



Shadows in the Moonlight

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: 3-4

Adventure Reputation, 5 Turan (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 are survivors of a great battle. They come upon the leader of their foes, Shah Amarath who is re-capturing a runaway girl. Continuing to run for their lives, the party makes for an island on the Vilayet Sea. Here they find mysterious ruins with an ancient past. The party will also encounter a band of pirates toward the end of their adventure.

World Map

After the party has seen the iron statues on the island, you can show players Figure 0: World Map—Turan and the Vilayet Sea and let them know this is where they are 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: From Swamp to Sea

You are in the employ of the Turanian King Yildiz, and are based around the steppes west of the Vilayet Sea. You and your 5,000 comrades, attempt to control the kozaki, a ruthless band of desert riders which harry Yildiz's borders. Uniting under a despot named Shah Amurath, the kozaki have made formidable ground again. Amurath lures your band deep out of Turanian territory, then cuts you down in a bloody battle by the river Ilbars. Amurath's force of 15,000 scatters to the four winds those lucky enough to not be slaughtered in the first clash of steel and flesh.

You quickly round up old friends lucky enough to be at the right place at the right time, for you have survived. Avoiding the large parties of kozaki scouring the steppes to dispatch fugitives such as you has forced you to crawl on your bellies through brambles. You have lain under rocks while the ants gnawed on your flesh, and crouched in the mire up to your mouths, eating muskrats raw. On the fourth day of this existence, you find a small boat making your life a notch less miserable. Gliding quietly to a bank, you hear a low growling voice barking at apparently a pleading begging female, just over the bank's rise.

“No!” she pleads.

“Yes!” His flash of open anger was like a spark struck from flint. “Slut! I should drag you back to Akif at my horse's tail, but I will be merciful and carry you on my saddle bow, for which favor you shall humbly thank me.”

Quietly slipping from boat to bank to hill's crest, you see none other than Shah Amurath, alone, save for the drooping drowning girl at his feet. The slender girl in sandals and girdled tunic, has dark hair falling over her white shoulders. Her eyes were those of a trapped animal, gazing in agonized intensity on the horseman above her. He was tall, slender, but hard as steel. From head to toe he was clad in light, silvered mesh mail that fitted his supple form like a glove. From under the domed-shaped, gold-crested helmet his brown eyes regard her mockingly.

Olivia is the BID. Assuming the party wishes to save her and dispatch the leader of their foes, roll for her favor. Show party “Figure 1: Olivia.”

[Shah Amurath (AC:0 HD: 8 hp:66 Mv:12 Th:8 D:d8+5/d8+5 SA: burning sulfur in eyes SD: Sz: M XP: 780)]

[Olivia AC: 10 HD: 1 hp: 3 Th: 20 Mv: 12 D: d2 Sz: 5'4"]

S: 11 C: 13 D: 10 I: 10 W: 14 Ch: 14 COM: 15 PER: 13

Vitals: Age: 18 Measurements: 32D 24 32 Hair: Dark Brown Eyes: Green

Swimming out to sea is the best chance of avoiding the hunting parties. Basically, if the party does not go to sea, then have them encounter a large force of their enemies. Otherwise, they find their way out to sea. Soon, they spot an island. Fatigued as they are, they decide to paddle towards it.

Part 2: Mysterious Island

Something sweeps into the sunlight, with a whirl of wings: a great parrot which drops onto a leafy branch and sways there, a gleaming image of jade and crimson. It turns its crested head and regards you with glittering eyes of jet.

Abruptly the bird spreads its flaming wings and, soaring from its perch, cries out harshly: “Yagkoolan yok tha, xuthalla!” and, with a screech of horribly human laughter, rushes away through the trees to vanish in the opalescent shadows.

You see a large hill to your left further into the island. To your right a massively tall outcropping juts into the sky.

Choosing the Path to the Large Hill

If party chooses the path to the hill, have characters roll a saving throw vs rods staves wands. If they fail, they take 2D8 because of a huge piece of stone that hurls through the trees! Characters may want to examine the stone and see how heavy it is. The stone is incredibly heavy. It would take 3 very strong men to lift it.

Now out of the thicket, you move swiftly through the thinning trees, until you mount a grassy slope, sparsely treed, and emerge upon a low plateau where the grass grows taller and the trees are few and scattered. And in the midst of that plateau rises a long broad structure of crumbling greenish stone.

You gaze in wonder. No legends name such a building on any island of Vilayet. You approach it warily, seeing that moss and lichen crawls over the stones, and the broken roof gaping to the sky. On all sides lay bits and shards of masonry, half hidden in the waving grass, giving the impression that once many buildings rose there, perhaps a whole town. But now only the long hall-like structure rises against the sky, and its walls lean drunkenly among the crawling vines.

Whatever doors had once guarded its portals has long rotted away. You stand in the broad entrance and stare inside. Sunlight streams in through gaps in the walls and roof, making the interior a dim weave of light and shadow. Grasping your weapons firmly, you enter, with Olivia tiptoeing after you. **[Show party “Figure 2—Ruined Temple.”]**

You stand in a great hall, whose floor is of polished stone, littered with dust and broken bones, which had fallen from the ceiling. Vines, growing between the stones, mask the apertures. The lofty roof, flat and undomed, is upheld by thick columns, marching in rows down the sides of the walls. And in each space between these columns stands a strange figure.

They are statues, apparently of iron, black and shining as if continually polished. They are life-sized, depicting tall, lithely powerful men, with cruel, hawk-like faces. They are naked, and every swell, depression and contour of joint and sinew is represented with incredible realism. But the most lifelike feature is their proud intolerant faces. These features are not cast in the same mold.

Each face possesses its own individual characteristics, though there is a tribal likeness between them all. There is none of the monotonous uniformity of decorative art, in the faces at least.

Characters may want to search around; on a successful roll, they find d6 scattered silver, and a small piece of jewelry (35sp). This area, the characters can surmise, is very defensible. Any intruders could be seen coming up the hill.

Choosing the Path of the Rise

At last you stand on the ultimate pinnacle, your hair stirring in the sea wind. From your feet, the cliffs fall away sheerly three or four hundred feet to a narrow tangle of woodlands bordering the beach. Looking southward, you see the whole island lying like a great oval mirror, its beveled edges sloping down swiftly into a rim of green, except where it breaks in the pitch of the cliffs. As far as you can see, on all sides stretches the blue waters, still, placid, fading into dreamy hazes of distance.

Character should attempt a Perspicacity check to see the sails on the horizon. If they see the sails, it is estimated that the ships would arrive in 5 to 6 hours.

If characters decide to sleep, Olivia has a dreadful dream which she relates upon awakening. Remember they are fatigued and if they should try to stay awake, remind them that they would fight at -3 on combat rolls.

Olivia's Dream

I saw a great hall, whose lofty ceiling was upheld by stone columns marching in even rows along the massive walls. Among these pillars fluttered great green and scarlet parrots, and the hall was thronged with black-skinned, hawk-faced warriors. They were not Negroes. Neither they nor their garments nor weapons resembled anything in the world I know.

They were pressing about one bound to a pillar: a slender white-skinned youth, with a clatter of golden curls about his alabaster brow. His beauty was not altogether human—like the dream of a god chiseled out of living marble.

The black warriors laughed at him, jeered and taunted in a strange tongue. The lithe, naked form writhed beneath their cruel hands. Blood trickled down the ivory thighs to spatter on the polished floor. The screams of the victim echoed through the hall; then lifting his head toward the ceiling and the skies beyond, he cried out a name in an awful voice. A dagger in an ebon hand cut short his cry, and the golden head rolled on the ivory breast.

As if in answer to that desperate cry, there was a rolling thunder as of celestial chariot-wheels, and a figure stood before the slayers, as if materialized out of empty air. The form was of a man, but no mortal man ever wore such an aspect of inhuman beauty. There was an unmistakable resemblance between him and the youth who drooped lifeless in his chains, but the alloy of humanity that softened the godliness of the youth was lacking the features of the stranger, awful and immobile in their beauty.

The blacks shrank back before him, their eyes slits of fire. Lifting a hand, he spoke, and his tones echoed through the silent halls in deep, rich waves of sound. Like men in a trance, the black warriors fell back until they were ranged along the walls in regular lines. Then from the stranger's chiseled lips rang a terrible invocation and command: "Yagkoolan yok tha, xuthalla!"

At the blast of that awful cry, the black figures stiffened and froze. Over their limbs crept a curious rigidity, an unnatural petrification. The stranger touched the limp body of the youth, and the chains fell away from it. He lifted the corpse in his arms; then ere he turned away, his tranquil gaze swept again over the silent rows of ebony figures, and he pointed to the moon, which gleamed in through the casements. And they understood, those tense, waiting statues that had been men...

Olivia begs the party to move if they are resting by the ruins, or if not, to assure her that they will not venture over to the ruins. The party had best listen to her, for Olivia's dream is an accurate account of what happened 1,000s of years ago. Whether she has latent precognitive powers, or whether the spirits conferred this dream upon her is a question the party can speculate. In any case, the ebony figures will attack when the moonlight shines upon them, which is a half hour after the pirates land and ascend the hill. Read the Statues Attack below when appropriate.

The Pirate Confrontation

The pirates drop anchor 5-6 hours after the party arrives on the island. If observed, the characters will see dots of light from torches file from the dark shape that is their boat to the rowboats that bring them to shore. They have foolishly only left 4 pirates on the ship. If the party does not confront them on the beach, then the pirates wend their way through the foliage toward the hill and the ruins.

Party Options

1. Outright Battle

The party has little chance of an outright battle against the pirates, if for no other reason than the pirates have superior numbers.

[Pirates (70): (AC:7 HD:1 hp:8 Mv:12 Th:19 D:d6+1 SA:vdirty trick save vs para or lose next attack from sand in eyes or similar SD: thief skills Sz:6 XP:65)]

2. Mono e Mono Duel

They may opt to challenge the leader in a one-on-one duel as per the Pirate Code. Other party members will be bound and killed if the Pirate Leader wins. If the character wins, he will become the pirate leader and his friends are released.

[Pirate Leader (AC:5 HD:5 hp:30 Mv:12 Th:13 D:d6+3 SA: dirty trick save vs para SD: thief skills Sz:6'8 XP:450)]

“By Ishtar!” bellows a bull-like voice, as a huge figure swaggers forward: a giant, naked to the waist, where his capacious belly is girdled by a wide sash that upholds voluminous silken pantaloons. His head is shaven except for a scalp-lock, his mustache droops over a rat-trap mouth. Green Shemitish slippers with upturned toes are on his feet, a long straight sword in his hand. “I am Sergins of Khrosha!”

3. Sneak Around and Overtake the Ship

Characters may decide to let the pirates ascend to the ruins, and then sneak around and overtake the ship. If so, read The Creature below and run the battle. The pirates will not hear the commotion from the hilltop but the 4 pirates on board will. They will shoot a signal for help after the second round of battle (flaming arrow). The pirate group will arrive 8—12 rounds later. The biggest problem with this

solution is the potential lack of knowledge the characters, even if successful in overtaking the ship, will most likely not know how to sail a large ship.

4. Join the Pirates

They might try to parley with the pirates and try to convince them to allow them to join the group (Charisma and Reaction checks necessary).

The Creatures

When the characters arrive at the beach and after the pirates have ascended to the hill, have the creatures attack.

Out of the shadows of the cliffs moves a monstrous shambling bulk—an anthropomorphic horror, a grotesque travesty of creation. In general outline it is not unlike a man. But its face, limned in the bright moonlight, is bestial, with close-set ears, flaring nostrils, and a great flabby-lipped mouth in which gleamed white tusk-like fangs. It is covered with shaggy grayish hair shot with silver, which shines in the moonlight, and its great misshapen paws hang nearly to the earth. Its bulk is tremendous; as it stands on its short bow legs, its bullet-head rises above that of yours who face it; the sweep of the hairy breast and giant shoulders is breathtaking; the huge arms are like knotted trees. In a flash of fur, another appears moving over the crest of a small dune abutting the forest line. [\[Show Title Page of this adventure\]](#)

[Ancient Ape (2): (AC:6 HD:7 hp:47 Mv:15 Th:11 D:d8/d8/2d6 SA: crush—if both arms hit the damage is instead 2d8X3 SD: regenerates all lost hp by next full moon unless reduced to 0 Sz:8' XP:975)]

The Statues Attack

Read this if the party has allowed the pirates to ascend to the ruins and they are not there.

The night had been split by an awful scream. It came from the ruins. Instantly there follows a mad medley of yells, shrieks and cries of blasphemous agony. Though accompanied by the ringing of steel, the sounds are of massacre rather than battle.

[Statues (10): (AC:4 HD:5 hp:30 Mv:12 Th:14 D:d10 SD: immune to non-damage spells Sz:6' XP:600)]

Part 3: Epilogue

If the party has somehow overcome or avoided the statues, pirates, and ape, and they find themselves on the pirate ship sailing away from the island, give the party two non-weapon proficiencies that are sailing related assuming the characters spend at least a month with the crew. Additionally, the pirates have 2997sp worth of goods on ship that could be sold at ports.

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

Figure 1: Olivia



Figure 2: The Ruined Temple

