



THE SUNDERED VALE

(AN ADVENTURE SET IN R.E.H.'S MYTHIC HYBORIA)

OVERVIEW

The PCs, lost in the desert somewhere between Shem and Stygia, happen upon an oasis tended by **Djedi**, a dark-eyed temptress who warns of a nearby canyon. Among the carved-rock ruins, reminiscent of ancient Petra, stands a palace complex seemingly untouched by the ages. Curious PCs must first contend with 'dragons' (monitor lizards) before meeting the palace's sole occupant, the beautiful **Sosthi**, who claims to be trapped by guardian monsters originally intended for her protection. The monster turns out to be Sosthi herself, a ravenous lamia in disguise. Heroes who survive her machinations--and appetite--may learn of her parasitic relationship with Djedi before leaving the oasis for good.

START

The PCs are several weeks out of Akkharia, a Shemite city. They may have originally been hired on as caravan guards, or forced to flee Akkharia's mudbrick hovels after some intrigue gone wrong. Whatever the reason, raiders struck halfway through their travels, and now they're wandering lost in the desert, their food and water exhausted. Vultures are already circling overhead.

Then, a miracle: in the distance, palm trees dot a series of lush green hills. An oasis!

The trees don't vanish as the PCs trudge closer. They're quite real, and loaded with dates. Springs feed a lake of rippling water. Monkeys can be heard screeching among the palm fronds; baboons, some with crude sacks slung over their shoulders. The baboons are in the process of gathering dates and bringing them to a clearing on the shores of the lake. A large tent has been set up there, spacious as a Hyrkanian yurt. A sun-bronzed woman with long black hair steps out to greet the PCs.

This is Djedi, a rustic beauty who identifies herself as caretaker of the oasis. She seems to be master of the baboon troupe, though an ivory-handled switch hangs from her girdle in case a few get surly. She is quick to offer hospitality, bringing out jars of palm wine and cool spring water, along with platters of dates, dried apricots, and goat cheese (she has pens nearby). Simple fare, but it's ambrosia to the near-starving heroes.

If asked, Djedi explains she trades with the occasional caravans who stop here to refresh. The PCs are welcome to stay as long as they wish. However, she warns of a dangerous landmark close by.

"Just beyond that hill lies a cleft in the earth, cursed since ancient times. The ruins there swarm with dragons, but the real danger is the Palace of Sebkeht. Why it remains standing while stouter buildings crumble I cannot say. Scores of desperate men have come here seeking the palace's treasure vaults, though not a single one has returned after descending into the canyon."

Djedi's 'warning' is actually an attempt to goad PCs into exploring the canyon, though she will not invite suspicion by overdoing it. If the heroes seem content to heed her advice, or spend too much time lounging around the oasis, see **Nighttime Visitor** for possible consequences.

THE CANYON

The hill Djedi indicates affords an excellent view of the canyon. Sheer rock rises a hundred feet on either side, while a broad, shallow river wends down the center. Buildings have been carved out of the canyon walls, with beautifully finished (if wind-worn) facades. Whether these are houses, temples, or tombs is difficult to say.

The gorge widens at one point, as does the river, flowing around a narrow 'island' and the palace complex resting atop it. Minarets of polished lapis dazzle in the sunlight. Chimerical figures cast from bronze, part-human and part-beast, adorn the marble walls like gargoyles. As Djedi mentioned, the building is inexplicably intact, as if the last stone was mortised into place hours ago.

The palace's pristine condition is the result of a hypnotic illusion cast by Sosthi, a lamia dwelling deep within the structure's crypts. In reality, the walls and minarets are crumbling, though the building as a whole still stands.

Sunning themselves near the island and swimming with graceful serpentine motions are a pack of monitor lizards. Though it's difficult to judge scale, the largest appear to be roughly 7-8 feet long--big enough to be dangerous to humans.

Not far from the PCs vantage, steps have been hewn into the rock at a steep angle, allowing access to the canyon bottom.

EXPLORING THE RUINS

Assuming they don't make a beeline for the palace, PCs may opt to explore the ruins carved into the slightly porous rock walls. Most were houses of wealthy families dwelling in the city-canyon, though a few were devoted to craftsmen and temples. Almost all are empty after having been looted over the ages. The interiors can be as elaborate as you wish, but since the structures had to be hewn from stone, floorplans tend to be on the small side.

Unless you are intending to run a 'dungeon-crawl' it's not recommended to use all the encounters below. Choose a couple or roll randomly (d6):

1) In the dining area of this ruined house sits a desiccated, turbaned corpse, surrounded by a circle of salt. This was formerly a Stygian caravan trader, part of a group that decided to explore the canyon and ran afoul of Sosthi. The trader knew a small amount of sorcery: his circle protected him from the lamia, but not starvation or thirst. Pinned to his robes is a curious looking scarab carved from yellowed bone. This is the **Scarab of Baq**, a talisman against poison which would prove very useful (see **Appendix B**).

2) A former temple. PCs who search diligently and make a Hard (-1) Mind check can discover a hidden compartment at the back of an altar, with several idols of semi-precious stone inside. The idols look valuable to the right collector, but also bestow a curse: the bearer has to pay *double* Hero Points in order to achieve a desired effect, until the idols are returned to their secret niche. The curse won't be obvious until the bearer attempts to use a Hero Point.

3) A hastily-finished mosaic in one chamber of this dwelling shows the destruction of the Palace of Sebkeht, wreathed in ghostly flames. Hieroglyphs in proto-Stygian explain the death of Sebkeht the Third at the hands of his treacherous daughter, Sosthi, but only a PC with ranks in Scholar would have a chance to decipher it (a Demanding Mind check, at -4).

4) This house serves as lair to a 'dragon', a giant monitor lizard over 10' long and weighing almost 400 pounds. This old beast preys on its own kind, so the other monitors avoid the area. On a 1-3 (d6) it's hungry enough to aggressively attack any humans that come close. Otherwise, it will try to avoid conflict unless threatened or cornered.

5) The chambers of this guano-encrusted dwelling are infested with a colony of small brown bats. During the day they sleep, but close to nightfall they'll become active, swarming out to feed. PCs who keep their heads down can avoid danger. Those who insist on flailing at the creatures are subject to multiple bites per round (1 LB damage, stopped by Medium or higher armor) for d6 rounds, or until they leave the dwelling. PCs attacked in this manner will have to make Hard (-1) Strength checks one hour later, to shake off a nasty infection. Failure means they suffer fever and convulsions the next day (-1 to Strength and Agility, plus d6 LB damage if not resting).

6) This large dwelling is haunted. PCs with ranks in Barbarian, Sorcerer, or Priest, or who have the Nose for Magic boon will feel uneasy on stepping inside. The feeling gets stronger the closer they come to the back of the dwelling, near the sleeping area. At night, heavy sighs can be heard echoing from someplace close by, but never pinpointed.

The angry shade of a suicide might decide to manifest, depending on how long the PCs stay in the area. He appears as an exsanguinated corpse with slash-wounds on both wrists. Witnessing the apparition entails a fright check at -2 (see **Appendix C**). The ghost can't actually hurt anyone, beyond scaring them out of their wits.

THE PALACE OF SEBKEHT

Getting to the palace poses some challenges. A stone footbridge used to lead from one bank of the river to the narrow island on which the complex stands, though this has long since collapsed. The fallen stones, however, protrude from the water (the river is only 5' at its deepest point), so it's possible to cross carefully, by climbing over rubble and hopping from stone to stone. Doing so slowly requires an Easy (+1) Agility check. Failure means PCs land in the drink, and have to either scramble up on the rocks or wade for shore.

The monitors, meanwhile, swim towards any PCs who are trying to cross. Several of the largest (1.5 per PC, round up), will attack. The creatures are less active at night, so waiting until darkness to cross won't attract attention unless the PCs dawdle. Creative strategies (like throwing meat in the water as bait) should generally be successful as well.

None of the lizards set foot on the island. Sosthi's supernatural presence repels all wildlife except vermin, so once the PCs arrive they are safe from further attack.

The palace's gates stand wide open, flanked by the chimerical bronze figures glimpsed earlier. Walls of blue-veined marble gleam, and further in an immaculate courtyard of ferns and dwarf palms can be glimpsed. The whole complex is eerily silent, as birds shun the place. Shouts or called greetings will seem to echo indefinitely. Inside the complex proper are chamber after chamber of finely appointed, though empty, rooms: grand halls, reception areas, shrines, slave quarters, guest suites, etc.

As previously noted, all this finery is an illusion. The palace is actually rubble in most places, and the ceiling has long since fallen away. PCs poking around during the day may notice becoming sunburned and thirsty, despite being 'inside.' At night, they may notice the air feeling chill (Moderate Mind checks for either, but only if a player seems skeptical about the nature of the palace).

CRYPT LABYRINTH

Eventually, PCs discover alabaster steps leading down into the palace's sub-chambers. These appear as polished stone vaults with pillars of turquoise and serpentine jade. Torches flicker in silver cressets, providing plenty of light.

In reality, these crypts are covered with cobwebbed dust and crawling with vermin. The torches, however, are real, and kept alight by Sosthi's magic.

Interconnected rooms soon lead to a circular chamber with a domed ceiling and an ornately carved bier at the center. Atop the bier lies a beautiful woman with fair skin and straight black hair (a wig), nude except for a girdle of snakeskin and a pair of golden armlets gracing her slender limbs. Aside from the wig she is completely hairless; even her eyebrows have been shaved smooth.

This is Sosthi. She stirs as soon as anyone approaches the bier. Jet eyes flash in the torchlight as she speaks:

“Are you the ones come at last to free me from this accursed place?”

Sosthi explains she is the daughter of Sebkeht the Third, a powerful sorcerer-king who cast a spell on the palace to protect it, and her, while the surrounding canyon-city fell to invaders. Unfortunately, the spell also keeps her trapped inside: *“No doubt, you saw those monstrous bronze beast-figures adorning the walls; they come to life and force me back if I try to leave.”*

Sosthi pretends to be unaware that centuries have passed since the city fell. Her only concern appears to be getting out of the palace. Perhaps her newfound acquaintances might be able to help by slaying the guardian-statues? She hints that other, lesser heroes have tried before, and failed. If her stunning beauty isn't enough to sway PCs, she offers to reward them with treasures from her father's secret chamber. In fact, she'll give them the loot right now as a show of good faith--because she swears she'll never return to this place, once she leaves.

In truth, Sosthi poisoned her father, Sebkeht the Third, because she feared he would promise her hand in marriage; not to an earthly prince, but a demon. The chain of events afterwards brought about the fall of the canyon-city, and Sosthi, for the sin of patricide, was transformed into a lamia. She maintains the illusion of the palace in order to lure victims. Unlike most lamia, who hunger after child-flesh, Sosthi lusts for the blood of heroes!

If the PCs go along with her promises of treasure, she will lead them deeper into the labyrinth of crypt-chambers. At some point she produces a brass key, inserts it in what appears to be a crevice, and reveals a small, gold-paneled chamber heaped with loot--mostly objects d'art from Acheronian times, and fist-sized gemstones. The treasure is real, not illusory, and while the PCs are hopefully gaping, Sosthi laughs wickedly. With a clap of her hands she douses every torch in the place, plunging the crypts into total darkness.

The lamia then begins a series of hit-and-run attacks from the darkness. Seeing her true form for the first time requires a fright check at -2. She will try to use her *Beguiling Gaze* on any hero thoughtful enough to provide a light source, and her vampiric bite attack to restore any lost LB. At the GM's option, she might also try to lead the PCs into trapped areas of the crypt. Some suggestions:

Covered Spike Pit Trap. Dusty canvas covers an 8' pit. Causes d3 damage from the fall, plus a Hard (-1) Agility check to avoid d6+2 damage from spikes at the bottom (armor counts against the latter).

Falling Statue Trap. Two statues holding halberds with a tripwire in between, balanced so they fall towards each other, blades first. Tough (-2) Agility check to avoid completely, otherwise 2 attacks at +1 for d6H+1 damage. On a successful hit, the PC must then pass a Moderate (0) Strength check or be pinned for d3 rounds afterwards.

Poisoned Cobwebs Trap. The cobwebs are especially thick down this section of hall. Sosthi's illusions make them appear as a haze, perhaps caused by incense smoke. Blundering through the cobwebs triggers an attack by hordes of tiny scarlet spiders nesting inside. Roll a Hard (-1) Strength check to overcome the poison from multiple bites, causing d6 damage d2 rounds later and raising a series of painful welts (-1 to Agility).

Spotting the traps beforehand without a light source is at least a Demanding (-4) Mind check. Otherwise the difficulty is from Moderate (0) to Tough (-2), adding any ranks in Barbarian, Hunter, Thief, or Assassin.

Unless PCs have taken some kind of precaution prior to getting into the labyrinth, like leaving a trail or a series of marks, remembering how to get out requires a Hard (-1) Mind roll. Otherwise, it takes 2d6 turns of wrong-ends to find their way back to the circular chamber.

If PCs do not want to go to the treasure chamber, or refuse to help Sosthi, she will attempt to tag along with them anyway, warning that the bronze guardians will animate and attack if they try to leave the palace. At some point she will use her *Hypnotic Illusion* ability to create a distraction (penalty die on the PCs priority check), transform, and then harangue the party with hit-and-run tactics as described before, casting *Pass Unnoticed* to get away if the cover of darkness isn't available. Anyone directly witnessing Sosthi's transformation from beauty into a demon-thing has to make a fright check at -4.

Even if the PCs escape the palace, Sosthi, if still alive, will pursue them to the oasis at night (see **Nighttime Visitor**).

If/when Sosthi is killed, the illusions covering the palace vanish, revealing the ruin in all its squalor. A mosaic in one of the grand halls, previously hidden by the spell, shows Sosthi in her youth next to a younger girl with similar features, probably a sister. Brushing some dust away will clearly show the girl to be Djedi.

NIGHTTIME VISITOR

The default assumption is that PCs will want to explore the canyon right off. If they spend a significant amount of time lounging around the oasis instead, or if they escape from the palace without killing Sosthi, the lamia will come calling in the dead of night.

Sosthi will use her *Pass Unnoticed* ability to come upon the oasis unawares. If the PCs have set up some kind of watch, she will attempt to pick off sentries first before engaging the rest of the group. She will *not* fight to the death, however, and if wounded enough will attempt to slink back to the palace and recover.

Another option: if the PCs decide to spy on Djedi at night, they might discover her terrible secret. Sosthi comes to her sister's tent in her true form, and after a whispered conversation, cuts a small wound above her breast and lets the blood dribble into a bowl, which Djedi greedily drinks down. An awful symbiosis is revealed: Djedi lures victims to the palace, and Sosthi keeps her eternally young with her enchanted blood. In this manner the two have kept alive over the centuries.

LOOSE ENDS

If the PCs return to the oasis and Djedi finds out they've killed her sister (perhaps by displaying treasure taken from the palace) she flies into a rage and attacks, along with her horde of baboons. No Sosthi means no magic blood, and time will soon be catching up with her. In fact, without Sosthi, Djedi dies in 2d6 days, aging rapidly into a crone and finally a withered corpse. The mournful baboons will nuzzle her remains before bearing her away into the palms . . .



APPENDIX A: CAST OF CHARACTERS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

LARGE BABOON

Attributes

Strength 1
Agility 2
Mind -1
Lifblood: 6

Combat Abilities:

Attack: +2
Damage: d6, canines
Defense: 1
Protection: 0

Djedi's bigger specimens. These are about 45 lbs., covered with olive fur, and have 4" canines. They will defend their mistress with their lives. Treat as toughs for initiative purposes.

SMALL BABOON

Attributes

Strength 0
Agility 1
Mind -1
Lifblood: 3

Combat Abilities:

Attack: 0
Damage: d3, canines (as rabble)
Defense: 0
Protection: 0

Smaller versions (rabble), but just as ferocious and loyal. They will attempt to attack as a *horde* (see Mythic Rulebook, pg. 157), swarming over their intended target and biting.

DJEDI, DESERT BEAUTY WITH A DARK SECRET

Attributes

Strength 0
Agility 0
Mind 0
Appeal 2

Combat Abilities:

Attack: +1
Damage: d6L, ivory switch
Defense: 1
Protection: 0
Lifblood: 6

Djedi stands 5'4" with wavy, blue-black hair and an appealing figure. Her gauzy clothing is somewhat at odds with her sun-bronzed skin. She is Rank 1 in both Noble and Beastmaster careers, and has the Beast-Friend boon.

Though she appears to be in her early 20's, Djedi is in fact centuries old, her youth sustained by her sister's enchanted blood. The youngest daughter of Sebkeht the Third, she was not originally involved in the plot to kill her father, and therefore escaped the curse that transformed Sosthi. Her primary motive is to maintain the symbiosis that keeps her alive; she is both devoted and dependent on her older sister.

MONITOR LIZARD

Attributes

Strength 1
Agility 0
Mind -2
Lifblood: 10

Combat Abilities:

Attack: +2
Damage: d6 + special, see below
Defense: 0
Protection: 0

The "dragons" of the canyon-city, these are the larger, more aggressive types, feisty enough to attack PCs. They are about 7' long, with mottled-looking hides and flicking tongues. Their bite carries a low-grade venom; PCs have to make a Hard (-1) Strength check or their wounds will fester, healing at the "slow" rate vs. normal (1 LB per day). These creatures are excellent swimmers.

GIANT MONITOR LIZARD

Attributes

Strength 3
Agility 1
Mind -2
Lifblood: 20

Combat Abilities:

Attack: +3
Damage: d6H + special, see below
Defense: 0
Protection: d6-3

This beast is over 10' long, with a prominent dorsal fin and beaded gray hide, grown large after years of feeding on its own kind. Its bite carries festering-venom similar to its smaller kin, though the Strength check is Tough (-2).

SOSTHI, ACCURSED LAMIA

Attributes

Strength 3
Agility 1
Mind 2
Appeal 2 / -2

Combat Abilities

Initiative 2
Melee 2
Missile 0
Defense 2

Lifblood: 25
Villain Points: 5
Protection: d6-2 (partial; see below)
Attack: +3, +4 tail slap
Damage: d6 bite (special), d3+3 constriction (special), or d6H tail slap (special).

Boons/Flaws

Alert
Supernatural Creature (Demon)
Attractive
Night Vision
Cravings

Careers

Noble 2
Temptriss 1
Assassin 0
Sorcerer 3

In her true form, Sosthi appears as a beautiful woman with a serpentine body of jet-black scales extending for 7' below her waist. Her 'promotion' from mortal into demoness has granted her a number of powers, especially in the area of illusions.

Sosthi has a suite of physical attacks. Vampiric, she can extend a pair of fangs and bite (usually after employing her *Beguiling Gaze* power). The damage from the attack is transferred to her own LB total, though she cannot exceed her maximum score. Against multiple opponents (up to 3 if adjacent) she can employ a tail-slap. Finally, she can constrict a single target for continuous damage (armor does not count) while still able to use her bite attack and cast spells at other opponents.

Sosthi's scaled armor covers her serpentine body for the most part, and can be bypassed in combat if the attacker takes a Tough (-2) modifier to their roll.

Though she is a Rank 3 Sorcerer, it's simpler in play to have her employ a number of magical powers instead of rolling to cast spells:

**Beguiling Gaze.* Sosthi can lock eyes with a single person and force her will upon him or her. Targets have to make a Mind check, modified by Sosthi's Mind or lose all volition for the round, staring rapt into the depthless pits of her soul.

**Pass Unnoticed.* As per the spell in the Mythic rulebook, pg. 148.

**Hypnotic Illusions.* Sosthi uses these to hide her true form and the decay that has struck the palace of Sebkeht. She can also use illusions in combat, typically to make it appear as if weapons have been transformed into poisonous snakes. Targets must make a Mind check modified by Sosthi's mind, or react accordingly (e.g. throw down their weapons, struggle with the writing serpent in their hands, etc.)

APPENDIX B: THE SCARAB OF BAQ

This item appears as a small scarab, intricately carved from bone and yellowed with age. Once worn, it grants the bearer an advantage die when attempting to resist the effects of poison. If the bearer fails the roll, the scarab takes more direct action: it bites its host and draws out the poison (no damage, but the process is painful). After doing so, the scarab will appear more discolored. Each 'use' in this manner runs the risk of the scarab becoming too full of poison. Roll 2d6; on a result of '4' or less the scarab turns black and crumbles to powder.

APPENDIX C: FRIGHT CHECKS

Fright Checks provide additional gravitas to encounters with the supernatural (especially in fantasy worlds where 'monsters' are not common). For PCs, the main effect of a failed Fright Check is to cause dramatically appropriate hesitation.

A Fright Check entails a Mind roll, + modifiers for how terrifying the encounter is. A PC can add +1 for every rank of Barbarian career possessed. The *Fearless* boon obviates the check.

If failed, the PC automatically loses initiative and takes a penalty die on all actions until they make a successful roll against the object of their fear (e.g. an attack roll, another Mind check, etc.), thereby 'overcoming' their terror. Spending a Hero Point also bolsters courage and allows the Hero to shrug off the effect.

A Calamitous Failure result means the Hero has been badly shaken and freezes for d6 rounds (or retreats, if the player prefers).

APPENDIX D: 'FIGHTING SCHOOLS' IN BOL

The default Barbarians of Lemuria rules assume that certain careers might be useful during fights, and gives some suggestions as to when these could apply. The following are possible 'schools' of fighting associated with various careers, and the combat 'tricks' or 'stunts' that can be used under certain conditions (and with the GM's permission). They are not 'feats' in the D&D sense as anyone with the appropriate career can use them, and they are not meant to be earth-shatteringly powerful. For that kind of action you'll need to spend a Hero Point!

These tricks require precise timing and cannot be used *ad nauseam*. A general rule of thumb is that they can be used once per adventure for each Rank the character has in the appropriate career. Mixing different tricks from different schools is possible if the character has the right background. So, if Slevyas the Surly is a Rank 1 Thief and a Rank 1 Soldier, he may employ stunts from both the Dirty Fighting and Drill schools of combat. It pays to be well-rounded.

Several of these schools make use of the Combat Options on page 67 of the Mythic rulebook.

Savage Style (Barbarians, Hunters)

Blood Rage: When making an All-Out Attack (see pg. 67) you also gain a bonus die on damage.

First Strike: If you have initiative on your opponent *and* are fighting the first round, gain a bonus to attack or damage equal to your highest qualifying rank.

Dirty Fighting (Thieves, Assassins, Sailors/Pirates, Beggars)

Cheap Shot: If you have initiative on an opponent, gain a damage bonus equal to your highest qualifying rank. If you hit, your opponent takes a penalty die on attacks the next round.

Back Stab: When attacking an unaware opponent, gain a bonus die to hit and a damage bonus equal to your highest qualifying Rank.

Drill (Soldiers, Warriors, Mercenaries)

Formation Fighting: If adjacent to an ally, gain a +1 bonus to either attack or Defense, up to +2 for 2 adjacent allies.

Called Shot: Subtract your highest qualifying rank from any difficulty modifier for an unusual attack or maneuver.

Finesse Fighting (Gladiators/Duelists, martial-oriented Nobles)

Riposte: When taking the Full Defense option (see pg. 67) if your opponent *misses*, you can make a counter-attack at the end of the round at -2 to hit.

Precision Strike: Substitute Agility or Mind or Melee score in place of Strength when determining damage for an attack.