

# Prince Emsah's Guard

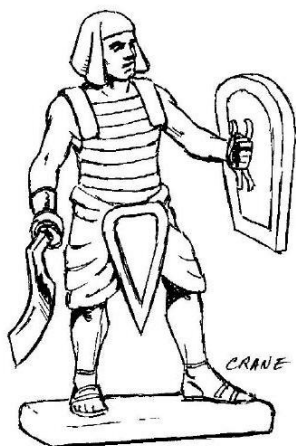
(Or, What Happens in the Tombs, Stays in the Tombs)

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## Introduction

Ever go to the family reunion, where there's lots of bored little kids? Wish you had something catchy that might encourage some of them to get into wargaming? Don't want to appear too much of an Ogre in front of the Politically Correct (PC) parents? Here's a progressive series of related wargames that you can sit down and start to play Solo this afternoon. We are going to start off with the "beginner" Level I game (which is actually quite a lot of fun) aimed at your teenage kids and relatives, and then progress to more complicated true "wargames" versions. Three decks of cards, some coins, and we are good to go.



## The Story Line

Ahmen-tep (that's us) got up with the full moon, with dark thoughts weighing heavy in his heart. He desperately needed the money, and was willing to risk almost anything to get it. Ahmen-tep had made up his mind to gamble on trying to sneak into Prince Emsah's tomb, to find a piece of the fabled Prince's fortune. Ahmen-tep had determined that he was going to become a moderately successful tomb robber.

His uncle Hamid had worked around Prince Emsah's tomb, and had let slip a tantalizing clue, and with it, Ahmen-tep felt sure he could find the back door that the workmen had used to seal the tomb. See, a number of the tombs had a very narrow vertical slit, where only skinny young men could squeeze their way out from the depths. Many thought this was only an air shaft, too narrow for a human to pass. Or possibly just a sight-line, so that a star in the heavens could shine down the shaft for alignment purposes. It was really tight going for a skinny young man, and not for the faint of heart! To get back in, you had to go head-first down the hole, control your breathing, and above all, don't panic! All that Ahmen-tep wanted was a small gold pot, one that surely wouldn't be missed by the Prince. Ahmen-tep's need was great, and the Prince wouldn't begrudge him such a tiny sliver of his enormously wealthy votive offerings, would he?

Alas, Ahmen-tep wasn't to know that his greedy second cousin, Ya-I-kant was also intent on visiting Prince Emsah's tomb that night, and Ya-I-kant had no such scruples about taking everything that he could lug along with him, through the inky galleries that separate this world from the next. Let the figures on the walls frown down on him! Ya-I-kant didn't care, and had no scruples about such things. On the night of the full moon, they each flitted over to their separate rabbit holes, and rubbed their bodies with olive oil to make themselves slippery to pass through the narrow entrance ways, and like snakes, they shouldered their way through the gaps in the stones, well-hidden behind the brush, and then dropped into the stygian deeps.

## Setting up the Game

This is a quick game to learn, and to set up and play, and Stage I requires only the bare minimum of equipment (although it looks a lot nicer with the proper figures and some painted walls). For the basic game you need 10 pennies (the treasure), a quarter (Prince Emsah's sarcophagus), and two nickels (preferably one nice bright one --- that's us; and one dark, dingy, scarred and wicked looking one --- you

guessed it, that's Ya-I-kant). Other than that, you need two decks of cards (with both the jokers included), with different-colored backs (like one Red deck, and one Blue deck. You may want to have an extra Blue deck, so we don't have to recycle the walls of Prince Emsah's Tomb). That's it; we're ready to set up the game.

### Corridors, the Doors and the Tomb

We can play this game on a good-sized coffee table, but we are probably better off on a sturdy kitchen table or a card table, as long as it can still rattle and shake (more on this later!). We start by placing the Quarter in the middle of the playing area, surrounded by 10 "treasure" pennies, sort of like this:

top

```

  ┌───┐
  │ I I │
  │ I * I │ Tomb
  │ I I │
  └───┘
  
```

The \* is the quarter, with the 10 treasure pennies around it (not shown)

tomb door

Then we use the Blue deck (preferably two Blue decks shuffled together, but one will do in a pinch) to build the walls. We start by making the square, about 4" by 8" inch inside dimensions. This is the Tomb. Place 3 Blue cards on each long side (all the cards are face down), one Blue at the top closing off the "box", and one at the side closest to us (representing the sealed tomb door through which we get into the tomb. All the cards are lengthwise, around the Tomb, making it look like a large square oblong.

Next, we construct two galleries that lead off from the tomb (sort of in the shape of an upside down "Y" leading away from the Tomb). Again, we have 4 blue cards (face down) in two rows about 4 inches apart, making up each of the galleries, with one card set across these as the inner door and one set across these as the outer door, at each end of the gallery. So any one of the galleries looks like this:

Inner door

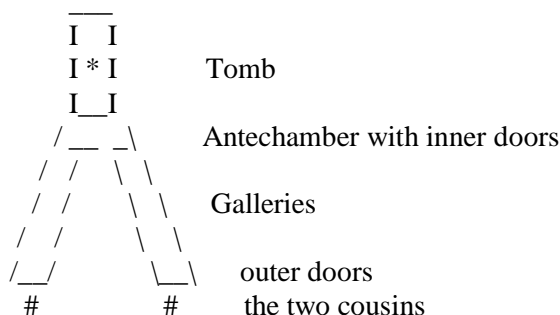
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  ┌───┐
  │ I I │
  │ I I │ Gallery (typical)
  │ I I │
  └───┘
  
```

# The # mark is for one of the tomb robbers

Outer door

To start, ONE of the two nickels (marked # representing ONE of the two cousins) is set at the bottom of each of the longer legs of the Y. So now the whole tomb-and-galleries assembly should look sort of like this:



And there we have it, we're ready to start the adventure --- and believe me, it's the adventure of a lifetime (and maybe of the Here After, too!).

### **Movement**

The Red deck of cards (which we use as the Movement deck) is shuffled, cut, and then the cards are turned over one at a time, to show who gets to move next. Oh! You noticed there are no rulers, right? Not to worry. The Egyptians used one measure called a "cubit", and another that was the Pharaoh's hand-span, and we are going to use that, the width across 4 fingers (held tight together) per move. Simple, Nah? To resume our play-by-play . . .

### **Red Card Red Deck**

Any red card from the Red deck, and we move our bright nickel-token for the God's Fool, the one named Ahmen-tep. Because he carries no grave goods, he wiggles across the outer door, and then moves freely up into the leg of the Y, between the Blue cards marking the walls of the Gallery. The light from his candle flickers and twists, and Ahmen-tep stands in awe, looking at all the painted figures, that point the way towards Prince Emsah's tomb. The flickering makes them seem only asleep, and ready to come back to life at the slightest noise. They even seem to move, out of the corner of his eye. Luck is with our young fool, and he pulls several Red cards in a row, and wiggles his way up along the gallery and out of the leg of the Y, to stand in the antechamber before the door outside of Prince Emsah's burial chamber. Ah, but then . . .

### **Black Card Pulled from the Red Movement Deck**

Ya-I-kant moves like a river eel, with the crocodile underworld-god Ammut hot on his tail! He greases his way through the gallery that is his leg of the Y, and two more cards carry him up the gallery to stop just at the top of the gallery before the inner door. What wealth will he see on the other side? His mind leaps with visions of the benefits of his ill-intended gain. No ghost stories will deter him from grabbing everything he can lay his hands on! But wait, from the Red movement deck, Ya-I-kant turns over an ominous Joker. He stands shivering in fear! But nothing happens with this Joker (it never does, on the way in. Course, when anyone is on the way out it's a different matter entirely. dum Dum dum Dum dum Dum . . .).

### **God's Fool Stands in Awe**

Ahmen-tep gets the next movement card, and places his 4 fingers against his Bright Nickel, and then he moves his nickel over the face-down Blue door of the tomb, across to the other side of the Tomb's door, which brings him into the Inner Sanctum. What amazing wonders! What indescribable wealth! His poor candle taper is reflected in hundreds of little suns, each leaping back from all that gilded treasure that surrounds Prince Emsah's sarcophagus. Gold, Jewels, Model Soldiers on their own movement stands! What to take first? Another red card from the Red deck, and within 4 fingers reach, he picks up a fabulous stand of eight exquisite toy soldiers, richly decorated with gold. Bliss!

(GroooOOoannnnnnnnnn... And the table rumbles and shakes ... but not too much to mess up the cards)

And from the depths of the earth, there is a terrible rumbling, like the earth tearing itself apart, and Ahmen-tep is seized with a mortifying dread, so that he nearly drops his Golden treasure, he is that scared! What is it, that horrible sound?! That must be the very displeasure of Ammut, the God with the head of a Crocodile! His legs are like Jello, and he can't stop shaking, but he KNOWS he must be brave!

## The Trap Sets

For each treasure-penny that is picked up (and either player can move up to 4 fingers and pick up one penny on any move) a Blue card is added (face down) to the walls along EACH leg of the galleries of the long legs of the Y. The trap has been triggered, and the extra cards represent the walls starting to close, and squeeze in towards the center of the corridors, to capture the grave robbers before they can leave Prince Emsah's Tomb. Start by placing the extra Blue cards (still face-down) evenly along the outer walls of the Galleries (so that every stone is formed of two cards, not one). The cards aren't turned up, until one of the scoundrels re-enters the galleries on the way out (sort of like a parting surprise from Prince Emsah).

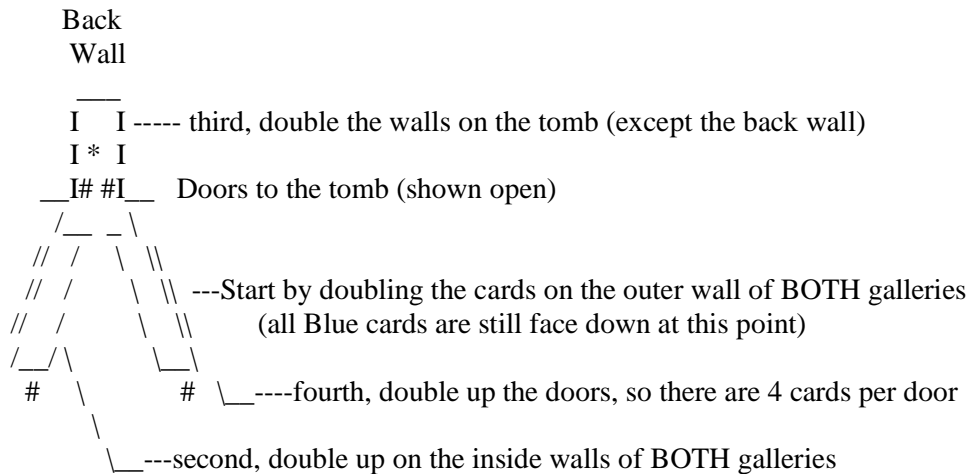
## Ya-I-kant Decides to Share

Back to the other knave, and two more black cards turn up from the Red movement deck, so our greedy cousin Ya-I-kant slithers into the inner sanctum. He yells at Ahmen-tep to "Get out! This is HIS treasure!" But Ahmen-tep is too terrified to understand what he's saying. Ya-I-kant pulls another black movement card from the Red deck, and scoops up another piece of gold, and that terrible rumble comes again (two more cards from the Blue deck get added face down, one along each of the walls of the Y galleries; one set for every penny picked up).

After all the walls of the gallery walls have at least 2 cards (on both sides), then extra cards get added to the walls of the tomb (except for the back wall). Fourth, we add extra cards to the outer doors of each of the galleries (4 cards total) and then to the inner doors of each gallery.

Once any of the grave robbers tries to escape and enters either of the galleries, then all the cards on THAT gallery are turned face up, to show the trap closing. Any new cards are played ahead of the tomb robber, to try and close the gallery before he gets a chance to escape.

So now the map of the whole of the tomb should look something like this:



## God's Fool Bolts

Ahmen-tep picks up only 4 small objects, and then his nerve completely breaks! The grumbling and moaning of the earth becomes too much, and he bolts for the gallery. And now the awful truth starts to show itself. As Ahmen-tep steps into the gallery, the walls of the gallery are starting to close in on Ahmen-tep from each side! As soon as he passes over the inner door and into the gallery itself, the Blue cards of the walls and doors ahead of him are all turned upright, exposing their terrible secret!

The walls of the trap are rumbling closed, the sand that kept them apart is dribbling away, second by second, sealing them in!

### How the Walls Operate

Each side of the Gallery walls at this point should have two Blue cards per position. When we turn them up and have one Face Card (J, Q, K, or A) on a wall, and that wall has crept forward and shut ¼ of the gallery. 2 face cards on one side, and that half of the gallery has reached the middle. It takes a total of 4 face cards (two on each side) to completely close the gallery. Once the gallery is reduced to ¼ width (a total of 3 face cards on that section) then the thief cannot take more than 4 penny-treasures with him. Discarding any number of penny-treasures costs nothing, but we can only pick them up, one treasure per turn. Anything else is left behind. Every time ANY treasure is moved, then another card is added along the walls between the thief and the exit (ignoring sections he has already moved through), at the worst possible place (that is, the place that already has 3 face cards). It doesn't matter if the walls have more than 2 cards per side at this point --- Prince Emsah wants his treasure BACK! A Blue-deck Joker is the equivalent of 2 face cards. So that means a Blue joker on one side, with two face cards on the other side, has trapped our poor God's Fool. He has to try and go back and negotiate his way through the other gallery on the opposite long leg of the Y. Here's what the moving walls on the gallery look like:

—	—		The doors are shown open, because no “new” joker has turned up
3,8	II #	II 2,7	otherwise the landslide behind might close them down
K,5	II	II 4,9	The opposite wall moved in ¼ with the King
6,10	II	II Q,A	This side moved half way, with 2 face cards (next Blue card goes on the 6)
4,7	II	II Joker, 1	This side moved half way, because of that Joker
2,5	II	II 3,5	
5, 9	—	— 6, 3	The doors are still unmoved

For Level I play, we don't take into account the diagonal space between adjacent sections of wall (so the space between the K, 5 wall and the Q, A wall is still considered to be half a corridor wide).

If a Joker is pulled from the Red (movement) deck, then the player loses his turn, and there is a partial cave-in behind him, between him and the Tomb. If TWO players are in the same leg of the gallery, then that cave-in happens such that BOTH players cannot go back into the triangle formed outside of the tomb. Cave-ins always block Ya-I-kant from escaping from the far leg, then block Ya-I-kant from going back, so that the two miserable thieves are forced along the remaining gallery.

### Ya-I-kant Gets Greedy

Ahmen-tep should never attempt to steal too much. Ya-I-kant on the other hand, will go after ALL the pennies in the tomb, then go after Prince Emsah's sarcophagus as well. As soon as the Sarcophagus is picked up, the walls of the tomb are also triggered (so they are turned face-up, and the walls start to constrict). You can always count on Ya-I-kant to try and pocket more than his fair share. But will he get away with it? Or will they both share eternity with Prince Emsah?

### The Thrilling Denouement

Ya-I-kant appears through the door of the tomb, lugging the booty towards his gallery. Every move with Prince Emsah's sarcophagus causes one more Blue card to be played on each leg of the Y for the two galleries. And that card is played ahead of Amen-tep, trying to block them BOTH from leaving the tomb. Ya-I-kant gets half way down “his” gallery, and the walls collapse until there is only ¼ of the width free! Dropping the Sarcophagus in order to make it through the narrows, Ya-I-kant races for the exit with his remaining booty, but the Gods do not smile kindly on our greedy friend. The outer doors slam shut, before he can make it down and out of the gallery.

Undaunted, Ya-I-kant spins around and turns back, squeezing through the narrow section, and once again he picks up the sarcophagus, and then he heads toward the other gallery! But will he make it in time? The walls are groaning almost continually now.

Ya-I-kant enters the top of the other gallery, and spots the flicker from Ahmen-tep's candle, close to the other far exit. Each time Ya-I-kant moves, taking the sarcophagus causes another Blue-deck card to be played in front of Ahmen-tep, as the tomb tries to capture both young thieves. Oh no! The Red movement deck produces a Joker (remember they are both on their way out, now), and the rumble behind Ya-I-kant serves notice that there can be no turning back! There is a cave-in where the inner door of the gallery once stood! Meanwhile, Ahmen-tep has his own troubles, as the outer doors grind inexorably closed. One Red face card, two Red face cards, nothing to do but hold our breath and run. And at the worst possible moment, it's Ya-I-kant's move and he pulls a Joker from the Blue deck! And in response, with a terrible noise, the door grinds closed on God's Fool, Ahmen-tep! Wait! Is this the end!?

At the last minute, the stones on the exit door hit the penny-treasures that Ahmen-tep is carrying, and they jam the doors, just for a second, and with one last supreme effort, Ahmen-tep wriggles free, but all of the treasure is left behind, and slowly the massive stones grind shut, sealing the tomb for eternity! Ya-I-kant cannot believe what he is seeing. He screams as a solid wall trundles down to seal exit door! And because of the cave-in, there will be no way back to the tomb. He sits there, stunned, as the candle flickers out and everything goes black! Prince Emsah hasn't let go of his things, and has drawn two more fellow travelers into his bosom. The trap has been well and truly sprung!

Ahmen-tep runs and tells his uncle, but the next morning, all that the uncle Ahmed can find of Yah-I-kant, is one right-foot sandal, found discarded outside the tomb's secret entrance, where Yah-I-kant dropped into the dark, to share Eternity with the Prince.

### **Designer Notes**

The first level is the PC (politically correct) version of the game, suitable for your grand kids or nephews and nieces. You can work up your own variation. Nothing prevents you from having several galleries, one for each kid that wants to participate.

The Y-shaped galleries and tomb could be "preconstructed" with 2 levels of cards, but we found that adding the cards as we go along gets more squeal-per-kid factor. You can buy suitable Egyptian 1/72 plastic figures and mount them on the pennies (although I find the non-wargaming parents are more forgiving of simple coins). We could make up walls, painted in the Egyptian style, for more gloom-and-doom effect.

This is sort of a Treasure-accumulation/Race game, with a bit of Skirmish Wargaming thrown in. The moving walls add a touch of Chance-cards to the mix. Get too greedy, and you get to stick around!

### **Recap of the Rules**

The Tomb itself is shaped from single cards, placed face-down like this:

top

—  
I I

I \* I Tomb (with the sarcophagus-Quarter marked \*)

I I

tomb

door

The orientation of the cards is shown, and the asterisk represents the sarcophagus. The pennies aren't shown, but they would surround the sarcophagus.

Each of the galleries is similarly shaped, but a bit longer, like this:

Inner door

—  
I I  
I I  
I I  
I I

Gallery (typical)

# # represents the starting position for one of the tomb robbers

outer  
door

And in the simplest form (the solo game) the three elements form a Y with a triangle where they join. Nothing prevents you from building more galleries, or having more than one thief per gallery, if you get inundated with kids.

### Going Into the Center of the Tomb

When we are going INTO the tomb, all we do is move. Ahmen-tep (that's us) moves on any red card pulled from the Red (movement) deck, except a Joker (where he misses that turn). Ya-I-kant (the greedy guts) moves on any black card pulled from the Red (movement) deck. It's assumed that anyone can wriggle through cracks in the face-down cards that represent the doors.

Movement is 4 fingers --- place your 4 fingers next to the coin, and move the coin to the opposite side of the 4 fingers. Size of fingers isn't really important, although the smaller the fingers, the bigger the squeals.

You can move 4 fingers, and pick up ONE penny (treasure) along the way. Any direction. Even go forward 2 fingers, pick up the treasure, and go back 2 fingers. Keep it simple. Don't spread your fingers.

### Adding to the Walls

Each time a treasure is disturbed, or a treasure is moved, or the sarcophagus is moved, then ONE card from the Blue deck is added to EACH of the galleries, spread evenly along one wall of the gallery, then the other wall, until there are TWO cards on each spot on the walls, then the doors are also doubled up, until there are 4 cards for every door as well. Once there are TWO cards on every spot on the Galleries, then extra cards would get placed on the Tomb walls, starting with the parts nearest the Tomb door. The idea is to place the cards wherever they will trap a thief, so he can't escape the tomb.

### Jokers pulled from the Red (Movement) Deck

A Joker pulled from the Red (movement) Deck on the way in, just acts like a blank and causes the player to stall for that turn. Ah, but on the way out, things are different. When ANYONE is on the way out, then that same joker from the Red movement deck causes a partial cave-in. This is usually placed before Ya-I-kant if he is trying to escape down HIS gallery, or otherwise BEHIND, so that neither thief can retreat. Even if the joker is pulled by Ahmen-tep, the cave-in occurs beyond Ya-I-kant, so that both players have to struggle to get out along the same path.

## Extra Rules for Little Squealers

Little girls get 4 fingers and a thumb of movement, 'cause they wriggle better. Big Boys (over 21) use only 3 fingers once they have any treasure, 'cause they always try and steal heavier stuff, and can't wriggle worth squat. Girls never get caught inside the tomb --- let them roll a 6-sided die ("Be careful!"), and whatever they rolled, they found a hole on the way out to the surface. The rest will have to get dug-out tomorrow, and then serve extra-super-secret detention, cleaning off all the dust on the pictures that line the walls. Nobody really gets left behind forever in the PC Level I version.

## The Level Two Game

Now the fun for "real" wargamers starts. No more PG13 labels. We need to add some 6-sided dice, and whenever we need to throw a dice, we ask for 1D6. First, we are going to expand the number of players on each side. So "our" good-guy leader gets 1D6 knifemen, and 1D6 treasure-porters, plus our leader figure. And our leader figure (as well as the leader of the knifemen and the lead porter) get chosen by 1D6 from the following list of people (re-roll any duplicates)

:

- 1 = Ahmen-tep (notice this list all have names near the beginning of our alphabet)
- 2 = Buhr-Depp (ask the little squealers to explain where they got their names from)
- 3 = Cup-Chick
- 4 = Dig-fuzz
- 5 = Empty-toe
- 6 = Foam-stick

The opposing force has (1 + 1D6) knifemen, and (1 + 1D6) treasure-porters, and the leader figure gets chosen from the following list of people:

- 1 = Ya-I-kant
- 2 = Wadi-Wallah
- 3 = Timid-shah
- 4 = Vacu-pahk (What? You think I'd make that up??)
- 5 = Urp-Tray
- 6 = Semi-Ramis

In the Level 2 game, it takes at least 4 porters to carry the Prince's Sarcophagus. If there aren't enough porters, then the knife-men help. If there still aren't 4 porters-plus-knife-men, then (and only then) our greedy Ya-I-kant will get his hands dirty and help.

## Hand-to-hand

The knife-men are the only ones who fight hand-to-hand. The two principals are too busy stuffing their pockets and running for their life, and the porters will go wherever the knifemen direct them. The knife-men do battle to the bitter end, before they go and "tag" other porters to follow them, then they try and follow their leader's footsteps out. Keep it simple; one combat per "touching" intersection, per turn, and the high 1D6 dice wins.

## Level Three?

Oh, that's where we have 1d6 of guards that get woken up in the night because of all that groaning coming from the tomb. They get split up (by dice roll) over the two-or-more gallery entrances, and they try and tackle the knife-men as the tomb robbers try to escape. (For added zest, don't roll for their location until the tomb robber's pop their head out of the entrance).



Now in Level 3 we can't simply abandon the knife-men to their fate (as we might have done in Level 2), and run-like-hades; now we have to shepherd those knife-men in front of us on the way out, to distract the guards so that we can fade away into the night. And that becomes MUCH harder to do.

Combat Strengths? Knife-men are a 3, tomb guards are a 4, and our two cousins are a 5. Add 1D6 to each roll. Winners stay put, and losers fall back 4 fingers (and if they can't fall back, then they are removed). Level II and Level III are beer-and--skittles games, and the more the brewski, the better the wrotten puns will flow. Egyptians had a kind of ale, so it's all excusable "in the nature of serious hysterical research".



### **A Change of Scene**

Nothing says that this scenario has to be set in Ancient times. While the knife-men and porters can be ANY figures (Ancient Egyptian, or even Muslims, and cut the weapons off the porters), the "Main" tomb robbers can be either colonial Egyptian, or British, or even 1800 period French. Prince Emsah's Guard embraces them all, with equal dispassion. They can all share eternity with the Prince. (We even ran this once as Napoleonic Brits guarding a Pirate treasure site). This makes a great demo intro for future Solo wargamers at conventions, too.

### **Acknowledgements**

Prince Emsah really lived, about 2000 BC, and he is famous for his 32 little toy soldiers, arranged in lines of 8 figures on a common stand. The moving walls were a wonderful part of an old Howard-Hawks Warner-Brothers movie called *Land of the Pharaohs* starring a very young Joan Collins, and an imperious Jack Hawkins as Pharaoh. Scary even today (OK, so my copy's one of those ancient Laser Discs, put out around the time of the Pharaohs --- it just adds something to the ambience).

The whole point was to design a PC game that even the kids could play, with minimal equipment, (just some coins and cards) for maximum fun, and that could be played tonight. No excuses accepted for not having anything at hand, or whining that it takes too long to paint the figures up. Shake a box, and play. Even if your playing field is just the Lumpy-Bed at the Days-Inn-de-Jour.

And at the same time, the rules for the first level set the stage for the other two game-difficulty play levels that the Big Boys (aka Dads) can graduate to, once the kiddies have been sent off to bed.