



Curse of the Jade Cricket

In this adventure, the heroes encounter an old man who asks them to complete his quest: return a cursed item to the tomb from which it was stolen. In exchange, they can have any of the tomb's other treasures.

A Beasts & Barbarians One Sheet by Preston DuBose



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INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed to work in nearly any part of the Dread Sea Dominions. Merely adjust the scenery description as needed.

While traveling, the adventurers encounter an elderly man pinned beneath a broken wagon. Characters who make a Repair roll or a Notice (-2) roll deduce the old man had been repairing the wagon's wheel when the support shifted, pinning him to the ground. As the heroes approach, they become aware of a high-pitched trilling noise coming from ahead, but the sound abruptly ceases when they draw near. Lifting the wagon and removing the injured traveler is a Dramatic Task using Strength. Failure means the old man receives additional injuries during the rescue.

After the heroes extract him from his predicament, it's clear the wagon isn't the only thing broken. The old man's leg is twisted at an unnatural and painful angle. If the heroes failed their Dramatic Task then a Healing roll also reveals broken ribs and other injuries, which are beyond any healer's capacity.

The old man introduces himself as Aartaro, a former thief of Jalizar, and is grateful for the rescue. Although obviously in great pain, he is far more concerned about failing in his mission.

Tears streak down Aartaro's face. "Please have mercy and help an old man. In my youth I was hired to plunder a special tomb, one that only appears once every fifty years. The fat nobleman told me to take as much as I could carry, with the exception of a jade cricket. This jade cricket.

He produces a jade figurine from a pocket and hands it to them.

"Now I'm cursed! When I left the tomb I tried to sneak past the nobleman and his guards, but the jade cricket chirped an alarm and I was caught, stripped of all my treasures, beaten, and left for dead. No matter the circumstances, no matter where or how I try to get rid of it, this infernal thing always returns to me and causes mischief. It was the cricket that spooked my mule old Sal and caused her to run until she broke my wagon.

The tomb is set to reappear this very night, and Aartaro was on his way to return the stolen artifact. Only, with a broken leg he'll never be able to traverse the path to the tomb. He begs the adventurers to return the jade cricket to its rightful place in the tomb's burial chamber and swears he left mountains of other plunder still within.

Assuming the heroes agree, the former thief gives directions to a place not far from their present location. The tomb is set to appear tonight after sunset, but he warns them they must be out before the first rays of the rising sun or be trapped for 50 years.

THE TOMB OF DUSK

The Tomb of Dusk is hidden in a steep mountain cleft, deep in a swamp, along an oceanside cliff, or any other hard to reach spot appropriate to the heroes' region. Traversing the route would be overwhelming for someone like Aartaro but merely strenuous for the adventurers. True to his word, with the sun dipping below the horizon and twilight rapidly deepening, a doorway fades into existence in a hitherto solid slab of rock. The entrance itself is unassuming; little more than a crack in the stone. However, after descending a dozen rough-hewn steps the heroes find the walls and floor turn to smooth, worked stone.

The upper left corner of the tomb's ceiling glows in a line of unnatural light just bright enough to provide dim lighting conditions. Characters who make a Smarts roll -4 or who observe the ceiling at least twice more notice the glowing line shifts across the ceiling over time. When it reaches the opposite corner of the ceiling, it means the first light of dawn has reached the tomb's door and those left behind are trapped for 50 years.

TRAPS AT EVERY TURN

The Tomb of Dusk is designed to prey upon player expectations of the traditional dungeon crawl trope. In a traditional dungeon crawl, players expect traps or creatures around every corner. Players also know to pay special attention to things the GM takes time to describe in detail. This tomb is filled with the appearance of these dangers, but without the actual trap itself. This should put the characters on the edge of their seats, waiting for danger to strike. It's entirely at GM discretion as to when actual danger befalls them.

THE DANCE OF VIRTUE

Your light reveals a change in corridor ahead. Your path leads into a large hall. The floor transitions to a red tile pattern randomly interspersed with white squares. The walls are adorned with elaborate carvings depicting great and terrible battles, enormous banquets and tragic famines, and so on.

A Notice roll reveals several small, randomly placed holes in the walls. These holes would be the perfect size for a deadly arrow barrage. A raise on the roll reveals irregularly shaped tiles in a meandering path down the corridor. Keeping to the path without stepping on other tiles requires an Agility roll at -2. If this corridor was ever a trap, it is no longer one.

GUARDIANS OF DISCIPLINE

Beyond the grand hall, the corridor snakes downward into the earth until eventually reaching an antechamber.

From the threshold of this room, you see a number of wooden chests. A few are tipped over, their contents scattered carelessly on the floor. Others are open and appear empty, although you can't be sure from this distance. At least one chest seems untouched, other than the lid having been flung open

to reveal gold coins, gems, and delicate jewelry.

You also spy two dried corpses lying among the chests. The remains are little more than piles of bone held in rotten clothing and tarnished armor. A spear lies beside one, a sword the other. They are witnessed by a dozen or more clay statues lining the walls. These life-sized replicas of soldiers stand at attention and hold weapons at ready.

Opposite the entrance of the room, there is a set of double doors, ornately carved and currently closed. Although of uncommon design, the sword and spear have no special qualities and the corpses' other belongings are in tatters. The treasure can be entirely real, or if the grand wealth adversely affects the campaign then most of it is found to be fakes (explaining why other thieves left it behind) with a few genuine pieces to make the journey worth their while.

TOMB OF THE FORGOTTEN

As you open the door to this room, torches set in metal brackets along the wall light up. Although they emit no heat or smoke, they offer a clear view of the circular room before you. A stone sarcophagus lies in the center, but far more imposing is the figure beyond. A mummified woman sits upon a stone throne, which itself rests upon a dais which effectively puts the seated figure a full head higher than the tallest among you. Both of the mummy's hands lie upon the throne's armrest, palms up.

Assuming the heroes enter the room, if they approach at least as close as the sarcophagus then they can make out a delicate ruby figurine of a praying mantis sitting upon the mummy's left hand. The right is currently empty, and it is here the jade cricket belongs.

This room is nothing more than it appears, but the GM should set the mood as though any wrong move could cause the mummy or the sarcophagus' owner to arise.

Jade Cricket – This figurine is cursed with the Bad Luck hindrance. If Aartaro dies and it is still in the possession of one of the heroes, then that person becomes its new owner. No matter how it is disposed of (other than being put back in its rightful place in the mummy's hand), the cricket always returns to its owner within 24 hours.

Ruby Mantis – This figurine bestows the Ugly hindrance, although the effect only occurs after a night's rest. Like the Jade Cricket, the only way to break the curse is to return the mantis to the Tomb of Dusk.

THE GAUNTLET

Having reached the farthest chamber in the tomb, experienced adventurers may expect to run a gauntlet of all the traps they encountered on the way in. Again, it's entirely up to the GM whether to keep building the tension or give them what they expect. If running this as a gauntlet, refer to the info below. Otherwise, skip to **The Exit**.

TOMB

After placing the jade cricket in the mummy's hand, her bony fingers curl around both figurines. The sound stone rubbing against stone comes from the sarcophagus behind them as the lid slides aside. The queen's champion, another mummy, arises to do battle.

(WC) Mummy: Use the mummy stats from the Savage Worlds core rules.

ANTECHAMBER

Although the clay statues are unchanged, the wooden treasure chests have sprouted stubby legs and grown rows of shark-like teeth.

Devourers (1 per hero): Use the Soldier stats from Savage Worlds core rules, adding the Construct Special Ability.

GRAND HALL

Upon reaching the grand hall, the heroes find that the path of white tiles has changed. Now the tiles change color before their eyes. A Smarts roll -2 allows them to detect a pattern to the changes, negating the difficulty of the Agility roll. Otherwise, crossing the hall is a Dramatic Task using Agility at -2. Failure results in a barrage of crossbow bolts equal to 1d4 bolts for every Success they failed to achieve in the Dramatic Task. (For example, if the hero only achieved two successes in the Dramatic Task then he would roll 3d4 to determine the number of bolts fired.) Each bolt does d6 damage.

THE EXIT

The return journey seems to take far longer than the trip to the innermost tomb. The thin line upon the ceiling indicates approaching dawn. The GM may wish to run the race to exit the tomb before the deadline as a group Dramatic Task rolled by the member with the lowest Strength attribute. Other members may assist at -2. Failure means they are trapped within the tomb, but only for a moment. When the door reappears, they exit to learn 50 years have passed in the rest of the world.

Otherwise, when the heroes exit the tomb they discover Aartaro accompanied by a group of bandits.

As you exit the tomb you spy Aartaro accompanied by several other rough looking individuals. The old man shrugs his shoulders and says, "What can I say? I changed my mind. I figure I deserve compensation for 50 years of bad luck." One of the bandits brushes Aartaro aside and demands all the treasure you took from the tomb.

Regardless of adventurers' amount of cooperation, the bandits attempt to search the heroes themselves. When they are done (or if the adventurers attack first), without warning the leader stabs Aartaro with a knife and orders his men to kill them all. If the Dramatic Task to rescue Aartaro from the wagon resulted in another Wound then the bandit performs the killing blow. Otherwise, he is alive but gravely wounded. Even if alive, he is no condition to fight.

(WC) Aartaro: Use Thief stats (see *SEGM*), he has one Wound and the Lame Hindrance.

(WC) Bandit Leader: Use Brigand stats from *SEGM*, raising Fighting by one die step.

(E) Bandits (1 per hero +1): Use Brigand stats from *SEGM*.