war chariot too desiccated for use but with 100 lunas worth of decorative gold plating rests along one wall. The mummified body of Azag sits upright on a throne at the end of the chamber, holding a long, flawless iron broadsword across its lap and a fine sceptre of silver and gold in its right hand.

The weapon is the *Blade of Azag*, a weapon forged from meteoric iron and bound within the spells of many ancient Atlaian sorcerers to serve as a weapon of destruction against the demonic Eshu. The weapon itself is merely a

finely crafted broadsword with a +1 bonus to its damage and armour piercing effects due to the strength of the blade. Anything that might be affected by meteoric iron will have a similar problem with this blade and of course, plunged into the chest slot of the stone god Eshu, it will stop the animation of that demonic god's mortal form. The weapon has an inscription along its blade, which says only, '*Cast thee back to the Outer Darkness,*' in Old Atlaian. Any character that studied the murals in the entry hall will notice that this is the same sword as the one depicted sticking from the chest of the six-armed giant.

The sceptre is a compelling object, which seems to emit an almost electric attraction to anyone who touches it or studies the item carefully. Artelios, if present, will develop a sudden and intense interest in the object, which he will proclaim is the one which he sought all along through the map. Unless someone objects, he will take the sceptre and inform everyone else that the rest of the treasure is theirs for the taking. Note that if Artelios is not present, then one of the heroes should feel this inexplicable attraction to the sceptre instead and find it impossible to resist.

The rest of the chamber contains thousand and thousands of gold lunas worth of treasure, in the form of goblets, urns, jewellery, perhaps 10,000 coins of ancient mint filling three huge coffers and dozens of finely crafted weapons. There is one suit of Azag's own plate armour that an especially brave soul may try to take off of his mummified body. The sum total of wealth in the chamber is difficult to calculate and will be difficult to haul out without a good investment of time and labour. Unfortunately, the characters will find that they are short on both, as the dark plans of General Kephros and Eshu will likely interfere. In addition, Erishka will be opposed to any tomb robbing, except for the purpose of gaining the *Blade of Azag*, as she seems certain that the weapon is why they were meant to find the tomb.

Should the characters have some idea of hauling the treasure up and out of here through the secret entrance in the pits of darkness (P9) it is possible that Kephros will uncover the tomb of Eshu and awaken the stone god without any interference. If this happens, undead Stygian soldiers, slaves and Kephros himself, as well as the stone god will eventually descend upon the characters, as Eshu will want to find and destroy the weapon which can sever his connection with the mortal realm.

ENCOUNTER FIVE: CIVIL WAR

At last the characters stand victorious. Kephros is dead, Eshu has been destroyed, any surviving Stygians have fled and other possible foes such as Orafa may well have been dealt with. Erishka, if she has survived to this point, proclaims that it is her destiny to restore the priesthood of Olorun in the temple as the first new priestess. It even seems like the characters may at last get the time to extract some of the treasure from Azag's tomb, if they can convince Erishka that it is theirs by divine mandate.

The characters will no sooner settle into some healing and looting than several forces from the various kings of Atlaia begin to congregate outside of the pyramid. The two lead forces are led by troops from the Yaraba and Adja. Each force is over a thousand strong and ready to fight. They hold a tense stand off as they set down camp on opposite sides of the pyramid. Within a matter of hours, smaller armies from the Atlaian kingdoms of Jubar, Thulaban and others approach, finding places to encamp near the pyramid.

Erishka will be surprised at the forces amassing outside, but also delighted that her father, King Thamaug and her brother, the Prince Ebar, lead the Adja forces. She will send a message out to her kin as well as other kings and princes that they may parley within the grand pyramid. If any of the Stygian slaves remain alive, she will use them as runners to send these messages, otherwise she will petition the characters for assistance. Erishka wants to avoid a war that will cost the lives of so many of her people and she believes that the evil which filled the temple and angered Olorun is gone, so there should be no cause for further warfare.

The princes and kings will agree and within hours all will approach with their congregations to gather inside the temple's central chamber and discuss the matter. Erishka will explain that she is now the high priestess of Olorun and that she was chosen by the orisha for this task. She will tell of the deeds of the characters and the manipulations of Eshu. She will blame Eshu for the deaths and desecration of both priests and temple. The various factions will be furious, but within a matter of minutes they will seem to calm down and be willing to discuss the terms of peace between kings. All seems like it will go well and the delegations return to their respective camps to dwell on the matters at hand.

Alas, all is not as it seems and any characters who choose to be present during this matter may attempt a Sense Motive check (DC 18). Success will reveal that some of the delegates seemed a little unsettled by Erishka's story of what happened, as if all is not going according to plan. Prince Ebar also seemed very upset, though he tried to hide it. Characters may also make a Spot check (DC 15) to notice any unusual behaviour. They will notice that Prince Ebar confers in private on two occasions with the Yaraban prince Shalabas. If the prince is confronted about his seeming displeasure at the news of what has transpired in the pyramid, he will deny anything but happiness at what his sister reports. Any displeasure he feels is over the fact that the priests suffered so needlessly under a great evil. Likewise, Shalabas will be offended at any intimation of dishonesty and both will say only that they grew up together and remain companions.

In fact, Prince Ebar is upset because he knows the truth. Ebar slew the priests himself, as did prince Shalabas of the Yaraba, for this year, when they travelled to the pyramid for their sacred duties, it was revealed by the High Priest Molun that the two were to be chosen for the priesthood. The two princes, stricken that they would be forever forced to follow the archaic sect of Olorun and renounce their royal heritage, conspired to escape their fate. The two realised that they were the first to arrive at the pyramid, so they methodically slew all of the priests and desecrated the temple, then hid any evidence of their participation and went into the jungle to bide their time and return when the other princes arrived. Unbeknownst to them, their sacrilege had been sufficient to stir the dreadful mind of Eshu from its aeons' old slumber. The ancient entity became aware, once more, of its entrapment and reached out to find the closest descendant of its ancient followers to assist in freeing it from its prison. Thus did Kephros get dragged into the tragedy.

PRINCE EBAR

Atlaian barbarian 7: **HD:** 7d10+28 (75 hit points); **Init:** +9; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 17; **Parry DV:** 19; **DR:** -; **BAB/Grp:** +7/+7; **Atk:** War spear +11/+6 melee or javelin +10/+5 ranged; **Full Atk:** War spear +11/+6 melee or javelin +10/+5 ranged; **Dmg:** War spear 1d10+4, x3, AP 5, javelin 1d8+3, x2, AP 5, range 30 ft.; **SA:** -; **SQ:** Black Kingdoms traits, Fearless, Versatility, Bite Sword, Crimson Mist, Trap Sense +2; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1) x 5 ft. (1); **SV:** Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 9, Cha 12

Skills & Feats: Bluff +11, Climb +13, Hide +8, Listen +5, Move Silently +14, Survival +6, Spot +8; Brawl,



Cleave, Diehard, Endurance, Power Attack, Uncanny Dodge, Mobility, Track

Possessions: War spear, six javelins, large shield, bandoleer, sandals, jade necklace worth 50 silver pieces.

Notes: Prince Ebar, heir to the rule of the Adja tribe, is a selfish, vile man, one who will cut the throat of any who oppose him. He fully intends to inherit the throne from his father by any means necessary, including treachery. His sister is Erishka, whom he fears, for her good nature puts him to shame.

That evening, after the parley, Ebar will slip away to see Shalabas and they will discuss what must be done to avoid any detection in this matter. Both brothers now fear possible divine retribution and suspect that it is only a matter of time before Erishka discovers what they have done. Ebar and Shalabas grow angry and suspicious of each other at this point, as Ebar suggests that they should convince their fathers to take the pyramid before any of the other Atlaian kings can react. Shalabas proclaims

that he does not trust Ebar any more, as he seems to have nicely set his sister up as the new high priestess. The two suddenly come to blows and Shalabas is killed. Ebar hides the body, dismayed at what he has done. At this point, unless characters have tried to follow the two and overhear what they are up to, then the following events will occur.

Both princes return to their tents, where they meet with their respective kings. Ebar tries to convince his father that they should take the pyramid and lay claim to it and the treasures within before one of the other kings decides to. With but a single priestess and some foreigners, the temple is not in good hands, his argument goes and they must lead an assault. King Thamaug will have none of this, however and orders his son to do nothing. Ebar grows enraged and slays his father, stabbing him in the back. When he recovers his wits, he realises what he has done and uses this to his advantage. He calls out that the Yaraba have assassinated the king and that they seek the wealth of the pyramid. The alarms are sounded and the warriors of the Adja rush to arms as Ebar leads a charge against the Yaraba. In the midst of all the fighting, Ebar will lead 50 warriors to the temple, to find his sister and slay the foreigners, as well as secure the pyramid from the other kings.

The characters are now in the middle of a full civil war, as the various factions begin bloody conflict in the middle of the night. If the characters know what's good for them they will almost certainly seek to escape with whatever loot they can carry, as foreigners rarely live long in the middle of a civil war in the Black Kingdoms. Any flight into the darkness of the jungle basin will involve at least two or three chance encounters with various war bands seeking enemies to slay.

During the bedlam of fighting, two events will occur. At some point, Artelios will become lost from the main party, as will Alam'Enshadar if he was with them. Artelios will later be found, mortally wounded with a poisoned dagger in his gut. 'They took the sceptre. The Scarlet Hand took it. Avenge me!' he will shriek and then die. He might name Alam'Enshadar specifically if he is, or was, still alive at this point. Games Masters who like keeping Artelios around can keep him alive, if only just barely, but his death serves a dramatic purpose. In any case, an inspection of his body will reveal that the mysterious sceptre, found in the tomb of Azag, is gone. The character with the highest Will rating or the highest Wisdom will develop a sudden, inexplicable compulsion to seek out the sceptre. They cannot explain the reason for this desire, except to say that it seems as if the sceptre's unknown importance is too great to fall into the hands of the Scarlet Hand. Anyone who

attempts to Track the assassin may do so (DC 10) as they have made haste and are not covering their tracks. The path will eventually lead to a different hidden mountain pass, where it meets up with several horse tracks and then heads south. Should the characters pursue, then the path will lead them directly to the tale of *The Red Citadel*.

Note that if Artelios did not have the sceptre and a character took ownership of it instead for any reason, then you may treat this encounter differently depending upon need. At some point you can say that the character in question is separated from the rest of the party and he is ambushed and knocked unconscious, but that might seem unsporting to the players. You could also reveal that the sceptre has gone missing, lifted from the characters belongings but unnoticed until the adventurers are some distance away and suddenly noticing the Alam'Enshadar is no longer with them. A third possibility is to simply let the characters walk out with it and the sceptre will be stolen from them in between this tale and the start of *The Red Citadel*, giving you an appropriate lead-in to that tale without much fuss.

AFTERMATH

Assuming the characters took flight and escaped in the night, a steady pace will get them to the narrow canyons of the guardians by dawn, through which they can make safe passage during the day. The heroes will leave, probably with as much treasure as they could fit into pockets and satchels, at least enough to sustain them at a good tavern for a time, if they could only find one in these harsh lands.

Characters who stopped Eshu should all receive a 2,000 experience point award for a job well done and they should receive an additional 250 experience points if they managed to find away to get rid of Kephros before Eshu was even awakened by the Stygian sorcerer and another 250 experience points for eliminating Orafa. An additional 100 experience points should be awarded for each major Non-Player Character that lived to the tale's end, including Artelios, Kophethu and Erishka. The average experience award should be at least 4,000, enough to advance a 4th level adventurer to 5th level. Indeed, if the reward could be even greater if the characters engaged in large number of overland encounters, or fought in almost every possible combat, as this was a tough scenario. All characters should also receive six bonus points of reputation for being involved in such a tragic and momentous event in the region of Atlaia.

The Red Citadel

ON A SWELTERING, humid night in the frontier settlement of Aurik, a band of swarthy northerners crowd into the smoky confines of a rowdy tavern. The establishment, maintained by an entrepreneurial Zamboulan, serves as a centre for foreign mercenaries, prospectors, slavers and traders to gather and gossip.

One of the rough adventurers who have entered slips a handful of silvers to the barkeep, and leans over the counter. 'We're looking for a group, which we are told can be found in these parts. They call themselves the Scarlet Hand.' The man has many scars from long years of war and conflict and his eyes have a hardened quality that sends chills down the spine of the barkeep.

The noise of the crowd drowns out most of the man's words, but the barkeep heard enough. 'Are you mad? Do not presume to enter my tavern and mention *their* name in here! I spit on those jackals and all that they stand for. I can tell you nothing of their kind.'

The adventurer's eyes bore into the heart of the barkeep and he continues unfazed. 'We are looking for a group of these curs, who likely have a finely wrought sceptre of silver and gold for sale. They robbed us, and we mean revenge upon them.' Something in the frost-rimed and steely quality of the adventurer's eyes and the intensity of his chiselled features appeals to the barkeep's sense of hope. 'They are no friends of ours, either.'

The barkeep considers the wanderer's words, and then leans in closer, to avoid being overheard. 'You didn't get this from me, but if you want the Scarlet Hand, then you must look to the south and Bzambeï and the Red Citadel. A hive of villainy and corruption, the likes of which I've not heard of outside the walls of Shadizar all jiggling on the strings of Haza's pet wizard, Quaridan. If that's the road you will be taking, then I pity you, for none who cross that demon have ever survived. My friend, may whatever gods you believe in bless you in your venture, for many of us would like to see that abominable brotherhood cast down. Here, the drinks are on me, for you and your friends. Now remember, we never spoke of this foul matter.'

The Red Citadel is the concluding adventure in the *Conan: Tales of the Black Kingdoms*.

For characters who have fought their way across these dangerous lands, through the cultists of Jullah in Zabhele and civil war and lost tombs in Atlaia, they will at last find themselves facing the agents of the Scarlet Hand and their sorcerous master.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The characters arrive in the frontier settlement of Aurik, seeking out the Scarlet Hand for purposes of revenge as well as to retrieve a mysterious sceptre from the tomb of Azag. They discover that the Scarlet Hand is an organisation of assassins and mercenaries under the employ of Quaridan, an enigmatic scholar in the service of Haza, High Clan Chief of the Wadai tribes, and is based in the grounds of Bzambeï, the Red Citadel, the ancestral halls of the High Chief.

As the characters conspire to retrieve the artefact from the clutches of the Scarlet Hand, they discover that things are not so simple as they would hope. Agents of the Scarlet Hand have lost the sceptre in a raid by rebellious Wadai warriors incited to such action by the High Chief Haza's depredations on his own people. The Wadai tribes have suffered greatly at the hands of their own High Chief as, on the advice of Quaridan, Haza has been selling vast numbers of his own people into slavery. Now the sceptre is in the hands of a powerful tribal leader, Chief Kulbahath.

The characters have stumbled upon a great uprising, and the chance to participate in the bloody assault against the blood-stained walls of the Red Citadel, destroying the Scarlet Hand and putting an end to High Chief Haza's reign of terror.

THE HEROES

The Red Citadel is written for five to six characters averaging 5th to 7th level in experience. The tale begins with the assumption that all of the characters have been given an opportunity to spend any loot and re-equip themselves after their last adventure.

The heroes are most likely the survivors of *The Ruins of Atlaia*. Adventurers who reached the end of that tale had a chance to witness first-hand the discovery and theft of the Sceptre of Azag by agents of the Scarlet Hand. It is

possible that the Scarlet Hand agent Alam'Enshadar was responsible for the theft. If so, then he may have a chance to reappear in this tale, as well.

If the characters did not play *The Ruins of Atlaia*, then the reasons for their journey to Aurik and their hatred of the Scarlet Hand can be established now. The characters were instead hired by Erithemes, the wife of the merchant Artelios from *The Shroud over Zabhela* to seek out the Scarlet Hand, reclaim the stolen sceptre which her husband procured from the region of Atlaia at great cost, and take revenge upon his assassins. She will offer very healthy compensation, up to 1,000 gold lunas to be distributed between the characters. Games Masters may devise any encounters they wish the characters to experience en route, or simply begin this scenario at the end of their journey to Aurik.

AURIK, THE WADAI AND THE RED CITADEL

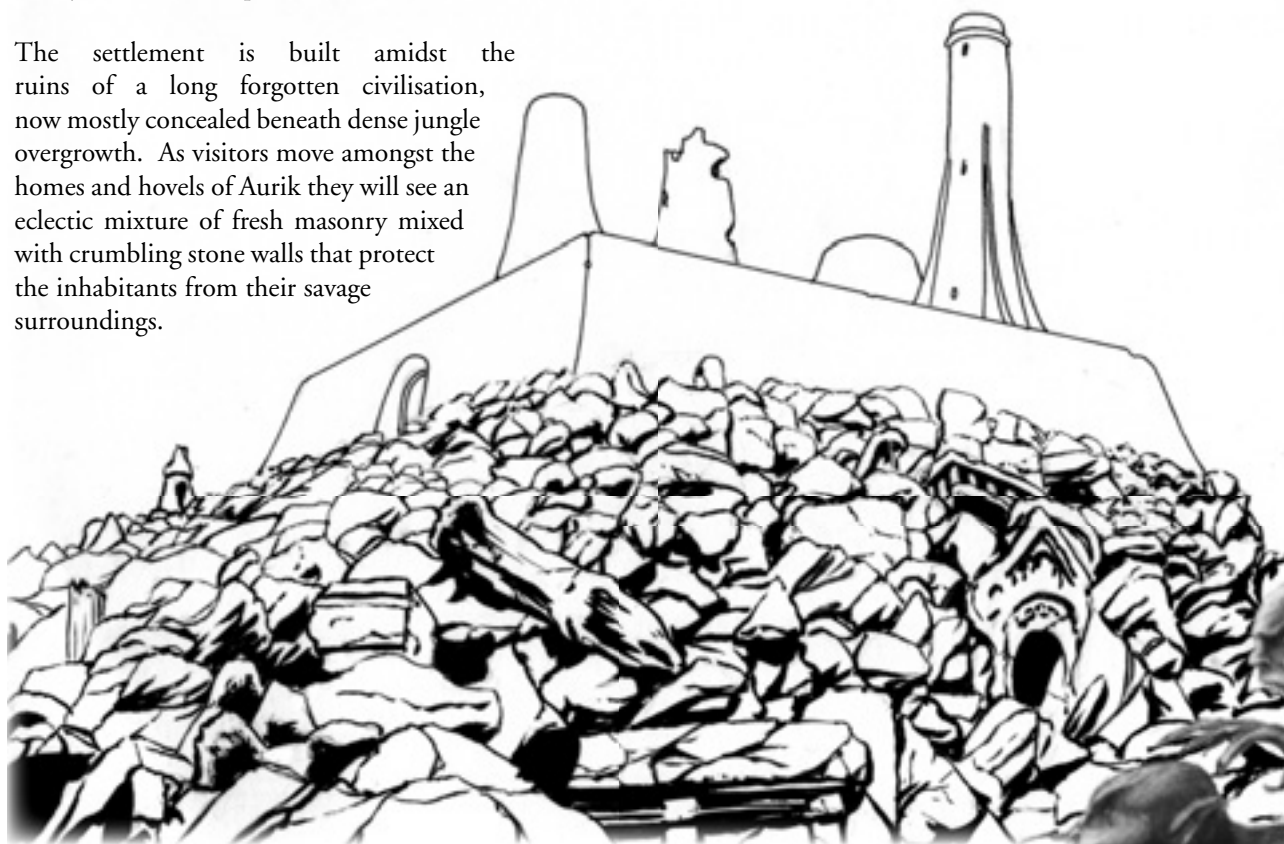
The frontier outpost of Aurik is a hot, muggy locale all year round, a great shantytown of huts, tents, and rough stone buildings quarried from the local ruins. A haven of mercenaries and merchants, slavers and explorers, Aurik serves as a way station for those daring enough to traverse these wild lands and a collection point for those unfortunate enough to have been captured here before their journey north up the river Styx.

The settlement is built amidst the ruins of a long forgotten civilisation, now mostly concealed beneath dense jungle overgrowth. As visitors move amongst the homes and hovels of Aurik they will see an eclectic mixture of fresh masonry mixed with crumbling stone walls that protect the inhabitants from their savage surroundings.

Far beyond Kush, Tombalku, or even Atlaia lurk the deep jungles of the southern Black Kingdoms. Few brave this wild frontier, for in the depths of these ancient jungles lie untold dangers, fortunes and ferocious tribesmen. One such group are the Wadai, a people of peaceful, egalitarian ways, forced into conflict by the plundering of slavers upon their people.

The Wadai are a great clan of people, comprised of countless tribes ranging from a few hundred to tens of thousands, all dwelling in the great expanse of sweltering, thick jungle just south of Aurik. The Wadai are a tall, lean, and very dark people, who favour close-cropped hairstyles, which are more comfortable in the thick humidity of the long summers. As a people, the Wadai are naturally generous, introspective, and egalitarian. Tribal chiefs are chosen from among the tribe's own number and those of knowledge and learning are viewed with great respect.

The Wadai religion is based on a form of animism, and they have a strong respect for the beasts of the land. As such, Jhebbal Sag and his kin are potent deities among the Wadai. The Wadai also revere Ajuju, Dagon, and Derketo, as well as stranger gods, such as Zhiphal of the Sun, the hideous god of pestilence and death called Drauga, and the demonic entity Thaug. Throughout the Wadai lands are secret stone monuments, with images carved in the likeness of these many gods and spirits. These shrines are



the markers by which the Wadai navigate their complex jungles, as well as the points at which they offer prayer and sacrifice.

The Wadai do not like to dwell in any one place too long, and rarely settle in one location for more than two seasons before picking up and moving on. This nomadic lifestyle has, of late, become an instrument of survival rather than an innate characteristic of the Wadai. As slaver raids become more prolific and destructive many Wadai tribes are forced out of their ancestral territories and the handful of permanent settlements and religious sites the Wadai do have. The most famous of these cultural centres is the settlement of Garundi. Within Garundi's vine-wrapped stockade walls is a township in perpetual motion, previously empty from one season to the next, Garundi now finds itself filled with tents and mud huts, as thousands of the nomadic Wadai try to escape the depredations of the Scarlet hand on their tribe. Amid the clamour of voices, one stands out, that of the chieftain Kulbahath. Angered by the inaction of the High Chief, Kulbahath rises to challenge the reign of the Wadai's divinely appointed High Chief in Bzambe.

The Red Citadel, known by the Wadai as Bzambe, rises from amidst the stones of a curious ruddy red ruin. Constructed from an unknown stone, akin to blood-stained basalt, the entire colossal structure serves as the seat of Wadai governance. Ever have the halls of the Red Citadel been home to the High Chiefs of the Wadai people, but now the large archaic ziggurat, refurbished and reinforced by its latest occupant, more closely resembles a fortress. Surrounded by an army of statues, just barely visible through the thousand years of mossy growth and vines, depicting some long-forgotten, lion-headed god, Bzambe towers over the jungle canopy.

At the centre of these outlying edifices, at the very height of the Citadel lie the halls of High Chief Haza, the current ruler of the Wadai tribes. A foreboding man, Haza seeks only to be left alone within his tower, leaving matters of governance to his mysterious advisor, the Zamoran scholar, Quaridan. Now, given absolute power by Haza, the outlander scholar ensures a flow of Wadai slaves through Aurik and north to Zamboula. Reassured by the honeyed words his advisor, Haza is oblivious to the growing unrest amongst his people as the Scarlet Hand, Quaridan's private army, continues its startlingly efficient and ruthless slaving operation. This dedicated brotherhood of knaves, assassins and villains now secrete themselves in cities and settlements across the Black Kingdoms, ready to lay

down their lives for an enigmatic master many have never met.

ENCOUNTER ONE: THE DROWNING CITY

The characters have arrived in the outpost of Aurik during a prolonged rain. Indeed, it seems as if the great drought that covered so much of the northern lands only a short while ago did not reach this far south, and here the rains seem never to stop. As the tributaries of the River Styx swell to bursting point their waters run white as they pick up speed, their currents and eddies roaring with primal fury. As the waters continue to rise many take refuge in Khitan-style stilted huts. While much of Aurik rests above the flood plain, many of its roads are washed out, and the migratory population has become temporarily besieged by the forces of nature. Tensions rise, and those who are only barely tolerant of their neighbours begin to look for an excuse to fight in the midst of the perpetual downpour.

The characters arrived only hours before the flood waters overwhelmed the main road into the city, and have taken refuge in a crowded tavern where many other foreigners have also sought respite from the downpour. Though the patrons are rowdy and boisterous, few seem interested in answering questions. Any queries about a Scarlet Hand or the sceptre will be met with scowls and warnings that speaking of the Scarlet Hand is foolish, and the characters had best keep quiet about such matters. Characters who succeed at a Gather Information check might learn some of the following bits of information:

DC 10: The Scarlet Hand exists, yes, and it is best not to speak of them. Many belong to it, and you never know who is and is not a member.

DC 15: They are enforcers, answering to one of the chiefs of the local savages. Many believe they are holed up in the Red Citadel, a haunted ruin deep in Wadai territory.

DC 20: Terrifying lights and noises have been seen and heard emitting from the towers of the Red Citadel by those brave enough to venture there. Stories of some terrible evil surround the citadel, and now even fewer dare venture into that area of the jungle.

DC 25+: The Red Citadel is home to High Chief Haza, ruler of the local Wadai peoples. His advisor, Quaridan is real power behind Haza's throne, however, and the

Scarlet Hand is said to be controlled by the High Chief's mysterious council.

Eventually, the adventurers will be directed to speak with the barkeep, a dour Iranistani named Sharam. After sensing that the characters are honest, he will relay most of the information that they may have already learned from questioning bar patrons, but will further add that he knows of a man who can get them into the keep without being detected. Watabbi, the former bodyguard of High Chief Haza, was exiled from the Wadai tribelands some years ago after questioning Quaridan's influence over the High Chief. Finding refuge in the walls of Aurik, Watabbi now serves as a guide to those brave, or foolish enough to journey into the jungles.

'He confided in me once, when he was particularly drunk, that he had discovered a hidden network of secret passages beneath the ruins on which the Red Citadel was founded. Tell him that I sent you. I am certain he will be willing to help, as he has no love for Quaridan, or his Scarlet Hand.' Sharam will explain.

The characters may seek lodging that night, as it becomes clear the rains will not let up. Sharam has a common room for all to stay in at the cost of one silver and his establishment is the closest thing the characters will find this far from civilisation. If they decide to ignore the rain and slog their way through flooded, muddy streets to find Watabbi's hut, then give any particularly observant characters a chance to make a Spot check (DC 18). If they succeed, then they notice a figure in the distance, running down the street away from Sharam's tavern. It could just be a citizen of Aurik seeking cover from the rain, but something else suggests a more sinister purpose to the man's haste. He is too far away to catch, but a Tracking roll (DC 15) will make his muddy prints easy to follow in the rain. His trail will lead to a gloomy alleyway formed between two deserted hovels.

Whether the characters follow the man to the alley, or they disregard him and head off to find Watabbi's hut or back to Sharam's tavern, they will be assaulted by a gang of thugs. If no one even noticed the man running away, then the thugs will gain surprise for the opening round of the battle, otherwise the characters may be wary of some sort of attack. If they followed the man down the abandoned alley, then the thugs will cover the exits of the alleyway, blocking their escape. Otherwise, the thugs will approach from all sides on an open street. There will be two thugs to each adventurer in the party. If the heroes chose to sleep in the tavern's common room for the night, they may hear the thugs approach over the floorboards if they make a Listen check (DC 15).

SCARLET HAND THUGS

Ghanatas thief 3; HD: 3d8+3 (22 hit points); **Init:** +6; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 14; **Parry DV:** 11; **DR:** 4; **BAB/Grp:** +2/+2; **Atk:** Ghanatas knife +4 melee; **Full Atk:** Ghanatas knife +4 melee; **Dmg:** Ghanatas knife 1d8+2, AP 1; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** Sneak Attack Style (Ghanatas knife) +2d8/+2d6; **SQ:** Trap Finding, Eyes of the Cat, Trap Sense +1; **SV:** Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 9
Skills & Feats: Balance +5, Bluff +3, Climb +3, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +8, Gather Information +4, Hide +10, Intimidate +4, Jump +3, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +5, Move Silently +9, Ride +6, Search +6, Sense Motive +1, Sleight of Hand +8, Spot +8, Survival +6, Tumble +6; Dodge, Light-Footed
Possessions: Ghanatas knife, leather jerkin

Having defeated their assailants, the heroes may wish to search their bodies, doing so they will discover that all their attackers bear a peculiar tattoo on the inside of their forearm, which may already be familiar to the characters. The tattoo depicts a strange rune, one which a Decipher Script check (DC 20) will reveal to be a mark of the ancient serpent men of Lemuria, and detailed in esoteric manuscripts from that forgotten land such as the *Codex of Xoth*. Observant characters and scholars in the group who have previously seen the tomb of Azag might start to make some connections here.

At last, the characters may resume their journey to meet with Watabbi. They will encounter no further opposition along the way.

ENCOUNTER TWO: KILLING TIME IN AURIK

Watabbi is a short, stocky native with unusually thick muscles for his kind. Now middle aged, he seems resigned to his exile in Aurik, but for the interruption of a troop of odd adventurers banging upon his quarters.

Whether the characters waited until morning or journeyed to see Watabbi in the middle of the night, it will still be raining, and the streets will now be flooded with over two feet of water. Watabbi will at first mistake them for possible customers, interested in hiring a guide to the jungle. When the characters make their real purpose known, he demands that they leave, unless they mention that Sharam sent them.

At the mention of Sharam, Watabbi will change his tone, and suggest that the characters meet him later, where it is safe. He tells them to meet him at noon of either that day or the next (depending on when the characters showed up) in the market square, likely deserted due to the rain, but will have no further discussion here, though he will not explain why.

WATABBI

Wadai barbarian 5/borderer 3; HD: 8d10+16 (60 hp); **Init:** +11; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 19; **Parry DV:** 19; **DR:** –; **BAB/Grp:** +8/+11; **Atk:** Hunting Spear +13 melee finesse; or Club +11 melee; **Full Atk:** Hunting Spear +13/+8 melee finesse; or Club +11/+6 melee; **Dmg:** Hunting Spear 1d8+3/ x2 / AP 4; or Club 1d8+3/ x2/ AP 4; **SA:** Crimson Mist, Versatility (–2 penalty), Combat Style (two-weapon combat); **SQ:** Southern Black Kingdom Tribesmen qualities, Illiterate, Fearless, Bite Sword, Trap Sense +1, Uncanny Dodge, Mobility, Favoured Terrain (forest) +1; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SV:** Fort +9, Ref +11, Will +2 (+0 vs. Terror); Str 17, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 7

Skills & Feats: Hide +17, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (geography) +4, Listen +2, Move Silently +17, Perform (dance) +8, Profession (sailor) +2, Spot +13, Survival +11; Awareness, Diehard, Endurance, Fighting-Madness, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Stealthy, Track, Two Weapon Defence

Possessions: Hunting spear, club, large black shield

Characters now realise that they have some time to kill, either getting a bit of rest or doing some scouting. They will quickly discover that moving about the city undetected is relatively easy in the floodwaters and rains, as no one else wants to be outside during the downpour.

If the adventurers are particularly daring, it is entirely possible that they will attempt to find their own way to Bzambe and into the Red Citadel. If so, then skip the meeting with Watabbi in the market square and go directly to encounter three. It is also possible that the heroes might try a more direct approach, by attempting to gain an audience with High Chief Haza and his lieutenant, Quaridan. In such a case, bear in mind that the citadel will be more heavily populated by day, and that the Scarlet Hand may have been alerted to the characters' presence by any questions they might have asked in Sharam's tavern.

Assuming the characters wait to meet Watabbi in the market place, they will find that noon in Aurik brings out a small crowd of



merchants, peddlers and customers, despite the continuing rain. Unlike other quarters of the town, the market is built on an elevated platform of crumbling stone that was once a great coliseum. The platform is high enough to keep the markets safely away from the persistent floodwaters.

Watabbi will be eating grapes and figs from one of the market stalls. When he sees the characters approach, he motions them out of the rain and under the cover of an abandoned awning. Here, he sits down and invites the adventurers to sit with him. 'We are safer here,' he says, motioning to the jabbering traders and hawkers. 'Where many watch over us. The Scarlet Hand are not so bold as to make a move in such a public place.'

As they settle down Watabbi gets right to the point. 'You must make me an offer for the information I have. Betraying High Chief Haza, his villainous sorcerer or the Scarlet Hand is certain death for me. Why would I help you?' He will await the tale of the characters. If they relay their tale to him truthfully, Watabbi will sense it, and be more willing to help. If they attempt to concoct a story, the characters will have a harder time (Bluff check opposed by Watabbi's Sense Motive check) trying to convince Watabbi to aid them. If they fail, Watabbi will refuse to aid them

any further, and the characters will have to find their own way through the jungle and into the Red Citadel.

Once Watabbi is willing to help, he will explain that there is a hidden way into the citadel, a passageway built into the ancient ruins that later architects were unaware of as they rebuilt the citadel's defences. It opens out into the heart of the citadel, bypassing all of the guarded outer walls and the inner compound. It is the safest means of entry and Watabbi's only fear of the passage is that it is said to be haunted, though he has never encountered any of the ghost that supposedly prowl the dark passages. If the characters are willing to brave these passages, Watabbi will happily lead them to the Red Citadel.

ENCOUNTER THREE: INTO THE JUNGLES

Watabbi suggests that the heroes should gather whatever supplies and trappings they need and meet him on the southern outskirts of Aurik as soon as they are ready to leave. When everybody has arrived he leads the characters into the jungle. The overgrown underbrush and monsoon weather have made the jungle trails treacherous and the guide cautions the adventurers not to wander from the trail as they head into even thicker jungle.

The characters find themselves travelling through this dangerous land, with the jabbering calls of unseen creatures on all sides. During their passage, Watabbi takes countless precautions to ensure that dangerous predators do not become aware of the party's scent or passage, but if characters do not heed his advice they will almost certainly attract unwanted attention from the local wildlife.

The characters have about 30 miles of unrelenting jungle and undulating terrain to cover before they reach the Red Citadel. For each day of travel, they can manage an average of ten miles of travel through this harsh terrain but Watabbi assures the characters they will arrive just before nightfall on the third day.

For each day spent travelling, the characters are likely to experience 1-3 events (1d4-1) from the following chart. Games Masters may choose which events occur from the following chart, or he may roll to add an element of randomisation. Descriptions of each event follow the chart.

Wild Beast Event Table

1d20	Event
1-2	War Party
3-4	Slaver Gang
5-10	Ruin
11-15	Wild Beast
16-20	Trail

EVENT DESCRIPTIONS

War Party: The characters stumble across a Wadai hunting party intent on stopping the slavers that venture out of Aurik to prey on their people. The band is relatively small. Mistaking the adventurers for slavers, the Wadai will attack.

WADAI WARRIORS

Kushite barbarian 1; **HD:** 1d10+2 (12 hit points); **Init:** +3; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 11; **Parry DV:** 13; **DR:** -; **BAB/Grp:** +1/+4; **Atk:** Hunting spear +5 melee; **Full Atk:** Hunting spear +5 melee; **Dmg:** Hunting spear 1d8+3; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** -; **SQ:** Fearless, Track, Versatility (-2 penalty); **SV:** Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 9

Skills & Feats: Bluff +1, Climb +5, Hide +3, Intimidate +3, Jump +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +3, Spot +6, Survival +4; Endurance, Fighting-Madness

Possessions: Hunting Spear, loincloth

Slaver Gang: The characters have the misfortune to stumble across a slaving party of the Scarlet Hand hunting more slaves for their latest shipment through Aurik. The band is relatively small (1d10 Scarlet Hand thugs, see pg. 57).

Ruin: The characters stumble across the crumbling ruins of some ancient city, part of some once great, and now forgotten empire. The ruins are particularly old and weathered; while no structure remains intact the scale of the ruins is truly impressive. There is a 65% chance that a family unit of 2d4 native creatures inhabit the ruins. Roll on the Animal encounters table to determine what type of creature dwells amongst the ruins.

The ruins are otherwise a safe place to camp and remain safe from predators. If the characters make a Search check (DC 15) they may find several effigies of a leonine-headed creature, doubtless a revered symbol to the builders of this once great place.

Wild Beast: The characters stumble into the path of a dangerous beast. Roll on the Animal Encounter Table to

determine what creature they must deal with. A character may attempt a Handle Animal check to calm the beasts encountered and move away, avoiding a confrontation. The DC for such a check is provided on the chart, according to the type of animal.

Animal Encounters

1d20	DC	Animal Encounter
1-4	15	Boar*
5-7	10	Monitor Lizard**
8-9	12	Grey Ape*
10-12	16	Panther*
13-15	14	Elephant*
16-19	18	Giant Spider*
20	18	Constrictor Snake (lesser Son of Set)*

* See *Conan the Roleplaying Game*, ** See pg. 78

Trail: The characters have stumbled across a well-used path. The trail will have a 50% chance of leading to a family unit of 2d4 native creatures which inhabit the ruins. Roll on the Animal encounters table to determine what type of creature the adventurers uncover, otherwise the trail will lead the party off course requiring a Survival Check (DC 15) to reorientate themselves and get back on track.

True to Watabbi's word, the party sights the towering edifice of the Red Citadel through a break in the thick jungle canopy just as the sun dips towards the horizon on the third day.

ENCOUNTER FOUR: THE SECRET ENTRANCE

The entrance to the hidden passage into the Red Citadel is actually located some distance outside Bzambe. Watabbi describes the location, a shrine to the strange, leonine gods of the forgotten city atop which the citadel now rests.

'Our passage to the shrine may be flooded,' Watabbi says, 'due to the rain and the nearby river. Once inside, we will need to look for the third statue on the right, a lion-headed woman brandishing two sickles. At the feet of the statue is a hole through which is the catch that holds the shrine's door shut.' The guide continues, 'Once the catch is released the statue can be pushed aside, revealing a narrow staircase going down.'

This passage will lead you directly into the citadel. But you must always move forward. Never deviate, it is a maze down there,'

Watabbi will assert. 'You will never be seen again if you choose to explore it.'

The journey to the shrine is not long. About two miles from Bzambe's walls, close to the banks of the river lies the crumbling ruin of which Watabbi spoke. The river has indeed burst its banks, as Watabbi had feared, and 100 feet from the temple the flood waters become more difficult to wade through as they rise above waist level. The characters will have to make Swim checks (DC 15) to progress the rest of the way without being knocked over by the current. If any character loses his footing, refer to *Conan the Roleplaying Game* for drowning rules.

Inside the shrine's walls, the current abates, but the structure remains flooded. The characters must wade around chest deep in water. Inside the temple, four crocodiles have taken refuge from the floodwaters and move about, either floating in the water or sleeping on the raised altar at the far end of the temple. The temple itself is 50 feet wide, 60 feet long, and has a partially crumbling ceiling held up by a dozen pillars to the left and right. Three large female statues with leonine heads stand watch on either side of the temple. Characters should know that the third female statue on the right is the one they seek.

CROCODILE (4)

HD: 3d8+9 (22 hp), **Init:** +5; **Spd:** 20 ft. swim 30 ft.; **DV:** 13; **DR:** 4; **BAB/Grp:** +2/+6; **Atk:** Bite +6 melee or tail slap +6 melee; **Full Atk:** Bite +6 melee and tail slap +6 melee; **Dmg:** Bite 1d8+6, tail slap 1d12+6; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** Improved Grab; **SQ:** Hold breath, low-light vision; **SV:** Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2

Skills & Feats: Hide +7, Listen +4, Spot +4, Swim +12; Alertness, Skill Focus (Hide)

Once the characters deal with the crocodiles, they can focus on opening the hidden door. Diving below the water reveals that there is, indeed, a deep hole at the foot of the statue, and if the characters have not brought a shaft, then Watabbi will use his spear butt to push into the hole and release the secret doorway's catch. However, it will become clear that, upon using the shaft to lever the statue to the side, exposing the hidden passage, the floodwaters will drain into the secret passage.

Curious characters might investigate the temple, requiring a Search check (DC 16). If they do so, they will discover two similar holes in front of the third statue. One hole can be found in front of the first statue on the left, and the other hole can be found in the centre of the old altar on the raised platform at the end of the temple.

Any experimentation will reveal that a shaft thrust into either hole will also activate a switch that unlocks a secret passage. The statue has the same problem as the other, in that opening it will flood the passage below, but the altar is elevated above the flood waters, and though it requires considerable strength (Strength check (DC 25)) to lift, no waters have risen high enough to flood the passage.

The characters are now faced only with the problem that the one passage they have found will not lead them directly into the Red Citadel. They may decide to risk it anyway, and see if they can puzzle their way through these hidden catacombs. If they decide to wait some time and see if the floodwaters abate, Watabbi will warn them that it is likely to take about two or three weeks before the flood waters recede.

Inside, the hidden passage leads down a short staircase for 15 feet, then changes to a smooth, gently sloping passage of carved red stone. The tunnel is slightly curved, and as the characters move down its length they will realise that it undulates, like the curves of a snake, making visibility ahead and behind somewhat limited. Every 30 feet or so, a side passage will appear on one side or the other. Eventually, the main passage will end in a three-way junction, with no obvious means of determining which way to go. Unless the characters choose the right exit, they will find themselves heading deeper into the catacombs, with no easy way to keep track of the direction they are going. Games Masters can have their players make a Wisdom check (DC 15) for every ten minutes they are wandering the tunnels. If someone succeeds, then they get back on track and are moving closer to the right direction. They need to make three such checks in a row before they reach their goal. Characters who picked the right hand passage at the intersection only need to make one Wisdom check to stay on track in the correct passage way.

For every ten minutes that the characters remain in the secret passages (a minimum of 30 minutes if they make all three Wisdom checks in a row) there is a 25% chance that they will attract the ghostly being which haunts these corridors. The characters will feel a strange chill in the air, and suddenly get a prickling sensation along the napes of their necks as they realise that something inhuman moves among them. When they begin to hear the strange, unutterable mutterings of some otherworldly entity, then the bodiless slimer is almost upon them. This hideous guardian, summoned long ago by Quaridan to keep these passages free of from spies and intruders will doggedly pursue the characters through the tunnels. If the characters flee deeper into the maze-like tunnel network, but still try to stay on track, have them make Wisdom checks (DC 20) during their flight. If at any time a character fails three

checks in a row, there is a 20% chance he stumbles on an exit to the passageways and can flee outside where the bodiless slimer will not pursue.

BODILESS SLIMER

HD: 8d8+8 (44 hp); **Init:** +11; **Speed:** 30 ft.; **DV:** 21; **DR:** 8; **BAB/Grp:** +8/+17; **Atk:** Slimy grapple +12 melee; **Full Atk:** Slimy grapple +12/+7 melee; **Grp Chk:** +21; **Space/Reach:** 10 ft. (2)/10 ft. (2); **SA:** Fiery breath 2d8 flame, slimy grapple 1d6 + 1d4 slime, telepathic mumblings; **SQ:** Invisibility, darkvision, slimy resilience, semi-intangible, manifest; **SV:** Fort +6, Ref +11, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 20, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 1

Skills & Feats: Climb +11, Intimidate +6, Jump +11, Listen +11, Spot +11, Survival +1; Brawl, Dodge, Toughness

Notes: The bodiless slimer inhabits underground tunnels. It is invisible, making it hard to see and fight. It is also at least partially intangible, though a strong sword will cut it easily enough. The bodiless slimer constantly drips unpleasant, sticky slime and mouths obscenities just below conscious hearing but which are audible in the back of the mind. Its breath burns enemies in combat.

The bodiless slimer usually attacks with its slimy grapple, which works as a standard grapple attack except that the thick, sticky, irritant slime coating the creature inflicts an additional +1d4 damage and gives it a +4 innate bonus to all opposed grapple checks.

Fiery Breath (Ex): As a full-round action, the bodiless slimer can breathe fire at any one opponent within 20 feet. This fiery breath deals 2d8 damage. The target gets a Reflex saving throw (DC 19) for half damage.

Invisible (Su): The bodiless slimer is always invisible.

Manifest (Su): As a standard action, the bodiless slimer can either leave Earth and return to its home place, or appear on Earth. In either case, it manifests at the new location at the end of its action.

Semi-Intangible (Su): The bodiless slimer is immune to critical hits, as it has no true form beyond a collection of ichorous strands.

Slimy Resilience (Ex): A bodiless slimmer is formed from a resilient, cobwebby stuff that springs back into place when struck, unless it can be cut right through. This makes it very difficult to harm with bludgeoning weapons, which tend to simply deform it for a moment rather than actually damaging it. Piercing and slashing weapons can cut or stab right through the cobwebby stuff, separating it or poking through into vital organs. A bodiless

slimer's Damage Reduction is doubled (16) against bludgeoning attacks of any kind.

Telepathic Mumbblings (Su): A bodiless slimer mumbles constantly and mouthlessly to itself. This muttering cannot be heard with the ears alone but is somewhat unnerving to anyone who is not somehow immune to telepathic contact, as it is heard within the very brain of all nearby. The slimer automatically affects all characters within ten feet as though with a Demoralise Opponent attempt once per round as a free action. Fortunately its Charisma is sufficiently low that most experienced enemies will be unaffected.

All characters arriving by way of the secret passages will enter the Red Citadel in the old temple (C6).

ENCOUNTER FIVE: THE RED CITADEL

The Red Citadel is an imposing structure. Observers will notice that the oddly asymmetrical fortress appears to be built entirely on the foundations of older ruins, and that only a small portion of the structure appears to be new construction. The four towers of the citadel are all fully 30 feet higher than the walls, and one particular tower stretches up for nearly 50 feet, like a great spire to the heavens. It is from this tower that strange lights can be seen flickering under the cover of night. A listen check (DC 20) will reveal the faintest of noise, as well as a mix of baying beasts and weird chanting, punctuated by the occasional scream. It is easy to see that there is something terrible going on in the tower. Even by daylight the tallest of the towers has a strange, subtly deformed quality to it, and an occasional large bird, not unlike an enormous raven, will periodically land or take off from its wide windows.

Characters who seek entry have a number of options. They could walk right up to the main gates (C1), journey through the hidden passage (C6), scale the walls under cover of darkness (C2), or try some other scheme. The citadel is well defended, as it is a true seat of power in this land. The good news is that the recent severe flooding has cut off a large contingent of the Scarlet Hand, a company of men who escorted the last major slave caravan to the eastern borders of Zembabwei. Without those extra numbers, the citadel has only one primary garrison of 100 men in its defence, along with the city garrisons.

The following description of the red citadel is written from a neutral perspective, and assumes

that the characters could have gained entry any number of ways. After the citadel's description, a discussion of some of the possible results of their invasion will be discussed.

C1: MAIN GATES

The large main gate of the citadel is a 20 foot high double door of strong wood and reinforced iron. Above, in the gatehouse, large cranks can raise and lower a second reinforcing iron-barred gate to seal off the entry. During any siege attempts on the citadel, the great double barred entry will be difficult to crack, and on entry, there are two murder holes positioned above in the gatehouse through which boiling oil and rocks can be dumped.

During the day, the entrance is wide open, and eight citadel guards stand to attention. Entry to the citadel is by permission only. Characters who wish to gain an audience with High Chief Haza must first see his advisor, Quaridan. Any character may try and gain favour with the guards by making a Diplomacy or Reputation check (DC 18). If the check succeeds, then the guards are suitably impressed, and may recognise the characters for prior deeds in Zabhela or Atlaia, which is not necessarily a good thing. They will send a messenger to the court, who will return shortly with an immediate invitation for the characters to follow him in. They will be taken to an audience with High Chief Haza and his lieutenant Quaridan in the grand court (C5).

CITADEL GUARD

Kushite barbarian 1; HD: 1d10+2 (12 hit points); **Init:** +3; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 11; **Parry DV:** 13; **DR:** –; **BAB/Grp:** +1/+4; **Atk:** Hunting spear +5 melee; **Full Atk:** Hunting spear +5 melee; **Dmg:** Hunting spear 1d8+3; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** –; **SQ:** Fearless, Track, Versatility (–2 penalty); **SV:** Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 9; **Skills & Feats:** Bluff +1, Climb +5, Hide +3, Intimidate +3, Jump +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +3, Spot +6, Survival +4; Endurance, Fighting-Madness; **Possessions:** Hunting Spear, loincloth

C2: THE FORTRESS WALLS

The sheer walls of the citadel are 30 feet high. Each of the parapets at the top is guarded by patrols of 20 citadel guards by day. At night, smaller patrols of four guards are spread out among the four primary lengths of the citadel's walls.

Characters who seek to scale the walls by day will surely be spotted. At night, the darkness will aid climbers in any efforts to hide while climbing. The wall will require

two Climb checks (DC 25) to climb with no rope. If the characters manage to lodge a rope with a grappling hook at the top of the wall (guards may make a Listen check (DC 15) to hear this) then the Climb check's DC is reduced to 15.

The far side of the wall is not so difficult to pass, as each wall has a staircase that runs down to the courtyard below the inner compound.

C3: THE OUTER COMPOUND

The main gates open into the outer compound, an open area between the outer walls and the citadel in the centre. The outer compound includes several simple structures, serving as food storage, stables, servants' quarters and barracks for the outer defence. During the day, this area will be bustling with activity (though heavy rain may send everyone rushing inside) and the best way to get through undetected is to blend in and look inconspicuous (Disguise check (DC 20)). At night, it will be almost entirely deserted except for one patrol of six guards who take a 20 minute patrol around the perimeter of the outer compound. Entering any of the buildings could lead to sundry unexpected encounters, but any guards the characters meet will try to shout out an alert on the first round of combat.

C4: THE INNER COURTYARD (1st FLOOR)

The citadel is an open complex, a building in which the interior of the structure opens up to a grand courtyard, the inner compound. Here can be found a lush garden of local and imported plants, a fresh water fountain built around the restored statues of the ancient city, and numerous pleasant garden paths through which guests may travel. On sunny days with no rain, High Chief Haza chooses to lounge here. When such is impossible, they head up the stairs to the grand double doors at the far side of the courtyard to the inner courts (C5).

At any given time, a number of Haza's many wives and concubines will be relaxing in the courtyard. Even on a rainy day, someone will likely be here under an enclosed gazebo, meditating upon the weather. Four of Quaridan's thugs guard the courtyard at all times (see pg. 57 for details).

Two double staircases along the inner walls from the courtyard lead up to the grand court on the second floor. On the south wall of the courtyard is an entrance to the garrison headquarters (C8). To the west and east of the

courtyards are open columned passageways that feature such extravagant niceties as a disused fountain, guest quarters and dining rooms for the servants and guards.

C5: THE GRAND COURT (2nd FLOOR)

The entire second floor is the domain of the grand court of High Chief Haza. He can be found here during the day, whether he is entertaining guests, attending to civic affairs, or simply relaxing for a meal and entertainment. At night, the court might be occupied during a particularly lengthy evening of celebration, but most guests will retire to their own quarters. At least ten guards and four thugs will be stationed here at all times.

If the characters have arrived unbidden during the night, then they only have the permanent guards stationed here to worry about. Those guards will signal an alarm as quickly as possible, to summon reinforcements should any intruders be detected.

During the daytime hours, if the characters gain an audience with the High Chief, they will be taken here. Haza is unaware of the interests of the characters, but if word is out that they are here to deal with the Scarlet Hand, then Quaridan will come down from his tower to be present. Haza has little patience for fools and time-wasters, so he will dismiss the characters if they fail to make a quick and strong case for his attention. He will consider any talk against him or Quaridan to be treasonous and will order the adventurers arrested and confined. If they are imprisoned, the characters will be taken to the prison tower (C10), held for a day, and then escorted to the death pits.

Quaridan, should he be present if the characters are brought to the court, will take a keen interest in them. He will ask them some questions, either to unnerve them and tear away any disguises they have attempted, or to catch them out in any false stories they may have concocted. If they are straightforward and accuse him of complicity in the theft of the sceptre, Quaridan will laugh, exclaiming that any tales of the Scarlet Hand or their work are those of superstitious locals, and that he has never seen or heard of the mysterious sceptre the adventurers seek. The characters will get the distinct impression that if Quaridan was not worried about them before, he has dire plans for them now.

If the characters know the names of one or more Scarlet Hand agents (such as Anubar or Elam'Anshadar should

they be alive up to this point), Quaridan will share with them the knowledge that a caravan headed to Bzambe from the north did, indeed, have one or more of these gentlemen attached to it, but recent reports indicate that caravan was raided by rebellious Wadai warriors seeking to overthrow the high Chief, and all members of the caravan were either slain or taken to Garundi, to the west.

‘Two days past,’ Quaridan will explain, ‘rebellious Wadai messengers from Garundi came with their threats. His most austere highness, The High Chief, has told them that the survivors of their raid would only be released in exchange for Wadai slaves held in Aurik. His most divine High Chief was unconcerned by the loss of this caravan or the idle threats of upstarts, of course, thus he had the rebel messengers subdued and sent to the prison tower.’

If the characters have maintained good relations with Haza and Quaridan, they might attempt a Diplomacy check (DC 20) to request access to the Wadai prisoners. If the check succeeds, then Quaridan will agree, and invite the characters to stay as guests for the remainder of the day until court ends. At that time, Haza and his entourage will go with the characters to the prison tower (C10) to question the messengers. Once they are questioned, and admit to the location of the sceptre, then Quaridan will order them executed, though another Diplomacy check (DC 30) will convince him to stay the execution and lower their sentences to slavery.

High Chief Haza will want to know more about this sceptre, and why it seems so important. He will still not react well to any mention of the Scarlet Hand, until he is certain he is alone with the characters. Haza will then ask the characters if they would like to dine with him that evening. Assuming they accept, the High Chief will take them to his own private quarters with his personal armed guard, but Quaridan will not be present. The High Chief will offer the characters a large chest of ancient gold coins (worth nearly 1,000 gold lunas) if they would be willing to seek out the Wadai rebels and retrieve the sceptre for him. In private, he will explain to them that he has also heard tales of the Scarlet Hand, and is sure they are very dangerous, but he will not hear any talk of any connection to the Red Citadel. He does believe that the sceptre has power, possibly even power enough to throw down the rebels and destroy the Scarlet Hand forever. Thus, if the heroes play their cards right, it is possible they will leave the citadel in the service of the High Chief.

C6: THE OLD TEMPLE (OUTER COMPOUND)

The old temple is a curious relic from the ruins atop which the citadel was built. The round building is not unlike the temple by the riverbanks from which the characters may have discovered the catacomb entrance. Indeed, if they arrive here via the catacombs, they will find the exit to the old temple is by means of a hinged statue that can be pushed aside using firm stone handholds below, exposing a trap door in the floor. When the statue is replaced, it locks in position from outside, and once again a lever must be inserted into a hole at the base of the statue to reopen it.

Quaridan, at High Chief Haza’s request, has refurbished the temple. For many generations the Red Citadel has seen many different High Chiefs, but the temple has remained curiously untouched. Quaridan has nevertheless replaced the altar with a shrine to less traditional gods. Few actually come here, however, and there is little chance of anyone being present when the characters emerge.

C7: PRIVATE QUARTERS (3RD FLOOR)

The third floor of the citadel is a lush, relaxing collection of private suites, occupied by High Chief Haza’s personal complement of concubines and slaves. Haza himself dwells in his own tower (C9). There are almost never any guards on this floor, although a summoning bell can be found for anyone who needs it. During the day there will be a bustle of activity among residents and guests of the compound. During the night, all will be in slumber, and adventurers prowling about will require Move Silently checks (DC 10) to avoid accidentally alerting the chamber’s occupants.

The third floor is the only level from which any of the four towers can be reached. If these doors are found locked, then an Open Lock check (DC 22) will be necessary to open them without keys. High Chief Haza’s tower (C9) will always be locked, and only he has a key. Quaridan’s tower (C12) is curiously unlocked. A wary adventurer might do well to consider why before entering. The prison tower (C10) is locked, but any guard is likely to have a key. Finally, the abandoned tower (C11) remains unlocked.

C8: THE GARRISON HEADQUARTERS (1ST FLOOR)

The bulk of the citadel’s guards are stationed here when off duty, as their service to the High Chief causes them to leave their homes forever. As a rule, at least 50 men will



be ready in the garrison to defend the citadel and their High Chief. During the daytime, most of the guards in the garrison will be on duty. At night, most will be asleep, with the exception of the standard patrols at the gates and on the walls.

C9: THE TOWER OF THE HIGH CHIEF

The second tallest tower, Haza has made this his personal study and quarters. It contains spacious windows, all facing out over the citadel. There are four floors. The first contains a recreation room in which two large mute guards are permanently stationed. The second floor is a study, filled with various books, maps and various fine paintings. The third floor is Haza's bedchamber, and he usually has one or two of his concubines with him at night. The final floor is an observation room, from which he can survey the entire city. None of his floors have windows that face Quaridan's tower, which can only be seen from the rooftop. Haza himself will be here in the evening.

HAZA'S PERSONAL GUARDS [2]

Kushite barbarian 6; HD: 6d10+11 (44 hit points); **Init:** +6; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 15; **Parry DV:** 16; **DR:** -; **BAB/Grp:** +6/+10; **Atk:** War spear +10/+5 melee; **Full Atk:** War spear +10/+5 melee; **Dmg:** War spear 1d10+4, x3 AP2; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** -; **SQ:** Bite Sword, Crimson Mist, Diehard, Endurance, Fearless, Mobility, Track, Trap Sense +2, Uncanny Dodge, Versatility (-2 penalty); **SV:** Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 10

Skills & Feats: Bluff +6, Climb +6, Hide +5, Intimidate +6, Jump +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +7, Survival +5; Endurance, Fighting-Madness, Iron Will, Power Attack

Possessions: War Spear, loincloth

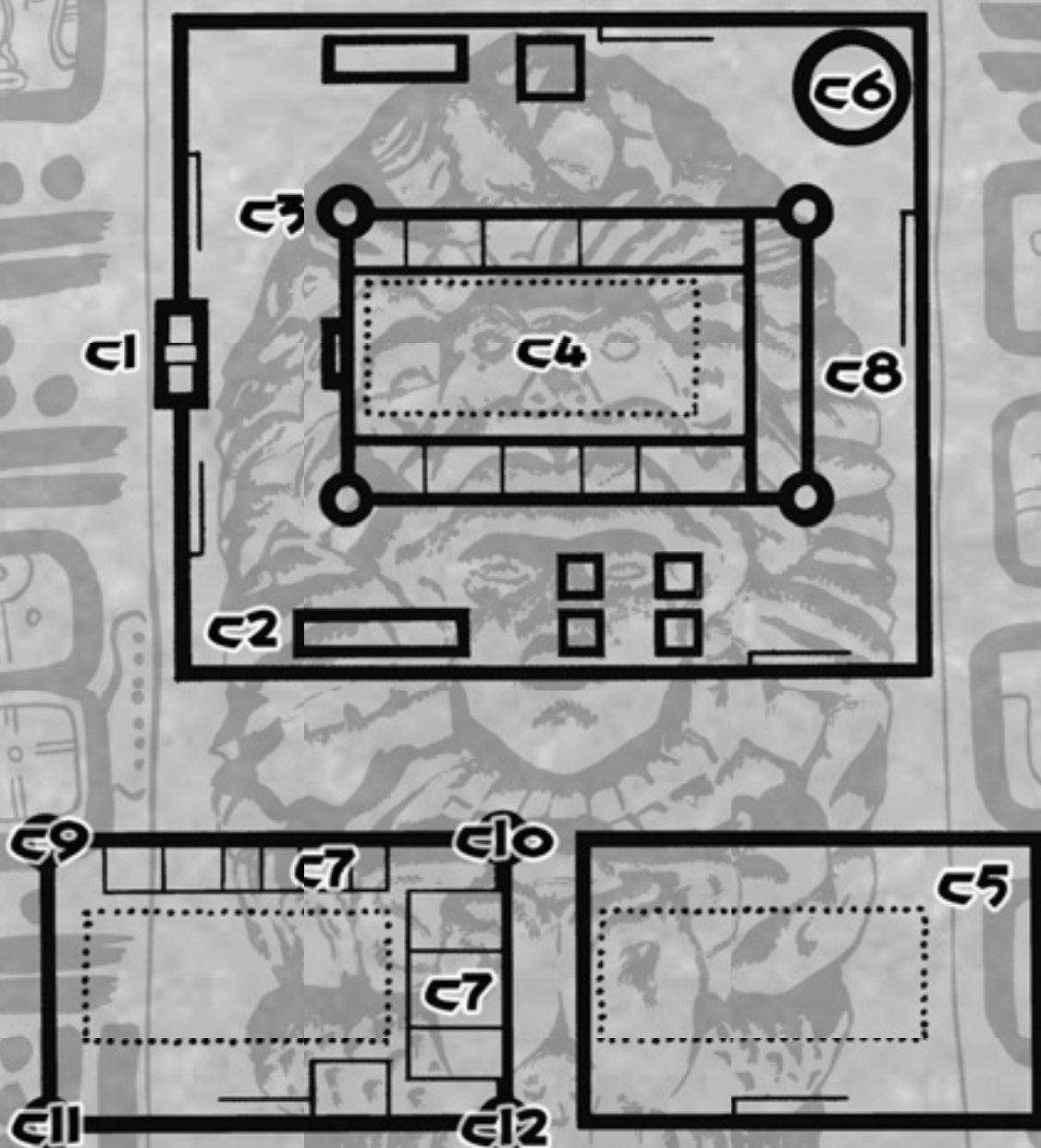
C10: THE PRISON TOWER

The shortest of the four towers, the prison tower is a squat, solid affair with no windows and only one entrance. It is almost impossible to escape from, and the three floors have been turned into compact prison cells. A handful of political rivals, would-be assassins, and some whose reason for incarceration has been forgotten are all held here on Quaridan's orders. There is always one of Haza's personal guards here, who acts as a prison warden. He has a ring of keys that open the cells tied about his neck.

The third floor of the prison tower is where the Wadai messengers are being held. The leader of the three is named Runhab. He is an older man, and the one who delivered the Wadai rebels' demands to the Red Citadel. All three have been beaten and battered by the prison guards. Any characters who are captured and imprisoned will be placed in this cell, giving them a chance to talk to the Wadai.

Runhab will try to assess the trustworthiness of the characters who speak with him. If they are honest with him and speak only the truth, then Runhab will tell them his tale. He will speak of his leader, the chieftain Kulbahath, and how they were but a handful of warriors a few weeks ago, standing against Quaridan's slavers. They raided a caravan from the north and took many foreigners hostage. Among the foreigners they found a beautiful sceptre, cast of silver and gold. It called to the chieftain, and when Kulbahath picked it up, he said it spoke to him, and told him what must be done. He began to journey from village to village, tribe to tribe, telling the Wadai that that Quaridan's hold over their High Chief and his slaving raids must end. He called upon all able warriors to gather

THE RED CITADEL



at Garundi, the Wadai holy place, to create an army to wipe the influence of the white man from Wadai lands. The elders of the community urged peaceful solutions first, and so Kulbahath bade Runhab to go to Bzambe and offer the release of prisoners in exchange for the cessation of Scarlet Hand raids. The High Chief, under advice for Quaridan, locked them away as traitors and usurpers.

The Wadai would like to escape and return to Garundi. They will tell those they trust of their plans, and offer to take the characters with them. Unless the characters offer a brilliant escape plan, however, the Wadai prisoners will have no way of freeing themselves.

C11: THE ABANDONED TOWER

When Quaridan first came to the Red Citadel many years ago he occupied this tower. His early experiments in summoning were uncontrolled and, after a terrible accident that nearly cost him his life and immolated the tower, it has remained untouched and uninhabited. The four floors inside are gutted by fire, so hot it seems, that even the stone melted, leaving it a great hollow of slag and charred remains.

Some feel an unnerving presence in the tower, as if an unseen entity still dwells there. There are tales from years ago that tell of a guardsman and an errant concubine stealing away to the tower for a tryst, only to be found brutally murdered and ripped apart the following morning. Despite these tales, any characters sneaking into the tower and looking for a safe place to hide will find that this is the place. The guards will not even do more than glance inside, and only if they are specifically searching for someone.

C12: QUARIDAN'S TOWER

Although this is the tallest tower, it has only three floors. The middle and top floor both have abnormally tall ceilings (about 15 feet). Quaridan will be here most of the time unless he has a specific reason to attend to business elsewhere in the citadel. The first floor of this tower is his private study and bedchamber. He is attended to at all times by a huge Wadai slave raised from birth to be utterly loyal to him alone (use statistics for Haza's Personal Guard with maximum hit points (71 hp)).

Quaridan will usually be found on the second floor of his tower, where a great laboratory has been established, positioned around a stone pentagram in the centre of the floor. The room also contains a large cobra, a personal pet of Quaridan, which will be slithering about, trying to hide and position itself behind a suitable target.

LARGE COBRA

HD: 3d8 (13 hp), **Init:** +10; **Spd:** 20 ft.; **DV:** 14; **DR:** 4; **BAB/Grp:** +2/+6; **Atk:** Bite +4 melee; **Full Atk:** Bite +4 melee; **Dmg:** Bite 1d6 plus poison; **Space/Reach:** 10 ft. (2)/5 ft. (1); **SA:** Poison; **SQ:** Scent; **SV:** Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills & Feats: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +8, Listen +5, Spot +6, Swim +8; Improved Initiative

Quaridan will not be happy with any unwanted intruders in his private sanctum, but he is fully prepared for them nonetheless. The moment he is alerted to any intrusion on the first floor, Quaridan will seal the trapdoor over the staircase leading into this chamber with a heavy bolt lock (Strength check (DC 25) to break) and prepare to cast his *shape-shifter* spell. Once cast, he transforms into an immense black raven and descends to the lower wing of the citadel before turning back into a human to gather a large number of loyal citadel guards and Scarlet Hand thugs to return and deal with his assailants.

QUARIDAN

Zamoran scholar 12; **HD:** 12d6+24 (50 hit points); **Init:** +4; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 17; **Parry DV:** 14; **DR:** –; **BAB/Grp:** +9/+9; **Atk:** Stiletto +9 melee; **Full Atk:** Stiletto +9/+4 melee; **Dmg:** 1d4, x2, AP 1 plus poison; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **Magic Attack Bonus:** +8; **Base PP:** 13; **SQ:** Zamoran Traits, Background (pact), Knowledge is Power; **SV:** Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +14; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 19, Wis 18, Cha 15
Skills & Feats: Appraise +16, Bluff +15, Craft (alchemy) +16, Decipher Script +16, Forgery +10, Gather Information +12, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Knowledge (history) +18, Knowledge (local) +16, Knowledge (religion) +19, Listen +16, Move Silently +13, Perform (ritual) +10, Search +15, Sense Motive +14; Iron Will, Opportunistic Sacrifice, Ritual Sacrifice, Sleep Mastery, Tortured Sacrifice

Sorcery Styles: Divination, Necromancy, Oriental Magic, Summoning; **Spells:** *Astrological prediction, mind reading, visions, calm of the adept, darting serpent, shape-shifter, warrior trance, master words and signs, demonic pact, summon demon, greater demonic pact, summon elemental, bind demon*, raise corpse, death touch, agonising doom, immortality*, witch's vigour**

*Denotes Spells from *The Scrolls of Skelos*.

Possessions: Quaridan has many possessions in his tower, but he carries a stiletto, small tome of ritual chants, and vial with three doses of lethal poison that he can apply to his stiletto (Fortitude save (DC 15) or death in 1d6 rounds; 1d6 Constitution damage if save



is successful). He wears a variety of jewellery worth approximately 100 gold lunas.

Notes: Quaridan was forced out of his native land many decades ago, after slaying his own master to steal forbidden lore. He wandered east, to Vendhya and beyond in search of strange magic and lore, and eventually found what he sought, including the powers of transformation. He eventually returned west, where he served for a time in Iranistan as an advisor and court wizard before his notoriety for summoning demons had him cast out of the palace. He travelled westward until he found Bzambe's enigmatic ruins atop which the Red Citadel was built. Here he offered his service to a naïve and newly-appointed young chieftain. To insure his own power base, he recruited mercenaries and assassins, buying their loyalty with money and thus was the Scarlet Hand born.

The third level of Quaridan's tower is a virtual aviary, in which numerous messenger birds, mostly ravens, are perched and study any intruders carefully before flying away to find their master, should he not be in his tower when it is entered.

APPROACHING THE CITADEL

Characters have a lot of options in how to confront Quaridan, High Chief Haza and their many minions. Without being able to

inspect everyone for tattoos marking them as members of the Scarlet Hand, it will be impossible to determine who does and does not belong to the secret order. Quaridan will be difficult to catch due to his sorcery and High Chief Haza is essentially an innocent pawn.

If characters get an opportunity to speak directly with Quaridan and he decides that they are sincere in seeking out the sceptre, he will be willing to tell them that there were agents of the Scarlet Hand in the caravan which the Wadai raided, and that he is certain that the Wadai rebels have taken the sceptre. He will deny any complicity in the theft of the sceptre or any animosity towards Artelios, but Sense Motive checks opposed by his Bluff check will allow especially astute characters to see through this lie.

Characters who have infiltrated the citadel during the day may have an opportunity to gather information from guards and captured slaves. Likewise, should they gain entry to the courts, they will have ample time to speak with various subjects in attendance to High Chief Haza during intermissions and after they have been dismissed. The results of a Gather Information check could include:

DC 10: Some of the Wadai tribes rebelling against the Red Citadel raided a caravan north of here. High Chief Haza has no time for the pleas of these whining dogs though, and they will soon be put down.

DC 15: There was something important to Quaridan on that caravan and he has sent two expeditions into the Wadai tribelands to find it. The Wadai now gather under a powerful lesser chieftain in Garundi. This Kulbahath, is said to be so charismatic that thousands of Wadai rebels flock to Garundi to join his insidious uprising. His messengers came to offer the prisoners of their raids in exchange for freeing the captured Wadai troublemakers. They were hauled off to the prison tower, to await execution.

DC 20+: Yes, many of Quaridan's men bear such a mark, and it will be those men who shall deliver us from the usurpers of High Chief Haza's throne. Many of these men were dispatched to seek out an object stolen from us by the Atlaians long ago. The Wadai prisoners claim to know of this artefact.

By now, if the characters have not been taken prisoners themselves, or if they have not discovered that the Wadai prisoners might know something, then the Games Master should have Quaridan's Scarlet Hand thugs drag the party before the High Chief to be tried as spies and would-be usurpers before being dragged to the prison tower.

ENCOUNTER SIX: GARUNDI

Characters who chose the diplomatic route may have befriended High Chief Haza and now work for him. Stealthy adventurers may have invaded the citadel under cover of night or through the haunted passages, and have possibly stumbled on the Wadai prisoners, learning of their tale. Characters who angered the High Chief or his advisor, Quaridan, and were imprisoned may have had a more direct route to the Wadai in the prison tower, and could have subsequently escaped with them in a jailbreak. It is always possible that none of this happened, and the characters deduced that Garundi was a good place to go based on rumour and conjecture.

The journey to Garundi takes two days and is located to the west, deep in Wadai territory. As the characters journey towards the Wadai holy place, they will notice that the rains are easing and little by little the flood waters are receding, though doubtless routes out of Aurik will still be under water, their current trail is unimpeded.

As the first rays of light break through the jungle canopy on the second day, the party will be ambushed by a large force of Wadai warriors; 200 tribal warriors surge out of the jungle around the trail. If the characters have any Wadai with them, such as Runhab from the prison tower, then the attackers will appear cautious, and refrain from attacking until they can establish why the captured messenger is with the party. Runhab or any other Wadai allied with the characters will explain that the characters are allies of the Wadai, or at least a neutral party, before being welcomed and escorted to Garundi.

If the characters do not have any Wadai allies and act hostile on the opening round when the warriors reveal themselves, then a battle is likely to ensue. The Wadai, though relatively weak warriors have overwhelming numbers, nearly 200, in fact. They will fight to subdue the characters initially, but will seek to kill their foes if it becomes evident that there is no other recourse. If the characters are unwilling to surrender or flee, then this could be their last stand. The Wadai will break and run if they lose over three quarters of their number (see pg. 59 for Wadai warrior details).

Whether as prisoners, guests or corpses, the characters will at last arrive in Garundi by day's end. Garundi is a large, sprawling collection of mud huts and tents surrounding a stone temple. The whole area is surrounded by a simple wooden stockade, and is alive with thousands of Wadai men, women and children, all assembling from dozens of

tribes across the land, all seeking refuge from the Scarlet Hand.

The characters will be taken directly to the temple, where they are taken to the top of the edifice. At the summit of a great staircase rests a huge, if simple throne, from which Kulbahath presides over the religious centre of his people. Surrounded now not by priests but warriors, he looks as regal as any great chieftain of the Black Kingdoms. In his left hand is a war spear, and in his right he holds the gold and silver Sceptre of Azag. Kulbahath has, indeed, claimed the sceptre from the raided caravan.

KULBAHATH

Wadai Barbarian 10; HD: 10d10+28 (75 hit points); **Init:** +9; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 18; **Parry DV:** 24; **DR:** –; **BAB/Grp:** +10/+10; **Atk:** War spear +18 melee or javelin +11 ranged; **Full Atk:** War spear +18/+13 melee or javelin +11/+6 ranged; **Dmg:** War spear 1d10+9, x3, AP 8 or javelin 1d8+3, x2, AP 8, range 30 ft.; **SA:** –; **SQ:** Southern Black Kingdoms traits, Fearless, Versatility, Bite Sword, Crimson Mist, Trap Sense +2; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1) x 5 ft. (1); **SV:** Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +6; Str 22, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 16

Skills & Feats: Bluff +10, Climb +10, Hide +10, Intimidate +9, Listen +10, Move Silently +10, Perform (dance) +5, Survival +10, Spot +10, Swim +10; Diehard, Endurance, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Uncanny Dodge, Mobility, Track, Weapon Focus (war spear); **Reputation:** 35; **Leadership:** 24 (34 w/*Sceptre of Azag*)

Possessions: War spear, sheathe of ten javelins, a large shield, sandals, headdress worth 100 silvers, Sceptre of Azag.

Notes: Kulbahath was chosen by the priesthood of the Wadai to be the sacred chieftain of the most holy place of the Wadai, Garundi. He has been a ruler for many years, and has watched his people diminished by the constant slave raids of the foreign devils. At last he has found something that empowers him to take a stand. Through the spirit voice of the sceptre, Kulbahath will rise and cast these white devils out of his land.

If the characters are presented as allies or a neutral party, then Kulbahath will welcome them to Garundi, and inform them that he is preparing to purge these lands of the influence of Quaridan and his slavers. When he learns of the fate of his messengers (either from the characters or a third party) he will roar with anger and thrust the sceptre above his head. 'My brothers!' Kulbahath calls to the thronging mass of eager onlookers. 'The gods speak to me, and they tell me that the time to strike and



destroy the foreign devils who have plagued our people for so long is now!' The chieftain's words invoke a flurry of activity amongst the gathered Wadai. If the characters ask, Kulbahath may share with them that he hears voices, and that the sceptre allows him to speak with the gods. Whether this is true or not, no one can say for certain. What is true is that his innate charisma and leadership seems to be magnified by the sceptre, and he has amassed an army unlike any the Wadai have ever seen before.

If the characters are presented as enemies and prisoners, then Kulbahath will proceed with the same speech as above, but then have them hauled off to a pit, where they are held. In the pit can be found the caravaneers, as well as the Scarlet Hand agents who stole the sceptre. This will include Elam'Anshadar if he stole the sceptre at the end of *The Ruins of Atlaia*, as well as Anubar and Renik, the Bamulan twins from *The Shroud over Zabhela* if they are still alive. Characters may finally get a chance at some old fashioned revenge. There will be a total of five Scarlet

Hand thugs in the pit as well as any of the aforementioned surviving agents. Characters in this fix might find it tempting to see if they can escape and beat the Wadai war party to the Red Citadel in time to raise an alarm about the impending attack.

Even if the characters are on friendly terms with the Wadai, they may be able to ask about the

prisoners, and Kulbahath will be happy to show them who he has in the pit. If the characters express a particular interest in any of them, Kulbahath will grant them access to that specific prisoner.

The remainder of the day will be spent preparing for war, as the Wadai take up arms and assemble to march on Bzambe. Kulbahath will ask the characters if they are willing to fight against the evil of the Red Citadel. If they agree, then he will provide them with whatever arms the Wadai can muster, mostly war spears, javelins and large shields. That night the Wadai throw a great party, full of feasting, wenching and revelry for the warriors who are about to liberate their land. At dawn, the war party departs. The Wadai move swiftly, but will time their attack for nightfall two days hence.

ENCOUNTER SEVEN: THE FALL OF THE RED CITADEL

Two days later, just before midnight, the Red Citadel of Bzambe lies exposed to an army of more than 600 Wadai warriors. Moving stealthily in the night, the great army descends upon the citadel in a fury of bloodshed. On this night, the Wadai reap revenge for decades of slavery.

The Red Citadel's total forces number less than 100, with perhaps 1,000 citizens left to their own defences. The Red Citadel itself will have no more than 50 warriors on duty this night. It seems that the city is poised on the brink of disaster.

There are four key events that will transpire over the course of the midnight siege. Characters may well manage to participate in all four events described as follows. If they are unable to be at any specific event, Games Masters should relay the results through the Non-Player Characters that were present, or allow them to try and hunt down the information if they are interested.

EVENT ONE: SNEAKING INTO THE RED CITADEL

If the characters are with the Wadai, then Kulbahath has them moving with him and his contingent. He is planning to storm the Red Citadel personally. If the characters have previously discovered the secret entrance via the catacombs and are willing to share that secret, then Kulbahath will take them up on the offer, sending 100 men with them to enter the citadel in secret and throw open the gates from within. Refer to the details in encounter three for

their return trip, and note that the floodwaters have not yet receded. Characters passing through the catacombs a second time gain a +5 circumstance bonus to their Wisdom checks when finding their way back through the maze.

Refer to the description of the citadel in encounter three for the layout of the complex and the initial disbursement of citadel troops at night. As soon as an alarm is raised and the word gets out, the garrison will be awakened and to arms as quickly as possible and such alarms will likely warn the entire city. The characters and the Wadai will have to storm the gatehouse (C1) to secure the winches necessary to raise the portcullis. For dramatic purposes, you should let the characters do this while the Wadai warriors fight the good fight against the citadel guard dispatched to stop them.

It is possible that the characters never found the citadel's secret entrance, or choose not to mention it. In such a case, then the only real option for gaining entry to the citadel is by scaling the walls, which Kulbahath and his men will gladly volunteer to do. The characters may join them, of course.

EVENT TWO: THE CHARGE

Once the first alarm is sounded, the Wadai forces will move as quickly and quietly as possible into the citadel. Bzambe has no outer wall for defence, relying instead on the protection of the citadel. The Wadai slaughter of foreigners will begin in earnest. The Wadai will gain an initial surprise, cutting through late night stragglers and drunken louts easily, then breaking into houses and killing any foreigners they find, though they will leave children and women unhurt.

The guards rushing to the defence of the city from the main garrison will at first be disorganised, then eventually head deeper into the citadel as they seek refuge against the Wadai attackers. By the time they amass at the gates, the first Wadai warriors will be rushing to invade the citadel.

EVENT THREE: HIGH CHIEF HAZA FALLS

During the siege of the citadel, Haza will try to rally his men to the defence of the inner compound. This will be an opportunity for one or more of the characters to confront him. If for some reason none of the characters seek to battle Haza, then he will be found slain in his private chambers (C7).

HIGH CHIEF HAZA

Wadai barbarian 5/noble 5; HD: 5d10+5d8 (50 hp); **Init:** +8; **Spd:** 30 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 18; **Parry DV:** 21; **DR:** –; **BAB/Grp:** +8/+12; **Atk:** Hunting Spear +14 melee finesse; or Club +11 melee; **Full Atk:** Hunting Spear +14/+9 melee finesse; or Club +11/+6 melee; **Dmg:** Hunting Spear 1d8+4/ x2 / AP 5; or Club 1d8+4/ x2/ AP 5; **SA:** Crimson Mist, Versatility (-2 penalty), +1 special regional bonus to hunting spear; **SQ:** Southern Black Kingdom Tribesmen qualities, Illiterate, Fearless, Bite Sword, Trap Sense +1, Uncanny Dodge, Mobility, Title, Rank Hath Its Privileges, Wealth, Special Regional Feature +1, Social Ability (*savoir-faire*), Lead By Example +2; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SV:** Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +5 (+3 vs. Terror); Str 18, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 16

Skills & Feats: Bluff +10, Diplomacy +8, Hide +13, Intimidate +14, Listen +3, Move Silently +13, Perform (dance) +18, Profession (sailor) +3, Sense Motive +7, Spot +11, Survival +9; Awareness, Endurance, Fighting-Madness, Leadership, Persuasive, Power Attack, Stealthy, Track

Possessions: Headdresses with ear guards made of monkey-skin, hunting spear, club, large black shield

EVENT FOUR: KULBAHATH IS STRICKEN

The final major event will be Kulbahath's tragic fall. From the heights of the great tower of the Red Citadel a large raven will descend and attack Kulbahath. The claws of the avian beast are laden with Quaridan's terminal poison (see pg. 67 for details). As Kulbahath succumbs to the poison the creature snatches up the sceptre, feeling the eerie power of the artefact that contains the soul of the ancient emperor Azag, before returning to the top of Quaridan's tower. There the Raven reverts to human form, revealing it to be none other than Quaridan himself.

The characters should be given this opportunity to defeat Quaridan. He is a tough opponent, made tougher by his minions; two ravens which transform into two black fiends at his bidding. Quaridan will be overcome with the raw power of the sceptre, and his grasp of it will have an immediate effect on the forces of the citadel, which begin to fight more valiantly and turn the tide against the Wadai. The characters must defeat Quaridan to insure that the Wadai win the day and that the Red Citadel falls. He will also have at least a dozen of the Scarlet Hand waiting at his tower entrance to defend him while he works his dark sorcery.

BLACK FIEND (2)

HD: 6d8+12 (39 hp); **Init:** +7; **Spd:** 40 ft.; **Dodge DV:** 17; **DR:** –; **BAB/Grp:** +6/+8; **Atk:** Gore +9 melee; **Full Atk:** Gore +9 melee and 2 claws +6 melee; **Dmg:** Gore 1d8+1, claws 1d6+1; **Space/Reach:** 5 ft. (1)/5 ft. (1); **SQ:** Immunities, manifest; **PPs:** 13; **Magic Attack Bonus:** +7; **SV:** Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 19

Skills & Feats: Craft (herbalism) +10, Hide +19, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Move Silently +19, Perform (drums) +13; Dodge, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (gore)

Notes: Black fiends are commonly called up either as assassins, or to teach scholars a portion of their bountiful magical knowledge. At a distance or in the dark – their favoured environment in any case – they could pass for human, being of a similar size and general build. Up close, their vile demonic features, horns, and pointed ears make their true nature clear.

Immunities (Su): Black fiends are immune to all physical damage, except that dealt by either fire or objects made from silver. Silver weapons are not generally manufactured during the Hyborian Age, though improvised weapons made from silver benches, candlesticks, mugs etc. could be used.

Manifest (Su): As a standard action, the black fiend can either leave Earth and return to its home plane, or appear on Earth. In either case, it manifests at the new location at the end of its action.

If Quaridan escapes, or is undefeated, then the Wadai, while having done severe damage, will still rout and flee into the jungle. The Red Citadel will stand, and with High Chief Haza dead, and Quaridan in possession of the sceptre, he will assume the Role of High Chief of the Wadai.

If the characters stop Quaridan, then the Wadai will be victorious, and Kulbahath will be honoured as a great leader, martyred in the cause of freedom. The characters will be commended for their aid in the freedom of the Wadai, and collect their share of the loot from the citadel, which may include the 1,000 gold lunas High Chief Haza had stowed away if the Games Master is feeling especially generous.

If the characters took a decidedly different turn and tried to warn the Haza or Quaridan of the impending attack, then the scenario might progress somewhat differently, as Kulbahath will not have their aid in the assault. In the first event, characters

will have alerted the Red Citadel of the impending attack, and its guards will be armed and ready for the assault. The grand victory will not be the defeat of Quaridan but the fall of Kulbahath. Games Masters might wish to gauge the reward for a scenario such as this by the overall villainy of the characters.

AFTERMATH

Assuming the characters brought the Red Citadel to ruin and aided in the freedom of the Wadai, they should all receive a 1,500 experience point award. The defeat of Quaridan also deserves an extra 500 experience points, perhaps more if the battle proved especially tough. A variable reward of between 200 and 400 experience points per encounter should be considered. Finally, a +8 Reputation bonus will be in order, as word of the characters' assistance will spread far and wide.

The mystery of the sceptre may loom in the characters' minds even at the end of this tale. As the Wadai purge Bzambe of slavers and Quaridan's influence, a new High Chief will be appointed. Kulbahath's son Waparo will claim the sceptre and he too will claim to hear the voices of the gods. In fact, the sceptre contains the spirit of its last king, Azag, which can communicate telepathically with those who wield it. Azag's good will from aeons past is conveyed to its wielder, and if they are of like mind, it grants them Azag's leadership skills. This effectively imparts the Leadership feat on the wielder as if they were 20th level. The character holding the sceptre also gains a +5 magical bonus to all Diplomacy and Sense Motive skill checks.

The characters at last have a break from the constant struggle of life in the Black Kingdoms. Perhaps they can return to Zabhela, where Erithemes may await them to offer a reward. There is always Tombalku, torn by civil war, or Bamula where they can board another ship, or Zembabwei, where the Forbidden City lies off the coast. The tales of the Black Kingdoms never truly end.

Black Bestiary

THERE ARE COUNTLESS unique and deadly beasts that are native to the lands of the Black Kingdoms. Some of the more unique creatures can be found below, but many can be replicated by the statistics of other creatures, for example a zebra is similar enough to a riding horse to obviate the need to generate new statistics for this creature. Almost all of the following creatures appear in one or more of the scenarios in *Tales of the Black Kingdoms*.

APE, GREAT

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 6d8+18 (35 hit points)

Initiative: +8 (+2 Dex, +6 Ref)

Speed: 30 ft. (6) climb 30 ft.

Dodge Defence: 15 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural)

DR: 2

Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: +3/+12

Attack: Claws +7 melee (1d10+5)

Full Attack: 2 claws +7 melee (1d10+5) and bite +2 melee (1d8+2)

Special Attacks: Improved Grab, Crush 3d8+5



Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent

Space/Reach: 10 ft. (2) x 10 ft. (2)

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +2

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7

Skills: Climb +14, Listen +6, Spot +6

Feats: Alertness, Toughness

Climate/Terrain: Warm forest and mountains

Organisation: Solitary or company (2-5)

Advancement: 5-8 HD (Large)

The great apes of the Black Kingdoms are large, powerful beasts found in thick jungles and mountainous regions throughout the regions of Atlaia, Tombalku, Bamula and Wadai. Some tribes revere the great apes as spiritual beings of nature, protected by the will of Jullah, the ape god, while others see them as dangerous predators, to be hunted. These powerful omnivores resemble gorillas but are far more aggressive; they kill and eat anything they can catch. An adult male ape is often over six feet tall and weighs up to 400 pounds.

Crush (Ex): A great ape can attempt to crush a grabbed opponent. A great ape that gets a hold can sweep up an opponent in a bear hug and make a single crush attack. This attack automatically inflicts an extra 3d8+5 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the great ape must hit with a claw attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking and attack of opportunity.

Skills: Apes have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take ten on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

BABOON

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 1d8+1 (5 hp)

Initiative: +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Ref)

Speed: 40 ft. (8), climb 30 ft.

Dodge Defence: 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural)

DR: 1

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/+2

Attack: Bite +2 melee (1d6+3)



Full Attack: Bite +2 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4

Skills: Climb +10, Listen +5, Spot +5

Feats: Alertness

Environment: Warm plains

Organisation: Solitary or troop (10–40)

Advancement: 2–3 HD (Medium)

Baboons are powerful and aggressive primates adapted to life on the ground. They prefer open spaces but climb trees to find safe places to rest overnight. Throughout the hot plains of Ghanatas, Tombalku, and Atlaia baboons are a fairly common sight. A typical baboon is the size of a big dog, males can be two to four feet long and weigh as much as 90 pounds. Baboons are usually found in groups, though lone males are not unheard of.

Skills: Baboons have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take ten on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

BUFFALO, WATER

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 5d8+15 (37 hit points)

Initiative: +8 (+2 Dex, +6 Ref)

Speed: 40 ft.

Dodge Defence: 11 (-1 size, +2 natural)

DR: 4

Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: +3/+13

Attack: Gore +8 melee (1d8+9)

Full Attack: Gore +8 melee (1d8+9)

Special Attacks: Stampede

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent

Space/Reach: 10 ft. (2) x 10 ft. (2)

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 22, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 4

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +5

Feats: Alertness, Endurance

Climate/Terrain: Temperate plains

Organisation: Solitary or herd (30–200)

Advancement: 6–7 HD (Large)

The water buffalo of the Black Kingdoms are huge, woolly beasts with large horns which move in large herds, following sources of water. The real danger from water buffalo, which are a primary livelihood for many tribes of the land, is the protectiveness of aggressive males and the possibility that a large herd will spook and stampede.

Stampede (Ex): A frightened herd of water buffalo flees as a group in a random direction (but always away from the perceived source of danger). They literally run over anything of size Large or smaller that gets in their way, dealing 1d12 points of damage for each five water buffalo in the herd. A successful Reflex save (DC 18) halves this damage.



CHEETAH

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)

Initiative: +4 (+4 Ref)

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

Dodge Defence: 15 (+4 Dex, +1 natural)

DR: –

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+5

Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3)

Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3) and 2 claws +1 melee (1d2+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Trip

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent, sprint

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +2

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +4

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse

Environment: Warm plains

Organisation: Solitary, pair, or family (3–5)

Advancement: 4–5 HD (Medium)

Cheetahs are swift feline predators of the plains. A cheetah is three to five feet long and weighs 110 to 130 pounds. Cheetahs make sudden sprints to bring down prey.

Trip (Ex): A cheetah that hits with a claw or bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+3 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the cheetah.

Sprint (Ex): Once per hour, a cheetah can move ten times its normal speed (500 feet) when it makes a charge.

CROCODILE

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+9 (22 hp)

Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Ref)

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), swim 30 ft.

Dodge Defence: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural)

DR: 4

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+6

Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d8+6) or tail slap +6 melee (1d12+6)

Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d8+6) or tail slap +6 melee (1d12+6)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab

Special Qualities: Hold breath, low-light vision

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2

Skills: Hide +7*, Listen +4, Spot +4, Swim +12



Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Hide)

Environment: Warm marshes

Organisation: Solitary or colony (6–11)

Challenge Rating: 2

Advancement: 4–5 HD (Medium)

Adjustment: —

Crocodiles are aggressive predators of between 11 and 12 feet in length. They lie mostly submerged in rivers or marshes, with only their eyes and nostrils showing, waiting for prey to come within reach.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a crocodile must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, the crocodile establishes a hold on the opponent with its mouth and drags it into deeper water, attempting to pin it to the bottom.

Hold Breath (Ex): A crocodile can hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to four times its Constitution score before it risks drowning.

Skills: A crocodile has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take ten on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

*A crocodile gains a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks when in the water. Further, a crocodile can lie in the water with only its eyes and nostrils showing, gaining a +10 cover bonus on Hide checks.

GAZELLE

Small Animal

Hit Dice: 1d8 (5 hp)

Initiative: +3 (+3 Ref)

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

Dodge Defence: 16 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural)

DR: –

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/–4

Attack: Gore –1 melee (1d6–2)

Full Attack: Gore –1 melee (1d6–2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 7, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +9, Spot +8

Feats: –

Environment: Warm plains

Organisation: Herd (10–100+)

Advancement: 2–3 HD (Medium), 4–5 HD (Large)

Gazelle are a type of antelope common to the plains and grasslands of the Black Kingdoms. Herds of gazelle can number in the thousands and attract some of the most dangerous predators. These statistics can also be used to represent deer, gazelles with advanced Hit Dice can be used to represent other types of antelopes such as kudu, topi, oryx and impala. Though capable of attacking with their horns, gazelles prefer flight to combat, and only attack if cornered.

GIRAFFE

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 4d8+16 (34 hp)

Initiative: +2 (+2 Ref)

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Dodge Defence: 13 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural)

DR: –

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+10

Attack: Kick +7 melee (1d6+4)

Full Attack: Kick +7 melee (1d6+4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +3

Abilities: Str 22, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 1, Wis 14, Cha 8

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7

Feats: –

Environment: Warm plains

Organisation: Pair or Tower (3–18)

Advancement: 5–6 HD (Large)

These long-necked herbivores roam both the grasslands and scrub plains of the Black Kingdoms, feeding upon a wide range of plant species. Experienced travellers know to stay clear from giraffe herds, known as towers, because while giraffes often prefer to flee in the face of danger, mothers are especially protective of their young.

HIPPOTAMUS

Huge Animal

Hit Dice: 9d8+54 (95 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 15 ft. (3 squares), swim 20 ft.

Dodge Defence: 12 (–2 size, +4 natural)

DR: 2

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/–12

Attack: Bite +11/+6 melee (1d10+10)

Full Attack: Bite +11/+6 melee (1d10+10)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./15 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: Low-light vision

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +2, Will +2

Abilities: Str 25, Dex 11, Con 22, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 6

Skills: Hide –5, Listen +3, Spot +3, Swim +17

Feats: –

Environment: Warm aquatic

Organisation: Solitary or bloat (3–30)

Advancement: 10–13 HD (Huge)

These animals also known as *mutapa* (moo-TAH-pah) or ‘water elephants’, live mostly along the banks of the rivers and waterways of the Black Kingdoms. These massive herbivores are generally placid, though males are known

to be highly territorial and will attack swimmers and boats that move through their territories. Hippos sweat a sticky pink oil that can prove a very effective sunscreen for those brave enough to try and collect some.

LEOPARD

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)

Initiative: +4 (+4 Ref)

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft.

Dodge Defence: 15 (+4 Dex, +1 natural)

DR: 1

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+5

Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3)

Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3) and 2 claws +1 melee (1d3+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab, pounce, rake 1d3+1

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +2

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Balance +12, Climb +11, Hide +8*, Jump +11, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Spot +6

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse

Environment: Warm forests

Organisation: Solitary or pair

Advancement: 4–5 HD (Medium)

These jungle cats are about four feet long and weigh about 120 pounds. They usually hunt at night. The statistics presented here can describe any feline of similar size, such as jaguars, panthers and mountain lions.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a leopard must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can rake.

Pounce (Ex): If a leopard charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +6 melee, damage 1d3+1.

Skills: Leopards have a +8 racial bonus on Jump checks and a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. Leopards have a +8 racial bonus on Balance and Climb checks. A leopard can always choose to take ten on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

*In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, the Hide bonus improves to +8.



LION

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 8d8+24 (60 hp)

Initiative: +10 (+3 Dex, +7 Ref)

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Dodge Defence: 15 (–1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 12

DR: 2

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+12

Attack: Claw +7 melee (1d6+5)

Full Attack: 2 claws +7 melee (1d6+5) and bite +2 melee (1d10+2)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Pounce, Improved Grab, Rake 1d6+3

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +2

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Balance +7, Hide +3*, Listen +5, Move Silently +11, Spot +5

Feats: Alertness, Run

Environment: Warm plains

Organisation: Solitary, pair, or pride (6–10)

Advancement: 6–8 HD (Large)

The lions of the Black Kingdom are the most fearsome and cunning of all predators. Averaging five to eight feet long and weighing 330 to 550 pounds, the

typical male lion can easily bring down a water buffalo. The females are slightly smaller in size but otherwise use the same statistics.

Pounce (Ex): If a lion charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a lion must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can rake.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +7 melee, damage 1d4+2.

Skills: Lions have a +4 racial bonus on Balance, Hide and Move Silently checks.

*In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, the Hide bonus improves to +12.

MONITOR LIZARD

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+9 (22 hp)

Initiative: +2 (+2 Ref)

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), swim 30 ft.

Dodge Defence: 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural)

DR: –

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+5

Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d8+4)

Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d8+4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: Low-light vision

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +2

Abilities: Str 17, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2

Skills: Climb +7, Hide +6*, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +4, Swim +11

Feats: Alertness, Great Fortitude

Environment: Warm forests

Organisation: Solitary

Advancement: 4–5 HD (Medium)

This category includes fairly large, carnivorous lizards from three to five feet long. Monitor lizards can be aggressive, using their powerful jaws to tear at prey or enemies.

Skills: A monitor lizard has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take ten on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while

swimming, provided it swims in a straight line. Monitor lizards have a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks.

*In forested or overgrown areas, the Hide bonus improves to +8.

MONKEY

Tiny Animal

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)

Initiative: +2 (+2 Ref)

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 30 ft.

Dodge Defence: 14 (+2 size, +2 natural)

DR: –

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/–12

Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d3–4)

Full Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d3–4)

Space/Reach: 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: Low-light vision

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 5

Skills: Balance +10, Climb +10, Hide +10, Listen +3, Spot +3

Feats: Weapon Finesse

Environment: Warm forests



Organisation: Troop (10–40)
Advancement: 2–3 HD (Small)

The statistics presented here can describe any arboreal monkey that is no bigger than a housecat, such as a colobus or capuchin. Monkeys generally flee into the safety of the trees, but if cornered can fight ferociously.

Skills: Monkeys have a +8 racial bonus on Balance and Climb checks. They can always choose to take ten on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. They use their Dexterity modifier instead of their Strength modifier for Climb checks.

RHINOCEROS

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 8d8+40 (76 hp)

Initiative: +6 (+6 Ref)

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Dodge Defence: 15 (–1 size, +6 natural)

DR: 3

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+18

Attack: Gore +13 melee (2d6+12)

Full Attack: Gore +13 melee (2d6+12)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Powerful charge

Special Qualities: Low-light vision

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +3

Abilities: Str 26, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 2

Skills: Listen +14, Spot +3



Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Improved Natural Attack (gore)

Environment: Warm plains

Organisation: Solitary or herd (2–12)

Advancement: 9–12 HD (Large); 13–24 HD (Huge)

The black rhino of Ghanatas grows to between six and ten feet long, three to six feet in height at the shoulder and weighs up to 6,000 pounds. Best left alone by travellers who stumble across the immense beast, the rhinoceros is infamous for its bad temper and willingness to charge intruders. When it is harassed or annoyed, a rhinoceros lowers its head and charges.

Powerful Charge (Ex): A rhinoceros deals 4d6+24 points of damage when it makes a charge.

VULTURE

Small Animal

Hit Dice: 1d8+2 (7 hp)

Initiative: +3 (+3 Ref)

Speed: 15 ft. (3 squares), fly 40 ft.

Dodge Defence: 16 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural)

DR: –

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/–12

Attack: Bite –1 melee (1d4–1)

Full Attack: Bite –1 melee (1d4–1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: Disease resistant low-light vision

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +1

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6

Feats: –

Environment: Warm mountains, plains and deserts

Organisation: Solitary, wake (2–7) or colony (100–1,000)

Advancement: 2–3 HD (Small)

In a land that abounds with violence, these scavenging birds are common. As scavengers, vultures prefer to wait until an opponent is dead before attacking.

Disease Resistant (Ex): Vultures gain a +4 racial bonus to saving throws made against diseases.

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