

STELA OBLITERATA

A mid-level desert fantasy adventure

One Page Dungeon Contest 2020

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Inset map produced with [DungeonScrawl](#)

MAP OF THE SICKLE SCARP

This rod points West
and is 1 scale mile

*Apkallu (2):
evil spirit*

*Simurgh:
good spirit*

A. The road-village Alakran by the Notch Pass, fewer than 100 souls. Only goats, pistachios, empty houses, and water to sell. If asked, elders 25% likely to tell a true rumour about each tomb, 25% false. A boy of 12, Gimu, vanished 6 months ago.

1. A bare cedar tree of bronze, 50' tall, blue-green with age, planted in a mound. The axe-marked hollow trunk echoes with groans if struck. Evil-repelling glyphs ring its base. The 8 harpies who nest in the treetop clawed a 2' hole in it. In a tomb 20' under the tree flit 6 undead shadows, kept from rising into the trunk by the glyphs, corpses in gold finery (1650 gp). Lead tablets name the family of Shen-Apru, and say the bronze of the tree was their profit from poaching the King's cedars, 12,000 gp if it can be moved (3 tons).

2. A sandstone slab door near the ridge's top, a hard climb up. Flanking it, reliefs of vulture-headed *apkallu* demons, and over it, a hieratic text: "By the word of the Simurgh, none, be they child or grown, shall open this again."

Inside the tomb paces Chuzema, the *apkallu* who possessed the Governor Narshish after his warlock dealings were found out. If the slab is disturbed, the demon speaks in the voice of the Governor, says that he had found a recipe of eternal life, and begs for a youth on their thirteenth birthday, the only way to open the tomb. In the gullet of Narshish's mummy is the 12-sided jet demon-gem (3000 gp).

In a sacred plaza stands a diorite monolith, tall as a stretching ogre. Four inscriptions on this stela tell of evildoers in the 4th Epoch, banished after death to the "shadow of the sunset," their cryptic crimes in date order, names chiselled out ("XXX").

XXX AND HER HOUSEHOLD. FOR STEALING THE KING'S ROOF.

XXX. GOVERNOR OF WAHATTU. FOR COMMERCE UNLAWFUL.

XXX. TIMEKEEPER. WHOSE ACCIDENTS WERE BY DESIGN.

XXX. HOLY KING. WHO FLED THE FATE OF FLESH BY DRINKING.

You have discovered that this refers to four damnation tombs on the east of the remote Sickle Scarp, where buried souls could not ride the rays of the setting sun to the Blessed Land.

B. Cult cave: Mid-level demoniac cleric Nush, 2 acolytes, 2 gnoll warlocks, 10 cultists, 7 gnolls, and 4 hyenas. When their captive, Gimu (entry A) reaches the day when he is neither boy nor man in 2 weeks, they'll release the demon in tomb 2, and take first Alakran, then the world! Treasure: 400 gp in an urn; silver chalice, bowls and knife (600 gp); a whip that throws fiery splashes; and 3 musky *potions of heroism* in skulls sealed with tar.

*Harpies in tree (1) drop
blinding guano, leader
charms with song*

*Borkar (4):
golem fists,
dire wolf bite*

3. On the far wall of a blood-stained chamber is an array of knobs with hieroglyphs and the legend "Learn from the souls damned before me, push to say yes and pull to say no." The knobs read:

BIRD LION FISH TREE FIRE
BONE LEAF KILL KING MOON

To open the tomb: in any order, push TREE and pull LEAF (the leafless cedar from 1), push BIRD and pull KILL (the vulture from 2 eats the dead but does not kill). One wrong move and the walls slam together for huge damage, 5% chance the puzzle gets stuck forever.

Here lies the royal time-keeper Tigmani. Her marvellous clockworks' malfunctions had a way of killing her enemies, as painted in gruesome murals - frog of boiling steam, crushing oxen, poisoned love goddess, incinerating mirror, etc. The deactivated inventions rest here, with gold, orichalcum, and semiprecious stone inlays, 1500 gp in total.

4. A façade of cyclopean pillars, sentinel idols, and hieratic screeds damning a nameless king for taking "more than taxes." The lead-plated doors take six strong persons to open. Behind, the bar to shut them is raised, mockingly.

The tomb murals name king Belu. They show his dead queen and child, his search for eternal life, discovery of a blood-drinking recipe, ravages on the people, and the coup against him. In truth, he set up his own removal and burial, and now haunts the west as a vampire, changing alias each generation, sneaking in and out as a mist by a grated exit tunnel (C).

In the tomb (inset): 50' hidden pitfalls (X); three heartless vampire thralls (as wights, Y); and Borkar, a lumbering flesh golem in mummy cloth with a dire wolf's head (Z). In Belu's furnished bier-room (T): 10,000 gp in cash from sale of tomb goods, magic horseless chariot wheels (2x speed), magic bow that temporarily doubles each arrow shot from it.

