

# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS<sup>®</sup>

MARAUDERS OF THE DUNE SEA<sup>™</sup>



AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 2<sup>ND</sup> LEVEL

Bruce R. Cordell



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# INTRODUCTION

Nightmares of desert horrors trouble the dreams of the innocent while raiders grow ever bolder beyond the walls of the great city-state of Tyr. Children cry of midnight portents, and mercantile houses fear the disruption of their trade. Bandits and merchants chase rumors of a temple hidden in the desert, an ancient shrine to the primordial Ul-Athra said to safeguard a fragment of the artifact known as the *Crown of Dust*. Can the heroes recover a caravan lost in the wastes, repel the threat of vicious raiders, and win the relic from the perilous temple?

*Marauders of the Dune Sea*™ is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure for five 2nd-level player characters. It can be played as a follow-up to the short adventure in the *DARK SUN*® Campaign Setting. The characters should approach or reach 4th level by the end of the adventure.

## BACKGROUND

During the Green Age of Athas, civilization reached its zenith, and great structures were built above and below the surface of the earth. Today, lost ruins of that period lie across the Tablelands and beyond. Most of these crumbling structures are empty and worthless, but others have endured the ages, still guarding the secrets of ancient days.

Recently, gith nomads discovered the Face in the Stone, an old temple northeast of Tyr. Within the shrine, the gith found doors that bore runes referring to the relic of Ul-Athra, an entity also known as the Dust Kraken or the Mouths of Thirst. While trying to open the doors, the gith were attacked by creatures in the temple. The surviving nomads fled and made for the base of the raider lord Yarnath the Skull, hoping that he would reward their discovery. However, before the gith could reach Slither, Yarnath's crawling citadel, a sandstorm caught them unprotected in the desert and slew them.

Later, Yarnath's raiders found fragments of a journal among the nomads' remains and pieced together what the gith had found, but the bandits did not know the location of the ruin. In addition, they found hints that the sandstorm that killed the gith was unnatural.

Intrigued, Yarnath became determined to find the Face in the Stone and its mysterious relic. He turned his attention to merchant caravans that passed through the area, hoping to force caravaneers to give up the location of the ruin. Unfortunately for the raider lord, so far everyone has been ignorant of the old temple.

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## ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Recruited to find the Face in the Stone, the characters must venture into the wastes with incomplete knowledge of their destination. To locate the ruin, they must survive the harsh desert, cruel raiders, and an unnatural dust devil.

Once the characters find the old temple, they can enter and explore the ruin, facing the perils within as they hunt for the fragment of the *Crown of Dust*, the relic of Ul-Athra. After leaving the shrine, the heroes must evade the raiders of Slither and flee across the desert with Yarnath's animate citadel in pursuit.

## RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

To run *Marauders of the Dune Sea*, you need the *Player's Handbook*® and the *Dungeon Master's Guide*®. The *DARK SUN*® Campaign Setting, *D&D*® *Dungeon Tiles*, and *D&D*® *Miniatures* can enhance your play experience.

As with any published adventure, *Marauders of the Dune Sea* as written might not suit your group perfectly. Feel free to make changes to fit your game and have more fun.

### PLOT HOOKS

The adventure assumes that the heroes begin in the city-state of Tyr. Use or customize any of the following plot hooks to bring your players into the game.

### ADVENTURE BECKONS

While in Tyr, the heroes are approached by Karlen, the owner of an Artisan District shop that sells collectibles and oddities. The half-giant shares a rumor about the recent discovery of the Face in the Stone, a ruin in the desert. Karlen asks the heroes to explore the place and bring back treasures that he can sell in his shop.

Karlen knows the site's general area in the wilderness—a few days' trek northeast of Tyr. However, no one in the city-state knows the precise location of the Face in the Stone, so the characters are on their own. See Encounter D1: Desert Trek, page 6.

#### QUEST: FIND THE FACE

##### 3rd-Level Minor Quest (150 XP)

The characters complete this quest if they find and explore the Face in the Stone as part of this adventure hook.

### MERCHANT CARAVAN

A dwarf messenger approaches the heroes while they gather in a public location in Tyr. He hands them a sheet of rolled papyrus, sealed with wax marked with three dragonflies. Inside is written the following:

*Greetings from House Shom.*

*We've sent messengers throughout Tyr to deliver this communication to those of mercenary guise. If you be such, and you wish to earn a great reward, read on.*

*Desert raiders harass and disrupt our caravans, yet the Revolutionary Council of Tyr will not lift a finger to help. Thus, honest merchants must find aid elsewhere.*

*The raiders claim that our caravans know the site of a ruined temple called the Face in the Stone. They say if we give up the location, their attacks will cease. But we know nothing of the ruin. Moreover, a Shom caravan seeking to find the Face in the Stone never returned.*

*Our request is this: Find the Face in the Stone, learn the fate of our lost caravan, and provide assistance to any survivors. All we have concerning the ruin's location is a line from an old song: "Where the devil's horn threads the tunnel in the sky, a stony visage rarely blinks its hollow eye."*

*Return with your findings to our emporium in Tyr, and you will be heralded as heroes of House Shom.*

*Regards, Delem Shom*

Shom representatives know the site's general location in the wilderness—a few days' trek northeast of Tyr. However, no one in the city-state knows the precise location of the Face in the Stone, so the characters are on their own. See Encounter D1: Desert Trek, page 6.

#### QUEST: FIND THE FACE

##### 3rd-Level Major Quest (750 XP)

The characters complete this quest if they find and explore the Face in the Stone as part of this adventure hook. They also earn a monetary reward of 750 gp.

### NIGHTMARES IN THE WASTE

Terrible nightmares haunt a relative of one of the heroes. The victim, who lives in Tyr, dreams of a devouring sandstorm that comes on the wings of an enormous dust devil.

The relative can recall only one part of the dream: the name "Face in the Stone," which he describes as "a lost shrine where evil stirs."

A DC 15 Streetwise check reveals that Yarnath the Skull also seeks news of a ruin called the Face in the Stone, and that his raiders are harassing caravans traveling north of Tyr for information about the shrine. .

#### QUEST: FIND THE FACE

##### 3rd-Level Minor Quest (150 XP)

The characters complete this quest if they find and explore the Face in the Stone as part of this adventure hook.



# ENCOUNTER T1: STREETS OF TYR

## Encounter Level 4 (991 XP)

After establishing one or more of the plot hooks on page 3, use this encounter to kick off the action.

### SETUP

3 dwarf conscripts (D)

5 elf snipers (S)

2 thri-kreen bounders (B)

Sarhan, templar of Hamanu (T)

Hamanu, the sorcerer-king of Urik, has placed spies in several other city-states to report on his rivals' doings. In Tyr, one of these spies—a human templar named Sarhan—has become aware of the situation regarding Yarnath, House Shom, Karlen, and the Face in the Stone.

Sarhan isn't sure what the city-state of Urik might gain from learning the location of the Face in the Stone, but the templar hasn't gotten where he is by ignoring hunches. He has hired spies to watch Karlen's shop and the Shom merchant emporium in case they send mercenaries after the lost ruin.

Thus, the characters come to Sarhan's attention if they accept a commission to find the ancient temple. While the heroes move through a market street of Tyr, Sarhan and his underlings attack.

This encounter takes place on the poster map. Place the attackers on the map as shown; place the characters in the center of the lane.

#### When Sarhan and his forces attack, read:

*Yells of surprise and alarm mix with the sounds of heavy boots and claws on Tyr's cobbled streets. From one end of the lane, two thri-kreen are bounding in your direction. On overlooking rooftops, a handful of elves throw off cloaks and snatch throwing chatkchas from their belts. From the other end of the street, three burly dwarves hustle toward you. Behind the dwarves strides a determined-looking human in a long cloak. He bears the insignia of Urik: a roaring lion.*

#### When Sarhan has a chance to speak, read:

*The man wearing Urik's insignia says, "This is your lucky day, dogs of Tyr. Hamanu, the Lion God, has chosen you to join the ranks of his worshipers. You should feel honored! However, I'm afraid this is going to hurt. A lot."*

The man gestures for his forces to attack. Roll initiative.

### LION OF HAMANU TATTOO

If Sarhan and his forces win, they knock the characters unconscious and drag their bodies into a nearby alley. There, the templar tattoos a stylized lion of Urik on the wrists of two or three characters. Then Sarhan retreats, leaving the heroes to wake up in the alley. For more about the tattoos, see "Adventure Conclusion" on page 31.

#### 3 Dwarf Conscripts (D)

Medium natural humanoid  
 HP 47; Bloodied 23  
 AC 14, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 14  
 Speed 5  
 Saving Throws +5 against poison effects

#### Level 2 Brute

XP 125 each  
 Initiative +2  
 Perception +3  
 Low-light vision

#### TRAITS

##### Stand the Ground

The conscript can move 1 square less than specified when subject to a pull, a push, or a slide.

##### Steady-Footed

The conscript can make a saving throw to avoid falling prone when an attack would knock it prone.

#### STANDARD ACTIONS

##### ⊕ Gouge (weapon) ⊕ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC  
 Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage. If the conscript scores a critical hit, the conscript pushes the target 1 square and knocks it prone.

#### MINOR ACTIONS

##### Singular Focus ⊕ Recharge when the chosen enemy drops to 0 hit points or fewer

Effect: The conscript chooses one enemy it can see. Until the end of the encounter or until the conscript uses this power again, the conscript gains a +5 bonus to melee damage rolls against that enemy.

Skills Dungeoneering +8, Endurance +9

Str 16 (+4)

Dex 12 (+2)

Wis 14 (+3)

Con 17 (+4)

Int 11 (+1)

Cha 11 (+1)

Alignment unaligned

Languages Common, Dwarven

Equipment hide armor, gouge

#### 5 Elf Snipers (S)

Medium fey humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.  
 AC 17, Fortitude 13, Reflex 17, Will 16  
 Speed 7

#### Level 3 Minion Lurker

XP 38 each

Initiative +9  
 Perception +8

#### TRAITS

##### Sharpshooter's Advantage

The sniper deals 3 extra damage against any creature it is hidden from.

##### Wild Step

The sniper ignores difficult terrain when it shifts.

#### STANDARD ACTIONS

##### ⊕ Bone Dagger (weapon) ⊕ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC  
 Hit: 5 damage.

##### ⊕ Chatkcha (weapon) ⊕ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +8 vs. AC  
 Hit: 5 damage.

#### MOVE ACTIONS

##### Elven Misdirection ⊕ At-Will

Effect: The sniper moves 2 squares. If it has cover or concealment, it can make a Stealth check to become hidden with an automatic check result of 25.

Skills Bluff +6, Stealth +10

Str 11 (+1)

Dex 18 (+5)

Wis 15 (+3)

Con 10 (+1)

Int 10 (+1)

Cha 11 (+1)

Alignment unaligned

Languages Common, Elven

Equipment bone dagger, 10 chatkchas



2 Thri-Kreen Bounders (B) Level 6 Minion Skirmisher	
Medium natural humanoid XP 63 each	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +8
AC 20, Fortitude 18, Reflex 19, Will 18	Perception +5
Speed 6	Low-light vision
TRAITS	
<b>Deft Dodger</b> The bouncer gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against ranged attacks.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ <b>Claw</b> ♦ At-Will Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC Hit: 7 damage.	
⊙ <b>Chatkcha (weapon)</b> ♦ At-Will Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +11 vs. AC Hit: 7 damage.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
<b>Mantis Bound</b> ♦ At-Will Trigger: The bouncer is missed by an attack. Effect (Free Action): The bouncer jumps 3 squares. This move does not provoke opportunity attacks.	
Skills Athletics +10, Nature +10, Stealth +11	
Str 14 (+5)	Dex 17 (+6) Wis 14 (+5)
Con 13 (+4)	Int 10 (+3) Cha 10 (+3)
Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Thri-Kreen	
Equipment leather armor, 2 chatkchas	

Sarhan, Templar of Hamanu (T) Level 7 Controller	
Medium natural humanoid XP 300	
HP 82; Bloodied 41 Initiative +5	
AC 21, Fortitude 19, Reflex 19, Will 20 Perception +7	
Speed 6	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ <b>Hamanu's Fist (psychic)</b> ♦ At-Will Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +12 vs. AC Hit: 3d6 + 5 psychic damage. Effect: Sarhan slides the target 1 square.	
⊙ <b>Hamanu's Glare (psychic)</b> ♦ At-Will Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +12 vs. AC Hit: 3d6 + 5 psychic damage. Effect: Sarhan pushes the target 2 squares.	
⊖ <b>Fettering Glare (psychic)</b> ♦ Recharge ⓈⓈ Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in burst); +10 vs. Will Hit: 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target falls prone. The next ally of Sarhan that hits and damages the target before the end of Sarhan's next turn can reroll one attack roll before the end of the ally's next turn, using either result.	
Skills Insight +12, Intimidate +13, Religion +12	
Str 14 (+5)	Dex 15 (+5) Wis 19 (+7)
Con 18 (+7)	Int 18 (+7) Cha 21 (+8)
Alignment evil Languages Common	
Equipment token of office, needles and pot of ink	

## TACTICS

Sarhan and his forces hold back on any attacks that reduce their enemies to 0 hit points or fewer. Thus, beleaguered characters fall unconscious instead of being wounded so badly that they must make death saving throws.

Sarhan allows the dwarf conscripts to precede him into combat, but he stays close so he can use *fettering glare* on at least a few heroes.

The thri-kreen bounders attempt to box the characters in from behind, setting up flanking opportunities as they can.

The elf snipers use the rooftop edges as cover, both for defense and to use *elvish misdirection*, which sets up opportunities for them to gain combat advantage against the heroes. If any characters climb the buildings to the rooftops, the snipers draw daggers and fight hand to hand. The elves can shift on the slanted difficult terrain of the rooftops.

If combat goes poorly for Sarhan's side or lasts for more than 10 rounds, the templar abandons his comrades and attempts to escape before the city's Tyrian Guard arrives. If Sarhan makes it more than 1 square off the area of the poster map, he gets away. Perhaps he'll return one day to take vengeance against those who caused him to fail Hamanu.

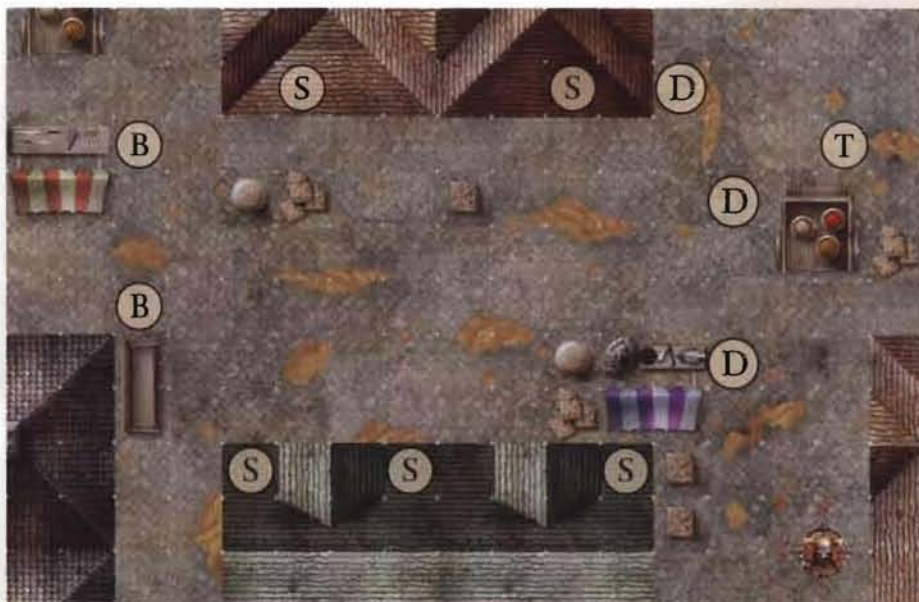
## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Bright light (daylight).

**Market Stalls and Tables:** The stalls and tables of the vendors are difficult terrain.

**Buildings:** The shops and residences are blocking terrain. Characters can enter a building as a move action. Climbing to a rooftop requires a DC 15 Athletics check. The slanted rooftops are 10 feet high and difficult terrain.

**Treasure:** Sarhan carries 550 gp.





## ENCOUNTER DI: DESERT TREK

### Encounter Level 4 (950 XP)

#### SETUP

- Rock cactus field hazard (R)
- 2 crystal spiders (S)
- 2 crystalline web hazards (W)

When the characters attempt to locate the Face in the Stone, they must strike off into the roadless waste northeast of Tyr with only general directions. The trip requires the travelers to overcome the hardships of the Athasian badlands and desert terrain. The Finding the Face skill challenge provides the framework for handling the characters' attempt to locate the ruined temple.

The skill challenge indicates a multiday excursion. About three days into their trek, the heroes wander into a stony area where three crystal spiders lie burrowed under the sand. Most of the rocks on the ground are part of a rock cactus field. In addition, crystalline webs stretch between several normal rocks, but the transparent glassy fibers are not visible from a distance.

When the characters notice the crystalline webs flashing in the crimson sun, place the characters on the southeast edge of the map. Place the webs and roll initiative, then place the crystal spiders as shown on the map as their initiatives come up.

#### When the heroes see the webs, read:

*Thin strands of nearly invisible crystal suddenly become apparent as you get close enough. They form a large web. Now that you know what to look for, you see another mass of strands stretched between two other large rocks.*

#### TACTICS

The crystal spiders lie in wait where the unsuspecting might stumble into their fine glass webs.

#### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Bright light (daylight).

**Sand Dunes:** Difficult terrain.

**Rock Outcropping:** This rock protrudes 10 feet high, requiring a DC 15 Athletics check to climb to the top.

**Treasure:** If the characters dig where the spiders surfaced and make a DC 18 Perception check, they find a bag containing dried rations, a glass mirror, and 331 gp.

#### Rock Cactus Field (R) Hazard

#### Level 3 Obstacle XP 150

A cluster of spherical, cracked stones covers the ground. Suddenly they open, revealing spiny tendrils that lash out to snare the unwary.

**Hazard:** A rock cactus field fills six contiguous squares, which are difficult terrain. It appears to be a small field of rocks. The plants conceal dangerous tendrils that drain bodily fluids.

#### Perception

- ◆ DC 15: The character recognizes the field as a group of spherical cacti.
- ◆ DC 20: The character notices widening cracks on the cacti, like shells beginning to open.

#### Additional Skill: Nature

- ◆ DC 15: The character recognizes the hazard as a rock cactus field.

#### Trigger

When a creature enters or ends its turn in or within 2 squares of the rock cactus field, the hazard attacks.

#### Attack

**Opportunity Action**      **Melee 2**

**Target:** Triggering creature

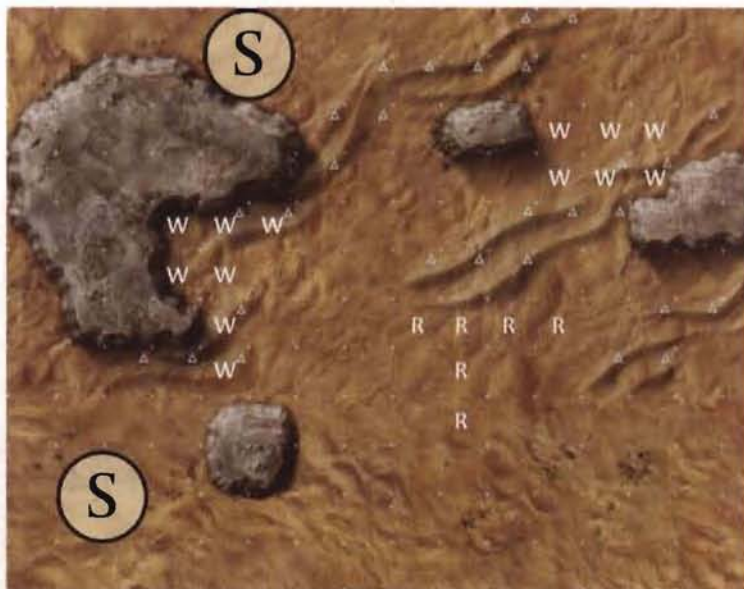
**Attack:** +8 vs. AC

**Hit:** 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target is slowed and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both). Remove one square of the rock cactus field. Removing the final square ends the hazard.

**Aftereffect:** The target is weakened (save ends).

#### Countermeasures

- ◆ A character can attack a square of the rock cactus field (AC 17, other defenses 15; hp 8). Destroying all squares ends the hazard.





## FINDING THE FACE

Any trek beyond the walls of a city-state or village is risky. Many hazards and desert creatures lurk beyond or under the next dune, ready to pull travelers to their doom.

Discovering the location of the Face in the Stone is a hard skill challenge for a group of 2nd-level explorers. Each attempt at this challenge requires a full day of activity. Given the complexity of the challenge, the characters will travel beyond the walls of Tyr for a minimum of six days before they find the hovering dust devil that marks the Face in the Stone.

**Level:** 3 (XP 300).

**Complexity:** 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures).

**Primary Skills:** Athletics, Endurance, Nature, Perception.

**Athletics (DC 15):** One of the characters presses ahead, using his or her physical strength to jump ravines, climb escarpments, or steady another comrade who attempts to do the same. This skill can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge.

**Endurance (DC 10):** Athas is a harsh world, and groups that wish to stay together must cross the wastes at the speed of their least robust member. This skill can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge, but only if the check is made by the character who has the lowest Constitution score.

**Nature (DC 15):** Knowledge of the desert landscape is a boon for travelers. Use of this skill allows a character to recognize the terrain of the region and choose the best route to cover distance quickly or to avoid predators and natural hazards. This skill can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge.

**Perception (DC 15):** The characters can stay alert for “where the devil’s horn threads the tunnel in the sky,” the vague landmarks mentioned in House Shom’s letter. From a certain perspective, these landmarks correspond with distant formations in the Ringing Mountains, and recognizing these signs eventually guides explorers to the Face in the Stone. This skill can be used to gain 3 successes in this challenge.

**Success:** If the characters earn 6 successes before 3 failures, they find the ancient temple and proceed to Encounter D2.

**Failure:** The characters find the Face in the Stone and proceed to Encounter D2. However, the protracted desert travel causes each character to lose a healing surge, and the group gains no experience points for the skill challenge.

### 2 Crystal Spiders (S)

Large natural beast (spider)

### Level 4 Lurker

XP 175 each

HP 39; Bloodied 19

Initiative +10

AC 18, Fortitude 14, Reflex 18, Will 16

Perception +9

Speed 8, climb 8 (spider climb)

Tremorsense 10

Resist 5 radiant; Vulnerable 5 thunder

#### TRAITS

#### Gleaming Carapace

When the crystal spider moves at least 5 squares during its turn, it gains concealment until the end of its next turn.

#### STANDARD ACTIONS

#### ⊕ Razor Leg ⊕ At-Will

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage.

#### ⊖ Bite (poison) ⊕ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature that cannot see the spider); +7 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d6 + 1 poison damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

#### ⚡ Radiant Agony (radiant) ⊕ Recharge when the spider uses bite or when no enemy is blinded

Attack: Close burst 2 (creatures in burst); +5 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The spider pushes the target 3 squares, and the target is blinded until the end of the spider’s next turn.

#### ☀ Brilliant Ray (radiant) ⊕ Recharge ☼ ☼

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d6 + 4 radiant damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the spider’s next turn.

Skills Stealth +11

Str 10 (+2)

Dex 18 (+6)

Wis 14 (+4)

Con 9 (+1)

Int 1 (-3)

Cha 3 (-2)

Alignment unaligned Languages –

### 2 Crystalline Webs (W)

Hazard

### Level 4 Obstacle

XP 175 each

Thin, shimmering glass strands interlace into an intricate, beautiful web.

**Hazard:** A crystalline web stretches between two surfaces, creating a 2-by-2-square or larger barrier.

#### Perception

⊕ DC 14: The character notices the crystalline web.

#### Trigger

When a creature enters one of the web’s squares, the trap attacks.

#### Attack

**Opportunity Action**      **Melee**

Target: The triggering creature

Attack: +7 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends). The target returns to the last square it occupied, and its move ends.

Miss: The target returns to the last square it occupied, and its move ends.

#### Countermeasures

⊕ A character can move through a square containing a web by spending a move action to make a DC 14 Acrobatics check. On a failed check, the trap makes an attack.

⊕ A character can attack the web (AC 18, other defenses 16; hit points 25; vulnerable 10 thunder). When it is reduced to 0 hit points, the web is destroyed.



## ENCOUNTER D2: STORM'S EDGE

Encounter Level 4 (950 XP)

### SETUP

10 human captives (C)  
10 tarek piercers (P)  
2 human wasteland raiders (H)  
3 tarek raiders (T)

This encounter uses the poster map. The heroes start in the corner of the map opposite the corner occupied by the edge of the swirling dust devil.

After completing Encounter D1 (which includes a days-long skill challenge), the characters find the area bordering the Face in the Stone. They top a slight rise and see a massive dust devil that seems rooted in place bisecting a cliff face; provide the first read-aloud text below.

As the characters move closer, they also see survivors of a House Shom caravan and a group of raiders camping just beyond the edge of the swirling dust devil. The caravan survivors are bound hand to foot, captives of the raiders. The heroes arrive in time to see the raiders begin to dispose of the captives; provide the second read-aloud text below.

The raiders attack intruders on sight.

**When the heroes first see the dust devil, read:**

*A dust storm hangs in place over a cliff wall. A swirling, twisting pillar of blowing dust and sand ascends at least 50 feet into the sky. It screams over the dead plain, promising stinging death to those who enter its skirts.*

**When the heroes are closer, read:**

*You see more than a dozen humans and humanoids among the jumble of rocks and dunes ahead. Their ragtag and eclectic dress suggests that they are raiders. Some perch atop the rocks as sentries, and others gather farther away, partly sheltered by a large boulder. Numerous bound human captives lie near the edge of the stationary dust devil. Just as you notice the prisoners, a raider drags one of the captives across the sand and tosses him into the swirling dust. The victim screams and is gone.*

### TACTICS

Seven tarek peons keep watch. When the characters come into range, the peons warn their comrades and launch javelins at the characters.

Three tarek peons are charged with tossing the bound captives into the dust devil. Each round, the peons throw one captive into the dust devil until no captives remain or all the peons are killed.

The tarek and human raiders use the large rocks as cover during the first round of the characters' advance. They prefer to fight close to the dust devil so the tarek raiders can use *bone heartpick* to slide the characters into its edges.

**QUEST: RESCUE CAPTIVES**

**1st-Level Minor Quest (100+ XP)**

When the encounter concludes, the characters gain 100 XP for each surviving captive not thrown into the dust devil.

2 Human Wasteland Raiders (H)	Level 2 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 125 each
HP 40; Bloodied 20	Initiative +5
AC 18, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 13	Perception +2
Speed 6	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⊕ <b>Dagger (weapon) + At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d4 + 5 damage.	
⊕ <b>Barbed Spear (weapon) + At-Will</b>	
Requirement: The raider must not have a creature grabbed.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC. While the raider has a creature grabbed, it can use <i>barbed spear</i> against the grabbed creature only.	
⊕ <b>Gutting Dagger (weapon) + At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the raider); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d4 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Skills Intimidate +5	
Str 18 (+5)	Dex 14 (+3) Wis 12 (+2)
Con 16 (+4)	Int 8 (+0) Cha 9 (+0)
Alignment unaligned	Languages Common
Equipment hide armor, barbed spear, dagger	

3 Tarek Raiders (T)	Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 150 each
HP 49; Bloodied 24	Initiative +5
AC 19, Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 14	Perception +2
Speed 6	
<b>TRAITS</b>	
<b>Tarek Squad Tactics</b>	
The raider gains combat advantage against any enemy adjacent to one or more other tareks.	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⊕ <b>Bone Heartpick (weapon) + At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage, and the raider slides the target 1 square. The target is marked until the end of the raider's next turn.	
<b>TRIGGERED ACTIONS</b>	
⊕ <b>Dangerous Aggression + At-Will</b>	
Trigger: An enemy marked by the raider makes an attack that does not target the raider.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The raider uses <i>bone heartpick</i> against the triggering enemy, and if the attack hits, the enemy is also immobilized (save ends).	
<b>Deathless Warrior + Encounter</b>	
Trigger: The raider drops to 0 hit points.	
Effect (No Action): The raider makes a saving throw. If the raider succeeds, it does not die until the end of its next turn.	
Skills Athletics +10, Endurance +9, Nature +7	
Str 18 (+5)	Dex 14 (+3) Wis 13 (+2)
Con 17 (+4)	Int 11 (+1) Cha 11 (+1)
Alignment unaligned	Languages Common, Giant
Equipment bone heartpick	



<b>10 Tarek Peons (P)</b> Medium natural humanoid	<b>Level 1 Minion Artillery</b> XP 25 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 11 Speed 6 (8 when charging)	Initiative +3 Perception +9
<b>TRAITS</b>	
<b>Tarek Squad Tactics</b> The peon has combat advantage against enemies that are adjacent to at least one other tarek.	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⊕ <b>Bone Heartpick (weapon) ⊕ At-Will</b> Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC Hit: 4 damage.	
⊕ <b>Bone Javelin (weapon) ⊕ At-Will</b> Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +8 vs. AC Hit: 4 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the peons next turn.	
<b>Skills</b> Athletics +7, Nature +9, Perception +9	
<b>Str</b> 14 (+2)	<b>Dex</b> 17 (+3) <b>Wis</b> 18 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 13 (+1)	<b>Int</b> 8 (-1) <b>Cha</b> 8 (-1)
<b>Alignment</b> chaotic evil <b>Languages</b> Common, Giant	
<b>Equipment</b> bone heartpick, bone javelin	

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Bright light (daylight).

**Sand Dunes:** Difficult terrain.

**Rock Outcroppings:** The rocks protrude 10 feet high, requiring a DC 15 Athletics check to climb to the top.

**Dust Devil Edge:** This area is difficult terrain. Any creature that enters or starts its turn within the powerful swirling wind takes 1 damage and falls prone. All creatures within the dust devil have concealment from one another, and they have total concealment from those outside the dust devil. Those who attempt to press through to the center of the dust devil begin the skill challenge in Encounter D3.

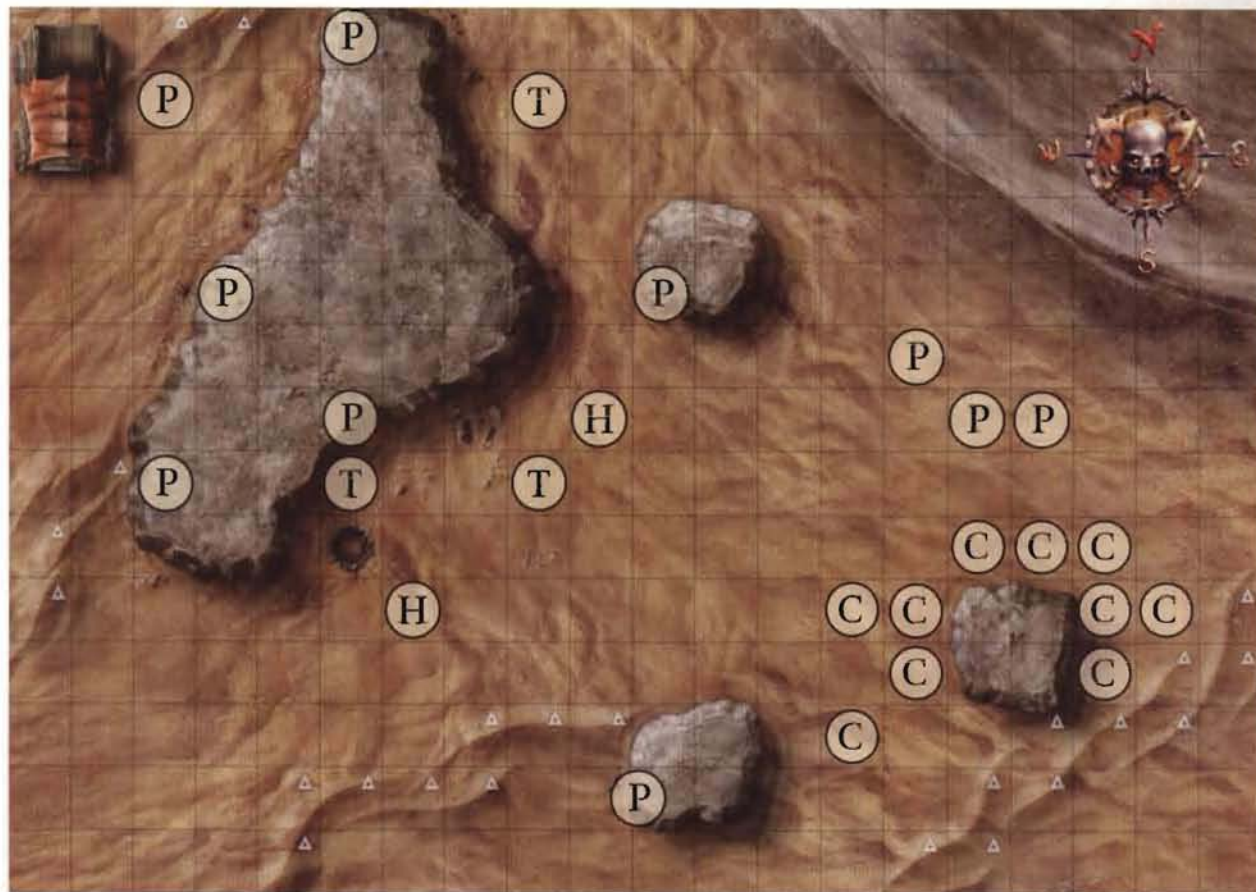
**Treasure:** The raiders carry a total of 317 gp.

## SECRETS REVEALED

If the heroes defeat the raiders and search the bodies, they discover that each one bears a tattoo of a snake skull. A DC 21 Streetwise check reveals that the tattoo is a symbol of a band of raiders, led by Yarnath the Skull, that operates from a mysterious citadel known as Slither.

If the heroes interrogate a raider, they learn that the bandits are seeking the Face in the Stone. It might lie within the whirling dust devil, but none of the raiders has worked up the courage to venture inside to find out.

If the heroes rescue any captives, they learn that the caravan had been traveling to the dwarven settlement of Kled to pick up a load of obsidian when it became lost. The caravan saw the stationary dust devil and headed in that direction, only to be attacked by the raiders.





## ENCOUNTER D3: DUST DEVIL

### Encounter Level 3 (750 XP)

To find the Face in the Stone, the characters must push through the stationary dust devil that hides it.

### PUSHING THROUGH

In essence, the dust devil's vortex is a sandstorm. Pushing through to the still center requires a minimum of 4 rounds of movement, and each failure adds to the time a character spends within the storm. Each character makes a skill check on his or her turn, and, to overcome the challenge, each individual character must earn 4 successes before 3 failures.

**Level:** 3 (XP 750, or 150 per character).

**Complexity:** 1 for each character (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

**Special:** Characters who tie themselves to other characters gain a +2 bonus to all skill checks in the challenge.

### MOVING THROUGH THE DUST DEVIL

Each character takes 1 damage per round while within the dust devil.

**Primary Skills:** Athletics, Endurance, Nature, Perception.



**Athletics (DC 15):** The character uses brute strength to push through the storm. This skill can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge.

**Endurance (DC 15):** The character withstands the dust devil's rigors. This skill can be used to gain 2 successes in this challenge.

**Nature (DC 13):** The character maneuvers to avoid the wind's worst effects. This skill can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge.

**Perception (DC 15):** The character avoids getting turned around in the swirling sand and going the wrong way. This skill can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge.

### COMPLICATIONS

Different skills apply as the heroes progress through the dust devil.

**Secondary Skills:** Nature, Endurance, Athletics.

**Round 2, Nature (DC 15):** The winds carry stinging grit. A character who succeeds on this check does not earn a success in the skill challenge, but a failed check counts as a failure for that character and imposes a -5 penalty to Perception checks made by the character until he or she earns a success on any check in the challenge.

**Round 3, Endurance (DC 15):** The intensity worsens, and the whipping sands scour unprotected characters. Any character who has not earned at least 2 successes must succeed on an extra Endurance check or lose a healing surge. A successful Endurance check of this sort does not contribute a success in the skill challenge.

**Round 4, Athletics (DC 10):** The punishing winds cause sand dunes to shift, threatening to bury the heroes. Any character who has not earned at least 3 successes must make an extra Athletics check. A failed check counts as 1 failure toward the skill challenge, and the character loses a healing surge as he or she digs free of the sand. A successful Athletics check of this sort does not contribute a success in the skill challenge.

### AFTERMATH

**Success:** Any character who earns 4 successes before 3 failures reaches the center of the dust devil and proceeds to Encounter F1.

**Failure:** Any character who accumulates 3 failures becomes turned around and exits the stationary dust devil only a few feet from his or her entry point. To reach the Face in the Stone, the character must attempt the skill challenge again.

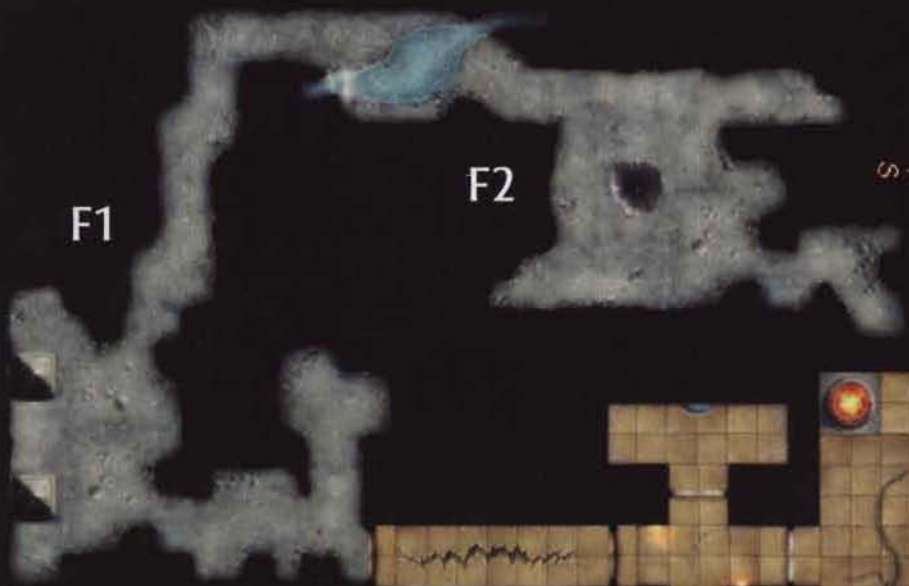
### ARRIVING AT THE FACE

The map on the next page is an overview of the Face in the Stone. Each of the seven major sections is the site of one or more encounters as the adventure unfolds.



F1

F2



### The Face in the Stone

F3



F7

F4



F6

F5





# ENCOUNTER F1: THE FACE

Encounter Level 3 (775 XP)

## SETUP

- 2 hejkin stalkers (S)
- 3 hejkin sparkers (H)
- Hejkin chanter (C)
- 2 lightning obelisks traps (T)

When the characters push through the stationary dust devil, they find the Face in the Stone. They can see small creatures (hejkins) moving within the opening. The hejkins do not emerge to face the intruders, instead letting the characters try their luck getting through the lightning obelisks trap.

**When the heroes pierce to the storm's eye, place their miniatures just off the southern edge of the encounter map and read:**

*Walls of roaring dust circumscribe a hollow area of still air bisecting a high cliff face. The cliff contains the relief carving of a massive humanoid face. The empty eyes are black shadows, but the gaping mouth is set with two granite obelisks that look like massive teeth. You see flashes of several humanoids darting about within the mouth cavity.*

2 Hejkin Stalkers (S)	Level 1 Skirmisher
Small aberrant humanoid	XP 100 each
HP 29; Bloodied 14	Initiative +5
AC 16, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 11	Perception +1
Speed 5 (earth walk), burrow 3	Darkvision
Resist 10 lightning	
TRAITS	
<b>Auspicious Bolt</b>	
The hejkin deals 1d6 extra lightning damage to any target granting combat advantage to it.	
<b>Earth Phasing</b>	
The hejkin can burrow through solid stone at full speed, and it can shift while burrowing.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
Ⓜ <b>Claws</b> ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage.	
Effect: The hejkin shifts 1 square.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
Ⓜ <b>Earth Grasp</b> (teleportation) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one bloodied creature); +4 vs. Will	
Effect: The hejkin or one of its allies swaps positions with the target, teleporting.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
<b>Burrow Beneath</b> ♦ Encounter	
Trigger: The hejkin takes damage.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The hejkin shifts 7 squares.	
Skills Insight +6, Stealth +8	
Str 14 (+2)	Dex 17 (+3) Wis 12 (+1)
Con 13 (+1)	Int 8 (-1) Cha 8 (-1)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Deep Speech	

3 Hejkin Sparkers (H)	Level 1 Soldier
Small aberrant humanoid	XP 100 each
HP 31; Bloodied 15	Initiative +4
AC 15, Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 11	Perception -1
Speed 6 (earth walk), burrow 6	Darkvision
Resist 5 lightning	
TRAITS	
<b>Arcing Defense</b>	
The sparker gains a +2 bonus to AC and Will while adjacent to another hejkin.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
Ⓜ <b>Claw</b> ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the hejkin's next turn.	
Miss: If the target is bloodied, it is marked until the end of the hejkin's next turn.	
Ⓜ <b>Grounded Current</b> (lightning) ♦ Recharge ☼ ☼	
Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in burst); +2 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 2d6 + 3 lightning damage, and the hejkin pulls the target 2 squares.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Ⓜ <b>Telluric Arc</b> (lightning) ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy marked by the hejkin moves away from it or makes an attack that does not include the hejkin as a target.	
Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Close burst 5 (triggering enemy in burst); +6 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 10 lightning damage.	
Str 16 (+3)	Dex 14 (+2) Wis 8 (-1)
Con 15 (+2)	Int 9 (-1) Cha 12 (+1)
Alignment evil Languages Dwarven	

## TACTICS

The area in front of the cave mouth is open desert, so the characters can arrange themselves anywhere. The hejkins do not willingly move south beyond the cave mouth, instead waiting to see whether the characters defeat the lightning obelisks trap and enter the cave. Several hejkins withdraw up one of the side passages and wait. However, if only one or two characters make it through the dust devil, the hejkins might rush out of the cave and deal with the underpowered intruders.

The sparkers attempt to draw attacks while keeping invaders bottled up near the trap, allowing the stalkers to close in and flank a chosen foe.

The chanter peppers foes with close attacks. If an enemy is already slowed, the chanter moves in to use *claw*.

## ROLEPLAYING OPTION

Hejkins have opportunistically colonized the outer portion of this old ruin, using areas F1 and F2 as their lair. They defend the area not because they are bound to do so but because it is their home.

The hejkins don't know what lies on the other side of the locked double doors, but they surmise that it is responsible for the dust devil that protects their lair.



The sparkers and the chanter watch for foes to become bloodied, since they gain special attacks against bloodied enemies.

The last hejkin left standing tries to flee to area F2 to warn its kin.

**Hejkin Chanter (C)** **Level 2 Controller**  
Small aberrant humanoid XP 125

HP 37; Bloodied 18 Initiative +3  
AC 16, Fortitude 13, Reflex 14, Will 15 Perception +0  
Speed 6 (earth walk), burrow 6 Darkvision  
Resist 5 lightning

**STANDARD ACTIONS**

⚔ Claw ⚡ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC  
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the hejkin's next turn. A bloodied or slowed target is immobilized instead of slowed.

⚡ Earth's Voice (thunder) ⚡ Recharge when first bloodied

Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in blast); +5 vs. Fortitude  
Hit: 2d6 + 3 thunder damage, and the hejkin pushes the target 3 squares and knocks it prone.

⚡ Static Song (lightning) ⚡ Encounter

Attack: Close burst 3 (enemies in burst); +5 vs. Fortitude  
Hit: 2d8 + 4 lightning damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).  
Miss: Half damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the hejkin's next turn.

**MINOR ACTIONS**

⚡ Twisted Earth (teleportation) ⚡ Recharge ☒ ☒

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Fortitude  
Hit: The hejkin swaps positions with the target or swaps the positions of the target and an ally within 5 squares of the hejkin.

Str 10 (+1) Dex 15 (+3) Wis 8 (+0)

Con 13 (+2) Int 10 (+1) Cha 17 (+4)

Alignment evil Languages Dwarven

**2 Lightning Obelisks (T)** **Level 3 Blaster**

Trap XP 150

Two granite obelisks stand several feet apart. You can walk between them or around either side. Each obelisk is scribed with jagged lines.

Trap: The obelisks fire lightning bolts each round on their initiative after they are triggered.

**Perception**

- ◆ DC 20: Tiny discharges of static electricity play across each obelisk.
- ◆ DC 25: One of the obelisks has what looks like a control panel.

Initiative +3

**Trigger**

The trap is triggered when an intruder attempts to enter area F1. Roll initiative. Once activated, the obelisks attack until the end of the encounter whenever an intruder remains in range.

**Attack**

Standard Action Ranged 10

Target: One intruder per obelisk

Attack: +6 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8 + 3 lightning damage.

**Countermeasures**

- ◆ A character who makes a DC 15 Acrobatics check can tumble between or around the obelisks without triggering them.
- ◆ A character can attack an obelisk (AC 10, other defenses 10; resist 15 all; hp 74). Destroying an obelisk destroys the entire trap.

- ◆ A character can engage in a skill challenge to deactivate the control panel. Complexity 2 (6 successes before 3 failures). DC 13 Thievery. Success disables the trap. Failure causes the control panel to explode (close blast 3, 2d6 + 3 lightning damage to creatures in blast), and the trap remains active.

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Bright light (daylight streaming through the cave mouth).

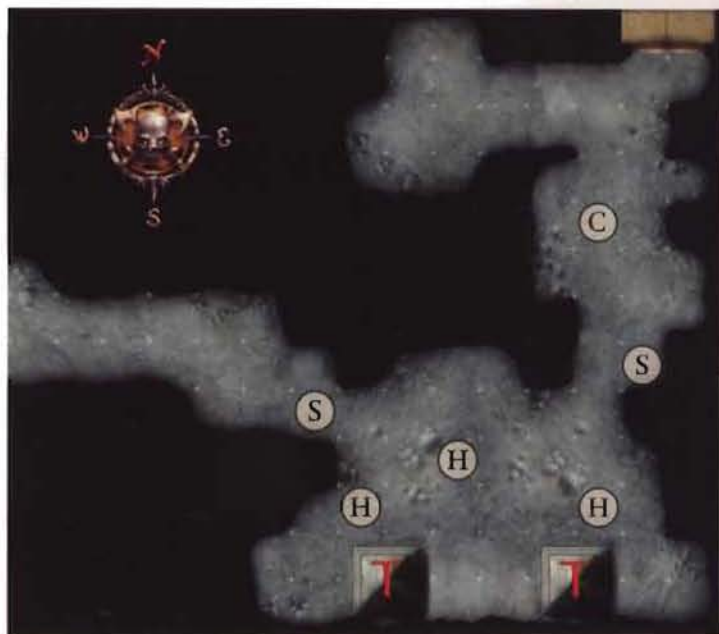
**Cavern Terrain:** Except for the obelisks and the double doors to the north, the lair appears to be a natural cavern.

**Obelisks:** The two obelisks, which from the outside appear to be wide-set teeth in the maw of a weathered face, serve as the focus of the lightning obelisks trap.

**Double Doors:** Stone double doors (affixed to hinges on the opposite side of the doors) open to a corridor leading to area F3. The doors bear ancient runes referring to the relic of Ul-Athra, also known as the Dust Kraken or the Mouths of Thirst.

The doors are locked and trapped. Use the lightning obelisks trap for details such as attacking and targeting. The trap covers both panels of the door (rather than two separate sites). It is triggered if someone tries to open the doors without unlocking them, or if someone tries to deactivate the trap and fails.

The hejkin chief in area F2 wears the key to the door lock around his neck.





## ENCOUNTER F2: HEJKIN LAIR

Encounter Level 3 (775 XP)

### SETUP

2 hejkin sparkers (S)  
 Hejkin chanter (H)  
 Chuul fledgling (F)  
 Hejkin chief (C)

A chuul fledgling rests below the water in the tunnel approaching the hejkin lair and doesn't join the fight unless the gong in area F2 is rung. If the characters cross the stream, do not place the fledgling on the map unless the characters succeed on the Perception check to spot it.

It's possible that the heroes have never seen running water before. If so, remind the players that their characters regard the stream as a spectacular occurrence.

**When the heroes see the intersecting stream, read:**

*A strange sound, akin to a breeze blowing through a fine crystal chime, reveals itself to be a flowing path of water! Free-running water falls down one side of the corridor, pools in the center of the tunnel, and flows away down another constricted channel.*

### Perception Check

DC 25: *A shape resting 15 feet below the water's surface looks a bit like a scorpion. Whatever the shape is, it doesn't move.*

**When the heroes reach the main cavern, read:**

*This wide cave stinks with years of rotting carrion, and spoor. Piles of debris ring the area like nests, and a large hole pierces the center of the chamber. A gong made out of chitin hangs along the southern wall.*

### TACTICS

If a hejkin from area F1 makes it at least as far as the stream's edge before being killed, the hejkins in this chamber are alerted and ready to defend their lair.

The hejkin chief moves to stand before the gong and rings it the moment the first character enters the chamber. When this occurs, roll initiative for the chuul fledgling. On its count, the fledgling swims 15 feet up from the bottom of the pool and attacks the characters.

After sounding the gong, the chief attacks the strongest-looking character. The sparkers join in, while the chanter uses its close attacks to best effect.

2 Hejkin Sparkers (S)		Level 1 Soldier
Small aberrant humanoid		XP 100 each
HP 31; Bloodied 15		Initiative +4
AC 15, Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 11		Perception -1
Speed 6 (earth walk), burrow 6		Darkvision
Resist 5 lightning		
TRAITS		
<b>Arcing Defense</b>		
The sparkers gain a +2 bonus to AC and Will while adjacent to another hejkin.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ <b>Claw</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the hejkin's next turn.		
Miss: If the target is bloodied, it is marked until the end of the hejkin's next turn.		
⚡ <b>Grounded Current</b> (lightning) ♦ <b>Recharge</b> ☼ ☼		
Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in burst); +2 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d6 + 3 lightning damage, and the hejkin pulls the target 2 squares.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
⚡ <b>Telluric Arc</b> (lightning) ♦ <b>At-Will</b>		
Trigger: An enemy marked by the hejkin moves away from it or makes an attack that does not include the hejkin as a target.		
Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Close burst 5 (triggering enemy in burst); +6 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 10 lightning damage.		
Str 16 (+3)	Dex 14 (+2)	Wis 8 (-1)
Con 15 (+2)	Int 9 (-1)	Cha 12 (+1)
Alignment evil		Languages Dwarven

Hejkin Chanter (H)		Level 2 Controller
Small aberrant humanoid		XP 125
HP 37; Bloodied 18		Initiative +3
AC 16, Fortitude 13, Reflex 14, Will 15		Perception +0
Speed 6 (earth walk), burrow 6		Darkvision
Resist 5 lightning		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ <b>Claw</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the hejkin's next turn. A bloodied or slowed target is immobilized instead of slowed.		
⚡ <b>Earth's Voice</b> (thunder) ♦ <b>Recharge</b> when first bloodied		
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in blast); +5 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d6 + 3 thunder damage, and the hejkin pushes the target 3 squares and knocks it prone.		
⚡ <b>Static Song</b> (lightning) ♦ <b>Encounter</b>		
Attack: Close burst 3 (enemies in burst); +5 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d8 + 4 lightning damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).		
Miss: Half damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the hejkin's next turn.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
⚡ <b>Twisted Earth</b> (teleportation) ♦ <b>Recharge</b> ☼ ☼		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: The hejkin swaps positions with the target or swaps the positions of the target and an ally within 5 squares of the hejkin.		
Str 10 (+1)	Dex 15 (+3)	Wis 8 (+0)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 10 (+1)	Cha 17 (+4)
Alignment evil		Languages Dwarven



<b>Chuul Fledgling (F)</b>		<b>Level 3 Soldier</b>
Medium aberrant magical beast (aquatic)		XP 150
HP 49; Bloodied 24	Initiative +4	
AC 19, Fortitude 18, Reflex 13, Will 14	Perception +3	
Speed 6, swim 6	Darkvision	
TRAITS		
<b>Tentacle Net (poison)</b>		
A creature hit by the fledgling's opportunity attack is immobilized until the end of the fledgling's next turn.		
<b>Aquatic</b>		
The chuul can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ <b>Claw</b> ⊕ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage, or 3d6 + 6 against an immobilized creature.		
⊕ <b>Double Attack (poison)</b> ⊕ <b>At-Will</b>		
Effect: The fledgling uses <i>claw</i> twice. If both attacks hit the same target, the fledgling makes a secondary attack with its tentacles against the same target.		
Secondary Attack: +7 vs. Fortitude; the target is immobilized (save ends).		
Str 18 (+5)	Dex 12 (+2)	Wis 14 (+3)
Con 17 (+4)	Int 0 (-4)	Cha 10 (+1)
Alignment unaligned    Languages –		

<b>Hejkin Chief (C)</b>		<b>Level 3 Elite Brute (Leader)</b>
Small aberrant humanoid		XP 300
HP 112; Bloodied 56	Initiative +2	
AC 15, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 15	Perception +0	
Speed 6 (earth walk), burrow 6	Darkvision	
Resist 5 lightning		
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ <b>Claw</b> ⊕ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 7 damage, or 3d6 + 7 against a bloodied target.		
⊕ <b>Double Attack</b> ⊕ <b>At-Will</b>		
Effect: The chief uses <i>claw</i> twice.		
⚡ <b>Static Rumble (lightning)</b> ⊕ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (enemies in burst); +5 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d6 + 3 lightning damage, and the target falls prone.		
⚡ <b>Telluric Field (healing, lightning)</b> ⊕ <b>Recharge</b> ☼ ☼ ☼		
Attack: Close blast 3 (enemies in blast); +5 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d6 + 7 lightning damage, and if the target is bloodied, the chief or one of its allies in the blast regains 5 hit points.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
⊕ <b>Earth Grasp</b> ⊕ <b>At-Will</b> (1/round)		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: The chief pushes the target 2 squares, and the target is slowed and grants combat advantage until the end of the chief's next turn.		
Str 17 (+4)	Dex 12 (+2)	Wis 8 (+0)
Con 16 (+4)	Int 10 (+1)	Cha 15 (+3)
Alignment evil    Languages Dwarven		

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Darkness; the heroes must provide their own light.

**Subterranean Pool:** The water from the stream gathers in the center of the tunnel leading to area F2, creating a pool 15 feet deep. A character can cross the pool by making a running long jump across the narrowest portion (DC 9 Athletics check). At the start of

the encounter, a chuul fledgling hides at the bottom of the pool.

**Nests:** Accumulations of fur, bones, cobwebs, and loose earth litter the sides of the chamber. The piles look like they have been well used by lounging hejkins.

**Gong:** This crude chitin gong summons the chuul fledgling from the pool.

**Pit:** A narrow shaft in the center of the chamber drops to a ledge 30 feet below (3d10 falling damage). From the ledge, the shaft continues much deeper into the earth, dropping another 200 feet to the next ledge. Years ago, the hejkins used this shaft to reach the ruined temple. (If characters descend into the shaft, they eventually find the tunnel is choked by an impassable rockslide.)

**Treasure:** Bloody water fills a stone basin in one of the side passages. Beneath the basin is a hollow that contains several treasure parcels: a level 3 magic item, a level 4 magic item, two 100 gp gems, and 110 gp.

Around his neck, the hejkin chief wears a leather thong with the key to the locked double doors separating area F1 from area F3.

When the characters get through the double doors, proceed to Encounter F3.





# ENCOUNTER F3: CULT OF DUST

## Encounter Level 3 (839 XP)

### SETUP

- 2 salt zombies (S)
- 3 zombie rotters (R)
- 2 blazing skeletons (B)
- Whipping tail trap (T)

When the characters first see area F3, none of the monsters listed in "Setup" is present. Provide the first read-aloud text below. The monsters appear if any intruder moves at least 4 squares into the chamber. When this occurs, provide the second read-aloud text, roll initiative, and begin combat.

**When the characters see the altar chamber, read:**  
*Roars of flame accompany the dancing lights from four massive braziers that burn, one in each corner of the chamber. The skeleton of a snakelike creature lies crumbling on the floor, its eye sockets seeming to smolder with embers. An altar carved of bone stands along the north wall.*

**When combat is triggered, read:**  
*With a puff of smoke, a skeletal form appears in each of the two northern braziers, burning but undamaged by the flames. Fire flares in the eye sockets of the skeletal creature on the floor; its tail rises, lashing. Smoke puffs in the two southern braziers, and as it fades, several shambling corpses appear in adjacent spaces. Two of the corpses are crusted with salt.*

<b>2 Salt Zombies (S)</b> Medium natural humanoid (undead)	<b>Level 1 Soldier</b> XP 100 each
HP 28; Bloodied 14	Initiative +2
AC 17, Fortitude 15, Reflex 11, Will 12	Perception +0
Speed 6	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; Resist 5 necrotic; Vulnerable 5 radiant	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⊕ <b>Claw</b> ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 2 damage, and the zombie grabs the target.	
† <b>Salt Feast</b> ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one bloodied creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 2 damage, and the zombie grabs the target. The target takes a -4 penalty to attempts to escape the grab. Each time the target attempts to escape and fails, it takes 5 damage.	
<b>TRIGGERED ACTIONS</b>	
<b>Zombie Weakness</b>	
Trigger: A creature scores a critical hit against the zombie.	
Effect (No Action): The zombie drops to 0 hit points.	
Str 16 (+3)	Dex 8 (-1)
Con 12 (+1)	Int 1 (-5)
	Wis 10 (+0)
	Cha 3 (-4)
Alignment unaligned Languages –	

<b>3 Zombie Rotters (R)</b> Medium natural animate (undead)	<b>Level 3 Minion Brute</b> XP 38 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative -1
AC 14, Fortitude 13, Reflex 9, Will 10	Perception +0
Speed 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⊕ <b>Slam</b> ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage.	
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 6 (-1)
Con 10 (+1)	Int 1 (-4)
	Wis 8 (+0)
	Cha 3 (-3)
Alignment unaligned Languages –	

<b>2 Blazing Skeletons (B)</b> Medium natural animate (undead)	<b>Level 5 Artillery</b> XP 200 each
HP 53; Bloodied 26	Initiative +6
AC 19, Fortitude 15, Reflex 18, Will 16	Perception +4
Speed 6	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 fire, 10 necrotic;	
Vulnerable 5 radiant	
<b>TRAITS</b>	
⚙ <b>Fiery Aura (fire)</b> ♦ Aura 1	
Any creature that ends its turn within the aura takes 5 fire damage.	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⊕ <b>Blazing Claw (fire)</b> ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
⊕ <b>Flame Orb (fire)</b> ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d4 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
Str 13 (+3)	Dex 18 (+6)
Con 17 (+5)	Int 4 (-1)
	Wis 15 (+4)
	Cha 6 (+0)
Alignment unaligned Languages –	

<b>Whipping Tail (T)</b> Trap	<b>Level 2 Blaster</b> XP 125
<i>The skeletal snake tail animates and begins to whip and lash about the chamber.</i>	
Trap: When the trap is triggered, the snake tail attacks each round on its initiative.	
<b>Perception</b>	
♦ DC 20: The skeletal tail, still in one piece, seems articulated.	
♦ DC 25: A snake sigil is chiseled lightly into the front of the altar.	
Initiative +5	
<b>Trigger</b>	
When one or more characters move 4 squares into the room, the tail makes its first attack as a surprise action. It then rolls initiative, attacking each round. The skeleton can heave its body about to place the origin of the blast anywhere it wants within the chamber.	
<b>Attack</b>	
<b>Immediate Reaction or Standard Action</b>	Close blast 3
Target: All creatures in blast	
Attack: +5 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 1 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
Miss: Half damage.	
<b>Countermeasures</b>	
♦ A character can attack the tail (AC 15, other defenses 10, hp 30). Destroying the tail destroys the trap.	



- ◆ A character can engage in a skill challenge to deactivate the trap by pressing the nonsense runes on the altar in the proper order. Complexity 1 (4 successes before 3 failures). DC 15 Thievery or Arcana. Success disables the trap. Failure causes the tail to make an attack as an immediate reaction.

## TACTICS

The blazing skeletons stand in the far corners of their braziers, forcing the characters to stand in the fire if they wish to use melee attacks.

The salt zombies move to engage the toughest-looking character. The zombie rotters mill about, engaging the nearest foes.

The whipping tail trap is controlled by a vestigial intelligence, which tries to avoid harming its undead allies. The tail will not attack the characters if two or more of its allies would be caught in the blast. If only one ally would be caught in the blast and the attack would catch two or more characters, the tail makes the attack.

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Bright light. The braziers burn with magic fire.

**Braziers:** Treat the burning bowls of each brazier as difficult terrain. A creature that starts its turn standing in a brazier takes 1d4 + 1 fire damage and ongoing 3 fire damage (save ends).

### BONUS ENCOUNTER: DUELING BASINS

As the heroes move up the hallway that leads from area F2 to area F3, they might be diverted by two side passages that branch off where a skeleton lies on the floor. Both passages lead to chambers that contain small basins of magically preserved fluid.

The basin in the western chamber holds a maroon fluid that, if sipped, returns a spent healing surge to the drinker. The fluid can confer this effect only once per day and only when it is sipped directly from the basin. If the drinker already has all his or her healing surges, the drinker instead gains 10 temporary hit points.

The basin in the eastern chamber contains an aquamarine fluid that, if sipped, recharges one of the drinker's daily powers. The fluid can confer this effect only once per day and only when it is sipped directly from the basin. If the drinker already has all his or her daily powers, the drinker instead gains a +2 bonus to the attack roll and a +5 bonus to the damage roll for the next attack power he or she uses.

A character who drinks from both basins within a 24-hour period gains no benefit from the second basin. Instead, upon sipping the second fluid, the drinker gains ongoing 10 poison damage and a -2 penalty to his or her saving throws (save ends both).

The skeleton lying in the middle of the passageway is that of a hejkin that died after drinking from both basins.

**Skeleton:** The snakelike skeleton on the floor is that of a primordial cultist that became particularly enamored of its lord. The skeleton currently serves as a trap.

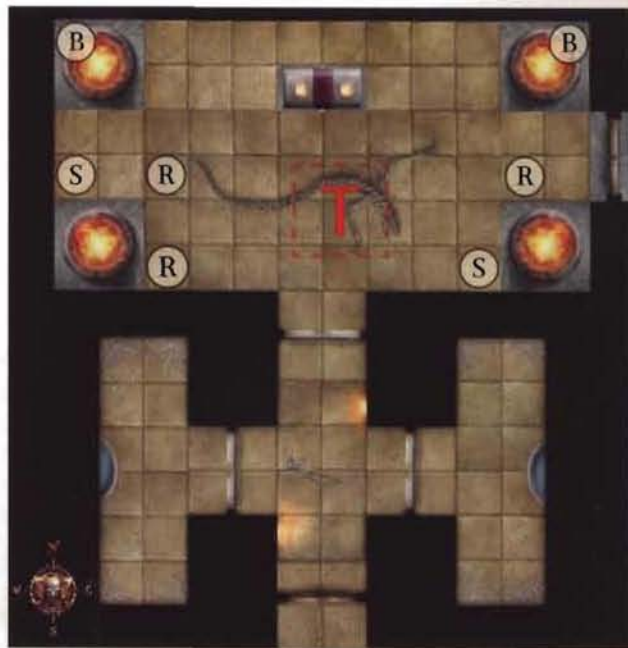
**Altar:** The altar is scribed with hard-to-discern runes that mix the Primordial language with what seems to be a nonsense script. As described in the trap countermeasures, a character can deactivate the trap by pressing the nonsense runes in the proper order.

The Primordial script reads as follows:

*In the beginning, Ul-Athra and its siblings created the world. For a time, each primordial claimed a domain among the formless, empty regions. Ul-Athra, a creature of wind and rage, had dominion over the fury of the dust storm. It wore upon its brow the Crown of Dust, into which the primordial had invested a considerable sum of its power. When Ul-Athra was lost to the world, fragments of the Crown remained.*

An image appears below the readable script: a simplistic depiction of a massive serpent that is hundreds of yards long but no thicker than a human torso. On its serpentine head rests a golden crown from which a whirling halo writhes. The halo looks somewhat akin to a dust devil.

**Double Doors in East Wall:** Treat the stone double doors that exit area F3 the same as the double doors described in area F1. That is, the doors are locked and trapped with lightning, and they can be unlocked with the hejkin chief's key.





## ENCOUNTER F4: STORM SEAT

Encounter Level 2 (700+ XP)

### SETUP

1-5 dust devil sprites

Bone construct (B)

2 dust devils (D)

Cauldron feeder trap (T)

When the heroes first see area F4, the bone construct is the only monster present. Provide the read-aloud text below.

If a character is slid into the cauldron or appears in the cauldron, the dust devils appear in open spaces next to the cauldron. Whenever a character in the cauldron is first bloodied or drops to 0 hit points, one dust devil sprite appears in the room.

If the characters do not enter the cauldron and do not attack the bone construct, they might slip through the chamber unharmed.

When the characters first see this chamber, show the players “View of the Storm Seat” on page 32 and read:

*In a niche in the southern wall, an 8-foot-tall, vaguely humanoid creature made of fused bones sits on a throne. Four statues, apparently carved from the floor, stand around the chamber. Each statue is a humanoid creature with snake-like scales that wears twisting scarves of solidified wind. A great stone cauldron sits on the northern side of the chamber, directly across from the throne.*

### Perception Check

**DC 18:** *Low whispers issue from the cauldron. The ghostly muttering continues without end, mixing words from many languages without meaning.*

### BONUS ENCOUNTER: ANCILLARY CHAMBERS

As the heroes move down the hallway that leads from area F3 to area F4, they might explore one or both side passages, at least one of which had ritual significance for the primordial Cult of Dust that was based here.

The southern doors lead into a rough, unfinished passage. Untended objects thrown onto the circle in the glyph chamber can be found scattered here. The dead-end passage also contains a patch of phosphorescent slime. This fungus glows slightly from years of having absorbed the residual magical energy that flows throughout the temple. If a living creature touches the slime, the creature gains vulnerable 5 poison until after that creature's next extended rest.

The area behind the northern doors is not developed here; you can use it as you see fit.

1-5 Dust Devil Sprites	Level 1 Minion Skirmisher
Small elemental magical beast (air, earth)	XP 25 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +5
AC 15, Fortitude 11, Reflex 13, Will 11	Perception -2
Speed 8	

#### STANDARD ACTIONS

##### ⊕ Grasping Winds ⊕ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4 damage, and the sprite slides the target 2 squares.

Effect: The sprite shifts 1 square.

##### ⚡ Stinging Sands ⊕ Encounter

Attack: Close burst 2 (creatures in burst); +4 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 10 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the sprite's next turn.

Skills Stealth +8

Str 7 (-2)

Dex 17 (+3)

Wis 7 (-2)

Con 14 (+2)

Int 4 (-3)

Cha 14 (+2)

Alignment unaligned

Languages Primordial

### Bone Construct (B)

Medium natural animate (construct)

### Level 2 Elite Brute

XP 250

HP 92; Bloodied 46

Initiative +3

AC 14, Fortitude 15, Reflex 14, Will 12

Perception +2

Speed 6 (cannot shift)

Darkvision

Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1

#### TRAITS

##### Bone Spikes ⊕ Aura 1

Any enemy that enters the aura takes 2 damage.

##### Osseous Retaliation

A creature that makes an opportunity attack against the bone construct takes 1d6 damage.

#### STANDARD ACTIONS

##### ⊕ Bone Spur ⊕ At-Will

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.

##### ⚡ Double Spurs ⊕ At-Will

Effect: The bone construct uses *bone spur* twice, making each attack against a different target. If both attacks hit, the targets are dazed until the end of the construct's next turn.

##### ⚡ Bone Volley ⊕ Recharge [1]

Attack: Close burst 3 (enemies in burst); +5 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

#### TRIGGERED ACTIONS

##### ⚡ Bone Death ⊕ At-Will

Trigger: The construct is first bloodied or drops to 0 hit points.

Attack (Free Action): The construct uses *bone volley* if the power is available; otherwise, it uses *bone spur*.

Str 17 (+4)

Dex 15 (+3)

Wis 12 (+2)

Con 16 (+4)

Int -2 (-5)

Cha -2 (-5)

Alignment evil

Languages —

## TACTICS

If combat begins, the bone construct takes a minor action to stand and then charges the nearest foes. It brutalizes them by spending an action point to use *double spurs* twice.

If the dust devils appear, they attack the nearest foes not already in the cauldron. The dust devils try to slide characters into squares adjacent to the statues.







# ENCOUNTER F5: ANCESTOR HALL

Encounter Level 1 (600 XP)

## SETUP

- 4 wisp wraiths (W)
- 2 scaled guardians (G)
- Zombie (Z)
- Defiling sigil trap (T)

Several undead lie amid the scatter of real corpses that cover the floor in area F5, hiding the defiling sigil trap. Do not place the zombie or the scaled guardians until an intruder steps into any square of the room. Do not place any wisp wraiths unless they appear, which occurs when characters drop to 0 hit points (as described below).

When the characters see the chamber, read:

*Wide steps lead down into a grand chamber. Crackling fire burns in two braziers that flank the stairs. The flames bathe the room in oddly inconstant light, throwing shadows across a floor covered in skeletal and mummified humanoid remains.*

## BONUS ENCOUNTER: ANCESTOR URNS

As the heroes move down the hallway that leads from area F4 to area F5, they might explore two side passages where ornate stone urns hold the remains of former cult leaders.

Both passages look nearly identical: a 25-foot-long hall decorated with floor tiles that depict a coiling snake. A sealed urn stands at the back of each hall. In the center of each hall, a message scribed on the floor in Primordial reads, "Our ancestors require obeisance."

The snake design in the southern hall appears to be painted with charcoal (actually burned bones). The name Palmas Thoyan is inscribed in Primordial on the urn at the end of the hall. If a living creature makes a verbal or physical sign of respect (such as a greeting or a bow) to the urn, the creature gains resist 3 necrotic until its next extended rest.

The snake design in the northern hall appears to be painted in dark green fluid (actually thickened snake venom). The urn at the end of the hall is inscribed with the name Koroneth Maeshez in Primordial script. If a living creature makes a verbal or physical sign of respect (such as a greeting or a bow) to the urn, the creature gains resist 3 poison until its next extended rest.

If either urn is disturbed by an attempt to move, open, or break it, both halls and the corridor connecting them are subject to a close burst attack; +8 vs. Fortitude; 3d6 + 3 damage, and the target is blinded (save ends). This attack also triggers the encounter in area F5 before the characters enter that chamber.

When the encounter begins, read:

*With a shriek, several bodies scattered across the floor rise. The corpses appear to be of rotting humanoids with scales instead of skin. The sickly sweet odor of decaying flesh blows through the chamber. A snake sigil carved in the floor, previously obscured by bodies, begins to glow with scarlet light.*

4 Wisp Wraiths (W)		Level 1 Minion Skirmisher
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)		XP 25 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +5
AC 13, Fortitude 11, Reflex 15, Will 12		Perception +0
Speed 0, fly 6 (hover), phasing		Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic, insubstantial;		
Vulnerable 5 radiant		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Shadow Caress (necrotic) ⊕ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 4 necrotic damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the wraith's next turn.		
MOVE ACTIONS		
Shadow Glide ⊕ Encounter		
Effect: The wraith shifts 6 squares.		
Skills Stealth +8		
Str 3 (-4)	Dex 17 (+3)	Wis 10 (+0)
Con 13 (+1)	Int 4 (-3)	Cha 15 (+2)
Alignment chaotic evil		Languages Common

2 Scaled Guardians (G)		Level 2 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 125 each
HP 38; Bloodied 19		Initiative +7
AC 18, Fortitude 14, Reflex 16, Will 13		Perception +1
Speed 8, climb 4		
Resist 10 necrotic; Vulnerable 5 radiant		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Bite (poison) ⊕ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 2 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
⊕ Death Bite (necrotic) ⊕ At-Will		
Trigger: A creature takes damage from the ongoing poison damage of the guardian's bite.		
Attack (Opportunity Action): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +5 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 1 damage, and the target is dazed and takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends both).		
Skills Stealth +10		
Str 13 (+2)	Dex 18 (+5)	Wis 10 (+1)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 9 (+0)	Cha 11 (+1)
Alignment chaotic evil		Languages Common, Primordial

## TACTICS

The undead stay in this chamber because they enjoy the necromantic emanations generated by the defiling sigil. These emanations might also lure intruders close enough to the sigil to be attacked by it. If a character is attacked by the sigil, the undead attempt to swarm that character and bring him or her down as quickly as possible. If they can reduce a character to 0 hit points, a wisp wraith appears and joins the conflict (to a maximum of four wisp wraiths per encounter).



<b>Zombie (Z)</b>		<b>Level 2 Brute</b>
Medium natural animate (undead)		XP 125
HP 40; Bloodied 20	Initiative -1	
AC 14, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 10	Perception +0	
Speed 4	Darkvision	
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic; Vulnerable 5 radiant		
TRAITS		
<b>Zombie Weakness</b>		
A critical hit automatically reduces the zombie to 0 hit points.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ <b>Slam</b> ⚔ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d12 + 4 damage, or 1d12 + 9 against a grabbed target.		
⚔ <b>Zombie Grab</b> ⚔ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex		
Hit: The zombie grabs the target. The target takes a -5 penalty to checks to escape.		
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 6 (-1)	Wis 8 (+0)
Con 10 (+1)	Int 1 (-4)	Cha 3 (-3)
Alignment unaligned		Languages -

**Defiling Sigil (T)** **Level 2 Blaster**  
Trap XP 125

When a living creature approaches the sigil, defiling magic sucks the life from the intruder, possibly creating an undead.

**Trap:** When triggered, the trap attacks living intruders within its space and adjacent to it, holding them and draining their life force.

**Perception**

⚔ DC 20: Just before you enter a square adjacent to the sigil, you notice the image twitch slightly.

**Additional Skill: Arcana**

⚔ DC 25: The sigil is made with the help of arcane magic and, as such, is likely a product of defiling.

**Trigger**

When a creature enters a square containing the sigil or adjacent to it, the trap attacks as an immediate reaction instead of a standard action. Then roll the sigil's initiative. It acts each round on its turn until no creature is within the trigger area.

Initiative +2

**Attack** ⚔ **Necrotic**

**Immediate Reaction or Standard Action**      **Melee 5**

**Target:** One creature

**Attack:** +5 vs. Fortitude

**Hit:** 1d6 + 1 damage, and the target is restrained and takes ongoing 3 necrotic damage (save ends).

**Special:** The sigil can restrain only one target at one time. The sigil attacks a restrained target until the target escapes or drops to 0 hit points. If the latter occurs, a wisp wraith forms over the target's body and attacks living intruders in the room. The sigil attacks another creature in range or waits to be triggered again.

**Countermeasures**

⚔ A restrained character can use an escape action (DC 20 check) to free himself and end the ongoing necrotic damage.

*First Failed Escape Check:* The ongoing necrotic damage is instead 6. *Each Subsequent Failed Escape Check:* The ongoing necrotic damage increases by 3 (to a maximum of 15).

⚔ As a standard action, a creature adjacent to the sigil can disrupt the enchantment with a DC 20 Thievery check or Arcana check. Doing so renders the sigil inert until the start of that creature's next turn and releases all currently restrained creatures.

⚔ A character can attack the sigil (AC and other defenses 10, resist 5 all, hp 25). Reducing the sigil to 0 hit points destroys the trap.

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Bright light. The braziers burn with magical (and likely defiling) power.

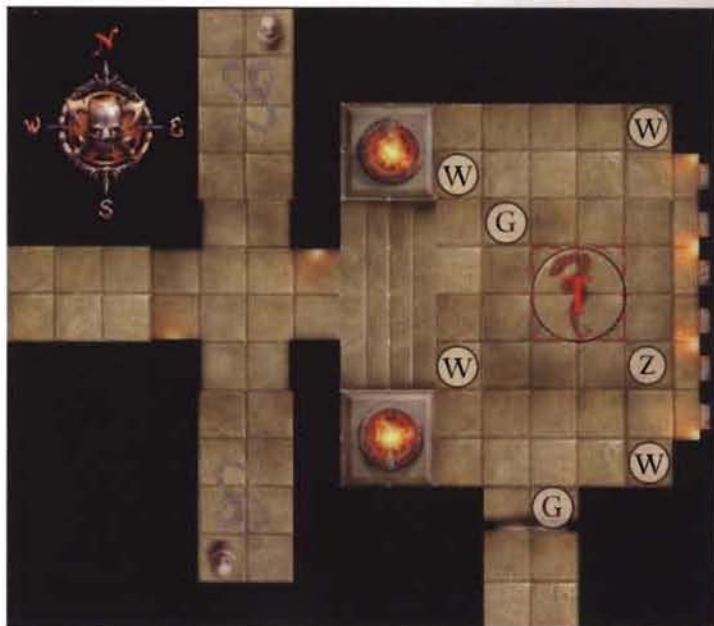
**Braziers:** Treat the burning bowls of each brazier as difficult terrain. A creature that starts its turn standing in a brazier takes 1d4 + 1 fire damage and ongoing 3 fire damage (save ends).

**Sigil:** The sigil is part of the trap described in the defiling sigil statistics block.

**Corpses:** The ordinary corpses that do not rise to attack are only a few months old. They consist mostly of hejkins, with a few other familiar races mixed in among the dead.

**Niches:** Most of the niches in the east wall contain only dust, though a few hold stacked remains.

**Treasure:** If the characters search the corpses on the floor, they discover one 100 gp gem, a *potion of healing*, and 70 gp. Searching the niches in the eastern wall reveals a rotting canvas bag that contains a corpse with a level 5 magic item.





# INTERLUDE: THE RED CHORD

## Encounter Level 4 (900 XP)

### SETUP

**Darok, mul gladiator (D)**

**J'narr, gith drone (J)**

**Nalla, goliath enforcer (N)**

You can drop this encounter into the adventure any time after the heroes enter the temple. The tactical map sets the encounter outside area F5, assuming that the characters are accosted by rival mercenaries (see the sidebar) after dealing with Encounter F5.

If the heroes are in relatively good shape after completing Encounter F5, run this encounter after a short rest or midway through an extended rest.

Wherever you decide to use this encounter, the Red Chord members appear from an exit that is closer to the temple's entrance.

Give the characters a DC 18 passive Perception check to notice the sounds of approaching creatures. Provide the read-aloud text, and let the heroes decide how they wish to respond to the mercenaries.

### When the Red Chord finds the characters, read:

*A voice calls out, "What do we got here?"*

*Three figures stand in the hallway. The one who spoke is a mul wearing the revealing garb of a stadium gladiator and wielding a warhammer. The second figure is a female goliath in elaborate hide armor wielding an intricately carved great-club. Rounding out the group is a drooling gith who stares forward with vacant eyes. A halo of psionic energy flickers around the gith's head.*

### No matter how the characters explain their presence, read:

*The goliath turns to the mul. "Darok, looks to me like House Shom went and hired competitors behind our backs. I don't much like that."*

## RIVAL MERCENARIES

The characters are not the only group that House Shom hired to find the Face in the Stone. As noted in the Merchant Caravan plot hook on page 3, Shom sent appeals far and wide for mercenaries interested in taking the job. Shom figured that few would accept, and, of those, most would fail to find the temple or fall victim to Yarnath's raiders.

A DC 20 Streetwise check reveals that the Red Chord mercenary company hails from Tyr and has a reputation for getting the job done, no matter what. They do not have a reputation for fair dealing or for showing mercy to their enemies.

*"Nor do I, Nalla. 'Course, we appreciate how you folks opened the way for us. Walking in here was as easy as taking water from a slave. But your part's done now. So kindly get out, or face the power of the Red Chord!"*

The characters can engage in a skill challenge to try to make temporary peace with the Red Chord. Complexity 1 (4 successes before 3 failures). DC 13 Insight (1 success), Diplomacy (up to 3 successes), or Bluff (up to 2 successes).

If the characters succeed on the skill challenge, they form a short-term alliance with the Red Chord. However, the mercenaries betray the heroes halfway through the next fight that occurs. If the characters fail the skill challenge, Darok breaks off negotiations and attacks.

<b>Darok, Mul Gladiator (D)</b>	<b>Level 4 Elite Soldier</b>	
Medium natural humanoid	XP 350	
HP 112; Bloodied 56	Initiative +6	
AC 20, Fortitude 18, Reflex 16, Will 14	Perception +2	
Speed 6		
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1		
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>		
⚔ <b>Warhammer (weapon) ♦ At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d10 + 7 damage.		
⚔ <b>Double Sweep ♦ At-Will</b>		
Effect: Darok uses warhammer twice. If both attacks hit the same target, Darok knocks the target prone.		
<b>TRIGGERED ACTIONS</b>		
⚔ <b>Pursuing Shove ♦ At-Will</b>		
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to Darok stands up.		
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (triggering enemy); +7 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: Darok pushes the target 3 squares and shifts 3 squares to a square adjacent to the target.		
<b>Incredible Toughness ♦ Encounter</b>		
Trigger: Darok starts his turn.		
Effect (No Action): Darok ends one effect that includes ongoing damage and the dazed, the slowed, the stunned, or the weakened condition.		
Str 19 (+6)	Dex 14 (+4)	Wis 11 (+2)
Con 16 (+5)	Int 9 (+1)	Cha 7 (+0)
Alignment unaligned	Languages Common	
Equipment warhammer		

## TACTICS

Darok sends J'narr forward at the first opportunity to attempt *psychic nova* before the characters can use too many daily or encounter powers.

The mul and the goliath rush in after the gith drone and bring their weapons to bear. If the combat takes place outside area F5, Nalla uses *push through* to try to push characters into the chamber; Darok does the same with *pursuing shove*. The thri-kreen hunter stays back and uses *double throw*. It flees combat if it becomes bloodied or if two of its companions are downed.



**J'narr, Gith Drone (J)** **Level 5 Controller**

Medium natural humanoid

XP 200

HP 62; Bloodied 31

Initiative +2

AC 19, Fortitude 17, Reflex 13, Will 14

Perception +3

Speed 6

**TRAITS**⚙️ **Brain Fog** ♦️ **Aura 3**

Enemies within the aura take a -1 penalty to all defenses.

**STANDARD ACTIONS**⚔️ **Bone Dagger** (weapon) ♦️ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage.

🌀 **Telekinetic Thrust** (force) ♦️ **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d6 + 5 force damage.

Effect: J'narr slides the target 2 squares.

🌀 **Psychic Nova** (psychic) ♦️ **Recharge** ⚡️ ⚡️

Attack: Area burst 1 within 5 (enemies in burst); +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: 4d6 + 4 damage, and the target takes 5 psychic damage whenever it uses a daily or an encounter power (save ends). If the target is bloodied, it also takes ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends both).

**MOVE ACTIONS**🌀 **Telekinetic Leap** ♦️ **Encounter**

Effect: J'narr flies 5 squares.

Str 16 (+5)

Dex 10 (+2)

Wis 12 (+3)

Con 14 (+4)

Int 5 (-1)

Cha 8 (+1)

Alignment evil

Languages Deep Speech

Equipment inix shell armor, bone dagger

**Nalla, Goliath Enforcer (N)** **Level 8 Brute**

Medium natural humanoid

XP 350

HP 105; Bloodied 52

Initiative +7

AC 21, Fortitude 20, Reflex 20, Will 19

Perception +6

Speed 6

**STANDARD ACTIONS**⚔️ **Greatclub** (weapon) ♦️ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 4d6 + 6 damage.

**MINOR ACTIONS**⚔️ **Push Through** ♦️ **Recharge** when first bloodied

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. Fortitude

Hit: Nalla pushes the target, knocks it prone, and shifts 1 square to the square the target vacated.

🪨 **Stone's Endurance** ♦️ **Encounter**

Effect: Nalla gains resist 5 to all damage until the end of her next turn.

**TRIGGERED ACTIONS**⚔️ **Vengeful Clout** (weapon) ♦️ **Encounter**

Trigger: Nalla drops to 0 hit points.

Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 4d6 + 6 damage, and the target falls prone.

Skills Athletics +14, Intimidate +10, Nature +11

Str 20 (+9)

Dex 17 (+7)

Wis 15 (+6)

Con 15 (+6)

Int 11 (+4)

Cha 12 (+5)

Alignment unaligned

Languages Common

Equipment hide armor, greatclub

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Bright light. The braziers burn with magical (and likely defiling) power.

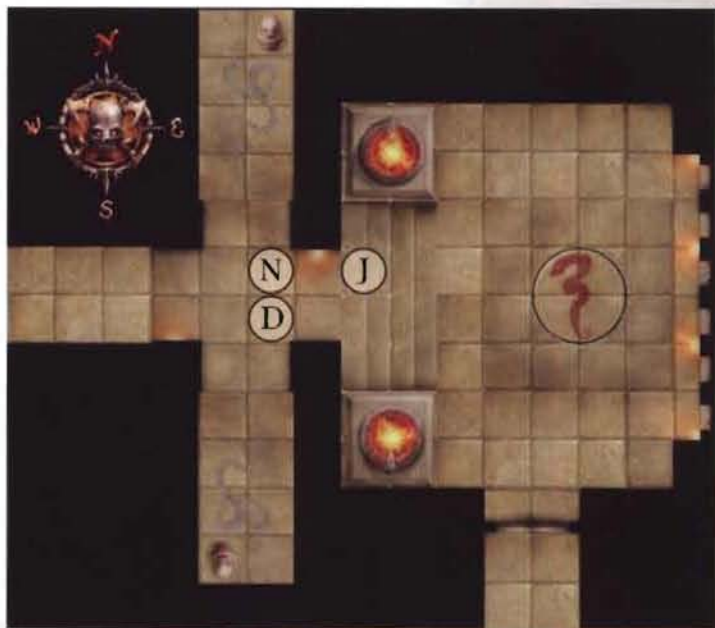
**Braziers:** Treat the burning bowls of each brazier as difficult terrain. A creature that starts its turn standing in a brazier takes 1d4 + 1 fire damage and ongoing 3 fire damage.

**Sigil:** The sigil is part of the trap described in Encounter F5. The characters might have deactivated it already.

**Corpses:** The ordinary corpses that do not rise to attack (as described in Encounter F5) are only a few months old. They consist mostly of hejkins, with a few other familiar races mixed in among the dead.

**Niches:** Most of the niches in the east wall contain only dust, though a few hold stacked remains.

**Treasure:** The treasure in the chamber is described in Encounter F5. The characters might have gathered it already. The Red Chord carries the following: four 100 gp gems, a total of 231 gp, and one level 5 magic item.





# ENCOUNTER F6: ROT BLOOM

Encounter Level 3 (800 XP)

## SETUP

Bloodthorn vine (V)  
Myconid rotpriest (R)  
2 myconid guards (G)  
Myconid sovereign (S)

The side passage that branches off between areas F5 and F7 leads to an ancient storage area.

When the characters look south along the corridor toward area F6, read:

*The air in the corridor is damp and smells of rot. The passage ends at a door covered in an uneven layer of slightly phosphorescent fungus.*

Area F6 was the Cult of Dust's cold storage area, which held food, drink, and an assortment of delicacies. When the cult failed, a fungal infection began to germinate here without interference.

Myconids now infest the chamber. The vegetable creatures have gained a measure of intelligence and are preparing to venture farther into the abandoned warrens of the cult tunnels. Though activity in the temple is rare, every so often a zombified hejkin makes its way into the chamber, so the fungal creatures are ready for violence.

The myconids do not attack intruders unless they are attacked first. Because inactive myconids look like overly large fungus stalks, a casual glance into the chamber might not reveal any danger.

The encounter begins either when the characters attack the myconids or when a character moves to a space adjacent to the pit, at which point the fungal bloodthorn growing inside attacks.

When characters look into the chamber, read:

*Fungus blankets the floor, covers the walls, and hangs from the ceiling of this moist cavern, glowing dimly in cool tones of green, blue, and yellow. The rotted detritus of barrels, crates, and shelves litter the side walls, all evenly coated in fungal stalks, a few of which reach 5 or 6 feet in height. A dark cavity pierces the floor of the chamber.*

### Perception Check

DC 22: Some of the larger mushroom stalks growing around the chamber appear vaguely humanoid in shape.

Bloodthorn Vine (V)		Level 2 Soldier
Medium natural beast (plant)		XP 125
HP 41; Bloodied 20	Initiative +3	
AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 12, Will 14	Perception +3	
Speed 5 (forest walk)	Blindsight 10	
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Striking Vine ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.		
† Impaling Thorn (healing) ♦ Recharge when the vine doesn't have a creature grabbed		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage, and the vine grabs the target.		
Sustain Standard: The vine sustains the grab, the target takes 2d8 + 4 damage, and the vine regains 5 hit points.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
Pulling Vines ♦ At-Will		
Effect: The vine shifts 1 square, pulling any creatures it has grabbed into spaces adjacent to it.		
Str 17 (+4)	Dex 10 (+1)	Wis 14 (+3)
Con 17 (+4)	Int 2 (-3)	Cha 6 (-1)
Alignment unaligned		Languages –

Myconid Rotpriest (R)		Level 3 Brute (Leader)
Medium fey humanoid (plant)		XP 150
HP 58; Bloodied 29	Initiative +2	
AC 15, Fortitude 16, Reflex 13, Will 16	Perception +3	
Speed 5	Tremorsense 10	
TRAITS		
Regeneration		
The rotpriest regains 5 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point.		
Sensitivity to Light		
If the rotpriest takes radiant damage, its regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Stipe Staff (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d10 + 3 damage.		
↩ Decomposing Spray (necrotic) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Close burst 3 (enemies in burst); +6 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 1d12 + 5 necrotic damage.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Roots of the Colony ♦ At-Will		
Trigger: The rotpriest is hit by an attack while a myconid ally is within 5 squares of it.		
Effect (Free Action): The rotpriest and the myconid ally each take half damage from the attack.		
Sacrifice for the Colony ♦ At-Will		
Trigger: A myconid ally uses roots of the colony to deal damage to the rotpriest.		
Effect (Free Action): The rotpriest takes the damage dealt to the triggering ally, and the ally takes no damage.		
Life Burst (healing) ♦ Encounter		
Trigger: The rotpriest drops to 0 hit points.		
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The rotpriest makes a close burst 1 and restores 10 hit points to one living creature in the burst.		
Str 10 (+1)	Dex 12 (+2)	Wis 15 (+3)
Con 18 (+5)	Int 10 (+1)	Cha 18 (+5)
Alignment unaligned		Languages –
Equipment staff		



<b>2 Myconid Guards (G)</b>		<b>Level 4 Soldier</b>
Medium fey humanoid (plant)		XP 175 each
HP 56; Bloodied 28	Initiative +7	
AC 18, Fortitude 17, Reflex 16, Will 14	Perception +3	
Speed 6	Tremorsense 10	
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ <b>Spiny Strike</b> ✦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage.		
⚡ <b>Pacification Spores</b> (poison) ✦ Encounter		
Attack: Close burst 1 (nonplants in burst); +7 vs. Will		
Hit: 2d6 + 5 poison damage, and the target cannot take standard actions until the end of the guard's next turn.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
<b>Roots of the Colony</b> ✦ At-Will		
Trigger: The guard is hit by an attack while a myconid ally is within 5 squares of it.		
Effect (Free Action): The guard and the myconid ally each take half damage from the attack.		
Str 18 (+6)	Dex 16 (+5)	Wis 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5)	Int 8 (+1)	Cha 10 (+2)
Alignment unaligned Languages –		

<b>Myconid Sovereign (S)</b>		<b>Level 4 Controller (Leader)</b>
Large fey humanoid (plant)		XP 175
HP 58; Bloodied 29	Initiative +2	
AC 18, Fortitude 18, Reflex 14, Will 15	Perception +1	
Speed 6	Tremorsense 10	
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ <b>Slam</b> ✦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 3 damage.		
Effect: The sovereign slides the target 1 square.		
⚡ <b>Spore Blast</b> (poison) ✦ Recharge 2/3		
Attack: Close blast 3 (nonplants in blast); +7 vs. Will		
Hit: 2d8 + 3 poison damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the sovereign's next turn.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
<b>Commanding Spores</b> ✦ At-Will		
Effect: One plant ally within 5 squares of the sovereign can shift 1 square as a free action.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
<b>Roots of the Colony</b> ✦ At-Will		
Trigger: The sovereign is hit by an attack while a myconid ally is within 5 squares of it.		
Effect (Free Action): The sovereign and the myconid ally each take half damage from the attack.		
Str 7 (+0)	Dex 11 (+2)	Wis 8 (+1)
Con 18 (+6)	Int 7 (+0)	Cha 12 (+3)
Alignment unaligned Languages telepathy 5		

## TACTICS

The bloodthorn vine is attached to the pit's side just beneath the lip. It could gain a surprise action if a character moves to a square adjacent to the pit before recognizing that the chamber contains a threat. If this occurs, combat begins when the bloodthorn vine uses *impaling thorn*. On the following round (or the same round if not a surprise round), the plant uses *pulling vines* to drop its victim into the pit.

The myconid guards close with the characters, attempting to push victims toward the pit. The rotpriest

stays close enough to its allies to take some of their hits (using *roots of the colony* and *sacrifice for the colony*) and then regenerate. It uses *decomposing spray* when it can hit multiple targets. Otherwise, the rotpriest uses *stipe staff* to bludgeon enemies into submission.

The myconid sovereign stays out of melee if possible. It uses *commanding spores* to give its allies superior positions during the fight. The sovereign uses *spore blast* even if its allies are caught in the blast—as plants, they are immune to the effect.

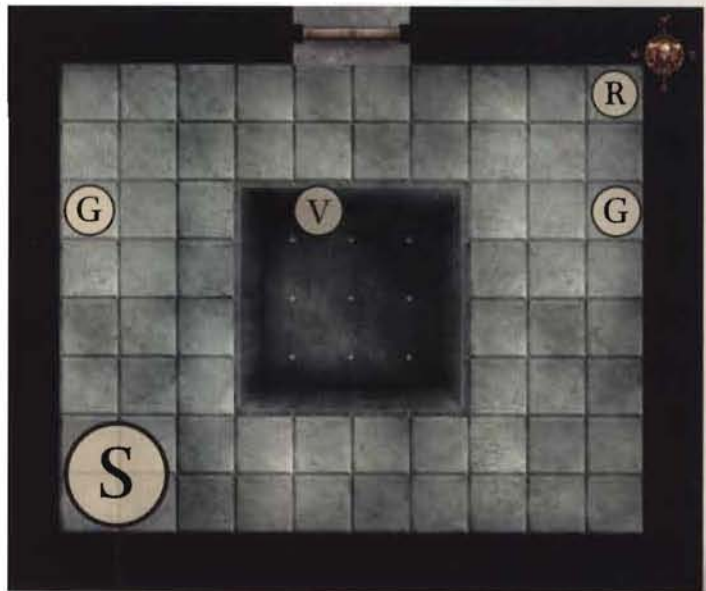
## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Dim light. Bioluminescent fungi on the walls, floor, and ceiling provides just enough light to see by, lending an eerie cast to the chamber.

**Pit:** The pit is 30 feet deep; creatures that fall in take 3d10 falling damage. The cultists did not build the pit into the original storage chamber. It opened after earth movement caused the floor to collapse. The sides of the pit are rough but powdery, and climbing out without a rope is difficult (DC 22 Athletics check).

The pit's floor is difficult terrain. It is a mass of loose earth, benign fungal growth, and assorted debris, including several sets of humanoid bones that appear to be hejkins. A few shattered barrels and boxes that were caught in the collapse are strewn across the pit bottom.

**Treasure:** A clay vessel, painted red, lies mostly buried among the detritus at the bottom of the pit (DC 15 Perception check to find). The vessel contains four 100 gp gems, three *potions of healing*, and 330 gp.





# ENCOUNTER F7: CROWN WYRM

## Encounter Level 5 (1,000 XP)

### SETUP

10 wisp wraiths (W)  
Silk wyrm adult (S)

A pit in this chamber still holds the centerpiece of the cult's devotion: a fragment of the *Crown of Dust*, the relic worn by the primordial Ul-Athra. This fragment represents one-third of the artifact.

A silk wyrm adult, guardian of the fragment, begins the encounter insubstantial and phasing inside the ceiling between the two fountains. The wisp wraiths are phasing inside the floor as shown on the map.

The monsters attack if a character enters the pit or disturbs the *Crown of Dust* fragment.

When the adventurers enter the chamber, show the players "View of the Pit" on page 32 and read: *Flickering purple radiance shines up from a pit in the floor. A small object in the pit seems to be the source of the light.*

### 10 Wisp Wraiths (W) Level 1 Minion Skirmisher

Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 25 each  
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +5  
AC 13, Fortitude 11, Reflex 15, Will 12 Perception +0  
Speed 0, fly 6 (hover), phasing Darkvision  
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic, insubstantial;  
Vulnerable 5 radiant

#### STANDARD ACTIONS

⊕ **Shadow Caress (necrotic) ⊕ At-Will**  
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex  
Hit: 4 necrotic damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the wraith's next turn.

#### MOVE ACTIONS

**Shadow Glide ⊕ Encounter**  
Effect: The wraith shifts 6 squares.

Skills Stealth +8

Str 3 (-4) Dex 17 (+3) Wis 10 (+0)  
Con 13 (+1) Int 4 (-3) Cha 15 (+2)

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common

### TACTICS

The silk wyrm adult begins with a surprise action to attack the character nearest to its starting position. It uses *mesmerizing dread* to try to slide that character into the pit. The wisp wraiths swarm any characters who attempt to make ranged attacks on the wyrm.

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

Refer to the map on the facing page.

**Illumination:** Dim light. The only light (beyond what the characters might carry) comes from the *Crown of Dust* fragment.

**Dragonhead Fountains:** These fountains contain potable water, refreshed from an underground aquifer.

**Sacrifice Slab:** A residual charge of defiling magic in the slab keeps the silk wyrm adult alive without food.

**Pit:** The pit is 20 feet deep (2d10 falling damage, DC 15 Athletics check to climb out). A character who starts his or her turn in the pit gains vulnerable 5 poison until the end of the encounter.

**Treasure:** In addition to the fragment of the *Crown of Dust*, the debris at the bottom of the pit consists of 3,245 sp and two level 5 magic items.

### Silk Wyrm Adult (S) Level 3 Solo Skirmisher

Large natural magical beast (reptile) XP 750  
HP 174; Bloodied 87 Initiative +7  
AC 17, Fortitude 16, Reflex 17, Will 14 Perception +8  
Speed 6, fly 8 (clumsy) Low-light vision  
Saving Throws +5; Action Points 2

#### TRAITS

##### Blood Scent

The adult's attacks against bloodied creatures ignore concealment.

#### STANDARD ACTIONS

⊕ **Bite (poison) ⊕ At-Will**  
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +8 vs. AC  
Hit: 1d10 + 6 poison damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).  
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is immobilized (save ends).  
Second Failed Saving Throw: The target is helpless (save ends).

⊕ **Feed (healing) ⊕ At-Will**  
Attack: Melee 2 (one immobilized, restrained, or helpless creature); +6 vs. Fortitude  
Hit: The target loses 1 healing surge and the adult regains 10 hit points.

⊕ **Wyrm Strike ⊕ At-Will**  
Effect: The adult uses *bite* twice, making each attack against a different target.

#### MOVE ACTIONS

**Serpent Strike ⊕ At-Will**  
Effect: The adult shifts half its speed.

#### MINOR ACTIONS

⊕ **Mesmerizing Dread (fear, psychic) ⊕ Recharge ☼ ☼ ☼ ☼ ☼**  
Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies in burst); +6 vs. Will  
Hit: 1d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the adult slides the target 3 squares. The target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses until the end of the adult's next turn.

**Shadow Form ⊕ Recharge when first bloodied**  
Effect: The adult gains insubstantial and phasing. While in this form, the adult gains a -5 bonus to Stealth checks, but it cannot attack. It can resume its normal form as a free action.

#### TRIGGERED ACTIONS

⊕ **Silk Strands (acid) ⊕ At-Will**  
Trigger: An enemy hits the adult with a melee or a close attack.  
Effect: Before its attack, the adult shifts 1 square.  
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 3 (triggering enemy); +6 vs. Reflex  
Hit: 1d6 + 8 acid damage, and the target is restrained (save ends).

Skills Stealth +10  
Str 14 (+3) Dex 18 (+5) Wis 14 (+3)  
Con 14 (+3) Int 7 (-1) Cha 11 (+1)  
Alignment unaligned Languages –





## CROWN OF DUST

This item is appropriate for heroic tier characters.

### Crown of Dust (First Fragment) Heroic Tier

*This relic is a fragment of a crown of gold, about a third of the whole. The piece is still wearable—barely. Visions of raging sandstorms warm the blood of those who wear the fragment.*

**Item Slot:** Head

**Property:** You gain a +2 item bonus to saving throws against ongoing poison and necrotic damage, as well as to skill challenge checks to survive or navigate desert hazards.

**Power (Daily ♦ Summoning):** Minor Action. Ranged 5. Summon a Medium dust devil in an unoccupied square within range. It then makes the following attack. Melee 1 (one creature); Strength, Reflex, or Constitution vs. Reflex; 1d10 + Str, Ref, or Con modifier damage, and the target falls prone. After the attack, the dust devil disappears.

## CROWN OF DUST LORE

**History DC 20:** A millennium ago, Ul-Athra was bested by the Dragon. The beast clove the primordial's crown into three parts, all of which were lost to history.

## GOALS OF THE CROWN

- ♦ Be reunited into a whole item once again.
- ♦ Find and resurrect or free Ul-Athra.

## ROLEPLAYING THE FRAGMENT

This fragment of the *Crown of Dust* doesn't know where to find its other fragments or the remains of Ul-Athra. It has a hazy memory of events before the Dragon struck the *Crown* from the primordial's head.

### CONCORDANCE

<b>Starting Score</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Owner gains a level</b>	<b>+1d10</b>
<b>Each fragment of the <i>Crown</i> joined to the first</b>	<b>+1</b>
<b>Owner defeats an immortal (1/day)</b>	<b>+2</b>
<b>Owner or ally attacks an elemental (1/encounter)</b>	<b>-2</b>
<b>Owner defeats enemy without <i>Crown's</i> aid (1/encounter)</b>	<b>-1</b>

### PLEASED (16–20)

*"Soon, Ul-Athra will be found and restored to life!"*

The fragment is delighted because its host has shown a strong desire to revive the ancient primordial.

**Property:** You gain resist 15 poison.

**Power (Encounter):** Immediate Interrupt. **Trigger:** An enemy within 5 squares of you fails a saving throw. **Effect:** The fragment's daily power recharges.

### SATISFIED (12–15)

*"We're making progress, surely? Perhaps the next dune holds Ul-Athra's remains or my lost fragments!"*

The fragment recognizes the efforts made by its host and hopes that they continue.

**Property:** You gain resist 10 poison.

**Property:** Each enemy within 5 squares of you has vulnerable 5 poison.

**Power (Encounter):** Free Action. **Trigger:** You score a critical hit on an enemy. **Effect:** The target takes ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

### NORMAL (5–11)

*"I am troubled. What if I never find my creator?"*

The fragment is forlorn by its host's failure to find Ul-Athra and its missing pieces.

### UNSATISFIED (1–4)

*"Are you even trying to help me?"*

The fragment is displeased with an owner who seems unwilling to search out Ul-Athra's remains. Until the artifact's concordance improves, it grants no powers, but its properties still apply.

### ANGERED (0 OR LOWER)

*"You've been deceiving me all along!"*

The fragment, enraged, punishes its host until the character's behavior improves or the artifact decides to move on. It grants no powers or properties.

### MOVING ON

*"A curse upon you until your bloodline fails!"*

The fragment disappears in a flash of virulent purple light, most likely while its host is engaged in combat.



## ENCOUNTER E1: LEAVING THE FACE

Encounter Level 4 (950 XP)

### SETUP

Jhakar tracker (J)  
2 salt zombies (Z)  
Elf peddler (P)  
3 elf dune striders (S)

If the characters disturb the *Crown of Dust* fragment in area F7, the dust whirlwind that hides and protects the temple immediately collapses. Elf raiders from Slither (Yarnath the Skull's movable base), already close enough to see the stationary dust devil, witness the collapse. They move to investigate and find the Face in the Stone.

By the time the heroes are ready to leave the temple, the raiders have taken up positions in the entry cavern (area F1) in preparation for a deeper journey into the complex.

Yarnath's raiders employ a variety of creatures to complement their strengths. In this case, the elves that found the Face in the Stone brought a vicious jhakar tracker and two salt zombies.

**When the characters return to the entry chamber, read:**

*The awful roar of the dust storm that raged outside the Face in the Stone has ceased. On the other side of the cavern's gaping mouth, the air is clear and free of whirling sand; the cloaking wind devil has collapsed!*

*Then you notice several raiders arrayed around the chamber. All are elves; two are undead and crusted with salt. Each raider's forehead is branded with the tattoo of a snake skull. Nearby, a small reptilian beast hisses at you, baring its large teeth.*

### TACTICS

The salt zombies and the jhakar tracker move to block the entrance. The salt zombies try to grab any characters who attempt to exit the cavern. The jhakar tracker uses *opportunistic chomp* on the first character to end his or her turn within 2 squares of the beast.

The elf peddler screams at the elf dune striders to "Kill the meat!" and uses *peddler's command* to provide its allies with additional movement. It attempts to use *double dealing* against characters who try to escape south through the open cave mouth.

The elf dune striders use their speed and their movement-enhanced attacks to pen in the heroes. If a character escapes out into the desert, the striders try to run that character down. If possible, each elf dune strider reserves *elven accuracy* to use in conjunction with *rushing dervish*.

Jhakar Tracker (J)		Level 1 Skirmisher
Small natural beast (reptile)		XP 100
HP 28; Bloodied 14		Initiative +3
AC 15, Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 13		Perception +6
Speed 6		Low-light vision
TRAITS		
Uncanny Senses		
The tracker's attacks ignore concealment.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Bite ⊕ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 2 damage, or 3d6 + 4 against creatures granting combat advantage to the tracker.		
Effect: The tracker shifts 1 square.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
⊕ Opportunist Chomp ⊕ Encounter		
Trigger: An enemy ends its turn within 2 squares of the tracker.		
Effect: The tracker shifts 1 square before or after the attack.		
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (triggering enemy); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 3d6 + 4 damage.		
Str 15 (+2)	Dex 12 (+1)	Wis 12 (+1)
Con 12 (+1)	Int 2 (-4)	Cha 6 (-2)
Alignment unaligned		Languages —

2 Salt Zombies (Z)		Level 1 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 100 each
HP 28; Bloodied 14		Initiative +2
AC 17, Fortitude 15, Reflex 11, Will 12		Perception +0
Speed 6		Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; Resist 5 necrotic; Vulnerable 5 radiant		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Claw ⊕ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 2 damage, and the zombie grabs the target.		
⊕ Salt Feast ⊕ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one bloodied creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 2 damage, and the zombie grabs the target. The target takes a -4 penalty to attempts to escape the grab. Each time the target attempts to escape and fails, it takes 5 damage.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Zombie Weakness		
Trigger: A creature scores a critical hit against the zombie.		
Effect (No Action): The zombie drops to 0 hit points.		
Str 16 (+3)	Dex 8 (-1)	Wis 10 (+0)
Con 12 (+1)	Int 1 (-5)	Cha 3 (-4)
Alignment unaligned		Languages —

### PARLAY

The raiders do not immediately attack the characters, mainly because they are surprised to see the characters appear from deeper within the temple. The elf peddler demands to know who the characters are, why they were in the shrine, and whether they recovered anything.

The raiders are one of many teams scouring the desert for the Face in the Stone. Despite their low status among most other raiders, the elves feel emboldened by their association with Yarnath. If they can retrieve the relic that he desires, their standing with the raider lord will improve dramatically.



<b>Elf Peddler (P)</b>		<b>Level 2 Skirmisher (Leader)</b>	
Medium fey humanoid		XP 125	
HP 34; Bloodied 17		Initiative +6	
AC 16, Fortitude 12, Reflex 15, Will 15		Perception +8	
Speed 7			
<b>TRAITS</b>			
<b>Wild Step</b>			
The peddler ignores difficult terrain when it shifts.			
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>			
⊕ <b>Bone Longsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will</b>			
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC			
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.			
⊖ <b>Double Dealing ♦ At-Will</b>			
Effect: The peddler uses bone longsword and then shifts half its speed. If it ends the shift in a square where it flanks an enemy other than the creature it just attacked, uses bone longsword against the flanked enemy.			
<b>MINOR ACTIONS</b>			
Peddler's Command ♦ At-Will (1/round)			
Effect: One ally within 20 squares of the peddler moves half its speed. If that ally is an elf, it instead shifts half its speed.			
<b>FREE ACTIONS</b>			
Elven Accuracy ♦ Encounter			
Effect: The peddler rerolls one of its attack rolls and uses the second result.			
Skills Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9, Stealth +9, Thievery +9			
Str 11 (+1)	Dex 16 (+4)	Wis 14 (+3)	
Con 10 (+1)	Int 12 (+2)	Cha 16 (+4)	
Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Elven			
Equipment bone longsword			

<b>3 Elf Dune Striders (S)</b>		<b>Level 4 Skirmisher</b>	
Medium fey humanoid		XP 175 each	
HP 52; Bloodied 26		Initiative +9	
AC 18, Fortitude 14, Reflex 18, Will 15		Perception +9	
Speed 7			
<b>TRAITS</b>			
<b>Move Like the Wind</b>			
The dune strider gains a +5 bonus to all defenses against opportunity attacks provoked by its movement.			
<b>Wild Step</b>			
The dune strider ignores difficult terrain when it shifts.			
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>			
⊕ <b>Bone Longsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will</b>			
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC			
Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage, or 2d8 + 4 when charging.			
⊕ <b>Obsidian Short Sword (weapon) ♦ At-Will</b>			
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC			
Hit: 1d6 + 7 damage.			
⊖ <b>Rushing Dervish ♦ Recharge</b> when first bloodied			
Effect: The dune strider moves its speed + 2. At any point before, during, or after the move, it uses bone longsword and obsidian short sword, making each attack against a different target.			
<b>FREE ACTIONS</b>			
Elven Accuracy ♦ Encounter			
Effect: The dune strider rerolls one of its attack rolls and uses the second result.			
Skills Acrobatics +12, Athletics +8, Endurance +8			
Str 13 (+3)	Dex 21 (+7)	Wis 15 (+4)	
Con 12 (+3)	Int 12 (+3)	Cha 12 (+3)	
Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Elven			
Equipment bone longsword, obsidian short sword			



ENCOUNTER E1: LEAVING THE CAVE

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** Bright light (daylight streaming through the cave mouth).

**Cavern Terrain:** Except for the obelisks and the double doors to the north, the lair appears to be a natural cavern.

**Obelisks:** The two obelisks, which from the outside appear to be wide-set teeth in the maw of a weathered face, serve as the focus of a lightning trap. The characters probably deactivated the trap on their first time through the chamber. If the trap is active, see Encounter F1 for details.

**Double Doors:** The stone double doors leading to area F3 were locked and trapped, but the heroes probably overcame the locks and the trap on their first time through the chamber.

If the characters have the hejkin chief's key, they can relock the doors. Doing so also resets the trap (unless the characters previously deactivated or destroyed it).

**Treasure:** In addition to their equipment, the raiders carry a bag containing 360 gp.



## ENCOUNTER E2: THE CRAWLING CITADEL

### Encounter Level 3 (750 XP)

When the heroes leave the Face in the Stone, they confirm that the dust devil that hid the old temple has dissipated. Rocky barrens, sandy wastes, and scrub plains stretch away in all directions, broken only by the shape of a very large and ominous moving object—Yarnath's crawling citadel, Slither.

#### When the heroes emerge from the Face, read:

*The air is motionless, the heat as palpable as a blanket. The sound of distant thunder reveals itself to be a colossal object grinding across the sandy wastes. The animated skeletons of several giant desert creatures have been fused together into a ghastly structure, well over a hundred feet in length, that crawls across the desert.*

*Built within and upon the animate skeletal construct is an articulated citadel of bones and quarried stone. Humanoids ride the structure, standing on lookout platforms and peering from turrets and spires. From the way the figures are waving and pointing, it seems they have seen you.*

Slither is about a half-mile away when the characters first become aware of it (and it of them). If the characters captured any raiders from Encounter E1, the prisoners are happy to see the massive citadel closing in on them. The characters can try to convince a raider to identify the object, or they can make a check to learn the following information.

#### Bluff, Diplomacy, History, or Intimidate Check

**DC 15:** *The lich wizard Yarnath the Skull used a defiling ritual to create a moving citadel from the animate skeletons of colossal bony creatures. The citadel, Slither, crawls across sandy wastes, scrub plains, salt flats, and ridged foothills with equal facility. Yarnath leads a band of raiders of all ability levels, including an elite group of extremely well-trained dray.*

#### Insight Check

**DC 10:** *The moving citadel seems hostile and, by its visage, likely houses creatures whose power far exceeds your own.*

#### Nature Check

**DC 10:** *It should be possible to evade the citadel, which crawls with a speed equal to that of a human moving across level terrain. But if you hope to evade the massive structure, you had better start now.*

### EVADING SLITHER

When the crawling citadel catches sight of prey in the wastes of Athas, raiders ride out ahead of the animated base, which follows behind. The characters must escape from the outriders before Slither comes close enough to launch its elite dray raiders or the lich Yarnath.

If the characters try to run straight back to Tyr, they will be caught long before they reach the city-state. Similarly, if they retreat into the Face in the Stone, they will be overwhelmed eventually. Their only hope is to take an evasive, innovative path through the wastes.

Evading the outriders and Slither is a hard skill challenge for a group of 3rd-level characters. Each character makes one check per hour of activity.

**Level:** 3 (XP 750).

**Complexity:** 5 (requires 12 successes before 3 failures).

**Primary Skills:** Acrobatics, Athletics, Endurance, Nature, Stealth.

**Acrobatics (DC 13):** The character scouts ahead through tricky terrain and crosses a narrow sandstone catwalk, avoids falling into an unexpected sinkhole, or squirms through a tight eyehole. A failed check indicates that the character takes a spill and loses a healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure in the skill challenge. This skill can be used to gain 2 successes in this challenge.

**Athletics (DC 13):** The character scouts ahead through demanding terrain and scales a cliff face, leaps a fissure, or swims across a silt pool to find the best route for evading Slither. A failed check indicates that the character takes a spill and loses a healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure in the skill challenge. This skill can be used to gain 2 successes in this challenge.

**Endurance (DC 13):** Two characters must make Endurance checks to fend off the deleterious effects of racing across the wastes so soon after braving the dangers of the Face in the Stone. A failed check indicates that each member of the party loses a healing surge, and it counts as a failure in the skill challenge. This skill can be used to gain 4 successes in this challenge.

**Nature (DC 14):** A character trained in this skill can attempt to fool the outriders by laying down a false trail. First, the character must make an Acrobatics check or Athletics check (as described above) while deviating from the heroes' true path. If successful, the character can make a Nature check to lay a false trail away from the true path. A failed Nature check indicates that the false trail is not convincing, in addition to counting as a failure for the skill challenge. This skill can be used to gain 2 successes in this challenge.



**Stealth (DC 12):** At some point during the chase, a character must make a Stealth check to hide in the rocky badlands as a group of outriders gets too close. The heroes are only as stealthy as their least quiet member, so the character who has the lowest Dexterity score must make this check. A failed check doesn't mean the outriders immediately find the characters, but it does count as a failure for the skill challenge. This skill can be used to gain 2 successes in this challenge.

**Success:** If the characters earn 12 successes before 3 failures, they evade the outriders and Slither. The characters can make their way to whatever destination they choose with no further raider trouble. See the "Adventure Conclusion" sidebar.

**Failure:** If the characters accrue 3 failures, they fail the skill challenge. The characters must face the outriders in combat; use the statistics block below.

<b>5 Tarek Raiders (T)</b>	<b>Level 3 Soldier</b>
Medium natural humanoid	XP 150 each
<b>HP 49; Bloodied 24</b>	<b>Initiative +5</b>
<b>AC 19, Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 14</b>	<b>Perception +2</b>
<b>Speed 6</b>	
<b>TRAITS</b>	
<b>Tarek Squad Tactics</b>	
The raider gains combat advantage against any enemy adjacent to one or more other tareks.	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⊕ <b>Bone Heartpick</b> (weapon) ⊕ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage, and the raider slides the target 1 square. The target is marked until the end of the raider's next turn.	
<b>TRIGGERED ACTIONS</b>	
⊕ <b>Dangerous Aggression</b> ⊕ <b>At-Will</b>	
Trigger: An enemy marked by the raider makes an attack that does not target the raider.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The raider uses <i>bone heartpick</i> against the triggering enemy, and if the attack hits, the enemy is also immobilized (save ends).	
<b>Deathless Warrior</b> ⊕ <b>Encounter</b>	
Trigger: The raider drops to 0 hit points.	
Effect (No Action): The raider makes a saving throw. If the raider succeeds, it does not die until the end of its next turn.	
Skills Athletics +10, Endurance +9, Nature +7	
<b>Str 18 (+5)</b>	<b>Dex 14 (+3)</b>
<b>Con 17 (+4)</b>	<b>Int 11 (+1)</b>
<b>Wis 13 (+2)</b>	<b>Cha 11 (+1)</b>
Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Giant	
Equipment bone heartpick	

If the heroes defeat the outriders, they can attempt the skill challenge again. Another batch of raiders rides out from the citadel, with two additional tarek raiders. Eventually, the characters either succeed on the skill challenge or fail so many times that they are defeated by wave after wave of raiders.

Yarnath has commanded his forces to knock the characters unconscious so he can capture them and learn about the Face in the Stone. However, if all the characters fall unconscious, the raiders search their bodies and find the *Crown of Dust* fragment.

After obtaining the artifact, Yarnath has no more need of the characters. They wake up the next day lying on the desert sand, each with 1 hit point and one healing surge. In addition, each character has a gift from the lich bandit lord—a black ceramic coin on which a snake skull has been etched. Yarnath believes that the heroes owe him a favor for sparing their lives, and the coins indicate this debt.

In the unlikely event that the characters failed to take the *Crown of Dust* fragment from the temple, they are knocked unconscious, taken inside Slither, and later interrogated about the Face in the Stone. If the characters divulge useful information, Yarnath confiscates some of their possessions, gives each character a black debt coin, and lets them go. (Play out this scene as you see fit.)

## ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

Depending on how things went at the very beginning and the very end of this adventure, the adventure concludes in one of these ways . . . and, of course, the story continues.

**Victory:** If the heroes retrieve the *Crown of Dust* fragment from the Face in the Stone, the sensitive dreamers find that their nightmares end. In addition, Yarnath's raiders find the temple, and he calls off his attacks on merchant caravans. If the heroes play their cards right, they make a valuable ally of House Shom.

**Defeat:** If the heroes fail to retrieve the fragment or lose it to Yarnath, the raids still end, though the occasional nightmares of all-devouring sandstorms continue. Worse, Yarnath might show up again one day, pressing his claim to the debt owed by the heroes.

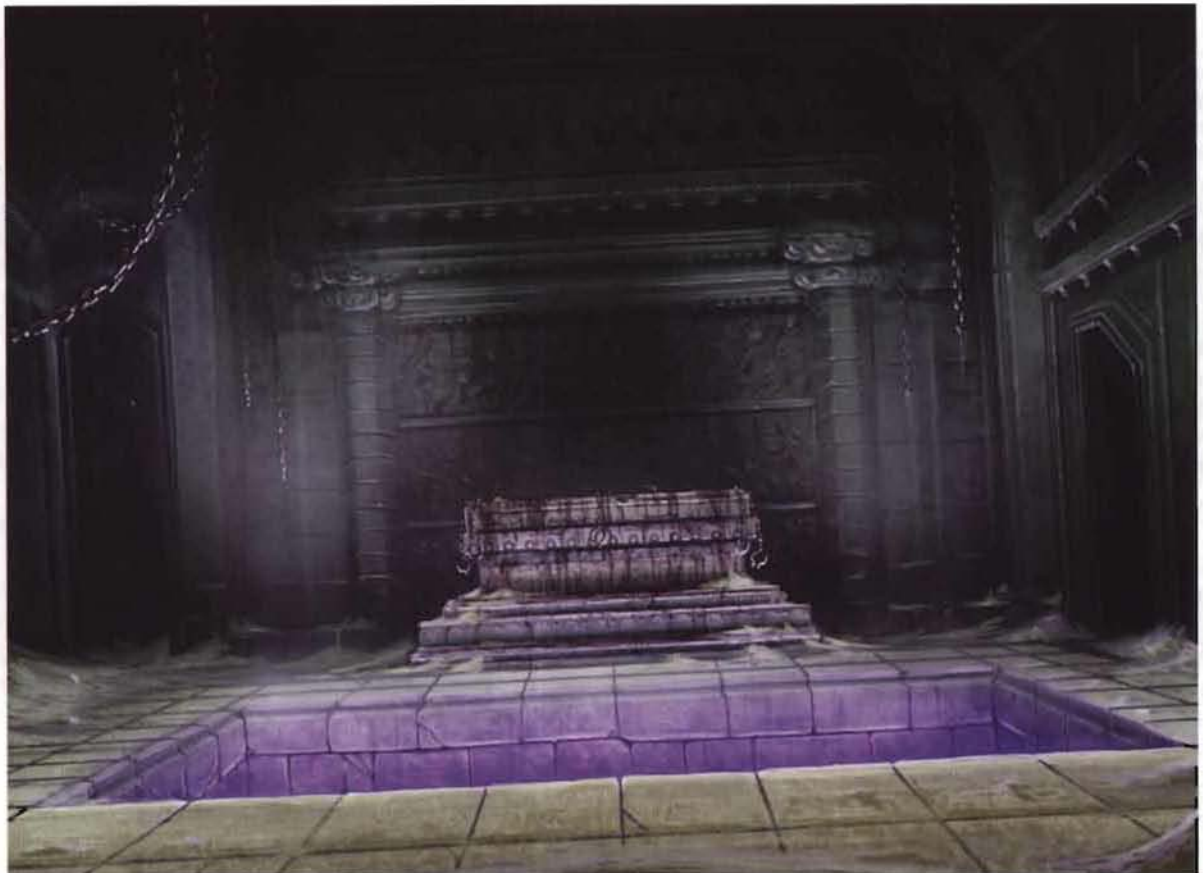
**Either Way:** If the characters lost the fight with Sarhan in Encounter T1, he inked Lion of Hamanu tattoos on the flesh of some of them. The tattoo initially seems to have no effect and appears to be mere decoration. However, a DC 21 Arcana check reveals a little-known secret: Hamanu has developed a ritual that allows him to use the tattoos as the endpoints of psionic compulsions. When Hamanu or his high templars perform this ritual, those who bear the tattoos are forced to telepathically answer questions put to them. Thus, after the characters discover the Face in the Stone, Hamanu might eventually learn its location (among other things).

You can play this through by deciding that at some future point, Hamanu's high templars telepathically interrogate the characters to discover the fate of the temple and the *Crown of Dust* fragment. Unless the telepathic link is broken, Hamanu's templars could become terrible foes of the characters—or perhaps influential patrons, if the characters are willing to do the bidding of the tyrannical sorcerer-king of Urik.





*View of the Storm Seat*



*View of the Pit*





# DEATH SLITHERS ACROSS THE DUNES

Nightmares of desert horrors trouble the dreams of the innocent while raiders grow ever bolder beyond the walls of the great city-state of Tyr. Bandits and merchants chase rumors of a temple hidden in the desert, an ancient shrine to the primordial Ul-Athra said to safeguard a fragment of the artifact known as the *Crown of Dust*. Can the heroes recover a caravan lost in the wastes, repel the threat of vicious raiders, and win the relic from the perilous temple?

*Marauders of the Dune Sea™* is a stand-alone DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure for 2nd-level characters. It is designed for the DARK SUN® campaign setting, but the adventure also fits easily into any campaign that includes a desert. It features an easy-to-run encounter format and a full-color, double-sided battle map.

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