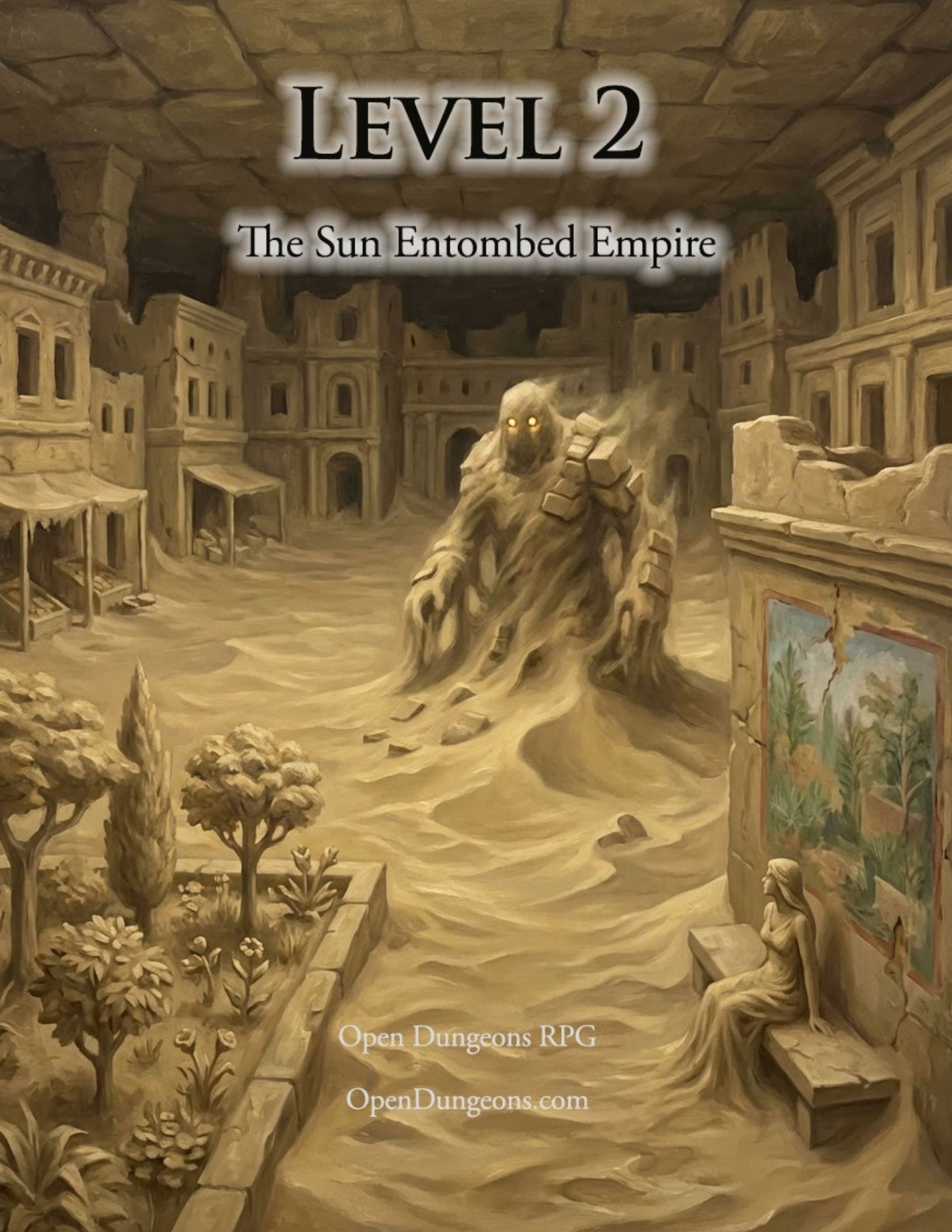


LEVEL 2

The Sun Entombed Empire



Open Dungeons RPG

OpenDungeons.com

How to Read Adventure, Color Coding

DN NOTE - mechanics, room dimensions, trap details, DM-only

TO PLAYERS - read-aloud text

SUGGESTED ENCOUNTER - enemy stats, combat balance notes

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS - loot and item descriptions

STORY DROP - narrative connections and lore context

THE SUN ENTOMBED EMPIRE

LEVEL 2

Open Dungeons RPG

DN LEVEL OVERVIEW

This level is the gods' recreation of the Pharaoh's capital city - a hollow copy built from his memories, constructed so he would spend eternity surrounded by everything he sacrificed for his forced Ascension. The buildings look real. They aren't. Doorways open onto sand. Streets end in walls. Homes contain furniture but no warmth. None of this existed before the curse. The gods built a dead city from a dead man's memories and made it his prison.

The Sand Warden patrols this level. It moves through sand as if swimming, erupting from floors and walls without warning. It is a divine construct - a prison guard. It does not speak, negotiate, or tire. It has a lair in B29 (the central plaza) but roams freely. The DN should deploy it whenever the party gets comfortable. It can appear in any room with exposed sand (which is nearly all of them).

No water exists anywhere on this level. The city is bone-dry. Any containers found are empty or filled with sand. The only actual water in the entire dungeon is hidden deep within Level 5.

The emotional weight of this level comes from walking through someone's home and realizing it was built as punishment. Lean into the domestic details - children's toys made of sand that crumble when touched, kitchens with stone ovens that were never lit, beds carved from rock with no blankets. Everything is close enough to real life to hurt, and wrong enough to remind you it's all a lie.

B1 - South Entry Corridor

DN NOTE

Wide corridor, 25 ft wide, 60 ft long. The main southern entrance to the level. Sand on the floor deepens as players move north. Walls show the first signs of urban architecture - carved lintels, window frames filled with sand, the ghost outlines of doorways that were sealed before they were finished.

Cool underground air. Faint amber glow from ahead - the false city's permanent sourceless light. No traps. No enemies. Atmospheric entry.

TO PLAYERS

The corridor widens. The walls change from rough stone to something deliberate - carved lintels overhead, the rectangular shapes of sealed windows, the outlines of doorways filled solid with sandstone. You're walking into a city. Or what's left of one. The air is cool and still, and a faint amber light glows from somewhere ahead, painting the sand in warm tones that feel like a lie.

NAVIGATION

North leads to B4 and the city interior.

West passage leads to B2.

East passage leads to B19 and B22.

B2 - Abandoned Market Quarter

DN NOTE

Large open chamber, 40x35 ft. Stone stalls and counters arranged in rows - a marketplace. Everything is empty. The stalls are carved from single blocks of sandstone, too perfect, too uniform. No wear from use. These were never real market stalls. The gods built them from the Pharaoh's memory of what a market looked like.

Intelligence Chance Roll TN 13: the goods that would have filled these stalls are represented only by sand shaped into approximations - loaves of bread, fruit, bolts of cloth - all made of compacted sand. Touch them and they collapse.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

A marketplace, frozen mid-day. Stone stalls line the chamber in neat rows, counters polished smooth, everything arranged as if the vendors stepped away moments ago. But the stalls are empty. No goods, no scraps, no signs of commerce. Just stone and sand. On closer look, some of the counters still have shapes on them - rounded lumps, stacked forms. They look like bread. Like fruit. They're sand. All of it. Shaped to look real from a distance and crumbling the moment you reach for them.

NAVIGATION

East leads back to B1.

North leads to B3.

B3 - Residential Ruin (South)

DN NOTE

Small chamber cluster, three connected rooms (15x15 ft each). A home. Stone beds built into the walls. A hearth that was never lit - no soot, no charcoal, no ash. A child's toy carved from stone sits on a shelf. Beside it, a second toy made of compacted sand, shaped like a small dog. It dissolves at touch.

This is the first domestic space players encounter. Play the contrast hard - it looks lived-in but was never alive.

No enemies. No traps. No loot.

TO PLAYERS

Someone lived here. Three rooms, connected by low archways. Stone beds built into the walls, wide enough for two. A hearth in the corner - but it's pristine. No soot. No char. It was never used. On a shelf near the door, a child's toy. A small animal carved from stone. Beside it, another toy shaped like a little dog. You pick it up and it falls apart in your fingers. Sand. Just sand, pressed into a shape that almost meant something.

NAVIGATION

South leads to B2.

North leads to B6 and B4.

B4 - Central Residential Block

DN NOTE

Large residential area, 40x30 ft. Multiple dwelling units branching off a central corridor. Sand knee-deep in the corridor, shallower inside the units. Each dwelling is a variation of B3 - beds, hearths, shelves - all equally fake. One dwelling has a wall mural showing a

family: parents, three children, a pet. The mural is exquisitely detailed. The faces have been scratched out.

Wisdom Chance Roll TN 14: the scratches on the faces aren't random vandalism. They're precise. Surgical. Someone (the gods) removed the identities while preserving everything else. The family exists but cannot be known.

One dwelling contains a dead adventurer. Different era than Level 1 bodies. Cause of death: starvation (bones only, dried parchment skin). They made it deep into the city and couldn't find their way out.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Dead adventurer: 8 GP, 3 SP. A short sword (1d6 slashing, functional). A journal fragment: "Third day in the city. Streets loop. I keep finding the same fountain but there's nothing in it. The buildings watch me. I can hear them settling at night but nothing moves." A crude charcoal map of B1-B7 area (partially accurate, helps navigation).

TO PLAYERS

A neighborhood. Dwellings branch off a sand-choked corridor, each one a small home - beds, hearths, shelves, the architecture of daily life. All of it empty. All of it unused. In one unit, a mural covers an entire wall: a family, painted with extraordinary care. Two parents. Three children. A small animal at their feet. Every detail is perfect except the faces. The faces have been scratched away. Not smashed. Scraped. Carefully, deliberately, as if someone wanted the family to exist but refused to let them be recognized.

NAVIGATION

South leads to B3 and B1.

West leads to B6.

North leads to B7.

East leads to B19 and B20.

B5 - Collapsed Grand Hall (West)

DN NOTE

Massive chamber, 60x40 ft, ceiling partially collapsed. This is one of two Collapsed Grand Halls on this level. Upper floors have pancaked downward creating a multi-tiered ruin of unstable debris. The collapse isn't from age - the gods built it pre-collapsed. The destruction is decorative.

Navigation is three-dimensional. Players climb over rubble, squeeze between collapsed floors, and risk cave-ins. Moving through debris: Strength Chance Roll TN 12 to climb safely. Dexterity Chance Roll TN 13 to squeeze through tight gaps. Loud noises or heavy impacts: Probability Roll - on 1-3 on d6, a section of ceiling drops. DEX Quick Save or 1d6 bludgeoning. DR applies.

Among the debris: remnants of a funeral procession. Shattered ceremonial vessels. Crushed offerings. Remains of servants arranged in careful rows - even the mockery preserved this detail.

SUGGESTED ENCOUNTER

Sand Crawlers (x3) - nest in the upper debris. Small constructs of sand and bone, size of large dogs. They drop from above.

Suggested: 8 HP each, AC 11. Attack: Bite, d20+2 vs AC, 1d4+1 piercing. Pack tactics: if 2+ crawlers attack the same target in the same round, each gets +2 to hit. Fast - 30 ft movement, can climb walls and ceilings.

Balance (2 players): 24 HP total but fragile individually, manageable. (3-5 players): Easy. The real danger is the cave-in mechanic during combat.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Ceremonial bronze anklet (15 GP). Crushed offering box containing 12 SP worth of corroded coins. A servant's bone pendant carved with a prayer of devotion (no monetary value, but a Cleric holding it gets a momentary sense of warmth - the prayer still carries residual faith).

TO PLAYERS

The ceiling fell. Or rather, it was built fallen. The grand hall stretches sixty feet across, but you can only see fragments of it through the layers of collapsed floors above. Slabs of stone lean against each other like cards. Rubble fills the gaps. Getting through means climbing, squeezing, trusting surfaces that groan under your weight.

Between the debris, you notice something arranged with care. Broken vessels, crushed offerings, and bones. Not scattered - placed. Rows of them, small skeletons laid out side by

side, hands folded. Servants. Even in this ruin, even in this mockery, someone made sure they were buried properly.

NAVIGATION

East leads to B7 and B8.

North (climbing through upper debris) leads to B10.

South leads to B6.

B6 - Servants\' Quarter

DN NOTE

Narrow L-shaped corridor connecting B3/B4 to B5. Small chambers branch off - sleeping alcoves, each barely 6 ft wide. Stone slabs for beds, nothing else. No personal effects. These servants had nothing in life and less in death. The gods didn't bother recreating possessions for people who didn't matter to the Pharaoh's memory.

No enemies. No traps. No loot. The emptiness is the point.

TO PLAYERS

A corridor lined with alcoves, each one barely wide enough to lie down in. Stone slabs for beds. No shelves. No hearths. No toys. Whoever slept here owned nothing worth remembering - or at least, nothing that the builders of this place thought worth recreating.

NAVIGATION

East leads to B3 and B4.

North leads to B5 (Collapsed Grand Hall).

B7 - Artisan\'s Workshop

DN NOTE

Medium chamber, 25x20 ft. A craftsman's workshop - stone workbench, tool racks (empty), a kiln built into the wall. Pottery fragments on the floor, but the fragments don't fit together. They were never whole pieces. The gods created shards without creating the pots they came from.

Intelligence Chance Roll TN 14: some fragments bear partial hieratic inscriptions. Piecing together 3+ fragments (takes 10 minutes): the text is a production order for ritual vessels. "200 vessels for the Gathering. The staff requires amplification through resonance points." This is a reference to preparations for the forced Ascension ritual.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Pottery fragments with partial inscriptions (quest item if assembled - no gold value, but provides context for Level 4 Pharaoh encounter).

Artisan's chisel, still sharp (improvised weapon, 1d4 piercing, or functional tool).

TO PLAYERS

A workshop. The workbench is solid stone, smooth from use that never happened. Tool racks line the walls, empty, pegs waiting for implements that were never made. A kiln sits cold in the corner. Pottery fragments litter the floor - dozens of pieces, different sizes, scattered as if a shelf collapsed. But when you try to fit them together, nothing matches. The pieces don't belong to any whole. They were born broken.

If players spend time assembling fragments (Intelligence Chance Roll TN 14, 10 minutes):

Three fragments align. The writing is small, precise - a production order. "200 vessels for the Gathering. The staff requires amplification through resonance points." Whatever the Gathering was, it needed a lot of preparation.

STORY DROP

The 'resonance points' reference the Pharaoh's forced Ascension infrastructure. He didn't just perform a single ritual - he built an entire logistics chain to harvest and channel mortal faith. The 200 vessels were distributed across the empire as focal points. This connects to the resonance tracking in Level 1's observatory (A6) and the ritual details in Level 4's libraries.

NAVIGATION

South leads to B4.

West leads to B5.

North leads to B15 and B8.

East leads to B18.

B8 - Barracks (Abandoned)

DN NOTE

Rectangular chamber, 30x20 ft. Military sleeping quarters. Stone bunks in rows, weapon racks (empty), armor stands (empty). Everything is sized for soldiers but feels sterile. No graffiti, no scratches on the bunks, no initials carved into stone. Real barracks accumulate personality. These never held a single person.

One bunk has a sand-formed shape lying on it - humanoid, roughly soldier-sized. Like a body cast made of compressed sand. Touching it: it collapses into a pile. The outline remains on the stone slab. The gods made ghost soldiers to fill ghost beds.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

Barracks. Stone bunks in rows, weapon racks along the walls - all empty. Armor stands with nothing on them. The room is organized with military precision but it feels hollow. No scratches on the bunks. No marks on the walls. No sign that any living person ever occupied these beds. One bunk, near the back, still has something on it. A shape. Lying on its side. It looks like a person sleeping, but the color is wrong - pale, sandy, motionless. You reach out and it crumbles. Just sand, pressed into the shape of a soldier who never existed.

NAVIGATION

South leads to B7 and B5.

North leads to B9.

East leads to B15.

B9 - Officers\' Quarters

DN NOTE

Larger chamber, 30x25 ft. Higher-ranking military quarters. Bigger beds, a desk, a map table (empty). A decorative sword mounted on the wall - real bronze, functional, but inscribed with the name of a general who may or may not have existed. Wisdom Chance Roll TN 13; the inscription style doesn't match the empire's actual writing conventions. The gods invented this general.

No enemies. No traps.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Bronze officer's sword (1d6+1 slashing, well-balanced, worth 20 GP). Inscribed with a false name.

TO PLAYERS

Officer's quarters. More space, a proper desk, a stone table large enough to spread a map across - though there's no map on it. A sword hangs on the wall above the bed, mounted on bronze hooks. Real metal. Real edge. The name engraved along the blade is long and formal, the kind of name that belongs to someone important. Whether that someone was ever real is a question this room doesn't answer.

NAVIGATION

South leads to B8.

East leads to Sand-Choked Corridor and B14.

North leads to B10 and B11 area.

B10 - Guard Tower Ruin

DN NOTE

Tall narrow chamber, 15x15 ft but 30 ft ceiling. A guard tower, hollowed out and partially collapsed. Spiral staircase wraps the interior wall, broken at the 20 ft mark. Upper platform is reachable via climbing (Strength Chance Roll TN 14). The platform offers a vantage point over B9, B11, and the Sand-Choked Corridor. Good tactical position.

From the platform: Wisdom Chance Roll TN 12 - players can see movement in the sand below in the corridor between B9 and B12. Something large displacing sand as it moves. This is the Sand Warden on patrol. First sighting.

TO PLAYERS

A tower. The walls reach thirty feet up, and a spiral staircase wraps the interior, broken halfway. The upper platform is still intact - if you can reach it. From down here, you can see the remains of a guard post: a stone bench, mounting brackets for a signal torch, a narrow slit window looking north.

If players climb to the platform (Strength Chance Roll TN 14):

The view opens up. You can see over the walls into the corridors below - the sand-choked passage to the east, the grand hall to the north. And something else. In the sand below, something is moving. Not on the surface. Under it. A long, slow displacement, like a whale passing beneath shallow water. Whatever it is, it's big. And it's headed deeper into the city.

STORY DROP

First Sand Warden sighting. This is a preview, not an encounter. Let the players see it, fear it, and plan around it. The Warden patrols the main corridors - B29, B34, B40, B50 loop. It surfaces when it detects intruders.

NAVIGATION

South leads to B9.

East leads to B11 (Collapsed Grand Hall).

The platform overlooks corridors toward B12.

B11 - Collapsed Grand Hall (North)

DN NOTE

Second Collapsed Grand Hall. 55x45 ft. Same construction as B5 - pre-collapsed by divine design. This one was a civic building, not a funerary hall. Stone benches in rows suggest an assembly hall or courthouse. The collapse has created a dangerous multi-level environment.

Same mechanics as B5: Strength Chance Roll TN 12 to climb, Dexterity Chance Roll TN 13 for tight gaps, cave-in risk on loud noises (Probability Roll 1-3 on d6).

Deeper in the rubble: a stone tablet, cracked but legible. Intelligence Chance Roll TN 14 to translate. It's a court record - a trial. A priest accused of questioning the Gathering ritual. Verdict: guilty. Sentence: "service to the Ascension." The priest was fed to the ritual.

SUGGESTED ENCOUNTER

Rubble Lurker (x1) - a larger sand construct hiding in the debris. Ambush predator.

Suggested: 18 HP, AC 13. Attack: Crushing grab, d20+3 vs AC, 1d6+1 bludgeoning. On hit: target is grappled (Strength Chance Roll TN 14 to escape). While grappling, the Lurker deals 1d4 bludgeoning per round automatically. Immune to poison, disease. Looks like rubble until it strikes.

Balance (2 players): 18 HP + grapple = Hard. (3-5 players): Challenging. The grapple is the real threat - it takes one player out of the fight.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Court record tablet (quest item). Stone bench fragment carved with the city's seal - a sun disc over clasped hands (worth 10 GP as curiosity).

TO PLAYERS

Another grand hall, another controlled collapse. This one was wider, busier - stone benches fill the floor in rows, angled toward a raised platform at the north end. An assembly hall. A place where decisions were made. Now it's rubble stacked on rubble, and the benches jut from the debris like ribs from a carcass.

If players find and translate the court tablet (Intelligence Chance Roll TN 14):

A trial record. The writing is formal, clipped, legal. A priest, unnamed, stood accused of questioning the Gathering ritual. The verdict was swift. Guilty. The sentence wasn't execution. It was "service to the Ascension." Whatever that means, the priest didn't get a choice.

STORY DROP

'Service to the Ascension' meant being consumed as fuel for the forced Ascension ritual. Dissent wasn't tolerated - questioning the Pharaoh's plan got you fed to it. This connects to the siphoned souls in Level 1's A10 (the watching faces) and the Pharaoh's guilt in Level 4.

NAVIGATION

South leads to B10 and B9.

East leads to B12.

B12 - Northern Corridor Junction

DN NOTE

T-junction corridor, 15 ft wide. Connects B11 to B13 and the Sand-Choked Corridor. Sand is deeper here - knee-high. Movement costs double through this section. Footprints in the sand: identical bare feet, same size, going in circles. Prison-generated, like B8 on Level 1.

No enemies. No traps. Transit area.

TO PLAYERS

The corridor branches. Sand is deep here - up to your knees - and every step is work. Footprints cover the surface, all the same size, all barefoot, looping in circles that go nowhere. Someone walked here for a very long time without arriving anywhere.

NAVIGATION

West leads to B11.

East leads to Sand-Choked Corridor toward B13.

South leads toward B14 and B9.

B13 - Scribe\'s Hall

DN NOTE

Rectangular chamber, 25x20 ft. Low desks line the walls, each with a stone inkwell and reed-pen grooves. A scribe's workspace. The inkwells contain dried black sand instead of ink. Reed pens are present but snap at the slightest pressure - sand shaped to look like reeds.

One desk has actual writing on its surface - a scribe was practicing letters, and the gods preserved it. Intelligence Chance Roll TN 12 to read: it's a bureaucratic form, an inventory of grain stores. Mundane. Human. The banality is the point - this was a real person doing real work before everything ended.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

Desks. Low, stone, arranged in neat rows against the walls. Each has a small well carved into its surface and grooves for holding writing implements. The wells contain something black and dried. The pens beside them look like reeds but snap like sand when you touch them. One desk, near the back, has marks scratched into its surface. Not decorative. Someone was practicing their letters. Simple strokes, repeated, careful. The work of a real hand.

NAVIGATION

West leads through Sand-Choked Corridor to B12.

South leads to B14.

East leads to B31 area.

B14 - Inner Residential Passage

DN NOTE

Narrow winding corridor connecting B9/B12 area to B15/B16. Walls show carved window frames - decorative only, filled with stone. One window has been chiseled open by a previous adventurer, revealing solid sandstone behind. There was never an outside.

Intelligence Chance Roll TN 13: the architecture implies this corridor should have windows looking onto a street. There is no street. The city has no exterior.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

A winding passage with carved window frames set into the walls - the kind you'd expect to look out onto a street. But every window is filled with solid stone. One has been chiseled at,

the stone chipped away by someone desperate to see outside. Behind the stone: more stone. There is no outside. There never was.

NAVIGATION

North leads to B12 and B9.

South leads to B15 and B16.

B15 - Storeroom Block

DN NOTE

Cluster of small rooms, 10x10 ft each, branching off a central hall. Storage rooms - stone shelves line the walls. All empty. One room has clay jars, sealed with wax. Inside: sand. Every jar, sand. One jar, Intelligence Chance Roll TN 15: contains not sand but ash. Human ash. Mixed with gold flake.

The gold-flecked ash is a cremated priest who served the ritual. The gods stored the remains here as inventory - faith fuel, filed and shelved.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Gold-flecked ash (worth 5 GP for the gold content, but Clerics who hold the jar feel residual sorrow - not a mechanic, just flavor). Sealed clay jar (intact, worth 2 GP as a container).

TO PLAYERS

Storage rooms, shelved floor to ceiling. Everything is empty except one room at the back with a row of clay jars, sealed with old wax. You crack one open. Sand. Another. Sand. They're all sand. Except one. The last jar holds something finer, darker. Not sand. Ash. And in the ash, tiny flecks of gold catch the light.

NAVIGATION

North leads to B14 and B8.

East leads to B16.

South leads to B7.

B16 - Connecting Passage

DN NOTE

Short corridor, 10 ft wide, 25 ft long. Unremarkable transit passage. Sand ankle-deep. One detail: a carved relief on the east wall showing a procession of figures carrying something tall and thin overhead. The staff. It's the earliest depiction players might find of the actual instrument.

Wisdom Chance Roll TN 13: the figures carrying the staff aren't celebrating. Their postures are strained. Their faces (the ones not scratched out) show fear.

TO PLAYERS

A short passage. Nothing remarkable except a carving on the east wall - a procession, dozens of figures in a line, carrying something overhead. It's long, thin, topped with a disc. Whatever it is, it's clearly important. The figures carrying it don't look proud. Their backs are bent. The ones whose faces survived look afraid.

STORY DROP

First visual depiction of the Pharaoh's staff on Level 2. The fear in the carriers' faces hints that the staff's power was already consuming people before the ritual. Connects to Level 5's Buried Temple of the Scarab where the staff rests.

NAVIGATION

West leads to B15.

East leads to B17.

B17 - Noble's Residence

DN NOTE

Larger dwelling, 30x25 ft. Higher quality than B3/B4 - painted walls (faded), carved furniture, a stone bathing basin (empty, lined with sand). This was a wealthy household. A mural on the north wall: a nobleman standing beside the Pharaoh, both smiling. The

Pharaoh's face is intact here - young, handsome, confident. The nobleman's face is scratched out.

Wisdom Chance Roll TN 14: beneath the main mural, a second, older painting shows the same nobleman alone, looking worried. The Pharaoh's hand on his shoulder. It was painted over but the prison's decay has revealed the original beneath.

No enemies. No traps.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

A gold ring in the bathing basin, buried under sand. Worth 25 GP. Engraved with a noble house's crest - a hawk above a crescent.

TO PLAYERS

A nicer home. Painted walls, real furniture carved with care, a stone basin in the corner that might have held something once. The main wall holds a mural of two men standing together. One is clearly royal - the sun disc crown, the ceremonial robes. His face is intact, and he's young. Smiling. The man beside him has had his face removed. Scratched away to bare stone.

If players examine the mural closely (Wisdom Chance Roll TN 14):

Beneath the paint, another image. An older mural, hidden under this one. The same nobleman, alone this time. He isn't smiling in this version. He looks worried. A hand rests on his shoulder - the Pharaoh's hand - but the gesture doesn't look comforting. It looks like weight.

NAVIGATION

West leads to B16 and B15.

South leads to B18.

East leads to B30.

B18 - Kitchen Quarter

DN NOTE

Medium chamber, 20x15 ft. A communal kitchen. Stone ovens (never lit), grinding stones, preparation surfaces. Sand fills every container. A large stone table dominates the center, set for a meal that was never served - plates (stone), cups (stone), utensils (sand-formed, crumble at touch).

The meal setup is the gods' specific cruelty: a feast frozen at the moment before anyone could eat. Abundance rendered meaningless.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

A kitchen. Stone ovens built into the walls, cold and clean. Grinding stones. Preparation surfaces. A large table dominates the room, and it's set for a meal. Plates, cups, utensils, all arranged carefully. But the plates are stone. The cups are stone. And the utensils dissolve in your hand. Sand, shaped to look like a dinner that was never served.

NAVIGATION

West leads to B7 and B15.

East leads to B29 (Central Plaza) via B21 passage.

B19 - Southern Alley

DN NOTE

Narrow passage, 8 ft wide, 40 ft long, running south from B4 to B20. Walls are close - claustrophobic compared to the wider residential areas. Sand drifts against the walls in wind-sculpted curves, though there is no wind down here. The sand was shaped this way by design.

Halfway down: a carved door frame in the east wall, filled with solid stone. Above it, hieratic text. Intelligence Chance Roll TN 13: "Bureau of the Census. All citizens present themselves." A government building that never opened.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

An alley. Narrow, the walls almost touching your shoulders. Sand has drifted against both sides in graceful curves, like wind pushed it there, but the air is dead still. Halfway down, a door frame is carved into the east wall - formal, official-looking, with writing above it. But the doorway is solid stone. Whatever was behind it never existed.

NAVIGATION

North leads to B4.

South leads to B20.

B20 - Fountain Square

DN NOTE

Small open area, 25x25 ft. A circular stone fountain occupies the center - bone dry, basin cracked, decorative fish carved along the rim. The fountain was never connected to anything. No pipes, no channels, no water source. It's a sculpture of a fountain.

The dead adventurer's journal from B4 mentions this: "I keep finding the same fountain but there's nothing in it." This is that fountain. The streets do loop.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

A square opens up around a fountain. Round, stone, carved with fish along the rim. Bone dry. Not dried up - never filled. There are no pipes underneath, no channels. It's the shape of a fountain with none of the purpose. The basin is cracked, and sand has settled in the bottom like sediment in a cup that never held anything.

NAVIGATION

North leads to B19 and B4.

East leads to B28 and B21.

South leads to B1 area.

B21 - Western Boulevard

DN NOTE

Wide curved passage, 20 ft wide, 80 ft long, sweeping from B20 area northeast toward B29. This was a main street. The width and the gentle curve suggest urban planning - a boulevard connecting residential districts to the city center. Sand deepens from ankle to knee as players move east.

Halfway along: a toppled statue lies across the path. A civic figure, arms raised in benediction. The head is missing. Climbing over it: Dexterity Chance Roll TN 10 (easy). Looking into the broken neck: sand pours out slowly, continuously. The statue is bleeding sand.

The Sand Warden's patrol route passes through here. Probability Roll: on 1-2 on d6, the Warden passes through during the party's transit. If so, they feel the sand vibrate and have 1 round to hide or prepare.

TO PLAYERS

A wide street, curving gently toward somewhere important. This was a boulevard - you can feel it in the width, the design. People walked here. Thousands of them. Now it's sand and silence. Halfway down, a statue lies across the path, toppled. A figure with outstretched arms. Its head is gone. Where the neck broke, sand pours out in a thin, steady stream. It doesn't stop.

NAVIGATION

Southwest leads to B20.

Northeast curves toward B29 (Central Plaza) via B27.

B22 - Sand-Choked Corridor (South Entry)**DN NOTE**

Beginning of the southern Sand-Choked Corridor. 15 ft wide, sand chest-deep. Movement is reduced to 5 ft per round. Players must physically push through sand. Exhausting - after 3 rounds of pushing, CON Tough Save or gain Weary condition (per Open Dungeons rules: -2 to all Save Rolls until 6+ hours rest).

The corridor connects B1/B23 south to B24/B25, providing an alternate route into the central and eastern city. It's faster than going through the residential blocks but far more punishing.

No enemies in the sand, but the Warden can sense vibrations here easily. Loud movement through chest-deep sand: Probability Roll, 1-3 on d6 attracts Warden attention.

TO PLAYERS

The corridor ahead is choked. Sand, chest-high, filling the passage wall to wall. You can see the ceiling above it and the walls on either side, but everything below your shoulders is sand. Getting through means pushing, wading, fighting for every step. Your legs burn after ten feet. Your armor weighs twice what it should. The sand doesn't care. It just sits there, patient, waiting for you to give up.

NAVIGATION

North (through sand) leads to B23.

West connects back to B1 area.

B23 - Sand-Choked Corridor (Mid-Section)

DN NOTE

Continuation of sand corridor. Sand drops to knee-depth here briefly - a pocket. Players can rest for 1 round without Weary penalty before the sand deepens again. A dead adventurer is partially buried in the wall - only an arm and shoulder visible, reaching out of the sand. They were swallowed while trying to push through.

Searching the body (requires digging, 2 rounds): Intelligence Chance Roll TN 12. They find a shield (DR +1 bonus, wooden, battered but functional) and 7 GP.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Wooden shield (+1 AC, functional). 7 GP.

TO PLAYERS

The sand drops. Not much - to your knees - but enough to breathe, to plant your feet, to feel something solid under you. A pocket of space in the suffocating corridor. Then you see the arm. Sticking out of the sand in the west wall, reaching toward the passage. Just an arm and a shoulder. The rest of them is buried in the wall. They didn't make it through.

NAVIGATION

South (through sand) leads back to B22.

North (through sand) leads to B24.

B24 - Sand-Choked Corridor (Exit)

DN NOTE

Corridor opens up. Sand drops to ankle level. Players emerge into a junction connecting to B25 (east) and the Hidden Sand-Slide area (south). The relief of exiting chest-deep sand should feel earned.

Hidden Sand-Slide: Wisdom Chance Roll TN 16 to spot. A smooth slope disguised under a thin sand layer. Stepping on it: DEX Quick Save or slide 30 ft south, depositing players back near B22's entrance. Cruel reset.

TO PLAYERS

The sand drops. Your feet find solid stone. The corridor opens up and you can move again - actually move, not wade. The relief hits harder than it should. Ahead, the passage branches east into wider chambers. Behind you, the sand corridor waits for anyone foolish enough to come back through.

If a player triggers the Hidden Sand-Slide:

The floor tilts. Not a little - a lot. The sand gives way beneath you and you're sliding, fast, on polished stone coated in fine grit. Thirty feet, maybe more, spilling downward until you tumble out into the corridor you fought through ten minutes ago. You're back at the start.

NAVIGATION

North leads to B25.

South (sand-slide) dumps back to B22 area.

North leads toward B29 area.

B25 - Merchant's Storehouse

DN NOTE

Medium chamber, 25x20 ft. Larger than the market stalls in B2 - this was wholesale storage. Shelves line all four walls, floor to ceiling. Most shelves hold sand-formed shapes of goods (jars, bolts, boxes). One shelf, upper corner, holds something real: a locked strongbox.

Picking the lock: Thief only, per class ability. Forcing it open: Strength Chance Roll TN 15. Inside: 35 GP, a jade scarab pendant (worth 50 GP, and Wisdom Chance Roll TN 14 reveals it's dedicated to Khepri, god of rebirth - the same god the Buried Temple of the Scarab in Level 5 is dedicated to), and a rolled parchment with a partial city map showing B25-B44 area.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Strongbox: 35 GP. Jade scarab pendant (50 GP, dedicated to Khepri). Partial city map (B25-B44 area, aids navigation).

TO PLAYERS

A storehouse. Shelves everywhere, floor to ceiling, loaded with shapes that look like merchandise from across the room. Up close, it's the same trick - sand pressed into the outline of trade goods. But one shelf in the upper corner holds something different. A box, small, iron-banded, with a real lock on it. Not sand. Not stone. Metal.

STORY DROP

The jade scarab pendant dedicated to Khepri directly connects to Level 5. A player wearing or carrying this pendant when they enter the Buried Temple of the Scarab triggers unique dialogue: the temple's wards pulse once and then relax, as if recognizing a pilgrim. It doesn't bypass the guardian, but it signals that Khepri's faithful were expected.

NAVIGATION

West leads to B24.

North leads to B26.

East leads to B50 (large open area).

B26 - Administrative Hall

DN NOTE

Rectangular chamber, 30x20 ft. Raised stone platform at the north end - a magistrate's seat. Benches for petitioners. Clay tablets stacked along the walls, most shattered. The bureaucracy of a dead empire, preserved in fragments.

Intelligence Chance Roll TN 14: among the readable tablets - tax records, land disputes, water rights (ironic given there's no water). One tablet stands out: a petition from a village elder requesting exemption from the Gathering. Denied. Stamp: "All serve the Ascension."

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

A government building. The raised platform at the far end is clearly where someone important sat. Benches face it in rows - this was where people came to plead their cases, settle disputes, beg for mercy. Clay tablets are stacked along every wall, most of them cracked or crumbled. The paperwork of a civilization, filed and forgotten.

If players search the tablets (Intelligence Chance Roll TN 14):

Most of it is mundane. Tax records. Land surveys. But one tablet is different - a petition, handwritten, from a village elder. They're asking to be exempted from something called the Gathering. The request was denied. A stamp at the bottom reads: "All serve the Ascension."

STORY DROP

'All serve the Ascension' was the official policy. The Pharaoh didn't just attempt forced Ascension on a whim - he institutionalized it. Every citizen, every village, every prayer was catalogued and directed toward his ritual. The bureaucracy of godhood.

NAVIGATION

South leads to B25.

East leads to B29 area.

South leads to B27.

B27 - Boulevard Junction

DN NOTE

Junction where B21 (Western Boulevard) meets the approach to B29 (Central Plaza). Wide area, 20x20 ft. A stone archway frames the entrance to B29 - the first real architectural statement on this level. The arch is carved with the sun disc motif, rays extending downward like fingers reaching for the city. Beneath the arch, sand is perfectly flat, undisturbed. Nothing has crossed this threshold in a very long time.

No enemies. No traps. But crossing under the arch: WIS Mind Save. Fail = momentary vision: the city alive, bustling, sunlight, voices. Lasts 2 seconds. No damage. Players who fail see what this place was supposed to be. Players who succeed feel nothing.

TO PLAYERS

An archway. The first real piece of architecture that feels intentional, designed to impress. A stone arch frames the passage ahead, carved with a sun disc at its peak, rays reaching downward like fingers. The sand beneath it is perfectly flat. Not a footprint, not a ripple. Nothing has walked through here in a long, long time.

If a player fails WIS Mind Save when passing under the arch:

The city snaps into focus around you. Color. Sound. Sunlight pouring through an open sky. Voices, hundreds of them, the noise of a living place. People brush past you in both directions. Children run. A merchant shouts a price. It lasts two seconds. Then it's gone, and you're standing in sand and silence, and the loss of it hits you like a fist.

NAVIGATION

Southwest leads to B21.

East (through arch) leads to B29 (Central Plaza).

North leads to B26.

B28 - Residential Ruin (Southwest)

DN NOTE

Small dwelling, similar to B3. Two rooms. This one has a unique detail: a stone cradle in the smaller room. Inside the cradle: a sand-formed infant. It doesn't crumble when touched - it's more solidly packed than other sand-forms. Wisdom Chance Roll TN 12: this one was made with more care. More attention. As if whoever (whatever) constructed the prison lingered here.

No enemies. No traps. No loot. Emotional damage only.

TO PLAYERS

Two rooms. A home for a small family. In the back room, a cradle carved from stone. Inside it, a shape. Small. Infant-sized. Made of sand, like the soldier in the barracks, but this one feels different. Denser. More carefully formed. You touch it and it holds. It doesn't fall apart. Someone made this one with intention. With something that might have been grief.

NAVIGATION

North leads to B20.

East leads to B25 area.

B29 - Central Plaza - Sand Warden\'s Domain

DN NOTE

MAJOR ENCOUNTER AREA. Massive open chamber, 80x60 ft, ceiling 35 ft. The heart of the false city. A grand plaza ringed by the facades of important buildings - all false fronts, no interiors. A raised platform at the center once held a statue (base remains, statue removed). Sand fills the plaza knee-deep and shifts constantly - slow, rhythmic, like breathing.

This is the Sand Warden's lair. It rests beneath the sand in this room when not patrolling. Players entering B29 for the first time: the sand begins to vibrate. They have 2 rounds before the Warden surfaces. Players who have seen the Warden from B10 recognize the vibration pattern.

The Warden patrols a circuit: B29 \> B34 \> B40 \> B50 \> B29. It takes approximately 15 minutes to complete the loop. If players time it (Wisdom Chance Roll TN 14 after observing the pattern for 30+ minutes), they can cross B29 during the patrol window.

ALTERNATIVE: Players can attempt to sneak through. Dexterity Chance Roll TN 16 for each player, or the Warden surfaces.

SUGGESTED ENCOUNTER

Sand Warden (x1) - BOSS ENCOUNTER. Divine construct. Prison guard.

Suggested: 45 HP, AC 15 (shifting sand armor). DR 2 (sand absorbs impact).

Attacks (2 per round): Sand Slam, d20+5 vs AC, 1d6+2 bludgeoning. Sand Surge (recharge: roll d6 at start of each round, available on 5-6): 15 ft cone, all creatures in area DEX Quick Save or 1d6 bludgeoning and knocked prone. DR applies to all bludgeoning.

Special: Moves through sand at 40 ft (full speed). On solid ground: 15 ft (slow). Can submerge fully and become invisible in sand - Wisdom Chance Roll TN 18 to detect while submerged. If reduced to half HP (22 or below), it submerges and repositions, surfacing 20 ft away next round.

Immune to poison, disease, necrotic, psychic. Resistant to piercing (half damage). Vulnerable to thunder damage (double damage, and prevents submersion for 1 round).

Balance (2 players): 45 HP + 2 attacks/round + DR 2 = Deadly. Consider reducing HP to 30 and giving it 1 attack/round. The fight should be avoidable. (3-4 players): Hard to Deadly. (5 players): Hard. The Warden is designed to be fought OR avoided. Players who time the patrol and sneak through are playing smart, not cheating.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

The Warden drops nothing when killed - it dissolves back into the sand. However, killing it permanently removes the patrol from Level 2, making all other rooms safer.

On the empty statue base at the plaza center: an inscription (Intelligence Chance Roll TN 13): "He stood here. He stood above all. Now he kneels in sand and remembers standing." Beneath the inscription, a hidden compartment (Intelligence Chance Roll TN 16): contains the Warden's Heart - a fist-sized obsidian sphere that pulses with dim amber light.

Suggested magic item: Warden's Heart (obsidian sphere). While carried, the holder can sense the approximate location of divine constructs within 60 ft (vibration in the sphere). Does not work on undead, only constructs. Useful for detecting traps and guardians in Levels 3-6. Worth 75 GP if sold.

TO PLAYERS

The city opens. You step into a plaza so wide the walls disappear into amber haze. This was the center of everything. Building facades ring the space - official-looking, important, but flat. No depth. No interiors. Just fronts, like a stage set built to impress from one direction. A raised platform sits at the center, empty. Whatever stood there was removed. The base remains, and the city arranges itself around the absence.

The sand is knee-deep and it's moving. Not flowing. Breathing. A slow, rhythmic shift, in and out, like the entire floor is the chest of something sleeping.

When the Sand Warden surfaces:

The sand erupts. Not from one point - from everywhere. The entire floor heaves upward and something massive pulls itself free. It has no fixed shape. It is sand and stone and grinding force, eight feet tall one moment and twelve the next, reshaping itself as it moves. Two points of amber light burn where eyes might be. It does not roar. It does not speak. It simply turns toward you with the patience of something that has done this a thousand times and will do it a thousand more.

STORY DROP

The Sand Warden is the gods' prison guard - a divine construct tasked with keeping souls trapped. It is not evil. It has no will. It is a lock. Killing it doesn't anger the gods (they stopped paying attention centuries ago) but it does weaken the prison's hold on Level 2, making the false city slightly less oppressive. The inscription on the statue base references the Pharaoh directly.

NAVIGATION

West (through arch) leads to B27 and B21.

North leads to B30 and B17.

East leads to B40 and the eastern city.

South leads to B26, B25, B50.

Northeast corridor leads to B33, B34.

B30 - Temple Approach

DN NOTE

Wide corridor, 20 ft, connecting B29 north toward B17 and B33. Columns line both sides - carved with lotus motifs, some toppled. The architecture shifts from civic to religious. The floor is tiled (under the sand) - Wisdom Chance Roll TN 12 to notice the pattern: alternating sun discs and scarabs. The Pharaoh's religious and political symbols intertwined.

No enemies. No traps. Atmospheric transition.

TO PLAYERS

Columns. Carved with lotus flowers, lining both sides of a corridor wide enough for a procession. Some have fallen, cracked across the path. The architecture here feels different - more deliberate, more sacred. Under the sand, if you scuff it aside, you find tiles. A pattern: sun discs alternating with scarabs, stretching ahead in an unbroken line.

NAVIGATION

South leads to B29.

West leads to B17.

East leads to B33.

B31 - Upper Terrace

DN NOTE

Elevated platform area, 30x20 ft, raised 8 ft above surrounding corridors. Accessed via crumbled stairs from B13 area. The terrace overlooks the northern section of the city. From here, players can see B32 (Hidden Sand-Slide), B33, B35, and the tops of structures in B34.

Tactical vantage point. Wisdom Chance Roll TN 13: from this height, players can map the general layout of the northeastern quadrant. Draw or describe the room connections for them.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

Steps, crumbling but climbable, lead up to a terrace eight feet above the corridor floor. From here, the city spreads out. You can see over the walls of nearby rooms, into corridors you haven't walked yet, across rooftops of buildings that never housed anyone. The layout starts to make sense from up here - the way the corridors branch, the larger spaces to the east, the passages curving north.

NAVIGATION

Down stairs leads to B13 area.

East overlooks B32 and B35.

B32 - Hidden Sand-Slide (North)

DN NOTE

A concealed slope at the base of B31's terrace. Wisdom Chance Roll TN 16 to spot before triggering. The slide is 40 ft long, polished smooth, depositing players in the corridors near B35. DEX Quick Save to control descent. Fail = 1d6 bludgeoning at the bottom + prone.

Can be used deliberately as a shortcut to B35/B36 area. Climbing back up: Strength Chance Roll TN 14.

INTER-LEVEL CONNECTION: Behind the slide's upper edge, partially concealed by the terrace wall, a narrow gap opens in the rock. The stone shifts from urban architecture to pale sandstone - the transition between levels. This passage connects to A4 on Level 1 (The Court of Fallen Monuments), emerging at the top of the Sand-Slide Connection. The gap is tight - 4 ft wide - but passable from either direction. Strength Chance Roll TN 13 to navigate.

Wisdom Chance Roll TN 15 to notice the gap from B32's terrace side. From A4's side, the gap is more visible - the urban stonework is obvious against the sandstone.

TO PLAYERS

The floor drops away without warning. Smooth stone, coated in fine sand, angled sharply downward. You're sliding before you realize the ground has changed - forty feet of polished stone with nothing to grab.

If players find the inter-level gap (Wisdom Chance Roll TN 15):

Behind the terrace wall, where the slide begins, a gap in the rock. Not a doorway - a crack, four feet wide, rough-edged, as if the two levels were pressed together and the stone couldn't quite seal. The air from inside is different. Warmer. Drier. The stone shifts from carved city walls to pale, ancient sandstone. Whatever is on the other side, it isn't this city.

NAVIGATION

Slide deposits near B35 area.

Climbing back up leads to B31.

Gap in rock wall leads to A4 (Level 1 - The Court of Fallen Monuments). Two-way - Strength Chance Roll TN 13.

B33 - Processional Corridor

DN NOTE

Long corridor, 15 ft wide, 60 ft, running north-south connecting B30 to B34/B35. Walls are carved with a continuous procession - thousands of tiny figures marching toward the south (toward B29). They're carrying offerings: grain, livestock, children, their own hands raised in prayer. The procession grows more frantic as it nears B29. By the last panel, the figures aren't marching. They're running.

WIS Mind Save for players who study the final panels: fail = overwhelming sense of urgency, desire to move south toward B29. Lasts 1 round. No damage. The carvings carry residual psychic imprint of the Gathering.

TO PLAYERS

A long corridor, walls covered in a single continuous carving. A procession. Thousands of tiny figures, carved with painstaking detail, all moving in the same direction - south, toward the plaza you just left. They're carrying things. Grain. Animals. Bundles that might be children. Their hands are raised. At first it looks like celebration. But as you walk, the figures change. They move faster. Crowd closer. By the last panel, they're not marching. They're running. And the things they carry are no longer offerings. They're everything they own.

STORY DROP

The Gathering was the Pharaoh's empire-wide mobilization for his forced Ascension. Every citizen, every resource, every prayer - directed toward the ritual. The progression from orderly march to desperate sprint shows the reality beneath the propaganda. By the end, it wasn't voluntary.

NAVIGATION

South leads to B30 and B29.

North leads to B35.

East leads to B34.

B34 - Sand-Choked Corridor (Central)

DN NOTE

Large sand-filled area, 50x30 ft. Sand varies from knee-deep to chest-deep. This is the main Sand-Choked Corridor referenced in the map. The Warden's patrol route passes through here.

Movement: knee-deep areas = half speed. Chest-deep areas = 5 ft/round. CON Tough Save after 3 rounds in chest-deep sand or gain Weary.

Warden patrol: passes through every ~15 minutes. While in chest-deep sand, players cannot dodge effectively - DEX Quick Saves are made with -2 penalty.

No fixed enemies besides Warden patrol.

TO PLAYERS

Sand fills the corridor from wall to wall. In places it's to your knees. In others, to your chest. The passage is wide - fifty feet across - but the sand turns it into a slow, grinding crawl. You can see the far side. You just can't reach it quickly. And beneath the surface, the sand trembles in a rhythm you've learned to fear.

NAVIGATION

West leads to B33 and B30.

East leads to B40.

North leads to B35.

Warden patrol route: B29 \> B34 \> B40 \> B50 \> B29.

B35 - Northern Passage Network**DN NOTE**

Winding corridor network connecting the northern section. Multiple branches - north to B36, east to B37, south to B33/B34. Narrow (10 ft) and disorienting. Walls are undecorated - this is infrastructure, not display. The gods didn't bother making the back corridors pretty.

Wisdom Chance Roll TN 14 to navigate without getting turned around. Failure: players loop back to where they entered after 10 minutes of walking.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

Corridors. Narrow, winding, branching without logic. The walls are bare - no carvings, no paint, nothing. After the detail of every other room, the blankness feels intentional. Like whoever built the rest of this place ran out of interest here. Or didn't think anyone would make it this far.

NAVIGATION

North leads to B36.

East leads to B37.

South leads to B33 and B34.

West leads to B32 (sand-slide base) and B31 area.

B36 - Garrison Ruin

DN NOTE

Large chamber, 45x35 ft. A military installation - larger than B8's barracks. Training dummies made of stone (targets still visible). A sand-filled sparring ring. Weapon racks along the walls, most empty, but three hold functional weapons.

One training dummy has been hacked at with a real weapon - fresh marks compared to the ancient stone. A previous adventurer used this as practice. Their body is slumped in the corner of the sparring ring, sword still in hand.

SUGGESTED ENCOUNTER

Garrison Ghosts (x4) - spectral soldiers that manifest when players touch the weapon racks. They aren't hostile immediately - they salute, form a line, and wait. If players salute back or acknowledge them: they nod and fade. If players attack or flee: they attack.

Suggested: 10 HP each, AC 11. Attack: Spectral spear, d20+3 vs AC, 1d6 necrotic (DR doesn't reduce). Immune to physical damage. Vulnerable to divine/holy magic (double damage). They're echoes, not monsters.

Balance: designed as a roleplay encounter, not a combat one. Fighting them is unnecessary and costly (immune to physical). Acknowledging them costs nothing.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Weapon racks: Bronze spear (1d6 piercing, functional). Iron hand-axe (1d6 slashing). Short bow with 12 arrows (1d6 piercing, range 60 ft).

Dead adventurer: 15 GP. Longsword (1d8 slashing, good condition). Leather armor (DR 1).
Journal: "The ghosts saluted me. I didn't know what to do. I swung. They're faster than they look."

TO PLAYERS

A garrison. Bigger than the barracks you saw earlier - training dummies carved from stone, a sparring ring filled with sand, weapon racks along every wall. Three of the racks still hold weapons. Real ones.

When players touch the weapon racks:

The air goes cold. Four shapes materialize between the racks - soldiers, translucent, in formation. They don't attack. They snap to attention. Heels together, spears upright, eyes forward. They're waiting. For what, you don't know. But the posture is unmistakable. They're saluting you.

NAVIGATION

South leads to B35.

Southwest leads to B37.

B37 - Eastern Approach

DN NOTE

Junction area connecting B35/B36 to the eastern city. 20x20 ft. A stone sign post (broken, leaning) with carved directions - arrows pointing to districts that may or may not exist. Intelligence Chance Roll TN 12: one arrow points east and reads "Temple Quarter." Another points south: "Royal Crypts."

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

A junction with a broken signpost. Stone, carved with arrows and text. One arrow points east: something about a temple. Another points south. The post leans at an angle that makes half the text unreadable. Whoever carved this assumed people would need directions. That implies the city was big enough to get lost in. You're starting to believe it.

NAVIGATION

North and Northwest leads to B35 and B36.

East leads to B38, B43.

South leads to B39, B41.

B38 - Priest's Dwelling

DN NOTE

Medium chamber, 20x15 ft. A priest's home - more austere than the noble's residence (B17) but more personal than the servants' quarters (B6). A prayer niche carved into the east wall, facing the direction of the Buried Sun Temple (B44). A reed mat (sand-formed) on the floor. A shelf holds a real clay prayer tablet, intact.

Prayer tablet (no Chance Roll to read - it's in Common): "Grant me strength to serve. Grant me blindness to doubt. The Ascension is his burden. Faith is mine."

No enemies. No traps.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Clay prayer tablet (quest flavor item). If shown to the Pharaoh in Level 4, he pauses and says: "Blindness to doubt. I asked them for that. I needed them not to question."

TO PLAYERS

A priest's room. Small, spare, clean in a way the other dwellings aren't. A prayer niche is carved into the wall, facing east. A mat on the floor - sand-formed, crumbles if disturbed. On a shelf, a clay tablet, intact. The writing on it isn't formal. It reads like a prayer written by someone who needed to believe what they were saying.

"Grant me strength to serve. Grant me blindness to doubt. The Ascension is his burden. Faith is mine."

STORY DROP

The priest asked for blindness to doubt - meaning doubt existed. Even among the faithful, the forced Ascension was controversial. The Pharaoh needed blind faith because informed faith would have asked questions. Connects to the dissident priest trial in B11 and the Pharaoh's guilt in Level 4.

NAVIGATION

West leads to B37.

South leads to B39.

East leads to B43 area.

B39 - Ritual Preparation Chamber**DN NOTE**

Small chamber, 15x15 ft. Stone basins along the walls (dry), hooks for hanging garments. A robing room - where priests prepared before ceremonies. One basin has residual traces of gold pigment in the cracks. Intelligence Chance Roll TN 14: the gold pigment is mixed with human ash. Priests painted themselves with the remains of the sacrificed before rituals.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

A small room with stone basins and hooks on the walls. Somewhere between a washroom and a dressing room. The basins are dry, like everything else, but one still has residue in the cracks. Gold. Faint, dried, but unmistakable. Whatever they washed with here, it wasn't plain.

If players examine the gold residue (Intelligence Chance Roll TN 14):

It's not pure gold. There's something mixed in - gritite, powdery, gray beneath the shimmer. It takes you a moment to place it. Ash. The gold is mixed with ash. Human ash.

NAVIGATION

North leads to B38.

South leads to B41.

B40 - Eastern Boulevard

DN NOTE

Wide passage, 25 ft, connecting B29/B34 east toward B42 and B47. Part of the Warden's patrol route. Sand knee-deep throughout. Facades of buildings line both sides - homes, shops, government offices - all false fronts with no interiors. One facade has collapsed, revealing solid sandstone behind. The illusion doesn't hold up close.

Warden passes through every ~15 minutes.

No fixed enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

Another boulevard. Wide enough for crowds, lined with the fronts of buildings - doors, windows, carved signs. From the center of the road, it looks like a real city street. But one facade has collapsed, and behind it there's nothing. Just solid stone. The buildings are flat. Set pieces. The city was never meant to be entered from this side. It was meant to be walked through, and mourned.

NAVIGATION

West leads to B29 and B34.

East leads to B42, B47.

North leads to B37 area.

Warden patrol route.

B41 - Temple Antechamber

DN NOTE

Rectangular chamber, 25x15 ft. The transition space before the Buried Sun Temple (B44). Columns frame the entrance, carved with prayers. The floor shifts from sand to actual stone tile - the first solid ground since entering the level. The temperature drops slightly. The air tastes different. Older.

Wisdom Chance Roll TN 12: the prayers on the columns are genuine - pulled from the Pharaoh's memory, not fabricated by the gods. This is the first authentic text on the level.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

The sand stops. Your feet find stone - real tile, laid in patterns. The columns framing the entrance ahead are carved with text, prayers, line after line in careful script. The air is different here. Cooler. Older. Whatever lies beyond those columns, the rest of the city was built around it.

NAVIGATION

West leads to B39 and B37.

East leads to B44 (Buried Sun Temple).

West leads to B42.

B42 - Inner City Residential

DN NOTE

Cluster of wealthy dwellings, similar quality to B17. 40x30 ft total. Three connected homes. These were temple district residents - priests, scholars, administrators. Better built, more detailed, more painful in their emptiness.

One home has a child's room with a stone bed sized for a small body, shelves with sand-formed toys, and a mural of stars on the ceiling (Wisdom Chance Roll TN 14: the star map is accurate, not corrupted like Level 1's observatory. The gods didn't bother corrupting a child's ceiling).

No enemies. No traps. No loot.

TO PLAYERS

Wealthy homes. Better built, more detail, more space. One has a child's room. Small bed, small shelves, small sand-formed shapes that might have been toys. On the ceiling, someone painted stars. Not a pattern. A real sky - constellations, clusters, the arc of a night

sky that this place has never seen. Unlike everything else in this city, the stars look right. Whoever painted this ceiling told the truth.

NAVIGATION

Northeast leads to B41.

West leads to B40.

South leads to B47.

B43 - Crypts of the Sand Kings (North)

DN NOTE

Large chamber, 35x30 ft. First of two Crypts of the Sand Kings. Royal tombs of rulers who came before the Pharaoh - recreated by the gods as set dressing. Six sarcophagi arranged in two rows. All are sealed. Inside (if opened, Strength Chance Roll TN 14): hollow mummies. Literally hollow - shells of preserved skin over empty cavities. The gods recreated the bodies but not the souls.

Inscriptions on the sarcophagi tell the lineage: kings who expanded the empire, conquered neighbors, built monuments. Each one greater than the last. The pattern is clear - a dynasty building toward something.

Treasure in the sarcophagi is mixed real/fake per the summary: gold items that tarnish when touched, jeweled weapons that crumble when lifted. Wisdom Chance Roll TN 15 to distinguish real from false before touching.

SUGGESTED ENCOUNTER

Hollow Mummy (x2) - two mummies animate if more than 2 sarcophagi are opened. They aren't aggressive - they wander, confused, bumping into walls. If attacked, they fight back feebly.

Suggested: 10 HP each, AC 10. Attack: Clumsy swipe, d20+1 vs AC, 1d4 bludgeoning. On being destroyed: they crumble and a whisper escapes - the name of the king they were supposed to be. Pathetic, not threatening.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Real items (Wisdom Chance Roll TN 15 to identify): Gold funerary mask (50 GP). Bronze ceremonial dagger (1d4 slashing, ornamental but functional, worth 20 GP).

Fake items (crumble/tarnish): Everything else.

TO PLAYERS

Tombs. Six stone coffins in two rows, carved with names and titles. Kings. Each inscription tells of greater conquests, taller monuments, wider borders. A dynasty that kept reaching higher. The sarcophagi are sealed and heavy.

If players open the sarcophagi:

The body inside is... wrong. Preserved, yes. Wrapped, arranged, adorned. But when the light hits it, you see it. The wrappings are draped over nothing. The body is a shell - dried skin holding empty air. There's nothing inside. No bones. No organs. Just a shape, dressed up to look like someone it isn't.

STORY DROP

The hollow mummies underscore that nothing in the prison is real. The dynasty's lineage - each king more ambitious than the last - shows the Pharaoh's forced Ascension wasn't madness. It was the logical endpoint of generations of escalating ambition. He was always going to try. The question was only when.

NAVIGATION

West leads to B38 and B37.

South leads to B44 and B45.

B44 - Buried Sun Temple

DN NOTE

MAJOR LORE ROOM. Large chamber, 45x35 ft, partially buried - sand covers the floor 2 ft deep, dunes drift against the walls. The temple interior is staggering despite the decay. Massive columns, vaulted ceiling (25 ft), walls covered in the most detailed murals on the level.

The murals show the forced Ascension ritual in greater detail than Level 1's altar. The progression: (1) The Pharaoh studying texts surrounded by scholars. (2) Construction of the staff from sacred wood and gold. (3) The Gathering - millions assembling, faith directed inward. (4) The ritual itself - the Pharaoh at the center, staff raised, light pouring from the assembled multitude into him. (5) The mural stops. A crack runs through the wall where the climax should be. Beyond the crack - sand. The gods redacted the ending.

Intelligence Chance Roll TN 15: panel 4 shows the light flowing through the staff but also flowing out of the worshippers. Their mouths are open. Not in prayer. In pain. The Pharaoh's forced Ascension was consuming them alive.

Wisdom Chance Roll TN 16: the scholars in panel 1 include one figure who is turned away from the others, hand raised as if objecting. The dissident. Cross-reference with the trial record in B11.

No enemies. This room is too sacred for the gods to place guards. The knowledge itself is the punishment - anyone who reaches here learns exactly what the Pharaoh did.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

No treasure. The murals are the reward.

Suggested quest item: If players make charcoal rubbings of the murals (takes 30 minutes, requires charcoal and paper/cloth), they can present them to the Pharaoh in Level 4. He will not look at them. He says: "I know what's on those walls. I painted the first draft myself."

TO PLAYERS

A temple. Even buried, even ruined, even filled with sand - it takes your breath. The columns are massive. The ceiling vaults upward and disappears into shadow. And the walls are alive with paint. Murals, stretching from floor to ceiling, panel after panel, telling a story in color and light.

A man surrounded by books and scholars, studying. The construction of something - a long rod, dark wood, capped with gold. A gathering of thousands, then millions, stretching to the edges of the panel. And then the ritual. The man at the center, the rod raised overhead, and light - pouring from every figure around him into the rod, into him. It's beautiful. It's the most beautiful thing you've seen in this dead place.

Then the wall cracks. The next panel should be there, but it isn't. Just a fracture in the stone, and sand behind it. Whatever happened next, you're not allowed to see.

If players study the ritual panel closely (Intelligence Chance Roll TN 15):

The light flowing from the figures isn't peaceful. Look closer. Their mouths are open. Not in song. Not in prayer. Their bodies are arched backward, faces twisted. The light isn't leaving them willingly. It's being pulled. They're burning from the inside out, and the man at the center doesn't look down. He doesn't see them. He's looking up.

STORY DROP

This is the most complete depiction of the forced Ascension on Level 2. The detail about the Pharaoh 'looking up' while his people burned is the core of his guilt. He knew what the ritual would cost. He chose to look away. This connects directly to his confession in Level 4: 'She believed in me. They all did. That was the point.' The dissident scholar foreshadows the trial in B11.

NAVIGATION

West leads to B41.

North leads to B43 (Crypts).

South leads to B45 (Crypts).

B45 - Crypts of the Sand Kings (South)

DN NOTE

Second crypt chamber. 30x25 ft. Four sarcophagi - earlier dynasty rulers, less grand than B43. These are the founders, the first kings. Their inscriptions are simpler, humbler. "He built the first wall." "She planted the first field." The contrast with the later kings' conquests is stark.

Same real/fake treasure mechanic as B43. Wisdom Chance Roll TN 15 to distinguish.

One sarcophagus holds a genuine relic: a stone tablet inscribed by the founding king. Intelligence Chance Roll TN 14: "We build this city for our children, not for the gods. Let the gods keep their heaven. We will make our own on earth." The irony is brutal given what the Pharaoh eventually tried.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Real: Founding king's tablet (quest item - no gold value, but powerful roleplay tool if shown to the Pharaoh). Bronze arm-band (15 GP).

Fake: Everything else.

TO PLAYERS

Older tombs. Simpler coffins, simpler inscriptions. These aren't conquerors. The text beside one reads: "He built the first wall." Another: "She planted the first field." These are founders. The people who started everything, before ambition turned it into something else.

If players find and read the founding king's tablet (Intelligence Chance Roll TN 14):

"We build this city for our children, not for the gods. Let the gods keep their heaven. We will make our own on earth."

STORY DROP

The founding king's words are a direct rebuke to everything the Pharaoh became. The empire was built for its people. The Pharaoh turned it into fuel for his own Ascension. If players carry this tablet to Level 4, the Pharaoh reads it and says nothing for a very long time. Then: 'He would have been ashamed of me. He would have been right.'

NAVIGATION

North leads to B44.

South leads to B46 and Hidden Sand-Slide.

B46 - Hidden Sand-Slide (Southeast)

DN NOTE

Concealed slope near B45 exit. Wisdom Chance Roll TN 16 to spot. DEX Quick Save to control. Fail = 1d6 bludgeoning + prone.

INTER-LEVEL CONNECTION: The slide no longer deposits near B48/B49. It goes deeper. The polished stone extends further than expected - 60 ft instead of 30 - and the architecture changes mid-slide. Carved urban stone gives way to rough military

construction. The temperature drops. Wind begins to push against you from below. The slide deposits players in C10 on Level 3 (The Sector of the Sand Winds), emerging through one of the hidden sand-slide connection points. The wind hits immediately.

Climbing back up from C10: Strength Chance Roll TN 14. The wind on Level 3 makes the ascent harder - player must also succeed on a Dexterity Chance Roll TN 12 to keep footing against gusts during the climb.

TO PLAYERS

The floor tilts. You know the feeling now - polished stone under sand, gravity pulling you somewhere you didn't plan to go. But this slide is longer than the others. Much longer. The stone changes under your back as you slide - smooth urban tile giving way to rougher, colder rock. And then the wind. Faint at first, then building, pushing against you from below like the place you're heading doesn't want you to arrive quietly. You tumble out into a junction where the air screams and sand streams horizontally past your face.

NAVIGATION

Slide descends to C10 (Level 3 - The Sector of the Sand Winds). Two-way - Strength Chance Roll TN 14 + Dexterity Chance Roll TN 12 to climb back up against the wind.

Climbing up leads back to B45 area.

B47 - Garden of Stone

DN NOTE

Open chamber, 30x25 ft. A garden - or the idea of one. Stone trees, stone shrubs, stone flowers. Everything carved from sandstone with extraordinary detail. Veins on leaves. Bark texture on trunks. But everything is the same color. No green. No life. A garden made by someone who remembered what plants looked like but couldn't make them real.

In the center: a stone bench beneath a stone tree. Sitting on the bench: a sand-formed figure, woman-sized, hands in her lap, looking at a wall. She doesn't crumble at touch. Like the infant in B28, this figure was made with care.

Wisdom Chance Roll TN 15: the wall she faces has a faded mural - a real garden, green and alive, with the same bench, the same tree. She's looking at what it used to be.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

A garden. Stone trees reach toward a stone ceiling, branches carved so precisely you can count the leaves. Stone flowers line a path. Stone shrubs border the walls. It's beautiful work. And it's completely dead. Everything is the same sandy color. No green. No scent. No rustle. Just the shape of life, rendered in rock.

A figure sits on a bench at the center. A woman, made of sand, hands folded in her lap, facing the far wall. She doesn't crumble when you approach. She's looking at something. A faded painting on the wall - a garden, this garden, but alive. Green. Blooming. She's sitting exactly where she sat when it was real.

NAVIGATION

North leads to B42.

West leads to B40.

East leads to B48.

B48 - Eastern Residential Block**DN NOTE**

Large residential cluster, 35x25 ft. Multiple dwellings, similar to B4 but denser. Closer together, smaller rooms. Working-class housing. The walls between units are thin enough to hear through - except there's nothing to hear.

One dwelling has a wall covered in tally marks - thousands of them, floor to ceiling. Intelligence Chance Roll TN 13: they're counting days. Someone was tracking time. The count exceeds 10,000. Whoever was counting was here for over 27 years - or they were counting someone else's sentence.

No enemies. No traps.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

In the counting room: a bone stylus used to scratch the marks. A small golden sun disc pendant wedged into a crack in the wall (worth 30 GP). It was hidden deliberately.

TO PLAYERS

Dense housing. Small rooms, thin walls, close together. Working-class. No art, no murals, no luxuries. In one unit, the entire wall is covered in scratches. Not random. Tally marks. Rows and rows, floor to ceiling, counted in groups of five. Thousands of them. Someone was counting days. The number, if you bother to add it up, exceeds ten thousand.

NAVIGATION

West leads to B47.

South leads to B49.

B49 - Southern Passage (East)

DN NOTE

Curved corridor connecting B48 to B50 and the Hidden Sand-Slide deposit zone. 15 ft wide, sand ankle-deep. The walls here show water damage - stains and erosion patterns - despite the fact that no water has ever been here. The gods recreated the appearance of water damage as part of the illusion. A flood that never happened.

No enemies. No traps.

TO PLAYERS

A curving passage with stains on the walls. Water stains. Tide lines and erosion channels carved into the stone by something that flowed here once - except nothing has flowed here. Not ever. The marks are carved. Deliberate. Someone wanted this corridor to look like it survived a flood. It survived nothing. It was born this way.

NAVIGATION

North leads to B48.

West curves to B50.

Sand-slide deposit zone from B46 nearby.

B50 - Grand Residential District

DN NOTE

LARGEST ROOM ON THE LEVEL. Sprawling open area, roughly 100x60 ft, occupying the south-central portion of the map. This is the city's main residential district rendered at scale - dozens of dwelling facades, cross-streets of sand, small plazas, all contained within a single massive underground chamber. The ceiling is 40 ft up.

The Warden's patrol passes through B50. It enters from the east (B47/B49 area), crosses the space, and exits west toward B29. This takes it approximately 3 minutes to traverse. Players inside B50 have cover options (building facades, rubble, cross-streets) but the space is open enough that the Warden can spot movement from 60 ft.

The district contains 6 dwelling facades that can be entered (unlike the false fronts on B40). Each is a 15x10 ft room behind the facade. Contents:

Dwelling A: Empty except for a stone chair facing a blank wall.

Dwelling B: A sand-formed family of four, seated around a table. Touching any figure: they all collapse simultaneously.

Dwelling C: A mural of the city from above - a genuine aerial view showing the city in its prime. Intelligence Chance Roll TN 14: the layout matches the dungeon they're exploring. The streets, the plazas, the temple district. This is the same city, recreated underground.

Dwelling D: Locked (Thief pick lock or Strength Chance Roll TN 16). Inside: a skeleton, not sand-formed - a real person. They locked themselves in and starved. Clutching a letter: "I know this isn't real. I know it. But I can't find the way out. If you find this, the exits loop. Every street goes back to the plaza. Break the pattern. Go through the walls."

Dwelling E: A potter's workshop with one finished piece - a small bowl, real clay, real craftsmanship. Worth 5 GP but significant: someone in this dead city made something real.

Dwelling F: Empty. Completely empty. Not even sand. Just a bare room. The most unsettling space on the level.

TREASURE / MAGIC ITEMS

Dwelling C: Knowledge of city layout (equivalent to partial map, aids navigation).

Dwelling D: Letter (quest flavor). The skeleton has 3 GP and a small knife (1d4 piercing).

Dwelling E: Clay bowl (5 GP, handmade, one-of-a-kind).

TO PLAYERS

The cave opens into something impossible. A city district. Underground, contained within stone walls and a ceiling forty feet up, but unmistakably a neighborhood. Building fronts, cross-streets, small plazas. Sand fills the streets like snow in an abandoned town. The scale

of it hits you - this isn't a room. It's a replica of an entire district, built beneath the earth as a monument to something that was destroyed.

Some of the buildings can be entered. Most are facades - flat fronts with nothing behind them. But a few have doors that open into small rooms behind. Each one holds something different. Each one feels like opening a stranger's diary.

Dwelling B - When players touch a sand figure:

They fall apart. Not just the one you touched - all four of them. The entire family collapses at the same moment, as if they were connected by something invisible. Sand pours across the table and onto the floor, and the chairs hold the shapes of people who were never there.

Dwelling D - When players read the letter:

"I know this isn't real. I know it. But I can't find the way out. If you find this, the exits loop. Every street goes back to the plaza. Break the pattern. Go through the walls."

STORY DROP

Dwelling D's skeleton is a real person - an adventurer pulled in by the sandstorm centuries ago. Their advice ('go through the walls') is literal and useful: some walls in the prison are false and can be broken through (Strength Chance Roll TN 16 or appropriate magic). This hint applies to all six levels. The clay bowl in Dwelling E is the only handmade object in the entire false city - proof that someone, somehow, created something genuine inside the prison.

NAVIGATION

North connects to B29 area, B26, B25.

East connects to B47, B49.

South connects to B24 area and sand-slide zones.

Warden patrol passes through east to west.