

DESERT PLOTS

AMAZON
MUTUAL #2

AD&DTM
& MODULES
& GENERIC PLOTS

DRAGON TREE

A
DESERT
MYSTERY-
CAMPAIGN-
PLOT

WITH
2 COMPLETE
DUNGEONS

5 PLOT OUTLINES

13 NEW MONSTERS

18 NEW MAGIC
ITEMS

18 NEW TRAPS
& TRICKS

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1310 COLLEGE AVE, SUITE 1151
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Such labour'd nothings, in so strange a style,
Amaze th' unlearn'd and make the learned smile.
Pope - Essay on Criticism

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DESERT PLOTS

by MARY EZZELL AMAZON MAGAZINE #2

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These 2 dungeons and 5 plots may be used separately or together. If played as a series, all 7 add up to a single mystery with continuing NPC's and interlocking clues.

To play the series, begin with PREFACE FOR DM on Page 22.

CO-DESIGNER

MIKE DUHESSIAN - WHAT'S A BELWORTH?

ILLUSTRATIONS

Elizabeth Ford cover, ad, 15, 20

David Stephens ad

Mary Ezzell all else

CONSULTANT

BEN R. EZZELL - Back cover
and much good miscellaneous

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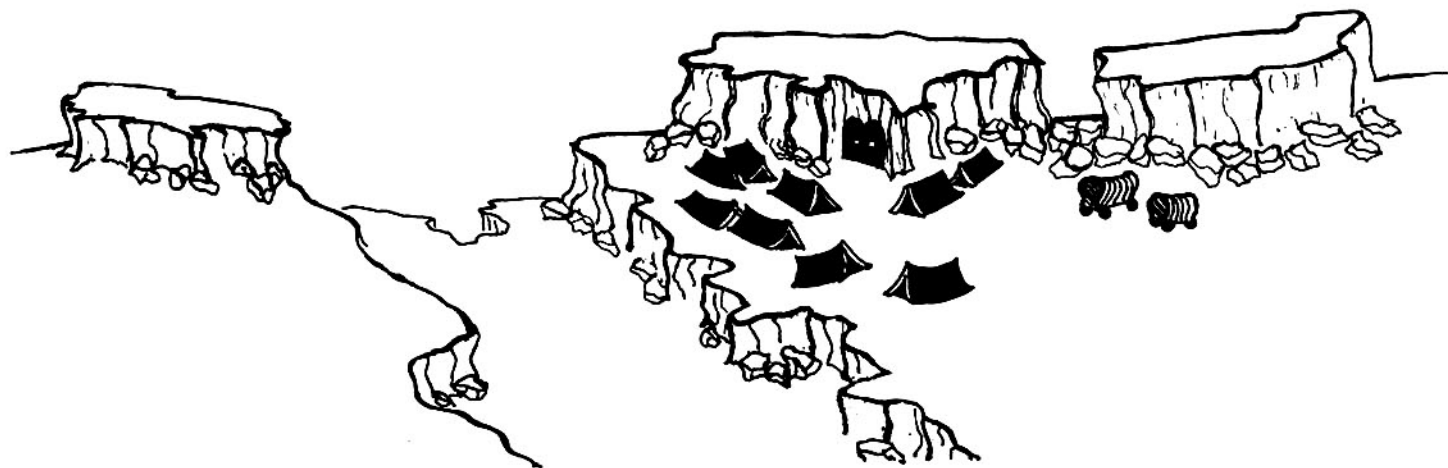
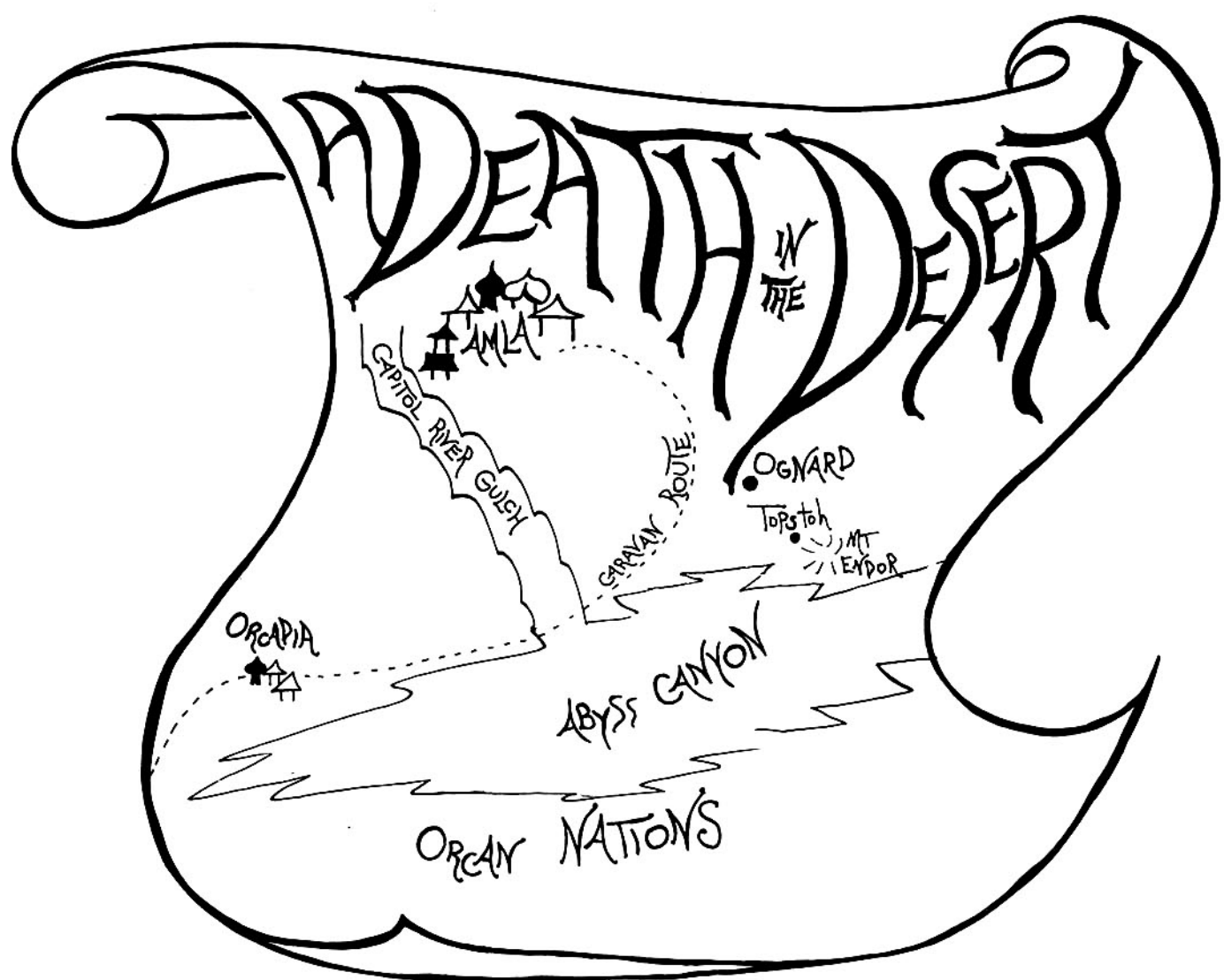
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GREAT

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PREFACE FOR DM

This dungeon is suitable for a low-level thinking party or a medium-level hacking party. All monsters are original - most have adjustable Hit Dice, all attacks can be easily adjusted to balance any party from first level on up. Treasures are also given in adjustable terms. However, any party well-supplied with powers of flight, levitation, auguries etc would find little puzzle and less challenge in it.

The party must find 3 stolen magic scrolls. Hackers can search randomly, thinkers can guess the scrolls' content from what they encounter in the dungeon, then use ROCMIRRA'S INDEX to locate the scrolls.

ASSIGNMENT FOR PARTY

AMLA needs a team to travel to the southern desert to recover goods stolen in a caravan robbery. A carrier pigeon message says that a caravan they insure was robbed last night where the Capitol River joins Abyss Canyon, and four magic scrolls belonging to the Lady Rocmirra were stolen.

They will pay (200 gp * average level of the party) to each party member for making the trip, plus 5% of the value of any goods recovered. There is also a bonus for quick delivery. If the goods are returned to AMLA's office within 30 days (without excess wear on the horses or mules AMLA provides), the pay will be doubled.

AMLA will provide standard packs, one horse and one pack mule per person. The best route is straight south along Capitol River Gulch. The river is dry at this season but many waterholes remain and the animals should be able to forage. Travel time will be 2 weeks each way, but since food for people is often scarce in that region AMLA will issue each traveler 3 months' iron rations.

FURTHER INQUIRIES REVEAL

Bandits have always lived in the southern desert - renegade humans and humanoids from the northern cities.

The territory south of the Canyon belongs to the orcs. They seldom cross the Canyon except when their own countries are hit by drought.

Recent droughts have driven many orcs to raid human territory north of the Canyon, and the King has sent troops to the Canyon to stop them.

Lady Rocmirra is an eccentric young scholar who has been doing research in Orcadia, a village of orcs who have made peace with humans. She was following up a reference in a dead wizard's journal which said: "...scrolls I made ...help with famine ...lost in the land of the orcs, who can neither read nor use them...."

EN ROUTE

The party has no real difficulty finding water and forage along the river, but the ranchers refuse to sell provisions. All their extra supplies have already been stolen by orcs or bandits, or commandeered by the King's soldiers en route to the Canyon.

RUMOURS

- 1 (T) The orc king sent an envoy north to buy food.
- 2 (T) A group of orcs was killed by bandits.
- 3 (T) Bandits stole a great treasure of gold and jewels from some orcs.
- 4 (T) Lady Rocmirra was looking for some help with the famine.
- 5 (T) Lady Rocmirra found some help with the famine.
- 6 (T) There is an abandoned fortress where the Gulch joins the Canyon.
- 7 (T) Bandits stole some magic scrolls from a caravan.
- 8 (T) Soldiers have besieged a group of bandits in the fortress.
- 9 (T) Soldiers camped at the canyon have been playing with some magic item.
- 10 (Misleading) A bright green snake frequents the soldiers' camp by the canyon.

Here insert false rumours referring to existing campaign material in your world.

NOTE - Ognard, Topstoh and Mt. Endor are not in this module. Topstoh (a human town) and Mt. Endor (an extinct volcano) are the setting of WHAT'S A BELWORTH. Ognard is a country of ogres mentioned in THE PALACE OF THE BANDIT PRINCE and OASIS.

AT THE CANYON

Abyss Canyon resembles America's Grand Canyon - 5 miles across and 1 mile deep - but both canyon and surroundings are dry desert. A troop of 300 of the King's soldiers are camped at the rim waiting for a dust storm in the canyon to abate. Their camp is close in the shelter of a rocky plateau that sticks up above the canyon rim, and their tents and wagons block all entrance to a pair of old double doors set in the side of the plateau.

The soldiers are all gossiping about the bandits they have besieged in the fortress behind the double doors, and about any other rumours the party hasn't heard already.

SOLDIERS WITH SCROLL:

As the party passes through the camp they will see a line of bright glowing green light moving along the ground. The line is 30' long and 3 inches wide. The line comes from a magic scroll carried by 2 soldiers who are following the line. (See ROCMIRRA'S INDEX below) When the party identify themselves as AMLA agents, the soldiers will give them the scroll, then depart hastily without answering any questions. (They had borrowed the scroll to try to find the Captain's love letters for some friendly blackmail....a girl's name is written into the blank on the scroll, and the letters are under the Captain's bed in the headquarters tent)

HEADQUARTERS TENT:

When the party reach the headquarters tent they will find the Captain of the soldiers arguing with a well-dressed old man - Sir Mormulo, the owner of the robbed caravan. The old man is trying to persuade the Captain to send soldiers into the fortress after the scholar Rocmirra's other scrolls. The Captain refuses: "I've already lost 3 men in there - our orders are to cross the Canyon and fight orcs as soon as the sandstorm ends."

IN ANSWER TO THE PARTY'S QUESTIONS SIR MORMULO AND THE CAPTAIN WILL RELATE THIS STORY:

2 weeks ago Mormulo's caravan was attacked by approximately 100 bandits, who captured one wagon. Then the soldiers happened along. The bandits fled into the abandoned fortress inside the plateau. The soldiers pitched camp outside to keep them from escaping.

Sir Mormulo sent the caravan on but stayed to oversee the recovery himself.

BANDITS MADE RAIDS THE FIRST 3 NIGHTS:

1. 1st night 10 bandits stole two 25-gallon leather kegs of water - 7 bandits were killed.
 2. 2nd night 15 bandits stole enough iron rations for 2 men for 2 days - 8 bandits were killed and ROCMIRRA'S INDEX was recovered.
 3. 3rd night 5 bandits stole soldiers' tool wagon - none killed.
- Nothing has been seen or heard of the bandits since, and 3 soldier scouts sent in have not returned.

INVOICE OF STOLEN CARAVAN WAGON CONTENTS:

The stolen caravan wagon carried 70 scrolls, 20 kegs of tar, 35 empty metal water drums, 89 pounds of opium, 67 pounds of pipeweed, 49 potions of extra healing (1d8).

RE SCROLLS:

Sir Mormulo explains that of all the goods, all he cares about are "the other 3 magic scrolls. Most of Rocmirra's scrolls were just textbooks and encyclopedias, but 4 of them were magical - though a spell was put on them so they cannot be found by a detect magic or any such spell. ROCMIRRA'S INDEX scroll was recovered when the bandits tried to steal the rations - although it is obviously magical, it is not particularly valuable, and you may use it to help locate the other scrolls. I will pay (300 gp * average level of the party per party member) for each missing magic scroll."

PLAYERS' MAP:

At DMO the Captain may give the party the Players' Map. He will explain that the fortress has not been used for over 100 years except occasionally by orcs camping out. 3 years ago his men chased some orcs out of it and mapped it; however, the map is out of date since there have been some earth tremors since that may have caused rockfalls inside.

NATURAL CAVE-IN



KEY TO DM'S MAP:

SCALE - Dots are spaced 10' apart.

TRACKS AND TRAFFIC PATTERNS - Tracks of heavy bandit and orc traffic connect 200, 100, 500, 1200, 1500, 1800, 2000, 2100, 2300, 2700, 2800, 2500, 2600. How much can be learned from these is DMO.

BLOCKED CORRIDORS - Earth tremors since the players' map was drawn have caused most of the corridors on the east and west sides of the dungeon to collapse or pinch together, becoming impassible. These blockages are indicated on the DM's map by: 

One corridor - 550 - has been deliberately made impassible by piling up round boulders: 

DUST POOLS - very soft powdery dust that people can sink into and suffocate, as in quicksand.

Where rainwater falls on a large dust pool a crust of dried mud forms which is as dangerous as thin ice....

WALLS - if drawn ragged on the map they are natural formations, very rough and full of crevices - any person hiding in them has 80% (DMO) to escape detection. If drawn smooth they are manmade or smoothed - treat as 'undressed stone'.

FLOORS - unless specified, all floors are 1-8" of dry sand over packed earth or stone.

CEILINGS - all are rough and natural, height varies at DMO.

LETTERS IN RECTANGLES - These show the locations of volumes of the ENCYCLOPEDIA ORCKIANA.

A - wandering orc
B C D - 300
E F G - 600
H I J - 800
K L M - 1100 (ruby)
N O P - 1400
Q R S - 1700 (opal)
T U V - 1900 (emerald)
W X Y - 2200 (diamond)
Z - wandering orc

NOTE ON GOLEMS

All the golems in this dungeon are made of normal materials magically held together and animated. When a golem loses all his HTK he loses all magic and the materials revert to their natural state (which is non-magical unless noted). They are very hastily and clumsily made and are only vaguely humanoid in shape.

ROCMIRRA'S INDEX

The scroll the two soldiers give the party is headed 'ROCMIRRA'S INDEX'. It is decorated with hundreds of tiny poems praising libraries, research, books etc. In large letters in Common is written: "Please lead me to the piece of paper with the most words written on it about"

Neither the soldiers nor Sir Mormulo really understand the workings of the INDEX (Sir Mormulo is allergic to magic...) The party should have to learn most of the following information by trial and error:

Anyone may use the INDEX. When a subject is written into the blank, a glowing green line forms on the ground (30' long), which leads in the direction of whatever piece of writing has the most words written about that subject. Regardless of where the INDEX is moved, the line will always point to that piece of writing. The only way to make the line vanish is to touch the INDEX to the piece of writing that was its target.

The INDEX is of a very smooth parchment and ink does not penetrate. If the first subject is rubbed off and a new one written in, the line will move to point to the new target.

The INDEX does NOT distinguish between magical and ordinary writing, nor between true and false information. It knows all languages. The line will always indicate the safest lawful route to its target - ie it will follow paths and lead through doors, not cut across.

DM NOTE RE INDEX:

The 3 other scrolls are: A MANUAL OF INSTANT GOLEM CONSTRUCTION (now in 2800), A MANUAL OF TURNING MUD TO GEMS (in 2800), and a MANUAL OF CREATING FOOD AND DRINK (in 2500). Any other subject written onto the INDEX will lead to some worthless scroll - in camp this will be some record in the Headquarters Tent or a soldier's letter. In the dungeon this will be a volume of the Encyclopedia Orckiana, a memoir of Sir Tonypandy Gnoptic or DMO.

Knowing that the INDEX was recovered, the bandits placed the worthless scrolls in 8 different dungeon rooms to lead investigators into danger. Whenever a worthless scroll is the target the DM may place it where he likes, or use the location chart by the DM map.

BACKGROUND FOR DM - WHAT HAS REALLY HAPPENED

20 days ago, this group of bandits killed an envoy of orcs and stole the treasure with which the orcs were attempting to buy food. On their way north to spend their loot they met Sir Mormulo's caravan and attacked it too, then were driven into the fortress by the soldiers.

The bandits were already out of food and water when they entered the fortress. They found a band of orcs camped in the fortress living on lizard meat. The bandits killed and ate some of the orcs - the surviving orcs are hiding in 1500 or roaming the corridors.

The first night the bandits ate orc meat and stole the soldiers' water to drink.

The second day they examined the contents of the caravan wagon they had brought into the fortress and found ROCMIRRA'S INDEX. That night, being all out of orc meat, they used the INDEX to help them locate the soldiers' store of rations - but the soldiers recovered the INDEX.

The third day they further examined the scrolls and found the MANUAL OF INSTANT GOLEM CONSTRUCTION, THE MANUAL OF MUD TO GEMS, and the MANUAL OF CREATING FOOD AND DRINK. At this they stopped worrying about supplies, moved to the deepest part of the fortress and started creating their own food and drink and making golems to guard them. To help construct the golems, they made one last raid on the soldiers and stole the tool wagon. They made the golems from materials taken from the stolen wagons.

Knowing that the soldiers had the INDEX and somebody would probably be using it to search for the other magic scrolls, the bandits prepared several traps baited with the worthless scrolls and with gems they made.

Of the soldier scouts who went inside, two were killed and the third is a prisoner in the bandits' lair.



100 - ENTRANCE. Double doors opening inward. Remains of caravan wagon and soldier's tool wagon. Tools are missing and most metal and lumber parts have been cannibalized.

200 - TAR BARRELS. 7 full barrels of tar, 3 empty, mess of tar on floor (where tar golem was constructed). Floor is well-swept of sand.

Tar golem's tracks lead to 1100 where he is now.

300 - DUST POOL. Neat pile of SCROLLS against west wall. Floor is dried mud, has several large cracks in it.

DM Note: Floor is a thin crust of dried mud over a single large dust pool 18' deep. For each 100 lbs of weight put on it it has 20% per round cumulative to crack open - save vs falling in on dexterity -3 for every 100 lbs on the floor (ie, the more weight the worse it will crack and tilt).

The SCROLLS are Vols B C D of the Encyclopedia, plus 5 histories: of bugbears, of barrow-wights, of bar-rooms, of Barsoom, of cows (or DMO).

***** HOW TO PLAY DUST POOLS *****

Treat as you normally treat quicksand, or:

Anyone falling in sinks 1d4' per round. On the 1st round after his nose goes under he must begin saving on constitution - save is -1 that round, -2 the 2nd round, -3 the 3rd round etc. When failed he is unconscious and dying of suffocation (treat as 0 HTK).

400 - DUST POOLS. Floor is dusty all over. In some places it is solid and in others it is soft dust 18' deep. If swept or probed, many areas will seem solid but crack under real weight. Picking a safe path requires 5 minutes and 1 dexterity roll per 10'.

If the green line of ROCHIRRA'S INDEX goes through the room it will zig-zag to stay on solid ground only, indicating a safe path.

500 - BUTCHERED ORC. Remains of a skinny orc - bandits butchered him for meat 2 weeks ago. Remains of where they built a fire and hung the meat to dry.

550 - BLOCKED CORRIDOR. Many tracks of humans, orcs and dragged objects lead into this corridor - and disappear under a pile of round boulders which now fill it to the ceiling, blocking all passage. The boulders are of a different sort of rock from the rest of the passage, and are smeared with a black substance (tar).

DM note - Until yesterday this was the main route from the entrance of the dungeon to the inner rooms. All orcs, bandits and golems used it, and the bandits carried supplies through here. Only when they were through using the front rooms did they have their tar golem carry the boulders to block the passage.

600 - TAR TRAP. This room is higher than the rest and very warm. A strong updraft flows into it from the hall and out through several small fissures in the ceiling (50% to extinguish flames). 9 SCROLLS are stacked neatly against the east wall.

TAR TRAP: Above the narrowest part of the room, where the floor is highest, the bandits suspended a mass of very soft tar, using 'ropes' of tar to hang it from ceiling formations. When any heat source such as a lamp is brought under this mass, the 'ropes' have 35% (cumulative per heat source) to melt, dropping the soft warm tar. (Save on dexterity -8 unless prepared, 1d6 damage)

Upon landing, the 55-gallon mass of tar will flow downhill at Move 4 - direction DMO.

If attacked by fire the tar has 10% per point of damage to ignite - anyone in contact takes 1d6 damage each round for 1d4 rounds.

9 SCROLLS: Vols E F G of the Encyclopedia, a 3-volume novel about fornication, a book on gold-mining, a book of etiquette for ettins.

700 - 4 GIANT ABYSS CAMELEONS. HD 4. AC 5. 2 attacks: 1d6. 1d6, int LOW, move 18", 10' long, special ability CAMOUFLAGE. HP 25, 17, 31, 19. When alerted, these lizards can change color to match their surroundings so well that they then have 80% not to be detected as long as they remain motionless. This is not invisibility or illusion - it is a true chemical color change. The change requires 1 round, during which the lizard can perform any normal action.

The floor shows signs of many battles over the past 3 months. (The lizards nest in passages to the west, too narrow even for hobbits. The orcs have been coming here to hunt lizards since they moved in 3 months ago.)

DMO - these lizards will not try to kill a low-level party, though they may try to steal the party's food and water rations....



800 - DUST POOLS. 5 SCROLLS are lying jumbled against the west wall (bandits threw them there).

Floor is a thin crust of dried mud over a single large dust pool 12" deep. Although the floor is not cracked, close examination shows that it is similar to the floor in 300. For each 100 lbs of weight put on it it has 10% per round cumulative to crack open - save vs falling in on dexterity -3 for every 100 lbs on the floor (ie, the more weight the worse it will crack).

5 SCROLLS: Vols H I J, a history of hornets, jeweler's manual of gem-cutting.

900 - WATER KEYS. Floor is damp all over, some places quite wet. Here are the two 25-gallon leather kegs the bandits stole from the soldiers. One is overturned and empty, the other is 1/4 full and leaking - it has many arrows sticking in it.

By the overturned keg is a trough-like depression about 10' x 2', quite wet. In the NW corner is a recently-planted post with bloody ropes tied to it.

In the sand are many strange 'footprints': each is shaped like a half circle with the straight edge to the back, and each has recently been filled with water. The straight edge is about 12 inches long. It is obvious they were not made by any normal creature.

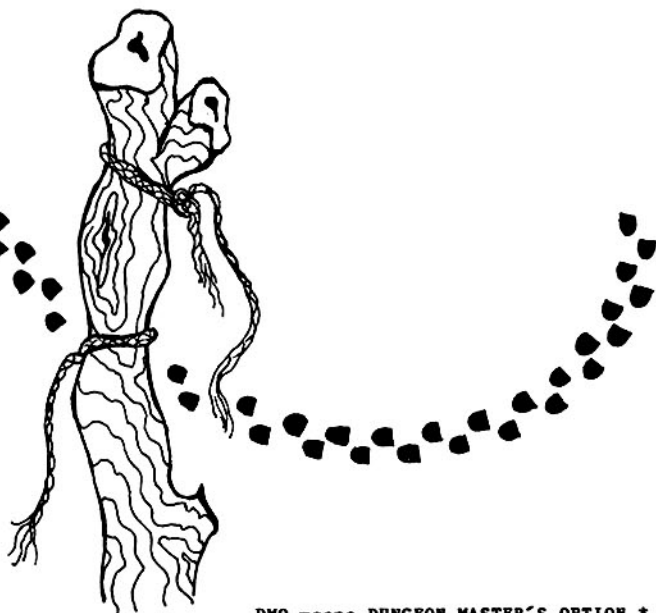
DM note: The 'trough' was shaped by hand - the bandits used it to mold the water into a water golem.

The golem made the footprints. They are flat on the backside because he is too!

When the bandits caught an orc trying to steal a drink they tied him to the post and tormented him by using the other keg for target practice and wasting the water. After they left him he worked loose.

All this happened last night.

1000 - ORC PICNIC AREA. Room is littered with bones and scraps, all 2 weeks old or older. (Here the orcs used to eat the lizards they killed in 700 until the bandits came - now if they manage to sneak out and get a lizard they take it back to 1500)



1100 - TAR GOLEM. HD 4-17, AC 10, 1 atk: 1 pt/HD + immobilize. The golem strikes with his fist. Any person or weapon touching him sticks to him. Weapons do no damage, as cuts close instantly.

Oil, turpentine etc will dissolve him - 1d6 points damage per pint. 2 pints in the right place will free any person stuck, but a second roll to hit is required for exact placement.

Fire does double damage. For each point of fire damage there is 10% the golem will ignite. If so, both the golem and each person stuck to him will take 1d4 points of damage per round thereafter per each of the golem's HD.

7 SCROLLS are stacked neatly against the east wall: Vols K L M, re mandrakes, man (raising in captivity, best recipes for preparation), mussels, morbid jokes.

LARGE RUBY is hidden under them. It is fist-sized, clumsily made, shows fingerprints. (Bandits made it with the MANUAL OF MUD TO GEM CONSTRUCTION - evaluation should wait till end of game - see note on last page)

1200 - SAND GOLEM or Delian Sandman. HD 4-17, AC 10, 1 atk: SPECIAL, Int LOW, move 9". The sandman attacks by swinging his fist. He always appears to miss, but in fact he is slinging sand at his opponent's eyes and has 5% cumulative per round to hit (regardless of AC - effect of helmet is DMO). When he hits, opponent must save on dexterity -8 to blink - if failed, he sleeps till wakened (which requires a rough touch or jolt to body).

Piercing weapons such as arrows go through the golem doing 1 pt damage each. Swinging weapons such as swords do double damage, and all in a 2d12' radius must save on dexterity or sleep - save is at -1 for each point of damage the golem took.

Oil or any liquid does 1d6 damage per pint. If placed exactly (which requires a second 'to hit' roll), 2 pints can cause a limb to fall off or a held victim to be released. Otherwise the victim will not be released until the golem has taken damage equal to 1/3 his HTK.

If all the party sleeps, after 1d6 hours the starving orcs in 1500 will try to capture them to butcher as needed for food.

The sandman's job is to keep anyone who enters from the north or west from exiting to the south - he will not bother the orcs, for they enter from the south.

1300 - NON-BUTCHERED ORC. Body of an orc, recently tortured but not butchered.

1400 - PIT TRAP. Against the east wall are neatly stacked some soldiers' canteens and containers of soldiers' rations. Thrown carelessly on top of them are 4 SCROLLS.

PIT TRAP: The whole front of the room is a 20' deep pit trap concealed by cloth stretched on a wooden frame with sand spread over it. In the pit is the body of an orc dead of concussion (not butchered).

DM note: The bandits repaired this old trap on their first day to catch orcs for food. Later they reset it and added the scrolls to catch soldiers or other investigators.

4 SCROLLS: Vols N O P, and a history of Orcadia.

1500 - ORCS. This room is crowded with natural formations (all dry). Visibility is 10' any direction, wierd shadows. Camped in a hideout in the east side are 5 orcs + 3 orcs per average level of the party. They are all so weak from hunger that they are -2 on everything. If the party goes through this room the orcs will try to capture them for meat. They would prefer to get a straggler or two without a big fight, but will take on the whole party if necessary.

DM note - the orcs can give the party valuable clues about the bandits. If the party does not try to capture and question them, have one or more of the orcs offer to trade the following information for food or drink. If the party will not trade, have one of the orcs tell it anyway in an attempt to gain pity.

The orcs crossed the canyon looking for food. They camped here and lived on lizards (in 700) till the bandits came. The first two days the bandits hunted and ate them. Then the bandits stopped bothering. The bandits brought the water kegs to 900 yesterday, emptied one and left the other.

Last night one orc tried to steal a drink, was caught and tied to the post. The bandits tormented him by using the keg for target practice and wasting the water. Then they left him and he worked loose.

If you think the party needs extra clues about the making of the water golem, the orc may have seen part of the process.

1600 - DUST POOLS. Floor is dusty all over. In some places it is solid and in others it is soft dust 18' deep. Picking a safe path requires 5 minutes and 1 dexterity roll per 10'.

If the green line of ROCHIRRA'S INDEX goes through the room it will zig-zag to stay on solid ground only, indicating a safe path.

Many sets of footprints lead into the room for a short distance, then retreat. The only longer set leads by a zig-zag path to the middle of the room, then disappears in an area of disturbed sand and dust. Probing this disturbed area will discover the body of one of the soldier-scouts suffocated under the dust.

1700 - DUST GOLEM. HD 4-17. AC 10. 1 attk: SPECIAL, int LOW, move 9", size 5'. Appears as a pile of dust until the SCROLLS he guards are disturbed. His attack is to carry his victim to 1600 and throw him into a dust pool. Although he is no more solid than any pile of dust, he CAN carry up to 300 lbs.

On a 'to hit' roll he picks up his victim, who is immobilized and choking. After 3 rounds the victim must begin rolling constitution each round. Roll is -3 on that round, -4 on 4th round, etc. If failed, he is unconscious and dying of suffocation (treat as 0 HTK).

Piercing weapons such as arrows go through the golem doing 1 pt damage each. Swinging weapons such as swords do double damage, and all in a 2d12' radius must save on constitution or sneeze helplessly that round - save is at -1 for each point of damage the golem took.

Oil or any liquid does 2d6 damage per pint. If placed exactly (which requires a second 'to hit' roll), 2 pints can cause a limb to fall off or a held victim to be released. Otherwise the victim will not be released until the golem has taken damage equal to 1/3 his HTK.

A clean cantrip will vanish him instantly....

5 SCROLLS: Vols Q R S, a 2-volume book about quarantines.

LARGE OPAL clumsily formed in the shape of a knife (was mudball, turned to gem). Evaluation should wait till end of game - see note on last page.

1800 - MAGNETIC GOLEM. HD 4-17. AC 10. 2 attk: 1 pt/HD each, int LOW, move 9", size 15'.

The magnetic golem appears as a pile of scrap metal and weapons which has a great attraction for anyone wearing metal armour.... His job is to prevent anyone who enters from the east or west from exiting to the south.

When he rises to attack he looks vaguely humanoid, but has swords attached in place of hands. These are magic swords with +1 for each 2 average levels of the party, and will retain their magic even after the golem is killed.

Any metal weapon has 100% to hit him and stick. Anyone wearing metal armour within 2d12' of him must roll strength -10 and dexterity -10 each round or fall into him and stick. Pulling loose a stuck person or weapon requires combined strength of 10 per HD. If he loses all HTK all magnetism ceases.

Note: If metal items are left in the passage to 1500, each surviving orc in 1500 has 5% per hour to find and steal them.

1900 - DOUGH GOLEM. HD 4-17. AC 10. 2 attk: 1pt/HD, 1pt/HD or SPECIAL, int LOW, move 9", size 10'.

The golem attacks with both fists. Any round when he hits the same target with both he can instead of giving point damage enfold the target, who must then save vs suffocation: constitution -1 the first round, -2 the 2nd, -3 the 3rd etc. When failed treat as 0 HTK. Freeing a captive requires giving the golem damage equal to 1/3 of his normal HTK (captive can fight too until save is failed).

Edged weapons do half damage, fire does triple damage (bakes him). Liquid causes him to grow 1 HD per quart (with corresponding increases in combat ability etc) until he has grown 5 HD greater - the 6th quart makes him so big and loose he collapses, dead and demagicked.

10 SCROLLS: Vols T U V, a 7-volume instruction book on torture.

LARGE EMERALD clumsily shaped like a wine-glass. Evaluation should wait till end of game - see note on last page.

2000 - FOOTPRINTS.

The sandy floor of this room has many recent footprints of the water golem in 2100. They resemble the front half of a shoe sole (see 2100). They are different sizes, the fresher the smaller.

In one corner wet sand has been disturbed and mounded up. Under it is the body of one of the soldier-scouts, freshly dead - by drowning! (DM note - He was drowned by the water golem who is now in 2100)

2100 - WATER GOLEM. HD 4-17. AC 10. 1 attk: 1pt/HD + SPECIAL, int LOW, move 9", size 5'. His attack is to squirt a jet of high-pressure water. Any opponent hit takes 1pt damage per golem's HD and must save on dexterity -8 and strength -8 or be knocked down and stunned for 1d4 rounds. To drown a stunned opponent the golem must hit him with a jet 3 times more or must envelop him for 3 rounds. When either of these is done, treat opponent as at 0 HTK.

Piercing weapons do no damage, slashing weapons do 1/2 damage. Fire does 1/2 damage but all in 1' per HD take the same amount from steam. Sand, dry cloth etc does 1d6 per pint.

DM note: The golem was made last night. Ever since, he has been steadily shrinking because of walking on dry sand. Because he was made in a trough-type mold, his front is convex but his back is flat - thus his footprints are rounded in front and flat in back. Either taking damage OR SHOOTING HIS JETS decrease the golem's size by 1" of height per point. (Whether his HD and abilities reduce in proportion is DMO)

His job is to prevent anyone who enters from the north or west from exiting to the south.

2200 - BRANDY GOLEM.

HD 4-17, AC 10, 1 attk: 1pt/HD + SPECIAL, int LOW, move 9", size 5'. His attack is to squirt a small jet of high-pressure brandy at his opponent's face. When an opponent is hit he takes 1pt damage per golem's HD, is blinded that round and must save on constitution -8 vs drunkenness: -1d6 on everything until cured (+1d6 on morale). When strength, dexterity, or constitution reach 0, treat as 0 HTK.

Piercing weapons do no damage, slashing weapons do 1/2 damage. Fire does double damage, and for each point of fire damage there is 5% cumulative he will explode, doing 1d4 per HD damage to all in 4' per HD. Sand, dry cloth etc do 1d6 per pint.

When the golem is touched by any container suitable for brandy (glass, keg etc), there is 40% cumulative that enough of him will go into the container to fill it.

He contains 20 gallons of brandy, and if significantly shrunk by any means will lose abilities in proportion (details DMO).

16 SCROLLS: Vols W X Y, a 6-volume biography of Ynvli the Louse, a 7-volume history of Wong & Wong Wight Manufactory.

LARGE DIAMOND clumsily shaped like a faceted stone - but shaping was done by fingers while it was still a mudball. (Evaluation should wait till end of game - see note on last page)

2300 / 2400 - LONG ROOM. Empty room - smells of cinnamon - and at DMO of the dinner the bandits are cooking in 2500 (roast goose, strawberry pie). Area 2300 has a normal solid sandy floor. 2400 is dusty, laced with dust pools each 3d10' deep. Picking a safe path requires 5 minutes and 1 dexterity roll per 10'.

If the green line of ROCMIRRA'S INDEX goes through the area it will zig-zag to stay on solid ground only, indicating a safe path.

At DMO sounds of bandits' voices in 2700 can be heard here.

2500 - KITCHEN. Here are 3 bandits preparing a large, fancy meal in makeshift containers - pate de foie gras cooking in helmets etc. The room stinks of cinnamon, for that is the only fuel for their cooking fires. (DM note - they ran out of regular wood but can create cinnamon sticks using the scroll)

All 3 bandits are 1st level fighters (AC 10, HP 4, 6, 5), but they are all drunk and at -2 (or DMO) on everything. They are armed with swords and daggers, which they have been using as cooking tools.

In this room is one of the magic scrolls - a MANUAL OF CREATING FOOD AND DRINK with unlimited uses. It is decorated with many tiny poems about cooking. All the food it creates is raw.

For a party of hackers this scroll should be open and obvious - for thinkers it may be in a crevice in the wall, so well hidden that finding it will require using ROCMIRRA'S INDEX. It is protected by a mask magic spell, so it cannot be found by detect magic etc.

DMO - a low-level party may have little chance of getting by the bandits unless the DM allows them to succeed in poisoning or dopping this food.

2600 - STOREROOM. At the south end of this room is a 10x10' opening into daylight, in the sheer wall of Abyss Canyon. Below the opening is a narrow ledge that connects this room with 2700 and 2800. How safe that ledge is is DMO - a low-level party may need to be allowed to use it to get past the bandits.

LOOT: In this room are stored 42 extra-healing potions (1d8), 59 pounds of opium and 44 lbs of pipeweed which the bandits haven't got around to yet.

Here you may add other treasures appropriate to your campaign, if you think the party deserves them.

2700 - BANDITS. 90 bandits camping and carousing. All are low-level* fighters, state of drunkenness is DMO.

This room has a wide opening to the cliff face (which they have been using as a latrine).

On the floor may be found balls of mud which the bandits were shaping to be turned into gems.

CAPTIVE SOLDIER: He is alive but in poor condition - can give any hints the DM wants the party to have but no more.

*NOTE ON BANDITS:

FOR THINKERS: Most thinking parties will regard 90 drunken bandits as an obstacle to circumvent - rather than trying to fight them, they will dope or poison their food, blow opium smoke into the room, cause a diversion, sneak past on the ledge etc. ANY REASONABLE EFFORT OF THIS SORT SHOULD BE GIVEN A GOOD CHANCE OF SUCCESS.

If the attempt fails and the bandits do attack, if you do not wish to have a detailed melee here is a simplified method. Consider the bandits' levels and drunkenness to be such that whenever a party member can be attacked from all sides at once he will take 1d4 damage per round per average level of the party. (For each point his AC is under AC 10, it will absorb one point of the damage: AC 9 takes 1d4-1, AC 8 takes 1d4-2 etc) Protecting his back etc or killing an opponent will reduce the damage by 1/4 for one round.

Consider that the bandits all have 5 HTK per level, and are AC 10 (too drunk to put their armour on or get their dexterity bonuses etc). Thus whatever target the party member chooses he still rolls to hit AC 10, and the bandit takes the full damage rolled.

For thinkers these bandits need have little or no treasure on their persons, as there is plenty elsewhere in the dungeon.

FOR HACKERS: If fighting 90 bandits at once is what your group does by choice, you are doubtless already so expert in handling such matters that any advice from me concerning the bandits' levels and personal treasure would be both superfluous and impudent.

2800 - ORNATE GOLEM. HD 4-17, AC 3, 3 attk: each 1pt/HD, int LOW, move 9", size 6'. This golem is made out of gold and jewels. He can attack with one foot and both hands each round - all are spiky with jewels. He weighs 100 lbs per HD and does 1d6 damage per HD to anyone he falls on. He is so bright that anyone looking at him in daylight must roll constitution -8 each round vs blindness for 1d4 rounds.

Value of the materials in the golem is 700 gp per average level of party per party member.

On the wall is a page torn from the Encyclopedia on which has been scribbled (using beef extract for ink): "tar, sand, dust, metal, dough, spirit, water, ornate, smoke". All the words have been crossed off except "smoke".

In this room are two more of the stolen scrolls: a MANUAL OF INSTANT GOLEM CONSTRUCTION and a MANUAL OF MUD TO GEM CONSTRUCTION. A mask magic spell prevents them being found by detect magic etc. For hackers their hiding place should be fairly obvious - for thinkers, they should be

hidden in a crevice and unfindable except by ROCMIRRA'S INDEX.

The list on the wall refers to the MANUAL OF INSTANT GOLEM CONSTRUCTION. The manual consists of a separate page for each type of golem. It is decorated with hundreds of tiny poems about golems. The used pages are faded and obviously in need of recharging - unused pages are bright and clear. There is one used page for every golem checked off on the list, and one unused page for a smoke golem. (At DMO there may be duplicate unused pages for some of the other types as well - if you want the party to be able to make golems to help fight their way out)

The instructions for making a golem say to form the materials into the desired shape, then touch the page to the materials.

Golems thus made are temporary, reverting to non-magical materials in 3d10 days. They can obey only the simplest commands: guard, carry etc.

At DMO these spells can be copied into a player character mage's spell book and used normally - except that the golems produced can never have more HD than the mage who copied them, and they will endure for only 1 hour per level per level of the copier. (EG if copied by a 5th level mage the golem would last 1*5*5=25 hours)

SMOKE GOLEM: HD 4-17, AC 10, 1 atk: SPECIAL, int LOW, move 9", size SPECIAL, str 19. Size depends on how much smoke the party made. His attack is to blow a smoke ring around his enemy's face - blinded for 1d4 rounds, save vs poison or cough for 1d4 damage per HD.

Although he feels as insubstantial as normal smoke, the smoke golem CAN carry the whole party and their treasure out over the canyon to safety.

But if the golem is made of pipeweed or opium smoke all riders must save vs poison or be stoned (-1d4 all attributes. +1d4 morale) - and the golem will be MUCH too mellow to fight....

The MANUAL OF MUD TO GEM CONSTRUCTION is decorated with many tiny poems about gems, mud etc. It works the same way as the MANUAL OF INSTANT GOLEM CONSTRUCTION. Number of unused pages is DMO - as is the duration and value of the gems made.

Logically the gems should be of low quality and little value, or the bandits would not have used them so generously in baiting their traps. But if a party deserves extra treasure they may be 1d4*100*ALP or DMO each.)

DMO - if copied into a player's spellbook, the gems produced by the copied spells will endure only 1 hour per level per level of the copier - eg if copied by a 2nd level they will last 1*2*2=4 hours. While it lasts, each gem will appear to be worth 1d4*100 gp.

NOTE: Neither the Ornate Golem nor the mud-ball jewels nor any food made belongs to the caravan, so the party may keep all such (the material for the Ornate Golem came from the orc envoy the bandits robbed earlier).

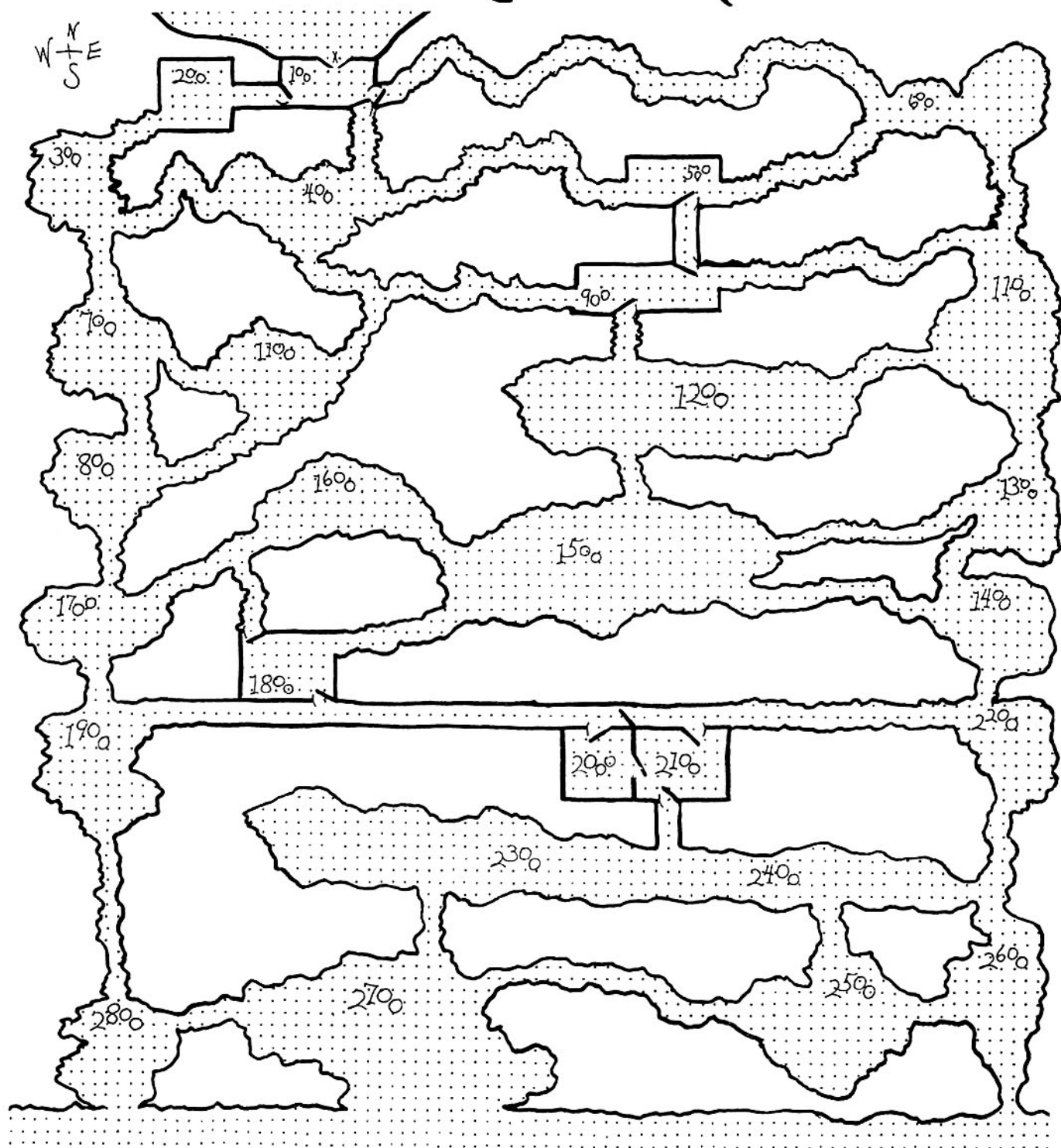
DMO: If you like adlibbing golems, the MANUAL can also include a page or two labeled 'Wild Card' which can animate ANY material. I will leave the stats up to you. However, if a golem is made of unburned opium or pipeweed or healing potion or any other caravan goods, Sir Mormulo can rightfully claim it as his own....

"...used the sacks out of our AMLA packs, filled them with pipeweed smoke and used the Smoke Golem page to animate them ... had the nicest dreams all the way back to AMLA ... yes, we floated all the way back, forgot the Barbarian's warhorse he'd left with the soldiers and everything...." - Menfrey

"...Bredon Posvalsky got killed four times in this, gods kept reviving him ... knew just what to tell the Index to find, but was so lazy he let the green line lead him all the way Well, when that green line preceded him into the bandits' room, of course they all grabbed their weapons and hid, waiting...." - Twyla von Lippmanova

"...took the half full water keg and rolled it at the Sandman ... good hit, DM gave automatic kill Ah, but the best fight I ever had with a Sandman was back at the old Black Castle ... Fr. Samuel had given us this anti-sleep potion, thin black aromatic and bitter, needed a whole pint for a dose ... threw 3 doses at the Sandman, triple damage ... our Techno had a funny name for the stuff, called it 'coffee'...." - Guy Teague

PLAYER'S MAP



DOTS ARE TEN FEET APART ::
 WAVY LINES ARE NATURAL PASSAGES ~~~~
 STRAIGHT LINES ARE UN-DRESSED STONE ==

HA'S BURN



PREFACE FOR DM

This dungeon is suitable for a hacking party of levels 7-10 or a thinking party of levels 1-4.

(PS. I had NOTHING to do with the poems. - Mary)

ASSIGNMENT FOR PARTY

AMLA wants a rescue party that includes at least one lawful good cleric (allegiance to St. Fallwell helpful but not necessary). Auguries show that their policyholder, Charles Hapstone Belworth George, is in good health but is being exposed to strong temptation - and by the terms of his policy they must send a cleric to his rescue.

However, if no Lawful Good clerics are available, they will take any rescue party they can get.

AMLA will pay 1000 gp for Belworth's safe delivery from temptation, or for the return of his body. His family is offering an additional reward of 1000 (or DMO) for his safe return.

Belworth's policy also covers his WAND OF SPEAKING TO OBJECTS, which AMLA's auguries show that he lost on the same day he fell into temptation. 500 gp will be paid for its safe return either to Belworth or to AMLA. If the wand is found first, the party may use it to help complete their mission (see 500).

Belworth was last seen at the town of Topstoh.

FURTHER CITY INQUIRIES REVEAL

Belworth is a 1st level fighter who failed to qualify for paladinhood. He is redhaired with freckles, 5'5", weighs 180 lbs (plump build). His stats on record with AMLA are: str 7, dex 6, wis 18, int 12, cons 9, chr 8. (DM NOTE - events in the dungeon have changed Belworth's stats to: str 18, dex 18, wis 10, int 16, cons 18, chr 18.)

When rejected by the Governor's company of paladins, Belworth bought a suit of armour and set off to try to find some mystery to investigate to impress the Governor.

RUMOURS IN TOPSTOH

- (T) People come back from volcano either witless and weak or raised in stats.
- (T) Winston, the town weakling, came back much improved (several months ago).
- (T) After he came back Winston showed no interest in local girls.
- (T) After Winston came back he would do nothing but sit and stare at the fire.
- (T) Winston recently paid a wizard in the capitol 1000 gold pieces to make a very powerful love potion.
- (T) Winston ordered a magic amulet.
- (T) Lots of arson cases in town lately.
- (T) Winston was suspected of arson.
- (T) Winston was jailed on suspicion of arson.
- (T) Winston has disappeared.
- (T) Winston disappeared from a locked cell in the town jail.
- (T) Adventurers often bring back gold coins from the volcano.
- (T) A cult of worshippers of Inescue meets in the volcano.
- (T) Healing pills can be bought cheap at the tavern.
- (T) The demon Inescue frequents the volcano.
- (T) The demon Inescue has a pet octopus.
- (F) The demon Inescue feeds on mens souls.
- (T) The demon Inescue feeds on mens stats.
- (T) The demon Inescue can raise the stats of humans.
- (T) Before going to the volcano Belworth bought a Potion of Analyze Magic.

TOWN OF TOPSTOH

Topstoh is a moderate-sized town near a volcano.

In town it is common knowledge that the volcano is riddled with caverns and strange things happen there. Fresh-minted gold coins are plentiful in town, causing severe inflation - 20 gp for a meal, etc. The Governor has posted notices offering a reward of 1000 gold pieces for the identity of the counterfeiters plus 10,000 gold for anyone who can break up the operation.

Examination of the counterfeit coins shows they are purer gold than the Governor's - legend says that in the volcano is hidden a magical tome that tells how to transmute rock to gold (legend is false).

Any townsman has 35% to know that Belworth George went to the volcano.

FURTHER INQUIRIES IN TOPSTOH REVEAL

If sought out, Winston's landlady complains that Winston's room is filling up with firewood and coal he ordered before he was arrested. Several packages have been delivered too - one contains a powerful love potion. Winston received one package just before he was arrested and took it to jail with him.

The jailer reports that Winston disappeared from a locked cell before they could search him - jailer suspects teleportation.

Tavern barkeep sells 'Healing Pills' cheap - 1 gp each, has 3d20 on hand. (Winston sold them to him. Each heals 1-4 points of any damage, but requires a roll of constitution -8 to swallow - and takes away one point of the user's constitution, duration DMO. The Barkeep may or may not know this....

WHAT HAS REALLY HAPPENED

Under the mountain on the elemental plane of fire is a city of efreet whose queen likes human lovers but soon tires of them. To give her a steady supply the efreet have placed treasure in the volcano caverns to lure adventurers in.

When the efreet caught Winston several months ago, the demon Inescue (the efreet's ally and tenant) gave him pyromania and raised his stats to make him acceptable to the queen. After she tired of him and released him he still loved her and wanted to go back. He ordered a love potion and an amulet of the planes (paying with gold from the volcano). While awaiting delivery he set fires. The amulet was delivered just before he was arrested so he used it to escape from the town jail, then made his way back to the efreet queen's bedroom. She had her guards throw him in her prison.

Last week Belworth George saw the reward notices, went to the volcano and was caught by the efreet. He is also in the queen's prison, virtuously resisting her amorous advances.

DM OPTIONS - THINKING OR HACKING

For a thinking party, use characters so low-level that they cannot out-fight the efreet. Thus they must use their wits to find another solution - such as figuring out that Winston must have gotten in by his Amulet of the Planes, so they can get out with it - or bargaining with the efreet to give Winston's love potion to the queen so she will be satisfied with Winston again - or solving the efreet's problem in some other mutually profitable way....

For a hacking party, use 7-10th level characters who can fight the efreet. If they lack plane-shifting powers of their own, they can escape by using the scrolls of plane-shifting in the efreet queen's treasure cabinet or the headband of the efreeti who guards the pentagram.

For really dedicated hackers, you may need to throw in a few extra treasure-carrying, hackable monsters from your favorite encounter table - preferably tied in with campaign material already established in your world.

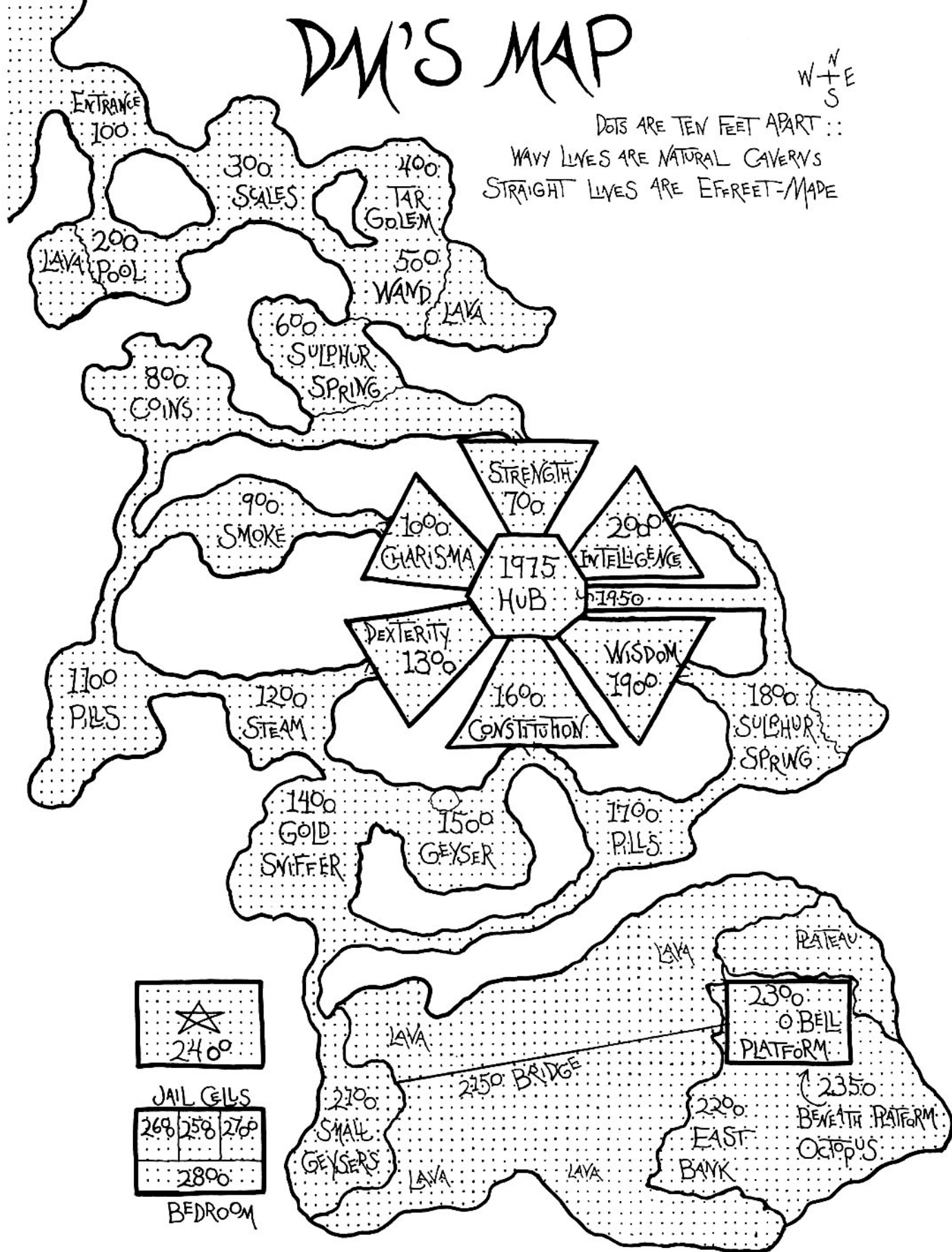
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DM'S MAP

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DOTS ARE TEN FEET APART ::

WAVY LINES ARE NATURAL CAVERNS
STRAIGHT LINES ARE EFFREET-MADE



VOLCANIC CAVERNS - GENERAL

Except for Inescue's trap rooms (and of course the Fire Plane jail and bedroom), this dungeon is all natural volcanic cavern chambers and passages. Ceiling heights are DMO.

100 = ENTRANCE

Carved into the stone over the entrance are runes that look like flames - see illustration. (They say "TANSTAAFL" which means "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch") If any object marked "TANSTAAFL" is taken under those runes the object and all people and monsters within 1d20' of the object will be teleported back to where the object came from.

A flickering red glow can be seen in the passage leading to 200.



200 = LAVA POOL

Glowing red lava pool fills western half of chamber (1d10 * ALP points of damage per round to anyone falling in) - illumines room even without torches. Floor is rough and slippery, slants to pool - dex roll (+DMO) to cross without slipping in.

300 = SCALES

Mounted on a white marble pedestal is a set of large golden scales. Engraved on their front are flame-shaped runes - again, TANSTAAFL. On the back of the scales is a small metal plate engraved "Handcrafted by Inescue". On their side Belworth scratched the holy symbol of his patron St. Falwell (and what that symbol should be we will leave to the imagination of the DM...)

The scales work in reverse - the side holding a heavy weight will rise, the light side will sink.

Inescue made the scales to raise some of Belworth's attributes and lower others. They rotate attributes around an axis of 14 (or DMO). Each time they are touched (whether by hand, by the wand, etc) they will raise one attribute which was below 14 to the same number of points above 14 (or to the racial maximum). Thus Belworth's intelligence 12 became intelligence 16. Belworth's other low attributes would all have gone above racial maximum, so they leveled off at 18 each.

The increase is felt immediately. Half an hour (or DMO) later, for each attribute raised some other attribute which was above 14 will be rotated to the same number of points under 14. Thus Belworth's original wisdom 18 became wisdom 10.

Since Belworth had only one high attribute to begin with, he got five attributes raised and only one lowered - a net gain.

Duration of changes is DMO - we suggest permanent or several months. Attributes that were EARNED should restore faster than those simply rolled up.

Anyone touching the scales is also afflicted with pyromania for 6 months. (May be played as a 'philia'; see INSANITY TABLES in HANDBOOK OF TRAPS TRICKS by DRAGON TREE)

DMO - if the WAND OF SPEAKING TO OBJECTS is used on the scales, user will have to name their purpose as "Raise low attributes and lower high ones" etc. Then the scales can tell him:

"Inescue made us. There was a redheaded man in armour. Inescue showed him a red jewel and said, 'I offer you again. If you are willing I will make you the strongest of men, and the most graceful, clever, healthy, wise, and handsome as well.'"

"But the man said, 'I take no boons from you.'"

"So Inescue said, 'My jewel you can decline, but this you cannot.' And he touched us to the man, and the man became more handsome. And he left us with the man for a while and the man threw water at us and muttered and scratched a symbol on us."

"Then finally we heard a woman's voice say, 'Take the scales above, at least they may serve to prepare others.' And then Inescue brought us here."

400 = TAR GOLEM // 500 = WAND

The north portion (400) of this double chamber is 15' lower than the corridor or the south portion (500). At the back of the south portion is a lava pool whose light illumines the south portion - even from the corridor the party can see a backpack and wand lying by the pool.

400 - In the lower north portion (400) is a tar golem. He will require 4 rounds to climb either to the corridor or to 500.

400 = TAR GOLEM

AC: 10 HD: 4-17 (DMO) 1 Attk: 1 pt/HD
Align: NN + immobilize
Int: non Move: 9" Size: 10' tall

The tar golem strikes with one fist per round. Any weapon, person etc touching the tar golem sticks to him - when he hits, the target sticks to his fist. Weapons do no damage, as cuts close instantly.

Oil, turpentine etc will dissolve him - 1d6 points damage per pint. 2 pints in the right place will free any person stuck, but a second roll to hit is required for exact placement.

Fire does double damage - for each point of fire damage taken there is a 10% chance the golem will ignite. If so, both the golem and each person stuck to him will take 1d4 points of damage per round thereafter per each of the golem's HD.

500 = LAVA POOL

Anyone falling in the lava takes 1d10 * ALP points damage per round.

Lying by the lava pool is Belworth's pack, his WAND OF SPEAKING TO OBJECTS and some scattered lead coins. (The Gold-Sniffer tore off the pack to get at Belworth's gold coins and transmute them to lead - see 1400)

WAND OF SPEAKING TO OBJECTS (value 20,000)

RARE - ANY CLASS MAY USE - plain black wand inscribed with its name.

When the wand is pointed at an object the object will say, "Tell what I do, then I'll speak you true".

If the user can state the function of the object to the DM's satisfaction, the object can converse with him for 5 minutes or DMO.

How smart, coherent, well-informed, cooperative or honest the object is.... Well, the DM needn't give ANY information he doesn't wish to.

600 = SULPHUR SPRING

Filling the northern half of the room and blocking the corridor is a hot sulphur spring (20' deep). Each 10-minute bath will cure 1d8 points of damage. (Whether cure is magic or natural is DMO)

NOTE ON
700 / 1000 / 1300 / 1600 / 1900 / 2000
INESCUE'S TRAP ROOMS

The demon Inescue made these rooms to collect the stats of superheroes to feed on. Each room will make each character exercise a different attribute, and each time he successfully rolls under the attribute he will lose one point from it (permanently or DMO).

In each case the attribute rolls start at -8 (or DMO). The character stays at -8 till he succeeds once, then he is at -9 till he succeeds again, then at -10, etc.

These rooms are all wedge-shaped. At the small end of some wedges is an illusory view into some room that is really too large to fit the space where the wedges meet.

Note on Detect Evil, Protection from Evil etc - Inescue is not present. Attributes are drained into the appropriate object in the room, where they remain until Inescue collects them. The rooms, objects etc are NOT evil, they are NN.

(DMO - attributes may even be gotten back out of the object if the proper action is performed. But it will not be possible to get more points out than the party has put there in the first place - ie, the objects start at 0 points stored, unless the DM is feeling VERY generous.)

DMO - Inescue will not take stats from any character whose total stats equal less than 90 or some other minimum the DM wishes to set. In this case a notice on each door may say "For Superheroes Only", and characters below the minimum will not be able to succeed in the critical action no matter what they roll.

DMO - Loss of stats may be temporary - duration DMO. (Earned gains in attributes may be easier to regain than super-attributes that were simply rolled up)

700 = STRENGTH TRAP

Empty room. At the narrow end is an immovable metal door with Inescue's emblem - an 'I' surrounded by evil symbols. This pattern is formed by rubies set into the door (200 gp each).

Frying a ruby out requires rolling strength -8. For the same person to get a second ruby requires strength -9, etc. ("Takes a lot of strength out of you...") Each time he gets a ruby 1 point of strength goes into the door. (Anyone who replaces a ruby in the door goes up one point in strength, until the points collected in the door are exhausted - door has 0 points until party puts some there)

Through the keyhole can be seen the illusion of a very large evil temple with gold altar, diamond chalices etc.

800 = COIN MACHINE

In this room is a large black metal box (NOT magic) with a single asbestos handle and a spout - below the spout is a pile of 2-20 fresh-minted gold coins. Each time the handle is pulled 2-20 coins come out (total inside is 100).

Lifting the lid requires combined strength of 30. Inside is a clockwork mechanism for molding coins.

When party leaves room an efreet hand sticks through from the fire plane and pulls the handle again. If the box is empty more fiery hands open the top and pour in molten gold. They will refill as many times as the DM can stand it. (The efreet made these machines to provide bait to keep adventurers coming so they can catch them to serve their queen)

DMO in the corner is a pile of identical lead coins left by the Gold Sniffer (see 1400).

900 = SMOKE

Room is full of smoke, save on constitution or cough loudly.

1000 = CHARISMA TRAP

This looks like a dimly-lit waiting room for a fancy barber shop or dressmaker's - at the back is an unbreakable glass wall behind which can be seen the ILLUSION of a brightly-lit showcase full of jewelry.

When the room is entered, lights will come on. The glass wall can still be seen through, but now anyone looking will see his own reflection also. All looking at or through the glass must roll charisma each round - any round when the character rolls UNDER his charisma he will be too absorbed admiring his own image to do anything else (and will have lost 1 point of charisma). First roll per character is at -8, after rolling under it at -8 he becomes -9 till he rolls under it again, then he becomes -10 etc.

DMO - lost points are stored in the glass. Deliberately making faces at the glass gains 1 point per round (glass starts at 0 points stored).

1100 = PILL BOX

Brass box full of large pills - various colors, all marked "Efreeti Control". Any person swallowing one can be controlled for 3 hours by any efreeti within 30'. (Degree of control is DMO - cannot influence choice of becoming queen's lover - at DMO may save on wisdom vs each command)

1200 = STEAM VENTS

Room is full of steam and slippery. 2 cracks in west wall send out continuous cones of hot steam (each 40' long, 10' wide at largest end). Roll dex to dodge between them - 1d4 damage if failed.

1300 = DEXTERITY TRAP

Empty wedge-shaped room. On the back wall is the ILLUSION of an open door leading into a 50' square magical laboratory containing a gold cauldron boiling over a magical green fire - this illusory cauldron appears to be overflowing and sending white foam all over the floor of the wedge-shaped room.

The foam on the floor of the wedge-shaped room is real (soapsuds) - floor and wall are very slippery. Roll dexterity for each 10' of movement. Each character rolls at -8 till he succeeds, then at -9 till he succeeds again, etc.

For each success, character loses 1 point of dexterity permanently or DMO. Lost points are stored in the floor - DMO anyone who DELIBERATELY falls down gains 1 point (floor starts with 0 points).

1400 = GOLD-SNIFFER'S LAIR

Chamber is littered with packs, clothing, bodies, and lead coins. A periodic whooshing sound can be heard from 1500 (geyser).

GOLD SNIFFER

AC: 0 HD: * HTK: 30 2 Attk: 1d4/1d4*
Align: hungry Rare claws*
Int: non Move: 9 Size: 15' long

*Hits as HD 3, saves as HD 12
100% immune to fire (magic resistance DMO - may be high)

The gold-sniffer looks like a giant armadillo with gold scales. He can detect gold up to 60' away, even through rock. He will tear the clothes and packs off of anyone carrying gold to get at it (long sharp claws do 1d4 in the process -- 3 hits per garment to remove). Can suck the virtue out of 10 gp weight of gold per round, thus transmuting gold coins (or whatever) to lead.

Scales are gold-bronze alloy - apparent value 250 gp, but at DMO if the gold-sniffer is killed the gold will change to lead in 3 days. He can be tamed and ridden - tunnels through earth 10' per minute - if tamed can be sold to any mining company for 10,000 * ALP gold pieces....

1500 = GEYSER

Geysir by north wall - goes 3 rounds between eruptions. Each eruption takes 3 rounds in all: 1st round it covers 3' radius with boiling water, 2nd round covers 20' radius, 3rd round covers 3' radius. All in covered area take 2d6 * ALP damage - save on dexterity to 1d6 * ALP.

Each time the water spurts it raises into view a set of ivory keys inset with jewels which are floating in the water. These are KEYS OF KNOWLEDGE, can open Secret Door at 1950. (At the bottom of the pool is parboiled body of the cleric who was carrying the keys)

KEYS OF KNOWLEDGE (value 20,000 gp)

UNCOMMON - Ring of jeweled ivory keys inscribed "Knowledge opens all doors".

This ring has all sizes and shapes of keys on it - one to fit any door encountered. The right size key can open ANY door (DMO) if the user can state to the DM's satisfaction the contents of the area beyond the door. Door may have a saving throw - percentage DMO. (DM may require a very specific description. These keys are meant to give players challenging puzzles - not free lunches)

1600 = CONSTITUTION TRAP

Box of vials labeled "Constitution Potion". Contents tastes so bad that the person drinking must roll constitution -8 for first sip, -9 for second etc. Each successful swallow lowers constitution permanently or DMO by 1 point.

Also box of pills labeled "Healing Pills". Each heals 1-4 but requires constitution -8 to swallow - each time a pill is swallowed a constitution point is lost. (Swallowing a second pill requires constitution -9, etc)

DMO - Inducing vomiting reverses all effects.

1700 = MIST & PILLS

Room is full of hot mist, like a steam bath - roll constitution or be very drowsy while in the room.

Brass box full of large pills - various colors, all marked "Efreeti Control". Any person swallowing one can be controlled for 3 hours by any efreeti within 30'. (Degree of control is DMO - cannot influence choice of becoming queen's lover - also at DMO may save on wisdom vs each command)

1800 = SULPHUR SPRING

Each 10-minute bath heals 1d8 damage.

1900 = WISDOM TRAP

Empty room - at back is oaken door partially split by an ax. Through the split can be seen the illusion of an armoury full of fancy jeweled weapons monogrammed with "I".

Each round in this room the party will be attacked by some illusory enemy - save on wisdom -8, -9 etc. Each time a character succeeds in rolling below his wisdom, 1 point of wisdom has gone into the floor, for Inescue to retrieve later. (DMO wisdom can be gained by DELIBERATELY acting very afraid of a known illusion - floor starts with 0 points) DMO illusions do no real damage.

The illusory enemies may be rolled randomly from your favorite encounter table, but it is better if each one is some old nemesis or phobia of one of the party members....

1950 = DEADEND CORRIDOR

Corridor deadends at a secret door. Door is locked - at DMO it can be opened only by KEYS OF KNOWLEDGE from geysir in 1200. (Keys will unlock door if user can guess contents of area beyond - "Illusion generator", "illusionist", "room of illusions" would be acceptable)

1975 = HUB ROOM

This room fills the space in the center between the wedge-shaped rooms.

Here different characters will see different ILLUSIONS. To a fighter this will appear to be the armoury seen behind the oaken door in 1900. To a mage it will appear to be the magical laboratory seen from 1300. To a cleric, the evil temple of 700. To a thief, the hoard of jewelry of 1000.

The only sight which all members will see alike is a plain wooden table in the middle of the room (which is real). On the table is a real, but INVISIBLE, MAGIC LANTERN.

MAGIC LANTERN (value 20,000 gp)

VERY RARE - Jeweled candle-lantern with stained-glass panels.

Choosing among the pictures painted on the stained glass panels, this lantern projects whichever illusion seems most reasonable to the person viewing it. Thus in a magical setting it projects the illusion of a magical laboratory, etc. In an empty room each character sees what his class is preoccupied with.

When the candle is lit the lantern becomes invisible and the illusion is projected. When the candle is extinguished the illusion disappears and the lantern becomes visible.

DMO - standing in front of the lantern will not block projection - however, throwing a cloak over the lantern etc will.

The candle is magic - can be extinguished but never burns down.

MAGIC TABLE (value 50,000)

VERY RARE - Very plain, unremarkable wooden table, much worn and splintery.

The table is made from a wood which cannot be affected by illusion - thus it remains visible in spite of any illusions cast in the room.

The wood's virtue remains even if the table is broken up. For each pound of wood carried, the user will have +1 on all Disbeliefs etc.

However, the piece of wood carried will remain visible in spite of any type of illusion or invisibility the user tries to employ himself, including Displacement, camouflage etc etc.

2000 = INTELLIGENCE TRAP

Big magical book chained to wall, (cannot be removed). Writing is so fancy and decorated with "I" monograms that reader must roll intelligence -8, -9 etc for each sentence read. Each time the character succeeds in reading a sentence, 1 point of his intelligence goes into the book. (DMO intelligence may be gained by reading aloud, deliberately INCORRECTLY - 1 point per sentence - book starts with 0 points stored)

Book begins, "This is the story of the beautiful queen of the efreet and her human lovers." At DMO its content may simply make strong men blush, or may tell any hints of the true story the DM would like to give.

2100 = SMALL GEYSERS

The floor here is riddled with small geysers and steam vents. Each erupts at regular intervals. By careful timing it is possible to dodge between them without taking damage. Each 10' distance traveled requires an intelligence roll - if failed, take 2 points damage * ALP.

DMOs: a character may stand in place and take no damage - retracing one's path is easier - only requires intelligence +5.

2150 - BRIDGE

The geyser area ends at a chasm 1000' deep with a flaming lava pool at the bottom. A 1'-wide black metal suspension bridge leads across. The bridge has 2 handrails made of metal cable and is in fact perfectly safe - however the view is so frightening that a wisdom roll is required for every 40' travelled. Anyone failing freezes in panic.

The east bank (area 2200) of the chasm is 20' lower than the west bank. However, the bridge ends at a metal platform raised above the east bank which is level with 2100.

2200 - EAST BANK

This area is dark and empty except for scraps of prey left by the AIR OCTOPI who lair under the platform (area 2350).

DM NOTE: Anyone who planeshifts from 2200 to the elemental plane of fire will appear in 2800 = QUEEN'S BEDROOM.

2350 = BENEATH PLATFORM / OCTOPUS LAIR

Floor is level with 2200, ie 20' lower than platform. It is the lair of 2 AIR OCTOPI - Inescue's pets who hunt and suck stats for him. At all times one octopus will be here while its mate wanders the passages - if disturbed the octopus here will whistle for its mate, who will arrive in 2d6 rounds.

DM NOTE: Anybody who planeshifts to the elemental plane of fire from under the platform will appear in one of the Jail Cells (2600, 2500, or 2700).

Among the rubble and corpses here is the sword SOUL-KEEPER (value 20,000 gp).

SWORD SOUL-KEEPER

RARE - FOR FIGHTERS ONLY - jeweled sword.

The sword can dance 3 times per day (10 rounds each time), and can speak Common, Dragon and LG.

If the sword's user dies in battle his soul goes into the sword. There it can exercise all his normal powers (within reason - DMO): to hit, detect traps etc, any spells he knows, etc. All stats remain same. While in this form he CAN learn new skills and earn experience.

If a second owner dies, both souls will be stored and the highest wisdom will control (other becomes unconscious) - up to 30 character levels may be stored at once.

AIR OCTOPUS

AC: 6 HD: 1 per arm* Attk: 1 per arm*
Align: LE Very rare 1d6 per attack
Int: semi Move: 9 Size: 10' diam

This is actually a demon whose material vehicle was constructed by Inescue. When mortals fight him he draws strength from their auras (life levels). He will grow one arm for each character-level fighting him (an arm can grow and attack in the same round).

Each person fighting the octopus hits at -1 per his own level (ie, a 10th level fighter is -10). The octopus is 100% magic resistant and immune to magic weapons, but normal weapons do triple damage.

The octopus contains bladders of lighter-than-air gas which allow him to float at any height he chooses. At DMO this is explosive.

2300 = PLATFORM / BELL

Mounted in the center of the platform is a large brass bell (see illustration on Page 12). As soon as anyone steps on the platform big red letters appear on the bell that say in Lawful Evil alignment language, "EFREETI SUMMONING". If the bell is not touched after 2 rounds (or DMO) the language will change to Neutral Evil, and so on up through all the alignments. (Any NPC questioned will tell the reason for this: after dealing with Belworth the efreet were disgusted with good characters and wanted them only as a last resort)

Anyone touching the bell directly or indirectly is plane-shifted to 2400 = PENTAGRAM (DMO: Effect may be delayed)

Bell radiates strong neutral magic. Small letters engraved around the bottom say in Common: "Please ring for service - Tanstaaf!".

The bell is mounted to a bracket which is welded to the platform. There is a similar bracket at each end of the platform, empty. (The efreet move the bell depending on where they want their captives to appear in 2400)

On the platform and on the north wall are scribbled poems (see next page). Poems on platform and wall:

Hot to trot,
How 'bout a date?
I want to be
Your next flaming mate
Signed, Hot Lips Winston

Roses are red, violets are blue,
I love you and all the flames in my heart do too.
Signed, Winston

I came, I saw, and I flamed over you.
Signed, Winston

Violets are blue,
Roses are red
What a hot time we had
Together in
Yours, signed Winston

2400 = PENTAGRAM

Any person who touches the bell in 2300 appears here on the elemental plane of fire. He is standing in the center of a large pentagram (burnt into an asbestos floor) which protects him from the raging flames outside the pentagram. Many efreet are surrounding the pentagram. They will ask him to be their queen's lover for 100 years. (Efreet control pills cannot influence this decision - character has free choice) If he refuses they will open a trapdoor which drops him into 2500. If he agrees they will open an aisle through the flames to C, where a similar trapdoor opens to 2800 = QUEEN'S BEDROOM.

Pentagram is drawn on top of an asbestos-covered box-like enclosure which houses 2500, 2600, 2700, and 2800. A similar trapdoor opens into each jail cell.

The jail cells are lined with asbestos to keep humans safe from fire. George is in adjoining cell 2600, Winston in 2700. Efrete and queen visit regularly to renew their offer: treasure (queen's treasure box - 1000 * ALP gp value) and freedom for all prisoners if one of them will be the queen's lover for 100 years. Inescue can also give her lover straight 18 stats - duration DMO. At DMO they may also offer to have Inescue restore some or all lost stats for all the party, and to give the party spells of their own choice. (In fact the 100 years of love passes in a single human day, but this should be concealed as long as possible - these efrete do not understand human time very well) She does not want Winston - he served last term and she is tired of him.

DMO - Each person who touches the bell will arrive and be asked separately. If more than one agrees the later ones will be put in the cell to wait their turn.

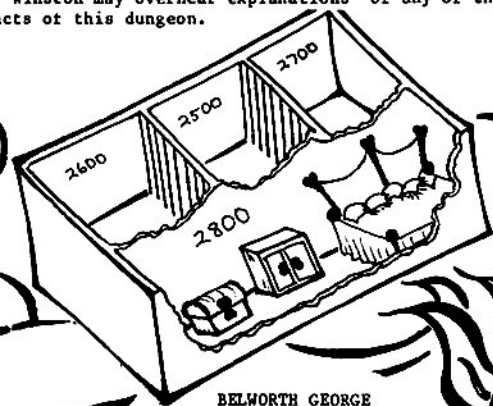
Efrete may also consider constructive suggestions like releasing prisoners under a geas to find a better lover than any of them would be, or to fetch a love potion to make the queen want Winston again, etc. Other efrete are tired of all the bother of finding her new lovers so they would be happy to slip her the potion. They will generously (2,000 * ALP gp or DMO) reward any party who finds a way to solve this problem for them. They have unlimited gold and jewels. At DMO can also reward by restoring or raising stats, or by bestowing spells of the party's choice.

DM NOTE: It is possible to tunnel through the walls, roof or floor of the cells - but tunneling into any unprotected area will admit enough heat to make the cell unlivable after 3 rounds.

DM Option: If you wish to allow the party to fight their way back, the pentagram may be a permanently safe area. If they tunnel through the roof of the cell and arrive back in the pentagram, an efrete with a GOLD HEADBAND (value 500 * ALP gp) inscribed with a pentagram will enter the pentagram and attack them. (How many efrete are still watching and help him is DMO) If they defeat him they can use the HEADBAND to return to the BELL ROOM. (The HEADBAND'S only power is to shift the wearer and companions to and from the fire plane 10 times per month)

DM NOTE: Any person plane-shifting to prime material plane from the cells will appear in 2350 = OCTOPI LAIR.

DMO - EFREET GUARDS gossip a lot. The party, Belworth or Winston may overhear explanations of any of the puzzling facts of this dungeon.



AC: plate & shield HD: 1 Damage: weapon
Align: LG Unique 1st level fighter
Weight: 170 lbs Size: 5' 8" tall
st 18, dx 18, ws 10, int 16, cons 18, chr 18

Belworth is as silly a prig as the DM can stomach. He came investigating the counterfeiting and was plane-shifted when he threw holy water on the Bell.

When Belworth refused to have his strength raised by Inescue's "red stone" (from the door of 700), Inescue made a pair of scales and touched Belworth with them - this infected Belworth with pyromania, lowered his wisdom and raised all his other stats, but he still resisted temptation and even managed to scratch St. Falwell's holy symbol on the scales. (Afterwards Belworth overheard the queen ordering the scales put upstairs to soften up other adventurers)

AC: 10 HD: 1 Damage: weapon
Align: LN Unique 1st level MU
Weight: 100 lbs Size: 5' tall
Str 18, Dx 18, Chr 18, Cons 18, Wis 5, Int 7

Winston is consumed with love and jealousy - his attitude is secretive and uncooperative. He will conceal the fact that he carries an Amulet of the Planes. Rather, he will claim that he wished his way in or that love laughs at locksmiths. He will also conceal the fact that he spent what seemed to him 100 years of love with the queen, then found that only one day had passed in the town.

Winston's Amulet of the Planes allows shifting to any plane, but does not assist on travel within a plane. Any class may use it - fumble factor for beginners is DMO.

2800 = EFREETI QUEEN'S BEDROOM

Temperature 120F. This is a luxurious fireproof boudoir - curtains are made of gold and platinum threads (1000 gp), frames of furniture are diamonds (poor quality - 2000 gp) walls and furniture are padded with asbestos. 50 buckets of water and 50 buckets of sand are sitting on the floor or hanging from the walls. Lounging on the bed is the EFREETI QUEEN and her pet SALAMANDER-LIZARD, who is wearing a sweater knitted of steel wool.

DMO - in a locked cabinet are 3 scrolls of Plane-shifting and miscellaneous jewels worth 1000 * ALP gp. (If pleased with her lover she will give him these jewels)

DM NOTE: Shifting to the Prime Material plane from this room puts a person in 2200 = EAST BANK.

NOTE - If playing the series THE LOST VALLEY OF JER'DRUN, a room full of snow and icicles should be added adjoining the bedroom - see page 32.

EFREETI QUEEN

AC: 2 HD: 10 Attk: magic
Align: NN Unique
IQ: 18+ Move: 9/24 Size: 12' tall

DMO use any reference on efrete, or she may have the following powers from DRAGON TREE SPELL BOOK (10th level ability - page numbers are in parenthesis). Time rewind (36), transfer stiffness (37), see other planes (57), attack other planes (59), dying curse (71), cold fire (39), righteous runes of fire (45), instant baroque (43), summon poltergeist (51), time speed / time slow (69), body part teleportation (74), transfer friction (36), Jireen's flying phlogiston (44), wood light (52), blood boil (64).

In addition she can at will polymorph self or other, telepath any creature, do any fire-related spell and cause sunburn by flashing her eyes (-1 dex till cured).

She will not attack unless offended, but will make amorous advances to the most charismatic male in the party (not counting Winston). Winston will then attack this male. She wears a ruby necklace worth 2000 * ALP gp.

SALAMANDER-LIZARD

AC: -2* HD: 6+7 2 attk: ld3/ld3
Align: NN Rare + 75% to catch fire
IQ: 18+ Move: 24"/24" Size: 4' long

*Natural AC 0; sweater gives +2

Immune to fire or heat damage

Looks like a small dragon but is too white-hot to be seen clearly. Prefers making eloquently-sarcastic remarks to fighting. Will defend his mistress but if seriously endangered will claw a hole in the wall and escape. (This requires 3 rounds - and admits enough heat to make the room unliveable after another 3 rounds)

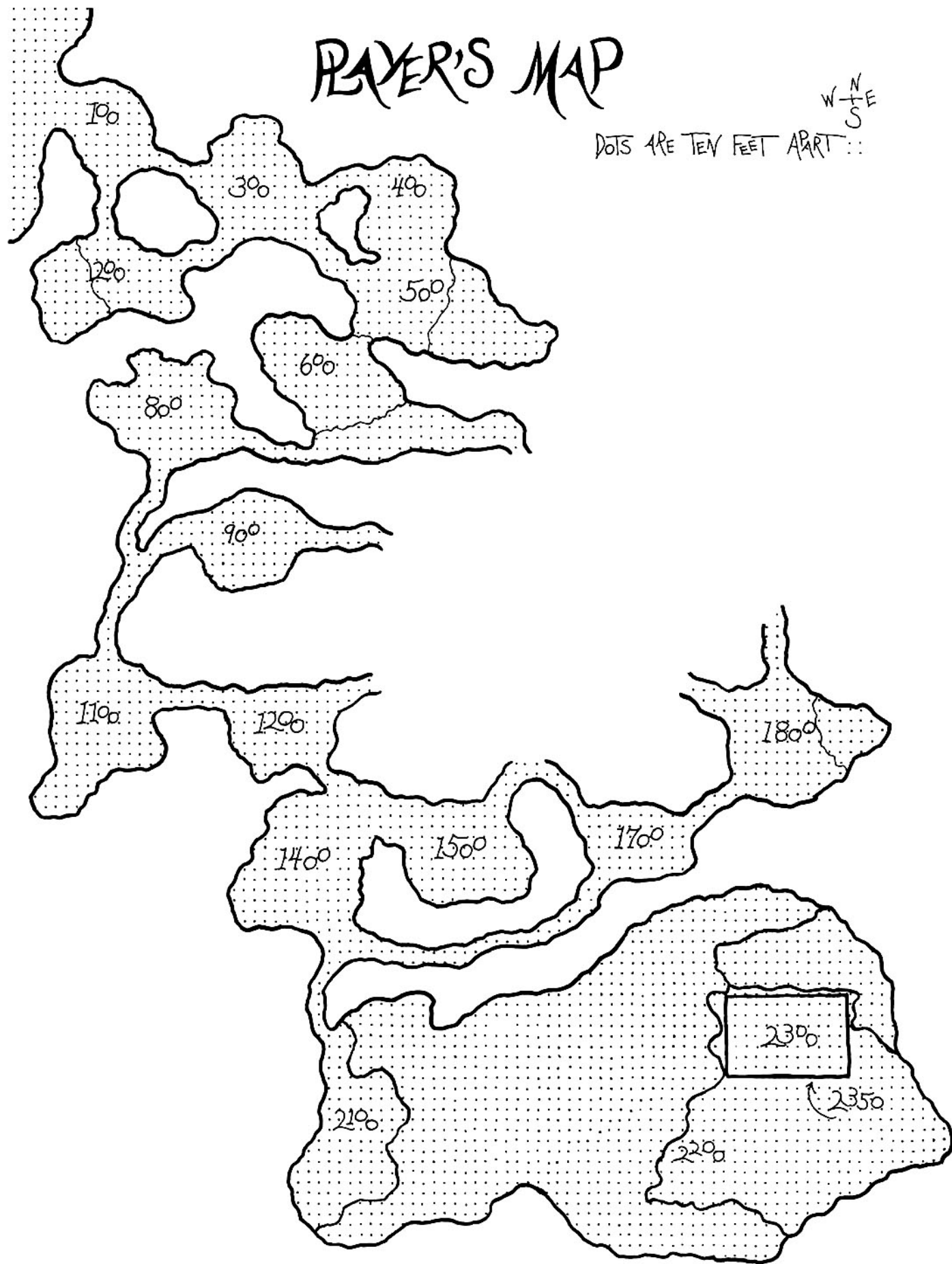
He is wearing a fancy sweater knitted of steel wool, and a jeweled collar worth 1000 * ALP gp.



PLAYER'S MAP



DOTS ARE TEN FEET APART ::





PREFACE FOR DM

Here are several short dungeon plots, all in the same desert setting. Played as a series, along with A DEATH IN THE DESERT and WHAT'S A BELWORTH?, they all add up to a single mystery.

To play the series, start with the BACKGROUND sections which follow. AMLA will send the party to the desert to seek both Lady Rocmirra and her magic scrolls. The first dungeon in the series is A DEATH IN THE DESERT, in which they recover the scrolls. Next they must follow Lady Rocmirra's trail through THE PALACE OF THE BANDIT PRINCE, HOSPICE, and THE VALE OF MAYA, finally encountering her in WHAT'S A BELWORTH?. In the last of the series, THE LAND OF LIVING JEWELS, they are hired to seek the victim whom Lady Rocmirra herself has kidnapped....

Space does not permit giving full details of all these plots. The plot summaries given may either be used as skeletons around which to construct your own original adventures, or inserted into ready-made modules which lack plots.

ORCADIA

BACKGROUND

The party is hired by Amazon Mutual Life Assurance for a two-fold job: to rescue the scholar Lady Rocmirra and to retrieve the magic scrolls she was carrying.

A carrier pigeon has just brought word that the caravan in which Lady Rocmirra was crossing the southern desert has been robbed and the scrolls stolen. A letter has also been received demanding a large ransom for Rocmirra's safe return.

Rumours from the south say that desert bandits have recently begun to unite under a mysterious leader who calls himself the Bandit Prince.

FURTHER INQUIRIES REVEAL:

ROCMIRRA & THE ORCAN LIBERATION FRONT

Lady Rocmirra was a graduate student at the University in the same provincial capitol where AMLA's office is located. Concerned about drought and famine conditions in the south, she had crossed the desert to do research in the library in Orcadia to seek spells that could help relieve the problem. She had written that she had found three useful scrolls and was bringing them back (but did not reveal their contents). The University carries a large insurance policy on both Lady Rocmirra's life and the scrolls.

The note received via carrier pigeon was sent by the caravan's owner, Sir Mormulo, from the robbery site. It did not mention kidnapping.

The ransom note was posted in the city itself the day after the pigeon arrived.

NOTE - the following information should be easily available AS SOON AS THE PLAYERS ASK FOR IT, BUT NOT BEFORE! Some parties run all the way through A DEATH IN THE DESERT and part way into THE PALACE OF THE BANDIT PRINCE before they begin to suspect Rocmirra's motives. As soon as they begin to wonder about her, they should meet an NPC who knows the story related below: at the University, they may meet Rocmirra's professor - along the canyon gulch, an NPC henchman or wandering bard - at the robbery scene, the caravan owner or his assistant - at the kidnapping scene, Rocmirra's Secretary who travelled with her.

Rocmirra's interest in Orcadia began when she was an undergraduate studying legends of the Ovidians - a mythical race of desert dwellers (said to be good demons!) who promote non-violence and seek Enlightenment and Release from the Wheel through the Practice of the Great Art and the Lesser Art of Master Ovid. While most of the material seemed merely legend, she remembered one marginal note by an explorer who was also a powerful wizard, which said "Here I searched and found naught of peaceful demons nor their vanishing oasis, but only dusty death. And the scrolls I made for help in our famines are lost in Orcadia where the orcs can neither read nor use them...." (Aside from providing a source for and clue to the scrolls Rocmirra sought, this wizard has nothing further to do with these plots. Use a suitable NPC already established in your campaign.)

A fellow-student of the Ovidian legends, young cleric Caspian, was involved with a campus revolutionary group, the Orcan Liberation Front, promoting racial tolerance and free love. He persuaded Rocmirra to join the group and later she became the mistress of the group's leader Volannian, a powerful fighter-mage rumoured to be part orc.

When officials arrested the group, Volannian and Caspian fled to the southern desert. Because of her family's influence and her own scholastic brilliance, Rocmirra was released and allowed to stay at the University. She never married, and it is rumoured that she and Volannian are still in touch.

If the party follows up the ransom demand, which was posted in the University city on the day following the arrival of the pigeon, they find another ex-member of the revolutionary group, one Anthony Pandi, who also claims credit for all other terrorist or sabotage activities that may be going on in your world, and demands ransom for all other important missing persons....

Inquiries about Volannian's and Caspian's activities in the desert connect them vaguely with the Bandit Prince, and with the Ogres of Castle Ognard.



YET FURTHER INQUIRIES REVEAL: OVIDIAN LEGENDS

As with Rocmirra's personal background, the following details should not be forced on the players until they seek them, though hints may be dropped as liberally as you like. The details should be hard to find, spaced throughout the early part of the journey. The party may hear them from the same NPC's who know Rocmirra's story. Or, Rocmirra may have stolen these scrolls from the University library, or discovered new ones in Orcadia, then lost them along her way, so that such scroll-fragments turn up one by one in various treasure troves throughout the series.

FRAGMENT OF OVIDIAN MARCHING SONG:

Gentle come and gentle go
Water through the rain and snow
Through plants and men and down again
Through stream and fen begin again
As steam and vapor up again
And down again in rain again
Thus goes soul around again
Till ocean home is found again.

...

Bodies this and bodies that
Bodies thin and bodies fat
Bodies more or bodies less
Bear each one in humbleness
Travel on in hopefulness
Bodies matter less and less
As they change in speediness
The more you change the more you're
blessed
Till soul-drop's free from dirtiness
Home in ocean's blissfulness.

FRAGMENT CONCERNING MASTER OVID:

"...and as to the reputed one called Master Ovid, in this Shadow named Delos none know whether such man were true or wandering shade himself, for in no scrolls can be found his name save as a rumour of poets, no taxes he paid nor owned naught albeit the poets rumour he rode away a waterbuffalo in search of a lost ox....

"...and of the Great Art some said he knew, he would say naught but laugh, but all said he had the power of vanishing and reappearing and always with great wealth of gold and jewels which he freely gave his followers on condition they waste it in luxurious pleasure, nor could prison hold him nor weapon find him for he was always gone none knew where.

SCHOLAR'S ACCOUNT:

"Mattered it naught what each had been before, elf dwarf orc ogre or sundry other sort, all being equal in the Great Art. And thus it is said that all by this practice over many years became the spirits now called by some 'good demons' and by others 'Hospiciers'."

"Sure it is that atired of the crowds who sought him in the cities for his vanishing and his gold, Master Ovid sought the unpeopled desert. And when his students bewailed his leaving he said, 'Through the Art you may visit me but beware on the journey. In a blue valley I will build you a pyramid for a sign, which is as real as the world of this city. In that valley, called Jer'drun, there is a paradise in a crater and I will build a way to it that all may use. And as it is paradise of pleasure already, I will make spells to keep it paradise of gentleness and non-violence as well. And those students who go with me will make a place of help for all weary travellers, which will instruct them in the beginnings of the Great Art as well.'"

CITY MONK'S ACCOUNT:

"Thus I have heard. In the Paradise hidden in Jer'drun with the cool springs and the blue air many kinds of folk live all in peace, nor can any take arms even an if they would, so there all the nations meet to talk peace. And such is the cooling of warlike passions there that it causes snow to fall on the ground and green pines to grow even in the midst of the sandy desert.

"But if a man will stubbornly by his proud strength force his way there he finds hell and brimstone only....
DESERT MONK'S COMMENT:

"Were it only so easy to cool passions! In fact the warlike passions rage the hotter for being denied action, like a banked fire, nor can all the snow of Jer'drun and its pines, which be of natural earth not magic, prevent the inhabitants' devious and warlike schemes and intrigues from growing faster than the ferns and rosevines which flourish so thick and well-watered there...."

ANOTHER SCHOLAR'S ACCOUNT

"Now it is said that one so-called Master Ovid was once chela or student of Mahavira, believing with the Jains in ahimsa, but they expelled him. Then was he chela to Guatama for his belief in anicca, but they expelled him. Then chela was he to Patanjali for his belief in the maya-nature of the Multiverse, but they expelled him.

"And the reason these venerable Terran groups of Jains, Buddhists and Hindus expelled him despite his agreement with their doctrines, was his immoral conduct in teaching his chelas the use of magic, soma-drug, sex-love and all manner of luxurious living, all of which things the heathen Jains Buddhists Hindus preach against no less than do the followers of our blessed St. Fallwell....

PROVERBS & SAYINGS OF MASTER OVID:

"My Great Art be naught save a condensed and speedy flowing with the nature of time which is anicca."

"My Great Art be wheels within the Wheel, my Lesser Art be mayas within the Maya."

"Ay speedily the Great Art leads to Enlightenment, as wheels within wheels travel faster than the Great Wheel alone."

"Ay speedily the Lesser Art by skill in the small mayas leads away from belief in the Great Maya."

"Always temper the shorn lamb to the wind."

"By the strength of need is change accomplished."

"Change not the world but transform yourself, by which is the world transformed."

"All change not from the will of the changed is violence."

"Do not violently adapt the world to yourself, but peaceably adapt yourself to the world."

"Shakespeareji saith the madman, the poet and the lover be anear to truesight. Use love or wine to clear your eyes to pierce the veil of Maya. In Jer'drun I will build you a Vale of Maya for the learning of the Great Art."

"Worldly desires depart not by starving but by overfilling."

NOTE FOR DM ONLY - Anicca means change, ceaseless flow of events. Maya means illusion - as a Phantasmal Force. Ahimsa means non-violence or reverence for life. Chela means student. Soma was a psychedelic sacrament. The Wheel means repeated reincarnation. Enlightenment means blissful freedom from 'the Wheel' - a raindrop rejoining the ocean is a popular symbol of this.

All these terms are explained in any Terran reference book on Oriental religions. For a thinking party, the adventure is richer if the PLAYERS have to look such terms up themselves, between dungeon sessions. (To rationalize this for play, I let the party carry with them a magical book which contains "anything you can find in any book in America, present company excepted....")

For more details on the Ovidians, see THE VALE OF MAYA.

Interfacing 'A DEATH IN THE DESERT'

In addition to the introductory material given with A DEATH IN THE DESERT, you may wish to have the caravan owner, Sir Mormulo, drop hints about Rocmirra's odd behavior during the journey - secret meetings with wandering tramps, playing with pigeons or mirrors etc. A suspicious-minded party might get the idea she was trying to signal someone....



THE PALACE

CLUES INSIDE THE DUNGEON

During the early part of this episode, if the party has not already begun to suspect Rocmirra and Vollanian of conspiring to fake a robbery-kidnapping, Rocmirra's jealous Secretary will suggest that idea and point out Rocmirra's suspicious actions during the caravan trip.

Most of the Palace is really a makeshift structure of canvas and wood, thinly disguised by illusions of ostentatious luxury. It adjoins an underground section leading into the cliff.

The decor is Late Barbaric Brutal Splendor, but only the brutality is real. The guards' gold armour is just painted yellow, the cushions are horsehair dyed purple, the guards wink to each other even as they shout salutes to "His Excellency!" The lamps burn only crude oil, but the lampshades are real human skin....

Small tables and hatracks are made from stuffed orcs, impaled orcs with continual light spells on them decorate the walls, chandeliers are candles held in the orifices of orcs hung from the ceiling by their own intestines....

In places of honor are stuffed ogres - apparently stuffed some time after their accidental or natural deaths.

Living here in honor is a simple-minded half-ogre Lady Anastasia, who claims descent from the grandfather of the ogre Count Ivor of Ognard; her hobby is geneology, and the Prince has employed her to trace his family tree. So far she has found only one possible ogre ancestor, unconfirmed - a bastard great-uncle of the present Count Ivor of Ognard. Anastasia is also supposed to act as Lady in Waiting for the long-awaited Bandit Princess. (She can confirm that it is local ogre custom to honor their dead by stuffing them, or necrotaxodermis)

With a small treasure chest is found a note addressed to Count Ivor - "I trust this gift will disprove rumors of my supposedly tainted blood" - signature is illegible. The chest contains pickled orcs' ears.

In the Prince's study is found a letter from Count Ivor offering to recognize the Prince's claim to ogre nobility blood if the Prince will organize the bandits to fight on the ogres' side in 'the coming heated conflict'.

RUMOURS

Also missing is the 'Hermit' - a quiet young holy man who had tended Rocmirra's wounds.

The Hermit was not present when Rocmirra disappeared.

The Hermit was very upset when he learned of her disappearance, rushed away toward the Palace.

The Hermit snuck into the 'Palace' and hasn't been seen since.

The Hermit was first seen in this area shortly after the Prince began gathering power among the bandits. The Hermit was kind and sorrowful, would not speak of his past, but seemed to be doing penance for some past sin.

The Hermit disbelieved the story of the Ovidians, said it was a 'beautiful symbol but not a fact'.

The Bandit Prince is stronger and fiercer than any full-blood human.

When he first came here the Bandit Prince treated orcs well, but now he is deliberately cruel to them.

Orcs and ogres who live across the canyon have an uneasy alliance.

Ogres have claimed this territory but never succeeded in conquering it.

Many mysterious creatures live in the canyon.

Ogres from Castle Ognard are arming for war against some mysterious foe.

The Bandit Prince is rumoured to be half orc.

The Bandit Prince has been casting auguries to find out his ancestry.

CHALLENGE FOR PARTY

In this adventure the party explores the lair of the Bandit Prince, who has captured Lady Rocmirra. They have encounters with the Prince's guards and magical traps, and finally battle the Prince himself. But at the end they find that Rocmirra has already escaped and must be sought in the Lost Valley of the legendary Ovidians.

ASSIGNMENT

After recovering the scrolls in A DEATH IN THE DESERT, the party is informed that the caravan has been attacked again further along its route - an apparent kidnapping attempt. They are asked to proceed to the scene of the new attack and act as Rocmirra's bodyguard through the rest of her journey.

Arriving at the scene, they find several caravan wagons immobilized after brutal attacks on the camels and drivers. Rocmirra herself is missing, presumed taken by the bandits (see OPTIONS) in yet a third attack. Local desert dwellers suggest searching the nearby 'Palace' of the 'Bandit Prince' - a fantastic structure, mostly illusion, built on strange rock formations at the foot of a cliff. What the structure is really made of no one knows, but it seems to be the headquarters for local bandits and their strange, new, pale-skinned leader.



BANDIT PRINCE

The Bridal Suite has the same decor: sheets are coarse linen with designs painted on to imitate embroidery - a coat of arms in which the only distinguishable feature is a large letter O; an elaborate, man-high wedding cake proves to be sand mixed with glue and spread over stacked kegs; the lampshades here have the blood left on, to cast a nice rosy light....

But in the Bridal Suite there is a difference. Sheets have been spread over the bodies; an orc slave speaks of kind treatment from 'the lady'; the only real bit of luxury in the Palace, a crystal goblet monogrammed 'O', lies broken as though thrown on the floor; disarray speaks of some sort of scuffle and flight.

Expert examination of tracks, auguries and fragmentary reports from encountered NPC's give this picture: Rocmirra entered willingly; the Hermit followed and was captured; Rocmirra quarreled with the Prince; she freed the Hermit; guards chased them deep into the dungeon.

Following, the party encounter the Prince himself in his own apartment, and at a dramatic moment Rocmirra enters, free and dressed to match his own fake finery. She declares herself happy with the Prince and makes fun of the party. (In fact she is a high-quality illusion the Prince is casting)

The trail of the real Rocmirra and the Hermit leads into the dungpit of the deepest cell in the dungeon, where the guards at the Prince's command had walled them up to die. Stains and smudges show that the Hermit was wounded. Rocmirra couldn't carry him, she went on alone, digging and crawling. Beside a steep narrow passage upward she left a message: "Dearest, I have always followed your dreams, follow if you can." The passage leads to an opening in the far side of the cliff, overlooking a beautiful blue hazy valley with a pyramid next to a crater in the center....

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED: ROC MIRRA'S PLAN

Volannian and Caspian joined the bandits. Volannian became the Bandit Prince, soon losing his ideals and becoming as brutal as the bandits he led. Caspian was revolted by their life, broke with them and became a nameless desert hermit seeking for the origins of the Ovidian legends.

Despite his denials, Volannian had secretly believed that he was part orc - thus his interest in the peace-with-orcs movement and his initial good treatment of the desert orcs. Upon finding that he may be part ogre instead, he repudiated his ties with the orcs.

Rocmirra had kept in touch with Volannian by letter. Together with Anthony Pandi they planned to fake a robbery-kidnapping, collect the ransom, and escape with the scrolls. However, Volannian had to make three separate attempts before he succeeded with the kidnapping.

On the day of the first attack, Volannian sent 100 of his bandits against the caravan while he waited in the hills with the rest of his force. The 100 stole the wagon carrying the scrolls and accidentally injured Rocmirra - then a troop of king's soldiers arrived. A few days later the caravan resumed its journey, taking Rocmirra, and Volannian and the rest of his bandits secretly followed it.

Several days later Volannian struck again. This time he killed most of the camels and drivers, leaving the caravan immobile, but was wounded himself and had to retreat to his base fortress. Hearing of the attack, Caspian (known only as the Hermit), arrived to help nurse Rocmirra and the other victims.

For as long as the DM likes, Volannian may be out of action and Rocmirra and the Hermit at the stranded caravan, available for encounters before she enters the Palace.

TREASURES

Numerous small WANDS OF ILLUSION all monogrammed O or H, some inscribed with Ovidian proverbs. Their illusions can do no damage. (Bandits stole them from a prospector)

NOTE - Throughout the early part of this series, Volannian and Caspian should be referred to only as 'the Bandit Prince' and 'the Hermit', since speculation about their identities (along with speculation about Rocmirra's true motives) is the most important part of the on-going mystery. Even if the players make the right guesses and feel 90% sure, don't confirm anything for free! Make them wait for that last 10% until they find Caspian in THE VALE OF MAYA and he admits all.

Options for DEATH & PALACE

SIMPLICITY

A group unused to mystery dungeons will probably have all they can handle at once with the clues to the missing scrolls which are provided in A DEATH IN THE DESERT.

For simplicity's sake, the DM may wish to delay the question of kidnapping or any encounters with Rocmirra or the Hermit until the scrolls are recovered. In this case no word of the later attack has reached the camp by the canyon - Sir Mormulo informs the party that Rocmirra was injured in the first attack, which made her unable to give any useful information about the scrolls; she travelled on with the caravan two days after the robbery, and the ransom note must have been a hoax, as she was at liberty (though wounded) the very day it was sent!

After A DEATH IN THE DESERT is finished, word of the second attack reaches the camp and the party is sent to the stranded caravan.

For greatest simplicity, Rocmirra and Caspian may enter the Palace just before the party arrive, and her Secretary can tell the party anything you wish them to know.

If you wish the party to encounter Rocmirra and Caspian in person, you will have to manipulate events (ie, cheat!) so that Volannian succeeds in kidnapping Rocmirra in spite of any precautions the party takes, and Caspian succeeds in following her into the PALACE OF THE BANDIT PRINCE.

HUMAN INTEREST -

Some groups will find A DEATH IN THE DESERT rather dry unless they are FIRST exposed to the human-interest puzzle of Volannian's and Caspian's identities and Rocmirra's real motives. Experienced plot-solvers will demand such background information from the University before ever accepting the assignment - if your group doesn't, have some NPC hint at such matters if ever the group's interest seems to lag.

To further increase human interest, you may wish the party to meet Rocmirra and 'the Hermit' in person before playing A DEATH IN THE DESERT. In this case the party may hear reports of the attack on Rocmirra and visit the stranded caravan while she is still under the Hermit's care. Remember that Rocmirra cannot tell them the subjects of the scrolls without ruining A DEATH IN THE DESERT, so she will have to feign amnesia or delirium....

IN EITHER CASE -

Neither Rocmirra nor Caspian will tell the party anything that is not stated or implied in FURTHER INQUIRIES REVEAL and YET FURTHER INQUIRIES REVEAL. They may speak of the Ovidian legends (which neither of them currently believe in), but most of the personal material they will conceal or deny - Rocmirra for obvious reasons, and Caspian to protect her.

Secretly Caspian suspects Rocmirra of being Volannian's accomplice. He is telling her about the change in Volannian and trying to persuade her not to go through with the plan. She cannot accept such charges against her old love, but is beginning to be troubled with doubts, and to greatly value Caspian's support and care....

AV Route

CHALLENGE FOR PARTY

In this episode the party follows Lady Rocmirra's trail to an alien travellers' way station and oasis in the Valley of Jer'drun, where they must contend with many strange traps and tricks before learning Rocmirra's destination: a mountain named Endor, at the far end of the Valley.

PREFACE FOR DM

The Hospice furnishings and treasures may be scattered throughout whatever sort of desert-cave or abandoned-fortress module you like or have handy - lord knows what may have moved in since the Ovidians furnished it, or what unknown levels may be found underneath it. Thus if you like you can play the Hospice as a full-fledged detailed combat and experience point conventional game.

However, most DM's will prefer to use the Oasis itself as strictly town encounters with details improvised as you need them or left to the players' imagination, and neither dangers nor rewards so drastic as to require a detailed complex setting. (Although if you don't mind improvising in drastic situations - or if you have a Fire Plane city handy - we have given some hints of predicaments the party may get into) If you prefer, you could skip playing the Oasis altogether and have some NPC tell the party whatever they want to know about it.

The editors regret that neither space, time nor courage permit our giving details of the efreets' spa, since so far our players have spent insufficient time there to result in transmission of the street-map and shopkeepers' names over the Aeolian Web to us.

VALLEY RUMOURS

Since the Valley of Jer'drun is scarcely populated by humanoids, and its existence is unknown to the bandits, these 'rumours' may be learned only from the few crazy hermits and prospectors who live on its slopes, from desert animals (plant a few Speak with Animals scrolls in the Palace of the Bandit Prince if necessary), or from auguries etc.

Most of the rumours concerning the oasis are partly true, largely misleading....

Near the center of the Valley is a beautiful oasis.

The oasis vanishes and reappears.

The oasis is really a mirage.

The oasis can be seen only by the pure of heart.

The oasis is really a trap set by demons.

A drunken prospector named Rumson often visits the oasis.

When sober Rumson denies the existence of the oasis.

When drunk or asleep Rumson babbles about the great time he has with gamblers and dancing girls at the oasis.

Recently a lady wearing a wedding gown was wandering in the valley.

A lady was asking the way to the oasis.

A lady was asking about 'Ovidians'.

A young injured hermit has been wandering in the valley, also asking about 'Ovidians' and about the oasis.

The young hermit is mainly concerned to find the lady.

In the pyramid is a strange set of rooms.

Over the entrance of the pyramid are the words: HOSPICE - ALL WELCOME.

The lady said she was going to the pyramid.

The pyramids are really mirages.

The pyramids are really traps set by demons.

Further south live strange demons.

Further south live strange small elementals.

Many magic weapons and other treasures can be found in the land of the demons.

Many adventurers never return from the land of the demons.

Fighters lose their wits in the land of the demons.

To the southeast is a country of ogres.

The most powerful lord in the Valley is Count Ivor of Castle Ognard.

The ogres claim to own all the Valley but seldom are seen in it.

The ogres are preparing for war.

AT THE PYRAMID

The pyramid appears hazy with distance until the party is within half a mile of it.

At first approach the pyramid appears to be made of polished marble, beautifully decorated with pictures of an oasis, of many creatures enjoying themselves, of lions lying down with lambs and other monsters befriending each other. Over the entrance are the words: HOSPICE - ALL WELCOME. Cool scented air blows out of the pyramid, smelling of cool water, fresh flowers, everyone's favorite fruit and vegetable dishes.... ALL THIS IS ILLUSION, which is only seen by those new to the area. For each hour a party member stays in the vicinity there is 10% cumulative that he will cease to notice it.

To him, as to the regular desert dwellers, the illusion will only be visible if he moves several miles away: as the shape of a pyramid (featureless blue like a cloud or distant mountain) which disappears on closer approach.

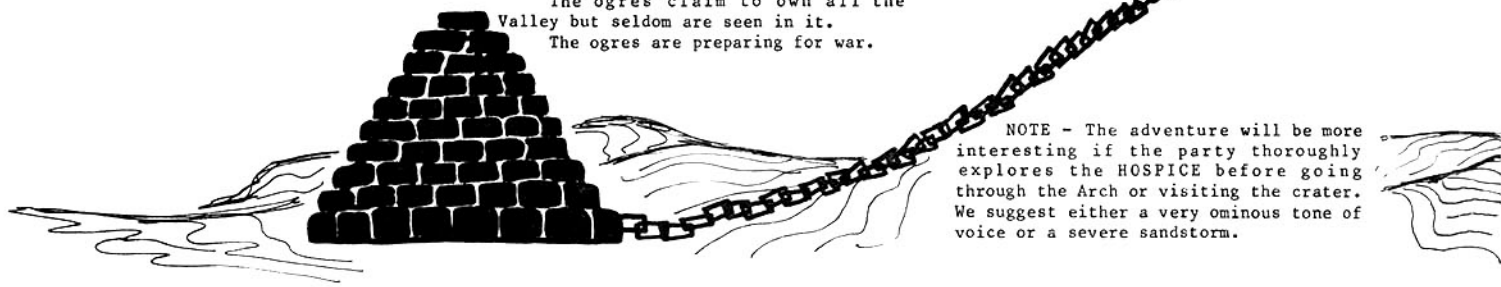
In fact, at the site of the 'pyramid' is nothing but a natural hill riddled with erosion passages. Against it is built a very crude lean-to shelter made of castoff materials: scraps of canvas, bones, mummified corpses (apparently dead of natural causes, and arranged as reverently as possible, allowing for structural considerations).

Very close inspection may note that none of the materials have been cut or punctured (except a few animal pelts which appear to have been taken from animals long dead). The few pieces of wood and yucca etc used also were dead already, and were not cut but used whole.

Scarcely noticeable over the entrance to the lean-to, formed by small weathered bones and sticks tied by woven cord, are the words: HOSPICE - ALL WELCOME.

Behind the hill is a very rough and broken slope up to a large crater. A path up the side of the crater passes through an ornate, but much weathered, stone Arch.

NOTE - The adventure will be more interesting if the party thoroughly explores the HOSPICE before going through the Arch or visiting the crater. We suggest either a very ominous tone of voice or a severe sandstorm.



HOSPICE

INSIDE THE HOSPICE

The lean-to shades an entrance to a maze of erosion-formed chambers inside the hill, which has been very crudely fitted out as a way-shelter for travellers. As before, all is made of castoff materials with scarcely any breaks, cuts or punctures. (A clever party may note that while corpses of all kinds are used wherever convenient, no material has been used which would have involved harm to any living plant or animal) Beds, tables, waterbottles etc are of all sizes, as though to accommodate all sorts of creatures.

Many improvised vessels were made from a very odd sort of rock formation that seems to be common near the crater: a ball about the size of an orange, whose outside is white glass which has been melted, shaped and compressed, and whose center is white sand veined with white glass.

TREASURES:

A RING inscribed "Ring of Regeneration". On a healthy wearer it has no effect. An injured wearer will be polymorphed into a troll until regeneration is complete. Then he returns to his natural form. (This and all other polymorphs in this serie. are safe and gentle and require no System Shock roll)

CORNUCOPIA inscribed "Abundant Food". This is found outside, in full sunlight, chained to a rock. Anyone attempting to activate it is polymorphed into a cactus. At sundown he returns to his natural form, somewhat better nourished.

DECANTER inscribed "Endless Water". User is polymorphed to microscopic size, liable to drown in the minute specks of water that float even in the driest air. He will resume natural size if reduced to 0 HTK from drowning, or after one hour, whichever is sooner.

POTION labeled "Cure Disease". Effect depends on the disease. Basically, the drinker is polymorphed into a germ etc of whatever disease he is suffering from. Usually his head or heart vanishes and the rest of his body remains as prey to the germs. When the disease has run its course he polymorphs back to his natural form, whole and cured and forever immune to that disease.

Palm-leaf FAN labeled "For Coolness". User is polymorphed into a lizard, snake etc (to whom the desert temperatures are perfectly comfortable) until his surroundings become what his natural form would consider cool.

SCROLLS - these are in containers labelled "CURE INSANITY". In addition, each scroll is labelled as below. (The Ovidians have unusual ideas of what behaviors are insane)

"For Greed" - victim believes that he has full Midas touch, turning even his friends into gold by touching them. This is a delusion - the only things he can really turn to gold are heavy substances such as lead or rock. How long this gold lasts is up to the DM - we suggest permanently. The victim's condition lasts until he is cured of greedy tendencies.

"For Celibacy" - victim is polymorphed into a Phraint or Kzin or other creature suitable to your campaign which has no capacity for humanoid-type romantic love. The condition lasts until he is kissed by the lover he rejected (or at DM's by some other person who would be a suitable mate to his natural form).

"For Vanity" - the user can change his appearance to any form he wishes, as long as it is spectacularly beautiful and makes him the center of attention in any group. Effects last one week or until desperately regretted.

The Greed and Celibacy scrolls are found half a dozen to a box. One Celibacy scroll has been used already (see below). Only one Vanity scroll is found - the rest of that boxfull has already been taken away.

Magic swords and other WEAPONS. The builders of the Hospice placed these where it would take a deliberate effort to reach them. Some are concealed in canes or jewelry, all are monogrammed H and somewhat decorated, but empty jeweled racks and cases show that the lighter-weight, gaudier weapons have been removed already - notably a hatpin and a pair of dueling pistols.

In fact the weapons are so enchanted that anybody using one can neither do damage with it nor take damage from an opponent's weapon - but this should be concealed as long as possible! Misses should appear to be legitimate, armour should appear to absorb the damage, etc....

The jewels are real and quite valuable.

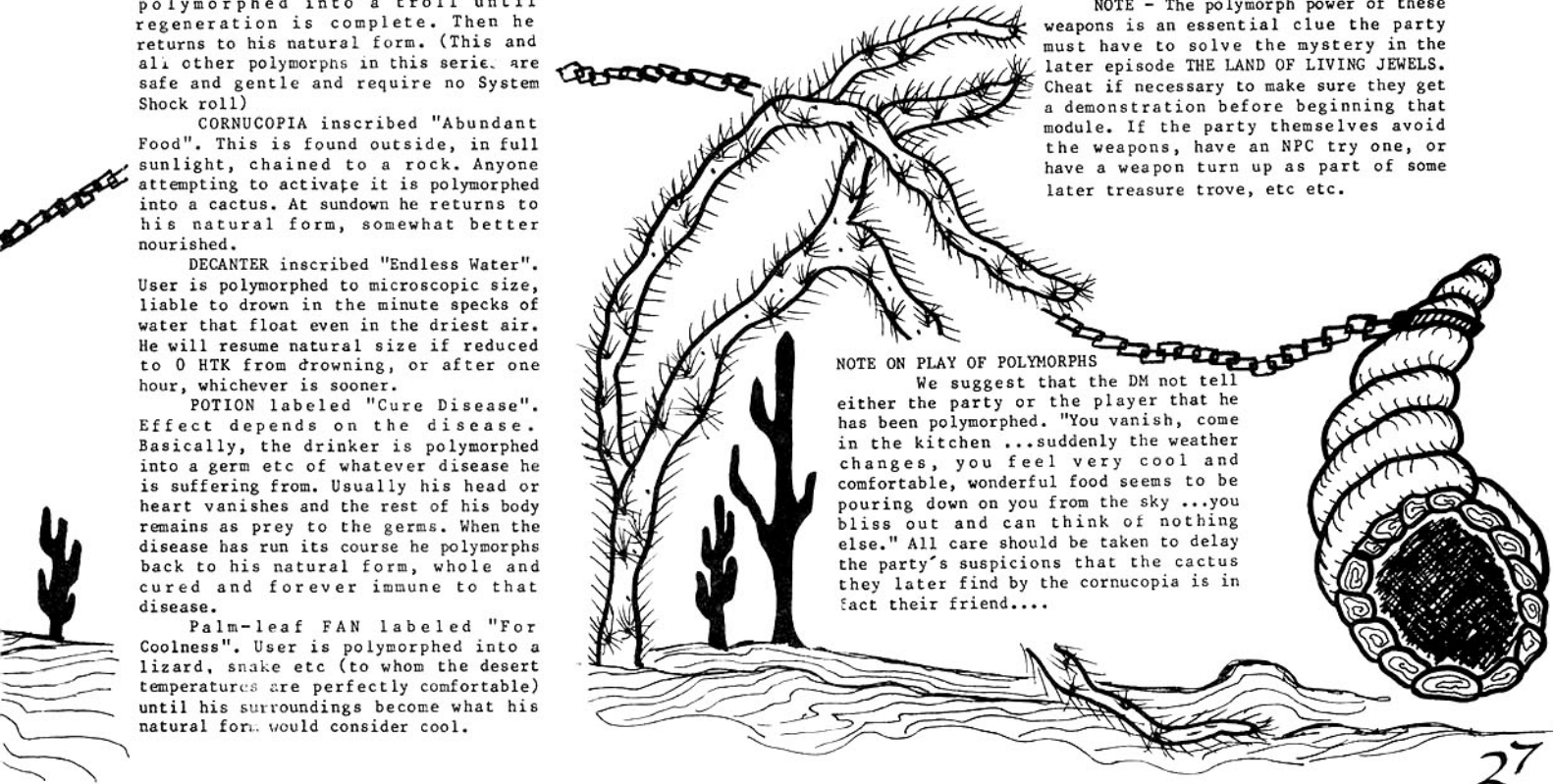
Anyone picking up a weapon sees the illusion of a cloaked holy man preaching non-violence and urging the user to give up thoughts of fighting. (If anyone attacks the user, the holy man will become visible to all and try to rebuke or bluff the attacker) This continues until the user either is converted (or pretends to be) or loses his temper and attacks the holy man. Then he is polymorphed into some form in which he can harmlessly blow off steam - such as a small geyser or whirlwind or in the case of a high-level victim, a bubbling lava pool or miniature volcano. The condition lasts until he learns to control his temper, or until his friends cool him down with ice etc.

This geyser etc may appear some distance from where the user was standing. It will appear where natural conditions are most likely for it - ie in an existing crack in the ground etc - and where it cannot damage anyone. The weapon will be found with the new form, dancing in the boiling water or lava, unharmed.

NOTE - The polymorph power of these weapons is an essential clue the party must have to solve the mystery in the later episode THE LAND OF LIVING JEWELS. Cheat if necessary to make sure they get a demonstration before beginning that module. If the party themselves avoid the weapons, have an NPC try one, or have a weapon turn up as part of some later treasure trove, etc etc.

NOTE ON PLAY OF POLYMORPHS

We suggest that the DM not tell either the party or the player that he has been polymorphed. "You vanish, come in the kitchen ... suddenly the weather changes, you feel very cool and comfortable, wonderful food seems to be pouring down on you from the sky ... you bliss out and can think of nothing else." All care should be taken to delay the party's suspicions that the cactus they later find by the cornucopia is in fact their friend....





The decoration on the Arch appears similar to the pictures on the illusory pyramid, but it is so badly weathered that all that can be made out are the words: TO THE PERMANENT OASIS.

Very close inspection of the construction of the Arch finds no seams or chisel marks. (In fact it was molded while softened by heat to the consistency of soft clay - a few fingerprints can still be found in the crevices)

Above certain areas of the crater may at times be seen flickering red and yellow lights reminiscent of fireworks.

It is barely possible to climb to the crater without going through the Arch. Fliers will be in difficulty: very strong heat up-drafts from the inside of the crater tend to throw them thousands of feet into the air....

BEYOND THE ARCH

A player going through the Arch should be told something like: "You feel very light on your feet, invigorated, the air and ground are very cold, nice smells are drifting down from the craterGoing into the crater you find it is not quite as cold as outside, you see a haze of cool blue fog, a waterfall, beautiful crystalline plants, a bubbling spring, waving blue-green treetops... to the east are snowdrifts....

A player who manages to get to the crater without going through the Arch finds blue smoke and dust, a boiling geyser, erosion formations, a molten pool of oily blue-black lava, waving tongues of blue flame, white sand dunes....

Depending on his approach, he may also have to dodge balls of exploding lava, magical fireballs, and strange molten-hot balls of white glass, the outside melted and pressed, the center white sand - many of the cooled glass-sand balls litter the crater sides.

In fact any creature going through the Arch is polymorphed into some fire-creature such as an efreeti, fire elemental, Greyhawkian salamander etc - usually a kind similar to its own nature in size, intelligence etc. Humanoids usually become efreet.* (The effect is temporary - shortly after leaving the crater they revert to natural form)

For such fire-creatures, the crater really is the cool oasis described: pleasant and healthful. Should any party member decide to retain fireish form and settle there, he will find it a reliable paradise.

IN THE CRATER

The western portion of the crater appears uninhabited, but scattered throughout it are many arches similar to the one outside the crater. Most of them are strangely made: large at the entrance, small at the exit. They have inscriptions such as: "TO OWN MUCH LAND" ... "TO CONTROL LAND AND AIR" ... "TO LIVE UNTRoubLED"....

Anyone going through such an arch is polymorphed into a firefly, fireant, fire-elf etc. Such creatures live happily in the western part in their equivalent of a cool beautiful forest, of vast extent....

It is well if in some peaceful cool leafy fire-elf village a party member is mistaken for Caspian and welcomed to a house and servants Rocmirra hired, hoping she and Caspian could someday return and live there....

An area-effect spell covering the whole crater prevents any kind of violence: participants are automatically polymorphed into forms with no conflict. EG, two creatures fighting over territory or food are shrunk so tiny that both have plenty. At mealtime all change to vegetarians....

How evenly the spell covers the area is up to the DM. The scattered spots where violence is possible were long since discovered by the inhabitants, as reflected in local real estate values. Of course, it is taboo to mention this advantage openly, for fear the Ovidians will find out about the spot and repair the spell.

In the eastern part of the crater, the areas which are well-covered by the spell have become a sort of Switzerland of the Fire Plane - a diplomatic sanctuary where envoys of all fireish nations and factions can meet, negotiate, spy, plot and bank without fear of a jeweled dagger in the back or poison in the morning sulphur.

Of the several dueling grounds, the more public are covered by the spell, and when not in use for matters of honor (settled by a harmless fireworks exchange) are available to handle overflow from the fireball courts. The private ones, not covered, may pose a hazard to players unused to the etiquette of a fiery civilization.

The preferred method of assassination here is to manipulate ones opponent into attempting some violent act, which results in him being polymorphed to some more convenient or desirable form. (This is often done by making him think he is in a spot not covered by the Ovidians' spell....)

After (or during) intrigue, sophistry and heresy, the favorite pastime of the efreet here is winter sports: mud slides, boiling mineral springs for cooling, lava pools for warm baths, geyser polo.... For skiing, sledding, snow sculpture and snowball fights there are the sand dunes - thus the melted glass balls found outside the crater etc.

EFREET RUMOURS

The true efreet are very snobbish toward polymorphed humanoids (who have efreet bodies but know nothing of grooming or etiquette) and will scarcely condescend to speak to them. By eavesdropping the party may overhear conversation on the following topics:

The efreet are planning war against Count Ivor and the ogres over title to the whole Valley.

They know of Ivor's treaty with Volannian but are not impressed.

Someone in the efreet royal court is working on a secret weapon.

The weapon will do away forever with those pesky ogres and Ovidians.

It is a pity that the secret weapon will destroy the crater-resort as well....

If the party persists in inquiring about the secret weapon, they may hear hints of its powers: "entropy death ...halt molecular action ...energy drain ...paralyzation...."



With aid of illusions and charm spells, the party may succeed in improving their own appearance enough to have their bribes accepted by the upper class of efreet servants.

Whatever method of inquiry the party uses, moderate effort should reveal the following facts (in random order):

An exceptionally shabby female efreeti recently arrived.

The shabby efreeti spent much time hiding in the woods, or using the western arches to polymorph into the form of small woodland creatures such as fireflies, fireants or fireelves.

A new hermit has been wandering in the Valley, singing old Ovidian songs (badly mispronounced) and shouting "It's true! It's true!"

The shabby efreeti began snooping around the noble efreet.

The shabby efreeti kept asking about the war.

Madame Fiona (the reigning efreet belle and toast of the spa) finally expelled the shabby efreeti.

Madame Fiona received an anonymous gift.

Madame Fiona began wearing a new jeweled hatpin monogrammed H.

Duke Constantin tried to rape Madame Fiona but during the struggle a strange holy man appeared and frightened him away.

Madame Fiona has been looking dazzlingly beautiful lately.

Madame Fiona has suddenly developed in interest in politics.

Madame Fiona has disappeared.

Prospector Rumson does often visit the lower class tourist section of the spa (and has NOTHING further to do with the plot).

What Really Happened in HOSPICE & OASIS

The Hospice and the Arch were built by the Ovidians for the simple purpose of doing good for weary travellers. Of course, their ideas of good may seem a little peculiar....

The Ovidians believe in doing as little violence as possible to any creature, nor even to inanimate objects: thus the minimum of cutting or breaking, and the fact that only dense materials may be polymorphed to gold by their spell - to turn wood to gold, for instance, would 'do violence' to the nature of wood.

The Ovidians specialize in polymorph magic for two reasons. One, changing the environment to suit people means doing violence to the environment: better therefore to change people to fit the environment. Two, they think it a healthy spiritual exercise - for more on their philosophy see THE VALE OF MAYA.

Her experiences in the Palace left Rocmirra too dazed to ask the Valley hermits or prospectors for help for Caspian - her only thought was to find the Ovidians for him. Following the clues in the legends she came to the Hospice, went through the arch was transformed into an efreeti and visited the Oasis.

There she heard news that Caspian had also escaped from the Palace and was following her, learned much about the Ovidians, and overheard rumours of coming war. Expelled because of her shabby appearance, she managed a clever revenge. She sent Madame Fiona a jeweled hatpin from the Hospice, then waited. Madame Fiona had occasion for anger, tried to use the hatpin, and was suitably polymorphed. Rocmirra then used a Vanity scroll to transform herself into Madame Fiona's likeness until she had learned all she wished of the efreet's secrets.

Shocked that the peaceful paradise she and Caspian had dreamed of so many years was now itself menaced by war, Rocmirra determined to alert the Ovidians to the danger and then proceed to the Efreeti capitol at Endor to try to stop the war - taking with her the box of Vanity scrolls, the dueling pistols and several of the other gaudier magic weapons from the Hospice, and heartily agreeing with everything the illusory holy men said....

Before leaving she wrote a poem to Caspian and left copies both with an attendant at the Oasis and hidden in the Hospice itself.

Arriving later, Caspian explored the Hospice, healed himself with the ring, found the poem and did not take time to go through the arch. However, during the past few weeks he had become so fond of Rocmirra that he had felt tempted to break his self-imposed vow of celibacy. Supposing that a scroll made by holy men and labelled 'For Celibacy' would REINFORCE his vow, he read the used Celibacy scroll and was polymorphed into a Phraint (or whatever the DM likes). In this form he continued on to seek Rocmirra and the Ovidians, wondering greatly....

CLUES

The following poem should be found toward the end of the episode, after the Hospice and the OASIS have been explored.

One copy is held by an efreeti attendant at the oasis for 'the Hermit'. The other is found in the Hospice, in the same room with the used 'For Celibacy' scroll. Tracks in that room are odd: they show a robed human coming in, something leaving in giant clawed leaps....

Your dreams I followed and found dust
And dust again and blood and lust
My world first dull then nightmare hell
Till at the bottom of the worst
Your blest blue dream where all is well.
But what when well itself turns ill
And war comes here to waste our dream?
I'll go nor wait one hour to tell
Our Friends. I've got a scheme.
To Endor then and see what seeming
Can serve the future of our dreaming.

NOTE - Rocmirra's poem is SUPPOSED to function as an ambiguous riddle for the players. But to keep it from being a headache for the DM, we suggest that you prepare a written players' copy instead of trying to dictate it.

DM OPTION - TIME IN THE CRATER

On some parts of the Fire Plane in Delos (notably the Efreeti Queen's bedchamber at Endor) time runs much faster than on the Prime Material Plane - thus Winston spent 100 years as the Queen's lover while only one day passed in his home village.

At DM option, time in the crater may pass either at normal rate or faster. For faster, if one party member goes through the Arch alone he may spend hours or days in the spa but return to his party almost instantaneously.

Running crater time faster than outside time allows lengthening the series and allowing the party to explore more of the non-efreet parts of the crater. Since to a party member who has gone through one of the small arches and been polymorphed to a miniature fire-elf etc, any flowerbed or fencerow may appear a wilderness, you can insert here any forest- or cold-wilderness modules you like.

MADAME FIONA'S WHEREABOUTS - OPTIONS

For most parties, Madame Fiona should have been polymorphed into a geyser or small volcano outside the crater, near the arch - the magic hatpin may be easily seen in the bubbling liquid.

For an extra clever or sophisticated party, the hatpin turns up in a jewelry shop etc in the efreet's spa: jeweler got it from a doctor; doctor removed it from a portion of Constantin's anatomy; doctor is puzzled how to treat an "angry boil" which appeared on that same anatomy at the same time the hatpin did, and seems only to worsen with conventional Efreet remedies such as hot poltices....

NOTE OF ADVICE - What hints the players should have of these personal matters depends on their interest.

If they don't care, don't bother them! The poem in Rocmirra's writing saying she is going to Endor is all they need to send them in the right direction.

If they do care, and are happily speculating about these and many other possibilities as well, again don't bother them. And don't confirm their right guesses about IMPORTANT questions.

If they do care but can't get started speculating, give them some generous clues: tracks, fingerprints, graffiti from Caspian, testimony of a mouse in the corner. Once they are started speculating, give them only the minimum clues and confirmations necessary to keep them happily at it.

Too few questions up in the air means dullness. Too many means frustration. With practice you will learn how to listen to your players' talk and know when it is time to answer an old question or throw them a new one. But it is still best if the answer to the old one is only 99% certain....

When too many questions have piled up, it is generally best to answer the red-herring-from-left field sort first (such as Rumson and the dancing girls), then anything the party should have figured out in the previous chapter, leaving the larger questions of identity and motive to carry on suspense.

THE VALE OF MAYA

CHALLENGE FOR PARTY

Travelling overland through the Valley of Jer'drun toward Mount Endor, the party must brave not only natural desert obstacles but alien magic, mirages and polymorphs. At the headquarters of the Ovidians they rescue Caspian from a magical training ground called the Vale of Maya and learn the secrets of the Ovidians. Upon reaching the foothills of Endor, a sudden volcanic eruption forces them to leave the Valley of Jer'drun and take refuge in the human town of Topstoh.

EN ROUTE

Among whatever natural desert obstacles you like, the party sees odd mirages. Like the illusion of the pyramid, these serve to help the party by directing attention to something real: a seeming oasis with palms and waterfall covers a real, though small and muddy, spring; a feathered serpent offering a ride up a cliff covers a real path; a wall of thorns and serpents marks a dangerous ravine, etc.

Treasures and weapons similar to those in the Hospice may also be found along the way, either placed by the Ovidians or lost by other travellers.

If any party member has been polymorphed into a geyser etc and not yet recovered, the geyser and the weapon that did it should be found along the way and local hermits should give sufficient hints on how to restore him. In any case, the party needs as a clue for later (unless they are VERY clever) the experience of restoring at least one polymorphed geyser to human form: if they didn't get involved with Fiona's geyser and none of their own need restoration, they may find a child weeping by a geyser in which floats a ruby sword, who asks their help to restore his parent....

Whenever the party is in trouble they may encounter what seem to be small elementals: whirlwinds, animated rocks or waves of sand etc. Whether the 'elementals' manner appears hostile, mischievous or ambiguous, the upshot of the encounter is usually helpful to the party - steering them in the right direction, scaring away a monster etc.

They also encounter 'demons' who behave strangely, sometimes helping but never harming - though given to pranks and hexes. If attacked, the 'demons' vanish.

RUMOURS

These can be learned from desert dwellers en route to the Hermitages, and from some of the hermit students themselves. All are more or less true but some are misleading or distorted.

A giant grasshopper has been jumping around the Hermitages, singing Ovidian songs badly.

A grasshopper was asking to join the Ovidians.

The Ovidians have a new probationary member who is a giant grasshopper.

Probationary members of the Ovidians must begin with the dirtiest and most humiliating job.

A giant grasshopper has recently seized power among the Ovidians.

The Venerable Abbot was polymorphed into a grasshopper.

The Ovidians have a new Venerable Abbot.

None of the grasshoppers have been seen for the last few days.

A lady in a wedding dress was looking for the Ovidians.

The lady wanted to learn the Great Art.

The new Venerable Abbot has offered a reward for the lady's capture.

The lady went into the Vale of Maya. The lady has not been seen since.

NOTE - The 'giant grasshopper' is Caspian polymorphed to a Phraint - see the excellent ARDUIN GRIMOIRES. Or use a Kzin, or maybe a giant frog....?

AT THE OVIDIANS' HEADQUARTERS

The Ovidian headquarters resembles some modern American Indian pueblos: a mixture of very natural and primitive structures with occasional striking luxury. Mud huts decorated with real jewels and gold, some have luxurious baths etc. Family life is encouraged - many children, many elaborate playgrounds - but families fit no normal pattern. Mixed marriages (say, a water elemental married to an orc) and homosexuality seem common.

There is no commerce, no apparent source of food or supplies, little drudgery. The atmosphere is that of a spiritual retreat, but some recreation is practiced, especially by the children - mostly elaborate theatricals, stage magic shows, and FRP games....

FURTHER INQUIRIES REVEAL

The Venerable Abbot went alone into the Vale. He is overdue to return and his helpers are beginning to worry. They will reward the party for his rescue.

Senior Ovidians cannot go into the Vale to look for him because, having explored it thoroughly, they are forbidden to reenter by proverbs such as "No man can bathe in the same river twice". Junior Ovidians cannot because all are needed to deal with a crisis: auguries say that the efreets have developed an energy drain weapon that menaces the whole valley, and all Junior Ovidians are working with spells and prayers to try to avert the threatened war.

Giant grasshoppers are rare in the Valley, none have been seen for 20 years until recently. Now at least three have been seen together.

The grasshopper seen most often wears a badly-fitting hermit's robe and sings badly and constantly. The others are never seen without him. They sometimes wear good robes and sometimes go green and naked; they sing well but not often.

In answer to questions about the Great and Lesser Arts the Ovidians will quote any Ovidian Proverbs the party hasn't heard yet, refusing any straightforward information: "These Arts each must learn for himself in the Vale of Maya." (Only after the party has been through the Vale and figured out as many answers as they can for themselves should Caspian or some other Ovidian answer the rest)

YET FURTHER INQUIRIES REVEAL

As the party meets different Ovidians, they may notice that the older and holier members have jobs such as sweeping, dishwashing or amusing babies, while the new members who know very little of the teachings hold the executive and administrative jobs. The Ovidians explain that administrators have to give orders, which is a kind of violence, so administrative jobs can only be done by those not far along in holiness.

The grasshoppers of 20 years ago appeared shortly after a missionary of St. Fallwell had visited the valley preaching chastity. Several of his converts disappeared for a while, then reappeared after the grasshoppers left.

WHAT HAS REALLY HAPPENED

The singing grasshopper is Caspian in phraint form. The other grasshoppers are high-level Ovidians who often polymorph to that form to keep him company (and try to teach him to sing properly).

Caspian asked to join the order, was accepted and given its least-popular job: that of Venerable Abbot.

Concerned for Rocmirra's safety, he has offered a reward for her. Hearing that she entered the Vale and did not return, he went looking for her and fell afoul of some danger there, where he still is. (If the party rescues him he will tell them all they ask or should know of the following information; otherwise one reward of their adventure may be a letter or diary of his which gives the same information)

The Great Art of the Ovidians is Polymorphing, and the Lesser Art is Illusion. The 'small elementals' and 'helpful demons' (and some other monsters too if the DM likes) were polymorphed Ovidians. When Master Ovid seemed to vanish, he was really polymorphing into some small or invisible form; the jewels he brought back were either stolen (theft is very easy when you can polymorph to a gnat or a puff of wind - and make any permanent illusion - at will) or made by a Polymorph Object spell.

Many of the odd families were originally normal, but now each member takes whatever form is most convenient or comfortable for any given task, sometimes changing several times a day.

If a party member requests a high-level Ovidian to read his mind, Detect Lie etc, roll for initiative - the Ovidian will polymorph self into the form of a Mind Flayer or other creature endowed with that ability....

Ovidians share the Terran Oriental belief that each soul is reincarnated over and over until it realizes the world of solid forms is illusion, at which time it is released from the Wheel of Reincarnation and free to dissolve in formless bliss. Emotional attachment to any particular body or circumstances delays this process. Thus they consider polymorphing a good spiritual exercise because it weakens attachment to any particular body, illusion a good exercise because disbelieving ones own illusions may lead to disbelief in the illusion of the whole Multiverse....

UNLIKE real Terran Hindus, Buddhists and Jains, the Ovidians encourage indulgence in all forms of pleasure and luxury, believing that the best way to overcome such desires is to surfeit them. Sex, romance and psychedelic drugs are especially encouraged, since altered perceptions may lead to perceiving conventional reality as illusion and becoming interested in spiritual studies.

The rumours about Ovidians being demons began because like demons they take many different forms (including the forms OF DEMONS when convenient) and when threatened or damaged they vanish. (Fallwellians helped spread the rumours) Ovidians have never bothered to deny the rumours: "We are neither demons, angels nor humanoids, being Released from such illusions of difference. Our members come from all racial backgrounds. The Great Art makes all equal. On the Wheel of Reincarnation all souls, including your own, have many times lived in demonic bodies, or angelic, or animal. Souls are souls. and may have any alignment they choose at any time regardless of their temporary material form. This is the Great Teaching of Release from the Wheel...." They tend to be rather intolerant of the racial prejudice implied in questions about demons, since some of their best friends in fact ARE good demons!

The Vale of Maya was constructed by Master Ovid to give would-be students some practice in dealing with illusions, polymorphs and some of the other philosophical principles of the Ovidians. However, since Master Ovid achieved Nirvana, it has not been very well maintained....

Rocmirra used the Vale to learn to polymorph herself to efreet form, and used a Permanency scroll to maintain the form. In this form she travelled on to Endor.

INSIDE THE VALE

The Vale of Maya tends to look different to different people. A fighter may see it as a fortress, a thief as a treasurehouse, a ranger as a natural formation similar to the Hospice.

Generally, the pattern of illusions here is just opposite to those encountered so far, where an unusual illusion concealed a commonplace reality. Here most of the treasures and wonders are real (produced by polymorphs) and most of the dull things are illusion. People will tend to see the more common or dangerous thing they normally expect, not the precious or beneficial things that are really there.

CLUES:

From one hall open several chambers. One is full of water (held in by force-field), one of ice and snow, one is vacuum of space, etc. By the door to a room full of fire is found Rocmirra's clothing.

On the wall of the hall is written: "Danger. Do not attempt these rooms without faith and wisdom and full knowledge of your goal."

Elsewhere is embroidered on a silken hanging in fancy old script: "Do not try to change the world, change yourself. - Master Ovid" Burnt into the silk is the word "AMEN!" (in Rocmirra's style of lettering....)

The fire etc are only semi-illusionary. No Disbeliefs etc will affect them from outside the room. Inside each room, a successful Disbelief will reduce damage enough to allow the adventurer to escape with his life, but with real damage to equipment etc.

Anyone who goes into a room and then attempts to polymorph himself into a creature appropriate to that environment will succeed! (Effects temporary)

Scrolls of 'Permanency', labelled "Danger! The Illusion of Permanency violates Anicca." Each of these is headed with a proverb such as: "Don't try to freeze the river", "Impermanence is the nature of life", "Lack of change produces stagnation", etc.

These work as a normal Permanency spell (although at DM option they may be rather weak, unable to work on drastic effects). However, each will in some way twist the effects of the thing made permanent so as to backfire on the user, teaching him the dangers of 'permanence'.

If the DM is feeling very generous, sincere regret of using the scroll may be enough to cancel its effects - but we suggest in most cases a regular Dispell procedure plus a penance.

(Rocmirra used one of these - after gaining efreet form in the room of fire, as may be hinted by singed fingerprints on the scroll case. Since her intentions were good, the backfire was a mild one - amnesia and longing for her true form, which manifested as nymphomania - and cancellation will be easy. See INTERFACING 'WHAT'S A BELWORTH?')

Letter from Rocmirra to the Ovidians, telling them all she learned at the crater, and perhaps hinting at her plan to help negotiation between the efreet and the ogres.

For most parties, Rocmirra wrote this before polymorphing to efreet form. For a dull party she wrote it after, burnt into stone.... Careful, this is a VERY big clue and can easily take the surprise out of WHAT'S A BELWORTH? If in doubt, have the letter written normally but damaged - if necessary, party can decipher further clues in it later as needed.

TRICKS & TRAPS:

In a natural unroofed chamber, a hollow in a rock which catches rainwater is full of rain-washed pebbles. On the wall nearby is written: "Who sees no difference between pebble and jewel is nearing Enlightenment." These are real pebbles, but anyone who tries to see a pebble itself as being as beautiful as a jewel (whether by polishing it, getting stoned on pipeweed and staring at it etc), will polymorph it into a real jewel! It will remain in this state as long as he maintains concentration, or as long as he believes....

The spell on the room which allows this, may also allow polymorphing other objects into something fancier by similar methods.

Empty room with notations scribbled on the wall: "anekanta", "syad", "eva", "relativity", "see Jain Sutras", "see Idres Shah".

Once all the party is inside, the door will lock and a message appears on the wall: "There is only one monster in this room. Name it and go free." Near the center of the room some will encounter an invisible snake; others bump into an invisible treant; have warm invisible 'black pudding' drop on them etc; be brushed by invisible wings or tentacle; be hit by an invisible spout of water as from a water golem (see A DEATH IN THE DESERT) etc.

In fact the only real monster is an invisible elephant - some encounter his trunk, his leg, his manure, his ears or tail, or if they are hot or dirty he may wash them with a spout of water. 'See Invisible' etc WILL NOT WORK.

Over the entrance to a cavern chamber is written: GOLD MINE. Inside are brawling native miners, lots of equipment....

On the ceiling are 8 words in a strange script. A separate Read Languages (or Intelligence Roll etc) is needed to decipher each one. They read, "Buddha said: 'Don't just do something, sit there.'"

Anyone joining the activity, interacting with the miners etc, finds them very solid, heavy, powerful. Anyone obeying the words on the ceiling sees first the equipment vanish, then the miners, then the rocks around the gold, leaving nuggets free for the picking.

Anyone who sits till the nuggets vanish learns to polymorph rock to gold (10 gp per level per day). Anyone who sits till the floor vanishes learns to go ethereal at will.

Normal attempts at Disbelief etc have no effect.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

Room with a colored mist suspended in the center, which changes shape and color in response to what people say: if they mention a monster, it will vaguely take on that monster's shape etc. Can be shaped deliberately into any illusion desired.

While in this room the party should have some exciting encounter which will allow them to put the mist-illusion to good use.

NOTE - If your magic system allows, the Ovidian spells which power these training devices may be treated as half-finished Impromptu Spells (see DRAGON TREE SPELL BOOK, Page 11). The Ovidians have provided the power and prepared a general purpose polymorph or illusion spell, awaiting the party to put in the final elements. Thus if the party does something inappropriate, the spell may still go off in a fumbled or distorted form, as per Impromptu. Which is to say, judge as a Wish....

NOTE - The training devices should give the party some lasting plusses in future attempts to polymorph or cast illusions. But we recommend you not let them learn to polymorph themselves at will to fire-resistant or flying creatures etc or it will unbalance WHAT'S A BELWORTH? - these skills may be promised as later rewards, and given in THE LAND OF LIVING JEWELS.

TREASURES:

Small WANDS OF ILLUSION like those found in the Palace: monogrammed O or H, inscribed with Ovidian proverbs, illusions cannot do damage.

Along with the treasures the Ovidians have deliberately placed to bait their training devices, the party will find things discarded by other adventurers who, after training, no longer needed them. EG near the room where they learn to polymorph pebbles to jewels, real jewels may be discarded. In the shallower levels this will be mostly heavier treasure: copper and silver coins, pure gold counterfeit coins from Topstoh (see WHAT'S A BELWORTH?), heavy equipment. Later it will be crooked or cursed magic items....

OPTIONS

If you wish to spread this plot-material out a bit thinner, various unrelated desert modules may be inserted as the party nears the Ovidian headquarters. Some material from RUMOURS and FURTHER INQUIRIES REVEAL may be gotten from NPCs between or during these extra modules: EG, an Ovidian hermit may direct them to a normal treasure-cave; prisoners rescued from a normal module may be Ovidians and tell information about grasshoppers or the new Abbott - or be Fallwellian and give distorted reports of Ovidian matters; Caspian may have gone into another dungeon before entering the Vale; the Key to the Vale may have been stolen and have to be recovered before the party can enter, etc etc.

INTERFACING WHAT'S A BELWORTH

ASSIGNMENT AND CHALLENGE FOR PARTY

Mount Endor, Rocmirra's destination, is a long inactive volcano. But about the time the party leaves the Ovidian headquarters it begins erupting violently, pouring lava in their path and forcing them to detour out of the Valley of Jer'drun altogether, up to the human town of Topstoh.

In Topstoh the party is contacted by AMLA with an additional assignment: policy-holder Belworth George needs moral support, and as long as they're in the area....

Seeking Belworth, the party must explore a cavern in the foothills of the volcano, fight or bargain with an Efreeti Queen for his release ...and if they are clever, recognize the Queen as Rocmirra, polymorphed and scarcely remembering her human past....

ADDITIONAL ROOM

Next to the Queen's bedroom should be added a room full of ice and snow, which is used to keep the bedroom and jail cells cool for humans. (A good clue to this is condensation on the bedroom wall) No efreeti present know the details, but rumours suggest that this where the Emir Grax stored the efreeti's famous new energy drain weapon, a magic wand. (Guards feared that if not continually packed in ice it would explode) The wand itself is missing, but rumours may suggest that it is now deep in the volcano itself - ie in the next module, THE LAND OF LIVING JEWELS - see RUMOURS AT ENDOR in that module.

NOTE - before allowing efreeti to melee in this room, see details of the Wand's effect in THE LAND OF LIVING JEWELS.

WHAT HAS REALLY HAPPENED

Wanting a position of power so as to stop the efreeti's plans for war with the ogres, Rocmirra used the same scheme on the real Queen as she did on Madame Fiona at the Oasis. She sent the Queen the pair of magical dueling pistols from the Hospice, and when the Queen's next fit of anger resulted in her being polymorphed and disappearing, Rocmirra used a Vanity scroll to assume her likeness and take her place.

I have not included detailed clues to this scheme within BELWORTH, but if you wish to add them see RUMOURS AT ENDOR in THE LAND OF LIVING JEWELS.

PROGRESS OF MYSTERY - DM OPTIONS

One way or another, at the end of BELWORTH Rocmirra is found, and the party learns that she has been impersonating the true efreeti queen for the purpose of preventing war with the ogres. Her usefulness over and her fading human memories restored, Rocmirra is now ready to resume human form and return to Caspian. (Her promiscuous appetite for human lovers was really a confused way of searching for Caspian, whose name and face she had forgotten....)

TO OBSCURE THE TRUTH...

When I run this, I like the Queen's identity to come as a SURPRISE. For as long as possible I try to make 'What's A Belworth?' seem to be unrelated to the rest of the campaign - just a filler dungeon stuck in the same area, an interruption to the main plot line.*

Therefore I have the Topstoh townsmen ignorant of the Valley of Jer'drun, I try to conceal till the end the fact that there are efreeti in the dungeon etc. And when efreeti are encountered they know little and care less about the Ovidians, the conflict with the ogres, etc - and NONE of them suspect that the Queen they serve is really a human imposter. Only if persistently questioned do they recall being disappointed when the Queen suddenly switched her support from the war-mongering party to the peace-making party, and began personally negotiating with the ogres with surprising skill and success ...shortly before she developed this distressful sexual perversion....

However, for the sake of climax and surprise, when some party member confronts the Queen with her true identity - or even mentions such a suspicion in her hearing - she usually remembers and admits it at once, gushingly emotional, homesick and grateful.

TO MAKE THE TRUTH PLAIN....

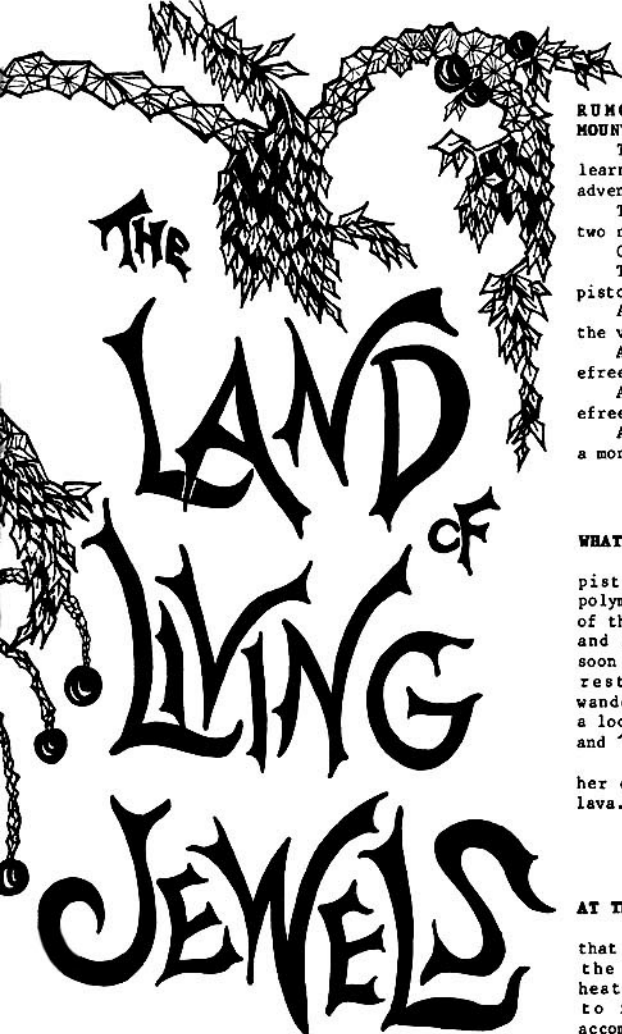
See above ...and do the opposite.

The Queen's pet salamander-lizard dislikes Rocmirra, who treats him kindly but isn't half as much fun as the real Queen. If treated well, he can be a valuable ally and informant for the party, giving them good hints.

If all hints fail, the party has failed in their challenge and deserves to lose the reward and a bit of face as well. Unless you're feeling very soft-hearted, we suggest: Let Winston or Belworth (or any NPC accompanying the party) become interested in the caravan robbery (which is common knowledge throughout the desert) and learn enough about Rocmirra to guess the 'Queen's' secret for himself. He should NOT voluntarily tell the party his guess. Rather, he will attempt to beg a secret conference with the Queen and convince her of her true identity. She will remain in efreeti form long enough to transport him comfortably to AMLA's office, help him collect the reward, come back to Topstoh and revisit her friends.... And of course she will give the NPC her own treasure, and her former subjects will also reward him well for getting her to abdicate....

Please remember the AMLA geas that prevents the party from stealing any of the policy-holder's belongings! Finding themselves prevented from stealing the 'Queen's' treasure is a tip-off for the party which usually comes at a dramatic moment. (But if you want to be generous with treasure - or stingy with clues - you may reasonably rule that the treasure belongs to the efreeti's true queen, not to imposter Rocmirra....)

*For one thing, the next time I DO stick an unrelated module in the middle of some campaign, the players refuse to believe it's really unrelated and come up with all sorts of devious tie-ins, which I hastily adopt....



CHALLENGE FOR PARTY

Whether the party rescues Rocmirra or kills her, the efreet are glad to be rid of her and offer the party great reward ...if the party can restore their rightful queen, whom Rocmirra has been impersonating. This requires journeying to the heart of the angry volcano and using the secret energy-drain weapon of the efreet to break the charm which holds her soul captive.

RUMOURS AT ENDOR

The real queen received a pair of ruby-studded dueling pistols; became angry at Emir Grax; challenged him to a duel; humanoid holy men appeared at the dueling grounds; Queen and Emir disappeared.

The Queen was angry at the Emir because he wouldn't give her the energy-drain weapon. (He said she was too hot-tempered)

The Emir took the energy-drain weapon with him whenever he left the palace.

The energy drain weapon has not been seen since the duel.

A monster in the heart of the mountain has a new weapon which shoots ruby bullets.

Another monster in the heart of the mountain has an energy drain weapon.

Augaries say the Queen is a prisoner in the heart of the mountain.

RUMOURS NEAR THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN

These are all true, should be learned gradually in the course of the adventure.

The recent eruption was caused by two new volcanoes opening up.

One volcano has since disappeared.

The new volcano has a ruby-studded pistol dancing in the lava.

An efreet has been wandering around the volcanoes.

A monster stole a wand from an efreet.

A monster stole a pistol from an efreet.

An efreet is being held prisoner by a monster.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

Obviously, Rocmirra's gift of pistols got both the Queen and the Emir polymorphed into volcanoes in the heart of the mountain. The Emir, being older and less hot-tempered than the Queen, soon cooled off and was spontaneously restored to efreet form. While he wandered in the area he was captured by a local monster and his dueling pistol and 'energy-drain' wand stolen.

The Queen is still in volcano form, her own dueling pistol still in her lava.

AT THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN

Optional: This area may be so hot that humans could not survive. To enter, the party will have to have much heat-resistant armour or be polymorphed to fire-creatures. This can be accomplished by either: gifts from the efreet; gifts from the Ovidians; fighting, bargaining with or tricking monsters at the border of the area for suitable treasures.

CLIMATE & SCENERY

This area connects with a part of Narnia described in THE SILVER CHAIR by C. S. Lewis. The Queen's pet salamander came from here, from a brilliant river of fire. If respectfully addressed he may guide the party here - and may or may not want to remain in his old home. Here molten jewels grow on crystal trees. Wherever there is an opening at the top of a cave to let warm air out, the thermal upcurrents give the effect of an area effect Feather Fall....

For further details see descriptions of 'the Antipodes of the Mind' in HEAVEN & HELL and THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION by Aldous Huxley.

DM OPTIONS - HACKING OR THINKING

FOR HACKERS:

Any underground module heavy on fire-monsters may be used. The trail may be straightforward: rumour of a prisoner efreet leads through many obstacles and guards to the Emir, who understands what happened to him and to the Queen and advises the party how to find and restore her by cooling the volcano with ice from the 'energy-drain' wand.

FOR THINKERS:

Trail may resemble an old-fashioned hard-boiled detective story: pistol is found in trove of Monster A, who knows only that he got it from Monster B, and so forth through as many Monsters as you like, with other rumours or scraps of the story being gotten only through effort ...and not all monsters telling the truth....

Emir may not know what happened ...or may think he knows but be wrong ...or may not trust the party and deliberately mislead them....

The energy-drain wand may be very hard to recover, but another treasure of Dispell Magic or Dispell Polymorph much more convenient. This will work - but if the Queen is freed from volcano form without being cooled down first she will still be very angry and attack all in sight - including the party, the Emir.... (Before hiring the party, the efreet at Endor may have teased them not to harm the real Queen....) The party's only safety may be to race her to a rumoured cache of weapons nearby, or to ally with a party of spelunking ogres....

TREASURES & REWARDS

Whatever arch-villain lives in the dungeon may complain of the new volcano and offer the party a reward to get rid of it.

The PISTOLS, with typical Ovidian extravagance, shoot an endless supply of harmless ruby bullets....

The 'ENERGY-DRAIN WAND' is really a WAND OF ENDLESS SNOW. A second setting shoots icicles (treat as normal arrows - but they melt quickly). A third produces a beam of cold (1pt damage per round).

To efreet or any other fireish creatures, these sources of magical cold are powerful dangers: they drain life-levels, paralyze, freeze etc.

If the real Efreeti Queen gets home with the Wand and attacks the ogres as she planned, the resulting snowstorm will turn the whole Valley of Jer'drun into what humans consider a cool wet oasis. The crater will assume the climate of Southern Florida. (This is what the efreet consider 'destruction' of the valley - making it by their standards a frozen waste)

"...yes, AMLA really lost money ... party never returned ... found later they abandoned all assignments, bought up acres and acres of desert, stole the efreet's Wand of Endless Snow and made a fortune in real estate" - Tuyla von Lippmanova

ADAD**
MODULES
& GENERIC PLOTS

DESERT PLOTS

AMAZON
MUTUAL #2

LINKING

THE EFREET
SECRET WEAPON

ADVENTURERS' LIFE ASSURANCE

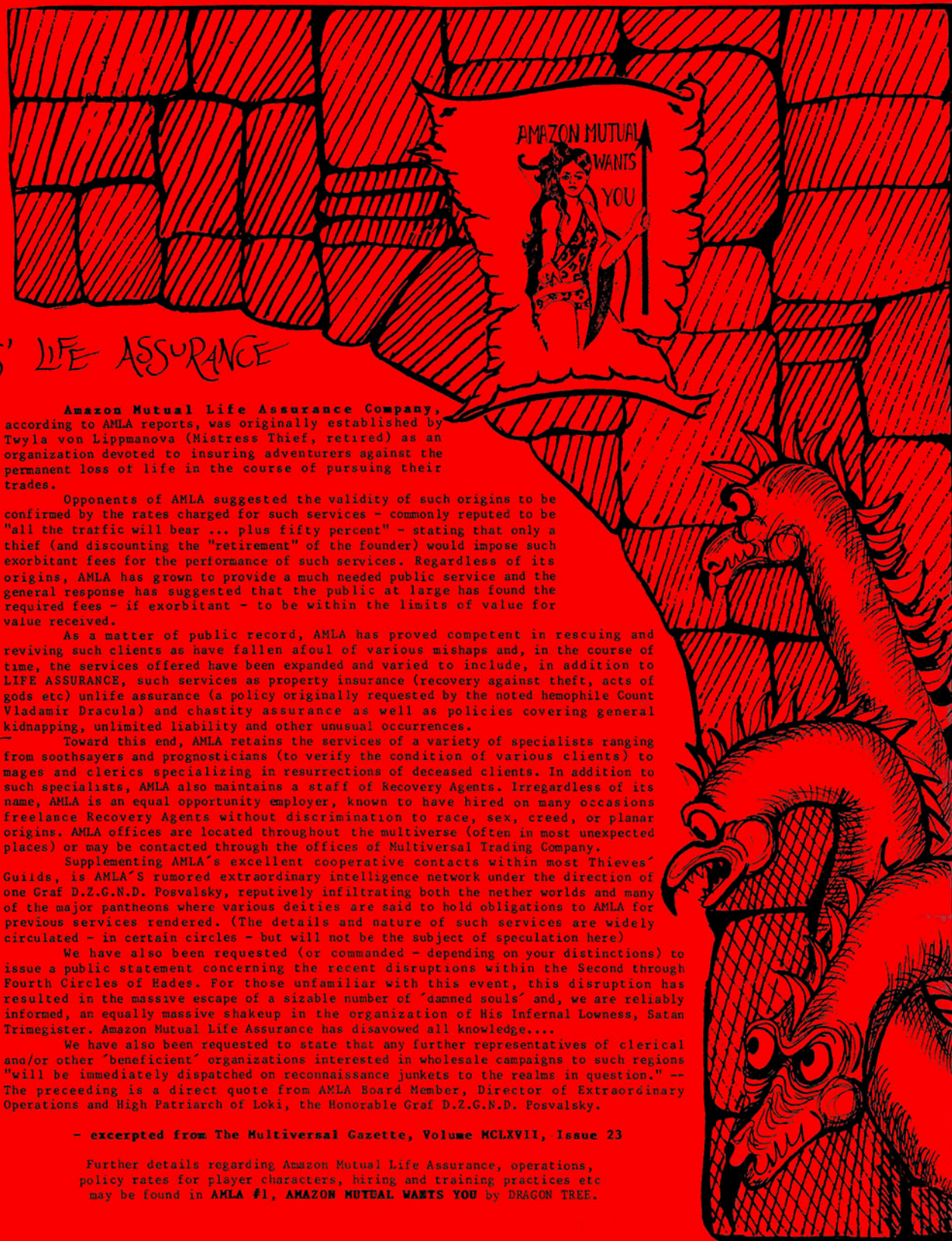
THE GREAT ART
OF MASTER QID

& HIS
GOOD DEMONS

THE ORGAN
LIBERATION FRONT

THE SEXUAL
MORES OF THE
EFREET QUEEN

& BELWORTH G.
THE PALADIN OF
ST. FILLWELL



Amazon Mutual Life Assurance Company, according to AMLA reports, was originally established by Twyla von Lippmanova (Mistress Thief, retired) as an organization devoted to insuring adventurers against the permanent loss of life in the course of pursuing their trades.

Opponents of AMLA suggested the validity of such origins to be confirmed by the rates charged for such services - commonly reputed to be "all the traffic will bear ... plus fifty percent" - stating that only a thief (and discounting the "retirement" of the founder) would impose such exorbitant fees for the performance of such services. Regardless of its origins, AMLA has grown to provide a much needed public service and the general response has suggested that the public at large has found the required fees - if exorbitant - to be within the limits of value for value received.

As a matter of public record, AMLA has proved competent in rescuing and reviving such clients as have fallen afoul of various mishaps and, in the course of time, the services offered have been expanded and varied to include, in addition to LIFE ASSURANCE, such services as property insurance (recovery against theft, acts of gods etc) unlife assurance (a policy originally requested by the noted hemophile Count Vladamir Dracula) and chastity assurance as well as policies covering general kidnapping, unlimited liability and other unusual occurrences.

Toward this end, AMLA retains the services of a variety of specialists ranging from soothsayers and prognosticians (to verify the condition of various clients) to mages and clerics specializing in resurrections of deceased clients. In addition to such specialists, AMLA also maintains a staff of Recovery Agents. Irregardless of its name, AMLA is an equal opportunity employer, known to have hired on many occasions Freelance Recovery Agents without discrimination to race, sex, creed, or planar origins. AMLA offices are located throughout the multiverse (often in most unexpected places) or may be contacted through the offices of Multiversal Trading Company.

Supplementing AMLA's excellent cooperative contacts within most Thieves' Guilds, is AMLA's rumored extraordinary intelligence network under the direction of one Graf D.Z.G.N.D. Posvalsky, reputedly infiltrating both the nether worlds and many of the major pantheons where various deities are said to hold obligations to AMLA for previous services rendered. (The details and nature of such services are widely circulated - in certain circles - but will not be the subject of speculation here)

We have also been requested (or commanded - depending on your distinctions) to issue a public statement concerning the recent disruptions within the Second through Fourth Circles of Hades. For those unfamiliar with this event, this disruption has resulted in the massive escape of a sizable number of "damned souls" and, we are reliably informed, an equally massive shakeup in the organization of His Infernal Lowness, Satan Trimegister. Amazon Mutual Life Assurance has disavowed all knowledge....

We have also been requested to state that any further representatives of clerical and/or other "beneficent" organizations interested in wholesale campaigns to such regions "will be immediately dispatched on reconnaissance junkets to the realms in question." -- The preceding is a direct quote from AMLA Board Member, Director of Extraordinary Operations and High Patriarch of Loki, the Honorable Graf D.Z.G.N.D. Posvalsky.

- excerpted from The Multiversal Gazette, Volume MCLXVII, Issue 23

Further details regarding Amazon Mutual Life Assurance, operations, policy rates for player characters, hiring and training practices etc may be found in AMLA #1, **AMAZON MUTUAL WANTS YOU** by DRAGON TREE.