



# The Devil in Iron

By Wesley Connally

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This series of 12 adventures that I created are all based on Robert E. Howard's Conan short stories. Almost all of the text boxes for you, the DM, to read are taken directly from Howard's own writing. This provides a great atmosphere for your players. You may warn them that some are lengthy, but just sit back, relax, and allow the text to paint the world for them. This will enrich their experience.

I have modified Howard's text to represent plural adventurers and rewrote all text for the present tense. I had to add a few dialogue boxes of my own writing to fill in important roleplaying gaps in the original story lines.

All adventures are written for D&D 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, but could easily be adapted to more modern versions. I highly recommend my other handouts and rules to create a more full Conan-World experience.

Levels: 7-9

**Reputation:** 5 Turan (Country Reputation is based on a 1-5 scale from barely known (1) to heroic status (5). For every 5 points of Adventure Reputation the characters earn, based on a successful adventure, their score for the Country Reputation in the country where the adventure takes place, goes up by 1. Reputation will affect NPC reaction rolls, prices, jealousies, women etc.)

## Adventure Summary

A trap is set for the adventurers to lure them to an island on the Vilayet Sea. But everyone gets more than they bargained for as the once ancient ruins on the island is regenerated and a god comes back to life!

To capture the spirit of the Conan world, I offer a "Babe-In-Distress bonus (BID)." As there is almost always a BID in the stories and thus these adventures, I have the characters "compete" for her favor. If you wish to do this, when the characters first meet the BID, have characters average their Comeliness and Charisma scores. Then have them roll a d20. The one who comes closest *without going over* their averaged score has struck the fancy of the BID for whatever reason ("he's not the best looking, but he has kind eyes"). He then becomes responsible to oversee her safety. If the adventure is completed and she is still alive with only a few nicks, that character is awarded a 10% experience point bonus, not to mention her undying gratitude in the bedroom. Of course, this process applies to female player characters as well. The BID perhaps is intimidated by men and seeks the safety of female protection, or perhaps the BID "just swings that way..."

## Part 1: The Trap

Characters need to make a BID roll.

Jehungir Agha has called for a truce meeting, his men wearing the white flag of openness and negotiation. They have set up their tents across from the kozaki camps where you find yourselves in employ. Having left Zamboula, you find your reputation still intact with the kozaki, helping make the King of Turan, King Yezdigerd's life as unhappy as possible. Your varied talents are appreciated and you quickly move up the ladder of kozaki success.

During the truce meeting with your current enemy named Jehungir Agha, lord of Khawarizm and keeper of the coastal border, you spied a tall, handsome girl whose yellow hair, clear eyes, and fair skin identified her as a pure-blood of Nemedian breeding. Her scanty silk tunic, girded at the waist, displays the marvelous contours of her magnificent figure. Her fine eyes flash with resentment whenever Jehungir Agha claps his hands for more wine, but when they lift and gaze at you and your friends, her countenance changes dramatically. Her smile, sultry eyes, and the quick flash of her earnest glances boil your blood with passion. She is a magnificent specimen carved voluptuously out of pure ivory.

The meetings of truce are going well, so well that at one point, [BID winner] asks about the serving slave girl and inquires of her name. Jehungir Agha barks a command and she appears like a summoned ghost of a goddess from behind the enfolded velvet from the back of the pavilion. He issues another command, gesturing in the direction in which you are seated. She turns to face you and in soft tones, states, "I am called Octavia, servant of Jehungir Agha, lord of Khawarizm." She bows her head and slowly bends at the waist offering a suppliant posture and not inconsequentially, a view of her magnificent overflowing bosom which reveals itself fully from beneath her gauzy veil.

[For those who make a PER check, read the next paragraph. This check simply gives your players something to do during the long dialogue box :)]

And as she slowly straightens, you catch her flashing eyes and a wry smile escape the corners of her mouth. Her face changes from one heartbeat to the other as she turns to her lord and master, then excuses herself.

[Read the following regardless of who makes the roll.]

Every man's fire has been kindled in the room, "What is her price?" [BID winner] blurts out unexpectedly.

Jehungir looks surprised, "Ah, Octavia, she is not for sale." And under no circumstances you soon find out, would he allow her to be lost to him. "Her talents and skills match her beauty," he slyly grins. "I'm sure you will forgive my obstinacy."

Two days later, after Jehungir Khan departs and a temporary peace line has been carved on the map, a messenger from him demands that you give the girl Octavia, back. He is demonstrative and confident that her disappearance has something to do with you. A different kind of fire now kindles the camp as you correctly state that Jehungir Khan can "eat with the dogs," and that though her very presence can make any man covetous, you nor any of your comrades have stolen her. The messenger departs with a vague warning about his master's will and threats.

Later that day, a Yuetshi fisherman reports that Octavia was seen heading out to the Vilayet Sea,

alone, in a small dingy, to the island of Xapur, just this morning. No doubt she found a way to escape her hard master, but whether she is able to safely scale the tall cliffs which gird the small island is a different story, indeed. There is but one way to ascend them and that is a hard-to-find ancient carven stairway which crawls and spirals its way up the side. You know this because you had been there not two weeks before atop the island in the ruins of a once-great but now long-forgotten fortress-city. The occasion was a meeting of the various pirate and desert raider groups united in harrying King Yezdigerd.

It is assumed that the characters will want to chase her down whether it be to return her to her master for peace sake, or to claim her as their own, or perhaps free her. If they do not move to do this, it will be incumbent upon the BID winner to kindle their thirst for the chase.

Roll a d6 and add this to 7am for time of day when they learn of Octavia's journey to Xapur. It takes two hours to reach the coast, two hours to procure a boat and two hours to row out to the island,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of that time if the characters consistently reinforce the notion that they are hurrying. It gets dark at 6:30pm. It is very important to keep track of time and where the PCs are when it gets dark (see "Background" below).

Have them travel the short distance to the sea, procure a boat and sail to the island, Xapur, and scale the stairs, and traverse the jungle. You should make this as easy or difficult as you wish.

## Part 2: Reaching Dagon

As the characters traipse around the jungle of Xapur, have them roll for surprise at -5.

Rustling of branches to your right catches your ears, and then you notice a slight smell of sulfur and smoke. From the patch of tall weeds and grasses, stare fire red eyes. In a heartbeat's time, it leaps!

For those of you who are surprised, you are taken flat-footed as a reddish brown canine leaps from a nearby patch of weeds and grasses.

The beast resembles a great hunting hound being a full 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  feet at its shoulder. Its maw opens to reveal a black tongue and black teeth. An orange light like that of a hotly burning coal, illuminates the gullet of the reddish brown canine. Your nostrils are assaulted by the acrid smell of sulfur and smoke as it lunges toward you.

d4+2 rounds later the other Hell Hounds 3 close the circle.

[Hell Hounds (4) (AC:4 HD:7 hp:42 Mv:15 Th:13 D:d10 SA:fire SD: Sz: M XP:1400) Fire breath=10 yard range, 7 damage, NO save for half. If a 20 is rolled, it bites and grabs its victim breathing every round on him.]

Ahead of you, among the trees, rises something that your reason tells you is not possible. It is a great dark green wall, with towers rearing beyond the battlements. You stand paralyzed in the disruption of the faculties which demoralizes anyone who is confronted by an impossible negation of sanity. You doubt neither your sight nor your reason, but something is monstrously out of joint. Less than a month ago, only broken ruins had showed among the trees. What human hands could rear such a mammoth pile as now meets your eyes, in the few weeks which have elapsed? Besides, the buccaneers, who roamed Vilayet ceaselessly, would have learned of any work going on, on such a

stupendous scale and would have informed the kozaki.

As you approach, you see that the walls are composed of the same green stone that form the ruins, and you are haunted by a vague sense of familiarity. It was as if you look upon something you have never before seen but have dreamed of or pictured mentally. At last you recognized the sensation. The walls and towers followed the plan of the ruins. It is as if the crumbling lines have grown back into the structures they originally were.

No sound disturbs the morning quiet as you steal to the foot of the wall, which rises sheer from the luxuriant growth. On the southern reaches of the inland sea, the vegetation is almost tropical. You see no one on the battlements, hear no sounds within. You see a massive gate a short distance to your left.

The gate has 200hp and if forced open, it releases a deadly trap—an iron cage with long thin points depending from its ceiling. It crashes down on those walking past the broken gate trapping the first two members and possibly the next two unless a saving throw vs breath weapon is made. A save is also applicable for the spikes (vs death/poison). Saving indicates the thin lances miss the heads of the character. Failure indicates 3d10 damage, and the loss of 1 CON/turn for 1 hour. Characters get a save every turn to avoid the CON loss.

## Background for DM

A Yuetshi fisherman climbed the great domed part of the ruins and beheld a marvelous site through the broken roof. Below, a huge figure of a man was perfectly preserved and strangely, a great dagger was sunk into his chest. The dagger gleamed like the sun itself and lured the fisherman to climb down and retrieve it. When he pulled it out, much to his surprise, the colossal man awoke and promptly slew him.

Khosatral Khel awoke when the dagger that paralyzed him for centuries was removed. He is (practically) a god from the stars and created this formerly great city. Now he has set to task the resurrection of the city and all its inhabitants, the Dagonians. These people are now similar to ju-ju zombies. They slumber in a comatose state, but at night, they fully awake and act as normal (though technically undead) people. They can be turned as 4HD creatures.

If Khosatral knows of the party's presence in his city, the Dagonians attack on sight.

There is a 40% chance of encountering 1d4 Dagonians in any particular room or corridor at night.

[Dagonian (ju-ju zombies) (AC:6 HD:3+12 hp:30 Mv:12 Th:15 D:d8+4 SA: SD:fire=1/2, normal weapons=1/2 Sz:6 XP:1150)]

At night, when fully awake, they act as normal people and can interact with the PCs. However, if Khosatral has been alerted to the PCs presence, the Dagonians attack them on sight.

The circumference of the wall is not great, but the number of green stone buildings it contains is surprising. They are three or four stories in height, mainly flat-roofed, reflecting a fine architectural style. The streets converge like the spokes of a wheel into an octagon-shaped court in the center of the town, which gives upon a lofty edifice, which, with its domes and towers, dominates the whole

city. You see no one moving in the streets or looking out of the windows. The silence that reigns there might have been that of a dead and deserted city.

### Part 3: Dagon's Interior

As they move about, they see an open door to a house. Eventually, they should venture into a building or home. In either case, use the following description.

The floor is covered with thick rugs, and there are benches of polished ebony and an ivory dais heaped with furs.

A hanging is suddenly drawn aside,

[Roll for Initiative]

revealing a cushioned alcove from which a slender, dark-haired girl regards you with languid eyes. You stare at her tensely, expecting her momentarily to start screaming. But she merely smothers a yawn with a dainty hand, rises from the alcove, and leans negligently against the hanging which she holds with one hand.

She is undoubtedly of a white race, though her skin is very dark. Her square-cut hair is black as midnight, her only garment a wisp of silk about her supple hips.

Presently she speaks, but the tongue is unfamiliar to you. She yawns again, stretches lithely and, without any show of fear or surprise, shifts languages.

[Ask if anyone knows Yuetshi. If so continue. A character may wish to spend one of his 3 Fate Points to "back learn" Yuetshi.]

The dialect of Yuetshi sounds strangely archaic. "Are you looking for someone?" she asks, as indifferently as if the invasion of her chamber by an armed group of men is the most common thing imaginable.

[If they ask who she is]

"I am Yateli," she answers languidly. "I must have feasted late last night, I am so sleepy now. Who are you? Hmm. You are not a Dagonian. I suppose you are mercenaries. Have you cut the heads off many Yuetshi?"

This seems a strange accusation as water rats are more feared than the provincial fishermen who inhabit the coastlines of the Vilayet Sea.

[Allow PCs to respond to this.]

"But they are very terrible," she murmurs. "I remember when they were our slaves. But they revolted and burned and slew. Only the magic of Khosatral Khel has kept them from the walls---" She pauses, a puzzled look struggling with the sleepiness of her expression. "I forgot," she mutters. "They did climb the walls, last night. There was shouting and fire, and people calling in vain on Khosatral."

She shook her head as if to clear it. "But that cannot be," she murmurs, "because I am alive, and I thought I was dead. Oh, to the devil with it!" She comes across the chamber and approaches the foremost member. She runs her fingers through [PC closest to her]'s thick locks as if to assure herself of your reality.

"Perhaps it is all a dream. A naked bloodstained devil caught me by the throat and drove his knife into my breast. Oh, it hurt! But it was a dream, because see, there is no scar." She idly inspects her smooth bosom, then puts her arm around your neck and jumps into your arms. "It does not matter. You are no dream. You are strong. Let us live while we can. Love me!" She kisses you with unfeigned relish. "You are----strong----love---me." The sleepy murmur fades away, the long lashes droop over the sensuous cheeks; her supple body relaxes in sleep in your arms.

If the characters search the room. Search check applicable.

You find something to make you wonder. Among the furs on the dais is a gorgeous spotted skin, whose predominant hue is golden. It is not a clever copy, but the skin of an actual beast. And that beast, you know, has been extinct for at least a thousand years; it is a great golden leopard, which figures so prominently in Hyborian legendry, and which the ancient artists delight to portray in pigments and marble.

A hallway presents itself as a means to further investigate the interior.

You find a human figure, which lays half in the hall and half in an opening that obviously is normally concealed by a sliding door, which is a duplicate of the panels of the wall. It is a man, dark and lean, clad only in a silk loincloth, with a shaven head and cruel features, and he lay as if death has struck him just as he was emerging from the panel.

A stairwell descends into darkness.

The man shows no evidence of being killed, but his sleep is so deep that the PCs might mistake him for dead. If they think to compare his pulse or lack thereof to Yateli's, she appears dead too.

Unbeknownst to the characters, the entire city is a hive of connections, each house having a stairwell that connects to the underground halls and rooms. After traversing some common hallways and rooms for 10 minutes, they come out into a huge central room.

The area is vast, and PCs could wander aimlessly for hours of game play time. It is more prudent to not have a map of the city, but rather ad lib rooms, hallways, and stairways as you see fit. Use the following table for each random turn.

1. Furnished Room
2. Furnished Room; 10% chance of 100sp to 1000sp items
3. Room with d4 Dagonians, awake at night, comatose at day; 30% of 100 to 3000sp items
4. Empty Hallway
5. Empty Hallway
6. Stairwell up to a house; d6 Dagonians, awake at night, comatose at day; 30% of 100 to 3000sp of items

Before the pace of the game tires, have the party find the following room, Throne Room of the Serpent God (see Map at end of adventure):

You come out into a dim and lofty room of enormous proportions. Fantastic columns march about the mottled walls, upholding a ceiling, which at once, translucent and dusky, seem like a cloudy midnight sky, giving an illusion of impossible height. The walls are curiously worked. Meticulously carved out of the rock are the detailed scales of a snake or similar reptile. You admire the amazing amount of work that it must have taken to carve out such numerous scales.

If any light filters in from the outside, it is curiously altered. You move across the bare green floor. The great room is circular, pierced on one side by the great, bronze valves of a giant door. Opposite this, on a dais against the wall, up to which lead broad curving steps, there stands a throne of copper, and when you see what is coiled on this throne, you retreat hastily lifting your weapon.

[Roll Initiative. This roll is a false alarm but is to cause tension.]

But the thing does not move. You scan it more closely and presently mount the glass steps and stare down at it. It is a gigantic snake, apparently carved out of some jade-like substance. Each scale stands out as distinctly as in real life, and the iridescent colors are vividly reproduced. The great wedge-shaped head is half submerged in the folds of its trunk; so neither the eyes nor jaws are visible. Recognition stirs in your mind. This snake is evidently meant to represent one of those grim monsters of the marsh, which in past ages had haunted the reedy edges of Vilayet's southern shores. But, like the golden leopard, they have been extinct for hundreds of years. You have seen rude images of them, in miniature, among the idol huts of the Yuetshi, and any Stygian knows that there exists a description of them in the *Book of Skelos*, which draws on prehistoric sources. You admire the scaly torso, thicker than your thigh and wonder what fabulous price such a work could bring in the Aquilonian markets could such a piece ever be transported safely.

However, what the characters most likely do NOT realize, is that it is indeed real but will remain asleep if not molested. If touched it awakens but does not move. It takes in its surroundings. In this case, it will quickly slither after the party as they turn to leave the dais.

[Giant Constrictor (AC:5 HD:12 hp:96 Mv:15 Th:8 D:2d10/2d8 SA:constrict SD: Sz:G XP:2800) It takes 80 points of strength to extricate one in its coils. There is a 20% to hit a coiled ally when striking the snake.]

If the characters succeed in finding the secret door behind the constrictor's dais, and they enter, read the following:

In the dim light, you see a great domed room. In the center sits a block of golden stone and beside it on the floor, a Yuetshi fisherman, his neck bruised and twisted in horrible fashion. He has perhaps lain here for five days. Beside him, you see the half-moon glimmer of a brilliantly gleaming knife. [If the character's have had the vision at the well, read the following]. This is obviously the ancient Yuetshi knife forged from material from beyond the sun. The evidence seems clear as to what has recently happened...



Note that the domed ceiling, broken for the Yuetshi, is now rebuilt via Khosatral's magic. PCs will not be able to exit or enter that way. There are no other exits from this room.

**Dagger of Dagon +3:** Excellent class weapon. Forged from a meteorite and ancient Yuetshi magic. This is the one weapon that can injure and perhaps disable Khosatral Khel. It can do traditional damage, d4+3, but upon a critical hit, it buries itself into his chest and he becomes paralyzed until a future fateful day where it is removed.

If the PCs leave the constrictor's room via the huge double door made of bronze, they travel through a few more empty hallways and rooms until they reach a room with a pool. Use the random table above for a few rooms and hallways, and then have them find the pool room below.

A pool of reflective black water stands in a 8' diameter ewer basin made of black-striped marble.

[Save vs Spell: if they miss the see the vision.]

The one known as Khosatral Khel came from the abyss and clothed his body in the aspect of a man. He stalked the earth like a god, for no earthly weapon could harm him and to him a century was like an hour. He came upon a primitive people on the island of Dagonia, and it pleased him to give this race culture and civilization and there they worshiped him. But after many ages, a fierce and brutish people appeared on the shores of the sea. They called themselves Yuetshi, and after a fierce battle they were defeated and enslaved, and for nearly a generation they died on the altars of Khosatral.

Then their priest, a strange gaunt man of unknown race, plunged into the wilderness, and when he returned he bore a knife that was of no earthly substance. It was forged of a falling rock from the sky and flashed through the atmosphere like a flaming arrow. Against that unearthly knife, Khosatral was impotent. Carnage and slaughter bellowed through the red smoke that choked the streets. The grimmest act of that grim drama was played in the cryptic dome behind the great dais chamber with its copper throne and its walls mottled like the skin of serpents. From that dome, the Yuetshi priest emerged alone. He had not slain his foe, because he wished to hold the threat of his loosing over the heads of his own rebellious subjects. He had left Khosatral lying upon the golden dais with the mystic knife in his breast to hold him senseless and inanimate until doomsday.

Allow the characters to move from room to room for a bit, again using the random table above. Then, unexpectedly, they see Octavia laying on a silken divan.

“Oh!” she exclaims. Her face contorts into a combination of happiness and tears. She rises and you are again struck by her curvaceous figure. She runs, girl-like, to [BID winner's] arms. “Please, please, don't let him get me! We must leave immediately!” she cries in an exulted whisper.

[If they question her as to whom she is referring]

“I...I don't know his name, but he is a huge monstrosity of a man. He moves and speaks as a man but I do not think is human!” Her hands clutch powerfully to your arm at the memory of him.

At this very moment, you hear a voice which comes from behind one of the walls. The tongue is Nemedian, but the voice is not human. There is a terrifying resonance about it, like a bell tolling at

midnight. "There was no life in the Abyss, save that which was incorporated in me," it tolls. "Nor was there light, nor motion, nor any sound. Only the urge behind and beyond life guided and impelled me on my upward journey, blind, insensate, inexorable. Through ages upon ages, and the changeless strata of darkness I climbed---"

[Khosatral's appearance, show picture which is at the end of the adventure]

There is no sound of footsteps, but the great dusky form grows more distinct until you recognize the figure of a man. He is clad in sandals, a skirt, and a broad shag green girdle. His square-cut mane is confined by a circle of gold. You stare at the sweep of the monstrous shoulders, the breadth of swelling breast, the bands and ridges and clusters of muscles on torso and limbs. The face is without weakness and without mercy. The eyes are balls of dark fire. And you know that this is Khosatral Khel, the ancient from the Abyss, the god of Dagonia.

[Khosatral (AC:-2 HD:15 hp:100 Mv:9 Th:5 D:2d10/2d10 SA: SD: immune to everything magic or non-magical save the Dagger of Dagon +2 described above Sz: 9' XP:35,000)

Khosatral will attack but will forfeit initiative on the first round as he evaluates his enemies.

After a couple of rounds, it should become apparent that no spell or weapon can hurt him. If they do not have the dagger that was, hopefully, envisioned at the pool, the party should soon run, to either escape the city or to find the hidden door within the room of "scaled walls" to obtain the dagger.

In either case, Khosatral Khel mentally orders the Dagonians to begin a journey to him and attack the intruders. The party, as they flee away from Khosatral, will encounter a d4 Dagonians in a d4+1 rounds of running. Thereafter, every d6+1 rounds, another d4 Dagonians will block their path, slowing them down and allowing Khosatral to catch up. It will be important during this chase to keep track of distance and rounds of fighting to see if he does indeed catch up before the characters can dispatch and move past the Dagonians.

It takes 3 rounds to get back to the constrictor's room, but make the chase exciting. Have PCs make an INT check to see if they remember the most direct way back. At the God of the Serpents Room, they can bar the double bronze doors which will hold Khosatral for a d6+1 rounds.

Unfortunately, if they left the giant snake unmolested, or alive, it will now awaken with the commotion.

From the constrictor's room, PCs can make a INT -3 check to remember the most direct way; if successful, it takes 5 rounds of running unmolested to make it to the stairwell that they know about. Otherwise, if they fail to remember, use the Random Room chart at a rate of one room per round until they find a stairwell up to a house.

PCs should probably encounter a group of Dagonians descending the stairwell, a last, perhaps, obstruction to their freedom. This escape should be an exciting chase as the PCs are truly being pursued by a far superior foe.

#### Part 4: Escaping the City of Dagon

In the courtyard of Dagon, there is a final 1 in 3 chance of the PCs encountering a d6+1 group of Dagonians. Khosatral Khel will pursue the PCs all the way to the steep narrow stairwell that leads down to their boat, if he has not been placed in another temporal stasis with the Dagger of Dagon.

Outside the city, Jehungir Khan waits for the party near the stairs leading down to the water. He has a band of Turanians with him, crossbows locked and loaded.

PCs must roll for surprise. In any case, the Turanians will at least win initiative and fire their crossbows before the party can retaliate.

Jehungir Khan (AC:2 HD:8 hp:76 Mv:12 Th:12 D:d8+6/d8+6 SA: SD: Sz:6 XP:950)

Turanians 8 (AC:5 HD:2 hp:14 Mv:12 Th:16 D:d6/d6 or d8 SA: SD: Sz:6 XP:65)

This final battle could also involve Khosatral and Dagonians, surely an unexpected event for Jehungir Khan!

## Part 5: Epilogue

If they escape with their lives, award PCs with Xps or if you use a simplified system like I do, this adventure should be worth ½ level for each PC, +/- ¼ level based on roleplaying, time to complete adventure (the longer, usually the more XPs)

I also keep track and award the following bonuses each worth 1/10 of a level:

1. Most Damage in a single blow/spell
2. Coolest Critical Hit by a PC
3. Weirdest/Funniest Happening
4. Scribe (one player must write all notes including monsters killed and treasure gained)
5. BID if she is alive and relatively unharmed
6. Best Idea







