



The Hand of Nergal

Short Story by Lin Carter

Based on a fragment 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.

Levels: 3-4

Adventure Reputation, Turan: 10 (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

The characters begin locked in battle as part of a large army under the banner of King Yildiz, against the forces of Munthassem Khan. After the battle a young woman guides them to Yaralet to meet a man Atali who wants their help in killing the Khan. Characters are taken by secret passage to the Khan's palace where a climactic battle ensues.

World Map

At any appropriate time, you can show players "Figure 0: World Map—Turan" 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 1: The Great Battle

Begin by having players draw from a pouch of like-colored stones with one unique colored stone. The player who draws the unique color is the “chosen one,” the one that Atali has seen in his crystal. (Roll a die if you don’t want to deal with stones). If this character should die before Hildico introduces him to Atali, have her say that these are “friends of the chosen, but the chosen has perished.” Atali will comment that “brave souls will have to do but our chance of success has dwindled considerably.”

Each player rolls d4+1 to see how many significant encounters he must face alone. For each encounter, roll d10 to determine how many foes for that encounter: 1-5=1; 6-8=2; 10=3. Then roll on the chart below for each adversary.

1. Soldier (AC:4 HD:1 hp:8 Mv:12 Th:18 D:d8+1 SA: SD: Sz:6 XP:65)
2. Soldier (AC:4 HD:1 hp:8 Mv:12 Th:18 D:d8+1 SA: SD: Sz:6 XP:65)
3. Soldier (AC:4 HD:1 hp:8 Mv:12 Th:18 D:d8+1 SA: SD: Sz:6 XP:65)
4. Soldier (AC:4 HD:1 hp:8 Mv:12 Th:18 D:d8+1 SA: SD: Sz:6 XP:65)
5. Veteran (AC:3 HD:2 hp:17 Mv:12 Th:16 D:d8+2 SA: SD: Sz:6 XP:150)
6. Veteran (AC:3 HD:2 hp:17 Mv:12 Th:16 D:d8+2 SA: SD: Sz:6 XP:150)
7. Commander (AC:2 HD:3 hp:25 Mv:12 Th:14 D:d8+2/d8+2 SA: SD: Sz:6 XP:340)
8. **Shadow Bat (AC:5 HD:4 hp:28 Mv:18 Th:12 D:d8/d8/2d6 SA:ST drain SD:1/2 damage Sz: L XP:600) Do not engage in combat now. Save all such rolls to fight at the end of battle.**

Have the players finish the combats, but if an 8 is rolled, hold off that encounter until after the text description below.

Field Description and Shadow Bats

The field is drenched in sunset fires and bathed in human blood. Here the mighty host of Yildiz, king of Turan, in whose army you serve as a mercenary, had fought for five long hours against the iron-shod legions of Munthassem Khan, rebellious satrap of the Zamorian Marches of northern Turan. Now, circling slowly downwards from the crimson sky, come nameless things whose like you have never seen or heard of before in all of your travels. They are black, shadowy monsters, hovering on broad, arch-ribbed wings like enormous bats. They seem more shadow than substance—translucent to the sight, like wisps of noisome black vapor or the shadowy ghosts of gigantic vampire bats. Evil, slitted eyes of green flame glare through their smoky forms. They fall upon the battle like vultures on a field of blood---fall and slay.

Screams of pain and fear rise from the host of King Yildiz as the black shadows hurtle amongst the

ranks. Wherever the shadow-devils swoop, they leave a bloody corpse. By the hundred they come, and the weary ranks of the Turanian army fall back, stumbling, tossing away their weapons in panic.

Characters rolling an 8 above, now battle their Shadow Bats.

Field of Blood

The sun flames like a crimson coal on the horizon. It glowers across the silent battlefield like the one red eye that blazes madly in a Cyclops's misshapen brow. Silent as death, strewn with the wreckage of war, the battlefield stretches grim and still in the lurid rays. Here and there amidst the sprawled, unmoving bodies, scarlet pools of congealing gore lay like calm lakes reflecting the red-streamered sky.

Dark, furtive figures move in the tall grasses, snuffling and whining at the heaped and scattered corpses. Their humped shoulders and ugly, doglike snouts mark them as hyenas from the steppes. For them, the battlefield will be a banquet table.

Down from the flaming sky flap ungainly, black-winged vultures, come to feast on the slain. The grisly birds of prey drop upon the mangled bodies with a rustle of dusky wings. But for these carrion-eaters, nothing moves on the silent, bloody field. It is still as death itself. No rumble of chariot wheels or peal of brazen trumpets brake the unearthly silence. The stillness of the dead follow fast on the thunder of battle.

Carefully, yet impatiently you move among the dead, bloody as are they. You are splashed with gore from head to foot, and your weapon is stained crimson to the handle. Bone-weary are you and your gullet is desert-dry. You ache from a score of wounds as you lust for a skin of wine and a platter of beef. You look to the city Yaralet, noticing its flat-topped buildings against the skyline. This is the home of Munthassem Khan your enemy and you realize that that direction is sure death, or worse, capture and slavery. You gaze southward and know that Yildiz, your employer, and his city lies hundreds of leagues away.

Functional characters should stumble upon those Left for Dead or unconscious, healing etc.

Hildico the BID

You hear a quavering moan which comes from the margin of the plain.

You part the straggling reeds that grow in shaggy clumps along the banks of the slow river and glare down at a pale figure, which writhes feebly at your feet. It is a girl.

She lays there, half-naked, her white limbs cut and bruised. Blood is clotting in the foaming curls of her long black hair, like a chain of rubies. There is unseeing agony in her lustrous dark eyes, and she moans in delirium. You stand looking down at her, noting almost absently the lithe beauty of her limbs and the rounded, lush young breasts. You are puzzled—what is a girl like this, a mere child, doing on a battlefield? She has not the sullen, flamboyant, sullied look of a camp trollop about her. Her slim and graceful body denoted breeding, even nobility.

“The Heart...the heart...of Tammuz...O Master!” she cries softly, her dark head turning restlessly from side to side, babbling as one in a fever.

[Upon awakening]

“Who—what--the bats!”

“Who are you?”

“I am Hildico, a Brythunian, slave to the House of Atalis the Far-seeing, who dwells yonder in Yaralet. My master sent me in secret to move among the warriors of King Yildiz, to seek one [character name] of [character's home], and to bring him by a private way to his house within the city. You are the one I seek!”

[After characters ask what he wants with him...]

The girl shakes her dark head. “That I know not! But he said to tell you that he means no harm, and that much silver can be yours, if you will come. I came not to the field in time to seek you before the battle. So I hid in the reeds along the river's edge to avoid the warriors. And then—the bats! Suddenly they were everywhere, swooping upon the fallen, killing—and one horseman fled from them into the reeds, trampling me under his hooves unawares---a bat tore him from the saddle and let his corpse fall in the river. I swooned, for in its panic, the horse struck me...” She lifts one small hand to her gashed brow.

Be sure to roll for who will get the BID Bonus. The party at this point may wish to tend to her wounds. They then make their way to the House of Atalis.

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

S: 9 C: 10 D: 10 I: 11 W: 12 Ch: 14 COM: 17 PER: 14

Vitals: Age: 15 Measurements: 34C 22 33 Hair: Black Eyes: Dark Brown

Part 2: In Yaralet

The characters arrive at night. Hildico stops the party near the city and tells them:

We must be careful! Atalis' house is under scrutiny from Munthassem Khan for he believes Atalis to be a wizard. He has decreed all wizards be given a sword blade in the chest! [She gives a concerned glance at any wizards, or even priests in the party]. We have arranged to meet a man, a man who has contacts and can lead us safely to Atalis. We are to meet at the Buxom Brew, a brothel and bar sometime near midnight [it's about 9PM].

If any encounters should take place within the city, here is the standard guard stats:

[City Guards (AC:5 HD:2 hp:16 Mv:12 Th:17 D:d8+1 or d6+poison SA: poisoned crossbow bolts: save or 1 CON /strike SD: Sz:6 XP:220)] Crossbows reduce target's AC value by 3 (so chain AC 5 becomes AC 8).

This will give the characters a chance to engage in wenching, drinking, and/or gambling. They will have about 3 hours before Prince Than meets them. He will not reveal his name or rank to the PCs until introduced by Atalis himself in the safety of his house.

At the Buxom Brew

Hildico guides you through a maze of streets. Passing several taverns where laughing and swearing erupt from open windows and doors, you being to wonder how large Yaralet actually is. Finally, she leads you

to a busy tavern, or rather “brothel” as Hildico had correctly put it. A woman, obviously a harlot, is flirting heavily with a patron outside the half-open door. His hand, already under her long red skirt assures you that his silver will soon be parting from him.

The awning above the door proclaims “Buxom Brew” with a picture of a heavily endowed woman holding two pints of ale. Inside, the familiar smell of smoke, body odor, and spilled liquor assaults your senses, but the atmosphere is lighthearted and music from a fiddler has half the patrons clapping their hands in rhythm.

[Aside from getting Wenching/Drinking/Gambling points, the rewards for tonight’s activities are:

Gambling: a man, desperate to win, antes a beautiful dagger whose metal is engraved with serpents intertwined –winner of the round gets it. It is a magical **Dagger +1**

Wenching: there are two pretty women who are patrons, not harlots. If seduction attempts are successful, for the price of a room, one may be willing to “kill an hour or so.”

Drinking: the ante is 15 silver; one patron doesn’t have the cash, but has a “map with weird letters on it.” He came by it when it fell from a wizard’s cloak just before he was executed. The winner gets the scroll of three spells: Shocking Grasp, Magic Missile, Fireball. Of course, the PCs can look at it, but he won’t let them take the time to cast Read Magic to see what the spells are, unless they win of course.

Hildico will be willing to spend some alone time with her protector if he can seduce her. Treat her as “Lustful” (only one check is needed) and already “Friendly” on the Reaction Table. If the protector is female, other male party members can try to seduce her. Again, treat her as friendly, but “Normal” (two seduction checks are needed).

[After the players have had their fill of wine, women and cards, read the following]

Near midnight, you notice Hildico’s countenance change. You follow her gaze across the room and you see a cloaked and hooded man lift his index finger and touch his cheek. “It is time, quickly” she says with a hint of anxiety in her voice. You follow her out of the Buxom Brew where the mysterious figure stands waiting. “Do not speak,” he says, “nor lag behind.” With that, he turns on his heel and quickly heads off down the street. A full 20 minutes later, he stops near some guards, three in all, and speaks to them, though you cannot make out what he is whispering to them. But when he is done, the guards turn about and disappear down an alley. “Quickly!” he says to you. He leads you up a set of wide stone steps, to a grand ornately carved oaken door which he enters without hesitation. You follow and Hildico quickly shuts and locks the door when the last of everyone is inside.

Meeting Atalis

With a little cry, the man who must be Atalis springs to his feet and goes toward you. “Welcome--- thrice welcome, [characters name],” he pauses and looks at the rest of you, “and friends!” he concludes.

This figure of mystery is a slender man of medium height, with a splendid head and the ascetic features of a dedicated scholar, yet in his smooth face and keen eyes is something of the shrewd merchant. He is clad in a plain robe of rich fabric, and his head is shaven to denote devotion to study and the arts. As he converses, he gestures with his left hand only. His right arm stretches across his stomach at an unnatural angle.

“And this is your escort, Prince Than,” he gestures to the tall lithe man who you followed to Atalis’ house. He nods in greeting and takes his hooded cloak off. Prince Than is undeniably handsome. The firm, clean outline of his soldierly limbs and the steely quality of his cool gray eyes belie the foppishness of his curled and scented black locks and jeweled cloak.

“Here is wine and food---” he gestures to a table.

“I know you, although we have never met,” Atalis begins in a smooth, soft voice, “because of my crystal—there on yonder stand by the chair. Within its depths I can see and hear for a hundred leagues. But I am no sorcerer—only a seeker of knowledge. A philosopher, some men call me.” His smile twisted into a terrible grin of agony. As he staggers, you notice his foot bends horribly.

[If they ask about his “problem...”]

“I’m cursed. By this fiend who rules us with a dread scepter of hell-born magic. This satrap slew all wizards in Yaralet; I being but a humble philosopher, was allowed to live. Yet he suspects that I know something of the Black Arts and has cursed me with this deadly scourge. It withers up my body and tortures my nerves, and will end in a convulsion of death, ere long!”

Prince Than gazes with wild eyes at you all. “I, too, have been cursed by this hell-spawn, for that I am next to Munthassem Khan in rank and he thinks I may desire his throne. Me he has tortured in another way: a sickness of the brain—spasms of blindness that come and go—which will end by devouring my brain and leaving me a mindless, sightless, mewling thing!”

The Hand of Nergal

Atalis relates a story of tragedy for the city of Yaralet. At night, no one goes out including thieves, assassins, harlots, drunkards. They hide in fear behind lock doors and barred windows. It was not always thus. Munthassem Khan taxed his citizens lightly, ruling with justice and mercy, busy with his private collection of antiquities and in the study of these ancient objects which absorbed his keen, questing mind. Then he changed and a terrible shadow fell over Yaralet. The satrap was like one under a powerful and evil spell. Suddenly, the city guard seized men—nobles, wealthy merchants, priests, magicians, who vanished into the pits beneath the satrap's palace, never to be seen again.

Some whispered that a caravan from the far south had brought to him something from the depths of demon-haunted Stygia. Few had glimpsed it, and of those one said that the thing was carved with strange, uncouth hieroglyphs like those seen on the dusty Stygian tombs. Weird forces shielded the Khan from those despairing patriots who sought to slay him. And terror walked the streets of nighted Yaralet. Men hint at slinking, bat-like forms glimpsed from barred windows—of shadowy horrors alien to human knowledge, deadly to human sanity. This thing from Stygia was the Hand of Nergal.

“It looks,” said Atalis softly, “like a clawed hand carved of old ivory, worked all over with weird glyphs in a forgotten tongue. The claw clasps a sphere of shadowy, dim crystal. I know that the strap has it: I have seen it here,” he gestured, “in my crystal. They say it fell from the stars into the sunset isles of the uttermost west, ages upon ages before King Kull rose to bring the Seven Empires beneath his single standard. Centuries and ages beyond thought have rolled across the world since first bearded Pictish fishermen drew it dripping the deep and stared wonderingly into its shadowy fires! The *Book of Skelos* says the Hand brings two gifts unto its possessor—first, power beyond all limit, then, death beyond all despair.”

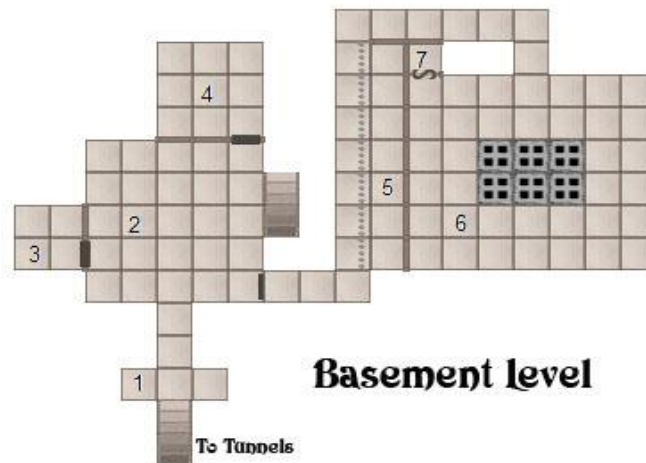
But the Hand has a weakness! The Heart of Tammuz! Hildico, please.” Atalis holds out his hand expectantly, and she places within it a beautiful gem. “This Heart will protect the one who holds it from the power of the Hand of Nergal. I give it to the chosen one, our savior.” He hands the Heart of Tammuz to [_____].

Atalis is wrong. In his research he mistakenly assumed the Heart is a protection, when in fact, it is more of an offensive power. The chosen one will quickly learn that he or she is NOT protected. The player of the character must think to STRIKE the Khan with the Heart.

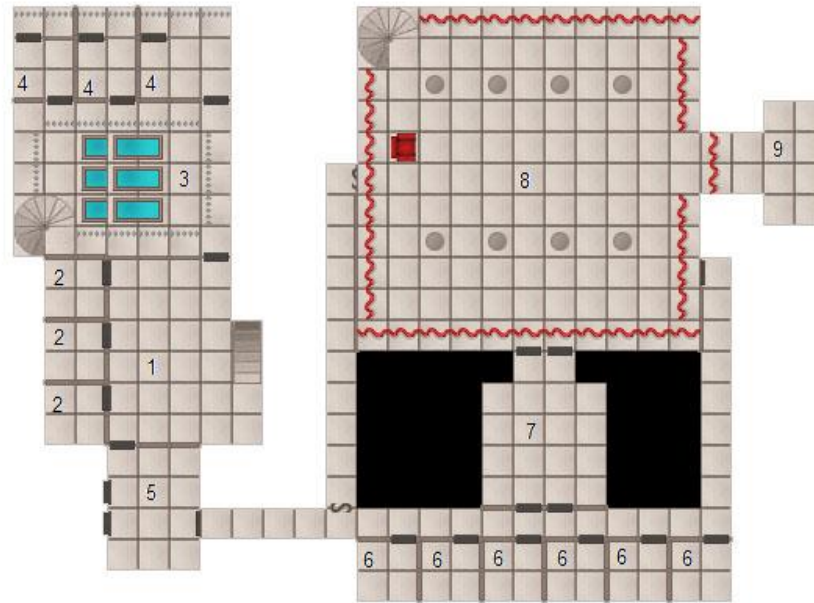
Atalis asks for help in defeating the Khan, offering 500sp to each PC from the coffers of Khan and offers to guide the party by connecting tunnels to his house. Hildico, of course, will insist on coming along, clinging to her savior like a leech.

Part 3: The Palace of Munthassem Khan

Tunnel with Secret Entrance: the entrance is guarded by clever device.

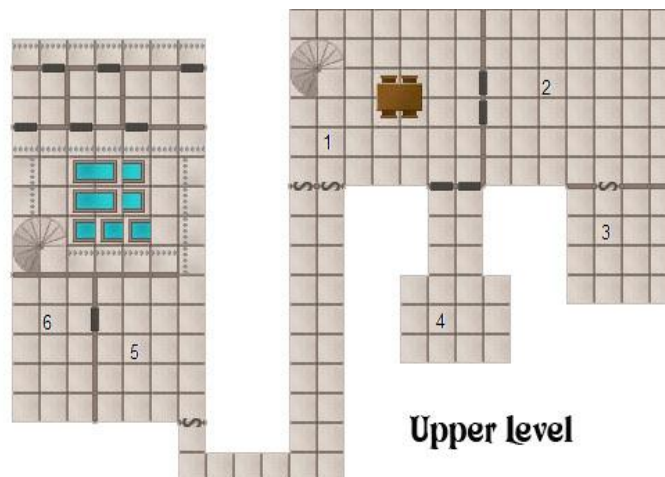


1. This 10X10 room and its mirror opposite hold mundane storage. Crates are stacked against the south central wall to hide the secret tunnel entry.
2. This room is for larger storage crates too cumbersome to move around to area 1. All manner of supplies needed to sustain a palace can be found. Clear pathways lead from 1, 3, and 4 to the stairway. The stairs lead to Area 1 on the Ground Floor.
3. This area houses the male slaves. 8 male slaves are here if the characters come at night. They do not fight, nor do they raise the alarm.
4. This area is for the female slaves and 18 make this cramped room their home. Most are pretty, as the Khan only buys uncomely ones when he is pressed and pretty ones are unavailable. They react the same way the males slaves do.
5. Cells line the north to south area. Currently only 2 cells are occupied, two males who have recently been caught conspiring against the Khan. They are due to be killed in area 6 in two nights.
6. The entryway to this area is guarded with a glyph. This powerful glyph deals 20 Constitution damage divided evenly to anyone within 10' when it explodes. Save for half. This large area serves as the oubliette and victims are lowered to their deaths. The Khan with the help of the Hand of Nergal has summoned a horror of the past, similar to an owl bear. The hulking figure lurks in an alcove until its victims are lowered. Owlbear (AC:5 HD:4 hp:22 Mv:12 Th:17 D:d8/d8/d10 SA: hug SD: Sz: L 10' XP:650)
7. This secret compartment houses the palace's treasury. It currently contains 400gp in gems and 100gp, 3,000 in silver, and 5,000 copper. The 3 chests are trapped with a poison needle: Save vs Poison or take d4 constitution damage per round for 3 rounds.



Ground level

1. This is a pleasant area save for the 2 guards (AC:5 HD:2 hp:16 Mv:12 Th:17 D:d8+1 SA: poisoned weapons: save or 1 CON /strike SD: Sz:6 XP:220)
2. Servants quarters
3. Poolside. This area is open to the sky with a spiral stairway leading up to the balcony. During the day, 2 to 5 luscious girls can be found here enjoying the time away from the reclusive Khan.
4. Guest rooms. The rooms can be accessed via either the pool stairway or a hallway leading to the rest of the upper rooms.
5. Foyer. This is a living room style area, a place of respite from the hot summer sun. Double doors lead out to a patio.
6. Guards and servants quarters
7. Kitchen
8. Throne Room: when characters reach this room, read the description below.
9. Antechamber. This room leads to the outside and is stocked with 4 Guards (AC:5 HD:2 hp:18 Mv:12 Th:17 D:d8+1 SA: poisoned weapons: save or 1 CON per strike SD: Sz:6 XP:220)



Upper level

1. Dining Area. This large dining hall can accommodate a couple dozen guests and is well appointed with plush chairs and couches and divans.
2. Artifacts collection. This is the Khan's collections. Each is trapped with a sigil that is either a) poison—save or d4 CON, three saves b) comatose sleep for 2-5 hours or c) black energy—save or d6 ST reduction, then 10 more saves, 1/hour losing 1 ST point for each fail. Each artifact could garner 100—1000gp to the right collector. Otherwise, characters will be lucky to get 50sp. Additionally, many pieces are fragile and would need constant saves each hour of transport to not break unless extreme care is taken. Finally, if the Khan is killed, no one will take kindly to the city's treasures being taken.
3. Private Study—this is trapped with searing heat—save or 2d10. Many of the tomes contain esoteric ancient knowledge and sorcerers can learn d4 non-weapon proficiencies if they spend at least an hour pouring over the texts. An urn contains Black Lotus Blossoms the fragrance of which forces a Save vs Breath Weapon at -5 or sleep d3 hours +d3 ST damage. May have prophetic dreams.
4. Kitchen: food prepared below is lifted via a dumbwaiter to here where final preparations are made before serving.
5. Guest Lounge: Currently a Rakshasa is a guest from Vendhya and lounges about here causally smoking his pipe. (AC:-1 HD:5 hp:32 Mv:15 Th:15 D:d3/d3/d5 SA: illusion SD:1/2 damage from non-magic Sz:6 XP:7000) ESP; Illusions, Blessed Crossbow bolt kills 4/3/2/3 wizard spells and 2/1 priest spells; the Rakshasa is in no hurry to engage in battles not his own, but will if he thinks he can get an easy meal. He will assume the form of a luxurious woman in need of assistance. If he realizes the Khan has died, he is willing to ally himself with the party to attack later.
6. Honored Guest Room—a more luxuriously appointed suite than the smaller ones across the balcony.

Seeing Munthassem Khan—Room 8 Ground Level

You stand at one end of a vast, shadow-filled hall whose high, vaulted roof is lost in darkness overhead. In the center of the hall, which is otherwise empty save for rows of mighty columns, stands a square dais, and upon the dais, a massive throne of black marble, and upon the throne—Munthassem Khan. He was of middle years, but thin and wasted, gaunt to the point of emaciation. Paper-white, unhealthy flesh and shrunken upon his skull-like face, and dark circles shadows his hollow eyes. Clasped across his chest as he lays sprawled in the throne, he holds an ivory rod, like a scepter. Its end is worked into a demon's claw, grasping a smoky crystal that pulses like a living heart with slow fires.

Atalis tugs at your sleeve. “See—he still sleeps! The Heart will protect you. Seize the ivory Hand from him, and all his power will be gone!”

With that the Khan's eyes flash open. “Ah gentlemen, I have been expecting you.”

Dark forms begin to crawl from the shadows on every side...

[Initiative]

He lifts the scepter and suddenly, shockingly, the limping seer screams. His muscles contort in a spasm of unendurable agony. He falls forward on the marble flags, writhing in pain.

Prince Than plucks at his rapier, but a gesture of magic from the Hand stays him. His eyes go blind and dead. Icy sweat starts from his paling brow. He shrieks and sinks to his knees, clawing frantically at his brow as pangs of blinding pain tear through his brain.

[Shadow Bats (8) (AC:5 HD:4 hp:28 Mv:18 Th:12 D:d8/d8/2d6 SA:ST drain SD:1/2 damage Sz: L XP:600)]

[Munthassem Khan (AC:0 HD:4 hp:28 Mv:9 Th:10 D:d6 SA: scepter SD: Sz:6 XP:3000)]

Scepter: All powers are at 20th level. Telekinesis, Bone Wrack (-4 on actions, 2d8 damage/round), Contagion, Curse, Summon Shadow-bats; globe of invulnerability; only the possessor of the Heart of Tammuz can harm the holder of the Hand of Nergal.

Striking Munthassem Khan with the Heart of Tammuz

When the chosen one throws or strikes the Khan with the Heart (if he strikes him, have the Heart fall to the ground)

At either side of the satrap's body lay the two talismans. And from both arise weird shapes of force. From the Hand of Nergal, a darkly shimmering web of evil radiance spreads—a glow of darkness, like the sheen of polished ebony. The bone-deep chill of interstellar space is its blinding touch. Before its subtle advance, the orange glare of the torches fades. It grows larger, fringed with writhing tentacles of radiant blackness. But a nimbus of golden glory strengthens about the Heart of Tammuz and rises, forming a cloud of dazzling amber fire. The warmth of a thousand honey-hearted springs flow from it, negating the arctic chill, and shafts of rich gold light cleave the inky web of Nergal. The two cosmic forces meet and fight.

At this point, the former possessor of the Heart is attacked. Characters must fight off the Shadow-bats for 3-5 more rounds, then:

The golden fog of Tammuz is now a giant, flashing figure of intolerable light, dimly manlike in configuration but huge as those Colossi hewn from the stone cliffs of Shem by age-forgotten hands. The dark shape of Nergal, too, has swelled into giant proportions. It is now a vast, ebon thing, brutal, hulking, misshapen, more like to some stupendous ape than man-like. In the foggy hump that is its brutal-like head, slitted eyes of malignant fire blaze like emerald stars. The two forces come together with a thunderous, shattering roar like colliding worlds. The very walls shake at the fury of their meeting. Some half-forgotten sense within your flesh tells you that titanic cosmic forces strive and fight. The air is filled with the bitter stench of ozone. Foot-long sparks of electric fire crackle and snap through the roiling fury as the golden god and the shadowy demon come together. Another roar of earth-shattering thunder, and the black one dissolves before the embrace of intolerable brightness. Then it is gone. And for a moment the figure of light towers above the dais, consuming it like a funeral pyre—then it too, is gone.

“The Heart is always stronger than the Hand,” Atalis said softly, in the ringing silence.

Part 4: Epilogue

The party is now free to roam the palace, though Prince Than will not allow them to loot the country's treasury. But he will suggest they root out any loyalists in the palace. Once the area is safe, if Hildico's protector has seen to his job, she is more than willing to sneak away with him in one of the guest rooms to repay his work.

Characters will have made a powerful ally in Prince Than and 500sp apiece.

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 must write all notes including monsters killed and treasure gained)
5. BID if she is alive and relatively unharmed
6. Best Idea

Figure 1: Hildico

