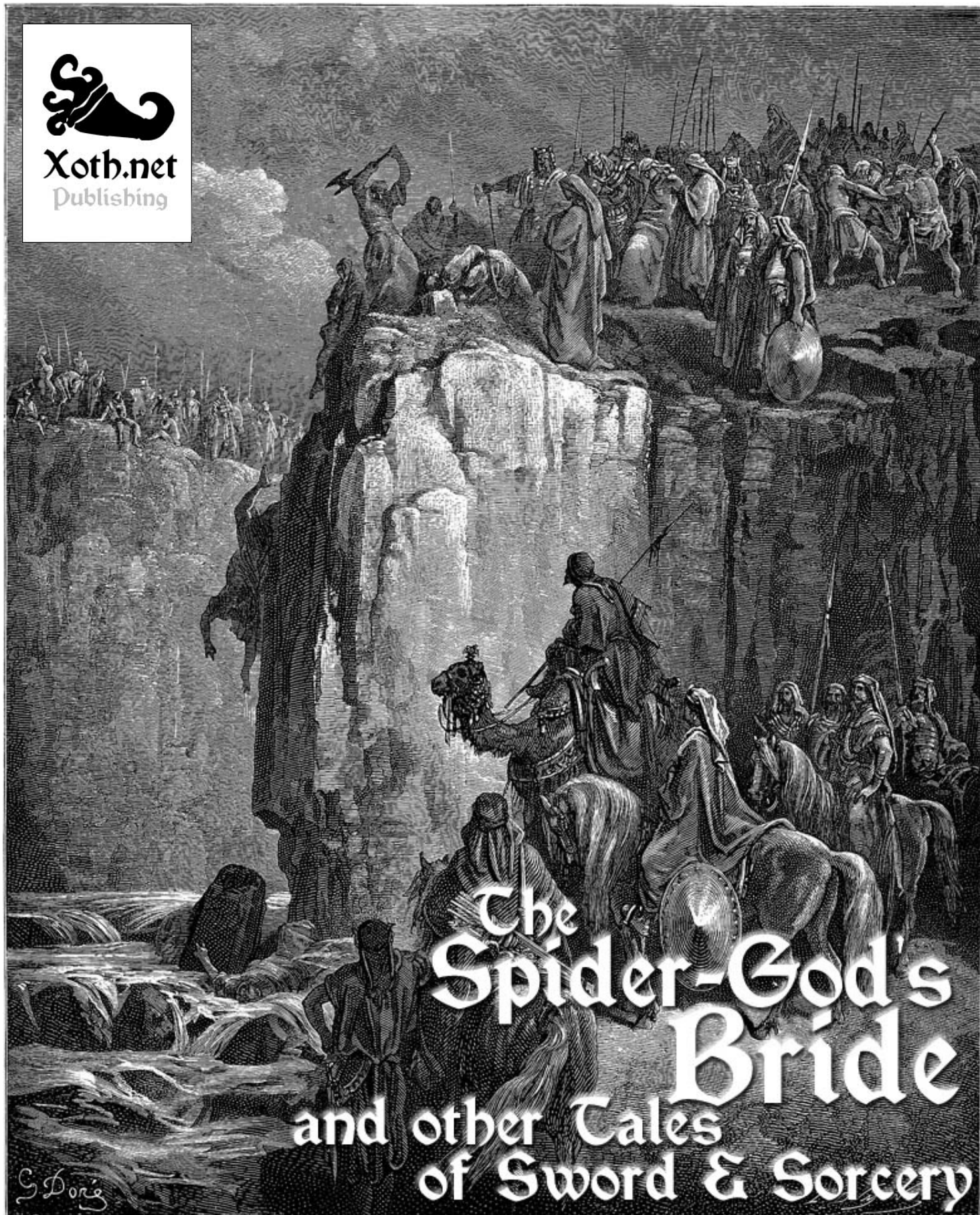


XP1

Sword and Sorcery
Adventures for Character Levels 1-10



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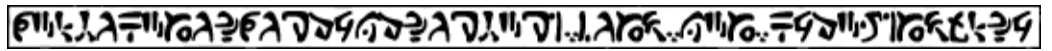
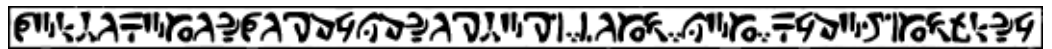


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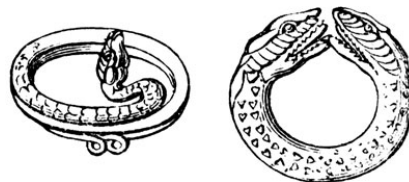
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This book uses the supernatural for settings, characters and themes. All mystical and supernatural elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only. Reader discretion is advised.

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[illegible]

Read on, and prepare for high adventure, as the player characters cut a crimson swath through savage jungle kingdoms and thronged desert cities. From the forbidden catacombs of Belthaar to the sunken temples of Namthu, a world of adventure awaits you!

This book makes occasional references to mature themes such as human sacrifice, slavery, drugs, racism and perverted sexuality. Such themes, which are staples of the sword and sorcery genre, are simply assumed to be unpleasant but undeniable facts of life in the grim fantasy world described. The sensible reader should quickly note that these themes are not the focus of the book; they are not explored in-depth, nor are they used gratuitously. Remember that this is a work of fiction, and stuff in this book should not be taken as an endorsement of these things in the real world. That said, let's get on with the game.

The book then wraps up with appendices containing new monsters and creature templates, plus a bibliography and other miscellanea.





Campaign Guidelines and Optional Rules

The worlds of sword and sorcery adventures differ in many respects from the “high fantasy” milieu assumed by the core rules. In sword and sorcery, the world is dominated by human races; other races (usually degenerate survivors of an earlier age) and supernatural monsters exist only in hidden or lost enclaves far from human civilization. Combat is bloody and brutal, and magical healing does not exist. The use of real magic or sorcery is uncommon, and when used its effects tend to be subtle. Sorcerers are almost always villains, tainted by cosmic evil. Permanent magical items are extremely rare, and never for sale.

To establish the proper atmosphere for the adventures contained within this book, you are strongly encouraged to make use of the following optional rules (and the new classes in the Characters chapter) in your campaign.

While everything in this chapter is optional, the adventures as written assume all the following rules to be in effect (except for the “Armor Reduces Damage” rule, as noted below). The DM might have to make adjustments to the adventures in this book if he places them within a world with the standard d20 System level of magic, monsters, and magical items.

Out With Alignment

“Torches flared murkily on the revels in the Maul, where the thieves of the east held carnival by night. In the Maul they could carouse and roar as they liked, for honest people shunned the quarters, and watchmen, well paid with stained coins, did not interfere with their sports. (...) In one of these dens merriment thundered to the low smoke-stained roof, where rascals gathered in every stage of rags and tatters -- furtive cut-purses, leering kidnappers, quick-fingered thieves, swaggering braves with their wenches, strident-voiced women clad in tawdry finery. Native rogues were the dominant element -- dark-skinned, dark-eyed Zamorians, with daggers at their girdles and guile in their hearts.” — Robert E. Howard: The Tower of the Elephant

A staple high fantasy concept, that of inherently evil races (such as orcs and drow) doesn’t make much sense in a mainly humanocentric world such as the one described in this book.

While the sword and sorcery genre certainly has its own set of clichés, it differs from high fantasy in that there is no delicate balance between good and evil, with fair and noble elves valiantly fighting against stupid, evil orcs. Rather, it is a grim world where might makes right; a world of cruel kings, barbarous fighters, beautiful but seductive women, and ambitious sorcerers and foul demons lurking in the shadows.

Individuals within this world are defined by their motivation, culture, and personal ambitions and ethics. Having characters act according to their own motivation creates much more interesting plots and storylines than simply “I’m good, you’re evil” plotlines.

As a consequence, characters, creatures and deities have no listed alignment value (to retain compatibility with the standard stat-blocks, the alignment entry is included, but all characters are simply listed as Neutral). The PCs will have to judge for themselves whether an NPC is “evil” based on his or her actions.

That said, there are certain supernatural creatures and monsters, such as demonic outsiders and most undead, whose alignments can be labeled as “cosmic evil” (CE). A *protection from evil* spell works against these kinds of monsters.

Note that while cosmic evil may exist, there is no such thing as “cosmic good”. This is one of the major differences between high fantasy, where some sort of balance of power between good and evil usually exists, and sword and sorcery worlds, where the outlook is bleak and the heroes usually fight against overwhelming odds.



Monsters Are Monstrous

"Only a sudden (...) premonition of danger saved Imaro from the talons of the beast that sprang down from the trees. Despite Imaro's lightning-swift leap to the side, those claws raked across one naked shoulder, adding to the scarlet wounds decorating his dark skin. Thrown off-balance by the glancing blow, Imaro stumbled to the ground. Quickly he leaped to his feet and whirled to meet his attacker. His eyes widened in surprise then, for the beast facing him was like none he had seen before, on the Tamburure or elsewhere. It was a great cat, leanly built, halfway between a leopard and a lioness in size. Its fur was scarlet in hue, spotted like a leopard's with rosettes of a deeper crimson shade. Its glittering claws were fearsome weapons, but more dangerous still were the dagger-like fangs that curved an inch below the cat's tufted chin. The long tail lashed in frustration. Not often did the red panther miss its prey."

— Charles R. Saunders: *The City of Madness*

Good sword and sorcery tales include a certain element of brooding horror. The monsters encountered by the protagonists are often unique or exist in isolation. Many monsters are simply giant or prehistoric versions of natural animals such as snakes, apes, and bats.

A good rule of thumb is to have the PCs encounter at most one or two different monster types during a single adventuring session. Dungeons stocked with different monsters in each room should be avoided, since it quickly breaks atmosphere and strains credibility.

Whenever a monster or unusual animal is encountered, treat them as having the Frightful Presence extraordinary ability.

Frightful Presence (Ex): This special quality makes a creature's very presence unsettling to foes. It takes effect automatically when the creature performs some sort of dramatic action (such as charging, attacking, or snarling). Opponents within 30 feet who witness the action may become shaken for 1 minute (10 rounds). This ability affects only opponents with fewer Hit Dice or levels than the creature has. An affected opponent can resist the effect with a successful Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 frightful creature's racial HD + frightful creature's Cha modifier).

If multiple creatures of the same type appear simultaneously in the same encounter, opponents only have to make a single saving throw against the fear effect. An opponent that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the frightful presence of monsters of the same type for 24 hours. For example, if the PCs are attacked by a pack of five ghouls, each player character makes a single saving throw. Those who make the save do not need to save again if more ghouls are encountered within 24 hours.

Magic Is Mysterious

"My name is Pharpetron, among those who have known me in Poseidonis; but even I, the last and most forward pupil of the wise Avyctes, know not the name of that which I am fated to become ere tomorrow. Therefore, by the ebbing silver lamps, in my master's marble house above the loud, ever-ravaging sea, I write this tale with a hasty hand, scrawling an ink of wizard virtue on the grey, priceless, antique parchment of dragons. And having written, I shall enclose the pages in a sealed cylinder of orichalcum, and shall cast the cylinder from a high window into the sea, lest that which I am doomed to become should haply destroy the writing. And it may be that mariners from Lephara, passing to Umb and Pneor in their tall triremes, will find the cylinder; or fishers will draw it from the wave in their seines of byssus; and having read my story, men will learn the truth and take warning; and no man's feet, henceforward, will approach the pale and demon-haunted house of Avyctes." — Clark Ashton Smith: *The Double Shadow*

While almost every sword and sorcery tale seems to include a foul demon, an ancient wizard risen from the dead, or a cult of snake-worshipping priests, these settings are usually referred to as "low magic", at least when compared to the typical high fantasy, quasi-medieval settings so common in roleplaying games.

The major difference is that in sword and sorcery stories, magic is not used as a replacement for technology. Spells and magic items are not used to perform every little task and to make life more convenient for the caster. Rather, magic is a corrupting force that can be dangerous to both health and sanity; it is only used when the sorcerer deems it absolutely necessary.

Common people working their shops or fields, and the majority of soldiers, thieves and merchants, have likely never seen a true magician or seen a spell cast or held a magical item. Magic is generally feared, and most magicians (but not all) are associated with dark curses, evil gods and unbearable secrets which "Man Was Not Meant To Know". Even priests are usually feared and held in awe by the common man.

In savage areas, magic is widely feared and misunderstood, the province of tribal witch-doctors and shamans, who claim to protect the rest of the tribe from the vengeful spirits and demons that surround them.

The select few who are able to use magic and cast spells guard their secrets jealously and attempt to use it to their advantage, often to the detriment of others, and sometimes also to themselves.





Races

The following subchapters describe the various human races found in the World of Xoth. There are no demi-human races; elves, dwarves, halflings and other non-humans are not appropriate in a sword and sorcery campaign, at least not as player characters. Survivors of older, pre-human races, such as the giant-kings of Kuth and the Yalothan snake-men, exist only in small numbers and are primarily intended as non-player characters and villains.

As humans, all races have the following common traits: Medium size, base speed of 30 feet, gain 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level, 1 extra skill point at each additional level, automatically speak their own language and gain 1 additional bonus language (in addition to any bonus languages due to high Intelligence), and may select any class as a favored class, without suffering any XP penalties for multiclassing.

In addition, each race has certain racial traits that distinguish it from the other races. Bonus feats listed as racial traits are in addition to the extra feat all 1st-level humans gain, ignoring any listed prerequisites of the bonus feat. For example, a Zadjite sorcerer begins play with 3 feats; one for being a 1st-level character, another for being human, and finally Zadjite Whip-Mastery as a racial trait bonus feat of all Zadjites.

Languages: There is no Common language in the World of Xoth. Each race speaks its own language, and most people know at least one or two additional languages (usually the languages of neighbouring countries), based on their Intelligence score as usual.

Azimbans

Also known as the “dwellers in the cities of stone” by their tribal neighbours, the Azimbans have an old culture centered around their stone fortresses and bird-worship.

Physical Description: The black warriors of Azimba are tall, strong and proud, known for their discipline in formations with shield and spear. The men are usually shaven-headed, and the wearing of brightly colored robes and feathered plumes is common.

Religion: The god of the Azimbans is Jul-Juggah, a reptilian bird-god that must be propitiated with human sacrifice. His feather-cloaked priests know the secret spells to summon lesser winged lizards, survivors of a lost age.

Racial Traits: +2 racial modifier to Strength; +2 racial bonus to Intimidate and Spot skills; Azimban Spear-Mastery as a bonus feat.

Bhangari

The mysterious eastern realms of Laksha, Ghoma and Azjan are inhabited by a multi-

tinous people known for their fierce warrior castes, master craftsmen, skilled herbalists, and ranks of ascetic priests. The Bhangari live in great walled cities and build temples that soar to the sky.

Physical Description: Of medium height, with golden skin and delicate features. The men keep their black hair cropped short and dress in simple cotton garments, while the women wear colorful silken gowns and weave their hair in long braids. The armies of Laksha, Ghoma and Azjan wear medium armor decorated with silver and gold; the officers have turbans set with feathers or gems to denote their station.

Religion: Not much is known about the cults of the east. The cult of the ape-god Simatala originated in the land of Laksha, and there are several cults that worship aspects of the elephant.

Racial Traits: +2 racial bonus to Heal and Move Silently skills; Brutal Charge (use full attack action in same round as charging); Combat Reflexes as a bonus feat.

Daka

The Daka are the pygmies inhabiting the Silver Isles of the Eastern Ocean. They live in jungle caves and know the secrets of the rare lotus herbs that grow only on their islands.

Physical Description: Short of stature (even adults are rarely 5 feet tall) with curly black hair and dark, wrinkled skin; dressed in loincloths and jewelry of feather and bones, and armed with hunting bows and blowpipes.

Religion: The Daka worship as gods the monstrous slugs of colossal size that inhabit the marshes and swamps of the Silver Isles.

Racial Traits: +2 racial modifier to Dexterity and -2 racial modifier to Strength; +2 racial bonus to Hide and Survival skills; Expert Poisoner and Eyes of the Cat as bonus feats; Small size (+1 bonus to attack rolls and Armor Class, +4 bonus to Hide skill, -4 penalty to grapple checks); Speed 20 feet.

Ghazorites

The Ghazorites are a sub-race of the Susrahmites, who dwell in and around the great port-city of Ghazor on the coast of the eastern ocean. The Ghazorites are known both as avaricious merchants, ruthless warriors, and excellent sailors.

Physical Description: Slightly smaller of stature than their plains-dwelling brethren, Ghazorite men and women often have some foreign blood, the result of intermingling of races. Such crossbreeding usually manifests as a flat nose, blond hair, green eyes, swarthy skin, or some other unusual feature.

Religion: The Ghazorites worship the gods of Susrah, in addition to many strange gods brought to the city by foreign sailors, mercenaries and merchants.



Racial Traits: +2 racial bonus to Appraise and Profession (sailor) skills; Weapon Familiarity (suffer only -2 penalty when using weapons without proficiency); racial Sneak Attack (+1d6) that stacks with the rogue ability of the same name.

Ikunas

The cannibalistic tribes of the Ikuna lands are a constant plague upon the neighbouring nations. From their homeland south of the Hills of the Dead, between the jungle and the coast, the Ikunas wage a war of terror upon the Zadjites, Azimbans, and anyone venturing into the southern waters. Few dare go into these lands; likewise, an Ikuna raiding party on the warpath is something best avoided.

Physical Description: Black-skinned with wavy hair and slightly green-tinted eyes that give them a preternatural, fearsome appearance. The Ikuna warriors are heavily muscled and move with pantherish grace, clad only in loincloths. The women, who are often shamans and tribal priestesses, adorn themselves with necklaces of bone and teeth.

Religion: The Ikunas worship several tribal gods, some of which are simply deified serpents, giant bats and great lizards from the nearby jungles of Yalotha. But also on the blood-stained altars in the witch-houses of the Ikuna are grotesque idols of older demon-gods and grinning, inhuman skulls of unnatural proportions.

Racial Traits: +2 racial bonus to Hide and Swim skills; +1 racial bonus to attack rolls with Ikuna knives and clubs; natural attack with filed teeth (deals 1d4 lethal damage when grappling); Scent; Cannibalize as a bonus feat.

Jairanians

Dwellers in the desert-cities of the west, the Jairanians are renowned as master craftsmen, breeders of fine horses, and cunning thieves. Mercenaries from the cities of Jairan are employed across the continent.

Physical Description: Light brown skin, deep brown eyes, wearing loose pants and short vests.

Religion: Various grim gods are worshipped among the Jairanians, including Yadar, Othabbhon, and even Al-Tawir.

Racial Traits: +2 racial bonus to Craft and Gather Information skills; +2 to all saving throws against magic; Stealthy as a bonus feat.

Khazistanis

Conquering horsemen of the northwestern steppes, the Khazis or Khazistanis are a proud people, and justly so. From humble nomadic roots, they have established an empire with glittering cities stretching from the Eastern Sea to the deserts of Jairan, and scores of caravans bringing tribute and loot to the proud nobles of Khazabad. The ruling warrior caste consists of mounted archers riding magnificent purebred horses into battle.





lets of Ahyada are said to be effective wards against demons.

Cult Secrets: The cult of Ahyada teaches the following additional spells to its initiates (an asterisk indicates a new spell):

- 1st level — *protection from evil, sanctuary*
- 2nd level — *augury*
- 4th level — *divination*
- 5th level — *dream*

Akhlathu, the God of Twisted fate

Figurines of this god, who has few temples and no priests, depict Akhlathu as a deformed dwarf, whose facial features even show a hint of retardation. Many Susrahmites swear “By Akhlathu’s Beard!” when in trouble. This is also a god of thieves and gamblers.

Al-Tawir, the Ancient One, the Sleeper Beneath the Sands

Some say that Al-Tawir dwells in the black gulfs between the stars, others that he sleeps in a sealed and forbidden tomb beneath the desert sand. Al-Tawir is one of the Old Gods. The nomads hear his voice in the howling of the desert winds, and they see his face in the rage of sandstorms. He is the emptiness of the desert, associated with getting lost, with thirst and hunger, with darkness, and with sandstorms.

Cult Secrets: The cult of Al-Tawir teaches the following additional spells to its initiates (an asterisk indicates a new spell):

- 2nd level — *darkness, whispering wind*
- 3rd level — *vampiric touch*
- 5th level — *nightmare*
- 8th level — *whirlwind*

Baal-Khardah, the Sun-God of Susrah

The lord of the sky, protector and judge of humankind, Baal-Khardah is a distant god, usually worshipped only by nobility. The common people tend to favor the more earthly passions of his mate, Belet-Lil. His lavish temples are filled with ram-headed statues, golden sun-discs, and sacred swords.

Cult Secrets: The cult of Baal-Khardah teaches the following additional spells to its initiates (an asterisk indicates a new spell):

- 2nd level — *spiritual weapon*
- 4th level — *divine power*
- 6th level — *hold monster*

Belet-Lil, the Moon-Goddess of Susrah

Voluptuous mate of Baal-Khardah, and earth-mother, Belet-Lil is a goddess of fertility, revelry, and beauty. She is very popular



among the Susrahmites, not least due to the large numbers of temple prostitutes found in every city.

Cult Secrets: The cult of Belet-Lil teaches the following additional spells to its initiates (an asterisk indicates a new spell):

- 1st level — *charm person, fertility charm**
- 2nd level — *delay poison*
- 4th level — *restoration*
- 5th level — *dominate person, lover’s curse**

Ia-Azutlatl, the Blood-God of Sunken Ptabaana

The true form of Ia-Azutlatl is unknown, but he is one of the Old Gods; some even claim that he is the greatest and oldest of those ancient ones. It is known that the blood-druids of now-sunken Ptabaana worshipped him with ceremonies of mass slaughter atop their stepped pyramids of green stone. Today, his name survives only in the rituals of primitive savages and mad hierarchs.

Cult Secrets: The cult of Ia-Azutlatl teaches the following additional spells to its initiates (an asterisk indicates a new spell):

- 3rd level — *black fist of Ptabaana*
- 4th level — *lesser planar binding*
- 6th level — *planar binding*
- 8th level — *greater planar binding*

Jul-Juggah, the Devil-Bird of Azimba

The sweltering plains of Azimba are dotted with hundreds of monstrous statues of lizard-birds. Whether these grim effigies were crafted by an older civilization, or placed there more recently by the feather-cloaked shamans of Jul-Juggah, is not known.

Cult Secrets: The cult of Jul-Juggah teaches the following additional spells to its initiates (an asterisk indicates a new spell):

- 1st level — *feather fall*
- 5th level — *song of discord*
- 6th level — *stone tell*

The Living Flame, Nameless God of Zadj

The Zadjites worship a nameless elemental god, the Living Flame, above all other gods. The priests tend everburning fires in their marble temples. Fire is considered pure; both the dead and the unbelievers are cast into the flames to be purified. Fire also imbues metal with a spark of the divine; the priests of the Living Flame are skilled metal-workers and weaponsmiths.

Cult Secrets: The cult of the Living Flame teaches the following additional spells to its initiates (an asterisk indicates a new spell):

- 2nd level — *burning hands*
- 4th level — *greater magic weapon*
- 5th level — *wall of fire*



Maggash, the Brazen God of Zhaol

Abominable are the brass idols of Maggash, the fire-god of Zhaol, and even worse are the rites of the priesthood, which include the burning of infants as sacrifice. The priests of Zhaol accept no other god than their own, and worship of other gods is strictly forbidden and punishable by death.

Maggash is sometimes depicted as a bull, or a bull-headed humanoid.

Cult Secrets: The cult of Maggash teaches the following additional spells to its initiates (an asterisk indicates a new spell):

- 2nd level — *bull's strength, death knell*
- 5th level — *flame strike*

Nhakhramat, the Six-Armed Woman

The ivory woman, said by some to be the mate of Yadar, is worshipped largely by Khazistanis who disapprove of Belet-Lil's open sensuality, which is a source of conflict between the Khazistanis and the Susrahmites.

Cult Secrets: The cult of Nhakhramat teaches the following additional spells to its initiates (an asterisk indicates a new spell):

- 2nd level — *alter self*
- 5th level — *true seeing*

Nwanga Zhaal, the Lord of Beasts

Known and feared across the Jungle Kingdoms, this bloodthirsty god is master of the beasts that howl at the moon. His shamans are always served by flocks of bonded animals.

Cult Secrets: The cult of Nwanga Zhaal teaches the following additional spells to its initiates (an asterisk indicates a new spell):

- 2nd level — *animal messenger*
- 4th level — *drums of panic**
- 3rd level — *dominate animal, summon animal**
- 7th level — *animal shapes*

Othabbhon, the Guardian of the Gates

Depicted as a horse-headed humanoid clutching a bronze key, this mysterious god is a protector of homes and vaults, as well as the guardian of secret and hidden places.

Cult Secrets: The cult of Othabbhon teaches the following additional spells to its initiates (an asterisk indicates a new spell):

- 1st level — *arcane lock*
- 2nd level — *obscure object*
- 3rd level — *glyph of warding*
- 7th level — *sequester*



The Necromancer's Knife

A black and white woodcut illustration depicting three men in traditional Middle Eastern or biblical attire. They are seated on the ground in front of a rough stone wall. The man on the right is writing in a book with a quill. The man in the center is looking down at the book, while the man on the left looks towards the viewer. A long staff and a pair of sandals are on the ground. The scene is set in a simple, possibly outdoor or semi-outdoor, environment.

The chief apprentice, Arakshat, ultimately had all his rivals killed, maimed, imprisoned, or banished; but the infighting had left Ikhtanabu's wealth spent and his precious library scattered. Arakshat took what was left, sold his master's ravaged properties, and left the city of Belthaar, and was never seen in its precincts again.

Years later, a pack of hungry ghouls, attracted by the bituminous scent of Ikhtanabu Xul's mummified corpse, burrowed into the necromancer's private tomb in the catacombs of Belthaar and devoured his well-preserved body. Now it became evident that not all of Ikhtanabu Xul's necromantic studies had been in vain, for certain secret spells protected the wizard's repose, and his evil shade was released after the feasting of the ghouls. The shade was unable to rest before it had exacted Ikhtanabu Xul's revenge upon his treacherous apprentices, but it was bound to the tomb and needed a living host body to leave.

Thus the wizard's shade inhabited a silvered ritual dagger prepared for this purpose until the broken tomb was discovered by a lowly tomb-robber. This thief, Taziz by name, managed to snatch the valuable-looking dagger from the tomb before he was beset by hungry ghouls and was forced to flee.

Out of the catacombs, in the dingy back alleys of the city, the shade of the necromancer possessed the body of the hapless thief, Taziz.

However, before Taziz/Ikhtanabu could return to the tomb or seek out revenge on his former apprentice, the tomb-robber was assailed by a band of thugs, whose leader, Jahwar, had glimpsed the silver knife carried by Taziz and decided to take it from the lone man.

Adventure Synopsis

The player characters are passing through the back alleys of Belthaar and come across Taziz/Ikhtanabu just as Jahwar and his thugs slay the thief and take the dagger. These merciless thugs don't want to leave any witnesses to their murder and so attack the PCs.

Assuming the player characters defeat Jahwar and his men, they find the silver dagger. Sooner or later, one of the PCs or an NPC become possessed by Ikhtanabu Xul's shade and this eventually leads the player characters to the wizard's tomb.

The city's catacombs are a maze of tunnels, alcoves, and crypts. A sinister order of priests known as the Keepers protects the entrances

The City of Belthaar

This city, located west of the Ophrat river, is one of the smallest city-states of Susrah, with a population of only 12,000 people, yet its foundations are ancient, and its gloomy, serpentine streets wind their way between mighty monuments and hoary towers. There are temples and ziggurats dedicated to Belet-Lil, Baal-Khardah, Yadar, and a multitude of others.

Belthaar is currently ruled by the petty king Simashattar III, whose army of 2,000 pikemen and 500 charioteers is involved in a three-way war with its bigger neighbours, Zhaol and Ghezath. Despite his small army, Simashattar has avoided defeat by capturing a princeling of Ghezath and holding him hostage. At the same time, he is secretly negotiating a separate truce with emissaries of Zhaol.

City Guard of Belthaar, male Susrahnite Ftr1: CR 1; SZ M; HD 1d10+3; hp 10; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 leather armor, +1 Dex), touch 11 (+1 Dex), flat-footed 12 (+2 leather armor); BAB/Grapple +1/+3; Atk +5 melee (1d6+2, short sword, 19-20/x2) or +3 ranged (1d6+2, javelin, 20/x2, range increment 30 ft.); SA +1 racial bonus to attack rolls with all weapons; SQ +2 racial bonus to Appraise and Knowledge (religion) skills; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +6, Intimidate +4, Jump +6. *Feats:* Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative (b), Toughness, Weapon Focus (shortsword).

Languages: Susrahnite.

Possessions: Leather armor, short sword, javelin, 3 gp.

Description: These guards wear simple grey uniforms over their armor.

Tactics: The city guards hurl their javelins first, before surging into melee with their swords.

Guard Captain of Belthaar, male Susrahnite Ftr3: CR 3; SZ M; HD 3d10+3; hp 22; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 leather armor, +1 light wooden shield, +1 Dex), touch 11 (+1 Dex), flat-footed 13 (+2 leather armor, +1 light wooden shield); BAB/Grapple +3/+6; Atk +8 melee (1d8+3, longsword, 19-20/x2); SA +1 racial bonus to attack rolls with all weapons; SQ +2 racial bonus to Appraise and Knowledge (religion) skills; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +9, Intimidate +6, Jump +9, Ride +7. *Feats:* Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative (b), Improved Shield Bash, Toughness, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Susrahnite, Lamuran.

Possessions: Leather armor, light wooden shield, longsword, 12 gp.

Description: Guard captains are typically in their late twenties, with scarlet sashes over their grey uniforms to denote status.

Tactics: Most of these junior officers follow their men into combat, eager to gain glory.





5. Furnace

This room is usually unbearably hot. It contains a huge stone furnace, fuelled by coal, that is used to cremate the corpses of the poor. When the furnace is burning, black foul-smelling smoke rises from the shrine's roof through a chimney that is just large enough for a Medium-sized creature to squeeze through and descend (or ascend, if seeking to escape) with a Climb check (DC 15).

There is a 25% chance that 1d2 acolytes are here, refilling or cleaning out the furnace.

6. Chamber of Urns

The walls of this chamber are filled with wooden shelves, upon which are set hundreds of urns. Most of the urns are of clay, but 20% are of bronze (worth 10 gp each), and 5% are of gold (worth 25 gp each). A few of these urns are filled with ashes from the furnace (Area 5), to be taken down and placed in the catacombs; the remaining urns (80%) are empty.

7. Morgue

The two doors leading into this large room are both adjacent to short stairs of worn stone. The stairs are 10 feet tall and the ceiling height is 20 feet. In the chamber are several rectangular stone slabs. The skull-masked priests carry the dead from the city on biers of blackened leather with handles of polished bone, and place their bodies here, covering the corpses with purple funerary shrouds until they are ready to be taken either to the furnace (Area 5) or the embalming chamber (Area 8).

Since the room is below ground level, it is somewhat cooler than the rest of the building, which slows decay and helps prevent the outbreak of diseases. Yet, the stench of death and decay is overwhelming and living creatures who stay in the room for more than 1 round must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be sickened for 1d6+4 minutes.

There is a 10% chance that 1d3 acolytes are here, carrying a fresh corpse into the room or preparing to move a body away.

8. Embalming Chamber

This grisly chamber is the domain of Othbanes, senior priest of Yadar and master embalmer (see Area 9). The room features a workbench filled with mummification tools, such as knives, hooks, and saws, as well as jars filled with herbs, oils, and resins.

Before mummification, the corpses are drained of blood and the blood is collected in small golden bowls, which is later poured into the large bowl in the sanctum (see Area 10). Then, the internal organs are removed, and moisture is removed by covering the body in salts. The body is treated with special herbs and resins, then wrapped up in cloth and in some cases decorated with protective amulets, jewelry, and face masks.

In the northwestern corner of the room, beneath a loose flagstone, is the secret entrance (Search DC 25) to a tunnel that leads into the catacombs beneath the Shrine of the Keepers. Only Othbanes and his ghoul-allies know about this secret door.

Often, ghouls emerge from the secret tunnel and feast upon the corpses that Othbanes has brought into the embalming chamber from the morgue (Area 7). The corrupt priest provides the eaters of the dead with fresh corpses in return for jewelry and other items the ghouls have stolen from the tombs below.

There is a 20% chance that 1d4+1 ghouls suddenly emerge from the tunnel when the PCs are here, and a 40% chance that Othbanes is present in the room.

Ghouls (2-5): CR 1; hp 13; see Area 4 of the Catacombs.

9. Master Embalmer's Office

This is the study and sleeping quarters of Othbanes. A small bookcase is filled with a number of scrolls and parchments that deal mostly with medicine and anatomy. When not working in the embalming workshop or studying his books, the priest rests on a comfortable divan of green silk.

A sturdy chest (Hardness 5; hp 15; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 30) stands in one corner; Othbanes has the key. This trapped chest (CR 2; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; lock bypass [Open Lock DC 30]; Atk +17 melee [1 plus poison, needle]; poison [blue whinnis, DC 14 Fortitude save resists (poison only), 1 Con/unconsciousness]; Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 17) contains several items traded from the ghouls, including four pieces of green silk, each wrapped around an object.

Inside the first are two ancient books on alchemy (worth 50 gp each). The second piece contains a small cedar box inlaid with painted ceramic tiles (worth 5 gp). The box holds six linen handkerchiefs embroidered with a script H (worth 1 gp each). Inside the third piece are five daggers, balanced for throwing (worth 12 gp each). Each one is set with a small obsidian in the pommel. The fourth length of silk is wrapped around a small jewelry box, which holds a jewelry set consisting of a gold ring (worth 20 gp), a bracelet (worth 40 gp), and a necklace (worth 55 gp).

Under the silk-wrapped bundles are three belt pouches. The first holds copper (187 cp), the second contains silver (141 sp), and the third has some gold with a smattering of platinum (7 pp and 54 gp).

Othbanes, master embalmer and corrupt priest, male Susrahnite Sor4: CR 4; SZ M; HD 4d4+8; hp 18; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+0 no armor, +1 Dex, +4 *mage armor*), touch 15 (+1 Dex, +4 *mage armor*), flat-footed 10 (+0 no armor); BAB/Grapple +2/+3; Atk +5 melee (1d4+1, curved dagger, 18-20/x2); SA +1 racial



bonus to attack rolls with all weapons, Spells; SQ +2 racial bonus to Appraise and Knowledge (religion) skills, Sinister Presence; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +7, Concentration +9, Heal +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Profession (embalmer) +9, Spellcraft +9, Use Magic Device +7.
Feats: Acolyte, Combat Casting, Extend Spell, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative (b), Spell Focus (necromancy).

Arcane Spells Known (Spells per day: 4/3/2; Spell DC 10 + spell level +2 Int): 0 — *disrupt undead*, *prestidigitation*, *resistance*; 1st — *chill touch*, *mage armor*, *scare*; 2nd — *command undead*, *death knell*, *ghoul touch*.

Languages: Susrahnite, Lamuran, Yar-Ammonite.

Possessions: Clothing, masterwork curved dagger, 24 gp, 1 dose of blinding-powder.

Description: Dressed in purple and silver robes, with a green jade skull-mask. Othbanes deals with the ghouls that haunt the catacombs of Belthaar, and he knows of several secret tunnels beneath the city. The ghouls bring items pilfered from the tombs to Othbanes, while he keeps the locations of their lairs secret.

Tactics: Othbanes will trade the information about the secret tunnels for his life if he is in mortal danger.

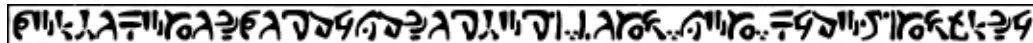
10. Sanctum

In the gloom of this ghastly chapel stands a 10 feet tall statue of the death god of Susrah, cloaked in a hooded robe of real cloth, its arms held out to receive offerings. The statue itself, which has the body of a young and powerful man but whose hidden face is that of a grinning skull, is of polished ebony, while the cloth is embroidered with golden thread. In each of its outstretched hands is a yellowed scroll; the scroll in the right hand contains the *dispel evil* spell, while the left contains the following spells: *false life*, *contagion*, and *magic circle against evil*.

In front of the idol is an altar, also made from polished ebony, with inlays of ivory and silver in the shape of skulls. There is a scattering of gold and silver coins and other valuables upon the altar (a total of 250 gp), left there by supplicants who have dared visit the charnel temple to pray for the deceased. Black, greasy candles burn slowly on the altar, representing the dwindling of life force within every living person. It is said that the priests can kill a person simply by extinguishing a candle that has been inscribed with the true name of the victim.

To the left of the altar is a large golden bowl (worth 350 gp) inscribed along its rim with the archaic cuneiform script of Susrah. A successful Decipher Script (DC 20) check allows a character to read the following on the bowl: *"The bones of the dead go to the tomb but the*





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A Cry for Vengeance

Read or paraphrase the following to the player characters. This text describes events that happen off-stage and foreshadow the PCs' meeting with the thief Sabiha.

The night is black under a faint crescent moon. Silence hangs over Khadim Bey's domed palace like a thick veil. Two cloaked figures climb silently over the towering wall. Time passes; the palm trees in the palace garden rustle softly in the sultry night wind. When the two figures emerge and descend the citadel wall a half-hour later, the hood of one falls temporarily away to reveal the face of a female, with long black hair and yellow eyes, like those of a cat. Suddenly, torches flare on the battlements and guards shout out alarms. Chaos ensues, but the two figures disappear into the shadows of the city.

The following day, the player characters are out on some trivial errand, perhaps visiting the bazaar or the city square. The same rumors can be heard everywhere: Daring thieves entered the grand palace last night and stole a very valuable emerald from the *bey*; a gem which on special occasions sat squarely in the navel of the governor's favorite concubine, a beautiful girl from Azjan in the East. A successful Gather Information check reveals that the emerald is said to be worth over 5,000 gp (DC 15); that the jewel was cut more than six hundred years ago by the peerless master artisan Shembuj (DC 20); and that it was supposedly once set in the crown of the wicked Raj of Uthjar (DC 25).

Confirming that there is more to these tales than mere rumors is the fact that the city watch are conducting random searches in the bazaar and elsewhere. The player characters are approached by an especially haughty and devoted Khazistani officer, named Hassan Sadi, and his troop of Yemarite mercenaries. He interrogates the PCs very thoroughly, asking uncomfortable questions, and orders his men to inspect the belongings of the party





duels; he sometimes throws in a wild beast for good measure. The winner gets the prize money, usually around 40-50 gp.

All kinds of weapons are allowed, as long as the two combatants agree. Fights are supposed to end when the first combatant is incapacitated (at 0 hp), but people are killed more often than not. Such would-be champions are hauled out of the pit and disposed of through the back door nearby.

6. Back Door

This door has the same statistics as the front door (Area 1). It exits to a dark alleyway littered with filth and refuse. Rats and stray dogs scurry about in the shadows. Several other narrow streets connect with this alley here; Abu's henchmen and contacts often use this door to come and go on their illicit errands.

7. Conference Room

A massive wooden table, ringed by half a dozen chairs, stands in the center of this large room, where Abu and his contacts often meet to discuss business. Ibo and Sabiha might be found here, too. There is a 25% chance (rolled separately for each NPC) that any of the three are present in the room at any given time.

There is an elaborate marble fireplace in the eastern corner of the room; the floor is carpeted with a heavy Jairanian rug (worth 200 gp).

8. Office and Bedchamber

Abu is a man who likes to mix business and pleasure; his office is next door to his lavish bedchamber. In the tavern-keeper's desk is a locked compartment (Hardness 5; hp 1; Break DC 17; Open Lock DC 25) that contains a pile of gold coins (2,000 gp total), a silver collar (worth 75 gp), and a golden snuff box (worth 25 gp). The compartment is trapped with a poison needle trap (CR 2; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; lock bypass [Open Lock DC 30]; Atk +17 melee (1 plus poison, needle); poison (rattlesnake, DC 15 Fortitude save resists (poison only), 1d6 Con/1d2 Con); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 17).

Next door, a circular bed, covered with the pelts of exotic animals (various furs, worth 150 gp), is usually kept warm by a handful of off-duty serving-girls (see Area 2 for statistics).

Abu Khafi, Tavern-Owner and Lotus-Trader, male Jairanian Rog6: CR 6; SZ M; HD 6d6; hp 29; Init +4 (+4 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+0 no armor, +4 Dex), touch 14



(+4 Dex), flat-footed 10 (+0 no armor); BAB/Grapple +4/+6; Atk +9 melee (1d4+2 plus poison, curved dagger, 18-20/x2); SA Sneak Attack +3d6; SQ +2 racial bonus to Craft and Gather Information skills, +2 to all saving throws against magic, Trapfinding, Evasion, Uncanny Dodge, Trap Sense +2; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +9, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +10, Bluff +11, Craft (herbalism) +10, Diplomacy +11, Forgery +10, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (local) +10, Move Silently +13, Sense Motive +10, Tumble +13. **Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Iron Will, Quick Draw, Stealthy (b), Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Jairanian, Khazistani.

Possessions: Fine clothing, masterwork curved dagger, two doses of large scorpion venom (Injury DC 18, damage 1d6 Str/1d6 Str), keys to all doors in house, 99 gp.

Description: Shaven-headed, with a well-oiled beard and a sly grin to match. Abu is a native of Jairan to the west, and so are most of his staff.

Tactics: If forced to fight, Abu positions himself so as to gain flanking and sneak attack with his poisoned dagger.

9. Lotus-Rooms

The basement of Abu Khafi's house has six special rooms where a guest's lusts, whether for the sensuous dreams of the silver lotus, or for other, more obscene desires, can be satisfied. The door to each room is of average quality (Open Lock DC 25) and can be locked by the guest from the inside; Abu also has a key with which he can unlock any of these doors from the outside.

Inside each chamber is a low table surrounded by comfortable cushions. A silvered brazier (worth 30 gp) stands in the corner, providing illumination and warmth. The powdered leaves of the silver lotus can also be burned in the brazier to produce a thin grey smoke that instills pleasant dreams and visions in the mind of any who inhale the vapors.

For each room, there is a 50% chance that it is occupied by 1d3 lotus-smokers, with a 75% likelihood that each is asleep. Player characters entering an occupied chamber without holding their breath must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) to avoid the effects of the residual (but diluted) vapors (initial damage 1 Wis, secondary damage unconsciousness for 3d10 minutes). Another saving throw must be made 1 minute later, even if the first saving throw was successful.

There is a secret peek-hole in the wall farthest from the door in each chamber, which Abu's henchmen use to spy upon his guests, to learn secrets that can be used for blackmailing. The peek-hole is itself set within a secret revolving door that can be locked (Open Lock DC 30) from the outside (from Area 10). The

presence of both peek-hole and secret door must be detected separately with a successful Search check (DC 30).

10. Secret Corridors and Escape Tunnel

A narrow corridor runs along the back wall of each lotus-room, and connects with the main corridor through several secret doors (Search DC 30). Abu's guards and serving-girls know about these secret doors; but only Abu knows about the secret door in the far eastern wall that runs for another 40 feet and then connects with a sewer tunnel. There is a spiked pit trap 25 feet down the secret tunnel (40 ft. deep; CR 3; no attack roll necessary [4d6], +10 melee [1d4 spikes for 1d4+4 points of damage per hit]; Reflex save DC 20 avoids; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20).

11. Lotus Vault

This room has a strong wooden door (2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 30). The door is trapped with a wall scythe trap (CR 4; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +20 melee [2d4+8/x4, scythe]; Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 18). The vault contains Abu's supplies of silver lotus (worth over 10,000 gp) and other items, including a rack with three silvered scimitars (worth 105 gp each) and a large bronze bowl inscribed with Susrahnite cuneiform around its rim (worth 200 gp). The room can also be used as a safe retreat in case of trouble, since the door can be barred from the inside (adds +2 to Break DC).

Slaves of the Silver Lotus

The player characters can confront Sabiha and her companion Ibo either inside the House of Abu Khafi, or the PCs can shadow the two thieves when they leave the gambling-house. This night, Ibo's mission is to deliver a dose of silver lotus from Abu Khafi to Sahiba's master, the Khazistani general Melik Khan. The general is addicted to the lotus and must cooperate with the rebel nobles to get what he craves. Note that Melik Khan does not know the identity of the rebel nobles; Sabiha is the link between the nobles and the general.

Ibo and Sabiha stop and talk briefly in a dark and deserted square some streets away from Abu's house, then Sabiha returns to the gambling-house while Ibo heads for the general's mansion. The PCs can track Ibo as he leaves the Pleasure District and heads for the wealthy Mansion District. Ibo stops at certain points to make sure he is not being followed; make a Spot check opposed by the Hide skills of the player characters at such occasions (opposed Listen and Move Silently checks may also be appropriate).

Unless hindered by the PCs somewhere along the way, Ibo reaches the walled mansion of Melik Khan, where he approaches the main



The Vault of Vigthrahotep

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claim to the throne were soon slain or exiled, for the new queen was a witch who used curses and necromancy against her enemies. Having mastered an abominable rite of longevity, Nugga-Tikanda started a reign of terror which has lasted for two centuries.

Adventure Synopsis

The player characters are hired by a group of Susrahnite traders who have found clues to the whereabouts of a lost gold mine. These traders are in fact inphidians, serpent-men, in disguise, survivors of a lost age who seek to free a serpent-king, the ancient Yigthrahotep, who lies slumbering in the prehuman vaults beneath the mine.

The PCs travel along with the “Susrahnites” through the desert and into the kingdom of Shoma. The final piece of the key to open the vault, which was re-sealed by the priests of the Ishrah, can be found in the temple of Katanga, the capital city of Shoma.

Reaching the lost mine, the PCs must deal with the Wamuba tribesmen and their mad witch-queen, then explore the tunnels and chambers beneath the mine. When the vault is found, the serpentmen drop their disguises and attempt to sacrifice the player characters to the awakened serpent-king Yigthrahotep.

Starting the Adventure

Consider any of the following hooks to get the adventure started.

— A scholar among the PCs finds and studies a clay tablet that contains tantalizing hints of a lost gold mine in the jungles south of Shoma. The player characters set out on an expedition on their own. As they search for the keys to the lost mine, they are approached by a group of foreign merchants.

— The player characters are hired as mercenaries or caravan guards by foreign merchants who are travelling south. When the caravan reaches Shoma, it becomes apparent to the PCs that the merchants are looking for a lost gold mine somewhere in the jungle. The player characters are promised a share of the loot if they help find the lost mine.

The Legend of the Purple Spires

The Ishrahnites wisely re-sealed the ancient vault they unearthed in their mines (see the Introduction), by placing powerful warding spells on the doors to prevent anyone from going into (or breaking out of!) the vault. But according to the laws of sorcery, there is no magic that cannot be undone, and for all seals there must exist a key.

The priests of the Ishrah therefore covered the vault doors with hundreds of arcane sigils and cuneiform script. Three of the symbols,

placed randomly among the other sigils, are the keys to opening the vault. To preserve the keys (as they must be, otherwise the seal is voided), the priests carved each symbol on separate objects, which were then handed on to different guardians and carried away. Over the centuries, the keys changed hands multiple times, and eventually their significance was lost.

The three objects each containing a part of the key to the vault are a clay tablet, a golden figurine, and a marble flagstone. The clay tablet is assumed to somehow fall into the possession of the player characters (see below), while the golden figurine has been found by a group of serpent-men. The marble flagstone is currently set in the floor of the inner shrine of Nataka in the city of Katanga.

The Clay Tablet of Zhaol

The clay tablet written by the priests of the Ishrah eventually found its way to the city of Zhaol the Accursed (so called by its neighbouring peoples for its wickedness) where the stone rested for centuries. Only recently, the tablet came to the city of Zul-Bazzir through a merchant, or perhaps a thief or sorcerer. It is assumed that the player characters start this adventure with the tablet already in their possession, but a separate introductory adventure could easily be created wherein the PCs find or steal the tablet.

The tablet, little more than a square foot in size, has now broken up into three pieces, of which the largest is missing (and is, in fact, forever destroyed).

The first remaining piece is covered with cuneiform script. It requires a successful Descripher Script check (DC 25) to read what turns out to be a myth-poem:





Shining Hills Random Encounters

Roll	Encounter
1	Disease
2	Insect swarm
3	Fungi
4	Carnivorous tree
5	Giant dire frog
6	Constrictor snake
7	Heavy rain and flood
8	Rockslide
9	Monstrous spider
10	Carnivorous ape
11	Native tribesmen
12	Mazanian warband

Carnivorous Ape: This aggressive band of 1d3+2 man-eating apes attack by jumping down from the trees above the party.

Carnivorous Tree: A single assassin vine uses its long, tentacle-like main vine to grab and strangle a passing victim, while using its lesser vines to entangle others. It takes a Spot check (DC 20) to detect the assassin vine before it strikes.

Disease: The characters are exposed to a tropical disease while passing a mosquito-infested area. The disease is similar to the red ache (Fortitude DC 15, incubation 1d3 days, damage 1d6 Str). If the initial saving throw succeeds, the disease has no effect. Otherwise, the character takes damage after the incubation period. Once per day afterward, the character must make a successful Fortitude saving throw to avoid repeated damage. Two successful saving throws in a row indicate that the character has fought off the disease and recovers, taking no more damage. These Fortitude saving throws can be rolled secretly so that the player doesn't know whether the disease has taken hold.

Fungi: A large patch of 1d3+1 violet fungi are found in the moist and dark shade of a rotted tree.

Constrictor Snake: Constrictor snakes usually are not aggressive and flee when confronted, especially if Ursib and the other serpent-men are with the party.

Giant Dire Frog: A pair of large, feral amphibians with razor-sharp teeth and dark mottled skin with black splotches leap out from hiding in a marshy area. See the Tome of Horrors for statistics.

Heavy Rain and Flood: A massive downpour of rain causes severe flooding of a nearby river. Characters are caught in the river stream and must make Swim checks (DC 20) every round to avoid going under. If a character gets a check result of 5 or more over the minimum necessary, he arrests his motion by catching a rock, tree limb, or bottom snag — he is no longer being carried along by the flow of the water. Escaping the rapids by reaching the bank requires three Swim checks (DC 20) in a row. Characters arrested by a rock, limb, or snag can't escape under their own power unless they strike out into the water and attempt to swim their way clear. Other characters can rescue them as if they were trapped in quicksand (see the DMG).

Insect Swarm: A centipede swarm approaches the party's campsite. The swarm is immune to weapon damage, but a lit torch swung as an improvised weapon deals 1d3 points of fire damage per hit. Also, a lit lantern can be used as a thrown weapon, dealing 1d4 points of fire damage to all creatures in squares adjacent to where it breaks.

Mazanian Warband: A raiding-band from the southern realm of Mazania, consisting of 2d6 x 10 female warriors (Ftr2), wearing leather armor and helmets set with ostrich feathers. They are armed with clubs, javelins and composite shortbows. Their leader is a female 6th-level fighter with rhino-hide armor and armed with a dire flail. The Mazanians seek loot and the capture of male slaves.

Monstrous Spider: A colony of 1d4+1 large monstrous spiders have spun several webs to trap the unwary. A Spot check (DC 20) is required to avoid stumbling into the webs.

Native Tribesmen: This is a band of 1d10+10 native warriors, unrelated to the Wamuba tribe. Their initial attitude is hostile. They are 2nd-level barbarians, armed with shortspears and carrying large wooden shields. Their leader is a 4th-level barbarian armed with a great-club.

Rockslide: A sudden rockslide threatens to bury one or more of the party members. A character can spot the danger with a successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) or Craft (stonemasonry) check (DC 20). Characters in the slide zone take 3d6 points of damage, or no damage at all if they make a Reflex save (DC 15). Characters in the slide zone who fail their saves are buried.

Characters take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per minute while buried. If such a character falls unconscious, he must make a Constitution check (DC 15). If it fails, he takes 1d6 points of lethal damage each minute thereafter until freed or dead.

Characters who aren't buried can dig out their friends. In 1 minute, using only her hands, a character can clear rocks and debris equal to five times her heavy load limit. The amount of loose stone that fills a 5-foot-by-5-foot area weighs one ton (2,000 pounds). Armed with an appropriate tool, such as a pick, crowbar, or shovel, a digger can clear loose stone twice as quickly as by hand. You may allow a buried character to free himself with a Strength check (DC 25).

turies ago, clearing away the vegetation in the eastern part of the valley and constructing a wooden palisade across the valley floor. They built their small huts of wood and mud inside the palisade, in the shadow of the purple ruins. The tribe avoided the ancient fortress, believing it to be cursed, but the chieftain's oldest wife, Nugga-Tikanda, secretly delved into the ruins. It was whispered that she learned the dark arts of witchcraft from the dead spirits of the Ishrah within the ruins. Not long after, the chieftain died from a sudden wasting disease, and Nugga-Tikanda seized rulership of the tribe.

The Wamuba live in almost total isolation from the outside world. There are currently around 300 members of the tribe; two-thirds are adult warriors and the rest are young boys. If the player characters enter the village, they soon notice that there are no women to be seen anywhere. Also, due to inbreeding (see below), many of the tribesmen have gross physical defects, such as missing or bulging eyes, weirdly twisted arms or feet, purple boils or cysts, extra or missing digits on hands or feet, and so on. The majority are still capable warriors, however.

Note: The Wamuba use the same statistics as the Shoma race, except that they do not get the racial +10 bonus to Speed.

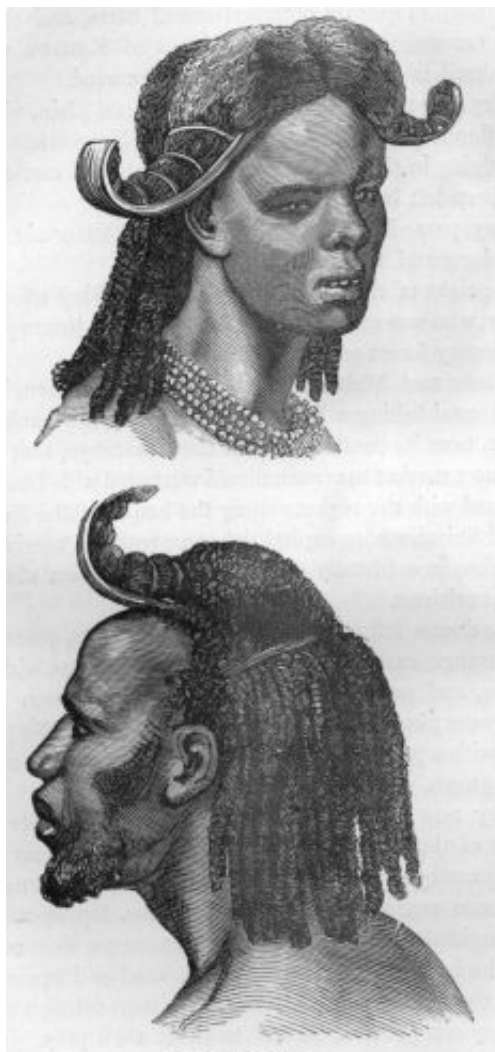
The important non-player characters of the village include:

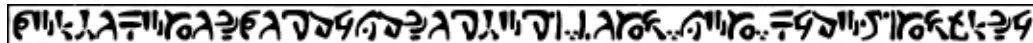
— Nugga-Tikanda, Witch-Queen of the Wamuba: Nugga-Tikanda is the despotic female ruler of the tribe. She is in fact a two hundred year old crone, sustained by sorcery, although her physical form is young but massively obese. The witch-queen is not wholly sane.

— Tibaa, Tribal Champion and Royal Consort: Tibaa, a powerful warrior, is Nugga-Tikanda's current favorite, champion and consort. He enjoys his current position and acts ruthlessly in order to preserve it against any potential rivals.

— Mwanza “the Hunchback”, Village Elder and Chief Steward: Mwanza is an old, hunchbacked man who oversees the village and acts as the queen's messenger. He speaks a basic form of the Shoma language, which allows him to communicate with strangers.

Development: As the PCs approach within a mile or two of the valley, they are spotted by Wamuba sentries who hide in the dense







cyclopean temples and sunken treasures. The priest, Dar-Tiglat, learns the story of Namthu and the Horn of Bhaomog through these dreams, though he does not realize that he has become the unwitting thrall of Bhaomog.

Dar-Tiglat plans to depose Uktha-Akkar, the current high priest of the cult of Yammosh. He hopes to use the horn to control Bhaomog and his servitors, the “bloated ones” of Namthu, and to learn the ancient ritual of creating such creatures. With a horde of amphibious warriors and a monstrous sea-god under his control, bringing him the sunken treasures and secrets of the deep seas, Dar-Tiglat can overthrow Uktha-Akkar and become high priest, and perhaps even king of Ghazor.

Through his divination spells, Dar-Tiglat learns that the PCs have come into the possession of the Horn of Bhaomog. Since the scheming priest’s resources are limited, he thinks he may use the PCs as useful pawns. Dar-Tiglat knows where the ancient priests of Namthu are entombed, and that their tomb contains a map to the now-lost isle. Recognizing the PCs as capable individuals, he drops clues so that the PCs are led towards the tombs to find the map to the island.

When the player characters find a map point-

ing to a lost isle with fabled treasures, they need to find a ship that can take them to the island. There are not many vessels in Ghazor’s harbor that can make the long trip across the open sea, and Dar-Tiglat arranges it so that the PCs gain passage on a ship where many of the crew are cultists loyal to Dar-Tiglat.

As the PCs’ vessel leave Ghazor, a pirate captain of the Sea Raiders follows the player characters, intent on finding and taking the treasure for himself, as well as taking revenge for the murder of his first mate at the hands of the PCs.

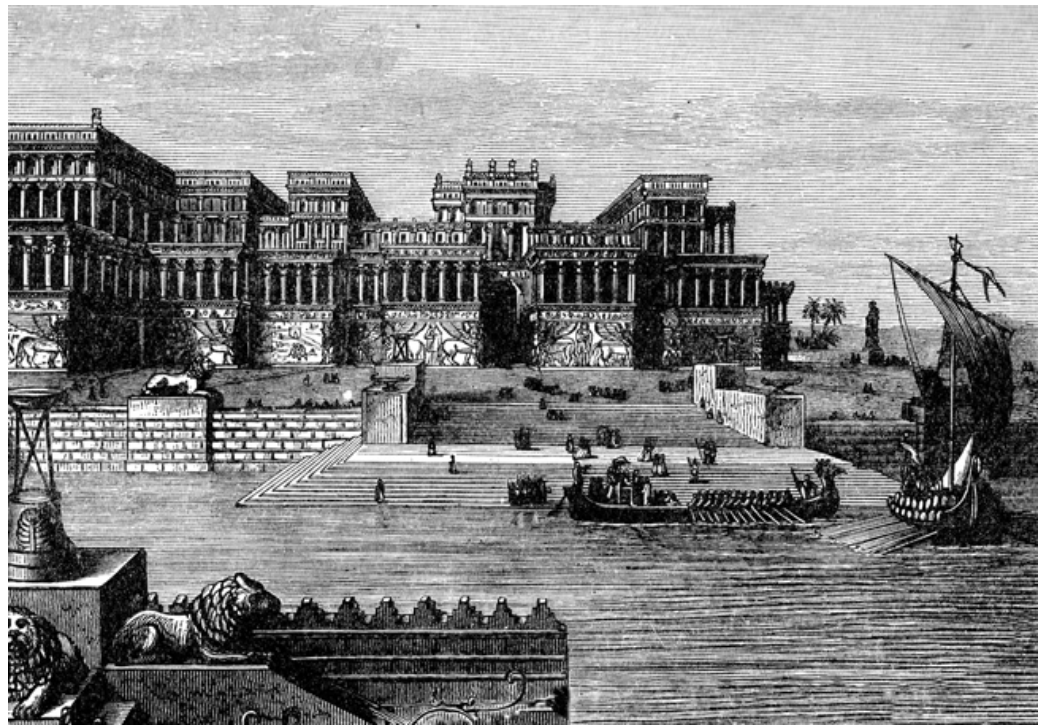
Once on the island, after the characters have served their purpose, Dar-Tiglat plans to betray and capture the PCs, transforming them into bloated ones, the amphibian slaves of Bhaomog.

Meanwhile, Bhaomog himself slumbers and waits patiently in his abyssal prison for the day when he shall once again awaken and rise above the waves to become master of the southern seas.

Starting the Adventure

Consider any of the following hooks to get the adventure started.





Development: If the guards are attacked, they attempt to raise the alarm using a horn, in which case reinforcements arrive from the north city in $2d6+6$ minutes. One of the guard-captains (determined randomly as to which one) has a huge gambling-debt and may accept a bribe if the offer is substantial.

The Bay of Ghazor

The water of the bay is cold, and the waves crash upon the cliffs of the peninsula, making it dangerous to swim (Swim DC 15) and to maneuver in small boats (Profession [sailor] DC 12), although the waves are a bit more calm on the northern side facing the bay (Swim DC 13).

If the player characters approach the tip of the peninsula in a boat, they must make a Jump check (DC 10, but remember the armor check penalty) to get from the boat to the cliffs, due to the crashing waves. Swimming PCs, or PCs in the water from failed Jump checks, must make a Climb check (DC 15) to climb up from the water.

Before getting to the peninsula, however, the PCs must deal with the great sharks that infest the bay of Ghazor. A large shark approaches and attacks any swimmers or small boats without provocation. A Spot check (DC 15) can be made to detect a big fin in the water before the shark dives and disappears, only to reappear under the boat a few seconds later, attempting to overturn the boat (or simply attack any swimmers). Unless the PCs spotted the shark, it attacks with surprise and the player characters are flat-footed.

As long as the shark is submerged in the water, it has total cover; on the surface it has improved cover (+8 to AC, +4 to Reflex saves).

Each round the shark charges the boat, each PC must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or fall into

the water. See the DMG for more information about the effects of water on combat.

Large Shark: CR 2; hp 38.

The Secret Cavern and Underwater Tunnel

There is a hidden cavern (Search DC 20) near the cliffs, with a long tunnel eventually leading to the ancient royal crypts (see Area 1 of the crypts). A long stretch (200 feet) of this tunnel is underwater, meaning that player characters must swim through it to reach the crypts.

A character with a Speed of 30 feet can swim 15 feet with a full-round action (by making a Swim check against DC 10). It thus takes 13 rounds for a character with average speed to swim through the tunnel. A character with a Constitution score less than 13 cannot hold his breath this long and must start taking Constitution checks to avoid drowning (DC 10, +1 for each additional round).

Note that if there is combat along the way, the number of rounds a character can hold his breath is halved (ie. 1 round of combat “costs” 2 rounds of breath).

The Ruins of the Ancient Palace

The ruins of the old palace are severely weathered. The outer walls are 30 feet tall (Climb DC 20) but broken in several places. Everything of value that was not relocated to the new palace has long since been carried away by looters. A successful Search check (DC 15) allows the player characters to find a tunnel that leads down towards the crypts, but they soon find this tunnel collapsed. It quickly becomes apparent that it would take weeks to clear the tunnel of rocks. The PCs will have better progress searching for the secret cavern with the underwater tunnel (see above).

The Ancient Royal Crypts of Ghazor

Standard Features: Unless noted otherwise, all doors are stone doors (4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 25 if described as locked).

Lighting: The crypts are unlit.

1. Flooded Chamber

The underwater tunnel from below terminates in this large square chamber. Three doors are apparent; two are locked while the third is a false, trapped door (Falling Block Trap: +15 melee [6d6]; Search [DC 20]; Disable Device [DC 25]; Can strike all characters in two adjacent squares).

2. Collapsed Chamber

A narrow stairway leads up to this chamber, where the walls have collapsed, blocking further progress into the palace ruins above.

3. Slimy Corridor

This corridor is plain and unadorned. With a successful Spot check (DC 20), a player character can detect a faint glistening streak of slime across the ceiling. This is a trail left by the monster currently in the antechamber (Area 6).

4. Hall of the Sea

The walls of this chamber are decorated with the shells of snails and fossilized crustaceans. In the center of the chamber is a large, square pillar painted with blue waves and various types of ancient sailing-vessels.

5. Corridor With Alcoves

There are ten small alcoves in this T-shaped corridor. Each alcove contains a copper urn whose lid is shaped like an octopus, with the tentacles hanging down the sides of the urn. The urns are inscribed with archaic cuneiform script; a successful Decipher Script check (DC 20) reveals that the urns contain the ashes of great sea-captains. The urns are worth 75 gp each, but the dust inside is worth even more to a knowledgeable sorcerer, for it can be used as a material component to cast a double-strength lower water spell.

6. Antechamber

The door to this chamber is slightly ajar. Along the south wall is a row of life-size statues of people with unknown racial features.

The opposite wall is painted with scenes that form a story: A group of people lived on an island rich from sea trade, and their temple was heaped with sacrifice to the sea-gods. One image shows a priest with a gold-embroidered robe that seems to receive wisdom and revelations through a conch shell placed next to the

priest's ear. The next images show the people fleeing from the island, which is wracked by earthquakes, and coming to Ghazor as it must have existed many centuries ago. The priests among the sea-people are shown offering tribute to the king of Ghazor, and the final image is of the priests being buried under the palace on the island.

In the middle of the room is a human body lying face-down. If the body is turned around, the PCs see that it is a corpse, which is covered in some sort of slime, and has begun to decay. This is in fact the body of the Namthuan priest Takahla, which has recently been exhumed from his sarcophagus and absorbed by an abominable creature that feeds upon sorcerous energies. The creature attempts to lash out against a surprised opponent, and then withdraw into the grand crypt (Area 7) where its progenitor lurks.

Slime-Covered Corpse (arcanoplasm):

CR 7; SZ L Aberration; HD 7d8+42; hp 73; Init +4; Spd 30 ft., climb 10 ft.; AC 16 (-1 size, +7 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 16; BAB/Grapple +5/+11; Atk +7 melee (2d4+3 plus 1d6 acid, slam); Full Atk +7 melee (2d4+3 plus 1d6 acid, slam); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Constrict (2d4+3 plus 1d6 acid), Improved Grab, Arcane Spell Mimicry; SQ Absorb Arcane Magic, Amorphous, Arcanesense (100 ft.), Blindsight (60 ft.), Immunities; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 15, Dex 11, Con 22, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +18, Hide +2, Move Silently +6.
Feats: Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (slam).

Tactics: Arcanoplasms always target arcane spellcasting creatures first. Their innate ability to detect such creatures allows them to do so with precision and accuracy. Because of its ability to replicate spells cast near it, the arcanoplasm always tries to stay within 30 feet of an arcane caster. Mimicked spells are cast at the foe deemed most threatening.

Acid (Ex): An arcanoplasm secretes a highly corrosive acid that dissolves only flesh. Any melee hit deals acid damage.

Constrict (Ex): An arcanoplasm deals automatic slam and acid damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, an arcanoplasm must hit with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Arcane Spell Mimicry (Ex): An arcanoplasm can mimic any arcane spell of 4th level or lower that is cast within 30 feet of it. The spell takes effect on the arcanoplasm's next action, has a caster level of 7th, and does not require any components. The save against a mimicked spell has a DC of 12 + the level of the spell. The save DC is Charisma-based.



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