

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

# DARK • SUN

W O R L D

BOXED SET



Face the Fire of the Dark Sun...  
a World Ravaged by Sorcery!

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons<sup>®</sup>  
3rd Edition



# DARK SUN

W O L D

A guide to  
campaigns set  
beneath the  
Dark Sun



# Rules Book



# Rules Book

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# Chapter I: Ability Scores

Every Dark Sun character has the same six ability scores used in the AD&D® game: **Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma**. However, the manner by which these are determined is quite different.

## Rolling Ability Scores

The six ability scores are determined randomly by rolling dice to obtain a score from 5 to 20. These numbers are, on the average, higher than those for characters in other campaign worlds. There is a very good reason for this: the world of Athas is brutal and unforgiving. It is a savage world with frightful challenges beyond every dune. Athas is not a world for the weak or the simple-minded—those who cannot adapt, who cannot meet every challenge with confidence in their skills and abilities simply won't survive. The world of Athas has produced races of beings that are generally superior—of greater strength and endurance, capable of greater intellect and vision—to those who inhabit other campaign worlds.

When rolling ability scores for player and non-player characters, use these methods:

### Rolling Player Character Ability Scores

Roll 4d4+4 six times, once for each ability score, in order. The totals rolled are written down as rolled.

### Rolling Non-player Character Ability Scores

Roll 5d4 six times, once for each ability score, in order. The totals rolled are written down as rolled.

### Optional Methods

The following optional methods may also be used for player or non-player character generation, if the DM so chooses.

**Optional Method I:** Roll 5d4 twice for each ability score, keeping the higher of the rolls.

**Optional Method II:** Roll 5d4 six times and assign the rolls to the ability scores as desired.

**Optional Method III:** Roll 5d4 twelve times and assign the six best rolls as desired.

**Optional Method IV:** Roll 6d4, discarding the lowest die, six times. Assign the six totals to the ability scores as desired.

**Optional Method V:** Each ability score starts with a score of 10. The player then rolls 10d4. These dice can be added to the character's abilities as desired (with some restrictions.) All of the points on a die must be added to the same ability score and no ability score can exceed 20 points.

## The Ability Scores

The six ability scores govern a player character's interaction with the world of Athas just as described in the *Player's Handbook*, with these exceptions:

**Intelligence:** The DARK SUN™ campaign setting assumes the use of both the weapon and non-weapon proficiency rules. Thus, the number of languages a player character can speak is strictly governed by proficiencies. Because of this, the *number of languages* column on the Intelligence table in the *Player's Handbook* translates directly into additional proficiency slots. These additional slots need not be used for new languages; they can be used for any nonweapon proficiency.

**Wisdom:** Templars, a player character class of bureaucratic priests, receive their spells through their sorcerer-king. If a templar falls from favor with his sorcerer-king, all of his spells can be lost, including those granted for having a higher Wisdom score.

# Chapter 2: Player Character Races

If you are familiar with fantasy roleplaying games or literature you will no doubt find many of Dark Sun's concepts familiar. But Athas is a world where the essential, fundamental nature of things has been twisted through years of unchecked, environmentally-abusive magic—many of the things you find familiar may be so in name only. The player character races are no exception to this, and the elves, dwarves, half-elves, and halflings of Dark Sun are bizarre adaptations of those found on other AD&D® game worlds.

Each of the eight player character races (**dwarf, elf, half-elf, half-giant, halfling, human, mul, and thri-kreen**) are described in detail here, with specific rules for using them in the campaign. The notes given on roleplaying each race are also very important, since a character earns additional individual experience point awards when played according to these racial descriptions. Within these guidelines, players are encouraged to develop their own aims, attitudes, and personalities for their characters.

## Minimum and Maximum Ability Scores

For Dark Sun characters, use the racial ability requirements given here. If a character's ability scores fit all of these requirements, the character may choose that race. Consult this table **before** making any racial adjustments to ability scores.

### Racial Ability Requirements

| Ability      | Dwarf | Elf   | H-Elf | H-giant | Halfling | Mul   | Thri-kreen |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|---------|----------|-------|------------|
| Strength     | 10/20 | 5/20  | 5/20  | 17/20   | 3/18     | 10/20 | 8/20       |
| Dexterity    | 5/20  | 12/20 | 8/20  | 3/15    | 12/20    | 5/20  | 15/20      |
| Constitution | 14/20 | 8/20  | 5/20  | 15/20   | 5/20     | 8/20  | 5/20       |
| Intelligence | 5/20  | 8/20  | 5/20  | 3/15    | 5/20     | 5/20  | 5/20       |
| Wisdom       | 5/20  | 5/20  | 5/20  | 3/17    | 7/20     | 5/20  | 5/20       |
| Charisma     | 5/20  | 5/20  | 5/20  | 3/17    | 5/20     | 5/20  | 5/17       |

## Racial Ability Adjustments

Some races are naturally stronger or weaker or more or less agile than others. These and similar differences are accounted for with modifiers to their generated ability score. These modifiers are applied exactly as described in the Player's Handbook. No adjustment can raise a score above 24 or lower it below 3.

**Table 2: Ability Adjustments**

| Race       | Adjustments   |
|------------|---|
| Dwarf      | +2 Constitution, +1 Strength, -1 Dexterity, -2 Charisma               |
| Elf        | +2 Dexterity, +1 Intelligence, -1 Wisdom, -2 Constitution             |
| Half-Elf   | +1 Dexterity, -1 Constitution   |
| Half-Giant | +4 Strength, +2 Constitution, -2 Intelligence, -2 Wisdom, -2 Charisma |
| Halfling   | +2 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom, -1 Constitution, -1 Charisma, -2 Strength    |
| Mul        | +2 Strength, +1 Constitution, -1 Intelligence, -2 Charisma            |
| Thri-kreen | +2 Dexterity, +1 Wisdom, -1 Intelligence, -2 Charisma                 |



## Player Character Races

### Class Restrictions and Level Limits

Just as in the traditional AD&D® game, there are restrictions to the classes available to a character, and the level to which he may advance, based on his race. Players and DMs familiar with the AD&D game will find that these restrictions are very different in DARK SUN campaign setting, however, because of the unusual nature of the demihuman races.

Humans are always unrestricted in level advancement or class selection. It is recommended that the optional rule on *Exceeding Level Limits* (presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) be used when playing a DARK SUN campaign.

### Languages

Athas is a world where the intelligent races come from a wide variety of species—the humans and demihumans are very different than the insectmen and beastmen. Each intelligent race has its own language, sometimes even its own approach to lan-

guage and communication. For instance, the thri-kreen language is a combination of clicks and whines that come very natural to their pincered mouths—humans find it very difficult to reproduce these sounds, but the task is not impossible. DARK SUN adventures are not quite as language friendly as other AD&D® campaign worlds—characters will tend to rely more heavily upon magic or interpreters for communication.

As a reminder, the DARK SUN campaign assumes that players and DMs are making use of the optional proficiency system detailed in the AD&D game.

### The Common Tongue

There is a standard language (known simply as common or the common tongue) that all humans, dwarves, elves, half-elves and muls speak. It is important to note that halflings and thri-kreen do not speak common. It is strongly recommended, however, that player character halflings and thri-kreen use one of their proficiency slots to obtain the common tongue.

Table 3: Racial Class And Level Limits

| Class       | Human | Dwarf | Elf | H-Elf | H-Giant | Halfling | Mul | Thri-kreen |
|-------------|-------|-------|-----|-------|---------|----------|-----|------------|
| Bard        | U     | -     | -   | U     | -       | -        | -   | -          |
| Cleric      | U     | 1 2   | 15  | 16    | 12      | 12       | 10  | 12         |
| Defiler     | U     | -     | 16  | U     | -       | -        | -   | -          |
| Druid       | U     | -     | -   | 14    | -       | 12       | 12  | 16         |
| Fighter     | U     | 16    | 14  | U     | 16      | 12       | U   | 16         |
| Gladiator   | U     | U     | 10  | U     | 14      | 12       | U   | 15         |
| Illusionist | U     | -     | 12  | 16    | -       | 16       | -   | -          |
| Preserver   | U     | U     | 15  | 12    | -       | -        | -   | -          |
| Psionicist  | U     | -     | U   | U     | U       | U        | U   | U          |
| Ranger      | U     | -     | 16  | 14    | 8       | 16       | -   | 12         |
| Templar     | U     | 10    | 16  | 14    | -       | -        | -   | -          |
| Thief       | U     | 12    | 12  | 12    | -       | 16       | 12  | -          |

U: The character has unlimited advancement potential in the given class.

Any #: A player character can advance to the maximum possible level in a given class. The *Player's Handbook* gives rules for advancing the player characters to 20th level.

-: A player character cannot belong to the listed class.



## Other Languages

All other languages are identified with their race name (such as halfling, thri-kreen, gith, and others). Characters begin the game knowing only their racial language. Other languages, including common or other racial languages, must be assigned proficiency slots.

The following is a list of possible languages available to newly generated player characters. Dungeon Masters may wish to expand or reduce this list to accommodate their own campaigns.

|               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| Aarakocra*    | Anakore    |
| Belgoi        | Braxat     |
| Ettercap      | Genie*     |
| Giant         | Gith       |
| Goblin Spider | Halfling   |
| Jozhal*       | Kenku*     |
| Meazel        | Thri-kreen |
| Yuan-ti       |            |

\* these creatures generally speak common

## Dwarves

Dwarves are short but extremely powerful. Athasian dwarves average 4'2 to 5 feet in height and tend to have a very large muscle mass—a full grown dwarf weighs in the neighborhood of 200 pounds. Lives of hard work in the hot sun leave them with a rich tan and rugged, calloused hands and feet. Dwarves can live up to 250 years.

A dwarf's chief love is toil. A dwarf is never happier than when there is a cause to work or fight for, something he can approach with stoic single-mindedness for weeks, months, years, or even decades at a time. Once a dwarf's mind is committed to a certain task, he'll only set it aside after a great deal of grumbling and coercion. The fulfillment he achieves upon completion of a lengthy, difficult task is what he strives for.

The task to which a dwarf is presently committed is referred to as his focus. A dwarf's focus must be a



feat requiring at least one week to complete. Shorter term goals cannot be considered a focus. While performing tasks that are directly related to his focus, a dwarf receives a +1 bonus to all his saving throws and a +2 bonus to all his proficiency rolls (or +10 to any percentile roll). Actually, a dwarf's commitment to his focus is based in his physiology—those who complete their lives before they complete their foci live out their afterlives as banshees in the wastes, haunting their unfinished works!

By nature, dwarves are nonmagical and never use magical spells, just as described in the *Player's Handbook*. This restriction does not apply to cleric or templar spells. An Athasian dwarf takes notice of other beings based upon his focus. If the other being is also actively committed to the dwarf's focus, the dwarf will consider him a sensible and dependable companion. If, however, the other being is vehemently opposed to the dwarf's focus, the two will be irrevocably at odds until one or the other is dead. There is very little room for compromise in the mind of a dwarf.



## Player Character Races

### Elves

The dunes and steppes of Athas are home to thousands of tribes of nomadic elves. While each tribe is very different culturally, the elves within them remain a race of long-limbed sprinters given to theft, raiding, and warfare.

An Athasian elf stands between 6½ and 7½ feet tall. They are slender, lean, and generally in terrific physical condition. Their features are deeply etched into their weather-toughened faces, and their skin made rugged by the windblown sands and baking sun of the wilderness. Elves typically dress to survive in the desert environment. Even when at an oasis or in the cities, elves tend to prefer their native garb, designed to wrap the wearer against the brutality of the elements.

Elves are all brethren within their own tribe, but regard all outsiders as potential enemies. There is no racial unity among the elves—an elf from outside the tribe is just as much a foe as a human, halfling, or thri-kreen. Acceptance of an outsider by an individual elf can be achieved, but trust will only develop over time. Acceptance of an outsider by an entire tribe is also possible, but rare. It is usually only awarded after some great sacrifice has been made on behalf of the tribe—many outsiders have been accepted posthumously into elven desert tribes.

Individually, tribal elves are swift, sure, and self-reliant in the extreme. An elf is conditioned to run quickly over sandy and rocky terrain, sometimes for days at a time—an elf warrior can cross better than 50 miles per day. An elven war party on the move is a deadly force of endurance and maneuverability. Elves use no beasts of burden for personal transportation, though they do sometimes engage kanks and similar creatures for baggage or raw materials transport. It is dishonorable among elves to ride on an animal unless wounded and near death—even pregnant women and old elves are expected to keep up with the tribe or be left behind.

While most elven tribes make their living through herding, some have turned to commerce and others

to raiding. Elven traders are rightly considered the most capable on Athas. Not only can they barter and deal with a variety of races, they can move and protect their goods across the vast wilderness.

Elven culture, while savage, is also very rich and diverse. A player character elf can choose from a variety of classes: cleric, defiler, fighter, gladiator, preserver, psionicist, ranger, templar, or thief. In addition, they may select any combination of classes in accordance with the *multi-class combinations* table presented in the next chapter.

A player character elf can be from a wild, tribal background or from a city state upbringing—there are many elves that have settled in the cities as bazaar vendors, and still many more that have been dragged there in chains.

Elves are masterful warriors, naturally skilled in the use of their long bows and long swords. Elves gain a bonus of +1 to their attack rolls with these weapons, but only those of native tribal make and design. In order to qualify for this bonus, a weapon must be crafted by members of the elf's tribe—no others will do.

Elves gain a bonus to surprise opponents when in the wilderness or wastes of Athas. In desert or steppe encounters, when an elf or party of elves approaches a non-elven group, the opponents suffer a penalty of -4 to their surprise rolls. Mixed parties cannot gain this advantage.

Elves have no special knowledge of secret or concealed doors. They also have no special resistance to spells. Elven infravision enables them to see up to 60 feet in darkness.

With nimble fingers and incredible speed, elf characters add two to their initial Dexterity score. They also add one to their initial Intelligence score. However, their intellect is not generally balanced by common sense, so elf characters subtract one from their initial Wisdom score. Finally, elven characters are especially fine-boned and have a high metabolism that tends to tire them out, forcing them to subtract two from their initial Constitution score.





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**Roleplaying:** Elves have no great love of creatures outside their tribe. Even when found in the company of others, an elf will keep to himself, often camping near but not directly with his companions.

When encountering outsiders, an elf will often fabricate tests of trust and friendship. For instance, an elf might leave a valuable object in the open to see if his new companions attempt to steal it. After a series of such tests, the elf will gradually learn to trust or distrust the outsiders. The severity of these tests of loyalty may take an alarmingly dangerous turn, even revolving around life-threatening situations, before an elf accepts an outsider as an equal.

Elves never ride on beasts of burden. They prefer to run everywhere they travel, even when running might prove slower or others in the elf's party will be taking animal or magical transportation.

## Half-elves

Elves and humans travel many of the same roads

on Athas—elven tribes have at times encountered human mercenaries, just as elven warriors have found gainful employment in the armies of the city states. The merchant class, too, is overrun with traders of both races, so it is not at all unusual for children of mixed parentage to be born into the world—the half-elves.

A half-elf is generally tall, between 6 and 6½ feet tall, but more meaty than his elven counterparts. His facial features are clearly more deeply defined than those of a human, but based solely on his countenance a half-elf can usually pass for either an elf or a human.

A half-elf's life is typically hardened by the intolerance of others. Neither fully human nor fully elven, half-elves rarely find acceptance with either race. Elves are especially intolerant, at times driving mothers of half-elven infants from their camps into the desert. Humans are more apt to accept half-elves as allies or partners, but seldom accept them into their homes, clans, or families. Rarely do half-



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elves congregate in great enough numbers to form communities of their own, so they remain outsiders, forever wandering from situation to situation without a people, land, or village to call home.

Intolerance, however, has given the half-elf his greatest attribute —self-reliance. As a loner, usually without permanent residence, a half-elf survives the rigors of life in the wilderness completely on his own. The skills involved in survival, such as locating food, water, and shelter, are only half of the challenge they face—half-elves must also learn to deal with the absence of companionship, the complete lack of conversation and basic friendship.

Coincidentally, faced with intolerance from the races of their parentage, many turn to completely alien races for acceptance. Dwarves, halflings, and even thri-kreen have no basic dislike of half-elves nor do they grant them any favor. At the very least a half-elf dealing with these races can expect no automatic prejudices. Also, some half-elves turn for companionship to the animal world, training beasts



of the air and sands as servants and friends.

Half-elves add one to their initial Dexterity score because of their fleet-footed elven ancestry. However, they inherit the same light frame and thin bone structure of the elves as well, causing them to subtract one from their initial Constitution score.

Half-elven characters have no resistance to *charm* or sleep-related magic, nor are they endowed with an ability to find secret doors. Half-elven infravision enables them to see up to 60 feet in darkness.

A half-elf character can choose from all of the available character classes, though he will have to face eventual level limits in many of them. He can also become multi-classed, having the widest variety of combinations available to him (see the *multi-class combinations* table in the next chapter).

A half-elf gains some benefits as he increases in levels.

A half-elf gains the survival proficiency when he reaches 3rd level. He need not spend any of his proficiency slots in order to know survival. Like other characters, half-elves must specify a terrain type for this proficiency. Dark Sun terrain types include stony barrens, sandy wastes, rocky badlands, mountains, scrub plains, forest, salt flats, or boulder fields.

A half-elf can befriend one pet when he reaches 5th level. The pet may be of any local animal, no larger than man-sized. The half-elf must spend one week with the animal while it is still young. After that time, the pet will follow the half-elf everywhere and obey simple commands. A half-elf can only have one such pet at a time, and must wait 100 days after the death of one pet to begin training another. Choice of pets is always subject to the DM's approval. Refer to *Chapter 11: Encounters* for possible pet choices.

**Roleplaying:** Half-elves pride themselves on their self-reliance. A player with a half-elf character should keep this in mind and apply it whenever possible.

For example, when a half-elf is part of a larger



party of characters, he will rarely eat of the meal prepared by the others, nor will he use the fire set for the camp. He will instead hunt for his own food, cook and eat it by himself, away from the others. A half-elf character will discuss strategy with his companions when he has them, and will cooperate as necessary, but will always seem semi-detached and aloof.

Despite their self-reliance, when faced with elves or humans, half-elves often find themselves looking for acceptance. For instance, when among elves, a half-elf will go out of his way to prove just how elven he is, by running great distances with them and observing other social and cultural rituals with the elves. These efforts, however, are mostly lost on the elves and therefore serve no purpose. The half-elf's behavior is seen by some as slightly irrational, but only by those who are comfortably wrapped in the blankets of racial acceptance; having none leaves half-elves out in the bitterest cold.

## Half-giants

Giants dominate many of the islands and coastal areas of the Silt Sea, wading across it to plunder the communities of smaller races where they find them. In some lost millennium, as a bizarre experiment or perhaps as some sort of curse, giants were magically crossbred with humans. Half-giants are now fairly common, especially to human controlled lands at the edge of the sea of dust.

A half-giant is an enormous individual, standing between 10 and 12 feet tall, and weighing in the neighborhood of 1,600 pounds. Their features are human, but exaggerated.

A half-giant character can be a cleric, fighter, gladiator, psionicist, or ranger. Further, a fair array of multi-classed choices are available to half-giant characters, as detailed on the *multi-classed combinations* chart in the next chapter.

Simply put, a half-giant gains terrific size from his giant heritage, but also inherits that race's dull wits. His human background, however, provides him with





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an interest in communication and cooperation, not to mention more reserved traits such as curiosity, a willingness to learn, and a general tendency toward kindness. At any rate, half-giants are capable of far more kindness than their often tyrannical, blood-thirsty giant kin.

Though no one knows for certain, half-giants seem to be a fairly young race, perhaps only a few tens of centuries old. There is no half-giant culture common to all of their kind. On the contrary, having insufficient history and overall intelligence to have their own culture, half-giants tend to readily adopt the cultures of other creatures they admire or associate with. Half-giants are very imitative creatures, eager to fit into new situations as they present themselves.

Half-giants sometimes collect into communities of their own, though they most often adopt the culture and customs of those creatures that are nearby. When near an elven nation, for instance, half-giants will form their own hunting and raiding parties, adopting the ways of the elven marauders. They won't mix with the elves, neither will they fight with them. In most instances, imitative half-giant communities will compete directly with the race whom they are likening themselves to. It is their great size and combat prowess that keeps their competitors at a safe distance.

Half-giants can switch their attitudes very quickly, taking on new values to fit new situations. A half-giant whose peaceful farming life is disrupted by marauders may soon adopt the morals of the very renegades who sacked his village. To reflect this, one aspect of a half-giant's alignment must be fixed, and chosen during character creation. The other half must be chosen when they awaken each morning. They are only bound to that alignment until they sleep again. (See Chapter 4, Alignment). For example, a half-giant may have a fixed "lawful" alignment. Every morning, he must choose to be lawful good, lawful neutral, or lawful evil.

Half-giant characters add four to their initial

Strength scores and two to their initial Constitution scores. They subtract two from their initial Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, however.

Half-giants double their hit die rolls no matter what their character class. Add any bonus for a high Constitution score after doubling the roll of the die.

All personal items such as clothes, armor, weapons, food, etc., cost double for half-giant characters. Other considerations, such as transportation or lodging, are also considerably more expensive when they are available at all. In areas not dominated by half-giants, things such as buildings, furniture, wagons, boats, etc. aren't made to support their weight. Even in cities, they tend to camp outside to avoid destroying things.

**Roleplaying:** Half-giants are friendly and eager to please those they meet. Others who accept them find that half-giants quickly adopt their lifestyles and skills, even their values. A half-giant character who is presented with a new situation should examine the roles of the people there, determine where he might best fit in, and then start performing the tasks necessary.

For example, a half-giant character who happens upon a dwarven stone quarry may watch the dwarves, then start quarrying stone himself. He won't work with the dwarves, necessarily but, if he can make a living at it, he will continue to quarry stone just like his neighbor dwarves do.

This is not to say, however, that half-giants are strictly bound to perform as those they see around them, nor are they restricted from moving on. On the contrary, if the situation is not beneficial or if the half-giant would not perform well (living in the trees like the halflings, for instance), he won't imitate it. Also, half-giants are not bound to a piece of work or a lifestyle the way other races are—they seldom have regrets or reminiscences about what has gone before. They simply aren't as emotionally attached to their lives or works.

Persons playing a half-giant character should be



prepared to switch goals and lifestyles easily, usually based on the charismatic individuals their character meets. Remember, though, that due to size alone, half-giants make excellent fighters. Always remember their great size and roleplay accordingly. Dungeon Masters should not mindlessly allow the character to fit easily through human-sized doorways or ride in a tiny wagon. Similarly, they must not forget that he can see in many second story windows, reach things humans cannot, and lift things humans would never consider lifting.

## Halflings

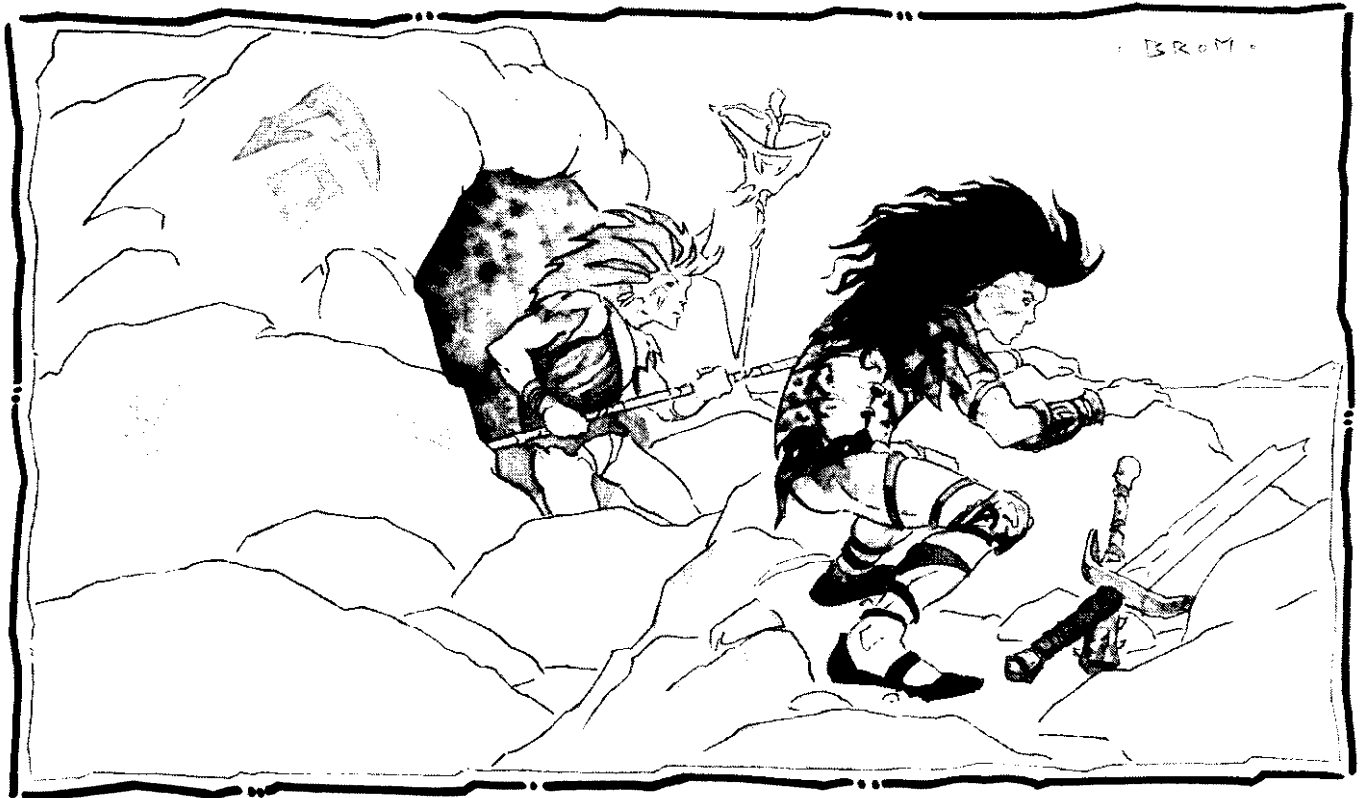
Beyond the Ringing Mountains are jungles that flourish in rains that never reach the tablelands or the Sea of Silt. There life is abundant, the foliage thick and untamed. The undisputed rulers of these jungles are the halflings.

A halfling is a very short humanoid, standing no more than 3½ feet in height. They are muscled and

proportioned like humans, but they have the faces of wise and beautiful children. Halflings live to be as much as 120 years old, but once they reach adulthood, their features never succumb to their years—it's very difficult for an outsider to determine a given halfling's age. A halfling weighs 50 to 60 pounds and is virtually always in peak physical condition.

Halflings possess a great deal of racial unity. Though divided politically into separate villages and communities, halflings have great respect for their race as a whole. Political differences between them are settled wherever possible peaceably, through ritual and custom, most often under the direction of their clerical leaders, the shaman witch doctors.

On a personal level, halflings relate very well to one another, well enough to have built a considerable culture rich in art, song, and other expressive communication. However, they tend to rely heavily on their culture for communication, a culture that both parties in a conversation are assumed to understand. It is difficult or a halfling to compensate





## Player Character Races

in conversation for a listener who isn't intimately familiar with halfling culture, and as such they easily become frustrated with outsiders. Depending upon how "official" a meeting is, outsiders often have to take great pains to learn local customs merely to communicate with the halflings in question. Of course, halflings who have travelled widely outside their traditional jungle home have a much greater tolerance of those with a "lack" of halfling culture; so much so that they can communicate easily and without frustration.

Halfling culture is fabulously diverse, but difficult for other races to comprehend. A complete history of their culture, if such a thing existed, would speak volume upon volume of complex social change, inspirational clerical leaders, and in-depth personal studies of the halfling and his duty to his jungle home. Conspicuous in their absence would be references to great wars of conquest or tremendous monetary wealth—the yardsticks by which other races measure cultural success. Halfling culture cares for the individual's inward being, his identity and spiritual unity with his race and environment. Their culture does not provide for more traditional values, and vices such as greed and avarice are particularly discouraged.

Oddly, the richness of the land may be disturbed and examined, even used for a halfling's own gain. However, those riches belong to the land and, in the mind of the halfling, should never be moved away. For instance, nature intended a spring to bring water only to a certain area. To move the water through irrigation to some other area is not what nature had in mind. Similarly, an archaeological find in the jungle that yields a great pile of gold and metals is an event that shouldn't be tampered with—the gold might be used to raise a spectacular series of clerical buildings on the spot, but it should not be carted off to some other location.

Halfling characters have the same high resistance to magic, resistance to poisons, talent with slings and thrown weapons, and bonuses to surprise oppo-

nents that are described in the *Player's Handbook*. In Dark Sun, halflings are not divided into Hairfoots, Tallfellows, and Stouts, nor do they gain additional initial languages. No halflings have infravision.

Due to their small size, halfling characters subtract two from their initial Strength score and one from their initial Constitution score. Also, their introverted nature means they subtract one from their initial Charisma score. However, halflings are possessed of tremendous speed and agility, and so add two points to their initial Dexterity score. Finally, their pious unity with their race and their jungle environment grants them an additional two points to their initial Wisdom score.

As mentioned in the *Player's Handbook*, halflings with a Strength score of 18 never roll for exceptional strength—while they may be quite strong, their small size precludes them attaining the muscle mass or leverage to apply tremendous strength.

**Roleplaying:** Halflings are very comfortable when in their own groups. While not afraid to adventure on their own among other races, they tend to have a difficult time adjusting to other customs and points of view. However, being generally open-minded, rather than becoming abrasive or combative, halflings tend to be curious and, at times, utterly confused by the behavior of others.

To quell their own confusion, their curiosity demands that they attempt to learn many of the customs of those they confront on the outside world. This is not to say that a halfling character will adopt these customs. On the contrary, they will almost certainly not, but a wide variety of experience is encouraged by the clerical teachings of halfling witch doctors—they see the customs of others as no threat to their own and as a welcome chance to learn through a different point of view.

The accomplishments that are normally held in high esteem by other races are completely alien to halflings. For example, tremendous booty from an adventure might tantalize other races, but a halfling



would, instead, be concerned with how his part in the adventure will help advance halfling culture, his own knowledge or inner well-being—the treasure would not be a consideration for the halfling.

Also, whereas many other races will think less of halflings because of their small size, they quite honestly see great bulk as a drawback in others. They are usually prepared to respond to “short” comments with their own philosophical views on the virtue of stealth, speed, etc.

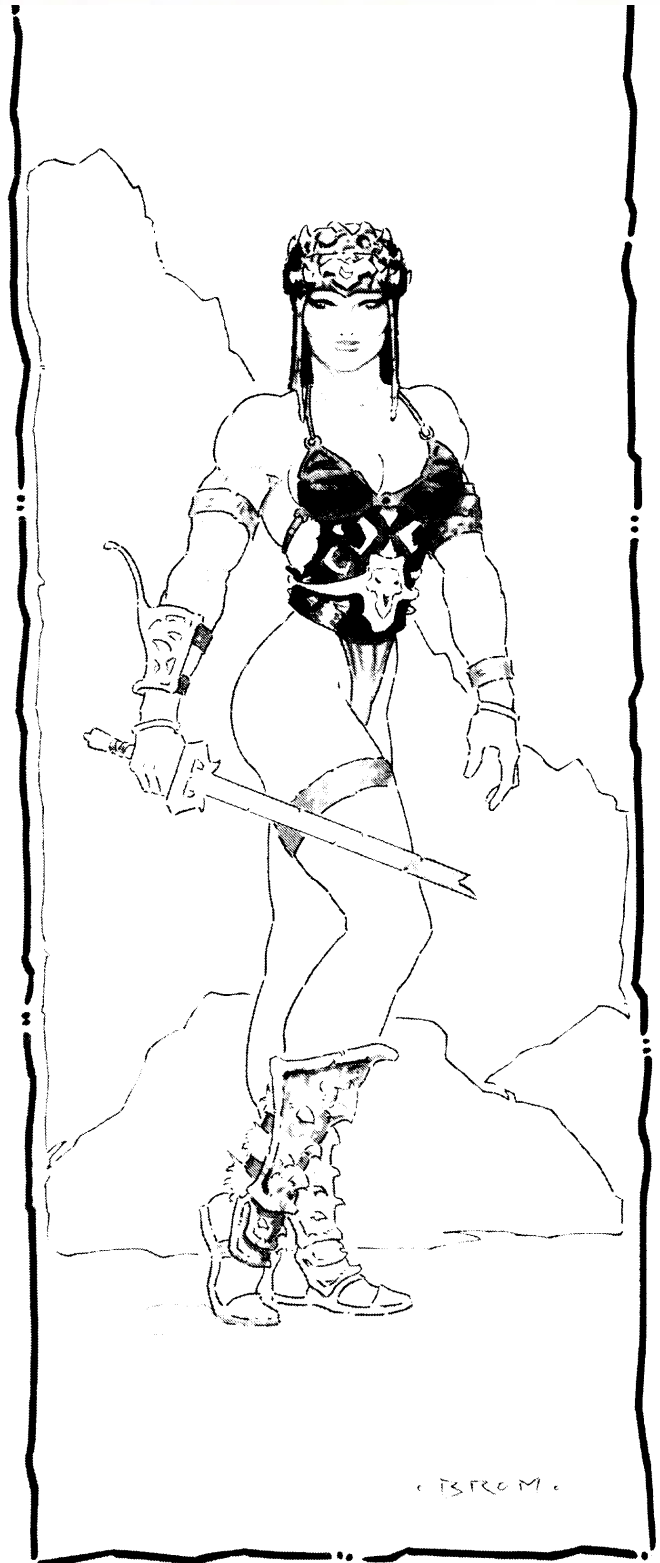
When among others of his kind, a halfling will never cross or lie to his brethren. They will help each other in times of need, regardless of danger.

## Human

Humans are the predominant race on Athas. Human characters are not restricted in either the classes they can choose or the levels they can attain. High-level humans can easily become the most powerful characters in the campaign. Although humans can not be multi-classed characters, they can be dual class characters as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

An average human male stands between 6 and 6½ feet tall and weighs 180 to 200 pounds. A human female is somewhat smaller, averaging between 5½ and 6 feet in height and weighing between 100 and 140 pounds. The colors of skin, eyes, and hair vary widely.

On Athas, centuries of abusive magic have not only scarred the landscape—they've twisted the essence of human appearance, as well. Many humans in Dark Sun look normal, and could pass unnoticed among humans of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® or GREYHAWK® campaign settings. Others, however, have marked alterations to their appearance. Their facial features might be slightly bizarre; a large chin or nose, pointed ears, no facial hair, etc. Their coloration might be subtly different, such as coppery, golden brown, hues of grey, or patchy. The differences may be





## Player Character Races



more physical, such as webbed toes or fingers, longer or shorter limbs, etc. A player with a human character should be given broad latitude in making up these alterations to his form, if he so wishes. Ultimately, none of them will give him any benefit nor any hindrance to game play—his appearance is strictly a roleplaying asset.

The children of humans and other races produce the so-called half-races: half-elves and muls. It is important to note, however, that half-giants are a race born of a magical union in the distant past; half-giants can only reproduce with one another.

As in other AD&D® campaign worlds, humans are generally tolerant of other races. They can easily adapt to situations involving elves or dwarves, and even more exotic races such as half-giants and thri-kreen. Where other, less tolerant races come into contact with one another, humans often serve as diplomatic buffers.

### Mul

A mul (pronounced: mül) is an incredibly tough crossbreed of a human and dwarf. They retain the height and cunning of their human parent, plus the durability and raw strength of their dwarven heritage. Muls are usually the products of the slave pits—owners recognize the muls' assets as gladiators and laborers, and so order the births of as many muls as can be managed within the ranks of their slaves. Muls are born sterile—they cannot perpetuate their kind.

A full-grown mul stands 6 to 6½ feet tall and weighs 240-300 pounds. They are fair skinned, sometimes tending toward a copperish coloration. Their dwarven ancestry gives them a well-muscled frame and an incredible constitution—mul laborers can perform heavy work for days at a time without stopping. Muls have stern facial features. They are unmistakably human in appearance, though their ears are swept back and slightly pointed. Most muls, whether male or female, have no hair or beard.

Born as they are to lives of slave labor, with the





taskmaster's whip taking the place of parents and family, muls are given to a gruff personality and violent reactions. Understandably, many never seek friends or companionship but live out their lives in servitude, driven by hatred and spite. Most, however, learn who to trust in the slave pits and who not to, gaining favor and reputation among the other slaves.

Many slave muls have either escaped or otherwise won their freedom and now live independent lives all over Athas. Of these, a large percentage have bartered their combat prowess, making their way as soldiers or guards. A few others, given to more cerebral pursuits, have turned to priestly devotions or the mental disciplines of psionics.

A player character mul may become a cleric, druid, fighter, gladiator, psionist, or thief. When created, the player must decide if his mul character will be considered a demihuman or a human character. As a human, the mul character can have unlimited advancement in any class and become a dual-classed character later in his career. As a demihuman, a mul can become a multi-classed character in accordance with the *multi-classed combinations* table in the next chapter. Once the decision is made, the mul character will forever be considered either a human or demihuman in all ways.

A mul character adds two to his initial Strength score and one to his initial Constitution score. While often cunning and bright, a mul's training rarely encourages the mental disciplines, so mul characters subtract one from their initial Intelligence scores. The rigors of their upbringing in bondage makes them sullen and difficult to befriend—mul

characters subtract two from their initial Charisma scores.

Mules are able to work longer and harder without rest than are most other races.

Regardless of the preceding type of exertion, eight hours of sleep will let a mul become fully rested, ready to begin work again.

**Roleplaying:** Muls are slaves, true, but when they are doing well in the arena, they are the most pampered slaves. It is expensive to generate and maintain a stable of muls, and their owners protect their large investments with special treatment and considerations. It's rare that a mul who does his work well receives particularly harsh treatment as a slave. Thus, they often don't see their slavery as all that bad a deal. Of course, when their arena or work performance is lacking, discipline is cruelly reinstated.

Like their dwarven parent, a mul who sets his mind on freedom or disruption among the other slaves is rarely kept on hand. They most often are sold or traded from owner to dissatisfied owner until they are eventually relegated to harsh labor in a remote area or sent to the gladiator pits.

## Thri-kreen

Hulking insect-men standing as tall as 7 feet at the shoulder, the thri-kreen are the least "human" of the player character races. Their survivability in the wilderness, combined with their cunning and intellect, have made the *mantis warriors* (as they are known to some races) the undisputed masters across large tracts of the Athasian wastes.

The individual thri-kreen is a six-limbed creature

## Mul Exertion Table

### Type of Exertion

Heavy Labor (stone construction, quarry work, running)  
 Medium Labor (light construction, mining, jogging)  
 Light Labor (combat training, walking encumbered)  
 Normal Activity (walking, conversation)

### Time Before Rest

24 + Con hours  
 36 + Con hours  
 48 + Con hours  
 Con days



## Player Character Races



with a tough, sandy-yellow exoskeleton. Its hind legs are the most powerful, used for walking, running, and leaping. The four forward limbs each have a hand with three fingers and an opposable thumb. A thri-kreen's exoskeleton is extremely hard, and gives the creature a base armor class of 5.

A thri-kreen's head has two large eyes, two antennae, and a small-but-powerful jaw. The jaws work from side to side and have several small extensions that grab and manipulate food while it is being eaten. The eyes are jet black and multi-faceted, separated to either side of the head. The antennae are all but vestigial, serving only to help maneuver through brush and grasslands in the darkness (they also serve to lessen any darkness or blindness based penalty by 1 point (or 5%)—ranged activities (like missile combat) do not gain this benefit).

Thri-kreen have no need of sleep. Thri-kreen characters can remain active through the day and night.

Thri-kreen make and use a variety of weapons.

Chief among them are the *gytha*, a polearm with wicked blades at either end, and the *chatkcha*, a crystalline throwing wedge. They also fashion many forms of clothing, but never wear armor.

Thri-kreen can use most magical items such as wands, rods, staves, weapons, shields, and most miscellaneous magic. Those items, however, designed to be worn by demihumans, such as rings, girdles, armor, and cloaks, will not function for a thri-kreen because he simply cannot put them on. Unless otherwise stated, magical items are designed for use by demihumans.

The pack is the single unit of organization among the thri-kreen, generally having 2-24 individuals. The pack is always on the hunt, never idle—there are no permanent thri-kreen communities. The so-called thri-kreen nations are, in fact, not organized as such, nor are they thought of as nations by the mantis warriors. The nations are human conventions to delineate on maps where the thri-kreen thrive and dominate.



Thri-kreen are carnivores and the pack is constantly on the hunt for food. They consider the other player character races as potential food stock, but only prey on other intelligent creatures in times of desperation. The mantis warriors have a well-known taste for elves, which keeps both races at an uneasy peace when they are forced to cooperate.

Thri-kreen player characters can become clerics, druids, fighters, gladiators, psionicists, or rangers. They may also be multi-classed (see *multi-classed combinations* in the next chapter). Regardless of his class, a thri-kreen gains certain advantages as he increases in experience levels.

A thri-kreen has formidable natural attacks. They are able to make one bite and four claw attacks per round. Each claw strikes for 1d4 points of damage, and the bite inflicts 1d4+1 points of damage. If using a weapon, the thri-kreen can attack with its weapon and bite; multiple attacks due to fighter level only apply to the weapon.

A thri-kreen can leap up and forward when he reaches 3rd level. The thri-kreen can leap 20 feet straight up or up to 50 feet straight forward. They cannot leap backward.

A thri-kreen can use a venomous saliva against opponents when he reaches 5th level. Those struck by the thri-kreen's bite must save vs. paralyzation or be paralyzed; smaller than man-sized creatures are paralyzed for 2d10 rounds, man-sized for 2d8 rounds, and larger for 1d8 rounds. Creatures classified as huge or gargantuan are only affected for one round.

A thri-kreen masters the use of the chatkcha, a crystal throwing wedge, when he reaches 5th level. The chatkcha can be thrown up to 30 yards and still return to the thrower if it misses the target. When it hits, a chatkcha inflicts 1d6+2 points of damage. In game terms, a thri-kreen gains an automatic bonus proficiency in chatkcha on reaching 5th level. If he has previously spent a proficiency slot on chatkcha, the thri-kreen gains nothing for reaching 5th level.

A thri-kreen can dodge missiles fired at it on a roll of 3 or better on 1d20 when he reaches 7th level. He cannot dodge magical effects, only physical missiles. Magical missile weapons (enchanted arrows, thrown axes, etc.) modify this roll by their plus.

Thri-kreen add one to their initial Wisdom score and add two to their initial Dexterity scores. Their intellect and behavior are such that they subtract one from their initial Intelligence score and subtract two from their initial Charisma score.

**Roleplaying:** A thri-kreen's obsession is the hunt. Thri-kreen are skilled and wise hunters—skilled enough to bring down the animals they need, wise enough to move on before they completely deplete an area of prey.

From birth, all thri-kreen are involved in the hunt—the young are concerned with preparation and preservation of hunted food, elders are hunters. There are no distinctions between male and female thri-kreen in their pack society.

To outsiders, thri-kreen sometimes seem overly preoccupied with gathering food, hunting, and maintaining stocks of travel food. Since they do not sleep, thri-kreen often hunt through the night while other races they are working with are “needlessly lying around.”

Their pack intelligence also makes them protective of their clutch-mates. To a thri-kreen, his clutch or pack includes whoever he is with at the time of danger. It is instinctive for a thri-kreen to leap into battle to protect those he is with, regardless of personal danger.

### Other Characteristics

As has been said, Dark Sun characters are very different from those in other AD&D® games. This is reflected in the following tables for height, weight, age, and aging effects, which replace those given in the *Player's Handbook*.



## Player Character Races

### Height and Weight

| Height in Inches |         |          | Weight in Pounds |          |
|------------------|---------|----------|------------------|----------|
| Race             | Base    | Modifier | Base             | Modifier |
| Dwarf            | 50/48   | 2d4      | 180/170          | 4d10     |
| Elf              | 78/72   | 2d8      | 160/130          | 3d10     |
| Half-elf         | 70/68   | 2d6      | 120/75           | 3d12     |
| Half-giant       | 125/125 | 3d10     | 1500/1450        | 3d100    |
| Halfling         | 36/34   | 1d8      | 50/46            | 5d4      |
| Human            | 60/57   | 2d8      | 140/100          | 6d10     |
| Mule             | 66/65   | 2d6      | 220/180          | 5d20     |
| Thri-kreen*      | 82/82   | 1d4      | 450/450          | 1d20     |

\*Thri-kreen are 48 inches longer than they are tall.

### Age

| Starting Age |          | Maximum Age Range |                   |
|--------------|----------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Race         | Base Age | Variable          | (Base + Variable) |
| Dwarf        | 25       | 4d6               | 200 + 3d20        |
| Elf          | 15       | 3d4               | 100 + 2d20        |
| Half-elf     | 15       | 2d4               | 90 + 2d20         |
| Half-giant   | 20       | 5d4               | 120 + 1d100       |
| Halfling     | 25       | 3d6               | 90 + 4d12         |
| Human        | 15       | 1d8               | 80 + 2d20         |
| Mule         | 15       | 1d6               | 80 + 1d10         |
| Thri-kreen   | 6        | -                 | 25 + 1d10         |

### Aging Effects

| Race           | Middle Age* | Old Age** | Venerable*** |
|----------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| Dwarf          | 100         | 133       | 200          |
| Elf            | 50          | 67        | 100          |
| Half-elf       | 45          | 60        | 70           |
| Half-giant     | 60          | 80        | 120          |
| Halfling       | 45          | 60        | 70           |
| Human          | 40          | 53        | 80           |
| Mule           | 40          | 53        | 80           |
| Thri-kreen**** | -           | -         | 25           |

\* -1 Str/Con; +1 Int/Wis

\*\* -2 Str/Dex, -1 Con; +1 Wis

\*\*\* -1 Str/Dex/Con; +1 Int/Wis

\*\*\*\* Thri-kreen suffer no aging effects until they reach venerable age, when they suffer -1 Str/Dex.

## Chapter 3: Player Character Classes

Player characters on Athas fall into the same general groups found in the traditional AD&D® game: warrior, wizard, priest, and rogue. Dark Sun characters can also be psionics, as described in *The Complete Psionics Handbook*. There are, however, minor modifications to all classes.

### A Note About Psionics

Dark Sun is a world of powerful psionics. Every player character has at least one psionic talent, as do many of the non-player characters and monsters. A thorough understanding of *The Complete Psionics Handbook* is required for full enjoyment of any DARK SUN™ campaign.

### Warrior Classes

There are three different classes within the warrior group on Athas: **fighter**, **ranger**, and **gladiator**. Each is conditioned for a particular style of combat.

The *fighter* is a skilled warrior, trained for both

individual combat and warfare in military formations. Characters of this type are the mainstay of any organized military force.

The *ranger* is a warrior knowledgeable in the ways of the wilderness, skilled in surviving the rigors of the wild oases and the brutal stretches of desert between them. Many slave tribesmen are rangers.

The *gladiator* is a specialized warrior trained for combat in the arenas. He is skilled in the use of many obscure weapons and combat techniques, including those peculiar to specific combat games and exhibitions popular among the general populace.

As a note, there are no paladins on Athas.

### Wizard Classes

A wizard is able to capture and master magical energies. However, on Athas, magic and the ecosystem are irrevocably bound—no one, not even a wizard, can affect one without affecting the other.

All wizards must decide at the beginning of their





## Player Character Classes

careers whether they are trying to work with nature or without regard for it. In Dark Sun, this means a wizard must be either a defiler or a preserver.

The *defiler* is a wizard who activates tremendous magical energy without regard to its effect on the environment. With the casting of each spell, a defiler destroys a portion of the world's ecosystem, rendering it dead and sterile. The means by which a defiler learns and uses magic is comparatively easy to master, so he advances quickly. A defiler can be either a noble, freeman, or slave.

The *preserver* attempts to use magic in concert with the environment. Learning how to wield such magic on Athas is especially difficult, so the preserver's advancement is slow. A preserver can be either a freeman or slave.

The *illusionist* is a specialist wizard who wields magical illusions. An illusionist can be either a preserver or a defiler, and will advance in levels accordingly. An illusionist can be from any social class.

### Priest Classes

There are three types of priests on Athas—clerics, templars, and druids.

The *cleric* is a free-willed priest, tending the needs of the local people with his particular talents. On Athas, clerics draw their magical energy directly from one of the four elemental planes: earth, air, fire, or water; not from any manner of deity. A cleric may be either a freeman or a slave.

The *templar* is a regimented priest devoted to a single sorcerer-king. Such disciples work within the hierarchy of that particular sorcerer-king's clergy, advancing in power and position. A templar draws his magical energy through his sorcerer-king. A templar can be either a freeman or a noble.

The *druid* is a priest tied to a particular feature or aspect of Athas. Unique geographic features are guarded by spirits when druids serve. For example, a pooled oasis has its own spirit and a single druid will reside there to protect it and preside over its use by humans, demihumans, and animals. Druids can

be from any social class.

### Rogue Classes

Athas is a world of corruption and power where rogues are well-suited to success. There are still those, however, who use their disreputable talents toward noble ends, but they are especially rare. There are two types of rogues on Athas: thieves and bards.

The *thief* is a rogue whose strengths lie in stealth and pilfering. On Athas the thief can be regarded as a talented individual for hire—some city states do not even consider the thief as a wrongdoer; only the person who hired him is guilty of a crime. The thief may also be a simple robber seeking personal wealth or redemption. A thief can be from any social class.

The *bard* is a rogue who uses songs and tales as his tools. He is a man of wit and comradeship. With few other talents to offer, the bard is still a welcome source of entertainment and information across Athas. A bard can be from any social class.

### The Psionicist Class

The *psionicist* uses the forces of his own mind to affect his environment. Psionic powers are not magical in nature, that is to say, psionic powers do not draw upon magical energy that surrounds all things. Rather they are derived from within when the psionicist has his entire essence in coordination; his mind, body, and soul in perfect harmony. Since psionic powers are not magical, they in no way affect the world's ecosystem when they are used.

Any human or demihuman character who meets the ability requirements may elect to be a psionicist. However, those who do not choose the psionicist class will have latent psionic powers. **Every player character in Dark Sun has latent psionic powers and will be a psionicist or wild talent.** Refer to the Psionicist section below for details.



## Class Ability Score Requirements

As with character classes in other campaign worlds, those unique to Dark Sun require minimum scores in various abilities. For classes not unique to Dark Sun, the ability score requirements listed in the *Player's Handbook* still apply.

### Class Ability Requirements

| Class      | Str | Dex | Con | Int | Wis | Cha |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Gladiator  | 13  | 12  | 15  | -   | -   | -   |
| Defiler    | -   | -   | -   | 3   | -   | -   |
| Templar    | -   | -   | -   | 10  | 7   | -   |
| Psionicist | -   | -   | 11  | 12  | 15  | -   |

## Newly Created Characters

In Dark Sun, characters do not begin adventuring as novices to the world around them. Rather, they start with a fair degree of experience.

### Starting Level

In Dark Sun, all single-classed player characters start the campaign at 3rd level. A player character thus begins his adventuring career with the minimum number of experience points to attain 3rd level. He gets the THAC0 and saving throws of a 3rd level character, plus any class or race benefits that apply. This rule reflects the fact that daily life on Athas is much harsher than it is in other AD&D® realms, forcing characters to mature more quickly if they are to survive.

### Starting Hit Points

Beginning characters determine their hit points in a fairly normal fashion. Roll a hit die for each of the character's first three levels of experience, apply any Constitution modifications to the rolls, and then total them to determine starting hit points.

### Starting Proficiencies

Starting player characters receive their initial





## Player Character Classes

weapon and nonweapon proficiencies, plus the additional slots due at 3rd level. Thus, warriors receive an additional weapon slot (5 total) and an additional nonweapon slot (4 total) for being of 3rd level. Wizards and priests receive an additional nonweapon proficiency (5 total) for being of 3rd level.

For those not used to this system, remember that the *Number of Languages* column from *Table 4: Intelligence* in the *Player's Handbook* indicates a number of bonus nonweapon proficiency slots.

### Starting Money

PCs who start the campaign as freemen have three times the starting money stated in *Chapter 6: Money & Equipment* of the *Player's Handbook*.

### Multi-classed Player Characters

Player characters who are multi-classed start adventuring in the campaign at different levels. The character begins with just enough experience points to be 2nd level in his most "expensive" class.

For example, a fighter/preserver would have

2,500 experience points in each class, the minimum to be 2nd level as a preserver, letting him start the campaign at 2nd level in each class. A fighter/preserver/thief would also have 2,500 experience points in each class, which is enough to make him 2nd level as both preserver and fighter, but enough to let him start the campaign as a 3rd level thief.

### Non-player Characters

While player characters start the campaign at higher levels, NPCs can still be 1st or 2nd level, as determined by the DM. Thus, it is important to realize that the PCs are truly exceptional individuals and that lower-level NPCs will be fairly common.

### Class Descriptions

The complete character class descriptions that follow provide detailed information about each class. Those unique to Dark Sun are detailed fully while those that are found in other campaigns are presented so that the contrasts to similar characters in other settings can be made clear.

#### Warriors

There are no paladins in Dark Sun—the idea of serving good and right for the simple rewards of inner peace and faith faded from the barren world of Athas long ago. There is, however, one new warrior character class: the gladiator. Born of a demand for blood and excitement in the arenas, gladiators are, perhaps, the most deadly fighting characters.

#### Fighter

|                       |            |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Ability Requirements: | Strength 9 |
| Prime Requisite:      | Strength   |
| Allowed Races:        | All        |

On Athas, the fighter is a trained warrior, a soldier skilled in mass warfare. Every society on Athas maintains an army of fighters to protect itself from attack or to wage wars of plunder and annihilation





## Player Character Classes



against its neighbors. Fighters are both the commanders and soldiers in these armies, and at higher levels are experts in both individual and formation combat, leadership, and morale.

Fighters can have any alignment, use magical items, and gain weapon proficiencies and specialization as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

As a fighter increases in experience levels, his reputation as a warrior and leader of men grows. As word spreads, less experienced warriors who are eager to fight for the same causes will seek him out. These followers will remain loyal to the fighter for as long as they are not mistreated and there are battles to be fought. A fighter need not have a stronghold to attract followers.

Followers are always gained in groups of 10 individuals called a *stand*. All 10 are of the same race and experience level and have the same equipment. A *unit* consists of some number (usually 2-20) of identical stands.

Once a fighter reaches 10th level, he attracts his first unit of followers. This first unit will always be made up of warriors of the same race and background as the fighter (if the fighter is a slave tribesman, so will be his first unit of followers). The first unit will consist of 1d10+2 stands (30-120 individuals). Roll 1d2+1 to determine the level of the unit.

As the fighter gains each new level beyond the 10th, he will attract another unit of followers. Roll dice to determine the number of stands in the unit and the level of the followers. These subsequent followers, though, may be of very different backgrounds than the fighter himself.

A fighter cannot avoid gaining followers. The desperate populations of Athas are constantly on the lookout for great commanders; warriors who will lead them on campaigns of glory.

### Fighter's Followers

| Char. | Level | Stands     | Level     | Special |
|-------|-------|------------|-----------|---------|
| 11    |       | 1 d 10 + 4 | 1 d 3 + 1 | 5 %     |

|    |             |            |      |
|----|-------------|------------|------|
| 12 | 1 d 12      | 1 d 3 + 2  | 10 % |
| 13 | 1 d 12 + 2  | 1 d 4 + 1  | 15 % |
| 14 | 1 d 12 + 4  | 1 d 4 + 2  | 20 % |
| 15 | 1 d 20      | 1 d 6 + 1  | 25 % |
| 16 | 1 d 20 + 2  | 1 d 6 + 2  | 30 % |
| 17 | 1 d 20 + 4  | 1 d 8 + 1  | 35 % |
| 18 | 1 d 20 + 6  | 1 d 8 + 2  | 40 % |
| 13 | 1 d 20 + 8  | 1 d 10 + 1 | 45 % |
| 20 | 1 d 20 + 10 | 1 d 10 + 2 | 50 % |

**Stands** indicates the number of stands of followers that are attracted to the character.

**Level** indicates the level of the characters that make up the stand.

**Special** indicates the chance that the unit is of an unusual nature. Some examples include: kank cavalry, thri-kreen, elves, aarakocra, or human fighters of exceptional equipment or morale—the DM decides all special characteristics beyond number of stands and level of followers.

It is important to remember that these are merely the automatic followers that a fighter gains. In the course of a campaign, a player who wishes to role-play the situations might raise huge armies of former slaves or gain control of an entire thri-kreen tribe.

A fighter has the following special benefits:

A **fighter can teach weapon proficiencies** when he reaches 3rd level. The fighter can train students in the use of any weapon in which he is specialized. The fighter may train a number of students equal to his level in a single "class," and a class requires 8 hours of training each and every day for one month. At the end of that time each student must make an Intelligence check; those who pass gain a bonus proficiency slot in that weapon. A student may only be trained once, regardless of success, with a specific weapon. Students can learn any number of new proficiencies in this manner, even beyond those slots normally allowed for a character of that level.

A fighter can operate heavy war machines when he reaches 4th level, including bombardment



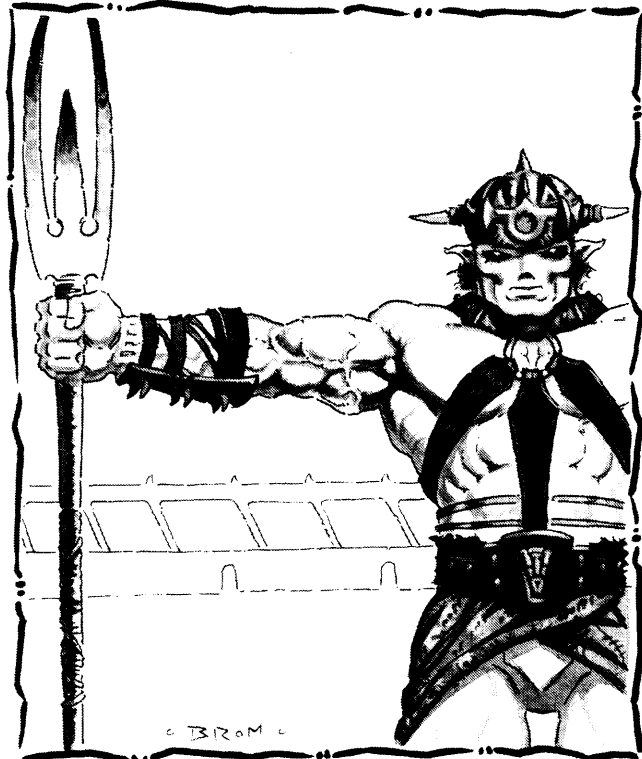
## Player Character Classes

engines (like ballistae, catapults, and trebuchet), crushing engines (like rams and bores), and siege towers.

A fighter can supervise the construction of defenses when he reaches 6th level. These include ditches and pits, fields of stakes, hasty stone and wooden barricades, and even semi-permanent stone fortifications. Specific rules governing the construction of these defenses are presented in *Chapter 9: Combat*.

A fighter can command large numbers of troops when he reaches 7th level. In roleplaying terms, the fighter has mastered the skills and techniques to take charge of 100 soldiers per level—this includes terminology, use of messengers and signals, use of psionic and magical aids to communication, etc. Rules on troop command in roleplaying are given in *Chapter 9: Combat*.

In BATTLESYSTEM™ miniatures rules terms, the fighter gains a *command diameter*, or CD. This value is calculated by adding the fighter's experience level to his Loyalty Base figure (from the Cha-



risma Table in the *Player's Handbook*). Note that this ability allows the fighter to command troops assigned to him, but does not give him the ability to raise the troops himself.

A fighter can construct heavy war machines when he reaches 9th level, the specific rules for which are given in *Chapter 9: Combat*.

In all cases where the rules here don't contradict them, the rules covering fighters in the *Player's Handbook* should be used.

### Gladiator

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Ability Requirements: | Strength 13<br>Dexterity 12<br>Constitution 15 |
| Prime Requisite:      | Strength                                       |
| Allowed Races:        | All  |

Gladiators are the slave warriors of the city states, specially trained for brutal physical contests. Disciplined in many diverse forms of hand-to-hand combat and skilled in the use of dozens of different weapons, gladiators are the most dangerous warriors on Athas. They advance as Paladin/Rangers.

A gladiator who has a Strength score (his prime requisite) of 16 or more gains a 10 percent bonus to the experience points he earns.

Gladiators can have any alignment: good, evil, lawful, chaotic, or neutral.

A gladiator can use most magical items, including potions, protection scrolls, most rings, and all forms of enchanted armor, weapons, and shields; he abides by all warrior restrictions that apply.

Gladiators have the following special benefits:

A gladiator is automatically proficient in all weapons. —he never suffers a penalty for not being proficient with any weapon, even one that is new to him.

A gladiator can specialize in multiple weapons. As a reward for their years of training and discipline, gladiators are the ultimate masters of weapons. A gladiator character may specialize in any number of weapons, provided he has the number of



proficiency slots required.

**A gladiator is an expert in unarmed combat.** He receives 4 point modifier to punching and wrestling attack rolls, which he can use as a plus or a minus to his roll after it is made. The gladiator may consult the *Punching and Wrestling Results Table* in the *Player's Handbook* while making this decision.

A gladiator learns to optimize his armor when he reaches 5th level. He conditions himself to use his armor to its best advantage, dodging and moving his body in such a way that opponents are confounded by his armor and shield. Provided the gladiator is wearing armor, his armor class is reduced by one for every five levels (-1 at 5th-9th level, -2 at 10th-14th level, -3 at 15-19th level, -4 at 20th level). This benefit does nothing for gladiators who aren't wearing armor. Some magical items (like a *ring of protection +2*), do not count as armor while others (such as *bracers of defense*) do. The DM must rule on a case-by-case basis.

**A gladiator attracts followers** when he reaches 9th level. The followers arrive in the same manner as for fighters. A gladiator's first unit will always consist of other gladiators who have come to study his fighting style and "learn from a true master."

## Ranger

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Ability Requirements: | Strength 13<br>Dexterity 13<br>Constitution 14<br>Wisdom 14 |
| Prime Requisites:     | Strength, Dexterity, Wisdom                                 |
| Races Allowed:        | Human, Elf, Half-elf,<br>Halfling, Thri-kreen               |

Though Athas is a land different from other AD&D® campaign worlds, the role of the ranger is largely unchanged. The wilderness is harsh and unforgiving, calling for skilled and capable men to master its ways—the ranger answers that challenge.

A ranger's motivations can vary greatly. For in-

stance, human rangers are very often former slaves forced into the desert wilderness for simple survival. Halfling rangers, on the other hand, are an integral part of their aboriginal society, serving as advisors and trackers. Whatever their origin, all rangers are of good alignment, living rugged lives through clever mastery of their surroundings.

A ranger can use any weapon or wear any armor, and he can fight two-handed, just as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

**A ranger also gains the tracking, move silently, and hide in shadows abilities** as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

An Athasian ranger must also choose a species enemy, gaining attack adjustments against them (consult *Chapter 11: Encounters* for a list of possible species enemies).

**A ranger is skilled at animal handling.** His adeptness with both trained and untamed animals is, again, just as presented in the *Player's Handbook*.

**A ranger can learn clerical spells** when he reaches 8th level. At that time, he must decide upon a single elemental plane of worship and can only choose spells from that sphere (a ranger cannot use spells from the Sphere of the Cosmos). A ranger never gains bonus spells for a high Wisdom score, nor is he ever able to use clerical scrolls or magical items unless specifically noted otherwise.

While a ranger cannot enchant magical potions on his own, he can reproduce them using botanical enchantment (see *Chapter 10: Treasure*).

At 10th level, a ranger attracts 2d6 followers, but his followers are far different from those granted to a fighter or gladiator. To determine the type of follower acquired, consult the following table (rolling once for each follower).

## RANGER'S FOLLOWERS

|       |                 |
|-------|-----------------|
| 01-04 | Aarakocra       |
| 05-08 | Anakore         |
| 09-12 | Ant Lion, Giant |
| 13    | Behir           |



## Player Character Classes

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 14-19 | Belgoi                                       |
| 20-25 | Baazrag                                      |
| 26-30 | Cat, Great                                   |
| 31    | Dragonne                                     |
| 32-35 | Druid  |
| 36-37 | Ettin  |
| 40-45 | Fighter (human)                              |
| 46-52 | Fighter (elf)                                |
| 53-58 | Fighter (thri-kreen)                         |
| 53-62 | Giant  |
| 63-68 | Kenku  |
| 67-78 | Lizard                                       |
| 73-82 | Preserver                                    |
| 83    | Psionicist (human)                           |
| 84-90 | R o c  |
| 91-95 | Tiref  |
| 96-78 | Wyvern                                       |
| 99    | Yuan-ti                                      |
| 00    | Other wilderness creature (chosen by the DM) |

In all other ways, govern the creation and play of rangers as presented in the *Player's Handbook*.

### Wizard

In Dark Sun, magic is irrevocably linked to the environment. The casting of magical spells and the enchantment of magical items always draws energy directly from the living ecology in the vicinity, destroying the life there. Wizards can choose two paths toward mastery of magical energy.

The *preserver* learns to tap magical energies in such a way as to minimize or even cancel his destruction through balance and in-depth study, but his progress as a wizard is very slow.

The *defiler*, on the other hand, casts magical spells without regard to the havoc he plays upon the environment—compared to a preserver, a defiler advances through levels very quickly, but his very existence destroys the life around him.

*Illusionists*, a specialized type of wizard, can progress as preservers or defilers, as explained below.

Wizards are restricted in their use of weapons and armor, just as explained in the *Player's Handbook*.

All wizards in Dark Sun use spell books and memorize their spells, just as explained in the *Player's Handbook*. In Dark Sun, however, "books"—made with flat pages bound along one edge between heavy covers—are fairly rare, usually only found as artifacts. Dark Sun wizard characters tend to have their spells written on paper or papyrus scrolls, or woven into small tapestries or, in extreme cases, some use complicated knot and string patterns or stone tablets. They are all still collectively referred to as "spell books" and function accordingly.

### Defiler

|                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Ability Requirements: | Intelligence 9       |
| Prime Requisite:      | Intelligence         |
| Races Allowed:        | Human, Elf, Half-elf |

Defilers are wizards who have decided to take a faster, darker approach to mastering the use of magical spells. In the give and take of spell casting, defilers are well versed in the taking, but give nothing in return. With every spell cast, a defiler leeches the life-energy out of the plants and soil around him, leaving a lifeless zone. Because of this, defilers can only have non-good alignments.

A defiler who has an intelligence score of 16 or higher gains a 10 percent bonus to all experience points earned. A defiler can use any magical item normally available to wizards.

Just like preservers, defilers can opt to specialize. Specialist defilers are treated as explained in the *Player's Handbook*.

The actual amount of damage to the environment done by a defiler casting spells depends upon the level of spell and the nature of the defiler's surroundings while he is casting it. The rules governing this process are given in *Chapter 7: Magic*.



## Defiler Experience Levels

| Level | Defiler   | Hit Dice (d4) |
|-------|-----------|---------------|
| 1     | 0         | 1             |
| 2     | 1,750     | 2             |
| 3     | 3,500     | 3             |
| 4     | 7,000     | 4             |
| 5     | 14,000    | 5             |
| 6     | 28,000    | 6             |
| 7     | 42,000    | 7             |
| 8     | 63,000    | 8             |
| 9     | 94,500    | 7             |
| 10    | 180,000   | 10            |
| 11    | 270,000   | 10 + 1        |
| 12    | 540,000   | 10 + 2        |
| 13    | 820,000   | 10 + 3        |
| 14    | 1,080,000 | 10 + 4        |
| 15    | 1,350,000 | 10 + 5        |
| 16    | 1,620,000 | 10 + 6        |
| 17    | 1,870,000 | 10 + 7        |
| 18    | 2,160,000 | 10 + 8        |
| 19    | 2,430,000 | 10 + 7        |
| 20    | 2,700,000 | 10 + 10       |

In most cases, defilers are outlaws (even in the eyes of the corrupt sorcerer-kings), so they keep their magical abilities under cover. Unlike preservers who have a loose organization in their underground, outlaw defilers tend to be loners, keeping their ambitions and powers to themselves. A sorcerer-king tolerates a select few defilers in his employ, to carry out day-to-day magical tasks that he has no patience for. These defilers are always at the beck and call of their master, and the sorcerer-king himself oversees the training of new recruits. The sorcerer-king's defilers are feared and hated far and wide. Wherever they travel they leave behind a swath of ashen destruction.

## Preserver

**Ability Requirements:** Intelligence 9  
**Prime Requisite:** Intelligence  
**Races Allowed:** Human, Elf, Half-elf





## Player Character Classes



The preserver is a wizard of the old, established school of magic. In the give and take of spell casting, preservers have mastered the balance. A preserver's magical spells are cast in harmony with nature. When a preserver casts a spell, there is no damage to the nearby environment.

Dark Sun preservers are treated just as the mages described in the *Player's Handbook*. They may specialize freely. A preserver who has an Intelligence score of 16 or higher gains a 10 percent bonus to the experience points he earns. In all cases where the rules here don't contradict them, the rules about mages in the *Player's Handbook* should be used.

### Illusionist

|                       |                                   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Ability Requirements: | Dexterity 16                      |
| Prime Requisite:      | Intelligence                      |
| Races Allowed:        | Human, Elf, Half-elf,<br>Halfling |

Illusionists are treated just as described in the *Player's Handbook*. They may be defilers or preservers, but that decision must be made when the character is created. They will advance in levels and cast magical spells as defilers or preservers, depending on which way of life is chosen.

In all cases where the rules here don't contradict them, the rules about illusionists in the *Player's Handbook* should be used.

Illusionists, like all specialist wizards, must conform to the race and minimum ability score requirements as presented in the *Player's Handbook*.

### Priest

Athas is a world without deities. Powerful sorcerer-kings often masquerade as gods and demi-gods but, though their powers are great and their worshippers many, they are not true gods. The world does, however, provide sources of magical power. Such belief-inspired magic is separated into



three distinct areas, each with a class of priest that specializes in its application.

**Templars** worship the sorcerer-kings and draw their magical energies through them. The sorcerer-kings grant magical spells to their templars for services rendered. If a templar falls from favor with his sorcerer-king, or if his sorcerer-king is killed, the templar loses all magical spells.

**Clerics** worship one of the four elemental planes: earth, air, fire, or water. They call upon magical energies from those planes, specializing in one element's magical applications on the prime material plane.

The spells available to a cleric depend upon his elemental plane of worship. To reflect this, the spheres of clerical spells have been altered—there are only five spheres: the Spheres of Earth, Air, Fire, Water and the Sphere of the Cosmos (a general sphere). A cleric gains access to all spells within his chosen elemental sphere and to all spells in the Sphere of the Cosmos.

The spells themselves are received directly from the elemental sphere (even the Cosmos spells). A cleric need not restrict his activities to supporting his element on Athas, but direct opposition may cause spells to be withheld, at the DM's option. For example, a cleric of the water who goes out of his way to poison or otherwise damage a watering hole might suffer for this action.

**Druids** associate themselves with the spirits that inhabit special geographical locations on Athas—every oasis, rock formation, stretch of desert, and mountain has a spirit that looks over it and protects its use. A druid will ally with a particular spirit, acting as that spirit's earthly counterpart, drawing his magical energy from the spirit in question.

## Spheres of Magic

On Athas, the spheres of spells are changed to reflect the emphasis on the elemental planes. Clerics are restricted to one of these spheres, plus the

sphere of the cosmos. Templars can have access to any sphere, but their spell progression is slower than normal. Druids choose their spheres based upon the geographic feature with which they are associated. The new lists of priest spells by sphere is given in *Chapter 7: Magic*.

Otherwise, priest characters are created and used just as described in the *Player's Handbook*. They use eight-sided Hit Dice and can gain additional spells for having high Wisdom scores. Restrictions to armor and weaponry vary according to class.

The use of priestly magic *never* adversely affects the ecosystem in and of itself. The net result of the spell may affect the environment (such as *summon insects* or *lower water*), but the use of the magical energy itself entails no destruction akin to the unleashing of a defiler's magic.

## Cleric

|                       |          |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Ability Requirements: | Wisdom 9 |
| Prime Requisite:      | Wisdom   |
| Races Allowed:        | All      |

Outside the city states, away from the bureaucracy of the sorcerer-kings and their templars, the most common type of priest is the cleric. All clerics worship the elemental planes and draw their magical energies directly from them. However, the backgrounds and motivations for clerics may be vastly different—the shaman witch doctors of the halflings, the mullahs of the trader caravans, and the healers among the slave tribes are all very different, but they're all clerics,

A cleric must have a Wisdom score of 3 or more. A cleric who has a Wisdom of 16 or more gains a 10 percent bonus to the experience points he earns.

Every cleric must choose one elemental plane as his focus of worship. This choice will dictate what spells he can call upon and what types of weapons he will prefer to use. A cleric has major access to the sphere of his element of worship. He also has minor access to the Sphere of the Cosmos.



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Clerics concentrate their efforts on magical and spiritual pursuits, and usually leave combat to others. However, Athas is a violent world, and practicality dictates that they train in combat, as well. Clerics are not restricted with regard to the armor they may wear, but commonly limit themselves to weapons that are somehow related to their particular elemental plane of worship.

### Cleric Weapons Restrictions

**Elemental Plane of Earth**— Clerics of the earth are usually the best armed since they can use stone and metal in their weapons. Wood is also acceptable to them since it originally grew from the ground. They may use any weapon listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

**Elemental Plane of Air**— Since the air does not lend itself easily to being an offensive weapon, clerics of the air rely instead on weapons that are guided by the air. They may use any sort of bow, blowgun, or sling, regardless of construction. Spears are also acceptable, used in either a melee or missile role.

**Elemental Plane of Fire**— Clerics who worship this plane rely on flaming weapons. Favored weapons include flaming arrows, burning oil, and magical weapons enchanted to somehow burn or scald. In extreme circumstances, heating metal weapons to cause searing damage is another acceptable practice among the clerics of the flames. Because it was once fused under great pressure and heat, all obsidian weapons are also acceptable.

**Elemental Plane of Water**— Those who worship this plane recognize water as the bringer of life to the wastelands, the originator of all that grows. Therefore, clerics of the water may use any weapon that is of organic origin, usually wood or bone. They may use bows, clubs, maces, javelins, quarterstaves, spears, and warhammers.

Clerics are not strictly forbidden from using weapons that do not conform to those listed here. However, clerics will not gain their share of group

experience awards for creatures defeated using weapons outside this scheme.

**Clerics have power over undead**, just as described in the *Player's Handbook*. In Dark Sun, undead are classified as either *controlled* or *free-willed*, but the cleric's ability to turn or dispel them is the same.

**Athasian clerics never gain followers** simply as a reward for advancing in levels, nor do they ever gain official approval to establish a stronghold. However, any of these things may come about as a result of good roleplaying.

**Clerics do gain certain powers** with regard to their elemental planes of worship as they advance in level.

**A cleric can ignore the presence of the element** he worships when he reaches 5th level. The duration of this power is a number of rounds equal to his level, and it can only be performed once per day. Thus, a cleric of water may move through water freely and one of earth may pass through stone walls as if they were not there. Force exerted on the cleric by the element may also be ignored—a great wind will not affect a cleric of the air, flames will not burn a cleric of the flames. This protection extends to everything that the cleric is carrying on him at the time.

**A cleric can gate material directly from his elemental plane** when he reaches 7th level. The amount of material he may gate is one cubic foot per level above 6th. The material is a pure specimen from the plane in question—earth, air, fire, or water. The exact nature of the material will be raw and basic; stone (not metal) from the plane of earth, air, flame, and liquid water from their respective planes.

Air so gated comes in the form of a terrific wind, capable of knocking down all huge or smaller creatures; it lasts one round.

The shape of the gated material may be dictated by the cleric (a stone wall one inch thick, a sheet of flame surrounding the altar, etc.), but it cannot be gated more than 50 feet from the cleric. Material may be gated only once per day.

Though not a granted power, a cleric can conjure elementals from his elemental plane when he reach-





es 9th level, since *conjure elemental* is a 5th level spell in Dark Sun. The 6th level spell *conjure fire elemental* and the 7th level spell *conjure earth elemental* have been removed from the Dark Sun clerical spell lists.

In all cases where the rules here don't contradict them, the rules about clerics in the *Player's Handbook* should be used.

## Druid

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Ability Requirements: | Wisdom 12<br>Charisma 15                    |
| Prime Requisites:     | Wisdom, Charisma                            |
| Races Allowed:        | Human, Half-elf, Half-ling, mul, Thri-kreen |

Druids are independent priests who ally themselves with various spirits of the land. He shares power with the spirit he worships, nurturing and protecting the geographical feature to which the spirit is tied. Virtually every feature of the land on Athas has a druid to protect it, but there is no worldwide organization of druids—they serve independently, living patient, solitary lives of guardianship.

Every druid must choose one geographic feature to be his **guarded lands**. The geographic features that a druid might make his guarded lands can vary widely. For instance, one may watch over a particular stretch of open desert, another may protect a belt of scrub grass within it, while still another might watch over a small oasis that borders on both.

Lower-level druids may travel widely in the world. During their *time of wandering*, a young druid learns about the world, its ecology, the balance of nature and the ways of its creatures; he may spend as much time on his guarded lands as he sees fit.

Upon reaching 12th level, the druid's time of wandering has come to an end. From that time forward, the druid must spend half of his time on his guarded lands, watching over them and protecting them. The rest of the time a higher-level druid must

again travel the world, keeping tabs on trends that might threaten nature in general and his guarded lands in particular.

Druids tend not to bother or even encounter those who use their guarded lands without damaging them. Travelers who stop at an oasis to water their animals and then move on will probably never know there is a druid watching their every move. It is a druid's firm belief that the lands are for all to use, men and animals, alike. They merely see to it that their guarded lands aren't abused in any way. Understandably, druids tend to be very apprehensive about wizards who venture into their realms, as they might turn out to be defilers.

A druid who has both a Wisdom and Charisma score of 16 or more gains a 10 percent bonus to the experience points he earns.

Druids have no restrictions as to what weapons they may use. They may never wear armor, but may don items that give magical protection (bracers, cloaks, etc.). They can use any magical item normally available to druids.

A druid has major access to spells from any sphere that is associated with his guarded lands. For instance, a druid whose guarded land is a stream might be restricted to spells from the Sphere of Water. A more exotic druid might choose as his guardian lands the "howling winds of the north" and use spells from the Sphere of Air. Still another druid whose guarded land is a desert spring may draw spells from both the Sphere of Water and the Sphere of Earth, though only one may be of major access and the other of minor, as decided by the DM. At most, a druid may claim two Spheres to be related to his guarded lands, and they must meet the approval of the DM. In addition, a druid has major access to spells from the Sphere of the Cosmos.

### Possible Guardian Lands

**Sphere of Earth:** a particular mountain or hill, a rock outcropping, an expanse of desert or steppes.



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**Sphere of Air:** the skies over a particular area, the winds of a canyon or any prevailing wind pattern.

**Sphere of Fire:** dry grasslands, a volcanic vent, hot springs, or boiling tar pits.

**Sphere of Water:** a spring or pool, oasis, or natural cistern.

When in his guarded lands, a druid has several powerful granted powers.

**A druid can remain concealed** from others while in his guarded lands. This is proof against all normal forms of detection (sight, hearing, etc.) but will not protect the druid from magical detection (including a *detect invisible* spell). The druid cannot move or cast spells in any way while concealed.

**A druid may speak with animals** in his guarded lands when he reaches 3rd level. He can speak with all animals when he reaches 7th level.

**A druid may speak with plants** in his guarded lands when he reaches 5th level. He can speak with all plants when he reaches 9th level.

**A druid can live without water or nourishment** in his guarded lands when he reaches 7th level. At that point the druid draws his life energy directly from his guarded lands.

**A druid can shapechange** into creatures common to his guarded lands when he reaches 10th level. The druid can so shapechange up to three times per day. The size of the animal is not restricted provided the animal is native to the druid's guarded lands. When assuming the shape of the animal, the druid takes on all of its characteristics—its movement rate and abilities, its armor class, number of attacks, and damage per attack. The druid's clothing and one item held in each hand also become part of the new body; these reappear when the druid resumes his normal shape. The items cannot be used while the druid is in animal form. Since many animals wander over wide ranges on Athas, druids often have a large number of creatures to choose from. However, they cannot shapechange into creatures totally alien to

their guarded lands. Consult *Chapter 11: Encounters* for a list of possible creatures; use the terrain indicated for each creature when considering whether it is native to the druid's guarded lands. The druid retains his own hit points, THAC0, and saving throws while in animal form.

In all cases where the rules here don't contradict them, the rules about druids in the *Player's Handbook* should be used.

### Templar

|                       |                                |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ability Requirements: | Wisdom 3<br>Intelligence 10    |
| Prime Requisite:      | Wisdom                         |
| Races Allowed:        | Human, Dwarf, Elf,<br>Half-elf |

Templars are the greatly feared disciples of the sorcerer-kings. Their organization is steeped in ancient tradition and treacherous politics, and the work they perform for the sorcerer-kings is governed by endless bureaucracy. To city dwellers, the templars are the enforcers of the sorcerer-king's will, allowed to run rampant, enforcing the local edicts with painstaking indifference, doling out punishment or even execution with the sorcerer-king's blessing. An organization of wicked men looking out for their own wealth and power, the templars are overrun with corruption to the highest level—the sorcerer-kings generally turn a blind eye to bribery and scandal among the templars, provided terror is maintained among their subject populations.

Templars gain levels as do clerics, but their spell progression at low levels is slower. At 15th level, though, the progression increases drastically as the character enters the upper ranks of the templar hierarchy. At the highest levels, templars have more spells available to them than clerics of the same level.

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## Templar Spell Progression

| Templar Level | Spell Level |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---------------|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|               | 1           | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 1             | -           | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2             | 1           | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3             | 1           | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4             | 2           | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 5             | 3           | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6             | 3           | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| 7             | 3           | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| 8             | 3           | 3 | 2 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 7             | 3           | 3 | 3 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 10            | 3           | 3 | 3 | 2 | - | - | - |
| 11            | 4           | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| 12            | 4           | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | - | - |
| 13            | 4           | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | - | - |
| 14            | 5           | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | - |
| 15            | 6           | 6 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16            | 7           | 7 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| 17            | 7           | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| 18            | 8           | 8 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| 17            | 9           | 9 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 3 |
| 20            | 9           | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 4 |

The libraries of the templars are unavailable to outsiders, but are the most extensive in the cities. Their use allows templars to access all the spheres for their spells. Also, the extensive libraries encourage magical research. Templars may begin creating scrolls at 6th level and potions at 8th.

A templar character may be either neutral or evil—there are no good templars. The templars from one city state have no association with those from another. Thus, templars cannot transfer loyalty from one sorcerer-king to another while the first is still alive. Should a templar's sorcerer-king fall from power or be killed, he may petition to another sorcerer-king for acceptance, where he may find an open hand or the taste of steel, at the new sorcerer-king's whim.

Templars are initially trained as warriors and, at lower levels, are forced to garrison temples and palaces in their city state. Templars are not usually re-





## Player Character Classes

stricted as to weaponry or armor worn, but some sorcerer-kings impose temporary restrictions. In times of war, the templars are commonly called upon to summon formations of undead soldiers that they will lead into combat and to act as officers for his mortal armies.

A templar's spells are received directly from the sorcerer-king he worships. Spells can be taken away by the sorcerer-king if the templar has somehow displeased him. If the sorcerer-king is particularly displeased, he might kill the offending templar.

Templars have power over undead, but only to raise or ally with them, never to turn them away. As discussed for evil priests and undead in the *Player's Handbook*, this is resolved in the same way as a turning attempt. Up to 12 undead can be commanded. A "T" result means the undead automatically obey the templar, while a "D" means the undead become completely subservient to the templar. They follow his commands (to the best of their ability and understanding) until turned, commanded, or destroyed by another.

As a templar advances in level, he gains certain powers *within his city state*.

**A templar can call upon a slave to do whatever he wants.** Slaves who do not do as ordered by a templar face immediate death.

**A templar can pass judgement upon a slave at any time.** In any matter involving disobedience or the actions of a slave, a templar may judge, sentence, or pardon a slave as he sees fit, regardless of who owns the slave. Penalties can include imprisonment, torture, or even death.

**A templar can legally enter the house of a freeman** when he reaches 2nd level. The freeman has no right to refuse the templar admission, under punishment of imprisonment **and** possible execution.

**A templar can requisition soldiers** when he reaches 3rd level. He can call upon 1d4 soldiers per level. The soldiers will all be 1st-level templars with one 2nd-level templar centurian. A templar can call upon soldiers any time he wishes, but the soldiers

cannot be ordered to leave the city without permission from the templar's sorcerer-king.

**A templar can accuse a freeman of disloyalty** or similar crimes when he reaches 4th level. Regardless of evidence, an accused freeman will be locked in the dungeons of the sorcerer-king for as long as the accusing templar wishes.

**A templar can gain access to all areas in palaces and temples** when he reaches 5th level. Before that time the templar is restricted from areas such as libraries and council chambers unless ordered to go there by a higher-level templar.

**A templar can draw upon the city treasury for official investigations** when he reaches 6th level. The number of gold pieces he can draw from the treasury is equal to the roll of a number of 10-sided dice equal to the templar's level, multiplied by his level, per month. For example, a 7th level templar would roll 7d10 then multiply the result by 10. Few questions are asked when gold is requisitioned, provided no attempt is made to withdraw funds more often than once per month.

**At templar can pass judgement on a freeman** when he reaches 7th level. The freeman must be at least two levels lower than the judging templar, regardless of the freeman's class. Judgement can be in the form of a fine, a stretch of time in the dungeons, enslavement, execution, or anything else the templar wishes. Failure to comply makes the judged freeman an outlaw who, if caught, will be executed. Again, there need be no real evidence against the freeman being judged.

**A templar can accuse a noble** when he reaches 10th level. This is similar to the ability of the templar to accuse freemen, but permits the character to take action against the nobility on behalf of the sorcerer-king.

**A templar can pass judgement on a noble** (just as he can judge a freeman) when he reaches 15th level. The noble must be at least two levels lower than the judging templar.

**A templar can grant a pardon to any condemned**



man when he reaches 17th level. Only the sorcerer-king himself can nullify the pardons granted by such a character.

As a rule, a templar can have no more than one man accused and in the dungeons per level. He may judge or pardon no more than one man per week. He may never accuse, judge, or pardon another templar who is of equal or higher level.

The templar hierarchy is measured strictly by experience level. A templar of higher level can negate any action taken by one of lower level (prevent the requisitioning of money or troops, release accused prisoners, etc.). Templars of the same level who disagree must seek out someone of higher level within the hierarchy to arbitrate their differences.

Templars never gain followers as do clerics. They never receive official approval to establish religious stronghold—a sorcerer-king’s life revolves around his one city and, while that may expand, he will never open branch areas that he cannot control.

## Rogue

Athas is a world of intrigue and treachery, of shady deals and secretive organizations—it’s a rogue’s paradise. Beyond the cities, among the wasteland tribes and villages, thieves live by their wits. Within the secure walls of the city states, many typically roguish occupations have become institutions unto themselves. Thieves and bards have become pawns of the wealthy, deployed in deadly games of deceit between noble families.

## Bard

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Ability Requirements: | Dexterity 12<br>Intelligence 13<br>Charisma 15 |
| Prime Requisites:     | Dexterity, Charisma                            |
| Races Allowed:        | Human, Half-elf                                |

The bard is a member of a bizarre class of enter-

tainers and storytellers prized by the aristocratic city dwellers. Freeman all, the bards tour through cities in groups or individually, then travel on, making a living with their wits and talents. It is also widely accepted that many bards lead double lives as notorious blackmailers, thieves, spies, and even assassins.

As described in the *Player’s Handbook*, the bard must remain mostly neutral in alignment; that is, he must have “neutral” as one of the elements of his alignment. The bard’s profession puts him in touch with all sorts of people and situations and he cannot afford to have a strong polarity of alignment to complicate his interaction with them.

Athasian bards have no restrictions to their armor or weapon choices. However, they tend to wear no armor, in favor of more festive clothing, and their weapons are often concealed and small.

Bards are first and foremost entertainers. Each has some skill as a singer, actor, poet, musician, and juggler. Every bard character specializes in one particular mode of performance which should be noted on his character sheet—this may become pertinent in some roleplaying situations.

Among the nobility of the cities, bards are tools. They are commonly hired by one house of nobles and sent to another as a gift. The bards are sent to entertain, and usually to perform some other subtle task (such as robbery, assassination, espionage, etc.), as well. It is considered rude to turn down the gift of a bard or bard company. However, when presented with a troop of bards from one’s worst enemy, sometimes they are turned away. To get around this, the hiring party sometimes disguises their approach by using a third party to send the bards—it can turn into a very complicated collage of intrigue and deceit.

A bard has a bewildering variety of benefits.

**A bard can use all thief abilities:** pick pockets, open locks, find/ remove traps, move silently, hide in shadows, hear noise, climb walls, and read languages. The initial values of each skill is given on the *Thieving Skill Base Scores* table, and is modi-



## Player Character Classes

fied by race, Dexterity, and armor worn. Unlike thieves, bards add nothing to these base values at 1st level. Each time the bard rises a level in experience, the player receives another 20 points to distribute. No more than 10 of these points can be assigned to a single skill and no skill can be raised above 35 percent.

**A bard can influence reactions** just as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

**Music, poetry, and stories of the bard can be inspirational**, as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

**Bards also learn a "little bit of everything,"** again, just as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

**A bard is a master of poisons**, knowledgeable in both their use and manufacture. Each level, the bard rolls 1d4 and adds to it his level to determine which new poison he has mastered (on the table below). If the bard already has mastered the poison rolled, he gains no new poison at that level. If the roll is 18 or higher, the bard may choose any poison on the list. Once mastered, the bard can make a single application of the poison every day, using easily obtained materials. The methods of application are presented in *Chapter 9: Combat* in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

### Bard Poison Table

| Die Roll | Class | Method   | Onset      | Strength |
|----------|-------|----------|------------|----------|
| 2        | A     | Injected | 10-30 min. | 15/0     |
| 3        | B     | Injected | 2-12 min.  | 20/1-3   |
| 4        | C     | Injected | 2-5 min.   | 25/2-8   |
| 5        | D     | Injected | 1-2 min.   | 30/2-12  |
| 6        | E     | Injected | Immediate  | Death/20 |
| 7        | F     | Injected | Immediate  | Death/0  |
| 8        | G     | Ingested | 2-12 hours | 20/10    |
| 7        | H     | Ingested | 1-4 hours  | 20/10    |
| 10       | I     | Ingested | 2-12 min.  | 30/15    |
| 11       | J     | Ingested | 1-4 min.   | Death/20 |
| 12       | K     | Contact  | 2-8 min.   | 5/0      |
| 13       | L     | Contact  | 2-8 min.   | 10/0     |
| 14       | M     | Contact  | 1-4 min.   | 20/5     |

|     |                 |          |           |              |
|-----|-----------------|----------|-----------|--------------|
| 15  | N               | Contact  | 1 minute  | Death/25     |
| 16  | O               | Injected | 2-24 min. | Paralytic    |
| 17  | P               | Injected | 1-3 hours | Debilitative |
| 18+ | Player's Choice |          |           |              |

Athasian bards do not gain the use of magical spells at higher levels. Further, they never gain the ability to use magical devices of written nature.

In all cases where the rules here don't contradict them, the rules about bards in the *Player's Handbook* should be used.

### Thief

|                       |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Ability Requirements: | Dexterity 9 |
| Prime Requisite:      | Dexterity   |
| Races Allowed:        | All         |

Athasian thieves run the gamut of society. They range from gutter snipes who prey upon the merchants and freemen of the cities to vagabonds who steal what they can from passing caravans or merchant trains. At their best, thieves can be in the employ of the nobility, plying their trade by contract in the name of a royal household or noble do-gooders who seek to steal only from the corrupt and wealthy.

A thief's prime requisite is Dexterity. A thief with a Dexterity score of 16 or more gains a 10 percent bonus to the experience points he earns.

A thief can choose any alignment except lawful good. A thief can be from any social class—slave, freeman, or noble. Any human, dwarf, elf, half-elf, halfling, mul, or thri-kreen character can be a thief.

A thief's selection of weapons is not limited; a thief character can use any weapon, but suffers non-proficiency penalties where appropriate. A thief's choice of armor is limited, just as described in the *Player's Handbook*. However, there is no such thing as elven chain armor on Athas.

A thief's skills are determined just as in the *Player's Handbook*. However, racial and Dexterity adjustments will be different for Dark Sun thieves.

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### Thieving Skill Exceptional Dexterity Adjustments

| Dex | Pick Pockets | Open Locks | Find Remove | Move Silently | Hide in Shadows |
|-----|--------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 18  | +10%         | +15%       | +5%         | +10%          | +10%            |
| 13  | + 1 5 %      | + 2 0 %    | + 1 0 %     | + 1 5 %       | + 1 5 %         |
| 20  | +20%         | +25%       | +12%        | +20%          | +17%            |
| 21  | + 2 5 %      | + 2 7 %    | + 1 5 %     | + 2 5 %       | + 2 0 %         |
| 22  | + 2 7 %      | + 3 0 %    | + 1 7 %     | + 3 0 %       | + 2 2 %         |

Athasian thieves can employ the backstab and use of scrolls abilities, just as described in the *Player's Handbook*. There is no thieves' cant used on Athas, nor do thieves attract followers.

At 10th level a thief can attempt to attract a patron. A patron is a noble who will sponsor the thief and protect him under his house and name. Such a character is expected to perform tasks for the noble patron, such as theft, spying, and even assassination, in return for lodging and political protection.

The base chance of finding a patron is a percentage roll equal to 5% per level of the thief beyond 9th. Once a patron is obtained, the thief need not roll further-the thief is from then on in the employ of one noble family from one city of the DM's choice. A thief need not seek out a patron if he doesn't wish to. Further, once a thief has a patron, the only way to leave his service is through death-a hired thief knows too many of the noble's secrets to be allowed to "resign" in any conventional way.

### Thieving Skill Racial Adjustments

| Skill           | Dwarf   | Elf     | Half-elf | Halfling | Mul   |
|-----------------|---------|---------|----------|----------|-------|
| Pick Pockets    | -       | + 5 %   | + 1 0 %  | + 5 %    | -     |
| Open Locks      | + 1 0 % | - 5 %   | -        | + 5 %    | - 5 % |
| Find/Remove     | + 1 5 % | -       | -        | + 5 %    | -     |
| Move Silently   | -       | + 5 %   | -        | + 1 0 %  | + 5 % |
| Hide in Shadows | -       | + 1 0 % | + 5 %    | + 1 5 %  | -     |
| Detect Noise    | -       | + 5 %   | -        | + 5 %    | -     |
| Climb Walls     | - 1 0 % | -       | -        | - 1 5 %  | + 5 % |
| Read Languages  | - 5 %   | -       | -        | - 5 %    | - 5 % |

In the campaign, having a thieflly patron will mean several things. First, the DM can assign the thief jobs for the family, which he must perform or be targeted for assassination, himself. Second, the thief can never be personally held responsible for his crimes while working for a patron. Typically, patrons have powerful friends among the defilers and templars of a city state to protect both themselves and their thief employees.

In all cases where the rules here don't contradict them, the rules about thieves in the *Player's Handbook* should be used.

### Psionicist (Dark Sun variation)

Ability Requirements: Constitution 11

Intelligence 12

Wisdom 15

Prime Requisites: Constitution, Wisdom

Races Allowed: Any

All intelligent creatures on Athas have some measure of psionic power. However, not all are considered to be of the psionicist character class.

In Dark Sun there are no racial restrictions nor racial level limits for psionicist characters. Any human character who meets the ability requirements may be a dual-classed psionicist. Any demihuman character who meets the ability requirements may be a multi-classed psionicist. For dual-or multi-



## Player Character Classes

classed characters, the psionicist class may be combined with any other class or classes.

**Inherent Potential:** In DARK SUN™ campaigns, a character may have a Wisdom or Constitution score as high as 22. This table is an expanded version of that given in *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, covering the higher scores.

**Inherent Potential Table**

| Ability Score | Base Score | Ability Modifier |
|---------------|------------|------------------|
| 15            | 20         | 0                |
| 16            | 22         | + 1              |
| 17            | 24         | + 2              |
| 18            | 26         | + 3              |
| 17            | 28         | + 4              |
| 20            | 30         | + 5              |
| 21            | 32         | + 6              |
| 22            | 34         | + 7              |

**Power Checks:** It is possible for a Dark Sun psionicist to have a power score of 20 or more. In such cases, ignore the psionic power's *power score* and 20 results; a roll of 20 always fails, but with no detrimental or beneficial effect.

**Wild Talents:** All player characters, even those who do not meet the ability requirements for the psionicist character class, are *automatically* wild talents, as described in *The Complete Psionics Handbook*. They may roll for their devotions as described there.

**Non-player Characters:** All non-player characters who meet the ability requirements for the psionicist class are wild talents, as well. In most cases, unimportant NPCs are assumed to have only a psionic defense mode. For important NPCs, the DM must roll for their devotions normally.

In all cases where the rules here don't contradict them, the rules about psionicists in *The Complete Psionics Handbook* should be used.

## Multi-Class and Dual-Class Characters

Dark Sun characters can become multi-or dual-class just, as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

### Multi-Class Combinations

Any demihuman character who meets the ability requirements may elect to become a multi-class character, subject to the restrictions presented in the *Player's Handbook*. The following chart lists the possible character class combinations available based upon the race of the character.

#### Dwarf

|                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Cleric/Psionicist  | Thief/Psionicist          |
| Fighter/Cleric     | Fighter/Cleric/Psionicist |
| Fighter/Psionicist | Fighter/Thief/Psionicist  |
| Fighter/Thief      |                           |

#### Elf or Half-elf

|                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Fighter/Mage       | Fighter/Mage/Cleric       |
| Fighter/Thief      | Fighter/Mage/Thief        |
| Fighter/Psionicist | Cleric/Mage/Thief         |
| Fighter/Cleric     | Cleric/Fighter/Thief      |
| Cleric/Mage        | Fighter/Mage/Psionicist   |
| Cleric/Psionicist  | Fighter/Thief/Psionicist  |
| Cleric/Thief       | Fighter/Cleric/Psionicist |
| Mage/Psionicist    | Cleric/Mage/Psionicist    |
| Mage/Thief         | Cleric/Thief/Psionicist   |
| Thief/Psionicist   | Mage/Thief/Psionicist     |

#### Half-giant

|                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Fighter/Cleric     | Cleric/Psionicist |
| Fighter/Psionicist |                   |

#### Halfling

|                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Fighter/Thief       | Cleric/Psionicist      |
| Fighter/Cleric      | Illusionist/Thief      |
| Fighter/Illusionist | Illusionist/Psionicist |



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Fighter/Psionicist  
Cleric/Illusionist  
Cleric/Thief

Thief/Psionicist  
Fighter/Thief/Psionicist

### Mul

Fighter/Thief  
Fighter/Cleric  
Fighter/Psionicist  
Cleric/Psionicist

Cleric/Thief  
Psionicist/Thief  
Fighter/Thief/Psionicist  
Fighter/Thief/Cleric

### Thri-kreen

Fighter/Cleric  
Fighter/Psionicist

Cleric/Psionicist  
Fighter/Cleric/Psionicist

*Defiler* or *preserver* can be substituted for any *mage* entry.

*Templar* can be substituted for any *cleric* entry.

*Ranger* can be substituted for any *fighter* entry by elves, half-elves, half-giants, halfling, or thri-kreen.

*Bard* can be substituted for any *thief* entry by half-elves.

*Druid* can be substituted for any *cleric* entry by half-elves, halflings, muls, or thri-kreen.

*Gladiator* can never be a part of a multi-class combination for demihumans.

### Dual-Class Characters

Human characters are free to become dual classed characters on Athas, just as they are in any other AD&D® campaign world. The rules governing this are fully detailed in the *Player's Handbook*.

### Character Trees

DARK SUN™ campaigns are set in a violent world. Powerful magics and psionics, desperate hordes of raiders, and even the unforgiving desert wastes all conspire against player characters—death is not at all uncommon on Athas, nor is it uncommon for player characters in DARK SUN campaigns.

Replacing a fallen player character of high level

with a novice first level character is never satisfying for the player. Also, where this new character fits into the plot is usually contrived on the spot.

In DARK SUN campaigns, players are encouraged to use character trees, where they play with only one character at a time, but they have four to call upon at the beginning of any particular adventure.

In brief, a character tree consists of one active character (which the player is using as his player character) and three inactive characters. The active character takes part in the adventure, performing actions in the campaign world. When a new adventure begins, the player may switch to one of his inactive characters or keep his previously active character to continue play.

### Setting Up a Character Tree

To begin a character tree, a player should completely roll up four characters. Once this is done, the player selects the character that he intends to run for the first adventure, making that one his “active” character. The other three are inactive.

### Alignment

The four characters that make up a player's character tree are unrestricted as to class or race; any combination is acceptable. However, the alignment of these characters is restricted. All of the four characters in a character tree must be either good, neutral, or evil. Devotion to chaos or law makes no difference, however.

For example, one character tree might have a chaotic good dwarven gladiator, a lawful good thri-kreen fighter, a neutral good human bard, and a chaotic good elven preserver. The thri-kreen could not be lawful evil or even lawful neutral and still be a part of that character tree.

If a character is forced to change alignment so that it no longer fits within the tree, that character must be discarded (or, optionally, the player may discard the other three, inserting three new characters



## Player Character Classes



into his tree and adopt this new alignment).

Discarded characters should be given to the dungeon master for use as NPCs.

### Changing Characters

There are three instances when a player may switch the character he wishes to use in play: between adventures, during an adventure, or upon an active character's death.

#### Between Adventures

When an adventure is concluded (in the eyes of the DM, that is), a player may switch his active character for an inactive one. The player is not obligated to do so, and may keep one character active through any number of consecutive adventures.

#### During an Adventure

Within the scope of the campaign world, calling upon another character to replace the active character requires a substantial investment in time, whether for sending messages or journeying and searching for the transient inactive characters of the tree (psionics and magic may make this task easier, but cannot solve all the problems). The DM should sparingly allow players to switch their active character during an adventure, and usually impose a 3d6 day delay. The DM should never allow switching during critical or dangerous scenes of an adventure. Any switching of characters during an adventure is subject to the discretion of the DM, who may freely veto any request to do so.

#### Upon an Active Character's Death

When the active character dies, one of the inactive characters on the tree is assumed to arrive on the scene within one day (if possible). The player picks which inactive character will arrive and must subsequently roll a new first-level character to occupy the vacated spot on the tree. If circumstances



make it difficult for a new character to arrive, the DM may be forced to extend the period before the newly activated adventurer arrives.

### Character Advancement

The active character in a campaign receives experience points and advances in levels just as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

Every time the active character goes up a level of experience, the player may also advance one of his inactive characters one level. The inactive character chosen must be of a lower level than the active character. Adjust the experience point total on that inactive character's sheet to the minimum number for the new level attained.

For purposes of character tree advancement, multi- and dual-classed characters that are inactive may only advance in one class. As active characters, multi-class characters cause an inactive character to advance when he increases one level in *each* of his classes. A dual-classed character causes an inactive character to advance with every level he attains.

For inactive multi-class characters, care must be taken that a single experience point total can correctly yield the level combination. In general, an inactive multi-classed character should never be more than one level different in each class (3,3,4 is okay, 3,3,9 is not).

### The Status of Inactive Characters

*Inactive characters are not NPCs or followers.* They aren't involved in the adventure at any time. At no time will a player's active and inactive characters come into contact in the campaign world.

When not in play, inactive characters are assumed to be elsewhere on Athas, performing other task.

All characters in a character tree are assumed to know each other and are working toward similar ends. The player may invent connections—the characters are all sons of the same powerful woman, are distant cousins, friends from childhood, etc. How-

ever, there is no need to have any relationship between them—the player may decide that the individuals in his character tree have no more than a passing acquaintance with one another.

### Using the Character Tree to Advantage

The character tree's chief purpose is to give every player a pool of adventurers to choose from for different situations or when one of his characters dies. The player is familiar with these characters and can apply their strengths more readily than he might be able to with freshly created characters. However, if care is taken, the character tree can be a valuable tool to the player in an extended campaign.

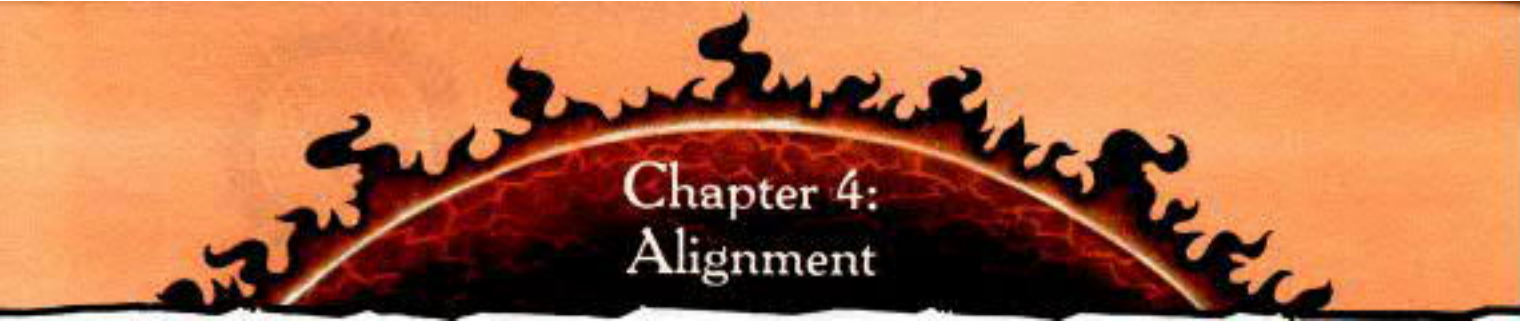
As only one inactive character gains a level of experience every time the active character does so, deciding which character to advance might be a decision based on which direction the campaign seems to be taking. If, for instance, a large war is in progress, a player may wish to use his fighter for his active character. If the war is winding down, he might want to advance inactive non-fighter characters for the post war adventures to come.

As another example, the quest might be a dangerous trek across the wilderness to steal a magical item from an ancient defiler's mansion. The player might use his ranger character to make the journey, but all the while might be using his inactive character advancements to make his thief more powerful for the final assault on the mansion.

### Exchanges Between Characters

Even though characters are on the same tree, they cannot freely exchange equipment, magical items, cash, or personal possessions. Keep separate lists for all such items.

In some instances, if there is a compelling reason to do so, characters may exchange important items or information, but this is an option that can be easily abused. In general, items stick with the original character and that's that.



## Chapter 4: Alignment

DARK SUN™ campaigns call upon players to roleplay their characters according to alignments, just as in AD&D® campaigns. The alignment scheme is the same, combining an attitude toward order (law, neutrality, or chaos) with an attitude toward morality (good, neutrality, or evil). All characters and creatures have an alignment in Dark Sun.

As stated in the *Player's Handbook*, "consider alignment as a tool, not a straightjacket that restricts the character." Encourage players to manipulate their Dark Sun characters, using alignment to enhance their roleplaying—creative roleplaying in the Dark Sun world, as in any AD&D campaign world, will enhance both its realism and its enjoyment.

### Half-giants and Alignment

As stated in *Chapter 2: Player Character Races*, half-giants have rapidly shifting attitudes toward both order and morality. Their imitative nature and basically poor grasp of right and wrong facilitate this flip-flopping of attitudes which, in game terms, manifests itself as a change in alignment. One half of a half-giant's alignment remains fixed, the other half may vary.

A half-giant must choose an alignment every morning, one that reflects a reaction to his changing environment, but it must be an alignment that the DM agrees to. In general, a half-giant will be imitative or will be reacting to his environment when a change in alignment occurs. Unless there is a valid reason for the half-giant to become, say, chaotic evil for a day, then the DM should not allow it. If a player repeatedly requests daily alignment changes simply for personal gain, the DM should suggest he play another type of character. Remember, a half-giant character's alignment *may* change each day, but it isn't mandatory—he may go months at a time without a single change. For this reason, half-giant characters, while the dumbest in the campaign world, are generally the most difficult to accurately roleplay.

A half-giant's shifting alignment should become

a hindrance as often as it is a boon. His any-way-the-wind-blows thinking can make him appear unreliable, even dangerous to characters with a more linear approach to order and morality. The DM must sometimes present situations where a half-giant's changing alignment will cause him some grief.

### Alignment in Desperate Situations

#### (Optional Rule)

Life threatening circumstances always put a character's alignment to the test. How he acts, how he treats the other characters in a party, and how he controls his own actions can change drastically with desperation. These rules are presented chiefly to govern situations where water is in very short supply, but they can be adapted to a variety of other situations: the commodity in short supply could just as easily be food in times of famine, the antidote to a poison, the cure for a widespread disease, air in a collapsed tunnel, etc.

A party of characters that has a potentially deadly shortage of water will have to take several things into consideration. Individually, characters should react based on their alignment. As a group, they will have to examine which of their number are strong and capable and which are weak and in need of assistance.

Plans may be made to give more water to certain individuals so they can survive to cast spells or fight foes. How characters react to such plans again rests with their alignments.

#### Lawful Good

A character of this alignment will insist that everyone get an even share of what water there is, even those in the party who seem beyond hope. He will readily conceive of and accept plans that call for unequal distribution of water for the good of the group, but will never let the weak or dying go without water.



### Lawful Neutral

Such characters will insist that everyone get an even share of available water, but won't care one way or the other about characters that may be beyond hope. He will also accept that call for unequal distribution of water for the good of the group.

### Lawful Evil

A character of this alignment will insist that available water be evenly distributed among the able-bodied of the group, but won't offer any to those who seem too far gone. He will accept plans that call for unequal distribution of water for the good of the group, especially if that means more water for him.

### Neutral Good

A neutral good character will insist that everyone in the group get an even share of remaining water, even the severely dehydrated. He will consider plans calling for unequal water distribution, but will have to be convinced that the plan will ultimately benefit the party and not hurt him personally.

### True Neutral

A character of this alignment will want a fair share for himself, but won't necessarily come to the aid of the very weak. He will consider plans that call for unequal water distribution, but only if he and the party will benefit in the short term.

### Neutral Evil

A character of this alignment will insist on his fair share, and will be against giving water to the very weak. He will consider plans for unequal water distribution, but only if he personally will benefit soon.

### Chaotic Good

A chaotic good character will insist that everyone get an even share of the available water, even the

very weak. He will not consider plans calling for unequal water distribution unless he and those he likes personally get more water as part of the plan.

### Chaotic Neutral

Such a character will insist on his fair share, and won't concern himself with the plight of the very weak. He won't consider plans calling for unequal water distribution unless he personally gets more water as part of the plan.

### Chaotic Evil

A chaotic evil character will freely lie, cheat, or even kill to get all the water he can. He will constantly suggest plans calling for unequal water distribution that grant him additional water immediately.

### Severe Desperation

For the purposes of this rule, severe desperation sets in when one member of the party (either a PC or NPC) dies from dehydration and the situation shows no signs of changing. At such times, the DM should make a Wisdom check for each character every day in order to avoid madness.

The madness created by water deprivation forces a character to adopt a chaotic evil alignment for that day with regards to obtaining water. The DM should inform the player of this temporary alignment change—the player should do his best to adopt the madness in his character's style: a stupid gladiator might simply take out his sword and demand the water, whereas a bard might poison some of his fellows in secret to increase his share. If a player is unwilling to take appropriate actions, the DM should make the character into an NPC until the madness wears off. It is mostly for this reason that this rule is optional. Alignment related class abilities are lost during the period of madness.

Once a character has a successful Wisdom check or is rehydrated, the madness goes away.

## Chapter 5: Proficiencies

In Dark Sun, both weapon and nonweapon proficiencies generally follow the guidelines in the *Player's Handbook*. Any exceptions to typical AD&D® game mechanics appear in this chapter.

Dark Sun characters often have higher attribute scores than those in other AD&D campaign worlds. As a result, Dark Sun characters can more easily accomplish proficiency checks, which are based upon attributes. Even so, players should remember that rolling a natural 20 still results in failure, regardless of their characters' attribute scores.

### Dark Sun Weapon Proficiencies

Weapon proficiencies and specialization function as usual for all Dark Sun character classes except the gladiator class. Gladiators begin the game with proficiency in every weapon. In addition, they can specialize in any number of weapons, provided they have enough slots available to do so. A gladiator must spend two slots to specialize in any melee or missile weapon except a bow, which requires three slots. Gladiators thus transcend the rule that limits specialization to fighters.

For example, Barlyuth, a dwarven gladiator, starts the game with four weapon proficiency slots. As a gladiator, he already holds proficiency in all weapons, so he needn't spend any of his four slots to become proficient. Instead, he may spend all four slots to specialize in two melee weapons, or spend three slots to specialize in a bow weapon and save the remaining slot for later specialization.

A 9th-level gladiator could thus specialize in two melee weapons and one bow weapon (seven total weapon proficiency slots) and an 18th-level gladiator could specialize in five melee weapons (10 total weapon proficiency slots). A gladiator gains all the benefits for every weapon in which he specializes, suffering no penalty for multiple specializations.

### New Nonweapon Proficiencies

#### GENERAL

| Proficiency       | Slots | Ability | Modifier |
|-------------------|-------|---------|----------|
| Bargain           | 1     | Wis     | - 2      |
| Heat Protection   | 1     | Int     | - 2      |
| Psionic Detection | 1     | Wis     | - 2      |
| Sign Language     | 1     | Dex     | 0        |
| Water Find        | 1     | Int     | 0        |

#### PRIEST

|             |   |     |     |
|-------------|---|-----|-----|
| Bureaucracy | 1 | Chr | -2  |
| Somatic     |   |     |     |
| Concealment | 1 | Dex | - 1 |

#### WARRIOR

|                      |   |     |     |
|----------------------|---|-----|-----|
| Armor                |   |     |     |
| Optimization         | 1 | Dex | - 2 |
| Weapon Improvisation | 1 | Wis | -1  |

#### WIZARD

|             |   |     |     |
|-------------|---|-----|-----|
| Somatic     |   |     |     |
| Concealment | 1 | Dex | - 1 |

### Description of New Proficiencies

As in the *Player's Handbook*, the proficiencies here appear alphabetically with description and rules for using them in a campaign.

**Armor Optimization:** This proficiency allows a character to use his armor to best advantage against a particular opponent (much like the gladiator special ability). A successful proficiency check in the first round of any combat situation gives a -1 bonus to the character's Armor Class in that situation. A *situation* is a series of rounds in which a particular character engages in combat. Once the character goes two full rounds without combat, the situation ends. The character must be wearing some type of armor or employing a shield in order to use the armor optimization proficiency. The bonus provided by the armor or shield adds to the bonus from the armor optimization proficiency. Furthermore, the bonus from the armor optimization proficiency adds to that of the gladiator special ability.



**Bargain:** A character with the bargain proficiency can haggle over cash, service, and barter transactions to capture a better deal. In a cash transaction, a successful check allows the character to purchase an item for 10% less or sell one for 10% more than the going rate. In a simple barter transaction, a successful check improves the perceived value of the bargainer's goods by 10%. In protracted barter, a successful check allows the bargainer to roll 3d6 instead of 2d6 for that round of barter; a separate check initiates every round. (See Chapter 6: Money and Equipment). In a service transaction, a successful check provides the bargainer 10% more than the going rate for his services. The DM should require players to roleplay the bargaining session to gain the benefits of this proficiency.

Simple and protracted barter are fully explained in Chapter 6: Money and Equipment.

**Bureaucracy:** The bureaucracy proficiency helps characters in a number of situations. A successful check shortens the time a character spends in a city dungeon awaiting judgement. It can also speed the process of gaining an audience with an important templar or other official. The bureaucracy proficiency helps a character understand political hierarchies and who to consult to get a job done. A successful check also allows the character to pay 10% less on a tax levied against him; two successful checks in a row allow him to avoid the tax altogether.

In addition to these example uses, the bureaucracy proficiency functions in countless other ways to let a character understand and use (or abuse) bureaucratic systems.

**Heat Protection:** A character with the heat protection proficiency has learned to use clothing and personal pacing to optimize endurance against the rigors of Athas' heat. With a successful check, the character need only consume half the normal amount of water per day to avoid dehydration. In combat, the heat protection proficiency allows a character wearing metal armor to battle better and longer. A successful check each round allows the



character to avoid the THAC0 loss for that round. In addition, when the character reaches his Constitution score limit to rounds of combat, a successful check will allow him to fight for five more rounds. This check can be made at the end of every subsequent five round period, but once failed, the character collapses from exhaustion.

Dehydration receives full explanation in Chapter 14: Time and Movement. The effects of using metal armor in combat appear in Chapter 6: Money and Equipment.

**Psionic Detection:** The psionic detection proficiency works much as the metapsionic devotion psionic sense, but is much less powerful. With this proficiency, a Dark Sun character uses his latent psionic ability to detect the expenditure of psionic strength points (PSPs) around him.

When employing this proficiency, a character must clear his mind and concentrate, taking at least one full round to prepare. A successful check allows the character to detect the expenditure of any PSPs



## Proficiencies

within 50 yards of his location, regardless of intervening material objects. A character can maintain use of the proficiency for successive rounds, but during that time he cannot move or perform any other action. The proficiency check, however, must succeed on the round the PSPs are expended or the character detects nothing.

Psionic detection proficiency can only inform a character that PSPs were expended within 50 yards, telling nothing more. The detector cannot determine the number of PSPs, their source, the powers or devotions drawn upon, or the purpose of the expenditure (e.g., to initialize a power or to maintain one). This proficiency is not cumulative with other detection techniques.

A player whose character has psionic detection proficiency should ensure that the DM knows. Often the DM will secretly roll the proficiency and inform the player of results.

**Sign Language:** Those who have mastered the use of sign language can communicate among themselves without words, provided they can see each other's hands. Signing is a language unto itself: it conveys ideas that any other character with the sign language proficiency can understand, regardless of their native language.

To use sign language for an entire round, all parties involved must make a successful check. Characters who succeed can converse together for an entire minute; those who fail cannot listen. When a PC signs successfully with an NPC, the DM should speak freely with the player for one minute per round. Every round of conversation requires another check. A failed check means that either the speaker didn't perform his finger movements accurately, the listener wasn't watching the speaker closely enough, or something else blocked communication.

On Athas, many groups employ sign language for covert conversations. In some city states, using sign language can be grounds for imprisonment. Though sign language throughout Athas is generally consistent, secret societies often employ special codes so that

unwanted eyes cannot decipher specific conversations.

**Somatic Concealment:** Though spell casters can mumble verbal components and hide material components in their hands or robes, somatic components are harder to hide. The somatic component of any spell, magical or clerical, is apparent to any character watching the spell caster. On Athas, where spell casting is sometimes illegal, the ability to hide the necessary gestures becomes important. If movements can be concealed, a spell can be unleashed without calling attention to the caster.

A character using the somatic concealment proficiency must announce to the DM his intention to do so at the beginning of the round. Then, when the character casts his spell, the DM makes his roll in secret. A successful check indicates that anyone who could normally view the wizard doesn't recognize his gestures as magical in nature. A failed check means that all who can view the casting wizard see his movements for what they really are.

**Water Find:** Even the most barren desert yields water to those who know how to find it. Small animals burrow in the ground and store water there; some rare plants store water in cistern roots beneath the soil; seemingly lifeless trees sometimes have moist heartwood. The find water proficiency can only be used once per day and takes an hour to perform. During this time the character can only move half as far as normal. A successful check indicates he has found sufficient water to sustain himself for one day. It does not mean that he has found enough water to rehydrate, but he will not further dehydrate that day. The character can only find enough water for himself—if he shares his find with others, none of them gains any benefit.

**Weapon Improvisation:** In Dark Sun, virtually anything can be (and has been) used as a weapon. A character with this proficiency rolls against Wisdom to spot a useable weapon just about anywhere. A successful check means the character has found a club that does 1d6+1 damage to man-sized and smaller creatures, or 1d3+1 to larger opponents.





The DM may assign modifiers for the ease or difficulty of finding such a weapon: a marketplace might warrant a +2, a barren grassland a -2, and a sandy desert might annul the proficiency altogether.

### Nonweapon Proficiency Group Crossovers

| Character Class | Proficiency Groups      |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Defiler         | Wizard, General         |
| Gladiator       | Warrior, General        |
| Preserver       | Wizard, General         |
| Psionicist      | Psionicist, General     |
| Templar         | Priest, Rogue, General  |
| Trader          | Rogue, Warrior, General |

### Use of Existing Proficiencies in Dark Sun

Because Athas differs drastically from other AD&D® game worlds, some of the existing proficiencies may seem awkward in their application. For instance, navigation and seamanship proficiencies on a world without oceans of water are ludicrous and should only be considered for characters who are mad or unnaturally old (i.e., can remember the old Athas). The following text clarifies use of other such proficiencies in this desert world.

**Agriculture:** On Athas, the low humidity makes grain storage extremely easy, but raising crops far more difficult. This proficiency covers the best use of land and water for a given crop and how to keep that crop alive through the dry growing season.

**Armorer:** The lack of metal on Athas leaves armorers to concentrate on other materials, namely chitin, bone, and stiffened leathers. Metal armor is so rarely constructed that, when such a task is undertaken, it is usually done so by a team of armorers and blacksmiths.

**Artistic Ability:** This proficiency itself remains unchanged, but its usefulness upon Athas may be more far-reaching. Slaves with artistic ability are sometimes brought out of the mud pits and into the homes of nobles, where they are taught to read. Once out of favor, however, literate slaves cannot be returned to the

pits—they are either executed or sent to the arena.

**Blacksmithing:** As with the armorer proficiency,





## Proficiencies



blacksmiths perform the same functions, but have shifted their main material from metal to other durable substances.

**Fishing:** Obviously, fishing is only useful in the few exotic places where pools of water support fish.

**Navigation:** The methods of direction finding common to naval voyages prove equally useful for caravans crossing the trackless seas of sand.

**Religion:** Large, organized religions have never developed on Athas, though sorcerer-kings make themselves out to be gods or godlike and have surrounded themselves in religious mystique. On a local level, cities and villages have ancient lore about mysterious beings or demigods, but consistent mythic systems are never widespread.

**Seamanship:** This proficiency only finds study by madmen, fools, or the preternaturally ancient.

**Swimming:** This proficiency applies rarely; for example, in the decadent pools of nobles or small bodies of natural water in exotic locales.

**Weaponsmithing:** Again, this proficiency remains unchanged but for the materials used.

### Use of Survival Proficiency in Dark Sun

As described in the *Player's Handbook*, each slot of survival proficiency must be applied to a specific type of terrain. Athas contains sandy wastes, stony barrens, rocky badlands, salt flats, mountains, jungles, and steppes. Survival proficiency gives the character a chance to locate food and water in that particular terrain, but only in minuscule amounts.

A successful check allows a character to find enough water to avoid losing any Constitution points from dehydration. The character will not rehydrate, and he may continue to dehydrate on subsequent days that he doesn't receive water. The same check allows a character to find enough food to sustain him for a day.

Survival proficiency helps a character avoid poisons. A successful check informs the character whether a plant or animal is poisonous, provided the food source is native to the proficiency's terrain type.

## Chapter 6: Money and Equipment

To understand commerce and equipment in Dark Sun, one must understand that Athas is a metal-poor world. In game terms, all metal items—swords, armor, coins—are worth considerably more than on other AD&D® worlds such as Lynn or Oerth.

Virtually all Athasian city states issue coins minted in tribute to their sorcerer-kings. Also, some independent dwarven communities and some wealthy merchant families mint their own coins when the precious metals are available to them. Though the currencies vary (a gold coin minted in Tyr might be a bit heavier than the square gold coins that bear the Ryharian family crest), they all fall under the standard exchange rates given in the *Player's Handbook*. On Athas, 100 cp (ceramic pieces) = 10 sp = 2 ep = 1 gp = 1/5 pp.

**Ceramic Pieces and Bits:** The most commonly used coin throughout Athas is the ceramic piece (cp). Ceramic coins can be manufactured from the most common clay of Athas, then glazed in specific colors and kilned to discourage forgery. The molded shape of ceramic pieces allows them to be broken into 10 separate pie-shaped pieces. Each of these “bits” is worth 1/10 of a ceramic piece.

### What Things Are Worth

The equipment lists in the *Player's Handbook* show not only how much each item costs, but what each item is worth in typical AD&D game coinage.

On Athas, the relative rarity of metal increases the value of metal items. Coins themselves are worth more, so fewer Athasian coins are needed to purchase things that aren't made of metal. However, metal items, because of the scarcity of metal coinage, cost relatively the same number of coins as in other worlds. When Dark Sun characters make purchases from the equipment lists in the *Player's Handbook*, therefore, the following rules apply:

**All nonmetal items cost one percent of the price listed.**

**All metal items cost the price listed.**

Thus, the small canoe (a nonmetal item) costs 3 sp, but the long sword (a metal item) costs 15 gp.

If an item is typically a mixture of metal and nonmetal components and the metal components could be replaced easily, the nonmetal price applies. For example, Athasian chariot makers have found ways to avoid using metal parts to make an equally sturdy chariot, so the nonmetal price of 5 gp applies.

All prices listed in the DARK SUN™ boxed set or in any other DARK SUN module or accessory already compensate for the rarity of metals. Prices listed in other AD&D game products are not adjusted—the rules of conversion apply for them, as well.

### Monetary Systems

Societies on Athas exchange goods and services in three ways: coin, barter, and service.

**Coin:** Transactions where goods or services are purchased with money remain quite common on Athas, despite the lack of metals: Athas is metal-poor, not metal-depleted. Coins are a readily accepted means of payment and, considering the increased value of coins, are less bulky to carry around.

**Barter:** Barter is the exchange of goods for other goods: no coins change hands. By its very nature, barter is an age-old ceremony of negotiation. Characters in Dark Sun can enter either a simple or protracted barter.

**Simple Barter:** In simple barter, characters compare the costs of the items to be exchanged and then match the quantities until they are approximately even. For example, Kyuln wishes to exchange his crop of rice for a metal bastard sword. On Athas, Kyuln's rice is worth 2 bits (2/10 cp) per pound, and the metal bastard sword he seeks is worth 25 gp (2500 cp). Kyuln would have to trade 12,500 pounds of his rice (his entire harvest) to the weaponsmith in exchange for his new metal bastard sword. The weaponsmith might not be that hungry.

**Protracted Barter:** In protracted barter, dice are thrown and costs recalculated in three separate



## Money and Equipment

rounds before a final exchange is made. Because of its complexity, protracted barter works best for items that cost more than 100 gp. For protracted barter, the Charisma scores of the parties involved (usually a player character and nonplayer character controlled by the DM) must be known.

In the first round of protracted barter, each party rolls 2d6 and adds the result to his Charisma score; the higher roll wins the round. The winner has talked down the price of the loser's barter item by 10 percent. If either party decides to end the barter, it is finished here. If neither party decides to end the barter, it continues to a second round, and then to a third. Protracted barter can last no more than three rounds. Once entered into, a transaction will take place—neither party can back out of a deal once protracted barter has commenced.

If Kyuln from the previous example (Charisma score of 13) were to enter into protracted barter with the weaponsmith (Charisma score 7), he might get a better or worse deal. In the first round, Kyuln rolls 7 (+13 = 20) and the weaponsmith rolls 10 (+7 = 17); Kyuln wins the round. He has talked the weaponsmith down 10 percent, so the metal bastard sword in question is now worth 22 gp and 5 sp. Both men wish to continue into a second round. Kyuln rolls 4 (+13 = 17) and the weaponsmith rolls 10 (+7 = 17); the tie means that neither cost is adjusted. In the third and final round, Kyuln rolls a 10 (+13 = 23) and the smith rolls a 7 (+7 = 14); Kyuln wins again. He has talked the weaponsmith down to 20 gp for the metal bastard sword, so must only exchange 10,000 pounds of his rice for it.

Service: The services a character renders—from those of the unskilled laborers to those of the prized engineers—all have their asking price.

### Common Wages

| Title              | Daily  | Weekly       | Monthly |
|--------------------|--------|--------------|---------|
| <i>Military</i>    |        |              |         |
| Archer/artillerist | 1 bit  | 1 cp         | 4 cp    |
| Cavalry, heavy     | 3 bits | 2 cp, 5 bits | 1 sp    |

|                    |        |              |        |
|--------------------|--------|--------------|--------|
| Cavalry, light     | 1 bit  | 1 cp         | 4 cp   |
| Cavalry, medium    | 2 bits | 1 cp, 5 bits | 6 cp   |
| Engineer           | 5 cp   | 3 sp, 5 cp   | 15 sp  |
| Footman, heavy     | ½ bit  | 5 bits       | 2 cp   |
| Footman, irregular | -      | 1 bit        | 5 bits |
| Footman, light     | -      | 2 bits       | 1 cp   |
| Footman, militia   | -      | 1 bit        | 5 bits |
| Shieldbearer       | -      | 1 bit        | 5 bits |

#### Professional

|                 |        |              |      |
|-----------------|--------|--------------|------|
| Unskilled labor | -      | 2 bits       | 1 cp |
| Skilled labor*  | 1 bit  | 1 cp         | 4 cp |
| Classed labor** | 3 bits | 2 cp, 5 bits | 1 sp |

\*available only to characters who have a proficiency related to the job.

\*\*available only to characters who are being employed because of their class.

A character may receive payment for his services in other services, goods, or coins, depending upon the situation.

With both barter and service exchanges, the DM should make certain the goods or services exchanged are needed or desired. (Desert nomads need neither a barge nor a stonemason.)

### Starting Money

All PCs begin the game with a specific amount of money. The player should use this starting money to equip his character; campaign time need not be spent to “play out” these purchases unless the DM deems it important to his adventure.

The following table indicates how much money each character starts the campaign with, based on the character's class group. These figures are for starting 3rd-level characters; characters starting at 1st-level should divide the total by three. Characters generated as inactive members of the character tree also get starting money. The owning player may equip inactive characters at any time prior to using them as active characters.

# Money and Equipment



## Initial Character Funds

| Character Group | Die Range           |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Warrior         | 5d4 × 30 cp         |
| Wizard          | (1 d 4 + 1) × 30 cp |
| Rogue           | 2 d 6 × 30 cp       |
| Priest          | 3 d 6 × 30 cp       |
| Psionicist      | 3 d 4 × 30 cp       |

## Athasian Market: List of Provisions

### Weapons

The weapons commonly found in the brutal lands of Athas consist of obsidian, bone, wood-and sometimes even metal.

The following weapons, because they can be easily made without metal, can be purchased for one percent of their price in the *Player's Handbook* and used normally: blowguns (with barbed dart or needle), all bows, clubs, all crossbows, harpoons, javelins, a 11 lances, quarterstaves, scourges, slings (with sling stones), spears, staff slings, and whips.

The remaining weapons—because they can be constructed from a variety of materials—vary in cost, weight, damage, and hit probability: battle axes, all arrows, all quarrels, daggers or dirks, darts, footman's flails, footman's maces, footman's picks, hand or throwing axes, horseman's flails, horseman's maces, horseman's picks, knives, mancatchers, morning stars, all polearms, sickles, sling bullets, all swords, tridents, and warhammers. The table below indicates the percentage cost and weight of weapons, and modifiers to damage and hit probability for the stats in the *Player's Handbook*.

The arquebus is unavailable on Athas.

### Weapon Materials Table

| Material       | Cost | Wt.  | Dmg* | Hit Prob.** |
|----------------|------|------|------|-------------|
| metal          | 100% | 100% | -    | -           |
| bone           | 30%  | 50%  | - 1  | - 1         |
| stone/obsidian | 50%  | 75%  | - 1  | - 2         |
| wood           | 10%  | 50%  | - 2  | - 3         |

\*The damage modifier subtracts from the damage normally done by that weapon, with a minimum of one point.

\*\* this does not apply to missile weapons.

In the game and in text, such weapons should always be referred to with their material and make: wooden broadsword, bone sickle, metal dagger, and so forth. As well as adding flavor to battle scenes, this indication helps the DM keep track of what type of weapon is being used.

Nonmetal weapons detract from the wielder's hit probability as well, much in the same way a cursed weapon does. Note the hit probability reduction on the player's record sheet.

Nonmetal weapons can be enchanted. However, enchantment is cumulative with the weapon's hit probability modifier; in this case a -1 penalty. The net modifier for a *bone dagger* +2 is actually +1.

**Breaking Weapons:** Obsidian, bone, and wooden weapons are prone to breaking. Whenever a successful attack inflicts maximum damage, there is a 1-in-20 chance that the weapon will break, as per the following example:

Bruth is sent to the arena armed with a bone battle axe against three unarmed gith. In his first round, Bruth cleaves through the skull of his first opponent (makes a successful attack) and brings him down (rolls an 8 on his 1d8 for damage). Unfortunately, the shock of the blow splinters the bone of the axe head (Bruth's player rolls a 1 on 1d20 indicating weapon breakage), leaving him weaponless. Bruth's career in the arena may be brief.

### Armor

All forms of armor listed in the *Player's Handbook* are available in Dark Sun. They afford the same AC rating described there.

**Metal Armor in Dark Sun:** Two facts on Athas conspire to limit the use of metal armor: extreme heat and the high price of metal. A suit of field plate armor costs 2,000 gp on Athas, the equivalent of



## Money and Equipment

200,000 gp on other AD&D® campaign worlds. Simply put, a sorcerer-king can either purchase several suits of field plate or build a substantial addition to his city walls.

Likewise, the intense heat across Athas' barren surface makes metal armor an unpleasant experience, to say the least. In any daytime combat situation, a character wearing metal armor adds one to his THAC0 for every round of combat beyond the first and will collapse, exhausted from the heat, in a number of rounds equal to his Constitution score.

**Alternate Materials:** Many types of armor can be constructed without metal on Athas, using more readily available materials.

**Shields:** Shields are mostly constructed with layers of leather stretched over a wooden or bone frame and hardened. Effective shields can also be constructed of chitinous materials scavenged from dead insectoids. Though made of alternate materials, shields on Athas come in the typical varieties: bucklers and small, medium, or body shields.

**Leather Armor:** Perhaps the most common type of armor used on Athas, leather armor is shaped to the individual wearing it, and then hardened.

**Padded Armor:** As described in the *Player's Handbook*, this armor is made from heavy cloth and batting. Many Athasian warriors prefer padded armor woven from giants' hair.

**Hide Armor:** Hide armor on Athas is usually constructed from mekillot or braxat hide.

**Studded Leather, Ring Mail, Brigandine, and Scale Mail Armor:** These varieties of armor are constructed using pieces of bone or chitin.

**Chain, Splint, Banded, Bronze Plate, or Plate Mail; Field Plate and Full Plate Armor:** These types of armor must be made with metal components, making them both expensive and potentially deadly in the day's heat.

### New Equipment

The following equipment is generally available in populated sectors of Athas for the prices shown.

### Household Provisions

|                         |        |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Tun of water (250 gal.) | 1 sp   |
| Fire Kit                | 2 bits |

### Tack and Harness

#### Barding

---

|                   |        |         |
|-------------------|--------|---------|
| Inix, leather     | 35 sp  | 240 lb  |
| Inix, chitin      | 50 sp  | 400 lb  |
| Kank, leather     | 15 sp  | 70 lb   |
| Kank, chitin      | 35 sp  | 120 lb  |
| Mekillot, leather | 500 sp | 1000 lb |
| Mekillot, chitin  | 750 sp | 1600 lb |

### Transport

#### Chariot

---

|                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| one kank, one warrior    | 10 sp |
| two kank, two warrior    | 25 sp |
| four kank, three warrior | 50 sp |

#### Howdah

---

|               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| inix          | 1 sp  |
| inix, war     | 10 sp |
| mekillot      | 2 sp  |
| mekillot, war | 50 sp |

#### Wagon, open

---

|                       |       |
|-----------------------|-------|
| 1,000 pound capacity  | 10 cp |
| 2,500 pound capacity  | 20 cp |
| 5,000 pound capacity  | 30 cp |
| 10,000 pound capacity | 50 cp |

#### Wagon, enclosed

---

|                        |        |
|------------------------|--------|
| 1,000 pound capacity   | 15 cp  |
| 2,500 pound capacity   | 25 cp  |
| 5,000 pound capacity   | 40 cp  |
| 10,000 pound capacity  | 60 cp  |
| Wagon, armored caravan | 100 sp |

## Money and Equipment



### Animals

|           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Erdlu     | 10 cp |
| Inix      | 10 sp |
| Kank      |       |
| Trained   | 12 sp |
| Untrained | 5 sp  |
| Mekillot  | 20 sp |

### Equipment Descriptions

#### Household Provisions

**Tun of Water:** In most Athasian cities, water is drawn from a collective cistern maintained by the sorcerer-king and his templars. It is not at all uncommon for the price of water to increase dramatically during particularly dry periods or when the templars are attempting to extort more money from consumers.

### Weapons

|                    | Cost | Wt | Size | Type | Speed | Damage |       |
|--------------------|------|----|------|------|-------|--------|-------|
|                    |      |    |      |      |       | S-M    | L     |
| Chatkcha           | 1 cp | ½  | S    | S    | 4     | 1d6+2  | 1d4+1 |
| Impaler            | 4 cp | 5  | M    | P    | 5     | 1d8    | 1d8   |
| Polearm,<br>Gythka | 6 cp | 12 | L    | P/B  | 7     | 2d4    | 1d10  |
| Quabone            | 1 cp | 4  | M    | P/S  | 7     | 1d4    | 1d3   |
| Wrist Razor        | 1 sp | 1  | S    | S    | 2     | 1d6+1  | 1d4+1 |



## Money and Equipment

**Fire Kit:** Though flint is readily available, steel is scarce on Athas. The standard fire-starting kit therefore uses a bow and sticks rather than flint and steel.

### Tack and Harness

**Barding:** There are two types of barding for the various beasts of burden on Athas: leather and chitin. Leather barding is made with stiffened leather pads, often reinforced with bone or chitin, and joined together with cloth or soft leather straps. Leather barding affords the animal a -1 bonus to its AC. Chitin barding is made from plates of insectoid chitin and bone, fastened together with leather and cloth. Chitin barding affords the animal an AC bonus of -2. The two types of barding cannot be combined.

### Transportation

**Chariot:** A chariot is a lightly armored vehicle constructed of wood, chitin, and hardened leather, designed for riding and combat. The driver of the chariot must have either the teamster/freighter secondary skill or the charioteering proficiency. The chariot driver can attack with single-handed weapons while the vehicle is moving, but suffers a -4 penalty to all attack rolls. Others in the vehicle suffer no penalty to melee attack rolls, but have a -1 penalty to missile attack rolls while the chariot is moving. Those in a chariot have 50% cover from the front or sides, 25% cover from the flank or rear (consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for the exact effects of cover and concealment on combat). If one of the animals hitched to a multi-kank chariot dies or is maimed, the chariot's speed is reduced to  $\frac{1}{3}$  that of normal. The slain beast may also cause the chariot to crash, but the fallen animal can then be cut loose by survivors. Multiple deaths in the animal team bring the chariot to a halt.

**Howdah:** A howdah is a frame with seats designed to be mounted on the back of an inix or me-

killot. A normal howdah is made of a light wooden frame and has one seat for the animal's driver. Normal howdahs do not count against the carrying capacity of the animal, but the driver's weight does.

A war howdah is constructed of much sturdier materials, affording cover to those within. An inix war howdah weighs 150 pounds and can hold four fighters. A mekillot war howdah is a more elaborate affair, weighing 1,000 pounds. Within the mekillot war howdah's two levels 16 warriors may ride, four of which can fight to any one side at a given time. Soldiers in a war howdah can choose to have 25%, 50%, 75%, or 30% cover *and* concealment (consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for the exact effects of cover and concealment on combat).

Anyone riding in a howdah is considered to be at rest and shaded.

**Wagons, open:** An open wagon is little more than a wooden box on four wooden wheels. A 1,000-pound-capacity wagon requires a single kank to pull it. The 2,500- pound-and 5,000-pound-capacity wagons need teams of two and four kanks, respectively. The 10,000-pound-capacity requires a single mekillot to move. Inix are not used to pull wagons for the simple reason that their tails get in the way.

**Wagons, enclosed:** Enclosed wagons require the same animal power as similar-capacity open wagons. Items within enclosed wagons are little affected by weather. Some merchants and nomads convert enclosed wagons into living quarters. Individuals riding within enclosed wagons are considered at rest and shaded.

**Wagon, armored caravan:** An armored caravan wagon weighs 5,000 pounds and can carry up to 35,000 pounds more. The exact design of any particular armored caravan wagon can change from trip to trip. Artisans customize the interior for each journey, adding or taking away slave pens, expanding or removing enclosures, and so forth. In general, an armored war caravan can carry a cargo of 15,000 pounds of goods, plus have room for 50 fully armed warriors, 25 slaves in transit, and a handful



## Money and Equipment



of merchants, nobles, or other stately travelers. Soldiers in an armored caravan wagon can choose to have 25%, 50%, 75%, or 30% cover *and* concealment (consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for the exact effects of cover and concealment on combat).

While one mekillot can pull an armored caravan wagon, they are usually drawn by a team of two, to prevent the death of a mount stranding the wagon.

### Animals

**Erdlu:** Erdlus are herd beasts raised by many different cultures on Athas. These large, flightless birds stand up to seven feet tall and weigh around 200 pounds. Their omnivorous diet allows them to graze nearly anywhere and their hardy nature keeps them alive in harsh terrain. The price of a single erdlu can be as much as double that listed or as little as half, depending upon availability. Erdlu's eggs are also edible: one egg can fetch 3 bits.

**Inix:** An inix is a large lizard animal that grows to as much as 16 feet long. Each can carry up to 2000 pounds. Though herbivorous by nature, inix are vicious combatants, attacking with both tail and bite. Inix trained for riding are also trained not to fight while mounted, for no rider could manage to keep his seat while an inix thrashed its mighty tail.

Inix can be fitted with a howdah. Half-giants use them as individual mounts. Inix cannot generally pull wagons because of their lengthy tails.

**Kank:** Kanks serve as both herd animals and beasts of burden. They are large insectoids, 4 feet high and 8 feet long, weighing around 400 pounds. As herd animals, kanks are durable and easily tended. Kanks are not raised for their meat, which becomes foul-smelling as soon as they die. Instead, they are raised for honey globules produced on their bellies. A single honey globule can bring 4 bits.

As riding beasts, kanks provide effective transportation for a single character (except for half-giants, who use inix for the same purpose). A kank can carry up to 400 pounds. Kanks used as riding

animals also require harnesses and saddles. The tack and harness prices given in the *Player's Handbook* for horses work well for kanks also.

Kanks can be hitched to wagons individually or in teams. A character needs the teamster/freighter secondary skill or the animal handling proficiency to effectively operate teams of kanks.

**Mekillot:** A mekillot is an enormous G-ton lizard, used as a beast of burden. Each one can carry 8,000 pounds or pull up to 40,000 pounds behind it. Mekillots are hard to control and sometimes turn on their handlers.

A mekillot can be fitted with a pack howdah or a war howdah, carrying several men into combat.

### Weapons

**Chatkcha:** This thri-kreen throwing weapon is common among the steppes tribes. It is a crystal wedge that can be thrown up to 30 yards and, due to its spin and affect upon the air, still return to the thrower if it misses the target.

**Gythka:** This thri-kreen polearm has wicked blades at either end. The weapon's thick shaft allows it to be used like a quarterstaff against similarly armed opponents.

**Impaler:** An impaler is a weapon developed for arena combat. It has a single shaft about 4 feet long with a pair of long pointed blades, splitting to each side and forming deadly "T" The weapon can be swung horizontally or vertically, over the head.

**Quabone:** This weapon is constructed from four identical shanks of bone, lashed together to form a radially symmetrical, sword-length rod. With its lightness and crudely sharpened end, the quabone is a fairly ineffective weapon. The quabone is used in arena situations where combat is intended to draw out for a long period of time.

**Wrist Razor:** Wrist razors consist of a trio of blades that protrude from a heavy arm band. The razors project out over the back of the hand, are extremely sharp, and can be up to 6 inches long. Wrist razors can be worn on one or both forearms.

## Chapter 7: Magic

The sources of magical energy on Athas are very different from those in other AD&D® campaign worlds. Athas is a world without deities, where clerics worship the elemental powers themselves. Despite the brutality that seems infused in its soil, Athas is a fragile world, where the very existence of wizardly magic can disrupt and destroy the land's ability to support life.

### Priestly Magic

The priests of Dark Sun worship the beings that inhabit the elemental planes: those of earth, air, fire, and water. In Dark Sun campaigns, priest spells fall into four spheres associated with those four elemental planes, and a separate Sphere of the Cosmos. This last sphere is by far the largest, though the other four hold generally more powerful, more specialized spells. All priests on Athas thus draw magical energy (the energy with which they cast spells) from the elemental planes.

#### Sphere of Earth

Magical Stone (1st)  
Dust Devil (2nd)  
Meld Into Stone (3rd)  
Stone Shape (3rd)  
Conjure Elemental (Earth) (5th)  
Spike Stones (5th)  
Transmute Rock to Mud (5th)  
Stone Tell (6th)  
Transmute Water to Dust (6th)  
Animate Rock (7th)  
Earthquake (7th)  
Transmute Metal to Wood (7th)

#### Sphere of Air

Dust Devil (2nd)  
Call Lightning (3rd)  
Control Temperature, 10' Radius (4th)  
Protection From Lightning (4th)  
Air Walk (5th)

Conjure Elemental (Air) (5th)  
Control Winds (5th)  
Insect Plague (5th)  
Plane Shift (5th)  
Aerial Servant (6th)  
Weather Summoning (6th)  
Astral Spell (7th)  
Control Weather (7th)  
Wind Walk (7th)

#### Sphere of Fire

Endure Heat/Endure Cold (1st)  
Faerie Fire (1st)  
Fire Trap (2nd)  
Flame Blade (2nd)  
Heat Metal (2nd)  
Produce Flame (2nd)  
Resist Fire/Resist Cold (2nd)  
Flame Walk (3rd)  
Protection From Fire (3rd)  
Pyrotechnics (3rd)  
Produce Fire (4th)  
Conjure Elemental (Fire) (5th)  
Flame Strike (5th)  
Wall of Fire (5th)  
Fire Seeds (6th)  
Chariot of Sustarre (7th)  
Fire Storm (7th)

#### Sphere of Water

Create Water (1st)  
Purify Food & Drink (1st)  
Create Food & Water (3rd)  
Water Breathing (3rd)  
Water Walk (3rd)  
Lower Water (4th)  
Reflecting Pool (4th)  
Conjure Elemental (Water) (5th)  
Magic Font (5th)  
Part Water (6th)  
Transmute Water to Dust (6th)





## Magic

### Sphere of the Cosmos

- Animal Friendship (1st)
- Bless (1st)
- Combine (1st)
- Command (1st)
- Cure Light Wounds (1st)
- Detect Evil (1st)
- Detect Magic (1st)
- Detect Poison (1st)
- Detect Snares & Pits (1st)
- Entangle (1st)
- Invisibility to Animals (1st)
- Invisibility to Undead (1st)
- Light (1st)
- Locate Animals or Plants (1st)
- Pass Without Trace (1st)
- Protection From Evil (1st)
- Remove Fear (1st)
- Sanctuary (1st)
- Shillelagh (1st)
- Aid (2nd)
- Augury (2nd)
- Barkskin (2nd)
- Chant (2nd)
- Charm Person or Mammal (2nd)
- Detect Charm (2nd)
- Enthrall (2nd)
- Find Traps (2nd)
- Goodberry (2nd)
- Hold Person (2nd)
- Know Alignment (2nd)
- Messenger (2nd)
- Obscurement (2nd)
- Silence, 15' Radius (2nd)
- Slow Poison (2nd)
- Snake Charm (2nd)
- Speak With Animals (2nd)
- Spiritual Hammer (2nd)
- Trip (2nd)
- Warp Wood (2nd)
- Withdraw (2nd)
- Wyvern Watch (2nd)
- Animate Dead (3rd)
- Continual Light (3rd)
- Cure Blindness or Deafness (3rd)
- Cure Disease (3rd)
- Dispel Magic (3rd)
- Feign Death (3rd)
- Glyph of Warding (3rd)
- Hold Animal (3rd)
- Locate Object (3rd)
- Magical Vestment (3rd)
- Negative Plane Protection (3rd)
- Plant Growth (3rd)
- Prayer (3rd)
- Remove Curse (3rd)
- Remove Paralysis (3rd)
- Snare (3rd)
- Speak With Dead (3rd)
- Spike Growth (3rd)
- Starshine (3rd)
- Summon Insects (3rd)
- Tee (3rd)
- Abjure (4th)
- Animal Summoning 1 (4th)
- Call Woodland Beings (4th)
- Cloak of Bravery (4th)
- Cure Serious Wounds (4th)
- Detect Lie (4th)
- Divination (4th)
- Free Action (4th)
- Giant Insect (4th)
- Hallucinatory Forest (4th)
- Hold Plant (4th)
- Imbue With Spell Ability (4th)
- Neutralize Poison (4th)
- Plant Door (4th)
- Protection From Evil, 10' Radius (4th)
- Repel Insects (4th)
- Speak With Plants (4th)
- Spell Immunity (4th)
- Sticks to Snakes (4th)
- Tongues (4th)
- Animal Growth (5th)



Animal Summoning II (5th)  
 Anti-Plant Shell (5th)  
 Atonement (5th)  
 Commune (5th)  
 Commune With Nature (5th)  
 Cure Critical Wounds (5th)  
 Dispel Evil (5th)  
 Moonbeam (5th)  
 Pass Plant (5th)  
 Quest (5th)  
 Rainbow (5th)  
 Raise Dead (5th)  
 True Seeing (5th)  
 Animal Summoning III (6th)  
 Animate Object (6th)  
 Anti-Animal Shell (6th)  
 Blade Barrier (6th)  
 Conjure Animals (6th)  
 Create Tree of Life (6th)  
 Find the Path (6th)  
 Heal (6th)  
 Heroes' Feast (6th)  
 Liveoak (6th)  
 Speak With Monsters (6th)  
 Transport Via Plants (6th)  
 Turn Wood (6th)  
 Wall of Thorns (6th)  
 Word of Recall (6th)  
 Changestaff (7th)  
 Confusion (7th)  
 Creeping Doom (7th)  
 Exaction (7th)  
 Gate (7th)  
 Holy Word (7th)  
 Regenerate (7th)  
 Reincarnate (7th)  
 Restoration (7th)  
 Resurrection (7th)  
 Succor (7th)  
 Sunray (7th)  
 Symbol (7th)

Clerics have major access to the sphere of the element they worship, plus minor access to the Sphere of the Cosmos. Templars have major access to all spheres, but gain spells more slowly.

There are no deities in Dark Sun. Those spells that indicate some contact with a deity instead reflect contact with a powerful being of the elemental planes.

## Wizardly Magic

Wizards draw their magical energies from the living things and life-giving elements around them. Preservers cast spells in harmony with nature, using their magic so as to return to the land what they take from it. Defilers care nothing for such harmony and damage the land with every spell they cast.

## Defiling

Defilers wield magic with no concern for their dying world: Indeed, defilers are much to blame for Athas's current state. With each spell they cast, defilers draw magical energy from the life force of plants in the vicinity and channel it to their own selfish ends.

Even the sorcerer-kings, however, are not the most dread users of defiler magic: the great dragon's defiler magic is so powerful that it destroys living animals as well. All magic cast by defilers up to 20th level, including all 1st through 9th level spells, destroys plant life only. Any creatures in the area, however, suffer great pain.

**Casting Defiler Spells:** Spells cast by defilers use all the necessary verbal, somatic, and material components. The absence of any of these precludes the successful casting of the spell. The range, duration, casting time, area of effect, and saving throws remain unchanged.

When a defiler casts a spell, all vegetation in a sphere around him turns to ash. The radius of that sphere depends upon two things: the abundance of vegetation in the area, and the level of the spell cast.



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### Defiler Magical Destruction Table

| Terrain Type   | Spell Level |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------------|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|                | 1           | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |
| Stony Barrens  | 10          | 14 | 17 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 |
| Sandy Wastes   | 10          | 14 | 17 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 |
| Rocky Badlands | 10          | 14 | 17 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 |
| Salt Flats     | 10          | 14 | 17 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 |
| Boulder Fields | 10          | 14 | 17 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 |
| Silt Sea       | 10          | 14 | 17 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 |
| Mountains      | 10          | 14 | 17 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 |
| Scrub Plains   | 3           | 4  | 4  | 5  | 5  | 5  | 5  | 6  | 6  |
| Verdant Belts  | 2           | 2  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 4  |
| Forest         | 1           | 1  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 3  |

The number shown is the radius, in yards, around the defiler where all vegetation is turned to ash. The effect is instantaneous with the casting of the spell.

Note that these numbers adjust for specific situations. For example, in a city, the mud pits might have no more vegetation than the stony barrens, while the gardens of the sorcerer-king will be equal to a teeming forest.

#### *Casting Multiple Spells from the Same Location:*

If a defiler casts more than one spell from the same location, the radius of destroyed vegetation expands around him. Consult the Defiler Magical Destruction Table for the highest level spell cast from that location, then add one yard for every other spell cast. (Spells equal to the highest level spell are treated as additional spells).

For example, the defiler Grifyan casts a *lightning bolt*, a 3rd-level spell, while in the scrub plains. The area of ash around him will be 4 yards. In the next round, he casts a *magic missile* spell, expanding the radius of ash by 1 yard, bringing the total of burnt earth to 5 yards. In the third round, Grifyan decides to unleash an *advanced illusion*, a 5th-level spell. Since this is the highest-level spell cast from this location, the area of ash is recalculated; 5 yards for the 5th-level spell, plus 1 yard each for the two lower-level spells cast, for a total radius of ash of 7 yards.



**Effects on Living Creatures:** Though only plants are destroyed within the radius, living creatures are caused great pain. Any being in the radius of a defiler's magic suffers an immediate initiative modifier penalty equal to the level of the defiler spell cast. No matter how high the resulting initiative roll, though, the pain can never keep a character from performing an action during a round. The initiative penalty only postpones when the action occurs.

**Ash:** The ash created by defiler magic is black and grey, completely devoid of life or life-giving elements. Nothing will grow in an area of ash for one year. The ash itself is very light and usually blows away, leaving behind a lifeless, circular scar on the ground. Even with the ash gone, though, the defiler's magic has leached all life-giving nutrients from the soil, so that an area defiled may take many years to recover life, if it ever does.

## Trees of Life

A *tree of life* is a mighty and magical tree, enchanted by a powerful priest or wizard. The magical life forces of *trees of life* make them virtually eternal. The greatest *trees of life* are ancient: many solitary trees predate the villages around them and others stand in entire groves, a quiet testimony to the great wizards of a bygone age. Present-day priests and wizards still create new trees to enrich the world or, in the case of the defilers, to pervert their powerful life forces to further their destructive, evil ambitions.

A *tree of life* is, in essence, a living magical item. It stores and channels energies from all four elemental planes. Thus, though wizards can create a *tree of life*, only clerics and druids can tap its special powers.

**Special Powers:** Any cleric or druid in contact with a *tree of life* receives from the tree four spells, each of which can be cast once per day. The spells gained are *heal*, *augury*, *divination*, and *magic font*.

**Destroying a Tree of Life:** A *tree of life* has two distinct parts: its physical form and its life force.

The stump, branches, roots, or leaves of a *tree of*

*life* make up its physical form, and are not inherently magical. The same things that would destroy a normal tree will destroy the physical form of a *tree of life* (e.g., chopping it down, burning it) with one exception. Neither climate nor terrain effect a *tree of life*. One will flourish in the middle of the desert or on a rocky mountain face, regardless of drought, severe weather, natural lightning, earthquakes, and so forth.

Destroying the tree's life force is much more difficult. A *tree of life*, at any stage of growth (even sprout) has 100 hit points (10 levels of 10 hit points each) that can only be affected by life-draining magic. The wizard spells *vampiric touch*, *enervation*, *trap the soul*, and *energy drain* can each drain hit points; *death spell*, *finger of death*, *limited wish*, and *raze* can each snuff out 3 levels of the target tree; and a *wish* slays the tree. The priest spells that affect a tree's life force are *raise dead* (and its reverse *slay living*), *restoration* (and its reverse, *energy drain*), and *resurrection* (and its reverse, *destruction*). Undead creatures that have an energy drain attack can affect the life force of a *tree of life*.

Defiler magic also affects a tree's life force. Every level of defiler magic cast within 100 yards of a *tree of life* drains one level of life force from the tree. This negates the effect the spell would otherwise have on surrounding vegetation.

The life force of a *tree of life* is completely snuffed if it falls below zero levels or hit points. The life force will not regenerate if either of these numbers falls below zero, in which case both the life force and the physical form of the tree die.

**Regeneration:** Both a *tree of life's* physical form and its life force regenerate. If the tree's physical form is damaged or destroyed, it will grow back, to full size. The tree will regrow at a rate of one quarter of its full size per week. A sprout will appear in one day, grown to a sapling in one week. It will grow to a young tree in two week, then to a full-sized adult tree in three. After four week, the *tree of life* will revert to its true form: an ancient and mighty tree. No matter how many times the physical form of the tree is destroyed,



## Magic

it will always grow back in four weeks.

The life force of a *tree of life* regenerates one level (10 hit points) per hour. It regenerates even if the life force reaches zero points, but not if it goes below zero.

*Trees of life* in the World of Athas: Though originally created by wizards to combat the destruction of nature, trees of life are now heavily exploited by defilers, who use the trees' powerful life forces to charge their defiling spells. Sorcerer-kings often have large gardens within their cities, even within their palaces, where groves of *trees of life* are tended and maintained. Thus, defilers can exercise evil magic from their citadels without decimating the cities below—a desperate measure to keep their tiny verdant belts as plentiful as possible.

### Magical Items

Use of magical items never causes a defiling effect on the surrounding grounds. However, defilers who create magical items do cause destruction at the time of manufacture.

**Potions and Oils:** On Athas, potions are drawn from the juices of fruits. Rules on how to use these fruits appear in Chapter 10: Treasure.

**Scrolls:** Scrolls found as part of a treasure will always be papyrus and will lack a case of any kind, unless otherwise noted. As such, these delicate scrolls often do not survive the combat in which they are won. The spells on a scroll can be either wizard or priest, as indicated in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and should be determined using the random spell lists in Appendix 1 of this book.

The process of setting a spell to a scroll inherently strips the spell of defiler or preserver characteristics. Thus, spells cast from scrolls do not cause defiler destruction.

**Rings, Rods, Staves, Wands, and Miscellaneous Magic:** These items function just as described in the *DMG*. Such items rarely consist of metal, but rather are fashioned from the finest alternate materials available.

Substitute the following table

for its counterpart in Appendix 2 of the *DMG*.

### ARMOR TYPE

| d20 Roll | Armor           |
|----------|-----------------|
| 1        | Brigandine      |
| 2-5      | Hide            |
| 6-8      | Leather         |
| 9        | Padded          |
| 10       | Ring Mail       |
| 11-12    | Scale Mail      |
| 13-17    | Shield          |
| 18       | Studded Leather |
| 17       | Metal Armor     |
| 20       | Special         |

### METAL ARMOR

| d100 roll | Armor             |
|-----------|-------------------|
| 01-15     | Banded Mail       |
| 16-23     | Bronze Plate Mail |
| 24-45     | Chain Mail        |
| 46-50     | Field Plate       |
| 51-55     | Full Plate        |
| 56-65     | Plate Mail        |
| 66-75     | Splint Mail       |
| 76-99     | Metal Shield      |
| 00        | Special           |

Magical adjustment to Armor Class is determined normally. Special armor is also determined normally, but elven chain mail does not exist on Athas; reroll if necessary.

**Weapons:** All magical weapons found as part of a treasure are metal or have metal components. Non-metal weapons can be enchanted as well, but magical adjustments must still take into account the inherently poorer quality of the material used. Weapons are determined as in the *DMG*. Weapons can have intelligence, and those with intelligence 15 or greater can have a psionic wild talent (25% chance).



# Chapter 8: Experience

In the DARK SUN™ game world, substantial experience-point awards are made available to characters, based not only on their defeat of monsters, but also on their roleplaying use of racial and class special abilities. These latter awards help promote better roleplaying of distinctions between races and classes. Experience for defeating monsters is divided normally among party members in a DARK SUN campaign and individual awards should be considered for every character based on the following guidelines.

## Individual Class Awards

| <b>Action</b>   | <b>Awards</b>      |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>All Warriors:</b><br>Per Hit Die of creature defeated        | 10 XP/level        |
| <b>Fighter:</b><br>Stand commanded in combat or war             | 50 XP/day          |
| Construction of defense or war machines                         | 100 XP/day         |
| <b>Gladiator:</b><br>Per Hit Die of creature defeated in arena* | 10 XP/level        |
| <b>Ranger:</b><br>Spells cast                                   | 50 XP/spell level  |
| Track, hide, or move silently                                   | 100 XP             |
| Use followers in crisis   | 100 XP             |
| <b>All Wizards:</b><br>Spells cast to defeat foes or problems   | 50 XP/spell level  |
| Spells successfully researched                                  | 500 XP/spell level |
| Potion, scroll, or magical item made                            | XP value           |

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>Preserver:</b><br>Maintain spell-casting secrecy                  | 50 XP/spell level  |
| <b>Defiler:</b><br>Spells cast for sorcerer-king                     | 25 XP/spell level  |
| <b>All Priests:</b><br>Per use of granted power                      | 100 XP             |
| Spells cast  | 100 XP/spell level |
| Potion or scroll made  | XP value           |
| Permanent magical item made  | XP value           |
| <b>Cleric:</b><br>Use element creatively                             | 100 XP             |
| <b>Druid:</b><br>Defeat defiler                                      | 200 XP/level       |
| <b>Templar:</b><br>Profit by accusing, judging, or pardoning freeman | 150 XP             |
| Profit by accusing, judging, or pardoning noble                      | 500 XP             |
| Profit by accusing, judging, or pardoning templar                    | 750 XP             |
| Advance sorcerer-king's goals  | 100-1,000 XP       |
| <b>All Rogues:</b><br>Special ability successfully used              | 200 XP             |
| Treasure obtained  | 2 XP/cp value      |
| Hit Die of creatures defeated  | 5 XP/level         |
| <b>Thief:</b><br>Treasure obtained for patron**                      | 4 XP/cp value      |
| <b>Bard:</b><br>Effective use of poison                              | 100 XP/level       |



## Experience

### Psionicist:

|  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Psionics used to defeat foe or problem | 10 XP/PSP                   |
| Psionics used to avoid combat          | 15 XP/PSP                   |
| Psionic opponent defeated              | 100 XP/level<br>or Hit Dice |
| Create psionic item                    | 500 XP x level              |

\*For gladiators, this award only applies to creatures slain without outside aid. The gladiator gets no experience points for being part of a group kill. The 10 XP per level, however, are added to the normal allotment for kills, representing the gladiator's subsequent glory.

\*\*The thief adds this XP allotment to the rogue gain for treasure obtained.

### Individual Race Awards

#### Dwarf:

|                       |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Pursue present focus  | 20 XP/day   |
| Ignore present focus  | -100 XP/day |
| Complete major focus* | 5,000 XP    |

#### Elf:

|                                    |            |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Subtle test of trust               | 20 XP      |
| Life-threatening test of trust     | 250 XP     |
| Refuse animal or magical transport | 50 XP      |
| Continuous run                     | 10 XP/mile |

#### Half-elf:

|                                 |        |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Observe human or elven custom   | 50 XP  |
| Better a human or elf in custom | 250 XP |

#### Half-giant:

|                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Imitate charismatic friend    | 20 XP/day |
| Shift alignment per influence | 50 XP     |

#### Halfling:

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Practice another race's custom | 50 XP  |
| Aid another halfling           | 100 XP |

### Mul:

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| Heavy exertion | 50 XP/12 hours |
|----------------|----------------|

### Thri-kreen:

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Per kill brought back for food | 50 XP  |
| Per creature paralyzed         | 100 XP |
| Per missile dodged             | 10 XP  |

\*Dwarves do not consider any mission a major focus unless it lasts at least a year.

### Individual Class Awards

**Fighter:** The fighter's greatest skills lie in organized mass warfare; conducting himself well during such times will gain him additional experience points. Awards for commanding followers only apply during critical situations—even during war, fighters do not gain experience points for spending weeks camped in reserve.

**Gladiator:** The intensity of arena combat sharpens the senses, tests the courage, and magnifies the skills of gladiators. The award for combat within the arena therefore adds to the points given for defeating a creature as a warrior. The arena experience bonus only applies to gladiators.

**Ranger:** Among the warrior class, rangers have the most unique abilities. Casting clerical spells and employing thieflike qualities provides experience awards. Awards or using followers do not, however, apply to everyday applications; only use of followers in life-threatening situations gain the ranger experience. DMs should not reward cowardly or greedy use of followers.

**Preserver:** Preservers benefit from the normal wizard experience point bonuses. However, when trying to maintain spell-casting secrecy, success wins for the preserver an additional bonus. Because use of magic is often illegal—or at least discouraged—preservers who try to conceal their magic use deserve the listed XP bonus.

**Defiler:** A defiler also receives the bonuses listed for all wizards. When carrying out the business of



the sorcerer-king, defilers receive an additional experience point award for spells cast. The sorcerer-kings send their defilers out into the countryside to maintain order and terror; sorcerer-kings who notice a successful underling send him additional support.

**Cleric:** The cleric's granted powers can be very powerful, and so provide their own reward. With them, a cleric and his party should be able to defeat greater foes and, therefore, get greater group experience awards. There is consequently no special experience award for clerics; the priest awards suffice.

However, should a cleric use his granted powers in an original way, employing his particular element with finesse and flair to overcome an obstacle, the DM may wish to grant these bonus experience points.

**Druid:** The priest awards are generally adequate to give druid characters the experience they deserve. However, defeat of their arch-enemies, defilers, warrants a class experience award in addition to group experience.

**Templar:** The conniving ways of the templar demand that he abuse his position for his own ends. The class awards listed separately for the templar reward the use of that deceit.

DMs should make certain that PC templars make enemies every time an accusation or judgement is made. Victimizing a freeman brings few or low-powered enemies. Nobles command greater respect and friendship, so a templar who accuses or judges a member of the aristocracy may well expect foes in high places. Assassination is a common end for templars.

Similarly, pardoning individuals can also gain a templar valuable friends.

Note that accusations, judgements, and pardons only give a templar experience when these acts further the templar's ends. Pardoning an important noble for a bribe or favor or accusing a stone merchant to temporarily get him out of the way will earn the templar experience. Simply accusing, judging,

and pardoning the general population at random—though perfectly acceptable to the sorcerer-kings—won't gain any experience for the templar.

Pleasing the sorcerer-king is always a boon for a templar. The sorcerer-king grants him special attention and favors that manifest themselves as an experience point bonus.

**Rogues:** Note that rogues all gain experience points per *ceramic* piece of treasure obtained, not per gold piece. This system only works if the DM appropriately reduces the amount of treasure in DARK SUN™ campaigns (see Chapter 10: Treasure and Chapter 6: Money and Equipment).

**Thief:** A thief in the employ of a patron generally does not get to keep his prizes. He does, however, gain an addition 4 XP award per cp taken, making such tasks worth a total of 6 XP per cp.

**Bard:** Every use of poison gains the bard the experience point bonus given to all rogues for successful use of an ability (200 XP). However, bards also get points based on the level of the victim. Note that poisons can be used for many things: to weaken, to sicken, to temporarily incapacitate. Rogues don't necessarily always kill victims with their poisons.

## Individual Race Awards

Good roleplaying of the player character races in DARK SUN brings with it substantial experience point awards. Conversely, poor roleplaying brings drastic penalties, regardless of individual class awards.

Judgement of good roleplaying ultimately lies with the DM, so he must be familiar with all the nuances of the Athasian player character races. Players should be careful never to forget the peculiarities of their character's race, and should apply these to all the roleplaying situations they can. The lines of communication between the DM and the players should be clear to allow good roleplaying and to emphasize the unique nature of Dark Sun campaigns.

**Dwarf:** A dwarf's roleplaying revolves around his focus. The focus of a player character dwarf should



## Experience

be agreed upon by the player and the DM. Examples of dwarf foci range from the broad (e.g., construction of a temple, protection of a village, quest for a lost family member) to the narrow (e.g., journey from one city-state to another, escort a caravan, explore a half-buried ruin). The pursuit of a relevant mission is perfectly acceptable, but relevance must be agreed upon in advance by both the player and the DM. Dwarves rarely shift focus drastically before a project is completed, and only in the face of exceptional circumstances (e.g., imminent war, assassination of a brother, dragon attack on the area). Again, these exceptional circumstances must be agreed upon in advance by both the player and DM.

**Elf:** An elf's roleplaying revolves around his self-reliance and relationships with outsiders. Outsiders include anyone not of the elf's tribe—even other elves. Thus, an elf on Athas should not wish to gain friendship and trust with every character he meets; on the contrary, he tests the trustworthiness of outsiders who display some redeeming characteristics (redeeming to an elf, that is). Elves also perform such tests on outsiders who try to befriend them. Even PCs should put outsiders to tests of trust or loyalty whenever possible rather than trust them from the onset just "because they're other player characters." The trust of an elf is not easily earned.

**Subtle tests of trust include the following:**

- entrusting an outsider with a confidential piece of information,
- leaving a valuable item out in the open, in clear view, to see if the outsider takes it,
- arranging a secret rendezvous, then making sure the outsider shows up in the right place and on time,
- asking the outsider to deliver a message or item.

**Life-threatening tests of trust include the following:**

- letting oneself get captured by gith to see if the

outsider attempts a rescue (this is a favorite among elves of the stony barrens),

- faking unconsciousness after a battle to see what care the outsider provides,
- making certain part of the water supply is lost on a cross-desert journey, then seeing if he gets a fair share of what's left,
- challenging a particularly deadly enemy to see if the outsider stands with him or flees.

An elf will also recognize displays of trust and loyalty that are not planned in advance. If an outsider fails one or more tests of trust, an elf player character should not consider him a friend and should never retest him. However, if a series of tests are passed, the elf player character can declare the outsider a friend—no further tests will be necessary unless the friend severely breaks that trust.

With regards to self-reliance, elves never take animal transport unless they have been too injured to run. Elf player characters should use running as their chief means of transport.

**Half-elf:** Seeking acceptance among humans and elves is important to every half-elf, though they will vehemently deny it. Simply observing a local custom of a human or elven community he is visiting gives a half-elf PC an experience point award. These customs are usually very simple, such as drinking the local ale with the elven chieftain or participating in a human wedding ritual. Such opportunities come up rather frequently when a half-elf character comes upon a new human or elven community. Experience point awards, therefore, should be received the first time the half-elf performs a particular custom.

In extreme cases, a local custom may take the form of a contest or competition. If the half-elf character can get involved and perform better than any *one* of the humans or elves also participating, he receives the experience point award listed. If he does better than *all* of the humans or elves involved, he gains double that award. Examples of such contests



are archery contests, psionic strength games, artistic competitions, and animal training.

Winning such half-elf awards will entail a great deal of roleplaying; if the player makes the effort, he should be rewarded.

**Half-Giant:** Adopting the lifestyles of others gives a half-giant purpose. As a player character, a half-giant should seek out the most charismatic member of the party and imitate his racial and class customs. When he does so, he will gain an experience point bonus.

Sometimes a particularly charismatic nonplayer character may attract the attention of a player character half-giant. The half-giant character might, for a time, even switch sides in an adventure, during which time he should get his experience point bonus.

When a half-giant character shifts his alignment according to the influences he is experiencing in the campaign, the DM should give him the experience point bonus listed. This can be earned every time the half-giant properly shifts alignment and roleplays that shift act accordingly, but no more than once per day.

**Halfling:** Their curiosity and open-mindedness demand that halflings experiment with the customs of other races. When given the opportunity to do so, no matter how trivial the custom, the halfling gains an experience award bonus. This bonus includes everything from drinking from a caravan master's ceremonial cup for luck to hunting wild erdlus with the elf warriors. The DM should grant the award only once per custom observed, regardless of repetition.

Halflings are honor bound to aid one another when in need. This award should only be handed out when there is a danger of injury or loss of life to the aiding halfling.

**Mul:** A mul's ability to exert himself over long periods of time can earn him an experience point award. Each 12 hours beyond the first 12 that a mul exerts himself (such as carrying a wounded party member, keeping watch, etc.) merits the listed

award. Note that the exertion must be necessary to the adventure, a judgement subject to the DM's approval.

**Thri-kreen:** A thri-kreen's natural combat abilities are formidable and shouldn't be overlooked in favor of human tactics. A player whose thri-kreen uses natural combat abilities will gain the awards listed. Again, instances must be relevant to the adventure to warrant an award.

Each creature slain and taken back to a camp or nest for food also warrants an experience point award; the Hit Dice or relative toughness of the creature has no effect on the award.





## Chapter 9: Combat

Athas is a violent world: those who wish to survive must fight, and only those who fight well survive. PCs will find themselves battling a lone monster in the desolate seas of sand, a polished gladiator in the roaring arenas, or legions of combatants in a full-scale war.

### Arena Combats

Every major city on Athas has an arena for holding gladiatorial games. The sorcerer-kings use the games to entertain their slave and noble populations and to hold barbaric executions and trials by combat. On Athas, life is cheap and the champions of the arenas are the popular folk-heroes of the age.

Player characters may well find themselves thrust into the arena as prisoners or gladiators. Success can mean great things; failure means certain death. More powerful player characters may become champions or may themselves own entire stables of gladiators.

The customs of every arena are unique, but some generalities can be drawn about the various matches made and the treatment of slaves bound for the arena floor

**Games:** All arenas feature spectacles that pit gladiatorial slaves against each other or against ferocious beasts. Wagering on these games is the sport of sorcerer-kings, nobles, merchants, and peasants alike.

**Matinee:** Matinees feature very simple combats, pitting inexperienced gladiators or prisoners against each other in struggles to the death. Matinee warriors are never well armed or armored. Combatants who do well in matinee games sometimes rise to higher contests or are traded from house to house. At times, the sorcerer-king, master of the games, uses matinees for simple executions, as well. Matinees whet the spectators' appetites for more skilled games to come.

**Grudge Match:** Gladiators who have met before and survived are often called upon to fight again. Wagering on grudge matches is especially heavy.

Most often, grudge matches aren't fought to the death, only to severe injury; thus the combatants may fight again.

**Trial by Combat:** Many people accused of crimes by the sorcerer-king or his templars receive the right to trial by combat. Unfortunately for the accused, the sorcerer-king chooses whom the accused will fight, picking from among his best gladiators. Death is tantamount to a confession of guilt. Those who win gain their freedom, but are often accused and imprisoned again unless they flee the city.

**Matched Pairs:** Many stables present pairs of gladiators to fight side-by-side. Pairs are trained together and selected to complement each others' skills.

**Bestial Combat:** Gladiators and prisoners are often sent into the arena against savage beasts. The sorcerer-kings sponsor expeditions to capture wild animals, or buy them from the many caravans that come to their cities. The crowd finds these bloody affairs particularly enjoyable.

**Test of Champions:** A test of a champion is often the culmination of a day's gladiatorial games. A popular and powerful gladiator is selected to face a series of unusual tests. They may be as simple as fighting several demihuman or animal opponents at once or more elaborate contests against magical or psionic opponents in a maze of walls assembled just for the occasion.

**Advanced Games:** Most cities have team games that are popular with their audiences, but make no sense to those from outside the city. The rules are complicated and deadly, involving dozens of gladiators at a time.

**Stables:** Most noble and merchant houses have stables of slaves. These slaves combat each other as well as the gladiators, criminals, wild animals, and intelligent animals sponsored by the sorcerer-king, himself.

Typical stables of slaves have between 10 and 100 potential arena combatants. The sponsoring noble house provides the slaves with adequate food, cloth-



ing, and housing—nobles want their investments to pay off, so gladiatorial slaves seldom want for the necessities of life. The slaves are trained for 12 hours virtually every day in the courtyards of the noble's estate, overseen by armed guards and their instructors.

Every slave in a stable receives minimal training in armed and unarmed combat before being sent to his first matches. Those who show promise (and who survive the dangerous early days of their careers) are further trained in specialized combat techniques. This training emphasizes skilled unarmed combat, raw endurance, and specialization in arena weapons such as the trident, quabone, and net. Slaves who have survived several matches and undergone this more extensive training are considered gladiators (levels 1 through 4, usually) and are the mainstay of the stables' arena warriors.

Every stable has its champion or champions. A champion is a gladiator of level 5 through 20, the most experienced warrior in the stable. When a single arena hosts multiple high-level gladiators, rivalries can develop. Usually, rivalries between champions within a single stable are not allowed—one stable will not arrange a match between two of its own, no matter how fierce the rivalry. The champion of a stable has performed well in all the matches described above and has gained the attention of every other noble house.

**Wagering:** Bets between spectators run rampant during the games. Noble houses and the sorcerering himself cover all wagers against their own gladiators, setting odds based on the gladiators involved and the amount of wagering on each side. The rich very often challenge each other with enormous bets, hoping to wipe out another noble house with the outcome of a single contest.

When player characters want to wager on gladiatorial games, the DM may handle it in one of two ways. If all players agree, they can roll up the gladiators in question and play the match out themselves. Otherwise, the DM must determine the outcome randomly. The odds on any particular contest will





## Combat

vary, but a player character can rarely do more than double or triple his original bet.

**Trading of Gladiators:** Gladiators are often traded or sold to other houses. Of course, subterfuge and intrigue run wild in the gladiatorial pits. A bard may be sent to one house just to poison and weaken that house's champion in advance of an offer to purchase him. Also, it is unwise to refuse the sorcerer-king's request to purchase a gladiator, no matter how little he offers.

### Battling Undead in Dark Sun

On Athas, undead are still just that: dead beings that are somehow animated to function among the living. In the DARK SUN campaign world, undead come in two varieties: mindless and free-willed.

Mindless undead are corpses or skeletal remains animated by some character or creature for its own purposes. When encountered, skeletons and zombies are always mindless, controlled by their animators. Skeletons and zombies are never free-willed. Undead monsters created using an *animate dead* spell are always mindless.

Free-willed undead are usually very powerful creatures with great intellect and ambition. Every free-willed undead creature in Dark Sun is unique—each has its own reason for existing and its own set of strengths and weaknesses. Athas has no ghouls, shadows, wights, ghosts, wraiths, mummies, spectres, vampires, ghosts, or liches, though PCs may encounter a host of monsters very much like them. Confronting and defeating a free-willed undead creature in Dark Sun is always interesting and challenging—powerful undead on Athas break all the familiar molds.

Quite often, free-willed undead have minions, either living creatures or mindless undead that they have animated. Oftentimes Athas' powerful undead operate undiscovered among the living, while some have even become powerful allies of the sorcerer-kings, themselves.

### Turning and Controlling Undead

Athasian clerics draw their spell casting powers from the elemental planes of earth, air, fire, and water. They also can tap the Positive Material plane for *augury*, other information, and the ability to turn undead creatures. Templars draw their magical powers through their sorcerer-kings, who in turn draw upon the Negative Material plane; templars cannot turn undead, but they can control them. Druids have no powers over undead.

**Turning Undead:** A cleric on Athas wishing to turn undead must challenge the creature with the power of his elemental plane. A cleric of earth, for instance, must throw dirt or dust toward the undead, but he need not strike them, so no attack roll is needed. A cleric of water must splash water at the undead, and a cleric of fire must toss ash or hold forth a burning object. One of the great advantages granted a cleric of air is that he can turn undead, with a breath. Once the character has made the challenge, he rolls for turning the undead normally. Free-willed undead are turned according to their relative power, which is measured by their Hit Dice only.

Turned undead flee as described in the *Player's Handbook*. Dispelled undead are spectacularly overcome by the element: suffocated by earth, charred and burnt by fire, dissolved by water, or battered by hurricane—force winds. These elemental catastrophes only effect the undead being dispelled.

**Commanding Undead:** Templars, wizards using necromancy, and sorcerer-kings can command undead as per the rules for **Evil Priests and Undead** in the *Player's Handbook*.

### Character Death

Dark Sun is a particularly dangerous place; one where character death is frequent and, at times, gruesome. High PC mortality rates find some relief in the character tree—a fallen player character is immediately replaced by another of similar level, a character with which the player is already familiar.





Still, as deadly a world as Athas is, player characters, especially those at low levels, may die too frequently. Thus, in the DARK SUN™ campaign, DMs should use the “Hovering on Death’s Door” optional rule (the so-called “neg 10” rule), presented below.

### Hovering on Death’s Door (Optional Rule)

DMs may find that their DARK SUN campaign has become too deadly: too many player characters are dying. If this happens, you may want to allow characters to survive for short periods of time even after their hit points reach or drop below 0.

With this rule, a character can remain alive until his hit points reach -10. As soon as the character reaches 0 hit points, though, he falls to the ground unconscious.

Thereafter, he automatically loses 1 hit point each round. His survival from this point on depends on the quick thinking of his companions. If they reach the character before his hit points reach -10 and then spend at least one round tending his wounds (e.g., stanching the flow of blood), the character does not die immediately.

If the only action is to bind his wounds, the injured character no longer loses 1 hit point each round, but neither does he gain any. He remains unconscious and vulnerable to damage from further attacks.

If a *cure* spell of some type is cast upon him, the character is immediately restored to 1 hit point-no more. Further *cures* do the character no good until he has had at least one day of rest. Until such time, he is weak and feeble unable to fight and barely able to move. He must stop and rest often, can’t cast spells (the shock of near death has wiped them from his mind), and is generally confused and feverish. He is able only to move and hold somewhat disjointed conversations.

If a *heal* spell is cast on the character, his hit points are restored as per the spell, and he has full vitality and wits. Any spells he may have known are

still wiped from his memory, however. (Even this powerful spell does not negate the shock of the experience.)

### Waging Wars

The sands of Athas have been stained red with the blood of a thousand campaigns of conquest. Wars are waged over food, water, territory, and less: sorcerer-kings pit armies of slaves against each other, watching with cold-hearted pleasure as hundreds meet their deaths, more often than not all over some wager or just for the enjoyment of the spectacle. Athas is a violent world where the hand of diplomacy bears a sword or chatkcha.

Player characters will eventually be called upon to fight wars, either as soldiers or as commanders of armies.

Once player characters must deal with large numbers of troops, waging wars of defense or expansion in the DARK SUN campaign world, the DM should institute BATTLESYSTEM™ miniatures rules to fight these wars. Adopting BATTLESYSTEM removes the outcomes of important battles from the hands of the Dungeon Master and puts them on the tabletop where they belong.

### Followers

Though fighters and gladiators automatically gain followers when they reach higher levels, any character, regardless of class or race, may find himself at the head of a rag-tag army of followers. The political fortunes of Dark Sun characters can rise and fall rapidly: military might keeps powerful forces at bay and gives a character the strength to affect large populations and areas of Athas.

A warrior’s followers almost never arrive with all of their equipment. More often than not they join the warrior with nothing more than the clothing on their back. But in general they are highly motivated to follow the warrior and will fight for him regardless of equipment provided. Obviously a warrior will



## Combat

want to arm and armor his followers, and see to it that they are well fed and housed in order to keep them in premium fighting condition, but circumstances and finances sometimes leave little choice.

### Piecemeal Armor

Dark Sun characters seldom (if ever) wear complete suits of metal armor. The reasons are manifold, but focus primarily on the oppressive heat of the Athasian sun and the scarcity of metal. It is not uncommon, at least among heroic sorts, for a character to wear scavenged portions of armor, however.

Determining the correct Armor Class for someone in piecemeal armor can thus be very important. Each type of armor piece has a specific AC modifier associated with it. When a piece of armor is worn, that modifier is subtracted from the character's base Armor Class (usually 10) to determine his actual AC. Thus, a character who is exploring some ancient ruins and finds an old, battered breast-

plate from a suit of full plate armor would be able to don it, reducing his AC by 3 places.

No more than one piece of armor may be worn to protect a specific region of the body. Thus, it would be impossible for a character to wear two breastplates and claim a double bonus to his Armor Class. The chart above indicates the AC bonus associated with any given piece of armor.

### Important Considerations

Although piecemeal armor is lighter than full suits of armor, it can still be quite heavy and cumbersome. Breastplates weigh one half the weight of a complete suit of that armor type and each arm or leg piece weighs one eighth the weight of the original suit.

Characters wearing piecemeal metal armor are also subject to the exhausting effects of Athas' hot climate. A character with armor over more than two limbs or wearing a breastplate is subject to the full effects of the Dark Sun's savage heat.

### Bonus to AC Per Type of Piece

| Armor Type      | Full Suit | Breast Plate | Two Arms | One Arm | Two Legs | One Leg |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------|----------|---------|----------|---------|
| Banded Mail     | 6         | 3            | 2        | 1       | 1        | 0       |
| Brigandine      | 4         | 2            | 1        | 0       | 1        | 0       |
| Bronze Plate    | 6         | 3            | 2        | 1       | 1        | 0       |
| Chain Mail      | 5         | 2            | 2        | 1       | 1        | 0       |
| Field Plate     | 8         | 4            | 2        | 1       | 2        | 1       |
| Full Plate      | 7         | 4            | 3        | 1       | 2        | 1       |
| Hide Armor      | 4         | 2            | 1        | 0       | 1        | 0       |
| Leather Armor   | 2         | 1            | 1        | 0       | 0        | 0       |
| Padded Armor    | 2         | 1            | 1        | 0       | 0        | 0       |
| Plate Mail      | 7         | 3            | 2        | 1       | 2        | 1       |
| Ring Mail       | 3         | 1            | 1        | 0       | 1        | 0       |
| Scale Mail      | 4         | 2            | 1        | 0       | 1        | 0       |
| Splint Mail     | 6         | 3            | 2        | 1       | 1        | 0       |
| Studded Leather | 3         | 1            | 1        | 0       | 1        | 0       |

# Chapter 10: Treasure

Since Athas is a metal-poor world, the treasure tables in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* are inappropriate for coins found in a lair. The DM should use these tables instead for all Dark Sun lair encounters.

appropriate for coins found in a lair. The DM should use these tables instead for all Dark Sun lair encounters.

## Dark Sun Treasure Types

### Lair Treasures

Treasure

| Type | Bits                 | Ceramic             | Silver            | Gold              | Gems          | Magical Item                 |
|------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| A    | 200-2,000<br>30 %    | 100-2,000<br>40 %   | 10-100<br>35 %    | 10-100<br>25 %    | 10-40<br>60 % | Any 2<br>30 %                |
| B    | 400-4,000<br>25 %    | 100-1,000<br>25 %   | 10-100<br>25 %    | 5-50<br>30 %      | 1-8<br>30 %   | Armor<br>Weapon<br>10 %      |
| C    | -<br>-               | 100-600<br>15 %     | 10-60<br>20 %     | -<br>-            | 1-6<br>25 %   | Any 2<br>10 %                |
| D    | 1,000-10,000<br>15 % | 1,000-3,000<br>50 % | 100-600<br>15 %   | 100-400<br>10 %   | 1-10<br>30 %  | Any 2+1<br>potion 15 %       |
| E    | 2,000-12,000<br>25 % | 1,000-4,000<br>25 % | 300-1,800<br>25 % | 200-1,200<br>30 % | 1-12<br>15 %  | Any 3+1<br>scroll 25 %       |
| F    | 3,000-18,000<br>10 % | 1,000-4,000<br>30 % | 300-1,200<br>10 % | 100-400<br>10 %   | 2-20<br>35 %  | Any 5 except<br>weapons 30 % |
| G    | -<br>-               | 1,000-8,000<br>40 % | 300-1,800<br>20 % | 10-40<br>10 %     | 3-18<br>45 %  | Any 5<br>35 %                |
| H    | 1,000-10,000<br>35 % | 1,000-6,000<br>30 % | 200-1,200<br>30 % | 20-120<br>15 %    | 3-30<br>60 %  | Any 6<br>15 %                |
| I    | -<br>-               | -<br>-              | 100-600<br>30 %   | 10-100<br>10 %    | 2-12<br>65 %  | Any 1<br>15 %                |

### Individual and Small Lair Treasures

|   |                 |                 |                 |                 |              |               |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| J | 2-12            | -               | -               | -               | -            | -             |
| K | -               | 2-12            | -               | -               | -            | -             |
| L | -               | -               | -               | 2-8             | -            | -             |
| M | -               | -               | 1-6             | -               | -            | -             |
| N | -               | -               | -               | 1-4             | -            | -             |
| O | 10-30           | 10-20           | -               | -               | -            | -             |
| P | -               | 10-40           | -               | 1-10            | -            | -             |
| Q | -               | -               | -               | -               | 1-6          | -             |
| R | -               | -               | 2-16            | 10-40           | 3-18         | -             |
| S | -               | -               | -               | -               | -            | 1-8 potions   |
| T | -               | -               | -               | -               | -            | 1-4 scrolls   |
| U | -               | -               | -               | -               | 3-24         | Any 1         |
| V | -               | -               | -               | -               | 90 %         | 70 %          |
| W | -               | -               | 4-24            | 1-6             | 2-20         | Any 2         |
| X | -               | -               | 50 %            | 25 %            | 70 %         | 60 %          |
| Y | -               | -               | 200-800         | -               | -            | Any 2 potions |
| Z | 100-300<br>50 % | 100-400<br>50 % | 100-600<br>50 % | 100-400<br>60 % | 1-10<br>75 % | Any 3<br>50 % |



## Treasure

### Coins

Because metal coins are more valuable on Athas, they are somewhat more rare in treasures. The frequency and quantities of coins in these treasures is less than most AD&D® campaign adventurers will be used to.

No platinum or electrum pieces are regularly minted on Athas. The metal, is occasionally found in small amounts, but not enough to warrant inclusion on the table. Finds of platinum or electrum will be special treasures placed by the DM.

Bits are one-tenth pie pieces of a ceramic piece. When found, they may or may not be completely broken into individual bits; some may still be unbroken or partially broken coins.

Ceramic, silver, and gold pieces weigh in at 50 to the pound. Five hundred bits weigh 1 pound.

### Gems

Where metals are very rare, gems become a more frequent medium of exchange. On Athas, gems are fairly common and still quite valuable.

#### Gem Table

| D100  | Base  | Class         |
|-------|-------|---------------|
| Roil  | Value | Class         |
| 01-2  | 15 cp | Ornamental    |
| 26-50 | 75 cp | semi-precious |
| 51-70 | 15 sp | Fancy         |
| 71-90 | 75 sp | Precious      |
| 91-99 | 15 gp | Gems          |
| 00    | 75 gp | Jewels        |

The gem variations and descriptions of the individual stones from the *DMG* still apply to gems found in Dark Sun.

### Objects of Art

Art is not usually a part of lair treasures on Athas. Such finds will be specially placed by the DM. The objects of art table in the *DMG* is appro-

priate for determining the price of such items, except that the number ranges represent ceramic piece value, not gold piece. Items consisting of steel make a valuable treasure, as well.

### Magical Items

The nature of magical items found in DARK SUN campaigns is discussed in Chapter 7: Magic. When magical items are found as part of a lair treasure, Table 88: Magical Items (from the *DMG*) will suffice to determine each item's general category. Subsequent rolls on the subtables yield a variety of specific items, though the DM may find some have names that are anachronistic to DARK SUN campaigns. For instance, *gauntlets of ogre power* are very useful on Athas, but Athas holds no ogres. The various items of *giant strength* have the same problem because DARK SUN campaigns do not use the traditional pantheon of giants.

If a Dark Sun DM rolls up a random magical treasure item with an inappropriate name, he should either change the name or, better yet, don't give the players a name for the item at all. This latter solution makes PCs cautious with their new-found magical items, testing them carefully for powers that, were they to know the official name, they might recognize from years of play.

Other magical items in the *DMG* are anachronistic not in name only. In magical item descriptions, the mention of humanoids not native to Dark Sun obviously do not apply.

A final group of items so contradicts the environment of Athas that they either do not exist, or have been changed.

*potion of dragon control, scroll of protection from dragon breath, bag of tricks, bucknard's everfull purse, decanter of endless water, horseshoes (all), stone horse, hammer +3 dwarven thrower, elven chain,* and any item having to do with aquatic settings or lycanthropes.

The following items are changed to fit DARK SUN



campaigns:

- **Potion of Giant Control:** Affects any giant.
- **Potion of Giant Strength:** The strength equivalent names do not apply in the Dark Sun campaign, though all the listed benefits are the same.
- **Potion of Undead Control:** Roll the 1d10 normally; the result is the maximum Hit Dice of the undead that the potion can control.
- **Rod of Resurrection:** Charges required are gladiator 2, templar 2, psionicist 4, half-giant 6, thri-kreen 2, and mul 2.
- **Boots of Varied Tracks:** Substitute Dark Sun animal tracks for those listed.
- **Candle of Invocation:** Rather than invoking pantheons of gods, these draw upon the spirits of the lands or the elemental planes.
- **Deck of Illusions:** Though many of the creatures listed are not native to Athas, they can still serve as illusions.
- **Figurines of Wondrous Power:** Keep ebony fly and golden lion. Characters will find no other figurines on Athas.
- **Necklace of Prayer Beads:** The bead of summons calls a powerful creature from the elemental planes, instead.

### Potions

On Athas, potions come in the form of magical fruits or berries. The juices of the fruit hold the magical properties of the potion and the fruit must be eaten to release the magical effect. In Dark Sun, potions are never found as fluids in a flask or vial.

Any juicy berry or fruit may be enchanted with a potion. Since the juice itself holds the potion, drier fruits such as dates cannot be so enchanted. The type of fruit chosen to house the potion has no effect; any fruit can contain any potion.

Any potion listed on Table 89: Potions and Oils in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* can be enchanted into a fruit. On Athas, these may be referred to as potions or fruits, interchangeably (a *potion of giant strength* is the same as a *fruit of giant strength*).

Once the skin of the fruit is broken, it must be eaten within one turn or the potion's magic is lost.

Whereas normal fruits may only remain ripe for a few days or weeks before they begin to rot, potion fruits have their period of ripeness greatly extended. Once enchanted with a potion, a fruit will remain ripe for 99 years. After that time, the enchantment fades and the fruit will rot normally.

The entire fruit must be eaten to gain the effect of the potion. This takes an entire round. Fruits that are enchanted with oil-type potions must be crushed and the juice allowed to run over the user, which takes two rounds.

Potion fruits cannot be identified by taste. A *detect magic* spell will identify a fruit or tree as magical, but only *identify* or similar magic provides a positive identification.

Potion fruits can be combined. Different potion fruits eaten concurrently will all have their effects on the ingester. Potion fruit duration is 4+1d4 turns unless otherwise stated in the description.

Fruits may be enchanted with potions in one of two fashions: magical and botanical enchantment.

**Magical Enchantment:** Any wizard, cleric, or druid can enchant normal fruits into potions. Magical enchantment occurs as described under "Potions" in Chapter 10 of the *DMG*.

**Botanical Enchantment:** Any wizard, ranger, cleric, or druid can use botanical enchantment. Botanical enchantment is the process of using one enchanted fruit to grow more.

The original potion fruit must be planted unused. From this seed a magical tree grows very quickly, producing a full-sized fruit tree grows in 1d6 weeks. Once the magical tree is grown, a d6 is rolled: on a roll of 1 or 2, two new potion fruits of the same type appear on the tree; on a 3-5, one new potion fruit of the same type appears on the tree, and on a 6 there will be no potion fruits on the tree. Regardless of how many nonmagical fruits the tree bears, there will be, at most, two potion fruits on it. Once these are picked, there will be no additional potion fruits



## Treasure

from that tree.

If a *permanency* spell is cast on a magical tree, it grows a continuing series of potion fruits. Once the tree's potion fruit is picked, a new one grows in 1d6 days. Such a tree will live at least 99 years unless it is destroyed.

Botanical enchantment is somewhat risky. The tree must be tended, watered, and pruned every day while it is growing. Any severe change in the weather, such as a drought or freeze, will ruin the tree and no fruit will be borne. Any use of defiler magic near the tree will kill it and render any potion fruits on it useless. Even if all goes well, the tree may not bear potion fruits, anyway.

### New Magical Items

These new magical items can be found as part of lair treasures in Dark Sun. Because they do not appear on the subtables in the *DMG*, DMs may wish to create new tables or use these items when the "DM's Choice" is rolled.

#### Amulet of Psionic Interference

XP Value: 5,000

This item scrambles the wearer's psionic abilities, rendering him incapable of making any psionic power checks. The device creates a magical field around the wearer's mind that does not eliminate his psionic strength points, but interferes with them in such a way that they cannot be called upon for power checks. The amulet does not interfere with the wearer's ability to recover psionic strength points. Only the person who places the amulet around someone's neck can remove it; if someone puts it on himself, they can easily remove it, but if it was placed on by another, the wearer cannot remove it without a *remove curse* or *wish* spell.

#### Oil of Feather Falling

XP Value: 700

Crushing such a fruit and rubbing the juices on one's feet gives the character all the abilities of the

wizard's spell *feather fall*, but for a duration of exactly 10 hours. The character can carry with him up to 250 pounds of equipment beyond his normal clothing and weapons. *Oils of feather falling* are most often used to travel across the Silt Sea—a person of feather weight can float easily on the surface of the silt and walk at his normal rate of movement. Multiple applications can last a character long enough to cross an estuary of the Silt Sea or even to reach one of its many islands from shore.

#### Ring of Life

XP Value: 500

This item protects the wearer from the effects of defiling magic. When worn, the character is immune to the initiative point loss incurred when in the destructive diameter of a defiler's spell. The ring of life also bestows upon its wearer recuperative powers as if he had complete bed rest; the wearer naturally heals 3 hit points per day. The ring of life will not protect its wearer from the dragon's defiling magic.

#### Rod of Divining

XP Value: 3,500

This item is a small "Y" shaped stick that must be held in both hands to use. With each charge expended this item will locate and pull its holder toward any accumulation of water of at least one gallon within 1,000 yards. The end of the rod will point toward the water and gently pull the character that way. The quality of the water need not be such that the character can easily obtain it. For instance, the rod might point down to an underground water source up to 1,000 yards beneath the caster. It might also locate moisture within a large plant (if it amounts to one gallon or more) or that hidden by *invisibility* or other concealing magic, but it will ignore the moisture within living beings. (Every player character holds far more than a gallon of water.) If multiple accumulations of water reside in the rod's range, it draws itself to the largest one.

## Chapter II: Encounters

Encounters in the DARK SUN™ fantasy world occur exactly as described in generic AD&D® campaigns. Surprise rolls and encounter distances appear in the *Player's Handbook*, and the philosophy and details of encounters appear in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The additional rules given here specifically target Dark Sun encounters, making them easier and faster to run for the DM.

### Wizard, Priest, and Psionicist Encounters

Spellcasters and psionicists pose numerable problems for the DM, not the least of which is deciding what spells or psionic powers they can use at the time of the encounter. In instances when the DM has particular spells he needs NPCs to have, he should choose those spells and fill out the rest, using the system given there.

At times, an encounter with a large group of creatures calls for multiple spell casters or psionicists. The DM may wish to roll their spells or powers as a group to save time. Encounters where 15 elven psionicists can all perform different psionic actions may be interesting, but are nightmarish for the DM. Rolling for spells or powers as a group simplifies the action and can satisfy for DMs and players alike.

### Encounters in City-States

Athasian city states are usually very crowded and busy: half-elven merchants loudly hawk their wares in bazaars and street corners; slaves and peasants bear nobles high on sedan chairs and force their way roughly through the throngs; templar guards patrol the streets against the many thieves and low-lives that scurry through the alleys and sewers. Even at night, the decadent lifestyles of the wealthy keep the city alive with festivals and parties that last until the dawn.

When dealing with encounters in a city, it is more appropriate to ask whom the player characters do

*not* encounter than whom they do. Any normal denizen of the cities-peasants, slaves, templar guards, merchants, nobles-can be located without much trouble: they are ubiquitous. If the player characters wish to avoid some particular encounter, such as with the city guards or with a particular aristocrat, that too is fairly easy; city states throng with crowds.

Specific encounters should be set up by the DM. These will mostly be adventure-specific, presenting the player characters with individuals that will help or hinder their progress.

### Monsters

Many of the monsters presented in the AD&D *Monstrous Compendiums* are appropriate for DARK SUN campaigns. They should be used in addition to those new monsters given in the Wanderer's Guide. In many cases, these creatures have adapted themselves to the more harsh, arid condi-





## Encounters

tions on Athas.

**Magic:** Those creatures capable of casting spells should be treated as defilers. When they cast spells, they ruin the ground around them, according to spell-level, just as described in Chapter 7: Magic. As a result, spell-wielding monsters rarely cast spells directly from their lair. Those who merely have spell-like abilities do not cause defiling damage when using those abilities.

**Psionics:** Of all the monsters in the following list, only yuan-ti have psionic powers (according to the *Complete Psionics Handbook*). However, all those marked with an asterisk could possess wild powers in **DARK SUN** campaigns. Whether or not an individual creature is a wild talent is the DM's decision.

**Plant-Based Monsters:** Defiling magic destroys all plant-life within its area of effect without exception. A plant-based monster can thus be destroyed (or injured if it isn't wholly contained within the area of effect), with no save allowed.

### Monstrous Compendium 1 and 2

Aarakocra\*  
Aerial Servant  
Ankheg  
Ant  
Ant Lion, Giant  
Basilisk  
Bat  
Beetle  
Behir\*  
Bulette  
Cats, Great  
Cave Fisher  
Centipede  
Dragonne\*  
Elementals, all  
Ettercap\*  
Ettin\*  
Genie, all \*  
Giant-kin, Cyclops\*  
Golem

Hornet  
Kenku\*  
Lizard  
Pseudodragon\*  
Plant, Carnivorous  
Rat  
Remorhaz  
Rot  
Sandling  
Scorpion  
Skeleton  
Snake (except Sea, Giant)  
Spider  
Wyvern\*  
Yuan-ti\*  
Zombie

### Forgotten Realms® (MC3)

Bhaergala\*  
Meazel\*  
Rhaumbusun  
Strider, Giant  
Thessalmonster  
Thri-kreen\*

### Dragonlance® (MC4)

Fire Minion\*  
Hatori  
Horax  
Insect Swarm  
Skrit  
Slig\*  
Tylor\*  
Wyndlass

### Greyhawk® (MC5)

Beetle  
Bonesnapper  
Dragonfly, Giant  
Dragannel  
Horgar





Plant, Carnivorous (Cactus, Vampire)

**Kara-Tur (MC6)**

Goblin Spider\*  
Jishin Mushi

\*indicates possible psionic wild power

No creatures from the SPELLJAMMER™ *Monstrous Compendiums* live on Athas. Fiends from the Outer Planes Appendix (MC10) can travel to and from Athas at will, but do so rarely, only when summoned by dragons or great wizards.

**Wilderness Encounters**

The wilds of Athas are teeming with intelligent and unintelligent monsters. Encounters in the wilderness should be rolled for on a daily basis or as the DM sees fit. Obviously, if characters are lost or unprepared, even the most routine wilderness encounters can prove to be fatal for the party.

Each of the tables below lists monsters for encounters in a particular terrain type. The monsters listed come from the *Wanderer's Guide* and from *Monstrous Compendiums* I and II. The other monsters listed as appropriate to Dark Sun can be added, as well, if you have the appropriate *Monstrous Compendiums*.

When encounters occur should be determined using the Frequency & Chance of Wilderness Encounters table in the *DMG*.

**Stoney Barrens**

| Die Roll | Creature         |
|----------|------------------|
| 2        | gai              |
| 3        | bulette          |
| 4        | roc              |
| 5        | genie, dao       |
| 6        | ankheg           |
| 7        | wyvern           |
| 8        | basilisk, lesser |



|    |                   |
|----|-------------------|
| 7  | spider, huge      |
| 10 | gith              |
| 11 | ettercap/ behir   |
| 12 | centipede, giant  |
| 13 | beetle, boring    |
| 14 | baazrag           |
| 15 | tembo             |
| 16 | braxat            |
| 17 | bat, huge         |
| 18 | ettin             |
| 17 | basilisk, greater |
| 20 | ant, swarm        |

**Sandy Wastes**

| Die Roll | Creature            |
|----------|---------------------|
| 2        | genie, djinn        |
| 3        | basilisk, dracolisk |
| 4        | spotted lion        |
| 5        | lizard, minotaur    |
| 6        | wasp                |



## Encounters



|    |                          |
|----|--------------------------|
| 7  | snake, giant constrictor |
| 8  | snake, constrictor       |
| 9  | sandling                 |
| 10 | elves/gith               |
| 11 | kank                     |
| 12 | scorpion, huge           |
| 13 | slaves                   |
| 14 | inix                     |
| 15 | anakore                  |
| 16 | jozhal                   |
| 17 | spider, phase            |
| 18 | centipede, megal-        |
| 17 | yuan-ti                  |
| 20 | dragonne                 |

## Mountains

### Die Roll

|    |                    |
|----|--------------------|
| 2  | lizard, fire       |
| 3  | ettin              |
| 4  | roc                |
| 5  | ant, giant         |
| 6  | giant-kin, cyclops |
| 7  | lizard, giant      |
| 8  | leopard            |
| 9  | beetle, fire       |
| 10 | bat, common        |
| 11 | halflings/dwarves  |
| 12 | gith               |
| 13 | slaves             |
| 14 | kenku              |
| 15 | spider, giant      |
| 16 | ettercap           |
| 17 | zombie             |
| 18 | arakocra           |
| 17 | pseudodragon       |
| 20 | bulette            |



## Scrub Plains

### Die Roll

| Die Roll | Creature                     |
|----------|------------------------------|
| 2        | genie, jann                  |
| 3        | remorhaz                     |
| 4        | behir                        |
| 5        | ant lion, giant              |
| 6        | mekillot                     |
| 7        | silk wyrm                    |
| 8        | cheetah                      |
| 9        | erdlu                        |
| 10       | gith                         |
| 11       | elves/slaves                 |
| 12       | kank                         |
| 13       | rat, giant                   |
| 14       | jaguar                       |
| 15       | scorpion, large              |
| 16       | spider, giant                |
| 17       | bat, huge                    |
| 18       | plant, carnivorous, man trap |
| 19       | pseudodragon                 |
| 20       | gaj                          |

## Rocky Badlands

### Die Roll

| Die Roll | Creature           |
|----------|--------------------|
| 2        | arakocra           |
| 3        | dragonne           |
| 4        | giant-kin, cyclops |
| 5        | roc                |
| 6        | ankheg             |
| 7        | belgoi             |
| 8        | lizard, giant      |
| 9        | beetle, fire       |
| 10       | spider, large      |
| 11       | gith/dwarves       |
| 12       | kluzd              |
| 13       | rat, giant         |
| 14       | common lion        |
| 15       | hornet             |
| 16       | bat, huge          |
| 17       | braxat             |

18  
19  
20

giant  
genie, efreeti  
ant, swarm

## Salt Flats

### Die Roll

| Die Roll | Creature            |
|----------|---------------------|
| 2        | basilisk, dracolisk |
| 3        | zombie, ju ju       |
| 4        | snake, spitting     |
| 5        | ant, giant          |
| 6        | wasp                |
| 7        | wyvern              |
| 8        | hornet              |
| 9        | skeleton            |
| 10       | scorpion, huge      |
| 11       | zombie              |
| 12       | centipede, giant    |
| 13       | spider, large       |
| 14       | lizard, giant       |
| 15       | bat, large          |
| 16       | skeleton            |
| 17       | spider, phase       |
| 18       | zombie, monster     |
| 19       | remorhaz            |
| 20       | g a j               |





## Chapter 12: NPCs

The denizens of Athas will react to the player characters in much the same way they would in any other AD&D® campaign setting. There are, of course, exceptions and they are dealt with here.

### Spellcasters as NPCs

Priests in DARK SUN™ campaigns have no compunction regarding the sale of their magical services. An Athasian cleric or templar will readily sell himself to cast magical spells for the prices shown on the NPC Spell Costs chart in the *DMG*. Remember to charge in ceramic pieces, not gold pieces.

Druid NPCs, however, have no desire for monetary gain. They will sometimes cast their spells for free if the player characters are performing some task which benefits the druid's guarded lands or the natural environment in general. It will have to be quite clear to the druid NPC that the player characters are promoting what he believes to be the ultimate good and, if he even thinks there is a defiler among the party members, he won't offer any of his services, regardless of their intentions.

Wizard NPCs will not readily offer their services for coin. Most preservers and defilers are outlaws within the city states and won't even let it be known that they have spellcasting capabilities. Even outside the city states, where folklore and common conceptions about the destructive nature of magic prevail, wizards are reluctant to let their identities be known. Since virtually anyone they meet could be a templar attempting to discover their secrets, renegade wizards shun those who seek to buy their services.

Rare instances may come up where a renegade wizard might allow himself to be bought. If the use of his magic can be concealed and it benefits him or furthers his alignment's calling, a wizard might be bought. Such occurrences will be rare, and the DM should allow such purchases sparingly.

One notable exception to the reluctance of wizards to sell spells are the affluent, treacherous defilers who perform for the sorcerer-kings, themselves. These defilers are uncaring and are, for the most

part, above the law. If such an ambitious defiler is sought out to cast magical spells for coin, he may readily accept; however, the chance that he will later betray the buyer or even blackmail him are high.

### Templars as NPCs

Templars are the most feared people in the city states. Their power to accuse and imprison nearly anyone for any reason keeps the city dwellers in terror. Not surprisingly, templars tend to abuse the powers they have for their own personal gain which, so long as the city is administered and kept in order, does not bother the sorcerer-king.

Templars perform three vital functions within a given city state. Primarily, they comprise the city guards and officers of the sorcerer-king's armies. Secondly, they see to it that the city is administered, its businesses kept running, and its slaves fed. Finally, the templars are responsible for maintaining the illusion that the sorcerer-king is a god—they have absolute power to enforce worship and homage to the sorcerer-kings. Every templar NPC will be actively pursuing one of these functions.

One final, unwritten function of the templars is to advance through their ranks as rapidly as possible. The means by which a templar might gain power and position are wide open, including bribery, theft, and even assassination of others within their ranks. Every templar NPC can be counted on to accept underhanded schemes that will help him rise to power among his fellows.

Templar soldiers are the enforcement arm of their service to the sorcerer-king. Low-level templars (levels 1-4) are common soldiers, guards within the cities around the slave areas practiced and drilled in formations around the city walls. Mid-level templars (levels 5-8) are officers in charge of small (10-100 man) units of guards, slave soldiers, or undead soldiers (in times of war). High-level templars (levels 9+) are usually generals or administrators, keeping the army equipped and fed.

In the administration of the city states, templar



## Typical Administrative Templar Positions

### Low Level (1-4)

Removers of Waste  
Movers of Grain  
Minor Construction  
Disease Control  
Maintenance of Gardens  
Maintenance of Roads  
Maintenance of Walls

### Mid Level (5-8)

Tax Collection  
Major Construction  
Slave Control  
Grain Distribution  
Gate Monitor  
Assigner of Permits  
Riot Control

### High Level (9 +)

Coin Distribution  
Construction  
Planning  
Mayor of the City  
Governor of the  
Farmlands  
Aid to the King

NPCs occupy all positions from waste removal to the mayorship. Lower-level templars (levels 1-4) are given the dirtier jobs that require hands-on work, having a few guards at their disposal and fewer slave laborers than they need to perform their tasks effectively. Middle-level templars (levels 5-8) gain greater responsibilities and may have several lower-level templars beneath them. High-level templars (levels 9 and higher) move into management of the city state—such templars are difficult to unseat, since they can blame nearly any shortcomings on their underlings.

These are only a sampling of the many levels of templar bureaucracy. Advancement through the ranks has little to do with ability or experience.

Technically, the sorcerer-king is a god within his own city and the templars assure him of worship and obedience. In actuality, a sorcerer-king is not a god or a demigod, though he is generally an extremely powerful wizard and psionicist. However, the templars erect temples and subjugate the populations to worship him. There isn't a noble, merchant, or peasant in a city state who doesn't at least pay lip service to the sorcerer-king or the templars who enforce his will.

The DM must keep two things in mind when dealing with any particular templar NPC. First, how will the templar attempt to use the player characters to gain advantage? He could accuse or imprison them, which always looks good in the eyes of a superior, or he could buy their services to perform

a task such as assassination or simply making a superior look bad. Second, the DM must consider how the player characters might appeal to the templar's wicked ways and greed. In their quest for power, they are sometimes easily manipulated. Beware, though—higher-level templars have played these games of treachery before and, by their very existence, they've proven pretty good at them.

## Druids as NPCs

An NPC druid will defend his guarded lands. Regardless of where the player characters are in Athas' hinterlands, there is almost certainly a druid watching their every move. Those player characters who responsibly use the druid's guarded lands will never be bothered. Hunting on their lands or using its timber for equipment is, to the druid, part of the natural order of things and he won't interfere.

Irresponsible use of his guarded lands, however, will bring him out into the open with full force. Hunting his lands until there is no game left or stripping the vegetation will cause the druid to take action. An NPC druid who finds a defiler on his land will take steps to eliminate that threat.

# Chapter 13: Vision and Light

## Limits of Vision

All of the conditions presented on the Visibility Ranges table in the *Player's Handbook* exist on

Athas. However, there are a number of conditions unique to Athas that should be added.

### Dark Sun Visibility Ranges

| Condition          | Movement | Spotted | Type | ID | Detail |
|--------------------|----------|---------|------|----|--------|
| Sand, blowing      | 100      | 50      | 25   | 15 | 10     |
| Sandstorm, mild    | 50       | 25      | 15   | 10 | 5      |
| Sandstorm, driving | 10       | 10      | 5    | 5  | 3      |
| Night, both moons  | 200      | 100     | 50   | 25 | 15     |
| Silt Sea, calm     | 500      | 200     | 100  | 50 | 25     |
| Silt Sea, rolling  | 100      | 50      | 25   | 10 | 5      |



# Chapter 14: Time and Movement

## The Athasian Calendar

Every city state has its own calendar, but that most commonly used and considered the Calendar of Tyr.

In the calendar of Tyr, years are counted off using a pair of concurrently running cycles; one of eleven parts, the other of seven. The eleven-part, or *endlean* cycle, is counted and spoken first, in the order presented below. The seven-part, or *seofean* cycle, is counted and spoken second. The endlean cycle is complete when Athas' two moons, Ral and Guthay, meet in the heavens—a major eclipse that occurs once every 11 years. The seofean cycle is more abstract, meeting when agitation in the cosmos leads to fury.

Every 77 years the cycle repeats itself, ending with a year of Guthay's Agitation and starting again with a new year of Ral's Fury. Each 77-year cycle is called a *king's age*; there have been 183 complete king's ages since Tyr adopted this calendar (more than 14,500 years).

So, the first year of each king's age is a year of Ral's Fury. The next year is a year of Friend's Contemplation, followed by a year of Desert's Vengeance, etc. The 76th year of each king's age is a year of Enemy's Reverence, followed by the 77th year, a year of Guthay's Agitation.

### The Endlean Cycle

Ral  
Friend  
Desert  
Priest  
Wind  
Dragon  
Mountain  
King  
Silt  
Enemy  
Guthay

### The Seofean Cycle

Fury  
Contemplation  
Vengeance  
Slumber  
Defiance  
Reverence  
Agitation

Superstition and folklore surrounds each of the years of the king's age. Storms during a year of

Wind's Vengeance are believed to be more powerful and dangerous, so many overland trips are avoided. Sacrifices and prayers are called for to ward off the great beast during years of Dragon's Agitation. Years of Enemy's Contemplation are supposed to enliven treaties and alliances—the list goes on.

Each year is made up of exactly 375 days: the exact time between highest suns. Athasians have no seasons that govern their thinking of time—there is no marked difference in temperature or weather patterns. However, the year is divided into three equal *phases*: high sun, sun descending, and sun ascending. Highest sun is the first day of the year in the calendar of Tyr and lowest sun indicates the midpoint of the year (which, incidentally, occurs at midnight, and is generally observed in nighttime ceremonies).

Days are kept track of in a variety of ways. Merchants tend to identify days with phrases such as "thirty five days past the high sun." Other schemes divide the year into 25 weeks of 15 days each, the names of those days associated with important person-ages of a particular royal house. In **DARK SUN™** campaigns, DMs may stick to seven day weeks with the standard Gregorian calendar names for simplicity.

## Year of the Messenger

Every 45 years, a brilliant comet visits Athas. By night one can read by *the messenger's* light, and it can be seen clearly in the full light of day. Folklore holds that the messenger visits the dragon every 45 years to deliver to him important information—reconnaissance that the stars have observed since its last visit.

## Starting the Campaign

For campaign purposes, the calendar starts on High Sun (the first day of the year) of the Year of Priest's Defiance, in the 170th King's Age. The next Year of the Messenger will be the Year of Enemy's Slumber, six years away.



## Time and Movement

### Dehydration

As PCs adventure, one overriding consideration will almost certainly be the supply of water. Quite often in DARK SUN™ campaigns, characters will be in situations where the supply of water has no impact on the adventure. These dehydration rules are intended for extreme situations only and should only be enforced when a lack of water could be life-threatening.

### Water Consumption

How much water a character needs depends upon his level of activity and his race. An active character (hard exertion, walking, riding, etc.) needs 1 gallon of water per day. An inactive character (sitting, resting, or sleeping, etc.), needs ½ gallon of water per day.

If the character is in the shade during the entire day, he only needs half the amount of water dictated by his activity. A character wearing a full suit of metal armor requires twice as much water each day to avoid dehydration. Thus, a character in metal armor who undertakes only light activity but is unable to remain in shaded areas would require 1 gallon of water.

A character who does not drink enough water will suffer the effects of dehydration.

### Unusual Races

Thri-kreen and half-giants suffer from dehydration differently than humans and normal demi-humans.

**Thri-kreen:** Thri-kreen can go for one week on the amount of water it takes to sustain a human for one day. Thus, thri-kreen characters only roll for dehydration once per week without water.

**Half-giants:** Due to their great size, half-giants need four gallons of water per day when active or two gallons when inactive.

### Substituting Other Liquids

Many common beverages such as wine, beer, ale, and fruit juices can supplement a character's water intake—the quantities per day remain the same. In times of desperation, players may suggest more outlandish liquids to stave off dehydration: honey, tree sap, even the blood of fallen monsters. Generally, none of these are suitable substitutes.

### Effects of Dehydration

A lack of water is reflected in the game by a reduction in Constitution. Beginning with the first day a character does not receive his required allotment of water, consult the dehydration table at midnight and immediately apply the result.

#### Dehydration Effects Table

| Amount of Water               | Constitution Loss |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Full requirement              | None              |
| Half or more of requirement   | 1d4               |
| Less than half of requirement | 1d6               |

Constitution losses are cumulative over consecutive days of dehydration; a character's hit point adjustment, system shock, resurrection survival, poison save, and regeneration rate all drop accordingly. Every point drop in the character's hit point adjustment (from +1 down to 0, or from -1 down to -2, etc.) will reduce the character's hit points by a number equal to the character's level (highest level for dual-or multi-classed characters). A character whose constitution reaches 0 is dead—such characters have a resurrection survival number of 25%.

### Rehydration

A character can rehydrate by drinking his full allotment of water through the course of one day. At the end of that day, his Constitution score goes back up 1d8 points. Each consecutive day that the character's water needs are met restores another 1d8 points until





the character is fully recovered. Lost hit points are regained at a character's normal recovery rate.

## Example of Dehydration

Thyasius, a human third son of a noble family, is captured by elven nomads. When his family fails to pay the ransom, the elves turn him loose in the desert without food or water. His Constitution score is 15. After the first day without any water, he rolls a 3 on 1d6 bringing his Constitution temporarily down to 12. Since Thyasius is a 5th-level fighter, five of his hit points were due to his original Constitution of 15, so these are temporarily lost, as well. After a second day without water, Thyasius rolls 6 on 1d6, bringing his Constitution down to 6. Since the hit point adjustment for a character with a Constitution score of 6 is -1, he will temporarily lose another five hit points. After the third day, he rolls a 1, bringing his Constitution down to 5. Since the hit point modifier is still -1, Thyasius loses no more hit points on the third day. On the fourth day, he is found by a half-elven trader who gives him a full gallon of water—Thyasius' rolls 1d8 and regains 6 of his lost Constitution points. His lost hit points will return more slowly, in accordance with his normal healing rate.

## Transporting Water

Water must be carried in skins or barrels. The wines insisted in the Equipment Lists carries one gallon of liquid. The small barrel listed carries 30 gallons. Every gallon of water (with its container) weighs 3 pounds.

## Animals and Dehydration

Animals also suffer dehydration. Tiny animals need 1/8 gallon; small animals need 1/2 gallon; man-sized animals need 1 gallon; larger than man-sized animals need 4 gallons; huge animals need 8 gallons; gargantuan animals need 16 gallons of water per day. Animal water intake can be cut by half for shade or inactivity, or quartered for both.

At the end of a day that an animal doesn't get its full allotment of water, there is a 10% chance it will die, that chance increasing by 10% for each additional day without water. Animals fully rehydrate after one day in which they drink their full allotment of water.

## Movement by Night

At night, the temperatures in all types of terrain drop significantly, though moisture is still at a premium. If characters decide to travel by night, they gain the benefit of working in shade (half water consumption).

The draw back to such plans is that good rest under the blistering sun of the day is difficult. Characters who are travelling by night must seek shelter during their daytime rest periods. Rock outcroppings or caves will suffice, as will tents or other make-shift buildings. If such shelter cannot be located, each character must make a save vs. poison in order to rest well. Those who fail will sleep fitfully and can not memorize spells or recover hit points. Thri-kreen obviously are not subject to this rule.

## Overland Movement

The rules presented for overland travel in the *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide* still govern movement on Athas. It is important to note, however, that those suffering from dehydration cannot undertake a *forced march*.

The races of Dark Sun also have different movement rates than those in traditional AD&D® campaigns. The following table details these differences.

| Race          | Movement Points | Force March |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Human         | 24              | 30          |
| Dwarf         | 12              | 15          |
| Elf           | 24              | 30          |
| Half-elf      | 24              | 30          |
| Half-giant    | 30              | 37          |
| Halfling      | 12              | 15          |
| Mul**         | 24              | 30          |
| Thri-kreen*** | 36              | 45          |



## Time and Movement

\* For overland movement, an elf may add his Constitution score to 24 (his normal movement rate) or 30 (his forced march rate) to determine his actual movement in miles (or points) per day.

\*\* This is for a normal 10-hour marching day. A mul can move for 20 hours per day on each of three consecutive days. The fourth day, however, must be one of rest in which the character only travels for 10 hours. A "resting" mul can still force march.

\*\*\* This is for a normal 10-hour marching day. A thri-kreen can always move for 20 hours per day.

### Terrain Modifiers in Overland Movement

Athas challenges its characters with a variety of new terrain types, each of which affects movement in different ways. The following table lists the cost (in movement points) to pass through one mile of the given terrain.

#### Terrain Costs For Overland Movement

| Terrain Type   | Movement Cost |
|----------------|---------------|
| Stony Barrens  | 2             |
| Sandy Wastes   | 3             |
| Rocky Badlands | 3             |
| Mountains      | 8             |
| Scrub Plains   | 2             |
| Forest         | 3             |
| Salt Flats     | 1             |
| Boulder Fields | 4             |

The *movement cost* listed is movement points needed to cross one mile of the listed terrain. Terrain obstacles and hindrances apply as listed on the Terrain Modifiers table in the *DMG*.

### Mounted Overland Movement

As usual, Athasian mounts can move a number of miles per day equal to their movement rate under normal conditions. The following chart details the movement rates of Athas' most common mounts.

| Mount    | Movement Points |
|----------|-----------------|
| Kank     | 15              |
| Inix     | 15              |
| Mekillot | 9               |

These overland movement rates can be doubled or tripled, but the animal may become lame or exhausted, as per the AD&D® rules. Dehydrated animals cannot move at greater than their base movement rate.

### Half-giants and Thri-kreen

Half-giants are extremely large, and so need an equally large mount to carry them. Half-giants can ride an inix (so long as the beast is not called upon to carry any extra cargo).

Thri-kreen never ride animals. They look upon it in the same way that a human might view a child "playing with his food."

### Care of Animals

Athas' beasts of burden are hardy animals, acclimated to their world's harsh conditions; they are generally self-reliant, if somewhat savage creatures. Many beasts are more intelligent and deadly than those used on other AD&D campaign worlds. A Dark Sun character has a more uneasy peace with his animal, and experience warns him that the rider may become the hunted.

**Kank:** A kank is a large, docile insect used mainly as an individual mount. Each can carry either a 200 pound rider and 200 pounds of extra cargo or two 200 pound riders with no extra cargo. A kank can find food in any terrain other than salt flats if allowed to graze for a few hours each day. Otherwise, it must have five pounds of plants or vegetables per day. Each kank needs only two gallons of water per day to avoid dehydration.

All kank mounts are of the food-producer variety, creating large globules of green honey on the abdomen every other day; it can be eaten by all the player



character races and counts as one gallon of water. Characters on a strict diet of kank honey can survive on it alone for a period of days equal to their Constitution score; after that, the character's diet must be supplemented with other foodstuffs or he will become weakened and ill. A kank that is dehydrated or not getting enough food does not produce honey.

A kank pushed to double or triple its normal movement rate receives a +1 bonus to its saving throw to avoid exhaustion.

**Inix:** An inix is a large lizard that can be tamed for use as a beast of burden. Each can carry up to 2,000 pounds of cargo or passengers. Each inix needs 150 pounds of food and eight gallons of water per day. If allowed to graze every day in scrub plain, forest, or verdant belt terrain, an inix will forage enough food for itself. Every day that an inix doesn't receive its fill of water or food, it must save vs. death or go berserk. The animal's basic saving throw is 10, but there is a cumulative -2 penalty on the save imposed with each passing day. The berserk inix's aim is not to eat its masters, but to escape to forage elsewhere. However, it will attack those who try to stop it—once berserk, an inix must be either set free, magically or psionically charmed, or killed. The chance to go berserk is in addition to dehydration.

An inix can be pushed to double or triple its normal movement, like any other mount.

**Mekillot:** This is a huge animal that can carry or pull up to 8,000 pounds on its back or up to 40,000 pounds on a wagon. A mekillot needs 300 pounds of food and 16 gallons of water per day.

When in use as a pack animal, a mekillot may decide to stop working or to move in a random direction. Each day, roll 1d20. On a roll of one, the mekillot stops where it is and won't move further that day. On a roll of two, the mekillot takes a new direction, not given to it. Exactly when the mekillot becomes stubborn is determined randomly (roll 1d10 for the ten-hour march day). A stubborn mekillot can sometimes be controlled through magic or psionics. Any physical effort to change a mekillot's

mind (a beating, attempting to lure it with food, etc.) enrages it and causes it to attack.

A mekillot *cannot* be pushed to double or triple its normal movement.

### Use of Vehicles

**Wagons, carts, and similar** conveyances must be pulled by kanks, mekillots, or the like. A cart is any wagon of less than 1,000 pounds capacity; carts generally have two wheels and can be drawn by one kank. Open, enclosed, and armored caravan wagons that require multiple draft animals also require a teamster to drive them—a teamster is any character with the animal handling proficiency.

Wagons can be easily broken, especially when in difficult terrain. For every day of travel, a wagon has a 1% chance of breaking down (broken axle or wheel, the floor gives way, etc.). For every day of travel in rocky badlands, stony barrens, or mountain terrain, there is a 3% chance of breaking down. These chances are not cumulative with the passage of time. Broken wagons can be repaired by someone with the carpentry or engineering proficiency.

A wagon moves at the speed of its beasts of burden. The animals cannot be pushed to double or triple their normal speed while pulling a wagon.

**Chariots** are just as described in the *DMG*, except that on Athas they are pulled by kanks. Kank teams of one, two, or four may be used that carry chariots holding no more than one, two, or three warriors, respectively. Chariots are more fragile and tend to break down during times of high speed and stress (such as combat). Use the wagon break down rates for day to day movement. However, in combat these same percentage chances apply per round, and are doubled if the chariot is turned more than 45 degrees while at high speeds.

**Howdahs** are small structures built for the backs of mekillots and inix. Having a howdah does not reduce the animal's carrying capacity, and it can still move at double or triple rate, subject to the lameness and exhaustion rules in the *DMG*.

# Chapter 15: New Spells

Magic used on Athas is shaped and molded by the harsh realities of that world. The influences of foul defilers, the valiant efforts of preserves, and the corrupt researches of sorcerer-kings have left their mark upon the wizard's trade. This chapter highlights important differences between Dark Sun and magic in other AD&D® game worlds.

## Wizard Spells

### First Level Spells

#### Charm Person

Athasian creatures that can be charmed include all PC races except thri-kreen, plus the belgoi.

#### Find Familiar

In DARK SUN campaigns, substitute this table for that found in the *Player's Handbook*.

| Die Roll | Familiar     | Sensory Powers                              |
|----------|--------------|---|
| 1-3      | Bat          | Night, sonar-enhanced vision                |
| 4-5      | Beetle       | Senses minute vibrations                    |
| 6-8      | Cat, black   | Excellent night vision and superior hearing |
| 9        | Pseudodragon | Normal sensory powers, but very intelligent |
| 10-11    | Rat          | Excellent sense of taste and smell          |
| 12-15    | Scorpion     | Senses fear                                 |
| 16-20    | Snake        | Sensitivity to subtle temperature changes   |

#### Mount

In DARK SUN campaigns, substitute this table for that found in the *Player's Handbook*.

| Caster Level    | Mount                               |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1st-3rd level   | Wild Kank                           |
| 4th-7th level   | Trained Kank                        |
| 8th-12th level  | Inix                                |
| 13th-14th level | Mekillot (and howdah at 18th level) |

15th level & up

Roc (and saddle at 18th level)

### Second-Level Spells

#### Detect Psionics (Divination)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 2 rounds/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: sphere (10 yard/level diameter)

Saving Throw: None

This spell is similar to the metapsionic devotion, *psionic sense*, but uses magical rather than psionic means. The spell allows a character to detect the expenditure of psionic strength points (PSPs) in a sphere around him. The diameter of the sphere is equal to the range of the spell.

At level (4 or below), the spell only lets the character know that PSPs were expended within the sphere, not how many PSPs, from what individual, what powers or devotions were used, or whether the PSPs were expended to initialize a power or to maintain one.

Casters who are of levels 5-7 will also learn what individual within the sphere is expending PSPs.

Casters of level 8-11 will also learn what discipline the psionist is calling upon and whether the points were spent to maintain or initiate a psionic effect.

Finally, casters of level 12 or higher will learn exactly which science or devotion is being used.

#### Fool's Gold

Copper coins are seldom minted on Athas. However, copper is still the medium of this spell and can be turned into solid gold. In DARK SUN campaigns, the area of effect is reduced to 1 cubic inch, or about 15 gold coins, per level.



### Third Level Spells

#### Fleet Feet (Alteration) (Reversible)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 day/5 levels

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: one individual

Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell allows an individual to move more quickly. The person affected can take very large strides, as if his feet and legs weighed far less than they actually do. For purposes of cross country movement, an affected character can travel double his normal movement rate (and may still force march beyond that, though he is still subject to those effects). The character's movement rate is doubled in combat situations, as well, but his balance and inertia make it difficult to maneuver. If he moves greater than his normal movement rate and attempts to turn in any way, such as to round a corner or to avoid an obstacle, he must make a successful Dexterity check to avoid falling (ending his movement for the round and making him prone).

The reverse of this spell, *stone feet*, makes the affected character's legs feel as heavy as rock, slowing his movement to half. The character's balance is unaffected. A saving throw negates this effect.

The material component for this spell is a feather from a flightless bird, such as an erdlu (or for the reverse, a piece of mekillot hide).

#### Phantom Steed

In DARK SUN™ campaigns, this spell creates a kank-like creature with the same abilities listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

### Fourth Level Spells

#### Ice Storm

In DARK SUN campaigns, the water, hail, and

ice created by this spell is only temporary. It will disappear three turns after the completion of the spell. Even water consumed in that time disappears, giving its imbiber no benefit.

#### Massmorph

Since trees might be somewhat conspicuous in DARK SUN campaigns, the caster of this spell has the option of making the affected creatures appear to be boulders and stones, instead. The material components must be any handful of available pebbles.

#### Plant Growth

This spell has no effect on a *tree of life*. Since a defiled area has no vegetation left, this spell has no effect if cast there.

#### Psionic Dampener (Alteration)

Range: 5 yards/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 4

Area of Effect: one individual

Saving Throw: Neg.

Use of this spell allows the caster to disrupt the psionic activities of one individual. The target is allowed a saving throw to negate the spell. Whether successful or not, the target immediately knows that the spell was cast and who cast it.

If the spell is successful, the target is unable to expend PSPs for its duration. The spell lasts until the wizard stops concentrating, either voluntarily or involuntarily. The affected psionicist can otherwise function normally. If the affected psionicist moves beyond the range, the spell is broken and he can again use PSPs normally, even if he reenters the spell's area of effect.

The material component for this spell is any small object within a blown glass sphere.



## New Spells

### Raze (Alteration)

Range: Touch  
Components: V, S, M  
Duration: Permanent  
Casting Time: 5 rounds  
Area of Effect: Special  
Saving Throw: None

This spell duplicates the life-draining effects peculiar to defiling magic. The spell may be cast by a defiler or a preserver, though a defiler will cause more damage with it.

The casting of the spell causes a large area of vegetation to instantly give up its magical potential and turn to ash. Unlike the natural destruction of defiling magic, **raze** affects all vegetation within the radius of the spell, regardless of the terrain. The area of effect for a preserver is one yard per level of the caster. For a defiler, it is five yards plus one yard per level of the caster (in lieu of normal defiling damage).

The ash created is black and grey, completely devoid of life or life-giving elements. Nothing will grow there for half a year, leaving a lifeless circular scar on the ground.

The material components for this spell are a handful of ash (either from a previous *raze* spell or from normal defiler magic) and a pinch of salt.

### Transmute Sand to Stone (Alteration) Reversible

Range: 10 yards/level  
Components: V, S, M  
Duration: 2d6 days  
Casting Time: 4  
Area of Effect: One 10-foot cube/level  
Saving Throw: None

This spell turns a volume of sand into an equal volume of sandstone. The caster can choose any simple shape he desires, provided no single portion is smaller than one cubic foot and none of the shape exceeds the range of the spell. The spell does not confer the ability to move the sand or stone created;

the stone will occupy the space where the sand was at the time of casting. Persons standing with their feet in the sand at the time of casting will have to break themselves free, though a saving throw vs. paralyzation is allowed to jump free, (if possible). The fact that an area of sand has been so turned to sandstone is not readily apparent even after the spell has been cast. Viewers may have to make an Intelligence check to notice that there is stone where there was once sand. Though permanent, the magically created sandstone will quickly break down into sand particles over a period of 2d6 days. The reverse of this spell, *transmute stone to sand*, allows the caster to change any type of stone to sand (sandstone, granite, gems, clay brick, concrete, etc.). Stone items such as weapons become useless. Floors turned to sand may cause those standing on them to lose their balance and fall (dexterity check to avoid). Supporting stones in buildings so affected can easily cause a structure to completely collapse.

The material component for the spell is sand ground between two pebbles (or sand from an hour glass for the reverse).

### Wall of Ice

Like the *ice storm* spell, the ice created disappears three turns after the conclusion of the spell.

## Fifth-Level Spells

### Transmute Rock to Mud

The mud created by this spell is of a magical nature—no water can be gotten out of it.

### Rejuvenate (Alteration)

Range: Touch  
Components: V, S, M  
Duration: Special  
Casting Time: 1 round  
Area of Effect: 5' radius/level  
Saving Throw: None

This spell grants the ability to support vegetation



to an area of ground. In the case of ground made barren by defiler magic, *rejuvenate* dispels the ground's sterility, making it immediately capable of supporting vegetation. The spell may be cast on any ground short of solid rock, including sand, rocky sand or soil, or dust.

In either case, the spell affects the ground in a circle extending away from the caster, so he must stand in the middle of the area he wishes to revitalize. The radius of the circle is 5 feet per level of the caster. Once cast, the soil is enriched and moistened, and a layer of fine grass emerges instantly.

The duration of the spell varies. Once cast, the moist soil and grass are not magical, and are subject to all natural forces upon them. They will, however, survive a week in even the worst of conditions. *Rejuvenate* will otherwise last until another defiler spell destroys the vegetation there.

The material component of the spell is a seed (of any type) and a drop of water.

Defilers cannot cast *rejuvenate*.

### Wall of Iron

In DARK SUN™ campaigns, the duration of this spell is one turn per level of the caster.

## Sixth Level Spells

### Reincarnation

In DARK SUN campaigns, substitute this table for that found in the *Player's Handbook*.

| D100  | Roll | Incarnation        |
|-------|------|--------------------|
| 01-08 |      | Aarakocra          |
| 09-16 |      | Belgoi             |
| 17-24 |      | Dwarf              |
| 25-32 |      | Elf                |
| 33-34 |      | Giant              |
| 35-37 |      | Giant-kin, Cyclops |
| 38-48 |      | Half-elf           |
| 49-55 |      | Half-giant         |
| 56-66 |      | Halfling           |
| 67-78 |      | Human              |
| 79-85 |      | Kenku              |

86-89

Mul

90-96

Thri-kreen

97-00

Yuan-ti

### Transmute Water to Dust

In DARK SUN campaigns, this spell has no reverse.

## Seventh-Level Spells

### Doom Legion (Necromancy)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 7 rounds

Area of Effect: 120 yard radius

Saving Throw: None

This spell creates skeletons or zombies from the remains of an army defeated in battle. The spell must be cast on the site of the conflict, where the fallen bodies still lie. When cast, only the bodies or skeletons of the losing side will be animated.

If the battle took place less than three months before the casting of the spell, the undead will be zombies. Any longer period of time will yield skeletons—even if the bones have turned to dust, they will reassemble when this spell is cast.

The number animated depends upon the radius of the spell and the number of bodies within it. The DM decides what level of conflict was fought on the grounds where the spell is cast, then rolls dice to find how many undead are raised:

Skirmish 3d12

Small Battle 6d12

Major Battle 10d20

Animated bodies that are less than 1 yard beneath the surface will dig themselves out within one turn of casting the spell. Those deeper will not animate. The bodies cannot have been disturbed before the casting of the spell—those that are moved, searched, or in any way disturbed do not animate.



## New Spells

There is a chance that the animated army of undead will ignore the spell caster and undertake their original mission, depending on how long the vanquished army has laid at rest.

| Time at Rest   | Chance to Ignore |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1 day          | 90 %             |
| 1 week         | 80 %             |
| 1 month        | 70 %             |
| 3 months       | 60 %             |
| 1 year         | 50 %             |
| 5 years        | 40 %             |
| 10 years       | 30 %             |
| 50 years       | 20 %             |
| 100 years      | 10 %             |
| Over 100 years | 0 %              |

An army of undead that ignores the spell caster will not necessarily attack him, but it will not obey him. It will pursue revenge for its defeat, advancing on its previous enemy, even if that no longer makes sense, considering the passage of time.

Should the army *not* ignore him, the undead will consider the spell caster its new leader and will follow him until every individual is somehow destroyed.

The material components for this spell are a drop of blood from one of the unit's old opponents (or a descendent thereof) plus a handful of soil from the unit's original homeland.

### Eighth Level Spells

#### Create Tree of Life (Alteration, Enchantment)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 turn

Area of Effect: One tree

Saving Throw: None

By means of this spell, a wizard can enchant a living sapling to become a magical tree of life. The sapling must have already sprouted from the ground, though the wizard can transplant such a

sapling before casting the spell. It will grow to its full size in only one week, but has its full powers and capabilities immediately after the spell is cast. Any tree less than one year old will suffice; this spell cannot be cast on an older tree. The properties of a *tree of life* are described in Chapter 7: Magic.

The material components for this spell are the sapling (which grows into the *tree of life* and a piece of copper wire formed in the shape of a tree.

### Priest Spells

#### First-Level Spells

##### Create Water

In Dark Sun, **create water** produces only one half gallon of water per level of the caster. In all other ways, the spell is exactly as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

##### Merciful Shadows (Abjuration) (Reversible)

Sphere: Cosmos

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 day/5 levels

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Person touched

Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell creates a magical shade to protect an individual from the scorching sun. Once cast, the individual gains the benefits of being in the shade (half water consumption requirements), even when travelling or fighting in the full light of the sun. The individual so protected appears normal, except that he doesn't sweat as much as expected and his coloration is a bit gray.

The reverse of this spell, *blistering rays*, intensifies the light and heat of the sun on the victim. The individual must have twice the water per day for the duration of the spell or suffer the effects of dehydration. Also, in each round of combat in the open sun, the individual must make a Constitution





check to keep from passing out. The saving throw, applicable only to the reverse of the spell, negates its effects. This spell (and its reverse) has no effect on an individual who is in the shade.

The material components of this spell are a piece of a palm leaf (or black fabric for the reverse).

## Second Level Spells

### Charm Person or Mammal

Athasian creatures that can be charmed include all of the player character races except thri-kreen, plus the aarakocra, anakore, bat, belgoi, braxat, cats, cyclops, ettin, giant, gith, and rat.

### Hold Person

In Dark Sun campaigns, this spell effects all player character races except thri-kreen, plus aarakocra, anakore, belgoi, and gith.

### Snake Charm

Yuant-ti and silk worms can be affected by this spell.

## Third-Level Spells

### Create Food & Water

In Dark Sun, this spell can create a maximum of one half gallon of water per level of the caster. The remainder of the material created will be bland food. In all other ways, the spell is exactly as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

### Air Lens (Alteration)

Sphere: Air  
Range: 90 yards  
Components: V, S, M  
Duration: 3 rounds +1 round/level  
Casting Time: 3  
Area of Effect: Special  
Saving Throw: None

By means of this spell, the priest creates a magical lens high in the air, with which he can direct intensi-

fied rays of the sun against his enemies (the caster must be in the sunlight for the duration of the spell). Once cast, the priest can attack with the lens twice per round, against one or two different targets within the range of the spell. Attack rolls must be made for each attack, but the priest suffers no nonproficiency penalty. Targets under cover receive benefits for both cover and concealment. Each hit inflicts 2d6 points of damage. Creatures resistant to heat or fire take only half damage.

The spell can also be used to ignite flammable materials. When doing so against non-mobile targets, no attack roll is necessary and any normally combustible material (cloth, wood, paper, etc.) will ignite. Personal equipment may also be targeted, but the priest must make a successful attack roll with a -4 penalty. If hit, the article of equipment ignites. Burning clothing will inflict 1d6 points of damage for 1d6 rounds or until discarded. Burning shields become useless. The flames so created are not magical in nature and can be extinguished normally. Magical darkness can negate the effects of this spell. Magical shade reduces damage by half.

The material component for this spell is a small, round piece of glass.

## Fourth-Level Spells

### Call Woodland Beings

This spell is not available in Dark Sun campaigns.

### Rejuvenate (Alteration)

Sphere: Elemental, Plant  
Range: Touch  
Components: V, S, M  
Duration: Special  
Casting Time: 1 round  
Area of Effect: 10' radius/level  
Saving Throw: None

This spell functions just as the 5th-level wizard spell of the same name.



## New Spells

### Fifth-Level Spells

#### Commune

In Dark Sun campaigns, a priest is able to contact powerful beings from the elemental planes to answer his questions.

#### Conjure Elemental (Conjuration/Summoning) Reversible

Sphere: Elemental (Various)

Range: 80 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 5 rounds

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

In Dark Sun campaigns, there is no 6th-level *conjure fire elemental* spell or 7th-level *conjure earth elemental* spell for priests. Instead, this spell allows the caster to open a special gate to any elemental plane to which he has major access and summon an elemental to step through. The Hit Dice of the elemental are determined randomly.

| Roll  | Hit Dice |
|-------|----------|
| 01-65 | 8        |
| 66-90 | 12       |
| 91-00 | 16       |

The elemental will not turn on the caster, so concentration need not be maintained. The elemental summoned remains for a maximum of one turn per level of the caster, or until it is slain or magically banished.

#### Sandstorm (Conjuration/Summoning)

Sphere: Air

Range: 60 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 3 rounds/level

Casting Time: 4 rounds

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: ½

This spell allows a priest to conjure a very large version of a *dust devil*; one that can engage and attack a number of targets at once. The storm has AC 0, MV 12, and hit dice equal to the level of the caster. The sandstorm is a large whirlwind of dust and sand twelve feet tall that covers a 10-yard by 10-yard square per level of the caster. The storm's shape can be determined by the caster and changed on any round after casting, provided no portion of the storm moves further than its movement rate. Any creature within the storm is subject to an attack which will do 2d6 points of damage (save versus spells for half damage). The storm is only subject to attacks from magical weapons. The winds of the storm will put out all normal fires within it. Also, any items within the storm must make item saving throws each round or be destroyed—all sandstorm saves are as if vs. acid with a +5 bonus. The storm can hold a gas cloud or a creature in gaseous form at bay or push it away from the caster. The cloud obscures vision through it, and creatures are blinded for 1d4 rounds after emerging from it (save versus spell to avoid blindness). A spellcaster caught within the sandstorm loses concentration and any spells he is about to cast are ruined.

The material component for this spell is a small bottle of air collected on a windy day.

### Sixth Level Spells

#### Create Tree of Life (Alteration, Enchantment)

Sphere: Cosmos

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 turn

Area of Effect: One tree

Saving Throw: None

This spell is identical to the 8th-level wizard's spell of the same name.



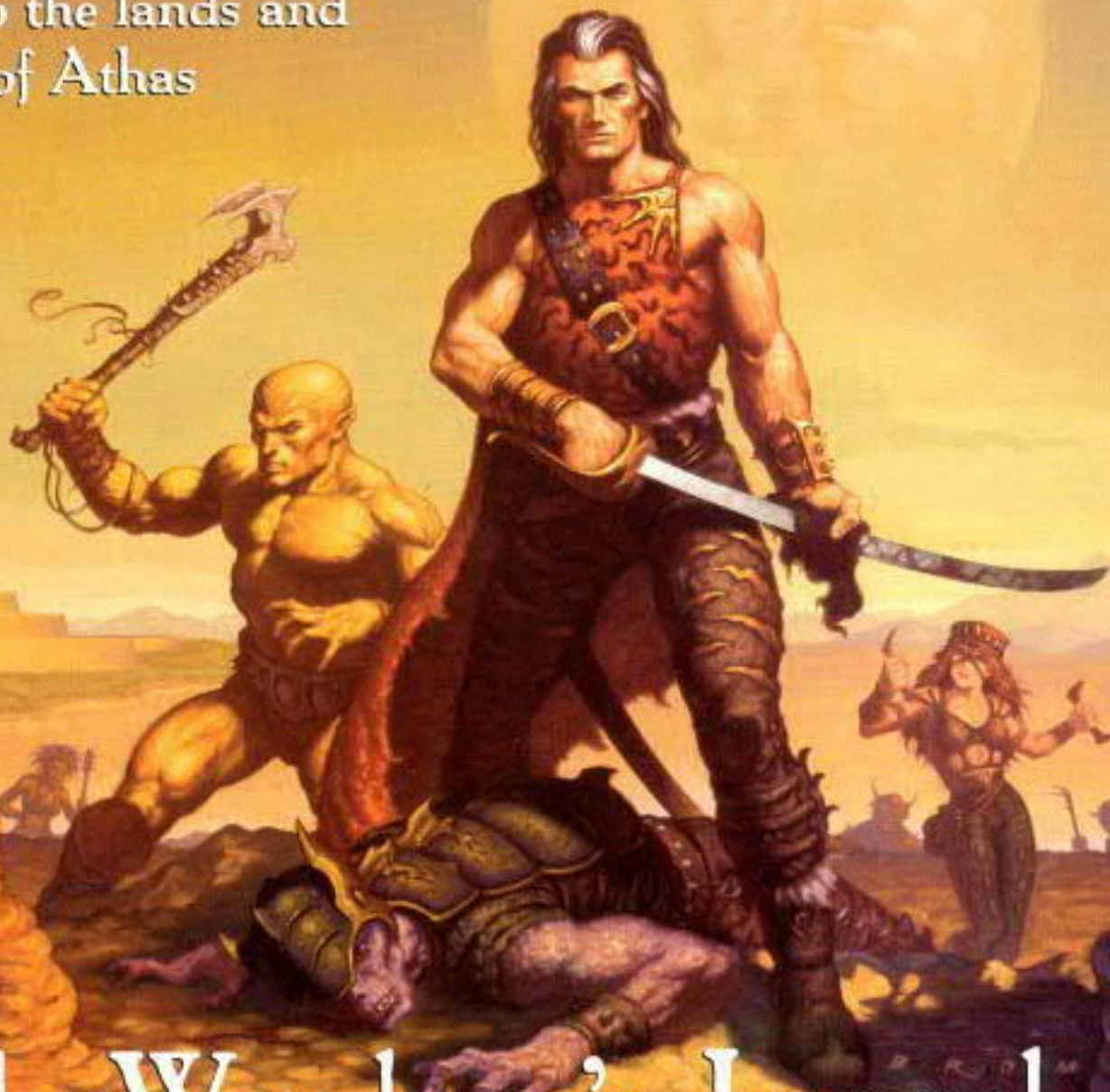
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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons  
5th Edition

# DARK SUN™

W O R L D

A comprehensive  
guide to the lands and  
people of Athas



## The Wanderer's Journal



## The Wanderer's Journal

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## Chapter One: The World of Athas

### The Wanderer's Journal

I live in a world of fire and sand. The crimson sun scorches the life from anything that crawls or flies, and storms of sand scour the foliage from the barren ground. Lightning strikes from the cloudless sky, and peals of thunder roll unexplained across the vast tablelands. Even the wind, dry and searing as a kiln, can kill a man with thirst.

This is a land of blood and dust, where tribes of feral elves sweep out of the salt plains to plunder lonely caravans, mysterious singing winds call men to slow suffocation in a Sea of Silt, and legions of slaves clash over a few bushels of moldering grain. The dragon despoils entire cities, while selfish kings squander their armies raising gaudy palaces and garish tombs.

This is my home, Athas. It is an arid and bleak place, a wasteland with a handful of austere cities clinging precariously to a few scattered oases. It is a brutal and savage land, beset by political strife and monstrous abominations, where life is grim and short.

### Overview of the World

Athas is a desert-sun-scorched and wind-scoured, parched and endless.

From the first moments of dawn until the last twinkling of dusk, the crimson sun shimmers in the olive-tinged sky like a fiery puddle of blood. It climbs toward its zenith and the temperature rises relentlessly: 100 degrees by midmorning, 110 at noon, 130—sometimes even 150—by late afternoon.

A man cannot drink fast enough to replenish the fluids he loses. As the days drag on, he feels sick and feeble. If he does not have enough water, he grows too weak to move. His mouth becomes dry and bitter, his lips, tongue, and throat grow swollen. Before long, his blood is thick and gummy. His heart must work hard to circulate it. Finally his system overheats, leaving him dead and alone in the sands.

The wind does little to help matters. As hot as a

forge's breath, it blows up sandstorms that last 50 days at a stretch, speeding the evaporation of water from skin and soil alike. A storm can darken the sky at high noon, carrying so much sand that it reduces visibility to a pace.

Breezes on Athas are suffocating and dust-laden, caking everything they touch with yellow-orange silt, spoiling food, and filling a man's eyes with pasty mud. Even still days are perilous. Columns of superheated air can rush upward in terrific whirlwinds, carrying dust, plants, and men to great heights—then suddenly dying away and leaving their reluctant passengers to fall to a horrible death.

As dangerous as it is, the wind is merely an inconvenience when compared to the greatest danger of Athas—the lack of water. In most places, it rains no more than once a year. In some places it only rains once in ten years, and the only available water lies in brackish, mineral-crusting oasis ponds. Aside from a handful of streams that trickle less than fifty miles before drying up, there is not a single river on the planet—though I have crossed plenty of ancient bridges and know that rivers were once common. What the world was like in those days, I cannot imagine.

I have already noted what the lack of water can mean to a thirsty man, but the dry climate affects Athas in other ways. It allows the sun to shine down unreflected on the barren ground, which is why it grows so hot during the day.

At night, the low humidity has the opposite effect. The day's heat escapes into the sky, plunging the temperature to 40 degrees or less—and in the mountains, even to zero.

As far as I can tell, all parts of Athas share the blazing sun, the dangerous winds, and the lack of water. Nothing I have seen in my own explorations or heard from the hundreds of travelers I have interviewed points to any other conclusion. Athas is an endless wasteland, spotted by tiny oases of fecundity, inhabited by brutal predators. It is, for all intents and purposes, a land of mortal desolation.



Though the picture I have painted so far is of a stark and rugged land, I do not mean to say that Athas is dreary or monotonous. To the contrary, it has a majestic and stark beauty. When first light casts its emerald hues over the Sea of Silt, or when sunset spreads its bloody stain over the Ringing Mountains, there is a certain feral beauty that stirs the untamed heart in all of us. It is a call to take up spear and net, to flee the city, to go and see what lurks out in the barrenness.

## General Geography

The description that follows is what, over the years, I have pieced together about the geography of our world. There are many omissions, and no doubt dozens of errors, for my information is gathered from travelers, merchants, and explorers—some of whom no doubt felt that it was in their best interest to mislead me wherever possible.

Nevertheless, certain broad outlines do emerge. Athas, or at least the explored portion, consists of about one million square miles of desert. In its center, covering an area of about 120,000 square miles, is a vast, dust-filled basin that I call the Sea of Silt. Because of travel difficulties to be discussed later, the Sea of Silt remains almost entirely unexplored.

Surrounding this dry sea is a band of Tablelands, ranging from as much as 400 miles wide to as little as 50. The Tablelands consist of many types of terrain: golden dunes, stony barrens, dust sinks, white salt flats, rocky badlands, and plains of yellow-green scrub-brush.

This is where civilization—if you can call it that—still lingers. Scattered across these flatlands are tiny oases of life where a few acres of fertile land supports a grain field, sometimes even a forest. Clinging to





## The World of Athas

these oases are the disorderly jumbles of buildings and people that we know as cities. Though each city reflects the personality of the king that rules it, all are precariously balanced at the edge of starvation, barely scratching enough food from their small plots of land to support their populations.

The Tablelands are encircled by the various ranges of the Ringing Mountains. These ranges all run north and south. To the east and west of the Sea of Silt, the mountains form solid walls separating the tablelands from the unknown regions beyond. To the north and south of the dusty sea, they form a series of parallel ribs. The deep valleys between the ridges lead away from central Athas like a series of long (and hazardous) corridors.

In every direction, beyond the mountains lie the Hinterlands. We have little knowledge of what abides there. Many men have set out to explore the depths of this unknown region, but I have never met one who returned. During the one journey that I undertook to view just the edge of the Hinterland, an invisible braxat carried off my companions, a tribe of halflings tried to eat me, and a silk wyrm hounded my trail for over a week. It is a wonder that I returned at all.

### Athasian Culture

Although Athas is a wasteland, it is not an empty wasteland. The world is fairly crawling with humans, demihumans, and humanoids. Every group has found a different way to survive in this barren and harsh environment. In general, I have found that all cultures seem to fall into one of seven basic categories. There are city dwellers, villagers, merchant caravan dynasties, herdsmen, raiders, hunter-gatherers, and hermits.

The cities, surrounded by golden fields of crops, stand at sizable oases. They are bustling enclaves of humanity, stinking of garbage and ringing with the supplications of beggars. Their tawny towers of fired brick rise from behind thick stone ramparts designed to lock residents inside as well as keep

strangers out. In the center of every city, a powerful sorcerer-king lives inside a secure fortress, ruling his subjects through a sophisticated hierarchy of bureaucrats, nobles, and rapacious clergymen. Each city is a state unto itself, its king wielding absolute authority over every living thing inside its walls and crawling through its fields.

Villages are no more than clusters of mud-brick shelters erected at minor oases in various forlorn places, such as the edge of a salt flat or in the shelter of a rocky overhang. Depending on their nature, they are ruled by officious bureaucrats, minor despots, or, occasionally, even democratic councils. At best, they are semipermanent. Sooner or later, the dragon comes calling, the oasis dries up, or a tribe of raiders sweeps out of the wastes. Within a few years of such an event, all traces of the village are buried beneath a massive sand dune or carried away by the howling wind.

The dynastic merchant houses are sophisticated trading companies with networks extending many hundreds of miles, transcending political boundaries, and spanning all social classes. Their trading posts are found on bleak peninsulas jutting into the Sea of Silt, or in box canyons located high in the Ringing Mountains. A sporadic stream of cargo runs from these outposts to the cities, carrying the goods with which the houses stock their vast bargaining emporiums. Each house may have facilities in a number of cities. Most are owned by single families and passed on from generation to generation.

Nomadic herdsmen wander the scrub plains, stony barrens, and sand dunes, pausing for a week or two wherever there is pasture enough for their flocks to graze. Their bands are usually small, consisting of five to ten extended families (50-150 individuals), for their harsh way of life will not support large populations. Most herdsmen have fiercely independent spirits, governing themselves through a council of elders. Usually, a magic wielding patriarch serves as the leader of this council.

Wherever something is worth stealing, there are





raiding tribes. These bands of despicable cutthroats live by pillaging caravans, poaching nomad flocks, and plundering helpless villages. They are cowards who make their homes in desolate places protected by wide expanses of salt flats or great tracts of rocky badlands. Their warlords are ruthless and tough, taking and holding their positions through violence and treachery.

The primitive hunting and gathering clans have the most versatile cultures. You'll encounter them anywhere: hunting snakes in the salt flats, gathering roots in the stony barrens, even stealing eggs from nests perched high atop mountainous crags. They live in small groups of three or four immediate families, usually numbering no more than twenty individuals.

Hermits have withdrawn from a society, either by choice or through coercion. They are peculiar individuals who reside at isolated oases and scratch out a meager living, either by subsistence farming or through limited hunting. Hermits live in all parts of Athas, though you won't meet many because they avoid contact with most strangers.

## Supernatural Forces

The world is full of powers beyond those that common men can master. As a rule, they are grouped into three categories: clerical magic, wizardry, and psionics. Each plays an important part in the cycle of life and death on Athas.

### Clerical Magic

On Athas, there are several different types of clerics. Each of them pays homage to one of the four elemental forces—air, earth, fire, or water. Of course, the latter are perhaps the most influential on our thirsty world, but all are powerful and worthy of respect.

Another group of people call themselves the druids and, at least by most accounts, are considered to be clerics. Druids are special in that they do not pay tribute to any single elemental force, but

rather work to uphold the dying life force of Athas. They serve nature and the planetary equilibrium. Many people consider it a lost cause, but no druid would ever admit that.

In some cities, the sorcerer-king is glorified as if he were some sort of immortal being. In fact, many such rulers are actually able to bestow spell-casting abilities upon the templars who serve them. Are they truly on par with the elemental forces worshipped by clerics? I think not.

### Wizardry

The magic of wizards is different from that of the clerical orders. It converts the energy of life into magical power that the sorcerer shapes into spells. If this is done with respect for the life forces of the world and care is taken to balance the net loss of energy with the net gain of magic, there are no adverse effects. In most cases, wizards take great care to guard the vitality of the world when casting their spells and working their enchantments.

For others, however, the long-term drain on Athas' ecology is meaningless. They care little for the life force that is lost when they spin their webs of magic. The dark souls, called Defilers, drain the power for their spells from the world around them. Plants near them wither and once fertile soil turns to sterile ash under their macabre power. Most of Athas' sorcerer-kings are Defilers of the highest power.

### Psionics

To one extent or another, every human and demi-human on Athas has psionic powers. Most people are wild talents, with only one power that they have learned to use by trial and error. But anyone can harness their psionic powers through careful practice and study, and every city has at least one training hall dedicated to teaching "the way of the mind." Many warriors, templars, and sorcerers have attended these academies and developed powerful psionic abilities in addition to their normal talents.



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Psionic powers are not magic. The user focuses his effort inward rather than outward, drawing upon natural forces that infuse his own being rather than those that imbue the world around him. Thus, the widespread use of such mental abilities does not further enhance the degradation of our battered Athas.

### History

What generally passes for the history of Athasis, in my opinion, a jumble of folklore and propaganda. Most people are too concerned with the problems of the present to devote themselves to the lessons of the past. The few who have any interest in history are the flattering lackeys of kings undertaking the project to glorify their sovereign. The resulting chronicles are implausible fables or mutually incompatible fabrications, and never should you trust what you hear in them.

Still, we can glean something from these jaded annals. The authors of the kingly histories stumble over their own words in their efforts to flatter their monarchs, but we know from the sheer number of their chronicles that most city-states are thousands of years old. The same sorcerer-king rules over the city for spans of hundreds of years, sometimes for more than a thousand. There are even cases where the current sovereign is credited with founding the city.

As incredible as such claims sound, do not discredit them too readily. It is certain that powerful sorcerers live for centuries, and I know of no king that has died in my lifetime, or that of my-father or his father.

Yet, the sorcerer-kings do die. I know of at least two deserted city-states. A monarch ruled each one, so there were once at least two more sorcerer-kings than now inhabit the world. We can only assume that the magic keeping them alive failed--or that another king killed them. In either case, the deserted cities are further evidence that Athas itself is dying. If the world were healthy, new metropolises would rise to replace those that had fallen into waste.

Turning from political histories to folklore, who

has not heard a bard's sonorous voice sing the marvels of the world before ours? The lyrics speak of a land of plenty, with grass on every hill and water in every draw. Fields of barley and whey stretched for miles, and there were so many sheep that the herds could not be counted. Proud forests of oak and maple covered the wild lands, and men were the masters of the beasts.

These ballads sing the praises of warriors who fought not for food or entertainment, but for honor, glory, and lady love. The kings in these songs were noble warriors who fought terrible beasts and waged righteous wars in defense of their subjects. Clearly, they were men who placed the needs of their domains above their own desires and cravings.

Most Athasians regard these tales as fanciful flights, mere diversions from the toil and misery that is their life. As far as the individual songs are concerned, their attitude is no doubt correct, for every singer exaggerates the story to heighten the drama. In sum, however, there may be a kernel of truth to the ancient lyrics and ballads.

The world abounds with the ruins of these forgotten kingdoms. Who has not marveled at the archaic walls of a lost city snaking from beneath a mountainous sand dune? Who has not stopped at a rocky aerie to wonder at the aged ruins of the castle perched on the summit? Who has ever crossed an ancient stone-paved road without speculating as to where it once led?

If you have ever asked yourself even one of these questions, then you feel in your heart what I have accepted as true: Athas is a barbaric shadow of some better world. Like men, the elves, dwarves, halflings, and all the demihuman races are but brutal descendants of worthier ancestors. The dragon, the lions, and the other great beasts are horrible abominations of their noble progenitors. Even the plants, such as the blood-blossomed tamarisks, are deadly scions of the foliage that once blanketed the land. The essence of every living thing, from the highest to the lowest, has been warped in some

## The World of Athas



grotesque way that makes it more vicious, more cunning, and more terrifying than its forbearers.

I have no idea what caused this atrocious transformation. Perhaps it was the law of nature, for in a savage land, only the savage will survive. Perhaps it was the influence of a sinister power, as yet unknown and unseen. Perhaps, as some say, the dragon itself

is at the heart of the matter.

If we can discover the truth, we may yet attain the glory of the ancients. Somewhere out there, buried beneath tons of sand and dust, lost in centuries of fire and blood, is an Athas that we have never known: a world of abundance and splendor, where honor is as precious as water.



## Chapter Two: Athasian Society

In my travels I have found that Athas is a world of clashing cultures. Primitive hunters stalk their prey into a city's barley fields, and are in turn hunted down by outraged nobles. Nomadic herders clog the trading roads with their unruly flocks, slowing even the fastest merchant caravan to a crawl. To keep from being massacred in their sleep, villagers working the mines of the Ringing Mountains buy off feral halfling tribes with worthless glass baubles.

On Athas, there are as many different societies as there are groups of people. Each has found a different key to survival in this harsh world. Sometimes these different bands coexist peacefully; more often, they clash whenever they meet.

Surprisingly, all of these societies are shaped by the same four forces: barrenness, shortage of metal, psionics, and magic. If you understand how any society deals with these forces, you will understand the society itself.

### Barrenness

The basic necessities of life are scarce on Athas. This means that every society must devote itself to attaining food and safeguarding its water supply.

Hunting tribes spend three-quarters of their time looking for quarry, to say nothing of killing it and preparing it to eat. At the same time, they cannot stray too far from water, for they need plenty of liquid to digest their diet of meat. When the game roams away into unknown deserts, they must often choose between starving to death or dying of thirst.

The lives of the herders are no easier. They spend their days driving their flocks of *erdlus* across the vast wastes in search of good grazing and ample water. When they are lucky enough to find good pasture, they wage a constant battle to protect their flightless birds, for few predators can resist the temptation of downing a two-hundred pound erdlu or stealing an egg from its clutch.

City dwellers have the most certain means of existence, but also the hardest lives. In the fields around the cities, whole legions of slaves toil to raise a few

meager crops. Thousands of soldiers patrol these farms day and night, killing scavengers and raiders without pause. Even then, most cities suffer frequent famines and must resort to food wars in order to keep their populations from withering away.

Given the importance of food and water on Athas, it shouldn't surprise any of us that whoever controls the food and water forms an elite class. The best stalkers, the wisest herders, or the people who own the farms and wells are always influential and politically powerful members of the community.

### Metal

Metal isn't strictly necessary for any Athasian culture to survive, but it's a great benefit to those that have it. Hunters know that metal arrowheads and spearheads are sharper and more enduring than those made of stone or bone. With metal shoes, herders can protect the feet of their mounts from the rigors of the desert wastes. City dwellers use metal to fashion tools that make backbreaking farm work easier and more efficient. Metal even facilitates commerce between societies, for merchants and traders use it as a universal currency.

Unfortunately, metals are rare. In my voyages I have been lucky enough to actually see the iron mines of Tyr, something few outsiders are ever permitted to do. They are grand affairs with hundreds of slaves toiling to bring scant traces of metal to the surface. I have come to the conclusion that the ancient societies would have considered this mine too worthless to operate. In our age, however, it is a treasure trove that has provided the sorcerer-king of Tyr with wealth and power almost unmatched in the world.

The scarcity of metal retards commerce on Athas. Without an abundance of currency, we must often resort to barter -a cumbersome affair when a merchant must haul both the goods he sells and those he receives in exchange over great distances.

The scarcity of resources hampers industrial and economic development as well. In Tyr, one maltreated but better-equipped slave accomplishes twice



what his well-fed counterparts do in cities like Urik and Balic. The only reason for this is that his tools are better. Mills and workshops that are able to glean a handful of metal tools almost always have an edge on their competitors.

In war, the advantages of metal are also plain. Tyr's army has never numbered more than ten thousand, but its elite units are composed of highly trained men, each of whom carries a steel sword and an iron-tipped javelin. Often it has destroyed an army five times its size that was armed with bone battle axes or even obsidian-edged sabers!

Who can doubt that Athas would be a very different place with an abundance of metal? Commerce would be easier and less hazardous, slaves more efficient, wars quicker and more decisive.

As I have stated earlier, it is my belief that metal was not always scarce on Athas. For the last few centuries, our main source has been debris from the ruins of ancient castles and cities. Apparently, our ancestors devoured Athas' ore supply, leaving to us little but their scrap. Now, even that meager supply is all but exhausted, and with it fades the ghost of civilization. There are those who say that our cultures and technologies can survive without metal, but I believe that they are wrong.

Still, lucky treasure hunters have been known to return from a ruin with a hoard of steel swords and shields, providing they are resourceful enough and brave enough to explore ruins that others have missed or been too frightened to enter.

I have heard tales that suits of clothing fashioned from metal have even been found from time to time. It is generally agreed that these were worn by warriors to protect against the blows of enemy weapons. I can only speculate that the climate must have been far cooler in those ancient days. Any fool that would wear such clothing now would die faster from heat stroke than he would have from the weapons of his foes. Still, the idea that there was once enough metal in the world to allow such a garment to have been manufactured astounds me.

There are even rumors that mounds of steel, silver, and gold lie hidden in the deepest tunnels of certain forlorn cities. I have never seen such a thing myself, but if such treasures exist, they will reward those who find them most handsomely. Those who control such stores of metal can buy food, power, influence, and sometimes even the sorcerer-king's protection.

## Psionics

From the lowliest slave to the most powerful sorcerer-king, psionics pervade all levels of Athasian society. Virtually every individual has some mental ability, although in many the true strength of their psionic potential remains unrealized.

Each culture values its psionic members. To the raiding tribes, individuals with clairvoyance are especially useful for locating targets. The nomads, for example, value an individual who can pinpoint the band's position in the desert.

Psionic powers are not always beneficial. They tend to be destabilizing and turbulent. There are always thieves who will use their psychokinesis to steal the property of a fellow tribesmen, and power hungry nobles who send assassins trained in psychometabolism to murder their rivals. Rebellious subjects can always find a use for nearly any psionic ability, and in seemingly peaceful villages? many sordid and disgraceful acts are carried out behind curtains of psionic deception.

Considering the potential psionic offer powers for amassing power and wealth, it should not surprise you that most cities have at least one school devoted to the Way-of the Mind. These schools are run by masters of the psionic arts, often with the stated purpose of helping the individual better understand his own potential and the responsibilities it entails. In reality, they are usually expensive academies for the sons and daughters of the wealthy, designed to develop the student's psionic powers to their full potential-with the explicit goal of gaining an advantage over their political rivals in later life. It is no



wonder that, in many cities, such schools are carefully licensed by the sorcerer-king. Sometimes, they are even banned altogether, though this merely forces the schools to disguise themselves and does nothing to eliminate them.

Psionics has often been called a great equalizer in the brutal world of Athas, for it gives even the most physically weak individual a chance to compete and survive. If anything can compensate for the gradual deterioration of our world's vital energies, it will be the power of the mind.

### Magic

Magic is arguably the mightiest force in Athas. Those wielding it call fire storms out of a calm sky, change one object into another, or kill enemies with a mere gesture. They dictate the wills of entire mobs, make the dead walk, and have even been known to stop time. Magic can expose traitors, destroy rivals, and exact unquestioning obedience from subjects. It can also conceal secret activities, uncover the king's spies, be used to assassinate royal officers, and foster general rebellion.

### Life Energy and Magic

Casting a magical spell requires energy. The power for a spell must come from somewhere, and there are two means of fueling one's magical endeavors on Athas. One is harsh and destructive, furthering the downward spiral of life on our world. The other is positive and beneficial, halting the effects of this ecological entropy for a while. Those who employ the first type of magic are called Defilers, while those who employ the latter variety are Preservers.

Defilers learn to draw magic from the land, but not the art of replacing it. Because it is this latter aspect of magic that is most difficult to master, they learn spells and advance in their art far more quickly than their counterparts. Defilers are a blight upon our world. They are the fiends who have de-

stroyed Athas, and the reason that most decent folk-especially farmers and herders-will take up arms to drive any wizard, Defiler or not, from their midst.

When the life energy of foliage is converted into magical spells, the soil in which the plants were growing becomes sterile. In most cases, it stays barren for decades. The spark of life can be returned to the ground through hard work and tender care, but few people can afford to take the time required to do so.

**Preservers** reinvigorate the soil after they drain it to power their spells. As Preservers learn their craft, they also learn to rekindle the spark of life. When they cast a spell, they replace what they have taken through a combination of natural and mystical processes (such as by working compost into the soil or by performing the *Rite of Blood* in the field they have drained). Preservers learn their spells and master their art more slowly than Defilers, for they must learn to give as well as take. Unfortunately, Preservers are scarce compared to Defilers, and it is a rare person who understands the difference between the two.

### The Veiled Alliance

Because magic is so powerful, every ruler controls it tightly. For the most part, it is impossible to maintain control of a populace dotted with numerous psionic individuals if one is not also a wizard. Thus, nearly every ruler on Athas is a wizard of some type, usually a Defiler.

Sorcerer-kings send their agents to destroy potential rival wizards hiding within their cities. Nomad witch-lords banish rival mages to the unforgiving sands of the desert. Halfling chiefs exterminate followers who show any sign of control over the supernatural. Even otherwise timid hermits have been known to risk their lives in an effort to make sure that no wizard enters their territory.

Despite their efforts, leaders seldom monopolize magic. There are always at least a few individuals in any society who practice it secretly. Of course, these



powerful people are almost always the hand-picked, loyal followers of the leader.

In most cities (and many villages, tribes, and clans), there are secret leagues of Preservers called the Veiled Alliance. The Veiled Alliances are confederations of Preservers working together to protect their members from assassination and harassment by sorcerer-kings and other lieges. The members work together to shield each other's identities from the authorities or to help those who have been discovered to escape persecution. They are often involved in plots to overthrow their oppressive overlords.

The Preservers with whom I have spoken say that there are only two drawback to belonging to a Veiled Alliance. First, membership is permanent. When you join one of these secret organizations, you pledge to uphold its charter until death. Anyone failing in this pledge is cast out, and the alliance assigns one of its members usually someone experienced in such matters) to assassinate the outcast. This seems rather severe to those of us in the rank of the uninitiated, but it is a condition of affiliation that all members agree to when they join the alliance.

Second, all Veiled Alliances require that their members be Preservers and not Defilers. The reason for this is practical, not idealistic: even a few mages will decimate a small area if they do not practice their art responsibly. Any violation of this principle always results in the banishment (and subsequent execution) of the Defiler.

From what I can tell, although each league goes by the same name, they are in fact separate organizations. Most follow the two principles outlined above, and will extend their protection to a member of an alliance from another city (providing adequate





proof of affiliation is provided). At the same time, they must be on constant watch for spies, for most rulers will stop at nothing to uncover and destroy an alliance operating within their territory. For this reason, punishments are sure and swift in any Veiled Alliance. Everyone with whom I have spoken agrees that it is better to err on the side of security than to risk exposing the entire society.

### The Worst Scourge

As bad as they are, Defilers are not the worst of magic's blights. Compared to the dragon, even sorcerer-kings are babes toying with a dimly understood gift. The dragon wields sorcery powerful enough to crush entire cities, and so destructive that we must measure the devastation caused by its spells in square miles.

Anything that crawls or walks or flies trembles at the mere sight of the horrid beast, for the dragon draws its magical energy from animal life. When it casts its spells, any creature from whom it draws energy collapses in its tracks, dying before it hits the ground. In addition, the dragon can store magical energy in its body for use at a later time. This gives it the freedom to use its spells in even the most barren of wastes and the incentive to roam over wide expanses of desert in search of food.

Being a wanton user of magic, the dragon preys upon anything that can feed its ravenous appetite for energy. When the horrid beast is about, caravans of withered corpses line the trading routes. Whole herds of desiccated erdlus rest alongside their shepherds in blackened fields of dead salt-brush. Entire villages lie smashed and flattened, the bodies of the inhabitants strewn about the streets like refuse. No society, from the smallest family of hunters to the largest, most crowded city-state, is safe from the dragon.

### The City States

Each city state is different. Its laws, customs,

economy, architecture, and general culture vary according to the tastes of the city's ruler and the needs dictated by survival.

In austere Balic, where hungry giants raid semi-weekly, every citizen is a skilled and fearless soldier. At the other extreme is decadent Tyr, where slaves outnumber citizens two-to-one. Gulg can hardly be called a city at all, lacking a single stone building and standing hidden behind a wall of thorny hedges and poisonous vines.

Despite each city's unique character, however, they all respond to the rigors of barren Athas by organizing in the same general manner. Perhaps this is an accident of history, or perhaps survival mandates this type of organization; I don't pretend to know. All I can say is that this is what I have seen in my travels.

### The Sorcerer Kings

Every city is led by a king. He (or she) may be addressed as "Magnate" in one place and "Vizier" in another, but is always the absolute dictator of his subjects.

Kings are at the top of the social order. They live near the center of the city in a fortified palace bustling with minor officials. When a potentate finds it necessary to leave his palace, he does so only with a great deal of preparation and pomp, well-protected by magic and his full bodyguard. If this cannot be arranged, he will not leave (except in the most dire of emergencies). The last thing any king of Athas wants is to walk unprotected among his subjects.

At most without exception, every king is a powerful Defiler who has risen to his position through the unprincipled use of magical and psionic abilities. All monarchs jealously guard the use of magic and employ a sizable force of templars whose sole duty it is to ferret out and execute unauthorized Preservers. In every city that I have visited, the kings are especially anxious to infiltrate agents into the Veiled Alliance, as an organization of Preservers presents a viable challenge to their magical power base.





Every king uses his magic to prolong his life, and most have reigned for hundreds of years. Many have reigned for more than a thousand years, and one or two are even credited with founding their ancient cities.

The king is sometimes considered his city's deity. His priests force the citizens to build temples to the king and lead them in pompous ceremonies of worship. Sometimes, the nobles and a few wealthy citizens consider the king their benefactor. Never, however, are other classes misled by such pretensions. The merchants see the king for what he is—a center of political and magical power that must be appeased if they are to continue their commerce in his city. If the ranks of slaves see the king as a god, it is certainly as an evil and corrupt one that keeps them in bondage and makes a misery of their lives.

In return for his exalted position and unlimited authority, the king has the duty to administer justice, protect the citizens from famine and crime, and safeguard the city from external attack. In practice, these gluttonous monarchs spend most of their effort protecting their power base and seeing to their own comfort. Justice tends to be self-serving and arbitrary, and the king's agents are so corrupt that they often ignore crime altogether—providing the criminal pays them a large enough bribe.

All kings take the matter of famine seriously, however. When a city's population starves, one of two things happen: a terrible revolt breaks out or disease and pestilence run rampant through the streets. In either case, the slave population plummets. Untended fields go barren, fortifications fall into disrepair, and the city grows weak. Therefore, most kings take quick and decisive action when famine begins: they raise armies and go to another city-state, steal its food, and replenish their supply of slaves.

Because starting a war is the typical response to a city's internal problems, I have never heard of a sorcerer-king who does not take the matter of security from external attack seriously. All kings maintain standing armies, they usually have some large defen-

sive project under construction, and I have heard that they devote most of their magical research to developing spells to fend off enemy armies. In fact, most cities are so well defended that it is impossible to criticize any sorcerer-king on this basis.

## The Templars

*Templars* are clergymen devoted to the sorcerer-king of their city. Like other priests, they are granted spells in return for their worship. Unlike true priests, who draw their power from the elemental forces of the world, Templars tap into the magical forces of their sorcerer-king. When a templar beseeches his monarch for a spell, the sorcerer-king grants the request by employing his own mystical energy to power the templar's magic. Because of the strain this places on both the sorcerer-king and the surrounding land, young templars do not ask for (or receive) many spells. As close personal servants of the sorcerer-king, however, high-ranking templars have greater access to magic than one might expect.

These greedy templars dominate the king's bureaucracy. Although each city organizes its agencies differently, every bureaucracy is steeped in ancient traditions designed to promote the organization's welfare and keep it tied closely to the monarch. Templar bureaus tend to be permeated by intradepartmental treachery and embroiled in external political intrigues with other agencies of the city's bureaucracy.

As agents of their monarch's will, templars are feared and despised by common city-dwellers—with good reason, if you ask me. These priests abuse their positions steadily, enforcing the king's edicts with spiteful indifference, taking bribes, and dealing out unjust punishments to anyone who objects. Generally, complaints about the bureaucracy's corruption fall on deaf ears, for the templars are any sorcerer-king's best means of maintaining a stranglehold on the population.

Templars are the guardians of reading and writing. Because knowledge is power, and the most effi-



cient way of passing on knowledge is through writing, no one but templars and nobles are permitted to read and write. One of the most sacred duties of the templar bureaucracy is to prevent the knowledge of this art from spreading beyond their own ranks and that of the nobility. Most kings have authorized them to execute on the spot anyone else demonstrating any knowledge of these critical skills.

Templars are commonly recruited from the offspring of other templars, or from the ranks of freemen. Technically, a member of the nobility may also join the king's bureaucracy, but most aristocrats consider such positions beneath their honor.

### The Nobility

The nobles control the farms and the water of the cities. Usually, each noble family picks a senior member to sit on a parliamentary council. In theory, these councils act as advisory bodies to the monarchs, but in reality they are little more than administrative bodies through which the king passes his commands to the aristocracy.

It is not rare, however, for the interests of the nobles to be opposed to those of the templars and/or the kings. On such occasions, the advisory councils sometimes find the courage to voice their opposition. When this happens, a flurry of political assassinations usually follows. Most people assume that these assassinations are carried out by the templars on their own initiative or at the king's request.

Though the nobles sometimes gather the courage to oppose the templars, or even the king, don't make the mistake of believing that they have the best interests of the city populace at heart. As a class, they are interested only in preserving their hereditary land rights, and they form the largest block of slave-owners in any city.

No matter how opposed the nobles might be to the king's policies, they can always be counted on to protect the city (as invasion would strip them of their landed rights). For this reason, every family is allowed to maintain a standing army of slave soldiers,

with the young men of the family serving as officers. In an emergency, the king can freely call upon these armies to supplement his own troops.

As you might expect, the nobles sometimes turn their armies on each other or the templars, but never the sorcerer-king. The king's magic is usually more than sufficient to deal with the use of force, and any family foolish enough to challenge him in such an obvious fashion suffers terrible consequences.

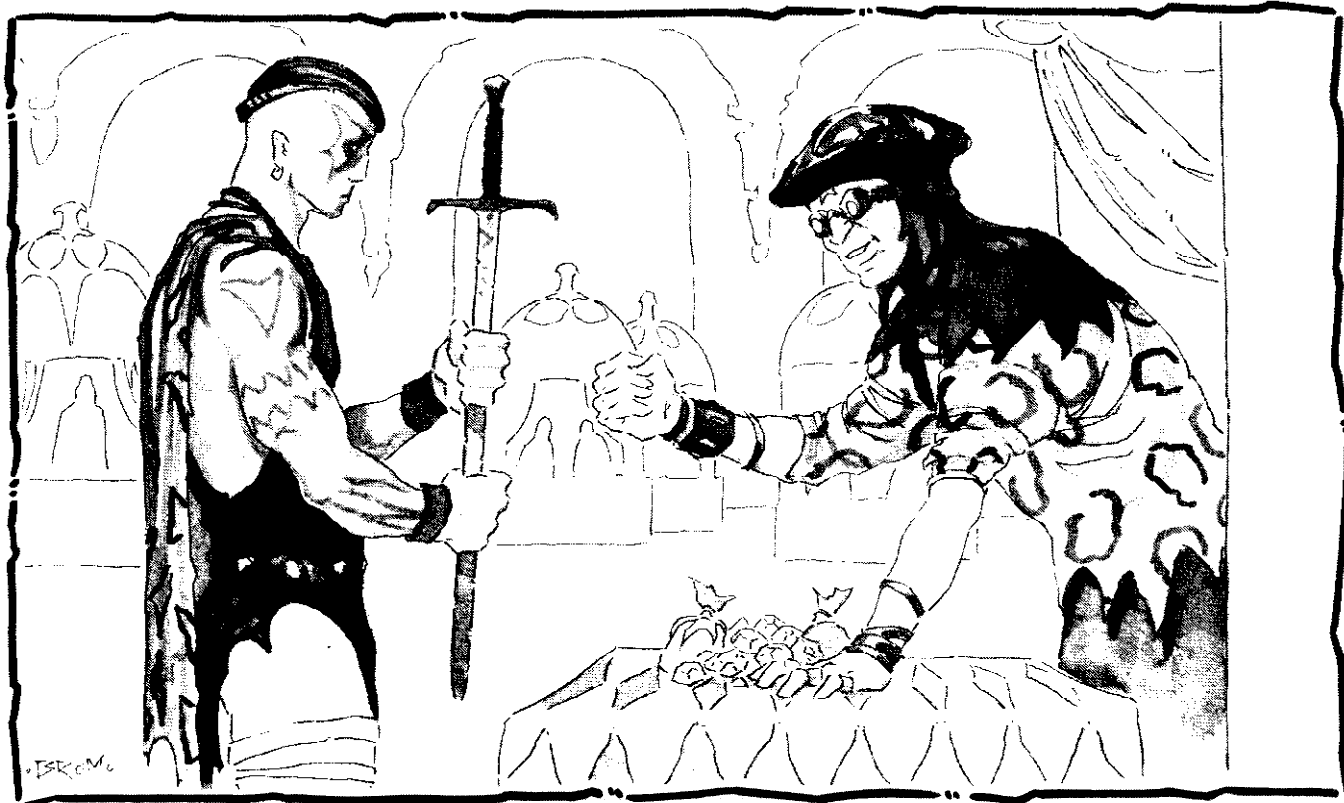
Like the templars, the nobles are permitted to read and write, and they are usually equally vigilant about protecting this critical secret.

### The Freemen

Put simply, freemen are citizens of the city who are not owned by the king, the templars, or the nobility. By virtue of their birth status, they have the right to reside within the protection of its walls and, theoretically at least, to enjoy the benefits of its laws. But if a freeman cannot pay his debts, exhibits knowledge of reading, writing, or magic, or undertakes some other forbidden activity, he is judged to be in violation of the king's edicts. The templars have the right to (and almost certainly will) seize him and sell him into slavery. This practice is a source of considerable income to many templars.

The bulk of freemen are craftsmen and artisans who keep their shops within the city walls. Heavily taxed by the king and harassed by the corrupt templars, they are generally ill-contented and suspicious, but too cowardly and intimidated to openly resist their tormenters.

Less common in the class of freemen are the clerics. Clerics are priests who worship the elemental planes and draw their magical energies from them. If their devotion allows them to live in cities, they make a nice living by selling their services as healers or workers of minor miracles. Templars tend to regard these true priests with suspicion and animosity, though most have learned that it is wiser not to harass a cleric.



## Merchants

Every city serves as the headquarters for at least half-a-dozen merchant houses, and several times that number maintain trading emporiums within the city walls. Usually, these trading emporiums are located in a particular quarter of town, where a purchaser can buy nearly anything that Athas has to offer if he knows where to look.

Merchants are not citizens, for the nature of their work dictates that they maintain contact with a wide variety of societies (which makes our sorcerer-kings distrustful). Instead, merchants are granted long-term licenses to reside in a city, and in return they donate large sums of money to public works (i.e., to the sorcerer-king).

Merchants are one of the few classes that the bureaucracy is careful not to harass. The templars have learned that if they try to intimidate or black-

mail one merchant, they will find that everything they wish to buy from other merchants has inexplicably doubled in price or vanished from the market.

Technically, merchants are not permitted to read or write, but they are allowed to keep accounts. I should note that most houses have highly developed methods of "keeping accounts." For all practical purposes, most merchants can both read and write in the secret language of their houses. Not surprisingly, jealous templars spend a considerable amount of energy trying to prove to the king that the keeping of accounts is, in fact, a form of reading and writing.

For additional information on this subject, I have included a more complete description in the section entitled *Merchant Houses* later in this chronicle.



## Elven Merchants

Some elven tribes earn their livelihoods as traders. Usually, they are less established than the merchant houses, so they sell their wares in crowded bazaars located on the edges of the true merchant quarter. Elves have a reputation for smuggling and selling banned goods such as spell components. (By the way, if you expect a merchant to guarantee his product, it is best not to buy from an elf).

## Slaves

A person can become a slave in one of three ways: by being born a slave, by being captured during a war or other armed conflict, or by being sold into slavery for committing some crime or failing to pay one's debts.

A member of any race or social class can become a slave, though nobles and merchants usually have friends or family who will buy their freedom for them. It is also rare for elemental clerics or mages to become slaves, as they can usually escape easily. Instead of selling such individuals into bondage, prudent templars simply execute them when they capture them.

We can take one bit of solace from the institution of slavery, however: there are a surprising number of former templars in their ranks. The losers of the political infighting in the king's bureaucracy are often sold into slavery. Templar slaves are generally the subject of abuse and ridicule by their newly established peers and generally die quickly as a result of some tragic accident.

There are several classes of slave: gladiators, artists, soldiers, laborers, and farmers.

## Gladiators

The wealthiest templars and most noble families maintain stables of men and women picked and trained for their fighting prowess. These slaves are sent to fight in the gladiatorial stadiums for public entertainment. Their owners, sitting in private boxes

perched high above the arenas, often wager considerable sums on the outcome of these battles. More than one noble has been sold into slavery for not being able to pay the debts he incurred when a favored gladiator fell.

The best of these gladiators are *mul*s (pronounced: *mül*), a tough crossbreed of human and dwarf. They retain the height, dexterity, and cunning intelligence of their human side, but are also gifted with the durability and strength of their dwarven parent. From their dwarven line, they also inherit a certain single-mindedness which makes them vicious fighters.

Standing over six feet tall, muls weigh two hundred to three hundred pounds, have hairless coppery skin as tough as gith hide, and tend toward introspective, gruff dispositions. They are born sterile and cannot reproduce their own kind.

Despite their combat abilities, muls don't make good soldiers. In addition to being very expensive to buy or breed, muls are intelligent enough to recognize when their officers are making a mistake and stubborn enough to refuse foolish orders.

## Artists

In most Athasian cities, the arts are appreciated, but not as highly regarded as many feel they should be. Although templars and nobles alike enjoy being surrounded by artistic creations, none of them would ever trouble to create such a thing themselves. Therefore, all arts are entrusted to slaves.

One of the best ways for a slave to elevate his position is to develop and demonstrate some sort of artistic ability, such as singing, reciting poetry, painting, sculpting, and so forth. If he or she has enough talent, a noble or templar will purchase the slave and treat him to a life of pampered luxury. In exchange, the owner expects the slave to produce beautiful work which will impress his friends. (I must note that because of the dubious tastes of nobles and templars, many artists must compromise their artistic vision in order to stay alive.)



In most cities, it is common practice to secretly teach valued slaves the art of reading and writing, so that they may read the words of the masters and record their own observations for the owner's next of kin (this is how I came by the art myself). For the artists, there is only one drawback to this privilege: popularity is a fickle thing, and most artists fail out of favor within a few years of their success.

When that happens, those who have been taught how to read and write suffer one of two fates: their owners either have them executed for knowing how to read and write, or they are sent to the gladiatorial pits as fodder. It is no wonder that many artists, upon sensing their popularity beginning to wane, plan elaborate escapes and flee into the desert as I did.

## Soldier Slaves

Both sorcerer-kings and the noble houses maintain standing armies of slave soldiers. The quality of these soldiers varies widely. In most cases, they are simply burly slaves who have been taken from the fields, equipped with some manner of weaponry, then taught to fight as a unit. To keep these soldiers in line, officers rely on a combination of privileged treatment and harsh punishments.

The best armies of the noble houses are selected as infants, removed from their parents, and raised by officers. During their harsh childhoods, these children learn two things: to be loyal to their owning family, and to fight without regard for themselves.

In order to ensure that the armies of their nobility are not a threat to their own power, many sorcerer-kings raise armies of half-giants. This powerful race was created by the magical crossbreeding of humans and giants and their strength can put even a powerful mul to shame.

To oversee these half-giant troops, the monarchs rely upon hand-picked templar officers who use their magical abilities to keep the brutes in line. Noble houses never use half-giant soldiers, for they lack the magic necessary to keep such troops under control.

## Laborers

Every city has a large force of laborer slaves. About half are owned by enterprising freemen who make their livings building homes, shops, merchant emporiums, and other private structures. The other half are usually owned by the monarch, overseen by the templars, and spend their time building and maintaining various public structures such as bridges, temples, and city walls.

Generally speaking, slaves owned by the freemen are well-fed and cared for, for they are an investment that the owner does not care to squander. Laborers owned by the king, however, are fed barely enough to keep them alive, and once they prove too weak to work, they are executed. As agents of the monarch, the templars can always procure more slaves by arresting minor law-breakers or vagrants.

The ranks of the laborers are dominated by strong races such as dwarves, half-giants, baazrags, and muls too old or maimed to fight in the gladiatorial arenas.

## Farmers

At least half of any city's slave population are farmers owned by the nobles. These starving dregs labor in the fields around the city, working the soil, carrying water, digging up man-choking vines, and picking poisonous insects off crop leaves.

If an overseer sees a slave touch his mouth without permission, he whips the man mercilessly. If he catches a slave stealing food or water, he cuts off the thief's hand. When a slave loses both hands, he can no longer work and is put to death.

The only consolation in the farmer's life is that when a tribe of raiders attacks, or when a flock of wild erdlus races through a field, he can sometimes escape into the desert. Whether or not this is an improvement is hard to say, but the desire for freedom often outweighs the urge to live.



## Wizards

Despite the persecutions of the templars and the sorcerer-kings, every city has its share of wizards. Of course, you will never meet one who openly admits to his art, but there are nevertheless mages in every city.

## Defilers

Cities are the hardest places for inexperienced Defilers to survive. Not only are they hunted by the agents of the monarch, but few citizens will provide them with refuge or assistance—in addition to fearing the king's wrath, most people resent what the Defiler's magic does to the land. For this reason, most Defilers lead solitary lives of constant apprehension, associating only with the shady elves who sell them spell components.

## The Veiled Alliance

Mages have life a little easier. As members of the Veiled Alliance, they have a network of friends and allies to whom they can turn when they need support. The alliance helps them procure spell components without exposing their identities to untrustworthy elves, warns them about nosy templar agents, protects them from psionic and magical probes, and helps them escape the city if they are discovered.

Joining a Veiled Alliance is no easy matter, however. From what I understand of the organization in Tyr, for example, before a Preserver is asked to join, a current member must propose to the entire organization that they extend an invitation to the prospective associate. If any of the current members states a reason for excluding the candidate, he is not invited to join. Only after all the members have



been polled and no one objects does the proposing member extend an invitation to the candidate. Such invitations are seldom refused, for by the time a Preserver is offered membership in the Veiled Alliance, he is well aware of the benefits it can provide.

As a courtesy, most Veiled Alliances extend their protection to Alliance members from other cities. Once, I was in the company of an Alliance member when he requested such a courtesy. First, we sought out a tavern that we had heard Alliance members frequented. As we entered, the Preserver covered the lower part of his face with his hand. This did not appear to be so much a secret password, however, as an indication that we were looking for a member of the city's Veiled Alliance.

After we sat down, we were approached by a psionist. This woman asked us several questions, and all the while I could feel her probing our minds for lies. At first, I thought that she found our answers unsatisfactory, for she simply stood and left without saying a word. A short time later, however, a waif came to our table and informed us that a guide was waiting for us. This guide took us to the home of a high-ranking Alliance member, who acted as our host and protector while we were in the city. He did not introduce us to any other members of the Alliance, and, though he treated us courteously enough, I was aware that if we had acted in a manner that could be considered even slightly suspect, we would have been killed in our sleep.

## Gender in the Cities

In most city-states, there is no distinction made between the positions which men and women may hold, for both sexes seem equally capable of the treachery required to attain and hold power. At least two sorcerer-kings are in fact sorcerer-queens, and women rise or fall as fast as men in the ranks of the templars. Many noble houses are represented on the monarch's advisory council by matriarchs, and the control of most merchant houses passes to the eldest competent child, whether it is a son or a daughter.

Even in the ranks of slaves, sex makes little difference. Women fight as gladiators and soldiers alongside their male counterparts, and artists are treated the same no matter which sex they are. About the only place where gender makes any difference is in the lowest rank of slavery, where there is a slight preference to make males laborers due to their slight advantage in strength.

## Race in the Cities

Although racial dispositions tend to group humans and demihumans along class lines, this is not due to any sort of bigotry. In no city that I have been to is there a policy, official or otherwise, that excludes any race from membership in any organization or group. There are dwarven templars, elven nobles, human gladiators, and halfling craftsmen. In short, a member of any race can hold any position, provided he has the necessary talents and skills.

This is certainly not due to any benevolence or sense of justice on the part of the sorcerer kings. I suspect that it has more to do with the fact that such prejudices are a foolish waste of valuable resources.

However, this is not to say that all races are equally represented in all classes of society. Every race has certain dispositions that suit it for certain positions in society. The following paragraphs list the occupations which each race commonly pursues in a city.

## Humans

Humans are the most common and versatile of all the races. They are typically found in any position, from sorcerer-king to farmer. Compared to dwarves, muls, and half-giants, they are not very strong, so there are less of them in the ranks of soldier-slaves and laborers than their proportion to the total population might indicate. Humans have a talent for treachery and political intrigue, so they form a clear majority in the ranks of templars and nobles.



### Dwarves

Due to their strength, dwarves make good laborers, soldiers, and craftsmen, so there tend to be large concentrations of them in these classes. However, if a dwarf sets his mind to attaining a certain position, he can overcome nearly any barrier to his success through sheer determination. I have met hard-working dwarves in the ranks of the templars, nobility, artists, and gladiators.

### Elves

Most elves found in the cities represent their tribes in the trading bazaars. They are expert bargainers, but are also extremely unreliable to anyone except members of their own tribes. Elves usually avoid slavery by fleeing at the first sign of trouble, but when forced into bondage, they make excellent farmers (provided their owners can keep them from running away), and are often selected as artists due to their ability to flatter potential patrons. Though I have never frequented the Games, I understand that elves also make interesting gladiators, winning their victories through speed and stealth where their opponents rely on strength and endurance.

### Half-elves

City-born half-elves are rarely accepted as members of their elven parent's tribe, for their human half makes them suspect to the clannish minds of elven tribesmen. At the same time, they suffer from the reputation for deceit and unreliability that taints elven merchants. Therefore, most half-elves grow as loners, learning quickly to rely only on themselves and to take advantage of others to get what they want. These traits serve them well in the ranks of the templars. When sold into slavery, they either convince their owners that they have hidden artistic potential or find themselves working in the fields as farmers.

### Half-giants

Because of their limited intellectual capacity, half-giants do poorly in positions of power. They make short-lived templars and aristocrats, and most people are far too cautious with their wealth to buy anything that a half-giant craftsman makes. Therefore, even if born into freedom, the unfortunate members of this race find it difficult to make a living as an honest freeman and usually find themselves bound into slavery. They are generally purchased either by craftsmen in need of strong laborers or by templars filling a half-giant regiment for the king. Occasionally, half-giants manage to retain their freedom for a few years by hiring themselves out as mercenaries.

### Muls

By their very nature, all muls are born into slavery for the purpose of gladiatorial training. If they prove unsuitable for this purpose, their strength usually commands a good price as a laborer. Occasionally, muls win or purchase their own freedom. When this happens, they make excellent templars. Similarly, they can always find ready employment as an elite mercenary, in the permanent guard of a noble family, or a merchant house sentry cadre.

### Thri-kreen

These giant, intelligent insects are not common in cities, for their lives are devoted to the hunt and they possess only a dim understanding of human society. Nevertheless, they are sometimes taken as slaves. In this case, they serve as laborers or farmers, but never as soldiers (they are known to turn on their masters, and any man who trusts one with a weapon is considered a fool). Occasionally, when its pack has been destroyed, a thri-kreen comes into a city of its own free will. In these cases, it either seeks out a position as a templar assassin or volunteers its service as gladiator on behalf of some lucky noble.





## Halflings

Halflings are rare in cities, for they are possessed of a personality even more feral than that of the thri-kreen. When taken as slaves, they are usually trained for the gladiatorial arena as a curiosity, for it is well-known that they die quickly in bondage. Halflings who have been cast out of their own tribes will serve nobles as hunting guides or craftsmen as stonechippers, but only if their freedom is in no way impinged and in return for room and board only (they view wages as a form of slavery).

## Villages

In your travels, you'll find villages scattered all over Athas, from islands in the Sea of Silt to peaks high in the Ringing Mountains. Usually, they stand at some site of moderate importance, such as a minor oasis, the crossroads of two trading routes, or near a flint or obsidian quarry. They consist of a few crudely built structures erected within a small area.

Some villages are surrounded by a stone wall or a thorn-hedge stockade, but all are located in the most defensible position possible. Several times a year, the villagers will be called upon to defend their homes from beasts, raiders, or monsters, and they realize the advantage terrain can provide. No matter how carefully defended a hamlet is, however, don't count on it existing for very long. Sooner or later, its defenses will fail and the inhabitants will have to flee or die, abandoning their shabby homes to the desert.

## Client Villages

The largest, best equipped villages are sponsored by the city-states, usually because there is something in the local area that is of importance to the city. Tyr, for example, sponsors a village at the site of its iron mine, and Urik maintains a sizable town near the obsidian quarries of the Smoking Crown.

Occasionally, some interest other than a city also sponsors a village. For instance, the merchant

houses of Wavir, Rees, and Tomblador in the city of Balic protect a critical junction along their trading routes by sponsoring the fortress village of Altaruk.

The leader of most client villages is a military governor assigned by the sponsoring agency. In the case of city-run villages, this leader is usually a moderately powerful templar of proven loyalty to the sorcerer-king. Other sponsors usually rely upon a Preserver or Defiler as the commander. The governor is assisted in his duties by subordinate officers—templars if a city is sponsoring the village, mercenary fighters if someone else is sponsoring it.

Compared to cities, these hamlets are culturally backward. When visiting them, you will find only the barest necessities and no amenities. The Veiled Alliance is rare in client villages, for most hamlets are so small that it is impossible for a mage to hide his presence for long. Where the Alliance does exist, it is only because the members are powerful enough that the authorities feel it would be more trouble to smash than it is worth. The other inhabitants of villages are mostly desperate and rough individuals whose favorite pastimes are far from conducive to the public peace. The governor's authority over the inhabitants is enforced by virtue of the garrison he commands.

Client villages are rarely self-sustaining. They usually draw their water from a local well or spring, but they must rely upon shipments from their sponsors for food and other supplies. Often, enemies find it easier to destroy the village by cutting off these supply lines than by attacking the village itself.

Unlike most other hamlets, when a client village is destroyed, the sponsor generally rebuilds it as quickly as possible. Often, to prevent such a holding from being looted repeatedly, the sponsor also goes to considerable effort to track down and eliminate the force that ruined the village in the first place.

## Slave Villages

As we all know, slave escapes are far from rare on Athas. Those who survive inevitably find their way



to one of the hundreds of slave groups hiding in the most forlorn parts of the desert.

Because slaves are not well equipped to survive the rigors of the desert, most bands form *raiding tribes* (described later). These tribes make their bases in villages located in the most miserable, difficult-to-reach parts of the desert. If you happen to stumble upon a slave village, you won't be allowed to leave without first becoming a tribe member, and you won't be asked to become a tribe member unless you can prove you're an escaped slave or will perform some great service for the tribe. The only alternative to membership, however, is a slow and lingering death in the desert.

The leaders of slave villages are usually the best military thinkers, which means these hamlets are dominated by soldiers or gladiators. Wizards or ex-templars-turned-slave never serve as leaders, for the

slaves are too wary of magical power to trust such men in positions of leadership. No matter who leads the community, however, he must be careful not to be seen as a dictator. The slaves are quick to overthrow anyone who limits their freedom.

Despite unpleasant associations with the sorcerings, slaves realize what wizards can do to protect them. Therefore, wizards and sorcerers are more tolerated in slave villages than anywhere else. Usually, however, a hamlet has only one type of wizard: either Preservers or Defilers. The friction caused by the two different approaches to magic is destructive to village harmony.

Many escaped slaves were once artists, so most slave hamlets have a rich cultural life. Should you visit a slave village, you will no doubt find brilliant masterpieces of sculpture and painting in ramshackle huts, and be entertained at night by poetry



recitations, concerts, and plays.

Most slave villagers are truly thankful for their newfound freedom, so you will note a certain blissful atmosphere in the community. At the same time, you had better be aware that there is also an undercurrent of barbarism that could explode into violence at any moment. Many ex-slaves are gladiators, soldiers, and other rough sorts who believe that the best way to resolve differences is with the sharp end of a dagger.

Whether artist or gladiator, all the inhabitants are painfully aware that slave-takers from a nearby city could appear at any time, so they live with only one goal in mind: to enjoy what time they have to the fullest.

### Dwarven Villages

You will find dwarven villages in any place dwarves have a reason to gather for a common purpose. Dwarves wishing to build a toll-bridge have established villages on isolated banks of dust fjords. Others, convinced that hidden seas lie under the Great Ivory Plain, have founded a hamlet in the center of the vast salt flat to drill for water. Still others, determined to restore the lost City of Dwarven Kings to its former glory, have built their village in the middle of the vast expanse of sand that long ago buried the ancient metropolis.

The leader of most dwarven villages is the person who first devoted himself to the idea that is the focus of the town's existence. All of the other dwarves look to him for guidance and planning, executing his most tentative suggestions as if they were commands. If the leader of the village dies, then leadership is passed on in descending order of arrival. The dwarf who joined the project second becomes the new leader, then the one who joined third, fourth, and so on.

In these villages, dwarven culture, what there is of it, centers on the family. When the dwarves are not working toward achieving the community's focus, they are caring for their families. Relations between

the families are generally close and friendly, their ties strictly regulated by a code of honor. Although it is extremely rare for a dwarf to break this code, those who do are banished from the village. If you ever visit a dwarven village, be sure to ask for a recitation of its code of honor as soon as you reach the outskirts, or you may find yourself entangled in a blood feud with an entire community of stubborn dwarves.

There is no Veiled Alliance in any dwarven community, and wizards are not tolerated within their bounds unless someone the dwarves trust will vouch that the wizard is a friend of the dwarven race.

### Halfling Villages

As noted later (see *Hunting and Gathering Clans*), most halflings wander the forest ridges along the crest of the Ringing Mountains, sustaining themselves through hunting and gathering. Generally, they live in small, isolated clans that ramble through a well-defined territory.

Every 100 days, however, these clans go to a small village abutting their territory. The village is little more than a stone pyramid rising above the forest canopy, surrounded by ten to twelve stone houses where the tribal chief, his wives, and high priests live.

The chief resembles the sorcerer-king of the cities in that he is the absolute ruler of his territory (usually all the forest within fifty miles of his village), and in that he is a powerful wizard. However, all halfling chiefs are Preservers, not Defilers, and exercise great care not to destroy the forest when they use their magic. For this reason, their magic tends to be much less powerful than that of the sorcerer-kings, and their lifetimes are limited to a normal span. Most of their powers come from their psionic abilities.

Halfling villages serve two important functions. First, they are a neutral area where different clans can meet without infringing on each other's territory. Thus, this is where marriages are arranged, goods are traded, and information is passed be-



tween clans.

Second, a village is the chief's home and the center of the government. When the halfling clans go to a village, they take with them food and other items to sustain the chief, his family, and the advisors. Assuming the chief deems the offering adequate, he rewards them by bestowing upon them the ranger-like abilities that make halflings such capable hunters and stalkers.

Aside from using his powers to help his followers be good hunters, the chief also has the duty to defend his clans' territories from outside encroachment. Therefore, he can conscript subjects as warriors or to build communal structures that serve the general welfare of entire tribe.

This authority is never invoked for the purpose of fighting or building defenses against other halflings. Among all halflings, there is such racial harmony that they never fight with one another. When confronted with conflicting interests, even two chiefs will work together to find some compromise that serves both of them.

Before moving on in my narrative, I must take a moment to offer a warning to any reader who is contemplating a visit to a halfling village: the greatest gift a clan can offer its chief is a feast. And the finest feast a halfling can imagine is a delicious human or demi-human who has wandered into their territory and been hunted down.

### Dynastic Merchant Houses

Merchants are the masters of commerce. In one way or another, everything that a city-state needs and cannot produce itself must pass through their hands. For Tyr to trade its precious iron for ceramic pots from Balic, a merchant must purchase the iron in Tyr, carry it to Balic, arrange an exchange, carry the pots back to Tyr, and sell them. The merchant makes a tidy profit at both ends of his journey—which is only fair, when you consider the risks involved in transporting such commodities.

Merchants are indispensable to every city, but

that does not make them popular. Successful merchants become incredibly wealthy, a fact that templars and nobles alike envy. A merchant's business dictates that he ignore governmental boundaries and avoid political allegiances, which makes him suspect in the eyes of the sorcerer-kings.

Merchants are jealously tolerated, but never truly welcomed by the upper classes. The templars grant them long-term licenses to reside and do business within the city walls, but merchants are never considered citizens and are not granted the protection of the city's laws.

As a consequence of their non-citizen status and the requirements of their profession, merchants have developed a specialized sub-society of their own. They organize themselves into companies called *merchant houses*. These houses consist of several different branches, each designed to fulfill one aspect of the company's needs. Most merchants see no commercial value in keeping the basic structure of their organizations secret, so it is possible to provide a sketch of the way most houses operate.

### Headquarters

Most trading houses are owned by a single family, which maintains a headquarters in its favorite city. Usually, it is a large, well-defended compound situated in a secure area as far away from noble mansions and templar complexes as possible. Although they will not discuss the matter, we can assume that a great deal of the family's wealth is stored in secret vaults within these compounds. Needless to say, merchant headquarters are heavily guarded against both assassins and thieves, and all of them have established sophisticated escape routes in case the need arises for a sudden departure.

The family patriarch (or matriarch) directs the operations of the entire merchant house from the headquarters. Agents from the house's farthest outposts are constantly entering and leaving the compound, delivering profits, collecting bonuses, making reports, receiving instructions, and attend-



ing to every detail of business. Despite the constant buzz of activity, however, the guards at the gate will permit only agents of the house to enter the compound. In the case of larger houses, recognition is often achieved through secret signals or passwords.

Merchant houses are owned in common by all direct descendants of the founder, but control is passed on from the patriarch or matriarch to any family member of his or her choosing. In the most successful of the merchant houses, the patriarchs are careful to choose their successors on the basis of ability and integrity. When this is not the case, however, the rest of the owning family sometimes withdraws its support from the patriarch and chooses a new one—or even allows the house to collapse.

## Emporiums

In addition to their headquarters, most merchant houses maintain large trading emporiums in five to ten different cities. These facilities consist of large buildings where all manner of goods are stored in neat bins. When a resident enters one of these emporiums, an agent of the house is assigned to accompany him and see to his needs.

If the customer has come to sell, he will discover that the agent is interested in buying almost anything. Of course, a few restrictions apply. First, it cannot be against the laws of the city to possess or otherwise handle the item being offered. Second, the item must be of demonstrated value to someone somewhere. Finally, the resident must be willing to part with the item for about half of its true worth (a quarter if it must be transported to another city before being resold). If a deal is struck, the customer is paid in hard currency or goods, as he prefers.

If the customer has come to buy, an agent will lead him through the emporium and offer to sell him anything in which he expresses an interest. Generally, most emporiums have an ample supply of common items, such as tools, building supplies, clothes, etc., and also supply one or two types of rare items, such as jewelry, gems, food, weapons,

etc. Although it is possible for a customer to bargain for a lower price, most agents will not accept less than an item's true value—and will obviously try for somewhat more. Payment is accepted in goods or metal coin.

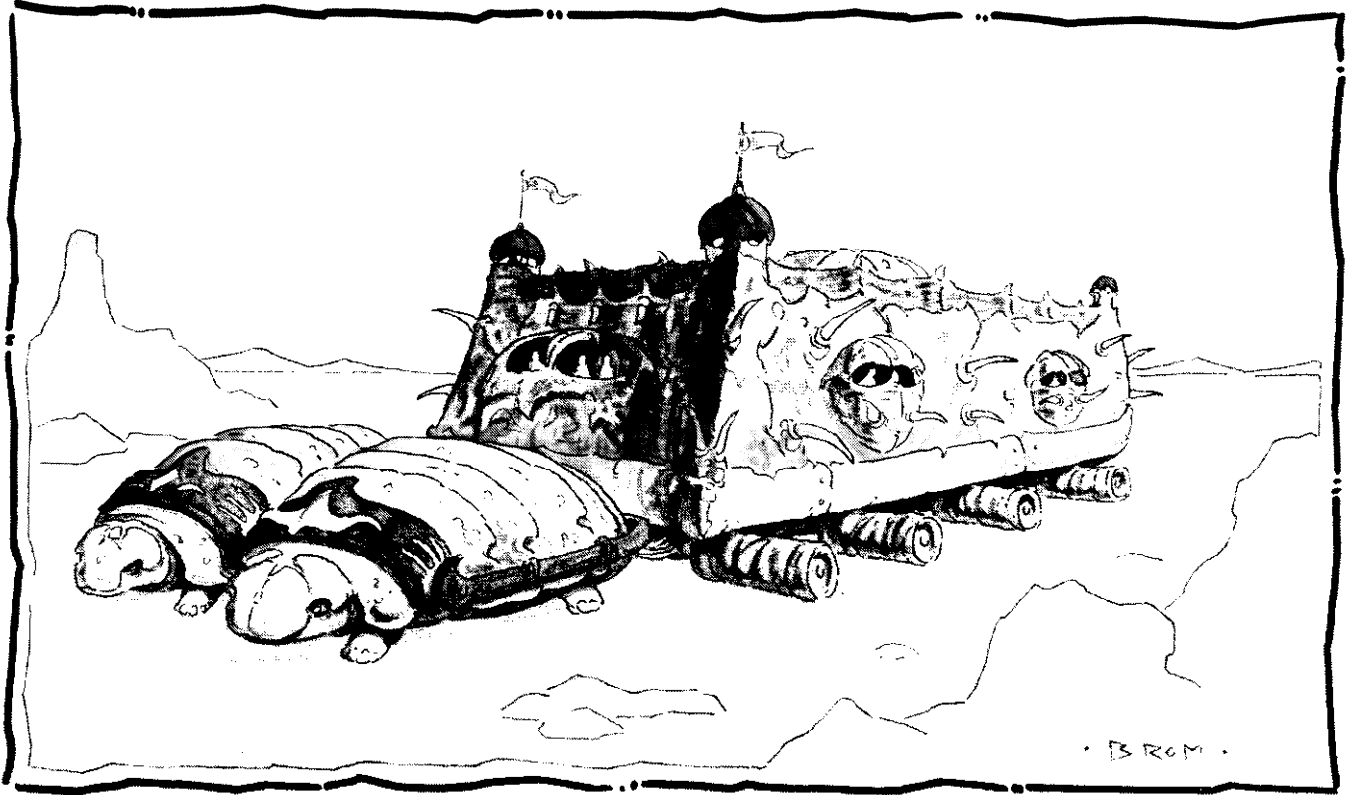
Most emporiums are run by trusted senior agents of their parent merchant houses, if not by a member of the owning family itself. These agents handle large transactions themselves, and generally live in well-guarded areas over, behind, or beneath the trading floor. I believe, though I am guessing when I say this, that operating capital for the emporium is generally stored in a secret vault located somewhere within the senior agent's living quarters.

## Outposts

Merchant houses also maintain trading posts in the wilderness areas and wastelands of Athas. Such outposts can be found wherever there is something to trade and someone to trade with: in the Ringing Mountains, where halfling chiefs exchange hardwoods for obsidian spear heads; in the rocky badlands, where thri-kreen hunters trade sacks of minerals for hand-carved whistles; on the banks of the Sea of Silt, where friendly giants barter blocks of granite for tarp-sized woolen capes.

I have found the agents manning these trading posts to be the toughest and most self-reliant men and women employed by the merchant houses. They commonly barter with the most feral and ferocious humans, demihumans, and humanoids; they enjoy making long journeys into the wastelands in search of new goods, and they take a great pride in their hard lifestyles.

Unfortunately, necessity dictates that outpost agents be the most expendable members of a merchant house. Their facilities consist of little more than a mud-brick warehouse built inside a walled fortification. Usually, the house employs a small band of mercenaries to defend it, and sometimes even a mage and/or a cleric, but the remoteness of the outpost dictates that such forces be kept to a



minimum. Trading posts are easy marks for raiding tribes and hungry monsters. By no stretch of the imagination is it uncommon for a supply caravan to find the outpost it has traveled days to reach demolished and the inhabitants slaughtered.

## Caravans

Every merchant house relies upon its caravans to move goods from one city to another and to supply its trading posts. Every house has its own theory on the best caravan configurations, but they all want to accomplish the same thing: moving cargo from one location to another as quickly as possible with the least chance of it being stolen.

Some caravans are small and swift, relying upon speedy *kanks* to carry them and their cargo out of harm's way. If you ever have a chance to ride with such a caravan, do so. At first, you may be hesitant

to mount a four-hundred pound, six-legged insect with pincers the size of your legs, but you will quickly discover that these gentle beasts are excellent mounts. Even at their slowest pace, they move like the wind. When they run, it seems you're flying.

Other caravans consist of a single, huge, slow-moving wagon with armored flanks, depending on nearly impregnable defenses to discourage attacks. Such wagons are usually drawn by a pair of *mekil-lots*, cantankerous six-ton lizards with a fondness for eating their handlers. Aside from a force of mercenary outriders, the entire caravan is carried inside the wagon: drivers, guards, supplies, and cargo. At first, this might seem like an easy way to travel, since all a passenger need do is lounge about—but I'd rather walk from Balic to Urik in my bare feet. The quarters are cramped and hot, the entire wagon smells of unwashed humans and demihumans, and



the journey lasts forever.

Most caravans take passengers, but the only cargo they will carry is that of their own merchant house. The houses are much too competitive to carry cargo for each other, or to trust their cargo to another house's safekeeping.

The caravans are led by a shrewd captain, often a former mercenary or soldier hired by the house for his military skills. To defend the caravan, the leader either hires individual mercenaries or subcontracts with a mercenary band. From the time the caravan leaves one city's gate until it enters another's, the captain's word is law, and to disobey his command is to risk banishment or death. No matter what a captain does on the trail, only one thing will cause his employers to dismiss him: abandoning the cargo. As long as he delivers the goods to their destination, the house assumes that he is doing his job well.

## Employment Terms

In most houses, there are four general categories of employees: family members, senior agents, agents, and hirelings.

**Family members** are, to one extent or another, all owners of the companies. They are usually based in the headquarters and oversee the administrative operations of the house, such as the keeping of accounts, routing of caravans, and planning for expansion. Often, they are also sent to run emporiums in distant cities. Of course, a family member's relationship with his house can be terminated only for the most dreadful breaches of trust.

**Senior agents** are trusted employees of the house and have the authority to conclude fairly large deals in the house's name. They are assigned to important positions requiring a fair amount of skill, such as running emporiums, outposts, or being caravan captains. A senior agent holds his position for life, and can even pass it on to a trusted son or daughter—though the house patriarch or matriarch has the option of replacing incompetent senior

agents who have risen to their positions through inheritance.

It should be noted that although both outpost agents and caravan captains are senior agents, they seldom pass their positions on to children. Even if they survive long enough to have families, the children are usually too wise to follow in their parent's footsteps.

**Regular agents**, like senior agents, are usually life-long employees of the house, but their employment can be terminated for just cause by senior agents or family members. Agents usually have limited authority to conduct a specific type of business.

**Hirelings** are people the house contracts to perform a specific service. Their relationships are usually short term, although hirelings who perform well are usually assured of receiving more work of a similar nature in the future.

## The Merchant Code

All merchant houses abide by a strict code of ethics that applies to all employees from family member down to agent. Although this code varies from house to house and is usually kept secret, it is not impossible to loosen an agent's tongue with a few friendly tankards of ale.

Generally, I've found that all merchant house codes are designed to promote commerce and keep the house out of trouble with the templars and the sorcerer-kings. They usually include the following provisos:

1. Recognition that by joining a merchant house, the agent forsakes citizenship in any city or membership in any tribe.
2. An oath by all members of allegiance to the merchant house.
3. A promise to perform in the best interests of the merchant house in return for a specified salary.
4. A promise to deal honestly with stranger, friend, and foe alike.



5. A promise not to flaunt any wealth gained through employment with the house.
6. A promise to uphold the laws of the city in which the agent is stationed, and to do nothing to bring the wrath of the sorcerer-king or his agents down upon the house.
7. A promise to cooperate with other merchants to make life very expensive for any person (this usually means templars) who unjustly imprisons, blackmails, or otherwise harasses any merchant.

In most merchant houses, violation of its code is sufficient reason to terminate the house's relationship with any agent, senior agent, or family member.

## Elven Merchants

Many elven tribes enrich their lives as nomads by becoming merchants. As tireless runners and desert wanderers, they are well suited to caravan life, but elves are too restless to establish a permanent headquarters.

Instead, the tribe itself serves as the headquarters, with the chief acting as a patriarch. The chief's advisory council, composed of a senior member from each family, handles the administrative functions such as keeping of accounts, keeping track of inventory, and setting prices.

Most tribes are not wealthy enough to build or maintain bartering emporiums in the cities. Instead, they rent dilapidated buildings or erect semi-permanent stalls on the outskirts of the trading quarter. These bazaars, commonly referred to as the elven market, often have unusual and rare goods for sale from all corners of Athas.

In most cities, the elven market is a disreputable place. Unlike other merchants, elves abide by no code of ethics. People who buy there usually assume they are purchasing stolen property or goods of inferior quality. The elven market is also the primary source of banned goods, such as spell components and other equipment necessary for a wizard to practice his craft.

Although elves sell to all comers with no questions asked, they are adept at detecting the presence of templars and the sorcerer-king's agents (generally through the use of psionics). As a templar passes through the elven market, I have never failed to be amazed at how quickly banned goods disappear in front of him and reappear after he passes.

Despite the elves' expertise at deceiving (or fleeing) the templars, many of them are enslaved for selling banned goods. When this happens, most elves are rarely concerned. They simply wait for the first opportunity to escape, then run into the desert and rejoin their tribe. If this proves impossible, they bide their time by trying to flatter their masters into promoting them into artistic status—which I believe is the reason so many noble homes are decorated with tasteless paintings and worthless sculptures.

Most templars will not admit it, but elves rarely remain in captivity for long. Their tribes are extremely close-knit, and they would not think of leaving one of their members in peril. To secure the release of even the lowest-ranking tribe members, they have been known to offer exorbitant bribes (though I have yet to hear of any tribe actually paying such a debt). Most often, they simply help the slave escape and, if possible, assassinate the accusing templar, then leave the city with all their tribe members and omit it from their caravan routes for a few years.

Usually, a tribe stays at a city for only a month or so. Unless it leaves under dubious circumstances, a handful of its members stay behind to conduct business at the bazaar. They usually live together in the same building from which they conduct their business. Often, this band contains a considerable number of thieves who employ their talents to add to the store of valuable merchandise that the tribe will sell in another city.

By the time the tribe returns—anywhere from six months to several years later—these elves are more than ready to leave the city and return to the wandering life. Any half-elf children that happened to





have been conceived during this time are left in the city, as they would find an unwelcome reception within the tribe.

Outside the city, elven merchant tribes do not maintain trading posts. Instead, they conduct their business as they wander the Athasian deserts, stopping here to graze, there to bargain, and anywhere to steal.

In most cultures, few sights are more agitating than that of a tribe of elves camped nearby. The next few days are certain to be filled with seedy entertainment, hard bargaining, and a small but steady outflow of stolen property.

I was once with an elven tribe when another elven tribe camped nearby. On the first night, my host tribe arranged an evening of entertainment for the purpose of luring the other tribe away from its camp. While their guests were enjoying the party, my hosts sent a contingent of thieves to rob the guests' camp. The guests reciprocated the next night, stealing back not only their own property, but a considerable amount of my host's (and my own) property as well.

These affairs continued for about a week, with the parties growing progressively more wild and ribald each night, until finally both tribes claimed that they had gotten the better of the contest and parted ways. In truth, I don't know who won the contest; I lost a precious rusty steel dagger and four copper coins, but my share of the host tribe's booty was a shiny helmet of bronze!

Lest anyone make the mistake of thinking it is easy to join an elven tribe, I should point out the circumstances by which I came to be among them. Before being accepted as an equal, I had traveled with the tribe for two years and single-handedly saved the chief's daughter from being eaten by a pack of wild thri-kreen. Still, the experience was worth the effort, hardship, and risk and I would not have passed it up for anything on Athas.

Elven caravans are notoriously light and fast. The elves prefer to travel by foot, carrying their personal

belongings in a sack slung over their shoulders. Cargo is transported on kanks, the only beasts of burden capable of keeping up with an elf if he breaks into a full run. During my time with the elves, I rode a kank whenever we were on the road.

## Nomadic Herdsmen

Herdsmen live in groups called *douars*. Each douar consists of a dozen families or so that wander the desert together. They move from pasture to pasture, pausing wherever there is water and enough forage to feed their animals. When the forage is gone, they pack up their belongings and move on.

It is a practical impossibility for the douars to be much larger than twelve families or so. It requires more than a dozen animals to sustain each family, so each tribe needs about 140-150 beasts to survive. In most parts of Athas, this is the largest number of beasts that can graze a pasture area without starving. If more than a dozen families try to live together, there will not be enough forage for the additional animals.

Most herders rely upon flocks of erdlus for their livelihoods. Erdlus are flightless, featherless birds covered with flaky gray to red scales, weighing as much as a full-grown man and standing as high as a tall elf. They have powerful, lanky legs ending in four-toed feet with razor sharp claws, and can run at great speeds over distances of several hundred yards. Their bodies are massive and round, with a pair of useless wings folded at their sides. Attached to their yellow, snake-like necks are small round heads with huge wedge-shaped beaks. These beaks are equally suited for working between thorns to crop forage at the roots, for piercing a predator's heart like a spearhead, or for making a meal of unwary reptiles.

The first time a herder asked me to share one of the gruesome bird's eggs, I almost refused, imagining that the wrinkled, leathery shell could contain nothing edible. I couldn't have been more wrong! Erdlu eggs are a treat not to be missed. When con-



sumed raw, as is the custom when the tribe is on the move, the red yolks have a zesty, gamey taste both satisfying and invigorating. If cooked, the whites form a spongy cake with a rich taste not unlike sharp cheese. All in all, erdlu eggs are an excellent food; a man can survive for months eating nothing else, and by drinking them raw, he can even go for a week or so without water.

Aside from their eggs, however, the erdlus provide the herders with many of the other things needed to survive in the desert. When a bird becomes too old or infirm to travel, its meat fills the stew pot. One of the best knives I ever owned had an erdlu claw edge, and the birds' sharp beaks make fine spearheads. Herders long ago learned to make a kind of light armor from the birds' scaly wings, and the tendons of their long necks make fine bowstrings.

Considering the value of even one of these beasts,

it is no wonder that humans, demihumans, and the creatures of the wastes all regard erdlus as prize quarry. Herdsmen must guard their flocks day and night, battling off or fleeing from a startling array of raiders, thieves, and monsters.

As you might expect, most herdsmen are capable fighters, but even these hardy warriors know that it is best to avoid a fight whenever possible. Therefore, herdsmen tend to be gracious hosts, save that they interrogate their guests mercilessly, trying to learn all they can about the location of the dragon, raiding tribes, and anything else that might threaten their flocks.

The douars are generally led by the tribe's wizard. The wizard is always a Preserver and never a Defiler, for herdsmen have a deep hatred of anyone who deprives them of good grazing land. The wisest member of each family serves as an advisor to the



leader, though the weight given to their opinions varies from tribe to tribe.

Herdsmen have a deep and abiding respect for druids, and always leave offerings of food and other gifts at any place they pass where they know a druid resides. Clerics, too, are sure to receive a warm welcome from a herding tribe, for the cleric's magic can be of great use in helping the tribe defend its herds. Templars, however, rarely survive a visit to a nomad camp. Herdsmen have independent spirits, and they regard servants of the sorcerer-kings as harbingers of drudgery and slavery.

## Elven Herdsmen

Many elven tribes have become merchants, and some have become raiders, but elves are by nature nomads and herders. They are possessed of an independent spirit and a wanderlust unmatched in any other Athasian race. This free spirit causes other races to regard elves as deceitful and lazy-which, even I must admit, is more or less true if your perspective is that of an honest craftsman or a hard-working merchant-house agent.

What other races fail to understand is that the elf would rather live a short and happy life than a long and cheerless one. Elves have adapted to the rigors of the Athasian wastelands in a unique way: they embrace the inevitability of death and hardship and make no attempt to escape it. In their view, the future is bleak and terrible-so one should do all he can to enjoy life today!

Admittedly, this outlook makes elves notoriously untrustworthy, but only where outsiders are concerned. Within their own tribes, they follow a strict code of honor regulating what liberties they can and cannot take with the property and rights of others. Of course, this code does not apply to those who are not members of the tribe (elven or otherwise), and strangers are expected to look out for themselves.

This free-for-all attitude applies even in the area of courtship. When a young warrior is ready to take a mate, he spies upon other tribes, trying to pick out

a suitable woman. If he finds one he likes, he hides outside the camp until an opportunity comes to steal her. If the elf has already approached the maiden and she is agreeable to being abducted, she will no doubt make his wait a short one and accompany him with only a token show of resistance. However, if the maiden does not wish to go with the warrior, his wait may well be a long one, and when he finally does have an opportunity to seize her, she just might kill him. It should also be noted that I have met several elven women who, wishing to stay with their own tribes, stole the male elf of their dreams in this same manner.

Whatever the sex of the victims, once they have successfully been taken to the abductor's camp, a messenger is sent to the old tribe to announce the safe arrival of the newlyweds. The abductees then become members of their mates' tribe, and all ties with their old tribe are broken. Even if they returned, they would be regarded as outsiders. This may seem a cruel custom, but I doubt that most elven marriages would last for more than a few weeks without it.

Elven tribes vary from other herders in more ways than their cultural customs, however. Erdlus cannot travel for long distances at the rapid pace elven tribes prefer, so elves prefer to keep kanks instead. Generally speaking, the giant insects are an inferior herd animal-but are ideally adapted to the elven temperament and lifestyle.

Kanks can eat nearly anything, so their keepers can wander deeper into harsh wastelands and stay longer than most other herders. In hives, kanks instinctively divide themselves into vicious guards, food producers, and brood queens, so the elves have very little to do in the way of animal husbandry. This leaves them free to devote themselves to their favorite pastime: frenzied feasting and wild revelry.

Of course, there are a few drawbacks. The only food that kanks provide is a thick green honey secreted by the food producers and stored on their abdomens in melon-sized globules. If the tribe wishes



to move, it must either move very slowly (for elven tastes) so the food producers can keep up, or remove all of the honey droplets from the kank abdomens. While kank honey provides plenty of energy, if you eat it for more than two or three weeks without a supplement of edible vegetation, you start to lose weight and grow weak, just as if you were starving. In addition, the meat of the kank itself is inedible—when a kank is killed, its flesh begins to emit an odor so foul that not even a starving man can stomach it.

Aside from its honey, the only useful thing that a kank provides is a chitinous armor—providing an elf is patient enough to sit outside camp and use sand to scrub the stink of the insect's flesh off the carapace. Because of these shortcomings, elves are forced to spend more time hunting and foraging than other tribes. It is when the hunting is bad, or when they find themselves in dire need of something they cannot acquire through foraging, that they must turn away from their free-spirited way of life and become merchants or raiders.

### Raiding Tribes

When I say that raiders are the parasites of the desert, no one will disagree. Either unable or too lazy to earn their own living, they feed and clothe themselves by stealing from caravans, lonely villages, hermits, and even the cultivated fields surrounding the cities. Their tribes vary in size from a dozen individuals to several hundred, depending on the territory they work and from whom they usually steal.

Although raiders may be scoundrels and cutthroats, they are not fools. They do not prey upon those who stand a chance of fighting back and winning. Tribes numbering no more than one or two dozen prey upon hermits and small parties of travelers. On the other hand, the tribes that plunder caravans number in the hundreds, and those that loot villages have as many as a thousand members.

Most raiders make their homes in some forlorn place, such as rocky badlands or a secret oasis in the

middle of a salt plain. Of course, the raiders are attempting to hide their location, but the isolation of their villages also makes it difficult and expensive to send a force to destroy them. This tactic works all too well; I can count on my fingers the number of raiding tribes that I know to have been destroyed in retribution for their thievery.

Usually, the raiding tribes pick their leaders through a hierarchy of violence. The most deadly (often a Defiler) is the leader. Invariably, he chooses the most dangerous and toughest tribe members as his assistants, ensuring their loyalty through special rewards and treatment. The other members of the tribe are kept in line through the threat of force. If the leader is a wizard, he will seldom tolerate the presence of another wizard in his tribe. If the leader is not a wizard, one of his assistants is usually a Defiler who jealously guards his position in the tribe.

### Slave Tribes

When they escape, slaves usually find their way to one of the many slave villages (see *Villages*) dotting Athas. Usually, these villages serve as the base for a raiding tribe, for slaves seldom have the skills necessary to survive in the desert.

Though slave tribes are no less fierce or destructive than other raiders, they tend to leave other villages, hermits, and small parties of travelers alone. Their attention is directed at the city-states themselves, as well as the caravans carrying goods between those city-states. In this regard, we can excuse their violence, for it almost takes on the character of a war against their former masters. In fact, slave tribes have been known to attack templar caravans and expeditions at great risk to themselves—even when there was no economic incentive!

Slave tribes vary from other raiding tribes in several important ways. First is the special treatment they give other slaves. Only ex-slaves are allowed to join a slave tribe, and when they attack a caravan, their first priority is freeing all the slaves in it. At the very least, these slaves will be given directions to the



closest safe oasis, and enough food and water to reach it. More often, they are offered membership in the slave tribe.

Second, slave tribes have an innate suspicion of the power that a wizard can wield, so they will never allow one to become their commander. Instead, their leaders are usually ex-soldiers, slaves, and sometimes gladiators.

Finally, most raiding tribes are naturally composed of one particular race, but slave tribes tend to have a wider variety of stocks. In every city, a wide selection of races are used as slaves. An equally wide selection escapes and finds its way to the slave villages, so it should come as no surprise to discover that most slave tribes are composed of a wide variety of races.

### Giant Tribes

Clans of giants inhabit the various islands of the Sea of Silt, especially those of the Forked Tongue estuary. Periodically, a group of them wades ashore to raid the fields surrounding a city or to pillage some hapless village. After the raid is finished, they wade back to their island homes, secure in the knowledge that they cannot be followed.

Fortunately, giants aren't such bad people when they aren't smashing your home, and they can be very talkative. From the few I've visited, it appears that when they aren't raiding, most of them keep small herds of erdlus and kanks. They live in huge stone huts shaped like beehives, consisting of a single room with the beds and sitting areas along the wall. A cooking fire and the food preparation area is located in the middle of the room, beneath a smoke-hole in the ceiling of the hut. Housekeeping habits vary by individual; some huts are meticulously clean, others are so cluttered with half-finished projects that even a small person can hardly find a place to sit.

As a cautionary note, I should warn you that there are two things you should never do around a giant:

First, never assume that just because you see one, he's going to attack. When giants come to shore, they usually have a specific goal in mind and will not bother anyone who does not stand in their way. Nothing makes them angrier, however, than being attacked just because somebody thinks they're going to cause trouble.

Second, never visit a giant's island uninvited. They are a very polite race who would not dream of visiting your home uninvited, unless they intended to steal something. Most giants assume that you will behave according to similar standards.

### Thri-kreen Tribes

Most packs of thri-kreen are hunters (see *Hunting and Gathering Clans*), but occasionally they start preying on caravans, villages, or even lurking about the outskirts of cities and attacking farm slaves. When they start preying upon other intelligent races, they cross the thin line between hunting and raiding.

The fact that they never need to sleep and stay in a state of more or less constant activity makes them especially dangerous. When they start to track a caravan, they can quickly overtake it, then attack without pausing for a rest. If it is a village they are raiding, their tireless nature makes them no less menacing; given two or three days of constant harassment, even the most courageous defenders will be reduced to a bundle of quivering nerves.

Most often, raiding thri-kreen are more interested in food than in goods. They eat or take away every living being, but seldom take anything that is not of immediate use to them. I once ran across a band of human scavengers who made a practice of following a thri-kreen raiding pack around and collecting the booty left behind. Six months later, I ran across the same band of scavengers—they still had all the booty they had collected, but had themselves fallen victim to the thri-kreen.

Thri-kreen are intelligent, so it is possible to approach their camp and strike up a conversation



without becoming a meal. This is one risk I have personally chosen to avoid, however. Even solitary thri-kreen tend to be treacherous and unreliable and I cannot imagine trusting a group of them.

### Halfling Tribes

Although normally simple hunters and gatherers (see *Villages* and *Hunting and Gathering Clans*), halflings occasionally come down from the mountains in search of gifts for their chief. Usually, these tribes have been assigned such tasks as a form of punishment for some trespass they committed against another tribe or the chief. Halflings have little concept of property, and they regard anything that moves as a potential meal, so it is difficult to regard them in the same light as normal raiders—their concept of right and wrong is so different from ours that it is absurd to hold them to the same moral standards.

That does not change the effects of their actions, however. Halfling tribes will sneak up on a sleeping caravan, a village, sometimes even a city, and carry away whatever they can lay their hands on—goods, animals, and people. The animals (and sometimes the people) they eat immediately, but they usually attempt to take prisoners and stolen items back to their village as a gift for the chief.

Such raiding parties are led by the clan's normal leader, often a fairly powerful psionicist. If it proves too difficult for the raiders to steal what they want on the first night of attack, the psionicist usually tries to use his talents to help the clan escape. They return the next night with a different plan of attack, and, if they do not succeed, the night after that, then the night after that, etc. They will keep returning until they steal what they want, or until the entire raiding party is destroyed.

There are two other peculiar things about halfling raiding parties. First, no one can tell what the raiders are after, not even the raiders themselves. They simply start taking things until their leader declares that they've got what they came for, i.e., an item of

suitable magnificence for their chief. This can be an item as common as a kank saddle, or something as exotic as the bejeweled scabbard of a magical sword. Second, when a halfling raider is captured alive, he refuses to eat or drink, attempting to starve himself to death. He will not, however, attempt to escape or to kill his captors, as he views his capture as a sacrifice to his clan's chief.

### Elf Tribes

Elven raiders are nomad or merchant tribes who have been reduced to thievery in order to support themselves. The cause of this transformation is almost always some disaster that has deprived them of their normal livelihoods, such as the loss of important cargo or a bank hive. Often, the tribe returns to its former way of life as soon as it recovers, so it is not uncommon for a group of elves to be raiders one year and merchants the next.

Attacks by elven raiders are seldom as bloody as those by other groups. Usually, the elves arrange some diversion, such as a stampede or fire, then sneak into the camp to steal. If the tribe was formerly a merchant tribe, they place the highest priority on goods; if it was formerly a herding tribe, they usually have the greatest desire for kanks. After they're finished, the elves rely on their great speed to flee, pausing only to disable any means their victims may have of catching them (such as kank mounts). Although they'll steal everything in sight, elves are not murderous. They rarely attack anyone except those who stand between them and the bounty for which they came.

For more information on elves, see *Nomadic Herdsmen* or *Dynastic Merchant Houses*.



## Hunting and Gathering Clans

Hunting and gathering clans are small groups that make their living through hunting meat animals and foraging for edible plants. Their number is usually small, between 10 and 50 individuals, and their culture is simple and practical. They devote their free time to making weapons, clothes, and shelter; otherwise, they are usually tracking animals or foraging for edible plants.

Their lifestyle is the most primitive of any on Athas, but it is also the freest. They wander across great tracks of Athas without regard for political boundaries, following game wherever it leads. Even though their lives are hard and short, whatever they do, they do for themselves. If a hunter is not hungry, he does not hunt; if he already has a fine bow and plenty of arrows, he does not make another; if his family has a good tent to protect them at night, he does not erect another.

Most hunting and gathering clans are thri-kreen or halflings, although small groups from other races also make their livings in this manner. Humans seem to lack the stamina to endure this lifestyle in the rigorous wastelands of the desert; in all my travels, I have never seen a clan of human hunter-gatherers.

### Thri-kreen

Thri-kreen are hatched to hunt. They roam the desert in packs of up to twenty-five beasts, always searching for fresh quarry. On those rare occasions when they are not hunting, thri-kreen are making weapons. They never sleep, and pause to rest only rarely. Unlike most other hunting clans, they do not burden themselves with shelters or other belongings, taking with them only what they can carry in their own mandibles. Thri-kreen packs usually do not hunt other intelligent beings (aside from the occasional elf) unless they have turned to raiding as a means of supporting themselves.

The thri-kreen pack is organized along a strict or-

der of dominance. The most aggressive, toughest member is the leader. The second most aggressive member is next in charge, and so forth. Whenever there is any dispute about the dominance order, the two contenders fight until one of them surrenders or dies. After the fight, there is never any bad will between the contestants; once the issue of dominance is resolved, they both go about their business with the full security of knowing just where they stand in the pack.

This pack instinct can make thri-kreen seem belligerent and contentious, yet strangely loyal, in the eyes of other races. The thri-kreen's pack instinct is so strong that when a single thri-kreen is a member of a group including other races, it attempts to establish a dominance order. The thri-kreen instinctively attempts to bully the other members of the "pack." If they let it get away with this behavior, the thri-kreen figures that it's the leader of the pack; if someone stands up to it and defeats it in a contest of physical prowess, the thri-kreen accepts a lower place on the dominance order and does whatever its "superior" says.

Once it joins a group, a thri-kreen remains steadfastly loyal-unless two or more members gang up on it in a dominance struggle. When this happens, the thri-kreen assumes that the other members intend to kill it and leaves at the first opportunity.

### Halflings

The wild halflings live in the forest along the ridge of the Ringing Mountains. Each clan, numbering between 30 and 75 individuals, hunts and forages within a strictly defined area of 20 to 30 square miles. Normally, this would be too small an area to support so many individuals, but the forest ridge is unusually abundant in both animal and plant life.

The halfling clans are careful to avoid crossing into each other's territory. This would cause hard feelings, perhaps even a fight. If there is one thing that halflings try never to do, it is offend each other. They have learned that by respecting each clan's



rights and property, all the clans will enjoy longer, happier lives (perhaps the sorcerer-kings should take a lesson from these wild fellows).

When some disaster befalls a clan, they have no need to resort to stealing from one another. Instead, those in need of help simply journey (or send a messenger) to their chief (see *Villages*) with their request. Assuming the need is genuine, the chief either lends his own support or calls upon his other subject clans to aid the one in trouble. This custom even applies between chiefs; if one of them is ever faced with a problem he cannot handle, his brothers are honor-bound to aid him in whatever manner they can. Because of this custom, which is so deeply ingrained in the halfling mind that it is very nearly instinct, every clan realizes that it is never to their benefit to fight with another halfling clan.

Unfortunately for us, this ethic applies only between halflings. They consider anything else (including intelligent races) fair game for the stew pot-or just to steal from, if there are too many intruders to capture. Captured humans and demihumans are considered a delicacy and are usually taken to the chief as an offering, but some clans eat their quarry on the spot-particularly if hunting has not been good of late.

When away from their own kind, halflings are mistrustful and cautious. I once asked a halfling why this was. He gave me a spiteful look, then, in all seriousness, replied, "I know what on your mind. You think 'not much meat on halfling, but he make good snack someday'". Of course, I tried to explain that it is not common practice for humans to eat their guests, but my little friend refused to believe it. Steadfastly he maintained that, when it came to mealtime, the only race one could trust was his own.

## Hermits

Hermits come in all races and from all walks of life. They live alone in some forlorn place far away from any permanent human or demihuman society,

either by their own choice or because they are outcasts. Most survive through a combination of foraging and herding, though some are also hunters. Hermits are seldom nomads, for even the most barren patch of Athas can meet the survival needs of a solitary man, providing he is skilled at survival in the desert and is not picky about what he eats.

Usually, hermits live near a source of water, but their residences are not obvious or easy to find. In Athas, water attracts visitors—human, demihuman, and otherwise—so it is not always safe for a lone individual to reveal his presence. Therefore, most hermits go to considerable trouble to keep the locations of their homes hidden.

Occasionally, if you don't look harmful and the hermit is an outcast and not a voluntary recluse, he shows himself and tries to strike up a conversation with you. In such cases, don't be put off by the excited hermit's rambling conversation, and keep in mind that although he may quite inadvertently say something offensive to you and will never pause to let you speak, he does not mean any offense. Most hermits have simply forgotten the niceties of conversation.

Some hermits are crazy and dangerous. If you look carefully when you approach an apparently abandoned waterhole, you may well see some warning sign: a skeleton here, a piece of discarded armor there, an abandoned wagon over there. Usually, the hermit fears that visitors to his waterhole intend him harm, or believes they are stealing from him. Such hermits rarely confront the offenders directly, however. Even if they're crazy, they're not stupid, and they realize that fighting a superior number of thirsty beings is not a good idea. Instead, they try to take the visitors unawares, such as after they have made camp and gone to sleep.

Of course, there are as many reasons for people to live alone as there are hermits, but I have found two types of hermits to be fairly common-or, at least, common in hermit terms.





## Psionic Masters

Those who have truly mastered the art of psionics often become quite famous. They are constantly beseeched by would-be students or adversaries who would like to prove themselves by defeating a known master.

Often, psionic masters accept the role of teacher (for they can command outrageous prices in return for their knowledge) and deal quickly with young upstarts. When these things become too common, however, the psionic master finds that the further development of his own abilities comes to a halt. He must spend most of his time teaching his students the basics of the art and dealing with a seemingly endless series of second-rate psychics with delusions of grandeur. This robs him of the terrific amount of time he requires for his own meditations.

When this happens, many dedicated psionic masters leave their schools in the hands of trusted disciples, or abandon them altogether and flee into the desert. They seek out some unknown or seldom-used waterhole and have a small stronghold erected. The masters shut themselves up inside their strongholds and continue their meditations in the peace that they could not find in the city.

Usually, a few devoted students accompany the master to serve as guards and servants, so he is arguably not a hermit. However, a man surrounded by guards and sitting in trance for days on end is just as alone as if he were sitting upon a mountaintop without anybody else within a hundred miles. Anybody disturbing a psionic master in such a condition quickly realizes that he has made a mistake. Once, I encountered a shattered tribe of elves wandering aimlessly through the desert. Lost and unprovisioned, they clearly had no hope of survival beyond





the next few days. I later learned that they had made the mistake of disturbing a master's trance as they attempted to rob his home.

## Druids

Druids are independent priests who worship and ally themselves with the various spirits of the land. They serve as guardians and caretakers of the specific terrain feature they worship (such as a particular oasis, an unusual rock formation, a rare expanse of grassland, etc.). In return, the spirits of life grant the druids magical powers.

Obviously, a druid must be near the territory he protects (this territory is called his *guarded land*) in order to fulfill his obligations. Usually, this means that he lives in isolation in some desolate part of the desert, living off the land and by the grace of the spirit he worships.

Most druids have such a close relationship with their guarded lands that they desire no contact with any strangers that happen to pass their way. Instead, they simply watch the visitors from afar, making their presence known only if the party includes a Defiler, or if it does something to desecrate the terrain feature associated with the spirit they worship. If they do make their presence known, it is always for the purpose of attacking. They will use their powers to kill or drive away Defilers and others who don't respect the land.

Thankfully, druids do not consider normal use desecration. The few who have spoken with me have all expressed the firm belief that the land is for all to use, animals and intelligent races alike. They claim that they never use their powers except to safeguard their guarded lands from abuse.

## Chapter Three: Athasian Geography

Almost all of Athas is a desert wasteland, but that does not mean that the landscape is monotonous. Far from it; over each hill, behind each dune, the terrain is more awesome, more spectacular, more beautiful than what you have already seen. In my travels, I have been overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of this land, cowed by its indifferent brutality, even overpowered by the unrestrained might of its elements, but never have I been bored.

It is beyond my modest capabilities as a geographer to impart all the grandeur and majesty of Athas. I can write of storms blowing in from the Sea of Silt, of watching a wall of pearly dust billow ten-thousand feet into the air, then come roiling ashore like a mountain range crashing down about upon you. I can say that to breathe the steam of the Yellow Caves is to lose your wits in a cloud of euphoria, or describe the queasy feeling of sliding down the black, glassy slopes of the Smoking Crown. I can terrify you with stories of being stalked through the forest by hungry halflings, and perhaps I can even make your eyes sting by describing what it's like to cross a salt flat on a windy day. But all you will know is what I say of it, and my words could never do justice to this magnificent land.

There are hundreds of different kinds of terrain on Athas, from wind-scoured pebble flats to twisted badlands canyons to gleaming sands to jumbled boulder fields. Unfortunately, it is impossible to relate in detail the geography of all these places, at least in the number of days remaining to my life. Instead, I will describe what I've learned of the four general terrains of Athas: the **Sea of Silt**, the **Tablelands**, the **Ringing Mountains**, and the **Hinterlands**. Armed with this information, you must see Athas for yourself. Perhaps that is as it should be; each person must find his own way through the splendorous deserts of our world.

### Sea of Silt

In the center of the inhabited lands of Athas sits a huge, sunken basin called the Sea of Silt. This re-

gion is filled with tiny particles of dust and silt that the wind has carried into this vast depression over thousands of years.

I have met travelers who claim that the Sea of Silt was once a sea of water. As unlikely as this may sound, the theory should not be entirely discounted. There are, after all, certain similarities between the Sea of Silt and a body of water: they're both flat, they fill low-lying areas, and heavy objects sink in them. Although it does not seem likely that the water itself turned to dust, it is conceivable that this basin was once filled with liquid instead of dust.

On a still day, which is so rare as to be almost nonexistent, the Sea of Silt looks like an endless plain of pearly powder. Sometimes, it lies as flat as a table and it seems you can see clear to the other side of the world. More often, the dust has been churned into star-shaped dunes or piled into massive swells. On some days, when the silt lies in parallel, wave-like ridges, the sea looks like a infinite gray lake, frozen in an instant, with the waves all at their peaks.

Usually, however, the Sea of Silt is not even visible. The slightest breeze stirs up a silvery pall of dust that clings to the surface like a fog. It becomes impossible to tell where the silt-laden air ends and the dust-bed begins. The sea takes on the aspect of an endless moor, the swirling dust rising off the surface like ash-colored steam, obscuring your vision everything both far and near.

When the wind blows more strongly, as it often does, the Sea of Silt becomes a boiling cloud of dust, the edges tinged with crimson sunlight and the center as dark as a dragon's heart. On such a day, a man standing near the sea cannot see more than a few feet in any direction. The dust coats his clothes, his face, the inside of his nose, and even, it seems, his lungs. He cannot see the ground or the sky, and when he walks his feet drag through inches of thick dust. He grows disoriented and lost, and it becomes an easy matter for him to wander into the sea itself. Sometimes, he disappears forever.

On stormy days, the wind roars over the sea like



## Athasian Geography

the howl of a mekillot. If you are within fifty miles of the Sea of Silt, there is nothing to do but find shelter and wait. These are the days when the silt rises thousands of feet into the air, blocking out the sun's light and turning the day to night. The dust is so thick that to breathe without a cloth over the nose and mouth is to choke, and to rest in the open for more than a few minutes is to be buried beneath a drift of gray powder.

The wind may blow for only a few hours during such storms, but the silt stays suspended in the air long after it stops. It may take a day or more before the dust settles enough to allow travel again, and more than a week before the haze totally disappears from the sky.

Even when the wind is not blowing, however, the Sea of Silt is far from a hospitable place. The dust is so loose that a man cannot walk across it, and it is too deep for any man to wade through. Anyone who tries to do so invariably sinks and is lost. He suffers a terrible death, suffocating as his lungs fill with gray powder.

As one might imagine, the difficulties of travel have had a dampening effect on explorations in the Sea of Silt—though there are those who have tried it, of course. I am not one of those fools, however, so I must admit that what little I have learned of this region, beyond my own experiences on the shores, comes from second- and third-hand accounts. There may well be errors in what follows, so be forewarned that I take no responsibility for any of the advice about traveling in this region.

### Methods of Travel

So far as I know, there are only a few ways frequently used to cross the Sea of Silt: flying over it, wading through it, or levitating above it. There are other means employed from time to time, and certainly new methods of travel will be thought of in the future, but for now these remain the principle options of silt crossers.

### Flying

Flying is the least dangerous of these methods, for the traveler avoids the hazards of the sea itself by moving above them. This method also affords the luxury of increasing the distance at which one can see hazards, such as approaching storms or flying predators. Unfortunately, this option is not available to most humans and demihumans, as they lack wings. Also, if your means of flight should fail you, the sands below lie waiting to consume you when you are forced down.

Of course, it is possible to use magic or psionics to fly, but the number of people blessed with these abilities is rather limited. Those who do choose to fly over the Sea of Silt would be well advised to make sure that they are going to reach their destination with plenty of time to spare. As mentioned above, if their ability fails while they are over the Sea of Silt: they will fall into the dust and sink like a rock.

### Wading

Wading is usually employed only near the shore, for the dust is too deep in most parts of the sea for humans and demihumans to touch the bottom. At the best, it is a slow and tedious process, for the traveler must use a long pole to probe the sea bed ahead of him—or risk falling into an unseen hole—and moving through the silt can be quite exhausting.

When someone steps into one of the many pits that dot the floor of the sea, he simply disappears—unless he is accompanied by friends who have some method of retrieving him, like a rope tied around his waist. It appears that such unfortunate victims suffocate within four minutes of their disappearance, for I have heard numerous accounts of searchers finding their companion dead within five or six minutes of his vanishing beneath the surface.

It should also be noted that the greater the size of the creature, the farther into the Sea of Silt he can wade. I am thinking, of course, of the giants—particularly those who make their homes on the is-



lands in the Estuary of the Forked Tongue. They have worked out paths that allow them to wade to and from all the islands in that area, much to the consternation of the nobles whose crop lands they raid.

I have spoken at length with several giants about the nature of their paths. As far as I can tell, it appears that at a depth of fifteen feet, the dust grows sufficiently compressed to support some weight. By carefully walking over the same areas generation after generation, the giants have compacted the silt and created a sort of trail beneath the dust at a depth of about twelve feet.

I should add that many advanced clerics who worship the element of earth have developed the ability to pass through stone, earth, sand, and the like as if they were walking through air. Of course, this ability also applies to the Sea of Silt, but the cleric must take care lest he be caught somewhere on the dust bed when his supernatural powers expire. If this were to happen, he would, no doubt, suffocate just like anyone else.

Some humans employ various techniques to wade through the Sea of Silt as giants do. I know of at least one place where a village trades with giants on an island in the sea by walking out to it on long stilts. They stick to established paths, of course, and any misstep can be fatal.

At least one dwarven community employs large vehicles to traverse the sea. Although these lark constructs look almost comical with their greatly oversized wheels and relatively small carriage section, they do function very well. To provide locomotion, dwarves in the belly of the craft turn a series of cranks that cause the wheels to rotate, thus propelling the vehicle. A number of human communities have employed similar craft, either self-built or purchased from the dwarves, and use them as merchant vessels. In many cases, such craft are powered by slaves who are chained to their work stations and forced to turn the wheels to the beating of a task master's drum.

### Levitation

Levitation is the last of the three most commonly used means of crossing the Sea of Silt. Let me clarify that I am not employing the term "levitation" in any specific sense, as wizards and psionicists are wont to do. By levitation, I mean any manner in which a person can cause something to float naturally or supernaturally—whether it be himself, someone else, or an object.

By this means, a would-be traveler uses his abilities to give something (an individual, a group, or an object capable of carrying a group) the ability to "float" on or above the dust. After this is done, the floating object also needs some means to propel it. I have heard of two methods: setting up a sail, or using long poles to push off the sea bed.

The trouble with sails is two-fold. First, when there is enough wind to use a sail, the Sea of Silt is invariably covered with such a haze of dust that it is impossible to navigate. Second, someone using a sail can only travel in the direction the wind is blowing. I have heard of geniuses who have experimented with keels and rudders, trying to use various combinations of opposing forces to control the direction in which they move. Unfortunately, however, the dust lacks the cohesive tension to make such contraptions work effectively.

Poles work better. Usually, they must be about twenty-five feet long, and have some sort of square or circular pad on the end. The poles are pushed down through the dust until the pads reach the compressed layer of silt at fifteen to twenty feet, and then the craft can be pushed forward.

Of course, levitation suffers the same major drawback as flying. Although an object capable of carrying one or more people can be levitated, when the spell or lifting power wears off, that object sinks just like anything else. Add to this the disadvantage of having to propel the craft or person being levitated, as well as the navigational difficulties that one is bound to encounter on the many windy days in the sea, and it seems to me that levitation is a much



inferior way of moving across the great basin of dust.

### Geography of the Sea of Silt

By far and away, the most common feature in the Sea of Silt is mile after mile of dust. From the descriptions of those who have dared to venture out into this vast pool of powder, all that one sees ninety-nine days out of a hundred is an endless ocean of pearly gray silt—especially if he travels straight toward the heart of the sea.

#### Mudflats

Occasionally, a traveler will come across a *mudflat*. Mudflats are areas where traces of water seep-up through the floor of the Sea of Silt, turning the dust above it into mud. Usually, mudflats are between fifty and five hundred yards in diameter. They are lushly vegetated by bushes and small trees that protrude from the thick layer of silt.

Sometimes, if the wind has blown the dust away and left the mud exposed to the crimson rays of the sun, the surface of the mudflat will be dried and cracked. The resulting crust is usually strong enough to support a man's weight. If this is not the case, the man will find himself wallowing waist deep in mud and dust. This could be a serious hazard, for most mudflats are controlled by ferocious beasts that prey on whatever comes to feed on the vegetation. Although their prey is usually avian, they are not adverse to feasting on land-bound travelers who have made the trip to their islands.

The traveler who sees a mudflat and takes its lush vegetation to indicate the presence of water will be sorely disappointed. All of the water seeping out of the sea bed is quickly absorbed by the silt and turns to mud. This poses no problem for plants, which draw water from mud with their roots. The animals that inhabit mudflats can usually get all the water they need from their prey or from plants. Animals like men, however, that must

drink their water in more-or-less pure form, have a more difficult problem; despite the mudflat's lushness, there is no free water. Even digging clear to the bottom of the Sea of Dust will not produce a single cup of the precious fluid. There are those, I am told, who have used various processes similar to distillation to obtain small quantities of water from the mudflats. I have never done this myself, nor do I know of anyone who has, but I can only imagine that the resulting liquid is hardly fit for any but the parched and dying.

The plants and animals that spring up on the mudflats are both intriguing and deadly. Long, roopy vines dangle from forests of towering, naked-trunked trees capped by umbrellas of huge frondlike leaves. The undergrowth is a thick tangle of ferns, thick-bladed grasses, and broad-leafed plants that spill out of single, bulbous roots. Some of the vines are carnivorous, and will attempt to entwine and strangle any creature lounging or passing beneath them. The thick-bladed grasses can also be dangerous, for they sometimes have edges as sharp as an obsidian sword that will slice unprotected skin open.

#### Estuaries

Near the shores of the Sea of Silt, there are long, relatively narrow estuaries that twist their way inland. Like the sea itself, they are filled with "dust and are nearly impossible for humans and demi-humans to traverse. In many instances, they protrude so far inland that they form considerable barriers to travel. At the same time, these estuaries serve as passageways for the strange creatures that inhabit the Sea of Silt—many of which can be nearly as devastating to crops, villages, and other human interests as a pack of mad thri-kreen or a hungry herd of wild erdlus.



As in the Sea of Silt itself, plants rarely grow in the shifting dust of the estuaries. Except for the periodic flying beast, a few *silt horrors*, and an occasional giant, the estuaries are empty of animal life.

## Islands

In the estuaries and near the shore of the Sea of Silt, hundreds of islands poke out of the dust. These often serve as a refuge for predatory creatures that can fly. In many cases, they also serve as a haven for giants and other raiders who have the ability to cross a few miles of deep silt.

Because they are rarely visited, and tend to be located in vicinities that Defilers have no reason to frequent, islands often have an abundant supply of foliage. This makes them ideal for hermits and small tribes of herders. Of course, those who are blessed with such homes tend to be very territorial

about their islands. Strangers are usually chased away, if not killed to keep word of the bountiful island from spreading.

The only oases in the Sea of Silt are located on the islands, for any large and continuing supply of water that seeps into the dust bed quickly becomes a mudflat. Unfortunately, the inhabitants of islands are secretive about water, so it is difficult to determine whether or not there is an oasis on most islands. I assume, however, that islands are as likely or unlikely as any other piece of similar land to have an oasis, so you may judge your chances of finding water on an island according to the type of terrain that is upon it.

The islands have an abundance of plant and animal life upon them. Columnlike conifers that rise to heights of thirty or forty feet are not uncommon, as are wild orchards of smaller olive trees. The slopes





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are often covered with tangles of woody vines, and there are entire fields of brightly colored flowers. If giants inhabit the island, they have generally destroyed most of the dangerous plants. But other islands often have a wide assortment of deadly foliage, from broad-leafed vines that attempt to mummify anything wandering through them to innocent-looking flowers whose pollen is a deadly poison.

The giants keep the islands they inhabit clear of dangerous animals, and generally one finds only common herd animals such as goats and erdlus in such places. Other islands, however, often have ferocious, mid-sized predators like the deadly gaj (described in *Chapter Five: Monsters of Athas*).

### Ruins

Like the rest of Athas, the Sea of Silt has its fair share of ruins. The ruins of several ancient cities still stand on the shores of the dusty sea. In many cases, abandoned towers poke their crowns clear of the silt more than a mile from shore, and the city walls run into the sea. Whether or not the sea was always filled with dust, these half-buried cities suggest that the Sea of Silt is constantly growing larger and deeper.

Many of the islands also have ruins, though on a much smaller scale. On some, an ancient castle still overlooks a bay or sits atop the highest hill. Long forgotten villages jut out of the dust. Some explorers have even reported seeing great crafts—built entirely of long-since petrified wood—lying half-buried in the silt. Some have suggested that these vessels were once huge boats, which does not seem unlikely if one allows that the sea was once filled with water. They resemble great wagons, save that they have no wheels or skids and are more or less barrel-shaped on the bottom. The only conceivable way that they could ever have moved is to have floated on water or been levitated by some terrific magic.

### *Fabled City of Plenty*

Many of the travelers to whom I have spoken claim to know explorers who have ventured deep into the heart of the Sea of Silt. Several of the explorers told of being lost in a terrible storm that nearly killed them.

After the storm passed, and the dust was settling back to the sea, they saw a magnificent city surrounded by lush fields and filled with towering fruit trees. As they tried to approach the city, the wind rose and obscured its exact location with a pearly veil of silt.

No one I know has ever claimed to have visited the fabled city. According to the stories which pass from one traveler to another, however, dozens of explorers have tried to return to the place where they saw the fabled city—and all they found was dust.

What the secret of the fabled city is, I leave you to judge for yourself. Perhaps it is no more than a legend. Perhaps it is a ghost from a better time. Perhaps, after all, there is a real city somewhere out there. Let me know if you discover the truth.

### Encounters in the Sea of Silt

Despite its bleakness, the Sea of Silt is not exactly deserted. Those who journey there can expect to find plenty of adventure—though little of the kind I suspect they would prefer. As one might expect, there is no abundance of intelligent races. On the other hand, there are more than enough voracious monsters for any man to meet in one lifetime. Here follows a list of the kinds of creatures most commonly reported by explorers of the Sea of Silt.

### *Flying Creatures*

No matter what method of travel they chose, all explorers may expect many encounters with flying creatures. Flocks of predatory birds and flesh-eating bats circle above the drifting sands, while blood-sucking insects (both large and small) seem always to be close by.





These encounters seem to occur more often near shore, especially in estuaries where the islands were not populated by intelligent races. Usually, the encounters resulted in a predatory attack. Often, as many members of the explorer's party perished by falling into the Sea of Silt as by being killed by the attacking monster.

### *Giants*

Many explorers have reported unpleasant meetings with giants. Uniformly, these encounters occurred when the explorer and/or his party went ashore on a giant's island without first being invited. In these instances, the giant would defend his territory savagely, not stopping to listen to any sort of reasoning.

On the other hand, if the explorers first circumnavigated the island and used some means to signal the inhabitants, any giants living there were usually happy to receive the travelers as honored guests. Of course, not all islands are inhabited by giants, so explorers have reported many instances when announcing their arrival brought them nothing but a swift attack from some hungry predator.

### *Mudfiends*

As mentioned earlier, predators often lurk on mudflats. Often, these predators are various manners of flying beasts found elsewhere in the world, like wyverns. As soon as any prey comes to feed on the lush vegetation, they spring out of their hiding places and attack.

The most dangerous of these beasts are kluzds, ten-foot reptiles who live only in muddy areas, which means predominantly on the mudflats. Few explorers have actually seen a kluzd (pronounced "kloozd"), but many of them have had encounters with the snake-like creatures.

Usually, it happens this way: shortly after setting foot on a mudflat, someone notices a pressure ridge forming in the silt-covered mud. This pressure ridge

makes a beeline straight for one member of the party, who usually tries to flee. His efforts generally avail him little, however, for the ridge quickly catches up with him. Little, if any, can be seen of the monster as it drags its screaming prey beneath the surface of the mudflat. If the victim struggles, the mud and silt in the area may be churned for a short period. Then the ground grows still, the kluzd apparently having retreated. The victim is never seen again (presumably because he has been eaten). Fortunately, kluzds are not overly voracious and tend to be solitary creatures, so only one victim is usually taken in this manner.

When the wind has exposed the mudflat and left the mud to dry into a hard crust, however, the kluzds can be even more dangerous. Apparently, they mate under such conditions, for two of them often burst through the crust and attack simultaneously. The kluzds will each drag a victim down to their muddy nest for their young to feed upon, then return to get another victim for themselves. If the attack comes at night, some explorers have even reported dozens of kluzd young pouring out of the holes created by their parents to gnaw upon the wounded and dead.

### *Silt Horrors*

Occasionally, explorers are attacked by huge white tentacles that shoot out of the Sea of Silt. These tentacles wrap themselves around whatever they touch—man, beast, object—and try to pull it down to the dust bed. Usually, of course, wading or levitating explorers are most susceptible to such attacks, but I've heard stories of tentacles attacking those who fly within twenty feet of the surface.

No one seems to know for sure what the tentacles are attached to, though I have heard a third-hand account describing a horrid beast. According to this account (which, I must emphasize, may be unreliable), a mage was flying over the Sea of Silt when he saw a wading giant attacked by some of the tentacles.



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During the struggle, the giant managed to pull a gruesome white creature with a fleshy, bulbous body out of the dust bed. The thing's body was as malleable as soft clay, and the giant could never get a handle on it. Eventually, the thing wrapped itself around the giant's head. He screamed, then fell and disappeared in a cloud of dust. I have dubbed these monsters "silt horrors."

### Tablelands

The Sea of Silt is surrounded on all sides by the Tablelands, a band of relatively flat terrain ranging from less than fifty miles wide to more than four hundred. This is where the civilization of the ancients flourished, at least if we are to judge by all the ruins they left. It is here that the remnants of civilization cling to a few verdant oases today.

Generally, the Tablelands are arid, hot, and barren. Even on windless days, the sky is filled with a yellow-green haze of floating silt. The crimson sun blazes with merciless fervor, and the breeze feels like the hot breath of the dragon itself. The ground is parched and desolate, either baked to ceramic hardness or so lacking in moisture that it has the consistency of fine powder. Here and there, thorny bushes and clumps of spiny grass cling to the soil, waiting for the once-in-a-decade rain in order to release their seeds.

The plains of the Tablelands are home to a wide variety of societies composed of all races. Here, the traveler will find hermits, thri-kreen packs, nomad tribes, villages, and the few cities that remain. He will meet people of all races and classes; human slaves, elven nobles, and even, in one or two cases, halfling merchants. The Tablelands are the great mixing bowl of Athas, where the different cultures of many people are forced to fuse or clash.

This is not, by any means, to say that the Tablelands are tame. In the Tyr region alone, there are tens of thousands of square miles of plains, and I am sure that fewer than a million people live in that area—most of them in cities, villages, or other

groups located near a good source of water. By and large, the plains are empty and wild, populated by untamed tribes and savage beasts. All in all, the Tablelands are an excellent place for adventure-and death.

### Travel in the Tablelands

We have all seen wizards and elemental clerics of the air merrily riding the currents over our heads, but flying is hardly a common method of travel. Most Athasians must choose between two slower, more tiresome options: walking or riding.

#### Walking

Walking is by far the most inexpensive and reliable mode of transportation, but (unless you are an elf) it is also one of the slowest and most dangerous. On a good road, an average human or demihuman can walk about two miles an hour for a maximum of ten hours a day. This means he can travel about twenty miles a day.

At this rate, it takes him about nine days to travel the 170 miles from Tyr to Urik. Although this might not seem like a terribly long trip to one who has not attempted it, let me assure you that it is a real test of endurance.

First, travelers must carry enough food and water to make the trip. At the least, a human needs one good meal and a gallon of water each day to survive. Even this assumes that he spends the hottest part of the day sitting in the shade and limits his traveling to the cool hours after dusk and before dawn. Therefore, he must load himself down with nine gallons of water, weighing about one hundred pounds, for his nine day trip. If he knows where the oases are along the route, and wishes to take the chance that there will be nothing to prevent him from using them, he can get along with much less water.

Of course, he will need a few pounds of food, unless he wishes to take the time to hunt or forage



each day-which means he will be able to spend less time walking and must therefore carry more water. In addition, he'll need a weapon to defend himself, for even if he does not run into any unfriendly strangers, the desert is full of hungry beasts-most of which he cannot hope to outrun on his own.

Further, of course, he must consider the unexpected. What happens if he is delayed by a sandstorm, or loses track of (or is chased off of) the established trails. What happens if he has some (or all) of his supplies stolen by scavengers, or is injured in an accident? It should be obvious by now that the answer to most of these questions is simply: he dies.

Walking is fine if the traveler is interested in transporting himself and/or something small and light from one place to another. It is far from safe, however, is very slow, and is anything but an ideal method of moving cargo.

## Riding

There are two forms of riding: mounted, or in a wagon. Mounted is the fastest form of travel. Usually, mounted travelers ride kanks, for these giant insects are hardy, swift, and docile. They move at an average rate of four miles an hour, and cover forty miles or more a day. The kanks could probably cover half again as much distance, but few riders can endure more than ten hours of kank riding.

Kanks need no water when on the move. They feed themselves by foraging at night, and they can carry a hundred pounds of equipment or supplies in addition to their riders. Their greatest advantage becomes apparent in an emergency, however; even fully loaded, kanks can run at forty miles an hour for distances of ten miles or more. It is no wonder that most explorers and adventurers prefer kanks over every other form of travel.





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Wagon travel is used primarily by caravans. Any beast of burden can be used to draw a wagon, but most wagon caravans prefer mekillots. Standing as high as twelve feet at the shoulder and weighing as much as ten tons, these monstrous lizards move along at a plodding pace of two miles an hour for fifteen hours a day, pulling behind them fortress wagons loaded with dozens of guards, passengers, supplies, and cargo. When attacked, these fearsome lizards turn into gargantuan terrors, stomping, biting, and tongue-lashing their opponents to death. At the same time, it is nearly impossible to kill a mekillot for its hide is so thick that many weapons simply will not penetrate it.

Despite their toughness, mekillots have several disadvantages. First, they are carnivores. Toward the end of a long journey, they begin to cast hungry glances at their handlers. In fact, more than one driver has disappeared when he went to check the mekillots.

Second, they must drink every four or five days. This process takes an entire day. The typical mekillot will drink about two hundred gallons of water before it quenches its thirst, but its stomach holds only fifty gallons at a time. It requires several trips back to the well for the beast's body to store all the water it needs.

Third, the huge wagons drawn by mekillot teams can only travel on well-established roads or on extremely flat terrain like salt flats. Otherwise, the wagons tend to roll over or bog down.

Finally, the only thing that a mekillot can outrun is another mekillot. Parties traveling in these huge wagons are committing themselves to a fight if something should decide to attack them, for fleeing is out of the question.

### Geography of the Tablelands

I may speak of the Tablelands as if they are a single type of terrain, but this is far from true. The Tablelands consist of six different kinds of land: stony barrens, sandy wastes, salt flats, rocky bad-

lands, scrub plains, and inland silt basins. Each is as different from the other as the Sea of Silt is from the Ringing Mountains. They are lumped together for the purposes of geographical description. All occur in the same general area, but no one should make the mistake of assuming that the similarity goes much beyond their location.

### Stony Barrens

Stony barrens are the most common type of terrain in the Tablelands. They consist primarily of large sheets of exposed bedrock—mostly orange-red sandstone. Of course, the bedrock is constantly being weathered away, so the barrens are littered with stones ranging in size from pebbles to boulders. Large areas of rock are covered by a thick layer of red dirt, as well as waist-high drifts of coarse orange sand and puffy heaps of yellow dust.

If you have any other choice, don't travel across open ground on stony barrens. Unless you're traveling on a road or well-worn path, the loose rocks make footing treacherous. Humans and demihumans (including elves) can move at only half their normal walking speed when traveling these areas. Kanks can travel at standard walking speed, but not any faster.

On the other hand, mekillots barely notice the change in footing, for their great weight grinds rocks into powder. However, only a fool would try to pull a wagon through this terrain; even the sturdiest wheels would be pulverized within a matter of miles.

### Flora and Fauna

For every rock in the stony barrens, there are a dozen thorns. Cactus grows everywhere and in every conceivable shape: squat spheres covered by long yellow needles, twisted masses of ground-hugging tubes, tall spine-covered barrels rising as high as twenty feet—even in tangled masses with tree-like limbs. Many of these cacti are sources of both food and water, provided you are willing to work your way



past their thorns.

If you are not familiar with a particular cactus, however, it is best not to attempt eating it or stealing water from it. Some cacti have mobile needles that will work their way deep into your flesh, not stopping until they reach your heart or another vital organ. The meat or fluid of other cacti is toxic, and there are even a few that shoot poisoned needles at any animal passing near them.

The fauna of the stony barrens is varied. Here, you will find most of the animals of Athas: wild erdlus, mekillots, inix, etc. Of course, there is also an abundance of predators: braxat, tembo, belgoi, and the like.

### Sandy Wastes

The sandy wastes are what many people imagine when they think of the open desert: a vast expanse of yellow sand, piled into dunes of various shapes and sizes. There are many different kinds of dunes.

Where there is a strong, steady wind blowing from one direction, the dunes are called *mekillot dunes*. This is because of their great size and shape, which resembles the hump of a mekillot's back. Stretching anywhere from one-half to several miles in length, and lying parallel to the path of the wind, these dunes often rise as high as 750 feet and can seem like mountains—especially if you happen to be the unlucky fellow who must cross a couple of hundred miles of them on foot.

*Wave dunes* are the product of moderate winds which blow steadily from one direction. They look like an oasis pond on a windy day, with sharp, evenly spaced ridges of sand. The crests of these dunes are only between fifty and a hundred feet high. They are not difficult to cross, but I have known the regularity of their spacing to drive impatient muls into a killing frenzy.

*Crescent dunes* form where the sand does not completely cover the ground. They result from a one-directional wind blowing sand more readily over the dune's low tips than its high center. These are my fa-

vorite kinds of dunes, for you can almost always find a way to go around rather than climb over them.

*Star dunes* are the most interesting. They are twisted masses of sand with tentacle-like ridges extending in all directions—sometimes for many miles. They form in areas where wind from many directions meet, causing the dune's radial arms to twist back on itself. As a traveler, I have always considered star dunes my friend. Because they change shape slowly and seldom move far, they serve well as landmarks in seas of shifting sand.

In any dune region, the traveler occasionally hears a vibrant booming echoing across the sands. This muffled thunder usually continues for five minutes or more, and can be so loud that you must shout to make yourself heard. Druids and clerics explain this roaring by saying that it is caused by avalanches of sand tumbling down the steep slip-faces of the dunes. Personally, I think the elven explanation is more likely: the booming is caused by the tolling bells of an ancient city that the dunes have buried.

Of course, not all sand lies in dunes. Where there is no wind, it may form a yellow plain, as level as a salt flat and seemingly as endless as the Sea of Silt. Similarly, it is heaped in great fan-shaped hills at the base of the Ringing Mountains, where it spills out of the canyons running out of the high country.

Whether it lies in a flat plain or is heaped into great piles and dunes, traveling through sand is hard work. Human and demihuman travelers must rest at least twelve hours a day and have an adequate supply of food and water, or their speed quickly decreases and they find themselves too exhausted to continue moving.

The other great hazard of the sandy wastes is the sandstorm. On a bad day, the wind howls so loud that it drowns out the voice of a screaming man, and it stirs up so much sand that you cannot see farther than a few feet in front of you. Under such circumstances, I advise you to stop wherever you are and wait out the storm. To do otherwise is to lose your way or become separated from your companions.



## Athasian Geography

### Flora and Fauna

Plants are few and far between in the sandy wastes, for they must fight a constant losing battle with the wind as it works to bury them beneath a fine layer of sand. Still, there are occasional clumps of tough grass, wiry stems of ocotillo, and scrawny sprays of salt brush. Most of these plants are harmless, if not nutritious, but be careful before allowing your mounts to graze on anything with a purple hue—such plants often drive mekillots and inix into murderous rages. Kanks don't seem to be affected by these plants, however, I have no idea what the purple plants would do to a man who eats them.

As in the stony barrens, you will find most forms of animals in the sandy wastes. The anakore (see *Chapter Five: Monsters of Athas*) seems to be particularly common here.

### Salt Flats

The salt flats are just what the name implies: immense plains of salt-crusting ground. Salt flats are generally level and packed as hard as stone, so traveling over them is fast and easy. However, forage for pack animals and prey for hunters is all but nonexistent. Those traveling through a salt-flat are well advised to take along enough food for themselves and their beasts.

They should also carry an ample supply of drinking water. Although there are oases in the salt flats, the water is usually so bitter and salty that it is undrinkable. In some cases, water can be found that seems safe to drink, but is tainted with a slow-acting poison.

### Flora and Fauna

I have always tried to avoid travel on the salt flats, for they are a harsh place. This is nowhere more evident than in the shocking lack of plant and animal life found upon them. Here and there a traveler might find a hearty weed or dwarf cactus, but by and large these foul regions are wholly lifeless.

### Rocky Badlands

The rocky badlands are labyrinths of narrow, twisting canyons winding their way through a region of high ground. The canyons are walled by cliffs of crumbling rock, and the hilltops consist of little more than knife-sharp ridges separating one canyon from the next. There tend to be concentrations of oases in the badlands, so they are a natural haven for hermits, raiding tribes, and creatures of all sorts.

Traveling in the badlands is not particularly difficult—provided one is willing to stay in the bottom of the canyons and has no particular desire to move in a straight line. Those wishing to go somewhere other than where the canyon leads quickly discover that scaling the canyon walls—often sheer cliffs—is a practical impossibility, especially if they have much cargo.

Mountains often lie at the heart of the badlands. Usually, these mountains are little more than massive pinnacles of stone rising far above the surrounding hills, but they are occasionally true mountains standing thousands of feet high. No matter what their height, mountains are usually inhabited by one or two vicious creatures who consider any attempt to climb the peak an encroachment on their territory.

### Flora and Fauna

The gulches of the rocky badlands are often covered with diminutive trees bearing tiny silver, gold, or purple leaves. There is also an abundance of low-lying brush with serrated, silver-white leaves, as well as spherical gray-yellow bushes with thorny stems standing as tall as a man. The twigs of the trees make excellent grazing for any reptile, but kanks die within a few days of eating even a mouthful of these twigs. Don't let anything eat the serrated leaves of the low-lying brush, as the sharp leaves slice up the intestines of whatever eats **them**.

As throughout most of the Tablelands, nearly any



kind of beast can be found in the rocky badlands, but tembo, belgoi, and silk wyrms are especially common.

### Scrub Plains

Scrub plains are small tracts of dusty land dotted with clumps of grass, thorny bushes, and occasionally even spindly trees. These tracts are relatively scarce in the Tablelands. Because the scrub provides the best forage available, herders tend to overgraze these plains, stripping the land of all foliage and reducing it to a sandy waste or stony barren.

What the herders do not inadvertently destroy, Defilers often annihilate. Although the scrub plains are not lush by any standard, they contain more vegetation per acre than most other Athasian terrain. Because of this, Defilers are often attracted to these areas when first learning their black art, practicing new spells, or trying to find a safe refuge.

Given the destructive pressure of these two forces, it is a wonder that there are any scrub plains at all in the Tablelands. Most of the remaining tracts still exist only because they are watched over by druids. When they realize that a Defiler has entered their territory, these druids do everything in their power to drive him from the area or kill him—usually the latter.

The druids treat herders more kindly, simply keeping a close eye on the herding tribes and their flocks. If the herders try to take their flocks into a pasture in danger of being overgrazed, or if they stay in the same place too long, the druids will subtly guide the herders away by summoning a ferocious creature or a plague of insects.

In cases of especially dense or stubborn herders, the action may be more severe. I was once traveling with a party of elven nomads who refused to move on, even though they were perfectly aware that they were angering the local druid. The standoff finally ended with the druid opening the earth and swallowing the tribe's entire camp. No elven lives were lost, but the herders had to resort to raiding in order

to survive.

Travel in the scrub plains is generally easy and uneventful. The greatest danger facing most travelers is that they will anger the local druid or run across a predatory animal.

### Flora and Fauna

The scrub plains are covered with sporadic clumps of brown-green grass, thorny hedges, and tall, wispy trees with drooping branches and long, spear-shaped leaves. Occasionally, when a rain has fallen in an area within the last thirty to sixty days, an entire field will be covered with wild flowers and leafy green plants. Generally speaking, most of the plants in the scrub plains are safe for both humans and beasts, but halflings and dwarves should avoid eating anything with purple spots (unless they are fond of terrible stomachaches and feverish deliriums).

As in the rest of the Tablelands, nearly any beast can be found in the scrub plains—though with much greater frequency. Jozhal and gith can be an exceptional problem here.

### Inland Silt Basins

These areas are much the same as the Sea of Silt, save that they cover a much smaller area. Most of the time, they are shrouded by a gray pall of windborne silt, and the dust is still so deep that a man cannot wade through it. There are rumors that certain hidden pathways follow the course of long buried city walls. I cannot attest to the accuracy of these tales, but even if they are true, I would hesitate to trust my life such a treacherous trail.

Those traveling across an inland silt basin must use the same methods as those traveling in the Sea of Silt itself, and can expect to meet the same hazards. Therefore, I suggest that anyone contemplating such a journey read the entry describing the Sea of Silt before embarking.



## Athasian Geography

### *Flora and Fauna*

I have found that the creatures dwelling in and around the silt basins are similar in most respects to those found in the Sea of Silt itself. With the general exception of silt horrors, the information presented above for the Sea of Silt can be assumed to apply to Silt Basins as well.

### *Ruins*

The Tablelands are fairly covered with ruins. Decaying towers rise out of the sandy wastes. Abandoned fortresses loom over the stony barrens. The white-cruled crowns of half-buried palaces protrude from the salt flats. Long-lost dungeons lie tucked away in the hidden corners of badlands labyrinths.

The architecture of these ruins, both in the great cities and in the isolated buildings, is that of ancients, with an abundance of gracefully arched doors, windows, and gates. The walls and towers are built of thousands of more-or-less flat rocks, carefully shaped and fitted into place, then mortared with lime cement. The top of the towers and walls are capped by square crenelations designed to protect men as they defended the top of the wall. Generally, the windows of the exterior walls are no more than slits through which soldiers can fire bows and crossbows at besiegers outside the castle. The interior walls are more generous, large enough to let an ample amount of light and air into the dank rooms.

The most common ruins are solitary remnants of the glorious age that preceded ours. As you travel through the Tablelands, you'll find bridges spanning long dead riverbeds that have not known the taste of water in centuries. You'll cross cobblestone lanes laid down more than a thousand years ago, and if you turn to follow them you'll pass shattered guard towers that must have seemed like lonely and forlorn posts even when the road ran heavy with traffic. Most often, these ruins are simply places to hide from the sweltering sun or take shade from the

merciless wind. Occasionally, there will be a hidden opening that leads to a basement or lost tunnel system. Sometimes, these subterranean tunnels even hold priceless treasures—an ancient steel sword or breastplate, for example. Just as often, they serve as home to some vicious or brutish creature that will appreciate an unexpected meal entering its lair.

Although not as common as the solitary bridges and towers of the previous age, more substantial ruins are not rare. Archaic castles stand along ancient roads and dry riverbeds. Even if the castle itself has been reduced to a ruin, the foundations often still exist. The dark rooms and twisting tunnels inside those foundations sometimes contain valuable weapons and other treasures—but like the ruins of the previous age, they are also prime lairs for vicious creatures.

The largest castles are surrounded by villages. Most of the village buildings have long-since collapsed, and their walls have disappeared, but valuable items such as coins, weapons, and metal tools and utensils still lie among the foundations. There is usually a large, ruined stone building that once served as a temple where the ancients practiced their religion. The vaults beneath these temples sometimes contain vast treasures. Unfortunately, those who have entered these temples also report finding unusual numbers of strange creatures—both living and undead.

In the Tablelands of the Tyr region, a handful of ruined cities lie half-buried in dust, sand, or salt. Although the locations of these cities are well known, they are relatively untouched. Exploring a city ruin is a major undertaking, for they cover tens of thousands of acres and are often buried beneath a thick layer of windblown sediment. In addition, most serve as either the home of a raiding tribe or the lair of dozens of vicious creatures, so it is common for adventurers entering city ruins to not return.

The eight cities that I know of (and have visited personally) are described in *Chapter Four: Atlas*





*of the Tyr Region.* The vast majority of these ruined cities date from ancient times. In many ways, they resemble the ancient village ruins, save that everything is on a much grander scale. In the center of a city, there is a massive fortress-town in place of a castle. There is dozens of huge temples instead of a single small one; there are thousands of collapsed buildings, each with a cellar or basement in its foundation. Finally, most have large subterranean sewers and catacombs into which much of the city's treasure has been dragged over the centuries by successive generations of monsters.

Two of the ruined cities that I know of date from our own era. Of course, they resemble our modern cities in layout. The prime areas of economic importance (the merchant emporiums, the noble estates, the templar houses, and the sorcerer-king's fortress) have already been thoroughly explored and looted. There is little reason to visit these two cities except for curiosity's sake. Considering what abides there now, I am not that curious.

Of course, there may well be cities that no one has discovered yet. Who has not heard stories of a lost city of steel lying buried beneath a mammoth mekil-lot dune, or listened in awe to the bards who sing of the dwarves' *Lost City of Gold*?

### Encounters in the Tablelands

Anyone traveling in the Tablelands is assured of a wide variety of adventures. To be certain, not all will be pleasant, but they will be interesting-provided the traveler survives, of course.

### Cities

Seldom will an alert traveler encounter a city by surprise. The locations of all cities in the Tablelands are well known, and they all lie along the course of well-traveled roads. In addition, most cities are surrounded by a wide swath of cultivated land, as well as service roads for moving wagons, water, and slaves about without injuring crops. Further, there is

a constant stream of travel within several miles of the gates. In short, not even a blind man could approach a city without realizing it.

Of course, it is always possible for a wanderer to crest a hill and discover to his surprise that a city lies in the valley below. Even in this case, he will not be lost for long. Any passing caravan driver will tell him where he is-though the wanderer may have to suffer a few bemused remarks for having to ask such a foolish question.

In the Tyr region, there are seven cities: Tyr, Urik, Gulg, Balic, Raam, Nibenay, and Dral. The name and location of each is well known, and all a traveler must do reach any one of them is set foot onto the proper road and start walking. In most cases, entry into a city is simple. Unless the traveler is carrying banned goods (be especially careful about anything that could be used as a magical component), the gate guards simply record the traveler's name and reason for visiting a city, collect a tariff (and/ or bribe) for any cargo the traveler is carrying, and then let him enter. Each city's unique atmosphere and flavor is detailed in the *Atlas of the Tyr Region* later in this book.

### Villages

Villages are far from common; it is quite possible to travel for hundreds of miles without coming across a single one. On the other hand, you will find them in the most unexpected places: standing in the middle of salt flats, hidden in the labyrinths of the rocky badlands, and clinging to the sides of isolated mountains.

The reception given a party of strangers depends upon the nature of the village they encounter. Other than offering them food and water; a dwarven village might hardly notice the strangers. A slave or raiding village, on the other hand, might well attempt to imprison or slay them.

Some villages are described in the *Atlas of the Tyr Region*, which appears later in this book. However, villages tend to be temporary communities, so



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it would be futile to describe them all. Besides, there are no doubt dozens of villages of which I have not heard. For a general description of what to expect when you run into a village, I suggest you consult *Villages* in *Chapter Two: Athasian Society*.

### Caravans

Anyone traveling a major road will certainly encounter caravans of all sizes and descriptions. If they wish, they can usually purchase passage with a caravan in return for money or labor—provided they don't appear menacing or threatening. The primary benefit of caravan passage is safety, not comfort; often, passengers provide their own food and transportation, purchasing only the protection of the caravan's guards.

Small caravans, usually mounted on banks, can be found off the main roads. Those traveling away from the road are usually carrying supplies to an outpost or village. Caravans traveling toward the road are generally carrying raw materials, such as clay, obsidian chips, or even beads of smelted iron. Unlike most caravans, these off-road caravans seldom take passengers. To safeguard against raiders and competitors, Merchant Houses place a high priority on keeping the location of their outposts secret.

For more information on caravan organization, take a look at the section I have entitled Caravans, located under *Dynastic Merchant Houses* in *Chapter Two: Athasian Society*.

### People of the Tablelands

Most of the Tablelands are bleak and savage, but they are far from deserted. When you travel in these areas, you'll meet representatives of all races, including nomads, raiders, hermits, and hunters. Each group tends to be found in the type of terrain best suited to its lifestyle. Nomadic herders are more common in the scrub lands. Raiders tend to hide in the labyrinths of the badlands, and hermits prefer to live at out-of-the-way oases. Hunters are

found wherever there is prey: stony barrens, sandy wastes, rocky badlands, and the scrub plains. Of course, these guidelines are not hard or fast; to survive, the races of the desert must be flexible and mobile, so you shouldn't be surprised to find any group in any terrain.

When you meet a group of natives, the responses you receive will depend on their nature and your own attitude. If you appear frightened, most natives will try to take advantage of you; if you seem hostile, they'll want to fight; if you're arrogant, they won't do anything to help you. In general, I have found that it is best to appear confident and courteous. This implies that you have the strength to defend yourself, yet have no harmful intentions.

Each of the groups mentioned above is described more fully in *Chapter Two: Athasian Society*.

### Animals

A wide variety of creatures inhabit the Tablelands. All are dangerous, for Athas is a harsh place with one natural law that prevails over all others: kill or be killed. Even animals which subsist entirely on plants have deadly defenses, for they must fight off vicious predators almost daily. My advice to the hungry traveler thinking to make an easy meal of any innocuous-looking beast is this: be as prepared to fight for your life as the animal you are hunting will be to fight for its own.

If the herbivores are dangerous, the carnivores are a truly nightmarish. Intelligent races receive no special consideration in the deserts of Athas. In fact, many predators consider them a special delicacy and lurk near places where human and demihuman races conglomerate—i.e., near villages, roads, oases, etc. When you travel outside any city, always assume that you're being stalked by something as large as a mekillot, as quiet as a halfling, as fast as an elf, and as vicious as a mul—chances are that you will be correct.

Most of the creatures described in *Chapter Five: Monsters of Athas* can be found in the Tablelands.



The herbivores tend to inhabit the types of terrain described as their natural habitat, and will seldom be found in other locales, unless some natural or unnatural event has forced them to leave their home terrain. On the other hand, the carnivores move through all terrains freely, either pursuing prey or searching for it in places that they know it frequents.

## The Ringing Mountains

Mountain ranges encircle the Tablelands, each running north and south. To the east and west of the Sea of Silt, they form great wall-like barriers separating the Tablelands from the unknown lands beyond. To the north and south of the Sea of Silt, they form a series of parallel ribs. The deep valleys between these ribs lead away from central Athas like a series of long corridors.

I have visited only the mountains lying west of Tyr,

so remember that my comments reflect experiences there. These mountains more or less *separate* the Hinterlands from the Tablelands, whereas the mountains north and south of the Sea of Silt form long passageways *connecting* the Hinterlands and the Tablelands.

It is entirely conceivable that this terrain difference will have a profound effect on the societies in those areas. After all, in the Tyr region, the mountains are a barrier separating this part of Athas from whatever lies beyond. In the northern and southern regions, the mountains are like funnels that guide travel between the two areas along certain rigid tracks. Keeping this warning in mind, then, let us explore the Ringing Mountains.

From a distance of a hundred miles, the Ringing Mountains look like a ridge of reddish clouds hugging the horizon. As you move closer, their soft edges





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gradually grow sharper and more distinct. At a distance of fifty miles, the craggy shape of individual peaks becomes visible. Between twenty and thirty miles, you start to climb great, fan-shaped heaps of coarse sand washed down out of the canyons. After you've struggled to within five miles of the mountains, the range takes on the appearance of a great wall of loose rock and sheer cliff.

At this point, weak-hearted travelers often despair of crossing the mountains and turn back. Don't make this mistake. As you trudge forward, you'll discover that the mountains are not nearly as inhospitable as they look. Traveling in them is simply a matter of keeping your wits about you and moving forward with a slow, steady pace.

### Methods of Travel

In the mountains, the only reliable means of transport is walking. You can ride kanks many miles up the canyons that wind and twist into the heart of the range, but eventually you'll reach a boulder field or rocky escarpment where it would be dangerous to remain mounted. On treacherous terrain, extra weight can easily cause even a sure-footed kank to lose its balance and fall-spilling the passenger into a boulder field or plunging both mount and rider hundreds of feet to their deaths. In fact, there are many places, such as the cliffs at the canyon heads, where kanks cannot even travel.

Therefore, if you are going to travel very far in the Ringing Mountains, sooner or later you will have to rely upon your own two feet. Unfortunately, walking in the mountains is even slower and more tedious than in the desert. It is impossible to travel a straight line in the mountains. Your path always bends and turns as you move around obstacles such as cliffs, high peaks, deep crevices, and so forth. Even then, you must hike hundreds of feet up or down, often both, for every mile traveled horizontally.

In addition to the extra effort of travel, one must always be on the lookout for the many hazards of the mountains. First and foremost, losing your footing

can be deadly. Even if the slip does not send you plunging down the mountain, it may result in an injury that will make it impossible to travel when the going becomes truly hazardous. Second, the mountains are full of hiding places where dangerous creatures and desperate characters can wait to ambush unwary travelers. Third, the mountains grow extremely cold at night, especially in the highest places. Unless you are wearing heavy clothing or sitting up all night next to a campfire (which tends to attract unwanted attention), it is quite possible to freeze to death—especially if you haven't had much to eat.

There is one last inconvenience to traveling in the mountains: it is exhausting. Of course, hour after hour of climbing hundreds of feet up and down is bound to take its toll on a person, but the weariness of which I speak goes far beyond that. As you travel higher, it almost seems that some magical force is trying to hold you back. Breathing becomes difficult, until even walking a hundred yards is enough to leave you panting and gasping. You begin to feel light-headed and dizzy, then sick to your stomach. You lose all desire to go on, and want nothing so much as to collapse and sleep forever. Even water loses its appeal, and the thought of eating seems more trouble than it is worth.

I have seen full-grown men lie in the same spot for more than a day, not bothering to eat the food in their satchels and barely drinking enough from their full waterskins to keep themselves from dying. This strange malaise seems to affect half-giants and elves more than most other races, to the point where I would advise them not to enter the mountains without a trusted member of another race who will remind them to eat and drink, as well as prod them to continue moving. On the other hand, although dwarves grow as tired as anybody else, the characteristic determination of their race renders them all but immune to the lethargy so dangerous to others.

Given all of the complications of voyaging in the mountains, most parties should be happy if they can



maintain a travel rate equaling a quarter of their normal distance. It should also be noted that the fatigue of traveling in the mountains has no effect on running speeds (as long as one is not moving across treacherous terrain, of course). When the individual finally has to rest, however, it takes twice as long as normal to recover—and if the exertion was especially intense, he may feel sick and lethargic.

## Geography of the Ringing Mountains

The Ringing Mountains are composed of four predominate terrains: the foothills, the canyons, the mountains, and the forest ridge. Although each is distinguished from the other in many ways, it is sometimes difficult to tell where one region ends and the other begins. At the base of the mountain range, steep hills rise to either side of the sand heaped at the mouth of the canyons, and before you know it you have entered a canyon that winds deep into the foothills. The foothills gradually grow steeper and rockier, imperceptibly making the transition into full-fledged mountains.

Other times, the transitions are more obvious. A rocky slope suddenly ends in a cliff that plunges hundreds or thousands of feet down to a canyon's sandy floor. At the summit of the mountain range, a forest of tall trees suddenly appears, their leaf-laden boughs swaying in the wind as if to greet a weary traveler.

Whether the transition is gradual or sudden, a smart traveler will always pay attention to the terrain he is in. It will provide him with valuable clues as to what he might find lurking around the next corner, the kind of hazards that could come crashing down around his head, and what is likely to happen to him if he makes a mistake.

## The Foothills

On both sides of the Ringing Mountains, the great heaps of sand washed out of the mouth of the canyons lie piled high against the foothills. The

foothills generally resemble the rocky badlands of the Tablelands in both appearance and terrain. They are filled with narrow, twisting canyons interspersed with steep ridges of higher ground.

There are a few differences, however. The ridges between the canyons tend to be higher, and their summits are often rounded and quite expansive instead of sharp and narrow. Also, as you travel toward the spine of the Ringing Mountains, the foothills grow more dramatic. The canyons are deeper, the cliffs more impressive, and the summits higher.

Assuming you're going toward (or away from) the summit of the Ringing Mountains, the easiest way to travel through the foothills is along the bottom of a ravine. Here there is often a dry creek bed that makes a fairly nice walking surface. It is even possible to ride kanks safely in these areas, if you can get one there in the first place. Occasionally, you'll encounter a field of boulders or a steep wall of stone that must be crossed or climbed, but otherwise your travel should be fairly easy.

When traveling along these seemingly dry watercourses, however, carefully watch the sky over the mountains ahead, and immediately climb to higher ground if you see any dark clouds gathering up there. Should a rainstorm occur over the area from which your gulch drains (not an uncommon occurrence in the mountains), a wall of water may come rushing down the gulch without warning. Those caught in such a flash flood will almost surely perish—either from drowning, or by being battered against rocks as they are carried downstream.

It is also fairly easy to travel along the ridgetops toward the spine of the mountains, thus avoiding the possibility of being caught in a flash flood. This route entails its own problems, however. Not infrequently, you'll find yourself working your way along the edge of a precipice that plunges hundreds or thousands of feet down into an abyss. When this happens, forget about riding your kanks or any other beasts of burden—unless you value your life as



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little as your cargo. The crumbling ground along the edge of these precipices can be shifting and uncertain, and will certainly collapse if too much weight is concentrated in one place. You'll have to figure out for yourself what is too much weight; sometimes the ground will support a full grown mekillot, and other times it will collapse under the weight of an unencumbered halfling woman.

Traveling parallel to the spine of the Ringing Mountains is all but impossible. You'll find yourself climbing and descending ridge after ridge—a slow and exhausting process, even if you don't fall off a precipice or find yourself facing an impassable cliff. It's usually much wiser to go to the base of the foothills, travel the desired distance northward or southward, and then travel up a canyon or ridge that leads more or less where you wish to go.

### *Flora and Fauna*

The flora and fauna of the foothills is the same as that found in the rocky badlands of the Tablelands. See *Rocky Badlands* in the *Tablelands* section above for more information about this.

### *The Canyons*

The foothills are broken every twenty to forty miles by a major canyon that leads deep into the heart of the mountains. These canyons are usually between one and five miles wide, and kanks can usually be ridden up to forty or fifty miles into them.

The first five or ten miles of canyon floor is usually covered with heaps of deep sand that have been washed down out of the mountains over the years. Often, there is quite a bit of water trapped beneath these sands (having trickled or washed down from the mountains), so it is not uncommon to find copses of small trees, fields of grass or flowers, or even hedges of thorny bushes growing here.

These sandy fans make good grazing land, so it is not uncommon to encounter nomadic herders camped at their bases. The herders are usually hap-

py to let a party of travelers pass through their territory, but tend to frown on anyone stopping to graze their animals for more than a day or two.

Further up, the canyon floor consists of stony barrens, and is littered liberally with boulders of all sizes. Here, the vegetation is a little heavier than in most stony barrens, for rocky cliffs rise high on both sides of the canyon, providing shelter from the sun during much of the day. Every ten or twenty miles, there is usually a pool of water hidden in some rock crevice, left behind by the last flash flood. Travelers should think twice before drinking from such a pool; often, it has been standing stagnant for years.

The greatest hazard of this area comes from predatory creatures. The ample vegetation supports a large population of grazing creatures, which in turn draw a larger number of carnivores. In addition, the confined spaces of the canyons make it easy for hungry predators to work their territories, and there are plenty of crevices and fissures in which they can hide. Plan on losing at least a third of your pack animals, and perhaps one or two of your friends, as you pass through this area.

Near the top of the canyon, you may reach a steep field of boulders. Leave your mounts behind at this point, for even kanks cannot hope to cross this treacherous terrain without breaking a leg within the first mile or so. In fact, as you cross this area, be careful yourself. If you misstep even once, your foot may lodge in a gap between two boulders, snapping your leg like a piece of dry wood as your momentum carries you forward.

As you step or jump from one boulder to another in this area, it is difficult to tell when your weight may tip a stone's balance and send you tumbling into a mass of sharp-edged rocks. Even worse, the shifting boulder may dislodge others above, burying you beneath tons of jagged rock. It is because of the hazard presented by boulder fields that many merchants who travel in the mountains insist on taking an Earth Cleric along with them; such an individual can prove invaluable in stabilizing a particularly



loose area of boulders, or in moving a great mass of stone if a rock slide should occur.

Above the boulder field, near the head of the canyon, there is nearly always a large field of scrub. These fields range in size from just over twenty miles in diameter to nearly a hundred. They exist, in my estimation, for three reasons. First, the boulder field makes it difficult for grazing creatures to reach them, so the plants live longer. Second, they are close to the summit of the Ringing Mountains, which means they are close to a water supply. Third, the temperatures are a little cooler at these altitudes, so the grasses are not punished as severely by the heat of the day.

Sometimes, a hermit or a small tribe of herders will make their home in such areas, having carried their beasts into the field as young animals. Such individuals (or tribes) are very suspicious of stran-

gers and protective of their territory. It is far from a rare occurrence for a tribe of raiders to slay them, steal their herds, and make the mountain meadow their home base. Obviously, this means that anyone entering one of these areas stands a fair chance of running into a raiding tribe-which is never a pleasant experience.

Occasionally, these high mountain meadows are not protected by a boulder field. Avoid such areas at all costs. They are often defended so jealously by hostile nomads or raiding tribes that to enter them is to insure an ambush. If this is not the case, then they are filled with nervous herbivores and ferocious carnivores, all of whom will defend their territory aggressively against any intrusion.

The only exception to this that I know of is the scrub land surrounding the city of Tyr, where the city nobles consider it a great sport to hunt down





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any vicious animals that intrude upon their territory. This is an exciting sport, for the nobles fall victim to the animals almost as frequently as they are successful in their hunting.

### *Flora and Fauna*

Near the bottom of a typical canyon, the flora and fauna corresponds to that of the sandy wastes (see *Sand Dunes* in the *Tablelands* section above). At the top of the canyon, there is usually a region of scrub land. This area is covered with a lush carpet of grass, and dotted with tall, puff-ball trees bearing small waxy leaves. The wood of the trees is extremely hard and is excellent for making weapons, but the tree is otherwise inedible. Watch out for single blades of a tough purple grass in this area; they tend to grow with other clumps of grass, and are so sharp that they can cut the tongue off careless beasts and slash the feet of unwary travelers to ribbons.

In place of the cacti of the rocky barrens, the mid-ranges of the canyons are covered by dagger plants. These strange plants have dozens of long, dagger-shaped leaves that radiate out as much as three feet from a central core at the top of the plant's root. Each leaf ends in a sharp needle. The needle is tipped with a mild poison, and paralyzes any limb it pokes will be paralyzed for up to ten days. Some varieties of these plants have leaf edges as sharp as an obsidian blade.

Most kinds of animals can be found in the canyons, especially those of the predatory variety. Fortunately, since animals in the canyons are very territorial, once you have dealt with the primary predators, chances are you will not be attacked again. Mountain gith can be a real hazard in these canyons.

### *The Mountains*

If your intention is to cross the Ringing Mountains, or even to reach their summit, sooner or later you'll have climb the mountains themselves.

Those who have been traveling in a gulch or a canyon will have no doubt when this moment has arrived. They will find themselves standing at the base of a sheer wall rising thousands of feet into the sky. There will be no easy way to continue forward. If they have somehow managed to bring pack animals this far, the gravel-covered slope, the huge boulders looming overhead, and the intermittent cliffs will leave no doubt that the only way to continue is climbing on their own feet.

The realization will come slower to those who have been traveling along the ridgetops. They will notice that the slopes are growing steeper, the precipices deeper, cliffs more frequent. Their pack animals, if they still have any, will grow nervous and afraid. Even the docile kanks will refuse to move, and, if they are somehow forced to continue forward, the poor beasts will inevitably lose their footing on the sheer slopes and fall to their deaths-strewing all that they were carrying as they tumble thousands of feet down the mountainside.

In either case, as you shoulder your burdens and start to climb foot-by-foot up the steep slopes, this is where you will feel the worst effects of the mysterious mountain-sickness. Breathing will become difficult, your head will pound with pain, you will feel sick to your stomach, and you will feel tired and listless. In serious cases, you may even lose all desire to continue your journey and turn back for no reason you can name, or even sit down and wait for the freezing embrace of the night, when the temperatures will plunge far below zero.

Assuming you have the necessary willpower to continue onward, however, the mountain peaks will probably be covered with loose gravel and stones, for little grows on the windswept, sun-scorched terrain. For every three steps you take upward, you will slip backward one. At any moment, the entire slope might coming sliding down on top of you, burying your entire party under tons of dirt and rock. If the mountainside is not covered in gravel, chances are that you're climbing a cliff of solid stone. You must





be sure of every step, always securing every move with a good handhold, for one slip will send you plummeting thousands of feet. Even if your friends bother to descend the mountain and are lucky enough to locate your remains, all they will find is a pummeled mass of flesh.

The one good thing about the mountains is that predators will not be as great a concern as they are in the canyons. Few land animals have any desire or reason to journey into the mountains, so the only hazard will come from large flying creatures that may be looking for an easy meal. Usually, the purpose of their attacks is not so much to kill you directly as to cause you to lose your footing and plunge to your death. In fact, they seem to prefer meat that has been tenderized in this fashion. I once saw a wyvern ignore several pounds of freshly killed erdlu in order to knock a man off the mountainside, then fly down and feast on the pulverized body.

### *Flora and Fauna*

Vegetation is not common on the rocky slopes of the high mountains, but here and there, the gnarled trunk of a six-foot ranike tree snakes out of a crack in the cliffs. While there is nothing edible about this tree, when burned, its sap gives off an aromatic fragrance that is repugnant to insects, including the rugged thri-kreen.

The only animals you are likely to encounter on these slopes are flying reptiles and birds of prey, all of which take advantage of the security offered by the rocky heights to make their nests. Needless to say, they do not appreciate having their territory violated.

### *The Forest Ridge*

As the traveler crests the summit of the Ringing Mountains, he sees what is perhaps the strangest sight on Athas, and one that will assuredly take his breath away. Below him, a jungle of tall fir and birch trees covers the steep slopes of the high moun-

tains, with a thick undergrowth of rhododendron and mountain bamboo. It stretches north and south along the spine of the mountains as far as the eye can see. This is the legendary Forest Ridge, the paradise at the top of the world.

For some reason, a wide band west of the summit of Ringing Mountains is surprisingly moist. Nearly every morning, a gentle drizzle falls, and at night there is sometimes an inch or two of snow. Predictably, this more-or-less constant supply of moisture has resulted in a green-belt unlike anything else on Athas.

As the traveler enters the forest, he quickly discovers that the vegetation is so thick that he must cut a path through it. The forest grows dark and gloomy, and it is filled with the chortles and cries of hundreds of small animals alarmed at the intruder's presence. Overhead, the wind whistles through the treetops with an eerie ringing—hence the name of the range.

Although the mountains on this side of the summit are as steep as those on the eastern side, the footing is much less treacherous. The loose gravel has been replaced by a carpet of moss that clings to a thick layer of black soil. The slopes are still steep, the cliffs are just as rocky, and the abysses just as deep, but they are hardly visible behind the green curtain of vegetation.

The most amazing thing about this forest is the humidity. Beads of water cling to everything: tree leaves, rocks, even your forehead. The gentle murmur of tiny brooks comes from all directions, here and there becoming a small roar as a stream plunges over a precipice and crashes onto the rocks at its base far below.

Even in this paradise, you still will suffer from mountain-sickness. The slightest exertion still fatigues you and your head still pounds, but at least the thick canopy of the jungle provides some shelter from the sun.

At night, the forest remains surprisingly warm, almost as if the thick canopy were acting like a



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blanket to insulate the ground. The temperature drops, lingering a little bit above or a little bit below freezing but does not plunge anywhere near the extremes experienced on the barren eastern slopes of the mountains.

You mustn't linger in the forest, however, unless you have come here to die. Surprisingly, the greatest threat does not come from animals. The jungle is occupied mostly by small animals that rely upon poison to defend themselves, and they won't bother you if you don't bother them. The predators are not generally dangerous to men, either; they tend to be small and feed almost exclusively on the lesser creatures inhabiting the forest.

It is the halflings that you must watch out for. They consider anything that enters their territory—including other intelligent races—fair game. Once they become aware of your presence, they will silently stalk you through the forest, awaiting just the proper time to spring ambush. If possible, they'll take you alive and present you as a gift to their king. Should you be taken alive, this is not a fate you should hope for. Some halfling kings are so savage that they prefer to eat humans and demihumans presented to them alive. Others are more civilized, and will at least have the decency to kill and cook their meals first.

If a traveler cannot be taken alive, the halflings will be just as content to drive him over some cliff, ambush him during his sleep, trick him into trusting them by pretending to be friendly, or simply overwhelm him with superior numbers.

It should be noted that any halfling with the adventuring party will be spared if at all possible. Even if the halfling is dressed the same as his companions, the natives will assume he has been captured and is being held against his will by the "big people." Protests and entreaties on behalf of the rest of the party will have no effect, as the savage halflings will simply assume that their unfortunate brother has been magically seduced into defending his companions. After the "brother" has been "freed," he

will be invited to join the tribe or be released with an armful of gifts to go on about his business.

For more information on halflings, see *Organization of Villages* and *Hunting and Gathering Clans* in *Chapter Two: Society on Athas*.

### *Flora and Fauna*

There are so many trees, vines, and shrubs growing on the Forest Ridge that it is futile to try to describe them all. Suffice it to say that there are hundreds of mighty trees, all covered with lush growths of huge leaves, bearing strange and exotic fruits. From their branches dangle more kinds of vines than I could catalog in a lifetime. The floor of the jungle is so thickly covered with green shrubs and brightly colored flowers that the ground itself can only be glimpsed on rare occasions.

The fauna of the jungle is as amazing as the flora. A thousand species of snakes, frogs, birds, and little rodents scurry about your feet. Occasionally, you will also glimpse one of the great, dark predators that lurk in the depths of the jungle—but so briefly that you will not be able to say that you saw any more than a dark shadow. Be forewarned, however; in the forest, just because something is small does not mean that it is not deadly. Poison is so common in this jungle that it is a wonder you can breathe the air without inhaling some foul toxin.

### *Ruins*

The Ringing Mountains have their share of ruins, though sometimes of peculiar sorts.

The canyons and gulches are, for the most part, devoid of any ruins. Whether this is because the ancients did not build there or because the flash floods have washed away all signs of their presence is impossible to know. Suffice it to say that if you are searching for lost treasure, don't bother looking in the canyons.

The spires and ridges of the foothills are dotted with crumbling towers, abandoned keeps, and

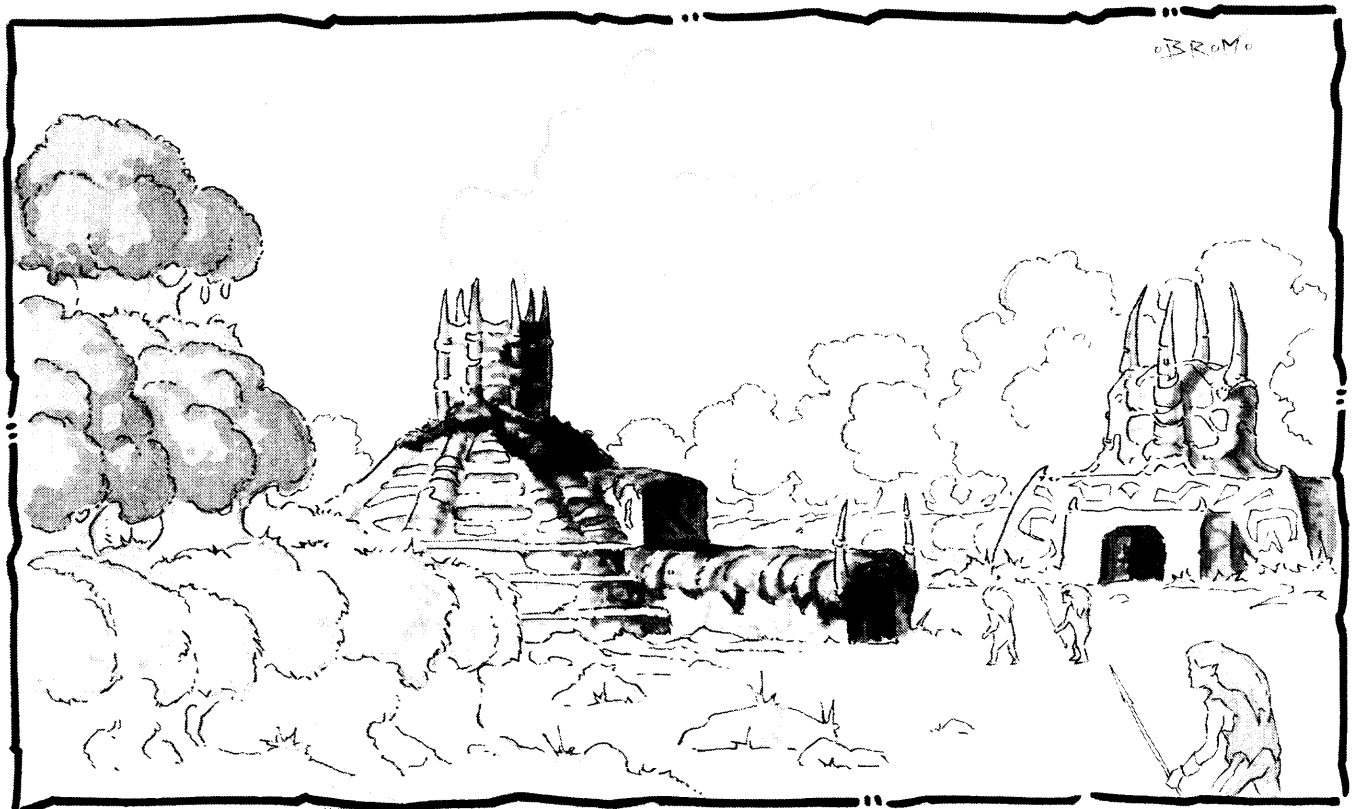


forgotten castles. Usually, these lonely edifices stand atop a peak or knoll overlooking what must have once been a point of some strategic importance, such as the junction of two large canyons or the narrow entrance of a particularly long gulch. Sometimes, the foundations and dungeons below these castles still contain a few pieces of steel armor, a metal sword, or some other forgotten treasure. Just as often, they now serve as the stronghold of a powerful raider chieftain or monster tribe.

In the foothills, there are many natural caverns of incredible scope and size. Usually, they are inhabited by a wide variety of nasty creatures, but some of them house incredibly beautiful scenes and vast pools of water concealed in their depths. It is occasionally worth the risks involved to sneak into one of these caverns just to see what you can see.

The mountains and foothills alike are laced with

ancient mines. For all but dwarves and halflings, mine tunnels too low to walk in comfortably; in fact, half-giants and many elves must crawl on their hands and knees to explore these places. Some people claim that this is because halflings were once expert miners who dug most of the tunnels in the Ringing Mountains, but I'm not sure I believe this. Whoever dug the mines did a poor job—or else age has taken its toll on their craftsmanship. I have heard tales of mine entrances collapsing unexpectedly, leaving a party of explorers trapped inside and suffocating. Some mines are filled with water, and as you move through them you must be careful not to step into a hidden pit, or to open a door that will unleash a torrent of foul-smelling water that burns your skin like acid. Other mines, I have been told, are filled with explosive gas, so that when you carry a torch into them, the air itself erupts into flame.





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Add to these dangers the usual assortment of horrors lurking in dark caverns, and strange races of dark-dwelling humanoids said to inhabit the mountain tunnels, and the mines seem to be very good places to avoid. Of course, I realize that many of you reading these words have heard the tales of underground cities and treasures hidden in these mountain mines, but just remember that neither wealth nor fame does a dead man any service. That is all I will say on the matter.

Finally, the strangest ruins of all can only be found high in the mountains. Every now and then, you will come across a strange, dilapidated building still clinging to the side of a high cliff, or tucked away in a deep crevice halfway down a thousand-foot abyss. These tiny buildings are large enough to hold no more than two or three people, and can only be entered at considerable risk by climbing a sheer face of rock or lowering oneself several hundred feet on a rope. They seldom contain anything of economic value, but I have known clerics and druids alike who have spent a day or two there and emerged with new insights on the nature of the world that have allowed them to increase their powers significantly.

### Meetings

If you intend to travel into the Ringing Mountains, be prepared to fight for your life one minute and run for it the next. About the only friendly people that you will meet are the herders grazing their animals on the sandy heaps at the mouths of the canyons. Otherwise, the inhabitants of the mountains are there either in search of privacy, or because it is a good place to hunt. Neither group is likely to welcome visitors.

Occasionally, you may discover a merchant's trading post hidden away in some gulch, near a rock quarry or possibly even a mine. Unless you work for the same house, and are bringing him supplies, don't expect a warm welcome. Any merchant outpost in such an out-of-the-way location is a sure in-

dicator that something in the vicinity is of economic importance. Most likely, the resident agent will assume you are scouting for a competitive house and will do nothing to make your job easier—or even to save your life.

On the other hand, there is little need to fear that he will ambush or otherwise assault you; all merchant codes strictly forbid using violence to weed out the competition. Of course, if you can prove that you are not a competitor, and offer to swear a satisfactory oath never to reveal the outpost's existence, the agent may be inclined to receive you as a guest or customer. Of course, once you have proven that you do not belong to another house, his obligated to avoid violence no longer applies.

### The Hinterlands

The Hinterlands is that area which lies beyond the Ringing Mountains. I must confess that I know little of this region, for my journeys have taken me less than a hundred miles into it. In my defense, however, let me point out that I am the only person I know who has ever journeyed there and returned. To my knowledge, all others who have set out to explore this region have simply disappeared.

At first glance, the Hinterlands are not very different from the Tablelands. After descending the western slope of the Ringing Mountains and working your way across the miles of sand heaped at the mouths of the canyons, you will come to a flat, empty plain that stretches out toward the horizon as far as the eye can see. You have reached the Hinterlands.

### Travel in the Hinterlands

Almost any normal method of travel should work well in the level plains of the Hinterlands: walking, kank riding, or even a mekillot wagon. Unfortunately, unless you can think of some way to get a kank or mekillot across the Ringing Mountains (and believe me, I have tried or heard tell of every



technique I know) you'll end up walking. You're about as likely to find a domesticated beast of burden here as you are to survive a battle with the dragon. The Hinterlands remain completely deserted; even if you're carrying money or goods which with to barter with, you'll find no one from whom you can purchase an animal.

Fortunately, the flat terrain is conducive to foot travel. After leaving the narrow band of stony barrens (see below), you'll be able to make good time. There will be enough foliage so that you can forage for food without too much effort, even if you don't always recognize the plant that you're eating. I advise you to be careful of anything with crimson leaves, however; after eating the root of one of these plants, for two days I thought I could fly. (It's a good thing I wasn't in the mountains.) Game will be also be plentiful, if you feel like risking a hunt.

I would advise you to be careful about water, however. Although oases are a little more common in the Hinterlands than in the Tablelands, you won't know their locations, and there are no well-traveled paths to give you clues as to where you should look. The best option is take along a cleric of the Water Plane as a traveling companion. Barring this, I would suggest never traveling so far away from your last watering hole that you cannot return to it with what you have left in your waterskins. I suspect that one reason travelers don't return from this region is that hidden oases are more common and, they don't follow this advice.

## Geography of the Hinterlands

From my experiences, the Hinterlands have much in common with the Tablelands, save that they are devoid of intelligent races as we know them. Therefore, the descriptions below are brief, describing only aspects which are unique to the regional terrain of the Hinterlands. If you need to know more about the basic nature of a particular type of terrain, or the flora or fauna found there, see *Geography of the Tablelands* in this same chapter.

## Stony Barrens

When you reach the base of the Ringing Mountains' western slope, it will appear that the Hinterlands are nothing but a vast plain of stony barrens. Don't despair; the stony plains are only a narrow band, between five and thirty miles wide. In the worst case, it shouldn't take more than three days to cross them.

You may stumble across a well-worn path leading away from the foothills of the Ringing Mountains. Though the walking will be much faster and easier on this path, avoid it at all costs. The path has no doubt been made by large animals that roam back and forth between the foothills and the scrub plains beyond. Even if you don't encounter a herd or pack of these beasts, which will no doubt be ferocious, you are likely to be attacked by the fierce predators that have learned to lie in ambush along such routes.

## Scrub Plains

Most of the ground that I have seen in the Hinterlands is composed of scrub plains. Compared to those of the Tablelands, these plains are unusually flat; except for bushes and the occasional tree, they are as level as a tabletop. Unfortunately, the gentle breeze which always seems to be blowing stirs up a lot of dust, so a gray-green haze clings to the ground, limiting visibility to a half mile or so.

There are vast numbers of animals in the scrub plains, most of whom show two-legged creatures no special diffidence. As you travel, you will no doubt run across feral herds of erdlus, wild mekillots, untamed kank hives, and dozens of creatures that you will not recognize at all. If they do not flee from you, then you would be well advised to flee from them.

## Rocky Badlands, Mountains, & Forest

The only terrain of this type that I encountered was the Dragon Crown Mountain; see this entry in *Chapter Four: Atlas of the Tyr Region*.



## Athasian Geography

### Ruins

I ran across little sign of the ancients in the Hinterlands. Apparently, the Ringing Mountains were as much a barrier to them as they are to us. The sole exception was a strange temple I found in the forest, concealed in the heart of the Dragon Crown Mountain. While I did not have time to explore it as carefully as I would have liked, I can assure you that it was unlike anything I have seen elsewhere on Athas.

### Meetings

The only encounters I had were with wild beasts; I came across no sign of intelligent races in the Hinterlands. This is not to say that such races don't exist, only that they are very rare. If there are intelligent races in the Hinterlands, I would guess that they are primitive hunting and gathering clans, or possibly even nomadic herders. There is no sign of economic activity in the region, so it would be out of the question to encounter raiding tribes, merchants, villages or cities.



## Chapter Four: Atlas of the Tyr Region

So far, I have tried to describe the general nature of Athas. To a certain extent, my abilities in this regard have been limited by mortal weaknesses: it is impossible for one man to visit all the corners of the world in his lifetime. Therefore, much of what I have set down in these pages has been gathered from conversations with fellow travelers, gleaned from the records of far-ranging merchants, or extrapolated from what I know via first hand experience. Of course, there are bound to be certain errors and vagaries in such material.

That won't be the case in the material presented here. In these pages, I will describe, in as much detail as possible, only sites that I have seen for myself. No doubt, when you visit some of the places depicted below, you will find that certain things may have changed.

Despite these differences, I believe you will find this record amazingly accurate; at one time, at least, these places were exactly as they are described here.

In honor of my home city, I call the region I have explored the Tyr Region. This in no way implies that Tyr dominates this vast area-it doesn't-or even that is the largest city in the area-it isn't. All that it is meant by the name is that I started my explorations in Tyr, and this is the region I have explored.

The Tyr region lies on the western shore of the Sea of Silt. Judging by what I have heard from other explorers and travelers, the land around Tyr is fairly typical of the regions bordering the Sea of Silt, with about half of its entire area taken up by Tablelands. The large *Map of the Tyr Region* shows the terrain of this area, as well as the locations of all the locales described below. Before reading further, take a few minutes, if you will, to study this map-if for no other reason than to appease the ego of an old man who has spent countless hours ruining his eyesight to make it.

### Cities

There are seven cities in the Tyr Region: Balic, Draj, Gulg, Nibenay, Ream, Tyr, and Urik. Each

is ruled by a sorcerer-king (or queen) and is organized more or less along the lines outlined under *Society of the City States* in *Chapter Two: Athasian Society*. If you've never been to a city, be sure that you read this section before stepping through the gates. Otherwise, you could quite easily find yourself making bricks in the mudpits or fighting for your life in the arena.

Of course, there are many cultural variations among the cities, as dictated by the individual tastes of the sorcerer-kings. Considering the degree to which these differences manifest themselves, it is a lucky thing that the underlying social structure is so similar from city to city. Otherwise, traveling from one to another would be even more hazardous than it is now.

### Balic

Balic is ruled by the Dictator Andropinis, a powerful sorcerer-king who was *elected* to his post over seven-hundred years ago. Though the term "dictator" originally referred to the power of *dictating* (as in stating) a city policy sanctioned by a democratic assembly of property owners, Andropinis has converted the title and off ice into one of total authority. Anyone who speaks against him is executed by dictatorial decree.

On the rare occasions that someone is brave enough to voice a complaint about the harshness of Andropinis' rule, the old man takes great delight in reminding all within earshot that their ancestors elected him to his post for life. Unfortunately for the citizens of Balic, nobody realized just how long Andropinis might live.

Andropinis lives in a majestic palace of white marble, rectangular in shape and adorned on all sides by magnificent columns. This palace is located atop a stony, fortified bluff in the center of the city. Andropinis' personal army consists of ten thousand highly disciplined foot soldiers who carry twelve-foot lances, large wooden shields, and thrusting daggers made from the sharpened thigh bones of erdlus.



## Atlas of the Tyr Region



Balic's templars are unique in that the free citizens of the city elect them to their posts for ten-year terms. Andropinis is generally tolerant of these elections, though he sometimes lets the citizens know which candidates he would like to have elected. I have heard that if the wrong candidate wins the election, Andropinis has him executed and calls another vote.

The nobles of Balic are called *patricians*. Like most other nobles, they hold their lands from generation to generation. Most of them make their living from the olive orchards and grain farms surrounding the city, but a few own large parcels of the scrub plains, upon which they carefully graze kanks and other creatures, twenty miles west of the city.

Balic's Merchant Emporiums sit nestled against the base of Andropinis' rocky fortress, in an area called the *agora*. The merchants do a bustling busi-

ness in olive oil, kank nectar, and the decorated pottery produced by the city's famous potters. The Elven Market rings the agora on all sides, so that it is impossible to do any legitimate bartering without first being assaulted with dubious offers.

Balic's secluded location is quite defensible as far as the armies of other city-states are concerned, for it is impossible to approach the city from any direction except the west. Unfortunately, its close proximity to the Forked Tongue Estuary causes the city more than enough trouble from giants who wade ashore to raid. Every citizen in the city, male or female, slave or freeman, is a member of the militia. On a rotating basis, they spend every tenth month helping the normal army patrol the fields and scrublands in an effort to reduce the amount of crops and stock lost to raiding giants.

## Draj

The sorcerer-king of Draj calls himself "The Mighty and Omnipotent Tectuktitlay, Father of Life and Master of the Two Moons." As you might guess from his appellation, Tectuktitlay claims to be a god. Lest you take him seriously, I'll point out that in my opinion, Tectuktitlay is not even one of the more powerful sorcerer-kings.

Be that as it may, Tectuktitlay rules Draj from a great walled compound in the center of the city. This compound contains several one-story buildings that serve as the barracks for his personal guard, templar quarters, a school for the children of the nobles, and a psionics academy that he personally supervises. In the center of this compound is a large gladiatorial arena. It is surrounded by tiers of stone seats, except where a steep stone pyramid—Tectuktitlay's home—rises two hundred feet over it.

No one seems to know how long Tectuktitlay has ruled Draj, probably because he has forbidden this knowledge to be passed on from generation to generation in order to make himself seem completely immortal. His templars, called "Moon Priests," claim that he raised the city from the dust and made





the surrounding lands fertile.

This last claim no doubt arises from the fact that Draj sits on a huge mudflat located on the western edge of a large inland silt basin (see *Geography of the Sea of Silt* in *Chapter Three: Athasian Geography* for an explanation of mudflats).

If I had to guess, and I have to, I would say that what really happened is this: A relatively young and weak Defiler, Tectuktitlay, led a small band of followers to this island and founded his city. Given the natural fertility of mudflats, Draj prospered and Tectuktitlay eventually became a sorcerer-king.

Because Draj and the surrounding lands are located on a mudflat, defending it is fairly simple. Any army that attempts to leave the road to it inevitably bogs down in a quagmire of thick mud. If the army stays on the stone paved road leading through Tectuktitlay's lands, all he needs do is send his warriors out to defend the narrow passage, then drive the enemy into the mud.

Nevertheless, Draj is almost constantly at war, sending its armies far and wide in search of captives. The warriors, which you will encounter nearly anywhere, are armed with obsidian-edged swords and short barbed spears attached to long ropes. They are trained to throw their harpoons into a target's thigh or seat and then drag him back to where they are standing.

Captives are returned to Draj itself, where they are forced to climb the great pyramid so that Tectuktitlay himself can tear out their hearts. The bodies are sent tumbling down the pyramid into the great arena below.

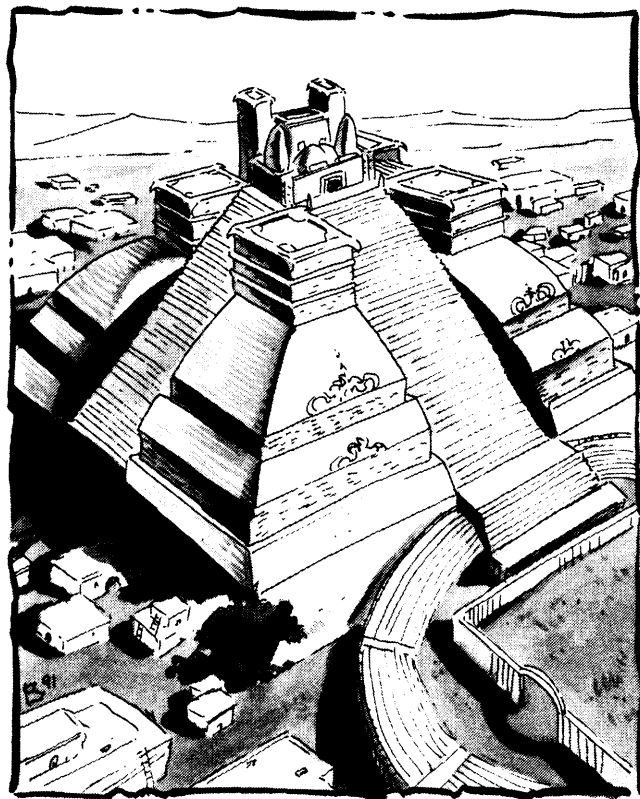
On a day following a particularly large number of sacrifices, the bodies are removed from the arena so that the Tectuktitlay's favorites—the Priests of the Moons, the nobles, and weapon-makers—can enjoy an afternoon of gladiatorial games.

Despite its warlike nature, Draj enjoys heavy commerce with the other cities of the Tyr Region (and some cities to the north, whose names I do not

know). This is because Draj's fertile soil makes it rich in two essential resources: hemp, which is good for making both clothes and rope, and grain, which most other cities desperately need in order to feed their starving populations.

## Gulg

The sorcerer-queen of Gulg, Lalali-Puy, is called the *oba* by her subjects. The *oba* is an absolute monarch whose name means "forest goddess" in the language of her people. This is not a title she assumed herself, but one that her subjects thrust upon her. Lalali-Puy can command anything she wishes and know that she will be instantly obeyed by her people. In their eyes, she is a goddess: they attribute her long life to immortality, and they believe that only a being of supreme power could have the abilities that she displays.





## Atlas of the Tyr Region



Lalali-Puy is perhaps the only city ruler who enjoys the popular support of her subjects. Gulg is engaged in an ages-old territorial war with Nibenay, the city at the other end of the forest. As terrible as their oba is, the inhabitants of Gulg are convinced that she is all that stands between them and being totally enslaved by Nibenay. In this, they are undoubtedly correct.

Gulg is not a city in the ordinary sense of the word. It lies at the southern tip of the Crescent Forest, more or less in the center of the territory portrayed on the *Map of the Tyr Region*. The outer walls of the city consist of a thick hedge of thorny trees. The branches of these trees grow so tightly interwoven that it is impossible for anything larger than a halfling's fist to penetrate the barrier.

While most of the inhabitants of the city live in circular mud huts capped by roofs of thatched

vines, Lalali-Puy herself lives in a small but magnificent palace built in the highest limbs of a huge agafari tree.

Her templars, who oversee the military, economic, and agricultural matters of the city, live in well-appointed huts in the lower limbs of the tree. Although the particular level of a templar's hut bears no direct relationship to his status, one can tell a templar's approximate rank by counting the number of necklaces he wears. Lalali-Puy's most trusted advisor, and second in command, wears ten necklaces. The lowliest templars wear only one.

In Gulg, the nobles are not landowners, for the templars' city-owned slaves gather the city's food supply—wild fruits, nuts, and berries—from the forest. Instead, the nobles are composed of an elite class of hunters who are selected from the general population at an early age and laboriously trained in the arts of tracking, moving silently, and surviving in the timberlands for many days without food or water. As you might suspect, nobility is not inherited in Gulg, for only the most capable youths are selected to undertake the grueling training required to become a hunter.

Like all property in Gulg, the food that the hunters and slaves gather is considered to be owned by the oba, who then redistributes it so that the basic needs of citizens are met. Of course, this makes it difficult for merchants to operate in the city, but the oba has solved this problem in a very efficient manner. In Gulg, the senior agent of a merchant house deals directly with a templar assigned to his emporium, who barter on behalf of all the people of the city. These templars are well known as hard bargainers, for more than one merchant house has gone broke trying to trade in pepper, kola nuts, and exotic feathers with the merchants of Gulg.

The warriors of Gulg are known as *judaga* or *head hunters*. They are half-hunter and half-fighter, depending upon stealth to ambush their enemies and bows and arrows or poisoned darts to slay them. Their name comes from their habit of claim-



ing the heads of fallen enemies to prove their boasts of combat prowess.

## Nibenay

The city of Nibenay is named after its founder, the sorcerer-king **Nibenay**. Called the *Shadow King* by his subjects, Nibenay is a bizarre and enigmatic figure. His subjects see him so rarely that the city is constantly filled with rumors that he has died. Whenever these rumors result in a civil disturbance, however, Nibenay appears long enough to impress upon his subjects that he is still very much alive—usually by singlehandedly crushing the rebellion.

The Shadow King lives inside a walled sub-city located in the center of Nibenay. No free man has ever seen his palace in person, but according to rumor it sits atop an artificial mountain of stone slabs. The palace itself is supposedly a giant bust of Nibenay's head. The front of the castle is carved into a stone relief of the Shadow King's face. The sides and rear of the palace are covered with life-sized representations of dancing women, strung together as if they were locks of his hair.

Nibenay's templars are all women. It is unclear whether they are all Nibenay's wives, but it seems entirely possible. Only the templars are permitted to enter and leave the sub-city in which his palace is located. Otherwise, the rest of the city is composed entirely of slaves dedicated to making the lives of Nibenay and his templars comfortable and secure. Some say that many of these slaves are sculptors who are kept busy carving reliefs of each templar into the locks of Nibenay's hair covering the side and rear of the palace.

This is completely feasible, as strange tastes in architecture seem to be the norm in Nibenay. Every building is carved with stone reliefs. Although the craftsmanship is flawless, the subject matter is peculiar. Often, the relief portrays the self-satisfied smirk of a wealthy noble—usually the person who owned the building when it was first built. Sometimes, the building is carved with the figures of the builder's

entire family, all engaged in some sort of strange dance. In other instances, the building is decorated with fantastic reliefs of various monsters in the superstitious belief that if the city is visited by one of the terrible beasts it will be flattered by the depiction and leave the inhabitants in peace.

Nibenay sits just outside the northern edge of the Crescent Forest, atop several hundred acres of bubbling springs. The nobles each own one of these springs, which they use to irrigate the fields of rice that feed the city.

Nibenay's merchant trade is based on the sale of weapons made from wood obtained in the Crescent Forest. Nibenay's craftsmen are busy day and night felling agafari trees and shaping their extremely hard wood—the next best thing to bronze—into shields, spears, and clubs. This is the basis of Nibenay's rivalry with Gulg, for the hunters and gath-





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ers of the forest city fear that if left unchecked, Nibenay's devastating practices would soon leave them without a home.

The core of Nibenay's army consists of a thousand half-giants armed with agafari lances and clubs.

### Raam

The sorcerer-queen of Raam, Abalach-Re, calls herself the *Great Vizier*. She lives in a beautiful palace with ivory walls and an alabaster roof built atop a grassy knoll overlooking the city. Unfortunately, the base of this knoll is surrounded by a complicated and ugly series of defensive breastworks, ditches, and walls, for Abalach-Re is the most insecure of all the city rulers. When I visited there, the people spoke of organizing a rebellion and openly praised the last attempt to overthrow their queen (though it

apparently occurred previous to most of their lives, for no one could remember how it had ended).

Abalach-Re professes to be the representative of some greater power, and claims that her powers are gifts from this mysterious being. According to Abalach-Re's theory, this mysterious being has picked her to watch over the city of Raam and its people. When she is no longer performing his task well, this same mysterious being will strike her dead and assign someone new to the office of Great Vizier.

This is one of the more original ploys a sorcerer-king has used to legitimize his or her power. By claiming to be the humble servant of a higher power, and by claiming that this same being approves of what she is doing, Abalach-Re hopes to focus the inevitable discontent of his subjects away from herself. Unfortunately for her, the citizens of Raam are smarter than she thinks. Although they pay lip service to the being she professes to serve, and may even attend the ceremonies the templars of Raam organize to honor this mythical creature, few people truly believe in its existence. Instead, they secretly despise Abalach-Re for being such a weak ruler that she must resort to these ploys, and they flout the authority of the *Great Vizier* whenever they feel they can get away with it.

As a consequence, Raam is the most chaotic city I have visited. Templars hardly dare to show themselves alone in the streets for fear of being assassinated by the nobles. The nobles are little better than raiding tribes. Each noble owns at least a small tract of land abutting the roads, and his guards demand a hefty price from anyone who wishes to cross the noble's land. The merchant houses hire small armies of mercenaries to defend their trading emporiums from armed bands of thieves. The situation is so bad that elves are commonly accepted in the ranks of high society as if they were upstanding citizens!

Of course, it is the slaves who suffer most under these conditions. Because most of Raam's fields lie untended and wild, food is expensive and difficult to come by in large quantities. Consequently, slaves



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are fed only what is absolutely necessary to keep them alive-and then only as long as they are needed. As soon as their usefulness is at an end, they are sent to the arena to entertain the mad crowd with a pitiful exhibition of fighting.

The only thing that prevents Raam from being overrun by another city-state is the sheer numbers of the army it can field. Abalach-Re maintains a huge armory beneath her palace and, if desperate, can arm every citizen in Raam with a wooden shield, flint-tipped throwing spear, and an obsidian-spiked flail. Of course, she is loathe to place such might in the hands of a populous that clearly despises her, but the option exists nonetheless.

### Tyr

Tyr is ruled by the sorcerer-king Kalak, who calls himself simply King Kalak or, as he sometimes prefers to be addressed, the Tyrant of Tyr. A pragmatic and ruthless man, Kalak is perhaps the most honest of all sorcerer-kings. He rules by the might of his magic and tremendous psionic powers, placing his own security and the stability of Tyr above all other considerations.

If Kalak's attitude seems unjust or inequitable, it is at least predictable. The residents of his city understand that the best way to insure their own survival is to do what benefits Kalak. The surest way to find themselves working in the slave pits is to oppose Kalak's will. As a consequence, Tyrian society has functioned very efficiently for the thousand years that Kalak has ruled the city.

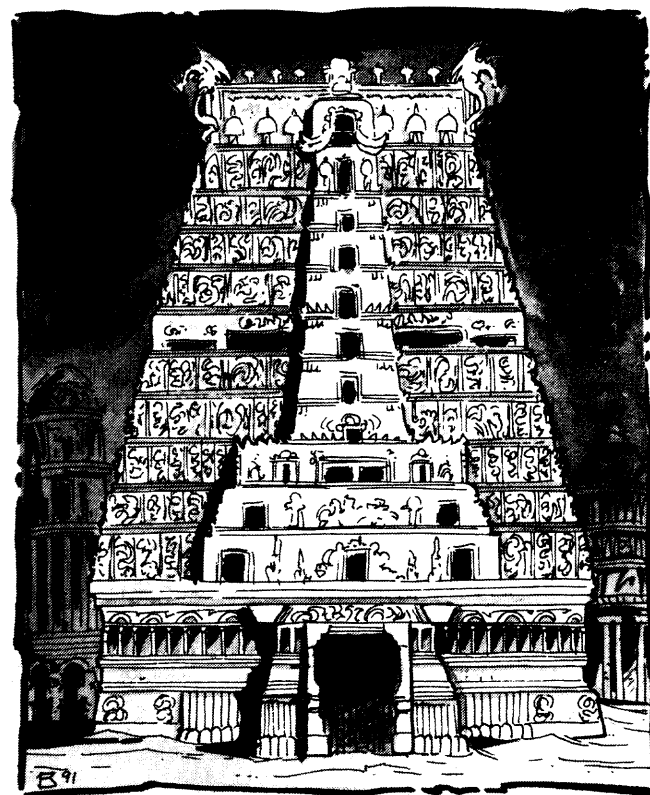
The Tyrant of Tyr has always made his home in a magnificent palace adjacent to the gladiatorial stadium. The eastern wall of this palace overlooks the arena itself. During the games, Kalak himself can often be seen sitting on one of the hundred balconies that overlook the arena, accompanied by a handful of templars and other favorites.

Of late, old King Kalak seems to have become senile. For the past twenty years, he has diverted much of the city's slave labor to building a mighty

ziggurat (directly across the arena from his palace), claiming that it will protect Tyr from attacks by the dragon. At first, the nobles were tolerant of his folly, for the burden it placed on them was not great. Over the last year, however, Kalak has grown frantic to finish the massive structure, appropriating so many slaves that there is almost nobody left to work the fields.

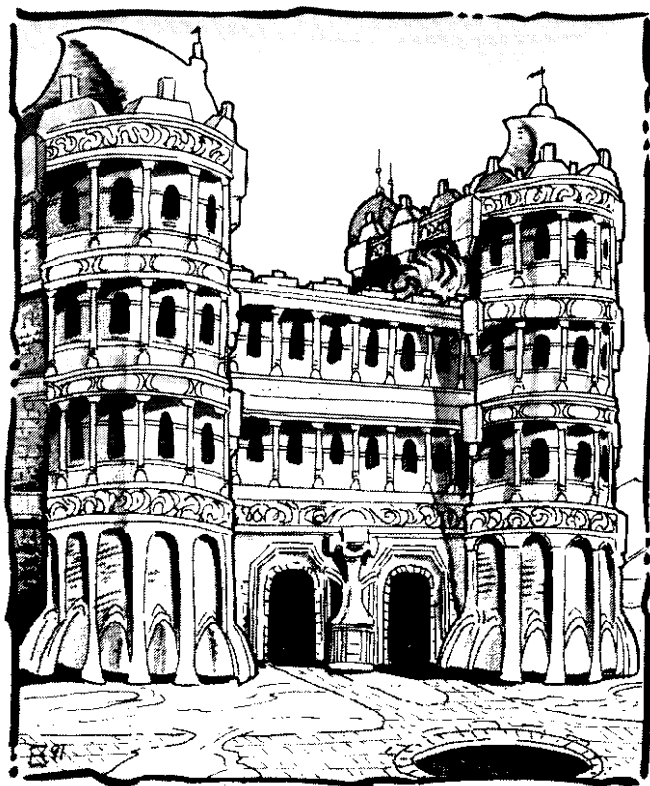
Kalak has also taken the slaves out of the mines, completely shutting down iron production. This has caused the city's economy to crash, leaving merchant and noble alike destitute. The slaves are starving, and even free craftsmen receive only meager grain rations in return for their services-and then only if their work contributes directly to the construction of the ziggurat.

To make matters worse, other cities that depend





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upon imports of Tyr's raw iron to supplement their economies are up in arms. Many of them, most notably Urik and Raam, have sent emissaries to King Kalak with rave warnings concerning the consequences of failing to resume iron production.

Can it be any wonder that in their private gatherings, nobles are whispering plans of rebellion and that merchants are fleeing the city in droves? Surely, even the iron grip of the templars cannot keep the city from erupting into a violent inferno for much longer.

When the final battle comes, it will be a terrible thing. The Royal Guard consists of two thousand mercenaries led by five hundred half-giants and Kalak's loyal templars. In fact, the latter are all armed with steel swords. Against them will be arrayed the varied armies of the nobles—who are far superior in number, if not armament. Considering the advan-

tages of Kalak's magic, the contest will be a close one. Ironically, it may well be decided by the lowliest of all Tyr's citizens, the slaves.

### Urik

Perhaps King Hamanu of Urik is best described in his own words:

*I am Hamanu, King of the World, King of the Mountains and the Plains, King of Urik, for whom the roaring winds and the all-mighty sun have decreed a destiny of heroism, and to whom the life-giving waters and the nourishing soils have trusted the mightiest City of Athas.*

*The Great Spirits of the bountiful lands raised me from my childhood, instructing me in the art of war, how to give the signal for the skirmish, and when to draw up the line of battle. They made my arms powerful against my enemies, who have always been many, and gave me weapons to strike off the heads of those whom I fight. They made of me a man who cannot be killed, and a general who cannot be defeated.*

*I am Hamanu of Urik, The Great King, The Mighty King, King of the World, King of Athas, an unrivaled potentate who holds sway from the great Ringing Mountains to the shores of the endless Sea of Silt, the bringer of death and peace, to whom all must submit.*

As you have probably guessed, Hamanu considers himself a warrior king. Providing he finds the battle worthy of his skills, he often leads his troops into combat personally. So far, he has earned his boasting rights—his armies have never been defeated when he was leading them.

Hamanu's palace stands inside a great walled fortress in the center of Urik. This fortress covers a square mile, serving as both the administrative center for his templars and the base for his army. It contains a drill field, a barracks, and an armory filled with obsidian-edged swords, spears, and bows and



arrows. From this fortress, Hamanu can personally send more than ten thousand slave soldiers led by a thousand lance-carrying half-giants into battle. Whether their status is slave or mercenary, all of these soldiers are extremely loyal to Hamanu, for he trains with them personally almost every day.

One of the most interesting aspects of Hamanu's army is his company of halflings. He has worked out an agreement with Chief Urga-Zoltapl whereby Urik supplies him with a certain quantity of obsidian in return for the services of two hundred halfling warriors. Hamanu uses these halflings to disrupt his opponent's rear areas by having them infiltrate during the night to attack the tents of rival commanders, destroy supply wagons, and free his enemy's slaves.

Urik's economy depends almost entirely on obsidian quarried from the Mountain of the Black Crown. It also relies heavily on Tyr's iron to make the tools necessary to quarry the glassy stone efficiently.

As a final note, I should warn you that if you visit Urik, be very careful to obey all of Hamanu's laws and keep some gold hidden securely away just in case you must bribe a templar for your freedom. Few fates are worse than being sold into slavery to work in the quarry pits. The sharp edges of the glassy stone will slice your fingers, hands, and arms to a point of uselessness within days.

## Villages

There are hundreds of villages in the Tyr Region. Even if it were possible to describe them all, there would be little point in doing so. By the time you visited any particular village, there is a good chance that it would be gone—having been destroyed by raiders or simply deserted after serving its purpose. Therefore, only the villages that seemed to me more or less permanent are described below.

## Altaruk

Located at the head of the Big Fork of the Forked Tongue Estuary, Altaruk is a client village of the merchant houses of Wavir, Rees, and Tomblador (based in Balic). As villages go, Altaruk is heavily fortified; it is surrounded by a fifteen-foot wall and defended by five hundred free mercenaries armed with mekillot-hide shields, wooden lances, and daggers of sharpened bone.

This contingent of warriors is commanded by Arisphistaneles, a powerful Preserver. Because of Arisphistaneles' influence, the Veiled Alliance is openly tolerated in Altaruk, and the city is fast becoming known as a safe meeting place for Preservers—though Defilers are strictly forbidden entry.

Despite its formidable defenses, Altaruk is destroyed on a regular basis by giants from the islands of the Forked Tongue Estuary. The sponsors always rebuild the village promptly, for its garrison is a key deterrent to the raiders that would otherwise prey on the heavy caravan traffic at this critical junction. This protection is extended to caravans of other houses in return for payment of a heavy toll as they pass through Altaruk.

## Makla

Makla is a client village of Urik, located on the shore of the Lake of Golden Dreams. It is a rugged town serving as a supply center and base camp for the slave gangs quarrying obsidian from the Smoking Crown. Makla is rarely harassed by raiders, for 500 Urik soldiers armed with obsidian-edged swords and spears are stationed here. They are supplemented by so half-giants armed with lances and clubs and a force of 25 halfling hunters assigned to track down escaped slaves.

## North and South Ledopolus

These two dwarven villages are located on opposite sides of the Big Fork of the Forked Tongue Estuary. The inhabitants of North Ledopolus are trying



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to build a stone pathway to Ledo Island from their north shore of the estuary, and the inhabitants of South Ledopolus are trying to do the same from the south shore of the estuary. Their intention is to bridge the entire estuary, opening a shorter caravan route from Gulg and Nibenay to Balic and other cities south of the Tyr Region.

Occasionally, the giants living on Ledo Island wade out to tear down some of what the dwarves have built. This usually occasions a fierce battle between the two contingents.

### Salt View

Salt View is a slave tribe village located on the eastern face of the Mekillot Mountains. Like most slave villages, it is a boisterous, unruly place filled with ex-slaves of all races, yet it is also known for its fine theater. The former slaves of Salt View have recently begun to supplement their normal means of making a living (raiding caravans bound for Gulg or Nibenay) by sending out acting troupes to put on shows for wealthy merchants (they will have nothing to do with nobles). Salt View's leader is an ex-gladiator mul named Xaynon.

### Ogo

Ogo is the home of the halfling chief, Urga-Zoltapl. It consists of a massive step-pyramid rising just high enough so that its summit sits beneath the shade of the forest canopy (about seventy-five feet). Urga-Zoltapl's palace sits atop this pyramid, and it is here that he receives his tribesmen. A dozen stone buildings, homes for his servants and wives, stand scattered around the base of the pyramid.

Ogo is unique among halfling villages in that an outsider may hope to visit it without being eaten—but I would suggest undertaking the journey only in the company of halflings from Urik. Otherwise, you'll be taking your chances as to whether Urga-Zoltapl thinks you would be more interesting as a conversationalist or as a meal.

### Walis

This small village is hidden away up an obscure side canyon in the foothills of the Ringing Mountain—and that's the way the citizens like it. From the outside, it looks like the long-deserted ruin of an ancient castle, and many travelers no doubt pass right beneath it without a second thought. Walis sits atop a high spire of rock that can only be reached by scaling a five-hundred foot cliff, by flying, or by being hoisted in a cargo-bucket that the natives operate for that purpose. Those who do know of Walis's true nature must stand at the bottom of the cliff and ask to be lifted, and the natives will oblige only if the individual is known to them.

The reason for all this secrecy and security is that Walis sits atop the only gold mine in Athas that I know of. Lest you get any ideas about getting rich quickly, however, I should warn you that all commercial transactions in the village are handled by the Tomblador merchant house, which also pays a small company of Defilers to live in the village and protect it. Like the iron mine of Tyr, the gold mine here gives up its precious treasure only at great cost in sweat and blood.

### Oases

Athas is an arid world, but it is not entirely waterless. In various places, springs and underground streams bubble to the surface, forming small pools around which a verdant belt of vegetation grows. The desert is fairly dotted with oases—but they are so small and spread so far apart that unless you know their exact locations, you are apt to die of thirst looking for them. Then, too, oases come and go with frustrating irregularity. Sometimes the underground water source dries up; other times, the wind buries them beneath tons of sand and dust. Even when you do find an oasis, it is wise to remember that the water is sometimes poisonous.

The largest and most reliable oases are marked on the *Map of the Tyr Region*. There is little reason





to describe each oasis individually, however, so I have included in the atlas only those that have some unique feature, which you may be likely to visit in your own travels.

## Bitter Well

The waters at this oasis are actually very cool and sweet. For centuries, as the caravan drivers crossed the scrub plains surrounding this oasis, they could hear running water. They could never locate its source, however, until a small group of dwarves set up a village and dug a well through a thin mantle of rock. It turned out that there was an underground stream below the rock mantle, which was acting as a sounding board to amplify the sounds of the stream. The dwarves, who had hoped to make a fortune selling water to the caravan drivers, were understandably bitter when they realized that the stream was too small to support even their own families, much less earn them the fortune they had hoped for; hence the name of the oasis.

I would advise against relying upon watering at this well when making your travel plans; there is at least a 50% chance that the caravan ahead of you has already depleted the well. When this happens, it often takes up to six days before enough water j-lows back into the well to fill a typical caravan's waterskins.

## Black Waters

Black Waters is located in the heart of the Yaramuke (see *Ruins* below), halfway between the cities of Urik and Raam. Whatever you do, don't drink from either the pool or the stream that runs out of it. When King Hamanu of Urik destroyed Yaramuke, he used such terrible magic that he poisoned this oasis forever. Now, whoever drinks this water feels a chill fall over him and grows deathly ill. You would also be well advised to avoid camping near this oasis; it is haunted by the spectres of those who did not read (or heed) this warning.

## Lake Pit

This lake, located at the northern end of the Dragon's Bowl, is the largest body of water in the Tyr Region. Its cerulean surface covers more than twenty-eight square miles. Despite the fact that it is less than thirty miles from Urik, it remains in pristine condition, its shores teeming with both flora and fauna. Perhaps the reason for this is that to reach it, travelers must descend the steep cliffs of the Dragon's Bowl, or perhaps it is because Lake Pit is also under the protection of the druid who lives in the Dragon's Bowl (see *Landmarks* below).

In either case, if you visit Lake Pit, do nothing to befoul the crystalline waters. And for your own protection, don't even think about trying to reach the Sunken City rumored to lie in the submerged caves beneath the lake. All those stories about rooms full of gold and halls filled with treasure are probably just fairy tales, anyway.

## Lake of Golden Dreams

The Lake of Golden Dreams lies on the western side of the Smoking Crown, where a thick yellowish steam constantly rises from its boiling waters. Where the yellow water is not too deep, it is possible to see that the bottom of the lake is laced with hundreds of tunnels and passageways. According to rumor, these tunnels lead to an incredible city that lies at the heart of the Smoking Crown. It is difficult to say whether there is any truth to this story, however; those who have survived the scalding waters long enough to swim into the tunnels have never returned.

## Silver Spring

There is nothing silver about this oasis: the water is foul-tasting and brown, the bushes in the surrounding scrub plains are dun-colored and thorny, and the rocks are burnt orange, just like in the stony barrens of the rest of Athas. The reason the oasis is called the *Silver Spring* is because the elven chief



## Atlas of the Tyr Region



who settled his tribe here demands a piece of silver (or something equivalent) of anyone who wishes to water at the pool. He and his warriors generally attack anyone who fails to pay.

### Grak's Pool

The pond at this oasis is protected by a large mud-brick fortress. If you want to water here, it costs one copper piece (or the equivalent) per animal (they count intelligent beings as animals). Otherwise, the half-elf Grak and his fifty mercenaries won't allow you inside—unless, of course, they realize that you are more powerful than they are. According to rumors, there is a vault beneath Grak's fortress that contains all the treasure he has gained through controlling this oasis over the years.

### Lost Oasis

This geyser sits in the middle of a salt flat. Over the years, the steaming waters have washed the salt away for several miles around the fountain, and now it is surrounded by a beautiful forest of pinion trees. The Lost Oasis and its grove are protected by the thri-kreen druid Durwadala, whom you will never see—even if she attacks you for defiling the oasis.

### The Mud Palace

This huge mudflat is located in an inland silt basin in one of the most deserted parts of the Tyr Region. Even if you can persuade a friendly giant to carry you to it, as I did, I advise against going there. The entire mudflat is populated by horrid monsters, the like of which you have never seen before.

At the center of the island, where the foliage



grows so thick it is a veritable jungle, a magnificent castle of white marble rises out of the mud. What may lie inside is impossible to say. The grounds are haunted by venomous spiders and snakes of every sort. To make matters worse, there are no windows, doors, or entrances of any sort on the castle—save for the windows at the highest levels of the tower, which gush forth a constant stream of water.

## Islands

The Sea of Silt is filled with islands, and I must admit, not having the ability to fly (magically or otherwise), that my visits to them have been limited.

I have learned the names of many, however, and these islands are listed on the *Map of the Tyr Region*. Most of them are inhabited by giants, I believe. But not every island on the map is described here; as I have said earlier, in this atlas I am including only places that I have visited personally. Therefore, the list below includes only a few of the many islands in the Tyr Region.

## Ledo

This rocky crag is inhabited by a clan of ten to fifteen giants (the inhabitants were intentionally vague as to their number and took steps to prevent me from getting an accurate count). They are convinced that the dwarves of Northern and Southern Ledopolus (see *Villages* above) are trying to reach Ledo in order to steal their mineral wealth, which consists of a single flint-laced mountain. Ledo is too rocky for grazing, so the giants make their living by hunting and by trading bags of flint to merchant caravans traveling the road from Balic to Altaruk.

## Dragon's Palate

This long, narrow island is formed by a small range of very high mountains. The northern face of the mountains receives quite a bit of rain and has three fairly large streams that cascade down the

steep slopes before forming mudflats in the Forked Tongue Estuary.

The giants on this island make their living by herding sheep and tending olive orchards. They rarely resort to raiding, except in search of some material they cannot produce themselves. They are especially fond of kank nectar and are sure to welcome any visitor bearing a tub of the rich green honey.

I should warn you, however, against trying to capture or kill any of the exotic birds that inhabit the northern slope of the mountains. Although the tail feathers of these birds are worth a small fortune in any city, the giants seem strangely attached to their feathered friends. If they catch you bird hunting, they will most assuredly toss you into the Sea of Silt to suffocate.

## Siren's Song

Though I have not actually visited this island, it seems wise to warn you about it. Caravan drivers traveling the area north of this island have taken to plugging their ears as they pass, for a strange, haunting song drifts out over the stony barrens from Siren's Song. This song casts a magical spell over those who hear it, and they find themselves compelled to follow it to its source. Unfortunately, the source lies on Siren's Song Island, and as the enchanted men attempt to wade out to the island, they inevitably suffocate in the half-mile of silt that they must cross to reach it. Foolishly, I was determined to hear this song, so I deliberately left my ears uncovered. I nearly killed my companions before they succeeded in restraining me and saving me from this terrible fate. To this day, its memory haunts me and I often feel a longing to seek out its source.

Some claim that an ancient sorceress is imprisoned on the island, and that she is singing her beautiful song to call a hero to her aid. Others say the song is nothing but the cry of some foul creature inhabiting the island. Whatever the reason, be forewarned—the song is fatal.



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### Waverly

In the center of this large island sits an ancient, walled city. In the town square, the primitive fountain still sprays water into the air. The town's sewers act like a network of irrigation canals to carry away the overflow, so the region in and about the town has become a well-watered scrub plain over the years. At the edges of the city lie several piers and ancient craft that may have been used for sailing when the sea was filled with water. Although these were clearly crafted of wood once, they have become petrified either with the passage of time or via some arcane enchantment. The area between these piers and the Sea of Silt is rocky and barren.

According to legend, a horde of several thousand pounds of silver is buried somewhere beneath the city. Even if this legend is true and you found the horde, however, I think you would have more trouble transporting it back to shore than finding it in the first place. Other than a flock of wild erdlus and several hives of wild kanks, the island appears completely deserted.

### Lake Island

Lake Island is a huge volcano that has gradually thrust itself up out of the Sea of Silt over the course of the last five hundred years. Though it has never erupted violently to my knowledge, the summit grows a little higher each year as a fairly constant stream of magma trickles forth from cracks in the side of the cone. The scrub plains of the island's lower slopes are covered with a lush grass that serves kanks and erdlus well as fodder.

In the crater at the mountain's summit there is a large, deep lake of clear blue water. A plume of bluish steam rises from this lake and hangs over the mountain's crown at all times. Some psionicists claim that breathing these vapors while perched on the edge of the crater in a state of trance helps them achieve a deeper understanding of their inner powers. The giants on the island think it is great fun

to see if they can sneak upon these individuals and push them into the scalding waters of the lake.

### Ruins

As noted in the chapter on geography, there are ruins all over Athas. You will encounter them practically wherever you go, lying half-submerged in dust basins, rising out of the endless salt flats, or towering above the stony barrens. The ruins described below are some of the more interesting ones that I have visited.

### Bleak Tower

This circular, marble tower rises more than a hundred feet above the surrounding plain. Once, a wooden stairway ascended the interior, but it has long since rotted away. Other than the stairway, the tower remains exactly as it has stood for at least a thousand years. Not a stone has fallen from its walls. From its crown, a magical lantern still casts a macabre green light out over the Sea of Silt. When the wind stirs up a good dust storm, a loud, painful bellow sounds from the tower at regular intervals. The local natives attribute the roar to the ghost of the tower's lady who, they say, lost her betrothed on such a night long ago, when the Sea of Silt was filled with water.

### Arkhold

This ancient village of stone huts was once protected by a large castle perched atop a hill overlooking the town. The village seems to have been a healthy one, for it had outgrown its walls several times and built new ones to protect the outer buildings. Now, much of the village is covered by drifting sand. My guides told me that every time they come back, a new part of the town is uncovered and a section that they had previously explored is buried in sand. Arkhold's isolation makes it a good place for treasure hunters. Although we tarried here only a few hours, my guides each found a steel sword (I



suspect that one of them was magic) in parts of the village that had only recently become uncovered.

As for the castle itself, I cannot tell you much about it. When I tried to climb the hill to explore it, my guides restrained me bodily, claiming that it was the home to a foul race of insane humanoids. Then, as nightfall began to approach, they insisted upon leaving the area altogether, fearing that those same humanoids would come and take us kicking and screaming back to their castle. I would like to return there someday, however, for the castle looked amazingly well preserved. I am sure that it would prove to be an excellent place to learn something about the ancients.

### Kalidnay

Kalidnay was once a magnificent city-state, as large as Tyr and as wealthy as Balic. The sorcerer-king who ruled it lived in an immense palace in the heart of the city, surrounded by the mansions of his nobles and templars. Judging from all of the abandoned trading emporiums, it must have been a wealthy city indeed. In the center of the city, there was even a huge ziggurat. Now, the streets are littered with skeletons, the palaces have fallen into ruin, and the ziggurat has been cracked open like an immense earthen egg. No one knows what disaster caused the downfall of Kalidnay, but there can be no doubt that it came rapidly and unexpectedly.

### Bodach

Bodach, lying at the tip of a peninsula projecting into one of the great inland silt basins, was undoubtedly one of the mightiest cities of the ancients. Its ruins cover many square miles of the peninsula. When you stand at the edge of the silt basin, you can see its towers rising above the silt for many miles beyond.

Unfortunately, Bodach and the surrounding territories are not good places to linger. As the crimson sun goes down, thousands of undead zombies and

skeletons crawl out of the cellars, sewers, and hidden dungeons, then begin scouring the city and the surrounding countryside. If you are here after dark, you will spend the entire night fighting one long, pitched battle.

I have talked to those who say that the undead are controlled by a powerful Defiler who is using them to keep treasure hunters away from the city while he systematically loots it. Others claim that the undead are the original inhabitants of the city, and they cannot rest because there is some terrible secret buried in the heart of ancient city that they do not want discovered. In either case, if you go to Bodach, be prepared for an intense battle against this gruesome army.

### Giustenal

Giustenal is another of the great cities of the ancients. The city has many different walls, some of which wind down into the Sea of Silt. It is possible to wade several miles into the dust by walking along the tops of these walls, but I would advise against such foolishness. There seems to be an unusual concentration of silt horrors around the city.

Giustenal appears relatively deserted, perhaps even peaceful, and it is. However, there is something lurking out there in the quarters buried by the Sea of Silt. Psionicists claim that it is a being—or an object-of incredible power that makes contact with vulnerable minds and calls to them.

I have never felt this pull, but one night while we were camped inside the city ruins, a glassy look came over my psionist companion and he began conversing with an unseen partner in a strange language. Two days later, he went insane and murdered our kank drivers. I was forced to kill him to defend myself.

### Yaramuke

This ruined city was once ruled by the Queen of Yaramuke, a beautiful sorcerer named Sielba. She



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and King Hamanu of Urik became embroiled in a bitter dispute concerning quarrying rights to the obsidian on the Smoking Crown. Hamanu resolved the dispute by razing Yaramuke to the ground, using such terrible magic that even the water was fouled forever. According to legend, Sielba's treasure is still buried beneath the ruins of her palace. If you journey to Yaramuke in search of this treasure, I wish you good luck in determining which pile of rubble was once Sielba's palace.

### Landmarks

Never let it be said that Athas is a dreary or monotonous land. It is strewn with interesting and beautiful landmarks, as I'm sure you will discover during your travels. Here are a few of my favorites.

#### Dragon's Bowl

This great basin was formed when the first great dragon was born, tearing his body out of the living rock. Obviously, I was not present at this event, but when I entered the valley eons later, an intangible sense of awe crept over me, filling me with emotions of such apprehension and triviality that I fell trembling to my knees.

Perhaps this is why, despite lying between three busy caravan routes, Dragon's Bowl remains a hushed and desolate place. Or perhaps it is because no matter how you enter the Dragon's Bowl, you must descend a thousand feet of steep, treacherous slopes that often end in sheer, rocky cliffs. In either case, you will find the bottom of this large valley eerily quiet, especially around Lake Pit at the northern end (see Oases above). The entire region is under the protection of the mul Enola.

#### Mekillot Mountains

From a distance, these mountains look like a huge mekillot crawling across the plains. The core of these mountains is composed of hard granite, and wherever this bedrock is exposed, it protrudes from

the surrounding soft rock in beautifully carved shapes—domes and pillars, huge walls, immense tilted slabs, etc.

It is well worth the trying trip across the salt plains to walk among these natural monoliths, but beware of two things when you arrive: klars and Salt View. Klars are huge nocturnal bears that hunt via psi-onics and Salt View is a slave village.

#### Estuary of the Forked Tongue

This silt-filled channel is over two hundred fifty miles long, and is one of the primary barriers to traveling north and south in the southern areas of the Tyr region. It is filled with small islands, only a small portion of which are shown on the *Map of the Tyr Region*. Most of these islands are inhabited by at least one or two giants. On breezy evenings, when the crimson sun is just setting and a silver haze of dust hangs over the channel, it is one of the most beautiful sights on Athas.

#### Dragon's Crown Mountain

As far as I know, I am the only living man who has ever seen this ancient volcano. Shrouded in black cinders, it rises out of the scrub plains of the Hinterlands like a lonely sentinel. On the northwest side, the steep wall of its slopes is broken by the jagged outflow of an ancient river of lava.

If you make it this far into the Hinterlands, take the time and effort to struggle up the broken ground of this river. At its heart lies a beautiful pine forest, filled with gentle creatures. Deep within the forest lies an alabaster palace. When I visited, the gates to this palace were closed and it appeared deserted, but I could peer inside and see that the gardens were beautifully maintained. Though I camped outside the gates for more than a week, I never did see any inhabitants. I reluctantly decided to leave when I noticed a huge, dark shape circling high overhead.

Atlas of the Tyr Region



• ISROOM •



## Chapter Five: The Monsters of Athas

Life is a mysterious and resilient thing. Even in the starkest wastes of Athas, the careful observer finds it clinging to the horns of sand dunes, peeking out from beneath wind-raked boulders, and creeping along the cracked plains of sun-baked clay.

To survive, almost every form of life has become a monster. On the increasingly infertile world of Athas, these adaptations have taken an almost diabolical turn. The land is so barren that every form

of life, to one extent or another, is both predator and prey. Some of the more notable of these monsters are described in the pages that follow.

Over the course of the next few pages, you will learn a little about the most common, interesting, or dangerous creatures that I have encountered in my travels. Again, I must caution the would-be adventurer that even the most passive beast or sweetest flower is often deadly on Athas.





# Animals, Domestic



|                   | <b>Erdlu</b>                 | <b>Kank</b>                  | <b>Mekillot</b>              | <b>Inix</b>                  |
|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN:  | Tablelands<br>or Hinterlands | Tablelands<br>or Hinterlands | Tablelands<br>or Hinterlands | Tablelands<br>or Hinterlands |
| FREQUENCY         | Common                       | Common                       | Rare                         | Uncommon                     |
| ORGANIZATION:     | Flock                        | Hive                         | Solitary                     | Solitary                     |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:   | <b>Day</b>                   | <b>Any</b>                   | <b>Day</b>                   | <b>Day</b>                   |
| DIET              | Omnivore                     | Omnivore                     | Omnivore                     | Herbivore                    |
| INTELLIGENCE:     | Animal (1)                   | Animal (1)                   | Animal (1)                   | Animal (1)                   |
| TREASURE:         | Nil                          | Nil                          | Nil                          | Nil                          |
| ALIGNMENT:        | Neutral                      | Neutral                      | Neutral                      | Neutral                      |
| NO. APPEARING:    | 50-500                       | 50-500                       | 1 or 2                       | 1 or 2                       |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | (5d10x10)                    | (5d10x10)                    | 7 (underside 9)              | 6                            |
| MOVEMENT          | 7                            | 5                            | 7 (underside 9)              | 6                            |
| HIT DICE:         | 18                           | 15                           | 9                            | 15                           |
| THAC0:            | 3                            | 2                            | 11                           | 6                            |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 2"                           | 19                           | 9                            | 15                           |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 1d6/1d4                      | 1d6                          | 1d6                          | 1d6/1d8                      |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Nil                          | See below                    | Swallow or crush             | Crush                        |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Nil                          | Nil                          | Nil                          | Nil                          |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil                          | Nil                          | Nil                          | Nil                          |
| SIZE:             | M (7' tall)                  | L (8' long)                  | G (30' long)                 | H (16 + ' long)              |
| MORALE:           | Average (10)                 | Elite (14)                   | Elite (14)                   | Steady (12)                  |
| XP VALUE:         | 65                           | 35                           | 6,000                        | 650                          |
| PSIONICS:         | Nil                          | Nil                          | Nil                          | Nil                          |

There are numerous domesticated animals on Athas. Some of the most common ones, at least in the Hinter and Tablelands, are described here.

## Erdlu

Erdluls are flightless, featherless birds covered with flaky gray-to-red scales. They weigh as much as 200 pounds and stand up to seven feet tall. They have powerful, lanky legs ending in four-toed feet with razor-sharp claws, and can run at great speeds over short distances (no more than half-a-mile). Their bodies are massive and round, with a pair of useless wings folded at their sides. Attached to their yellow, snake-like necks are small round heads with huge wedge-shaped beaks.

Erdluls make ideal herd animals, as they can eat many forms of tough vegetation, as well as snakes, lizards, and other small reptiles. They instinctively band together in flocks for protection. When threatened, their first impulse is to flee. If this is not possible, the entire flock will turn and give battle as a group. When they fight, they strike at their attackers with their sharp beaks and then rake them with their claws.

Erdlu eggs are an excellent food, containing all the nutrients that a human or demihuman needs to survive for months at a time. If eaten raw, they can even substitute for water (1 gallon per egg) for periods of up to one week. In addition, the hard scales of their wings make excellent shields or armor (AC 6), their beaks can be used to make fine spearheads, and their claws are often crafted into daggers or tools.

## Kank

Kanks are large docile insects. Their bodies have a black chitinous exoskeleton, and are divided into three sections: head, thorax,

and abdomen. Kanks often weigh as much as 400 pounds and stand up to four feet tall at the back, with bodies as long as eight feet from head to abdomen. Around their mouths, they have a pair of multi-jointed pincers which they use to carry objects, to feed themselves, and occasionally to fight with. On their thoraxes, they have six lanky legs ending in a single flexible claw with which the kank can grip the surfaces it walks upon. Their bulbous abdomens have no appendages, and are simply carried above the ground.

Kanks are often used as caravan mounts, as they can travel for a full day at their top speed, carrying a two-hundred pound passenger *and* two-hundred pounds of cargo. They also make decent herd animals and are especially valued by elves. Because they can digest nearly any sort of organic matter, these hardy beasts will thrive in almost any environment. In addition, they require little attention, for a kank hive instinctively organizes itself into *food producers*, *soldiers*, and *brood queens*.

The food producers secrete melon-sized globules of green honey that they store on their abdomens to feed the young and, when food is scarce, the rest of the hive. Humans and demihumans can live on this nectar alone for periods of up to three weeks, but must supplement their diets with meat and/or vegetation after longer periods. The sweet taste of this nectar makes it very valuable, and it is this that has caused the kank to be domesticated. It should be noted that wild kanks produce far fewer globules than their carefully bred cousins.

When the tribe stops in an area that looks as though there is a considerable amount of vegetation, the brood queens lay a clutch of twenty to fifty eggs. The soldier kanks, along with the rest of the hive, ferociously defend this area from all predators, and will not leave until the eggs hatch. Herders must delay their migrations or abandon their hives when this conflicts with their plans.

In a fight, the soldiers attack first, striking with their pincers for

1d6 points of damage. In addition, any victim hit by a soldier is injected with Class O poison (save vs. poison or be paralyzed in 2d12 rounds). If pressed, the food producers will also fight, but they lack the poison of the soldiers. The brood queen never attacks, even in self defense.

Although predators may attack kanks for the food producers' honey globules, only the foulest carrion eaters will eat kank flesh. As soon as a kank dies, its meat emits a foul-smelling odor that not even a starving man can stomach. The chitinous exoskeleton of kanks can be scraped and cut into solid plates of armor (AC5), but it is somewhat brittle and each time it is hit there is a 20% chance that it will shatter.

## Mekillot

Mekillots are mighty lizards weighing up to six-tons, with huge, mound-shaped bodies as long as 30 feet. Their backs and heads are covered with a thick shell that serves as both a sunshade and protection from attacks by other large creatures. Their undersides are covered with much softer scales (AC 8).

Despite their vicious dispositions, mekillots are often used as caravan beasts. A hitched pair can pull a wagon weighing 10-20 tons at a slow, plodding pace. Mekillots are never truly tame, however; even when they are hitched to a wagon, the stubborn creatures have been known to turn off the road and go wandering off for days—without any apparent reason. They are also noted for making snacks of their handlers. Because of the difficulties of controlling these beasts, most caravans rely on psionics with the appropriate powers to drive them.

In a fight, mekillots attack with their long tongues, striking for 1d6 damage. On a natural roll of 20, the tongue grasps the victim

and tries to draw him into his mouth. He must save vs. paralyzation to avoid being swallowed and slowly killed by the great beast's digestive system. Swallowed individuals are helpless to employ any form of attack other than psionics on the mekillot that consumed them.

Mekillots protect their vulnerable undersides by instinctively dropping to their bellies when anything crawls beneath them. This causes 2d12 points of damage to the creature they drop upon and may injure the mekillot, depending on what it is trying to flatten.

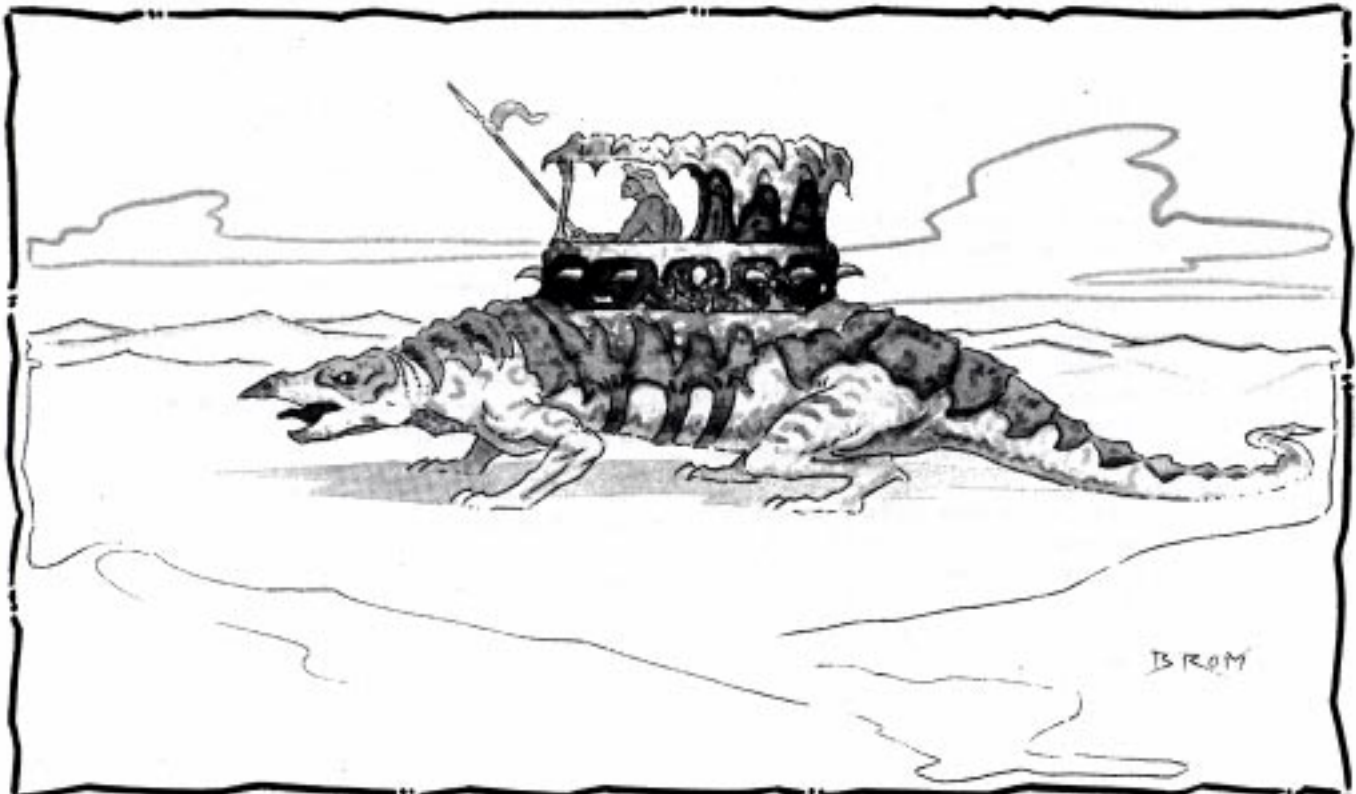
## Inix

The inix is a large lizard midway in size between a kank and mekillot. It weighs about two tons and grows up to sixteen feet long. Its back is protected by a thick shell, while its belly is covered with a layer of flexible scales.

Inix make spirited mounts, and are capable of carrying up to a seven-hundred and fifty pounds. They move at steady pace for hours on end, and over short distances, their charge is as fast as that of a kank. Inix riders often travel in howdahs, small box-like carriages that are strapped to the beast's back.

The one major drawback to traveling by inix is that these large herbivores need vast amounts of forage. If they don't get enough to eat they are nearly impossible to control. Thus, they are seldom used in regions where forage is at a premium.

In combat, inix slap with their immense tail (1d6 damage) and bite (1d8 damage). On a natural biting attack roll of 20, they grasp man-sized or smaller opponents and do an additional 1d20 points of crushing damage. Their shells are useful for making armor (AC 5), and their scaly underbellies can be used to make a type of fine leather armor (AC7).



# Belgoi



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|                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Tablelands |
| FREQUENCY:       | Uncommon   |
| ORGANIZATION:    | Tribe      |

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|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | Any      |
| DIET:           | Omnivore |
| INTELLIGENCE:   | L        |

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|            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| TREASURE:  | M,(I)       |
| ALIGNMENT: | Lawful evil |

---

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|                |      |
|----------------|------|
| NO. APPEARING: | 1-10 |
| ARMOR CLASS:   | 7    |
| MOVEMENT:      | 12   |

---

|                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| HIT DICE:       | 5  |
| THACO:          | 15 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | 2  |

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|                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 1d4+2              |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Constitution drain |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Nil                |

---

|                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil            |
| SIZE:             | M (6' tall)    |
| MORALE:           | Average (8-10) |
| XP VALUE:         | 650            |

---

## PSIONICS SUMMARY:

| Level | Dis/Sci/Dev | Attack/Defense | Score | PSPs |
|-------|-------------|----------------|-------|------|
| 2     | 2/1/5       | E W, P B / M   | 12    | 35   |

**Telepathy**— *Sciences:* domination; *Devotions:* attraction, ego whip, psionic blast, mind blank, contact.

**Note:** These psionics are common to most belgoi. It is not unusual for individuals of higher status to have more powerful psionics, however.

At first sight, the belgoi appear human—end then you notice the long claws on the end of their fingers, their puckered, toothless mouths, and their webbed, three-toed feet. They are a race of ignorant demihumans who dwell in the most forlorn wastes of Athas. They have a taste for the flesh of intelligent races and no ruler will tolerate them within five day's travel of his city.

**Combat:** Belgoi usually attack by sneaking up on their victim's camp and selecting a juicy looking target. Each belgoi rings a small bell that allows it to make contact with its victim, then attempts to use *domination* to take over the victim's body and have him leave camp, or *attraction* to lure the victim into the darkness. If the belgoi's *contact* is successful, only the victim can hear the bell, but if it fails, then the entire party hears it.

Once the victim is lured out of camp, the belgoi caresses and touches the victim, temporarily draining 1d6 points of Constitution per round (duration: 1d4 turns, victim loses all bonuses due to high Constitution). Upon reaching 0 Constitution points, the victim falls unconscious, and the belgoi sits down to feast.



If forced into melee combat, the belgoi strike with their wicked claws, inflicting en 1d4+2 points of damage. Each time they hit, the victim must save vs. poison or lose 1d6 points of Constitution (es described above).

When a battle starts to go against the belgoi, they will flee and fetch replacements for any of their fallen comrades, then return a short time later to attack again. Therefore, battles with belgoi often turn into long, running fights that last for many days. The only way to prevent the belgoi from returning time after time is to kill them all before they have a chance to escape.

**Habitat/Society:** Basically, the belgoi form huge raiding tribes and behave as such. They tend to make their homes in forlorn parts of the desert, but journey forth in great numbers to harass the trading routes, settled villages, and anywhere else they can find a plentiful supply of poorly defended people.

Belgoi hosts tend to move in small parties of 1-10 individuals. When they encounter likely-looking prey, the scouting party usually attacks, looking to its own dinner first. If they have stumbled across a large group, however, they will fetch other members of their tribe and return to attack with greater numbers.

**Ecology:** Belgoi often leave the land barren and desolate behind them, stripped of all animal and vegetable life. They are second only to the foulest of defilers in the destruction they cause to the world about them.

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Tablelands, Mountains, and Hinterlands |
| FREQUENCY:       | Rare                                   |
| ORGANIZATION:    | Solitary                               |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:  | Night                                  |
| DIET:            | Carnivore                              |
| INTELLIGENCE:    | High (13-14)                           |
| TREASURE:        | R, V                                   |
| ALIGNMENT:       | Neutral evil                           |

|                   |                                      |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| NO. APPEARING:    | 1 or 2                               |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | 0                                    |
| MOVEMENT:         | 15                                   |
| HIT DICE:         | 10                                   |
| THACO:            | 11                                   |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 1                                    |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | by weapon +10                        |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Breath Weapon                        |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Hit only by magical or steel weapons |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil                                  |
| SIZE:             | H                                    |
| MORALE:           | Fanatic (18-13)                      |
| XP VALUE:         | 5,000                                |

## PSIONICS SUMMARY:

| Level | Dis/Sci/Dev | Attack/Defense  | Score | PSPs |
|-------|-------------|-----------------|-------|------|
| 6     | 1/2/10      | MT, PB, P s C / | 15    | 80   |
|       |             | IF, MB, M -     |       |      |
|       |             | TS, TW          |       |      |

**Telepathy**-- *Sciences:* psychic crush, tower of iron will. *Devotions:* mind thrust, psionic blast, intellect fortress, mental barrier, mind blank, thought shield, awe, contact, inflict pain, invincible foes.

It is difficult to tell whether the braxat are of mammalian or reptilian stock. Their backs are covered with thick, articulated shells, their heads have a squarish lizard-like shape giving them a reptilian appearance, and the crowns of their heads are defended by three to five horny protrusions. At the same time, they walk upright on two feet, can speak with a human-like voice, have a fully opposable thumb, and are warm-blooded.

**Combat:** Braxat are hunters by nature, and their fighting tactics reflect this. They will often use psionic attacks (*inflict pain* or *invincible foes*) in an attempt to disable their opponents and reduce the risk to themselves.

After attacking psionically, the braxat wade into hand-to-hand combat, usually carrying a massive spiked club that inflicts 2d4 points of damage.

They use their breath weapon only as a last resort, for it tends to render the prey unsuitable for consumption. This cone of acid is one foot in diameter at the base and extends for ten-feet, where it is five feet in diameter. It does 2d10 points of damage to anything it touches (save vs. breath weapon for ½ damage).

Braxat suffer damage only when hit by steel weapons or those with a magical enchantment upon them. All other weapons glance off of them harmlessly, although they may be knocked prone or



otherwise affected by them.

**Habitat/Society:** Braxats are found throughout Athas, wandering the forlorn wastes in search of prey. They are usually solitary creatures, but may rarely be found in mated pairs (in this case, the young are usually safely hidden away in a remote cavern).

**Ecology:** Braxat are true terrors of the desert, usually attacking at night in search of fresh meat. Although they will eat caravan mounts on occasion (with the exception of kanks), they prefer intelligent races.

Braxat shells make excellent shields and armor plates (AC2). Because of this, they are sometimes hunted by other creatures living near them. Because of the power of the braxat, however, would-be hunters often find the tables turned upon them and end up the targets of a deadly ambush.

# Dragon of Tyr



|                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Any               |
| FREQUENCY        | Unique            |
| ORGANIZATION:    | Solitary          |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:  | Any               |
| DIET             | Omnivore          |
| INTELLIGENCE:    | Supra-genius (20) |
| TREASURE:        | (H)               |
| ALIGNMENT        | Lawful evil       |

|                   |                                      |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| NO. APPEARING:    | 1                                    |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | -10                                  |
| MOVEMENT          | 15, Fl 45 (A), Jp 5, Br 6            |
| HIT DICE:         | 32 (250 hit points)                  |
| THACO:            | -3                                   |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 4 + breath weapon or spell & psionic |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 2d10+15/2d10+15/4d12/5d10            |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Breath weapon (25d12)                |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | See below                            |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | 80%                                  |
| SIZE:             | G (40' tall)                         |
| MORALE:           | Fearless (20)                        |
| XP VALUE:         | 42,000                               |

## PSIONICS SUMMARY:

| Level | Dis/Sci/Dev | Attack/Defense   | Score | PSPs                  |
|-------|-------------|------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| 25    | 6/12/28     | EW,II,MT,PB,PsC/ | 19    | Varies (usually 200+) |
|       |             | IF,MB,M-,TS,TW   |       |                       |

**Clairsentience**— *Sciences:* clairvoyance, precognition; *Devotions:* combat mind, danger sense, poison sense.

**Psychokinesis**— *Sciences:* detonate, disintegrate, telekinesis; *Devotions:* animate shadow, ballistic attack, molecular agitation, soften.

**Psychometabolism**— *Sciences:* death field, life draining; *Devotions:* body equilibrium, cause decay, chameleon power, ectoplasmic form, heightened senses, reduction, suspend animation.

**Psychoportation**— *Sciences:* teleport; *Devotions:* dimensional door, dimension walk, teleport trigger, time shift.

**Telepathy**— *Sciences:* psychic crush, tower of iron will; *Devotions:* contact, ego whip, id insinuation, intellect fortress, mental barrier, mind blank, mind thrust, mindlink, psionic blast, thought shield.

**Metapsionics**— *Sciences:* ultrablast.

**Defiler Spells:** 1) *charm person, friends, hypnotism, sleep, chill touch;* 2) *bind, forget, ray of enfeeblement, scare, spectral hand;* 3) *hold person, suggestion, feign death, hold undead, vampiric touch;* 4) *confusion, emotion, fumble, contagion, enervation;* 5) *chaos, domination, feeblemind, animate dead, magic jar;* 6) *eyebite, mass suggestion, death spell, reincarnation;* 7) *shadow walk, control undead, finger of death;* 8) *binding, mass charm, sink;* 9) *mordenkainen's disjunction, energy drain.*



ian in many ways: it has a long, snake-like neck, whip-like tail, and scaly hide. Yet it walks on two legs, its hands have long, well-developed fingers and thumbs, its bone structure seems faintly humanoid, and its head is long and narrow, with a distinctly mammalian appearance.

**Combat:** The dragon is a terror in combat. It can attack simultaneously with its massive claws (2d10+15), its fang-filled mouth (4d12), and its whip-like tail (5d10). In addition to its melee attacks, the dragon can use one psionic power *and* cast one magical spell per round. For purposes of determining psionic power and spell effects, it is treated as 20th level psionist and a 20th level defiler. The dragon's saving throw numbers are always "2".

Three times a day, the dragon can breath a cone of superheated sand during a round instead of using its psionic powers and casting a spell. This cone is five-feet wide at the base, fifty-feet long, and a hundred feet in diameter at its far end. The cone does 25d12 of damage, which is treated as both heat and abrasive damage.

The dragon can be hit only by +2 or better magical weapons. If these are not made of metal, the dragon suffers only ½ damage from the attack. Each round, the dragon automatically regenerates 10 hp. The dragon has an 80% magic resistance to all spells cast against it.

The dragon usually attacks like a hunter, first stalking and then chasing down its prey. Next, if its opponent consists of a large group of individuals, it attacks with its *death field* psionic power, but if the opponent is only a handful of individuals, it attacks them individually with its *life draining* power.

The dragon uses its breath weapon only as a last resort, for it is so destructive that nothing usually remains of any prey that it hits.

**Habitat/Society:** The dragon wanders over all parts of Athas, usually alone. Occasionally, it visits a sorcerer-king, leaving disaster and chaos in its wake.

Fortunately, there is only one dragon in the Tyr Region, and perhaps in the entire world of Athas. It is tall and thin, with a gnarled bone structure and swollen, bulbous joints. Its appearance is reptil-

# Dune Freak (Anakore)



|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN:  | Any sandy region                          |
| FREQUENCY:        | Uncommon                                  |
| ORGANIZATION:     | Small Tribes                              |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:   | Night                                     |
| DIET:             | Omnivore                                  |
| INTELLIGENCE:     | Low (5-7)                                 |
| TREASURE:         | P   |
| ALIGNMENT:        | Neutral evil                              |
| <hr/>             |   |
| NO. APPEARING:    | 2-12 (2d6)                                |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | 8   |
| MOVEMENT:         | 9, 15 Br                                  |
| HIT DICE:         | 3   |
| THACO:            | 17  |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 2   |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 1d4/1d4                                   |
| SPECIAL ATTACK:   | Surprise bonus, Paralyzation, suffocation |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Burrow                                    |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil                                       |
| SIZE:             | M (6' tall)                               |
| MORALE:           | Steady (11-12)                            |
| XP VALUE:         | 650                                       |
| PSIONICS:         | Nil                                       |



The anakore are a race of dimwitted humanoids with bony, wedge-like heads, small ears pressed close to the sides of their heads, and sunken, beady eyes covered by clear membranes to prevent sand from scratching these delicate tissues.

The bright light of Athas' sun blinds the anakore during the day, but at night they can see as clearly as most beings do during the day. The anakore do not have infravision, however; they do not see body heat. In complete darkness, they are as blind as any human. But if there is even the tiniest amount of light, such as from a star, they see very well.

The anakore have an unusual dorsal ridge running along their spine. This fin is actually a sensitive organ which picks up minute vibrations traveling through the sand. With it, they can locate a solitary creature walking on the sand from as far away as five miles.

**Combat:** Anakore usually attack their foes by burrowing underneath them, then striking from beneath the victim with their sharp claws. Such victims suffer a -3 penalty to their surprise rolls. The anakore continue to fight from within the sand for as long as possible, imposing a -2 penalty to their opponents' attack rolls.

When an anakore hits a victim with both claws, it holds the individual motionless for a moment and bites with its short, sharp teeth.

While this bite inflicts no damage in itself, it does inject poisonous saliva into the wound. The victim must immediately save vs. paralyzation or be completely unable to move for 1d4 rounds. On the round following paralyzation, the victim is dragged under the sand, suffering an additional 1d4 per round suffocation damage.

**Habitat/Society:** The anakore live within any sandy heap, such as sand dunes or the alluvial fans at the mouths of the canyons. Normally, they travel and hunt in small packs of two to twelve individuals, with the largest, most aggressive acting as leader. They are rarely found outside of sandy areas, but they can walk upright across various kinds of terrain—though they are unusually vulnerable in this state and will avoid fighting at all costs.

**Ecology:** The anakore are nomadic burrowers who are constantly moving through the sandy wastes of Athas. It is often possible to identify an area through which anakores have passed by the dead plants found there—the anakores chew the roots away, leaving the upper stalks exposed. In addition to their diet of plant roots, the anakores also eat meat—mekillot, inix, erdlu, elf, dwarf, halfling, and nearly anything except kank.



|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Sands, stony barrens, rocky badlands, and islands |
| FREQUENCY:       | Very Rare   |
| ORGANIZATION:    | Solitary  |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:  | Any   |
| DIET:            | Carnivore   |
| INTELLIGENCE:    | Very (11-12)                                      |
| TREASURE:        | Z   |
| ALIGNMENT:       | Neutral evil                                      |

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| NO. APPEARING: | 1-2 |
| ARMOR CLASS:   | 2   |
| MOVEMENT:      | 12  |

|                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| HIT DICE:       | 7  |
| THACO:          | 13 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | 1  |

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 1d6       |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | See below |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | See below |

|                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil             |
| SIZE:             | L (6' diameter) |
| MORALE:           | Champion (15)   |
| XP VALUE:         | 2,000           |

#### PSIONICS SUMMARY:

| Level | Dis/Sci/Dev | Attack/Defense                | Score | PSPs |
|-------|-------------|-------------------------------|-------|------|
| 8     | 1/4/13      | II, EW, PB/<br>IF, MB, M-, TW | 17    | 120  |

**Telepathy**— *Sciences:* domination, mass domination, probe, tower of iron will; *Devotions:* aversion, contact, ego whip, esp, false sensory input, id insinuation, inflict pain, intellect fortress, life detection, mental barrier, mind blank, psionic blast, send thoughts.

The gaj is a psionic horror. Physically, it appears as a large reptile resembling a beetle in appearance. Its body is covered by a scaly, rust-orange shell about six feet in diameter. From beneath this shell protrude six four-jointed legs which end in webbed feet with long, sharp claws.

Its head is a spongy white globe about two feet in diameter. Spaced at even intervals around the head are six compound eyes. A pair of barbed mandibles as long as a man's arms flank six finger-like appendages that hang over its mouth, and three feathery stalks rise from the top of the head.

**Combat:** The gaj strikes with its psionic attack modes first, trying to disable its opponents before moving in for the kill. If this fails, or once the opponents are disabled, the gaj tries to kill its prey with its two huge mandibles.

Whenever the gaj makes a successful hit, the victim must save vs. paralyzation or be held by the mandibles until he breaks the hold (as if wrestling; see *Punching and Wrestling* in Chapter 9: *Combat of the DMG*). While held, the victim suffers five points of damage per round. More importantly, the gaj wraps its feathery antenna around the victim's head and psionically *probes* his innermost thoughts. Unlike the standard psionic *probe*, however, this is a painful, destructive process. The victim loses 1d4 points of Intelli-



gence or Wisdom (distributed randomly on a point by point basis) each round he is held. This loss is permanent, and once the victim's Intelligence or Wisdom drops to 0, he becomes a mindless husk and will soon die of starvation and thirst.

The hard shell covering the gaj's body reduces the damage that all non-metallic weapons cause it. Thus, all non-metal weapons inflict half their normal damage to these monsters. In melee, it can also protect its vulnerable head by pulling it beneath its shell. This leaves the dangerous mandibles exposed, and does not reduce its combat effectiveness at all.

**Habitat/Society:** The gaj are solitary hunters that prey on other intelligent life forms. They prefer to live in rocky areas where their shells serve as camouflage, or in sandy areas where they can hide themselves from predators in a shallow burrow. Most often, they are found alone, but occasionally mated pairs are encountered.

**Ecology:** Like all carnivores, the gaj eat flesh to provide their bodies with physical energy. Unlike most other animals, however, the gaj derive their mental energy from the thoughts of other beings—through the effects of their probe powers. No matter where they live, the gaj are constantly using their feathery antennas to search the horizon with their psionic *life detection* powers for signs of their favorite prey—other intelligent races. After a week without consuming the thoughts of an intelligent creature, the gaj starts losing PSPs at the rate of 1d10 per day. The lost PSPs are fully recovered once the gaj feeds, but if his total number of PSPs ever drops to 0, he loses his psionic powers and his will to live. Within a week, the creature will die.

# Giant, Athasian



CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Sea of Silt Islands, Tablelands  
 FREQUENCY: Uncommon  
 ORGANIZATION: Clans

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Day  
 DIET: Omnivore  
 INTELLIGENCE: Low (5-7)

TREASURE: Y (I)  
 ALIGNMENT: Varies by individual

NO. APPEARING: 1-20  
 ARMOR CLASS: 4  
 MOVEMENT: 15

HIT DICE: 15  
 THACO: 5  
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-16+14  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Hurl rocks  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil  
 SIZE: H (20-30')  
 MORALE: Champion (16-17)  
 XP VALUE: 9,000

## PSIONICS SUMMARY:

**Humanoid giants** are not capable of employing psionic powers. Because of their huge brain mass, humanoid giants are resistant to all forms of psionics. When any form of psionics is used against them, they are allowed to save vs. spells to negate it. In addition, in psionic combat, they are treated as if they have all five defense modes.

Many **beast-headed** giants are intelligent enough to make good psionicists, however. Although they lack the general immunity to psionics that their humanoid cousins possess, they have the following statistics:

| Level | Dis/Sci/Dev | Attack/Defense | Score | PSPs |
|-------|-------------|----------------|-------|------|
| 5     | 2/3/10      | Varies/3       | 13    | 75   |

Their disciplines, sciences, and devotions vary too widely to make generalizing possible or practical.

Athasian giants come in only two basic varieties: humanoid and beast-headed.

Humanoid giants resemble massive humans standing between 20 and 30 feet tall, and weighing between four and eight tons. They have exaggerated and sometimes comical features, such as huge noses, ears, mouths, and so forth. Their skin is usually dark red to black in color, and their hair is coarse and sturdy (giant hair ropes are the best on Athas). Most humanoid giants have a Strength scores of 25.

Beast-headed giants resemble humanoid giants in many respects, save that they are slightly smaller (15-20 feet). In place of the head of a man or woman, they have the head of some beast, and their skin is usually an extremely pale color, like pink or alabaster. Beast-headed giants are rarely seen in the Tablelands, for they are just short enough to make wading through the Sea of Silt hazardous to their safety.



**Combat:** Giants fight in two basic modes: defensively or offensively. When fighting defensively, such as when protecting their island homes from uninvited guests, their favorite tactic is to hurl boulders at the enemy from as great a range as possible (up to 250 yards), doing 2d10 damage to anyone or anything they hit.

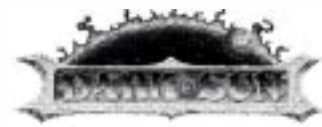
Offensively, giants like to get to the heart of the matter, melee, as quickly as possible. They will charge into the fray swinging their huge clubs. When hit by a giant, any being of man-size or smaller must save vs. paralysis or be knocked off his feet and fly 1 yard per point of damage inflicted.

**Habitat/Society:** Generally, humanoid giants are only destructive when they want something, or when a stranger has landed on their island uninvited. Otherwise, they are quite congenial and friendly.

Beast-headed giants tend to be more hostile, and treat all non-giants as vermin. They are magical mutations of normal giants, and are treated by their brethren as inferior beings. Since beast-headed giants are on the whole somewhat wiser and more intelligent than humanoid giants, this makes them understandably bitter.

**Ecology:** Most giants feed themselves through herding sheep, kanks, erdlus, and other animals. They often supplement this simple lifestyle through raiding, simple forms of commerce (such as by selling their hair to rope-makers), and occasionally by hiring themselves out as mercenaries (though this is considered quite dishonorable by most giants).





|                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN:  | Tablelands, Mountains    |
| FREQUENCY:        | Uncommon                 |
| ORGANIZATION:     | Tribal                   |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:   | Day/Night                |
| DIET:             | Carnivore                |
| INTELLIGENCE:     | Average (10)             |
| TREASURE:         | M (Individual), I (Lair) |
| ALIGNMENT:        | Chaotic                  |
| NO. APPEARING:    | 10-100                   |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | 8                        |
| MOVEMENT:         | 10                       |
| HIT DICE:         | 3                        |
| THACO:            | 17                       |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 1 or 2                   |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | by weapon or 1d4/1d4     |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Springing                |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Nil                      |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil                      |
| SIZE:             | M                        |
| MORALE:           | Steady (12)              |
| XP VALUE:         | 175                      |

## PSIONICS SUMMARY:

| Level | Dis/Sci/Dev | Attack/Defense | Score | PSPs |
|-------|-------------|----------------|-------|------|
| 5     | 2/3/10      | II, MT/M -     | 16    | 80   |
|       |             | TW, MB         |       |      |

**Telepathy**— *Sciences*: tower of iron will, project force; *Devotions*: id insinuation, mind thrust, contact, mind blank, mental barrier.

**Psychokinesis**— *Sciences*: telekinesis; *Devotions*: animate object, animate shadow, ballistic attack, control body, control flames.

**Note**: Only leaders commanding 25 or more gith have psionic powers. The psionics listed above are representative of these leaders, but their powers do vary greatly. Gith with more hit dice have correspondingly greater powers.

The gith are a race of grotesque humanoids that appear to be a peculiar mixture of elf and reptile. They are extremely gaunt and lanky, with long gangling arms and spindly legs. Their hands have three fingers with no opposable thumb, yet they are able to use tools and wield weapons. Both their fingers and toes end in sharp claws. If one could get a gith to stand up straight, he would measure close to seven feet tall. However, most gith appear to be no more than five feet tall, for they stand hunched over at the shoulders.

**Combat**: If possible, the gith attack in mass, usually starting with a psionic attack from one of their leaders. Then the entire party



moves in quickly to melee. They oft en accomplish this by *springing* up to twenty feet in one giant leap to close with their enemies. When they employ this spring, it gives them a +2 THACO bonus on the first round of combat.

The gith are generally armed with large, wicked-looking spears with giant, razor-sharp heads of obsidian (1d6-1 damage). Although these spears look like thrusting weapons, they are used primarily to slash or chop. The gith oft en armor themselves, especially their vulnerable backs, with inix-shell armor (AC 6).

**Habitat/Society**: The gith live in tribal organizations. The individual with the most powerful psionics generally acts as the leader. All other social positions are distributed at his pleasure.

For every twenty-five gith, there will be a five HD leader, for every fifty, a six HD leader, and for every tribe of 100 or more, a seven HD leader. In addition to having hit points and THACO numbers appropriate to their HD, these leaders will have psionic powers approximately equal to a psionist of an equivalent level.

**Ecology**: Mountain gith live in underground lairs, claiming a particular canyon or valley as their territory. Gith inhabiting the Tablelands tend to organize their society more along the lines of a nomadic hunting clan, going wherever the game takes them. They do not hesitate to attack human or demihuman groups.

# Jozhal



|                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN:  | Tablelands and Hinterlands     |
| FREQUENCY:        | Rare                           |
| ORGANIZATION:     | Family                         |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:   | Nocturnal                      |
| DIET:             | Omnivore                       |
| INTELLIGENCE:     | Very (14-15)                   |
| TREASURE:         | U                              |
| ALIGNMENT:        | Chaotic neutral                |
| <hr/>             |                                |
| NO. APPEARING:    | 5-10 (1d6+4)                   |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | 3                              |
| MOVEMENT:         | 18                             |
| HIT DICE:         | 4                              |
| THAC0:            | 17                             |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 1                              |
| <hr/>             |                                |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 1d6 or by weapon -2 or 1d4/1d4 |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Uses magical items & spells    |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Camouflage                     |
| <hr/>             |                                |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | 10%                            |
| SIZE:             | S (4' tall)                    |
| MORALE:           | Steady (11-12)                 |
| XP VALUE:         | 1,400                          |

## PSIONICS SUMMARY:

| Level | Dis/Sci/Dev | Attack/Defense Score | PSPs |
|-------|-------------|----------------------|------|
| 4     | 2/2/9       | EW, PB/IF, TS 14     | 80   |

**Psychoportation**— *Sciences:* banishment. *Devotions:* dimensional door, time shift, time/space anchor, teleport trigger.

**Telepathy**— *Sciences:* contact. *Devotions:* ego whip, psionic blast, intellect fortress, thought shield, mind bar.

**Spells**- 1) *detect magic, cure light wounds, detect poison, locate animals or plants, magical stone;* 2) *silence 15' radius, hold person, flame blade;* 3) *locate object, dispel magic.*

Standing about four feet tall, the jozhal is a small, two-legged reptile with a skinny tail, a long flexible neck, and a narrow, elongated snout. Its mouth is filled with needle sharp teeth, and its lanky arms end in small, three-fingered hands with an opposable thumb. Although the lozhal's hide is covered with scales, they are so small as to be unnoticeable at first, and it appears to more akin to a man's skin or a baazrag's rough hide. The jozhal can change the hue of its skin at will, either to match the color of its environment, or to stand out against it.

**Combat:** Generally, the jozhal prefers to avoid combat. It attempts to flee, then use its ability to change skin color to hide from pursuers (they must roll their Wisdom or less on 1d20 to find the jozhal). Should the pursuer get too close to the jozhal without actually seeing it, the jozhal will attack. The victim must make a surprise check with a -2 penalty.



During the actual fight, the lozhal attempts to defend itself first with psionics and magic, then with any magical items it currently possesses (roll on Table 88 in DMG, results calling for armor, shields, or weapons count as no magical item in iozhal's possession). If that fails, it will bite with its teeth for 1d8 points of damage, or strike with any weapon available to it (with a -2 damage modifier.)

**Habitat/Society:** The jozhal live in small family groups of four to five creatures. They are extremely intelligent and cunning, but regard humans or demihumans as foolish, dangerous creatures and will rarely tolerate them.

Jozhals are attracted to magic of all sorts, and whenever they see humans or demihumans passing they track the party down and attempt to cast a *detect magic* spell on the group. If the spell reveals any magical items, they will try to sneak into camp and steal them.

**Ecology:** Jozhals forage for food (roots and tubers), and eat almost any sort of small reptile, snake, or insect. Their magic is akin to that of elemental clerics, and is therefore not destructive to the environment around them.

The jozhal clan's intellect is best reflect in its relationship to the world around it. They are very careful never to destroy the life-giving world in which they live, always making use of every bit of scrap and refuse that they find. They carry this to extremes, even practicing cannibalism and using the bones of their dead to construct weapons and tools.

# Silk Wyrms



|                  |           |
|------------------|-----------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Badlands  |
| FREQUENCY:       | Uncommon  |
| ORGANIZATION:    | Solitary  |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:  | Any       |
| DIET:            | Carnivore |
| INTELLIGENCE:    | Low (5-7) |
| TREASURE:        | (W)       |
| ALIGNMENT:       | Neutral   |

|                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| NO. APPEARING:    | 1              |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | 3              |
| MOVEMENT:         | 12, Fl 12 (C)  |
| HIT DICE:         | 6              |
| THACO:            | 15             |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 1              |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 1d6            |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | See below      |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Nil            |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil            |
| SIZE:             | L (501 long)   |
| MORALE:           | Steady (11-12) |
| XP VALUE:         | 1,400          |

## PSIONICS SUMMARY:

| Level | Dis/Sci/Dev | Attack/Defense | Score | PSPs |
|-------|-------------|----------------|-------|------|
| 6     | 1/1/0       | Nil/Nil        | 15    | 45   |

## Psychometabolism— Sciences: shadow-form.

The silk wyrm is a snake with a hard, chitinous shell that measures over 50' in length. They are commonly seen flying through the air during the day searching for prey, but rarely attack until dusk, when they assume their *shadow form* and sneak into a camp to attack.

Any creature bitten by a silk wyrm must save vs. poison or be paralyzed for 1d4 days (a *restore* or *remove curse* will reverse this effect). Psionic powers can still be used while in this state, as long as the body itself is not required to move.

The silk wyrm will drag its paralyzed prey away and encase it in a sheath of silk, inside which the unfortunate victim will linger for up to two weeks. During this time, the silk wyrm will occasionally stick its head into the protective cocoon and bite the victim's neck, draining a little bit of blood and paralyzing him for another 1d4 days. Each time this occurs, the victim loses one point of Constitution. When his constitution reaches 0, all of his blood has been drained and he dies.

The silk casing manufactured by the silk wyrm is valued in many cities for use in expensive clothing. It is flame resistant (+4 bonus on any saves vs. normal fires, +2 bonus vs. magical fires) and very tough. Cutting a captured victim free can be quite time consuming.



# Tembo



CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Tablelands and mountains  
FREQUENCY: Uncommon  
ORGANIZATION: Pack  
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Night  
DIET: Carnivore  
INTELLIGENCE: High (13-14)  
TREASURE: I  
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING: 1-6  
ARMOR CLASS: 4  
MOVEMENT: 15  
HIT DICE: 4  
THACO: 17  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 5  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d4 (x2)/ 1d6 (x2)/ 1d8  
SPECIAL ATTACK: Level drain  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Dodge missiles  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 10%  
SIZE: M  
MORALE: Fearless (20)  
XP VALUE: 975

## PSIONICS SUMMARY:

| Level | Dis/Sci/Dev | Attack/Defense Score | PSPs |
|-------|-------------|----------------------|------|
| 5     | 1/2/5       | -/IF, M- 10          | 80   |

**Psychometabolism**— *Sciences*: death field, life draining, shadow form; *Devotions*: chameleon power, displacement, ectoplasmic form, heightened senses, immovability.

The tembo is a despicable, furless, tawny-colored beast covered with loose folds of scaly hide. Varying between three and six feet in length, they usually stand about as high as a man's thigh. All four of their lithe feet end in long sharp claws, and huge canine fangs protrude from beneath the flappy lips of their squarish snouts. The tembo has huge, squarish ears which it can turn in any direction, independently of each other.

**Combat**: Though all tembo love to fight, their battle tactics are as unpredictable as these vicious beasts themselves. Some attack by stealth from a short distance away, sneaking as close as possible to their victims and trying to destroy them with a *death field*. Others prefer to play with their victims, batting them from one paw to another, using *life draining* each time the paw lands. Still other tembos like to leap into the fray immediately, meleeing their victims from the first round.

In such physical confrontations, the tembo are true horrors. Their favorite tactic is to leap at their victim, attacking with all four feet and their bite at once. The front claws cause only 1d4 damage, but the back claws have a greater tendency to sink into softer flesh,



ripping through important tendons and organs (which is why they do more damage). The greatest danger of the tembo comes from its horrid mouth, however. When the tembo successfully hits with its powerful jaws, the victim must make a saving throw vs. death magic or lose one life level. This loss is permanent, and a save must be made each time the tembo lands a successful bite.

When attacked from a distance, the dexterous tembo have a 40% chance of dodging any non-magical missile fire directed at them.

Tembo display no fear, and will always fight to the death rather than run.

**Habitat/Society**: Tembo prowl the desert in small packs that seem to have no real social organization or cohesiveness. Each tembo does more or less as it pleases, not sharing any prey it downs with the others. The tembo's one concession to social life is that if one of them is attacked, the entire pack will join to fight the enemy.

**Ecology**: The favorite food of the tembo is the young of any other race. Tembo are famous for sneaking into a nomadic camps to drag off elven children, for skulking about dwarven villages prowling for untended toddlers, even for sneaking into populated cities to snatch noble babes from their cradles. Needless to say, this makes these despicable beasts universal objects of hatred. Even feuding elf tribes, the most dedicated of enemies, have been known to call a truce for the purpose of hunting down a tembo pack that has appeared in the area.



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# A Little Knowledge

Jerry Olton

The lightning bolt came out of a clear sky. Jedra, busy haggling over the price of a new waterskin, flinched as the bright blue flash illuminated the food and clothing and harness stands around him. In the same instant, a thunderclap rattled the entire bazaar and echoed off the adobe brick walls of the one- and two-story buildings surrounding it.

Jedra turned, ears ringing, to see a four-slave sedan chair on the ground only a few yards away, the overweight templar it had carried angrily brushing sand off his black robe of office while three heavily muscled slaves frantically righted the chair. The fourth slave lay on the ground, a patch of melted sand a few inches across bubbling beside his smoking body.

The slave must have stumbled and pitched the templar out, Jedra supposed, and the templar had killed him for it. Case closed.

Activity had stopped in the bazaar, but as others came to the same conclusion it picked up again. Jedra turned back to the water vendor, a leathery old elf with an eyepatch over his left eye, and said, "All right, two ceramics for the waterskin, but only if it's full."

The elf peered at Jedra, no doubt trying to judge how far he could push this young, skinny half-elf, but at last he nodded. "Done," he said, and he filled the teardrop-shaped leather sack from a barrel at the back of his stand, careful not to spill a single drop, while Jedra dug into his pouch for two fragments of ceramic coin. They were the last of Jedra's money. If he was to eat today, he would have to find work or scavenge something he could sell.

Taking the skin from the elf, he drained a fourth of its contents in two long swallows, then slung it around his shoulder by the strap, the weight of it comforting. At least he wouldn't go thirsty today.

The templar was already gone when he turned around again, as was the sedan chair and the slave's body. All that remained of the incident was the small glassy pool where the lightning bolt had melted the sand. Ever curious, Jedra kicked at it with the toe of his sandal, and a piece of glass flaked off the top. It was several inches across and an inch or so thick in the middle, but thinner around the edges.

He bent down and picked up the fragment, then nearly dropped it again when he looked into it. There, amid the bubbles and streaks, danced a tiny

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upside-down image of a thri-kreen.

He looked beyond the glass. The actual creature stood across the way, its six-limbed, mantislike insectile body glistening in the sunlight as it examined a gythka—a polearm with blades at either end—at an armorer’s stall.

The thri-kreen seemed oblivious to Jedra and his glass. Cautiously, lest he be less fortunate a second time, Jedra looked through the glass again, turning slowly and watching as the upside-down bazaar slid by-backward. No one noticed that they had been turned on their heads, if indeed they had. Jedra put his free hand out beyond the glass to see if he could feel any sensation.

A point of bright light slid across his wrist, and when he paused to look at it, he felt a sudden sting of heat. The glass had burned him!

Jedra rubbed at his wrist, but he smiled. The glass must still hold a bit of the lightning bolt that had created it. That might be worth something to the right person. He glanced at a spice stand draped with herbs and roots, a stand that was rumored to be a black market outlet for the things used in the creation of magic. The proprietor would probably buy the glass from him.

He took a few steps toward the stand, then stopped, realizing he was reluctant to part with his new treasure so soon. A half-breed elf with no home and no magical training didn’t often find himself in possession of wondrous devices. He had no doubt he would have to sell it eventually, but the day was still young and his hunger was still bearable. He would see what else the glass could do first.

He found a quiet spot just off the bazaar, in an alley lined with continuous mud-brick row houses. Their wooden doors and windows were closed tight to hold in the cool air from the previous night, giving Jedra privacy to experiment.

In just a few minutes he discovered the glass’s major power, and the reason he’d been burned: When held at the right distance, it made things seem greater than they really were, including the heat of Athas’s coppery red sun. Why most things remained only images while the sun actually seemed to appear beneath the glass was a mystery, as was the reason why objects beyond arm’s reach of the glass were turned upside-down.

He had just ignited a dead leaf—no doubt blown into the alley from the king’s garden, since few of the freemen living in the row houses would willingly spend the water to keep a plant alive—when he felt a presence in his mind, as if someone were watching him. He had learned to trust that sensation; he looked up to see a human nobleman of about sixty years, his hair as white as his robe, standing at the far end of the alley, mouth open in astonishment. Cursing his carelessness, Jedra stood and began to walk quickly toward the bazaar again. The man must have seen the leaf bursting into flame and would certainly draw the obvious conclusion that Jedra was using the glass to power some sort of magic.

Just as obviously, Jedra was not a templar, and by law only templars and the sorcerer-king himself were allowed to use magic. A commoner caught practicing it could be sold into slavery, even executed. Unused to magic or its implications, Jedra hadn’t even considered that danger.

He considered it now. Suddenly sweating, he sprinted for the bazaar, hoping to lose himself in the crowd, but he had hardly made it a dozen paces before the noble found his voice. The shout of “Stop him!” pursued Jedra out of the alley, and he emerged to find everyone looking in his direction. None of the dozens of shoppers made a move to catch him, probably thinking him an ordinary thief, but when the noble emerged from the alley behind him and shouted, “A magician! Stop him!” they sprang into action.

A tall, massive half-giant with arms the size of Jedra’s legs swung a sack of grain off one shoulder just as Jedra ran past, catching him square in the back with it. He staggered forward under the blow but kept his footing, only to slam into a compact, musclebound dwarf. The dwarf’s blocky head reached only to Jedra’s chest, just high enough to burst his new waterskin with the impact.

He dodged around the dwarf, but the entire bazaar seemed out to get him now. A noble’s order was almost as good as law, especially an order the templars would so obviously support. None of the crowd wished to be caught disobeying that order lest they be accused of aiding in an escape. Such people often found themselves sharing their quarry’s fate.

Jedra whirled and leaped back into the alley, dodging dwarf and half-giant and bowling over the

noble, but he skidded to a stop when he realized that the noble's cry had brought people running from the other end, too. He was trapped. He looked to either side but saw only the closed doors and shuttered windows of the row houses lining the alley. Could he leap to a windowsill and from there to a roof? Not likely, but he could think of nothing else to try. He crouched to spring, but when he jumped it felt as if he'd kicked a hole in the ground rather than launched himself into action. He heard astonished gasps from the crowd and looked down to see a shimmering circle of darkness beneath his feet. He had just enough time to scream before he fell through.

He landed on his feet on hard-packed dirt, but the remains of his abortive leap and a sudden rush of disorientation combined to send him sprawling. He threw out his hands to stop his fall, and the glass flew from his grasp to skitter to a stop in a circle of ash next to a pair of dark leather boots.

Straining to see in the dim light, Jedra raised his head to find who the boots belonged to. A short, wiry man with dark curly hair stood before him. The man bent down to pick up the glass.

"Who are you?" asked Jedra as he stood and took stock of his surroundings, though the circle of ash around the man's feet told him plenty. He was a magician, and not a templar, either. Templars drew their power from the city's sorcerer-king, but other magicians had to draw upon the life-force around them. Every time a magician cast a spell, he drew his energy from the plant life and fertile soil around him. If a mage wasn't careful, he drew all the life-force from an area, reducing it to ash.

The man didn't answer. He examined the glass carefully, nearly dropping it when he saw upside-down images of the room slide through it. "Oho!" he said. "So this is what caused all the commotion. Is it your work?"

Jedra had no idea how to respond. He looked around him and saw that he was in a one-room house, with a cot in one corner, a plank table and two chairs in another, a wooden chest and cabinet in a third, and a workbench covered with scrolls and wands and unfamiliar tools in the fourth. A window in one wall opened onto a shared courtyard and allowed a shaft of sunlight to illuminate the room.

The window in the opposite wall was shuttered, but Jedra could hear the mob shouting in confusion just beyond it. Obviously, the man had rescued him with some kind of spell, but for what reason Jedra couldn't guess. Finally he simply said, "Maybe."

"Good answer," the man said. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Dornal, mage and member of the Veiled Alliance."

Jedra considered making up a name, but there seemed little point in lying to a mage. "Jedra," he said.

Dornal smiled. "I was right to rescue you, Jedra. You have powers the Alliance would love to learn. You have heard of us, haven't you?"

Jedra nodded. Of course he had. The Veiled Alliance was supposedly a league of mages opposed to the sorcerer-king and his templars and to unscrupulous magicians in general. They worked to put life-force back into the world rather than use it up to power their spells. They were a secretive bunch whose existence Jedra had only half believed until now.

"I was looking through the shutter when I saw you practicing your burning spell," said Dornal as he squinted to see the images in the glass. "I assume this is used for that as well?" He swung around toward the open window.

"Don't look at the sun!"

The mage lowered the glass and studied Jedra from beneath narrowed brows.

"It magnifies things. Even sunlight. You could burn your eye with it."

"Oh." Dornal examined the glass with renewed interest. "And what were you doing with it?"

"Experimenting."

"Of course."

A subtle change in the noise from outside made Dornal step to the window and peer through the cracks in the shutter, then he turned suddenly away. "They've brought in templars to search the area for magic. We've got to go." He walked to the cabinet, pulled out a cloth traveling bag, and began to throw clothing and valuables into it. The lightning glass went into the bag, Jedra noticed.

"Go where?" he asked.

"We must leave the city for a time," said Dornal. "I risked a great deal in stealing you away right out in the open like that. Templars can trace the use of



magic, and they don't like to be publicly thwarted; they'll search for us for many days before they give up."

"Days!"

"That's right. So we would be wise to stay out of their path until that time passes." Dornal pulled a long, multi-colored tunic from the cabinet and tossed it to Jedra. "Here, put that on."

Jedra complied, seeing the wisdom in that, at least. He was about to argue about the idea of leaving the city when Dornal tossed him a leather sack and said, "Keep that out of sight."

Jedra nearly collapsed when he opened it and saw a double-handful of silver and gold coins. He'd never before held even a single silver piece. A fortune this size would take him a dozen lifetimes to earn, and at least a lifetime to spend. If Dornal trusted someone he'd just met with such wealth, then the man must be a powerful mage indeed. And if so, then he certainly knew more about keeping himself safe from templars than Jedra did. The boy stripped off his ruined water-skin and used its tie to secure the money bag around his neck, making certain it hung hidden beneath his tunic.

Dornal tossed another money sack into his traveling bag, tied it closed, and stepped to the back door. "Coming?" he asked.

Jedra couldn't see that he had much choice, not if the templars were looking for him. "I guess," he said, and followed the mage out the door.

Within hours he found himself sharing a cramped cabin in an upper deck of a merchant caravan headed for the city of Tyr. It was hardly a caravan, really, just a single enormous wooden wagon pulled by two equally enormous mekillots—long, wide, lizardlike creatures with hide thick enough to turn arrows. The wagon they drew looked like a castle on rollers, complete with battlements from which guards could fire on the raiders and wild beasts that roamed the desert. Inside was a warren of decks and compartments with enough cargo capacity to hold an entire bazaar's worth of goods.

This wagon's cargo also included slaves, destined to labor and probably die on the ziggurat being built for the sorcerer-king of Tyr. Jedra shuddered when he thought of the poor creatures huddled in darkness just a few decks below his own. Had it not

been for Dornal's intervention, he might have found himself in a similar situation.

The dry, musky smell of mekillot hide poured in through the single foot-square porthole in their cabin, but closing the shutter would have been worse. They'd only just left the city, but Jedra was already sweating with the heat and he knew it would get much worse as the day wore on. They needed all the fresh air they could get, even if it did smell of dust and lizard.

They also needed the sunlight the window admitted. Dornal was examining Jedra's mysterious piece of glass, holding it up to the light and branding lines into the tiny tabletop jutting out from the opposite wall.

"It doesn't seem to need life-force to power it," he said. "Truly astonishing. What else does it do?"

"You saw how it magnifies things," Jedra said. He was sitting on the edge of the cabin's single bunk, trying to keep from getting sick with the swaying of the wagon.

"Yes, yes, and it makes distant things look smaller and upside-down," said Dornal. "I fail to see the usefulness of that, unless you could actually make something become smaller and upside-down. Is there a spell for that, perhaps?"

"I don't know," Jedra said. "I don't think so."

"You don't think so." Dornal peered at Jedra through the glass. "You know, it's becoming quite clear to me that you know very little about this . . . this device. You didn't make it yourself, did you?"

Jedra had been dreading this moment. He considered lying, but he knew he'd be caught in an instant. Reluctantly he said, "No. But I saw how it was made."

"Did you now? Tell me about it. What spells were used?"

Dornal was obviously testing him. Carefully Jedra described how the templar called down the lightning bolt and how he had found the glass afterward.

"A lightning spell," Dornal mused when he was done. "Yes, I suppose there might be enough energy in a lightning spell to make something like this, but if the templar didn't fashion it on purpose, then I don't suppose he knows anything more about it than you do."

"Probably not."

"And you know next to nothing. You're not a mage at all, are you?"

"No," Jedra admitted. Hopefully, he added, "But I bet I could learn."

Dornal laughed softly, and his laugh sent a chill down Jedra's spine. "Oh, no doubt you could. You've got potential. I can sense it in you. But I see no point in training my own competition." He waved an arm, and Jedra felt his muscles lock into place. The wagon lurched, one of its wheels no doubt falling into a circle of ash that suddenly appeared beneath it as the magician above cast his spell. Unable to keep his balance, Jedra toppled to his side on the bunk.

With effort, he could still speak. "What are you doing?" he demanded.

"Retrieving what's mine." Dornal knelt beside Jedra and removed the money bag from beneath the boy's tunic. "Thank you for carrying this past the gate guards for me," he said, pouring into his hand a collection of crystals and amulets that would have marked anyone as a magician on sight. "I wasn't sure we'd make it past them unchallenged."

Dornal had cast some kind of illusion on the bag, Jedra realized. He kicked at the magician with all his strength, but his spell-bound leg hardly moved. "You used me," he hissed.

"I did. Get used to it. It's going to happen a lot where you're going."

"Where's that?"

For answer, Dornal merely pointed downward. Then he waved his hand again, and Jedra lost consciousness entirely.

Jedra woke to intense heat and the smell of dozens of sweaty, unwashed bodies. The only light came from two barred windows set in doors on either end of the hold, the doors themselves opening only into dim companionways, but the boy didn't need light to know where he was. Dornal had sold him into slavery, probably for little more than the cost of his passage. He'd taken back his tunic, too; Jedra now wore a simple breechcloth.

He sat up and looked around him. There were twenty or thirty others in the hold with him, all bound at wrists and ankles with heavy leather manacles and tied to the wall with ropes attached to the collars around their necks. Jedra saw that the slave-

master hadn't been picky; there were humans, dwarves, an elf, even one of the insectile thri-kreen.

"What did you do, cross the wagon master?" a female voice asked. He turned and saw a short, round-faced human woman sitting beside him. She wore a halter in addition to her breechcloth.

"I trusted a magician," he said after a moment.

She laughed, but not unkindly. "Not a wise idea," she said.

A dwarf two people beyond her did laugh unkindly, but not at Jedra. In a voice like distant thunder he said, "You should talk, templar."

The other slaves laughed. Jedra stared at the woman in open amazement. She, a templar? "Wrong," she said to the dwarf. "I was a healer. My powers are psionic, not magical, and to be a templar you've got to know magic."

Jedra knew next to nothing about psionics, the mental abilities that some people could call upon instead of magic, save that such powers supposedly didn't require life-energy to fuel them. He had wondered if his own ability to know when people were watching him was psionic, but he'd never before found anyone who could tell him.

He was about to ask the woman beside him, but the dwarf wasn't through taunting her. "You worked for the templars," he said. "That's practically the same thing."

"Slaves work for the templars, too," she spat back at him.

"But you got paid for it. Blood money," said the dwarf.

Jedra normally wouldn't have gotten mixed up in someone else's argument, but he wanted to talk with this woman. Besides, he couldn't help noticing that, given a bath and a chance to brush out her shoulder-length brown hair, she would be rather pretty. It was enough to make him say, "Does it matter? We're all slaves now."

The dwarf growled, "Yah, thanks to the likes of her. And maybe you, too, eh? You like templars, do you?"

Stunned by the sudden accusation, Jedra stammered, "I—of course not. I mean—"

*Stay out of it*, the woman's voice said clearly in his mind. *I can take care of myself*. Aloud she said, "Leave him alone. And leave me alone, too, or I'll heal your mouth closed for you."

"Hah," the dwarf snorted, but Jedra noticed that he shut up.

The woman turned her attention back to Jedra. "So just how did trusting a magician get you here?"

Jedra told her the whole story about the piece of lightning glass, ending with Dornal's betrayal.

"He told you he was one of Those Who Wear the Veil?" she asked.

"That's right."

"Well, that was his first lie. The Veiled Alliance really are honest magicians, for the most part. But they're secretive as thieves when it comes to talking about it, and they hate people like this Dornal."

"I wish I'd known that before," Jedra said.

She laughed again. "We all wish we'd known something we didn't, or we wouldn't be here, that's for sure. What's your name, anyway?"

"Jedra. What's yours?"

"Kayan."

Jedra looked up and down the slave hold, but the other slaves had already lost interest in the two of them. He leaned close to her anyway. Softly, he asked, "How did you do that, when you spoke to me in my mind?"

*You mean sending thoughts? It's a simple psionic power.*

It wasn't quite like hearing her voice, but Jedra understood her words perfectly. His intention to ask about his own ability vanished in a sudden, more immediate question. "How far can you reach with that?" he asked excitedly.

"Depends on how well I can visualize the person I'm trying to contact," she said aloud. "If it's someone I know, I can talk to them almost anywhere. Otherwise, they've got to be close."

"Then you can call for help!"

She shook her head. "Who would I ask? Most of the people I know were the ones who put me here in the first place. They'd think it was real funny hearing from me now.

"But there must be somebody—"

"Look, nobody I know is going to come after a caravan just to rescue a couple of slaves. So unless you know someone—"

"The Jura-Dai would." The voice was high and pure, and came from directly across the hold from Jedra. He looked up to see an elf staring at him. His

eyes were set close in a narrow face, and his nose was slender and long. Everything about him was long. Even bent at the knees, his legs stretched nearly across to Jedra, and his reddish blond hair reached the floor despite being braided. He was like an exaggerated version of Jedra himself, whose elven features had been rounded and shortened by his human heritage.

"What?" Kayan asked.

"I am Galar of the Jura-Dai tribe. My people would come for me if they knew I was here."

"They'd attack a caravan just for you?"

Galar laughed. "There is plenty of treasure on board, too."

Jedra said to Kayan, "You can send a message to his tribe!"

Kayan shook her head. "I don't know anyone in his tribe. So unless they're traveling along right beside us, I can't reach them."

"You could try."

"And get myself blasted unconscious by the guards?"

"Huh? How would they know you'd done anything?"

She looked at him like he had drool on his chin. "One of the guards is a psionicist. That's one of the ways they keep slaves in line. He'll be watching for escape attempts."

"Oh."

Kayan's expression softened. "Look, I'd try it in a minute if I thought it'd work, but I know my limits. I can't contact any random elf out there. That's just not the way it works."

Jedra nodded, feeling hope drain out of him, but a sudden thought checked his plunge into despair. "Wait a minute. These psionic powers of yours—are they something you can teach?"

"Well, you've got to have some inherent ability, but otherwise, yes, it's possible. Why?"

Jedra nodded toward Galar. "You could teach him. He knows plenty of elves."

Kayan looked at Jedra as if he'd just suggested escaping by a trap door—and then shown her one at her own feet. But she'd been a slave long enough to know how debilitating false hope could be. "Well," she said cautiously, "it might be worth a try."

Galar, they soon discovered, had all the telepathic ability of a rock. He couldn't even make himself heard psionically across the slave hold, much less across the expanse of desert between him and his tribe. Jedra, however, surprised them all. With only a few hours of Kayan's coaching, he learned to send his thoughts to anyone in the hold, even the thri-kreen. His control was terrible—everyone near his intended target heard garbled voices in their heads, as well—but the raw power behind his sending was more than Kayan had ever seen before.

"You'd better stop," she suggested after a particularly strong blast had reached half the slaves in the hold. "There's no way the guards could've missed that. They might not care about a little telepathy among the slaves, but they're going to do something about it if you keep it up."

Jedra sighed. He'd been given a glimpse of something incredible within himself, then told to close his eyes. "I think I should try to contact the Jura-Dai," he said. "You admitted my power's stronger than yours; I might be able to reach them."

"No!" Kayan pounded the deck between them with her fist. "You don't know what you're talking about. Your unfocused thoughts wouldn't make it beyond the first dune. You've got to learn control first." She leaned back against the wall. "Wait. Bide your time. Sooner or later an opportunity will come along, and then maybe you can use your talent."

"Maybe," Jedra grumbled, but he supposed Kayan was right. He would wait—for a little while.

He soon learned that the easiest way to wait—and to escape the heat—was to spend as much time as possible unconscious. He leaned back against the wall and let the creaking of the wagon lull him to sleep.

Jedra floated face-down in a pool of water. The bottom was far out of reach, but the water was so clear only a faint shimmering told him he was seeing through anything but air. He drifted peacefully along, watching his shadow slip over the sand below, but when another shadow blotted out his own and he turned to see what cast it, he found himself suddenly sinking downward.

He thrashed his arms and legs, but the water wouldn't support him. He hadn't been breathing

while adrift; now he needed to breathe desperately but couldn't.

The foreign shadow extended itself toward him, and suddenly Jedra felt a hand clasp his arm, pulling him upward. His head broke the surface, and he gasped in a breath, blinking in astonishment at his rescuer. It was Galar, still bound at the wrists, but behind him Jedra could see an entire tribe of elves. He saw their gaily colored tents, their herds of long, beetlelike pack animals called kanks, their willowy children playing in the sand—

Jedra sat up with a start, momentarily disoriented to find himself back in the slave hold of the merchant caravan. He'd seen a tribe of elves! He could still see them clearly in his mind.

Could his sleeping brain have used some sort of psionic vision to locate the Jura-Dai? It was possible; Kayan had told him he had other untrained skills besides telepathy. Jedra turned to ask her, but she was still asleep, and now that he was using his eyes again, the image in his mind started to fade. He closed his eyes and tried to concentrate. Yes, there they were, a whole tribe of elves camped out near a desert oasis. He could still see them, but he knew he couldn't hold onto them for long.

It was now or never, he realized. Concentrating hard on the elves in his vision, he tried to focus his thoughts in the way Kayan had taught him. He felt a hint of recognition, a faint twinge of "contact." It was enough. He summoned all the energy he could muster into the single thought:

*Galar of the Jura-Dai is held captive in a caravan a day out from Urik on the road to Tyr.*

Retribution came suddenly and with such intensity that Jedra cried out as if he were being burned alive, for that was exactly what it felt like. He writhed in agony, feeling his skin peel away in sheets of flame. The pain was worse than anything he'd imagined possible, and it went on and on, far longer than it would have if he'd really been on fire. A real fire would have killed him by now.

Then, as suddenly as it had come, the pain went away. Jedra collapsed on the deck, gasping for air.

Kayan lifted him to cradle his head on her lap. "You had to try it," she said.

"Dream," Jedra whispered through the memory of pain. "I saw the elves in a dream, saw my chance."

"Your chance to get us all punished," the dwarf growled, eyeing the door warily, but no guards appeared.

Galar looked to Jedra and asked, "Did you reach them?"

"I don't know." Jedra's whole body shuddered involuntarily with the release of tension. "I couldn't tell."

Galar asked Kayan, "Could he really have found them in a dream?"

She shrugged. "Who knows? It's possible, I suppose. What did you see?"

Jedra described the camp, with its colored tents and pens full of kanks.

"Colored tents?" asked Galar.

"Red and green and yellow, with blue and yellow banners flying from their peaks," Jedra said.

Galar shook his head sorrowfully. "I don't know whom you saw, if indeed you saw anyone at all, but the tents of the Jura-Dai are the color of the sand. Their only marking is the tribe totem on the walls." Galar held out his arm to show them a tattoo on his wrist: an angular, stylized raincloud with daggers for raindrops.

"Oh." Jedra pulled himself up to a sitting position. "I was stupid. I'm sorry."

"Don't be," Kayan said. "You didn't know. I'd



have probably done the same thing in your position."

"I didn't know," Jedra said sullenly. "That's starting to sound like my motto."

"Don't be so hard on yourself," she said. "You're learning."

"Oh yes. I'll be a master by the time I die on the ziggurat." With that, Jedra turned away and refused to respond to any further words of comfort.

The wagon rolled on. Exhausted, Jedra slept, this time without any dreams of elves, and when he awoke it was already morning. The guards brought wooden mugs of water and bowls of thin gruel, but Jedra had barely eaten half of his before they unshackled him and led him into the upper decks of the wagon. He expected to be taken to the psionist and reprimanded again for his offense, so he was surprised when the guard brought him to the cabin he had shared for so short a time with Dornal. The guard knocked, and the mage himself opened the door.

"Well, hello," Dornal said, stepping aside. "Do come in." The guard gave Jedra a shove, and he staggered into the room.

"Thank you," Dornal said, tossing the guard a silver coin. Jedra gasped. That was probably more money than the man made in a month; Dornal was obviously buying his silence. Sure enough, the guard left and closed the door behind him.

"You were holding out on me," Dornal said, almost conversationally. "You shouldn't have done that, because now I will have to use less subtle methods to extract the information I need." He waved his hands, and Jedra once more felt his muscles lock into place.

The wagon lurched. He felt himself topple forward and instinctively tried to throw out his hands to keep his balance. Spell-crippled, his arms didn't move, but he nonetheless kept his balance, and Dornal, directly in front of him, staggered backward as if Jedra had actually pushed him.

"What's this?" the man asked, astonished. He righted himself and waved his arms again, just as Jedra frantically tried to imagine a fist slamming into the magician. Dornal rocked back on his heels with the blow, but the renewed binding spell clamped down on the boy with the force of a giant's

fist; he fell face-first to the deck, striking with a resounding thump. Blood gushed from his nose, and it felt as if he'd bitten his tongue.

"Your pitiful little tricks won't help you, boy," Dornal growled, kicking Jedra repeatedly until the half-elf nearly fainted from the pain of broken ribs and a fractured skull. Jedra tried to scream, but the binding spell wouldn't allow it. He tried to strike out psionically, but the pain prevented him from concentrating.

Satisfied at last that Jedra was subdued, Dornal dragged him by the heels into the patch of sunlight shining through the porthole. Jedra felt the heat on his bare back, then a sudden burning. Dornal was using the lightning glass on him.

"Now," Dornal said, "you will tell me everything you know."

He relaxed the binding spell enough to allow Jedra to speak, and the boy let out his breath in a long, gurgling scream. At last he found his voice. "Stop!" he shouted, turning his head far enough to see the magician kneeling over him. "I'll tell you anything you want!"

"You will tell me the truth," Dornal said, drawing the point of heat slowly across Jedra's back. "Starting with what other powers you have and how you invoke them."

Cursing and weeping with the pain, Jedra told Dornal what little he knew, but the magician obviously didn't believe him. He held the glass over the boy's back, demanding more, until Jedra wished he had some hidden knowledge to give Dornal so that the torture would end.

At last Jedra screamed, "I don't know any more! Kill me or let me go, but stop hurting me."

Dornal leaned back out of the sunlight and scraped sweat off his brow with the edge of his hand. "You're in no position to make demands," he said. "On the other hand, I'm beginning to think you're telling the truth." He gave Jedra one last burn just for spite, then went to the door and shouted for the guard to put the boy back in the hold.

This time his wounds were real. Jedra was dimly aware of being locked up again, of warm hands touching him, of Kayan and Galar discussing his injuries, but he was beyond caring. He wanted only to die.

Even death was denied him. Jedra felt strength pouring back into him with the same relentlessness with which it had been ripped away, healing and revitalizing his wounds. It took time; he was aware of the wagon moving again and of the day wearing on into night. He was aware of Kayan holding onto him throughout. She was doing this, he knew. She was lending him her strength.

He woke with the dawn, aching and hungry but healed. Kayan looked gaunt with fatigue. When the guards came with food and water he made her eat and drink most of his, despite her protests that he needed it as much as she did.

"You gave me too much of your own strength," he said. Then, more softly, "I didn't know such a thing was possible."

"Of course it is," she said. "That's how healing works. All of my powers are like that. Sharing thoughts, sharing ability, sharing health—it's all the same sort of thing."

"Sharing ability?"

She shrugged. "Well, if you've got something you can do but I can't, and if I've got something I can do but you can't, then we can put our heads together and do them both at the same time."

Jedra could feel sudden excitement building in him. "What if you try to share the same ability? Does it get stronger?"

"Depends on what you're trying to do. Why?"

"What would happen if we both tried calling the Jura-Dai?"

Kayan snorted. "Will you forget that idea? Wasn't it enough that you almost got yourself killed?"

"Not if we can make it work this time. Look, you've got the control we need to actually reach someone. I've got the power to get us there even if we don't know just who we're looking for. I was close last time, I know I was. A little more control and I'd have made contact."

"You think."

"I know."

"If you're wrong, then we both suffer the guards' reaction. I can't heal you again if I'm hurt too."

The dwarf said, "Whether he's right or wrong, you'd better be able to take care of the guards before you try anything. Another escape attempt and they'll probably punish us all. And if they do, I

promise you, you'll regret it."

"We've got to try something," Jedra said. "We've got to escape this caravan before we get to Tyr."

"I have no objection to escaping," the dwarf said. "You just make sure we do escape when you try it, though."

"He's right," said Kayan. "It's a long trip. We can afford to wait for a better opportunity."

"I don't want to wait."

"Well you're going to have to," she said, "because I'm not going to help you get yourself hurt again."

Jedra looked to Galar for help, but the elf only held out his slender hands in a gesture that said as plain as words, "What can we do?"

About midday the caravan came to an outpost. The slaves could hear shouts of joy from the wagon guards, but those shouts soon turned to dismay when the guards saw that the outpost had been raided recently. The wagon stopped only long enough for the guards to sift through the ruins, then started up again. That night when they brought water, the mugs were only half full. When the slaves complained, one of the guards growled, "Be glad you get any. The raiders poisoned the well. We're all on half rations until we get to the next outpost."

The slaves had been getting the bare minimum already; half that was hardly enough to keep them alive. They made it through another day and a half before a sandstorm blew up out of the deep desert and forced them to a stop, and there they stayed for two more days, listening to the howl of sand-laden wind battering against the wagon's closed hatches. The second day they got no water at all.

Their mouths and tongues were too swollen to allow speech. *They've given up on their cargo*, Kayan said in Jedra's mind when the evening water time came and went without a show of guards. Now *they're hoarding what's left for themselves*.

*I think it's time we tried calling for help*, Jedra answered.

No.

*Why not? We've got nothing to lose, do we? We're going to die in this hold in a day or two anyway, unless we do something.*

Kayan said nothing. Jedra could hear her labored

breathing in the dark beside him.

*Let's at least say we died trying.*

After a long time, she answered, *Let's see if we can try and live to tell about it instead.*

The convergence felt a little like the sharing of thoughts, but this time their combined consciousness grew until they felt like a single incredibly powerful being. The slave hold took on a shimmering, not quite substantial quality, as if the linked Jedra and Kayan existed on a higher plane that was only loosely tied to reality. It looked much like Jedra's underwater dream when he had seen the elves.

Unlike in his dream, they could move freely here, directing their attention wherever they chose. Cautiously, lest they alert the psionic guard to their presence, they drifted through the wagon's walls and out into the desert, searching for a tribe of elves.

The sandstorm was a whisper of motion, nothing more. In the dream, Jedra and Kayan became a swift, sleek-winged bird darting over the desert. The minds of other travelers were great funnels down which they could slide, only to find themselves looking out of strange eyes at the interiors of wagons or tents. None belonged to the elves they sought. They searched outward in ever-widening spirals, leaving the storm behind and speeding over the dunes faster than any real bird could fly, rising higher and higher to see more desert at once-until, finally, they found an enormous well leading down toward dozens of tents pitched at the base of a mountainous dune.

The tents would have been hard to spot if the dreamscape hadn't exaggerated them out of proportion, for they were the same grayish yellow color as the sand. Their walls were decorated with the stylized cloud raining daggers that Galar had shown them.

*Found them!* they thought together. They dropped toward the largest tent, felt themselves being drawn into the mind of the elf inside, and looked out through his eyes to see a bard playing a harp to a dozen or more elves reclining on woven rugs. The elves' clothing made up for the lack of color on their tents; men and women alike wore loose, rainbow-colored blouses and pants. Desert life had darkened their leathery skin to a deep brown.

Jedra's and Kayan's host became aware of their presence, and quickly they sent, *Galar of the Jura-*

*Dai is a slave in a caravan caught in a sandstorm five days out from Urik to Tyr.*

They had no time to listen for a response. The tent and its occupants swirled as if they were smoke blown by the wind, and suddenly Jedra and Kayan were adrift over the desert again. *The guard*, they realized. *He heard our sending.*

A whirlwind danced across the dunes toward them: the guard's attack on their minds rendered visible in the dreamscape. Kayan and Jedra became a bird again, darting in and out around the whirlwind, seeking some sign of weakness where they could press an attack of their own.

*Inside*, the part that was still Kayan said, *directly into his mind.*

They flew over the top and down through the center of the funnel. The whirlwind writhed like a snake, trying to throw them out, but they were faster. When they reached the point of the funnel they grew larger and spread their wings outward with the force Jedra had discovered when Dornal had attacked him. The whirlwind spun into fragments, leaving a dark shadow of itself in its place. Jedra and Kayan slid into the shadow and found themselves in a silent, unguarded cave. They had knocked the guard unconscious.

*Kill him*, Jedra said.

*No, heal him so no one else knows anything happened*, Kayan answered, *including himself.*

They wound their way through the dark caverns of the guard's mind, sealing off whole sections of it as they passed. They let him keep just enough psionic ability to monitor the slaves but not enough to harm them, and they blocked his memory of the battle completely. They left him snoring peacefully in his cabin, then dissolved their link.

Coming out of convergence felt like losing half their intelligence. Jedra wanted to join again immediately, but the new fatigue in his dehydrated body warned him that he had already paid a high enough price for their temporary enhancement. Doing it again would have to wait for better days.

The sandstorm blew over in the night, and the wagon moved out again the next day, reaching another outpost by evening. This one was still standing, and for the first time in three days the slaves received water. Their strength slowly returned, and Jedra

and Kayan began to hope they might survive long enough to learn whether or not their efforts had come to anything.

The other slaves weren't even aware at first of what Jedra and Kayan had done, but since they had already gotten away with it, the two finally decided to tell their fellow prisoners. At first the others were cautiously optimistic, but when another day passed without action, their mood began to grow ugly. "The elves aren't going to come," said one.

"We don't even know if they exist," said another.

"Should've known better than to trust a half-elf boy," a third muttered.

"A half-elf and a templar," the dwarf put in, "feeding us false hope so we'd think they were with us.

Galar spoke up. "If my people heard the call, they will come."

"They heard it," Jedra said. "Give them time; they were a long way away." But inwardly he wondered. Would they come?

He got his answer that evening, when a sudden commotion broke out on the upper decks. Shouts and the pounding of running feet echoed down the companionways, and the wagon lurched to a halt as a loud crack of thunder split the air.

"Link up," Kayan hissed, and almost immediately she and Jedra were back in convergence. The wagon became insubstantial, and their consciousness slipped away and upward to watch the battle.

The desert was covered with elves and their beetlelike kanks. Armed raiders swarmed like ants up the sides of the wagon, hacking at the guards with swords and overpowering them by sheer numbers. A silver eagle with iridescent wings flew through the dreamscape, breathing fire upon the defenders; the elves had a psionist as well, it seemed. A tiny whirlwind rose toward it—the greatly diminished wagon guard returning the attack—but even as they joined battle a third warrior entered the dream.

It came as a giant black bat, but the bat was different in texture from the eagle and the whirlwind. It had a soft-edged fuzziness about it, as if it were somehow less substantial than the others, and its face was recognizably human.

*Dornal*, Jedra realized. *Does he have psionic power, too?*



*He's fighting with magic,* Kayan said. *That's why he doesn't look the same as the others.*

His insubstantiality in the psionic vision evidently didn't affect his ability to enter the fray. The bat swept over the eagle and the whirlwind, spitting lightning bolts ahead of it like spears. It attacked indiscriminately, blasting both with multiple strikes until the eagle fell smoking from the sky and the whirlwind blew away into nothing.

Then it turned its attention to Jedra and Kayan.

They had been hovering overhead as a bird again, but as the bat rose toward them their combined intellect fashioned a barrier, a sheet of glass that trapped the lightning's fury and held the bat at bay.

*Lightning glass,* Jedra thought. Exulting in his newfound abilities, he bent the glass to match the shape of the piece he had discovered in the bazaar, and suddenly the bat beneath it glowed white hot, flared, and disappeared in a cloud of greasy smoke.

The dreamscape shook as if gripped by an earthquake, and Jedra and Kayan tumbled out of convergence to find the slave hold full of elven raiders, two of whom were slicing through their bonds.

The leader of the elves, a heavily muscled warrior who bled from half a dozen sword slashes, advanced into the hold. He grinned when he saw Galar and said, "You look like walking death."

"So do you," Galar replied, and the two embraced like long-lost brothers.

"You may all go free," the elf warrior said to the slaves, "but take nothing with you. Everything in this wagon now belongs to the Jura-Dai."

Galar nodded to Jedra and Kayan. "These are the ones who called you here," he said.

The warrior bowed to the half-elf and the human. "In that case, you may take whatever you wish, and you may travel with the Jura-Dai until you reach the safety of your own kind."

"Thank you," Jedra said. "There's one thing in particular I'd like to retrieve." He took Kayan's hand and led her out of the slave hold, up narrow companionways choked with elves already hauling the wagon's cargo away, and onto the passenger deck.

Smoke seeped from beneath Dornal's cabin door. They opened it cautiously, holding their breath against the stench of burned meat, and looked in-

side to see the magician's body lying on the floor, his charred flesh curling from exposed bones.

Horrified at the spectacle but unable to look away, Jedra stepped into the room. The floor was barely scorched around the body; it was as if the magician had burned from the inside out.

*How could we have done such a thing?* he whispered in his mind.

*Wild talent can be unpredictable,* Kayan answered.

Jedra stared at the body until he was forced to breathe, then finally said, *I think we need to tame it, then.*

The lightning glass rested on the floor near one crisped hand. Jedra picked it up and turned away, but Dornal's traveling bag sitting open on the bunk made him pause. He upended it, and along with the clothing out fell two small leather sacks. One held magical amulets, and the other was full of money.

Jedra took them both and left the room. *These will probably be useful where we're going,* he said as he closed the door behind him.

"Where is that?" Kayan asked aloud.

"Someplace where we can find a real member of the Veiled Alliance," he said. He led the way out of the wagon's interior and down the gangplank to the sand where the elves were piling their booty.

Kayan blinked in the sudden brightness. "Why the Alliance?" she asked.

"Because there's still too much we don't know," Jedra replied. He saw her puzzlement and went on. "Ignorance got me into this mess. If it hadn't been for you, I'd have never gotten out of it. But even now I know just enough to be dangerous. If I—if we are going to survive in this world, then we need to master the forces that shape it, and for that we need a mentor."

"We?" she asked.

Jedra grinned. "Well, after all we've gone through, I just—Am I assuming something I shouldn't?"

She shook her head and smiled. "No. 'We' sounds just fine to me."



# A Little Knowledge

## A Flip-Book Adventure

This booklet and the two spiral bound books in the box constitute a single adventure entitled *A Little Knowledge*. The three books, when taken together, present a new adventure style known as a *flip-book*.

This book, called the *Story Book*, contains a short story of the same name (which, presumably, you've just read), this introduction to the adventure, and two monstrous compendium style pages for monsters peculiar to the scenario. The spiral bound books are the *Dungeon Master's Book* and the *Player Aid Cards*.

The dungeon master should keep the *Story Book* and the *Dungeon Master's Book* in his possession. The *Player Aid Cards* are for the players to view during the adventure, but only as directed by the dungeon master.

## The Short Story

Jerry Oltion's *A Little Knowledge*, serves as an introduction to the scenario, both for you and your players. It doesn't tell the story of the adventure, so it doesn't give anything away—let any of the players read it beforehand, if they're interested. The characters in the short story are not the main characters of the adventure, nor do they even appear as NPCs. The role-playing adventure basically begins as the short story is winding down. In this case, the player characters are other slaves in the caravan wagon. They may or may not have been privy to the activities described in the short story, but that doesn't matter. Now they are about to be abandoned in the desert to fend for themselves, and that's the focus of the role-playing adventure.

## Characters

The role-playing adventure is recommended for four to eight players, all of whom should be third level (that is, novice characters). DM's should suggest to the players that at least one of the characters

be a psionicist. With that in mind, the players are free to generate any characters they wish. For better role-playing, the DM should also have them fabricate some reason that they are now slaves on this wagon. For instance, a dwarven gladiator could have been ordered to win a crucial fight, or else—when he lost he was thrown into slavery. Remember, none of the players' characters are the main characters in the short story.

The player characters will have no equipment and no money with them—thus, that portion of character generation can be skipped. Any materials they wish to use during the adventure will have to be scavenged as they go.

It is not important that the player characters know of each other before the adventure begins. In fact, given the situation at the start of the adventure, it's reasonable to assume that they are meeting each other for the first time as this adventure begins.

## The Flip Books

The two spiral bound books contain the role-playing adventure. The information for every encounter is condensed on a single page that the DM can look at and reference quickly. The players also get a series of cards with maps or illustrations right at their fingertips, to use and refer to at their leisure, not stuffed away in a book that the DM needs to use, too.

The *Player Aid Cards* contain illustrations and diagrams that coincide with the encounters of the adventure. The *Dungeon Master's Book* contains the text and direction needed to referee the adventure. It provides background, role-playing notes, and game statistics for every encounter, spelling out for the DM everything he needs to know to effectively run the player characters through that encounter.

Each card in the *Dungeon Master's Book* covers one encounter in the adventure. That information is organized in the following sections:

**Setup.** This section tells the DM how to prepare for the upcoming encounter. It may contain infor-



## A Little Knowledge

mation on pacing, instruct the players to flip to a certain card in their book, or give the DM other vital information.

**Actions.** The various actions on the cards in the *Dungeon Master's Book* are self explanatory. Each one details a certain portion of the encounter on the card. There may be one or more action sections per card.

**Roleplaying.** These notes are given to enhance roleplaying, both by the DM and on the part of the players. The *DARK SUN™ Boxed Set* is intended for advanced roleplayers, those who are familiar with both the AD&D 2nd Edition game and the nuances of effective roleplaying. Incorporate the roleplaying notes when appropriate through the entire encounter. There may not be a roleplaying section for every encounter.

**Statistics.** This section provides game statistics for every creature that might be fought or otherwise dealt with in the encounter. Ability scores, combat statistics, spell and psionics lists, and experience points earned are all presented. When there is treasure to be found, it will also be listed here.

**Next.** Once a particular encounter is concluded, this section tells the DM where to go next. It may also give some hints as to pacing; some encounters are extremely important and should, therefore, be given sufficient play time. Others that are less important should be speeded up to maintain player interest in the adventure.

### Modifying Encounters

The encounters provided here are balanced for an adventuring party of the size and experience levels recommended. However, since this is an introductory adventure, it's important that the players at least touch upon every encounter presented in the adventure (they don't have to overcome every obstacle, but they should at least confront every one). If the player characters are becoming weaker and may not survive to the end of the adventure, the DM should modify the encounters to make them less se-

vere. He may want to make it easier for them to locate water or food, or cut down the number of monsters encountered.

### Rules References

The adventure in *A Little Knowledge* centers on survival in an arid environment. Be familiar with *Chapter 14: Time and Movement* in the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *DARK SUN Rules Book* to better administer movement across the desert, location of water and food sources, and the effects of dehydration if that becomes a problem for the player characters. Also, since psionics among the player characters, non-player characters, and monsters is fairly common, review the rules for psionic powers and combat presented in *The Complete Psionics Handbook*.

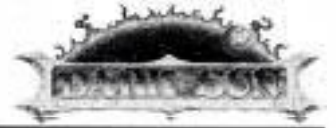
### Concluding the Adventure

After card #24 in the *Dungeon Master's Book*, the adventure is over. At that point, the player characters will have experienced first hand many of the things that make Athas' wastelands both interesting and deadly. What the players decide to do with their characters then is wide open—new encounters and adventures will take place outside the direction of the flip-books. Resume traditional roleplaying techniques for adventures following *A Little Knowledge*.

### After the Adventure

The various cards used in this adventure describe many NPCs, locations, and situations that won't change after this adventure is long ended. Keep the cards available for when the PCs pass this way again. Who knows? They could easily meet up with old friends or enemies, and you'll have all the appropriate information ready to go.

# Kluzd



|                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN:  | Mud flats     |
| FREQUENCY:        | Very rare     |
| ORGANIZATION:     | Solitary      |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:   | Night         |
| DIET:             | Carnivore     |
| INTELLIGENCE:     | Animal (1)    |
| TREASURE:         | Nil           |
| ALIGNMENT:        | Neutral       |
| NO. APPEARING:    | 1-2           |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | 2 (8)         |
| MOVEMENT:         | 12, burrow 12 |
| HIT DICE:         | 4             |
| THACO:            | 17            |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 1             |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 1-8           |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Suffocation   |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Nil           |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil           |
| SIZE:             | M (6' long)   |
| MORALE:           | 14            |
| XP VALUE:         | 270           |
| PSIONICS:         | Nil           |

Kluzd are snake-like reptiles that inhabit mudflats and other muddy areas. They are about ten feet long and two to three feet in diameter. They can swallow a grown man whole, although this results in a strange, almost comical, bulge in the center of their bodies.

Male kluzd have a distinctive turquoise and white coloration about their head and neck area. Females do not share these bright colors; their bodies are sandy brown flecked with black along their entire length. All kluzd have a series of elongated, feather-like scales around the back of their heads. These flare out to form a large fan when the creature is angered, a primitive mechanism to make it appear larger to its animal opponents.

Kluzd have mere animal intelligence. They can communicate with each other only in a most rudimentary fashion or through magical or psionic means.

**Combat:** When a kluzd senses something moving along the surface of its mud-patch, it swims toward the object and attacks with needle-sharp, barbed teeth. A kluzd can burrow through mud quickly. It cannot burrow through dry dirt or sand.

A successful attack by the creature inflicts 1d8 points of damage. Also, in each round a kluzd will attempt to grapple, attacking whatever portion of the target is beneath the surface of the mud—in the case of a man, this is usually a leg. The victim must save vs. paralyzation or be grappled. Once grappled, the victim must make a bend bars/lift gates roll each round. If the roll is failed, the victim is pulled or kept under the surface of the mud for the entire round. If the roll is successful, the victim doesn't manage to break free, but does reach the surface of the mud to take a breath. If the victim rolls below half his normal bend bars/lift gates number, he breaks free and can flee through the mud for that entire round.

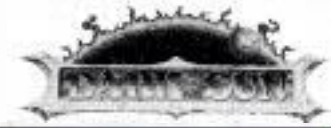
A victim that is held under the mud must hold his breath; the



character can hold his breath up to 1/6 of his Constitution score in rounds (rounded up). While attempting to hold his breath beyond this time, the character must roll a Constitution check each round. The first check has no modifiers, but each subsequent check suffers a -2 cumulative penalty. Once a check is failed, the character suffocates. The victim is unable to defend himself with normal weapons or attacks while being held beneath the mud, although he can employ psionic powers. Once the first victim dies, the kluzd will swallow it whole, then submerge to the bottom of the mud and leave any other creatures alone while it feeds.

**Habitat/Society:** Most often, the kluzd is well-protected by its muddy environment; few native predators can submerge themselves in the thick muck to hunt them. Kluzd will only leave the safety of their mud pools when these areas dry out completely. The creatures are far more vulnerable when forced onto the surface of the mud flat. A kluzd will travel in a straight line away from its evaporated burrow in search of a new one—those that don't locate a new mud hole within four days will themselves dry out and perish.

**Ecology:** Kluzd mate when their mudflats dry across the surface to become a broken, hard crust. The female lays a clutch of eggs (1d8 in number) that will hatch and grow to full size in six weeks. Until the young leave the mud pond, their parents will protect them. The young do not hunt. Rather the parents attack creatures that cross the dried surface of the mud flat, dragging them under to feed their children.



|                   | Worker/Water Fetcher | Soldier        | Brood Queen    |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN:  | Tablelands           | Tablelands     | Tablelands     |
| FREQUENCY:        | Rare                 | Rare           | Rare           |
| ORGANIZATION:     | Brood                | Brood          | Solitary       |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE:   | Continuous           | Continuous     | Continuous     |
| DIET:             | Omnivore             | Omnivore       | Omnivore       |
| INTELLIGENCE:     | Animal (1)           | Animal (1)     | Animal (1)     |
| TREASURE:         | Nil                  | Nil            | W              |
| ALIGNMENT:        | Neutral              | Neutral        | Neutral        |
| NO. APPEARING:    | 10-200               | Special        | 1              |
| ARMOR CLASS:      | 7                    | 7              | 4              |
| MOVEMENT:         | 6                    | 6              | 6              |
| HIT DICE:         | 2                    | 2              | 5              |
| THACO:            | 19                   | 19             | 15             |
| NO. OF ATTACKS:   | 1                    | 2              | 2              |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK:    | 1-4                  | 1-4/1-4        | 1-6/1-6        |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS:  | Nil                  | Poison         | Egg Implant    |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Nil                  | Nil            | Nil            |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil                  | Nil            | Nil            |
| SIZE:             | M (6')               | M (6')         | M (7')         |
| MORALE:           | Steady (11-12)       | Steady (11-12) | Steady (11-12) |
| XP VALUE:         | 65                   | 120            | 270            |
| PSIONICS:         | Nil                  | Nil            | Nil            |

Wezers are enormous flying insects that make underground hives in the desert tablelands. Though of animal intelligence, they are highly social creatures, structured into several distinct classes by both social function and physical characteristics.

Water fetcher, worker, and soldier wezers all have wings, multifaceted eyes, and six thin limbs extending from their abdomen. Soldier's are slightly larger than the menials, and are colored a shade of yellow brighter than their fellows. The brood queen is much larger—she, too, has wings, but they are insufficient to lift her into flight. The brood queen has a huge abdomen for laying the hive's eggs.

**Combat:** Water fetcher and worker wezers each have a single stinger attack that inflicts 1d4 points of damage. A soldier can attack with its stinger twice per round, each hit inflicting 1d4 points of damage and requiring the victim to save vs. poison to avoid being paralyzed by its venom. The paralyzation will take effect 2d6 rounds after the failed save and will last for 2d4 days.

The brood queen can attack twice per round with her stinger and each hit causes 1d6 points of damage. A successful hit by the queen's tail injects an egg into the victim's stomach, causing an additional 1d6 points of damage. The victim may save vs. poison, if successful the egg dies and will not hatch, although the victim still suffers the injection damage. If the save fails, the egg begins to grow. Unless it is removed surgically (causing an additional 1d10 points of damage) or a *cure disease* spell is cast upon the character, the egg hatches in five days. As the emerging larva feeds, it permanently reduces its host's Constitution score by 1d4 points each day. Once the victim dies, or the larva has fed for ten days, it leaves its host's body via the ulcerous injection wound, and attempts to continue feeding on him from without. Eggs and larva have no attacks and can easily be destroyed.

**Habitat/Society:** Wezer's build colonies beneath the sands where they protect the brood queen and allow her to lay eggs. From the surface, their hives appear to be a series of domes that vary from three to eight feet tall, but that are all about five feet in diameter. The domes are constructed by the workers, made from sand glued together with a bonding resin they secrete. Only one dome actually has an entrance from the surface that leads

into the rest of the tunnels.

There is 50% chance that the inside of any dome reeks of decay and contains a slain creature. The dead beast is bloated and foul, with an ulcerous wound in the abdomen. A single white wezer larva feeds on the body. Every chamber has a four-foot tunnel leading down, hidden beneath a six-inch plug of sand and wax (treated as a hidden door).

The colony tunnels are cool, humid, and six feet in diameter, just large enough for half-giants to crawl through. Humans, muls, thri-kreen, elves, and half-elves suffer a -2 penalty on their attack and damage rolls in the tunnels. Half giants suffer a -6. Halflings and dwarves suffer no penalty.

Beneath the ground is a series of chambers connected by these tunnels. Chambers are used to store larva and additional food. The brood queen spends all of her time in the brood chamber.

Water gatherers fly in the vicinity of the colony in search of water. They either store water directly in wax balls, or they use water to create honey that they store the same way. They hang both types of wax balls in the colony chambers to feed the rest of the adults and to nurture the young. Each sphere contains one gallon of either honey or water. The contents are apparent by the shade of the sphere (water is light, honey is dark).

In addition to any other treasure found in a wezer lair, there are usually about 35 one-gallon wax balls of water and 20 balls of honey hanging from the honey-combed ceiling of the brood chamber. Any character can carry three spheres with him. The wax lasts one full day outside the hive before melting and spilling. Each day that a character eats at least a quart of the honey, he heals 1d8 points of damage.

**Ecology:** Workers are charged with construction and maintenance of the domes, chambers, and tunnels of the colony. Water fetchers must collect water and store it as either water or honey for the others. The soldiers use poison to fetch live creatures for the queen to lay eggs in. The brood queen herself is the matriarch of the colony. She is mother to all the colony's members, and as such is protected to the bitter end. If the colony moves, it moves on the brood queen's command only.



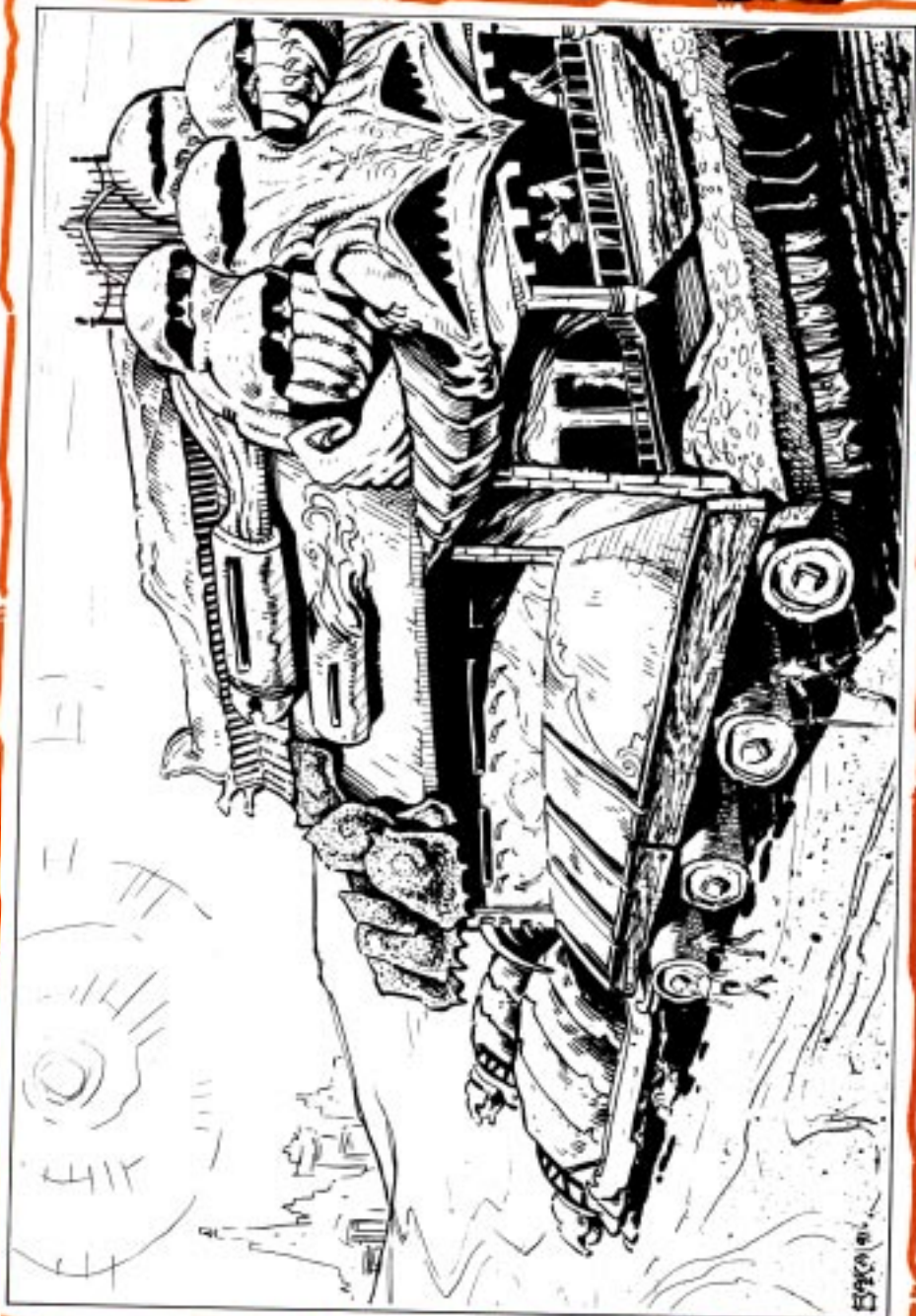
# DARK • SUN

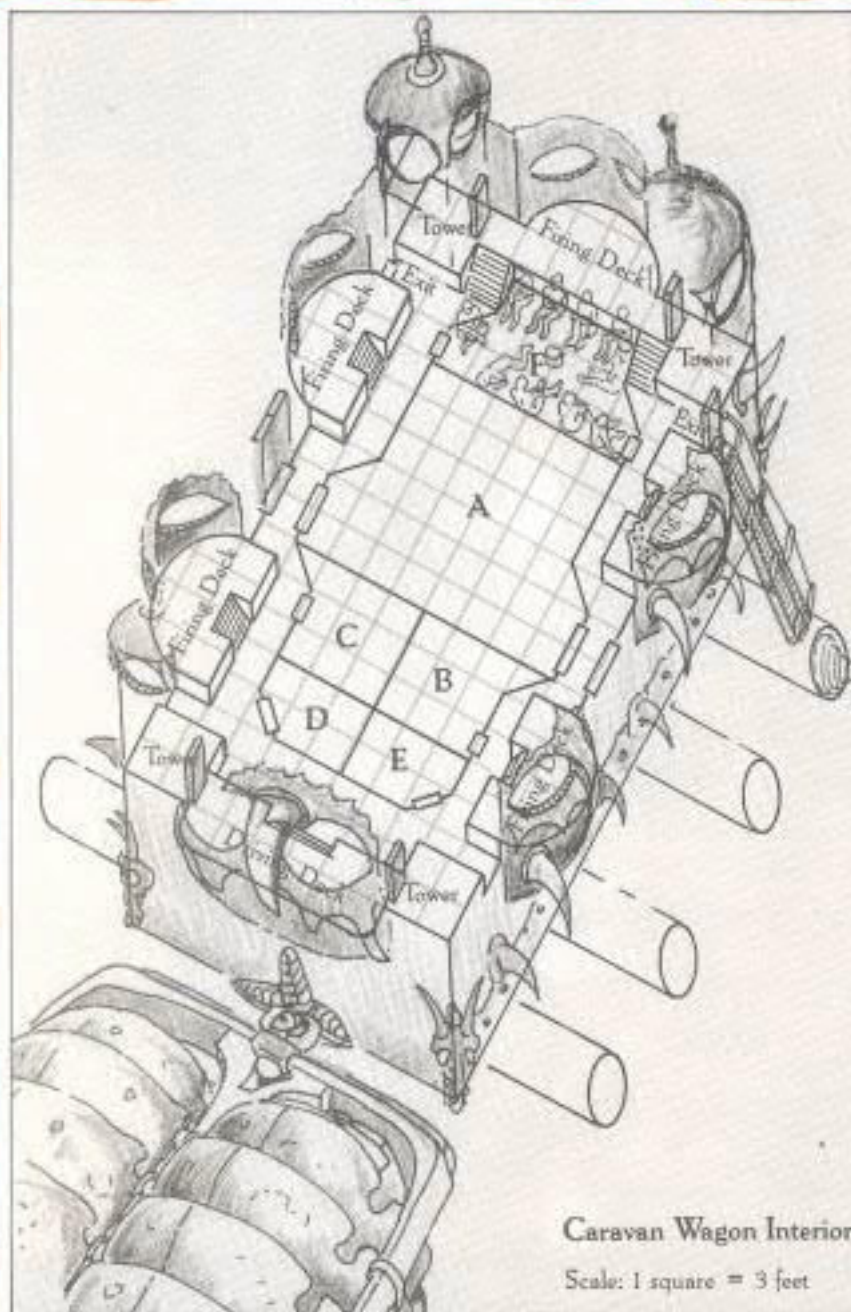
W O R L D

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Dark Sun



Player Aid Cards

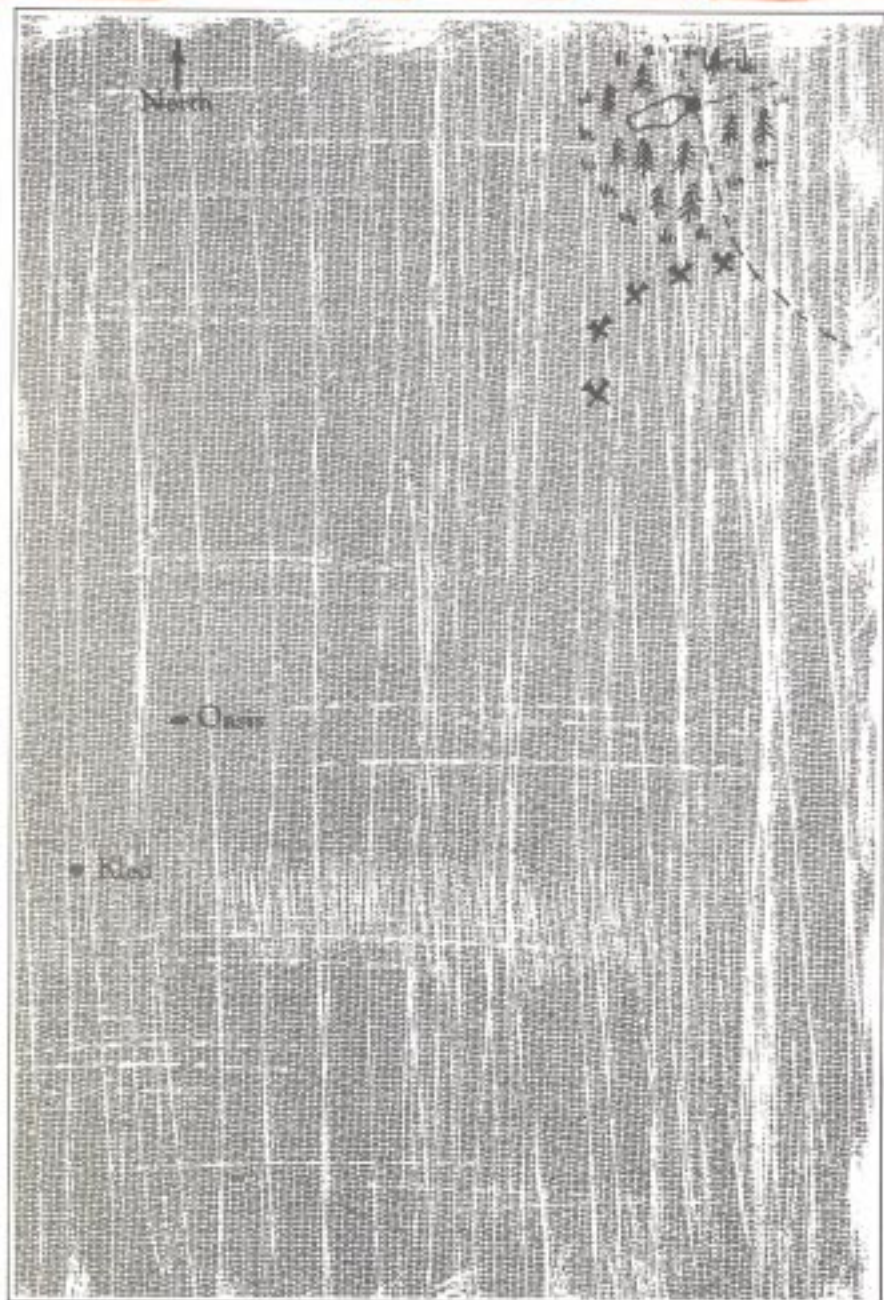






















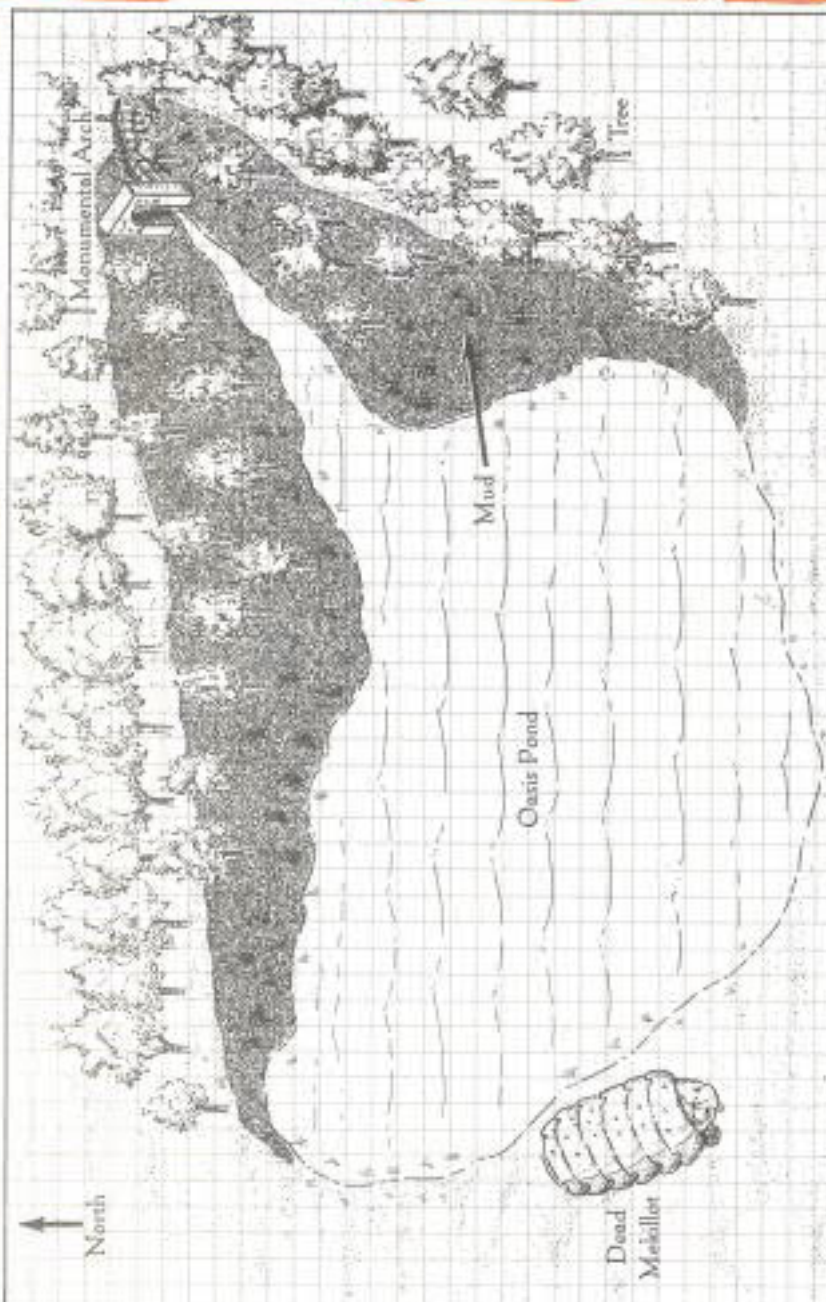














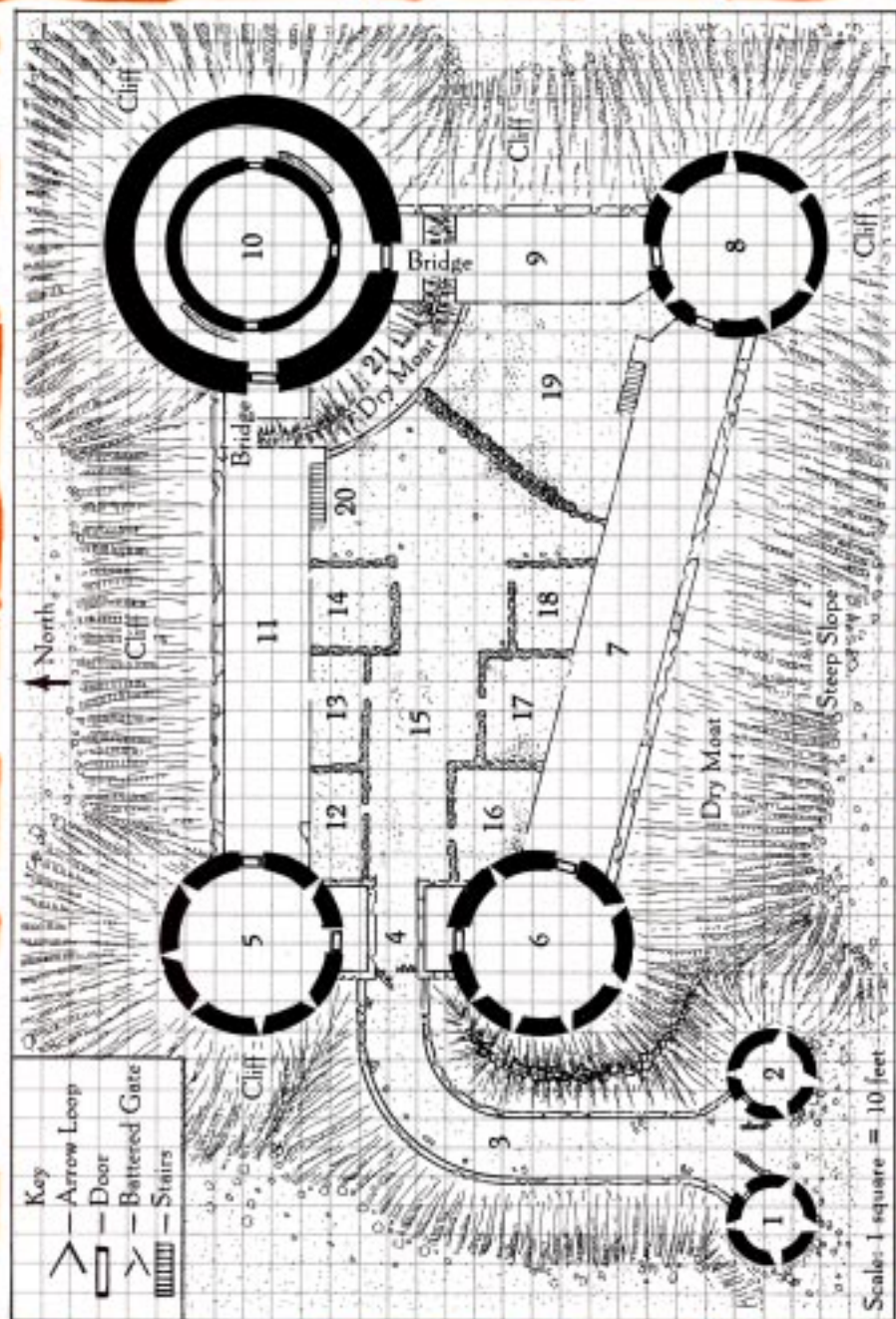






















# DARK SUN

A Little  
Knowledge...  
An  
introductory  
adventure set  
beneath the  
Dark Sun

Dungeon Master's Book



## One: Mekillot Caravan

**Setup.** Have the players flip to *Player Aid Card #1*. The PCs are all slaves, tied inside the wagon's slavehold—a dark room with no ventilation and a door on each side barred from the outside. There are no other slaves, and PCs have no possessions except their clothing (hemp breechcloths, with halters for women).

**Typical Day.** The wagon moves at daybreak; an hour later, five guards (one a psionist) feed the slaves (gruel and water) and check the shackles. They return in the evening with an additional quart of water per slave. This routine never varies.

**Escape.** The player characters may wish to escape. They all wear heavy leather manacles on their wrists and ankles, as well as leather collars. The manacles and collars are sealed shut with giant-hair rope. This rope can only be broken by someone with a Strength of 21 or better who makes a successful bend bars/open gates roll. The rope runs through a bone loop set into the wall, and is tied securely shut with knot located outside the hold. This gives the slaves just enough freedom to reach the wooden chamberpot in the middle of the room. The bone loops can be pulled from the wall, freeing the slaves secured to them, by a successful bend bars/lift gates roll.

Upon hearing the tell-tale crack of the bone-loop being pulled from the wall, six guards and the psionist will rush into the hold, subduing escapees with threats, violence, or psionic powers. The barred doors can be opened by making a successful bend bars/lift gates roll.

**Roleplaying.** The guards and psionist treat PCs with the indifference of animals. They won't fall for any diversions, leaving the slaves bound in their shackles at all times.

**What the Guards Know.** It might be possible for the PCs to extract some information from the guards through passing conversation or via psionic and magical means. The guards know that the slaves were brought in Urik by Resherek Merchant House (the PCs know this too), that they are being taken to Tyr for resale at a high price, and will end up working on the construction of a grand ziggurat. The guards expect the slaves to die in the harsh conditions there.

### Statistics.

**Guards (6):** Int Avg; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 1; hp 8 (x6); THAC0 19; #AT 1 (obsidian short sword, attacks at -2); Dmg 1d6-1; SZ M; ML 10; XP 15 each; Treasure 1-4 cp each.

**Psionist (1):** Int Avg; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 8 THAC0 19; #AT 1 (obsidian short sword, attacks at -2); Dmg 1d6-1; SZ M; ML 12; XP 120 each; Treasure 2-8 cp; Psionics— Sciences: telekineses, domination, mass domination; Devotions: ballistic attack, control body, control flames, inertial barrier, awe, contact, ego whip, id insinuation, inflict pain, dimensional door, dimension walk; Def Modes: IF, M-, TW, PSPs 70.

**Next.** Don't take too long with this encounter. When the PCs are about to break free of the hold, or it appears they aren't going to try, continue with encounter 2.

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## Two: Out of the Hold

**Setup.** Don't tell the players to flip to *Player Aid Card #2* until instructed to below. The PCs are still in the slave hold, either free of their bonds and attempting to escape or waiting quietly for something to happen.

**Trouble.** Outside the hold, lookouts sound the alarm. An instant later, a loud voice can be heard from outside the wagon: "The Jura Dai are not slaves. your king must release our people, or all his caravans will perish in the desert."

The psionist and any guards outside the hold assume battle stations, forgetting about the PCs. This is the PCs' chance to escape, for nothing they do will attract the guards.

**Sudden Stop.** Shortly after the events detailed above occur, a loud explosion sounds at the front of the wagon. It stops amid astonished cries of "You can't stop a mekillot wagon!" "They stopped us!" and "We're doomed!" (The attackers' defiler used a *lighting bolt* to sever the shaft by which the wagon is pulled.) The booming voice sounds again: "Leave now, taking nothing with you, or we will burn you out!"

**Offer.** If the PCs are not out of the hold by now, the psionist opens the door and offers them freedom in return for defending the wagon. Assuming the PCs agree, he frees them and assigns them to man the three rear firing decks, where they can find crossbows and 20 obsidian bolts each. Should the PCs not help, the psionist uses *mass domination* to force them to fight.

**Out of the Hold.** The PCs are free, have the players flip to *Player Aid Card #2*. This shows them what they want to know about the wagon. The two exit doors are both open, most of the crew having abandoned ship. Outside the wagon, dozens of elves are moving in with burning torches. The PCs have two rounds before the elves arrive. In this time, they can fight, flee, or explore. Here is a listing of what they find in each room of the wagon:

- A: Cargo Hold.** Hundreds of obsidian bastard swords, short swords, daggers, and battle axes.
- B: Crew Quarters.** Twelve sleeping hammocks.
- C: Psionist's Quarters.** 25 cp (hidden in bunk).
- D: Captain Weom's Quarters.** Successful secret doors search reveals a safe beneath bunk, trapped with type K contact poison. The safe contains 25 sp and a bone case containing the captain's map (shown on *Player Aid Card #5*)
- E: Kitchen.** Gruel, 500 gallons of water in a barrel, 20 one-quart vessels (PCs can carry two per hand). The barrel collapses if moved.

The PCs have time to explore two rooms before the elves swarm the wagon (see next encounter).

**Statistics.** The psionist and guard statistics are listed in encounter one, and the elf statistics are listed in encounter three.

**Next.** Continue with encounter 3.

## Three: Elves

**Setup.** The PCs peer outside the wagon, have them flip to *Player Aid Card #3*. Emphasize that they are in a desert setting.

**Off The Wagon.** Two rounds after the PCs are freed, three dozen elves board the wagon, slaying the psionist (if he is still alive) and half-a-dozen guards who remained behind. They will not attack the PCs unless attacked. Instead, they tell the PCs to get off the wagon and go away they allow the PCs to take up to two weapons and two quarts of water each, but nothing more (confiscating coins or other treasures the PCs display prominently). After giving the PCs one round to abandon the wagon, they start setting fire to it.

**Outside.** The wagon is surrounded by three hundred elves. They won't bother slaves, but offer no help either. Any thri-kreen suffer a deluge of insults (the elves are well aware of the thri-kreen's taste for elf-meat), but are not attacked.

**Roleplaying.** The elves are not trying to help the slaves and couldn't care less what happens to them. If the PCs attack, they won't hesitate to fight, but are content to let the PCs go (taking any treasure the PCs display, however). This attitude applies to elven PCs as well.

**What The Elves Know.** The only advantage that an elven PC has in this encounter is that he might be able to strike up a conversation with the raiders. If this is done, the PC can learn something of the raiders' motivation.

The elves are angry because the King of Urik has been raiding the Jura Dai tribe for slaves. In return for his actions against them, the elves are taking vengeance by attacking commerce to and from Urik. Lastly, because the majority of the slaves are clearly not used to survival in the desert, the elves expect most of the refugees from the caravan to die of thirst.

### Statistics.

**Jura Dai Elf (300):** Int Avg; AL N; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT (bone short sword attacks at -2); Dmg 1d6-2; SZ M; ML 13; XP 15 each; Treasure 2d4 cp each.

**Jura Dai Chief (1):** Int Very; AL CN; AC 5 (kank breastplate); MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; D 1d4 (steel dagger); SZ M; ML 15; XP 270; Treasure 10 gp. Defiler spells: 1) *color spray, magic missile, sleep, ventriloquism*; 2) *darkness 15' radius, invisibility, knock*; 3) *dispel magic, lightning bolt*; 4) *minor creation*.

**Jura Dai Psionist (1):** Int Very; AL NE; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 8; THAC0 19; #AT 1 (obsidian dagger, attacks at -2); Dmg 1d4-1; SZ M; ML 12; XP 120; Treasure 20 sp; **Psionics—Sciences:** *psychic crush, telekinesis*; **Devotions:** *contact, ego whip, id insinuation, inflict pain, psionic blast, thought shield, animate shadow, ballistic attack, inertial barrier*; **Def Modes:** IF, TW; PSPs 55.

**Next.** If players have more than two-quarts of water apiece, or return to the wagon to see what they can salvage, continue with encounter four. Otherwise, continue with encounter five.

## Four: Wagon Wreck

**Setup.** Have the players flip to *Player Aid Card #4*. after they've looked at it, show it to them again. The sun is beating down like a furnace. Never let them forget how hot it is.

This encounter servers double-duty. Use it if the PCs have more than two-quarts of water each, or if they return to the wagon looking for salvage. in the latter case, make sure the PCs find the map in the bone case (described under Salvage below).

**Burned Wreck.** If the PCs have returned to the wagon, they discover that it has been completely burned and looted. The cargo is now missing, as are the coins in the psionist's quarters and the captain's quarters (whether the PCs or the elves took them).

**Salvage.** Not much survived the fire, but here is a list of what the PCs can find. If they can make something of it, fine for them: 1. Charcoal (the wagon was made of wood), for all practical purposes an unlimited supply. 2. Dozens of obsidian shards (broken weapons), as long as four feet and razor sharp. 3. Burn leather (straps and clothing). 4. Burnt bone (human). 5. Burnt cloth (hammocks, clothing, etc.). 6. Sheets of glass under wagon, where sand melted. 7. Captain Weom's burnt remains. He died when the lightning bolt freed the mekillots. 8. Bone case with map (on *Player Aid Card #5*).

**Thirsty Guards.** Whether at the wagon or in the desert, the PCs meet a dozen guards. The guards demand any water the PCs have. Should a battle ensue, each time a character attacks and misses, there is a 20% chance that one water vessel is smashed or spilled. Each time a guard hits a PC, there is a 50% chance that one vessel the PC carries (or which is nearby) is spilled. Should the PCs leave their water unguarded in order to fight, several guards forgo combat to attempt stealing it.

**Roleplaying.** Although the guards are interested in taking anything the PCs might have that will help them survive, they are not interested in working with the PCs. The guards would rather destroy the PCs water supply than leave it to them.

**What The Guards Know.** Through psionic, magical, or physical means the PCs might be able to get some information out of the guards. If they do, they will learn that the guards believe they are all probably going to die of thirst, if the elves don't return and kill them first. Confident of that, if the slaves survive to reach Urik, they will be returned to slavery – whether or not they fought on behalf of the wagon.

### Statistics.

**Guards (12):** Int Avg; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 1; hp 6 (x12); THAC0 19; #AT 1 (obsidian short sword, attacks at -2); Dmg 1d6-1; SZ M; ML 10; XP 15 each; Treasure 1-4 cp each.

**Next.** Continue with encounter five after the PCs either defeat the guards or leave the wagon.

## Five: The Hazards of Desert Travel

**Setup.** Only instruct the players to look at *Player Aid Card #5* if they found the map in the bone case in encounter two or encounter four. This encounter discusses mapping, movement rates, and water consumption for this adventure. All of these things are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 14 of the *Dark Sun™ Rules Book*.

**The Map.** Captain Weom normally did not need a map for his caravan route, but on this trip he had to stop at the village of Kled to conduct some business. To help him find it, his employer drew the rough sketch map on *Player Aid Card #5*. Captain Weom kept track of his wagon's progress by the line of "X"s. The attack occurred in the last area with an "X" (the PCs are there now). Locate this area on the *Map of Tyr Region* by comparing its position to the city of Urik. As the players travel, keep track of their position on the *Map of the Tyr Region*. When they move into different types of terrain, refer to the *Athasian Geography* chapter of *The Wanderer's Journal*. This will help you describe what the PCs see.

**Moving.** Movement is discussed in Chapter 14 of the *Dark Sun™ Rules Book*.

**Water.** Water weighs 8.3 pounds/gallon. Most PCs need one gallon of water/day (four gallons/day for half-giants). This requirement can be reduced by half by moving only at night and resting in shade during the day. At midnight of the first day without enough water, PCs suffer the effects of dehydration. Any character who had less than half the required amount suffers a temporary loss of 1d6 Constitution points (with loss of all benefits). If the character has between half and all of the necessary water, the loss is only 1d4 points. Note that thri-kreen only need to make this check once per week.

Some PCs have proficiencies, powers, or spells which allow them to find or create water, or to reduce the need for it. Read the description of these abilities before allowing their use, and check the *Dark Sun™ Rules Book* to see if any modifications have been made for the Dark Sun Campaign. Proficiencies are discussed in Chapter 5, and spell modifications in Chapter 15: New Spells. Note especially that *Create Water* and *Create Food and Water* produce only ½ gallon of water per level of caster. Psionics function as described in *The Complete Psionics Handbook*.

PCs magically or psionically counteracting dehydration suffer a cumulative Constitution loss (based on the number of days without water) when no longer able to continue doing so.

**Wandering Monsters.** At the start of each day, roll 1d10. They will meet a wandering monster on a result of 1 or 2 (1-4 if traveling at night). Roll on the appropriate table in the *Wilderness Encounters* section in Chapter 11 of the *Dark Sun™ Rules Book*.

**Next.** If the PCs wander back toward Urik or a road, continue with encounter 12. Otherwise, continue with encounter 6.

## Six: Bloody Timiris

**Setup.** Don't have the players flip to *Player Aid Card #6* until instructed to by the text below. Use this encounter a day or so after the attack on the caravan wagon, once the PCs have a desperate need of water, and while they're still in the Sandy Wastes.

**Distant Plants.** Ask the players to flip to *Player Aid Card #4* (the Athasian desert) to remind them of how hot and thirsty they are. Following this, the tallest PC sees a thicket of vegetation a mile distant. If the PCs are traveling at night, the thicket is silhouetted Athas' twin moons. The thicket is nearly a half-mile across. From its center glistens a scintillating silver reflection—the unmistakable gleam of water.

When PCs move closer have them flip to *Player Aid Card #6*. The thorny bushes grow most densely over the silvery reflection. The reflection is thirty yards in diameter and resembles a pool of water.

**Further Investigations.** Most tests suggest the reflection is caused by a pool of water. It splashes if something is dropped into it, a breeze runs across it, etc. The bushes themselves have a drab, gray-pink tinge to them. The thorns are each about an inch and a half long and barbed. Should a PC think to break one off, he discovers a small hollow passage inside it, with a tiny hole in the end. The use of appropriate proficiencies reveals only that the plant is not poisonous, not what it is. A careful (well-lit) study of the ground inside the thicket reveals there are bones scattered throughout it.

**Getting into the Pool.** The bushes grow directly out of the "pool" in the center of the thicket. It is impossible to reach the pool without going through the thicket—even by flying above it. On one side of the thicket is a narrow, three-foot tunnel leading toward the center. PCs may crawl down this tunnel freely, or use their weapons to hack one of their own.

Once they have passed their halfway point on their way to the pool, the thorny bushes rapidly constrict around the PCs sticking each character with 1d6 x 10 thorns (no attack roll needed). As the timiris sucks their blood, the PCs suffer one point of damage for every ten thorns by which they were struck. They can easily hack their way free of the bush, but it takes one round per hundred feet they had advanced. Once outside of the bush, the thorns continue to suck blood until they are dug out of the skin (which requires one round and does a total of 2 additional points of damage).

**After the Attack.** The timiris can be cleared by burning, hacking, or other reasonable methods. It is hit automatically and cannot resist or escape. Anyone who comes too close for the timiris for more than one round is subject to a thorn attack.

The timiris has no treasure, and the center of the thicket is actually a thin layer of sap covered by an oily residue that protects it from evaporation and gives it its silvery sheen. It is not drinkable.

**Next.** If the PCs are about to enter the Stony Barren, continue with encounter 7. Otherwise, continue with encounter 8.

## Seven: Cactus Food

**Setup.** Use this encounter the first time the PCs enter an area of Stony Barrens. As they start through the Stony Barrens, have them flip to *Player Aid Card #7*.

**Thorny Cactus.** There are dozens of different kinds of cactus in the Stony Barrens. Three different varieties dominate the region, however: a spherical purple kind roughly two feet in diameter, a tubular kind that resembles a mass of writhing brains and covers the ground for twenty square yards, and a tall tree-like kind with 1-6 branches.

**Purple Ball.** Upon being struck, this cactus oozes a clear liquid. It is a deadly toxin that causes anyone so much as tasting it to lose 1d4 points of Constitution for a period of two hours (treat as dehydration). Anyone who drinks a mouthful immediately suffers 1d10 points of Constitution loss for a full day. If used to tip an arrow or spear, the toxin causes the same results to any wounded creature—though it loses its effectiveness four hours after being taken from the plant (the fluid is still not drinkable). A purify food and drink cast upon a living plant kills the cactus, but provides on gallon of drinkable water. Only one plant may be affected per spell. A successful herbalism proficiency check reveals this without experimentation.

**Writhing Mass.** If the cactus is chopped opened, a slimy worm shoots out of the wound and tries to entwine the closest living being (THAC0 15). If it scores a successful hit, the worm continues to shoot out of the cactus and entwines the victim's legs, tripping him the instant he tries to flee. On the following round, it wraps him up like a mummy, causing 1d6 points of suffocation damage until the victim is dragged away from the cactus or the worm is removed. Striking the cactus again merely causes more worms to come out. These worms can be used as ropes and are up to 180 feet long.

**Tree-like Cactus.** Anyone approaching within four feet of this cactus is subject to 1d6 attacks by the cactus's animated limbs (THAC0 17). A successful hit causes 1d4 points of damage, and on a natural attack roll of 20 the victim is pulled to the cactus's spiny trunk and hugged for an additional 1d4 points of damage. For purposes of defense, the cactus is AC 10 and can withstand 20 hp of damage before toppling the ground and releasing anyone it has grasped. If eaten raw within fifteen minutes of toppling, the pulp of this cactus provides half of a being's daily water requirements.

**Next.** If this encounter occurred after encounter 6, continue with encounter 8. Otherwise, if the PCs are in the same area as a road, continue with encounter 12. If the PCs are in the same region as an oasis, continue with encounter 14. If the PCs are near Kled, continue with encounter 17. Otherwise, allow them to continue wandering until one of the conditions above applies.

## Eight: Wezer

**Setup.** Don't have the players turn to *Player Aid Card #8* until instructed to do so. It is best to use this encounter after the PCs have been traveling for two or three days, when they are still at least a day away from the nearest oasis.

**Buzzing.** As the PCs climb a small dune (or ridge), they hear a loud, frantic buzzing on the other side. When they investigate, have them flip to *Player Aid Card #8*. The aarakocra are both coal black, with naked heads entirely devoid of feathers, wicked-looking red eyes, and wingspans of about 20 feet. They are attacking a wezer, which resembles a wasp but also has many things in common with a bee. It has a red body, is about five feet long, three feet in diameter, and has no apparent stinger at the end of its abdomen. The sphere attached to its mouth is a ball of wax the size of a one-gallon jug. The wezer is no match for the aarakocra.

**Helping the Wezer.** If the PCs decide to help the wezer, the aarakocra defend their meal from the air, repeatedly diving at the PCs to attack with their talons. Once it becomes apparent they cannot defeat the PCs with their talons, and assuming the two avians survive, they fly away. After that, the party will periodically see two distant specks in the air. These specks are, of course, the aarakocra, which are keeping track of the party from a safe distance. For the rest of the adventure, any time the PCs are in desperate circumstances, the aarakocra are 40% likely to show up and bomb the party with meat and vegetable matter and other offensive materials. Each time the PCs leave a valuable item unguarded, the aarakocra come to steal them.

**Helping the Aarakocra.** If the PCs help the avians defeat the wezer, they will receive little reward for their efforts. The aarakocra will escape with the wax sphere, pausing some distance off they split the water it contains without offering any to the PCs.

**The Wezer.** After the PCs rescue it, or after the aarakocra leave, the wezer quickly dies. If the PCs rescued the wezer, the wax ball on its mouth is still intact, and contains one gallon of water. Otherwise, the ball bursts in the struggle, showering one of the PCs with a refreshing spray of water.

**Roleplaying.** The two aarakocra are intelligent, though hardly noble. If a PC is able to speak with them, the aarakocra intentionally give the replies they think most likely to get the party killed.

**What The Aarakocra Know.** The aarakocra will gladly lie or deceive the party, they may be persuaded (by *charm* spell or similar ability) to give the adventurers reliable information. They know the location of the nearest oasis, the nearest road, and the cities of Tyr and Urik. They don't know where the wezer was coming from or going.

### Statistics.

**Athasian Aarakocra (2):** Int Average; AL NE; AC 7; MV 6, Fl 36 (C); HD 1+2; hp 8 each; THAC0 18; #AT 2; Dmg 1-3/1-3; SZ M; ML 11; XP 65 each.

**Wezer, Water Fetcher, or Worker (1):** Int Animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 6 Fl 21 (B); HD 2; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SZ M; ML 11; XP 65.

**Next.** Continue with encounter 9.



## Nine: The Colony

**Setup.** Don't have the players look at *Player Aid Card #9* until instructed to below.

**Wezers.** Periodically, a wezer buzzes far overhead. The wezers always pass by too far away to hit with any weapons, or to cast spells at. The PCs can determine that the wezers are all going to the same nearby location, however.

**The Hive.** Eventually, as the PCs crest a dune (or hill), instruct the players to flip to *Player Aid Card #9*. Tell them that the size of the domes varies between three and eight feet tall, but that all are about five feet in diameter. The domes are apparently constructed of sand glued together in some way. Only one, near the center of the area, has an obvious entrance. The entrance is four feet in diameter.

If the PCs watch long enough during daylight hours, they will see a wezer approach the center dome with a waxy ball on the end of its head. A few minutes later, the wezer leaves without the ball. Should the PCs attack one of these wezers, it attempts to flee. Any attack that strikes the creature will cause it to drop the wax ball it is carrying. Unless some special precautions are taken, the ball will burst when it strike the ground or is caught.

**Inside a Dome.** Most of the domes are sealed, but the PCs can break into any one of them. There is a 50% chance that the inside of any dome reeks of decay and contains a slain creature. The dead beast is bloated and foul, with an ulcerous wound in the abdomen. A single white wezer larva, about two feet long and a foot in diameter, feeds on the body. Have the players flip to *Player Aid Card #10* when they see this. In the center of the chamber is a four-foot tunnel leading down, but it is hidden beneath a six-inch of sand and wax (treat as a hidden door).

If the dome does not contain a body, a single worker wezer is sealing the interior of the chamber with wax. It immediately starts buzzing loudly and attacks the PCs. In the center of the chamber is a four-foot, unplugged tunnel leading down into the ground.

**The Central Dome.** The central dome contains a four-foot tunnel that descends into the ground. Crawling out of this dome is a worker wezer. It starts buzzing madly and attacks the PCs.

**Roleplaying.** The wezers have animal intelligence, but can converse if the PCs find a way to speak with them. They consider the PCs invaders who must be destroyed.

**What The Wezers Know.** Conversations with the wezers will reveal that they come in four varieties: water fetchers, workers, soldiers, and queens. Further, the PCs can learn that the soldiers use poison to fetch live creatures for the queen to lay eggs in. If the subject comes up, the PCs may also discover there is much water and honey (encased in wax spheres) in the queen's chamber.

### Statistics.

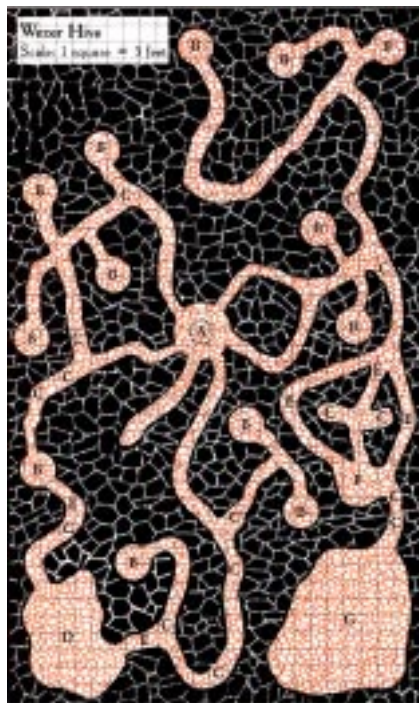
**Wezer, Water Fetcher or Worker (1):** Int Animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 6 Fl 21 (B); HD 2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SZ M; ML 11; XP 65 each.

**Next.** If the PCs enter the subterranean hive, continue with encounter 10. Otherwise, skip to encounter 13.

## Ten: The Hive

**Setup.** Don't have the players turn to *Player Aid Card #10* until they reach Area C on the DM's map below. The DM's map is for use in guiding the PCs through the wezer colony. The colony tunnels are cool, humid, and four feet in diameter—just large enough for half-giants to crawl through. Normal-sized PCs (not halflings or dwarves) suffer a -2 penalty on their attack and damage rolls in the tunnels, half-giants suffer a -4. If the PCs entered the colony through the central dome, they begin in area A. If the PCs entered through another dome, begin in any area B. Should the PCs try to start a fire and smoke out the colony, see encounter 11.

- A. This room is ten feet beneath the central colony dome. The PCs are attacked by one worker wezer per party member.
- B. This room is directly beneath one of the incubation domes. It is defended by a single worker wezer. If the PCs enter an incubation dome, there is 50% chance that they will find the bloated body of some animal and a wezer larva (as shown on *Player Aid Card #10*). Otherwise, the dome is empty.
- C. A soldier wezer is waiting at this location to attack.



- D. This is the communal resting and eating chamber. The only thing it contains at the moment are two soldier wezers per PC.
- E. The tunnel slopes down here. The PCs meet a single worker.
- F. At this point, one soldier wezer per PC attempts to ambush the party from the tunnels that the PCs did not enter by.
- G. See encounter 11.

### Statistics.

**Wezer, Water Fetcher or Worker:** Int Animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 6, Fl 21 (B); HD 2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SZ M; ML 11; XP 65 each.

**Wezer, Soldier:** Int Animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 6, Fl 21 (B); HD 2; hp 12; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4/1d4; SA Poison (Paralytic, 2-12 round onset time, 2d4 days duration, save to avoid); SZ M; ML 12; XP 120 each.

**Next.** Continue with encounter 11 when the PCs reach room G. If they retreat and give up on getting water out of the colony, continue with encounter 13.

## Eleven: Brood Queen

**Setup.** Have the players flip to *Player Aid Card #11*.

**Brood Chamber.** The spheres hanging from the honeycomb on the ceiling contain one-gallon of water or one-gallon of wezer honey. The contents are apparent by the shade of the sphere (water is light, honey is dark). As the PCs enter, the brood queen thrusts the barb at the end of her abdomen into the body of a paralysed elf and injects him with an egg.

**Angry Queen.** At first, the queen pays the PCs no attention. The instant the PCs reach for any of the wax spheres or disturb any of the bodies scattered about the chamber, the queen attacks. Each round, a soldier wezer enters the chamber to defend its queen.

**Leaving.** If the PCs decide to retreat before slaying the brood queen, return to encounter 10

**Smoke.** The PCs may attempt to smoke the queen out of the chamber, or even to smoke out the entire colony. To do so, it will take them an entire day to gather enough combustible fuel from the area surrounding the colony. Should they start a fire, all the wezers except the queen will leave the colony. Twelve soldiers will wait at each exit, preventing anyone from entering the nest. Anyone inside the tunnels, PCs and queen included, suffers 1d4 points of damage per round from smoke inhalation.

### Statistics.

**Wezer, Soldier:** Int Animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 6, Fl 21 (B); HD 2; hp 12; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4/1d4; SA Poison (Paralytic, 2-12 round onset time, 2d4 days duration, save to avoid); SZ M; ML 12; XP 120 each.

**Wezer, Brood Queen:** Int Animal; AL N; AC 4; MV 6; HD 5; hp 32; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6/1d6; SA Egg Implantation; SZ M; ML 12; XP 270.

A successful hit by the queen's tail injects an egg into the victim's stomach, causing an additional 1d6 points of damage. The victim may save vs. poison, if successful the egg dies and will not hatch, although the victim still suffers the injection damage. If the save fails, the egg begins to grow. Unless it is removed surgically (causing an additional 1d10 points of damage) or a *cure disease* spell is cast upon the character, the egg hatches in five days. As the emerging larva feeds, it permanently reduces its host's Constitution by 1d4 points each day. Once the victim dies, or the larva has fed for ten days, it leaves its host's body via the ulcerous injection wound, and attempts to continue feeding on him from without.

**Treasure.** There are 35 one-gallon wax balls of water and 20 balls of honey hanging in the honey-combed ceiling. Any character can carry up to three of these spheres with him. Each day a character eats at least a quart of the honey, he heals an additional 1d8 points of damage.

**Next.** After the PCs leave the wezer colony, allow them to continue exploring the desert. If they come to a road, go to encounter 12. If they reach an oasis, go to encounter 14. If they travel to Kled, go to encounter 18. If none of these things occur within two days, continue with encounter 13.

## Twelve: Ex-Slaves

**Setup.** Use this encounter when the PCs reach a road or an area of scrub. Have the players flip to *Player Aid Card #12*.

**Ex-Slaves.** The ex-slaves seen on card 12 are sneaking up on three inix-drawn wagons, hoping to steal some water. When the PCs make their presence known, the woman angrily tells them to keep out of sight before they blow the ambush.

**Stalking the Wagon.** Assuming the PC convince the ex-slaves of their usefulness (see *Roleplaying* below), they will be told to raid the caravan. After dark one or more of the PCs must sneak into the camp to steal water. The travellers have stored their waterskins in the center of the camp, protected by two dozen guards (most of whom are sleeping). The PCs chance of successfully sneaking past the three guards who are awake is 10%, unless they use some special ability such as magic or psionics. If only a thief enters the camp, he may add his *move silently* or *hide in shadows* score (whichever is better) to his basic 10% chance. Each PC that sneaks into camp may steal two five-gallon waterskins (per trip). There are 10 such skins available. The guards will execute any water thieves that they capture at sunrise.

**Roleplaying.** The three ex-slaves are friendly toward the PCs, recognizing them as fellow escaped slaves, but are reluctant to help them out—they're short of water themselves. Assuming the PCs demonstrate that they have unique talents, the ex-slaves agree to let them stalk the caravan, providing the PCs agree to split any water taken fifty-fifty. If no such deal can be made, they fight to prevent the PCs from "jumping their claim."

After the PCs have retrieved, or tried to retrieve, the water, the ex-slaves say they'd be happy to invite the PCs to join their tribe. However, "the trouble at Kled" has made finding water difficult, and the tribe can't afford to take on any more mouths. They suggest that if the PCs can resolve the trouble at Kled, they can find refuge with the slave tribe (the tribe will find them in this case). The "trouble" has to do with the Jura Dai elves accusing the inhabitants of Kled of telling slave takers where to find the elves.

**What The Ex-slaves Know.** Striking up conversation with the escaped slaves is easy. From them, the PCs can learn that the PCs will be killed or returned to slavery if they try to join a caravan or return to Urik. They can also learn where the nearest oasis is and that the water there has recently turned bad. Lastly, they will find that the ex-slaves believe that the King of Urik is very evil, but not as evil as the King of Tyr.

### Statistics.

**Guards (6):** Int Avg; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 1; hp 8 (x6); THAC0 13; #AT 1 (obsidian short sword, attacks at -2); Dmg 1d6-1; SZ M; ML 10; XP 15 each; Treasure 3-18 cp each.

**Ex-slaves (Kollus\*, To-gahl\*, and Marista\*):** Int Avg; AL NC; AC 8; MV 12; HD 5; hp 25 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1 (obsidian short sword, attacks at -2); Dmg 1db-1; SZ M; ML 10; XP 65 each; Treasure none.

**Next.** Continue with encounter 13.

## Thirteen: Silk Wyrms

**Setup.** Don't have the players turn to *Player Aid Card #13* until instructed to below. Be certain to have the description of the Silk Wyrms in Chapter 5 of the *The Wanderer's Journal* close at hand.

**Sky Ribbon.** Parties traveling during the day notice that they are being followed by a silvery ribbon flying low in the sky. Those traveling at night see something slender pass before the two moons of Athas now and then. The ribbon stays at least a mile distant, but PCs employing some magical or psionic ability that enhances their vision discover that it appears to be a large snake covered with an articulated shell of silver-gray chitin. The snake is about 45 feet long and two feet in diameter, and has a pair of wicked-looking fangs in its mouth. It follows all day (or night) long, disappearing and reappearing every now and then. Just before dusk (or dawn), it disappears and does not reappear.

**Night Attack.** Show *Player Aid Card #13* to the players when their characters realize something is in camp. After the PCs stop for the day (night), the silk assumes its *shadow form* and sneaks into camp. Only PCs employing a *true seeing* spell, the psionic power *five detection*, or other detection abilities can see it. It seeks out the party's water supply, assumes its physical form, sinks its fangs into the containers, and drinks three gallons per round. There is a 50% chance each round that the party hears the trickle of water.

If the silk wyrm is caught stealing the water, it attempts to paralyze the nearest character and drag him off. Otherwise, after it drinks its fifteen gallons of water, the silk wyrm attacks the largest sleeping person in the group, seeking to drag him away. This individual suffers a -4 penalty to his surprise roll. If the wyrm escapes with its victim, the party can easily track them.

**Silk Wyrms' Lair.** The silk wyrm drags the victim to the shady side of a rock outcropping, where it seals him in a cocoon. There are a dozen other cocoons in the lair, all containing the desiccated husk of some previous victim.

### Statistics.

**Silk Wyrms:** Int Low; AL CE; AC 3; MV 12, Fl 24 (C); HD 6; hp 30. THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA Poison; SZ L; ML 12; XP 1,400; Treasure; the cocoons are worth 10 gp (total) in a city, and one cocoon contains a clay tablet with three restore spells (treat as a clerical scroll).

Any victim bitten by the wyrm must save vs. poison or be paralyzed for 1d4 days. Paralyzed victims will be sealed in cocoons after any combat is resolved. From that time on, the silk wyrm dines on his blood, draining one point of Constitution per day, lost points are recovered at a rate of one point per day after the victim is freed.

**Next.** When the PCs reach an oasis, flip to encounter 14. If they reach Kled, continue the adventure with encounter 18.

## Fourteen: Lonely Mekillot

**Setup.** When the PCs reach an oasis, have them turn to *Player Aid Card #14*. Make sure to have the entry on mekillots found in chapter five of *the Wanderer's Journal* at hand for this encounter.

**Mekillots.** The characters recognize the two mekillots on *Player Aid Card #14* as the animals that were drawing the wagon at the start of this adventure. The one lying on its side at the water's edge is obviously dead. The other one is confused, frightened, and angry. If any PC tries to approach either it or its dead mate, the mekillot moves to keep itself between the adventurers and the oasis. The huge beast attacks anyone who reaches the edge of the water or the body of the dead mekillot.

**What Happened.** After the elves released the two mekillots, the beasts wandered in the desert until they found this oasis. Unfortunately, the water here is poisonous to all animals except elves, kanks, and kluzds. The mekillots smelled something strange in the water, but one of them drank anyway and quickly died.

The other mekillot is upset about its mate's death. It is also extremely thirsty, but dimly realizes that drinking from the pool is a bad idea. Nevertheless, it is extremely defensive of the oasis, as this is the only water it knows of within miles. Because of the beast's panicked state of mind, PCs trying to draw the mekillot away from the pool, or take control of the animal, suffer a -4 penalty to any checks they must make to use their power, proficiency, or spell.

**Roleplaying.** The mekillot is a total slave to instinct. Right now, it wants water and it knows there is water in the pond. The mekillot is not about to let the PCs near the water, because it's afraid they'll drink it all (mekillots can typically drink several hundred gallons over the span of a few hours, and assume that other beasts can too). The only thing that can lure the mekillot away is the immediate prospect (within sight or smell) of drinking at least ten gallons of water.

**What The Mekillot Knows.** Should the PCs contact the mekillot via a psionic power or spell and try to reason with it, they will not have much luck. The mekillot smells "something funny" in the water, but it doesn't know what. The creature dimly recalls that a bunch of elves came up and drank from the pond yesterday. It is quite pleased with itself for chasing them off before they emptied the oasis of all its water.

### Statistics.

**Mekillot (1):** Int Animal; AL N; AC 6 (8 underside); MV 9; HD 11; hp 50; THAC0 9; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6; SA Swallow whole on a natural attack roll of "20" and crush anyone beneath it for 2d12; SZ G; ML 14; XP 5,000.

**Next.** Continue with encounter 15 when the PCs get past the mekillot to the water.



## Fifteen: Oasis

**Setup.** Once the PCs are past the mekillot in encounter 14, have the players flip to *Player Aid Card #15*.

**General Appearance.** The water is scalding hot, brown, muddy, and bitter smelling—in other words, normal for an Athasian oasis. There is plenty of long green grass growing on the edge of the pool, and the mudflats are covered with healthy foliage. A closer inspection reveals that the pool is surrounded by dead birds, lizards, and small mammals.

**Yypr Trees.** This oasis is also dotted with yypr trees. These stand fifty feet tall and grow equally well in the muddy areas of the oasis or the sand at its edge. They are conifers, with hard, flat needles that can be boiled to make a refreshing tea. Anyone resting for a day while drinking several cups of this tea heals recovers one point of lost Constitution (if any) or 1 additional hit point. A successful *herbalism* proficiency check will reveal this to the players if they think to examine the trees.

**Water.** The water is obviously toxic. Any non-elf taking more than a small taste of the water will be poisoned (type J poison, 1-4 minute onset time, death/20). The water can be purified magically (such as with a *purify food* and *drink* spell), but the PCs must be very careful when attempting to purify it conventionally (such as by boiling and recovering the steam). The PC supervising conventional purification attempts must make a successful Intelligence ability check with a -4 penalty, or the water retains the poison.

**The Water's Source.** Although the map may look as though there is an inlet at the north-eastern corner of the pool, that is not the case. The pond is slowly fed by a small hot spring.

**Mud.** The mud around the oasis is steaming hot. Further, it smells terrible and is crawling with disgusting worms and beetles. Although these creatures are harmless to humans and demihumans, they are repulsive.

**Monumental Arch.** A small bridge of yypr wood leads to this marble arch which was built by the preceding Athasian civilization. At the base of the arch are a dozen clay pots, all filled with various grains, fruits, and vegetables. All of these foodstuffs are moldy. Scattered here and there on the wooden bridge are leaves and stems of a purple herb. Anyone making a successful *herbalism* or *survival (mountain)* proficiency check recognizes the herb as methelinoc, an extremely poisonous herb found only in the Ringing Mountains. Because this herb does not affect elves or kanks, elven tribes sometimes use it to prevent strangers from stealing their water.

**Next.** Continue with encounter 16.

## Sixteen: Elves

**Setup.** Have the players turn to *Player Aid Card #16*.

**Thirsty Elves.** A group of 20 young elves has come for water. Laughing at any warnings not to drink from the oasis, the elves plunge their canteens into the water, bring their kanks forward to drink, and spend the next several hours drinking and loading five hundred gallons of water onto their kanks.

**Methelinoc.** In its mandibles, one kank carries a leather-wrapped bundle of methelinoc (a poisonous purple herb from the mountains; see encounter 19). The elves prevent the PCs from investigating this bundle, even fighting if necessary. If questioned about its contents, they claim it's for the water, and that they are cleaning up all the oases that have been poisoned. Anyone seeing the contents and making a *herbalism* proficiency check knows this is a lie.

Assuming they have this bundle as they leave, the elves take it to the monumental arch and empty it into the water. The water bubbles and froths, then turns purple for a few minutes. (Note: preventing the elves from doing this has no effect on the oasis. It takes weeks for the methelinoc already in the water to deactivate.)

**Following the Elves.** The PCs may try to follow the elves. Should the elves notice this, which is 75% likely, the elves lead the PCs in wide, sweeping circle that brings them back to this oasis. Otherwise, the PCs will have to resort to tracking, for the elves are certainly traveling faster than the PCs can follow for long.

**Roleplaying.** The elves are indifferent to the PCs. If the PCs offer to buy the antidote to the poison in the water, the elves try to sell the PCs the methelinoc on their kank, instructing them to throw it into the pool. They say it requires twelve hours before the water is drinkable (to give themselves enough time to get away). They are, of course, lying.

**What The Elves Know.** Although the elves will not engage in idle chatter with the PCs, it might be possible to learn something from them via magic or psionic means. If this is done, the PCs will learn that these elves belong to the Jura Dai tribe (just as the raiders who attacked the caravan did) and that they have used methelinoc to poison all the wells in the vicinity as retaliation for Urik's slave-taking. Further, the elves know that, there is no known antidote for methelinoc (other than being an elf, kank, or kluzd.) They may also learn that the Jura Dai camp is at the end of the southernmost canyon beyond the oasis north of Kled (a dwarven village) and that they are feuding with Kled because the dwarves have helped the Urik slave takers find the elven camp. The elves greatest secret, which they will fight against revealing with all their will if possible, is that they have kidnapped the thri-kreen druid who watches over this oasis because they don't want him to purify the waters.

### Statistics.

**Jura Dai Elf (300):** Int Avg; AL N; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1 (bone short sword, attacks at -2); Dmg 1d6-2; SZ M; ML 13; XP 15 each; Treasure 2d4 cp each.

**Next.** If the PCs remain at this oasis, go to encounter 17. If they travel to the elven camp, go to event 19.



## Seventeen: Dwarven Children

**Setup.** Have the players turn to *Player Aid Card #17*. Be sure to have the entry describing the *kluzd* at hand during this encounter.

**Giggles.** The sound of giggling children drifts across the oasis. When the PCs investigate, they see two dozen dwarven children moving away from the arch monument, where they have just left an offering of sugar-coated ants. They are sneaking along the mudflats toward the edge of the pond, waterskins in hand. They pay no attention to warnings not to drink from the pond, and don't even seem to understand what is being said to them unless addressed in dwarvish.

**Kluzd Attack.** As the PCs watch, a little boy suddenly disappears beneath the mud. The child has been attacked by a kluzd. Another child will disappear every other round until the PCs jump in to help. The kluzd then turns on a PC.

**Rescue.** The kluzd is taking the children to its den. If the PCs defeat it, they can follow its tunnels back to its den and rescue all the children.

**Roleplaying.** Only one of the children, a brash, 11-year-old boy named Claodis (klä-ö-dis), speaks Common. The PCs must either trust him to translate, or find a means of communicating with the other children in their own language. The first thing Claodis tells the PCs is that they were too slow in battling the kluzd—then he demands something to drink, or he'll tell all his friends they said it was safe to drink from the oasis pond.

Once they get past Claodis' blustering, he can explain that there has been a terrible water shortage, so he talked his friends into coming to this oasis to get some water for the whole village. He won't listen to claims that the oasis is poisoned, claiming that they made offerings to the druid, so the druid will make sure that the water is safe (he is wrong; the druid has been kidnapped by the Jura Dai elves).

**What The Children Know.** Conversation with the dwarven children will reveal the location of Kled and the fact that the elves have been seen visiting this oasis fairly regularly. The children know that a druid is supposed to watch over this oasis, but their parents think that the elves did something to him.

### Statistics.

**Kluzd (1):** Int Animal; AL N; AC 2 (8 out of mud); MV 12, Br 12; HD 4; hp 21; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA Suffocation; SD nil; SZ M; ML 14; XP 270.

**Dwarven Children (24):** Int Average; AL NG; AC 10; MV 6; HD 1; hp 3 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2; SZ S; ML 7; XP 15; Treasure Nil.

**Next.** If the PCs opt to return the children to Kled, go to encounter 18. If they do not, the children will ask them to come with them to Kled and help solve the water shortage there.

## Eighteen: Kled

**Setup.** Have the players turn to *Player Aid Card #18*.

**Children.** If the PCs have any dwarven children with them, a dozen angry mothers drag the kids away, scolding them loudly. If the PCs don't have any dwarven children with them, a dozen frightened mothers surround them and ask if they have seen their lost children.

**Barunus.** After the PCs have met the mothers, the village leader, an ancient dwarf named Barunus greets the PCs. He is so feeble that he can hardly walk. If the PCs have not done so already, he asks them to give half their water to the children. After hearing the PCs' story (see *Roleplaying*), Barunus asks the PCs to free the druid who watches over the nearby oasis.

**Sword of Kemalok.** If the PCs agree to help the dwarves, he presents them with the *Sword of Kemalok*, a steel short sword +1. This sword can cure *serious wounds* twice per day, but has only 10 charges left. When they're gone, it loses its +1 bonus and becomes just a steel weapon. Barunus doesn't know this, however, and believes that its enchantment is eternal.

**Roleplaying.** Barunus is the founder of the village, and a kind-hearted old dwarf. He tells the PCs everything he knows about the current situation in the region (see below.) Barunus speaks frankly and honestly, all that he asks in return is that the PCs do the same.

**What Barunus Knows.** Barunus founded Kled 150 years ago. His (and thus Kled's) purpose is to uncover the lost city of the dwarven kings, Kemalok. When Kemalok is restored to its former splendor, Barunus believes, the world will once again be verdant and bountiful. The Jura Dai are mad at the dwarves of Kled because a legion from Urik watered from Kled's well before attacking the elven camp. The dwarves didn't want to let the legion water in Kled, but they had no choice. The elves are holding the druid of the nearby oasis prisoner to prevent him from reversing the effects of their toxins on the oasis.

### Statistics.

**Kled Dwarf (300):** Int Avg; AL N; AC 10; MV 6; HD 1; hp 8; THAC0 19; #AT 1 (bone club attacks at -2); Dmg 1d4-2; SZ S; ML 14; XP 35; Treasure 1d4 cp.

**Barunus:** Int Very; AL NG; AC 10; MV 3; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1 (bone club attacks at -2); Dmg 1d4-2; SZ S; ML 14; XP 35; Treasure 2d4 cp.

**Next.** Barunus will tell the PCs how to find the elves' current stronghold. When they have almost reached it, continue with encounter 19.

## Nineteen: Badlands

**Setup.** Barunus gives the PCs a sketch map of the route to the elven stronghold.

**The Jura Dai Scout.** *Player Aid Card #19* shows the terrain that the PCs encounter as they start toward the elven stronghold. As the players examine the card, have them make ability checks on their Intelligence or Wisdom (whichever is higher). Anyone who makes the check spots an elf moving through the terrain ahead of the party. If the PCs don't spot him, the elf slips away and warns his chieftain that they are coming.

Should it become clear that he has been noticed, the elf flees up the canyon at his best speed. If a PC attempts to catch him, compare the character's movement rate with the elf's (12). If it is higher and the PC makes a successful Dexterity Check, the elf is overtaken. If not, the elf escapes.

If the elf is caught, he attempts to fight his way free, but can be subdued for interrogation if the PCs don't strike to kill.

**Roleplaying.** The elf, Fanan, is a psionic guard who should have heard the PCs coming a long way off. Unfortunately for his tribe, he was sleeping on the job. He is scared to death, but is also determined not to betray his tribe. If the PCs can suggest a plausible reason that it is to his tribe's benefit to help them locate the elven camp, the elf cooperates willingly and leads them to the camp. Otherwise, he trembles and cowers, but does not aid the PCs. If the PCs release him under any circumstances, he runs and warns his fellow elves of their approach. Of course, some PCs might be able to track him back to his home.

**What Fanan Knows.** If he is befriended or forced to talk, Fanan will reveal what he knows about the situation. First, he is aware that the Jura Dai camp is inside an ancient fortress overlooking the canyon. He knows the general layout, but won't reveal it willingly. If the PCs find a way to force him to do so, have them flip to *Player Aid Card #21*. The Jura Dai chief's name is Tuga Dai, and he is determined to force the king of Urik to release his elven slaves.

Fanan knows about the captured druid. He will reveal that the druid is being kept the fortress, though he doesn't know exactly where. Tuga doesn't want to kill the druid because he's afraid of angering the desert spirits. If the subject comes up, which is not likely, Fanan will reveal that Tuga's daughter, Jengi, is watching over her father's herds a short distance away. The only reason Fanan knows this is because he hopes to marry Jengi, but he lacks the courage to confront her other suitors and claim her for his own.

### Statistics.

**Fanan:** Int Avg; AL N; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT 1 (bone short sword, attacks at -2); Dmg 1d6-2; SA psionics; SD psionics; SZ M; ML 13; XP 120; Treasure 3d6 cp.

Psionic Powers—Sciences: *clairaudience, clairvoyance, life draining*; Devotions: *1 all-round vision, chameleon power, danger sense, know direction, poison sense, body equilibrium, body weaponry, cause decay, double pain, enhanced strength*. Def Modes: IF, MB, TS. PSPs: 66.

**Next.** Continue with encounter 20.

## Twenty: Lady in Distress

**Setup.** Do not have the players flip to *Player Aid Card #20* until instructed to by the text below. Be sure to have the game statistics on the Gith on hand during this encounter.

**A Cry For Help.** As the PCs are moving toward the Jura Dai camp, either with or without Fanan, they hear the nearby sounds of a skirmish and cries for help in elvish. When they investigate, have them flip to *Player Aid Card #20*.

**Jengi.** Jengi, the Jura Dai chieftain's daughter, is being attacked by several Gith. Like Fanan, she was neglecting her duties and catching a catnap after their late night rendezvous.

If Fanan is leading the PCs to the elven camp, he insists that they help Jengi. If the PCs let him escape in encounter 19, he is watching the battle from a hiding place. He had just come to warn her about the PCs when the gith jumped her. If the PCs help Jengi, he joins in defending her, using *body weaponry*, *enhanced strength*, and *double pain*. If the PCs don't help Jengi, he leaps to her defense alone.

**After the Battle.** Assuming the PCs save her from the gith, Jengi is properly grateful. If the PCs do not save her from the battle, Jengi and Fanan die terrible deaths at the hands of the gith.

**Roleplaying.** Jengi is seductive and flirtatious, and always tries to get what she wants by using her ample charms. After the PCs save her life, she tries to learn what they are doing near the elven stronghold. If the PCs think of a reason that isn't threatening to her or her tribe, Jengi offers to introduce them to her father, the chief of the Jura Dai clan.

On the other hand, if the PCs reveal the true reason that they're seeking out the stronghold, Jengi tries to dissuade them. Assuming she fails, she reneges on her offer of gratitude and uses every means at her disposal to warn her father and the other elves of the PCs approach-although she will not directly attack them or attempt to cause them harm.

**What Jengi Knows.** If the PCs are able to befriend Jengi or otherwise convince her to share her knowledge with them, she will reveal that the captured druid is a thri-kreen named T'klik'chik. He's being held in a ruined tower at the Jura Dai camp. She knows for certain that any attempt, even by her, to persuade her father to release the druid will meet with failure. Jengi is also familiar with the general layout of the ancient fortress, though she will reveal this to the PCs only under duress. Should the party find a way to convince her to do so, have them flip to *Player Aid Card #21*.

### Statistics.

**Jengi:** Int Very; AL CN; AC 10; MV 12; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1; D 1d4 (steel dagger); SZ M; ML 15; XP 120; Treasure 2-20 sp. Defiler Spells: 1) *charm person*, *friends*, *hypnotism*; 2) *forget*, *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter*.

**Typical Gith (12):** Int Average; AL CE; AC 8; MV 9; HD 3; hp 15 each; THAC0 17; #AT 2; D 1d4/1d4; SA Springing (+2 on first attack roll); SZ M; ML 12; XP 175; Treasure nil.

**Next.** After the PCs conclude this scene, continue the adventure with encounter 21.

## Twenty-One: The Elven Encampment

**Setup.** Do not have the players flip to *Player Aid Card #21* until instructed to do so. During this encounter, be sure to describe the castle as a “fortress of the ancients” – never refer to it as a “castle” or “keep”, this is a place of mystery and awe.

**Introductions.** If the PCs are with Fanan and/or Jengi, they are taken directly to the great tower (area 10). To reach the tower, they are allowed access to the inner courtyard (area 15). Any elf noticing PCs anywhere else attacks at once, shouting an alarm that will summoning 1d10 elves/round.

**The Castle.** This region of Athas is dotted with thousand-year old ruins, but this one is unusually well-preserved. The stone walls are in good condition, but the upper floors of the towers have crumbled.

- 1,2: These towers are surrounded by rubble and now stand only about ten feet tall, with no roofs. Inside each is one sentry.
- 3: This road, the only castle entrance, is lined by a 6' tall stone wall.
- 4: When the PCs reach this point, have them flip to *Player Aid Card #21*. If the party is not escorted by Fanan and/or Jengi when they reach this area, they are immediately attacked by the sentries in areas 5 and 6.
- 5,6: The lower two floors of these towers still stand. An elven family including two warriors (one male, one female) and three children camps on each tower floor. In each tower a sentry watches area 4 from the balcony overlooking the gate. A trap door in the basement of each tower leads to a dungeon cell.
- 7,9,11: The walkways along these walls are where the tribe's single elves sleep. During the day and evening, there are only 1d10 elven warriors along each wall. At night, however, there are 75 male warriors sleeping on 7 and 11, and 50 female warriors on 9. To avoid being challenged while on these walls, PCs must take care not to be seen or heard. There are two sentries on the bridges between the great tower (area 10) and at areas 9 and 11.
- 8: This tower is similar to 5 and 6, save that the lower floor is occupied by five sentries. The captive druid is in the cell beneath the trap door (go at once to encounter 22 when the PCs discover this cell).
- 10: See encounter 23 when the PCs enter this tower.
- 12-14, 16-18: An elven family including two warriors (one male, one female) and three children camps in the foundations of the buildings that once stood here.
- 15: At any time, there are 2d10 elves in this courtyard.
- 19: This is where the tribe keeps its 100 kanks penned at night.
- 20: At any time, there are 2d10 elves gathered around the well,
- 21: This dry moat is now filled with offal and refuse.

### Statistics.

**Jura Dai Elf (300):** Int Avg; AL N; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1 (bone short sword, attacks at -2); Dmg 1d6-2; SZ M; ML 13; XP 15 each; Treasure 2d4 cp each.

**Next.** Continue with encounter 22 when the PCs find the druid, or encounter 23 when the PCs enter the great tower.

## Twenty-Two: The Druid

**Setup.** When the PCs open the trap door beneath the southeastern tower of the fortress, have them flip to *Player Aid Card #22*.

**T'klick'chik.** At first, the PCs may not realize that the thri-kreen pictured on the *Player Aid Card* is the druid they have come to rescue. Any elves with, or captured by, the PCs claim the thri-kreen was taken because he was caught eating an elf, and is being held for execution. The druid, they claim, is in the great tower.

T'klick'chik does not speak common. Unless a PC is able to communicate with him in some way, speaking with T'klick'chik may prove difficult. Using gestures and signs requires a successful Intelligence check for a PC to communicate each new idea. Obviously, some concepts are easier to convey than others, and DMs should apply modifiers judiciously.

**Entering the Cell.** PCs entering the cell without permission (see *Roleplaying* below) are swarmed by lizards, automatically suffering 1d8 hit points in bites each round. They must also save vs. poison or lose 1d3 points of Strength each round until a *neutralize poison* is cast upon them.

**T'klick'chik's Demand.** Once the PCs manage to communicate with him, T'klick'chik demands proof of their dedication to the oasis spirit. He wants the PCs to bring him Tuga Dai, dead or alive (see encounter 23). When the PCs comply, T'klick'chik kills the chief (if he is not already dead) and eats him. After T'klick'chik finishes his meal, he agrees to leave with the party.

**Roleplaying.** To T'klick'chik, most humans and demihumans look the same. When he sees any human or demihuman PC enter his cell, he assumes they are elves coming to fetch him for the stewpot. Even after the PCs have communicated their desire to him, he remains aloof and suspicious.

**What T'klick'chik Knows.** Once the PCs manage to convince the druid that they are not his enemies, they will be able to learn some things from him. First, the thri-kreen knows that Tuga Dai spends two hours every night alone in the uppermost room of the great tower studying his spells. Further, he feels that his capture was due only to a surprise attack by the elves. Once he returns to his oasis, he has no need to worry about the traditionally vengeful elves—they won't dare to challenge him directly.

### Statistics.

**T'klick'chik:** Int High; AL N; AC 5; MV 18; HD 6 +3; hp 50; THAC0 13; #AT 5; Dmg 1d4(x4)/1d4+1; SA druid spells and poison: SD dodge missiles on 9 or better; SZ M; ML 15; XP 3,000; druid spells: 1) *bless, animal friendship, invisibility to animals, locate animals or plants, detect poison, create water*; 2) *snake charm, messenger, detect charm, speak with animals, find traps, slow poison*; 3) *hold animal, summon insects, create food and water, water breathing, water walk*; 4) *reflecting pool, lower water, neutralize poison*; 5) *cure critical wounds, control winds*; 6) *part water, transmute water to dust*.

**Next.** Continue with encounter 23 when the PCs go to fetch Tuga Dai. Once they have delivered the chief and left the fortress, continue with event 24.

## Twenty-Three: Tuga Dai

**Setup.** Have the players flip to *Player Aid Card* #23.

**Entering the Tower.** If the PCs are escorted by Fanan and/or Jengi, they are taken directly into the great hall (area D).

- A. Two sentries stand guard on these balconies.
- B. These arched halls provide access to the interior rooms. In any hall, there is 25% chance of meeting 1d4 elven clan chiefs.
- C. This room has no roof. Between ten p.m. and midnight, Tuga Dai comes here alone to study his spells.
- D. There are always 2d8 clan chiefs in the great tower. This is also where Tuga Dai spends most days and evenings.
- E. This is where Tuga Dai sleeps, along with his wife and children. He is here after midnight and before daylight.
- F. The basement holds a supply of methelinoc. The well here is dry.

**Roleplaying.** Tuga Dai cares only about his tribe. He won't release the druid, no matter what the PCs do or say, and is more interested in how they learned of his stronghold. Tuga Dai does not allow the PCs to leave, instead having their hands bound and sealing them in room F.

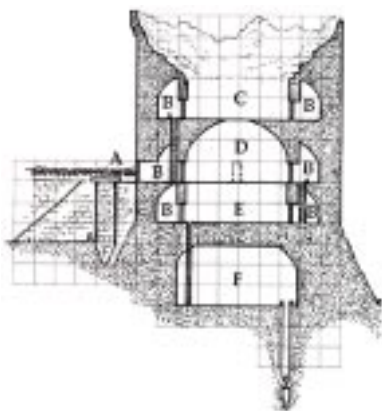
**What Juga Dai Knows.** It might be possible for the PCs to glean some information from their conversation with the elf leader. He knows that he has little chance of freeing the Jura Dai taken by the King of Urik, but he has to do something to strike back. He is aware that Fanan and his daughter Jengi are having a secret love affair.

### Statistics.

**Jura Dai Chief:** Int Very; AL CN; AC 5 (bank breastplate); MV 12; HD 4; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; D 1d4 (steel dagger); SZ M; ML 15; XP 270; Treasure 10 gp. Defiler Spells: 1) *color spray, magic missile, sleep, ventriloquism*; 2) *darkness 15' radius, invisibility, knock*; 3) *dispel magic, lightning bolt*; 4) *minor creation*.

**Tuga Dai:** Int Very; AL CN; AC 5 (kank breastplate); MV 12; HD 8; hp 35; THAC0 13; #AT 1; D 1d4 (steel dagger); SZ M; ML 15; XP 2,000; Treasure 10 gp. Defiler Spells: 1) *color spray, magic missile, sleep, ventriloquism*; 2) *darkness 15' radius, invisibility, knock*; 3) *dispel magic, lightning bolt*; 4) *minor creation*. Treasure: 10 gp.

**Next.** If the PCs take Tuga Dai to the druid, continue with encounter 22. Otherwise, return to encounter 21.



Scale: 1 square = 10 feet

## Twenty-Four: The Oasis

**Setup.** Don't have the player's flip to *Player Aid Card #24* until instructed to below. Use this encounter as the PCs leave the elves, whether they are escaping alone or with the druid T'klick'chik.

**Angry Elves.** As they are not anxious to have the location of their secret fortress known, the elves attempt to ambush the PCs. T'klick'chik does what he must to defend himself, but is not overly helpful to the party members-though he will use his healing powers to keep them from dying. The type of ambush depends on how careful the party was inside the elven camp:

### Ambushes Conditions

- One PCs rescued T'klick'chik without revealing their presence to a single elf (except the chief).
- Two PCs were seen by one or more elves, but no alarm was raised for one reason or another.
- Three PCs were seen by elves and an alarm was raised. These ambushes occur at various points along their escape route.

**Ambush One.** Twelve elves attack the party with bows and arrows from cover. The party suffers a -2 penalty to their surprise check.

**Ambush Two.** Ten elves block the PCs' path in a narrow stretch of canyon, while five more attack from behind. If Fanan and Jengi are alive, they are part of the group that attacks from behind.

**Ambush Three.** A dozen elves, led by the tribe's best psionicist, catch the PCs at night or in their camp.

**Reaching the Oasis.** Once the PCs reach the oasis with T'klick'chik, the elves no longer bother them. Over a period of several hours, T'klick'chik uses his spells to empty most of the water out of the oasis, then neutralizes the poison in what remains. During this time, dozens of ex-slaves and dwarves from Kled appear, their waterskins expectantly in hand. At long last, T'klick'chik casts his final spell. When this happens, have the players flip to *Player Aid Card #24*. A few moments later, the druid disappears into the foliage and returns to his duties.

### Statistics.

**Jura Dai Elf:** Int Avg; AL N; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1 (bone short sword, attacks at -2); Dmg 1d6-2; SZ M; ML 13; XP 15 each; Treasure 2d4 cp each.

Fanan's statistics are listed in encounter 19.

Jengi's statistics are listed in encounter 20.

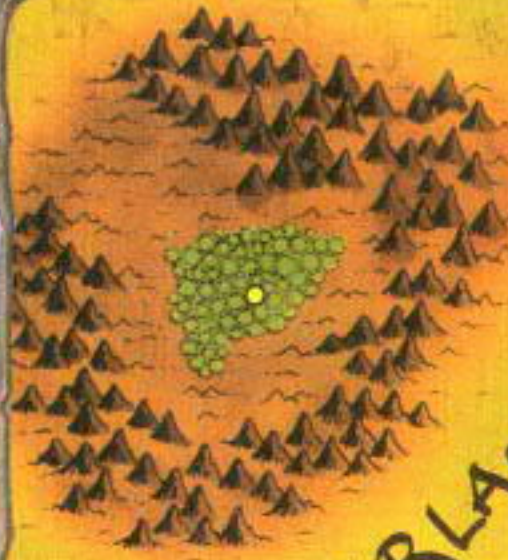
The elven psionicist's statistics are listed in encounter 3.

T'klick'chik's statistics are listed in encounter 22.

**Next.** This is the end of the adventure. The PCs have their choice of going to live in Kled, joining the slave tribe, or striking out on their own. The dwarves of Kled will reward the PCs with 10 gp, no matter what they decide to do.







DRAGON CROWN  
MOUNTAINS

HINTERLANDS



FOREST



BINGING MOUNTAINS

199



FOREST RIDGE

MOUNTAINS

ALLOVIAL SAND WASTES

THE TABLE

Oyo

LAKE OF THE  
QUEEN DIAMOND

MAKLA

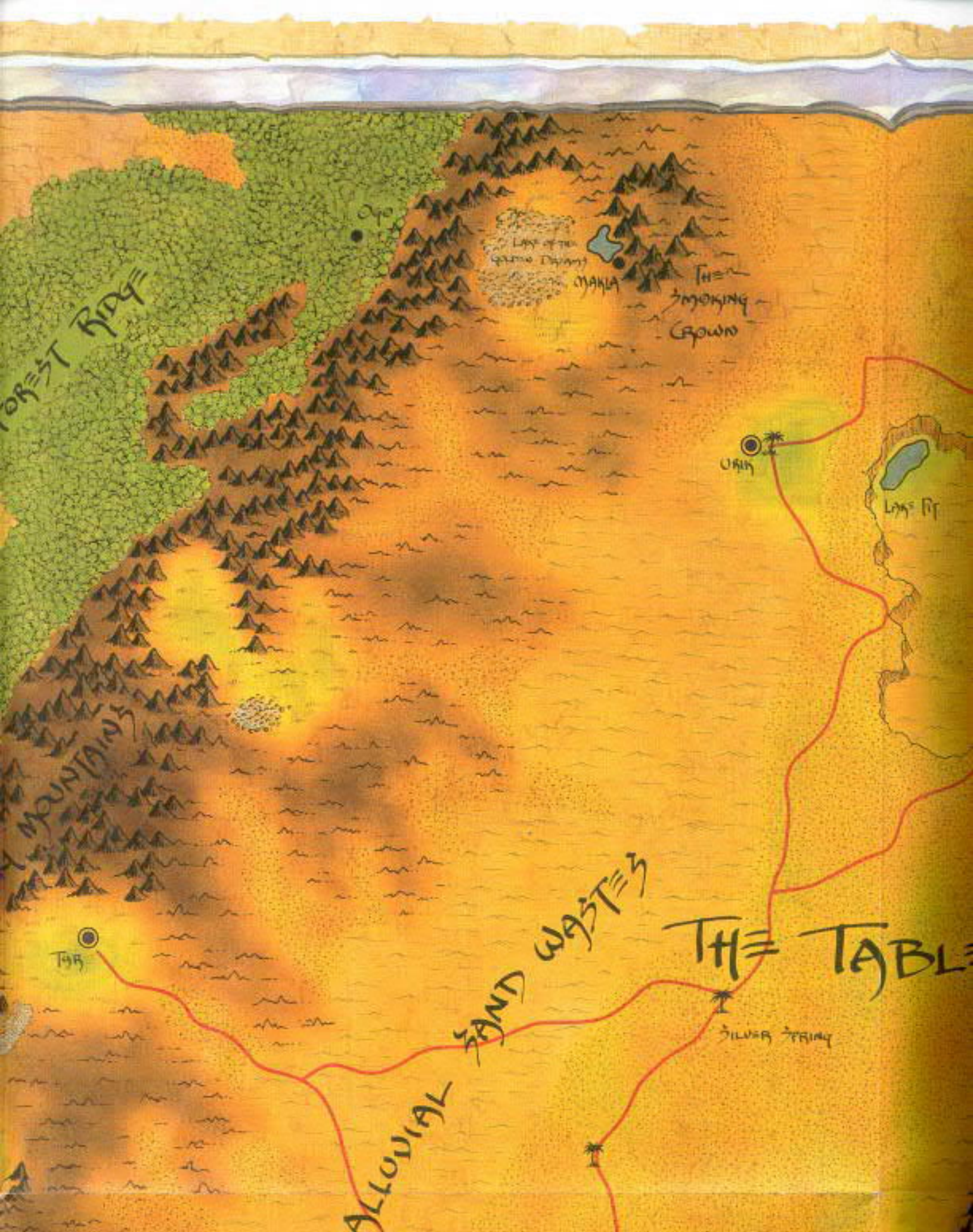
THE  
SMOKING  
CROWN

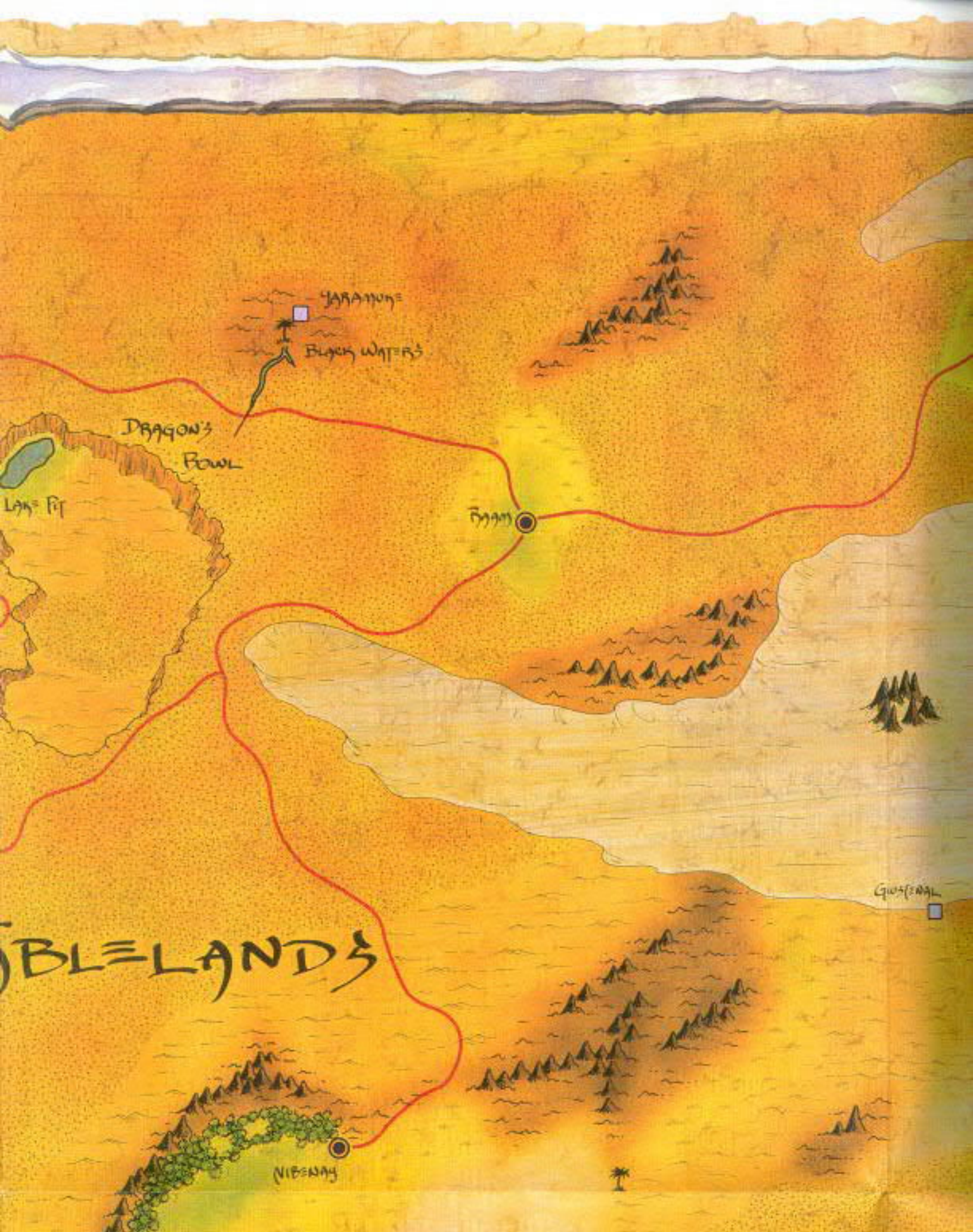
URIN

LAKE PIT

TAB

SILVER SPRING





YARATHUNE

BLACK WATERS

DRAGON'S  
BOWL

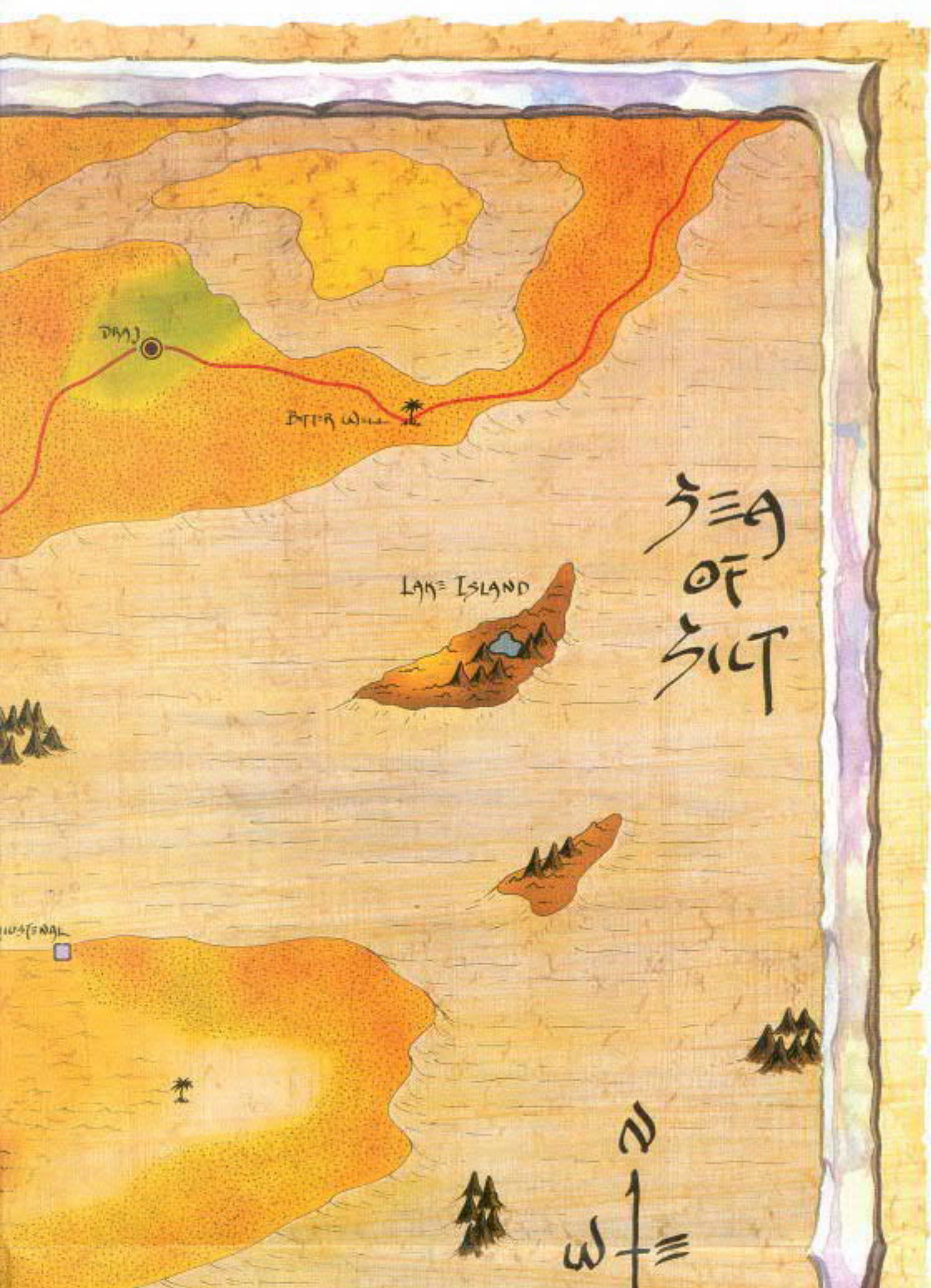
LAKH PIT

MIRAM

GUSTAFAL

BLELANDS

NIBENAY



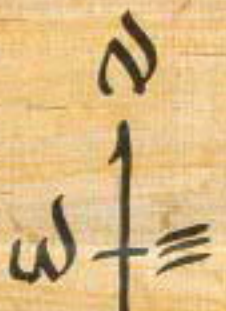
DAM

BITTER WATER

LAKE ISLAND

SEA OF SILT

WATERFALL



















FOREST RIDGE

BINGING MOUNTAINS

# DARK SUN

## - THE TYR REGION -

|   |                 |   |                |   |                  |
|---|-----------------|---|----------------|---|------------------|
|  | MOUNTAINS       |  | FOREST         |  | RUINS            |
|  | ROCKY BADLANDS  |  | JORDAN BELTS   |  | ROAD             |
|  | SCRUB ENTRANCES |  | SCRUB PLAINS   |  | CAMP             |
|  | SAND WASTES     |  | ROUGHER FIELDS |  | SPECIAL INTEREST |
|  | DARK DUNES      |  | CITY           |   |                  |
|  | SALT FLATS      |  | VILLAGE        |   |                  |



KALIN

WALLS

GREAT AL

ALTARUM

GAMM'S POOL

GREAT  
IVORY  
P

NORTH  
LEOPOLIS

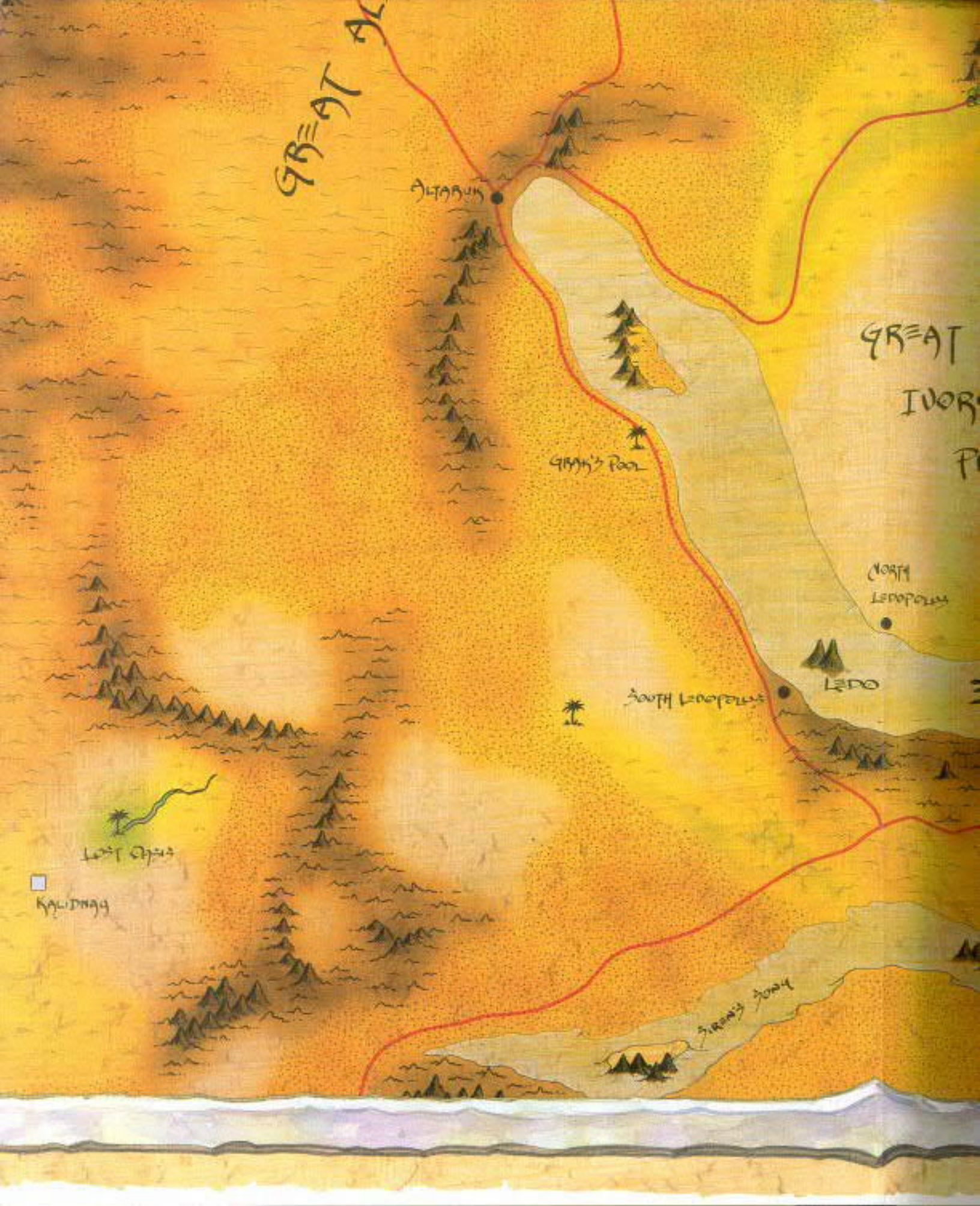
LEDO

SOUTH LEOPOLIS

LAST CITY

KALIDMAG

SWAMPY JOURY





GULF

M=HILLOT MOUNTAINS  
SALT VIEW

GREAT  
IVORY  
PLAIN

BODACH

SM  
POPOLUS

ESTUARY

OF THE

DRAGON'S  
PALATE

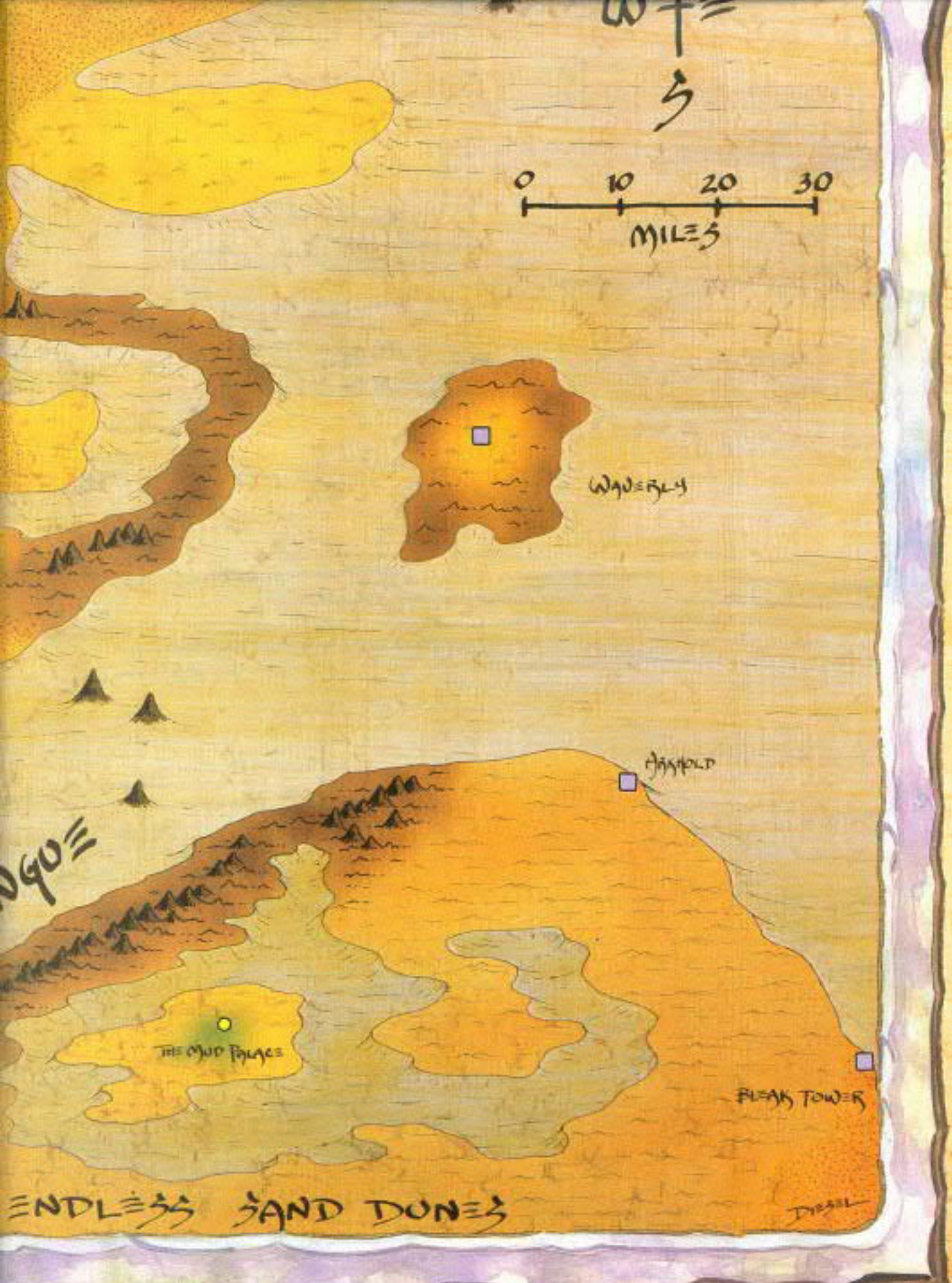
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0 10 20 30  
MILES

WAGGLES

HAYHOLE

THE MUD PALACE

FLEAS TOWER

ENDLESS SAND DUNES

DRESEL



DRAGON CROWN  
MOUNTAINS

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FOREST

RINGING MOUNTAINS

# DARK · SUN

## - THE TYR REGION -

|  |              |  |               |  |                  |
|--|--------------|--|---------------|--|------------------|
|  | MOUNTAINS    |  | FOREST        |  | SQUAD            |
|  | ROCKY HILLS  |  | DESERT DUNE   |  | RAVE             |
|  | SCRUB HILLS  |  | SCRUB FLATS   |  | CAMP             |
|  | SANDY WASTES |  | BARREN FIELDS |  | SPECIAL INTEREST |
|  | DUST STORM   |  | CITY          |  |                  |
|  | SALT FLATS   |  | ALLIANCE      |  |                  |



FOREST RIDGE

MOUNTAINS

198

LAKE OF THE  
GOLDEN DRAGONS

MAKIA

THE  
SMOKING  
CROWN

URUK

LAKE PIT

ALLUVIAL SAND WASTES

THE TABLE

SILVER SPRING



YARAMUN

BLACK WATERS

DRAGON'S  
BOWL

LAKS PIT

FHAM

GUDSVAL

BLELANDS

NIBENAY



DAM

BITTER WOOD

LAKE ISLAND

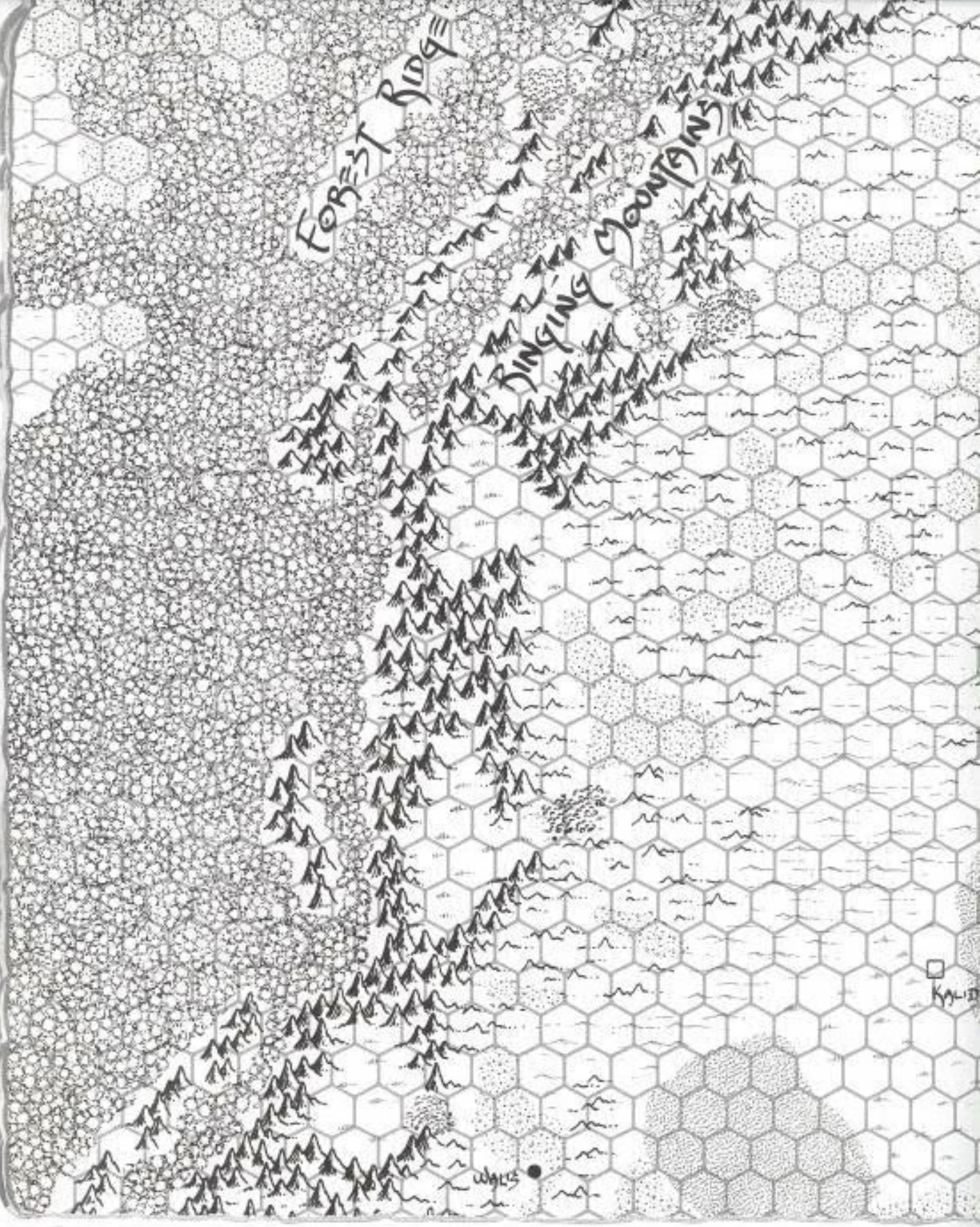
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ORIGINAL

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FOREST RING

JINGING MOUNTAINS



KAL-17

WOLVES



GREAT

ALTAHUK

GREAT  
IVOR

GRAB'S POOL

NORTH  
LEOPOLIS

LEDO

SOUTH LEOPOLIS

LOST OASIS

KALIMAY

SIRRA'S HONEY



GULF

MOUNTAINS  
SALT VESSEL

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GREAT  
IVORY  
PLAIN

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NORTH  
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ESTUARY

OF

THE

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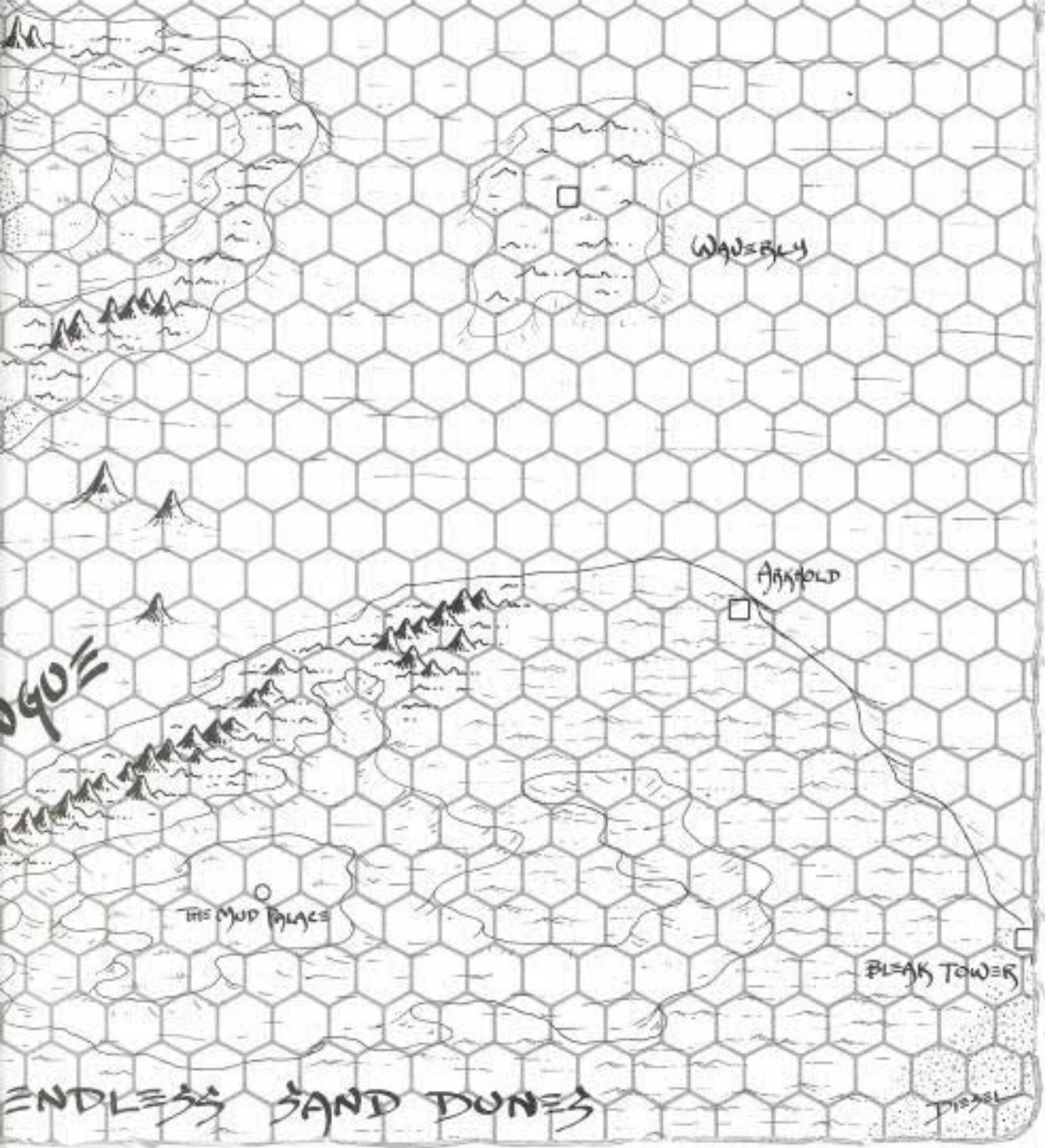
DRAGON'S  
PALATE  
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● BASIC

END



W T  
S  
SCALE: 1 HEX = 5 MILES



WAGSLEY

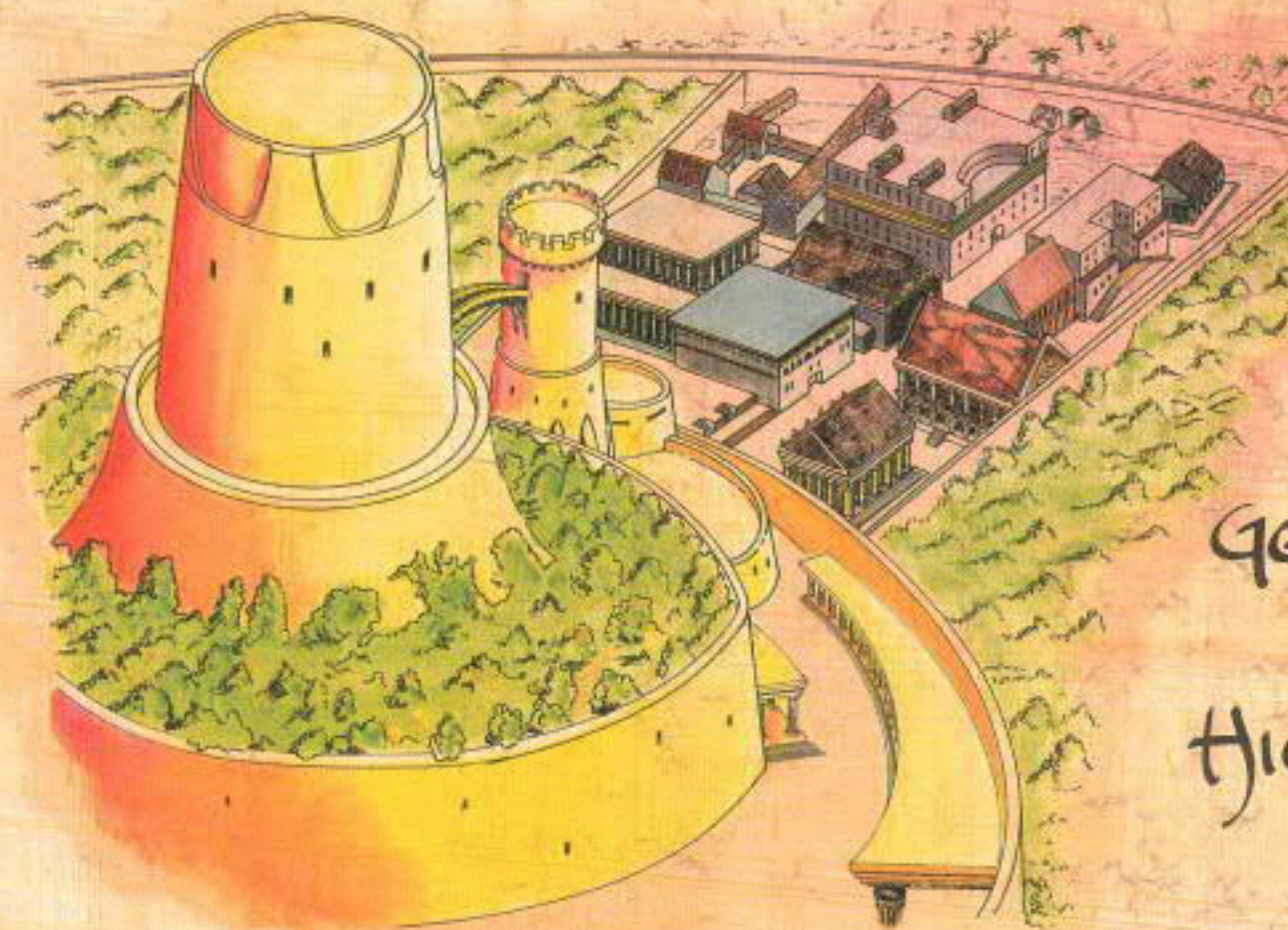
ARKOLD

THE MUD PALACE

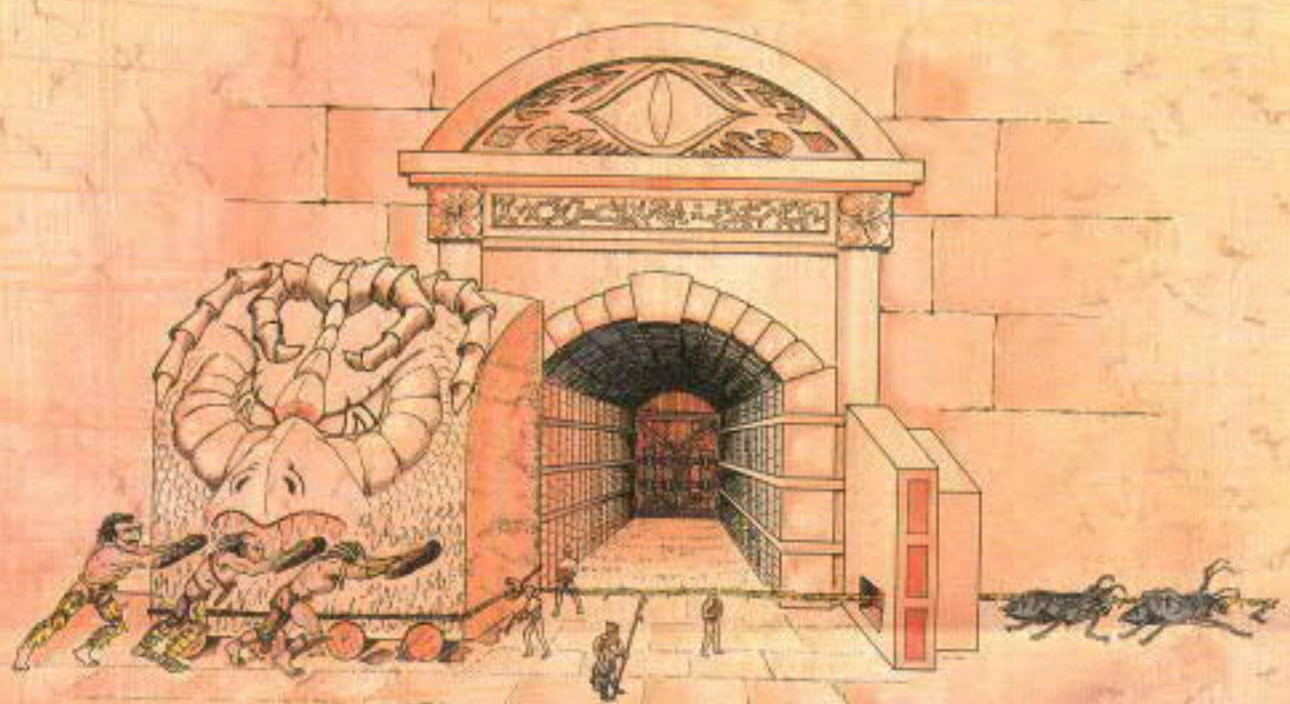
BLACK TOWERS

ENDLESS SAND DUNES

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Go  
High



ELVEN BRIDGE

WARRENS

ELVEN MARKET

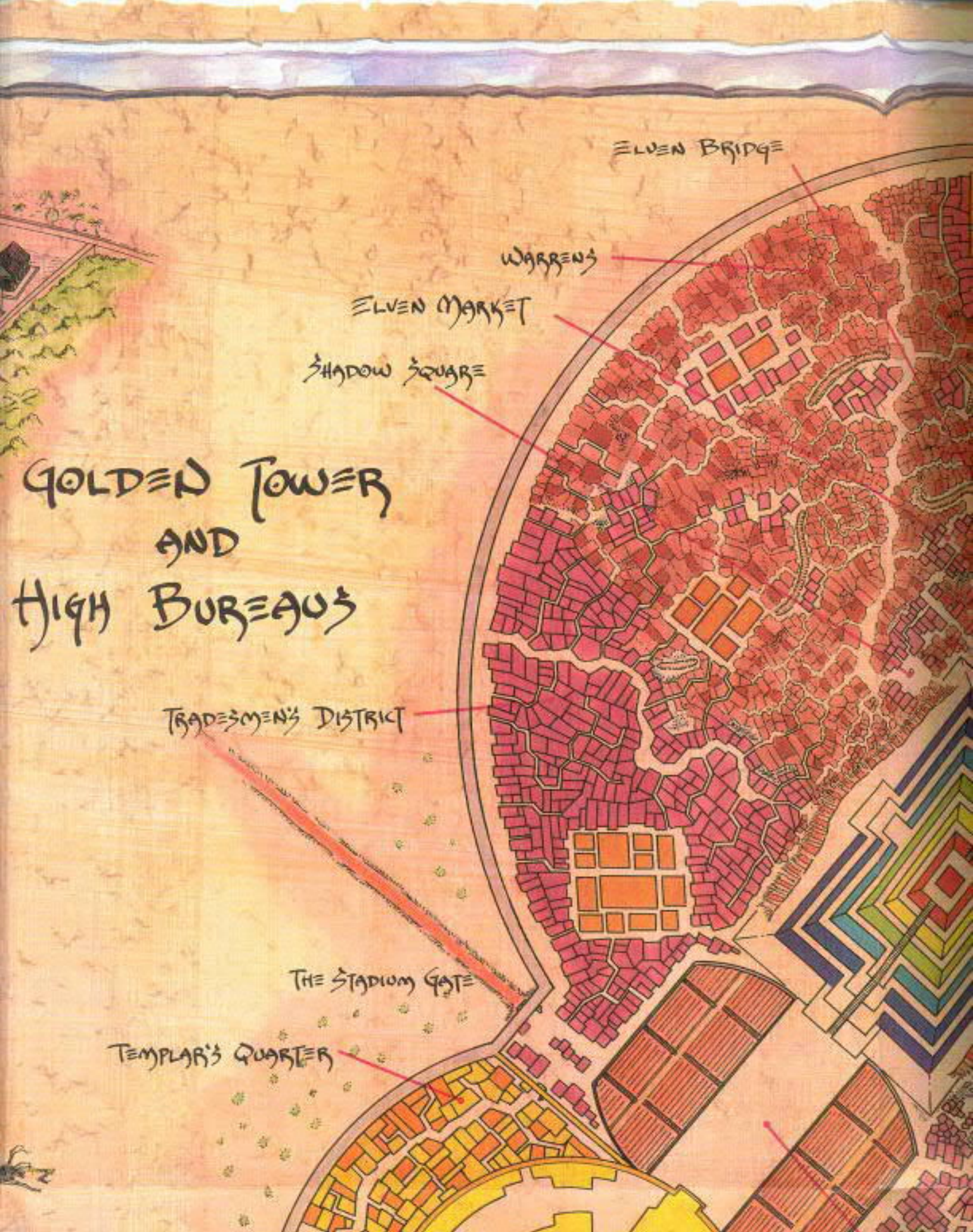
SHADOW SQUARE

GOLDEN TOWER  
AND  
HIGH BUREAUS

TRADESMEN'S DISTRICT

THE STADIUM GATE

TEMPLAR'S QUARTER





MERCHANT DISTRICT

NOBLE QUARTERS

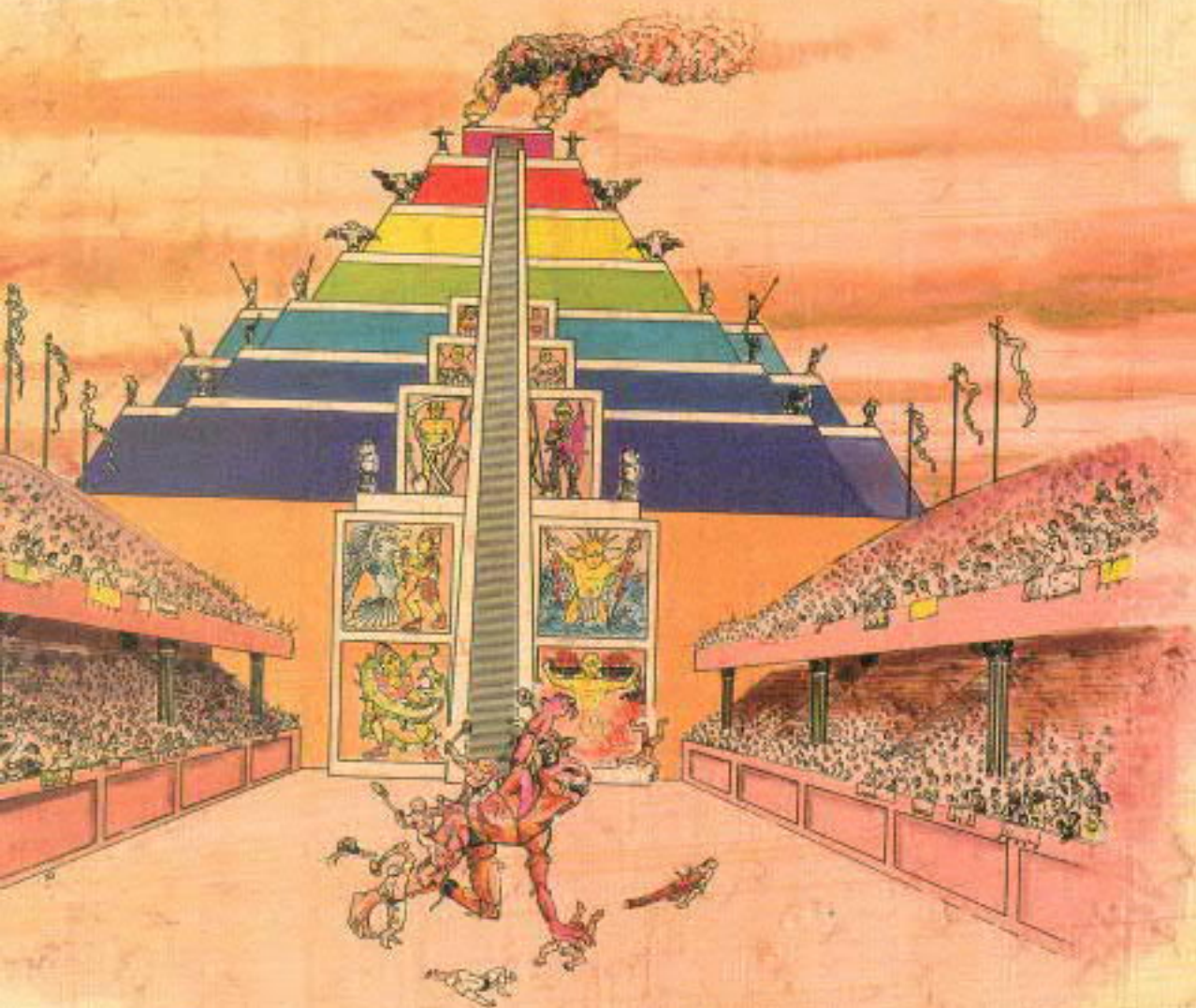
CARAVAN WAY

CARAVAN GATE

NOBLE QUARTERS

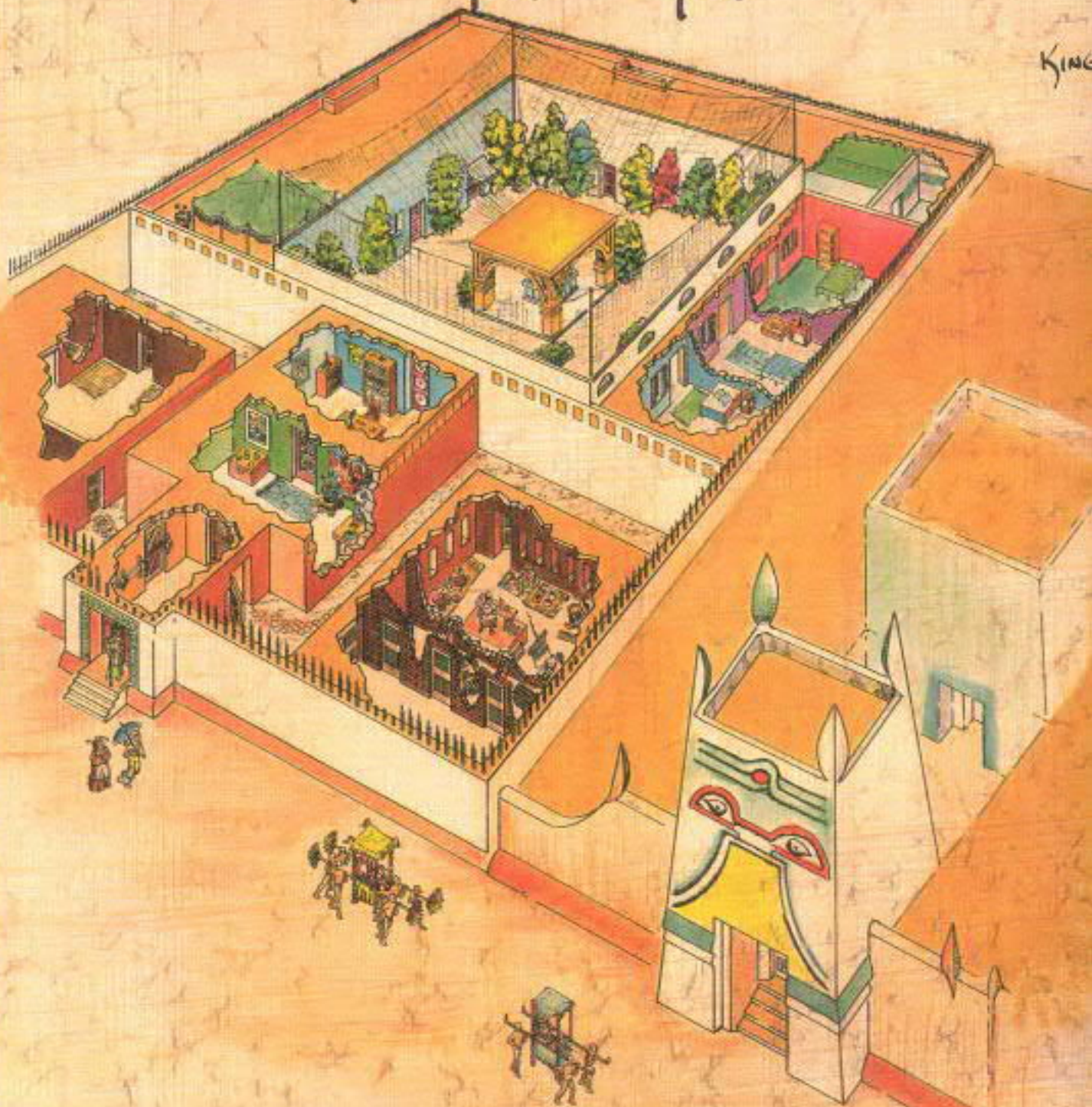
THE BRICKYARDS

SLAVE PITS



GLADIATORIAL STADIUM  
AND KALAK'S ZIGGORAT

# THE GRAND GATE



TOWNHOUSE OF THE MINTHOR FAMILIES

KING'S GARDENS

HIGH BUREAUS

THE GRAND GATE

GOLDEN TOWER

TEMPLAR'S QUARTER

KING'S GARDENS

# THE CITY OF TYR

ONE INCH = 150 FEET

DARK SUN  
W O R L D

KALAK'S ZIGGORAT

TRADESMEN'S DISTRICT

GLADIATORIAL  
STADIUM

ST=H

SHAG

WARRENS



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SHADOW SQUARE IN THE  
ELVEN MARKET

ROBERTSON

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Amid the barren wastelands of Athas lie the scattered city states, each in the grip of its own, tyrannical sorcerering. Protecting their own positions with dark magic, they demand absolute obedience. The restless mobs are placated with bread and circuses—the arenas overflow with spectators seeking release from their harsh lives.

The land outside the cities belongs to no one. Savage elves race across the deserts while insectoid thri-kreen satisfy

their taste for blood. Dwarves labor at projects beyond the scope of men, and feral halflings lie in ambush.

Athas is a land of deadly magic and powerful psionics that offers no promise of glory or even of survival. Those who do not have the cunning to face life on Athas will surely perish—leaving nothing but bones bleached white under the blistering rays of the Dark Sun.



**BOXED SET**

Face the fire of the Dark Sun and enter the most challenging AD&D® game world yet!

By Timothy B. Brown  
& Troy Denning



**ON THE SANDS OF ATHAS YOU'LL FACE . . .**

**Three new PC races!**

- Muls—half-dwarf, half-human; specially bred for combat!
- Thri-kreen—the savage mantis-warriors of the barrens!
- Half-giants—bred for tremendous size and strength!

**Three New PC classes!**

- Gladiators—Heroes of the arenas, the ultimate warriors!
- Templars—Wicked priests who serve the sorcerer-kings!
- Defilers—Wizards whose powers drain the life around them!

**More Powerful PCs!**

- All DARK SUN™ game characters begin at 3rd level!
- Ability scores that can go as high as 24!
- All PCs have one or more psionic powers!
- The new Character Tree allows players to advance many characters at once!

**IMPORTANT!**

In order to explore the world of Dark Sun you must have a copy of the *Complete Psionics Handbook*.

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