



**Playtest Kit v1.1**  
**Playtest Adventure**

# The Red Pit

***“What do I know of cultured ways, the gilt, the craft and the lie?  
I, who was born in a naked land and bred in the open sky.  
The subtle tongue, the sophist guile, they fail when the broadswords sing;  
Rush in and die, dogs — I was a man before I was a king.”***

**– The Road of Kings**

*The hammer falls; with it, the rust-pitted iron manacles that have been the symbol of your enslavement clatter to the ground. The sudden release from their chafing weight elicits a low and dangerous chuckle from the back of your throat — like the cough of a leopard that has caught the scent of its prey.*

*The gap-toothed trustee squints up at you, then over his shoulder at that hulking fool, Nazarus. “Don’t get used to it, swine!” the **Kothian** chief of the trustees bellows. “You’ve done well, aye, and Master Abdibaal rewards those who keep their backs bent and their noses clean. But you’re not free, you hear me? Tomorrow, those go back on.” Grinning, he cracks his whip for emphasis. “Now move, ere I lose my patience with you, slave!”*

*But you don’t move. You stand, shoulders squared, your lungs expanding as you draw in a deep breath of hot, rancid air. The sheer walls of the Red Pit rise above you — an open-air prison that your captors swore would break you. “No man like you can live long as a slave!” they gloated. But what do they know of men like you, men who have trod a thousand blood-mired paths — from the deck of a **Zingaran** galley, heeling in the froth of slaughter, to the dank alleys of the East, where a razor-edged whisper augurs death? A slave? By the gods, you’ve been a slave and more, besides!*

*It has not been easy to get to this moment; you’ve bided your time, swallowed equal measures of anger and pride. You’ve danced to the tune Nazarus and his mangy pack have played, kowtowing to his whip and to their endless jibes, all under the watchful eye of the overseer, Abdibaal, and his swarthy **Pelishtim** mercenaries. You’ve played your part. But no more.*

*Now, it’s your turn to call the tune.*

*With a bellow of maniacal fury, you snatch the gap-toothed trustee by his throat. Corded muscle writhes along your blade-scarred forearm as you haul him aloft; iron fingers convulse, crushing the life out of him. Spitting in contempt, you hurl his scrawny corpse at his mates before whirling to face the slaves at your back — men you have toiled alongside, starved with, and bled with. “Brothers of the chain!” you roar. “Would you lick the boots of those who would grind you into dust... or would you be free men? Aye, rise up and slay the dogs!”*

*And with a shout that shakes the foundations of heaven, the gods of blood and slaughter descend upon the Red Pit to once more claim their own...*

Enslaved and condemned to die in **Koth’s** most infamous quarry, our heroes must overpower their jailers, evade a withering hail of arrows, and defeat a vicious man-eating lizard as they scale the Red Pit’s sheer walls. In the race to freedom — who will be the first to die?

A demonstration scenario for 4-6 adventurers using the 2d20 rules for Robert E. Howard’s **CONAN: Adventures in an Age Undreamed**.

## PROLOGUE

On the western marches of **Koth**, in the bleak hills near the border with **Argos** and **Ophir**, lies an ugly scar in the earth that men call the Red Pit. From its depths, slaves hack blocks of fine rose-hued limestone from the ground — stone ultimately bound for the palaces and villas of **Khorshemish**. The slaves who are sent here rarely last a season; they live at the whim of the elements, toiling beneath the blazing sun by day and huddling together in their rags for warmth by night. Despite all this, some still have dreams — dreams of freedom — though most dream only of the rich red froth of vengeance.

For the purposes of this scenario, the Player Characters (PCs) begin as slaves, naked but for a twist of cloth around their loins and armed with only their wits, their fists, and a handful of makeshift weapons. Regardless of their origins, they face the same fate: to scrape and scabble at the rock until Death comes for them.

Unless they can wrest their freedom from the Master of the Pit.

That Master is a brutal man called ABDIBAAL, a eunuch deep in the confidence of the Kothian king, *Strabonus*; he is as merciless and intractable as *his* master, though the fat-bellied eunuch has forgotten more about intrigue than *Strabonus* will ever know. A cadre of his countrymen, *PELISHTIM* MERCENARIES from western *Shem*, prowls the edges of the Red Pit, ever watchful. But inside the quarry, Abdibaal employs a gang of THUGGISH TRUSTEES to keep the other slaves in line. NAZARUS THE WHIP is their chief. The last member of Abdibaal's retinue is a NAMELESS STYGIAN, tall and gaunt, whose sole task is to care for the eunuch's prized pet: a 300-pound carnivorous lizard he keeps caged near the edge of the Pit.

## SYNOPSIS

The adventure begins as the slaves' workday draws to a close. The brazen horn has sounded and Abdibaal orders Nazarus and his Trustees to tally how much stone each slave grubbed forth, collect their tools, and mete out punishment to those who missed their quota. Only after will they receive their meagre ration of hard bread, water, and a wooden bowl of herb stew.

A lucky few — the PCs among them — who have demonstrated a willingness to work and who have “kept their noses clean” have their irons struck off for the night ... a luxury calculated to make the balance of the slaves work that much harder. For the moment, however, our heroes' legs are free, and they stand closer to the sweet taste of freedom than they have in months.

The players start with only their fists against Nazarus' whip and the other Trustees' truncheons; however, should the party sweep aside the Trustees and their chief, they might secure mining tools to wield in their defence or even spur a general slave uprising. No matter how they begin, their revolt does not pass unnoticed. Abdibaal astride his horse, up at the lip of the mine, orders his archers to target the players along with any other slaves foolish enough to join them. Through this hail of arrows, the adventurers must rush to the base of the only scalable cliff, atop which the Master of the Pit, his guards, his archers, and his monstrous pet lizard await.

Once they reach the relative safety at the foot of the Pit wall, they must gather their strength and make for the surface. Impetuous adventurers may choose to scale the face of this cliff barehanded, with nothing but raw courage and *Mitra's* blessing between themselves and the archers' deadly shafts. Craftier characters might release the Pit's massive stone-hauling basket, letting it plummet to the quarry floor to provide a rope straight to the surface. Most likely, the party scurries up twin rope ladders hanging from a rocky outcropping high on the wall, a formation called the Eunuch's Ear.

As the players ascend from the Red Pit to the Eunuch's Ear, Abdibaal sits not idle. He exhorts his archers to maintain their barrage; if it comes to it, he lowers a few of his mailed *Pelishtim* to the Eunuch's Ear with orders to cut the ladders before the PCs reach the outcrop's surface. Should the player's take and hold the Ear, the remaining mercenaries rain down havoc with their broad-bladed spears. Finally, if all else fails, Abdibaal orders the grim and silent *Stygian* to unleash a Mighty A'Ghama. Maddened by the reek of spilled blood, the lizard-beast claws its way into the Red Pit, bent on slaking its hellish appetite.

## AND SO IT BEGINS

Our heroes' goal is simple: fight tooth and nail to reach the surface and gain their freedom. There are no intrigues, no ulterior motives; this first tale is pure action, a bloody, bare-knuckled contest for survival — will you die a slave under the brutal summer sun or break out and triumph as a free man? The goal of the NPCs is equally simple: stop the player characters and restore the status quo to the Red Pit. The Master, Abdibaal, escapes at the end of this chapter, for he features as the villain in a larger cycle of tales.

# THE LAY OF THE LAND

The action begins in ZONE 1, with a scrawny, gap-toothed Trustee hammering an iron awl-punch through the rivet securing the PCs pitted leg manacles . . . and granting them a slim chance of escape. A second Trustee waits here as well, holding a woven basket to take the pitted iron chains.

Adjacent to the PCs, in ZONE 4, nearly 120 slaves stand and watch, shuffling and clanking. In ZONE 2, Nazarus sits at a massive table laden with baskets of bread and a huge pottery urn of still-warm herb stew. He oils his whip, while his merry band of thugs (nine additional Trustees) stands by and wagers their night's ration of bread on which shirker will next suffer their chief's wrath.

Two additional medium zones — ZONE 3 and ZONE 5— stand between the PCs and the scalable eastern wall of the Pit, marked ZONE 6.

[Begin Sidebar Here]

## Begin in the Middle

Much of Robert E. Howard's work opened using a literary technique known as *in medias res* — “begin in the middle” — which created explosive and dynamic openings, then a brief pause to fill the reader in on the backstory. For GMs, this means starting the adventure as close to the point of no return as possible. The tale of the Red Pit commences just after one of the Trustees strikes the chains off the ankles of the PCs. However, GMs are encouraged to find their *own* point of no return, if they so desire. Maybe before the chains come off, or after Nazarus begins to ply his whip against those slaves who have offended him?

[End Sidebar Here]

Forty feet up the eastern wall juts an outcropping called the Eunuch's Ear (ZONE 7). Here Nazarus and his Trustee dogs sleep, in a cave that reeks of sweat and rancid meat. There's shelter beneath the outcropping from any archers on the surface (ZONE 9). Two rope ladders lead up from the quarry floor to the top of the Eunuch's Ear.

Adjacent to this outcropping, just off its southern edge, hangs the giant stone-hauling basket (ZONE 8). This triple-woven hopper is suspended from a cable-thick rope that runs to the surface, where its control mechanism and counter-weight are located.

Finally, ZONE 9 is the surface of the Red Pit. In it stand the twelve *Pelishtim* mercenaries — three archers and eight spearmen and their captain — that make up Abdibaal's personal guard. The Master of the Pit perches here, as well, his thick bulk astride a chestnut mare. His pet, a Mighty A'Ghama, waits in its iron cage: a nightmarish lizard like something dredged from the bowels of the *River Styx*, slaving and agitated. A gaunt *Stygian* in the ragged robes of a former priest tends the beast.

Once the fighting breaks out, the scenario offers two paths to reach the cliff face. The first (ZONE 5) leads through their fellow slaves and across a field of scree — a detritus of limestone chips hacked from larger blocks. On the one hand, this scree-field proves difficult and hazardous to navigate; on the other, it provides a near limitless supply of fist-sized stones for throwing.

The second route (ZONE 4) winds among the many rough five-foot by five-foot limestone blocks recently extracted from the quarry walls. These provide cover, but slow movement and may prolong the players' exposures to ranged attacks.

Consider kicking off the action by reading or paraphrasing the following:

[Begin Read Aloud Text Here]

The last hammer falls with a metallic chink; the sweat-crusting iron rivet pops free, and the cuff of the slave manacle drops away. This is your reward for diligence, for being meek and not causing trouble: a night free from the chains that have plagued you since your enemies tossed you into this *Mitra*-forsaken quarry.

They all watch: the other slaves, clutching their uncollected tools at your back; Nazarus from behind the baskets of hard bread and stew buckets on the oaken table before you; his sneering thugs. Even that pig-eyed fool, Abdibaal, watches, perched like a fat vulture at the lip of the Red Pit and surrounded by eight of his mail-clad hirelings, *Pelishtim* mercenaries from western *Shem*. They all expect the meek posturing of broken men. But no more.

You can taste your freedom.

It lies beyond scattered stone blocks, across a field of fist-sized limestone scraps, and up a sheer cliff

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to the surface. From the middle of the cliff juts the stone outcrop where Nazarus and his cronies climb each night to sleep. They call it the Eunuch's Ear and twin rope ladders dangle off it enticingly.

Yes. Freedom lies at the edge of your grasp. Now, it's time these dogs know you for what you truly are — not some slowly rotting slaves on death's threshold, but predators hewn from whalebone and gristle . . .

[End Read Aloud Text Here]

[Begin Sidebar Here]

#### **Don't' Wanna be a slave?**

If you don't like the idea of the player characters starting as slaves, have them instead in the bottom of the pit having been captured by slavers and about to have their manacles put on. Remember this is not supposed to be the beginning of a campaign but a structured playtest to get feedback on the system.

[End Sidebar Here]

**The GM should start the adventure with 2 x the number of players in Threat Points. So if there are 4 players he should start with 8 Threat.**

## **Zone 1 — Set My People Free**

The PCs are present along with two Thuggish Trustees (*see Zone 1 — Adversaries, below, for additional details*). While the terrain here is clear — with no outstanding obstacles and no cover — our heroes cannot leave this Zone without either (1) killing or incapacitating the two Thuggish Trustees, or (2) Persuading or Commanding the slaves of Zone 3 to let them pass.

The summer sun is low in the west, creating pools of shadow extending from the western wall of the Pit, across Zone 1 to roughly the outer edge of Zone 2. The shadows create a Challenging D2 Observation (Senses check for NPC's) test for anyone trying to distinguish the PCs from among the other slaves at distances beyond Medium.

### **Zone 1 — Action**

Our heroes' attempt to escape from the Red Pit starts when they raise their hands against the two Trustee Thugs in this Zone. These two — along with Nazarus and their nine cronies in Zone 2 — must eventually be incapacitated or killed. The only question is how soon Nazarus responds to the adventurers' opening bid to escape.

One of the Thuggish Trustees in Zone 1 holds a SPOIL BASKET containing the players' recently removed IRON MANACLES. If recovered, the spoil basket may be used as a makeshift shield. The other Thuggish Trustee holds a small HAMMER and an AWL-PUNCH, which together with the iron manacles make passable weapons if recovered.

Iron Manacles 1Handed, 1+[cd]3, Reach

Spoil Basket 1 handed, [CD]3, Knockdown, Fragile, Shield 1

*Fragile* (If the Soak rolls any '6' effects, the shield is destroyed)

*Knockback* (Athletics test if one or more 6s are rolled; the difficulty is the number of 6s rolled)

*Shield 1* (Gain 1 Soak on all locations, and can attempt to Parry ranged attacks)

Hammer Unbalanced, 1+[cd]4, Vicious 1

*Unbalanced* (Use one-handed if Strength 9 or higher, two-handed if strength 8 or less)

Awl Punch: 1 handed 1+[cd]2 weapon, Unforgiving 1 (If a character takes a Standard Action 'Exploit weakness' in a turn then attacks on the second turn, the Awl punch gets the Vicious 1 and Armour Piercing 1 qualities)

*Vicious 1* (when a character rolls a '6' effect it counts as if 1 damage had been rolled)

*Armour Piercing 1* (when a character rolls a '6' effect, count any Soak rolled by target's armour as one less)

**See final page of adventure for summary of weapons and weapon effects**

If the players eliminate the two Trustees in Zone 1 during the first combat round, the shock of their revolt affects Nazarus and his other Trustees exactly as if the PCs had staged an ambush. Allow the heroes an opposed roll of their leader's Stealth versus Nazarus' Senses (10 with Focus 1). If it succeeds, players receive a bonus d20 to one skill test during their next turn. If the roll fails, Nazarus is too quick off the mark and GMs may spend 1 Threat to advance the Trustees to the top of the initiative order for the second turn.

**Difficulties are noted in the text as Average D1, Challenging D2, Daunting D3, Dire D4 and so on. D1 means it requires 1 success, D2 – two successes and so on**

Without leaving Zone 1, the adventurers may make a Daunting D3 Persuade or Command test to convince the other slaves to join them in revolt. Unless the PCs succeed on this test or a related test, the slaves refuse to surrender their tools — more small hammers and spoil baskets — and also refuse to move, which transforms Zone 3 into Difficult Terrain. *See Zone 3 (below) for additional details.*

As soon as Nazarus can act, he orders his surviving Thuggish Trustees to subdue the players. Nazarus, however, remains in Zone 2 while his minions do his dirty work. The turn following the players' attack, the archers in Zone 9 notice the fight and attempt to shoot the party down from Extreme range.

## ***Zone 1 — Extended Consequences***

### **Fomenting a Slave Revolt**

It is one thing for their fellow slaves to allow the PCs through their zone — or even to hand over their hammers and spoil baskets — it is another to convince even a portion of the unarmed prisoners to rise up and attack Nazarus' trustees.

Heroes may spend 2 Momentum from the Persuade or Command test against the slaves to foment a general revolt. This sends a number of their fellow slaves, chained two by two, boiling into Zone 1 — and after that into Zone 2 — against the onrushing Thuggish Trustees from Zone 2.

Fomenting a general revolt also makes adventurers within Zone 1, Zone 2, or Zone 3 harder than normal for the archers in Zone 9 to spot. Archers shooting at our heroes under these circumstances must succeed at a Dire D4 Perception test or accidentally target a random slave instead of a player character. This condition persists until twelve slaves have been slain or until the PCs enter a Zone other than Zone 1, 2 or 3.

### ***Zone 1 — Raising the Threat Level***

Except as described in *Zone 1 — Action (above)* or in *this section (below)*, GMs are advised **not** to use Threat to move Nazarus and his fellow Trustees to the top of the initiative order.

Other suggestions for spending Threat against the PCs include:

#### **One Trustee Flees**

Consider spending 1 Threat to grant one (and only one) of the Trustees in Zone 1 more of a fighting chance, by allowing him to act before the PCs and scurry back to his chief's side.

#### **Everyone is Shocked except Nazarus**

In the event the players win the opposed roll for an ambush, consider spending 2 Threat to increase Nazarus' reaction time. He alone moves before the PCs and enters Zone 1 to attack, while shock delays his remaining Trustees. In this event, the archers in Zone 9 begin firing the round following Nazarus' attack.

### ***Zone 1 — Adversaries***

#### **2 Thuggish Trustees (Minion)**

*Like their mates in Zone 2 these are slaves elevated to positions of authority by Abdibaal. They eat better, sleep out of the elements, and are experienced shirkers where hard labour is concerned. They're consummate bullies, using force and intimidation to bend others to the Master's will.*

Attributes											
<b>Strength</b>			<b>Physique</b>			<b>Agility</b>			<b>Awareness</b>		
10			10			9			8		
<b>Coordination</b>			<b>Intelligence</b>			<b>Willpower</b>			<b>Personality</b>		
8			7			7			7		
Fields of Expertise											
<b>Combat</b>		<b>Fortitude</b>		<b>Movement</b>		<b>Senses</b>		<b>Social</b>		<b>Technical</b>	
<b>EXP</b>	<b>FOC</b>	<b>EXP</b>	<b>FOC</b>	<b>EXP</b>	<b>FOC</b>	<b>EXP</b>	<b>FOC</b>	<b>EXP</b>	<b>FOC</b>	<b>EXP</b>	<b>FOC</b>
+1	1	-	-	+1	-	+1	1	+1	-	+1	-

**NPC's use simplified details – Instead of the wide array of skills they are given Fields of Expertise - Combat for all attacks, Fortitude for Physical or Willpower based tests, Movement for Agility, Stealth or Athletics tests, Senses for Awareness tests, Social for Personality tests and Technical for any kind of Intelligence test.**

**Vigour: 5 Resolve: 4**

**Soak:** None (unarmored); they wear rags held together with rope belts.

**Attacks:**

- **Truncheon (melee):** 1+[CD]3, 1Handed, Knockdown (Athletics test if one or more 6s are rolled; the difficulty is the number of 6s rolled)

**Special Abilities**

- Strength in Numbers: a Trustee attack inflicts an additional +[CD]2 damage against any creature that has already been attacked this round.
- Minion: Minions attack in Mobs working as a team. Consequently all Minions contribute 1d20 to any and all skill tests up to a maximum of 5d20, rolling as one. If a minion is killed any excess damage is automatically applied to other minions although any effects that only impact the target (such as burning) are limited to the first target.
- Seize the initiative. A Trustee can act before a player in a turn if the GM pays 1 Threat point per Trustee

**Tactics**

If they survive the initial onslaught, the Thuggish Trustees drop anything they are carrying and wade into the players with their truncheons. They fear Nazzarus more than anyone and fight to the death.

- Seize the initiative. The trustees can act before a player in a turn if the GM pays 1 Threat point for each Trustee.

## Zone 2 — Nazzarus the Whip

The terrain is clear, save for the massive table occupied by Nazzarus and surrounded by his thugs. Fully ten feet long and six inches thick, three trestles support this slab of aged and weather-hardened oak; its gouged and pitted surface holds six woven reed baskets filled with hard bread, wooden bowls, a huge earthenware pot of tepid herb stew, and the rolled parchment scrolls of the Pit's slave ledgers.

If the players ask about Nazzarus and the Trustees before entering Zone 2, consider reading or paraphrasing the following:

**[Begin Read Aloud Text Here]**

You watch Nazzarus closely. He's bored; you can see it in the impatient flick of his whip. He's ready to dole out punishment then retire for the night, to partake of the ale and whores Master Abdibaal delivers when the quarry meets its quotas. The slaves behind you shift uncomfortably, chains clanking.

Nazarus the Whip — oh, you've felt the sting of his hateful lash across your naked back more times than you can stomach. The other slaves whisper that he was born in the Pit, a creature without pity carved from the bones of the earth by blackest sorcery. You laugh at those slack-witted fools!

You know Nazarus for what he is: a mongrel, likely the son of a **Kothian** whore who sold him for the price of a drink. But he's no weakling. Squat like an ape and scorched nearly black by the sun, Nazarus' blunt features still bear the scars of a childhood pox; ringlets of black hair, thick with grease, trail down his back. Copper bands encircle his corded biceps, each inlaid with a stylized silver eye — the sigil of Abdibaal and his masters in **Khorshemish**.

Nazarus wears a breechcloth and a vest stitched from poorly tanned hides — human skin, taken from the backs of the last slaves who tried to escape — and a broad belt that supports his iron-capped truncheon and his whip. Nazarus the Whip is a wolf leading a pack of feral dogs, lean and knotted curs with howling voices and hate-filled eyes, eager to scabble in the dirt for their master's leavings.

[End Read Aloud Text Here]

### ***Zone 2 — Action***

If the heroes remain in Zone 1, Nazarus and his Thuggish Trustees leave this zone and lumber in, truncheons flashing, to attack the players.

If the players move into Zone 2, the Thuggish Trustees engage them and Nazarus leaps to the top of the table as a Response Action. When he lands, he shakes but does not spill the towers of bread and soup. The teetering towers of food rivet any slaves who have not attacked the Trustees and — even mid revolt — GMs should narrate the anger that flashes at the prospect of losing their meagre meals.

From atop the table Nazarus wields his whip (see Nazarus' profile later for details of the whip), first against any hero who spoke out against him and then against the hero with the highest Physique. While fighting from this perch, Nazarus gains 1 bonus Momentum to every attack against any foe on the ground.

### ***Zone 2 — Extended Consequences***

If the players attack and other slaves do not join them, this exposes the party to archery from Zone 9. Nazarus and his Trustees are known figures who stand out despite the distance; consequently, without the cover and confusion provided by their fellow slaves, it requires a Daunting D3 Observation (Senses for NPC's) test to accurately target a PC. When arrows miss, GMs are encouraged to describe them hailing down but striking only inanimate objects.

### **Attacking Nazarus**

Players who attack Nazarus must join him atop the table and risk spilling the slaves' meals. If some of their fellow slaves are already in the fight, they avoid Nazarus and his whip like the plague, leaving him free to assault the PCs. To get the party's goat, GMs should consider narrating Nazarus' whip choking the life from any slave personally known to the adventurers.

Whether or not the party convinced a substantial number of the slaves to revolt, anyone who ruins the food stacked on Nazarus' table — especially the herb soup — incurs their wrath. Combatants, including Nazarus, must succeed on an Average D1 Acrobatics or Unarmed Combat to **not** splash through the food while fighting atop the table.

### **Spilling the Food**

Six of the hungriest slaves immediately attack anyone who knocks over the food. If Nazarus knocks over the food, the twelve nearest slaves immediately join the fray.

If the PCs incited a general revolt and *then* Nazarus spills the food, GMs should consider setting a pack of slaves on him all at once, then simply narrate the chief Trustee vanishing, screaming, beneath a pile of enraged men — the spray of his blood, his unseen death rattle. The whip, handle stained with gore, lands beside the nearest PC for retrieval.

While engaging Nazarus atop the table, players may spend 1 Momentum to knock him off. They may spend 2 Momentum to force Nazarus to stumble into the slaves' food, potentially incurring their wrath as described above.

### **The Table**

The table itself proves a useful defence against arrows from Zone 9. Success on an Average D1 Athletics test allows any player to tilt the table on its side and seek cover behind it. It requires a minimum of two characters and success on an assisted Challenging D2 Athletics test to lift and carry the table like a massive



shield. The table acts as a shield providing [CD]4 Shield cover. Players carrying the table in this fashion are encumbered, which increases the difficulty of all physical actions by 1. Additionally, players carrying the table treat all Zones as Difficult Terrain, but this does not increase the challenge posed by terrain that is already Difficult.

### Even in Death They Serve

Corpses also make good shields, whether of Trustees or fellow slaves. For that matter live slaves also work. If the players do not think of it themselves, succeeding on an Average D1 Insight test gives them the idea.

Carrying a Corpse encumbers a character, increasing the difficulty of all physical actions by 1. The Corpse will act as a shield providing [CD]4 Shield, Dreadful cover (Any ‘6’ effects rolled increase the characters Dread by 1).

Carrying a Hostage encumbers a character, increasing the difficulty of all physical actions by 1. As a shield a Hostage provides [CD]3 Shield, Dreadful and has 4 vigor. The slave must be grappled first and will try to escape each round (rolls 1d20). Threat can be spent to add d20’s to this test.

### Zone 2 — Raising the Threat Level

If any hero engages Nazarus atop the table, GMs might spend 2 Threat to force *them* to spill the food and draw the immediate attack of six slaves. This instantly frees Nazarus to engage a different player.

Additionally, after the players defeat Nazarus and his Thuggish Trustees, GMs might spend 1 Threat to allow the Master’s troops in Zone 9 to act before the adventurers next turn.

### Zone 2 — Adversaries

## 9 Thuggish Trustees (Minions)

Use the stat block from *Zone 1 — Adversaries*.

### Nazarus (Nemesis)

*Squat and powerfully built, this vicious Kothian brawler is chief of the Trustees of the Red Pit and Abdibaal’s right-hand man. The Pit is his fiefdom and he rules it with an iron fist; those who cross him can only pray for death as he strips the skin from their backs and adds it to his trophies.*

Attributes											
Strength			Physique			Agility			Awareness		
11			12			10			9		
Coordination			Intelligence			Willpower			Personality		
8			9			10			7		
Fields of Expertise											
Combat		Fortitude		Movement		Senses		Social		Technical	
EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC
+2	2	–	–	+1	1	+1	1	+1	1	-	–

**Vigour:** 12      **Resolve:** 10

**Soak:** Brigandine Vest (Human skin), Torso [CD]2) Soak

### Attacks

- Whip 1+[cd]3

Fearsome (Every ‘6’ Effect rolled causes the target to lose 1 resolve)

Grapple (Every ‘6’ Effect rolled grabs a target; escaping this grab requires an Acrobatics or Athletics test with a difficulty equal to the number of effects rolled)

Reach (A character with a Reach weapon can withdraw from a melee engagement as a Free Action if no enemy combatants have a Reach weapon; the first melee attack made against a character with a Reach weapon has its difficulty increased by one step)

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- A Thousand Angry Curses (scare): Range C, 1+[CD]3 Resolve damage

#### **Talents**

- No Mercy: When rolling damage Nazarus may choose to reroll any two [CD]
- Deflection: When rolling to Parry Nazarus does not need to pay any Threat points.

#### **Special**

Can use Call to Serve on Trustees. Once Called, each trustee adds 1d20 to Nazarus' attack rolls to a maximum of +3d20.

- Seize the initiative. Nazarus can act before a player in a turn if the GM pays 3 Threat points

#### **Tactics**

If the slaves do not revolt en masse, Nazarus seeks to subdue and re-shackle the adventurers. Otherwise, he tries to slay them.

## **Zone 3 — Brothers Before the Lash**

Here the broken-spirited and apathetic slaves crouch in fear, still chained in pairs, their near-naked bodies wracked with exhaustion. As a result, Zone 3 counts as difficult terrain unless our heroes succeeded on a Persuade or Command test to secure their fellow prisoners' support as described in *Zone 3 — Action (below)*.

### ***Zone 3 — Action***

Succeeding on a Challenging D2 Persuade or Command test convinces the slaves in Zone 3 to passively assist the heroes. As a result, Zone 3 will not become difficult terrain. However, still fearing Nazarus, the nearest slaves refuse to relinquish any of their six spoil baskets or six small hammers — unless forced.

On the other hand, success on a D2 Persuade — or a D1 Command — test convinces 2 slaves per momentum (to a maximum of 12) to rise in revolt and join the adventurers against Nazarus and his minions.

If the party succeeded on their opposed roll to ambush Nazarus and the Trustees in Zone 1, reduce both of these tests by 1 Difficulty.

In the event of failure the party may repeat this Persuade or Command test as often as they like, provided they remain in or adjacent to Zone 3.

### ***Zone 3 — Extended Consequences***

Heroes may spend 1 Momentum from the Persuade or Command test against the slaves to entice the nearest to pass forward their spoil baskets and hammers. The party may acquire a maximum of six baskets and six hammers in this fashion.

If the players ask about the appearance of the slaves, consider reading or paraphrasing the following:

[Begin Read Aloud Text Here]

Your brothers of the chain are a wretched lot — stick-thin scarecrows huddled in rags, pus running from sores, and beards crawling with vermin. They clutch their baskets and their hammers to their breasts like talismans. There is something deep in their eyes, though, gleaming like hooded lamps past a fog of fear and pain: there is fury, hope, and a naked greed for the cool air of freedom. All they lack is a leader.

[End Read Aloud Text Here]

### ***Zone 3 — Raising the Threat Level***

#### **The Tower of Babel**

GMs who wish to increase the difficulty of the Persuade or Command test to incite a slave riot should consider spending 2 Threat to change the slaves' languages to ones no party members speak.

#### **Repercussions when Fomenting Revolt**

If the PCs roll a Repercussion while Persuading or Commanding the slaves, consider a Personal Repercussion. Have one of the slaves recognize the player as the reason for their enslavement. Instantly, this person calls out the player's crime and seeks vengeance.

Even if the party successfully foments a slave result, this Repercussion causes six slaves to attack the PCs.

If the PCs roll this Repercussion while failing their Persuade or Command test to incite revolt, then add 1 to the Difficulty of all future Persuade or Command tests.

If you choose this Repercussion, consider reading or paraphrasing the following:

[Begin Read Aloud Text Here]

Eyes blaze; from the ranks of the slaves steps forth an unkempt spectre of a man, thin and crippled by his chains. "Liar!" A claw-like finger jabs your direction. "I know you, wretch! O, by *Ishtar*! I know you! You cannot trust him, brothers! He is no better than the dogs that worry at our heels! I followed you once before and look at where it got me — chained and beaten and cast aside! No, if this whoreson says it can be done, he means we can die so he might live! Nay! It would be better for us if he dies so we might live!"

[End Read Aloud Text Here]

### Zone 3 — Adversaries

#### 12 Slaves (Minions)

The slaves of the Red Pit are a varied lot — native **Kothians**, gaunt from hunger; **Shemites** with wild eyes and unkempt blue-black beards; tawny-haired **Argosseans** who pine for the sea, and proud **Ophireans** who cling to their arrogance in spite of their station. Despite their differences, they fight with the feral persistence of a pack of wild dogs.

Attributes											
Strength			Physique			Agility			Awareness		
6			6			8			7		
Coordination			Intelligence			Willpower			Personality		
7			7			7			7		
Fields of Expertise											
Combat		Fortitude		Movement		Senses		Social		Technical	
EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC
+1	1	–	–	+1	–	+1	1	+1	–	+1	–

**Vigour:** 3      **Resolve:** 4

#### Attacks

- Desperate Clawing Hands 1+[cd]2, Backlash 1, Vicious 1

Backlash 1 (every '6' Effect rolled inflicts one damage to the attacker)

Vicious 1 (Every '6' Effect rolled adds +1 to the damage total)

**Soak:** Lash-scarred Flesh ([CD]1)

**Minion.** Minions attack in Mobs working as a team. Consequently all Minions contribute 1d20 to any and all skill tests up to a maximum of 5d20. If a minion is killed any excess damage is automatically applied to other minions although any effects that only impact the target (such as burning) are cancelled

#### Tactics

The slaves will branch into 4 mobs of 3 slaves.

- Seize the initiative. The slaves can act before a player in a turn if the GM pays 1 Threat point for each slave.

## Zone 4 — Fruits of Their Labour

Due to inches-thick gravel left from mining the quarry walls, this Zone is Difficult Terrain.

### Zone 4 — Action

The three archers in Zone 9 shoot repeatedly at anyone who enters this Zone, which counts as Medium range for them.

However, this is also where the slaves spend their days toiling to chip massive cubes of limestone from the quarry walls. These scattered five-foot by five-foot Limestone Blocks provide [CD]4 soak to any character making an Acrobatics Response Action to dodge arrows. Once characters take cover, they may then make an opposed Stealth test against opponent's Observation (Senses for NPC's) to deny Line of Sight to the archers in Zone 9.

## Zone 5 — Field of Dead Dreams

This is the Zone to which slaves shovel the skull and fist-sized chunks of debris left from whittling down the limestone blocks of Zone 4 to fit the stone-hauling basket. As a result, this Zone is both Difficult and Hazardous Terrain, but its jagged detritus may prove useful as weapons.

### Zone 5 — Action

The three archers in Zone 9 shoot repeatedly at anyone who enters this Zone, which counts as Medium range for them. This Zone offers no cover from the hail of arrows, until players reach the base of the wall beneath the Eunuch's Ear (Zone 6).

If the heroes enter Zone 5 without improvising something to cover their feet, they cut themselves on the foot-deep shards of limestone that coat the zone like quicksand and take 1 point of Damage. Success on an Average D1 Craft test with an object like a spoil basket allows them to avoid this damage.

If the heroes fail the Athletics test required to navigate this zone they take an additional point of damage from the limestone scree and will need to make an additional Average D1 Athletics test to cross the zone.

Finally, as a Restricted Action, any hero may stoop and retrieve 2 hunks of jagged stone debris suited to throwing.

#### JAGGED STONE DEBRIS

Roll [cd]2 to see what comes to hand. Compare each dice to the chart below

- 1 Large Hefty rock. 1+[cd]3
- 2 Sharp sliver of rock. 1+[cd]3, Vicious 2, backlash 1, fragile (Every '6' Effect rolled adds 2 to damage but inflicts 1 damage to the wielder and reduces its damage for any future attack by -[cd]1)
- 3-5 Baseball sized chunk of Blunt rock. 1+[cd]2, Close range
- 6) Baseball sized chunk of Coquina. 1+[cd]2, Close range, Spread. (On impact the Coquina shatters sending tiny fossilised shell fragments spinning. On a '6' effect the target suffers half the rolled damage to another hit location. Armour Soak functions as normal.)

## Zone 6 — By Tooth and Nail

Players count as having entered Zone 6 when they reach the base of the Pit wall by exiting Zone 4 or Zone 5. For the purposes of climbing the wall directly to freedom, Zone 6 counts as Difficult Terrain. However, Zone 6 also possesses a special point of egress, located directly below the Eunuch's Ear. Party members must first enter Zone 6 before exiting onto the rope ladders of Zone 7.

### Zone 6 — Action

Heroes who decide to climb the cliff wall, avoiding *Zone 7 — the Eunuch's Ear* may do so; however, the cliff wall is Difficult Terrain and climbers endure constant archery fire from Zone 9. Moreover, climbing the cliff wall is a three floor climb, requiring success on three consecutive Athletics tests. The difficulty of each test is equal to the floor of the climb (D1 for the first floor, D2 for the second, D3 for the third). Momentum could be used to get to a higher level in the same turn.

Additionally, each Injury sustained while climbing forces a Resistance test or be knocked from the wall. The difficulty of each test is equal to the number of Injuries sustained while climbing.

Characters who fall from the wall take 1+[cd]2 damage per floor fallen.

Alternately, players may enter Zone 6 directly beneath Zone 7 — *the Eunuch's Ear* and achieve complete cover from the archers in Zone 9, who may no longer shoot at them. This respite proves temporary as the heroes must either scale the cliff itself or emerge from cover to scale the rope ladders if they wish to progress further. It is impossible to climb over the outcrop to the top of the Eunuch's Ear any other way. See Zone 7 — *the Eunuch's Ear* for additional details on scaling the rope ladders.

Players who start climbing the cliff wall from directly beneath the Eunuch's Ear outcrop remain completely protected from archers for the first of their three consecutive Athletics tests. They must emerge from beneath the overhang to finish the climb, facing archery fire as normal during the latter two tests.

Finally, after the heroes enter Zone 6, Abdibaal orders three of his eight **Pelishtim** spearmen lowered on ropes to the surface of Zone 7 with orders to cut the rope ladders. See Zone 7 — *the Eunuch's Ear* for additional details.

### ***Zone 6 — Extended Consequences***

If the heroes ignore the Eunuch's Ear and successfully climb the cliff wall to the surface, as they near the top any **Pelishtim** spearmen remaining in Zone 9 attack them. Being poked with spears during the final Daunting D3 Athletics check of their climb is part of why it is a D3 test; however, characters who take an Injury from the **Pelishtim** spears during this last leg of the climb — whether or not they succeed at the final Athletics test — must make an *additional* Average D1 Resistance test or be knocked from the wall.

On the second of the three Athletics tests used to climb the wall, ascending heroes may spend 1 Momentum to clamber from the cliff face into Zone 8 — *The Stone-Hauling Basket*, which also provides complete protection from the archers.

Finally, players might use Luck points to accelerate their climb.

### ***Zone 6 — Raising the Threat Level***

#### **It's Raining Slaves**

If any slaves survived the battle with Nazarus and his Trustees, the adventurers' bold ascent inspires them to follow. Some prove swifter climbers than the PCs and, at any given time, GMs should consider narrating them as above or below the heroes scaling the Pit wall. This allows the GM to spend 1 Threat or a Repercussion plucking a slave off the cliff face — perhaps after taking an arrow to the face — and smashing him into a PC. PCs hit by a falling slave must succeed at an Average D1 Acrobatics or Resistance check or also fall from the cliff.

#### **Checking Their Ascent**

If the heroes *rapidly* ascend the cliff face — for example, using Momentum or Luck points — GMs might spend 2 Threat to place three **Pelishtim** mercenaries into the stone-hauling basket and lower it to the climbers' level. These mercenaries add their spear attacks to the hazards of the ascent.

### ***Zone 6 — Adversaries***

See Zone 9 for additional details on both the **Pelishtim** archers and spearmen.

## ***Zone 7 — the Eunuch's Ear***

The Eunuch's Ear is an outcrop of rock jutting from the side of the Red Pit halfway between the surface and the floor. From above it resembles an ear, thus the moniker. This is also where Nazarus and his Trustees sleep, away from their fellow slaves. Each night they retreat up two rope ladders, pull them up behind, and retire for the evening. The Master of the Pit even granted Nazarus the privilege of chipping a small cave into the cliff wall.

Neither the Ear nor the cave constitutes Difficult Terrain. However there is only one way to enter **Zone 7**; characters must succeed on an Average D1 Acrobatics test to climb the rope ladders to the top.

### ***Zone 7 — Action***

The moment the heroes enter Zone 6, the Master of the Pit orders three of his **Pelishtim** mercenaries lowered on ropes to the top of the Ear. Abdibaal has the ropes withdrawn after depositing them. Armed only with short swords — they left their other equipment in Zone 9 — the mercenaries have orders to cut the rope ladders.

If the adventurers enter Zone 6 and, on their very next turn, began climbing the rope ladders into Zone 7, then they reach the top just as the mercenaries begin to cut the ladders from their moorings.

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An opposed roll pits the climbers' Acrobatics against the mercenaries' Technical and determines whether the heroes reach the top seconds before the mercenaries cut the ladders – or seconds after. Treat each ladder as a separate skill test.

If the mercenaries win either opposed roll, they cut the rope ladder in question and anyone on it falls to the bottom of the Pit, taking 2+[CD]4 points of damage.

The first PC to reach the top of a ladder before it is cut must succeed on an Average D1 Acrobatics or Close Combat test to leave the ladder and gain a foothold on the Ear. Success also allows allies behind him or her to leave the ladder without making this test. However, during the round in which the first character up the ladder attempts to gain a foothold on the Ear, the defending *Pelishtim* receive 1 bonus Momentum to all their attacks.

Once the party gains a foothold on the Ear, our heroes must battle any surviving mercenaries while still under fire from the archers in Zone 9, whose deadly skills with the bow are no longer impeded by distance. If the adventurers defeat their better-equipped *Pelishtim* foes, they secure real armour and weaponry for the first time in the scenario.

Anyone entering the small cave carved into the cliff finds complete safety from the archers in Zone 9. Clever PCs might drag corpses into the cave and don defeated foes' equipment in relative safety. Within the cave, among the Trustees' filthy bed rags, they also discover two oil lamps. Success on an Average D1 Alchemy test, allows players to construct crude Molotov cocktails.

#### **Exploding Oil Lamp 1+[CD]2, Burning**

Burning (Victims take 1 point of damage for a number of rounds equal to the number of '6' effects rolled on the Combat Dice)

Victims of the Exploding Oil Lamp lose their next turn trying to extinguish themselves or if the players are struggling describe the victims running around on fire, luckily out of the fight for now.

Finally, when it becomes clear the heroes will win the battle for the Eunuch's Ear, Abdibaal orders his Stygian servitor to release the imprisoned A'Ghama. See *Zone 9 — Adversaries for additional details* on the Mighty A'Ghama

The wall between the top of the Ear and the surface at Zone 9 is Difficult Terrain, and it requires success on a Daunting D3 Athletics check reach the surface.

### ***Zone 7 — Extended Consequences***

#### **Race to the Top**

Adventurers may spend 1 Momentum from the opposed climb roll to not only reach the top before the ladders are cut, but also to exit the ladder and gain a foothold on the Ear, unopposed.

#### **Tossing *Pelishtim* Like Rag Dolls**

PCs fighting the mercenaries at the top of the rope ladders may spend 2 Momentum or a Luck Point to grab an enemy and hurl him to his death on the stone shards below.

### ***Zone 7 — Raising the Threat Level***

#### **Half a Ladder is Better than No Ladder**

If a player wins the opposed roll to climb a rope ladder before the *Pelishtim* cut them loose, GMs might spend 1 Threat or a Repercussion to allow the *Pelishtim* to successfully cut one of the two legs off the ladder. This sends the cut ladder swinging wildly into the other ladder.

Anyone on the now swinging ladder must succeed at a Challenging D2 Acrobatics check or fall to the Pit floor, taking 2+[CD]4 points of damage. Players may spend 1 Momentum from this Acrobatics check to leap to the more stable ladder, to the stone-hauling basket in Zone 8, or to the outcrop of the Ear itself.

Any player who leaps from a ladder to cling to the stone outcrop of the Ear cannot climb horizontally or vertically from this precarious perch. Instead, on their next turn they must succeed at a Daunting D3 Acrobatics check to leap to any remaining ladder or into the stone-hauling basket in Zone 8.

#### **Deadly Hail of Arrows**

GMs might spend 1 Threat to grant the archers in Zone 9 an additional d20 while firing at the PCs — especially if our heroes have avoided taking damage from archery to this point.

## Vertical Dominoes

GMs might spend 2 Threat or a Repercussion to break a rung of the ladder. After a rung breaks, PCs must succeed on an Average D1 Acrobatics check to hold onto a rung or plummet into the next climber below. A hero slammed by the falling body of his ally must succeed on a Challenging D2 Acrobatics test to retain his grip on the ladder and may spend 1 Momentum to catch and hold his falling friend.

If more than one party member plummets down the ladder in this fashion, increase the difficulty of the subsequent Acrobatics checks by +1 Difficulty for every additional falling friend. No one clinging to a ladder may catch more than one falling friend at a time, forcing them to choose when struck by more than one falling party member.

Anyone who falls off the ladder to the bottom of the Red Pit takes 2+[CD]4 points of damage.

## Zone 7 — Adversaries

### *Pelishtim* (Elite)

The *Pelishtim* of western *Shem*, with their hooked noses and curled blue-black beards, are famed throughout the *Hyborian* kingdoms as disciplined fighters and archers without peer. They frequently offer their skills to whatever king or noble rogue can meet their price —for these sons of the South do not sell themselves cheap.

Attributes											
Strength		Physique				Agility		Awareness			
9		9				9		9			
Coordination		Intelligence				Willpower		Personality			
9		7				7		7			
Fields of Expertise											
Combat		Fortitude		Movement		Senses		Social		Technical	
EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC
+1	1	–	–	+1	–	+1	1	+1	1	+1	–

**Vigour:** 9      **Resolve:** 7

**Soak:** Mail Shirt (Arms [CD]2, Torso [CD]3)

### Attacks

- Shortspear (melee): 1+[CD]5, 1H, Reach 1
- Shield (melee): [CD]4, 1Handed, Full Defence 1 (A character wielding a Full Defence weapon or shield may attempt to make parry and Defend Other Response Actions using his close combat skill against ranged attacks as well as melee attacks. Full Defence also confers all the effects of Parry. The X value is the Soak provided, which now applies to both melee and ranged attacks.
- Steely Glare (scare): Range C, 1+[CD]2 Resolve damage
- Bow and Quiver (1 reload each) 1+[CD]4 Medium Range, Armour piercing 2, Volley
- Falchion 1+[CD]5, Unbalanced (characters with Strength under 9 have to use this as a 2-handed weapon), Vicious 2 (Every '6' effect rolled inflicts 2 damage)

**Elite.** Elitess attack in Mobs working as a team. Consequently all Elites contribute 1d20 to any and all skill tests up to a maximum of 5d20. If an elite is killed any excess damage is automatically applied to other Elites although any effects that only impact the target (such as burning) are cancelled

### Tactics

The *Pelishtim* prefer to fight in units of three where possible.

- Seize the initiative. The *pelishtim* can act before a player in a turn if the GM pays 1 Threat point for each *Pelishtim*

## Zone 8 — The Stone-Hauling Basket

This massive rope and leather basket hangs by a hemp cable thicker than a man and connected to a winch at the lip of Zone 9. Powered by oxen, the device hauls limestone boulders to the surface. It is large enough to comfortably hold six humans.

At the start of the scenario a femur-thick iron peg locks the winch mechanism in place. The basket dangles halfway down the cliff face, a few feet above the surface of the Eunuch's Ear and far enough from the edge of the Ear that neither Abdibaal nor his minions believe anyone foolish enough to leap for it. Characters at the bottom of the Red Pit cannot easily spot the iron peg nor ascertain details of the winch mechanism until they are closer.

If the players ask for more information about the stone-hauling basket, consider reading or paraphrasing the following:

[Begin Read Aloud Text Here]

In the distance, a scaffolding of heavy timbers reinforced with cold-wrought iron supports a rope and mammoth basket; the basket is leather, while the rope is triple-plaited hemp, thicker round than the anchor cable of an *Argossean* galley. Powered by oxen, the rope is drawn up through a series of wooden cogs with iron teeth. The whole apparatus hangs over the edge of the Pit — tempting in its simplicity: here is a direct path to the surface, an easy climb even for the weak-limbed slaves of the Pit, but it dangles just out of reach . . .

[End Read Aloud Text Here]

### Zone 8 — Action

Players who wish to send the stone-hauling basket plummeting to the bottom of the Pit must remove the iron peg locking it in place. This is only possible when no one is in the basket or climbing its massive cable, as weight on the device jams the peg.

To knock the iron peg free, players must first spot it. From the floor of the Red Pit, this requires succeeding on an Epic D5 Observation test. For adventurers on the surface of the Eunuch's Ear this becomes a Daunting D3 Observation test. Once spotted, inflicting a cumulative 6 points of damage on the iron peg knocks it free and sends the stone-hauling basket crashing to the floor of the Red Pit.

If recovered, the iron peg makes a serviceable weapon.

Crude Iron Peg 1 handed, 1+[CD]4

Players who wish to leap from the Eunuch's Ear into the stone-hauling basket (or onto the cable) must Sprint and succeed on a Challenging D3 Acrobatics test, which hurtles them across the gap and inside the basket (or onto the cable) in a single move. Once within the leather and rope cocoon of the basket, its depth provides complete protection from archers in Zone 9.

Leaping into the basket (or onto the cable) from the anywhere in Zone 6 requires having already succeeded on the first of the three tests required to climb the cliff bare-knuckled (see *Zone 6 — Action, for additional details*) and only then succeeding on an Epic D5 Acrobatics test to leap laterally and reach the cable or the basket interior.

Once in Zone 8, climbing the basket's hemp cable to the surface is easy, requiring success on a single Challenging D2 Acrobatics test. Anyone climbing the cable in this manner becomes a priority for the Zone 9 archers, who unleash a volley before the climber reaches the surface.

### Zone 8 — Extended Consequences

#### Dropping the Basket with Intent

Provided the GM deems it reasonable, the player who delivers the final damage and knocks the iron peg free from the winch may spend 1 Momentum to smash the falling stone-hauler through anyone climbing the wall in Zone 6 or land it on anyone in Zone 4 or Zone 5.

#### What Would Abdibaal Do?

Chopping through a cable as thick as the one holding the stone-hauling basket requires more time than Abdibaal and his minions possess. Moreover, weight in the basket clamps the iron peg in place such that nothing



short of sledgehammers will knock it free — and Abdibaal has none with him. Consequently, when one or more heroes enters the basket or reaches the cable, Abdibaal orders the A’Ghama freed and driven below to hunt the climbers. See *Zone 9 — Action for more details*.

[Begin Sidebox Here]

### **Sometimes It’s All In the Narration**

Sometimes the key to amping the excitement lies in the narration. If your players knock the femur-sized iron peg free, consider describing how the falling peg kills a slave on its way to the bottom. Use or paraphrase words like these:

*The iron peg falls among the slaves who clamour and caper beneath; most scurry aside, but one moves too slow. The peg — half a yard long and tapering to a rounded point at either end — pierces the poor wretch’s body near the crown of his head. Blood spews as he staggers toward his brother slaves, gurgling, arms outstretched in silent plea for succour. Three steps he takes before his legs give way, spilling him to the earth like a marionette with its strings clipped.*

[End Sidebox Here]

Alternately, after the PCs drop the stone-haul to the floor of the Red Pit, Abdibaal may order three of his fighters to man the winch and recover the basket. Drawing the basket back to the surface requires three men and three turns. Each turn spent at the winch draws the basket an additional Zone’s distance from the floor of the Red Pit. For example, at the end of the first turn spinning the winch, the basket ascends from being inside Zone 4 — where it was when it landed — to a Medium distance from Zone 4 in Zone 6. At the end of the second turn, the winch lifts the basket to a Long distance from Zone 4, but still in Zone 6.

Finally, PCs who succeed on a Challenging D2 Stealth test may sneak inside the fallen basket unseen, perhaps to be drawn to the surface where they ambush the winch crew.

## ***Zone 8 — Raising the Threat Level***

### **Unwelcome Guests**

If the players enter the stone-hauling basket, consider spending 1 Threat to have the A’Ghama leap directly from Zone 9 into the basket with them. While in the close quarters of the stone-hauling basket, the A’Ghama receives 1 bonus Momentum on every attack.

### **You’ve Got the Spins**

Consider spending 1 Threat or a Repercussion on players who enter the basket to set it swinging and spinning. This renders everyone either in the basket or climbing the cable Dazed.

### **Just Hanging Around**

Against players leaping into the basket, consider spending 1 Threat or Repercussion so they reach only the lip of the basket and then dangle. On the following turn they must succeed on an Average D1 Athletics test to haul themselves inside. This allows the archers in Zone 9 to target the dangling hero one additional time.

### **Get Thee to a Sledgehammer**

If multiple players enter the stone-hauling basket, or if some players are fighting the A’Ghama inside it, or if the GM feels it will heighten the tension, consider spending 2 Threat for Abdibaal to locate a sledgehammer. One of his minions may now attack the iron peg and, after inflicting 6 points of damage, knock it free. The basket falls to the bottom of the Red Pit and delivers 2+[CD]4 points of damage to anyone along for the ride.

Adventurers climbing the cable when the peg pops free must succeed on a Daunting D3 Athletics test to cling to the cable and ride to the bottom of the Pit unharmed. Failure means they flew off the cable and slammed to the bottom, also taking 2+[CD]4 points of damage.

In the right hands, sledgehammers double as war hammers.

Sledgehammer 1+[CD]4, Armour Piercing 1, Knockdown, Unforgiving 1

## **Zone 9 – The Surface**

The scenario ends when the players reach the surface and defeat any remaining foes. All defenders receive 1 bonus Momentum for attacks against characters climbing out of the Red Pit. They lose this bonus Momentum once the characters leave the Pit and stand on the level surface.

## **Zone 9 — Action**

The archers shoot their arrows (20 per archer) at the heroes until they run out. The **Pelishtim** mercenaries who did not descend to the Eunuch's Ear throw their spears at the party when they reach Zone 7 or after players attempt the second Athletics test required to climb Zone 6.

As mentioned, once the PCs reach the top of *Zone 7 — the Eunuch's Ear* or progress to within one skill test of reaching the surface, the Master of the Pit orders the **Stygian** to release the caged A'Ghama. Once released, the barely-controlled lizard's first act is to eat the **Stygian**. Afterwards the threatening **Pelishtim**, plus the smell of horse (which it despises), and the allure of dead slaves together drive the creature into the Pit seeking easier prey.

When the **Stygian** releases the Mighty A'Ghama, consider sharing or paraphrasing the following:

[Begin Read Aloud Text Here]

*The cage door crashes open. The **Stygian**, his priestly robes stained and threadbare, bellows something in the guttural tongue of his people. Its serrated tail thrashing, the nightmarish beast lumbers forth. It moves fast, talons ripping furrows in the soil, as it twists and snatches up the **Stygian**. The man screams once — as much from anguish as from ecstasy — before the massive A'Ghama rips him in two amid a welter of blood.*

*The **Pelishtim** curse and raise a clamour, spear-hafts and sword-hilts crashing against the brazen faces of their shields. The banging tumult drives the beast back to the edge of the Pit; its nostrils flare as it catches the rich red scent of fresh gore. It senses easier prey below; its cold yellow eyes narrow and it scuttles over the edge.*

*As it descends, the world falls silent. You hear only the faint clank of the creature's chain against the rocks, the creak of its leather collar. You stare, entranced, as that massive, slab-like head turns. Lips peel back from its blood-smearred teeth, and the monster bellows a challenge.*

[End Read Aloud Text Here]

Once the PCs reach the surface any remaining **Pelishtim** cover the Master of the Pit's retreat, as he rides off for reinforcements. The rear guard troops include one sergeant, tougher than the rest.

## **Zone 9 — Extended Consequences**

### **Your Higher Ground Means Nothing!**

Players may spend 1 Momentum or a Luck Point to eliminate the bonus Momentum of the **Pelishtim** trying to stop them from exiting the Pit and reaching the surface.

### **Throw Them to the Ground**

Players may spend 2 Momentum earned during an attack against a **Pelishtim** spearman or archer to grab that foe and toss him down into the Pit. However they may not use this tactic against the **Pelishtim** sergeant, who is too much a veteran to fall for it.

### **Lizard Monster Rodeo**

Heroes may spend 1 Momentum from an attack on the A'Ghama to seize its dangling leash, giving it the Staggered condition. Spending 2 Momentum on any Close Combat, Athletics or Animal Handling test allows the PC to mount the A'ghama.

Once riding the creature, a Daunting D2 Animal Handling test as a Response Action prevents the creature from attacking anyone, while success on a Dire D4 Animal Handling test allows the hero to ride the creature to the surface. Success on an Epic D5 Animal Handling test allows a hero to ride the creature to the surface and also forces it to attack one foe (not including Abdibaal), before it throws the hero to the ground and flees.

## **Zone 9 — Raising the Threat Level**

If a player grabs the A'Ghama's leash or leaps onto its back, consider spending 5 Threat points to send them both tumbling from the cliff face to smash onto the limestone below. Such a fall inflicts 3+[cd]6 points of damage to both creature and rider. Consider spending an additional 1 Threat to have the lizard land on its would-be rider, inflicting another 1+[cd]2 points of damage to both of them.

## **Zone 9 — Adversaries**

## A'ghama, Mighty (Nemesis)

*Who knows where Abdibaal found this beast, or by what sorcery he made it so huge and ravenous? Regardless, it is the terror that haunts the nightmares of the Red Pit's denizens; its gaping maw and chisel-like teeth no less fearsome than its dead, yellow eyes — eyes that only blaze to unholy life when it catches the scent of blood.*

Attributes											
Strength		Physique				Agility		Awareness			
14 (+1)		14				12		8			
Coordination		Intelligence				Willpower		Personality			
8		3				8		5			
Fields of Expertise											
Combat		Fortitude		Movement		Senses		Social		Technical	
EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC
+1	1	+2	1-2	+1	1	+2	1	–	–	–	–

**Vigour:** 16      **Resolve:** 10

**Soak:** Scaly Hide (All 2)

### Attacks:

- Cavernous Maw (melee): 2+[CD]6, Gruesome, Vicious 1, only against prone targets
- Lashing Tail (melee): 2+[CD]6, Reach, Knockdown
- Hissing Roar (scare): Range C, 1+[CD]4 Resolve damage, Intense 1, Startling

### Special Abilities

- **Camouflage:** the A'ghama can change its colouration to blend into its surroundings. It gains one bonus Momentum on all Stealth tests to hide.
- **Fear 2 (added into Hissing Roar)**
- **Feasting:** if the A'ghama kills a creature, it may spend a standard action to feast upon the remains. If it does so, it immediately recovers five Vigour or one Injury.
- **Night Vision (The mighty agama takes no penalties from darkness)**
- **Slow to Act:** while the A'ghama is a fearsome foe, it seldom moves unless hungry or injured. Unless the creature has suffered damage, it will not take any actions on its turn. However, the GM may spend one Threat to declare that the creature is hungry, in which case it may act normally, as its hunger overrides its normal languor.
- **Unnatural Strength 1 (The Agama gains 1 bonus Momentum on all Strength tests including Athletics tests)**

### Tactics

The A'ghama is drawn by the scent of fresh blood; it will target characters who are already wounded first before going after any others.

- Seize the initiative. The Mighty Agama can act before a player in a turn if the GM pays 3 Threat points

## Pelishtim Commander (Elite)

*He is called Shiruk-Nashur, and he cuts a powerful figure among the Pelishtim with his long black hair, worn in coarse braids woven with fetishes of carved bone; serpent tattoos decorate his cheeks beneath deep-set eyes that glitter like knives.*

Attributes											
Strength			Physique			Agility			Awareness		
11			10			8			8		
Coordination			Intelligence			Willpower			Personality		
8			7			9			10		
Fields of Expertise											
Combat		Fortitude		Movement		Senses		Social		Technical	
EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC
+2	1-2	+1	-	+2	1-2	+1	-	+2	1	+1	-

**Vigour:** 10      **Resolve:** 9

**Soak:** Heavy Mail (Head [CD]4 Torso [CD]4, Arms [CD]2, Legs [CD]2)

### Attacks

- Spear (melee): 1+[CD]7, Unbalanced, Armour Piercing 1, Reach
- Shield (melee): [CD]4, 1H, Full Defence 1
- Steely Glare (scare): Range C, 1+[CD]4 Resolve damage
- Falchion 1+[cd]4, Unbalanced (characters with Strength under 9 have to use this as a 2handed weapon), Vicious 2 (Every '6' effect rolled inflicts 2 extra damage)

### Threat Spends

- **Leadership:** the *Pelishtim* commander may spend two Threat to grant one bonus d20 to a single Mob or Gang within Close range. This bonus die may be used on any skill test that group attempts before the end of its next turn
- Seize the initiative. The commander can act before a player in a turn if the GM pays 2 Threat points

### *Pelishtim* (Minion)

See Zone 7 — *Advesaries for stat block.*

## WRAP UP

The scenario ends when the players reach the surface and either dispatch or chase off the remaining foes.

## Loot

In addition to the equipment of their defeated foes, our heroes discover:

- 3 gold each, including a hammered-gold torc, dropped by Abdibaal as he fled
- Bedrolls and Five days worth of hardtack and watered-wine, left by the fleeing guards
- A small hand drawn map showing paths through the *Kothian* hills to the nearest of three settlements, including a curious sigil drawn near the crest of one hill, located a day's hard ride northwest of the Red Pit. A Daunting D3 Lore test reveals the sigil is a single character, the letter "T", written in the script of ancient *Acheron*.
- Cheat's Dice. A set of weighted ivory dice for cheating at games of chance. Cheat's Dice provide 1 bonus momentum to thievery tests when used for gambling. An Average D1 Observation test recognises that they are, in fact, weighted dice.

## Experience

Award the party 300 xp for escaping the Red Pit.

If the party engineered a general slave uprising, award the party an additional 100 xp.

If half or more of the slaves that reolt also escape the Pit alive, award each player another 25 xp.

# Weapon or Attack Effects Summary

**Knockdown** - on a '6' Effect result the target is knocked down and must stand up in their action)

**Fragile** - If the Soak rolls any '6' effects, the shield is destroyed)

**Unforgiving 1** - If a character takes an Standard Action 'Exploit weakness' in a turn then attacks on the second turn, the Awl punch gets the Vicious and Armour Piercing qualities)

**Vicious** - when a character rolls a '6' effect it counts as if 1 damage had been rolled)

**Armour Piercing 1** - when a character rolls a '6' effect, count any Soak rolled by target's armour as one less for each level of Armour Piercing)

**Dreadful** - Any '6' effects rolled increase Dread by 1).

**Fearsome** - Every '6' Effect rolled causes the target to lose 1 Resolve)

**Grapple** - Every '6' Effect rolled grabs a target; escaping this grab requires an Acrobatics or Athletics test with a difficulty equal to the number of effects rolled)

**Reach** - A character with a Reach weapon can withdraw from a melee engagement as a Free Action if no enemy combatants have a reach weapon; the first close combat attack made against a character with a Reach weapon has its difficulty increased by one step)

**Vicious 1, 2** – For each '6' effect rolled Vicious does 1 point of damage for every level of Vicious

**Backlash 1** – For each '6' effect rolled, Backlash deals 1 point of damage for every level of Backlash to the attacker

**Fragile** - Every '6' Effect rolled adds 2 to damage but inflicts 1 damage to the wielder and reduces its damage for any future attack by  $-\lceil cd \rceil 1$ )

**Spread.** On a '6' effect the target suffers half the rolled damage to another hit location. Armour Soak functions as normal.)

**Burning** - Victims take 1 point of damage for a number of rounds equal to the number of '6' effects rolled on the Combat Dice). Victims of the Exploding Oil Lamp lose their next turn trying to extinguish themselves or if the players are struggling describe the victims running around on fire, luckily out of the fight for now.

**Full Defence X**—A character wielding a Full Defence weapon or shield may attempt to make parry and Defend Other Response Actions using his close combat skill against ranged attacks as well as melee attacks. Full Defence also confers all the effects of Parry. The X value is the Soak provided, which now applies to both melee and ranged attacks.

**Parry X** - When in melee, if a character using a Parry X weapon makes a Parry attempt, he gains Soak equal to  $\lceil CD \rceil X$  (the level of Parry) against melee attacks until the start of his next turn. A character wielding two parry X weapons adds their ratings together.

**Gruesome** – the target gets the 'Bleeding' status for a number of rounds equal to the '6' effects rolled. Bleeding means the target loses one Vigour at the start of each turn until you receive medical attention.

**Intense 1** - When the character takes the Exploit Weakness action, he gains the Dreadful and Traumatic X qualities on the subsequent scare attack with this Display. The Traumatic effect inflicts 1 additional Resolve damage for each Effect generated.

**Startling:** If one or more '6' Effects are generated on the damage roll, the target suffers the Staggered condition, which lasts one round per Effect generated.

**Fear 2** - when the creature appears, enemies must attempt a Discipline test against a mental assault, with a difficulty equal to the level of Fear (in this case 2). A mental assault is a number of [CD] equal to the difficulty of the Discipline test, inflicting mental damage (which reduces the creature's Resolve) equal to the total rolled.

**Unbalanced** - Unbalanced weapons are 2-handed if you're strength 8 or less, or 1-handed if you're strength 9 or more.

## Sample Weapons & Attacks From the Adventure

Iron Manacles 1Handed, 1+[cd]3 weapon

Spoil Basket 1 handed [cd]2 Soak, Fragile

Hammer 1 handed 1+[cd]4 weapon

Awl Punch: 1 handed 1+[cd]2 weapon, Unforgiving 1

Truncheon (melee): 1+[CD]3, 1Handed, Knockdown

A thousand Angry Curses (scare): Range C, 1+[CD]3 Resolve damage

Spear (melee): 1+[CD]7, Unbalanced, Armour Piercing 1, Reach

Shield (melee): [CD]4, 1H, Full Defence 1

Large Hefty rock. 1+[cd]3

Sharp sliver of rock. 1+[cd]3, Vicious 2, backlash 1, fragile

Baseball sized chunk of Blunt rock. 1+[cd]2, Close range

Baseball sized chunk of Coquina. 1+[cd]2, Close range, Spread.

Exploding Oil Lamp 1+[CD]2, Burning

Shortspear (melee): 1+[CD]4, 1H, Reach 1

Steely Glare (scare): Range C, 1+[CD]2 Resolve damage

Bow and Quiver (20 arrows each) 1+[CD]3 Medium Range, Armour piercing 2, Volley

Falchion 1+[CD]4, Unbalanced (characters with Strength under 9 have to use this as a 2-handed weapon), Vicious 2 (Every '6' effect rolled inflicts 2 damage)

Cavernous Maw (melee): 2+[CD]6, Gruesome, Vicious 1, only against prone targets

Lashing Tail (melee): 2+[CD]6, Reach, Knockdown

Hissing Roar (scare): Range C, 1+[CD]4 Resolve damage, Intense 1, Startling

## Combat Action List

The following are a sample of combat actions for use in this playtest

### Free Actions

During your turn, you can attempt one or more free actions. A character cannot perform the same free action more than once during his turn, but he can take as many as he wishes unless he takes a Restricted Action (in which case, he may only take a single Free Action).

Under normal circumstances, free actions do not permit skill tests.

### *Adjust Stance*

A character can make a small adjustment to his stance or position. The character can use this adjustment to move to any point within the same zone - essentially, anywhere within Close range. This action cannot be used to move into Reach of an enemy or to move through or into difficult terrain - these require the Movement Restricted Action. A character cannot perform an Adjust Stance action if he also performs the Movement Restricted Action or the Sprint Primary Action in the same turn.

### *Drop Item*

The character opens one or more hands that hold an item. The item falls to his feet.

### *Fall Prone*

The character drops to the ground, reducing his ranged combat target silhouette. A character cannot fall prone on the same turn he stands up.

[Sidebar]

### Prone

While prone, the character can move only using the Adjust Stance action. Further, all ranged attacks targeting the character from Medium or longer range increase in difficulty by one step, but ranged attacks within Close range and melee attacks gain one bonus Momentum against the character.

[/Sidebar ends]

### *Speak*

A character may talk to nearby allies, scream a war cry, shout an order, threaten a political opponent, or otherwise converse with a few sentences or phrases. This cannot be used to attempt a Command or Persuade test, or perform any other skill test that involves speech unless that test would be zero-difficulty.

## Restricted Actions

### *Movement*

The character can move to anywhere within Close or Medium range, including into Reach of an enemy or through difficult terrain. See Movement (page @@) for more information on traversing difficult terrain. A character cannot perform a Movement action if he also performs the Adjust Stance Free Action or the Sprint Primary Action in the same turn.

### *Recover*

When a character is suffering from a temporary status effect such as Bleeding or Staggered, he may be able to attempt a Resistance test to prematurely end the condition. If the status effect has a specific magnitude (such as Staggered 3), the condition's magnitude becomes the difficulty rating for the

Resistance test. If the status effect does not have a specific magnitude, it requires a Challenging D2 Resistance test. If the character passes the test, the status effect ends.

### ***Stand Up***

If a character was previously in a prone position, he may stand up. A character cannot stand up on the same turn he falls prone.

### **Standard Actions**

There are a number of Standard Actions available. Most combat actions that require a skill test, such as attacks, are Standard Actions. A character usually only performs one Standard Action on his turn.

### ***Attack, Close Combat***

The character waits for an opening then attacks a target within Reach (NPC, Character, or Object) either with his bare hands or an equipped melee weapon. When a character makes a Close Combat Attack, he must declare a target, as well as which equipped weapon is being used. If the Close Combat Attack succeeds, the attacker moves to the damage step of the combat sequence.

### ***Attack, Ranged***

The character draws down on and attacks a target with whom he is not currently engaged in melee. Ranged attacks use ranged weapons. The target must be within the weapon's effective range, or the actions difficulty increases by one for every zone outside this effective range. With most weapons, the target must be within line of sight. If the Ranged Attack succeeds, the attacker moves to the damage step of the combat sequence. A character who attempts a Ranged Attack while an enemy is within Reach increases the difficulty by one, unless it has the Close Quarters quality.

### ***Coup de Grace***

If he has a ranged or close combat weapon equipped, a character can deliver a killing blow to a helpless, unconscious, or dying target within Reach. The GM may deem that some targets require a skill test. The GM has the final say over whether or not a target can be dispatched with a Coup de Grace action.

### ***Exploit Weakness***

A character takes extra time readying his next Close Combat, Ranged Attack, or Scare action to further increase his odds of hitting and potentially inflict more damage. If the character performs a Close Combat Attack, Ranged Attack, or Scare action when the previous action was to Exploit Weakness, the character adds 2d20 to the attack's skill test. If the attack succeeds, the attack inflicts +[CD]2 extra damage. This is cumulative with any bonus dice from weapon qualities to a maximum of 3d20.

GMs may allow, at their discretion, an attack against an unaware opponent to trigger a free Exploit Weakness action, so long as the character succeeds at an opposed Stealth test (resisted by his target's Observation test). In this way, this action can also be used to represent attempts to ambush, whether with an intent to knock out an opponent or dispatch them more quietly.

### ***Pass***

The character may decide to spend his turn doing nothing. Passing still uses a character's Standard Action for his turn.

### ***Scare***

The character nominates one enemy within range and attempts to intimidate them into backing down. The character makes a Persuade test, opposed by his target's Discipline test. If this is successful, the target suffers mental damage determined by the character's Display (a method of showing prowess or



otherwise intimidating foes), which also determines the maximum range of this attack. If the character has no specific Display at that moment, he must default to the Steely Glare Display (Close range, 1+[CD]2 mental damage).

### ***Sprint***

The character may move to any point in any zone within Long range. Sprinting over difficult terrain requires a Challenging D2+ Athletics test to maintain footing. If the test fails, the character counts either as having taken a Move action or, at the GM's preference, faces a complication such as tripping over, making too much noise, or not being in Cover at the end of his action. Ranged attacks made against a character who is sprinting (by using a readied action, for example) have their difficulty rating increased by one step.

### ***Use Skill***

Should a character wish to use a skill in any other fashion it will usually require at least one Standard Action. The GM has ultimate decision on how many standard actions a given activity requires takes.