

Pulp Egypt

Shadows of Sekhmet

An Any-System Key Scenario by Peter Schweighofer



The members of Hartwell College's Egyptian expedition attend a séance to humor Mrs. Wittingham, a wealthy widow they hope will help fund their archaeological activities. When sinister forces abduct her from her hotel room, the heroes embark on a quest to find Mrs. Wittingham, defeat a band of antiquities thieves, and liberate a lost temple from looters.

Introduction

Cairo, April 1935—The characters belong to the Hartwell College Egyptian expedition, now winding down its desert excavations at Sakkara for the season, but desperately in need of additional funding from a private patron to continue work next October. They have been courting Mrs. Alexandra Wittingham, wife of late and powerful arms industrialist Karl Wittingham, who seeks to bestow an endowment on a worthy archaeological expedition in Egypt. If they don't secure her funding, the heroes must close down their dig next season. To court her favor, the characters agree to indulge her spiritualist tendencies and join her for a séance with famed medium Madame von Teufel.

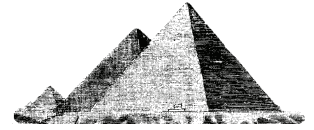
Episode One: Seance

The heroes attend a séance in Madame von Teufel's suite at Shepherd's Hotel, during which she summons the spirit of Sekhmetkemsaf, a long-dead priestess of Sekhmet, who inhabits Mrs. Wittingham's body. Several other individuals equally interested in the occult join the exercise: Bryce Billingsworth, a brash and skeptical American oil company owner; Gaston LaVache, a French gambler, drinker, and blasé playboy impressed by nothing; and Dietrich Stosser, a German acquaintance of von Teufel's who displays a keen interest in Teutonic occult subjects.

Like other rooms at Shepherd's, this one consists of a central parlor flanked by two bedrooms; each room has a set of curtained French doors that open up onto small balconies. Von Teufel set up the main parlor with a large round table at the center surrounded by enough chairs for herself, Mrs. Wittingham, the heroes, and the other guests. A burgundy tablecloth covers the surface, with a crystal ball on a stand at its center (for effect). A sole electric light from the chandelier above illuminates the table and crystal ball with an eerie glow. Heavy draperies cover the parlor's French doors and the open doorways to the adjoining rooms. The rest of the parlor's furniture, wall décor, and other trappings lurk in shadow from the dim lighting and smoke from an incense burner off to one side.



The



Egyptian Gazette

CAIRO, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 1935

2 piastres

POLICE RAID OPIUM BOATS

**POLICE, SOLDIERS SWARM
BOULAK DOCKS**

BOULAK, April 9—British soldiers assisted Cairo police last night in intercepting a shipment of opium arriving at the Boulak docks from the Nile Delta.

Acting on an informer's tip, police monitored two feluccas approaching Boulak on the Nile. They arrested the crew and two businessmen waiting dockside to meet the boats. The two allegedly represent a crime syndicate processing and smuggling opium for export to underworld distributors throughout Europe.

Delta farmers frequently find opium a more lucrative crop than cotton.



THE BOULAK DOCKS REMAIN A HAVEN FOR SMUGGLERS AND CRIMINALS.

WITTINGHAM TOURS CAIRO

**WIDOW SEEKS TO FUND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG**

BY ARCHIBALD LITTLEDALE

Special to the Gazette

CAIRO, April 9—The widow of armaments industrialist Karl Wittingham arrived in Cairo yesterday as part of a tour of British colonies seeking investment opportunities for the inheritance her husband left her. Mrs. Wittingham seeks to endow an archaeological expedition in the Nile Valley as a philanthropic endeavor and memorial to her husband's appreciation of ancient art.

During her stay in Cairo she plans to meet with several expedition leaders to discuss their work and the potential support she might offer. Mrs. Wittingham also hopes to enjoy Cairo's sightseeing opportunities, including the pyramids, bazaars, opera, Ezbekiya Gardens, and the medieval Mohammedan architecture.



MRS. WITTINGHAM

GERMANS CLAIM PHARAOHS AS ANCESTORS

CAIRO, April 7—Germans descend from ancient Egyptian pharaohs, claimed researcher Dieter Stosser during a lecture at the Geographical Society Sunday afternoon. The head of a German Department of Ancestral Heritage group said his team visited archaeological sites and scoured libraries and antiquities storehouses to uncover supposed evidence that missing members Egypt's ancient royalty fled north during several periods of political upheaval to establish settlements in what is now

Germany. Stosser pointed to papyrus scrolls he found in a private collection in Cairo that corroborate evidence in a Hildesheim museum.

After the lecture many in attendance voiced doubt regarding these German claims. "Pure fantasy," said British archaeologist John Pendlebury. "These Nazis will say anything to legitimize Hitler's government and its aggressive agenda toward

Continued on Page Nine

VON TEUFEL RECOVERS FROM 'POSSESSION'

CAIRO, April 8—Celebrated Austrian medium Madame Marianne von Teufel announced her recovery from a "possession" experienced during an intense séance March 24. During the ceremony von Teufel purportedly channeled the spirit of an ancient Egyptian slave girl to entertain a party

of tourists from France, but the experience taxed her stamina and sent her into a mild fever for two weeks.

Now that she has recovered, the popular von Teufel is once again accepting engagements to conduct séances at her Shepherd's Hotel suite.

With plentiful dramatics von Teufel seats everyone and asks them to place their hands palms-down on the tabletop. Read aloud: **Now focus on the sound of my voice. Concentrate your minds on the ancient days, the time of the pyramids and temples, of reed ships sailing on the Nile, chanting priests, primeval animal-headed gods, golden treasures. Send your minds back in time, envision the faces of the people living in that long-lost land...the peasant woman washing clothes along the reedy Nile shore, the boatman holding the tiller steady, the stone carver fashioning a regal statue, the labor gang hauling massive stones to the temple, the charioteer tending his horses, the priestess rattling the sistrum and singing hymns to the gods.**

As she leads the group through this dramatic exercise, von Teufel engages some of the usual trappings such charlatans use to embellish their performance: a small light (fed by a wire through the table) begins glowing in the crystal ball; more pungent incense wafts into the room; side tables and furniture vibrate and rattle with “psychic energy;” the wind blows open the French doors and flutters at the drapes. Karl, her hidden assistant lurking behind one of the bedroom doors, manipulates some of the “special effects.”

The dramatic narrative continues from von Teufel: **Reach out to one of those ancient souls, call to them with your mind, receive their spiritual essence into your hearts....**

Suddenly Mrs. Wittingham stands bolt upright, her arms stretched upward with fingers splayed and palms outward. Anyone making a *Hard notice* roll thinks they see a hazy, golden glow silhouetting her body. With eyes wide with terror and her voice at a tremulous pitch she cries out, pleading to the sky in an incomprehensible tongue.

Any hero making a *Hard languages, archaeology, hieroglyphics*, or similar skill check realizes she’s speaking a form of ancient Egyptian; they also recall in their brief dealings with Mrs. Wittingham that she has no understanding of the archaic language and can’t even read basic hieroglyphics. A second such roll enables them to patch together a loose translation of what she said (bearing in mind the difficulty of transposing understanding of a lost written language into a never-before-heard spoken one):

Sekhmetkemsaf is coming, my sisters. The defilers have dishonored the sanctuary of Bastet and must be punished. I brave the perils prepared by our enemies to reach you. I shall free you from your torment, sisters, and release your souls to complete your journey to the Afterlife.

When the spirit “departs” Mrs. Wittingham collapses back into her chair in a fainting spell; on cue, Madame von Teufel’s hidden assistant releases a cage full of doves, which flutter around the parlor, causing confusion and disorientation before flying like flitting spirits out the open French doors. Also “exhausted” from conducting the séance, von Teufel swoons in her seat, though nearby Dietrich Stosser quickly appears at her side to comfort her with dramatic outpouring of concern.

As the group recovers from the emotional drama of the séance, someone calls for the *saffragi*, one of the young Egyptian servants stationed in each of the hotel’s hallways to serve guests at a moment’s notice. He appears and receives directions from someone (Stosser if not one of the heroes) to bring Mrs. Wittingham back to her room to recover from the brush with the spirit world. Possibly with the aid of one of the characters, they help Wittingham back to her suite; by this time she regains some of her senses and strength and retires to her bedroom for the evening.

If one of the heroes suggests someone stay in the adjoining parlor in case she needs assistance, Mrs. Wittingham thanks them but claims it isn’t necessary; she does not mind, however, if someone insists on remaining nearby. One of the stragglers from the séance suggests anyone left after all this commotion reconvene in Shephard’s famous bar (or the lounge, which remains open to women) for drinks and discussion of von Teufel’s performance. Some characters might retire to their own hotel suite for the night.

Difficulty Values

- Routine _____
- Challenging _____
- Hard _____
- Improbable _____

**MRS. WITTINGHAM/
SEKHMETKEMSAF
(BOSS)**

Competent Skills:

- command* _____
- dodge* _____
- drive* _____
- endurance* _____
- intimidate* _____
- persuade* _____
- stealth* _____

Expert Skills:

- charm* _____
- faith* _____
- search* _____

Signature Skill:

- cast magic* _____

Gear:

- fine clothes* _____
- Sekhmet amulet* _____
- hat and purse* _____



Episode Two: Abduction!

Sinister forces employ magical means and minions to kidnap Mrs. Wittingham and try forcing the spirit possessing her to reveal the location of the lost temple mentioned in the séance. During the night an otherworldly golden glow begins shining through beneath the door.

Anyone in the adjacent parlor hears the pitter-patter of small, floppy feet suddenly running about the room, then a scream of alarm from Mrs. Wittingham: “Help me, someone, get these demons off me!” Eventually the heroes (and any stragglers from the séance) race to the room to investigate. Those stationed in Mrs. Wittingham’s hotel suite parlor witness these strange occurrences firsthand. Anyone retiring to their own rooms or Shepherd’s bar receives an anxious summons from the *saffragi* on duty in the nearby hallway; the insistent fellow refuses to leave the characters alone until he drags them to Mrs. Wittingham’s room to investigate the strange lights and sounds.

The door to Mrs. Wittingham’s bedroom remains locked. Any attempt to communicate with Wittingham before the door opens brings no response; characters still see the shimmering golden light shining from beneath the door, hear Wittingham’s muffled voice screaming through a gag, and sense several child-sized creatures stumbling around the bedroom. With sufficient persuasion (and threats that breaking down the door would damage hotel property) the *saffragi* reveals a master key to open the door (though nothing prevents the heroes from using force if they prefer).

They enter the bedroom in time to see three short reptilian creatures best described as crocodile imps trussing Mrs. Wittingham up with her own bedsheets and tossing her through a gold-glowing portal inscribed on one otherwise blank wall. Through this portal the heroes can clearly see and hear activity in a space that looks like a dusty warehouse filled with several vehicles and piles of supplies; definitely not the adjacent room in Shepherd’s Hotel, but a location somewhere distant accessible through the strange glowing portal.

Once they toss Mrs. Wittingham through the portal, the three crocodile imps turn on anyone coming through the door. These creatures stand no taller than three feet and resemble bipedal crocodiles with shortened, upright bodies balanced with a long tail, stumpy legs and arms, and long, toothy snouts. They wear loose mesh tunics woven from netting material and carry short, Egyptian-style hand axes. The imps serve their masters, the Nazis led by Deitrich Stosser, who used lost occult magic to summon them as his minions while operating in Egypt.

The imps pursue one of two strategies. If those initially entering the bedroom seem caught off guard and few in number, the imps attack them, swinging their axes and cackling in a strange, reptilian tone. If the imps feel they’re outnumbered at any time, one calls out a strange phrase in ancient Egyptian (for those scholars out there, it equates to “Magic gate, close the way!”) At this point the circular, gold-glowing portal on the wall begins to slowly shrink in size as the three imps scamper through just in time.

CROCODILE IMP (HENCHMAN)

Competent Skills:

dodge _____

notice _____

search _____

stealth _____

Expert Skill:

fight _____

Natural Defenses:

claws _____

hand ax _____

tough skin _____

“Oh, Let Her Go”

If the heroes decline to follow Mrs. Wittingham through the portal, the scenario follows a different course. The characters still need Mrs. Wittingham to help fund their expedition. If they don’t immediately begin searching Cairo’s warehouse district (near the docks in the northwestern suburb of Boulak), they realize that she’s disappeared from Cairo society. Meanwhile, Stosser and his Nazis hold her hostage, trying to persuade her (and the spirit that inhabits her) to lead them to the lost temple. The heroes might realize that, as associates of Mrs. Wittingham, the Nazis continue surveillance on them, though not always discreetly. The heroes might have dreams of their potential patroness in an ancient Egyptian setting, begging for them to help rescue her and her priestess sisters. The local authorities might suspect the heroes in her disappearance, prompting them to pursue their own investigation to clear their names.

Episode Three: Warehouse Fight

Assuming the heroes manage to jump through the portal before it closes, they find themselves in a warehouse packed with supplies, vehicles, and Germans! The three crocodile imps start manhandling Mrs. Wittingham (still trussed up in bedsheets), but they're distracted; any attacks on them send them sprawling and then diving for cover as they snarl for help.

Hearing the sounds of a fight, the Nazi thugs scattered throughout the warehouse (busy preparing the vehicles for some kind of expedition) turn their attention to subduing the heroes and capturing Mrs. Wittingham. They avoid using firearms lest they arouse the suspicions of others in the neighborhood; but they quickly gang up on the heroes using their fists, prybars, shovels, or any other handy equipment.

Fighting and maneuvering becomes difficult in the cluttered warehouse confines. Piles of supplies line the walls. Several vehicles—a truck, two motorcycles, and an automobile—take up space in the center, all facing two large double doors (currently closed) which allow access to the outside.

Mrs. Wittingham, possessed by some ancient spirit, takes her own course of action amid the fray. Leaping onto a nearby motorcycle, she kicks the engine to life and races through the warehouse toward the large double doors. Nazi thugs dive out of her way as she speeds along. Before she reaches the doors, she shouts several words in ancient Egyptian and thrusts one of her hands toward the doors; the air shimmers with force and the doors blast outward, clearing the way for her to race off into the night.

Meanwhile the Nazi thugs divide their efforts; some try to incapacitate the heroes while other clamor aboard the lorry, automobile, and remaining motorcycle to chase Mrs. Wittingham. Pursuing a similar strategy remains the heroes' only way of following her, too. The warehouse brawl develops into a fight to gain control of the vehicles and continue the pursuit.

Depending on who commandeers which vehicles, the fight turns into a chase through the Cairo streets and north into the Nile Delta. Ultimately the heroes must lose the Nazi thugs and track the lone motorcycle as it zooms across raised roads through swamps, sugarcane, and cotton fields.



NAZI THUG (HENCHMAN)

Competent Skills:

drive _____

intimidate _____

notice _____

shoot _____

stealth _____

Expert Skill:

fight _____

Gear:

Luger pistol _____

BMW MOTORCYCLE

Top Speed: 68 mph

Driver: 1

Passengers: 0

OPEL OLYMPIA

Top Speed: 60 mph

Driver: 1

Passengers: 4

OPEL BLITZ

Top Speed: 50 mph

Driver: 1

Passengers: 8

What If She Loses Them?

Queries of local residents reveal talk of a screaming spirit which sped through towns in the early morning hours like some ancient ghost. The heroes must convince superstitious villagers to talk about the otherwise taboo subject; bribes work better than intimidation, though bonuses might increase their chances if they use the superstitions against the Egyptians. By following reports of a spirit racing through the night they manage to track Mrs. Wittingham to the site of a lost temple of Sekhmet.

If the Nazis somehow got ahead of them in the pursuit, they follow additional reports of thugs roughing up the population in their brutish search for Mrs. Wittingham.

Episode Three: Lost Temple of Sekhmet



The heroes somehow track the missing Mrs. Wittingham to a sugarcane plantation in the Nile Delta where a band of Egyptian workers is looting a lost temple. The motorcycle tracks turn off into sugarcane fields, forcing down the crops as she weaves her way toward a marshy area. In the middle of the swamp, shielded by pools, reeds, and palm trees, stands a sandy rise with evidence of ruins. Several *fellahin* peasants occupy a small camp near the collection of fallen columns, massive stone blocks, and sand-covered statues. Even at this early hour, before the sun’s heat becomes too unbearable, they dig in pits, pry apart stones, and rummage through rubble seeking artifacts. Their main efforts center around a stone-lined pit near the temple foundation; from this they’ve already pulled several decorated sarcophagi and strewn their contents—the mummified remains of ancient priestesses of Bastet—across the sand to loot for gold and valuable amulets. (These mummies are the remains of the “dear sisters” mentioned by the priestess’ spirit currently possessing Mrs. Wittingham; “saving” them consists of respectfully interring the bodies, or at least trying to preserve them from looters.)

Dispersing the peasants requires some intimidation or persuasion; they aren’t expecting any kind of interference way out here in the middle of the fields. Although they might claim the heroes are trespassers on the sugarcane plantation, or that they have permission to excavate here, they are little more than cowardly looters themselves. If they don’t leave with the heroes’ encouragement, the arrival of a truck filled with Stosser and his Nazi thugs sends them scurrying in the face of such brutish force. While the thugs advance through the swamp, Stosser begins casting a spell. The remaining crocodile imps scamper out of the truck, giggling to themselves mischievously...the more Stosser chants, the larger they grow, until they stand eight feet tall and move like hulking behemoths. They wade into the fray, leading the Nazi attack.

The giant crocodile men swing their immense axes at the heroes as they dodge around the temple ruins. Once the Nazis waded through the swamp to the sandy mound, they take

CROCODILE GIANT (BOSS)

Competent Skills:

dodge _____

lift _____

search _____

strength _____

Expert Skills:

intimidate _____

notice _____

Signature Skill:

Fight _____

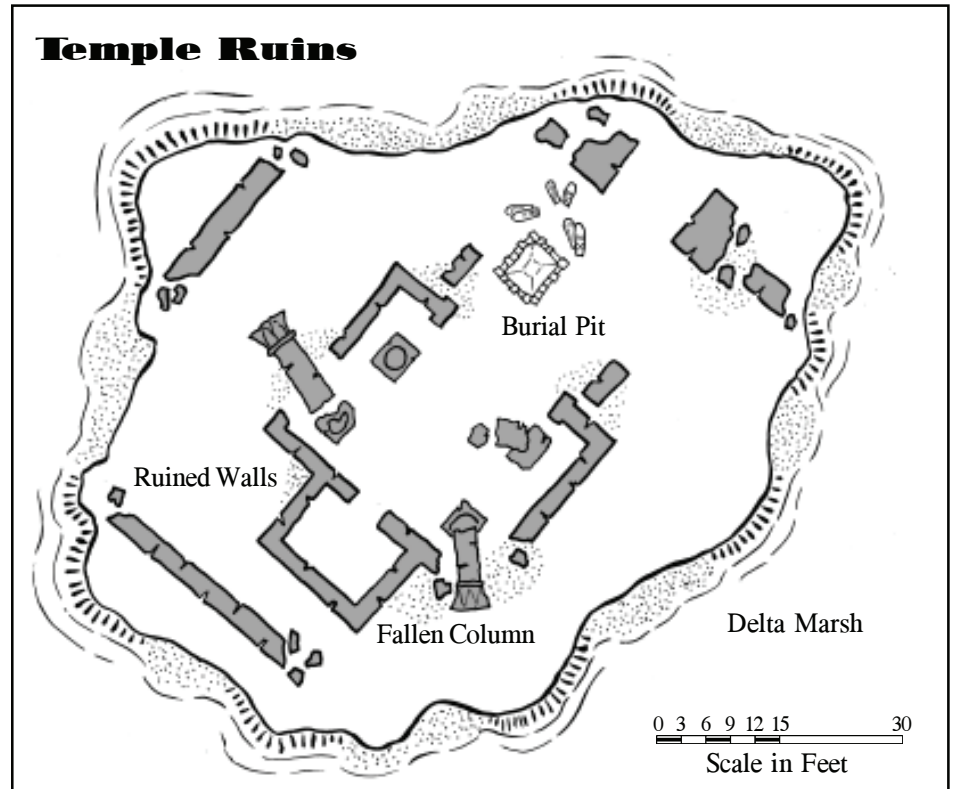
Natural Defenses:

claws _____

huge ax _____

armored skin _____

Temple Ruins



cover, occasionally shooting at heroes when they have a clear field of fire. The heroes have few recourses to weapons beyond their own equipment. They might try luring one crocodile giant into the burial pit. The peasants left a few shovels and picks. They might find some kind of protective amulet or powerful spell among the looted mummies or sand-covered ruins. Mrs. Wittingham, standing proudly while possessed by the ancient spirit, might aid them with awesome magic channeling the divine power of Sekhmet, lion-headed goddess of war.

The Nazis continue their sporadic gunfire even after the heroes defeat the crocodile giants, though at this point their morale begins failing. As soon as one of their number falls, or if Stosser takes a hit, they begin a tactical retreat back to their truck and rumble off to Cairo, leaving the heroes with Mrs. Wittingham at the ruined temple.

Epilogue

After the Nazis retreat and the heroes reclaim the ruined temple, the spirit possessing Mrs. Wittingham drives her to gather up the mummies and the trinkets looted from their bodies and reverently replace them in their respective sarcophagi. She intones quiet chants in ancient Egyptian, consecrating the reburials and ensuring their souls will live on with dignity and respect. Once Wittingham has restored the mummies, the spirit leaves her in peace. She has a few memories of her recent misadventures, enough to strengthen her belief in spiritualism and bestow upon the heroes and their expedition her grateful patronage in appreciation of their assistance. Mrs. Wittingham agrees to fund their further digs both at Sakkara and here at the newly discovered temple ruins.

If Stosser survives, he denies all involvement in the chase and events at the ruined temple; ultimately he and the other Nazis of his expedition become shadowy adversaries for the heroes' future adventures in Egypt.

Credits

Written, Designed & Produced by **Peter Schweighofer**

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DIETER STOSSER (BOSS)

Competent Skills:

bluff _____

command _____

dodge _____

drive _____

intellect _____

notice _____

research _____

stealth _____

Expert Skills:

archaeology _____

excavate _____

fight _____

shoot _____

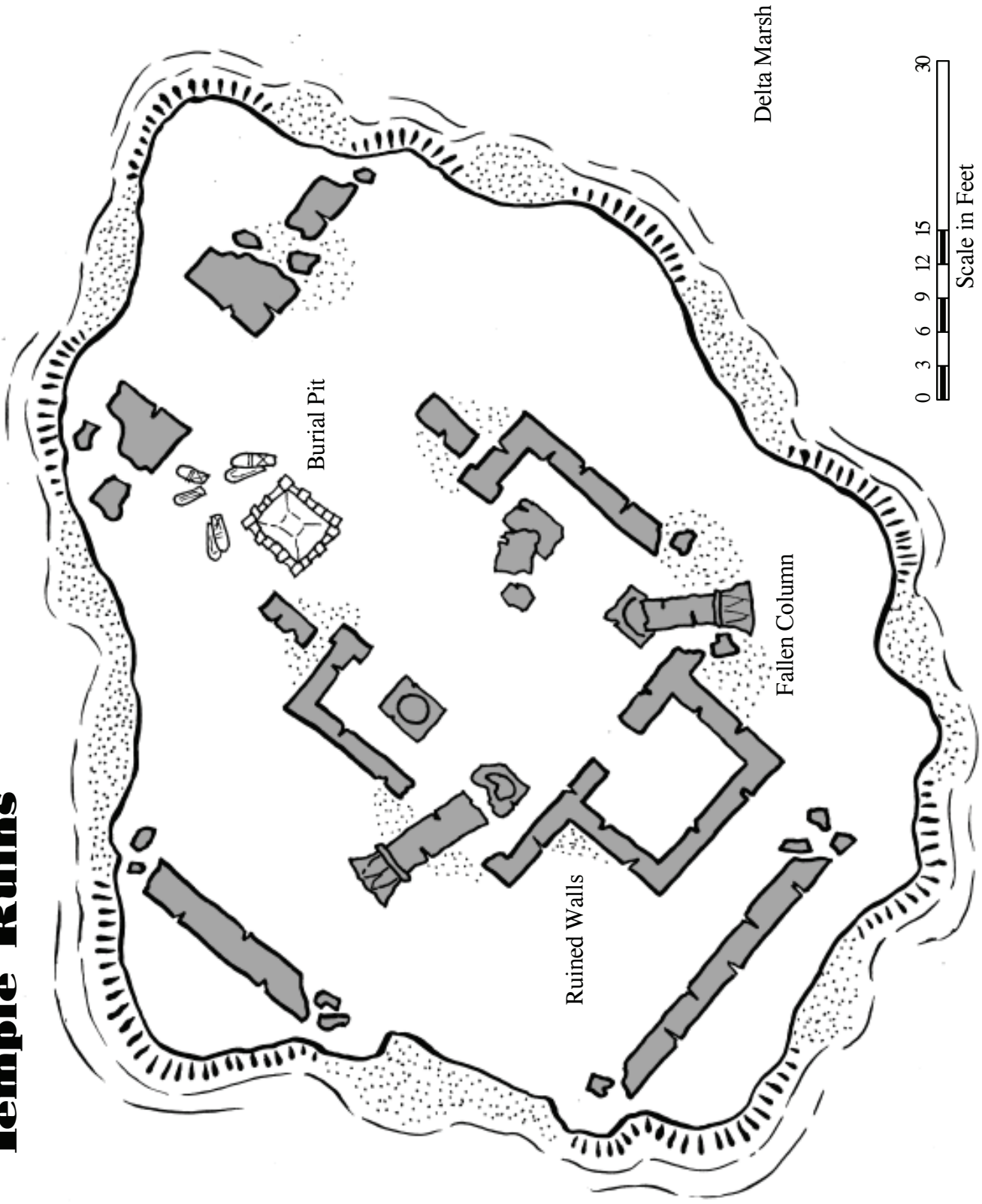
Signature Skill:

cast magic _____

Gear:

Luger pistol _____

Temple Ruins



Scale in Feet

The Mallory Expedition

Use these six members of the Hartwell College expedition, formerly under Professor Mallory's leadership, as templates for characters to use in this scenario or any *Pulp Egypt* adventure. Use them as written or adjust them to the campaign's themes and players' preference. Customize their skills using the *Any-System Key* found on page 12.

ELLIOTT HAMILTON

Occupation: Archaeologist

Age: 29 **Gender:** Male

Physical Description: Slight build, glasses, studious features, mop of blonde hair, dressed in tweed jacket and cap.

Background: As Professor Percy Mallory's protege, you've served as his assistant and colleague on various expeditions to Egypt. You're good friends, and spend many evenings smoking pipes and discussing theories about life in ancient times. You're a diligent scholar, studious academic, and meticulous archaeologist. You respect Mallory, even if you often sit off to the side taking on the daily tasks of the dig while he basks in the limelight. You're a quiet fellow used to listening more than barking orders.

You have a thorough understanding of Arab culture and of ancient Egyptian language and history. Thanks to generous financing from Hartwell College, you and the expedition rarely want for funds. This also ties you to the institution, obliging you to spend your time administering the expedition and overseeing the logistical aspects of its operations.

ELLIOTT HAMILTON (BOSS)

Competent Skills:

climb _____

dodge _____

persuade _____

Expert Skills:

deduce _____

search _____

speak Arabic _____

Signature Skill:

Egyptology _____

Equipment:

pocket knife _____

satchel _____

electric torch _____

magnifying glass _____

notepad, pencil, ruler, brush

MACK TANNER

Occupation: Wayward Adventurer

Age: 35 **Gender:** Male

Physical Description: Tall, well-built, with rugged good looks and a shock of wavy brown hair. Wears a leather jacket, brown fedora, and sturdy expedition boots.

Background: Your wanderlust and natural curiosity have led to a life of varied adventure across the globe: mountaineering in the Rockies, treasure hunting in India, smuggling in Italy, exploring along the Amazon. Along the way you've picked up a few useful skills that help you hold your own in a fight and get by using your wits. When you found yourself in Cairo looking for a job, you signed on with the Mallory archaeological expedition to Sakkara. Your varied past and often rough demeanor sometimes inhibit courteous interaction with others, but you get along well enough with your fellow expedition members. Although you have few academic skills that help with the dig, you oversee general security, make sure the native *fellaheen* workers stay in line, and keep the less worldly excavation personnel out of trouble.

MACK TANNER (BOSS)

Competent Skills:

navigate _____

notice _____

Expert Skills:

bluff _____

climb _____

dodge _____

fight _____

sneak _____

Signature Skill:

shoot _____

Equipment:

Webley revolver _____

compass _____

satchel _____

ISABELLE NEAVE (BOSS)

Competent Skills:

bluff _____*brawl* _____*charm* _____*dodge* _____*gamble* _____*navigation* _____*streetwise* _____

Expert Skills:

drive _____*ride* _____*shoot* _____

Signature Skill:

pilot _____

Equipment:

Derringer _____*flight jacket, leather helmet, goggles***ISABELLE NEAVE****Occupation:** Vehicle Ace**Age:** 23 **Gender:** Female**Physical Description:** Gorgeous figure accentuated by boots, riding pants, leather jacket, silk scarf, goggles and flight cap.**Background:** A rich upbringing exposed you to extravagant toys like motorcars and aeroplanes, so you naturally developed an affinity for and proficiency in operating them. You were in Cairo when your degenerate brother squandered the family fortune. You found work driving or piloting those wealthy enough to afford automobiles and aeroplanes (though they'd never let a woman do such work for the army or Royal Air Force). You still have a flair about you from growing up rich, though this means you spend more money than you make. Everything's an adventure to you, even overseeing transport and logistics for the Mallory expedition. You drive their lorry, picking up supplies and hauling artifacts back to the warehouse in Cairo. When you're not driving, you watch the dig and gamble with the *fellahin*.**IBRAHIM AL-KASSAM (BOSS)**

Competent Skills:

dodge _____*endurance* _____*lift* _____*persuade* _____*streetwise* _____

Expert Skills:

fight _____*intimidate* _____

Signature Skill:

command _____

Equipment:

stout stick _____*pipe, kaftan, tarboosh***IBRAHIM AL-KASSAM****Occupation:** *Fellahin* Foreman**Age:** 52 **Gender:** Male**Physical Description:** Hulking, dark-skinned Arab with full graying beard wearing a tarboosh and sashed kaftan**Background:** A native Egyptian, you have worked among the ancient ruins all your life. You began hauling and sifting dirt from excavations for *ferengi* (foreigners) who came to dig seeking tombs and treasures. You befriended many and soon rose to become a foreman, directing crowds of *fellahin* peasants on vast excavations and advising great archaeologists how best to unearth Egypt's regal past. You deal sternly with workers, who need strict leadership and supervision, but you've also earned their respect. Those unfamiliar with your work often treat you as infirm or senile considering your great age. To your employers you offer quiet suggestions and paternal encouragement; they are friends whom you faithfully serve.

ARCHIBALD LITTLEDALE**Occupation:** Reporter**Age:** 25 **Gender:** Male**Physical Description:** Tall and wiry, with a thin mustache, wearing a dapper suit and broad-rimmed hat, and carrying a pen and pad in his hand.**Background:** As the son of a cotton mill owner in the Nile Delta, you spent much of your youth in Cairo among both wealthy Europeans and common Egyptians. You made friends with everyone you met, finding something interesting in each person and encouraging them to talk about themselves and their work. You used this natural rapport when you got a job reporting for Cairo's English-language newspaper, the *Egyptian Gazette*. You cover various beats: archaeological digs, society gossip, business news, military happenings. Cairo can be a pretty rough city, so you carry a two-shot Derringer in your pocket in case of trouble. You maintain a wide cast of low-level contacts throughout Cairo, people who can offer more information or other angles on stories you're researching. Your solid understanding of Arabic culture also aids you in navigating the exotic terrain of Egyptian society.**ARCHIBALD LITTLEDALE
(BOSS)****Competent Skills:***dodge* _____*sneak* _____*speak Arabic* _____**Expert Skills:***bluff* _____*charm* _____*notice* _____*persuade* _____*search* _____*streetwise* _____**Signature Skill:***investigate* _____**Equipment:***Derringer* _____*camera* _____*notepad, pen***MAJOR WILSON BROOMHALL****Occupation:** British Military Officer**Age:** 41 **Gender:** Male**Physical Description:** Aging fellow with stern face, meticulously trimmed mustache, army uniform and hat, and military bearing.**Background:** Life had little direction until the outbreak of the Great War. You received a commission in the British Army and fought the Hun in France. Since then you've remained in the service, rising in rank and going wherever His Majesty required: India, Hong Kong, Singapore, British East Africa, and lately Egypt. You understand obedience and the chain of command, but realize individual soldiers must rise to the occasion to prevail. You hold authority over lower-ranked British military personnel and have the respect of many Englishmen in Egypt. Your duty to King and country is beyond reproach, though many native Egyptians treat you with resentment for occupying and ruling their country. Between your light duties at the Cairo garrison, you dabble in archaeology, tagging along on excavations, observing, and occasionally helping to supervise operations.**MAJOR WILSON
BROOMHALL (BOSS)****Competent Skills:***brawl* _____*dodge* _____*navigate* _____**Expert Skills:***investigate* _____*streetwise* _____*survival* _____**Signature Skill:***command* _____**Equipment:***Webley Mk4 revolver* _____*riding crop* _____*army uniform*



Any-System Key



An Adaptable Stat System

By Peter Schweighofer

The *Any-System Key* describes character skills and task difficulties in terms that easily translate into different game systems. These terms do not key into any one game engine, but serve as general guidelines to give readers an overall sense of how they fit within their own game's stat and difficulty scale. *Any-System Key* publications provide settings, characters, adventures, and other source material adaptable to your favorite roleplaying game.

Character Stats

Assume characters have the average rating in most skills, with several rated at the level of a competent professional, a few considered expert in their field, and sometimes one signature skill for which the character is renown.

SKILL LEVELS

Competent Skills: Displays a professional level of training

Expert Skills: Possesses specialized knowledge

Signature Skill: Ranks among the best in the world

Three character levels further describe their abilities. Henchmen do not possess Signature skills and only have one Expert skill. Bosses have the usual complement of skills. Masterminds boost all their skills by one level; their Competent skills have the same value as Expert skills normally possess, Expert skills have values equivalent to the Signature level, and Signature skills increase by one increment beyond their maximum game value.

CHARACTER LEVELS

Henchman: No Signature Skill, only one Expert Skill

Boss: Normal skill levels

Mastermind: Skills boosted one level, Signature Skill gains bonus

An equipment category defines a character's possessions (or an animal's natural weapons) gamers can easily look up for damage, cost, and other stats in their preferred game.

Example:

ORC (Henchman)

Competent Skills: archery, brawl, carouse, climb, intimidate, track

Expert Skills: fight

Equipment: leather armor, sword

Task Difficulties

Any-System Key publications use four levels to describe the degree of difficulty for tasks undertaken by a person with professional training and proficiency in relevant skills.

TASK DIFFICULTIES

Routine: Low chance of failure (25%).

Challenging: Moderate chance of failure (50%).

Hard: High chance of failure (75%).

Improbable: Almost certain chance of failure (99%).

Example:

The characters must leap across a chasm to reach safety. Doing so successfully requires a *Challenging jump* roll; they have a moderate chance of failure, but also a moderate chance of success. If flames leaped out of the chasm, the difficulty might increase to *Hard*; not only must they jump the chasm, but they must withstand intense heat.

Higher Level Games

Running a setting or scenario with heroes who seem to waltz through encounters? Simply raise the gamemaster character levels and the task difficulty levels. Nothing turns Henchman-level mooks into challenging opponents better than upgrading their Expert skill into a Signature skill.

Fits Your Favorite Games

Game character skills have different degrees of competence defined by stats. Simply figure out which stats best represent the levels of Competent, Expert, and Signature skills and use those values when integrating *Any-System Key* material into your game.

The same applies for difficulties. Just match the *Any-System Key* difficulty descriptions with the corresponding values for rating tasks in your own game.

Visit the Griffon Publishing Studio website
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and sample character stats.
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