

AMARUNE'S ALMANAC

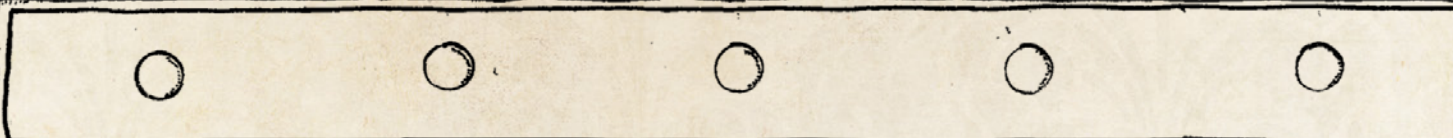


Deserts of the Realms





Jæerûn





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Credits

Lead Designer & Producer: Steve Fidler
Editor: Ryan Langr
Writing and Design: Ashley May, BorntoDoStuff, Bryan Holmes, Ed Greenwood, Israel Moreira, Sean vas Terra, Steve Fidler, Trevor Armstrong
Layout & Graphic Design: Nathanaël Roux
Forgotten Realms Sages: Bryan Holmes, and Ed Greenwood
Cover Art: Maxim B (Adobe Stock), composed by Steve Fidler
Cartography: Map of Faerûn by Dusty Haynes @ TableTopAdvantage.com, modified by Steve Fidler & Nathanaël Roux
Introduction Art: Amarune Writing by Dante Ezio Cifaldi
Interior Sketch Art: Shiah "Cinder" Irgangladen

Other Interior Art: Евгения Гребнева, Storn Cook, Felipe Gaona, Bob Greyvenstein, Azzedine Rouichi, Matteo Di Iorio, Keith Hardy, Bruno Balixa, Grandfailure, some art www.critical-hit.biz — Enggar Ajar Adirasa, ink splatter brushes (Brusheezy.com).

Definitions

When referencing spells from this book, the superscript "AA8" is used (for example, *druidic practice*^{AA8}). Each volume of Amarune's Almanac uses this notation, with the end numeral changed to match the volume of the book. "XGE" is used to denote spells from *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*.

If other definitions are used, they will appear here in future volumes.

My loyal fans, at last. We come to the most honest of all environments within Faerûn—the desert.


I assure you I am not delirious from the heat. Deserts are harsh, cruel, and unforgiving. But unlike a jungle or the mountains, there is no pretense of abundance and prosperity. You know before you even step on the sandal-melting dunes what you are in for.

So what does all that desolation get you? Not much more than a scorpion sting and a dry mouth. My dearest friend the Sage used to speak of the desert as if it were some cache of untold knowledge and treasure, but I'm most acquainted with its fierce creatures, adapted to do whatever it takes to survive. I once spent a tenday in the belly of a World Eater! I was harried by Sludar encircling me with their sand skates, listening to their cackling laughter all throughout the day so I was forced to sleep through the night and lose a full day's travel. And, if you can believe this, the mosquitos! Not like the small nuisances in Chult, but addazahr whose bite left lasting pain for almost two weeks.

All of this, however, is not a surprise. Even when you slip through loose sand and fall into the ruins of an ancient city—as has happened to me on occasion—it's no secret that deserts have swallowed whole civilizations in the past. Yes, truly the most honest of environments.

As this is the last in my colleague Amarune's series of almanacs, I feel compelled to share that this series has granted me a great joy to share with you all. It is a wonder to be on this side of publishing, seeing the reactions of so many to words not even my own.

So, humbly I say, contained herein are the acknowledgements of Amarune and her husband Arclath on notable flora, fauna, artifacts, magic, people, and locations among the deserts of the realm. I can not guarantee the legitimacy of their findings, but I can attest that these two have seen a great deal and altruistically provide these almanacs to be your guide to Faerûn and beyond. These two individuals would not intentionally lead you astray or into harm's way.

 Volothamp Geddarm

The following D&D books provided material and inspiration:

Scott Haring. *Empires of the Sands*. 1988
David Cook. *The Horde (Volumes I & II)*. 1990
Scott Bennie. *Old Empires*. February, 1990
Ed Greenwood. *Anauroch*. November, 1991
Wolfgang Baur, Steve Kurtz. *Monstrous Compendium Al-Qadim Appendix*. 1992
Doug Stewart. *Monstrous Manual*. June, 1993
Steven E. Schend and Dale Donovan. *Empires of the Shining Sea*. September, 1998
Steven E. Schend. *Calimport*. October, 1998
Clayton Emery. *Star of Cursrah*. January, 1999

Ed Greenwood, Sean K. Reynolds, Skip Williams, Rob Heinsoo. *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting 3rd edition*. June, 2001
Thomas Reid. *Shining South*. October, 2004
Richard Baker, Ed Bonny, Travis Stout. *Lost Empires of Faerûn*. February, 2005
Jennifer Clarke-Wilkes, Bruce R. Cordell, and JD Wiker. *Sandstorm*. March, 2005
Brian R. James and Ed Greenwood. *The Grand History of the Realms*. September, 2007
Bruce R. Cordell, Ed Greenwood, Chris Sims. *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*. August, 2008

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Foreword

And so we come at last to the deserts of the Realms.

To most of us, they are the great hot sand seas, but deserts may be cold, even frozen, and more rocks than sand. A desert is really just anywhere on dry land where very little rain falls, so very little grows. The Realms has at least one large and well-known desert, Anauroch, that ranges through everything from sandstorms and killing heat and shifting hot dunes in its southernmost reaches to arctic, in one unbroken swath of desolation. In fact, it can reasonably be said that the presence of Anauroch made the Zhentarim possible, as more than just a brief alliance between mages and clerics in a bid for local power: the “Network” became a caravan force, undercutting other shippers between the Moonsea and the Sword Coast by controlling the fastest, cheapest overland route—by crossing Anauroch, where everyone else has to go the longer way around it.

To most ‘everyday folk’ of the Realms, deserts are places to stay well away from. Dangerous, uncomfortable even when you make only brief, timid forays in from the verges, and offering little good reason to go there. And beings who do dwell in a desert are hardened to survive there, and usually don’t appreciate intruding competitors—and treat them accordingly.

To adventurers, and beings accustomed to deserts, these parched areas can be homes, not just adventuring territory. To those of us used to more hospitable climes, the idea of mere food and water being prized treasure because they’re scarce may seem odd or even repulsive. Though thanks to the tales told by bards and around campfires and tavern hearths, late at night, “just plain folk” across Toril are aware of a romantic side of deserts: that their shifting sands often hide ruins that might hold treasure. And a moment’s thought about such tales leads to the realization that deserts move. And recede, or grow, with shifts of climate.

Which has likely made more than a few folk of Toril take out their best maps for a fresh look, as they ponder: does every desert hide a lost realm? Likely not, but quite a few of the larger ones do, as Realmslore has already shown us. I asked Elminster about this, and after muttering a few comments about leading fools to their deaths, and qualifying them with the admission that Amarune hasn’t managed to get herself killed yet, so there are fools and then there are fools, he shared this desert-related lore with me:

Somewhere under the shifting sands of the Plains of Purple Dust, in Raurin, is a crashed ship of the skies. A skyship kept aloft and propelled by magic, and carrying a valuable cargo, though tales don’t agree on just what was aboard. Elminster believes it was an living ship of Evermeet, that all aboard perished in the crash, and that most were wealthy and high-ranking elves bearing much magic—from enchanted blades and armor to all manner of magical rings, scepters, and garments, that presumably still lie buried for someone to find.

Moreover, somewhere in the Corsair Domains—or Raurin, or perhaps the Calim Desert, as this tale has been applied to many locales, for so many years that the original locale has been forgotten, and these three are among the places where it’s claimed to be—is an entire lost caravan, with all of its goods; the tales tell us these include “chests of cut and polished gemstones” and trade-bars of gold and silver and platinum, not to mention rare perfumes and sherries, though the latter may be long spoiled. The tales all agree it was a large, wealthy caravan, with many wagons and guards, and was “overwhelmed and buried alive” in a great sandstorm, where a “safe” route along the edge of a desert proved to be deadly, as the desert expanded and swallowed much.

And to be sure, if you’d like to follow up these chances at treasure, this tome, like all of its sister volumes, can be very useful in guiding you in your adventures. “Useful” often meaning “keeping you alive.” So read on, and as you turn the page, I leave you with this: be as thorough and attentive in your preparations as the good stalwarts of Vorpal Dice Press have been in preparing all of these Almanacs, but when you are prepared, be then as intrepid as Amarune herself in your venturing. Or to put it more plainly, before you grow too old to enjoy the trips, travel, as she has, and see the wonderful world around you, in all of its varied beauty.

Ed Greenwood

{Creator of The Forgotten Realms}



Introduction

My name is Amarune Lyone Armala Whitewave, and this is, for now, the last entry in my Amarune's Almanac series. This started as a holiday, and a chance to try to consolidate my own memories with those of my great-great-grandfather Elminster, with whom I shared a vessel for a time. I decided to begin journaling my experiences as I traveled with my dear friend, lover, and now editor Arclath Delcastle, in hopes that writing down my thoughts could help me discern which things I was seeing with my own eyes, and what were fragments of Elminster's memories left behind in the corners of my mind.

I've been writing these almanacs for many moons, and at last, I am penning the final volume of the Amarune's Almanac series. Though I don't promise I'll never find reason to put quill to page again after this venture, it does at least conclude my current publishing contract with Volothamp Geddarm, who has been instrumental in seeing these volumes transported from my cluttered notes to your waiting hands.

As I look back on the process, I must ask myself a question: Did I accomplish what I originally set out to do? Quite frankly, I believe I failed in my original intent. I feel no more as though Elminster's memories are separated

from my own, but perhaps I've become more at peace with them and their presence. When they bubble to the surface, I no longer feel so disoriented. Though I may not have satisfied my original goal, I do feel accomplished in what I have achieved.

I recall a memory that was truly, distinctly my own. I was walking in a forest in autumn, holding Arclath's hand, and gazing up at the leaves as they changed colors. I described the sight in Volume One as being "like banners of gold, copper, and crimson" fluttering above our heads. At the time, I wondered how many people would never see such beauty, living in a metropolitan city, or a desert, or a swamp, or a frozen mountainside. Perhaps it was egotistical of me to dream of providing those people with my experiences, taking it upon myself to broaden their perspectives. But at the same time, if I have encouraged anyone to climb down from their mountain our walk outside their city gates to see more of the world at large for themselves, then I am satisfied with my work.

DANTE EZIO CIFALDI



Survival Of The Most Prepared

Everything we learned to survive in the freezing north and mountaintops would serve us well when visiting deserts. The most important thing I learned from any traveling merchant was the statement: "Insulation is a two-way street."

Though it might seem counterintuitive to dress in layers when traveling in the desert, it's far better than exposing your skin to the sun, wind, and sand. Layers of light-colored and breathable fabric allow the wind to cool you without allowing the heat of the sun to penetrate as quickly, and fabrics that wick sweat away from the body help cool you faster. Even more so than traveling in other environments, drinking plenty of fresh water is vital to survival in the desert.

Even in a hot desert, however, one must be prepared for the evening chill. Without clouds and humidity to hold in the heat, the temperature begins to plummet as soon as the sun tucks in behind the horizon. Finding safety, protection, and warmth to survive through the dark of night is almost more challenging than dealing with the heat and exhaustion during the day.

Almost.

Magic of the Deserts

Deserts are full of more life than most people could imagine, both flora and fauna. Not only are predators constantly lying in wait for any traveler caught unawares, but small animals, birds, reptiles, and insects flourish if you know where to look. Deserts are defined as being devoid of water, but they're hardly devoid of life.

The inclination to refer to something as a "desert" when it is empty has led to a difficult misconception to conquer. Deserts are often filled with magic. Even ignoring magically-saturated regions like the Plains of Purple Dust, many deserts are home to mystical ruins, elementals, or relics left behind by societies that relied on magic in order to thrive in a harsh environment. Unfortunately, such magical ruins would lead to one of the more trying chapters of my story...

The Story I Could Not Tell

Every volume of Amarune's Almanac has included my visits to five locales, which I attempt to describe in great detail, so that you might be able to travel there yourself one day, or feel as though you'd already seen it for yourself. There was but one journey I will not describe in such detail, both for my own safety as well as your own.

Arclath and I were travelling in the Anauroch Desert. I say this only because it is akin to saying we were traveling along the Sword Coast; it's such a wide expanse of land that finding any single area without better detail or direction is like finding a needle in a haystack. Arclath and I had stumbled upon a particular landmark of interest; surprisingly well preserved examples of Netherese architecture, half buried in the sands. Arclath went to look for a good place for us to make camp in the shelter of the ruins, while I perched myself on a rock to sit and make a rough sketch of the sight, which I'm afraid you will never see. I became so absorbed in my work that I did not realize how much time had passed until the lowering sun had made it too difficult for me to continue to draw, and I then became aware that I had not seen Arclath for some time.

The moment I stood from the rock, I was suddenly back down on it, pulled onto my back with the wind knocked from my lungs. A loop of thin rope had been thrown over my neck from behind, and before I could get my wits about me, my arms and legs were pinned as well. I could hardly see the faces of my attackers before a burlap sack was shoved over my head.

Arclath and I would spend the night in what I presumed to be the back of a wagon as it traveled, listening to the sounds of our bags being pulled open and every one of our worldly possessions being examined. As you can imagine, it involved a great deal of rustling paper, on my part. We were not to speak unless spoken to, but we were expected to answer promptly, and the press of the flat of a sword against our collarbone was a chilly reminder that we had no alternative.

For what seemed like hours, we were questioned about our interest in the ruins and ancient secrets of the Netheril, whilst we tried to convince them we had none beyond a passing fascination with their architecture. Our captors read through every word of my notes, and as it turns out, they physically excised the portions they found unsuitable for publishing; some of my pages had sections sliced out with the finest precision, removing any mention of where we found the ruins in question.

Eventually, the wagon came to a stop, and the burlap sacks were removed from our heads. Arclath and I found ourselves sitting opposite from a lone human man with fair skin and black hair, who rested his elbows on his knees and tented his fingers as he stared at us. We understood that we were no longer being questioned, and it was now our time to listen.

This Netherar man (not Netherese, an important distinction to be sure) was a member of the Cult of the Shattered Peak, and it was the life's work of himself and his Netherar companions to see that the lost magics of the Netherese Empire remain lost. Arclath had apparently ventured too close to a tomb they were in the process of burying, and we had been mistaken for hunters of arcane secrets. Though the Cult was satisfied that we were not power-hungry wizards seeking to resurrect an empire that crumbled under its own hubris, the fact remained that we could not be permitted to speak of what few things we had seen there.

Though I could not write about the ruins I had found, the man was more than willing to permit me to write about my experiences with the cult, and was forthcoming with answers to almost every question I had about his work. Indeed, he *wanted* me to publish the promise that the Cult of the Shattered Peak had eyes all across Anauroch Desert and beyond, and that no greedy mage would escape their attention.

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR, ARCLATH DELCASTLE

Dearest readers, I have a confession to make. I, Arclath Delcastle, have never edited anything in my life before taking on the responsibility of *Amarune's Almanac*. Being a sufficiently well-read man with an educated upbringing, I assumed that it would be no difficulty at all. Oh, how wrong I was. Luckily, Volothamp Geddarm's publishing staff was sufficiently stern with me, sending back draft after draft with their own red-inked clarifications, until I had done it right.

Though the number of exchanges has reduced over time, I was shocked when the sixth volume received no responses. I was terrified that something had become lost! Perhaps a courier had been eaten somewhere along the road. Instead, a moon after I expected my red-inked draft returned to me, I received a printed and bound copy of *Amarune's Almanac, Volume 6: Swamps of the Realms*. It remains my favorite book to date, not necessarily for its content or for the memories it conjures up, but because it marks my own personal growth as an editor. I do not know if I will ever take up editing work for others beyond my darling *Amarune*, but I do consider it to be another feather in my cap.



Player Options

Presented here are two subclasses, one for the Druid class and one for the Ranger class. These subclasses represent the abrasive and eroded denizens of the desert. The Circle of the Sands, a malleable and destructive force; and the Tomb Raider ranger archetype who delve into the secrets buried beneath the vast expanses.

Circle of the Sands

The deserts of Faerûn are harsh and unforgiving environments. Many people call these regions home, but they are at constant odds with the scarce resources and eroding winds. The few druid circles that tend to the deserts chose to embody these qualities, rather than fight against them. They can take on the forms of creatures who are adapted to the deserts and create oppressive storms of sand and wind.

Circle Spells

Your mystical connection to the land infuses you with the ability to cast certain spells. At 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level you gain access to circle spells connected to the deserts of Faerûn.

Once you gain access to a circle spell, you always have it prepared, and it doesn't count against the number of spells you can prepare each day. If you gain access to a spell that doesn't appear on the druid spell list, the spell is nonetheless a druid spell for you.

CIRCLE OF THE STANDING STONES SPELLS

Druid Level	Spells
3rd	<i>blur</i> , <i>dehydrate</i> ^{AA8}
5th	<i>tiny terraform</i> ^{AA8} , <i>wall of sand</i> ^{XGE}
7th	<i>hallucinatory terrain</i> , <i>mirage</i> ^{AA8}
9th	<i>insect plague</i> , <i>sand wave</i> ^{AA8}

Desert Beast Forms

At 2nd level, you can use your Wild Shape to transform into a beast that calls deserts home with a challenge rating as high as ½ (you ignore the Max CR column of the Beast Shapes table, but must abide by the other limitations there).

The maximum CR of your desert forms increases when you reach certain levels in this class. The max CR becomes 1 at 6th level, 2 at 10th level, and 3 at 14th level.

Land Transmutation: Sandstorm

Starting at 2nd level, you can expend a use of your Wild Shape as an action to magically transmute the area within 60 feet of you into an arid desert. A 5-foot-wide and 10-foot-tall cylinder of swirling sand appears in a space you can see within the desert. This cyclone heavily obscures the area it occupies, and provides full cover to any creature inside its area.

As a bonus action on your turn, you can move the sandstorm up to 20 feet. A creature that starts its turn in the area of this cyclone, or enters it for the first time on their turn, must make a Constitution saving throw against your druid spell save DC. On a failed save, the target has disadvantage on Wisdom ability checks and ranged attack rolls it makes until it uses its action to wipe its eyes, or the end of its next turn. A creature that does not rely on eyes for sight is immune to this effect.

The terrain created by this feature is real and not an illusion, but is otherwise magical. This effect lasts a number of hours equal to half your druid level (rounded down). The area then reverts to its normal form unless you expend another use of this feature. You can revert the area to its normal form earlier by using a bonus action.



Oasis

Starting at 6th level, you can create an area of respite during a short or long rest. At the start of the rest, you touch a point on the ground and an instant oasis appears in a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on that point. This area provides warmth, protection, comfort, and enough food and water for a full day's nourishment for up to 6 creatures.

At the end of a rest which is spent within the sphere, you and your allies can remove a level of exhaustion. Any creature that spends a Hit Dice to regain hit points can treat a roll of 1 or 2 as a 3.

Once you use this feature, you can't do so again for 3 days.

Sand Step

At 10th level, you can dissipate into a cloud of sand as an action. While in this form you have a flying speed equal to your walking speed and if air can pass through a space, you can pass through it without squeezing. Your movement does not provoke opportunity attacks, and you can't manipulate objects in any way that requires fingers or manual dexterity. At the end of your turn, or if you come in contact with water, your body reforms in its space. If the space is too small for your size, you move to the nearest unoccupied space that can accommodate your size or return to the place where you used this action if it is closer.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. You regain all expended uses at the end of a long rest.

Living Cyclone

Starting at 14th level, the cylinder of sand created as part of your Land Transmutation: Sandstorm grows, becoming 10 feet wide and 30 feet tall. When you use your bonus action to command it to move, you can also have it perform one of the following actions.

Attack. Make a melee spell attack against a creature within 10 feet of the sandstorm. This attack uses your Wisdom modifier for its attack roll and you add your proficiency bonus to the attack roll. On a hit, the target takes slashing damage equal to 1d10 + your Druid level.

Barrier. The sandstorm changes shape until the start of your next turn, creating an immovable 30-foot-long, 10-foot-high, and 1-foot-thick wall of sand. This wall blocks line of sight, but not movement. The first time a creature moves through the wall, it must make a Dexterity saving throw against your druid spell DC. On a failed save, the target is blinded until the start of its next turn.

Tomb Raider Archetype

All across Faerûn there lay lost tombs filled with the ancient knowledge from times and empires long passed. Many of the marvels of these ancient worlds now lay hidden by dense jungle, or obscured by desert sands, and all densely packed with magical wards and defenses. As a Tomb Raider ranger, it's your job to delve into these ruins and recover the knowledge and items of the ancient world and bring them to light to further the advancements of modernity. You are often pitted against ancient undead remnants, defensive constructs, and greedy interlopers like dragons who have laid claim to the ruined sites in the interim.

Archaeologist's Playbook

Starting at 3rd level, you can beseech the desert sands to grant you information and wards. You can prepare a number of spells from the Playbook table equal to your Wisdom modifier. The spells must be of a level for which you have spell slots. Whenever you finish a long rest you can change the list of prepared spells. Changing out these spells takes time spent in contemplation of your environment: 1 minute per spell level for each spell on your list.

If one of these spells has the ritual tag, you can ritually cast it.

PLAYBOOK SPELLS

Ranger Level	Spells
3rd	<i>comprehend languages, detect magic, identify, protection from good and evil</i>
5th	<i>darkvision, knock, see invisibility</i>
9th	<i>dispel magic, remove curse, speak with dead</i>
13th	<i>arcane eye, freedom of movement</i>
17th	<i>dispel evil and good, legend lore, passwall</i>

Delver's Knack

Also at 3rd level, as a product of skill, magic, and luck, you've developed a keen sense of opportunity. You have a die that represents this faculty, called your knack die, which is a d6. You gain the following benefits:

- Whenever you are attacked, or are forced to make a saving throw against a trap, you can roll your knack die and add it to your AC against that attack, or to the result of the saving throw. You can do this after you know the result of the roll, but before any of its effects take place.
- When a creature misses you with an attack, you can use your reaction to make an unarmed strike against them. On a hit, it deals an additional d6 damage.

You can use this feature's benefits a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier. You regain any expended uses whenever you finish a long rest. Alternatively, you can use a bonus action on your turn to spend a spell slot in order to regain uses. You regain a number of uses equal to 1 + the spell slot's level.

Uncanny Sense

At 7th level, you have a knack for finding secret contraptions and passages. As an action, you can cast a suspicious glare around you. If there is a secret mechanism, passage, or trap within 30 feet of you, you spot the closest one. A trap, for the purpose of this feature, includes anything that would inflict a sudden or unexpected effect you consider harmful or undesirable, which was specifically intended as such by its creator, magical or otherwise.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier. You regain any expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Practical Knowledge

Starting at 7th level, whenever you make an Intelligence or Wisdom check, you can expend a use of your Delver's Knack feature to roll your knack die and add it to the result.

Lucky Gamble

By 11th level, you know how to hedge your bets. Whenever you roll a knack die, you can choose to call a number on the die. If the result is equal to the number, you can roll an additional knack die and add it to the result without expending a use of the feature. You can only do this once per use of the feature.

Historical Magics

By 15th level, you've learned how to decipher the magic of many cultures and use it like your own. You ignore all class, race, and level requirements on the use of magic items.

When using a magic item that casts a spell, you can use your ranger spellcasting ability, spell attack bonus and ranger spell save DC, in place of the items. Additionally, you can cast any scroll as if the spell it contains is on the ranger spell list.

STORN COOK



AMARUNE'S ALMANAC: DESERTS OF THE REALMS SPELLS

Spell Level	Spell	School	Ritual	Druid	Ranger
1st	<i>druidic practice</i>	abjuration	✓	✓	✓
1st	<i>condense moisture</i>	conjuration	✓	✓	✓
1st	<i>sandbind</i>	transmutation		✓	✓
2nd	<i>dehydrate</i>	evocation		✓	✓
2nd	<i>sand shawl</i>	conjuration		✓	✓
3rd	<i>create glass</i>	transmutation	✓	✓	✓
3rd	<i>tiny terraform</i>	transmutation		✓	✓
4th	<i>mirage</i>	illusion	✓	✓	✓
5th	<i>sand wave</i>	transmutation		✓	✓
6th	<i>dry thunderstorm</i>	conjuration		✓	
9th	<i>secrets of the sand</i>	transmutation		✓	

Additional Rules

Druid: Spellcasting

As a druid, your affinity for the world you are in allows you to quickly tap into its latent magic and call upon its power and knowledge. You can swap a druid spell you have prepared for a druid spell with an Environment component that matches the biome you are currently in by spending 1 minute per spell level in deep meditation. This spell must be a spell you would otherwise normally be able to prepare. This can be performed during a short rest.

Ranger: Natural Explorer

Upon picking a favored terrain with your Natural Explorer feature, Rangers gain a subset of spells associated to that terrain. These represent skills you've mastered as a Ranger, boons granted from the land itself, or simply tricks you've picked up out of necessity. Each spell listed can be cast once. You must complete a long rest before you can cast one of these spells again.

When you gain new favored terrains at 6th and 10th level, you do not learn the spells associated to those lists immediately. Instead, during a long rest you can choose to swap the spells you gained from one favored terrain to instead learn the spells from another.

BOB GREYENSTEIN

FAVORED TERRAIN: DESERT SPELLS

Ranger Level Spell

2nd	<i>sandbind</i> ^{AA8}
5th	<i>sand shawl</i> ^{AA8}
9th	<i>create glass</i> ^{AA8}
13th	<i>mirage</i> ^{AA8}

Spellcasting

Component: Environment (E)

Some spells require the caster to be in a specific biome or surrounded by specific terrain, specified in parentheses in the environment entry, before they can be cast. Some features may allow substitutes or replacements for this component and in this case the effect is created from whatever natural materials are available around it. The damage type of the spell does not change unless decided otherwise by the DM.

Spells

Druidic Practice

1st-level abjuration (ritual)

Classes: Druid, Ranger

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (25 gp worth of herbs, leaves, and roots, which the spell consumes), E (any natural environment)

Duration: Instantaneous

You perform an ancient druidic ceremony that calls upon the land itself. When you cast this spell, choose one of the following practices, the target of which must be within 10 feet of you throughout the casting.

Forosnai. You touch a willing creature and send them on a spiritual pilgrimage. The target falls unconscious, waking up after 1 hour, if they take damage, or someone uses an action to shake or slap them awake. The exact nature of this pilgrimage is unique to the individual and can result in learning new knowledge about an ancestor or past life or receiving guidance from a deity. The exact information learned is up to the DM. A creature can benefit from this practice once each year, during the season of their birth.

Geasa. You touch a willing creature, and choose a creature type: aberrations, beasts, celestials, constructs, dragons, elementals, fey, fiends, giants, monstrosities, oozes, plants, or undead. Alternatively, you can choose one race of humanoid (such as elves or tiefling). A ward is placed on the target, preventing it from being slain by a creature of the chosen type. If an attack by a creature of that type would reduce the target to 0 hit points, the target is instead reduced to 1 hit point and the ward ends. The ward ends early if the target is reduced to 0 hit points by a creature of any other type. A creature can benefit from this rite only once.

Imbue. You touch a mundane plant or piece of wood. Magical energy suffuses the object throughout the ritual, preserving its form and allowing it to be used as a druidic focus.

Purify (Creature). You touch a willing creature, who becomes occluded by a mystical smoke that smells of sage. As the smoke clears, you make a DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check. On a successful check, the target is restored to its original alignment.

Purify (Object). You touch an object that has been diseased or blighted by a nonmagical source. The blight is removed, restoring it to its original state.

Condense Moisture

1st-level conjuration (ritual)

Classes: Druid, Ranger

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (A flask or other container), E (desert)

Duration: Instantaneous

You pull moisture from the air and use it to fill any number of Medium or smaller sized, water-tight containers within 5 feet of you. Each of these containers are filled to their full capacity.

Once this spell has been cast, it cannot be cast again within 100 feet of that location until a full day and night have passed.

Sandbind

1st-level transmutation

Classes: Druid, Ranger

Casting Time: 1 reaction (in response to a creature you can see using burrow movement)

Range: 300 feet

Components: V, E (desert)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Choose one creature you can see within range. Yellow bands of energy surround the target. The creature must succeed on a Strength saving throw or its burrow speed (if any) is reduced to 0.

Creatures underground, with a burrow speed of 0, are considered restrained while affected by this spell.

At Higher Levels. If cast using a spell slot of 6th level or higher, you can cast the spell as an action. If you do, instead of choosing a single creature within range, it affects all creatures within range.



Dehydrate

2nd-level evocation

Classes: Druid, Ranger

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 40 feet

Components: V, S, E (desert)

Duration: Instantaneous

You point at a living creature within range, and force all moisture from their body. The target must make a Constitution saving throw, taking 3d10 necrotic damage on a successful save or a level of exhaustion on a failed save. A creature that fails this saving throw has advantage on saving throws against this spell for 24 hours.

At Higher Levels. When cast using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, increase the necrotic damage by 1d10 for each spell slot above 2nd.

Sand Shawl

2nd-level conjuration

Classes: Druid, Ranger

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self (15-foot sphere)

Components: V, S, M (a handful of sand), E (desert)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You create a swirling sandstorm in a 15-foot-radius sphere centered on yourself, which moves with you. The area is difficult terrain and lightly obscured to creatures other than yourself. Each creature that starts its turn in the area or that enters it during its turn must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the start of its next turn blinded as long as it remains in the sandstorm.

Create Glass

3rd-level transmutation (ritual)

Classes: Druid, Ranger

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Self

Components: V, S, E (desert)

Duration: Instantaneous

You transform all sand within a 10-foot cube into glass. Objects turned to glass have an AC of 6, and 5 hit points per inch of thickness.

At Higher Levels. When cast using a spell slot of a higher level, the spell affects an additional 10-foot cube for each two spell slot levels above the 3rd.

Tiny Terraform

3rd-level transmutation

Classes: Druid, Ranger

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, E (desert)

Duration: Instantaneous

You touch the ground beneath your feet, causing it to shift and vibrate. Each creature in a 20-foot cube below the ground's surface must make a Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 6d6 bludgeoning damage and has its movement speed halved until the end of its next turn on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Additionally, for the next minute, you know the location of each creature that takes damage from this spell if they are within 1 mile of you.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 3rd.

Mirage

4th-level illusion (ritual)

Classes: Druid, Ranger

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 1,000 feet

Components: V, S, E (desert)

Duration: 8 hours

You cause an illusion of an oasis, complete with vegetation native to the region, at a point within range. Creatures who approach within 30 feet of the illusion can make a Wisdom saving throw, seeing the spell as an illusion on a success. If cast at night, the duration of the spell is doubled.

Sand Wave

5th-level transmutation

Classes: Druid, Ranger

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Self (a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on you)

Components: V, S, E (desert)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You cast a spell that speeds up a sand dune you are standing on. The sand rolls and turns to keep you and any creatures within the area riding on top of the wave. Other creatures within the area must succeed on Dexterity saving throws or be buried in sand at a location of your choosing at the edge of the radius of the spell.

For the duration of the spell, you can choose to move the wave up to 80 feet on each of your turns as a bonus action. All creatures within the area are moved with the dune.

Dry Thunderstorm

6th-level conjuration

Classes: Druid

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Self

Components: V, S, E (desert)

Duration: Instantaneous

You convert your body and all your possessions, turning your body into lightning, and shooting straight into the clouds above. Choose a location exposed to the open sky within 1,000 feet of you. At this location you become a column of lightning that strikes the ground. You then transform back into your regular form.

The cylinder has a 60-foot radius, centered on the point you chose. It has a height stretching

from the clouds to the ground. If there are no clouds, the column is 100 feet tall. The column is filled with multiple lightning bolts, flashing from sky to ground. Each creature within the column must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking 3d10 lightning damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a successful one.

If you cannot see the sky when you cast the spell, it fails.

Secrets of the Sand

9th-level transmutation

Classes: Druid

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 1 mile

Components: V, S, M (a shovel), E (desert)

Duration: Instantaneous

You choose a building or structure within range, which must be entirely contained within the environment component of this spell. You do not need to see the target. As you finish casting the spell, choose if you want the target to become buried or unburied.

If you bury the target, it sinks into the ground at a rate of 10 feet per turn, until the highest point of the selected building is 60 feet underground. Creatures who do not spend their entire turn moving to escape must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or be buried in the sand with the building.

If you unbury the target, the building rises at a rate of 10 feet per turn, until the base of the building sits upon the surface of the ground. Creatures within 100 feet of the structure are pushed away from it until they are 100 feet away.



Locations

Anauroch

To simply say “we visited Anauroch” would tell you nothing. Also known as the Great Sand Sea, Anauroch is a vast swathe of desert cutting through Faerûn. If you were to travel from the southern top of Anauroch to the northern reaches, it would be akin to walking from Baldur’s Gate to Icewind Dale. Crossing it east to west would be like walking from Hellgate Dell to the Mere of Dead Men, and only a fraction as pleasant a journey.

What you need to understand about Anauroch is it is not simply sand as far as the eye can see, despite its “Sand Sea” name. Instead, Anauroch is split into three distinctive areas, and the one people most commonly think of is called The Sword. Named in honor of the scimitars wielded by the nomadic Bedine people to fiercely protect their lands, The Sword is hardly boring. Even counting aside the many forms that sand dunes take, some areas are salt flats, appearing as glistening white stretches of cracked earth. Under the dry heat, it can be difficult to imagine that inland seas once existed here, now evaporated to the point that the salt is all that remains. What water does still remain in The Sword can only be found in small oases, some magically maintained, or in underground reservoirs.

North of The Sword lies a land known commonly as the Plain of Standing Stones, but I prefer the Dwarven title “Turlaghh,” which translates to “the Field of Broken Dreams.” Here, the sand gives way to fields of gravel, with jagged rocks jutting up from the earth. Wicked winds carve the land, wearing down the stone and sweeping away almost anything that dares to try to grow here. What few remnants of trees and shrubs remain are what grow tucked deep down in crevices, protected from the violent gale.

Even further north beyond the Plain of Standing Stones lies the High Ice. Most people would not

Fauna. Beacon Tortoise, Dromedary, Dune Rattler, Rattelyr Dragon, Sand Elemental, Sand Skate, World Eater


Flora. Avallae, Cobra Orchid, Death’s Hands, Devver, Foaalongh, Journeyman’s Gate, Kalantavur, Luallgarde, Pitcher on the Horizon, Surtl, Tassit

- A sinkhole has appeared a few miles north of the Scimitar Spires, deep enough to penetrate the Buried Realms below and some **phaerimm** (see *Amarune’s Almanac: the Underdark*) have escaped.
- Some say the ruins of the very first cloud palace, the seat of the cloud giant progenitor Nicias, are buried beneath the sands of the Anauroch Desert.
- Kobolds have been moving in great numbers across the desert, northward. A trader who had stopped one said they mentioned the old ones, the Sarrukh, still alive.
- A congregation of Shadovar, shadowfell-infused remnants of the Netherese empire, have been spotted digging along the edges of the desert.

consider the High Ice to be a desert in passing, but I assure you it is; even though the region itself is a massive glacier, and ice obviously means that water is present, the region receives almost no snow or rain. The glacier itself is formed from hundreds or even a thousand years of freezing weather, and the ice you walk on today is nearly the same as what stood in at the dawn of Dale Reckoning.

Although Arclath and I have had the “pleasure” of visiting all three regions of Anauroch, I feel I would be remiss if I were to speak of anything but The Sword. Shallow as it may seem to speak only of the sands when discussing a desert, I would be failing in the purpose of writing this book if I were not to tell you of how much more the desert has to offer.

Even in a place that seems “dead” at a glance, there is a thriving ecosystem. All manner of insects and reptiles make their homes in the sand or under rocky outcroppings; many lizards and snakes hunt at sundown, feasting on the insects that come out in the dark before retreating into the sand for warmth as the overnight chill sets in. When these reptiles emerge in the morning to sun themselves and warm their cold bodies, birds prey upon their still slow moving bodies.



Herd animals like gazelles, ostriches, onagers, and occasionally wild camels roam the lands, feeding on whatever vegetation can be found. Many have adapted to eat various forms of cactus, either by working around their spines or eating them whole, to get at the stores of precious water kept inside. Their pack behaviors help to protect them from all manner of carnivorous predators, like lions and wyverns.

Arclath and I are comfortable with the fact that in many of the places we travel, we are nowhere near the top of the food chain. For this reason, we decided to travel in the company of a herd of onagers. It took no small amount of effort to gain their trust; we would offer bits of trail rations or sips of water, and though only a few of them were brave enough to approach us for them, the rest of the herd soon became comfortable with the idea that we were not there to hurt them. However, it did mean we had to learn to secure our campsite better than ever; we would wake to the sound of our tent being chewed on in the morning as they came around looking for whatever goodies we had in our pack.

The benefit of traveling with the onagers was that nothing ever snuck up on us. As soon as they detected a predator, like a wyvern on the hunt, they would throw their heads back and begin to snort almost explosively. In no time at all, the pack was on the move, circling their strongest around the calves. The elder and infirmed would naturally lag behind as the pack moved on, and they would become sacrifices that allowed the rest to escape from their hunters. This often afforded Arclath and myself the time to grab up our belongings and move away from the threat as well.

What we had never considered was that the size of the herd might function not only as a defense, but also as a lure.

It was the middle of the day and we had only recently departed from an oasis, having restored our canteens and drank our fill. The pack of onagers was moving steadily under the broil of the noon sun that beat down directly on our heads, no doubt in search of rocky cover to take shelter in until the

worst of the heat subsided. At first, Arclath and I sensed nothing, which wasn't unusual when we first heard the onagers make their alarm calls. Several of them began to throw their heads back and flare their nostrils, and they surrounded the young in the middle of the pack, but none of them ran. They couldn't seem to pick a direction to travel in. They were confused, and obviously terrified. Concerned that they could stampede in any direction, Arclath and I backed away from them to give them space.

Then, we began to feel something. A low rumble rose up from the ground underneath us as our feet sunk into the vibrating, softened sands. We quickly extricated ourselves from the sinking sands and broke for the nearest solid structure we could find, a lone outcropping that jutted up from the base of a dune but offered no shade. We scrambled to climb up on top of it, as we saw the sand distorting nearby. It bulged upward before collapsing back in, not unlike waters receding before a tidal wave crashes down again. Then, before our very eyes, the desert itself opened up beneath the onagers. A gaping maw spread open from the sand, its rows of inward-facing teeth snagging a dozen braying and kicking onagers in a single bite. The rest of the herd panicked, scattering in every direction as the towering sand worm arched in the air and came back down. Its mouth fell over three more as it dove back into the sand with all the ease of a breaching whale falling back into the ocean.

The pack of onager would not reconvene. Scattered as they were, lions and wyverns picked them off one by one, comfortable in the knowledge that the sand worm would not return for another bite of any less than a full flock. As for Arclath and myself, we gave up on traveling with a herd again. We would rather have late notice of a wyvern's presence than have our tent be swallowed whole in the middle of the night.

WEALTH IN THE WASTELAND

Some of the most valuable and rare goods that nobles seek to stock their pantry and show their affluence come from deserts like The Sword. A combination of low arable land and difficulty trading with the locals drives up the price of goods like coffee, saffron, turmeric, myrrh, and frankincense.





Calim Desert

Perhaps because I carry so many of Elminster's memories, I find myself spending a lot of ink writing about the past. I often describe the ways a region has changed over the decades, centuries, or even millennia. It's seldom that I find myself able to talk about a recent change. It was for this reason that Arclath and I decided to follow the Sword Coast further south than we had before, to visit the nation of Calimshan. As a primarily trade-based society, Calimshan's prosperity often hinged on selling at the highest prices whilst paying as little as possible in costs. For many prosperous Calishite merchants, this meant the employment of slaves.

It was less than five years ago that a Chosen of Ilmater appeared within Calimshan, and began to lead these slaves to rise up against their genie and genasi masters. In the beginning, these showings of resistance were non-violent, but after the Chosen disappeared, the region erupted into a violent revolution. Many genie lords fled into the depths of the desert, or back into their elemental planes. Those who remain are in a precarious position, leaving the region in a chaotic state. As unpredictable a climate as this might be, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to see such a change unfolding before our very eyes.

Our journey through the Calim Desert began in Memnon, which feels like a caravanseraï masquerading as a city. Nearly every part of Memnon is designed to cater to an itinerant population of merchants traveling north and south; one cannot throw a pebble without hitting an inn, a stable, a sundries shop, a bath house, a shrine, or a repair shop. Hawkers run up and down the streets, harassing traveling merchants to try to draw them to their services, each offering what they assure are the lowest prices in the city. Yet, the merchants constantly complain about how expensive everything has become. This is

Fauna. Beacon Tortoise, Dromedary, Dune Rattler, Sand Crocodile (and Greater), Sand Elemental, Sand Skate, Thunderherder, World Eater

Flora. Avallae, Calim Cactus, Denver, Emmult's Curse, Foaolongh, Journeyman's Gate, Kalantavur, Luallgarde, Surtl, Tassit

- A **greater sand crocodile** has been found and dispatched outside the Friary of St. Amahl west of the Trade Way. The body exposed a previously unknown storehouse linked to the ruins of Dashadjen.
- A young human woman, recently freed of slavery, has claimed she is the descendant of a Calishite noble family, once overthrown by djinnis, and she now seeks to reclaim her family's nobility and influence. Though the climate of revolution has led many to support her claim, there are some beginning to question her legitimacy.
- A wizard in Almraiven is paying well for any remains of the Calimemnon Crystal. Their use for the crystal is unknown, but it's making many Pashas nervous.
- The streets whisper that some of their rulers are genasi wearing human guise. Still infused with hatred for their former slavers, some of the Calishites are starting to riot.

because the now-liberated folk of Memnon insist upon fair pay, and they strongly pressure their peers to not undercut one another to the point of impoverishing themselves.

Every corner of Memnon is like living theatre. Every downtrodden soul puts on their biggest smile as they seek to please a customer, and merchants with gold and platinum rings on every finger exaggeratedly complain about how they're not sure how they'll keep their children fed if things keep going this direction. The poor are excited for change and the wealthy are terrified of it, and yet, the flow of traffic in and out of the north and south gates of the city is the same as it has been for decades, constant and never wavering. The only thing that's changed are the faces and the prices.

The Trade Way, the road which runs all the way from Waterdeep to Calimshan, feels different in many sections; so much so that the space between Baldur's Gate and Tethyr is often called Coast Way instead. When it reaches Memnon, it no longer

CAREFULLY CHOSEN WORDS

A calishite is a person who is from Calimshan, and while it generally refers to humans of the local ethnicity, it may also apply to people of other races native to the region. A calamite is a specific breed of light warhorse that is famously bred in Calimshan. They are expensive horses, and some of the most beautiful to behold in the world.

The words "calishite" and "calamite" are not interchangeable under any circumstances. Choose your words carefully when speaking with any calishite merchants or guards.

follows the coast, but instead cuts directly across the desert itself, providing the shortest path possible to its final destination. This path would take around five days to travel at a normal clip, but the sweeping dunes, high daytime temperatures, freezing nights, and need for large water supplies will cut one's travel time nearly in half. Taking a tenday to travel between the two cities is not uncommon, and caravans often try to travel in large numbers to discourage bandits from picking at them along the way.

There are numerous oases along the path, some natural, some magically maintained, some with good clean reputations, and some that are known for practically being bandit traps intended to spring on whatever un-knowledgeable merchant recently got into the game. To lay them out on a map would be pointless, as many of these comfort stops come and go with the changing of the weather. The caravan Arclath and I traveled with made a stop at one such temporary "oasis," called The Magic Well.

The Magic Well is not exactly a well in the classic sense, but it is certainly magical. The entire business is built around the presence of a single portable hole, a rare magical item that functions as extra-dimensional storage space. Though it could be filled with any variety of things, its owner has decided to fill it with roughly 2100 gallons of fresh water, presumably collected from some location outside of the Calim Desert. Vending this water to the merchant caravans that travel through has earned enough money for The Magic Well "oasis" to fund a small army of guards and several large, grand tents, as well as numerous small but magnificently appointed tents. While these small tents can be rented by the night, providing luxurious bedding in the middle of the desert, the giant tents hold such attractions as communal dining and entertainment.

On our first night at The Magic Well, Arclath and I visited one of the tents and felt as though we'd stepped out of the middle of the desert and into a

festhall. The makeshift floors were thick with rugs and cushions, and one could hardly guess there was sand just inches beneath your feet. Food and drink flowed freely, and dancers cut their path not only across the floor, but across the air as well. Suspended from hanging rings or lengths of silk were some of the most elegant figures I had ever seen. On that night, a band of air and fire genasi dancers had come to perform to an excited audience. Though their grace was unparalleled and their beauty was otherworldly, I could tell there was tension in the air. Much of their audience was reveling in the fact that genasi, the former lords and rulers of much of the region, were now dancing for their coin as so many slaves had once been forced to do.

I don't know if any of the genasi who were dancing that night had ever been in positions of power within the Calim Desert. I imagine many former slave-lords had fled the desert, and that these dancers were opportunists from beyond the sands seeking to make coin off of their own taboo appeal. Nonetheless, the guards of The Magic Well were as keenly aware of the tension as I was, and they kept as watchful an eye as ever.

We would spend three nights at The Magic Well, as I was able to barter much of my writing and knowledge of foreign lands for room and board. The morning after our third night, however, Arclath and I woke to sounds of near chaos. The tents were being broken down, nearly all around us as we scrambled to pack our things. Merchants were trying to outbid one another to get larger shares of water, though the oasis organizers were quite strict on how many rations one could purchase. As it turns out, the portable hole was beginning to run low on water, and it was time to break camp. I am certain The Magic Well and its organizers are extremely secretive about their travel routes in order to avoid bandit attacks, but I can't help imagining them arriving at a small fresh stream somewhere in Tethyr, opening up the portable hole, and filling it with what is akin to liquid gold just a hundred miles south.



Elfharrow

“Elfharrow” is not a name given to this desert by the elves that live here, which should tell you quite a few things about this land from the outset. Any time a region is given such a foreboding name by those who merely pass through, you can be sure that the locals are an unwelcoming sort.

Like so many others, Elfharrow was devastated by the Spellplague. Lying just east of Halruaa’s North Wall mountains, the once-forested region formerly known as Lapaliiya was blasted nearly to oblivion. Not only did the region’s average rainfall plummet, and the flood of the Outer Sea salted the land to the envy of any tyrant, but life-draining magics sapped the soil of its fertility as well. While cities across the region crumbled, elves escaping the nearby plaguelands of the Shaar Desolation found it to be a far more welcoming wasteland than the one they fled.

Though more than a century has passed since the Spellplague, the elves of Elfharrow still literally bare its scars today. Many of them show the signs of being plaguechanged, though often only in minor ways; superficial deformities of magic scarring the flesh or personality quirks derived from being too closely woven with the Weave when it unraveled. This is not to say that spellscars are not serious things; merely that those more heavily warped by the Spellplague did not escape Shaar to tell their tales.

After Arclath and I descended from Mount Talath after our visit to the High Temple of Mystra (Editor’s Note: See *Amarune’s Almanac Volume 7: Mountains*), we decided to cut through the Elfharrow to see the city of Ormpur. We had heard that rains were returning to the Elfharrow and the edges of the forests were beginning to encroach on the land again, so we assumed it would be somewhat tamed by these hopeful prospects. We were wrong.


Fauna. Debbie, Dune Rattler, Rattelyr Dragon, Sand Elemental, Sand Skate

Flora. Ab’i, Caravara, Devver, Foaalongh, Journeyman’s Gate, Kalantavur, Luallgarde, Rulguth, Surtl, Tassit

- A wild elf leader has sent word to meet with Lapal League leaders, indicating a desire to cede territory along the south-eastern border (connecting the reclaimed Lapaliiya to the Shaar) in exchange for the head of the leader from a rival warband and protection for their people.
- Merchants in and around the Elfharrow claim that young wild elves have been attacking their caravans and camps, and stealing their buff chickens. Only the chickens and only the buff colored ones.
- It’s rare for the elves of Elfharrow to ask for help, but it seems a few wild elves have come out of their realm doing just that. Some indescribable monsters are ravaging their homes and they want someone to help slay it. Of course, some think this a ruse to trap those who pose a threat to the elves.
- People on its borders claim earthquakes and giant sandstorms have become more common in the Elfharrow. The elves are denying it.

We were only far enough across the desert for the Walls of Halruaa to vanish behind us when we glimpsed the sight of growing clouds low on the horizon. Arclath and I had studied how to endure a sand storm, and right away, we set to covering our exposed skin, rolling down sleeves and wrapping our cloaks around ourselves. We cracked open our precious canteens to saturate our scarves with water before wrapping them over our noses and mouths, in an effort to keep from breathing the dust into our lungs. We laid low on the sand, our bodies over our walking sticks to prevent them from becoming projectiles, and covered our heads with our arms to try to shield ourselves from anything the high winds might carry. But, those whipping winds never came. Instead of the howl of a storm, we heard the howls of voices echoing across the land, with the trampling of hooves and the squeaking of wagon wheels.

The “sand storm” was not one caused by nature, but one that nipped at the heels of a pack of elves who drove their flock of goats across the dunes with



reckless abandon. Painted with clay and dyes of the earth, the elves rode on horses decorated with similar paints and leather armor, adorned with spikes of sharpened bone. Their wild cries gave them the appearance of a pack of demons rising up from the Abyss to tear across the land, sowing fear and chaos in their wake.


Making the split-second decision between being tormented or being trampled, Arclath and I stood, raising our hands up in the air to show we were no threat to them. I'm not sure why we thought we might be interpreted as a threat. Only in retrospect am I realizing how egotistical that was, to stare down what looked like a warband on the hunt in their own territory and think that they might somehow be threatened by me. There was no fear in their eyes, no concern, only the abundant joy of a child who has discovered a new toy. Their herd of goats scattered across the sands as the elves broke off from the drive to instead circle around us, never stopping and never slowing. The sharpened axles of their wagon wheels tore past us, creaking with the threat that they could fly off in any direction at any minute. Their horses breathed heavy under cloth covers, under the weight of their riders and their deadly looking armor. The riders swung all manner of weapons in the air over their heads; swords, spears, clubs, and hatchets were the least surprising, while others carried all manner of odd 'weapons' like strings of beastly teeth or pieces of broken wagon wheels. They had no interest in a parley. Their only interest seemed in trying to whip up a dust cyclone around us.

Then, one of the riders broke from the pack, charging through the middle of the circle, cutting a line in the sand between myself and Arclath. They were on a mission of terror, and they wanted to hear us scream. Another rider cut across from behind

us, her boot finding purchase on the back of my shoulder and nearly knocking me onto my face, though I shuffled to keep my balance in the shifting sands. A third rider broke formation to charge Arclath, and snagged the strap of his canteen from his shoulder, I'm sure with intent to steal it. He had most assuredly not expected Arclath to keep hold of the canteen and dig his feet in. The horse kept charging but the rider was snapped off of his saddle, flying through the air before unceremoniously crashing to the ground beside us. Knowing not what else to do, I grabbed my walking stick and struck him across the face with it, splashing blood and a couple of teeth onto the sand.

For a moment, I worried I had signed our death warrant. Instead, uproarious laughter rose between the hoots and howls. The circle began to break up as riders fell away, some charging north while others spread out to gather their wayward flock. One of the riders shot past us, leaning down off the side of her saddle so low she barely held on with one stirrup, and grabbed the shirt of the attacker Arclath had dethroned. They took off toward the north, with the beaten man cackling even as blood poured from his nose and mouth, and he was drug across the sand by the back of his collar. As they vanished into the dust, we saw him holding Arclath's canteen aloft like a prize. As quickly as the discord had come upon us, it had scattered like oh so many grains of sand into the wind, their voices fading in the distance, leaving us alone with the pounding of our pulses.

In the end, Arclath and I never made it to Ormpur. We turned back for the North Wall and found another route of travel that wasn't claimed by berserk elven horse-and-buggy gangs.





Plains of Purple Dust

The land bears scars of violence long after the aggressors are gone. I once walked by an old, scarred oak tree and saw a wisp of a memory from my great-great-grandfather: the sight of a young lady swinging her sword in exhausting repetition. I know that by the time I saw the tree, that young lady was probably long gone. Maybe her children or grandchildren owned the land where the old oak still grew, even if they'd long since traded their swords for rakes and spades. But, the land remembered.


The Plains of Purple Dust bear the scars of the fall of the Imaskari Empire. Though the original empire fell thousands of years ago, this northern region of the Raurin Desert remains covered in a deep blanket of fine, glistening purple sand. Though not as obvious as craters or piles of bone, the purple dust is the direct result of the vicious spell-wars that heralded the fall of Imaskar. Even now, millennia after these battles, a faint aura of magic still radiates from the purple sands, and the ruins of dozens of purple stone towers can still be found standing (or leaning) amidst the towering dunes.

After the Spellplague, the harsh winds that cut across the Plains of Purple Dust served to extend its borders, sweeping fine purple sand out even further across neighboring regions. Yet, across the vastness of this desert, there are only two individual oases to offer relief to travelers. The first is called the Lonely Lake, though its name is misleading; you'll find no solitude there, but instead, the controlling grip of a family of wizards descended from the Mulhorand mage Nezram. This wizard family, called Nezramites, have forged alliances with the local nomads but are wary of anyone else who passes by. Since the Mulhorandi overthrew the rulers of High Imaskar, driving many of them to the Plains of Purple Dust, the Nezramites have only become more guarded and territorial. Having heard of the Nezramites from other travelers, we chose to avoid the Lonely Lake entirely.

Fauna. Beacon Tortoise, Debbie, Dromedary, Dune Rattler, Rattelyr Dragon, Sand Elemental, Sand Skate, Thunderherder, World Eater

Flora. Ab'i, Caravara, Journeyman's Gate, Luallgarde, Rolling Cactus, Rose of Forgetfulness, Spring Lily, Tassit

- One of Nezram, the World-Walker's daughters, has been scouring the desert looking for powerful Okothian artifacts. While none have been found, she sells a wide variety of trinkets from Okoth and can be found at the Lonely Lake.
- Merchants offering purple mud baths claim that the luxurious experience can increase a mage's potency. The accompanying rumors of purple mud baths causing glowing scars or prophetic hallucinations are purely circumstantial and coincidental.
- The Sludar are humanoids who are often shunned in society. Here on the plains, they have a small society that has been burgeoning for some time. Their leaders have decided it's time to show the larger world they want to belong. To that end, they've asked for bodyguards for their ambassadors.
- Shrieks and caws have carried across the desert wastes and onto tamed lands beyond. The rocs are fighting each other, and fighting for their lives. But why?



Thus, Arclath and I set off into the Plains of Purple Dust with a different destination in mind: the Grinning Skull. Though it sounds even less inviting than the Lonely Lake, we hoped that the off-putting name would keep others away.

When Arclath and I first spotted the Grinning Skull from atop a dune, we were shocked by the size of it. The skull of a dragon, nay, a great wyrm, lay on the desert sands, its lower jaw all but buried in the sands with but a few tips of teeth jutting up like towering stalagmites. Within the skull was a cavern, easily large enough to contain a small town. We had only moments to marvel at the view before the winds picked up, and forced us to race ahead, pulling our hoods down to shield our faces from the brewing dust storm.

When we arrived inside the skull, we felt as though we'd stepped into another world entirely. Instead of a cavern of cold bone, we found walls covered in vine. The eyes of the supermassive skull were veiled with vines, and the sunlight that shone through glimmered across the surface of five pools of water. The dirt here was not even tinged purple, but instead, was a soft pale brown, crisscrossed

MAGIC REMAINS

Most adventurers probably think that they're used to the aura of magic. After all, you're around it every day, aren't you? You probably sleep with a ring that bears an enchantment, or wrap yourself each day in a magical cloak. This, my friend, is like comparing a skink to a great wyrm. The aura of magic that radiates from the Plains of Purple Desert is oppressive, even nauseating to some. Sensitivity to it does not hinge on how magically inclined one is or isn't, and seems almost random.

Though Amarune braved the desert without a cave beyond the wind and dryness, I struggled with nausea and headaches from the outset. Within a few days, I began to spot strange marks on my skin; red and purple dappled splotches where I'd had no reason to bruise. I regrettably hid these for several days, out of concern Amarune would insist we turned back. She eventually discovered them when I became dizzy and took a tumble down a purple dune. Even then, I downplayed my concern.

Within a couple of moons of leaving the Plains, I've recovered fully from the experience, though I feel I would be committing a great disservice to our readers to not warn them of the dangers they might face in such a place. Though I presume I was particularly sensitive to the aura, I will not assume that it could not be significantly worse for someone else.



with exposed roots from trees and shrubs that grew throughout the cavern. I do not know how long we stood in silence, staring at our surroundings, before we were greeted by a lone figure.

A human man, dressed in layers of unbleached muslin, with flecks of silver in his dark brown hair, greeted us as he walked barefoot across the soil. His words struck me strangely at first, "Full glad am I to have visitors, though thoust seem bewildered."

His archaic common tongue stuck me as a man hundreds of years his senior, I managed a small nod and he warmly introduced himself. This gentleman, a druid who named himself Aridius, was the lone resident of the Grinning Skull, and tender of this seemingly miraculous garden.

Though he appeared decades younger, and spoke millennia older, I could guess from his stories that Aridius was around two centuries old. As a druid, the primal magics he wielded have slowed the passage of time for his bodies, to the tune of decades passing like mere years. It was a little less than a century and a half ago when he first came to the Plains of Purple Dust and was captured by a group of bandits called the Desert Wind who brought him to the Grinning Skull.

The pools of the Grinning Skull were cursed by the cruel Imaskari, who inflicted magic poison on four of the five pools, and each day at sunrise, the safe pool changed at random. It was the Desert Wind's common practice to force their captives to drink the water of the pools to determine which were safe.

Through no skill of his own, Aridius became their good luck charm, and for many days in a row, he selected the safe pool and provided them with clean drinking water. I don't know how this arrangement came to an end, and I didn't feel it was tasteful to ask, but I could imagine the myriad ways that Aridius came to live here while the Desert Wind was long gone.

In his time here, one of the things Aridius had learned was that the poisoned pools of the Grinning Skull were dangerous for animals, save a solitary random pool, but all five of them were safe for plants. Thus, he had been cultivating wildlife here for many decades, until a nearby jungle flourished within the great wyrm's skull.

"Mine efforts hath borne strange fruit," Aridius said, "I sought only to bring life to the plains which had been so devastated by the mages' war, yet erelong, I realized that the plants were not only surviving in the poison-tainted soil, but cleansing it. Though this verdant garden seems immured within this grim cavern, I have no doubt that come centuries from now, it shall flourish thither and yon across the desert."

Given that the desert has been a magical wasteland for thousands of years, it shocks me to think that even such a small patch of land could be purified and made livable again in little more than one century. It gives me hope for many parts of Faerûn still suffering from the catastrophes of the past.





Quoya Desert

In the far east beyond the Plain of Horses, beyond the Endless Wastes of the Hordelands, there is a land known as the Quoya Desert. Average temperatures are below freezing three moons out of the year, and the annual rainfall only measures in at about four inches. Were it not for the numerous small streams that flow across the land, I can't imagine how anyone or anything could survive in this place.

Arclath and I had intended to visit the far eastern nation of Shou Lung, but doing so would mean crossing the Quoya Desert and then passing through the Dragonwall, a three-thousand-mile-long wall that serves as the nation's border. In order to navigate our foreign entry, we stopped off in the small town of Kwachow in a large valley known as the Merket Depression. We had heard of the famously delicious Kwachow melons that grew in this town, and I suppose that Arclath and I had formed an idea of what Kwachow might look like in our minds. We were sorely mistaken.

The Merket Depression, or Merket Oasis if you prefer, was not a verdant and refreshing oasis. It was a dry little town where everything was seeming covered in a thin layer of dust at all times. The vital streams that flowed into the valley had all been diverted to numerous fields of melon vines, while the farmers and townsfolk themselves subsisted off of water collected and carefully rationed from the cisterns that filled when the streams flooded once a year. The locals neither treated us warily nor welcomed us with open arms; because they had so little, they were unaccustomed to offering hospitality, but also thankfully unaccustomed to bandit raids or con artists.

When we expressed our surprise at the dry and desolate appearance of the Merket Depression, we were told that only a few of the Quoya Desert's streams terminated here, while the rest flowed into

Fauna. Dromedary, Rattelyr Dragon, Sand Elemental
Flora. Avallae, Cobra Orchid, Devver, Emmult's Curse, Journeyman's Gate, Kalantavur, Luallgarde, Surtl, Tassit

- Ansi and its caravanserai are missing? Reports of travelers say the entire area has been swallowed by a sandstorm.
- Rumors of the miraculous medicinal properties of the waters of the Bitter Well Oasis have people clamoring to spend small fortunes on bottles of what might only be cloudy salt water.
- The Quoya Desert is a tradeway via the Spice Road. However, while rain is often light in the region, the last twenty days have had nothing but downpour. Travel is now dangerous and difficult, many rich merchants are paying for someone to figure out what's happening and yet more to stop it.
- The statue of a massive, serpentine dragon has been revealed by the swirling desert winds. Diggers have made it to the dragon's mouth, and they claim it's an entrance to some sort of complex.

another valley, called the Horseshoe Temple Oasis. From right away, my interest was piqued; an oasis with a temple in it sounded positively fascinating. As it turns out, the Horseshoe Temple was an incredibly important destination within the Quoya Desert and was central to no less than three different faiths.

You may notice I use the word "was," as in, past tense. Unfortunately, the Horseshoe Temple Oasis was overrun with violent spirit creatures called oni, who are prevalent in this region. There is some word that the oni converted the Horseshoe Temple to their own faith, defacing the monuments within and erecting statues of their own god of the underworld.

I might've ignored this entirely, or written it off as an interesting footnote, had our travel through the Dragonwall not been denied. At the whims of the magistrate, or perhaps the bureaucrats who look over such requests, our first petition to pass into Shou Lung was denied and we were left stranded in Kwachow. Instead of making another attempt, we decided to pay a visit to the Horseshoe Temple Oasis, at least to look at it from afar.

KWACHOW MELONS

While nobles pride themselves on knowing about all the rarest and most fashionable consumables, only the most well-traveled know of exotic trade goods from far away lands like Kara-Tur. Though I have no entourages to impress or noble peers to rub my luxuries in the noses of, I still cannot help being drawn to rare experiences. Thus, when I heard of the Kwachow melons, a delicacy that graces the platters of Shou Lung's emperor at his banquets, I knew I had to learn more.

These large, succulently sweet melons are only able to be grown in the tiny desert valley town of Kwachow. I cannot fathom why any mortal being would choose to live in this place, beyond the farming of this melon. We met a farmer who was checking his crop, and he sliced open one of the pale cream-colored melons to show a vibrant scarlet flesh within. The heart of the fruit was slightly paler, dividing the flesh into sections in which the small seeds were arranged in swirling patterns. It was gorgeous, and dripping with juice as it was sliced. The farmer began to sample the melon in a most studious fashion, cutting another thin section and holding it up to the sun to see the pattern through the translucent flesh. He examined the aesthetics in several other ways before he ever took the first taste.

When I approached the farmer to ask if I might purchase a slice of the melon he'd already cut into and half-butchered, he looked me over with a careful eye, stroked his chin, and began to think quite heavily about what he'd ask me to trade for a mere slice. I knew in order to enjoy this luxury, I would have to submit to being the milked foreign traveler.

Having bartered for three undersized and aesthetically flawed Kwachow melons to supplement our rations (and satisfy our curiosity about the delicacy), we departed. We mostly kept to the valley of the Merket Depression to avoid the biting winds of the desert, and we heavily cloaked ourselves to keep the dust at bay. Once we emerged from the valley, we hugged the foot of the mountains, curving around the southwestern tip before we could begin to see the valley. We could see numerous streams cutting across the cold desert, before vanishing into a box canyon. We saw a red sandstone pyramid with a gateway that seemed to mark the entrance to the valley, though we dared not move closer. Cautiously, we approached the canyon from its eastern edge, keeping our bodies low and camouflaging ourselves with the thick coat of dust that had coated our cloaks.

At first, I couldn't believe what I saw within. The streams poured over the edge into the canyon like waterfalls, into a verdant green forest. The walls of the canyon were vibrant red sandstone, into which numerous caves and embedded sets of stairs had been carved. At the bottom of the valley were fields of grass and wildflowers, and a forest of pine trees. This was not simply an oasis, but what seemed like a paradise tucked away in the midst of the bitter desert.

Yet, past the first glance, things began to sour. I could see piles of trash flowing out of some of the caves, or shoved against the corners of the stairs, leaving only a narrow path for one to walk along. Bones and other debris littered what were once carefully sculpted gardens, now left to overrun. As we watched, we saw an enormous oni emerge from one of the caves; a humanoid silhouette with the head of a bull, clad in the unique armor of Kara-Tur. Groveling at his feet were three goblins, whom he kicked about and ordered to do his bidding. In the time we spent by the valley, I counted roughly a dozen oni dwelling within the valley, and two dozen goblin slaves at their beck and call.

This valley, a glimmering oasis amidst the bitterly cold dusts of Quoya, had been claimed by the oni for over a century and a half. Though its beauty and spiritual significance seemed remarkable to Arclath and myself, there had been no significant effort to reclaim it from its defilers. Even though it was at least spiritually an important part of Shou Lung, its position on the western side of the Dragonwall put it out of sight and out of mind. From what we could tell, the only thing that had free passage through the wall, or was worth defending on the outside, were Kwachow melons.

Between Adventures

The deserts of Faerûn are unforgiving, but not without their rewards. Gathered around areas that receive adequate shade and water are grasses, succulents, and flowers. The following section details a downtime activity which you can participate in to gather the flora of specific regions. Of course, these roots and herbs are not only found in the wild; they can be used to populate marketplaces, act as quest hooks, or simply add another element of depth to an environment. Some even function as spellcasting components to improve spells or can be used in the crafting of weapons and equipment.

Downtime Activity: Gathering Plants Expedition

The world is a wealth of natural resources, and it only takes a keen mind and a bit of regional knowledge to collect its bounty.

Resources. An expedition to gather resources and materials takes a workweek from planning to completion. Part of this time is spent gathering information about what types of plants can be found in the region, and how difficult they are to find. Each of the plants on the Regional Flora table designates the regions of Faerûn in which they are most commonly found.

Resolution. The character must make a series of checks, with the DC for all checks determined by the plant the character is searching for: the character's choice of Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival), Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception), and a Wisdom check using an herbalism kit, or an Intelligence check using alchemist's supplies. If the plant is poisonous, they can use an Intelligence or Wisdom check using a poisoner's kit instead.

If none of the checks are successful, the character becomes lost and is on the expedition for an additional tenday.

If only one check is successful, the character never finds their bounty but returns as expected.

If two checks are successful, the expedition is a partial success, netting the character 1d4 units of the plant they sought after.

If all three checks are successful, the expedition returns 1d4 + 3 units of the plant they sought after.

Whether the expedition is a success or a failure, all is not lost. Roll an additional d6 and consult the Mundane Flora table, to determine if anything else was found.

MUNDANE FLORA

d6 Reward

- 1 Nothing of value was found, and roll on the Expedition Complication Table.
- 2 Nothing of value was found.
- 3 5 gp worth of herbs and materials were found.
- 4 10 gp worth of herbs and materials were found.
- 5 25 gp worth of herbs and materials were found.
- 6 25 gp worth of herbs and materials were found, and one unit of one of a unique flora that can be found in the region (determined by the DM).

EXPEDITION COMPLICATION TABLE

d6 Complication

- 1 The winds have constantly shifted the direction of the dunes you were walking across, adding two days to your expedition.
- 2 A persuasive and intrusive bard meets you on your journey and insists that, because you overheard his music, you owe him compensation.
- 3 In the dead hours of the night, your packs are ransacked by local fauna, leaving you with half as many provisions as are required to complete the expedition.
- 4 It is too early or late in the season for the plant to have its clear indicators, making it nearly impossible to find.
- 5 You encounter an aggressive band of beasts local to the region.
- 6 The oasis you'd marked on your map to camp for the night has dried up, and you are unable to refill your waterskins or water your pack animals, leaving you thirsty for a full two days.

REGIONAL FLORA TABLE

	Ab'í	Avallae	Calim Cactus	Caravara	Death's Orchid	Emm't's Hands	Devver	Journeyman's Curse	Foalough	Kalantavur	Pitcher on the Gate	Luallgarde	M'racerl	Rose of Forgetfulness	Rolling Cactus	Spring Lily	Rulguth	Surtl	Tassit	
Amn																				
Anauroch			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓
Beastlands																				
Calimshan			✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓
Chessentea																				
Chondath																				
Cormanthor																				
Cormyr																				
Damara			✓					✓				✓			✓					✓
Dambrath														✓						
Elfharrow	✓				✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓
Great Glacier			✓					✓				✓			✓					✓
Greypeak Mountains																				
Halruaa			✓					✓				✓			✓					✓
Hordelands			✓			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓						✓	✓
Jungles of Chult																				
Lantan																				✓
Lapaliiya					✓			✓		✓		✓							✓	✓
Luskan																				
Moonshea Isles																				✓
Mulhorand								✓				✓			✓				✓	✓
Murghôm															✓					
Narfell			✓					✓				✓								✓
Neverwinter																				
Plains of Purple Dust	✓				✓						✓		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Rashemen									✓											
Semia									✓						✓				✓	
Silver Marches																				
Sossal																				
Spine of the World																				
Tethyr																				
Thay								✓	✓			✓								✓
The Dragon Coast																				
The Great Dale																				
The High Forest																				
The High Moor																				
The Shaar	✓				✓						✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
The Shining Plains																				✓
The Western Heartlands																				
Thesk								✓	✓			✓								✓
Turmish															✓				✓	
Unther																				
Vaasa			✓			✓		✓				✓								✓
Yehimal Mountains														✓						

Flora

Presented in this section are details of some of the flora you might find littered throughout the deserts of Faerûn. The regional flora table in the previous section will detail where they can be found in the wild, and the following section and table provides the details about the flora and their measures and values.

Flora: Deserts

Below is a table which lists each plant included in this book, sorted alphabetically. Each plant has a quantity of material and a gold cost associated with that quantity. The costs listed are for high quality and adventurer-grade examples of each material.

Flora	Unit	Value
Ab'i	1 tuber	2 sp
Avallae	a dozen intact flowers	1 gp per flower
Calim Cactus	1 honey bulb	500 gp
Caravara	10 plants	5 cp each
Cobra Orchid	1 orchid	250 gp
Death's Hands	1 hand	25 gp
Dever	1 lb. of dever grass	5 sp per lb.
Emmult's Curse	1 lb. of rauffen	10 sp per lb.
Foalongh	1 tuber	50 sp

Journeyman's Gate	1 dried dream lily flower	4,000 gp
Kalantavur	a half dozen intact kalantavur	1 gp each
Lualgarde	Special	—
Mracerl	one plant with 12 leaves	5 sp
Pitcher on the Horizon	—	—
Rolling Cactus	—	—
Rose of Forgetfulness	1 rose	10,000 gp
Rulguth	10 lbs. of rulguth	15 gp
Spring Lily	1 lily seed	10,000 gp
Surtl	a dozen nuts	1 sp each
Tassit	a dozen tubers	15 cp each

Евгения Гребнева

MATERIALS: UNITS

When gathering flora, the useful part of the plant varies. In the case of a flower, it might be each individual seed; or in the case of a tree, it could be cords of burl or specific cuts of lumber. The units and values shown here represent what is usefully gathered by a small adventuring band, which is likely far less than the amount of units a major lumbering organization can procure within a tenday.



Ab'i

Across the wind blown deserts of Zakhara and the High Desert, travelers rejoice at the sight of tall brown grass. Ab'i grass appears innocuous to the uninitiated, but the plant harbors a flavorless tuber about 3 feet below the sand surface. These tubers can be harvested for up to a gallon of water each.

Ab'i is most often found by oases, which negates some of their inherent usefulness when first found. However, the tuber can retain water for up to a month when kept away from the sun. Additionally, many oases are seasonal, but the plant persists through the year, even after its oasis has dried up. This means a traveler who finds Ab'i can use its location to mark potential oases along future trips. It also means Ab'i can be found and harvested for water even during the desert dry season.

Avallae

Avallae ("blue eyes") are ground-hugging, shallow-rooted plants that form rosettes of overlapping dark green leaves. They can subsist on very little water; the size of the rosettes, from small coin to larger than the length of a human hand, are a rough indicator of how much rain has fallen locally (in most deserts of Faerûn, the rosettes will fit into an adult human palm). Only when touched by moisture (sometimes ground fogs, but more often brief desert rainstorms), avallae very rapidly grow buds in their rosette centers that become flowers startlingly like oversized, lidlessly-staring human eyes with rich royal blue irises (a center black dot, surrounded by a circle of blue, surrounded by white outer leaves—the inside of the unfolded bud). These blue eyes are edible but neither tasty nor nourishing ("like eating

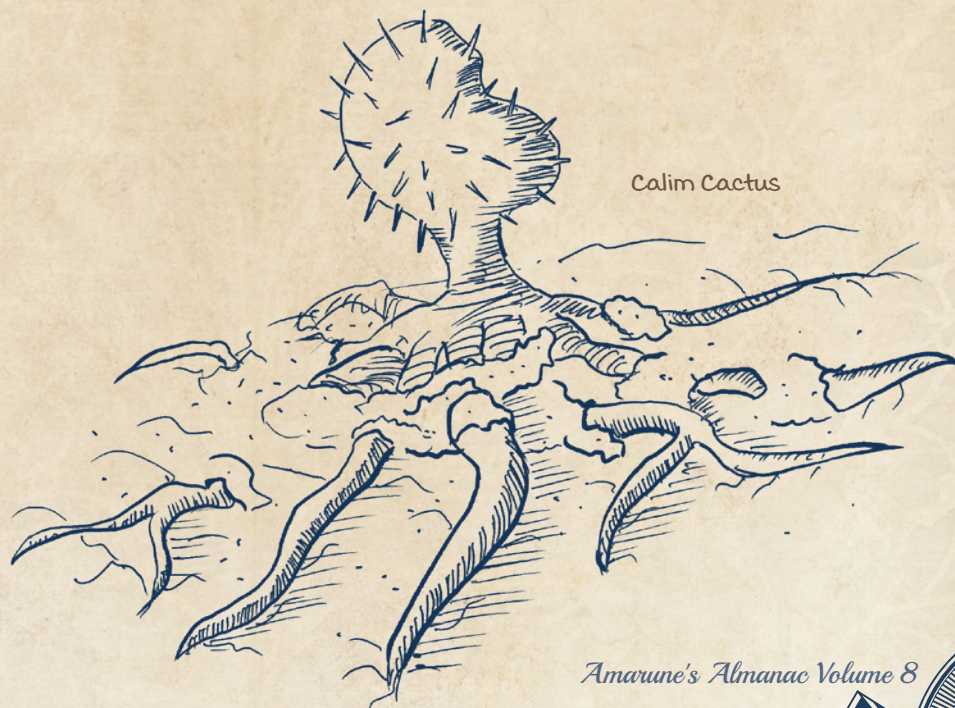
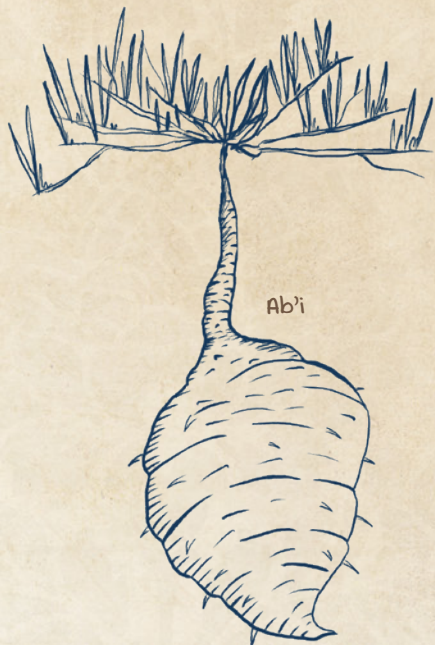
leaves and bark," one wayfarer described it), and persist for days or months, drying out very slowly (if more moisture strikes them during this time, they grow in size). When they dry out, the blue flowers wither, the black centers bursting to emit fine black spores like drifting black dust, that are carried on the desert winds to land and grow more rosettes, and the rosettes remain to await the next rainfall, when they can grow eyes again.

Avallae flowers can be crushed to emit a long-lasting, vivid blue dye used for writing and cosmetics by desert nomads. When used as a material component for the spell *illusory script* (requiring a dozen flowers worth of dye, used in place of the lead-based ink), the message can't be read even by a creature with truesight. Such messages are popular among the more clandestine groups that operate in the deserts of Faerûn, such as the Cult of the Shattered Peak.

Calim Cactus

Native to the Calim Desert of southwestern Faerûn, the calim cactus are short cacti, averaging 3 and a half feet tall, well known for their vast, woody root systems that occasionally pierce the desert sands and rocks. The cactus uses these protrusions of its roots to absorb what little moisture exists in the air. Its reliance on airborne water means it's generally a very slow growing plant, but also one that can be found and harvested for roughly a gallon of water anywhere in the Calim Desert.

The cactus flowers once every two years, with a single, large, azure flower growing on the cactus's thorny crown. The flower relies on small herbivores for pollination and seed dispersal, and attracts them



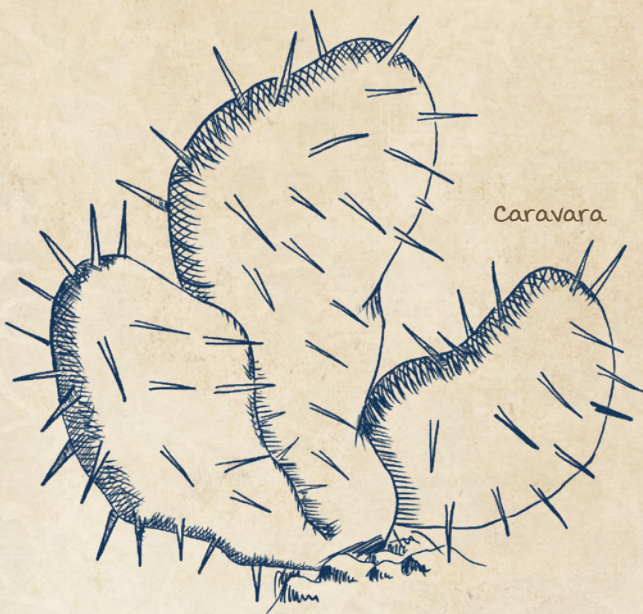
with a small well of sweet honey in the flower's center. Stored in an airtight bulb to protect from wind and sand, this bulb of honey is considered a prized ingredient and delicacy of Calimshan, and a prime specimen is worth upwards of 500 gp if sold to the right buyer.

The cost is inflated because it is actually difficult to find wild bulbs, as the fauna of the desert seem to have figured out a way to track when specific cacti are ready to flower. The major producers are specific pashas of Calimshan, who control oases where they grow naturally, and produce faster due to the abundance of water.

Caravara

Part grass, part cactus, caravara is a low growing plant that consists of one to three flat, thorny lobes. Brownish green in color, this distinct plant gets their name from the fact that it seems to sprout sporadically along the caravan routes of the previous year. Caravara seeds are small, and look like perfectly round grains of sand. Their germination is triggered by the tossing of sand, as the plants take this to be an indication of rainfall. Without actual water, the plants live for at most about a year after sprouting. The caravara sustains this wasteful method of reproduction by shooting up clouds of these small seeds, clones of themselves, and spreading as much of them as they can.

The lobes can be roasted, and the roots of caravara can be used as a spice akin to horseradish. It is not particularly sought after, as caravara and its roots are quite bitter and don't go down well. However, they preserve well so they are still kept and harvested for emergency rations for desert dwellers and travelers.



Cobra Orchid

On the rocky outcroppings in the midst of the desert wastes, these golden flowers find purchase with their strong roots that grasp the rock as anchor points. The flower is said to resemble a cobra's head and hood, with its mouth fully ajar. This, in addition to the flower's slender winding stems, makes it look like a miniature cobra. The snakes seem to think so as well, though, as the rocky outcroppings where these flowers grow seem to attract swarms of the venomous beasts.

This orchid actually relies on the predators for pollination and the spread of their seeds. Since they must roam the desert to seek prey, and are naturally attracted to the outcroppings where the flowers reside, they are extremely effective at the task. This has led to the orchid taking on the symbolism of ill omen among the desert wanderers, as large quantities of cobra orchids usually indicates a landing frequented by the formidable predators.

Though hard to care for, the orchids do fetch a pretty penny in foreign markets due to their metallic petals. Natives to the deserts where these flowers are found all have stories of foolhardy adventurers going into the rocky outcroppings to gather samples and seeds, and never returning.



Cobra Orchid

Death's Hands

This weed manages to cover swatches of the Anauroch despite the dearth of resources. These weeds grow out of a four-leafed base, have four stalks, each of which is topped with four finger-like lobes. These plants grow and gain sustenance from absorbing magic and life essence over long periods of time. Over years, these plants can convert verdant areas into wasteland, and animate the wasteland in unlife through a sporadic release of negative energy.

It is widely believed by sages learned on the subject of ancient evils that these flowers were made by the phaerimm, a horrible threat from millennia and a half ago that indirectly caused the end of the greatest human empire in Toril's history. When casting a necromancy spell, a spellcaster can add four stalks of death's hand as a material component. If they do, the stalks are consumed by the spell and the spell is cast as if from a spell slot one level higher. The caster must then succeed on a DC10 Charisma saving throw, or gain a level of exhaustion.



Devver

Devver is a coppery-brown desert grass, a shallow root that sprouts a trio, quartet, or quintet of leaf blades that can grow to three feet in length, but are usually not much more than a third of that (the size and number of the leaves is an indicator of how plentiful rainfalls are, and how old a particular tuft of devver is). Devver is edible for all cloven-hoofed animals, but incredibly bitter and a laxative for humans, so it is ready forage only for pack beasts. However, devver leaves are as flexible and tough as leather thongs, and can be cut and used like thongs (to strongly bind things) for a month or more, until they dry out and become brittle. They blacken as they decay, so their hue provides a warning of imminent breakage/collapse.

Emmult's Curse

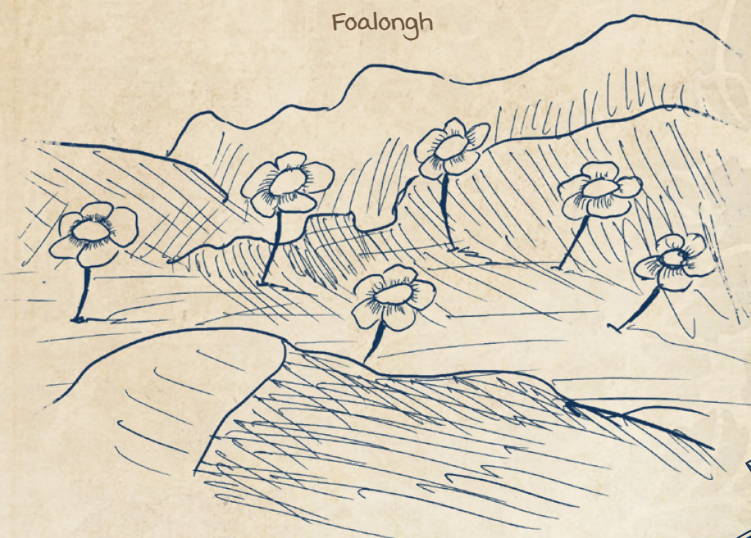
Emmult's Curse ("Rauffen") is a ground-hugging, spherical gray-green cactus that rarely grows larger than a human fist, except where there's sufficient water; in dry terrain where an underground spring runs close to the surface, water can often be located by lines of larger rauffen nearby. Rauffen (pronounced "RAW-fen") is an old desert name for this plant, but it's known in Common as Emmult's Curse, after an unfortunate caravan merchant in the 1100s DR who, through his life, repeatedly fell so he got rauffen plants in his face. Upon contact with the spines, he swelled up to a comical red, bloated appearance. His legacy is to be a name given mockingly to clumsy, accident-prone individuals.

Rauffen have sharp, piercing spines that many humans and elves are swellingly allergic to (but dwarves, gnomes, halflings, and all goblinkin are not); these spines can be used as needles, but remain flexible for months, and so can be bent and

even knotted as fastenings to join the edges of torn clothing, or two pieces of cloth, together. If one end of a rauffen is cut open, the interior (which is somewhat like a sour-sweet peach) can be eaten, or sucked or crushed to yield its stored, sweetly drinkable water—which has made this plant a life-saver for many desert travelers.

Foalough

Foalough (pronounced "FOE-long") is seen on the surface of desert sands only as a long line of tiny five-petaled white flowers flat to the ground. Those unfamiliar with arid terrain often stride right past them (and they readily survive being trodden on, or even under heavy weights like full casks and barrels left for days atop them). Yet every tiny flower is connected by a whisker-thin black stalk to a shallow-buried shared root, a tuber ranging in length from the size of a small human forearm to the length of a tall man's leg. This root is dun-brown (mottled with darker gray patches wherever flower stalks sprout from it), and looks rather like a long cucumber, except that it almost always bends several times, in an irregular zigzag shape. Foalough roots absorb and store moisture; if one end is sliced off, the exposed surface can be sucked on for some time to yield the rough equivalent of a tankard of ale, ere that exposed end is drained of moisture—and seals itself! (So the root can be carried in a pouch or pack, and when the next drink is desired, a finger width of root is sliced off and the newly exposed surface sucked on for more water). Foalough roots grow slowly, last for centuries if undisturbed, and seem to purify all moisture they take in, so it's all, no matter how foul the source, drinkable by all known sentient races of Toril.



Journeyman's Gate

This desert flower can be found randomly amidst Faerûn's deserts, and is easily identifiable by its bright pink and yellow petals, which are large and long. Its lily-like appearance, combined with the fact that it tends to color the sands within 10 feet of its base in many hues, have given it the moniker of 'dream lily.' The reproduction of the plant is unpredictable, as it's believed to teleport its seeds randomly across the desert.

For each journeyman's gate, there is a sister flower in another desert on Faerûn—usually the same desert, but not necessarily. When at least a gallon of water is poured into the sand beneath the flower, the colored sands around the base of the flower begin to swirl about. The sands become a portal to the gate's sister flower for the next minute. Any creature that touches the sand is transported to the sister flower's location.

If such a flower is killed or plucked, both it and its sister flower dry up instantly, losing any portal abilities. The dried flower can be used as a material component for spells that allow for teleportation, however. When a caster does so, it lets them teleport any creatures within 10 feet of them, in addition to themselves, regardless of how many creatures the spell can normally teleport. The creatures must be willing, unless the spell can target unwilling creatures. This consumes the flower.

Kalantavur

Kalantavur ("Klant") is a brown-gray desert weed that consists of some short leaves and a long stalk (usually seen bending in the wind; the stalks are supple and very tough, rarely breaking or failing to spring back upright when the wind dies) that's capped by a spiky, thistle-like head (an orange-to-pink flower surrounded by sharp spines, and growing out of a bulb that bristles with spines). It rarely grows taller than knee height for an adult human, unless moisture is plentiful and recurring. Klant tastes like rotting sour lemons and its spines can draw blood, but if eaten—spines and all—despite the discomfort and mouth wounds, the entire head of a klant plant, raw-fresh or dried and years old (so long as it hasn't lost more than half of its spines) can neutralize all poisons currently in your body. No lasting protection is conferred, so a fresh poisoning even moments later would have its normal effect. This process harms the creature ingesting the kalantavur, causing them to lose 1 hit point per Hit Die but ends all but the most virulent poisons in the ingester's body.

Luallgarde

Luallgarde (pronounced "LAL-guard") is named for the long-ago desert wayfarer who accidentally discovered its unusual property: it is a thorny, inedible (poisonous if ingested by livestock or pack animals) yellow-green ground vine, that's unrooted and creeps or is blown or disturb-carried freely over the ground. However, if the blood of a mammal falls on luallgarde, and the mammal remains in contact with the vine for half a day or more, the vine "melts" into the mammal's body, and causes healing—regeneration of lost or damaged organs, tissues, and even blood (as per the *regenerate* spell)—as it does so. Erengul Luallgarde was a bastard noble Tethyrian son who, when fleeing brigands, fell over a cliff in a desert, to his presumed death. But, lying senseless and shattered on the rocks below, he slowly regenerated because he'd landed on a patch of the vines now named for him. Days later, dazed and covered with his own dried gore, he got up, entirely healed, and walked away.

More recent experiments have determined that luallgarde can't be grown in a garden, as it shrivels and dies soon after being taken out of desert conditions, or even contact with the ground (so it can't be harvested and carried, but must be found and used where it is). Thus far hasn't yielded any distillate, sap, or essence that has any regenerative properties at all. However, scores of wayfarers have benefited from its aid since Luallgarde himself; the vine's properties are very real.

Special. When searching for Luallgarde during a downtime activity, if you find it, you benefit from its regenerative properties as part of that downtime activity but can't bring the plant away from where you found it without destroying it.



Kalantavur

Mracerl

Mracerl (pronounced “Mur-ACE-url”) is a rare, reddish-purple desert flower with long, thin, pointed radiating leaves, usually nine to a dozen in number, that is found in the Shaar and no other grassland, and in desert regions, including cold rocky deserts, only east and south of the Shaar. It commonly hugs clefts, either between rocks or under the bones of some dead-in-the-desert skeleton, and grows slowly in small clusters of seven or less (usually three). Mracerl is so strong-tasting, ‘hot’ (tongue-inflaming), and bitter that it’s inedible—but if roasted slowly over a hot fire, in a shallow pan with any sort of edible sap or oil that’s allowed to entirely cook away, the resulting powder is a nutty red pepper that never grows mold (and so, unless consumed, lasts forever), and can be sold as the very finest sort of the spice known as “pepper.” This process requires a successful DC 10 Wisdom or Intelligence check using cook’s utensils. A failed check still produces half as much pepper, but it is of notably low quality. Each leaf produces 1 ounce of pepper, worth 1 sp each.

Pitcher on the Horizon

When water is scarce enough, even the plants can resort to getting it from other creatures. This carnivorous magical pitcher plant embeds itself in the desert sand, and creates a magical illusion using either the effects of the *major image* or *hallucinatory terrain* spells (DM’s choice, DC 14). The illusion is always large enough to cover the entrance to the plant’s mouth, and takes the form of the strongest desire of the last creature it digested. As such, these plants often portray the illusion of an oasis, as water is often the dying wish of the creatures and wanderers of the desert.

These plants start small, but there is no known limit to their size. The largest recorded by a sage is 20 feet in diameter, but desert natives have reported seeing entire palaces where they should not exist, claiming it must be the work of the pitcher on the horizon.

The plant is cylindrical in shape, and generally thrice as deep as it is wide. The bottom of the cylinder is filled with an acid that resists

evaporation. The acid rises about a number of feet from the bottom equal to half the plant’s width. A creature that starts their turn in the acid takes 2d10 acid damage. A creature that starts their turn fully submerged in the acid instead takes 4d10 acid damage. The sides of the pitcher are lined with downward facing barbs meant to make climbing out of the plant extremely difficult. If a creature attempts to scale these walls, they must succeed on a DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check. On a failure, they take 2d6 piercing damage from the barbs. If they fail by 5 or more, they also fall.

Rolling Cactus

Also called the ‘desert chestnut,’ these spherical cacti can be seen riding the wind along desert dunes across the central deserts of Faerûn, and in Zakhara. These light, woody cacti are covered in short, wide spines, and can grow up to four feet in diameter. Immediately below the green, rough fibers of the surface, the cactus hides a bounty of soft chewy insides. The cactus’s hard shell is normally roasted to dry it out and make it brittle to allow easy access to the juicy insides. A 2-foot rolling cactus provides enough food and water to sustain a Medium creature for a day.

At their center, the cactus has up to three large seeds, suspended in its center by strands of flesh like a bug in a spider’s web. The seed can be left anywhere in the desert, where it can remain dormant beneath the sands for up to thirty years, storing water from the small quantities of rain until it can swell into a cactus of its own.

People who live on the edge of the deserts regularly collect these cacti when they see them to thin their numbers. They’ve been known to be collected by the wind and travel in large swarms, composed of hundreds or even thousands of cacti. These swarms can be up to 60 feet in radius, and up to 30 feet tall, lightly obscuring its area. A creature caught in a cactus swarm must roll a d6. On a 5 or a 6, they are struck by a cactus, taking 1d4 bludgeoning and 1d4 piercing damage. Whenever a creature makes a ranged attack in the storm, they must roll the same d6. On a roll of a 5 or a 6, the target has three-quarters cover from the attack.



Rose of Forgetfulness

Rose of Forgetfulness

Deep in the oases of the Zakharan wastes, wayward travelers can find bushes of these snow-white flowers growing in delicate bundles. While they may seem delicate, their stalks are very rigid, and their petals firmly held. These flowers rely on passing sandstorms to gather their black, bladed, peppercorn like seeds across the desert vast. There are generally 2d6 roses to a bush, and they retain their potency for up to 6 tendays after cutting, assuming little preservation.

Those that discover these wayward bushes should be very wary, however, for the rose's sweet scent is a poison that if deeply inhaled causes amnesia. Any caster that prepares spells that enters the area within 5 feet of a rose of forgetfulness must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw against its poison, or forget a random spell it has prepared. If a creature inhales directly from the rose, they must succeed on the same saving throw, or get amnesia. The creature forgets its identity, any tasks it was attempting to accomplish, and any spells it had prepared. This effect can only be cured by a *greater restoration*, *heal*, or *wish* spell.

Rulguth

Rulguth ("hagbane") is a plentiful dusty-gray-green, ground-hugging, woody desert shrub that rarely grows above low-boot-top level and takes the form of clusters of rounded, kidney-shaped leaves growing from thin branches growing in segments; five side-branches split at every segment joint. Rulguth is inedible and tastes horrid, but its root and lower stalk (only) can be boiled down to yield a strong glue that dries out and cracks very slowly (typically after months of daily use). Water doesn't affect it, so it can be used as a sealant to mend torn water-skins.

The fey creatures known as "hags" hate and will recoil from rulguth, for they find it flesh-eating and poisonous to the touch (hence its nickname). It can be used as a defense against them; every direct-flesh contact between a hag and rulguth (even dried rulguth, but not rulguth glue) deals 1d4 + 1 acid damage to the hag (and on the hag's next turn, it must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or suffer an additional 1d4 + 1 acid damage. On a successful save, the hag becomes immune to that rulguth's effects for the next 24 hours).

Hagbane poison (worth as much as 150 gp per dose) can be created with 5 lbs. of rulguth, distilled spirits, and a successful DC 17 Intelligence check using alchemist's supplies or a poisoner's kit. A hag subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the hag is also unable to cast spells while poisoned in this way.

Spring Lily

This extremely rare and beautiful pale pink lily is found exclusively within the oasis pools of southeastern Faerûn. Its crescent petals are arranged in a spiral, fractal pattern that seems to ripple as you look into it. The lily floats in the center of the oasis pool on a pad shaped like the lower half of an oyster. Waves regularly emerge from the lily to ripple across the water's surface.

The lily is actually a plant native to the Elemental Plane of Water. These lilies were first spotted on the Material Plane during the Spellplague, believed to have been transported to the Calim Desert by a misfired spell. The lily produces its own fresh water, meaning oases quickly sprang out around them. The Pashas of Calimshan took note of this immediately and began warring and establishing control over these oasis points. To this day the lily is considered one of the most valuable resources a leader in the

southeastern deserts can own, granting it the local moniker “The Azure Crown”.

Reproduction habits of the plants are poorly understood, but elven memory states they have a chance of spawning a seed during the height of the Vernal Equinox on the Material Plane. The chance depends on the phase of the moon that night, with a 5% chance on a new moon, to a 95% chance on a full moon. The seed is about an inch across and resembles a peach and quickly blooms when dropped into a pool of water large enough to cover it.

Surtl

Surtl (pronounced “SIR-tull,” but far more often called “sandclaw” due to its appearance). This abundant brown, ground-hugging plant can be found all over arid regions of Toril, and consists of a fuzzy brown nut or ovoid central body that sends out half a dozen ‘fingers’ or fronds that act both as leaves and to anchor it (loosely) in place. Surtl are bitter and inedible, and grazing animals will instinctively avoid them. They can last for centuries ere their central nut dries out, splits, and puffs scores of tiny black spores up into the winds to blow elsewhere and become new surtl. Heat doesn’t ignite them, and lack of water—even for years—doesn’t seem to harm them. However, if the central nut-body of a surtl is crushed while in contact with ferrous metal, such as an iron shield or shovel blade, or sliced open with a ferrous metal blade, it will ignite with a brief, intense flare of flame and heat. Desert wayfarers who know this customarily use a surtl to light fires; surtl will ignite wood, dry grasses, and even heaps of damp, fresh camel dung.

When casting a spell that creates fire or deals fire damage and using a ferrous metal spellcasting focus, a surtl nut can be consumed as part of casting the spell to have the initial flames turn black instead of their normal color. If the fire ignites anything, or lingers for longer than the initial casting, the black effect fades but the flames produce an abnormal amount of ashy smoke that creates a column in the area that will heavily obscure vision. This smoke is dispersed by a moderate or greater wind (at least 10 mph) but otherwise lingers as long as the fire burns.

Tassit

Tassit (“taz”) is a surprisingly abundant shallow-growing tuber found in sandy, hot deserts all over Toril. Usually only about a foot below the surface, a tassit root is a pale white thin, relatively straight cylinder, usually smaller around than a slender adult human wrist, covered with fine “hair” of beige rootlets, some of which reach the surface and, lying splayed like strands of human hair, are the only sign of the tuber’s presence. Roots that break off and are blown or carried on boot-treads or wagon wheels to another sandy location that has enough water will burrow down and form a new tuber. Tassit tubers absorb and store water, and have saved the lives of thirsty wayfarers, but tassit juice is like drinking liquid garlic, and tassit tubers can be sliced and fried—or eaten raw—and used in cooking like garlic. As such tassit tubers can be found, rarely, in marketplaces among other sundries and spices.



Appendix

Beasts and Monsters

The deserts are host to a wide variety of creatures, all adapted for the unrelenting environment. Many are found just below the surface, burrowing through the water-starved ground only surfacing to hunt. Despite the scarcity of resources in the desert, life here has a tendency to grow exceptionally large. Some of Faerûn's largest creatures can be found in the desert.



REGIONAL BEASTS TABLE

	Beacon Tortoise	Deep Skate Debbi	Dromedary	Dune Rattler	Ice Skate	Sand Dragon	Sand Crocodile	Sand Skate	Thunderherd Sand Weird	World Eater
Aglarond										
Amn										
Anauroch	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Beastlands	✓	✓								
Calimshan	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Chessentea										
Chondath										
Cormanthor										
Cormyr										
Damara	✓			✓		✓				
Dambrath	✓			✓						
Elfharrow		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓
Great Glacier	✓					✓				
Greypeak Mountains										
Halruaa					✓					
Hordelands				✓			✓			✓
Jungles of Chult										
Lantan										
Lapaliiya		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓
Luskan						✓				
Mhair Jungles										
Moonshea Isles										
Mulhorand	✓						✓		✓	✓
Murghôm	✓						✓			✓
Narfell				✓		✓				
Neverwinter						✓				
Plains of Purple Dust	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Rashemen						✓				
Semia										
Silver Marches										
Sossal						✓				
Spine of the World						✓				
Tethyr										
Thay										
The Dragon Coast										
The Great Dale										
The High Forest										
The High Moor										
The Shaar	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓
The Shining Plains										
The Western Heartlands										
Thesk										
Turmish				✓	✓		✓			✓
Unther							✓			✓
Vaasa				✓		✓				
Yehimal Mountains						✓				

Beacon Tortoise

You see a shining beacon of light on the horizon, a sole point of interest in the bleak desert landscape. Is it a source of power? A brilliant oasis offering respite from your thirst? No, it's just a beacon tortoise lumbering its way across the sands. The tortoise's shell is mirrored, taking in the desert sun and reflecting it in all directions with such intensity that standing too close can be blinding. For those who can manage to pry open the tough exterior of the tortoise, it can serve as a lifesaving source of meat in the middle of the wastes.

The tortoises themselves are placid herbivores who can go months without food and water, wandering the desert between the few sources of nourishment that exist there. When threatened in the daytime, the tortoise's blinding shell is a potent defense against most bestial predators, as the light often sends them into a panic. At night, when they are more vulnerable, the tortoises often seek shelter to rest in safety, sometimes even half-burying themselves, leaving only the top of their silvered shell visible.

The outer shell of a beacon tortoise is a near-perfect mirror, and retains this property even when heated or molded into different shapes. This has created a small luxury trade in the material, as it is used in accessories and trinkets for far-away aristocracy.

Beacon Tortoise

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 17

Hit Points 57 (6d10 + 24)

Speed 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	6 (-2)	18 (+4)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

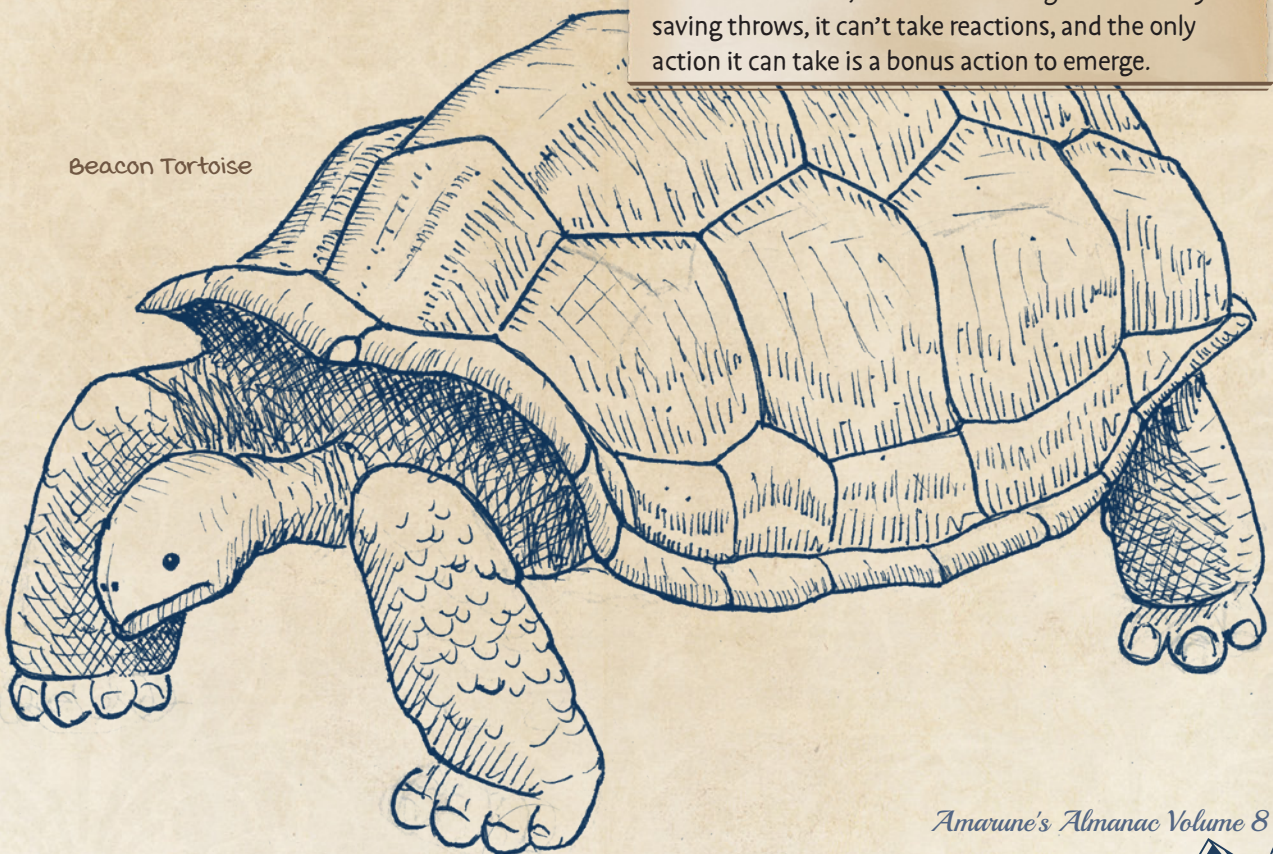
Beacon Shell. While in direct sunlight, the reflective shell of the tortoise glows with great intensity, reflecting bright sunlight in a 60-foot radius and dim light for an additional 60 feet. When a creature starts its turn within the bright light of the shell and is able to see it, the creature must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the start of their next turn.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Shell Defense. The tortoise withdraws into its shell. Until it emerges, it gains a +4 bonus to AC and has advantage on Strength and Constitution saving throws. While in its shell, the tortoise is prone, its speed is 0 and can't increase, it has disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws, it can't take reactions, and the only action it can take is a bonus action to emerge.

Beacon Tortoise



Debbi

Debbi could be mistaken for a dog, but they are more closely related to a hyena than canine. These baboon-faced quadrupeds stalk around dusk and dawn through the warm sand deserts of Zakhara and, more recently, Elfharrow and the Plains of Purple Dust. Their paws have an opposable thumb which allows them to climb and even use simple tools and throw sticks and rocks when cornered.

The creature is a scavenging beast, seeking out whatever fresh flesh they can. This usually consists of small lizards that have been trampled by larger beasts, the half digested prey of purple worms, and—if they are lucky—abandoned and injured beasts of burden such as dromedaries or horses.

Debbi are unliked creatures. They are aggressive, yet quick to flee even fights they start. They are also cowardly and selfish even among their own packs. Their howl is fearsome, particularly when paired with a discharge of static electricity that arcs golden light all around the debbi. This is a unique property of their fur, which captures static electricity from the minerals and fibers that blow through the air while they sleep.

Most that live in the areas where debbi are known to also live are knowledgeable enough to steer clear of them. However, a tarpaulin material made of the fur can be used as a cloak, or even a tent if enough material is gathered. Each time the cloak is touched from the outside (not the portion that touches the wearer), even with a metal object such as a weapon, the wearer can use their reaction to discharge the cloak into the creature. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or become stunned until the end of their next turn. Once a cloak has been discharged in this way, it can't do so again until the next dawn.

Debbi

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 21 (6d6)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Acrobatics +4, Athletics +4, Intimidation +4, Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The debbi makes two melee attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Fists. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Throw Stone. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Reactions

Crackling Fur. Immediately after rolling initiative, if the debbi is not surprised, it can discharge static electricity within its fur to create a golden crackling energy accompanied by a deafening howl. Each creature within 30 feet of the debbi that can hear it must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If each creature the debbi can see fails this saving throw, it can also move up to its movement and make a bite attack against a frightened creature.



Dromedary

Dromedaries are a type of single-humped camel native to desert regions. Well adapted to their environment, they can go days without water and weeks without food, making them a staple of desert travel. They act as beasts of burden as well as mounts for travel and war, uniquely suited to crossing arid lands that present a challenge to horses. They are infamously smelly to the point where other beasts, especially horses, tend to avoid them, and can even be sent into a panic by the assault on their senses.

When used in direct combat, the dromedaries are traditionally fitted with a stable platform as a saddle, allowing an archer to easily loose arrows at targets even while on the move. However, their use in direct-melee combat, in the same manner of a warhorse, is much more limited and few are well-suited to heavy barding, especially given their native habitat.



Dromedary

Dromedary

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 9

Hit Points 34 (4d10 + 12)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Con +5

Skills Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Camel Stench. Any non-camel beast that starts its turn within 15 feet of the camel must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of the camel until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the camel's stench for 24 hours.

Desert Traveler. The camel has advantage on saving throws to avoid exhaustion, as well as to resist the effects of hot weather and sandstorms.

Stability. A rider mounted on the camel has advantage on checks and saving throws to avoid being dismounted.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) bludgeoning damage.

Kick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4+3) bludgeoning damage.

Dune Rattler

Dune rattlers are large rattlesnakes that inhabit desert regions. Their potent toxins allow them to fight toe-to-toe with larger creatures, and many beasts instinctively recoil from their signature rattling sound.

Rattlers are native to most arid locales, with their camouflage adapting to match the local rocks and sands, leading to a diversity of colors among the species. However, each bears telltale brightly-colored marks along its body, an additional warning to any beast haphazard enough to get too close.

The venom of the rattler can be harvested using a poisoner's kit, creating an injury poison that is best suited to a piercing weapon or arrow, using the same damage and DC as the rattler's attack.

Dune Rattler

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 19 (3d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6

Senses blindsight 10 ft., tremorsense 30 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Desert Camouflage. The snake has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks to hide in sandy terrain.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

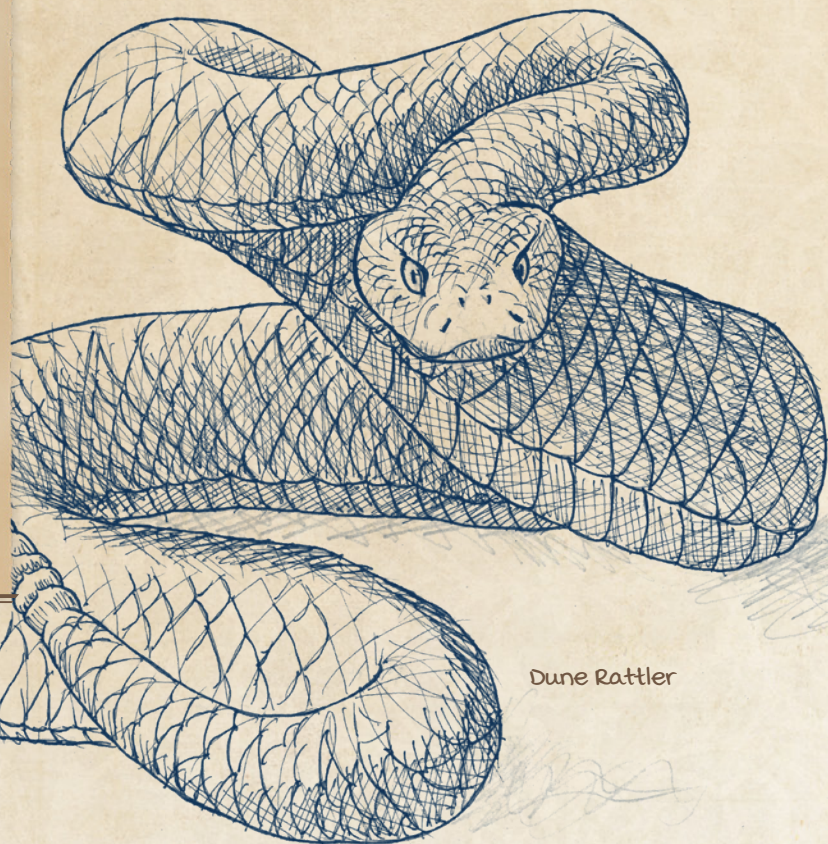
Rattle. The snake rattles its tail, which can be heard up to 60 feet away. Any hostile beast that hears the rattle must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened by the snake until the end of its next turn.

Rattelyr Dragon

These dragons look much like a traditional dragon—but without wings. Instead, they have webbed claws that act as shovels for digging and a lithe—almost snake-like—body which terminates with a club-ended tail which can make a fear-inducing rattle much like a rattlesnake; the dragon's namesake. Also unlike more common dragons, the mature rattelyrs also bear two flaps of thin skin on either side of their head and neck, and a muscle structure that allows them to deploy this hood.

Their scalecoat starts as a shining russet color, helping them to remain hidden among the rocky outcroppings and sandy dunes of the desert when they are at their most helpless (which isn't all that helpless, it turns out). As they grow, the scales lose their gloss and become a matte color within the ranges of purple, black, and grey.

The dragons are true dragons but do not belong to any of the usual groupings (metallic, chromatic, etc.) As true dragons, they share the potential for individuality, intelligence, and personality but lack the ambition and opportunity of their winged cousins. Instead, they are content to dominate the realm they are best adapted for.



Dune Rattler

Rattelyr Dragon Wyrmling

Tiny dragon, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 27 (6d4 + 12)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +4, Cha +3

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +5

Damage Immunities fire

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Draconic

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Surprise Attack. If the dragon surprises a creature and hits it with an attack or its breath weapon during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage from the attack.

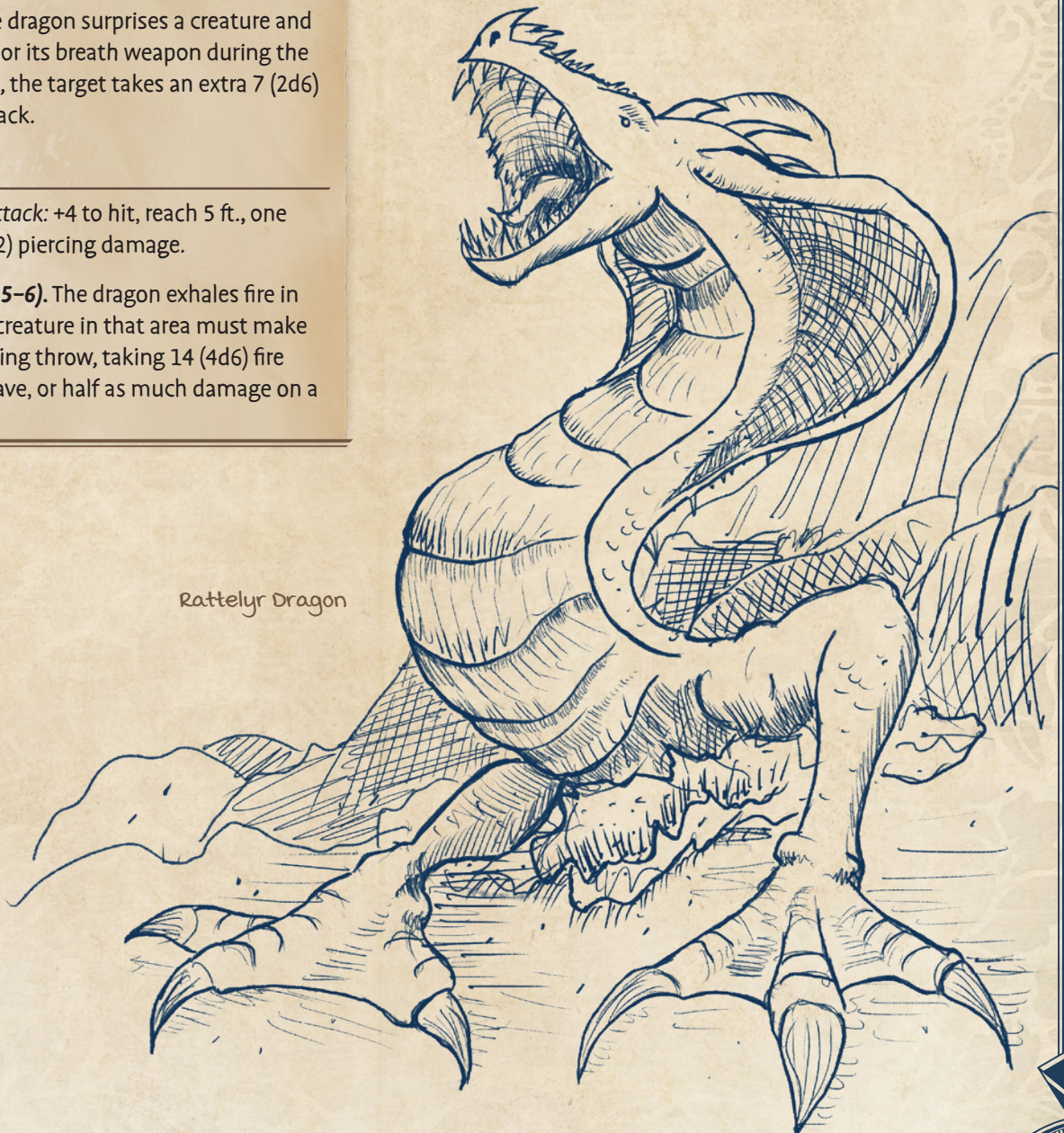
Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Taking down a rattelyr dragon is no small task. If you can find them before they find you, undercut their natural defenses to magic, and overcome their vicious power, then you will be rewarded with two highly sought after prizes. First, the hood of the adult or ancient rattelyr dragon can be worked into a *rattelyr hood cloak* (see appendix C). These cloaks are both fashionable, and expensive. The unique purple hues are highly prized among nobility, and such a cloak can be worth as much as 10,000 gp in some markets. Secondly, the rattle of a young or older dragon contains 1d6 (or 1d6 + 2 for an adult dragon, and 1d6 + 6 for an ancient one) calcified organelles. Each organelle can be powdered and distilled with equal parts pure spirits and water to produce a *potion of heroism*. This process requires a successful DC 17 Intelligence check made with alchemist's supplies.

Rattelyr Dragon



Young Rattelyr Dragon

Small dragon, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 65 (10d6 + 30)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +5, Cha +3

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +6

Damage Immunities fire

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Surprise Attack. If the dragon surprises a creature and hits it with an attack or its breath weapon during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage from the attack.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales fire in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 27 (7d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Rattle. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 15 feet of the dragon that can hear it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature that is surprised has disadvantage on this saving throw. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Rattle for the next 24 hours.

Adult Rattelyr Dragon

Large dragon, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 178 (17d10 + 85)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	20 (+5)	21 (+5)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +9, Cha +7

Skills Perception +9, Stealth +9

Damage Immunities fire

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Surprise Attack. If the dragon surprises a creature and hits it with an attack or its breath weapon during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 14 (4d6) damage from the attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) piercing damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales fire in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 56 (16d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Rattle. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 30 feet of the dragon that can hear it must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature that is surprised has disadvantage on this saving throw. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Rattle for the next 24 hours.

Reactions

Unfurl Hood (Recharge 5–6). When the dragon is targeted by a magic missile spell, a line spell, or a spell that requires a ranged attack roll, it unfurls its hood and reflects the spell back at the caster as though it originated from the dragon, turning the caster into the target.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Ancient Rattelyr Dragon

Huge dragon, lawful evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 270 (20d12 + 140)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	22 (+6)	25 (+7)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +12, Con +13, Wis +7, Cha +11

Skills Perception +13, Stealth +11

Damage Immunities fire

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 23

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Surprise Attack. If the dragon surprises a creature and hits it with an attack or its breath weapon during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 14 (4d6) damage from the attack.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Rattle. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage

Fire Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales fire in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 63 (18d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Rattle. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 30 feet of the dragon that can hear it must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature that is surprised has disadvantage on this saving throw. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Rattle for the next 24 hours.

Reactions

Unfurl Hood (Recharge 5–6). When the dragon is targeted by a magic missile spell, a line spell, or a spell that requires a ranged attack roll, it unfurls its hood and reflects the spell back at the caster as though it originated from the dragon, turning the caster into the target.

Sand Crocodile

Many stories of sand crocodiles are told to calishite children, spoken by elders warning them off exploring the sands of the Calim Desert at night.

Hatori, as they were known in Old Alzhedo, are huge reptiles that swim through the sandy desert like a shark swims through the salty sea. They have armored hides that resist most rudimentary weaponry; but such things are useless against a beast you can't find. Their hide is an exact match in both hue and texture to the specific sands they were raised in. An off-white tan color, with a fine almost smooth consistency in the hottest, driest regions of the desert and a more muddy brown color, with a lumpy and uneven covering where the sandy desert meets the sea.

The sand crocodile will shuffle its flipper-like limbs and body in rapid and frantic movement, displacing the sand beneath it and allowing it to submerge—where it conserves its energy, waiting for prey to come to it.

While exceptionally rare, a variety of the beast known as a greater hatori is said to exist. Such creatures are so large in size, they defy logic. The smallest of the greater hatori are said to be 60 feet in length. The largest of these greater hatori, however, is much harder to discern, as such tales tend toward hyperbole. These tales also paint the imagery that greater hatori even prey upon great dragons who are bold enough to land upon the sands.

Despite being an ancient creature, the crocodiles have adapted to the prosperity of Calimshan and often set their traps along trade routes, hoping to ensnare a full caravan of beasts and people alike. As such, a slain hatori often has a bounty of rewards to find within its belly. Anyone who manages to slay a typical sized sand crocodile can roll twice on the Treasure Hoard: Challenge 0–4 table found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to determine what might be found inside; or twice on the Treasure Hoard: Challenge 11–16 table when examining the contents of a greater hatori's stomach.

Sand Crocodile

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 66 (7d12 + 21)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	9 (-1)	17 (+3)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Skills Stealth +3

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from attacks made with nonmagical weapons

Senses tremorsense 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Hold Breath. The crocodile can hold its breath for 30 minutes.

Sand Camouflage. The crocodile has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in sandy terrain.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the crocodile can't bite another target.

Greater Sand Crocodile

Gargantuan beast, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 145 (10d20 + 40)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Stealth +5

Damage Resistances fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from attacks made with nonmagical weapons

Senses tremorsense 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Hold Breath. The crocodile can hold its breath for 8 hours.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the crocodile fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Sand Camouflage. The crocodile has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in sandy terrain.

Siege Monster. The crocodile deals double damage to objects and structures.

Actions

Multiattack. The crocodile makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 (3d12 + 6) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 19). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and the crocodile can't bite another target.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

The crocodile can take 3 legendary actions, choose from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The crocodile regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Sandstorm. The crocodile flails about, kicking up enough sand to produce a localized sandstorm. This heavily obscures the area within 30 feet of the crocodile, and lasts until the start of the crocodile's next turn.

Burrow. The crocodile burrows itself into the ground and takes the Hide action.

Emerge (Costs 2 Actions). The crocodile erupts from the ground, with its wide maw open to ensnare any creature occupying the space directly above it, or within 5 feet of the crocodile. Each creature in this area must succeed on a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or become grappled (escape DC 19). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the crocodile can't use its bite. The crocodile must be burrowed to use this action.

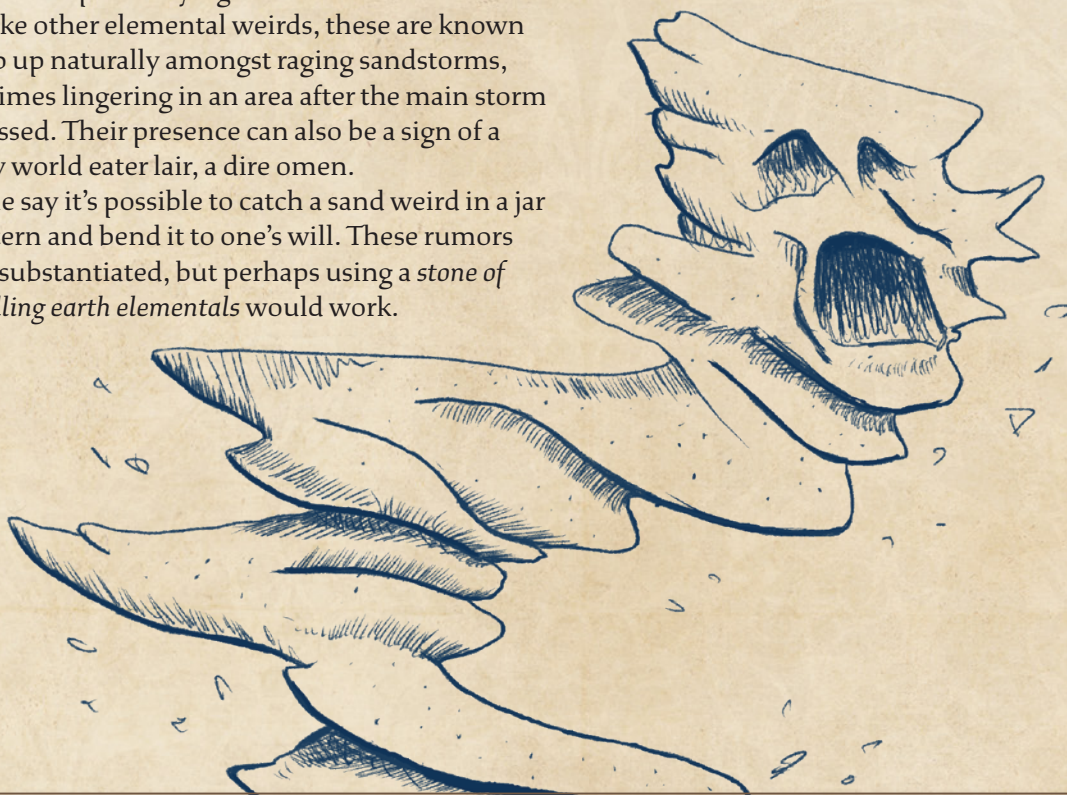
Sand Weird

Sand weird are a sub-variety of earth elemental most commonly found animated in desert regions. Appearing as something of a miniature sandstorm, they do not attack directly, instead simply enveloping a target and allowing their sandy nature to desiccate the poor creature within. A sand weird's shape and size are malleable, allowing it to grow and shrink to adapt to varying situations.

Unlike other elemental weirds, these are known to crop up naturally amongst raging sandstorms, sometimes lingering in an area after the main storm has passed. Their presence can also be a sign of a nearby world eater lair, a dire omen.

Some say it's possible to catch a sand weird in a jar or lantern and bend it to one's will. These rumors are unsubstantiated, but perhaps using a *stone of controlling earth elementals* would work.

Sand weird



Sand Weird

Large elemental, neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Vulnerabilities lightning

Damage Resistances lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Terran but doesn't speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Sand Form. The sand weird can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing. When a hostile creature moves into or within the elemental's space, it takes 3 (1d6) slashing damage for every 5 feet it travels.

Actions

Desiccate. Each hostile creature in the weird's space must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 10 (3d6) slashing damage and 7 (2d6) necrotic damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a success.

Expand (Recharge 5-6). The sand weird increases its size by one category until the start of its next turn, and each creature within its space (after increasing in size) immediately suffers the weird's Desiccate feature.

Skate

Skates are lithe and nimble creatures. Their body is composed mostly of two flat fins that are serrated with a hundred boney finger-tips on each end, spanning 7 to 8 feet. These fingers articulate in wave-like patterns that pull the skate across the ground and allow it to easily burrow through loose materials like sand, water, and loose dirt. Each skate has a barbed tail to be used against prey, although the effect of the barb varies with the type of skate.

Skates travel in pods of three to five, containing one or two mature skates and the remainder adolescents. These pods hunt together using tactics that display a functioning intelligence. If their targets are hunters, they use the adolescent skates to draw the target into an ideal position for the mature skates to strike. However, if the targets are scavengers or prey creatures, they use the mature skates to frighten and corral the targets toward the adolescent skates to deliver the final blows.

The creature provides little in the way of meat, but its skin has anti-abrasive qualities that are useful for clothing and tarpaulin that resists the deleterious effects of sandstorms and repeated frosts. One mature skate can provide enough finger-tip bones to cover a great club or several smaller weapons. Dressing a weapon in this way allows it to rend flesh as effectively as it crushes bones.

Deep Skates. Deep skates live exclusively within bone deserts—areas of the Underdark where purple worms congregate when death is imminent. The bones desiccate and disperse into a pale white powder that covers entire caverns and tunnels. These skates have a matching bone-wide hide and dark purple eyes. Their time spent in the Underdark has infused them with limited psionic abilities, and thus they are able to communicate within their pod through telepathy, making traveling through the bone deserts particularly dangerous. The barb on their tail delivers a poison that neutralizes the target's ability to cast spells for a brief time.

Ice Skates. These skates live in the arctic deserts in northern Faerûn and are believed to have evolved at the border of Anauroch and High Ice, where the arid sand desert and cold polar desert met. This skate variety travels in much larger packs, but the average skate is much smaller in size: roughly two feet across. To feed such large packs, they are uniquely adapted to hunt large prey such as mammoths and remorhaz. Their barb delivers a poison that causes the blood of their prey to become susceptible to the frigid temperatures and potentially freeze.

Sand Skates. Sand skates travel across the loose sand blown across the surface of wide deserts such as the Raurin Desert, Elfharrow, or Plains of Purple Dust. Its barbed tail is actually a proboscis, which it uses to drain moisture from creatures it captures: a useful mechanism where water is scarce.

The Sludar tribes of the Plains of Purple Dust have domesticated these beasts for the purpose of travel and surprise skirmishes. A harness crafted from another skate's hide can be affixed to the creature. This harness is unlike any saddle you might find on a horse; it resembles a dorsal fin, but is hollow from the back and has two arm braces for the rider to strap into. A second set of braces for the rider's ankles are affixed to the skate's tail. The braces can be quickly released by the rider, requiring only a bonus action to doff, but take 1 hour to don. This unique design allows the rider to travel through the dunes like the skate does, unharmed, but does not allow for any sort of mounted combat—relying on control over the beast and its prowess alone.

SKATE LANGUAGE

Skates of all varieties are intelligent enough to communicate. However, traditional language would prevent them from communicating while submerged. Instead, they communicate through a low tone with subtle vibrations. This sound can travel long distances through loose earth, sand, and water, allowing the skates to communicate effectively while submerged. To the average humanoid, this sounds like rolling thunder on a distant horizon. Deep skates are capable of producing and understanding this form of communication as well, and use it to communicate with other pods.

Deep Skate

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 10 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	21 (+5)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Int +2

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Skate, telepathy 30 ft.

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Earth Glide. The skate can burrow through nonmagical, unworked earth and stone. While doing so, the skate doesn't disturb the material it moves through.

Magic Resistance. The skate has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Razor Fins. The first time the skate enters the space within 5 feet of a creature on its turn, that creature takes 5 slashing damage.

Skirt. The skate doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it burrows out of an enemy's reach.

Actions

Slash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Sting (Recharge 5-6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned this way, the target is unable to cast spells. The target can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect early on a successful save.

Ice Skate

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d6 + 8)

Speed 10 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +6

Damage Resistances cold

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Skate, telepathy 30 ft.

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Earth Glide. The skate can burrow through nonmagical, unworked earth and stone. While doing so, the skate doesn't disturb the material it moves through.

Razor Fins. The first time the skate enters the space within 5 feet of a creature on its turn, that creature takes 5 slashing damage.

Skirt. The skate doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it burrows out of an enemy's reach.

Actions

Slash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage and 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Sting (Recharge 5-6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned this way, the target becomes vulnerable to cold damage.

Sand Skate

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 30 (4d10 + 8)

Speed 10 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	21 (+5)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Skate

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Earth Glide. The skate can burrow through nonmagical, unworked earth and stone. While doing so, the skate doesn't disturb the material it moves through.

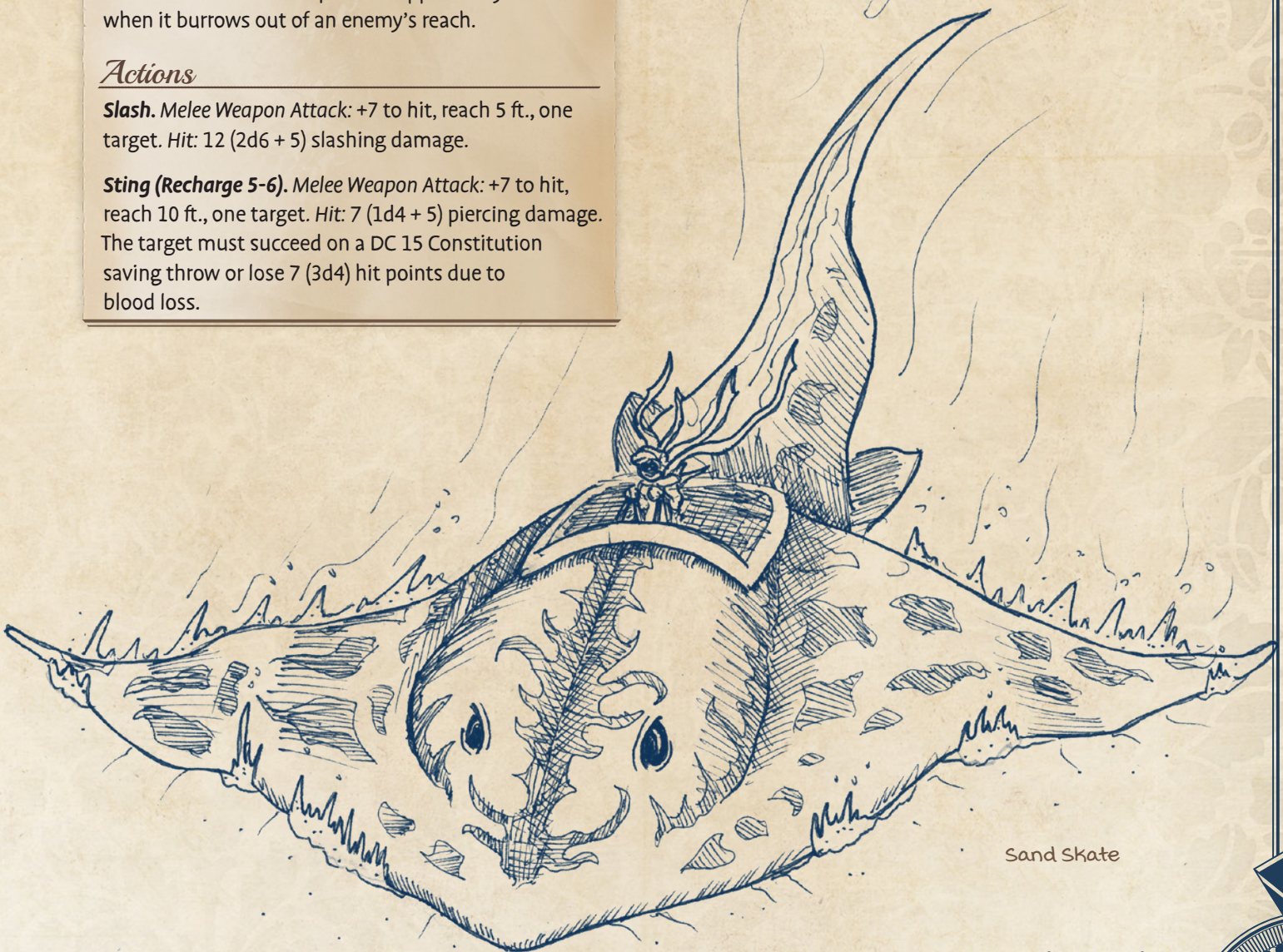
Razor Fins. The first time the skate enters the space within 5 feet of a creature on its turn, that creature takes 5 slashing damage.

Skirt. The skate doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it burrows out of an enemy's reach.

Actions

Slash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Sting (Recharge 5-6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or lose 7 (3d4) hit points due to blood loss.



Sand Skate

Thunderherder

The thunderherder is a very distant cousin of the infamous purple worm. Their bodies are worm-like and are composed of many chitinous plates, which have a protrusion where the plate meets the sand. This protrusion is used for mobility, allowing it to quickly traverse the top of dunes or crawl up rocky outcroppings.

The worm is capable of delivering a powerful poison with its stinger, but is relatively non-aggressive and will only attack when cornered; preferring to burrow into the sand and escape any threats. Many desert tribes have exploited the worms' non-aggressive nature and domesticated them, using them like a grassland tribe might use a rothé or ox to carry supplies and pull vehicles.

Thunderherder

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (6d10 + 12)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +5

Condition Immunities poisoned

Damage Immunities poison

Senses tremorsense 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 2 (400 XP)

Beast of Burden. The thunderherder is considered to be a Huge animal for the purposes of determining its carrying capacity.

Spider Climb. The thunderherder can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Stinger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or take 7 (2d6) poison damage.



Thunderherder

World Eater

You feel the presence of the world eater before you see it. The ground trembles and quakes long before the creature bursts forth from the earth: a massive worm hundreds of feet long, bearing a maw big enough to swallow an ancient dragon whole. All who live among the sands must fear the world eater, for when it emerges to destroy and devour, it cannot be stopped. Fighting the worm is usually considered to be out of the question entirely, as it seems to shrug off even the most powerful attacks and spells. The worm seems attracted to settlements and fortifications, quickly demolishing any permanent structures into rubble to sink beneath the dunes. Any region where the worm lairs is thus made unsuitable for permanent habitation.

There is seemingly only a single world eater, which moves between the desert regions of the world in a migratory pattern. Tunneling through the underdark, the worm will enter an area and establish its lair there for years or decades before leaving for a new desert. Attempts to drive the worm away or lure it into leaving have so far been fruitless. Thankfully the worm isolates itself to the most arid of landscapes, for reasons unknown. Woe to the civilizations of the world if the worm ever decides to seek greener pastures.

Regardless of the world eater's nigh-invulnerability, there are still those who attempt to attack it, usually to harvest various bits of the creature for crafting purposes. If one can manage to get atop the worm while it's above-ground, they're kept safe from it as long as they can hold on tight. However, the worm has latent magical control of the sands around it, animating them into hostile sand elementals that defend the worm from top-down attack. Flying scavengers that follow the worm, such as stirges or wyverns, can also present a threat.

The worm's flesh and hide are valuable but nonmagical, useful for cooking delicacies or creating long-lasting leatherwork. The teeth of the world eater can be carefully sculpted down into +3 *daggers*, but these are very delicate and will shatter on an attack roll of a natural 1 or 2.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the worm takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

- 1d4 **sand weirds** appear in unoccupied spaces within 5 feet of any hostile creatures within 300 feet of the worm. The elementals roll initiative as normal and attack any creatures hostile to the worm.
- A cloud of sand swirls about in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point within 120 feet of the worm. The cloud spreads around corners. Each creature in the cloud must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be blinded for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.
- The ground in a 30-foot square within 300 feet of the worm turns to quicksand. Any creature in the quicksand's area when it appears must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or sink 1d4 + 1 feet into the quicksand.

Regional Effects

The region containing the world eater's lair is warped by the worm's presence, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- Quicksand pits form in and around the worm's lair, varying from 10-foot squares to as large as 100 feet across.
- Sandstorms rage within 6 miles of the lair.
- Tremors and minor earthquakes rack the region within 6 miles of the lair, slowly but surely demolishing all permanent structures.

World Eater

Gargantuan monstrosity (titan), unaligned

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 820 (40d20 + 400)

Speed 60 ft., burrow 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
29 (+9)	6 (-2)	30 (+10)	3 (-4)	18 (+4)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Str +17, Con +18

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, stunned

Senses blindsight 120 ft., tremorsense 5280 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages —

Challenge 25 (75,000 XP)

Demolisher. Any buildings, vehicles, or other structures within 10 feet of the worm while it moves suffer 100 points of damage when the worm finishes its movement.

Immutable Form. The worm is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the worm fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Living Terrain. The worm moves on its turn but does not take actions or reactions. The top of the worm can be traversed as difficult terrain while it is above ground. A creature atop the worm is safe from the worm, but must make a DC 25 Strength saving throw whenever the worm moves, falling prone on a failure.

Magic Resistance. The worm has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Regeneration. The worm regains 30 hit points at the start of its turn. If the worm takes lightning or force damage, it regains only 15 hit points at the start of its next turn. The worm dies only if it is hit by an attack that deals 30 or more lightning or force damage while it has 0 hit points.

Tunneler. The worm can burrow through solid rock at half its burrow speed and leaves a 60-foot-diameter tunnel in its wake.

Unstoppable Force. The worm can't be moved against its will, and can enter other creature's spaces and stop there. When the worm moves into a creature's space, that creature is either swallowed (if in front of the worm) or slammed (if to the side of the worm).

A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the worm, and it takes 72 (16d8) acid damage at the start of each of the worm's turns.

A slammed creature must make a DC 25 Strength saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 104 (16d12) bludgeoning damage, is flung 30 feet away from the worm, falls prone, and is stunned until the start of its next turn. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage, and is pushed away from the worm until it is no longer in the worm's space.

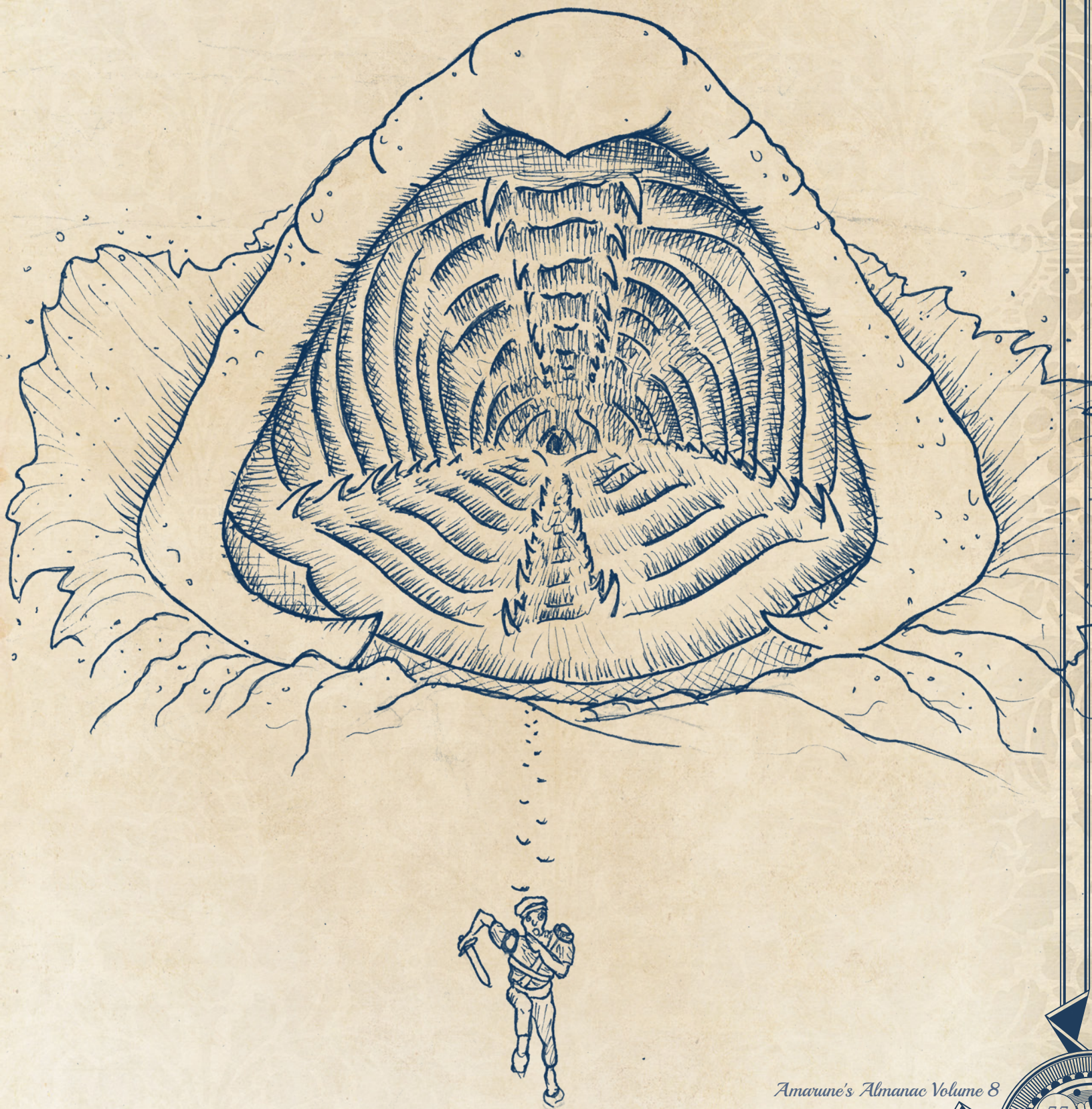
Legendary Actions

The worm can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The worm regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Move. The worm moves up to half its speed.

Digest (2 Actions). All creatures swallowed by the worm must make a DC 26 Constitution saving throw, taking 26 (4d12) acid damage on a failure, or half as much damage on a success.

World Eater



Magic Items

In addition to the flora, fauna, and desolate expanses of the realms, throughout my travels I have learned about or interacted with multiple wondrous artifacts. Whether a container that holds lifegiving water, a long buried artifact, or a tool with which to protect yourself from the rigors of the sands, these items are a true representation of the desert.

Armor of the Turned

Armor (scale mail), rare (requires attunement)

This glistening blue-gray scale mail is made from overlapping plates of a glossy material you can't identify, but it is certainly not metallic.

While wearing this armor you have a burrow speed of 20 feet through sand or loose earth, and can still breathe even while completely encased in dirt, sand, or other similar materials.

Decanter of Endless Sand

Wondrous item, rare

This stoppered flask has a faint, nearly indistinguishable sound when shaken. The decanter weighs 2 pounds.

This item has 6 charges and regains all expended charges each day at dawn.

You can use an action to remove the stopper and speak one of three command words, whereupon an amount of sand pours out of the flask and a number of charges are expended. The sand stops pouring out at the start of your next turn. Choose from the following options:

- "Pile" expends one charge to create a small pile of sand that can cover a 1-foot-square surface.
- "Dune" expends three charges to create a pile of sand that is 10 feet across and 5 feet tall. This sand is expelled with some force, and moves Large or smaller creatures that would be covered by the sand to the edge of the pile.
- "Desert" expends 6 charges to create a veritable sea of sand that erupts from the decanter as a 30-foot geyser. This sand covers a 20-foot radius and is up to 10 feet deep at its center. Any creature in the radius of the sand is pushed toward the edge of the area until it would no longer be covered by sand, unless it has a burrow speed.

Decanter of Finite Water

Wondrous item, common

This stoppered flask sloshes with a cavernous echo as if it's much larger than it appears and always weighs 2 pounds.

As an action you can remove the stopper and pour out 1 gallon of fresh water. The water stops pouring out at the start of your next turn. The decanter holds 30 gallons of water in total, and cannot be refilled by normal means.

Dunes and Oases: A Desert Guide

Wondrous item, uncommon

This book is sewn from a sturdy parchment, and has only tatters of what was once a leather cover remaining. No matter how many times you open it a few grains of sand falls out each time.

If you spend a long rest or an equivalent amount of time studying this book, the desert biome becomes favored terrain for you for the next week, and you can ask up to three questions about a specific type of creature, plant, or weather pattern, within the desert biome that the DM gives a short reply to. Additionally, you can identify the name of any cacti or succulents, in any biome, with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check, by looking through the book. If you succeed by 5 or more, you can ask the DM one question about the cactus or succulent you identified.

Earthbound Gauntlet

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This black leather gauntlet has an intricate bronze ridge down its back with five carefully cut stone "gems" set in its winding pattern.

You can focus on these gems and choose an area of terrain no larger than a 40-foot-cube within 120 feet that you can see. You can reshape dirt, sand, or clay in this area in any manner you choose so long as you maintain concentration (as if concentrating on a spell) for at least the duration required to do so: an action for a 10-foot cube, 1 minute for a 25-foot cube, and 10 minutes for a 40-foot cube.

You can raise or lower the area's elevation, create or fill in a trench, erect or flatten a wall, or form a pillar. The extent of any such changes can't exceed half the area's largest dimension. So, if you affect a 40-foot cube, you can create a pillar up to 20 feet high, raise or lower the area's elevation by up to 20 feet, dig

a trench up to 20 feet deep, and so on. It takes the entire duration for these changes to complete.

Because the terrain's transformation occurs slowly, creatures in the area are not trapped or injured by the ground's movement.

This effect doesn't directly affect plant growth, natural stone, or structures. The moved earth carries any of these things along with it. If the way you shape the terrain would make a structure unstable, it might collapse. Similarly, if these transformations would make the terrain itself unstable it collapses when you stop concentrating on it.

Karsus' Infinite Expanse

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This crystal orb is matte white with no distinguishing factors whatsoever, and yet it has a mesmerizing quality when you gaze into it.

While attuned to this orb, you have advantage on saving throws against the spells *banishment*, *maze*, and *imprisonment*.

As an action you can touch a creature with the orb and force it to make a DC 18 Charisma saving throw. On a success they feel incredibly thirsty, but are otherwise unaffected. On a failure the target creature is transported to a demiplane of infinite desert.

For each minute that passes within the demiplane, a creature trapped there must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. On a failure they gain 1 level of exhaustion. On a success, or when they reach a total of 3 levels of exhaustion, they are expelled from the demiplane and reappear in the space they left, or the nearest unoccupied space if that space is occupied.

You can use this feature once, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long or short rest.

Netherese Halberd

Weapon (halberd), rare (requires attunement)

This halberd's angular head is made from a glistening bronze and its handle is carved out of light ash.

This item has 4 charges, and regains all expended charges each day at dawn, or when exposed to a natural sandstorm.

As an action you can expend a charge and sweep the halberd across the ground to create a 30-foot-radius sphere of thick whirling sand centered on you.

This cloud of sand spreads around corners, and its area is heavily obscured for all creatures except you.

The cloud lingers in the air for the next minute or until a strong wind disperses it.

Each creature, except yourself that is completely within the cloud at the start of its turn must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or spend its action coughing and can not speak. This save is made with disadvantage if you are in a desert or an area that is primarily sand. Creatures that don't need to breathe automatically succeed on this saving throw.

Rattelyr Hood Cloak

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

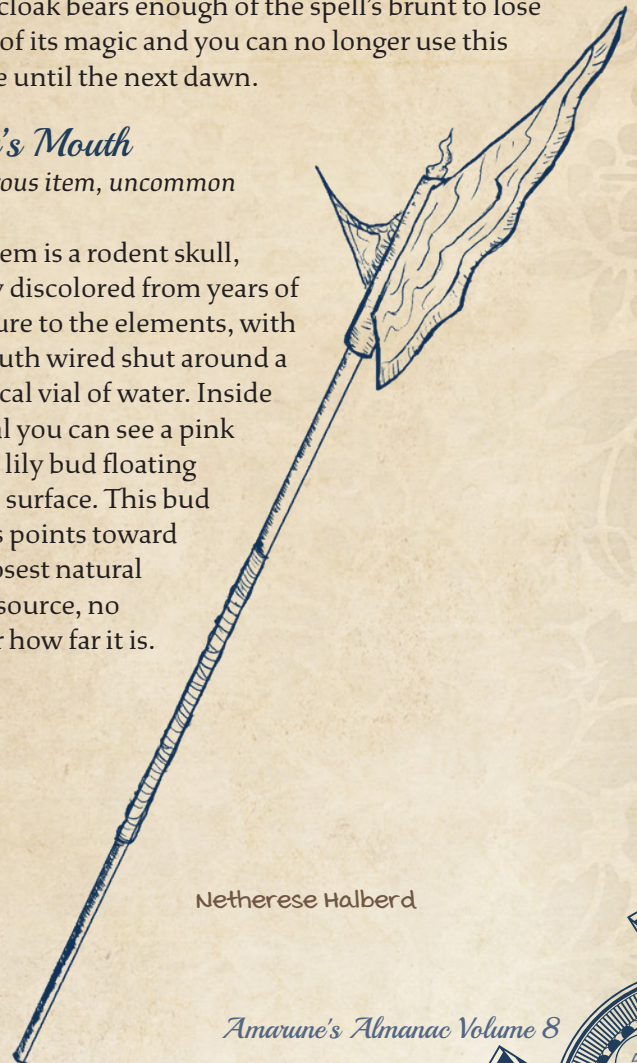
This cloak is made of the matte magenta scales of a rattelyr dragon. Along its hemlines, it is heavy with a semi-rigid boning sewn in. This boning provides the cloak the structure needed to unfurl, mimicking the spell-turning hood of the dragon.

When targeted by a ranged spell attack or *magic missile* spell, you can use your reaction to roll a d6. On a result of 6, the spell is reflected back at the caster as though it originated from you, turning the caster into the target. On a result of 1–5, the spell affects you as normal. If the d6 result is either a 1 or a 6, the cloak bears enough of the spell's brunt to lose much of its magic and you can no longer use this feature until the next dawn.

River's Mouth

Wondrous item, uncommon

This item is a rodent skull, deeply discolored from years of exposure to the elements, with its mouth wired shut around a spherical vial of water. Inside the vial you can see a pink spring lily bud floating on the surface. This bud always points toward the closest natural water source, no matter how far it is.



Netherese Halberd

Scorching Obsidian Staff

Staff, legendary (requires attunement)

The shaft of this staff is made from a petrified branch, worked to almost a mirror finish. It is topped with a large chunk of obsidian that comes to a twisted point.

This staff has 5 charges and regains 1d4 + 1 expended charges each day at dawn.

While attuned to this staff you can tell how long ago volcanic rock was formed, and what type it is.

As an action you can expend a charge from this staff and aim it at a point on the ground or a wall

within 60 feet. When you do so, the obsidian glows white-hot and a pinpoint ray of immense heat fires from the staff. Each creature within a 5-foot radius of the ray, or a 15-foot radius of the target point, must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 4d6 fire damage and 4d6 radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

If an area affected by this ray is composed of sand or stone, it too becomes white-hot before turning to a black glass over the course of a minute, and any creature that starts its turn touching the area during that time takes 2d6 fire damage.

As I write this letter, I sit at a shabby, disheveled desk. The first-through fifth volumes of Amarune's Almanac are held neatly upright between bookends at the corner of my desk, and beside them, the rough lace-bound final draft of Volume 6: Swamps of the Realms. The manuscript for what will shortly become Volume 7: Mountains of the Realms is a leaning pile of papers, crumpled and tilted, marked with ink and pasted-over notes from Arclath. The rest of the desk is covered in cold, discarded cups of tea and kaeth, and the notes I've taken from the various deserts we've traveled.

My notes are a mess, in every sense. There are mismatched pieces of paper and different inks, sometimes even notes written on the back of draft pages from earlier books. There are smears of mud, and clay, and blood, and sweat, and tears. I've cried over these pages. Sometimes I cried from exhaustion as I struggled to get the words committed to paper before risking losing them to my dreams. Sometimes I wept from frustration, knowing I didn't have the vocabulary to describe the wondrous sights that I had seen. Sometimes I cried because I was angry with myself for becoming so worked up over something so paltry, as counterproductive as that may seem.

I began to pen this letter because I found myself sobbing over my already near-illegible notes, because I realized that all of this was coming to a close. Not right now, obviously, because once I send these notes away to Arclath, he's going to send them right back to me telling me what needs to be changed. We'll go back and forth over a tenday before the manuscript goes on to the next step of the process.

There are so many people that I owe the success of these books to. Many of them that I've never met in person. I know there's a retired elven gentleman hunter who fact-checks all of my notes on monsters to ensure I'm not passing along any potentially life-threatening misinformation. There is a sketch artist friend of volo's who takes my rough doodles and refines them into something better suited for publication. I've heard there's a team of gnomes who carve the printing press blocks for each individual page of each book. I briefly met the elderly dwarven woman who owned the goat farm that provides the leather for our book bindings; she offered us tea and let us pet the goats, which was an eerie experience in retrospect.

In a couple of moons, volo will ship me a first run copy of Volume 8: Deserts of the Realms, and I will have a few days to look through it and see that it meets my approval before the printers dive into full-time work. When I send him my letter of approval, my work will be complete. What began so many moons ago as a supposed vacation, and spun into a wild web of adventures, journaling, and learning the publishing business.

Perhaps when this is over, I'll take a real vacation.

