



A Witch Shall Be Born

Short Story by Robert E. Howard

Adaptation for D&D by Wesley Connally

Please send suggestions and comments to: wes@cw.edu

This series of adventures that I created are based on Robert E. Howard's Conan short stories (or with some exceptions, Carter/de Camp). I've changed a few things here and there, and fleshed out places like abandoned palaces etc. for a true dungeon crawling experience. There should be a few surprises for those who have read the short stories. Almost all of the text boxes for you, the DM, to read are taken directly from Howard's own writing. This provides a great atmosphere for your players. You may warn them that some are lengthy, but just sit back, relax, and allow the text to paint the world for them. This will enrich their experience.

I have modified Howard's text to represent plural adventurers and rewrote all text for the present tense. I had to add a few dialogue boxes of my own writing to fill in important roleplaying gaps in the original story lines.

All adventures are written for D&D 2nd edition, but could easily be adapted to more modern versions. I highly recommend my other handouts and rules to create a more full Conan-World experience. I also recommend familiarizing yourself with the original Howard/Carter/de Camp story.

Levels: 5-6

Adventure Reputation, 15 Khauran (Country Reputation is based on a 1-5 scale from barely known (1) to heroic status (5). For every 5 points of Adventure Reputation the characters earn, based on a successful adventure, their score for the Country Reputation in the country where the adventure takes place, goes up by 1. Reputation will affect NPC reaction rolls, prices, jealousies, women etc.)

Adventure Summary

The PCs happen upon Conan himself, hung upon the Tree of Death. They learn about a good queen, suddenly turned despicably evil. Now, they must get to the bottom of her mysterious change and possibly earn a Queen and Country's thanks. If you're familiar with the original story, this adventure changes in that the secret that Taramis' long lost evil twin, Salome, who has usurped the throne, should remain a secret until the plot twist at the end. Thus, all details about Conan and Valerius' suspicions about Salome are deleted.

World Map

At any appropriate time, you can show players Figure 0: World Map—Khauran and let them know this is where they will be adventuring.

To capture the spirit of the Conan world, I offer a "Babe-In-Distress bonus (BID)." As there is almost always a BID in the stories and thus these adventures, I have the characters "compete" for her favor. If you wish to do this, when the characters first meet the BID, have characters average their Comeliness and Charisma scores. Then have them roll a d20. The one who comes closest without going over their averaged score has struck the fancy of the BID for whatever reason ("he's not the

best looking, but he has kind eyes”). He then becomes responsible to oversee her safety. If the adventure is completed and she is still alive with only a few nicks, that character is awarded a 10% experience point bonus, not to mention her undying gratitude in the bedroom. Of course, this can apply to female player characters as well. The BID perhaps is intimidated by men and seeks the safety of female protection, or perhaps the BID “just swings that way...”

Part 1: The Tree of Death

Immediately throw the characters into the action by reading the following:

“Time to die, Infidels!” A lean, bearded white-robed Zuagir tribesman rushes at you, his brandished tulwar lifted high above his head. His face is contorted with the adrenaline of battle and his white desert garb flourishes in the desert breeze. His several companions, all cut seemingly from the same mold, are at his heels.

[Zuagir Tribesmen (8) (AC:7 HD: 2 hp: 8, 9, 10, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16 Mv:12 Th:17 D:d8 SA: SD: Sz: M XP:35 each)]

Each tribesman has 1d20+6 silver. They were heading to a large camp in hope to gain employment. The real loot are the 8 camels, Natalia, basic rations and supplies. Give each player at least: rations, rope, spikes, water, wineskin, torches, 2 flasks of oil, flint and steel, backpack, 2 large sacks, 2 small sacks, and Zuagir garb.

With the heated battle over, you look around and see their camp a few paces off. Obviously, your Zuagirian must be off, as you swore you asked only to trade for some supplies. The sun dips below the horizon, and as you examine their camels and rations, you thank whatever god you pray to, since your supplies had nearly run dry. Rummaging through packs and saddle bags, you think back to how you came to be here.

One job led to another, and you and your friends have found yourselves in the Kingdoms of Sand, specifically in Khauran. Khauran is a kingdom of no great size, one of the many principalities which at one time formed the eastern part of the empire of Koth, and which later regained the independence which was theirs at a still earlier age. This part of the world is made up of these tiny realms, diminutive in comparison with the great kingdoms of the West, or the great sultanates of the farther East, but important in their control of the caravan routes, and in the wealth concentrated in them.

Khauran is the most southeasterly of these principalities, bordering on the very deserts of eastern Shem. The city of Khauran is the only city of any magnitude in the realm, and stands within sight of the river which separates the grasslands from the sandy desert, like a watch-tower to guard the fertile meadows behind it. The land is so rich that it yields three and four crops a year, and the plains north and west of the city are dotted with villages. To one accustomed to the great plantations and stock-farms of the West, it is strange to see these tiny fields and vineyards; yet wealth in grain and fruit pours from them as from a horn of plenty. The villagers are agriculturists, nothing else.

This is a stark contrast to the Zuagirs, the desert wolves, part of whom lie before you cooking in their own blood. They are a nomadic war-like people and inhabit all parts of the dunes that lie in the three directions around you. Your destination is in the fourth direction. Ahead of you, Khauran, where you hope to find wealth over a card table, lust in a brothel, and even an adventure to feed the growing sickness of boredom rotting your gut since you have come into this sand-choked region.

Your reverie is interrupted by a distinctly female whimper coming from the largest tent at the campsite. You gather at the tent, and raise the flap to find a woman lying on her left side. Her mouth is gagged and hands and feet bound with cloth, but her bright fearful blue eyes gaze at you expectantly. She looks to be an auburn-haired Nemedian girl tanned by the desert sun. She is no peasant. Her dress, a flimsy, beautiful purple reveals more than it covers. At a glance, you notice ringlets on her arms and her shapely tanned legs taper to golden anklets. A beautiful necklace of Ophirian design rests between her ample breasts which beg to escape the confines of her low-cut neckline. You begin to hunger for more than food and wine.

[What is your name?/Who are you?]

My name is Natalie, she coos with the femininity of a noble.

[What are you doing here?/Why do they have you bound?]

I was captured, taken from my family in Khauran. My father is a merchant I own you my thanks and my father will repay you for your trouble when he passes through Khauran someday. Otherwise, I have not much to offer. At this, she catches your eyes with hers then looks down, ashamedly. Her coyness seems false, and you read between her lines. [Show Figure 1: Natalia]

[At this point, roll for the BID]

Natalia is actually Ivga, the fiancée to Valerius who is the loyal soldier of Queen Taramis posing as the beggar in Khauran. It is possible that she can be seduced by her saviors (it would take 3 successful seduction attempts to do so), but is fiercely loyal to Valerius otherwise.

[Natalia (Ivga) AC: 10 HD: 2 hp: 9 Th: 19 Mv: 12 D: d2 Sz: 5'8" 124lbs]

S: 13 C: 12 D: 11 I: 10 W: 13 Ch: 9 COM: 16 PER: 13

Vitals: Age: 17 Measurements: 32DD 22 31 Hair: Auburn Eyes: Hazel Skin: Milky White

When the players travel on, read the following when they are but a half-mile from Khauran:

The sun sinks, a lurid ball in a fiery sea of blood. Against a crimson rampart that bands the horizon the towers of the city, Khauran, float unreal as a dream. The very sky is tinged with blood to your glare. Up ahead, you see a giant of a man, a thief no doubt hanging from massive beams that form an X. The man hanging on the cross was the one touch of sentient life in a landscape that seems desolate and deserted in the late evening. [Show Figure 2: Conan on the Tree of Death]

In your ears sounds the beat of wings. Lifting your head you watch the shadows wheeling above him. Hungry vultures slowly, methodically circle their meal. One dipped – dipped—lower and lower. You see the man draw his head back as far as he can, waiting with terrible patience. The vulture sweeps in with a swift roar of wings. Its beak flashes down, ripping the skin on victim's chin as he jerks his head aside; then before the bird can flash away, the man's head lunges forward on his mighty neck muscles, and his teeth, snapping like those of a wolf, locks on the bare, wattled neck. Instantly the vulture explodes into squawking, flapping hysteria. Its thrashing wings seem to blind the man, and its talons rip his chest. But grimly he hangs on, the muscles starting out in lumps on his jaws. And the scavenger's neckbones crunch between those powerful teeth. With a spasmodic flutter the bird hangs limp. He lets go, spitting blood from his mouth. The other vultures, terrified by the fate of their companion, are in full flight to a distant tree, where they perch like black demons in conclave.

You've never seen anything like this, and as you approach closer, you've never seen quite a specimen of human life before. His muscular body is coated with blood and sweat. Corded muscles in his neck, shoulders and arms strain against the cross that binds him. And he is big—if standing you figure him to be at least a foot taller than most men and certainly more muscled and broader than any man you have seen who might match his height. Four large-headed spikes keep him firmly fixed. Trails of fresh blood attest to what must have been an excruciating struggle to free himself from their hold. His skin is of a white breed, though bronzed from years of sun exposure. His short-cropped mane hangs slightly forward as his head droops from exhaustion. His eyes roll upwards towards his furrowed brow to gaze at you.

This is Conan. Assuming they ask him what his crime is, he will respond:

If it's a crime to be the only sane one in command, then I am guilty. That son-of-a-bitch Constantius will pay with his life if I ever get loosed from this. [Conan paused for breath]. The city you seek is mad and there is devilry at work. The good Queen has gone insane, turning on her own people. The Queen I was general for would never have listened to the poison a devil like Constantius spews much less suck his cock. [Conan spits a bit of blood]. She ordered the Khaurani standing guard to assemble in the Great Square, then told them to disarm and disband—that the Shemite mercenaries brought in by Constantius would be the new permanent defense. Of course, I refused to lay down my weapons, as did many of my men. Though I'm loyal to Queen Taramis, the words that came from her mouth were not sane. She was a different person. Fighting broke out. Some Khauranians escaped to the desert, others put to the sword. Constantius had special plans for me....[Conan gives a glance to the spikes in his hands]

Part 2: In the Desert

Read this after they take to the desert with Conan:

In the first few days, Conan shows much progress in healing, though it is apparent it will take months to get close to normal again. It's obvious he wants his revenge against this Constantius cur, and it does seem like the change in Queen Taramis is beyond the mundane—dirty magic might be involved. After a few days of camping 10 miles from Khauran, Conan tells you one evening: “Tomorrow I must ask you a favor. There is a camp of Zuagir not far from here—8 miles to the northwest. Ride and bid them join us. Tell them Conan has promised a camel train load of gold and silver from the coffers of Khauran if they help us breach her. As added incentive, tell them Shemites are now in control of the city.” Conan grins the grin of one who knows a great way to end a negotiation when he hears one.

Conan briefs them with a few more directions, pointing out natural markers on the horizon and offering suggestions for their trip. You may suggest that someone might have to use a Fate Point to know Zuagirian.

Aside from the burning sun and little water, the trip passes uneventfully. You crest the last dune before the Zuagir encampment and then you stop and gaze at the immensity. At least a thousand tents lie sprawled before you. When they notice your presence, you soon find yourself surrounded by a circle of camels and whooping Zuagirs—“the welcoming party!” you remember Conan warning you. Soon, you are sitting around their encampment in a circle with their leaders. **[Roll initial reaction on the “Cautious” column. Then as the players reiterate their points re-roll using their best Charisma modifier. The points they make are valid, and the Zuagirs nod approvingly.]** Negotiations are progressing. Then, you see it. A strange ripple in the sand moves rapidly, arcing at first away from you then coming around and moving swiftly, directly at your party. Within seconds, a monstrous form erupts from the sand in a blur of teeth, claws and scaly armor! The creature's maw opens up, then closes and disappears, leaving the lower half of a body of one of the Zuagir. Men begin to run wildly, crying “Booletti! Booletti!” You see the ripples in the sand coming around again...

[Landshark (AC:-2 (body)/4 (face)/6 (underbelly) HD: 9 hp: 50 Mv:14 Th:11 D:4d12/3d6/3d6 SA: 8' jump SD: Sz: M XP:4000)]

It will continue making passes and if it kills 5 men, it is sated and will burrow off. After this encounter, if the characters were instrumental in killing or driving off the Booletti, no more reaction rolls are required. The 3,000 Zuagir agree to join Conan. Relate the following when this encounter is over and back with Conan:

[Show Figure 3: At the Zuagir Camp with Conan] Seven months have passed and life feels good. Your ranks have swelled to 14,000 strong. Three thousand of those of refugee Khaurani hardened with the thoughts of revenge. The Zuagirs who, though no friends of the Khaurani, hate the foreign Shemites more.

You swallow the last bite or two of your meal and sit back in Conan's tent, gulping some wine from your flagon. Suddenly, the routine of your evening is interrupted. Two Zuagir escort a young Khaurani, not 12 years old, into the tent. His white dress and multi-colored striped vest show signs of having been in the desert for a few days; his lips are parched and it is obvious he is worn out. "General Conan," says one of the Zuagir, "he says he has a letter for you, and only you." The boy nods, and extends his arm which holds a sealed letter wrapped in a purple velvet ribbon.

Conan grunts and springs up from his resting position, "Let me see it boy. You from Khauran?" The boy nods. "Give him food and drink. Get him cleaned up and 10 silver for his trouble. Let him stay in the women's tent for now."

They exit and Conan reads the letter, uttering a disapproving growl or grunt every now and then. When finished, he hands the letter to you with the simple imperative: "Read."

"You can scarcely conceive, my dear friend, of the conditions now existing in Khauran. Seven months have passed since the coup, during which time it seems as though the devil himself had been loosed in this unfortunate realm. Taramis seems to have gone quite mad; as you know, whereas formerly she was famed for her virtue, justice and tranquility, she is now notorious for qualities precisely opposite to those just enumerated. Her private life is a scandal—or perhaps 'private' is not the correct term, since the queen makes no attempt to conceal the debauchery of her court. She constantly indulges in the most infamous revelries, in which the unfortunate ladies of the court are forced to join, young married women as well as virgins.

She herself has not bothered to marry her paramour, Constantius, who sits on the throne beside her and reigns as her royal consort, and his officers follow his example, and do not hesitate to debauch any woman they desire, regardless of her rank or station. The wretched kingdom groans under exorbitant taxation, the farms are stripped to the bone, and the merchants go in rags which are all that is left them by the tax-gatherers. Nay, they are lucky if they escape with a whole skin.

I sense your incredulity, good Conan; you will fear that I exaggerate conditions in Khauran. They toil supinely under the iron hand of Constantius, and his black-bearded Shemites ride incessantly through the fields, with whips in their hands, like the slave-drivers of the black serfs who toil in the plantations of southern Zingara.

Nor do the people of the city fare any better. Their wealth is stripped from them, their fairest daughters taken to glut the insatiable lust of Constantius and his mercenaries. These men are utterly without mercy or compassion, possessed of all the characteristics our armies learned to abhor in our wars against the Shemitish allies of Argos—inhuman cruelty, lust, and wild-beast ferocity. The people of the city are Khauran's ruling caste, predominantly Hyborian, and valorous and war-like. But the treachery of their queen delivered them into the hands of their oppressors. The Shemites are the only armed force in Khauran, and the most hellish punishment is inflicted on any Khaurani found possessing weapons. A systematic persecution to destroy the young Khaurani men able to bear arms has been savagely pursued. Many have ruthlessly been slaughtered, others sold as slaves to the Turanians. Thousands have fled the kingdom and either entered the service of other rulers, or become outlaws, lurking in numerous bands along the borders.

Their plight is most wretched. Taramis, apparently possessed of a demon, stops at nothing. She has abolished the worship of Ishtar, and turned the temple into a shrine of idolatry. She has destroyed the

ivory image of the goddess which these eastern Hyborians worship (and which, inferior as it is to the true religion of Mitra which we Western nations recognize, is still superior to the devil-worship of the Shemites) and filled the temple of Ishtar with obscene images of every imaginable sort—gods and goddesses of the night, portrayed in all the salacious and perverse poses and with all the revolting characteristics that a degenerate brain could conceive. Many of these images are to be identified as foul deities of the Shemites, the Turanians, the Vendhyans, and the Khitans, but others are reminiscent of a hideous and half-remembered antiquity, vile shapes forgotten except in the most obscure legends. Where the queen gained the knowledge of them I dare not even hazard a guess.

She has instituted human sacrifice, and since her mating with Constantius, no less than five hundred men, women and children have been immolated. Some of these have died on the altar she has set up in the temple, herself wielding the sacrificial dagger, but most have met a more horrible doom.

Taramis has placed some sort of monster in a crypt in the temple. What it is, and whence it came, none knows. But shortly after she had crushed the desperate revolt of her soldiers against Constantius, she spent a night alone in the desecrated temple, alone except for a dozen bound captives, and the shuddering people saw thick, foul-smelling smoke curling up from the dome, heard all night the frenetic chanting of the queen, and the agonized cries of her tortured captives; and toward dawn another voice mingled with these sounds – a strident, inhuman croaking that froze the blood of all who heard.

In the full dawn Taramis reeled drunkenly from the temple, her eyes blazing with demoniac triumph. The captives were never seen again, nor the croaking voice heard. But there is a room in the temple into which none ever goes but the queen, driving a human sacrifice before her. And this victim is never seen again. All know that in that grim chamber lurks some monster from the black night of ages, which devours the shrieking humans Taramis delivers up to it.

I can no longer think of her as a mortal woman, but as a rabid she-fiend, crouching in her blood-fouled lair amongst the bones and fragments of her victims, with taloned, crimsoned fingers. That the gods allow her to pursue her awful course unchecked almost shakes my faith in divine justice.

When I compare her present conduct with her deportment when first I came to Khauran, I am confused with bewilderment, and almost inclined to the belief held by many of the people—that a demon has possessed the body of Taramis.

But I must conclude this letter and slip it out of the city. I must haste, before dawn. It is late, and the stars gleam whitely on the gardened roofs of Khauran. A shuddering silence envelops the city, in which I hear the throb of a sullen drum from the distant temple. I doubt not that Taramis is there, concocting more devilry. I pray this letter finds you. When I heard of the broken Cross of Death, and that you had vanished, my heart held hope that someday your vengeance will deliver us.

We patiently await.

Atreas”

Conan empties the wine-jug and smacks his lips with relish. Tossing the empty vessel into a corner, he braces his belt and strides out through the front opening, halting for a moment to let his gaze sweep over the lines of camel-hair tents that stretched before him, and the white-robed figures that moved among them, arguing, singing, mending bridles or whetting tulwars.

He re-enters and lifts his voice: "Aie, you dogs, sharpen your ears and listen! Gather around here. I have a plan to tell you."

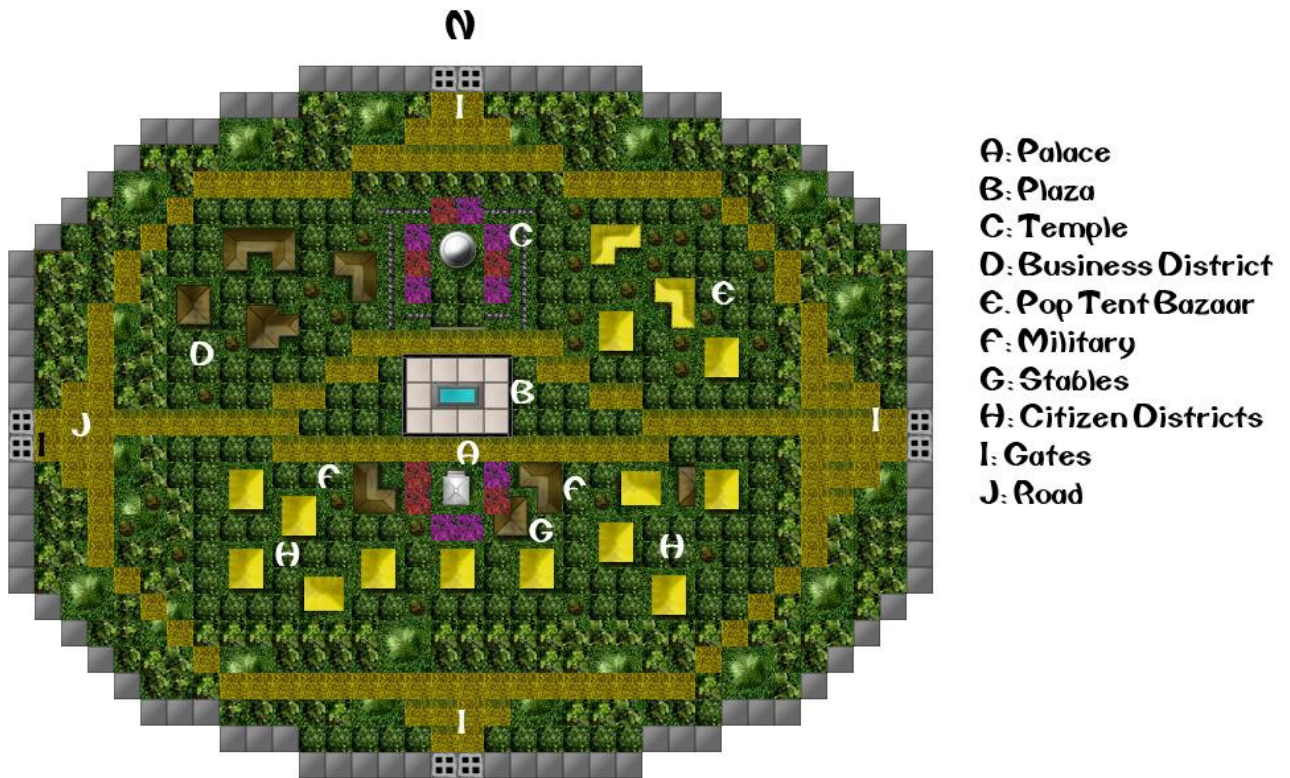
Conan lays out his plan to you. He is going to lure out Constantius and his army from the walls of the city with fake siege engines. The sudden appearance of 14,000 men and siege equipment will leave him no time to provision the city for such a stand, so he will believe his only recourse is to meet the army head on. Conan will only show part of his army however, leaving 3,000 on each side to flank Constantius when they engage head on. The army will move slowly though they are only a few leagues away. He wants the party to move ahead and sneak into the city four days beforehand, learn what has bedeviled the queen and try to redeem her, if that is possible.

Part 3: Within the City

The characters will need a plan to sneak into the city when they arrive. Not only will their weapons raise suspicions, but as Astreas' letter mentions, any male of fighting age will be apprehended on sight, and sold into slavery. Women in their company will be taken and violated. Once within the city walls, allow the characters to gamble, drink and wench as ways to blend in and try to gain information, rumors, about Queen Taramis. As a general rule, allow the characters to gain one piece of information from the Rumor Table below every time they gamble, drink, or have "pillow talk" with a prostitute.

Also once within the city, Natalia (Ivga) will want to take her protector immediately to an Inn, but not for reasons that he may think. Once a room has been secured by her protector, read the following:

"I have some disappointing news for you" she says, after you both are in the privacy of your room. I am not Natalia, but rather my name is Ivga. I am the fiancée of Valerius, a brave and loyal soldier of Queen Taramis. After the massacre of the soldiers in the plaza, he did not return. I waited for him for days, looking for him hoping he was not killed. One night, I heard a rumor that he was alive! I took to the streets that night hoping to find him, but I was taken captive and sold to the Zuagirs that you fought. I didn't want to tell you the truth then, for I didn't know you well, and was afraid if you thought I was already betrothed that your desire to help me would wane. I know the matron of Matilda's House of Joy, a high-class brothel not far from here. I will take refuge there, and masquerade as a harlot. If you should find Valerius, or find out information about him, please let me know! I will ask Matilda for a favor next time you see me there, and I promise she will not let you leave unsatisfied!" She smiles and kisses you on the cheek. "May Ishtar guide and protect you." And then she leaves.



Capital City of Khauran: Khauran

Rumor Table

1. A giant fire lizard has appeared in the gardens behind the palace. Even the guards dare not venture there.
2. It is said that Queen Taramis soon after her change, defiled Ishtar's temple and labored to summon a demon which is now inside the inner sanctum.
3. Queen Taramis' bodyguard is a giant Shemite, with somber eyes and shoulders like a bull, his great black beard falling over his mighty, silver-mailed breast. His name is Khumbanigash. He is also Constantius' right-hand man.
4. The Queen has several priests who appeared soon after she took the throne. They do her bidding without question and seem skilled in the arts of Necromancy. They are unmistakable in appearance—they have features like yellowed parchment stretched over a skull.
5. The prisons below the palace have seen more use in the last seven months than in the last seven years before Queen Taramis' change. But the prisoners usually don't stay very long. They are either sent to the slave boats or sent to feed the Temple Demon.
6. A deaf beggar with no known name does much of the Queen's dirty work. He can be seen skulking around the shadows and in the alleys at night in the poor district or in the mornings usually in the vicinity of the palace.
7. Several have claimed to have seen a curious mark between the Queen's breasts--a scarlet crescent, red as blood. In such a hot climate, the queen often wears little but a low-necked tunic

and a thin gossamer skirt. Many a man has gazed with covetousness in his heart at the Queen's bosom, but none remember such a mark before the Days of Darkness.

8. A secret passage exists which leads from the Queen's Stables to her private chamber.

A. Palace

a. For a detailed description of the palace, see section 4 below.

B. Temple

a. For a detailed description of the temple, see section 5 below.

C. Bazaar

a. This is a bustling area where common goods including, but not limited to, fruit, cloth, perfume, common household items such as rope, and tools can be found.

D. Tavern

a. This is a typical tavern filled with food, ale, commoners, and wenches. Citizens spend time forgetting their lot by drinking, gambling, and wenching here.

E. Common Houses

a. Only the elderly and sick are in their home during the battle, the population having gathered at the battlements to see how the fight is going.

F. Stables

a. If the players discovered the rumor about a secret passage from the Queen's Stables that leads to her private chambers, they will find that it is true. The stables area, in general, has 8 Shemite guards, 3 specifically near the queen's chariot and mount. All 8 guards can converge by the second round of combat.

[Shemite Guards (8) (AC:5 (chain) HD: 3 hp: 14, 15, 16, 16, 18, 19, 23, 24 Mv:12 Th:15 D:d8+1 SA: SD: Sz: M XP:65 each)]

b. Players have a 2 in 6 chance (since they know it exists) of finding the secret door in the floor of the stables, under the chariot. The chariot has enough clearance to crawl under, remove the straw covering the door, and unlatch the door. The door swings downward revealing a set of stone stairs.

G. Barracks

a. Before the battle, scores of Shemites can be found in and around the barracks. After the army leaves to battle Conan, a skeleton crew of 4 guards can be found

[Shemite Guards (8) (AC:5 (chain) HD: 3 hp: 14, 15, 16, 16, 18, 19, 23, 24 Mv:12 Th:15 #AT: 3/2 D:d8+1 SA: expert SD: Sz:M XP:65 each)]

H. Plaza

a. The citizens converge here to either witness the goings on at the temple to the north, or here the proclamations given from the balcony to the south. During the battle, this plaza area is empty.

An Ally in the Alley

If the PCs investigate the rumor about the beggar, they can find him just as described. This is actually Valerius, a noble warrior who for 7 months has been undercover gaining the trust of Salome since he is "deaf." He has been trying to learn the secret behind the queen's change, and, of course, he is not really

deaf. If the party is able to befriend him, he will reveal his true self. He takes the party to an old ramshackle of a dwelling, his temporary home. Then he tells them:

[If the four days are almost up, allow Valerius to tell the players what he has learned in his 7 months (one or two rumors they have yet to uncover). If they never learn of the secret passage from the stables, Valerius can tell them this as well when they meet him again to enter the palace].

"Conan's invasion gives us the opportunity we seek! Constantius will leave only a few hundred men in the city, and they will be on the walls and in the towers commanding the gates. The palace will be left all but unguarded. Let us loosen our blades in our scabbards, commend our souls to Ishtar. When the army rides out of the city, we must start for the palace. Meet me here at daybreak on the morning when Constantius rides out to meet Conan's army."

Part 4. The Palace

All guards are on high alert. It is a time of war. Areas marked "G" on the map have 1-2 guards.

[Shemite Palace Guard (AC: 4 (chain+shield) HD: 4 hp: 32 Mv:12 Th:13 #AT: 3/2 D: d8+2 SA: expert and specialized SD: Sz:M XP:95 each)]

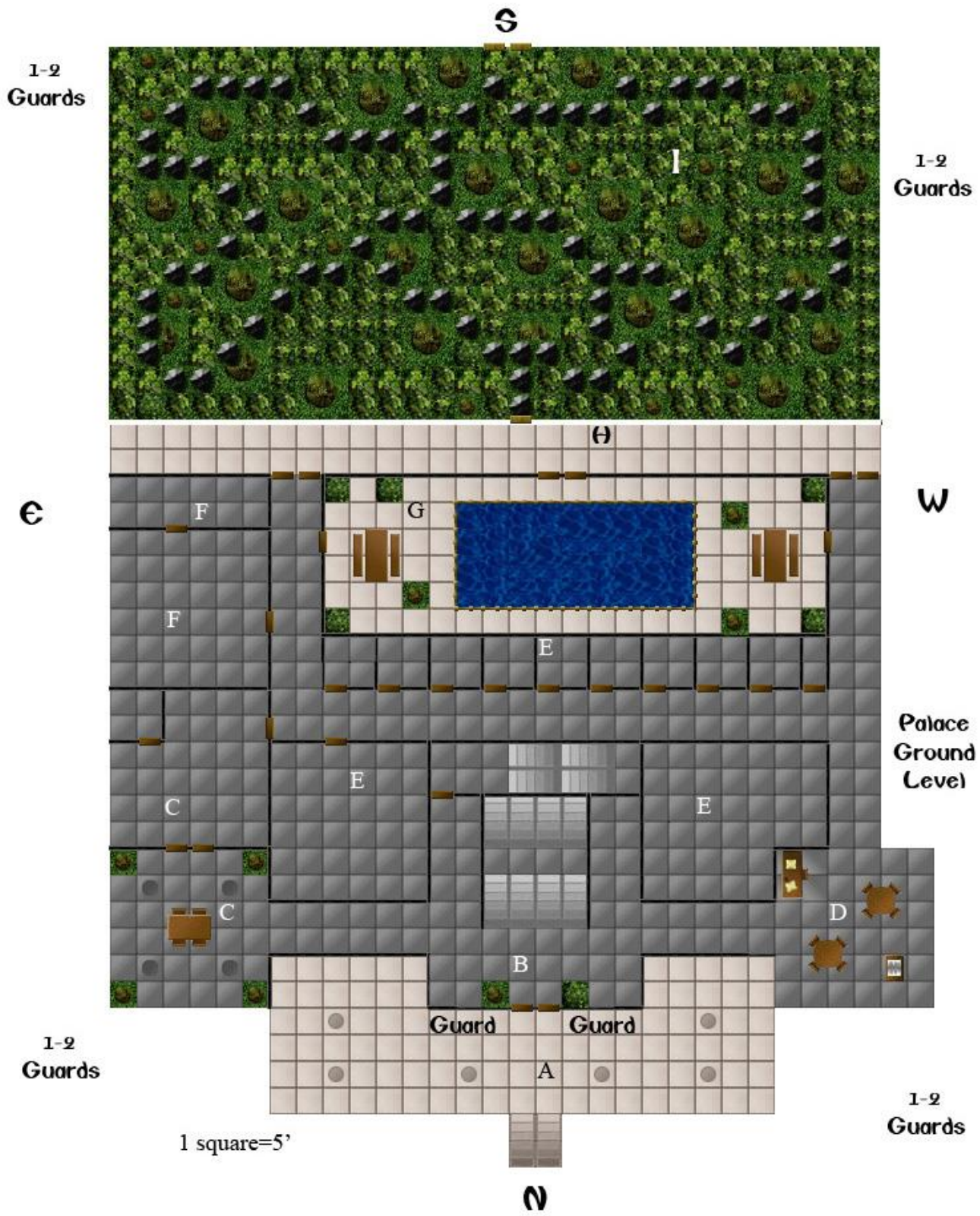
If the PCs enter the palace after 9PM, Salome and Constantius will be in their quarters, sleeping, love-making or preparing for either. Khumbanigash will be in his room next to Salome's. Two hours after the army leaves the city to engage Conan's army, Salome will get a report from Kang, a priest she sent to follow Constantius, via a crystal ball. The report will be that all is lost. *At that point, she will gather two priests and Khumbanigash and head to get Taramis out of prison with the intention of sacrificing her to Thaug in the temple.*

Otherwise, she will be found in one of the following places (d20):

1. Her room/balcony (1-4)
2. Sitting room (5-7)
3. Spa and Pool room (8-10)
4. Orgy Room (11-13)
5. Torture Room (14)
6. Temple (15-18)
7. In the bazaar are plaza with attendants (19-20)

When the party does see her for the first time, read the following. Remember to say "Taramis" not Salome!

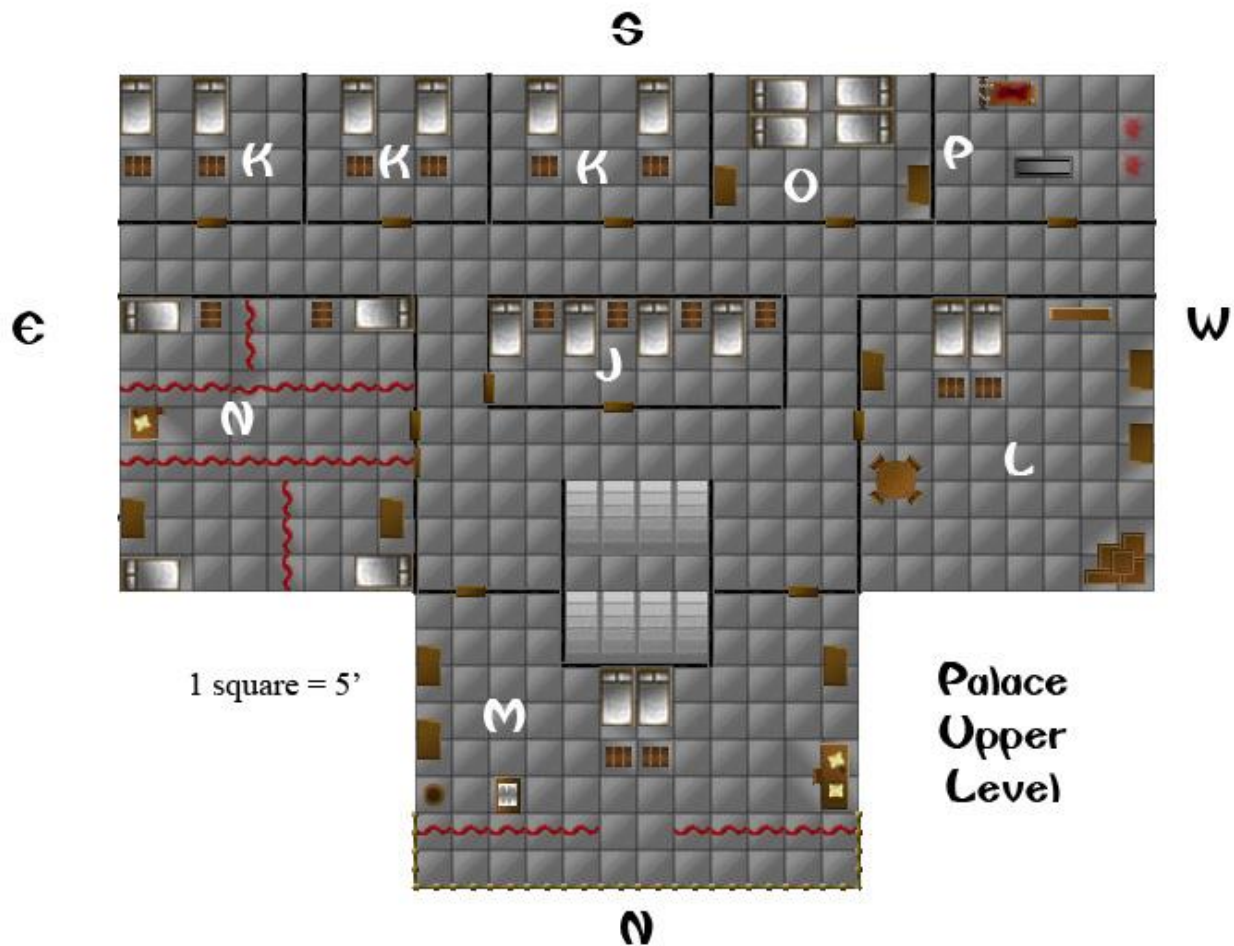
[Show Figure 4: Salome with Krallides] Taramis [Salome] is clad in the barbaric splendor of a woman of Shushan. Jewels glitter in the torchlight on her gilded sandals, on her gold breast-plates and the slender chains that hold them in place. Gold anklets clash as she moves, jeweled bracelets weight her bare arms. Her tall coiffure is that of a Shemitish woman, and jade pendants hang from gold hoops in her ears, flashing and sparkling with each impatient movement of her haughty head. A gem-crusted girdle supports a silk skirt so transparent that it is in the nature of a cynical mockery of convention. The low-necked tunic leaves the upper parts of her firm breasts bare. Suspended from her shoulders and trailing down her back hangs a darkly scarlet cloak. Lust and mystery sparkle in her scintillant eyes, cruelty lurks in the curl of her full red lips. Each movement of her supple body is subtly suggestive.



Ground Level

- A. Stairs and Portico
 - a. Marble stairs lead up to the portico and double entry doors. The doors are closed but only barred if Conan's army breaches the city gates.
- B. Inner Foyer
 - a. A large beautiful foyer is used to greet guests and serves as the hub to the rest of the palace. A set of stairs rises in the middle of the foyer to the second level
 - b. A separate room to the south contains a stairwell that descends down to the prison area.
- C. Dining Hall and Kitchen complex
 - a. 8 servants/cooks can be found in this area. They have been told to prepare a celebration feast.
- D. Sitting Room
 - a. Time is idled away here with a window looking out to the plaza and temple. Cards, checkers and a form of chess can be seen on the gaming tables and books line bookshelves on the western wall.
- E. Servants Quarters and Storage
 - a. Several rooms are dedicated to the servants. This area also contains a washroom for clothes and bathrooms and a storage area for supplies and pantry.
- F. Guards Room and Armory
 - a. This is where the guards live who have been assigned to the palace. Their area also contains bathrooms
- G. Spa and Pool
 - a. a luxurious heated pool with a separate spa bath is here attended by 6 servants ready to conjure more heated water, drinks and food
- H. Back Patio
 - a. The palace is on a rise and thus the back patio gives a beautiful view of the gardens to the immediate south and the rest of the city beyond. An iron fence separates the patio from the garden and has an iron grilled door for an entrance. There is no roof over the patio.
- I. Garden
 - a. This is a lush beautiful garden filled with trees, plants and flowers of all types. A path winds its way around the foliage. The foliage is thick and tall enough that it is difficult to see from one part of the path across the foliage to another part of the path. The wall around the garden is 10' tall. Double wooden doors, banded and barred, provide egress to the south, though this is more of an emergency exit and is rarely used.
 - b. Salome has summoned and bound a creature that now guards this area. It is smart enough to not attack her, Khumbanigash, or Constantius but will attack guards (who know about it and do not enter) or the PCs.

[Fire Lizard (AC: 3 HD: 10 hp: 70 Mv:9 Th:11 #AT: 3 D: d8/d8/2d8 SA: 2d6 fire breath 15'long cone SD: immunity to fire Sz:L 30' XP:3000)]



Upper Level

J. Guards Room

- a. This is identical to the area for guards on the first level save that there is no armory.

K. Servants Quarters and Storage

- a. This area is for the more personal attendants for the royalty

L. Khumbanigash's Room

- a. This area is currently the home of Salome's bodyguard Khumbanigash. He will only be here after 9PM. Otherwise, he is within earshot of the Salome. 350 silver can be found in his footlocker which is locked.

Khumbanigash (AC: 1 (chain+shield+Dex) HD: 7 hp: 70 Mv:13 Th:10 #AT: 5/2 D: d8+6 SA: expert and specialized SD: Sz:M XP: 320) S: 18/51 C: 17 D: 16 I: 12 W: 14 Ch: 11 Com: 14; he possesses a **Tulwar +1**, that glows when unsheathed.

M. Salome/Taramis' Quarters and Balcony

- a. Here is where Salome sleeps. She will be found here with Constantius after 9PM; The secret door is revealed by looking under a throw rug. It leads to the Queen's Stables.

N. Priests Quarters

- a. Salome keeps 4 Stygian priests in the palace. Two spend their time in the palace while the other two spend their time in the temple. They share a common room quartered off with curtains. An altar sits on the southern wall. It is here that clues can be found as to

Salome’s true identity. The priests keep records and diaries. They refer to a woman called “Salome” who is a Sorceress from Stygia. It is very clear that as they refer to her actions from week to week that they are referring to the woman posing as the queen. They also mention “her prisoner” who is held in the prison, though they don’t name Taramis by name. Information concerning Thaug in the temple is vague—only that it is a demon from another world with a vast appetite and whose presence enhances Priests of Set’s spell casting ability.

Stygian Priests (4) (AC: 10 HD: 3 hp: 24, 21, 18, 16 Mv:12 Th:18 #AT: 1 D: d8 SA: spells SD: spells Sz: M XP: 120)]

S: 10 C: 14, 12, 11, 9 D: 12 I: 12 W: 17 Ch: 12 Com: 8

Each Priest has the following spells at his disposal. Spells in *italics* are bonuses from Thaug. Spells in **bold** are Necromantic and thus do not entail the additional -1 CON check penalty. If Thaug is slain, the priests do not get the bonus spells and will immediately know of his passing:

<u>1st Tier</u>	<u>2nd Tier</u>	<u>3rd Tier</u>
Command	<i>Hold Person</i>	<i>Magical Vestment</i>
CureLW	Cause MW	
Protect from Good	<i>Heat Metal</i>	
Torch Light		
CauseLW		

The priest with the CON of 14 and 24hp has a **Staff of the Serpent** which comes alive and strikes for 2d4 CON damage (poison)

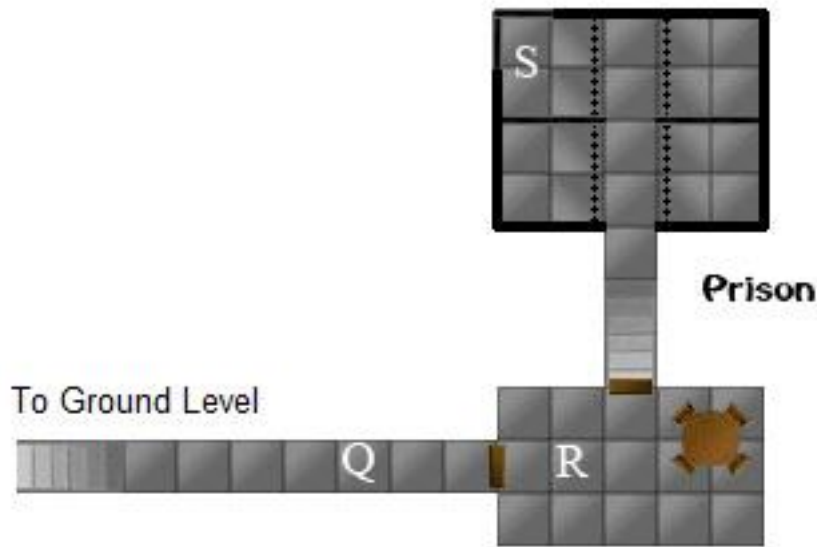
Each has an unholy symbol of set (cobra within a circle) worth 50 silver each.

O. Orgy Room

- a. Salome has converted what used to be guest rooms into a lavish orgy room with appropriate devices and accouterments in each.
- b. 4 servants (2 males and 2 female) await to serve
- c. A search reveals that this room used to be a bedroom

P. Torture Room

- a. This is aside from the room near the prison that the resident torture/jailer uses. This is a personal torture room where Salome takes delight in “treating” special enemies.
- b. It is empty of servants but contains many hand devices of torture and manacles on the walls.
- c. A search reveals that this room used to be a bedroom



1 square = 10'

Prison Area

Read the following when the party descends from the Palace Ground level:

Palace and prison are connected by a long closed gallery, whose vaulted roof rises on gloomy arches. Hurrying along this, you pass through a heavy door at the other end that lets you into the dim-lit recesses of the prison. You have emerged into a wide, arched corridor at a point near where a stone stair descends into the darkness.

Q: Long Corridor: 2 guards are posted at the end of this long hallway.

[Shemite Palace Guard (AC: 5 (chain) HD: 4 hp: 32 Mv:12 Th:13 #ATT: 3/2 D: d8+2 SA: expert and specialized SD: Sz:M XP:95 each)]

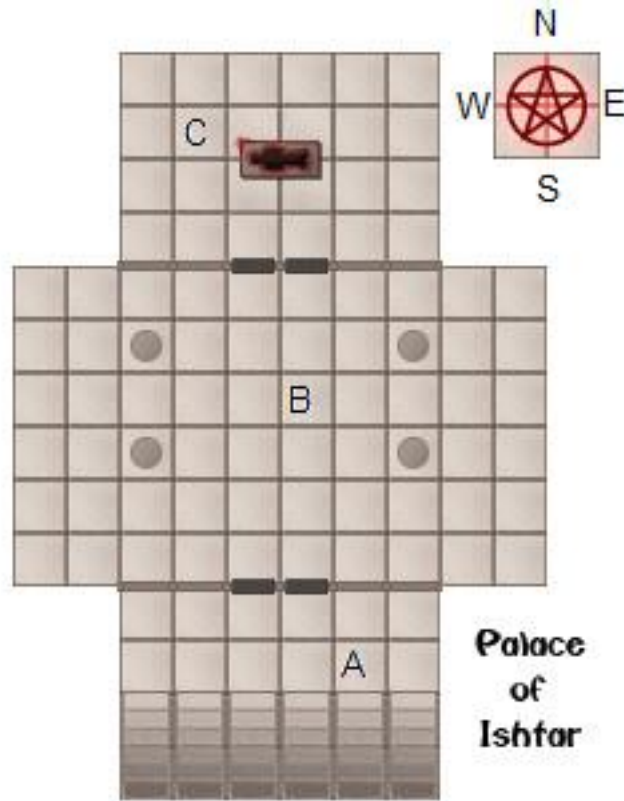
R: Jailer: the official palace jailer is here with one other guard

[Shemite Palace Guard (AC: 5 (chain) HD: 4 hp: 32 Mv:12 Th:13 #ATT: 3/2 D: d8+2 SA: expert and specialized SD: Sz:M XP:95)]

[Jailer (AC: 4 (chain) HD: 6 hp: 48 Mv:12 Th:11 #ATT: 3/2 D: d8+2 SA: expert and specialized SD: Sz:M XP: 150)] The keys to the cells are hanging on the wall.

S: Jail Cells: the cells marked "S" contains Queen Taramis

Part 5: The Temple



1 square = 10'

A. Steps and Pillared Portico

B. Worship area: Two Priests of Set can be found here almost any time of day or night

[Stygian Priests (4) (AC: 10 HD: 3 hp: 24, 21, 18, 16 Mv:12 Th:18 #AT: 1 D: d8 SA: spells SD: spells Sz: M XP: 120)]

S: 10 C: 14, 12, 11, 9 D: 12 I: 12 W: 17 Ch: 12 Com: 8

Each Priest has the following spells at his disposal. Spells in *italics* are bonuses from Thaug. Spells in **bold** are Necromantic and thus do not entail the additional -1 CON check penalty. If Thaug is slain, the priests do not get the bonus spells and will immediately know of his passing:

1 st Tier	2 nd Tier	3 rd Tier
Command	<i>Hold Person</i>	<i>Magical Vestment</i>
CureLW	Cause MW	
Protect from Good	<i>Heat Metal</i>	
Torch Light		
CauseLW		

The priest with the CON of 14 and 24hp has a **Staff of the Serpent** which comes alive and strikes for 2d4 CON damage (poison). Each has an unholy symbol of set (cobra within a circle) worth 50 silver each.

C. Inner Sanctum

- a. This is where Thaug will appear when Salome summons it (from an inter-dimensional space). Thaug is a huge 20' long frog-like demon. It has bulging eyes; it croaks and hops. Thaug has a permanent mist that surrounds it, making it hard to see. An orange glow emanates from the torches reflecting off of the fog giving the place an eerie glow.
- b. If given the chance, this is where Salome will take Taramis once Salome knows that all is lost with the battle. It will take her and any remaining Priests of Set two rounds to lock Taramis onto the altar. Then she must chant for 6 rounds (not necessarily continuous) to have Thaug emerge from his inter-dimensional portal). The priests and Khumbanigash will fight the party, buying time for Salome to finish her summoning. (She has already completed the difficult part of summoning Thaug seven months ago, but must still complete a 6 round chant to summon him from his dark abode).

As Salome raises her arms, she begins a chant in a long-forgotten tongue, known only to the vile priests in Stygia. After a moment, a mist rises from behind the supple sorceress and it soon engulfs the room making it hard to see further than 15'. [As the battle progresses, keep the players abreast of the changes in the room from Salome's incantation: Round 1) Mist; 2) Torches flare 3) temperature drops 20 degrees to about 60; 4) a black oval of nothingness appears behind Salome 5) torches go out for one round then flare again 6) continue reading--characters hear the croaking] When Salome stops her chant you hear an unearthly loud "CROAK!" Its deep guttural tone literally vibrates through your body. Then you notice the two tentacles, black and oily, rising to each side of Salome. It then emerges from the fog. It looms toward you, a giant shadowy thing, like a travesty of nature cut out of the heart of night, a black shapelessness in which only the staring eyes and gleaming fangs are distinct.

When Thaug is not being bothered by mortals in melee, its course of actions are as follows: it will first break the chains on Taramis' arms with its tentacles (1st round), then legs, (2nd round), then pick Taramis up with the same tentacles (3rd round) then eat her (4th round). If attacked in melee, it will defend itself attack with its tentacles and bite and resume its desired course of actions when it can. [Thaug (AC: 0 HD: 12 hp: 70 Mv:15 Th:8 #AT: 3 D: d10/d10/2d8 SA: swallow whole on a 20; if a tentacle hits, it will damage then fling the victim 8-15' away SD: Sz: H XP: 5000)]

It is to note, that Thaug is not brilliant. If the party is able to somehow swap Taramis with Salome after the summoning, Thaug will eat Salome! It is a point of debate as to whether Thaug will disappear after Salome dies. Play this as you see fit. If the party is barely alive and struggling, allow Thaug to vanish (read the box below). If they are still very much healthy, make them deal with the demon even if the sorceress dies.

If Thaug dies (or if you choose, Salome dies):

Suddenly, the huge nether-beast freezes its motions. Its blank stare fixes on you for but a brief second. Then, as if it were a painting on a cloth and being sucked away, it crumples, shrinks, and then with an audible "POP" it disappears.

Part 6: Epilogue

As the characters defeat Thaug, Conan's army enters victoriously from the city gates. Taramis, (if alive), can make her appearance to him and the crowd. Valerius will run to the front, saying "The

tyranny is over!,” introduce the real queen, and the crowd will erupt. Ivga will make her appearance in a couple of minutes and she and Valerius will embrace. After the crowd knows about her twin evil sister, Taramis will offer Conan the generalship and the players a high-ranking position within her court or in the military. Conan will politely refuse, saying his time is done here. The characters can accept or decline as they wish (regardless, they will still be thrown into the next adventure!)

The player’s reward is 500sp each and every business in town will give the players ½ off of anything they want.

If they escape with their lives, award PCs with Xps or if you use a simplified system like I do, this adventure should be worth 1/3 of a level for each 4 hour playing session (but no more than 1 level per adventure in any case).

I also keep track and award the following bonuses, each worth 1/10 of a level:

1. Most Damage in a single blow/spell
2. Coolest Critical Hit by a PC
3. Weirdest/Funniest Happening
4. Scribe (one player must write all notes including monsters killed and treasure gained)
5. BID if she is alive and relatively unharmed
6. Best Idea

Salome (Conjurer) 9th level

AC: 10 hp: 31
Mv:12 Th:16
#AT: 3/2 D: d4+4 (+d4 CON poison)
SA: expert and specialized with dagger; spells SD:
spells
Sz:M XP:2770

Non-weapon proficiencies:

Allure 16 Etiquette 16
Ancient history14 Read/write 16
Spellcraft 14 Dancing 14
Sex 16 Herbalism 14

S: 9
C: 16
D: 11
I: 16
W: 10
Ch: 12
Per: 15
Com: 18

Salome has access to these spells (she is barred from Divination and Invocation):

1st: **Summon Creature 1**; Shield; Burning Hands;
 Shocking Grasp; *Charm Man 1*; *Kiss of Wounding*;
2nd: **Summon Creature 2**; **Summon Swarm**; *Kiss of Weakness*
3rd: **Summon Creature 3**; *Blown Kiss*; *Kiss of Slavery*
4th: **Summon Creature 4**; Rainbow Pattern
5th: **Summon Creature 5**

* **BOLD** spells are those within her specialty and do NOT get the additional -1 CON check

***Italicized* spells are taken from “Spells with ZIP” which, in turn, is taken from The Book of Unlawful Carnal Knowledge.

***It is to note that Salome used a scroll much above her level, to summon and bind Thaug.

She has the following magical items:

- **Dagger +2 of poison (on any critical hit, adds d4 CON poison damage)**
- **Set’s Scarab of Protection (+3 to all saves including those that have no save; absorbs 10 levels of draining)**
- **Potion of Life (if imbiber would fall to 0 or less, instead stays at 1 hp; protection last 1-30 rounds after which victim remains at 1 hp (or more)).**
- **Paired Crystal Balls (the smaller of the two balls is given to another and if that person’s name is spoken, the Diviner and that person can communicate and see one another. The communication the Diviner receives sounds like gibberish to anyone else who is within earshot)**

Taramis [**Salome**] is clad in the barbaric splendor of a woman of Shushan. Jewels glitter in the torchlight on her gilded sandals, on her gold breast-plates and the slender chains that hold them in place. Gold anklets clash as she moves, jeweled bracelets weight her bare arms. Her tall coiffure is that of a Shemitish woman, and jade pendants hang from gold hoops in her ears, flashing and sparkling with each impatient movement of her haughty head. A gem-crusted girdle supports a silk skirt so transparent that it is in the nature of a cynical mockery of convention. The low-necked tunic leaves the upper parts of her firm breasts bare. Suspended from her shoulders and trailing down her back hangs a darkly scarlet cloak. Lust and mystery sparkle in her scintillant eyes, cruelty lurks in the curl of her full red lips. Each movement of her supple body is subtly suggestive.

Valerius, Soldier 6th level

AC: 10 (as beggar) 4 (as soldier)

hp: 40

Mv:12

Th:12

#AT: 3/2

D: d4+4 (+d4 CON poison)

SA: expert and specialized with tulwar;

Sz:M

XP:720

Non-weapon proficiencies:

Blind fighting

Etiquette 12

Endurance 16

Read/write 12

Running 14

Gather Information 14

Disguise 14

Scrounging 12

S: 16

C: 16

D: 14

I: 13

W: 10

Ch: 14

Per: 11

Com: 15

Valerius has garnered a stash of weapons and armor during his seven months in disguise. He has under the floorboard of his shack: 5 tulwars, 8 daggers, 2 spears, 1 battle axe, 1 warhammer, 4 suits of chainmail, 2 sets of leather armor, 5 wooden shields. If the party has lost theirs, he will happily resupply them.

Figure 0: World Map--Khauran



Figure 1: Natalia

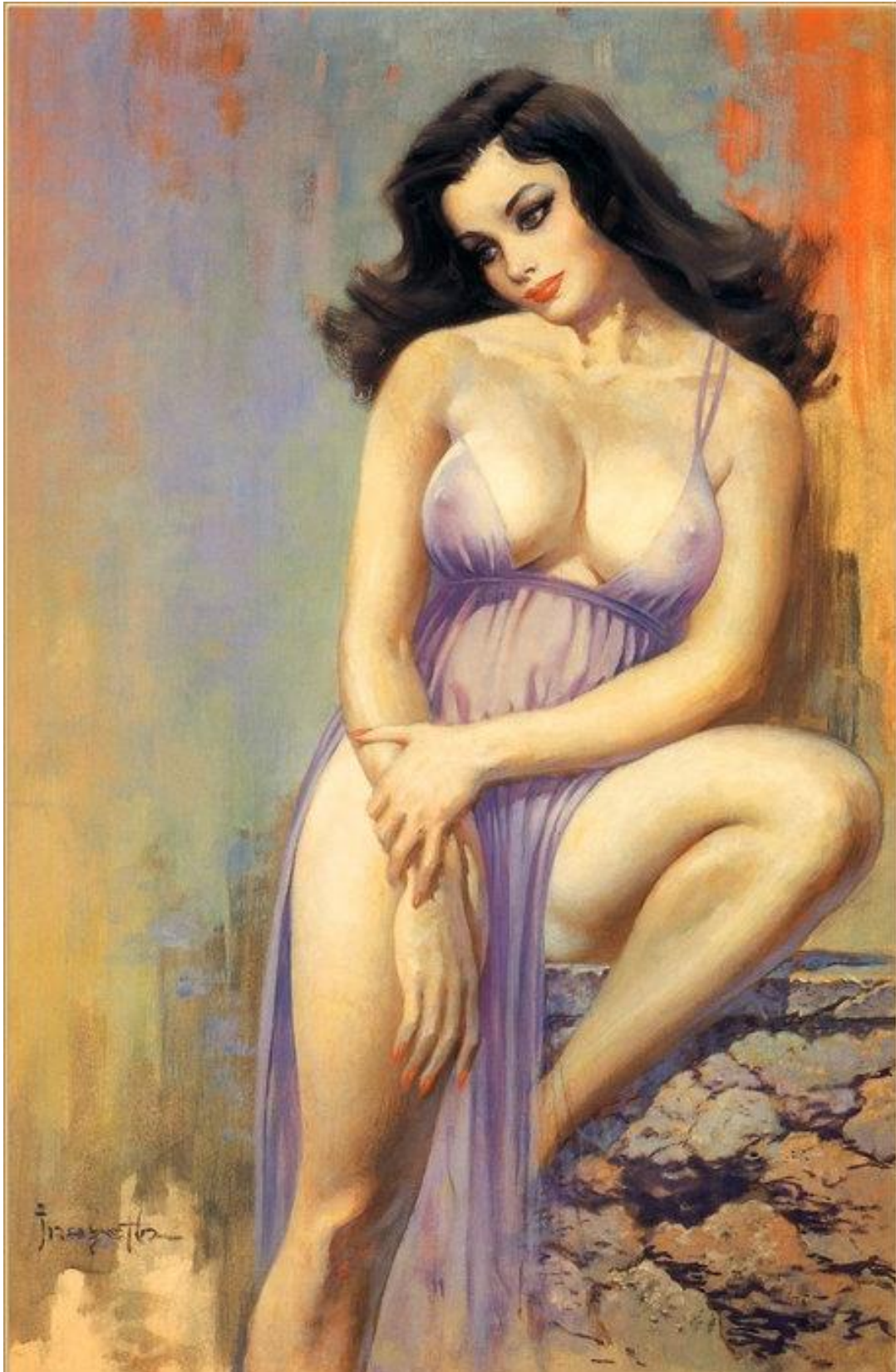


Figure 2: Conan on the Tree of Death



Figure 3: At the Zuagir camp with Conan



Figure 4: Salome with Krallides'



Figure 5: Thaug

