



Note: The judge can adjust the timeframe forward (through the Crusades) or backwards as their game requires. The latter replaces Cairo with settlements from antiquity (Roman through Byzantine), calling for research.

## BACKGROUND

By happenstance, the characters find a map, this time accompanied by written instructions (in Byzantine Greek) describing a three-day journey southwest along the vanishing Small Nile into the desert. A possible oasis is identified in the center, with a simple drawing suggesting rocky spires to the bottom left, marked by a crimson diamond. Greek is a separate language, so characters unschooled in this tongue must hire a translator to use it...

If the party originates in the region, Greek might be an available tongue, with travel to the indicated site all the easier. Those hailing from elsewhere either secure passage or undertake an overland journey, with whatever new adventures occur along the way. Otherwise, experienced characters might find this as part of an earlier treasure, with newcomers securing it as described below, perhaps inspiring them to seek their fortunes in the desert:

- (1) The party finds the map folded in the pages of a Vulgate Bible, itself valuable (25 SP), uncovered on the person of a pilgrim dead from some mysterious ailment. Optionally, this is a leper, inspiring nothing short of terror in the minds of any medieval person. A fearful event.
- (2) A bottle washes onshore (or floats in some foul waterway), stoppered and bearing its contents in plain sight. Of course, players are free to ignore this prompt, leaving it to the thoughtful judge how best to manage things.
- (3) The map is offered as a prize in some tavern game, surrendered the first time the characters win. The weathered parchment is considered worthless, although this can change if the party says too much. Any resulting hostilities should be harmless as befits what amounts to an adventure hook.
- (4) Whatever else the judge thinks of, noting that any of the above works for existing chronicles, as the dead abound, and gambling is all too common amongst the drunken class. Of course, creative judges can have the characters start as captives of the Black Dog raiders, taking play in a whole new direction.

Their treasure map won, the party meets in Cairo's Greek Quarter, seeking knowledge, equipment, and followers for their journey. In its bustling streets, many tongues are spoken and many services offered. Money changers and food vendors vie for their coin, and word travels quickly of outsiders planning an expedition. All such exchanges should be acted out, with good roleplay being key to success on both sides of the wall. The desert awaits these adventurers...

## OLD CAIRO

Inheriting a long-standing population, the Greek Quarter is arranged north to south, with taverns being unique to this subdivision. Moreover, the Fatimids employed gold dinars (10 SP equaling 1 dinar) for trade, with foreign currency changed for a 5% share to the district's moneylenders. Of course, the city has its criminal element, fencing stolen goods for a similar fee and enticing those inclined to such, which is to say that crime does pay...

Hostels exist to support travelers (1 SP per night or 1 dinar per week), with outfitters and camel merchants beyond the city gates. As characters inquire about the region, locals will come forward, offering advice and services, not to mention all manner of rumors. Buying drinks (to loosen lips) pays dividends, with a 1-3 in 1d6 chance of a rumor rolled for on the following:

1d6

### RUMOR

- 1 An Egyptian burial lies in the southern desert (TRUE)
- 2 Crocodiles and other predators prowl the Nile (TRUE)
- 3 Djinn haunt the desert at night, causing sandstorms (FALSE)
- 4 Starving cannibals hunger for human travelers (FALSE)
- 5 The Black Dog Caliphate (a gang) commands the desert (TRUE)
- 6 There is a bounty (15 dinars) on a hyena called Set (TRUE)

Of course, characters who ingratiate themselves or offer bribes get better results, adding +1 to rumor dice where it makes sense...

## NOTABLE FIGURES

In a large, interconnected city, the following may step forward:

BRINGAS is a portly, balding Greek moneylender who approaches the party once their queries get noticed, offering loans at 5% interest:

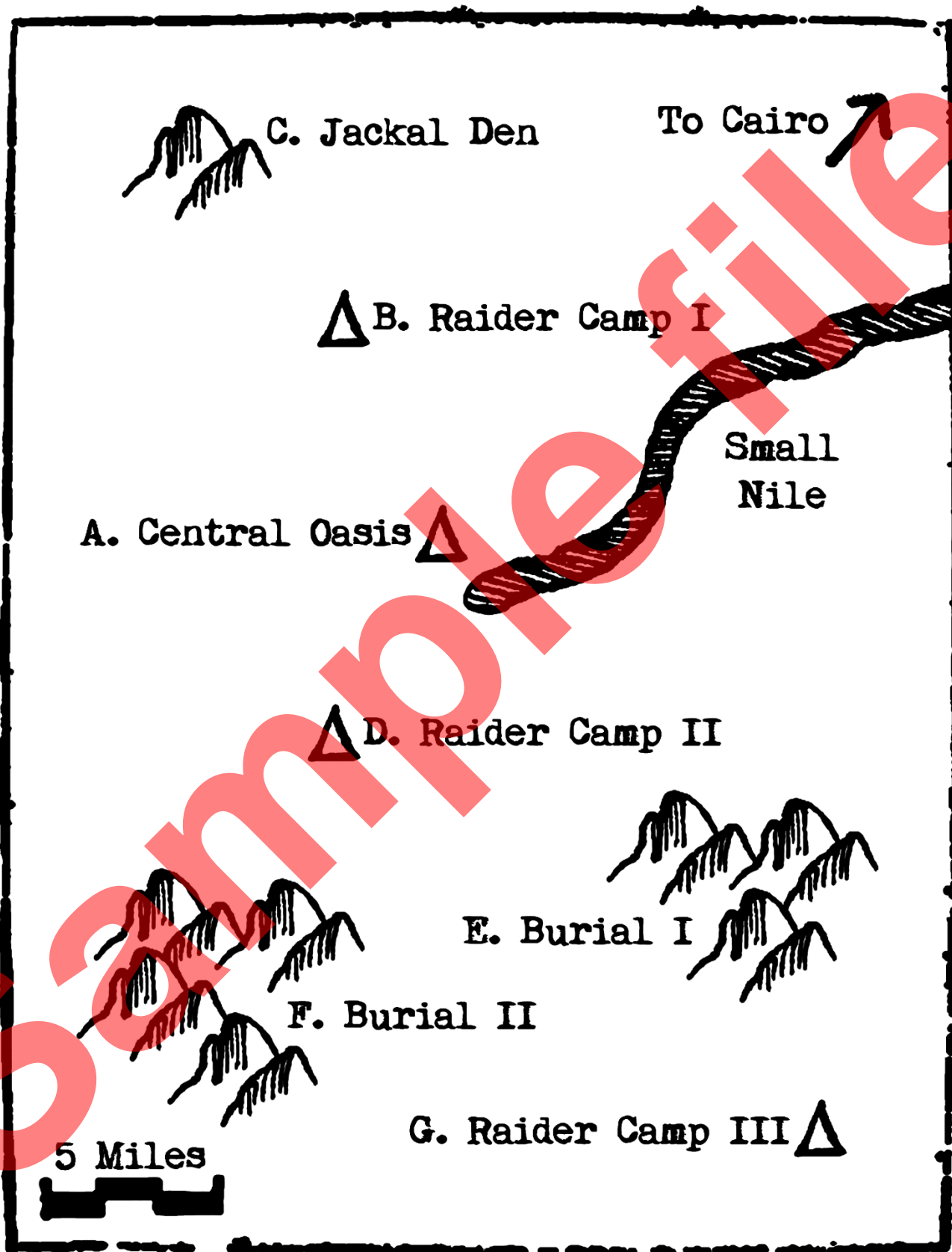
LITERACY: literate SOCIAL CLASS: commoner LUCK: 10 Move: 50' (unarmored)

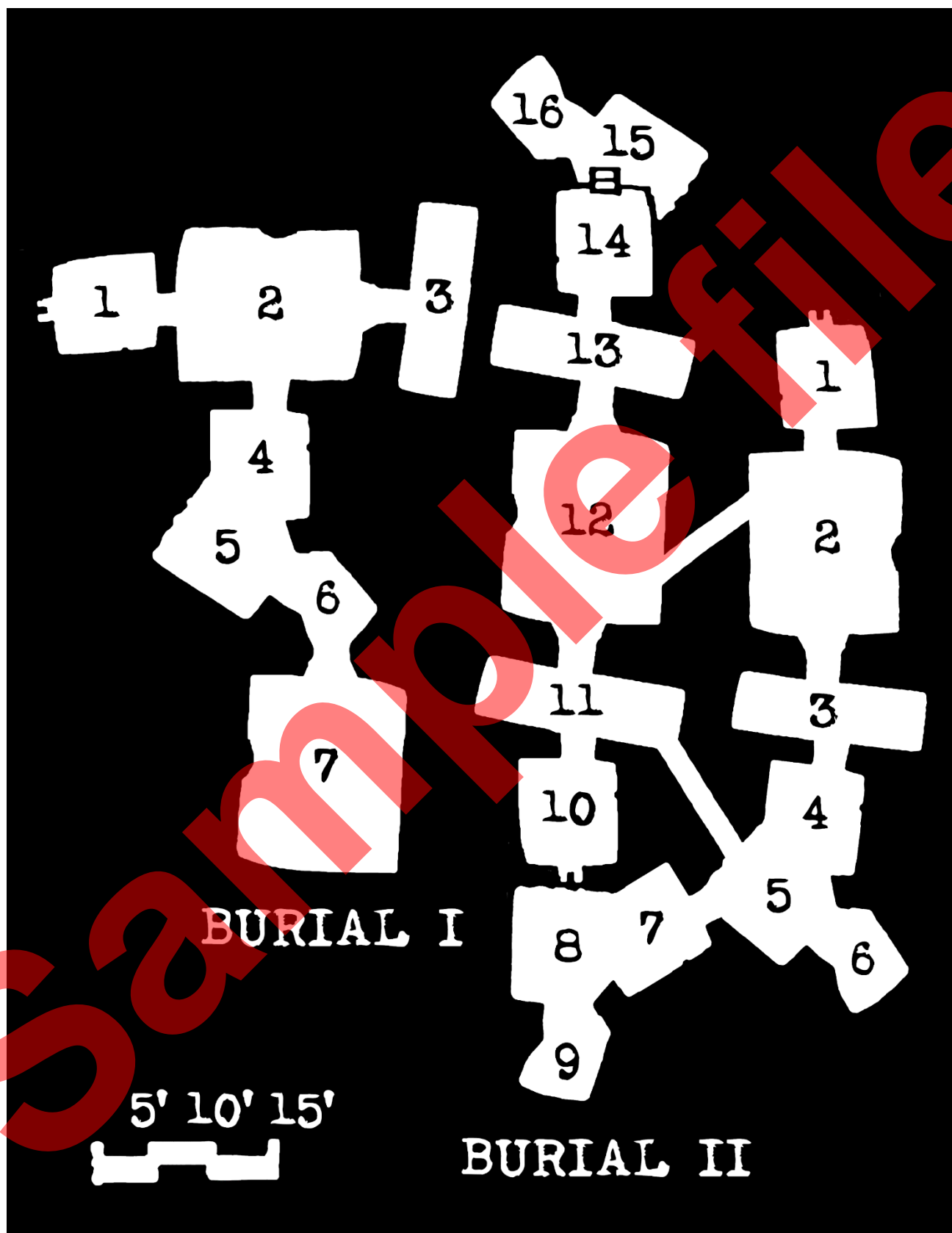
CALIXTA followed her late father from Constantinople, dancing and juggling for entertainment. Dark-haired and barely out of her teens, she offers to join whatever party is willing to take her, scouting and using her knives:

LITERACY: illiterate SOCIAL CLASS: commoner LUCK: 12 Move: 50' (unarmored)

FURKAN was born in Damascus but later settled in Cairo, establishing himself as an outfitter known for his striking red hair and icy blue eyes:

LITERACY: literate SOCIAL CLASS: nobility LUCK: 10 Move: 40' (gambeson)





THEOPHONIA is a Coptic widow, aged and affluent, with two adult sons serving abroad. To pass her days, she patronizes causes she favors:

LITERACY: literate SOCIAL CLASS: nobility LUCK: 10 Move: 50' (unarmored)

## THE SMALL NILE

Long past its prime, the Small Nile meanders for two days before reaching the wilderness map. Towns give way to less-traveled lands, a thin, fertile strip bordered by desert on all sides. Hereafter, assume it takes one day to traverse the provided map by camel (treated as horses) in any direction, rolling for encounters once every 5 miles consistent with conditions. Assume a 1-2 in 1d6 chance of something as determined on the following:

Roll 2d6	RESULT	NUMBER	LUCK	MOVE	DAMAGE
2-6	Black Dogs	3-6	2	50'	per attack
7	Crocodile*	1	7	special	bite (+2)
8	Dust Devil	--	--	--	--
9	Hyenas	1-2	6	40'	bite, 2 claws (+2)
10-11	Jackals	6-9	1	30'	bite (+1)
12	Simosemet	unique	--	50'	per attack

\*Near water only; otherwise, hyenas or jackals (choose)

BLACK DOG RAIDERS. These common bandits are nonetheless organized, with high morale from the reputation their gang enjoys. They travel on foot, swiftly covering ground and relying on their knowledge of the desert terrain such that all dice for stealth are rolled as easy (7+), overtaking careless intruders daring the sands. These go unarmored, employing throwing spears at range before closing to fight with scimitars (arming swords).

CROCODILE. A plague on travelers, these reptiles move 50' in water (easily tipping small boats with a successful hit) and 40' on land, where they thrash prey with their powerful jaws. Any unmodified attack roll of 12 indicates a target is seized in a death grip for dragging underwater barring some timely aid. Otherwise, drowning may result for a terrible end.

DUST DEVIL. These whirlwinds arise suddenly, spooking camels and horses not secured. Alternately (1-3 in 1d6), these are powerful SANDSTORMS reducing visibility for 1-2 days and redirecting party movement towards a fixed point as indicated below. Blowing sand can be the deadliest of foes:

1d6	TOWARDS...	1d6	TOWARDS...	1d6	TOWARDS...
1	Raider Camp I	3	Jackal Den	5	Burial II
2	Raider Camp II	4	Burial I	6	Raider Camp III