



Rogues in the House

Short Story by Robert E. Howard

Adaptation for D&D by Wesley Connally

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This series of adventures that I created are based on Robert E. Howard's Conan short stories (or with some exceptions, Carter/de Camp). I've changed a few things here and there, and fleshed out places like abandoned palaces etc. for a true dungeon crawling experience. There should be a few surprises for those who have read the short stories. Almost all of the text boxes for you, the DM, to read are taken directly from Howard's own writing. This provides a great atmosphere for your players. You may warn them that some are lengthy, but just sit back, relax, and allow the text to paint the world for them. This will enrich their experience.

I have modified Howard's text to represent plural adventurers and rewrote all text for the present tense. I had to add a few dialogue boxes of my own writing to fill in important roleplaying gaps in the original story lines.

All adventures are written for D&D 2nd edition, but could easily be adapted to more modern versions. I highly recommend my other handouts and rules to create a more full Conan-World experience. I also recommend familiarizing yourself with the original Howard/Carter/de Camp story.

*thank you to whoever made the Manor House floor plan. I lifted it for this adventure. ☺

Levels: 4-5, but at least 15 levels

Adventure Reputation, 5Corinthia (Country Reputation is based on a 1-5 scale from barely known (1) to heroic status (5). For every 5 points of Adventure Reputation the characters earn, based on a successful adventure, their score for the Country Reputation in the country where the adventure takes place, goes up by 1. Reputation will affect NPC reaction rolls, prices, jealousies, women etc.)

Adventure Summary

I would suggest running Craig Tidwell's "Slavers Caravan" for 1st and 2nd level characters before running this adventure. Characters begin locked in a jail cell in Corinthia and are sentenced to death because of riotous acting and the slaying of a guard captain. A secretive man, a rebel, makes an appearance to their cell and tells them he will free them if they will sneak into Nabonidus' house, the future city ruler, and slay him. They discover at that house that all is not as it seems. If they are successful, the man who hired them gives them reward.

World Map

At any appropriate time, you can show players "Figure 0: World Map—Corinthia" and let them know this is where they will be adventuring.

To capture the spirit of the Conan world, I offer a “Babe-In-Distress bonus (BID).” As there is almost always a BID in the stories and thus these adventures, I have the characters “compete” for her favor. If you wish to do this, when the characters first meet the BID, have characters average their Comeliness and Charisma scores. Then have them roll a d20. The one who comes closest without going over their averaged score has struck the fancy of the BID for whatever reason (“he’s not the best looking, but he has kind eyes”). He then becomes responsible to oversee her safety. If the adventure is completed and she is still alive with only a few nicks, that character is awarded a 10% experience point bonus, not to mention her undying gratitude in the bedroom. Of course, this can apply to female player characters as well. The BID perhaps is intimidated by men and seeks the safety of female protection, or perhaps the BID “just swings that way...”

Part One: Prelude and Escape

There was a priest of Anu whose temple, rising at the fridge of the slum district, is the scene of more than devotions. The priest was fat and full-fed, and he was at once a fence for stolen articles and a spy for the police. He worked a thriving trade both ways, because the district on which he bordered is the Maze, a tangle of muddy, winding alleys and sordid dens, frequented by the boldest thieves in the kingdom. Because of the priest Anu, a small rabble, of which you are apart regardless of whether you are guilty or not, got into trouble with the police. Chaos ensued and you fled. Someone snuck into the temple by night and cut off the priest's head. As a group, you were blamed and a search proved fruitless until a woman betrayed you to the authorities and led a captain of the guard and his squad to the hidden chamber where you lay, drunk or asleep, or both. Waking to stupefied but ferocious life when they seized you, fighting began, the captain found himself disemboweled, but sleep, wine and the number of guards all worked against you and you find yourself fettered to the stone wall of the strongest dungeon in the city.

To this cell comes a man swathed in black, hiding even his face. Only his cold dark eyes are visible. “Would you like to live?”

“I want you to kill a man for me. Nabonidus, the king’s priest!” [He waits for confirmation]

You have heard of this Red Priest, this Nabonidus. A cruel yet powerful man, he had power of intrigue and grasp of international politics which made him the strongest man in the kingdom. People, chancellor and king moved puppet-like on the strings he worked. You have heard rumors of the vile business that takes place within the walls surrounding his garden and estate. What defenses he possesses you know little. You have heard of a huge savage dog that roams the gardens and has on occasion torn an intruder to pieces as a hound rends a rabbit. Men who had been allowed to enter report that Nabonidus dwells among rich furnishings, yet simply, attended by a surprisingly small number of servants. Indeed, they mentioned only one as having been visible—a tall, silent man called Joka. Someone else, presumably a slave, had been heard moving about in the recesses of the house. All this you recall in a flash of memory.

.....”Remember, you are not to escape until I have had time to reach my house.” The swathed man leaves, quickly and silently.

Characters wait until a change of guard happens, at which time, keys are conveniently left within reach of the prisoners. Characters must make their way to Nabonidus' house. Two Move Silently checks, at least, should be made. On each case three guards pass closely by:

[Guards 3 (AC: 7 HD: 1 hp:6 TH: 19 D: d8 M: 14 S: M XP: 35)]

Characters can decide which of the four walls to scale. In any case...

You drop down into the gardens which are expanses of shadow, darkened by clumps of shrubbery and waving foliage. No light shines in the windows of the house, which looms so blackly among the trees. One of you stumbles over something bulky and yielding. Bending close in the dim starlight, you make out a limp shape on the ground. It was a dog that guarded the gardens and it is dead. Its neck is broken and it bares what seems to be the marks of great fangs. No human could have done this. The beast had met a monster more savage than itself.

Part Two: Nabonidus' House

The party has three options for entering the house at the ground level: the 'front' double doors, the servant's entrance into the kitchen on the 'garden' side of the house, or crawling through the large windows that lead into rooms 5 and 6 on the first floor (no other windows are large enough to allow anyone larger than a small being to enter.) Be sure to have "Figure 1: Nabonidus' House" at the ready when referring to the mansion's rooms.

Entering through the Front:

The house is obviously designed to be defensible; the front doors attest to this. While elegant stonework and carvings adorn the lintel, the doors themselves are all business: iron stays brace every edge, crisscrossing the door itself to reinforce what looks like at least two separate layers of oak planking set at cross-grains to each other. At some point in the distant past, someone tested the door with heavy axes (solid cuts lace the door faces), but had little success.

The doors have 50 hp.

The locks can be picked at -20%.

Entering through the Back:

Your eyes did not deceive you: a small garden lies along the east side of the manor, giving a faint hint of the neat rows of organized plant life.

Wild maize, strawberries, pea and bean vines, as well as tubers grow wild within (and without) the confines of this garden. Searching reveals the broken portions of a darkly-stained hoe.

The house is obviously designed to be defensible; even the rear servant's entrance attests to this. Iron stays brace every edge, crisscrossing the door itself to reinforce what looks like two separate layers of oak planking set at cross-grains to each other. At some point in the distant past, someone tested the door with heavy axes (solid cuts lace the door faces), but had marginal success.

The doors have 30 hp.

The locks can be picked at -10%

Entering through the Windows:

Although the house is obviously designed to be defensible, every chain has a weak link. In this case, it seems that Nabonidus has a love of sunlit rooms. Two unusually broad window casements grace the southern wall of the manor's first floor. While the windows have been made as secure as possible (heavy internal and external shutters are installed), all but one of the external shutters are missing or hang in disarray, the glass is broken from the casement, and the internal shutters have been pushed away to expose the building's dark interior.

With proper preparation (clearing away glass shards, etc.), entering the house through these windows is a fairly simple process. Entering this way leads into Area 5.

Key to the Mansion

In Thak's aggressive rage in the first hour of his take over, he has caused some problems, specifically letting a covey of Nathri escape their catacomb prison. He tore the lid off of the trapdoor among other things. After a brief fight with Thak, Thak went upstairs figuring he will deal with them soon. The covey stays on the first floor not wishing to tangle with the giant ape again. The first time the party meets the Nathri read the following:

A sudden hissing sound is the first clue that you are not alone in this room. You sense another presence and your hairs stand on the nape of your neck. Then without warning, the creatures emerge...small winged horrors, humanoids with barbed tails, from the bowels of God-Knows-What. Their vespertillian wings flap noisily as they hiss from a gaping fanged mouth. Whipping their tails to and fro like a cat's about to pounce, they levitate upright for a moment, then fly toward you with malice in their eyes.

[Nathri: (AC:6 HD:1+1 hp:8 Th:17 D:d4 or weapon; barbs on hand back = sv vs poison or -1 on attack rolls and CON for 2d20 rounds Mv:18 S:s ML:16 EX:120)]

1. Entry Hall:

Silence greets your footsteps on the cold marble floor of this empty hall. A few smaller portraits adorn the walls (and floor) along the hallway, but the passage is otherwise devoid of ornamentation or other detail. The floor's marble tile is set in a gray/pink checkerboard, and the walls masonry is stained in two or three places with heavy smears of blood, but there are no bodies in evidence. You hear a creak, perhaps those of a floorboard above you. A door is on both your right and left and a set of stairs climbs to the second floor. Near the landing of the stairs you can see a portrait of Nabonidus.

The stairs are trapped and Thak will activate it when they are halfway up them—save vs DEX or drop to the prison catacombs below.

Near the double entry doors at the west end of the house, there is a small closet (containing a few old cloaks and some hard-weather boots). All the doors leading off this passage are closed and latched, but not locked. At the center point in the hallway leading east, is a trapdoor which Thak will release as soon as 3 characters walk over it. The character in the center must save at -5, the other two at -3 or be sent to the prison catacombs below.

2. Formal Sitting Room:

Designed for quiet conversations and informal meetings, this sitting room seems undisturbed. An overstuffed couch sits in the northwest corner of the room behind a low, round table, and two armless but comfortable looking chairs are arranged on the east wall on either side of a small stand. A narrow window pierces the northern wall, next to the only object in the room that has seen any violence.

[Nathri: 2 (AC:6 HD:1+1 hp:8 Th:17 D:d4 or weapon; barbs on hand back = sv vs poison or -1 on attack rolls and CON for 2d20 rounds Mv:18 S:s ML:16 EX:120)]

The furniture is all quite comfortable, and reasonably elegant: one of the two chairs has been ravaged by termites and dry-rot, however, and will collapse if sat upon. One round after the characters enter, The Ape opens a large pit trap, which sends anyone standing on the trap area (6' X 6') not making a Dex -3 check down into the prison catacombs below.

3. Dining Hall:

An elegant dining hall is well-appointed. In the center of the room sits a long, carved mahogany table, around which 8 chairs are arranged. A large chandelier hangs directly over the center of the table. In the northeast corner of the room, along the north wall, there is a low, heavy cabinet which probably doubles as both utensil storage and a serving table. A single narrow window is set in the north wall, and several wall sconces (fit with candles) are arranged around the room. A door is set into both the southern and eastern walls, and a strong animal scent permeates the air.

[Nathri: 3 (AC:6 HD:1+1 hp:8 Th:17 D:d4 or weapon; barbs on hand back = sv vs poison or -1 on attack rolls and CON for 2d20 rounds Mv:18 S:s ML:16 EX:120)]

Within the trundle (locked, -10%), is Nabonidus' silver. At this time, the silver is worth roughly 200 sp, but with a polishing agent and some serious elbow grease, could be worth around 800 sp for the matched set. (The value of the base metal is roughly 200 sp).

The southern door is latched. The door to the east swings both in and out. When it opens, a trap door opens on the side where the door is opened, plummeting those within 3' of the door down the shaft (DEX -5 to avoid).

4. Servants Meal and Preparation Hall:

Two long, heavy tables dominate this room, which was probably used to prepare the cooked meals before taking them into the actual dining hall (also, this is more than likely where any servants would have eaten). The tables are scarred, but this is probably simply the result of food preparation, not violence. A swinging door is set into the eastern and western walls, and a heavy latched door is set into the southern wall. The northern wall's expanse is broken only by one narrow window.

[Nathri: (2) (AC:6 HD:1+1 hp:8 Th:17 D:d4 or weapon; barbs on hand back =sv vs poison or -1 on attack rolls and CON for 2d20 rounds Mv:18 S:s ML:16 EX:120)]

5. Lounge:

This is the room where characters enter if they enter from the southern windows.

The room is empty, in so far as human life is concerned, but it has a grisly occupant, nevertheless. In the midst of a wreckage of furniture and torn hangings that told of a fearful struggle, lay the body of a man. The form lay on its belly, but the head is twisted about so that the chin rests behind a shoulder. The features, contorted into an awful grin, seem to leer at you. This must be Joka, the servant of Nabonidus.

A couch, several comfortable wingback chairs and ottomans, now smashed, and dark wallpaper make this room seem quite calming... or unnaturally dim. From the walls to the furniture, there is a definite sense of masculinity to the room -- one can almost smell pipe smoke. The only exits from the room are the windows in the south wall (smashed, their hinges torn down), and the door set in the center of the north wall.

A huge centipede will burst out of the couch as soon as it is touched.

[Monstrous Centipede (huge): (AC:6 HD:2 hp:12 TH:18 SA:poison 1-2CON Mv:12 S:S M:10 XP: 70)]

6. Sun Room:

A couch, divan, and large wingback chairs and ottomans are arranged around this colorfully appointed room. The only exits from the room are the windows in the south wall (smashed, their hinges torn down), and the door set in the center of the north wall. There is a definite air of perfume to this room, though this is marred somewhat by a strong animal musk.

[Nathri: (2) (AC:6 HD:1+1 hp:8 Th:17 D:d4 or weapon; barbs on hand back = sv vs poison or -1 on attack rolls and CON for 2d20 rounds Mv:18 S:s ML:16 EX:120)]

The table just to the left of the door leading from the room is used as a writing desk. It contains water-wrinkled writing paper and inkpots, as well as several quills and a small quill-sharpening knife with a mother of pearl handle (50 sp). A PER check reveals that Nabonidus was working on a cleric scroll, and thus the ink may be special or magical (70 sp).

7. The Kitchen:

A large kitchen dominates most of the eastern end of the manor. A massive preparation table sits in the center of the room next to a small but obviously very heavy cutting table, and the large fireplace set in the east wall looks as though it were designed specifically for cooking large meals. A swinging door in the south wall probably leads to the pantry, while both a latched and swinging door are set into the west wall. Along the north side of the room, a small flight of stairs leads up to the second floor. Cutlery hangs from racks on the wall. Several pots and kettles are overturned. Cutlery lies scattered on the floor.

A heavy cleaver is held in the fist of a large woman. She swings from a meat hook in front of the fireplace. She is presumably the cook and is clearly dead. A pool of blood has gathered itself beneath her corpse on the floor and a trail of blood can be traced to the pantry door.

A strange smell, like that of rotting eggs fills the kitchen. A set of stairs ascends along the northern wall, reaches a landing then, presumably ascends again.

At the top of the stairs, the door is shattered, pieces of it dangling from what's left of the hinges.

A successful PER check finds some sulfur on the ground and if made by 5 or more, also reveals that no bloody footprints can be found though there are bloody splotches where the cook obviously fell.

8. Pantry & Wine Cellar:

Several racks fill this room, filled with flour and other consumables. The glint of light on dark glass near the back of the room, however, catches your attention. A trapdoor with an iron pull handle has been ripped asunder and tossed to the side. You hear a sobbing sound from behind the last wine rack. You catch a glimpse of long dark hair and flesh. The girl looks scared to death, barely peeking out from the fingers that try to hide her face. Her limbs are long and her supple legs curled to her chest, and her full bosom heaves from the multiple shallow breaths she takes. [Show "Figure 2: Vara"]

[After they ask about her...]

"I am Vara, a slave girl of Master Nabonidus. I ran here to hide from the monsters that have taken over this house. I thought surely this is where I would die."

Vara is the BID. Make competitive checks for her favor.

[Bruthia AC: 10 HD: 1 hp: 3 Th: 20 Mv: 12 D: d2 Sz: 5'9"]

S: 11 C: 14 D: 11 I: 10 W: 12 Ch: 8 COM: 19 PER: 16

Vitals: Age: 16 Measurements: 33C 22 32 Hair: Auburn Eyes: Grey

A PER check reveals that the splinters on the trapdoor frame have injured something.

Dark spots of blood have stained the needle-like projections. The blood has a peculiar acrid odor.

The trapdoor leads down to the catacombs.

9. Upper Hall & Gallery:

Your footsteps echo in this large open hall. Black and white marble tiles form a checkerboard pattern over the floor. The northern wall of the gallery has no windows breaking its surface, but over a half-dozen large oil paintings in several styles, adorn it. Several smaller hallways branch off the gallery to the south.

A trap is sprung when all visible characters are in the gallery, poison-tipped arrows shoot from the walls under the paintings striking the lower mid-sections to the thighs. Each character is potentially hit by one or two arrows TH:15. Characters so hit must save vs poison or take d4 Con and then another d4 a turn later.

The first painting on the west end of the hall is a Soulscape Painting, depicting the shadowy landscape of a forested hillside at dusk.

As you gaze at the painting you can't help but feel that the painting is a masterpiece, though you know you are no expert. The shadowy landscape of a forested hillside at dusk is alluring, almost calling you. You notice a solitary figure standing atop the crest of the hillside on the edge of the forest. It is a shadowy form, any features or sharp outlines have been blurred to where the image is barely recognizable as human. [If the characters don't say they look away at this point, a Save vs Spell will be required. If successful. Even if they wish to look away, they must make a Wisdom check to do so.] As you gaze at the painting you swear the figure just moved, almost imperceptibly. It was so subtle, you almost don't believe that it happened—perhaps the figure's arm swayed from back to front—perhaps the leg moved forward a bit [Wait for character's reaction. If the action is not turn away, a WIS check at -1, and a save vs Spell at -1 will need to be made. Keep reading] The

figure is now DEFINITELY moving. It is walking down the hillside, towards the bottom of the painting and seems to be picking up speed, its outline blurry and quivering. [WIS -2 Save now at -2] It gets larger as it is moving towards you and though it gets closer, its outline and face continues to be a blur of shaking nondescript horror. And now it fills the painting with blurry red eyes...its mouth opens revealing rows of sharp teeth. [Save is now required. If the character makes it...] You wrench your face away from the painting, and give a careful narrowed eyed glance back at it. All is as it was as if it was all an illusion. [If the save was not successful...] Two black quivering arms reach through the painting grabbing your head. You feel the unnatural strength and you are lifted off the ground. The air has grown unnaturally cold and you gaze around with blurry eyes. You see a forest of trees and a grassy hillside up ahead...

Only Nabonidus has the key to unlocking the souls trapped within and even if pressed, he will not be so willing as the other shadowy form is an arch rival priest who has been waiting for revenge for a decade....

The piece would fetch well over 2000 sp, over 5,000 sp if the buyer knew its real properties. The rest are detailed below:

- A portrait of a fat, well-dressed, older woman wearing pink. The painting is set in an oval frame. (150 sp)
- An unhorsed knight glaring up from the meadow's grass in reproach at his unrepentant mount. A forest and a spired castle can be seen in the distance. (300 sp)
- A portrait of Portia and Mano, cousins of Nabnibus. This picture has been damaged, but a brass plate on the bottom of the picture names the couple. (150 sp)
- A portrait of Maritta, Nabonibus' neice. This portrait has been damaged, but a brass plate on the bottom of the picture names the girl. (200 sp)
- An untouched portrait of Geno, Nabonibus' brother. A brass plate on the bottom of the picture names the boy. (350 sp)
- An old masterpiece painting of children at play in a city street. (1200 sp)

10. Guest Room:

This is unmistakably a guest room. Without external windows, the contents of the bed chamber are quite neat and undisturbed, and consist of a small bed, a chest painted bright red, and a chest-of-draws. Surprisingly, the room is even free of dust.

Only nice spare clothing and blankets can be discovered here.

11. Guest Room:

Another guest room--it is furnished with a canopy bed, a footlocker, and a small but elegant chest-of-drawers, and has remained dust free.

This room is more of a decoy guest room. Nabonidus uses it to store some of his valuables. The chest contains 400 sp and a **Ring of Protection +1** (saves only). It is guarded by a Glyph of Warding: Electric shock for 8d4 damage, save for half.

12. Library:

This room is obviously the library. Shelves line every wall, each brimming with old tomes and miscellaneous papers.

Wizards, Historians, Clerics etc, can find a useful piece of information with a 10% cumulative chance for every hour spent here.

13. Storeroom:

Shelves along the walls hold folded linen, woolen flannels, and any number of house care tools.

14. Walk-in Closet:

Fine dresses and suits hang within this spacious closet. Obviously, the master of the house dressed well.

The closet contains over 3000 sp in clothing.

15 & 16. Control Chamber:

This room is the high point of extravagance. Opulent, decadent, it is obviously the house's pride and joy. An ivory-inlaid chair is set against the east wall, above which hangs a mirror, and another full length silvered mirror hangs on the east wall. A curtain hangs in the southeast corner of the room. Several pull ropes depend from the ceiling and many knobs and levers jut from the east wall.
[Show "Figure 3 & 4: Control Room"]

You stare at the creature and shudder at the sight of the great black hands, thickly grown with hair that is almost fur-like. The body is thick, broad, and stooped. The unnaturally wide shoulders had burst its scarlet gown, and on these shoulders you note the same thick growth of black hair. The face peering from the scarlet hood is utterly bestial, and yet you realize that it is not wholly a beast. There is

something in the red murky eyes, something in the creature's clumsy posture, something in the whole appearance of the thing that sets it apart from the truly animal. That monstrous body houses a brain and soul that are just budding awfully into something vaguely human. You stand aghast as you recognize a faint and hideous kinship between your kind and that squatting monstrosity, and you are nauseated by a fleeting realization of the abysses of bellowing bestiality up through which humanity had painfully toiled. [Show "Figure 5: Thak"] [When the party attacks Thak, show the Title Page]

[Thak, Ape (AC:6 HD:6 hp:48 Th:12 D:d6+3/d6+3/d8 SA: can rend X3 damage if both hands hit SD: Mv:15 S:L ML:18 EX:800)]

17. Bath:

This small room is dominated by a tarnished but wonderfully-crafted claw-foot, enameled copper bath tub in the center of the room. Only heavy verdigris on the exposed copper portions of the tub mar its otherwise marvelous appearance.

Nothing else of note is in this room. The tub is worth about 1000 sp, provide the characters can figure out how to move the monstrosity.

18. Winter/Summer Storage

This small room is probably used for storing warm-weather clothes in the winter, and cold-weather clothes in the summer, as well as a catch-all place to put anything the owners didn't want to get rid of, but have no current use for. Currently, the room contains only a short table. There is a wooden door in the room's northern wall.

19. Wrecked Attic: Signs of Rage

Something very angry has had its way with this room: discarded and unused furniture, stored here for safe keeping, has been thrown about with great force. Chunks of wood and detritus litter the floor, making it even more difficult to weave between the maze of old chairs, ottomans, casks, crates, and candelabra. But what catches your attention above all else are the glowing red sets of eyes piercing the darkness of the upper corners of the room near the ceiling. With a rush of sound, bat-like creatures, unfold themselves and drop into the air. These are unlike any bats you have ever seen. As they stretch their 2' wingspan a burst of pyrotechniques erupts as their wings alight with fire. You can only guess what dire purpose Nabonidus had with these demon-bats lurking in his catacombs.

[Fire Bats (6) (AC:8 HD:2 hp:12 Th:17 D:2D4 SA:can ignite clothing on fire with a hit (save) SD:immune to fire, infra 120' Mv:Fl 21 S:2' wingspan ML:18 EX:195)]

Several crates of old clothes, some damaged or broken furniture in need of repair, a bent candelabra, etc., are strewn about the room. In one crate are some rolls of old parchment: 3 wizard scrolls (value 120 sp) and 1 druid scroll

20. Master Bedroom:

While the master of the house obviously enjoys his wealth, the master bedchamber of the manor is charmingly simple: A very large 'sleigh' bed, a chest-of-drawers and a scarred old wooden chair are the only pieces of furniture in the room. The area seems to have been the site of some turmoil. The mirror attached to the chest-of-drawers is broken. The bed's dressings have been torn into shreds. What seems to be been a beautiful crystal decanter of sorts has been shattered, its fine and now intensely sharp projectiles lie scattered all around the dresser. A red glow emanates from what little liquid is left.

With a PER check, they notice that the red glow matches the hue and tone of the glow of the Fire Bats.

In the upper right hand drawer of the chest of drawers, underneath some of Nabonidus' clothes, is a silken black sack which, when unfolded, is about 2' by 4' in size. This is a **Bag of Holding** which Nabonidus uses to carry all of his travel-related belongings when he had to go somewhere on business.

Part Three: The Catacombs

Upon waking in the prison:

It is a reverberating clang of metal that rouses you. You groan and struggle dazedly to a sitting position. About you all is silence and darkness, and for an instant you are sickened with the fear that you are blind. Then you remember what had gone before, and your flesh crawls. By the sense of touch you find that you are lying on a floor of evenly joined stone slabs. Further groping discovers a wall of the same material. You rise and lean against it, trying in vain to orient yourself. That you are in some sort of a prison seems certain, but where and how long you are unable to guess. You remember dimly a clashing noise and wonder if it had been the iron door of your dungeon closing on you, or if it betokened the entrance of an executioner.

Upon finding Nabonidus:

Presently you come to a sharp bend in the corridor, about which the light filters greyly. Together you peer around the corner. You see it — the body of a man, half naked, lying limply in the corridor beyond the bend, vaguely illumined by a radiance which seems to emanate from a broad silver disk

on the farther wall. A strange familiarity about the recumbent figure, which lays face down, stirs you with inexplicable and monstrous conjectures. Overcoming a certain repugnance, you grasp it and turn it on its back. An incredulous oath escapes you “Nabonidus! The Red Priest!” your brain a dizzy vortex of whirling amazement.

See end of adventure for Nabonidus’ stats.

Nabonidus lifts a hand vaguely to his bruised temple, mumbles, and opens his eyes. For an instant, they are blank and empty of intelligence; then life comes back to them with a jerk, and he sits up, staring at his companions. Whatever terrific jolt had temporarily addled his razor-keen brain, it was functioning with its accustomed vigor again. His eyes shoot swiftly about him, then come back to rest on you.

“You honor my poor house, young sires [and madams,]” he laughs coolly.

Characters can ask questions:

[If they make a deal with him to get out:]

“What does a wolf with his leg in the trap say?” laughed the priest. “I am in your power, and, if we are to escape, we must aid one another. I swear, if we survive this adventure, to forget all your shifty dealings. I swear by the soul of Mitra! But I also need your help with something...”

[If they ask about how to get out or respond with “With what?:”]

Nabonidus raises a finger, as in “hold on a minute,” “There is only one other way out of these pits, which I will show you. But tell me, how did you come here?” [He waits for their story]

He limps down the corridor, which here widens into a sort of vast chamber, and approaches a distant silver disk. As you advance, the light increases, though it never becomes anything but a dim shadowy radiance. Near the disk you see a narrow stair leading upward.

“That is the exit,” said Nabonidus. “And I strongly doubt if the door at the head is bolted. But I have an idea that he who would go through upstairs had better cut his own throat first. Look into the disk.”

What had seemed a silver plate was in reality a great mirror set in the wall. A confusing system of copper-like tubes jutted out from the wall above it, bending down toward it at right angles. Glancing into these tubes, you see a bewildering array of smaller mirrors. You turn your attention to the larger mirror in the wall, and ejaculate in amazement.

You seem to be looking through a broad window into a well-lighted chamber. There are broad mirrors on the walls, with velvet hangings between; there are silken couches, chairs of ebony and ivory, and curtained doorways leading off from the chamber. And before one doorway which was not

curtained, sits a bulky black object that contrasts grotesquely with the richness of the chamber.

You feel your blood freeze as you look at the horror which seems to be staring directly into your eyes. Involuntarily you recoil from the mirror, while your friends thrust their heads in turn truculently [wildly, fiercely] forward.

Nabonidus pauses, smiling, expecting the inevitable question....[What is THAT?]

“That is Thak,” answers the priest, caressing his temple. “Some would call him an ape, but he is almost as different from a real ape as he is different from a real man. His people dwell far to the east, in the mountains that fringe the eastern frontiers of Zamora. There are not many of them; but, if they are not exterminated, I believe they will become human beings in perhaps a hundred thousand years. They are in the formative stage; they are neither apes, as their remote ancestors were, nor men, as their remote descendants may be. They dwell in the high crags of well-nigh inaccessible mountains, knowing nothing of fire or the making of shelter or garments, or the use of weapons. Yet they have a language of a sort, consisting mainly of grunts and clicks.

I took Thak when he was a cub, and he learned what I taught him much more swiftly and thoroughly than any true animal could have done. He was at once bodyguard and servant. But I forgot that being partly a man, he could not be submerged into a mere shadow of myself, like a true animal. Apparently his semi-brain retained impressions of hate, resentment, and some sort of bestial ambition of its own.

At any rate, he struck when I least expected it. Last night he appeared to go suddenly mad. His actions had all the appearance of bestial insanity, yet I know that they must have been the result of long and careful planning.

I heard a sound of fighting in the garden, and going to investigate — for I believed it was yourself, being dragged down by my watchdog — I saw Thak emerge from the shrubbery dripping with blood. Before I was aware of his intention, he sprang at me with an awful scream and struck me senseless. I remember no more, but can only surmise that, following some whim of his semi-human brain, he stripped me of my gown and cast me still living into the pits — for what reason, only the gods can guess. He must have killed the dog when he came from the garden, and after he struck me down, he, I assume, killed Joka. Joka would have come to my aid, even against Thak, who he always hated.”

At some point in their conversation, characters should roll a PER to notice something going on in the mirror:

Listening to Nabonidus' story, you almost miss seeing in the mirror a stealthy hand part the curtains of one of the doorways. Between them appear a dark face whose glittering eyes fix menacingly on the squat form in the scarlet robe. Your gaze and intake of breath brings this scene to everyone's attention.

“Petreus!” hisses Nabonidus. “Mitra, what a gathering of vultures this night is!”

The face remains framed between the parted curtains. Over the intruder's shoulder other faces peer — dark, thin faces, alight with sinister eagerness.

“Why, what would Petreus and his ardent young nationalists be doing in the house of the Red Priest?” laughed Nabonidus sarcastically. “Look how eagerly they glare at the figure they think is their arch-enemy. They have fallen into your error; it should be amusing to watch their expressions when they are disillusioned.”

You see Petreus put his finger warningly to his lips, and nod to his fellow conspirators. You cannot tell if Thak is aware of the intruders. The ape-man's position has not changed, as he sits with his back toward the door through which the men are gliding.

“They had the same idea you had,” Nabonidus is muttering. “Only their reasons were patriotic rather than selfish. Easy to gain access to my house, now that the dog is dead. Oh, what a chance to rid myself of their menace once and for all! If I were sitting where Thak sits — a leap to the wall — a tug on that rope—”

Petreus places one foot lightly over the threshold of the chamber; his fellows are at his heels, their daggers glinting dully. Suddenly Thak rises and wheels toward him. The unexpected horror of his appearance, where they had thought to behold the hated but familiar countenance of Nabonidus, wrecks havoc with their nerves. With a shriek Petreus recoils, carrying his companions backward with him. They stumble and flounder over each other; and in that instant Thak, covering the distance in one prodigious, grotesque leap, catches and jerks powerfully at a thick velvet rope which hangs near the doorway.

Instantly the curtains whipped back on either hand, leaving the door clear, and down across it something flashes with a peculiar silvery blur.

“He remembered!” Nabonidus is exulting. “The beast is half a man! He had seen the doom performed, and he remembered! Watch, now! Watch! Watch!”

You see that it is a panel of heavy glass that has fallen across the doorway. Through it you see the pallid faces of the conspirators. Petreus, throwing out his hands as if to ward off a charge from Thak, encounters the transparent barrier, and from his gestures, says something to his companions. Now that the curtains are drawn back, you can see all that takes place in the chamber that contains the nationalists. Completely unnerved, these run across the chamber toward the door by which they had apparently entered, only to halt suddenly, as if stopped by an invisible wall.

“The jerk of the rope sealed that chamber,” laughed Nabonidus. “It is simple; the glass panels work in grooves in the doorways. Jerking the rope trips the spring that holds them. They slide down and lock in place, and can only be worked from outside. The glass is unbreakable; a man with a mallet could not shatter it. Ah!”

The trapped men are in a hysteria of fright; they run wildly from one door to another, beating vainly at the crystal walls, shaking their fists wildly at the implacable black shape which squats outside. Then one threw back his head, glares upward, and begins to scream, to judge from the working of his lips, while he points toward the ceiling.

“The fall of the panels released the clouds of doom,” says the Red Priest with a wild laugh. “The dust of the gray lotus, from the Swamps of the Dead, beyond the land of Khitai.”

In the middle of the ceiling hangs a cluster of gold buds; these have opened like the petals of a great carven rose, and from them billows a gray mist that swiftly fills the chamber. Instantly the scene changes from one of hysteria to one of madness and horror. The trapped men begin to stagger; they run in drunken circles. Froth drips from their lips, which twists as in awful laughter. Raging, they fall upon one another with daggers and teeth, slashing, tearing, slaying in a holocaust of madness. You turned sick as you watch and are glad that you cannot hear the screams and howls with which that doomed chamber must be ringing. Like pictures thrown on a screen, it is silent.

Outside the chamber of horror Thak is leaping up and down in brutish glee, tossing his long hairy arms on high. At your shoulder, Nabonidus is laughing like a fiend.

“Ah, a good stroke, Petreus! That fairly disemboweled him! Now one for you, my patriotic friend! So! They are all down, and the living tear the flesh of the dead with their slavering teeth.”

Only death is to be seen in the chamber of the gray mist; torn, gashed, and mangled, the conspirators lay in a red heap, gaping mouths and blood-dabbled faces staring blankly upward through the slowly swirling eddies of gray.

Thak, stooping like a giant gnome, approaches the wall where the rope hangs, and gives it a peculiar sidewise pull.

“He is opening the farther door,” said Nabonidus. “By Mitra, he is more of a human than even I had guessed! See, the mist swirls out of the chamber and is dissipated. He waits, to be safe. Now he raises the other panel. He is cautious — he knows the doom of the gray lotus, which brings madness and death. By Mitra!”

“Our one chance!” exclaims Nabonidus. “If he leaves the chamber above for a few minutes, we will risk a dash up those stairs.”

Suddenly tense, you watch the monster waddle through the doorway and vanish. With the lifting of the glass panel, the curtains have fallen again, hiding the chamber of death.

“We must chance it!” gasps Nabonidus, and you see perspiration break out on his face. “Perhaps he will be disposing of the bodies as he has seen me do. Quick! Follow me up those stairs!”

Part 4: Conclusions

At this point, a lot of different scenarios could happen. If the party has cleared out the Nathi on the 1st floor, the party can run upstairs unhindered.

Once upstairs there will surely be a confrontation with Thak. There is no more lotus poison, however, so the party is safe from that threat.

When Thak is defeated, Nabonidus will surely try to betray the group. He has been preparing some defensive spells as he can without the party knowing—*Protection from Good* and *Barkskin*

The party's savior, Murilo, who let them escape jail will be waiting for their exit from the house and will hail them down. He will explain that he is one who leads a group who is strongly opposed to Nabonidus, who is trying to make himself ruler in Corinthia. Knowing this, Nabonidus sent him one of his servant's ears in a box as a death notice. Without viable options, he freed the party thinking they as a group would be a match for the evil Red Priest.

He rewards you with 300 sp each and a powerful ally.

If they escape with their lives, award PCs with Xps or if you use a simplified system like I do, this adventure should be worth 1/3 of a level for each 4 hour playing session (but no more than 1 level per adventure in any case).

I also keep track and award the following bonuses, each worth 1/10 of a level:

1. Most Damage in a single blow/spell
2. Coolest Critical Hit by a PC
3. Weirdest/Funniest Happening
4. Scribe (one player volunteers to write all notes including monsters killed and treasure gained)
5. BID winner
6. Best Idea

Nabonidus the Red Priest

8th Level Cleric of Set

AC: 8

HD: 8 hp: 48

Th:14

D: d4+1

SA: expert and specialized with knife

Mv:12

S:M

ML:12

Exp: 1800

S: 14 C: 11 D: 11 I: 15 W: 17 Ch: 18 COM: 9 PER: 10

Knife: +1 ROP +2 (AC Only) Girdle of Priestly Efficacy (reduces cast time -2 to 1 minimum)

<u>1st Tier</u>	<u>2nd Tier</u>	<u>3rd Tier</u>	<u>4th Tier</u>
<i>Cause Light Wounds</i>	<i>Cause Moderate W</i>	<i>Dispel Magic</i>	<i>Cause Serious Wounds</i>
<i>Protection from Good</i>	<i>Flame Blade</i>	<i>Scarlet Cloak (fog)</i>	<i>Neutralize Poison</i>
<i>Cure Light Wounds</i>	<i>Hold Person</i>	<i>Animate Dead</i>	<i>Cure Serious Wounds</i>
<i>Command</i>	<i>Produce Flame</i>	<i>Inflict Injury</i>	
<i>Sanctuary</i>			

Figure 0: World Map—Corinthia



Figure 1: Nabonidus' House

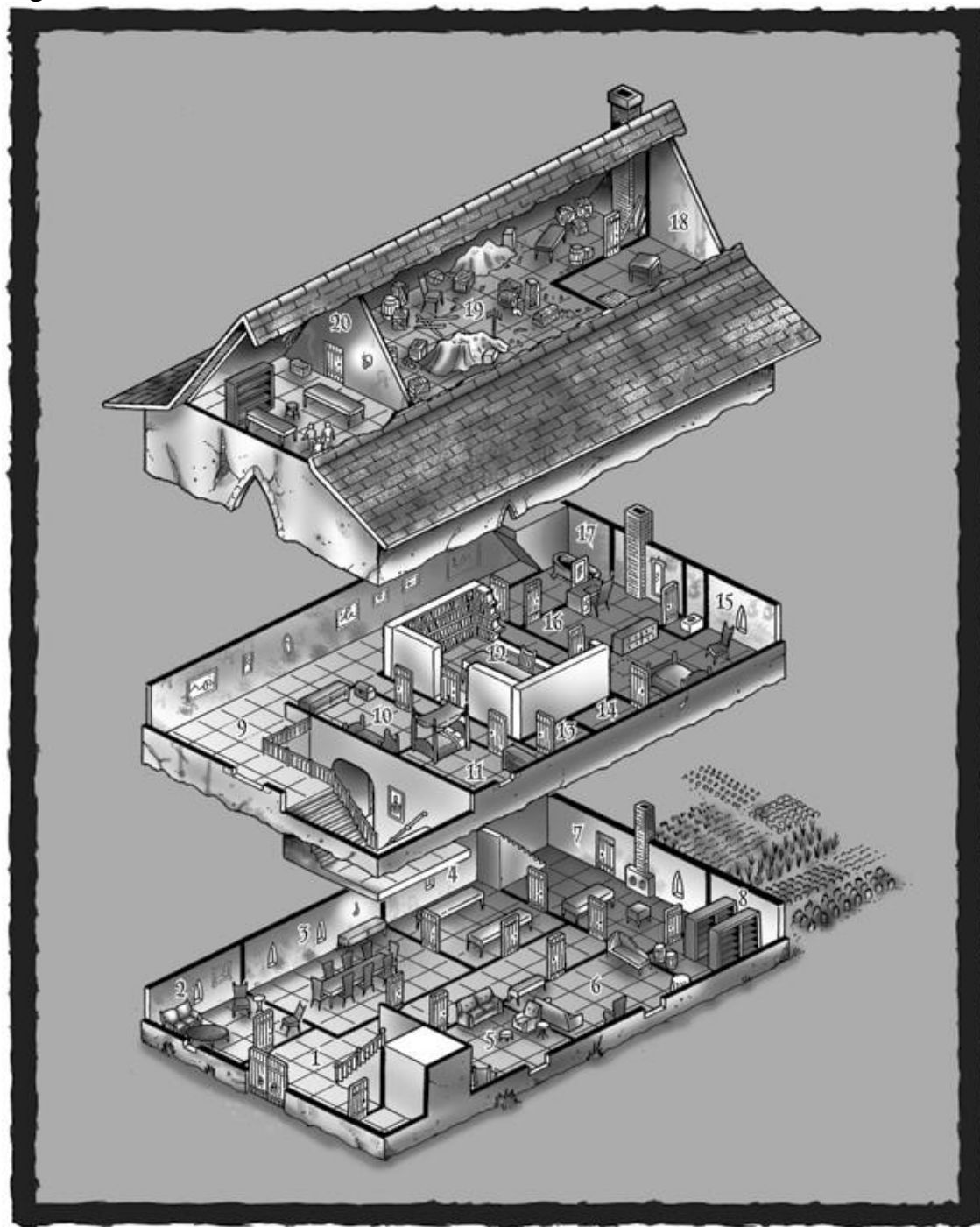


Figure 2: Vara



Figures 3 &4: Control Room

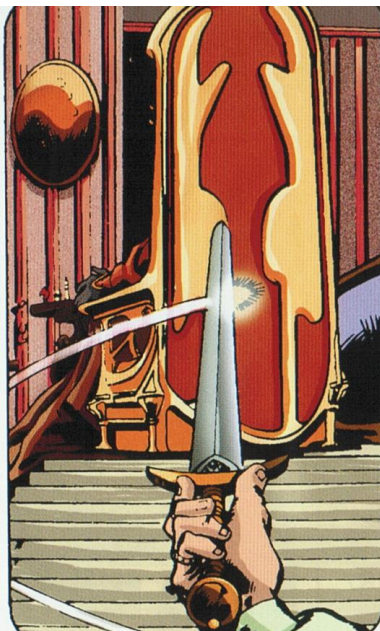


Figure 5: Thak

