

Akkimedes' Lock

The famous safe-breaker Alzayeen "the Crow" considered himself to be a connoisseur of locks. So when he learnt that a lock built by the great sage Akkimedes was now on the vault of a foppish Caliph, he thought it deserved an owner who appreciated its qualities rather more fully than the Caliph did, and so he extracted the entire brass door from its hinges and carried it away.

For what the Caliph had failed to recognize (despite the attempts of his viziers to investigate the lock for themselves) was that the lock was itself a vault. The door is a minor artifact that can shrink people to tiny size, and within that locking mechanism is a hidden room that could secrete its owner's most prized treasures, and there Alzayeen hid several choice items. But, for all his pride at discovering that chamber, the lock still has one secret hidden from even him.

The interior of the lock is a small "clockwork" dungeon, moving through the workings should feel a little like picking a lock. The scenario has a slightly mathematical flavour to it: some groups might find it a little trivial while others might find it frustrating and boring. Those groups may need to make trips back to consult a sage who can give some clues (and fair enough for a thief to case the joint), but if Alzayeen should see signs that someone has been poking around he's unlikely to ignore them.

The Grotto

Alzayeen's hideaway is located a full day's hard riding away from the city; it would take several days on foot, and that supposing that you knew where it was and weren't having to search for it. It is likely that the party will need some kind of clue to its location, perhaps by learning the general location and staking it out to see the thief visiting it. Hidden among a non-descript rocky outcrop is a hole a couple of feet wide leading into a large natural grotto, the sandy floor some 80' below (for a visual reference, search for images of "Majlis al Jinn").

A cursory examination of the area will find a stout wooden rod, somewhat wider than the hole, worn in the middle as if by rope rubbing against it. If the rod is wedged between the rocks, those wear marks are positioned over the centre of the hole, ready for someone to be lowered down to the floor. A closer examination would reveal that the rod has been ever so slightly sawn through and is far weaker than it appears. It will break under one of the character's weight - DM's choice as to which.

Directly underneath the hole is a large pit (the remains of an ancient well) covered in a tarpaulin with a thin layer of sand on top. The pegs holding the tarpaulin are strong enough to support the end of a coil of rope, but not much more than that.

The sand at the floor of the cave hides a pair of **Sand Serpents**, the desert's equivalent of the Water Weird [AC 4, HP 18, 12, HD 3+3, MV 12", XP 442, 418; Attacks as 6 HD monster (THAC0 13), on a successful attack target must save vs paralyzation or be dragged under the sand and start suffocating; Takes only 1 hp damage from sharp weapons, normal damage from blunt weapons; when it loses all its hit points it is only disrupted and reforms after 2 rounds, killed by *Purify Food*, dispelled by *Dispel*

Evil]. The serpents particularly target any characters who are either in the pit or near its edge (knocking them in); characters in the pit will then have a -2 penalty against their suffocating attacks as the sand pours down on top of them. The remains of several other victims are scattered through the sand on the cave floor; a thorough search, sifting through all of the sand, could turn up 3,500 gp worth of coin and gems (Alzayeen has an agreement with the serpents and allows them to keep this treasure as part of the deal).

The Narrow Passage

Leading out of the grotto is a narrow natural passage, almost a slot canyon, between 2-4' wide and 12' tall. At a bend in the passage, about 20' along, the sand on the floor has been mixed with a quantity of *Dust of Sneezing and Choking* (save vs poison or die, disabled with coughing and sneezing fit for 5-20 rounds regardless). Spread through so much sand, the dust is less effective (+4 to save, only affects a 5' radius), and probing ahead with a pole would stir up enough to cause some sneezing and give a little warning, but if enough of the sand is stirred up at once the dust acts at full strength.

Around the bend, a wooden pole stands from the floor to the roof, where it holds up one end of a hinged shelf filled with rocks. If the pole is dislodged and the rocks fall, they will cause 2d6 points of damage themselves and they will release the full cloud of dust. There is a second of the poles on the floor at the back of the first grotto.

The Great Door

The passage widens out again to 8', and a short flight of crude rock steps lead up to a great bronze and iron door with many symbols carved into it.

The third step up is false, made of lacquered skin from a "lurker above". It looks perfectly normal, but sounds a little odd when it's tapped; a successful check for traps on the steps from a thief would also indicate that there's something odd about it, but not what. The step can't support any weight, and underneath is a pair of bear-traps (1d8 points of damage, needs a successful "bend bars/lift gates" check to release them) and a pod of **4 large scorpions** (AC 5, MV 3", HD 2+2, HP 14, 11, 10, 9, XP 132, 123, 120, 117; Attacks 3 - 1d4 / 1d4 / 1+poison, save at +2 or die).

The door itself is neither trapped nor locked - a thief or dwarf can see that the door doesn't really belong on this wall at all. There are dials and controls for several locks along the edge, and the centre is covered in symbols from an ancient language; scholarly characters would recognise it as such, even if they can't read it. *Comprehend Languages* or *Read Magic* reveals the message "Name the greatest king and behold the majesty of Iskander Makedon" around a pictogram of a hand, an hourglass, and a tiny human figure; next to the pictogram is a dial and a small pencil-width hole. Placing a hand on the pictogram and saying "Iskander Makedon" causes the characters to shrink to a tiny size and appear at location A inside the lock. The hourglass indicates that the shrinking is temporary: typically it will last an hour, and it would be unwise to remain inside the lock when you expand again.

A particularly thorough examination of the door will spot the mark of the sage Akkimesdes - three shapes, a cone, a circle, and a cylinder (see the entry to Akkimesdes' Tomb).

The store room

Beyond the great door is an unassuming cavern some 15' across. There is a chair, a low bed, a table and stool, an unlit brazier and charcoal, a couple of barrels in the corner, a lamp, clay jar, and wineskins lie on the table, and a broad chest at the foot of the bed. At the back of the cave is a small cleft that leads to a water seep - a clay bowl collects fresh water from a spring that seeps through the rocks

The chest has only a simple lock on it and contains a couple of sets of clothes (some are disguises - a caravanner, a servant, a merchant) some simple tools and utensils, and a small bag of coins (250gp value, predominantly silver and copper with some gold). The barrels contain salted meat and some dried fruits, the wineskins have good wine, the clay jar has oil for the lamp.

On the wall behind the table a large rock conceals a cavity in which is a strongbox; it's roughly a foot cube and appears to be made of iron with bands of some other metal around the middle and a dial made of crystal on top. It is in fact a glass bell-jar with a *Permanent Illusion* on it. The outside of the jar is coated with *Tanzar's Ointment of Ape-like Gription*, which will instantly adhere to the touch. The jar is filled with ordure in which **6 Rot Grubs** crawl, an incautious movement will lift the jar off its base and release the grubs. This arid land variety of grub are quite capable of burrowing through the sand on the floor to seek flesh. The salted meat could be used as a lure.

The lamp and the oil are both perfectly normal, but the lamp's wick contains hallucinogens (there are ordinary wicks in the chest). After the lamp has burnt for a turn, make a secret saving throw vs poison for each character; anyone who fails sees shapes moving in the shadows. If the lamp is not extinguished they must make a second saving throw vs spells or their vision blurs to the point that they can't distinguish between other people and menacing shadow shapes. The hallucinations end 1 hour after the lamp is extinguished, they can be cured with *Neutralize Poison* or *Cure Blindness*.

The Lock

The lock is built out of brass with some details added in other metals. The lock mechanism consists of three interlocking cogs - one with 8 teeth, one with 7 teeth, and one with 3; the spaces between the teeth are large enough for a character to stand in and push the cog in either direction. Where the cogs meet, the teeth fit very closely so there isn't enough space for a character to fit; it would be possible for someone to be crushed by them. To keep track of how the cogs are oriented as the characters move through them, print the map twice, cut out the circles from one, and pin them to the other copy so they can rotate; remember that they will turn in *opposite* directions.

The spaces on the cogs are marked on the map by a letter - those letters are carved into the side of the respective space, in the same ancient script as on the door. While any character can see that they're the same script, only the character who was able to read the message on the door can translate them. The meaning of the letters is explained at location 8.

The mechanism has an upper and lower level, accessible only at certain points with ladders. The areas on the map marked in white are on the upper level, the lower level is in grey. The seven-toothed cog has a single tunnel leading across its lower level. The eight-toothed cog has a second set of teeth on the lower level. The lower and upper levels rotate at the same time, they aren't independent.

The lower level of the cogs has leaked some of its lubricant onto the floor - on the metal surface it acts like *Oil of Slipperiness*, making it almost impossible to keep your footing. Climbing the ladders with slick hands will likewise be difficult, but the oil can be wiped off with just a clean cloth.

1. The "hallway" leading to the keyhole is decorated by carvings showing a king leading armies in conquest, fighting great battles, and sitting on a throne with what appear to be other kings prostrating themselves before him.
2. The walls are carved with scenes of the king travelling through many countries. They show temples, cities, mountains, rivers, animals - some familiar to the characters, some not.
3. A ladder leads down to the lower level. When the cog is aligned correctly, the tunnel joins this to location 4. The floor here is covered in that slippery oil.
4. Another ladder leads back to the upper level
5. A short passage leads to a room with a large disk on the wall. The carvings on the walls show various places (cities, buildings), and on the wheel are four symbols: S M A P. The symbols represent four states and the wheel needs to be turned so the 'M' is at the top (representing 'Makedon' over all others).
6. Another short passage to a room with a disk on the wall. Here the wall carvings show four people, one clearly the king from the other carvings, the others appear to be an old statesman, a philosopher, and a defeated king. The disk has the symbols D A I P, it needs to be turned so 'I' is at the top (representing 'Iskander' over the others)
7. A ladder leads down to the lower level. There a character can use the gaps in the lower level of this cog to travel around to location 8 (the two cogs don't join on the lower level, so they can travel in either direction). Because of the slippery floor, it's likely that the cogs will have to be turned by someone on the upper level and a character down here just holds on and slides with the cogs movement.
8. A couple of steps up lead to a pair of doors, the lubricant ends at the stairs. The doors are locked unless the disk at location 5 is set to 'M', the disk at location 6 is set to 'I', and the two cogs are aligned so the symbols can be read as "ISKANDER*MAKEDON" (the 'I' on the top cog lines up with location 3, the 'D' on the other cog is at the 12 o'clock position, read from the 'I' in a figure-8 pattern using the 'D' twice).

Attempting to open the door without those settings will lock the cogs in place - they will not turn until the entire mechanism is reset from the outside, using the dial by the keyhole that the characters entered through. Turning that dial makes the cogs spin - characters in the cog spaces take 1d6 damage from being thrown about, and must make a save vs paralyzation to jump to safety rather than being crushed between the gears. The lock can't be picked from here, but a *find traps* roll will warn about this locking mechanism.

Inside this chamber is Alzayeen's "special collection". On the walls are several shelves with several small boxes and bags containing 4,500 gp worth of coins sorted into separate bags by origin (it helps disguises to use the correct currency), various gems and jewelry totaling 12,000 gp (a *Periapt of Foul Rotting* is mixed among them), a set of four *Figurines of Wondrous Power* (three Ivory Goats and a Marble African Elephant) in a box with a **poison needle** trap, and a set with 3 pots of *Nolzur's Marvelous Pigments* and a brush. There are tapestries on the walls and rugs and furs on the floor which could fetch a further 1,000 gp. In the centre is a simple rosewood divan lounge, it is clearly old, rather plain, and seems a little out of place; this was Iskander Makedon's lounge, it could be very valuable to a suitable buyer.

One wall has shelves with all manner of locks and a book filled with diagrams, notes, and information on how they work and how they may be picked. A thief who spends a month studying the notes and practicing with the collection of locks will gain 4,000 XP and be able to pick locks as if they were 2 levels higher; assassins can gain 2,000 XP by spending a week studying the notes, but don't gain the extra skill with locks.

On the floor, obscured by the rugs, are a set of magical symbols (see handout). By touching the cone on the first row, the circle on the third row, and the cylinder in the bottom right corner, a section of the floor disappears revealing an entrance to the final room. (Those symbols can be found among the great door's carving, they are Akkimedes's "maker's mark")

Akkimedes' Tomb

There is a 10' drop to the room below, which is a simple 10' x 20' rectangle. At the other end of the room there is a sealed tomb; the tomb is carved with a cylinder containing a sphere and a cylinder - the mark of Akkimedes. In the far corner a skeleton in tattered rags is slouched on a stool.

The skeleton was a disciple of Akkimedes who took the dead sage's body to its tomb and then sat in the corner to accept his fate and watch over him. His devotion has transformed his spirit into something akin to a wraith [AC 4, MV 12", HD 5+3, HP 24; Attacks 1 / 1d6 damage and level drain; only silver or magic weapons can damage it], but it is Lawful Neutral and not Evil. His incorporeal spirit is not attached to his skeleton, which stays on the stool, and will not attack unless the tomb is interfered with. He will try to attack with surprise.

The tomb contains the remains of Akkimedes and at his feet is a cedar box. Inside the box is the only copy of the *Palimpsest of Akkimedes* - a collection of his thoughts, theories and discoveries that acts like a *Tome of Clear Thought*, but is written in that ancient language. It also contains a set of scales, the *Reckoner of Akkimedes*- this device can count a large number of objects by simply weighing them, or can tell the amount of gold or other precious metals in an object.