

The God-King's Curse

"The God-King's Curse" is a Swords & Sorceries adventure for the Fifth Edition of the world's most popular fantasy role-playing game.

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On the Cover
TBD

Introduction

Zyirra, the City of a Thousand Gods, is an ancient, sweltering trading port on a rocky island on the coast of a stormy sea. Its houses, temples, and fortresses rise in endless tiers of crumbling stone. A few days ago, the residents and shopkeepers of the Street of Silks hired the adventurers to protect them against a haunting. Other than threats from local thugs who resent the competition for their protection racket, it has been an uneventful job. But it may draw the adventurers into deadly secrets at the bedeviled heart of a fallen empire.

The God-King's Curse is optimized for five 3rd-level adventurers. Some encounters recommend ways to make things challenging for a substantially stronger party or easier for a substantially weaker party.

How to Get Here

The crumbling city-state Zyirra can be located in any sea where the weather is hot and humid in the summers and rainy but rarely cold in the winters. It is a fractious place, once the heart of an empire that fell long ago, now governed by the invaders' corrupt descendants.

City and Empire

All information in this section is readily available to the adventurers. It may be useful to present it in handouts or cards that the players can review when a detail comes up.

Zyirra and Surkat: Zyirra once was the capital of an empire under the patronage of Surkat the Conqueror: the God-King, the devil-god of rivers and shallows, lakes and the underworld, Father of Furies, patron of sailors, traders, and soldiers. Surkat is said to be both consort and rival of Tiamat, the dragon-mother, queen of the deep seas and primordial Chaos, embodiment of grasping greed, power and vengeance.

The Samarran Conquerors: Perhaps 200 years ago, an invasion from a rival kingdom, Samarra in the sun-drenched east, overthrew the infamously ruthless Zyirran Empire. The priests and paladins of Samarra crippled the power and influence of the cruel cult of Surkat and built new temples to their gods atop the ruins of the old temples. The Samarrans salted the mainland fields that once fed the city, forcing Zyirra to trade with Samarra for crops. Even Zyirra's legendary docks and fisheries had to be repaired and rebuilt. The Samarran priest-king of Zyirra today is Akila Utusham, brother to the distant high king of Samarra.

The Holy Guard: A Holy Guard of Samarran soldiers and priests has remained, generation after generation, to enforce the rule of the priest-king Akila Utusham. Samarran rule of Zyirra is uneasy and often corrupt. The church of Surkat thrives, its temples allowed to be rebuilt. Its most passionate adherents blame their the empire's fall on their ancestors who abandoned their bloody-minded god. Those Zyirrans despise the Samarran occupiers and often fight them.

The Thousand Gods

The deities featured in this adventure represent the following domains, found in the *Player's Handbook* and *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*. These are only the most prominent of the literally countless gods worshipped in Zyirra. Feel free to substitute equivalent gods from your campaign; Surkat could be a face of Asmodeus, for example. Note that the Zyirrans and Samarrans regard Tiamat as as the goddess of primordial chaos and abyssal deeps, chaotic evil in alignment.

DEITY	ALIGNMENT	CULTURE	DOMAINS	SYMBOL
Mala, the earth mother	NG	Samarran	Life, Nature	Stalks of grain
Surkat the Conqueror, the god-king of Zyirra	LE	Zyirran	Forge, War	Shark impaled by a spear
Theruun the Thunderer	N	Samarran	Tempest, War	Thunderbolt
Tiamat the Plunderer, the Dragon Queen	CE	Zyirran	Knowledge, Trickery	Dragon head with five claw marks
Tyirro, the sky-father	LN	Samarran	Knowledge, Light	Solar half-disk on a flat horizontal line
Zheros, the Dying Goddess	NE	Samarran	Grave	Chimera with the heads of a bull, a lion, and a serpent

General Features

Zyirra has the following general features:

Terrain: Narrow, twisting, uneven streets. Looming buildings of crumbling stone. Night-black alleys. Gutters slick with filth.

Weather: Hot and often muggy, even in the endless shade of the city. A brilliant sun lights up the blue sea but rarely makes it to the city streets. Occasional rain, usually mild but sometimes savage.

Sights: The half-light of the noon sun filtering down the narrow gaps between buildings. A rare stab of light when the sun stands just overhead for an instant. Merchants in shops and stalls offer goods and vices from every part of the known world. Beggars, thieves and footpads lurk in the deep shadows, watching for opportunities. Shrines to gods and spirits, known and unknown, stand in alcoves and gaps however small.

Sounds: The loud exhortations of competing and ruthless merchants. The pleas of beggars and pitiful children. Fragments of chanted prayers in every language from shrines and unseen temples. The raucous squawks of gulls that lose their way and are brought down by flung stones. The bells that warn of a person of wealth coming through and the growls of guards for those who fail to make way.

Languages: The Common tongue is the language both of Zyirra's Broken Empire and the far-flung Samarran kingdoms. Nevertheless, accent and dialect clearly identify a speaker's origin unless the speaker makes a **Charisma (Deception)** roll against a listener's passive **Insight**.

Appearance: Zyirrans and Samarrans look much alike, most of them swarthy with thick dark hair. Zyirrans tend to wear colorful tunics, trousers, and cloth hats. Those who wear armor wear it dyed or painted brightly. Samarrans tend to wear loose-fitting, multicolor robes, with hoods to protect against unwanted spills from above. People of every strange ethnicity and culture can be seen in the streets, shops, and temples.

Female Samarran Names (roll 1d10): Aea, Antum, Gamelat, Gemekala, Irkalla, Puabi, Silili, Sirnada, Taram, Urnina.

Male Samarran Names (roll 1d10): Bazi, Dadanum, Damuzi, Duququm, Ibi, Ilshubani, Kullassina, Singamil, Urnammu, Watrum.

Female Zyirran Names (roll 1d10): Adiya, Annata, Azikal, Birakan, Izezaer, Maduisur, Silba, Sursa, Tazin, Zyo.

Male Zyirran Names (roll 1d10): Abizur, Attar, Enozyir, Khalbas, Mittan, Paltar, Surattan, Sureno, Utusur, Zyiryaton.

The Street of Silks

The Street of Silks earned its name when its stone and timber shops and warehouses were entirely dedicated to silk-sellers and weavers. After centuries of change, countless other kinds of merchants and crafters have moved in. Its four winding blocks house nearly a thousand residents, whose cramped apartments rise four or five stories overhead.

The Hauntings

For the last few nights, a series of hauntings have outraged the neighborhood's families and merchants:

- **Half a dozen residents and shopkeepers** saw and heard the spirit of a deceased, furious woman in tattered, bloody robes in the middle of the night, whispering to the uncomprehending living.

- **Arshut Urdanel**, a seller of cooked meats, stumbled from her third-floor apartment singing a strange, angry song in words no one understood. A neighbor shook her awake.
- **Aqhat the Lender**, who lives in his own small stone building, brushed past servants and guards and walked onto the street in his night-robe. Only his wife's shouts stirred guards to drag him back inside, where he came to his senses.
- **Tani Abotrys**, a weaver, rose from bed while her wives slept, went to the window, and fell 40 feet to her death.
- **A few barn owls** have recently come to nest in the neighborhood. Local legend says owls are drawn to death and pursue restless spirits.

Confronting the Ghost

The usual authorities have failed to exorcise the ghost.

Priests at the district's dozen shrines and small temples have sprinkled holy water, posted icons and warding symbols, and said prayers, all to no effect. Some priests say such a curse is what nonbelievers can expect when they sacrifice to the wrong gods.

The Holy Guard rarely bothers with this part of the city except when it is time to collect taxes. It says ghosts are the province of the priests.

The gangster Nikkal Surkaturab, who runs a protection racket on the Street of Silks, scoffs that she has her hands full keeping everyone safe from rival gangs; she can't be expected to stop people from going crazy.

Aqhat the Lender, terrified at the chance that he may have been exposed to his neighbors without his guards, lost patience. He put out a bounty of 400 gp to anyone who rids the neighborhood of the ghost. That attracted mercenaries, madmen, con artists, and the adventurers to the Street of Silks.

A Dim Morning

For the past three days, the adventurers have had a small, second-floor apartment with a window that overlooks the Street of Silks. They have not yet encountered the ghost or had a useful lead on finding it. The sun rises somewhere, seen only by a slow, slight rise in the light filtering down gray between the buildings overhead. Arshut Urdanel, the meatseller, brings them a parcel each morning for breakfast. (That is all part of the adventurers' daily lifestyle expenses.)

Eshmunamash

As they breakfast, a rival greets the adventurers from the street. He is Eshmunamash, a notorious rogue who claims friendship with everyone as well as potent skills in divination and the more subtle kinds of sorcery (the kinds that have few visible effects). Eshmunamash cries up to them in a tone that affects injury:

"In the night, I confronted the spirit! I fought it with holy symbols in hand. It cried out in wrath, but my faith was strong. The ghost fled like mist in the sun. Yet wicked Aqhat refuses to pay! Three witnesses told the tale, yet Aqhat refuses! I will press my case. But I will miss you, my friends, now that the job is done."

If the adventurers press him for details, Eshmunamash answers unconvincingly while never admitting dishonesty. His three witnesses—Ashtsaph, Gebal, and Zimrida—are known drunkards, willing to say anything for half a piece of silver. Eshmunamash repeatedly emphasizes the many opportunities for strong-handed adventurers in other parts of the city.

Quite suddenly, Eshmunamash spots someone coming down the block, makes hurried excuses, and flees.

Nikkal

The newcomer is Nikkal Surkaturab, leader of a gang that extorts protection money on the Street of Silks. She comes down the street with her four most dangerous thugs. Nikkal is a hard-eyed woman of indeterminate age, wiry and dark, with thick black hair cut short, her face and hands scarred from countless fights. She wears fine robes and gold rings. Her followers—Alunhan, Amma, Tammuz, and Yemurukat—are arrogant but alert.

Nikkal stops below the adventurers' window and calls up a greeting.

- She says that their tax is nearly due. The tax is only 1 gp per week per head, nothing exorbitant. If they say they will refuse to pay, she shrugs and says "We'll see." Her guards laugh cruelly.
- She asks mockingly whether the adventurers slew a ghost in the night.
- She says that they are fools if they think Aqhat will ever pay them a copper piece. Aqhat did not become the richest man on the Street of Silks by giving up his wealth willingly.

The Haunting

The adventurers' conversation with Nikkal is interrupted by a woman's cries for help, down the street. Septy, the middle-aged wife of prosperous Hurumal the Plumber, says the ghost has possessed her husband. In a rush, Septy says:

- She found Hurumal working on a tablet of lead in their shop.
- When she saw his face, he looked insane.
- Hurumal hissed at her, held the tablet to his breast, and stumbled out the door and eastward.
- Septy says she will pay 100 gp to whomever brings her husband home safe.

Nikkal sends Amma, Tammuz, and Yemurukat running down the alley in pursuit of Hurumal.

The Chase

When the thugs set out, Hurumal is standing upon a wagon and crying out, over and over, in a strange, hoarse voice as a pair of owls circle watchfully overhead:

"Woe unto Zyirra! The Dragon has opened the Crypt of Furies!"

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At that distance, an adventurer can make out his words with a DC 15 **Wisdom (Perception)** roll. Word quickly begins to spread. Some people make holy signs in dread. Others' eyes light up with avarice. Any adventurer can stop to ask what is amiss, but that takes up one round.

When Hurumal sees pursuit, he begins to run, 180 feet ahead of the thugs. The owls follow.

The thugs' lead on the adventurers depends on how quickly the adventurers set out after Hurumal. If they are not prepared, do they pause to gather equipment and don armor?

- **Grabbing gear:** It takes each adventurer a single combat round to grab their essential weapons, shields, arcane implements, holy symbols, and so on.
- **Donning armor:** It is possible that adventurers who habitually wear armor have already put it on. If the question is not clear, allow each a DC 11 **Wisdom** saving throw to have donned

armor during the conversations with Eshmunamash and Nikkal. Otherwise, it takes 1 minute to don light armor, 5 minutes to don medium armor, or 10 minutes to don heavy armor, taking 10 combat rounds per minute.

- **Getting to the street:** Rushing out of the apartment, down stairs, and to the street covers 60 feet. An adventurer can simply leap the 10 feet down to the street as an action, but that requires a DC 10 **Strength (Athletics)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check. If it fails, the adventurer takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall and is prone. If it succeeds, the adventurer is prone but takes no damage. If it succeeds and the roll is 15 or higher, the adventurer takes no damage and lands on their feet.

Obstacles and Opportunities

Hurumal is running for the Well of Sacrifice, a circuitous 600 feet from the adventurers' door. The thugs and Hurumal travel 60 feet per turn.

If the adventurers have mounts, they are awkward in the crowded streets. Every round, a riding adventurer must make a DC 13 **Wisdom (Animal Handling)** check to make progress. If it fails, the animal balks in confusion as pedestrians shout in anger.

During the chase, the adventurers have three risky opportunities to gain ground where their quarry and rivals were slowed.

- **A crowded alley:** Each adventurer can attempt a shortcut through a 60-foot alley cluttered with crates, sleeping drunks, and surprised footpads. That requires a DC 13 **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check. If that fails, the alley is difficult terrain. Taking the street to the same spot means traveling 120 feet. Hurumal and the thugs do not take the alley.
- **A crowd of street vendors:** Each adventurer must push past 60 feet of carts and shouting merchants to gain ground. That requires a DC 13 **Strength (Athletics)** check. If that fails, the crowd counts as difficult terrain. Hurumal and the thugs fail at their Strength (Athletics) checks, so each adventurer who succeeds gains 30 feet on them.
- **A shortcut:** Each adventurer can attempt to predict where Hurumal is going, or commit to following the lead of a fellow adventurer who makes the prediction. Predicting Huruma's destination requires a DC 13 **Wisdom (Insight)** check. An adventurer whose roll succeeds realizes that Hurumal must be heading for the Well of Sacrifice. They and each who followed them can take a shortcut down an alley, taking 60 feet to reach a spot that takes 120 feet to reach by the street. Each adventurer who failed the check, or who followed one who failed, thinks Hurumal is heading for a temple half a block in the wrong direction. Those adventurers each travel 60 feet in the wrong direction before realizing their error.

Catching Up

If adventurers catch up to the thugs, two thugs turn and threaten them, hoping to frighten them off while their friend seizes Hurumal. If the adventurers persist, the thugs attack, but if one thug dies or falls unconscious the other flees.

If the adventurers catch Hurumal before he reaches the Well of Sacrifices, the ghost possessing him attempts to possess an adventurer and take the lead tablet to the Well of Sacrifice. Owls in the shadows overhead utter piercing cries. Otherwise, the thugs catch Hurumal at the well.

Distance from Hurumal

You can use this table to track each pursuer's progress. The thugs move at the same speed as Hurumal, dashing 60 feet per round.

ROUND	THUG:	THUG:	THUG:	ADV:	ADV:	ADV. 3	ADV:	ADV:
1	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
	<i>At the end of round 10, Hurumal reaches the Well of Sacrifice if not yet caught.</i>							
11								

The Well of Sacrifice

The Well of Sacrifice is a deep rainwater cistern where believers throw sacrifices—usually valuables but sometimes living creatures—to please gods or spirits. The cistern is surrounded by a wall five feet high and thick. Stairs lead up to the edge of the pit. The ghost's goal is to plunge a possessed body into the well while clutching the tablet.

Hurumal cornered: If the adventurers do not catch up before, the thugs have Hurumal cornered near the stairs, but seem to wish they did not. One thug is crawling away in horror, his face and body withered and aged 30 years since a few minutes ago. Another flees in terror. The last thug, white-faced, draws a *kopis*—a sort of forward-curving scimitar—to slay the haunted man. The ghost attacks the last thug with its Withering Touch.

The thug looks relieved to see the adventurers. He desperately welcomes the help in killing Hurumal. If the adventurers attack the last thug, he flees.

When the adventurers come within 60 feet, the ghost uses its Horrifying Visage to frighten them away. The thugs, having already suffered it, are immune.

The pursuing owls watch hungrily from the shadows, as if waiting for the spirit in Hurumal to take flight as their prey.

Hurumal's death: Hurumal has 8 hit points. Should he be reduced to 0, the possession ends and the ghost is seen clearly, an ethereal image of a savagely angry woman in the tattered, bloody robes of a Samarran priestess. An adventurer who is familiar with Zyrira and has a passive **Religion** score of 13 or higher recognizes the visage. It is Aziyana of the temple of Tyirro the Sky-Father, chief of the gods of the Samarrans who conquered Zyrira. An

adventurer who recognizes her and succeeds at a DC 15 **Intelligence (Religion)** roll, or has a passive **Religion** score of 15 or higher, knows she was charged with maintaining the Labyrinth of Zyirra. That assignment was once honorable but is scorned these days by ambitious priests and priestesses.

Into the pool: Should Hurumal die or fall unconscious, Aziyana attempts to possess a thug (or an adventurer if no thug is within 5 feet) and make the victim pick up the tablet, climb the stairs, and plunge into the well. In the well, she deliberately inhales the fetid water. The drowning victim soon reaches 0 hit points and the possession ends. The ghost vanishes, never to be seen again. The victim must make death saves while companions fish them out. The hunting owls fly away, disappointed.

If Hurumal drops the tablet and the ghost fails to possess a victim, the thug picks the tablet up, reads it, and realizes what it implies. He rushes it to Nikkal unless the adventurers intervene.

For a weak party: The ghost's spell save DC is 11, not 13, and its Withering Touch inflicts 8 (2d6+1) damage.

For a strong party: Add one or two more thugs working for Nikkal.

Unclean Waters

Anyone swimming in the pool must make a DC 13 **Constitution** saving throw or become infected by disease. A victim who inhaled the water makes the roll at disadvantage. After 1d6 hours, an infected adventurer gains a level of exhaustion due to fatigue and nausea. After each long rest, the infected adventurer must make a DC 13 **Constitution** saving throw. If it succeeds, the adventurer recovers from the disease. If it fails, the adventurer gains no benefit from the long rest and gains a level of exhaustion.

A senior priest at a nearby temple could cast *lesser restoration* to heal a diseased adventurer. It requires a gift or sacrifice worth 50 gp. Unless the diseased adventurer is a member of the temple, obtaining the service requires a DC 12 **Charisma (Persuasion)** check. Finding a temple and attempting to negotiate the cure takes 1d4 hours per temple.

The Tablet

If the adventurers recover the lead tablet, they can read what Hurumal inscribed:

*"I, Aziyana, curse the deceitful one
who bears the face and name
Biraktal son of Belzur,
spawn of chaos,
pretender to the Samarran faith,
priest of wicked Tiamat.
May his eyes fail,
his tongue fall mute,
his hunger be never sated,
his bowels bind themselves up,
his strength become weakness,
his honor become scorn,
his sleep turn to death,
his memory fade,
and his exhortations go unheard.
By my sacrifice, may the gods find Biraktal
amid the jewels of the Crypt of Furies
and punish his betrayal."*

It is common knowledge that the Crypt of Furies was built centuries ago to entomb the old empire's most zealous champions and terrible devils—and their greatest treasures. Entry is forbidden except to a handful of priests of the Sky-Father, but the watch has become uneven over the years.

An adventurer who is familiar with Zyirra and has a passive **Religion** score of 15 or higher recognizes Biraktal as a prominent Samarran merchant who visits Zyirra only occasionally and never for more than a few days.

Without the Tablet

If the adventurers fail to seize the tablet, they can learn its contents by asking Septy, who recalls them clearly. Failing that, they hear breathless rumors from Eshmunamash of the Crypt of Furies having been opened for looting. He claims to know a secret way through the labyrinth to the treasures at its heart, which he offers for only one tenth of the total that they find, with 100 gp up front. If they pay, he says the secret, which he heard from a priest charged with maintaining the labyrinth, is to follow every other right turn except where an apparition appears, and in that case to turn left.

Other Motivations

The lure of uncounted treasures may be enough to attract the adventurers to the Crypt of Furies. If they need more incentive, have well-informed, tough-minded NPCs such as Aqhat and Nikkal express uncharacteristic fear of what may come. The Crypt of Furies holds terrible devils in check. If servants of Tiamat, the great Dragon, have opened it, the whole city may be at risk. Surely heroes with the adventurers' talents wish to stop that.

Getting Paid

If the adventurers destroy the ghost or it vanishes after they confront it, Aqhat the Lender pays the agreed 400 gp.

Experience

- Defeating the ghost earns 1,100 XP.
- Defeating Nikkal's thugs earns 100 XP per thug, including a multiplier for their numbers.
- Saving Hurumal earns 750 XP.
- Getting the curse tablet without letting the thugs seize it earns 375 XP.

The Crypt of Furies

The players have this information or can easily learn it from any NPC:

Most Zyirrans see only the entryway of the Crypt of Furies: a small, square, windowless marble temple where a fortress once stood. The temple's marble double doors are engraved with reliefs of the gods of Samarra conquering the god-king Surkat and his winged devils, the Furies.

For centuries, the doors of the crypt have opened only twice a year, at the solstices. Then the Holy Guard in full panoply would accompany the two Tyirro clerics charged with maintaining the crypt. The clerics would go in for a few hours; the soldiers would stand guard outside. The doors refused every other physical or magical attempt to open them.

Over the long years, the district around the the crypt emerged as one of the poorest and most desperate of Zyirra. At first, the ruins of the old fortress-temple and rumors of hauntings dissuaded merchants from building. Over time, the city-state's poorest stole and used the stones of the ruins. But the district remained a slum. Familiarity with the marble crypt

bred contempt. People came to ignore it, except to steal and deface its fine engravings and statues.

The Crypt Opens

Rumor races across the city after haunted Hurumal declares that the crypt has been opened. An adventurous thief finds the doors unlocked. Word spreads. A handful of desperate and foolish looters venture in and never come out. Prophets, priests, and the Holy Guard gather.

Ease of access to the crypt depends on when the adventurers arrive.

Morning

If the adventurers rush to the crypt immediately after dealing with Aziyana's ghost they find locals milling around, sharing rumors, working up their courage, and in some cases growing more and more alarmed.

A phalanx of 50 soldiers of the Holy Guard has just arrived. Their captain means to block the crypt entrance, but in the chaos the soldiers are too occupied with shouting, shoving, and warding off thrown rocks and garbage to maintain formation. From time to time, a file of ten soldiers that is not busy fighting breaks out in song, singing a war-hymn to invoke the blessings of Theruun the Thunderer, steel their comrades' courage, and intimidate the rioters.

Meanwhile, prophets cry out portents:

"The Furies are released!"

"The God-King Surkat returns!"

"The Empire lives again!"

"Zheros shall sweep Zyrira clean of evil!"

The players can invent their strategy get through the chaos. They can enter the crypt with a single DC 10 check by a single adventurer. It might be **Charisma (Intimidation)** if they threaten their way through, for example, **Dexterity (Stealth)** if they look for a way to dart through without being noticed, **Wisdom (Insight)** to judge when the crowd is most likely to sway away from their path, **Strength (Athletics)** to find the best way to climb over debris, and so on. If the check fails, the adventurers come under attack by 5 rioters or 3 Holy Guard soldiers.

For a weak party: The rioters or soldiers fling missile weapons but retreat from melee combat.

For a strong party: They face 2d6 rioters or 2d4 soldiers.

Afternoon

Holy Guard reinforcements have come, forming a perimeter around the crypt in three phalanxes of 50 soldiers each, singing war-hymns to steel their courage and intimidate the rioters. Each phalanx is supported by 15 mercenary skirmishers with slings. Rioters have knocked over wagons for cover against the skirmishers' slings. Dozens of armed acolytes of Surkat have joined the rioters. A priest from the temple of Surkat is having a shouted argument with the Holy Guard captain. The followers of Surkat say that the Samarran guard has failed, and now it is time for Surkat's acolytes to protect the crypt from desecration.

The adventurers can attempt to get into the crypt as described in **MORNING** on page XX, but two adventurers must make DC 13 checks, one to get through the riot and another to get past the soldiers. If the same adventurer attempts both checks, both checks are at disadvantage. If the first fails, they come under attack by 7 Surkat temple acolytes. If the second fails, they come under attack by 5 soldiers and 2 skirmishers.

For a weak party: The adventurers face half as many rioters or soldiers.

For a strong party: They face 3d6 Surkat temple acolytes and/or 2d6 soldiers.

Night

The riot has settled into a series of skirmishes between the Surkat acolytes, the Holy Guard, and rioters, sometimes all at the same time. The soldiers' morale has become shaky as several have fallen and no further reinforcements have been sent. Barricades block many streets and alleys.

The adventurers can attempt to get into the crypt as described in **MORNING** on page XX, but three adventurers must make DC 15 checks: one to get through the riot, one to get past the Surkat acolytes, and another to get past the soldiers. If the same adventurer attempts more than one check, all by that adventurer are at disadvantage.

If the first check fails, they come under attack by 10 rioters led by a thug. If the second fails, they come under attack by 7 Surkat temple acolytes and the Surkat priest. If the third fails, they come under attack by 7 soldiers and the Holy Guard captain.

For a weak party: The adventurers face half as many rioters or soldiers.

For a strong party: They face 3d8 rioters, 3d8 Surkat temple acolytes, or 2d8 soldiers.

Experience

- **Morning:** Defeating 5 rioters is worth 100 XP; defeating 3 soldiers is worth 300 XP; getting into the labyrinth without combat earns 200 XP
- **Afternoon:** Defeating 7 acolytes earns 175 XP; defeating 5 soldiers and 2 slingers is worth 750 XP; getting into the labyrinth without combat earns 375 XP
- **Night:** Defeating 10 rioters and a thug is worth 600 XP; defeating 7 acolytes and a priest is worth 1,300 XP; defeating 7 soldiers and the captain is worth 1,600 XP; getting into the labyrinth without combat earns 750 XP

The Labyrinth

Stairs lead down from the marble crypt, winding deep into the bedrock of the island. They emerge in the first corridor of a granite-walled labyrinth. The labyrinth walls are in countless places carved with reliefs or painted with frescoes. The designs originally depicted the triumphant conquests of the Zyirran gods, but those have been defaced and replaced by images of the Samarran gods triumphant.

The corridors lead first to a storage chamber that holds supplies for cleaning the labyrinth and crypt, and a ceremonial crypt and shrine.

The False Crypt

The initial shrine is a diversion. Its coffins have been thrown open and ancient corpses disturbed.

On the central coffins, an adventurer with a passive **History** score of 12 or higher recognizes the icons of the greatest villains of the fallen empire: Shalmanisar the Last Emperor, Panna the Assassin Queen, Aminu the Warlord, Mardeen the Archpriest, and Naheerseen the Magus. The corpses' clothing and the coffins' furnishings do not reflect those famous personages' glory.

On the outer coffins, an adventurer with a passive **Religion** score of 12 or higher or a passive **Arcana** of 15 or higher recognizes the icons of the Furies, the mightiest devils said to work the will of Surkat on Earth and in hell. Their coffins are empty.

The bodies of three cultists, burned by holy fire, lie around a fresco dedicated to the victory of the Samarran gods on the far wall. A secret door there leads to the true crypt, opened by caretaker priests who touch the foreheads of the gods in a certain pattern. But when anyone who is not a priest of Tjirro or Zheros enters the chamber, the secret door seals

and becomes a trap. Then anyone, even a priest of Tyirro or Zheros, who attempts to open it suffers 8d10 radiant damage from a blast of searing light and heat, halved on a DC 15 **Dexterity** saving throw. The secret door does not open, no matter what, until no mortal but a priest of Tyirro or Zheros remains in the labyrinth.

Into the Labyrinth

In the labyrinth, guardians can be heard, sometimes very distant and sometimes shockingly near: a bull-like lowing; a profound roar; a lethal hissing. Occasionally the adventurers find the ravaged and burned remains of looters but no spoor of guardians.

The map divides the labyrinth into five zones.

Zone 1: Serpents

After the adventurers enter Zone 1, from time to time they hear the lethal hissing of serpents, sometimes distant and sometimes shockingly near.

If the adventurers take the priests' route through Zone 1, they encounter no guardians. Otherwise, at some point decided by the DM, they encounter 4 infernal serpents with scales that look like pure gold, lurking in crevices or the corpse of an intruder. Make a **Dexterity** (Stealth) check for the serpents. If the roll is equal to or higher than any adventurer's passive **Perception**, that adventurer is surprised in the first round of their hissing attack. Poisonous liquid death drips from their fangs. The golden scales of a slain serpent crumble to ash in an hour.

For a weak party: Remove a serpent.

For a strong party: Add one or two serpents.

Zone 1 Shrines

- **Vipers:** The infernal vipers of Zheros, rising from cracks in the earth
- **Zheros:** The Dying Queen, wearing Samarran funereal robes and mask, escorting the dead to the underworld; she holds up a rod topped with her holy symbol in gold; on close inspection, an adventurer with passive **Investigation** of 15 or who makes a DC 15 **Intelligence** (**Investigation**) check finds that the holy symbol can be pried loose and taken
- **The Defeat of the Last Emperor:** Shalmanisar is a mace-wielding warrior wearing a jeweled crown and elaborate robes, clutching his throat while his beautiful queen pours powder into his goblet from a ring on her left hand
- **The Defeat of the Warlord:** Aminu is a huge, scimitar-wielding warrior in an iron mask and scale mail, overrun by a Samarran chariot
- **The Defeat of the Archpriest:** Mardeen is a cruel-looking, gaunt man brandishing the holy shark's tooth of Surkat, pierced by lightning from the heavens
- **The Defeat of the Magus:** Naheerseen is a surprisingly large, powerful man clutching a clay tablet and a scroll, felled by the spears of Samarran hoplites
- **The Defeat of the Assassin Queen:** Panna wears a long hooded cloak that does not quite disguise her sheer robes and elaborate headdress, surrounded by spear-wielding halflings in rustic robes and sandals

Zone 2: Lions

After the adventurers enter Zone 2, from time to time they hear profound, deep roars, sometimes distant and sometimes shockingly near.

If the adventurers take the priests' route through Zone 2, they encounter no guardians. Otherwise, at some point decided by the DM, they are stalked by 2 infernal lions. Make a **Dexterity** (Stealth) check for the lions. If the roll is equal to or higher than any adventurer's

passive **Perception**, that adventurer is surprised in the first round of their pouncing, roaring attack. Deathly fire belches from their mouths as they roar.

For a weak party: Remove a lion.

For a strong party: Each lion has 40 hit points.

Zone 2 Shrines

- **The Holy Guardians:** An infernal bull and cow, an infernal lion and lioness, and a horde of infernal vipers all stand around Zheros, the Dying Queen; all are bowing before her holy symbol, a golden medallion engraved with a chimera
- **The Holy Lion:** An infernal lion with a mane like fire and the dead around its mighty feet
- **The Holy Lioness:** An infernal lioness crouching, her eyes like fire, about to pounce

Zone 3: Priestess

The adventurers have an encounter in this zone only if they entered the crypt at night. They hear occasional distant prayers, see glimpses of healthful light, and then meet a stern Samarran priestess. She is one of two priests charged with maintaining the crypt, cautiously following the memorized path through the twisting corridors. Her name is Asharra. She holds holy symbols of Tyirro and Zheros before her at all times, one in each hand.

Asharra has the same abilities and statistics as the temple priest of Surkat but with different spells.

Asharra has encountered two groups of terrified looters already, and she is impatient and skeptical with the adventurers. She tries to avoid a battle but she urges them to flee, for the guardians of the labyrinth are terrible. She refuses to explain what they are or their nature. Asharra's mission is to confirm that the inner crypt—the true crypt—has not been violated, and to seal it and the outer crypt against further intrusion.

If the adventurers talk Asharra into explaining her presence, she says that she is one of two priestesses of Tyirro charged with the labyrinth's upkeep. The elder priestess, Aziyana, disappeared a week ago.

If the adventurers ask about Biraktal, Asharra says he is a Samarran merchant, often away traveling, who supports the temple.

If the adventurers show Asharra the tablet of Hurumal or say what it contained, she becomes deeply afraid. She smothers her scruples about putting the treasures of the crypt at risk and asks the adventurers to accompany her into the inner crypt. If followers of Tiamat are there, they must be destroyed before they release powers that will devastate the city. If the adventurers make common cause with Asharra, she offers them the benefits of two *cure wounds* spells and one casting of *lesser restoration*. Going forward, she keeps the labyrinth's infernal guardians at bay with her holy symbols.

If the adventurers attack Asharra, she retreats. She leads them to the infernal bulls, which she keeps at bay with holy symbols, and goes to the heart of the maze while the bulls distract them. She dies fighting Biraktal.

Zone 3 Shrines

- **Tyirro Opens the Way:** The Sky-Father, supreme Samarran god, gestures toward the earth where Zheros and her infernal guardians rise from crevices; Tyirro's holy symbol stands above his head in the sky, in gold; on close inspection, an adventurer with passive **Investigation** of 15 or who makes a DC 15 **Intelligence (Investigation)** check finds that the holy symbol can be pried loose and taken
- **The War of the Gods:** A great fresco shows an epic battle of myth.
 - *Astarra of the Sick Moon* quails before the sunlight of Istanna the Sun Queen.
 - *Lelutha the Hungry*, a vampiric spider-goddess, retreats from auroral beauty of Illiosus of the Dawn and the joyful madness of Taltaan the Hunter.

- *Tiamat the Plunderer*, the many-headed dragon of chaos and the deeps, falls before mighty Theruun the Thunderer, one of his eyes in her jaws and one of his hands in another set of her jaws but his right hand plunging a lightning spear into her breast.
- *Surkat the Conqueror*, surrounded by winged devils, flees from the sky-spanning might of Tyyirro the Sky-Father.

Zone 4: Bulls

After the adventurers enter Zone 2, from time to time they hear an angry, bull-like lowing, sometimes distant and sometimes shockingly near.

If the adventurers take the priests' route through Zone 4, they encounter no guardians. Otherwise, at some point decided by the DM, they are pursued by 2 infernal bulls. Make a Dexterity (Stealth) check for the bulls. If the roll is equal to or higher than any adventurer's passive **Perception**, that adventurer is surprised in the first round of their charging, bellowing attack. Deathly fire rises from the falls of their stamping hooves.

For a weak party: Remove a bull.

For a strong party: Each bull has 50 hit points.

Zone 4 Shrines

- **The Infernal Bull:** The holy bull of Zheros glares, its horns lowered menacingly, bellowing fire
- **The Infernal Cow:** The holy cow of Zheros stands tall over the overthrown city Zyyirra itself

Zone 5: Biraktal

The final labyrinth encounter is not a guardian but an intruder. In life, it was half man and half blue dragon, blessed by Tiamat, and often went about disguised magically as an ordinary human merchant. But it was slain by necrotic powers and rose again as a hideous corpse—a ghast. It wears blasted armor. The priest Asharra recognizes the armor and some of the deathly, half-draconic facial features as Biraktal, a merchant and supposed devotee of Tyyirro.

Biraktal does not immediately attack. He says in a rasp:

“Go no further. The ritual must conclude. We shall bring forth the sleeping Fury as a sacrifice to the Great Dragon. Tiamat shall hear our prayers and fill us with the endless power of the abyss.”

If the adventurers question him, they find the ghast has remnants of its living memory and obsessions. It reveals its scheme in a croaking hiss from its dead throat, thinking any delay will make the scheme's success more likely. Biraktal says:

- **Disguise:** He went in magical disguise among the Samarran temple for years.
- **Secrets:** He sought the magical secrets of the temples of Tyyirro and Zheros.
- **The Plan:** He and his colleagues in the service of Tiamat prepared a ritual. They meant to open the wards that bound the Furies of Surkat, but only one, and only enough to draw the Fury forth helplessly. Then they would sacrifice the devil itself to Tiamat.
- **Aziyana:** Biraktal led the abduction of the priestess Aziyana, caretaker of the crypt. He oversaw her torment and interrogation under castings of *zone of truth*. Eventually, she revealed the safe path through the labyrinth. Then he murdered her.
- **The Ritual:** In the inner crypt, Biraktal led the ritual. But he was too hasty. He paid for his arrogance. The powers that he invoked triggered curses laid down by Zheros, destroying him but raising him up again in this ghastly form. The other priests continued the ritual as Biraktal staggered away in horror.

An adventurer with a passive **Arcana** score of 15 or higher suspects that Biraktal's scheme is sheer insanity.

When the adventurers cannot be stalled any further and attempt to push past, Biraktal attacks.

For a weak party: The half-dragon ghaſt wears no armor and has AC 13.

For a ſtrong party: The half-dragon ghaſt has 80 hit points.

Zone 5 Shrines

- **The Chimera:** Zheros as chimera, ſimultaneously bull, lion, and ſerpent, all wearing the crowns of hell

Rest in the Labyrinth

If the adventurers attempt to reſt in the labyrinth, they have a 50% chance each hour of being attacked by 1d6 lemures, dead ſervants of Surkat cursed to haunt this place, all but mindleſs in their hunger, grief, hatred, and pain.

For a weak party: 1d4 lemures appear.

For a ſtrong party: 2d4 lemures appear.

Encounters

- Defeating 4 infernal ſerpents earns 800 XP; carefully avoiding the ſerpents is worth 375 XP.
- Defeating 2 infernal lions earns 1,350 XP; carefully avoiding the lions is worth 375 XP.
- Defeating 2 infernal bulls 2,100 XP; carefully avoiding the bulls is worth 375 XP.
- Defeating the prieſteſs Aſharra earns 450 XP; enliſting her aid is worth 375 XP.
- Defeating the half-dragon ghaſt earns 700 XP.
- Defeating lemures earns 10 XP for one, 30 XP for two, 60 XP for three, or 80 XP for four, 100 for five, or 120 XP for ſix, 175 XP for ſeven, or 200 XP for eight.

The Inner Crypt

The inner crypt is elaborately carved with the iconography of the Samarran death-goddess Zheros: bulls, lions, and ſerpents in poſtures of menace and power. Runes and ſymbols can be interpreted by an adventurer who knows the Samarran language or one with a paſſive **Religion** ſcore of 12 or higher. They warn that any who interfere with the curſe on the god-king's ſervants will ſuffer that curſe in turn.

The Five Heroes

Five ſarcophogi in alcoves are closed. They hold the remains of Surkat's moſt potent mortal defenders and the great treaſures of the crypt. An adventurer with a paſſive **History** ſcore of 12 or higher recognizes ſymbols and names from legend:

- Shalmanisar, the Laſt Emperor
- Panna the Aſſaſſin Queen
- Aminu the Warlord
- Mardeen the Archprieſt
- Naheerſeen the Maguſ

It takes a combined **Strength** bonus of +4 or higher for one or more adventurers to lift a ſarcophoguſ lid. If another adventurer brandiſhes a holy ſymbol of Tyirro or Zheros, the mummy inside remains inert. If not, the mummy riſes to deſtroy thoſe who diſturbed it. The dead lay entombed with riches; ſee "Treaſures" on page XX.

The Four Furies

More terrifying are the four central sarcophogi that have no lids. Inside them lay unthinkably beautiful creatures, two female and two male: tall, strong, nude, apparently human but of indefinable ethnicity, and with great folded wings whose feathers are the color of dried blood. They do not breathe but are undecayed. Even through the curses that hold them still, they exude an aura of potency and lethal power, barely contained. An adventurer with a passive **Religion** score of 12 or higher or a passive **Arcana** of 15 or higher recognizes the Furies, the mighty devils who served the god-king Surkat.

The priestess Asharra can identify the sarcophogi and the Furies if no adventurers have the necessary skills.

The Ritual

The cultists of Tiamat stand in a ring around their leader, the high priest who took Biraktal's place. The high priest, Hano, is insensible and takes no part in the encounter. His entire being is locked in struggle with the wards on the Furies. He wears the garb of a human citizen of Zyirra but his appearance flickers back and forth from human to red dragonborn.

Hano's defenders include a cult priestess, Khanna; a dragonborn cult fanatic, Narsai; and 4 cultists, Apram, Goru, Ninos, and Sada. If they detect the adventurers, they attack madly to protect or avenge their high priest.

The high priest, Hano, has the same abilities and statistics as the cult priestess and the benefit of a *protection from evil and good* spell.

If the adventurers cause him to fail a concentration check, that causes the utter ruin of both the ritual and Hano. Hano rushes the last exhortations of the ritual and reaches out for the devil he means to sacrifice. In a flash, the devil awakens. She rises and impales the high priest with a long, poisonous sword that was not there before. The devil turns eyes flashing an eternity's wrath on the adventurers. Then the power of the curse returns. The devil reclines again in slumber, bringing the writhing and screaming high priest with her. The high priest remains in the devil's sarcophogus, impaled, trapped in timeless stasis.

For a weak party: Remove the cultists; the party must contend only with the fanatic and the priestess.

For a strong party: The cultists each have 18 hit points rather than 9.

Sharukas, Queen of Light

If the adventurers do not stop the ritual, the cultists awaken one of the Furies but their scheme to contain and sacrifice her goes awry. The devil, an erinyes, manifests armor of unbreakable copper about herself. She kills the cultists, strides through the labyrinth destroying its guardians, and emerges into the city above. She draws the worshippers of Surkat around herself, telepathically reaching out to those nearest and giving them unmistakable commands. A great slaughter of Samarrans and disloyal Zyirrans follows. Foreigners flee the city in a catastrophic panic. The devil takes the throne as Sharukas, "Queen of Light," and sets out to resurrect the Empire of Zyirra and dedicate it to herself and her master, Surkat.

Treasures

The treasures of the Crypt of Furies lie in the sarcophogi of Surkat's mortal heroes. The Samarran priestess Asharra fights to stop any attempt to loot their remains.

In the sarcophogus of Shalmanisar, the last emperor: An elaborately-engraved chest containing 400 gp; a gold and diamond crown worth 300 gp; a suit of magical linethorax armor (nearly two dozen layers of colorful linen glued together, equivalent to leather armor), tailored for a human of slightly above average height and average weight, which gives a +1 bonus to AC and a +1 bonus to all saving throws; and a cloth-of-gold robe embroidered with gemstones

of chalcedony, citrine, onyx, and quartz, and painted with arcane text; the text acts as a spell scroll (*compulsion*); if the robe is used as a scroll, the cloth of gold crumbles but the gemstones remain, worth 50 gp each.

In the sarcophogus of Aminu the Warlord: A small chest of 300 gp, robes of fine silk (100 gp), an iron diadem (100 gp), an iron war-mask (100 gp); and an exquisite scimitar in a leopard-fur scabbard (250 gp) set with an emerald (750 gp). The scimitar is a *giant slayer*, but it is cursed to impose a disadvantage to attack rolls against humanoids. The curse can be lifted with a *remove curse* spell cast outside the crypt.

In the sarcophogus of Mardeen the Archpriest: A small chest of 300 gp and an amulet on a gold chain: an enormous shark tooth, polished and carved with runes dedicating it to Surkat. The amulet gives any lawful neutral or lawful evil wearer advantage on death saving throws, but if a death save fails and one or both dice roll 1, the amulet crumbles to dust.

In the sarcophogus of Naheerseen the Magus: A small chest of 300 gp, a gold necklace with a malachite stone, worth 200 gp, and five clay tablets inscribed with arcane sigils, each weighing 2 pounds, which function as spell scrolls (*charm person*, *phantasmal force*, *protection from evil and good*, and *magic circle*).

In the sarcophogus of Panna the Assassin Queen: A small chest of 300 gp, a silver circlet set with an azurite stone worth 200 gp, and four copper rings each set with a grayish stone that defies ordinary study; three ringstones may be ground into powder and mixed with strong alcohol to form potions of *climbing*, *greater healing*, and *resistance (necrotic)*; the fourth stone may be ground up and used as *dust of disappearance*.

Rewards and Consequences

If the adventurers stop the Tiamat cult, Zyirra's priest-king Akila Utusham praises them in public, rewards them with jewelry and fine furs and silks worth 200 gp per adventurer, and offers them the benefit of any one cleric spell of 5th level or lower.

If the adventurers did not loot the sarcophogi of the heroes, then it turns out by chance or fate that the priest-king's rewards are far more generous. He gives them another 200 gp each, as well as artifacts said to be blessed by the Samarran gods themselves:

- **The Armor of the Warlord:** a suit of +1 scale mail armor, forged in the Samarran style, that grants advantage on a Strength saving throw, once per turn
- **The Bow of the Dawn:** a longbow (or a shortbow if that is more appropriate) that grants +1 to hit and +1 damage, and that inflicts +2d6 radiant damage with any critical hit if the attack took place in sunlight under the sky
- **A Mace of Disruption:** its iron head is engraved with runes celebrating Theruun the Thunderer
- **Scrolls of Power:** one 1st-level spell scroll, one 2nd-level spell scroll, and one third-level spell scroll, with spells appropriate to the adventurers' classes

The Holy Guard joins the priest-king in publicly praising the adventurers, but its commanders privately hold a deep grudge against them after being upstaged. The Surkat priests deeply resent the adventurers for looting the tombs of their great heroes. The cult of Tiamat is bent on vengeance. We leave the repercussions to you, but the adventurers may be well served to leave Zyirra for a while.

Experience

- Defeating the cultists is worth 1,500 XP.
- Stopping the cult ritual is worth 1,500 XP.
- Defeating a mummy is worth 700 XP.
- Escaping an awakened Fury is worth 2,100 XP.

Appendix: Monster/NPC Statistics

Eshmunamash • Fury (Erinyes) • ghost of Aziyana • half-dragon ghastr (Biraktal) • Holy Guard captain • Holy Guard soldier • infernal bull • infernal lion • infernal serpent • lemure • rioter • Surkat temple acolyte • Surkat temple priest • thug • Tiamat cult fanatic • Tiamat cult priestess • Tiamat cultist

Eshmunamash

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 27 (6d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0) **DEX** 15 (+2) **CON** 10 (+0) **INT** 12 (+1) **WIS** 14 (+2) **CHA** 16 (+3)

Skills Deception +7, Insight +4, Investigation +3, Perception +4, Persuasion +7, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Cunning Action. On each of his turns, Eshmunamash can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Eshmunamash deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 ft. of an ally of Eshmunamash that isn't incapacitated and Eshmunamash doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Actions

Multiattack. Eshmunamash makes two melee attacks.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

Fury (Erinyes)

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 153 (18d8+72)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR 18 (+4) **DEX** 16 (+3) **CON** 18 (+4) **INT** 14 (+2) **WIS** 14 (+2) **CHA** 18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +8, Wis +6, Cha +8

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses Truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Hellish Weapons. The erinyes' weapon attacks are magical and deal an extra 13 (3d8) poison damage on a hit (included in the attacks).

Magic Resistance. The erinyes has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The erinyes makes three attacks.

Longsword (Two-Handed). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d10+4) slashing damage plus 13 (3d8) poison damage.

Longsword (One-Handed). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8+4) slashing damage plus 13 (3d8) poison damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage plus 13 (3d8) poison damage. The target must succeed at a DC 14

Constitution saving throw or be poisoned. The poison lasts until it is removed by the *lesser restoration* spell or similar magic.

Reactions

Parry. The erinyes adds 4 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the erinyes must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Ghost of Aziyana

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 45 (10d8)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. It can hover.

STR 7 (–2) **DEX** 13 (+1) **CON** 10 (+0) **INT** 10 (+0) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 17 (+3)

Damage Resistance acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Ethereal Sight. The ghost can see 60 ft. into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The ghost can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Actions

Withering Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (4d6+3) necrotic damage.

Etherealness. The ghost enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

Horrifying Visage. Each non-undead creature within 60 ft. of the ghost that can see it must succeed on a DC 13 **Wisdom** saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If the save fails by 5 or more, the target also ages 1d4×10 years. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to this ghost's Horrifying Visage for the next 24 hours. The aging effect can be reversed with a *greater restoration* spell, but only within 24 hours of it occurring.

Possession (Recharge 6). One humanoid that the ghost can see within 5 ft. of it must succeed on a DC 13 **Charisma** saving throw or be possessed by the ghost; the ghost then disappears, and the target is incapacitated and loses control of its body. The ghost now controls the body but doesn't deprive the target of awareness. The ghost can't be targeted by

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any attack, spell, or other effect, except ones that turn undead, and it retains its alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, and immunity to being charmed and frightened. It otherwise uses the possessed target's statistics, but doesn't gain access to the target's knowledge, class features, or proficiencies. The possession lasts until the body drops to 0 hit points, the ghost ends it as a bonus action, or the ghost is turned or forced out by an effect like the dispel evil and good spell. When the possession ends, the ghost reappears in an unoccupied space within 5 ft. of the body. The target is immune to this ghost's Possession for 24 hours after succeeding on the saving throw or after the possession ends.

Half-Dragon Ghast (Biraktal)

Medium undead (half blue dragon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (scale mail)

Hit Points 65 (10d8+20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 18 (+4) **DEX** 17 (+3) **CON** 14 (+2) **INT** 11 (+0) **WIS** 12 (+2) **CHA** 9 (-1)

Damage Resistance lightning, necrotic

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses Blindsight 10 ft., Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 5 ft. of the half-dragon ghast must succeed on a DC 10 **Constitution** saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the draconic ghast's Stench for 24 hours.

Turn Defiance. The half-dragon ghast and any ghouls within 30 ft. of it have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an undead, it must succeed on a DC 10

Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Necrotic Lightning (Recharge 5–6). The half-dragon ghast exhales lightning of a gruesome greenish hue in a 30-foot line that is 5 ft. wide. Each creature in the line must make a DC 12

Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) necrotic damage and 11 (2d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Holy Guard Captain

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class 18 (scale mail and shield)

Hit Points 65 (10d8+20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 15 (+2) **DEX** 14 (+2) **CON** 14 (+2) **INT** 14 (+2) **WIS** 11 (+0) **CHA** 14 (+2)

Saving Throws Strength +4, Dexterity +5, Wisdom +2

Skills Athletics +4, Deception +4, Intimidation +4, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Samarran

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Phalanx. The captain has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if the captain is within 5 ft. of the creature, at least one of the captain's allies is within 5 ft. of the creature, and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Shield Wall. When a creature the captain can see attacks a target other than the captain that is within 5 ft. of the captain, the captain can use its reaction to add a +1 bonus to the target's AC. The captain must be wielding a shield.

Actions

Multiattack. The captain makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6+2) bludgeoning damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 80/320 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

Will to Fight (Recharge 6). The captain can inspire courage in up to 10 allies within 30 ft., allowing each to heal 6 (1d8+2) hit points.

Holy Guard Mercenary Skirmisher

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 10 (2d8+1)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0) **DEX** 12 (+1) **CON** 12 (+1) **INT** 10 (+0) **WIS** 11 (+0) **CHA** 10 (+0)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +3

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Slinger. As a bonus action, the skirmisher can mark a single creature that is more than 5 ft. away. Until the beginning of the skirmisher's next turn, the skirmisher's ranged attacks against that creature have bonuses of +2 to hit and +2 damage. The skirmishers of the Holy Guard often engrave their lead sling bullets with insults or mockery: "Eat Me," "Up Thy Backside," "Let Us Pray," "Sleep Well," "Theruun's Love," and so on.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4+1) piercing damage.

Sling. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4+1) bludgeoning damage.

Holy Guard Soldier

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 17 (scale mail and shield)

Hit Points 16 (3d8+3)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 14 (+2) **DEX** 12 (+1) **CON** 12 (+1) **INT** 10 (+0) **WIS** 11 (+0) **CHA** 10 (+0)

Skills Intimidation +2, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Phalanx. The soldier has advantage on melee attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the soldier's allies is within 5 ft. of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Shield Wall. When a creature the soldier can see attacks a target other than the soldier that is within 5 ft. of the soldier, the soldier can use its reaction to add a +1 bonus to the target's AC. The soldier must be wielding a shield.

Actions

Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6+2) piercing damage. A Holy Guardsman's longspear is versatile. It inflicts 1d8 damage if wielded with two hands.

Kopis. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6+2) slashing damage. A kopis is a sort of forward-curving scimitar.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 80/320 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6+1) piercing damage.

Infernal Bull

Large fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armour)

Hit Points 34 (4d10+12)

Speed 40 ft.

STR 20 (+5) **DEX** 10 (+0) **CON** 16 (+3) **INT** 5 (−3) **WIS** 10 (+0) **CHA** 6 (−2)

Damage Immunities necrotic

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Infernal but can't speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Charge. If the bull moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a target and then hits it with a ram attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 **Strength** saving throw or be knocked prone.

Godbound. The bull cannot attack any creature that brandishes a holy symbol of Tyirro or Zheros with at least one hand.

Actions

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8+5) piercing damage.

Necrotic Bellow (Recharge 5–6). The bull exhales necrotic energy in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 **Dexterity** saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) fire damage and 10 (3d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Infernal Lion

Large fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armour)

Hit Points 26 (4d10+4)

Speed 50 ft.

STR 17 (+3) **DEX** 15 (+2) **CON** 13 (+1) **INT** 6 (−2) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 8 (−1)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities necrotic

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages understands Infernal but can't speak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Godbound. The lion cannot attack any creature that brandishes a holy symbol of Tyirro or Zheros with at least one hand.

Keen Smell. The lion has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Pack Tactics. The lion has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the lion's allies is within 5 ft. of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Pounce. If the lion moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 **Strength** saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the lion can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Running Leap. With a 10-foot running start, the lion can long jump up to 25 ft.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage.

Necrotic Roar (Recharge 5–6). The lion exhales necrotic energy in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 **Dexterity** saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) fire damage and 10 (3d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Each creature within 10 ft. of the lion must make a DC 12 **Wisdom** saving throw or become frightened. A frightened creature can attempt the saving throw at the end of each turn to lose the condition.

Infernal Serpent

Medium fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8+2)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0) **DEX** 18 (+4) **CON** 13 (+1) **INT** 4 (–3) **WIS** 10 (+0) **CHA** 3 (–4)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +6

Damage Immunities necrotic

Languages understands Infernal but can't speak

Senses Blindsight ft., Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Challenge 1 (100 XP)

Godbound. The serpent cannot attack any creature that brandishes a holy symbol of Tyyro or Zheros with at least one hand.

Actions

Necrotic Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d4+4) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 **Constitution** save. If it fails, the target takes 5 (2d4) necrotic damage and 5 (2d4) fire damage and is poisoned for one hour; if it succeeds, the target takes 5 (2d4) necrotic damage.

Lemure

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

Armor Class 7

Hit Points 13 (3d8)

Speed 15 ft.

STR 10 (+0) **DEX** 5 (–3) **CON** 11 (+0) **INT** 1 (–5) **WIS** 11 (+0) **CHA** 3 (–4)

Damage Resistance cold

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Infernal but can't speak

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the lemure's darkvision.

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Godbound. In the labyrinth, the lemure cannot attack any creature that brandishes a holy symbol of Tyyirro or Zheros with at least one hand.

Hellish Rejuvenation. A lemure that dies in the labyrinth comes back to life with all its hit points in 1d10 days unless it is killed by a good-aligned creature with a *bles* spell cast on that creature or its remains are sprinkled with holy water.

Actions

Fists. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

Mummy

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 58 (9d8+18)

Speed 20 ft.

STR 16 (+3) **DEX** 8 (-1) **CON** 15 (+2) **INT** 6 (-2) **WIS** 10 (+0) **CHA** 12 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +2

Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistance bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poisoned

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The mummy can use its Dreadful Glare and makes one attack with its rotting fist.

Rotting Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6+3) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 **Constitution** saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot. The cursed target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and its body turns to dust. The curse lasts until removed by the *remove curse* spell or other magic.

Dreadful Glare. The mummy targets one creature it can see within 60 ft. of it. If the target can see the mummy, it must succeed on a DC 11 **Wisdom** saving throw against this magic or become frightened until the end of the mummy's next turn. If the target fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it is also paralyzed for the same duration. A target that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the Dreadful Glare of all mummies (but not mummy lords) for the next 24 hours.

Rioter

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0) **DEX** 10 (+0) **CON** 10 (+0) **INT** 10 (+0) **WIS** 10 (+0) **CHA** 10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Actions

Club or **Dagger**. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d4) bludgeoning or piercing damage.

Thrown Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +0 to hit, reach 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

Temple Acolyte

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class 13 (studded leather armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0) **DEX** 10 (+0) **CON** 10 (+0) **INT** 12 (+1) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 12 (+1)

Skills Medicine +3, Persuasion +3, Religion +3

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage, two handed.

Temple Priest

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral or lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (scale mail and shield)

Hit Points 27 (5d8+5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0) **DEX** 10 (+0) **CON** 12 (+1) **INT** 13 (+1) **WIS** 16 (+3) **CHA** 13 (+1)

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +5

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Infernal

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The priest has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, spare the dying, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *bless, cure wounds, detect magic*

2nd level (3 slots): *augury, lesser restoration*

3rd level (2 slots): *speak with dead, tongues*

Spellcasting—Asharra. The Samarran priestess is a 5th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, spare the dying*

1st level (4 slots): *burning hands, cure wounds, protection from evil and good*

2nd level (3 slots): *calm emotions, lesser restoration*

3rd level (2 slots): *daylight, flaming sphere*

Actions

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

Bonus Actions

Divine Eminence. The priest can expend a spell slot to cause its melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) force damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If the priest expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

Thug

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (leather armor)

Hit Points 32 (5d8+10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 15 (+2) **DEX** 11 (+0) **CON** 14 (+2) **INT** 10 (+0) **WIS** 10 (+0) **CHA** 11 (+0)

Skills Intimidation +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Names. Use these stats for Nikkal Surkaturab (though she has 12 Int, 14 Wis, and 15 Cha) and her followers Alunhan, Amma, Tammuz, and Yemurukat.

Pack Tactics. The thug has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the thug's allies is within 5 ft. of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Multiattack. The thug makes two melee attacks.

Hand Axe, Mace, Scimitar, Shortsword, or Kopsis. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 5 (1d6+2) bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage. A kopsis is a sort of forward-curving scimitar.

Tiamat Cult Fanatic

Medium humanoid (black dragonborn), chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d8+6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 14 (+2) **DEX** 14 (+2) **CON** 12 (+1) **INT** 10 (+0) **WIS** 13 (+1) **CHA** 15 (+2)

Skills Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Damage Resistance acid

Dark Devotion. The fanatic has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Spellcasting. The fanatic is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spell casting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). The fanatic has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *command, guiding bolt, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *aid, blindness/deafness*

Actions

Multiattack. The fanatic makes two melee attacks.

Sickle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 4 (1d4+2) slashing damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 6). The fanatic spits acid in a line 5 ft. wide by 30 ft. long. Each creature in the line takes 7 (2d6) acid damage, halved on a DC 11 **Dexterity** save.

Tiamat Cult Priestess

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (scale mail)

Hit Points 27 (5d8+5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0) **DEX** 10 (+0) **CON** 12 (+1) **INT** 13 (+1) **WIS** 16 (+3) **CHA** 13 (+1)

Saving Throws Intelligence +4, Wisdom +6, Charisma +4

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +4

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. The priestess is a 5th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The priestess has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *command, guiding bolt, sanctuary*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, prayer of healing*

3rd level (2 slots): *dispel magic, spirit guardians*

Actions

Sickle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d4) slashing damage.

Bonus Actions

Divine Eminence. The priestess can expend a spell slot to cause her melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) fire damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If the priestess expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

Tiamat Cultist

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (studded leather armor)

Hit Points 13 (3d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 11 (+0) **DEX** 12 (+1) **CON** 10 (+0) **INT** 10 (+0) **WIS** 11 (+0) **CHA** 10 (+0)

Skills Deception +2, Religion +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Dark Devotion. The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Multiattack. The cultist makes two attacks.

Actions

Sickle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 3 (1d4+1) slashing damage.