

Adventure I-1: Journey to the Black Oasis



~The Player Characters~

Kamal, noble half-orc warrior from the distant kingdom of al-Baat

Khalida, Honorable Daughter of Heaven's Fire, cleric of Ishtar and follower of the Qhímá (KEY-ma)

Khalil of the Cup, warlock, brother to Nephys

Nephys, paladin of the Qhímá and magistrate of the al-Rassan, sister to Khalil

Ylyndar, elven shadowdancer from Dzim, City of Thieves

[C] means a clue to an unsolved mystery.

THE UNCOVERED TOMB

In the **Holy City of Urzat Baz**, a sinkhole swallows an orphanage in the Basrat slums. [C] The player characters investigate and discover a forgotten tomb belonging to a warlord from the mysterious ancient culture known as the **Builders**. On the walls of the tomb is a tribute to that warlord's liege, a sorcerer-king called Amon-Ket, with clues to the location of his tomb. After rescuing the survivors of the sinkhole, the party departs Urzat Baz for the **Sea of Dust**, led by the **Bedouin Sheik Tarib ibn Tarib**, who was grateful for his rescue, though his granddaughter perished.

DEALING WITH ELVES

While at the oasis of Raziz, deep within the Sea of Dust, the party decides to ask the tribe of elves known as the Locust Eaters for assistance in locating the tomb of Amon Ket. After a mysterious nighttime journey, they arrive at an elven encampment and are presented to the chieftain of the Locust Eaters, **Bleak Wind**. After an exchange in Elvish between Ylyndar and Bleak Wind, the leader agrees to share his tribe's knowledge in exchange for a favor from the group, to be honored at a later date. The party agrees, and Bleak Wind reveals that Amon-Ket's tomb lies within the **Blight of the dragon Zahhak-Aziz**. The dragon, a legendary creature, is known to have attacked Urzat Baz twice in the last five hundred years, but hasn't been seen by men in over a century. Each time he attacked, it took the entirety of the wizard cabal known as the Wardens of Istafar to drive him back. With this knowledge in mind, the party was miraculously returned to Raziz on the same night to prepare for entering the dragon's domain.

ENTERING THE BLIGHT

Days later, the party entered the Blight under cover of night, bringing with them six camels, including two for carrying water. The Blight was a blackened wasteland scarred by frequent lightning strikes, with scarce water fouled by the dragon's presence. On the second day within the domain of the dragon, while near to the location of the tomb, a jinn appeared before the party. It claimed to be bound into the service of the dragon, and demanded a tribute in the dragon's name—each party member must give up that which is most precious

NEKH BET'S KISS

+1 *Khopesh*, unique, requires attunement

Recovered from Amon-Ket himself, this ancient weapon allows the user to make brief sojourns into the Land of the Dead.

THE SCEPTER OF AMON-KET

Rod, unique, requires attunement

Also recovered from Amon-Ket, this scepter gives the wielder great power over the weak-minded, but also alters his personality.

to him. Kamal gave his family's signet ring. Ylyndar gave his waterskin. Khalil gave up all his wealth. Nephys gave her sense of justice. Khalida gave her faith. With a thunderous clap and a rush of wind, the jinn proclaimed "Done!" and disappeared with all the objects given. Nephys and Khalida were left wondering exactly what would happen to them. Having paid the tribute, however, the party moved on, discovering the lost tomb of Amon Ket in short order.

THE TOMB OF AMON-KET

Within the tomb, the party fought horrors and encountered wonders, including priceless antiquities such as marble statues of forgotten gods and five strange disks with alien symbols upon them. After waking and defeating the mummy Amon-Ket, the party continued deeper into the tomb, eventually arriving at a path that revealed the hidden **Black Oasis**. Within the Oasis stood six impossible obelisks that hovered motionlessly above six bases made of the same strange material as the disks. Neither rock nor metal, they contained properties of both. [C] Engraved upon each obelisk was a symbol corresponding to each of the five disks, with a sixth obelisk engraved with a different symbol for which they had no corresponding stone: ≡. Also upon the obelisks were carved slots in the same hexagonal shape as the disks, suggesting that the disks could be inserted into the corresponding obelisks. The symbols were:



Y WATER WORLD

The first stone the player characters activated is keyed to a world covered in shallow, stormy seas. The obelisk is the only structure in sight that stands, though ruins are evident around it.

When Khalil and Ylyndar teleported in, a massive tidal wave hundreds of feet high was closing on their position; unfortunately, the socket on the obelisk on this side, which would allow them to return to the Black Oasis, was missing. A quick search in a flooded cellar revealed a grotesque and aggressive cephalopod and an ignition stone lying 20 feet underwater in total darkness. After defeating the cephalopod and retrieving the stone, Khalil and Ylyndar returned to the Oasis, narrowly avoiding the massive wave.

W SWAMP WORLD

After some discussion, the party decided to activate another obelisk, will everyone huddling around the stone. With a tremor and a flash, they arrived at a swampy, alien world, and a ruined ziggurat in the center of a black lake, with an obelisk guarded by a strange humanoid frog warrior who fled upon the party's arrival. Furthermore, Kamal was missing, having not arrived with the others, and in his place was a pale-skinned, red-haired dwarf who cannot remember anything about herself except that she hates orcs. Within minutes, the frog-man returned with more warriors in tow. After defeating the attack, the party decided to leave the waterlogged temple, carefully swimming to shore. It was then that they noticed the alien vegetation and dual moons in the sky. Wherever they were, it was not Istafar, and they were trapped without the key for returning.



Adventure I-2: Beacon of Madness



~The Player Characters~

Cade, halfling bard and former spy for Queen Astrade of Ivgorod

Khalida, Honorable Daughter of Heaven's Fire, a cleric of Ishtar and follower of the Qhimá

Khalil of the Cup, a warlock, brother to Nephys

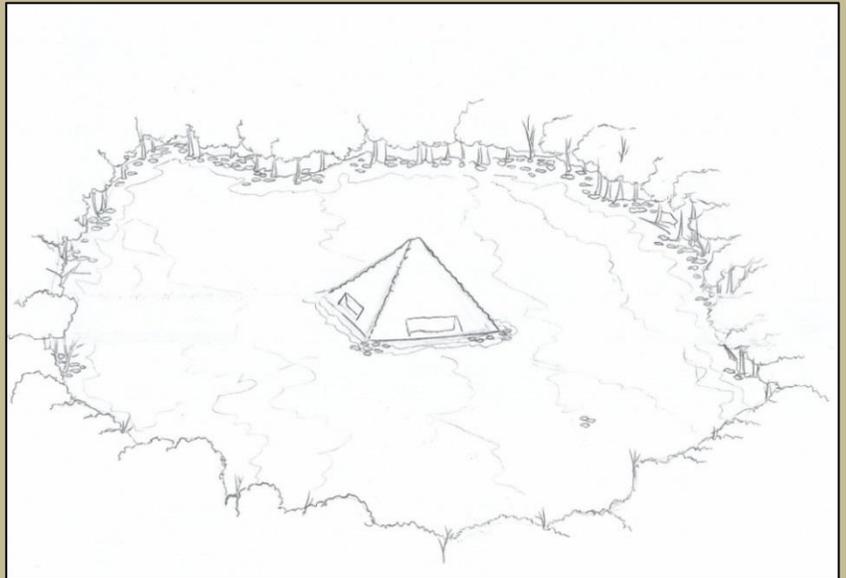
Nephys, paladin of the Qhimá and magistrate of the al-Rassan, sister to Khalil

Red, amnesiac dwarven warrior

Ylyndar, an elven shadowdancer from Dzim, City of Thieves

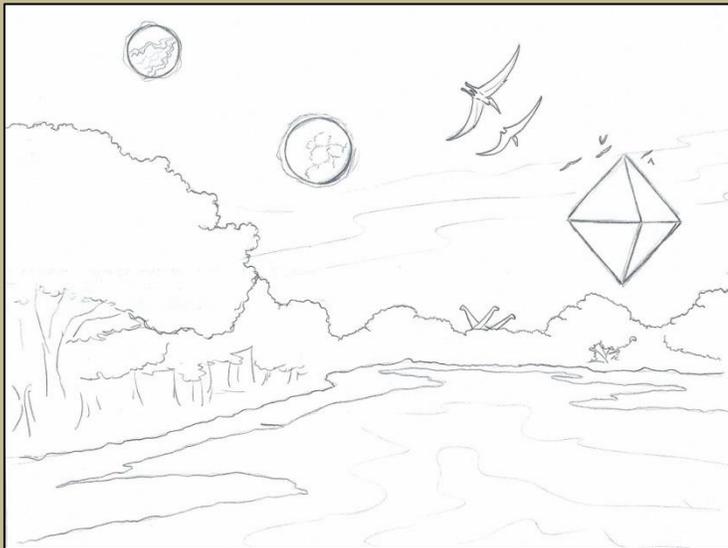
A DIFFERENT WORLD

The second stone the characters activate sent them to a dark, swampy world. An open-aired, moss-covered ziggurat of worn black stone surrounds the obelisk on this side, which is missing its activation stone. After defeating the frog warriors and swimming across the black lake to shore, they encounter hostile flora and fauna, and when the sun rises, a world like none they have ever seen—purple and blue vegetation, red sky, and two moons that hang in the daylight. There appear to be no mammals on this world, only strange, thunderous reptiles, amphibians, and clouds of insects. The air is humid and hot, the waters brackish and tepid. Periodically, an intense white light pulses, blanketing everything.



SLAVERS AND SLAVES

The party slogs through the marshes for some time. While doing so, they spy a black diamond-shaped structure floating in the sky, which seems to be the source of the pulsing light. Flying reptiles swarm around its top. Afterward, Ylyndar hears sounds of movement ahead. The party hides, and what comes into view is a familiar scene, despite its alienness; slavers forcing chained slaves to march. The slavers are more frog-folk, but the slaves are a different race, brightly colored fish-folk with an air of defeat and despair. The party ambushes the frogs, killing them or driving them away. While doing so, they discover that magic is wild and unpredictable on this world—spells don't always work as they should. After the defeat of the slavers, the fish-folk lead the party to their village, some distance away.



THE FISH-FOLK LEADER

The grateful fish-folk lead the party to their village, which is small and poor, consisting largely of mud huts, many of which are unoccupied and in disrepair. They introduce the party to their leader, an ancient and blind fish-woman who might be a seer or mystic. Around her neck, among her many talismans, is the missing activation stone for this world's obelisk. Using pantomime and drawing with mud sticks, the party strikes a bargain with the seer: they will rescue missing tribe members from the frog-folk in exchange for the stone. The next morning, Red discovers a small blue frog in her hut. She squashes it.

ASSAULT ON THE FROG-FOLK

The entrance to the frog-folk lair is underwater, at the base of the obelisk's ziggurat through which the party arrived on this world. The fish-folk helpfully produce squid-like creatures that the party can swallow to breath underwater, but the party loses them in a frog-folk ambush, and must procure more. Ylyndar makes satchels out of large leaves to carry them more carefully. The party returns to the ziggurat, swallows their squids, and walks along the bottom of the lake to the lair entrance. Fighting breaks out immediately when the party enters the lair, as the frogs have guards posted at the entrance. During the fight, Khalida discovers a room where fish-folk mystics are chained to the floor around a pool of water. She frees them. Delving further into the lair, the party discovers the fish-folk's great hall, where the chieftain is holding court with his followers. The party attacks, kills the chieftain and his minions, and frees the remaining fish-folk. Afterward, they return to the fish-folk village. On the way back, they encounter, of all things, a halfling from their own world—Cade. He has been lost here for some time, stranded by a vengeful wizard. He gratefully accepts the party's offer to return to Istafar with them. While traveling back to the village, Red encounters the blue frog again. This time she picks it up, surprised that it lives.



CELEBRATION

The fish-folk insist on hosting a feast for the party. Though the fare is meager, the party appreciates the honor. Khalida visits the old seer, who gives her the activation stone. She then takes Khalida on a stroll through the village, pausing when the beacon goes off. Khalida notices that the entire village stops what they are doing and falls prostrate toward the beacon's light. The old seer merely bows. Afterward, the seer speaks to Khalida at great length, gesturing toward the floating black hadron frequently. Unfortunately, Khalida cannot understand her, so she waits politely for the seer to finish. When the seer stops speaking, she presses an object into Khalida's hand—a heavy, bulbous glass fish. Each end of the fish has an opening, though one is larger than the other and appears to be slotted. Khalida takes the gift, unsure what to do with it. The party discusses their plans. Some advocate for returning to Istafar immediately, while others want to explore the mystery of the beacon. Agreement is reached—the beacon seems to have some powerful effect on the region, and should be investigated.



CITY OF THE GHOULS

As the party trudges toward the beacon, they get a general sense that these tribes of frog- and fish-folk are the survivors of what was once a sophisticated civilization. As they approach the massive floating structure, the land grows foul. The party has difficulty crossing a black, befouled river, beyond which they discover, at the base of the floating black diamond, a ruined city long reclaimed by the swamp. The city is deathly quiet, and the party spies a temple in the center, directly below the hadron. They attempt to quietly make their way toward it, but awake a herd of frog-folk ghouls, which stream toward them in greater and greater numbers. The party flees toward the temple, but come to a destroyed bridge—the only way across. Trapped, they turn to fight the herd as a ghoulish dinosaur crashes into the fray, attacking player characters and gobbling ghouls.



In this dire moment, the tiny blue frog that befriended Red hops to the ground and grows in size, large enough to be ridden. Out of options, the party mounts the frog two at a time, and with mighty leaps it bears them across the broken bridge to safety on the other side. Safe from the ghouls, the party proceeds to the temple, where they discover a massive fish-shaped horn of stone. On the way, Red has a vision while in contact with the now-little frog, a vision of a majestic and prosperous city in which frog-folk and fish-folk live together in peace, and in which they ride the flying reptiles now roosting atop the black hadron. Khalida places the glass-blown bauble into the horn and blows; shortly thereafter, three flying reptiles land, confused but docile. The party rides them to the top of the hadron, where they discover a doorway to the interior.

THE NO-SHIP

Within the hadron, the party encounters alien architecture, but Red's dwarven senses allow them to find a central chamber, in which they find an enthroned corpse of some long-dead humanoid creature, and the source of the beacon—[C] a small device magically suspended atop an altar of sorts. Investigating, the party finds a strange black rod in the corpse's hand, a strange necklace, and a small blue gem atop its brow. Cade and Khalida investigate the device emitting the beacon, and discern that it allows a skilled pilot to move the hadron. Khalida attempts to do so, but loses control. The hadron crashes, gravely injuring the party and destroying the undead city below. After much healing and labor, Red leads the others out of the ruined ship. The wild magic effect has ended with the silencing of the beacon. Cade puts the control device in his bag, and the party returns to the fish-folk village.



A **bolded** name is an NPC, location, or idea that is still in play and might be important later in the campaign.

UNDERSTANDING, FINALLY

[C] Upon returning to the fish-folk village, the party discovers that they can miraculously communicate with the natives. A celebration ensues. The fish-folk call themselves the Oatoo, and their enemies the Jenwa. The leader introduces herself as **Ungalagoc**, and she is indeed a seer. [C] She tells the tale of her people: once prosperous and peaceful until the arrival of the **Architect** and his *no-ship* centuries before. The Architect subjugated them, putting the servile Jenwa in charge. The Oatoo rebelled, a war ensued, and their society fell to ruin. Afterward, the ship began emitting the beacon. It has defined their world ever since.

Later that night, after the celebration ends, Ungalagoc asks the party to follow her into the swamp. They go, and she leads them to an ancient tree, under which is a chamber containing a still pool. She offers each character the opportunity to experience a vision. All do so. Afterward, most of the party shares their visions.

[C] THE VISIONS

Cade's Vision

The notes ring in your mind. Clear, but discordant. Violent and all-consuming. If you can find them, if you can see them. You can make them a chord, and then.

The breath of life. The fires of creation. The forging of the world. The fall.

The wall is before you, symbols carved deeply, but out of order. You can find the order. You can write the song. Your companions cry for help, from somewhere behind you. If you turn around you will lose it. A moment more is all you need. Surely they understand that.

You reach out, touch the wall. It should be cold, but it is blazingly hot. You can feel the fire within it. You can feel the notes bursting. You compose a triad, simple perhaps, but worthy. A major, of course. The wall explodes with light. You play the chord. The world goes white.

Someone is screaming. Utter agony. It's you.



Khalida's Vision

Urzat Baz, the Holy City of Ishtar—your home—burns. Fire consumes its streets and alleys, from the waterfront to the Watchtower, and ash chokes the air in swirling eddies. The sky above is a vengeful red.

Everywhere angels, wrath and terrible, butcher men and women, children and elders, faithful and faithless, criminals and magistrates, traders and councilors, imams and commoners, nobles and concubines alike. None escape their flaming swords. No cry for mercy is heeded. It is a day of righteous judgment.

The angels weep blood as they raze the city to the ground.

Nephys's Vision

You stand upon the Hill of Olives in Urzat Baz, your hands bound in hempen rope. You are dressed as a prisoner, in a simple linen smock, and your head is shaved. You relish the wind off the river, and inhale the clean air deeply.

To your sides stand the full leadership of the city magistrates, as well as members of the watch and the religious council. Ahead is an old stump, the executioner standing beside with his tulwar. His black eyes pierce you, but he is motionless. Waiting.

Imam Alzeeri steps forward and addresses the assemblage, his voice tired but firm. "After much deliberation, the council has agreed that there can be only one penalty for the crimes of Nephys, once our sister. For her betrayal, for her treason, for her unholy and sinful acts in the cause of infidels, and for the specific crimes enumerated here," he gestures at the unfurled scrolls in his hand, "the council sentences you to death." The imam looks at you. "Have you any final words?"

You straighten your spine, and in a calm voice that belies your fear, you say, "I accept the judgment of the council."

Moments pass. Finally, Alzeeri steps forward and whispers, "Is that all? Will you say nothing more?"

"I accept the council's judgment," you say again.

The old man slumps, weary. "Very well," he says, and nods to your guards. They walk you forward to the stump. Looking down, you see old bloodstains upon it.

"Kneel," says the executioner.

You kneel.



Red's Vision

You awaken groggily. You are laying in the summer sun, in tall grass, your head wet and sticky, your vision blurred. A shadow stands over you—an orc. He is broad-shouldered, a sheen of sweat upon his gray skin. His black eyes meet yours as he jerks you roughly to your feet. On the ground is a red-bearded dwarf. Your spear is in his back, and your blood is on his axe. He is dead.

You swoon. Steadying yourself, you note the burning holdfast in the valley below. Red pinions flutter atop its spires, and even from here you spot the black boar upon them. A horn sounds across the valley, low and urgent. The gate of the fort is down. You see the stains of battle, the corpses of dwarves and orcs. Crows descend to feast. The warrior says in orcish, "Warchief. What now?"



SPIRIT FROG

*Magical companion,
unique*

This little guy likes to eat berries and ride in pockets. If Red asks nicely, he might allow her to ride him as a mount or peer into the spirit world.

[C] NO-SWORD

Weapon (any), legendary

This black rod, made of an unknown substance that is similar to metal and stone, but is neither, is heavy and dense. With a thought, Nephys can reshape it into any weapon she desires.

[C] QA-JEWEL

*Wondrous item, legendary,
requires attunement*

This luminous blue jewel, forged from the heart of a dying star, is self-aware. It grants Khalida several wondrous abilities.

Ylyndar's Vision

You sit shackled in darkness. You are starving and smell like filth—you gag at it. The stones beneath you are damp and freezing, and you shiver constantly, your teeth clattering. You hear soft whimpering to your left, but you see only black.

From beyond, you hear the clanking of heavily-booted feet. A bolt is thrown, and unfamiliar light blinds you. You raise your hand and cry out in pain, but your voice is small. Boyish.

A large shadow stands in the doorway, silhouetted by torches beyond. A voice says, "Take the boy. Leave the girls." It is familiar. Repulsive.

Your eyes adjust as they pull you from your chains and to your feet. In the light, you see the speaker once again. He said he was vwayd, a dark elf; "A cousin, of sorts," he chuckled. He is corpulent, dressed in black fur-lined finery. His skin is shockingly pale, like a corpse, with networks of blue veins visible underneath. His pate is shaved, with a tentacled black dragon tattooed upon it.

You hate him. You would try to kill him, if you didn't have to take care of your sisters. You look at them as they huddle together, terrified. You see two pairs of your father's silver eyes looking back. Much the same as yours.

The guards, dangerous northmen, close the cell door and drag you away.



Adventure I-3: Emissaries of the Dragon

~The Player Characters~

Cade, halfling bard and former spy for Queen Astrade of Ivgorod

Khalida, Honorable Daughter of Heaven's Fire, a cleric of Ishtar and follower of the Qhímá

Khalil of the Cup, a warlock, brother to Nephys

Nephys, paladin of the Qhímá and magistrate of the al-Rassan, sister to Khalil

Red, amnesiac dwarven warrior

Ylyndar, an elven shadowdancer from Dzim, City of Thieves



WEARY GOODBYES

Returning to the Oatoo village after experiencing their visions, the party bids farewell to Ungalagoc and her people and begins the trek back to the ziggurat within the lake. On the way Nephys summons, for the first time, a paladin's celestial steed—a dinosaur! Arriving, they huddle around the obelisk, insert the stone, and in a cacophony of sound and motion find themselves once again standing in the Black Oasis, within the Blight of the terrible dragon Zahhak-Aziz, on their homeworld of Istafar. After a brief discussion, they agree that, for now, they are finished with traveling to other worlds.



LEAVING THE BLIGHT

Picking their way cautiously, the party heads north and west out of the Blight, avoiding any creatures they see. Ylyndar scouts ahead and discovers what appears to be a tribe of Bedouins digging in the earth. [C] The party decides to contact them for trade and information, but the Bedouins are fearful, suspicious, and strangely barbaric. As the trade commences, three storm griffons attack, but Khalil and Khalida drive them away with back-to-back *fireball* spells, demonstrating their increasing mastery of magic. Impressed and even more fearful, the Bedouins give the party what they ask for, and the party departs.



THE DRAGON'S DOMINANCE

Upon leaving the Blight, Khalida and Nephys suddenly experience seizures, falling to the ground; the dragon's powerful *geas* finally asserts itself. Nephys defies Zahhak-Aziz for a brief moment, only to be crushed into submission by his titanic will. Khalida is commanded to go to Urzat Baz, to the home of **Imam Suhaad**, the leader of the **Council of Imams** which governs the holy city. Nephys is ordered to journey to Dzim to recover an item stolen from the dragon by the city's warlord, Drasko. She is also instructed to administer the dragon's justice for the crime—death. Both heroes are likewise commanded to tell no one of their tasks. Confronted with the possibility of splitting up, the party briefly attempts to journey south to Dzim, but within a day Khalida is deathly ill, felled by the dragon's unstoppable compulsion. The party decides to separate: Nephys, Ylyndar, and Khalil head south to Dzim, and Khalida, Red, and Cade travel north to Urzat Baz. They will rendezvous in Urzat Baz as soon as they are able.



DZIM

Once Nephys, Khalil, and Ylyndar arrive in Dzim (ZEEM), Ylyndar reaches out to his contacts in the Thieves' Guild, looking for his old mentor, Fargo. Instead, he finds **Rashid**, a corpulent representative of the guild who claims that he can put Ylyndar in touch with Fargo. When Ylyndar mentions that he also needs a way inside Drasko's palace, Rashid demands a hefty sum. They agree to meet again the following day. Meanwhile, Nephys lays low and Khalil infiltrates Drasko's palace on his own, to see what he can learn. Azlatt, Khalil's gen familiar, finds the doors of the Sultana's suite magically warded, preventing him entry. Khalil, while disguised as a member of the Sunwraiths, the mercenary guild led by Drasko, is pressed into service by the tiefling sorcerer called **Scorn**, one of Drasko's lieutenants. Along with a gang of other mercenaries, he heads to the Pit (the local gladiatorial arena) to settle a score with **Cotter Yang**, a rival lieutenant.

Under orders, Khalil stays close to Scorn, witnessing several brutal arena fights, including one using a trio of ogres. He notices Drasko and her third lieutenant, an assassin named Sawada, presiding over events. He is present when a messenger informs Scorn that Drasko requires the tiefling to return to the palace, and to "bring the ogres." When the opportunity presents itself, Khalil slips away and back to the party's hideout to report what he has seen.

After conferring, the party concludes that the best way to get inside the palace is to buy Rashid's assistance. Before doing so, Khalil sends Azlatt back to the palace to uncover the command word to allow passage through the wards on the Sultana's suite; the little gen returns hours later with that information, having witnessed a guard pass through with a tray of food. That night, the characters follow the thief and his men to a brothel just outside the palace walls. They enter the palace dungeon through a basement tunnel running under the wall, but are betrayed—Rashid leads them into a locked cell, and closes the way behind them before they realize. Rashid gloats before departing, claiming that, as promised, he has led Ylyndar to Fargo. Within the cell, Ylyndar discovers Fargo's corpse, which he identifies by the old thief's lucky coin, having found it upon the body. The characters vow revenge upon the fat thief. Rashid is apparently working for Drasko, and assumes that the party will remain trapped in the cell until she decides to deal with them. However, he doesn't know about Ylyndar's *shadowstep* power—the elf simply walks through the shadows into the hall beyond, steals the keys from the sleeping guard, and unlocks the cell. The party dispatches both guards and makes their way carefully through the palace, stealthily avoiding patrols, until they arrive at the warded door. Khalil utters the command word, the wards fall, and the three adventurers enter the Sultana's suite with their guard up.

What they find surprises them—not a half-orc warlord in an opulent room, as expected, but a wrecked suite, a *teleportation circle*, and a malnourished wizard bound by magical chains. **Wakim**, the wizard, claims to be the vizier of the previous sultan, and the key to his liege's overthrow by Drasko five years ago. Although a loyal servant, Drasko kidnapped Wakim's wife and daughter, forcing him first to

betray his lord so that Drasko's *coup d'état* would be a success, and then to craft wonders for the warlord before crafting his own chains. Drasko has kept him imprisoned since, periodically freeing him to work more wonders for her, using his family as leverage all the while. Wakim warns the party that the *teleportation circle* in the room leads to the half-orc's private retreat, the previous sultan's sail barge. He begs the party not to kill Drasko, but to force her to release him, which requires her to utter a command word, and to tell him where his family is being held. The characters reluctantly agree, steel themselves for combat, and step through the circle.

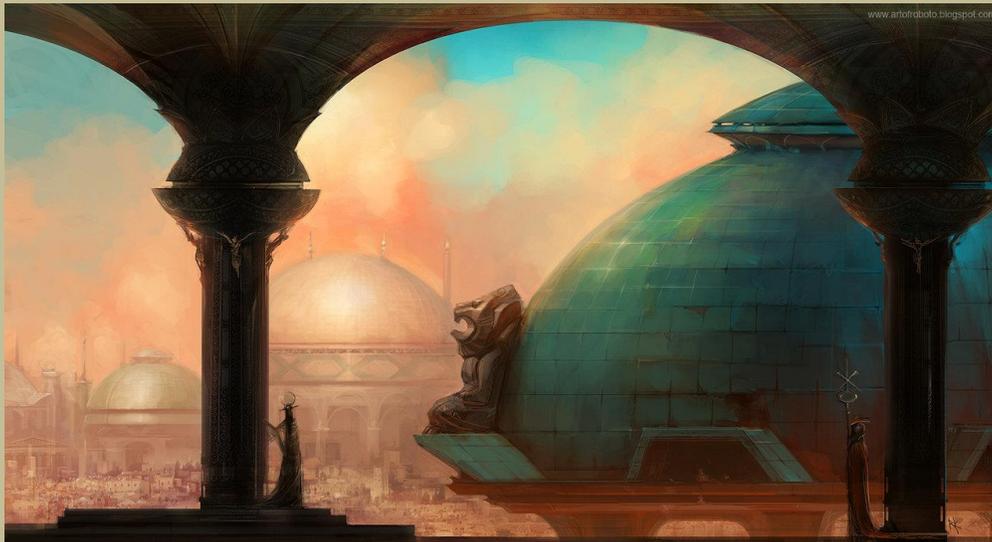
Arriving, the party discovers that the "sail barge" is a *flying* sail barge, and it flies hundreds of feet above a hidden oasis. The fight is short but brutal. Spells fly—Khalil unleashes a *fireball*, only for the party to endure a return *fireball* from Scorn. The three ogres, pulled from the Pit, descend upon the party. Nephys swells in size, empowered by Zahhak-Aziz, and begins to coruscate with lightning. Cotter Yang, a throwing knife master, attacks from the fringes of the melee, wounding Khalil badly and knocking him over the side of the barge to fall to his death. Ylyndar battles Yang and the ogres, while Nephys cuts a swath through the giants to reach Drasko aft. Before the warlord can flee, Nephys cuts her down, leaving her barely alive. The fight over, Yang jumps overboard, floating gently to the ground under a *feather fall* spell. Scorn surrenders, negotiating with the party. Nephys, her draconic power faded, goes below deck and recovers the dragon's possession, a *censer of jinn summoning*. They set free Drasko's slaves, and then return to the palace after Scorn agrees to stand down the Sunwraiths (after taking command, of course).



Waking Drasko, Nephys coerces her to unbind Wakim, but she laughs when he demands the whereabouts of his family. "Sold into slavery long ago," she says. In the following days, Nephys publicly executes Drasko in the Pit in front of the citizenry, with Scorn presiding; this effectively legitimizes the tiefling's position as Sultan. Wakim recovers his spellbook from Drasko's barge, and then as a favor to Nephys, who was ordered to return the censer to the Blight, cleverly uses it to summon a jinn to bear it back to Zahhak-Aziz. Later, Ylyndar explains his vision to Wakim, who casts *legend lore*, revealing the following cryptic message:

[C] Ancient Evil from a ruined land, hewed by men, cast down by elves, bound by dragons, festering in the Darkness Beyond the Wind. Its tendrils coil around king and commoner alike. Only one who has performed the sacred rite of the Ædris Da'onai can resist its corrupting Touch.

[C] The following day, Wakim offers to send the party directly back to Urzat Baz using a previously-established *teleportation circle* from when Dzim was a lucrative trade city and he was an apprentice to one of the Wardens of Istafar. Bidding the party farewell, he sends them on their way, and sets out to find his wife and daughter.



URZAT BAZ

Khalida, Red, and Cade exit the Blight to the northeast, through a strange cracked landscape littered with the broken remains of petrified trees. They make their way back to the Oasis of Raziz on foot, relying heavily upon Khalida's ability to *create food and water*.

[C] At the oasis, they are surprised to meet a friend—Tarib ibn Tarib. Upon hearing their tale, he offers spots in his caravan to Urzat Baz, a long and dangerous overland journey. The party accepts, and the caravan leaves the next day. It follows the last leg of the **Golden Path**, the major trade route from Urzat Baz in the west to the distant city of Ramapour, some 3000 miles to the east.

The journey takes three weeks. [C] Along the way, word passes from other caravans that a mysterious, ruthless, and well-organized group of bandits has been attacking caravans and disappearing as rapidly as they appeared—as if by magic. Tarib's caravan encounters the remains of some of their victims, and the tracks do indeed lead into the desert only to mysteriously disappear. Cade wants to investigate, but Khalida's *geas* demands that they continue on to the holy city. Cade passes the time by cobbling together a minor magical cloak from a chunk of petrified wood scarred by the Blight's lightning storms and a bolt of *eternal silk* from Amon-Ket's burial hoard.



After several weeks, the caravan finally arrives at Urzat Baz, and the party gratefully says farewell to Tarib ibn Tarib and his family. Khalida, under compulsion, immediately sets out for the estate of Imam Suhaad, atop **the Hill of Olives**, with Red and Cade in tow. After ingratiating themselves with the staff at the imam's home, Khalida's unusual and abrupt request to meet with the elderly imam alone is granted, and she is ushered into the scholar's private reception room. After exchanging pleasantries, Khalida fulfills her *geas*, saying, "Your master wishes to thank you for your service." Visibly shaken, the imam thanks Khalida for delivering the message and ends the reception. As the imam's servants usher Khalida out of the home, a scream is heard by all. The party rushes to the imam's garden, which overlooks the city. A wailing servant is standing by the wall of the garden, past which is a one-hundred foot drop to a rocky outcrop below. The imam's broken body lies among the rocks.

Upset, Khalida goes to **Bashadi Temple**, the largest temple of Ishtar in the faith, with Red in tow. This is the place where Khalida was trained as a cleric. She visits **Imam Tarif**, the temple's curator and her mentor, and tells him what has happened. He counsels her to not reveal being under the dragon's sway, and to keep a low profile until he has had a chance to sort out what has happened. While there, Red spies a dangerous-looking man in black robes, and the two stare one another down until the man leaves.

Khalida and Red go to Khalida's home in the city's **Temple District**, while Cade sneaks back into Imam Suhaad's estate to investigate the death. [C] Cade learns little, except that Suhaad was being pressured to retire so that her nephew, **Saladin**, could replace her on the council. Afterward, he heads to Khalida's home.

That night, while Cade sleeps downstairs and Khalida and Red sleep upstairs, an assassin slips into the house. He slits Cade's throat before sneaking upstairs. He stabs Khalida, but misses the mark—she lives, screams, and wakes Red. The dwarf grabs her sword, never far from her reach. Khalida casts *hold person* upon the assassin, and Red performs a *coup de grâce*, mortally injuring the man, but not killing him. Red realizes that this is the man she saw at the temple earlier that day. Downstairs, Cade, in his dying breath, manages to cast *healing word*, saving himself. Furious, he heads upstairs for revenge only to find the combat over. Red and Cade tie the assassin to a chair, and Khalida dresses and seeks a city watchman. [C] Cade casts *detect thoughts* upon the assassin, who is refusing to speak, and discovers that he is called the Serpent, that he is a feared professional killer, and that he was hired to kill Khalida by Tarib ibn Tarib in the city's **Grand Bazaar**. The assassin did not ask why the sheik wanted Khalida dead. As the **al-Rassan** (the city watch) approach, Cade executes the captive man in an act of revenge. Red looks the other way while he does so. Khalida returns with the al-Rassan, who discover the dead assassin. After telling the tale of the attempt on her life, the watch sergeant agrees that the killing was justified, and orders his men to dispose of the corpse.

Confused and saddened by the friendly sheik's betrayal, the party discusses what to do next, but cannot decide what, if anything, they should do other than find ibn Tarib. They speculate that perhaps he is a servant of Zahhak-Aziz. The following morning, Cade heads to the Grand Bazaar to locate the old man, but only finds some of his tribesmen. One of the men claims that ibn Tarib left for the deep

desert the previous day to visit family, and he did not say when he would return. Cade confirms the man's truthfulness with *detect thoughts*. Having reached a dead end, he returns to the others and reports what he has found.



The day after, Khalida and her companions are summoned to **the Seat of the Rock**, the administrative headquarters of the city, to a council inquiry concerning the suspicious death of Imam Suhaad. Conducting the inquiry are imams **Amal**, **Zaaida**, **Nasar**, and **Shariff**, the surviving members of the council. In attendance are dwarven **Ambassador Pol**, **Warden Anaiya** of the Wardens of Istafar and her apprentice, **Sim**, and Imam Suhaad's nephew Saladin. The councilors ask Khalida many questions about her involvement in Suhaad's death, but she skillfully navigates the inquiry without revealing the truth, and does so without triggering the *zone of truth* spell permanently embedded in the room. [C] Ambassador Pol speaks briefly with Red at the behest of the council, but does not claim her as one of his own people, instead suggesting that perhaps she is "one of those northern dwarves from across the sea." Cade is questioned, but he misdirects all investigation with ease. The inquiry concludes with some councilors seemingly convinced that the party is not complicit in the affair. Others feel that more inquiry may be warranted, and they advise the party not to leave the city until the investigation has concluded.

Returning from the inquiry under escort from the al-Rassan, the party is ambushed in Yazeer Square by cultists screaming their allegiance to **Hadad**, the Storm Lord, who is one of the Fallen—a god cast down by Ishtar during the **Godwar**. The guardsmen defending the party take heavy losses, but Khalida turns the tide of the battle with a powerful *radiance of the dawn*. The cultists are then easily defeated, and the guards tie up the survivors and collect the corpses in preparation for transport.

Adventure I-4: Wrath of the Storm Lord

~The Player Characters~

Cade, halfling bard and former spy for Queen Astrade of Ivgorod

Khalida, Honorable Daughter of Heaven's Fire, cleric of Ishtar and follower of the Qhímá

Nephys, paladin of the Qhímá and magistrate of the al-Rassan, sister to Khalil

Red, amnesiac dwarven warrior

Sadra, Ya'atha mystic from the desert mountains of Khanduras

Ylyndar, elven shadowdancer from Dzim, City of Thieves



RETURN

Ylyndar and Nephys return to Urzat Baz via **one of Wakim's old teleportation circles**, one that appears to have been hidden in a storeroom in a warehousing district outside the walls of the holy city, and has not seen use for many years. With them is Khalil's corpse and possessions, which they recovered from the desert after the fight upon the sail barge. Exiting the warehouse, they discover that a mild sandstorm appears to be blowing in from the desert. They head to the city gates, only to discover that they are closed. Nephys pulls rank and summons the Sergeant of the watch, who informs her that there has been an attack by cultists on the city watch up in the Temple District, that a cleric of the temple was involved, and that the surviving cultists were taken to **al-Afqwa Fortress**, headquarters of the al-Rassan. Nephys and Ylyndar note the information, but decide to take Khalil's body to the home of Nephys's parents first. Ylyndar learns that Nephys and Khalil were siblings.

BLOOD AND DUST

Under heavy escort, Khalida, Cade, and Red return with the al-Rassan to their headquarters to interrogate the surviving cultists. The cultists, who upon close inspection each have an unidentifiable rune carved into their foreheads, refuse to cooperate or be intimidated, but Cade skillfully navigates their memories via *detect thoughts*, and learns the name of the cultists' leader—**Odeh Khan**—as well as the name of a spice merchant's estate on the Hill of Olives where they lair. While discussing the interrogation with **Major Farooq of the al-Rassan, a ranking officer**, screams and sounds of combat issue from deeper within the keep. Rushing to help, the party confronts a mob of "dust men" who are killing watchmen with elemental magic. The characters engage them, but are confounded by the creatures' mobility and deadly ability to incapacitate their foes with choking dust and sand. As the fight lingers on, the major is wounded defending his fallen subordinates, and Khalida rushes to his aid. She is attacked, and for the first time invokes the *qa-jewel's* ability to



momentarily shroud her from any injury. As Khalida glows with white light, a stranger appears and engages the creatures. This is **Sadra**, a mystic from the hinterlands who can speak the tongue of jinn. Sadra quickly discerns that the creatures are minor jinn called **rooh**. He attempts to communicate with them, but realizes that they are both fairly unintelligent and bound to the service of a mortal who summoned them. As the fighting ends, the party regroups and investigates where the rooh came from. Cade informs Major Farooq of the apparent treason of the merchant Rafiir ibn Shalam ibn al-Hajji. Farooq begins to assemble his men to storm the merchant's home, and the party discovers that the city watch morgue, where the rooh attack seems to have originated, is empty of the corpses of any cultists.

GRIM REUNION

As Khalida, Red, Cade, and Sadra discuss what to do, Nephys and Ylyndar finally arrive, and for the first time in months, the group is reunited. Their separate adventures are discussed, as is Khalil's death. After a short rest, guardsman summons the party to the keep's grounds, where the major is coordinating the deployment of fifty armed and horsed al-Rassan to march up the Hill. The major then defers to Nephys, a city magistrate, and Khalida, a cleric of the temple; the party decides to ride up with the guard platoon. Cade summons, for the first time, a giant eagle, and rides him into the sky to scout ahead and locate the home he saw in the cultist's mind. However, the sandstorm has gone from mild to moderate, and he has difficulty discerning one home from another. He rendezvous with the others as they reach the Hill, and they send guardsmen around to find the estate.



THE CULTIST LAIR

The al-Rassan eventually locate the estate of ibn Hajji, and the party takes with them three squads of watchmen. They order the rest to encircle the estate's perimeter and to capture or kill any cultists attempting escape. Cade notices that the estate appears to have been built atop the ruin of an older structure, possibly a Settler keep (from a time when the Settlers ruled the city). Nephys bangs on the front door, ordering it open in the name of the council. A drunken, naked man answers the door, and Nephys lays him out with one blow for his indecency. The characters enter and order the squads to search the estate for evidence of cult activity. Ylyndar scouts ahead and Cade begins a careful room-by-room examination. Nephys interrogates the drunkard, who claims that he is the merchant ibn Hajji. The home's interior shows strong evidence of immoral activity, such as drinking, whoring, gambling, and so on. The place is a wreck, and from what Nephys can gather, the man has drunk wine nonstop for weeks. She orders him arrested for treason and taken to headquarters for later interrogation.

Cade discovers a trail of blood that wends through the estate's rooms, and begins to follow it. Ylyndar inadvertently releases a pair of hungry tigers locked in the master suite. The party subdues the tigers and locks them back in the suite. A watchman reports that his squad found something on the back lawn, and when the party arrives they find a bloody trapdoor and a worn stair descending into the dark. Ylyndar scouts it and discovers a hollowed tower buried under the estate, with a crumbling stair that encircles the interior wall. Dismissing the watchmen with instructions to report to Major Farooq what they found, the group descends the stairs.

Within the lair, they face **aamir** (gargoyles, which are minor jinn), an enslaved minotaur, cultists, and more rooh. They work their way to a room deep within the ancient keep where they are greeted by Odeh Khan himself, and combat ensues. The fight is bloody and frightening—working with the cultists and the jinn are two **demons**, who are able to remain within Istafar by possessing mortals. The demons unleash a *cloudkill* spell that sears the party, and Odeh Khan, who is some sort of elemental monk, hurls thunder and lightning via rapid melee attacks. Ylyndar is greatly injured, and the group deals with the chaos by hurling spells back, summoning creatures, and healing. As the party continues to target Khan, he commands the demons to finish them off, and then retreats with lightning speed. The group manages to defeat the fiends, but doing so drains nearly all their resources. They camp overnight right there in the lair.



THE STORM, THE ARCHMAGE, AND HER APPRENTICE

After resting and recouping their powers, the group investigates Odeh Khan's escape route, which leads to a storm drain somewhere on the Hill of Olives. Outside, the sandstorm continues, and it is now a blinding and blistering gale. Rather than exiting there, they decide to return to ibn Hajji's estate. Upon returning to the surface, the party encounters the youthful-seeming Warden of Istafar, Anaiya the Red, and her elderly apprentice, Sim, having a calm discussion about the nature of the storm raging all around them.



Anaiya: What would you say? A thousand cubits?

Anaiya: Two thousand cubits. Incredible. What do you think it is?

Anaiya: They're going to point it here, of course.

Anaiya: No. But I have an idea. *(to you)* Salam aleekum.

Sim: Closer to two thousand.

Sim: Elemental protoform. Not a jinn. Just a...a force. Like a golem. Directed.

Sim: Of course. Do we have time to scry them?

Sim (to you): Hello.



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**The adventure continues April 4th!**