

THE SUN ENTOMBED EMPIRE

A king reached for godhood.
The gods made him wish he hadn't.
Your players just walked into his punishment.

Open Dungeons RPG

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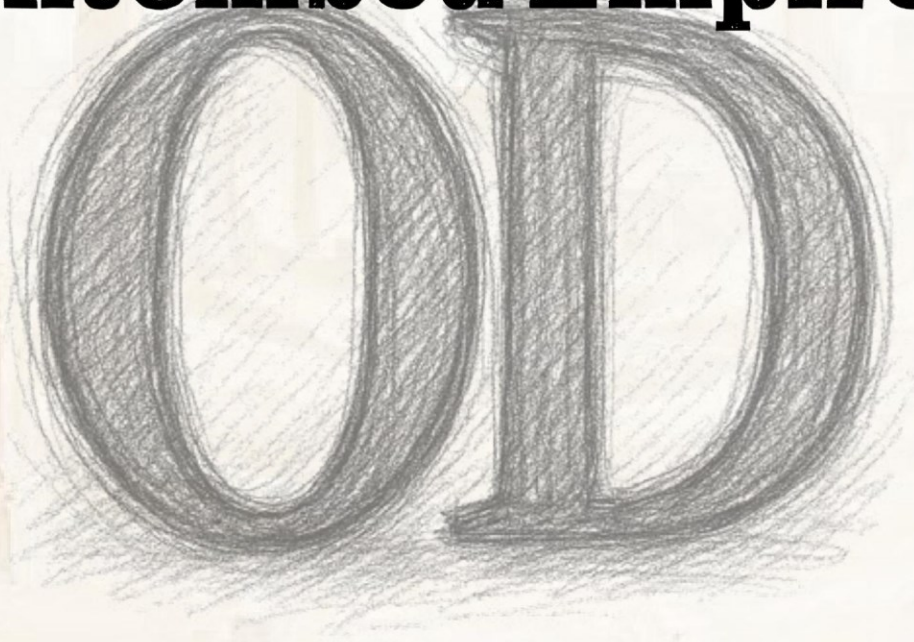


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Designed
Layout
Written
Art
by

OpenDungeons.com

The Sun Entombed Empire



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If you never ran an OD adventure, consider running **Echoes Beneath the Stone**.

Adventure Written for the DN

This adventure is written for the Dungeon Narrator (DN) though some Players may read, it's discouraged, to help keep out **metagaming**.

Metagaming is using player knowledge to influence a character's actions when the character has no way to know that information.

Adventure is designed for player levels 1 - 2

Spell Note

When players use a magic spell for a scene, improvise how adventure scene or story responds.

Recommend reading adventure in advance so you can pivot adventure story as needed to cater to magic spells or unexpected character behavior, skills or abilities.

NPC Note

If you're playing with one or two players, an NPC is provided if you want to use.

When using NPC, they don't make choices, but agree to whatever decisions the player-character(s) decide.

NPC is provided to help and support.

Encounter Note

The DN may need to adjust encounter relative to level and party size.

Read scene ahead of players actions - if players are actively investigating through action or magic, knowing how next scene responds may help.

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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

Notes:

When you see an attack listed as "d20+2", for example, it means the monster rolls 1d20 and adds +2 to the result, then compares that total to the target's AC to hit or miss.

Falls can deal different damage because the real driver is how hard and how fast you stop, not just "you fell." A shorter drop, a slide, or landing in loose sand can reduce impact damage because the surface absorbs force, while a longer drop or landing on hard stone increases it.

"Demirealm Law" rule in the Core Guide: rules may change by depth, and the deeper you go, the more the prison rewrites reality to punish comfort.

THE SUN ENTOMBED EMPIRE

Prelude: The Ritual of Stolen Suns

Open Dungeons RPG

What the Players Know

TO PLAYERS

You were crossing the deep desert when the sand turned against you. A storm rose from nowhere - not a natural storm, not wind-driven, but a wall of churning sand that appeared on every horizon simultaneously and closed like a fist. You ran. You couldn't outrun it. The sand swallowed the caravan, the sky, the sun. When it stopped, you were somewhere else.

The desert looks the same. It isn't. The sun overhead hasn't moved since you woke. The heat is constant, unchanging, 120 degrees with no variation. There is no wind. There is no water. There is no horizon that gets closer no matter how far you walk. Something is wrong with this place in a way that goes deeper than geography.

Ahead of you, half-buried in sand, the tops of ancient structures break the surface. Stone platforms. Carved entries. The ruins of something vast, sunk beneath the desert floor. The sand has been here a long time. Whatever is below has been here longer.

You don't know who built this place. You don't know why you're here. You know that the desert above will kill you in hours, and the structures below are the only shelter you can see.

What the DN Knows

DN NOTE

Everything that follows is DN-only information. Players discover this through exploration, journals, altar visions, spirit encounters, and environmental storytelling across all six levels. Do not reveal any of this upfront. The adventure is designed so that the full picture assembles gradually, and some groups may never piece together the complete story. That's fine. The dungeon works whether or not the players understand why it exists.

The Pharaoh

DN NOTE

His name has been scoured from every surface in the prison. The gods made sure of that. What remains is his title, his ambition, and the consequences of both.

He was the ruler of the Empire of Akhet-Ra - a civilization that dominated the desert for centuries. A brilliant mind. A gifted leader. A man who understood divine power not as a mystery to worship but as a system to study. He was not evil in the way players expect villains to be evil. He was worse. He was right about almost everything, and the one thing he was wrong about destroyed his empire and damned his soul.

He wanted to Ascend.

What Ascension Means

DN NOTE

In the Open Dungeons system, Level 10 is the ceiling of mortal power. A character who reaches it undergoes a transformation called Ascension - restrictions lift, abilities surge, and the character's inner resonance becomes too great for the Material Realm to contain. Ascension is not granted by the gods. It is not a reward. It occurs when the weight of a mortal's deeds, will, and story presses against the limits of mortality until the cosmos must make room.

Ascension is rare. It is the culmination of an entire lifetime of extraordinary achievement. Most mortals never approach it. Those who do have earned it through decades of trials, growth, and the slow accumulation of resonance that comes from living a life that matters.

The Pharaoh understood all of this. He studied it. He mapped the mechanics of Ascension the way an engineer maps the mechanics of a bridge. And he found a flaw - or what he believed was a flaw. If Ascension occurs when a mortal's resonance exceeds the threshold, then the source of that resonance shouldn't matter. It doesn't have to be earned. It can be taken.

The Ritual of Stolen Suns

DN NOTE

The Pharaoh designed a ritual to harvest the resonance of others and channel it into himself. Not their souls - resonance. The accumulated weight of their lives, their deeds, their potential. Every person carries a measure of it. Most carry a candle's worth. A hero might carry a bonfire. The Pharaoh calculated that the combined resonance of thousands of ordinary lives would equal the threshold needed for Ascension.

He was correct about the math. He was catastrophically wrong about the principle.

The ritual required a focus - the staff, topped with a golden sun disc, designed to absorb and channel resonance. It required a location - the Buried Temple of the Scarab (E6 on Level 5), a sacred site built directly over a convergence point where the Material Realm runs thin. And it required fuel. Thousands of lives, gathered in the great plazas of Akhet-Ra, told they were participating in a ceremony of blessing.

They were not.

The ritual activated at noon. The staff drank the sun. Light gathered from every direction - not sunlight, but the golden light of living resonance, pulled from every body in the plazas. Witnesses described people collapsing silently, mid-step, mid-sentence, mid-breath. No screams. No wounds. They simply emptied. Thousands of lives reduced to husks in seconds, their resonance flowing upward through the staff and into the Pharaoh.

For a moment, it worked. The Pharaoh's resonance surged past the threshold. He felt the Material Realm loosen its grip. The boundary between mortal and something greater began to dissolve. He was Ascending.

Then the gods noticed.

The Divine Response

DN NOTE

Ascension earned through a lifetime of deeds is a natural process. The cosmos accommodates it the way a river accommodates a stone that has grown too large for its bed. But forced Ascension - resonance stolen from thousands and crammed into a single vessel - is an abomination. It is a mortal attempting to rewrite the fundamental architecture of existence through theft.

The gods did not debate. They did not warn. They acted with the unanimous, instant fury of powers that had just watched a mortal try to break the rules that hold reality together.

They ripped the Ascension out of him. Not gently. They tore the stolen resonance free, and it scattered - but the lives it came from were already gone. The resonance had nowhere to return to. It dissipated into the desert, into the stone, into the sand. The Pharaoh was slammed back into mortality with such force that his empire shattered around him. The cities crumbled. The plazas where thousands had stood became tombs. The desert swallowed everything.

But the gods were not satisfied with destruction. Destruction ends. They wanted punishment that endured. The gods judged him in unanimous fury, and one god carried out their will by building the prison.

The Prison

DN NOTE

They built the Sun Entombed Empire through one god - a pocket dimension, a demirealm, sealed inside an eternal sandstorm. They took the ruins of the Pharaoh's civilization and reconstructed them underground as a six-level prison. Not a dungeon. A sentence. Each level serves a purpose in the punishment:

Level 1 (The Court of Fallen Monuments): The entry. The Pharaoh's achievements, broken and half-buried. A reminder of what he built and what it cost. The prison teaches you to watch your feet.

Level 2 (The Sunken City of Akhet-Ra): The city itself, preserved in ruin. The streets he ruled, the buildings his people lived in, all hollow and filled with sand. The Sand Warden patrols here - a construct of divine punishment, endlessly walking the streets of a dead city.

Level 3 (The Sector of the Sand Winds): The punishment escalates. Wind that never stops, that kills light, blocks communication, and grinds you down through exhaustion. The prison stops being a museum and starts being a weapon.

Level 4 (The Lost Tombs of Zerzura): The quiet level. Academic, contemplative, full of the knowledge the Pharaoh accumulated in his obsessive study of Ascension. His spirit lingers here in D16, waiting for someone to listen. This is where the prison reveals its cruelty is not mindless - it preserved his mind so he could spend eternity understanding exactly what he did wrong.

Level 5 (The Lost Necropolis of Akhet-Ra): The necropolis where the dead of Akhet-Ra were meant to rest. The Buried Temple of the Scarab sits at its heart (E6), still holding the staff. The Divine Sentinel Guard guards it - the gods' final lock on the cage. The only safe

rest in the entire dungeon exists here (E27), a small mercy the gods either overlooked or allowed as bait.

Level 6 (The Labyrinth of Divine Punishment): A shifting maze designed to break the mind. The walls move. The architecture is deliberately wrong - proportions that unsettle, angles that shouldn't exist. This level exists purely to make you feel small, lost, and powerless. It is the gods saying: you tried to become one of us, so here is what it feels like to be nothing.

The Pharaoh's soul was bound inside this prison. Not dead. Not alive. Aware. He has been here for millennia, conscious of every grain of sand, every echo in every corridor, every adventurer who has stumbled in and died trying to find a way out. The staff - his instrument of atrocity - sits in the deepest chamber, still humming with residual power. Removing it and driving it into the ground beyond the storm boundary is the only way to end the sentence.

The Moral Architecture

DN NOTE

The Sun Entombed Empire is not a story about good versus evil. The Pharaoh committed an atrocity. He killed thousands to fuel his own ambition. That is not ambiguous. But the punishment the gods designed is also monstrous - an eternity of conscious suffering with no possibility of redemption, appeal, or release. The gods didn't build a prison. They built a torture device, and they walked away from it.

The players are not here to judge the Pharaoh. They are here because a sandstorm dropped them into someone else's sentence. Their goal is simple: survive, find the staff, get out. But the story asks a question it never answers: does anyone deserve this? The Pharaoh killed thousands. The gods condemned him to something worse than death, forever. The players carry the staff out and end it - but whether they feel like liberators or accomplices is a question the adventure leaves with them.

Do not resolve this for your players. Do not tell them how to feel about the Pharaoh. Let the dungeon do its work. The altar visions, the spirit encounter in D16, the dead adventurers, the sand-formed family in the city, the infant in the cradle - these details accumulate. By the time the players drive the staff into the ground and the sun finally moves, they will have their own answer. It won't be the same answer for every group. That's the point.

The Staff

DN NOTE

The Pharaoh's Staff is the key to everything. It was the instrument of the ritual, the anchor of the prison's magic, and the only means of ending the sentence. While it remains in E6, the prison holds. The moment it is removed, the prison begins to destabilize - sealed entries crack, divine constructs weaken, and the demirealm starts to unravel. Driving it into the ground beyond the sandstorm boundary collapses the prison entirely and releases every soul trapped within it, including the Pharaoh's.

The staff is not a weapon. It is not a tool. It is a key, and the only lock it opens is this one.

A Note on Running This Adventure

DN NOTE

The Sun Entombed Empire is designed for Level 1-3 characters using the Open Dungeons system. It is a six-level dungeon with approximately 160 rooms, designed to be played over multiple sessions. The tone is oppressive, the resource management is punishing, and the emotional weight accumulates as players descend. This is not a hack-and-slash module. Combat exists, but the dungeon's real threats are dehydration, exhaustion, navigation, and the slow realization that this place was built to make someone suffer forever.

Let the players discover the story at their own pace. Some groups will piece together the full picture by Level 3. Others will reach the staff without ever understanding why the prison exists. Both experiences are valid. The dungeon works as a survival crawl even if the lore goes undiscovered. But for groups that find it, the story transforms the experience from a dungeon delve into something they'll talk about long after the session ends.

Take your time with the ending. After everything the players have been through, the moment the sun moves should feel earned. Read it slowly. Let the silence land. The stars are the reward.

THE SUN ENTOMBED EMPIRE

Adventure Start - The Crossroads of Sand

The Surface Hub
Open Dungeons RPG

S1 - The Crossroads of Sand

DN NOTE

This is the starting point of the adventure. Players arrive here after being pulled through a supernatural sandstorm during desert travel at night. They wake on a circular stone platform, roughly 40 ft in diameter, at the center of a scorched demirealm trapped in eternal high noon. Temperature: 120 degrees Fahrenheit. The sun does not move. There is no shade. There is no water. The sandstorm that brought them here is visible at the horizon in every direction - a wall of churning sand encircling the world.

Six brick paths radiate outward from the platform like spokes on a wheel, evenly spaced at 60-degree intervals. Each path is identical - 15 ft wide, pale sandstone bricks half-buried in drifting sand, cutting a straight line toward distant ruins on the horizon. The paths look the same. They feel the same. There is no distinguishing feature between them. The prison does not care which road they take.

At the center of the platform, a stone marker. Carved into it in Common, Elvish, Dwarvish, and Hieratic: "SIX ROADS. ONE PRISON. NONE LEAD OUT." Added by adventurers over centuries. The oldest text is in a language no player will recognize - the empire's original script.

SEALING MECHANIC: Once the party commits to a path and travels roughly 200 ft from the platform, the path behind them fills with sand. Not slowly - in a single wave, floor to horizon, as if the desert swallowed the road whole. There is no going back to the hub. The only way forward is through the level they have entered - and from there, through the connections between levels. The hub is a one-time starting point. The players will never see it again.

No enemies. No traps. No Chance Rolls. The only decision is which path to walk. Let the heat, the silence, and the six identical roads do the work.

HEAT MECHANIC: While on the surface hub and the paths, the heat is oppressive. CON Tough Save every 10 minutes spent above ground. Each failed save adds 1 level of Exhaustion. Each level reduces current HP by 1. Exhaustion levels stack. All Exhaustion levels are removed after 6+ hours of rest in a sheltered area. If the party cannot secure real shelter (shade plus protection from heat and wind), they cannot take this rest. Once players

enter any level, the temperature drops to cool underground air and the mechanic stops. This creates urgency - standing around debating is costly. Pick a road and move.

TO PLAYERS

You don't remember the sandstorm ending. You remember the desert at night - cool air, stars, the caravan route stretching ahead. Then the wind. A wall of sand taller than anything you've ever seen, moving faster than horses, and the sound of it swallowed everything. You covered your face. You fell. The world went dark.

Now the world is bright. Too bright. You open your eyes and the sun is directly overhead, white-hot, pinned to the center of the sky like it was nailed there. The heat hits you before your vision clears - 120 degrees, maybe more, pressing down on your skin like a hand made of fire. There is no shade. There is no wind. The air tastes like hot stone.

You're lying on a stone platform. Circular. Forty feet across. Pale sandstone, ancient, cracked but solid. Around you, sand in every direction - rolling dunes, flat stretches of baked earth, the shimmer of heat distortion blurring the horizon into soup. And at that horizon, in every direction, a wall. Not stone. Sand. The sandstorm, still raging, encircling this place in a barrier that reaches from the ground to the sky. You are inside it. Whatever this place is, the storm is keeping it sealed.

Six roads lead away from the platform. Stone brick paths, evenly spaced, radiating outward like the spokes of a wheel. Each one is identical. Fifteen feet wide. Pale bricks half-swallowed by drifting sand. Each road cuts a straight line toward the horizon, toward shapes in the distance - dark outlines of ruins, edges of structures too far away to identify. The roads look the same. They feel the same. Nothing distinguishes one from another.

At the center of the platform, a stone marker rises to waist height. Words are carved into every face, in different hands, different languages, different eras. The newest is in Common. The oldest is in a script none of you recognize. They all say the same thing:

"SIX ROADS. ONE PRISON. NONE LEAD OUT."

The sun beats down. Your armor is already hot to the touch. Your waterskins are warm. The stone under your boots is warm. Everything is warm and nothing is moving and the six roads wait and the storm howls at the edge of the world and this place does not care which one you choose.

It just needs you to choose.

WHEN PLAYERS CHOOSE A PATH

You walk. The bricks are steady underfoot, half-buried, ancient, but solid. The heat presses harder with every step. Sweat runs and dries before it reaches your chin. The ruins ahead

grow slowly - dark shapes resolving into walls, archways, the suggestion of something built with purpose. Behind you, the platform shrinks.

Then the sound. A low rumble, felt in your feet before you hear it. You turn. The road behind you is gone. Sand has swallowed it - not grain by grain, not drifting, but all at once, a single wave that erased the path from where you stand back to the horizon. The platform, the other five roads, the stone marker with its warning - all of it buried. Ahead, the ruins. Behind, desert. The road chose you back.

NAVIGATION

Each of the six paths leads to one level's primary entry room:

Path 1 leads to A1 - Entry Corridor (Level 1: The Court of Fallen Monuments)

Path 2 leads to B1 - South Entry Corridor (Level 2: The Sunken City of Akhet-Ra)

Path 3 leads to C1 - Buried Plazas (Level 3: The Sector of the Sand Winds)

Path 4 leads to D1 - Eastern Entry Hall (Level 4: The Lost Tombs of Zerzura)

Path 5 leads to E1 - North Entry Hall (Level 5: The Lost Necropolis of Akhet-Ra)

Path 6 leads to F1 - Entry Hall (Level 6: The Labyrinth of Divine Punishment)

The paths are not labeled. Players choose blind. The DN decides which path corresponds to which level, or assigns them randomly. Once the party enters a level, the entry seals behind them. From that point forward, progression between levels occurs through inter-level connections: sand-slides, shaft networks, hidden passages, and secondary exits that connect one level to another.

The adventure ends when the Pharaoh's staff is carried beyond the sandstorm boundary and driven into the ground outside.

STORY DROP

The hub establishes the prison's thesis: you are trapped, the trap is old, others have been trapped before you, and the prison itself is indifferent. The identical paths remove the comfort of an informed decision - there is no right choice, only forward. The sealing mechanic commits the party and eliminates retreat as a strategy. From this point on, every exit leads deeper, not out. The carved warnings from previous adventurers serve as the first in-world hint that this place has been consuming people for centuries - and that the way out is not the way in.

THE SUN ENTOMBED EMPIRE

The Breaking of the Prison

Adventure Ending
Open Dungeons RPG

END - The Sandstorm Boundary

DN NOTE

The sandstorm boundary is visible from the surface of the demirealm - a wall of churning sand stretching from ground to sky in every direction, encircling the prison. Players can reach the boundary by exiting any level to the surface and walking toward the horizon. The walk takes approximately 30 minutes from the nearest level exit. The heat mechanic applies: CON Tough Save every 10 minutes or gain 1 level of Exhaustion.

STAFF AND THE SEALS: While the staff remains in the Buried Temple, the prison's sealing magic holds. Surface entries that sealed behind players when they first entered remain blocked by compacted sand and stone. The moment the staff is removed from E6, the prison begins to destabilize. Sealed entries crack, sand loosens, and within minutes the nearest surface exit to the party's current position reopens - not fully cleared, but passable. Players may need to dig through loosened sand (Strength Chance Roll TN 12) but the divine compaction is gone. The staff is undoing the prison from the inside out. This is the first physical sign that what they're carrying matters.

Destabilization affects divine seal points first - surface entries, compacted corridors, reinforced stone choke points. Interior chambers remain structurally intact unless otherwise specified. The prison does not collapse instantly. It begins to fail at its boundaries.

The boundary is not a wall. Players can walk into it. The sand scours but does not kill - 1d4 bludgeoning per round of exposure, DR applies. After 3 rounds of pushing through, they emerge on the other side. What they find depends on whether they carry the staff.

The boundary can be crossed in either direction. Players who exit can re-enter. The storm is a cage, not a door - it keeps the prison sealed, but it was designed to trap the Pharaoh's soul, not block foot traffic. The gods assumed no one would have a reason to leave without ending the curse. They were almost right.

END-A - Crossing Without the Staff

DN NOTE

Players who cross the boundary without the Pharaoh's staff emerge into the demirealm's outer desert. This is not the real world. It is the same prison, extended. Eternal high noon. 120 degrees. No water. No landmarks. No shade. No horizon that gets closer no matter how far they walk. The desert is infinite in every direction - or near enough to infinite that it makes no difference. The gods built the prison with no walls because the desert IS the wall.

There is nothing out here. No ruins, no roads, no oases real or false. The sand is featureless. The sun does not move. The heat mechanic continues: CON Tough Save every 10 minutes or gain 1 level of Exhaustion. Without water or shade, this is a death sentence measured in hours.

Players can turn around and re-enter the storm. 1d4 bludgeoning per round for 3 rounds, then they are back inside the prison. The levels, the connections, the inter-level passages - all still functional. The prison does not punish you for trying to leave. It just makes leaving pointless.

If the party splits and some members carry the staff while others have already crossed without it: when the staff is driven into the ground, the prison collapses regardless of where individual players are. Everyone inside the demirealm is transported to the real world. See END-B.

TO PLAYERS

You push through the storm. Sand strips at your skin, your armor, your resolve - three rounds of blind, grinding punishment, and then it stops. You stumble forward, blinking, spitting grit.

Desert. The same desert. The same sun, directly overhead, nailed to the same blank sky. The heat is identical. The sand is identical. The only difference is that the ruins are behind you now, hidden behind the wall of churning sand at your back. Ahead of you: nothing. Sand in every direction, flat and featureless, stretching to a horizon that shimmers and never arrives.

You walk. Ten minutes. Twenty. The horizon doesn't change. The sun doesn't move. Nothing moves. The desert is not a place. It is an absence of place - a void made of heat and sand, extending in every direction with the patience of something that was never designed to end.

The storm is still behind you. You can go back. The prison is still there, through the sand, with its corridors and its ruins and its dead. Out here, there is nothing. Not even the courtesy of a dead city to die in.

STORY DROP

The outer desert exists to make a point: the prison has no walls because it doesn't need them. The Pharaoh's punishment isn't confinement - it's context. Inside the storm, there are ruins to explore, puzzles to solve, a staff to find, a story to piece together. Outside the storm, there is nothing. The gods didn't trap him in a cage. They trapped him in the only interesting place in an infinite wasteland. Leaving without the staff is freedom in the most meaningless sense of the word. Players who experience this and choose to re-enter the prison understand something the Pharaoh has known for millennia: the punishment isn't being inside. It's knowing that outside is worse.

END-B - The Breaking of the Prison - With Staff In Hand

DN NOTE

Players who carry the Pharaoh's staff across the boundary and drive it into the ground outside the storm trigger the adventure's ending. This is the climax. Take your time with it.

THE SEQUENCE: The moment the staff enters the sand beyond the boundary, the golden sun disc at its head flares with white light - not amber, not gold. White. Clean. The same light as the Divine Sentinel Guard. The same light as the gods' hands in the altar visions. For the first time in the adventure, divine light appears that is not punishment. It is release.

The staff sinks. On its own, pulling downward, driving itself deeper than any hand could push it. The sand around it turns to glass in a circle that expands outward - one foot, five feet, ten. The glass is clear. Through it, players can see down. Not sand. Not stone. A void. And in the void, a single point of light, falling away.

The sandstorm falters. The wall of churning sand that has defined the horizon since the players arrived begins to slow. Not all at once - in sections, like a machine losing power. The howl drops in pitch. Sand that was suspended in the air begins to fall. The storm is dying.

The prison collapses. Not violently. Quietly. The eternal noon dims. The sun overhead - fixed, burning, immovable since before the players were born - moves. For the first time. It slides toward the horizon, and the sky darkens. Not to black. To twilight. To the sky of a

real desert at the end of a real day. Stars appear. The temperature drops. In seconds, the 120-degree furnace becomes cool evening air.

EVERY SOUL GOES FREE. The undead on every level dissolve into sand. The constructs freeze and crumble. The Sand Warden, the Divine Sentinel Guard (if not already destroyed), the skeleton soldiers, the maddened spirits - all of them release. Players who are still inside any level when the collapse occurs see this happen around them. The sand-formed figures - the soldier on the bunk, the family at the table, the woman in the garden, the infant in the cradle - they don't crumble. They exhale. A breath of warm air escapes each one as the sand relaxes and finally, gently, falls apart. Not destruction. Permission.

THE PHARAOH. His voice rises from the staff one final time. Not from sand. Not from walls. From the staff itself, quiet, close, as if he were standing beside the player who drove it in. What he says depends on what the players found.

If players met his spirit in D16: "You listened. That is more than I deserved. Go now. Live under a sky that moves. I had forgotten what that looked like."

If players never found D16: "You did not find me. But you found the staff, and that was enough. I will not burden you with my story. The sand will forget it soon enough. Thank you. For ending this."

If players carry the Obsidian Sphere from F29: the sphere flashes once, warm in the holder's hand, and goes clear. Perfectly transparent. Through it, the real world is visible - not a 10-second glimpse. Permanent. The sphere is free too. It is now a genuine scrying device worth 200+ GP, its prison function replaced by its true purpose. The sphere wanted to leave. It got its wish.

TRANSPORTATION: The demirealm dissolves. The glass circle around the staff expands - silently, quickly - until it reaches the players. When it touches them, the world shifts. No violence. No falling. The ground simply changes. Sand becomes different sand. Hot air becomes cool air. The amber haze lifts and the sky is real - deep blue, fading to black at the zenith, scattered with more stars than any of them have seen since the storm took them. The staff remains where they drove it, but the glass is gone. The prison is gone. The storm is gone. They are standing in the real desert, on the real caravan route they were traveling when the sandstorm swallowed them. Their tracks from before the storm are still visible in the sand, preserved by the dry air. Nothing has changed out here. Everything has changed in them.

AFTERMATH: The players are free. The Pharaoh's soul is released to whatever judgment awaits it - that is between him and the gods, and the adventure does not resolve it. The staff remains embedded in the sand. It is inert now - dark wood, a gold disc that no longer hums. It can be retrieved and sold (the gold alone is worth 50 GP), or left as a marker in the desert. The prison's ruins do not persist in the real world. There is no dungeon to return to. Only sand, and the memory of sand, and a single staff standing upright in a desert where a prison used to be.

TO PLAYERS

You drive the staff into the ground.

It sinks. Not from your strength. The sand pulls it down, and the gold disc at its head catches light that doesn't come from the sun overhead. White light. Clean, sharp, nothing like the amber sickness that has colored every moment since you arrived. The staff buries itself to the hilt and the sand around it turns to glass.

You step back. The circle of glass expands. One foot. Five. Ten. Through it, you can see down - not into sand, not into stone. Into nothing. A void, and somewhere in that void, a single point of light falling away like a star dropping out of the sky.

The storm falters.

The wall of sand at the horizon - that howling, churning barrier that has caged this world since before you knew it existed - begins to slow. Sections of it stutter. Sand that was suspended falls. The sound drops from a roar to a moan to a whisper to nothing. The storm is dying, and it is dying quietly, as if it has been waiting for this and is grateful it can finally stop.

The sun moves.

You have never seen it move. Not once. Not a degree. Since the moment you woke on the stone platform, it has been fixed overhead like a nail driven into the sky. Now it slides. Westward. Slowly at first, then faster, as if making up for lost time. The sky darkens. Not to black. To the deep blue of twilight, bruised with purple at the edges, and the stars come out. Not one or two. All of them. Every star you have ever seen and a thousand you haven't, pouring into a sky that has been empty since before you were born.

The temperature drops. The furnace shuts off. Cool air touches your skin for the first time in what feels like your entire life, and the relief of it is so sudden and so total that your knees almost buckle.

The glass circle reaches you. When it touches your boots, the world shifts. Not a lurch. Not a fall. The ground simply becomes different ground. The sand changes color. The air changes weight. The haze lifts and you are standing in a desert you recognize. The caravan route. The real one. Your footprints from before the storm are still here, pressed into sand that has been waiting patiently for you to come back and finish your journey.

The staff stands upright behind you, planted in the sand where a prison used to be. The gold disc is dark. The hum is gone. It is just a stick in the desert now, and the desert is just a desert, and the sky is full of stars, and the night is cool, and you are free.

Behind you, the wind picks up. Not a storm. A breeze. The kind that crosses deserts at night, carrying the cold from somewhere high and far away. It passes over the staff and the gold disc catches the starlight for a moment. Just a flash. Then it's dark again, and the breeze moves on, and the desert is quiet, and the sentence is over.

STORY DROP

The ending is designed to be quiet. After hours of sand and death and divine cruelty, the release should feel like exhaling. The sun moving is the most important visual - it has been fixed overhead since the adventure began, and seeing it slide toward the horizon tells the players more than any narration could. The stars are the reward. The cool air is the reward. The familiar footprints are the reward. Not gold, not magic items, not experience points. The world, given back.

The Pharaoh's final words are deliberately brief. He has been talking for millennia. He is done. If the players found him, he thanks them in the way exhausted people thank someone who finally turned the lights off. If they didn't find him, he doesn't burden them with exposition. He just says thank you and lets go.

What happens to the Pharaoh's soul is intentionally unresolved. He committed an atrocity fueled by brilliance and ambition. He paid for it longer than his empire existed. Whether that is enough is not a question the adventure answers. It is a question the players will carry with them, and it is the only treasure that matters.

