

The Teeth of Gwahlur

Short Story by Robert E. Howard

Adaptation for D&D by Wesley Connally

Please send suggestions and comments to: wes@cwv.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: 9-10

Reputation: 20 Keshan (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 have gone south to the kingdom of Kush to see if the legendary Jewels of Gwahlur actually exist. Posing as mercenary generals for hire to train the warriors of Keshan, they learn of a forbidden city that lies within volcanic-like walls outside the capital of Keshan. Gaining access to the sacred city will be challenging enough, but once they learn about all the hands who want the jewels, they may get more than they bargained for.

World Map

At any appropriate time, you can show players “Figure 0: World Map—Keshan” 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 process applies 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: Scaling the Cliffs

The cliffs rise sheer from the jungle, towering ramparts of stone that glint jade-blue and dull crimson in the rising sun, and curve away and away to east and west above the waving emerald ocean of fronds and leaves. It looks insurmountable, that giant palisade with its sheer curtains of solid rock in which bits of quartz wink dazzlingly in the sunlight.

You have come to the kingdom of Keshan following the lure of a fabled treasure that outshines the hoard of the Turanian kings. Keshan is a barbaric kingdom lying in the eastern hinterlands of Kush where the broad grasslands merge with the forests that roll up from the south. The people are a mixed race, a dusky nobility ruling a population that is largely pure Negro. The rulers—princes and high priests—claimed descent from a white race which, in a mythical age, had ruled a kingdom whose capital city was Alkmeenon. Conflicting legends sought to explain the reason for that race's eventual downfall, and the abandonment of the city by the survivors. Equally nebulous were the tales of the Teeth of Gwahlur, the treasure of Alkmeenon. But these misty legends had been enough to bring you to Keshan, over vast distances of plain, riverlaced jungle, and mountains.

You had found Keshan, which in itself is considered mythical by many northern and western nations, and you had heard enough to confirm the rumors of the treasure that men call the Teeth of Gwahlur. But its hiding place you could not learn, and you were confronted with the necessity of explaining your presence in Keshan. Unattached strangers are not welcome there.

But you were nonplussed. With cool assurance you made your offer to the stately, plumed, suspicious grandees of the barbarically magnificent court. You are a group of professional fighting men. In search of employment you have come to Keshan. For a price you would train the armies of Keshan and lead them against Punt, their hereditary enemy, whose recent successes in the field had aroused the fury of Keshan's irascible king. This proposal was accepted.

But then came an interruption. Thutmekri came to Keshan at the head of an embassy from Zembabwei. His offer outweighed yours. He pledged himself to invade Punt from the east with a host of black spearmen, Shemitish archers, and mercenary swordsmen, and to aid the king of Keshan to annex the hostile kingdom. The benevolent kings of Zembabwei desired only a monopoly of the trade of Keshan and her tributaries—and, as a pledge of good faith, some of the Teeth of Gwahlur. These would be put to no base usage, Thutmekri hastened to explain to the suspicious chieftains; they would be placed in the temple of Zembabwei beside the squat gold idols of Dagon and Derketo,

sacred guests in the holy shrine of the kingdom, to seal the covenant between Keshan and Zembabwei. This statement brought a savage grin to your hard lips.

You knew you had to find the Jewels and leave before they did and you learned by this time that the Jewels were not in Keshan. Meanwhile, the high priest Gorulga announced that before any decision could be reached concerning Thutmekri's offer, the will of the gods must be ascertained concerning the proposed alliance with Zembabwei and the pledge of objects long held holy and inviolate. The oracle of Alkmeenon must be consulted.

This was an awesome thing, and it caused tongues to wag excitedly in palace and beehive hut. Not for a century had the priests visited the silent city. The oracle, men said, was the Princess Yelaya, the last ruler of Alkmeenon, who had died in the full bloom of her youth and beauty, and whose body has miraculously remained unblemished throughout the ages. Of old, priests had made their way into the haunted city, and she had taught them wisdom. The last priest to seek the oracle had been a wicked man, who had sought to steal for himself the curiously cut jewels that men called the Teeth of Gwahlur. But some doom had come upon him in the deserted palace, from which his acolytes, fleeing, had told tales of horror that had for a hundred years frightened the priests from the city and the oracle.

You find yourselves halfway up the sheer cliff which guards the city of Alkmeenon. No other entrance around the sheer walls presented itself, and you knew you didn't have time to spend a day or more trying to find a less obvious entrance.

Very near the top, you can spy what seems to be a small cave.

Emphasize that just because this is their first obstacle of the adventure, it is by no means their easiest. In fact, this could be their deadliest. It is assumed they had time to gather some spikes, hammer, and ropes before leaving Keshan.

The walls are 500' up, but they are only straight and sheer after the first 300'. PCs must make climbing checks at this point, which is at the 350' mark. They must make checks every 50'. This means 4 total checks need to be made.

If characters have the mountaineering skill, no check is needed. Thieves may use their climbing skills, but all other characters only have a 3% per DEX point. Characters would be advised to have the best climber, were he a mountaineer, thief, or just the one with the best DEX, lead the group tied by ropes. If a non-leading PC should fail a check, the next person who is higher must make a ST check or fall as well. Keep going up the rope until someone makes a ST check.

Should a fall happen, characters take terminal velocity damage from such a height--52d6. Because of the sloping nature of the bottom half, and because it is fairly smooth, characters are allowed a saving throw for half damage. Obviously, a character who has fallen might just need to use a Fate Point to be Left for Dead.

After the last climbing check is made, they reach the cave:

The cave is so tiny that it is little more than a niche cut in the stone, but it holds an occupant. A

shriveled brown mummy, cross-legged, arms folded on the withered breast upon which the shrunken head is sunk, sits in the little cavern. The limbs are bound in place with rawhide thongs which have become mere rotted wisps. If the form had ever been clothed, the ravages of time had long ago reduced the garments to dust. But thrust between the crossed arms and the shrunken breast there is a roll of parchment, yellowed with age to the color of old ivory.

[Characters who have the reading skill or ancient languages can examine the scroll and decipher some of it]

You gather that the writer, the mysterious Bit-Yakin, had come from afar with his servants, and entered the valley of Alkmeenon. Much that follows is meaningless, interspersed as it is with unfamiliar phrases and characters. Such as you can translate seems to indicate the passing of a very long period of time. The name of Yelaya was repeated frequently, and toward the last part of the manuscript it became apparent that Bit-Yakin knew that death was upon him. With a slight start, you realize that the mummy in the cave is Bit-Yakin. The man had died, as he had prophesied, and his servants, obviously, had placed him in that open crypt, high up on the cliffs, according to his instructions before his death.

When the PCs reach the summit:

It is like looking into the interior of a vast bowl, rimmed by a circular stone wall. The floor of the bowl is covered with trees and denser vegetation, though nowhere does the growth duplicate the jungle denseness of the outer forest. The cliffs march around it without a break and of uniform height. It is a freak of nature, not to be paralleled, perhaps, in the whole world: a vast natural amphitheater, a circular bit of forested plain, three or four miles in diameter, cut off from the rest of the world, and confined within the ring of those palisaded cliffs.

Catching a glimpse of the marble domes amidst the twinkling green, you catch your breath. It is no myth, then; below you lay the fabulous and deserted palace of Alkmeenon.

But a scream from above brings your scenic viewing to an abrupt close. Looking up, several large creatures, wasp-like in appearance but each almost as large as a man, circle and swoop upon you.

[Wasps 10 (AC:4 HD:4 hp: 20 Mv:21 Th:17 D:2d4/d4 SA: poison sv or 2d6 CON damage + 2d6 rounds of being paralyzed SD: Sz:4' XP:420)]

Part 2: The City and Palace of Alkmeenon

In half the time it took to scale the outside, you make your way down the sloping rugged inner side. Now, all about you, you see signs of an ancient civilization; marble fountains, voiceless and crumbling, stand in circles of slender trees whose patterns are too symmetrical to have been a chance of nature. Forest-growth and underbrush have invaded the evenly planned groves, but their outlines are still visible. Broad pavements run away under the trees, broken, and with grass growing through the wide cracks. You glimpse walls with ornamental copings, lattices of carven stone that might once have served as the walls of pleasure pavilions. Presently, pushing through a screen of vine-tangled branches, you come into a comparatively open space where the trees straggle unencumbered by undergrowth, and see before you the wide, pillared portico of the palace.

Climbing the steps of the palace you enter a broad audience hall. At the farther end of the great room, there rises a dais with broad lapis-lazuli steps leading up to it, and on that dais there stands a massive chair with ornate arms and a high back which once doubtless supported a cloth-of-gold canopy. You spy two arches, one on each side of the back wall of the throne. The one on the left of the dais, unlike the other is furnished with a door. Nor is it any common door. The portal is one of the same rich metal as the throne, and carved with many curious arabesques. Between the two arches is an alcove.

The alcove is mostly concealed by a tapestry depending from above the lintel. If the PCs follow it around, they find themselves in a small hallway that parallels the Oracle Room (where the body of Yelaya is). As long as they have a light source, they easily see a small hole positioned so that if one were to squat down, one could see and presumably hear what goes on in the Oracle Room. Clever PCs might suspect ancient foul play, as the High Priest may have wanted to monitor what the “goddess” tells important visitors.

When PCs decide to investigate what lies beyond the ornately carved door, read the following.

You are in a square chamber of no great dimensions, whose marble walls rise to an ornate ceiling, inlaid with gold. Gold friezes run about the base and the top of the walls, and there is no door other than the one through which you have entered. But you note these details mechanically. Your whole attention is centered on the shape which lay on an ivory dais before you.

It is no effigy of stone or metal or ivory. It is the actual body of a woman, and by what dark art the ancients have preserved that form unblemished for so many ages you cannot even guess. The very garments she wears are intact—and you scowl at that, a vague uneasiness stirring at the back of your mind. The arts that preserves the body should not affect the garments. Yet there they are—gold breast-plates set with concentric circles of small gems, gilded sandals, and a short silken skirt upheld by a jeweled girdle, a tiara with a gem worth a roomful of slaves. Neither cloth nor metal shows any signs of decay.


Yelaya is coldly beautiful, even in death. Her body is like alabaster, slender yet voluptuous; a great crimson jewel gleams against the darkly piled foam of her hair.


Suddenly, a gong in the distance breaks the reverie. It could not possibly be anyone from Keshan, not yet anyway and the city of Alkmeenon has not seen a living soul in 100 years.


You can investigate and find them, or wait here until they find you.

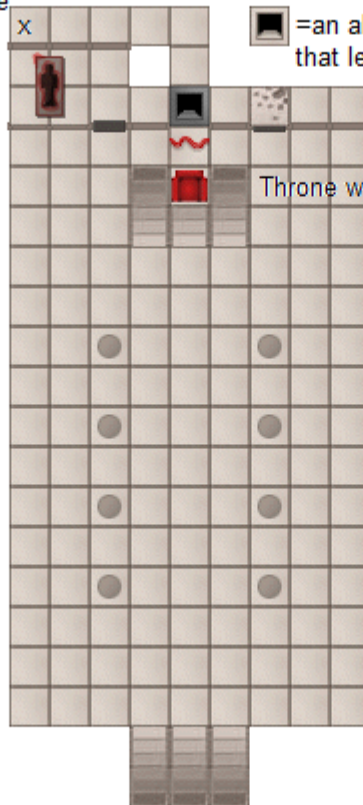
x=where one can see through a pinhole at the goddess and hear

Oracle Chamber where Yelaya lies

 =an alcove behind a tapestry that leads to x.

 Secret Door leading directly outside to Zargheba.

 Throne with Lapis-Lazuli Steps



Part 3: The Underground River

If the PCs decide to investigate where the sound emanated from, at some point in their wanderings read the following:

With appalling suddenness the seemingly solid flags splinter and give way under your feet. Even as you fall, you spread wide your arms and catch the edges of the aperture that gapes beneath you. The edges crumble off under your clutching fingers. Down into utter darkness you shoot, into black icy waters that grip you and whirl you away with breathless speed.

Bronze ladders extend from the ledges to the water's surface at regular intervals, and there is one just ahead of you. Instantly, you strike out for it, fighting the current that would have held you to the middle of the stream. It drags at you as with tangible, animate, slimy hands, [for those who make a **Strength Check**] but you buffet the rushing surge with the strength of desperation and draw closer and closer inshore, fighting furiously for every inch. [Again another **Strength Check**] Now you are even with the ladder and with a fierce, gasping plunge you grip the bottom rung and hang on, breathless.

[If they fail one of the two **Strength** checks, they are plunged further down the river taking a total of 6d8 damage. The underground river eventually exits the temple compound and characters are washed up a mile away from the palace. They are halfway between the northern cliff and the palace. It will take 15 minutes for players to catch their breath and jog back to the palace. If they go directly to

Yelaya's chamber, the Oracle Chamber, they may just meet their other party members as they get there.]

As you cling to the ladder, you hear an awful screech and look to see nameless creatures bursting from the river's surface and fly straight at you.

[Ixitxachitil (flying giant manta rays) (8) (AC:4 HD:4+4 hp:16 Mv:12(S) 9 (glide) Th:15 D: SA: 3d4 SD: Sz:6' XP:420)]

The Ixitxachitil attempt to knock characters from the ladders and then fight them under the water where they have a huge advantage (PCs have -6 on initiative and -6 on all combat rolls).

Once they make it up the ladders, PCs see a ledge that overlooks the river, or would if there were enough light. An escape presents itself in the form of an opening in the ceiling.

Part 4: The “Goddess Yelaya and Muriela

You draw yourself up through a hole and find yourself in a wide chamber in a state of extreme disrepair. Most of the roof has fallen in, as well as a great section of the floor, which is laid over the vault of a subterranean river. Broken arches open into other chambers and corridors, and you believe you are still in the great palace.

[Characters will presumably want to make it back to the Oracle Room where the body of Yelaya lays.]

The body still lays as you had first seen, silent, motionless, but now there is a subtle difference. The lissome limbs are not rigid, a peach-bloom touches the cheeks, and the lips are red—she's alive!

The dark lashes lift; the eyes open and gaze up at you—inscrutably, dark, lustrous, mystical. She sits up with a supple ease, still holding your ensorcelled stare. “I am Yelaya!” The voice is rich and musical. “Do not fear. I will not harm you if you do my bidding.” [Show “Figure 1: Yelaya on the Altar”]

[Allow players to react to this sudden unexpected turn.]

“I am a goddess. A thousand years ago there descended upon me the curse of the greater gods, the gods of darkness beyond the borders of light. The mortal in me died; the goddess in me could never die. Here I have lain for so many centuries, to awaken each night at sunset and hold my court as of yore, with specters drawn from the shadows of the past. Men, if you would not view that which will blast your soul forever, get hence quickly! I command you! Go!” The voice becomes imperious, and her slender arm lifts and points.

The Old Switcharoo

At this point, characters need to make a PER -5; if someone doesn't make it, proceed with roll playing. If someone does make it, he notices her Corinthian accent and remembers her as Muriela, Zargheba's dancing girl. Zargheba is a Stygian hired by Thutmekri to look for the Teeth of Gwahlur. He also

remembers a crescent-shaped birthmark on her hip.

If discovered, Muriela begs for their mercy. She doesn't want to go back to Zargheba for he can be very cruel, and may even kill her if he finds she was discovered. Muriela is the BID. Roll for the BID.

[Show "Figure 2: Muriela"]

[Muriela AC: 9 HD: 1 hp: 3 Th: 20 Mv: 12 D: d2 Sz: 6'0" 140lbs]

S: 13 C: 8 D: 15 I: 11 W: 8 Ch: 11 COM: 17 PER: 8

Vitals: Age: 18 Measurements: 36C 24 36 Hair: Brunette Eyes: Dark Blue Skin: Milky White

Muriela has the Allure trait as well as Acting, Dancing, Disguise, Etiquette, and Sex.

She knows the following:

- ▲ Zargheba is out in the yards of the palace watching for the priests. He left via a secret door to the east of the throne. She can show the party the door.
- ▲ He and she came alone
- ▲ They entered through a secret way on the south side of the valley; a broad pool at the cliff's foot. Gwarunga told this information to Zargheba. (Gwarunga is a native of Kush who is in the Keshan Court).
- ▲ He hid her among the trees while looking for this Oracle Chamber. He does not fully trust Gwarunga; he came back and led her here, stripped Yelaya's body and gave Muriela her clothes.
- ▲ "I was to bid the priests to take the Teeth of Gwahlur and give some of them to Thutmekri as a pledge, as he desired, and place the rest in the palace at Keshan. I was to tell them that an awful doom threatened Keshan if they did not agree to Thutmekri's proposals. And, oh, yes, I was to tell them that you were all to be skinned alive immediately."
- ▲ Gorulga is not a party to this swindle. He believes in the gods, and is incorruptible. (Gorulga is High Priest of Keshan)

One bright plan the PCs might have is for her to continue Zargheba's plan to fool the High Priest, only now, she is instructed to say something different, something that might greatly benefit the PCs.

The party very well might decide to look for the Stygian snipe where he is hiding outside of the palace. Muriel will not wish to accompany them, for the High Priest and his acolytes are expected soon. If the party leaves to find Zargheba, run the following:

Twilight has fallen. The great rooms and halls are shadowy and indistinct; copper friezes glint dully through the dusk. You stride like a silent phantom through the secret door, with a sensation of being stared at from the shadowed recesses by invisible ghosts of the past.

Outside, in the brush, not ten paces from the door, you make out a dim face. He seems to be looking straight at you.

You are suddenly aware of something unnatural. Zargheba, you know, is not a tall man. Yet his face is on level with the tallest among you. Was he standing on something? You stiffen, for you see through a slot in the underbrush a glimpse of a stem of the tree under which, apparently, Zargheba is standing. The face is directly in line with that tree. You should see below that face, not the tree trunk,

but Zargheba's body—but there is no body there.

You look on Zargheba's severed head, suspended from the branch of the tree by its own long black hair. A chill descends down your back.

Darkness has come quickly. You see torches approaching the temple.

They had not advanced up the wide, overgrown avenue as Zargheba had expected them to do. Obviously, there is more than one secret way into the valley of Alkmeenon. They are filing up the broad marble steps, holding their torches high. You see Gorulga at the head of the parade, a profile chiseled out of copper, etched in the torch glare. The rest are a combination of guards and acolytes, giant black men from whose skins the torches strike highlights. At the end of the procession, there stalks a huge Negro with an unusually wicked cast of countenance. That is Captain Gwarunga, who Muriela had named as the man who had revealed the secret of the pool entrance to Zargheba. You wonder how deeply the man is in the intrigues of the Stygian.

[Characters know that if they want to listen in on what happens inside, they must quickly move back inside via the secret door, before the range of the torches touch the back wall of the spacious Audience Hall. They have time to slip behind the tapestry to the concealed alcove.]

Gorulga's voice booms eerily and hollowly in the great empty space, framed in sonorous phrases unintelligible to the listener; then the high priest thrusts open the golden door and enters, bowing repeatedly from his waist and behind him the torches sink and rise, showering flakes of flame, as the worshipers imitated their master.

Gorulga is booming forth some kind of chant in an accent unfamiliar to you, and which is probably some invocation in the ancient tongue of Alkmeenon, handed down from generation to generation of high priests. Lifting his head and raising his arms toward the silent form on the dais, Gorulga cries in the deep, rich resonance that is the natural attribute of the Keshani priest: “O great goddess, dweller with the great one of darkness, let thy slave whose head is in the dust beneath thy feet! Speak, great goddess on the holy valley! Thou knowest the paths before us; the darkness that vexes us is as the light of the midday sun to thee. Shed the radiance of thy wisdom on the paths of thy servants! Tell us, O mouthpiece of the gods: what is their will concerning Thutmekri the Stygian?”

The high-piled burnished mass of hair that catches the torchlight in dull bronze gleams quivering slightly. A gusty sigh rises from the blacks, half in awe, half in fear. Her voice comes plainly to your ears in breathless silence, and it seemed cold, detached, impersonal.

How Muriel responds depends on if her cover was blown earlier, or if the PCs were perhaps fooled by the ruse. If fooled, she relates what Zargheba told her to say as planned:

Take the Teeth of Gwahlur and give a rightful portion of them to Thutmekri as a pledge, as he desired, and place the rest in the palace at Keshia. An awful doom threatens Keshan if you did not agree to Thutmekri's proposals. Skin alive the foreigners immediately.

If the PCs discovered the ruse, and tell her to say something new, read this version:

It is the will of the gods that the Stygian and his Shemitish dogs be driven from Keshan! They are thieves and traitors who plot to rob the gods. Let the Teeth of Gwahlur be placed in the care of the foreigner generals. Let them lead the armies of Keshan. They are the beloved of the gods!

In either case, there is much mumbling concerning the goddess' edict, and in either case, the priests depart, bowing while moving backwards the entire time. They will move with haste to the location of the Teeth of Gwahlur guided by the directions handed down from generation to generation of priests. It is a simple plan for the PCs to just follow the priests to the location.

Gwarunga Lingers

But a fly in the ointment exists when re-entering the Audience Hall. By the time the PCs move around from their place of hiding, Gwarunga has Muriela by the throat to the left of the throne.

The torches of the priests have vanished from the great hall outside—but the palace is not empty of their ilk: Gwarunga of the Royal Court and some of his guards remain. His wicked features are convulsed with fury, and he grasps the terrified Muriela by the throat, choking her efforts to scream and plead, shaking her brutally.

“Traitoress!” Between his thick red lips his voice hisses like a cobra. “What game are you playing? Did not Zargheba tell you what to say? Aye, Thutmekri told me! Are you betraying your master, or is he betraying his friends through you? Slut! I'll twist off your false head!”

The characters will most likely attack him and his guards. If Gwarunga is near death, he will feign dying, and re-emerge as a player in the final scene. The only ways he will not, is if a critical hit makes it impossible (like a severed head or major limb), or if characters check his fallen body specifically to see if he is alive and then slay him.

[Gwarunga (AC:6 HD:10 hp:80 Mv:15 Th:7 D:d6+5/d6+5 SA: stunned d3 rounds on a 16+ attack roll SD: Sz: M XP:4000)] He uses a spear and is a master with such which earns him +3/+3.

S: 18/51 C: 17 D: 17 I: 14 W: 10 Ch: 12 COM: 13 PER: 11

[6 Guards (AC:8 HD:4 hp:30 Mv:12 Th:13 D:d6+3 SA: SD: Sz: M XP:650)]

When the battle is over, have all PCs make a PER check to notice that Muriela's headpiece is gone. Muriela, moves her hands to her head, and with a look of surprise, states that it must have fallen off in the Oracle Room. When she returns to the Oracle Room, PCs hear a scream and muffled cry.

The Ol' d Switcharoo Two

When returning to the Oracle Room, the goddess has returned to the dais! And Muriela is gone!

The ancient keepers of Bit-Yakin have abducted Muriela via a secret door to the west of the dais in the Oracle Room. Finding the secret door takes a typical check. If they fail to find it, warn them that the High Priest's trail to the Teeth of Gwahlur grows colder by the minute.

If they find the door, read the following:

You see nothing. You hear nothing. A dozen steps down, the stair ends in a narrow corridor which runs straight away into the gloom.

You stare at the paintings which frescoes the walls, half visible in the dim light which filters down from above. The art is unmistakably Pelishti; you have seen frescoes of identical characteristics on the walls of Asgalun. But the scenes depicted have no connection with anything Pelishti, except for one human figure, frequently recurrent: a lean, white-bearded old man whose racial characteristics are unmistakable. They seem to represent various sections of the palace above. Several scenes show a chamber you recognize as the Oracle Room with the figure of Yelaya stretched upon the ivory dais and huge black men kneeling before it. And there behind the wall, in the niche, lurks the ancient Pelishti. And there are other figures, too—figures that move through the deserted palace, did the bidding of the Pelishti, and drug unnamable things out of the subterranean river.

Suddenly you hear a creak of rusty iron, like a lever scraping in its slot.

[PCs must make a DEX check; failure indicates 10d10 (and potentially a system shock or die if 50% of hp was lost.)]

[If the trap was avoided, read the following:]

A huge block of stone drops on the spot you had just quitted. An instant's slower thought or action and it would have crushed you like an ant. That way is now blocked. You turn and hurry back up toward the stair and the Oracle Room. As you set foot on the first step, the light is blotted out, and above you the marble door rushes shut with a resounding reverberation.

Characters will have to pass a conventional Open Doors Check to re-enter the Oracle Room.

If Gwarunga's feign death worked, when they emerge, the chamber is empty, and so is the dais. Yelaya has again vanished! He has taken her body and contrived a plan to get the Teeth.

Otherwise, when they emerge, Yelaya's body is there as expected. In this case, the servants of Bin-Yakin must have slammed the door on them.

Part 5: The Priests Procession

When the characters finally decide to chase the priests:

The trail leads away from the palace, through masses of exotic-scented shrubbery where great pale blossoms spread their shimmering petals, through verdant, tangled bush that shower blooms at the touch, until you come at last to a great mass of rock that juts like a titan's castle out from the cliffs at a point closest to the palace, which, however, is almost hidden from view by vine-interlaced trees. Evidently that babbling priest in Keshia had been mistaken when he said the Teeth were hidden in the palace. This trail has led you away from the place where Muriela had disappeared, but a belief is growing in you that each part of the valley is connected with that palace by subterranean passages.

You scrutinize the great jut of rock which stands out in bold relief in the moonlight. It is covered with strange, grotesque carvings, depicting men and animals, and half-bestial creatures that might have been gods or devils. The style of art differs so strikingly from that of the rest of the valley, that you wonder if it did not represent a different era and race, and is itself a relic of an age lost and forgotten at whatever immeasurably distant date the people of Alkmeenon had found and entered the haunted valley.

A great door stands open in the sheer curtain of the cliff, and a gigantic dragon's head is carved about it so that the open door is like the dragon's gaping mouth. The door itself is of carven bronze and looks to weight several tons. There is no lock that you can see, but a series of bolts showing along the edge of the massive portal as it stands open, tell you that there is some system of locking and unlocking—a system doubtless known only to the priests of Keshan.

The tunnel debouches into a wide room before the moonlight plays out, an empty cavern of no great dimensions, but with a lofty, vaulted roof, glowing with a phosphorescent encrustation, which, as you know, is a common phenomenon in this part of the world. It makes a ghostly half-light, in which you are able to see a bestial image squatting on a shrine, and the black mouths of six or seven tunnels leading off from the chamber. Down the widest of these—one directly behind the squat image which looks toward the outer opening—you catch the gleam of torches wavering.

Presently you peer into a larger cavern than the one you had just left. There is no phosphorus here, but the light of the torches fall on a larger altar and a more obscene and repulsive god squats toad-like upon it. Before this repugnant deity, Gorulga and his ten acolytes kneel and beat their heads upon the ground, while changing monotonously. You realize why their progress has been so slow. Evidently, approaching the sacred crypt of the Teeth is a complicated and elaborate ritual.

The priests rise and continue their journey. Emerging into a cavern of huge proportions, about whose upward curving walls galley-like ledges march in tiers, they begin their worship anew before an altar which is larger, and a god which is more disgusting than any encountered thus far.

You crouch in the black mouth of the tunnel, staring at the walls reflecting the lurid glow of the torches. You see a carven stone stair winding up from tier to tier of the galleries; the roof is lost in darkness.

Have characters make a Listen Check. If successful, they hear a crying and sobbing sound if Muriela is not with them.

You make your way up a stone stair, following the sounds of a girl's sobbing. Soon, you are looking again into a chamber hewn out of solid rock, not a natural cavern like the others. The domed roof shines with the phosphorous light, and the walls are covered with arabesques of beaten gold. Near the farther wall on a granite throne, staring forever toward the arched doorway sits the monstrous and obscene Pteor, the god of the Pelishti, wrought in brass, with his exaggerated attributes reflecting the grossness of his cult. And in his lap sprawls a limp white figure. [Show "Figure 3: Pteor the God of the Pelishti"]

From thick bands of gold on the idol's arms, slim gold chains run to smaller bands on Muriela's wrists.

Characters need to make a PER check to notice a green viper before it strikes them.

[Viper (AC: 8 HD:1 hp:3 Mv:12 Th:15 D:1 SA: venom save each round or d4 CON/round for 4 rounds SD: Sz: S XP:320)]

Once Muriela has been saved (if she was not already with them), the PCs once again catch up to the priests.

As you advance, you hear the chanting of the priests, mingled with the sound of rushing waters. The light grows stronger above them as you emerge on a high-pitch gallery of a great cavern and look down on a scene weird and fantastic. Above you, gleams the phosphorescent roof: a hundred feet below you stretches the smooth floor of the cavern. On the far side this floor is cut by a deep, narrow stream brimming its rocky channel. Rushing out of impenetrable gloom, it swirls across the cavern and is lost again in darkness. The visible surface reflects the radiance above; the dark seething waters glint as if flecked with living jewels, frosty blue, lurid red, shimmering green, an ever-changing iridescence.

You and your companions stand upon on one of the galley-like ledges that bands the curve of the lofty wall, and from this ledge a natural bridge of stone soars in a breath-taking arch over the vast gulf of the cavern to join a much smaller ledge on the opposite side, across the river. Ten feet below it another, broader arch spans the cave. At either end of the carved stair joins the extremities of these flying arches.

[If PCs make a PER check, read the following:]

Your gaze catches a glint of light that is not the lurid phosphorus of the cavern. On that small ledge opposite you, there is an opening in the cave wall through which stars are glinting. A way out!

The priests have reached their destination. There in a sweeping angle of the cavern wall stands a stone altar, but there is no idol upon it. Whether there is one behind it, you cannot ascertain, because some trick of the light, or the sweep of the wall, leaves the space behind the altar in total darkness.

The priests strike their torches into holes in the stone floor, forming a semicircle of fire in front of the altar at a distance of several yards. Then the priests themselves form a semicircle inside the crescent of torches, and Gorulga, after lifting his arms aloft in invocation, bends to the altar and lays his hands on it. It lifts and tilts backward on its hinter edge, like the lid of a chest, revealing a small crypt. Extending a long arm into the recess, Gorulga brings up a small brass chest. Lowering the altar back into place, he sets the chest on it, and throws back the lid. It seems as if the action releases a blaze of living fire which throbs and quivers about the open chest.

If Gwarunga is still alive continue with the following. If not, skip down to "The Guardians Appear."

If Gwarunga's feign death worked, he has followed the PCs and priests, carrying Yelaya's body with him, holding it aloft, and doing his best to imitate her voice (he is helped by the echo in the cavern).

An inhuman voice booms out high above them. You start violently and the chanting breaks off as the kneeling blacks fling up their heads. They freeze on their knees, their faces turned upward with a ghastly blue hue in the sudden glare of a weird light that bursts blindingly up near the lofty roof and then burns with a throbbing glow. A cry goes up from the High Priest, echoed shudderingly by his acolytes. In the flash, a slim white figure was briefly disclosed to you, standing upright in a sheen of silk and a glint of jewel-cruled gold. Then the blaze smolders to a throbbing, pulsing luminosity in which nothing is distinct and that slim shape is but a shimmering blur of ivory.

"Yelaya!" screams Gorulga, his brown features ashen. "Why have you followed us? What is your pleasure?"

"Woe to the unbelievers! Woe to the false children of Keshia! Doom to them which deny their deity!"

A cry of horror goes up from the priests. Gorulga looks like a shocked vulture in the glare of the torches. "I do not understand!" he stammers. "We are faithful. In the chamber of the Oracle you told us--"

"Do not heed what you heard in the chamber of the Oracle!" rolled that terrible voice, multiplied until it was as though a myriad voices thundering and muttering the same warning. "Beware of false prophets and false gods! A demon in my guise spoke to you in the palace, giving false prophecy. Now harken and obey, for only I am the true goddess, and I give you one chance to save yourselves from doom! Take the Teeth of Gwahlur from the crypt where they were placed so long ago. Alkmeenon is no longer holy, because it has been desecrated by blasphemers. Give the Teeth of Gwahlur into the hands of Thutmekri, the Stygian to place in the sanctuary of Dagon and Derketo. Only this can save Keshan from the doom the demons of the night have plotted. Take the Teeth of Gwahlur and go: return instantly to Keshia: there give the jewels to Thutmekri, and seize the foreign devils and flay them alive in the great square."

[What happens next, will not at first be understood by the PCs. The spirit of Yelaya, angered beyond reason at the defilement of her body, enters her body. She will assume her full power to slay the infidels, especially Gwarunga.]

Now, a flash of brilliance illuminates the feminine figure of Yelaya, and she plummets off the precipice and down the 100' or more to the river below.

Part 6: The Guardians Appear

You are aware that a new element has entered into the light of the torches. Darkness steals around the altar except for that glowing spot of evil radiance cast by the Teeth of Gwahlur. Slowly figures become visible, like shapes growing out of the night and silence.

At first they seem like gray stone statues, those motionless shapes, hairy, man-like, yet hideously human; but their eyes are alive, cold sparks of gray icy fire. Gorulga screams and falls backward, throwing up his long arms in a gesture of frenzied horror.

A long arm of one of Bit-Yakin's servants shoots across the altar and a misshapen hand locks on to one of the black priest's throat. Screaming and fighting, the priest is dragged back across the altar; a hammer-like fist smashes down, and his cries are stilled. Limp and broken he sags across the altar, his brains oozing from his crushed skull. And then the servants of Bit-Yakin surge like a bursting flood from Hell on the black priests who stand like horror-blasted images. Then there is slaughter, grim and appalling.

You see men lifted bodily and their heads cracked open against the stone altar. You see a flaming torch, grasped in a monstrous hand, thrust inexorably down the gullet of an agonized wretch who writhes in vain against the arms that pinion him. You see a man torn in two pieces, as one might tear a chicken, and the bloody fragments hurled clear across the cavern.

The PCs can either attempt to take the Teeth for themselves, fighting Bit-Yakin's servants (and possibly avoiding the wrath of the goddess), along the way, or they can make for the opening to the outside while "the gettin's good"). In either case, they will need to cross the upper bridge before they can escape. It is suggested that they have a final encounter either with the goddess' fist, or a servant or two on the bridge. If they hold the Teeth, make sure they hold on to them during the battle, lest they fall to the river below.

If Gwarunga is did not die in the palace and he attempted to impersonate the goddess Yelaya, read the following:

The ground begins to rumble. You realize with horror that the cause of the shaking ground is that the body of the goddess Yelaya, which had earlier plummeted to the river below, has grown. She has reached her full power. Her form now is colossal, towering over the small combatants. Her feet straddle the river, and the bridge upon which the battle is ensuing comes up only to her midsection. She smiles at the drama being played out beneath her.

Yelaya's gaze now rests on the gallery above, and her hand shoots out retrieving a screaming writhing form that you recognize as Gwarunga. Her voice, though feminine and sultry, booms and echoes across the spacious cavern, "You have blasphemed me, using my body and imitating a goddess for your personal gain. Goodbye." With this she takes her free hand and severs his head off with her thumbnail, sending a fountain of blood up and over her hand. The crimson cataract falls to the river below, followed by Gwarunga's lifeless body.

She then turns her attention to the tiny skirmish at her waist. Reaching down she picks two combatants, and lifts them to her smiling face. Their cries are cut short as she squeezes them until there is an awful cracking and crunching sound, and their eyes pop from their skulls. She drops them simultaneously. They follow Gwarunga's body to the river below.

There are now 19 other guards and priests besides Gorulga. Yelaya will hand pick (pun intended) two each round to destroy. Be sure to assign Gorulga a number when randomly rolling who she chooses.

His death could affect the outcome. Any guards and priests not caught up in melee with one of the fifteen Servants, will run back into the tunnels including Gorulga. When PCs first fight a servant of Bit-Yakin, read the following description:

It is no ape, neither is it a man. It is some shambling horror spawned in the mysterious, nameless jungles of the south, where strange life teems in the reeking rot without the dominance of man, and drums thunder in temples that had never known the tread of a human foot.

[Sasquatch (15) (AC:6 HD:6+4 hp:52 Mv:15 Th:11 D:d8/d8 SA: squeeze/rend SD: Sz:8' XP:420) If both claws hit or a natural 20 is rolled, then the victim is either squeezed for double damage (before the Crit Table roll) or rended (save vs death or die—if the character saves then he instead takes 2d8 damage)]

Part 7: The Escape

Two routes of escape present themselves to the PCs:

Escape by the opening in the wall

If the PCs are able to avoid dying by either the goddess and/or the Servants of Bit-Yakin, and are able to make it across the upper bridge to the opening they saw, they can make a quick escape, perhaps with Muriela and the Teeth of Gwahlur in tow.

Escape by backtracking

It may occur to the PCs to escape by backtracking all the way to the Dragon Door opening and attempting to escape via the pool that Muriela mentioned. This will work, but they will have to deal with the Servants pursuing them along the way. The servants know all the shortcuts and PC will have to deal with any that they did not kill in the melee by the time they reach the outskirts of the City of Alkmeenon. The goddess will not pursue the party outside of the expansive cavern. If the PCs meet Gorulga, he may strike a temporary alliance with the PCs. If they have the Teeth, they could parlay for any help he might give them (he does have Raise Dead after all!)

Part 8: Epilogue

If they manage to leave with the Teeth of Gwahlur, they will find that they, indeed, are valuable. In total, 32 Teeth of Gwahlur are in the chest. Each could buy a small house stocked with 10 servants. Perhaps the PCs are ready to buy a kingdom. Perhaps the Teeth will simply have been stolen or lost between adventures. But one thing is for sure, if the PCs decide to slowly spend the Teeth over a few weeks or more, something that valuable will always be a source of jealousy....

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:

- Most Damage in a single blow/spell
- Coolest Critical Hit by a PC

- Weirdest/Funniest Happening
- Scribe (one player must write all notes including monsters killed and treasure gained)
- BID if she is alive and relatively unharmed
- Best Idea

Cast of Characters

This adventure has several names that can become confusing. Here is a list of them to help:

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Keshan | City of Blacks where you seek the Teeth of Gwahlur |
| Thutmekri | Ambassador of Zembabwei, but a Stygian by race |
| Gorulga | High Priest of Keshan |
| Alkmeenon | Ancient Holy city near Keshan |
| Yelaya | Last Ruler of Alkmeenon |
| Bit-Yakin | Wandering Aesthetic who took refuge in Alkmeenon |
| Zargheba | Stygian also looking for the Teeth, hired by Thutmekri |
| Gwarunga | Native who is in the Keshan Court |
| Muriela | Dancing Girl of Zargheba's |

Gwarunga, 10th Level Warrior

AC:5 (skins and DEX)

HD: 10 hp: 103

Mv: 15

Thac0: 5

#AT: 3

D: d6+7/d6+7/d6+7

SA: expert, specialized and master with the spear;
stunned d3 rounds on a 16+ attack roll
can use one attack to Trip opponent with spear as per
"Conan Special Combat Moves"; this attack
does NOT provoke an AofO and he can add his
ST modifier (+2) to the opposed roll

SD:

Sz: M 6'4"

XP:4000

He uses a spear and is a master with such which earns him +3/+3. Additionally, his spear point is a +1 magical weapon.

S: 18/51 (+2/+3) C: 17 D: 17 I: 14 W: 10 Ch: 12 COM: 13 PER: 11

Gorulga 10th Level High Priest of Derketa

Primary Sphere: Necromantic

AC: 7 (skins and shield)

HD: 10 hp: 73

Mv: 15

Thac0: 13

#AT: 3/2

D: d6+5

SA: spells; expert and specialized with the axe

SD: spells

Sz: M 6'1"

XP: 4000

He uses an Axe +2.

S: 17 (+1/+1) C: 15 D: 12 I: 14 W: 17 Ch: 14 COM: 10 PER: 14

| <u>First Tier 6</u> | <u>Second Tier 5</u> | <u>Third Tier 4</u> | <u>Fourth Tier 4</u> | <u>Fifth Tier 3</u> |
|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Bless | Augury | Dispel Magic | Neutralize Poison | CauseCW |
| CauseLW | CauseMW | Inflict Injury | Recitation | Raise Dead |
| Prot from Good | Slow Poison | Magic Vestment | CauseSW | Atonement |
| Sanctuary | Aid | Prayer | CureSW | |
| Prot from Evil | Hold Person | | | |

***Bold** spells are Necromantic and thus do not cause Gorulga the additional -1 CON check penalty.

Figure 0: The World Map Keshan



Figure 1: Yelaya on the Altar



Figure 2: Muriela



Figure 3: Pteor the God of the Pelishti

