

? Session 25 – The Serpent Gate and the Sandbound Dead

📁 Music

[PLACEHOLDER — session music thumbnail / audio / lyrics inserted after recap approval]

📁 Images

[PLACEHOLDER — Ziggurat]

[PLACEHOLDER — Multi-Headed Serpent Guardian]

[PLACEHOLDER — Temple Guardian / Yuan-ti]

[PLACEHOLDER — Mummy Lord]

? Campaign Arc

- **Campaign:** Spelljammer
- **Session:** 25 – **The Serpent Gate and the Sandbound Dead**
- **Date:** 26 September 2026
- **Dungeon Master:** James / Jamie / Sicareus
- **Setting:** Cathrys’ decaying forest → serpent-guarded ziggurat → blood-fed portal chamber → sand-choked temple on a deeper layer of Carceri
- **Next Session:** 10 October 2026

? Previously On...

Session 24 left the party deep within **Cathrys**, still pursuing the Illithid expedition under Primus’ increasingly troubling command to reach the imprisoned “Resident” — **Tharizdun**. Their first major fight on the layer had cost High Jinks her pseudodragon **R** and destroyed Dino’s **Steel Defender**. Of the two Farastu Demodands drawn into the battle, one vanished invisibly into Cathrys and the other was banished elsewhere on the same plane.

Despite mounting doubts about what releasing Tharizdun might actually mean, the supernatural compulsion remained. The Illithids were still somewhere ahead, another expedition was also believed to be moving toward the same objective, and the party had little choice but to continue deeper.

? Overview

Following the route through Cathrys, the party pushed through the same silent, sweet-smelling forest until almost everyone was seized by another supernatural vision. A great stone ziggurat appeared before them in their minds: Illithids climbing its stairs, numerous serpent-like guardians standing aside, and the same unsettling music once heard in Arborea. Rigg alone did not receive the vision, but the others felt the familiar pull drawing them toward the structure. When they finally reached it, careful scouting and Dino’s use of **Detect Thoughts** revealed that roughly twenty Illithids had already passed through. The temple guardians had not willingly admitted them — something had rendered them unable to intervene.

Rather than fight the enormous multi-headed serpent guarding the upper entrance, the party talked their way through. Evidence of their history as Illithid hunters helped, although passage came at a price: previously recovered Alhoon trophies and crystals were left with the guardian. Inside, the group found two Alhoons defending a portal chamber. A coordinated ambush killed one, while the second escaped with only a handful of hit points remaining, vanishing to an unknown plane after warning that the conflict was not over. The party recovered another Alhoon crystal, studied the portal and learned that it opened into a sand-covered counterpart of the temple. After a full rest, fresh familiars and some questionable firearms instruction, they went through.

The transition proved one-way. Behind them the portal was gone; ahead lay the same serpent-marked architecture half-buried in drifting sand, with a storm howling outside. An approaching temple figure forced the party into hiding, but failed stealth from the heavily armoured members gave them away and the chamber erupted into an undead ambush. A **Mummy Lord and three Mummies** rose against them. Dino hit the Mummy Lord with an enormous opening assault before its **Dreadful Glare** repeatedly left him paralyzed and later badly wounded. Leydrick turned several of the lesser undead, Valen detonated another carefully sculpted Fireball, Rigg hammered at the lord at close range, and High Jinks answered a brutal strike with a devastating Hellish Rebuke. The session ended with the battle still unresolved.

????? Party Members

Character	Player	Class/Subclass	Race	Notable Actions
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Garrick “Rigg” Dalhart 	Moose / Ben / Elemunk	Rogue (Swashbuckler)	Human	Scouted ahead through the forest and around the temple; remained openly uneasy about the compulsion; helped negotiate passage with the serpent guardian; produced four gallons of beer from the Alchemy Jug as an improvised offering; landed heavy Sneak Attack and Fire Strike damage; continued pistol training with Dino during the rest.
Leydrick Gefinhal 	Jared / Galindis	Cleric (Life Domain)	Dwarf	Supported the Alhoon ambush with the Dwarven Thrower and healing; later used Turn Undead and Sear Undead to disable and burn several Mummies; maintained Shield of Faith while the Mummy Lord's negative energy interfered with the party's ability to heal.
High Jinks 	Kate / Keitachan	Warlock (Great Old One)	Tabaxi	Used her enhanced sight, stealth and disguise magic during the approach to the temple; helped manage the confrontation with the serpent guardian; maintained Eldritch Blast pressure in both battles; summoned a Sprite familiar named Tick Tock ; used Luck defensively and retaliated against a Mummy with a 5th-level Hellish Rebuke for 38 fire damage.

Dynoth “Dino Roar” Rokos 	Robb / Baconbuff	Artificer (Battle Smith) / Fighter	Githyanki	Used Detect Thoughts to establish that a large Illithid group had already entered the ziggurat; confronted the serpent guardian directly; delivered a brutal Action Surge assault during the Alhoon fight; entered the Mummy Lord battle with Misty Step, repeated Moon-Touched Sword attacks and Psionic Strike; was repeatedly caught by Dreadful Glare and suffered a massive burst of damage without being dropped.
Valen Pyre 	Justin / Slitzer	Wizard (Evoker)	Human	Supported the stealth approach with Invisibility; opened the Alhoon ambush with Fireball; used his portal-viewing spectacles to inspect the destination ahead; recovered another Alhoon crystal; protected the resting chamber with Alarm and summoned a weasel familiar; later used a 5th-level sculpted Fireball and sent the weasel to deliver Protection from Evil and Good to Dino.

? Key Locations

- **Cathrys’ Decaying Forest:** The same silent, swampy wilderness entered in Session 24. The party’s next compelled vision occurred here and directed them toward the ziggurat.
- **The Serpent Ziggurat:** A large stone temple surrounded by snake-like guardians. Roughly twenty Illithids had already forced their way through before the party arrived.

- **The Upper Serpent Gate:** Guarded by an enormous multi-headed serpent capable of speaking Common and detecting concealed intruders. The party negotiated passage rather than fighting it.
 - **The Blood-Portal Chamber:** A lower temple room occupied by two Alhoons. Its active portal led onward through Carceri and hovered above a blood-filled basin.
 - **The Sand-Choked Temple:** A near-copy of the previous temple buried in blown sand. The arrival portal did not remain behind the party, and a violent sandstorm could be heard outside.
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? Session Highlights

- The party continued through Cathrys despite growing discomfort with the compulsion surrounding the Resident.
- Everyone except Rigg received a vision of Illithids entering a distant ziggurat while the music previously heard in Arborea played again.
- Rigg scouted ahead and confirmed several serpent-like guardians around the structure.
- Dino used Detect Thoughts and an Illithid trophy to establish that roughly twenty Illithids had recently entered and that the guardians had somehow been prevented from stopping them.
- The party avoided a potentially disastrous fight with the giant serpent guardian by proving they were pursuing the Illithids.
- The guardian required the group to leave their existing Alhoon trophies and crystals behind before entering.
- Rigg produced four gallons of beer from the Alchemy Jug for the serpent, which regarded the unfamiliar drink suspiciously before trying it.
- The party surprised two Alhoons guarding the lower portal chamber.
- One Alhoon was killed; the second escaped by planar travel with single-digit hit points and warned that the confrontation was not over.
- Another Alhoon crystal was recovered from the slain creature.
- Valen's portal spectacles revealed that the next destination was another temple covered in sand.
- The group chose to complete a long rest before proceeding.
- Valen warded the area with Alarm and summoned a weasel familiar.
- High Jinks summoned a Sprite familiar and named her **Tick Tock**.
- Rigg used the downtime for further pistol training with Dino.
- The next portal proved one-way, depositing the party inside a sand-filled counterpart of the serpent temple.
- Rigg heard a sandstorm raging outside while scouting the stairs.
- An approaching temple figure discovered the group after several members failed their attempts to remain hidden.
- A Mummy Lord and three Mummies engaged the party.
- Dino opened aggressively with Misty Step, Action Surge, repeated Moon-Touched Sword attacks and Psionic Strike.

- The Mummy Lord repeatedly used Dreadful Glare against Dino, leaving him paralyzed more than once.
- Leydrick used Turn Undead and Sear Undead, leaving several Mummies frightened, incapacitated and radiantly burned.
- Valen used a 5th-level Fireball with Sculpt Spells to attack the undead without burning nearby allies.
- High Jinks retaliated against an undead attacker with a 38-damage Hellish Rebuke.
- Dino suffered a devastating burst of damage but remained conscious.
- The Mummy Lord used Channel Negative Energy, temporarily preventing nearby creatures from regaining hit points.
- High Jinks reinforced herself with Armor of Agathys.
- Valen used his weasel familiar to deliver Protection from Evil and Good to Dino before Misty Stepping away.
- The session ended before the undead encounter was resolved.

✕ Encounter Resolution

Creature / Companion	Final Status	Notes
Multi-Headed Serpent Guardian	Alive / Non-hostile	Allowed the party to pass after they surrendered Illithid trophies and crystals. Rigg also supplied it with beer from the Alchemy Jug.
Alhoon #1	Dead	Killed during the surprise attack in the portal chamber. Dino removed its head and another Alhoon crystal was recovered.
Alhoon #2	Escaped	Plane-shifted away while reduced to single-digit hit points. Its destination was not established.
Mummy Lord	Alive	Still engaged with the party when the session ended.
Three Mummies	Encounter Ongoing	Several were affected by Leydrick's Turn Undead and became frightened and incapacitated. The fight was not completed before play stopped.
Steel Defender	Active	Present again by the final encounter and assisting Dino. It attempted to engage one of the Mummies and could impose disadvantage on attacks against nearby allies.
Tick Tock	Active	High Jinks' newly summoned Sprite familiar. Used its shortbow against the undead before retreating under invisibility.

Creature / Companion	Final Status	Notes
Valen's Weasel Familiar	Active	Summoned during the long rest and later used to deliver Protection from Evil and Good to Dino at range.

? Key Scenes

The Guardian's Price

Rigg stood before the immense multi-headed serpent after the party managed to turn a possible battle into a negotiation. Their Illithid trophies were enough to establish what they were hunting, but the guardian demanded those trophies remain behind if they wished to enter. Before moving on, Rigg produced several gallons of beer from the Alchemy Jug and poured it out as an additional offering. The creature regarded the unfamiliar liquid suspiciously before finally trying it.

Dino Breaks the Alhoon Line

Dino closed on one of the two Alhoons inside the portal chamber and committed heavily to the attack. Moon-Touched steel, additional attacks and psionic force tore into the defender while the rest of the ambush unfolded around them. One Alhoon died in the chamber; the second later escaped by shifting onto another plane.

Under the Mummy Lord's Gaze

Dino's opening charge against the Mummy Lord hit hard, but the creature answered with something more dangerous than raw damage. Its Dreadful Glare caught him repeatedly, locking the Githyanki in place while the undead pressed around him. Even after suffering an enormous burst of damage he remained standing, but the repeated paralysis turned the centre of the fight into a race to keep him alive long enough to act again.

The Weasel Delivery

With Dino badly wounded and the Mummy Lord still controlling the battlefield, Valen used his newly summoned familiar to deliver protective magic from a safer distance. The weasel carried Protection from Evil and Good into touch range while Valen stayed farther back. Once the spell had been delivered, Valen used Misty Step to reposition as the unfinished battle continued around them.

? Ongoing Threads & Plot Hooks

- **Primus' Command / The Resident:** The party remains compelled toward the imprisoned Tharizdun despite increasingly open doubts about whether releasing him is remotely sensible.
 - **The Illithid Expedition:** Roughly twenty Illithids passed through the serpent temple ahead of the party. One Alhoon was killed here and another escaped, leaving most of the expedition still somewhere further along the route.
 - **Escaped Alhoon:** One portal-room defender escaped onto an unidentified plane after warning that the conflict was not over.
 - **The Rival Expedition:** Another group is also believed to be moving toward the same ultimate objective.
 - **Carceri's Deeper Layers:** The party has moved onward from Cathrys into a sand-dominated realm through a portal that appears to function only one way.
 - **Alhoon Crystals:** Several unusual crystals associated with the Alhoons have now been recovered. Their actual purpose remains unconfirmed. Existing examples were left with the serpent guardian, while another was recovered from the newly slain Alhoon.
 - **Cathrys Survivors:** One Farastu Demodand fled invisibly during Session 24 and another was banished elsewhere on Cathrys. Neither was confirmed dead.
 - **The Sand Temple:** The party has not yet explored beyond the immediate temple chamber, and a major sandstorm is active outside.
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? Loot & Discoveries

Item / Discovery	Finder	Description / Status
Alhoon Crystal	Valen / Party	Recovered from the slain Alhoon after the portal-room fight. Similar crystals have been found previously, but their function remains unconfirmed.
Illithid Expedition Intelligence	Dino / Party	Detect Thoughts, the temple guards and the serpent guardian established that roughly twenty Illithids had already passed into the temple before the party arrived.
Route to the Sand Realm	Party	Valen's portal spectacles and the party's reference book established that the active portal opened into a sand-dominated region deeper along their route through Carceri.

Item / Discovery	Finder	Description / Status
Existing Alhoon Trophies / Crystals	Party	Left behind with the serpent guardian as the price of passage into the temple. Their eventual recovery was not guaranteed, especially after the guardian warned that travel through the temple was generally one-way.

No new coin or additional confirmed magic items were recovered during the session.

? Cliffhanger

- The party is inside the sand-choked temple with no visible return portal.
- The **Mummy Lord remains alive** and the undead encounter is still in progress.
- Dino has been repeatedly paralyzed by Dreadful Glare and has taken severe damage, although he remains alive.
- Several lesser Mummies remain on the battlefield, with some temporarily controlled by Leydrick’s Turn Undead.
- The Mummy Lord has already demonstrated effects that interfere with spellcasting and temporarily prevent healing.
- Most of the Illithid expedition remains somewhere further ahead.
- One badly wounded Alhoon has escaped to an unknown plane and may return.
- Outside the temple, a powerful sandstorm continues to rage.